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Confronting *Carmen* beyond the Pyrenees: Bizet's opera in Madrid, 1887–1888

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Abstract: Bizet's *Carmen* entered Spain's cultural consciousness when it was first staged in Madrid in the 1887–8 season. A public battle for the performance rights in the autumn of 1887 led to competing productions at major theatres: the first in a new Spanish translation at the Teatro de la Zarzuela, and the second in the fully-sung Italian version at the Teatro Real. This article explores the Spanish encounter with *Carmen* during this season, from the political machinations of the lawsuit, to the opening nights and the extended critical debates that greeted the two premières. The Spanish adaptation is compared with the original French version and mapped against the native musico-theatrical tradition of the zarzuela, which had long purveyed constructions of 'Spanishness' for local consumption. Contemporary debates about national identity and its theatrical and musical representations underscore the varied critical responses to *Carmen*, which was embraced by Madrid opera audiences.

Romantic stereotypes of Spain lie at the very heart of Bizet's *Carmen*, and arguably form a cornerstone of its success.[1] But how was this image of Spain reconciled with questions of Hispanic identity when *Carmen*'s Madrid debut (and subsequent *succès de scandale*) made it a topic for public debate in the Spanish capital? *Carmen* sparked controversy, drew enthusiastic audiences, and inspired critical engagement with issues of exoticism and theatrical genre. The causes of this baptism of fire lie in the very specific context of late 1880s Madrid and the perspective provided by two competing productions: one in the vernacular lyric tradition of the zarzuela, the other at Madrid's home of foreign opera, the Teatro Real. *Carmen* connected immediately into a rich web of associations – many of them from the world beyond the theatre – which shaped its reception, and coloured the debates about its cultural authenticity. The elements of Spanish local colour that permeate the scenic, literary and musical dimensions of the opera provided a clear focus for critical debate, and

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[1] Much has been written about Bizet's direct borrowings from Spanish musical sources, illuminating the opera's genesis, the composer's creative process and his desire to reform the opéra-comique genre. Mina Curtiss cites studies from the first half of the twentieth century in her *Bizet and his World* (New York, 1958), 402 n5; more recent examples include Ralph P. Locke, 'Nineteenth-century Music: Quantity, Quality, Qualities', *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, 1 (2004), 30–7; Susan McClary, *Georges Bizet: 'Carmen'* (Cambridge, 1992), 44–61; Faustino Nuñez, 'La música española y lo español en *Carmen*', *Carmen*, Teatro Real programme (Madrid, [1999]), 140–51. On the other hand, relatively little has been written about *Carmen* in Spain. José Subirá's early history of the Teatro Real includes a brief consideration of *Carmen*'s eventful first season in Madrid, featuring fascinating anecdotes, but more recently only literary scholar Jean Sentaurens has tackled this rich subject in detail; José Subirá, *Historia y anecdotario del Teatro Real* (Madrid, 1997), 392–6; Jean Sentaurens, '*Carmen*: de la novela de 1845 a la zarzuela de 1887. Cómo nació "la España de Mérimée" ', *Bulletin Hispanique*, [104] (2002), 851–72.

the reviews reflect a peculiarly local and contemporary understanding of theatrical representation of Spanish culture. *Carmen*'s presence in Madrid created a stark juxtaposition between its French representation of Spain and the conventions of *costumbrismo*, Spanish artistic constructions of local customs, popular in literature, zarzuela and the visual arts. Madrid critics contrasted the opéra comique's evocations of local colour with the portrayals of Spain familiar to them from the zarzuela stage. This early Spanish encounter with *Carmen* provides a unique case study of the nineteenth-century reception of a recognised masterpiece of European exoticism from the perspective of the exoticised culture, which was itself struggling to define national identity.

Carmen's largely unnoticed Spanish première actually took place at the Teatro Lírico in Barcelona on 2 August 1881. It received a handful of performances at the very end of a season starring Célestine Galli-Marié, who had created the title role in Paris in 1875.[2] Barcelona's critics seemed quite unfamiliar with the opera itself, despite its success across Europe. The critical reception foreshadowed the main themes that would emerge in Madrid in response to the premières of the 1887–8 season, but the question of the work's Spanishness was less hotly debated in the Catalan capital, perhaps because, as Catalans, Barcelona critics and audiences felt they were exempt from Bizet's stereotyping of Spanish customs.[3] Although the production was under-prepared, both Bizet's music and Galli-Marié's performance were much admired, and the singer was complimented on her characteristic and dramatic execution of a role difficult for an artist who had not been born in Spain (*El Correo Catalan*, 5 August 1881, 1; *Diario de Barcelona*, 5 August 1881).[4] Galli-Marié declared herself pleased with the Catalan reception, writing to Bizet's widow that 'we have had another great success, this time in Carmen's own country'.[5] Despite this, the 1881 première hardly created a ripple in the national consciousness, and no Madrid commentator betrayed any memory of it in 1887.

Before a note of *Carmen* was sung in the Spanish capital, a sensational dispute over the Spanish performance rights set the scene for the opera's dramatic debut. By 1887 both the Teatro de la Zarzuela and the Teatro Real were eager to present

[2] Galli-Marié was a great success in the Catalan capital, where she starred in four operas, but *Carmen* seems to have been given four performances almost as an afterthought, perhaps at her insistence; see *El Correo Catalan*, 1 August 1881, 2.

[3] This is intimated by José Rodoreda (1851–1922), for example, who suggested that the Catalan audience's awareness that their region was 'rich, industrious, honourable . . . and peaceful' helped them to tolerate *Carmen*'s libretto with good grace. He also praised the effective local colour in the Chanson Bohème of Act II and the Entr'acte to Act IV, and noted the great success of the Habanera; see José Rodoreda, 'La *Carmen*, de Bizet', *La Ilustració Catalana*, 2/40 (1881), 326. *Carmen* took off in Barcelona in the late 1880s and early 1890s, as competing productions achieved popular success. The Barcelona *Carmen* 'phenomenon' is the subject of a chapter in our forthcoming book *Carmen: Culturual Authenticity and The Shaping of a Global Icon* (Oxford University Press).

[4] References to reviews and reports in the daily press are indicated in the main text by newspaper title, date of publication and, when available, the page on which the review or report appears.

[5] Cited in Curtiss, *Bizet*, 430.

Carmen to a Madrid public that had already heard so much about its European success, and with whom operas based on Spanish themes, from Rossini to Verdi, had been popular. Ultimately permissions were granted, and the opera was staged in Spanish with spoken dialogue at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in November 1887, and in Italian with sung recitatives at the Teatro Real in March 1888. The two competing productions attracted national press coverage and marked *Carmen*'s entry into Spanish cultural debates.

Carmen's progress through its first season in Madrid must be viewed in the unique theatrical context that shaped its reception there. This set the scene for the copyright dispute and the dramatic events surrounding the première at the Teatro de la Zarzuela. The lively critical responses to this Spanish-language production are then analysed in the light of current local events and in comparison with the native genre of the zarzuela. Constructions of Spanishness emerge as a key issue in the examination of Rafael María Liern's Spanish translation and adaptation, which leads into a discussion of local perceptions of the score's Hispanic credentials. Finally, the second première at the Teatro Real is presented, revealing how much local perceptions of the opera had changed during the season. *Carmen* inspired quite different reactions when it was performed in a foreign language and with all the conventions of an opera theatre.

Opera and theatrical life in 1880s Madrid

Madrid in 1887 was a city of abundant theatrical life, undergoing rapid change. Six new theatres had opened in the capital in the early 1870s alone,[6] and eleven were active in the late 1880s, up to twenty counting the summer venues. This booming theatrical scene was dominated by the entertaining one-act works known as the *género chico*, which constituted a new sub-genre of the zarzuela in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Frequently comic or even parodic, these works often included music and sung numbers. They were performed as part of the *teatro por horas*, a system where theatres offered separate short performances, often on the hour, enabling them to drop their prices.[7] The resulting contraction of opportunities for 'serious' full-length theatrical works was seen by many high-minded critics as a sign of decline,[8] but theatre was experiencing massive popularity and catering to an ever wider audience. In the 1887 winter season, only two of Madrid's theatres regularly performed full-length plays, the Teatro Real was dedicated to opera, but all the others were devoted to *teatro por horas*, as leisure activities developed to

[6] See David T. Gies, 'Glorious Invalid: Spanish Theater in the Nineteenth Century', *Hispanic Review*, 61 (1993), 230–1.

[7] The *teatro por horas* was established in 1868 in Madrid, and quickly dominated that city's theatrical scene, its short convenient format contrasting with the four or five hours that a full-length theatrical performance could last during this period. A comparison of prices in 1895 reveals that the lowest price for a show was 25 *centimos*, compared with the Teatro Real where seats in the gods cost as much as 1,50 *reales*. See Patricia Bentivegna, *Parody in the género chico* (New Orleans, 2000); Carmen del Moral Ruiz, *El género chico: ocio y teatro en Madrid (1880–1910)* (Madrid, 2004), 53–7.

[8] See Gies, 'Glorious Invalid', 236; Moral Ruiz, *El género chico*, 19–20.

accommodate the budget and tastes of the rapidly growing class of urban workers.[9] Most theatres were privately owned, but some, like the Real and the Zarzuela, were leased to private impresarios by the provincial government.

The Teatro Real, commonly referred to as the *regio coliseo* (royal coliseum) by the press, was Madrid's home of foreign opera, and had a reputation for rarely staging Spanish works.[10] Inaugurated in late 1850, it boasted a large stage and seating for nearly 3,000 spectators. Admission prices were high, with seats in the stalls costing up to four times the price charged at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in the 1880s.[11] Attendance by the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie was a declaration of social status, and the royal family often graced performances with their presence, as the regent María Cristina (1806–78) and her daughter Isabel II (1830–1904) were music lovers.[12] Managed by a series of impresarios during the second half of the nineteenth century, the Real experienced a brilliant period while under the direction of the Conde Ramón de Michelena (1885–92). With high standards of performance both onstage and in the pit, this success was due in no small part to the musical direction of one of the theatre's greatest conductors, Luigi Mancinelli (1848–1921), who held the post between 1886 and 1893.[13]

Repertory at the Teatro Real was dominated by Italian opera and performers during this period, although successful French works in Italian translation, mainly *grands opéras*, were also programmed. The 1887–8 season ran from 1 October until 22 March, opening with Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* and closing with *Carmen*.[14] The season included several works by Verdi and Donizetti, but Ponchielli's *La gioconda* led in popularity with a dozen performances, closely followed by *Les Huguenots* with ten. Spanish interest in Wagner had also been growing during the 1880s, and *Lohengrin* was performed six times late in the season.[15] Despite the excellent production values, the Teatro Real repertory was considered by many not to be sufficiently adventurous, so staging *Carmen* was something of a coup. Antonio Peña y Goñi, the foremost critic of the day, saw their performance of this 'jewel' of an opéra comique as a welcome break in the routine of the season. 'In short', he wrote, 'last night *Carmen* was like a dose of smelling salts for the Real's public, which seemed to groan under a powerful anaesthetic' (*La Época*, 15 March 1888).

[9] See Moral Ruiz, 20.

[10] Luis G. Iberni claims that the Real was the only Madrid theatre subsidised by the government, but an 1891 report suggests that at this time it operated without subvention; see 'Excmo. Sr. D. Ramón de Michelena', *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 8 November 1891, 283; Luis G. Iberni, 'Controversias entre ópera y zarzuela en la España de la Restauración', *Cuadernos de Música Iberoamericana*, 2–3 (1996–7), 158.

[11] See Moral Ruiz, *El género chico*, 53.

[12] See Vicente Bermejo López and Rosa María Valiente Moreno-Cid, *El Teatro Real de Madrid, 1850–1998*, available from www.ucm.es/info/hcontemp/madrid/teatro%20real.htm (accessed 14 January 2007); Moral Ruiz, 20.

[13] See Bermejo López and Moreno-Cid; Ramón Sobrino, 'Mancinelli, Luis', *Diccionario de la música española e hispanoamericana*, ed. Emilio Casares Rodicio (Madrid, 1999–2002), 7.

[14] The Teatro Real staged the fully-sung Italian version of *Carmen*, the principal vehicle of the opera's global dissemination. Edgar Istel reflected on the differences between the original and the version with recitatives in his article '*Carmen*: Novel and Libretto – A Dramaturgic Analysis', *Musical Quarterly*, 7 (1921), 493–510.

[15] See Joaquín Turina Gómez, *Historia del Teatro Real* (Madrid, 1997), 397–400.

The Teatro de la Zarzuela was a more intimate venue, although it accommodated audiences of up to 2,500. It had been established in 1856 by a group of artists led by the composer Francisco Asenjo Barbieri (1823–94) to provide a home for a national lyric genre, variously denominated as the *género lírico español* and *ópera cómica española* but finally known as the zarzuela. Their goal was to provide the native genre with a permanent home, but the new theatre met with varying fortunes in the decades after its foundation. The zarzuela was the only successful Spanish lyric genre of the nineteenth century, and was characterised by spoken dialogue in the vernacular. Although heavily indebted to Italian opera, the influence of French opéra comique was notable in the second half of the nineteenth century. Even more significant was the emergence of specifically Spanish themes in plot and locale, and this local colour was represented musically by a lively repertory of characteristic songs and dances.

Felipe Ducazcal (1845–91) took over the management of the Teatro de la Zarzuela for the 1887–8 season. He was well known, well liked and politically well connected,[16] having been a key supporter of the anti-Bourbon movement under General Prim and Amadeo I (1870–73). However, he moved with the times, and with the restoration of the Bourbons after the First Republic (1873–4) he befriended the new monarch Alfonso XII (1875–85), and in April 1886 he was elected as a deputy for Madrid in the Congreso de los Diputados. Ever an animator of popular entertainment, he was involved in a family publishing business and achieved outstanding success with summer theatres and the *género chico* in the early 1880s.[17]

Ducazcal had grand plans for the Teatro de la Zarzuela, stating in his prospectus that he proposed to create there 'Opera cómica Española' on the basis of the old zarzuela, with the aid of 'authors and artists of true merit'.[18] This renewal was to provide a venue for full-length (two- or three-act) zarzuelas, which had lost ground to the commercial success of the *género chico*. Ducazcal's initiative was in line with the calls for regeneration of Spanish opera, issued in the mid-1880s by leading composers such as Tomás Bretón.[19]

Knowing it would take time to develop new works, Ducazcal intended to launch his first season with masterpieces of the European operatic tradition 'in their primitive form of *óperas cómicas*', translated into Spanish by the most renowned playwrights. In this somewhat unusual category he included Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Weber's *Der Freischütz*, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute*, Thomas' *Mignon*, Gounod's *Faust* and, most importantly, Bizet's *Carmen*. Performers were to

[16] He was described as 'likeable and popular'; see 'La ópera "Carmen" ', *El País*, 27 October 1887.

[17] Among Ducazcal's many enterprises, he had turned around the fortunes of the Teatro Apolo (1880–84) and built his own hugely successful summer theatre, the Felipe (which opened in 1885); see Emilio Casares Rodicio, 'Ducazcal Lasheras, Felipe', *Diccionario de la zarzuela: España e Hispanoamérica*, ed. Emilio Casares Rodicio (Madrid, 2002–3), 678–9; Moral Ruiz, *El género chico*, 64–6.

[18] The prospectus for the season can be found in the Museo del teatro de Almagro, and is cited by Luis G. Iberni, *Ruperto Chapí* (Madrid, 1995), 148–9.

[19] See Iberni, 'Controversias', 160–1.

be drawn both from Spain and abroad, so Ducazcal craved indulgence of foreign accents in the spoken Spanish dialogue. A large orchestra of sixty players was to be gathered under the distinguished baton of Gerónimo Giménez, himself a zarzuela composer, recently returned from Paris.[20]

In his first season, Ducazcal ended up staging a mixture of new and old zarzuelas, with Spanish adaptations of foreign works. He opened the season on 30 September with the classic zarzuela *El diablo las carga* (1860) by Joaquín Gaztambide, which played to a full house but was considered antiquated by some critics (*El Liberal*, 1 October 1887). The first foreign work was *La romería de Ploermer*, a Spanish adaptation of Meyerbeer's *Dinorah*, which met with moderate approval. Critics accustomed to hearing Meyerbeer performed as *grand opéra* at the Teatro Real made allowances for the limitations of the performers at the Zarzuela, and noted the adaptation of recitatives into short declaimed scenes (*El Liberal*, 9 October 1887).

The other foreign work was, of course, Bizet's *Carmen*, translated into Spanish and adapted as a zarzuela by Ducazcal's friend Rafael María Liern (1832–97). An established writer and theatre producer, Liern had many zarzuela libretti to his credit, including *género chico* and parody works. He was also known for his comic articles and bull-fighting journalism in the contemporary periodical press.[21] Jean Sentaurens claims that Ducazcal adapted *Carmen* in order to satisfy the demands of popular audiences who would find the operatic version unpalatable.[22] The prospectus reveals, however, that Ducazcal was hispanicising foreign works more to elevate the genre of the zarzuela to aesthetic heights reminiscent of its glorious past than from any desire to pander to the popular audiences he catered to in his summer theatres.

The runaway success of the season was Ruperto Chapí's new work *La bruja*, which premièred on 10 December and played until February, eclipsing even *Carmen*. This represented a real boost for Ducazcal in his attempt to provide a new basis for the zarzuela repertory and raise the status of the genre, but his ambition was not to be realised. After only this first season, Ducazcal sublet the management of the Teatro de la Zarzuela because of his increased responsibilities as a parliamentary deputy. A touring Italian company, 'Tomba', which was well known in Madrid, performed the immensely successful *genero chico* work *La gran vía* (1886) by Federico Chueca and Joaquín Valverde,[23] which featured as characters many Madrid types,

[20] See Iberni, *Ruperto Chapí*, 149.

[21] See below for discussion of Liern's *Carmen* adaptation. Liern's connection with Ducazcal is further attested by the fact that he dedicated to the impresario his parody of *La gran vía*, entitled *Efectos de la gran vía* (1887); see José A. Aguilón Martínez, *Rafael María Liern y Cirac* ([cited 26 March 2007); available from http://es.geocities.com/mizarzuela/Liern.htm; Maria Luz González Peña, 'Liern y Cerach, Rafael María', *Diccionario de la zarzuela*, 2; Sook-Hwa Noh, 'Doña Juana Tenorio. Imitación burlesca de escenas de Don Juan Tenorio, en un acto y en verso, original de Don Rafael María Liern', *Revista de Folklore*, 18a (1998), 128.

[22] See Sentaurens, '*Carmen*', 856.

[23] *La gran vía* was premièred the previous year at Ducazcal's summer theatre, the Felipe, and was an instant hit; see Emilio García Carretero, *Historia del Teatro de la Zarzuela de Madrid* (Madrid, 2006), n.p.

even the streets of the capital. After the installation of electric lighting in the summer of 1888, a Spanish company of *teatro por horas* took over.

'El conflicto de las dos Cármenes'[24]

Bizet's *Carmen* caused quite a fracas before it even reached the stage in Madrid. At issue were performance rights granted by Choudens of Paris, holder of the copyright, and the combatants were the two impresarios: the Conde de Michelena of the Teatro Real and Felipe Ducazcal of the Teatro de la Zarzuela. The story of their legal machinations to obtain exclusive rights for the first Madrid performance of *Carmen*, or indeed any rights at all, is complex and confused. The press followed the spat avidly as it unfolded in late October and early November 1887, circulating rumours and relaying information as it was released by the participants. One critic observed that with so much column space devoted to the case, any more such all-consuming conflicts would spell the end of newspapers, as they would have no space for any other news.[25]

It seems that in the summer of 1887 both Michelena and Ducazcal decided to mount the Madrid première of Bizet's *Carmen*. According to *La Iberia*, on 10 September 1887 Choudens agreed to lease the performance rights for the 1887–8 Madrid season to Michelena, a contract reputedly worth 5,000 francs (*La Iberia*, 28 October 1887, 1). *Carmen* was to be sung in Italian, and its première was planned for November; the Teatro Real management announced the construction of new sets on 11 October (*El Anunciador Universal*, 11 October 1887). But the management of the Teatro de la Zarzuela had announced its own première for 27 October 1887.[26] The editors of *La Iberia* reported a rumour that Ducazcal had tried to reach an understanding with Michelena, effectively splitting the rights so that he could put on a Spanish version. But as no agreement was reached, Ducazcal then claimed he had obtained from Choudens the right to present *Carmen* in the 'provinces' (*La Iberia*, 28 October 1887, 1).

Ducazcal's claim was based on his purchase of the rights from a certain D. José Álvarez, who had Choudens' permission to perform *Carmen* in Mallorca and the Balearic Islands, but whose plans fell through.[27] According to a summary of the case

[24] The daily press dubbed the battle 'the conflict of the two Carmens'; see 'Consejo de ministros', *El Liberal*, 1 November 1887; Fernanflor, 'Madrid: Cartas a mi prima', *La Ilustración Ibérica*, 5 (1887), 706. All translations are our own, unless otherwise acknowledged.

[25] Allegro, 'En el teatro de la Zarzuela', *El País*, 3 November 1887. The amount of legalistic detail reported may have related to the focus on intellectual property law at the recent Congreso Literario Internacional (8–15 October), which also received significant coverage. Seven themes were listed for discussion at the Congreso, covering various aspects of intellectual property including author's rights, translation, theatrical works, quotation and performance rights. Only the seventh session deviated from this subject, addressing Cervantes and his international literary influence. *El Liberal* reported on each speech and the discussions that followed, summarising the main points and indicating the length of each session; see 'Congreso Literario Internacional', *El Liberal*, 8 October 1887.

[26] As advertised in 'Espectáculos', *El Liberal*, 27 October 1887.

[27] See Subirá, *Historia*, 393.

in *La Ilustración Ibérica*, this contract was actually for performances in 'Mallorca and in the provinces of Spain'. Ducazcal claimed that Madrid was a province of Spain, and thus felt empowered to announce the première at the Teatro de la Zarzuela.[28] Michelena was incensed and took his complaint to the Duque de Frías, Civil Governor of Madrid, who upheld his claim to the rights.[29] Ducazcal in turn contested this ruling, and both gentlemen submitted supporting documentation to Frías. Michelena had by now enlisted the help of Choudens' Madrid representative Zozaya.

On the face of it, Michelena's contract was airtight, as it provided him with exclusive rights to mount the work in Madrid during the 1887–8 season, and had also been registered with the Spanish consulate in Paris.[30] From Paris, Choudens affirmed its support and promised to contact the French ambassador in Madrid, who promptly informed the Minister of State that Michelena had documents to prove his claim. The government then suspended Ducazcal's planned première and the matter swiftly escalated from a local dispute before the provincial governor, to a diplomatic affair drawing in ambassadors and national ministers.

But Ducazcal was determined not to lose face, and before the new ruling could be conveyed to the Teatro de la Zarzuela, he himself postponed the advertised première, ascribing it to the sudden illness of Señora Eulalia González, who was to play Carmen. The numerous public who had turned up for the première met this announcement with some cynicism, but to prove that it was no empty claim, González herself made a statement to *La Correspondencia*, absolving the management of any responsibility for the postponement, and citing doctors who would testify that she was suffering from a sudden attack of laryngitis.[31] Many questions remained, and *La Iberia* clarified that González's continuing indisposition would further postpone the première, and that *Carmen* would be replaced by Barbieri's popular zarzuela *Jugar con fuego* (*Playing with fire*) (1851) on 29 October.[32]

Clearly convinced that he was in the right,[33] Michelena wrote an open letter to the press stating that Choudens should pay him damages if the première at the

[28] Fernanflor, *La Ilustración Ibérica*, 5 (1887), 706; 'Más sobre "Cármen" ', *El País*, 30 October 1887.

[29] See Subirá, *Historia*, 393. The following paragraphs are based on the report in *La Iberia*, 28 October 1887, 1–2.

[30] The contract in fact granted rights not only for *Carmen*, but also for *The Pearlfishers* and *Romeo and Juliet* (this presumably refers to rights for Gounod's opera of this name, although *La Iberia* says all three operas are by Bizet). The whole package cost Michelena 8,000 francs, but Choudens undertook not to enter into contracts for *Carmen* and *The Pearlfishers* with any other theatre in Madrid; see *La Iberia*, 28 October 1887, 2.

[31] González cited Sr. Méndez Ugalde, the theatre's doctor, and his colleague Dr Flores. *La Iberia* quoted in full the brief statement from *La Correspondencia*; see *La Iberia*, 28 October 1887, 2.

[32] Having quoted verbatim his conversation with the management of the Zarzuela, the journalist could not help pointing out the aptness of the title of Barbieri's zarzuela, given Ducazcal's current predicament; see *La Iberia*, 28 October 1887, 2.

[33] Michelena continued to declare that his theatre was already engaged in the preparation of costumes, sets and props for *Carmen*; see 'Un estreno malogrado', *El País*, 28 October 1887.

Zarzuela went ahead in breach of his exclusive contract (*El País*, 30 October 1887). Ducazcal seemed undeterred by threats of prohibition, or even confiscation of receipts,[34] persistently announcing the imminent première.[35] Meanwhile, the *Ministerio de Estado* (Ministry of State) informed the *Ministerio de Fomento* (Ministry of Development) that Bizet's *Carmen* had been properly registered by Choudens, so that the rights to the music should be properly protected in Spain.[36] The Teatro Real had now obtained a copy of the contract between Álvarez and Choudens, which allegedly granted rights for the Balearic Islands only at a cost of 1,800 francs, with a penalty of 10,000 francs if the material was used anywhere else. On this becoming public, Choudens ordered their Madrid agents Vidal and Llimona to enter the Teatro de la Zarzuela and seize all materials for Bizet's *Carmen*, while simultaneously launching proceedings against Álvarez (*La Iberia*, 31 October 1887).

Ducazcal's response to these events was decisive. He released to the press a certificate from the Ministry of Development, dated 27 June 1887, which stated that Vidal's registration of *Carmen* had not been approved due to insufficient documentation. He further claimed that the registration only listed Italian and German, which meant that the rights for performances in Spanish were in the public domain until someone deposited a Spanish translation.[37] As *La Iberia* points out, this rather confusing set of claims implies that even if Ducazcal might legally present a Spanish translation of the libretto, his singers would not be permitted to perform the music. Ducazcal repeated his intention of premièring the work just as soon as his soprano regained her health.[38] Such was the public interest in the story that a pack of journalists waiting outside the Ministry of State reported even the nebulous statement of the official Moret, that a proposed solution to the 'conflict of the two *Carmens*' was at that time being sent to the French ambassador for consideration (*El Liberal*, 1 November 1887). Precisely how it was resolved remains unclear, but after all this drama, the Teatro de la Zarzuela finally staged Bizet's *Carmen* on 2 November 1887 to a packed auditorium. Rumours continued to fly, and some whispered that the Governor had resigned to avoid having to suspend the performance again. Although Ducazcal's diplomacy was said to have triumphed, the

[34] According to *La Iberia* (29 October 1887), Article 25 of the Spanish intellectual property laws provides for confiscation of income from ticket sales and payment of same to the copyright holder if an unauthorised public performance takes place. This is actually supported by Article 5 of the international agreement, which provides that penalties should be set by local law. The report finishes with an unsubstantiated report from 'a colleague' that someone had mediated in the case, although both the identity and the outcome remain mysterious. Subsequent events prove that this claim was premature; see 'Carmen', *La Iberia*, 29 October 1887.

[35] On 31 October the Zarzuela claimed the première would probably take place on Wednesday (but their optimism did not extend to specifying in which week this Wednesday would fall); see 'Carmen', *La Iberia*, 31 October 1887.

[36] The full text of the registration is reproduced in the paper, listed as No 402; see *La Iberia*, 31 October 1887.

[37] The journalist cites Article 4 of the 1853 literary property agreement between France and Spain, which was in force when the work was published; see *La Iberia*, 1 November 1887, 2.

[38] This was reported both in *La Iberia* and *El Liberal* on 1 November.

authorities were reported to have seized 5 per cent of his receipts in case of future claims in the courts.[39]

Throughout the dispute, the prestige of both impresarios was at stake. Although each had ambitious plans for his theatre, the political machinations that accompanied the lawsuit revealed which of the two entrepreneurs was more influential. It was hardly surprising that Ducazcal took the victory, despite presenting what seemed to be the weaker legal case. He was, after all, a savvy political operator and the most popular cultural entrepreneur of his generation. In the end this much-publicised dispute raised public awareness of and interest in the opera, creating an exciting prologue to its production.

Carmen opens at the Teatro de la Zarzuela

At last . . . Carmen was presented in her homeland . . . followed by her retinue of *toreadores*, *cigarieres*, *bohemiens* . . . *contrebandiers* and her troupe of hispanicised French characters and Latin quarter flamenco types. (*El Imparcial*, 3 November 1887)

What a night it must have been at the Teatro de la Zarzuela for *Carmen*'s Madrid première on 2 November. A more highly charged atmosphere could hardly be imagined. People attended in full expectation that the performance would be suspended again, yet the blaze of publicity had provided the most effective promotion Ducazcal could have wished for: *Carmen* played until 22 November, always to full houses.[40] On that first night the typical zarzuela audience mingled with journalists, musicians, literati and a 'brilliant' high-society contingent, who would have more commonly been seen at the Teatro Real (*El Día*, 3 November 1887; *El Correo*, 3 November 1887; *La Publicidad*, 4 November 1887).

The theatre was completely full; in the gods there appeared to be some hecklers. In the stalls there was an abundance of men over the fair sex. The ladies must have withdrawn, believing that there might have been a commotion. (*La Iberia*, 3 November 1887)

The audience was divided between those prepared to cheer everything and others equally willing to hiss and boo, which made for a lively evening (*El Mundo*, 3 November 1887; *El Imparcial*, 3 November 1887).

The hecklers made their presence in the theatre felt from the first scenes, whistling or booing at inopportune moments; but the public protested against such inconvenience with great applause that resonated from stalls to boxes and silenced those ill-advised ones. (*La Publicidad*, 4 November 1887)

Yet another account suggests that a claque actually supported the performance, loudly applauding all González's numbers as Carmen despite the poor quality of her singing. This critic also attributed the work's 'near success' to the efforts of the secret police in repressing any unseemly behaviour like foot-stamping or booing (*El*

[39] *El Mundo* states the figure as 10 per cent; see *El Mundo*, 3 November 1887; *Unión Católica*, 3 November 1887; 'Carmen en la zarzuela', *La Iberia*, 3 November 1887.

[40] Towards the end of its successful run, on 17 November, the infanta (princess) Isabel graced the theatre with her presence, and the management tried to replicate the première by making sure González sang the title role; see *La Opinión*, 18 November 1887.

Mediodía, 3 November 1887), while another noted the presence of more policemen ('guardias de seguridad pública') than usual (*El Mundo*, 3 November 1887). The audience was undoubtedly excitable, and many had come to the theatre predisposed to react in a certain way. Ducazcal's connections may well have ensured both the positive response of the claque and the presence of the secret police.

The first act was greeted warmly, but as the work progressed – and its depictions of Spanish life became more colourful – the audience's goodwill began to dissipate in the face of the clumsiness of the libretto used in this performance and what they perceived as a Frenchified portrayal of Spain. The major musical numbers were well appreciated, however, especially the habanera, the children's chorus and the duo between José and Micaela, which were repeated (*El Mundo*, 3 November 1887; *El Liberal*, 3 November 1887). Audience approval greeted aspects of every act: in Act II both the sung numbers and the gypsy dance performed by Fuensanta Moreno as part of the 'Chanson bohème' were encored; the principals received two curtain calls at the end of both Acts I and III; and ovations greeted the sets of the first and final acts.[41] Some critics noted that the audience was reserved at the end, not lavishing applause on the performers (*La Opinión*, 3 November 1887), but others simply observed that they were exhausted by such a lot of nonsense (*La Iberia*, 3 November 1887). It was certainly a long night: after starting at 8.30pm, the curtain didn't rise on Act IV until 20 minutes after midnight (*El País*, 3 November 1887; *El Mediodía*, 3 November 1887).

The performance was not without its shortcomings: some of the singers seemed nervous, and there was a general feeling that the cast had not fully met the demands of the score.[42] One more charitable critic suggested they might do better in later performances (*La Opinión*, 3 November 1887), but the press response was as varied as the audience's had been:

> The most harmonious disorder reigned among the critics, with respect to the music. Some say that this opera will never acclimate in Spain, because of the lack of verisimilitude in the characters and the lack of local colour in the music; others affirmed that that our public will enjoy, in other performances, the beauties of the score.[43]

Despite general recognition of Bizet's musical mastery, most critics focused their reviews on the infelicities of the scenario and libretto, decrying them as absurd French constructions of a non-existent Spain.

'Espagne' through Spanish eyes: *Carmen* and contemporary debate

> The author has taken for the argument of the drama a Spanish subject that is not at all true. The characters are false, the scenes are also false, and the whole is disjointed and deformed,

[41] According to *El Mundo*, Act II encores included the trio of the playing cards, the quintet and the final duet; see *La Iberia*, 3 November 1887; *El Mundo*, 3 November 1887; *El Mediodía*, 3 November 1887; *La Publicidad*, 4 November 1887.

[42] *La Iberia* thought González had sung the title role in half voice throughout, perhaps due to nerves. *La Opinión* also noted that she sang with reduced volume; see *La Iberia*, 3 November 1887; *La Opinión*, 3 November 1887.

[43] Fernanflor, 'Madrid: Cartas a mi prima', *La Ilustración Ibérica*, 5 (1887), 722.

because whatever is presented on the stage has never taken place in this ... land. (*La Opinión*, 3 November 1887)

Such a trenchant response must be understood in the context of contemporary debates not only about Spanish identity, but also about the way Spain was perceived by the outside world. Spaniards themselves enjoyed bullfights and flamenco, and were familiar with knife-wielding cigarette workers; they portrayed them under the aegis of *costumbrismo*. But the Spanish intelligentsia was increasingly sensitive to foreign depictions of such customs in a context of local colour that reinforced images of Spain as somehow backward and primitive, rather than as a modern and enlightened nation. The perceived difference between a French exoticist portrayal of such archetypally Spanish themes and the way Spanish *costumbrista* writers and composers would depict such themes clearly affected the reception of *Carmen*.

During the 1880s, the rapidly expanding Spanish capital was at the centre of debates about national identity. As their city engaged in a process of industrialisation and modernisation, some intellectuals sought to change foreign perceptions of Spain as a European backwater. During the nineteenth century powerful interests in Spain, including the bulk of the large landholders and the aristocracy, began to locate their understanding of what constituted Spanishness in the idea of Andalusia. This southern Spanish region was ideal for this attempt at nation-making because, unlike the northern regions of Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque territories, it did not have a distinctive language and cultural identity. The lack of separatist aspirations in Andalusia gave it great potential as a national cultural symbol, despite the fact that imagery of Andalusia had been shaped by foreign exotic and orientalist evocations of the region. Themes associated with this *andalucismo* included gypsies, flamenco, bullfighting and fiestas, so richly evoked in *Carmen*, but also commonly featured in the zarzuela. By the late nineteenth century, the attempt to promulgate this image as a unifying symbol of Spanish national identity was increasingly opposed by intellectuals who supported liberal republicanism and Europeanisation.[44]

One example of the predilection for Andalusian themes was the representation of bullfighting in the zarzuela. Barbieri himself had written a famous and respected *zarzuela grande*, *Pan y toros* (1864), which featured three celebrated bullfighters as central characters. Among them was the great Pepe-Hillo (1754–1801), one of the most renowned bullfighters of the late eighteenth century.[45] Set in the 1790s just

[44] See Manuel González de Molina and Miguel Gómez Oliver, *Historia contemporánea de Andalucía (Nuevos contenidos para su estudio)*, 2nd edn (Granada, 2000), 312–13. For further discussion of the identification of *andalucismo* with the idea of *castizo* culture, in relation to the arts and specifically to music, see Celsa Alonso, *La canción lírica española en el siglo XIX* (Madrid, 1998), 233ff. This debate was already alive in 1887, as evidenced by the Congreso Literario Internacional (8–15 October; see further discussion below), but it did not reach full strength for another decade, when the 'Generation of '98' began to espouse it much more powerfully in response to Spain's defeat in the Spanish–American war, and the loss of the country's last colonial possessions.

[45] Pepe-Hillo was also the eponymous hero of several subsequent zarzuelas. Two were composed by Guillermo Cereceda: *Pepe Hillo* (1873) is in four acts, while *Un ensayo de Pepe Hillo* (no date provided) is in one act. Christopher Webber, *Pan y toros* (2001 [cited 22 January 2007]); available from www.zarzuela.net.syn/pan.htm.

before the Peninsular War, at a time of high tension between France and Spain, *Pan y toros* was marked by pronounced anti-French sentiment and a strong sense of patriotic solidarity as upper- and lower-class characters united in the cause of Spanish independence.

Some of the most celebrated zarzuela composers of the age turned their hand to the bullfighting theme, notably Federico Chueca (1846–1908) and Joaquín Valverde (1846–1910), who wrote a series of bullfighting zarzuelas in the 1870s and 1880s, and successfully characterised many Spanish types in their *género chico* hit *La gran vía*. By the 1880s, there was a proliferation of zarzuelas incorporating bullfighting themes, especially in the *género chico*, which extended into the realm of parody and comedy.[46]

Spain's strongest bullfighting traditions were to be found in both southern Spain and Madrid, so zarzuela audiences in the capital would not countenance earnest but nonsensical depictions of their beloved *fiesta nacional*. When Bizet's portrayal of bullfighters faced a Madrid audience, it trespassed on well-marked theatrical territory and, inevitably, *Carmen* suffered from comparison with familiar and beloved representations of tauromachy in the contemporary zarzuela:

> We who have Barbieri, who achieved success with Pepe-Hillo, and who has described *majas*, toreros and *chulas* with great elegance and without depriving them of character or originality. Could we see these very characters falsified? Those who admire, with good reason, the musical naturalism of Chueca, would they admit Bizet's notes to types that have been so well characterised by the author of *La gran vía*? (*El País*, 3 November 1887)

A very different attitude to *andalucismo* and these *costumbrista* stereotypes of Spanish identity was expressed in debates connected with the Congreso Literario Internacional. For a week in mid-October 1887, Spanish intellectuals had the opportunity to promote a fresh image of Spain to foreign delegates. According to the local press this was only the second international scholarly congress ever to have been held in Madrid, and was thus an event of some significance.[47] The high-minded morning programme discussing matters of intellectual property was supplemented by lighter activities such as banquets, excursions to Toledo and El Escorial, a ceremony at the statue of Cervantes, and performances at the Teatros Real and Español. Former liberal Spanish President of the Republic Emilio Castelar (1832–99) hinted at the goals of the organising committee in his speech at the closing banquet: 'We hope that you contribute to the disappearance of so many errors and injustices that circulate abroad about Spain . . . There are many who have

[46] Antonio Barrios lists no fewer than eighteen zarzuelas on this theme from the 1880s alone (and his avowedly incomplete list does not provide dates for every work it includes). Many of the bullfighting zarzuelas were described in their subtitles as 'cómico-lírico', 'cómico-lírico-taurino' or even longer chains of such descriptors. Tauromachy also attracted the conductor of the 1887 *Carmen* production, Jerónimo Giménez, who composed *Caballeros en plaza* (1887), and Tomás Reig, who was to compile the music for Granés' *Carmen* parody *Carmela* (1891), but had first composed his own *Las toreras* (1888); see Antonio Barrios, 'Los toros en la zarzuela', *Gaceta Taurina*, 2/9 (1997), 11–13.

[47] This was the tenth of these literary conferences, previous gatherings having been held in other European capitals; see 'Congreso Literario Internacional', *El Correo*, 7 October 1887.

agreed to speak badly of us and dishonour us.' Castelar was clearly referring to Romantic constructions of Spain and the negative images perpetrated by the Black Legend.[48] He continued: 'You can say that you have encountered a nation that is free, cultured, generous, that wants to reclaim its past glories, living the life of freedom and democracy' (*El Liberal*, 16 October 1887). Somewhat controversially, delegates were also invited to a bullfight held in honour of the conference, and an informal outing to a flamenco performance after the final banquet. These last provoked significant debate, as they seemed to contradict the aims of the congress. Matters came to a head when the President of the Asociación Literaria y Artística Internacional (International Association of Writers and Artists), Gaspar Núñez de Arce (1834–1903), wrote to *El Imparcial* on 30 October 1887 to deplore the delegates' exposure to flamenco and *bailes gitanos*.[49] This debate was crucial to the genesis of the *antiflamenquismo* movement.

Just three days after this letter was published, *Carmen* was premièred at the Teatro de la Zarzuela. Given this context, it is no wonder that it became the focus for fierce criticism of the *espagnolade*. French exoticist literature was lambasted by critics who considered *Carmen* to be the nadir of the tradition:

> The libretto of Carmen is the biggest absurdity which could have come from the French imagination. Even putting together all the absurd articles written on Spain by Frenchmen who have visited us, we could not have come up with a more unfortunate work. (*La Iberia*, 3 November 1887)

The worst excesses of the genre represented by *Carmen* were blamed on French writers in general, and Alexandre Dumas *père* in particular: 'That torero with the knife in his belt, the smugglers and gypsies are purely French conceptions, types that existed only in the mind of Dumas, and that, portrayed by him, have been accepted by our neighbours as real and actual'.[50] The original novella was, however, distinguished from the libretto. Mérimée's output was familiar to Spanish critics,

[48] The Black Legend dates back to sixteenth-century Dutch and English propaganda against Spain that emphasised the traits of deceit, laziness, avarice and violence, and highlighted the role of the Inquisition. It continued to influence Spanish perceptions of foreign views on Spain and its culture well into the twentieth century. For a discussion of the Black Legend in relation to Spanish musical culture, see Carol A. Hess, *Manuel de Falla and Modernism in Spain* (Chicago, 2001), 136–7.

[49] '[Gaspar Núñez de Arce: Letter to the Editor]', *El Imparcial*, 30 October 1887, cited in Alfredo Arrebola, 'Flamenquismo y Antiflamenquismo en la Generacion del 98', *Umática: Monografico Flamenco* (Málaga, 2005), [cited 13 March 2007]; available from http://www.umatica.uma.es/index.php?option=comcontent&task=view&id=58&Itemid=94.

[50] *La Opinión*, 3 November 1887. A number of critics make equally exasperated references to Alexandre Dumas in their criticism of *Carmen*; see also *Unión Católica*, 3 November 1887; *El País*, 3 November 1887; *El Liberal*, 3 November 1887. Dumas' novels were popular and widely read in Spain; Spanish translations were often available very soon after the original publication in France; see Donald Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans from 1800 to the Present* (London, 2006), 423. Allegro reveals his familiarity with Dumas' *De Paris à Cadiz* as he attempts to excuse the Frenchman by placing his writings in historical context: 'Spain made a bad impression on Dumas because he encountered such vicissitudes during his voyage in Spain, at a time when there were no trains, and he was at the mercy of stagecoaches'; Allegro, *El País*, 3 November 1887.

who acknowledged his understanding of Spanish customs, gained through time spent in their country and his long association with Eugenia di Montijo, who until 1871 had been the Empress Eugènie of France. *Carmen* appears to have been serialised in Spanish translation in the Barcelona periodical *La Ilustración Ibérica* just before the 1887 Madrid production, but the novella was not published as a volume in Spanish translation until 1891.[51]

The 'naturalism' of Mérimée's *Carmen* was recognised by contemporary authors,[52] and the almost ethnographic quality of the novella was appreciated by some critics of 1887's Zarzuela première:

Carmen is taken from the novella of the same title written by Prosper Mérimée, one of the French writers of those times who, having lived in Spain for extended periods, was in a position neither to fantasise too much nor to exaggerate the local colour that so many foreigners abuse to inspire themselves in matters of our land.[53] (*El Correo*, 3 November 1887)

Writing in 1887, the music critic Allegro found himself unable to exonerate Mérimée quite so completely, believing he had submitted to the expectations of his French audience:

Nevertheless, it's clear that Mérimée didn't write *a humo de pajas* [lightly, without thinking], he was inspired by the land; but vacillating between painting us naturally and pleasing his countrymen by gratifying their ideas about us, he opted for the second. (*El País*, 3 November 1887)

Despite these reflections on the original novella, most critics located the blame specifically with Bizet's librettists, who had in fact adapted the work quite significantly from Mérimée's text. In order to create a dramatic narrative suited to the Opéra-Comique, they had changed locales, added and adapted characters and episodes – like the local colour provided by the bullfight – and simplified the plot.[54]

[51] 'You and all the readers of *La Ilustración Ibérica* know the novel from which the opera was taken'; Fernanflor, *La Ilustración Ibérica*, 5 (1887), 706. Fernanflor's comment suggests that it may have been published by the journal in the previous few years. This translation is listed without date by Luis López Jiménez and Luis-Eduardo López Esteve in 'Introducción', *Prosper Mérimée: Carmen* (Madrid, 1997), 90.

[52] López Jiménez and López Esteve (60–2) cite Juan Valera (1824–1905), a writer and public intellectual who was strongly influenced by *Carmen* in his 1874 novel *Pepita Jimenez*, which was adapted as an opera by Isaac Albéniz in the mid-1890s.

[53] Others were less approving of Mérimée's depictions, and Sentaurens identifies a strong antipathy to a supposed 'España de Mérimée' among Spanish intellectuals. Sentaurens argues that the *espagnolade* they decry is actually found in Bizet's opera, rather than the original novella, and he mounts a lively defence of Mérimée. Sentaurens refers broadly to Spanish writers from different decades, reaching into the twentieth century; see Sentaurens, '*Carmen*: de la novela de 1845 . . .', 851–72. It should be noted that the Spanish nationalist rejection of the *espagnolade* tradition and excoriation of what they called 'L'espagne de Mérimée' did not reach its height until the first decades of the twentieth century.

[54] For an overview of the adaptation, see Istel, '*Carmen*: Novel and Libretto', 493–510. See also Chapter 2, 'The Genesis of Bizet's *Carmen*' in McClary, *Georges Bizet: 'Carmen'*, 15–28. Sentaurens defends the quality of the libretto, declaring it a 'faithful and intelligent reading' of Mérimée's work, in which Meilhac and Halévy simply reduced José's long narrative to its

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Meilhac and Halévy, like Mérimée before them, felt they had to paint a colourful picture, but while the librettists employed the broad brush strokes needed to achieve maximum dramatic effect in an opera, they lacked the local experience and nuanced description which rendered the original novella more acceptable to Spanish critics of this period. Reviews suggest that the critics were familiar with the French libretto and used their pre-performance notices to criticise many elements of the story, before they had even heard Liern's judicious attempt to adapt the work for a Spanish audience.[55]

The critic for *El Mundo* felt that, despite a promising beginning with Act I, the work suffered because its French authors were inextricably caught up in their exoticist attitudes:

> This decline is caused to a great degree by the libretto, which is full of absurdities and inexactitudes which cannot get past a Spanish public. In the first act the story, although simple, is completely satisfying; in the rest the author wants to paint Spanish customs, but he paints them in a French manner. (*El Mundo*, 3 November 1887)

Allegro agreed that aspects of the libretto were absurd, but viewed the whole problem from a modern perspective, and with a clear understanding of the way stereotypes worked. He reminds his readers that Spain is no longer a country isolated from the rest of Europe by impassable mountain ranges, and declared it 'unforgivable that [the French] don't know us better' (*El País*, 3 November 1887). By comparing modern Spain with Dumas' imagined Spain of the 1840s, Allegro attacked the notion of its timelessness, rejecting the idea that the picturesque backwardness described by early nineteenth-century travellers continued unchanged. The critic of *El Liberal* also accused the librettists of having 'painted a Spain in the manner of Alexandre Dumas and only acceptable abroad; but never in our own house' (*El Liberal*, 3 November 1887). Felipe Pedrell, writing early in 1888, observed a simplistic and generic quality in the representation of Spain in *Carmen*, and extended this to the work's one-dimensional characterisations. He compared the passions that moved *Carmen*'s colourful band of '*torrrerós*' (*sic*), cigarette workers and smugglers with those one might encounter in a popular puppet show. Declaring that the local colour and chief dramatic roles were sketched *à la parisien*, Pedrell echoed many of his contemporaries in dismissing poor Don José and describing Carmen as a French coquette, rather than a full-blooded Spanish woman.[56]

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fundamental schema, concentrating the action in four spectacular episodes which represent the stages in the tragic confrontation between the two protagonists; see Sentaurens, '*Carmen*: de la novela de 1845 . . .', 857.

[55] Allegro quoted the French text in order to ridicule it; see Allegro, *El País*, 3 November 1887.

[56] [Felipe Pedrell] F.P., 'La Quincena Musical', *Ilustración Musical Hispano-Americana*, 1/2 (1888), 10. J. M. Esperanza y Sola, for example, also described Carmen as a 'Latin Quarter *cocotte*'; *Ilustración Española y Americana*, 31 (22 December 1887), 375.

Despite this ridicule of the imaginary Spain portrayed in the opera,[57] some elements of the plot bore direct relation to contemporary Spanish life. In drawing attention to the 'riot of cigarette girls' in Act I, Allegro echoes the journalistic descriptions of the strike and demonstrations which had occurred at the Madrid cigarette factory just a few weeks earlier. This event was described by one journalist as 'utterly Spanish',[58] and received extensive press coverage.

Madrid audiences had a clear image of cigarette workers against which to judge the exoticised image of Carmen and her companions. The *cigarrera* was a recognised visual stereotype from the mid-nineteenth century (albeit not actually smoking), and had even become a regular fancy-dress character in Seville's famous fiestas. Although the tobacco factory in Seville is better known, its counterpart in the Embajadores area of central Madrid employed up to 8,000 workers,[59] almost all of them women, and provided inspiration for Spanish authors of *costumbrista* literature and *género chico*.[60] They were described as 'legitimate descendants of the *antiguas manolas*', a clear reference to Goya's portraits from a century earlier (*El Día*, 6 October 1887).

In early October 1887, these workers went out on strike in protest at deteriorating pay and working conditions, and the ever-present threat of machinery being introduced to replace them.[61] Their dissatisfaction with the private management that had taken over the factory that year erupted on 5 October, and at 2pm they emerged from the factory to gather in their thousands, shouting and jostling. This threatening 'riot' led to the callout of divisions of cavalry and infantry to keep order in the streets, and especially to prevent the women from marching on the royal palace to seek the protection of the Queen regent. The following day, the management having fled, the women re-entered the factory, where they caused some damage by breaking windows. After several days of unrest and negotiations, the matter was settled through the intervention of governor of Madrid.

These disturbances were not uncommon, for the cigarette workers had no other means to arrest the gradual deterioration in their working conditions consequent on privatisation and mechanisation. The intriguingly modern image of a class of

[57] Allegro employs acerbic wit in lines such as 'Isn't Spain a land of toreros? Don't we even employ toreros at Mass?' He expanded at length in this vein, before concluding 'With such ideas about the Spaniards, of course the libretto of Cármen had to be nonsense'; Allegro, *El País*, 3 November 1887.

[58] Fernanflor, *La Ilustración Ibérica*, 5 (1887), 658.

[59] This figure is based on estimates in the contemporary press: *El Imparcial* states 7,500 workers, while *El Día* says it approaches 8,000; see 'El motín de las cigarreras', *El Imparcial*, 6 October 1887; 'Las cigarreras', *El Día*, 6 October 1887.

[60] See Jean Sentaurens, 'Des effets pervers d'un mythe littéraire romantique: à Séville, toutes les cigarières s'appellent Carmen', *Bulletin Hispanique*, 96 (1994), 454n2.

[61] The Compañía Tabacalera or the Spanish state tobacco monopoly was a national enterprise, and after various changes of status during the nineteenth century the government leased it to private enterprise in April 1887, with the intention that they achieve greater efficiencies, possibly through mechanisation; see Marta Macías, 'Privatization and Management Accounting Systems Change: The Case of the Nineteenth-century Spanish Tobacco Monopoly', *Accounting Historians Journal*, 29/2 (2002), 38.

industrial workers bargaining collectively through chosen spokespeople and threatening civic order, contrasts richly with popular depictions of the *cigarrera* type as a timeless Spanish character, often represented with Andalusian traits in *costumbrismo* art and literature, and caricatured in the press and in the theatre. It was clearly easier for writers to impose some illusion of control by exoticising these disturbing women than it was to address the modern industrial confrontation they brought into focus.

Carmen was premièred at the Teatro de la Zarzuela just a few weeks after these dramatic events. The wild scenes at the tobacco factory had been freshly reported, and the operatic characterisation of Carmen and her co-workers must have been sufficiently close to the images of militant *cigarreras* to touch a raw nerve with the critics. *El Liberal* had reported an incident where two of the workers confronted a subaltern within the factory, knife in hand (*El Liberal*, 7 October 1887). Fortunately no injury resulted, but this may have contributed to Allegro's outrage, when he suggested that the depictions in *Carmen* should not simply be believed, 'especially when there is a knife handled by women' (*El País*, 3 November 1887). Writing in the satirical journal *La Avispa*, Espoleta also refers to cigarette girls emerging 'mutinously' from the factory in Act I.[62]

While the libretto's resonance with contemporary events heightened Spanish sensitivities to the exoticising elements of the plot, the translation only exacerbated this situation. As the generally sympathetic critic of *La Iberia* concluded:

> One must . . . confess that if *Carmen* had been presented in Italian at the Teatro Real it would have had a different fate. The atrocities of the libretto, veiled by the Italian language, would not have caused such pain to the soul of our public, and the musical interpretation would have been better. (*La Iberia*, 3 November 1887)

Hispanicising *Carmen*: Liern's zarzuela version

Never did a writer face a more ungrateful task than Rafael María Liern in translating the French libretto into Spanish for its première at the Zarzuela.[63]

> The lyrics are of the most absurd that exist, despite the translation and adaptation of Sr Liern; suffice it to say that it is based on Spanish topics and given the poor estimation of us by foreign writers, that says it all; soldiers, gypsies, toreros, tobacco workers and other flamenco types are drawn into the story, which is like an indecipherable charade. (M. Corral, 'Espectáculos', *La Provincia*, 1/5 [1887])

[62] Espoleta, 'Pitos y Palmas. CARMEN ópera cómica en cuatro actos y varias latas', *La Avispa*, 9 November 1887.

[63] An unattributed and unpaginated manuscript libretto entitled 'Carmen. Zarzuela en cuatro actos, arreglada a la escena española, obra escrita sobre el asunto de una novela de Prosper [Mérimée], musica del Maestro George Bizet' exists in the archives of the Sociedad General de Autores y Editores (SGAE), Archivo Lírico, Materiales MMO/2234. It bears the stamp of 'Compañia de Zarzuela: Empresa Juan Orejon', and seems to have been used for later touring productions. Reference to reviews of the 1887 Teatro de la Zarzuela production reveals that this is in fact the Spanish translation prepared by Liern, as it contains altered character names and passages of dialogue unique to this version. All subsequent references in the text are to this document. No published edition of Liern's *Carmen* has been found. Sentaurens also refers to the SGAE manuscript; see Sentaurens, '*Carmen*: de la novela de 1845 . . .', 860n12.

A skilled and experienced dramatist (*La Opinión*, 3 November 1887), Liern endeavoured to combine a faithful translation with some amelioration and even explanation of the book's more fanciful representations of Spanishness. Sentaurens suggests that Liern's aim was to replace the *espagnolade* of the French local colour with a *costumbrismo* more recognisable to zarzuela audiences.[64]

Liern's most obvious change was to rename three of the characters, in order to avoid critical ridicule inspired by the unconvincing French attempts at coining Spanish names. Antonio Peña y Goñi exemplified the Spanish response to the original French libretto, writing:

> Invention beyond the Pyrenees has coined the characters El Dancaire and Lilas Pastia . . . We should hold a philological, ethnographic, etymological and genealogical competition in Madrid to try and find the origin of this Dancaire and that Lilas Pastia perpetrated by Mérimée, Meilhac and Halevy and immortalised by the adorable music of Bizet.[65] (*La Época*, 15 March 1888)

Liern thus rebaptised Escamillo as Joselillo, suggesting a gentle humour at work but also recalling Pepe Hillo. Sebastián replaced Lillas Pastia, while Frasquita was transformed into Currilla.

Liern also paid close attention to the character of José, who makes a point both in the Mérimée and the French libretto of calling himself '*Don* José' (our emphasis) from Navarre. His presumption of Basque nobility and clear blood line would not have impressed a Castilian audience,[66] for Castile abounded in men whose noble blood gave them the right to use such an honorific. Indeed, as 'Don' is used as a mark of respect, it would seem inappropriate for a mere sergeant to introduce himself to a superior officer (his new lieutenant) as 'Don José'. This pretension was to provide ample material for comedy in the zarzuela parody *Carmela*, which premièred in Barcelona in 1891.[67] Accordingly, Liern erases any trace of José being a 'Don', and the sergeant simply claims that his family was 'modest but honourable'.

The French José also claims that he had to flee Navarre after a fight, presumably having committed murder. That he could then simply join the army in another province suggests that lawlessness reigned in the Spanish nation. Liern checks this outrage by adding to José's shaky admission that he subsequently obtained a pardon through high connections. This episode dramatises the divisions between north and south that create faultlines running through the various stagings of *Carmen*. It is accepted that José is from Navarre in northern Spain, stationed as a soldier in Seville, southern Spain. But this north/south divide might inspire a variety of readings from differently located audiences. In the French versions, José can be identified with the advanced civilisations of France or even Europe in contrast to

[64] See Sentaurens, '*Carmen*: de la novela de 1845 . . .', 859.

[65] Esperanza y Sola also ridicules the name Lillas Pastia, using two exclamation marks to indicate his amazement; see *Ilustración Española y Americana*, 31 (22 December 1887), 375.

[66] José calls himself an old Christian (*vieux chrétien*), implying that there is no Jewish or Moorish contamination in his ancestry.

[67] Salvador María Granés and Tomás Reig (music), *Carmela: parodia-lírica de la ópera 'Carmen' en un acto y tres cuadros* (Madrid, 1891).

Carmen's identification with backward Spain, her exoticism magnified by being a southerner and a gypsy.[68] For Liern, however, Self and Other were not so simply defined. A Madrid audience of the late 1880s would have viewed Navarre as less familiar than Andalusia. The modern centrist capital embraced a large Andalusian population, which formed a crucial element in the identity of Madrid's popular classes, and inspired a homely exoticism often represented in the zarzuela.

Liern subtly alters Carmen's local colour by reconfiguring her generic gypsiness into a more Andalusian characterisation. For Sentaurens, Carmen loses her subversive power when her gypsy identity is downplayed, and he accuses Liern of 'censoring' the diabolical element in her character.[69] Yet Liern's transformation of Carmen could equally be interpreted as converting the exoticised 'fake' gypsy made from a conflation of European gypsy stereotypes into a much more accurately depicted *gitana andaluza*. The zarzuela, following the lead of Spanish literature, already had a tradition of representing *pícaro* (roguish and marginal) characters, which included gypsies and bandits. In the end, it transpired that Carmen was more readily embraced by Spanish audiences than José, who was seen as a travesty of manhood. This acceptance of Carmen is even more pronounced in Granés' parody *Carmela*, in which the action is transferred to Madrid and the title character is depicted as a *chula madrileña*.[70] In contrast, José is transformed into a peasant from Galicia in the distant rural north: caricatured in costume, accent and vocabulary, he becomes a figure of fun.

The lyrics of the major numbers tell us much about Liern's desire to remove the most offensive references from the opera – particularly in reference to gypsies and bullfighting – without damaging its dramatic and lyric fabric. He translated Carmen's famous Habanera almost literally, but omitted the central stanza that refers to love as a lawless gypsy child. According to Liern, love might be a wild bird, known to be contrary, but nothing more.

The Chanson Bohème, on the other hand, is completely rewritten. Meilhac and Halévy composed a lyric in the third person, a vivid description of generic 'bohemian' gypsies singing and dancing with complete abandon. The text reflects the gypsy tavern scene on stage, and provides non-Spanish audiences with a colourful image in sight and sound. Liern created quite a different and uniquely Spanish effect by writing for Carmen in the first person and removing overt reference to gypsies from the text, retaining only the stage direction that gypsies dance during the chorus. By means of argot and reference to sung forms typical of the *canto andaluz*, he typecast her as someone '*quién de verdá es andaluz*' ('who is truly Andalusian').[71] Carmen reflects on how she feels when singing and dancing,

[68] See James Parakilas, 'The Soldier and the Exotic: Operatic Variations on a Theme of Racial Encounter. Part I', *Opera Quarterly*, 10 (1993), 40.

[69] Sentaurens, '*Carmen*: de la novela de 1845 . . .', 860–1.

[70] The *chula* is a characteristic 'type' of the Madrid lower class, distinguished by dress style and a certain way of comporting herself.

[71] He refers to flamenco forms like *alegría*, *soledad* and *caña*, and puns on the last one, which also means a drinking glass.

activities to which she was born, and which wipe away all her tiredness and pain. For a Spanish audience these lyrics do not try to evoke an exotic scene; rather, they perform a hispanicising function, authenticating Carmen as both Andalusian and *aflamencada*.

Liern, who had written extensively on bullfighting, must have anticipated that local critics would ridicule the libretto's clumsy treatment of tauromachy.[72] To this end, he zealously reworked the relevant scenes in Acts II and IV, adding humorous touches where he could. Meilhac and Halevy's Escamillo may have just triumphed at the Granada bullfights, but Liern's Joselillo was playing for a local crowd in Spain's capital. He is declared 'the best matador in the world', to which Carmen dryly responds: 'So he's come from Madrid then . . . '.[73]

When the matador is invited into the tavern to drink with the soldiers and sings his famous song, Liern again injects humour into the exchange, stressing the political implications of soldiers and bullfighters coming together. Meilhac and Halévy's lyrics, like Carmen's Chanson Bohème, use the third person to describe a bullfight to an audience unfamiliar with its action. Joselillo's text seems truncated in comparison, but the first-person drama is powerful, and just a few pithy references suffice to describe the same bullfight to a knowing Spanish audience.[74] Subtle Andalusian inflections colour the characterisation, such as dropped final consonants and alteration of consonants within a word.[75] The celebrated march provided another target for Espoleta's ridicule in his parody for *La Avispa*: he aped the French libretto in calling Joselillo a '*toreador*', a word that does not exist in Spanish,[76] and described his number as a '*de profundis* flamenco' – an ironic description of the very light and lively march (*La Avispa*, 9 November 1887).

All this effort to touch up the work for a Spanish audience is overshadowed by Liern's heroic attempt to rationalise the nonsensical aspects of Act IV's scenario.[77] In brief, no Spanish audience would have recognised a parade of bullfighters outside the bullring, for the members of the *cuadrilla* usually processed directly into the arena to take their places for the bullfight. Allegro noted that this scene caused great hilarity among Spaniards who saw it in theatres outside Spain (*El País*, 3 November 1887). Liern concocted a story about an aristocrat complaining of traffic problems outside the bullring, so that carriages were stopped at some distance from the gate. This effectively necessitated two processions: one witnessed by the audience, and the 'real' one, inside the bullring. The number of dignitaries involved in this parade

[72] Allegro singled out the treatment of the bullfighters in the libretto, laughing at the crowd scene and procession in Act IV; see Allegro, *El País*, 3 November 1887.

[73] This is a nicely judged pleasantry for Madrid audiences, who believed they were the best arbiters of bullfighting.

[74] The text refers in passing to details that might seem technical to a foreigner, for example the bull emerging only after the President drops his white kerchief.

[75] For example, he calls Carmen 'Carmensija', rather than Carmencita or even Carmencilla, in both of which the 'c' would be pronounced 'th'.

[76] *Torero* is the generic term for bullfighter. In Mérimée, Lucas is only a *picador*, but Meilhac and Halévy promoted Escamillo to *matador*.

[77] Liern makes use of spoken dialogue to cover all the detail necessitated by his lengthy explanations.

was ridiculed in the cartoon parody of *La Avispa* and in the daily press (*La Iberia*, 3 November 1887; *La Avispa*, 9 November 1887).

Nor was the notion of a matador fighting only one bull in an afternoon acceptable; there would usually be six bulls on a programme, and three matadors.[78] The absurdity of Joselillo emerging from the bullring after killing the first bull, in order to find Carmen dying, is explained with an elaborate tale of him needing to go to another bullfight that day, in Ronda, a town with a renowned bullring. Espoleta's parody concluded by describing Carmen's murder in bullfighting terminology, declaring that José had committed an unauthorised 'kill' because he was an unqualified novice matador (*La Avispa*, 9 November 1887).

Allegro noted Liern's struggles with the absurdities of the French original, commenting that 'when the author tries to break these shackles that constantly bind him, he has to digress at length' (*El País*, 3 November 1887). Nonetheless, he simultaneously criticised him for reproducing 'the greater part of the improprieties of the libretto' and following the French original 'step by step'. These comments demonstrate the difficulty of Liern's task, for the circumlocutions required to explain the plot work against his general intent of paring the work back. Liern tried to correct even the smallest detail: although unable to change the inappropriate portrayal of women smoking in public as they left work, he did alter the menu at the tavern from sweetmeats back to the typically Spanish fried fish, in fidelity to Mérimée.[79]

The adapted libretto was not the sole target of negative comment. Critics also attacked aspects of the production and scenery, even criticising the set for its anachronism. Espoleta declared that the scene in Seville belonged to the current financial year (*La Avispa*, 9 November 1887), as the backdrop included a steamship, and a railway bridge over the Guadalquivir that had only been built in 1874 (*El País*, 3 November 1887; *La Iberia*, 3 November 1887).

Despite his herculean effort to render the text palatable to a Spanish audience (*La Opinión*, 3 November 1887), we have seen that Liern's transformation of the libretto was largely ignored by Madrid critics poised to attack the French authors of the original for their distorted depiction of Spain. Although Liern did not appear when called to take a bow at the end of the performance (*El País*, 3 November 1887), the opera's success could not be denied. The critic of *El Mundo* concluded:

> There is no need to stress that the music of Bizet had to be good to make the public listen in silence to so many tasteless depictions. In the end, however, the public applauded. It was a success, not because of the work, but despite the work. With another libretto *Carmen* would become an eternal fixture. (*El Mundo*, 3 November 1887)

[78] Several critics noted the oddity of the torero killing only one bull that afternoon; see, for example, *La Iberia*, 3 November 1887.

[79] In Act II scene 1 the soldiers order sherry and fish, while in scene 6 Carmen orders all the sherry in the house, along with various fish and shellfish for herself and José. Espoleta's parody in *La Avispa* coyly enquires how the lovers were ever to come together without lobsters and *manzanilla*; Espoleta, *La Avispa*, 9 November 1887.

The 'Spanishness' of *Carmen*'s music

Given the context of such a rich local tradition, Bizet's attempts to create local colour in his score inspired lively critical debate, but we should not assume that his 'Spanish' music was universally condemned. Despite the occasional detractor, like Allegro's declaration that 'Bizet's score, which has been presented in most of the theatres in Europe, has crashed in ours' (*El País*, 3 November 1887), most critics agreed on the undoubted quality of the music, as distinct from the exoticist abominations of the libretto: '[Unlike the libretto], the music is good . . . and more than good, excellent and superb from the first to the last note' (*El Imparcial*, 3 November 1887). Bizet's musical skill and especially his command of orchestral writing received almost universal praise: 'Bizet's style . . . is rich in ideas and the harmony is the result of an extraordinary refinement . . . the instrumentation [is] rich in artistic details and of an enviable freshness and facility' (*La Opinión*, 3 November 1887).

The most contested element of the opera was Bizet's musical characterisation of Spain, and his attempt to provide music associated with the bullring. The numbers most often called for encore were its overtly Spanish numbers. In *El Imparcial* Bizet was lauded for his extensive use of Spanish material: 'It is impossible to ask for anything more in four acts with a sentimental, romantic score packed with Spanish airs and orchestrated by a masterly hand . . . Many of the numbers display the perfect study that the author has made of national airs' (*El Imparcial*, 3 November 1887). *La Opinión* noted the 'marked Spanish character' of the seduction scene between Carmen and José, and praised the Entr'acte to Act IV as 'a piece with a very characterful Spanish theme; treated with much understanding of our music'.[80] The provenance of the Entr'acte theme in Manuel García's *polo* was not discussed by Madrid critics (García's *tonadillas* would have been long forgotten in Madrid of the late 1880s), but they were well aware that Carmen's 'Habanera' was based on Sebastian Iradier's 'El Arreglito' (1864). Noting the enormous success of the Habanera after the November 1887 première, certain malicious parties posed the rather arch question: are they paying rights to Iradier for his habanera?[81] The critic Esperanza y Sola pointed out that Iradier's publisher Heugel had demanded royalties from Bizet after the opera's Parisian première (*Ilustración Española y Americana*, 31 (22 December 1887), 375).

Madrid audiences had first heard music from *Carmen* as early as 1881, when the virtuoso violinist Pablo Sarasate performed his recently completed fantasy on *Carmen* while touring Spain. For this typically virtuosic operatic pot-pourri, Sarasate selected only motifs sung by Carmen, after opening with the theme from the Entr'acte to Act IV.[82] In 1881, and again in early 1887, critics responded coolly to

[80] *La Opinión*, 3 November 1887. *El Imparcial* concurred in 1888: 'Of the Spanish themes the work has only one which is really notable and beautiful, the prelude to Act Four, which was admirably performed and repeated to applause'; *El Imparcial*, 15 March 1888.

[81] See Subirá, *Historia*, 394.

[82] From Act I Sarasate used the Habanera, Carmen's exchange with Zuñiga, and the Séguedille; he closed the work with the 'Chanson bohème' from Act II. It is almost as if, as

footnote continued on next page

the Fantasy, in sharp contrast to rapturous audience reception.[83] 'The habanera of *maestro* Iradier' included in the Fantasy was judged to be a 'completely Spanish' theme that had 'nothing to do with Bizet'.[84] Although Sarasate set the most characteristically Spanish numbers of the opera, they failed to make any impression on Madrid's expert listeners, abstracted from their as yet unknown dramatic context. Once staged at the Zarzuela, some critics thought it was primarily these numbers (the Habanera, Chanson Bohème and Entr'acte) that were in a character appropriate to the subject matter.[85]

The habanera originated as a folk form in multi-ethnic Cuba, but in Europe it became a social dance, a popular Spanish urban form and a favourite in aristocratic salons of France's Second Empire, where it clearly denoted Spanishness. While Spaniards commonly referred to habaneras as *americanas*, they were not principally construed as markers of exoticism, as Cuban culture was still strongly identified with Spain.[86] The fact that the habanera was popularised in the court of Napoleon III and his Spanish wife, and in the leading salons of Paris,[87] casts doubt on Susan McClary's claims that this 'Creole' or 'African-Cuban' form was exclusively associated with the ill repute of the Parisian cabaret.[88] By 1887 Iradier's habaneras, also called Andalusian tangos, had been superseded in Spain by new works in the genre. The dance itself was still very popular, and in its more contemporary form was frequently used as a characteristic number in late nineteenth-century zarzuelas, especially in the *género chico*. One of the most famous Spanish habaneras of the *género chico* was the 'Tango de la Menegilda (Pobre chica)' from Chueca and Valverde's *La gran vía* (1886).[89]

footnote continued from previous page
Iberni suggests, Sarasate had wanted the violin to impersonate the gypsy protagonist; see Luis G. Iberni, *Pablo Sarasate* (Madrid, 1994), 153.

83 *El Liberal*, 9 October 1887; 'Sociedad de conciertos', *El Diario Español*, 3 April 1887; 'Sociedad de conciertos', *El Imparcial*, 4 April 1887. Among mixed reviews, few critics thought it had any merit; one declared it 'pale and a bit odd'; *El Diario Español*, 3 April 1887.

84 G.O., 'Setimo concierto del Príncipe Alfonso', *La Correspondencia Musical*, 1/16 (1881), 3–4. Iberni identifies G.O. as R. Gil Osorio; see Iberni, *Pablo Sarasate*, 78n6.

85 *El Globo*, 15 March 1888, quoted in Sentaurens, '*Carmen*: de la novela de 1845 . . .', 868. This is reinforced by another critic who stated of the non-'Spanish' music that 'in total one can say that the work has very good classical music; but it is not well suited to the libretto'; *La Publicidad*, 4 November 1887.

86 Habaneras belong to the category of *canciones de ida y vuelta* (songs of going and returning) arising from cultural exchanges with Latin America, like several other popular or flamenco song and dance styles. Even after the loss of Cuba as a colony in 1898, Manuel de Falla included a 'Cubana' as one of the *4 piezas españolas* (1906–8). See Maria Teresa Linares and Faustino Nuñez, *La música entre Cuba y España* (Madrid, 1998), 191–2.

87 Dozens of editions of Iradier's songs appeared in Paris, with major collections released *c.* 1857 and in 1864. The titles name singers who performed his music (including Maria Malibran, Pauline Viardot and Adelina Patti) while making claims that the songs were performed at the leading salons of Paris and London; see Alonso, *La canción lírica*, 317–18.

88 McClary, *Georges Bizet: 'Carmen'*, 51–2. In Spain the habanera was neither exotic nor demi-mondaine; indeed, during the nineteenth century it became inseparable from musical representations of Spain and played from the salons of the highest aristocracy to the smallest summer theatre.

89 Menegilda is cast as a *chula* domestic servant in *La gran vía*. Achieving comparable popularity a few years later was Tomás Bretón's charming habanera 'Dónde vas con mantón de Manila' from *La verbena de la Paloma* (1894).

This is the inescapable context in which Bizet's Habanera was judged:

> Bizet has developed Spanish motives working wonders with melody and instrumentation, but he did not know . . . how to give them that animation, that air, that local flavour to which we are accustomed. The tango of the first act had undoubted merit, but it cannot stand comparison with that other more modest, but much more *gracioso* [witty, charming] by the inspired Chueca.[90]

Pedrell considered Carmen's Habanera 'wretched' and 'insipid',[91] rather like the critic of *El globo* who thought it 'quite vulgar' (*El Globo*, 15 March 1888). But Pedrell's criticism had deeper roots. One of the fathers of Spanish musical nationalism, he was obsessed with Spain's folk-musical heritage. He believed that the 'true' Spain could only be captured in music through the use of forms that pre-dated the influence of Italian opera in the nineteenth century, especially music that incorporated folk elements. Pedrell defined this music, along with transcriptions and settings of Spanish folk music, as our 'popular musical songbook' (*cancionero musical popular*): '[Bizet] divined the musical colour, character, melodic turns, modulations and rhythm of our *cancionero musical popular*, to the extent to which its specific orientalism is valued and so well heard by him'.[92] For Pedrell this was how Spanish music should be created, and he lavished high praise on Bizet when he claimed that the French composer 'knew how to write genuinely popular Spanish music', demonstrating 'admirable facility' for it in scenes representing the people.[93] Distinguishing the quality of Bizet's music from the empty exotic stereotypes of the libretto, he reserved his criticism for the individual characterisations, and, in particular, Carmen's French coquetry in the Habanera. He deemed this dance unsuitable because it had become an urban popular style, degraded by overuse and removed from its folk roots.

Dance was a crucial element in the hotchpotch of Spanish topics which made up *Carmen*. Although critics exclaimed that a Frenchman should presume to describe such a uniquely Spanish phenomenon as a *juerga* (*La Iberia*, 3 November 1887),[94] Fuensanta Moreno danced to the Chanson Bohème to great applause. Nevertheless, *El mediodía* labelled it a dance with a 'flamenco veneer' (20 March 1888), and Espoleta made fun of its instrumental backing, describing it as a noisy combination of drum, cymbals, tabor, tambourine and hand-clapping (*La Avispa*, 9 November 1887). This closely parallels Bizet's orchestration in which he progressively adds tambourine, triangle, timpani and then cymbals as the Chanson Bohème reaches its climax. Such colourful orchestration was more akin to the French and Russian traditions of representing Spanishness than contemporary Spanish practice. Even

[90] *El Resumen*, 3 November 1887, quoted in Sentaurens, '*Carmen*: de la novela de 1845 . . .', 869.

[91] His criticism encompassed the comment that it had been 'soldered into the work, so they say, because it pleased the artist who created the principal role of the opera'; [Pedrell], 'La Quincena Musical', 10.

[92] [Pedrell], 10.

[93] [Pedrell], 10.

[94] A *juerga* is a riotous Andalusian gathering that features drinking, singing and flamenco dancing.

within zarzuela scores, gypsy spirit was commonly evoked by imitating or at times incorporating the sound of the guitar or *estudiantina*, creating a quite different sonic stylisation.[95]

Andalusians and gypsies were ubiquitous tropes of popular theatre and literature in Spain, and the home-grown *andalucismo* (a form of *costumbrismo* which focused on images of Andalusian identity and local colour) often typified them musically with gaiety and exuberance in the light entertainment of the *zarzuela chica*. Certain critics found Bizet's use of a more dramatic musical style to convey the same subject matter too sombre: 'The flamenco fiesta at the start of the second act is beautiful, above all the crescendo with which it ends, even though there are moments that seem more like sad Arab melodies than joyful Andalusian tunes'.[96] 'In the third act the music is too serious for the scene that represents the gypsies, bandits and toreros in the interior of the mountains. [The fourth act] was received coldly, given that the setting and the characters called for merry tunes and Spanish airs, which were generally lacking in the score' (*La Publicidad*, 4 November 1887). These quotations raise further questions about the stylistic distinctions applied by Spanish critics to representations of Andalusian scenes. The additional category of Arab style distinguishes between gay Andalusian folk music and the greater melancholy of *arabismo*, a trend that reached its height in popular song during the 1870s and 1880s.[97]

Pedrell suggested that greater recourse to this 'Arab' style would have lent a passionate ferocity to José's jealousy, lamenting that Bizet's principal characters were not infused with the 'popular' Spanish music he found so pleasingly characteristic in the crowd scenes.[98] Allegro, on the other hand, found the opening of Act IV inauthentic, despite its undeniable energy, encapsulating the problematic comparison between Bizet's opera and the *costumbrista* zarzuela tradition:

> To what end has the author of *L'Arlésienne* written inspired dances and marches for the bullfight procession, if they were to be performed here, where we have real *cante jondo*, *sevillanas* and *pasos dobles* with more colour than a painting by Velázquez! . . . It is French music, very apt for those French toreros and *demoiselles* tobacco workers painted by Meilhac. But would this music suit real toreros and tobacco workers, sung in Spanish and dressed as God decrees? Here they have put on the stage all our popular types, with their costumes, their argot, their *cantares* [folk songs], and even their gestures. Will these same types pass *a la francesa*? . . . In one word, does the score of *Carmen* have sufficient merit to make us applaud a torero converted into a *monsieur* and a cigarerra into *mademoiselle*? (*El País*, 3 November 1887)

Allegro was not alone in suggesting that Bizet's Frenchness handicapped him here. The critic for *El Mundo* recognised the 'vigour and arrogance' of the score, but

[95] The *estudiantina* was a traditional Spanish laúd (a type of mandolin) and guitar ensemble, which might include tambourines. La belle Otero, a 'professional Spaniard' who danced across Europe and in the USA to great acclaim in the last decades of the nineteenth century, toured with her own *estudiantina* ensemble.

[96] 'Zarzuela: Carmen', *La Regencia*, 3 November 1887. Optimism and *joie de vivre* were counted as essential Andalusian traits by Blas Infante in *El ideal andaluz* (Seville, 1915), as cited in Alonso, *La canción lírica*, 233.

[97] See Alonso, *La canción lírica*, 397.

[98] See [Pedrell], 'La Quincena Musical', 10.

would have expected something more *flamenca* for Joselillo's entrance from a Spanish composer (*El Mundo*, 27 October 1887).

Some of the harshest critics declared that it was impossible for a Frenchman to compose music for such essentially Spanish scenes. The critic of *La Opinión* went further, to argue that the composer would have had to be Spanish to capture accurately the music of the bullfighter. His final declaration that the ideal of Spanishness incorporates being Andalusian indicates the penetration of contemporary debates about Spanish identity:

> In the second act [at] the entrance of the matador Joselillo . . . the music is bright and does not lack a certain gallantry, but for Bizet to have interpreted it well, it would not have been enough to have lived for a few months in Seville; he would have to have been born under the limpid sky of Andalusia and for his blood to have been mixed with the golden *Jerez* [sherry] and the tasty essence of the pallid Manzanilla: it would have been indispensable, at the very least, to have been Spanish, because in this land we all have something of the Andalusian in us . . . and we all hope desperately to be considered *flamenco*. (*La Opinión*, 3 November 1887)

Clearly, it was often difficult for critics to distance themselves from the infelicities of the libretto, the main focus of commentary in the press, when discussing Bizet's evocation of Spain in the score. The Madrid public also had to come to terms with musical manifestations of cultural stereotypes that were often represented in the zarzuela through the local prism of *costumbrismo* and *andalucismo*. In the scenic representation of fiestas and bullfights the zarzuela had developed a lexicon of musical styles that evoked well-known popular song and dance forms associated with specific events (such as the *pasodoble* for bullfighting). Comparisons between contemporary zarzuela practice and Bizet's projection of local colour were unavoidable for the Madrid theatregoer, and underline the ambivalence of reactions to Bizet's treatment of Spanish musical sources. By the time *Carmen* was produced at the Teatro Real later in the season, however, the heat had gone out of the debates about the work's 'Spanishness', and its critical reception was transformed by the new context.

Beyond local colour: *Carmen* at the Teatro Real, 1888

Carmen finally appeared in a lavish production at the Teatro Real on 14 March, playing to packed houses at the very end of the 1887–8 season.[99] After the build-up of interest back in October, some concluded that the night's success was a foregone conclusion, 'a victory without a struggle' (*La Opinión*, 15 March 1888); but Michelena proved himself as canny an impresario as Ducazcal by making *Carmen's* first night a benefit for the 'Asilos del Pardo'.[100] This enabled him to disclaim any hope of monetary gain, turning it into a social event, which attracted a 'numerous and most distinguished' audience (*El Imparcial*, 15 March 1888).

[99] The production was admired, especially the set for Act IV; see 'Carmen', *La Iberia*, 15 March 1888.

[100] *La Iberia*, 15 March 1888. The Asilo del Pardo seems to have been an institution for the poor and the sick, and a regular beneficiary of theatrical performances. We are indebted to Ruth Piquer for this information.

Antonio Peña y Goñi, the foremost music critic of the day, described the première as a 'truly triumphant entrance' before a 'unanimous and enthusiastic public' (*La Época*, 15 March 1888). *La Opinión* added the confident prediction that '*Carmen* will become a repertory work in our Teatro Real' (*La Opinión*, 15 March 1888). Many critics dwelt on the favourable comparison they were able to make with the earlier production at the Zarzuela, now they had heard it 'sung by singers of indisputable merit' (*La Regencia*, 12 March 1888). Indeed, the higher quality of the singers and the magnificence of the production at the Teatro Real led *El Imparcial* to declare the two productions as different as night from day (15 March 1888). The opera was performed in Italian with accompanied recitatives under the superb conducting of the renowned Mancinelli: audience and critics were carried away by the work's dramatic power and the beauties of Bizet's music. Peña y Goñi declared that 'to cite the beauties of the opera would entail listing all its pieces' (*La Época*, 15 March 1888).

Despite this enthusiasm, critical response to this second production echoed some of the concerns expressed the previous year, including negative commentary on the libretto and debate over the arguable merit of the music, particularly when it attempted to be most Spanish. The 1888 reviews also reflect some new perspectives, influenced both by the excellent performance at the Teatro Real, and by the distancing effect created by the fully-sung Italian version. No longer blinded by *Carmen*'s novelty or the perception that it posed some kind of challenge to their own native zarzuela, critics could further appreciate Bizet's score, consider the work in its broader operatic context, and reflect on the impact of Bizet's very individual engagement with Spain. This production also facilitated reflection on the effect of local colour in the two different genres: cultural distortions that disturbed in a vernacular theatre were simply accepted by opera audiences.

Allegro, who had judged the Zarzuela version an inevitable failure, embraced the Teatro Real production. He reflected on why *Carmen*, 'which is the same in the opera as in the zarzuela, will always please as an opera', observing that 'in opera the music is everything; the rest has no importance. If the score is good, it all goes smoothly' (*El País*, 15 March 1888). The quality of the score and its performance, however, did not explain away all his earlier objections:

> In a theatre where they speak and sing in Spanish, one cannot present falsified toreros and Seville cigarette girls invented in Paris. But in the opera one can; it will be one more convention, a score on a Spanish subject that is sanctioned by all the audiences of the world, and we ourselves must not reject it . . . There will be those who say that the music has no Spanish flavour, that it is not always adequate to the situation or the characters, and that any one of our maestros has done more in this genre. This is not the time for such discussions. (*El País*, 15 March 1888)

Critics of the 1887 production had indeed discussed these matters exhaustively, but just a few pre-empted the Real production by considering *Carmen* in the context of contemporary opera, rather than zarzuela. The catalyst for these comments was their realisation that the appeal of Bizet's score would take time to unfold:

Neither *Gioconda*, heard today to great applause, nor *Les Huguenots*, now so justly and widely praised, instantly conquered the spirit of the public, for whom it is impossible to absorb important musical works in a single day. We are entirely sure that *Carmen* will put down roots in Madrid, and that it will be better liked the more it is heard. (*El Correo*, 3 November 1887)

The critic of *El Imparcial* probed this point more deeply, but maintained a quiet confidence in the enduring appeal of local colour to Madrid audiences:

Bizet has realised an exceptional task in welding Spanish songs, in which there is a preponderance of what we might call absolute melody, with the most difficult art of the Wagnerian school. The public could appreciate the colour and inspiration of the former, but until it hears the opera repeatedly it will not be able to fully appreciate . . . the triumphs achieved by the maestro in harmony and the perfection that he has imprinted on the orchestration. (*El Imparcial*, 3 November 1887)

When *Carmen* was revived at Barcelona's Liceo in January 1888 Pedrell felt that the comparison with Wagner was even more of an impediment to Spanish appreciation of Bizet's opera. During the 1880s Spanish interest in Wagner had grown steadily, including stagings of *Lohengrin*, *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Tannhäuser*. Pedrell speculated that the Germanic formal grandiloquence and background symbolism of operas like *Lohengrin* had a dulling effect on Catalan audiences' ability to appreciate the 'shining filigree' of Bizet's score. Despite the opera's revival at this less than opportune moment, Pedrell echoed *El Imparcial* in his conviction that *Carmen*'s score displayed enough characteristic local colour in depicting its Spanish subject matter to truly engage the interest of Spanish audiences.[101]

As we have seen, Madrid critics had been less than sympathetic towards the representation of local colour when the opera was performed at the Teatro de la Zarzuela, but, having vented their spleen in response to that production, they were less concerned with it in 1888. That the management of the Teatro Real may have been anxious to avoid this possible critical distraction is suggested by the unsubstantiated rumour that their production would be set in Naples, which, despite its remote Hispanic ties, would have provided a less contested southern Mediterranean setting than Seville.[102] The spectrum of critical opinion again included detractors, who took Bizet to task over his attempt at local colour.[103] However, in his review of the Teatro Real production Peña y Goñi addressed these critical misgivings and not only insightfully questioned what constituted a Spanish opera, but also cast doubt on the Spanish musical pedigree of the very zarzuelas that had been compared so favourably with *Carmen*:

Some Madrid musicians (those of low aspirations and accidental amateurs) attack *Carmen* for not being very Spanish. For these gentlemen a work with a Spanish plot should consist of an inexhaustible collection of *polos*, *manchegas*, *vitos*, *boleros* and *peteneras*; a kind of gypsy *Cosmorama* of 'ayyys', 'Oles' [and the like]. Yet they will also proclaim as masterpiece of

[101] See [Pedrell], 'La Quincena Musical', 10.
[102] See Manuel Giró, 'La ópera española y los compositores españoles', *Diario de Barcelona*, 25 January 1888.
[103] *El Imparcial*, 15 March 1888; Ignoto, 'Espectáculos', *La Provincia*, 2/11 (1888).

masterpieces Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, in which the great maestro was simply content to write an immortal work, which is about as Spanish as we are Chinese. The same gentlemen will demonstrate indignation at the *seguidilla* in *Carmen*, without taking into account the much-applauded polonaises of so many Spanish maestros. Let's forget about these musical craftsmen, given that the true aficionado will savour the beauties of *Carmen* without making an exhaustive study of her baptismal record.[104]

The crucial distinction here is that operas like Rossini's *Barber* set Spanish subjects without constant recourse to local colour, which did not form an integral part of plot and characterisation. Allegro claimed that opera audiences were much more accustomed to convention than to an imitation of reality, and related this to the practice of literary adaptation in opera. Declaring that the construction of operatic scenarios required the detachment of historical (and literary) figures from their accepted character in order to accommodate the dramatic demands of the libretto, he concluded that opera audiences were thus obliged to listen impassively to ridiculous texts, applaud if they are sung well, and ignore any offence.[105] If local colour presented to Spanish audiences conflicted with their perception of cultural realities, then it would certainly have a better effect when distanced by operatic convention.

This greater forbearance for local colour in foreign works at the Teatro Real allowed imported performers to achieve success in their roles, especially if they were able to render their characters *more* Spanish. The Teatro Real's Italian Carmen, Giuseppina Pasqua, became an audience favourite and gained a sort of honorary naturalisation for her exceptionally characteristic performance. Called repeatedly at the end of every act on opening night (*La Época*, 15 March 1888), she rendered the difficult part with all the charm, wit and 'picaresque character that could be asked of a foreign singer performing a genuinely Spanish type' (*La Iberia*, 15 March 1888). Peña y Goñi set the seal of approval: 'When Pasqua sings Carmen outside Spain one will be able to say that Bizet's character has Spanish blood in her veins, inoculated in Madrid with her successes here over the past decade. Then, surely, no one will be able to compete with her in that role' (*La Época*, 15 March 1888). The last performance of *Carmen*, which coincided with the last night of the opera season, was a benefit for Pasqua. In her encore she proved her Spanish credentials by singing, in Spanish, a Spanish song entitled 'Lo que Dios da . . .', which she had to repeat, amid a great ovation.[106]

[104] Peña y Goñi, *La Época*, 15 March 1888. These sentiments were also reflected in later reviews. The critic for *La República*, for example, questioned the 'inexplicable bias against Bizet's music' by those who maintained that only Spanish music based on popular songs could set a Spanish topic. He extended the argument, naming not only the *Barber*, but also *Il trovatore* and *La forza del destino* 'and so many other' operas on Spanish themes, none of which had been the target of such protests as *Carmen*; see *La República*, 15 December 1888, quoted in Sentaurens, '*Carmen*: de la novela de 1845 . . .', 869 n26. Whereas the habanera was widely recognised as a marker of southern identity in the zarzuela of the time (and often referred to as an Andalusian tango), polonaises, mazurkas and the *chotis* (a local adaptation of the Schottische) were commonly used as markers of Madrid identity in *género chico* zarzuelas.

[105] Allegro, *El País*, 15 March 1888.

[106] 'Entre bastidores', *La Opinión*, 23 March 1888. Back in 1881 Galli-Marié had similarly proved her 'Spanish' credentials with her encore on the last night of her Barcelona

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As *Carmen* established itself at the Teatro Real, and was revived in December 1888, Peña y Goñi reflected further on the title role and the function of its Spanishness, cautiously arguing that the dramatic essence of the opera transcended the issue of local colour altogether. He claimed that just as Shakespeare had chosen a Moor to embody the universal human impulse of brutal jealousy in *Othello*, so Mérimée had selected a gypsy tobacco worker who was both real and truly Spanish 'to synthesise in an artistic abstraction all the perfidies of the feminine sex in a depraved and free environment'.[107] Peña y Goñi thus claimed that Carmen's dramatic significance resided less in her Spanishness than in her embodiment of a universal (feminine) type. Later generations might question Peña y Goñi's gender stereotyping, but the real importance of this statement lies in the fact that it identifies the work's credible dramatisation of universal human themes as one of the reasons why *Carmen* achieved success with Spanish opera audiences. As the critic of *La Provincia* noted in 1887, 'the book is more than Spanish; it is very dramatic, and therefore very human'.[108]

Clearly this appreciation of the work's realistic credentials took time to emerge, and, as Allegro lamented, 'we are so used to the conventional that the real has no effect' (*El País*, 15 March 1888). Perhaps this was partly due to the challenges of producing a work intended for the relatively intimate Opéra-Comique in the cavernous Teatro Real. Peña y Goñi's first warm response to the 1888 production was tempered by his sense that he was observing the work from afar:

> *Carmen* has arrived late at the royal theatre, but can be assured a highly distinguished place in the repertory, however much the vastness of the theatre makes it seem like a miniature, as if seen from a distance, and many of its subtleties may take time to be appreciated, given that they are hidden by that perspective. (*La Época*, 15 March 1888)

Madrid audiences, however, grew accustomed to the scale of *Carmen*'s human drama as they became increasingly familiar with Italian *verismo* operas.[109] Seeing *Carmen* again in 1892 Peña y Goñi's comments reveal this shift in perception:

> What seemed small before on the vast stage of the royal theatre, now starts to seem large. The beauties of the work impress in their own right; the ear now perceives perfectly what previously sounded strange to it; and from this moment on it is the human note that is highlighted in this admirable creation of Bizet, the verismo which the opera breathes and is imposed on the spectator through the slow but irresistible impulse of genius.[110]

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engagement, a benefit performance of *Mignon*. Accompanying herself at the piano she sang a well-known habanera, 'La Habana se va á perder', with clear and correct pronunciation, and had to repeat it; see *La Renaixensa (Diari de Catalunya)*, late edition, [11 August 1881], 2–3; *Diario de Barcelona*, 11 August 1881, late edition.

[107] Antonio Peña y Goñi, *Madrid Cómico*, 29 December 1888, quoted in Sentaurens, '*Carmen*: de la novela de 1845 . . .', 857n9.

[108] Etcetera, 'Espectáculos', *La Provincia*, 1/4 (1887). This note was written after the critic heard the dress rehearsal, but before the première.

[109] See Luis G. Iberni, 'Verismo y realismo en la ópera española', *La ópera en España e Hispanoamérica*, ed. Emilio Casares Rodicio and Álvaro Torrente (Madrid, 2002), 215.

[110] Antonio Peña y Goñi, 'Carmen', *La E'poca*, 20 January 1892, quoted in Luis G. Iberni, 'Cien años de Antonio Peña y Goñi', *Cuadernos de Música Iberoamericana*, 4 (1997), 9.

In Madrid *Carmen* became established in the Teatro Real's repertory as changing tastes foregrounded what critics perceived to be its dramatic realism, a trait that it shared with the wave of *verismo* operas that swept the Spanish capital in the 1890s.[111] Viewing *Carmen* as a universal human drama gave Spanish performers and producers further licence to hispanicise both the title character and the opera as a whole in an attempt to make the local colour more realistic for their audiences. *Carmen* may have retained foreign and exotic connotations for Spanish composers and critics in the 1890s, but its increasingly valued dramatic realism, in tandem with that of Italian *verismo*, found echoes in a new generation of dramatic Spanish operas.[112]

By the end of the 1887–8 season, then, *Carmen* had secured a place in Spanish culture. The frame of the Teatro Real had made the opera acceptable to Spanish audiences, who opened their ears to the beauty of its music. But it was the Teatro de la Zarzuela adaptation that had provoked an active comparison with local theatrical constructions of Spain's own culture. In the end, *Carmen* challenged Spaniards to engage critically with foreign and *costumbrista* stereotypes of Spanish national identity and their projection on the lyric stage. The recognition and identification that followed the initial confrontation have resulted in innumerable productions and reinterpretations of the Carmen story and Bizet's music by Spanish artists over the past century. The process of assimilation and deconstruction of Bizet's masterpiece has posed a challenge to any fixed notions of the opera's 'nationality' and its position in Spanish culture.

[111] In Barcelona Spanish zarzuela productions were of greater importance in cementing *Carmen*'s place in theatrical repertory. Different translations and parodies demonstrate its progressive hispanicisation in the Catalan capital.

[112] *Verismo* influenced Tomás Bretón's *La Dolores* (1894) and Enrique Granados' *María del Carmen* (1898), and *Carmen* had an impact on the conception of Manuel de Falla's *La vida breve* (1905). Spanish critics of these operas made the inevitable comparisons with *Carmen*, favouring their evocation of Spanish music over Bizet's.