



Singing Pretty

Investigating Female Respectability in Classical Vocal Performance in South Africa

Alida van der Walt
G22V8094

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 consider respectability in classical vocal performance in South Africa by presenting research on six women who hold prominent positions in this field intertwined with my own experiences in this arena. I introduce the context and background to my research across the fields of respectability politics, music studies, and intersectionality before investigating two main modes of gendered bodily respectability that featured in my singer-participants' lives. These include first *extra-bodily technologies in service of respectability*, referring to anything that a singer may externally and visibly apply (on) to her body to enhance its physical appeal in specific ways, in line with respectability's requirements. In thinking through the notion of extra-bodily technologies, I outline via cyborg theory how this first mode of respectability policing operates as an intersectionally oppressive force in my own and my singer-participants' lives. The second form of bodily discipline emerges in what I call *intra-bodily markers of respectability*. In developing this term, I demonstrate, based on my singer-participants' experiences and my own, how the policing of intra-bodily respectability markers may shift our understanding of identity performativity from the discursive realm into the physical. In doing so, I think critically about the importance of language in respectability's shaping of women's realities. With little subversive potential found in these themes, I explore the theme of play as a subversive strategy employed by the singers in my study, contrasting the playful subversion with my own mode of 'serious' rebellion. Play, with its ambiguous nature rooted in theories of psychology and self-realization, becomes a fundamental aspect of human development, allowing individuals to explore their capabilities and confront societal limitations. I explore the gendered aspects of subversive play in various arenas such as physical appearance, sexuality, musicianship, race, and class, emphasizing and questioning its potential as a political action within the constraints of societal structures. The final part of the thesis explores my own experiences of embodied unbecoming from respectability's oppressions through vocal performance. Here, I tie together the three strands presented in the body of this thesis through my singing, transgressing body in reference to what I call a feminist musicianship practice as a way of singing beyond respectability.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Table of Contents	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Table of Figures	4
ONE	5
Introduction	6
1.1. Sitting/Singing Pretty	14
1.2. Respectability, Intersectionality, and Music Studies	18
1.3. Respectability in Classical Music.....	30
1.4. Research Goals, Aims and Methodology	34
1.5. The Singers-Participants—Singing the Self.....	36
1.6. Chapter Outline.....	38
TWO.....	41
Cyborg Singing: Extra-Bodily Technologies of Respectability	41
2.1. Dentition and Making the Singing Cyborg	44
2.2. Sing Pretty, Dress Prettier	54
2.3. <i>Mooimaakgoed</i>	61
2.4. Conclusion: Will the Master's tools, or will they not...?.....	71
THREE.....	75
Embodied Performativity: Intra-Bodily Markers of Respectability	75
3.1. Identity Performativity	78
3.2. A 'Tame' Crown.....	81
3.3. Slender Singing	86
3.4. Ageing and Ageism	90
3.5. Menstruation: (Taboo) Marker of Fertility and Youth.....	94
3.6. Conclusion: Aesthetics—a witch-hunt?	99
FOUR	102
Disobedient Femininities: Playfully Subverting Expectations.....	102
4.1. Playful Bodily Packaging and the Fun of <i>Mooimaakgoed</i>	104
4.2. Queer Play	110
4.3. 'Something strange happens when you have to <i>play</i> black and [you are] black'	112
4.4. 'I've had to perform other people's classes, not my class'	114
4.5. Conclusion: Playing Politics—Subversion Subsumed?.....	116
FIVE	121
Conclusion	121
5.1. un(BECOMING)	122
5.2. Reflecting on Autoethnography.....	128
5.3. Conclusion: Becoming Unrespectable.....	129
Bibliography	132

Acknowledgements

‘One does not, of course, write books single-handedly.’—this is an adage that an adolescent I latched onto, without knowing exactly where it was from or who said it, but knowing with visceral certainty that it was *true*. While this is hardly a book, this Master’s thesis was not assembled in isolation. I would like to say thank you to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Rhodes University, who generously funded my studies through a Rhodes Mellon Turning the Tide scholarship. As indebted as I am to these institutions for providing the funding for this project, so much am I beholden to my supervisor, Dr William Fourie, who is the grantholder of the funding that I received. Apart from this, I am thankful to William for his incredible generosity. He gives freely: time, insight, conversation, written feedback, motivation, kindness, care, and understanding. It is a supervision relationship that I leave behind with an extremely heavy heart. Then, to my family, for their unwavering support. *Liewe Ma en Pa, baie dankie vir al julle ondersteuning tydens oor die afgelope twee jaar. Julle was van die begin dwarsdeur tot die einde toe daar en ek waardeer julle teenwoordigheid eindeloos. Dankie ook aan Ma, Pa, Ester, Ben, en peetma Lettie dat julle my versorgn het tydens die laaste paar maande se skryf—ek is dankbaar vir elke koppie tee, skryf-snack, rugkrappie, en julle insette tot my werk.* Lastly, to my dear friends Jonathan Hughes, Ruhan Fourie and Lumé Venter. Jonathan, thank you for being a steadfast friend, soundboard, ad-hoc proofreader, and for your ever-abiding willingness to spare time for me and my work. *Ruhan, dieselfde geld vir jou, hoewel ek jou nie dikwels genoeg opgeneem het op jou aanbod vir ondersteuning nie. En natuurlik my liewe liefste Lumé, dankie dat jy altyd daar is, my beste maat. In alles wat ek doen is daar ook ‘n stukkie van jou.*

Table of Figures

Figure 1: <i>un(BECOMING)</i> 5: Taken at the end of the recital as I sing Arnold van Wyk's 'Vaalvalk', I reach the final point of unbecoming staring at the hair I cut from my head.	5
Figure 2 (left): The front page of <i>The Namibian</i> , on 22 July 1993, featuring the first <i>Biltongfees</i>	8
Figure 3: (right): The second page of <i>The Namibian</i> , on 22 July 1993, featuring the first <i>Biltongfees</i>	8
Figure 4 (top left): <i>Mej Biltongfees</i>	10
Figure 5 (top right): Beer tent with festivalgoers.	10
Figure 6 (bottom left): A biltong stall.	10
Figure 7 (bottom right): The church's pancake stall.	10
Figure 8: <i>un(BECOMING)</i> 4: I sing Madeleien Dringe's 'Song of a Nightclub Proprietress' while removing my stage makeup, clothed in a dressing gown and my underwear.	40
Figure 9: Publicity photo for <i>TV Bra for Living Sculpture</i>	72
Figure 10: <i>un(BECOMING)</i> 3: I sing 'What Lips My Lips Have Kissed' by Margaret Bonds, admiring my 'new' hairstyle after I had just cut off my ponytail, clothed in only my underwear and jewellery.	74
Figure 11: <i>un(BECOMING)</i> 2: In the first suggestive moment of subverting respectability on stage, I take off my concert gown midway through Schubert's <i>Frauenliebe- und Leben</i>	101
Figure 12: <i>un(BECOMING)</i> 1: A respectable singer enters and readies herself to sing Barbara Strozzi's 'Spesso per entro al petto'.	120
Figure 13: The poster for <i>un(BECOMING)</i>	123
Figure 14 (left): William Fourie, my thesis supervisor and the concept advisor for <i>un(BECOMING)</i> tidying up my new hairstyle after the concert, with a small group of staff and student colleagues observing in the background.	128
Figure 15 (right): William Fourie tidying up my new hairstyle after the concert.	128



Figure 1: *un(BECOMING)* 5: Taken at the end of the recital as I sing Arnold van Wyk's 'Vaalvalk', I reach the final point of unbecoming staring at the hair I cut from my head.

ONE

Introduction

[Ordentlikheid] is so deel van ons wese soos kermispoeding en koeksisters.

These are the words of Emma, a well-known South African classical singer, and a participant in my study.¹ Roughly translated from my and Emma's native Afrikaans, it means that *ordentlikheid*²—respectability—forms as significant a part of our 'collective' Afrikaner identity as church fete pudding and *koeksisters*.³ Even though Emma was talking to me as a researcher, her observation struck a note with me personally, because I have become acutely aware of respectability's onslaught in my life and on my body, now and in the past. The church fete, known in Afrikaans as a *kermis* or a *kerkbasaar*, is something I have been intimately familiar with since my earliest formative years. In 1993, the year before my birth, my *dominee*⁴ parents founded what became one of the biggest church fetes within Afrikaner Reformed churches in Southern Africa.⁵ The *Biltongfees*,⁶ as it was named, is to this day hosted annually by my parents' former congregation in Windhoek, Namibia. Like most Afrikaner church fetes, it was established with the main goal of raising funds for its host congregation. However, it was a church fete with a twist: while still incorporating traditional Afrikaner *kerkbasaar* elements like *kermispoeding*, *koeksisters*, sugary cinnamon pancakes, curry and rice, a lucky draw raffle, and more, the *Biltongfees* also aimed to celebrate and capitalise on (white, privileged) Namibians' love of good meat and biltong.⁷ The raffle, too, was no ordinary fete

¹ 'Emma' is a pseudonym. All study participants are represented completely anonymously in this thesis.

² *Ordentlikheid* is an Afrikaner ethnicised form of respectability. I expand on this concept in greater detail in the following section.

³ *Koeksisters* are traditional Afrikaner confectionary made of plaited dough that is deep-fried, soaked in syrup, and chilled before consumption. In her Master's thesis on Afrikaner women's experiences during the 1980-90 SADF conscription period, Dominique Niemand calls the *koeksister* 'A Topology of the Afrikaner'. Dominique Niemand, "'Bid Vir My Ma': A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of White Christian Afrikaner Females during SADF Conscription from 1980 until 1990" (Master's thesis, Pretoria, University of Pretoria, 2019), 10, 15, 23. See also: Barbara Sheen, *Foods of South Africa* (Greenhaven Publishing LLC, 2012), 37-39.

⁴ *Dominee* is the Afrikaans word for 'reverend' used in Afrikaner Reformed churches.

⁵ The Afrikaner Reformed churches include three interrelated denominations known as the *Drie Susterskerke* (Three Sister Churches), namely the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (Dutch Reformed Church), *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* (Netherdutch Reformed Church), and the *Gereformeerde Kerke in Afrika* (Reformed Churches in Africa). Ruhan Fourie, "'Angels and Demons'? The Dutch Reformed Church and Anticommunism in Twentieth Century South Africa" (Ph.D. thesis, Bloemfontein, University of the Free State, 2021), 38.

Additionally, churches that seceded from the *Susterskerke*, like the *Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk* (Afrikaans Protestant Church) and the *Evangelies Gereformeerde Kerk* (Evangelical Reformed Church) could also be considered Afrikaner Reformed churches.

⁶ Translation: Biltong Festival.

⁷ In his MA thesis on Afrikaner-nostalgic symbolism in Afrikaans pop music, Gysbert Albertus Booysen describes the *kerkbasaar* (amongst other things) as 'distinctive Afrikaner folk traditions': '*kenmerkende*

raffle. Entry tickets were expensive, and there were large prizes at stake: the winning prize was a hunting rifle in the festival's first year, and a new car by its fifth. Moreover, the festival featured since its inception a beauty pageant named *Mej. Biltong*, later *Mej. Biltongfees*,⁸ as an additional attraction. In short, the festival was intended to attract bigger crowds and attain larger-scale commercial success than the average church fete.⁹

In 1998, after five increasingly prosperous years of fundraising for the church, my parents' involvement in the congregation and its unique fete-gone-festival was decreasing. They were not necessarily less interested in the church and its activities but decided to put their church jobs on hold in favour of more financially sustainable employment to support our growing family. With this, the festival was handed over to a new organisational team. Under this new leadership, it expanded beyond its original designation as a 'respectable', albeit somewhat unconventional, Afrikaner *kerkbasaar*. Soon, the *Biltongfees* gained prominence in the city's yearly social calendar as a weekend-long party, touting all-day concerts in large, noisy beer tents and drawing in serious corporate sponsors. Despite its generally accepted status as a 'family-friendly' event, festival concerts often featured scantily clad Afrikaans pop stars, shaking their bodies to lyrics heavily laden with double entendres or sometimes direct sexual references.¹⁰ To wash this all down, the festival sold generous amounts of alcohol to

Afrikaner-volkstradisies soos huisgodsdiens, kerkbasaars of Kerssangdienste. Hierby kan selfs die kerkgebou [...] ingesluit word. Gysbert Albertus Booysen, 'n Multimodale Ondersoek Na Nostalgiese En Patriargale Afrikanersimbole in Populêre Afrikaanse Musiekvideo's' (MA thesis, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2021), 50.

⁸ Translations: Miss Biltong, Miss Biltong Festival.

⁹ For a historical example of how a *kerkbasaar* could function as a mechanism for church fundraising, see: D.A. van der Bank, D.A., 'Die Rol En Betekenis van Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Die Oranjerivierkolonie: Fondsinsameling', *Navorsing van Die Nasionale Museum: Researches of the National Museum* 6, no. 9 (1 December 1989): 313–15.

However, considering the scale of the Biltongfees, especially during its later stages, one could perhaps argue that it evolved from a *kerkbasaar* into a small-scale Afrikaner cultural festival, similar to South African festivals like Aardklop (Potchefstroom), Vryfees (Bloemfontein), Woordfees (Stellenbosch), Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK, Oudtshoorn), etc. There is ample literature on the tension between traditional Afrikaner *kerkbasaar* features (like koeksisters, beer, and boerewors) and 'sophisticated' or respectable Afrikaner identity post-1994, as well as the in/exclusivity of these festivals. Consider, for example, a critique levelled at the KKNK that 'it is not a cultural festival but an "Afrikaner bazaar"'. Temple Hauptfleisch, 'Eventifying Identity: Festivals in South Africa and the Search for Cultural Identity', *New Theatre Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2006): 181–94.

See also: Herman Kitshoff, 'Claiming Cultural Festivals: Playing for Power at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK)', *South African Theatre Journal* 18, no. 1 (January 2004): 65–81; Adam Haupt, 'Race, Audience, Multitude: Afrikaans Arts Festivals and the Politics of Inclusion', *Muziki: Journal of Music Research in Africa* 3, no. 1 (1 January 2006): 16–27; Esther Van Heerden, 'Liminality, Transformation and Communitas: Afrikaans Identities as Viewed through the Lens of South African Arts Festivals: 1995 – 2006' (DPhil diss., Stellenbosch, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 2009).

¹⁰ Note, again, the tension present here between the traditional Afrikaner bazaar format, and that of an Afrikaner cultural festival, as outlined in footnote nine above.

festivalgoers at a profit. In fact, among young people the festival became known as an opportunity for unregulated underage drinking; I know this from personal experience during adolescence. And this was all in aid of the church, of the congregation's economic wellbeing.¹¹



Figure 2 (left): The front page of *The Namibian*, on 22 July 1993, featuring the first *Biltongfees*.¹²

Figure 3: (right): The second page of *The Namibian*, on 22 July 1993, featuring the first *Biltongfees*.

Although my parents were not formally employed by the church anymore, they remained involved in Southern African church matters, our congregation, and the *Biltongfees*. I recall, for example, conversations between my parents about a newspaper article describing subsequent festivals' straying from the 'straight and narrow' (my word choice) and highlighting its disjunctions with generally accepted church values. Furthermore, I remember my father telling my mother that he addressed this negative publicity and its possible reflection on the church's public image with the festival's organising committee during a festival

¹¹ I chose to frame the church's economic status in terms of 'wellbeing' instead of, for example, 'survival'. Wellbeing, here, signals the kind of excess that religious institutions—not just the Afrikaner church—have historically tended to accrue. Furthermore, a word like 'survival' is heavily laden when used in the Afrikaner/Afrikaans context, alluding to a kind of nationalist survival anxiety that has plagued the 'Afrikaner volk' and (white) Afrikaans as language, both in the past and in post-apartheid times. See, for example, Etienne Viviers' PhD thesis, which 'investigates how survival anxieties have influenced the often unacknowledged ideology of Western art music in South Africa.' Etienne Viviers, 'A Critique of the Survival Anxieties That Inform South African Discourses about Western Art Music' (Ph.D. diss., Stellenbosch : Stellenbosch University, 2016), iii.

¹² Sapa, 'Biltong Fest!', *The Namibian*, 22 July 1993. Note, here, the crude juxtaposition of the *Biltongfees* with the meeting between Prince Mangosutho Gatsha Buthelezi, then Chief Minister of KwaZulu-Natal (1976-1994) and then President FW de Klerk. Buthelezi is also Founder (1975) and President of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP, 1975-present). Buthelezi's and De Klerk's was one of South Africa's most crucial negotiations around black-on-black violence at the time. Simpson Thula, 'Negotiated Revolution in South Africa, 1990-1994', in *Bullets to Ballots: Collective de-Radicalisation of Armed Movements*, ed. Omar Ashour (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 238-64; 'Prince Mangosutho Gatsha Buthelezi - Parliament of South Africa', accessed 10 January 2024, <https://www.parliament.gov.za/person-details/24>.

planning meeting. This must have been at some stage during the 2000s when I was still a child living at home. Other memories are more personal, like working at the festival during adolescence in the early 2010s: at the main festival gate selling entry tickets, behind the till at the pancake stall, or assisting my younger sister in her tasks as the festival's dedicated money runner. Escorted by two armed guards, she collected thick wads of cash from every church-owned stall in rotation. I recall her carrying up to N\$200,000 on her person at times.¹³ She then took the cash to the festival office, where it was counted, recorded, and later collected by an armoured vehicle. Such a rotation took her between one and two hours to complete, and once one rotation was completed, the next immediately commenced. She was about fifteen years old at the time.

My siblings and I were drawn into the festival by my parents' continued involvement, not only by association but also more directly through our bodily presence and labour. We grew up in the church and with the *kerkbasaar/Biltongfees*. Even now we remain deeply entangled in this and similar religious communities—not so much as a matter of religious conviction but rather out of deep-seated habit. For example, last year (2023), at the festival's thirty-first anniversary, my sister (now 27) worked at the festival's tea garden, and my brother and his fiancée (both 25) worked at the food tent. The year before (2022), they worked at the festival bar and food tent respectively. In fact, the only times any of us were not involved with the festival, were when we were not in Namibia during our tertiary studies in South Africa or abroad. I, for one, have not resided in Namibia since 2014, so my recent participation in the festival has been more haphazard. Nonetheless, I have been enmeshed in religious communities in other places: for example, as a *studente-ouderling* (student elder) in the congregation of the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* (our denomination) in Stellenbosch during my undergraduate studies (2014–18), or as a member of the Cathedral Consort (vocal ensemble) at the Anglican cathedral in Makhanda during my Master's studies (2022–23).

¹³ The Namibian Dollar (N\$) is approximately equal to the South African Rand. My own rough inflation calculations suggest that R200,000 in the early 2010s is equivalent to about R360,000 in 2023.



Figures 4-7: Photos taken at the 2008 *Biltongfees*, published in the local Afrikaans newspaper *Die Republikein*.¹⁴

Figure 4 (top left): *Mej Biltongfees*.

Figure 5 (top right): Beer tent with festivalgoers.

Figure 6 (bottom left): A biltong stall.

Figure 7 (bottom right): The church's pancake stall.

Such work in service of the church, like drudging away at a *kerkbasaar*, is always done on a volunteer basis. Moreover, the *kerkbasaar* specifically is historically a gendered site of service, built on the (voluntary) physical labour of women.¹⁵ Gender aside, the doctrine of service to the church was ingrained in us, and many other Afrikaner and/or churchgoing children, from a very young age. I have come to believe, however, that this sense of duty is rooted deeper than service for the sake of service. Superficially, it might seem like mere cultural-religious altruism. Yet, along with many other secular and sacred habits, it forms part of a subconscious performance of respectability that is expected of a given community's members. The pressure

¹⁴ 'Smullekker Biltongfees', *Die Republikein*, 7 July 2008, <https://www.republikein.com/na/nuus/smullekker-biltongfees->.

¹⁵ Niemand, "‘Bid Vir My Ma’: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of White Christian Afrikaner Females during SADF Conscription from 1980 until 1990", 97; D.A. van der Bank, 'Die Rol En Betekenis van Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Die Oranjerivierkolonie: Fondsinsameling', 314; Elsabe Kloppers, 'Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Sustersvereniging (NHSV) in 'n Postmoderne Samelewing', *HTS: Theological Studies* 59, no. 2 (1 June 2003): 526.

of conformity to such expectations can, in my experience, be externally imposed by community members or structures, or subjectively perceived and thus projected onto the self. I too have felt such pressures to be *ordentlik* for a long time, both personally and in my professional capacity as a classical singer in South Africa. On a personal and formative level, this pressure was not primarily imposed by my parents, who practice a liberal theology that is grounded in academic study rather than religious conviction alone. Instead, respectability was enforced by the white, Afrikaans-speaking religious community in which I grew up. Simultaneously, it has also been something that I have subconsciously imposed on myself because of my impression of the expectations of my community, regardless of whether such self-impositions are necessarily reflections of a more objective reality. In fact, where I have been able to subvert many external pressures of respectability gradually and consciously, I find it much harder to untangle myself from my own internalised expectations, which I will detail at various points throughout this thesis.

In its marriage of the traditional and the nonconforming, the *Biltongfees* is, for me, an apt allegory for my upbringing within an Afrikaans Reformed church and consequently, my formative experiences of respectability. It is within the *Biltongfees* as a church-fete-deluxe and the larger institution of the church that religion, Afrikaner identity, gender and respectability first intersected in my life. Within these spaces, and because of my bodily presence and labour, I feel I was disciplined into an Afrikaner ethnicised and religionised respectability from a young age. As I mentioned before, this disciplining was rarely committed by my parents, who always encouraged us to ‘think outside the box’ (one of my father’s favourite phrases) and to subvert the norm. Like with their *Biltongfees*, they allowed us the freedom to exist as moral paradoxes, to both conform to and undermine expectations of respectability as we saw fit—for the most part, at least. They did not need us to be conventional. Rather, respectability was demanded by our religious community and the larger community of the town that we grew up in. We were always the PKs,¹⁶ short for ‘pastor’s kids’ or (pastors’ kids, in our case), and were subsequently

¹⁶ PK is a commonly used abbreviation for ‘pastor’s kid’ or ‘preacher’s kid’. Since the year 2000, there has emerged a still-growing body of research and literature on PK identity, the majority of which is Master’s and Doctoral theses from outside the South African context. Peer-reviewed content on the topic include: Jason J. Delaney and John V. Winters, ‘Sinners or Saints? Preachers’ Kids and Risky Health Behaviors’, *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 35, no. 4 (December 2014): 464–76; Ruth L. Markham, Monica H. Arslain, and Eric C. Skowronski, ‘A Qualitative Study of Pastors’ Kids at Cedarville University: A Pilot Study’, 2014.

The only two investigations into PK identity in South Africa are a Bachelor’s dissertation and a Master’s thesis from 1988 and 1994 respectively, and speak only to the topic of Afrikaner PKs: H.G. Schaaf, ‘Die Pastorie-Kind: Seen En Kruis’ (B. Th. diss., Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 1988); Jannie Du Plessis, ‘Die Invloed van Die Pastoriesisteem Op Die Pastoriekind, Met Spesifieke Verwysing Na Die Ontwikkeling van Sy Selfkonsep’ (Master’s thesis, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 1994).

expected to present and behave in certain ways. I can name numerous examples of this, but an oft-repeated phrase that has remained with me and my siblings since adolescence immediately comes to mind: *Jy mag nie vloek nie, jy is 'n dominee se kind!*¹⁷ Or, more recently, a male congregation member who has known me since birth grabbing my arm one day after church to inspect my tattoo. Only six square centimetres in size, semi-hidden on the inside of my forearm, and—ironically—a Biblical reference, he declared it sinful. I did not ask for his judgement. I did not give him permission to touch me.

The pressure of respectability was perhaps most violently enforced on my body and behaviour by myself, based on what I subjectively believed my community required from me. Despite my unrestrained, liberal upbringing, I have struggled for years to unshackle myself from the subconscious compulsion to be *ordentlik* or respectable. This is why I relay this history/memory of the *Biltongfees*, our congregation, and the wider institution of the church at the beginning of this thesis, as a way of contextualising my personal interest in Afrikaner *ordentlikheid* or respectability, and South African respectability politics more broadly. Regardless of this recollection's Namibian situatedness, it relates strongly to South African respectability politics. At the time of the *Biltongfees*'s inception, Namibia was newly independent after more than seventy years 'under the yoke of the colonial rule of South Africa' (1915-1990).¹⁸ During this time, many Afrikaner settlers were encouraged to move to Namibia, both for economic and security reasons.¹⁹ Namibia, then known as South West Africa, was administrated as if it was an additional South African province, which meant that apartheid was also enforced in the country: 'the Namibian Africans who outnumber the country's whites by seven to one [were] under South African domination through the policies of "apartheid" and white supremacy.'²⁰ This domination, both in South Africa and Namibia, was intimately tied up in Afrikaner Reformed church politics. The Dutch Reformed Church in particular, which has historically served most of the Afrikaans population, provided moral support and

¹⁷ Translation: You are not allowed swear, you are a pastor's child!

¹⁸ Najmul Hasan, 'Namibia: South-West Africa, *Pakistan Horizon* 28, no. 3 (1975): 63. Namibia first came under South African rule in 1915 and gained independence on 21 March 1990. For a detailed account of Namibian colonial history, see: Marion Wallace and John Kinahan, *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

¹⁹ In *A History of Namibia*, Marion Wallaces explains how 'SWA [South West Africa] opened up the prospect of jobs and land for the growing number of impoverished whites in South Africa itself.' Later in the book, she describes these 'impoverished whites' as 'incoming Afrikaner pastoralists' and asserts that 'South African policy favoured the white, particularly Afrikaner, community' in the then SWA. Wallace and Kinahan. *A History of Namibia*, 216, 240. See especially chapters eight and nine (p. 205-272), which deal with British South African rule in Namibia (1915-46) and nationalism and apartheid in Namibia (1946-70).

²⁰ Hasan, 'Namibia: South-West Africa, 61.

theological justification for apartheid: a symbiotic church-state relationship that has been thoroughly documented.²¹

Post-apartheid, therefore, is as much a Namibian concept as it is South African. The ‘old’ South Africa’s tracks still lay fresh in Namibia, today and at the time that the *Biltongfees* was founded.²² Refer, for example, to Figures 1 and 2 above, where the newspaper entitled ‘The Namibian’ is still priced in Rand in 1993, three years post-independence. Also note that the article was provided by the South African Press Association (Sapa). In present-day times, many Namibians still speak of ‘Rand’ instead of ‘Namibian Dollar’, and Afrikaans is still an ‘unwanted lingua franca of Namibia’.²³ Based on this, I would argue that the *kerkbasaar*, including the *Biltongfees*, the greater Afrikaner church and the white Afrikaner community in Namibia are—just like apartheid—South African exports to Namibia. With these church-related exports also came church-related respectability policing. Annika Teppo, a cultural/social anthropologist and specialist in Afrikaner culture and its intersections with the church post-1994, explains:

Over my years of fieldwork, it became clear that during the era of formal apartheid (1948–94), the [Dutch Reformed Church] exercised a strong influence on the daily lives of its members and saw that they kept up the standards of respectability that it saw as suitable for ‘white’ people.²⁴

In the ‘personal’ sense of the political—or, in other words, for me as a researcher—there is another link between myself and South African respectability politics. My parents are both white Afrikaners who were born (in 1958 and 1963), raised, and schooled in South Africa. They moved to Namibia in 1988, first for my father’s compulsory military service as a chaplain in Rundu, and then to start their careers as *dominees* in Windhoek. Their plan was to stay in Namibia for five years only, but they never returned to South Africa again. As such, my siblings and I are dual citizens, Namibian by birth and South African by descent. We were raised to

²¹ Fourie, ‘“Angels and Demons”? The Dutch Reformed Church and Anticommunism in Twentieth Century South Africa’, 1. Refer to footnote 3 in Fourie’s text for a list of the most significant sources that have documented, in Fourie’s words, the ‘[Dutch Reformed Church’s] relationship with racial discrimination in South Africa’.

²² The idea of the ‘old’ South Africa speaks to Afrikaner-nationalistic nostalgia on the part of many white Afrikaners in the post-1994 New South Africa. See: Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998).

²³ Kotie Fourie, ‘Afrikaans - The Unwanted Lingua Franca of Namibia’, in *Discrimination through Language in Africa?: Perspectives on the Namibian Experience*, ed. Martin Pütz (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 1995), 315. See also: G Stell and G Groenewald, ‘’n Perseptuele Verslag van Afrikaans in Namibië: Tussen Lingua Franca En Sosiaal-Eksklusiewe Taal’, *Tydskrif Vir Geesteswetenskappe* 56, no. 4–2 (December 2016): 1128–48.

²⁴ Annika Teppo, ‘Moral Radicals: Afrikaners and Their Grassroots Ecumenism After Apartheid’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 44, no. 2 (4 March 2018): 254.

take pride in this dual identity, with a strong focus on our Afrikaner heritage.²⁵ Furthermore, since my parents moved to Namibia on their own, all our relatives still live in South Africa. This means that we have travelled to South Africa very regularly, at least twice a year, since I can remember. We were thus exposed to South Africa through our upbringing by my South African parents—who, despite their broad-mindedness, are still products of their time and culture—and to the country of South Africa itself during visits.²⁶ Moreover, I have been living in South Africa since 2014, when I, like many Namibian Afrikaners, moved here for my tertiary studies. I consider myself equally Namibian and South African. However, I have chosen to live in South Africa for the sake of my ongoing postgraduate studies and my singing career, as there are virtually no employment opportunities for classical singers in Namibia. As such, this study is situated in South Africa, because it is here where it is the most relevant not just for me but perhaps also for the professional sphere in which I work. Thus, in this thesis, I will analyse respectability in classical singing in South Africa. At the same time, I hope to continue untangling my own ‘respectability baggage’ through my research.

1.1. Sitting/Singing Pretty

I first became aware of *ordentlikheid* or respectability as a legitimate topic of academic study in 2021 when an acquaintance shared in an Instagram story the cover of Christi van der Westhuizen’s *Sitting Pretty: White Afrikaans Women in Postapartheid South Africa*.²⁷ He was then a PhD candidate in musicology and posted a picture of the book that they were analysing in their research seminar. I was pursuing an Honours degree in classical vocal performance and had no interest in musicology at all: not as a career, not even as a leisure activity. In fact, if

²⁵ There is extensive literature, historical and current, on how Afrikaner identity in the former Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) served as an important marker of whiteness, functioning to safeguard Afrikaner whiteness and maintain/strengthen bonds with South Africa. In other words, there is something transnational about Afrikaner identity and culture in South Africa’s neighbouring countries, yet Namibia is often overlooked in this kind of discourse. Some of the more recent resources include: George Bishi, Joseph Mujere, and Zvinashe Mamvura, ‘Renaming Enkeldoorn: Whiteness, Place, and the Politics of Belonging in Southern Rhodesia’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 77 (July 2022): 55–64; Jonty Winch, ‘Rhodesia, Rugby and the Afrikaner: “Working Together to Send This Country Ahead”’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 15 (12 October 2016): 1808–25; P.A.H. Labuschagne, ‘Afrikaner Culture in Southern Rhodesia during 1938 - 1952 : An Exposition of the Contribution of the Afrikaner Folk Festivals’, *South African Journal of Cultural History* 29, no. 1 (1 June 2015): 120–43; Gustav Hendrich, ‘Allegiance to the Crown: Afrikaner Loyalty, Conscientious Objection, and the Enkeldoorn Incident in Southern Rhodesia During the Second World War’, *War & Society* 31, no. 3 (October 2012): 227–43.

²⁶ By describing my parents as ‘products of their time and culture’, I do not imply that they are ‘old and racist’ and that it would be easier to just ‘let them be’, nor do I excuse them from racism based on the time and culture that they grew up in. Rather, I mean to say that culture-in-time is imparted in the individual in many subconscious ways that govern how we go about our lives, including how we rear children.

²⁷ Christi Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty: White Afrikaans Women in Postapartheid South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2017).

anything, I felt a rebellious disdain for musicology, a field that many mentors had tried to coax me toward. But the preliminary encounter with that book stirred something within me that would soon propel me towards the unthinkable: musicological research. Alone the book's front cover and title, photographed by someone else and displayed momentarily on my cellphone screen, already articulated for me a collection of unnamable things that have always featured in my life. Things that I had felt, thought about, and experienced for a long time both in my personal life and career as a classical singer, but had not had the vocabulary or confidence to voice. Things such as the admonition by many an elder, probably since before I can even remember, to '*sit mooi*'²⁸ with my legs closed, as if the bare genitalia of a young child should threaten the collective order of Afrikaner respectability. Or *Sondagskooljuffrouens*²⁹ encouraging us (girls) to remain modest, both in terms of ego and sexuality. (Save yourself for your future husband!) Or that heterosexual marriage, as one of society's oldest respectability strategies, is compulsory. Or all the Mothers and *Tannies* and magazines teaching us (girls) to take good care of our physical appearance: to be pretty—even sexy—but not too much. Never too much. But now, almost two years after converting to musicology, and after interviews with some of South Africa's foremost women singers, I understand that *ordentlikheid* or respectability is elusive; it is hard to recognise and even harder to articulate.

Although my journey with respectability started a long time ago, *Sitting Pretty* was for me the spark that ignited an intellectual and, indeed, musicological fire, with my respectability baggage providing ample fuel to keep the flames burning for a good while. Like Van der Westhuizen, I became ardently interested in what it means to be respectable, or *ordentlik*, and to what end/s. Van der Westhuizen postulates that to be regarded as acceptable, Afrikaner women must adhere to the criteria of *ordentlikheid* by 'sitting pretty', that is, by physically organising 'their bodies in accordance with certain prescriptions.'³⁰ *Ordentlikheid*, however, is not limited to embodied respectability only, but also prescribes 'respectable' behaviour and societal roles.³¹ A good, respectable Afrikaner woman carries her body in a normatively feminine and heterosexual way through her physical appearance (dress, makeup, hair, body size, etc.), and 'decent' posture and bodily movement. She also 'sits pretty' metaphorically through a performance of kind speech and pure thought, selfless motherly-wifely servitude,

²⁸ Translation: Sit pretty.

²⁹ Translation: Sunday school / catechism teacher.

³⁰ Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty*, 4.

³¹ Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty*.

and intellectual and (hetero)sexual subservience to (white) men. At least, this is Van der Westhuizen's argument, which Willemien Froneman summarises as follows in her review of *Sitting Pretty*: Afrikaner women follow a 'gospel of self-care, self-sacrifice, white privilege and colourblindness.'³² Froneman, however, does not fully agree with Van der Westhuizen's framing of the women in her study, questioning the 'extent to which white Afrikaans women are "interpellated" into this subject position.'³³ Subsequently, Froneman prioritises Afrikaans women's potentially agentive anger over their subservience: 'More than "silence", "service", and that unappetising-sounding notion of "white sex", what stands out is these women's simmering anger. Their desire is to break free.'³⁴

Be that as it may, Van der Westhuizen's work initially gave me a framework for thinking through many of my own felt oppressions. I have long felt burdened by such expectations of *ordentlikheid*, just as I was sometimes chastised for a lack of it. As I explained before, this pressure was not imposed on me by my parents but rather by the community that I grew up in and, more significantly, by myself. For me, being the child of religious leaders meant growing up in public view, under the watchful eyes of my parents' congregation and the larger community of our town. Even in the most mundane parts of childhood and adolescence—quietly playing at the back of the church during services as a young child, or singing along to hymns as a teen—I felt the congregation (and wider community, to some extent) viewed me, likely without harmful intent, as 'communal property': someone (or something, perhaps) who is everyone's to celebrate, admire, raise, discipline, discuss, scrutinise, and even touch and kiss. I did not feel entitled to draw personal boundaries, assert my need for privacy, or to selfhood that was not in line with the moral ideals of what I now understand to be Afrikaner *ordentlikheid*. Instead, I disciplined my body and psyche into moral acceptability, at my own cost. Thus, having experienced the cost of *ordentlikheid* in my own life, I was initially disinclined towards Froneman's critiques of *Sitting Pretty*, and related more to Van der Westhuizen's imposition of a clearly-defined Afrikaner respectability onto Afrikaner women. This is because for me, the bonds of *ordentlikheid*—silence, servitude, and white-sexual subservience—have been stronger than most things in my life. At the time of reading Froneman's review, neither my anger nor my will to be free had been able to loosen

³² Willemien Froneman, 'Sitting Pretty, but Simmering with Anger', *Literator* 40, no. 1 (12 November 2019), 1.

³³ My emphasis. Froneman, 'Sitting Pretty, but Simmering with Anger', 1.

³⁴ Froneman, 'Sitting Pretty, but Simmering with Anger', 2.

ordentlikheid's grip, so her 'debunking' of Van der Westhuizen's argument felt like it denied my lived experience.

Recently, however, I have noticed how delving into that anger, whether personally, artistically, or academically, has started to systematically undo my compulsion to be *ordentlik*. As my anger about *ordentlikheid*'s oppression slowly recedes, I have noticed growing in its place a strong resentment towards Van der Westhuizen's framing of Afrikaner women as 'inherently victim'. Indeed, in Froneman's words, *Sitting Pretty*'s methodological approach creates a 'feedback loop that locks white Afrikaans women in a heteronormative apartheid narrative out of which there is little chance of escape.'³⁵ Furthermore, and linking the affect of shame back to ideas around anger and agency, Froneman simultaneously praises and criticises Van der Westhuizen's treatment of shame as a potentially transformative agent:

She shows the transformative power of acknowledged shame and, conversely, the destructive cycles of anger triggered when shame goes unacknowledged. How different the above interview and the argument as a whole would have looked if the focus were less on outing these women as adherents to a hegemonic cult of *ordentlikheid* and more on understanding—perhaps even with some pathos—their unacknowledged shame.³⁶

In fact, I have now become excited to see what change my own anger (and shame) might facilitate. Dela Gwala, drawing on Audre Lorde and Maya Angelou, offers a premonition:

Audre Lorde became the touchstone of my anger. She spoke of rage as if it were a gift. In her telling, anger is a potent reservoir of power to drive the engines of change and progress forward—it was the electric current needed for a seismic social and institutional shift. [...] I found her sentiments echoed and amplified by a statement that Maya Angelou made in 2006: 'You should be angry So use that anger. You write it. You paint it. You dance it. You march it. You vote it. You do everything about it. You talk it. Never stop talking it.'³⁷

Yet, while *ordentlikheid* was the initial impetus for this study, it can and must remain only that—for the most part. As I have implied above, the English translation for '*ordentlikheid*' is 'respectability'. Yet this translation does not entirely capture the nuance of Afrikaner *ordentlikheid* as a culturally, linguistically, and racially sanctioned form of respectability. Van der Westhuizen concurs that Afrikaner '*[o]rdentlikheid* is difficult to translate: its meanings are embodied and include presentability, good manners, decency, politeness and humility with

³⁵ Froneman, 'Sitting Pretty, but Simmering with Anger', 1.

³⁶ Froneman, 'Sitting Pretty, but Simmering with Anger', 2.

³⁷ Dela Gwala, 'When the Anger Runs Out', in *Feminism Is: South Africans Speak Their Truth*, ed. Jen Thorpe (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2018), 200–209.

a Calvinist tenor.’³⁸ Teppo adds a further dimension to this definition when she calls *ordentlikheid* ‘the art of being proper’ and stresses that it should be understood as ‘an umbrella for many ideas about and behaviours related to what is socially acceptable, moral, and proper.’³⁹ Moreover, it is a selectively performative mode of respectability. Think, for example, of Afrikaners’ insistence on naming older persons ‘Oom’ and ‘Tannie’.⁴⁰ This act of naming serves as a display of *ordentlikheid* or respect towards white Afrikaans people but is not always equally afforded to people of other cultures and races. The white, Afrikaans mother does not insist that her daughter calls the black man ‘Oom’. Respectability, in contrast, is not selectively enculturated in the same way. Coded by English linguistic coloniality, it seeps across social groupings, across race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and so forth.

Therefore, *ordentlikheid* as an ‘ethnicised respectability’, to use Van der Westhuizen’s turn of phrase, is a framework which excludes the diverse experiences of other ethnolinguistic groups.⁴¹ It is enclaved in Van der Westhuizen’s theorisation in a way that does not account for the colonial seepage of respectability. It did, however, provide a useful starting point for me to begin thinking through my own respectability baggage, eventually expanding this understanding to respectability more broadly and to respectability in classical music performance in South Africa in particular. Bearing in mind my history with *ordentlikheid* or respectability it is perhaps unsurprising that I, as a young South African mezzo-soprano, feel and have felt uncomfortable with the classical concert stage’s unwritten, often gendered demands of respectability. It is precisely in this personal-professional relationship with respectability that this study has its inception as a way not only to deal with personal respectability issues but also to contribute to what is currently a dearth of critical sociological research and discourse on the topic. And so I ask: What does it mean to ‘sit pretty’ as a woman classical singer in South Africa today?

1.2. Respectability, Intersectionality, and Music Studies

Although a long-established social reality, the ‘politics of respectability’ was first articulated in the early 1990s by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham.⁴² She coined this term in reference to black

³⁸ Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty*, 23.

³⁹ Annika Björnsdotter Teppo, *Afrikaners and the Boundaries of Faith in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2021), 55.

⁴⁰ Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty*, 40.

⁴¹ Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty*, 17, 23, 195, 204.

⁴² Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 14.

women's movements within the Baptist church in America at the start of the twentieth century, thereby laying the foundations for respectability politics as an area of academic inquiry.⁴³ Higginbotham's respectability politics, to which much subsequent work on respectability is indebted, is 'rooted in resistance to racist imagery of Black people, particularly Black women, who adopted self-presentation strategies that downplayed sexuality and emphasized morality and dignity to reject White America's stereotypes of them.'⁴⁴ After Higginbotham, respectability was most notably theorised in 1997 by Beverley Skeggs following a longitudinal ethnographic study on how working-class women in northern England presented themselves through dress, speech and behaviour to prevent being stigmatised as working class.⁴⁵ 'For the women in her study', Anna Bull argues, 'respectability was a signifier of *not* being working class.'⁴⁶ At this early stage of respectability's theoretical development, it is interesting to note the race-class dissonance between Higginbotham's and Skegg's conceptualisations. For Higginbotham, respectability was primarily a racial matter, whereas Skeggs framed respectability first and foremost as a sign of class status.⁴⁷

As recently as 2021, respectability politics was described as an 'undertheorized concept'.⁴⁸ Even so, it is nowadays commonly understood that respectability signals more than either race or class identity. Indeed, informed by its coterminous field of intersectionality or intersectional feminism, respectability's historical preoccupation with sexuality and gender has also been integrated into discourse on the topic.⁴⁹ This suturing of class, race and gender issues situates respectability politics within a larger discourse of gender-focused intersectionality, both chronologically and theoretically. As a term and theoretical concept, intersectionality was formulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe how the inseparability of social

⁴³ Margot Dazey, 'Rethinking Respectability Politics', *The British Journal of Sociology* 72, no. 3 (June 2021): 581; Mikaela Pitcan, Alice E Marwick, and Danah Boyd, 'Performing a Vanilla Self: Respectability Politics, Social Class, and the Digital World', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 23, no. 3 (1 May 2018): 164.

⁴⁴ Pitcan, Marwick, and Boyd, 'Performing a Vanilla Self', 164.

⁴⁵ Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*, (London: Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 1997).

⁴⁶ Anna Bull, "'Respectability' and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training', *DR ANNA BULL* (professional website), 2020, 3; Anna Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 36.

⁴⁷ Maria Wiklund, Christina Ahlgren, and Anne Hammarström, 'Constructing Respectability from Disfavoured Social Positions: Exploring Young Femininities and Health as Shaped by Marginalisation and Social Context. A Qualitative Study in Northern Sweden', *Global Health Action* 11, no. sup3 (23 November 2018): 3.

⁴⁸ Dazey, 'Rethinking Respectability Politics', 581.

⁴⁹ Bull, "'Respectability' and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training'; Wiklund, Ahlgren, and Hammarström, 'Constructing Respectability from Disfavoured Social Positions'.

categorisations (like gender, race, class, sexuality, physical abilities, etc.) creates possibilities for interrogating overlapping and interdependent oppressions.⁵⁰ This, in turn, implies that intersectionality recognises how people may have diverse experiences of discrimination and oppression. Differently put, intersectionality ‘allows us to make sense of the multiple layers through which identities are constructed’, and proposes that to understand injustice, we need to consider all these identity layers and their interactions simultaneously.⁵¹

Around the same time that respectability politics and intersectionality emerged in academia, Judith Butler voiced seminal critiques on the constructed and performative nature of gender.⁵² In this regard, Deborah Youdell reminds us that

Butler is perhaps best known for her take-up of the debate between [Jacques] Derrida and [J.L.] Austin over the function of the performative and her subsequent suggestion that the subject be understood as performatively constituted.⁵³

[...]

Butler begins by adopting Foucault’s notion of discourse as productive and uses this alongside the notion of the performative to consider the production of sexed and gendered subjects.⁵⁴

Here, the words ‘constituted’ and ‘productive/production’ are synonymous with ideas of identity construction. Thus, paraphrasing Youdell, Butler’s most significant work relates to how identity (like sex and gender) is performatively constructed. Karl Kitching then lends an intersectional perspective to this notion when he observes that

[g]endered, classed and/or racialized identity, particularly from poststructural perspectives, can be considered nonstable, as it is an actively reiterated performance, made possible through the

⁵⁰ Kimberlé Crenshaw, ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics’, *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139–67; Kimberlé Crenshaw, ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color’, *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99; Ann-Dorte Christensen and Sune Qvotrup Jensen, ‘Doing Intersectional Analysis: Methodological Implications for Qualitative Research’, *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 20, no. 2 (June 2012): 109–25.

⁵¹ K. P. Vanyoro, G. Mavunga, and Z. E. Mugari, ‘Governing Bodies? Exploring Normative Sex and Gender Discourses in Informal Herbal Healing Flyers and Posters in Johannesburg CBD’, *Communicare: Journal for Communication Studies in Africa* 40, no. 1 (2021): 25.

⁵² Judith Butler, ‘Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s Second Sex’, *Yale French Studies*, no. 72 (1986): 35–49; Judith Butler, ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory’, *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519–531; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁵³ Deborah Youdell, ‘Intelligibility, Agency and the Raced-Nationed-Religioned Subjects of Education’, in *Intersectionality and “race” in Education*, ed. Kalwant Bhopal and John Preston, Routledge Research in Education 64 (New York: Routledge, 2012), 192.

⁵⁴ Youdell, ‘Intelligibility, Agency and the Raced-Nationed-Religioned Subjects of Education’, 196.

sociohistorically embedded meanings and subjectivities available in/constituting each moment.⁵⁵

Kitching's intersectional consideration is not only signalled by his mention of gender, class, and race. More importantly, perhaps, his intersectional concern is clear from his recognition that identity is not stable, but rather a repetitious performance that is dependent on many social factors. This is significant for my study since the ongoing performative construction of a singer-subject's identity may place on them a 'double burden' by occurring not just in their quotidian existence, but also in tandem with their vocal performance on stage. By implication, then, singers may carry the weight of their intersectional positionality doubly: in their daily lives, and in and through their singing.

Butler's critiques on identity construction and performativity were not only greatly influential for our understanding of identity politics, but also prompted the development of a more gender-oriented dimension of feminist thought. Indeed, '[n]ormalising feminist projects are [...] famously "troubled" by Butler's political philosophy'.⁵⁶ Simultaneously, and although Butler is not chiefly regarded as an intersectional theorist, their⁵⁷ work continually addresses intersectional issues.⁵⁸ Through their resistance to constructions of universal experiences of womanhood and their 'deconstructionist approach to gender and the category "woman"', they draw attention to a variety of social categorisations that may intersect within any one person.⁵⁹ Essentially, Butler says that no one is just 'woman'. Furthermore, they challenge the way in which biological sex (or other corporeal facticities or social positions, for that matter) comes to ascribe gender (or other categorisations) to bodies and beings.⁶⁰ It is through this cultural practice of ascribing or *naming* that respectability can be acquired or withheld. Bodies that can

⁵⁵ Karl Kitching, 'Understanding Class Anxiety and "Race" Certainty in Changing Times: Moments of Home, School, Body and Identity Configuration in "New Migrant" Dublin', in *Intersectionality and "Race" in Education*, ed. Kalwant Bhopal and John Preston, Routledge Research in Education 64 (New York: Routledge, 2012), 160.

⁵⁶ Kitching, 'Understanding Class Anxiety and "Race" Certainty in Changing Times: Moments of Home, School, Body and Identity Configuration in "New Migrant" Dublin', 159.

⁵⁷ Except in direct quotes from other sources, I refer to Butler with the pronouns they/them (singular) in this thesis. Butler identifies as non-binary and uses the pronouns they/them (singular) and she/her, with a preference for the they/them. 'I am enjoying the world of "they". When I wrote *Gender Trouble*, there was no category for "nonbinary"—but now I don't see how I cannot be in that category.' Quoted in Jules Gleeson, 'Judith Butler: "We Need to Rethink the Category of Woman"', *The Guardian*, 7 September 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/sep/07/judith-butler-interview-gender>.

⁵⁸ Lena Gunnarsson, 'Why We Keep Separating the "Inseparable": Dialecticizing Intersectionality', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 24, no. 2 (May 2017): 114–27.

⁵⁹ Gunnarsson, 'Why We Keep Separating the "Inseparable"', 117.

⁶⁰ Vanyoro, Mavunga, and Mugari, 'Governing Bodies? Exploring Normative Sex and Gender Discourses in Informal Herbal Healing Flyers and Posters in Johannesburg CBD', 31.

be accurately named ‘woman’ or ‘man’ based on their perceived sex and/or their gender performance are deemed legible and thus respectable.⁶¹ Unintelligibility, on the other hand, is excluded or disqualified from the social benefits of respectability and is vulnerable to discrimination and injustice. This is also true of other bodily materialities like race, weight/size, or physical ability, and even class or sexuality, and their deviations from the expected ‘norm’.⁶²

In broad strokes, both Butler and theorists of intersectionality argue that ‘one group is never homogenous’ and interrogate ‘frameworks that reduce people to one category at a time.’⁶³ I argue that such a practice of naming or categorisation is done to determine a person’s position within respectability’s pecking order. Or, in Kitching’s words, ‘[th]e performative, Butler tells us, enacts what it names; it names and makes.’ Thus, against the backdrop of Butler’s oeuvre and through the lens of intersectionality, respectability gains an additional dimension beyond the mere signification of class, race, and gender. It also describes a powerful oppressive force in the gendered, racialised, and classed ways that it names and then polices bodies and beings within a specific context. Where adherence to the norms and values of respectability ensures acceptance within that context, nonconformism to this social code of worthiness, whether intentional or not, is taboo and punishable by intimidation, exclusion, or disqualification.⁶⁴ It is especially as an intersectional oppressor that respectability will be explored in this study, with the aim of understanding its impact on South African women classical singers’ musicianship.

Considering respectability as an oppressive force in the lives of woman classical singers, my research also speaks to a broader field of feminist music studies. Most notably, I build on the pioneering work of authors such as Susan McClary and Marcia J. Citron, who first guided music scholarship in the direction of feminist musicology in the early 1990s.⁶⁵ McClary opened

⁶¹ Sara Kallock, ‘Livability: A Politics for Abnormative Lives’, *Sexualities* 21, no. 7 (October 2018): 1180.

⁶² Although class and sexuality are non-biological categorisations, they certainly affect the materiality of the body, which is why I have chosen to include them in my understanding of the bodily.

⁶³ Kudzaishe P Vanyoro, ‘QUEER(ING) BELONGING: Black Queer Narratives of Home(s), (In)Visibility and Resilience While Living in Johannesburg’ (Ph.D. diss., Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, 2022), 73-74.

⁶⁴ Wiklund, Ahlgren, and Hammarström, ‘Constructing Respectability from Disfavoured Social Positions’.

⁶⁵ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Susan McClary, ‘Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s’, *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993): 399–423; Susan McClary, ‘Of Patriarchs... and Matriarchs, Too. Susan McClary Assesses the Challenges and Contributions of Feminist Musicology’, *The Musical Times* 135, no. 1816 (1994): 364–69; Susan McClary, ‘Paradigm Dissonances: Music Theory, Cultural Studies, Feminist Criticism’, *Perspectives of New Music* 32, no. 1 (1994): 68–85; Marcia J. Citron, ‘Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon’, *The Journal of Musicology* 8, no. 1 (1990): 102–17; Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

her influential 1993 article on feminism in/and musicology at the time with the words, ‘[f]eminist scholarship is not new to musicology.’⁶⁶ While this might seem like a redemptive statement that clears musicology’s name of gender-based othering, it is, in fact, an arraignment against mainstream musicology for its gendered exclusivity. McClary argues that although feminist music research has been appearing since the 1970s, it was not readily granted space or attention in the discipline until about twenty years later.⁶⁷ According to McClary, this exclusion was broken in 1990 when Citron delivered ‘the first piece of feminist criticism in a major musicology journal’, scrutinising Western art music’s universalised canon and standards.⁶⁸ Furthermore, and like Butler, neither McClary nor Citron are primarily intersectional scholars, yet their work displays an acute intersectional awareness. Despite the monumental importance of Citron’s early critiques for the field of musicology and music theory, her focus is somewhat narrower than McClary’s. She mostly considers how ‘*gender-linked* conditions and conventions [...] thwart women’s chances’⁶⁹ for inclusion in the canon and, thus also in music history.⁷⁰ McClary, on the other hand, makes broader assertions about music’s non-neutrality with respect to social categories, stating that her

own work has been concerned with discerning how historically constituted ideas of gender, sexuality, and the body have informed even the most basic of musical procedures from the sixteenth century to the present.⁷¹

Moreover, and echoing Butler, she calls on those practising feminist musicology to ‘avoid repeating the same mistakes’ of universalising sex/gender/race/class:

In particular, it is important not to assume too quickly that we know what we mean by ‘women,’ especially when the result is the marginalization of women who differ from some white, middle-class, heterosexual ‘norm.’⁷²

Meanwhile, ethnomusicology—also historically othered by Musicology Supreme—was perhaps ahead in terms of feminist and intersectional considerations. First, it had been common practice within the field to include women in its research, even if it was not always in line with

⁶⁶ McClary, ‘Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s’, 399.

⁶⁷ McClary, ‘Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s’, 399.

⁶⁸ McClary, ‘Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s’, 401.

⁶⁹ My emphasis.

⁷⁰ Citron, ‘Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon’, 104.

⁷¹ McClary, ‘Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s’, 417.

⁷² McClary, ‘Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s’, 415.

current feminist criteria.⁷³ Second, ethnomusicology was also historically concerned with issues that we would label ‘intersectional’ today: ‘gender, identity, power, and the role of music in the construction of social realities.’⁷⁴ Ellen Koskoff, arguably one of the most important figures in feminist ethnomusicology in the last fifty years, examines the feminist trajectory of ethnomusicology from the early 1970s to 2012 through what she calls an ‘intellectual memoir’. Published in 2014, *A Feminist Ethnomusicology: Writings on Music and Gender* traces Koskoff’s personal journey through gender-focused ethnomusicological scholarship during her professional lifetime.⁷⁵ The book’s foreword is authored by another prolific figure in early feminist musicology, namely Suzanne Cusick, whose contributions were especially impactful in relation to (queer) sexuality in/and music.⁷⁶ Here, Cusick suggests that although Koskoff’s book is presented as ‘a kind of intellectual memoir that shows the process of change in a thoroughly intersectional professional life’, it relates more closely to the genre of autoethnography.⁷⁷ Autoethnography is, in short, a type of ethnography focused on the self, and it posits that since everyone exists within a specific cultural, social, and political context, the experiences of the individual may well reflect their context.⁷⁸ Therefore, autoethnography is a method that lends itself well to intersectional feminist research through its consideration of

⁷³ McClary, ‘Of Patriarchs... and Matriarchs, Too. Susan McClary Assesses the Challenges and Contributions of Feminist Musicology’, 366.

⁷⁴ McClary, ‘Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s’, 403.

⁷⁵ Ellen Koskoff, *A Feminist Ethnomusicology: Writings on Music and Gender*, New Perspectives on Gender in Music (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

⁷⁶ Suzanne G. Cusick, ‘Gendering Modern Music: Thoughts on the Monteverdi-Artusi Controversy’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 46, no. 1 (1993): 1–25; Suzanne G. Cusick, “Thinking from Women’s Lives”: Francesca Caccini after 1627’, *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (1993): 484–507; Suzanne G. Cusick, ‘Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem’, *Perspectives of New Music* 32, no. 1 (1994): 8–27; Suzanne G. Cusick, ‘On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight’, in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 67–84.; Suzanne G. Cusick, “There Was Not One Lady Who Failed to Shed a Tear”: Arianna’s Lament and the Construction of Modern Womanhood’, *Early Music* 22, no. 1 (1994): 21–43.

Much like her contemporaries mentioned above (Butler, McClary and Citron), Cusick is what I would call ‘accidentally intersectional’. Already her early work demonstrates clear intersectional awareness, even though it was not necessarily labelled as such. ‘It is understood now—as it was not twenty years ago—that each of us speaks for sure only for herself, each of us from a unique situation born of multiple identities layered each on the other—class, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and so forth.’ From: Cusick, ‘Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem’, 8.

⁷⁷ Suzanne Cusick, ‘Foreword’, in *A Feminist Ethnomusicology: Writings on Music and Gender*, by Ellen Koskoff, New Perspectives on Gender in Music (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), ix–xi.

⁷⁸ Carolyn Ellis, *Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*, Ethnographic Alternatives 13 (New York: AltaMira press, 2004); Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, Eighth edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2018), 287–299; Nicole Kipar, ‘Reflection as Product’, 2020, 160467 Bytes.

the individual as layered self within her own layered positionality.⁷⁹ As it might be evident already from the first part of this introduction, my research project also makes use of autoethnography as a research method for exactly this reason.⁸⁰

Later, by the early 2000s, Chris Walton and Stephanus Muller argued that ‘the study of sexuality and gender in music [had] become a decidedly mainstream activity’.⁸¹ This was true to a certain extent for musicology in South Africa, too. One of the early feminist events in South African musicology was the *Gender and Sexuality in South African Music* conference, hosted at the University of Pretoria in 2003, and the subsequent publication of the papers presented at this conference in a homonymous edited volume.⁸² More recent contributions to South African feminist musicology can be seen in *South African Music Studies*’ (SAMUS) dedication of a complete node (section) of their 36-37th volume to South African female classical composer Clare Loveday in celebration of her fiftieth birthday, featuring a series of candid interactions with the composer and her work.⁸³ Furthermore, the work of scholars such

⁷⁹ Tony E. Adams, Stacy Holman Jones, and Carolyn Ellis, eds., *Handbook of Autoethnography*, Second edition (New York London: Routledge, 2022).

⁸⁰ I address autoethnography in greater depth in a following section.

⁸¹ Chris Walton and Stephanus Muller, eds., *Gender and Sexuality in South African Music*, 1. ed (Stellenbosch: SUN ePRESS, 2005), i.

⁸² Walton and Muller, *Gender and Sexuality in South African Music*.

⁸³ William Fourie, ‘Splinter and Loss : Reading Clare Loveday’s Johannesburg Etude No. 2’, *South African Music Studies : SAMUS* 36–37, no. 1 (2018): 464–89; Andile Khumalo, ‘On Heatwave, Silence, and Working as a Woman Composer in South Africa : In Conversation with Clare Loveday’, *South African Music Studies : SAMUS* 36–37, no. 1 (2018): 504–18; Clare Loveday and Mareli Stolp, ‘Leading the Way, One Note at a Time : Composer Clare Loveday at 50’, *South African Music Studies : SAMUS* 36–37, no. 1 (2018): 490–503; Mareli Stolp, ‘Clare Loveday : Composer at 50’, *South African Music Studies : SAMUS* 36–37, no. 1 (2018): 451–54.

as Carol Ann Muller,⁸⁴ Angela Impey,⁸⁵ Marie Jorritsma,⁸⁶ and Siphokazi Tau⁸⁷ have also contributed significantly to local feminist music studies over the past twenty to thirty years.

However, if ‘the study of sexuality and gender in music’ had indeed ‘become a decidedly mainstream activity’, both in local and global contexts, I wonder if by ‘music’ Walton and Muller mean ‘Western art music’. As outlined above, ethnomusicology has shown a historical preoccupation with gender and sexuality matters. Furthermore, sexuality and gender have been a central concern in studies on popular and jazz music since at least ten years earlier (if not more), albeit via fields like sociology.⁸⁸ Perhaps a more accurate observation would be that by 2000, feminism and its concerns—as well as fields like ethnomusicology and popular and jazz music studies—had gained access to musicology proper. This delayed admittance of previously othered branches of knowledge into the discipline also meant that the intersectional turn within musicological debates only really started gaining momentum in the middle to late 2010s.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Carol Ann Muller, ‘Nazarite Song, Dance, and Dreams: The Sacralization of Time, Space, and the Female Body in South Africa’ (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1994); Carol Muller, ‘Sathima Bea Benjamin, Exile and the “Southern Touch” in Jazz Creation and Performance’, *African Languages and Cultures* 9, no. 2 (1996): 127–43; Carol Ann Muller, *Rituals of Fertility and the Sacrifice of Desire: Nazarite Women’s Performance in South Africa*, Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Carol Muller, ‘Capturing the “Spirit of Africa” in the Jazz Singing of South African-Born Sathima Bea Benjamin’, *Research in African Literatures* 32, no. 2 (2001): 133–52; Carol Ann Muller, *Musical Echoes: South African Women Thinking in Jazz*, Refiguring American Music (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Carol A. Muller, ‘Sathima Bea Benjamin: Musical Echoes and the Poetics of a South African-American Musical Self’, in *Women Singers in Global Contexts: Music, Biography, Identity*, ed. Ruth Hellier (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 161–76;

⁸⁵ Angela Impey, ‘Resurrecting the Flesh? Reflections on Women in Kwaito’, *Agenda* 16, no. 49 (1 January 2001): 44–50; Angela Impey, ‘Pathways of Song: Re-Voicing Women’s Landscapes in the Maputaland Borderlands’, *Agenda* 21, no. 73 (1 January 2007): 102–16; Angela Impey, ‘Songs of Mobility and Belonging: Gender, Spatiality and the Local in Southern Africa’s Transfrontier Conservation Development’, *Interventions* 15, no. 2 (June 2013): 255–71; Angela Impey, *Song Walking: Women, Music, and Environmental Justice in an African Borderland*, Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018).

⁸⁶ Marie Jorritsma, ‘South African “Songprints”: The Lives and Works of Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph, Princess Constance Magogo, and Rosa Nepgen’ (Master’s thesis, Rice University, 2001); Marie R. Jorritsma, ‘Sonic Spaces: Inscribing “Coloured” Voices in the Karoo, South Africa’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2006); Marie R. Jorritsma, *Sonic Spaces of the Karoo: The Sacred Music of a South African Coloured Community*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

⁸⁷ Siphokazi Tau, ‘Brenda Fassie and Busiswa Gqulu: A Relationship of Feminist Expression, Aesthetics and Memory’, *Social Dynamics* 47, no. 1 (2 January 2021): 23–36.

⁸⁸ McClary, ‘Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s’, 404; McClary, ‘Of Patriarchs... and Matriarchs, Too. Susan McClary Assesses the Challenges and Contributions of Feminist Musicology’ 368; John Covach, ‘Popular Music, Unpopular Musicology’, in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Mark Everist and Nicholas Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 452–70.

⁸⁹ Elizabeth K. Keenan, ‘Intersectionality in Third-Wave Popular Music: Sexuality, Race, and Class’, in *Oxford Handbooks Online*, by Elizabeth K. Keenan (Oxford University Press, 2015; Diane Pecknold and Kristine M. McCusker, eds., *Country Boys and Redneck Women: New Essays in Gender and Country Music* (University Press of Mississippi, 2016); Kyle DeCoste, ‘Street Queens: New Orleans Brass Bands and the Problem of Intersectionality’, *Ethnomusicology* 61, no. 2 (2017): 181–206; Sidsel Karlsen, ‘Policy, Access, and Multicultural (Music) Education’, in *Policy and the Political Life of Music Education*, ed. Patrick Schmidt and Richard Colwell (Oxford University Press, 2017); Sam de Boise, ‘Gender Inequalities and Higher Music

Moreover, these contributions were distinctly interdisciplinary, originating not necessarily from specialist musical and musicological fields alone.⁹⁰ However, despite this new inclusive disciplinary attitude, discourse on classical music specifically remained disappointingly oblivious to intersectionality. Where intersectionality does manage to reach over into classical music, it has been—much like Crenshaw’s ‘original’ intersectionality—the burden of black or marginalised women to spearhead this development.⁹¹ Here, the work of Naomi André, who can be regarded as the doyen of this subfield with the development of what she calls engaged musicology, is of particular importance to my study.⁹² This is not least through its intersectional concern with gender and race in opera and operatic (i.e., classical) singing, but also in its demonstratively tactful interweaving of autoethnographic reflections into the research material. As in the case of intersectionality and classical music, little work has been done specifically at the junction of respectability and classical music. One of the few sustained engagements in this field, Anna Bull’s research since 2016 on respectability in the classical music industry in the United Kingdom takes a decidedly intersectional approach and postulates that respectability as oppressor operates at the junction of gender, race and class, and sexuality to a lesser extent.⁹³ Apart from Bull’s work, André has also made meaningful contributions in terms of respectability in classical music at the intersection of especially gender and race from as early

Education: Comparing the UK and Sweden’, *British Journal of Music Education* 35, no. 1 (March 2018): 23–41; Kristin McGee, ‘Biopolitics and Media Power in the Online Dance Remake: Remixing Beyoncé’s “***Flawless” in the YouTube Archive’, *Popular Music and Society* 42, no. 1 (January 2019): 22–41; Alexandra M. Apolloni, *Freedom Girls: Voicing Femininity in 1960s British Pop*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021); Katelyn E. Best, ‘Expanding Musical Inclusivity: Representing and Re-Presenting Musicking in Deaf Culture through Hip Hop’, in *Music and Democracy: Participatory Approaches*, ed. Marko Kölbl and Fritz Trümpler (Wien Bielefeld: mdwPress Transcript, 2021), 235–66.

⁹⁰ See Athena Elafros, “No Beauty Tips or Guilt Trips”: *Rockrgirl*, Rock, and Representation’, *Popular Music and Society* 33, no. 4 (October 2010): 487–99; Reiland Rabaka, *Hip Hop’s Inheritance: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Hip Hop Feminist Movement* (Lanham Boulder New York Toronto Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, a division of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2011); Elizabeth A. McConnell et al., ‘Complicating Counterspaces: Intersectionality and the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival’, *American Journal of Community Psychology* 57, no. 3–4 (2016): 473–88; and Chernoh M. Sesay, ‘Mapping Intersectionality, Imagining Music, and Excavating America’s African Archives’, *Journal of the Early Republic* 38, no. 2 (2018): 325–33.

⁹¹ Naomi André, ‘Teaching Opera in Prison’, in *The Intersectional Approach*, ed. Michelle Tracy Berger and Kathleen Guidroz, Book, Section vols (The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 258; Naomi Adele André, *Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018); Samantha Ege, ‘Chicago, the “City We Love to Call Home!”: Intersectionality, Narrativity, and Locale in the Music of Florence Beatrice Price and Theodora Sturkow Ryder’, *American Music (Champaign, Ill.)* 39, no. 1 (2021): 1–40; Shyr Ee Tan, ‘Whose Decolonisation? Checking for Intersectionality, Lane-Policing and Academic Privilege from a Transnational (Chinese) Vantage Point’, *Ethnomusicology Forum* 30, no. 1 (2 January 2021): 140–62.

⁹² André, *Black Opera*, 1–26.

⁹³ Anna Bull, ‘El Sistema as a Bourgeois Social Project: Class, Gender, and Victorian Values’, *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 120–53; Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*; Bull, ‘“Respectability” and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training’.

as 2012.⁹⁴ André is, furthermore, a founding member of the Black Opera Research Network (BORN), an ‘intercontinental community of scholars and practitioners working at the intersections of opera and Blackness’ that was launched in 2020.⁹⁵ Significantly, the BORN team includes a number of prominent South African opera scholars—Hilde Roos, Mia Pistorius, Wayne Muller, and Donato Somma—whose work is mostly focused on the Southern African operatic scene.⁹⁶ However, while BORN and its scholars (including André) often address respectability in their work, its workings within classical music are not their primary interest. Rather, respectability forms part of a larger range of intersectional themes arising from their interrelated research topics. Other contributions to respectability in classical music have been smaller-scale historical explorations focused mostly on North American and British contexts.⁹⁷ While these studies are valuable for the critique of classical music as a tool for exclusionary boundary-drawing around ‘less’ respectable groups and genres, they do not speak directly to the current South African context.

In the South African context specifically, a handful of prominent publications have been delivered commenting on the connections and intersections between respectability, gender, race and class in music. Sylvia Bruinders’s research, for instance, provides a thorough examination of respectability and gender norms and values in the coloured⁹⁸ Christmas Bands Movement of the Western Cape.⁹⁹ Moreover, Xavier Livermon and Glenn Holtzman have also contributed to respectability research within music by respectively exploring race, gender, sexuality and respectability in kwaito music in South Africa (Livermon), and the coloured community’s self-association with specific musical genres as a ‘means of claiming

⁹⁴ André, ‘Teaching Opera in Prison’; André, *Black Opera*; Naomi André, ‘From Otello to Porgy: Blackness, Masculinity, and Morality in Opera’, in *Blackness in Opera*, ed. Naomi Andre, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor (United States: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 11–31.

⁹⁵ Naomi Andre et al., ‘Black Experiences in Opera: Perspectives from South Africa, Europe and the US’, *SAMUS: South African Music Studies* 40, no. 1 (1 July 2020): 292.

⁹⁶ ‘About | Black Opera Research Network’, accessed 6 January 2024, <https://blackoperaresearch.net/about/>.

⁹⁷ Jocelyn L. Buckner, ‘“Spectacular Opacities”: The Hyers Sisters’ Performances of Respectability and Resistance’, *African American Review* 45, no. 3 (2012): 309–23; Michael Goron, *Gilbert and Sullivan’s ‘Respectable Capers’: Class, Respectability and the Savoy Operas 1877-1909*, Palgrave Studies in British Musical Theatre (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Kelsey A. K. Klotz, ‘On Musical Value: John Lewis, Structural Listening, and the Politics of Respectability’, *Jazz Perspectives* 11, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 25–51; Gina Bombola and Kristen M Turner, ‘Respectability, Prestige, and the Whiteness of Opera in American Popular Entertainment from 1890 to 1937’, *The Musical Quarterly* 105, no. 3–4 (9 January 2023): 274–319.

⁹⁸ I use the term ‘coloured’ throughout this thesis as it is used self-referentially by many South Africans, while simultaneously acknowledging its complex history as a racial construction formed in and through apartheid law.

⁹⁹ Sylvia Bruinders, *Parading Respectability: The Cultural and Moral Aesthetics of the Christmas Bands Movement in the Western Cape, South Africa*, African Humanities Series (Grahamstown, South Africa: AHP Publications, 2017).

respectability and dignity’ (Holtzman).¹⁰⁰ That said, there has been a relative absence of concerns around the work of respectability in classical music and, more specifically, classical singing in South Africa. This is where—and why—my study seeks to make its contribution. As a young South African singer and scholar, I often needed resources that explain and validate the ways in which respectability has impacted my musicianship and research within my context, but these were not readily available. In fact, because of respectability’s ‘invisibility’ due to its situatedness in the (shared cultural) subconscious, I did not even have a name for it and its invasions in my life until very recently. This research, I hope, will help illuminate respectability and its functioning in classical singing for future generations of South African singers and vocal scholars.

The lack of respectability research in South Africa music studies stands in stark contrast to the wealth of scholarship on respectability politics in South African society more broadly. Locally, respectability has been analysed at its junctures with a diversity of intersecting issues like race,¹⁰¹ gender and gender-based violence,¹⁰² South African histories like apartheid and colonialism,¹⁰³ traditional practices,¹⁰⁴ landscape,¹⁰⁵ and Afrikaner and Afrikaans-speaking *ordentlikheid*.¹⁰⁶ Such local respectability discourses are all relevant to my study for gaining insight into respectability’s operation, currently and in the past, in the country. For example,

¹⁰⁰ Xavier Livermon, *Kwaito Bodies: Remastering Space and Subjectivity in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020); Glenn Holtzman, ‘Coloureds Performing Queer, or Queer Coloureds Performing?: Asserting Belonging through Queer Behavior in Cape Town, South Africa’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2017), iv.

¹⁰¹ Lynn M. Thomas, ‘The Modern Girl and Racial Respectability in 1930s South Africa’, *The Journal of African History* 47, no. 3 (2006): 461–90.

¹⁰² Fiona Larkan and Brian van Wyk, ‘A Few Good Men in a World of Gangsters: Discourses of Respectability and Risk amongst Student Teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa’, *African Sociological Review / Revue Africaine de Sociologie* 18, no. 2 (2014): 82–94; Jessica Scott and Liesl Theron, ‘The Promise of Heteronormativity: Marriage as a Strategy for Respectability in South Africa’, *Sexualities* 22, no. 3 (March 2019): 436–51.

¹⁰³ David Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance: A History of Sophiatown* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004); Robert Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750–1870: A Tragedy of Manners*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁴ Christie Sennott, Sangeetha Madhavan, and Youngeun Nam, ‘Modernizing Marriage: Balancing the Benefits and Liabilities of Bridewealth in Rural South Africa’, *Qualitative Sociology* 44, no. 1 (March 2021): 55–75.

¹⁰⁵ Jonathan Cane, *Civilising Grass: The Art of the Lawn on the South African Highveld* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019).

¹⁰⁶ Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty*; Teppo, ‘Moral Radicals’; Teppo, *Afrikaners and the Boundaries of Faith in Post-Apartheid South Africa*; Annika Teppo, ‘Church Rules? The Lines of *Ordentlikheid* among Stellenbosch Afrikaners’, *Anthropology Southern Africa* 38, no. 3–4 (2 October 2015): 314–30; Nina Botha, ‘“Sick” with Child’, *Anthropology Southern Africa* 33, no. 1–2 (January 2010): 1–8; Fiona C. Ross, ‘Raw Life and Respectability: Poverty and Everyday Life in a Postapartheid Community’, *Current Anthropology* 56, no. S11 (October 2015): S97–107; Theo Sonnekus, ‘Against *Ordentlikheid*: Disobedient Femininities in Selected Embroideries by Hannalie Taute’, *De Arte* 55, no. 1 (2 January 2020): 31–56.

though *ordentlikheid* is not suitable as a framework for analysing the experiences of South African women more generally, as explained before, it is still important for an integrated understanding of South African respectability politics. This is in part because its norms and values continue to compel Afrikaners and Afrikaans speakers, but more importantly for its demonstrative handling of intersectionality within respectability discourse in South Africa. Defining *ordentlikheid* as a set of ‘performatives for a mode of “doing woman” at a gender-sexuality-race-class juncture,’¹⁰⁷ Van der Westhuizen stresses that the concept allows for ‘an intersectional examination of the identity in question’¹⁰⁸ and ‘the discernment of the productive interactions between various social markers of difference—particularly class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and age.’¹⁰⁹

Thus, while issues of respectability and, concomitantly, intersectionality have been interrogated across various academic discourses in and beyond South Africa, musicology has been slow to incorporate such approaches. Instead, there has been a more contained focus on feminism. My study builds on this field of feminist musicology but recognises the imperative raised by authors such as Bull to consider the realities of classical music performers from the intersectional perspective of respectability coded by gender norms.

1.3. Respectability in Classical Music

[C]lassical music education as well as the profession remains dominated by people who are white and middle class.¹¹⁰

This was one of the central conclusions of Anna Bull’s 2019 monograph, *Class, Control and Classical Music*.¹¹¹ Following a long-term ethnographic investigation, Bull uses intersectional, historically informed analysis to demonstrate the gendered, racialised and classed patterns of inequalities in classical music in the context of the United Kingdom. To this end, she identifies two main patterns of inequalities:

¹⁰⁷ Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty*, 100, 195.

¹⁰⁸ Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty*, 24.

¹⁰⁹ Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty*, 60.

¹¹⁰ Bull, ‘“Respectability” and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training’, 1.

¹¹¹ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*.

low numbers of working-class people and racialised minorities in education as well as in the profession; and alongside this, high numbers of girls and young women learning classical music, but these higher numbers falling away within the profession.¹¹²

Employing the concept of ‘gendered respectability’, she draws these two intersecting patterns of inequality together, arguing that, within classical music training, they account not only for gender inequalities but are also historically classed and racialised inequalities.¹¹³ By tracing the concept’s historical lineage back to the nineteenth-century British Empire and highlighting its links to British imperialism, her study exposes respectability—currently and in the past—as a classed and raced identity, and as inextricably tied to gender.

On a classed front and against the backdrop of a late nineteenth-century expansive boom in the lower middle classes, gendered respectability is central to maintaining white, middle-class class coherence. Here, respectability draws boundaries around the middle classes by determining women’s class positions via their perceived sexual morality, associating deviant female sexualities with the lower classes. Respectability is, in Bull’s words, ‘a moral category and a form of judgement through which class is produced in gendered ways,’¹¹⁴ upholding the racial standards of empire through an imperialist us-them dialectic inscribed into Western identity during the Victorian period, when (white) middle-class identities came to be ‘shaped through and against the others of the Empire.’¹¹⁵ Within this ideology, women play a central role in reproducing respectability from inside the family in order to maintain the us-them distinctions that enable empire. Bull, after Anne McClintock, calls this the ‘cult of domesticity,’¹¹⁶ referring to how, with the family as a metaphor for the progress and health/wealth of empire, women are simultaneously complicit with imperialism and subject to its control. Should imperialism be thought of as a spatially extended form of nationalism, Van der Westhuizen makes a valuable contribution to the discussion in her theorisation of gendered *ordentlikheid* in service of Afrikaner nationalism:

¹¹² Bull, ‘“Respectability” and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training’, 1.

¹¹³ Bull, ‘“Respectability” and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training’, 1.

¹¹⁴ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, 9.

¹¹⁵ Bull, ‘“Respectability” and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training’, 3.

¹¹⁶ Bull, ‘“Respectability” and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training’, 3.

As is the case with nationalisms generally, women serve as the bearers of respectability, imprinted on their bodies through comportment and dress. Their bodies demarcate the nation.¹¹⁷

Within this historical and contemporary context, Bull then explicates classical music's reliance on and 'connotations with gendered respectability and femininity.'¹¹⁸ Historically, musical standards became intertwined with the moral standard of empire through conservatoire-style classical music training institutions and musical examination boards.¹¹⁹ Girls and young women made up the largest participatory demographic in these institutions because, for them, learning classical music was an integral part of the performance of a respectable middle-class identity. This performance was enabled by the bodily disciplining that is required to play classical music—a restrained comportment, sanitised of the sexual impropriety associated with uncontrolled lower-class femininity. At the same time, classical music also functioned as an aspirational pursuit through which lower-middle-class young women could perform and prove their respectability, and thus their worth to the British Empire as potential recruits into the cult of domesticity.

In more recent times, respectability's gendered, racialised, and classed heritage, handed down by musical training institutions, examination boards, and quotidian practices, 'still inform[s] the social identity and social significations associated with classical music' in the United Kingdom.¹²⁰ Bull outlines three ways in which respectability still functions in this way today. First, through classical music's unspoken lineage of self-association with middle-class morality, according to which social positions and identities are judged. In the consistent repetition over time of statements that connect class, moral worth, sexuality, propriety and classical music, such statements acquire the status of 'commonsense' discourse, creating an impression of inherent truth.¹²¹ Second, through 'respectable' dress and style, with its specific expectations for a modest, restrained appearance which adheres to traditional gender norms, that reinforced a normative identity of the 'respectable' classical musician.¹²² Last, through the restriction of expressive bodily movement for (young) women, linking control and restraint

¹¹⁷ Van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty*, 33.

¹¹⁸ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, 91.

¹¹⁹ Bull, '“Respectability” and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training', 4.

¹²⁰ Bull, '“Respectability” and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training', 5.

¹²¹ Bull, '“Respectability” and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training', 5.

¹²² Bull, '“Respectability” and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training', 6.

to the symbolisation of feminine sexual morality. This, in turn, contributes to their self-elimination from roles of prestige and authority such as conducting, thereby reinforcing gender inequalities in the profession.¹²³ Or, in Laura Tunbridge's phrasing,

The classical vocal recital, in other words, became a performative nexus for identifying as belonging to a certain race or nation while simultaneously demonstrating one's command over a number of different languages and styles.¹²⁴

In other words, the classical vocal recital, or classical music more broadly, promotes respectability's ideals by showcasing a refined and culturally sophisticated identity within the performance context, thus contributing to the perpetuation of certain oppressive societal norms and expectations associated with respectability. However, since Bull's research was conducted in the United Kingdom, she cautions that

the extent to which the arguments put forward here are also helpful for explaining patterns of inequality around classical music production in other contexts must be a matter for empirical investigation. The expansion of British music education institutions to Commonwealth countries suggests that there are likely to be some similarities in practices elsewhere, even if the meanings of these practices and the ways in which they intersect with structures of inequality may be different.¹²⁵

As such, this work is a direct heed to Bull's call to empirically investigate respectability in classical music in the South African context, to consider

the ways in which classical music refracts and intersects with other cultures and how classical music's culture travels across time and space, especially the role of British musical institutions in influencing musical cultures and standards in the Commonwealth.¹²⁶

Apart from serving as a response to Bull's call for empirical investigations into manifestations of respectability in classical music outside the United Kingdom, this work also underscores the need to explore how classical music intersects with diverse cultures, acknowledging that classical music's cultural impact transcends time and space, particularly considering the influence of British musical institutions on standards in the Commonwealth, even if this is a theme that is not explicitly addressed in this thesis.

¹²³ Bull, 'Respectability' and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training', 6-7.

¹²⁴ Laura Tunbridge, *Singing in the Age of Anxiety: Lieder Performances in New York and London between the World Wars* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 35.

¹²⁵ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, xvi.

¹²⁶ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, 180.

1.4. Research Goals, Aims and Methodology

It is within the context laid out above that I consider the following primary research question: how do expectations of female respectability affect South African women classical singers' musicianship? Following a decidedly intersectional approach, this question raises a secondary research question: how may the pressure of conforming to such expectations be compounded at the intersections of race, class, and gender? In order to address these questions, I aim in this study to:

- explore the lived experiences of six classical singers by means of in-depth, semi-structured interviews;
- situate my own experience as a performer in this field within the experiences of others through autoethnographic reflections;
- consider the tension that emerges between the singer-participants and my own experiences when issues of respectability are read intersectionally, i.e., across social categorisations like gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability.

This is done with the greater overarching aim of establishing critical sociological research on the lived experiences of women working in classical music performance in South Africa.

To achieve these aims, I investigate how women classical singers are expected to be respectable or 'sit/sing pretty' in classical music performance in South Africa, whether as a result of actual expectations (externally imposed) or perceived expectations (internally imposed, projected onto the self). Moreover, I investigate how these singers think the pressure of conforming to such expectations has influenced and continues to influence their musicianship. To do so, I take an interpretivist approach, which acknowledges that all things are social constructions and that singular realities do not exist.¹²⁷ Interpretivism is well-suited to qualitative research, and all the more to research that employs intersectional feminist methods, since interpretivism recognises that 'different people experience things in different ways and all these different interpretations and experiences of phenomena are equally valid'.¹²⁸

To investigate and analyse the lived experiences of South African classical singers, the views of six prominent women singers currently active in classical music performance in the country

¹²⁷ Layla Cassim, 'Chapter 1: Introduction to Research & How to Write a Research Proposal', in *THE POSTGRADUATE TOOLKIT: A Peer-Reviewed Electronic Textbook and Multimedia Resource [e-Book]*, 4th edition (Johannesburg: Layla Cassim ERS Consultants CC, 2021), 108.

¹²⁸ Cassim, 'Chapter 1: Introduction to Research & How to Write a Research Proposal', 108-9.

were collected by means of in-depth personal interviews. These discussions took the form of semi-structured interviews with a duration of sixty to a hundred-and-twenty minutes each. The semi-structured format implies that I had some scripted questions that I put to the singer-interviewees but that we did not necessarily stick to a specific question order, and that the singers were free to speak about unscripted themes and topics as they came up. To identify the singers, I first selected a small number of referees via purposive or judgment sampling. For this sampling method, the researcher uses their own judgement to determine who should be sampled. It is used in cases where a researcher is looking for participants with specific characteristics, expertise or experiences, as in the case of this study.¹²⁹ These referees are active classical music performers in South Africa who I knew might have had experiences relating to my research topic or might know of female-identifying performers who might have had such experiences. Then, the referees were asked to recommend possible interview participants. In other words, interview participants were selected via snowball sampling, also known as chain-referral sampling. For this sampling method, a participant or referee refers a further possible participant, who might, in turn, refer a third, etc.¹³⁰ Findings from the interviews are interwoven with autoethnographic reporting, which I discuss at more length below, on my own experiences of the pressures of conforming to (and at times subverting) expectations of female respectability in local classical music performance.

The sample size of both the referee and singer-interviewee groups were very small. I have opted for these sample sizes because my research is specifically interested in exploring individual lived experiences within South African classical music performance. The research is thus not primarily interested in generalising its findings to a larger group but rather in using the experiences of individuals within a group to ask questions and prompt discourse around my topic. With this in mind, a smaller sample size has had the advantage of giving me more time and resources to thoroughly analyse each participant's experiences in an in-depth manner and to fully consider the particular variables and contextual factors relating to each participant's situation.¹³¹ Linking to this, and as a purely practical justification for these small sample sizes,

¹²⁹ Layla Cassim, 'Chapter 3: An Overview of Research Design and Methodology', in *THE POSTGRADUATE TOOLKIT: A Peer-Reviewed Electronic Textbook and Multimedia Resource [e-Book]*, 4th edition (Johannesburg: Layla Cassim ERS Consultants CC, 2021), 1–240; John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Fifth edition (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018); John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, Fourth edition (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018).

¹³⁰ Cassim, 'Chapter 3: An Overview of Research Design and Methodology'; Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*; Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*.

¹³¹ Cassim, 'Chapter 3: An Overview of Research Design and Methodology', 69.

Cassim explains that the sample size in qualitative research is often much smaller than that of quantitative research, because qualitative data collection is often quite time-consuming and resource-intensive. ‘For example, it is easier and less time-consuming to distribute 100 questionnaires [...] than to go and interview 100 people.’¹³² Furthermore, keeping in mind the autoethnographic component of the study, I felt that a thoroughly qualitative reading of a small number of participants’ lived experiences against my own would be more productive than a broader, more quantitative reading of the experiences of many participants. Lastly, the field of classical music performance in South Africa is not a large pool to start with. Considering that my participants will form part of a subgroup within this pool, finding a larger group of participants who are interested and available to participate in the project would likely have crippled the study. The design of the interviews and the analysis of the data were approached through the lenses of respectability, intersectionality, gender and feminist theories, as outlined before, against which the lived experiences of both myself and the participants in this study are read.

1.5. The Singers-Participants—Singing the Self

[B]eing a classical musician is a powerful identity that performs respectability for young women.¹³³

The singers who participated in my study are represented completely anonymously in this thesis. They are referred to by means of pseudonyms, and any identifiable characteristics, performance experiences or affiliations have been left out to ensure their anonymity is preserved. The six singers, ranging in age from early twenties until early fifties, included one Zulu woman, three white Afrikaans women, and three coloured women with Kaaps as their home language. All six were partnered at the time of the interviews, three are mothers, and one is queer. The women are all active in the classical vocal industry in South Africa. Protecting the singers’ identities is of utmost importance for this study; surpassing university ethics standards, this is crucial given that anonymity shields them from the very real danger of losing work because of any revelations, benign or explosive, that may have emerged from the interviews. Furthermore, all the interview discussions were transcribed by me alone. Interview questions centred around the following themes: the singers’ musical backgrounds and performance careers; their ideas around musicianship; their experiences of gender and the

¹³² Cassim, ‘Chapter 3: An Overview of Research Design and Methodology’, 40.

¹³³ Bull, ‘“Respectability” and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training’, 1.

pressures of gendered respectability both in their daily life and in performance; whether they feel race and class have impacted how they experience their gender and gendered respectability both in their daily life and in performance; how they think such pressures have impacted their musicianship; the performative nature of gender; and their general ideas around respectability and *ordentlikheid* (where appropriate).

My participant-singers' stories are interwoven with autoethnographic reflections on my own lived experiences as a young South African mezzo-soprano, and how I feel respectability's oppressive force has affected my musicianship. Autoethnography, as a type of ethnography focused on the self, allows me to situate and analyse myself as researcher within a wider cultural, social, and political context. It also allows me to make explicit how my own experiences are reflected in the context of my research.¹³⁴ On a methodological level, autoethnography serves both as process and product, with the researcher engaging in autoethnography via self-analysis, and producing *an* autoethnography as the final outcome.¹³⁵ At the same time, reflections undertaken during the autoethnographic process can also be seen as products, because it is the 'data' that is analyzed to compose the autoethnography.¹³⁶ These reflections, a sort of continuous documentation of my experience, may take various forms, including planned and/or spontaneous diary entries, (auto)ethnographic field notes, analytical notes (made during the data analysis), retrospective narratives, reflection-in-action notes and incidental data (such as post-hoc researcher data and experiences).¹³⁷

As with any research methodology, autoethnography has its own set of advantages and disadvantages that make it either more or less favourable for different types of research. Despite its advantages in providing unique insights not easily attainable through other methods, autoethnography faces criticism, particularly for its potential to generate navelgazing research, which indulges narcissistic tendencies in the writer.¹³⁸ However, since my research is focused on the classical singer's embodiment of respectability, investigated in part through artistic methods, the autoethnographic component to this study offers valuable insights that might not

¹³⁴ Nicole Kipar, 'Reflection as Product'; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, 287-299; Ellis, *Ethnographic I*.

¹³⁵ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (2010).

¹³⁶ Leon Anderson, 'Analytic Autoethnography', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4 (August 2006): 382-83.

¹³⁷ Nicole Kipar, 'Reflection as Product'

¹³⁸ Sara Delamont, 'The Only Honest Thing: Autoethnography, Reflexivity and Small Crises in Fieldwork', *Ethnography and Education* 4, no. 1 (March 2009): 51.

be easy to access through other methodologies. Indeed, as a part of this research project, I presented an experimental concert, entitled *un(BECOMING)*, during which I consciously and wilfully transgressed what I perceived to be the boundaries of respectability on the classical concert stage. The concert formed a part of this research project by exploring various ways in which I envisioned undoing the oppression of respectability in my musicianship and on my singing body. These included cutting and shaving my hair, and removing my stage makeup, jewellery, and concert gown. These acts were a symbolic stripping of the things that made me respectable on stage. Yet I also sought a more internal unbecoming through my choice of repertoire and acts of musical disruption. I *un*became respectable; or became unrespectable. This recital is not addressed again until the concluding chapter. Indeed, it was not designed as a heuristic for understanding the lived experiences of my interlocutors nor of the themes that emerged in the analysis of the interviews. Rather, it was a way for me to reflect on my own experiences of respectability's oppression in my singing career. The concert thus becomes a tacit and even subconscious backdrop against which the autoethnographic reflections in this thesis are formed. *un(BECOMING)* was documented in extensive autoethnographic field notes, as well as photography, to inform my thinking around why for me being a classical musician can be such 'a powerful identity that performs respectability for [...] women.'¹³⁹ To draw this reflexive but tacit backdrop into my analysis of respectability, still images from this concert intersperse in reverse chronological order the various chapters of this thesis in order to think through my own politics of unbecoming in relation to the experiences of my interlocutors.

1.6. Chapter Outline

In this first chapter, I have introduced the context and background to my research across the fields of respectability politics, music studies, and intersectionality. Furthermore, this chapter outlines this project's goals and aims, as well as the methodologies it employs. Chapters Two and Three investigate two main modes of gendered bodily respectability that featured in my singer-participants' lives. Chapter Two is specifically focused on what I have termed *extra-bodily technologies in service of respectability*, referring to anything that a singer may externally and visibly apply (on)to her body to enhance its physical appeal in specific ways, in line with respectability's requirements. In thinking through the notion of extra-bodily technologies in this chapter, I outline via cyborg theory how this first mode of respectability

¹³⁹ Bull, "Respectability' and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training', 1.

policing operates as an intersectionally oppressive force in my own and my singer-participants' lives. The second form of bodily discipline emerges in what I call *intra-bodily markers of respectability*, which is the focus of Chapter 3. Across this chapter I demonstrate, based on my singer-participants' experiences and my own, how the policing of intra-bodily respectability markers may shift our understanding of identity performativity from the discursive realm into the physical. In doing so, I think critically about the importance of language in respectability's shaping of women's realities. In Chapter Four, I explore their theme of play as a subversive strategy employed by the singers in my study, contrasting the playful subversion with my own mode of 'serious' rebellion. Play, with its ambiguous nature rooted in theories of psychology and self-realization, becomes a fundamental aspect of human development, allowing individuals to explore their capabilities and confront societal limitations. The chapter delves into the gendered aspects of subversive play in various arenas such as physical appearance, sexuality, musicianship, race, and class, emphasizing and questioning its potential as a political action within the constraints of societal structures. Chapter Five explores my own experiences of embodied unbecoming from respectability's oppressions through vocal performance. This chapter ties together the three strands presented in the body of this thesis (Chapter Two, Three, and Four) through my singing, transgressing body in reference to what I call a feminist musicianship practice as a way of singing beyond respectability.



Figure 8: *un(BECOMING)* 4: I sing Madeleien Dringe's 'Song of a Nightclub Proprietress' while removing my stage makeup, clothed in a dressing gown and my underwear.

TWO

Cyborg Singing: Extra-Bodily Technologies of Respectability

I wear makeup every day. My reasons for doing so, I have come to realise, are complex. Even though I experience myself as confident and self-assured, or perhaps exactly because I experience myself as such, my daily habit of wearing makeup is something my conscious mind has struggled to unpick and make sense of. Most days it passes by as a mindless, uninterrogated routine. However, prompted by this study, I have started to contemplate whether, for me, makeup perhaps serves to conceal insecurities that run far deeper than skin. Imagined inadequacies rooted in the invisible, unarticulated subconscious. This kind of meditation usually happens in the morning while performing my ritual face painting, in the company of only my reflection in a vanity mirror. On one such a morning, in this state of up-close self-reflection, I observed five deep horizontal lines across my forehead. I had seen them before, but they now seemed more imprinted. Is this normal for a twenty-nine-year-old? I wondered. This encounter with my frown lines in the mirror stirred the memory of another encounter with a singer colleague in a bar about two years ago. We studied together for five years as undergraduates. Despite her pretty voice, face, and figure, she was not accepted to our university's classical vocal performance specialisation course. I, however, was admitted and felt like an imposter for it. After university, and notwithstanding my rigorous training in the performance programme, my singing career did not take off. She, on the other hand, seemed to start earning an income and recognition with her craft almost immediately, albeit in what our curriculum, through its focus on the classical canon, positioned as the lesser realm of musical theatre.

After four years of catching glimpses of each other on social media, it was delightful to see her in person again. She had just come from a performance and still wore a full face of stage makeup. I was utterly mesmerised by her false lashes. Did she apply them herself or does their company have a makeup artist? No, she replied, they have to do their own makeup. Wow, I've never been able to apply my own false lashes! But it's easy, she said, you just have to give the glue some time to dry and become tackier before applying the lashes—thirty seconds should do. This set the tone for the rest of our conversation that evening. In a kind of singers' geekspeak, we discussed some of the modes of beautification that might benefit a stage career. I, still feeling like a charlatan singer, asked her many questions, hoping to infuse my vocal worth with her dressing table expertise. Recalling my own painful orthodontic treatments, for

example, I inquired about her newly installed set of braces, and how it affects her singing. Truthfully, I think I was more interested in her cosmetic motivations for getting braces than its possible impact on her vocal delivery. Singing technique, after all, is highly malleable, but teeth only move if they are made to. Even then, they tend to return to their original positions if they are not kept in line by an orthodontic retainer after the treatment plan has concluded. Indeed, her teeth had shifted back after a first round of orthodontics in her teens, which was the reason she now decided to get braces once more. I yearned to do the same. But braces are expensive, I mused, trying to sound nonchalant, so how does she afford it? Oh, she persuaded her parents to pay, justifying it as a long-term investment in her career and continued employability. Her smile, she said, is part of the product after all.

Later, she casually mentioned that she had also been undergoing regular preventative anti-ageing procedures, like Botox injections, and wanted to know whether I had ever considered doing the same. Somewhat caught off-guard by her question, I admitted that I had indeed considered it, but not as a cosmetic treatment. Botox can be used as a treatment for tension headaches and temporomandibular joint (TMJ) dysfunction.¹⁴⁰ She seemed perturbed, mentioning that she could *see* the lines on my forehead, placing a high-pitched emphasis on the word ‘see’.¹⁴¹ While it certainly was an abrasive comment, I did not interpret it as a jibe about my maturing skin. On the contrary, despite the relative absence of affective grooves on her face, I sensed from her a sincere concern for my artistic image. Moreover, I have never been particularly bothered by the knowledge that I, too, would eventually start to develop wrinkles, so her comment did not strike a nerve. But on that morning, two years later, I

¹⁴⁰ According to Persaud et al., ‘[b]otox is best known for its beneficial role in facial aesthetics but recent literature has highlighted its usage in multiple non-cosmetic medical and surgical conditions [...] pertaining to the head and neck.’ Ricardo Persaud et al., ‘An Evidence-Based Review of Botulinum Toxin (Botox) Applications in Non-Cosmetic Head and Neck Conditions’, *JRSM Short Reports* 4, no. 2 (February 2013): 1. See also: C. Sunil Dutt et al., ‘Botulinum Toxin in the Treatment of Muscle Specific Oro-Facial Pain: A Literature Review’, *Journal of Maxillofacial and Oral Surgery* 14, no. 2 (June 2015): 171–75; Eliane H. Dutra et al., ‘Loading of the Condylar Cartilage Can Rescue the Effects of Botox on TMJ’, *Calcified Tissue International* 103, no. 1 (July 2018): 71–79; Brin Freund and Aruna Rao, ‘Efficacy of Botulinum Toxin in Tension-Type Headaches: A Systematic Review of the Literature’, *Pain Practice* 19, no. 5 (June 2019): 541–51; Tina S. Alster and Iris S. Harrison, ‘Alternative Clinical Indications of Botulinum Toxin’, *American Journal of Clinical Dermatology* 21, no. 6 (December 2020): 855–80.

¹⁴¹ Winfried Menninghaus explores the affect of disgust in the figuration of, amongst other things, the tropified ‘ugly old lady.’ He explores how discourse on disgust often amalgamates and rejects various defects, epitomized in the phantasm of the ugly old woman. This composite image includes features like folds, wrinkles, warts, enlarged bodily openings, black teeth, hollows instead of swellings, sagging breasts, foul breath, revolting habits, and an association with death and putrefaction. As such, he observes, ‘the founding fathers of the new “discipline” of aesthetics incorporated aged femininity into their system as its maximum disgusting evil’—a legacy that endures in our present day. Winfried Menninghaus, ‘Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body’, in *Disgust: The Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, Intersections (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 86.

suddenly felt panicked at the sight of the lines, as if I was fully registering their presence for the first time. You need to frown less, I scolded myself, surprised by my dismay at something I had anticipated embracing with joy in my mission to age gracefully. Grace, here, would be subversive. It would mean not fighting the signs that I am alive and have lived; have had the privilege of experiencing life. That was until this memory resurfaced of the last time someone noticed my lines. I relived my befuddlement at my colleague's remark, and her alarm at what she clearly considered to be undesirable impressions on my face. *My face. My frown lines*—a physical manifestation of interiority, of thoughts thought, and feelings felt. Facing myself in the mirror, I wondered if her anxiety had somehow burrowed itself into my subconscious, only for me to project it onto myself later?¹⁴²

Yet—and especially in the light of my interview discussions with the singers—I could also see that this is too shallow an analysis of the need that many women feel to make themselves 'pretty'. Indeed, it was evident from our discussions that for these singers, the pressure of beautification was not only present in their daily lives but extended into their professional existences on the classical concert stage. In fact, their perceptions of this pressure seemed compounded in performance settings. They, however, had some difficulty articulating their experiences in clear terms. Consider the following comment by singer Megan, for example:

Because she, [Maria] Callas was like, she epitomised, like, glamour. Of, of what a glamorous opera singer could be. And, um, yeah, sometimes certain audiences kind of expect, uh, that kind of aesthetic or ex-, or, or visual experience from, from singers. And it, and it isn't, um, it isn't, uh, um, yeah, it isn't realistically possible for everybody and it shouldn't be, it shouldn't be expected.

Megan's start-stop sentences and repetitive use of filler words suggest to me that she was stretching her expressive capacity about the pressure of looking pretty on stage to its very limit. The other singers had similar trouble articulating their thoughts in this regard. Nonetheless, an apparent theme emerged across all the separate discussions: presenting a natural, non-glamorised woman's body on the singing stage, even in the presence of remarkable musicianship, is not considered appropriate. Glamour, as a visual signifier of wealth and status, is an integral part of performing feminine respectability in classical singing. Put differently, for a woman to be valued as a classical singer, a certain 'gendered disciplining of the female body'

¹⁴² Menninghaus states that our impulse towards undesirabilities that evoke disgust is 'an immediate act of distancing'—not through destruction or flight, but rather by an act of 'clearing away.' This perhaps explains in part the shuttling away of this thought to my subconscious rather than acknowledging it in the proximal conscious. Menninghaus, 'Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body', 85.

was required.¹⁴³ With this in mind, I have identified from my discussions with the singers two main modes of gendered bodily disciplining that feature in their professional lives. First, there are what I have chosen to term here *extra-bodily technologies in service of respectability*. These extra-bodily technologies refer to anything that a singer may externally and visibly apply (on)to her body to make it more appealing—or rather, a certain kind of appealing. This includes concert attire, jewellery, makeup, and certain medical-aesthetic interventions. The second form of discipline emerges in what I will call *intra-bodily markers of respectability*, which will be the focus of Chapter Three. In thinking through the notion of extra-bodily technologies in this chapter, I outline via cyborg theory how this first mode of respectability policing operates as an intersectionally oppressive force in my own and my singer-participants’ lives.

2.1. Dentition and Making the Singing Cyborg

A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction ... The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women’s experience in the late twentieth century.¹⁴⁴

One morning, not long after I noticed my frown lines, I inspected my teeth in another intimate consultation with the mirror. After scanning each individual tooth for visible imperfections, and then assessing the overall alignment of each row, I tried to understand why I would have thought them so repulsive two years earlier. While my teeth are not aesthetically perfect—they do not look like I have had braces twice and are slightly yellowed from years of coffee drinking—they are certainly not objectionable either. They just look like teeth: functional organs aiding my biological survival by enabling me to bite, chew, and swallow. Hard, sharp, and powerful, they could even serve as weapons, if ever necessary. Indeed, the enamel on our teeth is not only ‘the hardest and most resilient tissue in the human body’, but also among the hardest known biological materials.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the teeth are powered by the masseter,

¹⁴³ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, 42.

¹⁴⁴ I will expand on this definition and the relevance of cyborg theory to feminist studies throughout this chapter. Donna Jeanne Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist- Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century’, in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, (London: Free Association, 1991), 149. Note: I rely on this edition of the essay, published approximately six years after the initial version, as the authoritative text. All references pertain to this edition.

¹⁴⁵ Elia Beniash et al., ‘The Hidden Structure of Human Enamel’, *Nature Communications* 10, no. 1 (26 September 2019): 4383.1. See also: Xiaodong Qi et al., ‘An Epidermis-like Hierarchical Smart Coating with a Hardness of Tooth Enamel’, *ACS Nano* 12, no. 2 (27 February 2018): 1062; Sylwia M. Wojda and Eugeniusz Sajewicz, ‘Influence of Dental Materials on Hardness and Young’s Modulus of the Surface Layers of Tooth Enamel Formed as a Result of Friction’, *Acta of Bioengineering and Biomechanics*; 01/2019; ISSN 1509-409X, 2019, 129; J. William Pro and Francois Barthelat, ‘Discrete Element Models of Tooth Enamel, a Complex Three-Dimensional Biological Composite’, *Acta Biomaterialia* 94 (August 2019): 536; Hewei Zhao et al., ‘Multiscale Engineered Artificial Tooth Enamel’, *Science* 375, no. 6580 (4 February 2022): 551.

which is one of the strongest muscles in the body compared to its weight and size. When it joins forces with the other jaw muscles, it can exert forces of between twenty to two hundred kilograms.¹⁴⁶ However, my teeth do not just help me survive in the strictest biological sense. They are also vital articulation organs, helping me to speak words and thoughts and, crucially, to sing.¹⁴⁷ In this sense, they can also be considered organs of pleasure that inflict *jouissance* through speech and music, not least erotic pain/pleasure.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, speaking and singing, for me, is not just a matter of indulgent *jouissance*, but are also ways of earning an income.

More importantly, perhaps, I wondered why I—and my singer colleague—might have felt the need to enhance our teeth? Having both had braces before, I do not think either of us suffered severe malocclusion.¹⁴⁹ At least, I know for sure that I did not, and cannot speak for her reasoning beyond the aesthetic-economic motivation she offered that night at the bar, namely that her smile forms part of her vocal product. Nonetheless, there is sufficient medical and psychosocial research to support the need for orthodontic treatment even of moderate malocclusion, whether diagnosed by a dental clinician or as self-perceived. Medical studies, including three studies from the South African context, have shown that orthodontic treatment has the potential to improve mastication efficiency and speech disorders in patients, as well as

Stifler et al. go on to explain enamel's hardness in terms of temporality when they say that 'this biological material [is] among the hardest and most durable tissues in extant species during life, and in extinct species long after death.' Cayla A. Stifler et al., 'Crystal Misorientation Correlates with Hardness in Tooth Enamels', *Acta Biomaterialia* 120 (January 2021): 124.

¹⁴⁶ Joseph Feher, '8.1 - Mouth and Esophagus', in *Quantitative Human Physiology*, ed. Joseph Feher (Boston: Academic Press, 2012), 689–700; B. J. Sessle, 'Neural Basis of Oral and Facial Function', in *Reference Module in Biomedical Sciences* (Elsevier, 2014).

¹⁴⁷ The articulators, namely, the 'jaw, lips, tongue, teeth, lips, soft palate, and hard palate [...] move in very precise coordination to form the consonants and vowel sounds that we speak and sing,' Kathryn LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer's Guide to English Diction* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 31, 33. See also: Jean Westerman Gregg, 'Vocal Development and Articulation in Speech and Song', *Journal of Singing* 58, no. 5 (2002): 433.

¹⁴⁸ The word *jouissance* is a psychoanalytic term (in origin, at least) referring to a nuanced form of physical or intellectual pleasure, delight, or ecstasy. In the Preface to the 1980 edition of *Desire in Language*, Julia Kristeva first mentions *jouissance* in terms of the pain/pleasure duality. She affirms that in language, 'our only chance to avoid being neither master nor slave of meaning lies in our ability to insure our mastery of [jouissance] (through technique or knowledge) as well as our passage through [jouissance] (through play or practice).' Later in the book, it is formally defined to encapsulate a 'totality of enjoyment' which can be 'sexual, spiritual, physical, conceptual', sometimes separated by context, sometimes all simultaneously. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), x, 16.

¹⁴⁹ Malocclusion is the clinical term for teeth that are not 'straight': 'any deviation from the normal occlusal scheme and may present with occlusal traits (such as crowding, spacing, increased overjet, anterior open bite and increased overbite)'. Omolara Abiodun Obilade, Oluranti Olatokunbo Da Costa, and Oluwatosin Oluyemi Sanu, 'Patient/Parent Expectations of Orthodontic Treatment', *International Orthodontics* 15, no. 1 (March 2017): 82.

orodental and periodontal health.¹⁵⁰ These findings are not completely uncontested, though, with some of the studies simultaneously claiming and questioning the medical necessity of orthodontics.¹⁵¹ Contrarily, the possible psychosocial effects of malocclusion are rarely disputed.¹⁵² To be sure, it has often been found that self-perceived and/or clinically assessed malocclusion may have ‘a significant negative impact’ on a person’s social and psychological well-being.¹⁵³ This may be for a number of interrelated reasons that are ‘primarily determined by a concern for appearance’, and often go hand-in-hand with self-esteem, social confidence, and social acceptability.¹⁵⁴ Motloba et al. affirm this when they observe that ‘increasingly, adolescents and the young report for orthodontic care primarily to address the aesthetic and social effects of malocclusion, and secondarily to manage functional problems.’¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, these ‘aesthetic and social’ concerns may be influenced by various sociodemographic factors, especially gender, age, race/ethnicity, and class. There seems, however, to be a need for investigating in greater depth the intersectional functioning of these factors in relation to malocclusion because the different studies cited here came to seemingly contradictory and often generalising conclusions, summarised below.

¹⁵⁰ Obilade, Da Costa, and Sanu, ‘Patient/Parent Expectations of Orthodontic Treatment’, 97; Ahmed Bhayat and Usuf Chikte, ‘Human Resources for Oral Health Care in South Africa: A 2018 Update’, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 10 (14 May 2019): 1668; Motloba D.P., Sethusa M.P.S., and Ayo-Yusuf O.A., ‘The Psychological Impact of Malocclusion on Patients Seeking Orthodontic Treatment at a South African Oral Health Training Centre : Research’, *South African Dental Journal* 71, no. 5 (1 June 2016): 200-4; Yuvthi Rampersadh, ‘The Perceived and Normative Orthodontic Treatment Need of a Group of South African Children’ (Master’s thesis, Cape Town, University of the Western Cape, 2015); P. E. Benson, H. Javidi, and A. T. DiBiase, ‘What Is the Value of Orthodontic Treatment?’, *British Dental Journal* 218, no. 3 (February 2015): 185-6.

¹⁵¹ A critique of the medical necessity of orthodontic treatment is summarised by Benson et al.: Benson, Javidi, and DiBiase, ‘What Is the Value of Orthodontic Treatment?’, 185-86.

¹⁵² Obilade, Da Costa, and Sanu, ‘Patient/Parent Expectations of Orthodontic Treatment’, 83; Motloba D.P., Sethusa M.P.S., and Ayo-Yusuf O.A., ‘The Psychological Impact of Malocclusion on Patients Seeking Orthodontic Treatment at a South African Oral Health Training Centre : Research’, 204; Benson, Javidi, and DiBiase, ‘What Is the Value of Orthodontic Treatment?’, 185-88; Eugene Twigge et al., ‘The Psycho-Social Impact of Malocclusions and Treatment Expectations of Adolescent Orthodontic Patients’, *The European Journal of Orthodontics* 38, no. 6 (December 2016): 593–601; Anurag Rai et al., ‘Analytical Study of the Psychosocial Impact of Malocclusion and Maxillofacial Deformity in Patients Undergoing Orthodontic Treatment’, *Journal of Medicine and Life* 14, no. 1 (January 2021): 21–31; Min-Juan Zhang, Yan-Hui Sang, and Zhi-Hui Tang, ‘Psychological Impact and Perceptions of Orthodontic Treatment of Adult Patients with Different Motivations’, *American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics* 164, no. 3 (September 2023): e64–71.

¹⁵³ The quotation is from Motloba D.P., Sethusa M.P.S., and Ayo-Yusuf O.A., ‘The Psychological Impact of Malocclusion on Patients Seeking Orthodontic Treatment at a South African Oral Health Training Centre: Research’, 200. The claim is supported by all the studies referenced in footnote thirteen above.

¹⁵⁴ The quotation is from Obilade, Da Costa, and Sanu, ‘Patient/Parent Expectations of Orthodontic Treatment’, 97. The claim is supported by all the studies referenced in footnote thirteen above.

¹⁵⁵ Motloba D.P., Sethusa M.P.S., and Ayo-Yusuf O.A., ‘The Psychological Impact of Malocclusion on Patients Seeking Orthodontic Treatment at a South African Oral Health Training Centre: Research’, 204.

On a gendered front, studies have indicated that differences in self-perceived malocclusion were statistically insignificant between genders. Paradoxically, then, women/girls were generally suggested to have higher dental self-confidence than men/boys. Furthermore, the psychological impact of malocclusion was sometimes determined as higher for men and sometimes for women. Moreover, women/girls were determined to be more likely to take up orthodontic treatment and to have higher expectations of its aesthetic and psychosocial outcomes than men/boys. It was also with regard to the studies' treatment of gender that their biases were most apparent. Firstly, the studies approached gender as a stable male-female binary determined by biological sex alone, and relatively free from intersectional entanglements. Second, more than one study conflated femininity or womanness with cosmetic vanity. Motloba et al., for example, inferred that the reason why double the number of women/girls than men/boys sought treatment at the centre where their study was conducted is because 'girls are frequently and intensely dissatisfied with their dental appearance, tend to put a higher priority on their physical appearance, and appreciate the social significance and expectation of aesthetics more than do [their] male counterparts.'¹⁵⁶ This claim seems to have been made not based on their own participants' feedback, but rather based on similar assertions from two other articles whose arguments they misconstrued.¹⁵⁷ In terms of age, it seems from the studies that malocclusion was often self-perceived as either mild or severe by young children, and moderate by older patients. Dental dissatisfaction and its psychosocial impact were furthermore presented as increasing with age and/or significantly greater for older patients. Older patients, moreover, were concluded to have higher aesthetic and psychosocial expectations of orthodontics, yet also more realistic than those of young children.

The interaction of race and ethnicity with perceptions of malocclusion and the need for orthodontic treatment seemed to be less mentioned across the studies. The same is true for social class, which was often discussed in the same breath as race or ethnicity. Speaking to the

¹⁵⁶ Motloba D.P., Sethusa M.P.S., and Ayo-Yusuf O.A., 'The Psychological Impact of Malocclusion on Patients Seeking Orthodontic Treatment at a South African Oral Health Training Centre : Research', 200.

¹⁵⁷ The first study cited primarily investigated actual treatment uptake, not participants' reasons for taking up treatment. The authors of that study claim that the reason why more women than men take up treatment 'is expected because women place more emphasis on appearance than men' yet this claim is not substantiated from their participants' feedback. See: Serene A. Badran and Susan Al-Khateeb, 'Factors Influencing the Uptake of Orthodontic Treatment', *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* 73, no. 4 (September 2013): 339–44.

The second study cited does determine from its participants' feedback that girls tend to be more dissatisfied with their dental appearance. Unlike Motloba et al., however, this study does not infer that girls being dissatisfied with their dental appearance implies they 'tend to put a higher priority on their physical appearance' and 'appreciate the social significance and expectation of aesthetics more than do [their] male counterparts.' See: W. C. Shaw, 'Factors Influencing the Desire for Orthodontic Treatment', *European Journal of Orthodontics* 3, no. 3 (1 January 1981): 160-61.

South African context specifically, Motlaba et al. mentioned that all their study participants were black.¹⁵⁸ They also hypothesised that there is an increased demand for orthodontics among ‘African subjects’ who are from previously disadvantaged population groups, but might now have better access to dental and orthodontic services.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, orthodontist Yuvthi Rampersadh provided a fairly thorough but markedly quantitative analysis of race and ethnicity, class status and orthodontic needs in South Africa.¹⁶⁰ Counter to Motlaba et al.’s deductions, she calculated that there is no statistically significant correlation between neither race, ethnicity nor socioeconomic class and the need for orthodontics. Considering class alone, Obilade et al.’s Nigerian-based study again posits that malocclusion is higher among upper classes, and so are expectations of pain from orthodontic treatment. Lower social classes, on the other hand, are less expectant of treatment pain but do anticipate possibly undergoing tooth extractions. They then go on to make an interesting observation about this, stating that ‘respondents who were relatively more privileged were less tolerant of discomfort, hence their low expectation [sic] regarding extractions and their high anticipation of pain.’¹⁶¹ For me, this observation links to the ostensibly ‘higher’ incidence of malocclusion in more privileged groups, where access to dental and orthodontic services might not be met with many barriers. This is supported by Drugan et al., who draw a correlation between the uptake of orthodontic treatment, social deprivation, and rurality, albeit in the British context.¹⁶² Moreover, they noted that sociodemographic position did not influence a person’s need for orthodontic care, but that ‘boys and children from minority ethnic groups are less likely to receive care.’¹⁶³ Benson et al., also in a UK study, are in consonant with this, observing that ‘[c]hildren from more deprived backgrounds tend to [...] generally have poorer access to dental and orthodontic treatment.’¹⁶⁴

Yet despite the studies’ irregularities and tendency towards social stereotyping, their findings have been valuable for me in terms of gaining preliminary insight into possible patterns of self-

¹⁵⁸ Motlaba D.P., Sethusa M.P.S., and Ayo-Yusuf O.A., ‘The Psychological Impact of Malocclusion on Patients Seeking Orthodontic Treatment at a South African Oral Health Training Centre : Research’, 202, 204.

¹⁵⁹ Motlaba D.P., Sethusa M.P.S., and Ayo-Yusuf O.A., ‘The Psychological Impact of Malocclusion on Patients Seeking Orthodontic Treatment at a South African Oral Health Training Centre : Research’, 202, 204.

¹⁶⁰ For example: ‘In the Asian, black and white ethnic groups, the percentage of self-perceived need for treatment of each group, is 40, 37 and 33% respectively. [...] However this difference is not considered statistically significant ($p=0.08$).’ Rampersadh, ‘The Perceived and Normative Orthodontic Treatment Need of a Group of South African Children’, 85.

¹⁶¹ Obilade, Da Costa, and Sanu, ‘Patient/Parent Expectations of Orthodontic Treatment’, 99.

¹⁶² C. S. Drugan et al., ‘Inequality in Uptake of Orthodontic Services’, *British Dental Journal* 202, no. 6 (March 2007): E15–E15.

¹⁶³ C. S. Drugan et al., ‘Inequality in Uptake of Orthodontic Services’, *British Dental Journal* 202, no. 6 (March 2007): 1.

¹⁶⁴ Benson, Javidi, and DiBiase, ‘What Is the Value of Orthodontic Treatment?’, 185.

perception of malocclusion, especially in relation to socioeconomic class. In reading these studies, I have come to consider why my perception of my dental imperfections might have been ‘out of line’ with clinical diagnoses. Why did I have a ‘tainted’ idea of the state of my dentition, not quite grounded in reality? Such questions are in part answered in the concluding words of Motloba et al.’s study:

the findings reveal that the perceptions of an individual of their malocclusion had a greater impact on their psychological and social wellbeing [sic] than did clinician assessed [sic] status of malocclusion.¹⁶⁵

I present this as a moiety of the issue at hand and not the *whole* explanation, because I believe it is mutually informed by socioeconomic class, especially in the South African context. Such an interconnectedness becomes quite clear in the light of two recent investigations by Bhayat and Chikte into the demographic profiles of dental professionals in South Africa, and, subsequently, a report on the state of dental care resources in the country.¹⁶⁶ In short, they determined that ‘[t]he majority of oral care providers are employed in the private sector even though the majority of the population access the public sector which only offers a basic package of oral care.’¹⁶⁷ They back up this statement with numbers: 90% of dentists and 66% of medical specialists (including orthodontists) operate in the private sector, which treats only 16% of the country’s population.¹⁶⁸ This has a triple implication for dental care in South Africa. First, the majority of South Africans cannot afford private dental care. Second, the public sector is overburdened and cannot provide sufficient dental care to the 84% of the population that are not able to access private care. Lastly, the prevalence of malocclusion in South Africa might be much lower if more people could access regular and affordable dental care for the prevention of untreated dental caries that eventually lead to tooth extraction.

What I want to illustrate here is that orthodontics and cosmetic dentistry are a kind of microcosm of the privileged classes’ exclusionary aesthetics. ‘Perfect’ teeth are a technology for accessing and performing classed respectability through something as simple as a smile. Indeed, this analysis is not so much about dental braces per se. Rather, braces serve here as a metaphor for the economic elite’s desire for—or a bourgeois aspiration to—‘cyborgification’

¹⁶⁵ Motloba D.P., Sethusa M.P.S., and Ayo-Yusuf O.A., ‘The Psychological Impact of Malocclusion on Patients Seeking Orthodontic Treatment at a South African Oral Health Training Centre : Research’, 204.

¹⁶⁶ Ahmed Bhayat and Usuf Chikte, ‘The changing demographic profile of dentists and dental specialists in South Africa: 2002–2015’, *International Dental Journal* 68, no. 2 (April 2018): 91–96; Bhayat and Chikte, ‘Human Resources for Oral Health Care in South Africa’.

¹⁶⁷ Bhayat and Chikte, ‘Human Resources for Oral Health Care in South Africa’, 1.

¹⁶⁸ Bhayat and Chikte, ‘Human Resources for Oral Health Care in South Africa’, 3.

as a way of signalling and maintaining their social status and its corollary, respectability. Originally formulated by Donna Haraway in her 1985 polemic, *A Cyborg Manifesto*, the cyborg was a symbol of feminist empowerment in a patriarchal, capitalist, and increasingly technology-driven society.¹⁶⁹ Here, Haraway argued that traditional notions of identity are constraining and fail to account for the complexities of contemporary existence.¹⁷⁰ By embracing the cyborg as a metaphor for hybridity, she proposed a vision of liberation where individuals can transcend limiting identity categorisations and forge new possibilities for being in the world. Haraway's manifesto sparked discussions beyond feminism, influencing fields such as science and technology studies, posthumanism, and critical theory.¹⁷¹ Her ideas continue to resonate in contemporary discourse, offering a framework for understanding the intersections of technology, identity, and power.¹⁷² In short, Haraway emphasised through the cyborg women's agency to embrace the ever-blurring boundaries between human and machine, natural and artificial, in order to challenge rigid structures of identity that reinforce inequality, including those based on gender and race.¹⁷³

Thus, the notion that the cyborg represents an inherently gendered and racialised concept is a critical interpretation that challenges Haraway's original view of the cyborg as a potentially liberating, post-gender, post-race entity.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, while links can be forged between

¹⁶⁹ Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', 149-181; Rebecca Pohl, *An Analysis of Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*, Macat Library (London: Macat international, 2018); Sara Louise Muhr, 'Caught in the Gendered Machine: On the Masculine and Feminine in Cyborg Leadership', *Gender, Work & Organization* 18, no. 3 (May 2011): 338-40; Allison Muri, *The Enlightenment Cyborg: A History of Communications and Control in the Human Machine, 1660-1830* (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 11.

¹⁷⁰ Matthew Gandy, 'The Persistence of Complexity: Re-Reading Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto', *AA Files*, no. 60 (2010): 43; Pohl, *An Analysis of Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto*; Muhr, 'Caught in the Gendered Machine', 349-50.

¹⁷¹ Pohl, *An Analysis of Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto*, 10-12, 15, 37, 49, 56-58, 64-66.

¹⁷² Gandy, 'The Persistence of Complexity: Re-Reading Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto', 44; Muri, *The Enlightenment Cyborg*, 19.

¹⁷³ Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', 149-181; Pohl, *An Analysis of Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto*, 19, 29; Muhr, 'Caught in the Gendered Machine', 338-40, 352; Muri, *The Enlightenment Cyborg*, 11; Gandy, 'The Persistence of Complexity: Re-Reading Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto', 43-44.

¹⁷⁴ This is not an entirely new critique of Haraway's cyborg but is also not representative of main trends in critiques thereof. See, for example: Muhr, 'Caught in the Gendered Machine'; Julia R DeCook, 'A [White] Cyborg's Manifesto: The Overwhelmingly Western Ideology Driving Technofeminist Theory', *Media, Culture & Society* 43, no. 6 (September 2021): 1158-67; Jennifer González, 'Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research', in *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, ed. Gill Kirkup (London ; New York: Routledge in association with the Open University, 2000), 58-73; Mary Ann Doane, 'Technophilia: Technology, Representation, and the Feminine', in *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, ed. Gill Kirkup (London ; New York: Routledge in association with the Open University, 2000), 110-21; Anne Balsamo, 'Reading Cyborgs Writing Feminism', in *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, ed. Gill Kirkup (London ; New York: Routledge in association with the Open University, 2000), 148-58; Alison Adam, 'Feminist AI Projects and Cyberfutures', in *The*

cyborg theory and respectability, this is an extrapolation and was not a concern directly addressed by Haraway. Indeed, cyborg theory has seldom been used specifically to critique traditional respectability norms that are tied to gender, race, and class. Yet with its emphasis on breaking down binaries and challenging established norms, the cyborg provides a useful lens to question and deconstruct societal notions of what is considered respectable in terms of appearance and behaviour. Similarly, neither Haraway's cyborg nor its critics explicitly address women's attire, which I turn to below, but the theory can be extrapolated to analyze how women's clothing and fashion intersect with technology, identity, and the social 'rules' of respectability. Moreover, while cyborg theory has sometimes been included in musicological discourse, it has rarely been applied to draw a link between the extravagance of classical vocal performance and the privileged pursuit of a cyborg-like ideal that displays perfection and excess.¹⁷⁵

Even though the cyborg allegory may offer a provocative lens for exploring 'corporeality, technology and the human [feminine] subject', its critics argue that its subversive possibilities are at times overdrawn.¹⁷⁶ Critiques of the cyborg as a liberatory figuration for women often centre around several key points. Many critics have noted how the cyborg as a concept tends to neglect the intersectionality of women's experiences, often presenting a one-size-fits-all approach to liberation.¹⁷⁷ This rings true despite Haraway's efforts to promote through cyborg

Gendered Cyborg: A Reader, ed. Gill Kirkup (London ; New York: Routledge in association with the Open University, 2000), 276–90; Denise Handlarski, 'Pro-Creation—Haraway's "Regeneration" and the Postcolonial Cyborg Body', *Women's Studies* 39, no. 2 (15 January 2010): 75–76.

¹⁷⁵ For discussion of cyborg theory in musicology, see Richard Middleton, "'Last Night a DJ Saved My Life": Cyborgs, Avians and Siren Bodies in the Era of Phonographic Technology', *Radical Musicology* 1 (2006); Stefan Helmreich, 'An Anthropologist Underwater: Immersive Soundscapes, Submarine Cyborgs, and Transductive Ethnography', *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 4 (2007): 621–41; Sophie Landres, 'Indecent and Uncanny: The Case against Charlotte Moorman', *Art Journal* 76, no. 1 (2 January 2017): 48–69; Suzanne G. Cusick, 'Musicology, Acoustemology, Performativity', in *Theorizing Sound Writing*, ed. Deborah A. Kapchan, Music/Culture (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2017), 38–40; Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music*, (Duke University Press, 2019), 139, 148; Sutirtha Chakraborty, Sourav Dutta, and Joseph Timoney, 'The Cyborg Philharmonic: Synchronizing Interactive Musical Performances between Humans and Machines', *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 8, no. 1 (17 March 2021): 74.1–9; Bonnie Gordon, *Voice Machines: The Castrato, the Cat Piano, and Other Strange Sounds* (Chicago (IL) London: the University of Chicago Press, 2023).

¹⁷⁶ Gandy, 'The Persistence of Complexity: Re-Reading Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto', 43. Other important critiques of the cyborg include: Muhr, 'Caught in the Gendered Machine'; DeCook, 'A [White] Cyborg's Manifesto'; González, 'Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research'; Doane, 'Technophilia: Technology, Representation, and the Feminine'; Balsamo, 'Reading Cyborgs Writing Feminism'; Adam, 'Feminist AI Projects and Cyberfutures'; Handlarski, 'Pro-Creation—Haraway's "Regeneration" and the Postcolonial Cyborg Body'; Hannah Bosma, 'Bodies of Evidence, Singing Cyborgs and Other Gender Issues in Electrovocal Music', *Organised Sound: An International Journal of Music Technology* 8, no. 1 (2003): 5–17.

¹⁷⁷ Pohl, *An Analysis of Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto*, 63; Malini Johar Schueller, *Locating Race: Global Sites of Post-Colonial Citizenship*, SUNY Series, Explorations in Postcolonial Citizenship (Albany:

theory a feminism that recognises and critiques how women may dominate each other along race or class lines, within as well as outside of the feminist movement.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, for her, the cyborg represented the possibility to subvert the bourgeois entrapment of women. However, Haraway's cyborg did not necessarily achieve this. Linking this to the topic of the cyborg and (non)intersectionality, some argue that an emphasis on technological augmentation in cyborg imagery can inadvertently reinforce ableist norms by idealizing certain physical enhancements.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, celebrating cyborgs as liberatory figures may be seen as techno-deterministic, suggesting that women's empowerment is contingent upon technological advancements.¹⁸⁰ Technological development, in turn, is often dominated by men, and thus is 'at odds with femininity.'¹⁸¹ As such, the cyborg demonstrates 'how the female body is always already mediated' by masculinity.¹⁸² Furthermore, the cyborg may downplay the importance of collective action and social change, instead placing the burden of liberation on individual women's technological choices.¹⁸³ There is also concern about the potential for the cyborg concept to be co-opted by commercial interests, framing empowerment primarily as a consumer choice in the marketplace of technological enhancements.¹⁸⁴ This commodification of empowerment may exacerbate existing social inequalities.

Thus, although the cyborg initially suggested a potential escape from traditional gender norms and boundaries, the idea of cyborgification may not necessarily lead to feminine liberation but can be used to detect the enforcement of respectability. Indeed, in contradistinction to Haraway's original framing, I argue that the very process of cyborgification inadvertently contributes to reinforcing societal norms and expectations. The assimilation of cyborgs into mainstream culture, including the mainstream classical vocal stage, can be seen as an attempt

State University of New York Press, 2009); Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 1st ed., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

¹⁷⁸ Pohl, *An Analysis of Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto*, 21, 25.

¹⁷⁹ Pohl, *An Analysis of Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto*, 60; Schueller, *Locating Race*; Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*; DeCook, 'A [White] Cyborg's Manifesto', 1161-62.

¹⁸⁰ Pohl, *An Analysis of Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto*, 53; Joan W. Scott, 'Commentary: Cyborgian Socialists?', in *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics*, ed. Elizabeth Weed (London: Routledge, 1989), 215-17.

¹⁸¹ Bosma, 'Bodies of Evidence, Singing Cyborgs and Other Gender Issues in Electrovocal Music', 9, 12.

¹⁸² Landres, 'Indecent and Uncanny', 68.

¹⁸³ Muhr, 'Caught in the Gendered Machine', 340, 348, 351; Ajneesh Prasad, 'Cyborg Writing as a Political Act: Reading Donna Haraway in Organization Studies', *Gender, Work & Organization* 23, no. 4 (July 2016): 431-46.

¹⁸⁴ Muri, *The Enlightenment Cyborg*, 6; Allison Muri, 'Imagining Reproduction: The Politics of Reproduction, Technology and the Woman Machine', *Journal of Medical Humanities* 31, no. 1 (March 2010): 56, 165; Kevin Warwick, 'Cyborg Morals, Cyborg Values, Cyborg Ethics', *Ethics and Information Technology* 5, no. 3 (2003): 135.

to make cyborgs/women conform to prevailing standards of respectability rather than challenging or subverting established power structures. In this context, then, the liberatory potential of the cyborg may be overshadowed by its appropriation into existing frameworks of acceptability, limiting the transformative impact it was originally envisioned to have on gendered, racialised, and classed roles and societal norms. By striving for cyborgianism,

[a] female receptor often ends up being forced to adopt a male point of view and thereby take a stand against herself and effectively participate in the conspiracy. She identifies against herself as she is swept up and sutured into male narratives and patterns of desire.¹⁸⁵

I extend this idea to include race and class in my conceptualisation of cyborgianism in classical singing. By striving for cyborgianism, women classical singers may be compelled to adopt and perform masculinity, whiteness, and respectable class status on stage. In doing so, they may be forced to disavow their own social identity.

In contrast to the tangibility of braces, however, cyborgification may be corporealized in more subtle ways through enhancements that are temporarily clad onto the body: attire, makeup, hairstyling, jewellery, and certain medical-aesthetic modifications, like Botox. Furthermore, such cyborgian performances of classed respectability are always already gendered and racialised. The cyborg—much like classical music—is a technology of higher-class respectability with a bias towards (heterosexual) masculinity and whiteness. In fact, I would contend that the appetite for cyborgianism is epitomised in the ‘high art’ of classical singing, where it operates not just in the daily lives of singers but also in their professional practice on the concert stage.¹⁸⁶ Drawing this all back to my dental-aesthetic idolon, my desire for cyborg dentition, I now regard it as a symptom of the self-indulgence that my privileged positionality affords.¹⁸⁷ In addition, this is perhaps also why my perceptions of *ordentlikheid* or respectability’s oppression in my life may be exaggerated, as I briefly mentioned in Chapter

¹⁸⁵ Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 74.

¹⁸⁶ In making this argument, I am aware that what audiences are drawn to on the concert stage is often the suspension of disbelief. In this sense, one might argue, the singer’s cyborgian construction is erased when the unreality of the fictional stage mends the body of the singer to their costume. However, in this move, the expectation for the cyborgification of the singer remains exactly so that it can fuel the fiction on stage. I will return to this point especially under the discussion of blackface in opera below.

¹⁸⁷ Menninghaus’s discussion on ‘the ugly old lady’ extends to how the representation of ugliness and disgust in art has evolved over time, with some aesthetic theorists suggesting that detailed descriptions of ugliness can paradoxically lead to its diminished aesthetic impact. Quoting J.E. Schlegel: ‘one should not paint the disgusting quality of an old woman if one wishes to depict her ugliness.’ I believe this is part of how I came to see my teeth—and other parts of my body and life—for what they really are, not what I have idealised them to be. By obsessing about my (self-perceived) hideousness, I became accustomed and thus desensitised to it. In time, this numbness made way for a more truthful self-reflective ego, thereby attaining what Manninghaus calls ‘*Ekel-transcendence*.’ Menninghaus, ‘Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body’, 90.

One. Both economically and socially, I can *afford* to fret about the ways in which I signal respectability, both in my daily life and through classical singing. I can afford to desire a cyborg body.

While it may seem in this chapter that I am setting up a binary between the natural, ‘unaltered’ woman and the cyborg woman, this is not the case. Instead, what I am suggesting is that there is no naturalistic woman. The cyborg woman, here, does not stand in opposition to an idealised ‘natural’ woman. Rather, the cyborg reveals a type of inherent oppression of women within respectability politics. That said, while Haraway’s cyborg alone *could* probably account for many of the ways in which women are oppressed by respectability, the experiences of my interlocutors push Haraway’s theory to its limits and show that embracing the cyborg is not necessarily a means to subversion. As such, my critique of Haraway’s cyborg theory does not seek to prove her idea of the cyborg as a liberatory figure wrong but serves as a useful entry point into my singer-participants’ lived experience. Indeed, the fact that women, including my participants, are cyborgs does not necessarily change their oppression. As such, even though Haraway envisions the cyborg to be a symbol of emancipation, my interlocutors and my own experiences suggest that this is not always so.

2.2. Sing Pretty, Dress Prettier

Regardless of respectability’s status as a social resource of the privileged, as explained above, I maintain that it is an oppressive force that governs all women’s bodies, irrespective of their intersectional positionality. Although economic power can fund cyborgification, it may occur among different pecuniary scales. Consequently, cyborg stature always remains an aspirational pursuit; it is never a point of arrival. This means that the ambition to be/come cyborg and advance along respectability’s hierarchy usually resides in the subconscious from where it rules us without our conscious consent. Respectability thus dictates bodies and beings even in the face of intentional subversion of respectable ‘norms’. This happens not only through its ruthless practice of naming and categorisation, but also because, as I will argue in more detail in Chapter Four, subversion in any context only exists in response to tyranny. Furthermore, as suggested in Chapter One, such oppression may place a double strain on classical singers, featuring in their day-to-day lives and artistic practice. Regarding respectability policing in classical singing, which is the focus of this study, Bull asserts that ‘classical music’s concert attire makes visible its associations with respectable middle-class femininity.’¹⁸⁸ That is, respectability is

¹⁸⁸ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, 100.

embodied in and performed through the classical concert stage's required dress code. In instrumental or choral performance, respectability is signalled by all-black concert wear. Wearing all black in these contexts serve as a 'mechanism of effacing the body', transcending corporeality, so that it does not 'corrupt the spirit of the music' in some or the other way.¹⁸⁹ Paradoxically, Bull further observes—echoing Lydia Goehr—that somatic presence is a prerequisite for musical sound production, yet it must simultaneously be eclipsed.¹⁹⁰ This poses a specific challenge for women performers, because, as Bull observes,

performing classical music while being female is a sure way to make the body visible. When we hear a man playing the drums, we hear the music on the drums, but when we hear a woman playing the drums, we hear a woman playing the drums; the female gendered body makes the body visible where previously it wasn't.¹⁹¹

Reinforcing Bull's qualitative analyses on the topic are a small number of recent quantitative studies investigating the effects of physical appearance on audience perceptions of female classical musicians.¹⁹² Although these studies are not specifically concerned with respectability politics, they still speak strongly to expectations of respectability in classical music. Noola K. Griffiths, for instance, focuses primarily on the impact of appearance and 'appropriate dress' on audience perceptions of women's technical and musical ability, the latter in itself an indicium of respectability over and above dress alone. Consequently, the performance of respectability through attire in classical music is twofold. It occurs via dress as 'a form of social communication' in and of itself, and in the way that sartorial appearance may signal musical-technical proficiency.¹⁹³ Furthermore, despite not addressing respectability discourse directly, Griffiths does imply it when she suggests that concert dress may 'provide insight into the social practices and underlying values associated with classical music performance.'¹⁹⁴ The

¹⁸⁹ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, 99, 174; Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

¹⁹⁰ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, xxviii.

¹⁹¹ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, 99.

¹⁹² Noola K. Griffiths, 'The Effects of Concert Dress and Physical Appearance on Perceptions of Female Solo Performers', *Musicae Scientiae* 12, no. 2 (2008): 273–90; Noola K. Griffiths, "'Posh Music Should Equal Posh Dress": An Investigation into the Concert Dress and Physical Appearance of Female Soloists', *Psychology of Music* 38, no. 2 (April 2010): 159–77; Noola K. Griffiths, 'The Fabric of Performance: Values and Social Practices of Classical Music Expressed through Concert Dress Choice', *Music Performance Research* 4, no. Journal Article (2011): 30–48; Olivia Urbaniak and Helen F Mitchell, 'How to Dress to Impress: The Effect of Concert Dress Type on Perceptions of Female Classical Pianists', *Psychology of Music* 50, no. 2 (March 2022): 422–38.

¹⁹³ Griffiths, 'The Effects of Concert Dress and Physical Appearance on Perceptions of Female Solo Performers', 274.

¹⁹⁴ Griffiths, 'The Fabric of Performance: Values and Social Practices of Classical Music Expressed through Concert Dress Choice', 30.

investigation by Olivia Urbaniak and Helen F. Mitchell supports Bull's and Griffiths's arguments while also acknowledging additionally the taken-for-granted nature of classical music's dress codes.¹⁹⁵ Concert dress requirements are tacit, they argue. This unexpressed dress policy is clearly gendered—for women, there is a clear preference for formal attire over casual wear, dresses over suits, and long gown-like dresses over shorter dresses. From my own experience on stage, and reflected in the interviews with my singer-interlocutors, this is a salient description of classical music's implicit accoutrement politics. Consider the following comments by singer Zobuhle as an example:

Well, they still expect you to wear a dress. If you come in wearing a suit, for example, then it's like, oh, an abomination. You can't do that.
[...]
[You have to wear] a long, long gown... [spoken dreamily]

The politics of dress, however, operate not just within the industry but may also be imposed extrinsically by a singer's personal community and audiences. This was noted specifically by singer Karla, who prefers to perform in a suit over a dress:

Or if I, sometimes I sing at the church that I grew up in, like for Christmas [...]. I did it once to surprise my mom and we went there and she didn't know that I was gonna be performing. But then I would sing again for *Paasnaweek*¹⁹⁶ or something, and then she would like, be like, 'Oh, don't you wanna wear that dress?' And I'm like, 'No, I don't wanna wear this dress. Like, stop talking about it.' You know?

The tacit dress code exceeds the profession in more disturbing ways. Singer Emma expressed how the pressure to 'wear a nice dress like a good girl' in classical music performance even operates at the level of children and non-professionals:

*My dogter, um, neem klavier en toe het hulle nou 'n konsert en sy is baie oor die aantrekkery so half cagey, en ek sê toe vir haar—dis nou 'n paar jaar terug, dit was haar eerste konsert—"Wat is dit?" Toe se sy, "Mamma, ek wil nie 'n rok dra nie, ek wil 'n suit dra." Toe sê ek: "Maar my Liefie, natuurlik, kom ons gaan koop dadelik vir jou 'n suit!" Ons het vir haar 'n lieflike suit gekoop. Maar verstaan, dat sy op haar [ouderdom]—toe was sy [...] tien—dat sy te bang was... Dis gender. Sy was te bang om te sê sy wil nie 'n rok dra nie.*¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Urbaniak and Mitchell, 'How to Dress to Impress', 422.

¹⁹⁶ Translation: Easter Weekend

¹⁹⁷ Translation: My daughter takes piano lessons and they had a concert and she was kind-of cagey about the dressing up, so I said to her—this is a few years ago, it was her first concert—"What is wrong?" Then she said, 'Mommy, I don't want to wear a dress, I want to wear a suit.' So I said to her, 'But my Dear, of course, let's go buy you a suit right away!' We bought her a lovely suit. But see, that she at her [age]—she was ten at that stage—that she was too scared... That's gender. She was too scared to say that she does not want to wear a dress.

Classical music's inclination towards normatively feminine and non-suggestive concert clothes for women relates back to what is called the mind/body double bind, wherein the body is at the same time required to be visible and hidden when making music. Considering that this double bind is already inherently gendered, it can perhaps be considered a triple bind for women performers, who are subject to less rigid dress codes than men, but who experience an 'increased pressure [...] to conform to gender stereotypes in terms of dress, body norms and physical appearance.'¹⁹⁸ Indeed, apart from their function of transcending the bodily in service of the autonomous musical work, appearance-related expectations also enacts women singers' on-stage respectability. When a singer presents as normatively feminine by wearing a dress and not a suit, her legibility as definitively *woman* grants and maintains her respectability. Yet at the same time, and perhaps to be considered as a fourth bind, an 'excess of femininity can lead to women being judged as less effective.'¹⁹⁹ By covering up her body and skin with a long gown, then, she avoids the 'unprompted negative attention' of sexualisation.²⁰⁰ This negative attention operates at two levels. On a primary level, sexualised identity is fundamentally linked to class-based respectability, as demonstrated in the words of one of Urbaniak and Mitchell's participants: 'showing legs was too much skin to be classy'.²⁰¹ During my conversation with Zobuhle, she also made the connection between class and the length of a woman's skirt, albeit in the context of adjudication. Despite her clear awareness of this link, though, she was adamant that you '*can be classy with a short skirt*'.

I was in this, um, workshop the other day, we were talking about adjudicators', uh, dress code. And then someone mentioned that 'No, people shouldn't show cleavage, uh, you shouldn't wear short skirts.' I'm like, 'But why? Why, why shouldn't you do that?' 'No, we as men, we feel that we will be...' I was like, [wow,] there are people [...] who still think this way. So now we can't wear our dresses or shirts and, and short skirts. *I mean, we are not saying that we are gonna be looking skanky or anything, but we'll be classy with a short skirt. You can be.* But they say, 'No, you can't, because when you sit, then your skirt is going to keep on going up and...' [...] I'm like, 'But why are you gonna be looking?'²⁰²

In other words, she acknowledges but rejects the notion that the amount of skin a woman has on display is a sign of her sexuality, and her sexuality, in turn, a sign of her class status. Or, per

¹⁹⁸ Griffiths, 'The Effects of Concert Dress and Physical Appearance on Perceptions of Female Solo Performers', 274; Griffiths, '"Posh Music Should Equal Posh Dress"', 160; Griffiths, 'The Fabric of Performance: Values and Social Practices of Classical Music Expressed through Concert Dress Choice', 30.

¹⁹⁹ Griffiths, 'The Effects of Concert Dress and Physical Appearance on Perceptions of Female Solo Performers', 275.

²⁰⁰ Urbaniak and Mitchell, 'How to Dress to Impress', 434.

²⁰¹ Urbaniak and Mitchell, 'How to Dress to Impress', 432.

²⁰² My emphasis.

Bull, she refuses how class and thus respectability (or respectability and thus class) may be ‘read onto women’s perceived sexuality’.²⁰³ On a second level, and folding women’s perceived sexuality back into respectability’s association with musical proficiency and professionalism, Griffiths warns that ‘it is essential that the woman is not too “appealing” for then she cannot be considered [...] a serious musician.’²⁰⁴ In summary, a serious woman classical musician must take care to not be in excess: clearly woman but not too feminine, appealing but not too sexy.

Worryingly, all these binds may indicate the perpetuation of a different but interrelated kind of gendered mind/body oppression that has been, according to Suzanne Cusick, ‘one of our civilization’s most fundamental and enduring philosophical dilemmas.’²⁰⁵ Although not an exclusively musicological concept, the so-called mind/body split has been thoroughly theorised in the field, most notably by Marcia J. Citron, Susan McClary, and Cusick in the early 1990s.²⁰⁶ In McClary’s words, it relates to ‘the always-gendered struggle between mind and body that has characterized Western culture from its beginnings.’²⁰⁷ In this ever-gendered conflict, men and masculinity are associated with the mind, and women and femininity with the body. As such, creativity and the arts as products of the mind have been considered in Western society as the domain of men, thus overlooking women’s creative intellectuality or valuing them primarily for their bodies.²⁰⁸ At the same time, it denies the embodied nature of creativity and music, making of it what Cusick calls a ‘mind-mind game’: ‘[m]usic, an art which self-evidently does not exist until bodies make it and/or receive it, is thought about as if it were a *mind-mind* game.’²⁰⁹

While the critique of classical music’s mind/masculinity connection has yielded important insights, music studies have in focusing on this critique made a crucial oversight. Both past and current scholarship on the topic generalise the phenomenon across classical music as a whole,

²⁰³ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, 36.

²⁰⁴ Griffiths, ‘The Effects of Concert Dress and Physical Appearance on Perceptions of Female Solo Performers’, 274.

²⁰⁵ Cusick, ‘Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem’, 16. See also: Griffiths, ‘The Effects of Concert Dress and Physical Appearance on Perceptions of Female Solo Performers’, 284; Griffiths, “‘Posh Music Should Equal Posh Dress’”, 175.

²⁰⁶ See especially: Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon*; McClary, ‘Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s’; Cusick, ‘Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem’.

²⁰⁷ McClary, ‘Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s’, 420.

²⁰⁸ Griffiths, ‘The Effects of Concert Dress and Physical Appearance on Perceptions of Female Solo Performers’, 275.

²⁰⁹ Cusick’s emphasis. Cusick, ‘Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem’, 16.

thereby neglecting that it might not function the same for women in different performance specialisations and scholarly subdisciplines. In terms of performance attire, my own and my singer-participants' experiences differed remarkably with what Bull, Griffiths, and Urbaniak and Mitchell identified as expected attire norms of instrumental and/or choral performers. Singing, as what is commonly conceived as the ultimate embodied music, is exceedingly body-focused.²¹⁰ Where traditional instrumental and vocal ensemble dress often works to tone down, blend in, and not 'steal the show', classical singing performance has an unspoken mandate on visual displays of opulence, glamour, and sometimes, hyper-sexualised femininity. These things all form an integral part of a classical singer's artistic respectability. This penchant for feminine sensuality and lavishness was something that I have observed over many years in my participants' public performance personas—when attending their concerts in person, during professional collaborations, and in promotional material for their upcoming engagements that reached me via social media, email newsletters, and other public media. It is furthermore illustrated in a comment by Amanda:

But we are sexualized in this industry a lot and not just on stage, off stage as well. With our dress sometimes... [...] I would be frowned upon if I had to come in, come to an event that I have to sing at in a suit, because 'Why are you wearing a suit?' you know? Um, 'Oh, you're so, you are so covered up!' Why do I need to expose myself to be able for you to enjoy music? You see, it's that type of thing. Um, definitely, definitely, especially big on being sexualized.

Speaking to the same issue, Emma commented:

*As ek kyk, nè, met my studente, as ons ons eindjaarkonsert hou ook, ek het so baie, my garderobe is groot van jare se kostuums, en hulle, die meeste van hulle trek sommer hier uit my ding [garderobe] uit aan. En die meeste van hulle wil opdress. [...] En, en hoe 'n groot deel van die lekker daardie opdress en fantasie vir hulle is. [...] Die opdress en fantasie is, is baie belangrik.*²¹¹

For me, classical vocal performance's displays of plenitude through concert dress can be linked back to the bourgeois endeavour toward cyborgianism. As I have mentioned before, aside from class, this is a gendered and racialised pursuit which has the performance and maintenance of respectability as its main goal. It is, however, an unattainable goal since every levelling-up in

²¹⁰ It is important to note that, as Nina Sun Eidsheim has argued, the conflation of body and voice in singing risks creating essentialised subjectivities, a move which has often been used to perpetuate racial stereotyping in vocal performance practices. In this sense, my observation here is also a critique of notions of voice as essence. See: Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music*.

²¹¹ Translation: With my students, when we have our year-end concerts, I have so many, my wardrobe is large from years' costumes, and they, most of them dress from my thing [wardrobe]. And the majority of them want to dress up. [...] And how big a part of the fun that dressing up and fantasy is for them. [...] The dress-up and fantasy is very important.

respectability status simply leads to a higher level to aspire to. Here, it is important to note that this is, in more than one way, a novel application of cyborg theory.

The cyborg performance of respectability through dress comes at a cost—or rather, costs. This sentiment was aptly expressed in various comments by singer Megan during our conversation. First and foremost, it is financially costly to dress yourself ‘acceptably’ for the concert stage. This cost is compounded for women, for whom concert wear that is sufficiently formal, glamorous, and feminine often comes at a considerably higher price than for men.²¹² In the second place, the labour of sartorial aesthetics mostly goes unpaid for women singers. Because dress codes for men are, as mentioned before, more restricted in terms of variety, it means that they need not invest as much thought and time in their wardrobe as women. Women, my interlocutors argued, are generally not compensated for the mental energy and temporal resources they expend in aestheticizing their performance wardrobe. Megan, for instance, said that

[i]n Western classical music, there are way more solid kinds of ideas of what the gender of being female is supposed to look like or perform. And it is, it’s been at the least harmful side of the scale, I think, even just in getting ready for a concert, concert prep, there’s so much more labour that goes into even getting up on stage with aesthetics or, um, beauty expectations, standard expectations or what you dress like. Um, it’s, it’s a lot of extra labour that goes into it that is largely invisible, or uncompensated.

[...]

[Y]es, I do feel that people have expectations of one due to your gender. I always feel in concert planning that there has to be a lot of intention that goes into what I would wear [...] and how I would present, what kind of, um, just space that would create for the audience to connect with me. And, yeah, it is extra pressure and extra labour and extra resources that have to go into that.

Along with the direct financial costs and the invisible labour that women face in dressing themselves respectably for the concert stage, concert dress often also comes at the cost of physical comfort.²¹³ In fact, sometimes concert wear is completely incompatible with bodily ease, yet mechanical unfeeling is expected of the singer. You cannot show that your dress is too tight to breathe properly or that your shoes are hurting you. Once more, Megan spoke of her experiences in this regard:

²¹² Menninghaus demonstrates how our perceptions of attractiveness more broadly may be tainted by gender. In presenting an anecdote of Heidegger donning as an ugly old lady and the old lady as Heidegger, he speaks to how gender and ugliness intersect in our collective consciousness: ‘first, a woman strikes us as uglier than an ugly man even when she is actually less ugly; second, a man can win the prize for ugliness only when he switches sexual signifiers.’ Menninghaus, ‘Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body’, 85.

²¹³ Griffiths, “‘Posh Music Should Equal Posh Dress’”; Griffiths, ‘The Fabric of Performance: Values and Social Practices of Classical Music Expressed through Concert Dress Choice’.

Hoeveel keer, how many times have we sung in, in something because it looks a certain way, but doesn't give us the support that we need for singing. Like, finding fashionable concert shoes that are, that, that give us the support that we need for the singing, but, but ties in with the rest of the aesthetic that we try to create. Like there's always some kind of, of negotiation or compromise that go into choices like these. Like why, why is that? You know? [...] *Skoene*, something as simple as that also affects the singing. It's not a hairstyle, but like, *skoene*, shoes. Um, or like some, some—and people are divided on this—some people are like, you can't sing in in a pump, in a flat shoe, you have to wear a heel. Like what's the, the correct height of the heel for it to not look 'oumarig', you know, or like there's so much that goes into it. Like, I literally had to search recently for a glamorous Green Cross²¹⁴ performance shoe. Cause I'm like, oh, I need the support I need, I need to, to look after my feet, but can I find a shoe that can also serve as a comfortable concert shoe? *En ek moes so gaan soek vir dit*, like.²¹⁵

Megan's comments above illustrate her acute awareness of the role of concert attire as a visible embodiment of respectability in classical music. Furthermore, she realised how performing respectability through appearance could be a costly endeavour, both financially and in terms of the unpaid labour and physical discomfort women endure to meet the expectations of concert attire. Over the course of our conversation, she also consciously acknowledged how the pressures to conform to gendered, racialised and classed appearance norms may extend into other areas of physical appearance, like face makeup, hair styling, body size and age, which I will explore below and in the following chapter. Such a level of cognizance of the complex interplay between respectability politics and classical singing was highly unusual among my singer-participants. They usually spoke of what I have theorised here as the pursuit of a cyborgian ideal more latently through anecdotes from their lived experiences. Respectability was rarely called by the name unless prompted by me. Nonetheless, their experiences and observations called for a critical examination of respectability and appearance in classical singing beyond dress code, ultimately inviting a reconsideration of the norms of 'pretty' within the classical music industry.

2.3. *Mooimaakgoed*

Mooimaakgoed is an Afrikaans colloquial word for 'makeup', which translates literally to 'pretty-making-things', or things that make you pretty. This word evokes in me *jouissance*—it is simultaneously a source of pleasure and pain. I find pleasurable its vivid descriptiveness of the transformative power of facial cosmetics as beautification technologies. Painful, however, is the word's implication: that faces, especially women's faces, are inherently deficient and

²¹⁴ Green Cross is a comfort footwear brand.

²¹⁵ Translations: *Hoeveel keer* – how many times; *skoene* – shoes; *oumarig* – granny-like; *Ek moes gaan soek vir dit* – I had to go looking/searching for it.

require prettying. In other words, *mooimaakgoed* does not make you prettier; it erases your inherent ugliness. It does not simply enhance existing beauty but constructs an idealized notion of beauty itself. The term not only reflects a norm in everyday life but also underscores an inescapable expectation on the classical concert stage, where facial attractiveness, akin to dress, becomes a visible marker of respectability. This dichotomous nature of *mooimaakgoed* exposes the complex relationship between societal norms, personal agency, and the pressures women face in adhering to established standards of beauty in both mundane and performative contexts. In classical vocal performance specifically, makeup for my interlocutors is a non-negotiable prerequisite. This is something I can attest to from my experiences as a classical singer, and is also confirmed by Zobuhle:

It's, it's mostly on [...] how you present yourself in terms of [...] dress code and... And you *must* wear makeup. Why is your face like this? You *have to* cover yourself.²¹⁶

Surfacing again here is classical music's fixation on masking body and skin. Veritably, makeup is a literal mask that hides the natural face. Like with concert attire, though, it operates differently in classical singing than in other performance specialities—it is intended to cover the skin for the sake of performing *luxus*, not primarily to disguise the body's materiality in the face of intellectual/musical/masculine greatness. Thus, in its function of showcasing wealth as an aspirational function of respectability, classical singers' stage makeup also forms a critical nexus with the elitist conatus for cyborgianism. This is a further innovation on cyborg theory, which has seldom thought of makeup as a body-augmenting technology. However, framed here as technological prosthesis, I argue that classical singers' stage makeup is, in fact, a technology for augmenting the body, which aligns with broader ideas of hybridization in cyborg theory. By applying cyborg theory, *mooimaakgoed* can be viewed as a form of cyborgian enhancement, of blurring the boundaries between the natural and the artificial, reality and imagination. The pressure to conform to established standards of beauty then becomes a societal demand for a cyborg-like ideal—an unattainable fusion of the natural and the technologically enhanced.

More importantly, however, cyborg theory provides a framework for understanding how makeup can be an oppressive tool in the complex landscape of racial identity and representation. Beyond the distinct racist undertones innate to any idea of camouflaging skin, the cyborg allows us to think of makeup as a tangible, wearable technology of whiteness. That is, of course, over and above classical music and singing as technologies of white bourgeois

²¹⁶ My emphasis.

affect per se. Zobuhle testified hesitantly but poignantly about the challenges related to skin colour and makeup in operatic singing:

Well, as you know, most operas are written, were written by Western people and they were for Western people. Um, it's, it, it's still a challenge for, for, for black people to be able to, to be casted in, in, especially in leading roles, because obviously of the race, uh, the colour of your skin. Unless you have to sing Aida, but not everybody can sing Aida, 'cause Aida is, uh, the girl is black from Ethiopia. So that's when you're like, ah, I can sing something [where] I don't have to, my makeup doesn't have to be super, you know, light.

Listening to Zobuhle's testimony was difficult, impacting me suddenly and deeply. While I am well aware of the employment issues that black people in opera may face due to their skin colour, I did not think that opera practices skin-lightening for black singers.²¹⁷ Striking me so viscerally was not the realisation of my ignorance with regard to opera's skin-lightening or skin-masking praxis, which I return to below, although this was certainly a part of my shock.²¹⁸ Rather, I was more disturbed to be confronted with the idea that even after conquering opera's racial bias by obtaining employment, black singers may still not be 'good enough' unless they lighten their skin. Indeed, black opera singers are required to mask the reality of their blackness and augment the reality of opera and classical music as being of and for whiteness.²¹⁹ What is more, this was the lived experience of a singer in South Africa, where the employment rate of black singers is relatively high in comparison to many Western countries.²²⁰ During a 2020 panel discussion that formed the inaugural event of the Black Opera Research Network (BORN), singer Louise Toppin delivered a strikingly similar account of makeup and blackness in classical singing to that of Zobuhle:

I am a light-skinned African-American woman. And so I have, I am treated differently, and I know that, than some of my dear sisters who are not. And so that is an issue, speaking for them,

²¹⁷ André et al., 'Black Experiences in Opera: Perspectives from South Africa, Europe and the US'; Wayne Muller, 'A Reception History of Opera in Cape Town: Tracing the Development of a Distinctly South African Operatic Aesthetic (1985-2015)' (Ph.D. diss., Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2018), 156-7; Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, 'Jazz, Opera, and the Ideologies of Race', in *African Theatre. 19, Opera & Music Theatre*, ed. Christine Matzke et al., Opera & Music Theatre (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2020), 21-33.

²¹⁸ André, *Black Opera*, 13-20; Naomi Adele André, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor, 'Introduction', in *Blackness in Opera*, ed. Naomi Adele André, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 3.

²¹⁹ Black opera singers' employment struggles are backed up by Karen Henson in her review of Naomi André's *Black Opera*, explains that in a recent report on the current opera landscape, insiders cautioned that it still 'remains "shockingly mono-cultural" in terms of the ethnic, socio-economic and gender profile of the talent on which it draws.' Karen Henson, 'Black Opera, Operatic Racism and an "Engaged Opera Studies"', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 146, no. 1 (May 2021): 226.

²²⁰ Muller, 'A Reception History of Opera in Cape Town: Tracing the Development of a Distinctly South African Operatic Aesthetic (1985-2015)', 156; Hilde Roos, 'Opera Production in the Western Cape: Strategies in Search of Indigenization' (Ph.D. diss., Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2010), 183, 192-223.

that they have faced so much in terms of makeup, in terms of not being able to ... some of the questions you said, in terms of wigs and doing the hair. I mean, I have quite often done my own hair. But there are, there are issues fraught with that. Some of the best voices on the planet have been these African-American, darkskinned [sic] African-American women. And one or two will burst through, but we don't get a large scale [sic] number. Or we don't feel like they fit.²²¹

Despite only 'hearing' Toppin in writing in a transcript of the event, I interpreted her tone as analogous to Zobuhle's in its apparent hesitation, perhaps indicative of her efforts to find the right words for a complicated, painful, and possibly dangerous matter.

Apart from Bull, there are many other scholars who criticise classical music, including opera, for its racial exclusivity. Naomi André, who is also a founding member of BORN, observes that by teaching opera to incarcerated women from her positionality as a black woman, opera 'was no longer an elitist art form in a foreign language only for white people,' thereby corroborating and critiquing its generally accepted status as white goods.²²² André's observation suggest the potential for transformation that lies at the intersection of opera and race, yet the reality that this transformative power often remains dormant, or when it is roused, it is as a result of black labour.²²³ Indeed, as is the case with many racially oppressive practices, the responsibility for advocating for change has predominantly fallen on black artists, administrators, and audiences.²²⁴ This, in turn, places an unfair burden on those who have already endured disproportionate harm as a result of the racism that they are fighting against.²²⁵

More upsetting still than opera's seemingly wilful ignorance of its metamorphic possibilities, however, is André's reports on the use of blackface makeup in opera.²²⁶ Particularly, this is done in productions of Verdi's *Aida* (1870) and *Otello* (1887), wherein the title roles are black people. André is one of few scholars who specifically addresses oppression at the intersection of race and makeup in opera, especially via blackface. In her monograph *Black Opera*, she

²²¹ André et al., 'Black Experiences in Opera: Perspectives from South Africa, Europe and the US', 314.

²²² André, 'Teaching Opera in Prison', 264. Henson supports this idea of classical music as what I have called 'white goods': 'These values [of the American Musicological Society], it seemed, remained rooted in the idea of the superiority of Western art music over other musical traditions and practices; [...] and the ideas and experiences of white listeners and scholars over those of listeners and scholars from African American and other minority backgrounds.' Henson, 'Black Opera, Operatic Racism and an "Engaged Opera Studies"', 221.

²²³ André affirms in *Black Opera* how opera can be a potential 'site for critical inquiry, political activism, and social change.' André, *Black Opera*, 193; Ayesha Casie Chetty, 'Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42, no. 13 (3 October 2019): 2367; Julia J. Chybowski, 'Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 73, no. 2 (2020): 405.

²²⁴ Naveen Kumar, 'Retiring Blackface', *Opera America Magazine*, 28 January 2023, <https://www.operaamerica.org/magazine/winter-2023/retiring-blackface/>.

²²⁵ Kumar, 'Retiring Blackface'.

²²⁶ See especially André's monograph: André, *Black Opera*, 2, 4-8, 10, 13-14, 31-32, 209, 213.

recounts her discomfort during a 2012 Metropolitan Opera broadcast of *Otello*, which she attended with a black South African colleague, when she discovered a white South African—the late Johan Botha—would play the title role in blackface.²²⁷ The Met has since ceased this practice of ‘blacking up’, albeit belatedly in 2015, and only after backlash related to promotional materials for their upcoming *Otello* production.²²⁸ Yet it persists on some other operatic stages globally, often defended as a traditional element of opera.²²⁹ In fact, when the Met ceased the practice after more than a century, singer Aleksandrs Antonenko, singing the role of *Otello* in their 2015 production, simply commented, ‘The Met breaks tradition, and I will be white.’ To this, journalist and deputy Culture editor at the New York Times, Michael Cooper, remarked how

[i]t was an offhand way of phrasing a seismic shift. That leading opera houses have continued to use blackface into the early 21st century, long after minstrel shows and similar performances have been rejected as racist, may be more surprising to many people than that the practice is now being ended by the Met, after 124 years, for the new production of ‘Otello’ [...].²³⁰

André’s work on blackfacing in opera makes for disturbing reading as it stands. Still, Karen Henson suggests in a review of *Black Opera* that André could have been even more assertive in addressing mainstream opera’s use and/or reminiscence of blackface makeup in times when such practices are rejected in other public and cultural spheres.²³¹ While other sectors, such as theatre and Hollywood, moved away from the use of blackface many years ago, ‘it has stubbornly persisted on some operatic stages to this day.’²³² Henson’s critique becomes especially perturbing in light of reports of blackfacing in an operatic production as recently as 2022:

²²⁷ André, *Black Opera*, 2; Henson, ‘Black Opera, Operatic Racism and an “Engaged Opera Studies”’, 225; Christine Matzke, ‘Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement’, *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 42, no. 2 (4 May 2022): 219.

There is a photo of Botha ‘blacked up’ in the following article, but I decided not to include it here as a matter of principle: Michael Cooper, ‘An “Otello” Without Blackface Highlights an Enduring Tradition in Opera’, *The New York Times*, 17 September 2015, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/arts/music/an-otello-without-the-blackface-nods-to-modern-tastes.html>

²²⁸ Cooper, ‘An “Otello” Without Blackface Highlights an Enduring Tradition in Opera’; Kumar, ‘Retiring Blackface’.

²²⁹ André, *Black Opera*, 8; Henson, ‘Black Opera, Operatic Racism and an “Engaged Opera Studies”’, 225.

²³⁰ Cooper, ‘An “Otello” Without Blackface Highlights an Enduring Tradition in Opera’.

²³¹ Henson, ‘Black Opera, Operatic Racism and an “Engaged Opera Studies”’, 225.

²³² Kumar, ‘Retiring Blackface’. See also: Cooper, ‘An “Otello” Without Blackface Highlights an Enduring Tradition in Opera’.

The U.S. singer [Angel Blue] posted a note on her [...] Instagram page saying she will be bowing out of ‘La Traviata’ at Verona’s Arena [Italy] [...] because the theatre recently mounted another Giuseppe Verdi opera, ‘Aida,’ that had performers in blackface.²³³

In the production in question, the title role of Aida was performed by Russian soprano Anna Netrebko. Netrebko has been a vocal defender of ‘blackening up’, arguing that it helps maintain the authenticity of centuries-old works and honours opera’s performance traditions. When the Met tried to stop her from using makeup to darken her skin during a production of *Aida* in 2018, she went to a tanning salon instead.²³⁴ In 2019, appearing with dark makeup in a production of *Aida* at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, she wrote on Instagram, ‘I am NOT gonna be white AIDA’ and ‘Black Face and Black Body for Ethiopian princess, for Verdi greatest opera! YES!’²³⁵ While there is certainly value in following historically informed performance practices, which is part of Netrebko’s defence, this is not a good enough reason for ‘choosing to ignore the racism inherent to them.’²³⁶ Instead, André encourages a more nuanced and contextualised approach when she cautions that

we need to think very carefully about opera and the politics and sensitivity of who’s representing whom. We are used to seeing non-black singers perform the roles of Aida, Otello; we’re used to seeing non-Asian singers, [non-]Japanese singers performing Butterfly; we’re used to seeing non-Chinese singers performing Turandot. And so these issues of blackface, yellowface, true-to-colour casting, and who gets to represent whom, are so complicated. My own view is that opera needs to have some sort of discussion and contextualisation.²³⁷

Differently put, tradition is not a good enough reason not to consider and reconsider how we treat race in/and opera. Or, in the words of OPERA America Social Justice Advisor Quodesia Johnson, ‘[t]radition does not outweigh people’s dignity.’²³⁸

In the quote above, André mentions a further racist practice for temporarily altering skin tone via makeup, namely, *yellowfacing*.²³⁹ It refers to makeup that is intended to mimic an Asian

²³³ ‘U.S. Soprano Pulls out of Italian Opera over Theater’s Use of Blackface: “Outright Racist” - CBS News’, 16 July 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/soprano-angel-blue-leaves-italian-opera-over-use-of-blackface/>.

²³⁴ Javier C. Hernández, ‘Soprano Withdraws From Opera, Citing “Blackface” in Netrebko’s “Aida”’, *The New York Times*, 15 July 2022, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/15/arts/music/angel-blue-anna-netrebko-blackface.html>.

²³⁵ Hernández, ‘Soprano Withdraws From Opera, Citing “Blackface” in Netrebko’s “Aida”’. There is a photo of Netrebko ‘blackened up’ in this article, but I decided not to include it here as a matter of principle.

²³⁶ Kumar, ‘Retiring Blackface’.

²³⁷ André et al., ‘Black Experiences in Opera: Perspectives from South Africa, Europe and the US’, 327.

²³⁸ Kumar, ‘Retiring Blackface’.

²³⁹ While I understand the use of the word ‘yellowfacing’ because of its relational meaning to blackfacing, I dislike the term and find it derogatory. Where the ‘black’ in blackfacing may be an important self-identifying term that links to black empowerment ideas like those of the Black Consciousness Movement, ‘yellow’ is a

complexion and is traditionally used in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (1904) and *Turandot* (1924), as well as Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (1885).²⁴⁰ In raising yellowface, André highlights a part of the discussion on race in opera that is often neglected in our sometimes myopically black-and-white racial politics. Certainly, if the use of dark makeup is considered inappropriate for white Otellos, this should also influence expectations regarding the appearance or behaviour of, for example, non-Asian singers in *Madama Butterfly* or *Turandot*.²⁴¹ Both blackface and yellowface, after all, are practices that historically carry symbolic weight and purpose as practices of racial and colonial oppression. The tradition of altering appearance with makeup in theatre has roots in medieval times, where actors often utilized soot to depict the souls of the damned, reflecting a historical link between darker skin tones and notions of degradation.²⁴² To degrade a person or group is to deny their humanity—the word literally suggests removing their 'grade' or status, and thus their respectability. As such, black/yellowface becomes 'a propaganda tactic to dehumanize people as the enemy or as property' based on their perceived racial otherness, and may contribute 'to whether [...] [certain] people are seen as fully human in cultural narratives.'²⁴³ Indeed, '[s]imilar to other art forms, opera shapes cultural sentiments about who is worthy to be seen as fully three-dimensional.'²⁴⁴ When viewed through this historical role of opera as a means to shape people's perceptions of others, then, it becomes crucial to scrutinize—as per André—the messages its practices convey.²⁴⁵ In doing so, the damage that harmful practices may cause to individuals and communities can be proactively negated. Indubitably, the goal of responsible operatic performance practice should be to counter harm before it occurs instead of after the fact 'in reaction to criticism.'²⁴⁶ This would mean not just reactionarily challenging but preventing the perpetuation of racist stereotypes and racialised dehumanisation.

Interestingly, Zobuhle did not address the issue of blackfacing in opera directly but did speak of skin-lightening practices, whether to imitate white or Asian hues. I am not sure why she did not address blackface, but it could be for a number of reasons. As a matter relating to racial

racial slur to refer to people of Asian origin. However, I am not raising this to suggest that we should think of a different name. Instead, I am problematising the term to remain mindful of its encoded connotations.

²⁴⁰ Cooper, 'An "Otello" Without Blackface Highlights an Enduring Tradition in Opera'.

²⁴¹ Cooper, 'An "Otello" Without Blackface Highlights an Enduring Tradition in Opera'.

²⁴² Kumar, 'Retiring Blackface'.

²⁴³ Kumar, 'Retiring Blackface'.

²⁴⁴ Kumar, 'Retiring Blackface'.

²⁴⁵ Kumar, 'Retiring Blackface'.

²⁴⁶ Kumar, 'Retiring Blackface'.

denigration, it might be uncomfortable or painful for her to talk about. Or perhaps, like many artists ‘both on stage and behind the scenes, [she] may also be sensitive to the consequences of speaking out against [it] and aware of [her] limited say in creative decisions.’²⁴⁷ However, I also considered whether it just did not occur to her, that it was not a part of her lived experience. My feeling is that as a singer in the South African industry, blackfacing would not be a part of her frame of reference, because it is something that does not happen on operatic stages here. This is affirmed for me in her statement that ‘not everybody can sing Aida, ‘cause Aida is, uh, the girl is black from Ethiopia,’ thereby implying that in her mind, blackness is a prerequisite for portraying Aida. Indeed, local productions simply use black singers to play roles like Aida or Otello or cast singers in roles regardless of their skin colour. Such a custom of casting in South Africa today makes sense when one considers that ‘[o]pera outside Europe and among the profoundly marginalized is not an extension of or foil to a fundamentally Italian, German or French history. It is the norm and the centre.’²⁴⁸ As such, opera in South Africa often seeks the cultural capital of indigenisation which, despite its complexities, creates space for black bodily expression.²⁴⁹

Where Zobuhle did touch on the issue of blackfacing (even though she did not frame it as such), she betrayed a sense of naïveté. This was suggested to me by her justification of yellowfacing in *Madama Butterfly*:

Well, yeah, if I, if I had to play Aida, then my skin is brown. Uh, I wouldn't have to, to wear makeup for that. But if, for example, if you have to play *Madama Butterfly*—*Madama Butterfly* is Chinese—then you [...] need to, um, to wear that makeup so that you at least look like that. The way that they paint your lips and things like that. Um, but I, I don't think it has anything to do with, with, with, with... I don't think it's about race, but it's about paying, um, tribute to the, to the culture, you know. You can't say that the opera is about Chinese people and then you have just normal people. So you, you can have normal people, but then certain things that you do, you know, so that you can, people can have a reference to what the opera is about.

Initially, Zobuhle's view felt counterintuitive to me. How can she speak out against certain oppressive stage makeup practices, like having to lighten her skin for the majority of roles, but condone others, like yellowfacing? Yet after a while, I started seeing how her nescient attitude might affirm André's warning regarding the need for thorough contemplation of the politics of

²⁴⁷ Kumar, ‘Retiring Blackface’.

²⁴⁸ Henson, ‘Black Opera, Operatic Racism and an “Engaged Opera Studies”’, 230.

²⁴⁹ For a thorough explication of the ‘complexities’ mentioned in this sentence, see: S. B. Davies and J. Q. Davies, “‘So Take This Magic Flute and Blow. It Will Protect Us As We Go’: Impempe Yomlingo (2007-11) and South Africa’s Ongoing Transition’, *The Opera Quarterly* 28, no. 1–2 (1 March 2012): 54–71; Juliana Pistorius, ‘Predicaments of Coloniality, or, Opera Studies Goes Ethno’, *Music & Letters* 100, no. 3 (2019): 529–39.

representation on the operatic stage—a neglect that is reflected in opera scholarship. Indeed, Henson argues that this is exactly what André’s work is about: an engaged opera studies wherein ‘opera scholars and musicologists as a whole need to be better informed, more nuanced and braver in their work’, and which keeps ‘singers and performance central.’²⁵⁰

Firstly, that Zobuhle was under the impression that *Madama Butterfly* is set in China instead of Japan indicates to me that the opera was likely never properly contextualised for her, whether through self-study or in her training and work experiences. Indeed, despite studying opera at undergraduate level in South Africa and at the postgraduate level abroad, and regardless of many years of industry experience, she still operated under a misbelief about *Madama Butterfly*’s milieu. Secondly, she believes that operatic stage makeup practices have nothing to do with race. Instead, she sees it as an expressive tool for staging an opera’s cultural context and honouring the culture in which it is set. This is strikingly similar to Netrebko’s view in its seemingly altruistic prioritisation of operatic traditions of racial re/presentation over antiracist practices. Third, her reference to ‘normal’ people versus Chinese people suggests to me a certain internalisation of opera’s standard racialised othering and exoticisation, here in the form of Orientalism.²⁵¹ ‘Normal’ people are black or white, and vice versa, black or white people are ‘normal’. Being Asian means being outside of the norms that qualify personhood, which is a prerequisite for being regarded as respectable.

That race can function as a qualifier for humanness and, therefore, respectability, illuminates a fourth possible reason for Zobuhle’s ostensibly ambiguous attitude towards oppressive stage makeup practices in opera. It made me think about metazoans’ biologically preprogrammed reactions to being violated, which is, in simple terms, to fight or flee.²⁵² In Kingdom Animalia’s fight-or-flight response of the sympathetic nervous system, ‘fight’ can be associated with anger directed at a threat, and ‘flight’ with a denial or rejection of the threat.²⁵³ As a part of the

²⁵⁰ Henson, ‘Black Opera, Operatic Racism and an “Engaged Opera Studies”’, 221, 223.

²⁵¹ Cooper, ‘An “Otello” Without Blackface Highlights an Enduring Tradition in Opera’.

²⁵² Walter B. Cannon, *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear and Rage: An Account of Recent Researches into the Function of Emotional Excitement*. (New York: D Appleton & Company, 1915); Linda Mathew, ‘Racism Is Life-Threatening and Continues the Cycle of Racial Trauma: What Can Clinicians Do to Interrupt This Cycle?’, *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 12 January 2024.

²⁵³ The fight-or-flight response was first theorized by Walter Cannon in 1915—see previous footnote. In the decade since, subsequent research has expanded on his idea, hypothesizing that human animals’ reaction to acute physiological stress because of a threat may trigger more than just ‘fight’ or ‘flight’. Such refinements now indicate various possible responses to stressful situations, including fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. Fight involves responding to a perceived threat aggressively, flight entails running away from danger, freeze refers to being unable to move or act against a threat, and fawn involves immediately acting to please and avoid conflict. For the sake of this argument, however, I am only referring to the ‘fight-or-flight response’, but I include ‘freeze’ and ‘fawn’ in my understanding thereof. According to Mathew and Vanderpool, these four responses

sympathetic nervous system, fight-or-flight works unconsciously. Similarly, if black/yellowface is a violence perpetuated against humans based on race, then denying or ignoring its harm may be the subconscious mind's way of shielding them against it.²⁵⁴ However, speculating on anyone's possible reasoning, whether conscious or subconscious, to plead neutrality towards or support for black/yellowface is perhaps not the most productive move here. More important to grasp, especially in the context of opera, is what skin-altering practices symbolise: the supremacy of those with white skin. Whether this happens by lightening darker skins to appear white or caricaturing black or Asian skins (and people!) through black/yellowface, it remains a cyborgian performance of whiteness as the epitome of aesthetic beauty. In fact, I am not convinced that this kind of racial cyborgianism serves any other purpose apart from communicating social status. To be sure, it is not a necessity for audiences' comprehension of operatic narratives and disregards their vast imaginative capacity.²⁵⁵ Indeed, such fictional substitutions are the very premise of the suspension of disbelief as evidenced by Cooper who argues that opera lovers

may not blink at seeing white Otellos in dark greasepaint, viewing it as part of a tradition that has also allowed overweight tenors to play starving artists or mature sopranos to be cast as winsome teenagers.²⁵⁶

Indeed, operatic performance relies on a suspension of disbelief by the audience. The audience is required to engage with the work on figurative, poetic, and allegorical levels, and do not require explicit skin-lightening/darkening to grasp text or even subtext.²⁵⁷ Instead, opera's characters and stories grip us through those things that cannot be communicated with makeup or other cyborgian tools—in their portrayal of a shared humanity. We are captivated by the great stories and characters first and foremost because we identify with their humanity, whether positive or negative, and not primarily due to the colour of their skin.²⁵⁸

are reflected in people's responses to the trauma of racial discrimination. Mathew, 'Racism Is Life-Threatening and Continues the Cycle of Racial Trauma'; Morgan Vanderpool, 'Body Science of Survivorship: Mapping the Neurological Impacts of Interlocking Systems of Oppression and Co-Designing Equitable Solutions through Movement and Breath', in *Practicing Yoga as Resistance: Voices of Color in Search of Freedom*, ed. Cara Hagan, Routledge Research in Race and Ethnicity (Abingdon New York (N.Y.): Routledge, 2021), 69, 70.

²⁵⁴ Mathew, 'Racism Is Life-Threatening and Continues the Cycle of Racial Trauma'; Vanderpool, 'Body Science of Survivorship: Mapping the Neurological Impacts of Interlocking Systems of Oppression and Co-Designing Equitable Solutions through Movement and Breath'.

²⁵⁵ Kumar, 'Retiring Blackface'.

²⁵⁶ Cooper, 'An "Otello" Without Blackface Highlights an Enduring Tradition in Opera'.

²⁵⁷ Kumar, 'Retiring Blackface'.

²⁵⁸ Cooper, 'An "Otello" Without Blackface Highlights an Enduring Tradition in Opera'.

2.4. Conclusion: Will the Master's tools, or will they not...?

Yet the device only humanized technology by instrumentalizing a human body. Only when Moorman performed as a grotesquely feminized cyborg was her humanistic, artistic agency made visible.²⁵⁹

In 1969, cellist Charlotte Moorman stepped onstage at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York to perform video artist Nam June Paik's *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*.²⁶⁰ Strapped to her chest were 'two small monitors adorning her otherwise bare breasts,' wired by Paik so that 'sound waves became electrical interference while she played, warping [the] television programs' displayed on the screens.²⁶¹ This was following another daring performance two years earlier, also in collaboration with Paik, during which she performed with 'two electric propellers pasted to her nipples'.²⁶² For this earlier performance, she (but not the idea's conceptualiser, Paik—a man) was tried for, and found guilty of, indecent exposure. Thus, in *TV Bra*, Moorman subverted the law, utilising the concept of the brassiere as a lawfully 'permissible article of clothing' to cover up Moorman's 'impermissible nudity'.²⁶³ The quote at the start of this section is a critique by Sophie Landres of Moorman's arguably cyborgianist endeavours, as well as those of others like her. Landres points out the paradoxical nature of cyborgianism: while the cyborg humanizes technology by using the human body as an instrument, the true visibility of humanistic, artistic agency is only achieved when the performance involves a grotesquely feminised cyborg. In pointing out this paradox, Landres highlights what I interpret as the failure of cyborgian subversion, namely, how the attempt to merge human and technology often falls short of its transformative goals. Indeed, the emphasis on instrumentalising the human body for the sake of technology does not necessarily result in the empowerment or liberation of individuals. Instead, the act of becoming a cyborg, particularly in a grotesquely feminised manner, as required by the classical concert stage, can be seen as a betrayal of the subversion of respectability's oppression. Thus, the pursuit of cyborgification, whether through a *TV Bra* or simply via concert dress and makeup, may inadvertently reinforce existing power structures and normative expectations, rather than challenging or subverting them.

²⁵⁹ Landres, 'Indecent and Uncanny', 62.

²⁶⁰ Landres, 'Indecent and Uncanny', 58.

²⁶¹ Landres, 'Indecent and Uncanny', 58.

²⁶² Landres, 'Indecent and Uncanny', 49.

²⁶³ Landres, 'Indecent and Uncanny', 58, 53.



Figure 9: Publicity photo for *TV Bra for Living Sculpture*.²⁶⁴

Referenced in Haraway's original manifesto, as well as in subsequent cyborg literature, is 'Audre Lorde's (1984) now famous feminist adage, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house"'.²⁶⁵ Lorde's analogy suggests that using the same oppressive systems or methods that created a problem is ineffective in achieving true liberation or social change. Haraway, as Lara Cox has argued, links this analogy and its implications, as laid out by Lorde, as exemplary of a 'liberated' cyborgian hybrid identity:

For Lorde, black, poor, lesbian and other women who endure multiple forms of oppression stand outside of 'society's definition of acceptable women' and must 'take [their] differences and make them strengths'. Haraway cites Lorde's text as an example of the cyborgian 'fusion of outsider identities' that feminism of colour expands upon [...].²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Landres, 'Indecent and Uncanny', 58-9.

²⁶⁵ Prasad, 'Cyborg Writing as a Political Act', 437.

²⁶⁶ Lara Cox, 'Decolonial Queer Feminism in Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1985)', *Paragraph* 41, no. 3 (November 2018): 325.

However, in doing so, does Haraway and her devotees not in some ways claim a position ‘wholly antithetical’ to Lorde’s? Julia R. DeCook has asked a similar question but focuses on the ability of oppressed groups to dismantle the technological sphere by participating in it. She asks: ‘how much potential do science, technology, and the cyborg identity really hold for women, for people of color, for the disabled, and for queer persons?’²⁶⁷ I think my position on this is clear from my explication of cyborg theory in this chapter. Indeed, I am sceptical about technology’s potential for inclusivity across vast and diverse social positionalities, both in everyday life and in classical vocal performance. Instead, I argue that assertions of cyborgian modes of creation as ‘an integral part of the emancipation project in that they allow [...] individuals to reclaim writing [or creation more broadly] as a tool for personal and collective liberation’ upholds rather than dismantles the proverbial ‘master’s house’.²⁶⁸ Inclusivity, here—or rather, the state of being included—signifies a respectable social identity. As such, a disconnect is illuminated between the idealistic, liberatory goals of cyborgification, and its practical outcomes in the lives of the singers with whom I have spoken.

²⁶⁷ DeCook, ‘A [White] Cyborg’s Manifesto’, 1161.

²⁶⁸ Prasad, ‘Cyborg Writing as a Political Act’, 437.



Figure 10: *un(BECOMING)* 3: I sing 'What Lips My Lips Have Kissed' by Margaret Bonds, admiring my 'new' hairstyle after I had just cut off my ponytail, clothed in only my underwear and jewellery.

THREE

Embodied Performativity: Intra-Bodily Markers of Respectability

[W]ith makeup, I'm not a makeup person, but I understand that once you are on stage... I did, for instance, in the States we did, we also did drama. So they explained to you why you must wear makeup. It's not because—because both men and women, they wear makeup—it's because you want to see your face. It's not because we want you to look pretty, it's because we want to see your face. And that was explained. So I'm like, 'Oh, okay, [...] now I know why, and I understand why I need to do certain things.

In Chapter Two, I contemplated what a singer may externally and visibly apply to her body to perform respectability, which I termed 'extra-bodily technologies of respectability'. Concert attire (including concert jewellery), makeup, and certain medical aesthetic interventions, like orthodontic braces, fall into this category. Despite my narrow analyses of these, there are certainly further—perhaps less noxious—reasons for applying beautification technologies to the body. Consider, for example, Salome's opinion expressed above. For her, performance makeup serves the primary function of highlighting the face; of making it more visible by exaggerating its qualities. Indeed, contrary to my assertions in Chapter Two, she insists that makeup is not a tool for 'making' you pretty. Or, in my words, makeup is not a mode of cyborgification for the sake of respectability. For her, it is not a technology for beauty enhancement, but rather a means for aiding a performer's facial visibility.

Salome's is not a view that I personally agree with, as I think similar reasoning often serves as an excuse for not breaking free from 'the power of [possibly racist, sexist, classist] symbols' in my/our own stage makeup practices.²⁶⁹ In fact, Salome's turn towards the pragmatism of stage makeup points, for me, back at the fight-or-flight response, which I briefly addressed in Chapter Two. There, I discussed fight-or-flight in terms of the possible reaction of the oppressed; of those who have been violated. Now, however, I am thinking about the possible fight-or-flight response on the part of a perpetrator—or perpetrator group—when confronted with the violation by their own group of another group. In this regard, Morgan Vanderpool observes that white people have 'a conditioned freeze response to the presence of racism, in a community within which they hold a position of power', which, in turn, 'leads to [their] inaction and silence'.²⁷⁰ The freeze response, too, is in my mind a pragmatic move, both on the

²⁶⁹ Cooper, 'An "Otello" Without Blackface Highlights an Enduring Tradition in Opera'.

²⁷⁰ Vanderpool, 'Body Science of Survivorship: Mapping the Neurological Impacts of Interlocking Systems of Oppression and Co-Designing Equitable Solutions through Movement and Breath', 76.

part of the oppressor and the oppressed. By freezing, each party retains its position within the social power/status hierarchy. Individuals within an oppressor group do not face possible expulsion from their community as a result of turning ‘against’ them by addressing the violation of another, and the oppressed do not face further denigration as a result of standing up to their violation. Since Salome made it quite clear that she did not experience the classical concert stage’s makeup practices as oppressive, it is specifically the freeze response on the part of a violator/s that supports my reasoning for not agreeing with her position. Yet regardless of my agreement (or not) with Salome’s view, I cannot and do not wish to disprove her or any other participant’s (or person’s) lived experience. Or, phrased in terms of intersectionality, neither my nor Salome’s personal views or lived experiences are generalisable. Considering, though, that I remain compelled by the forces of respectability to wear glamorous makeup as an essential part of my vocal performances, I might understand her pragmatic view better than I am willing to admit. Indeed, despite my intellectual belief of makeup as a tool for the oppression of women classical singers, I still believe that makeup enhances my vocal product, as if it could somehow leak from my skin into my voice box to make my voice sound pretty, or prettier.

Whatever the possible motivations for engaging or not engaging in beautification technologies aside, Salome’s perspective brought something more compelling into view for me. In hearing her opinion, I realised that while there might be a pragmatic purpose for wearing makeup when performing, the same cannot be said of the classical concert stage’s requirement for ‘tame’ hair. Apart from remaining out of the face to not obstruct the singer’s communication via her facial expressions during performance, hair often only functions in vocal performance to exhibit gendered, racialised, and classed respectability. Much like with dress and makeup, there is pressure on classical singers to augment (or reduce) their hair for performance. Cyborgified hair, for women, is not short, lest it blurs the boundaries between femininity and masculinity. Singer Karla, who has the shortest hair out of all the participants, expressed great frustration at this obligation to have long, ‘feminine’ hair.

[But] you always like, have to prepare yourself, someone’s gonna say something stupid. [...] ‘Oh, you should grow your hair, you have such nice hair!’ And I’m like, ‘Arrrrgh!’

Furthermore, cyborg hair is not black hair. It is *straight* and shiny. Or, if it must be black, it must at least act white, freed of coils and twists.²⁷¹ To this end, technologies such as heat styling tools, chemical hair relaxants and dyes, hair extensions, weaves, and wigs are employed. The concert stage's expectation for 'white' hair and normatively feminine hairstyles is illuminated in Megan's recollection of her subversion of this ideal.

Um, I've always kind of, even with hair as a, which is such a tangible, um, difference between white and ethnic people, um, when I was twenty, I went from wearing my hair straight to wearing curly hair and um, that was an embracing of, of my own ethnicity and that became part of, of [my] performance, of how I would style my hair in a performance. So that deliberately moved away from the, um, European ideal of like what hair is supposed to look like.

In Megan's recollection, however, there emerges a need to think about hair as something beyond only a technology of the performance of respectability. Her hair is resolutely bound up with the performance of racial identity. Thus, it is more intimately connected to the body and less of a cyborgian modification. Thought of as such, I consider hair as extending beyond an extra-bodily respectability technology, into what I want to call an *intra-bodily respectability marker*. Intra-bodily respectability markers refer to the physical attributes of the body itself, like race, weight/size, age, and markers of reproductive ability such as menstruation.²⁷²

Even though these markers sit within the body, their policing emerges in the exterior space of language aimed at or projected onto the singer. As will become clear in this chapter, the way in which these intra-bodily markers are policed is through passing (and less passing) comments from audience members and colleagues, ideas circulated in the media, and other forms of verbal communication. In short, the policing of these markers occurs as discursive acts, and thus the respectability inculcated here is performative in the sense that it constitutes an action in the real world through speech. Across this chapter, then, I demonstrate, based on my singer-participants' experiences and my own, how the policing of intra-bodily respectability markers may shift our understanding of identity performativity from the discursive realm into the physical. In doing so, I reveal the importance of language in respectability's shaping of women's worlds.

²⁷¹ The making white of black hair has a protracted history in opera in North America especially. See Elena Arredondo Farel, 'African American Opera Singers, 1850-1950: Ambition, Uplift, and Performance' (Ph.D. diss., Washinton University in St. Louis, St. Louis, 2022).

²⁷² Ability and disability need to be added to this list. However, this topic fell outside the initial purview of this thesis and should be the focus of future work in this area.

3.1. Identity Performativity

The concept of performativity refers to the idea that words not only reflect or describe reality but also actively shape it. This concept first emerged in 1955 through J.L. Austin's speech act theory to describe the ways in which certain utterances are not merely the act of saying, but are at the same time also acts of performance in which what is said is instantiated in the world.²⁷³ Austin's original formulation had far-reaching consequences for philosophers of language, but its most enduring presence has perhaps been in its adoption by Judith Butler, through whom the 'term "performativity" entered—and irrevocably altered—the literary and cultural scene in the 1990s'.²⁷⁴ In the context of gender and sexuality studies, Butler used the term in their influential book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.²⁷⁵ They argued that gender identity is not a fixed or essential attribute but is constructed through repeated and stylized speech acts which are often translated into real-world incarnations to mark gender.²⁷⁶ Simply put, gender is not a natural fact of the world but something that is made real through words and thus constitutes a performance in language.²⁷⁷ As such, the outward expression of gender involves not just expressing an innate inner identity; it is also the creation and reiteration of that identity through linguistic practices which regulate the body.²⁷⁸

Yet for performative language to have this kind of impact on the world, it must be shared: it must be uttered and, crucially, it must be heard. In this sense, performativity emphasizes the role of discourse, which Michel Foucault famously described as the amalgamation of ideas, attitudes, beliefs, actions, and practices within systems of thought, which form subjects and their worlds by shaping and constituting social reality.²⁷⁹ It suggests that our understanding of

²⁷³ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

²⁷⁴ Sandra Bermann, 'Performing Translation', in *A Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter, Book, Section vols (Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2014), 290; Lizelle Smit and Danie Stander, 'Gender-Performance in Alba Bouwer Se Vertaling van Die Etiketboek Sybille: Sjarmante Vriendin Gender Performance in Alba Bouwer's Afrikaans Translation of the Etiquette Book Sybille: Sjarmante Vriendin (Sybille: Charming Friend)', *Tydskrif Vir Geesteswetenskappe* 62, no. 1 (2022), 206.

²⁷⁵ Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Koskoff, *A Feminist Ethnomusicology*, 173. While *Gender Trouble* was the initial extensive engagement with the term, Butler first used the term to describe gender development in 1988. See Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution'.

²⁷⁶ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 140; Koskoff, *A Feminist Ethnomusicology*, 152; Philip Brett and Elizabeth Wood, 'Lesbian and Gay Music', in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett and Elizabeth Wood (New York: Routledge, 1994), 358.

²⁷⁷ Norma Coates, '(R)Evolution Now? Rock and the Political Potential of Gender', in *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, ed. Sheila Whiteley (London: Routledge, 1997), 52.

²⁷⁸ Coates, '(R)Evolution Now? Rock and the Political Potential of Gender', 52; Koskoff, *A Feminist Ethnomusicology*, 152.

²⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (London: Tavistock, 1972).

the world is not only influenced by the words we use but is actively produced through language. In this sense, discourse not only reflects existing norms and values but also participates in their continuous construction.²⁸⁰ Thus, in drawing on discourse, Butler's performativity highlights the power of language being shared in shaping social realities, including the construction of identity, gender, and other social categories.²⁸¹ Or, in the words of Åse Ottoson,

gendered and racialized subjects are continuously created through, and are enabled by, the enaction (performance) of certain norms that take on a quality of inevitability through the recurring repetition over time of certain practices, ideas, and values concerning male and female, black and white, and other identities, practices, and bodies.²⁸²

Ottoson's definition above points toward the critical potential of identifying speech acts in society to aid the deconstruction of the gendered, racialised, and classed subject as a hard fact of nature. To be sure, Butler's original formulation demonstrates that the subversion of such performative constructions requires breaking down these ontologies into 'constitutive acts' that are deployed by the same regulative forces that entrench them.²⁸³ At the same time, however, the very gendered subject is dissolved because such a subject is a product of the regulative framework of its instantiation. While this is a powerful critique that, as I will show, enables me to detect the performativity of respectability as something that emerges in the speech act and that establishes its own prediscursive regulatory framework, I still wonder about the requirement to deconstruct the subject in the moments in which respectability is shown as a constitutive act. I ponder the cost of this critical move in a world in which the gendered, racialised, and classed subject is already negated by the forces of respectability.

To account for this cost, I think in this chapter about/through the closeness of the bodies of my interlocutors to their constitutive subjectivities. While discursive performativity emphasises the role of language and communication in shaping social reality, an embodied perspective would delve into the physical aspects of identity, acknowledging the significance of the material body in performing respectability.²⁸⁴ Indeed, the experiences shared by the singers in

²⁸⁰ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

²⁸¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 4.

²⁸² Åse Ottoson, 'Holding On to Country: Musical Moorings for Desired Masculinities in Aboriginal Australia', in *Country Boys and Redneck Women: New Essays in Gender and Country Music*, ed. Diane Pecknold and Kristine M. McCusker (University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 67.

²⁸³ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 44.

²⁸⁴ Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound*, 49, 135, 144; Holtzman, 'Coloureds Performing Queer, or Queer Coloureds Performing?: Asserting Belonging through Queer Behavior in Cape Town, South Africa', 26, 32, 64-65, 72, 92, 98, 119, 134; Suzanne Cusick, 'Musicology, Performativity, Acoustemology', in *Theorizing Sound Writing*, ed. Deborah A. Kapchan, *Music/Culture* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2017), 25-28.

my study illustrate how the body and bodily practices are integral in the performance of identity while also attesting to the power of performative discourse in shaping these bodies. An embodied understanding of performativity recognises the tangible, lived experiences of the individual singer-participants, and shows how societal norms are inscribed onto and perpetuated through their bodies.²⁸⁵ While Butler's work does address the overlap between the performativity discourse and the material body, their theorisation assumes much in the power of ontological and discursive deconstruction's ability to deliver subversion. From my discussions with my singer-participants, it became clear to me that the theory does not fully match up to these women's experiences. In fact, what we see through their experiences and my own is the opposite: awareness of the theory of performativity, whether discursive or bodily, does not action liberation. There is something more here tethering us to respectability's oppression. As in the case regarding my critiques of Haraway's cyborg theory, I am not implying that Butler's theorisation of performativity is wrong. Rather, I am proposing that theory in the context of lived experiences needs to be thought differently.

In making this argument, I follow Nina Sun Eidsheim's proposition that in thinking about singing and voice, we must think beyond abstract figuration, which in this instance might be thought of as the discursive nature of performativity.²⁸⁶ Her argument is built on the idea that sound and music are, like gender or race, not the result of the body's biology, but of the perceiver's perception/imagination. Eidsheim shows how nineteenth-century European aesthetic thought around the abstraction of music has resulted in an *a priori* 'figuration of sound' as an object external to the bodies which create it. However, she contends, this abstract figuration does little to explain the intermaterial sensory experiences of sound, which extend beyond only the aural and which seem to envelop the perceiver through its atmospheric and corporeal transduction.²⁸⁷ Rather Eidsheim urges us to think about the materiality of vocal production, which she shows challenges sedimented (or prediscursive, to use Butler's terminology) notions of voice as 'innate, singular, and arising solely from within the vocalizer'.²⁸⁸ This move does not remove the need for thinking about the performativity of

²⁸⁵ This turn is not entirely at odds with Butler's argument, which indeed locates the possibility of the subversion of performative gender in the body. My argument here, however, is that the body needs not be subversive to maintain a legitimate subjectivity, and therefore I take seriously the closeness of the body in how it emerges as a regulated site of respectability. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 101-163.

²⁸⁶ Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham (NC) and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 16.

²⁸⁷ Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound*, 16.

²⁸⁸ Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 43.

respectability, but rather to think closely with the singing body so that critique of discourse in the material world of the singer can be extended onto whom such discourse is brought to bear. Indeed, Eidsheim's analysis of the construction of the black voice in discourse has material consequences for the body.²⁸⁹ What is important, however, is that the question of the performativity of respectability cannot be relegated to discourse analysis alone. It needs to be thought of in relation to the material conditions of the body. By embracing this perspective, I advocate for a more nuanced comprehension of the intersections between gender, race, class, and other identity markers, acknowledging the material implications of identity construction and challenging the narrow confines of discursive performativity. In thinking through the intra-bodily markers of respectability, I argue that the performativity of respectability does not just exist legibly only in language and theory, but also non-discursively in, on and through human bodies, including my own body, and those of the singers in my study.

3.2. A 'Tame' Crown

[E]ven when you look at the, the idea of hair and what hair traditionally has been, you know, *die kroon*, the crown of [a woman's], um, appearance. And in 2020 I shaved my hair, like I, I was bald. And that was very interesting to step into a performance space without this extra, um, symbol of femininity being part of it.²⁹⁰

Hair has long been considered a significant symbol of respectable femininity, both in quotidian life and on the classical concert stage.²⁹¹ Seen as *die kroon* or the crown of a woman's appearance, as referenced by Megan above, head hair symbolizes various aspects of respectable femininity, including beauty, sexuality, and gender, race and class identity.²⁹² This is further

²⁸⁹ Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 78-86.

²⁹⁰ Translation: the crown. See: Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama, eds., *Feminist Interrogations of Women's Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame* (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018).

²⁹¹ Ashley R. Garrin and Sara B. Marcketti, 'Ages and Stages: African American Women and Their Lives through Their Hair', in *Feminist Interrogations of Women's Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame*, ed. Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 99; Luiz Valério De Paula Trindade, "'My Hair, My Crown': Examining Black Brazilian Women's Anti-Racist Discursive Strategies on Social Media', *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Latino-Américaines et Caraïbes* 45, no. 3 (1 September 2020): 277-96; Johanna M. Lukate and Juliet L. Foster, "'Depending on Where I Am...' Hair, Travelling and the Performance of Identity among Black and Mixed-race Women', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 62, no. 1 (January 2023): 342-58; Ana Carolina Soares Oliveira, Juliana Maria Magalhães Christino, and Bruno Eduardo Freitas Honorato, 'Hair, Identity, and Stigma: Seeking Beauty and Media Alternatives from the Trajectory of Curly and Coily-Haired Brazilian Women', *Feminist Media Studies* 23, no. 5 (4 July 2023): 2435.

²⁹² In his theorisation of disgust as a human affect, Menninghaus, quoting Herder, observes: 'As an "adornment for the body," head hair alone belongs in the "realm of art."' In further reference to Herder, he also illuminates the double standard in the aesthetics of bodily versus head hair: "'Does hair also belong to the body's inessential

illustrated in Megan’s anecdote about shaving her head—an act that at the same time challenges conventional gender norms associated with hair, and highlights the symbolic power of hair as an integral part of how femininity is perceived and expressed, both on stage and in life more generally.²⁹³ The association of hair with respectable femininity was one of the most prominent themes in my interviews with the singers. In fact, almost all the singers reported either worrying about the appearance of their hair for performances or having had their natural hair policed into aesthetic acceptability per the concert stage’s requirements. Moreover, this pressure for aesthetically ‘white’ hair seemed to be a bigger concern for participants who had curly hair (regardless of race), or who were black and chose to wear their natural hair. For these singers, non-conformity to the ideals of ‘white hair’ is not merely a matter of aesthetics but could lead to workplace discrimination, or damage their employability.²⁹⁴ Simultaneously, conformity is not riskless either, since the chemical hair products used to police natural hair closer to whiteness have been linked to serious adverse health effects, like breast cancer.²⁹⁵ Megan described this compound burden of black women’s concert stage aesthetics—including hair—succinctly during our interview:

features?” asks Herder, thus drawing an analogy with the “creeping worms” of cartilage, veins, and wrinkles. His answer is clear-cut: “the little dispersed hairs in any case; they would deform any statue.” Menninghaus, ‘Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body’, 93.

This double standard of bodily vs. head hair is aptly illustrated in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, in a scene where the character Celie inspects her own genitals in a hand mirror for the first time: ‘I lie back on the bed and haul up my dress. Yank down my bloomers. Stick the looking glass tween my legs. Ugh. All that hair. Then my pussy lips be black. Then inside look like a wet rose.’ In Celie’s case, however, the double standard is further burdened by race—not only does Celie cringe at her amount of pubic hair, but also at the colour of her vulva. Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), 69.

See also: Merran Toerien, Sue Wilkinson, and Precilla Y. L. Choi, ‘Body Hair Removal: The “Mundane” Production of Normative Femininity’, *Sex Roles* 52, no. 5–6 (March 2005): 399–406; Teiahsha Bankhead and Tabora Johnson, ‘Self-Esteem, Hair Esteem and Black Women with Natural Hair’, *International Journal of Education and Social Science* 1, no. 4 (2014): 92–102.

²⁹³ Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama, ‘Introduction: Why Hair? Why Women?’, in *Feminist Interrogations of Women’s Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame*, ed. Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 6; Shir Aloni Yaari, ‘Hair Rites and Wrongs: Tonsorial Acts in the Work of Female Artists’, in *Feminist Interrogations of Women’s Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame*, ed. Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 41, 44–51.

²⁹⁴ Clynessia Harris and Deanna R Davis, ‘Wear Your CROWN: How Racial Hair Discrimination Impacts the Career Advancement of Black Women in Corporate America’, *Journal of Business Diversity* 23, no. 2 (2023): 40–51; Christy Zhou Koval and Ashleigh Shelby Rosette, ‘The Natural Hair Bias in Job Recruitment’, *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 12, no. 5 (July 2021): 741–50.

²⁹⁵ Dedee K. Teteh et al., ‘Heavy Is the Head That Wears the Crown : Black Men’s Perspective on Harmful Effects of Black Women’s Hair Product Use and Breast Cancer Risk’, *American Journal of Men’s Health* 14, no. 6 (November 2020): 155798832097007; Dedee Teteh et al., ‘The Black Identity, Hair Product Use, and Breast Cancer Scale’, ed. Cheng-Shi Shiu, *PLOS ONE* 14, no. 12 (4 December 2019): 1–15.

If, if you're part of a, a production and then having that extra stress of 'Will they know how to dress me properly? Like how, *hoe gaan my wig lyk?*²⁹⁶ [...] [T]he makeup design for the show, like, is it suitable to, to my, um, yeah, skin tone?' Like all of these things, like, these are extra things to [consider]. Um, or how the lighting design is done when you have, um, people of different hues on stage, like lighting that is, that is favourable and flattering to, to the whole spectrum of skin tone.

Megan also made a serious call for the education of industry professionals (makeup artists, hair stylists, wardrobe stylists, lighting technicians, etc.) on how performers' intersectional positionality (like race, class, physical ability) may impact their physical representation on stage:

[P]eople also need to be educated, the other technicians in the field about, about how you, how you would style somebody that is, that is, um, differently-abled or has a different body type, or how you would do makeup for darker skins. What kind of hairstyles are possible with, um, ethnic hair.

Megan's assertions underscore the intricate relationship between hair and the material performance of identity, particularly in the context of the classical concert stage. Her concerns demonstrate how the regulation of hair performs and reconstructs identity (like race or ethnicity), not just through how we speak and think about hair but also corporeally in/on the fleshy human body. Furthermore, she highlights how the pressure for performers, especially those with black hair, to conform to aesthetic standards that often align with Eurocentric ideals of 'white' hair, reflects a deeper issue in the industry.²⁹⁷ Megan's call for education among industry professionals on styling performers with diverse intersectional identities emphasizes the need for a more inclusive approach to representation in classical singing and the performing arts. This goes beyond mere discourse about the symbolic associations of hair; it involves a tangible and embodied understanding of how hair functions as a performative element, actively shaping and reconstructing identity on the corporeal level. The complexities surrounding hair in the realm of performance serve as a powerful reminder of the ongoing need for broader inclusivity and awareness within the industry.

²⁹⁶ Translation: What will my wig look like?

²⁹⁷ Although Lynelle specifically uses the term 'ethnic' to describe her hair, I prefer 'black hair'. This wording circumvents historically anthropological naming practices, encoded within the word 'ethnic', that has historically been used to differentiate humans (white people) from species (black people). Speaking about black hair confronts this naming problem head-on to suggest the hair of the oppressed.

Industry professionals aside, Megan was also a vocal advocate for the acknowledgement of the unpaid labour that women must do (compared to men) to aestheticise their bodies via hair styling and makeup for a performance:

Um, well, when I just think practically, getting ready for a concert, when I look at my male counterparts, for them it's a shower, get dressed, ready to go. You can do that in half an hour. I know that there's a ritual that needs to happen at least hours before... Like, is it, is it a day where I'm gonna wash my hair because that's an extra hour. If I'm just styling it it's less work. But, but there's, there's so much time and labour that goes into that. And applying makeup and the, the cost of that, of needing to go and purchase makeup and, and do that.

Megan's poignant observation on the substantial time, labour, and even financial resources invested by women compared to their male counterparts in preparing for concerts calls attention to the discursive regulation of gendered expectations entrenched within the classical vocal scene and the power of this to put bodies to work. This necessity for women performers to engage in extensive, unpaid aesthetic labour speaks to a systemic imbalance that places undue pressure on them to conform to idealized standards of femininity and respectability. Indeed, the classical concert stage requires women performers to do unpaid aesthetic labour for the sake of embodying idealised femininity and feminine respectability, or else risk exclusion or disqualification from the mainstream performance scene.²⁹⁸

This is one moment in which the regulative work of a discursive performativity of respectability is seen in action. In Butler's words, '[p]erforming one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect.'²⁹⁹ The correlation between the 'right' appearance and professional acceptance is disclosed here because, as Butler suggests, the fear of 'performing one's gender wrong' induces a set of tangible and subtle consequences. In turn, this raises critical questions about the entrenched gender norms in classical singing and the performing arts more broadly, urging a re-evaluation of industry standards to ensure fair treatment and recognition of the multifaceted contributions women make to their craft, beyond the confines of traditional aesthetic expectations. While such standards start from the acknowledgement of the discursive regulation of singers, it ultimately bears itself on the bodies of these women. Megan's call for acknowledgement of this unpaid labour becomes an essential part of the broader conversation on gender equity within the classical performance scene. I argue that the

²⁹⁸ Griffiths, 'The Effects of Concert Dress and Physical Appearance on Perceptions of Female Solo Performers'; Griffiths, "'Posh Music Should Equal Posh Dress'"; Griffiths, 'The Fabric of Performance: Values and Social Practices of Classical Music Expressed through Concert Dress Choice'; Urbaniak and Mitchell, 'How to Dress to Impress'.

²⁹⁹ Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution', 528.

first step to equity is, at the very least, a willing recognition of the tangible impact of aesthetic performativity on women's material existence—the time spent and expenses incurred in preparing their bodies for vocal performances.

While the material cost of respectability is clear, the subjective cost must also be accounted for. Amanda's experiences of the pressures of her hair conforming to certain expectations when performing were perhaps the most distressing out of all the singer-participants and highlights exactly the power of respectability's discursive performativity. She recalls two specific instances where audience members made shocking comments on the appearance of her natural, unstyled hair after performances:

I did a concert once here for what was supposed to be like a soiree. I had my hair like this [pointing to her natural, unstyled hair] and [...] lot of people don't know my ethnicity until I tell them: I'm a coloured female opera singer. I get mistaken for being white sometimes. I get mistaken for being Spanish. And people are very shocked when I tell them, 'I'm South African, I'm coloured,' you know? And, what, it wasn't a very good experience because what happened afterwards is one of the patrons came up to me and said, 'You've got a lovely voice and you really know what you're doing when you're singing, but I just don't think your hair matches the occasion.' And I looked at her and I was, I didn't know what to say. This happened twice in my life. This was [...] here in South Africa, and then when I sang abroad in France as well. The humidity got to my hair, and my hair just did this [gestures with hands that hair gained volume]. [...] And one of the audience members came up to me and said like, 'You shouldn't wear your hair like this ever, no one's gonna take you seriously.' So that's, I didn't know my hair played [a role] at all in singing... But that was, um, two experiences, which I will never forget.

These upsetting encounters that Amanda had with audience members who critiqued her natural, unstyled hair once again highlight the pervasive and discriminatory aesthetic expectations placed on performers' bodies, particularly those of women, within the classical music realm. The comments she received, both in South Africa and in France, not only reflect an alarming level of ignorance regarding diverse ethnicities but also expose the deeply ingrained biases tied to appearance in the classical concert space. Such incidents reveal how individuals like Amanda may face scrutiny not just for their vocal prowess but also for their adherence to the industry's narrow standards of beauty and respectability. Amanda's experiences emphasize the urgent need for a more inclusive and accepting environment within the classical music community, one that values the diverse backgrounds and appearances of performers rather than subjecting them to unwarranted criticism based on cultural stereotypes and biased notions of aesthetics. Her narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the ongoing, materially tangible challenges faced by classical singers who seek recognition beyond superficial and discriminatory judgments, made based on their bodily appearance. Classical singing's mandatory gendered, racialised,

and classed respectability performance is not just produced and reproduced through/in language—like in the comments Amanda faced about her hair—but also in the compulsory adherence to a type of ordering of the body, which has a bearing on a material existence, that performers must engage in if they want to be taken seriously.

3.3. Slender Singing

In my final year of high school, I first met who was to become my singing lecturer at university level when she presented some concerts in my hometown. My singing teacher at the time, a woman who shared my build—tall and slim—remarked what a fantastic singer and teacher this lecturer is. Then she added, in hushed tones, what a pity it is the lecturer is so *big*, otherwise she would surely get more opportunity to perform in operas. As a teen, I immediately internalised this judgment as an objective truth. Over the next years, though, as I got to know the lecturer, now *my* lecturer, I realised how misguided my old singing teacher’s comment was. I came to see my lecturer’s ‘fullness’ in a different light: She was appointed full-time as a university voice lecturer, and probably did not have time to sing in operas regularly. She was expecting a child, and likely not looking to take on *more* work anytime soon. She was an expert in art song interpretation, chamber music, and oratorio, and performed very regularly within these genres. In time, I started resenting my old teacher for reducing my lecturer to her body weight, when I have gotten to know her as so much more than that. This was my first encounter with fatphobia in the classical singing industry, something that Megan insists we need to have more conversations about.

The other conversation that doesn’t always, um, get explicitly called out is about, like the, the fatphobia that exists in the industry, or the outside perception of what classical singers used to look like or what they should look like now, or what’s acceptable. Like they, as, as the, the field is also expanded in who is exposed to the art form and who is professionally becoming part of the industry, there’s a wider variety of body types and ethnicities. And all of that also becomes part of the packageability and expectations and what is respectable.

Across this study, Megan has often been the whistle-blower regarding oppression in classical vocal performance, as well as in the performing arts more broadly. In the quote above, she unreservedly calls out discrimination, as she did multiple times during our conversation for multiple different kinds of oppression. What is more, she calls the mode of oppression by the name: fatphobia. In doing so, Megan exposes the industry’s expectations regarding body size, and thus confronts rigid perceptions of what classical singers ‘should’ look like. Megan’s testimony of such expectations, which are often harshly gendered, racialised and classed, was not an isolated experience among my singer-participants. Karla, for example, commented

specifically on the gendered differences between what is expected of men and women in musical performance spaces more broadly. She said:

If you think about how many, um, like famous singers, famous bands, it's usually male singers that are the front man because they don't care about that judgment. Uh, if you think about the amounts of artists, female artists out there with huge issues that are known in the media or the way they look or the way they're, that... Compared to the men, it's like nothing, you know? 'Oh, you're too thin. Oh, you're too that, oh, you're that.' And then the men, 'Oh, this guy has such a great voice. Oh, the band is sounding so great. The new songs...' Who cares if he picked up weight or if he's ugly? He, 'Oh, he sings so great. Oh, an ugly guy that can sing well, that's amazing!'

Zobuhle, in turn, highlighted classical singing's pressures at the intersection of race and body weight—amongst other things—in an upsetting comment about the place of black people in operatic singing.

I think for other people, it would be easier if we, as black people, didn't sing opera. I think that would be much easier for everybody, for other people, not for everybody, for other people, because I guess they feel that it's, their thing, it came with them, and this is how it was done in the past. So, this is, they must uphold these traditions that came with, that came with their forefathers and whoever. And so, if you don't look like that, then you, like you're not, you're not, you're not gonna make it. It's like, it's an, it's always, it's always, they always find a way to make it difficult for you to get in. To feel like you're good enough. If it's not your weight, it's the way that... It's your skin color, it's your hair, it's your, no, it's this, it's [that].

I generally experienced Zobuhle as an upbeat participant who seemed relatively unaffected by the interview content. Yet it was also her statements that often shocked me most, and quite viscerally, as if walking into a glass sliding door. Perhaps this is because her comments, for me, spoke to the subconscious ways in which respectability is operationalised on women classical singers' bodies and behaviour. The ways that her body, and all our bodies, are unconsciously tricked into performing in specific ways to ensure our acceptability within classical vocal performance. Indeed, frequently during our conversation, I wondered whether she was fully aware of the severity of the violence that might have been perpetrated against her through the industry's demand for a certain, visible kind of respectability. This is a scary line of thought, prompting in me a sense of hopelessness regarding the potential subversion of respectability's oppressions in our lives and societies. However, towards the end of the interview, almost as a kind of afterthought, she shared an anecdote in which it seemed, for the first time since we started talking, that she had recognised respectability's onslaught on her body after receiving a rude comment from an audience member.

[A]fter I won the, uh, when I came second in [an important international] competition and I won all the other prizes, like the audience prize, the jury prize and what not, and then these two

old, old, very old white ladies came to me and they said, 'Dear, your singing is so beautiful. It's amazing, and we have no doubt that you're gonna take over the world, but you must cut yourself into half.' And then they smiled and then they left. I was like, what had just happened? [...] [I]t affected me a lot because then, because the reality is that you have to be skinny to be on stage, especially the big stages. And, uh, the managers also, they look at how you look, are you gonna fit into the 'box'. So if you are not gonna fit into the box, then obviously you're not gonna [...] get as much opportunities as other people, you know. [T]hose ladies, they crushed, they crushed my spirit. [...] It just said to me, 'You're not enough. What you're doing is not enough. It is not enough, so you need to do more. Yoh.' [T]hen after that I was like, I'm never entering competitions again. Never. Because yes, it's the people with the money, they will say things like that because they think they're [untouchable].

Highlighted in this anecdote is not just racial privilege—the fact that two white women felt justified in prescribing to a black woman what she should look like—but also class, and perhaps age. Zobuhle asserts that the economically privileged, 'people with money', patrons of the arts, believe they are 'untouchable', and as such, they are allowed to dictate the appearances of singers and artists. The disrespect and rudeness of these women's comment aside, their recommendation that Zobuhle 'must cut [her]self in half' relates back to the idea of identity performativity as seated not only in what is said but also in the real-life, physical action that is suggested by words. Although the women probably did not mean that Zobuhle must literally cut herself in half, the instruction that their words give suggests exactly that: extreme bodily self-mutilation. They construct through their words an idea of what a classical singer should look like, and then offload the production and reproduction of that idealised shape onto the singer, Zobuhle.

Per Zobuhle's testimony, this comment or *speech act* impacted her severely. Despite having just won second place in a major international singing competition, her vocal self-esteem was very low. She was plagued by feelings of not being good enough as a singer because of her body weight. Consequently, she decided to withdraw from the competition scene entirely. Where these women's comment did not prompt actual corporeal self-mutilation, Zobuhle did not emerge unmutated either: her worth as a singer and as a person had been brutalised when she was reduced to her body size. In taking a holistic view of health, centred on the idea of well-being including mental health, I argue that such an assault on Zobuhle's psyche will inevitably also be reflected in her body and behaviour in some or the other way/s. In doing so, I further challenge simplistic views of performativity as purely discursive. Zobuhle's decision to no longer enter competitions, for example, is a concrete response to the impact that these comments had on her vocal and personal self-worth, and on her willingness to seek out the performance and employment opportunities that competitions may offer. This highlights how

performativity extends beyond the women's words to influence Zobuhle's actions, choices, and her very presence on the stage, thus emphasizing the material consequences of embodied expectations on performers' careers and holistic health. Indeed, as clearly demonstrated by Zobuhle's anecdote, the pressure for classical singers to conform to a slender image goes beyond mere discourse; it is an embodied expectation, and viscerally so, to the point where suggesting self-mutilation to a stranger is not strange. The implicit message that classical singers must fit a 'into' certain box to be regarded as acceptable, further reflects the material and corporeal dimensions of performativity on the classical concert stage.

It is, however, important to note that 'slender singing' was not always a prerequisite of the classical concert stage. Consider, for example, the old saying about opera which observes that 'it [the opera] is not over until the fat lady sings'. In fact, it seems that in the past, larger shapes were associated with a greater capacity for sound production, what Eidsheim calls a myth that, in a different context, Megan associated with.³⁰⁰

What's very interesting, what, what I did want to also say about, about just bodies, um, I'm somebody whose, whose weight has also oscillated, or oscillates, and I've been, um, easily like say the, the extremes of that would be like with twenty kilograms outside of each other or being like super, um, yeah, just slim and then have more, um, meat on my bones. And I found that that also affects the instrument. And, and I sound when I was at my, at my slimmest that it affected voice and, and that it, that there was just the quality of my sound, like the spaces for resonance when I was heavier and less 'aesthetically pleasing' collectively, that was when I sounded better. That was when my instrument was healthier. [...] And like where do you even compromise? A lot of, um, people are also like, yeah, when, when the singer suddenly for aesthetic reasons loses a lot of weight to, like, what gets sacrificed for the instrument?

This 'myth' is perhaps most commonly perpetuated in reference to Maria Callas, who was regularly framed as having lost or ruined her voice by extreme weight loss.³⁰¹ It speaks to a more common, yet mostly unsubstantiated, inclination to draw 'connections [...] between body shape, size, and vocal sound'.³⁰² On a larger scale, it shines light on perceivers' belief in an 'objective' sound which originates as a hard fact from the naturalistic body. Yet 'while the voice can serve as a clue to body size and strength, it also possesses the important ability to give a "false" signal in terms of these features.'³⁰³ As an antidote to this kind of thinking, Eidsheim suggests critical vocal organology as an investigative framework to conceptualise the

³⁰⁰ Nina Sun Eidsheim, 'Maria Callas's Waistline and the Organology of Voice', *The Opera Quarterly* 33, no. 3–4 (31 December 2017): 264.

³⁰¹ Eidsheim, 'Maria Callas's Waistline and the Organology of Voice'.

³⁰² Eidsheim, 'Maria Callas's Waistline and the Organology of Voice', 250.

³⁰³ Eidsheim, 'Maria Callas's Waistline and the Organology of Voice', 258.

interactions between body, voice, and social identity more productively. She explains that this is an unconventional application of organology but a powerful avenue for granting it the same material status as other instruments.³⁰⁴ By emphasizing the materiality of the vocal instrument, of breathing, vocalization, articulation, and other vocal-bodily functions and features, this approach offers a broader framework that enables the development of new vocabulary, concepts, and perspectives for understanding the voice. In doing so, in '[i]nvestigating the body, which is burdened by millennia of social practices' we are

one small step [further] in the process of unsticking the female (and the raced, classed and so on) body and voice from their construction and existence within a social and cultural sphere that can only comprehend them from within its own set of resources and hierarchies.³⁰⁵

In challenging the ingrained normative ideal of body shapes—big or small—in classical singing, I, along with singers like Megan and scholars like Eidsheim, actively participate in reshaping the performative aspects of identity within the industry. By advocating for a more inclusive and diverse representation of body types, we urge a materially tangible transformative shift in the industry's mindset to create a more equitable and respectful work environment for women classical singers.

3.4. Ageing and Ageism

Almost all of the defects addressed and rejected by the discourse on disgust are repeatedly compressed into one single phantasm: that of the ugly old woman.³⁰⁶

As I have argued in this chapter so far, identity is not merely a matter of discourse, of the words that we speak. It is also actively performed in, on, by, and through our bodily practices and behaviours as a result of discourse. Embodied performativity, thus, refers to how identity, including aspects like gender and race, is produced and reproduced in/on individuals' material bodies as a product of words spoken. Age is another identity marker that is corporeally performative; a corporeal enactment of words and language. The concept of embodied performativity allows for an exploration of how individuals actively internalise in/onto and perform with their bodies certain social expectations related to age. Thus, through the lens of embodied performativity, age can be recognised as not merely a numerical value but also socially constructed through words, and enacted and re-enacted through physical manifestations. Furthermore, such a fleshy understanding of performativity illuminates age, or

³⁰⁴ Eidsheim, 'Maria Callas's Waistline and the Organology of Voice', 250.

³⁰⁵ Eidsheim, 'Maria Callas's Waistline and the Organology of Voice', 264.

³⁰⁶ Menninghaus, 'Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body', 84.

ageism, as a tool for determining and policing a person's respectability in relation to their (perceived) age. Ageism is defined by Cecil et al. as 'implicit or explicit negative or positive stereotypes, prejudice, and/or discrimination against (or in favour of) elderly people.'³⁰⁷ Indeed, in line with my conceptualisation of respectability as an oppressive force, ageism is a form of discrimination based on a person's age. It places pressure on people to 'act their age' in terms of their physical appearance, bodily movement, expressions and mobility, and their behaviour. Furthermore, as implied in Cecil et al.'s definition of ageism above, it can be perpetuated against or in favour of elderly people. The opposite is thus also true: ageism can discriminate, whether positively or negatively, against youthfulness. During my discussion with Karla, she mentioned how she felt younger colleagues sometimes put her on a pedestal simply because she is older than them, even when the age gap was marginal. In doing so, she seemed to imply that these colleagues perpetuated ageism not just against her, but also against themselves by self-categorising as 'less than'.

*[D]it gebeur baie met jonger Afrikaanse mense wat nou die conductor is of sê nou maar... Dan sit hulle vir my hier bo, bo hulle. Dan is dit so awkward, dis soos, 'Jy's die conductor, wat moet ek nou [doen], kan ons net normaal [optree] Ah, dis so weird, hoe moet ek nou...'*³⁰⁸

Karla framed this kind of ageism as a symptom of specifically Afrikaner *ordentlikheid*, emphasising how outsiders often experience Afrikaners' ingrained sense of subservience to those older than them as 'fake'.

*Mense, want mense sien dit as fake as jy ordentlik is. [...] Maar dit is nie, want ons sien dit net as jy wil net respek toon. [...] Maar mense sien dit as 'Jy is nou besig om fake te wees, kan jy net, soos, normaal act', jy weet. En, um, dit is maar 'n kulturele ding wat ek al 'n bietjie afgeleer het, maar dit is definitief daar. [...] 'Jy, jy's, hoekom is jy so ordentlik? Soos, jy kan my respekteer, maar jy hoef nie fake te wees nie.' Dit, dit lyk net fake vir baie mense wat nie Afrikaans is nie, dink ek.*³⁰⁹

However, outside of the Afrikaner context, ageism is mostly discriminatory towards older ages with regards to singing, as I will demonstrate below. Additionally, it is highly gendered; it

³⁰⁷ Vanessa Cecil et al., 'Women's Grey Hair as an Abomination of the Body: Conceal and Pass, or Reveal and Subvert', in *Feminist Interrogations of Women's Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame*, ed. Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 126.

³⁰⁸ Translation: It happens a lot with younger Afrikaans people who are like, the conductor, or something... Then they put me [on a pedestal], above themselves. [I find it] so awkward, it is like, 'You're the conductor, what should I now [do], can we just [act] normal? Ah, this is so weird, how should I now...'

³⁰⁹ Translation: People, because people view it as fake if you are *ordentlik*. But it is not fake, because we just see it as a way of showing respect. [...] But people view it as 'You are now being fake, can you just, like, act normal,' you know. And, um, it is a cultural thing that I have unlearned a bit, but it is definitely there. [...] 'You, you are, why are you so *ordentlik*? Like, you can respect me and all, but you don't have to be fake.' It, it just seems fake to a lot of people who are not Afrikaans, I think.

forms a ‘toxic combination’ with sexism ‘in a culture obsessed with youthfulness’.³¹⁰ Building upon the examination of embodied performativity and ageism, the gendered nature of age discrimination, as well as its obsession with youthfulness, becomes apparent. This was flagged by Megan during our conversation:

And it, um, yeah, I, I can say this, um, and without trying to sound vain about it, I knew that I had a certain packageability. Um, when I started my career in the industry was eleven years ago, and just like youth, having youth on your side and a certain aesthetic appeal, um, I knew that there were privileges that came with that.

[...]

Like ageism ties in with, with, um, gender for sure.

Gender, here, is implied feminine. Cecil et al. affirm that ‘[a]geism’s impact is greater on women than on men.’³¹¹ This negative bias of ageism towards femininity is reflected in the work of Winfried Menninghaus—from which the passage at the start of this section was taken—on aesthetics and the sensation of disgust. Menninghaus brings into sharper focus the intertwining of ageism and gender bias, particularly as directed towards femininity, through his exploration of different figurations of disgust, including its embodiment in the figure of the tropified ‘ugly old woman’.³¹² He explains the history of this ‘disgusting’ trope, asserting that

[w]ith negative obsession, the founding fathers of the new ‘discipline’ of aesthetics incorporated aged femininity into their system as its maximum disgusting evil.³¹³

Such a portrayal of aged femininity as not just the epitome of disgusting but also as ‘evil’ and thus morally corrupt underscores how ageism disproportionately targets women, perpetuating discriminatory stereotypes against them. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, it also reflects the patriarchal underpinnings of aesthetic discourse, a discipline founded and largely driven by men.³¹⁴ The interconnectedness of femininity and patriarchally-commissioned ageism is also echoed by Lia Friesem. Crucially, she draws this connection through to the corporeal performativity of age, especially for aged/ageing femininity, through her reference to women’s greying hair and what it signifies in society:

³¹⁰ Barak-Brandes and Kama, ‘Introduction: Why Hair? Why Women?’, 6; Sophie Fuller, “‘Something Revolting’: Women, Creativity and Music after 50’, in *Gender, Age and Musical Creativity*, ed. Catherine Haworth and Lisa Colton (Farnham, Surrey Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 8;

³¹¹ Cecil et al., ‘Women’s Grey Hair as an Abomination of the Body: Conceal and Pass, or Reveal and Subvert’, 126.

³¹² Menninghaus, ‘Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body’, 84.

³¹³ Menninghaus, ‘Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body’, 86.

³¹⁴ Menninghaus, ‘Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body’, 84.

A woman's head hair is a central part of a broader language of appearance, which tells others about herself, while a woman's grey hair, first and foremost, signals she is turning old and obsolete in an ageist society, as well as distancing her further away from the desired Western beauty ideal [...]. Therefore, when ageism interfaces with sexism, it puts tremendous pressure on women to portray and convey a youthful image even if old.³¹⁵

The signification of age through appearance occurs also in classical vocal performance, and was something Megan was acutely aware of. During our conversation, and in a quote I used earlier, she spoke about her struggles to find performance shoes that are at the same time comfortable but do not look 'granny-like'.

Um, or like some, some—and people are divided on this—some people are like, you can't sing in in a pump, in a flat shoe, you have to wear a heel. Like what's the, the correct height of the heel for it to not look 'oumarig' [...].³¹⁶

Sophie Fuller takes ageism as operationalised within the oppressive framework of respectability a step further, referring to menopause and the tangible physical changes it brings about in a woman's body.

It affects older women throughout the world in almost every aspect of their lives and has been explored and dissected by feminist thinkers and writers from Simone de Beauvoir to Germaine Greer and beyond. Any study of the older woman inevitably needs to take on board attitudes towards the menopause—the physical change that marks ageing so distinctly for most women.³¹⁷

The physical changes in women's bodies during menopause are not merely visibly apparent but also aurally in the voice. This poses a particular crisis for classical singers, who rely on 'youthfulness of voice' for their livelihood. In fact, in Eidsheim's analysis via critical vocal organology of Maria Callas's 'vocal decline', it becomes clear that ageing is a part of the discourse on Callas's voice that is too often neglected. Eidsheim asserts that 'natural aging is a crucial aspect that is left out of the oft-recounted story of her vocal decline.'³¹⁸ Bringing ageing in connection with body weight, she makes two further crucial observations about the voice and ageing:

³¹⁵ Lia Friesem, 'Women's Grey Hair in Online Discussions', in *Feminist Interrogations of Women's Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame*, ed. Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 153.

³¹⁶ Translation: grandma-like.

³¹⁷ Fuller, "'Something Revolting': Women, Creativity and Music after 50", 8.

³¹⁸ Eidsheim, 'Maria Callas's Waistline and the Organology of Voice', 263.

Having consulted the general literature on these issues, I have found that, while voice can serve as a sign regarding the size and weight of the person, there are also many exceptions; the voice, in general, is not stable, but changes over time as part of developmental and aging processes.³¹⁹ [...]

We know that the voice undergoes drastic changes from infancy through childhood. But what is less commonly reflected on—although it is observed perceptually when a listener makes an educated guess about a speaker’s age—is the physical aging of the voice.³²⁰

Indeed, the vivid portrayal of aged/ageing femininity as both disgusting and morally corrupt within aesthetic discourse is encapsulated in the brutal and unquestioned criticisms levelled against Callas, as voice, artist and person. Callas, in Eidsheim’s analysis, brings to the fore the deeply entrenched biases of ageism in classical singing, particularly as directed at women. It shows how ageism does not only perpetuate discriminatory stereotypes but also unveils the patriarchal foundations of aesthetic discussions historically dominated by men. Furthermore, Callas’s story illuminates how the corporeal performativity of ageing becomes a language of appearance, subjecting women singers to conformism to visible and aural societal expectations related to age. In Callas vis-à-vis Eidsheim, the relentless pressure on women classical singers to corporeally conform to ageist and sexist standards is exemplified. Not even menopause is allowed as a reason for bodily and vocal changes; women classical singers are expected to always retain a youthful appearance and vocal sound. As such, Eidsheim’s groundbreaking analysis of Callas stresses the urgent need for a more nuanced understanding of ageism and gender with visual and aural performativity in classical singing and how it affects societal pressures exerted on singers’ physical bodies.

3.5. Menstruation: (Taboo) Marker of Fertility and Youth

Where recent scholarship on the classical singer’s voice and ageing/menopause, most prominently in the work of Bos et al., has started paving the way to a less ageist classical vocal industry, this work is to some extent undone by society’s collective disgust for menstruation.³²¹ Paradoxically, where ageing is weaponised against femininity for being ‘repugnant’, so is menstruation—a physical marker of reproductive ability, and thus, of (relative) youthfulness. Menninghaus observes this double standard, linking excessive body weight, aged femininity, and menstruation to sensations of disgust.

³¹⁹ Eidsheim, ‘Maria Callas’s Waistline and the Organology of Voice’, 258.

³²⁰ Eidsheim, ‘Maria Callas’s Waistline and the Organology of Voice’, 263.

³²¹ Nancy Bos, Joanne Bozeman, and Cate Frazier-Neely, *Singing Through Change: Women’s Voices in Midlife, Menopause, and Beyond* (Suquamish: StudioBos Media, 2020).

Doubtless, the sexual parts are not truly repugnant unless they belong to a person devoid of charm—a fat old woman, for example. But the most desirable woman’s organs partake in the unspeakable nature of the organs of the woman who is old and obese. Thus they partake in the nature of the sacred nucleus; which is even less surprising because, as I have mentioned, this nucleus refers, among other tabooed horrors, to menstrual blood.³²²

Like menopause, menstruation, or the hormonal changes of the menstrual cycle more broadly, also affects women’s voices.³²³ This is common knowledge amongst singers, yet is not always acknowledged by audiences and critics, whose vocal-aural expectations align with the sound ideals of the stable, non-menstruating voice. However, since female reproductive health, including menopause and menstruation, are taboo, they mostly remain unspoken. Speaking openly about your hormonal bodily functions is, as a woman, not considered respectable/acceptable, especially within the workspace.³²⁴ If at all disclosed, it is only mentioned to those in your closest circle of female friends, family members, and perhaps colleagues. Thinking of Foucault and his thoughts on the creation of discourse through words, it is ironic that even the words about menstruation that remain largely *unspoken* may form part of the discourse that informs women’s embodied performances of respectability. In fact, these words speak loudest through their silence. In their unspokenness, they enforce on women and singers the loud denial of menstruation and its effects on the female body.

When asked how she thinks her gender impacts her vocal performance, Zobuhle, remarked—quite casually, almost resignedly—how menstruation affects the singing voice and, consequently, how the ‘affected’ or menstruating singer is perceived:

Oh, well, the obvious one is that when you're a woman and you're on your periods, then things, they tend to go south. [...] So people, they, well, no, no people, they're not forgiving about that. [...] They don't really care about that. [...] Yeah, I mean, we're expected to be superwomen and always be on par, like on point all the time.

Zobuhle’s words highlight the societal expectations and challenges faced by female classical singers concerning menstruation—something that I have also experienced in my own body. The use of the euphemistic phrase ‘things tend to go south’ implies that menstruation brings

³²² Menninghaus, ‘Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body’, 351–52.

³²³ Bos, Bozeman, and Frazier-Neely, *Singing Through Change: Women’s Voices in Midlife, Menopause, and Beyond*; Filipa M.B. Lã et al., ‘The Effects of a Third Generation Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill on the Classical Singing Voice’, *Journal of Voice* 21, no. 6 (November 2007): 754–61.

³²⁴ Joan C. Chrisler, ‘Teaching Taboo Topics: Menstruation, Menopause, and the Psychology of Women’, *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (March 2013): 128–32; Ashok Kumar et al., ‘A Cross-Sectional Study of Knowledge, Taboos, and Attitudes towards Menstruation’, *Ethnicity & Health* 29, no. 2 (17 February 2024): 208–19; Sarah Dalrymple and Timothy Lane, ‘Breaking the Menstruation Taboo to Make Fieldwork More Inclusive’, *Nature*, 9 January 2024.

about physical and perhaps emotional challenges that can impact a woman's vocal performance. Furthermore, according to Zobuhle, there is a lack of understanding and empathy among audiences regarding the impact of the female hormonal cycle on the singing voice. Her observation that people are not forgiving about menstruation's impact on the singer's physical body, including their voice, suggests a harsh and unforgiving environment where women performers, despite facing natural biological processes, are expected to adhere to an unrealistic standard of perfection. Linking to this, the reference to being 'superwoman' reinforces this pressure on women singers to navigate their menstrual cycles seamlessly, maintaining at all times an unwavering standard of vocal excellence. Overall, Zobuhle's words shed light on the gendered expectations in classical vocal performance. Here, gendered expectations mean performing according to a 'male' hormonal cycle, which is physically capable of delivering similar vocal results with ease, regardless of the time of the month.

However, more than just denying menstruation and the pain/discomfort associated with it, women are also required to mask their reproductive disorders, both in and beyond classical singing. Amanda, for example, mentioned how severely her reproductive health impacts her day-to-day life, which includes her profession as a singer.

I have severe polycystic ovarian syndrome. I also have, um, premenstrual dysphoric disorder where I become so depressed before my period, on my period and after my period that I don't wanna get out of bed. I can't sing, I don't do my hair, I don't look after myself. I'm on treatment for that now. I'm on an antidepressant that is helping me lots. Um, but definitely as, as a female, it does. We, I mean today, like I started my period yesterday, I'm in so much pain, but I have to show up to work today.

Polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) is 'a common endocrine disorder of women in the reproductive age.'³²⁵ Women with PCOS commonly experience menstrual irregularities, like 'abnormally heavy or absent menstruation', or an unpredictable menstrual cycle.³²⁶ Furthermore, menstruation for women with PCOS is exceedingly painful; they may experience 'extreme cramps in their back and stomach, [and] intense headaches that [coincide] with their periods.'³²⁷ Individuals experiencing premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) encounter

³²⁵ Asma Ahmed E. Alwakwak, 'Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS): An Audit of How Many PCOS Patients Struggle to Lose Weight with Recommended Diet Management in a Tygerberg Hospital Population' (Master's thesis, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2022), 10.

³²⁶ Laura Anne Hartmann, 'A Qualitative Study Exploring the Perceived Self-Image and Self-Esteem of Women Diagnosed with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome Using Body Mapping' (Master's thesis, Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2022), 56.

³²⁷ Hartmann, 'A Qualitative Study Exploring the Perceived Self-Image and Self-Esteem of Women Diagnosed with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome Using Body Mapping', 57.

symptoms typical of premenstrual syndrome (PMS), such as bloating, headaches, and breast tenderness, in the weeks leading up to their menstrual period.³²⁸ However, PMDD goes beyond traditional PMS, causing intense anxiety, depression, mood fluctuations, and, in severe cases, suicidal thoughts.³²⁹ Both PCOS and PMDD may have a severe negative impact on mental health. Amanda spoke at length to these symptoms. First, she offered a recollection of a rehearsal during which her period was so heavy that she bled through her clothes but was not allowed time off to rest and recuperate from the havoc that her period was wreaking on her body, despite the presence of two understudies who could fill her part.

[I]t has happened to me once on varsity where I had a really bad period and it, I bled through my clothes and I said, 'I really need to go and change. I'm not feeling okay, please, could I have the rest of the afternoon off? I do have two other people that are cast in the role...' And it was just told to me, 'No, you can go and shower, but you need to be back within the next half an hour.'

She was expected to be, in Zobuhle's words, a 'superwoman', to power on. Little compassion was shown towards the physical pain and discomfort that she was enduring, not to mention the embarrassment of having the taboo of menstrual blood revealed visibly to her colleagues and mentors. Instead, she was expected to 'clear away', as per Menninghaus, the disgusting taboo of her menstrual blood, and then return to the rehearsal in 'perfect' bodily condition.³³⁰ Amanda went on to explain how the pain and discomfort of men and women has, in her experience, not received equal regard in her workspace.

I've had an ovarian cyst rupture, burst, and I was told, 'Sorry, you have to come in, that doesn't...' I was like 'I'm in so much pain, I'm on my...' 'Yeah, get a pain, you know, get pain tablets and you know, get a shot in the butt and make sure that you get to work on time, please.' Um, definitely with that way, I feel sometimes men call in, and they have a wild weekend of drinking, and they're just like, 'Sorry, I'm sick, I can't make it in today.' And they [the employers] just don't care.

Here, Amanda's experience of being dismissed and pressured to attend work despite the intense pain from an ovarian cyst rupture emphasises the unequal regard for the physical well-being of male and female singers, with men seemingly afforded more leniency for health-related issues. What her employers ask of her with their words, she must enact with her body: she must clear

³²⁸ Katy McLaughlin, 'Prozac and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder: An Old Remedy for a New Diagnosis', *Psychology Today* 35, no. 2 (2002): 21; Ellen W Freeman, 'Continuing Controversies in the Recognition and Management of Premenstrual Syndromes', *Women's Health (London, England)* 2, no. 5 (2006): 665–68.

³²⁹ McLaughlin, 'Prozac and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder: An Old Remedy for a New Diagnosis', 21; Freeman, 'Continuing Controversies in the Recognition and Management of Premenstrual Syndromes', 665–68.

³³⁰ Menninghaus, 'Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body', 85.

away her pain by any means necessary and must show up and work. Lastly, Amanda spoke about what lengths she is required go to in managing her menstruation-related pain during performance, and at what cost.

I, in that sense that I, I found this way to channel my adrenaline to make me forget about the pain. [...] Because I mean I don't feel anything. But what happens half an hour after I get off that stage, then I'm cripple, oh, I can't move, can't drive, I can't do anything. I'm in so much, you know, pain, I cry, I throw up, you know. It's, it's horrible. But I've, I've, I don't know if it's my body's, you know, defence mechanism that it's developed for that because I know I have to get the work done. Um, and a lot of people see it when I take the makeup off and they can see I'm a little strained in my face. And they would ask me, the women at work, are you on your period? Are you okay? Do you need time off? The women are very, very concerned with that, which is fantastic. Um, but the men still have a long way to go.

Here, Amanda explains how she uses the adrenaline of performance to temporarily alleviate her menstrual pain during performances. Yet, as she explains, the physical toll becomes evident post-performance, as she is left in intense, crippling pain. However, she has no choice but to navigate this challenge, driven by an externally imposed sense of duty to fulfil her professional responsibility. She also highlights her male colleagues' relative apathy to her pain, which emphasises the seemingly invisible injustice faced by female singers in the workplace.

Zobuhle's contribution, emphasising the reluctance of audiences and critics to acknowledge the physiological aspects of menstruation, demonstrates a disconnect between the lived experiences of female performers and the idealized, unattainable standards imposed upon them to be acted out by their bodies. In turn, this disjunction calls for a reconsideration of societal expectations, fostering a more compassionate and understanding environment that respects the holistic well-being of female artists. Addressing these issues is crucial for dismantling classical vocal performance's ageist and sexist dynamics. Furthermore, as is evident in relation to Amanda's testimony, the societal expectations placed on female classical singers, particularly regarding menstruation, perpetuate a rigid and unrealistic standard that undermines their well-being. The prevailing disdain towards menstruation reflects deeply ingrained cultural taboos surrounding women's reproductive functions, especially in the professional space, emphasising the mind/body problem as introduced by Goehr. This stigma not only reinforces an ageist narrative—menstruation is specifically related to a woman's age—but also contributes to an oppressive atmosphere where female artists are pressured to conceal or downplay natural bodily processes, all round acting as 'superwomen'.

What might stand out here and the preceding section is that my study is, through the inclusion/exclusion of certain ages of participants, constrained in reflecting the experiences of

older women. This, perhaps, shows a kind of ageist bias in my sampling of the singers and perhaps reflects my own subject position as a relatively young researcher. However, while this might have been an issue of sampling bias, it could simultaneously reflect a broader issue in the South African classical vocal industry, namely that older, menopausal women singers are rendered invisible. In thinking through my sampling, it has become clear that these older women are relegated to the peripheries of the mainstream performance scene.

3.6. Conclusion: Aesthetics—a witch-hunt?

[A]esthetics is a continuation of the witches' trials by other means.³³¹

The above quote, taken from the conclusion of Menninghaus, draws an allegory between the witch trials of early modern Europe and the persecution similarly faced by old women by the persistent association of the disgusting in aesthetics with their being. In so doing, he emphasises the enduring 'paradigmatic linkage of the scandalous disgust-pole' to this specific embodiment, so that the exclusion or invisibilisation of the aged feminine body remains a constant in present times.³³² As such, aesthetics, akin to the historical witch trials, perpetuates the dismissal and disfigurement of feminine figures into unaesthetic, harmless forms, both in quotidian life and classical vocal performance. My exploration here of performativity, grounded in J.L. Austin's speech act theory and later expanded by Butler, unveils how these 'witches trials' are enacted in women classical singers' lives. In its emphasis on the performative nature of gender identity, Butler's concept of performativity, albeit discursively rooted, serves as a lens through which to understand the ongoing discursive struggles in classical vocal performance. However, instead of just focusing on performativity in the discursive sense, this chapter has probed the influential role of language to not only reflect but actively shape societal realities surrounding women and realities of their bodies.

My analytical journey in this chapter transcends discourse, echoing Eidsheim's call for an embodied perspective on performativity. This perspective recognizes the lived experiences, often tangible, of women classical singers, illustrating how societal norms are inscribed onto and perpetuated through their bodies by words. Through discourse, a society's expectations of respectability are imprinted on and endure through the corporeal existences of women classical singers. By recognizing the material implications of identity construction, especially regarding body weight, age, and menstruation, I advocate in this chapter for a more nuanced, if not

³³¹ Menninghaus, 'Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body', 91.

³³² Menninghaus, 'Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body', 91.

embodied, understanding of performativity. Based on my discussions with classical singers whose lives are shaped by discourse, I have demonstrated how the performativity of respectability is not confined solely to words but extends beyond language and theory to permeate the material conditions of the body. As the health of the singer depends on a more holistic approach to wellbeing, I am prompting a holistic reconsideration of identity performativity at the intersections between gender, race, class, and other identity markers. Ultimately, this approach challenges the limitations of discursive performativity, urging a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics shaping classical vocal performance so that women classical singers will cease to be, as a result of intra-bodily respectability markers, ‘an exorbitant scandalon and object of strict aesthetic exclusion.’³³³

³³³ Menninghaus, ‘Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body’, 91.



Figure 11: *un(BECOMING) 2*: In the first suggestive moment of subverting respectability on stage, I take off my concert gown midway through Schubert's *Frauenliebe- und Leben*.

FOUR

Disobedient Femininities: Playfully Subverting Expectations

[I]t's *fun* to *play* outside of just what is agreeable, what is easily digestible for the audience. I always find that the things that I have the most *fun* with are the things that lie outside of just the cookie cutter, pretty agreeable, nice kind of mould. You make people feel safe with what they know and then you bring in something that challenges what they think they just witnessed, and that's *fun*!³³⁴

As a musician, I was quite surprised to realise that when I think of the word 'play', the first thing that comes up is not necessarily the act of making music with an instrument or portraying a character in an opera. Rather, I think of play as '*that thing that a child does*.' Such a Freudian inclination towards childish play was reflected in my discussions with the singer-participants in my study—in the words of Megan above, for example. In fact, the singers' use of play as a subversive strategy against respectability's oppression was, for me, one of the most exciting themes that emerged from my conversations with the singers. Where Chapters Two and Three laid out how the pressure of conforming to a gendered, raced, and classed respectability featured as an intersectionally oppressive force in these South African classical singers' lives and on their bodies, this chapter focuses on the singers' playful subversion thereof. While their subversion was not enacted only through play and playfulness but took various shapes and forms both on and off stage, the idea of play as subversion stood out for me. This is perhaps because it stands in stark contrast to my own subversive approach—to be discussed in Chapter Five—which I perceive as serious rebellion, often bordering on outright anger. What is less important here, is not whether my insurgence is perceived as serious and angry as I intend it, but rather the realisation via my discussions with the singers that this anger might have obscured for me the fullness of subversion's diverse potential.

Thinking of play as a subversive strategy, however, requires grappling with play's own ambiguous nature. Play has a long theoretical lineage, but in Western scholarship gains significant attention toward the end of the nineteenth century. Writing at this time, theorists such as Herbert Spencer, Karl Groos, and Moritz Lazarus were key to suturing play to the field of psychology.³³⁵ For these early theorists, play was a foundational activity which served

³³⁴ My emphasis. In this chapter, I have chosen to italicize the word 'play' (and related words like 'fun' and 'laughing') in all quotes of participants words' as an emphatic device. All emphases are noted in the footnotes.

³³⁵ Karl Groos, *The Play of Man*, trans. E. L. Baldwin (New York: D. Appleton, 1901); Moritz Lazarus, *About the Attraction of Play* (Berlin: F. Dummler, 1883); Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology, Volume 2* (New York: Williams and Norgate, 1872).

evolutionary functions and differentiated people from animals. Their work, and especially its bearing of play on psychic development, would go on to inform more famous psychological readings of play offered by Sigmund Freud and later by Erik H. Erikson and Jean Piaget.³³⁶ For these later psychologists, play was reframed as a part of personal development premised on control (control of libidinal desire for Freud, coordination control for Erikson, and the creation of cognitive consistency for Piaget). Play was not so much an evolutionary function but one of personal development which starts in childhood. While especially Freud's theories of play have attracted significant criticism, these theories set up a trajectory perhaps in which play and self-realisation are connected. Two main lines of enquiry in this field emerge, namely, theories of play which focused on the self-determining individual (most notably in the work of Michael J. Ellis) and those who thought of the individual's play as it develops the self in relation to others (in the work of Donald W. Winnicott).³³⁷

Reading this diverse theoretical lineage, along with work in other fields such as anthropology, behavioural science, neurology, and philosophy, Thomas Henricks concludes that 'play is ambiguous'.³³⁸ It has many different functions and operates in socially and culturally diverse environments to various ends. However, play also negates instrumentalization and occurs without any clear reason or use. Play can be both a key aspect of human development and simply an act with no purpose beyond fun. Yet, argues Henricks, what can be distilled from all these different theoretical views is that play is fundamental to the process of self-realisation.³³⁹ This self-realisation emerges both from within and in relation to the world around us as a testing of the self and a testing of the place of the self in its environment. As Henricks summarises,

play is an exploration of powers and predicaments. We play to find out what we can—and cannot—do and to see if we can extend our capabilities. As a consequence of these attempts, we also learn what the world can do to us. Not surprisingly, play varies according to the character of the world element we confront and our own standing respective to that element.³⁴⁰

What is important in Henricks's play theory is that the self emerges from grappling with its volition as it is parcelled out against a world of limitations. This is a type of making legible of

³³⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1961); Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1950); Jean Piaget, *Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1952).

³³⁷ Michael J. Ellis, *Why People Play* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1973); Donald W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (Tavistock: Tavistock Publications, 1971).

³³⁸ Thomas Henricks, 'Play as Self-Realization: Toward a General Theory of Play', *American Journal of Play* 6 (1 January 2014): 196.

³³⁹ Henricks, 'Play as Self-Realization', 201-11.

³⁴⁰ Henricks, 'Play as Self-Realization', 204.

the self through acts of varying danger and control. Henricks puts it succinctly when he argues that play ‘is a fundamental way creatures make coherent their possibilities for acting in the world.’³⁴¹

Henricks’s framing here opens the possibility of thinking about play in relation to a politics of selfhood. Although he does not situate play in these coordinates, the idea that play has some bearing on the limitations imposed on the self by social configurations, political orders, group ideologies, and all the other modes of regulations that constitute ‘the world’ suggests that it can be thought as a highly political action.³⁴² Furthermore, the type of political action here, when play deals with limits, control, and self-realisation, might be inferred as a type of subversive action in which the self detects ways of overcoming its oppression. In making this connection, however, it is important to note that theorists of play, and especially Henricks, do not assign to play a utopian solution for the actualisation of the person. Instead, play allows us to probe the limits of our being in the world, even if those limits are at times oppressive and curtailing. This framing, I will argue along with Jacques Rancière, is bound up in moments in which subversion witnesses its own powerlessness.

In making this argument, I will explore this notion of play as it emerged in the various arenas where subversive play features in my interlocutors’ lives: physical appearance (including concert attire, makeup, and hair), sexuality, musicianship, race, and class. Throughout the chapter, I take the approach that these subversive arenas are inherently gendered, and thus I do not present ‘gender’ as a separate category. Rather, I position it as an overarching category for all the richly intersectional facets of my participants’ modes of playfully disobedient femininity.

4.1. Playful Bodily Packaging and the Fun of *Mooimaakgoed*

The discussion of play’s subversion starts perhaps with the notion that play always ‘involves bodily activity—sounds, gestures, movements’.³⁴³ This observation was made by Groos in the late nineteenth century but forms an integral part of Henricks’s notion that play is an act of self-realisation through the fact that the self is determined in part through thinking the subject

³⁴¹ Henricks, ‘Play as Self-Realization’, 190.

³⁴² This is not to say that Henricks is unaware of the politics of play. His reading of selfhood specifically situates it as a historical-contextual concept bifurcated between privilege and subordination. That said, this seems to have little bearing on the possibility of self-realisation through play. Henricks, ‘Play as Self-Realization’, 199.

³⁴³ Henricks, ‘Play as Self-Realization’, 196.

in relation to their body.³⁴⁴ Understood in the context of musicianship more broadly, play emphasizes musical performance's kinesthetic and corporeal expressivity. Musicians engage in various embodied forms of play when practising or performing, using their bodies not only to produce musical sound and convey artistic interpretation but also as canvases for expressing their individual identities.³⁴⁵ This act of playing an instrument or singing as a necessarily bodily practice highlights the intimate connection between kinetic physicality, physical appearance, musical interpretation, and the expression of individualised identity. When considering these interrelated connections in the context of identity performativity, Henricks's observation about play's embodiment further underpins the idea that gender, race, or class are not merely sets of internalised identities but are also actively performed or enacted through aesthetic and kinetic bodily presentation.

In the realm of vocal performance specifically, and as observed in Chapters Two and Three, gendered, racialised and classed expectations of respectability may influence how individuals present themselves while singing on stage. Indeed, their physical-aesthetic presentation, bodily movement, gestures, and even choice of vocal genre all form part of their identity performance, which reflects—and sometimes challenges—societal expectations of gendered, racialised, and classed respectability. Against this observation, Henricks's insight calls attention to the embodied nature of play, which opens the possibility of forging this link between play, vocal musicianship, and identity performativity. By recognizing the physical dimensions of play in the context of vocal performance, I can better appreciate how my singer-participants engage in a dynamic interplay of sound, movement, and aesthetics, while simultaneously navigating and challenging oppressive respectability norms through their expressive and performative acts. Such a perspective enriches the understanding of how play functions as an ambiguous phenomenon, influencing not only personal development but also cultural expressions within specific domains like classical singing and identity performance.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Henricks, 'Play as Self-Realization', 199.

³⁴⁵ Bruce Ellis Benson, *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music Making*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³⁴⁶ The link between play and cultural expression was articulated in the sociological work of Roger Caillois as he conceived of play as a means of articulating social structures. This relationship moves play beyond the act of the individual to that of the individual testing their limits in social configurations. See: Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash, (New York, N.Y: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).

The embodied link between play and identity performativity emerged during my interviews with the singers. For Megan, for example, how she plays with hairstyle in her performances forms a crucial part of her vocal product:

[A]s my hair started to grow out I've, I've been more *fun* with braids [...]. Um, that is extra labour and extra time to have to go into a, a salon and sit there for six to eight hours and, and just have that done. But, um, I've always found the dramatic, um, aesthetic payoff to be worth it. [...] Because there's this thought behind it. Not that it's expected, but [because] the aesthetic of the hair does some of the, the work of, of centring the attention around the character or the performance. [...] Like it, it, it serves a purpose. Other than just being pretty or nice or expected.³⁴⁷

This excerpt from Megan's interview vividly illustrates the embodied link between play and identity performativity within the context of vocal artistry. Megan articulates the deliberate and transformative nature of her engagement with hairstyle as an integral component of her vocal performances. By describing the process of experimenting with braids and the additional time and effort invested in this endeavour, Megan stresses the significance of the physical and aesthetic dimensions of play. Her acknowledgement of the dramatic aesthetic payoff emphasizes the intentional and purposeful nature of her hairstyling choices. Importantly, Megan's comment suggests the limits against which her play with hair functions. She sees her hair as a site for challenging the conventional function of beauty by asserting that her aesthetic decisions, like intricate braids, serve a deeper purpose beyond mere adornment. In doing so, she highlights how play becomes a medium through which she shapes and communicates her identity within the performative space. This narrative emphasizes the agency embedded in the playfulness of personal expression, where aesthetic choices contribute meaningfully to the characterization and focal point of her performances.

However, Megan's playfulness in terms of her aesthetic presentation when performing also serves a distinctly political purpose. She intentionally plays with her physical-aesthetic appearance to challenge traditional expectations of what a woman classical singer should look like:

I think we also do have a, a responsibility to, to challenge the status quo. [...] There's, in the world, there's definitely, the beauty ideal would be, um, white, cisgender, able-bodied, slim, um, woman, and you can only work with what you have. But, so kind of *playing* into more of that aesthetic does create a certain appeal to, to certain audience members. And going away

³⁴⁷ My emphasis.

from that also, um, is received differently. [...] Um, but yeah, what's wonderful in the world is that we are creating more visibility, um, for glamour to exist outside of European standards.³⁴⁸

In this passage, Megan reveals the political dimension inherent in her playfulness regarding aesthetic presentation during performances and, to use Henricks's terminology, the limits of the world she occupies. By intentionally deviating from traditional expectations of how a woman classical singer should look, Megan takes on a responsibility to challenge and subvert the industry's prevailing beauty standards. She recognizes the conventionally 'respectable' ideal as one that aligns with attributes like whiteness, cisgender identity, able-bodiedness, and slimness. Her conscious decision to diverge from this standard, then, becomes an act of defiance and a deliberate effort to broaden the definition of glamour and beauty in the classical vocal sphere. By doing so, she not only challenges preconceived notions within the industry but also contributes to the creation of increased visibility for diverse representations of glamour outside the confines of European standards. In doing so, her playfulness not only detects the limits of who she can be in the world but emerges as a powerful tool for socio-cultural commentary and transformation, using her aesthetic choices to advocate for inclusivity and dismantle narrow expectations in classical singing.

While Megan clearly articulates the work play does in challenging the limits of who she may be in the singing world, other singers spoke of play as a seemingly less conscious act of deviance. Yet just as Henricks argues that the function of play might not always be apparent to the player, Juliana M. Pistorius argues that 'intentionality need not be a requirement for subversion.'³⁴⁹ In contrast to the way that Megan intentionally plays with her aesthetic appearance to enhance her vocal product and challenge the concert stage's hackneyed beauty notions, Emma plays with her appearance first and foremost for the sake of her own enjoyment. When asking Emma whether her gender impacts her musical performance, for example in the way that she prepares herself for a concert and carries her body on stage, the following exchange ensued:

Emma: Yes. It's important to me to feel beautiful. I *like* feeling beautiful.

Alida: But you do that in daily life anyway, it seems?

Emma: Yes, exactly! Yeah. It's just, I, I *love* colouring in and making things shiny and pretty, and I *play* dress-up for a living.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ My emphasis.

³⁴⁹ Juliana M. Pistorius, 'Coloured Opera as Subversive Forgetting', *Social Dynamics* 43, no. 2 (4 May 2017): 238.

³⁵⁰ My emphasis.

Emma's approach to playfulness in her aesthetic presentation offers a contrasting perspective to Megan's intentional challenge to traditional beauty norms. For Emma, the primary motivation behind playing with her appearance is rooted in personal enjoyment and the sheer pleasure of feeling beautiful. Emma's candid expression of delight in colouring, making things shiny and pretty, and essentially playing dress-up for a living accentuates the intrinsic joy she finds in this form of self-expression. In contrast to a deliberate political stance, Emma's playfulness emerges as a celebration of personal happiness and an unapologetic embrace of the aesthetic aspects of her identity. This exchange highlights the diverse motivations behind individuals' playful engagements with their appearance, showcasing how play can be a source of personal fulfilment and enjoyment beyond explicit sociocultural challenges.³⁵¹ Indeed, during our conversation, Emma kept returning to this theme of the joy of play and enjoyment in her musical practice and daily life:

[D]it vir my *lekker*, dis al hoekom ek dit doen. Dis vir my *lekker*, ek hou van opdress. Ek *hou van* makeup, ek *hou van* glitter. Ek *hou daarvan* om 'n hele pot glitter op my kop te gooi en dit vas te spuit met haarspray. Dis wie ek is, dis hoe ek operate. I very firmly believe, part of my life philosophy is silliness, want ek dink as jy nie kan silly wees nie, dan neem jy al hierdie goed [referring to the pressures of respectability] so ernstig op.³⁵²

Emma's enjoyment of play here suggests perhaps a form of enjoyment and pleasure which itself subverts through its pleasure. Thinking about pleasure in psychoanalytic terms, in turn, evokes the notion of *jouissance*, which I briefly evoked in Chapter Two. *Jouissance* represents a nuanced and complex experience of physical or intellectual pleasure, delight, or ecstasy but also makes room for understanding it in the ways in which it is bound up, as Freud initially argued, with pain.³⁵³ In the Preface to the 1980 edition of *Desire in Language*, Julia Kristeva introduces *jouissance* within the context of the pain/pleasure duality.³⁵⁴ She asserts that within the realm of language, 'our only chance to avoid being neither master nor slave of meaning lies in our ability to insure our mastery of [*jouissance*] (through technique or knowledge) as well

³⁵¹ Henricks, 'Play as Self-Realization', 199. Caillois calls this form of *paidia*, which is a freer form of play than the rule-based *ludus*. See Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*.

³⁵² My emphasis. Translation: I *enjoy* it, that is the only reason why I do it. I *enjoy* it, I *like* dressing up. I *like* makeup, I *like* glitter. I *like* emptying a whole jar of glitter on my head and then securing it in place with hairspray. That's who I am, that's how I operate. I very firmly believe, part of my life philosophy is silliness, because I think if you can't be silly, then you will take up all these things [referring to the pressures of respectability] so seriously.'

³⁵³ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

³⁵⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), x.

as our passage through [*jouissance*] (through play or practice).'³⁵⁵ Subsequently, *jouissance* for Kristeva encompasses a 'totality of enjoyment' that spans the realms of the sexual, spiritual, physical, and conceptual, sometimes experienced separately by context, and sometimes concurrently.³⁵⁶ Here, I think again of Emma's continual and almost exuberant expressions of enjoyment: 'Ek hou van pret, ek hou van lag.'³⁵⁷ Her recurring expressions of enjoyment and emphasis on a love for fun and laughter resonate with the intricate layers of pleasure discussed as a desire for *jouissance* and thus a negation of mastery and slavery, and perhaps the limits set out in her world. Yet Emma's joy can also be understood as a more straightforward act of subversion in the playful way it challenges traditional societal expectations and norms surrounding gender roles and expressions. In embracing play and finding *jouissance* in packaging her body in glamorous, normatively feminine ways, Emma disrupts conventional narratives that might perceive such expressions as mere conformity or a form of gendered oppression. By deriving immense enjoyment from these practices, Emma redefines the narrative, presenting her choices as acts of personal agency and empowerment rather than conforming to external pressures.

In a cultural context where gender norms often prescribe specific behaviours and appearances, Emma's unabashed joy in playing with her own aesthetic presentation becomes what Erin Manning calls a minor gesture, pushing back against rigid expectations and asserting the validity of diverse expressions of femininity.³⁵⁸ Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of the minor, Manning defines the minor gesture as creating 'sites of dissonance, staging disturbances that open experience to new modes of expression.'³⁵⁹ Yet these are not the grand moments of resistance, nor are they always intentional. Instead, the minor gesture, such as Emma's pleasure for dressing up, 'invents new forms of existence, and with them, in them, we come to be.'³⁶⁰ Framed in this way, Emma's enjoyment evokes a playful sense of *jouissance* but as a minor gesture which affirms the power of her expression rather than assigning her joy as a mere act of capitulation to respectability's oppression. Afterall, to feel and express joy is not to be respectable, for respectability negates the volition of expression as a whole.

³⁵⁵ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, x.

³⁵⁶ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, 16.

³⁵⁷ My emphasis. Translation: I like fun, I like laughing.

³⁵⁸ Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

³⁵⁹ Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 2.

³⁶⁰ Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 2. It is important to note that Manning specifically speaks to the notion of dressing up as a minor gesture later in her book. However, the limitations of space do not permit me to rehearse her argument here. See Manning, *The Minor Gesture*, 86-110.

4.2. Queer Play

While for some of the singers in my study play is an ambiguous tool that extends beyond subverting the pressures of conventional gendered, racialized, and class-based aesthetics, play also emerged during our conversations as a dynamic outlet for the expression of their sexuality and gender identity. Through playful engagement, these singers navigate and articulate their experiences, embracing a form of self-expression that extends, as Henricks's argues, into the realms of personal identity and desire bound up with selfhood.³⁶¹ Play, in this sense, becomes a liberating space where some of the singers can explore, redefine, and celebrate their sexuality and gender identity, detecting the limits and even transgressing restrictive societal constructs. By integrating these aspects into their playful expressions, these singers contribute to a broader narrative of empowerment and self-realisation, using the creative and subversive potential of play to foster a more inclusive and authentic representation of themselves in the face of oppressive social forces. Consider, for example, the following statement made by Megan.

A part of my coming out as queer and starting to *play* around with my expressions of gender was just that I had reached a point where I couldn't be okay with myself and still just conform all the time.³⁶²

Megan's experience of coming out as queer and experimenting with gender expressions highlights the pivotal role that play had in the navigation of her own identity formation and expression as an adult. In her struggle against the pressure of heteronormative conformity, playfulness aided the negotiation and expression of her sexuality within her social contexts. This relationship between queer expression and play has been well documented by queer theorists who have foregrounded the relationship between play and desire as well as the pleasure of *jouissance* in the transgression against oppressive heteronormativity in society.³⁶³ In a similar figuration, Megan's playful subversion of the pressure to conform became an embodied expression of the self-acceptance of her queer identity.

However, and again in reference to Pistorius's idea that subversion need not always be an intentional act, Megan's deliberate blurring of the boundaries of gender and sexuality in her self-expression is not the only way in which such identities can be performed, and indeed is

³⁶¹ Henricks, 'Play as Self-Realization', 205.

³⁶² My emphasis.

³⁶³ See, for instance: Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, eds., *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Series Q (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, Series Q (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

somewhat different from how the other singers articulated the negotiation of gender expression.³⁶⁴ In fact, for Karla, the opposite was true. When I asked her whether she thinks she is treated a certain kind of way because of her gender, she offered the following roundabout explanation.

I'm very outwardly [gay], you can see that I'm gay, so I would say more so [because of] my sexuality, um, which I wear on my sleeve, than [because of my gender]... [But my sexuality] is indirectly my gender, 'cause I'm a woman that looks too, uh, looks too... lesbian-ish.

In other words, Karla feels the pressure to be respectable is, in her case, heavily influenced by her sexuality which becomes a means to define her gender expression. By articulating the interconnectedness of her sexuality and gender, she emphasises that her sexual orientation indirectly shapes perceptions of her gender identity. Yet it also articulates certain limits of acting in the world. Especially the phrase 'looks too lesbian-ish' encapsulates the societal expectations and stereotypes associated with both gender and sexual orientation, revealing the complex ways in which she negotiates and experiences these intersections of identity. Her queerness is not, according to her, a characteristic she puts on intentional visual display. Rather, she dresses the way she dresses because, like Emma, it brings her joy, which might be indicative of a type of *jouissance* or minor gesture, as argued before. To be specific, Karla mostly performs in a suit, despite her awareness of the judgement it might incur:

[A]t one stage I had like seven, eight different dresses that I wore [when performing]. And it was *fun* for me, but it felt more like a dress-up-as-a-character type of thing. [...] Um, and I, I'm not saying I didn't look pretty. [And] I did like it, but I felt way more empowered when I started dressing the way that I wanted to. It was a very gradual going over. Sometimes I would wear a dress, sometimes I would wear [a suit]. And I [...] realized later on that I started to feel uncomfortable in a suit because I was worried about what other people were going to think. And then I sort of got over that at, at some point. So it was like a gradual going over, um, because you are to be believed that you *cannot* perform in a suit. [sic] You *cannot* do it.³⁶⁵

Dressing in a suit, though, is not the only source of *jouissance* in Karla's performance practice. I followed up my previous question by asking whether she feels that she needs to compensate for a 'loss' of normative femininity with makeup, hair and jewellery when she performs in a suit. She answered:

³⁶⁴ Pistorius, 'Coloured Opera as Subversive Forgetting', 238.

³⁶⁵ My emphasis.

Well, I do *like* putting on makeup and having red lips and stuff like that, because I do *like playing* around with those things. So, you know, I *like* to combine both. I *like* to wear a cool earring or something like that.³⁶⁶

For her, neither a suit nor makeup and jewellery were necessarily conscious signifiers of gender identity, but rather just different possibilities for comfortable, if not playful, self-expression. She continues:

[F]or me it's like, this [tugging at her own clothing, which is not normatively feminine] can be feminine, you know, because I, it's not like I feel like a man. [I'm not trying to move boundaries or make a political statement], I'm literally just trying to be myself.

Karla's nuanced approach to the performance of gender and sexuality challenges conventional expectations, showcasing the intricate negotiations within the intersections of identity. In doing so, however, she also articulates certain societal limits to that expression: she maintains an alignment to her feminine expression, she does not want to transgress the gender binary, and simply being herself seems to be a minor gesture in opposition to grand acts of politics. While Megan deliberately blurs boundaries as a conscious act of self-expression, Karla's experience highlights the unintentional yet impactful nature of societal perceptions. Her outward expression of being gay becomes a visible aspect of her identity, which, for her, indirectly shapes perceptions of her gender. Karla's journey of self-realisation involves a gradual shift towards dressing in a way she desires, despite societal norms dictating what is deemed performative for her gender. Her choice to perform in a suit and engage with makeup and jewellery represents a form of joyous self-expression rather than a conscious display of gender identity. In dismantling expectations and embracing the joy of self-realisation, Karla exemplifies the diverse and complex ways individuals navigate the intersections of gender, sexuality, and selfhood within societal frameworks. Like Emma's minor gesture of conformism-as-subversion, so does Karla too challenge respectability's expectations of gender and sexuality by simultaneously complying with and denying it.

4.3. 'Something strange happens when you have to *play* black and [you are] black'³⁶⁷

The title of this section is a quote from my discussion with Zobuhle, where she speaks about how difficult it was for her to play the character of Bess in George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*.

³⁶⁶ My emphasis.

³⁶⁷ My emphasis.

Her words reflect her profound dilemma at having to embody a character whose racial identity intersects, to some extent, with her own. The full quote reads as follows:

Something strange happens when you have to *play* black and you're black. You don't know what to do, which is very strange. Like, I didn't know what to do. Because normally you think that, 'Ah, this is easy, I, I'll just be myself.' But to be black, you don't know what it's like to be black. [laughing] Like I, that's the struggle that I had. I don't know about other people. I didn't know what to do with this character. But I knew she was a, a, a, a new mother and, and, and, and all of that, and she loses her husband and whatnot. But to be able to *play* this character, I was like, why am I struggling? So like, I struggled, because then it is easy when they say, um, you have to be Musetta. I'm not Musetta, I'm nowhere related to Musetta and the kind of life that she lives. We are like opposites, you know. And it's easy for me to, to tap into that. But then when I had to now be *this* person, I was like, 'Oh my goodness, what do I do?' That was the, the hardest thing that I, I, I've ever had to, to do. To be myself.³⁶⁸

As I was listening to Zobuhle speak, I pondered why this kind of complexity may arise when an opera singer is tasked with portraying an identity that, in some ways, overlaps with their own. Or, conversely, why a singer might portray with great ease a character whose identity differs vastly from theirs. In Zobuhle's struggle to articulate her own experience, it became evident to me that what she calls '*playing* yourself' is not straightforward and goes beyond the typical challenges of characterisation. Indeed, Zobuhle's statement captures the paradoxical—ambiguous—nature of attempting to 'play black' when one is already black.

On the one hand, seeing (and feeling in one's own body, in the case of the performing arts) your identity represented in art is a special experience. This is over and above the privilege of having stable employment and/or regular performance opportunities as a classical singer in South Africa—that is, if one considers having a job a privilege and not a basic human right.³⁶⁹ Moreover, it is 'special' in its exclusivity, since it is in Western art forms a privilege mostly afforded to those who are white and rich. Conversely, portraying your own identity means delving into nuanced layers of racial representation, both in the everyday sense and on classical concert stages, including the ways in which it might be negatively biased towards your race (or gender, or class).

From Zobuhle's words, it is clear she grappled with the ethics of embodying or *playing* this character who shares her blackness. This difficulty arises not from the character's emotional depth or narrative complexity; she mentions understanding Bess's experiences, such as being a new mother and dealing with loss. Perhaps, then, it lies at the depth of the paradox, the

³⁶⁸ My emphasis.

³⁶⁹ I briefly discussed the employment challenges (black) South African opera singers face in Chapter Two, on pages 61-62.

intensity of the ambiguity inherent in the recognition that racial identity is not a mere external characteristic to be replicated on stage but a deeply ingrained aspect of one's being, entwined with complex emotions, historical contexts, and societal biases. For Zobuhle, playing Musetta is easy, or rather, *subverting* Musetta is easy, because it is far removed from her identity as lived experience. Playing Bess—playing black—however, means playing into submission. It requires Zobuhle to refuse the *jouissance* of honest self-presentation, of asserting her black identity's intersectionality, and perhaps, the intersectionality of racial identity more broadly. In the same way that her blackness is separate from African American blackness, so is also Gershwin's and white society's racially stereotypical conceptualisation of the black woman far removed from real black women's bodies and lived experiences. Or, in the words of Nina Eidsheim: '[Playing these characters] is so condescending. These are not real characters. These are folklore characters'.³⁷⁰ Instead, playing black forces Zobuhle to become, in Kristeva's words, a 'slave of meaning'—the stereotypic meaning of what it means to be black, and a woman.³⁷¹ Indeed, subverting the very real reality of being a black woman is difficult, even on operatic stages where all disbelief is supposed to be suspendable.

4.4. 'I've had to perform other people's classes, not my class'

Again, the title of this section comes from my and Zobuhle's conversation. Right after making this comment, she laughed nervously, as if she had realised for the first time the magnitude of what she just said. She immediately followed this inadvertent/untintentional admission up with a denial thereof, as if to 'clear away'—per Menninghaus—her possible disgust at the realisation that opera requires of her to perform outside of her class.³⁷²

Um, the only time when I felt like I was, well, it was, it... Well, yeah, class... Which, which class am I in? I don't even know which class, I, I don't even, even believe in the classes. I know this people say there's classes, but I, I, I'm not in, I'm not in any class.

Earlier in the interview, she reacted in a similar, almost roundabout, way when I enquired about her experiences of class in classical singing. She said:

Class... What is class? Well, I guess with regards to opera, when we grew up thinking that opera was only for certain, uh, for certain people that we had not... Like, I didn't have access to opera until I was at [university]. Uh, but I had access to choral music, even that, my dad

³⁷⁰ Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music*, 80.

³⁷¹ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, x.

³⁷² Menninghaus, 'Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body', 85.

would say, ‘No, this is Handel, uh, it’s, it’s white people music, and it’s European music, it’s for, you must be disciplined for...’

In both cases, she seemingly understood more about class and class-based inequality than her subconscious mind was willing to admit, as if it was protecting her from consciously acknowledging what she likely already understands in a deep, embodied way. While classical music can be, according to Bull, a ‘mechanism for social mobility’, allowing ‘those coming from working-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds’ to ascend along the class ladder, this did not seem to be what was playing out in Zobuhle’s case.³⁷³ There seemed to be an absence of class aspiration, which I also detected in the discussions with some of my other interlocutors. In fact, Megan, who is coloured, asserted in so many words that her identity performance in classical music is not ‘an aspirational thing’.

Um, what’s, what’s very interesting, always I think with, with performing and like the western classical field, um, the, the ways that one performs, that’s like an, I won’t say like an aspirational thing, but, but um, the spaces that, that I work in, sometimes, um, are at a different like, class level than how I would live my life or the spaces that I move in outside of that.

Instead, Zobuhle’s account of having to ‘perform [or *play*] other people’s classes’ in operatic performances, together with the anecdote about her father describing Handel as ‘white people music’, speak to a connection being made between class status and race. Or, in more explicit terms, Zobuhle was at once viscerally confronted with the realisation that opera does not only ask of her to perform outside of her class but also, considering the interconnectedness of class and race, outside of her race. However, once she seemed to make this recognition, she started addressing matters of class, race, and access to resources, albeit not with the greatest ease.

The only thing that I would say then with re..., if I would put it under class, would be people, the reason why people, especially my, people of my colour don’t have, they can’t, sometimes have access to this kind of, the music, the classical music and stuff, is because of the finances. If you were to look into that, then that’s where the class is, finances. It’s to come from, uh, Khayelitsha to Cape Town at night, you have to get an Uber, because there’s no transport and Uber is like 300 Rands to come to Cape Town, and to go back at another 300 Rands. So things like that. If then you don’t have money, then you can’t, you don’t have access to, to those things, you know?

In comparison to Zobuhle’s previous two statements, this last comment shows her conscious realisation/acknowledgement of how class distinctions may intersect with her experiences as a black person in classical vocal performance. As such, our discussion expanded beyond class to underscore how financial constraints disproportionately affect certain racial communities,

³⁷³ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, 28, 69.

adding layers to the intricate intersection of race and class dynamics within the realm of classical music. This disparity is even more pertinent in the South African historical context, where black people have been disadvantaged by centuries of systematic racial oppression, and white people methodically privileged—in many more ways than just economically. For one, the preference given to Handel when Zobuhle's father is speaking about choral music is evidence of this oppression, and at the same time a mechanism of this exclusion and oppression. With this in mind, playing someone else's class becomes, especially for a black singer, an act of subverting, perhaps even betraying, your own identity on multiple fronts. However, in Zobuhle's case, respectability is already subverted—and opened up for further subversion—in the mere realisation of its presence.

4.5. Conclusion: Playing Politics—Subversion Subsumed?

Alida: There's that sort of overtly, overly sexualized, uh, femininity that's so highly prized and that you, I guess if you are a a, a studio singer, you have to play into it. It's your job. You have to, um...

Amanda: I will, I will play into something like that. Should it be requested of me. I do have my limits.

Subversion, in the cases discussed above, seems to stem from playful engagement with the body, dress, sexuality, gender expression, and even musicianship. Throughout these acts there lingers the idea that while play might be an act of self-realisation, it is often also a realisation of the limits placed upon the self by an oppressive society. In this sense, play perhaps is more able to articulate limits and means of self-realisation within those limits, and thus raises the question of whether play offers meaningful change to the limits and forms of oppression enforced by society. I have already argued that some forms of conformism might be thought of as minor gestures which change the possibilities of discourse and modes of being but are not grand political actions in and of themselves. Yet even as such, the possibility of failure of subversion needs to be thought through here.

In doing so, I turn to the thought of Jacques Rancière. Rancière has extensively theorised possibilities of subversive political action within democracies. Through his earliest work on the nineteenth-century French workers' archives, he theorised notions of dissensus as acts that emerge when the oppressed proletariat act outside of their designated roles in society.³⁷⁴ From this work, he showed how the political order must be thought of as a sensory, aesthetic

³⁷⁴ Jacques Rancière, *Proletarian Nights: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2012).

configuration in which certain voices are heard while others are made inaudible and their bodies invisible. Fighting this sensory order, or what he calls the distribution of the sensible, comes to constitute the act of disagreement, which can change the political order.³⁷⁵ Yet in making this connection with the sensorial, Rancière's focus shifts to the aesthetics of politics and its inverse, the politics of aesthetics. The latter term is used especially in art history to think through the way in which the aesthetic dimension of politics becomes intertwined with what he calls the regimes of art which correspond to broader philosophical conceptions of representation, ethics, and aesthetics.³⁷⁶

Building on the notion of the regimes of art, Rancière turns his attention to more recent developments in the art world to probe the possibility of subversion in critical artistic practices of the late twentieth-century. For him, there are four strategies in this field, which he labels as: the play, the inventory, the encounter, and the mystery.³⁷⁷ I want to consider only the first category here: the play. In analysing a number of postmodern artistic collages which critique commodification in late capitalism, Rancière argues that

the play invoked here marks the suspension of signification of the collages on display. The value of their polemical revelation has become undecidable. And it is the production of this undecidability that is at the core of the work of many artists and expositions.³⁷⁸

For Rancière, then, 'the positive power of play' lies in the suspension of signification and undecidability in critical art. This notion of play is in part informed by Friedrich Schiller's 1795 concept of play drive.³⁷⁹ He casts play, whether it be child's play or the 'relations of domination,' as an activity without a concrete end or goal.³⁸⁰ Having no ultimate point of arrival, play, and what he calls aesthetic free play, is therefore not necessarily limited to childhood, but becomes an aesthetic, and thus political, mode of engagement.

Rancière's reading of aesthetic free play draws out what he calls 'a metapolitics, which, against the upheavals of state forms, proposes a revolution of the forms of the lived sensory world.'³⁸¹ This opens play up as a possibility for the reorganisation of and, as I had hoped, the playful

³⁷⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

³⁷⁶ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, English ed. (with minor revisions) (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009).

³⁷⁷ Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, 53.

³⁷⁸ Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, 53

³⁷⁹ Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, 53

³⁸⁰ Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, 53.

³⁸¹ Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, 99.

subversion of dominant respectability narratives in the local classical music industry as well as in the day-to-day lives of my interlocutors. It thus almost felt like a personal victory, a reclaiming of female power, when I asked Emma: ‘[D]o you feel that people have certain expectations about your performance because of your gender?’ and she answered without skipping a beat:

*Ja, ek is seker hulle het. Maar ek gee nie om nie. Regtig, ek gee rerig nie om nie. Ek doen net wat ek wil. Ek is regtig nou daar. En enigiemand kan my daarvoor oordeel, I don't give a damn. Ek doen nou net wat vir my lekker is. Hoe ek aantrek, hoe ek is, hoe ek lyk.*³⁸²

Yet this initial excitement soon turned to disappointment when she continued to say:

*Ek weet wel wat die arena is waarbinne ek dit kan doen en waar ek veilig is. Ek gaan nie meer na plekke toe waar ek nie veilig voel nie. Ek dink dis 'n groot ding vir die onderwerp, vir die ordentlikheid.*³⁸³

In transcribing and working through the interviews, I noticed how almost all participants reported having to—to quote one of the participants—‘intentionally play into the system’ in some way or another, to be ‘performative when it calls for that’ to ensure not only their hireability, but also their personal safety from judgement, as the epipath to this subsection suggests. Some felt they had to play into white, Western aesthetic ideals, others mentioned feeling they felt they constantly had to play ‘above’ their class level, or adapt their speech and behaviour to suit the industry’s required respectability. Megan summed it up quite aptly:

[W]hen I think about being a coloured woman, [about] the ways that I would engage socially and how I would adapt when I'm working in a professional space to just be kind of, more uniform—or not uniform, more inclusive—[it] does shift the way that I speak or my body language. It's sometimes in an unconscious way, but also in an intentional way. [A]nd when it comes to class and gender, that also happens.

During an interview exchange with Rancière in 2008, Sudeep Dasgupta remarked that Rancière’s critique of critical art in a consumerist society is that it bears witness to its own powerlessness.³⁸⁴ His remark, in some sense, comes from the conclusion which Rancière comes to in his reading of the ‘positive power of play’, namely that playful critical art looks inward and suspends only the signification in the work while failing to suspend the relations of

³⁸² Translation: Yes, I am sure they do. But I don’t care. Really, I don’t care. These days I do whatever I want. And anyone can judge me for it, I don’t give a damn. I now do only what I enjoy - how I dress, how I am, what I look like.

³⁸³ Translation: I do know, however, what the arena is within which I can do this and still be safe. I don’t go to places anymore where I don’t feel safe. I think this is a big thing for the topic, for respectability.

³⁸⁴ Sudeep Dasgupta, ‘Art Is Going Elsewhere: And Politics Has to Catch It: An Interview with Jacques Rancière’, *Krisis: Journal for Contemporary Philosophy* 1 (2008): 70–76.

domination envisaged by Schiller's aesthetic free play.³⁸⁵ In the same way, I have come to question play's subversive potential after analysing my conversations with the singer-participants. I wonder whether play as subversion perhaps subverts itself, whether it can only bear witness to how it does not possess real subversive power. This is because like Kristeva's *jouissance*, playfulness's subversion is dual in nature: it simultaneously opens the ability to subvert, and it doesn't. It undeniably enables the possibility of subversion, yet at the same time, it also seems to destroy it in describing only the limitations in which the self must act in a society. And like Kristeva's *jouissance* once more, this awareness has suspended me in pain and, indeed, also in pleasure that remains in a painful world.

³⁸⁵ Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, 53.



Figure 12: *un(BECOMING)* 1: A respectable singer enters and readies herself to sing Barbara Strozzi's 'Spesso per entro al petto'.

FIVE

Conclusion

*Vandag 'n week gelede het ek nog hare gehad.*³⁸⁶

This is a note from my research diary dated Friday, 5 October 2023. Although it was the opening line to that entry, it was a personal sidenote to what I intended to reflect on that day. I wrote it down to serve as a bookmark in the timeline of my experiment; a placemark in the before and after of my grand unbecoming. Now, about four months and six centimetres of hair growth later, and prompted by this line, I am transported back to baldness. I feel, once more, the prickle of my scalp as I run my hand over instead of *through* my hair. On my shoulders, a lightness that transcends the physical; a euphoric unboundedness that surpasses merely the absence of the long, thick hair that had rested in my neck for more than fifteen years. The day before, on Thursday, 4 October 2023, I wrote about this exhilarating sense of untetheredness from the burdens of respectability:

*Dis nou al vyf dae na un(BECOMING), en dis vreemd om te dink dat dit vir 'n moer lang tyd net in die toekoms bestaan het. In 'n sekere sin voel dit asof dinge nogal altyd was soos dit nou is. Dat ek nog altyd so vreesloos gevoel het.*³⁸⁷

Indeed, in cutting my hair, I had also cut myself loose from the fear of not being respectable enough for the classical concert stage. Of course, 'respectable' is a word that I apply retrospectively to the gendered, raced, and classed pressures that I and the singers who participated in this study feel to look and act a certain way, both in our daily lives and in classical vocal performance. Respectability politics is simply the name given to our experiences of the classical vocal industry's demand for performing an identity that is 'good enough': sufficiently feminine, white, rich. The pressure that we feel to act out this idealised identity is driven by fear of damaging our employability by being excluded from the mainstream performance scene. This is a genuine fear: relegation to the peripheries of 'acceptable' vocal performance can have a profoundly destructive effect on singers' livelihoods. Where a lot of what has been presented in this thesis may have been, in part, speculative—based on projections of my own and my singer-participants' subjective experiences and insecurities—

³⁸⁶ Translation: Today, one week ago, I still had hair.

³⁸⁷ Translation: It is now five days *after* (un)BECOMING, and I find it strange to think that it only existed in the future for such a long time. In some ways, it feels like things have always been the way they are now. That I have always felt this fearless.

the fear of a loss of employment is perhaps the most *real* driving force behind our compulsion to be respectable. Subsequently, the actual loss of employment due to lacking respectability is the most tangible consequence of non-adherence to respectability's prerequisites on the classical vocal stage. Respectability in classical singing in South Africa is not just an oppressive force that polices singers' freedom of expression via their bodies and behaviour. More significantly, its oppression is economic: it may make or break a singer's ability to support themselves through their profession.

5.1. un(BECOMING)

In subversion of this pressure to be respectable, and the fear of being regarded unrespectable, I devised a vocal recital entitled *un(BECOMING)* as a part of this research project. The blurb used in advertising the event reads as follows:

Presented by Alida van der Walt (mezzo) and Dominic Daula (piano), this recital features a thrilling lineup of vocal music by Barbara Strozzi, Louise Reichardt, Robert Schumann (Frauenliebe- und Leben), Kurt Weill, Margaret Bonds, Arnold van Wyk and Madeleine Dring. A far cry from your run-of-the-mill recital, this is a semi-staged work based on Alida's new original script, with stage direction by Carla Mostert. Art song like you've never heard it before - we hope to see you there!

The goal of this recital was, quite literally, to un-become. Unbecoming, in the context of this recital, is a verbification of the same word as an adjective, which denotes impropriety or unsuitability. Thus, unbecoming refers to the way in which I, in this staged recital, physically and visibly distanced myself from some of the things that I felt the stage required of me for the sake of respectability.

The recital unfolded in stages. First, I unzipped the back of my concert gown, and then I took the gown off completely, revealing my bra, underwear, and a whole lot of naked skin to the audience. Next, I took off my bedazzled concert shoes and undid my upstyle hairdo. Then, I pulled my now-loose hair into a low ponytail and cut it off. Or at least, I managed to partially cut off the pony. The brand-new scissors that I bought for the occasion did not quite make the cut. They were not sharp enough to cut through the thick ponytail, which I did not foresee because this is not exactly a stunt that one can practice beforehand. After that, I took off my stage jewellery and tossed a pink bathrobe over my shoulders. As a penultimate statement, I removed my makeup on stage, first pulling at my fake eyelashes and then clearing the rest of the paint away with makeup wipes. Lastly, I shaved my head. All this happened while I was singing. The next day, I shaved my axillar hair, which I had grown out specifically for the

concert (I do not usually wear my underarm hair long, because I am tactually sensitive and do not like its coarse, tickly sensation).



Figure 13: The poster for *un(BECOMING)*.

The aim of the recital was not merely to ‘unbecome’ from the concert stage’s tacit compulsory performance appearance and dress codes that reinscribe dated ideas of gendered respectability, and of the exclusivity of classical music as a white, middle-class practice.³⁸⁸ It also aimed to subvert other gendered, raced, and classed inequalities that I, as a young South African mezzo-soprano, have seen and felt in classical singing performance: in the persistent non-inclusion of female or female-identifying composers and black composers in concert programmes; in unbalanced demographics on concert stages; and in the policing of not just singers’ appearances

³⁸⁸ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, xii.

but also ‘respectable’ behaviour, both on- and offstage. As such, the recital’s programming, too, was intentionally subversive. As a point of departure, ‘othered’ works were prioritised: works by women and black composers. Of the works performed, four were by women composers, of which one was a black woman, and three by male composers. This is a standard part of what I call a feminist musicianship practice, which puts ‘the experiences and labour of women [...] front and centre, and made visible’.³⁸⁹

Where the works of men were included, I staged the action in such a way that it would defile the sanctity of white male achievement in the classical canon. This defilement occurred at the hand of subversive femininity, thus inverting defilement as something that is historically perpetrated against women. In archaic terms, ‘to defile’ means to rape or sexually assault a woman. While our modern use of the word is not free of this negative sexual charge, inferring violent masculine domination of the feminine, it now means, more broadly, to *soil* something: to damage its appearance, its purity; or to desecrate or profane sacredness (like sexual innocence). During Robert Schumann’s song cycle, *Frauenliebe- und Leben*,³⁹⁰ a profoundly anti-feminist/misogynistic text, I soiled the work’s sacredness in the canon by overshadowing it with unconcealed and sensual femininity, appearing in just my underwear and displaying my uncovered skin. Furthermore, I desecrated the work by cutting off my ponytail to the last, sacredly beautiful postlude in the cycle, thereby polluting it not just with a protest against normatively feminine bodily markers (like long hair), but also auditively with the sounds coming from the scissors as it tore through my hair. During *Youkali* by Kurt Weill, I took the hair-cutting a step further and shaved my head with an electric shaver. Again, this was both an ideological and auditive disruption, violating idealised bodily expectations of femininity on the concert stage, and infringing on the sound of Weill’s composition through the buzz of the shaver. Lastly, I infringed the musical purity of South African composer Arnold van Wyk’s work, *Vaalvalk* (from the song cycle *Vier Weemoedige Liedjies*),³⁹¹ by singing it an octave lower than intended. More than an intentional subversion, this was a pragmatic move, since the song cycle was composed for a soprano and thus in an uncomfortable tessitura for my mezzo voice.³⁹² Yet the way that it was performed still served the purpose of disrupting what is revered

³⁸⁹ Stella Viljoen, ‘Come and Sit at the Table: A Feminist Reading on “Work”’, in *Covid Diaries : Women’s Experience of the Pandemic*, ed. Amanda Gouws and Olivia Ezeobi (Cape Town: Imbali Academic Publishers, 2021), 199.

³⁹⁰ Translation: The Love and Life of a Woman

³⁹¹ Translations: Grey Hawk; Four Melancholic/Sad Songs.

³⁹² The decision to do—or not to do—*Vaalvalk* was not simple, and fraught with many, and often contradictory, considerations. I was adamant to include a South African composer in the concert. Ideally, this would have been a work by a marginalised composer, i.e., a woman and/or a black person. But *Vaalvalk* was one of an already

by the canon—masculinity (although not heterosexual), whiteness, and economic privilege (assigned to Afrikaners by the apartheid-regime during its reign).

A further layer of subversion was encoded in what I considered to be a more balanced demographic among the recital's collaborators. Apart from myself, a white Afrikaans woman, and my supervisor, a white man, the other two important stakeholders were a black man (behind the piano) and a white woman (as director). While perhaps balanced in terms of gender representation, with two women and two men involved, I had hoped for greater racial diversity among my collaborators. However, the availability, in our small university town, of skilled bodies who have the necessary expertise—embodied, musical, and academic—for involvement in this project curtailed hopes of a more balanced racial demographic. In time, I came to see this apparent disparity in racial representation as perhaps also reflective of apartheid's and colonialism's legacies of white empowerment within the university space. There was a further dimension to this matter: all the collaborators partook in the project without direct reimbursement apart from their regular salaries as employees of the university. Keeping in mind South Africa's history of the systematic and intergenerational economic privileging of whiteness, I speculated whether the racial demographic could have been uneven: firstly, because of the availability of a very niche kind of white skilled labour at the university as the result of white people's historic 'access privilege' to resources; and secondly, that my white collaborators were perhaps more economically cushioned to be able to partake in this project without receiving additional remuneration. Perhaps, if I had promoted the project without distinctly stating that participation would be unremunerated, I may have come into contact with more black collaborators who, despite being skilled for participation, could not afford to take

limited number of South African art songs that fit thematically with the concert's theme and the rest of the programme. Then, there was the decision to either transpose the entire work down, or just sing the melody in full chest voice but an octave lower than written. However, knowing Van Wyk's life story—his personal struggles with/against his queer identity in apartheid-era South Africa, and how his consequent battle with self-acceptance might have been reflected in an extremely laborious compositional process—tampering with his work seemed sacrilegious, even in a context where sacrilege was the aim. Eventually, I compromised: By including *Vaalvalk*, I was including the work of someone who was not just a white Afrikaans man, but simultaneously also of a marginalised positionality because of his sexuality during a specific, markedly conservative time in South Africa's history. Furthermore, including his work was a recognition of my own Afrikaner identity, and my attempts to grapple with violent South African histories perpetuated by my people. Moreover, by including his work in a partially violated form, where only the pitch of the melody and not that of the whole work was altered, I managed to retain my subversive agenda while at the same time retaining cognisance of for Van Wyk's personal and compositional hardships. For more on Van Wyk, see: Stephanus Muller and Arnold van Wyk, *Nagmusiek*. (Johannesburg: Fourthwall Books, 2014); Magdalena Johanna Oosthuizen, 'Arnold van Wyk as liedkomponis: 'n ontsluiting van die liedere in die Arnold van Wyk-versameling by die Universiteit Stellenbosch' (Ph.D. diss., Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch University, 2014).

part in unpaid projects. Even so, what was eventually visible on stage was my white feminine body and the pianist's black masculine body in a field where black bodies are marginalised.

The presence of a director, who joined us from the field of dramatic arts, implies an additional form of subversion, namely, a rupturing of the traditional recital format. The latter is usually a highly restrained, unstaged performance wherein the focus is meant to be on the music, as an autonomous entity, and not the musicians or their bodies. Moreover, apart from contravening the boundaries and unspoken prescriptions of the traditional recital, the concert featured a vivid break in the uniformity of dramatic register across the whole work. At one point, our little team considered whether to merge more closely the two different registers of the piece but finally decided to keep it the way that it was, reasoning that the break was a breach of dramatic convention in its own right. I recalled this discussion in my research diary as follows:

*Carla [die regisseur] het genoem dat die dramatiese registbreuk haar nie gepla het nie, en daartoe geskimp dat dit dalk meer subversive/transgressive is juis omdat dit nie uniform is nie.*³⁹³

Lastly, *un(BECOMING)* was subversive in its disregard for the classical concert stage's requirements for perfection. The imperfections in the concert space—musically, but also with regard to the decision to put on display the material imperfections of my unconcealed living body—were not coincidental, but intentional. Yet intentionality does not necessarily mean ease of execution; simply having an idea does not enact that idea. In other words, I would have to perform these imperfections (the straining of my voice, the awkward encounters and gestures on stage, moments of interruption and disruption) as something controlled, practiced. On 20 September 2023, just more than a week before the concert, I remarked in my research diary that

[i]f unbecoming is my goal, then my need for perfection is something that I am going to have to start shedding.

Although I realised at that point that striving for perfection, especially in the musical sense, was not in service of undoing respectability's oppressive hold, my perfectionistic desires were not easily subverted. In retrospect, I think that classical music's demand for excellence-as-respectability is so deeply ingrained that the biggest step to delinking from it is the conscious acknowledgement of how it controls your meaning-making. Or, in Kristeva's phrasing, how

Translation: Carla [the director] said that the break in dramatic register didn't bother her much, and hinted at the possibility of non-uniformity is, in fact, in service of the work's subversive/transgressive agenda.³⁹³

respectability via excellence, in its various material and ideological manifestations as unpacked across this thesis, becomes the ‘master’ of your ‘meaning’.³⁹⁴

Crucially, none of the modes of subversion mentioned above were explicitly communicated to the audience. In the context of the grand subversive statement of *un(BECOMING)*, this was the only minor gesture, and intentionally so. For me, an important part of feminist musicianship is normalising the inclusion of the marginal into the mainstream. As such, I felt that highlighting my subversive intentions would undermine this agenda. Diverse inclusivity on the classical concert stage, I feel, should not be a performative achievement that begs for explicit acknowledgement; it should be the norm. I yearn for the day that I enter a performance and remain oblivious to its transformation, not because of white racial ignorance but rather because the transformed space had become inconspicuous precisely through its normality.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, I decided to present photographic stills from *un(BECOMING)* as glyphs in between chapters without addressing this recital in the body chapters. As a result of this decision, there emerges a disjuncture between the recital and the theories of respectability that I develop in this thesis. However, not presenting the recital in the body of the thesis was an ethical choice, since the recital was not necessarily intended to match up with the themes that emerged from the interviews. The concert was representative of my own experiences of respectability’s impact on my musicianship and singing body. Thus, it was not intended to be reflective of my interlocutors’ lived experience, nor is it posed as a universal ‘solution’ to undoing respectability’s grip in women singers’ lives. This recital is what subversion looked like for me at a very specific point in my singing career and personal life. Indeed, subversion is highly individualised and may vary across a singer’s lifetime.

³⁹⁴ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, x.



Figure 14 (left): William Fourie, my thesis supervisor and the concept advisor for *un(BECOMING)* tidying up my new hairstyle after the concert, with a small group of staff and student colleagues observing in the background.



Figure 15 (right): William Fourie tidying up my new hairstyle after the concert.

5.2. Reflecting on Autoethnography

What is this concert doing, and for whom? What is happening when I do this performance? Pragmatically, what will I achieve? Think about my research context. It has to do more than just be a performance. It has to ask questions. There is a difference between activism and research.

These were autoethnographic writing/thinking prompts from my supervisor during the early conceptual stages of *un(BECOMING)*. I mentioned in Chapter One autoethnography's risk for producing excessively self-indulgent research. Now, close to the end of this project, I still defend critical self-reflective autoethnography as a valid research method, especially within artistic research. Yet, at the same time, I must acknowledge that the transformative potential of a critical self-reflective academic is vastly limited when it occurs in isolation. Critical self-reflection ensues most productively at our intersections with other people who help rotate our inward gaze outward, whether that be by direct prompts like my supervisor presented, or through their mere presence in the autoethnographic space and consciousness. Indeed, autoethnography is about the self, but can never be for the sake of the self.

In undertaking this autoethnographically-inclined research, my hope is that it contributes critically to sociological research on what is currently a dearth of work relating to respectability in classical singing from an embodied, artistic perspective. However, as I experienced first-hand, this is not always an easy feat, especially when it infringes on your personal life and time.

Consider the following quote from my research diary, for instance, which I wrote down on Wednesday, 27 September after a long and taxing rehearsal.

*Dit is nou 19:30 en ek is pas tuis na 'n repetisie. My aandete (wat ek onder gewone omstandighede reeds rondom 18:00 al eet) is in die oond en sal seker so oor twintig minute eetbaar wees. Intussen skryf ek solank sodat ek dit nie later hoef te doen nie. Vroeër vandag het ek gedink aan hoe bevoorreg ek is om hierdie tipe werk te kan doen, met 'n span mense saam met my wat nie dink ek is heeltemal gek nie, en in die meriete van die werk glo. Maar nou dat ek die actual werk moet doen—die kritiese self-refleksie, die outoethnografie—die “data” vir die practice-led navorsing moet insamel, nou verwyf ek dit. Ek is moeg en my brein voel dolleeg. Ek wil nie nou skryf nie. Ek wil uitspan en rus en eet en die repetisie in my onderwuste laat “simmer”.*³⁹⁵

In this way, too, ethical autoethnography is not about the self. In fact, sometimes, it asks of the self to be put aside in the face of mortal frailties like tiredness and hunger. However, like Megan finds the ‘dramatic payoff’ of wearing braids during performance worth it despite its cost (in time and money), as I showed in the previous chapter, so can autoethnography be massively rewarding. First, there is a strange personal reward merely in the act of writing the self. Second, and more importantly, it is rewarding to think (however presumptuously) that the impact of your practice will live on and make an impact in discourse beyond yourself.

5.3. Conclusion: Becoming Unrespectable

In the pursuit of a way of being/performing/singing/writing beyond respectability, I have proposed feminist musicianship, as laid out above, as a counterforce to respectability’s oppression. Feminist musicianship, however, inevitably imposes unpaid labour on its practitioners. Stella Viljoen, also quoted before, remarks that ‘[t]raditionally, women’s work, tied as it was to the home, was invisible labour.’³⁹⁶ Here, ‘invisible’ also implies labour that goes unpaid in direct monetary terms. Similarly, the labour of feminist musicianship, tied as it is to the realm of offstage intellectual preparation, is also mostly invisible and unpaid. This is because the prices of musical performances sold on concert stages usually do not take into account the depth of intellectual work done offstage before the final product can be presented.

³⁹⁵ Translation: It is 19:30, and I just got home after another rehearsal. My dinner, which I usually eat around 18:00 already, is in the oven and should be done in about twenty minutes. In the meantime, I am reflecting now so I won’t have to do it later. Earlier today I was thinking about how privileged I am to be able to do this kind of work, with a team of people that don’t think me insane, and who believe in the merit of the work. Yet now that I have to do the actual work—the critical self-reflection, the autoethnography, compiling the data for this practice-led research—now I resent it. I am tired and my head feels empty. I don’t want to be writing right now. I want to relax, rest, eat, and let the rehearsal simmer in my subconscious.

³⁹⁶ Viljoen, ‘Come and Sit at the Table: A Feminist Reading on “Work”’, 197.

Coincidentally, this is also the biggest difference between feminist musicology and feminist musicianship: the prior has intellectual labour as its main product, and can often afford to fund it through state-supported higher education institutions and governmental or private research grants. The latter, however, is a burden often carried alone. This line of inquiry is interesting in its own right and calls for further thought and discussion, especially in terms of what it means for the economic situation and positions within power structures of feminist musicologists versus musicians that follow a feminist practice. Unfortunately, this falls beyond the scope of this thesis and will therefore not be explicated here.

It would surely be easy for me to fully blame the unpaid labour of feminist musicianship on a global classical music consumption culture that values and pays for standard-canon ‘talent’ displayed in comfortable ways above the intensive intellectual labour that is required for performing peripheral music in non-normative ways. Yet I wonder whether our highly constrained South African concert budgets would in the first place even be able to afford remunerating feminist musicianship fairly for such work, especially with the knowledge that the combined category of ‘Arts, culture, sport and recreation’ makes up but 0.6 per cent in the government’s Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) for 2022-24.³⁹⁷ The arts simply are not a main priority on our country’s payroll, and so South African musicians that strive for a feminist musicianship practice might find that doing so further compounds their situation of financial oppression in a local economy that is still trying to find its feet after hundreds of years of ongoing external and internal oppression.

With that all being said, I am wary of framing the value of feminist musicianship just in economic terms when its worth is so poignantly nonmaterial. If performing classical music can, as Bull suggests, ‘work as a mechanism for storing value in particular bodies, thus reproducing inequality’, then the practice of feminist musicianship is one avenue for opposing the inequality within and even outside of classical music.³⁹⁸ In broader terms, Bull, drawing on Adorno and others, holds up to view Western art music as a microcosm of the ‘power structures of [contemporary capitalism]’, thereby opening the latter up for consideration and critique.³⁹⁹ Furthermore, valuing feminist musicianship solely in monetary terms overlooks that the fruit of its labour is not limited to the public sphere of socio-political causes, but may for many of

³⁹⁷ ‘Budget Review 2022’ (Pretoria: National Treasury, Republic of South Africa, 2022), <http://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2022/review/FullBR.pdf>.

³⁹⁸ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, xiii.

³⁹⁹ Bull, *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, xxvi.

its practitioners be impactful on a deeply personal level. Indeed, since our musical experience is shaped by our positionality (which includes gender, race and class), feminist musicianship not only informs musical and artistic practices, but can also serve to inform practitioners about themselves. It is a way of holding the mirror up to one's own way of thinking about and doing music as a means for compassionate self-reflection.

Furthermore, feminist musicianship has allowed me to reflect on the ways in which I perform respectability in and through my musical performances, and to what end. Consequently, I have come to view respectability as a powerful oppressive force in the gendered, racialised, and classed ways that it polices bodies and beings in South African classical music and beyond. In turn, this realisation has given me the courage to sometimes disengage from, for example, the unpaid aesthetic labour of embodying idealised femininity and feminine respectability on stage despite the risk of exclusion or disqualification from the mainstream performance scene. This disengagement has, quite ironically, freed up more time for the unpaid labour of feminist musicianship. The conscious decision to spend less time aestheticising—perhaps even sanitising—my physical appearance and behaviour according to the unspoken expectations of female respectability affords me more time to do the *work* of feminist musicianship as described before. Additionally, recognising respectability as an intersectional oppressor has for me brought into view the dissonance between the opulence and glamour that I feel performers are often required to portray on stage and my material reality as a classical musician in South Africa. This has allowed me to scrutinise how aesthetic labour in the form of overly glamorised physical appearance may uphold the classist exclusivity of classical music, something which fortunately is also addressed by disengaging from unpaid aesthetic labour.

On a larger scale, the intangible value of feminist musicianship lies therein that it courageously stages, as per Viljoen's words quoted before, 'the experiences and labour of women [...] front and centre, and made visible'. In doing so, it sets a precedent for the recognition and opposition of other forms of intersectional inequalities within an outside of classical music in South Africa. Viljoen affirms this as 'a profoundly political act', a turn of phrase which gives me a glimmer of hope in the face of respectability's recalcitrant and ongoing oppression.

Bibliography

- ‘About | Black Opera Research Network’. Accessed 6 January 2024.
<https://blackoperaresearch.net/about/>.
- Adam, Alison. ‘Feminist AI Projects and Cyberfutures’. In *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, edited by Gill Kirkup, 276–90. London; New York: Routledge in association with the Open University, 2000.
- Adams, Tony E., Stacy Holman Jones, and Carolyn Ellis, eds. *Handbook of Autoethnography*. Second edition. New York London: Routledge, 2022.
- Alster, Tina S., and Iris S. Harrison. ‘Alternative Clinical Indications of Botulinum Toxin’. *American Journal of Clinical Dermatology* 21, no. 6 (December 2020): 855–80.
- Alwakwak, Asma Ahmed E. ‘Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) : An Audit of How Many PCOS Patients Struggle to Lose Weight with Recommended Diet Management in a Tygerberg Hospital Population’. Master’s thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2022.
- Anderson, Leon. ‘Analytic Autoethnography’. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4 (August 2006): 373–95.
- André, Naomi. ‘From Otello to Porgy: Blackness, Masculinity, and Morality in Opera’. In *Blackness in Opera*, edited by Naomi Andre, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor, 11–31. United States: University of Illinois Press, 2012.
- André, Naomi Adele. *Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018.
- . ‘Teaching Opera in Prison’. In *The Intersectional Approach*, edited by Michelle Tracy Berger and Kathleen Guidroz, 258. The University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
- André, Naomi Adele, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor. ‘Introduction’. In *Blackness in Opera*, edited by Naomi Adele André, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor. Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 2012.
- Andre, Naomi, Louise Toppin, Patrick Dailey, Njabulo Madlala, and July Zuma. ‘Black Experiences in Opera: Perspectives from South Africa, Europe and the US’. *SAMUS : South African Music Studies* 40, no. 1 (1 July 2020): 292–344.
- Apolloni, Alexandra M. *Freedom Girls: Voicing Femininity in 1960s British Pop*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Badran, Serene A., and Susan Al-Khateeb. ‘Factors Influencing the Uptake of Orthodontic Treatment’. *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* 73, no. 4 (September 2013): 339–44.
- Balsamo, Anne. ‘Reading Cyborgs Writing Feminism’. In *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, edited by Gill Kirkup, 148–58. London; New York: Routledge in association with the Open University, 2000.
- . *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*. Duke University Press, 1996.

- Bankhead, Teiahsha, and Tabora Johnson. 'Self-Esteem, Hair Esteem and Black Women with Natural Hair'. *International Journal of Education and Social Science* 1, no. 4 (2014): 92–102.
- Barak-Brandes, Sigal, and Amit Kama, eds. *Feminist Interrogations of Women's Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame*. London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.
- . 'Introduction: Why Hair? Why Women?' In *Feminist Interrogations of Women's Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame*, edited by Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama, 1–20. London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.
- Beniash, Elia, Cayla A. Stifler, Chang-Yu Sun, Gang Seob Jung, Zhao Qin, Markus J. Buehler, and Pupa U. P. A. Gilbert. 'The Hidden Structure of Human Enamel'. *Nature Communications* 10, no. 1 (26 September 2019): 4383.
- Benson, Bruce Ellis. *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music Making*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Benson, P. E., H. Javidi, and A. T. DiBiase. 'What Is the Value of Orthodontic Treatment?' *British Dental Journal* 218, no. 3 (February 2015): 185–90.
- Bermann, Sandra. 'Performing Translation'. In *A Companion to Translation Studies*, edited by Sandra Bermann and Catherine Porter, 285–97. Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2014.
- Best, Katelyn E. 'Expanding Musical Inclusivity: Representing and Re-Presenting Musicking in Deaf Culture through Hip Hop'. In *Music and Democracy: Participatory Approaches*, edited by Marko Kölbl and Fritz Trümpl, 235–66. Wien Bielefeld: mdwPress Transcript, 2021.
- Bhayat, Ahmed, and Usuf Chikte. 'Human Resources for Oral Health Care in South Africa: A 2018 Update'. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 10 (14 May 2019): 1668.
- . 'The changing demographic profile of dentists and dental specialists in South Africa: 2002–2015'. *International Dental Journal* 68, no. 2 (April 2018): 91–96.
- Bishi, George, Joseph Mujere, and Zvinashe Mamvura. 'Renaming Enkeldoorn: Whiteness, Place, and the Politics of Belonging in Southern Rhodesia'. *Journal of Historical Geography* 77 (July 2022): 55–64.
- Boise, Sam de. 'Gender Inequalities and Higher Music Education: Comparing the UK and Sweden'. *British Journal of Music Education* 35, no. 1 (March 2018): 23–41.
- Bombola, Gina, and Kristen M Turner. 'Respectability, Prestige, and the Whiteness of Opera in American Popular Entertainment from 1890 to 1937'. *The Musical Quarterly* 105, no. 3–4 (9 January 2023): 274–319.
- Booyesen, Gysbert Albertus. '’n Multimodale Ondersoek Na Nostalgie En Patriargale Afrikanersimbole in Populêre Afrikaanse Musiekvideo's'. MA thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2021.
- Bos, Nancy, Joanne Bozeman, and Cate Frazier-Neely. *Singing Through Change: Women's Voices in Midlife, Menopause, and Beyond*. Suquamish: StudioBos Media, 2020.
- Bosma, Hannah. 'Bodies of Evidence, Singing Cyborgs and Other Gender Issues in Electrovoical Music'. *Organised Sound: An International Journal of Music Technology* 8, no. 1 (2003): 5–17.

- Botha, Nina. “‘Sick’ with Child’. *Anthropology Southern Africa* 33, no. 1–2 (January 2010): 1–8.
- Brett, Philip, and Elizabeth Wood. ‘Lesbian and Gay Music’. In *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, edited by Philip Brett and Elizabeth Wood, 351–90. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Brett, Philip, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, eds. *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Bruinders, Sylvia. *Parading Respectability: The Cultural and Moral Aesthetics of the Christmas Bands Movement in the Western Cape, South Africa*. First edition. African Humanities Series. Grahamstown, South Africa: AHP Publications, 2017.
- Buckner, Jocelyn L. “‘Spectacular Opacities’: The Hyers Sisters’ Performances of Respectability and Resistance’. *African American Review* 45, no. 3 (2012): 309–23.
- ‘Budget Review 2022’. Pretoria: National Treasury, Republic of South Africa, 2022. <http://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2022/review/FullBR.pdf>.
- Bull, Anna. *Class, Control, and Classical Music*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- . ‘El Sistema as a Bourgeois Social Project: Class, Gender, and Victorian Values’. *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 120–53.
- . ‘‘Respectability’ and Classical Music: Examining the Intersections of Class, Gender and Race to Understand Inequalities in Musical Training’. *DR ANNA BULL* (professional website), 2020. <https://annabullresearch.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/anna-bull-agone-article-final.docx>.
- Buthlezi, Inkosi. ‘Chief Minister Speaks to the Press’. *Clarion Call* 1 (1988): 13–15.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- . ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory’. *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519–31.
- . ‘Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s Second Sex’. *Yale French Studies*, no. 72 (1986): 35–49.
- Cailliois, Roger. *Man, Play, and Games*. Translated by Meyer Barash. New York, N.Y: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961.
- Cane, Jonathan. *Civilising Grass: The Art of the Lawn on the South African Highveld*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019.
- Cannon, Walter B. *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear and Rage: An Account of Recent Researches into the Function of Emotional Excitement*. New York: D Appleton & Company, 1915.
- Casie Chetty, Ayesha. ‘Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement’. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42, no. 13 (3 October 2019): 2365–67.
- Cassim, Layla. ‘Chapter 1: Introduction to Research & How to Write a Research Proposal’. In *THE POSTGRADUATE TOOLKIT: A Peer-Reviewed Electronic Textbook and Multimedia Resource [e-Book]*, 4th edition., 1–231. Johannesburg: Layla Cassim ERS Consultants CC, 2021.

- . ‘Chapter 3: An Overview of Research Design and Methodology’. In *THE POSTGRADUATE TOOLKIT: A Peer-Reviewed Electronic Textbook and Multimedia Resource [e-Book]*, 4th edition., 1–240. Johannesburg: Layla Cassim ERS Consultants CC, 2021.
- Cecil, Vanessa, Louise F. Pendry, Jessica Salvatore, and Tim Kurz. ‘Women’s Grey Hair as an Abomination of the Body: Conceal and Pass, or Reveal and Subvert’. In *Feminist Interrogations of Women’s Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame*, edited by Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama, 124–52. London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.
- Chakraborty, Sutirtha, Sourav Dutta, and Joseph Timoney. ‘The Cyborg Philharmonic: Synchronizing Interactive Musical Performances between Humans and Machines’. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 8, no. 1 (17 March 2021): 74.
- Chrisler, Joan C. ‘Teaching Taboo Topics: Menstruation, Menopause, and the Psychology of Women’. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (March 2013): 128–32.
- Christensen, Ann-Dorte, and Sune Qvotrup Jensen. ‘Doing Intersectional Analysis: Methodological Implications for Qualitative Research’. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 20, no. 2 (June 2012): 109–25.
- Chybowski, Julia J. ‘Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement’. *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 73, no. 2 (2020): 401.
- Citron, Marcia J. ‘Gender and the Field of Musicology’. *Current Musicology* 12, no. 53 (1993): 66–75.
- . *Gender and the Musical Canon*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- . ‘Gender, Professionalism and the Musical Canon’. *The Journal of Musicology* 8, no. 1 (1990): 102–17.
- Coates, Norma. ‘(R)Evolution Now? Rock and the Political Potential of Gender’. In *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, edited by Sheila Whiteley, 50–64. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Cohen, Louis, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison. *Research Methods in Education*. Eighth edition. London ; New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Cooper, Michael. ‘An “Otello” Without Blackface Highlights an Enduring Tradition in Opera’. *The New York Times*, 17 September 2015, sec. Arts.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/arts/music/an-otello-without-the-blackface-nods-to-modern-tastes.html>.
- Covach, John. ‘Popular Music, Unpopular Musicology’. In *Rethinking Music*, edited by Mark Everist and Nicholas Cook, 452–70. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Cox, Lara. ‘Decolonial Queer Feminism in Donna Haraway’s “A Cyborg Manifesto” (1985)’. *Paragraph* 41, no. 3 (November 2018): 317–32.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics’. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139–67.
- . ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color’. *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.

- Creswell, John W., and J. David Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Fifth edition. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018.
- Creswell, John W., and Cheryl N. Poth. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. Fourth edition. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018.
- Cusick, Suzanne G. 'Foreword'. In *A Feminist Ethnomusicology: Writings on Music and Gender*, edited by Ellen Koskoff, ix–xi. New Perspectives on Gender in Music. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014.
- . 'Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem'. *Perspectives of New Music* 32, no. 1 (1994): 8–27.
- . 'Gendering Modern Music: Thoughts on the Monteverdi-Artusi Controversy'. *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 46, no. 1 (1993): 1–25.
- . 'Musicology, Acoustemology, Performativity'. In *Theorizing Sound Writing*, edited by Deborah A. Kapchan, 25–45. Music/Culture. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2017.
- . 'On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight'. In *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, 67–84. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- . "'There Was Not One Lady Who Failed to Shed a Tear": Arianna's Lament and the Construction of Modern Womanhood'. *Early Music* 22, no. 1 (1994): 21–43.
- . "'Thinking from Women's Lives": Francesca Caccini after 1627'. *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (1993): 484–507.
- Dalrymple, Sarah, and Timothy Lane. 'Breaking the Menstruation Taboo to Make Fieldwork More Inclusive'. *Nature*, 9 January 2024, d41586-024-00044–00045.
- Davies, S. B., and J. Q. Davies. "'So Take This Magic Flute and Blow. It Will Protect Us As We Go": Impempe Yomlingo (2007-11) and South Africa's Ongoing Transition'. *The Opera Quarterly* 28, no. 1–2 (1 March 2012): 54–71.
- Dazey, Margot. 'Rethinking Respectability Politics'. *The British Journal of Sociology* 72, no. 3 (June 2021): 580–93.
- DeCook, Julia R. 'A [White] Cyborg's Manifesto: The Overwhelmingly Western Ideology Driving Technofeminist Theory'. *Media, Culture & Society* 43, no. 6 (September 2021): 1158–67.
- DeCoste, Kyle. 'Street Queens: New Orleans Brass Bands and the Problem of Intersectionality'. *Ethnomusicology* 61, no. 2 (2017): 181–206.
- Delamont, Sara. 'The Only Honest Thing: Autoethnography, Reflexivity and Small Crises in Fieldwork'. *Ethnography and Education* 4, no. 1 (March 2009): 51–63.
- Delaney, Jason J., and John V. Winters. 'Sinners or Saints? Preachers' Kids and Risky Health Behaviors'. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 35, no. 4 (December 2014): 464–76.
- Delport, Alette. 'Canto Ergo Sum : I Sing, Therefore I Am'. *Muziki* 3, no. 1 (January 2006): 5–15.
- Die Republikein. 'Smullekker Biltongfees'. 7 July 2008.
<https://www.republikein.com.na/nuus/smullekker-biltongfees->

- Doane, Mary Ann. 'Technophilia: Technology, Representation, and the Feminine'. In *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, edited by Gill Kirkup, 110–21. London ; New York: Routledge in association with the Open University, 2000.
- Drugan, C. S., S. Hamilton, H. Naqvi, and J. R. Boyles. 'Inequality in Uptake of Orthodontic Services'. *British Dental Journal* 202, no. 6 (March 2007): 1–4.
- Du Plessis, Jannie. 'Die Invloed van Die Pastoriesistiem Op Die Pastoriekind, Met Spesifieke Verwysing Na Die Ontwikkeling van Sy Selfkonsep'. Master's thesis, Stellenbosch University, 1994.
- Dutra, Eliane H., Mara H. O'Brien, Candice Logan, Aditya Tadinada, Ravindra Nanda, and Sumit Yadav. 'Loading of the Condylar Cartilage Can Rescue the Effects of Botox on TMJ'. *Calcified Tissue International* 103, no. 1 (July 2018): 71–79.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Series Q. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Ege, Samantha. 'Chicago, the "City We Love to Call Home!": Intersectionality, Narrativity, and Locale in the Music of Florence Beatrice Price and Theodora Sturkow Ryder'. *American Music (Champaign, Ill.)* 39, no. 1 (2021): 1–40.
- . 'RESTAGING RESPECTABILITY: *The Subversive Performances of Josephine Baker and Nora Holt in Jazz-Age Paris*'. *Angelaki* 27, no. 3–4 (4 July 2022): 112–24.
- Eidsheim, Nina Sun. 'Maria Callas's Waistline and the Organology of Voice'. *The Opera Quarterly* 33, no. 3–4 (31 December 2017): 249–68.
- . *Sensing Sound: Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice*. Sign, Storage, Transmission. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.
- . *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music*. Duke University Press, 2019.
- Elafros, Athena. "'No Beauty Tips or Guilt Trips': *Rockrgl*, Rock, and Representation'. *Popular Music and Society* 33, no. 4 (October 2010): 487–99.
- Ellis, Carolyn. *Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*. Ethnographic Alternatives 13. New York: AltaMira press, 2004.
- Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. 'Autoethnography: An Overview'. *Forum, qualitative social research* 12, no. 1 (2010).
- Ellis, Michael J. *Why People Play*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1973.
- Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1950.
- Escalante, Samuel. 'Exploring Access, Intersectionality, and Privilege in Undergraduate Music Education Courses'. *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 29, no. 2 (2020): 22–37.
- Farel, Elena Arredondo. 'African American Opera Singers, 1850-1950: Ambition, Uplift, and Performance'. Ph.D. diss., St. Louis, 2022.
- Feher, Joseph. '8.1 - Mouth and Esophagus'. In *Quantitative Human Physiology*, edited by Joseph Feher, 689–700. Boston: Academic Press, 2012.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock, 1972.

- Fourie, Kotie. 'Afrikaans - The Unwanted Lingua Franca of Namibia'. In *Discrimination through Language in Africa?: Perspectives on the Namibian Experience*, edited by Martin Pütz, 315. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 1995.
- Fourie, Ruhan. "'Angels and Demons'? The Dutch Reformed Church and Anticommunism in Twentieth Century South Africa'. Ph.D. thesis, University of the Free State, 2021.
- Fourie, William. 'Splinter and Loss : Reading Clare Loveday's Johannesburg Etude No. 2'. *South African Music Studies : SAMUS* 36–37, no. 1 (2018): 464–89.
- Freeman, Ellen W. 'Continuing Controversies in the Recognition and Management of Premenstrual Syndromes'. *Women's Health (London, England)* 2, no. 5 (2006): 665–68.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1961.
- Freund, Brin, and Aruna Rao. 'Efficacy of Botulinum Toxin in Tension-Type Headaches: A Systematic Review of the Literature'. *Pain Practice* 19, no. 5 (June 2019): 541–51.
- Friesem, Lia. 'Women's Grey Hair in Online Discussions'. In *Feminist Interrogations of Women's Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame*, edited by Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama, 141–56. London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.
- Froneman, Willemien. 'Sitting Pretty, but Simmering with Anger'. *Literator* 40, no. 1 (12 November 2019).
- Fuller, Sophie. "'Something Revolting": Women, Creativity and Music after 50'. In *Gender, Age and Musical Creativity*, edited by Catherine Haworth and Lisa Colton, 7–23. Farnham, Surrey Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015.
- Gandy, Matthew. 'The Persistence of Complexity: Re-Reading Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto'. *AA Files*, no. 60 (2010): 42–44.
- Garrin, Ashley R., and Sara B. Marcketti. 'Ages and Stages: African American Women and Their Lives through Their Hair'. In *Feminist Interrogations of Women's Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame*, edited by Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama, 97–110. London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.
- Gleeson, Jules. 'Judith Butler: "We Need to Rethink the Category of Woman"'. *The Guardian*, 7 September 2021.
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/sep/07/judith-butler-interview-gender>.
- Goehr, Lydia. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- González, Jennifer. 'Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research'. In *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, edited by Gill Kirkup, 58–73. London ; New York: Routledge in association with the Open University, 2000.
- Goodhew, David. *Respectability and Resistance: A History of Sophiatown*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004.
- Goodrich, Andrew. 'Counterpoint in the Music Classroom: Creating an Environment of Resilience with Peer Mentoring and LGBTQIA+ Students'. *International Journal of Music Education* 38, no. 4 (November 2020): 582–92.
- Gordon, Bonnie. *Voice Machines: The Castrato, the Cat Piano, and Other Strange Sounds*. Chicago (IL) London: the University of Chicago Press, 2023.

- Goron, Michael. *Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Respectable Capers': Class, Respectability and the Savoy Operas 1877-1909*. Palgrave Studies in British Musical Theatre. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Gregg, Jean Westerman. 'Vocal Development and Articulation in Speech and Song'. *Journal of Singing* 58, no. 5 (2002): 431–38.
- Griffiths, Noola K. "'Posh Music Should Equal Posh Dress": An Investigation into the Concert Dress and Physical Appearance of Female Soloists'. *Psychology of Music* 38, no. 2 (April 2010): 159–77.
- . 'The Effects of Concert Dress and Physical Appearance on Perceptions of Female Solo Performers'. *Musicae Scientiae* 12, no. 2 (2008): 273–90.
- . 'The Fabric of Performance: Values and Social Practices of Classical Music Expressed through Concert Dress Choice'. *Music Performance Research* 4, no. Journal Article (2011): 30–48.
- Groos, Karl. *The Play of Man*,. Translated by E. L. Baldwin. New York: D. Appleton, 1901.
- Gunnarsson, Lena. 'Why We Keep Separating the "Inseparable": Dialecticizing Intersectionality'. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 24, no. 2 (May 2017): 114–27.
- Gwala, Dela. 'When the Anger Runs Out'. In *Feminism Is: South Africans Speak Their Truth*, edited by Jen Thorpe, 200–209. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2018.
- Handlarski, Denise. 'Pro-Creation—Haraway's "Regeneration" and the Postcolonial Cyborg Body'. *Women's Studies* 39, no. 2 (15 January 2010): 73–99.
- Haraway, Donna Jeanne. 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century'. In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 149–81. London: Free Association, 1991.
- . 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'. In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 183–202. London: Free Association, 1991.
- Harris, Clynessia, and Deanna R Davis. 'Wear Your CROWN: How Racial Hair Discrimination Impacts the Career Advancement of Black Women in Corporate America'. *Journal of Business Diversity* 23, no. 2 (2023): 40–51.
- Hartmann, Laura Anne. 'A Qualitative Study Exploring the Perceived Self-Image and Self-Esteem of Women Diagnosed with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome Using Body Mapping'. Master's thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2022.
- Hasan, Najmul. 'Namibia: South-West Africa'. *Pakistan Horizon* 28, no. 3 (1975): 61–78.
- Haupt, Adam. 'Race, Audience, Multitude : Afrikaans Arts Festivals and the Politics of Inclusion'. *Muziki: Journal of Music Research in Africa* 3, no. 1 (1 January 2006): 16–27.
- Hauptfleisch, Temple. 'Eventifying Identity: Festivals in South Africa and the Search for Cultural Identity'. *New Theatre Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2006): 181–98.
- Helmreich, Stefan. 'An Anthropologist Underwater: Immersive Soundscapes, Submarine Cyborgs, and Transductive Ethnography'. *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 4 (2007): 621–41.

- Hendrich, Gustav. 'Allegiance to the Crown: Afrikaner Loyalty, Conscientious Objection, and the Enkeldoorn Incident in Southern Rhodesia During the Second World War'. *War & Society* 31, no. 3 (October 2012): 227–43.
- Henricks, Thomas. 'Play as Self-Realization: Toward a General Theory of Play'. *American Journal of Play* 6 (1 January 2014): 190–213.
- Henson, Karen. 'Black Opera, Operatic Racism and an "Engaged Opera Studies"'. *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 146, no. 1 (May 2021): 219–30.
- Hernández, Javier C. 'Soprano Withdraws From Opera, Citing "Blackface" in Netrebko's "Aida"'. *The New York Times*, 15 July 2022, sec. Arts.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/15/arts/music/angel-blue-anna-netrebko-blackface.html>.
- Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Holman Jones, Stacy, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis. *Handbook of Autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast press, 2013.
- Holtzman, Glenn. 'Coloureds Performing Queer, or Queer Coloureds Performing?: Asserting Belonging through Queer Behavior in Cape Town, South Africa'. Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2017.
- Hutcheon, Linda, and Michael Hutcheon. 'Jazz, Opera, and the Ideologies of Race'. In *African Theatre. 19, Opera & Music Theatre*, edited by Christine Matzke, Lena van der Hoven, Christopher Odhiambo, and Hilde Roos, 21–33. Opera & Music Theatre. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2020.
- Impey, Angela. 'Pathways of Song: Re-Voicing Women's Landscapes in the Maputaland Borderlands'. *Agenda* 21, no. 73 (1 January 2007): 102–16.
- . 'Resurrecting the Flesh? Reflections on Women in Kwaito'. *Agenda* 16, no. 49 (1 January 2001): 44–50.
- . *Song Walking: Women, Music, and Environmental Justice in an African Borderland*. Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology. Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- . 'Songs of Mobility and Belonging: Gender, Spatiality and the Local in Southern Africa's Transfrontier Conservation Development'. *Interventions* 15, no. 2 (June 2013): 255–71.
- Inglese, Francesca. "'Mother City": Mothering Work, Coloured Respectability, and the Making of Contemporary Kaapse Klopse'. *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 26, no. 1 (2022): 1–24.
- Ingraham, Mary I., Joseph K. So, and Roy Moodley, eds. *Opera in a Multicultural World: Coloniality, Culture, Performance*. Routledge Research in Music 12. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Jorritsma, Marie. 'South African "Songprints": The Lives and Works of Jeanne Zaidel-Rudolph, Princess Constance Magogo, and Rosa Nepgen'. Master's thesis, Rice University, 2001.
- . 'Sonic Spaces: Inscribing "Coloured" Voices in the Karoo, South Africa'. Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2006.

- . *Sonic Spaces of the Karoo: The Sacred Music of a South African Coloured Community*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011.
- Kafer, Alison. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. 1st ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.
- Kallock, Sara. 'Livability: A Politics for Abnormative Lives'. *Sexualities* 21, no. 7 (October 2018): 1170–93.
- Karlsen, Sidsel. 'Policy, Access, and Multicultural (Music) Education'. In *Policy and the Political Life of Music Education*, edited by Patrick Schmidt and Richard Colwell. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Keenan, Elizabeth K. 'Intersectionality in Third-Wave Popular Music: Sexuality, Race, and Class'. In *Oxford Handbooks Online*, by Elizabeth K. Keenan. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Khumalo, Andile. 'On Heatwave, Silence, and Working as a Woman Composer in South Africa : In Conversation with Clare Loveday'. *South African Music Studies : SAMUS* 36–37, no. 1 (2018): 504–18.
- Kipar, Nicole. 'Reflection as Product', 2020, 160467 Bytes.
<https://doi.org/10.6084/M9.FIGSHARE.12818348.V2>.
- Kitching, Karl. 'Understanding Class Anxiety and "Race" Certainty in Changing Times: Moments of Home, School, Body and Identity Configuration in "New Migrant" Dublin'. In *Intersectionality and "race" in Education*, edited by Kalwant Bhopal and John Preston, 158–76. Routledge Research in Education 64. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Kitshoff, Herman. 'Claiming Cultural Festivals: Playing for Power at the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK)'. *South African Theatre Journal* 18, no. 1 (January 2004): 65–81.
- Kloppers, Elsabe. 'Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Sustersvereniging (NHSV) in 'n Postmoderne Samelewing'. *HTS: Theological Studies* 59, no. 2 (1 June 2003): 523–43.
- Klotz, Kelsey A. K. 'On Musical Value: John Lewis, Structural Listening, and the Politics of Respectability'. *Jazz Perspectives* 11, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 25–51.
- Koskoff, Ellen. *A Feminist Ethnomusicology: Writings on Music and Gender*. New Perspectives on Gender in Music. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014.
- Koval, Christy Zhou, and Ashleigh Shelby Rosette. 'The Natural Hair Bias in Job Recruitment'. *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 12, no. 5 (July 2021): 741–50.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. European Perspectives. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- Kumar, Ashok, Yukti Dhadwal, Vinit Yadav, and Bindu Sharma. 'A Cross-Sectional Study of Knowledge, Taboos, and Attitudes towards Menstruation'. *Ethnicity & Health* 29, no. 2 (17 February 2024): 208–19.
- Kumar, Naveen. 'Retiring Blackface'. *Opera America Magazine*, 28 January 2023.
<https://www.operaamerica.org/magazine/winter-2023/retiring-blackface/>.

- Lã, Filipa M.B., William L. Ledger, Jane W. Davidson, David M. Howard, and Georgina L. Jones. 'The Effects of a Third Generation Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill on the Classical Singing Voice'. *Journal of Voice* 21, no. 6 (November 2007): 754–61.
- LaBouff, Kathryn. *Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer's Guide to English Diction*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008.
- Labuschagne, P.A.H. 'Afrikaner Culture in Southern Rhodesia during 1938 - 1952 : An Exposition of the Contribution of the Afrikaner Folk Festivals'. *South African Journal of Cultural History* 29, no. 1 (1 June 2015): 120–43.
- Landres, Sophie. 'Indecent and Uncanny: The Case against Charlotte Moorman'. *Art Journal* 76, no. 1 (2 January 2017): 48–69.
- Larkan, Fiona, and Brian van Wyk. 'A Few Good Men in a World of Gangsters: Discourses of Respectability and Risk amongst Student Teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa'. *African Sociological Review / Revue Africaine de Sociologie* 18, no. 2 (2014): 82–94.
- Lazarus, Moritz. *About the Attraction of Play*. Berlin: F. Dummler, 1883.
- Livermon, Xavier. *Kwaito Bodies: Remastering Space and Subjectivity in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.
- Loveday, Clare, and Mareli Stolp. 'Leading the Way, One Note at a Time : Composer Clare Loveday at 50'. *South African Music Studies : SAMUS* 36–37, no. 1 (2018): 490–503.
- Lukate, Johanna M., and Juliet L. Foster. "'Depending on Where I Am..." Hair, Travelling and the Performance of Identity among Black and Mixed-race Women'. *British Journal of Social Psychology* 62, no. 1 (January 2023): 342–58.
- Markham, Ruth L., Monica H. Arslain, and Eric C. Skowronski. 'A Qualitative Study of Pastors' Kids at Cedarville University: A Pilot Study', 2014.
- Mathew, Linda. 'Racism Is Life-Threatening and Continues the Cycle of Racial Trauma: What Can Clinicians Do to Interrupt This Cycle?' *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 12 January 2024.
- Matzke, Christine. 'Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement'. *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 42, no. 2 (4 May 2022): 219–21.
- Matzke, Christine, Lena van der Hoven, Christopher Odhiambo, and Hilde Roos. *African Theatre. 19, Opera & Music Theatre*. Opera & Music Theatre. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2020.
- McClary, Susan. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- . 'Of Patriarchs... and Matriarchs, Too. Susan McClary Assesses the Challenges and Contributions of Feminist Musicology'. *The Musical Times* 135, no. 1816 (1994): 364–69.
- . 'Paradigm Dissonances: Music Theory, Cultural Studies, Feminist Criticism'. *Perspectives of New Music* 32, no. 1 (1994): 68–85.
- . 'Reshaping a Discipline: Musicology and Feminism in the 1990s'. *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993): 399–423.

- McConnell, Elizabeth A., Nathan R. Todd, Charlynn Odahl-Ruan, and Mona Shattell. 'Complicating Counterspaces: Intersectionality and the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival'. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 57, no. 3–4 (2016): 473–88.
- McGee, Kristin. 'Biopolitics and Media Power in the Online Dance Remake: Remixing Beyoncé's "****Flawless" in the YouTube Archive'. *Popular Music and Society* 42, no. 1 (January 2019): 22–41.
- McLaughlin, Katy. 'Prozac and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder: An Old Remedy for a New Diagnosis'. *Psychology Today* 35, no. 2 (2002): 21.
- Menninghaus, Winfried. 'Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times: The Construction of the Ideally Beautiful Body'. In *Disgust: The Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, 51–103. Intersections. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.
- Middleton, Richard. "'Last Night a DJ Saved My Life": Cyborgs, Avians and Siren Bodies in the Era of Phonographic Technology'. *Radical Musicology* 1 (2006).
- Motloba D.P., Sethusa M.P.S., and Ayo-Yusuf O.A. 'The Psychological Impact of Malocclusion on Patients Seeking Orthodontic Treatment at a South African Oral Health Training Centre : Research'. *South African Dental Journal* 71, no. 5 (1 June 2016): 200–205.
- Muhr, Sara Louise. 'Caught in the Gendered Machine: On the Masculine and Feminine in Cyborg Leadership'. *Gender, Work & Organization* 18, no. 3 (May 2011): 337–57.
- Muller, Carol. 'Capturing the "Spirit of Africa" in the Jazz Singing of South African-Born Sathima Bea Benjamin'. *Research in African Literatures* 32, no. 2 (2001): 133–52.
- . 'Sathima Bea Benjamin, Exile and the "Southern Touch" in Jazz Creation and Performance'. *African Languages and Cultures* 9, no. 2 (1996): 127–43.
- Muller, Carol A. 'Sathima Bea Benjamin: Musical Echoes and the Poetics of a South African-American Musical Self'. In *Women Singers in Global Contexts: Music, Biography, Identity*, edited by Ruth Hellier, 161–76. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013.
- Muller, Carol Ann. *Musical Echoes: South African Women Thinking in Jazz*. Refiguring American Music. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- . 'Nazarite Song, Dance, and Dreams: The Sacralization of Time, Space, and the Female Body in South Africa'. Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1994.
- . *Rituals of Fertility and the Sacrifice of Desire: Nazarite Women's Performance in South Africa*. Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Muller, Stephanus. *Nagmusiek*. Eerste uitgawe deur Fourthwall Books. Arnold van Wyk : Katalogus En Werklys van Musiek, 1925-1983. Johannesburg: Fourthwall Books, 2014.
- Muller, Stephanus, and Arnold Van Wyk. *Nagmusiek*. *Nagmusiek*. Eerste uitgawe deur Fourthwall Books. Johannesburg: Fourthwall Books, 2014.
- Muller, Wayne. 'A Reception History of Opera in Cape Town : Tracing the Development of a Distinctly South African Operatic Aesthetic (1985-2015)'. Ph.D. diss., Stellenbosch University, 2018.

- Muri, Allison. 'Imagining Reproduction: The Politics of Reproduction, Technology and the Woman Machine'. *Journal of Medical Humanities* 31, no. 1 (March 2010): 53–67.
- . *The Enlightenment Cyborg: A History of Communications and Control in the Human Machine, 1660-1830*. Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2007.
- Niemand, Dominique. "'Bid Vir My Ma' : A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of White Christian Afrikaner Females during SADF Conscription from 1980 until 1990'. Master's thesis, University of Pretoria, 2019.
- Nuttall, Sarah., and Carli. Coetzee. *Negotiating the Past : The Making of Memory in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Obilade, Omolara Abiodun, Oluranti Olatokunbo Da Costa, and Oluwatosin Oluyemi Sanu. 'Patient/Parent Expectations of Orthodontic Treatment'. *International Orthodontics* 15, no. 1 (March 2017): 82–102.
- Oliveira, Ana Carolina Soares, Juliana Maria Magalhães Christino, and Bruno Eduardo Freitas Honorato. 'Hair, Identity, and Stigma: Seeking Beauty and Media Alternatives from the Trajectory of Curly and Coily-Haired Brazilian Women'. *Feminist Media Studies* 23, no. 5 (4 July 2023): 2423–39.
- Oosthuizen, Magdalena Johanna. 'Arnold van Wyk as liedkomponis : 'n ontsluiting van die liedere in die Arnold van Wyk-versameling by die Universiteit Stellenbosch'. Ph.D. diss., Stellenbosch University, 2014.
- Ottoson, Åse. 'Holding On to Country: Musical Moorings for Desired Masculinities in Aboriginal Australia'. In *Country Boys and Redneck Women: New Essays in Gender and Country Music*, edited by Diane Pecknold and Kristine M. McCusker, 64–83. University Press of Mississippi, 2016.
- Pecknold, Diane, and Kristine M. McCusker, eds. *Country Boys and Redneck Women: New Essays in Gender and Country Music*. University Press of Mississippi, 2016.
- Persaud, Ricardo, George Garas, Sanjeev Silva, Constantine Stamatoglou, Paul Chatrath, and Kalpesh Patel. 'An Evidence-Based Review of Botulinum Toxin (Botox) Applications in Non-Cosmetic Head and Neck Conditions'. *JRSM Short Reports* 4, no. 2 (February 2013): 1–9.
- Piaget, Jean. *Play, Dreams, and Imitations in Childhood*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1952.
- Pistorius, Juliana. 'Predicaments of Coloniality, or, Opera Studies Goes Ethno'. *Music & Letters* 100, no. 3 (2019): 529–39.
- Pistorius, Juliana M. 'Coloured Opera as Subversive Forgetting'. *Social Dynamics* 43, no. 2 (4 May 2017): 230–42.
- Pitcan, Mikaela, Alice E Marwick, and Danah Boyd. 'Performing a Vanilla Self: Respectability Politics, Social Class, and the Digital World'. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 23, no. 3 (1 May 2018): 163–79.
- Pohl, Rebecca. *An Analysis of Donna Haraway's A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*. Macat Library. London: Macat international, 2018.
- Prasad, Ajnesh. 'Cyborg Writing as a Political Act: Reading Donna Haraway in Organization Studies'. *Gender, Work & Organization* 23, no. 4 (July 2016): 431–46.

- ‘Prince Mangosuthu Gatscha Buthelezi - Parliament of South Africa’. Accessed 10 January 2024. <https://www.parliament.gov.za/person-details/24>.
- Pro, J. William, and Francois Barthelat. ‘Discrete Element Models of Tooth Enamel, a Complex Three-Dimensional Biological Composite’. *Acta Biomaterialia* 94 (August 2019): 536–52.
- Qi, Xiaodong, Dan Zhang, Zhongbao Ma, Wenxin Cao, Ying Hou, Jiaqi Zhu, Yang Gan, and Ming Yang. ‘An Epidermis-like Hierarchical Smart Coating with a Hardness of Tooth Enamel’. *ACS Nano* 12, no. 2 (27 February 2018): 1062–73.
- Rabaka, Reiland. *Hip Hop’s Inheritance: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Hip Hop Feminist Movement*. Lanham Boulder New York Toronto Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, a division of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2011.
- Rai, Anurag, Department of Orthodontics, Patna Dental College and Hospital, Bankipore, Patna, India, Minti Kumari, Department of Public Health Dentistry, Patna Dental College and Hospital, Patna, Bihar, India, * Corresponding Author: Minti Kumari, MDS (Public Health Dentistry), Reader, Patna Dental College and Hospital, Patna, Bihar, India. E-mail: panhealth121013@gmail.com. Phone: +917999449364, Tanoj Kumar, Department of Oral Pathology and Microbiology, Patna Dental College and Hospital, Patna, Bihar, India, et al. ‘Analytical Study of the Psychosocial Impact of Malocclusion and Maxillofacial Deformity in Patients Undergoing Orthodontic Treatment’. *Journal of Medicine and Life* 14, no. 1 (January 2021): 21–31.
- Rampersadh, Yuvthi. ‘The Perceived and Normative Orthodontic Treatment Need of a Group of South African Children’. Master’s thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2015.
- Rancière, Jacques. *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*. English ed. (with minor revisions). Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009.
- . *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Translated by Julie Rose. Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- . *Proletarian Nights: The Workers’ Dream in Nineteenth-Century France*. London ; New York: Verso Books, 2012.
- Roos, Hilde. ‘Opera Production in the Western Cape : Strategies in Search of Indigenization’. Ph.D. diss., Stellenbosch University, 2010.
- Ross, Fiona C. ‘Raw Life and Respectability: Poverty and Everyday Life in a Postapartheid Community’. *Current Anthropology* 56, no. S11 (October 2015): S97–107.
- Ross, Robert. *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870: A Tragedy of Manners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Sapa. ‘Biltong Fest!’ *The Namibian*, 22 July 1993.
- Schaaf, H.G. ‘Die Pastorie-Kind : Seen En Kruis’. B. Th. diss., Stellenbosch University, 1988.
- Schueller, Malini Johar. *Locating Race: Global Sites of Post-Colonial Citizenship*. SUNY Series, Explorations in Postcolonial Citizenship. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009.
- Scott, Jessica, and Liesl Theron. ‘The Promise of Heteronormativity: Marriage as a Strategy for Respectability in South Africa’. *Sexualities* 22, no. 3 (March 2019): 436–51.

- Scott, Joan W. 'Commentary: Cyborgian Socialists?' In *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics*, edited by Elizabeth Weed, 215–17. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Sennott, Christie, Sangeetha Madhavan, and Youngeun Nam. 'Modernizing Marriage: Balancing the Benefits and Liabilities of Bridewealth in Rural South Africa'. *Qualitative Sociology* 44, no. 1 (March 2021): 55–75.
- Sesay, Chernoh M. 'Mapping Intersectionality, Imagining Music, and Excavating America's African Archives'. *Journal of the Early Republic* 38, no. 2 (2018): 325–33.
- Sessle, B. J. 'Neural Basis of Oral and Facial Function'. In *Reference Module in Biomedical Sciences*. Elsevier, 2014.
- Shaw, W. C. 'Factors Influencing the Desire for Orthodontic Treatment'. *European Journal of Orthodontics* 3, no. 3 (1 January 1981): 151–62.
- Sheen, Barbara. *Foods of South Africa*. Greenhaven Publishing LLC, 2012.
- Simpson, Thula. 'Negotiated Revolution in South Africa: 1990-1994'. In *Bullets to Ballots*, by Omar Ashour, 238–64. Edinburgh University Press, 2021.
- Skeggs, Beverley. *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London;Thousand Oaks, Calif; SAGE, 1997.
- Smit, Lizelle, and Danie Stander. 'Gender-Performance in Alba Bouwer Se Vertaling van Die Etiketboek Sybille: Sjarmante Vriendin Gender Performance in Alba Bouwer 's Afrikaans Translation of the Etiquette Book Sybille: Sjarmante Vriendin (Sybille: Charming Friend)'. *Tydskrif Vir Geesteswetenskappe* 62, no. 1 (2022).
- Sonnekus, Theo. 'Against *Ordentlikheid* : Disobedient Femininities in Selected Embroideries by Hannalie Taute'. *De Arte* 55, no. 1 (2 January 2020): 31–56.
- Spencer, Herbert. *The Principles of Psychology, Volume 2*. New York: Williams and Norgate, 1872.
- Stell, G, and G Groenewald. '’n Perseptuele Verslag van Afrikaans in Namibië: Tussen Lingua Franca En Sosiaal-Eksklusiewe Taal'. *Tydskrif Vir Geesteswetenskappe* 56, no. 4–2 (December 2016): 1128–48.
- Stifler, Cayla A., Joseph E. Jakes, Jamie D. North, Daniel R. Green, James C. Weaver, and Pupa U.P.A. Gilbert. 'Crystal Misorientation Correlates with Hardness in Tooth Enamels'. *Acta Biomaterialia* 120 (January 2021): 124–34.
- Stockton, Kathryn Bond. *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*. Series Q. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Stolp, Mareli. 'Clare Loveday : Composer at 50'. *South African Music Studies : SAMUS* 36–37, no. 1 (2018): 451–54.
- Sunil Dutt, C., Pooja Ramnani, Deepak Thakur, and Manish Pandit. 'Botulinum Toxin in the Treatment of Muscle Specific Oro-Facial Pain: A Literature Review'. *Journal of Maxillofacial and Oral Surgery* 14, no. 2 (June 2015): 171–75.
- Tan, Shzr Ee. 'Whose Decolonisation? Checking for Intersectionality, Lane-Policing and Academic Privilege from a Transnational (Chinese) Vantage Point'. *Ethnomusicology Forum* 30, no. 1 (2 January 2021): 140–62.
- Tau, Siphokazi. 'Brenda Fassie and Busiswa Gqulu: A Relationship of Feminist Expression, Aesthetics and Memory'. *Social Dynamics* 47, no. 1 (2 January 2021): 23–36.

- Teppo, Annika. 'Church Rules? The Lines of *Ordentlikheid* among Stellenbosch Afrikaners'. *Anthropology Southern Africa* 38, no. 3–4 (2 October 2015): 314–30.
- . 'Moral Radicals: Afrikaners and Their Grassroots Ecumenism After Apartheid'. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 44, no. 2 (4 March 2018): 253–67.
- . *Afrikaners and the Boundaries of Faith in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. 1st ed. London: Routledge, 2021.
- Teteh, Dede, Marissa Ericson, Sabine Monice, Lenna Dawkins-Moultin, Nasim Bahadorani, Phyllis Clark, Eudora Mitchell, et al. 'The Black Identity, Hair Product Use, and Breast Cancer Scale'. Edited by Cheng-Shi Shiu. *PLOS ONE* 14, no. 12 (4 December 2019): e0225305.
- Teteh, Dede K., Marissa Chan, Bing Turner, Brian Hedgeman, Marissa Ericson, Phyllis Clark, Eudora Mitchell, et al. 'Heavy Is the Head That Wears the Crown : Black Men's Perspective on Harmful Effects of Black Women's Hair Product Use and Breast Cancer Risk'. *American Journal of Men's Health* 14, no. 6 (November 2020): 155798832097007.
- Thomas, Lynn M. 'The Modern Girl and Racial Respectability in 1930s South Africa'. *The Journal of African History* 47, no. 3 (2006): 461–90.
- Thula, Simpson. 'Negotiated Revolution in South Africa, 1990–1994'. In *Bullets to Ballots: Collective de-Radicalisation of Armed Movements*, edited by Omar Ashour, 238–64. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021.
- Toerien, Merran, Sue Wilkinson, and Precilla Y. L. Choi. 'Body Hair Removal: The "Mundane" Production of Normative Femininity'. *Sex Roles* 52, no. 5–6 (March 2005): 399–406.
- Trindade, Luiz Valério De Paula. "'My Hair, My Crown": Examining Black Brazilian Women's Anti-Racist Discursive Strategies on Social Media'. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Latino-Américaines et Caraïbes* 45, no. 3 (1 September 2020): 277–96.
- Tunbridge, Laura. *Singing in the Age of Anxiety: Lieder Performances in New York and London between the World Wars*. Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- Twigge, Eugene, Rachel M. Roberts, Lisa Jamieson, Craig W. Dreyer, and Wayne J. Sampson. 'The Psycho-Social Impact of Malocclusions and Treatment Expectations of Adolescent Orthodontic Patients'. *The European Journal of Orthodontics* 38, no. 6 (December 2016): 593–601.
- Urbaniak, Olivia, and Helen F Mitchell. 'How to Dress to Impress: The Effect of Concert Dress Type on Perceptions of Female Classical Pianists'. *Psychology of Music* 50, no. 2 (March 2022): 422–38.
- 'U.S. Soprano Pulls out of Italian Opera over Theater's Use of Blackface: "Outright Racist" - CBS News', 16 July 2022. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/soprano-angel-blue-leaves-italian-opera-over-use-of-blackface/>.
- Van der Bank, D.A. 'Die Rol En Betekenis van Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Die Oranjerivierkolonie : Fondsinsameling'. *Navorsinge van Die Nasionale Museum : Researches of the National Museum* 6, no. 9 (1 December 1989): 313–15.

- Van der Westhuizen, Christi. *Sitting Pretty: White Afrikaans Women in Postapartheid South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2017.
- Van Heerden, Esther. 'Liminality, Transformation and Communitas : Afrikaans Identities as Viewed through the Lens of South African Arts Festivals: 1995 – 2006'. DPhil diss., Universiteit van Stellenbosch, 2009.
- Vanderpool, Morgan. 'Body Science of Survivorship: Mapping the Neurological Impacts of Interlocking Systems of Oppression and Co-Designing Equitable Solutions through Movement and Breath'. In *Practicing Yoga as Resistance: Voices of Color in Search of Freedom*, edited by Cara Hagan, 66–81. Routledge Research in Race and Ethnicity. Abingdon New York (N.Y.): Routledge, 2021.
- Vanyoro, K. P., G. Mavunga, and Z. E. Mugari. 'Governing Bodies? Exploring Normative Sex and Gender Discourses in Informal Herbal Healing Flyers and Posters in Johannesburg CBD'. *Communicare : Journal for Communication Studies in Africa* 40, no. 1 (2021): 23–48.
- Vanyoro, Kudzaishe P. 'QUEER(ING) BELONGING: Black Queer Narratives of Home(s), (In)Visibility and Resilience While Living in Johannesburg'. Ph.D. diss., University of the Witwatersrand, 2022.
- Viljoen, Stella. 'Come and Sit at the Table: A Feminist Reading on "Work"'. In *Covid Diaries : Women's Experience of the Pandemic*, edited by Amanda Gouws and Olivia Ezeobi, 194–202. Cape Town: Imbali Academic Publishers, 2021.
- Viviers, Etienne. 'A Critique of the Survival Anxieties That Inform South African Discourses about Western Art Music'. Ph.D. diss., Stellenbosch : Stellenbosch University, 2016.
- Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1982.
- Wallace, Marion, and John Kinahan. *A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
- Walton, Chris, and Stephanus Muller, eds. *Gender and Sexuality in South African Music*. 1. ed. Stellenbosch: SUN ePRESS, 2005.
- Warwick, Kevin. 'Cyborg Morals, Cyborg Values, Cyborg Ethics'. *Ethics and Information Technology* 5, no. 3 (2003): 131–37.
- Wiklund, Maria, Christina Ahlgren, and Anne Hammarström. 'Constructing Respectability from Disfavoured Social Positions: Exploring Young Femininities and Health as Shaped by Marginalisation and Social Context. A Qualitative Study in Northern Sweden'. *Global Health Action* 11, no. sup3 (23 November 2018): 1519960.
- Winch, Jonty. 'Rhodesia, Rugby and the Afrikaner: "Working Together to Send This Country Ahead"'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 15 (12 October 2016): 1808–25.
- Winnicott, Donald W. *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock, 1971.
- Wojda, Sylwia M., and Eugeniusz Sajewicz. 'Influence of Dental Materials on Hardness and Young's Modulus of the Surface Layers of Tooth Enamel Formed as a Result of Friction'. PDF. *Acta of Bioengineering and Biomechanics*; 01/2019; ISSN 1509-409X, 2019.
- Yaari, Shir Aloni. 'Hair Rites and Wrongs: Tonsorial Acts in the Work of Female Artists'. In *Feminist Interrogations of Women's Head Hair: Crown of Glory and Shame*, edited

by Sigal Barak-Brandes and Amit Kama, 39–53. London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

Youde, Deborah. 'Intelligibility, Agency and the Raced-Nationed-Religioned Subjects of Education'. In *Intersectionality and "race" in Education*, edited by Kalwant Bhopal and John Preston, 192–212. Routledge Research in Education 64. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Zhang, Min-Juan, Yan-Hui Sang, and Zhi-Hui Tang. 'Psychological Impact and Perceptions of Orthodontic Treatment of Adult Patients with Different Motivations'. *American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics* 164, no. 3 (September 2023): e64–71.

Zhao, Hewei, Shaojia Liu, Yan Wei, Yonghai Yue, Mingrui Gao, Yangbei Li, Xiaolong Zeng, et al. 'Multiscale Engineered Artificial Tooth Enamel'. *Science* 375, no. 6580 (4 February 2022): 551–56.