

**“Wherever I Could Move Around”: The Worldmaking Work of Gays and Girls
in the Archived Photographs and Testimony of Kewpie of District Six**

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Abstract

In 1998, the recently established Gay and Lesbian Archive of South Africa acquired 600 photographs and three interviews conducted with their original collector, Kewpie. The Kewpie Collection, as it is now known, remains the only official archival resource that depicts and was created by the collective of people from District Six, Cape Town, who described themselves as gays and girls and referred to each other using she/her pronouns after being assigned male at birth. Classified “Coloured” under apartheid, the girls were forcibly removed from District Six after it was declared “Whites Only” in 1966. Three decades later, as legal apartheid was being dismantled, the constitution of the Kewpie Collection as such was informed by a proliferation of historiographical and archival practices coupled with the urgent emergence of the question of gay rights within the public sphere. Notwithstanding its intentions and successes, one effect of the Collection’s archivalisation has been to obscure the fundamental work gays and girls undertook to both survive and imagine other ways of being in the world.

As it is discernible in the Kewpie Collection, this necessarily collaborative labour is elaborated in this thesis as a theory-practice of worldmaking. Seeking to expand available possibilities and make diverse forms of existence more possible, the girls of District Six were not only producers of gay counterpublicity, but key agents in multiple and expansive projects to reformulate inherited conditions of social existence into new possible worlds. Worlds thus created may have been actualised, contingently and ephemerally, in the scenes of their creation. Because they were non-hegemonic, they could not be sustained. Yet these worlds are indexed, in virtual form, by the Kewpie Collection. Because they transform inherited conditions, meanings and materials the girls produce risk recuperation as evidence of enabling past or indeed present conditions. Ultimately, however, this worldmaking continues to unfold as the materials are circulated.

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Introduction

In the late 1990s, the recently established Gay and Lesbian Archive of South Africa (GALA)¹ acquired approximately 600 photographs and three interviews conducted with their original collector, Kewpie. Collectively, these materials have come to be known as the Kewpie Collection. Born in District Six in about 1941, Kewpie was so named as a child after the popular cherubic characters initially conceived of in 1909 and produced as dolls from 1912.² Occasionally, in interviews and captions handwritten on photographs, Kewpie refers to herself as Capucine or Miss Capucine or, less often, using her given surname, Miss Fritz. Usually, however, she is “just Kewpie. Just me” (Kewpie 1998).³ The Kewpie Collection is the only official archival resource that depicts and was created by a collective of people that included Kewpie and some of her friends from a larger group. Members of this collective described themselves as gays and girls and referred to each other using she/her pronouns after being assigned male at birth. Most of them worked as hairdressers and on-stage performers, and intermittently lived with each other, in and near to District Six, Cape Town.

District Six was a densely populated, predominantly working-class residential area that stretched from the Castle of Good Hope, in the city centre, along the slopes of the mountain and near to the port. It was home to a racially and religiously diverse community

¹ GALA (2018) continues to be known by this acronym though its name changed in 2007, to reflect its increasing focus on educational and community work, to Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action. Since the late 2010s, GALA has referred to itself as the GALA Queer Archive.

² Their inventor, Missourian Rose O’Neill ([1916] 2015) described the Kewpie—derived from Cupid—characters as “a sort of little round fairy whose one idea is to teach people to be merry and kind at the same time.”

³ Kewpie (1996, 1998, 1999) is addressed and referred to as “Kewpie” in all interviews, and by every interviewee in Lewis 2000, discussed throughout this thesis. In press coverage, discussed in chapter two, Kewpie is usually referred to as Kewpie/Cupie, and occasionally as Cappucine or Kewpie Doll/Cupie Doll. Although Kewpie’s “given name” is stated by online sources that have appeared since 2018 (e.g., Wikipedia 2020; District Six Museum n.d.b; GALA n.d), discussed in the conclusion to this thesis, there is no record of Kewpie referring to herself by the first name she was given at birth. However, she chose a variation on it for one of the hair salons she managed in Kensington, at which parts of *A Normal Daughter* were filmed: Yugene’s Hairtique (Lewis 2000). Kewpie (1996) also states that her friend Liz’s “eldest is also Eugene. Named after me.”

including descendants of enslaved people, immigrants, artisans, cultural workers, labourers, and shopkeepers. Following the 1901 forced removal of residents legally considered “African,” the majority of those remaining—including Kewpie and her gay friends—were classified by the term in the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950 with both a liminal and residual function: “Coloured.”⁴ Kewpie seems to have still been living in the District in 1966, when the Nationalist government declared it “Whites Only” under the Group Areas Act 41 of 1950. Most photographs in the Kewpie Collection were taken over the following period of about sixteen years, during which approximately 60,000 residents were forcibly removed as the area was almost completely bulldozed (Bickford-Smith 1990; Jeppie and Soudien 1990).

Since its destruction, District Six has come to be remembered as a centre of cultural production, integration, and political defiance, the possibilities of which were curtailed by apartheid. Given this symbolism, the District has had resonance in the project of writing new histories in support of post-apartheid futures—including histories of sexuality and gender diversity. Mid to late-1990s efforts to conserve Kewpie’s photographs and recollections for posterity were part of this project. Notwithstanding their intentions and successes, this thesis suggests, one effect of these efforts has been to obscure the fundamental work undertaken by gays and girls to imagine and live beyond the constraints of their present. It is this work with which this thesis is concerned: the work of worldmaking.

Those whose survival is imperilled by the organisation of social relations that could

⁴ Those formerly classified “Coloured” occupy an intermediary position in the South African racial hierarchy, understood as distinct from the socioeconomically dominant white minority and the numerical majority of the population formerly classified “African.” The quotation marks around and capitalisation of *coloured* indicates that, in my usage, it refers to the deeply contested legal-apartheid-era race classification and not to a person, identity, or culture. I occasionally use the capitalised *Black* as an inclusive term for all people who are not white. For details of pre-apartheid race categories, see Bickford-Smith 1995. On changes in “race names persons came to be known by” as an aspect of the “psycho-political arsenal” of apartheid, see Ratele 2009.

be a given have always laboured in this way, to transform these conditions.⁵ This involves the necessarily collaborative work of constructing sustaining infrastructure where it is absent and wedging open, wherever and however possible, constraints on appearance and on what lives can therefore be “had [...] to live,” as Kewpie (1998) puts it. Across the chapters of this thesis, I elaborate this collective project, as it is discernible in the Kewpie Collection, as a theory-practice of worldmaking. In doing so, I follow the trajectory of scholars invested in theory that is “constructed,” as Pumla Dineo Gqola (2001) writes, “in sites which are traditionally, under white supremacist capitalist patriarchal logic, assumed to be outside the terrain of knowledge-making” (11). In this thesis, worldmaking is defined in various ways. These are drawn from Kewpie’s testimony—the account of her life she gives across interviews—with reference to her photographs. Vitality, this version of worldmaking involves reformulating the inherited conditions of social existence to expand available possibilities. The worlds created through this work may have been actualised, contingently and ephemerally, in the scenes of their creation. Because they are non-hegemonic, they could not be sustained. Yet, regardless of the extent to which these worlds were actualised, they are indexed in virtual form by materials in the Kewpie Collection.

Through what I conceptualise as reading with strategies of worldmaking in the Kewpie Collection, I draw conclusions that diverge from what I call a common-sense understanding of the Collection and of the girls of District Six. This is an understanding that has sedimented in common sense, seen in circulations of and engagements with the material, including in current scholarship. It presents the girls of District Six as beneficiaries of what have come to be understood as the District’s defining qualities: respect for and celebration of difference; cultural, i.e. artistic and intellectual, creativity; freedom of expression, belief,

⁵ The descriptor “the organisation of social relations that could have been a given” refers to conditions enabling what Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1998) call “a taken-for-granted social existence” (559), and “an extremely narrow context for living” (556).

and association; and caring inclusivity. Conversely, I argue throughout this thesis, the girls are producers of these qualities, and the Kewpie Collection is one site at which this production takes place. Moreover, the worlds created by gays and girls and indexed by the Collection are multiple. These worlds resist understandings of the Collection that localise or, especially, nationalise the imaginaries it makes available. Likewise, they trouble definitions of the Collection as a gay or, more recently, queer archival resource that is representative of a gay or queer past or even indexical of a specifically gay or queer world.

Across the six main chapters of this thesis, I describe worlds indexed by the Kewpie Collection, created through the collaborative work that I have sketched, and will continue to detail, drawing on Kewpie's testimony. In the sequence they are discussed, these worlds: rearrange hierarchies of value and transform attendant conditions of precarity; establish the groundwork for non-hegemonic modes of embodiment and affiliation; accommodate grief for losses erased from the public sphere and thereby make presently devalued lives more possible than this erasure allows; sustain forms of belonging, intimacy, and care, made available in accordance with need, that facilitate otherwise restricted movement and desire; foreground prohibited interpersonal connections that enable pleasures currently unavailable within the horizon of the social; and modify temporality to produce common senses capable of honouring and sustaining a multiplicity of experience.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I begin to detail the account of worldmaking I elaborate across remaining chapters and establish its key terms. I then sketch the desires shaping the Kewpie Collection as an archival resource and the common-sense understanding of Kewpie that my account contests. This includes an overview of what I distinguish as the Kewpie Photographic Collection, the Kewpie Collection, and the Kewpie Archive. Whereas the Kewpie Collection includes the Kewpie Photographic Collection and additional materials with which it is archived at GALA, the Kewpie Archive is not located

in a physical place. Rather, following Stuart Hall (2001), it is a “living archive” (91), made so through circulations of materials in the Collection and engagement with them. Detailing these distinctions, I locate each Collection and the Kewpie Archive within its socio-political conjuncture. Turning to current scholarship, I then trace the histories into which the Kewpie Collection has been conscripted, through which a common-sense understanding of Kewpie has taken shape. In previous and current engagements with the Collection, I discern desires to seek origins for mid-to-late-1990s articulations of gayness, as well as a condition we might call colouredness, and more recent notions of queerness. Finally, I describe how I read with what I understand to be worldmaking strategies. This involves remaining attentive to the terms of Kewpie’s self-actualisation, recognising and continuing the work of imagining otherwise, and moving with the waywardness of the materials constituting the Collection.

Worldmaking in the Kewpie Collection

The Kewpie Collection includes a series of sixteen photographs, apparently taken on a single sunny afternoon, which characterise terms of the theory-practice of worldmaking detailed in this thesis. Like many in the Collection, these photographs feature Kewpie and a few of her gay friends from a larger group. Although it is apparent in others in the Collection, the demolition of District Six does not enter the frame of any of these sixteen photographs. In crocheted tops, brightly coloured flares, sheer maxi dresses, and beehives, the girls smile and laugh on streets in and around the Cape Town city centre. They stand with hands on hips and arms around each other, lie down on the road and across boots of cars (fig. 0.1), lean against palm trees and buses, and perch on railings and bicycles. Occasionally, onlookers appear in the corner of the frame. As the afternoon turns into evening, the girls pose with arms around a few passers-by. Considering these images, in which the friends



Figure 0.1



Figure 0.2

alternatingly appear or cast vaguely recognisable shadows, we might imagine them passing a camera between themselves, calling out affirmations or instructions as they take turns to capture each other on film.

The reverse of each photograph in this series bears an inscription, handwritten by Kewpie. In most of these, she notes a date—perhaps the date they were taken, printed, or captioned—and describes herself and her friends in spaces beyond the location in which each image was taken, a location she thereby inscribes with possibilities she imagines actualised in spaces beyond it. Leaning against a palm tree, Kewpie is “Miss Capucine modelling Dior Gown Paris 73” and in a “film scene in Paris 24.3.73” (AM2886/130.10; fig. 0.2), while a couple of her friends posing with a bus on the Cape Town Parade are “on tour to Germany 24.3.73” (fig. 0.3). At the Cape Town Station, Kewpie and a friend are “Miss Capucine & Miss Andrews in their new Movie, ‘Girls will be Boys Boys will be Girls’ ’73” (fig. 0.4).⁶ Balancing on a bicycle and drinking from champagne coupes as the sun sets and children stare from the side-lines, Kewpie and another friend are “Miss Fritz

⁶ In 1970, The Kinks first sang: “Girls will be boys and boys will be girls / It’s a mixed up, muddled up, shook up world, except for Lola.”



Figure 0.3



Figure 0.4

in the S.A. Mixed Games Pretoria 1973” and “Patti participating in the first multi-racial SA games, Pretoria 1973” (fig. 0.5). These final two images of a bright, post-apartheid future make explicit an element of futurity in Kewpie’s descriptions of herself and the other girls as models and film stars, as well as the implied critique of their present that is marked by its distance from the spaces in which Kewpie imagines these glamorous possibilities actualised.

The evidentiary authority of archives resides in a common-sense understanding that archival documents bear inscriptions, in the sense of records or traces of the past. This is illustrated by the definition of *archive* as “a place in which public records or other important historical documents are kept” (OED Online, s.v. “archive, *n.*,” June 2021), and by Jacques Derrida’s (2002) description of archiving as “leav[ing] a trace behind us” (54).⁷ However, the inscriptions on this series of sixteen photographs are not purporting to lead us back to origins in a straightforward sense. There is another meaning of inscription that is perhaps more appropriate in this instance: in Geometry, to inscribe is to draw a figure “within a figure” so that the “boundar[ies]” of each “touch[...]” but do not intersect (OED Online, s.v.

⁷ Derrida’s (2002) argument that this trace “is at the same time the memory, the archive, and the erasure, the repression, the forgetting” is explicitly engaged with in chapter six (54).



Figure 0.5

“inscribe, v.,” June 2021). This sense of the term suggests that the possibilities with which Kewpie inscribes each photograph are literally contained within its boundaries, and figuratively contained within the scene set by the girls’ collaborative street performances depicted in these photographs. This dual containment indicates that the possibilities Kewpie imagines do not necessarily intersect with or exceed, but that they do at least tantalisingly touch, the boundaries of each. In this formulation, the photographs do not represent but rather constitute the possibilities they depict.

This constitution of possibilities is part of the collective project of worldmaking detailed in this thesis. Recalling certain scenes of worldmaking in interviews in which she is featured, Kewpie emphasises the importance of collectivity and the stakes of this project. Kewpie (1998, 1996) recalls sneaking out of the family home as a teenager to parties and nightclubs, where she was able to “meet[...] up with different sorts of people”: “wherever I could move around.” In these spaces in which she could dance or “move around,” a collective could be rehearsed that accommodated and worked across difference. Kewpie’s description of the spaces she sought out, “wherever [she] could move around,” is indicative of her search for (and co-creation of) spaces in which she could move, “[her] way,” towards

objects not easily available: spaces in which new forms of existence and togetherness could thus be rehearsed. Asked how apartheid “affect[ed her] life,” Kewpie (1998) says: “as a teenager coming up to the age of fifteen, sixteen seventeen, I realised that I’m human and I’ve got to have a life to live.” Using materials available to her, this thesis argues, she collaboratively makes appear worlds in which such a life is possible because she is seen as possible, which is to say she, “just Kewpie,” can appear.

This life is accessible to us in the testimony Kewpie gives across interviews and in her archived photographs, collaboratively created through worldmaking practices involving what I draw on her testimony to describe as uses of the fantastic and strategies of recollection. Both practices are speculative, bringing into being that which is precluded within the world that Kewpie shows us could have been a given, had it not been reformulated by said practices. They are also disclosive, making perceptible what is otherwise occluded within public space. They draw on intimate understandings of the falsity of a present made to seem inescapable, in which certain lives and connections are under contestation and erasure and in which precarity is a condition that is politically induced. This present, in which Kewpie (1998) had to come to the realisation that she was “human and [had] to have a life to live,” is reformulated in the Kewpie Collection.

Knowledges about the present that Kewpie’s realisation condenses are thus foundational to the theory-practice of worldmaking I discern in the Kewpie Collection. They can accompany learning, as Audre Lorde ([1984] 2013) puts it, “that we were never meant to survive. Not as human beings” (42). They register in Kewpie’s repeated insistence that “people can’t say [she’s] a man, people can’t say [she’s] a woman”—that she’s “just Kewpie,” even when her interviewers imply this is impossible by asking her to define herself within a set of given terms. Sara Ahmed (2017) recalls that Lorde “often spoke of how she started writing because of a need to create what wasn’t there” (xi). Lorde also said, in the

film *A Litany for Survival*: “what I leave behind has a life of its own.” I argue that materials constituting the Kewpie Collection fulfil both these functions.

Since it accommodates the labour of reformulating the present, the Kewpie Collection can be understood in relation to legacies traced, later in this introduction, in the work of Tavia Nyong’o (2018) and Saidiya Hartman ([2007] 2021, 2008, 2019), of contesting the arithmetic that renders certain lives expendable. It can also be understood in relation to “the practice of worlding our environs” described by Gqola (2001, 12), drawing on Carole Boyce Davies (1995). With reference to the construction of theory by “Blackwomen” feminists in Africa in “spaces” with “multiple textures,” Gqola (2001) explains that “‘worlding our environs’ refers to the ability to reshape the world (re-worlding) in ways that are more suitable for its Blackwomen inhabitants and therefore more equitable,” and “contains the suggestion of doing this both through language in whatever form (wording) and the physical material effects of our forms of activism” (12, 22).

A striking photograph from the series of sixteen illustrates one way the work of contesting the boundaries of an assigned, inherited space to signify potentiality and insist on expansiveness can appear in photographic format. In figure 0.6, Kewpie appears to be



Figure 0.6

jumping through a tyre in mid-air. She utilises photography as a medium of what I call fantastic performance: her otherwise impossible jump through the tyre is made possible by the stillness of the image, in which it cannot end or fail. Both Kewpie and the tyre are aloft, resisting gravity. In the background, the Cape Town railway station signifies the optimised movement

of those produced as an expendable workforce, in and out of the city in which they were prohibited to live. Yet the authority of the station's history is reorganised as it is recalled by Kewpie (1999), who tells her interviewers this photograph was taken at its "opening," although the date with which the reverse is inscribed, "'73," does not correlate with historical records. Rather, through uses of the fantastic and strategies of recollection, the station is "open[ed]" by gays for performance, and its symbolism of coerced movement "open[ed]" for resignification in the photograph itself, in which Kewpie playfully repurposes the tyre, a once-crucial component of vehicular movement rendered useless, to perform movement through (rather than with) it.

When these photographs were taken, what they depict was prohibited in various senses considered across the chapters of this thesis. The most obvious of these relate to the legal capture of desired land for the convenience and enjoyment of white people and the criminalisation of male-assigned persons dressed in clothing deemed female. Yet, in these photographs, Kewpie and the girls articulate their right to appear in public as they are and to joyfully take up inner-city space. Figure 0.6 conveys a dual sense of freedom— affective and socio-political —as something felt in discrete moments, suspended in time by the photograph. Both senses of freedom are made possible by a form of action-in-concert that I draw on Kewpie's testimony to theorise as movement-with. This is seen in Kewpie's mid-air suspension that evidences her perfect synchrony with the photographer whose shadow is printed like a signature across the bottom right-hand corner of the frame. The photograph manifests, and in some form sustains, a collective that constitutes and is constituted by a space in which it is possible for its participants to appear and articulate the idea—here, written in light rather than words—that the world it depicts possible and available to us in some form.

The anonymous format of the photographer's shadow-signature, representative of the uncertain authorship of most photographs in the Collection, emphasises the importance of collective pursuit to these materials' creation. It also underlines the Collection's common reception as non-professional and vernacular. Unlike the work of artists that has been donated free of charge and archived as such, Kewpie's photographs are currently the only materials held at GALA for which the donor received financial compensation. Their acquisition from Kewpie in 1998 was facilitated by Jack Lewis, the producer and director of a documentary film featuring Kewpie and her photographs, released in 2000, and the photographs are still held at GALA as part of a larger collection under his, Lewis's, name. This is indicative of dynamics informing the late-1990s constitution of the Kewpie Collection as an official if marginal archival resource, detailed shortly. Moreover, it is representative of how these dynamics have obscured the terms of Kewpie's self-actualisation, even as the constitution of the Collection as such has made these terms available for posterity.

For instance, although current scholarship, cited later in this introduction, describes Kewpie as a gay man, a queer man, a cross-dresser, and a moffie, there is no record that she identified with any of these terms. Kewpie (1998) insists, in fact, "people can't say I'm a man, they can't say I'm a woman," and in her usage, *gay* is never attached to *man* or *men*. We might understand *gay*, somewhat inexactly, as referencing the specific imbrication of having been assigned male and expressing femininity in a manner at least partly understood as making visible a sexual orientation towards men whose gender expression aligns with conventions of masculinity (although it is also, I will argue, so much more than this). Thus, all the girls, including those whom Kewpie (1996, 1999) describes as "sex change[s]," are gay; the men with whom they typically had sexual relationships are not. Additionally, while the relatively recent re-appropriation of *moffie* might be broadly understood as a political

statement engaging with an ironic, camp tradition containing elements of self-mockery, its traditional use as a derogatory marker for (individuals read as) men considered lacking in masculinity is evident in Kewpie's (1996, 1998) recollections of being targeted—or not—with the word as an insult.

It is not only the terminology Kewpie uses to describe herself and the girls that I argue is at risk of erasure, but the collective work of which this was a part: the fundamental work the girls undertook to both survive and imagine other ways of being in the world. In doing so, they transformed conditions that continue to structure the present in South Africa and beyond into new possible worlds. Moreover, these worlds are available to those who engage with the Kewpie Collection, by which they are indexed in virtual form. Reading with what I understand to be worldmaking strategies, I argue that this is the work the Kewpie Collection continues to do: the work of making life more possible. Crucially, this involves disrupting common sense and working to produce new common senses. Following Kara Keeling (2007), it is through “various strains of common sense” that “value is consolidated” (93), and life chances thereby skewed. In Keeling's formulation, “common sense designates a collective conception of the world” (42), often “provid[ing], in the form of clichés, a way of continuing present [mental and/or motor] movements” and thus reifying the dominant order by “play[ing] a role” what is “designated ‘reality’” (15, 42).⁸ The worldmaking work of gays and girls is the work of challenging this designation. The following sections define the collections of materials in which I discern this work and the understandings of its producers, which have sedimented in common sense, that this work contests.

⁸ Keeling's formulation of common sense expands on Gilles Deleuze's (1994, xv-xvii, 191-196). See Keeling 2007 (163).

The Kewpie Photographic Collection

Comprising seven hundred and ten photographs, of which approximately one hundred and ten are copies, as well as an accompanying catalogue and a few negatives held in a single envelope, the Kewpie Photographic Collection exceeds attempts at coherent summary or definition by genre. Images were captured by professional studio, street, and press photographers; Kewpie's friends, neighbours, and acquaintances; and presumably Kewpie herself. They were taken not just in District Six but across the greater Cape Town area: on streets and beaches; at parties, nightclubs, and performance venues; and in homes, back yards, hairdressing salons, parks, car parks, and photographers' studios; and, a few, in photo booths (AM2886/163.1-2). A handful, given to Kewpie, were taken in places to which she herself never physically travelled, including Paris, France.

In many photographs, the girls strike confident poses, perform on-stage (fig. 0.7), and laugh with and embrace each other and friends with whom they often gathers in groups,



Figure 0.7



Figure 0.8

their bodies and limbs arranged for cumulative effect (figs. 0.8 and 0.9). In others, Kewpie (1999) lies back on clothes-strewn floors, “flop[ped] out” at the end of a party (fig. 0.10). In two, one of her gay friends sits in the dirt at another friend’s grave, barefoot, laying flowers and drinking brandy (fig. 0.11). In the Photographic Collection as a whole, Kewpie and her gay friends are only a minority of the people depicted. The close group of friends with whom Kewpie most often appears in photographs (“the gay gang,” as Kewpie [1996, 1999] calls some of them [fig. 12]) does not only include those Kewpie typically describes as gays and girls. Notably, it also includes those Kewpie describes as lesbians and women. There are also close friends in straight families, including the Biggs family and the Syms family. There are other friends, relatives of friends, neighbours, clients, and co-workers. There are children—some Kewpie names in interviews, many she does not—standing alone on pavements, anonymous, wide-eyed, and shy, or crisp in new school uniform or Sunday best and belonging in some way to an adult Kewpie knew. There are the visitors who come and go (Kewpie names a few from Durban and Australia), and individuals, unnamed, who appear on public streets or at parties.



Figure 0.9



Figure 0.10



Figure 0.11

As well as evidencing engagement with a remarkably broad range of photographic practices, the Photographic Collection represents significant financial investment. By way of contrast, Siona O’Connell (2014) notes that none of the District Six family archives she considers include more than one photograph of any single event and presumes this is due to the expense of developing images (593). Kewpie, on the other hand, collected multiple and huge series of photographs taken at single occasions. Some of these were parties: twenty-seven at a party in Greenpoint; twenty-two at a “Roaring Twenties” night at the Ambassador Club; and twenty-eight at a party at a house in Rutger Street where Kewpie and some of the girls lived together for a few years. Other were days out: twenty at Trafalgar Baths; twenty-two at Fourth Beach; and nineteen at Kogel Bay. Four series of between ten and nineteen photographs each, including the aforementioned series of sixteen photographs, were taken on single afternoons spent on the streets of District Six and the nearby city centre.

Some photographs were evidently taken in studios, namely Van Kalker’s in Woodstock, or by the company of street photographers named Movie Snaps, discussed in chapter one. Others seem to have been taken by a friend’s husband, known as Billy Biggs, who was a photographer behind Movie Snaps, although these depict outings taken by his

family and friends including Kewpie. The size and style of the photographs predominantly featuring Kewpie and her gay friends on streets and pavements, such as the series of sixteen, suggest that, like the few 126 film negatives archived with the Collection, they were taken on an Instamatic camera. Introduced in 1963, Kodak's first Instamatic camera was significantly more user-friendly and affordable than any previous models, facilitating a boom in amateur photography after launching "on a world-wide basis" (Kodak 1963, 17). Since Kodak officially discontinued the format on 31 December 1999, the style is exemplary of amateur photography transnationally during the few decades in which the photographs in the Collection were taken.

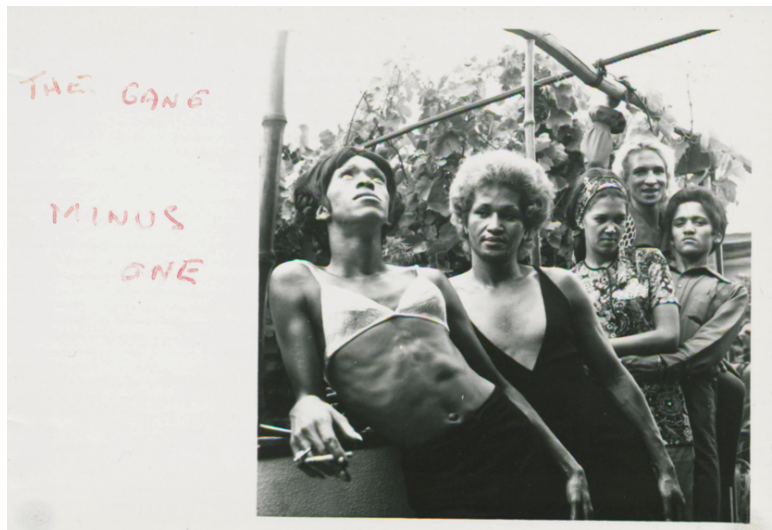


Figure 0.12

At GALA, these photographs are archived with an array of other materials. Collectively, the Kewpie Photographic Collection and these additional materials are referred to as the Kewpie Collection. Describing this Collection as a whole, the following section elaborates on the desires informing its late-1990s constitution as an archival resource. Subsequently, I argue that these desires continue to shape common-sense understandings of the Kewpie Collection and of Kewpie herself. In part, it is these understandings that this

thesis seeks to trouble, since they are exceeded by the worldmaking work that I discern in the Collection.

The Kewpie Collection

GALA's 1998 acquisition of the Kewpie Photographic Collection was facilitated by activist and film-maker Jack Lewis, producer and director of *A Normal Daughter: The Life and Times of Kewpie of District Six*, a 56-minute independent documentary film featuring Kewpie and her photographs, released non-commercially in 2000. As well as the Photographic Collection, GALA holds footage shot for *A Normal Daughter*; audio recordings of Kewpie being interviewed by Lewis, oral-history style, in 1996, during the period he spent researching and making the film; a thirty-page transcript of Kewpie being interviewed in 1998 by journalist and activist Mark Gevisser as part of his Oral History Project; and audio recordings of Kewpie being interviewed about her photographs by Anthropologist and human rights activist Graeme Reid, GALA Founding Director, then Chair of the Board of Trustees until December 2019. This final interview took place in 1999, and Kewpie's photographs have since been catalogued with information taken from her responses to Reid's questions about whom and what they depict. Lewis was filming for *A Normal Daughter* in the background of this interview and, although none of the footage he shot is held at GALA or featured in the documentary, the audio recordings capture his intermittent questions, comments, and requests for Kewpie to repeat answers and hold up photographs to his camera.

Although the recordings have been digitised, neither the 1996 Lewis interview nor the 1999 Reid and Lewis interview (aside from excerpts recorded in the catalogue) has been

transcribed.⁹ The 1996 interview is held at GALA as three audio recordings totalling four hours, fifty-three minutes and fifteen seconds, the final forty-eight minutes of which is overlaid by a very loud recording of music and a news broadcast, rendering the remainder of Kewpie and Lewis's speech largely impossible to discern. The 1999 interview is held as four audio recordings totalling three hours, thirty-eight minutes and twenty seconds, a significant portion of which consists of periods of silence, obscured speech, moments when the recording cuts out, and interruptions to the interview. This state of partial disorganisation indicates the political urgency with which the Kewpie Collection was constituted as such in late-1990s, and the relative hiatus in engagement until the late-2010s. This is partly due to socio-economic constraints arising from the context in which GALA operates, which places demands on the organisation to go above and beyond the remits of an archive. In addition to supporting research and publication and operating a community library, GALA promotes social equality and youth development, facilitating educational programmes and diversity training and sometimes acting as a first port of call for those in need.

The mid-to-late-1990s conservation of Kewpie's photographs and testimony for posterity was conducted in the spirit in which GALA, the first archive of its kind on the African continent, was founded by Reid in 1997 "to address the erasure and omission of LGBTIQ stories from public institutions such as official archives in (South) Africa" (GALA 2017). In chapter three, I argue that this conservation by the key actors I have named was informed by the emergence of the question of gay rights within the public sphere—coupled with a proliferation of historiographical and archival practices, sketched shortly—amid ultimately successful efforts to ensure the passage of the equality clause in the 1996 Constitution.¹⁰ The first work of scholarship to mention Kewpie appeared in a collection of

⁹ I quote from the transcript of the 1998 interview as held at GALA, and from my own transcriptions of the 1996 and 1999 recordings, which have been deposited with GALA and made available to future researchers.

¹⁰ Chapter Two of the Constitution—the Bill of Rights—contains what has come to be known as the equality clause: its Ninth Section, which is titled "Equality."

essays, memoirs, polemics, and photographs produced as part of these efforts (Chetty [1994] 2012). *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa* featured writing by both Lewis and Reid and was co-edited by Gevisser with Edwin Cameron, who is popularly understood to have been instrumental in shaping the way claims to gay rights were pursued from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s (Reid 2005, 176). However prudent, this course of action relied on a socially conservative emphasis on sameness that has been compellingly critiqued elsewhere (Cock 2005, 193-207). Centring Kewpie's relationship with her boyfriend Brian, as opposed to her friend Mitzi, for instance—she and Kewpie (1996), who were “like two sisters,” lived together for much longer than Kewpie and Brian—*A Normal Daughter* (Lewis 2000) does the political work of relating their relationship to the contemporary campaign for “gay marriage” that demanded: “Recognise our Relationships” (Hoad 2016, 12).

As illustrated in chapters three and four, the politically future-oriented impulse towards the recovery of oppressed histories seen in the constitution of the Kewpie Collection, *A Normal Daughter*, and *Defiant Desire* animated a socio-political conjuncture commonly conceived of as transitional. Between 1995 and 2002, the court-like body created to facilitate South Africa's transition to democracy aimed to address modes of dehumanisation and destruction that were both symbolic and physical, including the “obliterat[ion]” of “swathes of official documentary memory” as late as 1996 (Volume 1, Chapter 8, Paragraphs 104-106). Since hearing the testimony of approximately 21,000 self-declared victims, one tenth of whom appeared at public hearings, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has been productively critiqued for multiple reasons relating to its objectives, remit, structure, and success. Significantly, limitations on its scope of inquiry and thus on whose testimony was construed as relating to gross human rights violations effectively restricted whose losses were deemed publicly grievable.

The TRC represents the understanding of testimony as a vehicle for truth in which a growing investment in oral history had its basis while also signalling the emergence of an exclusionary, disappointing public culture to which this investment in oral history grew to respond. Referring to the account Kewpie gives across interviews as her testimony, I acknowledge the character of the moment in which these interviews were conducted. Additionally, I acknowledge subsequent critiques of the assumption inherent in the TRC that an ultimately shared truth about the past is possible, and the continued contestation of extant barriers to the forms of access to and participation in the archive that the TRC sought to facilitate. These dynamics are illustrated by questions about the archive raised since the TRC's dates of operation.

The impetus of the socio-political conjuncture I have sketched is legible in the commentary of contributors to *Refiguring the Archive*, a landmark collection of essays on the politics of archiving in South Africa during and after apartheid co-edited by Reid and five others. Insisting on the transformation of archiving as crucial to democratic change, archival historian Carolyn Hamilton, South African History Archive Director Verne Harris, and Reid (2002) declare that “alternative visions require alternative archives” (16). In these terms, we might understand the Kewpie Collection as constituted in a mode of recovery, driven by desires that animate *A Normal Daughter* (Lewis 2000). In the Collection, a flyer publicising this “new queer film from South Africa,” the first cultural text to feature gays within District Six, proposes that Kewpie’s “lovingly preserved collection of snapshots” show that “gay life in District Six was open and out—an accepted part of this racially and religiously diverse community” (AM886/C6). Implicit in this description are certain imagined futures. With the “exuberant utopianism about preserving queer lives” that Ann Cvetkovich (2011) notes queer archives often display (32), it offers a recovered historical precedent of an open and accepting society destroyed by forced removals that might act as

a blueprint for a democratic future, while affording historical legitimacy to newly articulated rights claims.

The relationship between archives and democratic futures in which this framing invests is well established. As Derrida (1996) states, “there is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratisation can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation” (4). Derrida was keynote speaker at the conference from which *Refiguring the Archive* is drawn, and his conception of the archive is taken up by many contributors. Most join Harris (2002) in suggesting that archives need to accommodate “the sub-narratives” and “counter-narratives,” at the expense of which “the language of meta-narrative” is “too easily [...] adopt[ed],” because they are “the very space in which democracy thrives” (150).

The limitations of this potentially transformative moment are evident in that the question of who has access to archives in general remains more pressing than ever. This is seen in the continued dominance, detailed shortly, of interpretations of the Kewpie Collection offered by those who played key roles in its constitution as such. Such dynamics continue to be challenged. While stressing that these “lenses cannot be the only frames through which queer Africans from the other fifty-five countries make meaning of our queer lives and realities,” Stella Nyanzi (2014) critiques “the dominant role” in scholarship on sexuality and gender diversity in Africa “of predominantly white South African queers.” Nyanzi notes that this “is as empowering as it is also colonising because queer Africa is much larger than this one nation,” describing “miniscule articulations of alternative South African queers as only Black raped lesbians, or brown coloured effeminate men” as both “important” and “gagging of varied ways of being queer and African” (65). Nyanzi’s phrasing indicates an additional layer to the issue she highlights, which relates to Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak's (1994) warning about the dangers posed by conflation of the senses of *representative* implied by *darstellen*, as in "a portrait," and *vertreten*, as by "a proxy" (71), so that "the staging of the world in representation—its scene of writing, its *Darstellung*—dissimulates the choice of and need for 'heroes', paternal proxies, agents of power—*Vertretung*" (74). In a basic sense, dominant "lenses" shape future discussions of the "others" they discuss. Kewpie and the girls' self-descriptions suggest that Nyanzi's descriptor, "brown coloured effeminate men," itself represents a category constituted through a white South African lens.

Indeed, there is friction between how Kewpie's interviewers describe her and how she describes herself. Although Gevisser says to Kewpie (1998), "you're a drag queen, okay," there is no record that she identified as such, although she does occasionally use *drag*—not accompanied by *queen*—to describe gays sartorially expressing a particularly glamorous mode of femininity, as in, the girls "didn't just dress up: they used to *drag*" (Lewis 2000). Likewise, while her interviewers usually follow *gay* with *men* or *guys*, Kewpie's responses indicate that she does not consider gays to be guys. When Lewis explains that "what [he] mean[s] is that there were gay guys and others," Kewpie (1996) responds: "yes, there were many gay guys and straight guys and lots of gays. Like us. Lots of gays." Whereas Kewpie uses she/her pronouns to refer to gays, Lewis uses he/him pronouns, as does Reid, so that Kewpie's (1999) description of someone in a photograph—"this one I can't remember, she's gay"—is listed in the GALA catalogue as "unknown gay man." Kewpie (1996) only uses he/him pronouns very occasionally when repeating Lewis's exact phrasing, as in the following exchange.

- Kewpie: That is Brigitte Bardot, myself, and Joanne Woodward. Known as... um... Joanne Woodward, what's her other name, everyone knew her just as...
 Lewis: You mentioned his real name just now.
 Kewpie: Ja, I'm trying to get to his real name. Jonah!
 Lewis: Jonah.

Kewpie: Jonah. Was known as Joanne Woodward. All the years.
 Lewis: You say he's in Mitchells Plain now?
 Kewpie: She's staying in Mitchells Plain now at the moment.
 Lewis: Still gay?
 Kewpie: Ja, ja, ja—was born gay.

Such moments are indicative of the way Kewpie and the girls' collective and self-actualisation, of which the terminology they use to define themselves is just one part, has been obscured by efforts to constitute the Kewpie Collection as an archival resource, notwithstanding the intentions and successes of these efforts. As I have suggested, the frustrated promise of the potentially transformative moment in which the Kewpie Collection was constituted as such is evidenced by the continued dominance of its mid to late-1990s framing in what I refer to as the Kewpie Archive, a broader configuration of physical and virtual materials that includes circulations and readings of the Kewpie Collection. The following two sections offer an overview of the Kewpie Archive, and the desires and interpretive frames informing the common-sense understandings of the Collection and Kewpie herself that have been established within it.

The Kewpie Archive

Since the shift Kewpie's photographs underwent from private collection to public Collection in the late 1990s, the Kewpie Collection of which they are now a part has gradually undergone another transformation, in line with the development in common-sense understandings of archives, from physical places acting as repositories for tangible, original or authenticated documents, to increasingly digital platforms hosting virtual materials or reproductions. As well as the physical materials constituting the Kewpie Collection, the Kewpie Archive comprises the many virtual and physical materials that have been created as a result of the relatively recent circulation of items, predominantly photographs, from the Collection, and by scholars and artists who have engaged in the long-acknowledged tradition

of using archives to “create [...] public meanings” (Boyd and Ramírez 2012, 8), and whose “reading, interpretation, and citation of materials” have in turn “construct[ed]” and “shape[d] the archive[...].” (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid 2002, 16).

While volunteering at GALA in 2017, British archivist Jenny Marsden approached the District Six Museum to propose the first public exhibition of photographs from the Collection, and the first collaboration between the two institutions, discussed further in chapter four. The resultant *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* (2018) exhibition, co-curated by Tina Smith of the District Six Museum and Marsden, who also acted as project manager, gave rise to much increased digital accessibility of certain items from the Kewpie Photographic Collection. Whereas previously only a handful was available via their website, GALA provided fifty-four photographs to the US-based Digital Transgender Archive (2018), and shared others from a dedicated Instagram account in the months leading up to the exhibition (@daughter_of_d6).

The renewed vigour with which the Kewpie Photographic Collection has been circulated since follows a twenty-year hiatus since the release of *A Normal Daughter* (Lewis 2000). Whereas this documentary film has had limited circulation, the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition has received significant coverage in print and online media. Articles began to appear in the weeks preceding the opening night, which alone attracted a crowd of about four hundred people, “challenging the capacity of the old [District Six Museum] Homecoming Centre building” (Chernis 2019, 2). During its first few months, the exhibition was featured in articles published online by one international and sixteen local and national media outlets. Interest has since burgeoned. After its four-month Cape Town run had been extended to six due to overwhelming interest, the *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six*

exhibition opened at the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg in May 2019,¹¹ and the Collection has continued to circulate digitally since. In the conclusion to this thesis, I consider resultant materials, including Kewpie's recent appearances on social media, promotional materials, and apparel.

As well as the materials held at GALA, which I refer to as the Kewpie Collection, these digital materials are part of the Kewpie Archive, which is what Hall (2001) has called a "living archive," partly made so by "critics and historians who create the informed climate in which the work is situated and who are involved in discussions and debates which embed the work itself in a network of associative meanings and interpretations" (91). In addition to the photographs, transcripts, and recordings, the Kewpie Archive includes the film and the exhibition. It also includes discussions and circulations of all the above—by writers, scholars, and artists, for example. Some of these engagements have materially extended the Collection, which includes photocopies of newspapers apparently made by previous researchers, organisational documents and communications made ahead of the *Kewpie* (2018, 2019) exhibitions, and extracts from academic discussions of the Kewpie Collection (de Greef 2019; Corrigan and Marsden 2020; Ramsden-Karelse 2020; Smith and Marsden 2020). Simultaneously, these documents remind us of the requirement to evidence impact faced by non-profits, such as GALA, seeking funding from international bodies.¹²

Elaborating on what it might mean to counter-pose the notion of a "living" archive with "the common meaning accorded to 'tradition,'" Stuart Hall (2001, 89-90) cites David Scott's (1999) understanding of "tradition" as "a special sort of discursive concept in the sense that it performs a distinctive labour; it seeks to connect, authoritatively, within the structure of its narrative, a relation among past, community and identity" (125). For the

¹¹ The Market Photo Workshop is a school of photography, gallery, and project space founded in 1989 by celebrated photographer David Goldblatt.

¹² It is worth noting that the *Kewpie* (2018, 2019) exhibition was funded by the Norwegian Embassy and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.

purpose of *Refashioning Futures*, it is the “ongoing dispute” over the meaning “of this signifier” that Scott praises as “the stuff of a discursive tradition” (123). This means “the archive has to insist on a certain *heterodoxy*,” Hall (2001) emphasises: since the archive “is always ‘re-read’ in the light of the present and the future [...] it is extremely important that archives are committed to inclusiveness” (92). As engagements with any archive extend it, then, they become part of that archive and can also close it off.

The Kewpie Archive is expansive and expanding. It is also taking increasingly specific shape as the materials comprising the Collection circulate according to certain logics. In current scholarship and in digital, print, and social media, certain photographs and extracts from Kewpie’s testimony appear more prominently and with greater frequency than others. This is one way that the Kewpie Archive, and attendant popular understandings of Kewpie, continue to take shape. Something like what we might call common-sense by now, as can be verified with a quick Google search, is that Kewpie was adored, a central organising force in the gay community and beyond, and that her photographs depict a gay or queer community that was not only accepted but celebrated within District Six. In part, these understandings are shaped by the organisation of and prior engagements with the Kewpie Collection. Casting Kewpie in the role of daughter in their productions of District Six, both *A Normal Daughter: The Life and Times of Kewpie of District Six* (Lewis 2000) and *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* (2018, 2019) present the Kewpie Photographic Collection as family album, assigning to it the task Pierre Bourdieu ([1965] 1990) names as the latter’s primary function: to affirm “continuity” and “integration” (29). Although the exhibition presented a more nuanced perspective than the film, accompanying notes similarly concluded that “the photographs show [...] that District Six was a place where same-sex relationships and gender nonconformity were largely accepted, and people could express themselves openly” (*Kewpie* 2018, 2019).

As I have implied, such uses of the Kewpie Collection to suggest new possible futures are unsurprising if not inevitable. Archives have a “relationship to the future,” one characterised, as Derrida (1996) puts it, by “anticipation” (17-18). While embracing the use of the Kewpie Collection to propose new futures, however, this thesis challenges understandings of the archive by which these uses are buttressed. Whereas I argue that the Collection does the work of making worlds and potentially bringing forth publics, “in the humanist imagination,” Appadurai (2003) explains, “the archive is no more than a social tool for the work of collective memory” (14-15). Writing about the photographic collective as constituent of and constituted by the Photographic Collection, for example, I move away from the understanding of the archive Appadurai describes, as “container or body, animated by something less visible [...] sacralised as the site of the past of some sort of cultural collectivity (often the nation), which is seen as sacred by definition” (15). This is how the Kewpie Collection is commonly presented in current scholarship, cited in the following section. Readings in which an understanding of Kewpie is seen to sediment in common sense might therefore be understood in terms of the desire for a “return to the origin” described by Derrida (1996) as *Archive Fever*: “to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement” (91). In this case, there are multiple desires at play, meaning that the reimagined District Six—as Kewpie is firmly located within it, repeatedly—is a symbolically rich site at which multiple investments intersect and vie for precedence. The following section gives an overview of these processes as they play out in current scholarship, in which I identify interrelated investments in documenting an authentically South African gay past; uncovering originary evidence of a racialised, sexualised condition

we might call colouredness; and, more recently, establishing a localised or nationalised ancestry of queerness.

Kewpie Archive Fever: Gay, “Coloured,” Queer

Gay

In their introduction to the “path-breaking” *Defiant Desire*, co-editors Gevisser and Cameron ([1994] 2012) state that “the oldest, most developed and least-explored gay South African subculture” can be found in “Western Cape coloured communities” (3). “Nowhere else in this country,” they claim, “have homosexuals been so integral to a culture” (7). Gevisser ([1994] 2012) reiterates this sentiment in a subsequent overview of gay and lesbian political organising from the 1950s to the 1990s, suggesting that “the history of ‘moffie life’ in Western Cape coloured culture is perhaps South Africa’s richest and most untold” (28). The academic “telling” of this “history” was instigated by Chetty’s ([1994] 2012) aforementioned chapter in the same collection, which similarly asserted that “aspects of gay life like cross-dressing and drag seem to have taken root in the coloured working-class communities of the Western Cape” so that “within Cape coloured communities there has always been a highly visible and socially developed moffie subculture” (117).

In the seventeen years since, as this “history” has been mentioned by scholars sporadically and often in passing, Gevisser and Chetty’s original comments have remained authoritative. Gevisser’s are cited as evidence that “gay life thrived in District Six”; that “Cape moffies were an important part of the culture of the coloured community, with its hub in District Six”; and that “coloured gay men became very much part of the texture of District Six” (Leap 2002, 224-225). Chetty’s are cited as evidence that District Six was “a coloured neighbourhood in central Cape Town [...] frequented by gay men who were cross-dressers and drag-queens” and who “provid[ed] role-models for successive generations to adopt”

(Rabie and Lesch 2009, 725). Both are cited as evidence that “gay life flourished” in “the Western Cape’s ‘Coloured culture’” (Visser 2003, 127), and of “the ease and freedom with which queer life was able to flourish in District Six” (Tucker 2009, 76).

Although current scholarship on District Six and on gender and sexuality in South Africa varies greatly, there has been a tendency to describe the District as a place that enabled a way of life variously called gay or queer. Yet there has been an almost complete and largely uncommented-on absence of representations of this “life” by those District Sixers who might be said to have lived it. Claims that it thrived or flourished are at odds with the marginalisation suggested by the extreme scarcity of publicly available instances of self-representation. As such, the Kewpie Collection is uniquely comprehensive. Shamil Jeppie’s (1990) comment about “documentary and oral evidence” from the 1940s and 1950s holds true for decades to come: “the voices of ‘moffies’ are never heard; they are always spoken about (derisively), represented, judged, but never allowed the privilege of discourse” (80). Where studies provide references to evidence that gays were generally accepted if not celebrated by the wider District Six community, therefore, these tend to lead to materials featuring Kewpie.

The Kewpie Collection has thus become somewhat embedded in this understanding, typically referenced as a rich archive of documentary evidence. The Collection itself is described as “attest[ing] to the integration of moffies within the wider community” (Reid 2013, 18). Interviews featuring Kewpie are presented as “detailed archive records [...] giv[ing] testimony” to “a community of queer men [that] could develop and thrive” (Tucker 2009, 74, 77). *A Normal Daughter* is cited as evidence of “thriving ‘moffie’ life” (Munro 2012, 61), that “gay life flourished” (Botha 2014, 67), and that “District Six was a queer space that allowed for a multiplicity of alternative lives” (Lease 2017, 138). Although some studies have reproduced individual photographs and short excerpts from Kewpie’s

testimony (Tucker 2009), critical engagement has been minimal and, in their entirety, these materials complicate the ways they have been presented. One aspect of this, detailed earlier, is that scholars have largely failed to recognise Kewpie as she asks to be recognised.

Advocating for “the presentation of [...] anecdotal and ephemeral evidence,” which “grants entrance and access to those who have been locked out of official histories and, for that matter, ‘material reality,’” José Esteban Muñoz (1996) warns that “evidence's limit becomes clearly visible when we attempt to describe and imagine contemporary identities that do not fit into a single pre-established archive of evidence” (9). Equally, sometimes that which does not fit is made to fit and leaves remains in which we might glimpse queerness as “an ideality,” as “that thing that lets us feel this world is not enough” (Muñoz 2009, 1). We can see, in these diverse descriptions of Kewpie, the Collection being made to fit within pre-conceived categorical distinctions that constitute its archivalisation.

“Coloured”

Discussions of gay or queer communities formerly classified “Coloured” continue to cite further brief comments Gevisser makes about “moffie life.” Building on his and Cameron’s ([1994] 2012) introductory definition of “Western Cape coloured communities” as “by nature fluid, hybrid and permeable” (7), Gevisser ([1994] 2012) suggests that “gay life” may have “flourished” and been “tolerated” in the District because the “hybrid[ity]” of a “society like that of the coloureds” prevented the establishment of any single prohibitive doctrine (28).¹³ Two notable examples of the circulation of this understanding are seen in important book-length studies. Arguing that narratives made it possible for South Africa to reimagine gay and lesbian people as fellow citizens and itself as a modern neoliberal democracy,

¹³ Writing with Bryce Lease, Gevisser (2017) has more recently suggested that “there has always been an openness to sexual and gender diversity within the creole community, assigned the term ‘coloured’ by the apartheid state, particularly in and around Cape Town” (157).

Brenna M. Munro (2012) comments that “‘impurity’ produces shame but at the same time, perhaps, its own kind of freedom, and even a hospitality towards sexual transgressions” (113). In his consideration of visibilities of “queer men” in racially segregated Cape Town, Andrew Tucker (2009) argues that “the fabric of District Six,” the “unique history of coloured culture,” and possibly the “hybridity of coloured life” in the District “helped foster cross-dressing queer life” and “allowed queer men to flourish” and freely “experiment with a variety of social configurations” (77-78).

Although District Six was home to a diverse population, waves of forced removal and prohibitions on the free movement and rights to work of those classified “African” meant that by 1966, when it was declared “Whites Only,” most residents were classified “Coloured.”¹⁴ Further, the “very fabric of District Six” can be conflated with this category because of the way they have each been figured in popular and academic discourse. As noted, in the project of writing a counterhistory of gender and sexuality in support of inclusive futures for a new South Africa, District Six has resonance given it has, since its destruction, come to function in Western Cape public memory, and the larger South African imaginary, as a symbol of lost diversity, urban integration, and cultural production.

District Six is described by Crain Soudien (2001a) as a “loaded political symbol” for “tolerance, mutual respect and respect for difference” (115), while Grant Farred (2000) writes about “its very name” becoming “a sociopolitical palimpsest onto which was written [...] lost freedoms, political defiance, and cultural creativity” (41). The District Six Museum website describes the District, in keeping with what I will term the prelapsarian narrative, as “the polar opposite of what the apartheid government [...] needed people to believe and

¹⁴ Figures suggest that fifty-six percent of the District’s 3,695 properties were owned by white people, although only one percent of residents were white; while people considered Indian owned eighteen percent of properties and made up four percent of all residents; and those classified “Coloured” owned twenty-six percent of property and made up ninety-four percent of residents (Centre for Intergroup Studies 1980). Although not counted here, those legally classified “African” remained in and were “regularly relocated” from the District for as long as it stood (Rassool and Prosalendis 2001, 133).

internalise,” in that it was “a living example of how diversity could be a strengthening characteristic of a community and need not be feared.” The *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* (2018) exhibition supplements the accompanying list of “language, religion, economic class,” and “geographical area of origin” with gender and sexuality (District Six Museum n.d.a).

Since 2020, the first works of scholarship to explicitly focus on the Kewpie Photographic Collection—three journal articles—have been published. Two co-authored by the exhibition curators importantly depart from previous scholarship, making efforts to stay faithful to language the girls use to describe themselves and emphasising the “individual and collective agency” seen in their use of photography to “def[y] and transcend[...] the limits placed upon oppressed people during apartheid” (Corrigall and Marsden 2020, 26). Ultimately, however, the Collection is presented as in the exhibition: as evidence of a “queer community that was highly visible and integrated into the broader community in District Six” (Smith and Marsden 2021, 163), and a “thriving queer community that was integrated within the broader District Six community, supporting historical narratives of District Six as a place where diversity and tolerance was valued” (Corrigall and Marsden 2020, 10).¹⁵

While recognising the importance of such counterhistories, this thesis challenges the established understanding of District Six as a place where gay or, more recently, queer life could flourish, on two counts. First, it erases work done by gays themselves, who I argue are producers rather than beneficiaries of what have come to be understood as the District’s defining qualities, including creativity, freedom, and inclusivity. Second, I would suggest that certain articulations risk reifying race in dangerous ways. Gevisser’s ([1994] 2012) understanding of “coloured communities” as inherently open—“by nature fluid, hybrid and permeable” (7)—relies on a conception of a condition we might call colouredness in terms

¹⁵ The third journal article is Ramsden-Karelse 2020.

of race mixedness, as a kind of deviance that necessarily allows for other forms of deviance. Such comments re-inscribe the categorical sexualisation of the category “Coloured.” So-called inter-racial sex between “a European male” and “a native female” continues to haunt discussions of the category first legally defined—in terms of a lack—one year after the British government implemented the first Immorality Act forbidding sexual intercourse between white and “native” people.¹⁶ So a popular joke goes, “God made the black man [...] the Indian, the Chinese and the Jew—but Jan van Riebeeck, he made the Coloured Man.”¹⁷ This sentiment continues to be circulated in scholarship, cloaked in the language of academia: “on a purely etymological level,” Tucker (2009) explains, “coloureds are the product of inter-racial sex” (71). Such understandings have been persuasively critiqued by Zimitri Erasmus (2001), who points to their roots in pseudo-scientific assumptions that there exist unmixed or pure race groups, arguing that we should instead understand identity in terms of cultural formations (17-23).

As Erasmus and other scholars concerned with identity formations in relation to the category “Coloured” have long argued, recognising ways that these identities have been reimagined and re-inhabited with meanings in addition to those imposed through slavery, colonisation, and apartheid (as have all raced identities) must be a crucial aspect of anti-racist critical projects (see, e.g., Gqola 2010; Adhikari 2005; Farred 2000). As these scholars have insisted, however, it is also critical to consider the conditions in which these processes have been able to take place. In relation to the descent of “Coloured” from an act of

¹⁶ The Pensions Act 22 of 1928 defined “A Coloured” as “someone who is neither” a “member of an aboriginal race or tribe in Africa,” nor “an American negro,” etc. After the National Party was elected on the promise of complete race separation in all spheres, the Immorality Act 5 of 1927 was amended, by the Immorality Amendment Act 21 of 1950, to ban sexual intercourse between white and classified-“Coloured” people. It was subsequently replaced by the more comprehensive and severe Immorality Act 23 of 1957, which itself would be amended three times: in 1969, 1985, and 1988. In the chapters two and three, I reference this history up to and including the Immorality Amendment Act 57 of 1969, which sought to further protect the nation from the perceived threat of homosexuality by introducing the now famous men-at-a-party offence.

¹⁷ Discussing this joke at length, Adhikari (2006) explains it “hinges on the audience's awareness of the status of Jan van Riebeeck, the commander of the first Dutch settlement established at the Cape in 1652, as the ‘founding father’ of white South Africa” (147).

enslavement predicated on a denial of free will, Gqola (2010) suggests in her study of “slave memory” that “a reading of the variety of ways in which coloured subjects participate in an imaginative project in relation to their identity is the ultimate assertion of the presence of will and humanity in the concrete historical subjects who were enslaved, as well as those descended from them.” This variety “testifies to the heterogeneity of the historically enslaved as well as their survival”: “to the strength of this will” (33). Since there is no record of Kewpie using *coloured* to refer to herself, I do not use it to describe her. Rather, I consider the entanglement of the Kewpie Archive with the relations produced by legal, social, and scholarly constructions of and classification as “Coloured,” as opposed to colouredness as anything that might have inherent qualities.

Although Gevisser ([1994] 2012) ostensibly discusses formerly classified “Coloured” communities in terms of culture, the descriptor “inherently fluid, hybrid, and permeable” is racially essentialist (7). In fact, vastly heterogeneous experiences, cultures, and identities intersect with the category “Coloured” (Erasmus 2001; Fared 2000; Adikhari 2005). The notion of entanglement is key for Erasmus (2001), who borrows it from Édouard Glissant along with his notion of a “cornered community,” meaning it is one “historically shaped by conditions of slavery” and “constructed in contexts of domination which have left little room for cultural autonomy and control over self-representations.” What Erasmus describes as a “cornered community” (while emphasising that there is no singular formerly classified “Coloured” community per se) has “had its cultural histories and institutions eradicated” but has been able to form identities in the “context of racialised relations of power and privilege” (22-24).

Although *Coloured* is popularly understood to have classified descendants of enslaved and indigenous people, the category was formally established after the 1834 abolition of slavery in the Cape Colony to distinguish those who had been enslaved from

indigenous populations that the British government was attempting to produce as an expendable workforce during the period of industrialisation. From 1658, the Dutch—and later the English—had brought enslaved people to the Cape from areas in Southeast Asia, Southern Africa, and East Africa including the islands of Madagascar and Mauritius. Under nineteenth-century British colonial rule of the Cape, the term *coloured* was introduced into official lexicon “as an embracing term for the colony’s black populace, many of whom were of ‘mixed’ descent” (Hendricks 2001, 43). A distinct “emergent community of assimilated blacks” of low social status, comprising descendants of enslaved people and exiles, formed from the late 1860s onwards after coming into contact with indigenous populations forced into the labour of mining gold and diamonds, partly through a series of taxes imposed by the colonial government (Adikhari 2005, xi). In 1908, the British High Commissioner for South Africa and governor of the Transvaal and Orange River colonies, Lord Selborne, wrote to Generals Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, suggesting that the British cultivate a close relationship with this group to discourage them from forming political alliances with indigenous groups: “It seems to me sheer folly to classify them with the Natives, and by treating them as Natives to force them [...] into making common cause with the Natives” (Hancock and van der Poel 1966, 375).¹⁸

“Coloured” is thus founded in both a proscription from humanity and the promise of dignity through the successful performance of racist ideals. The “assimilationism, which spurred hopes of future acceptance into the dominant society” (Adikhari 2005, xii), is one aspect of the violent intimacies characterising the relation of “Coloured” to whiteness, lazily pointed to as the basis of the so-called “Coloured” vote that ensured the “New” National Party returned to power in the Western Cape in the first democratic election. Those who

¹⁸ Selborne’s “policy recommendations for the treatment of Africans are,” as Bernard Magubane ([1987] 2007) notes, “just as sinister” (xvi). They include the recommendation “to ensure the gradual destruction of the tribal system, which is incompatible with civilisation” (Hancock and van der Poel 1966, 377).

dismiss the category and identification with it as a relic of legal apartheid or an indicator of “slave mentality” level the charge of collaboration with this abject positioning. The implication is that any legitimization of *Coloured* reinforces the superiority of whiteness for the sake of distinguishing a “Coloured” self from blackness, thus voluntarily colluding with denial of agency as a premise of racialisation.

Of course, “no matter how civilised or Westernised and educated,” apartheid ensured those classified “Coloured” were “still ranked lower than the poor white, or the Greek and Portuguese urban proletariat or peasant turned immigrant” (V. February [1981] 2000, 169), and the falsity of the promise of dignity is starkly illustrated by the history of District Six. The area was named the Sixth District of Cape Town under the Municipalities Act 12 of 1867. It had become densely populated, gradually, since thirty years prior, when the four-year period of “apprenticeship” following emancipation came to an end. Some note that former slaveholders invested their compensation in local residential property to embark on a new career, profiting as landlords from those who had been counted among their former human property (Rassool and Prosalendis 2001, 100). By the mid-twentieth century, the population is estimated to have grown to 66,000, exceeding 30,000 by the 1900s (108). Across generations, these newly “free” residents found themselves subject to mounting harassment and curtailment of their social and political rights; increasingly uninhabitable living conditions, due to legal bans on all building and maintenance work; and, eventually, forced removals. With the typically cruel irony of apartheid naming practices, the District was in 1970 legally re-christened Zonnebloem, Dutch for “sunflower,” after the farm that had been partly situated on this very site, on the then outskirts of Cape Town, where some of the first residents of District Six, including the celebrated Lydia Williams, had been formerly enslaved (Mountain 2004, 78-81).

These losses are doubly inscribed by what Zoë Wicomb (1998) laments as a “total erasure of slavery from the folk memory,” even in the Western Cape where most of the enslaved population lived and where most of their descendants continue to live. This is the “remarkable[,] particular amnesia” that Robert Ross (1983) notes “has set in,” through “processes” that “must have had something to do with the continued oppression of large numbers of ex-slaves by their ex-masters and with the concern of those who had escaped from this position to set themselves apart from the rural scene” (72). Also pointing to the masking of “historical consciousness” by “later generations[,] as a matter of survival,” as a reason for the “absence of slave memory among ordinary people,” Gqola (2010) suggests that these discussions of amnesia bear testimony to “the incredible power of the shame associated with that past” (as Wicomb argues) as well as the “success of 340 years of white supremacist physical and epistemic violence to suppress other histories, stories, memories” (202).¹⁹

Concerned with the ways that “slave memory” is nonetheless “evident in various sites in post-apartheid South Africa,” Gqola’s study advocates for a “multi-layered approach to the fragments that survive” (4-5). The “fragments” Gqola discusses consist of re-

¹⁹ Gqola (2010) notes that “general disregard” for “that particular moment in history, until recently,” was both evidenced and exacerbated by the fact that relevant historical studies have mostly appeared since the 1980s (6). Moreover, certain of these studies have perpetuated aspects of these histories’ repression. In his relatively early history of slavery at the Cape, Ross (1983) comments on the problem of finding sources given an almost complete absence of representation in the form of folk stories and songs, “slave autobiographies” or “interviews” (6). Relevant surviving documents are, overwhelmingly, court records from the period of Dutch East India Company rule—“the ‘material deposit’ left by the exercise of judicial terror”—which are “crucially silent about much” (7), and at best “derived indirectly,” in multiple senses, “from the slaves” themselves (10). Historians have distinguished forms of slavery practised at the Cape from chattel slavery. The former involved different routes and auction practices, bringing together enslaved people from diverse communities of origin that were typically atomised upon arrival, and otherwise divergent practices, relations, abuses, and modes of dehumanisation. As Ross (1995) has shown, however, understandings of these particularities have been severely compromised by investments in understanding relations between slave-owners and the enslaved as paternalistic, which are misguided yet rewarded by over-reliance on the accounts of slave-owners. Much work remains to be done on the “monstrous intimacies,” as theorised by Christina Sharpe (2010), perpetuated by studies such as Shell 1994, which argues that Cape slavery fundamentally entrenched a familial structure in which slaves were treated as children. Ross (1996) further points out that Robert C. H. Shell “gloss[es] over” sexual violence, describing “an act somewhere between extreme sexual harassment and rape” (383), for example, as “a passionate ménage à trois” (Shell 1994, 297; see also Scully 1996).

imaginings of slave history. Although Kewpie's photographs and testimony do not directly engage with such a history, I would suggest they offer what Joseph Roach (1996) identifies as "counter-memories, or the disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and memory as it is publicly enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences" (26). For instance, I argue in chapter three that, by embedding a quiet practice of grief within the 1999 recording, Kewpie gives disembodied voice to the consequences borne by those classified "Coloured" and bears witness to conditions of life and death that are particularly inescapable for gay people living within and against the constraints imposed by the entangled histories of the category "Coloured."

"Constructed as a race as opposed to an ethnicity," and in their perceived hybridity as what Mahmood Mamdani (2014) calls a "subject race"—colonised *and* defined as non-indigenous (27-28)—those formerly classified "Coloured" are, as Farred (2000) describes it, "completely grounded" (7), but without a symbolic claim to pre-colonial existence in South Africa. It is in this context that District Six "has been used to legitimise coloured claims for a place within the South African order" (Soudien 2001a, 117). As surrogate homeland, the lost District offers integrity as an alternative to "lack," and non-shameful genesis as an alternative to categorical sexualisation.

As early as 1990, Richard Rive criticised the romanticisation of District Six and its construction as a "mythic homeland" for people then still legally classified "Coloured" (111). In her seminal essay on shame, identity, and the category "Coloured," Wicomb (1998) critiques the construction of District Six as ethnic homeland as a form of forgetting, a "suppression of history," led by the work of the District Six Museum (94). It is an aspect of what Desiree Lewis (2001) describes as a "preoccupation," beginning in the 1990s, with

“rewriting, rediscovering, or renaming coloured identity” (157).²⁰ Whereas Adikhari (2005) criticises much of this work for being “driven by small groups of intellectuals and community activists” and failing to resonate with most people formerly classified “Coloured” (183), Soudien (2001a) contends that the construction of District Six as surrogate ethnic homeland has taken hold in popular consciousness.

Queer

The prelapsarian narrative of District Six is invested in by the construction of the lost District as birthplace of gay life in the Western Cape, to which Kewpie is welcomed home as prodigal daughter, making her available for use by some as evidence of a prelapsarian queerness that is attributed a wholesome and authentic relation to colouredness. This might be understood in relation to desires to document precolonial queerness in Africa. Keguro Macharia (2016b), for example, has criticised the “ahistorical and politically dangerous notions of authenticity” attached to the designation of ethnicities as “precolonial” (497). The figured authenticity of District Six is lapsed by the shock of forced removal, rather than colonisation: proposing the importance of respectability in what she calls “coloured culture,” Charmaine McEachern (1998) argues that forced removals “ultimately changed coloured subjectivity and identity” by attacking people at “the very site of respectability [...] their home” (513-515.) The wholesomeness to which the ideal of the District offers a return was, as Soudien (2001a) notes, “poisoned by apartheid” (125), and its attractiveness as alternative

²⁰ Another notable aspect consists of assorted claims to pure, ethnic identities. The Khoisan revivalist movement promotes a claim to indigenous privilege, and functions by excluding those identifying as Muslim or Malay (see, e.g., Adhikari 2005, 183). Wicomb (1998) has criticised ethno-nationalist claims to authenticity as denying history and preventing “multiple belongings” from being seen as “an alternative way of viewing culture” (105), while Erasmus (2001) has argued that such claims are not always based in notions of “authenticity and ‘purity,’” but in fact can represent an acknowledgement of “the fragments which make up the history of being coloured” and “the violence of the colonial encounter” (28).

to a Cape Flats contemporary is perhaps nowhere more evident than in removees' discussions of District Six gangs as uniquely benevolent and moralistic.²¹

The investment in seeking evidence of historical forms of “gay life” that were “open and out” can be understood in terms of the second frame described by Neville Hoad (1999), who identifies two ways in which the debate about “gay and lesbian human rights” was being framed at this time: “The first opposes African tradition, fairly homophobic and monolithically conceived, to Western modernity, with homosexuality coming to represent a Western decadent import and a disavowable excess of the economic modernisation that the state wishes to achieve. The second argues for human rights as part of an African nationalist tradition” (566). These frames correlate with each of the misleading terms of the dichotomy entrenched by the ongoing debate about what is “un-African,” homosexuality or homophobia, respectively. What is particularly unstable about the attribution to queerness of a wholesome and authentic relationship to colouredness, however, is that the latter is variously used to signify both wholesome tradition and decadent modernity. This is seen in divergent conclusions drawn in a 1977 issue of *Drum*, a politically and culturally influential magazine, aimed at Black readership, discussed in chapter two, and the 2018 *Kewpie* exhibition.

In July 1977, *Drum* published “The Moffie Manuscripts”: “Cape Town’s moffies trace their ancestry—right back to the days of Van Riebeeck.” Bursting with quips such as “having seen illustrations of Van Riebeeck, someone had to put curlers in his flowing locks,” the faux-academic report by “Carmen,” framed by the illustrated edges of a roll of parchment, conclusively establishes that it was “the perfumed society of the genteel whites”

²¹ Romanticisation of District Six gangs is evident in Pinnock 2016. The Cape Flats remains a “highly complex and contested space” (O’Connell 2017, 196). Forced out of the city onto these “far flung,” low-lying, surrounding areas, over half a million people classified “Coloured” found themselves in a “cultural vacuum” without public transportation, sufficient schools, medical facilities, or food shops (V. February [1981] 2000, 185; Farred 2000, 119, 42). Long-standing communities were broken up, property owners pitifully “compensated,” and women particularly isolated.

that “establish[ed] the Hottie moffie fraternity in the Cape”: “awestricken Hottentots discarded their loincloths” and “took to velvet knickers and lace-collared shirts[,] establish[ing] the moffie dress code for posterity.” Written by Jackie Heyns, who photographed and wrote about the girls of District Six, including Kewpie, the “report” explicitly references the girls’ practice of naming, elaborated in chapter one. “The queer’s quirk for adopting famous names was instilled by the arrival of Lord Charles Henry Somerset as Governor of the Cape,” it explains: “from that day they discarded the names given at birth and glorified their personality with names of their heroes and heroines.” Thus, “the die was set and the cult complete. Moffiedom was placed in the annals of history and entrenched as a definable group in the Cape society.” Fifty years later, the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition used depictions of the very same girls to advocate for inclusion based on historical precedent, proposing that “histories of queer lives like Kewpie’s challenge the popular notion that homosexuality is un-African” and emphasising the relevance of “themes and ideas explored in the exhibition” to “contemporary activism and dialogue on LGBTIQ rights in South Africa” to insist that “Kewpie’s story helps us to find the way forward” in “the struggle.”

Thus, over two decades since the release of *A Normal Daughter* (Lewis 2000), the Kewpie Collection is still being used to advocate for inclusion based on historical precedent, but in a context in which *queer* has gained precedence. We might understand contemporary descriptions of Kewpie as “queer,” I suggest, as part of a legacy of misrecognition. While this thesis positions itself within queer studies, it does not describe the Kewpie Collection nor Kewpie herself as queer, partly to maintain an investment in whatever political potential gets lost when *queer* is used to describe those who do not identify as such. Equally, however, the Collection does the work of queerness in the sense celebrated by Muñoz (2009) when he

describes queerness as an ideality: “that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough” (1).

Although I do not wish to imply that District Six was unusually dangerous for those residents whose self-expression did not align with gender norms, or those who did not live in accordance with heteronormative scripts, it seems uncontroversial to suggest that the narrative that District Six was unusually accepting of these residents has at least been exaggerated over time. Particularly so, given the dynamics arising from the aims with which much of the memory work has been conducted—to facilitate a return to the District and/or justify the enormity of its loss—a notable example of which is the kind of exaggeration that has come to be understood as an important component of the District Six oral tradition in relation to “the right to remake,” discussed in chapter four. Rather, I suggest that District Six was perhaps not *enough* for these residents, that certain materials presented as evidence of their acceptance are products of their own labour, and that reading these materials through the logics of the popular narrative of District Six risks erasing the ways they worked to imagine otherwise.

In the following section, I detail three imbricated components of the mode of reading I instead engage. This involves reading with the strategies through which the worlds indexed by the Collection are produced: remaining attentive to the terms of Kewpie’s collective and self-actualisation; continuing the work of imagining the worlds indexed while recognising the labour involved in their creation; and honouring the waywardness of this work.

Reading With

Since it is troubling because of its neo-imperial impulse and its potential to obscure race, class, and gender and sexual diversities (Nyanzi 2014; Matebeni and Pereira 2014, 7), “deploying queer as a strategy” in the African context “requires constant vigilance”

(Matebeni 2019, 3). It is especially important to remain attentive to the ways Kewpie “define[s] things for [herself],” as social justice activist and Advocate Letlhogonolo Mokgoroane put it at the 2018 Simon Nkoli Memorial Lecture, while recognising this might open possibilities understood as queer in the present:

Black queer possibilities look like defining things for ourselves. We should really ask ourselves: what does black queer futures look like? The answer to the question will be different for each person, because queer is not monolithic and that is its beauty. Black queer futures, for me, entails creating our own narratives. It is doing the work of intentional archiving our histories, our present, our joy—whatever they may look like. (Senne 2019)

Remaining attentive to the language Kewpie uses to describe herself and her gay friends, I refuse the terms with which she has been described by scholars, listed previously. I suggest that the former indicates complex modes of identification and expression that exceed and undermine the coherency of the latter and which hold as-yet-unexplored possibilities for making liveable lives that exceed the logics of hegemonic discourses on gender and sexuality. As Zethu Matebeni and Thabo Msibi (2015) remind us, it “remains crucial to find alternative ways that forge spaces for diverse existence” (4). Indeed, Kewpie’s account of life in the District underlines the ways in which certain lives are rendered illegible, therefore unliveable, and therefore ungrievable by the relationship between precarity and performativity (Butler 2009a, ii). Given this relationship, and because sexuality and gender diversities continue to subsist precariously in South Africa and beyond, it seems necessary to seek historical precedent while also remaining wary of the impulse to make identificatory claims on the past. Such claims might foreclose potentialities that may be perceptible but that cannot be captured within a still inadequate language. Although the work of expanding the remit of the possible is bolstered when we refute the relegation of minoritised difference to the present, or what Muñoz (1999) calls the “burden of liveness” (198), it is undermined when we close off possibilities within whatever we use to do so. Doing this work therefore involves a different mode of reading, one that tries to follow the lead of Macharia (2016),

who writes, “I am wary of the [...] knowing that impedes imaginative possibility, foreclosing histories of gendered, sexed, and erotic multiplicities” (504). This is what I describe as reading with, rather than against, worldmaking strategies.

Reading with involves remaining attentive to the terms of Kewpie’s self-actualisation more broadly, which often diverge from standard approaches of current scholarship. For example, in chapter six, I make a case for reading the Kewpie Collection, especially the many photographs and accounts of parties it features, as part of a history of jazz, in relation to which the girls of District Six have not yet been discussed. Conversely, current scholarship often construes their social positionality in relation to the participation of “moffies” in the *Kaapse Klopse* or *Tweede Nuwe Jaar* (second new year) celebrations in which *klopse* (troupes) departed from the District until this was restricted under apartheid legislation. When it is not dismissed as a shameful expression of slave mentality, this predominantly working-class parade is commonly framed as a celebration of freedom from enslavement. Suggestions that (a few) “moffies” are granted a space in which to perform gender, i.e. to exist, freely tend to reference Denis-Constant Martin’s (1999) brief comment that “the carnival *moffie* [...] commands a respect which homosexuals are not granted in ordinary society” (16; Pacey 2014; T. McCormick 2018, 172).

Others suggest that the appearance of “moffies” in this context evidences and/or enables general acceptance (Chetty [1994] 2012, 117; Tucker 2009, 78-81). As I understand it, this is mistaken on several fronts, the most important of which is the ostensible confusion of safety with contingent visibility—whereas the latter without the former is, as they say, a trap (R. Gossett, Stanley, and Burton 2017). Readings of this kind are complicated by the role of what Judith Butler (1999) calls “ritualistic release” (339). They seem to mistake a typical physical position at the forefront of the troupe for an indication of symbolic authority, sometimes using this to inform superficial readings of lyrics to the many derisive songs

about “moffies” composed and performed by *klopse* in the comic *moppie* genre (Gaulier and Martin 2017, 188-190).

Since it is usually a common feature of District Six oral histories, it is notable that Kewpie (1996) barely touches on the subject, only mentioning the *klopse* to tell Lewis that “moffies used to dance for coons and coming to *konserts* they used to dance the same way on-stage as well.”²² On the contrary, she speaks of jazz often. Unlike on-stage performers just mentioned, she says, *she* “started dancing on-stage [...] doing jazz.” Kewpie discusses jazz less as a musical genre and more as a formation of collective practices that (like those associated with the *klopse*) combined music, performance, and dancing. She refutes any presumptions that she was granted a space of freedom within carnival. In Kewpie’s testimony, gays appear as active agents in the co-creation and practice of diverse forms of self-definition, artistry, and togetherness. Some of these were enabled by the rapid flourishing of jazz in urban centres across South Africa from the late 1950s.

Jazz is discussed as just one of the worlds indexed by the Kewpie Collection, all of which may have existed in another form although, because they were oppositional, only ephemerally. Because the work of worldmaking is necessarily collaborative, these worlds are enabled, both as they may have appeared in the past and as they are indexed by materials such as those in the Collection, through collective pursuit. Equally, these worlds are generative, and one of their functions is to sustain a collective organised on non-hegemonic terms. Reading with the materials constituting the Kewpie Collection therefore involves not searching for their origin, or details of a community they depict, but rather reading with the strategies through which the various collectives sustained by the various worlds indexed come into being in the Kewpie Collection, which is just one site at which this happens. The

²² Although the term is rightly problematised in other contexts, working-class participants largely continue to refer to the *klopse* using the same term as Kewpie, and to the carnival by its historic name, the Coon Carnival.

uses to which the Kewpie Collection has been put in searches for its source, detailed above, might be understood as reading against, rather than with, since the materials constituting the Collection themselves are not conducive to this mode of reading.

Derrida's reminder that there are no original records, only traces leaving traces, is enjoyably illustrated by scraps of paper that surface while engaging with the Kewpie Collection, bearing witness to Lewis's repeated attempts during the 1996 and 1999 interviews to jot down definitive dates indicating when Kewpie lived where. Each attempt contradicts the last, and every list remains incomplete. Likewise, although Chetty ([1994] 2012) states that she "moved into what is now Kensington to set up his salon around 1954" (115), according to the dates of birth she gives during interviews, Kewpie would have been either twelve or thirteen years old in 1954, and she recalls living in at least three houses after her parents moved away from District Six when she was seventeen—houses seen in photographs apparently been taken in the 1970s.

These pieces of paper testify to the inconclusiveness of this search for origins, and to the apparent mismatch between Kewpie and her archivists' engagement with the materials comprising the Collection. In interviews, Kewpie often frustrates their attempts to comprehensively document. Many of Kewpie's (1996) answers contradict others, and she typically formulates her responses to questions about when things happened, or how long for, inexactly, as in "eight or ten or twelve years." Without disregarding the material conditions that render certain populations less likely to retain apparently complete and straightforward records of movement through life, and lock some out of material reality altogether, we might also understand the Collection's irreducibility to "facts"-based formats as suggestive of how (not) to read this archive.

That the Kewpie Collection cannot be used to write a historically accurate account of Kewpie's life without distorting or misrepresenting her self-description suggests that a

different sort of reading is required. It is common for scholars to talk about reading “creatively, against”—rather than with—“the grain” (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid 2002, 12), when searching for marginalised communities in mainstream archives, or about “‘readings against the grain’ which can reveal precisely what the controllers of the record sought to obscure” (16). Even as they foreground “the analytical limits of the archive,” Anjali Arondekar (2009) points out, many “continue to privilege the reading practices of recovery over all others” (12). Citing Arondekar’s (2005) recognition of this “problem of what is not there, what cannot be found there, what remains illegible,” Macharia (2016b) continues:

What do we ask of archives? And what do we ask [...] when the fictiveness of the documentation granted authority as archival encounters the fictions of queers intent on inventing tradition to recuperate a usable history? Put another way: what do queers need to invent to survive and how do such acts of invention engage with the authority assigned to archives? (501)

This question is grappled with by Reid (2013):

Clearly, to my informants, the need to have a history, or older role models, sometimes got in the way of accuracy or was more important than the facts. This was hardly surprising for a group of people who have by and large been left out of the historical record, or whose claim to history is the subject of dispute [...] what captivated me was how these stories spoke to a history, which was both real and invented [...]. (247)

Kewpie makes multiple “claim[s] to history,” although I am less interested in what Reid calls “accuracy” or “facts.” Such categories seem unreliable. As shown in chapter two, for example, Kewpie’s (1996) recollection of speaking with her namesake, Capucine, backstage after a show seems to have more “accuracy” once we recognise that Kewpie is referring not to Capucine the well-known actress but to Capucine the cabaret star whom Kewpie describes as a “sex change.” This story indicates how understandings of accuracy depend on the common-sense reification of a material reality that renders the latter Capucine far less well known than the former—and, as Gqola urges, “what we need desperately at this point, is the courage and the capacity to imagine the counter-intuitive” (Khan 2018, 115). Though Reid

falls back on the intuitive, while grappling with the counterintuitive, he gestures to a legacy of worldmaking that I will outline in terms of the fantastic and strategies of recollection.

In chapter one, I draw this notion of the fantastic from Kewpie's description of an on-stage performance and begin to develop it in relation to recent critical discussions of fabulosity, fabulousness, and fabulation (Manalansan 2015; moore 2018; Nyong'o 2018). In particular, Nyong'o (2018) builds on critical fabulation, the important methodology first explicitly discussed by Hartman (2008) in a reflection on the writing of her second book ([2007] 2021). By offering "a critical reading of the archive that mimes the figurative dimensions of history," Hartman (2008) explains, "I intended both to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling" (11). Hartman (2008) describes critical fabulation as "a history written with and against the archive" (12), one she explicitly connects to creative practices of minoritised subjects in her path-breaking third book (2019). Advocating for a reading practice that is "reparative but also suspicious of recovery and restoration," given the "risk" carried in this context by "communicating and rendering overly explicit that which ought more tactically remain camouflaged," Nyong'o (2018, 58, 5) proposes a move from a politics of representation to a politics of afro-fabulation.²³ Like Nyong'o's (2018) reading of the tactical fictionalising of the social world that from a black point of view is already false, Hartman's (2019) extended modelling suggests a conception of critical fabulation as a practice of reading *with* the strategies of minoritarian subjects as they are available to us in archives, albeit one that produces "a history written with and against the archive" (Hartman 2008, 12).

²³ This move is perhaps prefigured by Hall's (1990) description of Black self-portraiture as "not so much representation as inscription." Critical fabulation and Afro-fabulation are rooted in the specificities and possibilities of blackness founded in the moment of enslavement and through the crossing of the Atlantic. Taking up Hartman's (2008) advocacy of "the conditional temporality of 'what could have been'" (11), Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley (2018) explains that, "if contemporary black unfreedom originates in past violence, imagining alternative pasts is necessary to begin creating possibilities other than the living deaths that were supposed to be our lives" (127). I distinguish between and relate fabulation and the fantastic partly in acknowledgement that the conditions of life and death informing each are incommensurate and yet entangled in a manner considered in chapter three.

The series of sixteen photographs discussed above exemplify some of the ways the disenfranchised do the work of imagining and inventing life as free that Hartman (2019) memorably names waywardness: “a practice of possibility”; “an improvisation with the terms of social existence”; “the untiring practice of trying to live when you were never meant to survive” (228). Sometimes, as is the case with these photographs, the work of transforming inherited conditions takes aesthetic forms (e.g., moore 2018; Manalansan 2015; Nyong’o 2018). Reading with these strategies as they are legible in the resultant materials means continuing the imagining they enact, in some sense, while recognising the labour these materials’ creation involved, one component of which is this work of imagining otherwise.

Additionally, Kewpie’s testimony exemplifies a distinct but related genealogy of waywardness that Macharia (2016a) presents elsewhere:

Increasingly, I admire a certain African genius for waywardness. As practiced by Stella Nyanzi, waywardness accumulates odd stories, little moments, folksy wisdom, and seemingly disconnected anecdotes. Some stories feel juvenile— and those looking for profound insights in them will be disappointed by their simplicity. And also revel in their sophistication. Others will nod sagely and with well-practiced condescension praise the simplicity of African philosophy found in odd stories. Waywardness revels not in the secrets found as it strays here and there—it is not a scavenger hunt. Nor is waywardness necessarily interested in forging new paths that others can follow. Often, it is a stubborn refusal to come to the point. (188)

Reading with many kinds of archival materials can be a practice in waywardness, as potential insights and unexpected associations are pursued on the basis of whatever is found to be moving in varying senses. This is captured by Michel Foucault’s ([1994] 2001) account of being “guided by nothing more substantial than my taste, my pleasure, an emotion, laughter, surprise, a certain dread, or some other feeling whose intensity I might have trouble justifying, now that the first moment of discovery has passed” (157).

Waywardness seems an especially apt descriptor in the case of the Kewpie Collection. First, the Collection exceeds any easy categorisation. The worlds it indexes are

multiple, and overlapping, but incommensurate. Reading with means resisting closure and giving what these strategies produce space in which to move around, as Kewpie herself desires. Second, the strategies Kewpie engages involve a certain waywardness. This is illustrated by an exchange that takes place between Kewpie and Lewis in the first of the three 1996 interview recordings, after he asks her about a newspaper clipping featuring a friend subjected to particularly unflattering newspaper coverage.

- Lewis: Here's another article about Doris. 'Winked at the cops, fined two Rand, broken leg and all.'
- Kewpie: This was really Doris's, can I put it down to... she was always guaranteed to this, she used to do it often, because Doris used to always land up in Hollywood. And once coming out, she would attempt to do anything to go back. She was well known there.
- Lewis: Why do you think Doris liked to go to Hollywood?
- Kewpie: She had a boyfriend there. And while she was there the boyfriend was there. And she was quite, quite, quite satisfied and comfortable being with him all the years. And that was her story that she used to give me always. In a very... jokey way, laughing it off, too.
- Lewis: So how did the story go?
- Kewpie: It's a guy that she knew all the time and then, when he went away, she discovered that she could make a deal with him, visiting him, coming back, doing something just to get back to him, and that is how her love affair started.
- Lewis: Come on... Spell it out in more detail, you talking in circles.
- Kewpie: Well, I'm not talking in circles, actually, it's just I discovered that Doris had this guy—it was her boyfriend, supposed to be. And she was really in love, until when they discovered that they couldn't be parted.
- Lewis: So she used to work out ways to get into jail to be with him?
- Kewpie: There were so many ways for her to work it out to be in jail, all the time with him, and be around with him. She was never disappointed.

Without disregarding Macharia's reminder of the importance of waywardness as a specifically non-productive practice, I would add that Kewpie reminds us that sometimes "the point" is precisely to "talk[...] in circles." The exchange demonstrates conflicting conceptions of value or of what "the point" might be. For Lewis, the point is to have Kewpie "spell [...] out [...] more detail," whereas Kewpie reworks all reported detail so that Doris Day, the wayward criminal imprisoned, turns out to be in complete control, freely moving in and out of "Hollywood" to conduct her "love affair" as she pleases. When Lewis makes

a plea for a rendition more recognisable as “factual,” Kewpie dismisses the terms of his critique before returning to the anecdotal. Layering perspectives from “I discovered” to “they discovered” via the roundabout “it was her boyfriend, supposed to be,” Kewpie demonstrates what not getting to the point can do. She summons the authority of a small collective to revalue the devalued, so that Doris Day emerges from Kewpie’s recollection “satisfied,” “comfortable,” “really in love,” and “never disappointed.”

In chapter four, I develop an understanding of recollection as a discursive strategy Kewpie employs, which enacts the sort of theorisation that Barbara Christian (1988) reminds us “people of colour have always” done: “I am inclined to say that our theorising (and I intentionally use the verb rather than the noun) is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and in proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking” (336). Kewpie conjures entangled histories that overlap and contradict in rich and complex ways to open many possible trajectories. Fabulously “mim[ing]” history’s “figurative dimensions” (Hartman 2008, 11), Kewpie performs the ongoing negotiation that history involves for those seeking sustenance in an inhospitable present. As Rahul Rao (2020) notes, remembering can be about claiming membership of political community from which one has been excluded (99). Relatedly, I conceive recollection as a means of both seeking sustenance in and sustaining the collective, as illustrated by Kewpie’s account of Doris Day’s movement in and out of Hollywood.

The remaining chapters of this thesis further detail what I understand to be the collective work of worldmaking in the Kewpie Collection. As it is developed in Kewpie’s terms, this account of worldmaking joins a legacy of other such theorisations, with which it will be put into conversation. This indicates an additional sense in which I read with: by engaging with Kewpie’s account of this work, and the strategies it involves, as important theory in its own right, as opposed to content awaiting a theoretical frame.

Chapter Summary

Chapter one, “Moving Pictures: Kewpie’s Fantastic Performance of Celebrity,” suggests that Kewpie (1996), a self-declared “bioscope fanatic,” drew on cinematic experiences and strategies to construct her own celebrity. This is indicative, I argue, of the way the girls of District Six laboured as hairdressers and on-stage performers to convert the symbolic capital of fabulousness into financial capital. The Kewpie Collection is one site at which this conversion happens and in which the girls’ conditions are transformed. Kewpie’s fantastic claims to social privilege and worthiness that colonialism and then apartheid violently sought to establish as the proper domain of whiteness are, therefore, being circulated as evidence of what they perform. In other words, fantastic performances available to us in the Kewpie Collection are not enabled by hospitable conditions, but themselves transform conditions of precarity into the seemingly hospitable conditions that they, the performances, are popularly read as enabled by.

Chapter two, “‘People Can’t Say I’m a Man, They Can’t Say I’m a Woman’: The Kewpie Collection as an Archive of Trans Capacity,” contends that the Kewpie Collection offers an alternative to common-sense understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality seen in contemporary medico-legal discourse that established the so-called “sex change” as a cure for homosexuality. Whereas media publications in which the girls were featured have previously been understood as facilitating their self-fashioning, I show that this coverage follows the same trajectory seen in medico-legal discourse. Conversely, I argue, the Kewpie Collection disidentifies with this media coverage, and in doing so offers an important precedent for the sense of transgender community the enforcers of apartheid sought to foreclose.

Chapter three, “‘Still Around’: Sustaining Gay Life in Proximity to Death,” considers the constitution of the Kewpie Collection as evidence of historical precedent for a

contemporary political agenda for gay rights. The Collection bears witness to Kewpie's efforts to transform her conditions of precarity into a new mode of sociality that she calls gay life. Gay life is only ever in the terrain of possibility, in her account, since it could not be sustained within the given organisation of social relations. However, Kewpie indicates that she used photography to bring it into visibility, and that her photographs are therefore available to be used as evidence (as they have been) that "gay life was open and out," as Lewis puts it. Nonetheless, such uses are resisted by Kewpie's account of the proximity to death in which she indicates the girls' lives were lived and the practice of grief and dissonant temporalities it embeds within the recordings.

Chapter four, "Moving Home: Recollecting District Six and the Promise of the Queens Hotel," suggests that the *Kewpie* (2018, 2019) exhibitions' welcoming of Kewpie home as daughter was facilitated both by the process through which the District has been remembered, brokered by the District Six Museum for three decades, and by work done by Kewpie herself to imagine otherwise and imagine what home might yet mean—while living in the District and since its destruction. Resisting paradigms of memory and recovery within which her testimony might be captured, Kewpie outlines a strategy of recollection as she engages it. This strategy involves troubling the distinctions between true and false that are continual with the reified material reality that meant the reformulations of home rehearsed by gays, in District Six, could only exist precariously. Re-collecting District Six as she recalls it, Kewpie makes place for gays within the popular narrative of District Six. In doing so, she invites all who identify with the symbolism of the District to return to a more expansive sense of home.

Chapter five, "'And the World Around Me was Love': Kewpie's Photographic Practice of Freedom," draws on Kewpie's testimony to suggest that she uses photography to practise freedom from the constraints of her present. What is legible as freedom in her

photographs is produced by this necessarily collaborative practice. Kewpie's explanation of how this practice works unfolds in response to Gevisser's attempts to locate her within a nationalist political narrative. Refusing the political, however, Kewpie insists that it is possible to exist beyond politics in a narrow sense while offering a theorisation of politics in a broader sense. In these remarks and in the photographs that make freedom legible, there is a utopian impulse that continues to be felt in the present. These materials might therefore sustain the depleting work that impulse currently animates.

Chapter six, "'A Party All Over Again': Making New Memories of Embodiment in the Kewpie Collection," pursues an earlier suggestion that this photographic practice of freedom draws on other experiences of forming collectives. Arguing for the political importance of ostensibly non-political parties, I turn to the many photographs in the Collection in which the latter parties are depicted. Kewpie (1996) emphasises that what was there "for gays" at these parties was jazz and, moreover, that these gays were key facilitators of a contemporaneous jazz movement. Reading the Kewpie Collection as part of this history, I argue that jazz's distinct temporalities, as they were experienced locally, can be registered in Kewpie's photographs. Although the world to which this jazz movement aspired was curtailed by apartheid, photographs representing fragments of the scenes of its creation effect the temporal subversions these scenes facilitated. In doing so, the photographs conjure futures that might unfold from present and past (im)possibilities, anticipating forms of collective existence yet to come.

In summary, the concluding chapter, "A Queen Mother to All the Gays: The Afterlives and Times of Kewpie of District Six," characterises the Kewpie Archive as both moving and precarious. Since the work of worldmaking elaborated across preceding chapters continues to unfold, the Kewpie Archive is in motion. Further, this work unfolds,

precariously, in ways that are diverse and diffuse, making available imaginaries both fragile and expansively coalitional.

Chapter One: Moving Pictures

Kewpie's Fantastic Performance of Celebrity



Figure.1.1



Figure 1.2

From the late 1930s to the early 1980s, a company of street photographers named Movie Snaps worked opposite the Cape Town General Post Office. They would draw a chalk line on the pavement, and anyone who walked across it could have their photograph taken. Those photographed would receive a numbered ticket, with which they could return a few days later to purchase their portrait, printed by the photographers and stamped on the reverse with the same number. The distinctive style of these pavement portraits feels familiar to many of us born after the prolific company disbanded, since surviving photographs appear in family albums now scattered across the Western Cape and beyond. They recall a more diverse city centre; a time before the Nationalist government consolidated the political and social structures established at the Cape colony into legal apartheid. One aspect of their

segregationist project that remains alarmingly successful in the Western Cape is the attempt to establish the “correct relationship” between whiteness and urbanity (McEachern 1998, 501), “a key site for the expression of a modern Self” (Ratele 2009, 291). Yet a different sort of urbanity remains discernible in the Movie Snaps photographs, which depict an ethnically diverse, typically working-class population dressed in their weekend best and enjoying the city centre.

Kewpie (1996) recalls that “the majority of the Movie Snaps photographers knew the gays as well, you know going shopping and walking around in town,” and the Kewpie Photographic Collection includes at least eleven Movie Snaps images. These typically depict the girls and other friends pausing and smiling at the camera, sometimes slightly bashful but more often delighted at being photographed (fig. 1.3). Kewpie, on the other hand, seems to engage with the photographers more deliberately. In one example, a young Kewpie, wearing a velvet jacket over a buttoned-up polo shirt, her bleached hair held back by a fur hat, turns towards the photographer as she passes, head slightly tilted back, lips parted and staring straight into the camera (fig. 1.4). The effect is devastatingly glamorous.



Figure 1.3



Figure 1.4

This same sense of deliberateness is evident in the two Movie Snaps photographs shown above (figs 1.1 and 1.2). They are remarkably similar, although one is in black and white and the other has been colourised. In both, Kewpie wears pumps, a buttoned-up shirt, and a stovepipe pantsuit with its low-collared jacket fastened. In both, she appears to be unaware that her photograph is being taken. Straight-faced and staring ahead, she continues walking, with her right foot forward and a large handbag clutched in her left hand. We might even say she appears to be unwilling to have her photograph taken, given she sports a different pair of large, dark sunglasses in each image. Her own desire to be photographed and to own the photograph—as she crosses the chalk-drawn line and returns a few days later to make her purchase—is transferred to the photographer, who is visually absent but whose framing gaze is made desirous of her image. Kewpie thus utilises an existing and popular practice of street photography to perform a celebrity-paparazzi encounter, in which the celebrity, whose image is desired by others, is not paying to have her photograph taken. The celebrity knows her image is desired; it is so desired that she asserts some control with, for example, the sunglasses. With slight variations on a signature look—featuring the style of “slacks suit” she “loved” and described as her “real fashion” (Kewpie 1998), and her always-bleached perfect beehive, the hairstyle for which she was famous as a hairdresser (Kewpie 2018)—Kewpie repeats this performance of celebrity.

From the nineteenth century, a proliferation of media and communications technologies, particularly those involving mechanical reproduction of images, facilitated the mass production of and engagement with celebrity, while a boom in amateur photography in the mid-twentieth century began to democratise access to representation on film. While playfully referencing the fact that their subjects would be walking (moving) past, the name of the company of photographers, Movie Snaps, also promised the glamour of representation on film. The cinematic terms in which this promise was articulated held particular currency

in District Six, where immensely popular cinemas offered an increasingly oppressed population the opportunity to be metaphorically transported beyond the local. In figures 1.1 and 1.2, Kewpie harnesses this capacity of cinema. Performing celebrity as an ultimate marker of socio-economic privilege legally denied to her, she moves beyond the confines of apartheid in the realm of the imagination.

Considering such performances, this chapter suggests that Kewpie, a self-declared “bioscope fanatic,”²⁴ drew on cinematic experiences and strategies made potentially and variously available to subjects with the necessary material, discursive, and imaginative capital, to construct her own celebrity. These Movie Snaps photographs begin to illustrate this chapter’s principal argument: that the roles of hairdresser and on-stage performer facilitated and depended on performances that worked to insulate against labour precarity and yet are easily taken up as evidence of the celebrity and attendant qualities they do the work of imagining. Facilitating the production of what Karl Marx (2015) calls “a subject for the object” (26), such performances worked to insulate against the precarity the girls experienced as intermittently employed service and cultural workers who were, as “Non-Whites,” legally barred from professional training. Undertaking the sort of labour increasingly prevalent under neoliberalism, in a pre-neoliberal context, they created “not only material goods, but relationships and social life itself” (Hardt and Negri 2004, 108-13). The interrelation of social precariousness and precarious conditions of labour is indicated by such uses of photography to disrupt both.

As part of a collective performance that I term the District Six Star System, Kewpie used photography and testimony to project an image of herself that is informed by cinema’s production and (literal) projection of stardom. This image is fantastic, in that Kewpie pushes beyond the limits of what is possible to transform her conditions of socio-political

²⁴ *Bioscope* is a Southern African term for a cinema, now somewhat dated.

marginalisation into a mode of self-actualisation. I begin by introducing this notion of the fantastic, drawn from Kewpie's testimony, in relation to recent theorisations of fabulousness, fabulosity, and fabulation.

The Fantastic

While it is unclear exactly when Kewpie moved or was removed from District Six, by the early 1980s she lived about ten kilometres away in a room adjoining Salon Kewpie in Kensington. A family friend, Mr Davy, had opened this hairdressing salon with Kewpie as manager at some point in the 1960s, the decade in which the Nationalist government succeeded in establishing Kensington as a "model 'Coloured' township," having since 1953 forcibly removed from the area then known as Kensington and Windermere the largest concentration of Cape Town residents classified "African," including some of those forced out of inner-city areas such as District Six at the turn of the century (Field 2001). Through heavy investment in regulating movement across space and intermediary placement of those classified "Coloured," apartheid legislation structured Kewpie's forced movement from District Six and the constrained freedom she had to move to Kensington, which was contingent on the forced movement of others.

Yet, in the 1998 interview, Kewpie had the following exchange with Gevisser.

Gevisser: In terms of apartheid, you said for example that you saw all these... signs up. How did that make you feel? [...]

Kewpie: It never used to bother me. Because if I felt like walking into a white place I just walked in. If they had to stop me, they had to stop me.

Gevisser: Nobody ever stopped you?

Kewpie: Nobody ever stopped me.

Kewpie's words recall madison moore's work on fabulousness. Drawing on Thorstein Vleben's (1899) concept of a "leisure class," moore (2012) describes a "fabulous class" of marginalised cultural workers who use style to circulate in (and potentially disrupt) exclusionary spaces. moore (2018) reworks these ideas into "a theory of fabulousness as a

form of creativity from the margins” (64), with greater emphasis on the labour, creative possibilities, and sense of confrontation involved—and the inherent danger. Fabulousness is described as a form of what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) terms “symbolic capital.” It cannot pay the rent, but insists on the value of the self for “queer and other people forced to the margins,” who “bend[...] the rules of socially accepted appearance” to “create themselves for themselves” (moore 2018, 26).

Kewpie’s recollection, in the conditional tense, of having the freedom to walk “into a white place” *if* she “felt like” doing so doesn’t find such clear expression elsewhere in the Collection: there are no photographs of her in “a white place,” nor any other descriptions of her “walking into” one. There are, however, many photographs that convey the use of style theorised by moore, in which Kewpie sartorially and gesturally performs an opulent high femme glamour or celebrity, as in figures 1.1 and 1.2. While Kewpie signals the limits of the law, that the quotidian often exists beneath its reach, her bold statement to Gevisser also insists on her value within a degrading framework. Fabulousness, for moore, is an “embrace” of the self “constantly reminded” they “don’t deserve to be embraced” (28); a use of style to redefine this self and “create new relationships” (125).

This “power” of “reinvent[ion]” alludes to another sense of *fabulousness* referenced by moore (125): “proneness to fiction or invention” (OED Online, s.v. “fabulousness, *n.*,” June 2021). Drawing on various meanings and connotations of *fabulous* and *fabulation*, and notably considering the latter in Deleuzian terms of “*a drive for the virtual*, on the part of black subjects,” Nyong’o (2018, 14) has theorised what he calls “acts of afro-fabulation,” which “operate as a queer hack of the codes of an anti-black world” (4). Nyong’o and moore’s considerations of fabulousness are also in conversation with those of Martin Manalansan (2015), whose term *fabulosity* describes the performance of fabulousness by a group of queer undocumented migrants living in New York as an “ethical self-making,” a

process of “creating and realising a self through and despite an existence on the fringes of low pay, drudgery of public transportation, and inhabiting dingy apartments.” Fabulation conceptually informs both Manalansan’s explanation that “fabulosity” is “about story-making” and “narrating selves in these forms of contingency” and moore’s (2018) understanding of fabulousness as “using fashion to tell a one-of-a-kind narrative” (68). It also informs Nyong’o’s (2018) “defence” of “queer fabulousness and black shade”—“too often dismissed as ephemeral resistance and vain complicity”—which “is shaped by [Gilles] Deleuze’s idiosyncratic vision of the fabulist as the one who calls out to ‘the people who are missing’” (17; Deleuze 1997, 117-118).²⁵

As with the kinds of performance discussed by moore (2018) and Manalansan (2015), Kewpie’s performance of fabulousness involves appropriating markers of socio-economic privilege that, in the context of racist capitalist cis-het-patriarchy, we might think of as properly belonging to an ideal subject—one that is white, cisgender, and straight. As with these kinds of performance, Kewpie’s is antagonistically structured by its contextual specificities. The account Kewpie gives of her decision to *be* fabulous begins with a sense of lost possibility, articulated in descriptions of an opportunity she received and was denied at the age of fourteen, as a promising dancer taking extra-curricular lessons at the University of Cape Town (UCT) Ballet School. Kewpie (1996) tells Lewis: “[the Principal] Dulcie [Howes] was... available to send me overseas and my father just rejected me, I couldn’t go. Otherwise I would have been a retired dancer today in spite of a hairdresser.” Lewis wonders if “this [is] the same sort of thing that” famous ballet dancers from District Six “Johaar [Mosaval]” and “David [Poole] went on”; Kewpie tells him it was, repeating: “I would have been a retired dancer. I suppose I would have been better off than... just being a hairdresser.”

²⁵ “To catch someone in the act of legending,” Deleuze (1995) suggests, in reference to “what [Henri] Bergson calls ‘fabulation’[,] is to catch the movement of constitution of a people,” in the sense that “a people isn’t something already there” but, “in a way, is what’s missing, as Paul Klee used to say” (125-126).

Likewise, Kewpie (1998) tells Gevisser: “my father rejected me for going overseas through the UCT Ballet School. I could have been a retired dancer today.”

In this second interview, conducted two years later, Kewpie’s modal verb shifts: the past unreal conditional “would have” becomes the less certain “could have.” Although less tangible in the second, the sense of possibility is in each instance located in the past, not the present of the interview, and is related to movement, away from South Africa, which Kewpie insists would have altered the trajectory of her life had her father not prevented it. The place to which Kewpie was invited to travel, “overseas,” functions as the imagined elsewhere promising the possibilities of celebrity with which she inscribes District Six in the series of sixteen photographs discussed in the introductory chapter (seen in figs. 0.1 to 0.5).²⁶ *Retired dancer* symbolises the content conclusion of decades spent achieving the professional success travelling “overseas” would have enabled. Kewpie (1996, 1998) “regretted” this “all [her] life long, up ’til now”; although she would have “love[d] to” go overseas, she never again had the opportunity. Instead, she remained in District Six.

Kewpie (1998, 1996) explains that her father prevented her from accepting the invitation “because of [her] being gay,” thereby “rejecting [her] gay life as well.” She “wanted [dance] to lead her somewhere,” but after her “father’s rejection” she “couldn’t go on with it” (Kewpie 1996). So, she decided to “bang back into [her] gay life” (Lewis 2000), searching for spaces in which she could move more freely, corporeally if not overseas: “wherever I could move around” (Kewpie 1996). Kewpie details the kind of “turning point” that moore (2018) tells us “fabulousness almost always stems from”: “the moment we realise that suppressing our full selves by trying to fit in does us more harm than good, that it just

²⁶ Two photographs of the UCT Ballet (1956a, 1956b), including Howes and Poole, departing by train “on a five-week tour to Rhodesia” suggest another sense in which *overseas* might represent an imagined elsewhere. In 1956, “Rhodesia” referred to landlocked neighbouring areas roughly corresponding with present-day Zimbabwe and present-day Zambia, then known to British colonials as Southern and Northern Rhodesia, respectively.

isn't working, even if sometimes we are forced to blend in to feel safe" (31). Kewpie (1996) started sneaking out from her family home "to go dancing at night"—"the rhumba, the salsa, the cha-cha... and most of all the jazz"—at clubs and parties where she would "meet up with different gays" (Lewis 2000). Kewpie (1996) explains that dancing was a case of survival—"it was in my veins, in my body, in my life. I just couldn't live without it then"—and that she used it to cultivate celebrity within the place in which she remained.

Because she was "always entertaining people" by "danc[ing] around," Kewpie (1996, 1998) recalls, they "came to love" her. Singing and dancing in variety shows, cabarets, and performances advertised as *Moffie Konserts* that took place at venues across Cape Town, she "became known as Kewpie, Kewpie, all around District Six" (Kewpie 1996). An interviewee in *A Normal Daughter* describes *Konsert* performers being stopped in the street by regular attendees who would excitedly ask them to hurry up with the next performance. Kewpie remembers the first *Konsert* she saw: "It was fantastic to see what moffies could do on-stage. They were artists. They were beautiful. They were attractive. And they could perform" (Lewis 2000).

Kewpie's recollection of witnessing performance as "fantastic" suggests its power, however ephemeral, to make the impossible possible, or realise what is merely imagined. In this instance, the ordinarily abject *moffie*, otherwise used by Kewpie only when recounting an insult, describes "artists" who "were beautiful" and "attractive" because "they could perform" (Lewis 2000). And it was because of Kewpie's (1998) own "fantastic" performances that people "came to love" her. She recalls doing "a show as a cabaret star one night. And it was fantastic. I was very young still. I was about fifteen, sixteen [...] it was a beautiful function. And I had applause, standing applause, standing ovations." Kewpie (1996) performed, she explains elsewhere, "for the ovations."

Kewpie's use of *fantastic* evokes its etymology—via the Greek *phantastikos*, “able to imagine”—from *phantazein*, “make visible.” The notion of what was hitherto impossible in its invisibility being made visible through its imagining finds only a muted articulation in the contemporary use of *fantastic* to describe something “proceeding merely from the imagination” (OED Online, s.v. “fantastic, *adj.* and *n.*,” June 2021). Describing these performances as fantastic, Kewpie theorises a kind of self-making akin to the performances of fabulousness described by Manalansan and moore. It finds expression through Kewpie's use of photography as an “emergence into visibility”—to which Nyong'o's (2018) “expanded sense of fabulation” pertains. As theoriser-practitioner of a fantastic self-making, Kewpie bears more than a passing resemblance to what Nyong'o, as noted above, calls Deleuze's “idiosyncratic vision of the fabulist” (17). For Deleuze (1997), the fabulist possesses “a profound desire, a tendency to project—into things, into reality, into the future, and even into the sky—an image of itself and others so intense that *it has a life of its own*” (117-118). Deleuze continues: “an image that is always stitched together, patched up, continually growing along the way, to the point where it becomes fabulous” (118). In photographs and in interviews, Kewpie projects a fabulous image of herself and the other girls. The image she projects “into things, into reality, into the future” using photography, from the 1950s to the 1980s, enables the recording of her retrospective testimony in the late 1990s: she describes fantastic on-stage performances and “walking into a white place” in interviews focused on her photographic collection. Regarding the photographs themselves, Kewpie's handwritten descriptions of herself and her sisters as models and actors, discussed in the introductory chapter, form part of a broader, collective performance of an imagined global, which I call the District Six Star System.

The notion of the fantastic that I will continue to develop, drawing on Kewpie's use of the term, involves the same understanding deployed by Arendt, following the Ancient

Greeks, that to appear is to be—and what Kewpie refuses to notice either does not appear, or is stripped of its power, within the worlds seen in her photographs and testimony given with reference to said photographs. Kewpie’s testimony stands out from others about life in the District in that she never mentions forced removals. This historically notable form of coerced movement is disempowered since it does not figure in the worlds she conjures, although the District’s destruction is reimagined in photographs discussed in chapter five. This notion of the fantastic also suggests that these worlds have a potentiality that is actualised as they circulate. Constructing her own celebrity, Kewpie leaves behind photographs and recollections with an appealing quality that is the product of labour, and a potentiality that is currently being activated as this once private collection of materials is circulated in the present. However, partly because a defining feature of the fantastic is that it appears effortless, I will argue, much of the labour it involves is being erased as these fantastic materials are circulated as evidence of what they imagine and enact.

In the introduction to this thesis, I suggested that a story Kewpie tells about Capucine indicates how understandings of facts and accuracy depend on exclusionary reifications. This story illustrates the narrow line between the sense in which *fantastic* can refer to the delusional and the sense in which *fantastic* can refer to the realisation of the seemingly impossible. Hence, in fiction, the fantastic is a genre in which “the possible and the impossible are confounded so as to leave the reader (and often the narrator and/or central character) with no consistent explanation for the story’s strange events” (Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, 4 ed.). My use of *fantastic* refers to the realisation of the seemingly impossible, while recognising that this produces a sense of what Nyong’o, following Deleuze, calls impossibility. Acts of “tether[ing] together worlds that can and cannot be,” Nyong’o (2018) points out, are “a necessary step towards investigating possibilities outside our present terms of order” (6). My use of *fantastic* draws on such theorisations of

minoritarian performance as having “always traded in the miraculous capacity to make the impossible possible” (Chambers-Letson 2018, 34), as well as on understandings of worldmaking developed by Arendt ([1958] 1998), discussed further in chapter five, who reminds us that “the new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle” (177–178). The current chapter reframes Kewpie and the girls’ performances of celebrity in these terms. Leading to a reconsideration of their functions and the conditions in which they took place, the following section elaborates on the sources and the stakes of these performances, describing them, collectively, as the District Six Star System.

The District Six Star System

The method of creating and promoting film stars as successful “types” with distinctive images known as the Hollywood Star System had its precedent in nineteenth-century theatre owners and producers’ uses of the rapidly developing press and techniques of modern advertising to turn their performers into known brands that would attract an audience. By the early 1930s, the Hollywood Star System had been consolidated by the five studios that dominated film production. This vertically integrated studio system had exclusive control over stars’ images, which Richard Dyer (1998) reminds us were not “exclusively visual [...] but rather a complex configuration of visual, verbal, and aural signs [...] manifest not only in films but in all kinds of media text” (34). The girls of District Six were not part of a vertically integrated studio system, nor did they have at their disposal any significant means of influence over the popular media. To promote their own on-stage performances—and, I argue, their hairdressing salons—they harnessed existing brands, many of which had particular currency in District Six due to the immense popularity of bioscopes.

Like many who performed in variety shows, the girls were billed as the names they adopted after stars, usually those audio-visually imported to the District by its seven bioscopes, which from the 1940s mostly screened Hollywood films. The seven oldest photographs in Kewpie's collection, gifted to her by a *Konserts* organiser, show Hedy Lamarr and Yvonne De Carlo, the performers she describes as “artists[,] beautiful,” and “attractive” (Lewis 2000), on-stage in the 1950s. Kewpie (1998) recalls that “Betty Grable” and “Betty Hutton” were the other “main queens” of that generation. Her other photographs depict Kim Novac, Caroll Baker, Patti LaBelle, Sandra Dee, Joanne Woodward, Jean Shrimpton, Hayley Mills, Connie Francis, Shirley Bassey, Piper Laurie, Greta Garbo, Stephanie Powers, Sue Thompson, Diana Ross, Leslie Caron, Julie Andrews, Olivia de Havilland, Dolores Gray, Kay Kendall, Brigitte Bardot, Mitzi Gaynor, and—excitingly—Miriam Makeba.²⁷ When she started performing at events and in competitions, Kewpie (1998, 1996) adopted the stage name Doris Day after her “favourite star of that years”: “on-stage first of all I was known as Doris Day. And everybody knew me as Doris Day on-stage, but as Kewpie off-stage.” Later, she changed her billing to Capucine.

The fantastic image Kewpie uses photography and testimony to project insists on the value of the self by claiming entitlement, via celebrity, to socio-economic privileges she was legally denied—and it is crucially informed by cinema's production and (literal) projection of stardom. The impact that innovations in film and related technologies had on lived experiences of time and space as they developed with exponential speed throughout the twentieth century has been widely discussed. Susan Douglas and Andrea McDonnell (2019) describe moving pictures as offering a “vision of everyday life, transformed into a fantastic viewing experience where space, time, and motion could be manipulated in entirely new

²⁷ Kafunta, also quoted in chapter four, is so named after the iconic cover of the 1968 P. P. Arnold album, taking the name of the album as opposed to the soul singer herself in a slight variation on the standard naming practice.

ways” (91-93). The advent of cinema also had a transformational impact on meanings of celebrity, as the feature film generated the film star (which in turn generated revenue for feature films) and facilitated engagement with this new figure through processes that were both intimate and public. The star was seen “up close,” their large image illuminating a dark, enclosed space, and yet cinema-going, and fandom more broadly, were social experiences.

During the years in which most of Kewpie’s photographs were taken, cinema was experiencing an international decline in popularity. This coincided with the rise in popularity of televisions, which became common items in United States (US) households from the 1950s, and the gradual collapse of Hollywood’s studio system following *US v. Paramount et al* 1948.²⁸ In District Six, however, cinema was following an entirely different trajectory. Cinema-going likely retained popularity for longer in South Africa as a whole, given television broadcasting was only introduced in 1976. Without the immediacy of television, stars would have retained some of what Douglas and McDonnell (2019) describe as the “protective aura” provided by “reverence and glamour” (116). In District Six, cinema-going was by far the most popular working-class leisure-time activity, as Bill Nasson (1989) and Jacqueline Maingard (2017) have each shown, drawing on life history interviews with ex-residents conducted in the 1980s and 2000s for the Cape Town History Project, later renamed the Western Cape Oral History Project and then the Centre for Popular Memory.

Until its destruction, a key aspect of District Six’s singularity as a place predominantly occupied by working-class people classified “Coloured” was its proximity to the port and the city centre, and the opportunities for leisure enabled by generally short distances of travel between amenities and residents’ homes, places of work, and schools, as well as the relatively privileged access they had to a variety of forms of entertainment. Maingard (2017) comments on the regularity with which this is mentioned by respondents,

²⁸ The Supreme Court ruled that studios had to sell films on an individual basis. See Bomboy 2017.

who nostalgically remember the availability of “the city centre for window shopping after work or on weekends, and of the foreshore for strolling and picnics” (24), as well as the “several cinemas in District Six itself” and “others close by in Woodstock and other parts of central Cape Town” (20). She notes that interviewees often orient themselves, their homes, and places of work, and describe where events took place, in relation to these various bioscopes (12-14). As one put it: “our way of life were based on bioscope” (17). Given the extent to which “cinemas” and films “structured and shaped their lives and their identities,” Maingard suggests we understand District Six residents as “cinema citizens,” participating “in its imaginative opportunities” while being “stripped of all other citizenship rights” (32).

The small body of research on the popularity of cinema-going in the District suggests that such participation was particularly important for District Sixers with less social capital. Jeppie (1990) describes cinema-going as a “specifically feminine” form of leisure (82); interviewees remember the bioscope as a place of freedom for young women, outside of their or their next-door neighbours’ homes, where they were allowed to socialise by parents and guardians reassured by their nearness and their visibility to fellow audience members. The girls of District Six, however, are not mentioned in relation to cinema by Maingard, Nasson, or Jeppie, nor in any of the interviews that have been digitised by the Centre for Popular Memory.

The Kewpie Collection is a key site from which we might further understand functions of cinema in the District—the opportunities it opened up, and their limits. It illustrates Maingard’s (2017) suggestion that cinema-going was “so thoroughly entangled with everyday life” that residents might be regarded not so much as “‘going to’ the cinema” as “‘already there” (19, 31). However, whereas they feature less prominently than “experiences of *going* to the cinema” in Centre for Popular Memory oral histories (29), specific films are crucial to certain of Kewpie’s recollections. Her account of meeting Brian,

with whom she was in a relationship for thirteen years, for example, centres on *A Star is Born* (1954).²⁹ Kewpie describes this meeting twice, and in both instances her invocation of the film imbues the night with a certain romance.

I'll put it down to this. As Shirley Bassey introduced me to him that lunch hour, she invited me to come to a party [...] He came to fetch me straight out the bioscope. I went to watch *A Star's Born*. Of Judy Garland. The old picture. And he was waiting outside for... for the bioscope now to come out. And as I was coming out, he grappled me into my arms and we walked home, into the party. And at the party I stayed until the next morning. Three, four o'clock the morning. And that's how we became... Acquainted and lovers. And from there it was kick-off. (Kewpie 1996)

This young man that I've seen passing by [...] I scooped out of my home every lunch hour just to watch him [...] Miss Bassey [...] introduced me and him [...] And I was invited to a party for the next day. And that night, I just forgot about snooping around to the party, I went off to bioscope. And that is where I came onto Judy Garland playing *A Star is Born*. And that was the first *Star is Born* I'd ever seen and I was so overwhelmed with it. Not thinking of anybody around me. And after the picture was done, I moved out of bioscope and coming through the foyer, I discovered Brian was standing outside, waiting for me, to take me to the party. He grabbed hold of me from the one side and pushed his arms through my arms, and walked me right up the main road [...] We got to the occasion, he opened the door, he allowed me in first, and as we came inside he took off my jacket for me [...] And as we got into the lounge, it went all dark [...] at that moment the music started playing [...] He started holding me tight, kissing me [...] and I discovered that this was really love for me. (Lewis 2000)

In the second account in particular, Kewpie's description of watching the film seamlessly flows into a markedly cinematic mode of narration, in which she manipulates time and space, guiding our focus in a short, continuous sweep from the bioscope to the party, and directs the lighting and music to heighten the romantic effect. Kewpie often harnesses the cinematic in this way, to evoke a sense of glamour, possibility, and transport. While Nasson (1989) describes going to the "bioscope" as a "firmly local" activity (286), it is one that involved being metaphorically transported beyond the confines of the local. In turn, cinema was one means through which an imagined global was imbricated within District Six, even though the District is commonly conceived of as a "bounded space" (Bennett and Julius

²⁹ This account also contributes to understandings of gendered socialisation in the District, given the established "significance of the cinema as a place where teenage boys and girls could meet and court" (Maingard 2017, 22).

2008, 52). This is indicated by respondents' recollections of visits to the bioscopes themselves "by actual film stars" and publicity stunts by cinema owners—as when *The Mask of Zorro* (1940) was screened and "ushers wore black eyemasks and fake silver spurs, and the cinema management placed a large cut out of a horse on the wall of a neighbouring shop" (Nasson 1989, 287). The District Six Star System worked similarly, as a form of participation in the imaginative opportunities of cinema.

Co-opting cinema's capacity to collapse spatial and temporal distance, this collective performance inscribed the District with possibilities of celebrity. Kewpie consistently uses the girls' "star" names in the captions she writes on photographs and gives in interviews. Further, the Piper Laurie and Leslie Caron who appear in Kewpie's photographs are often described as "the famous Miss Piper Laurie" and "the smashing Miss Leslie Caron." Kewpie (1999) extends the District Six Star System naming practice to define others by association with its glamour, declaring one friend "the famous Mrs Mills, always with us, famous for singing and dancing with us," and naming another, Mrs Biggs, "the Duchess," so that one handwritten inscription reads "The Duchess, Kewpie & Julie Andrews" (fig. 1.5). Kewpie names Mrs Biggs's Kensington house "Las Vegas," so that "Taken in Las Vegas, 10th Dec 1971," acts as a suitably fabulous handwritten inscription on a black-and-white photograph in which she

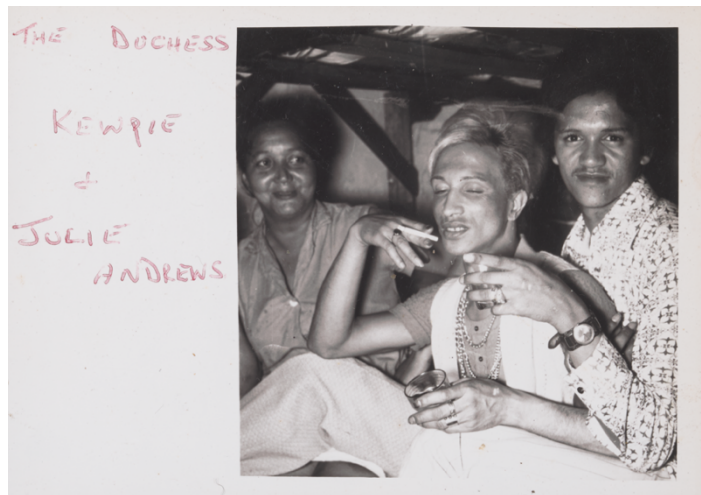


Figure 1.5

perches cross-legged in a trouser suit, crocheted waistcoat and Mary-Jane pumps, a fur hat resting on her blonde curls (fig. 1.6). Describing herself in Las Vegas, here, and elsewhere in Paris, Germany, and New York, Kewpie performs a global (North) freedom of movement. With her

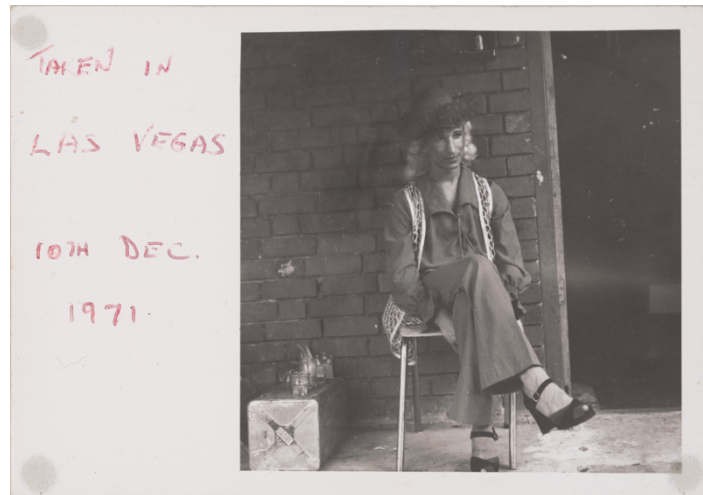


Figure 1.6

ability to physically travel restricted by her father who prevented her from travelling “overseas,” and by apartheid policies that controlled her corporeal movement in a local, national, and international context, she instead participates in the imaginative opportunities of cinema.

Kewpie appropriates markers of socio-economic privileges she is legally denied as they are constructed cinematically. Certain of her photographs immediately appear to reference contemporary conventions of what Dyer (1997) calls “star imagery.” Dyer describes the “radiant transcendence” of images of Hollywood stars, especially women, that aim to represent the metaphorical “light within” that “makes whites special” (207-208). This “light within” was guarded by the logic of apartheid, through which the symbolic was made material. In her second book of poetry, Gabeba Baderoon (2006) writes that her mother, classified “Coloured,” was “the first in her family to take / the bus from Claremont / up the hill to university” to study medicine in the 1950s—and that at one point during lectures, she and the other Black students had to leave the theatre:

Behind the closed door, in an autopsy
black students were not meant to see,
the uncovering and cutting of white skin.

Under the knife, the skin,
the mystery of sameness.

This “light within” has informed the ideal of white femininity visually constructed by Hollywood since its earliest days, with women stars lit to be radiantly white and bleached blonde hair and white clothing used to create a glow (Dyer 1997). Kewpie often appears in such a way in photographs, her bleached hair accentuated by white satin, silk, tulle, or lace. At a party, she holds a white cigarette holder between fingers in long white gloves, blonde hair curled gently from her face (fig. 1.7). Again dressed in white in figure 1.8, Kewpie is transcendent. She perches on the boot of a car so that her hair, piled on her head and illuminated by the sun, is amalgamated with the bright sky at the top of the frame.

We might imagine a District Six movie theatre as a counterpoint to the theatre Baderoon describes Black students being forced to leave, in which only the “mystery of sameness” is revealed. The visually constructed mythical “light within” would have instead illuminated the dark, enclosed room in a cinema designated for “Non-Whites” in which Kewpie (1996, 1998), the self-declared “bioscope fanatic,” would sit before larger-than-life images of stars and then take up the promise of Hollywood to construct her own celebrity, appropriating the signifiers of “star imagery.” Moreover, as well as screening films, bioscopes in and near to the District were popular venues for live musical performance and cabaret and so, in a more literal sense, facilitated Kewpie’s celebrity.



Figure 1.7



Figure 1.8



Figure 1.9

In a 1983 interview, the jazz singer Sathima Bea Benjamin remembers performing in such shows, “on the same bill as local tap dancers, acrobats, [...] anything that people found entertaining,” in nightclubs, bioscopes, and churches. “Capetonians are very good at imitating,” Benjamin explains: “We always had the Cape Town Jerry Lewis, the Cape Town Bing Crosby” (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 66). Perhaps the former is the same “District Six, Cape Town’s Jerry Lewis” who stands next to Kewpie (“that was supposed to be Barbara Streisand—me as Barbara Streisand, with the straight hair all swirled out”) at the Ambassador Club one evening when they “had like a show business show” (fig. 1.9; Kewpie 1999). According to Kewpie (1996), Jerry (“he was known as Jerry, and everybody just called him Jerry”) “was very witty on-stage, and beautiful shows going around the peninsula.” He could walk, jump, dance, sing, and go “on with his jokes, like Jerry Lewis used to, on screen. But, like Kewpie herself, “he was on-stage all the time.” Benjamin also recalls that a variety show in which she performed in 1956 and 1957 featured “two Moffies[,] Piper Laurie and another man called Joey” (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 72).

In such instances, Benjamin gives an account of a local performance culture within which we can locate the District Six Star System. She describes musicians learning melodies from Hollywood films by sitting through multiple screenings in bioscopes—where audiences were vocally and physically responsive to both films and on-stage performances—and replicating hair and clothing styles seen on record covers (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 62). Benjamin remembers one performer would walk on stage, when his name was called, “from the back of the cinema”—emerging from the very audience from which he would always receive (as Kewpie says she did) “standing ovations.” If a performance was less pleasing, the audience “would throw things at you, you know.” Benjamin evocatively depicts these shows as a collaborative performance by those on-stage and in the audience. “They could take you off and replace you with someone else who would really do something beautiful,” she explains. “So[,] it was a really tough but beautiful audience. You could almost hear them breathing with you [...] It was always such a rewarding experience” (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 67-68).

Benjamin’s account illustrates dynamics of audience participation intrinsic to the wider performance culture in which we can locate the District Six Star System—dynamics important to my discussion of Kewpie’s performance work in later chapters. Benjamin also gestures to a local performance economy, its competitive standards and its stakes: performers who had things thrown at them would presumably find future employment less forthcoming than those who received “standing ovations.” This illuminates the material realities underpinning the fantastic and the senses of fabulousness it indexes, suggesting that being a “bioscope fanatic” can be about work, and that the imaginative opportunities of cinema can be about income and therefore survival.

As seen in Kewpie’s projection of her own star image via a “complex configuration of visual, verbal, and aural signs” in photographs and interviews, the District Six Star

System—as a re-imagining of the Hollywood “Star System”—plays with the distinction Dyer (1998) makes between stars as a “phenomenon of production” and a “phenomenon of consumption” (10). Moreover, I argue, practices constituting the District Six Star System, including the appropriation of signifiers of star imagery, were used by the girls to insulate against the labour precarity they experienced as hairdressers and on-stage performers. Since these practices can be understood as part of wider performance culture, this argument emphasises the importance of framing discussions of cinema, Hollywood, and US images in District Six and neighbouring areas with an understanding, as bell hooks ([1996] 2009) puts it, of “the way white supremacy shapes cultural production” (285).³⁰

In this context, through the District Six Star System, the girls of District Six redefined their own value. Expressing her longing for the return of the *Konserts*, an interviewee in *A Normal Daughter* explains that the *Konserts* showed “’n moffie se waarde: hy is werd ook om ’n film ster te wees” (a moffie’s worth: he is worthy of being a film star) (Lewis 2000). This reference to “’n moffie se waarde” acts as a reminder of the oppressive conditions in which the performances being discussed took place. Arguing that the glamour the girls performed had a potentially inverse relationship to their socioeconomic precarity, in the following section, I understand the hairdressing salon as a space in which what this interviewee calls a moffie’s worth could be capitalised upon, with the social relations suggested by the salon facilitated by gay stylists themselves as opposed to part of an inherited organisation of social relations. Pointing out that it is a bounded space, I suggest that the sociality of the salon might be legible as “open” because the girls’ labour to convert the symbolic capital of fabulousness at this site is made to look effortless.

³⁰ As hooks reminds us, white audiences have been able to find Jenny Livingstone’s (1990) *Paris is Burning* reassuring because, in hooks’ ([1996] 2009) words, Livingstone frames her subjects’ “worship at the throne of whiteness” with no awareness of how “white supremacy shapes cultural production” (281, 285).

“’n moffie se waarde”

The salons in which many of the girls worked appear to have formed a network of sorts. A sense of a network is evoked by Chetty’s ([1994] 2012) brief and tantalising description of the girls “whil[ing] away the day” with “popular social outings” known as “salon crawls” (123). However, although Kewpie describes one photograph as “a party all the gay friends went to,” held in “some salon in Claremont,” and although she recalls visiting Piper’s hair salon after finishing work at her own, the “salon crawls” referenced by Chetty are not mentioned in any of the interviews held at GALA. What interviewees do convey is that the salons acted as a network of apprenticeship at a time when the formal study of hairdressing was reserved for those classified “White.” Kewpie was trained with Piper by Charles Arendse at Salon André, at 39 Upper Darling Street, District Six (Lewis 2000), then worked for Mr Davy, running Salon Kewpie in Fifth Avenue, Kensington (fig. 1.10). Salon Kewpie moved premises once, to Sunderland Street (fig. 1.11), Kensington, where Kewpie would also open her third and final salon, Yugene’s Hairtique, seen in *A Normal Daughter* (Lewis



Figure 1.10



Figure 1.11



Figure 1.12



Figure 1.13

2000; fig. 1.12).³¹ Kewpie's own apprentices included Mitzi and Patti LaBelle, both of whom she "discovered" while they were looking for work at Piper's Hair Fashions, located across the road from the Woodstock Police Station. Kewpie (1996) taught Patti hairdressing from the age of fifteen and "qualified her as a hairdresser"; Mitzi "did all the shampooing" and was taught by Kewpie "how to mix" and "use [...] perms and colours, bleaches and strips."

While some had other jobs—Diana Ross and Cliffidia, for example, worked at Groote Schuur and the Peninsula Maternity Hospitals, respectively—many of the girls worked as hairdressers or in hair salons, including Leslie Caron and Kay Kendall. As well as Mitzi and Patti, Kewpie (1996) employed Rocky, Bassey, Valley, Joseph (who after four years left Kewpie and "opened up her own salon"), Sue Thompson, and Brian, who worked as a cashier. The Kewpie Collection offers a fascinating insight into this world of hairdressing, its formalities and quirks. Stylists participated in local and national

³¹ Malcolm Corrigan and Marsden (2020) have compiled dates and locations from 1966 and 1975 editions of the *Cape Times*. By 1966, Kewpie was running her first salon, Salon Kewpie, located at 31 Fifth Avenue in Kensington (24). Around 1966, Salon Kewpie moved to Sunderland Street (Kewpie 1996). Around 1975, "Kewpie again moved premises within Kensington, opening Eugene's Hairtique, on the corner of Sixth Street and Fifth Avenue, which remained open into the late 1990s" (Corrigan and Marsden 2020, 24).

competitions (fig. 1.13). Products were purchased from Sylvia Biggs, “the Duchess,” wife to Billy Biggs. Other products were improvised. Stylists would create their “own colours [...] using vinegar[,] powders, [...] even tea leaves.” Mitzi would dye “her own hairs [...] like a peacock[,] mixing the Christmas trimmings piece by piece in little jugs of water.” After customers “were very upset” about their “hair dropping” and “falling out with the Wella’s straight,” Kewpie (1996) says: the stylists “discovered how to manufacture—I’ll put it down to that, manufacture—our own straighteners” using “perm liquids” and “Fuller’s earth” (or “mud,” if it wasn’t available), “cake flour, bread flour [...] and we had the best straighteners coming out.”

The hairdressing salons in which the girls worked can be understood in relation to discussions of salons in Salt River, about ten kilometres from District Six; further afield in Ermelo, a town in Mpumalanga, between Johannesburg and Eswatini; and on the Cape Flats to which many District Sixers were removed. According to accounts given by interviewees, the hair salons in and near to District Six fulfilled for gay stylists the three related functions described by Reid (2013) in his ethnography of the “ladies” and “gays” of Ermelo. The first function was financial: salons offered an opportunity for gays to be trained and gain paid employment in a profession. Second, they were places for gays to meet and perhaps socialise. Third, they were sites of interaction with a wider community. Because Ermelo salons facilitated “engagement and exchange” with “a largely heterosexual female client base,” according to Reid, gay stylists’ “visibility, status, fame and their role as interlocutors” gave them “influence” on “perceptions of gays in their community” (99). Reid notes that “hairstyling” is “an instantly recognisable niche profession for gay men in a South African setting.” Being a hairstylist is, according to one of his participants, “one of the symptoms of being gay” (17).

In his recollection of a Salt River hairdressing salon, which “was a meeting place for moffies,” Zackie Achmat ([1994] 2012) alludes to the second and third of these functions:

The moffies in these salons had wonderful parties. But the moffie hairdressers were also places where ‘straight’ men could go for a ‘regular blow job’ as a blow-dry was then known. My youngest aunt’s husband visited moffie hairdressers regularly. In the community, all fashionable women had their hair done at the hairdressers. At *Eid* after the Fast, virtually every Muslim household had members in the moffie hairdressers getting blow-drys. The community in Salt River and elsewhere has always had ambiguous attitudes towards the hairdressers, ranging from feigned disgust to sexual curiosity and its satisfaction. But the verbal and sometimes physical abuse horrified me. (335)

Achmat captures salons as a bounded space from which “moffies” acted as the gatekeepers of style and Muslim respectability while providing output for excesses of feeling in heteronormative life (“regular blow job[s]” for “‘straight’ men”), as signalled by Achmat’s “youngest aunt’s husband.” Achmat also captures the ambivalent position of these hairdressers in the wider community.

As with those discussed by Reid, the hair salons in and near to District Six were not all under the financial control of gays who worked there as stylists, although gay stylists were crucial to their appeal to customers. Interviewees in *A Normal Daughter* suggest that the glamour of the District Six Star System gave the girls authenticity as hairdressers—that “’n hairdresser sonder ’n moffie issie ’n hairdresser nie” (a hairdresser without a moffie isn’t a hairdresser) (Lewis 2000). The *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition featured a recreated section of Salon Kewpie, replete with dark green chairs, elaborately styled wigs, and orange walls adorned with images of Hollywood stars. One of the salon walls featured Piper Laurie’s description of her customers: “they will think of the movie and say, ‘oh I want a *Butterfield 8* style,’ you know, something like that. Or they’ll come and say, ‘oh I want a Cleopatra hair style.’ Then you automatically know what they were talking about.” Piper’s words suggest that the hairstylist has a form of capital that enables them to “automatically” understand the reference of the customer, while the salon promises the customer access, via the stylist, to

the glamour of the aspirational star imagery with which it is decorated, and which establishes possibility within the space. There is a sense that salons were spaces in which the District Six Star System was performed, and that the girls' glamour as hairdressers and on-stage performers was mutually constitutive and financially beneficial—as indicated by Marsden and Smith's description of the girls selling tickets for their upcoming performances from salons in which they worked (*Kewpie* 2018).

Kewpie did not have complete financial control of the salons in which she was trained and employed. Yet she tells Lewis that she “never worked” because, having seen clients at home from the age of fourteen, as seems to have been typical, she “continued [her]self to become that hairdresser for the day when [she] moved to Windermere,” where she “became [her] own boss as a hairdresser” (*Kewpie* 1996). In light of her employee status, Kewpie's recollection that she was her “own boss” suggests that hairdressing allowed her a degree of liberation reminiscent of the “exhilarating kind of freedom” that Roach (2008) suggests creatives get from what he terms “reclaimed labour” (147-148). moore (2018) proposes we consider the “aesthetic” work—or “work with an ‘e’ (*snap!*)”—of fabulousness in Roach's terms, as a form of “reclaimed labour,” because even when “not produced in ideal situations[,] werk” involves investing “time, love, and skill into one's own work” (59, 97).

Yet, as a fantastic performance—the fabulousness of which buttresses financial viability through the accrual of professional kudos—the District Six Star System blurs the distinction moore draws between *work* and *werk*, a term originating in US Black queer underground subcultures and now ubiquitous in “queer popular culture” and, increasingly, straight popular culture. As moore (2018) understands it, “that little ‘e’ is the distance between the stuff we don't want to do but have to in order to live and pay our bills (*work*) and the love and labour we do because we want to (*werk*)” (76). And while moore suggests

that *werk* “highlights the effort that goes into making memorable aesthetic moments happen,” if it is indeed “about creativity, virtuosity, and a certain kind of mastery”—qualities that typically have an effect of effortlessness—then this “type of aesthetic labour actually seen on the body” might well have the opposite effect (78), of obscuring said effort. This is a contradictory and quintessential quality of the fantastic: it involves a kind of labour that aspires to appear effortless. Although his study of fabulousness doesn’t explore it in depth, moore alludes to this quality when he describes an interviewee’s response to being asked about “the first time he felt fabulous”: “he came for my wig because the question implied there was a day in his life he was not fabulous” (79).

Given this quality of effortlessness, we might say that the gay stylists of District Six carved out a niche for themselves as gatekeepers of a valued mode of feminine glamour, their fantastic performances of which both on and off-stage lead Chetty ([1994] 2012) to remark that “the beauty business was their natural niche” (123). In a *Drum* article that is perhaps relatively sympathetic because it concerns “The Gay”—and safely bounded—“World of the Moffie Hairdresser,” Jackie Heyns (1976) declares it “no mystery” that “moffies [...] dominate the hairdressing profession”: “Their femininity naturally craves for like company and this is found in the colleagues and the customers of the hairdressing salons. [...] Their sexual abnormality has been put to full use. Their female attitude to life gives them the ability to appreciate feminine beauty while their male physique grants them a natural superiority.” Drawing on ethnographic research conducted during the 2010s on the Cape Flats, including “observations” at a “gay owned” salon, Allanise Cloete (2018) alludes to processes through which understandings of hairdressing as a gay niche have been established, noting that customers “expected” stylists to “play up certain characteristics” for which “the gay hairdresser” is “known,” such as quick, “snappy or witty remarks” and what Cloete calls “exaggerat[ed] femininity” (147-148). Elsewhere, we can see how established

“form[s] of verbal performance” are reinscribed as natural articulations of a stable identity in relation to which the niche is understood (162). In her brief discussion of *A Normal Daughter* (Lewis 2000), for instance, Shannon M. Jackson (2017) describes Charles Arendse as “a well-known moffie and stylist in District Six”—leaving us to wonder what his late wife Gladys would have made of this summary (88).

Arguing they have “contributed” to “social acceptance of the figure of the moffie,” Cloete (2018) traces gay stylists back to “legendary hairdressers who achieved fame in District Six during the 1950s and 1960s,” amongst whom she counts Kewpie, “in particular” (148). Although compelling, however, Cloete’s suggestion that “new ways of performing community” might be “invent[ed]” in “the space of the hair salon” is complicated by the dynamics of the “acceptance” to which she refers (160). As *niche* should remind us, the salons in which the girls of District Six worked were bounded spaces, in which symbolic economies could be contingently reworked. This is acknowledged by Valmont Layne and Ciraj Rassool (2001), who contend that what they describe as the “gay culture expressed” in salons was only “more” accepted on the condition that “it was contained in that space or performed on-stage” (153). As noted in the introductory chapter, recent scholarship has continued to present the Kewpie Collection as evidence of the girls’ social integration, describing Kewpie and the girls “liv[ing] openly” and being “supported” by the wider “community,” being “comfortable expressing themselves openly” (Corrigall and Marsden 2020, 17, 23), and “[feeling] largely accepted,” with “this [acceptance] creat[ing] an environment where their sexual and gender identities could be openly expressed” (Smith and Marsden 2021, 168). It seems likely that such descriptions are related to the girls’ fantastic performances of fabulousness, as a symbolic capital that they laboured to convert to financial capital. In other words, their fantastic performances in and of these circumscribed spaces (the salon and stage) convey a sense of expansiveness and

effortlessness and are available to be taken up and read as evidence of freedom, hospitality, and openness.

moore (2018) reminds us that “fabulousness is a mode of creative expression [...] typically employed by people responding to oppressive or otherwise restrictive sociocultural conditions.” However, unlike the “alternative world[s] built around specialised knowledge of what’s ‘hot’ in that world”—the nightclub, for example (82)—the hairdressing salon and the *Konsert* financially profit by attracting a clientele or audience from the wider society in which its producers live and work. Kewpie (1996) alludes to this kind of social labour, when she tells Lewis that she opened the first hairdressing salon in Windermere and brought with her the necessary associated glamour: “I introduced Windermere to dancing. I woke them up.” Other forms of social labour are alluded to by Heyns (1976), who notes “Cupie’s” expertise in code-switching means her “handling of female customers is a joy to behold.” Although “acceptance” perceived within the space of the salon might be conceived of as widespread due to observed popularity of the salon or diversity of clientele, then, it is also contingent on the socially reproductive labour performed within that space. Its limits are indicated by the visitor to a salon who, Cloete (2018) notes, qualifies his “admiration for the moffie [hairdresser] in juxtaposition to [...] ‘the gays of today’” (149). In this instance, worked-for forms of acceptance are weaponised against those who are perceived as failing to do the work.

The spaces Kewpie (1996) sought—“wherever [she] could move around”—were those in which she could not only dance but be celebrated for dancing and thus work to turn the symbolic capital of fabulousness into financial capital as an on-stage performer and, relatedly, a hairdresser. In chapter three, I point out that “mov[ing] around” functions as an alternative to, and resists, the girls’ everyday experiences of getting “pushed about and pushed around” (Kewpie 1998). The spaces of the salon, the party, and the nightclub that

allowed Kewpie to “move around” therefore offered a reprieve from violence that was quotidian rather than exceptional—and the girls’ work to establish alternate economies of relation within these spaces seems to have to do with survival as much as anything else. Using photography and testimony to perform celebrity, Kewpie creates related, metaphorical spaces in which she moves in otherwise impossible ways—beyond the confines of District Six, and beyond the confines of apartheid. Clearly, however, there are troubling limits to the transformative potential of this creative work and the senses of movement it engenders. Considering their roles as hairdressers and on-stage performers, we might go so far as to suggest that the girls’ work to convert the symbolic capital of fabulousness into financial capital seems to anticipate a terrain of zero-hour, platform, and gig employment with low or unstable income, in which labour and production are increasingly affective or immaterial. This is a terrain that induces entrepreneurial self-commodification while persistently deferring its promised rewards.³²

Clearly evincing the symbolic capital of fabulousness on which she endeavoured to financially capitalise, however, Kewpie’s performances of celebrity are easily taken up and presented as evidence of the transformed material conditions they do the work of imagining, even as they imply the labour involved in performing the celebrity and acceptance they are taken to evidence. For instance, the faintly colourised Movie Snaps photograph discussed in the introduction to this chapter evidently holds a particular appeal for scholars and curators (fig. 1.1). Proposing that it depicts Kewpie’s performance of a celebrity-paparazzi

³² Discussions of this terrain of labour precarity as a recent phenomenon emerging from shifts in labour relations in the 1970s and neoliberal economic conditions have been queried elsewhere. Some point to the uneven distribution, necessary to capitalism, of vulnerability to the inherent precariousness of the economy (e.g., Lorey 2010; Murray and Gollmitzer 2011). Challenging the Eurocentrism of academic discussions of precarious work, which have been increasingly popular since the 2007-2008 financial crash and the implementation of austerity measures across much of the globe, some frame the emergence of precarity in the global North as an expansion of economic conditions that have long defined labour in the Global South (e.g., Munck 2013; B. Scully 2016). Yet, as Isabell Lorey puts it, “those who should be the white middle class experience precarity as if it is new” (Puar 2012, 172)—and, as Nyong’o (2013) notes, there remains a need for “a more hemispheric geography, than accounts which tie precarity to the rise of neoliberalism” (160).

encounter, I read this photograph as one facet of Kewpie's construction of her own celebrity, aiming with *construction* to highlight that the material remains of such performances have an appealing quality that is the product of labour, and a potentiality that is being activated as this once private collection of materials is circulated in the present.

For the duration of the *Kewpie* (2019) exhibition's Johannesburg run, a two-metre-tall reproduction of this image was displayed on an external front-facing window of the Market Photo Workshop. At the time of writing, it is one of only two photographs from the Collection to have been printed in an academic publication (Tucker 2009). It is also the only photograph from the Collection featured in Erica de Greef's (2019) doctoral thesis highlighting lacunae produced by exclusionary museum practices including heteronormative and binary systems of categorisation (detailing the "androgynous, sixties fashionability" presented by the "non-heteronormative fashion icon," de Greef asks: "where is Kewpie's trouser suit [in museum collections]?") (116-112).³³ Both scholars understand Kewpie's spectacular self-expression as indicative of enabling conditions. Tucker (2009) uses the image to illustrate his claims that "queer men could walk freely along Hanover Street or any other" (77). While criticising the "museal violence of exclusion and silence," de Greef is in agreement regarding what conditions are documented by the photograph itself, citing Tucker's assertion that "within District Six and the neighbouring areas, queer life was able to prosper" (de Greef 2019, 122, 117; Tucker 2009, 77). In each instance, the photograph is presented as evidence of what I argue it performs.

As this once-private collection of photographs is publicly circulated as documentary evidence, Kewpie is remembered in terms of the celebrity and freedom the Collection

³³ The same photograph is reproduced, but not discussed, in Nadia Davids' (2007) doctoral thesis on the memorialisation of District Six (209).

depicts. While being interviewed in 1996, Kewpie made a comment that seems to exactly predict this ongoing process:

If you kick the bucket now, or tomorrow, or next year... they talk the best parts of you. But while you around, they also have a little crossword puzzle too, in your life. It is like a crossword puzzle, then. But when you- you've kicked the bucket, you have been the best gay around that you can ever think of. People will have stories like... like Cinderella was. Then you come out of a *noveltjie*.

In the present that it anticipates, Kewpie's wry description of "the best parts" being transformed into a fairy tale sounds as a caution against accepting any single narrative as the truth. Equally, it sounds as a celebration of the fantastic capacity of recollection. In any case, I have suggested an alternative sense in which we might consider the Kewpie Collection to be moving: not in the sense in which we might describe as moving the fairy tale of Cinderella who is given permission by her fairy godmother to go to the ball where she can be a star, but in the sense that it is a space Kewpie co-creates in which she can be a star and move, however contingently, beyond her inadequate present.

Conclusion

Kewpie's repeated statements that she would have been a retired dancer had she not missed the opportunity evoke a sense of lost possibility reminiscent of what Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover (2016) describe in cinema as "a queer temporality of belatedness." It "is so affective," they propose, "because it is a utopian gesture; it contains not simply the sadness of failure but a utopian desire that it not be too late" (236, 227). Prevented from travelling "overseas," Kewpie (1996) searched for spaces within District Six in which she could "move around." In this chapter, I have read photographs such as the two taken by Movie Snaps as such spaces. Claiming socio-economic privileges and freedoms legally denied to her under apartheid, Kewpie moves beyond or "around" it in the realm of the imagination. Fittingly, these photographs are an example of what is in photography called "speculation" or, more

commonly, “shooting on spec”: taking “photographs in the hope that someone will” purchase them (Lynch-Johnt and Perkins 2008, 113). Kewpie’s creative use of this genre is additionally speculative, fantastically bringing into visibility what was lost when she was denied the opportunity to travel overseas.

Alongside accounts of the girls’ roles as hairdressers and on-stage performers, the colourised Movie Snaps photograph has been shown to indicate the labour involved in fabulousness. Contra the conclusions drawn by Tucker (2009), de Greef (2019), *A Normal Daughter* (Lewis 2000), and the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition, I contend that this labour endeavours to transform the sociocultural conditions in which it takes place. In other words, the girls’ performances of fabulousness are not enabled by hospitable conditions but rather themselves strive to transform conditions of precarity into what these readings understand the performances to be enabled by. I do not mean to suggest that such reconfigurations of space overturn existing spatial economies but, rather, that the girls work within available terms to create moments of possibility. While these performances are as much about survival as they are anything else, survival is necessary to the pursuit of other imaginaries, and I turn to these in subsequent chapters

In part, I wish to draw attention to the ways in which imagery discussed here should be understood in terms of localised forms of cultural creativity as opposed to aspirations to US styles. Disidentifying, in the sense theorised by Muñoz (2009), “with the constraining and phobic limit of the present” (169), Kewpie reimagines celebrity as she performs it, thus reconfiguring the imagined elsewhere promising possibilities of celebrity with which she inscribes District Six in the series of sixteen photographs discussed in the introduction to this thesis. Working “on, with, and against” cinema, she uses photography and oral testimony to create a counterarchive of possibilities. Continuing this line of argument, the

following chapter suggests that Kewpie's use of cinema additionally produces an archive of trans capacity.

Chapter Two: “People Can’t Say I’m a Man, They Can’t Say I’m a Woman”

The Kewpie Collection as an Archive of Trans Capacity

While interviewing Kewpie (1998), Gevisser admires a particular photograph. “Beautiful pictures,” he tells her. “You look like a 90’s model. Look at that. This is a very 90’s kind of look.” Kewpie’s response is recorded as: “I look like ... in the sex change there” (12). This represents one of a few instances during the thirty-page transcript in which an ellipsis indicates that the transcriber couldn’t make out what was being said—and, unfortunately, GALA does not hold a recording of this interview that might be referenced. For reasons that will be made clear, I would hazard that “... in” might represent “Capucine,” whose name Kewpie sometimes goes by, and whom Kewpie (1996) elsewhere describes as “a sex change.” It seems likely that the transcriber might have registered the final syllable of *Capucine*, as pronounced by Kewpie, as a more familiar word, *in*, and found the preceding two unintelligible, particularly since the meaning of this sentence would have only become clear upon substantive engagement with the Kewpie Collection.

This partially obscured word, “... in,” illustrates that what we might call an archive of “the sex change” is fragmentary and under erasure. It also indicates that the Kewpie Collection is one site at which the roots of such an archive might be found. Explaining that GALA was “established, in part, to address [...] absence from, or biased representation within, the formal institutional archives of church and state,” Reid (2002) cites Joan Nestle of the New York-based Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA), who describes “the source of this gap in the archival record” (200-201). According to Nestle, “the roots of the Archives lie in the silenced voices, the love letters destroyed, the pronouns changed, the diaries carefully edited, the pictures never taken, the euphemised distortions that patriarchy would

let pass,” adding: “I have lived through the time of wilful deprivation and now it is time to discover and to cherish and to preserve” (Schwartz 1978, 20).

Nestle’s description of “the roots” of the LHA, with which Reid implies GALA’s likeness, reminds us that the latter Archive’s incorporation of Kewpie’s photographs and testimony, albeit an attempt to “cherish and to preserve,” has produced new forms of obscurement, meaning the Kewpie Collection itself features “absence[s]” and “biased representation[s]” that include “pronouns changed.” As detailed in the introductory chapter, although Kewpie (1998) states “people can’t say I’m a man, they can’t say I’m a woman,” and although she only ever uses she/her pronouns to refer to herself and her gay friends, many who have written about her—including her interviewers—do describe her as a man and using he/him pronouns. This misrecognition is presumably not malicious but reflects how those who have written about Kewpie read or understand her within the main interpretive schemes available to them. Because gender is instituted through a stylised repetition of acts, however, and because the form those acts can take is determined by a social reality that is in part constituted through language, the issue of how categories of difference are linguistically constituted and established as norm has a direct and important link to which of us is able to appear in public and be understood as worthy of protection.

Because descriptions of Kewpie in terms that she does not use constitute acts of erasure that have direct consequences for liveability, they can be understood in relation to the prohibition of the so-called sex change from public space. As B Camminga’s (2019) work on the emergence of *transgender* in South Africa shows, the Nationalist government foreclosed possibilities for a sense of trans community or “more transgressive politics of *transgender*” (90), while establishing what officials called the sex change as a cure for homosexuality from the 1960s onwards. Male-assigned individuals who underwent surgery were given new identity documents and instructed to live the rest of their lives as women.

They were supposed to aspire to womanhood; the medical procedure referred to as the sex change was construed as necessary to this transition but not to be discussed moving forward.³⁴

In the introduction to this thesis, I suggested it is necessary to both seek historical precedent and remain wary of the impulse to make retroactive identificatory claims. Confronting this problem, Transgender Studies scholars have developed useful methods. Since the girls referred to each other using she/her pronouns after being assigned male at birth, for example, we might view this Collection as an instance of what Susan Stryker (1998) calls “transgender phenomena” or as indicative of what David Getsy (2014) calls “transgender capacity.” The former “emerge from and bear witness to the epistemological rift between gender signifiers and their signifieds” thereby “disrupt[ing] and denaturalis[ing] Western modernity’s ‘normal’ reality, specifically the fiction of a unitary psychosocial gender that is rooted biologically in corporeal substance” (Stryker 1998, 147). The latter is a methodologically useful concept that allows us to “make space for all of the ways in which self-determined and successive genders, identities, and bodily morphologies have always been present throughout history as possibilities and actualities” without “projecting present-day understandings of transgender identities into the past” (Getsy 2014, 48), nor into locations to which *transgender* has travelled and been invested with new meanings, as Camminga (2019) shows has been the case in South Africa.

This chapter argues that the Kewpie Collection is one site at which the roots of an archive, in this instance an archive of trans capacity, might be found. I discuss this suggested archive in relation to another: an archive of transgender phenomena that appeared in *Drum*

³⁴ The nature of this secrecy, which has been conveyed to me anecdotally, means that formal citations are sparse. However, Amanda Lock Swarr (2012) recounts her interviewees’ descriptions of “a treatment protocol of silence that require[d]” those “seeking treatment” to “change their names and social associations, often “encourag[ing] them to move to locations where they didn’t know anyone” (50). Additionally, Camminga (2019) describes “remarkabl[e]” political “support” for the “legal facilitation” of new identities through the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Act 51 of 1974 (53-54).

magazine and the *Golden City Post* (later *Post*) newspaper between the early 1950s and the late 1970s. The importance of these extremely popular sister publications, and of *Drum* in particular, to contemporary arts, culture, and politics, and to popular understandings of race and gender, is well established (Choonoo 1997, 252-264).³⁵ What warrants further critical attention is that the urban celebration of each was increasingly tempered by sensationalist warnings of the degradation of urbanity by so-called homosexuality. Relatedly, from the mid-1950s, both periodicals represented the girls of District Six to a readership across sub-Saharan Africa. Having gained a degree of notoriety as an on-stage performer and hairdresser, Kewpie was featured in a number of these articles.

Given Kewpie's multi-media construction of her own celebrity, detailed in the previous chapter, it is significant that she does not seem to have preserved clippings of any of the articles in which she is featured. Contesting Chetty's ([1994] 2012) suggestion that "the vagaries of the popular press—at least for a time—allowed them the freedom to dream" (127), I show that this coverage forcibly aligned the girls with what Kaja Silverman (1996) calls "debased images" (79), suggesting they were lacking. Moreover, these images were structured by, and changed over time in accordance with, perceptions of homosexuality, sex, and gender that Camminga (2019) has traced in contemporary medico-legal discourse (44-59). Furthering the argument established in chapter one of this thesis, I contend that Kewpie (1996), the self-declared "bioscope fanatic," instead drew on cinematic experiences and strategies made potentially and variously available to subjects with the necessary material, discursive, and imaginative capital to disidentify, in the sense theorised by Muñoz (2009),

³⁵ Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg, holds forty years of material from *Drum*, which was foremost among white-owned publications aimed at Black readership to circulate contemporary constructions of African urban modernity. Founded as *The African Drum* in 1951, the magazine's early change in name and content came after the publisher and owner's vision of African authenticity failed to resonate, perhaps unsurprisingly, with their target readership: "Give us jazz and film stars, man! We want Duke Ellington, Satchmo, and hot dames! [...] You can cut out this junk about kraals and folk tales and Basutos in blankets—forget it! You're just trying to keep us backward!" (Sampson 2005, 7).

“with the constraining and phobic limit of the present” (169). Working “on, with and against” cinema (Muñoz 1999, 12), Kewpie uses photography and testimony to create a counterarchive of possibilities, not only for her own celebrity, but for a sense of trans community and “transgressive politics of *transgender*” (Camminga 2019, 90).

Becoming Capucine

As I argued in chapter one, bioscopes in and near to District Six facilitated Kewpie’s celebrity in at least two senses: as sites in which she would engage with the imagery she took up to construct her stardom, and as popular venues for on-stage performance. In her testimony, they often function as sites at which she and stardom coalesce. The centrally-located Star Bioscope, on Hanover Street, is the stage for Kewpie’s (1998) own “fantastic” performance for which she received “applause, standing applause, standing ovation,” and where she remembers seeing her “best movie ever up ’til today,” *A Star is Born* (1954).

The original. Of Judy Garland and James Mason. The one with Barbara Streisand, I won’t say it was a remake. I won’t say it was because the story wasn’t actually as the story of the original was. And Judy Garland was fantastic. That’s Liza Minelli’s mother. She was fantastic. And me as a youngster, as a gay youngster I used to sing beautiful. I had a beautiful voice. (Kewpie 1998)

Kewpie alludes to concepts of originality and identity, here, that inform both the film and her own fantastic process of self-making. Their relation is evident, as her repeated description of the film’s star as “fantastic” segues into an account of her own talent as a performer. It is perhaps the promise of *A Star is Born* that Kewpie takes up, using testimony and photography to play with its depiction of stars as simultaneously constructed and authentic.³⁶

In one such instance, while being interviewed in 1996, Kewpie authenticates her celebrity as Capucine. She had adopted the stage name “from her pictures,” she tells Lewis.

³⁶ On the construction of authenticity in *A Star is Born*, see Dyer 1991.

“I liked the pictures and I said, ‘ooh, wow, look at Capo.’ I used to call her Capo.” Capucine then travelled to South Africa, Kewpie recalls, and they met “backstage after [her] show” at another bioscope, the Luxurama in Wynberg:

Walking into her, uh... walking into the what-you-call-it room. And she’s sitting in the mirror. And us coming in, we walked up to the mirror, up to her, and she turned around and saw me. Well then, I was much more younger. I looked *exactly* like Capucine, and Capucine looked exactly like me. Without the... she’s got the superfluous hair. And she was a sex change. She was from Paris, from France [...] She was a singer, entertainer—like a cabaret star. And she was astonished, she was stunned when she saw me in the mirror. She turned around and she spoke to me, and she took my hand and she grappled me. She couldn’t believe, she said to me I was her double. Well I was much more younger then. And after she left she got married to this millionaire... went back to Paris.

In the only recorded discussion of her chosen stage name, Kewpie narrates the fantasy of substitution through which Capucine (from District Six) becomes Capucine (“from Paris, from France”). As part of the District Six Star System, the name appears to reference French fashion model and film star of *The Pink Panther* (1963) and *What’s New Pussycat?* (1965) fame, whom we might presume Kewpie reconfigures as “a sex change” by participating in a tradition that privileges gossip as epistemology. Indeed, the *Kewpie* (2018, 2019) exhibition stated that Kewpie named herself after said “French actress and model.” Yet, Kewpie tells us that this Capucine, whose fame facilitates mobility that is relatedly physical (performing overseas) and symbolic (marrying a millionaire), is “a cabaret star.”

In her 1982 co-authored autobiography, the English model April Ashley briefly mentions a “Capucine (not the film star but one of us)” whose “keeper was a very famous millionaire” (Fallowell and Ashley 1982, 67–68). *Us* refers to here performers at Parisian nightclub Le Carrousel, some of whom adopted the names of film stars (like the girls of District Six) and many of whom toured internationally (unlike the girls of District Six). A 1965 issue of quarterly magazine *Female Mimics* introduces the same Capucine—featured in thirteen photographic portraits alongside a description of the “change” that has made her “complete” (“after long painful months [...] *legally a woman!*”)—as “the toast and talk of

many continents” (27-37).³⁷ It seems likely that this is the Capucine whose name Kewpie took “from her pictures”—and that these pictures were, “before she arrived,” promoting her upcoming performance. Thus, Capucine the cabaret star takes up, transforms, and transports the iconography of the film star. Then, Kewpie sees herself in the cabaret star’s “pictures,” and perhaps in her performance on the stage of a bioscope where Kewpie herself may have performed and where the film star may have appeared on screen, and in Capucine herself when Kewpie meets her in “the what-you-call-it room,” that liminal space of transformation.

Here—in place of the metaphorical mirror of the bioscope screen in which Kewpie would see herself reflected, in and as the film star—there is an actual mirror that the cabaret star is “sitting in.” Its capacity as a mirror enables the transference, while the relay of taking up and transforming the iconography of the film star/cabaret star is accentuated by the sonic component of the relay of “Capo”/Kewpie. Kewpie’s awe and astonishment, and her affection (for “Capo”), are reflected back to her in Capucine, who takes Kewpie’s hand and tells her she is “her double.” Discussing the “mirror scene” as “a convention of transsexual autobiography,” Jay Prosser (1998) writes: “at an angle to [Jacques] Lacan’s mirror phase, the look in the mirror enables in the transsexual only disidentification, not a jubilant integration of body but an anguishing shattering of the felt already formed imaginary body” (100). Conversely, what is enabled by Kewpie’s “look in the mirror” at Capucine as “imaginary body” is more like “a jubilant integration.” Kewpie’s disidentification is more akin to the process theorised by Muñoz (1999) than described by Prosser: she does not identify/assimilate or counteridentify/reject (what Prosser calls disidentification), but rather “tactically and simultaneously works on, with, and against” (12). As what Muñoz calls the disidentifying subject, she reworks, to read herself into, Capucine. As Kewpie the bioscope fanatic might metaphorically get lost in a film, Kewpie the star gets lost in Capucine, and

³⁷ For more information, see Zagria 2016.

Capucine gets lost in Kewpie, so that Kewpie is the purer, more authentic version of Capucine than Capucine herself—who has “the superfluous hair”—and so that it is also symbolically Kewpie who leaves, marries “this millionaire,” and travels “back to Paris.”

Kewpie’s recollection of meeting Capucine demonstrates how the Kewpie Collection offers a counterpoint to the girls’ alignment in contemporary print media with what I follow Silverman (1996) in referring to as “debased images” (79). Remarkably, a 1964 edition of the *Post* includes a column about a visit to Cape Town by the very same Capucine whom Kewpie recalls meeting (Heyns 1964). This report will be discussed once I have sketched the conventions it follows—conventions belonging to an imaginary that prohibits a sense of trans community. Before turning to that column, and the coverage in which these degrading conventions are established, I want to further detail the alternative imaginary of becoming conjured by Kewpie’s own account of Capucine’s visit, and how this is enabled by cinematic strategies she engages.

Kewpie’s symbolic form of travel, “back to Paris,” with Capucine recalls the “temporary loss of self” through narrative immersion that Jackie Stacey (2006) describes cinemagoers taking pleasure in (266), as well as Melanie Green et al’s (2004) “transportation theory,” which seeks to understand the ways media texts facilitate temporary transportive experiences that are separate from life beyond them (311-327). In Kewpie’s account, however, she and Capucine engage with, admire, and are immersed in each other and Kewpie emerges from the encounter having gained approval for her use of the name Capucine—“she said to me I was her double”—in her life beyond it. She even extends the circulation of the name, and the attendant relay of Capo/Kewpie. After she met Capucine, Kewpie (1996) tells Lewis, Brian’s sister-in-law had a daughter: “Capucine Amina [...] She’s born as Capucine. I named her [...] I call her Capo. And she always smile when she sees me, she says ‘Kewpie?’ I say ‘yes, Capo? And she comes in and I always do her hair

for her.” The symbolism of Kewpie “do[ing Capucine Amina’s] hair for her” is particularly resonant since it seems Kewpie started bleaching her own hair after the platinum-blonde cabaret star’s visit to Cape Town.³⁸

In her account of meeting Capucine, Kewpie ultimately does not lose the self, but rather achieves a kind of suture. Tracing a counterhistory of cinema as a “machinic linking and delinking of embodiment, morphology, and sexuality,” Eliza Steinbock (2019b) proposes that it offers an alternative material means of achieving embodiment through “cut and sutured images [...] shot through with projections of desire.” Particularly relevant is Steinbock’s (2019a) suggestion that “cinema’s ability to demonstrate the exchange of looks and thus extend the frame of the mirror seem[s] useful for a trans subject with suture trouble” (104). To “articulate the trans-specific labour of stitching together a compatible bodily ego” (103), Steinbock (2019a) draws on Silverman’s argument that the cinematic screen—“functioning as the repository to the Lacanian screen” which “allows for bodily images to come together when the subject is locatable in the grid of culture” (104-105)—can offer the “light[ing] up” of others as what Silverman (1996), following Lacan, calls “an active gift of love” (79). “‘Active,’” for Silverman (1996), “might be said to qualify most profoundly that process of idealisation which, rather than blindly and involuntarily conforming to what the cultural screen mandates as ‘ideal,’ lights up with a glittering radiance bodies long accustomed to a forced alignment with debased images” (78-79). Steinbock (2019a) also notes Silverman’s suggestion that, “at the individual level, one might substitute another screen-image for the conventional one, or even distort or resignify the normative image” (105).

³⁸ Kewpie’s hair is its natural dark shade in only a handful of photographs, most of which appear to have been taken during her childhood and teenage years (e.g., AM2886/5; AM2886/13), and Kewpie (1996) says that the photograph in which she looks the oldest while her hair is still dark shows her on her way “to see Capucine at the Luxurama” (AM2886/15).

In Kewpie's account, the mirror functions as a cinema screen in which "cut and sutured images" of Capucine and herself flickeringly appear, "shot through with projections of desire" (Steinbock 2019b). For the normative image of Capucine the film star that would appear on the Luxurama screen, Kewpie substitutes the image of Capucine the "sex change" cabaret star, projecting it into the mirror-as-cinema-screen that is located "backstage," perhaps behind the screen of the Luxurama. Elsewhere, questioned about her "central" identity, Kewpie (1998) states:

My feelings were just me. It was no such thing as who am I or what am I looking into a mirror, which I never loved, a mirror I don't love because a mirror bungles you around. And I've never sat down to think of who the hell I am or things like that. Because I have just put it down to myself. Here I am and here I am. And that's just me. So I can't battle against life to fight against myself and say ooh Kewpie you're a man, ooh Kewpie you're a woman, ooh Kewpie you're a daughter or you're a boy or a son but I'm just me.

Refusing to locate her desire in "a mirror [that] bungles you around," Kewpie instead achieves suture in her account of meeting Capucine "in the mirror" inside the bioscope to which she attributes "cinema's ability to demonstrate the exchange of looks and thus extend the frame of the mirror" (Steinbock 2019a, 104). Rejecting the conventionally binary terms *man*, *woman*, *daughter*, *boy*, and *son*, Kewpie instead disidentifies with someone she defines as "a sex change." In place of her previous stage name, Doris Day, Kewpie selects a name chosen by the film star and then taken up by the cabaret star that directly references identity as a process of becoming, or stitching together—as does the liminal and evasively-named "what-you-call-it room" in which she and Capucine meet.

While the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition suggests that she stopped using the name Doris Day because it was "already" being "us[ed]" by "an older drag queen," it seems more significant that Kewpie dropped the name of the cisgender Hollywood star in favour of that of a non-Hollywood star whom she describes as "a sex change." This is particularly noteworthy considering Kewpie's (1998) insistence that "people can't say [she's] a man"

nor “a woman.” Rather than “conforming to what the cultural screen mandates as ‘ideal,’” Kewpie uses photography to “light[...] up with glittering radiance” and idealise her own body (Silverman 1996, 79), which she refuses to identify in strictly binary terms. She photographically performs an opulent glamour, bedecked in jewels, satin, pearls, and tulle, conveying the “light within” visually constructed in star imagery (Dyer 1997, 207-208). The image of herself that Kewpie projects using photography and testimony functions as an alternative to images that might appear on the cultural screen, actively idealising a body commonly forcibly aligned with debased images. The following section demonstrates that this alignment is evident in contemporary popular media texts, which worked to establish an understanding of the girls’ femininity as visually deceptive. While early reports of on-stage performances were flattering, in articles from the mid-1950s onwards, the girls’ femininity was no longer safely confined to the stage and their so-called abnormality was established as a problem in need of a solution—a solution that would come to be championed by both *Drum* and the *Post*.

“ON STAGE” / “OFF STAGE”

From the mid-1950s to the late 1970s, girls of District Six appeared with varying degrees of regularity in the monthly *Drum* magazine and the weekly *Golden City Post* newspaper, renamed the *Post* in 1960.³⁹ They appeared in interviews, sensationalist exposés of the Cape “moffie underworld” and “moffie drags,” and reports of court cases and other scandalous goings-on as well as fancy-dress nights and on-stage competitions sponsored, photographed, and reported as “moffie elections” by the newspaper itself. Following its 1955 launch, the *Post* joined *Drum* as one of two major publications “primarily responsible for forging a new popular press,” under the auspices of mining fortune heir Jim Bailey, for the “mass

³⁹ Hereafter referred to as the *Post* only.

audience” that emerged in Southern Africa post-1945 (L. Switzer and D. Switzer 1979, 115).⁴⁰ Within a few months, the Sunday tabloid became the first newspaper with a largely Black readership circulating above 100,000 copies (Choonoo 1997, 258). Following *Drum*’s 1950s heyday, the sister publications “pioneer[ed] sensational expose journalism” (L. Switzer and D. Switzer 1979, 115).

While the publications themselves circulated throughout sub-Saharan Africa, their coverage of the girls of District Six did not cultivate the sort of celebrity leading to opportunities to physically travel for the girls themselves, who were generally described in tones oscillating between fascination and disgust and in terms more pathologising than celebratory. Mentioning these “articles and photo-essays,” Munro (2012) defines their overall tone as “fascinated, amused, and sometimes derogatory” (107). They are discussed at greater length by Chetty ([1994] 2012), who notes “the pseudo-psychological ‘common sense’ that informed the reportage on gay life in the period” and the “range of attitudes” that registered in the writing, “from poorly concealed voyeurism and vitriol to paternalistic empathy” (121, 118). Considered in greater detail, it is apparent that representation of the girls was structured by, and changed over time in accordance with, contemporary perceptions of the relationship between homosexuality, gender, and sex.

Kewpie first appeared in the *Post* in the early 1960s, her photograph captioned “This is Capuchine, with the most sensational act in town. The crowd almost rioted as she threw the last of her clothes to them.” The accompanying article, “Strip Sensation at Moffie Crowning,” goes into further detail: “Amid applause, catcalls and yells of anticipation a crowd on the point of rioting rose to its feet as Cape Town’s Capuchine threw a flimsy

⁴⁰ Although initially based in District Six, Bailey’s press offices had relocated to Johannesburg by the mid-1950s. The *Post* published separate editions for the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and Kwa-Zulu Natal, and two for what was then called the Transvaal region. “Despite the popularity of both publications,” *Drum* appeared only as a fortnightly supplement to the *Post* from May 1965 to March 1968, relaunching as an independent magazine in April 1968. In November 1971, the *Post* was sold to *The Argus* (Choonoo 1997, 258).

garment to the audience and stood dressed in a bra and panties [...] As she shed her clothes to the strains of a popular twist number, Abe Hurzak, an old hand at controlling a rowdy mob, decided to play it safe, cut the encore and changed the act before things got really rough.” A crowd of men—“the cats” who came for “jazz blown by a multi-racial band”—are said to be “howling for the moffies.” The threat of a volatile, animalistic masculinity lurks behind the suggestion that things would have “got really rough” had “the Cape’s night-club boss” Hurzak not prevented Kewpie from performing the “encore.” The reader is invited to imagine that this would have involved the removal of her “bra and panties” (Post Reporter [1962/3?]).

The violence that is here subdued erupts dramatically in a January 1964 *Drum* article: “Knives appeared magically in fists and then the blood began to flow [...] None of the moffies was involved—the fight was strictly men only.” The earlier, implicit allusion to sexual deviance as the reason that the (“men only”) “crowd” is “on the point of rioting,” in the reference to the “strains of a popular twist number” to which Kewpie “shed her clothes,” is made explicit: “the moffies [...] were twisting—in fact it was the most twisted party I’ve seen. Men in dresses twisted with men in dresses; men in dresses danced with men in pants; and men in dresses twisted with little boys. And men in dresses DIDN’T twist with women in dresses.” The comic effect of the wordplay in this reference to the deviance (“the moffies [...] twisting”) that threatens social order (“on the point of rioting”; “blood began to flow”) works to provide a release from anxiety about the threat, constituting the reader as complicit in the judgement (“most twisted”) and sharing in the joke at the expense of its subject (*Drum* 1964).

The precedent for these articles had been established across the previous decade. “The Moffees” were first mentioned in January 1954, in a short *Drum* article that—unlike the two discussed above—determinedly professionalises its subject, “South Africa’s greatest

female impersonator, Joey Felice—alias Madame Costello,” with repeated references to her artistic accomplishment. Two large photographs, placed side-by-side, illustrate the clarification that “Madame” is the name by which “Joey is known on stage.” Whereas “OFF STAGE Joey Felice” with smartly combed hair wears a dark, loose-cut suit, “ON STAGE ‘Madame Costello’” reclines in a light-coloured dress and low heels, her face painted with cosmetics and framed by a large white feather extending from her hat. Both images convey a sense of respectability, each subject composed and looking sombrely away from the camera (de Vries 1954). The following month, decrying a “rising tide of immorality,” *Drum’s* (1954) “Short ‘Kinsey’ Report for Africa” voiced growing fears about “homosexuality” as a threat to society, declaring it an “evil spreading among Africans in cities.” In May 1955, just two months after its first issue, the *Post* gave this “evil” a specific referent: Cato Manor, “a little colony on the outskirts of Durban” where “man and man live as man and wife” (*Golden City Post* 1955).

It was in Cato Manor that a male-assigned resident had been arrested in 1947 for “masquerading in female attire” and charged with the offence of “availing himself of such a disguise in order to commit a crime” (*Rex v. Ntokile Zulu* 1947, 241-242). This was one of the first cases of conviction under pre-Union legislation, passed between 1882 and 1910, criminalising disguise with the intent to commit a crime.⁴¹ Reading the rhetoric of the trial, including a psychiatrist’s report requested by the Reviewing Judge who described the accused as “sexually abnormal,” Camminga (2019) establishes this case as the first legal instance in which the “idea of ‘sexual abnormality’” was “tied to perceptions of gender nonconformity” in South Africa (45). Although, according to Camminga, the earliest

⁴¹ The Union of South Africa came into existence in 1910, through the unification of the British Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and Orange River colonies. The five relevant sections of the Acts and Ordinances criminalising disguise with the intent to commit a crime in each of the colonies were eventually amalgamated into the Prohibition of Disguises Act 16 of 1969. In the 1947 case, the accused was charged under the relevant Natal legislation.

recorded arrest under the pre-Union legislation took place in 1906, convictions had always been quashed due to prosecutors' failure to establish criminal intent.⁴² In the 1947 case, although the initial sentence followed a guilty plea, the accused's conviction was overturned in light of the psychiatrist's report. The judgement concludes: "the accused's possession of female characteristics seems now to be second nature, and so, his wearing of female apparel may have been without any intention to commit a crime" (Rex v. Ntokile Zulu 1947, 242). Nonetheless, Camminga (2019) shows, the case established a legal precedent: "rather than something to be committed, with the disguise [indicating] intention," the "crime became [...] the disguise itself, and what it suggested about the individual's sexual proclivities in relation to the 'health and virility' of the nation" (46).

As reported by *Drum* in January 1954, Madame Costello's performance of femininity was safely contained within the space of the stage, the delineation of which was represented in print by a photographic frame, with pictorial evidence of an appropriately attired "OFF STAGE Joey Felice" to prove it (de Vries 1954). The performance of femininity in Cato Manor reported in May 1955, on the other hand, was located within domestic spaces ("man and wife") and aligned with the previously established "evil," "homosexuality" ("man and man"). Unaccompanied by photographs offering a knowable visual referent, the latter article stoked fears about the social threat posed by the potential visual unknowability of "unnatural vice"—a phrase repeated in the *Post* and *Drum*'s "exposures" of the "major social evil" and "immorality" found in men-only prisons (see, e.g., *Golden City Post* 1956a). The account given by an "ordinary" woman living in Cato Manor, of an "engagement party" she "foolishly attended," indicates a fear that "ordinary" members of society might be hoodwinked ("foolishly," or made fools of) and contaminated by the visually deceptive "queer[s]": "'Her' dress was wonderful. And the ring and

⁴² For an arrest to be recorded, a case would have had to be tried.

diamonds! But I felt queer as I watched ‘her’ and got away as soon as I could. It was not pleasant” (*Golden City Post* 1955).

Four months after the *Post*’s Cato Manor report, Madame Costello made a second appearance in *Drum*. This review of her on-stage performance described its subject in a markedly different tone. Readers were invited to share in the comedy of the reporter’s informal supposed slip, “(Joey) Costello led her girls—er—boys—Yvonne, Linda, Carmen and Piper.” There were no accompanying photographs of the performers in respectable, masculine dress. Their femininity was no longer safely confined to the stage, and there is a hint of anxiety in the reporter’s efforts to establish that it was not coherent off-stage: “During the interval I snooped round to the dressing-room of ‘The Chorus Girls.’ They spotted me and there was a cheerful chorus of husky voices: ‘Come right in, handsome’” (*Drum* 1955). Off-stage, in “the dressing-room,” the performers’ deviant sexuality (“come right in, handsome”) is rendered unthreatening (“cheerful”); their performance of femininity incoherent (“husky”).

Subsequent coverage typically depicts the girls as tragic figures, evoking pity and repulsion. Both publications continued to constitute their readership as complicit in this view, using a conspiratorial mode of address and conveying double meanings through wordplay, for example, on *query/queer*. Girls from the Cape “Coloured community” appeared more regularly in the *Post* and *Drum* from 1956, beginning with a series of five “Moffie Confessions” that ran from January to March (*Golden City Post* 1956b-f). The focus, here, was off-stage. “A distinction must be made,” the *Post* emphasised, “between the normal female impersonator and the psychologically abnormal ‘moffie’ who carries the masquerade into daily life” (*Golden City Post* 1956f), and “who is not to be confused with the amateur or professional actor who may happen to do female impersonations on the stage and is not necessarily abnormal” (*Golden City Post* 1956b). In August, an exposé described

“the grotesqueness of everything” at a “Moffie Drag”—a private party hosted by Madame Costello. Chetty ([1994] 2012) notes, in this first-person account, a “barely conceal[ed] sense of terror” (122). For the reporter, this “horrible dream” had an “almost nightmarish quality” because the girls’ make-up and feminine dress made it “almost impossible to make out their real sex.” The sense of terror Chetty recognises stems from a fear that the girls might successfully disguise their sexuality with a coherent performance of femininity. Again, this fear is somewhat relieved: although most of the girls were “just like [...] normal women,” the reader is reminded that “they were men” and reassured that there were at least “two who, no matter how they had tried, could not hide their physical selves” (*Golden City Post* 1956g).

The provision of a release from the fear of visual deception, often through comic resolution, is a typical, often structuring feature of the *Post* and *Drum*’s representation of the girls. It recalls Butler’s (1999) description of the “ritualistic release” provided for “a heterosexual economy that must constantly police its own boundaries against queerness” by Hollywood films that enact a “displaced production and resolution of homosexual panic,” which “actually fortifies the heterosexual regime in its self-perpetuating task” (339). A similar release is alluded to by Matthew Krouse ([1994] 2012), in his short memoir of time spent employed as a visible marker of what was to be reviled: a drag queen entertaining South African Defence Force troops charged with protecting the very regime that criminalised assigned-male persons dressed in clothing designated female. Krouse demonstrates that the military would “allow—and sometimes even encourage—a brief and public display of momentary transgression. It is a sanctioned assertion that there is otherness, an assertion of who the other is. In [this] case the other is black, communist, as well as any icon of sexuality that isn’t white heterosexual male” (124).

In June 1964, the *Post* ran a column about the same “celebrated visit to Cape Town by Capuccine” the cabaret star discussed by Kewpie, which features the kind of ‘reveal’ typically found in coverage of the girls. It is written by Jackie Heyns, journalist and photographer to both *Drum* and the *Post*, and the man behind the latter’s popular “Aunt Sammy” column, who would author a number of articles about the girls of District Six. The “beautiful, exciting creature [...] was irresistible” and “was surrounded by” a crowd of adoring men, Heyns (1964) tells us, until “passing under a low-hanging decoration a lock of her tresses was hooked and before you could say Capuccine the wig came off revealing the close-cropped head of a man.” Notwithstanding her much subtler reference to Capucine’s “superfluous hair,” Kewpie’s (1996) recollection of this visit acts as a counterpoint to the *Post* column. With Capucine unceremoniously de-wigged, the column ends with a joke about the many “moffies” in attendance at the crowded function being “stopped” from “going through the door” to the “powder rooms” that was “marked ‘women only’” (Heyns 1964).

Kewpie (1996), on the other hand, recalls being able to walk directly through a door “into the what-you-call-it room,” and although she apparently enters accompanied (“us coming in”), she and Capucine engage intimately. It is only Kewpie whom Capucine “saw in the mirror,” then “turned around and saw,” and “spoke to” as she “took [her] hand.” In the *Post* column, Capucine (along with the “moffies”) is revealed to be lacking as a woman because she has “the head of a man” (Heyns 1964)—whereas in Kewpie’s (1996) account, Capucine (and by implication Kewpie) emerges triumphant, “married to this millionaire and” traveling “back to Paris.” There is a similar suggestion that Kewpie’s femininity is visually deceptive in the “Strip Sensation” article mentioned above, in which the threat of violence is subdued only because she is prevented (the reporter suggests) from removing her “bra and panties.” The implication is that her body beneath her “bra and panties” would

reveal that she is lacking as a woman (Post Reporter [1962/3?]). In both articles, Kewpie and Capucine are aligned with what Silverman (1996) calls debased images: in this case, implying their femininity is visually deceptive.

Thus, from the mid-1950s onwards, both the *Post* and *Drum* rhetorically established the girls' abnormality as a problem in need of a solution. The following section traces the publications' subsequent advocacy, from 1963 onwards, of the so-called sex change as this solution, necessary for the good of society. Showing the concept of the sex change was made legible in relation to race reclassification, both sanctioned by the Nationalist government in specific circumstances as a means of further entrenching the social hierarchy apartheid aimed to maintain, I establish the common sense of race, gender, and sexuality that I will argue Kewpie contests.

The Solution

The fear of visual deception in the articles aligning Kewpie and Capucine with debased body images illustrates Linda Schlossberg's (2001) comment that, due to the "seemingly intimate relationship between the visual and the known, passing becomes a highly charged site for anxieties," wreaking "havoc to accepted systems of social recognition and cultural intelligibility" and blurring "the carefully marked lines of race, gender, and class" (1-2). Such anxieties are evident in the Nationalist government's various attempts to assert control over the performance of gender, as an aspect of the development of apartheid. Cameron ([1994] 2012) summarises the Judge's conclusion in the case of a male-assigned, classified-"Coloured" 19-year-old arrested in 1965: that "since the young man's 'disguise' had been so effective, and in the absence of an explanation from him, he must have intended illegally 'to conceal his sex and pass himself off as a woman'" (90). Chetty ([1994] 2012) has questioned the rationale behind such arrests: "What could possibly be dangerous about

wearing clothes meant for another gender? Oddly, it suggests that marginal and persecuted men could be more powerful by posing as a woman” (122).

What Chetty describes as the perceived “danger” of male-assigned people “posing as” women is evident in their criminalisation and in the rhetoric of coverage in the *Post* and *Drum*. In each case, the perception emerges from anxiety about what was understood to be the disguise of a sexuality that was threatening to society, as opposed to the “conceal[ment]” of “sex” in and of itself. While pre-Union legislation criminalising disguise with intent to commit a crime had been used since the 1900s, as noted, to target male-assigned people dressed in clothing deemed female, the relative rate of conviction increased in accordance with traction gained by the view of homosexuality as a threat to the health of the nation and Calvinistic morals. Attributing this traction to the increasing international popularity of sexology and eugenics across the first half of the twentieth century, Camminga (2019) notes “clear overlaps and slippages in rhetoric as terms like *degeneracy*, imbued with a certain racialised logic, began to appear more frequently” in medical and legal discourse “in relation to issues of sexuality” (42). This rhetoric of degeneracy is seen in *Drum*’s (1954) aforementioned “Report for Africa” styled after one of the key figures of sexology based in the United States, Dr Alfred Kinsey.

At the end of the 1960s, the Nationalist government implemented legal reforms to further protect the nation from the perceived threat of homosexuality. At the time of the famous 1966 raid of a party held in a private residence in Forest Town, Johannesburg, aforementioned pre-Union legislation addressed only public offenses and could be used to charge just nine of approximately 350 mostly white and male-assigned partygoers with “masquerading as women” (Gevisser [1994] 2012, 30). The incident was utilised later that year in support of a proposal to introduce draconian legislation on homosexuality, an aspect of which was so-called cross-dressing. In reaction, a modest legal reform movement, mainly

involving white middle-class gay men, mobilised, working to ensure that the Immorality Amendment Act 57 of 1969—described by Hoad (2005) as “deliberately designed to combat the emergence of [white] gay subculture, in terms that now appear almost farcical” (17)—was not as comprehensive as initially feared. The concurrent amalgamation of the pre-Union legislation into the Prohibition of Disguises Act 16 of 1969, on the other hand, passed virtually unimpeded.

The interconnectedness of anxieties around perceived degeneracy in relation to race and sexuality is highlighted by the government’s choice to seek further protections from the perceived threat of homosexuality by amending existing statutory, the primary aim of which had been the maintenance of race purity. It is important to note, however, that while such legislation tracks anxieties around race purity, the formal implementation of apartheid saw a rapid and almost complete legal disavowal of any extant pseudo-scientific understandings of race as a biological factor. Apartheid instead entrenched existing understandings of race as an “avowedly social construction” (Posel 2010, 167), rooted in “appeals to cultural difference and ethnic nationalism” (Dubow 2010, 238). This was, Posel (2010) explains:

the long-standing circular logic in terms of which superior socio-economic standing and privilege were considered key markers of racial superiority, at the same time as racial superiority was considered grounds for such elevated socio-economic status. Racial hierarchies ratified and legitimised the social and economic inequalities that were in turn held up as evidence of a hierarchy of racial differences. From this perspective, then, whiteness was an entitlement to privilege and relative affluence. (167)

This logic is evident in adverts for soaps and skin-lightening creams framing many of the articles featuring the girls in the *Post* and *Drum*, promising improved social standing articulated in terms of whiteness and purity: “I never dreamed my skin could look so much lighter’ [...] it works like a charm and makes them look much more attractive”; “I’m never lonely now... Thanks to Kamak! Kamak lightens and brightens your skin to a new loveliness”; “You, too, can have real beauty when you use Pond’s Vanishing Cream [...]

makes it Lighter, Smoother, Softer”; “The secret of real beauty is a lovely skin, and the secret of a lovely skin is Lux Toilet Soap [...] you will see how white it is. It is white because it is pure. It is the whitest soap you can buy.”⁴³

Apartheid legislation guarded against the threat posed by race passing, which constituted making a claim to legally guarded social privilege, by allowing for legal race reclassification where it conformed to the established common sense. Posel (2010) quotes the Minister of the Interior who, motivating the Population Registration Act 30 of 1950, described race classification as a judgement of “social status” and noted that “the test” of a person’s race, “as stipulated by the law,” was “the opinion of a person’s fellow citizens” (168; Union of South Africa 1950, 2520). Muriel Horrel (1978) shows that, taken as a whole, the Act itself contained loopholes through which people were able to legally change their “race” (16). In 1986, for example, 1600 individuals successfully petitioned to do so. Judith Raiskin (2005) lists details from a *Cape Times* article: while only “nine whites became coloureds, [...] two whites became Malay[,] and forty coloureds became black”; “506 coloureds became white[,] nine Indians became white, seven Chinese became white, one Griqua became white,” and “666 blacks became coloured” (6). That this legal practice of so-called race reclassification served to “entrench the racial-caste hierarchy of South African society” is well established (Reddy 2001, 76; see also van den Berghe 1965, 55).

Yet the logic of apartheid is troubled by claims to legally guarded social privilege associated with whiteness that are made by the District Six Star System. In *A Normal Daughter*, The Famous Miss Piper Laurie declares: “I’ve wanted to be a star all my life and I will die a star. I’m still a star. So I like to live that way. If the stars can do it, I can do it... Because the stars is human and so am I. It doesn’t matter who you are and you can have

⁴³ These adverts appeared in 1964. The first appeared in *Drum* (1964), alongside “It’s the Night of the Moffies.” The rest appeared in the *Post*: the second alongside “It’s ‘Doris’ Again!” (Post Reporter 1964), and the third and fourth alongside “A Moffie’s love Life” (Post 1964).

millions of Rands or millions of... I want to live like you live. I can even live better than you” (Lewis 2000). As Piper speaks, she stares directly at Lewis, who is off-screen and silent; boldly, almost daringly, gesticulating with one hand. It is a moment of confrontation between subject and documentary-maker. In two photographs collected by Kewpie, a younger Piper is sultry and strikingly confident in black feathers and lace, cigarette holder in hand, leaning against a wall then posing with a tall, handsome man (fig 2.1). Stating that she “slept with a lot of Afrikaner *Boere*, that used to have the uniforms,” as a person formerly classified “Coloured,” Piper declares: “I was one gay that defied apartheid... I defied.” She wears a black and gold slightly off-the-shoulder gown, as she says this, with a single pink bra strap showing. Her fabulousness—the cumulative effect of the content of her speech, her gesture, her elegant dress, her big, light brown, soft wig, her blue eye shadow, and red lip—is only augmented by her wrinkled skin and tooth-free grin.

From the early 1950s to the late 1970s, decades during which most coverage of the girls was published, passing and reclassification were regular topics of discussion in the *Post* and *Drum*. It is noteworthy that these discussions related to both race and sex. Each was discussed in remarkably similar terms—headlines included “HE CHANGED HIS RACE!” and “I CHANGED MY SEX”—and at times, on the same page (*Drum* 1963; Bux 1969). An



Figure 2.1

interview with a man classified “Coloured” but “accepted [...] as European” was published next to the *Post*’s first “Moffie’s Confession,” which described the “attempt to become a woman” by those who had “the appearance of a lovely woman, but the body of a man” (*Golden City Post* 1956b). A “race-change race” was reported alongside the headline “‘He was a Strange Boy—Very Girlish’” (Post Reporter 1963). The news that “scores of Coloured teachers in the Cape” were “convinced that the lure to play White [was] irresistible” and “expected to ‘try for White’ in the coming year” appeared beneath an article announcing: “STATE TO PAY FOR SEX-SWOP OP” (*Post* n.d.).⁴⁴

This report of a planned “Sex-Swop Op” is indicative of contemporary medico-legal perceptions of sex, gender, and sexuality. It concerns a male-assigned “twenty-year-old [...] known in social circles as Miss Lynette Jackson” who, appearing before a Johannesburg Regional Court “on a charge of soliciting,” was not asked to enter a plea. Instead, “when the report of his sexual life was produced, his case was treated sympathetically” because, in the words of the presiding magistrate: “it is a very real problem in that he has a combination of homosexual and transvestite tendencies.” The solution to this “problem” was recommended by a psychiatrist. Instructing Jackson “to co-operate fully with the probation officer handling his problem by undergoing all medical treatment and surgery recommended by doctors,” the magistrate postponed sentencing “for three years on condition that” Jackson was “not convicted again for any contraventions of the Immorality Act” (*Post* n.d.).

The materialisation of “transsexuality” as a medical and legal entity has been traced by Camminga (2019), beginning with the relationship between “medical” and “racial science” that grew as eugenics “took on its own local colouring,” from 1948, in the

⁴⁴ The operations of race and gender need disarticulation, partly because, as I argue in chapter three, efforts to render them analogous risk eliding the operations of intersectional oppressions. However, it is worth considering how and why they are brought together in Kewpie’s refusal of the common senses governing both.

“particular notion of medical intervention in relation to non-normative/transgressive bodies” developed by the state (46, 63). Detailing the use of “sex change” operations to enforce the heteropatriarchal order central to apartheid, particularly from the 1960s onwards, Camminga shows that, while criminalising homosexuality as a threat to the nation, the Nationalist government established “changing sex” as a cure for homosexuality (90). Discussions in Parliament from this period all focus on a “transition [...] from male and female” and evidence a “sincere belief” in the possibilities of changing sex through medical intervention and sex designation through legislation (54). While Camminga’s work traces “medico-legal perceptions,” which had “eventual cross-pollination into academia” (48), perceptions of the relationship between homosexuality, gender, and sex have not yet been traced in popular media.⁴⁵

It is remarkable, then, that the *Post* and *Drum* coverage discussed closely follows the trajectory outlined by Camminga, suggesting shifts in public perceptions of the relationship between homosexuality, sex, and gender in line with contemporary shifts in medico-legal perceptions. The coverage discussed demonstrates highly charged anxieties around male-assigned people passing as women and specifically—as with rising fears in government—disguising homosexuality. Early coverage even positioned sexuality as secondary to gender performance: “all the unconquerable longing in his being demands womanhood though he has a man’s body [...] In an attempt to become a woman they will go to all extremes: do the work of a woman, wear a woman’s clothes and even ‘get’ a man” (*Golden City Post* 1956b). It referenced “psychologists, social workers and others[’]” praise of the publications (1956g), for “bringing light[,] with a sociological motive,” to the “strange

⁴⁵ Briefly referencing *Post* and *Drum* headlines mentioned by Chetty to propose that “shock-value items in local news media facilitated the conceptual travel of ideas like ‘sex change’ into the public sphere,” Camminga (2019) is in agreement that the publications “utilis[ed] transgender phenomena as particular avenues of titillation for their readership” (49). Moreover, I add, they evidence and cultivate understandings of homosexuality, sex, and gender as were established in contemporary medico-legal discourse.

problem,” the “social problem” (1956e), “of a small selection of people who cannot, because of their strange inclinations, take a normal place in society” (1956g). It lamented the fact that a “solution” for this “problem” had not yet been found (1956b, 1956d, 1956e).

Following the 1963 article “‘I am Sick of Being a Boy’: Doctors Change Young Edward into ‘Edith’” (*Post* 1963d), the idea of a “sex change” began to surface as the “solution” the publications had been looking for. Alongside sensationalist depictions of gays as tragic figures evoking pity and repulsion, including in reports generated through pageant and event sponsorship, the *Post* and *Drum* began to embrace an understanding of the body as something malleable that is evident in contemporary medico-legal discourse. A 1970 report of the opening of her new restaurant in London, England, describes “Sex-change April” Ashley “who couldn’t be more feminine if she tried” (*Post* 1970). During the year leading up to the passing of the Immorality Amendment Act 57 of 1969 and the Prohibition of Disguises Act 16 of 1969, articles featuring the girls referred to the “Government spotlight,” including ongoing parliamentary debates, on the “love-life” of “homosexuals” and proposed “legislation against homosexuality which could mean offenders being jailed for up to three years” (*Post* 1968; Tobin 1968; Heyns 1968). The publications advocated “a more sympathetic attitude,” albeit with the clarification that, “although the problem should be approached in a sympathetic way, it should nevertheless be dealt with purposefully” (*Post* 1968).

The *Post* and *Drum* went into a surprising amount of detail suggesting an answer to this “problem.” Stressing that “no normally developed man could be made into a proper female” via surgery, they described the “moffies” as a group of “sex freaks” in whom “nature, in a flight of fancy, has placed the minds of women into the bodies of men.” Via the expertise of a “Professor,” readers were informed that “South Africa was up to date in sex change techniques” and that “sex change operations at Groote Schuur [in Cape Town]

were routine”—although “the hospital was avoiding notoriety in individual cases.” Readers were given pseudo-scientific explanations that “doctors dealt with three types,” the first of which correlated with the publications’ representation of the girls: “The transsexualist, who is really an extreme kind of homosexual,” from whom Groote Schuur doctors “receive inquiries every week. They are physically fully developed but have strong feelings to be the opposite sex” (Heyns 1968).

Having accepted the “sex change” as the solution to homosexuality they had been searching for, the *Post* and *Drum* began to portray all the girls as longing for the surgery and miserable without it—even when said longing and misery was not apparent. They emphasised that “behind the gay and devil-may-care image of Cape Town’s moffie world lies the heaving anxiety of their hearts to live a full and proper life across the sex line” (Heyns 1968). Chetty ([1994] 2012) highlights the presumably unwitting juxtaposition, in articles from the 1950s, of descriptions of “moffies” leading “lonely and bitter” lives, finding “solace” only “at the bottom of a bottle,” with photographs in which they look “at once demure, flirtatious, coquettish and playful” (121). The captions to two photographs of Kewpie in the April 1968 *Drum* strike a similarly discordant note. In black and white, a smiling Kewpie, in sequinned skirt and fishnets, embraces and clasps hands with Joanne Woodward, who clutches the back of Kewpie’s faux fur jacket to keep herself upright as she laughs. Bizarrely, the caption insists: “Dance time is fun but there’s often sadness behind the smile.” A second image of Kewpie smiling widely and conveying an easy glamor is again jarringly captioned: “I’d cut off my right arm to live like a normal woman.” This statement does not seem to have come from Kewpie herself, who is not interviewed in the accompanying article (Heyns 1968).

Although its tone is more sympathetic, another article written by Heyns and published in *Drum* eight years later makes a similar rhetorical leap. Heyns (1976) first

establishes Kewpie's "male sex," describing "him" as a "transvestite" and speculating that any "male" who "succumbs to his charm" would be none "the wiser, probably right up to the moment of coup de grâce." Immediately after a relatively flattering account of Kewpie as a hairdresser, Heyns declares that "behind the flamboyancy, behind the fancy hairdo, manicured and painted fingernails, high-heeled boots and apparent carefree banality is a contained outcry against fate's foul-play. None are truly happy and most seek escape [...] Ninety per cent would welcome a sex-change operation and only today's prohibitive cost prevents wholesale surgery tomorrow."

Kewpie was featured in at least twelve articles published in the *Post* and *Drum* between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s. Given Kewpie's construction of her own celebrity, the absence of any of these articles from the Kewpie Collection is striking—particularly since it does include glamorous photographs of Kewpie taken by *Post* and *Drum* reporters and published alongside the articles (e.g., figs. 2.2, 0.7, 6.4), although these are not labelled as such, as well as a single clipping from a different newspaper showing a marriage announcement (AM2886/75). Instead, I argue, Kewpie used photography and testimony to project an image of herself as popular media never did, fabulously making fantastic claims to worthiness and social privilege that colonialism and then apartheid violently sought to establish as the proper domain of whiteness. Whereas her freedom of movement was legally constricted, in her testimony Kewpie (1998) has the freedom to walk "into a white place." Whereas Kewpie's (1996, 1998) father prevented her from taking the

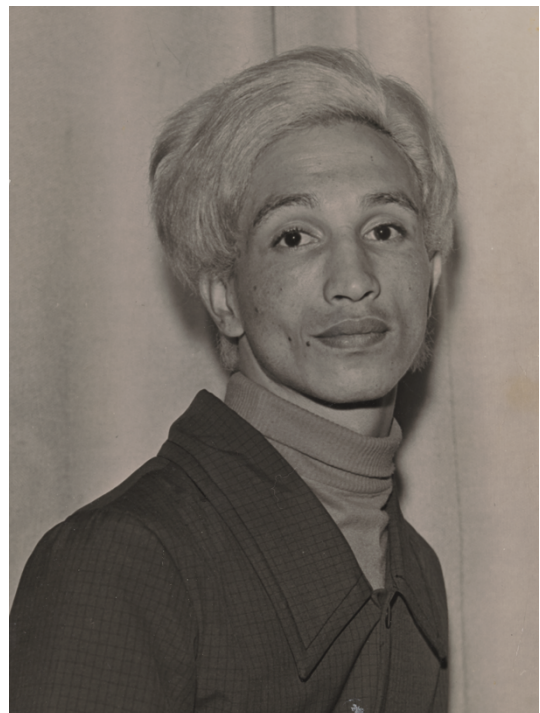


Figure 2.2

opportunity she had to travel “overseas” because of her “being gay,” in her photographs she is in Paris and Las Vegas, and performs the celebrity she was prevented from achieving as a ballet dancer. Through her fantastic self-making, Kewpie lights up her body “with a glittering radiance” (Silverman 1996, 78-79), which is in certain photographs reminiscent of the metaphorical “light within” that “makes whites special” as “visually constructed by Hollywood” (Dyer 1997, 207-208). The final section of this chapter extends this argument, suggesting that the Kewpie Collection is one site at which the roots of an archive, in this case an archive of trans capacity, might be found. I discuss two ways Kewpie offers an important precedent: discussing the sex change itself as aspirational, as opposed to a means to an end, and insisting on the freedom to self-define in a manner that is both capacious and insistent on fixity.

The Roots of an Archive

Tracing twentieth-century transgender phenomena that facilitated the emergence of a “politics and an identity in a way unique to South Africa,” Camminga (2019, 65) demonstrates how such concepts are useful for those concerned with enabling liveability. However, they also show how the Nationalist government’s establishment of the so-called sex change as a cure for homosexuality foreclosed possibilities for a sense of transgender community or “more transgressive politics of *transgender*” (90). As noted, male-assigned individuals who underwent surgery were given new identity documents and instructed to live the rest of their lives as women: they were supposed to aspire to womanhood, the operation construed as necessary to this transition but not to be discussed moving forward. Kewpie (1996, 1999), on the other hand, explicitly mentions what was supposed to be prohibited from discussion after the fact, describing two friends as “sex change[s].” (Dis)identifying with Capucine specifically as “a sex change” and proudly commenting that

she, Kewpie (1998), “look[ed] like ...in the sex change there” in certain photographs, implying an equivalence with Gevisser’s “90’s supermodel,” Kewpie reframes what was supposed to be a means to an end as aspirational in itself and offers us a way into thinking about what a transgressive politics might have looked like. While she discusses the sex change in positive terms, however, Kewpie rejects the notion that it is constitutive of one’s identity or necessarily uniformly desirable. Whereas in the *Post* and *Drum* she is portrayed as a tragic figure longing to be a woman, her body aligned with debased images, in interviews Kewpie (1998) repeatedly states “I’m naturally just me [...] I’m normally just me” and joyfully insists on her value and completeness as she is.

Kewpie most often responds to questions about her identity thus: “I’m just Kewpie. I’m just me”; “I’m normal. I’m just me”; “I was me. I was just me” (Kewpie 1998); “From birth, I was just myself. Always just myself” (Kewpie 1996). She self-defines capaciously: “I’m just me. I’m naturally, naturally born Kewpie. The gay. The lady. The woman. The sister. I am just me” (Kewpie 1996). She also stresses that others cannot define her, even with terms she uses: “I’m naturally just me. To me it’s just that people can’t say I’m a man, they can’t say I’m a woman. They can’t push their fingers into my eyes-and tell me this and that. I’m normally just me” (Kewpie 1998). This is a performative exercise, in that Kewpie establishes that it is the case that people can’t say she is a man or a woman, even though there is no ground for this claim other than the claim itself. Indeed, as established in the introductory chapter, the rules Kewpie dictates have not been adhered to in scholarship in which she is mentioned, nor by her interviewers themselves.

Yet this claim does the work of prefiguring an organisation of social relations yet to come: a time in which such statements can hold true. In this sense, Kewpie does what we might call reality expansion, troubling the anxieties evident in the Nationalist government’s various attempts to assert control over the performance of gender as an aspect of the

development of apartheid. The anti-“disguise” rhetoric of contemporary criminalisation laws operated to enact and enable what Talia Mae Bettcher (2014) calls “reality enforcement,” to which she describes trans people being subjected: humiliating “reveals” of “real” sex assigned at birth linguistically, for example by purposefully using incorrect pronouns or deadnames, or through physical acts such as forced bodily exposure or sexual violence. In this context, repeatedly insisting that she *is* just her, Kewpie affirms the reality that she is herself, “just Kewpie,” even when she is told this is impossible. She reminds us that any given reality, even those violently enforced, have power only in so far as they exist between people and are acted in accordance with. This is not to say that we can voluntarily refuse the conditions of social and political life, but rather that there is the possibility of working to transform them, by collectively and contingently constituting spaces of appearance, for example, discussed further in chapter five.

Kewpie draws her interviewers’ attention, in such instances, to the logics of bearing witness or making known what one has seen. When stressing that gender is read and judged subjectively, she defines the limits of her testimony. Kewpie (1998) shows little interest in how others would have seen her, shutting down this line of questioning and refuting the existence of an authoritative system of classification.

Gevisser: Did people see you as a moffie or—

Kewpie: Well people saw me just as Kewpie.

Gevisser: So say for example I would come down the road, would I see a woman walking there, would I see a moffie walking on the road?

Kewpie: Well it really depended on the person, seeing that person walking by.

Evading Gevisser’s question, Kewpie points to the violence of visibility and its irreducibility to visibility. The latter, as Xavier Livermon (2012) emphasises, “refers not only to the act of seeing and being seen but also to the process through which individuals make themselves known in the communities as queer subjects” (300). It has to do with recognition since—as Butler (2004a) argues—“it is only through the experience of recognition that any of us

becomes constituted as socially viable beings” (2). Kewpie refuses to speculate as to what others have seen when this might not align with her own interpretive frame for or affective relation to the visual. This refusal contrasts with her willingness to narrate from the perspective of the cabaret star Capucine, discussed above. Conversely, Kewpie (1998) emphasises the violence of others bearing witness on her behalf: “They can’t push their fingers into my eyes and tell me this and that.” Likening others saying who she is, or telling her what’s what, to violently preventing her from seeing for herself, she suggests there is an equivalence between the act of speaking on her behalf, or bearing witness for her, and the act of preventing her from witnessing in the first place. This is bookended by statements—“I’m naturally just me [...] I’m normally just me”—with which Kewpie insists that she is recognisable as a socially viable being, while implying that her entirety cannot be accommodated by (and her value therefore contained within) the visual field.

Asked about terms she has used to define herself, Kewpie (1998) emphasises she is “just” herself, as when Gevisser asks her when she first realised she was gay: “I have never ever realised that I was gay. I’ve always realised that I am me. I’m Kewpie. I’m just me.” With adamant yet playfully evasive responses, Kewpie insists on the freedom to self-define capaciously and not be defined by others. Her definition of herself only as herself sounds as a joyful insistence on her self-worth. The sense of awe conveyed by Kewpie’s frequent repetition of this definition is evident in her handwritten caption to a strikingly glamorous close-up photograph in which she wears a black dress, her bleached hair blowing in the wind, blending into the bright sky (fig. 2.3). Her hand, adorned with two silver rings, raises a whiskey glass to her lips. In the white border above the image, she writes, “Me!!” Kewpie wears large, dark sunglasses in this photograph. Perhaps the joy of her caption is somewhat

derived from this insistence on a degree of opacity—a visual opacity, in this case, although her refusal to be defined by her interviewers has this effect metaphorically.⁴⁶



Figure 2.3

Conclusion

While refusing to make herself fully legible in given terms, Kewpie also refuses to disappear. She performs visibility on her own terms, as in the two Movie Snaps photographs discussed in the previous chapter, in which she asserts imaginative control over the popular media to perform the mass visibility of celebrity (figs. 1.1 and 1.2). Performing a violation of her own privacy in the form of a celebrity-paparazzi encounter, Kewpie counters the violation of her privacy enacted by forced removals and, perhaps, her representation in the

⁴⁶ Kewpie's (1999) description of this photograph—"Kewpie at Strandfontein with the sunglasses and a Dora"—is one of just a few instances, in the Collection, in which she speaks Gayle: a code in which words are substituted with covert, typically alliterative women's names, e.g., *Priscilla* for *police*, *Wendy* for *white*, *Hester* for *listen*. Lauren Mulligan (2018b) suggests that Gayling developed in the hairdressing salons of 1970s District Six. Elsewhere, Kewpie's friend Sammy suggests the linguistic practice "began" at the Queens Hotel (Collison 2018). Exploring the code's "socio-political currency" with "family, friends and acquaintances amongst LGBTQ+ coloured communities in Cape Town," Mulligan (2018a, 2018b) offers a crucial corrective to an exclusive focus, in previous research, on white, English-speaking, cisgender, gay men (Cage 2003).

Post and Drum. Performing unwillingness to be photographed—again with the large, dark sunglasses—Kewpie is revealed to be as poised and impeccably glamorous as in any images in which she poses for the camera. In chapter one, I argued that these photographs act as an authentication of the celebrity Kewpie (1996) states she would have had, had she been able to accept the invitation to study “overseas.” The current chapter adds that, as well as constructing her own celebrity, Kewpie creates a counterarchive in an additional sense. Lighting up her body “with a glittering radiance” (Silverman 1996, 79), and flickering in and out of legibility, Kewpie as fabulist calls out to a “people who are missing” (Deleuze 1997, 117-118). She insists that “people can’t say [she’s] a man, people can’t say [she’s] a woman”—that she’s “just Kewpie,” even when her interviewers imply this is impossible by asking her to define herself within a set of given terms.

Aforementioned pronouncements of stardom and defiance made by Piper Laurie suggest an understanding of the girls’ performances of celebrity as a means of working through hyperbolic self-sovereignty as a response to constrained autonomy (Lewis 2000). Kewpie’s repeated statements that she is “just her,” or, as seen in chapter four, that, like Piper, she was the “one gay” who did something, might be heard similarly. Simultaneously, the Kewpie Collection’s function as one site at which Piper becomes The Famous Miss Piper Laurie reminds us of the importance of the collective, since, as I argue in chapter five, it is through the photographic collective that the Collection is made possible. Likewise, the mode of self-actualisation to which the District Six Star System aspires is only possible through that System, the necessary collectivity of which counterbalances the ostensible individuality of the celebrity it performs. In the case of both the photographic collective and the District Six Star System, apartheid logic is troubled through efforts to establish a new common sense—an alternative to the established common sense to which legal race classification had to conform, and to the common sense that “informed the reportage on gay life in the period,”

as Chetty ([1994] 2012, 121) puts it, which I have shown changed over time in accordance with contemporary perceptions of the relationship between homosexuality, gender, and sex. In chapter six, I suggest parties were one site at which a collective could be rehearsed and new common sense forged.

Kewpie's self-definition anticipates this dawning common sense. While her insistently expansive self-definition suggests that true recognition is possible, she points to the inadequacy of available terms, prefiguring a linguistic and conceptual shift yet to come. Partly through such strategies and through strategies of recollection, Kewpie creates materials that might act as an archive of trans capacity. Thus, we can begin to see how recollection works to both seek sustenance in and sustain a collective, in which a new common sense can be established. The following chapter further considers the importance of the collective, framing the Kewpie Collection in the moment of its constitution as an archive of gay life, and not, say, as an archive of trans capacity.

Chapter Three: “Still Around”

Sustaining Gay Life in Proximity to Death

On a flyer publicising “new queer film from South Africa” *A Normal Daughter: The Life and Times of Kewpie of District Six*, producer and director Jack Lewis (2000) proposes that Kewpie’s “lovingly preserved collection of snapshots” show that “gay life in District Six was open and out—an accepted part of this racially and religiously diverse community” (AM2886/C6). This documentary film was the first cultural text to prominently feature the girls of District Six. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, the film was created, interviews with Kewpie conducted, and her photographs acquired by GALA during a period in which the question of gay rights emerged as an element of public culture, amidst efforts to ensure the passage of the equality clause in the 1996 Constitution. In this context, Kewpie’s photographs were used to imagine and work for different futures by advocating for certain rights. Whatever the intention, one effect of this work has been to occlude the ways that Kewpie herself imagines and works for different futures in the project of sustaining gay life. Nonetheless, Kewpie curtails her interviewers’ rhetoric of political progress through activism, resisting ideological co-option by declining to co-operate with their optimistically future-oriented projects and by embedding a disruptive practice of grief in her testimony. This practice marks the cost of working to sustain gay life while living in proximity to death. It also insists on bringing with those failed by the contemporary movement for gay rights.

The notion of gay life that Kewpie deploys is in these circumstances imprecisely captured by the aforementioned flyer. Framing the attempted recuperation of Kewpie’s photographs as an effort to establish historical precedent for a contemporary political agenda, this chapter shows that Kewpie’s use of *gay* exceeds the hegemonic discourses of

sexuality legible in the descriptor “open and out,” and elaborates the notion of gay life that she instead suggests. Kewpie’s use of *gay life* troubles claims that gay life was “open and out” or able to “flourish” in District Six (Gevisser [1994] 2012, 28). Rather, she discusses gay life as an ideal that could not be sustained within the given organisation of social relations past or in the present telling of the testimony. As described in chapter one, Kewpie repeatedly recounts that her father prevented her from accepting an invitation to travel overseas with the UCT Ballet School. In *A Normal Daughter*, she describes her reaction: “That is how I decided to bang back into my gay life. I simply cautioned him with a wink of an eye, and I thought to myself—to hell with ballet dancing. And I’ll jump into hairdressing. And he always wanted me to be his genuine, normal son. Whereas now I am his normal daughter” (Lewis 2000). In this instance, Kewpie indicates some of the labour involved in sustaining forms of life that are otherwise devalued. She also begins to suggest that the pursuit of gay life—gay life as she sought to live it—entails an investment in the potential of collectivity to enable movement and engender new worlds of potentiality. The importance of the collective is attested to by the practice of mourning embedded in the 1999 recordings, discussed in the latter half of the chapter. Accommodating grief for losses erased from the public sphere, this practice of mourning seeks to make presently devalued forms of life more possible than their erasure allows. Riffing on Muñoz (1999), this would enable the “expansive [gay] *life-world[s]*” that Kewpie’s notion of gay life “helps us imagine” (34)—worlds further elaborated across the remaining chapters of this thesis.

“Open and out”?

After the first democratic elections in April 1994, the Interim Constitution was adopted as the fundamental law of South Africa. Seven months later, a small group of gay and lesbian activists formed the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) which

would, at its peak, comprise seventy-eight affiliate gay, lesbian, and human rights organisations across the country (Manion 2005, 244; Reid 2005, 176). The NCGLE worked to persuade the Constitutional Assembly to retain “sexual orientation,” listed as a protected characteristic in the Interim Constitution, in the equality clause of the final Constitution. Although the resultant Constitution did specifically prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, when it was passed in December 1996 there remained extant laws enabling continued oppression of those living their sexualities in diverse ways. According to Reid (2005), the NCGLE “self-consciously modelled itself” on other single-issue political campaigns such as the End Conscription campaign and, having achieved its first goal, embarked on “a systematic programme of incremental law reform, along the lines of [a] programme of action outlined by Cameron,” who was then editing *Defiant Desire* with Gevisser while acting judge of the High Court. “Edwin’s laundry list,” as the programme became known, “consisted of the most winnable objectives, such as [...] scrapping the sodomy laws, followed by more controversial issues such as same-sex partnerships, marriage and adoption” (176).

The NCGLE thus turned its focus to laws criminalising “same-sex” relations and precluding “same-sex” couples from various recognitions and rights granted to straight couples. In 1998, the NCGLE and the South African Human Rights Commission successfully challenged the constitutionality of the common-law and statutory criminalisation of “sodomy” and “unnatural sexual act[s],” resulting in the landmark ruling referred to colloquially as the sodomy judgement (NCGLE v. Minister of Justice 1999, 6). In 1999, the NCGLE successfully challenged a provision of the Immigration Act allowing residence rights to foreign-born opposite-sex, but not same-sex, partners of South African citizens (NCGLE v. Minister of Home Affairs 2000, 1). Aiming to bring together fractured gay and lesbian organisations and communities, the Coalition strove to ensure that lobbying

efforts represented the racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity of gays and lesbians in South Africa, under the banner of “equality and justice for all.” There was, according to Reid, a concerted effort to speak about “equality” as opposed to “gay rights”—an effort persuasively critiqued by Jacklyn Cock (2005) as part of the adoption of an “accommodationist tone” (193).

However tactical, the agenda the NCGLE pursued in the name of equality relied on a production of sameness, reducing perceived difference to a minimum acceptable value rather than fostering the imaginative capacities required for respecting and working across difference. Such tactics have actively disabled the recognition of trans lives and have been complicit in the continued disenfranchisement of sexual and gender diverse people who experience multiple oppressions. Given the gradualist approach of their litigation strategy, when the Aliens Control Act 96 of 1991 was debated, the Coalition successfully campaigned for legal changes benefiting those engaged in more easily recognisable forms of intimacy, as opposed to individual rights access that would benefit a broader range of people within South Africa, let alone those who might seek refuge within the country on the basis of “sexual orientation” whether or not that would involve living as part of a couple.

The favourable judgement, given in 2000, is understood to have established precedent for several others according rights and benefits to those in so called same-sex partnerships (Constitution Hill 2021), including pension benefits (*Satchwell v. President of the Republic of South Africa* 2002), adoption rights (*Du Toit v. Minister of Welfare and Population Development* 2003), and parental recognition (*J and Another v. Director General, Department of Home Affairs* 2003). The socially conservative emphasis underpinning these gains is legible in the judgement in the adoption rights case, which concerned the partner of a judge: “The applicants constitute a stable, loving, and happy family”; legal “failure” to “recognise the value and worth of the first applicant as a parent”

is “demeaning” and “limit[s] the[ir] right [...] to dignity” (Du Toit and Another v. Minister of Welfare and Population Development 2003, 210). Further, this period was marked by gay and lesbian agitation for rights that could only be claimed by those who were open and “out” (Cock 2005, 195).

The historical form of “open and out [...] gay life” presented by the aforementioned flyer can thus be understood as precedent for the acceptance and respectability of gays. This investment is evident in Lewis’s work during the 1990s as co-founder of Idol Pictures and with his then partner, the activist Zackie Achmat, whose short memoir, published in *Defiant Desire*, I quoted in chapter one.⁴⁷ The NCGLE was co-founded by and operated under the initial co-leadership of Achmat who, significantly, gave his name to the Collection of which the Kewpie Collection is part. The Achmat-Lewis Collection contains materials relating to the NCGLE, and to Achmat and Lewis’s collaborative projects including a documentary series “on the history of homosexuality in South Africa,” *Apostles of Civilised Vice* (AM2970A-B). The series shares a title with the journal article in which, Hoad (2016) argues, Achmat links “mine marriages” to “contemporary political and legal agitations around ‘gay marriage’” that “utilised the slogan ‘Recognise our Relationships’” (12; see Achmat 1993).

Drawing a connection between contemporary gay rights discourse and Lewis’s descriptor, “open and out,” the constitution of the Kewpie Collection might be understood as part of a movement that did not in the detail of its activities centre the liberation of people who, like Kewpie, live in ways unaccounted for by this discourse’s terms and troubling to homonationalist ideologies. Such people might labour in ways seen unskilled or disreputable, or engage in forms of intimacy and care that exceed or otherwise fail to neatly

⁴⁷ The South Africa History Archive holds another Collection in both Achmat and Lewis’s names, comprising materials they donated in the mid-2000s relating to their “anti-apartheid and HIV-related” work, including contributions to founding the Treatment Action Campaign in 1998 (AL3165).

map the ideal configuration of the couple. Within the Kewpie Collection, there is disconnect between a tactical mainstreaming of “same-sex” coupling and family conventions, and Kewpie’s own self-description. Moreover, Kewpie’s testimony highlights two issues with Lewis’s description of “gay life” as “open and out.”

Presumably, the flyer suggests that gay life was “open and out” because the girls are seen in the Kewpie Photographic Collection publicly and spectacularly expressing themselves in accordance with conventions of femininity. Yet, implying that social acceptance was granted proportionally to the coherency with which they performed femininity, Kewpie figures this form of acceptance as an alternative to the acceptance of gays *as* gays. This is the first issue she highlights. Kewpie (1996) typically follows statements such as “we were accepted” with the qualification “not as gays,” as in: “they accepted you as that person. Not really as that gay. As that normal person. Like they would take me as that normal girl, that normal woman. It was accepted that way.” She claims that people would “never notice [her] as a gay being dressed like that in town.” Kewpie (1998, 1996) suggests that she was safe in public because passers-by “always thought [she] was female”—“they’d always think it’s a woman walking past, a female”—and that everyone who “met up with” Mitzi “for the first time” “accepted” her specifically because “she was very like a girl, she was like a woman [...] they would never believe it that she was gay... There was no actions like a gay, or the hands or fingers going like that, she was normal, like any woman.” Meanwhile, according to Kewpie (1996), the “straight guys” or masculine-presenting men “who used to go with gays” were typically married to cisgender women and covert about their extra-marital desires: they were “afraid to be seen with the gays.”⁴⁸

There is a disturbing implication that any acceptance granted in proportion to the

⁴⁸ The *Golden City Post* (1956e) quotes an anonymous “Moffie’s Boyfriend”: “I’m not ‘queer’ myself, as a number of girls who have been my partners can testify [...] The strangeness of it did not strike me at all. I felt I had to protect her from the world.”

coherency of their expression of femininity made gays vulnerable to forms of violence—domestic violence, sexual coercion—that were unremarkable because they were gender-based and ubiquitous, understood as ways “guys” might assert their authority over “headstrong” women. At times, Kewpie (1996) mentions violence in passing, as though it were an unremarkable fact of life for the girls. She says that Mitzi had “that warmth and that love for each and every one, and even for whoever used to bungle her around or wanted to smash her up or whatever” and that Doris Day “was always kidnapped around.” She recalls having to move home because a man “interfered” with Shirley Bassey, who was living with her at the time, and remarks that this man must have “taken advantage” of Bassey because “she was a gay.” Explaining that “some of these gays were headstrong too, not wanting to go with these guys, so they were kidnapped,” Kewpie initially says “it wasn’t that harsh.” “But,” she adds after a pause, “it was almost like being killed around, too.”

This kind of violence is mentioned—and disturbingly glorified—in the early *Golden City Post* “exposés” and in footage Lewis shot for *A Normal Daughter* but chose not to include in his final edit. The newspaper quoted Yvonne de Carlo and Alice Faye, respectively: “We have quarrels like all lovers. He is very jealous, once he caught me talking to another boy. That night he gave me a terrible beating. He is a real man” (*Golden City Post* 1956c); “we had a violent argument. It ended in renewed affection” (*Golden City Post* 1956e). Interviewed by Lewis, a childhood friend of Kewpie and daughter of a *Moffie Konserts* organiser goes into further detail:

You would never say that was a moffie, that man wasn’t in love with a moffie, that man would treat her as he would a woman. So if the moffie did something wrong, or looked at another man, then the moffie would get a hiding—they get a hiding [...] And they lived like man and woman, and there was nothing wrong [...] It felt so wonderful because it was almost like a pleasure if they got a *pak* from their husband—for them it was like they were getting a hiding like a woman would get a beating [...] Because the man would take on the character of a man towards his wife [...] They could say ‘that’s my man,’ and the man could say ‘that’s my woman.’ They didn’t say ‘that’s my moffie,’ they’d say ‘that’s my *frou* [wife or woman].’ (AM2970/D4, Achmat-Lewis Collection, GALA; my translation)

Reid (2013) discusses a similar dynamic in his ethnography of the “ladies” of Ermelo, whom one participant describes as Kewpie does the girls of District Six: they “were accepted [...] as women and not as gays” (111). Reid understands this to indicate that “the social position” they “accepted” being “integrated into local communities as women [...] came at a price: they were vulnerable in the same way that women were vulnerable” (111). Reid comments that the “protection” of “ladies” by “gents,” in this instance, “was complex and closely tied up with subjective ideas about masculinity and control”—as another participant “discovered when” physically attacked by the “gent” whose “protection [...] he resisted” (65). District Six gays who would not “go with” men would be met with similarly violent consequences, according to Kewpie (1996): “it was almost like being killed around, too.” She suggests that a form of social acceptance was possible to the extent that gays conformed to the norms conferring recognition on women as subjects, although this form of legibility itself entailed exposure to violence without protection. Yet, while describing being accepted as “a woman” or “that normal woman,” Kewpie (1998) suggests this is a misrecognition, insisting “people can’t say” she’s “a woman.”

The second issue Kewpie’s testimony highlights with Lewis’s description of “gay life” as “open and out” is that her account does not fit easily with the epistemology of the closet. Kewpie (1996) explicitly refuses the options of staying in or coming out, suggesting that there was no closet (or cupboard) to begin with: “It was just natural. Every day. There was no such thing as... being hidden away in a cupboard. I was never in a closet. I was me from birth up ’til now.” Later, she adds: “As I said, I never wanted to be in the closet. I’ve never been in the closet.” When Gevisser asks her if there was “such a thing as being in and out of the closet,” Kewpie (1998) tells him “Well there weren’t actually.” Noting the prevalence of coming-out narratives as “a mode of national allegory,” Munro (2012, 174) refers to then Justice Albie Sachs’s 1998 assertion that “it’s not just the gay and lesbian

community that is coming out[:] the truth has been coming out[, and] we're all coming out" (Trenegrove Jones 2000, 114-115). South Africa's "transition" was conceptualised in public discourse as a "national coming out," Munro (2012) suggests, and "the figure of the gay person [...] frequently cast as a sign" of democratic modernity (173, viii). Rejecting simplistic understandings of visibility in relation to visibility, and the paradigms of memory and recovery in which the national project of bringing the "truth" to light had its basis, Kewpie troubles her recuperation as one such figure.

In various Global South contexts in which they work, scholars have long stressed that identity politics underpinning terminology and notions from the global North do not necessarily apply. Among the concepts carrying "specific social meanings steeped in Western ideology and traditions" named by Sylvia Tamale (2011) are "gay" and "coming out" (3). Kewpie offers an alternative to the coming out narrative; moreover, her use of *gay* is indicative of ways in which terminology originating in the global North is deployed and given new meaning in Global South contexts. Her self-identification reiterates the challenge to understand such terms as expansive enough to include the meanings with which they are invested beyond their initial contexts—for Kewpie not to be claimed as *gay*, for example, when it is followed by *man*. While the separation of gender and sexuality has been widely critiqued as particularly insufficient in certain Global South contexts, however, I am suggesting that gay life involves something more expansive than living what Tamale might call a "gendered sexuality" or "sexualised gender."

This is indicated, for example, by Kewpie's (1996) response to Lewis's surprise at discovering that the "woman" (Lewis's words) whom Kewpie's gay friend Kay Kendall married is "a lesbian" named Barry.

Kewpie: Kay met up with Barry all the time and all the time, and they became lovers. They settled down and had three kids where the one died. And they're still around with each other.

Lewis: It's actually a very sweet story.

Kewpie: It's a very sweet and real story. It's reality. Where I've never given it thought that Kay would one day get married to a lady... or to a lesbian for that matter. [...] Put it down to that, it's a man and a woman now, but they still live the gay life.

Suggesting that getting married requires being perceived as “a man and a woman,” but opening up both categories for potential inhabitation by Kay *and* Barry, Kewpie describes the achievement of a reconfigured version of marriage that can facilitate forms of intimacy that exceed it, meaning this couple can “still live the gay life.” This is partly why gay life seems to exist primarily in the terrain of possibility, for Kewpie. It entails reimagining constraints imposed by norms governing recognisability, to make possible forms of care, intimacy, and belonging otherwise unavailable in the horizon of the social, even via acceptance as women or as gay when the latter is understood as a gendered sexuality or sexualised gender. Elaborating on the notion of gay life articulated by Kewpie, the following section further establishes the importance of collectivity to the form of life that I subsequently suggest the girls worked to sustain in proximity to death. The significance of the collective, as opposed to the couple, correlates with the more expansive conception of orientation Kewpie invokes, offering a sense of possibilities that might be more fruitfully pursued by those concerned with “equality and justice for all.”

Gay Life

Kewpie's (1996) explanation of “how the gay life um went on in District Six” implies that it was in the terrain of possibility: “each and every child you could look at and stare at was halfway gay too.”⁴⁹ She alludes to attempts to prevent the actualisation of gay collectivity: “but somehow they moved away, moved away, moved away... or the family moved out of the vicinity, trying to stay somewhere else.” Ultimately, however, she describes gays

⁴⁹ This claim plays with “normalisation,” in the sense meant by Foucault and described by Warner and Berlant (1998): “not the imposition of an alien will, but a distribution around a statistically imagined norm” (557).

moving towards other gays, seeking out more adequate support structures, as she herself did: “but then the child runs away from home, trying to mix up with the gays.” Gay life could be rehearsed and fleetingly realised in improvised spaces, as when Kewpie and her friends would go “camping from Saturday night up ’til Monday mornings, coming back to work Tuesdays.” She says it “was fun, it was lovely, it was beautiful” because away from District Six there were “no harassings[,], no fighting. No aggressiveness, no one abusing nobody... and it was just beautiful. And that is the gay life, how we used to enjoy ourselves.”

Kewpie’s formulation of gay life anticipates Ahmed’s (2006a, 2006b) work on the phenomenology of orientations in the decade following, in which (sexual) orientation is conceived expansively and what Butler has called a “certain constrained agency” located in its performativity (V. Reddy and Butler 2004, 117). Ahmed builds on scholarship showing how inhabited spaces are actively constituted through actions even as they provide a context shaping actions that become accepted as the norm through repetition. Kewpie (1996) draws on experience of co-constituting such spaces. Both suggest the possibility of following desires to take actions that are not considered the norm but can become established as such, temporally and spatially contingently, while foregrounding the potential of the imaginative, figurative, and representational to shape material spaces by establishing conditions of possibility.

Since, recalling Adrienne Rich (1980), “compulsory heterosexuality diminishes the very capacity of bodies to reach what is off the straight line” (Ahmed 2006a, 557 and 2006b, 91), the pressing into lines of what Ahmed (2006b) calls “queer bodies,” bodies which “seem out of line” (17, 563, 560), can manifest as in Kewpie’s (1998) description of “gays” being “pushed about and pushed around.” We might understand Kewpie’s reference to “some of these gays” as “headstrong” in terms of Ahmed’s (2014) work on “wilfulness” as a charge of “unreasonable or perverted will” as a character fault, made against those who deviate

from “the right path” (4, 8-9).⁵⁰ Holding them “like babies in [her] arms and shoulders, trying to make them feel that they’re wanted” (Kewpie 1998), Kewpie tries to make these gays “feel in place, or at home” (Ahmed 2006a, 563). Working to establish alternative sustaining bonds, Kewpie (1998, 1996) offers a feeling of home contrapuntal to her experience of her family home where her father—who “hated [her] gayness” and was “very aggressive” towards her—“didn’t like the gays around.” If she had “gay friends around,” he “would push them around and chuck them out of the house, too.”

Kewpie’s father is figured in her testimony as one conduit of generally felt social pressure. She is prevented from feeling at home in the family home by his actions, which are a synecdoche for forms of pressure—forces constricting movement—that Kewpie suggests prevent gays from feeling at home within District Six, mentions of which seem to creep into her recollection almost as an afterthought. Kewpie (1998) remembers “ha[ving] a beautiful childhood life, although [she] was pressurised here maybe or pressurised there.” Asked “who pressurised [her],” she responds vaguely: “Like people walking past as you asked me previously or just hello and goodbye or whatever.” This pressure is instructional. Remembering he told her, while they were in a relationship, about “looking at gays” when he was still a child, Kewpie (1996) imagines a young Brian torn between desire and repulsion: “laughing at them, looking at them... and maybe admiring them.”⁵¹ Elsewhere, Kewpie (1998) comments that the men who used to “push” the girls “about” may have been acting with similar, shameful feelings: “they may be more gay than you and me.”

Since being a (sexualised) subject is to be in motion, Ahmed suggests, finding a

⁵⁰ Ahmed (2006a) suggests we could think of “orientations,” or the “point of alignment between spaces and bodies,” in the same way as this later work considers “the will”: as “straightening devices” (563, 2014, 7).

⁵¹ Achmat recalls, in similar terms, his own childhood complicity in the systemic abuse of the social group of “moffies” during the same years he felt implicated within it, in Salt River during the 1970s. Achmat ([1994] 2012) “le[d] five or ten children, all throwing stones at Peter Moffie” and “shouting: ‘Moffie! Moffie!’” in an attempt to drive out the devil. Whether from himself, or “Peter Moffie,” is ambiguous: “I can still see his bulging eyes filled with tears; I can see him holding his head high, dignified, while I tried to exorcise the *Shaytaan*. It did not work” (330).

home is a matter of finding one's direction towards others and settling into the contours of liveable space. For Kewpie (1996), this involves turning away from the family home, defined by pressure exerted by her father who she says "wanted [her] to be his son." Instead, she turns towards her "gay friends," kicked out of this home as "deviant[s]," objects that would "take [her] off" the inherited family "line" (Ahmed 2006a, 554, 90). "Refus[ing] th[is] inheritance," she describes a "breaking point" with the line on which she is pressured to stay (90). "So I decided," Kewpie (1996) tells Lewis, "to bang back into my gay life." This decision followed her father's attempt to prevent her from continuing ballet training: "He cut my costumes up into smithereens... hammered my shoes into bits and pieces. Cut my clothes up with scissors. And I was just sitting there with tears running." Asked when she first "realise[d]" she was "gay," Kewpie (1998) says "it wasn't just a matter of gay," but of "seeing femininity around me, and seeing beautiful things around me"; we might imagine these "beautiful things" include the costumes, shoes, and clothes for which she shed tears. For Kewpie (1996), "bang[ing] back into [her] gay life" involved turning away from the family home and going, instead, "wherever [she] could move around," finding a way to extend differently into space through tending toward objects her father tried to remove from her proximity. Dancing at nightclubs and parties where she would "meet up with different gays" was, for Kewpie, necessary to her survival: "it was in my veins, in my body, in my life. I just couldn't live without it then."

The moment Kewpie's (1996) father prevented her from "going overseas [...]" because of [her] being gay" was "where the gay life came in between" them: "he rejected me"; "rejecting my gay life as well." She "wanted [dance] to lead [her] somewhere," but "through [her] father's rejection, [she] couldn't go on with it." Kewpie suggests following this trajectory away from the family home would have made possible a different life, that of a professional dancer, which would have led to a more contented retirement or homecoming.

Instead, she is pressed into line by her father. With the decision “to bang back into [her] gay life,” she deviates from this line. She changes direction. This change of direction is determinedly hopeful: with an enthusiastic “bang,” she enters “into” a whole “life” that is hers. For Ahmed (2006a), “the hope of changing directions is always that we do not know where some paths may take us: risking departure from the straight and narrow makes new futures possible, which might involve going astray, getting lost, or even becoming queer” (554).

Ahmed (2006a, 564) and moore (2018) highlight how, in the nightclubs and “parties” to which she would “run away,” discussed further in chapter six, Kewpie could extend differently into space by turning towards otherwise devalued objects that were here valued and brought near. These include other bodies such as those of the “gay friends” whom her father would “push around” and “chuck [...] out of the house”; other physical objects such as the fabulous “costumes[,] shoes” and “clothes” that her father “hammered” and “cut”; as well as objects of thought, feeling, and judgement and objects in the sense of aims, aspirations, and objectives, such as dance or indeed gay life. “Mov[ing] us closer to bodies,” Ahmed (2006b) suggests, desire brings near objects such as these, each of which might put in reach objects that are as yet unknown because not previously “reachable within the body horizon of the social.” Thus, desires that do not move us along a straight line can create spaces that do not extend the straight body and that are often temporary as they “come and go with the coming and going of the bodies that inhabit them.” In this way, “alternative forms of [queer] world making [...] draw different kinds of lines, which do not aim to keep things in their places” (103), for instance routes to spaces in which “mov[ing] around” is possible (Kewpie 1996).⁵² Such desires “enact the coming-out story as a story of ‘coming

⁵² The deviance of certain bodies moving in this way in proximity to each other is suggested by *Drum*’s (1964) descriptions of the girls “twisting” at a “twisted party” mentioned in the previous chapter. On the etymology of *queer* from the Indo-European *twist*, see Ahmed 2006b (67, 172).

to,’ of arriving near other bodies, as a contact that makes a story and opens up other ways of facing the world” (Ahmed 2006a, 564-565).

Indeed, “bang back into my gay life” suggests a return, or homecoming, even as it is enacted by “run[ning] away from home” and, turning her back on the family home, finding a direction and orientation towards others that is “back[ward]” or non-productive in the terms given by heterosexual futurity. Although gay life could be rehearsed and fleetingly realised within the enclosed spaces to which Kewpie turned, and the temporality of “every night life” (Delgado and Muñoz 1997), however, she suggests that it could not be sustained within the existing organisation of social relations beyond them.⁵³ As invoked by Kewpie, gay life troubles the kind of “conventional good-life fantasies” considered by Lauren Berlant (2011) in that it reworks rather than rejects certain normative measurements of success by which the latter might be measured such as marriage, reproduction, and property ownership (2). Crucially, fantasies of gay life involve sustaining otherwise devalued forms of life, and their pursuit is seen in Kewpie’s descriptions of practices of sharing and forms of intimacy and enjoyment that are social as well as sexual. Framing survival as a necessarily collective pursuit, gay life reminds us that orientation is about much more than objects of sexual desire.

In the judgement in the 1998 case against the criminalisation of sodomy brought forward by the NCGLE, Justice Laurie Ackerman ruled that, as used in the Constitution, “the concept ‘sexual orientation’ [...] must be given a generous interpretation of which it is linguistically and textually fully capable of bearing. It applies equally to the orientation of persons who are bi-sexual, or transsexual and it also applies to the orientation of persons who might on a single occasion only be erotically attracted to a member of their own sex” (NCGLE v. Minister of Justice 1999, 25-26). My reading of Kewpie’s efforts to sustain gay

⁵³ The widely-discussed importance of spaces promising a reprieve from everyday life to queer counterpublicity is suggested by Celeste Fraser Delgado and Muñoz’s (1997) evocative phrase “every night life,” and illustrated by moore’s (2018) description of a fabulous class refusing to “accept the laws of the social world at face value” and seeking solace in spaces such as nightclubs (89).

life suggests a related way into thinking about orientation, more expansively than purely in terms of sexual object choice. It suggests an alternative history of gender and sexual diversities that does not easily map on to the terms currently animating hegemonic discourses on queer and trans lives, which are currently failing many of the governed in spite of constitutional promise of protection on the basis of gender and sexual orientation. It traces the outlines of one theoretical legacy that risks erasure when the past is mined in service of the future and materials produced by what I understand to be the work of worldmaking are offered as evidence of historical freedoms. The following section considers one way in which Kewpie indicates the toll taken by this work, signalling the proximity to death in which she and her friends laboured to sustain gay life. In doing so, she embeds a practice of mourning within the recordings that reminds us of the inevitable failure of movements that themselves fail to address intersectional oppression and to pursue the possibilities implied by a more expansive understanding of orientation, both of which would involve foregrounding the persistent losses Kewpie grieves.

The Late

It is remarkable how often Kewpie speaks of death in the 1996 interview, conducted by Lewis, and the 1999 interview, conducted by Reid with Lewis in the background, intermittently interjecting with comments, questions, and requests. Although Kewpie was in her mid-to-late-fifties at the time of these interviews, she sounds much older.⁵⁴ Her difficulty remembering detail, slightly rasping voice, and usually slow speech, punctuated by pauses to light cigarettes and episodes of coughing that foreshadow her own death from throat cancer in 2012, evoke a sense of exhaustion exacerbated by her frequent mentions of other

⁵⁴ Kewpie never mentions her age during interviews and is elusive when it comes to dates. Those she offers place her in her mid-to-late-fifties between 1996 and 1999. The *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition gives Kewpie's year of birth as 1942.

people's deaths. These vocal qualities are perhaps what is referenced by Chetty's ([1994] 2012) description of Kewpie as "a little maudlin" (123). They act as markers of what research has long shown: that biological age rapidly overtakes chronological age due to socioeconomic deprivation and for people with minoritised identities, partly as a direct result of everyday experiences of discrimination and other forms of violence that generate meaningful psychosocial stress and thus impact on health (Williams, Lawrence, and Davis 2019).

Charles Arendse's wife Gladys "died, but he's still around"; Aunt Winnie "was a fantastic person, also passed away"; "Vera and uh, Norman, they both passed away" ("the two of them died, you know"). The Mermaid Club in Woodstock was run by Abie Hurzook ("well he also died") and, after the death of owner Dave Sanders ("I dunno what was wrong with him"), the Ambassador Club was taken over by Derek who then "met up with a car accident."⁵⁵ Kewpie struggles to remember the names of some whose deaths she recounts: "This guy... He died"; "This lady died, now recently"; "This was my very good friend, he died now recently, too"; "His sister was a good friend of mine, and she died a few years ago"; "I can't remember the other girl's name. Oh this is the... What's her name, she died"; "With um... What's her surname, she died"; "I'm trying to get to her name... I think she's passed away, I'm not sure, she was very ill"; "He's a Moslem chap, I can't get to his name... This is, uh... They both died, husband and wife." Some of the deaths Kewpie (1999) mentions seem especially premature. Three out of four of her own siblings by birth didn't survive past childhood. Although she doesn't discuss their deaths, she mentions others: one of Kay and Barry's three children died, as did another "youngster" whose "mother was a good friend." Kewpie (1996) remembers Osborne Street: "I'll call it the famous street.

⁵⁵ Kewpie (1996) says that Dave Sanders, whom she briefly refers to as George, died after travelling "over to London[,] so much want[ing] to visit the royalties," and getting "into Buckingham Palace."

Where people came to love Kewpie. And where I was born in, and grew up. I *loved* all the neighbours, and they loved me too. I've seen them growing older, passing away, I've seen kids being born there, growing up with me. I've seen kids... dying away too. With accidents."

And then there are the many deaths of Kewpie's (1999) gay friends, including Harry and Yvonne, both a generation older, who were "discovered [...] dead on the field," as well as those of Kewpie's generation and younger, to whom she says she has "been a queen mother." Ralph Abrahams who "used to be called Miss Baker—Carol Baker"—was "killed by the street children." Of the hairdressers Kewpie (1996) qualified, there were "eight, nine of them that died." Kewpie's "in mate" Bassey (they lived together with Bassey's aunt, Mrs Syms, in Frances Street) "died through a car accident. One evening coming home, she was knocked over." Joseph (also known as Jean Shrimpton) "left me after four years, opened up her own salon, wasn't satisfied with the one and then opened the second one, and when opening the second one, she took ill. I don't think she had the salon for two or... two months. And she died."

Kewpie speaks most about the deaths of Patti and Mitzi, who worked for Kewpie for the longest, both of whom had heart attacks in the salon where they worked. Patti "was a very, very good hairdresser," Kewpie (1996) remembers, "as I qualified her. She was immensely busy. And loved by people, by each and everybody. She was very witty, very humorous, and a good worker... until... such a time when we discovered her dead in the one salon." Kewpie goes into further detail:

Well that was also salon called Salon Kewpie in Sunderland Street in Kensington. We just finished off the weekend's work, Saturday night, and Patti wouldn't budge to go home with us that same night. Until when we were leaving, and she— we left her in the salon alone. She wanted to get herself organised to go out, and never pitched up home. 'Til the Sunday when they were supposed to play netball, we phoned to the salon, nobody answered, phone was ringing. And Sammy clicked to say that we should go through to the salon and find out if Patti's around, because Patti used to like visiting neighbours and people. 'Til when Sammy jumped over the

wall and found the shampoo room's door unlocked. Went inside and discovered Patti lying dead on— on the floor.

Lewis asks Kewpie “what” she “think[s] happened” to Patti; she tells him “It was just a plain heart attack.” He asks her how old Patti was “at that time”; she tells him “Patti would have been round about... twenty-two, twenty-five.” Mitzi, whose own parents died when “she was very young still,” was, Kewpie tells Lewis, “my bosom friend as well as my sister as a gay and she died in my two hands on my bed.” Lewis asks her “what happened at the end on that fateful day.”

Well on the end that morning, as a normal morning, Mitzi and I used to get ourselves ready to get back to work. Either she goes to the shop with me or I go to the shop with her. But that special morning then Mitzi was healthy... As I said we got up the morning, ready to get out, and she had a shower, and while I was having my shower she left to go to the salon. And as she was walking through the entrance going to the salon, she collapsed in the yard. And then by collapsing these two friends were coming up to us to visit us to get us to go to the salon with Mitzi, this one girl especially Doreen discovered that Mitzi was... playing a prank on her— on them, like making a joke. But when she discovered that Mitzi was falling down to the ground, she was quite upset. They picked her up and brought her in. I was none the wiser that she had a heart attack. As I got out of the shower room, I discovered that Mitzi was laid down on my bed. And Mitzi's right hand and arm was moving around, hunting for something or someone, until when I discovered she was hunting for me. She took my hands into her hand, and she thanked me thrice, with big, big eyes looking up to the ceiling, not even winking. She thanked me thrice, and calling out my name, the third time she just closed her eyes and smiled, and I was none the wiser that she was dying in my hands. She grabbed me down onto her and she clutched me, and that is how she passed away. Until when they banged on my shoulders to tell me Mitzi had died and I was out. I didn't know whether I was me or what, I was just out. And that is how I discovered after Mitzi died.

There is a dissonance between Kewpie's explanations of when and how Patti died. “Twenty-two, twenty-five” emphasises how premature her death was; “plain heart attack” conveys the normalcy of premature death. Kewpie tells Lewis that Patti had worked for her for “eighteen, nineteen years” and that Mitzi “was with [her] for twenty-seven years and stayed with [her] for twenty-seven years.” Telling him that Mitzi died at the age of twenty-seven, she implies that she had known Mitzi for her entire life even though she had “started out as a nine-year-old kid working for Indian people as a... as a householder [...] And she was

good cook as well. Being with these Indian people all her life long up 'til that age nine ten up 'til [Kewpie] discovered her.” Kewpie later tells Lewis that Patti was also twenty-seven when she died. Questioning inconsistencies in her account, Lewis says to Kewpie, “see, there’s your problem with time again.” The phrase “problem with time” takes on additional significance heard in the context of Kewpie’s testimony, in which she attests to the problem of not having enough time in which to live. Her recollection of Patti and Mitzi’s lives and deaths, and in particular her implication (which she contradicts elsewhere) that she had known each of them for most if not all of their lives, alludes to another “problem with time”: the inadequacy of temporal markers for conveying the significance of non-biological familial relationships formed in adulthood.

The varying lengths of time Kewpie (1996) offers strive to indicate the importance of these relationships. Her recollection that Patti died after working for her for “eighteen, nineteen years,” the length of time it might take to raise a child to the cusp of an adulthood of potential independence and self-actualisation, signals that Patti’s life was cut painfully short. Kewpie’s statement that Patti was “twenty-two, twenty-five” when she died indicates the pain of having to fit the time it takes to raise a child (a whole “eighteen, nineteen years”) into the unfairly shorter time they had together, given they met when Patti was independent enough to be looking for a job at Piper’s Hair Fashions. On the other hand, Kewpie’s statement that Patti was only “twenty-two, twenty-five” when she died after working for Kewpie for eighteen years stresses the injustice of Patti’s life being cut short in her prime, while she was “always busy,” in her place of work, and “get[ting] herself organised to go out.” These contradictions gesture to the meaninglessness of Patti’s age of death, and of her death itself, implying that it was as unjust as if she had been only “twenty-two, twenty-five.” Time begins to unravel as Kewpie’s accounts of death unfold in the interview—and as she repeatedly insists it was eight or nine of the salon workers who died, though Lewis counts

four or five. She is undone by grief: “Until when they banged on my shoulders to tell me Mitzi had died and I was out. I didn’t know whether I was me or what, I was just out.”

The frequency with which Kewpie recounts deaths leads Lewis to comment, at one point during the 1999 interview, “so this whole generation is dying out...” Just over an hour into the recording of the interview Lewis had conducted three years previously, Kewpie (1996) herself says to him, “We used to be a gang [...] And we were a gang [...] They’ve all parted... I’m still left alone. Still around.” Two and a half hours later, having not used the descriptor before, she begins to use the word “late” to refer to Mitzi, then Patti. She uses it increasingly frequently for the final hour of the interview, even when she has named them in the preceding photograph, as in “that’s the late Patti [...] That’s the late Patti too.” She corrects herself when she does not use it, as in “that’s Patti, that’s the late Patti.” When Lewis asks, “and that’s Patti?” she responds “that’s- that’s the late Patti.” Kewpie then uses the descriptor frequently from the beginning of the 1999 interview, conducted for the purpose of collating captions for every photograph. The first deceased photographic subject Kewpie names is Brian, and she immediately repeats herself to indicate this is so: “And this is a photograph of me and Brian, the late Brian.” She continues in this fashion: “And forty-nine I’ve got Bridget and *Gar-bo*. And I’ll say now the *late Garbo*”; “Patti, the late Patti”; “and this one is with... *Vera*, the late *Vera*”; “And Mitzi. The late Mitzi.” Kewpie corrects Reid and Lewis, as in the following instances.

Kewpie: And this is the late Mitzi, with Miriam.

Reid: Mitzi...

Kewpie: *Late* Mitzi.

Kewpie: Mitzi...

Lewis: Mitzi, okay.

Kewpie: The *late* Mitzi.

Kewpie: That’s right, it was, uh, George’s place. This is the late...

Lewis: Baker.

Kewpie: The *late* Baker and... friend.

Reid: This is... Brian.
 Kewpie: I've got the *late* Brian of mine.

Kewpie: Number thirteen is also the Queens Hotel, with the late Patti in Mitzi's room.
 Reid: In...
 Kewpie: In the late Mitzi's room
 Reid: Okay. So it's Patti, in Mitzi's room.
 Kewpie: It's, uh, the *late* Patti in *Via's* room, Via.
 Reid: Okay, Via's room.
 Kewpie: Ja. *Kop mal*.

Subjects' deaths sometimes precede their names: "this is a late [...] old guy now, he passed away as well"; "what's his name again, he died. Bassey died... What's the name again... *Archie*. Archie. Douglas, and Bassey. So it's the *late* Archie, Douglas, and the *late* Bassey." Kewpie refers to the "late Garbo," "the late Brian," "late Brian's mother" and "Brian's late mother," "the late Dicky," "the late Norman Daniels" ("we used to call her Kim Novak"), "the late Bassey," "the late Valley," "the late Patti" and "the late, late Patti," "the late Mitzi," "the late Baker," "the late Ralph Abrahams" (who "used to be called Miss Baker"), "the late Stella," the "late Joseph" who is also "the late... Shrimpton," the "late Margaret," "the late Archie," and "the late Peter." In the three-and-a-half-hour-long recordings of the 1999 interview, much of which is composed of pauses between captioning photographs, Kewpie uses *late* in this way a total of 140 times.

The sense of *late* that Kewpie deploys is related to its now defunct meaning of "not long ago (but not now); recently, but no longer" (OED Online, s.v. "late, *adv.*," June 2021). It is typically used in this way to convey that someone is recently deceased, or that a person who may be alive is in fact not. Kewpie, however, repeatedly describes the same people, some of whom died decades ago, as "late"—sometimes even in the same sentence and in one instance describing Patti as doubly "late, late." She interrupts Reid and Lewis's repetitions of her descriptions of photographs to insist that they note a subject is, as she already told them, *late*. Her repetition of *late* is a reminder of the ever-presence of death, of

its continued returns, and an insistence on its recognition and on the grievability of the lives of those who are, Kewpie frequently reminds her interviewers, late. The sheer number of times Kewpie repeats *late* works to divorce the term from its context, so that its other temporal meaning—tardy—is reanimated. Since her usage of the term is euphemistic, this unmooring is perhaps facilitated by its indirectness or aversion to finality.

Late accumulates across the recordings and, conveying a sense that Kewpie is waiting for the arrival or return of those whom she describes as “late,” affects a temporal stuckness that counters the mood of political hopefulness in which the interviews were conducted. Kewpie’s insistence that Reid records in writing her linguistic mark of grief for these photographic subjects begins to sound as a refusal to look to the future because she is still waiting for them. “Late” becomes an invocation of the dead, made present as an absence, as those who are waited for in the present. Since, being “late,” they cannot themselves arrive, this waiting cannot end. Kewpie’s proclamation of their lateness, which she insists Reid record again and again in captions, and Lewis capture on film, thus enacts a mode of grief that defies Freudian conceptions of mourning.

Sigmund Freud’s fundamental opposition of mourning (in which the normal mourner is able to overcome loss by establishing identification with another object) to melancholia (in which the pathological mourner is unable to overcome loss by displacing it) has been widely critiqued elsewhere. Particularly relevant is David L. Eng and David Kazanjian’s (2003) suggestion that there is room in Freud’s conception for an understanding of “melancholia’s persistent struggle with its lost objects” as “continuous engagement” with the “remains” of the past (4).⁵⁶ The idea of “remains” is crucial because, as Achille Mbembe (2001) puts it, coloniality consists of modes of “entanglement” and “displacement” that

⁵⁶ As opposed to “simply a ‘grasping’ and ‘holding’ on to a fixed notion of the past” (Eng and Kazanjian 2003, 4).

produce “discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another” (14). In the multiple non-linear temporalities produced by coloniality, rather than staying put as something fixed to be grasped at as in Freud’s formulation, the past exists and interacts with the present. Mourning for the losses of those who were never seen as alive within colonial modernity cannot be completed, then, since they remain within, and continue to disrupt and repeat in, the present.

Capacious understandings of grief offered by Muñoz (1999) and Dagmawi Woubshet (2015) are especially useful for considering how Kewpie’s repetition of *late* constitutes a practice of mourning that defies Freudian conceptions. Primarily focusing on cultural production and works of grief by black gay men living in the US in the 1980s and early 1990s, both Muñoz and Woubshet conceptualise mourning in relation to specific conditions of black life and death. Situating these within legacies that exceed Freud’s formulation of loss, they each highlight the inadequacy of Freudian conceptions of inconsolable mourning as pathological, reliant on Freud’s “a priori” assumption of “the survival or future time of any given mourner,” in the context of grieving not for a single lost object but for persistent losses and for one’s own future (Woubshet 2015, 18). “Given the persistence of death in black life,” Woubshet (2015) argues, “black culture is imbued with an anticipatory sense of loss recalibrating the calendar of mourning to record past and prospective losses in a single grammar of loss” (19).⁵⁷ As a mode of mourning for which “there is no ‘normal’ teleological end in sight,” Muñoz (1999) proposes, “melancholia, for blacks, queers, or any queers of colour, is not a pathology but an integral part of everyday

⁵⁷ Demonstrating that “the opposition between normal and pathological mourning has never been a meaningful one in the formation of African American mourning,” Woubshet (2015, 18-19) draws on Abdul R. Jan-Mohamed’s (2005) theorisation of “the death-bound subject”—“a subject who is formed, from infancy on, by the imminent and ubiquitous threat of death” (2)—as well as Karla Holloway’s (2002) work on the persistent figuration of “the anticipation of death and dying [...] into the experiences of black folk” in the US, “given how much more omnipresent death was for them than for other Americans” (6), and Fred Moten’s (2003) work showing how “the way black mo’nin’ improvises through the opposition of mourning and melancholia disrupt[s] the temporal framework that buttresses that opposition” (210).

lives” and “part of our process of dealing with all the catastrophes that occur in the lives of people of colour, lesbians, and gay men” (74).

Both Muñoz and Woubshets consider tactics through which loss and suffering are reinserted into a public discourse endeavouring to censor them and show how this is bound up in the difficulties of representing identities under contestation and erasure within both public and private spheres. Woubshet (2015) points to political uses of grief that offer a “tangible way of leaving behind a trace” and archiving “for posterity queer lives, which would be otherwise effaced by the normative records of state, church, and family.” For mourners who are “without prospects of futurity,” these uses of grief exceed Freud’s binary model since they are inconsolable and “achieve cathexis in mourning itself and in its art and activism,” which “cannot displace loss” and instead place it “centre stage” (17-18). In Muñoz’s (1999) formulation, inconsolable grief is neither “a pathology” nor “self-absorbed mood that inhibits activism” but rather “a mechanism that helps us (re)construct identity and take our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their names—and in our names” (74). Muñoz and Woubshet each point to the rise of a sanitised gay liberalism in the wake of fatal homophobia in the decades prior, and illustrate how it repeats calls for the erasure of an embodied past that queerly exceeds its normative constraints.

The quiet practice of grief embedded in the 1999 recordings works to disrupt such a project, by insistently pointing to the incommensurability of this project’s vision with the histories Kewpie tells and the dissonant, disruptive, and belated temporalities her telling evokes. Although the process of collating captions gives these recordings an already stilted temporality, Reid conveys that he aims to move forward through photographs as quickly as possible. This stiltedness is compounded, however, by Kewpie’s insistence on repeating descriptions even when they have already been noted, to clarify that the subjects are late. It is not only by frustrating progress through photographs that her repetition of “late” jars the

temporality of the documentary project. Kewpie's reminders of premature deaths—"the *late* Mitzi"; "the late, late Patti"—seep into the interview as it progresses to subvert recuperation of her photographs as representative of an idyllic past. She prevents the past being sealed off by bringing her dead with her. This practice of grief urges recognition that these losses cannot be overcome, and of the futility of activism that fails to foreground insurmountable and persistent losses and to wage its battles in their names *and* our own.

Interviews with Kewpie were not conducted for the purpose of mourning. They were conducted in a moment of political hopefulness. Yet Kewpie uses *late* to mean deceased so often that it repeats across the recordings as a distinctive feature. It forms a random pattern, a beat with formative and disruptive qualities since it becomes expected yet remains irregular, as Kewpie repeatedly interrupts her interviewers and herself to note, again, that the subjects of the photographs are late. This repetition of *late* does the performative work of (but not within a prescribed space or time for) mourning. It subverts a narrative of political progress by appropriating the recordings of the 1999 interview and embedding within them a practice of grief that is perhaps specifically audible as such at a distance of over twenty years, perhaps especially by those who might experience as a loss a post-Rainbowist present in which the Constitution is failing the majority of the governed and in which the narrative of political progress that this practice subverts sounds increasingly hollow.

Late accumulates across the recordings to give disembodied and spectral voice to a quiet and persistent mode of grief. It insistently demarcates the unjust curtailment of lives while refusing the impulse towards resolution that Jay Pather warns against on the basis of its cruciality to South African nationalist ideologies. Proposing the "non-sequitur" as a means of insisting on irresolution, Pather (2017) calls for a melancholic relation to the past through adamant refusal of its closure (159). This is "the necessary and irreconcilable work of mourning" in which Gabrielle Goliath (2019) writes about herself and her peers critically

engaging (127).⁵⁸ The following section argues that the particular practice of mourning embedded in the Kewpie recordings bears witness to the toll taken by the labour in which Kewpie and her peers engaged to sustain gay life, reminding us of the continued cost to those failed by the movement for gay rights.

“Still around”

There is a sense of tentative triumph, of looking ahead to a better future, discernible in the questions put to Kewpie by both Gevisser and Lewis, and it is one that she almost comically complicates by refusing their paradigms of political progress. She rebukes the basis of Gevisser’s attempts to engage her on “political” topics: his belief in the efficacy of legal protections. “It is only now as the constitution is coming out about gays that they busting the gays around,” Kewpie (1998) tells him, incisively pointing to the ambiguity of visibility to complicate any investments in the political value of representation by which his project might be guided. “And I think it’s very unfair.” Although Lewis doesn’t explicitly ask her about political gains during the audio-recorded interviews, Kewpie (1996) quietly refuses the role accorded to her in his activism, at one point troubling certain tenets of the struggle for state protections by unexpectedly referring to a popular right-wing myth espoused by those fundamentally opposed to such protections.

Lewis: And it’s part of the explanation for why D. Six was so friendly towards gay people.

Kewpie: Another thing I can tell you is this that the gays never abused children then, they never used to abuse kids, that’s why the kids used to love them. And they grew up, and, and the gays used to help them with their weddings and parties.

Lewis: I don’t think gays abuse children *now* either, I think that’s just a media myth that’s been created...

Kewpie: Hmm, mm hmm... But they never used to abuse kids. Or hit them, either.

Lewis: *[Pause]* Okay... *[Presumably turning to another photograph or album]* Let’s open this...

⁵⁸ Goliath (2019, 129) draws on Ahmed’s (2004) investigation of a form of relationality with its basis in “learning to live with the impossibility of reconciliation” (39). On *Elegy*, the “long-term commemorative performance project” initiated by Goliath in 2015, in which performers “collectively enact a ritual of mourning,” see Goliath n.d.

This exchange takes place towards the end of the 1996 interview, less than a minute before the last of the three recordings is interrupted by the much louder music and news broadcast that renders the remainder difficult to listen to and much of the dialogue impossible to discern. Lewis had been musing that “D. Six was so friendly towards gay people” because of “this whole thing of children and [the Biggs family] girls mixing”—“loving gays,” Kewpie interjects—“easily together.” Although she agrees with Lewis’s analysis, he swiftly challenges her contribution to it (the “[...]other thing” she says she “can tell” him).

Curtailing her interviewers’ rhetoric of political progress and respectability, Kewpie declines to co-operate with their future-oriented projects. Her quiet refusal contrasts with, as it is overlaid by, the recording that commences shortly after the exchange outlined above to enact an inadvertent but nevertheless painfully loud censorship. Kewpie warily refuses to place hope in a narrative of political progress. When Gevisser seeks her opinion on the proposed constitutional clause that “says there will be no discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation” (this “means that the Constitution actually protects gay people,” he explains), Kewpie (1998) does not respond hopefully. “Well,” she says, “they should try.” Kewpie apparently invests little faith in the state’s ability to protect her. Asked what she “think[s] of the whole gay rights thing now,” she says that “if the government should allow it, it is going to be beautifully done [...] But,” she also cautions, “don’t let the government push you around and don’t let people push you about then they won’t be able to.” Thus far, not letting herself be pushed around (or indeed about) had involved resisting attempts made by other members of the governed and the government itself. These are the two parties prohibited from discriminating against members of the governed on the grounds given in the Constitution: “the state” and “any person” (s. 9 [3, 4]).

The way not to get pushed around, Kewpie (1998, 1996) suggests when detailing gay life, is to form a collective: to establish sustaining bonds by turning towards other

devalued objects, such as the “gay friends” who would be “pushed around,” thus enabling extension into inhabitable space in which a new set of relations, norms, and conditions of possibility were established. Such collectives and such spaces could not be sustained, however, within inherited conditions of social life. Reminding us of the consequences of these conditions for Kewpie and the girls, the accumulation of *late* forms something like what Woubshet (2015) terms a “poetics of compounding loss” (3). Insistently demarcating the ends of lives reveals their relentless curtailment and the reality of persistent loss in which Kewpie is implicated.

About halfway through the 1999 recordings, Kewpie is asked to describe a photograph of herself and Cora.

Kewpie: And this was the- Kewpie and the late Co- Cora. Just me and *Cora*.
 Reid: C, O, R, A.
 Kewpie: A.
 Lewis: Is Cora *late*?
 Kewpie: No, no.
 Lewis: No, she’s not late.
 Kewpie: [*Coughs, and whispers*] Sorry.

In the dizzying repetition of “late,” Cora is made late while she is still alive. Kewpie falters in “the late Co- Cora” but also in “this was the- Kewpie,” as though she is about to describe herself as late, before correcting herself. It is as though, given the relentlessness of death, “the late” is such a standard descriptor that it has become an involuntary tic suggesting lateness’s inescapability even for those who are alive, “still.” As noted, Kewpie tells Lewis that she is “still left alone. Still around.” *Still*, here, indicates that she remains, alone, after the others have “all parted.” But this softly spoken formulation also evokes another sense of *still*, as in not moving, gesturing to the implication of Kewpie’s life, “still,” in the conditions that produce the many deaths she recounts. In this way, “still around” can be understood as an inversion that signifies the impossibility of “moving around” (which I have argued represents freedom from the given terms of the social) because of the persistence of death.

Kewpie, though alive, is left “still” by the many deaths of her friends, in which she is implicated, both because they foretell the likelihood of her own and because they leave her alone (and) still.

Kewpie’s account of these deaths and the practice of inconsolable grief and dissonant temporalities it evokes foreground the conditions curtailing life and producing persistent death as an inescapable reality by enacting her stuckness within them. Kewpie bears witness to conditions of life and death that are particularly inescapable for gay people living within and against the constraints imposed by the entangled histories of the category “Coloured.” Of course, these conditions are incommensurate with those of black life and death discussed by scholars including Woubshet (2015) and Muñoz (1999), both of whom, in the chapters discussed here, offer a capacious understanding of mourning in relation to specific conditions of black life and death.

In their work, there echoes Rinaldo Walcott’s (2013) oft-quoted formulation of a present in which “Black people die differently” (143), in an essay in which he argues (also with reference to the ongoing decimation of the black queer community by HIV/AIDS) for the criticality of death in comprehending conditions and possibilities in black life. It is “the crossing of the Atlantic,” Walcott contends, that produces this present, making “the conditions of black death seem to repeat across time, space, and location” by inaugurating an “intimate relation to death in a fashion that” is—crucially—“different from many human others” (146-147). In this moment, “modern blackness” or “New World black being” is “founded in and through death” (143-145), so that death comes to signify the effacement of both the individual and collective body, erased from history and memory. While recognising the cruciality of the Middle Passage, Macharia (2020) emphasises the multiple exclusions enacted by liberal political reason and its promise of freedom, given freedom is conceived of as an intrinsic quality of the human invented through the exclusion of blackness founded

in death. Drawing on Sylvia Wynter (1995), Macharia (2020) insists that “Africa does not—cannot—escape this (new) worlding. Blackness names, in part, the suture between Africa and Afro-diaspora” (563).⁵⁹

To have been classified “Coloured” is to be entangled within these conceptions of Africa and diaspora in relation to freedom. The conditions to which Kewpie bears witness are incommensurate yet entangled with conditions of black life and death in what Hartman ([2007] 2021), writing about these conditions in the US, terms the “afterlife of slavery,” consisting of “skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment” (6). Addressing Muñoz himself after his own sudden death, Joshua Chambers-Letson grapples with the nature of a related entanglement. Although refusing to distract from the specific histories producing the present named by Walcott, Chambers-Letson (2018) contends that:

black and brown queer and trans death, like the deaths of women of colour, produced by different yet overlapping histories of colonialism, capital accumulation, white supremacy, and cis-heteropatriarchy, share something with each other not in spite of but because of their difference. I want to suggest that black and brown people’s emancipation from these conditions are mutually implicated, not in spite of but in relation to our incommensurability. What we share is that under such conditions, which are far beyond our ability to control them, survival can be hard. So, if I call your death mundane, it’s not to underplay the importance of your life. It’s only meant to serve as a bitter acknowledgement of the ubiquitous and disproportionate distribution of death towards queers, women, and trans people of colour. Dying for different reasons, often dying before really living, but dying nonetheless. (xvi-xvii)

I have suggested that the inconsistencies in Kewpie’s (1996) account of how old Patti and Mitzi were when they died and how long she had known them before their deaths evoke this sense of “dying before really living” (Chambers-Letson 2018, xvii). Kewpie’s account of these and other deaths indicate the “constant and close proximity to death” in which Chambers-Letson notes “trans and queer of colour life is lived” (xvi), as does her

⁵⁹ “If something called *freedom* names a position within intimate modernity,” Macharia (2020) asks, “what is it to write as the belated, forever barred from the freedom promised within intimate modernity?” (569)

recollection that experiencing the forms of physical and verbal violence with which the girls were targeted “was almost like being killed around too” (Kewpie 1996). Kewpie reminds us of the stakes of the political for those who are out of time.

Kewpie often describes gay friends striving to get as much living done as possible; to cover as much ground as possible during lives cut short. As well as bearing witness to the toll taken by lives of precarious manual labour, she bears witness to what Muñoz (2009) describes as “the material toll that a burning queer incandescence takes” (155). Both Mitzi and Patti died from heart attacks in the salon, the site at which fabulousness is produced and capitalised upon, and Kewpie often describes gay friends living “fast” or not being able to rest. Mitzi, who “started out as a nine-year-old kid working [...] as a householder[, ...] used to go home at night or shall I say in the mornings, two, three, o’ clock in the morning. Mitzi couldn’t rest. She was always on the way on the road.” Caron, who also worked as a domestic worker, “never had any education also, and she was a very fast type of person. You know, that fast living type of person [...] She can be very, uhm... How can I put it to you—she can put you off a track, quick” (Kewpie 1996). Kewpie had another friend, Wilhemina—“I used to call her Willy,” says Kewpie (1999), who inscribes a photograph of Wilhemina and Patti “models” (fig. 3.1)—who “was,” Kewpie (1999) tells Reid and Lewis, “a *strooimeisie*... you know, working on the road.”⁶⁰ Moreover, as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, although Kewpie (1996) recollects her story, all roads seemingly lead to prison for the criminalised and derided Doris Day, or to “Hollywood” where she “used to always land up.”

Laying out a different kind of track or road, the contemporary movement for gay rights arguably postponed the liberation of the girls of District Six from the conditions curtailing their lives as they, the girls, imagined it. South Africa is replete with reminders of

⁶⁰ Literally “sprinkle girl” as in flower-girl or bridesmaid, *strooimeisie* is used by Kewpie to mean sex worker.

the failures of such political movements. Twenty-six years into the new dispensation, early death remains an inescapable reality for the majority of Black trans women. A group of such women were forcibly removed from the home they had created for themselves under a bridge in District Six during the same week of, and only a few blocks away from, the opening of the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition. This exhibition featured photographs of homes created by Kewpie and her friends such as Sue and Olivia,



Figure 3.1

who “stayed with” Kewpie at the Queens Hotel, discussed in the following chapter as a “place” for Kewpie (1996) and her “gay friends”—“I won’t say boarders, they stayed with me. They were *strooimeisies*”—and of other friends whom Kewpie also describes as *strooimeisies*, including Anne and Sammy. In 2018, among those forcibly removed were members of the collective SistaazHood, “a transgender women’s sex worker support group and a safer space” (SistaazHood n.d.), whose founding member Leigh Davids spoke at an event held in conjunction with the exhibition’s opening with a stark reminder that residents of the area now officially renamed District Six continue to experience forced removals due to gentrification, anti-poor laws, and a lack of state protection.⁶¹

L. Davids made this intervention less than six months before her own unjust death.

⁶¹ For further information about the event, a “dialogue and exhibition walkabout,” see Tan 2018. In a piece published online by the Conversation one week later, Haley McEwen (2018) references the intervention made by L. Davids.

She passed away in February 2019 at the age of thirty-nine, due to health complications related to HIV, having struggled to afford adequate healthcare towards the end of her life. In April 2018, L. Davids had spoken at the opening of another exhibition, featuring the work of artist and photographer Robert Hamblin, in which she had collaborated. She said the following: “International studies show transgender women have an average life expectancy of about thirty to thirty-two years. We have no studies in South Africa but since 2011 we have photographed thirty black trans women sex workers for this project. Five of us have died not reaching the age of forty” (SA History 2020). L. Davids reminds us that there can be no end in sight for the mourning of these losses that continue to repeat in the present: the deaths of those who, like Mitzi, Caron, Willy, Olivia, Sue, Anne, and Sammy, are travelling on a road or track that is made wayward; those who are made late and whom Kewpie insists on waiting for but who, being late, cannot arrive. Muñoz (1999) points out that, when mourning someone whose very existence is under erasure, we cannot get over this loss without reproducing the violence of this erasure and thus the conditions producing their death. This is partly why melancholia is a necessary political resource for those of us who find ourselves under erasure in incommensurate yet entangled senses: resisting closure, we have no choice but to bring our dead with us to “the battles we must wage” in their name and our own (Muñoz 1999, 74), even as we work to figure out what this requires of us.

Conclusion

In May 2021, Constitution Hill published online a timeline celebrating the equality clause of the South African Constitution, the first in the world to prohibit discrimination on the basis of “sexual orientation.” The webpage includes a reference to “Kewpie, a well-known performer and activist in Cape Town” (Constitution Hill 2021). Although she did work as a “performer,” the description of Kewpie as an “activist” seems odd given she did not describe

herself as such and in fact repeatedly expressed her disinterest in being “political,” as discussed in chapter five. The current chapter has laid the groundwork to understand this posthumous descriptor, “activist,” as indicative of the manners in which Kewpie has been used to advocate for so-called gay rights since the 1990s. I have also sought to indicate some of the ways people like Kewpie have been made late by this rights project, and one way Kewpie herself disrupts this dynamic, reminding us of the inevitable failure of movements that do not centre those they claim to champion. Using testimony to do so, Kewpie in some form sustains, and demands that we sustain, the ideal of gay life she offers.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the contemporary gay rights movement does not seem to recognise Kewpie as she asks to be recognised. In 1999, Hoad described such rights as “extrapolated from a category called lesbian and gay identity or, less specifically, ‘sexual orientation,’ which more often than not fails to map onto the bodily practices or more extensive worlding(s) of the subjects it promises to describe” (561). It is inevitable that such failings most acutely fail those who experience intersectional oppressions. Indeed, in the late 1990s, by which time the Pride March had become the Pride Parade, white cisgender gay men and women literally paraded away from such people. Routes were altered, entrance fees were charged and, according to lesbian activist, filmmaker, and icon Bev Ditsie (2019), the “fundamental essence of what the march stood for” was supplanted with “an entirely different, depoliticised, elitist concept born of ignorance and the lack of care for other less privileged members of this so-called community”: “gay white South Africa could finally openly celebrate their freedom without being encumbered by the rest of us and our struggles.”

The wording of what has come to be known as the equality clause of the Constitution is intended to guard against intersectional failure.⁶² In 2021, in a landmark judgement, the

⁶² As theorised by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991).

Constitutional Court recognised intersectionality as part of general Constitutional law,⁶³ and Cameron (2013) for one continues to insist that “the Constitution is still our best practical hope,” although recognising “the limitations of rights talk.” I have, in this chapter, shared Cameron’s investment in the possibilities of constitutionalism, arguing that Kewpie offers a precedent for the “generous” reading of *sexual orientation* advocated by Justice Ackerman while trying to maintain some form of “persistent[...] critique” of what “one cannot not (wish to) inhabit” (Spivak 1993, 284).

Equally, Kewpie gestures to the limits of what even generous readings of the Constitution can do for those whose liberation is imagined for them: the sex workers, for example, who advocate for decriminalisation. Kewpie reinserts such people into a public discourse in which they are under erasure. She grieves for the kinds of losses that Yvette Christiansë (2003) describes, writing about a consequence of the TRC’s limitation of its scope of enquiry: “a certain forfeiture of the right to grieve publicly over the losses that [...] could not be construed as political, that were not the direct effect of the state’s activities, even if they were indirectly determined or marked by them.” “For those who would have grieved over such losses,” Christiansë concludes, “the threat is enormous” (373). Kewpie grieves for losses that occurred within the politicised District but not through forced removal, although forced removal is entangled with the conditions that produce these losses. Indeed, Kewpie’s (1999) reference to “the *late* Hanover Street” points to how the inescapable ever-presence of death is bound up with the threat of forced removal and destruction hanging over the District.

⁶³ See Atrey 2021 for a report of the concerned case. The resultant judgement explicitly utilises “an intersectional approach,” or “the intersectionality framework as a legal tool” (*Mahlangu v. Minister of Labour* 2021, 79). Emphasising that “there is nothing foreign or alien about the concept of intersectional discrimination in our constitutional jurisprudence,” Acting Justice Margaret Victor references Justice Sachs’s “pertinent[...] invo[cation]” of intersectionality (76-77). In 1998, citing “critical race feminists” at “the forefront of the movement towards a contextual treatment and understanding of the lives of those who face multiple discrimination,” Justice Sachs had suggested that “this [intersectional] approach seems to be contemplated by the words ‘on one or more grounds’ in section 9 (3)” of the Constitution (*NCGLE v. Minister of Justice* 1999, 70).

Kewpie: And this is Kewpie and Kay, in the...
 Reid: Oh.
 Kewpie: In the *late* Hanover Street.
 Reid: In... Hanover Street?
 Kewpie: Hanover Street, which is now... gone.

Oral histories and memoirs of District Sixers often refer to forced removal as a kind of death. One remembers the day they were forced to leave: “Everyone was crying. It was like a funeral. It was like a *kiefayat*. It was the *kiefayat* of District Six” (F. February 2016, 252). This notion is foregrounded in the work of O’Connell, who often comments that many of those who have been displaced are unable to articulate what has been lost, let alone overcome the loss, because the nature of the loss denied them a subject position from which to be able to mourn. O’Connell (2012) argues that the violence of apartheid “could only be exercised on those who were not considered human—therefore there was no destruction, no loss, and therefore *no mourning*” (26).⁶⁴ The following chapter begins with a discussion of the way the lost District has since been imaginatively reconstructed as a lost home, and Kewpie welcomed home as prodigal daughter. This is enabled, I argue, by her efforts to sustain gay life.

⁶⁴ O’Connell (2012) cites work by Butler and Badaroon that is relevant to the concerns of this chapter (26). Butler’s (2004b) seminal formulation of precarity as a politically induced condition, indicating a differential distribution of precariousness, suggests that it is through grief that we may come to understand precariousness as an inherent condition of social life, or our co-constitution through “a ‘common’ corporeal vulnerability” (42). In Butler’s (2004b) words, “some lives are grievable, and others are not; the differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kinds of subjects must not, operates to produce and maintain certain exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human: what counts as a liveable life and a grievable death?” (xiv). In a South African context, Badaroon (2004) explains that “the dominant ways of determining the boundaries of the human under apartheid, which were inherited from the colonial era, did not recognise Black people as human, and therefore did not recognise their deaths as deaths” (261). Thus, “control over the meanings of death is an indication of who is regarded as human” (261).

Chapter Four: Moving Home

Recollecting District Six and the Promise of the Queens Hotel

I was always the one gay in District Six, I should put it down merely. I was always on the lookout for a place to stay, but getting a place to stay for my other gay friends to stay with me [...] And that is how it happened that we moved out and we moved into the Queens Hotel. (Kewpie 1996)

During the week leading up to 24 September 2018, images of Kewpie began to reappear in and near to the area of Cape Town that many continued to call District Six, as Jarrett Erasmus of the Burning Museum Arts Collective decorated buildings in which Kewpie was born, lived, or performed on-stage with large-scale, wheat-paste portraits (Smith and Marsden 2020, 186-187). Each new public artwork marked a pause along the 2018 route of the Heritage Day March organised annually by the District Six Museum, where the first public exhibition of one hundred images from the Kewpie Photographic Collection, the Museum's first collaboration with GALA, had opened four days earlier. An article published on the GALA website summarised the spirit in which the Heritage Day March was dedicated to Kewpie and themed "Reclaiming with Pride," suggesting that "in a sense" it facilitated the "return" of Kewpie's "legacy to her home" (Tan 2018). "Home," here, is District Six: the place where Kewpie was born and lived and where many of her photographs were taken. As seen in previous chapters, District Six is also a place that Kewpie reimagined and from which she imagined herself elsewhere.

Considering the interrelation of various meanings of *home* and *moving home* in the Kewpie Collection and the *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* (2018, 2019) exhibitions, this chapter argues that the labour Kewpie undertakes to sustain gay life invites a return to a more expansive sense of home. Kewpie uses testimony as well as photography, I suggest, to reimagine conditions of precarity and make room for gays within the still emerging popular narrative of District Six. Homing in on her descriptions of experiencing various forms of

pressure, certain photographs and moments in her testimony are shown to represent instances of creativity as a direct response to inhospitable conditions. They offer glimpses of an existence Kewpie imagined but was unable to sustain. Rather than contest the understanding, which is in keeping with the popular narrative, that gays were accepted by and integrated into the wider District Six community, I demonstrate some of the ways that elements of this understanding were imagined and worked for by gays themselves in pursuit of a new mode of sociality that I have, following Kewpie's lead, called gay life.

The concept of *home* remains fraught in South Africa, where the post-apartheid nation's failure to fulfil its promise of a collective home for all within it has led to the emergence of nostalgia as a defining element of public culture (Worby and Ally 2013). The previous chapter discussed one response to this failure: attempts to legitimise present claims to rights and protections. The current chapter considers another: the construction of District Six as lost home. Taking up the idea outlined above, that the *Kewpie* exhibition facilitated the work of moving Kewpie home, I show how this act of re-membering the District with Kewpie is facilitated by processes through which the District has been remembered, brokered by the District Six Museum since it first opened its doors in 1994, as well as by work done by Kewpie herself.

As quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Kewpie describes one way she sought to sustain gay life: by finding a place of belonging for herself and her "gay friends." One of the buildings adorned with a wheat paste portrait of Kewpie in September 2018, an inconspicuous block of flats across the road from a furniture store, was the place Kewpie describes finding: the place she named the Queens Hotel. After pausing at each of these portraits, the Heritage Day March headed to the District Six Museum Homecoming Centre, where the Kewpie exhibition was housed. Located a short block from the Museum's main site, the Centre fulfils its name by welcoming ex-residents and hosting much of the work

through which the Museum continues to broker the memory of the lost District. This memory has been shaped by experiences of District Six, before, during, and since its destruction, as highly contested territory, physically and symbolically. Marchers were reminded of an aspect of this contestation as we signed a petition to the South African National Geographic Names Council, in support of the request for District Six's name to be formally reinstated.⁶⁵ Defining "home and dislocation" as "the experience of millions of victims of forced removals," Njabulo Ndebele (2003) considers such sites:

Symbols of dislocation. Mass stories of people who built homes and communities and then watched them demolished by apartheid's bulldozers. In a country where so many homes have been demolished and people moved to strange new places, home temporarily becomes the shared experience of homelessness, the fellow-feeling of loss and the desperate need to regain something. But where, and how? (82)

Beginning with "the fellow-feeling of loss and the desperate need to regain something," this chapter considers what else might be lost, when a history of dispossession flattens out what has been taken to the status of pre-existing or enabling, and asks whether "something" else might yet be regained.

Contending that a transformational imagination emerges from Kewpie's longing for something felt to be missing, I discuss the reconfigured ideal of home that is rehearsed before being explicitly named. The Queens Hotel is an ideal of home created through the movement of desire, which enabled potential movement. It is also a home that was itself moved by pressure since the domestic formations rehearsing this ideal existed precariously within District Six. While framing the Queens Hotel in its disappointment, I argue, Kewpie's recollection of District Six represents continued efforts to sustain gay life in some form.

Recollection

At the public dialogue mentioned in the previous chapter, at which L. Davids spoke of

⁶⁵ The name District Six was eventually legally reinstated in December 2019.

continued experiences of marginalisation and dispossession in the increasingly gentrified area, and at other District Six Museum events organised in conjunction with the exhibition's opening, several former residents expressed discomfort with conclusions drawn in *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* (2018). Among those who spoke about their own experiences of exclusion, one ex-resident captured the ambivalences that I seek to highlight in the Kewpie Collection. Distinguishing between public and private personas, she pointed to entanglements of gaining acceptance with vulnerabilities to violence: "I grew up in District Six and there's something that doesn't get told in those narratives. As much as people accepted you're a moffie, there was a lot of violence, a lot of violence. All of these things was true but we tend not talk about the incredible violence that went on there. It's all about the drag queens and the hairdressers." In chapter one of this thesis, I argued that the roles of hairdresser and on-stage performer facilitated and depended on fantastic performances. These performances worked to insulate against the girls' precarity, yet are easily taken up as evidence of the celebrity they do the work of imagining, as they arguably were in the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition. Yet there is a complexity to Kewpie's testimony that was occluded by this exhibition, as the quoted ex-resident implies might be the case.

The account Kewpie gives of life in the District is, at times, contradictory. Kewpie (1996, 1998) does state that "gays" were "accepted" by their families and the wider community, and that people were "never rude" or "hostile" to her. However, she also recalls being "pressurised" by the community as a child and suggests that "any parent would be like" her father towards "their gay." Kewpie (1996) describes parents who, upon finding out their child was a "moffie," would "bushwhack them, hit them," or "bang, bang, bang the child every time, until they can't do it any longer." She states that no one used *moffie* derogatorily, in District Six: "there was no such unscrupulous names around." Yet she also remembers that "here and there you would find the unscrupulous ones calling out 'hey

‘moffie’ and so on and so on,” and that “the cultured coloured people” who were “afraid to use Afrikaans words” would instead call out, “there goes a queer” (Kewpie 1998). Kewpie (1996) describes being safe in District Six: people would never “push” her “around,” or “discard” or “abuse” her, she says, “by uttering rude things towards” her. Yet she also recalls “discovering,” as she grew up there, “how people can push you around”—and this included being physically attacked by men (Kewpie 1998). Why, then, do certain aspects of Kewpie’s account seem to be occluded by the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition? I suggest this is partly to do with the ways in which the Kewpie Archive has taken shape through processes informed by desires of those constituting and engaging with it—some of which are key to the work of the District Six Museum discussed in the following section—and that it is partly because Kewpie herself enables this occlusion by engaging a strategy of recollection.

Notes to the exhibition cite *A Normal Daughter* (Lewis 2000), the 1998 interview with Gevisser that is available as a transcript at GALA, and the catalogue to the Photographic Collection that includes Kewpie’s descriptions of photographs in the 1999 Reid and Lewis interview. They do not quote the 1996 Lewis interview nor the Reid and Lewis interview (aside from those excerpts recorded in the GALA catalogue), neither of which had been transcribed. It is in the recordings of these latter two interviews that I suggested, in the previous chapter, there is embedded a practice of grief. Kewpie recounts experiences of discrimination in District Six most often in the interview by Lewis, whom she had known for three years at the time of recording. During the interview, he challenges Kewpie, asking her to disclose information they had discussed off the record. This interview also comprises more of Kewpie’s testimony than any other. She often sounds tired, speaking slowly, taking long pauses and giving her narrative more time to unfurl than she does in film recordings, in which her recollection of the District is snappier and more idealised as she looks directly into the camera.

It seems that the omission from the exhibition of certain troubling aspects of the account Kewpie gives of life in District Six results from desires to recover a redemptory narrative. However, it is also the case that, in the interviews it quotes, Kewpie gives an account of life in the District that more straightforwardly coheres with what I will describe as the popular narrative of District Six. Kewpie's account is somewhat shaped by desires guiding the acquisition of her photographs and the interviews themselves. Each interviewer admiringly refers to her photographs, anchoring their questions in the glamour and celebrity they depict. However, while Lewis directly questions Kewpie (1996) about instances of "gay people" being "beaten up" and "murdered," Gevisser changes the subject when Kewpie (1998) tells him that she "discovered [...] how people can push you around too": "Let's go back to your partner, how did you guys meet?"

More significantly, Kewpie herself seems use the interviews to recollect the past as she recalls it. At times, she enters a distinctly fantastic mode of narration augmented by idiosyncratic use of absolutes, challenged by Lewis in the following exchange.

- Reid: Did you regularly spend Christmas with-
 Kewpie: Not really regularly, but always [...]
 Lewis: 'Not regularly, but always...'
 Reid: Hmm?
 Lewis: 'Not regularly, but always...'
 Kewpie: Yes, *always*! (Kewpie 1999)

This narrative mode involves Kewpie gesturing out to complete acceptance as she speaks, launching into diatribes worded in increasingly absolute terms. In these instances, as with her statements of complete acceptance, Kewpie claims the "right to remake" (Soudien and Meltzer 2001, 69), elaborated in the following section. This right is granted by the act of giving testimony, which, as described by Derrida (2000), "structurally impl[ies] in itself the possibility of fiction, simulacra, dissimulation, lie, and perjury—that is to say, the possibility of literature, of the innocent or perverse literature that innocently plays at perverting all of these distinctions" (29). Though recorded in the context of contemporary historiographic

practices working to redraw the lines between remembering and forgetting, Kewpie's testimony troubles paradigms of memory and recovery within which it might be captured. Paying attention to the practice of looking and the limits and possibilities of the visual, Kewpie suggests an understanding of active forgetting as co-constitutive of remembering. This understanding is, in part, what *strategy of recollection* expresses.

Like *remembering*, with which it is synonymous, *recalling* foregrounds processes of summoning, gathering, and making again intrinsic to the act of giving testimony or remaking what one has seen to make it known to others. *Recollection* does not imply falsification, but troubles distinctions between the true and the false continual with a reified material reality out of which people like Kewpie are locked, in senses discussed in chapters two and three. By collectively nurturing "courage" and "capacity" to "imagine the counter-intuitive," as Gqola urges (Khan 2018, 115), we foster conditions of possibility for material realities continuous with new common senses. Theoretical resonances of the term *recollection*, discussed below, remind us that narratives established in public memory depend on a critical mass of recollections, conditions of possibility for which are shaped in turn by established narratives. In her testimony, Kewpie uses conventions of the popular narrative of District Six to write gays into the narrated District.

Referring to recollection as a strategy, I do not mean to imply that Kewpie crafts her testimony to serve an individualistic or finite purpose. Rather, quotidian recollections constituting Kewpie's testimony are part of broader configurations of memory and imagination, both oppositional and generative, in which blueprints for desirable futures can be traced. Additionally, Kewpie draws our attention to this strategy of recollection and the agency she claims through it. While her recollections themselves mingle what is rendered probable, possible, improbable, and impossible to trouble the exclusionary basis of each category, Kewpie details her quotidian acts of recollection in a manner that means these acts

are also distinctly fantastic. Referencing her strategy of recollection as she engages it, Kewpie elaborates a theory of resistance that should be considered a strategy of minoritarian worldmaking alongside, say, disidentification (Muñoz 1999).

Elaborating this theory, while referencing Biblical notions of divine creation, Kewpie (1998) disidentifies with Christian ideologies she presumably would have heard during childhood as a member of the church choir. Her philosophy of human existence hinges on a Platonic identification of the image of God in the intellectual capacity and perceptual faculty of human beings, in which the New Testament imperative to love thy neighbour remains intact (“Don’t just love yourself, you’ve got to love the next party too because we’re all God’s creation”) while the imperative to turn the other cheek is reworked into a strategy of turning a blind eye, apparently in order to divinely re-make her world in the image she desires. Kewpie “turn[s] her back” on those who “abuse” her with an authority approaching blasphemy, almost teasingly declaring: “I have always never pushed my God one side behind my back.”

Kewpie’s (1998) remarks suggest that action is effective only insofar as it is consented to by those who would be acted upon, and ideology effective only insofar as it is acted in accordance with. The upshot, that what she refuses to see loses its power to act upon her, facilitates an idiosyncratic politics of non-racialism: “I didn’t walk up to them as a white. I walked up to them as a human. As me.” Hence obeying (and even seeing) apartheid signage would make Kewpie complicit in the ideology they enact. “I’m not prejudiced,” she says, implying she did not take notice of these signs because she did not share in their sentiment. Admittedly, such claims rely on an alarming understanding of consent. This understanding manifests only as a means of claiming agency, however, because it is effective to the extent that it subsists in Kewpie’s testimony and photographs, in which what she refuses to see does not appear, which is to say exist. Kewpie (1998) has “overlooked”

demeaning experiences, she explains: “I don’t call that to my memory.” “If people reject you,” she advises, “just throw them a blind eye.” If anyone “should have” discriminated against her, she says, she “would never catch the eye to them,” so as not to “keep it in [her] mind and [her] brains.” Kewpie (1996) describes responding in this way to her father “rejecting” her because she was gay: “I just threw a blind eye his way.” Transforming her father’s painful refusal of her with her own playful refusal to witness it, “[she] just gave him the wink of an eye.”⁶⁶

Considered alongside her comment discussed in chapter one, about “people [...] talk[ing] the best parts of you” and “hav[ing] stories like [...] Cinderella was,” the desire Kewpie (1996) expresses to “lift [her] life up [...] and take the best part of it” sounds as a celebration of what Derrida (2000) calls the “possibility of fiction” (27, 29, 42, 92). Kewpie’s recollection of the District enacts the dual senses of *recollect* discerned by Eric Worby and Shireen Ally (2013) in a post-apartheid archival project: “‘recalling’ the past (through the work of memory)” and “‘re-collecting’ the past (through the work of archiving)” (467). Responding dismissively to questions about violence on the basis that she has refused to see it, Kewpie recollects the past as she recalls it. It is through such acts of recollection, Rassool (2001) points out, that “community” can be “recalled” (xi).

One way Kewpie recalls community as she recalls the past is by frustrating her interviewers’ attempts to comprehensively document. She typically formulates her responses to questions about when things happened, or how long for, inexactly, as in “eight or ten or twelve years,” and many of her answers contradict others. When Kewpie (1996)

⁶⁶ The visual terms in which Kewpie describes her strategy of recollection emphasise the visual logics of bearing witness, touched on in chapter two, while alluding to the camera’s function as a technology of recollection. Since all interviewers reference her photographs, the testimony Kewpie gives is mediated through the camera—as it is in film recordings, although this technology functions differently. Photographs work as framing devices, shaping what is remembered as seen and what is forgotten or un-seen. Interviews were conducted decades after most of the photographs were taken. We can hear how certain details are deemphasised and others privileged, as Kewpie is prompted by photographic recollections of what she is being asked to recall. Creating a frame around statements of complete acceptance, as certain photographs do, Kewpie offers positive statements available for cherry-picking.

tells Lewis that she met Brian through Bassey “near to the eighties,” he challenges her: “it couldn’t have been. You met Brian in the fifties.” This is when he expresses his frustration: “see, that’s your problem with time again.” Kewpie responds rather melancholically, “time, time, time...” before agreeing, “Ja, it was the late fifties.” In chapter three, I noted the significance the phrase “problem with time” takes on: insisting on waiting for those made late, Kewpie reminds us of the stakes of the political for those who are out of time in various senses. Muñoz (2009) describes two relevant “ways” in which “those of us who wait” are “out of time”: “We have been cast out of straight time’s rhythm, and we have made worlds in our temporal and spatial configurations” (182).

Kewpie’s answers conjure entangled histories that enact these “ways” of being “out of time,” performing the negotiation history involves for those seeking sustenance in an inhospitable present. Contradictions in her testimony convey that the past could have happened differently, “bring[ing] into co-presence a sense of the impossible, mingling what was with what might have been” (Nyong’o 2018, 7). Kewpie (1996, 1998) bears witness to the disappointment of past hopes for the future, unable to survive in the present of the interview, the loss of what once felt possible acutely expressed in wistful assertions that she “could” or “would have been a retired dancer today” had her father not prevented it. In chapter one, I likened Kewpie’s response to the “turning point[s]” moore (2018) tells us fabulousness “stems from” (31). Contextualised in precarities attendant upon being gay in District Six, as Kewpie describes, does not describe, and refuses to describe them, the notion of the fantastic and the senses of fabulousness it signals have suggested that gays might be thought of as producers, rather than beneficiaries, of the remembered District’s defining qualities, in sometimes inhospitable conditions. From this moment of rejection, Kewpie finds, as Gayatri Gopinath (2018) writes with regards to the aesthetic practices of

queer diaspora, “imaginative and pleasurable ways to dwell in the wake of forced containment and forced mobility” (16).

As noted in chapter three, Kewpie’s description of gays as “headstrong” is reminiscent of the charge of wilfulness discussed by Ahmed. Disobediently deciding to “bang back into [her] gay life,” refusing to be the son her father wants her to be, Kewpie (1996) accepts such charges and turns them into the “embodied and shared vitality” of wilfulness that is gay life (Ahmed 2014, 137, 140).⁶⁷ “Wilfulness” can thus be understood “as political art, a practical craft [...] acquired through involvement in political struggle[,] to exist or to transform an existence” (133). Materials constituting the Kewpie Collection are products of the girls’ labour to do both, of something like the “queer cultural production” that Muñoz (2009) argues works as “both an acknowledgement of the lack that is endemic to any heteronormative rendering of the world and a building, a ‘world making,’ in the face of that lack” (118). Offering glimpses of an existence the girls imagined, which could not be sustained within District Six, they represent forms of labour that risk erasure when materials thus produced are read as evidence of historical conditions rather than products of the work of imagining otherwise.

Until the opening night of the *Kewpie* exhibition in September 2018, representation of gays in the District Six Museum had been minimal. In 2012, Munro rather tentatively suggested that “recognisably gay men” *had* been “woven into” the “presentation of the community—albeit conspicuously” (135). Five years later, Nadia Davids (2017) asked “why queer culture—one of the most significant aspects of District Six cultural life—was largely absent in the Museum’s exhibition spaces” (112). The *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition worked to make room for gays that had not usually been afforded, filling in details of lives ordinarily

⁶⁷ Kewpie (1998) says she would tell other gays: “Make up your own mind. Nobody can make up your mind for you.”

glossed over. Since it has led much of the work through which District Six has been remembered, the Museum's explicit extension of the popular narrative of the District as a lost home to include "LGBTQ+ people," by claiming Kewpie as daughter, is significant. Kewpie engages a strategy of recollection, I have suggested, through which she participates in the collaborative creation of worlds beyond the constraints of the present defined by that which she rejects. The following section suggests this strategy inheres with what has come to be claimed by the District Six Museum as "the right to remake" (Soudien and Meltzer 2001, 69).

"The Right to Remake"

The District Six Museum has become an extremely popular tourist attraction, and one of the six internationally recognised Sites of Conscience in South Africa, since opening its doors in Buitenkant Street, on the site of the former District, on 18 December 1994. As well as interviews with ex-residents and a floor-map of the historical area, exhibitions incorporate photographs, paintings, memoirs, novels, poems, and films depicting the lost District, copies of which are often available for purchase at the Museum gift shop. As well as the permanent installations and shop, the main site, an old Methodist Church, houses the Museum Archive and café. Former residents guide tours of the space four times daily. Since 2002, the Homecoming Centre, where the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition was held, has been located a few metres down the road in a former warehouse. It is somewhat arbitrary to draw distinctions between these physical spaces in which the District is figured; the activism of the Museum including support for land restitution claims; and the critical literature authored by those involved in various capacities, some of which explicitly identifies the Museum as a "non-unifying text" and a "hybrid" and "generative" space refusing static and transcendent truth

in favour of collective reconstruction with its basis in shifting and dynamic memory work (Soudien 2001a, 119; Rassool 2008, 72; Julius 2008, 113).

When the District Six Museum was founded, public discourse was characterised by an investment in inclusion-as-reconciliation, which saw a proliferation of oral history projects, yet, as Andrew van der Vlies (2017) writes, was “riven with competing narratives of history, with contests not only over space but also over interpretations of the future” (3-4). The Museum was established by the Hands Off District Six (HODS) Committee, a small group of ex-residents who had set out in 1988 to claim physical and symbolic ownership of the District in the name of all ex-residents and defend it from two competing forces. The first was the official narrative seeking to legitimise the destruction of District Six. Presenting itself, as Soudien and Lalou Meltzer (2001) put it, “as a tale in search of a good ending, as in Sodom and Gomorrah” (67), this official narrative perpetuated the District’s reputation as a “degenerate slum” in need of clearance that Deborah M. Hart (1988) notes was “entrenched almost at the time of its naming.” Hart references a *Cape Argus* reporter’s account from the same year, 1867: “Prostitutes and thieves of the worst description, while of drainage there was none, of water not a drop” (607). The second threat manifested as a proposal by British Petroleum to redevelop the area. The oil company’s plans for redevelopment completely neglected to engage ex-residents, and HODS felt this was “tantamount to the erasure of the memory of District Six” (Jeppie and Soudien 1990, 15; Soudien 2001b, 5).

By founding the Museum, HODS aimed to mobilise an alternative grassroots movement for “land restitution, community development, and political consciousness.” The descriptor *museum* was contested from its earliest days. In its first six years, the Museum’s director described it as “a living space and a place for working with memory[,] not a monument but a focus for the recovery and reconstruction of the [District’s] social and

historical existence” (Delpont 2001, 11). Seeking a “radical historical practice that [was] both committed and social engaged,” the newly founded Museum began collecting testimonies from ex-residents, now held in the Museum Archive (Layne and Rassool 2001, 146). According to two founders, the Museum began conducting memory work in the spirit of the TRC, in which “telling, confessing, healing and catharsis” were understood as “necessary for national reconciliation and social reconstruction” (146). As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the TRC invested in testimony as a means of bringing to light previously hidden truths on the basis that this would prompt reparative processes of collective catharsis and forgiveness. Guidelines identified four types of truth: “observational[,] logical[,] experiential[,] and dialogic” (Sachs 2009, 81-82). As this list progressively indicates, the Commission’s aim was reconciliation. Truth was championed insofar as it inhered with “the idea that reconciliation depends on shared truth”—an idea that presumes, as Michael Ignatieff (1997) puts it, “that shared truth about the past is possible” (174).

As with the concurrent Western Cape Oral History Project mentioned in chapter one, Gevisser’s Oral History Project for which he interviewed Kewpie, and efforts by Lewis and Reid to conserve Kewpie’s photographs for posterity that included interviewing Kewpie, the newly founded District Six Museum conducted interviews in a future-oriented mode of historical recovery. As its work has continued, however, the Museum has avoided making claims about transcendent historical truth, instead investing in testimony as a vehicle for memory that might facilitate collaborative processes of reconstruction. The Museum’s “perspective” is that “recovery and restoration of memory is just as important as, and needs to be a vital component of, the recovery and restoration of land” (Rassool 2001, xi). The testimonies collected continue to form the basis of the narrative of District Six presented in

the Museum, which is nostalgic in the truest sense because it is rooted in a painful longing for a return home—whether that home exists physically or in the imagination.

Research conducted in District Six during the period of forced removal indicates that the formation of the narrative presented in the Museum, the popular narrative of District Six, was already well underway. Kay McCormick's (2002) study of language norms and practices suggests the District was figured by residents during its prolonged physical destruction, so that by 1983 the "construction of identity and community in the surviving remnant" was primarily informed by "memories and images" rather than what McCormick calls the "realities" of greater District Six (64). Stressing that the area had been fluidly linked to neighbouring areas Woodstock and Walmer Estate, unpublished doctoral research by Rosemary Ridd (1981) points to a similar process, suggesting that the figuration involved a gradual conceptualisation of increasingly static boundaries. This explains how it is that Woodstock sites such as the Queens Hotel, the Ambassador Club, and Piper's Hair Fashions have been recuperated as symbols of the lost District. Along with the girls of the Queens Hotel, Kewpie is "of" District Six in the sense that she has been incorporated into the narrative of which these symbols are a part.

From the late 1960s, this narrative of District Six was primarily developed at sites to which District Sixers were forcibly removed—predominantly, the Cape Flats. Scholarship defines the remembrance of District Six by removees in varying terms, though typically tracing the same contours. In an edited collection on the District's history published by HODS, the meaning of which had been changed two years previously to Hands On (as opposed to Off) District Six, Nasson (1990) advocates "properly record[ing]" the "District Six memory and imagination" previously "oral[ly] trasmi[tte]d" (66, 49). Although Wicomb (2018) criticises such attempts at "historical retrieval" for failing to acknowledge that "the act of narration" is "generative" and "lends itself to fictionalisation" (191), within the decade

following the 1994 visit to the Museum Wicomb recounts, the confidence Nasson (1900) placed in oral history, as a means of constructing a narrative both nuanced and historically accurate, began to fall away.

Throughout an edited collection the Museum published in 2001, the founding members and then Director comment on the somewhat conflicting but overwhelmingly idealised narrative of life and community within District Six emerging from oral histories being compiled. Soudien and Meltzer (2001) defend the “penchant” of this popular narrative for “exaggeration” (“as opposed to the dry and unimpeachable empiricism of the official”), which they understand as “clearly an important component of this area’s oral tradition” (99). Arguing that the “power of reinvention and renewal” can “open us to new ways of seeing,” they suggest that with “partial truthfulness,” District Sixers invite “one to return and revisit[:]. It matters not [...] that the details of the story are wrong. What matters is the right to remake” (68-69). Henry Trotter (2013) details how this idealised narrative was shaped over decades as removees coping with continued marginality formulated understandings of self and community with a basis in traumatic experiences shared through narration.⁶⁸ The popular narrative’s dominant features, identified by Soudien (2001a) elsewhere (119, 67), correlate with the “set of narrative conventions” that Trotter (2013) notes have emerged from “a reflexive, mutually reinforcing pattern of narrative traffic” (50). These include

⁶⁸ Sketched with reference to over one hundred oral history style interviews and 550 written submissions for land claims, this narrative is shown to be transposed from its oral form and incorporated into written forms (Trotter 2013, 64). The Commission on Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR) was established by the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994, “the first piece of ‘transformation’ legislation passed by” the Parliament that was constituted by the first democratic elections (Walker et al 2010, 14). Removees can submit claims for restitution in the form of the land from which they were removed, a different parcel of land, or financial compensation. Trotter (2013) suggests the process has “relied heavily on removees’ narratives” of their “experience of forced removal,” in addition to “factual data[,] to substantiate their claims” (64). Although the CRLR claimed in 2007 that over ninety percent (74,417) of all lodged claims had been settled (CRLR 2007, 3), “it is clear that the official national numbers are very poor indicators of what is actually happening in projects at the local level” (Walker et al 2010, 15). In the case of District Six, 2,293 individual restitution claims were lodged between 1995 and 1999 (CRLR 1999). On why the process of land restitution in District Six has been “so prone to stalling [...] despite the obvious urgency,” meaning that “claimants are indeed dying before their claims are settled, as is often stated in political rhetoric,” see Beyers 2010 (122, 133).

countering the official rationale for forced removals and contrasting the disappointing present, namely challenges of life on the Cape Flats, with an idealised past (56).

The popular narrative has been criticised on the basis that it mythologises the District—Soudien (2001a) professes his wariness of doing so—and criticisms largely directed at the District Six Museum. Committee members have expressed discomfort with the position in which the Museum has found itself as a popular tourist attraction required to present a history of the District to an audience of non-District Sixers. Yet, given this position, the typical basis of its memory work in the testimony of those who choose or are able to participate in both projects—refiguring the lost District and returning to its geographic location—has been critiqued. Some suggest that the Museum “risks effecting a new kind of social exclusion” since “the reality and ideological dispositions of the majority of District Sixers stand to be misrepresented” (Beyers 2008, 360). Others argue that exhibitionary practices support “static classification[s]” (Jackson 2017, 69-71), used to organise a present community around the notion of historic respectability destroyed by displacement to Cape Flats areas, offensively conceptualised as a morally bankrupt and unsafe counterpoint to the lost District. Certainly, the erasure of District Sixers on account of difference from those remembering must be challenged.

Primarily, however, this erasure seems to indicate the impoverished circumstances of the popular narrative’s proliferation through personal contact. While its contestation is important, the exclusion itself seems to result from enforced segregation demarcating limits of social networks in which the narrative of District Six was developed. However compelling, therefore, critiques of the exclusionary content of the narrative of District Six are complicated by the possibilities inherent in its primary form, which means the content is necessarily expansive. Indeed, following the same narrative conventions, some of those excluded have “written themselves in” (Soudien 2001a, 115). Hence, Soudien (2001a)

insists that the “District Six discourse” is not only “oppositional” but “crucially also generative in its own right,” meaning “the District Six experience is defined” as one “of constant deferment” (128). This is the case with Nomvuyo Ngcelwane’s (1999) memoir, *Sala Kahle, District Six: An African Woman’s Perspective*, which has been incorporated into the Museum in the form of a permanent installation. It is also the case with Kewpie’s testimony. Removees who do not identify as Black and/or gay tend not to mention District Sixers legally classified “African” nor the visible if not celebrated presence of gays described in current scholarship. Yet, using the same narrative conventions, both Ngcelwane and Kewpie have narrated themselves into the District.

The content of the popular narrative of District Six is perhaps, in one sense, often anaemic, given the setting in which it first developed: sites to which its authors were forcibly removed. Yet its development strives for relations of reciprocity and new solidarities, and these possibilities are implicated in its form. The way this narrative circulates means its content, which reflects a community of narrators, is expansive, potentially generating alternative economies of belonging and aspiring to limitless solidarities. In the recordings of removees’ natural or oral narratives that Wicomb (2018) considers, a “strictly male environment of drinking and smoking” has “a gendering effect” on the “stories [told]” and the forms of “power and self-worth” the “act of oral narration” therefore constructs “for the narrators” (192, 201). Crucially, however, the structure remains the same: they are stories of “the Fall,” in which the lost District is figured as prelapsarian, albeit “mobilised” in this instance “to establish patriarchal law” (196). In Kewpie’s testimony, the same structure is mobilised to establish a different sort of law altogether. Engaging the same conventions, Kewpie narrates gays as loved, accepted members of the District Six (narrative) community. This narration has since been incorporated into the popular narrative as it is presented to non-removees by the District Six Museum.

The Museum itself offers the basis for understanding the strategy of recollection Kewpie engages as an articulation of the right to remake District Six—further illustrating the girls’ role in producing the remembered District. Moreover, as suggested throughout this thesis, this right to remake is articulated not only in oral narrative and the written forms into which it is transcribed. This right is also articulated in mediums such as photographs, and in response to dehumanising conditions that do not neatly map onto the dehumanisation enacted by forced removals. The Museum’s typical use of photographs as stable referents should be challenged, and the Museum itself has laid the groundwork to do so.

In its first few years, as interviews were conducted with a particular emphasis on mapping the District, visual displays were provided as a sturdy “framework” for the dynamic, conflicting and shifting interaction, dialogue, and memory work the Museum aimed to facilitate (Layne and Rassool 2001, 146). The Foundation had acquired “hundreds of photographs” two years before the Museum opened its doors, and many of its visual displays have drawn on the push to photographically document the District in the years leading up to its destruction (Soudien 2001b, 6). Just as it has been central to the “memory-boom” of post-apartheid South Africa (Newbury 2009, 273), photography “had a central place” in District Six Museum exhibitions. Smith and Rassool (2001) have reflected on the Museum’s understanding of photographs as “visual signifiers of real lives in a real place,” able to provide a “register of visual facts,” a “historical record,” and “evidence of a tightly knit community life” (131-133).

Seventeen years later, Smith co-curated the first public exhibition of one hundred photographs from the Kewpie Photographic Collection with Marsden. It had “long been a dream of GALA’s to have an exhibition on the life and times of Kewpie and her sisters,” according to Director Keval Harie (2019)—and they “knew that the exhibition could not take place anywhere else first but in the true home of Kewpie’s legacy, the District Six

Museum” (1). While the exhibition’s engagement with “LGBTIQ rights” discourses is clearly guided by GALA’s educational and political commitments, it inheres with the Museum’s aim of contributing “positively to a free democratic society” (Combrinch 2001, 10), as well as their championing of District Six as an ideal model for a post-apartheid nationalism mentioned in the introduction to this thesis. The exhibition was structured by aforementioned investments, in testimony as a vehicle for reconstruction and in photography as a means of preserving the reality of a physically destroyed place and community. A Museum press statement described the photographs as a “valuable resource which records a thriving and celebrated queer culture within a community that has since been displaced” (Folb 2018), and the exhibition featured extensive notes interpreting them through the logics of the popular narrative of District Six as it had been collated and presented by the Museum over the course of nearly three decades.

These notes concluded that “street-scene photographs” featuring the girls “demonstrate the extent of integration of queer people into the broader District Six community” (*Kewpie* 2018, 2019). However, they neglected to ask why, if members of the wider public in *Kewpie*’s photographs evidence integration, the girls are absent in photographs of the wider public of District Six. If what Soudien (2001b) describes as “cross-dressing” was, as he claims (as current scholarship often does), a “noted feature of the [District’s] social landscape” (104), it is one that has been almost completely erased from its photographic representation. Gays are not recognisable in the publicly available work of any of the photographers who sought to capture the District, including its diverse community, at any point in its history including, with some urgency, its final years. They are nowhere to be seen in published collections of photographs by Cloete Breytenbach (Barrow [1970] 2003), Jansje Wissema (Small 1986), Bryan Heseltine (Newbury 2013), nor George Hallett, Clarence Coulson, Wilfred Paulse, Gavin Jantjes, and Jackie Heyns (Hallett

and McKenzie 2007), even though Heyns for one photographed and wrote about the girls for *Drum* and *Post* articles discussed in chapter two. Nor do the girls appear in any of the family photographs that have lined the walls of the District Six Museum since its earliest days.

Alluding to the use of documentary photography of the District as a means of constructing a narrative, Soudien and Meltzer (2001) suggest that we might gain a sense of its partiality by “looking for who is not represented in the representations of streets” (72). The girls are among those not represented in documentary photography of District Six. They are neither legible nor integrated into the wider community, in this body of work protesting the destruction of the area and aiming to preserve it in some form. In the Kewpie Photographic Collection, they are. Using Kewpie’s photographs and testimony to offer richer specificity of detail about gays within the District, the exhibition extends the popular narrative of District Six as a lost home—with its attendant qualities of safety, integration, acceptance, nurture—to include gays. This is enabled, I argue, by work done by gays themselves.

The *Kewpie* exhibition constructs a history verified by what Worby and Ally (2013) call an “archaeological” understanding of nostalgia (460), augmented by exhibitionary strategies including the bright pink colour scheme, recreated section of the interior of Salon Kewpie, and collection of old records playing in one corner. Yet the “once-imagined future” for which Kewpie is nostalgic does not seem to neatly map on to that reconstructed by the exhibition (460), which laments the loss of District Six and the impossibility of its continued existence uninterrupted by the apartheid policy of forced removals. Rather, Kewpie laments the loss of worlds perhaps fleetingly realised but primarily in the terrain of possibility, and the condition of hopefulness attendant on perceived possibility.

The following section homes in on this labour, turning to engagements with Marxian thought in queer of colour critique to consider artistic and cultural production as means of performing what is rendered unimaginable in political discourse. The Queens Hotel is discussed as a “place” Kewpie imagined for herself and her “other gay friends” within District Six—though geographically located in Woodstock—that would enable various kinds of movement: the joyful movement of dancing or “moving around,” free movement including freedom from coerced movement, and increased ease of movement towards each other for those devalued as objects of desire. Ultimately, transformational imagination emerges from Kewpie’s longing for new forms of intimacy and belonging. While framing the Queens Hotel in its disappointment, Kewpie’s testimony works with her photographs to create another sense of home within the remembered District Six.

The Queens Hotel

Descriptions of crowded living conditions in District Six and the related prevalence of domestic formations exceeding the nuclear family sometimes suggest they were conducive to forms of intimacy unconstrained by patriarchal and heteronormative notions of kinship. According to Jeppie (1998), “traditional kinship ties were valued” and “extended to include co-residents[,] neighbours,” even “complete strangers prepared to pay for accommodation” (388). Discussing the District as “a queer landscape, or a queer zone in the city,” N. Davids implies a correlation between a culture of “caring for children in a shared way in a community space” and an economy famously reliant on credit, bartering, exchange, lending, mending, and sharing. One sense in which apartheid has taken “hold of people not just spatially but also imaginatively” and caused such “damage” by insisting “on a very specific heteronormative nationalist narrative,” Davids suggests, is that with the destruction of the District a “curious internalisation of this idea of what a family should look like, what it

should be [...] filters down through various communities,” becoming “the violence that it turns in on its own children” (Davids and Matebeni 2017, 164). In more normative terms, Munro (2012) sees “the overflowing domestic formations of the neighbourhood,” which she believes could “incorporate the figure of the ‘stranger’ as well as the ‘queer’ into a family-like intimacy,” as “an important model for democratic nationalism” (111).

After leaving her family house at the age of nineteen and moving to Frances Street where she boarded with Bassey’s aunt, Mrs Syms, Kewpie (1996) describes being “accepted” as part of the Syms family:

It was lovely staying with her. You would have thought it was my own mother or grandmother. She treated me as one of her own kids. And accepted me as a gay, as a girl, as a woman, indoors and outdoors. I could stand and bath myself naked in front of her she would never attempt to stare and look at me. It was a normal thing, I was a child towards her.

Photographs indicate that, after moving out, Kewpie continued to join the Syms family (fig. 4.1), and the Biggs Family (fig. 4.2), on beach trips. At Strandfontein, the children seem to gather around Kewpie. Even while staying with Mrs Syms who “treated her as one of her own kids,” however, Kewpie (1996) imagined other forms of belonging and intimacy. “I was always on the lookout for a place to stay,” she tells Lewis, “but getting a place to stay for my other gay friends to stay with me.” She articulates the “insistence on potentiality for another world” discussed by Muñoz (2009), in which “potentiality” is “a certain mode of



Figure 4.1



Figure 4.2

nonbeing that is eminent, a thing that is present but not actually existing in the present tense”

(9). Referencing Ernst Bloch’s (1996) formulation “something’s missing” (76), Muñoz (2009) reformulates queerness as an ideality “not yet here”—“that thing that lets us feel this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing” (1). In his “manifesto for more life” that builds upon the thought of Muñoz, Chambers-Letson (2018) further explains that

For Bloch, utopian longing—wishing, hoping, and dreaming of and for *something* better than this—is that which allows us to survive and sustain in the face of negation and deprivation. To know that ‘something’s missing’ is to feel the absence of *something*, an encounter with lack that ‘activates and galvanises us towards the goal of a better life.’ (40)

Kewpie’s search for a “place” where she and her “gay friends” could “stay”—a place in which they could be “not just pushed about and pushed around but [...] wanted”—is animated by desire to live otherwise. It is animated by a yearning for a better life—a gay life—that, following Muñoz and Chambers-Letson’s uses of Bloch, might engender as yet unknown worlds of ideological potentiality.

According to Kewpie (1998), it was after she moved out of the Syms family home that she “discovered [...] what gay life is really like.” She and Brian “went to stay in Rutger Street” where, for the first time, she lived with other gays: “I discovered how passionately more, what gay life is really like. What life gives us and how people move around you and how people can accept you. And how people can push you around, too.” Paraphrasing Ahmed (2006a), Kewpie recalls discovering how “one object might put another in reach,” and so on, as she comes into “contact with different bodies and worlds” (564)—objects Kewpie (1998) experiences as “give[n]” by the (direction taken in) “life,” and worlds experienced as “discovered” and as “passionately more” in comparison to what has been left behind. She experiences people who “can accept” her as “mov[ing] around” her, not constricting her own movement, in contrast to those who “push [her] around” or disrupt her movement. While fantasies of gay life became more tangible in Rutger Street, the girls were made to feel aware that this mode of sociality was always in the process of being realised. Even its pursuit was hard won and defended; acceptance came with being “push[ed] around, too.”

While for Bloch (1996) it is the felt absence of what is missing that “activates and galvanises us towards the goal of a better life” (76), Chambers-Letson (2018) suggests that for minoritarian subjects the “something” that is missing may well be a lack of “action and galvanisation” in the wake of injury and injustice (40). Kewpie (1996) recalls that gays found themselves differentially exposed to injury without recourse to protection and that, even with the physical shelter of the “lovely big place” on Rutger Street, this domestic formation existed precariously. It came to an end for Kewpie and “the gang” after an “incident” involving Bassey: “we had a little grapple with the gangsters round there [...] but now he interfered with Bassey that morning.” Fearing retribution and deciding “it’s not going to happen to us,” Kewpie “moved around, scoping around for accommodation.” She

tells Lewis: “And that is how it happened that we moved out and we moved into the Queens Hotel,” in Invery Place.

When we moved in then I looked at the building and I thought to myself, it’s a lovely flat—I never called it a building. ’Cause that years, people used to call it *buildings*. And I said to the girls, girls. Before I close this door, while the furniture and things were all packed up, inside, I closed the front door and I turned my back against the door and I looked up the staircase and I said to the girls, you know what. There’s a name for this place today. I’m naming it the Queens Hotel. And I named it the Queens Hotel, and everybody got acquainted with it. They got used to it as the Queens Hotel. Up ’til today still. If you pass by, we say, there’s the Queens Hotel.

In this moment of anticipation, related in a suspenseful manner, looking in and “up the staircase” with her “back against the door,” Kewpie gives this new “place” an aspirational “name.” While gay life came more fully into view here, as the girls imagined and rehearsed forms of intimacy otherwise unavailable within the horizon of the social, it was ultimately unsustainable within the wider organisation of social relations. They had to move out because of another “incident,” involving the landlady and Miss Vi: “We still could have been staying there. We still could have been staying there up ’til now. So I had to empty the place after three months.” Kewpie didn’t find another Queens Hotel. She found accommodation for herself in Kensington, with her friend Salamah. After she moved in, Kewpie tells Lewis: “Mitzi was also looking for a place and hunting for a place. Through my good words and omen and I got Mitzi Gaynor to come and stay with me in Salamah.”

Kewpie’s (1996) recollection of the Queens Hotel and its promise of a “place” for gays expresses the disappointment of her present, her awareness that things are not in their appointed places. Although they continue to name it as such—“there’s the Queens Hotel”—“up ’til today still,” the girls are no longer within this “place” of belonging. “Pass[ing] by,” they are on the outside looking in and looking back. Kewpie bears witness from both positions, inside and out, so that her reimagining of this “place,” articulated in the act of naming it, is framed by the disappointment of its realisation. She moves rapidly from the hopeful “there’s a name for this place today” to “I’m naming it the Queens Hotel” to “I

named it the Queens Hotel” to “there’s the Queens Hotel.” Her testimony offers a complex critical engagement with notions of place and belonging, tracing the outlines of past imagined forms of intimacy emerging from the sociocultural enclaves in which gays were able to negotiate self-creation and self-expression, while pointing to the impossibility of their sustenance even within a neighbourhood that is popularly understood as conducive to non-heteronormative and non-patriarchal domestic formations and of which she often speaks highly.

In the wake of Nationalist government aspirations to complete spatial control, scholars have looked to creative renderings of place, social space, and community for alternative models for the post-apartheid nation. In her study of the relationship between place, subjectivity, and literary form, Rita Barnard (2007) argues that “it is with respect to emergent social space that literature, with its capacity to rewrite and reinvent new identities, new stories, and new maps, has been and will be of particular interest” (4). Munro (2012) offers a similar explanation of why literature is “at the centre” of her analysis: “writing plays a unique role in the production of structures of feeling about the ‘imagined community’ of nation and can tell us a great deal about the rich, contradictory texture of cultural change” (xi). Taking up the concept that R. Barnard (2007) follows J. M. Coetzee to call “dream topographies” (27-34; Coetzee 1988), Munro (2012) suggests further places and spaces through which “ideas of nation are configured and contested” (xxvii).⁶⁹

While suggesting they “provided an alternate ‘imagined community’ to the fraught fraternity of comrades, or indeed the nation-as-family,” however, Munro (2012) notes that the majority of literary “antiapartheid memorialisations” aiming to “reconfigure the urban

⁶⁹ R. Barnard (2007) considers “the farm, the white suburban home, the black township, the shack settlement, and the theatre” (3); Munro (2012) “the prison, the border, the city, the rural village, and the township” (xxvii), and their interactions with a series of what Arjun Appadurai (1990) has called “scapes” or flows which, in Munro’s (2012) words, “summon up the imagined community” of nation: “the family, the fraternity, the neighbour, the crowd, the orphan, and the sisterhood” (xxvii).

cultures of the past as a possible model for a future nation” excise “the lively queer public cultures that had been a part of these urban formations” (xxvii, 105).⁷⁰ Munro’s analysis is not concerned with creative practices of the producers of what she understands to be “queer public cultures” occluded by the texts she examines (61). Although both R. Barnard (2007) and Munro (2012) recall Ahmed (2006b) and Kewpie’s (1996) suggestion, discussed in chapter three, of the potential of the imaginative, figurative, and representational to shape material space by establishing conditions of possibility, neither consider what “key places” and “social space[s]” might be (re)created by those without access to the tools of literary representation (R. Barnard 2007, 3-4).⁷¹

If Kewpie’s photographs imagine an alternative District to the body of documentary photography memorialising the District under threat of destruction, her testimony does the same in relation to the body of literature discussed by Munro. Using conventions of the District Six popular narrative, it configures and contests ideas of intimacy and belonging through its own particular “key places” and “social spaces,” offering the Queens Hotel as a reconfigured ideal of home. A proliferation of possibilities is enabled by the particularities of oral testimony as opposed to literature, the ambiguity of queens/queen’s/queens’ opening up various potential meanings of *hotel*, as opposed to *house*.⁷²

The Queens Hotel reimagines the domestic in a way that troubles bourgeois

⁷⁰ Nonetheless, closely reading some of these texts, Munro (2012) argues that “the remembered city provides a literary ‘district’ into which queer possibilities could be written or read” (106). Although these possibilities are understood to reside in the avoidance of “fixed categories of belonging, racial or sexual,” what Munro reads as “Rive’s writing of the antiapartheid city memoir as homoerotic male romance,” for instance, is explicitly masculinist (124, 105). Rive’s depiction of non-sexual “love between men” in District Six can therefore seem less like a re-centring of “disavowed queer histories” (109), as Munro understands it, and more a repudiation of contemporary common-sense understandings of homosexuality, sex, and gender, established in chapter two.

⁷¹ It is also worth noting that R. Barnard (2007) and Munro (2012) write only about South African literature written in English.

⁷² The Queens Hotel as a place for gays is also suggestive of the phrase “knowing one’s place,” which economically expresses the “socio-spatial dialectic” at the heart of R. Barnard’s (2007) readings. The cliché expresses “the oppressive conflation of the spatial [one’s geographical situation] and the political [one’s standing in the racist power structure]” (3). It “also,” following John Western (1981), implies “pregnant meshing of the[se] two meanings,” from which “can arise a third,” suggesting “appreciation of [the] possibilities [of one’s place], to know its potential creativity for social action” (8).

distinctions between public and private. The “lovely big place” in Rutger Street and the Invery Place “flat” offered shelter for those without steady sources of income. “Olivia never worked,” Kewpie (1996) remembers, “she was staying with me then. Cora never worked, but Ron was working for Rex through from that time. Bardot wasn’t working at all, then.” As an ideal of belonging rehearsed in Rutger Street then Invery Place, where it is explicitly named for the first time, the Queens Hotel acted as an alternative kind of hotel, offering shelter whether or not payment was possible. Whereas staying in a conventional hotel is contingent on financial capital, the various meanings of *queen* deployed by Kewpie suggest that access to this hotel might be facilitated by the symbolic capital of fabulousness. Augmented by Kewpie’s insistently superior “flat”—“I never called it a building”—and the exclusivity of *queen, hotel* transforms the realities of rental precarity, reimagining the comings and goings and difficulties of settling down necessitated by labour precarity as stints of glamorous retreats during which mundane domestic tasks are taken care of for the various cultural workers, care workers, sex workers, service providers, and unemployed individuals reimagined as paying customers passing in and out of the Queens Hotel.

Of Rutger Street, Kewpie (1996) recalls: “We had two rooms and a kitchen, a lovely big place with a lovely L-shaped yard.” The evocative phrase “lovely big place” suggests that the girls found an expansive sense of belonging. This domestic site (“two rooms[,] a kitchen[, and] a lovely L-shaped yard”) could be configured not around the heterosexual family line but communal enjoyment and the ability of friends to move in and out, acting as an alternative domestic space for relationships with married men.

And while staying there, Sammy moved in with me, after a while Leslie Caron’s moved in with me. After a while Leslie Caron left and went to stay somewhere else again, then Sammy met up with her guy, stayed with me still while the guy stayed with his family around the corner, often being with her every night after work [...] and in between [...] Bassey was around with us as well.

In addition to those who stayed there for longer periods of time, “the gang used to frequent” the Rutger Street place “every weekend but every weekend[;] every but every weekend.” And “if it should come for them to stay over until the Monday morning, then they rush off from my place to work, the next morning,” Kewpie (1996) tells Lewis, who asks her how they “would normally spend one of these typical Saturday nights.”

We would maybe go out dancing or to a party, or we would stay home and have a lah-de-dah until falling asleep the next morning, two three four o’ clock the next morning. And being knocked... knocked awake, the Sunday morning for our koesisters coming through the door, every Sunday. And Leslie Caron or whoever was around would run to the kitchen, get our coffee or teas, and in spite of those that are not having coffee or tea they’ll have a cocktail, a party all over again, and we’ll have a few drinks too, in between, while Miss Caron is having... our lunch prepared for us—cooking [...] She would do the cooking herself [...] Very, very good cook. And she was like a char lady towards me. And a very, very, very... honest person [...] She stayed with me for a while... and, uh, Cliffidia stayed with me all the time until when she moved away.

Interviewees in *A Normal Daughter* recall that gays boarding with heterosexual families did housekeeping: cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children, dressing them for and delivering them to school or looking after them during the day. Charles Arendse exclaims that “in every bloody household, there was, I suppose, a moffie” (Lewis 2000).⁷³ Kewpie (1996) mentions that Leslie Caron used to work “for a Muslim family” and cater for Muslim funerals, and that Mitzi used to work for an “Indian” family. Kewpie (1998) suggests that gays could gain acceptance by performing reproductive labour for families described in heteronormative terms: “that is how the gays came to live around with the neighbours. Doing chores, home chores, some of them.” In Kewpie’s (1996) description of a typical weekend at Rutger Street, on the other hand, reproductive labour sustains fantasies of gay life. The domestic is reconfigured around forms of enjoyment Kewpie would run away from her

⁷³ In Achmat’s ([1994] 2012) memoir, discussed in chapter one, the “moffie” Sis Gamat enters the space of the heteronormative family home in the sanctioned role of caterer: “At my youngest aunt’s wedding in 1968, Sis Gamat is called in to do the cooking. Sis Gamat is a moffie. Sis Gamat sends all the women into hysterics; the men titter nervously around him and ignore him. I hear the whispers: ‘Sis Gamat likes men.’ They tease my aunt: ‘*Sis Gamat smaak jou man.*’ [Sis Gamat likes your man] I wonder—am I like Sis Gamat? For the next three years, I take the keenest interest in cooking and kitchens” (328).

family home in search of, with Leslie Caron carrying out typical domestic chores to facilitate it. The girls partake in the District Six tradition of Sunday morning koesisters with coffee or tea, but those who want to are able to have cocktails and “a party all over again,” and can go out dancing or to a party or “stay home and have a lah-de-dah.”

Photographs taken at the Queens Hotel show Kewpie reclining in lingerie (fig. 4.3); Olivia striking a pose in her underwear, Cliffie’s hand on her bicep as she perches on the bar in the corner of Kewpie’s bedroom (fig. 4.4); Kewpie lying back on a bed, smiling up at Olivia (fig. 4.5). Photographs taken at Rutger Street show straight women and Ron and Cora, a lesbian couple, playfully posing in the yard with the girls (figs. 0.8 and 4.6). The forms of domestic intimacy rehearsed here approach the sphere of social relation that Chambers-Letson (2018), continuing Muñoz’s sustained engagement with Marxist traditions, imagines as a “communism of incommensurability [...] made up of the often fractious and incommensurable, but no-less necessary alliances forged between people of colour (and especially women, queers, and trans people of colour)” (15). Represented only in speech, the ambiguity of queens/queen’s/queens’ further undercuts the logics of belongings (as in property) to suggest a more expansive availability of belonging (as in having a place).



Figure 4.3



Figure 4.4



Figure 4.5



Figure 4.6

Anticipating the argument of chapter six, Chambers-Letson suggests that this communism “might take its cues” from “the performance-rich parties of queer of colour nightlife [...] Not because these spaces were perfect—they were and are replete with their own violences—but because they were trying to produce *something* else, *something* we don’t even have a vision of. Yet” (9).

The Queens Hotel is an ideal, a promise articulated by the name given to the Invery Place “flat,” of a kind of belonging (having a “place”) that is in the process of realisation, given the precarities that meant the girls had to move away from both Rutger Street and Invery Place. In this sense, Kewpie’s testimony bears some resemblance to the narratives of “queer migration” discussed by Anne-Marie Fortier. The narratives “constitute different versions” of what Avtar Brah terms “homing desires” (Brah 1996, 180; Fortier 2003, 115), suggesting that these “queer migrations are not merely *against* the childhood home but, rather, that they *reprocess* the childhood home differently” (116). Since homing desires refer to a “longing to belong,” Fortier argues, “‘home’ is constituted by the *desire* for a ‘home,’ rather than surfacing from an already constituted home, ‘there’ or ‘here.’” Home is thus “produced through the movement of desire” (129), and as such “never fully achieved, never

fully arrived-at, even when we are in it" (131).

The following section discusses the Queens Hotel as a version of home reconfigured around the mother; an ideal of belonging Kewpie (1998) sought when she began sneaking out of the family home. "My mother used to allow me to go," she tells Gevisser, "but I had to run away from home because of my father." Produced through the movement of desire including desire for movement, the Queens Hotel enables various kinds of movement: dancing or "moving around," moving in and out, freedom of movement and the freedom to remain, and an increased ease of movement towards each other for those for whom this would otherwise be difficult. Ultimately, the Queens Hotel is indicative of ways Kewpie participates in the construction of District Six as home while inviting us all to return to a more expansive sense of home than this construction had previously allowed.

"Queen Mother to All the Gays"

Whereas movement in and out of the family "home" was constrained by Kewpie's father, who "would push [gays] around and chuck them out of the house, too," the Queens Hotel is a "place" of belonging available to those Kewpie describes as gays or girls, straight women, and lesbians. It is defined by *queen*, a term Kewpie (1996) figures in relation to *mother*. "My mother was my queen," she tells Lewis; her mother "always understood" her, and "loved the gays." Also repeatedly declaring "I love all the gays," Kewpie adopts this role for herself: "I've been like a queen mother to all the gays." Drawing on Kath Weston (1991, 116) and Jack Halberstam (2005, 5), Ahmed (2006a) suggests that "queer lives are about the potentiality of not following certain conventional scripts of family, inheritance, and child rearing, whereby 'not following' involves disorientation; it makes things oblique, which in turn opens up another way to inhabit those forms" (569). We can see how the pursuit of gay life opens up another way for Kewpie (1996) to inhabit the form of family, to be "like a

queen mother to all the gays” and hold “like babies in [her] arms” those whom she describes elsewhere as her “sisters.” Kewpie and Mitzi Gaynor “became like sisters,” and Mitzi was with Kewpie “always”: “all over where I stayed, all over where I lived.”⁷⁴

The Queens Hotel promises a homecoming, a coming to rather than out, as Kewpie looks back and reworks the form of family. It is organised around the figure of the mother, which Kewpie uses biological referents to invest with a utopian potentiality. Musing about the reason “District Six people were so accepting there,” Lewis responds enthusiastically to Kewpie’s (1996) agreement that “they grew up like that,” and her insistence that this is “the real thing, it was really the truth. That’s really the truth.” He concurs, “so it was a real community.” He makes a noise of disbelief or embarrassed dismissal, however, when she continues: “Ja, the whole community loved the gays [...] I’ll put it down to this. They gave *birth* to gays.” Kewpie insists: “No, no, no, they did! So many mothers and [...] girls, single girls too they gave birth to gays, discovered that the boy’s a gay, the girl’s a lesbian, what could they do about it? It was the natural thing. And they couldn’t get it out of them... They were just born like that.” A presumably sceptical Lewis changes the topic: “Who’s this in this stunning picture, number fifty?”

While claiming that mothers must accept children because they gave birth to them, however, Kewpie divorces this ideal from its biological basis, adopting the title of mother herself and defining the place of belonging she finds for herself and her gay friends in terms of the queen/mother. The Queens Hotel reworks the “mythologies of mothering” that Desiree Lewis (1999) notes “are often linked to representations of the nation or community as family” (167). Suggesting that mothers are defined by accepting as opposed to giving

⁷⁴ The non-heteronormative mobilisation of familial terminology has been long discussed, particularly in relation to lives of Black queers the Global North. E. Patrick Johnson (2003) understands the appropriation of “heteronormative tropes of domesticity” by “black gay men” living in the US as a “challenge” to “the notion of the domestic site as only a heterosexual paradigm” that constitutes “a reconfiguration of the very notion of family” (77).

birth to children, Kewpie participates in networks of care and modes of reproduction facilitated by hairdressing salons, bringing up Mitzi and Patti as her own apprentices. A similar notion of lineage was expressed by Kafunta, who was a generation younger than Kewpie, at the September 2018 “dialogue and exhibition walkabout” described by Tan (2018): “when I decided to start my moffie life, I was baptised by Diana Ross.” Declaring herself “a bop queen,” referencing her skill and renown as a performer, Kewpie evokes the notion of mother/queen seen in the *Post*’s reports of drag pageants (some funded by the publication itself) as “moffie elections” at which the most fabulous gay would be “elected” queen. This conception of pageants as democratic elections made it possible for the *Post* to report the murder of one of the gays as grieveable, with the headline “Moffies Mourn Murdered Queen.”

Other reported claims appearing in the *Post* and in an interview filmed for *A Normal Daughter* divorce pregnancy from cis-normative notions of mothering while troubling the perceived necessity of giving birth for social reproduction. In 1963, the *Post* (1963a, 1963b, 1963d) ran a series of articles covering various responses to one of the girls of District Six’s insistence that she was “expecting a baby.” Citing the opinion of “doctors” that “his claim is unbelievable,” one report offered the response of “Doris Day as he prefers to be called,” who was “sticking to his guns”: “Nobody doubts a woman when she says she’s expecting” (1963b). This was just one chapter in the publication’s long-running, derisive, and sensationalist reporting on Doris’s various escapades. Notably, that the staged debate between Doris and medical experts affords a rare instance of self-definition—“I’ll have my critics know that I regard myself as a girl”—suggests how challenges to the authority of medical science could work to resist the capture of gays by sexology and the contemporary medico-legal discourses it inspired.

Meanwhile, the childhood friend of Kewpie and daughter of a *Moffie Konserts* organiser who was interviewed by Lewis while filming for *A Normal Daughter* recalls that gays boarding at her family home would fall pregnant.

I'd ask afterwards, 'now where's the baby?' And they'd say, 'no, the baby's dead.' So then I would ask, 'now where did the baby go?' And my mother would say to them, 'you shouldn't talk so many things with the child, she asks too many questions.' Then the moffies would say, 'no, we want to answer her because she's now our child.' Then I would ask them, 'now where's the baby?' And they'd say, 'no, the baby's already buried.' The stomach was big—then you look again and the stomach was flat. So the moffie would walk as women walk when they are pregnant, as if there's a baby in the stomach. And then I would ask Kewpie, 'Kewpie, is it true that they get pregnant and they have a baby?' Then Kewpie says, 'man, I must still get to that stage.' So then I'd ask Kewpie, 'now what happens if it comes to your time when you must get a baby, is your baby also going to be dead?' And Kewpie said to me, 'ooh, I hope that my baby won't be dead like all their babies, because all their babies are dead.' So I said to Kewpie, you must take care of your stomach that your baby doesn't die.' So Kewpie said, 'no, my baby will never die.' But Kewpie never ever got to the stage of expecting a baby. Because I think Kewpie was probably scared that I was going to discover that this is not real business. (AM2970/D4, Achmat-Lewis Collection, GALA; my translation)

These evocative mentions of phantom pregnancies affirm nonbiological modes of reproduction while offering glimpses of non-compliance with what Elizabeth Freeman (2010) terms chrononormativity: "the interlocking temporal schemes necessary for genealogies of descent and for the mundane workings of domestic life" (xxii), or "the use of time to organise individual human bodies towards maximum productivity (3). Although gays' pregnancies inevitably end in a period of mourning, they become mothers and daughters to each other anyway, and to the interviewee herself, then a cisgender girl, who they say is "now [their] child."

Kewpie herself has been constituted as a daughter by both *A Normal Daughter* and the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition. Welcoming Kewpie home as prodigal "daughter of District Six," the exhibition arguably contributed to the figuration of the girls as beneficiaries of what have come to be understood as the District's defining qualities, including openness and integration. Instead constituting herself as a "queen mother," Kewpie herself enables District

Sixers to move to a reconfigured ideal of belonging. While her testimony frames the Queens Hotel in its disappointment, photography can offer means of creating a kind of bounded space that was ultimately unsustainable within District Six. Photographs thus produced might be accumulated to bring fantasies of belonging more into view, as they are imagined to have a place in the ideal home, future or past. The Kewpie Collection includes a black and white photograph, for example, in which Kewpie gathers around a circular table with Brigitte, Carmen, Hayley Mills, Mitzi, and Leslie Caron. Kewpie (1999) tells Lewis and Reid that it depicts “Christmas lunch in Rutger Street.” In the foreground, she and Brigitte clink champagne coupes as the others smile demurely or sip from their glasses. From centre frame, bright summer sun streams through a window behind the table and lights up the tablecloth and the girls’ clothing and hair to imbue the image with a glow (fig. 4.7). This photograph evokes a sense that, as Ahmed (2006a) suggests, belonging somewhere and finding a home is a matter of finding one’s direction, or orientation, and “extending one’s body into space” to settle into the “new contours” of “liveable [...] space.” While the “table around which the family gathers” can show that “inhabiting the family is about taking up a place already given” (559), then, the “table becomes queer when it provides [...] ‘support’ to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place” (570).

The girls seem very much in place, around this table, their tableau of idyllic domesticity perfectly poised. They look settled and expansive, their bodies comfortably extended into space that is necessarily inhabitable within the frame of the image. As in the ideal family photograph described by Bourdieu ([1965] 1990), “the convergence of looks and the arrangement of individuals objectively testifies to the cohesion of the group” (81). Articulating a reimagined form of domestic intimacy, this photograph offers a glimpse of past desires and past work to create a “place” within District Six that might sustain gay life. It suggests the cruciality of material space offering shelter from the world beyond it and a

table around which to gather. Kewpie's testimony indicates that this was hard won and ultimately could not be sustained. Yet, it reconfigures the popular memory of District Six as it is incorporated, along with photographs such as that shown in figure 4.7, into the work through which the District continues to be remembered. If read as doing the labour of imagining otherwise, these materials offer a critique of Kewpie's present from the vantage point of the ideal, and what Muñoz (2013a) describes as "affective resources for otherwiseness that exists both in the realms of the aesthetic and the quotidian."⁷⁵ Chambers-Letson (2018) points to the meaning of sustain "to live on"; read in this way, these materials sustain fantasies of gay life discussed in the previous chapter.



Figure 4.7

⁷⁵ Muñoz draws on Theodor W. Adorno's formulation of utopia existing in "the determined negation of what merely is," a negation that points "to what should be" (Bloch and Adorno 1988, 12).

Since Kewpie's testimony offers statements of complete acceptance, and since such photographs conjure a world in which gays are sustained, these materials are also available for use in the project of recovering an ideal past. Naming Kewpie "daughter of District Six" and moving gays in to this remembered "home," the 2018 *Kewpie* exhibition runs the risk of contributing to the figuration of District Six as a home for gays in the sense of "a place where something [...] flourishes" (OED Online, s.v. "home, *n.*1 and *adj.*," June 2021). This has taken shape in scholarship since Gevisser ([1994] 2012) suggested that "gay life flourished" in the District, possibly because a "hybrid, creole society like that of the coloureds" prevented the establishment any single prohibitive doctrine (28). Such claims are complicated by Kewpie's account of the kinds of dangers to which gays found themselves vulnerable. From this perspective, the District's proclaimed "openness" can look more like a contingent and violently policed opening within a relatively heteronormative framework. Kewpie uses creative practices available to her, however, to contest forms of regulation; push beyond the limits of such frameworks; and imagine, access, and inscribe symbolic and material spaces in which she can move in otherwise impossible ways.

Because this involves labour that is both imaginative and corporeal, her use of these creative practices should not be mistaken as indicative of enabling conditions in a simplistic sense. Rather, as I argue in chapter one, that certain photographs and moments in Kewpie's testimony evoke a sense of openness suggests this quality is imagined and worked for by gays themselves. This offers one way of refusing the re-inscription of a condition I have called colouredness as inherently sexualised and therefore always and already open to deviance: by considering the labour involved in creating (bounded) spaces that come to be offered as evidence of an inherent openness, and which are variously physical (such as the stage, the hairdresser, and the nightclub) and representative (such as photographs and moments in interviews). Such a refusal would abide with District Six Museum's stated

objective of remembering District Six as a multi-cultural and non-racial as opposed to “Coloured” community.

Kewpie draws attention to the strategy of recollection she engages to constitute moments of complete acceptance during interviews, suggesting what scholars have long maintained: forgetting is not foreclosed by remembering but constitutive of it. Writing about the uses to which women have been put in the processes of post-apartheid nation building, Meg Samuelson (2007) demonstrates how “a re-membling of nation depends on process of forgetting and, often, repression” (10). Samuelson’s conceptual framework draws on Toni Morrison’s concept of “rememoration,” and Homi K. Bhabha’s (1994) reading of it, in which he explains that “the act of ‘rememoration’ ([Morrison’s] concept of a creation of popular memory) turns the present of narrative enunciation into the haunting memorial of what has been excluded, excised, evicted, and for that very reason become the *unheimlich* space for the negotiation of identity and history” (198). As an alternative to the Nationalist government’s official narrative, the District Six Museum has led the work of creating a popular memory of the District—one owned by ex-residents, in defiance of government and corporate claims. There is, however, a risk of the narrative espoused by this popular memory becoming static, if the Museum does not actively harness the inherently expansive quality of the narrative’s oral form, through which a narrative community of removees has been established. Despite its agenda of critical non-racialism, the Museum continues to struggle to overcome charges of actively perpetuating the mythology of District Six as surrogate ethnic homeland and birthplace of those formerly classified “Coloured,” most famously levelled by Wicomb (1998, 94). As mentioned, one response from the Museum has been to install Nomuvuyo’s Room, a recreation of the interior of Ngcelwane’s (1999) family home in District Six based on her memoir.

The Museum's investments in representing the domestic as a means of returning a sense of intimacy, belonging, and respectability are evident in this permanent exhibition and others including family photographs and works of art featuring family recipes produced as part of the *Huis Kombuis* project.⁷⁶ As this proclaimed space for the negotiation of identity and community has become increasingly homey, however, gays have been represented as public personas, afforded space from the viewpoint of the wider community or those who have chosen and been able to participate in the memory work in which the Museum's imaginative reconstruction of District Six has its basis. Gays have typically appeared in the Museum as hairdressers and on-stage performers, and the interiors of spaces belonging to gays that have been twice recreated were, in both instances, hairdressing salons: sites at which they interacted with the broader community. Whereas gay hairdressers laboured to establish conditions of possibility in these salons, partly through the kinds of fantastic performances discussed in chapter one, they have been re-membered into District Six as beneficiaries of the remembered openness and integration of the District. Through such acts of forgetting, District Six is rendered mother or womb from which Kewpie can emerge as daughter. In her testimony, however, Kewpie returns as a speaking subject and offers us glimpses of what has been cast out in the production of District Six as home, as a history of dispossession, resulting in "the desperate need to regain something" (Ndebele 2003, 82), has flattened out what has been taken to the status of pre-existing or enabling.

Conclusion

What Kewpie shows has been cast out of District Six is, following Muñoz (2009), a longing for *something* else (1), from which there emerges transformational imagination. She bears witness to the work of sustaining gay life. This involves moving home in the sense of

⁷⁶ "Home kitchen." On this and other projects, see A. Soudien 2019.

searching for a place of belonging and intimacy while reimagining what this might yet mean, as well as physically moving home because this place of belonging could only be rehearsed precariously within the wider organisation of social relations. Furthermore, Kewpie uses photography and testimony to do the work of reconfiguring District Six so that gays might symbolically move home or return to it as the place of acceptance and freedom she imagines it can be. In this way, Kewpie adopts the role of mother captured by Lorde ([1982] 2018) when she writes: “it was so typical of my mother when I was young that if she couldn’t stop white people from spitting on her children because they were Black, she would insist it was something else. It was so often her approach to the world; to change reality. If you can’t change reality, change your perceptions of it” (17). As “a queen mother to all the gays,” Kewpie offers gays a homecoming. In doing so, she enables us all to move to a reconfigured ideal of belonging.

Drawing on another aspect of Lorde’s ([1984] 2013, 119) work on mothering to consider “the burden of raising a child who is not supposed to exist,” Chambers-Letson (2018) returns us to the table:

While the performance of queer or nonbiological kinship can open up ‘family’ for queers and trans people of colour (which is a necessity when one’s biological family has failed or disavowed you), it can also remake the notion of kinship such that your biological mothers have a place at the table next to your queer mothers. Those overlapping forms of family can be of critical importance: queer and trans of colour children need all the help they can get if they are going to survive this world. The same goes for their mothers. (82-83)

Kewpie invests the figure of the mother with a utopian potentiality because it has a basis in the act of giving birth: an act of bringing something new into the world. Simultaneously, she affirms nonbiological affinities and forms of reproduction and insists that motherhood, the status of being a mother, is achieved through acts of love as opposed to the act of giving birth. In the following chapter, I detail how Kewpie conceives such acts of love as crucial means of bringing newness into the world, in themselves. Along with the “Christmas Lunch

at Rutger Street” photograph (fig. 4.7), for example, this reworking of ideas of family invites all of us who might identify with the ideal of District Six to join the photographic and metaphorical table at which we are able to benefit from the notion that gay life was sustained in the District and claim Kewpie as daughter. Rather than District Six giving birth to gay life, then, fantasies of gay life give birth to a reimagined District Six. Kewpie emerges as both daughter and “queen mother” of District Six, doing the labour of sustaining gay life that suggests a different understanding of gays: not progeny able to flourish in a pre-existing home, but producers of the remembered qualities of District Six—respect, freedom, integration, creativity—in sometimes inhospitable conditions, who did the work of imagining otherwise and imagining what home might yet mean.

As this argument suggests, the worlds the Kewpie Collection discloses to us are necessarily expansive. They invite us in. At the opening of the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition, the curators recalled time spent scanning maps for any record of an establishment named the Queen’s Hotel—that place where, they gathered from captions to her photographs, Kewpie had stayed with her gay friends. Their anecdote indicates how Kewpie’s naming of this ostensibly private residence continues to act upon us and, specifically, to convey that this place was (and possibly still is) *available* for us to find, visit, and perhaps also stay. It implicitly issues an invitation to participation without defining parameters—although a limit was encountered in this instance, in the course of the curators’ fruitless search. Such worlds are made collaboratively, through participation in a collective that aspires to something strikingly like the political sphere Arendt (1961) defends when she insists that freedom is only possible in a guaranteed public realm that should not serve but be served by private households. The “place” Kewpie (1996) seeks for herself and her “gay friends” to stay—significantly, named a “hotel”—is one that enables their *public* appearance and action. Chapter five expands on this argument, suggesting that, by participating in the creation of

such worlds while refusing what she terms political, Kewpie offers us a resource for doing politics now. In Kewpie's sentimental formulation, these worlds are, like motherhood, made by love.

Chapter Five: “And the World Around Me was Love”

Kewpie’s Photographic Practice of Freedom

- Gevisser: There were more important things for you?
 Kewpie: Ja, my life.
 Gevisser: Was more important.
 Kewpie: It was more important than news like that. My life and people and the world around me. And the world around me was love. (Kewpie 1998)

In the transcript of the 1998 interview, there is a point upon which Kewpie is particularly pressed by Gevisser: the disinterest she repeatedly expresses in being “political.” Asked if “coloured people were making a culture for themselves” in District Six, Kewpie tells him that “they were starting to build themselves up to be more themselves and trying to better themselves and trying to get rid of this apartheid and colour bar, I’ll put it that way,” before stressing: “And that is how I would put it down again I am not political. I’ve never been political.” This remark precedes the exchange reproduced above, in which Kewpie tells Gevisser that “the world around [her] was love.” In this instance and others throughout the interview, Kewpie suggests that her experiences and desires were not nourished by what she terms “political.”

Nine years previously, at the 1989 African National Congress (ANC) in-house seminar of exiled cultural workers, a similar sentiment had been expressed by someone with a clearer role than Kewpie in the nationalist political history about which she is questioned by Gevisser: future Justice Albie Sachs, then member of the ANC Constitutional and National Executive Committees. Conceiving imagination as a social capacity nurtured by cultural production and lamenting a lack of thematic breadth and affective nuance resulting from the political weaponisation of culture, Sachs “popularise[d]” an argument that had been gaining traction since at least 1984, when Ndebele (2006) began to advocate “freeing” the “imagination” from the “laws of perception [...] characteris[ing] apartheid society” (174,

68, 63). It was imperative, Ndebele argued, for writers in South Africa to do away with what his formative critiques of “protest art” term the spectacular, in which “thinking is secondary to seeing,” and instead turn to the ordinary residing in nuance and reflection (38). Recalling Ndebele’s warning that, whereas “the ordinary daily lives of people should be the direct focus of political interest” (52), the “deepest dreams for love, hope, compassion, newness, and justice” are “sacrificed” (42), Sachs (1991) insisted that “surely” all “comrades [...] remember past love and dream of love to come.” He posed a question that is still being given increasingly urgent articulation: “What are we fighting for if not the right to express our humanity in all its forms, including its sense of fun and capacity for love and tenderness and our appreciation of the beauty of the world?” (187-188)⁷⁷

Approaching the question from a different angle, Kewpie altogether declines to engage in this “fighting for.” Although she expresses a refusal to struggle or indeed wait for the guarantee of what Sachs terms “the right to express our humanity in all its forms,” however, what Kewpie claims to have instead been invested in are precisely those elements of experience named by Sachs—and by Kewpie herself—as the purpose of said fighting. Unlike those who try to collectively “better” and “build themselves up,” Kewpie says, she “was only interested in” her “life and people and the world around” her: “things I could do myself. Or with people around me.” The investments of those from whom Kewpie distinguishes herself sound remarkably like her own. Seemingly, there are but two key differences. First, whereas the former work to alter their environment (“get rid of this apartheid”) to actualise the potential of self and collective, Kewpie’s engagements are facilitated by her environment. Whereas Sachs stresses the need to prepare for a way of life

⁷⁷ Sachs’s paper has been published multiple times and cited widely, including in the title of Munro 2012. Relatedly, reflecting on his fifteen-year term on the Constitutional Court, Sachs (2009) has suggested that “the law had to acknowledge the undeniable, incontestable claims of gay and lesbian couples to celebrate in a public way, with the State’s support and backing, their relationships, their intimacy, their love, their feelings for each other” (249).

(and love) to come, Kewpie states that “the world around [her] *was* love” (emphasis added). Since, as Sachs puts it, dreams of love were neglected within the struggle for political freedom, it is worth considering the significance of Kewpie’s claim. Second, Kewpie labels those from whom she distinguishes herself “political”—something she insists she is not. This raises certain questions. What does it say about the operations of the political as felt by Kewpie, and the possibilities available to her, that she says she is “only” interested in her own life, surrounding people and world, and her capacity to do things herself and with said people—but not in a “political” way? How might we receive Kewpie’s attribution to her “life” and the “world around” her precisely those qualities that she (and Sachs) suggest those who *were* “political” were (or should have been) manifesting?

In response, this chapter elaborates on three interwoven claims. First, that certain items in the Kewpie Photographic Collection are products of what I call a photographic practice of freedom, which is necessarily collaborative, and, acting as a space in which freedom can appear, make available to us the “world of love” around Kewpie. Second, that this practice involves refusing the impossibility of being free from or existing beyond politics, in a narrow sense, which is what Kewpie seems to term “political.” Third, that Kewpie’s testimony and photographs constitute an important legacy of direct action and a valuable resource for doing politics, in a broad sense, now. Since there is an outside of politics, but not an outside of the political, Kewpie’s insistence on not being political might be understood as a form of what Berlant (2011) calls “beyonding”: “a rhetoric people use when they have a desire not to be stuck” (80). Recognising that such rhetoric can enact a refusal to adopt the dominant limits of the political, Elahe Hascheme Yekani, Eveline Kilian, and Beatrice Michaelis (2013) suggest that “queer work” testing these limits “by articulating a desire not to be content with the present” would rely “strongly on a relationality of bodies, senses and things” (6, 8).

Kewpie's testimony constructs as mutually exclusive an investment in what she calls political, on the one hand, and inhabitation of the world of love around her, on the other, which is emergent in shared feeling. Meanwhile, her photographs show us what dreams of love might look like during the period in which Sachs laments their preclusion from the struggle for political freedom. These materials convey a utopian impulse that continues to be felt in the present. Although approached from a different angle by Sachs in 1989, Kewpie's insistent disinterest in a narrow definition of politics anticipates critiques levelled by Fallist activists who, in response to failed social and political promise, have sought non-verbal tactics such as I suggest can be found in the Kewpie Collection.⁷⁸ In this sense, Kewpie offers a valuable resource for sustaining the precarious and depleting work that utopian impulse currently animates.

This impulse is discernible in Kewpie's (1996) search for spaces in which she "could move around"—spaces available to us in certain photographs. I understand *moving around*, here, as shorthand for a form of action-in-concert that I will draw on Kewpie's testimony to term movement-with. Although Kewpie is not asked about and does not mention *freedom*, I argue that this practice of movement-with produces something legible in her photographs as freedom. Sachs (1991) joked that it was possible to tell which cultural workers were "the good ones" because they could "all recite sections of the Freedom Charter or passages of Strategies and Tactics at the drop of a beret" (188). Doing a different kind of cultural work altogether, Kewpie offers an alternative imaginary of freedom that remains vital as

⁷⁸ Fallist activists have used non-verbal tactics to express nuances and paradoxes in continuing forms of unfreedom and to imagine their negation. Boulle and Pather (2019) read their advancement of "a politics of radical action" as "a backlash against the rationalist imperative to 'put into words,' a collective assertion that talking has proven ineffectual and that compromise has operated as a cover" for forgetfulness (2). Art-makers involved in Fallist movements have worked to illuminate the complexities posed within long overdue questions of equity and redress, and to seek ways of expressing needs and desires for freedom that have been compromised or entirely neglected within the realm of party politics.

descriptors such as *born free* continue to register with an increasingly bitter taste.⁷⁹ Attempting to put into practice a political ideal of mass participation and calling for a radical restructuring of society, the Charter to which Sachs alludes represented a new period of armed struggle and popular resistance. In confidently future-tense declarations, it offered a vision of post-apartheid South Africa and a clear set of objectives to get there.⁸⁰ Its widespread clandestine circulation facilitated by the relative ease with which it could be reproduced on a single page, the Charter gave concrete meaning to the abstract ideal referred to in “freedom in our lifetime,” the popular struggle slogan that Gqola (2017) remembers “[growing] up on [...] even though everywhere around us was evidence of the power of a brutal apartheid state” (13-14). Lamenting the continued contamination of the achievement of political freedom by “forms of unfreedom” in contemporary South Africa, Gqola suggests that the coexistence of contradictory anti-apartheid slogans such as “each one teach one” and “freedom before education” was facilitated by a capacity to “imagine the impossible as inevitable” nurtured by the “radical movements” of the 1970s and 1980s that taught young Black people living under apartheid to believe that freedom “would arrive in your youth provided you gave the struggle your all” (14, 16).⁸¹

Contrastingly, Kewpie’s photographs evidence Charter ideals actually existing in her present. They show “people [...] shar[ing] in the country’s wealth” and accessing “houses, security and comfort”; they depict “peace and friendship”—often with something affectively

⁷⁹ Particularly since it applies to many who have, since 2015, put themselves at great personal risk to demand that promises made before their births are fulfilled by the government and who have faced police officers and private security forces deployed on campus for this reason.

⁸⁰ Shortly after the Defiance Campaign discussed below, the Freedom Charter Campaign saw fifty thousand volunteers gathering the demands of people across the country. Responses were synthesised and the Charter drawn up by Congress Alliance (CA) leaders. Half the declarations concern human rights; the other half welfare and social policies. At the 1955 Congress of the People, the Charter was approved by three thousand delegates. Adopted by all CA members, the Charter was used as evidence at the infamous 1956 Treason Trial. Its declarations are now enshrined in the South African Bill of Rights—Chapter Two of the Constitution—which includes the equality clause (s. 9).

⁸¹ Gqola builds on Ndebele’s (1998) argument that we need to do “the difficult task of normalising freedom” (25; Gqola 2009, 68, 2017, 13-24).

akin to the exclamatory Charter's enthusiasm. As established in the introduction to this thesis, these photographs have been read as historical evidence of sociocultural freedoms. Perhaps such readings are guided by present needs to remember and feel freedom and to access meaningful legacies and precedents. Pursuing rather than discounting these desires, this chapter argues that what is legible as freedom in Kewpie's photographs is produced by a necessarily collaborative practice. In other words, partly borrowed from Gqola, Ndebele, and Sachs, I am concerned with what kind of imaginative nurturing might yet be done if we understand worlds photographically depicted as made rather than captured and if we draw on Kewpie's testimony to consider how these worlds are made. This consideration will move us towards an Arendtian understanding of freedom, referring to the capacity to begin something new.

In what follows, I discuss key aspects of this practice of freedom as its effects are legible in the photographs, developing my reading with reference to Kewpie's testimony. Where she goes beyond Arendt, I argue, Kewpie conceptualises and uses a world disclosive function of photography in a manner akin to poetry as theorised by Audre Lorde, recognised by scholars such as Roderick A. Ferguson (2012) as an exemplar of the thinking of social movements beginning in the late 1960s that in various ways advocated for "a rehabilitation of the senses for the purposes of revolutionary change" (295).⁸² Kewpie values the kind of "warm feelings" about which Arendt is ambivalent and insists on the concrete existence of a common world (of love), a prospect about which Arendt is not optimistic that is now available to us in Kewpie's photographs. Read within different political histories to those pursued by Gevisser, Kewpie's testimony and photographs are shown to offer an important legacy of direct action.

⁸² Ferguson (2012) situates Lorde alongside "critical formations that saw the importance of affect and the senses" and "within a historical moment in which the elaboration of aesthetics of existence and the release of immense energies became part of the language used to mark new and insurgent social formations" (297).

Moving Around Beyond the Political

Asked whether she ever saw “those Whites Only signs,” Kewpie (1998) tells Gevisser that she did but would just ignore them. Gevisser continues this line of questioning, asking if Kewpie remembers the Second World War, “the NP [National Party] coming into power,” the Sharpeville massacre, states of emergency, Nelson Mandela. Her responses are all along the lines of “No,” “I can’t recall,” “I have never been interested in things like that,” “it never interested me.” Pressed on the matter and conceding “yes I realised [apartheid] was there because then I heard about the black and white,” Kewpie qualifies her apparent lack of interest in this line of questioning: “But as I’ve said I’m not political. I’ve never been political. I wasn’t interested in things like that around me.”

While Kewpie repeatedly rebuffs his attempts, Gevisser pursues the construction of a national^{ist} political history, asking, for instance, about the Defiance Campaign against Unjust Laws. Working with the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), the ANC launched this programme of non-violent resistance—the largest ever in South Africa, and popularly understood as the first pursued jointly by all race groups—on 26 June 1952, when Kewpie was approximately ten years old. Even if too young to remember the Defiance Campaign, however, she would surely have witnessed protests in, and marches passing through, the city and so close to where she lived. In the aftermath of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre ostensibly not remembered by Kewpie, she surely would have heard from District Six, if not seen, the 30,000 to 50,000 people who marched from Langa to the same Cape Town Parade shown in a number of her photographs. She would have been subject to the State of Emergency imposed in the aftermath of Sharpeville, and the many that followed.⁸³ Yet she tells Gevisser that she did not take notice.

⁸³ Perhaps Kewpie would have heard about or witnessed the effects of the movement among youth in the Cape to liberate their first language from its association with oppression that was produced by the Soweto uprising, a 1976 revolt against Afrikaans as the compulsory medium of education, and the concomitant resurgence of identification with political blackness.

Interestingly, the strategy of recollection that Kewpie here outlines is indicative of an aspect of her (non)political imaginary with which the Defiance Campaign resonates. Acts of said defiance included, for example, people legally considered “Non-White” ignoring “Whites Only Signs” on public transport and facilities and instead, as Kewpie (1996) herself recalls doing, just “walking into a white place.” Such resonances offer a bridge between what is now a party-political history and what we might think of as Kewpie’s self-positioning as an insistent non-political partier—and, indeed, the form of current non-party political activism exemplified by the 2020 occupation of a luxury beachside “holiday home” in Cape Town by We See You, a collective of “queer black and coloured activists from the working and middle class” (Collison 2020). Kewpie’s own position is encapsulated by her recollection of throwing a “drag party” in the house of Cissie Gool, celebrated District Six political organiser whose hair Kewpie tells Gevisser she used to cut and style: refusing party politics, Kewpie parties in the home of the political leader.

It is this mode of politics that I read in certain items from the Kewpie Photographic Collection. Many show groups of the girls wearing bright colours and feather boas, or oversized sunglasses and theatrical hats, standing or lying back on streets and pavements,



Figure 5.1



Figure 5.2

often with arms or a leg outstretched (figs. 5.1 and 5.2). Some of these include adults and children we might presume are neighbours or passers-by, thereby indicating the girls' visibility to a wider public. The conclusion drawn in the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition and challenged in chapter four, that these photographs "demonstrate the extent of integration of queer people into the broader District Six community," relies on an assumption that they would not depict the girls on public streets looking so fabulous, and being seen looking so fabulous by passers-by, if this was not generally accepted within a wider community. In my understanding, the logic of this assumption is false on two counts. First, it fails to recognise that, for the socioeconomically marginalised, fabulousness can be a survival strategy as opposed to a luxury. Second, it fails to recognise that people who find themselves marginalised in such ways do not do things only because they are given permission. Contra to the suggestion that they evidence integration, then, I read these photographs as one example of the girls' efforts to imagine new forms of social existence in the absence of sustaining infrastructure: to transform conditions of precarity into a mode of sociality that I have followed *Kewpie*'s lead in calling gay life.

Drawing on a contextually specific, sociocultural understanding of freedom described by Xavier Livermon (2012) as "the ability of black queer individuals to create forms of visibility that work to enable what Judith Butler calls 'liveable lives,'" we might understand these photographs as doing the "cultural labour of visibility" that occurs, as Livermon puts it, "when black queers bring dissident sexualities and gender nonconformity into the public arena." For this to constitute "freedom," then, there has to be an understanding that such "public disclosures will not result in the curtailment of or loss of life" (209-300). Clearly, these photographs alone cannot evidence such an understanding. Furthermore, since the kind of frame photographic representation involves might work to occlude social vulnerabilities or differential distributions of precarity, photography offers

one means of reimagining the existing organisation of social relations and parameters on liveability. In interviews, on the other hand, Kewpie does recall that gays were targeted with physical violence specifically because they were seen to be gay, and we know that they would have found themselves in such instances without recourse to substantial protection, legal or otherwise.

We might then say that it is in the photographs—not in a historical place they depict—that the girls can be safe in the knowledge that such spectacular self-expression will not result in curtailment or loss of life. We might wonder whether Kewpie co-created this collection of photographs so that such a space could exist. Rather than reading these photographs as representing conditions of acceptance and safety and thereby acting as historical evidence of freedom from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, then, I propose that they do the work of articulating the right to that freedom precisely by exercising it. As Butler (2009a) emphasises, turning to Arendt to consider how rights are exercised “even when, precisely when, those rights are nowhere guaranteed or protected by positive law”: “there is no freedom that is not its exercise; freedom is not a potential that waits for its exercise” (vi).

This example begins to illustrate what I term Kewpie’s photographic practice of freedom. As with the Defiance Campaign, resultant photographs articulate their subjects’ right to certain freedoms. In photographs in which the girls pose with cars, bicycles, motorcycles, and buses apparently belonging to friends and strangers, we might register the resistance to getting put in their place, so to speak, which I have read in Kewpie’s desire for “a place” for herself and her friends to “stay” on their own terms. Resistance to enforced confinement is often enacted in the Collection as in these recurrent performances of potential mobility: through an expansive inhabitation of place, which I understand as an articulation of the freedom to stay—which is to say, the freedom to have “a place [in which] to stay”—

as a constitutive aspect of freedom of movement. Performances of expansive inhabitation have specific qualities, recurring across many photographs in which the girls appear to physically navigate and interact with their surroundings with a confident and easy playfulness. These photographs do the work of exercising freedom from certain conditions curtailing life for the girls of District Six *and* of capturing freedom as affect.

Considering Kewpie's (1996) search for spaces in which she "could move around," photographs depicting corporeal—often gravity-resisting—movement within certain confines or parameters might be read as constituting such a space. In several photographs, Kewpie swings around lamp posts. She bends around the first, aloft (fig. 5.3). She is seen from a car, draping herself around the second (fig. 5.4). She hangs sideways from the top of a third with a triumphant smile and pink *doekie* over bright yellow hair, arm extended and foot pointed towards the photographer as a small child clings to the bottom of the pole and looks away (fig. 5.5). Utilising the quotidian to locate herself in a filmic tradition that offers the possibility of escapism (if not escape) in film-length instalments, Kewpie appears to be relishing a momentary defiance of gravity to literally be free of her burdens and claim a spotlight—specifically, the one overhead—as her own. In another photograph, Olivia de



Figure 5.3



Figure 5.4



Figure 5.5



Figure 5.6

Havilland climbs the tall Nelson Street sign (fig. 5.6). She clings on at the top, one hand resting on the metal rectangle, the other preventing her floppy sun hat from blowing away in the South Easter (wind) that famously blew through the District. Olivia's left leg is wrapped around the sign for stability, the other contorted so that she appears effortlessly perched, cross-legged, as she laughs. The labour of performance involved in creating these images—labour that is both imaginative and physically demanding—is erased in the photographic object itself. As with figure 0.6 discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the performance must, to be successful, look effortless. It is fantastic in the sense suggested by Kewpie's description of on-stage performance, as I have theorised it.

Although we might understand Kewpie's use of photography as a practice of freedom in the sense that her photographs depict a world in which the girls appear on public streets looking fabulous and enact freedom of movement and freedom from discrimination, for example, a more complex understanding is suggested by the photographs just discussed. They evoke a sense of freedom that is necessarily shared because it can only appear in the form in which it does through collaborative pursuit. The fantastic performance of affective transport in the tyre photograph (fig. 0.6), for example, is enabled by the almost perfect

synchrony of subject and photographer. We can see that the collective is crucial, and perhaps begin to further understand why the deaths Kewpie recounts disenable “moving around,” as discussed in chapter three; why they leave her “still around.” Furthering this line of argument, in the following section, will involve reading Kewpie’s insistently non-political remarks as a theorisation of the political. Rooted in an understanding of human agency as non-sovereign and fundamentally contingent on a collective, this theorisation moves us towards an understanding of these photographs as products of a collaborative practice, of intersubjective action, through which freedom can appear.

The Photographic Collective

Particularly in the Gevisser interview, while insisting that she is “not” and has “never been political,” Kewpie (1998) repeatedly articulates collective rights to life, dignity, and self-determination that she suggests are unlikely to be successfully secured through legal means. After responding rather unenthusiastically (“well, they should try”) to Gevisser’s line of questioning about “gay rights” and “the constitution [that] actually protects gay people,” Kewpie suggests that such protection is a question of commonality that surpasses the bounds of the nation state and should not be left to government: “I think the whole wide world should try and protect the gays today.” In such remarks, there is discernible an Arendtian longing for a common world in which rights are secured through the appearance and recognition of both equality (“because the gays are just as human as they are human”) and distinction (“and the gays live the way they do live”).⁸⁴ According to Arendt (1961), because it is interaction with others that brings into being our world as the context in which appearance (which is to say being) is possible and on which life possibilities are therefore contingent, freedom “develops fully only when action has created its own worldly space

⁸⁴ On equality and distinction as the “twofold character” of plurality, see Arendt (1958) 1998 (177, 7-8).

where it can [...] make its appearance” (169). Hence *freedom*, for Arendt, refers not to sovereignty but to the human capacity to begin something new, the infinite consequences of which cannot be designed nor predicted—a capacity that can only be actualised within a public space of appearance created through action-in-concert.⁸⁵ In other words, a world created in public action in which “men” are able to appear in their plurality and elicit the consent of others would be a world in which freedom could appear as a reality.

I have argued that certain street scene photographs do the work of articulating a right to freedom from discrimination, rather than historically evidencing that freedom. This is because they depict actions that are taken up and consented to within a photographic collective, comprising subjects, photographers, developers, those who have engaged with and circulated the images, and those of us who continue to do so. These photographs represent a world in which what is disclosed is consented to, even though such actions (such as the male-assigned subjects wearing clothing deemed female) were criminalised at the time and even though Kewpie’s testimony indicates that the girls were targeted with violence specifically because of what these actions are seen to disclose (for instance, these subjects are gay and articulate their right to appear in public as such). What I read as Kewpie’s theorisation of the political in a broad sense is thus rooted in her experiences of the curtailment of freedom as well as of collaborative practices of creating spaces of appearance in which freedom can appear.

It is not surprising that Kewpie insists her actions are not political but rather invested in people and the world around her, and that these collectives appear most distinctly in a relatively accessible creative format. Although she argues that action, as a mode of being together, is the route to participatory democracy, Arendt insists that such participation is

⁸⁵ Arendt ([1958] 1998) theorises human agency as non-sovereign in the sense that, although action is identity disclosing, reality affirming, and freedom-actualising, it is necessarily responded to, and its effects continued, by others (234-235).

rendered impossible by contemporary forms of politics. Apartheid legislation certainly aimed to foreclose the possibility, for the majority of the governed, of political participation via discussion and debate as well as voting and representation. Yet, Kewpie undermines this legislation by advocating and acting in accordance with ideals that she insists are non-political and that we might draw on Arendt to say are political in a sense inhibited within Kewpie's contemporary political landscape. Articulating her right to appear and to engage in public speech and action, Kewpie (1998) says it is because of their shared status as "human" that she wasn't "afraid" to "speak to" her friends who were "reclassified" or "started working" as "White": "I didn't walk up to them as a white. I walked up to them as a human. As me." She also cites this as the reason she would ignore anyone who (as Gevisser puts it) "discriminated against" or judged her: "To me it was just ag you're no better than me. You're just as human as I am. And that is me."

Kewpie voices a refusal to act in accordance with (and therefore consent to) the effects of what Arendt calls force and what Kewpie describes in terms of being pushed around, as discussed in chapter three. Instead, she achieves what Arendt calls power through what I will read as movement-with. Insisting that freedom and sovereignty cannot co-exist, Arendt (1961) warns that the application of the philosophical "equation of freedom with the human capacity to will" to the political realm, where it supplanted "freedom as a state of being manifest in action," has had "fatal consequences": since the will is incapable of generating "genuine power," "the will-to-power turned at once into the will-to-oppression" (162-163). Whereas "genuine power" is created through action and is what keeps people together after the moment of action has passed, political oppression involves the use of force to destroy power. This is achieved through isolation (which is also a precondition for totalitarianism since it is a precursor to loneliness), enforced inequality, and the flattening

out of difference, all of which produce world alienation—and all of which, we should note, are effects of the apartheid regime.

Although it would seem incorrect to describe Kewpie's experience of political oppression as one of totalitarianism as distinguished by Arendt, particularly in light of apartheid ideologues' glorification of the nation state, it is worth noting that the Nationalist government sought to enforce apartheid on all spheres of experience.⁸⁶ Hence Ndebele (1998) warned of the "importance," while "negotiat[ing] the difficult task of normalising freedom," of realising that "political accommodation such as [was] achieved does not imply that all the moral, intellectual, and philosophical questions have been solved": because "to stop at that point is to risk repeating the apartheid mistake of making politics everything" (25). Apartheid thus resembles totalitarianism in the aspect in which Arendt emphasises that the latter is most distinct from other forms of governance: whereas other autocratic regimes seek absolute political power by outlawing opposition, totalitarian regimes dominate all spheres of life for all of the governed and thus make it impossible to be free from politics.⁸⁷ This sense of pervasive subjugation flickers into Kewpie's (1998) testimony, in her singular admission of having registered anything "political."

Gevisser: And when you went out for example, did you ever see those Whites Only signs?

Kewpie: So many of them.

Gevisser: So many of them.

⁸⁶ Arendt ([1951] 1973) distinguishes totalitarianism as a novel form of politically oppressive governance, manifest in Nazism and Stalinism, that subjugates vast populations rather than political opponents and, aspiring to global dominance, aims to crush the nation state, for which Nazism used Jewish people as a proxy. Under Nazism, Jewish people were denied the right to have rights. Stripped of homes, property, and citizenship, and disappeared: from the public realm, then completely. Denied the products and means of labour, work, and action, they were denied the possibility of participating in common worldmaking.

⁸⁷ Although taking this argument in a different direction, Jaco Barnard likewise identifies respects in which the apartheid regime enacted totalitarian domination. Taking up Arendt's ([1951] 1973) emphasis on loneliness, which she distinguishes from both isolation and solitude, as "the essence of totalitarian government" (474-477), J. Barnard (2017) cites Justice Sachs' declarations in the so-called Sodomy Judgement as evidence of Constitutional Court "recogni[tion]" of "the promotion of loneliness as an aspect" of legal-apartheid "totalitarian rule" (504): "From today a section of the community can feel the equal concern and regard of the Constitution and enjoy lives less threatened, less lonely and more dignified" (NCGLE and Another v. Minister of Justice and Others 1999, 67). Moreover, as Mamdani (2000) observes, "the Nazi regime shared apartheid's fetishism with the law" (180).

Kewpie: Thousands and millions of them, ja.

Whereas totalitarian domination “bases itself [...] on the experience of not belonging to the world at all” (Arendt [1951] 1973, 475), Kewpie (1998)—who has “realised” the impossibility of living otherwise, since she is “human” and has “to have a life to live”—insists that she belongs to a “world” of “love” comprising “her life” and “people around [her].”

Kewpie’s disinterest in having “been political” refuses the impossibility of being free of politics, which is to say political force. It involves engaging a strategy of recollection—in which what she refuses to consent to loses its power to act upon her—through which she collaboratively makes worlds beyond the constraints of a present defined by that which she rejects. After acknowledging that she saw “so many” signs, Kewpie (1998) tells Gevisser that “it never bothered” her; that she “did [her] own thing.” Certain of Kewpie’s photographs, in which the ongoing demolition of District Six is particularly visually apparent, work in a similar way. Kewpie pouts from a black and white photograph (fig. 5.7), eyes locked on the lens and face tilted slightly away from the afternoon sun. Sunlight catches her hair tumbling towards her shoulders in golden wisps, her sequinned top, and the one



Figure 5.7



Figure 5.8

strappy metallic high heel on which she balances, her back to a graffitied and weather-beaten wall against which her long shadow is thrown. Leaning against the same wall on a different day are Kewpie and her friends (fig. 5.8). The five smile and shade their eyes from the sun beating down on what was once an indoor fireplace and now partly lies in broken bricks, amidst which the friends gather to exude variously defiant registers of apparently effortless chic.

Striking poses amid half torn-down buildings and piles of rubble on semi-abandoned streets, with various limbs outstretched and bodies propped against the one still-standing formerly interior wall, these photographic subjects joyfully re-inhabit spaces made less private *and* less habitable to collaboratively perform belonging in the landscape from which they are under threat of legal removal. As Ahmed (2010) shows, ideas about happiness can function as a means of worldmaking by distinguishing “who is worthy as well as capable of being happy ‘in the right way’” and thus informing what is able to appear (13). That attributing good feelings to certain bodies necessarily means denying them to others is demonstrated by the material space depicted in these photographs: an inner-city area being demolished and cleared out in order to “maintain the correct relationship between whiteness and urbanisation” (McEachern 1998, 501). As O’Connell (2012) suggests, there was to be no mourning for those forcibly removed (26). Further, as well as dictating who was merely allowed to travel for the purpose of work to urban spaces where they were granted limited rights, legal-apartheid-era forced removals dictated who was allowed to feel pleasure and joy, and experience belonging and safety, for instance, within those spaces. In these photographs, however, recalling the discussion of orientation in chapter three, the subjects enact dis-alignment with such policy and with the implied “affective geography of happiness” (Ahmed 2010, 97). Through gesture, facial expression, and style of dress, they

convey physical joy in a space that they are told should not, for them, carry positive affective value—a space that should only signify joy for those for whom it is being cleared out.

The photographs' setting recalls Berlant's (2011) reminder that precarity is, "at root [...] a condition of dependency." In a legal sense, Berlant explains, *precarious* "describes the situation wherein your tenancy on your land is in someone else's hands" (192). The South African government's attempts to legally seize for nineteen point three percent of the population classified "White" all desirable land on which "Non-White" individuals still lived involved the displacement of approximately three and a half million who, between 1960 and 1983, were forced further into varying degrees of socio-economic precarity (Union of South Africa Office of Census and Statistics 1960; Platzky and Walker 1985, 9-12). Many were unable to produce the legal documentary evidence of tenancy or ownership that the Nationalist government deemed requisite for receipt of any form of compensation. As mentioned in chapter one, this segregationist project remains alarmingly successful, as is visually obvious in Cape Town. Enacting a symbolic reclamation of some of this seized land, however, the two photographs in question suggest an alternate geography.

Thus enacting productive refusals, the photographs put into play dynamics between subject, photographer, and spectator that undermine the expectation Ariella Azoulay (2015) names as she prepares to imagine a "civil discourse" of photography under conditions of regime-made disaster: that the subjects of such disaster are "sentenced to be photographed rather than to photograph themselves" or even see photographs taken of them (19-20). These photographs pose a challenge to what Azoulay names "the central right" of the portion of the population on whom disaster is not inflicted, which consists in "the right to view disaster—to be its spectator" (1). These photographs capture the "very site of respectability" attacked by the Nationalist government (McEachern 1998, 515): broken open homes lying in piles of brick and stone which bring to mind another argument made by Azoulay (2015),

that ongoing so-called house demolitions in Palestine create violent ruptures that open up new possibilities.⁸⁸ Azoulay suggests that the “textures of destruction” come to constitute an “intimate and highly familiar environment” for the targeted section of the governed, and that this comes to constitute a world, in an Arendtian sense, since these conditions enable new possibilities including “Palestinian efforts to reclaim public space, for however limited duration, as an open space of movement and freedom” (153). Depicting a joyful re-inhabitation of spaces made less private and less habitable, Kewpie’s rubble photographs enact a similar reclamation. By articulating their right to have a place in which to stay—and in which to enjoy staying—these photographic subjects contest their attempted production as an increasingly precarious population. The photographs thus represent a form of direct action that opposes apartheid policy while disempowering its undergirding ideology.⁸⁹

It is important that these photographs convey “feelings.” “We are all human beings,” Kewpie (1996) explains. “We’ve got feelings, we love, we’ve got... happiness in our life, we’ve got our ups and downs.” In this rather Shakespearean defence of “gays,” Kewpie suggests that humanity is constituted by the capacity to have “feelings”—specifically, to love.⁹⁰ When Gevisser asks for “a comment on how [she] feel[s] about what [she’s] doing now,” Kewpie (1998) tells him: “I feel good I feel great about it because as I said I love people and gays are people. They’re humans. And coming to love each and everybody it’s beautiful.” Kewpie’s claim that she feels good and great specifically because she loves

⁸⁸ Thinking through the fragility of domestic space and the process of its destruction, Azoulay (2015) catalogues the “shame” of being forcibly removed from one’s home as “the private interior is mercilessly turned inside out” and “exposed to the public gaze” by those who aim to “make the building uninhabitable” (162). Next comes the transition from home to empty space “as the site of a demolished house loses its aura” and passers-by begin to throw rubbish into the rubble (180).

⁸⁹ This is direct action in the sense of members of the governed articulating their right to what is prohibited or otherwise unavailable by claiming it in public. In this instance, the girls’ style of dress is criminalised, as is their continued presence on this land. The implication of these laws is that the girls are not allowed to experience joy in this space, especially looking the way they do in these photographs.

⁹⁰ Kewpie recalls *The Merchant of Venice*: “Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? [...] If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?” etc. (Shakespeare [1978] 2003, 3.1.46-52).

people inheres with her understanding, recalling Butler (2004a, 2004b), of social life as inherently precarious. This means, in Kewpie's (1998) words, that "look[ing] after yourself" involves not "push[ing] around" others. Kewpie claims an unquestionable authority by referencing Biblical notions of divine creation: "You've got to love the next party too because we're all God's creation" or, more bluntly, "You've got to accept it because it's from God."⁹¹ "God has shown me in my mind that I am just me," she tells Gevisser. "I'm around. And God has shown me so many ways of look after yourself. Be you. Be yourself. Don't push around. Be yourself and I am me." Perhaps these "many ways" relate to two meanings of *look after*, concerning care and visibility, that are condensed in Kewpie's curation of the photographs she has left us. Pursuing this line of thought, love can be understood as divine in Kewpie's account because, as argued in the following section, it names feelings and actions that produce in their image the world that is accessible to us in these photographs.

Divine Love

It is through action-in-concert, I have argued, that this world (of love) is created, both as a common world shared between people, which may have come into existence ephemerally, and as it is accessible to us in photographs. This would suggest that, in Kewpie's account, what is common between people is not essential but rather produced through intersubjective action. For example, Kewpie's particular brand of non-secular humanism entails an insistence that gays *must* be accepted because they were created by God "as humans"—"not

⁹¹ Given the Bible was used to justify slavery and apartheid and is used to justify the persecution of sexuality and gender diversity, Kewpie's disidentification with Christian ideals, also discussed in chapter four, makes for enjoyable reading. Nonetheless, Kewpie's rhetoric is somewhat characteristic of the mid-1990s, when the humanity of gays was defended in the name of God, and homophobia likened to racism and sexism, by Desmond Tutu—even while he held the most senior position in the Anglican hierarchy in southern Africa as Archbishop of Cape Town. Given its understanding of "sexuality [a]s a divine gift" and "part of our humanity that makes us more [...] self-giving and concerned for others," Tutu (1996) asked why the Anglican church should "want all homosexual persons not to give expression to their sexuality in loving acts." Like Kewpie, he insisted: I "knew that the Lord of the Church would not be where his church is in this matter" (ix-x).

as a gay.” She does not argue that God made them gay, and that their being gay must therefore be accepted, but rather that God made them as humans and that they must be accepted as humans and allowed to live their lives since all humans are entitled to life and since—recalling Arendt ([1958] 1998)—plurality is a condition of human life (177, 7-8). In Kewpie’s (1998) repeated refrain that District Sixers loved gays not as gays but as humans, distinctions between the subject and object of action somewhat blur, as in “they came to love you as being that human being.” The ambiguity (of whether it is “they” or “you” or both “being that human being,” in this instance) evokes a sense that, in Kewpie’s formulation, love involves connecting across difference, through appearance and recognition of commonality as it is produced, even as difference between subjects is acknowledged. What is recognised as common is not ontological but performed. It is “*being* that human being.” What is shared is action-in-concert, which is both constitutive of, and enabled by, a common world. The “world around [Kewpie that] was love” is thus created through intersubjective action (involving disclosure and recognition) in which lover and loved are mutually implicated: “they loved me...”; “I was loved by them”; “they were loveable. That’s why I still maintain I love people.”

Although love operates for Kewpie as something like what Arendt calls a principle,⁹² Kewpie also uses *love* to name the sort of interpersonal or shared feelings about which Arendt is ambivalent. “Warm” and even “hot” feelings are centred by Kewpie. This is a key aspect in which she goes beyond Arendt, pointing to the importance of shared corporeal pleasure as a means of facilitating prohibited modes of togetherness that are socially

⁹² According to Arendt (1961), all action “springs from” a principle, such as “honour or glory, love of equality[,] excellence [...] but also fear or distrust or hatred.” Since they are “universal,” “inexhaustible,” and non-self-involved, principles are neither goals, which have a finite endpoint, nor motives, which demarcate individuals or groups. Arendt insists that “the manifestation of principles comes about only through action” (152).

transformative primarily because they are life-sustaining.⁹³ These are feelings that are brought into visibility through photography, meaning the world depicted is latent in interpersonal relations. Kewpie's testimony, given in the 1990s, reflects on ways of living that she and her sisters imagined and invented—traces of which are made available to us in the photographs themselves—from the 1960s to the late 1980s. During these decades in which most of Kewpie's photographs were taken, the possibilities of political action were reimagined by mass social movements within South Africa and beyond. Moving beyond Arendt, Kewpie advocates practices (some of which involve aforementioned “warm” and “hot” feelings) key to various movements concerned with redistributing power through concerted action to expand possibilities and make life more liveable for the exploited and oppressed.

For instance, Kewpie's repeated statements that she is “just Kewpie [...] just me” sound as a demand to be heard free from assumptions that she represents any social group. Rather than metaphorically speaking from behind the universalising “mask” (the *persona* distinguishing “a Roman citizen” from “a private individual”) favoured by Arendt ([1963] 2006, 256), however, Kewpie centres her adoption and transformation of categories of

⁹³ Although Arendt's various arguments about political and apolitical functions of emotions are too complex to detail her, she seems to understand the political efficacy of the sort of interpersonal feeling described by Kewpie as necessarily limited. Arendt ([1958] 1998) suggests that a danger posed by warm feelings as a basis for “human relationships,” even if these feelings develop into group solidarity rather than pity, is the prospect of withdrawal from the public realm into a closed-off world (53-54). However, in her well-trodden critique of the role of pity in the French Revolution, Arendt ([1963] 2006) is primarily wary that public expression of emotions is potentially deceptive, particularly when the expression of emotion becomes a “public” (though, Arendt might say, in fact social) principle (218-230; Degerman 2019, 168). Therefore, as Dan Degerman (2019) has drawn on a broad range of Arendt's writing to argue, although Arendt is “deeply concerned about the dangers of using shared emotion as the foundation for political action,” she “sees a constructive role for the emotions in the development of individual political agency” (154). What Kewpie's emphasis on the importance of interpersonal feeling demands we trouble is its implied relegation to the private sphere, which has been persuasively critiqued elsewhere. Berlant and Warner (1998) point out that the “structural differentiation” of “personal life” from “the public sphere” is presupposed by the “conventional spaces” of “heterosexual culture,” the “normativity” of which links intimacy “only to the institutions of personal life.” They continue: “by making sex seem irrelevant or merely personal, heteronormative conventions of intimacy block the building of nonnormative or explicit public sexual cultures,” while these “conventions conjure a mirage: a homebase of prepolitical humanity from which citizens are thought to come into political discourse” (553).

difference, deploying multiple available terms to self-describe expansively while refusing fixed identification by her interviewers. Speaking and acting from a position resistant of linguistic capture, Kewpie insists that she appears in multiple ways and as “just” herself even when she is told this is impossible. This is reminiscent of feminist suspicion of the purported equalising capacity of the mask favoured by Arendt, on the one hand, and investment in what such a mask might obscure, on the other. It is also bolstered by understandings of the given organisation of social relations such as have been explored in the work of Black feminists and feminists of colour on the political power and potential for revolutionary change of capacities of attentiveness.⁹⁴ Detailing feminist advancements of (Arendtian and other) theorisations of the constitutive relationship of self and other, Susan Bickford suggests that it is because the attentiveness of others is a prerequisite of appearance that María Lugones (1987) writes: “I am incomplete and unreal without other women [...] We are fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood without which we are not intelligible, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated; we are lacking” (8 quoted in Bickford 1995, 327). As I understand it, it is also why the deaths of Kewpie’s friends leave her “still.” It is why Lorde (2017) asks “how many other deaths [...] we live through daily / pretending / we are alive” (218).

Speaking as Lorde writes, in the midst of persistent premature deaths, “in the face of all those lives that have been taken, are being taken, again and again” (Ahmed 2017, x), Kewpie (1998) insists that she has “to have a life to live.” Her photographs conjure a world in which this life is possible; a world in which the girls have the freedom to remain within, travel beyond, and reimagine District Six; a world in which joy and pleasure and

⁹⁴ Considering Gloria Anzaldúa’s conceptions of identity, which bring together “our embeddedness in the socially constructed givens of our existence and our capacity to present ourselves self-consciously in a way that engages but does not simply reflect those givens,” Bickford (1995) writes: “As a political actor, I do not require a mask that conceals these givens; I require from others an attentiveness to what I do with them, a listening and a looking flexible enough to perceive my activity” (326).

togetherness are more possible; “the world around” her that “was love.” In her testimony, Kewpie refuses the political and yet, in these very recordings and transcripts as well as in her photographs, she does the political and necessarily collaborative labour of being and of articulating alternatives to the worlds being made by that which she refuses. In this way, the materials Kewpie co-creates and leaves behind do the work of political movement building—to which various notions of movement are pertinent. After telling Gevisser that seeing the “Whites Only” signs “never bothered” her, for example, Kewpie adds: “And I just moved my way.” I have read Kewpie’s description of the spaces she sought out, “wherever [she] could move around,” as indicative of her search for (and co-creation of) spaces in which she could move, “[her] way,” towards objects not easily available within the horizon of the social, in which new ways of being together could be rehearsed. That these were first and foremost spaces in which Kewpie could dance returns us to the significance of this specific sense of movement in her testimony and photographs.

Beginning with dancing or—as Kewpie typically describes it—moving around, the following section proposes a notion of movement-with as a form of action-in-concert that constitutes the world of love accessible to us in Kewpie’s photographs. *Moving around* indexes various meanings of *love* that Kewpie deploys. Drawing on Kewpie’s photographs to develop a notion of moving with from the notion of moving around, I elaborate the worldmaking functions of love in these photographs. Of primary interest are Kewpie’s descriptions of “warm” and “hot” feelings and her account of using photography to bring these into visibility so that they may be more widely shared between people. This is another key difference between Kewpie and Arendt. Whereas, as Jerome Kohn (2017) puts it, “Arendt’s view of realising a common world was never optimistic” (20), for Kewpie, this world already exists as a potentiality latent in interpersonal relations and emergent in shared feelings; photography is a means of bringing it into visibility. Kewpie’s view is more like

that of David Graeber (2011), who points out that “communism [...] is already here” since people “pretty much [...] always” act according to the Gotha Principle when “working together to get something done”—“the question,” he adds, “is how to further democratise it” (35-36). In this vein, decades earlier, C. L. R. James and Grace C. Lee ([1974] 1958) had set out on the “fundamental task” of “recognis[ing]” an already existing “socialist society” and “record[ing] the facts of its existence” as “outposts of a new society” (112, 151)—a new society “all around [us,] based on cooperative labour” (67). Practices of cooperation such as are alluded to in both instances are demonstrated, I argue, by Kewpie’s photographs.

Moving With

In 2018, Billy Biggs recalled that Kewpie always wanted him to photograph her “when she’s happy. Like in making the split, sitting on the ground with her legs like this. Kewpie was *goed da in*” (good at that).⁹⁵ Photographs thus captured by Biggs and others, in which she pirouettes, does the splits, and otherwise poses balletically with limbs extended, evidence the impressive command Kewpie has of her body as a trained dancer and professional performer, and suggest the pleasure she apparently derives from moving her body in this way. In Kewpie’s (1996) parlance, *moving around* refers to both dancing, as in “wherever I could move around,” and sexual or romantic involvement, as in “guys [...] that they would normally... move around with” or “he used to move around with gays and women.” Often explicitly relating corporeal movement to love in various senses, Kewpie discusses love as something like what Lorde theorises as the erotic, comprising love in all its forms, a facilitator of interpersonal connection especially where otherwise prohibited. “I used to always dance around and sing around,” Kewpie (1998) tells Gevisser, “and people came to

⁹⁵ Biggs was interviewed by the curators of the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition, Marsden and Smith, on 31 May 2018. This comment was featured in the exhibition.

love me for being that energetic person.” Romantic and sexual relationships were facilitated in this way—“I was always top for dancing. And the, the guys used to love it. And that’s how we got to know each other, in a good way for dancing”—including Kewpie’s (1996) relationship with Brian, whom she “taught [...] how to dance.”

The night Kewpie “moved out of bioscope” and “discovered Brian” was “waiting” was the night they “had sex, first time” (Lewis 2000; Kewpie 1996). In her description to Lewis of what happened after they arrived at the “party where [she] came to stay afterwards,” Kewpie and Brian’s dancing is not merely led by, but itself instigates, the music. Their co-movement is presented as joint possession of a singular synaesthetic emotion, “a blues” in which Brian tightly envelops Kewpie and from which there emerges a distinctly mobile sensation:

it went all dark and we had a blues [...] and I really enjoyed it and I really enjoyed it. He started holding me tight, kissing me on my neck, kissing me on my cheeks, kissing me on my lips and hugging me tight and tight and tight all the time. And that is how I discovered when I eventually felt something here squirming around, something squirming around, and then I felt and I discovered that this was really love for me. (Lewis 2000)

Kewpie describes the intense physical pleasure she experienced. “And I was shocked,” she tells Lewis, “I was amazed, I was... My whole body was like a furnace, I was hot. I was burning up. I just couldn’t believe it”; “afterwards, I was made up. I just couldn’t stay away from him. And I realised what sex was. Or shall I say what sex is. It was something new to me, it was exciting.” As well as squirming around inside or between people, the sensations of warmth and beauty that Kewpie names love expand out into the world and make it, the world, warm and beautiful. “I met up with this chap and then discovering after a few days that I am really in love,” Kewpie (1998) tells Gevisser. “And discovering what love is. That word called L O V E. It was so beautiful to feel body wise, mind wise.” Asked what her life was like at the age of twenty, Kewpie says, “It was beautiful. It was beautiful love in my life.” Asked about a photograph of herself and Brian taken at a party in which Lewis notes

a “very strong atmosphere where you can almost sense the attachment” (fig. 5.9), Kewpie (1996) describes her decision to “have it taken in that way”: to use photography to bring into visibility a beauty that is sensed as affect, through touch. “And we all had photos taken,” she explains. “And especially when that photo had to be taken and I decided to have it



Figure 5.9

taken in that way. Because love was beautiful then. It was all warm and beautiful. I just couldn’t take my eyes off him, every minute every second of the day, while being around him.”

Detailing the intense physical pleasure she experiences dancing and having sex, Kewpie names the sensations that burn up within her as love. Since it is an action in which subject and object are mutually implicated, as discussed above, loving is transformative: the “world around” Kewpie becomes “love” and is made beautiful, and she co-creates photographs that bring this affective beauty into visibility. Kewpie’s discussion of the transformative capacities of love is strikingly like Lorde’s theorisation of the related functions of those two “genre[s] of the senses,” inner scrutiny and the erotic (Ferguson 2012, 297). In Lorde’s ([1984] 2013) seminal formulation, one way the erotic functions is by “providing the power”—reminiscent of Arendt’s notion of true power achieved through action-in-concert—“which comes from sharing deeply any pursuit with another person.” The “sharing of joy” enables meaningful interpersonal connections beyond the constraints of compulsory heterosexuality and “forms a bridge” that “can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared[,] lessen[ing] the threat” of the sharers’ “difference” (55-56).

Another way the erotic functions, Lorde continues, is by instilling a “deep and irreplaceable knowledge of my capacity for joy,” underlined through such “reminder[s] of my capacity for feeling” as “the way my body stretches to music and opens into response, hearkening to its deepest rhythms.” The erotic thus “flows through and colours [...] life with a kind of energy that heightens and sensitises and strengthens [...] experience” (56-57). Kewpie’s (1996, 1998) sensory descriptions of interpersonal love flowing out to warm and beautify “the world around [her that] was love”—“it was so beautiful to feel body wise, mind wise”—captures the sense in which Lorde ([1984] 2013) understands the erotic as a means of re-joining the “psychic and emotional” with “the political” (56).

Describing her decision to have the photograph of herself and Brian taken (fig. 5.9), Kewpie (1996) offers an understanding of photography akin to Lorde’s understanding of writing. In line with this similarity, I contend that Kewpie’s photographs do the work Lorde ([1984] 2013) understands poetry to facilitate, which she names “pursu[ing] our magic and mak[ing] it realised” (36).⁹⁶ This involves bringing into visibility (or what Arendt calls appearance, which is to say being) what is previously felt or imagined. This is what I have drawn on Kewpie’s description of on-stage performance to call fantastic, and it is captured by the overlap of Lorde’s conception of “poetry as illumination” and the transliteration of *photography*, from the Greek *photos* (light) and *graphos* (writing, delineation, or painting), as “writing with light.” Although contextually inaccurate, the expression to “trip the light fantastic,” meaning to dance nimbly or lightly, gestures to another relation, of the capacity of fantastic illumination—the capacity of Lorde’s poetry and Kewpie’s photographs—to Kewpie’s discussion and photographic performance of movement.

⁹⁶ Since it “becomes a lens through which we scrutinise all aspects of our existence,” erotic knowledge is connected to what Lorde ([1984] 2013, 57) calls poetry, which is not “sterile word play,” but “a revelatory distillation of experience”; “not idle fantasy, but a disciplined attention to the true meaning of ‘it feels right to me.’” Poetry is a means of sharing “ideas” that are “already felt” but “nameless and formless” by making them communicable, fashioning the necessary language where it “does not yet exist,” in order to turn “hopes and dreams toward survival and change” into “more tangible action” in a necessarily continual practice (36-38).

This relation is evoked by a third sense in which Kewpie (1998) uses *move around*, as when she remembers discovering “how people move around you and [...] can accept you,” and “how people can push you around too.” In this instance, Kewpie establishes “move around” as the inverse of “push around,” which I understand as similar to what Arendt calls force, only ever able to move others to what Lorde ([1984] 2013) calls “temporary and reactive action.” Since the latter forces and constrain others’ movement while the former allows others the freedom to move, Kewpie’s wording suggests an understanding of *moving around* as movement that enables movement and is thus a way of moving with. This is akin to what Arendt calls acting in concert or what Lorde calls “altering your aura and your dreams” (38).

The notion of movement-with that I draw on Kewpie’s wording to develop is in one sense quite literal since it is often legible in photographs as consonant corporeal gesture—by which I mean poses suggestive of motion. It is also always more than that, however, since, given the necessarily collaborative nature of the creative format, corporeal synchronicity facilitates the creation of photographs—the tyre photograph discussed in the introduction to this thesis (fig. 0.6), for example—that are affectively rich or, we might say, moving. Additionally, such physical concordance denotes forms of solidarity and interpersonal connection—forms of what Kewpie might call love—that remain legally prohibited and otherwise precluded from public spaces across much of the globe.

This notion of movement-with is visually articulated in a series of three photographs in which Kewpie and Sandra Dee lie draped over the tall branches of a huge piece of driftwood on the beach at Strandfontein (fig. 5.10). While their poses echo those seen in the street scene photographs in which the girls stand or recline together with arms and legs extended, here Kewpie and Sandra Dee appear to be echoing the gesture of the washed-up tree’s limbs with their own, their poses increasingly expansive until Kewpie lies, leg

extended skywards, on the uppermost branch. Other photographs that appear to have been taken on the same day suggest they are on one of the camping trips Kewpie (1996) describes “all the gays” going on as “a gang,” often with the Biggs family or the Syms family, “almost every end of the month[,] every holiday, every week, and if we could go weekends.” She remembers being “on the beach, dancing on the beaches, dancing in the water, dancing in the sand,” adding, again, “and it was- it was beautiful, it was lovely.” As with the photograph of Kewpie and Brian kissing, these capture what is felt as “beautiful” and bring into focus what might otherwise be precluded from or occluded within given public space. In this case,



Figure 5.10

it is what can appear on these in-between nooks and empty stretches of beach where any conclusions we might draw about freedom and acceptance (given the apparently public nature of the outdoor place depicted) must be tempered by the desertedness of the setting: the only subjects who appear are those on the camping trip with the girls.

In other such photographs, the girls lie down on what Kewpie (1996) calls “the isle” or perhaps, as is more befitting of a commandeered fashion runway, “the aisle” (e.g., figs. 5.1, 5.2, 5.11, 5.12). They repurpose as a stage this traffic island in the middle of the main road that still runs through Woodstock and close to the former site of the Queens Hotel. As with photographs taken in the parking lot of the Cape Town Station and in the midst of ongoing demolition, the traffic (a)isle photographs convey a sense that their subjects should be surrounded by various inexorable forms of motion. Yet no passing vehicles appear on the main road nor in the deserted parking lot, nor does the work of demolition amid the rubble. Instead, the girls appear, suspended mid-motion: pirouetting, slightly blurred; leaping through the air; and standing, perching, and reclining with legs extended and arms flung back. They appropriate in-between spaces not intended for this purpose, and they do the work of re-signifying these spaces through collaborative gesture and synchronous



Figure 5.11



Figure 5.12

movement. The traffic island photographs offer a literalised illustration of my argument that the outdoor group photographs of the girls depict actualised public space, operating as what Arendt ([1963] 2006) calls “islands” of freedom (618).

These photographs manifest, and in some form sustain, a collective that moves around, or with. This is seen in the girls’ fantastic and/or consonant gestures that make us particularly aware of the necessarily collaborative nature of photography as a medium of creation. It is seen in Kewpie and Sandra Dee’s concordant gesture and in the corporeal shapes cumulatively drawn by the girls’ traffic (a)isle poses. Because this space is photographic, the collective is inherently expansive. The increasingly frail materiality of the photographs emphasises the relative ease with which they can be created and circulated, all the while conveying what Lorde ([1984] 2013) calls the “revolutionary demand”: “I feel, therefore I can be free” (38).

As with poetry as theorised by Lorde ([1984] 2013), the Kewpie Collection might “form[...] the quality of light within which we predicate” those dreams it enables us to name (37). This is partly because, in a manner incidentally akin to (“great”) poetry as described by Arendt (1975), Kewpie’s photographs entail “fluent gestures” through which we might

be “magically convinced that everyday speech”—or, in this case, an everyday setting—“is latently poetic.” Thus “taught by the poets,” Arendt continues, “our ears open up to the true mysteries of language.”⁹⁷ Kewpie shows us that another world is not only possible but latently extant, even if we can’t all always perceive it. Using photography to bring this world into visibility, she opens our eyes to the ways it is embedded as a potentiality in our everyday interactions. The “fluent gestures” made in Kewpie’s photographs are of a different and typically more literal variety to those discussed by Arendt. They might register as direct address, reminiscent of non-verbal modes of communication used to covertly establish interpersonal connections precluded from the public sphere. Continuing to act upon us in such ways, the Kewpie Collection represents a way of being in the world that transforms it. It therefore offers an important legacy of worldmaking.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I point to ways in which the Kewpie Photographic Collection sustains us as the photographic collective expands. Obviously, we cannot be sustained by photographs alone. But nor can we be sustained without such “dream[s] of love” or “dreams for love” as these photographs make available to us (Sachs 1991, 188; Ndebele 2006, 42). In the present chapter, I have argued that Kewpie’s scepticism about the possibilities of the political is inseparable from her insistence on the possibility of another world, and that she suggests this world already exists as potentiality; that it lies in the ways we interact. As in Lorde’s work in which, as Ahmed (2017) notes, “loving each other” is a way of “surviving” and “refusing the world that judges some of us to be unlovable” (x), it is remarkable how often Kewpie speaks about, and how often her photographs depict, forms of love and

⁹⁷ Arendt cites Clive James’s (1973) reference, in an essay on Auden published shortly after his death, to the role of “fluent gestures” in “elevating facts from the prosaic to the poetic.”

pleasure, sexual or otherwise. She most often describes her gay friends as loveable, and leaves behind a world in which they are loveable, loving and loved; in which they are desiring and desirable. This is a far cry from the narrative offered by contemporary print media, for instance, as detailed in chapter two.

Kewpie opens our eyes to a world in which these forms of love and pleasure are possible, uncomplicated, and open. Photography can be used to bring this world into visibility, she seems to suggest, because it already exists as a potentiality latent in interpersonal relations and emergent in intimately shared feelings. I have called this a photographic practice of freedom because it enables the appearance of what Butler calls liveable lives, or what Kewpie (1998) calls “hav[ing]” (not just a life but) “a life to live.” At the very least, this appearance is photographic. However, by exercising it, these photographs articulate Kewpie’s right to participate in the making of a common world in which the freedom they make legible can appear—a world in which it is possible for Kewpie to appear and to be recognised as “just Kewpie,” for instance. In doing so, the photographs help wedge open our conceptions of what might yet be possible—not by acting as historical evidence, but by articulating certain demands. Earlier in the current chapter, I likened this photographic practice of freedom to Graeber’s (2011) encouraging reminder that communism already exists wherever people are working together for a common good (35). Kewpie’s photographs exemplify such a practice (working together for a common good), and continue to do so since they articulate the valuable message that the world they depict is possible; that it already exists in some form. Just as Kewpie *has* to have a life to live, the existence of such a world remains vital for many of us, even if it is sometimes most available to us as it remains written in light on decades-old photographs. I have understood these as products of Kewpie’s use of photography to bring into visibility a world of love around her so that it may be more widely shared. Extending this argument, the following chapter is

concerned with how new memories of embodiment might be made through engagement with the resultant photographs. I begin by considering parties as one practice of collectivity on which what I have called Kewpie's photographic practice of freedom might draw.

Chapter Six: “A Party All Over Again”

Making New Memories of Embodiment in the Kewpie Collection

There is one category into which the many and varied photographs in the Kewpie Photographic Collection most commonly fall: those taken at parties. According to Kewpie (1996, 1999), these parties took place in venues such as the famed Ambassador Club and the Woodstock and Maitland Town Halls (figs. 6.1 and 6.2); in private residences in Kensington, Greenpoint, and District Six’s New Market, Rutger, and De Smit Streets; and in “some salon in Claremont.” They include a “go-go party,” a “Roaring Twenties party,” a “Spanish” party, an “op art party,” a “drag party,” a “smashing party,” birthday parties, a “Christmas party,” a “Christmas Eve party,” “a welcome party,” “a party stage,” “my party,” and “some party that all the gay friends went to.” Kewpie (fig. 6.3), Piper Laurie (AM2886/9), and Kay Kendall (fig. 6.4) are seen getting ready for and travelling to parties (Kewpie 1999). As noted, Kewpie (1998) lists “parties” among the places she sought out as a teenager. Some took place in demarcated sites of performance. Fancy-dress nights were



Figure 6.1



Figure 6.2



Figure 6.3



Figure 6.4

held in the nightclubs in which Kewpie (1998) would dance on stage, where there was always “fantastic music” played by a live band. Photographs taken in these spaces suggest that Kewpie drew on her ballet training, here (fig. 6.5), to develop the vocabulary of improvisatory corporeal movement seen in photographs taken beyond these spaces. The latter photographs visually articulate the notion, developed in chapter five, of movement-with as a form of action-in-concert through which freedom can appear.

Moreover, in spaces in which Kewpie (1996) could “move around,” a collective could be rehearsed. According to Kewpie (1998), dancing at parties “is how people came to love [gays].” Asked “how come there’s such a big mixture of straight and gay people” in a photograph taken at the Ambassador Club, Kewpie (1996) explains:

The mixture of straight people coming in there was through all the gays that invited them. Like our friends, straight friends that used to... always have their hair done at the salons or... as neighbours we used to tell them about these... shows going on. And invited them to come. Then they would rush. Husband and wife. Two sisters, maybe. Their grandmother and the grandfather. Well, they’d pay for their tickets to come in. And they enjoy themselves. Right up to five o’ clock the morning. It was fantastic parties. Lovely, lovely parties.



Figure 6.5

In the previous chapter, I argued that what I called a photographic practice of freedom drew on the girls' other experiences of forming collectives on which the efficacy of action is dependant. Relatedly, I referred to Kewpie as an insistently non-political partier. The current chapter argues for the political importance of parties of the ostensibly non-political variety, an importance perhaps betrayed by the Nationalist government's attempts to ban them from the early 1960s onwards. There is something "communist," I suggest, about what the architects and enforcers of apartheid feared, or at least erroneously labelled, as such, even if the communism rehearsed exceeds what those architects and enforcers imagined. This

further illustrates what might be lost in descriptions of gays' integration into a broader community that understand them as beneficiaries as opposed to producers of social integration and fail to consider sites at which social relations might be produced, such as the many parties Kewpie recalls. The emergent version of communism I discern lies in a dawning common sense able to honour a multiplicity of experience, forged through the temporality effected by the aspect of parties Kewpie emphasises above all others.

As well as dancing and "meet[ing] up with different sorts of people," these parties' appeal "for the gays," specifically, is located by Kewpie (1996) in "jazz." While jazz was the genre of music most often played at these parties, in general, some are described by Kewpie as specifically "jazz scenes": gatherings of people, usually in nightclubs, to hear jazz music played by a live band and, in Kewpie's recollection, dance. According to Kewpie, gays were enthusiastic participants in and organisers of jazz scenes. The owner of the Ambassador Club, Dave Saunders, "became friends with the gays"—"loving them, too"—and so they "could always ask [him] to give [...] a jazz scene." I therefore make a case for reading the Kewpie Collection, with a focus on its many photographs and recollections of parties, as part of a history of jazz. Doing so illuminates the temporal logics of the worldmaking work available in the Collection as well as the circumstances of the history in which it is standardly absent.

Jazz scenes are one articulation of what I follow musicologist Carol Ann Muller in describing as a jazz movement, and of the jazz world this movement sought to create. The movement took place in urban centres across South Africa, including Cape Town, predominantly in the diverse, working-class areas of District Six and Woodstock while Kewpie lived there and participated in their social life. This was "an extraordinary period," in the late 1950s and early 1960s, "of musical passion and activity" (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 76, 12), which was ultimately curtailed by apartheid. Jazz music was understood as

politically defiant, partly because of its relation to African American culture and politics, and jazz scenes and other performances brought together so-called (racially) mixed audiences under the cover of darkness. These events were heavily targeted by police. Musicians found themselves subject to mounting sanctions, with many forced into exile, often after being legally banned. Although the world to which this jazz movement aspired was only ever fleetingly realised, something of its scenes can be glimpsed in ephemera from this era. However, gays' role in the creation of this jazz world, and the pleasures it might have afforded them, has been lost in its historicisation. Their participation and pleasures are reimagined in this chapter.

Discussing ways women “are socialised into thinking of our bodies as burdens and our minds or souls as the only chance we have of transcending the mire of the bodies we drag with us,” Gqola (2017) teaches us that “it is crucial to begin to make new memories of embodiment: forms that encourage pleasure and power” (10-11). Chapter five argued that Kewpie uses photography to bring a world of love emergent in shared feelings into visibility so that it may be more widely shared between people. If the parties at which Kewpie (1996) “move[d] around” facilitated a new sense of embodiment, as I argue, this would suggest that the resultant photographs, perhaps especially those taken at parties, offer us a means of doing what Gqola urges us to. Whereas, in chapter two, I suggested that the terms in which Kewpie describes herself anticipate a dawning common sense, the current chapter’s argument that what was potentially communist about jazz scenes was their capacity to produce a new common sense privileges the embodied characteristic of sense. As Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu (2014) point out, there is a long history of thinking about feelings in photography. By considering “the real affects engendered through engagements with photography” and asking “what desires animate” the Kewpie Photographic Collection (13), I follow the work Brown and Phu sketch (21, 8-13). I depart from it, however, by suggesting that some of

these desires find articulation in motive qualities of jazz, as they were experienced locally, produced through practices of temporal subversion that were constitutive of and enabled by the jazz scenes in which Kewpie participated.

Playing with the notion of indexicality in photography, this chapter suggests that photographs taken at parties index syncopation, as might be said of jazz records, and that the photographs thereby engender a motional and embodied sense of swing. Further, the temporalities these photographs evoke produce a sense of extended existence through time, conjuring futures that might unfold from present and past (im)possibilities and anticipating forms of collective existence yet to come. This enriches our understanding of the pleasures that playing in and with time—as I describe practices of temporal subversion such as syncopation—might have held for those forging lives in proximity to death. With reference to jazz, I develop the notion of movement-with that I have drawn from Kewpie’s testimony with reference to her photographs. Focusing on two genres of photographs taken at parties—those from fancy dress parties and those that are “improperly” exposed—I contend that they anticipate forms of embodiment and collectivity yet to come, and in doing so enable us to have, as Kewpie puts it, “a party all over again.”

What’s so communist about a party?

Given the parties Kewpie recalls acted as spaces in which a collective could be rehearsed that accommodated and worked across difference, it is perhaps unsurprising that government attempts to regulate inter-personal relations and gatherings (sexual and otherwise) seem to have recognised as a threat, and sought to undermine, the potential of any such collectives.⁹⁸ While a concise history is impossible, relevant aspects of these attempts can be sketched.

⁹⁸ “In order to perpetuate itself,” Lorde ([1984] 2013) reminds us, “every oppression must corrupt or distort those various sources of power within the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change” (53).

Reflecting what Hoad (2005) describes as the apartheid state's "deep[...] if incoherent[...] invest[ment] in questions of reproductive heterosexual sexuality" (15-16), the Immorality Amendment Act 57 of 1969, discussed in chapter one, created the famous "men at a party" offence (s. 3). Until struck down by the 1998 sodomy judgement discussed in chapter three, the newly created clause of the Immorality Act 23 of 1957 criminalised "a male person who commits with another male person at a party an act which is calculated to stimulate sexual passion or to give sexual gratification" (s. 20 [A] [1]).⁹⁹ This positioned homosexuality in the same frame as the so-called interracial sex the 1957 Act criminalised (s. 16): "a sin, a disease, and an impediment to white reproduction" (Munro 2012, xxiii). Presumably via the lexicon used to ban political groups, the 1969 Act rather humourlessly defined *party* as "any occasion where more than two persons are present" (s. 3).

For two decades, the banning of organisations or individuals had been authorised by the Suppression of Communism Act 44 of 1950. Recalling Graeber's (2011) encouraging reminder that communism already exists wherever people "work[...] together to get something done" (35-36), to which I likened Kewpie's photographic practice of freedom in the previous chapter, the 1950 Act defined a "gathering" as "any number of persons having a common purpose" (s. 1 [d] [v]), and "organisation" as "any association of persons, incorporated or unincorporated," established or not (s. 1 [d] [x]). The Publications and Entertainments Act 26 of 1963 had extended these powers to authorise the banning of publications and entertainments including any "public entertainment or intended public entertainment" such as those in which Kewpie participated. Defined incredibly broadly, *communism* was used as a legal stand-in for any form of political opposition or anti-apartheid sentiment, as well as any form of perceived ideological threat to the regime—

⁹⁹ For a brief illustration of "the absurdities that enforcing such laws invariably lead to," see Cameron (1994) 2012 (92).

hence the “masculinist political discourse” that “developed” during apartheid and, as Kobus du Pisani (2012) writes, “attempted to link [male] homosexuality to communism and African nationalism” (189).¹⁰⁰

While the view that “homosexuality necessarily implies an intrinsic commitment to a revolutionary and transformative agenda” is politically essentialist and clearly erroneous (Cock 2005, 202), there is a sense in which the fearful discourse described by du Pisani was astute. Kewpie’s photographs seductively articulate the idea, the corrupting influence of which the government seems to have feared, that there are fulfilling and beautiful ways of being together outside of Calvinist-prescribed heterosexual family relationships: “the knowledge,” as Lorde ([1984] 2013) puts it, “that such satisfaction is possible, and does not have to be called *marriage*, nor *god*, nor *an afterlife*” (56-57). The photographs are in clear contravention of the aforementioned Publications and Entertainments Act 26 of 1963, which made it illegal for any person to “print, publish, manufacture, make[,] produce” or “distribute, display,” or “exhibit” any “undesirable publication or object” (s. 5 [1] [*a-b*]), including any “photograph” (s. 1 [1] [viii] [*e*]), and defined undesirability according to various relevant criteria. These include: the object “is blasphemous or is offensive to [...] religious convictions or feelings” or “is indecent or obscene or is offensive or harmful to public morals” (s. 5 [2] [*a*]), for example “it deals in an improper manner with [...] homosexuality[,] change of sex, night life[,] human or social deviation or degeneracy, or any other similar or related phenomenon,” or “has the tendency to deprave or corrupt the minds of persons who are likely to be exposed to the effect or influence thereof” (s. 6 [1] [*c, a*]).

¹⁰⁰ While du Pisani (2012) discusses views on “homosexuality” in Afrikaner society during the 1960s only, Nicky Falkof (2019) points to white press representations during the latter years of legal apartheid indicating that the link between “homosexuality” and communism (and, Falkof adds, satanism) was used to pathologise white people “whose disobedient bodies and beliefs were considered treacherous,” as anti-communist rhetoric remained powerful well into the 1990s.

The question of how “night life” might be dealt with “in an improper manner” is intriguing. It suggests that the violent policing of so-called mixed (race) and/or homosexual parties, as well as the almost comically paranoid legal definitions of *party*, *gathering*, and *organisation* cited above, were motivated by a recognition of the political threat posed by the sort of collective potential that ideological adversaries have welcomed—adversaries including Chambers-Letson and Muñoz. Via their considerations of this potential in relation to queer of colour parties in the US, this threat will be redescribed as the threat of temporal subversion, as it was effected by jazz scenes in which Kewpie participated. In his manifesto for queer of colour life, Chambers-Letson (2018) takes up and expands upon Muñoz’s theorisation of a “necessary communism.” Somewhat sidestepping Marx’s failure to adequately account for the ways subjectivity is differentially constituted according to race and gender, and like Graeber, Muñoz (1999) conceptualises communism as an available potential that precedes the political and as a future that can be glimpsed in the present, drawing the latter formulation from C. L. R. James’s sustained engagement with an aspect of Hegelian dialectics relating to temporality (197). While using *communism* “to help us think a certain communing of incommensurable singularities,” Muñoz (2013b) explains that he also means “just plain communism” or “the communism of living with a sense of the commons, a living in common” that he draws on Jean-Luc Nancy to describe as “a being singular plural.” According to Muñoz, this is a notion of communism that Nancy suggests “does not belong solely to the political,” and which is “first and foremost about the precondition for emancipation,” which is to say “freedom from historical forces that dull or diminish our sense of the world” (112).

Like Arendt, Muñoz (2013b) recognises “the crisscrossing trajectories of singular being” that are “full of violent collision, especially when we think about the history of dispossessed people” (113). Like Lorde, he suggests that “a certain kind of freedom” might

be afforded by the “experience of being-common-in-difference” constituted by the “sharing of the unshareable” (112-114). As Muñoz’s oxymorons suggest, this is a necessarily incomplete, continual practice. It is one that others invested in such questions have understood to be facilitated by performance, as a means of ephemerally emancipating the senses from what Marx conceptualised as their reduction under Capitalism to a “sense of having”—or, Chambers-Letson (2018) adds, recalling the “black contemporaries” whom Marx in 1844 either “could not or would not imagine,” “*a sense of being had*” (27). As “performance reaches into a spectator through the senses,” Chambers-Letson argues, “it also produces sense in and for the community of spectators” and thus “may produce a collective consciousness, or common sense” (22).

Likewise, the party can “serve the will towards freedom” (xxii)—as “*something* to be collectively improvised” (25)—and “More Life” because (xxii), whereas “political parties” often “endure [...] through coercion, violence, and force” (xv), what Chambers-Letson calls “our communist party” is endlessly renewable (xxii). Kewpie’s account of parties blurs the lines between the party and the performance, ultimately incorporating both and complicating classist presumptions that one but not the other necessitates a paying audience. It instantiates dynamics of the performance culture discussed in chapter one, to which audience participation and interaction was intrinsic. In Kewpie’s usage too, the party may produce an entanglement, enabling a sharing of incommensurabilities through which new alliances might be forged that are antithetical to the divide-and-conquer tactics of apartheid, including the violent policing of so-called mixed and/or homosexual parties.

Indeed, it was through “performing” at the Ambassador Club and Mermaid Nightclub that Kewpie (1996) says she “became *known* [...] as Kewpie, Kewpie, all around District Six.” She and her gay friends “used to frequent there every weekends,” and she and Kay would “help out there you know in the kitchen or behind the counter.” Lewis expresses

his surprise at seeing such a “mixed” crowd in Kewpie’s photographs taken at the Ambassador (where she says there were “the straight people, ballroom dancers, jazz fanatics, there were so many of them around. And then most of all the District Six people. They accumulated around there lots”) and at finding out from Kewpie that it “wasn’t specifically a gay club.” Lewis seems to find it difficult to grasp that this was the case with the Mermaid, too, and when he asks her “what made [the Mermaid] a gay club,” Kewpie tells him that “it became a gay club with all these gays coming there as the Mermaid Nightclub. You know? Like, uh... I’ll put it down to calling us gays as mermaids, too. As women, as ladies. As *froumens*. And it- it- it- it was lovely. It was exciting.”

In fact, the Mermaid was a jazz club. As Kewpie (1996) says, “it was always just jazz, jazz there.” Likewise, although the Ambassador was initially a ballroom club, it holds an important place in the history of what would come to be marketed as Cape Jazz. Asked “what sort of music [...] people played,” Kewpie says “most of all, the jazz,” and gives the same answer when asked “what type of dance” she would perform at parties and on stage. Repeatedly, Kewpie (1996, 1998) states: “I used to love my jazz”; “as I said, I loved jazz”; “jazz as well, which I love.” It seems that the Mermaid, a jazz club, could have been “a gay club” in Kewpie’s estimation because this descriptor does not indicate that it was exclusively for gays so much as a place where they were able to participate in forms of collectivity and self-making since they could meet diverse people brought together, Kewpie repeatedly explains, by jazz. In her recollection, gays’ participation re-makes the Mermaid Nightclub itself, so that *mermaid* comes to retro-actively refer to these gays who had been drawn there by jazz. Likewise, asked “what sort of scene happened at the Ambassador Club *specifically for the gays*,” Kewpie (1996) explains, “well *for the gays* we had, uh... we had jazz scenes.”

Following Muñoz and Chambers-Letson, I maintain that what is potentially communist about parties in general is their capacity to accommodate a collective and

produce a common sense that can honour a multiplicity of experience. Having established that jazz is the aspect of parties most emphasised by Kewpie, the remainder of this chapter considers this capacity of the parties she recalls, as it relates to the Kewpie Collection, in terms of jazz. In the following section, jazz is discussed as a movement in which the girls' participation has tended to be obscured by historical records, of which jazz scenes were one articulation. Kewpie's account of this movement is joined with those given by two of its important figures, recognisable as such to different degrees: pianist and composer Abdullah Ibrahim and singer Sathima Bea Benjamin. Kewpie knew Ibrahim and Benjamin before they were married, prior to Ibrahim's achievement of global recognition that was notably accompanied by Benjamin's apparent disappearance from jazz.

Considering the entangled relations emerging from Kewpie's, Benjamin's, and Ibrahim's accounts, I follow uses of the notion of entanglement to "think through and *with* the difficulty of incommensurability," as Chambers-Letson (2018) puts it, "instead of trying to extinguish it" (185), on scales of the global (Glissant [1990] 2010), intra-national (e.g., Nuttall 2009), and live audience (e.g., Chambers-Letson 2018). While they both feature prominently in hers, Kewpie does not appear in accounts given by Ibrahim and Benjamin, although her own recollections allow us to feel her absence within them. Kewpie locates herself in the jazz movement, an enabling force who is herself enabled by the music. While her absence from other accounts demonstrates the limitations of what might be understood as communist about jazz scenes, the account Kewpie gives harnesses dynamics of audience participation intrinsic to a broader performance culture—in relation to which Benjamin's account helps us locate each performer—to contest the hierarchies producing this absence. In so doing, Kewpie offers glimpses of what the jazz world might have been had it not been curtailed. The discussion of mobility, parties, and jazz facilitated by the three accounts illuminates possibilities and limitations of the reorientations of time effected by jazz as a

musical form and a social practice, and by the photographs subsequently discussed. Through the accounts, I move towards understanding jazz scenes as constituted by and facilitating practices of temporal subversion that enabled new memories of embodiment and that are indexed by the Kewpie Photographic Collection which, like Kewpie's testimony discussed in the following section, enacts a restaging of the past from which future possibilities might unfold.

"And Most of All, the Jazz"

Mid-way through their interview, Kewpie (1996) casually mentions to Lewis that she and Ibrahim knew each other "very well." They "got- became friendly," she explains, since Ibrahim used to "frequent there at the Ambassadors": he would "be there" at the "jazz scenes" on "Sunday evenings," and when "he's not working then he's there every night, and always been around." Kewpie refers to Ibrahim as he was known before reverting to Islam in 1968 ("he was Dollar Brand then, he wasn't Moslem then") and conveys her personal approval of what was by the 1990s an internationally well-established reputation: "he was a good pianist, good jazz pianist. Very, very good." Kewpie was also "always friends," she says, with Benjamin, then (before reverting to Islam) known as "Beattie Benjamin [...] from the Bloemhof flats." Kewpie seems to be referring to the late 1950s to early 1960s period during which, according to Muller, Ibrahim and Benjamin performed at clubs including the Mermaid and the Ambassador, which they "ultimately created" as a "place [...] for jazz as a progressive musical form" (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 90). Muller quotes a May 1961 *Drum* reporter's description of the Ambassador: "Dark as it is the Dollar is gleaming tonight. This is the real stuff, the pulse beat of the jazz world in the Cape" (91-92).

Although such Sunday night jazz scenes starred jazz musicians only, Kewpie (1996)—who started out as a singer before she began dancing on stage—performed in

variety shows, including charity evenings, that sometimes took place at the Ambassador. Benjamin too remembers performing in such shows, and sometimes touring before legal restrictions rendered this impossible (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 64-76). Benjamin and Kewpie both recall that their participation in this performance culture initially required sneaking out of the family home (Kelley 2012, 126; Kewpie 1996), and that, through these performances, they emerged as participants in the jazz movement—Benjamin as a singer, Kewpie as a dancer, and both as organisers and audience members. Their accounts echo, approach, and tantalisingly overlap with each other. They even recall performing, as singers, under the same stage name. “I think for a while I was either Doris Day or Joni James,” Benjamin mentions, “before I went into jazz” (Muller [2004] 2008, 188). “I was called as Doris Day then, I could sing,” Kewpie (1996) tells Lewis, adding: “but I don’t want to impress anybody, but I had a good voice then.”¹⁰¹ Performing in the same bioscopes, nightclubs, and town halls, and drawing on the same inspirations, Kewpie and Benjamin each say they became known “all over” by word of mouth.

As seen in chapter one, Benjamin evocatively depicts these performances as collaborations by those on stage and in the audience, reminding us of the potential of performance for making community. Yet, there were overlapping but incommensurate limitations to the possibilities each young performer would be able to access via the stage. This is illustrated by print media coverage in which both performers are overtly sexualised, their artistry alluded to primarily insofar as it maps onto evidence of sexual appeal, with their audience each allegedly “shouting for more.” Yet, as seen in chapter two, reporters observe Kewpie’s audience with a fascination verging on disgust—whereas they count themselves among Benjamin’s. Muller quotes from 20 July 1958 and 29 January 1959

¹⁰¹ Although Kewpie (1996) mentions another local singer named “Doris Day,” this seems to be the same Doris Day who was later the subject of particularly unflattering media coverage, whom Kewpie remembers as “a tall, slender, lean person”; a “good singer, good actress.”

editions of the *Golden City Post*: “Benjamin had the boys swooning”; “What she did to the audience [...] was wow”; “I got it bad [...] Everybody else got it bad too” (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 85, 87).

These articles preceded Benjamin’s apparent decades-long disappearance from jazz. “The few critics who have paid attention [...] regard her as one of the great musical storytellers,” yet Benjamin is “rarely mentioned in the pantheon of South African artists”—even though she recorded in 1959 what would have been the first South African jazz LP had it been released and has since had “a half-century in the music business and praise from none other than Duke Ellington” (Kelley 2012, 121-122). In January 1962, a concert was held at the Ambassador to raise funds for two one-way tickets to Zurich, where Benjamin would arrange her and Ibrahim’s critical meeting with Ellington (149; Muller and Benjamin 2011, 129-140).¹⁰² In South Africa, having endured demeaning treatment and sexual harassment from men musicians on whom she found herself dependant for performance opportunities, musical accompaniment, transportation, and safety (86), Benjamin’s work in jazz increasingly took the form of supporting Ibrahim’s. “Whenever [Ibrahim’s first band, the Jazz Epistles] had work, [she] was with them” (Placksin 2000, 14)—though, as Robin D. G. Kelley (2012) notes, “not always on stage” (145). After having to leave the country, and eventually go into exile, she found herself repeatedly rendered illegible in “a genre too often construed as black, white, male, and essentially American”—deemed, as Kelley (2012) puts it, “not ‘African’ enough to be marketable, and too ‘African’ or exotic to be taken seriously as a great jazz vocalist” (122). Just a year after the two musicians’ marriage, Benjamin is referred to by Lewis Nkosi (1966) as the “awesomely cool singing wife” of “the celebrated pianist” (34).

¹⁰² Afropop Worldwide (2011) 2018 gives an account of the initial meeting that took place between Benjamin, Ibrahim, and Ellington, and the subsequent history of the recordings they made (40:00-50:00).

Considering the entangled relations emerging from Kewpie, Benjamin, and Ibrahim's recollections when read together, I share Muller's excitement about the "surprising number of cornered communities and secret histories" that she speculates might be revealed by a shift towards entanglement in jazz studies (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 52). Jazz encompasses practices of survival and creation that Paul Gilroy (1993) argues produce a transnational community or "counterculture of modernity" (221), but that are emergent and traceable in localised histories. Modern jazz was hailed as "a music of freedom," in Kelley's (2012) understanding, because it "potentially embodied an inherent critique of apartheid's racial illogic" (122, 120). Presumably, this relates to the way jazz facilitates mixing of genre, style, and influence, with its tangled global roots and routes. On the level of local claims and publics to which Gilroy (2019) elsewhere refers (385), the jazz movement in Cape Town produced entanglements on the scale of live audience. In relation to this, and to this chapter's initial claim that there is something salvageably communist about the parties the Nationalist government erroneously labelled as such, jazz pianist and District Sixer Vincent Kolbe offers a salient recollection: "The only previous mixing I was aware of was in the Communist party, but that was all [...] really quite elite. In fifties jazz culture it was a different kind of thing[.] Had it been left to itself, this jazz scene could have developed into something remarkable" (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 88).

The limits of such a project are evidenced by the inequality of the possibilities available to Kewpie, Benjamin, and Ibrahim. Commenting on Gilroy's (1993) "use of music to reframe black collectivity," Macharia (2019) reminds us that "cultural forms can travel and be remixed in ways that bodies cannot" (23). The accounts of these three participants in the jazz movement remind us that certain bodies are rendered less able to travel than others. Kewpie and Benjamin express the same desire: to have a place of belonging that enables movement beyond their locale. For Benjamin, jazz ultimately enables both, though her

aspirations to belonging and corporeal movement beyond the local were often frustrated (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 11-52; Placksin 2000, 17). Kewpie, who, reflecting on an earlier period, expresses her desire to travel and the frustration of this desire, captures a similar sense of jazz as a kind of movement that enabled movement, which I will discuss shortly—even if not the sort of corporeal movement beyond the local, of which Kewpie dreamed, that jazz musicianship ultimately enabled for Ibrahim. The jazz movement, in which Kewpie, Benjamin, and Ibrahim participated, undoubtedly reproduced hierarchies, exclusions, and other forms of violence.

The Kewpie Collection should be read as part of the history of jazz, and not just vice versa. The accounts of participants in the creation of jazz worlds such as Kewpie—participants who are rendered less able to travel, for instance—are crucial to understanding the violences the creation of these worlds reproduced. Further, the Kewpie Collection enriches our understanding of the possibilities for collectivity and self-actualisation that the jazz world sought to enable. Locating herself at the centre of a history from which she has been omitted, Kewpie offers an alternate staging of the past that contests the hierarchies and exclusions this history has re-enacted. Whereas Muller cites three separate accounts of Ibrahim's Sunday night performances at the Ambassador that say there was strictly no dancing allowed (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 91-93), Kewpie's recollection of dancing to Ibrahim's music captures a sense of jazz scenes as mutually constituted by both performer and audience. Kewpie thus folds Ibrahim, the notoriously idiosyncratic genius respected by "serious" jazz critics internationally, into the localised performance culture she and Benjamin sketch. "You could dance to his music," Kewpie (1996) says, "like having a blues or a good jazz dance, and... he was very, very... I'll put it down, he's a... a- he's a perfect jazz musician." For Kewpie, "a perfect jazz musician" is one who participates in the co-

creation of the kind of spaces she sought out, “wherever [she] could move around,” by enabling (her) movement.

Ibrahim himself is in agreement with Kewpie’s analysis. “The only criterion I have,” he explains, “is whether it moves you” (Jaggi 2001). Ibrahim speaks of “different keys” that “activate different [...] aspects of the body.” Naming the jazz sus chord (V7) “mother pregnant with the child,” he says that, no matter where he plays it, “it moves” (Austin 1987). In various discussions of jazz, Ibrahim mobilises affective and corporeal meanings of *movement* and plays with their unstable distinctions to approach a sense of what I have called movement-with. Illustrating how jazz scenes produced entanglements on the scale of live audience, he offers a basis for the discussion of timing in the remainder of this chapter. In a 1987 documentary film, the eponymous *Brother with Perfect Timing* offers a theory of what makes jazz musicians great. In District Sixer and jazz musician Basil Coetzee’s vignette of a morning in a township, as Ibrahim relates it, “the moment of perfect timing crystallises” amid all the “cats, dogs, chickens,” and children: one of two men walking past “just scoops the girl up” out of the way of an oncoming car, “puts her on the side,” and takes a drag of his joint. “These,” according to Ibrahim, are the “brothers [who] have perfect timing.”

In this formulation, timing is “arriving at the right point at the right time with the minimal amount of effort”; *perfect* timing is synchronicity between those who might appear to the outsider as strangers—but who are, in fact, members of a collective that is enabled by and enables movement-with (Austin 1987). (As with Johannesburg’s Sophiatown and New York’s Harlem, Ibrahim says, “there will be so many things going down” in District Six “that you cannot see as an outsider.”) Relaying the words of his musical collaborator B. Coetzee, Ibrahim offers a collaborative theory of jazz as a form of movement-with, or action-in-concert, that is both dependent on and constitutive of collectivity. Deeply embedded in notions of collaboration, this theory suggests what Nkosi (1966) insists: that

“movement, dance [...] is all important because it defines an area in which jazz shifts imperceptibly from the formalistic into the existential” (35). The theory functions as an allegory for the life sustaining capacity of forms of togetherness that are constituted by and enabling of movement-with: since one of the “brothers” moves the “girl” out of harm’s way, his movement that moves her also enables her continued movement through life.

Ibrahim articulates an understanding of jazz scenes as a form of action-in-concert that is life sustaining. The collective constituted by this movement-with has a “scene” that is impermanent, and contingent, but that can be endlessly rehearsed and reformulated. These jazz scenes produced entanglements through which solidarities and alliances might have been forged were they sustained beyond the ephemeral scene, bringing together all the “different people” who Kewpie (1996), Benjamin, and Ibrahim agree would “accumulate” and be “moved,” albeit with some disagreement as to whether this movement was affective, gestural, or both. This, Chambers-Letson (2018) notes, is the aim of the many political movements that use “the aesthetic and poetic” as means to imagine and enact “new forms of collective care” and of “living in and surviving the world” (184-185). Historically and transnationally, jazz has offered particularly effective means. As Gilroy (2019) suggests, its reputation as a “music of freedom,” or its role as what he might call a “sonic counterpoint” to freedom struggles (385), is undoubtedly to do with its distinct temporalities. These temporalities, which are alluded to by the theory of jazz Ibrahim presents, are elaborated in the following section.

Throughout this thesis, I argue that the worldmaking work of gays and girls produces imaginaries, discernible in the Kewpie Collection, that prefigure new, better futures. As with Kewpie’s practice of grief discussed in chapter three, the materials in which these imaginaries can be glimpsed can trouble the limitations on what is archivable “even in its relationship to the future”—a category determined by the structure of the archive (Derrida

1996, 17). Likewise, the photographs of parties I discuss later in the current chapter challenge certain expected dynamics of the archive through the temporalities they evoke. As noted, Kewpie (1996) emphasises that what was there “for the gays” at these parties was “jazz.” In the following section, I suggest that the pleasures jazz scenes held for gays, in particular, might have to do with the practices of temporal subversion these scenes involved, through which a new common sense could be forged. These practices are legible, I argue, in Kewpie’s photographs of parties, in which they produce not just a sense of belonging but of being long, conjuring futures that might unfold from present and past (im)possibilities. The jazz movement in late 1950s to early 1960s Cape Town has been discussed as subsisting in the form of recollections and, more prominently, recordings from the era, to which we might listen to discern something of the scenes of which they represent fragments. Seeking to further trouble the primacy of recordings in jazz history (Rasula 1995), I move towards reading Kewpie’s photographs as another sort of ephemera in which we might register jazz’s distinct temporalities as they were experienced locally. In the following section, I define the temporalities of jazz scenes themselves. For the remainder of the chapter, I describe practices of temporal subversion in terms of syncopation producing a sense of swing in jazz scenes, in the Kewpie Photographic Collection, and, finally, in the photographic collective as we are recruited to it.

Syncopation and Swing in Jazz Scenes

Broadly speaking, the sense of swing in jazz, which, according to one introductory text from the US, many consider to be “indescribable,” is “accomplished” by “performers” who “toy with a steady beat, sometimes rushing ahead and sometimes lagging behind” (Meeder 2010, 14). This is one reason why US writer Jed Rasula (1995) describes jazz as an “exploration of the plasticity of time” (146). British musician and scholar Mark Doffman (2018) nuances

this notion of time's plasticity on the level of performance, making a case for the equal importance for jazz musicians of playing with time and playing in time. Playing with time describes "the expressive, perhaps playful, shaping of rhythm that adds communicative value to a performance," as musicians "actively play with temporal difference and discrepancy" to "affect others and contribute to the temporal dialogue of the group." Playing in time, on the other hand, involves consistency "in relation to the preceding and subsequent phrases" and synchronicity "with other players on a particular shared beat" as well as "the stability of the tempo across the performance of the piece." Playing in time is "a vital component in contributing to a coherent group feel" (164). The aim is to have great time, and—as the theory of jazz relayed by Ibrahim suggests (Austin 1987)—great time can only be had collectively.

All styles of music require a balance of playing in and with time. This is partly why, as Gilroy (2019) puts it, music in general is "endowed with the power to arrest and attenuate time, to modify temporality," giving it the "capacity to conjure with the possibility of acting in concert" and "inducements to cultivating a radical, deeper variety of attentiveness," through which we might learn to become "more present to one another," as Gilroy compellingly urges (386). However, Doffman (2018) acknowledges that jazz is "different" in "the weight given" to the "balancing" of "intersubjective time feel and expression, and in the degree of reflexivity on the part of musicians about time and how it is shaped in performance" (164). The constitution of this intersubjectivity in the moment of performance means that Ralph Ellison's (1958) definition of "true jazz," as "an individual assertion within and against the group" (42-43), might be thought of in terms of the collective constituted by multiple musicians and audience. Hence the colloquial tendency of those who listen to jazz to focus less on playing in time and more on playing with time as it is captured by the motional concept, swing.

Swing encapsulates the way jazz is at its best motive, or “the idea that good time should inspire movement” that Ingrid Monson (1996) notes “remains fundamental” among jazz musicians (28), and to which Kewpie, Ibrahim, and Benjamin have each been shown to allude. The concept somewhat explains jazz’s particular success in what Gilroy (2019) calls “the role of music in making political movements move” (385). The success of Ibrahim’s music in this regard is by now partly attributable to his pioneering incorporation of localised and continental musical styles. Yet it was only in exile that Ibrahim earnestly developed the signature compositional style heard in the upbeat ghoema rhythm of Mannenburg, his hugely popular anti-apartheid anthem released in 1974.¹⁰³ Like their Johannesburg-based contemporaries, the Blue Notes, the Jazz Epistles were invested in progressive, experimental forms of jazz.

The Jazz Epistles’ only recording, made in 1960 during their stint at the Ambassador, offers a glimpse of the jazz scenes in which Kewpie locates herself, part of a “moment of musical connectivity locally” and “identification with African American jazz history internationally” (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 93). Like many, Muller suggests that “images” from “Hollywood,” including of “African American navigation of that world,” offered “stark relief” from an “increasingly repressive political environment” (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 63-64).¹⁰⁴ In chapter one, such imagery is understood in terms of local culture and creative labour as opposed to simplistic copying. In a similar vein, while the self-styled modern, beatnik musicians moved their audiences with an easy swing reminiscent of

¹⁰³ Named after the drum on which it is played by marching or dancing *klopse*, a ghoema (or goema) rhythm typically consists of three notes, with the second and third accented to produce syncopated pushes in the melody.

¹⁰⁴ While some describe improvising avant-garde jazz musicians in late 1950s Cape Town “striving to learn from American styles while searching for a local jazz sound” (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 55), others liken efforts to isolate American from African influences to attempts to “analyse cubistic or European expressionist techniques in the work of an African sculptor, when European cubism itself has been nourished by African forms” (Nkosi 1966, 36). Ellington himself apparently told Ibrahim: “you’re blessed because you come from the source” (Jaggi 2001). Emphasising the same, Ibrahim adds that “you could learn experiences of almost everything” within District Six as it “was such a rich, cosmopolitan melting pot” (Austin 1987).

Ellington, this motional quality, and the syncopation through which it was produced, was familiar to classified “Coloured” working and middle classes with whom ghoema rhythms and ballroom dancing were, respectively, popular. Kolbe describes older musicians from these communities teaching younger ones: “‘Timing! Timing!’ they’d say [...] There was this emphasis on rhythm and good timing—a good swing [...] It’s like a delayed movement. You don’t really put your foot down on the beat. Good ballroom dancers don’t and good jazz musicians don’t, you know” (Muller and Benjamin 2011, 62).

What Kolbe describes is syncopation: “the action of beginning a note on a normally unaccented part of the bar and sustaining it into the normally accented part” to “produce the effect of shifting back or anticipating the accent,” and “the shifting of accent so produced” (OED Online, s.v. “syncopation, *n.*,” June 2021). Common to the music Kewpie (1996) describes enjoying, “and most of all the jazz,” is this necessarily motional quality of “a good swing” enabled by and enabling of syncopation: the musicians play for the pleasure of the dancers, to enable the dancers to “put” their feet “down” in a way that means “good timing” can be corporeally felt, collectively, through a sustained “shifting of accent.” Gilroy (2019) alludes to pleasures that might be thus experienced: “In the evolving traditions of the Black Atlantic, the capacity to play with time was embraced as a grounding aesthetic practice along with an impulse to refine the tools that could accomplish time’s subordination and, in that overcoming, to begin to build a system in which pleasure might be derived from the artful command of time’s mutability” (387). Kevin Gaines (2007) points to the “multi-layered meaning” carried in Afro-diasporic jazz circles of the 1950s and 1960s by the concept of good time, reminiscent of the good timing that in Kolbe’s recollection is synonymous with good swing. According to Gaines, *good time* symbolised “black solidarity and freedom,” denoting a “pleasurably altered sense of time” that “combined a utopian antiracist potential with an affirmation of black cultural distinctiveness” crafted musically (207).

We might imagine what further pleasures good time or timing held for Kewpie and her gay friends participating in jazz scenes. The phrase “problem with time” (a problem with which Lewis charges Kewpie) is significant, I have noted, since Kewpie (1996) attests to the problem of being unable to comfortably assume existence in future time given the persistent curtailment of life. We might imagine what embodied experiences of playing in and with time meant to and enabled for those living in proximity to death and made to sense this closeness when “pushed around,” or repeatedly subjected to interpersonal forced movement that functioned as a reminder of the likely curtailment of their movement through time. Certain of the pleasures we might imagine are captured by the etymology of *syncopation* from the Latinised ancient Greek *sún* “with” and *kóptō* “strike/cut/shake.” As detailed above, this pre-emptive striking or cutting of time, which is one way of playing with time, is only possible when playing in time, or in synchrony—the etymology of which from the Latinised ancient Greek *sún* “with” and *khronos* “time” suggests being together in time, moving through time collectively, or sharing the same (experience of) time.

The swing that syncopation can produce in jazz is, I have noted, embodied and motional. Moreover, these qualities are retained when swing is produced by syncopation indexed by jazz recordings. Although a recording from a jazz scene could not reproduce the common sense that might have been forged at that scene, it would engender embodied experiences—a sense of swing, for instance—enabled by practices of playing in and with time that were facilitated by and constitutive of that scene. In the following section, I suggest that certain photographs of parties—parties at which Kewpie emphasises jazz’s primacy—likewise index syncopation and engender the sense of swing that it produces. Further, the temporalities evoked by these photographs mean that, like the jazz Kewpie so “loved” at the parties the photographs depict, engaging with the Kewpie Photographic Collection holds pleasures for those “cast out of straight time’s rhythm” who, as Muñoz (2009) notes,

“ma[k]e worlds in our temporal and spatial configurations” (182). Indexing syncopation and engendering a sense of swing, these photographs frustrate a reading of the Photographic Collection as visually indexical of a coherent, real past. Instead, they index worlds made in “temporal configurations” of those “cast out of straight time’s rhythm.” In doing so, I argue, these photographs elicit a mode of reading that conscripts us to this worldmaking project, recruiting us—as I put it in chapter five—to the photographic collective. The following section establishes how the photographs elicit this mode of reading. The senses of playing in and with time outlined above with reference to jazz scenes are engendered, I argue, through engagements with the Kewpie Photographic Collection. Theorising “sound as an inherently embodied process,” and following Gilroy, Tina Campt (2017) has elsewhere opened “radical interpretive possibilities” by listening to images, challenging “the equation of vision with knowledge by engaging photography through a sensory register that is critical to Black Atlantic cultural formations” (5-6). While recognising the importance of Campt’s project, I depart from it in that my primary concern is with rhythm. With an attunement to sonic and inherently motional qualities, I describe my experience of engaging with the 710 photographs during time, the quantity of which is structured by the nature of the “entanglement of building and documents” from which Mbembe (2002) suggests the “status and power of the archive derive” (19).

Syncopation and Swing in the Kewpie Photographic Collection

At GALA, the Kewpie Photographic Collection can be viewed from eight o’ clock in the morning until three o’ clock in the afternoon, depending on staff availability. The photographs can be rushed through in approximately two hours, at an average of ten seconds each. More than one day in the archive is required for fuller consideration: trying to identify unnamed people, locations, and those taken at similar times; inspecting visible scraps of

handwriting and holding photographs up to the light in search of inscriptions and faded ink stamps that someone has—maddeningly—covered with press-sticked and glued-down paper; peering beneath these white, cut-out squares for older pools of adhesive grease that might suggest display by Kewpie herself; noting each wrinkled corner and browned, peeling edge left by unknown fingers repeatedly reaching for favourites. It takes time, in clumsy white archive gloves, to remove and replace the slippery stacks of clear plastic held in four heavy cardboard boxes, carefully slipping faded photographs from sleeves in which they are sometimes haphazardly inserted by eager students on class trips, and to cross-reference the current list with that created by Reid in 1999 to guess in what sort of order Kewpie stored the photographs before they were catalogued and re-catalogued by the professionals.

There are rhythms to the experience of engaging with the Kewpie Photographic Collection, and these are partly guided by the ways it has been organised. Both processes of cataloguing have sought to determine continuity and coherency. Yet the photographs subvert their recuperation as family album, evoking messier and richer temporalities than this format allows.¹⁰⁵ Unlike the aspirational family album, in which the steady progress of its regular rhythm is driven forward by the achievement of certain expected beats, there is a sense of swing engendered through engagement with the Kewpie Photographic Collection, in which “weak” beats are emphasised and complex, non-linear temporalities evoked by unpredictable sequences of solo improvisation and group formation. This is illustrated by two categories of photographs taken at parties.

The first involves the signification in contiguity of multiple historical times. This is a defining quality of jazz and one sense in which Rasula (1995) describes jazz as an

¹⁰⁵ Evidencing the correct achievement of markers of straight time—first day at school, riding a bicycle—but appearing out of context, certain photographs evoke and fragment the linear temporality of the suggested family album in which they could appear. One such photograph, described “Hazel getting married in Windhoek,” represents this most important marker of straight time only through a passionate kiss that obscures Hazel and her unnamed new husband, the composition balanced to suggest that the central focus of the occasion is a crystal wine glass, or perhaps the bottle of sparkling wine behind it (AM2886/166.1).

exploration of time's plasticity (146). In the Kewpie Photographic Collection, this signification conveys a sense of extending—specifically, swinging—through historical time that counteracts inability to assume future existence. This relates to what Freeman (2007) argues “queer belonging” names: “the longing to *be*, and be *connected*,” but also “be long[,] endur[ing] in corporeal form over time, beyond procreation.” The desire is to be connected with others, now, but also with “the dead or those not born yet”; to be “bigger not only spatially” but “temporally”; to “impossibly extend our individual existence,” to “preserve relationships that will invariably end,” to “have something queer exceed its own time” (299).

Although Freeman (2007) points out that “queer belongings,” as well as “mainstream families[,] come into being through visual technologies,” I am concerned with another genre of “self-elaboration through publicity” that conveys a sense of being long (307). Alongside photographs of a youthful and visibly aging Kewpie, a more immediately striking effect of temporal extension is created by the many photographs depicting Kewpie at fancy-dress parties: as a “Spanish dancer” (fig. 6.6); as a flapper (fig. 6.7); at an “Op Art” party (fig. 6.8); as “Marie Antoinette” (fig. 6.9). Kewpie (1998) names the Marie Antoinette outfit her favourite, to a presumably surprised Gevisser who has asked what she would typically wear to a party. Photographs of this occasion are among the most widely circulated. They are available via the Digital Transgender Archive website and adorn promotional material for the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition and exhibition catalogue.

These photographs produce a sense of swing by playing with our perception of Kewpie's relation to historical time, resignifying what has come and thus what might yet be. The etymology of *belong* discussed by Freeman (2007), from the Old English *gelang* meaning “alongside of” or “at hand” (298), might remind us that a sense of being long is in



Figure 6.6



Figure 6.7



Figure 6.8



Figure 6.9

this instance rendered accessible to us by the photographic collective, and suggest the potential of this sensed belonging to open to additional forms including “kinship as a technique of renewal” (298). Signifying survival across historical time, these photographs conjure a world in which gays get to grow up able to comfortably assume their continued existence, and to be loved, celebrated, and desired. They swing us back to reconfigured pasts

that propel us towards this anticipated reality. They offer glimpses of futures that may have seemed inevitable when bodies moved, together, to the same live music.

Obviously anachronistic, these photographs formulate realities that subvert the authority of historical time, conjuring futures that might unfold from present and past (im)possibilities. They enact the sort of “queer restaging of the past” that Muñoz, drawing on Halberstam (2005, 4-7), argues “helps us imagine new temporalities that interrupt straight time” (Muñoz 2009, 171), and hand down “possibilities for queer embodiment” to those of us for whom Freeman (2007) suggests “historical disjunction itself may serve as an opening into a differential future” (309).¹⁰⁶ They represent one form of what Omese’eke Natasha Tinsley (2018) calls the “disjunctive and syncopated sounds of black world making” (2), produced in the Collection.

Whereas these fancy-dress photographs tend to be widely circulated, there are others taken at parties which also represent these sounds but are lost in the Photographic Collection’s continued digital circulation because they fit less easily within the visual logics through which it has been granted the status of archive. At GALA, the most widely reproduced photographs, including the photograph shown in figure 6.9, appear in the first boxed stack. The two most widely reproduced, taken by Movie Snaps and discussed in chapter one, appear in the first sleeve (figs. 1.1 and 1.2). An array of photographs that appear later in the Collection, and not at all in the film or exhibitions, have been left out of the process of digitisation that most have undergone. I am interested in a subset of these: photographs that resist being read as visual depictions of the past. Some would have not fallen into this category when first created, but have since been obscured by water damage, for example. Others have belonged to this category since their creation: these photographs

¹⁰⁶ While discussing a film co-directed and co-written by Kewpie’s interviewer and archivist Lewis, coincidentally, Schoonover and Galt (2016) detail the potential of anachronism, when used as “a tactic” in cinema, “to destabilise the heterocentric domination over time telling and history making” (262).

resist being read as visual depictions of the past because they are underexposed, overexposed, or multiply exposed. It does not seem coincidental that almost all “improperly” exposed photographs were taken at parties. They index, in a manner distinct from fancy-dress photographs discussed above, practices of temporal subversion defining the musical form, jazz, in which Kewpie locates these parties’ appeal—practices I have discussed in terms of syncopation.

Encountering each “improperly” developed photograph is enjoyable partly because of the physical response they generate. Like the portion of the 1996 audio recordings that is largely inaudible, these photographs elicit a more focused, attuned, even straining attention, which they also somewhat frustrate. Further, they offer a way into imagining Kewpie beyond her visual depiction, via her decision to keep these photographs—to have them developed, even, given the expense (O’Connell 2014, 593). There is something compelling about Kewpie’s choices that have attached value to objects that should not be valuable according to the criteria of the archive and the genres of photography in terms of which the Collection is typically understood at present. It is pleasing to know that these differently legible photographs must be preserved and cared for by archivists, as the other photographs are, as they were by Kewpie herself.

As well as metaphorically emphasising the weak beat through a revaluation of the devalued, there is a sense in which these photographs visually enact syncopation as a form of cutting (across) time by frustrating a reading of the Photographic Collection as a series of frozen moments in time. They reveal that any appearance of “totality and continuity” is an “illusion,” created by the “montage of fragments” of which Mbembe (2002) reminds us archives are composed (21). This is another reason why encountering each of these photographs is pleasurable: playing in and with time, they evoke temporalities that counter or resist the expected dynamics of the physical archive and temporalities partly enforced by

the family album, a role into which other photographs have been conscripted. These photographs do not, as Susan Sontag ([1977] 2008) says photographs do, “give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal” (9). Because they do not “seem[...] to evoke the past,” they do not “actually exorcis[e] it” as Bourdieu ([1965] 1990), writing about the family album, argues photography does by “recalling” the past in a manner that means “all the unique experiences that give the individual memory the particularity of a secret are banished from it” (31). They thus disrupt what Pierre Nora (1989) describes as modern societies’ replacement of organic memory with archival memory (13), which both Nora and Derrida show us works against remembering.

Pointing to how “the archontic principle of the archive is also a principle of consignation,” Derrida (1996) draws on Freud’s theorisation of the death drive to describe the (“anarchontic”) “instinct of destruction” within consignation and thus the archive (3, 10). Although this means that “the archive always works, and *a priori*, against itself” (12), it also ensures the future of the archive since a hypothetical true, perfect archive, which would allow total forgetting, is impossible. Archiving for rather than “against memory” (Derrida 2002, 54), and undermining “the monument of the document” as a way of “producing forgetting” (68), the “improperly” developed items in the Kewpie Photographic Collection frustrate aspirations towards complete archival memory and thus complete forgetting, by incorporating dissonance, erasure, fragmentation.

As established, Kewpie’s collection of photographs was acquired by GALA at a historical juncture marked by a proliferation of historiographical and archival practices following a mass destruction of documentation. These efforts aspire towards a completion of the archive, a filling in of prior gaps, and arguably towards a form of eventual forgetting via the archive as a complete remembrance rather than forms of forgetting previously enforced through apartheid-era archival destruction. The photographs in question maintain

gaps within this attempt to fill in gaps, thus working against a post-1994 nationalist memorial culture that has itself worked to erase complex modes of grief such as those embedded within the recordings of interviews with Kewpie. Playing in and with time, these photographs approximate experiences of existing out of time in various senses. They offer glimmers of something resembling contemporary forms of embodied memories and desires that exceed state-sanctioned archival and commemorative practices.

Both discussed categories of photographs taken at parties subvert the authority of historical time. Like Kewpie's account of her centrality to jazz scenes, they enact a "queer restaging of the past" (Muñoz 2009, 171), which reminds us of the unreliability of histories accepted as fact. While reading Kewpie's account of her participation in jazz scenes with Benjamin's and Ibrahim's and considering the emergent entangled relations, I participated in this "queer restaging of the past"—and my participation suggests one way that worldmaking strategies engage those who engage with them. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, Hartman's (2019) and Nyong'o's (2018) extended modelling suggests a conception of critical fabulation as a practice of reading with the strategies of minoritarian subjects as they are available to us. By subverting the authority of historicity, the photographs discussed here likewise elicit a mode of reading with the subversion they enact. Refusing any illusory sense of closure, these photographs recruit those who engage with them to the project of narrative formulation that "mimes," following Hartman (2008), "the figurative dimensions of history" (11).

Recruiting us to the photographic collective, these photographs do the work of worldmaking by inviting us to mingle the impossible, improbable, possible, and probable, and, following Nyong'o's (2018) formulation of impossibility (6), tether together worlds that might and might not have been. Ultimately, such reformulations can enable futures that do not logically unfold from histories that leave us disappointed. The following section

enacts the mode of reading I suggest the photographs elicit, elaborating on how they engender “new memories of embodiment: forms that encourage pleasure and power” (Gqola 2017, 10-11). Recalling pleasures that might have been afforded capturing the image, anticipating the resultant photograph, and engaging with it after its creation, these photographs swing us back in another sense, to imagined scenes of their creation and the many undepicted scenes in which what they depict was rehearsed and made possible.

Syncopation and Swing in the Photographic Collective

Attending historically themed parties, Kewpie (1996) describes having to be really “of that era.” She recalls how, dressed as Marie Antoinette, she travelled to the Ambassador Club in a horse-drawn carriage with her friend Sowda (“Sowdie”) who was “also” dressed as “one of the Victorian girls” (fig. 6.10). Escorted by two “traffic cop[s]” through the “royal fanfare” of District Six’s crowd-lined streets, Kewpie (1996, 1998) claims a position symbolic of ignorant disdain for the poor, however inaccurate Marie Antoinette’s posthumous reputation might be. She also invokes revolutionary symbolism. Embodying



Figure 6.10

the last queen of France before the French Revolution, Kewpie visually articulates the logic that ruling classes are ultimately at the disposal of the oppressed—albeit an anachronistic category of the oppressed. She embodies a sense of excess while disregarding the excessive authority of the history in which she intervenes. In doing so, she refuses the dichotomies this history enforces and the relations it entrenches.

The area through which Kewpie and Sowdie progress in a horse-drawn carriage was named the Sixth Municipal District of Cape Town in 1867, seventy-four years after the execution by guillotine of the historical figure as whom Kewpie is dressed. Marie Antoinette was daughter to the emperor and empress of Austria; during her lifetime, the founding residents of District Six's parents and grandparents were enslaved at the Cape by European communities including those from the Kingdom of France, of which Marie Antoinette was monarch from the age of eighteen. In 1970, three years after Kewpie proceeded through its streets dressed as Marie Antoinette, District Six would be officially renamed Zonnebloem, after the farm where some of the first residents of the area that would come to be known as Kanaladorp, then District Six, had been enslaved. This historical farm should not be confused with the working farm near Paarl renamed Zonnebloem in 1856.

The enslaved labourers at both farms were forced to grow grapes, a non-indigenous crop that the coloniser van Riebeeck first had planted after docking at the Cape in 1652. At the older farm, situated near to the port and partially in what would become District Six, grapes were initially grown alongside other fruit and vegetables intended to ward off scurvy among sailors embarking on long trips. The more recently named Zonnebloem was founded forty years after van Riebeeck's arrival, as one of the Cape wine farms for which he had lobbied to ensure slave labour could form the "backbone": the cost-saving reason wine farms could be established as a staple of the Cape economy under both Dutch and British rule. The same farms have been able to continue to fulfil this role for the vastly unequal Western Cape

economy and play a fundamental part in the South African tourist industry because “the economic interests of the former slave owning class continue[...] to be served by unequal labour relations” (North 2017).¹⁰⁷ The owners of these farms notably include descendants of the French Huguenots who arrived at the Cape in 1688 after Protestantism was banned in France by Louis XIV, grandfather to Marie Antoinette’s husband Louis XVI. Resettled by the Dutch in Franschhoek, the Huguenots colonised land from which indigenous Khoisan peoples lived. Many from the indigenous population were eventually forced to labour on this colonised land. Their descendants are among the workers wine farm owners continue to exploit today.

This brief summary reminds us that the hierarchies of colonial modernity into which we are conscripted are partly established through literal trajectories, as Glissant ([1990] 2010) addresses. Travelling through “royal fanfare” in a horse-drawn carriage, however, we might imagine Kewpie experiencing a different web of relations, which she partly crafts through what Nyong’o (2018) describes as the ““anarrange[ment] of] the developmental and linear timeline of history” (26). The “traffic cops” Kewpie mentions were not part of the bloated and brutal South African Police force made increasingly omnipotent by the NP since their 1948 election to government, the paramilitary nature of which can be traced back to the Dutch Watch formed at the Cape in 1655. Nonetheless, they represent the NP’s “supplement[ation]” of this “formal police manpower” to “embed[...] police activity in a dense informal and quasi-informal social network” (Frankel 1980, 483). In Kewpie’s recollection, however, they are cast in supporting roles, enabling her movement through and adoration by the crowds. Perhaps, when formulating this route to a party, Kewpie pursued a sense of possibility she had felt in entanglements produced on the scale of the party when,

¹⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch (2011) offers comprehensive evidence of multiple human rights violations, obstruction of unionisation and extremely precarious living conditions experienced by wine farmworkers, who are among the lowest paid in South Africa.

dancing as a collective to jazz, another sort of existence felt not only possible but inevitable since it would seem to logically unfold from newly experienced present relations and an emergent common sense. We might then read the temporalities these photographs suggest in relation to Kewpie's participation in parties such as jazz scenes in which time's plasticity was explored.

As suggested, these collective explorations of time's plasticity may have held particular pleasures for those who experienced their lives as under threat of curtailment, as Kewpie suggests was the case for herself and her gay friends. We might imagine that jazz scenes afforded a sense of belonging, or togetherness and care, as well as a sense of being long in time and space via the evocation and blending of various histories and the signification of the glamorous global and geographically distant. For the self-described bioscope fanatic, attending fancy dress parties and "be[ing] really of that era" perhaps reproduced in a differently embodied format the historical immersion that cinema makes possible. Yet, given the discriminatory rationale of historicity, Kewpie "be[ing] really of that era" necessitates a form of what Muñoz (1999) terms disidentification, to the extent that the referent of *that era* is destabilised. While Kewpie names as her own source of sartorial inspiration a mid to late-eighteenth century monarch, her description of Sowda "also dressed as one of the Victorian girls" places them both in the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century. Meanwhile, the *Post* (1967) describes Kewpie (named only as "Cappucine") "arriv[ing] in a horse-drawn carriage dressed as Marie Antoinette" to "a recent seventeenth-century ball at the Ambassador Nightclub." This is one of the *Post* articles that refers to the girls in explicitly politicised language, mentioning the "wide comment" Kewpie's spectacular arrival drew "from election opposition parties." Kewpie's strategy of tactical misrecognition produces, in retellings of the event, what Nyong'o (2018) calls a "fictional archive" or "counterarchive of possibilities for dance history" (36), or, in this case, for

history. We might imagine Kewpie (1996) and her friends laughing and nodding in approval as she, “queen mother to all the gays,” transformed herself into a different queen, one more easily recognisable and celebrated as such within the public sphere, before stepping out of the Queens Hotel and into her appropriately regal vehicle.

The possibilities being reimagined in this instance can be said relate to dance history, too. Kewpie as Marie Antoinette echoes photographs of local ballroom dancing, and the UCT Ballet School Kewpie attended as a teenager. Considered alongside those from a performance of *Swan Lake* held in the UCT School of Dance Archive, we might register in these photographs a reimagination or disobedient re-inhabitation of past experiences that contests the assignment of certain modes of attire and embodiment on the basis of sex assigned at birth. In a Rosebank studio, “two ladies on right in white costumes” appear to have their faces framed by white feathers laid flat against their hair as they stretch against the barre (“*Swan Lake*” 1956). The performance for which they are rehearsing took place at the City Hall in Darling Street in 1956—likely the same year Kewpie was invited to travel “overseas” by then Principal Dulcie Howes and prevented from doing so by her father. During interviews, Kewpie does not mention performing on stage with the other dancers. In any case, it seems safe to presume that she would have worn costumes and performed roles assigned male. Kewpie’s (1996) own adored ballet costumes, for which she shed tears as they were “cut [...] to smithereens” by her father, likely did not include delicate white princess dresses such as those worn by the two rehearsing ballerinas.

We might imagine Kewpie (1998), whose recollection of “seeing femininity [and] beautiful things around” herself might be heard in an aspirational sense, watching these dancers in rehearsals or on stage. Perhaps she herself imagined slipping into her own soft white dress and feeling the bodice tighten against her ribs or lifting tulle from the ground and smoothing satin pleats as she waved to adoring crowds. The horse and carriage into

which Kewpie stepped the following decade may have been dreamed up as she exited the Swan Lake performance and walked home along Darling Street, past the spot where she would be captured by the Movie Snaps photographers, on which the “royal fanfare” would part as she and Sowdie were escorted to the Ambassador. Perhaps Kewpie remembered the feathers in the UCT ballerinas’ golden hair as she tucked one into her own while getting ready to go out that evening in 1967, or on the night of the “roaring twenties party” (fig. 6.7). Perhaps Kewpie remembered one of the Spanish dancing demonstrations or recitals seen in the UCT School of Dance Archive as she envisioned her own Spanish dancer outfit (fig. 6.6). Perhaps she recalled the ballerinas pirouetting on the stage as she glided across the floor of the Ambassador and curtsied (fig. 6.11).

While drawing connections to a wider performance culture, I have suggested that we understand Kewpie’s photographs of parties as part of the contemporary jazz movement. They represent a similar project, each collectively drawing together and re-signifying histories and memories to inscribe what is local with possibilities of a reimagined global and historical. Ibrahim’s Cape Town work, to which Kewpie remembers dancing, was formative, his “early style characteristically experiment[ing] with harmonic and rhythmic dissonance, unpredictable phrasing, piano colour and contrasting register” (Lucia 2002, 126), to link “the world of Duke Ellington, Thelonius Monk and Charlie Parker to the urban soundscapes of Cape Town and



Figure 6.11

Johannesburg” (125). The photographs I have discussed were mostly taken in the very nightclub in which so many jazz scenes took place, and of course they depict known jazz scene participants, including Kewpie.

These jazz scenes involved practising the “collective temporal distortion” in which Muñoz (2009) says “we need to engage” (185). Not only were distinct musical forms blended and reworked, embodied experiences of syncopation and swing were produced and shared. Shifting the accented part of the expected beat, collectively and repeatedly, bodies would have moved together in the subverted temporality that is syncopated time. Collectively cutting across time, participants in jazz scenes might have glimpsed possibilities beyond the limitations of a present they may well have felt as a suspended sentence. Aside from the photographs of fancy-dress parties so far discussed, there are traces of this practice of temporal subversion in certain of those photographs that resist being read as frozen moments in time: the second category of photograph discussed in the current section.

The two photographs displayed in figure 6.12 show only partly exposed frames, the bright white portion sectioned off by a vivid yellow-orange line. They are from a series of photographs taken at a party held in a private residence, presumably not by Billy Biggs nor any press photographer. At the time these photographs were taken—prior to the integration of motor drives into amateur-grade cameras, beginning in the 1980s, when film advancement was always performed manually—this sort of partial image typically resulted from film being advanced either too far or not far enough. However, the size and style of these and other photographs from the series suggests that, like the few “amateur” negatives archived with the Collection, they were taken on an Instamatic camera, so named for its original film advance mechanism. Although not, as the name might suggest, automatic, the mechanism introduced in 1963 by Kodak’s first Instamatic camera was more user-friendly

than that of any previous models. It was facilitated by 126-film, which featured only one perforation per frame, and by an internal sensing pin that would fall into place once the film was manually advanced to the next frame using a lever (in the case of early Instamatic models). At this point, the film advance mechanism would be locked until an image was captured, meaning it should have been impossible for frames to overlap. Indeed, there are no other photographs from this party (nor any other photographs in the Collection) showing frame overlap, which might indicate a problem with the camera mechanism itself.

As when shooting on any photographic film, however, it was possible to capture more frames than the 126-film roll allowed for by exposing the film before advancing it to the first perforation and/or after advancing it past the final perforation. The two images in question depict the same party, and the placement of the blank portion of each—one to the left, one to the right—suggests they were captured at the beginning and end of the roll where the emulsion begins and ends, indicated by the yellow bleed mid-frame. In this case, when taking these images, the sprocket wheel or sensing pin would not have lined up with any perforation in the film nor its paper backing; the photographer would not have seen the corresponding frame number through the window in the back of the camera, nor would they have felt or heard the advance mechanism click into place. As well as offering a visual



Figure 6.12

representation of cutting across, then, these photographs suggest memories of syncopated bodily movement.

These photographs are products of the collaborative gesture of subjects and photographer, including the pressure applied by the photographer's finger before or after the anticipated click of the advance mechanism. They depict a practice of playing with time or refusing the assigned "speed" of the camera, which is enabled by playing in time or the necessary corporeal synchronicity of the photographic collective, and which produces an effect of syncopation (or cutting across time) that is in this case visual. This is a practice of contesting limitations technologically imposed, of pushing (one's finger down) at the limits of the film roll to capture an image that cuts across the film emulsion. It is a practice of preemptively cutting across time, ahead of imposed restrictions, to demarcate a space of possibility and to perform multiplicity beyond present constraints. These are fugitive images, captured at the margins. They are suggestive of how syncopation can enact collective refusal of the state of being subject to the relentless rhythms of straight time, and instead open a space of possibility within single moments.

As well as recalling the embodied practice and pleasure of capturing more images than a film roll allowed, photographs such as these disrupt photography's claim to realism. Perhaps this is precisely why Kewpie decided to have them printed and to keep them, since this claim works to reinforce the oppressive association of visuality with truth that Kewpie's testimony troubles, as seen in chapter two. By disrupting common-sense reifications of what is real, these photographs do not only recall but anticipate pleasurable memories of embodiment. In other words, "improperly exposed" photographs can facilitate perceptions that were not visually accessible in the moment the image was captured, but which may have been enabled by the temporal subversions effected by jazz. This is demonstrated by figure 6.13.



Figure 6.13

In the centre of the photograph, Carmen smiles. Someone stands close, hand on hip, obscured by a bright white patch emanating from the top left corner to the middle of the frame: “fogging,” caused by a light leak. The film has been multiply exposed, meaning highlights are washed out and details from one image appear in the shadows of another. Against a dark doorway, a hand, cigarette between two fingers, is thrown into relief, along with a flounce of gingham, perhaps the hem of a skirt, and a smaller, beckoning hand. Perpendicular to one extended arm is another, ending in a hand in which it looks like a glass might be propped. Above Carmen, edges of a white feather emerge from the “fog,” resembling those tucked into Kewpie’s hair and clutched in her hand the night she dressed as Marie Antoinette.

Objects’ dimensions and placement, and the amalgamation of shape and texture, suggest uncertain and fantastic relations. A brandy or wine bottle hovers mid-air, an apparition apparently unseen by Carmen, who stands against a tall, large-bricked wall in

Rutger Street. From an adjusted perspective, Carmen is nestled in the crook of an arm, supported by another. Though disembodied, these arms' placement suggests pleasurable forms of embodiment. They might belong to the same person, or two people standing face to face, gesticulating as they converse over music or dance. Perhaps one arm belongs to Kewpie, who has by now torn off her Marie Antoinette gloves while having her cigarette lit. Perhaps these gloves were admired by a friend into whose delightedly protesting hands Kewpie proceeded to insistently place them. Or perhaps neither of these extended arms belong to Kewpie, whose presence is only implied by the edges of a ghostly feather.

Figure 6.13 represents forms of multiplicity that were, perhaps, made to feel possible by jazz's driving rhythms and dissonances; by the establishment of regular time through its subverting anticipation and the movement of bodies in expectation and resistance. The practice of drawing together precedents evoking distinct histories that is a hallmark of improvisation within and against constraints, itself a defining element of jazz, is here visually articulated. The photograph brings into visibility an improvisatory tradition that attempts to forge new ways of playing together in and with time, and thus anticipates forms of collective existence that are presently impossible. It suggests the prospect of representation without exposure. It evokes forms of care and togetherness that cannot come into visibility within present terms, and the freedom to be embodied in ways that are variously visible and opaque, unbound and held, changeable and insistently fixed.

Conclusion

Arguing for the political importance of parties of the ostensibly non-political variety, I have suggested that what was potentially communist about the parties that, from the early 1960s, were erroneously legally labelled as such was their capacity to produce a new common sense. Moving collectively to the same music, another existence and a new set of relations

might have felt not only possible but inevitable since they would have seemed to logically unfold from a newly experienced present. In Kewpie's testimony, jazz appears as a musical form, popular at parties, holding particular pleasures "for the gays"; a movement in which gays' participation has tended to be obscured by historical records; and a world this movement sought to create that was curtailed by apartheid policy. I have conceptualised the jazz scenes Kewpie recalls as sites at which this jazz movement was articulated, in which the world to which it aspired may have been glimpsed, since these scenes were constituted by and facilitated practices of temporal subversion that enabled new experiences of embodiment. Troubling the primacy of recordings in jazz history, I have argued that jazz's distinct temporalities, produced and experienced locally, can be registered in the Kewpie Photographic Collection, in which they produce multiple senses of belonging. Photographs taken at parties at which new forms of actualisation were rehearsed anticipate forms of embodiment and togetherness yet to come, swinging us back to imagined pasts that propel us to futures in which currently devalued forms of life are more tenable: futures in which survival is more possible.

This chapter's elaboration on what "the effect or influence" of these materials might be suggests another "improper manner" in which "night life" might be dealt with by "object[s]" such as "photograph[s]" banned under the Publications and Entertainments Act 26 of 1963 (s. 6 [1] [*a-e*]). Derrida (1996) underscores the ability of archives to affect those engaging with them—to induce what he terms a fever—while Foucault ([1994] 2001) describes unexpected "fragments" leaving "one of these impressions that are called 'physical,' as if there could be any other kind," having "stirred more fibres within [him] than what is ordinarily called 'literature'" (158). Because it indexes "worlds [made] in our temporal and spatial configurations," the Kewpie Photographic Collection evokes embodied sensations that are vital for those "cast out of straight time's rhythm" (Muñoz 2009, 182),

enabling us “to begin to make new memories of embodiment: forms that encourage pleasure and power” (Gqola 2017, 10-11). Ultimately, the photographs discussed elicit a mode of engagement that differently actualises possibilities, including temporal subversions, that were pursued by those participating in the creation of the jazz world I have described, including those who sought out the parties—the forms of nightlife—at which Kewpie (1996) emphasises that what was there “for the gays” was “jazz.”

Kewpie foregrounds jazz, offering an appealing point of reference for the Kewpie Collection. Customary understandings of jazz as a musical genre offer a ready-made analytical framework representative of more than a century’s purposeful efforts to centre labour, training, creative exploration, and risk. This helps us understand the Photographic Collection’s mixing of formal genres and apparently frozen moments of wild abandon, for example, in terms of artistry and improvisation as a skilled practice, as opposed to amateurism. Simultaneously, histories of jazz musicianship demand that we trouble distinctions between the artist, on the one hand, and, on the other, the amateur originally named as such for the love of their pursuit. Further, reading the Kewpie Collection as part of a history of jazz is suggestive of “entanglements of world-wide relation” through which we might follow the radical politics offered by Glissant ([1990] 2010), with the aim of honouring a multiplicity of experience and “protect[ing] the Diverse” (31, 62). Such entanglements supplement Kewpie’s current recuperation as queer icon with an increasingly transnational reach, discussed in the conclusion to this thesis.

Conclusion: A Queen Mother

The Afterlives and Times of Kewpie of District Six

Jack Lewis's 2000 documentary film featuring Kewpie and her photographs, *A Normal Daughter: The Life and Times of Kewpie of District Six*, was the first cultural text to prominently feature gays in the District. As established in the introduction to this thesis, its narrative remains authoritative. District Six is presented in the film as a place in which gay life was allowed to flourish by an existing configuration of social relations. Invoked here, the film's title is reworked to encapsulate arguments this thesis instead makes.

As self-declared "queen mother to all the gays," Kewpie (1996) participates, I have argued, in the worldmaking work of gays and girls. Ultimately, by contesting dominant common senses and the temporal logics they impose, this collaborative work reimagines conditions of precarity and makes diverse forms of existence more possible. Moreover, this worldmaking continues to unfold as materials constituting the Collection are circulated and engaged with. In this reformulation, Kewpie is of District Six in the sense that, as a producer rather than beneficiary of what have come to be understood as the District's defining qualities, she is a participant in its creation—whether or not the version of District Six created maps onto the lived realities of a historical, geographic area.

This concluding chapter summarises the theory-practice of worldmaking elaborated across preceding chapters and addresses its resonances and continuing outcomes. As materials constituting the Collection are engaged with, what I have called the Kewpie Archive expands and takes shape. It is a "living archive," comprising a configuration of physical and virtual materials including circulations and readings of materials in the Collection, which "embed" these materials "in a network of associative meanings and interpretations" (Hall 2001, 91). In what follows, I characterise the Kewpie Archive as

moving, in the sense that the work of worldmaking discernible in the Collection continues to unfold, and as precarious, meaning the ways this work unfolds are diverse and diffuse, powerful and vulnerable.

Worldmaking in the Kewpie Collection: A Moving Archive

A Normal Daughter's title is lifted from Kewpie's description of responding to her father's rejection "with a wink of an eye." "He always wanted me to be his genuine, normal son," she tells Lewis (2000), "whereas now I am his normal daughter." This moment in Kewpie's testimony is indicative of the collective project of imagining and living beyond the constraints of the present that this thesis discerns in the Kewpie Collection and elaborates as a theory-practice of worldmaking. First, it demonstrates the playful mode of refusal and transformation (the "wink of an eye") that Kewpie typically engages, using testimony as well as photography to reimagine conditions of precarity and contest constraints on liveability. Second, it signals that such strategies involve crafting from resources available within the compromised present that Kewpie rejects, here positioning herself as a daughter to signify she is not a son although she elsewhere declines both labels.

Referencing her strategy of recollection as she engages it and emphasising the fantastic capacity of performance to facilitate new common senses, Kewpie specifies what I have suggested should be considered alongside other theories of worldmaking. Via Nelson Goodman's (1978) formulation of worldmaking (1-23), Muñoz's (1999) theory of disidentification likewise describes a practice of "composition and decomposition" (196).¹⁰⁸ As with Kewpie's fantastic performances of celebrity, this can look like "a remaking and

¹⁰⁸ Since Muñoz's (1999) description of disidentification draws and builds on political strategies of Black feminists and feminists of colour (21-25), related lineages can be traced in more recent conversations. Noting the "porous [...] boundaries" between "practice and the imagination" in relation to Black feminist epistemological strategies, for instance, Gqola recalls being "provoked and transformed," when "watching people who behaved badly and finding [her]self being drawn to [those] people" and when "reading" a novel and "learning things" she was not "supposed to be learning from [the] novel" being read (Khan 2018, 113).

rewriting of a dominant script” (23). The version of worldmaking detailed in this thesis shares Muñoz’s investment in the ability of performances—“both theatrical and everyday rituals,” as he puts it, although Kewpie troubles these distinctions—to establish “oppositional ideologies” that “disavow[...] that which majoritarian culture has decreed as the ‘real’” and “function as critiques of oppressive regimes of ‘truth’ that subjugate minoritarian people.” Reshaping “reality” as they “deconstruct” it, these performances offer “worldviews” that enable “oppositional counterpublics,” thus “us[ing] the majoritarian culture as raw material to make a new world” (195-196).

The worldviews offered by materials in the Kewpie Collection teach us about being human in dehumanising conditions. “Prob[ing] beyond the observable facts,” as Ndebele (2006) puts it, “to reveal new worlds where it was previously thought they did not exist, and to reveal process and movement where they were hidden” (71), these worldviews offer an important point on the trajectory of ordinariness. Although it is agreed that the ordinary is by now “the common ground of post-apartheid literature,” the political sphere remains dominated, as Gqola (2009) points out, by spectacular masculinities (62). It is this politics that activists in the movement against “the dehumanisation of black people” in South Africa (“UCT Rhodes” 2015), which would come to be called Fallist, worked to reimagine while looking beyond dominant forms of knowledge production for ways of “represent[ing] and humanis[ing] us as energetic and hurt bodies” (Gamedze and Gamedze 2015, 2).¹⁰⁹

Exemplifying how we might understand “ourselves beyond” the “limiting and violent binaries” of the spectacular (Gqola 2009, 73), Kewpie contests instances of “reality enforcement” (Bettcher 2014). She reformulates the anti-“disguise” rhetoric of

¹⁰⁹ Articulating a powerful challenge to “cisheteronormative patriarchy” (Ndelu, Dlakavu, and Boswell 2017, 3), and to the gender binary itself as a “colonial imposition” (Matandela 2017, 11), self-identified womxn and non-binary activists instigated “reclamations of canons and knowledge erased by hegemonic metropolitan traditions” (D. Lewis and Baderoon 2021, 5), contesting their erasure and devaluation by both “claim[ing] back” historical narratives and “writing [themselves]” into history (Dlakavu, Ndelu, and Matandela 2017, 105-107).

contemporaneous laws criminalising gays, the efficacy of which depends on the capacity of language to identify, and gays' depiction in the *Post* and *Drum*, underwritten by fear of visual deception. For those rendered unreal by hegemonic common senses, a return to the ordinary promises a vital reality expansion. Facilitating this return, Kewpie's testimony highlights the inadequacy of common senses governing identification while insisting on the possibility of recognition beyond presently available terms. Moreover, Kewpie uses photography to bring into visibility a world of love around her and suggests this world is latent in everyday interaction and emergent in shared feeling. In doing so, she offers precedent for what Macharia, discussing Danai Mupotsa's (2015) writing about love and recognition, describes as "ongoing struggles for freedom in South Africa and the role of black queer and trans* womxn in those struggles as they reimagine and transform the masculinist politics they have inherited" (Macharia 2020, 562).

D. Lewis and Baderoon (2021) offer an equally redolent articulation of this process and the "global resonan[ces]" of the "desire for a vision of a just world" it conveys (6, 3). Drawing on Patricia Hill Collins's (1990) theorisation of "seeing from below" (25), D. Lewis and Baderoon (2021) explain that those "positioned at the margins see the world differently" and "offer understandings and insight that speak not only about and to—but beyond—their own locations." Although whether it is "respected or taken up in the public domain is another matter," this knowledge is "relevant to all" because it is "generative and not only reactive[,], not only counter[ing] racist and patriarchal world views" but "envision[ing] new ways of being human," and thus "produc[ing] future possible worlds" (2-3). By interpreting the social and articulating alternatives, materials in the Kewpie Collection demonstrate that other worlds are not only possible but available to us in some form.

As in the “world-making project [...] promote[d]” by Berlant and Michael Warner (1998), in which “‘world,’ like ‘public,’ [...] necessarily includes more people than can be identified, more spaces than can be mapped beyond a few reference points, modes of feeling that can be learned rather than experienced as a birthright,” the worlds made available to us by the Kewpie Collection are “*unrealisable* as community or identity.” They are “indexe[d],” as “virtual worlds,” by “cultural form[s]” such as the District Six Star System and the forms of fabulousness and reciprocity it involved; by Kewpie’s photographs and the disobedient temporalities and sensations they evoke; by Kewpie’s testimony, including her repeated insistence that she is “just Kewpie” and her recollections of the Queens Hotel, a place for herself and her gay friends to stay; and, perhaps, by the Queens Hotel itself. These cultural forms “allow for the concretisation” of a “counterpublic,” such as the “indefinitely accessible world conscious of its subordinate relation” that I have followed Kewpie to describe as gay life (558).

Certain materials in the Kewpie Collection conjure a fantasy of gay life as a reworked form of what Ahmed (2006b) calls an “inherited gift” (90). These include, for instance, photographs of “Christmas lunch in Rutger Street” and the girls’ cumulative traffic aisle/isle poses, and Kewpie’s recollections of the forms of pleasure, intimacy, and care involved in the ideal of home the Queens Hotel named. These materials do the “immaterial, affective labour” described by Keeling (2007). They “establish and sustain forms of community” in some format, “by working to make [those forms] visible, if only to others who long for such community.” They “(re)produc[e] the social reality” of the “collective they bring into visibility” and “the common sense that characterises and enables the survival of [that] fragile communit[y]” (148-149).

The various collectives brought into visibility by the Kewpie Collection are, as Keeling puts it in another context, fragile. They could not be sustained within the

organisation of social relations that could have been a given, were these relations not contingently reformulated by said collectives. Crucially, however, these collectives are coalitional, with both *gay* and *girl* exceeding their typical usage to incorporate those whom Kewpie describes as lesbians and straight women, for instance. The expansive possibilities of this coalitional quality, the potential strength it affords collectives, can be glimpsed in a recent mention of Kewpie in gertrude fester-wicomb's (2021) "own story" of being a "queer [...] woman" (83, 73, 89). As a child living near "Windermere," fester-wicomb remembers, she "admired" and was "mesmerised" by "Kewpie" and her "team" of "hairstressers [...]" Patsy and Mitsy." Observing that "the world belonged to them," fester-wicomb captures the capacity of alternative worldviews to enable the appealing and available counterpublicity of gay life (85).

Conceptualising gender and sexuality as sites for the elaboration of counterpublics, as opposed to private concerns in need of protection from the political, Berlant and Warner (1998) build on Arendt's (1961, [1958] 1998) theorisation of political life, to which Kewpie's account of the political has been shown to bear similarity. In particular, the nature of the creativity and transformative agency grounded in the everyday that is at work in Kewpie's photographs and testimony is fundamentally non-sovereign. Detailing her own precarity and recalling that she is left "still" by the many deaths she recounts, describing her search for spaces in which she could "move around" and using photography to create such spaces, Kewpie reveals an intimate awareness that agency is intersubjective and therefore fundamentally undermined by social inequality. Hence, she searches for and creates spaces in which she can appear and act ("move around"), and her agency is constrained (she is left "still") by the conditions producing premature death as a reality. Social inequality curtails Kewpie's freedom *because* agency is non-sovereign, and she uses this very reason—the non-sovereignty of agency—to seek what Arendt (1961) calls power (162-163), finding and

collaboratively constituting spaces in which she can move around *by* moving around. The similarity between Arendt's account of worldmaking and the account gleaned from Kewpie's testimony is not entirely surprising since, although Kewpie does not cite the theoretical legacies found in Arendt, she draws on lived experiences of political unfreedom as well as of action and participation.¹¹⁰

Departing from Arendt—and recalling Muñoz (1999), Ndebele (2006), Baderoon and D. Lewis (2021), and Berlant and Warner (1998)—Kewpie participates in the construction of multiple, overlapping but incommensurate worlds, indexed by the Collection, six of which I have considered in the preceding chapters. Kewpie is presumably the kind of person Arendt would have judged unfit for participation in a public sphere that would ensure action is recorded for posterity and retrospectively articulated in narrative.¹¹¹ Instead, photography is a tool available to, and used by, Kewpie to collaboratively construct spaces of appearance—and the resulting materials potentially make available to memory the various worlds they index.

This is the ultimate aim of the “queer project” Berlant and Warner (1998) imagine: “to support forms of affective, erotic, and personal living that are public in the sense of accessible, available to memory, and sustained through collective activity” (562). The Kewpie Collection depicts actions that were consented to within the collectives that enabled the creation of various materials in the Collection, and these materials continue to act—or the outcomes of the actions they depict unfold—as they are circulated and engaged with.

¹¹⁰ Forms of action and participation such as Arendt (1961, [1958] 1998) describes are seen in the Kewpie Photographic Collection. First, these photographs articulate their subjects' right to appear and contest policy and constraints on possibility, meaning the photographic collective is established through the forms of interaction that make speech and action meaningful. For example, they refuse the inability to be free of politics that the apartheid regime attempts to impose. Second, they break out from causal relations to bring the improbable into the world. Third, Kewpie names principles, such as love, in which these actions are based.

¹¹¹ Although disparaging about the “race fanatics of South Africa,” Arendt ([1951] 1973) describes the “savages” of Africa as “human beings [...] living without the future of a purpose and the past of accomplishment, [...] as incomprehensible as the inmates of a madhouse” (190). For “a systematic analysis of anti-black racism in Arendt's work,” see Belle 2014.

“To act, in its most general sense,” Arendt ([1958] 1998) writes, “means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, ‘to begin,’ ‘to lead,’ and eventually ‘to rule,’ indicates), to set something into motion (which is the original meaning of the Latin *agere*)” (177). The Kewpie Archive is, in this sense, in motion, or moving. Further, according to Arendt, “the reason why we are never able to foretell with certainty the outcome and end of any action is simply that action has no end” (233)—and, as the continued actualisation of the District Six Star System should remind us, “the smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of [...] boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation” (190).

The worlds that the girls create and use photography to bring into visibility and sustain in some form, and which Kewpie recollects in her testimony, are expansive. Their expansive quality is illustrated by materials in which Kewpie performs celebrity, which have a potential that continues to be actualised as they are circulated. Recruiting us to the photographic collective within which what is disclosed is consented to, photographs in the Collection remind us that, since their creation was collaboratively instigated by their photographers and subjects, their existence and circulation has been allowed if not actively facilitated by an ever-expanding number of people through whose hands they have passed. Developers, archivists, and spectators, including artists, scholars, and activists, have multiplied and changed the course of actions instigated within the images that they too are enjoined to look after in the sense of both viewing in retrospect and caring for or sustaining. Simultaneously, the materials constituting the Collection sustain us by continuing to do the work of worldmaking, articulating forms of relationality and embodiment that prefigure futures in which life is more possible. Like the worldmaking minoritarian performances described by Muñoz (2009), this work is “part of a larger political impulse that actually

exists in the present” and it is utopian, allowing us to “glimpse the worlds promised and proposed by queerness in the realm of the aesthetic” (173).

However, in the case of the Kewpie Collection, the materials and meanings produced by this work have been shown to risk recuperation as evidence of enabling past or indeed present conditions. Since the fantastic appears effortless, the labour through which it is produced and the contingent and difficult circumstances of this labour are easily erased. This is the case with the District Six Star System and with Kewpie and the girls’ efforts to sustain gay life and create a home for gays within District Six, the neighbourhood, and within its subsequent reconstruction in popular narrative. This erasure of the work the Collection continues to do is part of a broader dynamic that is ongoing in the present, playing out in diverse arenas. Because unvalued labour is still value producing, this dynamic is apparent in the use of various products of transformative work done by disenfranchised people as evidence of a wider set of hospitable relations, and in the erasure of minoritised peoples’ contribution to ascendant worldmaking projects. Contesting the latter form of erasure, I read Kewpie into a history of jazz that is both localised and global. While the standard excision of jazz from an understanding of the Collection was shown to underrate worldmaking work in the Collection, the standard excision of gays and girls from jazz was shown to underrate meanings and possibilities of jazz—and to deemphasise its limitations.

While delineating circumscriptions on what might be understood as communist about jazz scenes, materials in the Kewpie Collection that recall and inscribe these scenes have been shown to contest these limits in a way that, like Kewpie’s disruptive and inconsolable practice of grief, troubles dominant logics of the archive and notions of historicity, thereby contesting qualifications on what futures can be imagined. The Kewpie Collection acts as a counterarchive in various additional senses. For instance, its depiction of parties is at odds with the *Post* and *Drum*’s nominally exclusive coverage of what they

described as moffie drags, and of the girls' on-stage performances. In keeping with regular attempts in all such articles to establish a hostile sense of competition between two objects of analysis constructed by the publications as "moffies" and "real girls," this coverage makes regular reference to there being strictly no cisgender women allowed, only "moffies" and "men." An entirely different picture is painted in the Kewpie Collection. While even photographs taken in private residences typically indicate that there were cisgender women present, the majority were taken in venues not exclusively or even predominantly attended by gays—spaces in which new forms of collectivity could be rehearsed. In the Kewpie Collection, the gays and girls of District Six appear not only as producers of something like queer counterpublicity, but as key agents in multiple and expansive projects of worldmaking, which continue to multiply and expand as the Collection is circulated.

Current Circulations of the Kewpie Collection: A Precarious Archive

At a series of events held in conjunction with the Johannesburg opening of the *Kewpie* (2019) exhibition, organisers from GALA and the District Six Museum commented that the exhibition offered just one possible narrative. It also constitutes only one public-facing component of a range of related memory work led by both organisations, from which nuanced and complicated narratives continue to emerge. In Johannesburg, the exhibition was adapted to incorporate some of these narratives, notably through the inclusion of video footage of events and workshops that took place during the Cape Town run. District Six Museum curator Tina Smith commented that she sees the exhibition as "an entry point, a moment of introduction" (pers. comm., 23 May 2019).

Smith's remarks have proved prescient. Whereas, at the beginning of 2017, a Google search for "'Kewpie' 'District Six'" led to fewer than a dozen mentions, in September 2021, the same search yielded at least eighty-two relevant results, most of which discuss the

Collection and exhibition at length. The first launch of the *Kewpie* (2018) exhibition received substantial media coverage and precipitated increase in the Photographic Collection's digital circulation. Profiles of Kewpie have since appeared on Wikipedia and South African History Online. Kewpie has been introduced and had her photographs shared by multiple Instagram accounts. Her image has been used to promote parties and has inspired a graduate fashion collection. One of Kewpie's photographs (depicting The Famous Miss Piper Laurie) has graced the cover of a collection of queer poetry and essays. Most recently, Kewpie has adorned T-shirts sold to raise vital funds for the District Six Museum during the Covid-19 pandemic and promoted on social media, bearing a quotation for which Kewpie has come to be known: "District Six is really my gay vicinity" (Lewis 2000). A *New Frame* article about "Queer Ancestor Kewpie" captures the feeling shared by many, that Kewpie belongs to them in some way (Senne 2019). This is further indicated in that GALA has not been asked for permission by some who have circulated and reprinted photographs from the Collection during the ongoing expansion of the Kewpie Archive. Multiple claims have been staked on Kewpie's image and story, and certain conflicts have arisen, particularly as Kewpie has been received by audiences beyond South Africa and described as "transgender" and "white passing," for instance (Paul 2021; @sexworkhistory 2020).

Proliferating descriptions of Kewpie, often in terms in which she does not describe herself, demonstrate that materials in the Kewpie Collection exist precariously. They are not securely propped up or corroborated by a wealth of what might count as reliable historical evidence. Relatedly, they do not easily fit within the set of terms currently animating most academic work on lives that scholars might claim as gay, queer, or trans. This is perhaps a defining feature of what we might think of as archives of the precarious: the materials constituting these archives themselves circulate precariously. That the Kewpie Collection officially bears the name Achmat-Lewis indicates the contingent circumstances of the

Collection's constitution as an official if marginal archival resource. The continued dominance of dynamics informing this constitution is further illustrated by reproductions and interpretations of Kewpie's display of her photographs in her hairdressing salon, Y Eugene's Hairtique (AM2806/232.3), and the conclusions about Kewpie drawn or implied (Corrigall and Marsden 2020, 26; GALA and the District Six Museum 2019, 58). According to Lewis, he entirely created this display as a background for documentary filming, although this information was omitted from the film itself (pers. comm., 29 April 2020).

Understandings of Kewpie that remain dominant in the ever-expanding Kewpie Archive illustrate the circumstances in which a collective of people has been incorporated into the archive—in the form of materials they produce and in which they are depicted—but not otherwise granted access to the archive and its interpretation. This means materials constituting the Collection are available for use in forms of advocacy that have contested the experience of precarity that Nicholas Ridout and Rebecca Schneider (2012) describe as “life lived in relation to a future that cannot be propped securely upon the past” (6), and do so only for certain populations, to the exclusion of others, engaging tactics that continue to actively disenable the recognition of people who live their sexualities and genders in diverse ways. The continuing misrecognition of Kewpie indicates how those of us engaging with, circulating, and otherwise constituting or expanding archives are easily complicit in the inscription of illegibility and therefore in the differential distribution of precariousness.

Pointing to the inverse relation of precarity to legibility, and presenting violence as quotidian rather than exceptional, Kewpie's testimony suggests that uses of the Collection that fail to recognise her as she asks to be recognised reinscribe certain operations through which she is produced as precarious. These uses arguably work to disenable what Butler calls liveable lives and what Kewpie calls “having a life to live.” As Butler (2009a, 2004b) draws on Arendt to explain, and as Kewpie's use of photography to enable liveable lives in

the first place reminds us, liveability is constituted not only by physical conditions—access to safe shelter and food, for example—but by the conditions of intelligibility that inform who can be recognised as able to live a worthwhile life. The divine lesson Kewpie passes on, that there are “so many ways of look after yourself,” including “Be you. Be yourself. Don’t push around,” reminds us that the collective enables self-actualisation—and, therefore, of the importance of recognition as an aspect of care. Repeatedly, Kewpie implies that true recognition *is* possible, but that she cannot be captured within currently inadequate language.

Drawing on Butler’s ([1990] 2007) definition of “‘intelligible’ genders” as “those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire” (23), we can see that Kewpie is moved into intelligibility when described as a “man,” for example, in scholarship cited in the introduction to this thesis. These descriptions reinscribe the unintelligibility of Kewpie as she describes herself. Recently, this dynamic has taken a different form, involving claims about fluidity. Wikipedia (2020) describes Kewpie as “a gender fluid individual who preferred feminine pronouns” and states that “Kewpie saw her gender identity as fluid, though most often used feminine pronouns.” While managing to avoid implying that certain people’s pronouns are more debatable than others, South African History Online describes Kewpie as “a gender fluid individual who identified by female pronouns” (SA History 2019).

Adding that Kewpie “worked as a hairdresser in District Six,” where “her salon became the centre of the queer and drag community” (Wikipedia 2020), and that “her legacy continues to prove foundational to queer culture in Cape Town” (SA History 2019), these pages participate in the construction of Kewpie as originary evidence for a current understanding of fluidity as the correct prize of queer politics. This move to fluidity is seen in Gevisser’s recent book, *The Pink Line* (2020): although so-called gay marriage is

still used as a vector for rights gains, (gender) “fluidity” is what defines radical queerness. We might wonder how Gevisser would now describe Kewpie (1998)—whether he would still tell her, “you’re a drag queen, okay,” as when he was drawing together material in support of the fight for “gay rights.” Disregarding Kewpie’s self-definition, in which she is contrarily insistent on fixity, descriptions of Kewpie as “fluid” risk reinscribing exclusionary assumptions that anything unintelligible within dominant common sense itself lacks fixity; that whatever exceeds or undermines hegemony is changeable and impermanent in comparison to what is reified as fixed and permanent, the epitome of which is cis-heterosexuality.

In addition to the aforementioned descriptions, much of what the “Kewpie (drag artist)” Wikipedia (2020) page states as fact is contradicted by Kewpie elsewhere. Evidently, the Collection is particularly nonconductive to this ostensibly fact-based format, in which crowd-sourcing literalises the reification of fact into common sense. This nonconductivity expresses circumstances skewing the likelihood of retaining apparently complete and straightforward records. It also demonstrates the work of reality expansion, seen in Kewpie’s insistence on keeping open possibilities, that materials in the Collection continue to do. Because the Kewpie Collection refuses to be located easily within terms that currently animate discourses about queer and trans lives, including notions of fluidity, it helps us think about how a politics and scholarship that has grown out of these terms can be answerable to those who are currently claimed as either queer or trans.¹¹² Recognising Kewpie’s self-description as gay and not a man nor a woman enables us to think “beyond the loaded westernised frame of the LGBTI acronym,” as Nyanzi (2014) reminds us we must (67).

¹¹² As Keeling (2019) notes, “Salient critiques of the extent to which ‘queer’ has been domesticated and fixed along lines of sexuality, gender, class, ethnicity, and race in various national contexts remain important because they address how the politics that grow out of the disturbances through which ‘queer’ has become perceptible might be responsible to those who presently might claim and/or be claimed by that category” (17).

Moreover, remaining attentive to the ways Kewpie asks to be recognised shows that she offers an important precedent for expansive gender recognition legislation currently being debated in South Africa that would depart from internationally established models. Kewpie's repeated statement, "people can't say I'm a man, they can't say I'm a woman," prefigures the proposed introduction of an "X" gender marker, on identity documents, to mean "unspecified" (rather than "third gender" as in India, for example) even as she herself is sceptical about the potential of such legal gains. The ongoing campaign for X as "unspecified" is an example of activists continuing to do work done by Kewpie, demanding that space is left open for non-hegemonic forms of recognition, in which both fixity and expansiveness are prized (Nortier 2021).

These demands attest to the "impulse" that "exists in the present" of which the worldmaking work of gays and girls is part (Muñoz 2009, 173). Additionally, they demonstrate that the materials and meanings generated by this work are not contained within the Kewpie Collection. Rather, they are discernible within it as well as countless other sites. Fuller accounts of the Kewpie Archive will doubtless begin to address these manifold sites, including the vital role of *skinner*, or "gossip," as "the one true living archive" (Vaginal Davis quoted in Nyong'o 2018, 15). Investing in collectivity, and insisting that she's "no better than anybody," Kewpie (1998) herself signals that the theory-practice of worldmaking discernible in the Kewpie Collection is not idiosyncratic. This collection of photographs and recollections—with all their intricacies and magic—are not unique in and of themselves. They are primarily distinguished by their volume, and by having been given what Mbembe (2002) calls the "status" of archive, in the sense that they have been incorporated into a physical archive and the "imaginary" it "seeks to disseminate" (20). The Collection's constitution as an archival resource means that the crucial work and knowledges it makes available interacts with its organisation.

Ultimately, the materials constituting the Collection have been shown to contest and rework the terms of their archivalisation to create further possibilities. Working to imagine other ways of being in the world, the girls create possibilities that prefigure radical futures but are also, often, about enabling survival. The logics Kewpie troubles, when fantastically mingling what is rendered probable, possible, improbable, and impossible, are logics that render certain forms of life improbable or impossible. When challenging common senses governing norms of appearance and recognition, the girls articulate their right to appear in public and to be recognised as worthy of protection. Readings of photographs of the girls in public as evidence of their integration and acceptance risk playing into the trick by which the survival of the minoritised and disenfranchised is repackaged as a utopian ideal. Disavowing this logic, this thesis responds to calls in Queer African Studies to renounce false binaries of pleasure, desire, and creativity, on the one hand, and loss, mourning, and suffering, on the other (Matebeni and Msibi 2015, 4).

Nonetheless, the sheer frequency with which basic demands for equity, dignity, safety, and association are ridiculed as idealistic, impractical fantasies can make it difficult to persistently distinguish utopian desires from longings for collective survival. The worldmaking work of gays and girls reminds us that, in moments of difficulty, it is also important to anticipate being able to imagine the futures that we will only be able to conceive once survival is no longer a pressing concern. These are futures in which the worlds made by gays and girls can be sustained beyond the ephemeral scenes of their creation. Currently, these worlds, and the organisations of social relations they imply, are impossible to view in their totality. They are indexed, however, by materials in the Kewpie Collection.

These worlds are also glimpsed in contemporary cultural work, in which meanings produced by gays and girls continue to resonate and unfold. For instance, Kewpie's (1996) insistence that there is a locatable "place" for herself and her "other gay friends" to stay—a



Figure 7.1

place in which they would be “wanted”— finds expression in a May 2020 work by sculptor and jewellery designer Githan Coopoo (fig. 7.1). Kewpie’s (1996) reformulation of normalisation, her statement that “each and every child you could look at and stare at was halfway gay too,” is here reworked in red: “WE’RE ALL SO GAY.” The handles of the vase playfully suggest fabulous modes of embodiment, evoking a style of earring signature to Coopoo’s

insistently queer creative brand. In its domesticity, the vase suggests the existence of a place structured around “all” the “gay[s],” currently impossible to conceive in its transgressive totality: a future, ideal home in which the loud vase is imagined to belong.

Likewise, desires behind Kewpie’s (1996) search for spaces in which she “could move around” resonate in a June 2020 DJ performance by interdisciplinary artist Queezy (qqueezyy 2020; fig. 7.2). Elsewhere, the edges of a ghostly feather imply Kewpie’s presence within a space in which she cannot come into visibility (fig. 6.13). Here, they materialise as the black feather produced by Queezy from beneath their sheer top. Dancing “in Loving Memory of Kewpie” (@queezybabaz 2020), Queezy enacts pleasurable forms of embodiment and multiplicity suggested by the girls’ consonant and expansive corporeal gesture. This “black feather performance” invokes a world in which those still made late do not have to be waited for, as they are by Kewpie (1996, 1999). In the implied world, made in their temporal configurations, those made late presently are conversely present, conjured in the moment of the performance, though illegible in current terms. The set of social

relations in which this world might be sustained is likewise summoned when Queezy declares Kewpie “Cape Town’s iconic Mother Diva & Ya’ll better learn about HER” (@kewpie_legacy 2021).

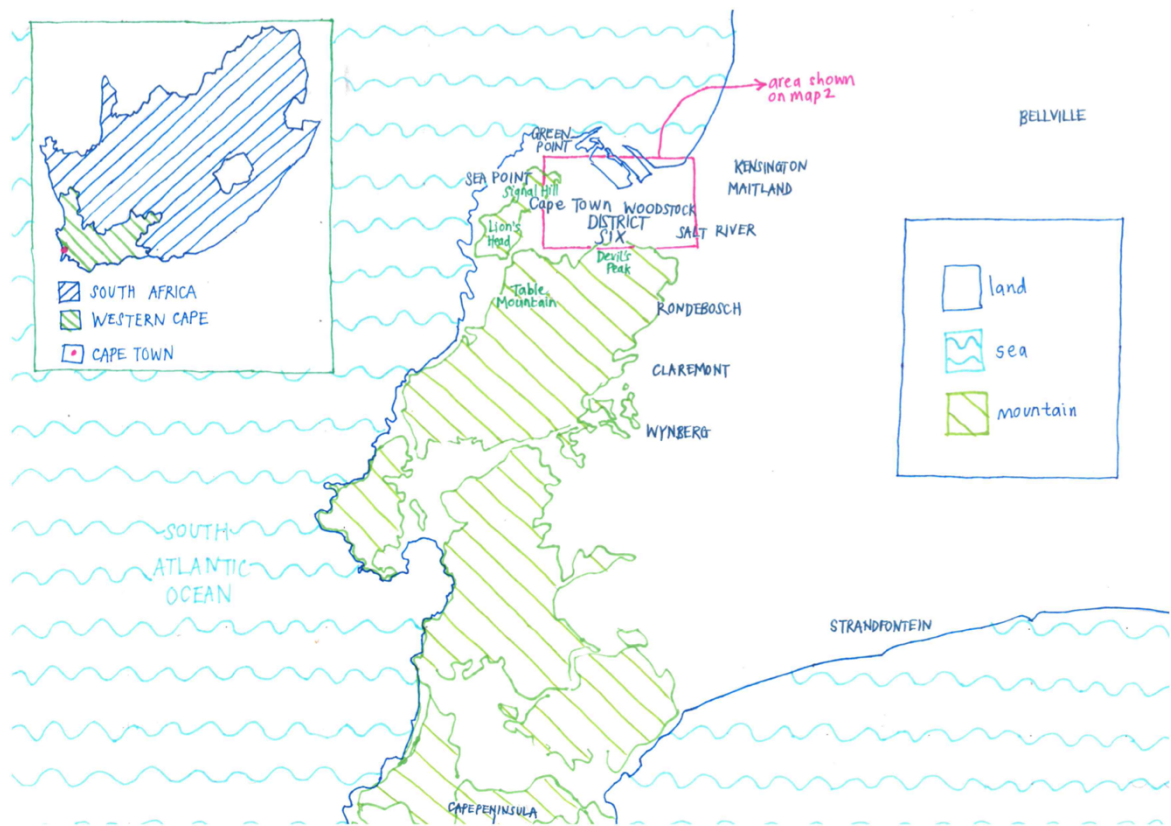


Figure 7.2

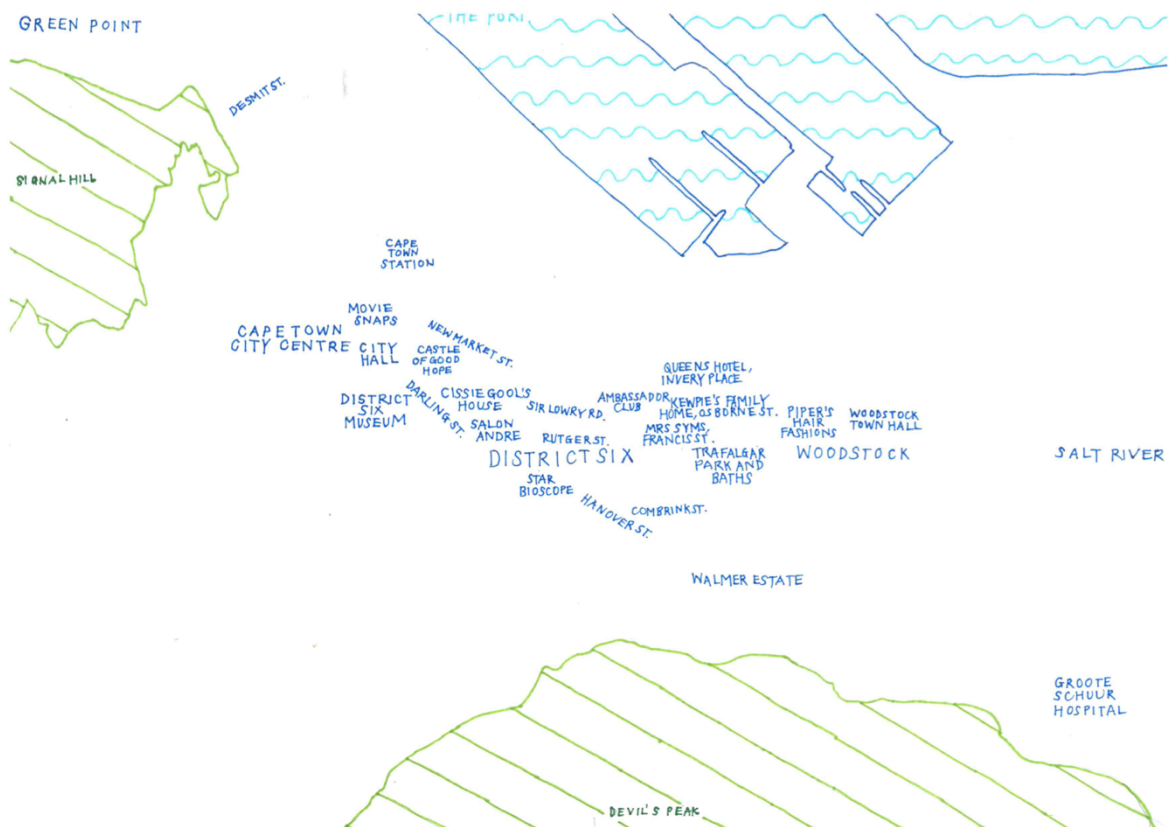
“Just Live Your Life”

Kewpie’s description of herself as “queen mother to all the gays,” referenced in the title to this conclusion, reprises her sentimental formulation of motherhood as fundamentally life-enabling. It is fitting, then, that as they circulate, the materials and meanings produced by the worldmaking work of gays and girls continue to do the necessarily collaborative labour of wedging open conceptions of what lives might be had to live. Asked what “message” she would “give gay people[,] the younger generation,” Kewpie’s (1998) response might sound idealistic, dismissive, or pragmatic: “My message will be live your life. Just live your life.” These words resonate otherwise, however, in the context of Kewpie’s realisation that “[she] had to have a life to live,” given the knowledges this realisation condenses. These are

knowledges of the falsity of a present made to seem inescapable, knowledges foundational to the theory-practice of worldmaking I have discerned in the Kewpie Collection. The simplicity of Kewpie's "message"—"just live your life"—prefigures futures glimpsed in the Collection. These are futures in which worlds made by gays and girls come into visibility and are sustained in multiple spaces beyond Kewpie's archived photographs and testimony: futures in which it is not only possible but easy for all of us to just live our lives.



Map 1. Showing the location of places in the greater Cape Town area referenced by Kewpie.



Map 2. Showing the location of places in the City of Cape Town referenced in this thesis.

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