

Khawuleza—An Instantiation of the Black Archive

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Abstract

South African history is such that Blackness/Indigeneity were excluded from institutions of knowledge production. Contemporarily, the traditional University is defined as an institution predicated on the abjection of Blackness. This reality neither predetermined the positions and responses, nor presupposed complete/successful erasure of Blackness/Indigeneity owing to exclusion. I contend and detail how theorising, thinking about and through the *Fact* of Blackness, continue(d)—using the artistic works of Mhlongo, Makeba, Mbulu, and contemporarily, Leomile as examples. Analysing the music of the abovementioned artists, a move rooted in intersectional feminist approaches, will reveal modes of theorising that characterised the artistic expressions that define(d) the country. Theory generation, so construed, necessitates a judicious philosophical consideration if we are to resurrect the Black Archive. I conclude with an introspective question aimed at inspiring similar projects in other traditions that constitute the Black Archive, i.e. African languages and literature, theatre, art practice and theory.

Keywords: Miriam Makeba; Busi Mhlongo; Letta Mbulu; Leomile; Black Archive

Nina Simone Four Womxn

My skin is Black,
My arms are long,
My hair is woolly,
My back is strong
Strong enough to take the pain...
(Simone 1966)

I introduce my analysis with the work of Nina Simone, as she thinks through the life stories of four womxn.¹ This move highlights the usefulness as well as the intersectionalities of tracing the history of Blackness through heeding the inflections that define the lived experiences of Black womxn of the global South. While I identify as a queer Black male feminist, I neither claim to speak on behalf of women, nor do I claim to have experiential knowledge of Black womxn. Rather, my aim in this analysis is to indicate how the Black Archive can be used as resistance against systems of oppression, which denigrate the lives of Black womxn, not only in our context but more broadly in the global South. The Black Archive in my analysis surfaces three things. The first is highlighting the importance of a decolonial agenda that is rooted in intersectional theory as seen in the Black feminist tradition. The second talks to revealing the usefulness of resurrecting the Black Archive as part of decolonising knowledge production and finally, it showcases the efficacy of artistic works in shaping cultural production and theory generation in South Africa.

In highlighting all these elements, my analysis draws inspiration from Mohanty (1993, 41) when he makes the claim that cultural identity and experience warrant a legitimate space for thinking philosophically about knowledge production and what knowledge we count as epistemically worthy of consideration. Furthermore, it is useful to state that the Black Archive facilitated the act of thinking through and theorising the *Fact* of Blackness, even as Blackness/Indigeneity has existed and continues to exist at the margins of knowledge production. The claim of Blackness existing at the margins is substantiated by the continued reality of Blackness being expunged from spaces that have become the centres of knowledge production globally, a point that is addressed poignantly and succinctly by Kristie Dotson (2011, 404) when she writes about “concrete flowers.” With this contribution framed as an undertaking at demonstrating how the Black Archive functions as a tool of and for decolonising knowledge and theory development in the contemporary academe, I reiterate that my aim is not to impose strictures that fix the experiences of Black womxn through lenses that are constructed by men. As indicated above, the aim of this analysis is to begin using the Black Archive as a tool of resistance against oppression in line with Ann Cudd’s (2006) analysis.

Dotson (2011, 406) takes issue with the sociality of epistemic practice in the discipline of philosophy, a sociality that undermines the questions that are posed by those who have existed at the margins and continue to be silenced by epistemically arrogant

¹ My orthographical choice in representing the word women/woman with an “x” is deliberate and aligns my scholarship with the work of Black feminist thinkers, activists and creatives who—in representing “woman” as *womxn*—contest the dual sex binary that aims to obfuscate womxn as citizen in her own right. Womxn is deliberate in that it specifically addresses Black womxn, and where I write about the category, woman, as inclusive of white feminist struggles and traditions, I represent the word in its accepted orthography as “women.” In this respect, my orthography aligns itself with the core purpose of my argument, showcasing how womxn have historically represented themselves and theorised their lived experiences outside of the strictures of masculinist understandings of womxn, and the desire that womxn assimilate to white feminist discourses and struggles.

practitioners. This erasure takes the form of the question—“how is your project philosophical?” Dotson (2011, 406) maintains that this question stifles our capacity to imagine and think creatively about theory generation, a reality that maintains the theoretical dependency of the peoples of the margins. This problem has been addressed systematically by Bongani Nyoka (2013) and Paulin Hountondji (2002) in their critiques of systems of knowledge production in the global South—critiques that substantiate and inspire this essay. As a response, I highlight how we can begin theorising from a position that is aligned with the political and epistemic struggles of the global South, while privileging the experiences of women so as to nuance our analyses. Privileging the experiences of the women of the global South surfaces an intersectional reading of contemporary issues that allows a systematic comprehension of the epistemic challenges confronting knowledge production contemporarily. This marks a decolonial agenda rooted in feminist thinking, a decolonial feminism.

Thinking from the global South shifts the geography of reason, as advocated by the global decolonial tradition (see Gordon 2014, 6; Mignolo 2009). In shifting the geography of reason, Dotson (2011, 404) raises the point that those who think outside the ambits of traditional philosophy allow us to pose new and interesting questions that facilitate the expansion of the disciplinary domain. By taking the discipline forward through an introspective analysis that speaks from the margins, through the Black Archive, I aim to showcase new perspectives that facilitate innovative and novel responses to the contemporary challenges that plague society. This process is useful in inaugurating new ways of understanding old problems.

There are two things to be said about Dotson’s (2011) critique. The first is the question of what we ought to consider as philosophy in the first instance. I must highlight that this question has been the basis of substantial intellectual strife since the time of Hannah Arendt. The second addresses our efforts at decolonising systems of knowledge production in the contemporary University and the role of the Black Archive in these efforts. I will address both of these questions implicitly in my analysis, as I think through the artistic works of the four womxn selected for this treatise—Mhlongo, Makeba, Mbulu and Leomile. My analysis thus aims to defend the claim that these works form the constitutive parts of the Black Archive. In analysing this music, I showcase how a song is not just a song, but a *score* of a particular moment in time capturing the essence of something an artist has realised (knowledge) and now needs to share with others (dissemination). By this claim, I mean that these works are merely a fractional representation of the richness that awaits the contemporary philosopher, literato, artist and social scientist who ventures in the direction of the Black Archive.

Scoring History

In thinking about the Black Archive, Simone is useful. Narrating the stories of four womxn negotiating their existence in a world that continues to oppress them systematically, structurally and politically, Simone initiates an analysis into the lives of

these womxn through her music. Here I want to pay attention to the story of Peaches when Simone sings:

My skin is brown
my manner is tough
I'll kill the first mother I see
my life has been [...] rough
I'm awfully bitter these days
because my parents were slaves
What do they call me
My name is PEACHES
(Simone 1966)

This lyrical composition is reminiscent of Patricia-Hill Collins' (2000) analyses when she writes about "Black Feminist Thought." Collins (2000) thinks through the position to which Black womxn have historically been relegated and the representations that mark the figure of the Black womxn. Seen as angry, bitter and the feminist killjoy, the Black womxn has been represented as antagonistic, and even bitter, when she attempts to articulate her oppression. To position the Black womxn in this way—owing to social institutions and modes of being that eschew their part in (re)producing these responses from the Black womxn—is symptomatic of hermeneutic injustices (Fricker 2007).

In the preceding framework, I implicitly conceptualise oppression as per Ann Cudd's work when she maintains that "the term 'oppression' plays a rich and complex role in defining a fundamental social wrong. Its complexity will lead us to ask questions about the origin and maintenance of that wrong, as well as how it might be overcome" (2006, 4). In framing oppression as a social wrong, Cudd (2006) invites us to consider the origins of that wrong, an invitation that will, if thorough, reveal the hermeneutic imbrications of oppression, subsequently necessitating a careful analysis of Cudd's recommendation through Fricker's conception of "epistemic injustice." The social wrongs that produce womxn like Peaches, as per Simone's composition, are historically "intersectional"—a claim that is substantiated by Simone when she sings of womxn such as Sweet-thing and Saffronia. These womxn represent the (t)old stories of Black womxn since the days of slavery, apartheid and contemporary femicide² in South Africa. These (t)old stories of Black womxn lead me to consider how this work instantiates the Black Archive.

By the Black Archive I mean the work that has, historically, been dedicated to thinking through and about the *Fact* of Blackness. By the *Fact* of Blackness, I mean the

² I should be clear; I use the concept with some caution and reservation—taking into consideration the definition of genocide. My caution is rooted in the desire to steer clear of hyperbolic language that does little to clarify concepts for the purposes of theory development. Simultaneously, my cautionary moves might be, and maybe should be, critiqued for their part in maintaining systems of domination and oppression, through privileging "rationality" and "reason."

historicity, both social and political, of Blackness/Indigeneity. To this end, of thinking about the *Fact* of Blackness, my work will analyse the songs of four female artists, an act that will substantiate the claim that even as Blackness/Indigeneity has been historically excluded from institutions of knowledge production, this exclusion neither predetermined nor ensured the absolute erasure of Blackness/Indigeneity. Blackness/Indigeneity, through poetry, literature, music and art continued to think about the conditions of oppression and injustice, while aiming at curating a world that would signify the “ontological recognition” (Kumalo 2018) of Blackness/Indigeneity. I maintain, through this analysis, that the resurrection of the Black Archive may assist us in thinking critically about institutional decolonisation in the contemporary South African University, while further allowing us the capacity to read old questions through new perspectives, a move that may lead to the development of epistemically just social institutions.

My analysis is rooted in the music of four female artists and one male artist. Collectively this music highlights how the project of thinking through and about the *Fact* of Blackness is conducted in three Nguni languages, isiZulu, isiXhosa and Shona, as well as seSotho (in the chosen examples). In the first section of the paper, I trace how an oppressive and totalitarian regime tore apart Black family life, through a system of forced migrant labour in the mines. I trace this history using Busi Mhlongo when, in thinking through the social place of Black womxn, she laments the desertion Black womxn negotiate(d) when their partners left to work in the Johannesburg mines, neither writing nor returning home to the Bantustans created by the apartheid regime. In the song “Yaphel’Imali Yami,” Mhlongo highlights how the contemporary culture of Black male absenteeism was inaugurated by a systematic attempt at killing Black family life in South Africa, owing to the “greed exhibited by white people in the country” (Biko 2004, 97). In the second section of the paper, I look at Miriam Makeba’s “Khawuleza,” wherein she details how Black womxn were the subjects of state terror, a terror that sought to control Blackness even as Blackness was responding to the social ills instituted by the regime.

“Khawuleza” deals significantly with the harsh realities of a regime that viscerally tore Blackness apart, separating womxn from their children because of womxn’s contravention of Prohibition Laws that were first instituted in 1897 and political activism. “Khawuleza” then deals with the harsh realities that womxn faced for contravening said governing regulations when their husbands and lovers did not send money home or support the family, owing to the migrant labour relations instituted by the apartheid state.

In the third section, I look at Letta Mbulu’s “Not Yet Uhuru—Amakhamandela.” At the dawning of democracy in 1993, Mbulu claimed “ifa lezithutha lodiwa ngaba

hlakaniphileyo,”³ suggesting that while many Black people thought that freedom was approaching, the reality of the social conditions were such that Blackness/Indigeneity had not yet achieved freedom and emancipation. As we fast approach the third decade of democracy in South Africa, it is clear that this liberation is far from being a reality for the majority of Blackness/Indigeneity. In the fourth section of the paper, I turn to a contemporary artist, Leomile, when she thinks about the hope and desire derived from the dignity and humanity of Blackness, which continues to be denigrated by the inhumanity of oppression and injustice, seen through the inherited legacies of apartheid in “Song for Pulane.” I conclude the paper by way of critique—a move offered by the music of Oliver Mtukudzi when he sings “Ndagarwa Nhaka.”

Busi Mhlongo—“Yapheli’ mali Yami”

Eyokugc’na lencwadi, uz’unkhonzele,

Hamba, hamb’unkhonzele

Yapheli’ mali yami ngibhalela wena soka lami awungiphenduli ngani?

(Mhlongo 1999)

This section highlights the implications of coloniality for Blackness/Indigeneity in Southern Africa. Theorising the effects of coloniality on Blackness/Indigeneity is inspired by Yvette Abrahams (2003, 12) when she writes about “colonialism, dysfunction and disjuncture.” Looking at the effects of coloniality on Blackness/Indigeneity, Abrahams (2003) makes a case for the historical position to which Black womxn have been relegated, through tracing the subtle resistance mechanisms of Saartjie Baartman. Taken away from her community, owing to European colonialism and voyeurism, Abrahams (2003) details Baartman’s treatment as an object of fascination by European modernity. Zine Magubane (2001) considers the implications that coloniality had for Black womxn’s bodies through surfacing the ethical and moral dimensions in her essay titled “Which Bodies Matter? Feminism, Poststructuralism, Race, and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of the ‘Hottentot Venus.’” Discussing the uses of science, eugenics and the preponderance of epistemic arrogance in European modernity, Magubane (2001) confronts how Baartman serves as a way of detailing the impacts of coloniality on Blackness/Indigeneity since the inception of colonial incursion in the southern region of the African continent. Moreover, the implications of coloniality and raced political paradigms of state organisation that are founded on “white greed in South Africa” (Biko 2004, 97)—a greed that re-enforces the enactment of racist ideology in the country, seen through exploitative labour relations such as the migrant labour system of the Rand in Gauteng—highlight the effect that this greed had on Black family life in the country. Mhlongo’s work is poignant in its consideration of the effects of coloniality on Black family life. Through a lyrical composition that surfaces the institution of Black male absenteeism in Black communities owing to the migrant labour system, Mhlongo

³ By this Mbulu means the inheritance of fools will be squandered by those who consider themselves clever.

laments the situation of Black womxn in South Africa who contend with the reality of desertion and neglect owing to men who abandon them with the responsibilities of rearing children and supporting families while they abscond from their family duties in the mines.

The phenomenon of Black male absenteeism surfaces a critical point about Black masculinities in South Africa. What follows is in no way a mode of excusing Black male behaviour, but rather serves to highlight the complexities instituted by a system of oppression, injustice and domination. Fanon (1952), when he writes about the “Fact of Blackness,” is useful here. Tracing the dysfunction instated by colonialism, Fanon writes, “[the Black man’s] metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they are based were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilisation that he did not know and that imposed itself on him” (1952, 83)—a point that will become clearer in the following section. The raced world into which the Black man is flung inspires a yearning within him that he be seen as human, as possessing ontological legitimacy, a reality that continues to be elusive even contemporarily in South Africa. Fanon poignantly captures this yearning when he writes, “on that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object” (1952, 84). This yearning for ontological legitimacy further expresses the desire within Black masculinities to transcend the infantilised position that they occupy in the white man’s world. Gqola (2007) speaks of this infantilisation when she considers the history of South African society that stripped men of their manhood⁴ through denying Black men the status of adulthood, as they were consistently viewed as boys in the eyes of whiteness.

It is, however, interesting to note this mode of framing Black masculinities, for as Coetzee (1980, 9) maintains, there is always the fear of *swart gevaar*, with Black men viewed as a danger to white women, always on the prowl to rape white women. The danger that is associated with the Black man in the South African context is buttressed by the colonial fears that dominate modes of relating to Blackness/Indigeneity—modes that are fixed in colonial strictures and discourse (Bhabha 1983). Black male absenteeism from family life is subsequently complicated by the reality of Black masculinities negotiating their desire to assert their humanity, assertions that may at times take the form of violent masculinities, as detailed by Kumalo and Gama (2018).

I contend that this violence manifests in a number of ways, through the absenteeism that is lamented by Mhlongo in the composition under scrutiny in this section, or through

⁴ I wish to qualify how I am using the concept of manhood in this analysis. I foreground the use of the concept of manhood in an article co-authored with Gama (2018) in which we argue for manhood proper, which we define as “action as legislation,” a definition derived from the work of Arendt (1994). Manhood proper, as per our argument, means a “non-violent” relation between the self and the other, a concept derived from the work of Cornell (1995, 78).

sexual violence as detailed by Gqola (2001). The violence of Black masculinities in South Africa can be attributed to the desire to assert the humanity of those who have always been denied it under systems of injustice and initiates countless challenges for the psycho-social realities of a socio-political project of imagining new identities in a postcolonial society. This reality is taken up at length by Zoë Wicomb in her analysis of the place of culture (2018a) in South African society, an analysis that is substantiated by the work of Kumalo and Gama (2018).

Mhlongo, through her lyrical composition in “Yapheli’mali Yami,” surfaces the realities of Black womxn under the hardships of apartheid reality in the country. This work is further useful in how it challenges the notion of a dearth of theory concerning Blackness/Indigeneity during the years of exclusion and oppression. In claiming a dearth of theory with respect to Blackness/Indigeneity’s modes of being and life, one has to interrogate how we conceptualise theory and what modes of theory development we give credit to in the academe, what modes of theory generation are seen to have more epistemic merit/authority. In detailing the reality of being Black and womxn in South Africa, Mhlongo begins to highlight the importance of the Black Archive in the project of reimagining knowledge production. In line with the earlier claim made using the work of Dotson (2011), a claim that agrees with the thought that those who have worked from the margins of the discipline of philosophy allow us to inaugurate new perspectives that facilitate the development of the discipline, I read the work of Mhlongo. Using Dotson’s (2011) work to understand Busi Mhlongo’s project, in this song, reveals a decolonial move that is rooted in expanding the horizons of knowledge, which facilitates an interrogation of what we (as theoreticians) consider to have epistemic authority.

In claiming that Mhlongo surfaces the psycho-social components of Black reality in the country, I wish to unpack this further in what follows. Acknowledging the psycho-social trauma and pain that comes from subjugation and systematically attempted erasure, it is necessary to consider the insights that might be gleaned from an in-depth analysis of the Black Archive. As womxn were charged with the task of rearing families and seeing to the responsibilities of men that were left unattended, all thanks to a system that attempted (and it is useful to consider the successes of apartheid in this regard) to decimate Black family life, the contemporary philosopher ought to consider the socio-political implications of said psycho-social trauma. One can subsequently count three theoretical moves highlighted by Mhlongo: first, the psycho-social implications for the lives of Black womxn, second, the impact that Black male absenteeism had on the socio-historic conditions under which Black children grew up, and lastly, the influence that these two components had on Black social life generally.

I find it useful, at this juncture, to look to Makhubu and Mbongwa (2019, 12) when they write, “love is rarely taken seriously as a political strategy in addressing the dire effects of colonialism and continued neo-colonial domination and exploitation. Yet key political movements of Black consciousness and Black nationalism are centred on love to challenge self-hatred.” These scholars are useful in making sense of the three

theoretical aspects that Mhlongo surfaces. The concept of love as resistance to the efforts at instilling self-hatred takes seriously the implications of our readings of Black male absenteeism in Black community life. This is based on the reality that even when present in said communities, owing to self-hatred—which is derived from the infantilisation of Black men by a system of injustice—their presence is oftentimes inflected by violence(s) that shatter the lives of womxn and children. With Makhubu and Mbongwa (2019) framing decolonial resistance through the lens of radical love, intertextually reading their work with Mhlongo’s composition reveals new and novel ways of addressing some of the challenges that continue to plague Blackness/Indigeneity. The impetus to address these challenges lies in the reality that they are experienced primarily by Black womxn who, forced to balance the desertions of Black men, have to contend with supporting their families, while relegating their own needs and desires to the background as a way of responding to these harsh realities.

This highlights the need to consider Miriam Makeba’s “Khawuleza.” Makeba thinks through the actions of the apartheid state vis-à-vis the Black womxn. Makeba’s work substantiates the claim that the apartheid state played a critical role in systematically breaking down Black family life.

Miriam Makeba—“Khawuleza”

Khawuleza, is a South African song—
it comes from the townships, reservations, locations
near Johannesburg,
The children shout from the streets
as they see police cars coming to raid their homes
for one thing or another,
They say *Khawuleza Mama!*
Which simply means,
“hurry up Mama and hide—
Please don’t let them catch you”
(Makeba 1965)

In the voiceover, which introduces the song, Makeba explains the social realities that gave rise to the song. Through the voiceover the audience is invited to bear witness to the depravity of the apartheid state, in its attempt to tear asunder the Black family, with Blackness/Indigeneity continuing to be denigrated by this system of oppression and injustice. However, it is useful to briefly sketch the historical underpinnings that resulted in such a socio-political institution—a sketching that I will tease out through Ifi Amadiume’s scholarship.

Lamenting the social impact that colonialism had on the African continent and the social status of womxn in society, Amadiume reveals how the effects of colonialism transformed social institutions in line with a Eurocentric male-centred ordering of society (Amadiume 1987, 121). Amadiume writes, “in Nnobi, people were told to stop

worshiping indigenous religious symbols which the Christians interpreted as idols. The Christian doctrine claimed that god created all persons and all things, and that, unlike the goddess Idemili, god was a ‘he’ and not a ‘she’” (1987, 121). With the reformulated social institutions owing to the colonial imposition of western-centric epistemic paradigms on the African continent, one begins to understand (ever so slightly) the extent to which these changes impacted on the power of womxn, as early as the eighteenth century. The redefinition of social orders, a transformation aligned with phallogocentric power, only to have that power removed through systems that infantilised Black men, highlights the impact of colonialism and apartheid on Black social life. Having briefly sketched some of the historic components that define the social conditions of Black womxn on the African continent, I now proceed to pay close attention to the motivations behind Makeba’s work.

Thinking through the level of control that was exercised by the apartheid state, control that was premised on an irrational fear, as explained by Coetzee in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), Makeba details the realities that were faced by Black womxn. To substantiate this position, Sisonke Msimang’s (2018) work *The Resurrection of Winnie Mandela: A Biography of Survival* is useful. Msimang, detailing Madikizela-Mandela’s political woes, writes:

The kids—10-year-old Zeni and 9-year-old Zindzi—are sleeping. The police break down the door and begin shouting. They take down Nelson’s suitcases and cause a mess and they make a terrible noise. The girls are awoken and they are frightened. *This is the last time they will see you for a long time, because the police arrest you and take you with them in their car, dragging you away from them as they scream and cling to your skirt.* (Msimang 2018, 75; emphasis added)

Msimang aptly captures the visceral reality that defined Black life in South Africa under apartheid rule, while vividly echoing the words of Makeba when she sings “nanka amaphoyisa azongen’endlini, khawuleza” (Here are the police about to enter the house, [please] hurry up and hide.) Msimang helps us think through the sophisticated theoretical moves implicit in Makeba’s composition. On the surface of it, Msimang reveals the absence of the Black man from the family, owing to his incarceration. When we go deeper into the reading of this work, we further see the depravity of a state that would have a mother violently separated from her children, owing to the fact that she threatened a state that was insecure in its rule as a result of the un-confronted acknowledgement of the injustice and amorality that defined it, its machinations and irrationalities. Furthermore, in Msimang’s detailing of Madikizela-Mandela’s life we are further invited to witness why Makeba indicates that children would plead with their mothers that they not be caught by the police—a pleading that rested on the recognition that should their mother be caught, there was no guarantee of her safe return home.

In detailing Makeba’s work through the analysis of Madikizela-Mandela’s life, the reader will begin to appreciate the claim that this song is symptomatic of modes of

theorising Black life that characterised how artists, musicians, poets and literati sought to make sense of their realities. Moreover, the aim lay not only in making sense of these realities but further in thinking critically about what this meant for the condition of Blackness and how Blackness could begin to curate a socio-political condition that was different from the one instituted by apartheid. In another composition, Makeba sings “bahleli bonke etilongweni, bahleli bonke kwanongqongqo [...] Nanku nanku nanku uSobukwe, nanku nanku etilongweni. Nanku nanku nanku uMandela, nanku nanku etilongweni. Nanku nanku nanku uSisulu, nanku nanku etilongweni.”⁵ In this song, Makeba is lamenting the reality of the liberation leaders in South Africa who found themselves in prison owing to the insecurities of a political system that was founded on amorality and was pronounced an injustice against humanity. Reading the work of Makeba intertextually with other compositions substantiates the work of Makhubu and Mbongwa (2019) when they suggest that radical love ought to be understood as decolonial philosophy.

“Khawuleza” substantiates the claim that apartheid, a system premised on colonial (ir)rationalities, attempted to tear asunder the Black family, a proposition that is further supported by Msimang when she details the life of Madikizela-Mandela. “Khawuleza” subsequently takes seriously the experiences of Blackness/Indigeneity in South Africa, while offering new insights into some of the challenges that are framed as social afflictions that continue to define Black life in the country. These social afflictions are raised through a reading of Mhlongo’s work in the previous section of the paper, wherein I consider the aftermath wrought by a system that was premised on the dehumanisation of Blackness/Indigeneity through a migrant labour system that tore families apart while leaving Black womxn with the responsibilities of having to piece together this shattered life. It is on the basis of having considered the effects of some facets of apartheid on Black family life that I now move on to consider Mbulu’s “Not Yet Uhuru.” In the analysis to follow I highlight how this composition, by Mbulu, sought to caution Blackness/Indigeneity from the perspective that life in South African society would change owing to the institution of democracy.

Letta Mbulu—“Not Yet Uhuru”

*Umhlaba wakithi [...], usemi ndawonye ...
Akukho mehluko kulelizwe,
Qhawula Amakhamandela.
Thina asinavoti,
Sikal'emikhukhwini,
Akukho mehluko kulelizwe,
Qhawula Amakhamandela.
Bakhona abanye abakithi,
Abasibona sesikhululekile,*

⁵ Miriam Makeba, “Nongqongqo (To Those We Love),” track four on *An Evening with Belafonte/Makeba* (1965).

Kodwa umshosha phansi
Uthi NOT YET UHURU!
(Mbulu 1996)

In this lyrical composition, Letta Mbulu makes the claim that Blackness/Indigeneity in the country ought not to assume that the absolute freedoms of liberation will be secured with the dawn of democracy. This position is interesting on two counts. First in the instance of what is dealt with earlier in the article, wherein I consider that as we approach the third decade of freedom and democracy in the country, Blackness/Indigeneity still finds itself relegated to the periphery. Wicomb (2018b) also deals with this reality when she thinks through the question of literacy as it relates to cultural generation in the country. Wicomb asks the critical question of what is to become of South African culture when many continue to be denied access to quality education, a precondition for the substantive participation of the majority in the cultural formation project of the country. Wicomb, through her analysis, reveals that those in power are the ones with the capacity to influence the trajectory of culture, its permutations and manifestations, a position that leads Wicomb to consider—implicitly—whether we can claim that democracy and liberation have finally been attained by the majority. It is useful to note that the essay under consideration here first appeared in 1995 (a year after the dawn of democracy). This consideration leads me to the second count of interest when analysing this composition, which is the reality that the vast majority of South Africans continue to eke out an existence in poverty and squalor and are disenfranchised from substantive participation in the country’s democratic processes.

Mbulu’s composition is therefore useful as she theorises the realities that continue to shape South African reality to the contemporary day. With this song released in 1993, an important question surfaces for the reader, the philosopher, and the social scientist. If indeed Blackness/Indigeneity continues to be in shackles, “Amakhamandela,” owing to the slow pace of social transformation with the lingering effects of colonialism and apartheid in the country—a reality that re-inscribes the need to consider the psycho-social effects of colonialism and apartheid on Black social life in the country—can we truly claim *Uhuru* in our context?

A few observations can be made about the social realities that have been detailed in this analysis. First, with Black womxn as the people who bear the brunt of colonialism(s)/apartheid’s effects on Black social life, how should we understand social liberation and democracy in the country? Second, with some still oppressed in our social milieu, how seriously are we to take the proposition advanced by Kumalo (2019) when he states that the oppression of one signals the oppression of all? Third, owing to years of colonial imperialism, apartheid and the stratified nature of our society, one ought to consider whether a society such as ours will ever attain absolute freedom and democratisation as envisaged by the notion of wholesale emancipation enshrined in the Constitution. This third consideration gives rise to a critical reading that is surfaced by

a critique of the South African nation state, which is the fact that the African National Congress (ANC) was never invested in the wholesale emancipation of South Africans. This claim is rooted in the reality that the vast majority of South Africans continue to endure systems of domination and injustice, characteristics that define nearly all South African institutions to the contemporary day. I make this claim in the face of the reality that access to quality healthcare, education and legal representation in the country is still radically skewed in favour of those who enjoyed socio-economic and socio-political freedoms derived from a system of injustice and oppression.

It is in light of these considerations that Mbulu's work becomes central to an analysis that challenges the reality that defines the peoples of the margins. Mbulu contends that "Not Yet Uhuru," which begs the question—when will all South Africans, irrespective of their social position, gender and class, ever truly enjoy the freedoms of liberation and freedom? More importantly, this line of reasoning surfaces the question of whether we can still see the Black Archive as a true reflection of the conditions of possibility that define Black life in South Africa. To answer this question, I wish to consider the role of art (music, poetry, literature, etc.) in reflecting the realities of social life. It is useful to remind the reader of my framing of artistic expression in the introduction, when I claim that a song is not just a song, but a score of a particular moment in time capturing the essence of something an artist has realised (knowledge) and now needs to share with others (dissemination). My analysis to this point has suggested that the artistic compositions of Busi Mhlongo as well as Miriam Makeba speak to the realities of Black womxn who endure the hardships of social life in South African society owing to a system inaugurated for the specified purpose of exploiting and dehumanising Blackness/Indigeneity. Using Mohanty (1993), I have indicated how culture is a useful and powerful tool when thinking about philosophical problems that continue to press the philosopher and social scientist to think creatively and imaginatively about old problems and questions. Premised on cultural identity as a worthy space for thinking about philosophical problems and in line with the critique levelled by Dotson (2011) against the epistemically arrogant questions that challenge the legitimacy of philosophical problems such as these, I wish to consider in more depth the notion of validity and the epistemic merits of the Black Archive in enriching theory development and generation.

Validity (Lindholm 2008, 15) points to the truthfulness of the artwork and its expression, through ascertaining its authenticity. Mbulu's work, I maintain—from the brief socio-political analysis presented above—challenges the false claim of equality between Black and white and is substantiated by the realities of the majority who continue to exist in poverty and under inhumane conditions. Ascertaining truth/truthfulness and validity in Mbulu's work compels the contemporary philosopher to explore the relationship between language, experience and knowledge imbedded in traditional philosophies, as discussed by Sontag (2001, 172). Sontag (2001) maintains that at times it is necessary to silence the art critic in order to appreciate the artwork in

its phenomenological reality. The concept of the phenomenological here is used in the philosophical sense.

Silencing the critic promulgates the spectators' capacity to see the work in relation to the social conditions within which it is produced. This facilitates the move that I am advocating for in this analysis—broadening our social theory through the resurrection of the Black Archive. Seeing an artwork in its social conditions, construed as seeing the uses/usefulness of the Black Archive, broadens our epistemic frameworks to systematically consider social and cultural modes of being, a position advocated by Mohanty (1993). These socio-cultural modes of being, which invariably differ from person to person owing to divergent subjectivities, substantiate the authenticity of Mbulu's work when we begin to carefully pay attention to the realities of many who continue to eke out an existence on the margins. Differing subjectivities as they relate to an artwork substantiate Bourriaud's (2002) contention when he writes about relational aesthetics. Bourriaud argues that the nature of how we relate to an artwork will subsequently instantiate dialogue as we read said artworks from our varied and divergent epistemic positions and subjective positionalities. This broadened understanding of knowledge, that takes seriously the role and place of the Black Archive, substantiates Sontag's (2001) argument that a silencing of disciplinary knowledge and its experts, the critics, is required as a method of allowing experiential knowledge to inform disciplinary discourse.

The use of the Black Archive as a mode of understanding the social ills that plague Black life in South Africa, while factually striving for freedom and justice, highlights the mandatory move of silencing the critic (the traditional philosophical questions and disciplinary decadence) in order to allow the artwork to speak for itself. Silencing the art critic and the disciplinary expert allows the artwork to speak from its social and political contextualities.

However, as noted by Sontag (2001), this poses some challenges as the validity of the claims of the artist are imbedded in language. Language is a constitutive element of knowledge, as it explains cultural meaning-making processes. Here I pause to reconsider experiential knowledge as detailed through Mhlongo and Makeba. Experiential knowledge, read as and through the Black Archive, broadens our epistemic frameworks and informs the artists' creative project, which mirrors society while launching a social criticism, i.e. Socratic Social Criticism. Socratic Social Criticism implies that the artist is speaking against injustice, as does Mbulu, in the instance of "Not Yet Uhuru," when she asserts "akukho mehluko kulelizwe—qhawul'amakhamandela" (We have not yet attained the freedoms we had hoped for—break the chains of bondage). This assertion suggests notions of being at home and being "unhomed" (with an erudite analysis of the concept of being unhomed offered by Kapp and Bangeni [2011]). The promise of democracy presaged Blackness being at home in the land of its forebears, while the failure of this promise/hope denotes being unhomed through continued relegation. This relegation further substantiates the position

advanced in this paper regarding the role of colonialism(s)/apartheid and contemporary coloniality continuing to tear away at Black family life in the country.

However, I wish to complicate this seamless reading of Mbulu's work. While I agree with the claim that the majority still live in poverty, I am sceptical of the claim that there is no difference in the contemporary democratic dispensation in South Africa. My scepticism should not be read as a move that aims at invalidating the claims by the artist, I merely seek to complicate a seamless reading that suggests that democracy brought about no changes in our context. I aver that the changes that have been instituted are minimal, however, raise some caution against the overgeneralisation that nothing has changed in our context. With this framework in mind, and aware of the notion that much is yet to change in the country, I move on to consider the work of Leomile when she sings of the inherent dignity that ought to be given to each individual. Leomile in this regard extends and nuances Mbulu's critique and suggests a critical mode of thinking that is invested in curating social institutions that function with the intention of fashioning a just social order.

Leomile—"Song for Pulane"

Nt'sepise ha u na ts'aba
Ha u bona lehalima le senang letolo
Nts'epise ha u na tsaba
Hei ue-uena Pulane
Se lle likeleli
Pelo e ja serati
Se ts'abe linaleli

(Leomile 2016)

In an effort to curate social realities premised on a just and equitable world, Leomile is crucial. The lyrical composition above can either be read as a love poem, or as the pursuit of the heart's desires irrespective of the social conditions in which one exists. This is envisaged in how Leomile implores Pulane, when she maintains, "promise me you won't be scared [...] don't cry tears, the heart wants what it wants [...] don't be scared of the stars." This composition substantiates the work of Makhubu and Mbongwa (2019) when they maintain that love is the basis of most liberation struggles. When reading this claim from a position that takes seriously the work of Njabulo Ndebele when he writes about "Memory, Metaphor and the Triumph of Narrative" (1998), the reader better understands the argument that I am advancing here. Ndebele (1998, 20) argues that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was an attempt at rebirthing the country through the ritualistic act of lifting the "evil" through testimony and the move away from repression towards expression. Expression understood as the articulation of the heart's desires in the speech act of recounting the pain and anguish that accommodated the atrocities of apartheid further contextualises the claim by Makhubu and Mbongwa (2019), who argue that radical love ought to be understood as

decolonial philosophy in historic and contemporary struggles directed at the pursuit of freedom and liberation.

It is from a place of desire—a desire expressed as the attainment of freedom and liberation in the dignity of Blackness/Indigeneity—that we see the notion of “the heart wants what it wants.” Reading Leomile’s composition intertextually with Makeba’s, it is indeed the heart that desires to have the dignity of Blackness/Indigeneity recognised in the land of its forebears. Writing about the project of cultural constitution, articulated in the South African context through the Constitution of the country, Nuttall and Coetzee (1998) argue that the drafting of the Constitution in the country was seen as emblematic of the hopes and desires of the future of the country and what it was to become.

The reader ought to bear in mind that I—along with Nuttall and Coetzee—make this claim of desire on the premise of the preceding sections in this paper, whereby I read Makeba’s work through the life of Madikizela-Mandela. Leomile takes this position further when she maintains, “promise you won’t be scared when you see lightening without thunder,” a lyrical composition that invites questions pertaining to the work of Mbulu above. I make reference here to Mbulu specifically as I raise the question of whether indeed we can concur with those who overgeneralise Mbulu’s music to make the claim that nothing has changed in South Africa. Mbulu’s work is useful in this reading of Leomile’s composition in so far as Mbulu expresses the desires that the majority had in the aspiration(s) to see things change. When we read the composition “promise you won’t be scared when you see lightening without thunder,” Leomile can be understood as making the case for resiliency in the aim of not backing down, even as the socio-economic and socio-historic conditions may seem to have remained the same since the inception of democracy.

The move to overgeneralise Mbulu’s composition is complicated by the proposition cited from Nuttall and Coetzee (1998) that the Constitution was the embodiment of the desires for the future of South African society, a future that we ought to critically consider by way of questioning whether we are close to its attainment or rather further removed. This question arises from the analysis in the previous section where my argument led me to the position that indeed many in the country continue to live in abject poverty and squalor. A further question that the reader can pose is that of the responses that can be offered to this reality. Does the expression of love (understood as the hope and desire to have the humanity of Blackness/Indigeneity recognised), unrequited in the case of abject poverty and continued conditions of inequality, warrant anger and the social unrest witnessed in contemporary society? This anger is expressed through the continuing public service protests that have come to define South African reality on a daily basis. It would be remiss of me to offer an answer to these questions, as the duty of the philosopher lies in explicating social issues through propositional logic, as a way of fully comprehending the social afflictions that define society. This is

done to better understand the social afflictions so as to be better positioned in suggesting intervention strategies.

The desire to have one's humanity recognised, seen as the expression of love, is important when one reads the desire for liberation in tandem with this composition that constitutes the Black Archive. The petition, "promise me you won't be scared when you see lightening without thunder," invites the question of hope in the work of theorising the *Fact of Blackness*. Hope in this regard portends the capacity and the will to continue the struggles for substantive freedoms and emancipation, even in the face of destitution, construed as the lack of social changes in the socio-economic and socio-political conditions to which Blackness/Indigeneity has been consigned.

Leomile, as a contemporary contributor to the Black Archive, highlights the uses of looking to the Black Archive to glean new perspectives to old questions and probing the possibilities of new, collective and cohesive futures in a post-conflictual society such as ours. In light of this framework, by way of conclusion, I now move on to further consider the implications of colonial impositions on Black life. Using Oliver Mtukudzi's critique of the perversions of power that abound in society, seen through the socially relegated status of Black womxn, my critique is aimed at inspiring similar projects in other disciplines that constitute the Black Archive i.e. African languages and literature, art history and theory, art practice, history, and philosophy, to mention a few.

Ndagarwa Nhaka—A Critique-Based Reflection

Ndagarwa nhaka amai
Ndagarwa nhaka munin'ina
Ndagarwa nhaka ini
Nemoyo chena
Ndawana wekuchemera mambo
Ndawana anondichengeta
Ndawana wekukurira mambo
Nekuyemera

(Mtukudzi 2000)

Critiquing the social institution of "inheritance," Tuku frames much of the argument that I have been developing in this paper. Looking at the perversions of a social institution that was aimed at protecting womxn and children, Tuku surfaces the implications of a phallogocentric society that centres the desires of men while neglecting the realities of womxn. Tuku is useful here in surfacing a number of questions that I find pertinent for the work that has been conducted in this analysis. First, understanding the impact that colonialism had on Black social life in southern African, why do we continue to be defined by the colonial impositions that arrested our societies? This question is echoed by the artist Ntsika (2019) when he sings "Alkebulan vela abantwana bakho, they still suffer from the curse of colonial pain [...] Alkebulan please remind

your leaders, blood was shed—isizwe esimnyama safa saphela—fighting for this freedom.”

Second, if indeed the South African context is defined by one of the world’s finest constitutions—how is it that womxn continue to be treated as second-class citizens? Third, can we continue to blame coloniality and European modernity for the persistent afflictions of the African continent? I surface this question with regard to the music of Tuku who decries how African social systems have become corrupted by those who were supposed to act as the guardians of culture. In light of this, I wish to echo the work of Wicomb when she considers the question of culture in the new South Africa. Wicomb writes,

if a culture has been arrested and tipped into alien trappings, then tradition becomes a hypothetical notion. We have to imagine how certain practices, given certain conditions, would have developed, or whether they would have been retained at all. To haul up traditions through the centuries is to do what Johannes Fabian accuses European anthropologists of, a “denial of coevalness,” or of believing that we do not experience time as the European does. (Wicomb 2018a, 39–40)

While culture continues to define modes of life on the southern tip of the African continent, I wonder whether we should consider a holistic revision of culture as a mode of recognising the undeniable, inherent and inalienable dignity of womxn in our context. Answering these questions lies in a further consideration of the Black Archive as a mode of gaining new and interesting perspectives on old questions that define the afflictions that abound in our context.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to my colleagues, brothers in scholarship, and critical readers—Katlego Chale and Professor Theodore Van Wyk—for their critical eye and comments on an earlier version of this paper. I am indebted to you both, gentlemen, for helping me strengthen my argument through your comments, insights, and critique.

I am thankful to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development for the gracious invitation to present this paper at the Stellenbosch University colloquium, 6 March 2020, that focused on stemming the scourge of Gender-Based Violence on University campuses.

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