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# Carmen

Georges Bizet

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John Berry  
Artistic Director, ENO

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# *Carmen*

Georges Bizet

*Overture Opera Guides*

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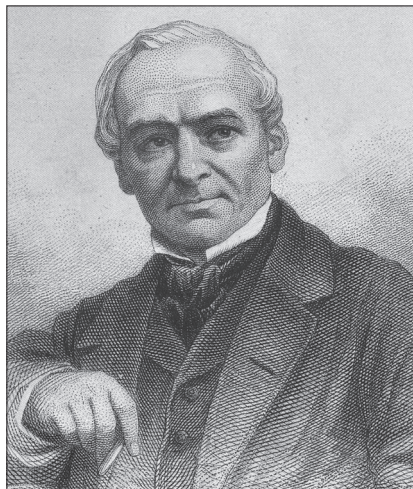


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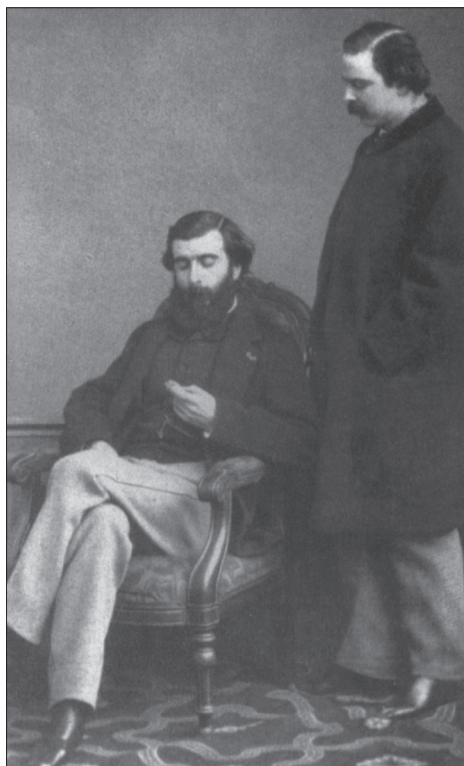


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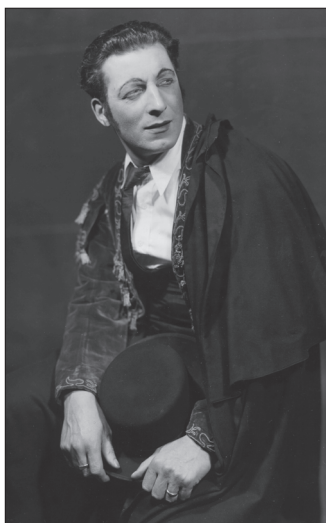
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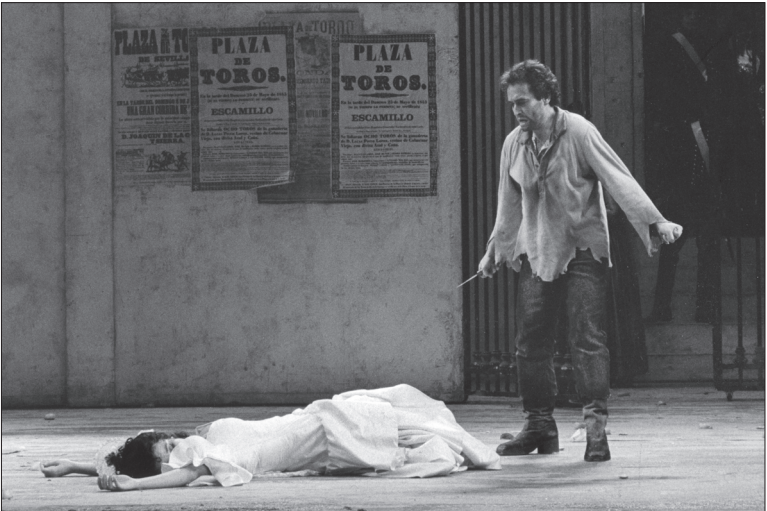






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## *Carmen*: From Mérimée to Bizet

*Richard Langham Smith*

Although *Carmen* is often seen as the starting point for a chain of French pieces on Spanish themes, it was in its time merely a stepping stone in the rush of French enthusiasm for Spanish culture which arose in the mid nineteenth century in the wake of Napoleon's defeat in the Peninsular War. Chabrier's *España*, Debussy's *Ibéria* and Ravel's *Boléro* and *L'Heure espagnole* may have drawn inspiration from *Carmen* but Bizet's opera was only a high point in the fashion – if not mania – for things Spanish (and in particular Andalusian) which snowballed from the 1830s onwards.

After the Napoleonic defeat many Spanish citizens who had supported his cause – the 'afrancesados', considered collaborators – were forced to flee north, particularly to the cultural magnet of Paris. Among them were intellectuals, artists, musicians and dancers who captivated the French with their arts but also hoped to perfect them there.<sup>1</sup> Hosted enthusiastically in French salons, they fostered a taste for learning the guitar and for flamenco costume and dancing. Spanish spectacle flourished on the Parisian stage: celebrated flamenco dancers delighted French audiences and a prosperous industry in the publication of dual-language Spanish songs grew up. Some publishers simply provided French texts for pre-existent Spanish music, others commissioned newly composed

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1 For further detail on this, see Montserrat Bergadà, 'Musiciens espagnols à Paris entre 1820 et 1868', in Louis Jambou (ed.), *La Musique entre France et Espagne: Interactions stylistiques, 1870–1939* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003), pp. 17–38.



pieces by Spanish composers who had established themselves in France.<sup>2</sup>

In literature, travelogues from visitors to the country across the mountains were much in fashion. Prosper Mérimée's novella *Carmen*, on which Bizet's opera is based, was to some extent one of these but had been preceded by such writers as Théophile Gautier in several genres. Among visual artists, Goya had visited Paris and enjoyed particular popularity – Delacroix in particular was at one time greatly influenced by him – and among French painters bitten by the Spanish bug were Chassériau (who painted the celebrated dancer Petra Camara), Manet (who painted *Lola de Valence*) and Degas who used a Spanish guitarist as a model. The taste was fostered not only by Hispanic exhibits at the various *Expositions universelles* but also by King Louis Philippe's founding of a *Galerie espagnole* in the Louvre in 1835.

Particular individuals were central in encouraging a French interest in Spain. The last Empress of France, Eugénie (née de Montijo, 1826–1920), was by birth Andalusian. She married Bonaparte's nephew, Napoleon III (1808–73), and fostered a taste for Spanish arts. Mérimée, incidentally, had been an intimate of hers since her childhood. Among Spanish musicians working in Paris were the dancer, guitarist and composer Fernando Sor (1778–1839) and later on Sebastián Yradier (1809–65) who had been a singing teacher to Eugénie. As will be seen, Bizet modelled his celebrated Habanera on a song by Yradier.

Also important were the García family who settled in France. The father, Manuel García (1775–1832) was an actor, opera singer and composer and a committed francophile. His son, also Manuel, was author of a celebrated singing treatise, considered a key text on *bel canto* even today. The two daughters were also highly influential: Maria (1808–36), a celebrated singer known under the name of her husband, Malibran, fell off her horse and died in Manchester at an early age. Her sister Pauline (1821–1910) sang and composed in the Spanish style. Their pictures often adorned the bilingual sheet music

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2 For details of this wave of Spanish fever, see Gerhard Steingress, ...y '*Carmen*' se fue a París (Córdoba: Almuzara, 2006).

which flooded the market in the early and mid nineteenth century. Pauline and her husband, Louis Viardot, provided a direct link with Bizet since both their out-of-town retreat on the Seine at Bougival, where Bizet worked on *Carmen* in 1874, and their Paris residence, were close to his, and he became a family friend. Viardot was himself a learned Hispanist with a particular interest in Spanish gypsies, on whom he wrote an extensive article in the *Dictionnaire Larousse*.<sup>3</sup>

The operatic stage had been by no means impervious to Spanish fever, and although no one had incorporated as much Spanish-style music as Bizet would do in *Carmen*, there were notable exceptions. For example in Massenet's *Don César de Bazan* of 1872, the Overture, supported by *tambours de basque*, has a motif with decidedly Spanish syncopations followed by a choral *Boléro* and a *Ballade aragonaise*. Several of the original cast of *Carmen*, incidentally, had sung in this opera. Before this, Auber, in *Le Domino noir* (1837) and *Les Diamants de la couronne* (1841), had used elements of music from the Iberian Peninsula. Adolphe Adam was another composer who employed Spanish settings, notably in *Giralda* (the name of the grand tower in Seville) and *Le Toréador*.<sup>4</sup> Both the Spanish context in general, and Bizet's friendship with the Viardots, not to mention his early friendship with Sarasate, were without doubt catalysts for his attraction to Mérimée's masterly novella about an alluring Spanish gypsy.

It was a rival to Bizet's two librettists, Louis Gallet, who first remembered how Mérimée's *Carmen* was recognized as a potential opera subject well before Halévy and Meilhac took it up. He recalled a conversation after sitting on a jury:

'Would you like me to recommend a subject?' proposed one of the judges: 'I'll give it to you, for I'm only a critic myself. It's *Carmen*, for there you have an opera in the same genre as *Fra Diavolo* with a part for an Englishman, think about it!'

3 *Grand Larousse Universel*, article 'Bohémien, -ienne' (no precise date but probably 1860s), p. 868.

4 See Hervé Lacombe, 'L'Espagne à l'Opéra-Comique avant *Carmen*', in François Lesure (ed.), *Échanges musicaux franco-espagnols* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2000), pp. 161–94.

Just think, we could have done this *Carmen* without ever having foreseen the other. And despite our own preoccupations, in deference to our advisor, there could have been a role for an Englishman, just as in *Fra Diavolo*.<sup>5</sup>

Leaving aside Gallet's comments about an Englishman – which will be returned to – why was Mérimée's *Carmen* so attractive and so successful in its transformation into a libretto? It is usually categorized as a '*nouvelle*', as opposed to a '*conte*', which is more of a 'tale', a chronological narrative telling a story. Mérimée's *Carmen* is quite different, more a compressed novel, not continuous and with a double narrative, with events at first observed by an erudite historian interested in the culture and history of other places, in this case remains of antiquity in Andalusia. Comparisons with Mérimée himself are inevitable for he was essentially a traveller, an inspector of public buildings all over France, responsible for the allocation of substantial funds for their restoration. In the novella the observer shows off his erudition with frequent references to gypsy, Basque and local culture, even in the form of footnotes extending into Greek.

He enthusiastically meets a notorious bandit, Don José, who is about to be garrotted for murdering Carmen. José, as the second narrator, recounts the events of his life from the perspective of a condemned man, centred on his meeting with Carmen and his affair with her. The novella thus dwells on Carmen from two perspectives: the narrator's, who seems intrigued by her and carries little cigars to lubricate engagement with women; and José's, whose interest in her begins not with her personality but with her legs. Even in prison he looks out between the bars recalling the delicious holes in her stockings!

For transformation into the opera libretto this double narrative was unworkable, so the novella is turned back into a story, and the erudite observer is eradicated, although the libretto retains details not only from the whole novella, but also from Mérimée's other reminiscences

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5 Louis Gallet, *Notes d'un librettiste: Musique contemporaine* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1891), pp. 265–67.

of Spain which included essays on a bullfight and an execution and an interview with a bandit.<sup>6</sup>

The novella was in another sense a travelogue, first published in a celebrated periodical (*La Revue des deux mondes*) which informed readers about life abroad. Its essence is that it observes details as well as embroidering them, just as Mérimée's compatriot in the field of the visual arts, Gustave Doré, did a little later on in his series of over two hundred engravings of Spanish life first published in another *revue* with a similar agenda, *Le Tour du monde*.<sup>7</sup> *Carmen* was the result of Mérimée's second visit to Spain in the 1840s, a significant date falling just after the formation of the Guardia Civil, an armed force whose principal mission was to rid Spain of bandits. Andalusia was allocated a particularly strong force and one crucial theme in the opera is the conflict between the soldiers and the bandits, encapsulated in Don José's change from one side to the other.

The libretto softens many aspects of the novella while developing others. Mérimée's *Carmen* has a horrible, murderous, one-eyed husband called García who is removed from the libretto. On the other hand, the libretto invents an operatic foil, Micaëla, the angel of the fireside. Where *Carmen* is a dark-skinned Andalusian, a sexually adventurous gypsy dressed in red, Micaëla is a blonde-haired Catholic virgin dressed in blue. Micaëla's devotion to José and her friendship with his mother are thus inventions of the librettists though she is developed from hints of a northern girl in the novella. Similarly, Escamillo is developed from mention of a picador who has a fling with *Carmen* into a fully-fledged torero, a macho foil to the lily-livered José who makes it clear in the opera – though not in Mérimée's original – that he is also a virgin:

*car jamais, jamais femme, jamais femme avant toi*<sup>8</sup>

6 Prosper Mérimée, *Nouvelles* (contains *Lettres d'Espagne*, essays previously published separately in *Revue de Paris* in the 1830s) (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1852).

7 Jean Charles Davillier, *Voyage en Espagne*, illustrated by Gustave Doré (Paris: Hachette, 1874). See also Gustave Doré, *Doré's Spain: All 236 Illustrations from Spain* (Mineola: Dover Editions, 2004).

8 'For never, never a woman, never a woman before you'.

he sings to Carmen in the crucial scene where he has to choose between love and duty. As if we hadn't guessed he was inexperienced, and as if his chastity will impress her! Quite the reverse.

Bizet's librettists also strengthen the novella's other main aspect: its sense of place, enhanced on stage (of course) by costume and scenery over which tremendous care was taken. First comes the *plaza* where all classes and occupations meet. A main conflict in the opera is projected: that of imposed masculine order against gypsy, female unruliness. The final version of the set strengthens this, pitting the guardhouse against the factory on opposite sides of the stage – the factory had originally been backstage, with a cumbersome fountain in the centre.

In Act Two the topos is the *venta*, or inn, sordid in the novella but a flamenco dance hall in the opera. In Act Three the wilderness of the sierra, or mountains, is portrayed: the hideout of the bandits who make excursions to the coast and to Gibraltar to rob their victims and even murder them, particularly if they are English. This terrain was finely captured by Doré. Finally we get to a double representation of the bullring (which we hear but don't see) and to the events outside.

*Carmen* has many claims to originality, not least because of its incorporation of so much Spanish-style music and its fusion of this with other styles: the tear-jerking *opéra-comique* arias and duets (such as José's duet with Micaëla [12]<sup>9</sup> and his Flower Song [23]); the gypsy elements on a strange, oriental-sounding scale (Carmen's recurrent motif first heard at the end of the Prélude [4], again in the card scene predicting her death [27], and finally at her murder [36]); elements of Spanish dance such as the Séguedille [16], the Chanson bohème [18] and the final Entr'acte [32]; and continuous musical dialogue which takes over in the final act, but is also extended in the scene where Carmen taunts José as he is torn between love and duty after her dance for him [22]. There is also a touch of religiosity about Micaëla's music: her first duet with José is introduced by an imitation of organ music as she tells him how she has been to church with his

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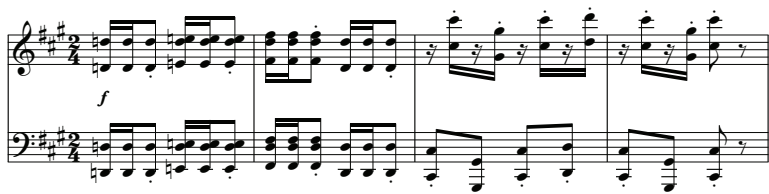
9 Numbers in square brackets refer to the Thematic Guide on pp. 87–92 [Ed.].

mother, and the hymnic line of her subsequent aria, accompanied by legato strings and harp, is reminiscent of a style of religious music used in fashionable Parisian churches, sometimes known as the ‘*style saint-sulpicien*’ [13]. There’s also a fugal style used for Carmen’s condemnation in the finale of this act; its ordered entries perhaps express the control imposed on her violent behaviour [17].

More important overall, however, is the opera’s realism, often using diegetic effects where the music is part of the action, for example the *Chanson bohème* [18], and the offstage music emanating from the bullring in the final act. Carmen’s several dance songs are also more a part of the action than the average operatic aria since they involve dancing in front of an onstage audience.

The *Prélude* [1–4], essentially a *paso doble*, plunges us straight into the music of the bullring, and it returns when the bullfight occurs. *Paso dobles*, or *pas redoublés* as they were known in France, were the stock-in-trade of the military bands that played (and still play) during *corridas* – in English they are quaintly known as the ‘military two-step’. They were originally used for training soldiers to march at double pace, and there were many examples to be found in the music of composers such as Rossini, Cherubini and Offenbach, to name a few. What Bizet does is to introduce a Spanish inflection by the use of a flamenco scale (with a flat supertonic, i.e. the second note of the scale) which listeners immediately recognize as Spanish: it is sometimes referred to as the ‘Spanish tetrachord’. The following music examples show various ways in which this Spanish hallmark is applied:

*Example 1:* A repeated motif based on the tetrachord C sharp, D, E, F sharp, centred on C sharp, is appended to the second idea in the *Prélude*, recurring later at various repetitions.



CARMEN

*Example 2:* Carmen’s so-called ‘Séguedille’ uses the tetrachord in several forms to give the movement an entirely authentic Spanish feel. Here the tetrachord descends, centred on B it starts on the flat sixth, another characteristic of flamenco music, G, F sharp, E, D, C, B.

The musical score for 'Séguedille' is presented in two systems. The first system features a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics 'Ji - rai dan - ser la Sé - gue -' and a piano accompaniment in bass clef marked *pp*. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics 'dille Et boi - re du Man - za - nil - la,' and the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/8. The piano accompaniment consists of rhythmic chords and single notes, often with a descending tetrachord pattern.

*Example 3:* The entire ritornello to the Chanson bohème which opens Act Two is based on a four-note motif descending from E to B via a flattened C.

The musical score for the 'Chanson bohème' ritornello is shown in two systems. The first system is for flutes, with a treble clef and a *pp* dynamic marking. The second system continues the flute part and includes a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The flute part features a descending four-note motif (E, C#, B, A) that is repeated and varied throughout the piece.

CARMEN: FROM MÉRIMÉE TO BIZET

*Example 4:* Bizet immediately impregnates the final act with the flavour of a Spanish fiesta with the stereotypical opening to the final Entr’acte, using not only the flattened supertonic, but the clash of major and minor versions of the third degree of the scale. Hemioctas characterize the dance on which it is based, the *polo*, and it is not immediately clear whether we are in duple or triple time.

Bizet also introduces into the Prélude an element specific to the *Pasodoble taurino* by using the ‘Toreador theme’ which will later



appear as Escamillo's [3]. Essentially sectional, and using fanfare motives, the *paso dobles* used at bullfights would include a lyrical melody as the final section before a recapitulation: this tune – the hallmark of the piece – would be identified with a victorious bullfighter. So in a sense, the *Prélude* is the *paso doble* 'El Escamillo'. Published *paso dobles* were rare at this time and it is possible that Bizet knew of this convention through the sizeable Spanish community in Paris who, among other patriotic activities, held bullfights in Montmartre. After all, the composer had lived on the borders of Montmartre from 1869 when it was rather more separate from Paris than it is today.

The relentless vamping of the *Prélude*'s accompaniment – to which men could march and horses could trot – is disturbed with great effect as the postlude changes suddenly to the 'Requiem' key of D minor, announced in a style somewhat conventional for foretastes of death or destruction: tremolando strings. Against this, a motif based on a scale with two augmented seconds is heard, possibly owing a little to the composer who was above all the world authority on gypsies, Franz Liszt.<sup>10</sup> This is sounded on bassoons and clarinets; rasping low notes on the horns punctuate [4].

After the scene in the *plaza* [5], a crowd scene ubiquitous in *opéras-comiques* of the period, comes a fascinating variant: a '*Scène et Pantomime*' found in the first vocal score but subsequently eradicated in all other early editions [7]. This is an extraordinary movement in several ways: first, because it has Moralès addressing the audience; second, because it uses mime; and thirdly because it is very funny, not a characteristic much found elsewhere in the opera. Only from the two surviving production books held at the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris do we learn what this scene is about. Clearly marked in the *Livret de mise-en-scène* as the '*Scène de l'Anglais*' it explains Gallet's comment about the potential for a spoof at the expense of the English.

The idea of an elderly 'milord' cuckolded by a sexy young Spaniard had already been exploited in Auber's *Fra Diavolo*, an *Opéra*-

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<sup>10</sup> The scale is used at the opening of Liszt's B minor Piano Sonata. Liszt also wrote a lengthy essay on gypsies.

Comique favourite. Here it's turned into a mime, with the Englishman accompanied by an attractive young lady from the *corps de ballet*. The scene was included in the printed libretto, the first vocal score and the orchestral parts. One critic, Jules Guillemot, writing in *Le Soleil*, advised his readers

to look out particularly for a meaningful pantomime between an old husband, a young wife and a lover, commented upon by the *brigadier* Moralès who whispers the words spoken by the miming characters behind him, which we do not hear: it's an original and witty idea and the production brought this out well.<sup>11</sup>

This scene was apparently written because the baritone Edmond Duvernoy, who took the role of Moralès, thought he hadn't got enough to sing, and Bizet and his librettists took the chance further to exploit the English presence in the novella. Only a brief aside was otherwise retained in the libretto when Le Remendado comes back from Gibraltar reporting that the place is full of English people and raising a laugh by reminding us that the English are 'a bit cold, but distinguished' (see libretto, p. 209). The lines are finely delivered in the 1911 recording (see Select Discography, p. 365).

This seems not to have been the only change caused by singers throwing their toys out of the pram. Célestine Galli-Marié was also dissatisfied, in her case with the crucial aria following her dramatic entry whose manner is distilled in the accompanying stage direction: 'Carmen enters. Her entrance and costume should be exactly as described by Mérimée' (see libretto, p. 131).

Since we are pointed back to the novella for Carmen's characterization, it is perhaps worth a glimpse at the two first encounters with her which so brilliantly encapsulate her conflicting aspects: first in the words of the erudite narrator, and then in those of Don José:

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11 Jules Guillemot, 'Revue dramatique', *Le Soleil* (9th March 1875). Despite this critic's admiration for the scene, it was unpopular with the directorate. A common view, as reported by Bizet's early biographer Charles Pigot, was that it sidetracked the plot and made Act One overlong.

One evening, after it had grown quite dusk, I was leaning over the parapet of the quay, smoking, when a woman came up the steps leading from the river, and sat down near me. In her hair she wore a great bunch of jasmine – a flower which, at night, exhales a most intoxicating perfume. She was dressed simply, almost poorly, in black, as most work-girls are dressed in the evening. Women of the richer class only wear black in the daytime, at night they dress *a la francesa*. When she drew near me, the woman let the mantilla which had covered her head drop on her shoulders... I perceived her to be young, short in stature, well proportioned, and with very large eyes. I threw my cigar away at once. She appreciated this mark of courtesy, essentially French, and hastened to tell me she was very fond of the smell of tobacco, and that she even smoked herself, when she could get very mild *papelitos*. I fortunately happened to have some such in my case, and at once offered them to her. She condescended to take one, and lighted it on a burning string which a child brought us, receiving a copper for its pains. We mingled our smoke, and talked so long, the fair lady and I, that we ended by being almost alone on the quay.<sup>12</sup>

There follows some banter in which the narrator, emphasizing her otherness, skirts round the question of whether she is a Jewess. She replies:

‘Oh come! You must see I’m a gypsy! Wouldn’t you like me to tell you *la baji*? [your fortune] Did you never hear tell of Carmencita? That’s who I am!’<sup>13</sup>

Where the narrator is intrigued, José is smitten. His narrative begins by gloating over her physical assets. Beginning with her legs, he then moves his gaze to her assets under her chemise:

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12 Prosper Mérimée, *Carmen*, trans. Lady Mary Loyd, reprinted in ‘*Carmen*’: a Romance by Prosper Mérimée with a Study of the Opera of the Same Name by Winton Dean (London: The Folio Society, 1949), pp. 17–18. Adapted by the present author for the mistranslation of ‘*cassie*’ as acacia.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

She was wearing a very short skirt, below which her white silk stockings – with more than one hole in them – and her dainty red morocco shoes, fastened with flame-coloured ribbons, were clearly seen. She had thrown her mantilla back, to show her shoulders, and a great bunch of cassia that was thrust into her chemise. She had another cassia blossom in the corner of her mouth, and she walked along, swinging her hips, like a filly from a Cordova stud farm. In my country anyone who had seen a woman dressed in that fashion would have crossed himself.<sup>14</sup>

It is clearly from this description that the librettists' stage direction is drawn. She continues introducing a new theme, strengthened in the libretto, which not only emphasizes José's obedience as a good soldier, but also mocks him for being effeminate. In this respect the librettists develop the image into a diametric contrast with Escamillo, the macho bullfighter who has myriad women ready to loosen their underclothes for him.

'*Compadre,*' said she, in the Andalusian fashion, 'won't you give me your chain for the keys of my strongbox?'

'It's for my priming pin,' said I.

'Your priming pin!' she cried, with a laugh. 'Oho! I suppose the gentleman makes lace, as he wants pins!'

Everyone began to laugh, and I felt myself getting red in the face, and couldn't hit on anything in answer.

'Come, my love!' she began again, 'make me seven ells of black lace for my mantilla, my pet pin-maker!'

'And taking the cassia blossom out of her mouth she flipped it at me with her thumb so that it hit me just between the eyes. I tell you, sir, I felt as if a bullet had struck me. I didn't know which way to look. I sat stock-still, like a wooden board.'<sup>15</sup>

José has already introduced himself as a mummy's boy, bursting into song in the middle of Micaëla's dialogue, the minute she mentions

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14 Ibid., pp. 28–29.

15 Ibid., pp. 29–30.

his mother [14]. His weakness is stressed in many ways, one of which is that he has no real aria of his own, nor a motif like Carmen. From the thinly veiled implication of the dialogue, it might be deduced that he has to resort to masturbation, unlike Escamillo: after all, he spends an awful lot of time fiddling about with his priming-pin.

As an incorrigible habitu e of the brothel when he was on excursions, and even a commentator on how many times a night – and how loudly – La Malibran enjoyed orgasm with her lover, the violinist Charles de B eriot, it is hardly surprising that M erim e, highly sexed and with a taste for obscenity, should introduce sexual metaphors into his novella.<sup>16</sup> Nor that Bizet should endorse them, for he too had freely indulged in loose women in his youth. His best biographer, Herv e Lacombe, after having given us a page of confessions from various inns and brothels, concludes that Bizet categorized his women as either ‘saints or whores’, a polarization not exactly irrelevant to the plot of *Carmen*.<sup>17</sup>

Before the final version with the Habanera, Bizet had already composed an aria to follow Carmen’s entry and very lovely it is. In its way. It uses material from the 6/8 section sung by the *jeunes gens*, in the rhythm, it has been suggested, of a tarantella. It was already a dance song whose central section, for an extended setting of the word *l’amour*, is deliciously lyrical: a sugar-plum number so typically in the manner of the Op era-Comique.<sup>18</sup> If the supposition is that Galli-Mari e thought it not strong enough, since she made Bizet alter it no fewer than thirteen times, then she was right: Bizet’s first version, lovely though it is, was not characteristic of a gypsy. The composer’s solution was the Habanera [11]. He remodelled the words to fit a dance song in this form, which he had found in an anthology of Spanish songs with French translations, and the page of his manuscript adapting these exists to this day.<sup>19</sup>

16 For a r esum e of M erim e’s letters recounting his sexual exploits, see Mario Bois, *La Trilogie de S eville* (Paris: Marval, 1999), pp. 132–33.

17 Herv e Lacombe, *Georges Bizet* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), p. 254 et seq.

18 The original version has been recorded as an extra in the 2003 EMI recording conducted by Michel Plasson (see Select Discography, p. 369).

19 From Paul Bernard and Dieudonn e Tagliafico (eds.), *Chansons espagnoles del maestro Yradier* (Paris: Heugel, 1865).

The Habanera, apart from its stronger characterization of Carmen, is also dramatically more convincing since it is in part a chorus, particularly where Carmen's confidantes (or one might say partners-in-crime) – Frasquita and Mercédès – as well as the crowd around, join in with Carmen's interjections about free love which are the essence of the aria: 'Love! Love!', says the original text, 'is the spice of life, whether it lasts a day, a week or a month' (no one suggests it lasts for ever):

Chance and whim,  
That's how loves begin!  
And there it is for life,  
Or for six months, or a week perhaps.  
One chance morning on a road  
You meet love: there it is!  
It comes, and just when you least expect it, it goes away.

It takes you, carries you away  
And it does what it wants with you!  
It's a delight, a dream  
And it lasts as long as it can!<sup>20</sup>

What the text loses by dropping these lines, it surely gains in dramatic impetus through its hybrid form as part dance, part aria, part chorus.

Before moving to some commentary on Act Two it is worth turning from text to context, in particular to the tobacco factory in Seville, built to accommodate the changing fashion for imbibing tobacco, from snuff to all kinds of cigars and cigarettes. The enormous factory and its regime were famous internationally: it is now used by the University of Seville and is free to visit. Several issues connected with it are explored in both novella and libretto. The imposing building

20 For the full text, see the liner notes to the Plasson recording. The French reads: *Hasard et fantaisie, / Ainsi commencent les amours ! / En voilà pour la vie, / Ou pour six mois, ou pour huit jours ! / Un matin sur la route, / On trouve l'amour, il est là ! / Il vient, sans qu'on s'en doute, il s'en va ! / Il vous prend, vous enlève, / Il fait de vous tout ce qu'il veut ! / C'est un délice, un rêve, / Et ça dure ce que ça peut !*