

Chapter 4

The Figure of the Khoisan Mother in Lady Skollie's Work: Trance Rhythm and Noise

ABSTRACT

This chapter draws from decolonial epistemic critical theory with specific reference to Nelson Maldonado-Torre's notion of the phenomenology of the cry and African art. Maldonado-Torres' thoughts apply to the accounting of art created in Blackness and to the reading of creative expressions that are inherently decolonial aesthetics of Blackness. This chapter seeks to locate the theme of the phenomenology of the cry as a decolonial imprint inherent in Lady Skollie's visual art practice, especially the figure of the Khoisan Mother. In this chapter, it is argued that it is from this point that Lady Skollie can be declared a decolonial existential phenomenologist/philosopher who practices decolonial phenomenology from the position of the previously marginalised. From this position, Lady Skollie's work can also be declared to be an Africana decolonial aestheSis.

INTRODUCTION: THE KHOISAN MOTHER

Any form of artmaking is a way of representing life. Making art is engaging in the process of thinking deeply about certain things people want to interpret regarding life. Art allows people to record memories, honour, express their feelings about their living conditions, challenge political systems, reflect on their identity, mirror their beauty, taste, and pleasure and other socio-political ills. The rock art of the Khoisan people is recorded as the first art to be created in South Africa and was found inside the caves where depictions of social life can be seen. The study of Khoisan rock art

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shows how they lived experience, and the spiritual world connect the African ecology and the Khoisan people's culture. Art, for them, was sacred, spiritual, social, and collective. Rock art for the Khoisan people was their ontology until the disruption by colonisation that led to the change in their ways of life. Decolonial aestheSis is a part of African art that deals with colonial tensions resulting from modernity to pose existential questions while dismantling the hidden legacies of coloniality/apartheid. Since the word African art is a colonial word used to catalogue indigenous art as craft and ethnographic objects, I prefer to adopt the term Africana art to cover the so-called African art and indigenous art of the people across the world's cultures. However, Africana art is decolonial aestheSis in the form of Africana art that deals with the question of creating art in blackness, debunking the Eurocentric standard of aesthetics and the reconfiguration of the identity of the black colonised subject as a human being. Lady Skollie is a contemporary visual artist based in Johannesburg, born in Cape Town to a family of Khoisan and coloured people in South Africa uses her art to reflect deeply on life and the legacies of the apartheid system. *Whose life?* The black life. Her life. The life of those with no life. This is not a racialised question or rhetorical or exclusionary question. It is a question that Lady Skollie is prepared to help us answer through her artworks through her artistic, metaphorical depiction of the figure of the Khoisan mother and themes that relate to politics of *being*, *subjectivity*, and *tensions* of living in post-apartheid South Africa as a racialised-outlawed other. After the physical fall of the infrastructure of colonisation in general and the fall of the apartheid system in the case of South Africa in particular, the ruins of modernity in the "post-colony" (Mbembe, 2001) remains in a constant conversation with "blackness" (Fanon, [1952]2008; Yancy, 2008) as presence-absence. Lady Skollie is delinking from the post-apartheid and neo-apartheid state of modern/colonial South Africa.

South Africa appears modern because it speaks the same language as the modern/globalised world, such as 3G, 4G, 5G, (fibre) internet, drones, viruses, and corrupt politics. This is the language at the centre of modernity, while the vocabulary from the periphery speaks of migration, xenophobia, premature death, police brutality, and Black Lives Matter. Hence, the colonial language of the centre responded by saying that all lives matter in an attempt to close the ontological dialectic. Modernisation/modernity is still an ongoing colonial project because, from a decolonial perspective, we realise there is no modernity without coloniality. There is no capitalism without the dehumanisation and exploitation of black bodies. Hence, to speak the language of the global world comes with serious fallouts embedded mostly in the lived experience of indigenous people or black people who suffer from its darker side – dehumanisation. This colonial terror is depicted well in the film *Avatar* (2009), in which colonisers invade indigenous people's homes by destroying their forests in search of their modern comfort. In doing this, scientists must put people inside

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