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# Resurrecting the Black Archive through the decolonisation of philosophy in South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

While acknowledging the impact of colonial imposition and violence, in this paper, I challenge the notions of epistemicide and linguicide in South Africa as claimed by some decolonial scholars. Using the Black Archive by drawing from S.E.K. Mqhayi's historical accounts, I argue that to claim linguicide and by extension epistemicide, only perpetuates the erasure of profound Indigenous thinkers such as S.E.K. Mqhayi and W.W. Gqoba. My second move is to showcase how the Black Archive can be used to substantively engage the ontologies of Blackness/Indigeneity in the contemporary university. This move resurrects the Black Archive while constituting the decolonial mission; teaching from a pedagogical predisposition that is locally responsive while simultaneously being globally relevant. I submit that this framework works towards epistemic restitution.

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## Introduction

I begin by considering how erasure and self-negation are exacerbated by the claim of epistemicide in our context.<sup>1</sup> This consideration highlights the maintenance of continued relegation vis-à-vis Black/Indigenous knowledge(s) owing to the claim of epistemicide.<sup>2</sup> While my analysis acknowledges colonial imposition and subsequent epistemic slighting, I aim to defend the position that our context experienced systematic attempted epistemic erasure that was and continues to be unsuccessful. This is not to deny the historicity of coloniality, but rather to showcase that the claim of epistemicide only intensifies epistemic injustice. Simply put, I aim to make the case, through contesting epistemicide and linguicide, that this claim maintains the sociality of epistemic practices in Philosophy as

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**Isingeniso** Singaluphikanga udlame olwaqhamuka nokucindezelwa kolwazi lwabantu abantsundu kuleli lakithi (laseNingizimu neAfrika), kulombhalo ngiphikisa umbono obekwe izingcitha-buchopho lapho beqokisa ngokuthi izilwimi kanye nolwazi lwethu lwashabalala ngenxa yalo loludlame. Ngokusebenzisa imibhalo ka SEK Mqhayi eqokethwe kwiNqolobane yesizwe – lapho eqopha futhi eshicilela umlando – ngibeka umbono oveza ukuthi lapho sibambelela kulomcabango wokuthi izilwimi kanye nobuciko bolwazi lwakithi kwashabalala ngenxa yodlame nenduzula yengcindezi yabamhlophe, sibhebhethekisa ukushabalala kolwazi oludidiyelwe iZanusi ezifana nabhali o-SEK Mqhayi kanye no WW Gqoba. Ngokwesibili, ngikhangisa ukusetshenziswa kweNqolobane le, lapho siyibenzisela ukucwaninga –ngokuphusile– ubuciko namasiko esintu kwizikhungo zemfundo ephakeme. Lokhu kuvuselela kabusha, isidima kanye nokwazisa indawo yeNqolobane yesizwe – lapho isetshenziselwe khona ukufezekisa izifiso zokulwisana nale ngcindezi. Lokhu kubika imizamo yethu yokufundisa ngenhloso yokuthola izisombululo zezinkinga ezihaqe isizwe, nalapho siyisebenzisela ukuphendulana nezinkiyankiya nezigigaba esibhekene nazo njengomhlaba jikelele. Ngokwami, ngiqokisa ngokuthi ngalendlela yokuhlela ulwazi siyakwazi ukuthi sisebenzele futhi sifezekisa isifiso sokubona ulwazi lwethu, njengabantu abantsundu, lubuyiselwa isidima, lwaziswa ngemfanelo; ezweni loBab'omkhulu.

discipline. My argument hinges on the Black Archive.<sup>3</sup> In complicating the use of epistemicide, my aim is to showcase that language allows us access into knowledge that existed historically and remained irrespective of colonial imposition. Language undergirds, demonstrates and instantiates the Black Archive. The process of reclaiming knowledge that was displaced by colonial imposition is frustrated by claims such as epistemicide and linguicide, as these claims abrogate the starting point of re-remembering and remembering. Abrogation of this sort has led to the contentious and salacious want for the 'intellectualisation of African languages' for instance. This is to say that abrogation in this sense denies the existence and displaces the contributions of scholars and thinkers such as Nontsizi Mqgqwetho, Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, Mazisi Kunene and SEK Mqhayi.

While South Africa grapples with a number of discontinuities owing to the 'disruptions [wrought by] colonialism' (Abrahams 2003), and as Quayson (2002) states it, 'we have always been consigned to responding from the place where we ought not to have been standing', I however, maintain that the Black Archive allows us to contextually understand epistemic harms.<sup>4</sup> While these harms might have been inflicted as early as the seventeenth century as detailed by Coetzee (1988) in *White Writing: The Culture of Letters in South Africa*, they do not amount to the claim of epistemicide in South Africa (consider Lebakeng et al. 2006; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Ramose 2004). Ramose (2014, 72), however, is cognisant of the shortfalls with this claim as he notes,

It was a systematic, systemic and sustained epistemicide which *failed*, despite its intensity and vigour, to kill completely and totally the indigenous cultures of Africa. This is the violent context within which Socrates was transported to Africa as the omniscient teacher endowed with the highest competence in the conduct of a deadly monologue (own emphasis added in italics).

My argument is that claims of epistemicide in South Africa are misplaced. I am therefore interested in the development of a concept that explains this problem without running into the challenges highlighted above of displacement and denial. This assertion is rooted in the wealth of knowledge that remains untapped by the Historically White Institutions (HWI).<sup>5</sup> I suggest that by inviting<sup>6</sup> this knowledge into the contemporary University, we begin to think critically about epistemic justice and restitution. Epistemic restitution is annulled owing to the lack of a shared ethical intuition; a point substantiated by the lack of engagement with the Black Archive.<sup>7</sup> This slack engagement motivates claims of epistemicide and linguicide in the country. Furthermore, epistemic restitution is reduced to a non-starter by Black/Indigenous scholars who shore-up the notion of epistemicide. Resultantly, I invite my reader to consider the following questions. If indeed we have experienced epistemicide, how do we begin working towards epistemic restitution; a request that underpins the decolonial tradition? Moreover, is epistemic restitution subsequently meant to be a form of cultural invention? These questions undergird my critique.

My argument subsequently deals with the lack of a shared ethical intuition. I showcase that Fricker's (2007) proposition (of a shared ethical intuition) does not do sufficient work in our context. I maintain that we not only lack a shared ethical intuition vis-à-vis the colour line/divide but more so, as a tradition; those invested in fighting against epistemic impositions that displace Blackness/Indigeneity. I suggest that there is a lack of a shared ethical intuition even amongst Black/Indigenous philosophers, therefore exacerbating

erasure and self-negation, owing to minimal engagement with the Black Archive. The claim of epistemicide rests on not having fully engaged and exhausted the possibilities of the Black Archive. Mine then, lies in dispelling the myth of epistemicide and linguicide, and highlighting the role of the Black Archive in epistemic restitution.

There are two motivations to my argument. The first challenges the disciplines' failure to acknowledge knowledge of philosophical import that exists outside of Philosophy as discipline, resulting in the continued Eurocentric notions that define Philosophy. Dotson (2011) takes issue with this mode of exclusion maintaining that it inculcates ignorance and limits the kinds of questions that the philosopher can ask by privileging a western-centric and Eurocentric conception of knowledge. Secondly, I aim to showcase how an engagement with the Black Archive locates epistemic slighting in the historical machinations that define South African socio-political and socio-historical reality.

Derived from the critique of Fricker's (2007) theory, and as my second move, I will showcase how the Black Archive works towards epistemic restitution. I do not dismiss Fricker's contribution, rather the aim is to showcase how the South African context is such that there is no shared ethical intuition. Fricker (2007, 86) suggests the cultivation of virtuous traits in hearers subsequently counteracting the risk of prejudice(s) distorting the perceptions of the hearer. Developing a virtue schema for testimonial justice, Fricker (2007, 86) suggests an examination of the 'anti-prejudicial current that the virtuous hearer's sensibility needs to contain in order' to steer clear of committing further testimonial injustices against the speaker. Fricker subsequently inquires of 'the critical awareness needed for a hearer to be able to correct for identity prejudice in a given credibility judgement' (2007, 90). This is foregrounded by uMqhayi's sentiments, when he notes that '[i]ntetho nemikhwa yesiXhosa iyatshona ngokutshona ngenxa yelizwi nokhanyo olukhoyo, oluze nezizwe zase Ntshona-langa'<sup>8</sup> (1914, v). uMqhayi demonstrates epistemic injustices derived from colonial imposition, and subsequently suggests that, '[y]indawo yomlisela nomthinjana wasemaXhoseni, ukuba akhangele ngokucokisekileyo ukuba iya kuthi, yakutshonela iphelele le ntetho nale mikhwa inesidima yakowawo, kutshonele nto ni na emveni koko'<sup>9</sup> (1914, v). It is clear to note that as early as the 20<sup>th</sup> century uMqhayi had begun thinking about the ethics of power and knowing; a preoccupation inspired by the epistemic slighting of Black/Indigenous knowers due to colonial imposition. Furthermore, I contend that the credibility deficit instituted by colonial categories of thought continues to be perpetuated by scholars who claim epistemicide in our context. The sociality of epistemic injustice, so construed, surfaces an element of Fricker's argument, i.e.

For a hearer to identify the impact of identity power in their credibility judgement, they must be alert to the impact not only of the speaker's social identity but also of the impact of their own social identity on their credibility judgement (2007, 91).

## Contesting epistemicide through language

To frame the historical encounters in the country as an attempted epistemic erasure that was unsuccessful is rooted in the knowledge that continues to define the realities of our context and the African continent. I begin with the proposition that language on the continent challenges the claim of epistemicide a point that will become clearer as

I develop my argument through code-switching. Code-switching (or what is now commonly known as translanguaging), demonstrates the instantiation of epistemic restitution through the Black Archive in the academe. I code-switch with the aim of demonstrating how 'new' questions have been considered historically albeit in different forms and in varied mediums. Lastly, code-switching in this treatise demonstrates an epistemic justice praxis.

To make the point of a systematically attempted epistemic erasure as opposed to epistemicide, more vividly I work through Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2015, 493) argument,

At another level, the decoloniality articulated here involves re-telling [sic] of history of humanity and knowledge from the vantage point of those epistemic sites that received the 'darker side' of modernity, including re-telling the story of knowledge generation as involving borrowings, appropriations, epistemicides, and denials of humanity of other people as part of the story of science.

Re-telling history from those epistemic sites that received the 'darker side' of modernity is interesting in how Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) seems, in this instance, to be flattening the topography that defines the variance of experiences among colonised peoples. To demonstrate, consider Kumalo's (2018a) analysis of two houses, uKumalo noMagubane, conceptually framed as dialogically responding to one another. Kumalo contends that, 'claiming the innocence that is created by *Inyosi*<sup>10</sup> as he reframes, remembers and re-members history, uMagubane is created as an innocent actor in his nation building project.' (2018a, 208–209). I ought to clarify two concepts here. Kumalo (2018a) makes reference to remembering and re-remembering history. In these two instances Kumalo (2018a) highlights orality as a legitimate source of knowledge production seen in his argument as the use of clan names. Orality in the case of remembering is important as it relays and inflects historical narrative with the names of the men and womxn who were worthy of being remembered through *izibongo*. Remembering, through orality, inscribes an Indigenous identity as the names of one's forebears define(d) and are defined by the landscape, bestowing an 'Adamic language' as detailed by Coetzee (1988) when he writes of a language that is born of the landscape and not imposed.

On the second matter of re-remembering, Kumalo (2018a) takes seriously political negotiations in the project of telling histories. Simply put, the narratives constructed by *Inyosi* are subject to contestation(s), deletions and embellishments, as a conscious political move. My analysis of the Kumalo house as represented by uMzilikazi and detailed by Kumalo (2018a) surfaces this point poignantly. U-Mzilikazi's clan names that record and relay his nation building project kwaBulawayo highlights the celebration of what can be termed cruelty seen in the assertion, (Kumalo 2018a, 202) 'yena omuzi wakhe wagcotshwa ngegazi lesitha sakhe.'<sup>11</sup> There are subsequently two components of remembering being referenced here, the first being orality as a legitimate source of knowledge production, which augments the second, in that orality is the epistemic tool used to construct elaborate histories told through *izibongo*.

Remembering and re-remembering is facilitated by language with the contemporary Black/Indigenous scholar accessing this knowledge through Indigenous language(s). This point is addressed by Kumalo (2018a) when he explains what he means by excavation. He argues that excavation ought to be construed precisely as the processes of surfacing

aspects of history that have been buried as a result of colonial impositions that constrain African modes of being. Consider excavation (Kumalo 2018a, 202) through the following,

*Ngibingelela koNkomose, koJiyane, koNdlandla, wena wakwaMpahle'mhlophe, ingabamnyama yeza nomdlakazi. Ngibingelela oMagubane, oNkomose, oJiyane izithuthwa ezidala, ezahamba lomhlaba, zithungatha zakh'isizwe. Isizwe esakhuluma nezizwe, kaze izikhali babezithathephi? KungezaMantungwa, oMbulaze abamnyama, abaletha ubumnyama beza nomdlakazi. OMabaso, ababas'entabeni ilanga lishona, bebikezela ukuza komDlakazi ngokukhothamisa izizwe zabangesheya koThukela! Isandla sikaMzilikazi esakha isizwe, omuzi wakhe wagcotshwa ngegazi lesitha sikaNdaba. Sikhulekile!<sup>12</sup>*

Excavation is performative in these clan names that constitute acts of recalling and remembering those who inflected history through their actions. The performative speech act is demonstrated by uMagubane's clan names that portray him with childlike innocence in the assertion 'wena wakwaMpahle'mhlophe, ingabamnyama yeza nomdlakazi' (Kumalo 2018a, 202). Furthermore, the performative speech act of oral historical narrative frames uMzilikazi through the preceding names of 'oMbulaze abamnyama [...] oMabaso ababas'entabeni ilanga lishona, bebikezela ukuza komDlakazi' (Kumalo 2018a, 202). Excavation therefore, denotes the duality of remembering and re-remembering, facilitating our capacity to question both the validity of what is remembered and to conduct a moral evaluation of the actions of those who are remembered. To explicate this point further, consider when Kumalo (2018a) writes,

Through the invocation of the old names, uS'hleza, uSandile, uDzanibe kaDazakatshane, uNqolo, uMahlamb'ehlaletsheni ngenxa yokwezwela ithawula – the lives and stories of these men and women, remembered through the clan names of uScina<sup>13</sup> inform my ontological foundations and epistemological inclinations. In their erasure, through relegating this knowledge to the realm of mythology, a relegation similar to Maitra [exposition] of testimonial injustice, I am faced with the inherent ontological denial derived from colonial imposition continued by the contemporary South African university.

This exposition reveals the role of language in the life of the contemporary Black/Indigenous being, as they move between modernity and Indigeneity. It can only be in the complete erasure of these oral historical narratives that we can claim epistemicide. While the Black/Indigenous subject still has access to this knowledge, the claim of epistemicide can be construed as a fallacy in our context.<sup>14</sup> These histories only demonstrate a fraction of the vast knowledge that constitutes the Black Archive. This is not to dismiss the challenges that came with colonialism and coloniality on the continent. I merely seek to demonstrate that this claim is perhaps better suited for contexts such as the Iberian Peninsula where it was not only language, but also culture that were erased owing to colonial imposition. Consider a contrasting example in the work of Grosfoguel (2013) when he writes,

The forced expulsion of Muslims and Jews from their land (genocide) led to the repopulation of the territory with Christian populations from the North of the Iberian Peninsula (Caro Baroja 1991; Carrasco 2009). This is what in the literature is called today "settler colonialism."

Two observations can be made here. The first is to acknowledge that there were and continue to be similarities with settler colonialism between the two contexts, in the forced removals of the locals from territories that were to be occupied by colonial settlers. This is evinced in the Group Areas Act of 1950 in South Africa. However, the cultural genocide

identified by Grosfoguel (2013) did not occur on the same terms in South Africa.<sup>15</sup> This is substantiated using Kumalo's (2018a) argument, when he details how the contemporary Black/Indigenous being still has access to the modes of life of her/his ancestors – seen through the proliferating practices of ubungoma.<sup>16</sup>

This is not to say that I contest the validity of Mamdani's (2005) claim that political identity in Africa is still ensnared in categories established by colonial matrices of power. While I acknowledge this, as Falola and Heaton (2008) argue that the cultures of Nigeria were transformed and transfigured by interactions between native identities and British colonial incursion, I cannot acquiesce to the claim that owing to coloniality we can and must dismiss all African modes of life as an invention of colonial imposition. Simply put, while I acknowledge Mamdani's (2005) argument that the postcolonial state is still trapped in categories developed by the colonial state apparatus, this cannot dismiss African realities that are still defined by African languages; languages<sup>17</sup> that reveal a world outside of the political economy instituted by colonial imposition. To demonstrate the seriousness with which I take this point as raised by Falola and Heaton (2008) and Mamdani (2005), I present uMqhayi's (1917) historical account of uMpande's life. uMqhayi writes,

Apo ke ngoku u Mpande aze kungena kona ke yena kusemveni kweloduli. Ute ngokupateka kakubi kumkuluwa wake u Dingana wade wacinga ukuba makamkwelele, aye kuzicelela indawo ezintshabeni paya, kuba hleze abulawe ngomhla otile omnye. Ute kuba u Mpande uza nomkhosi ongqindilili wempi engakolwayo sisipato sika Dingana, avuya kakulu ama Bhulu esithso nokuti yimpendulo yemitandazo yawo.<sup>18</sup> ([1917]/2009, 453)

uMqhayi allows me to concede that colonial imposition and incursion altered African modes of life, resulting in the transfigurations of Black/Indigenous political economies. However, this does not take away from Kumalo's (2018a) assertions that the Black Archive allows us to access knowledge that contested colonial incursion and continues to exist even in the (post)colonial<sup>19</sup> African political economy. The Black Archive is constituted by counter hegemonic historical accounts, that demonstrate why epistemicide is misplaced in our context. Critical intellectual work cannot dismiss the reality of these incursions, however, we must acknowledge that they were in no way tantamount to those documented by Grosfoguel (2013). Simply, while I acknowledge the changes instituted in the lineages of isizwe sika Zulu, I cannot accept that they were solely visited on us by white colonial incursion.<sup>20</sup> This would be tantamount to devaluing the agential power of historical figures, i.e. uMpande no Cetshwayo in fashioning their realities as aided and abetted by whiteness. This caveat surfaces that while I am in agreement with Falola and Heaton (2008), I cannot speak of the Nigerian context in the same ways that I can speak of South Africa.

In light of this, I contend that the claim of epistemicide is a misnomer in South Africa. However, I will acknowledge the role of colonial imposition on the African continent as indicated by uMqhayi ([1917]/2009), 451 when he writes, 'lomfo [ingu Mpande] ngunyana ka Senzangakhona, – u Tshaka no Dingana ngabakuluwa kuye; yena wayengowezindlwana ezisemva kanye, engacingeki ukuba anagze ade ongamele ubukumkani bakwa Zulu bakwa Malandela.'<sup>21</sup> Acknowledging colonial incursion must come with a further acknowledgement, i.e. the counter historical narrative that underpins our claims of epistemic injustice/harms. Furthermore, this double acknowledgement surfaces the role

of the Black Archive in epistemic restitution. To remind my reader, recall the questions that challenge epistemic restitution as a project premised of cultural invention. If, on the other hand, there was no access to the Black Archive we could entertain the notion of epistemicide and linguicide. Our access to the Black Archive through languages that survive to this day displaces cultural invention that expresses an unjustifiable desire to equate the experiences of South Africans to the broader Black diaspora.

On ‘borrowings and appropriations’ as dealt with by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, 493), it is not surprising that history as told by the victors of the battle between amaZulu and whiteness elides uMpande’s role. I subsequently agree that this move, revealing the entirety of history and the role of those who continue to be erased from it, is of immense import. Furthermore, a holistic historical account is substantiated by Mqhayi (1917, 455) when he claims,

Kude kwati kupi u Cetshwayo watenjiswa ngabamhlope nama Zulu ukuba ekufeni kuka yise iyoba nguye inkosi yakwaZulu; zaqala ke izinto zangati ziyazola, kuba lomfo wayesel’ eyilonto ukuzingela umfo ozakutata lendawo kayise; ukuze ambulale. Ngomnyaka we 1872 wab’ub’a u Mpande. Wafa umfo ewuhlanganisile umzi ka Zulu ekubeni zintsali zemfazwe ngemfazwe, – kodwa eyifumene londawo ngokusinikela isizwe sakowabo.<sup>22</sup>

In this historical exposition, uMqhayi demonstrates the role of each party on the colonial divide. It is important to note that, ‘kodwa eyifumene londawo ngokusinikela isizwe sakowabo’<sup>23</sup> (Mqhayi 1917, 455), demonstrating the complexity that came with negotiating colonial imposition and rule among the Black/Indigenous subjectivities in South Africa. I maintain that in the claim of epistemicide, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) and all those who would follow in this trajectory (locally) flatten the complexities inherently obvious through a systematic engagement with history through the Black Archive. The Black Archive highlights how the claim of epistemicide and linguicide does not and cannot hold, contextually. In this respect, it might be useful to find a new concept that might describe what we witness in the country. This new concept would serve the purpose of highlighting the violence of colonial imposition, while not eliding and further burying the knowledge that was developed by Black/Indigenous thinkers – including their response to colonial violence.

In denying the Black Archive and relegating it outside of the archives of philosophy of history, we witness a fundamental epistemic harm committed against those whose history is subsequently erased. Epistemic injustice in this regard manifests as hermeneutic injustices, which are a constitutive part of the structural and agential power exhibited to inflict said epistemic harms. It is on the basis of this analysis that I now consider the shortfalls with Fricker’s (2007) theory. I reiterate that my critique does not challenge Fricker’s model, rather it highlights the insufficiencies of this theory for our context.

### ***Critiquing Fricker’s model of epistemic justice***

To approach epistemic justice using Fricker’s theory in South Africa, poses a number of challenges. Fricker’s theory is premised on a communally ‘shared ethical intuition’ that presupposes an agreed upon set of terms around epistemic engagements while downplaying the reality of divergent epistemic traditions. This challenge might take us into the terrain of ethicists, requiring a distinction between virtue and duty ethicists. This

distinction implicitly surfaces some of the disagreements between Afrocentric and Euro-North American conceptions of ethics. I will, however, not deal with these differences as I am interested in the underlying assumptions behind Fricker's virtue epistemology conception of justice and not the distinctions that characterise the Afrocentric and Euro-North American traditions.<sup>24</sup>

Fricker's (2007) notion of a shared ethical intuition presupposes a community of epistemic agents that ought to act in an ethical way towards one another. This is framed as: 'any epistemic injustice wrongs someone in their capacity as a subject of knowledge, and thus in a capacity essential to human value; and the particular way in which a testimonial injustice does this is that a hearer wrongs a speaker in [her]/his capacity as a giver of knowledge, as an informant' (Fricker 2007, 5). When closely examined, Fricker takes a couple of things for granted. The first being a disregard of the divergences in the epistemic traditions that constitute a given community. This presupposition presents a challenge when dealing with a (post)colonial context such as ours wherein there exist glaring differences premised on a racialised social order. A social order premised on prejudices derived from centuries of colonial domination results in the knowledge(s) of the oppressed groups being disregarded as lacking any epistemic merit, which has culminated in the call for epistemic restitution and/or justice in the South African academe. The fractures, to which I allude, in the epistemic community are not only confined to those between settlers and Indigenous subjectivities, but exist among Indigenous groups. Historically, these fractures are evinced between those who acquiesced to Christian civilisation (*amakholwa*) and those who resisted colonial imposition (*amaqaba*), with Mda (2000) systematically laying this out in *The Heart of Redness*.

To illustrate this point further, consider my preceding argument, wherein I highlight the lack of a shared ethical intuition in the tradition of decolonial thinkers, who are themselves claiming epistemicide. I detail this point using Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2015, 494) argument when he writes, '[decolonising] the mind speaks to the urgency of dealing with epistemicides and linguicides. Moving the centre addresses the problem of Euro-North American centrism. Remembering is about uniting a dismembered and fragmented continent.' Ndlovu-Gatsheni is partly right in his suggestion of moving the centre to address epistemic injustice and harms seen in the suggestion that 're-membering is about uniting a dismembered and fragmented continent' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015, 494). I will not deal with the notion of epistemicide and linguicide as I have dealt with it, in the preceding section.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2015) notion of moving the centre highlights the heterogeneity of our (post)colonial context. Heterogeneity is addressed in Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2015) argument when he suggests that, 'moving the centre addresses the problem of Euro-North American centrism.' Ndlovu-Gatsheni here, joins the tradition of Africana philosophers, aptly captured by Outlaw's (2018) critique of European philosophers who disqualified and erased the humanity of African peoples by claiming the superiority of western thinking. Outlaw frames this thinking thusly,

For centuries the standard claim of western practitioners and historians of philosophical thought was that philosophy was the creation *sui generis* of Greek thinkers, of none other on Earth, a legacy that was somehow bequeathed to western Europe and, along with defining and leading the 'progress of civilisation,' has been cultivated and conveyed by Europeans across history and geography to other locales where, supposedly, neither civilisation nor philosophy existed (Outlaw 2018, 245)

In this regard, the consideration becomes, how can a theory of epistemic justice take seriously the affective trauma and heterogeneity that exists within (postcolonial) epistemic communities, therefore delivering on its aims; authentic or fundamental justice.

The challenge to the discipline of Philosophy is to overcome the misplaced claims to universality by Euro-Western and North America thinkers. As Outlaw writes, 'central to these ventures [of European colonial expansion and dispossession] was the denial of the humanity of African peoples . . . denials that required elaborate rationalisations from those most "able" of European thinkers, among them the long-since canonised philosophers Kant, Hegel, Hume' (2017, 246). The disqualification of African people as irrational and unthinking beings, prompts the political philosopher to carefully and pragmatically think about an ethical episteme.

This challenge takes seriously the socio-historical conditions of possibility that have given rise to the demand for epistemic restitution/justice in our context. Taking seriously these socio-political and socio-historical elements recognises the affective power of knowledge, and surfaces the politics in/of knowing. This includes the need to overcome the trauma of racial relations that instilled inferiority and superiority complexes, alienation and neurosis in the colonised subject. Addressing epistemic injustice in this sense means acknowledging not only the heterogeneity of the postcolonial academe but also the affective/psychic need to reclaim a positive Black subjectivity and for some, a positive collective African identity.

Fricker's (2007) theory attempts to think through these challenges, but from a perspective that elides the complexity inherent in the postcolonial condition. Thus I contend that Fricker's theory is insufficient to deal with the challenges encountered in our context. With this framework in mind, I invite my reader to consider the following question:

How does the contemporary academe in the postcolony establish a community of ethical epistemic agency, while also addressing the complexity and heterogeneity of this community?

I now move on to consider the function of the Black Archive in facilitating our capacity to re-imagine the contemporary higher education system. I contend that the lessons gleaned from the South African context can be useful in aiding the project of decolonising higher education – specifically in contexts that continue to be defined by (post)colonial relations, such as ours.

### **The Black Archive as alternative**

Having demonstrated the limitations of Fricker's (2007) underlying assumption that presupposes a shared ethical intuition, in what follows, I lay the foundations for the project of epistemic restitution. Using the Black Archive, I re-imagine our contemporary higher education landscape – through a praxis that is both locally responsive and globally relevant. This move will demonstrate what I mean by resurrecting the Black Archive as a form of epistemic restitution. Before I move on to do this work, I want to address an objection that may be levelled against my analysis. This objection comes as the claim that what I suggest here has already been done, with some critics citing the case of African Languages Department's teaching the work of Abner Nyamende and AC Jordan – specifically the University of Cape

Town's African Languages Department. My response to this objection is simply, that my critics use a single case of institutional awareness.<sup>25</sup> My argument, in discussing works that are constitutive of the Black Archive, makes a broader and far reaching claim, i.e. that the Black Archive should not only be confined to the constrictions of African Languages' Departments, but that it is further useful also to disciplines like Political Sciences, Philosophy, Music, and Art Theory. Furthermore, as noted in note 1 and substantiated by Etieyibo's claim (2018) in note 25, the delimitation and confinement of the Black Archive to African Languages' Departments creates a blissful ignorance that erases, negates and denies the scholarly contribution of Black/Indigenous scholars in the country. Simply put, these scholars, i.e. Mazisi Kunene, Abner Nyamende, WB Vilakazi, have all treated and applied themselves to the question of conceptual decolonisation and due credence needs to be afforded to their scholarly contributions. This acknowledgement contests the suggestion that knowledge is knowledge only insofar as it is produced by white thinkers and scholars in the country.

I begin, then, by explicating Antony's (2012) argument, revealing implicit modes of erasure that are unintentional. Antony (2012) highlights the implications of unintended/implicit erasures and self-negation that have been partly addressed in the first section of the paper through my critique of claims of epistemicide and linguicide. Louise Antony (2012) suggests a move away from the 'Different Voices' model, developed by Buckwalter and Stitch, to a 'Perfect Storm' model, which – she contends, does more to analyse the problem of Philosophy as discipline, globally. The Different Voices model, Antony (2012) suggests, is unsubstantiated as it will always use fallacious reasoning that relies on the differences between the sexes. My reader will recall Outlaw's critique of European philosophers who dismissed and disqualified entire peoples from human history on the basis of European thought being the only epistemic framework that espouses rationality. It is on this line of reasoning that Antony's (2012) critique can be extended to an analysis concerning Blackness/Indigeneity in South Africa. This disqualification is the basis from which we can speak of the epistemic harms that have dehumanised peoples of the periphery, a move that is contemporarily contested by the decolonial philosopher.

Antony (2012) argues that the Different Voices model, continues to institute and inscribe differences within the disciplinary community when in fact what we ought to be looking at are the factors that influence how the University mirrors the social problems of its location. She (Antony 2012, 234) suggests that the Perfect Storm is constituted by 'convergence, interaction, and intensification' with these three components viewed as the coalescing forces that lead to the attrition of womxn from Philosophy as discipline. In detailing the interaction of forces, Antony, uses the work of Crenshaw (1991) to argue that, 'if all the black people hired have been men, and all the womxn hired or promoted have been white, it is at least plausible that racism and sexism have converged in a unique way to systematically disadvantage black women' (2012, 233). Crenshaw (1991, 1245–1246) describes intersectionality in the following ways, 'women of colour [...] being] burdened by poverty, child care responsibilities, and the lack of job skills. These burdens, largely the consequence of gender and class oppression, are then compounded by the racially discriminatory employment and housing women of colour face [...]'. Crenshaw (1991, 1243) then makes the argument for a holistic approach to dealing with oppression in anti-racist and feminist struggles. She frames this move in the following way – 'although there are significant political and conceptual obstacles to moving against

structures of domination with an intersectional sensibility, my point is that the effort to do so should be a central theoretical and political objective.'

An intersectional approach, therefore, highlights the factors at play in the disciplinary arrangements that can be conceived as the social relations of epistemic practice. Antony, in concord with Crenshaw, substantiates this point, claiming that 'race and sex – together with any other socially significant parameters of human variation – can be thought of as axes defining a multidimensional space' (2012, 233). Antony (2012) extends Fricker's argument that our epistemic practices are defined by the social conditions wherein our epistemic practices play out. This line of thinking takes seriously the role of social factors as they shape the knowledge project, not only in Philosophy as discipline, but more broadly in the modern/western University.

A decolonial approach entails challenging the socio-political norms of society, specifically in a context such as South Africa – where the racialised subjectivities instituted by colonial discourses and structures – including the supposed superiority of whiteness and inferiority of blackness continue to be reproduced in our institutions and manifest through the disciplining of the Black/Indigenous body; a disciplining that has been most hard on the Black womxn.<sup>26</sup> A comparison can be made between the gendered realities of womxn who are socially sanctioned for exhibiting behaviour that is acceptable of men and the realities experienced by Black/Indigenous bodies in Historically White Institutions (HWIs). To demonstrate, consider when Kumalo writes,

This chastising response [to playing by the rules as established in the institution] is witnessed at Maritzburg College when the Prefect involved in the 'Kaffir'-incident earlier in the year retaliated by branding his shirt 'EFF our last hope of getting our Land Back' at the end of the year. While the school responded with visceral disciplinary action that sought to remind Blackness/Indigeneity of its place in white institutions, the response given by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education highlighted how HWIs continue to see Blackness/Indigeneity as expendable and thus abject beings (2018b, 6).

In light of this reality, it becomes crucial to consider the role of the Black Archive in fostering epistemic justice and restitution. Antony's (2012) gender-based analysis draws our attention and parallels the realities that continue to define the *Fact* of Blackness/Indigeneity in Philosophy as discipline. This assertion rests on the analysis presented in the first section of this paper, which considered an internalised colonial episteme that continues to undermine the epistemic contributions of Blackness/Indigeneity in the academe (e.g. through the claim of epistemicide propounded by some Black/Indigenous decolonial scholars). To this end, I suggest that unlocking the possibilities that lie in the Black Archive could contribute to building epistemic justice in the South African context.

While I am in agreement with Antony (2012, 251) when she cautions against uncritical changes to Philosophy as discipline – she argues that 'the anti-feminist line says that if womxn can't (or won't) do philosophy, so much the worse for womxn. The feminist line says that if philosophy is not informed by womxn's minds, so much the worse for philosophy', I am also in agreement with Graneß (2019) in that Philosophy departments that refuse to diversify their curricula ought to be called what they really are, departments of European and American Philosophy. This is to say that I acknowledge the shortfalls that come with arbitrary changes in the discipline. However, Dotson's (2011) argument should

inform our underlying assumptions. She maintains that privileging only one epistemic tradition institutes ignorance, as that tradition is blind to its own limitations. It is on the basis of this contention that I offer working with the Black Archive as a facilitating move towards epistemic justice. The use of the Black Archive signals the introduction of thinking that exists outside the colonial and western archive. Consider for example the work of uMqhayi when he writes *Ityala Lamawele*. In the introduction to the text uMqhayi suggests that he is concerned with the aims of working through Xhosa jurisprudence to surface its significance and contribution to the thinking of contemporary societies. He (Mqhayi 1914, v) asserts 'nangani ndingengcali kwathi ni yamthetho, ndinawo noko amanakani okuba umthetho wasemaXhoseni awahluke nakancinane kowezizwe ezikhanyiselweyo.'<sup>27</sup> Consider teaching *Ityala Lamawele* as a mode of conducting comparative jurisprudential analyses in a course on political philosophy or comparative jurisprudence for that matter.

There are two things to be said in this regard. First, uMqhayi's work does not lean on imposed borrowings derived from colonial incursion, but rather facilitates the use of alternative epistemic frameworks in pedagogy. U-Mqhayi is concerned with the impact of colonial incursion on Xhosa jurisprudential processes, substantiating the proposition that the notion of epistemicide and linguicide in our context might be misplaced. In this instance, using uMqhayi's work presents the academy with a genuine challenge to perform decolonised thinking. This approach is not only innovative and responsive to our context but is globally relevant. Global relevance comes from a pedagogical praxis that establishes dialogical conceptions of jurisprudence, not by way of an additive approach (the Different voices model), but rather as a substantive comparative exercise. Second, this facilitates inter-epistemic dialogue using the Black Archive and decolonising from a disposition located in Black/Indigenous epistemic traditions. In this regard, decoloniality democratises the knowledge project and is driven by those genuinely invested in its success and not merely in advancing their careers. This concern comes from the realities highlighted by the work of Tuck and Wayne (2012) who challenge approaches to decoloniality that do not engage the epistemic traditions of those whose knowledge is used as the premise of decolonisation.

As a way of further foregrounding Antony's (2012) cautionary remark, about how we implement changes to the teaching and learning praxes of Philosophy as discipline, I invite the reader to consider scholars who work in traditions such as decoloniality without any knowledge of the Black Archive. This perpetuates the erasure of Indigenous knowledge through advancing the claim that there is no scholarship, knowledge or work done by African thinkers in addressing the seminal, political and philosophical questions that continue to define our curricula. The reader will recall that in the introduction, in note 1, I make the case for the place of scholars such as WB Vilakazi, Mazisi Kunene and others, scholars who are continuously neglected in the teaching and learning praxes of the contemporary University.

Consider an example of decolonial praxis using artworks, i.e. *Song of the Pick* by Gerard Sekoto (1947). Prior to the formal institutionalisation of apartheid in South Africa, Sekoto made a poignant observation about the migrant labour systems in the country. The painting speaks volumes of the deracination of Black family life. Taught as part of analyses of personhood and the state, this painting addresses the seminal philosophical question 'Who is [Wo]Man as a political being'. Commenting on the power relations marked by

raciality in South Africa, Sekoto surfaces the seminal questions asked by Socrates of 'Athenian Democracy' and 'Justice', as analysed by Plato in *The Republic* (Lindsay 1935). Furthermore, Sekoto's work considers the Hobbesian question of political authority and its legitimation, by critiquing a political economy premised on the exploitation of Black/Indigenous labour.

With this example, and countless others unmentioned, I suggest that my analysis annuls objections that may be levelled against such a project, such as the question of 'how is this philosophical?' The real question, in my observation, would be an inquiry into how does the Black Archive lend itself to thinking about second order questions that preoccupy the philosopher.<sup>28</sup> If philosophy is earnestly invested in decolonising the knowledge project the interfusion between Art and Philosophy, Music and Philosophy, Literature and Philosophy becomes the starting point in decolonising curricula. I make this suggestion in Kumalo (cf. Kumalo 2020) where I argue that resurrecting the Black Archive concerns thinking about/through and theorising the *Fact* of Blackness/Indigeneity, which continued even as Blackness/Indigeneity was denied access to institutions of higher learning.

## Conclusion

My reader might inquire as to how the Black Archive allows Philosophy as discipline to make good on the promise of epistemic justice. There are three things to be said by way of answering this question and concluding my analysis. First, the Black Archive allows one to redefine Philosophy as discipline by teaching from a position that is aligned with the decolonial tradition. By this I mean, accessing the Black Archive empowers us to develop curricula that are locally responsive and globally relevant. While centring the perspectives of historically marginalised groups, use of the Black Archive does not appeal to a fundamentalist pedagogy or colonised subjectivity. To frame the Black Archive in this way is rooted in the first section of this paper that highlighted the criticality assumed when dealing with the historical material that constitutes this Archive. Second, the Black Archive anticipates the three coalescing forces; convergence, interaction and intensification. In the first instance, curricula coded/developed using the Black Archive are diversified to include the realities, narratives, rationalities and predispositions of those who experience the forces of coloniality pressing down on their being. The Black Archive instantiates critical reflexivity in demanding that we always be conscious of the historical machinations that constitute contemporary realities. Simply put, decolonised curricula will begin to reflect the ontologies and the variance that is constitutive of the demographics that make up philosophy departments in the contemporary University in South Africa. Finally, the Black Archive takes seriously the demand on the decolonial philosopher to reveal the politics of both the knower and knowledge. The Black Archive diversifies loci of enunciations.

Premising my argument on sources in the Black Archive, I have argued that the claim of total epistemicide in the South African context is inaccurate. My analysis has highlighted that the notions of epistemicide and linguicide, when applied uncritically in a totalising and exaggerated manner to theorise our reality, mean that epistemic justice/restitution becomes a project of cultural invention that reproduces erasure. To frame decoloniality thusly is rooted in the reality of decolonial scholars who may have constituted themselves

on the basis of negative difference, realised in symptoms of a neurosis of victimisation that reflects the colonial archive. If we are to truly re-imagine the project of teaching and learning from a position predicated on decoloniality, I suggest that there is a great deal more work that needs to be done in resurrecting the Black Archive.

## Notes

1. I test how this self-negation and erasure play out as the maintenance of historical realities in Philosophy as discipline, i.e. the continued privileging of knowledge that emanates from the north.
2. My analysis would be misplaced if it did not highlight how the concept 'epistemicide' has been treated by decolonialists. Lebakeng et al. (2006, 70) frame it as follows, 'higher education institutional cultures continue to privilege western symbols, rituals and behaviours imposed as a result of epistemicide' suggesting that epistemicide is an imposition that sought to displace, undermine and even negate Indigenous ways of knowing. Ramose (2004) maintains that 'since the epistemicide committed by colonisation on the epistemologies of the indigenous conquered peoples of South Africa, it is the epistemological paradigm of the successors in title to colonisation which continues to dominate the entire field of the construction and the distribution of knowledge in South Africa.' I understand Ramose (2004) to mean the substantive displacement of Indigenous knowledge, in this framework. I therefore, maintain that the claim of epistemicide – as it is used to underscore the role of colonial violence in occluding the knowledge of Indigeneity – can be misconstrued such that it is read as the complete annihilation of these knowledge systems.
3. The Black Archive is constitutive of works developed by Black/Indigenous artists, literato, musicians and poets who were committed to theorising the *Fact* (experiential embodiment) of Blackness even as they were excluded from knowledge making institutions, i.e. the University. This theorisation is envisaged as the consideration of the jurisprudential methods of Xhosa cosmology. It is on the basis of this claim that I maintain that the uncritical use of concepts such as epistemicide and linguicide perpetuates rather than draws attention to the problem(s) of epistemic injustice. This perpetuation is seen as the continued denial of the existence of these knowledge systems. Put simply, I fear that decolonial theorists feed into the occlusion of Indigenous thought. Using Kumalo's (2018a) argument, I demonstrate the uses of the Black Archive in facilitating the imagination of new possibilities in higher education.
4. My reader will note the different formulation from the standard 'epistemic violence'. Acknowledging the origins of this formulation (see Heleta, 2016; Keet, 2014; Todd, 2016), I am however, suspicious of using the term. Following in the tradition of epistemic justice I am more comfortable with the concept of epistemic harm (see Fricker 2007; Kvanvig 2011; Zagzebski 1996).
5. I caution the brazen claim of epistemicide. This cautionary remark highlights how we have not yet exhausted engagements with the Black Archive. I further acknowledge the scholarship of intellectuals working in cognate areas (see Oyèwùmí 1997 and Amadiume, 1987) who have brought Black/Indigenous scholarship into the mainstream, however, I contend that the Black Archive as developed by artists such as Sekoto, Makeba and literato such as Gqoba, Mqgqwetho and Mqhayi has received slack uptake by decolonialists in South Africa. In crude terms, the desire to detail the violence of colonialism has distracted decolonial scholars in South Africa from a systematic engagement with the corpus of work developed by scholars, thinkers, musicians, artists and poets that captured and theorised the experiential embodiment of Blackness/Indigeneity amidst the confusion and violence of coloniality. Claiming epistemicide and linguicide continues to distract us, as we become obsessed with whiteness and colonialism as opposed to our own modes of knowing. To this effect, I follow in the trajectory of Fanon, when he says 'I am no longer uneasy in his [the white man's] presence. *In*

*reality to hell with him*. Not only does his presence no longer bother me, but I am already preparing to waylay him in such a way that soon he will have no other solution but to flee' ([1963]/2004, 10). In this respect my work is not concerned with whiteness – in this very explanation the reader will note how I am being forced to engage with whiteness as a mode of justifying an engagement with Black/Indigenous thought. It is in this respect that I maintain that these claims 'epistemicide' and 'linguicide' obscure us from doing the real work of decolonisation as we expend our time focusing on whiteness and not our own systems of knowledge.

6. By this I mean what has been termed the resurrection of the Black Archive. See Kumalo, S.H. 2020. 'Khawuleza – An Instantiation of the Black Archive'. *Imbizo*. (Kumalo 2020).
7. I once again direct the reader to the lengthy engagement with whiteness as a mode of setting-up my analysis of Black thought. Black traditions and modes of thought, as they have always existed, are obfuscated by the demand that we engage whiteness. For the sake of developing critical decolonial thought, I will be so bold and say – like other decolonialists before me – 'to hell with whiteness.'
8. My aim in showcasing these facets of Xhosa cosmology is rooted in the concern that the epistemic practices and processes of the Xhosa people are being erased owing to the impositions of the peoples of the west. (Authors translation).
9. It becomes the duty of the Xhosa scholar to carefully think through the implications of this reality. Once our modes of thinking and knowing have been erased, we need to consider what else will be erased with these. (Authors translation).
10. The praise poet.
11. He whose house was christened with the blood of his enemies.
12. As these names are clan names that tell the histories of the two houses, it would be remiss of me to translate this formulation outside of the context in which it is discussed. I therefore, encourage my reader to glean the translation of this text from Kumalo (2018a).
13. The names of the Scina clan, denote and acknowledge the role of the matrilineal line ancestrally. While I am defined by a patrilineal conception of lineage, the matrilineal line defines my identity as I am formed by historic figures; omaJilajila, omaNdlangisa, oQhuden, who constitute my ontological foundations.
14. What is required is a new concept that will not consistently invoke whiteness as a mode of trying to deal with and engage the lived realities of Blackness and Indigeneity.
15. I acknowledge that erasure was attempted through the classification of African spirituality as witchcraft. However, these practices continued regardless and constitute parts of identity formation, for some, today.
16. Ubungoma are the traditional medicine practices that continue to be used by Black/Indigenous South Africans to the contemporary day.
17. This is not to suggest that coloniality did not alter orthography in African languages as Noni Jabavu clearly demonstrates this by protesting how she writes particular words in isiXhosa in the introduction to *The Ochre People: Scenes from a South African Life*.
18. Only now, after this battle, did Mpande enter the picture. Because of his ill treatment at the hands of his elder brother Dingana, he had decided to leave and seek a place of refuge from his enemies for fear of being murdered one day. Because Mpande brought with him a massed army of soldiers dissatisfied with Dingana's rule, the Boers greatly rejoiced at this answer to their prayers.
19. To write the term as (post)-colonial – in parenthesis with a dash between the post and colonial – is done deliberately. This follows in the decolonial tradition that contends that the current world in which we live continues to be defined by modernity which is synonymous with coloniality as argued by Mignolo (2009), Tlostanova and Mignolo (2009), and Grosfoguel (2013).
20. I wish to put forward a contentious proposition; the transformation and transmutations that we witness in history are as a result of collusion between Indigeneity and coloniality (a point aptly detailed by the scholarship of Mda 2000; as well as uMqhayi 1917).

21. This fellow was the son of Senzangakhona – Shaka and Dingaan are his older brothers; as he comes from a minor house of less significance, it was inconceivable that he could rule the kingdom of Zulu and Malandela.
22. After some time the whites promised Cetshwayo and the Zulu that after his father's death he would succeed as King KwaZulu; things began to calm down then because this fellow had been hunting the fellow who was to succeed his father. In 1872 Mpande died. He died with the Zulu nation united after the disruption of war after war – but he had achieved this dispensation by handing over his own nation.
23. But he had achieved this dispensation by handing over his own nation.
24. While I may not deal with the debates that define the differences between conceptual understandings of ethics from an Afro-communitarian versus a Euro-North American conception of ethics (a debate championed by scholars working in the tradition of Afro-communitarian conceptions of personhood – see Chemhuru 2018; Matolino 2014; Masaka 2018; Molefe 2015), this debate influences, albeit implicitly, the challenge that I level against Fricker's (2007) conception of epistemic justice; specifically as it relates to our context. To qualify my reasoning, there are two components that facilitate my challenge. The first is in surfacing the differences between Afro-communitarian thought which differs from Euro-western thinking. My critique surfaces that while Fricker (2007) is dealing with a 'shared ethical intuition' that rests on a communitarian conception of an epistemic tradition, virtue epistemology undermines communitarian thinking as virtue ethics is premised on an individualistic cultivation of virtues. Second, my critique suggests that even within a community i.e. among decolonial philosophers – whom we would assume is predicated on a shared ethical intuition, there continues to be a lack of this characteristic owing to the claim of epistemicide.
25. This awareness comes from Abner Nyamende and AC Jordan being academics at the University of Cape Town; a claim that is substantiated by how scholars – even in other liberal English Universities, i.e. Wits University – continue to be ignorant of their work. This is best noted in the recent collection by Edwin Etieyibo (2018: 10) wherein he claims, '[conceptually], a lot of controversies surround it [decolonisation], as to what it means or what it doesn't mean.' This assertion blatantly ignores the scholarship of AC Jordan, Abner Nyamende or WB Vilakazi – not to mention Mazisi Kunene, who have each treated the question of conceptual decolonisation in South Africa.
26. In line with intersectional Black Feminist scholarship, the Black/Indigenous body to which I am making reference does not occlude womxn. If anything, I encourage the reader to consider how the structural forms of power intersect to bear down on the experiential embodiment of Black womxn. An analysis to this effect is conducted by Patricia Hill-Collins (2000) in her seminal treatise *Black Feminist Thought*.
27. Even though I am not an expert of comparative jurisprudence, I do hold the view that the laws that govern Xhosa society are not that different from the laws that govern enlightened societies. (Author's translation.)
28. Given the scope and space I would problematise even this notion of second order questions, however, I will leave that project for another analysis.

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