

Figuring the Black Femme Fatale

Analysing Black Womanhood in *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha*

Leigh Waters-Maine

G18W4443

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music at Rhodes
University

Supervisor: Dr William Fourie

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I investigate black womanhood in *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha*, a post-apartheid film opera. The aim of this research is to examine the representation of black women in this film opera, focusing largely on the lead character, U-Carmen. This thesis is driven by a form of intersectional feminism which is characterised by overlapping categories such as race, gender, class and sexual orientation (Crenshaw 1989). A growing number of scholars have written about the rise of South African operas (Roos 2012; André 2016; Gerber 2021) but have seldom focused on the multi-layered representation of black women, which is what this thesis aims to do. In reading this work, I argue that *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha* foregrounds U-Carmen as a black woman with a storyline that rejects essentialist portrayals of black women on opera stages. The film opera, I argue, figures a complex womanhood represented in voice, labour, motherhood, and death. It not only recognizes the marginalised, but it also offers a change to the perception of the gendering of the black female body. In this thesis, I employ textual analysis to consider the historical contexts of U-Carmen alongside its contemporary resonances and analyse the main female character in the opera and how she can enforce or change the narrative of the role of women in opera.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
U-Carmen and Black Opera	5
Methodology.....	11
Summary of the Chapters	12
Chapter 1: The Black Female Voice and Indigenisation of Opera	15
Blackness.....	19
The Black Voice	23
U-Carmen’s Black Voice.....	25
Language as a Symbol of Indigenization.....	30
Indigenising Operatic Narratives	35
Black Opera Critique	42
Conclusion.....	46
Chapter 2: Sexual Politics: Restructuring the Black Female Body	49
Viewer’s Gaze	53
Sexual Desire and Objectification	58
Self-Fashioning Sensuality	61
Enigmatic Sensuality on U-Carmen’s Terms	64
Erotic Agency	68
Conclusion.....	70
Chapter 3: Woman as Labourer: The Invisible Hands	72
Formal Labour	75
Strategic Flirting and Emotional Labour	81

Traditional Labour	86
Conclusion	89
Chapter 4: Motherhood and Mothering	92
The ‘Good Mother’	94
The Unconventional Mother	98
Black Women, Othermothering and Community Mothering	102
Motherhood and ‘Project of the Self’	104
Conclusion: I Got Flowers Today	106
Chapter 5: Structural Violence: U-Carmen and the Lifeless Body	109
Femme Fatale and U-Carmen’s Fatality	113
Jongikhaya and His Violent History	115
Apartheid and Systemic Violence	119
U-Carmen’s Death	122
Refocusing Violence	127
Conclusion	129
Chapter 6: Conclusion	131
Bibliography	135

Introduction

U-Carmen and Black Opera

Operas have throughout history had significant connections with political and social change (Tambling 1987; Citron 2000). This is also the case in South Africa. For many South Africans, before 1994 and the shift from the apartheid to the post-apartheid regime, opera was viewed as being a solely Western art form made for and enjoyed largely by the white elite (Pistorius 2019). After the fall of apartheid, there emerged in South Africa an operatic identity which infuses a mixture of Western and African sound worlds (Roos 2012; Muller 2018). The infused influences include the aesthetics and cultural traditions of local musical practices, along with the social and indigenous ideological configurations. In the South African context, exposure of opera to local cultures resulted in opera productions that deviated from Eurocentric aesthetic norms. It also made possible innovative additions to the genre around the development of Blackness in this art form, which I describe in this thesis from the perspective of Black Consciousness which considers Blackness as a subjectivity emergent from a place of oppression.

One such important instance of innovation can be found in *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha* (2005), which will be the focus of this thesis. Presented as a film opera, *U-Carmen* is an adaptation of Georges Bizet's *Carmen*. Drawing on Prosper Mérimée's eponymous novella, *Carmen* (1845), Bizet's opera offers an emotionally provocative plot based on desire, erotic obsession, jealousy, hatred, and love. From its earliest productions, the perception of Carmen, the opera's leading character, has been one of an iconic femme fatale who is manipulative, irrational, cunning, hypersexual, and immoral (Clément 1988). Her unorthodox character has caught the attention of many directors who have conjured their own interpretations of the tale and successfully migrated her image through time and different media. In a

South African adaptation, *U-Carmen*, directed by Mark Dornford-May, is performed by the Isango Ensemble and combines the anxious melodrama of the opera with the realistic depiction of the hardship suffered by those living in a South African township. The film is a highlight of the Isango Ensemble's oeuvre, who have secured national and international renown since 2000 for their trademark experimental opera productions (Mouyis 2021). The adaptation won various international awards and achieved local honours, including a special screening for the South African parliament. The lead character, U-Carmen, diverts from the clichéd femme fatale and instead depicts a sensuous, independent woman, whose love of freedom and courage endures even when faced with death. Indeed, her womanhood, which foregrounds in this version of the opera her fierce passion, is set in contradistinction to her pursuer, Jongikhaya's, impulsive obsession.

Dornford-May's adaptation is grounded in the post-apartheid South African context while simultaneously encompassing critical traditional narrative traits of the original *Carmen*. According to James Davies and Lindiwe Dovey (2010), *U-Carmen* is regarded as a defining work in South African opera, film and theatre history. The film opera delicately foregrounds a considerable number of socio-political concerns that are definitive to its context such as human rights, racial prejudice and sexism. The status of the original *Carmen* as a cultural document rests not on its technical innovations but, as Susan McClary argued about opera more generally, on its ability to engage and galvanise heterogeneous audiences (McClary 1994, 75). While the film opera functions as a romantic melodrama, U-Carmen herself is not simplistic nor facetious. Instead, I argue in this thesis that she figures a type of complex black womanhood born from the representations of her sexuality, her position as a mother, her labour, and even her death.

To date, scholars have argued that the film opera's textual politics engages creatively and progressively with the issues of exoticism and sexual otherness. Stephanie Dias (2006) focuses on the black underclass and gender development in South Africa, arguing that the film 'vividly reflects prevailing class differences in South Africa [and] focuses on the potential power of the lower class, and more specifically women, challenging their oppression both in terms of class and gender.' *U-Carmen* depicts a township

culture uniquely belonging to Khayelitsha, inimitable even in South Africa. The culture of Khayelitsha belongs to a people that have their own social reality, heritage, and dialect; yet this culture is boldly postmodern and cosmopolitan (Moyo 2015, 239). The divide between the local and the global cannot consistently be perceived, in either real-life or in the film's depiction of Khayelitsha. Yet the township culture is not completely different to many in the global south, which have their own extensive archives of visual associations. Speaking to a similar issue, Davies and Dovey (2010) examine the transcultural nature of the audio and visual aspects in *U-Carmen* noting the multilayered complexities of bringing together different sound worlds which neatly feed from each other. Simon Lewsen (2012) sheds light on the relationship between sexual desire and those who hold official authority, *U-Carmen's* stance on sexual empowerment and misogyny with the protagonist constantly at odds when it comes to sexual freedom. Susanna Viljoen (2012) explores the interrelationship of text, context and identity in *U-Carmen* evidencing the creation of the African female other within a post-apartheid narrative. Naomi André (2016) dissects two reimagined versions of *Carmen* in their respective sub-Saharan African country viewing them as products of global cultural imagination, taking into consideration the different manners in which womanhood and sexuality are created to form the exotic other by juxtaposing them with their two nineteenth-century French origins. In this thesis, I build on the aforementioned perspectives while directly placing the black female body at the centre of the argument looking specifically at the multidimensionality of the creation and gendering of *U-Carmen* in the post-apartheid moment.

The interpretation of *U-Carmen* is affected by the change in culture and context of Khayelitsha, situated on the outskirts of Cape Town, at the start of the twenty-first century. Her character materialises as a strong black woman who uncompromisingly strives for autonomy and freedom of choice within the confines of a significantly sexist and patriarchal post-apartheid South African society –. The re-imagination of *Carmen* effectively results in her identity being deemed as a more complex character than merely portraying the simplistic siren depicted in Bizet's opera. In other words, the film opera does not

disaffirm U-Carmen's atypical sensuality and femininity attributed to her original character. Instead, it alludes to the female siren in conjunction with openly flouting orthodox subservience to male domination.

U-Carmen, however, should still be understood within the broader femme fatale discourse.. The film opera engages projections of male fear and desire typical of femme fatale figurations but also shows the striking extent to which femme fatales—seductresses whose desires and malevolence are seemingly unmotivated—are viewed and expected to behave, and how this can be challenged based on our understandings of violence. U-Carmen, as Grossman (2007, 1) argues, demonstrates a complex psychological and social identity, resisting the spectator's habit (traced in criticism and cultural responses) of seeing past her as opaque or ambiguous (thus a screen on which to project male fears and desires) or of fixing on her as the thing, a dangerous body, to be labelled and tamed by social roles and institutions. This draws U-Carmen close to the original Carmen who represents a real-life individual who would openly classify herself as a dangerous woman or femme fatale.

The task of representing black women in postcolonial ways is difficult as it requires refashioning forms of representation which continue to break new ground (Gqola 2001,15).. It is a necessary part of breaking with oppressive systems, 'look[ing] ahead to the full realisation of the horror with which we are faced' and embracing 'the terrifying peril in standing up' (Head 2001, 18). Instead of being a mere tool in such a figuration, the woman's body acts as both the site and the language through which positioning is negotiated (Gqola 2005, 3). U-Carmen as the representation of an 'ordinary' black woman in a black South African township adds to the different types of narrated forms of women on stage and on screen.

Black women's realities exist within intersecting oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism (Collins 2004; Crenshaw 1995). In recognising this, my study draws on black feminism which calls for the critique of the multiple minority statuses that black women hold in society, being subjected to racism and sexism often by members of their own community (for example, experiencing sexism by black men and racism by White women (Reid & Comas-Diaz 1990)). The pivotal paradigm that black feminism adopts

intends to move beyond individual acts of oppression to rather break boundaries and progression that name and critique systems of institutional, structural, and cultural oppression for an intersectional analysis of racism and sexism that black women experience (hooks 1989; Mowatt *et al.* 2013, 647). Black feminism encourages a scholarship that transcends privileged theories that are often rooted in racism and sexism, to use power in ways that challenge and change ways of thinking and knowing.

Feminism did not exist in the theoretical forms we know today during the period when Bizet's opera was composed. However, Dornford-May's *U-Carmen*—especially when explored through a black feminist lens—can be viewed as being more assertively feminist in comparison to the original *femme fatale* and even more contrastive to the traditional black woman, who is stereotypically regarded as being subservient to the black man (Viljoen & Wenzel 2016, 55). *U-Carmen* is more than a sensual, defiant, susceptible, and resolute character. Adapted to the South African context, she is no longer thought of as an iconic figure based on culturally determined perceptions of overt female sexuality, but rather as a marginalised African woman who is desperate for freedom of choice (Viljoen & Wenzel 2016).

U-Carmen's character persists in breaking the status quo or even 'breaking new ground' (Gqola 2001) against the stereotypical expectations of women's role in normalist Eurocentric society. The focus is turned to opening the terrain of black women's representation and theorisation to new signification. Society's gender norms attempt to set clear external boundaries, which Dornford-May counters by articulating *U-Carmen*'s innermost thoughts and convictions, along with the understated depiction of her sensuality. This is indicative of the dissolving of her internal boundaries. These boundaries are no longer constraining and could possibly transcend the limitations imposed by gender-based marginalisation. This makes it possible to consider both psychological and sociological factors when establishing perceptions of *U-Carmen*'s identity, which in turn allows for alternative interpretations of who she is and why she behaves in the manner that she does. The following thesis will shed light on the interpretation of her identity marked by womanhood and as a social construct dependent on the interaction between characters and place within a specific time. By conjointly considering the African and South African context of *U-*

Carmen, it is probable to deduce the identity of a specific society based on the employment of narrative strategies used to manipulate temporal and spatial dimensions. New contexts are formed in which identity is expressed.

In this thesis, I build on existing scholarship on opera that foregrounds issues of race and gender.

Important literature emerging from feminist scholarship since the late 1960s and 1970s, such as Catherine Clément's *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (1988), paved the way for many subsequent studies on gender in opera; a critical mass of academic writing on race in opera has until recently lacked consistency.

These works and publications such as *Opera in a Multicultural World* (2015) prompt an array of approaches to immensely varying forms of repertoire into a relatively cohesive space. Exploring opera's position in narrating diverse social realities and identities within a multitude of problematic frameworks is a significant undertaking. As expressed by Jane Forner (2016, 273-274), 'it can be a struggle to present analyses of specific works that successfully unite around multiple larger theoretical constructs while simultaneously maintaining a focus on topics of social exclusion, access, and privilege in opera as commerce alongside the legacy of colonialism in music and scholarship.' Naomi André's *Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement* (2018) successfully expands on topics raised in *Blackness in Opera* (2012) with an in-depth study of race and operatic history, demonstrating the value of specialised as well as broader volumes. While André's definition works in certain respects, there is still much debate around the exact meaning of Black opera. My thesis will contribute to this discussion by thinking specifically about Black South African opera. In line with the views of the Black Opera Research Network (2022), Black opera in this instance does not imply that there exists a white opera or other identity opera, but should rather be viewed as a starting point for how we can reinvent a term to include new voices, experience, and narratives. Redefining 'black' as an inclusive, positive identity brought about by the philosophy of Black Consciousness which was introduced by the South African Students' Organization (1968) taught that black South Africans could make meaningful change if awakened to their self-worth and the need for activism.

Research Question and Goals

This research is guided by the following question: How is the black woman's body represented in *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha* and how does this speak to broader cultural and gender tropes in post-apartheid South Africa? To answer this question, I aim to:

1. Explore the black feminine body in the post-apartheid black South African film opera *U-Carmen*.
2. Examine the meanings of the representation of the black feminine body in *U-Carmen*.
3. Consider how feminist research practices can allow for richer and more nuanced readings of the role and gendering of women in black South African opera.
4. Contribute to debates around the definition of Blackness in opera.
5. Analysing and studying the role of post-apartheid film opera in representing issues of black sensibility and indigeneity in *U-Carmen* by addressing the complexities of the narrative strategies used to create the film opera.

Methodology

To do so, I turn to textual analysis in reading *U-Carmen*. Textual analysis depends on intricate factors such as novelty, ingenuity, motivation, historical context, and the societies we inhabit or investigate (McKee 2003, 73). Textual analysis, according to interpretive approaches, is a form of qualitative analysis that specifically examines the fundamental ideological and cultural assumptions present within a text. It entails comprehending the language and symbols found in texts in order to acquire insights on how individuals interpret the material and understand the world. Fürsich (2014,1) examines the suitable

objective of textual analysis, which is not to reveal the singular ‘true’ or ‘hidden’ meaning of a text, but rather to present a range of potential interpretations of the analysed material. The objective is not to uncover concealed interpretations, the ‘subconscious’ motives of the creator, or any biases within the text. Rather, the goal is to comprehend the cultural and ideological presumptions that were prevalent during a certain period, which enabled a text to be deemed acceptable and gain popularity, eventually becoming widely accepted as common knowledge. McKee (2003, 4) defines a text as any form of interpretation of the meaning of an object, such as a book, television programme, film, magazine etc. A text is an entity from which we derive significance and understanding. (McKee 2003, 4) The term ‘text’ also carries post-structuralist connotations when considering the generation of significance. Nevertheless, the primary advantage of textual analysis is its ability to offer numerous interpretations and significance, prompting researchers to thoroughly investigate all potential facets of the text and introducing diversity into the field of cultural research (Besley 2013, 172). In my study of *U-Carmen*, I take the film opera as a whole as the text for analysis and draw it into the broader constellation of theoretical and analytical thoughts around opera.

Summary of the Chapters

The first chapter aims to unpack the black identity conveyed in *U-Carmen*, which, I argue, is dependent on the narrative strategies used to manipulate temporal and spatial dimensions. The chapter begins by grappling with what it means to be black as an identity, the resultant understanding of ‘Blackness’ builds on the concept of both Black Opera as well as Black Conscious cinema and their respective aesthetics and significance in the post-apartheid moment.

Chapter Two discusses the conceptions of sexual subjection and social disparities in a white-dominated ideological society and brings the historically invisible black female body to view. Using *U-Carmen* as the representation of the black female body, this chapter reframes nineteenth-century perceptions of what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for women. This chapter exposes the ability to conjoin the

sentimental heroine and the femme fatale despite being a sensual free-spirited female protagonist. The typically emphasised exoticism, mysteriousness and danger is shifted to restructure feminine power and agency.

Chapter Three highlights the problematic class, race, and gender differentiation in society by informing the multinational collective of the harsh realities of life in a South African township. This chapter aims to contribute to the overall understanding of the socio-cultural position of black South African women in the post-apartheid era by using *U-Carmen* as a tool to uncover the invisibility of the agency of black South African women who work towards redefining and enlarging traditional notions of their significance.

To build on bringing the invisible to the fore, Chapter Four exposes the multi-dimensional spheres of the black South African female body by representing the underrepresented perspective of single motherhood in opera. It elevates such voices into feminist operatic discourse by creating the space for developing new narratives that are a reflection on social realities in a major South African township. The key to this discussion will also be interweaving these thoughts within a specifically feminist interpretation that foregrounds womanhood within black identity studies.

The final chapter aims to contribute to the literature on violence against women in opera and the adaptive character of patriarchy and the new and changing forms of oppression that manifest in institutionalised violence and violence in the home. The bodies of the deceased are often read from a perspective that places them as the provokers of death. This chapter will instead question the position of the black femme fatale in a manner that does not glorify the objectification and victimisation of the female character but rather reframes murder by looking at the perpetrator and the role that they play in the often-overlooked narrative of the femme fatale and the need for a woman to die at the hands of a man.

Overall, the chapters will demonstrate how the narrative strategies used in *U-Carmen* effectively results in her being portrayed as an even more complex character in comparison to Bizet's *Carmen*. Although both share her namesake's search for freedom of choice, *U-Carmen*'s multi-layered identity is shaped and

influenced by the distinctive context in which the plot plays out. They also speak on the invisibility of the black female body or its complete absence or erasure from historical narrations. Each chapter draws on the importance of emancipation and its achievability based on context and circumstance.

The Black Female Voice and Indigenisation of Opera

Dornford-May is the second filmmaker to produce an African version of *Carmen*, following Senegalese director Joseph Gai Ramaka's *Karmen Gei* in 2001. While Ramaka infuses his musical soundtrack with jazz and contemporary dance genres, Dornford-May preserves the majority of Bizet's operatic score (Lewsen 2012, 232). In commenting on the two African *Carmen*'s, Naomi André (2016, 56) expresses how above the local colour and exotic backdrops, the rooting of *Carmen* in each country, with its specific history, folklore, and tradition, expands the way each film projects meaning and connects the past to the present. *U-Carmen*'s narrative is set in Khayelitsha township among the iconography of contemporary South Africa. At the same time, despite a few significant alterations, Dornford-May's filmic adaptation retains many crucial aspects of *Carmen*'s traditional narrative. In *U-Carmen*, Bizet's full score is performed (albeit at times slightly altered) with Western orchestral accompaniment. The music incorporates indigenous South African songs that are sung over Bizet's music, when the opera score is silent, or in between the different operatic numbers. This interpolation, beyond moving between past and present, mixes isiXhosa song with European operatic technique.

Aside from the intermixing of song, a significant way in which Dornford-May locates the opera in the South African setting is through the *U-Carmen* exclusive use of actors from the townships, who were largely overlooked by the artistic world and contained people who had little or no training as actors and singers. Dornford-May wanted to use raw talent with fresh potential (Dias 2006, 90). His search led to the formation of a theatre group, Dimpho Di Kopane, meaning 'combined talent'.

In its deep rooting within the South African context, *U-Carmen* subtly takes up several socio-political concerns that are specific to the film's context (Lewsen 2012, 232-236). These issues, however, need to be thought in a longer history of the emergence of Black opera in South Africa. Following the dismantling of apartheid, South African productions of both standard operatic repertoire as well as in newly composed operas emerged which had clear western operatic traditional roots and relationships of the canonic repertoire (André 2016, 13). Noteworthy is the fact that opera was an exclusively White domain during apartheid from which black people were structurally excluded since colonial times. Despite this, black people maintained a strong culture of solo and choral singing. Even though opera has largely been associated with white European culture, South Africa is now forging its own form and structural organisation of opera, which has afforded scholars the opportunity to ask different types of questions. The musical and textual meanings are now imbued with a new set of layered codes. This growing South African scene goes beyond being an issue of how the West represents Africa. Rather, at issue is a situation where Africans are fluent in the musical languages of the West but are also employing additional 'languages' in terms of musical allusion and sound, historical context, and cultural references (André 2016, 12). This new operatic movement in South Africa finds resonance with the past and present in how larger national concerns can be echoed musically (André 2016, 15).

The profuse operatic activity and experimentation have provided international operatic staging with well-wrought Black operas (such as *Winnie: The Opera* and *Princess Magogo*) and black operatic voices (such as Pretty Yende, Phumeza Matshikiza, Njabulo Madlala etc.). Past and present Black opera performers have significantly transformed the genre's musical styles. They have made their mark on the world stage as black vocalists at the Metropolitan Opera House, among other opera houses.

Through black voices, then, opera is able to explore aspirations of a new nation, the retrieval of a collective past, and a form of commentary on the present. Within this temporal matrix, space emerges for revising the role of black women in the greater socio-political system (Mhlambi 2015, 294-295). Opera provides such a space in that it enables the reconfiguration of race and gender. Opera in South Africa has

undergone a significant transition following the end of white minority rule and apartheid. The world has witnessed the rise of highly talented black vocalists, the incorporation of African elements into opera stage designs, and the creation of indigenous operas that highlight black historical narratives, among other developments (André 2018). However, it is only in recent times that the prominent opera venues throughout the world, where the likes of Yende hone their artistic skills, have started undergoing significant changes.

While opera as a genre has long been a space for presenting voices and perspectives of underrepresented and unsung heroes, the use of opera as a space for voicing black experiences in the present is a critical intervention for how black lives and culture are being represented (André *et al* 2016, 4-5). As a nation rebuilt on post-apartheid values, South African opera manifested into an arena for working out nuanced cultural issues around gender, power, heroism, and modernity that fuses past histories with current aspirations for the future (André 2014, 28). Key in this figuration is the notion of indigenisation. Hilde Roos (2010) foregrounds the concept of ‘indigenisation’ as having to do with the whole development of indigenous opera in South Africa. She places *U-Carmen* in this context with other Isango Ensemble works (such as *Son of Man* (2006) and *Unogumbe* (2013)). For her, two aspects are exceedingly important in this process. First is the textual adaptation across the cultural territories of South Africa and Europe which involves boldly localising and Africanising the works from overseas that re-contextualise their stories in a South African place, with local characters, while the musical performance draws on distinct traditional and modern practices. New musical arrangements may change parts of the score, instrumentation, and singing style; visual concepts draw on indigenous costume, popular fashion and spatial designs; and performers may use indigenous forms of dance, acting and ritual. The second aspect of indigenising opera is the post-apartheid context of structural transformation involving the dismantling of racial hierarchy within arts institutions and the increase in black people’s participation in, as well as access to, opera (Roos 2010, 194-200).

Expanding on Roos, Wayne Muller (2018) discusses the development of a distinctly South African approach to opera, emphasising the Africanisation of the genre. Over the course of nearly thirty years, significant changes occurred in the operatic repertoire and staging, which contributed to the emergence of a South African ‘way of doing’ opera. This evolution is the subject of reception histories that trace the formation of a canon and the aesthetics of opera within the South African context (Muller 2018, 157). Following the end of apartheid, South Africa's rapidly transforming society sought to redefine its identity by incorporating diverse cultures previously marginalised. In the arts, this involved integrating indigenous cultural production into existing forms, including opera, which was often criticised as Eurocentric and elitist. Strategies by both the opera industry and political powers aimed to democratise opera, making it more accessible and relevant to the local populace. These efforts towards Africanisation and contemporary relevance played a crucial role in establishing a uniquely South African operatic aesthetic (Muller 2018, 222).

The political changes in South Africa brought an end to cultural boycotts and international exclusion, leading to a renewed focus on building intercultural ties in the arts by the mid-1990s (Muller 2018, 183). Opera producers in Cape Town, particularly CAPAB Opera and later Cape Town Opera, developed various strategies to ensure the art form's survival in the new South Africa. They aimed to maintain the relevance of Western European opera while integrating African cultural references, such as rituals and costumes, to dispel the perception of opera as elitist and exclusionary. Three primary strategies emerged: localising standard repertoire operas, translating libretti, and Africanising musical texts by blending Western and African instrumentation and styles. These efforts not only maintained the integrity of the original scores but also created novel, contemporary works that resonated with local audiences (Muller 2018, 196-197). Ultimately, the localisation and Africanisation of operas—through adaptations of libretti, settings, and musical scores—served to indigenize the art form, making it relevant and accessible to a South African audience (Muller 2018, 224). This transformation shifted the boundaries from merely seeking contemporary relevance to fully embracing an African perspective in exploring operatic themes.

U-Carmen provides a means of categorising and tracing the indigenisation and Africanisation of opera which is evidenced through different strategic implementations. The film opera, however, deals with these themes specifically through the figuration of the black woman's voice. *U-Carmen* becomes, I want to argue, the articulator of the intersection of the socio-political situatedness of the opera, as well as its entanglements within past histories of marginalisation. In making this argument, I will in the following chapter explore different paradigms of the voice, opera in South African communities alongside the European tradition, and the broader sociological and historical context for opera in South Africa. This work is interdisciplinary and engages directly in emerging debates that approach opera from a wide range of disciplines. The stylistic aspects will be studied as creating and/or contributing to black self-realisation, self-sufficiency, black pride. For me, *U-Carmen*'s vocalisation of her womanhood draws these themes together and thus reframes the notion of womanhood within these critical coordinates.

Blackness

To start, it is important to first consider the notion of Blackness through which *U-Carmen*'s black womanhood is articulated. 'Blackness' has been theorised by several black scholars as being an identity and experience with shared, contested, and contingent histories and geographies (see Dei 2008; Martin & Hall, 1992; Ibrahim 2017). It is considered as being more than a racial identification. It goes as far as having the knowledge and understanding about history of black people, their experiences, politics, and culture (see Biko 1987; Dei 1995; Fanon 1952, 1963; Foster, 1997, 2005; Karenga & Asante 2006; Nelson 2010). Blackness is understood as an identification that comes with a positive affirmation, political consciousness, as well as black agency and resistance (see Foster 2007; Hartman 2016). It is the awakening of self-worth in black populations, recognizing one's inherent dignity and taking pride in it (Biko 1987).

To a certain degree, these classifications prove useful as they allow for a common language for thinking about Blackness in contemporary social formations. However, attempting to contain what Blackness is by

giving it a fixed definition, as many of these scholars do, can also prove to be harmful as the oversimplification of it should be challenged by evoking the multidimensionality of the black body in order to avoid perpetuating the epistemic violence inflicted by colonialism and slavery. Complicating our discernment of what it means to be black and what Blackness is, is pivotal by addressing the conditions that created it to begin with.

The term 'black' is complex, carrying different meanings across the globe with different societies applying different criteria regarding who is classified as 'black', with ever-changing social constructs. From a particular vantage point, as an African-born scholar with a politics to affirm my black subjectivity and Indigeneity, I recognize the fluid, intersecting, and contested nature of this concept. I thus enter the discussion from the perspective of understanding what Blackness means to varied segments of communities in which I am situated. From this vantage point, social variables affect classification as much as skin colour, and the social criteria for 'Blackness' vary. There is no sole narrative of Blackness, just as we do not have a singularity of the black body. The retheorization/reframing of Blackness that situates Africanness requires that we be more reflexive of scholarship. We need to ask additional questions in this regard. Raghuram (2017) helpfully poses one such question, namely, how do we begin to reimagine 'new geographies of knowledge?' We must be aware of not only the intersectionalities of Black/Afro-Indigenous peoples' identities but also the legacies of colonialism and the ways new forms of colonial and colonising relations show up in spaces and geographies and are mapped onto particular bodies.

I want to argue that the black taxonomy is unstable. However, a working outline for how we think about Blackness is necessary, especially in thinking through U-Carmen's articulating black musical voice. Despite notable scholarly contributions over the past few decades, the issue of race still presents significant hurdles for many musicologists (see Samuel Floyd 2008; Guthrie Ramsey 1996; Philip Bohlman 2003; Matthew M. Morrison 2014 and George Lewis 2004, 2014). This may be partially attributable to concerns raised by Toni Morrison's (1992 cited in André *et al.* 2012, 1) theoretical

approach in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. In the same way that Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1977) urged readers to critically examine the subordinating power dynamics inherent in the Western perspective on the East, Morrison scrutinises what she terms the 'Africanist' presence in American literature. This term encompasses not only the literal and figurative Blackness that African peoples have come to represent, but also a vast array of perspectives, assumptions, interpretations, and misinterpretations that accompany Eurocentric education concerning these individuals. Within academic domains such as musicology, which have historically placed significant emphasis on customs and methodologies predominantly originating from Western European cultures, Morrison's 'Africanist' paradigm compels scholars to reassess conventional perspectives on race in novel and frequently thought-provoking manners. Such approaches to the subject of race are not, however, non-existent in the scholarly musicological literature. With regard to the African American diaspora in the United States, numerous methodologies and models for addressing the issue of race in musical scholarship have been developed with the assistance of the aforementioned authors, among others. Their variety of case studies and theoretical frameworks concerning the intersection of race and music prompted us to contemplate the application of these viewpoints to a specific musical genre: opera (André *et al.* 2012, 1). Opera's enduring and extensive popularity, its long history of artistic collaboration and exchange, its diversity of styles, and its capacity to blur the boundaries between refined and vernacular artistic expressions all contribute to the genre's capacity to provoke thought-provoking and valuable inquiries regarding the intersections of race, ethnicity, and identity.

Following this geographical line of thought then, I deploy the terms 'black' and 'Blackness' in this chapter to denote individuals from Africa, the Caribbean islands, and parts of Latin America. As André *et al* (2012, 5) have argued, this geography encompasses a wide array of operatic characters, including individuals who were historically African (as examined by Eric Saylor and the team of Christopher Gauthier and Jennifer McFarlane-Harris cited in André *et al* 2012, 5), slaves, citizens of the United States or Caribbean nations (as discussed by Ann Sears, Gwynne Kuhner Brown, Karen Bryan, Gayle

Murchison, Melissa de Graaf, and Melinda Boyd cited in André *et al* 2012, 5), and diasporic figures from European culture (as discussed by Jonathan Wipplinger & Sarah Schmalenberger cited André *et al* 2012, 5). To understand Blackness and black identity is coming to a sense of self-knowledge, history, and the relation to communities and land. Blackness cannot be understood outside a conception of Africanness, and we must theorise Blackness in ways that speak to Africa and the African diaspora and insist or affirm the importance of going beyond a fixed or unbending racial ideology. It is the different histories, locations, geographies, and social and political realities that shape our understanding of Blackness. And, indeed, this complex representation speaks to the matrix of indigenisation that I want to argue is articulated through the black voice of *U-Carmen*. The thesis' framing of Blackness connects to the make-up of the Isango Ensemble, in which black township members are made to feel proud of their identity by promoting black identity and coming to a sense of self-knowledge, history, and a relation to community and land. Aside from reimagining Western theatre classics by placing them in South African or township settings, the Isango Ensemble also seek to addresses educational disparities in South Africa by providing training and educational opportunities for both staff and the community. This engagement with young people fosters a sense of hope, aspiration, and cultural pride, enabling them to overcome environmental limitations while honouring their heritage. Despite the challenges faced by many in South Africa, Isango presents its performers not as victims but as proud representatives of their community, appealing to a diverse and open-minded audience. Their productions integrate the reinterpretation of Western classics within a South African context, promoting cultural relevance and creativity. Isango's organisational structure supports artists at various stages of their careers, facilitating the development of emerging talents through the guidance of experienced artists. The creation of *U-Carmen* also connects to the framing of Blackness in that it encompasses not only the literal and figurative Blackness that Xhosa peoples have come to represent but also a vast array of perspectives, thus making it an appropriate theoretical frame for the thesis.

The Black Voice

The voice, originating inwardly and extending from the internal to the external, occupies a unique position in the auditory environment, specifically examined within the context of Western philosophy. According to Nina Eidsheim (2019, 17), the voice problematically is believed to expose the genuine essence of the body. The black voice, she shows, has been thought of as having a specific timbre that is identifiably 'black,' for instance, in a telephone conversation, devoid of any regional accent. The black voice has historically been treated as an 'other' through linguistic profiling. Linguistic profiling is a phenomenon in which an individual identifies social characteristics (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, or geographic origin) through the interpretation of auditory signals. Profiling based on linguistics is an automatic and natural psychological process. While not inherently discriminatory in and of itself, it has the potential to facilitate racial profiling, an act that is inherently discriminatory. Linguistic profiling has been linked to instances of discrimination, as demonstrated in studies conducted by John Baugh (1983), Jeffrey Grogger (2011), and others. This has significant implications for opera, where, as Eidsheim (2019) has shown, vocal performance might be subjected to racialized expectations and biases. The recognition or misrecognition of Blackness in vocal performances can be influenced by these profiling mechanisms, shaping how black voices are valued or dismissed.

The black voice, however, might be located in a broader discourse of black sound. The concept of 'acousmatic Blackness,' introduced by Mendi Obadike (2005), encapsulates the various inquiries that emerged from observations concerning vocal and auditory practices in Western vocal thought, a 'sonic skin' that enables stereotypes of Blackness to be articulated and understood in the absence of visual representations of Blackness (in Eidsheim 2019). Eidsheim's (2019) 'sonic Blackness' shows the perceptual phantom of a vocal timbre projected by the listener, which happens to match current expectations about Blackness, or the shaping of a vocal timbre to match ideas about Blackness; Barbara Savage's (1999, 7) 'aural blackface' explains the act of 'sounding' black by performing what might be recognised.

I expand upon Obadike's astute remark that hip-hop music, as a site of Black vocalisation, has the ability to evoke the essence of Blackness without the physical presence of a black individual. Applying this idea to African singers, the word and notion of 'acousmatic Blackness' can also encompass the perceived representation of the black physical form through singing tone, regardless of whether other criteria identify that individual as black (Eidsheim 2019, 7). The acousmatic inquiry refers to the auditory method or tool used to assess the extent of darkness in a certain context. Due to the acousmatic question's inherent incapacity to provide a definite response, any recognition of black vocal timbre is essentially the result of Blackness emerging in reaction to the acousmatic inquiry.

Yet as much as the black voice is a question of presence/ absence, it is perhaps also a function of listening. Dylan Robinson in *Hungry Listening* (2020) examines the act of listening through the lenses of settler colonialism and Indigenous culture. Robinson (2020) encourages the recognition of palatable narratives of difference, whereas ravenous listening engages in content-locating practices that direct the ear towards identifying standardised characteristics and types in the context of Western art music. This assertion holds true predominantly, albeit not exclusively, with regard to audiences confronted with tonal repertoire derived from the Western art music canon, which constitutes a substantial portion of chamber, opera, choral, and orchestral music ensembles. Formally trained music audiences are instructed to recognise musical conventions pertaining to harmony and genre progression, as well as a composition's innovative deviation from these conventions in a way that does not completely disrupt the generic flow. An individual's ear is thus 'civilised' to recognise and identify in 'higher listening' forms for those who have the privilege of obtaining a formal education in Western art music (Robinson 2020, 51).

Listening is inherently non-neutral and actively generates meaning, making it a political action. By actively engaging in the act of listening, we have the ability to assign names and establish precise definitions. We have the privilege of asserting, 'This is the vocal expression of an individual of African descent.' We have the privilege of asserting, 'That vocalist lacks authenticity in their delivery.' And we have the privilege of asserting, 'This vocalist does not exhibit their true essence in their performance.'

Not only do we, as recipients of sound, have the ability to categorise the person producing the vocals, but we also bring forth the abstract and intangible into the physical realm. Voices, being communal technologies, are closely connected to cultural values. Therefore, what the community hears and the meanings it ascribes to them are in harmony. Put simply, by listening we engage and set in motion (Eidsheim 2019, 24). The collective process possesses the dual nature of being both a curse and a beauty. By actively listening, we have the power to either strengthen or reject commonly accepted ideas and principles. Listening is not a neutral evaluation of the accuracy of something, but rather it is always inherently a discerning action - specifically, a political one (Eidsheim 2019, 25). The fact that the voice is a complex event comprising action, material, and social dynamics, in addition to its myriad acoustic signals, contributes to the fact that many definitions of voice fail to convey its nuance. The social and cultural fabrics that shape both voice and listening, as well as the complexity of voice, have yet to be thoroughly examined. This context affects how vocal performance is perceived and categorised, influencing the representation and definition of Blackness in opera. The complexities of voice as both a social and acoustic phenomenon mean that definitions of Blackness are often fluid and contested, reflecting broader cultural and racial dynamics. This is the framework that I use in thinking about U-Carmen's voice in this chapter as it sutures issue of race to broader discussions of indigeneity in opera marked by language and narrative.

U-Carmen's Black Voice

U-Carmen, portrayed by Pauline Malefane, exhibits a 'magnificently' trained operatic voice (Stobie 2016, 160), which situates her within a discursive practice of characterisation in opera that extends beyond her immediate environment. Her voice and characterisation can be thought in terms of longer histories of casting. As Eidsheim (2019, 67) has shown, female and male African American opera singers, for instance, experience both similarities and distinctions in how the intersections of race and gender manifest with characterisation in relation to voice types. Heroines are typically assigned soprano roles while

mothers, servants, and malevolent figures are assigned lower voices or extreme vocal ranges. The roles are mirrored in the relationship between male character archetypes and their corresponding pitch ranges (Eidsheim 2019, 67-68). Significantly, certain characters who are marginalised based on their race and ethnicity are designated for soprano roles. These roles frequently provide a starting point or a restricted casting opportunity for opera singers of colour, as we have observed.

By occupying roles traditionally assigned to certain voice types, black singers bring visibility to marginalised voices and experiences, thereby fostering a more inclusive and representative cultural landscape. Being cast in prominent roles defies conventional racial and ethnic stereotypes. This act of representation disrupts the traditional archetypes associated with race and gender in opera and allows for a broader, more inclusive depiction of heroism, resilience, and beauty, challenging the limited and often negative portrayals historically imposed on marginalised communities. This visibility not only affirms the identity and experiences of audiences but also educates and expands the perspectives of diverse audiences, promoting empathy and understanding.

By stepping into roles that are often reserved for non-marginalized individuals, black female singers can disrupt the traditional archetypes associated with race and gender in opera. When these singers perform as heroines, they challenge the preconceived notions about who can embody such roles, thereby expanding the narrative possibilities within the art form. This shift helps to dismantle the historical barriers and prejudices that have restricted opportunities for singers of colour, creating a more equitable space within the arts. The success and visibility of black female opera singers serve as powerful symbols of possibility and empowerment for individuals within marginalised communities. These performers not only demonstrate the potential for artistic excellence regardless of race but also could inspire future generations to pursue their aspirations without being hindered by societal limitations.

Depicting U-Carmen, who maintains the mezzo-soprano voice type of the original Carmen, as both a carer and, in some sense, a heroine, complicates her characterisation when read against Eidsheim's

taxonomy. This complex figuration is set in motion early in the opera when one of the important character connections is forged, namely between U-Carmen and Lulamile. His initial infatuation with U-Carmen is not aroused by her heroic display of virtuosity (as a heroine soprano might have). Instead, he first notices her while she sings to her daughter and praises her exceptional singing skills. Lulamile, a professional performing artist, comes from a community that greatly values music, especially singing, as a way to shape cultural identity. Therefore, he recognises and greatly appreciates U-Carmen's extraordinary voice prowess (Viljoen & Wenzel 2016, 67). This illustrates the significant recognition of the influential black female voice, even as it is framed within a depiction of U-Carmen in the traditionally subordinate role of carer.

Where the scene between Lulamile and U-Carmen challenges characterisations of voice types in a serene setting, the film's opening scene presents a jarring clash of ethnic traditions, creating a cacophonous aesthetic that combines intense conflict with uncompromising musical elements, notably rhythmic ones. This creates a fusion of black voices and an invisible European orchestra (Davies & Dovey 2010, 45-46). By skillfully juxtaposing Bizet's symphonic prelude, the film establishes a compelling denouement that underscores the diametrically opposed qualities of sight and sound, in addition to the cultural collision that exists between Europe and Africa. The initial sequence of the movie, denoted as 'the opera,' serves to underscore the disconnection and fragmentation through the use of the signpost that unveils the opera itself: 'Seville/Site D/Khayelitsha.' The local Gypsy Cigarette Girls choir performs a cappella renditions of the renowned 'Toreador Song' as a prelude to the introduction of Bizet's music during rehearsal. This juxtaposition possesses considerable importance. Although confronted with challenges in coordinating the vocalists, the male conductor effectively guides the intangible orchestra by employing Bizet's prelude, although it is unclear whether the vocalists can also hear the orchestra, they effectively blend the sounds together. U-Carmen and her fellow choristers project their voices over the orchestra singing audibly black tunes, making the voices audibly black.

The film then transitions to a subsequent sequence of disorderly scenes within the township, which comprise a multitude of authentic township elements (such as sewing machines, a goat obstructing the road, stokvel activity etc.). The fusion of strings and percussion amplifies the potency of these sights. Amidst the varied and heterogeneous assortment, Bizet's orchestral prelude, which imitates Spanish music, stands out prominently. It showcases recognisable European elements in a realistic fashion, including exaggerated four-bar phrases, lively dance rhythms, vibrant melodies, the repetition of popular-style themes, and the imitation of Andalusian music (McClary 1992, 46). The auditory manifestations and existence of the black vocal expression are unquestionably perceptible, there is a nod to local South African soundscapes which add to the richness of the perceived voice. Amidst the film's climax, the orchestra reiterates its vibrant European melody. The cameras are centred on the Gypsy Choir, who have relocated to the cigarette factory. In the absence of the male conductor, choir members are observed rolling and smoking cigarettes while performing anti-apartheid tunes. In this milieu, which is distinguished by vivacious and impulsive rhythms and the stench of cigarette smoke, the collision of two disparate domains is audibly palpable. Concurrently escalating, the instrumental 'soundtrack' and the colloquial 'noise track' contend for dominance by overlapping (Davies & Dovey 2010, 45). The song choice in this scene speaks volumes since it is audibly distinctly South African, it is a liberation song often utilised by politically marginalised protesters to exert influence over political discourse and convey their sentiments. Struggle songs played a crucial role in the tactics employed to overthrow the racially discriminatory apartheid regime in South Africa. They served as powerful tools of opposition employed by the black majority against the white oppressors. The black voices in this instance have a politicised quality, emanating an audibly black and distinct tone.

The film's sequence of scenes corresponds to the events shown in Bizet's opera. In the opera *U-Carmen*, the scenes portraying these events are introduced by a female character who announces the impending arrival of Lulamile. However, Lulamile does not perform the song 'Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre' as expected. Instead, a large number of people quickly leave the shebeen where they were waiting and

happily sing a traditional African melody to Lulamile, while also performing traditional dances. The traditional melody in this regard creates an audibly distinct tone to the black voice, though it could be imitated, the vernacular used and the 'click' sounds add to the dimension of the black voice as a whole. U-Carmen is alone, attending to a facial injury resulting from a vigorous altercation with a law enforcement officer. While examining her own reflection, she hums along with the repeated use of the main melody of the Habañera, contrasted with the traditional African song sung by the excited crowd outside the shebeen. This adds to the amalgamation of different sound scopes, yet this does not take away from the distinct sound of the black voice.

In another scene, U-Carmen ascends onto a pool table to perform and dance to entertain a fatigued Jongikhaya. She begins to hum the melody from the Allegretto. However, her performance of the castanet song deviates from the usual practice in this specific context, as it is not solely intended for the audience's hearing and sight. Jongikhaya is positioned at a pool table, with a cluster of revellers encircling him. U-Carmen, situated above him, diverges from Bizet's original composition as it is sung without orchestral accompaniment. Instead, the piece relies solely on vocal harmonies, with the lead singer humming the entire 'castanet song'. As anticipated, she displays a distinct awareness of her carefully orchestrated performance, the captivating non-verbal appeal of her music, her adept integration of dance rhythm, and the way her song functions as a means of both sexual and societal impact. U-Carmen does not have the accompaniment of hidden instruments. Instead, she receives improvised harmonic backing from the voices of the revellers onscreen. Instead of employing castanets, they substitute them with their own spontaneous, rhythmically varied hand claps. In a manner unprecedented in traditional opera-house productions, the operatic score just serves as a basic and fundamental framework. The voices deviate from the conventional Western structure and demonstrate improvisation that strongly aligns with African rhythmic and sonic elements. The remaining fragments of music by Bizet and other composers are skillfully employed to enhance and invigorate a text that would otherwise lack vitality, as exemplified in this collaborative depiction (Davies & Dovey 2010, 46-47).

The film effectively demonstrates how an unwavering commitment to the concept of authentic performance—as demonstrated by the vocalists’ intense immersion in their parts—can deculturarise or undermine banal hierarchical assumptions that possess considerable cultural value. Performance accomplishes a wholly positive deed in this instance, manifesting itself as a proactive ‘living through’ of a tense and thus highly emotive transcultural moment as opposed to a defensive corruption of a fixed work of art through sensuality. A number of rehearsed sequences from the original stage production have been incorporated into the film opera, primarily as a result of the inventiveness of *U-Carmen*’s performers. The songs are intended for various social gatherings, encompassing entertainment purposes. Consistent and diverse melodic and rhythmic patterns, along with verse patterns or word ornaments, are recognised to correspond with a variety of activities or situations. Critical listening positionality in this case entails a reflective examination of how factors such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and cultural background intersect and impact our perception of sound, music, and the surrounding environment (Robert 2020, 10). Bizet is domesticated by these instances of musical revision, which honour his score via both the observance and the breach.

Language as a Symbol of Indigenization

It’s indigenized ... It’s no longer a western imposition, it’s indigenized; it’s internalized by many, many people in our communities (André 2018).

Musically and linguistically (with text sung in English and isiXhosa), *U-Carmen* presents an intertextuality that shows a syncretic coming together of traditional South African and Western European elements. The sense of syncretism marks, I want to argue, a shift toward indigenisation rather than simply forging a hybrid form which is of neither culture. In making this argument, I move away from broader markers of culture, often used in aggregate in studies of the indigenisation of opera and as discussed at the start of this chapter, to focus specifically on language as an extension of voice.

Although applied differently, the concept of indigenisation is present in the discipline of translation studies where the practice of adapting a text for readers of a different language is called ‘domestication’. Maria Teresa Sánchez writes that domestication ‘refer[s] to the inevitable process of having to adapt the foreign text to our own linguistic and cultural background when we translate’ (Sánchez 2007). Translating an English text into French, Pierre le Tourneur (2000, 16) articulates his intention ‘to distil from the English [...] a French [text] to be read with pleasure and interest by French readers who would not have to ask themselves whether the book they were reading was a copy or an original.’ Although both statements imply a translation of high artistic quality, the adaptation of a libretto to the ‘linguistic and cultural background’ of the adopted country certainly points towards opera production becoming embedded in the local environment and can therefore be interpreted as a sign of indigenisation (Roos 2012, 136). If a language is a kind of cartography, then to translate is to transform one map into another. It is a process of finding the right symbols, those that will allow new readers to navigate through a landscape (Mbembe 2017, x). Indeed, in South Africa, translating libretti as a tool of Africanisation has been done since the 1960s with the aim to ensure contemporary relevance (Muller 2018, 196).

While *U-Carmen* utilises classical trained orchestral musicians, there is also the use of traditional African musicians who play indigenous instruments. IsiXhosa, a Nguni click language that is heavily reliant on vowels, is incorporated and gives the opera a unique diction where the vowel-driven African languages, to a Western listener not familiar with the language, functions similarly to the vowel-heavy Italian language, which although not the language of Bizet’s original opera, is suggestive in this context of the Western operatic subject. Yet intermittently, the isiXhosa vowels (and consonants) are interrupted by the sonic marker of the ‘click’ sounds of the Nguni language. To an ear used to hearing Italian opera, perhaps, the ‘click’ sounds shift the almost-familiar aural world into a stark new soundscape that highlights the foreign nature of this linguistic terrain. While *U-Carmen* is entirely in isiXhosa, the sonic signifiers of the ‘click’ sounds in the African languages, embedded within a vowel-saturated context, provide the audience with a syncretic linguistic experience, somewhere between Western opera and South

African singing. The opera provides a legacy for building upon Western opera in a way that opens up a space for African stories and histories to be told in their own African languages (André 2016, 14) but remarkably signals at the same time a form of defamiliarization with its original linguistic forbear. For the non-Xhosa opera-knowing audience, the click is an interruption; it provides a syncopated staccato feature to the otherwise expected legato lyricism of the operatic vocal lines. For the Xhosa audience, the click is the sound of recognition where the language is revealed and becomes the aural signal that the diction and meaning of the text are accessible and understandable (André 2016, 69-70).

Yet the function of language in the film opera needs to also be thought in terms of where it is placed in the aural frame. At times, for instance, Bizet's music recedes (by becoming softer in the soundtrack's mix) into the background and traditional songs rise to the surface. An early occurrence of this is right at the beginning when we first see the women working in the gypsy cigarette factory. During the Overture, the camera pans over the township and follows some of the factory workers from an early choir rehearsal to their factory workroom. As they are rolling cigarettes in the central room of a modest shack, the Overture's bright opening theme is played and the women sing upbeat traditional songs. For nearly forty seconds we hear this cross-cultural counterpoint as the women sing in isiXhosa, ululate, move their bodies, and roll cigarettes in time with the Overture. It is not clear if the women in the factory also hear the Overture or if they are just in tune with their own diegetic song. Nonetheless, as we watch this sequence, the possibility of thinking and listening to these two worlds together emerges. Such moments establish early on the breadth of the sonic world of the film. This is not a case where Bizet is translated into isiXhosa and casually adapted to a township setting. Rather this is a situation where Bizet's music is part of the world of Khayelitsha and is enmeshed with the other sounds and musics of the characters' lives. Such a scene, as explained by André (2016, 70-71), so early on teaches us how to listen to the film and make connections between what we see and how we hear. *U-Carmen* instructs us on the art of cinema analysis, namely on how to effectively perceive and establish correlations between various elements that characterise the sound scopes.

In addition to the sonic marker of the isiXhosa language being set operatically, the visual landscape of Khayelitsha adds another contrapuntal layer of signs. As the orchestra starts to warm up, the camera pans around the township, at first fast and then slowing down. The figuration of daily life in Khayelitsha is revealed visually and sonically as this sequence initially appears without any music. The orchestra then begins to tune up, and finally, the women's chorus is heard rehearsing the "Toreador Song." Dogs are walking around and barking, cars are driving with horns honking, and the voices of children playing and people going to work are layered in the aural mix of the background sounds. These opening scenes present a microcosm of the rest of the film. While Bizet's opera is one of the foundations for the narrative and sound, interwoven stories flesh out the plot to include flashbacks of life in the rural areas, the apartheid history that shows Lulamile's (the Escamillo character) parentless childhood, and the troubled, violent past of Jongikhaya (Don José) (André 2016, 70).

Language, however, is tied up in a larger realist aesthetic in the film opera. Charles Hazlewood, the musical director and conductor of *U-Carmen*, insists upon the mutual exclusivity of the film's audible and visual worlds: the pure 'authentic' music of Bizet on the one hand, and the pure 'authentic' locale of the township on the other. Two tropes of authenticity, in other words, are at loggerheads here. As Malefane (2006), who plays Carmen and who – along with Andiswa Kedama – translated the libretto into Xhosa, noted in an interview, 'We got strict instructions from Charlie [Hazlewood] [...] that he wanted Bizet as it was written – we could play around with our Xhosa as much as we wanted, but make sure we don't mess with Bizet' (Davies & Dovey 2010, 41). The setting and language facilitate a new version of the character Carmen. The use of the Xhosa language grounds the film firmly in South African black culture. With regards to the setting, both Andiswa Kedama and Pauline Malefane comment in their interviews on the *U-Carmen* DVD on the realistic portrayal of township life in the film – an ability inherent in the genre of film. The filming technique is gritty and lacks any glamorous 'Hollywood' feel, allowing us, the viewers, to see life as it is in Khayelitsha (Dias 2006, 91).

The aforementioned presents a tension in the hierarchy of value between two forms of authenticity in the film: The musical authenticity of Bizet's opera and the cultural and linguistic authenticity of the South African township setting. This tension is underscored by Charles Hazlewood's insistence on preserving the integrity of Bizet's music while allowing for creative freedom in the Xhosa translation of the libretto. Hazlewood's insistence on keeping Bizet's music unchanged could be interpreted as emphasising a hierarchy where the original Western classical music is placed at a higher value. This prioritisation suggests that the musical composition is considered sacrosanct and untouchable, a pure form that must remain unaltered to retain its authenticity. This could be seen as a form of cultural preservation or reverence for the original art form, positioning Western classical music as a universal standard. In contrast, the adaptation of the libretto into Xhosa and the setting in Khayelitsha bring a different kind of authenticity to the film. This aspect roots the narrative in South African black culture, giving it a specific and localised identity. The use of Xhosa language and the realistic portrayal of township life contribute to a form of authenticity that is deeply tied to the lived experiences and cultural expressions of the community depicted. This authenticity is more dynamic and flexible, reflecting the adaptive and transformative nature of cultural practices.

The hierarchy of value becomes evident in how these two forms of authenticity are treated. By maintaining Bizet's music in its original form, Hazlewood could be viewed as implicitly suggesting that the musical score holds a higher, perhaps more 'universal,' artistic value. This can be seen as a colonial perspective where Western art forms are placed above local cultures. Conversely, the flexibility allowed in the Xhosa translation and the portrayal of township life indicates a different, though equally important, form of value – one that is grounded in cultural specificity and realism. This hierarchy raises questions about the power dynamics in cultural production and the potential for cultural hegemony. By placing Bizet's music on a pedestal, the film risks overshadowing the significance of the Xhosa translation and the cultural context, potentially perpetuating a form of cultural imperialism. However, the insistence on

musical authenticity could also be seen as a way to maintain a connection to the original work, ensuring that the adaptation respects and honours its source material.

The film's approach can also be viewed as a negotiation between these values. By allowing the language and setting to be adapted while preserving the music, the film creates a space where both forms of authenticity coexist. This coexistence reflects a complex interplay between global and local cultures, highlighting the potential for intercultural dialogue and the creation of new, hybrid forms of artistic expression. *U-Carmen* reflects broader tensions in cultural production between preserving traditional art forms and embracing local, contemporary contexts. This tension invites critical reflection on how cultural authenticity is defined and valued, and the ways in which different forms of authenticity can be balanced to create meaningful and resonant works of art.

At the height of the opening scene, the orchestra recapitulates its racy European theme. The cameras now rest on images of the Gypsy Choir at a different township location – a cigarette factory – this time without their male conductor, rolling cigarettes and singing anti-apartheid freedom songs. It is here, in the ecstatic spontaneity of hammered-out rhythms and cigarette smoke, that the collision between two worlds becomes fully audible as the vernacular 'noise track' and instrumental 'soundtrack' crescendo mercilessly over the top of each other, competing with each other. The violent disarticulation of cultural styles in this filmic prelude, notably, introduces the viewer to a cacophonous aesthetic at once of hard conflict and unyielding musical – particularly rhythmic – contact, a 'real' sounding-together of seen African song and unseen European orchestra (Davies & Dovey 2010, 45-46).

Indigenising Operatic Narratives

As much as language, as an extension of voice, acts to indigenise *U-Carmen*, narrative as an extension of language becomes an important site for articulating the indigenisation of the opera. The film opera advances the theme of self-realisation through the story's emphasis on the Xhosa way of life and reflects a

form of ethnographic realism. By employing conventional narrative techniques, *U-Carmen*'s ethnographic realism is strengthened by both cultural normalcy and special events, which in turn support the film's humanistic approach to drama (Moyo 2015, 237). Indeed, it is for this reason that *U-Carmen*, according to Davies and Dovey, exemplifies a transcultural linguistic, visual, and political dynamic confrontation with Eurocentric elitism in the international axiology of opera (Davies & Dovey 2010, 46-47), offers an insight into an experience that is conspicuously absent in conventional productions of Western opera. It forges a black aesthetic that, as I have argued above, values traditional and indigenous narratives.

This aesthetic of realism, in some sense, is perhaps a product of the conceptualisation of the film opera. As the producers, creative team, and performers worked together to deliberately localise, domesticate, and diegeticize this film opera, postcolonial transcultural agencies proliferated and made it directly relevant to the lives of those who starred in, produced, and viewed it (Muller 2018, 196). This localization, as I will argue, serves a dual purpose: it intervenes in the international semiotics of representing South African locality while concurrently domesticating the opera. In what follows, I will trace the development of this aesthetic in a number of different narrativic themes as they are deployed throughout the opera.

The first narrativic theme I want to discuss is ritual. The initial sequence depicting the consequences of Lulamile's misfortune (TC 0:08:41) features his grandfather entrusting him to a white cleric while also bestowing upon him a necklace adorned with traditional prosperity beads, which is a symbol of enduring kinship and remembrance with his birthplace (Viljoen 2012). After having visions about his father, the adult Lulamile observes traditional religion with sufficient sincerity to return home and perform ancestral rites. When Lulamile performs his bow as a prosperous opera singer overseas, the ancestral jewels adorn his wrist. It is made more explicit in the scene depicting the traditional ritual that the individual spent their childhood abroad. The ceremony serves as an occasion for Lulamile to commemorate, affirm, and express optimism for the perpetuation of the benevolent connection he has shared with his father.

The ceremony transpires near Bra Nkomo's, who is Lulamile's cousin, shebeen. The shebeen, situated in a vibrant locality, serves as the setting for several significant celebratory ensemble sequences, romantic encounters, and dramatic confrontations that occur throughout the film. As a consequence of accommodating women's domestic activities in support of a traditional spiritual ceremony and its cultural formalities, the shebeen experiences a discernible metamorphosis. The perception of an alternative, more intimate ambience is generated by the altered sequence of events. Comparable to a kraal, a circular outdoor enclosure formed by tall, dense shrubbery conceals the men's gathering from the view of the general public on the street and divides the area for men from that for women serves to emphasise the social milieu of Khayelitsha. Equivalent to a kitchen, the women's area is furnished with tables and cooking utensils. The women perform laborious tasks such as slicing vegetables, presumably in anticipation of the beef that will be cooked subsequent to the animal sacrifice. Kraals are enclosures in rural regions where animals are confined and where male family members congregate exclusively to observe traditional cultural practices (Viljoen & Wenzel 2006, 62). Each space features a unique choreography, with the dynamic and unrestricted movement of the women juxtaposed with the deliberate and structured approach of the men, which are enabled through the theme of ritual.

This initial ritual creates a narrativic arch across the film in the way that it is linked in the penultimate scene of the film to celebrations that revolve around the off-screen slaughter of a bull intended to appease Lulamile's father's spirit, defend the family, and bring good fortune. As a traditional sacrifice, the tethered bull serves to fortify and safeguard the extended family unit, and thus the community as a whole. Hence, the virtues associated with tradition are elevated symbolically, thereby exposing their rigidly gendered limitations, even within the confines of this urban setting. The animals utilised in the ceremony serve as more than mere providers of flesh and hides; they embody and symbolise the vitality of the community. The existence of this life force is not restricted to the living; the deceased also experience it as consanguineous social members of the body, which not only possesses ancestral lineages but also serves as an ancient progenitor, having produced all living descendants and persisting for centuries.

As the women congregate for the slaughter to pay their respects to Lulamile, they erupt into song and dance upon hearing the sound of the slaughter. They wave and clap their hands, sway their bodies, and ululate. The women form a circle as the celebration gains momentum, and U-Carmen is the first to *xhentsa* – dance fervently in its centre, exhibiting a whole-body trembling in a rhythm of long-short-long values – in a manner reminiscent of shamanistic dancing and the flamenco fervour depicted in the traditional portrayal of the Spanish Carmen (Moyo 2015, 235). Umxhentso is a traditional dance, which according to Rani (2013), describes dances with cultural and religious significance that originated in an indigenous society. In keeping with the celebratory nature of this performance, U-Carmen's movements demand that the other vocalists and instrumentalists participate by clapping their hands or stomping their feet while pronouncing exclamations contained in the language, i.e. hayi! (Zungu 2020, 28-29). The umxhentso movement will be later spoken about in Chapter 2 in her use of the movement.

The gathering serves as a religious and cultural assembly where elders and ancestors participate in the praxis of filiation, which underpins the metaphysics of indigeness, in their capacity as progenitors. In this sense, ritual creates a narrativic theme which sutures the story of Carmen to the indigenous cosmology and figuration of the black subject in this context. As important as cosmology and ritual are in creating the ethnographic realist narrative of the film opera, it is complicated by a second narrativic theme which revolves around the rural – urban migration. This theme is announced in the scene where Jongikhaya returns to the barracks and Morales describes Nomakhaya being dressed 'as if she is from the rural areas' (TC 0:14:10). A rural/urban dichotomy is introduced when Jongikhaya immediately realises that Morales is describing Nomakhaya. Her background forms the basis of our understanding of why she is more likely to conform to societal expectations and her expected role as a married woman as the majority of the black South African rural communities are traditional and adhere to African male patriarchy. Jongikhaya opens the envelope Nomakhaya (the widow of Jongikhaya's deceased brother) hands him from his mother who approached her the previous Sunday after church (TC 0:14:50). The envelope contains a card featuring an image of the Virgin Mary carrying baby Jesus, the card reads 'For

my Son’ and the contents of the letter states that she offers him forgiveness and that she wishes that when he chooses a wife ‘let it be your brother’s widow’ which is a scene I will return to in Chapter 4 on Motherhood. This suggestion carries significance as it echoes traditional African practices but the mobility of the letter as something that travels between rural and urban further develops this narrative theme.

Cutting across the migration and cosmology is the theme of the premonition as figured by the *sangoma*. Occurring in the immediate aftermath of Jongikhaya's capture of U-Carmen and while she is still evading the police, U-Carmen selects a hiding place hastily and enters the *ndumba* – traditional sacred hut – of a traditional ancestral oracle without much thought. The camera does not immediately follow U-Carmen as she hastily enters the home and does not reveal her movements within the interior. Suspicious, the officer standing directly behind her observes the door closing and storms inside. At that moment, the camera enters the residence. The officer conducts a hasty and irate search of the interior before ostentatiously removing a blanket that obscures an enigmatic heap, but U-Carmen is nowhere to be found. The door of the *sangoma* – traditional diviner – bears his vocation and is embellished with three of the four suits of playing cards, all in red: an inverted heart with a V-shaped connection between its two hemispheres, a spade with its apex severed, and a diamond.

These symbols allude to the card-playing scene from the original *Carmen*, but they further imply an alternative form of divination. A thin steel door and vibrant red and white corrugated iron walls comprise the structure of the dwelling. The white door is adorned with a red spade pattern, which imparts an impression reminiscent of a sizable playing card. A significant symbolic, dramaturgical, and transcultural purpose is evident in this. Audiences who are acquainted with the Bizet narrative might recall that Carmen, portrayed by Bizet, becomes cognizant of her impending demise via a card-based fortune-telling exercise. Red is a significant symbol in Bizet's opera, representing both peril and desire; as such, it has become an integral part of the opera's visual legacy through design idioms like Carmen's renowned red dress. The design of the *sangoma*’s residence thus alludes to additional levels of significance in the scene,

particularly when the oracle himself appears, for the astute observer. In the absence of prior familiarity with Bizet's Carmen, the *sangoma*'s existence and the stark visual motif of playing cards may evoke notions of destiny and chance (Moyo 2015, 224-225). In this instance, U-Carmen's fate is depicted as a potential gamble inside the *ndumba*.

This perception may influence the tone of subsequent scenes, despite the fact that the initial encounter does not seem to have transpired in a dramatic manner. The *sangoma*'s *ndumba* represents the traditional base of intimacy with roots. The *sangoma*, a mature man situated in a visually vibrant ritualistic environment, surpasses all other characters in the film in his representation of Xhosa cultural and spiritual heritage. Upon his initial appearance, the *sangoma* is introduced as a minor yet thematically significant character, and his dwelling is designated as a symbolic location to which the narrative will revisit during a pivotal juncture. The figure of a traditional healer from South Africa accompanies his visage, which exudes both maturity and a persistently stern concentration. The *sangoma* appears ordinary due to his well-groomed dreadlocks, leopard-print vest, and basic brown pants; however, his unique vocation is indicated by the vibrant beads adorning his dreadlocks, necklace, and bracelets. These ornaments and adornments allude to black South African symbolisms of his role as a traditional healer and his capabilities.

In the adaptation of Bizet's renowned gypsy fortune-telling scene, later in the film, U-Carmen seeks the *sangoma*'s advice over her deteriorating marriage and the domestic violence occurring in her household. The film omits the depiction of the consultation at the precise moment in the storyline when it occurs. The visit to the *sangoma* is depicted as a distant memory. It occurs when U-Carmen, while engaging in smuggling activities by the seaside at midnight, succumbs to the peer pressure from her companions and discloses the information obtained during the consultation. The film depicts U-Carmen discovering her impending death while recalling past events. Subsequently in the film, U-Carmen's recollection of the events that transpired during her second encounter with the *sangoma* cements the significance of the

initial encounter as a pivotal juncture in destiny. The initial meeting with the *sangoma* establishes a ritualistic atmosphere, distinguishing it as a unique aspect of U-Carmen's world (Moyo 2015, 222-223).

The second scene of the consultation primarily explores the ritualistic acts that occur within the ceremonial setting, while the *sangoma* interprets the objects that portend her demise—including bones and Jongikhaya's ring—which comprise the prophecies. The two scenes depicting the encounter with the *sangoma* include distinct elements that contribute to the film's comprehensive portrayal of the *sangoma* divination ritual as an event that possesses its own suitable setting for action. U-Carmen's futility in attempting to evade her fate, which may have culturally specific connotations but is portrayed as inevitable in a patriarchal, misogynistic society, is highlighted in these sequences (Stobie 2016, 162).

Furthermore, the scene's emphasis on visual exoticism and ethnographic realism is vital to the dramatic juncture. As part of his performance of divination, the *sangoma* groans in a trance and swats his shoulders with a white traditional fly sweep. U-Carmen hands him the wedding ring after removing it from her finger. A cloth is used to encase the ring and the *amathambo*, a small assortment of shells, engravings, and bones used in the ritual for divination. As U-Carmen manipulates the cloth with her breath, the oracle suspends it from the ceiling. He shakes it once more, groans, and then tosses its contents onto the mat. He indicates the *amathambo* by utilising the whisk's handle while reading the results. The terrible news is declared via U-Carmen's song-based voice-over, whereas the on-screen characters solely engage in visual communication via eye contact. U-Carmen's facial expressions convey her astonishment and disbelief, whereas the oracle shakes his head in pity, aroused by undeserved calamity. The oracle then raises a mirror in front of U-Carmen and directs her attention to it. The two individuals remain seated in a tableau for a considerable duration as the camera gradually rotates towards a closer inspection of U-Carmen's reflection, which reveals a growing sense of anguish on her countenance. As the music rises in a horrific crescendo, a melodic voice-over by U-Carmen laments the outcome and urges the *amathambo* to never lie. As this message draws to a close, the reflection of U-Carmen transforms into a disconcerting vision of

her crouching while afflicted with a lacerations-splattered cut on her neck. Carmen has been ultimately denied an *amathambo* ‘no’ to the promise of a new life, love, and intimacy with her origins.

The culture of Khayelitsha is characterised in the film opera by its distinct language, heritage, and social realities. However, it also has a strong postmodern and global influence. The distinction between the local and the global is not always discernible, either in the actual Khayelitsha or in the film opera's portrayal of the location. The ceremonial scenes effectively demonstrate this intricacy as they embody cultural peculiarities in a manner that is very conducive to creating an exotic atmosphere, yet also prone to distorting racial and ethnic differences through stereotypical representations (Moyo 2015, 239). Both the *sangoma*'s presence and sacrificial ceremonies prominently explore themes of death, spirituality, and ritual, which are central to typical Xhosa humanistic-existential concerns. As a result, these scenes depict cultural specificities to create visual exoticism while also maintaining a dramaturgical humanism in the existential exploration of the challenges and potentialities of human existence (Moyo 223-224). Every scene is strategically positioned within the plot to effectively uncover significant narrative and thematic elements related to the expression of indigenous identity through family connections. Clearly, while the inclusion of traditional ceremonies contributes to visual exoticism, it also reinforces the third-world realism of the audiovisual language of these ritual scenes.

Black Opera Critique

What's wrong with the way Africans sing? Why should you teach them to sing like Italians? To make them into imitation whites – and poor imitations as well? [...] If you go to Khayelitsha you can find tales that are far more tragic than Carmen [...]. So why aren't we doing a real Carmen from Khayelitsha, a tragic tale in Khayelitsha? Why are we borrowing from Bizet? (Jordan cited in Davies and Dovey 2010, 40).

Why might black South Africans feel compelled to participate in and make opera, both within the established repertoire and in productions of new opera works given the colonial and recent apartheid history, and its association with European Western elitist artistic genres? This question, as Donato Somma has argued, has led to research into the genesis points of South African opera (Somma 2016, 33). I argue in this thesis that there are two reasons for this: The first reason is financial and the second has to do with South Africa's historical musical make-up, both points will be discussed.

Franz Fanon notes that 'in situations where colonial rule does not depend solely on the exercise of state violence, its reproduction instead rests on the ability to entice Indigenous people to identify, either explicitly or implicitly, with profoundly asymmetrical and nonreciprocal forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the settler state and society' (Coulthard 2014b, 25 cited in Robinson 2020, 7). With the desire of being better accepted African converts adhered to the missionary and 'Western' value system and participated in Christian choral and congregational singing rather in contrast to their more traditional songs. Performing traditional song and dance was forbidden and branded as heathen and blasphemous; despite that, music in the form of song and dance was an integral part of indigenous culture (Coplan 1985, 29 cited in Dias 2006, 87). The Westernisation of Africans through music not only helped shape and reinforce black middle-class identity, but it also widened the chasm between the traditional and Westernised. Music, from being an integral part of everyday socialising, became more structured and linked to high-profile events (Dias 2006, 87).

Dylan Robinson (2020, 8-9) alludes and builds on Fanon's view, arguing that even though the genre demonstrates a sharing space (e.g., visual and kinetic intermingling of bodies on stage, an acoustic blending of music, or a mixed use of languages) the integration often remains premised on discovering a way to "fit" Indigenous musicians into Western paradigms of performance. Using this thought and looking at opera, this would suggest that in such performance, the fundamental tenets of Western musical genres and form remain intact, thereby reinforcing settler structural logic – the form and structure of the aesthetic could be enriched by other sights and sounds without unsettling the worldview it supports. The

inclusionary performances make space for and accommodates Indigenous cultural expression while enervating Indigenous political and cultural impact.

Dissimilar to other African countries, South Africa has supported a continuing operatic culture since the nineteenth century (see Roos 2010; Muller 2018; Pistorius 2019). As noted earlier in this chapter, the colonial and apartheid systems barred black venture in this field and the primary patrons, participants and audiences were of White descent (e.g., British and Dutch colonials). Opera theatres were exclusively White, and the formal opera culture attained through necessary training programmes and apprenticeships were prohibited to black people (André *et. al.*, 2016, 1). As André *et. al.*, (2016) posit, there lies an informal history of opera in South Africa one that displays that black singers, composers, and audiences have long had exposure to operatic music through choral societies, classical music in missionary church venues, and educational settings. The black populations maintained a strong culture of solo and choral singing in churches and civic choir (André 2014, 19).

Since the dismantling of apartheid, the opera scene quickly became a space for black singers and composers to move into (Roos 2010). The genre's flexibility allowed South Africans to produce newly composed works on cultural and political figures, thus allowing them to write their own history (Muller 2018, 224). Newly staging Blackness in my view is an emancipatory act as it allows Africans to refigure themselves – gender and race – in new narratives from stereotypical caricatures to real-life figures for Europe and the world at large to see. Such inclusion could also be seen as seeking to redress a history of compositional resourcing and appropriation of non-Western music. Black audiences and singers have had a long-time engagement with singing in styles that have allowed a few singers who are vocally ready to move into opera (André 2014, 19). Yet to include Indigenous and non-Western musicians in such work may just as easily take part in a representational politics that does not necessarily address the structural inequities that underpin inclusion, although inclusion can just as easily participate in an elision of reciprocal relationships between collaborating partners (Robinson 2020, 5).

In *U-Carmen* the use of Bizet ‘as it was written’ is seen to turn Africans into imitators, compromising their cultural heritage. Davies & Dovey (2010, 40) counter Pallo Jordan’s critique by suggesting that the film should not be interpreted as an ‘imitation of whites’ or ‘borrowing from Bizet,’ but rather in light of the fact that it represents, what they refer to as a ‘complex, restless, playful cinematic transculturation,’ suggesting that it is only by closely examining the operatic entanglements in the film that one can understand it as such - exploring the tensions and incommensurability of its audio-visual engagements, proving a productive challenge at once to ‘high’ conceptions of operatic textuality and ‘low’ cinematic representations of African locality (Davies & Dovey 2010, 41). By doing so, one exposes themselves to multiple academic disciplines: transculturation and adaptation studies (see Hutcheon 2006; Dovey 2009); ‘screened music’ studies (see Slobin 2008; Mera and Morcom 2009); and opera studies (see Leicester 1994; Citron 2000; Parker 2006; Levin 2007). As scholars working on the intersections between film and music have argued, it makes little sense to analyse films that foreground music without taking that very music into account (Dovey & Impey 2010). Contemporary ethno/musicologists working on ‘screened music’ argue that ‘as soundtrack and visuals are matched, each re-contextualizes the (decontextualized) other’ (see Mera & Morcom cited in Davies & Dovey 2010, 40).

Instead of being rejected and eliminated, opera is being transformed to do different things. André (2016, 13) insists that it is no longer a borrowed replication of a foreign tradition but rather that South Africans are creating a new vision and function for the genre, as it combines new interracial collaborations that present Western and indigenous-inspired narratives performed by the bodies and voices of all of its citizens. The harmonised settings are also consistent with what will become a common practice in the inclusion of Indigenous voices and musicians into Western composition: the imposition of Western temporality through ‘clock-defined time,’ regimented through time signatures and metre, and the application of capitalist teleology upon the sounds – as well as peoples, voices, and bodies – of the New World (Robinson 2020, 120).

Despite the fact that opera can be seen as a genre that is relevant, provocative, empowering, and ripe with potential for critical inquiry, activism, and even social change, it is historically exclusionary. André (2018) acknowledges the fact that there are numerous obstacles that have to be overcome when attempting to make opera more accessible to those previously excluded from this artistic tradition. André goes on to admit that not even all-black casts and plots relevant to black experiences and histories will change the fact that opera is still expensive, usually exclusionary, often intimidating, and thus viewed as elite art.

Funding is a basic necessity for every filmmaker to make a film both contextually and textually. Film funding has bearing on which stories are told and how they are told. *U-Carmen* was funded by foreign based investors (so were *Tsotsi* (2006) and *Invictus* (2009)). Although intended for the South African audience, by nature of being foreign-funded, the film still gets to be told from the perspective or mimicking that of the foreign culture. Investors have the power to dictate storytelling approaches. Similarly, South African film distributors favour films adhering to Western standards that are profitable (Aiseng 2017, 46), sidelining local films which do not abide by those principles which results in them being left at the periphery. Funding and distribution both influence narrative techniques and aesthetic approaches that stories are required to follow. Filmmakers do not entirely have the full legroom to narrate their own stories in whichever way they feel is appropriate (Aiseng 2017, 46).

Conclusion

U-Carmen portrays the existence of a resilient female protagonist. This emerging black South African opera singer embodies the Western European heritage, in which women's vocals are distinctively distinguished and possess the ability to convey strength and influence. Opera in post-apartheid South Africa serves as a crucial platform that combines historical narratives with present ambitions for the future, while also exploring the connections between gender, race, and nation (André 2014, 28). Despite

its global scope, this story remains firmly grounded in South Africa. Significantly, this narrative is conveyed by South Africans, specifically focusing on South Africa.

U-Carmen challenges the notion of opera as an unquestionable symbol of high culture, where the musical aspect must be protected at any expense. It also does not view opera as a mere text or hypertext, nor as an exclusive social institution. Instead, *U-Carmen* sees opera as a discourse that is created by multiple authors and can be easily understood, repeated, and adapted to local contexts. However, it should be noted that the film does not resist just for the sake of resistance, nor does it deliberately aim to challenge the foundations of Western society. The film highlights the impact of a firm dedication to the idea of genuine performance, where the vocalists wholeheartedly embody their roles. This dedication has the potential to undermine or diminish conventional notions of high cultural worth based on hierarchy. The performance here has a completely positive effect, as it is not just a protective response to a corrupted artwork, but rather an engaged and emotionally charged experience of a complex transcultural moment. The film deserves recognition for incorporating various distinguishable moments from the original theatre production, showcasing the exceptional originality of its performers. These instances of musical reinterpretation once again tame Bizet, paying tribute to his composition both in adherence and in deviation.

As a form of Black Consciousness film, *U-Carmen* aligns with Fanon's (1968) assertion in *The Wretched of the Earth* that the colonised individual who writes for their community should employ the past as a means to envision the future and inspire proactive engagement driven by optimism. Black Consciousness ideas empower South African cinema to confront the ongoing psychological and metaphysical constraints imposed by Western dominance in cinemas in the southern region (Aiseng, 2017, 48). *U-Carmen* examines the conflicts and disparities between its audible and visual elements, presenting a thought-provoking challenge to both traditional opera and stereotypical portrayals of African settings in film. In this context, the creative authorship is shared among several key contributors, including the composer who creates the music, the librettist who writes the text or lyrics, the director who envisions the

production's staging and interpretation, the conductor who leads the performance, and the set and costume designers who craft the visual elements. This collaborative effort is crucial in crafting an opera's artistic and narrative essence, reflecting a multifaceted authorship that enhances its impact and relevance.

Sexual Politics: Restructuring the Black Female Body

In the 1973, Laura Mulvey a cinema theorist, utilised psychoanalytic notions to construct a feminist polemic that has since become a widely recognised and concise representation of gender dynamics in film, she coined the phrase 'the male gaze', describing the way in which the visual arts and literature depicted the world and women from a masculine point of view (Mulvey 1973, 810). Mulvey aimed to deconstruct the process of visual perception in order to reveal how traditional film techniques perpetuate male-dominated fantasies; she perceived this as a task that executed the vocabulary and concepts of psychoanalysis. Our obligatory gaze is motivated by delight and reflexive sympathy with the camera's objectives; some of the human forms onscreen appear to be posed for our examination. Those figures, Mulvey noticed, are often female. This cinematic universe does not function in a vacuum. According to Mulvey, it is 'subject to the law which produces it'; that is, what we observe is governed by the regulations of the society in which we reside. Thus, it is not coincidental that patriarchy tends to be reflected in cinematic images, which reinforce the traditional dichotomy between passivity and activity.

Too frequently overlooked in contemporary discourse surrounding the gaze is the potentiality of viewing as an act of ambivalence. Even the oppressor's gaze, according to Fanon's psychoanalytic study of colonialism *Black Skin, White Masks* (2016), can be a source of uncertainty; no one's perspective or projection is wholly secure. bell hooks directed her critique of mainstream film criticism in 1989 towards the experience of the black female spectator, an aspect that had hitherto been disregarded. Black women, estranged from the exclusive and discriminatory ideals of Hollywood cinema, formulated an alternative perspective in which a discerning recognition of preconceived notions hindered any direct sympathies towards the tragic mulattas or mammies depicted on screen. This "oppositional gaze," as hooks termed it,

was not acquired by virtue of being black and female; on the contrary, it was developed through the struggle against prevailing modes of perception. When it comes to black women, feminist author and activist hooks complicated this gaze by including White men, White women, and black men. What does this mean for the black feminine body? The black feminist movement analyses such questioning, which has become necessary due to the legacy of slavery, patriarchy and classism in society; the black feminist movement criticises the invisibility of black women and exposes their demands in feminist movements (Ribeiro 2016).

Feminist thought often emphasises the relevance of analysing and critiquing various intersectional oppressions that carry with them the heavier sentiments of undisclosed and unrecognised pain and trauma that come with the history of gender, racial, class, and sexual exploitations (Collins 2022). Despite this, black sexual politics and its interaction with the eroticized female body in African art are still relatively underexplored topics in African academia, having only recently been spoken about by Collins (2004). This breach is alarming given the rise of contemporary African artists utilising erotic imagery generated through eighteenth-century scientific racism, and its perpetuation in the imperialist epistemic structures of institutions — such as museums — in the centuries following.

Scrutinising and examining physical black women's bodies has been prevalent for centuries, which has led to controlling images being imposed onto them. The sensuality and sexuality of black women's bodies is a subject that has a long history in representational and material practices with erotic imagery (Ponzanesi & Duncan 2005). These illustrations have dictated the perception of black women and how they are to be treated. By tracing the history and defining characteristics of the ideas and actions of black women, Collins (2022) argues that black feminist thought is the dialogue that enables the resistance, perseverance, and triumph of black women in the face of adversity. Collins' (2022) timely update demonstrates, by means of meticulous research that synthesises the significant intellectual labour accomplished by black women, that the ideas and actions of black women are not peripheral concerns; on the contrary, they are pivotal to the trajectory of social justice in democratic societies in the coming years.

Four controlling images that have commonly been used to associate black women with are addressed in *Black Feminist Thought* (Collins 2022), these include the mammy, matriarch, welfare queen, and jezebel. To expand: the conventional Mammy stereotype plays the role of an unthreatening, hyper maternal, asexual black woman (Kwate & Shatema 2015; Mitchell 2020, 43). The matriarch refers to the notion that the poverty and concentrated disadvantage that envelops the majority of African Americans was caused rather than being an effect of black families commanded by unmarried mothers. The imagery of the welfare queen exemplifies the notion that impoverished, working-class African American mothers are to blame for the overall decline in the standard of living within modern capitalist society. Lastly, as an organisation that operates at the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality, Jezebel portrays African American women as excessively prolific and hypersexual. It goes without saying that all the aforementioned imposed images carry their own distinct negative implications, yet they all have one thing in common: they are centred around the sexuality of black women. The jezebel archetype is central to the nexus of all controlling images centred around black womanhood. The blackwoman is portrayed as one who is promiscuous and has an insatiable sexual appetite, which perfectly fits the narrative of the exotic Other. Black women have been historically represented as the height of sexual deviance and abnormality. Black women are compelled to either assimilate these representations into themselves or devise distinctive sexual politics as a means of opposition. U-Carmen forges a different narrative in comparison to the aforementioned images and allows for a different narrative of the black female body.

The hypersexuality of the black woman's body was (in)famously rendered historically through the body of Sarah Baartman, a South African Khoikhoi woman, who was horrifically exhibited in Paris and London in the early nineteenth century as the 'Hottentot Venus'. Her figure, but more specifically her large buttocks, genitalia, and breasts, as amusing, inferior, and oversexed were the main reason for her display (Gilman 1985; Collins 1990; Young 1997). This is a poignant example of the haunting images that represent the spectacular denigration of the black female body. Baartman's exhibition has had a long-standing impact on the understanding black women's bodies as hypersexualized spectacles for

consumption (Mowatt *et al.* 2013, 651). Black female bodies have historically been considered grotesque, animalistic, systematically subordinate, and unnatural (Gilman, 1985). An important aspect that marks the regime of representation of African women's bodies was passivity, which was central to both colonial and local African notions of appropriate femininity (Seidman 1993; Livermon 2020, 125).

The injustices that black women have been forcefully subjected to for centuries are directly linked to the ideas conveyed through this 'controlling image' (Collins 1990). Furthermore, it has led to the hyper-sexualisation of black women and has also given leeway for elite white males to attempt to control black women's sexuality. The repercussions of attempting to control black women's sexuality has forced a culture of dissemblance and sexual silence. Individuals at the intersection of subordinate identities are invisible because they are not fully recognized as group members, and because their characteristics and experiences are distorted or discounted in order to fit them into more prototypical models (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach 2008). However, through artwork, the same body that was once unsightly has become a call to arms, suggesting that instead of continued victimisation, black women wield the 'erotic' body as a resistance tool. African artists (e.g., Wangechi Muti, Zanele Muholi) are engaging with themes of eroticism and sexuality as inextricably entangled with historical violence and trauma through performance, live art, and painting. The strive by black women to disassociate from the culture of dissemblance and dismantle the image of the hyper-sexualised jezebel began to happen in recent decades. They have relished the idea of experiencing sexuality as a source of pleasure while also assuming their own authority in sexual power, by doing this they have made great strides to assume agency over their lives and sexuality. As a means of redefining their sense of self, black women have created alternative self-images. I argue that the same holds true for U-Carmen who forges her own version of sexuality and sensuality through movement.

In this chapter, I interrogate the use of movement and sensualisation as a mechanism to navigate the complex terrain of black female identity and sexual power. To accomplish this, I will present several fundamental arguments that feed into black feminist critiques of the body including a meditation on body

politics and gender being rewritten into the colonial paradigm. Dornford-May and Paulina Malefane synthesise various representations of sexualisation, which are coupled with issues of history and reappropriation of the black female body. Contrary to its previous confinements as an overly policed trope, the black female body is charged with an artistic power that explodes, and subverts the historical narrative, making it a constantly evolving archetype in contemporary black opera.

Several scholars have studied *U-Carmen* in respect to how it localises or indigenizes the international opera as seen in Chapter 1. However, they have also considered how the film opera responds to international feminist perspectives on the legacy of the original *Carmen*. Davies & Dovey (2010) make note of the large amount of feminist literature that has been written about Carmen's story with over eighty screen adaptations. Among these is Susan McClary in *Carmen* (1992) who gives a feminist critique of Bizet's opera in line with nineteenth-century French legacies of exoticism and sexism, which challenges notions that opera is a great love story with music. McClary encourages the opera to be read in a manner that does not ignore the fault lines of social power that organise it, making reference to Carmen being viewed 'as the lowest form of human life possible' (1992, 8) and points to the fact that *Carmen* is only one of many fantasies involving race, class and gender that circulated in French culture. McClary illustrates the emergence of Carmen within a vast cultural and political context of Orientalism which reproduced the recurrent stereotyped foreign fantasy figure of the savage woman with transgressive sexuality, criminal insubordination, and threatening to racial otherness (1992, 124). McClary's substantial postcolonial feminist critique sets the tone for the comparative discussion on *U-Carmen* as a reply to Bizet.

Viewer's Gaze

The fluttering piece of red fabric – reminiscent of flames – opens the first scene. The soundtrack features the sound of a loose corrugated iron sheet banging in a howling wind. By means of cross-dissolving, the

face of a woman (U-Carmen) dressed in red appears through the flames and a male voice begins to quote the passage from Mérimée's novella:

For a woman to be beautiful, they say in Spain, she must fulfil thirty ifs, or, if it pleases you better, you must be able to define her appearance by ten adjectives, applicable to three portions of her person. For instance, three things about her must be black, her eyes, her eyelashes, and her eyebrows. Three must be dainty, her fingers, her lips, her hair, and so forth. My gypsy girl could lay no claim to so many perfections. Her skin, though perfectly smooth, was almost of a copper hue. Her eyes were set obliquely in her head, but they were magnificent and large. Her lips, a little full, but beautifully shaped, revealed a set of teeth as white as newly skinned almonds. Her hair – a trifle coarse, perhaps – was black, with blue lights on it like a raven's wing, long and glossy [...] to every blemish she united some advantage, which was perhaps all the more evident by contrast. Dark-haired women who are attractive in their own strange way but who, according to the norms of the society in which they live, cannot lay claim to real beauty (Mérimée 2007,31).

The viewer's attention is drawn to U-Carmen's body parts in this opening scene. The camera frames her eyes, lips and hair, and we are informed that her faults are offset by her virtues. This framing suggests what Laura Mulvey calls erotic contemplation in *Visual pleasure and narrative cinema* (2006). This term, she argues, describes cinematic sequences in which the viewer is encouraged to temporarily discard narrative concerns in order to concentrate on the passive body of the female subject. This rendering of the passive body, panned over by the camera and the viewer's gaze marks the opening shots of U-Carmen. The female body is presented here in a spaceless, contextless environment, also featuring a male voice describing the original Carmen which enumerates, and evaluates, the female character's physical characteristics.

Torn from the narrative sequences, however, the opening shot presents an image of a voiceless, unresponsive nameless black woman. Similar to the dominant representations of black women in film that

persevere, the narrator denies black women their subjectivity and political agency which consequently relegates them to mute sub/objects (Dlakavu 2017, 89-90). The audience is invited to conceptualise U-Carmen as part of a history, and as a visual persona depicted in words that occlude the irony and descriptions of skin colour in Mérimée's novella, we are also informed that her faults are offset by her virtues.

The objectification of U-Carmen is not unique to the filmic adaptation. The objectification effect has long been bound up with Carmen by figuring her as the Other. In Bizet's original portrayal, McClary (1992, 53) argues that 'the exotic passages in Carmen are first and foremost products of Orientalism: they are fantasies about the Other firmly grounded in French culture'. This is evident in more traditional versions of the opera, where set and costume designs contribute towards the disseminated perceptions of the exotic Other. By Other, we can follow Pal-Lapinski (2005, 109) who states that 'exoticism is a trope that at times includes and parallels orientalism but is not necessarily limited to it'. During the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century, the Other was perceived to be exotic. Stereotypical identities of remote and unfamiliar people, cultures and places were constructed through fantasies derived from unsubstantiated perceptions of the Other. In the opening scene, Dornford-May forges a connection between issues of representation and this same sense of exotic Othering not only through the framing of U-Carmen, but also through the insertion of a version of Mérimée's text. In the original *Carmen*, Mérimée's passage did not provide any physical description of Carmen. The passage used here, however, attempts to describe the features of Pauline Malefane in a moment which collapses U-Carmen and Carmen in the term, 'gypsy girl' thereby modulating between Bizet's opera and the Insango production through the figuration of the black body.

The second time U-Carmen appears (TC 00:06:22) sets her within the context of Khayelitsha, and in contrast to the opening shot, neither her clothes nor her body language suggests her being overtly sexual. She is dressed in a tight-fitting, short-sleeved hoodie, blue jeans and a pair of red sneakers. She has the long sleeves of her red tracksuit top tied around her waist. The top bears the name of the choir to which

she belongs, namely the female choir of the Gypsy Cigarette Factory. Her hair is drawn back in a simple ponytail and her gait is assertive. U-Carmen does not act in a manner that can be perceived as excessively emotional or sensual. In fact, the lack of sexuality and excessive emotion in appearance and demeanour prompted quite harsh criticism from numerous foreign reviewers of the film. U-Carmen's physique prompted judgemental comments related to size: 'proudly (and bravely) overweight' (Gonzalez 2007); 'the decision to cast two leads who aren't svelte, then insisting upon their sexiness' (Zoller Seitz 2007); 'this Carmen has got booty and she isn't the only one. The film is full of fat ladies (and gentlemen) singing' (Byrnes 2006). The most egregious comments are voiced by Phil Hall (2007), who viciously attacks Malefane and describes her as "a miscast joke – her blubbery figure and air of detached indifference makes her the least appealing Carmen in memory, and it is difficult to understand why the men in the film are in such wild orgiastic fury over such a dull and dumpy woman." Clearly, expectations of a sexualised Carmen abound.

What is further worth noting with regards to the critical commentary on U-Carmen's figure is that the majority of the comments are made by male critics whose body shaming and judgement stem from stereotypical expectations based on Western models of slimness bound up with sexualised femininity. Femininity, in this sense, is more often than not defined by being the object of men's desire but is also coded within a racialised frame. As Christy Adair (1992, 160) notes, 'black women are subject to Western notions of beauty and "ideal proportions" and the sexism and racism which those standards illustrate'. The black woman's body is conceived as something undesirable. Black women's bodies and beauty have been predominantly devalued and rejected by mainstream culture, which, with the exception of exoticizing them, overvalued the European aesthetic and undervalues the aesthetics of other racial/ethnic groups (Banks 2000). Research has demonstrated that African American women are not exempt from the influence of the dominant culture and are affected by European ideals of beauty (James *et. al.* 2001). Rogers (2010) discovered that African American college women were more likely to internalise these notions and develop body image concerns as their exposure to social messages about thinness increased.

This marginalisation is not limited to the realm of aesthetics but extends into broader social and political narratives. Narrations of both anti-capitalist and anti-white supremacist struggles in the post-apartheid public discourse often gender events such as the #FeesMustFall movement and the Marikana massacre, privileging certain voices while marginalising others. In African historiography, voices fall into the ‘malestream,’ which Zeleza (2005, 207) characterises as the silencing of women’s voices, a tendency seen in previous anti-colonial struggles in the country (Simamkele 2017, 89). Women's perspectives and experiences are frequently overlooked, their contributions undervalued, and their voices silenced. This gendered silencing perpetuates a cycle where news and commentary often disregard the marginalised, reinforcing a biased narrative that fails to represent the diversity and richness of women's experiences and opinions. The dominant discourse not only marginalises women's voices but also shapes public perception, policy, and cultural norms in ways that sustain gender and racial inequalities.

Black feminist thought suggests that ‘dealing with prevailing standards of beauty – particularly skin colour, facial features, and hair texture – is one specific example of how controlling images derogate [black] women’ (Collins 2000). As such, the black female body bears the weight of cultural differences. Presuppositions about Carmen being excessively sexual and sensual are something that Phil Hall, in his criticism quoted above, shares with many who fail to allow for any possibility that Malefane’s portrayal of U-Carmen is not the result of bad acting, but that her acting style is informed by a deliberate choice made to dilute the perception that her character’s womanhood is equated with overt sexuality and to rather emphasise other qualities of womanhood besides sexuality and seemingly irrational behaviour. Often, productions push the theme of womanhood and sexuality to the brink in the costumes of female characters as well as in their body language. They feature female nudity and the *mise-en-scène* reminiscent of nineteenth-century paintings of women at public baths. The presuppositions of U-Carmen's sensuality and sexuality bear out persistently held opinions of the original Carmen’s character as a *femme fatale*. Audiences and reviewers from outside South Africa are perhaps not accustomed to a production where Carmen is cast as black, is portrayed as ordinary and acts as an integrated part of the community around

her. Traditional opera audiences are not used to having this exotic tale told from a different angle. Through a postcolonial feminist lens, one is able to pick up that Dornford-May's U-Carmen was constructed in a more assertively feminist manner in comparison to the original French femme fatale, her appearance and body structure can be deduced as being more inclusive and assertively feminist in the sense that it is inclusive and acknowledges a different form or realistic standard of the average female's beauty.

The physical appearance and characterisation of U-Carmen clearly offer a different set of signifiers to convey the character's identity. Malefane (Viljoen 2012, 232) says that it was a conscious decision to downplay the character's sexuality (but not her gender), explaining that the decision was based on her conviction that there must be something beyond the excessive female sexuality embedded in the precursory texts, as well as on her need to capture the change in the roles of African women in post-apartheid society. Her aim was to instil a sense of womanhood in U-Carmen that demands respect. Yet, I want to argue, such a demand is not simply a benign reimagining of the Carmen character. Instead, in following Muñoz (1999, 195–196), I want to suggest that this portrayal has 'the ability to establish alternative views of the world' and in so doing functions 'as critiques of oppressive regimes of truth'. Malefane's enactment of U-Carmen demand for respect is an indicator of conscious manipulations of understandings of black women's bodies, used here to entice, entertain and critique.

Sexual Desire and Objectification

Invisibility is a fundamental aspect of being Black in a White-dominated society. The Black body comes into view, however, when conceptions of sexual-subjection or social disparities are discussed. (Mowatt *et al.* 2013, 645)

In *U-Carmen*, Lulamile, unlike his counterpart, Escamillo, in Bizet's opera, does not immediately declare his love for U-Carmen (TC 00:01:52). Instead, he approaches her after hearing her sing a lullaby to her

sleeping daughter. The choice to have U-Carmen lulling a baby to sleep, instead of attracting Lulamile's attention by flaunting her sexuality, carries significance. In this moment, U-Carmen's attention is not on Lulamile and her body as object of desire is effectively blocked off from him. Indeed, he notices U-Carmen not only for her bodily beauty but for her beautiful voice. In focusing on the voice as object of desire, U-Carmen deviates from the original *Carmen* where her attraction is based on her overt physical sexuality.

This moment of becoming visible through a type of aurality, however, is complicated by a subsequent scene. The setting of the early shots in a photographic studio begins an ongoing emphasis on vision and voyeurism, which are shown to be interlinked and unapologetically sexist when the policemen sing that it is their pleasure to observe young women and 'rate their butts' (translation by the author, TC 00:08:19). The policemen confess that they spent their days at the hot, dusty barracks with their main purpose being to 'check out the girls and rate their butts'. Like the opening framing of U-Carmen's body, this comment further establishes the female Other as the object of pleasure, observed, as McClary argues in the context of the original *Carmen*, 'from [a] position of social privilege' (McClary 1992, 67) or a male-dominated context. The dialogue between two girls is superimposed on Segreant Mongezi's singing as they pass by the barracks while the policemen flirt with them. These instances confirm the objectification of the female body and immediately set the scene for Nomakhaya's appearance (TC 0:09:45); a scene during which they try to persuade her to stay with them while she waits for Jongikhaya. The choir of street boys, used in the original production, is cut out and replaced by the arrival of Nomakhaya at the police barracks is moved forward. By excluding the children's choir, which serves to provide light relief before the soldiers enter the stage, the sense of male dominance and objectification is continued. At this point, Nomakhaya, just like Micaëla in Bizet's opera, is merely a female object to be solicited. Nomakhaya is hesitant, shy and uncomfortable with the unwanted male attention and flees the scene. The policemen's behaviour classifies Nomakhaya, even more than Micaëla, as arousing 'lust, simply by virtue of being female' (McClary 1992, 70).

This overt objectification speaks against a more silent or invisible discourse of sexualisation. The discourses of gender in the South African public sphere are very conservative in the main: they speak of ‘women’s empowerment’ in ways that are not transformative, and as a consequence, they exist very comfortably alongside overwhelming evidence that South African women are not empowered which is evidenced in the very public and relentless circulation of misogynist imagery, metaphors and language (Gqola 2007, 115). Although McClary’s (1992, 38) comments do not speak specifically about South Africa, this observation can perhaps be seen across the diaspora: middle-class men viewed their exploits in the sensual world of the lower class as an area that could be ‘safely’ exploited, while still maintaining the purity of their middle-class homes. This is a display of how South Africa faces not only racialised socio-economic inequalities but also how our inequality is also deeply gendered.

Yet U-Carmen’s visibility is not only coded by voyeurism. According to the indications in Bizet’s score (2002, 41), Carmen must enter the stage at the beginning of ‘La voila la Carmencita!’, granting her the chance to interact with male soldiers in a manner that would establish characteristic perceptions of her sexual prowess and manipulation. Dornford-May, however, ignores the indications in Bizet’s score and separates U-Carmen from the men by having her sit inside the cigarette factory, drinking coffee (TC 00:16:10). At this stage there is also no interaction with the men or any indication of the coquettish behaviour which is so often assumed as being essential for performing this aria. As she sings the aria that signifies her existential resolve, the men are left on the outside of the building, banging rhythmically on the windowsills, and leering at her through the steel bars on the windows demanding that she tell them when she will love them. The *mise-en-scène* here is a visual signification of how the exotic, female Other is moved from the periphery to the centre due to her being leered at within her own community. In this placement, U-Carmen is no longer positioned only as the exotic, female and non-Western Other.

It is, however, also important to consider U-Carmen’s visibility within her community. The post-apartheid South African township, in which U-Carmen exists, hosts a patriarchal society evidenced already in Sergeant Mongezi’s song discussed above, in which her gender renders her marginalised and

inferior. One might question if her physical placement within the 'Habañera' scene is simultaneously indicative of her being an integral part of the society that marginalises her, but also of how she chooses to distance herself from patriarchal expectations or if the men's hands grasping the bars make it appear as if U-Carmen is imprisoned, rather than the embodiment of freedom. The images of her sitting inside with the men on the outside banging on the windowsills and straining to catch a glimpse of her through the steel bars on the windows, is a visual signification of how the exotic is no longer on the periphery but in the centre (Célestin 1996, 220). U-Carmen is no longer outside the society that marginalises her, but part of it. It is also within this setting that she begins the aria which probably signifies her unwavering resolve to exercise her freedom of choice, namely the 'Habañera'.

Self-Fashioning Sensuality

The dancing body is a symbolic expression that may embody many notions, including romance, desire, and sexual climax (Hanna 2001). U-Carmen makes use of movement and dance in a manner that evokes emotion. She makes calculated gestures that appear purposeful, intentionally rhythmical, and culturally patterned. She makes use of dance elements which I want to argue can be understood as a form of self-fashioning. Self-fashioning in post-apartheid South Africa designates a mode of control and agency that people who are otherwise disenfranchised have over their own bodies (Mbembe 2000). The argument I make in this chapter is that U-Carmen's nonverbal body movements similarly communicate a sense of control, with each gesture bearing its own criteria for expression and thus an agency through self-fashioning (Livermon 2020).

Externally, U-Carmen comes across as a strong, vivacious, beautiful, alluring, and rebellious woman. Her opening aria (TC 00:19:28) tells the audience about her personality and distinctive character. U-Carmen's behavioural patterns and calculated choices of movement display to the audience precisely how much she wants you to know. Love is a game that amuses her and she has no reason to commit, so she uses her sexuality to her advantage to get what she wants whenever she wants, especially when she cannot have it.

‘If you don’t love me’, she sings, ‘I love you.’ Her love is daringly accompanied by a warning ‘But if I love you, watch out!.’ U-carmen’s dance motions are typically structured with what appears to be premeditated rhythmic arrangements, wherein they trace lines or circles on the ground, and adhere to a specific sequence of steps, or conform to a pattern of regular accents and stresses.

During the ‘Habañera’ aria, U-Carmen remains for the most part, inside the factory and gradually moves out of the room into the outside area – continuing her nonchalant behaviour towards the men – where she first sits and sings and then moves to the centre of a circle composed of women, with men eagerly watching (TC 00:20:40). The lyrics emphasise the character’s fickleness and contrariness, and the danger she poses to others. U-Carmen playfully places her coffee mug on her head imitating rural women carrying buckets. It hinders her flexibility, making the fluidity of her movement appear stiff and mechanical. Her jacket is casually tied around her waist draping over her hips, which adds another dimension of movement. This effect then is slowly enhanced by the languorous swinging of her hips, contrasted with the jerky movement of her feet and her upright posture. The strained quality of U-Carmen’s dance is shown in stark contrast to the sinuous movements of a male admirer who briefly partners with her. Her movements are slow and appear calculated, displaying a measure of interiority typically attributed to the character of Micaëla. Her eyes and use of eye contact are used as a tool to reflect her emotions as she glares at those in awe of her beauty. The circular layout of the dancing places U-Carmen at the centre, but the effect is of ensemble work, as the women chorus members sing and perform *Umxhentso*, a form of dancing which includes overt shoulder movements that include shaking the thoracic and the rest of the upper body, stomping barefoot. The *Xhensta* here compounds the commentary on the rural as a signifier of indigenous traditional elements: the movements are intended to be sexy though subtle. These visual images signify that she is in control and self-fashions from a position of centrality.

This movement, *Umxhentso*, is inspired by celebrations in this dance, U-Carmen is seen dancing to a rhythm of long-short-long values. It is a dance usually performed within the community at weddings,

graduations and other celebratory events. Black women through dance moves negotiate dance spaces to assert their sexuality (Meintjes 2017). The fact that U-Carmen is dancing to seduce the onlookers inspires the movement to be more rhythmic than the previous ones. As this dance is a celebratory dance, she requires the other women to join in by stomping their feet or clapping their hands while proclaiming exclamations found within the language, i.e. hayi! (Zungu 2020, 28-29). The dance movements associated with women predominantly highlight their domestic roles in society. These roles are rooted in maternal and domestic activities and the women dance with grace with the intention of showcasing their femininity (Smith 2020; Harper 2011). On the contrary, the dance movements enacted by the male counterpart portrays masculine dominance, as seen with the dancers when Lulamile arrives (TC 00:19:45). He dances with an attack of fast, muscular motions, which, according to Harper (2012), these movements represent the portrayal of masculinity (Harper 2012).

U-Carmen's self-fashioning dance, however, does not only express a connection with the rural but draws in urban sexual references too. Moving from the *Umxhensto* scene, she climbs a slightly raised platform and holds on to a pillar, flirtatiously raising one shoulder and dipping her knees, as a result momentarily evoking an association with pole dancing. The expression of agency through this move is borne out by her fellow dancers. Drawing to the end of the aria, the women make gestures towards their male counterparts, seemingly illustrating feminine agency. After keeping a noticeable distance from the men, U-Carmen singles out a male partner and teases him by turning her back towards him and in a rotating motion swaying her hips, and then jocularly and dismissively jerking her buttocks against the man's groyne, leading to widespread laughter. This conduct is not prolonged which tells the audience that it was just momentary seductive behaviour.

U-Carmen's self-fashioning, as this scene suggests, importantly occurs in and against the presence of others. Instead of being surrounded by young men as indicated in Bizet's score (2002, 56), U-Carmen returns to stand amongst her women co-workers. A common occurrence throughout the film opera, the majority of U-Carmen's performances do not feature men's bodies as objects of desire or pleasure. When

men do appear, it is evidently at U-Carmen's bidding, and she's in control of the staging of the male body. With a sly smile and a knowing look, she may indeed grind her body against a man's. However, she is the one taking pleasure in the spectacle. It is the male body that is on display, sized up for the feminine gaze and dismissed when she's finished with him. She expresses defiance of a historical tradition that degrades black women's bodies with this defiant gesture that dares to claim the black female body as visible, pronounced, sexy, and beautiful. This resistance, as Livermon suggests about dancing to kwaito, is not just an individual protest (Livermon 2020).

At the centre of her self-fashioning, however, sits U-Carmen's figuration as the *femme fatale*. After returning to her co-workers, U-Carmen notices Jongikhaya sitting in the van and is mesmerised by the fact that he is indifferent and acts oblivious of her seductive behaviour (TC 00:05:44). She appears charmed by the challenge to get his attention and swaps her cup for a rose, proceeding toward him and throwing the rose into the vehicle, she laughs and declares, "if you don't want me then I'm yours but if I want you then beware!". Her mannerisms up to this point, even when she throws a rose to Jongikhaya, are more defiant than seductive. U-Carmen – and only she – is in control of the situation, which is evidenced through her ability to convey *hauteur*, secret amusement and delivering smouldering glances that those around her, including the audience, are left to interpret her agency. Indeed, U-Carmen's interiority is not explicitly revealed to the audience. Typical of the *femme fatale*, she is presented as mysterious and inscrutable. U-Carmen, like the original Carmen, is in the know-how of how to arouse people's senses with her subtle use of emotional manipulation, which allows her to choose when we are exposed to her inner thoughts. She uses her body and her eyes to speak for her: they are her tools of seduction.

Enigmatic Sensuality on U-Carmen's Terms

U-Carmen's movements and dance convey meaning through the use of space, touch, proximity to other dancers or observers, stillness, and specific body postures. As Kadija Sesay (2005) would argue, U-Carmen interrogates choices about what is possible in order to reveal that African sexual subjectivity

cannot be formed purely as a response to predetermined realities. Rather, it is a process of negotiation that entails the recognition of slippery freedoms, delight and bloodied impossibilities (Gqola 2005, 7).

The sense of recognising the impossible through her sexuality in some sense gives rise to what I want to call U-Carmen's enigmatic sensuality. This sensuality can be gleaned when U-Carmen is arrested for stabbing Manelisa at the Factory (TC 00:19:06). The scene is preceded by U-Carmen opportunistically placing and recognising herself as a rural girl at heart who goes to church; she even quotes from the Bible in order to manipulate Jongikhaya, in the familiar shape-shifting attributed to the character she plays on his feelings, using all the things that he treasures. (TC 00:20:55) The seguidilla sequence is shot with Jongikhaya driving U-Carmen in a police force minibus en route to prison. She is seated behind the passenger seat, with her hands cuffed to a handrail on the vehicle's roof. However, rather than singing about dancing the seguidilla and drinking manzanilla as in the original production, she sings of a shebeen in the township where she will meet Bra Nkomo. and dance the *Twalatsa* and drink *Sputla*. 'Since pleasure is for two, I'd like to take my lover there,' she declares. 'There are loads of men who want me but none of them can turn me on. Is there one who can? Show me that man, I'd love him well... He's only a sergeant but he's full of passion,' Here, U-Carmen verbally expresses her sexuality and sultriness. She hypnotises Jongikhaya with her use of fantastic erotic imagery; she captivates Jongikhaya and alludes to being able to satisfy his desires. After her promise to dance the *Twalatsa*, an erotic dance, for him and to drink with him at a shebeen, he is sufficiently inflamed by desire and gives her the handcuff keys. The hypothetical salacious scenario that U-Carmen describes influences him to release her so they can be realistically achieved (TC 00:03:37). After freeing herself she jumps out of the vehicle and makes a mocking gesture by wiggling her hands on either side of her head at the other police officers in the van behind. Here, we realise that the enigma of her sensuality shuttles between instrumentalization and a sense of guardedness.

Her shifting sensuality is developed further once Jongikhaya arrives at Bra Nkomo's and professes his love for U-Carmen (TC 00:05:04). She initially shrugs it off and laughs. However, when she realises his

seriousness, she decides to show him ‘how we please our men’ and sits him down. This section is sung acapella instead of with orchestral accompaniment fostering a moment of intimate communication between two people: an affair stripped of everything else but the message that she wants to send him; she longs to be loved by him. This proves the most sensual of the dance sequences throughout the film, U-Carmen initially lays on the pool table then stands on it, she hums and sings wordlessly while dancing provocatively by swaying her hips and exerting what Philippe Soupault (1928, 93) called the ‘sexual influence’ of dance. Indeed, U-Carmen’s aims through her movements to seduce Jongikhaya. Other women walk in and accompany U-Carmen with harmonies while clapping various rhythmic patterns. Jongikhaya is in noticeable awe. However, at this point, he looks down at his pager, and he rushes out, leaving Carmen unknowingly dancing to an empty chair until she hears the women laughing at her. U-Carmen’s only solo erotic dance quickly turns out to be an abject moment of embarrassment and humiliation for her, and the opportunity for the audience to respond viscerally to her sensuality and confidence in her body has been lost, as during the habanera and seguidilla the allure of swinging hips was not in excess, and now, when the focus is belatedly on her dance, her sensuality is shown to end in failure. This failure adds further to the enigma of her sensuality which is at once in control and forever vulnerable to the whims of her suitor.

In the wake of the failure of her sensuality, U-Carmen sings (TC 00:08:15), ‘I made all the moves. I gave all I had, tried everything to please you. I danced, I sang, I thought after time you’d be mine...’. The potential provocative carnality of U-Carmen has been foreclosed. Yet in this moment, there is also a failure of her calculated instrumentalization of her sensuality, which shows the affective force of music. Here we witness her almost seduce herself as she has, in Livermon’s words, ‘an experience of music not at all as an object of rational contemplation but as an affect itself whose chief mode of expression is a wordless cheer’ (Livermon 2020, 110). Yet, almost critiquing this notion of cheer in the experience of music, Jongikhaya steals this moment and feeling from her. U-Carmen feels humiliated and confronts Jongikhaya, which leads to him grabbing her from the back, strangling her, and forcing her head onto a

table. Bra Nkomo intervenes and pulls him off her. With the aim to appease U-Carmen with a cheap apology he shows her the rose in his Bible, and sings the Flower Song, which combines protestations of love with curses at having met her. U-Carmen does not immediately react out of anger. Instead, she returns to the beginning of the Allegretto and sings with the hope of luring him back from outside the tavern with the same melody. She is evidently desperate. Jongikhaya interrupts her and tells her to stop. It is only after she realises that he is not getting out of the police vehicle that she becomes angry and, singing the last two bars, bangs on the windshield. When Jongikhaya informs U-Carmen that he must return to the barracks, she reacts furiously and claims that she has tried everything to please him, but that she is left looking like a fool. She accuses him of leaving her needlessly because his love for her is not strong enough. His love is not to be trusted and in the absence of trust, music's sensuality seems to fail catastrophically in the face of gender inequality. The enigma of U-Carmen's sensuality is seemingly eviscerated.

Yet even as U-Carmen's sensuality is broken by Jongikhaya, the possibility of its instrumentalisation is not lost on him. In desperate need of easy money in a society characterised by desperation, various members of the company agree to be involved in drug smuggling, the women to act as honey traps (TC 00:07:57). Due to his previous affiliation with the police, Jongikhaya is initially snubbed by the company and watched with a close eye. Now dressed in slightly provocative clothing, the women are made to look desirable for the three men they have been called to seduce. U-Carmen and the other women are told to 'work your stuff' as they head off to the sailors. Meanwhile, at Monwabisi, Jongikhaya is snubbed once again when he attempts to join the men on the beach and U-Carmen's willingness to distract the sailors fuels his jealousy. When he sees her walking side by side and flirting with one of the men on the beach, he attacks the man. Disappointed and appalled at Jongikhaya's behaviour, U-Carmen tells him that she does not love him and that she wants nothing more to do with him. Here, it is Jongikhaya's ability to control U-Carmen that fails and what is revealed is her ability to instrumentalise her sensuality, albeit fleetingly, on her terms. U-Carmen publicly exhibits qualities that challenge what is thought to be

stereotypically feminine. She simultaneously serves as a model and inspiration for other black women, both literary and real. In light of the above, one could argue that the quest for women's emancipation, discernible in Dornford-May's work, is already bearing fruit (Mwepu 2008, 248). Contemporary African women are capable of rejecting social taboos and denouncing unfair relationships, as already demonstrated, through discursive ideas formed as a result of internalising precepts embedded in contemporary feminism (Mwepu 2008, 248), although the opera appears to present, through U-Carmen, a contrasting perspective which demonstrating that women's triumphs are achieved with significant sacrifices.

Erotic Agency

Despite the precarious nature of her sensuality, I want to argue that U-Carmen's dancing body does hold the possibility for locating her agency, despite its destruction by men like Jongikhaya. I want to do so by turning to Audre Lorde (1992) who writes to a community of black women suffering similar stifling oppression. Her commentary draws together threads of Blackness, the erotic, feminism and dance, making reference to the erotic as 'an assertion of the life force of women, of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives' (Lorde 1992, 80). She further argues that a recognition of 'the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world', concluding that acts of erotic creativity endorse 'that which is female and self-affirming in the face of a racist, patriarchal, and anti-erotic society' (Lorde 1992, 83). Lorde's argument emphasises the power of individual feminine bodies within culturally inflected scripts. U-Carmen occupies a similar scripted position in that the character is burdened with a long history of misogyny and racism emanating from specific cultural variants of the pervasive hegemonic discourse of heterosexual patriarchy. Yet in following Lorde, it is possible to detect U-Carmen's erotic agency as it is expressed through dance. In the South African context, dance has the potential to defy cultural stereotyping and extend its politics beyond

the implications of race to include those of gender and sexuality as well as ‘sociopolitical critique and exploration’ (Craighead 2006, 23). U-Carmen can be viewed as using dance and movement as a profound means of personal agency and social criticism; her choreography can conceive of a radical Carmen figure. U-Carmen’s performative strategies articulate the polyphony of what can sometimes seem to be partitioned modalities of race, gender, and sexuality at work within her identity and is a display of the attempt to gain performative emancipation.

The striving by black women to disassociate from the culture of dissemblance and to dismantle the image of the hyper-sexualised jezebel emerges strongly in recent decades. Malefane’s portrayal of U-Carmen manages to relish the idea of experiencing sexuality as a source of pleasure while also assuming her own authority in sexual power, by doing this she assumes agency over her life and sexuality as she actively defines it on her own terms, which she earlier describes as purposefully ‘restrained.’ As a means of redefining the sense of self, U-Carmen creates an alternative self-image of the black women. Throughout the opera film, U-Carmen displays a roller-coaster of different forms of sensuality that often seem contradictory. The understatement of Carmen’s sensuality in U-Carmen in the ‘Habanera’ simultaneously frustrates stereotypical perceptions of her identity and emphasises unrestrained chauvinistic male behaviour. Male lust and irrational jealousy are evident in the pompous and violent behaviour of the police officers and Jongikhaya’s jealous behaviour.

When considering U-Carmen’s movements and gestures that exclude flirtatious acts and proclamations of love for other men, alternative interpretations of her identity become possible. She does not have magical powers or illicit affairs with other men like the original Carmen; neither does she behave in a manner that can be perceived as unreasonably sexual and irrational. The film does not fulfil the potential of transcending the prejudices steeped in the narrative as it is transposed to different settings that are themselves riven with sexism and other forms of oppression. Instead, it exacerbates prejudice to symbolise the socio-political problems of the space.

It could be argued, however in contrast to the aforementioned, that U-Carmen differs from the stereotypical femme fatale, as she resonates with another type of a female character, the so-called mondain woman who could epitomise gender emancipation in the context of a consumerist utopia (Jovanovic 2015, 44). Corresponding to the rising level of emancipation for women, the figure of the mondain woman first appeared in cinema after the First World War, and it won back its popularity again in the nineteen-fifties (Peterlic 1990, 166, as quoted in Jovanovic 2015, 44). Mondain woman is 'a figure of the self-reliant, often self-centred woman, materially independent of the man, and a spiritually independent woman who emancipated herself' (Peterlic 1990, 166, as quoted in Jovanovic 2015, 44) (Đurović 2018, 151).

Conclusion

Throughout the African diaspora, black women are both directly and indirectly engaged in a perpetual struggle to emancipate themselves from patriarchal injustice. This is in no way 'an expression of a natural order, but rather the reflection of a situation of socio-political inferiority in which women find themselves' (Saint-Martin 1992, 60 cited in Mwepu 2008, 252). It is rather as Michèle Mailhot (1964, 87 cited in Mwepu 2008) would put 'a pathetic illustration of an inhumane virtue,' in that it is a one-sided display of expectations. U-Carmen's demeanour and self-representational insistence on ordinariness challenges figurations of the exotic Other. Despite employing a form of traditional seduction, the emphasis on the failure of this seduction prevents her from conforming to the stereotypical portrayal of a 'jezebel'. By performing in a manner that can be viewed as a disidentification of the stereotypical exotic Other, U-Carmen actively resists well-scripted and subordinating characterizations of black women thus challenging the explanatory power of dominant representations. The film opera foregrounds an idealistic notion of love as a force through which one is able to seek fulfilment on their own terms while also asserting their autonomy. U-Carmen embodies a galvanising, liberationist ideal that contributes, in no

small measure, to her appeal as a character. Nevertheless, the reality remains that black women's attainment of their fundamental right to assume authority in sexual power is often seen as transgressive.

Malephane's performance retained an unwavering assertion of agency through gestural performance and exhibiting a solid self-identity which constituted an unsystematic femme fatale that is true to a large number of people's lives. By rejecting 'controlling images' there is a never-ending negotiation between what others project onto black women's voices and bodies and the strength to counter it with their own ideas. With regards to the black landscape, a dense methodology is available and colonial power and patriarchal ideologies are at the forefront and the backbone of these writings which clearly display insensitivity to black women's emancipation due to their justification for devaluation and discrimination of the bodies with 'disabled' status. For this reason, it is suggested that studies on sexuality look at the complexities surrounding practices and internalised conceptions and beliefs within them.

Chapter 3

Woman as Labourer: The Invisible Hands

In the previous chapter, I presented arguments around the invisibility of the black female body. In this chapter, I will build on this notion but show how the visibility of this body can be reclaimed. Memory and archive, regardless of form (e.g., through cinematic or written texts), are political (Mangu 2011, as cited in Simamkele 2017, 94). Memorialising the past two decades of South African political discourse while excluding black women is not a neutral or unintentional act. The invisibility of black women in history should be critiqued. South African societies are conventionally patriarchal; men tend to have authority in society and women are seen as subordinate to them (SAHO 2016). For Pierre Bourdieu (2001), writing in France, this constitutive division of the social order and the relations of domination between genders are inherent in society, which leads to classifications of what men and women really are. Historically women's role was primarily a domestic one hidden in the household, which included child rearing and seeing to the well-being, feeding and taking care of the family. Women were excluded from matters outside the home. Instead, it was the domain of men who had roles related to public acts (Bourdieu 2001). Economic activity beyond the home – in order to help feed and clothe the family – was acceptable, but not considered 'feminine'. However, with the rise of the industrial economy, the growth of towns and the development of the migrant labour system, these prescriptions on the role of women (especially in rural settings), came to be gradually challenged.

Women's role in the history of South Africa has, since the 1970s and 1980s, been given some recognition. Previously the history of women's political organisation, their struggle for freedom from

oppression, for community rights and, importantly, for gender equality, was largely ignored in history texts. Not only did most of the older literature lean heavily towards White political development, they also predominantly focused on the achievements of men (e.g., their military exploits or leadership ability) virtually leaving women out of South African history. Bazzoi (1983, as cited by Zungu *et al.* 2014, 9) explains that in establishing the patriarchal character of South Africa, structural mechanisms (e.g., legal system, wages, access to positions of power and authority) whereby a hierarchical, unequal relationship between men and women is perpetuated. Abbott, Wallace & Tyler (2005) concur with the aforementioned and argue that women's and men's experiences of the social world are not only shaped by difference but by a hierarchical ordering of difference, what feminists have called the 'gender order.'

Nineteenth-century representations of the 'acceptable' women were strongly present in both novels and operas of the time. These representations served a moralising function: women who violated expectations of their subordinate domestic and social roles were chastised in order to discourage the image of female emancipation, which at the time was thought of as posing a threat to men's power and their role in society (Dias 2006, 84). Although the moralising function differs, both Bizet's and Dornford-May's *Carmens* transgress the acceptable boundaries of class and gender by flouting traditional expectations of women in the sphere of work. As a labourer in a cigarette factory, Bizet's *Carmen* is viewed as part of the 'lowest level of proletariat in Seville' (Clément 1988, 50). Dornford-May's *U-Carmen* falls under lower-class people and lives in a township that serves as a home to thousands who share a similar class likeness given the racial-class spatial partitioning by the apartheid state, which is largely retained after the advent of democracy.

Historically, black women have been coerced into less skilled, low-paid work, and despite being integrated into an industrial labour force, they have succumbed to an unusual degree of social and economic oppression (Seidman 1993, 292-293). Something of this reality is reflected in *U-Carmen*, which was produced and released into a nation forging its way into a new era, and inevitably undergoing innumerable frustrations over the disparity between the rhetoric of emancipation and the reality of a

sustained economic exclusion. While the collapse of the apartheid regime was undoubtedly a historic event in South Africa, it did not result ‘in substantive economic gains for the nation’s majority black population, nor has it eradicated racial, class-based, and gendered structures of oppression’ (Lewsen 2012, 242). The lives of many black people either remain the same or barely change due to their classed oppression and lack of economic mobility. Many have been forced because of intergenerational oppression to work low-skilled jobs which more often than not find their roots in industrialised factories (see Di Paola & Pons-Vignon 2013). It is important to consider labour in the construction of U-Carmen’s womanhood within the post-apartheid moment as it comprises multiple complexities and demands within the rural-urban interchange. U-Carmen’s labour is based on what is demanded from her as first a single mother within a rural-traditional configuration, and secondly as a working-class resident of Khayelitsha.

Since the late Middle Ages, the prevailing concept of labour (in the West) has rested on the idea of society working to uplift the status of the economy, the notion of self-concentrated creative energy, as well as the objectification of energy in material production (Narotzky 2018, 31). With the emergence of third-wave feminism, scholars and activists have critiqued the concept of labour, noting that there have been changes in women’s status in the economic sphere while basic household structures remain intact, including men’s control of women (Seidman 1993, 291). Feminist scholars have rethought the ways in which labour intersects with womanhood by, for instance, introducing reproductive work into the conceptual realm of labour noting that women not only assume the full burden of domestic labour, but that of child-rearing as well, highlighting the centrality of its particularities (e.g., emotional, and relational value) (Hochschild 1983; see Lawson 2007; Nelson 2006). Furthermore, anthropologists have drawn attention to the cultural and historical embeddedness of life-sustaining practises represented by women’s labour, questioning the universal relevance of a narrow concept of labour to make sense of the diversity of human livelihood practices (see Escobar 2008; Gudeman & Rivera 1990; Malinowski 1978; Strathern 1988). While the issue of reproductive labour specifically will be discussed later in this chapter, the point

here is that the body of scholarship shows the importance in thinking through the various and complex forms of labour that mark womanhood.

I draw on these concrete, social, and domestic forms of labour present in the labour theory of value (Narotzky 2018, 31) with the interest of unpacking and deepening the understanding of U-Carmen's complex spheres of experience as a formal and informal labourer, which I argue codes her identity as a woman. For the purpose of this chapter, *U-Carmen* will be dissected in a manner that understands it as a narrative of disenchantment in which a young underprivileged woman is faced with the limits of personal freedom, in the new, supposedly free South Africa: a sphere where official power persistently engages in several oppressive machinations rooted in labour and gender roles. Gender roles have been an important and recurring global topic since the last decade of the twentieth century. Bearing in mind that gender operates with other social categories, such as race, class, sexuality, and nationality, among others, it is necessary to understand it from an intersectionality perspective (Sotelo *et al.* 2017). Thus, working with these categories is relevant to offer analytical tools to understand the articulation of multiple differences and inequalities (Piscitelli 2008), especially as they are enacted in acts of labour.

Formal Labour

Black women have historically been given 'a back seat in the liberation wagon' in South Africa's political landscape (Mhlophe 1983). The masculinist historical trends place black women in the 'back seat' when telling a nation's story. While black women have been at the helm of challenging the state, their efforts to create a more equal society through resistance have been masked (Simamkele 2017, 89). As the all-male leadership grew increasingly unconcerned about advancing women's interests, it appeared that women's sacrifices in the struggle for a better society had gone unrewarded by those whom they helped to bring to power (Molyneux 1985, 230).

The new South African government has been, and continues to be, beset with the longer-term and more inertial consequences of apartheid. These consequences can be represented generically as the economic outcomes engendered by the policy of legislated racial exclusivity. Nowhere is this challenge more acute than within the arena of the labour market. As explained by Haroon Bhorat (2003) in *Employment and unemployment trends in post-apartheid South Africa*, the ability, or lack thereof, of the domestic economy to generate a sufficient quantum of jobs has constantly come under scrutiny. South Africa's unequal wealth distribution profiles it as the most unequal country in the world. The country's racial heritage is inscribed in profound differences in living standards between the race groups. This understanding helps us understand the opera specifically in its post-apartheid township context.

Khayelitsha, meaning 'new home' in isiXhosa, was built under the principle of racial segregation and labour stratification which protrude into the present. This township, which shapes U-Carmen's story, represents a microcosm of broader socio-economic trends. The area's basis in industrialization drives urban migration and township expansion, leading to its status as one of the largest and fastest-growing black townships in South Africa (Curry 2011). U-Carmen is one of the migrant citizens to inhabit the township of 'Seville' Khayelitsha driven from the village – like many others – in search of 'greener pastures' as a single mother who we later find out is in charge of taking care of her mother. Yet the township here, despite being placed in relation to the rural as a space of urban dwelling, is itself a marginal space. As Mbembe *et al.* (2008, 239) argue, 'the township both is and is not urban, it is proximate to the city while at its margins'. This observation frames the understanding of the township space as a contradictory space capable of containing disparate truths and practices of quotidian life. The contrast between township and town can be seen in the dissolved opening shot preceding U-Carmen's introduction that covers Cape Town with Table Mountain in the background. In the post-apartheid moment, the government slightly reconfigured city spaces so that the township is integrated into Cape Town, yet the feeling of being simultaneously of the city and distinctly apart from it persists. This duality reflects the prevailing class differences in South Africa, grounding U-Carmen's narrative in the ongoing

socio-economic stratification. The dichotomy extends beyond geography into cultural and socio-economic realms. This, however, also ties the film opera to the Bizet's original setting. The traditional *Carmen* narrative constantly juxtaposes urban versus rural values. Carmen is known to have 'gypsy' origins, but she is nevertheless habituated to her urban environment (Lewsen 2012, 240). *U-Carmen* maintains the narrative's urban/rural dichotomy, by portraying Jongikhaya as having village origins, while U-Carmen functions comfortably in her now accustomed township setting. Her narrative, however, might easily be understood as one in which working-aged women in a context of extreme poverty migrate to an urban area in search of employment that would supplement the household income. Thus, the urban/rural dichotomy in *U-Carmen* is not merely a backdrop but a critical narrative device that shapes characters' experiences and the story's socio-political commentary. It underscores the enduring impacts of apartheid-era policies and the complex, often contradictory nature of urban and rural identities in contemporary South Africa. This dichotomy invites viewers to reflect on broader themes of migration, marginalisation, and the search for better livelihoods, highlighting the intertwined nature of geography, identity, and socio-economic status.

Viewers are quickly made aware of the context in which *U-Carmen* takes place as it unravels into a sequence of emblematic images and sounds depicting a place of historical oppression characterised by 'separate development'. Nothing is glamorised or filtered out: the scene preceding U-Carmen's introduction abruptly begins with the sounds of an orchestra and a hammer on a corrugated-iron roof. In a jolty backward motion, we journey through the dusty grimy streets of a township with children laughing and running barefooted towards the camera, dogs barking, a train dashing by, before the taxi horn silences the orchestra, welcoming the viewer to the corrugated-iron roof homes of Seville, Site D of Khayelitsha. The comingling, dialogue, music, and township noise overlain on the audio track act as markers that contribute to the fabrication of a distinctive social and cultural milieu. Khayelitsha is a site of marginalised labour which is characterised by shifts to nontraditional, insecure work arrangements, and relatively high levels of unemployment. *U-Carmen* occurs in the context of hypermobility of capital,

relative immobility of labour, and declining market position for unskilled labour. Dornford-May (2009) expressed that he ‘wanted to explore the choices [that] a working-class, or in this case a previously disadvantaged girl, has in terms of choices for freedom’ acknowledging that ‘they’re dealing with marginalised groupings on the edge of society and a lot of U-Carmen’s decisions are based on a very strong survival instinct’.

Single mothers, like U-Carmen, as a class embody the challenge and societal expectations of being both the primary income earner and caregiver. These roles are difficult to reconcile even in contexts where there are plentiful jobs, childcare options, and comprehensive social security (Lewis 2010; Mokomane *et al.* 2012). These mothers face the additional challenges of living in a country with high levels of poverty and unemployment, and no provision of social assistance for them in their own right (Goldblatt 2005). The circumstances that brought U-Carmen to Seville are not extraordinary as we come to see that her life mimics that of those around her. Overall, those in the non-qualified labour force find themselves in a state of permanent material deprivation. Due to her economic circumstances, U-Carmen finds herself entangled in various forms of labour in an attempt to counter her lack of resources.

The cigarette factory workers sit processing the raw tobacco into finished products and singing anti-apartheid freedom songs (TC 00:16:12). This is the first scene that displays formal legal labour by women. The song can be recognized as a part of a social language as its usage signalled an ease of public knowledge that cut across region and class. The importance of this is embedded in the fact that the anti-apartheid hymn effectuates a shared experience. Seeing black women work in a factory would have been a rarity during the apartheid era (Chapman 2022). As a display of a human response to trauma, the hymn opens up reflections on the idea of trauma as the very link between lived experiences. To be noted is the fact that this hymn is embedded in black South African liberation struggle song, and therefore has a more striking impact on spectators who had grown up in that era and recognize the tune. *U-Carmen* keeps the same figuration of Carmen as a cigarette factory worker in Seville and the audience is exposed to the conditions of the working class which are characterised by poverty, desperation, and crime, which prove

relevant both then and now. The working class have limited influence in the managerial decision-making process and possess minimal or negligible authority within their professional environment and lack the ability to influence the speed or nature of their tasks. As a result of poverty and financial insecurity, they are employed by others to sustain themselves. The scene extends when the police officers arrive at the factory and the newly appointed sergeant states, ‘We’re really past apartheid now. Factories in the townships. Women workers?’, establishing the post-apartheid context, the movement toward industrialization in the township, as well as the shift in women’s positions from the margin to the centre. The pace of urbanisation and the changing black female employment patterns are closely linked with South Africa’s economic and labour history which are still bound up in its apartheid legacy (Groenmeyer 2011). U-Carmen’s ability to work is a display of emancipation as she – as a black woman – acts as an economically independent person, she liberates herself by breaking free not only from her village with little opportunity for growth, but also from the oppressive system that would have previously constrained her from a field – factory worker – often associated with men.

U-Carmen works tirelessly to provide for her family and her financial demands prove that her factory work stipend is not enough for her to sustain a standard lifestyle. Despite the long hours and exhaustion, she continues to strive for better provisions. At Bra Nkomo’s shebeen (TC 00:03:47), various members of the company are summoned by men who need assistance with Customs. The women agree to be involved in drug smuggling and act as honey traps in return for money. For decades the Western Cape has been plagued by the drug trade accompanied by organised crime networks (Goga 2014). Increased migration and the divisions of the apartheid landscape laid the foundation for the development, as the exclusionary conditions created by the state made gangs an integral part of social and economic life due to a lack of opportunities which caused a number of people to turn to gangs for employment (Goga 2014). *U-Carmen* illustrates the participants’ readiness to engage in unlawful activities, highlighting the dire circumstances they find themselves in.

Upon arrival at the port with the intent to smuggle contraband, there are only three men the women need to seduce (TC 00:07:57) . U-Carmen and the other women who join her introduce the audience to the ability of simultaneous forms of labour. There is a shift from paid labour to the inclusion of emotional labour. Emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) entails the regulation and management of emotional expressions when interacting with people within a professional work function. In this instance of dual labour, it is formal because she is getting paid, but it is also emotional because she actively needs to seduce and manipulate these men to successfully distract them. U-Carmen's labour 'requires one to induce or suppress feelings in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others' (Hoschild 1983, 7). We understand the emotional work that U-Carmen is doing as labour because it is a required part of the job as 'the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself' (Hochschild 1983, 7). Using the sexual objectification of the female body to their advantage 'like all other men they'll be really dim', the women sing with glee: 'What they desire is to pinch us on the arse...Everyone enjoys some flattery. Everything comes from being nice, a smile is cheap at the price if we flatter them, they'll let us pass'. U-Carmen and the other women use emotional labour in that they perform a cluster of activities designed to stimulate the sexual fantasies of the sailors for financial remuneration from the gang members. In Chapter Two, U-Carmen's sensuality is framed as an expression of her agency; in this case, it is important to consider it an act of labour as it negates the agency she is expressing.

As a single mother, this U-Carmen works in the cigarette factory in Khayelitsha and does her best to survive and make ends meet. She is a Carmen of the people, and her situation seems to represent that of her co-workers in the film as well as that of the large audiences. As the sole breadwinner, the pressures of her situation have pushed her to certain extreme measures that she might not have had to be in if not for her background and the supposed need to 'take care of my mother in the village' as well as her daughter. U-Carmen is indirectly forged to perform several acts of labour in order to counter the historical system

that has failed her as a black woman. Her lack of fair and equal opportunity in a white-dominated patriarchal society seems to leave her with no choice but to work harder than the average citizen.

The apartheid era reinforced the economic divide, leaving a legacy engrained in the nation's socio-economic fabric. The South African working class representing the majority of the population has endured decades of economic hardship and labour exploitation (Bond 2000). Contrary to this, U-Carmen can be viewed as emancipated through her achievement to break the status quo. U-Carmen attempts to forge a better life for her daughter and mother (in the village). The rural black woman's story as a formal labourer evidences the change in the post-apartheid moment and the genre of opera is used to articulate a new nationhood, a political and economic change – in separate moments – are acknowledged. Yet, the critique offered by the opera is of course that she is not emancipated. Even though she has a job, we see her suffering and desperation for money, which leads her to dabble with illegal contraband. She is still impoverished and displays struggle instead of liberation. U-Carmen can be said to be both emancipated and not emancipated in the same breath. Although she is nevertheless stuck in a cycle of impoverishment, she is personally emancipated from the constraints of joblessness and the formal labour she engages in should not be undermined because it tells us something about her womanhood and her refusal to adhere to societal patriarchal norms. Within the context of opera – both past and present – there is a relevant history of how the genre has provided a space for under-represented perspectives. In narratives of Western European opera, this space has elevated such voices into the discourse of 'high culture' while also providing a flexible medium for keeping up with evolving musical styles, musically setting different languages, and developing new narrative strategies (André 2014, 14).

Strategic Flirting and Emotional Labour

U-Carmen's labour extends beyond her work in the factory. Throughout the opera, she performs a type of emotional labour, which shows that the oppression of women extends beyond the realm of formal labour. To develop this argument, I use the term strategic flirting to describe U-Carmen's form of emotional

labour. Hochschild's (1979) theory of emotional labour, discussed before, states that in order to induce the correct feelings implicit with the rules of a situation, individuals engage in a conscious act of evoking, shaping, or suppressing feelings within themselves by changing their thoughts, physical conditions, and expressive gestures through both private surface acting and deep acting. Hochschild further asserts (1979) that emotional labour varies by gender and social class, with low-status categories like women and people of colour lacking 'status shields' against poor treatment of their feelings. With respect to gender, emotional labour is more essential for women than it is for men because they have considerably less independent access to money, power, authority, or status in society. As a black woman part of the low-middle class bracket, the use of emotional labour turns into an acquired pivotal tool with which U-Carmen accustoms herself and uses to manoeuvre oppressive spaces. Research consistently finds that gendered power, women as subordinate and men as dominant, is recreated through emotional labour (see Hochschild 1983; Pierce 1996). And while several scenes depict instances where U-Carmen makes use of emotional labour as a form of power to gain the upper hand, it is important to note that by drawing this form of labour to the fore, I do not suggest that the sexual coercion that takes place here is only an issue of labour. Instead, by focusing on labour in these instances, I wish to show how U-Carmen figures a black woman caught up in broader issues of patriarchal dominance beyond only the physical and sexual dominance so common in South African society.

Take, for example, the scene in which U-Carmen wounds Manelisa with a knife after the tension between them leads to a fight (TC 00:16:23). U-Carmen is consequently taken into police custody and put in the care of Jongikhaya, who is ordered to take her to the police station. U-Carmen makes a quick analysis of Jongikhaya's personality and scopes for what he possibly associates himself with. Using what she gathers on the man based on his behaviour and personal items, she plays with his emotions and manipulates him by using all the things that he treasures. As previously mentioned, she opportunistically claims to be a church-goer and even quotes from the Bible, insisting that she is a rural girl at heart and asks him to set her free because her 'mother lives alone in the rural areas. She needs me.' When viewed closely, one is

able to deduce that U-Carmen not only shape shifts, but intentionally makes use of emotional labour in this case. Confident that she has enchanted Jongikhaya and that he will do as she asks sooner or later. She sings about Bra Nkomo's shebeen – claiming it is to amuse herself – where she dances the Twalatsa and drinks sputla: 'But being alone is hardly fun, it's best if there's another one, since pleasure is for two' (TC 00:20:55). She works faultlessly to lure him into her world by creating a fantasy and capturing his attention. 'He's only a sergeant but he's full of passion, and I want to make him mine.' The use of emotional labour in this instance as U-Carmen uses emotive material strengths to appear as the victim while being the perpetrator. She plays a non-threatening role of a helpless woman in need of the aid of a good samaritan.

U-Carmen employs emotional labour for many purposes, some of which may be perceived as leaving her in a disadvantaged position. For example, Captain Gantana walks into Bra Nkomo's shebeen looking for U-Carmen who at the current moment is a fugitive on the run (TC 00:17:0). To Gantana's surprise, U-Carmen publicly rejects him, which leads to a fight that breaks out between Jongikhaya and the Captain because of U-Carmen's choice of 'a real man' (that being Jongikhaya). The fight between the men causes Jongikhaya's dismissal from the police force. Having witnessed the spectacle, the congregation of bandits follow and surround Jongikhaya and chant in the hopes of convincing him to 'stay with us, you will be free' by joining the smugglers. In the original *Carmen*, her anger towards Don José is developed to a point where she succeeds in making him feel so guilty that he is easily manipulated into helping the smugglers. Characteristics such as petulant anger and manipulative behaviour that more traditional versions of the opera usually attribute to Carmen are misattributed. The pause gives Jongikhaya the chance to choose whose side he is on. This misattribution renders U-Carmen as more vulnerable and in need of a man siding with her because he truly loves her, not because she has manipulated him. This is another display of emotional labour, U-Carmen suppresses her feelings of desperation and replaces them with a plea that she needs Jongikhaya. In this instance, U-Carmen's emotional labour can be viewed as a tool used predominantly in moments of desperation.

Emotional labour is recognised as a strategic approach employed during times of extreme urgency, an illustrative scene is presented to imply this necessity. U-Carmen, still a fugitive, is spotted walking into Bra Nkomo's shebeen (TC 00:16:26). The policemen storm in weapons drawn bringing the jubilant excitement to an end while she tries to flee but is surrounded. Captain Gantana threatens all those present and violently hits U-Carmen across the face without provocation, knocking her to the ground and making her bleed from her nose and mouth. He strikes her again after a disguised demeaning insult expressing that 'I prefer a real man over an officer who can't give me anything'. At this moment U-Carmen chooses not to back down and allow her emotions to take over. Gantana then touches her cheek gently, softly proposing that 'In return for sex, I'll forget everything'. She considers it prudent to acquiesce, and he asserts his power over her by stating that he will decide when and where the assignation will take place. In surveying the situation, U-Carmen takes responsibility for keeping the peace and consents. This is another example of emotional labour as she is put in a position where she must do something she would not normally do and exercise another form of labour. Malefane points out in an interview that U-Carmen agreed because the event would possibly not come to pass as her friends would protect her (Viljoen 2012, 236). This also comes to show that she was allowing herself to be used for a purpose. 'It looks like love has played a trick on you,' she says to Gantana in a later scene (TC 00:17:03). It is here we realise that she knew what she was doing when she agreed to his proposal. She was actively manipulating him and she proved to the audience – who at this point were unaware – that she was in control this whole time. Manipulation seems to be part of her skill set. The audience is unobvious of the fact that U-Carmen's emotional labour leaves her in a subordinate position. However, when men – like Gantana – engage in emotional labour it leaves them in the dominant position. Women's narratives of social exclusion, of harsh and cruel processes that undermine their human dignity and worth remain a painful reality (Taylor *et al.* 2010, 164). Despite the policy rhetoric of empowerment that emerged in the context of political and feminist emancipation struggles the reality for the majority of poor disadvantaged black women remains one of unfulfilled promise. The emotional labour experienced by U-Carmen, as a black woman, can be seen as intricate as it both grants her liberation and denies her independence.

Building on the aforementioned scene, when U-Carmen follows the captain, he insults her even further by stopping her and making it clear that he will determine when she pays her dues (TC 00:17:57). He is in control and U-Carmen's dignity is on the line as she could possibly have had to 'sell' her body, which in this case is both physical and emotional labour. As explained by Sayer (2007), 'to have dignity is to be in control of oneself, to be able to express and experience autonomy and to be taken seriously'. Where inequalities exist, whether that is based upon gender, race, accessibility, or occupational image (e.g., stigmatised work), it will be more difficult for individuals to maintain dignity, possibly resulting in undignified work (Sayer 2007). This scene reminds us of the possible limited freedoms and choices U-Carmen has as a working-class black woman who is living under a system of patriarchal oppression. black women must 'stay at home, participate in the cult of femininity, give in to unwanted sexual advances, surrender many choices, make [themselves] as small, quiet and invisible as possible' (Gqola 2007, 121). The need to perform emotional labour could be viewed as an act that subordinates the woman.

U-Carmen attempts to empower herself by using the skills that she possesses to attain her desires, in comparison to her formal labour which is a physical attempt at achieving her emancipation. In several ways 'empowerment' undermines what women through their own agency have been able to achieve. Empowerment as a concept denotes a simplistic notion of an endpoint at which someone experiences power and is able to use power to achieve a certain outcome. Power is not something that is transferred from one person to another (Taylor *et. al.* 2010, 165). This notion stands in stark contrast to the portrayal of the police in *U-Carmen*. Supposedly, the police are answerable to 'the people' and thus to no one in particular. Moreover, at any point, the police can appropriate notions of law-making and law-upholding for their own purposes (Davies *et. al.*, 2016). In Chapter Five, I will further discuss how the police deploy one of the most severe forms of violence in the film opera, but here it is important to note that they act as agents who negate U-Carmen's power U-Carmen's only option in this situation is to utilise whatever means can potentially empower her. Power over individuals and people and power to influence change is always about contestation and the assertion of rights and freedoms at individual and collective levels. U-

Carmen's emotional labour, though complex, evidences its ability to coerce and achieve specified goals. She is not only able to gain power from her use of emotional labour, but it also empowers her as an individual in different circumstances.

Traditional Labour

Where U-Carmen's emotional labour is performed in urban interactions, there is an additional form of labour that, although not formal, emerges within the urban-rural divide depicted in the opera. This form of labour is concerned with the traditional roles held by women within black societies. Despite the immense industrial development, the role of black women, regardless of class, often remains entangled with issues of tradition. South Africa in the post-apartheid era is still considered a country with patriarchal values marked by the permanence of customs and traditions which perpetuates a system of gendered oppression with these values being held high in black communities. U-Carmen labours in different spheres of her life, both formal and informal, and these shape her womanhood by displaying her abilities to play different roles when needed. The mass of black traditional social organisations is male-centred and male-dominated. In urban-rural communities they hold dominant roles in all spheres: economic, familial, parental and marital (Jardine 2012). This analysis aims to elucidate the phenomenon of gender segregation in township communities and explore the underlying reasons for the perpetuation of these social norms displayed in *U-Carmen*. This demonstrates a separation between public spaces—attributed to men—from private spaces, represented by the household, a role reserved for women (Davies & Frink 2014; Frisquete & Simili 2017).

The figuration of womanhood in South African society is bound up in these traditional roles and the labour assumed in these roles. As Pumla Gqola (2007, 116) has shown, 'outside of [formal] work, the dominant gender talk is that women must adhere to very limiting notions of femininity'. These limiting notions are described by Gqola (2007, 116) as a 'cult of femininity' that is present in the public sphere, and enacted through performances that require women to 'exhibit traditionally feminine traits, in other

words, that as powerful as women are at work, they submit to the [hetero]patriarchal cult of femininity elsewhere.’ The message communicated to black women is that they must modify their behaviour, making themselves ‘seem safe in order to be safe’ (Gqola 2007, 121). Black women must ‘stay at home, participate in the cult of femininity, give in to unwanted sexual advances, surrender many choices, make [themselves] as small, quiet and invisible as possible’ (Gqola 2007, 121). The cult of femininity communicates quite ‘unequivocally that South African public spaces do not belong to the women who live in this country’ (Gqola 2007, 121). U-Carmen’s traditional labour can be viewed as an instrumentalised act embedded in African tradition. U-Carmen makes it evident that she refuses to adhere to patriarchal views perpetuated in her formal life, yet she accepts the domestic role set aside by strict cultural norms. This can be interpreted as a form of acknowledgement and respect for Xhosa tradition. By keeping everything by the book in this particular space, a display of indigenisation and tale-telling in the correct manner is displayed in the opera.

Keeping to the realism of the opera film, the social context of *Khayelitsha* is underscored with a scene depicting a kraal (TC 00:20:23) in which a bull is fastened to a tree. In rural areas a kraal is an enclosure where animals are kept and a sacred privileged masculine space exclusively for male members of the families to meet to perform traditional cultural customs (Viljoen & Wenzel 2006, 62). The fact that cows are objects of inheritance from one generation to the next, symbolically assures continuity between the living and the living dead. Consequently, even acquired cows are considered as gifts bestowed by the ancestors, which emphasises the many requests for cows during Xhosa people’s sacrificial rituals. This highlights why Xhosa people reserve special treatment and great affection for cows. They can never be separated from them because they view them as precious and adequate material offerings for the ancestors (see Nkosinkulu 2015). The men are gathered to receive kaLulamile Nkomo who has returned home for *umsebenzi* (traditional ceremony) to honour his deceased father. The scenes depicting the ceremony alternate with scenes of the women preparing the food for the feast in a makeshift kitchen. The tethered bull is speared and slaughtered by Lulamile and acts as a sacrifice to his ancestors for continued

protection and more luck in the future. The prolonged bellowing as it dies indicates the presence and the acceptance of the ancestors, upon hearing the sound the women break into song and dance. The scene is indicative of the patriarchal society in which U-Carmen lives that is made up of sanctioned spaces. The women are shown behind a wire fence, representing the insistent image of separation and enclosure. While the women work tirelessly preparing the feast, the men are seated smoking, drinking, and talking waiting to be served. The scene reveals the strict gendered demarcations, even in an urban context. U-Carmen and the other Xhosa women conform to ‘societal prescriptions of what is appropriately female’ (Davies 1994, 60). Based on traditional cultural beliefs, domestic labour is women’s work. Lulamile’s ceremony shows how these roles are embedded in the familial unit (Helman & Ratele 2016, 1) and, as depicted in the film opera, how notions of manhood and womanhood are constructed and performed.

While it is possible to read this form of labour as an indicator of gender inequality in the opera, I want to posit that it might also signal a form of resilient agency. The culture of communalism here, which obliges people to be responsible for other relatives beyond their immediate families, is owed, as Kwadwo Okrah (2017) has shown to the resilience and fortitude of the black women. Women, in traditional societies, recognized the vital roles of the economic well-being of their communities (Uwa 2008 cited in Okrah 2017). The women working at the ceremony are not doing this to get anything in return. Instead, they are fulfilling duties as women for the community and in doing so enact a form of agency of care. In the opera, the women fulfil their duties by preparing the food and making sure the men and children are taken care of.

The aforementioned acts can also be seen in often-overlooked domestic forms of labour that involve childcare. It was common for women to leave their children in the care of others since their main priority was work, which represented a guarantee of survival (Davis 2010). Black South African women have historically shared caretaking responsibilities, not only do we see it in the aforementioned scene, but we also see it during the ceremony (TC 00:20:23) where all the women share the responsibility to oversee taking care of the children that are around. However, in U-Carmen’s case, there seems to be a break with

this figuration. At the start of the feast scene (TC 00:09:57), the women get ready to go to Bra Nkomo's for Lulamile's arrival. One of the women in the bedroom getting ready – supposedly a mother – exclaims to her child: 'Don't give Thandi trouble. Mum's going to Bra Nkomo's. Your mum's going dancing.' While this directive suggests that the children should stay behind, U-Carmen's daughter tags along hand in hand with her mother. She is obligated to look after her and take full responsibility for her child as an apparent single mother and appears to be working hard to do so, not only financially but also physically present. In this regard, it appears that communalism is broken down as there is no one to take care of U-Carmen's daughter and that she is alienated from the community. On the other hand, one might interpret this as a deliberate act from U-Carmen to take her daughter to enjoy the festivities with her. Later in the film opera, we do see a communal form of help which enables her to work freely. The weight of this labour is depicted in a particularly intimate scene. After the festivities (TC 00:01:52), Lulamile is drawn to the sound of lullaby and walks into a section of the shebeen where he finds two mothers with their children in their arms lulling them to sleep, one being U-Carmen as mentioned in Chapter Two. We are made aware that she takes care of her child, which compounds the various other forms of labour she enacts. The children are taken home (TC 00:03:47) while their mothers remain at the tavern. It is apparent that the women at Bra Nkomo's feast had all other aspects of their existence overshadowed by work.

Conclusion

Gender inequality not only still persists in the urban-rural milieu, but in many ways, women could be considered to be far worse off than they were before. Far from having been 'emancipated' as the official rhetoric sometimes claims, women's workload has been increased and there has been no substantial redefinition of the relations between the sexes. Traditional roles of housewife and mother have been added to those of full-time wage workers, while the provision of childcare agencies remains inadequate (Molyneux 1985, 229). From a feminist perspective, it could be interpreted that by not adequately reestablishing the position of women, the post-apartheid state has failed to fulfil its promise to emancipate

black women. As a male director, Dornford-May impressively does not fail to pick up the gender dynamics and nuances in the post-apartheid moment, instead he memorialises and represents the black womanhood in its true nature with all its complexities. Writing women into history does not only include narrowing the gaps and giving them a voice, but it also involves redefining and enlarging traditional notions of their historical significance.

U-Carmen functions as a complex ideological work that engages with U-Carmen's discursive legacy and with the complexities of social interactions in post-apartheid South Africa, reflecting on contemporary power structures. U-Carmen epitomises the everyday woman of Khayelitsha whose experiences stand in for a modern South African heroine; her strength does not come from juxtaposing how different she is from her surroundings (André 2016, 69). She is vulnerable and lives in poverty, works in a cigarette factory, and raises her child within the community as a single mother. While her world is imaginary, the interpolation of biographical and historical detail about characters and South Africa in *U-Carmen* contributes to the formation of alternative contexts. Cultural ordinariness and occasion alike reinforce the film's ethnographic realism, which serves to ground the dramaturgical humanism of the film and existential resistance (Moyo 2015, 237). The film opera recognizes the post-apartheid limitations of women's lives evident through the violent intersectionality of white supremacy, patriarchy, and class oppression; the latter often used interchangeably with economic alienation. This intersectional triple violence limited U-Carmen's life choices and movement and undervalued them through institutionalised minoritization.

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), characterises African women as those who metaphorically carry six mountains on their backs. The analogy represents the meanings emanating from our location in Africa with the accompanying history of interlocking oppressions in the burdens we carry. However, because these are on our backs, we are able to move with them. This analogy is mindful of the nexi of power relations at play in black women's lives whilst acknowledging the agency with which we engage with them (Gqola 2001, 12). The social order functions as an immense symbolic machine that tends to ratify

the male domination on which it is based: it is the social and economic division of labour, a very strict distribution of the activities attributed to each gender taking into consideration their place, moment and instruments (Bourdieu 2001). According to Stephanie Dias (2006, 91), *U-Carmen* 'focuses on the potential power of the lower class, and more specifically women, challenging their oppression both in terms of class and gender.' U-Carmen forges a path of her own and actively resists the norm, this pursuit begins when she leaves her home in the village for greener pastures. It leads her to working in a factory which is normally thought of as being a man's job. She breaks the status quo as with the other women in the factory. She does not live a lavish life and pushes multiple forms of labour to make ends meet.

Thinking about labour makes women visible, recognising women as labourers, both inside and outside the home, requires upsetting preconceived notions of the demarcation between the private and public spheres, or the domestic and professional environments. Despite emancipating themselves from marital and domestic obligations to become single mothers, women frequently find themselves ensnared in ideologies of female dependency to some extent due to their reliance on relatives at home. Individuals like U-Carmen who engaged in dual forms of labour, such child care or potential sex work, where their 'intimacy' is 'commodified' or 'purchased' (Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2004), become entangled in entrenched gendered systems that simultaneously provide them with the means to support themselves and restrict their capacity to do so.

Chapter 4

Motherhood and Mothering

The previous two chapters have built on literature concerned with issues of race, gender, sexual politics, and labour. The most notable theme in both chapters is the invisibility of the black female body. In this chapter, I build on this theme by considering the representation of motherhood in *U-Carmen*. According to Walker (1995), motherhood embraces several terrains which include mothering work, described as the practice of motherhood, and the discourse of motherhood, which involves norms, values, and ideas about ‘the good mother’ that tend to exist in each culture or society. It is thus a theme that is closely related to issues of labour but brings with it a question of practice which is encoded in a more complex framework of reproduction as something beyond an act of labour. For instance, Walker (1995) goes further to add another dimension of motherhood, namely the societal identity which consists of one’s self-image, positively or negatively valued, which is derived from membership in various social groups. Women in South Africa may have different notions of motherhood in comparison to others across the diaspora, and these notions within South Africa could conflict based on identity (Abrams 2017). It is perhaps impossible to construct a single definition of motherhood, especially across identity groups. Be that as it may, it is crucial to recognize the innumerable political, historical and identity influences at hand when conceptualising motherhood and these serve as a useful way of making visible the work of motherhood in *U-Carmen*.

Mothers are rarely present in operatic plots, when present, they are generally considered ‘supporting’ roles (Harder 2009, ii). More often than not, mothers usually get the short end of the narrative stick, be it

in fairy tales, Shakespeare's plays, or many other shared stories (McLary 2002). In South African political consciousness, however, the notion of mothers of the nation articulates that black mothers are active members of their community, as opposed to being passive domestic actors. During the pre-colonial era, importance was placed on motherhood and fertility which frequently granted women status and power in their respective communities (Walker 1995). This ideology is evidenced by the scarcity of there being a stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy and single mothers in many black South African communities. Becoming a mother is often thought of as vital and is described as 'God-given' and 'sacred' (Akujobi 2011, 2). However, in South Africa, particularly in rural areas, single motherhood and female-headed households are increasing to a rate approaching 50% (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA] 2018). The often-solitary responsibility of child-raising in households that lack access to resources and are also female-headed. This stretches maternal practices 'like the arms of an octopus and may be experienced as hard, stressful, victimised, or hectic' (Spjeldnæs 2021, 413), an observation shared in much literature on motherhood (Adeagbo 2019; Goodrum *et al.* 2019; Maisela & Ross 2018; Mkhize & Msomi 2016).

Within the post-colonial township setting, U-Carmen is represented as sharing motherhood with the majority of young women. The audience is not made aware of the father of her child's whereabouts but being a mother is an expectation rather than something that could be thought of as unheard of with regards to a black woman of her status. Her motherhood is a complete deviation from the original Carmen. Yet is impactful because it is a portrayal of real circumstances in which a contemporary Carmen in South Africa might find herself. U-Carmen lives in poverty, works in a cigarette factory, and raises her child within the community as a single mother. Presenting U-Carmen as a mother, without explanation, has complex ramifications. She is shown to have a tender, maternal side towards her daughter, but she seems lacking in solicitude (in one scene, for instance, she demands a cigarette from Lulamile and blows smoke over the child). U-Carmen, through her motherhood, becomes associated with the claims of domesticity which seemingly conflicts with her avowed desire for freedom (Stobie 2016, 164).

Often found in African literature is the portrayal of mothers as life-givers, creators, providers, cradle-rockers, nurturers, or goddesses (Akujobi 2011; Roscoe 1971). Authors tend to make use of words like ‘Mother Africa’ or ‘the motherland’ ascribing great power to mothers in children’s lives (Gethoi 1996; Leeuw 1987). The film opera alludes to these ideals and simultaneously gives contrasting notions of expected norms of mothering when considering the circumstances of the mother figures portrayed in the film. Existing literature has to date predominantly focused on the experience of the Western conceptions and ideas about motherhood, overlooking that like any institution, motherhood is to be examined within specific historical contexts (see Dockray-Miller & Dockray-Miller 2000). There is no sole form of a lived experience of motherhood and is not parallel across international or even racial lines, and feminist research is to take this into account (Mohanty 1988). This chapter aims to unpack the various forms of motherhood presented in *U-Carmen* by considering examples against the different forms of motherhood in the black urban-rural communities of South Africa, building on narratives of communalism, parenthood, and the ‘project of the self’ and by using a more historically specific understanding of motherhood that acknowledges and includes the experiences of women. The legacy of colonialism, apartheid-era violence, and institutionalised racism has notably had a stark impact on the manner in which women conceptualise and carry out their role as mothers (Abrams 2017).

The ‘Good Mother’

As previously mentioned, the perception that black mothers are active members of their communities is not new to South African discourse. The predominant societal dogma of motherhood pushes the narrative of ‘intensive mothering’, which requires an immense level of attention and care given by the mother to her child (Abrams 2017). The ‘good mother’ is considered one who plays the role of the central caregiver to her child, following expert advice, spending significant time and resources on her child, and is selfless and emotionally absorbed (Brown 2011). Jongikhaya’s mother in the film opera most closely resembles this active form of motherhood. Her character is deeply invested in both her religion (Christianity) and

Xhosa culture. She is an extension of Jongikhaya's character and plays an undeniably significant role in how his narrative as an outcast and disowned heir plays out throughout the film.

This is perhaps best exemplified in Dornford-May's close adaptation of the 'Parle moi de ma mère' duet (TC 0:11:00). Here, Nomakhaya tells Jongikhaya that his mother had approached her the previous Sunday after church (as Micaëla does in Bizet's *Carmen*). The following scene hosts an intertextual space created by means of the manipulation of external analeptic episodes, flashbacks to past events in Jongikhaya's life which make the audience aware of the circumstances that lead to him fleeing his rural home to live in Seville. This sequence draws parallels between Jongikhaya and Don José in the original opera, who also fled under suspicious circumstances. The audience is transported to Jongikhaya's past with images of him and his brother kneeling in prayer in their mother's home, an image of the local church and the brother's sermon about the sanctity of marriage. Jongikhaya's brother preaches that 'Marriage is a blessing from God... You will be blessed for eternity.' Jongikhaya supports this pontification and steps up to the pulpit warning the congregation that 'adultery is a great sin' (TC 00:12:45). Following the service, Nomakhaya and the two brothers go to the river to swim. Jongikhaya makes inappropriate advances toward his brother's wife by urging her to undress and that she joins them in the river. After she declines and quickly departs, the brothers break into an argument and Jongikhaya is told that he 'show[s] no respect to [his brother's] wife'. He denies this and the two insult each other leading to a tiff. The camera cuts away abruptly at this point, accompanied by the sound of a bird screeching. There are only the sorrowful consequences of the row between the two brothers and the audience learns that the brother had died (possibly drowned). At this point, Jongikhaya's character is portrayed as morally questionable.

Similar to Don José's claim that the officer he had killed had run into his sword by accident, Jongikhaya tells the authorities that his brother slipped when they went for a swim (TC 00:14:23). As secondary witnesses to what occurred at the river, we are made aware of Jongikhaya being a potential threat to society. His mother's declaration, 'Today, I lost both my sons. I'm washing my hands of you. Leave me, leave me to grieve', tells the audience that she does not believe his version of events. She disowns him

and orders him to leave (TC 00:14: 32). Thus, while the audience is permitted access to a disowned black man stripped of his pride, the mother figure does not have access to the same kind of feeling but exists simply to suffer and bear the harsh reality of her situation. This illustrates how his mother expresses her disappointment and anger toward Jongikhaya's actions. Yet it is not hard to imagine that her bereaved state is complex, possibly holding elements of emotional revenge as reparation for her son's passing but also representing the act of simply working toward managing her emotional trauma of having lost a son. Whether his mother's behaviour is considered appropriate or not, it does seem to complicate shallow representations of motherhood. Mothers are not often associated with resentment, shame, and rejection of their children. By disowning Jongikhaya, she shows a deep-rooted form of emotional turmoil in a time when she is vulnerable. Jongikhaya is consequently forced to live a life of maternal deprivation.

As the portrayal of the 'good mother,' the audience notes the difficulty in Jongikhaya's mother's decision to disown her son. This act is not taken lightly but can rather be commemorated as an act of tough love. Instead of turning a blind eye to Jongikhaya's evil deeds, she punishes him as a caregiver should in the instance of bad or unforgivable behaviour. In doing so, she, however, shows the moral tensions that emerge in motherhood and raises the question around whether she is really the 'good mother' if she is able to cast aside her son.

This complex representation of motherhood functions as a backdrop against which Jongikhaya's character is developed. Having moved to Khayelitsha, he forges a new life for himself as a policeman (TC 00:14:50). The flash-back sequence draws to an end in the present with Jongikhaya opening the card, featuring an image of Mother Mary and baby Jesus that his mother had sent him, again evoking the complex trope of the 'good mother'. In the card, she offers him forgiveness, pleads with him to return home, and suggests a levirate marriage with Nomakhaya: 'When you choose a wife, let it be your brother's widow'. This suggestion holds significance in that it articulates a traditional African practice. Mofono (2009, 40 cited in Zungu *et. al.*, 2014) explains that levirate marriages allowed a brother of a deceased man to claim conjugal rights from his sister-in-law, as well as to assume responsibility for her.

While levirate marriages are not outlawed in South Africa, and a widow must consent to such a marriage, the deceased's family has the right to revoke lobola should the widow refuse to agree to the levirate union (Bennet 2004, 346). After being estranged from her only living son and possibly enduring deep feelings of pain and guilt, she decides to forgive him. We see a mother's grief, forgiveness, and posttraumatic emotional growth after the loss of her child. Her forgiveness shows her courage and nurturing qualities and implies a divine sense which seeks to erase past errors. Jongikhaya's mother depicts a form of 'intensive' mothering here, which was popularised by Hays (1996), in the deliberate commitment and prioritisation, by the biological mother, of addressing the child's perceived emotional and material needs, ahead of her own. In doing so, the 'good mother' figures the ability to reprimand her son for his ill doings and also be able to forgive after he seemingly has learnt from the consequences of his actions. Part of her courage stems from her ability to forgive and renounce anger in the face of trials and tribulations. Of course, this again complicates her morality as we are led to question whether her attempt at reconciliation is simply a façade to ameliorate the social requirements of levirate marriage.

Although presented as a complex figure, Jongikhaya's mother is largely a figure, like many mothers in opera, without voice. She exists, in some sense, only in relation to her children. This means that her 'maternity is the terrain of [their] authority' (Warner 1994, 7). However, this 'authority' does not come with any real power, even as it appears to. One might question if her agency is stripped away or if her existence and presence say enough for the portrayal of the orthodox black maternal figure. Though she plays the character of the 'good mother,' Jongikhaya's mother does not depart too far from the conventional depictions of the black female body, one who is made both visible and invisible at the same time. As a mother figure, she is not liberated, and fits the conventional Mammy stereotype who plays the role of an unthreatening, hyper-maternal, asexual black woman (Kwate & Shatema 2015; Mitchell 2020, 43). Jongikhaya's mother literally and figuratively does not have a voice in the opera. The majority of her forms of communication are non-verbal. She communicates with Jongikhaya through a letter and through

a third person (Nomakhaya). Her views and opinions are secondary and are therefore of a subordinate nature thus displaying a lack of a sense of agency.

The Unconventional Mother

In contrast to the ‘good mother,’ whose sole purpose is to serve her children, the unconventional mother exposes the realities – in U-Carmen’s case – of the hardships of single motherhood and the possible demands that come with it. It goes without saying that the role of the ‘good mother’ is not easily accessible to all mothers, especially for low-income women and those who are not privileged enough to have access to material resources or have the time to spend with their children (Abrams 2017). These standards of motherhood are exponentially unachievable for lower-class black women. U-Carmen’s motherhood reflects this and, in doing so, marks one of the most significant deviations from the original Carmen. Yet, her motherhood, although unconventional, is impactful because it is a portrayal of circumstances aligned with the translocation of the opera’s setting. U-Carmen is shown to have a tender, maternal side towards her daughter, but she seems lacking in solicitude. Her parenting skills and abilities are questionable but at the same time coded by her socio-economic environment. For the sake of this chapter, ‘unconventional’ refers to acting out of the bounds of cultural norms that may be surprising as it forges alternative perspectives.

U-Carmen’s daughter is introduced to the audience in an unconventional manner framed in the discussions of Lulamile’s arrival and the celebration that is to take place (TC 00:09:57). This framing sets the tone for U-Carmen’s unconventional mothering as she happily takes her daughter to a shebeen setting which, for obvious reasons, is not a place for a child. No back story is given about her daughter or the father's whereabouts. However, based on how U-Carmen’s narrative unfolds, we quickly deduce that she is a single mother.

U-Carmen's unconventional motherhood, as mentioned before is premised in the interaction around the celebration of Lulamile's return. She leaves the house holding her daughter's hand, leading the way to the festivities welcoming Lulamile Nkomo back from New York (TC 00:10:26). The action of holding her daughter's hand and guiding her is a display of protection and affection. This initially suggests U-Carmen's loving side. She does not leave her daughter with Thandi, the babysitter. Not doing so, however, could be an indication of her inability to afford the babysitter's services and thereby situates her as a low-income woman who is not privileged enough to have access to material resources. In a different reading, however, her act of bringing her daughter with her might indicate that she sees the need to have her daughter enjoy the festivities with her. Either way, the audience is exposed to a side of U-Carmen that is unconventional, which departs from the erstwhile representation of U-Carmen as a 'good mother.' She not only plays an active role in her daughter's life, but she also, as Amy Brown (2011) argues, actively spends significant time and resources on her child and can be perceived as being selfless and emotionally absorbed.

U-Carmen's unconventional motherhood is further depicted in the scene where the party of women arrive at a celebratory affair at the shebeen. They begin to sing and dance. Small appropriations are made to the libretto to reflect the context. Instead of guitars, for example, U-Carmen sings that marimbas are playing (TC 0:11:43). The 'good mother' script is almost instantaneously flipped, without giving the audience a chance to indulge in this moment of U-Carmen's maternal behaviour. At this point, we lose sight of U-Carmen's daughter as she embraces Bra Nkomo and makes her way to the outside veranda. However, moments later U-Carmen's daughter is seen dancing on the table. The predominant societal dogma of motherhood pushes the narrative of 'intensive mothering,' which requires an immense level of attention and care given by the mother to her child (Abrams 2017). Already aware that a shebeen is not a place fit for a child, the audience notes traits in U-Carmen that might perceive her as being a bad mother: she neglects her daughter by pursuing her own happiness and enjoyment in a place notorious for the potential

danger because of the alcohol and drug abuse, instead of looking after her daughter and keeping her close in this environment.

Her mothering is further complicated when U-Carmen is spotted at Bra Nkomo's by police officials, and the festivities are brought to a halt (TC 0:16:26). Captain Gantana physically assaults U-Carmen twice by slapping her across the face and she falls to the ground. He refers to her as a little jailbird in a place for low lives. While this scene plays out, we are made aware that, even though we do not physically see her, the daughter is a witness to the brutalisation of her mother. Regardless of the terrible environmental situation, U-Carmen initially standing up for herself in the presence of her daughter does perhaps set a good example of her character and might be read as her teaching her daughter not to allow men to oppress you and the importance of it. U-Carmen's strength and resilience, however, is short-lived. Under duress, and as mentioned before, she agrees to have sex in exchange for the charges against her being dropped. Although we later learn that this exchange is an act of deception, it appears in that moment as if her desperation capitulates indirectly into an act whereby, she sells her body in front of her daughter. The shebeen environment, in which these harsh interactions play out, seems to code the figuration of U-Carmen as a 'bad' mother in that she brought her child to such a place. In saying this, I want to argue that U-Carmen's motherhood is as much coded by the violent environment in which she finds herself as it is coded by her relationship with her daughter.

A daughter witnessing her mother being abused, becomes acutely aware of the dire situation, which can significantly impact her mental health and their relationship. Such exposure to violence and degradation can lead to feelings of helplessness, fear, and anxiety in the child, disrupting her sense of security and stability. The trauma of seeing her mother assaulted and coerced into compromising situations can foster deep psychological scars, potentially leading to trust issues, emotional detachment, or internalised anger. Moreover, the child may struggle with conflicting emotions, simultaneously feeling anger toward the abuser and sorrow for her mother's plight, complicating their bond. This dynamic underscores the broader

societal implications of domestic violence, highlighting how it reverberates beyond the immediate victim to affect familial relationships and mental health profoundly.

As the celebratory events draw to a close, we are again reminded of U-Carmen's unconventional motherhood. Though her parenting skills have been controversial up to this point, U-Carmen's caring subjectivity is displayed through her retreat to the conventional act of mothering. Lulamile is drawn to the sound of the humming of a lullaby (TC 00:01:52), as mentioned earlier in Chapter Two. Here, however, I want to focus on the representation of motherhood in this scene. Lulamile walks into a section of the shebeen where U-Carmen and another woman have sleeping children in their arms. U-Carmen intimately brushes her daughter's forehead. In this instance, U-Carmen is depicted as being maternal, nurturing, and tender, but this image is quickly shattered when she demands a cigarette from Lulamile and blows smoke over the child. In this contradictory moment, cut through with intimacy and harm, we see her attempt to be a 'good mother' through the action of carrying her daughter and lulling her to sleep while through the act of smoking drawing our awareness back to the sordid environment of violence in which seems to envelop her and her daughter. Taking this into consideration, U-Carmen might not be perceived as being a 'good mother'. Although we note her efforts to care, she seems to fail her daughter as a mother in several different ways bound up within a larger form of systemic violence in which U-Carmen is a participant, willing or otherwise. She does not protect her from the dangers of the world; instead, she exposes her to violent behaviour and substance abuse.

The standards of 'good motherhood' appear exponentially unachievable for lower-class black women, who have to enact this ideal in the face of innumerable political, historical, gendered and racial oppressions (Abrams 2017). If U-Carmen was not socio-economically impoverished, the chances of her being a better mother would certainly be higher. In this sense, her representation in the opera is also shaped by the absence of material conditions, or, put differently, what is missing from her figuration as a mother. Yet this extends to the notion of social formations around her as a mother. An exclusive 'charmed circle' of motherhood is described by Verduzco-Baker (2010) in which acceptance into the circle is

highly inaccessible for those without certain privileges. Considering the classed and raced language surrounding motherhood, no amount of effort or dedication will make black women ‘good mothers. These women will constantly be perceived as less than good mothers in popular narrative. Poor black women are by default shamed as being lazy, hypersexual, excessively fertile, irresponsible, and greedy (Verduzco-Baker 2010). And indeed, such an image seems hard to escape in what can be perceived as U-Carmen’s neglect of her daughter. However, such a figuration is perhaps complicated when her motherhood is read against broader representations of the sociality of mothering in the opera.

Black Women, Othermothering and Community Mothering

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, in literature African mothers are represented as life-givers, creators, providers, cradle-rockers, *etc.* (Akujobi 2011; Roscoe 1971). Great power is ascribed to mothers in children’s lives. In black South African communities, mothers play a significant role in their social formations, often carrying not only the responsibility of their children but also that of other dependents (Magwasa 2010). When considering South Africa’s historical context and the political mobilisation of women surrounding the idea of nationalism, we come to realise how motherhood was used as a powerful symbol of national unity as mothers were conceptualised as both biological and cultural reproducers of the nation and community formation (Robbe 2015). The duty of mothers was both to save the nation for their children and concurrently reproduce community norms and ideals through their children. black women were and still are expected to hold the community together (McDonald 1997). Because of this, black women become community mothers who transplant tradition through interventions among their respective communities.

For black families, the assumption that mothering occurs within the bounds of a private, nuclear family household where the mother practically takes full responsibility for childrearing is hardly applicable as they have historically been less capable of supporting private households and alternatively leaned toward the practice of ‘community mothering’ (Collins 1987; Collins 2000; Hallstein 2006). Community

mothering or 'othermothering' is explained by Edwards (2000) as being the acceptance of responsibility for a child who is not one's own, representing the interdependence of the black community. This understanding expands to say that it is an effort to set an example for other black women and girls through boundless acts which range from scolding to nurturing (Edwards 2000). The black community, in other words, is seen as a group of relatives who have interests that are to be always prompted, but the ideal of being a mother to the community is also an identity passed down through generations of black women (Wolf 2005).

The film *opera* provides several displays of community mothering where the women share responsibility for the children. In the scene where the ladies get ready to go to Bra Nkomo, off to see Lulamile, they sing 'Don't give Thandi trouble. Mum's going to Bra Nkomo's. Your mum's going dancing (TC 00:09:57).' While others go partying, some of the children remain with a caregiver who assumes responsibility for the children. Later at the tavern, the children are taken home while their mothers remain at the shebeen with the aim of finding means to make money through smuggling (TC 00:03:47). This is reflective of the support that the women who are in similar situations show for each other. For U-Carmen and the other women in the film, it seems that motherhood and economic dependency on men do not go hand-in-hand. U-Carmen is not privileged enough to have a relative degree of economic security to provide for her family. A black woman's journey to autonomy is long and short-stepped and often completed with the aid of many helpers as seen in U-Carmen with the use of 'community mothering'. Feminist debates concerning the role of whether women are to work in order to provide for their children or if they should stay at home are highly inaccessible to both low-income women and women of colour who more often than most do not have the luxury to choose between work or home life and instead have done work outside the home for centuries. Walker (1995) deduces that discourses of motherhood for black and working-class communities 'may not emphasise women's involvement in the day-to-day care of their children as much as their responsibilities for financial support and discipline' (1995, 425).

‘Black activism’, as observed by McDonald (1997), is fuelled by ideals of motherhood. It is possible that black women are of the belief that they possess a unique empathic motivation and ability to maintain ties with poor and working-class women. Consequently, their strategies of solidarity and collective survival are passed down through generations (McDonald 1997). At Lulamile’s ceremony, the children are the responsibility of all the women (‘They are all our children’ they say (TC 00:20:23)) Collins (1997, 328) states that for African women, ‘emotional care for children and providing for their physical survival were interwoven as interdependent, complementary dimensions of motherhood’. The black community is not only seen as a group of relatives who have interests that are to be always prompted, but the ideal of being a mother to the community is also an identity passed down through generations of black women (Wolf 2005). This understanding helps in understanding *U-Carmen* better. The audience is able to better understand the parental dynamics displayed in the film opera. It is probable that a large number of black women regard themselves as being mothers to more than just their biological children. This is due to the fact that their conceptions of motherhood extend beyond the home. Motherhood involves interactions with children in the community, extended family, and all those who need care. The black woman does not seek solitary independence, partly because family and community are such strong values in the black culture. She traditionally relies on the physical and emotional help of her sisters, mothers, and neighbours to pull their resources together for the collective accomplishment of survival, freedom and autonomy (Baez 2016, 59).

Motherhood and ‘Project of the Self’

While agreeing with the fact that motherhood is to be historically and politically specific, generational shifts are also important in its figuration. One such shifted perspective holds that mothering contributes to an ideology of power and agency as a result of the expanding opportunities that arise from combining maternal identities with other identities and the capacity to share family and network responsibilities. This nuances the exponentially growing international literature on alternative visions of motherhood

(Heffernan & Wilgus, 2018). U-Carmen commands her own life and her own demands. She does not allow the fact that she is a mother stops her from pursuing her needs and wants.

Generational shifts have shown a different perspective or layer of mothering, namely a gradual movement away from the traditional patriarchal framework of male dominance (Walker 1995). Moore (2013) conversed with three generations of black mothers in Cape Town. From this he deduced that notions of motherhood amongst the women had changed from solely cultivating a ‘good provider and caring role’ toward an increased emphasis on achieving personal goals and working on ‘the project of the self’. This movement echoes discourse in feminist literature where mothers are autonomous subjects and also able to be detached from their children, which benefits the children (Hollway 2011) by serving as mothers as role models. U-Carmen could possibly represent this ideology as she holds multiple identities that play out in different roles throughout the film. As mentioned in Chapter 3, she is a formal labourer and also pursues an informal singing career as a chorister.

While the demanding nature of working two jobs – working at the factory and working with the smugglers, in U-Carmen’s case – can be physically and mentally exhausting, many single moms prioritise self-care and make efforts to maintain a healthy work-life balance. A handful of factory workers, including U-Carmen, are part of The Gypsy cigarette factory choir. The choir seems to play a pivotal role in the choristers’ lives as they take rehearsal seriously and the announcement of the choir performing also raises excitement and leads to a fight between U-Carmen and Manelisa when the screen is abruptly switched off. In *U-Carmen*, opera is diegeticized and used as a real-time element in their lives. With the strong legacy of choral singing in schools, churches, professional societies, and competitions, black South Africans were uncannily poised to move into opera as apartheid was being dismantled, proving to be somewhat of a tradition that played a fundamental role amongst various cultural groups (Barret *et. al.* 2015). Music played an active role in communal activities for the Zulu and Xhosa nations ‘Song and dance reinforce and reaffirm Zulu history’ (Levine 2005, 41). By being a chorister, U-Carmen builds on her layers of identity in her ‘project of the self’ extending her identity as a mother. She does an activity

outside of the workplace that does not benefit her financially but is instead an activity that she shows passion toward. In doing this she prioritises her need to pursue something she finds interest in that potentially helps her shy away from her worldly financial stress and pressure.

U-Carmen shows us that she is also able to be an autonomous being who is not solely attached to her daughter. She is a working woman, a hustler, and a chorister and like any other person she chooses to pursue love. The ambivalence of ‘superwomen’ combining employment and childcare ‘may not have the same salience in societies whose cultural conception of motherhood embraces collective mothering, where responsibility for childcare is shared among family and community members’ (Robinson 2014, iii). U-Carmen is able to rely on others to help take care of her daughter while she works toward building a better life for herself and her daughter. She is able to enjoy the luxury of mingling with potential lovers which might have proven difficult if not for the help of others. Working on the project of the self-shows that U-Carmen is autonomous and can make decisions that possibly benefit her.

Existing literature on motherhood sets poor women of colour at a default as they are shamed as being lazy, hypersexual, excessively fertile, irresponsible, and greedy (Verduzco-Baker 2010). This could also be a narrative that follows U-Carmen from a perspective that deems the ‘project of the self’ as a selfish action. With the aim of building herself, some mothers might perceive this as a neglectful act which shows greed because of self-interests overshadowing the potential needs of their daughters.

Conclusion: I Got Flowers Today

The end of the film opera is most telling of the commonality of motherhood. Both mothers (U-Carmen and Jongikhaya’s mother) die leaving their children presumably orphaned. In both cases no mention is made of their fathers and a male figure is not present in any scene alluding to their histories. Shari L. Thurer (1995, xvii) maintains that the construction and ideology of the ‘good mother’ is culturally derived and that ‘even as the mother is all powerful, she ceases to exist. She exists bodily of course, but her needs

as a [character] become null and void'. Jongikhaya is too late and finds his mom has already passed and did so without having seen him. She is old and appears to have had a peaceful departure (based on the scene where she lies on the bed). We can assume that she died sad because she never got to see him for one last time but both Jongikhaya and the audience are at ease because he has been forgiven. His mother has played and ended her official role as a 'good mother.'

The presence of a child as part of U-Carmen's life is in direct opposition to the depiction of her character in the precursory texts. Presenting her as a mother, without explanation, has complex ramifications. In contradistinction to Bizet's Carmen, U-Carmen for some parts of the film opera displays a loving, caring nature which we see with Dornford-May's version exudes multidimensional spectrums of emotion.

Throughout the film opera, we see her angry, annoyed, desperate, and cunning but we are also exposed to her loving and nurturing side. Positive attributes of U-Carmen are highlighted to focus on determination, sacrifice, and survival, rather than the lack of material resources. U-Carmen is headstrong, confident in herself, and possesses the bravery to resist injustices. She does not have immature qualities that need to be grown out of, but rather possesses and cultivates qualities that are necessary for refuting stereotypes and future political survival. U-Carmen's motherhood adds to the understanding of her as having responsibility that supersedes that of her own.

Further elaborating on the statement regarding U-Carmen's accountability, it is crucial to consider her premature demise as a mother and the manner in which she passes away when analysing the decisions she makes. (TC 00:11:28) 'Free I was born and free is how I'll die,' U-Carmen is willing to die for her freedom – it shows strength and resilience but can also be interpreted as being selfish because she knowingly walks toward the danger even though she has a child. U-Carmen dies at the hands of gender-based violence. Although there are clear signs of her suffering, the narrator interprets her as being brave and ready for battle. In a township like Khayelitsha, one might only wonder what the future holds for a little girl who has to navigate the world motherless, whose few last memories of her mother were of abuse at the hands of men Captain and Jongikhaya. Her mother leaves a legacy of defying male oppression. U-

Carmen becomes associated with the claims of domesticity rather than her avowed desire for freedom. As a single mother, her decision to ignore the repeated advice of her friends about the danger represented by Jongikhaya, and her resolve to embrace death, are inflected with a more sombre hue, as she abrogates her social duty to her child (Stobie 2016, 163).

Ideas on how to mother and, more than that, what constitutes a good mother, are ideas that all mothers have been exposed to and influenced by (Kruger 2005). Thoughts on mothering activities and standards are not, however, the sole preserve of mothers. Almost everyone, if pressed for an opinion, would have one, because we have been mothered, and have witnessed mothering in action. Yet, even though there might be noteworthy differences in the way mothering is done between the two characters and within the African community, opinion seldom moves beyond the set of standards that form the mothering benchmark within a particular society's worldview. It is rare that this worldview itself is subjected to scrutiny by the average person whose life is guided by it. There is no sole form of a lived experience of womanhood or motherhood. The legacy of apartheid-era violence, institutionalised racism, and patriarchy has notably had a stark impact on the manner in which women conceptualise and carry out their roles as Mothers. The film aids in helping recognize the innumerable political, historical and identity influences at hand when conceptualising motherhood.

Yet motherhood serves also as a unifying factor across urban, class and race boundaries. Single motherhood and unity among women are important in uplifting women's socio-economic standing. *U-Carmen* show how opera can provide a space for under-represented perspectives. In this case, the voices of black mothers are elevated, and their circumstances are acknowledged and recognized. By placing black women at the centre of the discussion of motherhood, their differential treatment and access to resources throughout history will be recognizable. In other words, the work of motherhood in *U-Carmen* emerges in recognizing historical differences and conjointly understanding that stories are both structural and individual will help conceptualise how black mothers carry out their role and how this has an impact on their potential socio-political emancipation.

Structural Violence: U-Carmen and the Lifeless Body

In an opinion piece for the *Mail & Guardian* entitled, 'Carmen, koeksisters and the president', Mercedes Sayagues (2005) foregrounds and highlights the social and economic relevance of *U-Carmen* in post-apartheid South Africa: 'What could be more relevant to a country where, according to the Human Sciences Research Council, a woman is murdered by her partner every six hours, than a story where the heroine is killed by her lover?' It seems not a week passes without men – belonging to all races, rich or poor, employed or unemployed – murdering their wives, partners, sisters, or daughters. Gender-based violence (GBV) continues to be an inherent and widespread problem in South Africa, sustained by systemic failings, stigma, and silence that are ingrained in societal conventions. This is a heinous transgression of human rights that hinders societal advancement and poses a threat to its very structure. The extensive prevalence of violence in South Africa is frequently characterised by extreme brutality, impacting persons from all social strata encompassing physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and structural forms that can be inflicted by intimate partners, acquaintances, strangers, and institutions. Economic inequalities, patriarchal societal norms, and power imbalances based on gender are fundamental contributors to GBV (Enaifoghe *et al.* 2012). According to a report by the World Health Organization (2005), the majority of instances of interpersonal gender-based violence are perpetrated by men against women, with the male perpetrator frequently being someone familiar to the female victim, such as a partner or family member.

Pushing the ethnographic realism discussed in Chapter 1 to its morbid conclusion, *U-Carmen* is not an exception to the norm of South African femicide. 'I was born free, and I'm going to die free'. These are the last words spoken by *U-Carmen* on the day she is brutally murdered by Jongikhaya. She is killed,

ironically, on Freedom Day. Set aside to commemorate the first democratic elections held in South Africa on 27 April 1994, Freedom Day marks the emancipation of black people from apartheid and the return of essential human rights for all. The irony of U-Carmen's murder lies in the fact that even though she 'dies free' in the political sense, she is killed in an act of gender-based violence, a systemic form of violence which enacts the ultimate un-freedom.

Suturing her death to Freedom Day ties her gendered body to a type of broader national politics. While I return to this entanglement later in this chapter, it is important to note that resistance in the 'post-transitional' moment is presented in *U-Carmen* as carried by the bodies of women in the wake of gender-based violence. This marking of the body allows for a refiguration of the femme fatale, which through U-Carmen's narrative differs from other Carmens. Instead of being a stereotypical femme fatale, Dornford-May conceptualised as a strong, independent force in resisting what men want her to be (Dornford-May 2006). This representation is pushed to its grim limit: even in the face of death she does not bend. Instead, she makes an active decision to stay herself and remain independent.

The figuration of women as dead, dying, mutilated and murdered became staggering in its graphic violence during the early modernist period (Morrison 2001, 15). These sacrificed women, as Elizabeth Morrison has shown, occupied the canvases of artists (e.g., Otto Dix, George Grosz and Oskar Kokoschka, the celluloid of Fritz Lang), the pages of novelists (e.g., Alfred Döblin and Frank Wedekind), and operatic stages (e.g., Carmen, Cio-Cio Sa, and Isolde). The ubiquity of these images raises numerous questions for Morrison: What fears, anxieties, or desires were negotiated over the bodies of these dead women? Whose values and beliefs were embodied in these images and what function did they serve within cultural practice? Why was the brutal violence enacted within these representations so often ignored or occulted in favour of an aesthetic reading that emphasised form over content, avant-garde innovation over blatant misogyny? (Morrison 2001, 15-16). Women victimised as a mere plot device is recurrent in the world of opera. 'The characters are left solely as victims', argues Sipe (2021, 6-7),

‘without reflection of their emotional, psychological, and physical turmoil; without justice; and without acknowledgement of their individual strength’.

Operatic works have for centuries glorified the victimisation and death of female characters, making gender-based violence a device that initiates dramatic action in male-dominated narratives with little to no concern for the outcome of its female protagonists or its role in perpetuating larger social inequities (Sipe 2021). Since the burgeoning of feminist musicology in the 1980s and ‘90s, many scholarly analyses have focused on issues of gender representation within the operatic genre. Representations of violence against women in opera have received a substantial amount of scholarly attention, from musicologists such as Susan McClary (2000), Lawrence Kramer (1997), Richard Leppert (2015), Carolyn Abbate (2001), and Joseph Kerman who engage in Catherine Clément’s (1988) assertions that opera features a parade of dying women, with operatic plots that inflict violence upon women and glossed by gorgeous music. Clément (1988) reiterates her claim by insisting that sopranos are the inevitable victims of opera, particularly in nineteenth-century opera where women are humiliated, hunted, driven mad, burnt alive, buried alive, stabbed, and even commit suicide. However, thinking about gender-based violence in ethnographic realist terms seldom occurs given that opera itself often negates realism in the suspension of disbelief.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the various ways through which representations of violence play out in *U-Carmen*’s ethnographic realist narration. This chapter will examine how U-Carmen herself combats the problematic typical femme fatale narratives of assault perpetuated in the operatic canon. While the film opera notably engages with issues of gender-based violence, it also moves beyond narrative tropes to expose cultural and individual circumstances of victimisation. In this sense, I also want to consider in this chapter the figuration of men in the film opera and consider the brutality and brutal pasts of the black men in U-Carmen’s life. By looking at gender-based violence from this angle, I consider the change in *U-Carmen* of stereotypical operatic narratives surrounding violence, which I argue is as structural as it is subjective.

My argument builds here on the work of a number of scholars who have commented on the death of U-Carmen. Thinking about issues of signification, for instance, I follow Stephanie Dias (2006) who questions the absence of the bullfight and questions its symbolic meaning and links it not only to the slaughtered bull but to the independent feminist fighting against the constraints of society. Dias's discussion of the absent bullfight is important because it prompts us to think about the broader societal construction of violence which emerges in the film opera through the symbolic. Another important interlocutor for me is Simon Lewsen (2012). Lewsen's discussion of Jongikhaya is especially important for understanding the way violence unfolds and refolds intergenerationally and through the figuration of the past. After tracing his history through the operatic flashbacks, Lewsen describes Jongikhaya as possessing a proclivity for violence that precedes his arrival in the city. U-Carmen's death and Jongikhaya's violence are tied up in these studies to frame the broader issues of gender-based violence.

While speaking to U-Carmen's death and Jongikhaya's violent history, other studies comment on the relationship between politics and death in the film opera. In this sense, *U-Carmen* offers a cynical depiction of the post-apartheid township society in which romantic and sexual freedom is presumed to be at odds with the forces of official power, and her demise is a symbol of unfulfilled promises of the post-apartheid era. Arifani Moyo (2016), in speaking about South African indigeneity, suggests that U-Carmen's murder follows the drama of orphanhood by violence that can only end with the death of a woman who then represents the new South Africa. Jongikhaya is referred to by Moyo (2016) as both a romantic and a predator like Captain Gantana, whose police uniform serves his image as an embodiment of the structural violence of post-apartheid South Africa. Jongikhaya embodies national contradictions of freedom and equality and also serves as a figure of time and death in U-Carmen's life. Naomi André (2016) traces Jongikhaya's violent past and notes how unlike Mérimée's and Bizet's Carmens' fickle reason – associated with the femme fatale – for leaving Don José, U-Carmen leaves to escape domestic violence. She refers to posttraumatic stress violence and the horrors of apartheid. Overall, Jongikhaya is marked negatively and viewed as a stained character. Cheryl Stobie (2016) examines the representation of

U-Carmen's sexuality, which she argues does not realise its full potential in comparison to an archetypal femme fatale who lures unsuspecting men to their destruction. Like in Dias's work (2006), an interesting connection is made between the ritual slaughter of a bull and the murder of U-Carmen, which highlights the imperative for traditional masculinity to be enacted in the opera (either by killing a bull or a woman). Santisa Viljoen and Marita Wenzel (2016) show how the re-coding of U-Carmen's identity questions intransigent or stereotypical perceptions of the iconic femme fatale. The structural violence and physical abuse that U-Carmen is subjected to is linked to the unfortunate gender-based violence reality in African communities which is of significance within the specific context of the film in comparison to the violence in Bizet's *Carmen*. This chapter will build on U-Carmen as a refiguration of the black femme fatale through the restructuring of the perspective of an abusive post-apartheid patriarchal societal lens. Using the aforementioned authors, the killing of the bull will be looked at to unpack the multidimensional forms of violence. 'Symbolic violence' is the initial category of objective violence; it pertains to the violence embodied in language and its various forms (Žižek 2008). The second category is 'systemic violence,' which pertains to 'the frequently disastrous outcomes that result from the efficient operation of our political and economic systems.' Žižek (2008) further argues that systemic violence often goes unnoticed due to the fact that it constitutes the 'normal' state of affairs, providing the context in which subjective violence is perceived as unsettling. However, while imperceptible, it must be considered in order to comprehend what might otherwise appear to be irrational outbursts of subjective violence.

Femme Fatale and U-Carmen's Fatality

Central to the discourse presented above is the idea that U-Carmen does not fit the narrative of the archetypal femme fatale, who is described as an attractive female villain who uses tricks of beauty, charm, and sexual seduction to achieve her hidden agenda (Doane 1991, 1-2). These characteristic traits do not neatly fit a reading of U-Carmen, who mostly presents as contradictory and inscrutable. That said, Stobie (2016, 164) reads U-Carmen's haughty and petulant demeanour as reinforcing the stereotype of the

heartless, fickle gold-digger, which is a prevalent myth of women in South Africa. This view possibly suggests that U-Carmen fits the femme fatale narrative if looked at through a South African social and cultural context. In this sense, one could consider Mary Ann Doane's (2013) argument that the femme fatale is situated as evil and is frequently punished or killed, claiming that instead of being a subject of feminism is rather a symptom of male fears about feminism (Mercure 2010, 115-116). This suggests that the femme fatale is more powerful as a figure who reveals that there is a patriarchal structure in place instead of a figure who shows how to speak from within that structure. U-Carmen seems to conform to this framing in that she does seem to wield some form of power that gives her access and freedom in the world of men. And it is precisely because of her sexual confidence that she becomes a target of the patriarchy. Yet these moments of power are often fleeting and any real power is stripped often before it is realised. In this sense, the hold of the femme fatale is in the figuration of U-Carmen represented as a fragile power, always on the brink of failure. Her sexuality and the negation of its power seem central to her tragic trajectory. However, as Moyo (drawing on Aristotle) (2016, 214) argues, sexual enmity by itself does not create the strongest context for inducing tragic pity and fear. In other words, U-Carmen's tragedy lies not in the typical murder of the femme fatale because she threatens the power of male sexual desire. Yet this is not to say that her story is not tragic; it certainly is. It instead is to ask: if not the negation of the femme fatale, what is so tragic about U-Carmen's death?

To think through this question, it is useful to return to the scene of U-Carmen's interaction with the *sangoma*. As discussed in Chapter 1, U-Carmen meets the *sangoma* twice: initially the décor of his *ndumba* creates a prescient encounter for the later adaptation of the fortune telling scene by alluding to Carmen's reading of the death cards. This bookending frame acts to encase U-Carmen in a trajectory that starts with the onset of love and ends in the premonition of death (Moyo 2016, 207-208). Thus not only is she destined to die as in the original *Carmen* but it is made clear that her desire for love is what ultimately sets her on the path of demise. This, however, is only part of the tragedy: the second layer is that love, in a context steeped in domestic violence against women, will lead to death for many others as well. It is

destiny not by divine intervention, but as a normalised act of man. The normalisation of this act is represented in the denial of the fulfilment of part of the prophecy. Echoing the original opera, the wording of the *sangoma*'s premonition implies that both U-Carmen and Jongikhaya are destined for an early death. Both are tragically framed within a narrative of fate and can only come to accept the law of causation. However, in a society where a man's murder of a woman is normalised, there are seemingly no consequences for Jongikhaya and so it is only U-Carmen who faces the ultimate sacrifice in her attempt to escape him (Stobie 2016, 165). Framed in this way, U-Carmen's death is a consequence of the structure of a society in which it is normal for a man to kill a woman.

By clearly placing the blame for U-Carmen's demise on these oppressive social structures, *U-Carmen* defies typical operatic narratives that refuse to place blame on the social context in which victims find themselves and thus ask for a reckoning of structural violence. I argue that such a reckoning also forces audiences to consider how similar social structures work to oppress and victimise vulnerable people within their own cultural environments. Although stereotyped as the femme fatale, her combination of independence and fatalism makes her seem more real than most operatic heroines. She is a woman who chooses freedom rather than obliging men. Or, as Dias argues, she is the image of the fatal woman who refuses masculine yokes and who must pay for this with her life (Dias 2006, 86).

Jongikhaya and His Violent History

To better understand the depth of structural violence in the film opera, it is helpful to consider the role of Jongikhaya more closely. Jongikhaya can be seen within the larger matrix of post-apartheid South Africa with his troubled violent past. As mentioned in Chapter 3, his background is largely presented in a flashback sequence which gives insight into the death of his brother. This sequence is somewhat ambiguous but suggests that Jongikhaya did indeed secretly desire his brother's wife and that he killed his brother. Aside from creating a narrative arc that allows for the reconciliation of mother and son, here we are shown that Jongikhaya's penchant for violence stems from an earlier part of his life. As pointed out by

Lewsen (2012, 240), this flashback refutes the reading of Jongikhaya being ‘corrupted by urban life; rather, the character is shown to possess a proclivity for violence that precedes his arrival in the city.’ Yet what the flashback also importantly suggests is that Jongikhaya’s violent nature is bound up with the refusal of sexual attainment through the juxtaposition of his coveting of Nomakhaya which results in the murder of his brother.

The relationship between this refusal of sexual attainment and violence further plays out in his engagement with U-Carmen. Through his inability to comply with her vision of a consensual love, Jongikhaya becomes undesirable to U-Carmen (TC 00:14:15). Jongikhaya is characterised as conjointly possessing a violent disposition and a sense of attachment to his official policeman status. These traits make him unsuitable for U-Carmen’s rebellious, anti-authoritarian temperament. Their incompatibility becomes harshly apparent during an altercation at Bra Nkomo’s shebeen. In this scene (TC 00:08:06), which I discussed in Chapter 2, U-Carmen reprehends him for deserting her halfway through a sultry dance following the sounding of his pager. Instead of giving U-Carmen an ear to voice her opinion, Jongikhaya violently silences her by grabbing her from behind. ‘Shut up and hear me out,’ he proclaims, ‘I’m called to the barracks at once’. His assertion that he is unable to stay is an indication that for him, official duty takes precedence over romantic involvement but in the same breath articulates his claim to power over her.

Jongikhaya’s effort in attempting to silence U-Carmen signals his domineering tendencies (Lewsen 2012, 246). His ineffective attempt to verbally silence her and exert power over her is preceded by a violent outburst. He forcefully shoves her into the tavern while strangling her. The altercation is brought to a halt by the intervention of Bra Nkomo. Noteworthy in the scene is the fact that despite being off duty, Jongikhaya is dressed in his police regalia. Though peculiar, his choice of outfit ‘aligns him with the signifiers of official power’ (Lewsen 2012, 246). Dornford-May forges here a connection between Jongikhaya’s official status and his violent disposition which plays out against his desire for sexual domination over U-Carmen. After the altercation (TC 00:11:05), U-Carmen is in tears and Jongikhaya

manipulatively tries to apologise by revealing to U-Carmen the rose that she threw at him while singing the 'Habanera'. Indeed, he plays the deceitful victim by urging U-Carmen to have mercy on him, leading him to his proposal as a display of his love.

Jongikhaya's gradual unmasking shifts the film's atmosphere from musically celebratory, romantic, and vibrant to dramatically ominous. In the aftermath of a domestic violence incident (TC 00:00:29), U-Carmen and Jongikhaya sit mutely on the bed, backs turned to one another. U-Carmen stands abruptly and exits the room, and in a subsequent scene she is with her friends who offer her food that she rejects (TC 00:00:49). 'He'll beat you again, he uses the Bible to hide his true nature,' says one of U-Carmen's friends commenting on Jongikhaya's hypocrisy having previously presented himself as a man of God. Though brief, these two sensitive scenes express the recognition that has unveiled Jongikhaya's misogyny, and the simultaneous reversal of U-Carmen's romantic situation (Moyo 2016, 212). In short, they bear out the inevitable refusal of sexual attainment which we have seen is coupled with Jongikhaya's ability for violence.

The turning point where the refusal of sexual attainments slips into violence occurs shortly after the scene, discussed in Chapter Two, where Jongikhaya assaults the sailor walking with U-Carmen. After this altercation, U-Carmen tells Jongikhaya that she does not love him and that she wants nothing more to do with him (TC 0:14:15). Nomakhaya arrives in the aftermath of U-Carmen's rejection of Jongikhaya. Jongikhaya at this point is battered and bruised. She pleads with him to leave with her as his mother is soon to die and wants to know what happened to her son. Having heard the conversation, U-Carmen interjects and tells him to leave. 'So you can find a new lover?', Jongikhaya asks U-Carmen (TC 00:14:32). 'Never!' he says. 'You must kill me first. I'll stay till my last breath. We took a vow... death is near. I'll never let you go... I am destined to die. You'll be mine; you bitch. You were mine since you cast your evil spell'. This statement displays his obsession and need to possess U-Carmen, even against her own will. After Nomakhaya explains that his mother does not want to die without forgiving him, he eventually agrees to leave, but does so after saying, 'you're in luck for now but I will return.' This point is

a marker of Jongikhaya's premeditated violent thoughts towards U-Carmen. It leaves an eerie feeling in the air. Yet his statement is more than a threat: with witnesses around, it shows the impunity and normalisation of gender-based violence in this society.

Uncertainty lingers as the film continues with the replacement of the typical bullfight following the fight between U-Carmen and Jongikhaya. Following Jongikhaya's departure to the village (TC 00:20:23), there is an *umsebenzi* and a cow will be slaughtered. The spillage of blood after Jongikhaya leaves could possibly allude to what is to come. (TC 00:04:30) Images of the township happening are intercut with images of Jongikhaya returning to Khayelitsha by train after his visit to his mother, whom he reached too late as he finds her already deceased. In the train the sense of peril and menace are emphasised by his hands, which are on his lap as if cradling his genitals, 'illustrating his need to reassert his masculinity, which he feels Carmen has impugned' (Stobie 2016, 164). The audience is aware of the potential destruction that is to occur, having the thought of his last statement to U-Carmen.

Against the background of the choir festivities, while stalking U-Carmen, Jongikhaya is spotted by members of Gypsy Cigarette choir hiding in the audience, and U-Carmen is warned and advised to leave the auditorium (TC 00:04:50). After being told to beware, her response is that she is not the type to be frightened. 'I will wait and speak to him, I'm not scared', she says. She ignores the warning.

Interchanging scenes representative of chaos create an anxious anticipatory atmosphere as the two meet hastily walking down a spiral of the stairs, trading places above each other, with Jongikhaya singing his song of alternating protestations of love and threats. The commotion comes to a halt as the two face each other outside the community hall. Jongikhaya urges U-Carmen to leave with him to start a new life and live happily. She tells him that she does not love him and he continues to pursue her until he finds an opportunity to harm her. Jongikhaya seizes control of his second victim's body, violating U-Carmen's sense of autonomy. Melodic degeneration intensifies as the moment of the assault approaches. Jongikhaya is evidently sure of his actions and premeditated violent intentions toward U-Carmen. The music gives the audience a quivering warning of danger and ill intent. U-Carmen appears unwavering in the face of death,

her final line 'Free is how I was born and free is how I will die.' Although U-Carmen attempts to embody empowerment based on her affirmation, the sense of disempowerment is immense, and abruptly interrupted by outbursts from the orchestra. Scratch tones in the strings, multiphonics in the bass clarinet, with percussion and electronics to create momentary violence and confusion in the sonic landscape. Jongikhaya has taken charge of U-Carmen's body, manipulating it like a puppet, reducing her to an object, a prop in that man's world.

The murder scene is a display of a grave social injustice, and fundamentally politicises U-Carmen's character as a metonym of South African women. It could be construed that the film opera makes a euphemised link between gender and violence. However, the tragedy is powerful because of its dramaturgically sensitive fleshing out of individual characters, simultaneous with very careful social metonymy and symbolism. Indeed, as Moyo argues (2016, 213), Jongikhaya finishes executing his dramatic purpose as a dangerous man who embodies the cruelty of the dangerous place in which U-Carmen, the resistant woman, lives and dies without losing her courage. There cannot be a dramaturgical choice between showing the reality of grave injustice, on the one hand, and on the other, sustaining a poetics of hope, courage and resistance. Neither of these two goals is optional for this ethnographic realist South African drama about a black woman, her experience with violence, and her comprehension about the magnitude of love (Moyo 2016, 213).

Apartheid and Systemic Violence

Proceeding U-Carmen's escape from the police mentioned in Chapter 1, the scene (TC 00:07:46) dissolves into a brief memory, on screen, of a mother and father gazing at their sleeping child (Lulamile), then up at each other, and again back at their son. However, this image of familial harmony is interrupted by the father polishing his pistol, a weapon he is obliged to own as a member of the underground liberation movement. Metaphorically, the intrusion of weaponry into the domestic scene symbolises the imposition of apartheid era violence on day-to-day life (Lewsen 2012, 246). It does not take long for the

metaphor to be rendered literal when two police officers – a white policeman leading his black compatriot – barge into the house with guns drawn. Lulamile's recollection appears not to serve an obvious narrative purpose as the story would still make sense without this piece of information. Instead, this recollection appears to forge a subtle link between the film opera's contemporary love story and South Africa's recent apartheid legacy most strikingly through the presence of the police.

The depiction of apartheid as a force that antagonises domestic love through the authoritarian figure of the police spills over into U-Carmen's vision of love as possibly being an antithetical to state-sanctioned power. Simon Lewsen (2012, 246) elucidates the conventional perception of domestic love as being less alluring compared to the impulsive indulgence of romance depicted in U-Carmen. The highlighted scene, which portrays familial love in a favourable light, illustrates how U-Carmen valorizes different types of consensual love relationships, all of which were historically antagonised through the interventions of the apartheid state. *U-Carmen* foregrounds an idealistic notion of love as a force through which human beings seek fulfilment on their own terms while also asserting their autonomy from official power (Lewsen 2012, 246).

Indeed, as representative of official power, the police commit much of the violence in the opera. Unlike other Carmens, U-Carmen gets beaten up by the police in the tavern scene and suffers humiliation (André 2016, 71). U-Carmen's issues with the police lead to confrontations with the predatory Captain Gantana, whose violence U-Carmen endures following her rejection of police pardon in exchange for sex (Moyo 2016, 209). Captain Gantana, the sexual harasser who later propositions U-Carmen, is identified by Moyo as the film's figure of structural gender violence. The police violence and brutality appears in the film as a norm, no one besides the police have a say. In a society accustomed to perpetuated dominance and abuse of power, the average citizen is left defeated and at a default in how and when they are able to use their own power.

Yet even as the police become a figure of violence, it is important to note the difference between Jongikhaya, who is impassioned, and Captain Gantana, who lacks romance and embodies only the pathology of abuse. Indeed, Jongikhaya's romantic nature complicates the caricature of an abusive man but rather the characterisation of a man with abusive tendencies. He is consistently inconsistent precisely because of the oscillation between the personalities of a romantic man and dangerous man. The actor, Andile Tshoni, uses sharply distinct expressions of emotional vulnerability and animosity respectively to portray this depth. As put by Moyo (2016, 217-218), during the scenes showing Jongikhaya's public threats, Tshoni commits entirely to showing the 'part of the character, with the musical and dramatic tension of the situation helping to frame him as quite menacing, but only for finite moments in the film. Such strong focus creates the sense of an unveiling of the mask. The face of the killer shows himself ever more fiercely at each turning point of the drama as Carmen's death approaches, so that her consistent courage is all the more stirring to watch.'

Enacted by the police, violence as portrayed in the post-apartheid South African era is not merely a simple signifier. Achille Mbembe (2001) has examined how the legacy of violence from apartheid and colonialism extends beyond physical acts to represent a new social order in a broader sense. As a result of the construction of the 'post-colony,' violence permeates the tangible, the conceptual, and the system of societal governance. Given Jongikhaya's rank within the police force, his tendency to resort to violent means indicates a strong inclination towards power and subordination. 'Postcolonialism is a particularly illuminating and even dramatic stage upon which the broader issues of subjugation and its corollary, discipline,' argues Mbembe (2001, 102-103). This configuration simultaneously enhances and complicates Jongikhaya's context as a cultural translator. Where the novella and opera depict the moral convictions of a nineteenth-century French narrator, Jongikhaya, as André argues, offers a credible account of the behaviour that a survivor of these cyclical systems of violence might exhibit (André 2016, 65). In this way, the violent history of apartheid perhaps re-enters through Jongikhaya's re-enactment of violence.

U-Carmen shows, through Lulamile's childhood trauma and tragedy, that apartheid is part of the history of violence. It also shows, through Jongikhaya's history, that violence is a general social and existential problem though it manifests by the work of specific violent enemies like apartheid or misogynistic men. Arifani Moyo (2016, 210) proposes that the violent threat means that when Lulamile slaughters a bull during the ceremony (the South African cultural rendering of Bizet's famous bull-fighting scene) is a dramatic foreshadowing of U-Carmen's death by the knife in a man's hand, which echoes Dias (2006) views on the absence of the bullfight. The spillage of blood, though an act of appeasing the ancestors, is also a reminder of death, it shows the link between the living and the dead as well the link between the past and the present. The notion of 'transculturation', as discussed by Davies and Dovey (2010, 4), holds significance for the theoretical and critical approaches taken by several authors in this anthology. It underscores the importance of both commemorating the past and modifying it to suit future objectives.

The absence of a bullfight in *U-Carmen* prompts an inquiry into the symbolic: in the absence of a physical bullfight, who represents the figurative bull that necessitates slaying, and from where does the bullfighter derive responsibility for such a slaughter? Do you consider the bull to represent the indigent, lower-class township inhabitants of South Africa, or the feminist 'other' who resists societal constraints and is considered to be othered due to her refusal to conform to societal ideals of the perfect woman (Dias 2006, 83)? Does the bullfighter bear responsibility for the demise of the privileged middle class, who are opposed to any change that could jeopardise the security of their comfortable environment and are instead contending for its preservation?

U-Carmen's Death

Bound up within the structural violence of the police, Jongikhaya's act of killing U-Carmen in the concluding scene signifies the surrendering of her body to the very institutions she had endeavoured to defy during her lifetime. Jongikhaya encounters U-Carmen at the concert arena and then orchestrates her demise outside the building, beside the highway, adjacent to a chain link fence adorned with barbed wire

(TC 00:04:50). In the concluding scene of the film, U-Carmen's crimson clothing gives her the appearance of a dishevelled stain on the roadside, juxtaposed with the debris and trash that has been blown against the fence. Two police officers are observed within the confined area, while Bra Nkomo and another spectator remain outside. Similar to the fence in Lulamile's *umsebenzi* scene, the tape symbolises the demarcation between the public domain and the area that is partitioned and controlled by an authoritative body. The irony of U-Carmen's final statement, 'Free is how I was born and free is how I will die,' becomes apparent when one realises that, by the end of the film, U-Carmen's dead body becomes the property of the state. The duration of this image, following the conclusion of Bizet's music and the transition to the realistic sound of cars speeding on the highway, causes the audience to perceive this scenario with a dual perspective. On one hand, we have a comprehensive understanding of how this event is really a minuscule component of the day-to-day operations in Khayelitsha (André 2016, 71). On the other side, the ordinary and commonplace has been exalted through the heroic narrative of U-Carmen. This film portrays a contemporary lady, representing the situations that could befall any individual (Lewsen 2012, 247). The film concludes with a highly negative tone: the last murder represents both U-Carmen's actual demise and the symbolic demise of an idealised societal concept where love and romance exist independently of government-sanctioned power.

This message is important and essential as it signifies that South Africa cannot truly experience freedom and love as a nation unless women are liberated from a pervasive environment of violence. Any notion to the contrary is similar to Jongikhaya's twisted reasoning that he cannot allow U-Carmen to live without him, as they promised to remain together till death. Jongikhaya possesses certain romantic qualities, similar to the patriotic Lulamile, but also exhibits predatory tendencies, reminiscent of the savage Gantana. Jongikhaya personifies the conflicting aspects of the nation and also symbolises the concepts of time and mortality in U-Carmen's life. The central conflict of her life is around her pursuit of love, which is entirely focused on him (Moyo 2016, 211). Their relationship encompasses the entirety of U-Carmen's defiant struggle for love, thus encompassing the entirety of the tragedy.

While Jongikhaya does not serve as an exact representation of all South African men, he does aptly symbolise those who share his sentiments and behaviours. His perpetual inconsistency can be attributed to the fact that he alternates between the personas of a romantic man and a dangerous man. By evoking starkly distinct expressions of emotional vulnerability and animosity, Andile Tshoni imbues the entire drama with the sense of a Jekyll and Hyde's struggle. Tshoni devotes the entirety of the sequences depicting Jongikhaya's public threats to demonstrating the character of 'Mr. Hyde,' with the musical and dramatic tension of the situation serving to temporarily establish him as a formidable figure within the film. Such intense concentration evokes the sensation of a disguise being removed. As the demise of U-Carmen draws near, the killer's visage becomes more visibly menacing at each pivotal moment of the narrative, thereby heightening the poignancy of witnessing her unwavering bravery (Moyo 2016, 217-218). History is widely recognised as a violent domain, containing fabricated narratives that vilify certain individuals while extolling others. It is common knowledge that the leadership of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa remembers and designates 'heroes' while ignoring the rest, including men and women (Zungu *et al.* 2014, 10). You are remembered if you perished in the conflict; conversely, if you managed to survive alongside millions, your name is omitted from historical records. Thus, history is a negotiation of power.

By facilitating an opening of the threshold between life and death, the sacrifice enables the closure of the chasm of intimacy that exists between the living and the deceased; despite their temporal separation, ancestors and descendants share the same spiritual existence. Demonstrating reverence and appreciation serves to maintain the ontological existence of the predecessors, whose benevolence has guaranteed the psychological and material survival of the descendants. U-Carmen has fought for this life-promise, this sense of belonging, throughout her entire romantic journey, beginning with Jongikhaya and continuing with Lulamile. In the midst of an ordinary occasion, her life-promise contrasts tragically with her death-threat, transforming her imperceptible resistance into an act of extraordinary love (Moyo 2016, 238).

The film opera demonstrates that apartheid is a part of the history of this violence through the childhood tragedy of Lulamile. Similarly, it demonstrates, via Jongikhaya's background, that violence is a pervasive social and existential issue, despite the fact that it is manifested by particular violent adversaries such as apartheid or misogynistic men. As mentioned above, the act of Lulamile slaughtering a bull during the *umsebenzi* serves as a South African cultural representation of the renowned bullfighting scene. The dramatic portent of U-Carmen's demise at the hands of the knife-wielding man is the result of the violent threat. This incident, is a significant symbol of the violent threat that threatens the hope for U-Carmen's emancipation. U-Carmen's recollection of the prophecy occurs subsequent to the film's disclosure of Jongikhaya's violence and her marital turmoil. The acknowledgment of Jongikhaya's sexism served as a prerequisite for illuminating U-Carmen's loneliness as a central aspect of a crisis that will ultimately result in her demise. The visual dramaturgy of Lulamile's *umsebenzi* emphasises filiation and belonging. Therefore, the scene clarifies U-Carmen's optimistic prospects, despite the symbolic foreshadowing of their demise at the hands of Jongikhaya, whose unmasking and threat have already been completed by that juncture of the film (Moyo 2016, 224). By integrating visual representations of South African traditional practices into the dramaturgical foreshadowing of the tragic result, the two ritual sequences effectively merge dramaturgical humanism with visual exoticism during pivotal moments in U-Carmen's narrative. As the ultimate rite of passage that poses the most fundamental threat to love, death enters her reality.

U-Carmen painfully dies before she is able to perform with Lulamile and as such her death is presented as a possible negation of the expression of the self. Might she have been able to escape Jongikhaya if she had sung with Lulamile? U-Carmen's struggles with violence in different forms can be viewed as having taken her ten steps backward from possibly achieving her goals. Her troubles with the law also play a role in the manner she behaves and how she tends to deal with the issues she is faced with. She inevitably does not have the opportunity to choose herself and put her actual needs and wants first. The need to protect herself seems to always take preference. Having had the opportunity to perform and open new doors for

herself, her death is not only the failure of the state but also a failure of the self. The inability of seeing past having to prove herself strong cuts the display of her being able to see herself as worthy of being in the position she is in and futuristically seeing where she is able to go.

A brief ribbon of red tape obscures U-Carmen's corpse in the film's opening shot. This image evokes the police tape that was employed to demarcate the crime scene at the conclusion of the film opera. The concluding image depicts U-Carmen's corpse encased in tape. Additionally, the sound of the loud whistle of wind breeze associated with the film's final scene is subtly perceptible from the beginning. Through the establishment of a visual and auditory connection between the murder in the film's denouement and the dominant voice/gaze of the male narrator in the opening scene, Dornford-May bolsters the correlation between misogynistic forms of romantic engagement and physical aggression. Furthermore, through directing the audience's focus towards *Carmen's* implicit misogyny, the director establishes a critical dialogue between his film and the source material. Hence, Dornford-May demonstrates a forward-thinking, introspective stance towards the gendered contestation for control over the narrative, a significant theme in the *Carmen* tradition as a whole (Lewsen 2012, 237-238).

The film concludes with a highly negative tone: the last murder represents both U-Carmen's real demise and the symbolic demise of an idealistic social vision where love and romance exist independently from government-sanctioned power (Lewsen 2012, 247). The ultimate impact is not so much one of sorrow as it is of implicit fairness. The film, although it portrays the struggle of women restricted by societal norms, is ultimately limited by traditional patterns and fails to depict a fully developed U-Carmen who defies societal constraints through her vibrant physicality and self-assured sensuality. *U-Carmen* represents an extraordinary accomplishment in its fusion of Bizet's opera and life in Khayelitsha, but ultimately it displays revisionist and ambivalent gender politics rather than a radical, subversive and innovative vision.

U-Carmen intensifies both the perceived inevitability of U-Carmen's demise and the accompanying feeling of success through deliberate musical and visual selections. Following the act of throwing

Jongikhaya's mother's ring at his feet, he angrily condemns her to hell. The image then shifts to the inside of the hall, where the audience energetically waves red flags and sings the powerful chorus of the 'Toreador Song', marking the climax of the choir performance. Jongikhaya discreetly severs U-Carmen's throat during this particular time, which is not shown on video. The sequence intentionally draws a connection between the sacrificial act of the bull in the previous scene, featuring triumphant and joyous chanting, and the depiction of the knife that caused the fatal injury. The purpose may have been to elicit irony (such as the deliberate selection of Freedom Day as the date for the event). Contrary to this potential intention, the emotionally powerful sound of the singing creates a strong impact. The implied meaning is that just as the sacrifice of the bull will bring about social harmony, U-Carmen's death will also restore social order (Stobie 2016, 165). This is because her longing for unrestricted freedom went against the accepted gender norms.

Refocusing Violence

U-Carmen does not harbour the archetypal 'battle of the sexes' – destruction, disruption, overwhelming high level of violence – contained within the archetypal femme fatale opera narrative which is accompanied by the mutual deadly hatred between man and woman. Instead, the film combats the reductive representations of victimisation as traditionally seen on the operatic stage and conveyed through contemporary social discourse.

As a single mother, U-Carmen abrogates her social duty to her daughter with her resolve to embrace death (Stobie 2016, 164). She ignored the advice of her friends about the danger that Jongikhaya could potentially pose as she felt she needed to confront him and possibly prove that she was not afraid of him. Stobie (2016) recognises U-Carmen's resilience in keeping her independence as throughout the film U-Carmen fights the conventions of society and against the control of the male figures in her life. The question arises of whether U-Carmen truly believe she will die, or if she is ultimately challenging fate. Her death could be interpreted as her ultimate expression of passion. It is possible that U-Carmen chooses

to interpret her demise as inevitable, significantly she comes to discover her freedom precisely in her embrace of the inevitability of causation.

According to Theodor Adorno (1992, 205), art ‘embodies freedom in the midst of unfreedom. [T]his mere existence liberates it from the malevolent influence that envelops it, [aligning] it with a promise of joy, which it in some way manifests through its despondent expression.’ Feminist opera studies, which frequently idealise female suffering and death through the invocation of the power of music and the voice as a form of rehabilitation for their narratives, may be all too familiar with this fragile optimism. Operatic women, as McClary (1991) most notably depicts them, momentarily escape into chromaticism and vocal extravagance before being inexorably compelled back into conventional frames that she considers to be invariably patriarchal. Feminist scholars have seldom acknowledged that music is impervious to malevolence. They believe it is capable of casting its own rituals. The music causes one to forget the plot,’ argues Catherine Clément (1988 cited in Cusick *et al.* 2018, 223) however, the plot sets traps for the imagination.

U-Carmen presents herself as a character with intricate moral and psychological underpinnings, as her motivations and behaviours do not consistently align with conventional or polemical views on women. The violence she endures is entirely beyond her control; however, this does not relegate her to the role of a victim; rather, she asserts herself as an agent of freedom, despite becoming fully cognizant of the imminent danger to her life and accepting the prophecy that her demise is imminent. Surprisingly, she exhibits victim-like behaviour only once, when Jongikhaya responds to his pager and decides to depart during their first date (Moyo 2016, 213-214). U-Carmen interprets this as a snub and becomes enraged. Violence does not exert any coercive influence over U-Carmen; instead, it serves as the pinnacle of her sexual capacity, rendering her the primary target of perilous men.

Conclusion

Opera is stereotypically viewed as an elite genre that is predominantly created by white men, on its own it is a cultural institution that works to dictate socially acceptable behaviour. Characters conform to society's expectations, or they are punished (Morrison 2001). It has functioned as a mechanism of the privileged for centuries to reinforce standards of gender relations. As previously mentioned, opera stagings have portrayed the punishment of women for 'feminine transgressions' such as speaking out, enacting their own will, being too sexual, or even tempting men into misconduct. Through these narratives, black opera has begun refuting its role as a tool of oppression by challenging audiences to face the harsh realities of gender-based violence. By expanding the narrative scope of opera to present realistic representations of victimisation, *U-Carmen* does justice to the experience of millions of survivors.

Jongikhaya can be seen within the wide-reaching matrix of post-apartheid South Africa with his disturbing past and violence. Even though his backstory exhibits an initial accident involving his brother, his succeeding incidents of violence—his abuse of power as he hits Carmen in the bar, her friends' reports of his beating her, and his ultimate murder of her—well reflect a post-trauma response to the brutality of a country so enmeshed in violence at the end of apartheid.

One man too many tries to enforce their will on U-Carmen and govern her behaviour. This grows to encompass every other female protagonist in opera. U-Carmen is a vulnerable young woman/mother who proves powerless against the social hierarchies that attempt to relegate her to the sidelines of her own life. This enables all forces bearing power to continually reinforce oppression.

In emphasising U-Carmen's innocence as a woman trying to do what she thought was right within a society that continually fails her, we begin to recognize the conditions of her abuse and subsequent death as symptoms of a larger social problem. *U-Carmen* denies the opportunity for common practices of victim-blaming that situate such problems as the result of individuals and instead refocuses our attention on political inequalities.

Dornford-May remarks that the film's relevance to township audiences has to do with the fact that 'It reflects how life is here, it's tough but there's a passion about life because people have to put up with so much,' proceeding to describe *U-Carmen* as a 'piece of realistic township life' (Dias 2006, 90-91). U-Carmen's murder strips her of her agency and personhood through a complex network of intertwining oppressive hierarchies. There is no singular person to blame for her tragic fate. Indeed, we witness as multiple agents – Jongikhaya, the state, the police, society – all fail to recognize their part in creating a world in which U-Carmen was so easily victimised and killed. By foregrounding U-Carmen's innocence and the culpability of those around her, Dornford-May forces the audience to recognize gender violence for what it is—a social, not individual, issue.

U-Carmen's characterisation matures through her resistance and persistence of showing a black woman who dares to love in a social environment that remains structurally violent after all the years since its very construction. U-Carmen is not a dangerous woman, but rather a resistant woman in a dangerous place; thus a kind of resistant irony characterises even her verbal self-description as sexually dangerous. This brings her postcolonial feminism into third-world feminism, which engages the local and postcolonial brutality in the post-apartheid moment. None of the violence she suffers is her own fault. Yet none of it causes her to assume the role of a victim, for she asserts herself as an agent of freedom, even as she becomes fully aware of the threat against her life and believes the foretelling of her death. It is in this context that the film ennobles U-Carmen by portraying her as a faithful and loyal lover who forgives offences but also confronts abuse and corruption around her or against her. The self-labelling as a 'dangerous woman' is an inscrutable contradiction, as it surely would be even for a real-life person who might make such claims about herself.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The character of U-Carmen is both recognisable and authentic precisely because she defies stereotypes, even while she ironically embraces the notion of being a dangerous woman in her public persona. The politicisation of realism in *U-Carmen* is mostly attributed to the recognisable depiction of injustice and its consequential impact on the black female protagonist's life, rather than solely relying on imagery and performance. Black feminist theory provides an epistemological framework that enhances our understanding of the lived experiences of black women by employing a critical and alternative worldview (Mowatt *et al.* 2013, 654). The film opera's ethnographic realism is strengthened by both cultural normality and special events. This realism grounds the film opera's dramaturgical humanism, which explores themes of mortality and existential resistance by presenting a sympathetic character portrait that challenges sexual stereotypes, therefore appealing to critical feminist sensibilities.

The film opera's feminism is unwavering, advocating against any form of gender violence targeting women, irrespective of their perceived moral standing. U-Carmen utilises social realism for a specific ideological purpose but also surpasses ideology through its rich characterization. U-Carmen, portrayed as a tragic heroine, serves as a strong source of inspiration while ultimately failing to triumph in her struggle. She has a paradoxical ideology, her most prominent attribute of bravery is what brings together her portrayal, establishing her appropriateness, credibility, and coherence. The image of the heroic black woman is essential to the upliftment of women who adhere to feminist or postcolonial ethics of metonymy, although it may not resonate with every individual in these groups. U-Carmen is merely one of several choices for a convincing depiction, not a generalising picture of women in her position.

The opera's viewpoint challenges the national and international institutions that perpetuate social injustice by denying the rights of oppressed individuals. These institutions encourage self-centred objectives that are closely connected to a political economy, forcing opposing agencies to use cruel perspectives to emphasise the importance of human justice (Mhlambi 2016, 49). The African idioms linked to her in the opera aid in understanding these images and placing them in the context of the larger political events that influenced her decisions. These images and actions are subsequently analysed in relation to a range of political setbacks that plagued the post-1994 government of the country. The film opera draws inspiration from and gains confidence from the ongoing political turmoil and directionless state of affairs in the post-apartheid South African state. It strategically employs the isiXhosa vernacular system as a covert means of expressing dissent and criticising both international and local authorities.

The film opera does not present a simplistic view that colonial and apartheid legacies have been resolved. Instead, it utilises the binary paradigms created by colonialism to generate productive disruptions and disconnections that are reflective of this historical context. However, it also avoids making a superficial effort to confine an emancipatory politics within these oppositions. And although the character of U-Carmen, like her operatic and cinematic predecessors, is ultimately sacrificed at the altar of patriarchal control and power, one cannot help feeling that the film opera is a slight victory in its attempt to do something 'new' without ignoring its own complicatedness in the past, its complicity in the deculturation processes that have had such adverse effects on African societies. *U-Carmen* is perhaps exemplary in the manner in which it enters foreign territory while enacting the turbulent cultural clashes of South Africa's past and present – particularly through its disjunctive and inventive use of Bizet's music and its pitting of various 'authenticities' against one another (Dovey & Davies 2010, 50-51). Through a deliberate omission of the past and present, U-Carmen subverts the conventional linear progression from tradition to modernity therefore presenting a collision between tradition and the gendered modernity embodied by its titular protagonist. As stated by Achille Mbembe, the postcolony is characterised by the entwinement of

temporalities: a construction of time that harbours the possibility of a variety of trajectories that are neither convergent or divergent, but rather interlocked and paradoxical, with each age harbouring, altering, and maintaining the previous ones.

Through *U-Carmen* the gendering of the black female body has been explored in various multi-dimensional manners. The first chapter of this thesis examines the incorporation of opera within the post-apartheid era, focusing on the process of voice in indigenizing opera and utilising the local IsiXhosa dialect as a tool to negotiate a nuanced and African identity in the film opera. The second chapter examines the various manifestations of sexuality and the autonomous agency and bodily movements of the black feminine body that are negotiated in a patriarchal traditional South African space. The third chapter explores the numerous forms of labour that either grant or revoke the possibility of black female emancipation noting the initial invisibility of women and the becoming of visibility in the labour sphere; the fourth chapter examines The impact and perception of maternal behaviours among black women in the post-apartheid era, as well as various forms of motherhood and mothering that have been neglected by other authors, are examined in the fourth chapter. The final chapter highlighted the disproportionate use of violence against black women as a manifestation of patriarchal dominance imprinted on the physical being, understanding it as a part of history linked to structural and systematic violence.

In locating black womanhood in the film opera, a number of avenues for future research have perhaps presented themselves. As much as I have drawn on sociological research to figure black womanhood, *U-Carmen* shows that opera (and the arts more broadly) has much to offer in thinking more carefully about representation in this realm. Indeed, the substantial body of literature on *U-Carmen* attests to this, but black feminist scholarship could benefit from a broader engagement with representations in complex media such as stage and operatic productions. Furthermore, while I have tried to detect the lived experiences of Blackness as represented in *U-Carmen*, much remains to be done in theorising black opera. *U-Carmen* is certainly a canonic text in this field, but more close readings of opera in this genre might enable a nuanced and sophisticated understanding of black opera which extends beyond lingering

stereotypes. This also suggests perhaps that the type of textual analysis that I have employed here can be extended to other works of and by black South Africans to disclose broader networks of intertext. It might be beneficial to think of *U-Carmen* in relation to other black women in this operatic space. Lastly, there is space for more work to be done on gender-based violence in opera. While Chapter Five showed that violence against women in opera is well established in scholarship, more can be said about the systemic forms of violence that make these portrayals so tragic

Black feminism is portrayed in *U-Carmen* through its confrontation with race, gender, and class which the film opera depicts as interconnected systems of oppression. *U-Carmen* shows that it is imperative to uphold a humanist perspective that categorically rejects all forms of human subjugation, that we establish identity and amplify the perspectives of ordinary black women and their daily encounters and lastly that we approach the matter with the understanding that black women in South African possess distinct qualities inherent to their daily encounters.

Bibliography

- Abbott, P., C. Wallace, M. Tyler, P. Abbott, C. Wallace, and M. Tyler. "Health, illness and caring." *An introduction to sociology. Feminist perspectives* (2005): 171-199.
- Abrams, Kaitlin. "'You become a rock': Conceptions of motherhood and lessons of race as told and photographed by four mothers from Cape Town, South Africa." (2017).
- Adair, Christy, and Christy Adair. "Cultured bodies—the social construction of the body." *Women And Dance: Sylphs and Sirens* (1992): 24-39.
- Adeagbo, Oluwafemi, and Oluwafemi Adeagbo. "Diversity in Families." *The Dynamics and Complexities of Interracial Gay Families in South Africa: A New Frontier: Gay Relationships in South Africa* (2019): 17-36.
- Adeagbo, Oluwafemi, and Oluwafemi Adeagbo. "Relationship Formation, Division of Housework and Power Negotiation." *The Dynamics and Complexities of Interracial Gay Families in South Africa: A New Frontier: Gay Relationships in South Africa* (2019): 37-52.
- Adorno, Theodor W., George Simpson, and On Popular Music. "Adorno, Theodor W." *The Actuality of Philosophy.* *Telos* 31 (Spring 1977): 120-33. "The Culture Industry Reconsidered." 1964. *New German Critique* 6 (Fall 1975): 12-19. "Tragedy and Enlightenment: Athenian Political Thought and the Dilemmas of Modernity 4 (1997): 209.
- Akujobi, Remi. "Motherhood in African literature and culture." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 13, no. 1 (2011): 2.
- André, Naomi. "Carmen in Africa: French legacies and global citizenship." *The Opera Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2016): 54-76.
- André, Naomi, Donato Somma, and Innocentia Jabulisile Mhlambi. "new voices in Black South African opera." *African Studies* 75, no. 1 (2016): 1-97.
- André, Naomi, Donato Somma, and Innocentia Jabulisile Mhlambi. "Winnie: The Opera and Embodying South African Opera." *African Studies* 75, no. 1 (2016): 1-9.
- André, Naomi. "Winnie, opera, and South African artistic nationhood." *African Studies* 75, no. 1 (2016): 10-31.
- André, Naomi. *Black opera: History, power, engagement.* University of Illinois Press, 2018.
- Asante, Molefi Kete. "The pursuit of Africology: On the creation and sustaining of black studies." *MK Asante and M, Karenga (Eds.), Handbook of Black studies* (2006): 317-327.

- Baez, Stefani. "Black Feminist Theory Reflected In Selected Literary Works By Black |Female Authors" A Thesis." PhD diss., California State University Dominguez Hills, 2016.
- Banks, Ingrid. *Hair matters: Beauty, power, and black women's consciousness*. NYU Press, 2000.
- Barrett, Gene, Mauricio I. Caniggia Ditzel, Ariel Muñoz Jelvez, and Lorna Read. "'Nadie es Profeta en su Tierra': Community, civil society, and intervening institutions in rural Chile." *Human Organization* 64, no. 1 (2005): 89-102.
- Baugh, John. "A survey of Afro-American English." *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1983): 335-354.
- Belsey, Catherine. "Textual analysis as a research method." *Research methods for English studies* 2 (2013): 160-178.
- Bhorat, Haroon. *The post-apartheid challenge: Labour demand trends in the South African labour market, 1995-1999*. University of Cape Town, 2003.
- Biko, Steve. "Steve Biko: I write what I like." Ed. Aelred Stubbs. London: Bowerdean (1987): 1978.
- Bohlman, Philip V. "Music and culture: historiographies of disjuncture." *The cultural study of music: A critical introduction* (2003): 45-56.
- Bond, Patrick. *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa*. London and Sterling: Pluto Press, 2000.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Masculine domination*. Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Brown, I. "Class and race differences in motherhood experience: Is maternal ambivalence limited to white middle-class mothers." PhD diss., Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, 2011.
- Byrnes, Paul. "U-Carmen eKhayelitsha." *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2006). Accessed July 7, 2023. smh.com.au/entertainment/movies/u-carmen-eKhayelitsha-2006090-gdoom3.html?page=fullpage
- Chapman, C. "Women's workplace oppression in 1970s South Africa." *South African History Online* (2020).
- Célestin, Roger. *From cannibals to radicals: Figures and limits of exoticism*. U of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Citron, Marcia J., and Marcia J. Citron. *Opera on screen*. Yale University Press, 2000.

- Clément, Catherine. *Opera, or, the Undoing of Women*. Translated by B. Wing. University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. "The meaning of motherhood in Black culture and Black mother-daughter relationships." *Sage* 4, no. 2 (1987): 3.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. "Black feminist thought in the matrix of domination." *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* 138, no. 1990 (1990): 221-238.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. routledge, 2022.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black sexual politics: African Americans, gender, and the new racism*. Routledge, 2004.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. "Black women and wellness." *Women & Therapy* 45, no. 4 (2022): 354-368.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. "Shifting the center: Race, class, and feminist theorizing about motherhood." *Mothering: Ideology, experience, and agency* (1994): 45-65.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1989. 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics'. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1: 139–67.
- Coleman, Robin R. Means. *African American viewers and the black situation comedy: Situating racial humor*. Routledge, 2014.
- Craighead, Clare. "'Black dance': Navigating the politics of 'black' in relation to 'the dance object' and the body as discourse." *Critical Arts: A Journal of South-North Cultural Studies* 20, no. 2 (2006): 16-33.
- Curry, E. "South Africa: New, Assertive Women's Voices in Local Elections." (2011).
- Cusick, Suzanne G., Monica A. Hershberger, Richard Will, Micaela Baranello, Bonnie Gordon, and Ellie M. Hisama. "Colloquy: Sexual Violence in Opera: Scholarship, Pedagogy, and Production as Resistance." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 71, no. 1 (2018): 213-253.
- Davies, Andrea Rees, and Brenda D. Frink. "The origins of the ideal worker: The separation of work and home in the United States from the market revolution to 1950." *Work and Occupations* 41, no. 1 (2014): 18-39.
- Davies, Catherine. "Contemporary Feminist Fiction in Spain: The Work of Montserrat Roig and Rosa Montero." (1994).
- Davies, James, and Lindiwe Dovey. "Bizet in Khayelitsha: U-Carmen eKhayelitsha as audio-visual transculturation." *Journal of African Media Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010): 39-53.

- Davies, Sharyn Graham, Adrianus Meliala, and John Buttle. "Gangnam Style versus Eye of the Tiger: people, police and procedural justice in Indonesia." *Policing and society* 26, no. 4 (2016): 453-474.
- Davis, Shannon N. "Is justice contextual? Married women's perceptions of fairness of the division of household labor in 12 nations." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 41, no. 1 (2010): 19-41.
- Dei, George J. Sefa. "Integrative anti-racism: Intersection of race, class, and gender." *Race, Gender & Class* (1995): 11-30.
- Dei, George J. Sefa. *Racists beware: Uncovering racial politics in the post-modern society*. Vol. 21. Brill, 2008.
- Dias, Stephanie. "Carmen: a migration." *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa* 3, no. 1 (2006): 82-93.
- Dlakavu, Simamkele. "'Say No, Black Woman': The Giant is Falling and the erasure of Black women in South Africa." *Agenda* 31, no. 3-4 (2017): 89-95.
- Doane, Mary Ann. "Caught and Rebecca: The inscription of femininity as absence." In *Feminism and film theory*, pp. 196-215. Routledge, 2013.
- Doane, Mary Ann. *Femmes fatales*. Routledge, 2013.
- Doane, Mary Ann. "Remembering women: psychical and historical constructions in film theory." In *Psychoanalysis and cinema*, pp. 46-63. Routledge, 2013.
- Doane, Mary Ann. "Technophilia: Technology, representation, and the feminine." In *Body/politics*, pp. 163-176. Routledge, 2013.
- Doane, Mary Ann. "Woman's stake: Filming the female body." In *Feminism and film theory*, pp. 216-228. Routledge, 2013.
- Dockray-Miller, Mary, and Mary Dockray-Miller. *Motherhood and Mothering in Anglo-Saxon England*. Vol. 13. London: Macmillan, 2000.
- Dos Santos, Andeline Julia. "Constructions of adoptive and foster mothering: a discourse analysis." PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2012.
- Dovey, Lindiwe. *African film and literature: Adapting violence to the screen*. Columbia University Press, 2009.

Edwards, Arlene E. "Community mothering: The relationship between mothering and the community work of Black women." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement* (2000).

Ehrenreich, Barbara, and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds. *Global woman: Nannies, maids, and sex workers in the new economy*. Macmillan, 2003.

Enaifoghe, Andrew, Melita Dlelana, Anuoluwapo Abosede Durokifa, and Nomaswazi P. Dlamini. "The prevalence of gender-based violence against women in South Africa: A call for action." *African Journal of Gender, Society & Development* 10, no. 1 (2021): 117.

Fanon, Frantz. "The fact of blackness." *Postcolonial studies: An anthology* 15, no. 32 (1952): 2-40.

Fanon, Frantz. "The Wretched of the." *Earth (New York: Grover, 2004)* 62 (1963).

Fanon, Frantz. "Black skin, white masks." In *Social Theory Re-Wired*, pp. 394-401. Routledge, 2016

Floyd, Samuel A. "Black music and writing black music history: American music and narrative strategies." *Black Music Research Journal* 28, no. 1 (2008): 111-121.

Foster, Michele. *Black teachers on teaching*. New Press, 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110, 1997.

Foster, Kevin Michael. "Diet of disparagement: The racial experiences of Black students in a predominantly White university." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 18, no. 4 (2005): 489-505.

Frasquete, Débora Russi, and Ivana Guilherme Simili. "Fashion and Women: The practice of sewing and the feminine work in Brazil in the years 1950 and 1960" *História da Educação* 21, no. 53 (2017).

Frey, Lawrence, Carl H. Botan, and Gary Kreps. "Investigating communication." *NY: Allyn & Bacon* (2000).

Fürsich, Elfriede, "Analysing Text." *The International Encyclopaedia of Media Studies*, 1st 7. Edition. Vol. 7, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2014.

Gerber, Melissa. "(De) coding Contemporary South African Opera: Multimodality and the Creation of Meaning, 2010–2018." PhD diss., University of the Free State, 2021.

Gethoi, Mutu Wa. *A Chequered Serenade to Mother Africa*. East African Educational Publishers, 1996.

- Gilman, Sander L. "Black bodies, white bodies: Toward an iconography of female sexuality in late nineteenth-century art, medicine, and literature." *Critical inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985): 204-242.
- Gonzalez, Ed. "U-Carmen." *Slant Magazine* (2007). Accessed 7 July, 2023. <https://www.slantmagazine.com/film/u-carmen/>
- Goodrum, Nada M., Rosa Felix, Shannon Self-Brown, Natasha De Veause-Brown, and Lisa P. Armistead. "Violence victimization and parenting among Black South African mothers." *Journal of family violence* 34 (2019): 127-137.
- Griffin, Farah Jasmine. "When Malindy sings: a meditation on black women's vocality." In *Uptown conversation: The new jazz studies*, pp. 102-125. Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Groenmeyer, Sharon. "Women and social policy—experiences of some black working women in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa." PhD diss., Dissertation. Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway, 2011.
- Grogger, Jeffrey. "Speech patterns and racial wage inequality." *Journal of Human resources* 46, no. 1 (2011): 1-25.
- Goga, Khalil. "The drug trade and governance in Cape Town." *Institute for Security Studies Papers* 2014, no. 263 (2014): 18.
- Goldblatt, Beth. "Gender and social assistance in the first decade of democracy: a case study of South Africa's Child Support Grant." *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 32, no. 2 (2005): 239-257.
- Gqola, Pumla Dineo. "Black woman, you are on your own: images of black women in Staffrider short stories, 1978-1982." Master's thesis, University of Cape Town, 1999.
- Gqola, Pumla Dineo. "Contradictory locations: Blackwomen and the discourse of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in South Africa." *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism* 2, no. 1 (2001): 130-152.
- Gqola, Pumla Dineo. "Yindaba kaban'u'ba ndilahl'umlenze? Sexuality and Body Image: Guest Editor, Pumla Dineo Gqola, introduces the issue." (2005): 3-9.
- Gqola, Pumla Dineo. "How the 'cult of femininity' and violent masculinities support endemic gender based violence in contemporary South Africa." *African identities* 5, no. 1 (2007): 111-124.
- Hall, Phil. "U-Carmen eKhayelitsha (DVD)." *Film Treat* (2007). Accessed July 7, 2023. filmtreat.com/uncategorised/u-carmen-eKhayelitsha-dvd/

- Hallstein, D. Lynn O'Brien. "Conceiving intensive mothering." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement* (2006).
- Hanna, Judith Lynne. "Dance and sexuality: Many moves." *Journal of sex research* 47, no. 2-3 (2010): 212-241.
- Harder, Caroline Hilda. "The roles of" mothers" in opera as exemplified by Fides (Meyerbeer's *Le Prophete*); Kostelnicka (Janacek's *Jenufa*); Mrs. Patrick de Rocher (Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*)." PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2009.
- Harper, Simon. "A critical comparative study of career transition policy, practice and experiences for ballet company dancers and musical theatre independent dancers." PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2012.
- Hartman, Saidiya. "The belly of the world: A note on Black women's labors." *Souls* 18, no. 1 (2016): 166-173.
- Hays, Sharon. *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. Yale University Press, 1996.
- HDLC and diminishes LDLC and non-HDL cholesterol in overweight individuals with mild hypercholesterolemia." *American journal of therapeutics* 14, no. 2 (2007): 203-212.
- Heffernan, Valerie, and Gay Wilgus, eds. *Imagining Motherhood in the Twenty-First Century*. Routledge, 2020.
- Helman, Rebecca, and Kopano Ratele. "Everyday (in) equality at home: complex constructions of gender in South African families." *Global health action* 9, no. 1 (2016): 31122.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. "Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure." *American journal of sociology* 85, no. 3 (1979): 551-575.
- Hochschild Arlie, R. "The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling." *The Production of Reality: Essays and Readings on Social Interaction* (1983).
- Hooks, Bell. *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. South End Press, 1989.
- Hutcheon, Linda. "A theory of adaptation." (2006).
- Ibrahim, Awad. "Don't call me black! Rhizomatic analysis of blackness, immigration, and the politics of race without guarantees." *Educational Studies* 53, no. 5 (2017): 511-521.
- Ingraham, Mary I., Joseph K. So, and Roy Moodley. "Introduction: Opera, Multiculturalism, and Coloniality." In *Opera in a Multicultural World*, pp. 1-18. Routledge, 2015.
- James, Kimberly A., Leadelle PhBarrett, Gene, Mauricio I. Caniggia Ditzel, Ariel Muñoz Jelvez, and Lorna Read. "" Nadie es Profeta en su Tierra": Community, civil society, and intervening

- institutions in rural Chile." *Human Organization* 64, no. 1 (2005): 89-102.elps, and Andrea L. Bross. "Body dissatisfaction, drive for thinness, and self-esteem in African American college females." *Psychology in the Schools* 38, no. 6 (2001): 491-496.
- Jardine, Safiya A., and Arlene Dallalfar. "Sex and gender roles: examining gender dynamics in the context of African American Families." *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism, and Practice* 4, no. 4 (2012): 18.
- Jovanović, Nebojša. "How the love was tempered: labour, romance and gender asymmetry in the classical Yugoslav film." *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 6, no. 1 (2015): 33-48.
- Kramer, Lawrence. *After the lovedeath: Sexual violence and the making of culture*. Univ of California Press, 1997.
- Kruger, L. "Mothers in the South African context: Motherhood ideologies and the subjective experience of motherhood." *Unpublished manuscript* (2005).
- Kwate, Naa Oyo A., and Shatema Threadcraft. "Perceiving the Black female body: Race and gender in police constructions of body weight." *Race and social problems* 7 (2015): 213-226.
- Leeuw, Schipper-De. "Mother Africa on a pedestal: the male heritage in African literature and criticism." *African Literature Today* 15 (1987): 35-54.
- Leicester, H. Marshall. "Discourse and the film text: Four readings of Carmen." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 6, no. 3 (1994): 245-282.
- Leppert, Richard. *Aesthetic Technologies of Modernity, Subjectivity, and Nature: Opera, Orchestra, Phonograph, Film*. Univ of California Press, 2015.
- Leppert, Richard. "Two Notes, One Ending (Three Operas) at the Boundary of the Great Divide; or, Aesthetic Meanderings of the Sonic Psyche." *The Opera Quarterly* 31, no. 1-2 (2015): 71-99.
- Lewis, George. "Experimental music in black and white: The AACM in New York, 1970–1985." In *Uptown conversation: the new jazz studies*, pp. 50-101. Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Lewis, George E. "Gittin'to Know Y'all: Improvised Music, Interculturalism, and the Racial Imagination." In *The Improvisation Studies Reader*, pp. 296-320. Routledge, 2014.
- Lewis, Richard. *When cultures collide*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2010.

- Lewsen, Simon. "Desire, Misogyny, and Official Power in Mark Dornford-May's U-Carmen eKhayelitsha." *Safundi* 13, no. 3-4 (2012): 231-249.
- Livermon, Xavier. *Kwaito bodies: Remastering space and subjectivity in post-apartheid South Africa*. Duke University Press, 2020.
- Levine, Laurie. *The Drumcafe's traditional music of South Africa*. Jacana Media, 2005.
- Levin, David J. "Auditions." *The Opera Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2007): 96-96.
- Lorde, Audre. *Burst of light*. Women's Press (CA), 1992.
- Magwaza, T . (2010) . Contemporary mothering practices in the context of HIV and AIDS . In A . O'Reilly (Ed .), *Twenty-firstCentury Motherhood* (pp . 105–117) . Columbia University Press
- Maisela, Thato, and Eleanor Ross. "The experiences of motherhood among black undergraduate students at a South African University: Reconciling competing roles." *South African Review of Sociology* 49, no. 2 (2018): 41-60.
- Mbembe, Achille. "African modes of self-writing." *Codesria Bulletin* 1 (2000): 4-19.
- Mbembe, Achille. *On the postcolony*. Vol. 41. Univ of California Press, 2001.
- Mbembe, Achille. "Ways of seeing: Beyond the new nativism. Introduction." *African studies review* 44, no. 2 (2001): 1-14.
- McClary, Susan. "Feminine Endings: Music." *Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, 1991) 7 (1991).
- McClary, Susan. *Carmen*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- McClary, Susan. "Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s." *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993): 399-423.
- McClary, Susan, and Robert Walser. "Theorizing the body in African-American music." *Black Music Research Journal* (1994): 75-84.
- McClary, Susan. "Temp work: Music and the cultural shaping of time." *Musicology Australia* 23, no. 1 (2000): 160-175.
- McDonald, Katrina Bell. "Black activist mothering: A historical intersection of race, gender, and class." *Gender & Society* 11, no. 6 (1997): 773-795.

- Mera, Miguel, and Anna Morcom. "Introduction: Screened music, trans-contextualisation and ethnomusicological approaches." In *Ethnomusicology Forum*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 3-19. Taylor & Francis Group, 2009.
- Mercure, Michelle. "The "bad girl" turned feminist: The femme fatale and the performance of theory." *Undergraduate Review* 6, no. 1 (2010): 113-119.
- Meintjes, Louise. *Dust of the Zulu: Ngoma aesthetics after apartheid*. Duke University Press, 2017.
- Mérimée, Prosper. "Bogdan Chmielnicki." *Bogdan Chmielnicki* (2007): 1-296.
- McClary, Susan. "Paradigm dissonances: Music theory, cultural studies, feminist criticism." *Perspectives of new music* (1994): 68-85.
- McDonald, Katrina Bell. "Black activist mothering: A historical intersection of race, gender, and class." *Gender & Society* 11, no. 6 (1997): 773-795.
- McKee, Alan. "Textual analysis: A beginner's guide." *Textual analysis* (2003): 1-160.
- Mhlambi, Innocentia J. "The question of nationalism in Mzilikazi Khumalo's Princess Magogo kaDinuzulu (2002)." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 27, no. 3 (2015): 294-310.
- Mhlambi, Nolwazi. "A Content and Genre Analysis of Black Romance Novels in South Africa."
- Mhlope, Gcina. "We are at War." *Off Our Backs* 13, no. 9 (1983): 22-22.
- Milani, Tommaso M., Rickard Jonsson, and Innocentia J. Mhlambi. "Shooting the subversive: When non-normative linguistic practices go mainstream in the media." (2015): 119-138.
- Mitchell, Robin. *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France*. Vol. 36. University of Georgia Press, 2020.
- Mkhize, Nhlanhla, and Ronelle Msomi. "African single mothers' experiences of work and career in South Africa." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 47, no. 3 (2016): 323-342.
- Mohanty, Chandra. "Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses." *Feminist review* 30, no. 1 (1988): 61-88.
- Molyneux, Maxine. "Family reform in socialist states: The hidden agenda." *Feminist Review* 21, no. 1 (1985): 47-64.
- Moore, Elena. "Transmission and change in South African motherhood: Black mothers in three-generational Cape Town families." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39, no. 1 (2013): 151-170.

- Moyo, Arifani. "Indigeneity and Theatre in the New South Africa." PhD diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2015.
- Mokomane, Zitha, Tamsen Jean Rochat, and Directorate. "Adoption in South Africa: trends and patterns in social work practice." *Child & family social work* 17, no. 3 (2012): 347-358.
- Moore, Elena. "Transmission and change in South African motherhood: Black mothers in three-generational Cape Town families." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39, no. 1 (2013): 151-170.
- Morrison, Elizabeth Aileen Carmen. "The dead/ly feminine: violence and eroticism in three expressionist operas." (2001).
- Morrison, Matthew D. *Sound in the Construction of Race: From Blackface to Blacksound in Nineteenth-Century America*. Columbia University, 2014.
- Mouyis, Angelique. "The Isango Ensemble and the Indigenization of Opera in Post-Apartheid South Africa: U-Carmen eKhayelitsha (2005), Unogumbe (2013), and Breathe Umphefumlo (2015)." PhD diss., Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, School of Graduate Studies, 2021.
- Mowatt, Rasul A., Bryana H. French, and Dominique A. Malebranche. "Black/female/body hypervisibility and invisibility: A Black feminist augmentation of feminist leisure research." *Journal of leisure research* 45, no. 5 (2013): 644-660.
- Martin, Juanita K., and Gordon C. Nagayama Hall. "Thinking Black, thinking internal, thinking feminist." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 39, no. 4 (1992): 509.
- Muller, Wayne. "A reception history of opera in Cape Town: Tracing the development of a distinctly South African operatic aesthetic (1985-2015)." PhD diss., Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2018.
- Munoz-Dardé, Véronique. "Fraternity and justice." In *Solidarity*, pp. 81-97. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1999.
- Mwepu, Patrick Kabeya. "Women and their struggle for emancipation in Lopes' works." *Tydskrif vir letterkunde* 45, no. 2 (2008).
- Narotzky, Susana. "Rethinking the concept of labour." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 24, no. S1 (2018): 29-43.
- Nelson, Charmaine A. *Representing the Black female subject in western art*. Routledge, 2010.
- Ntshongwana, Phakama, Gemma Wright, Helen Barnes, and Michael Noble. "Lone motherhood in South Africa: Some methodological challenges and policy imperatives." *South African Review of Sociology* 46, no. 4 (2015): 80-99.

- Nkosinkulu, Zingisa. "Diaspora, identity and Xhosa ancestral tradition: culture in transience." PhD diss., Master's. Thesis. University of South Africa. Available: http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/19184/dissertation_nkosinkulu_z.pdf, 2015.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, Molara. *Re-creating ourselves: African women & critical transformations*. Africa World Press, 1994.
- Okrah, Kwadwo. "The dynamics of gender roles and cultural determinants of African women's desire to participate in modern politics." *Global Engagement and Transformation* 2, no. 1 (2017).
- O'Reilly, Andrea, ed. *Twenty-first century motherhood: Experience, identity, policy, agency*. Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Pal-Lapinski, Piya. *The exotic woman in nineteenth-century British fiction and culture: a reconsideration*. Upne, 2005.
- Parker, Roger. *Remaking the song: operatic visions and revisions from Handel to Berio*. Vol. 13. Univ of California Press, 2006.
- Pierce, Jennifer L. *Gender trials: Emotional lives in contemporary law firms*. Univ of California Press, 1996.
- Piscitelli, Adriana. "Looking for new worlds: Brazilian women as international migrants." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 33, no. 4 (2008): 784-793.
- Pistorius, Juliana M. "Inhabiting Whiteness: The Eoan Group La Traviata, 1956." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 31, no. 1 (2019): 63-84.
- Ponzanesi, Sandra, and D. Duncan. "Beyond the black Venus: Colonial sexual politics and contemporary visual practices." (2005): 165-189.
- Purdie-Vaughns, Valerie, and Richard P. Eibach. "Intersectional invisibility: The distinctive advantages and disadvantages of multiple subordinate-group identities." *Sex roles* 59 (2008): 377-391.
- Rabe, Marlize, and Kammila Naidoo. "Families in south africa." *South African Review of Sociology* 46, no. 4 (2015): 1-4.
- Ramsey, Guthrie P. "Cosmopolitan or provincial?: Ideology in early Black music historiography, 1867-1940." *Black Music Research Journal* (1996): 11-42.

- Reyna-Villasmil, Nadia, Valmore Bermúdez-Pirela, Edgardo Mengual-Moreno, Nelly Arias, Clímaco Cano-Ponce, Elliuz Leal-Gonzalez, Aida Souki et al. "Oat-derived β -glucan significantly improves
- Ribeiro, Djamila. "Black feminism for a new civilizatory framework." *SUR-Int'l J. on Hum Rts.* 13 (2016): 99.
- Reid, Pamela Trotman, and Lillian Comas-Diaz. "Gender and ethnicity: Perspectives on dual status." *Sex roles* 22 (1990): 397-408.
- Rich, Adrienne. *Of woman born: Motherhood as experience and institution.* WW Norton & Company, 2021.
- Robbe, Ksenia. *Conversations of motherhood: South African women's writing across traditions.* Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2015.
- Robinson, G. S. "Attitudes to motherhood and working mothers in South Africa: insights from quantitative attitudinal data. Master's thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa." (2014).
- Rocha-Coutinho, Maria Lúcia. *Tecendo por trás dos panos: a mulher brasileira nas relações familiares.* Rocco, 1994.
- Rogers Wood, Nikel A., and Trent A. Petrie. "Body dissatisfaction, ethnic identity, and disordered eating among African American women." *Journal of counseling psychology* 57, no. 2 (2010): 141.
- Roscoe, Adrian. *Mother is gold: A study in West African literature.* Cambridge University Press, 1971.
- Roos, Hilde. "Opera production in the Western Cape: strategies in search of indigenization." PhD diss., Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, 2010.
- Roos, Hilde. "Indigenisation and history: how opera in South Africa became South African opera." *Acta Academica* 2012, no. sup-1 (2012): 117-155
- Said, Edward W. "Orientalism." *The Georgia Review* 31, no. 1 (1977): 162-206.
- Sathiparsad, Reshma, Myra Taylor, and Siyabonga Dlamini. "Patriarchy and family life: Alternative views of male youth in rural South Africa." *Agenda* 22, no. 76 (2008): 4-16.
- Sánchez, Maria T. "Domesticating the Theorists: A Plea for Plain Language." PhD diss., Salford: University of Salford, 2007.
- Savage, Barbara Dianne. *Broadcasting freedom: Radio, war, and the politics of race, 1938-1948.* UNC Press Books, 1999.

- Sayer, Andrew. "Class, moral worth and recognition." In *(Mis) recognition, social inequality and social justice*, pp. 100-114. Routledge, 2007.
- Sesay, Kadija. "Bring on the blood!." *Agenda* 19, no. 63 (2005): 25-28.
- Seidman, Gay W. "'No Freedom without the women': mobilization and gender in South Africa, 1970-1992." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18, no. 2 (1993): 291-320.
- Simms, Eva-Maria, and Beata Stawarska. "Introduction: Concepts and methods in interdisciplinary feminist phenomenology." *Janus Head* 13, no. 1 (2013): 6-16.
- Smalls, Krystal A. "Race, SIGNS, and the Body." *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Race* (2020): 233.
- Slobin, Mark, ed. *Global soundtracks: Worlds of film music*. Wesleyan University Press, 2008.
- Somma, Donato, and Neo Muyanga. "'The Musical Thread': Neo Muyanga on Opera and South Africa." *African Studies* 75, no. 1 (2016): 74-97.
- Sotelo, José R., Andre B. Sotelo, Fabio JB Sotelo, André M. Doi, Joao RR Pinho, Rita de Cassia Oliveira, Alanna MPS Bezerra et al. "Persistence of Zika virus in breast milk after infection in late stage of pregnancy." *Emerging infectious diseases* 23, no. 5 (2017): 854.
- Soupault, Phillipe. *Last Nights of Paris*. Barcelona: Jus, Libreros y Editores, 1928.
- Spjeldnæs, Ingrid Onarheim. "Mothering in socioeconomically marginalised communities in South Africa: A conceptual development." *Journal of Psychology in Africa* 31, no. 4 (2021): 406-415.
- Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) . (2018) . General Household Survey . Retrieved from <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P03182018.pdf> Valiquette-Tessier, Sophie-Claire, Julie Gosselin, Marta Young, and Kristel Thomassin. "A literature review of cultural stereotypes associated with motherhood and fatherhood." *Marriage & Family Review* 55, no. 4 (2019): 299-329.
- Stobie, Cheryl. "Diamonds at the meeting of her thighs: Representations of gender and sexuality in U-Carmen eKhayelitsha." *Journal of African Cinemas* 8, no. 2 (2016): 155-168.
- Stobie, Cheryl. "'She Who Creates Havoc Is Here': A Queer Bisexual Reading of Sexuality, Dance, and Social Critique in Karmen Gei." *Research in African Literatures* 47, no. 2 (2016): 84-103.
- Tambling, Jeremy. *Opera, ideology and film*. Manchester University Press, 1987.

- Taylor, Judy, Rosalind M. Jones, Peta O'Reilly, Wayne Oldfield, and Anne Blackburn. "The station community mental health Centre Inc: nurturing and empowering." *Rural and Remote Health* 10, no. 3 (2010): 1-12.
- Thurer, Sherry. *Myths of motherhood: How culture reinvents the good mother*. Penguin, 1995.
- Verduzco Baker, Lynn M. "Charmed Circle of Motherhood: How Discourses of Motherhood Discredit and Empower Young and Low-Income Mothers." PhD diss., 2011.
- Viljoen, Susanna Isobella. "The articulation of context and identity in U-Carmen eKhayelitsha." PhD diss., North-West University, 2012.
- Viljoen, Santisa, and Marita Wenzel. "The same, yet different: re-encoding identity in U-Carmen eKhayelitsha." *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa* 13, no. 1-2 (2016): 53-70.
- Walker, Cheryl. "Conceptualising motherhood in twentieth century South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, no. 3 (1995): 417-437.
- Warner, Virginia . "Social dysfunction and psychiatric disorder in mothers and their children." *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 33, no. 9 (1994): 1256-1264.
- Wolf, S. "State-provided Family planning in Limpopo Province 1974–1984. Limpopo Histories. A research project on the history of the Limpopo Province in South Africa." (2005).
- Wolf, J., Phil Hall, Paul Robinson, and Phil Culverhouse. "Bioloid based humanoid soccer robot design." In *the Proc. of the Second Workshop on Humanoid Soccer Robots*. 2007.
- World Health Organization. *The World Health Report 2005: Make every mother and child count*. World Health Organization, 2005.
- Wright, Katharine. "Are children vulnerable in research?." *Asian Bioethics Review* 7, no. 2 (2015): 201-213.
- Young, Jean. "The Re-Objectification and Re-Commodification of Saartjie Baartman in Suzan-Lori Parks's *Venus*." *African American Review* 31, no. 4 (1997): 699-708.
- Zizek, Slavoj. *Violence*. Picador, 2008.
- Zoller Seitz, Matt. "Those arias, that tragedy, in Xhosa." *The New York Times* (2007). Accessed 7 July, 2023. [nytimes.com/2007/03/28/movies/28carm.html?ref=movies](https://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/28/movies/28carm.html?ref=movies).

Zungu, Mthunzi, Nozipho Manqele, Calda de Vries, Thato Molefe, and Muziwandile Hadebe.
"HERstory: Writing women into South African history." *Agenda* 28, no. 1 (2014): 7-17.