

**THE MEZZO-SOPRANO AS
REPRESENTATION OF ‘THE
OTHER’ IN NINETEENTH-
CENTURY OPERA**

KAREN VAN DER WALT

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THE MEZZO-SOPRANO
AS REPRESENTATION OF 'THE OTHER'
IN NINETEENTH- CENTURY OPERA

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To my wonderful husband

without whose love and constant support my whole being would not be possible .

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION AND AIM

The *Oxford Dictionary of Music and Musicians* defines the term mezzo-soprano as: ‘Half soprano. Female (or artificial male) voice midway between soprano and contralto.’¹ Composers started differentiating between sopranos and mezzo-sopranos only in the early nineteenth-century. Previously the soprano range encompassed what would today be classified as the mezzo-soprano range (for instance, Dido in Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*). While there was no distinct differentiation between the mezzo and soprano voice in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century, today certain roles are traditionally sung by mezzo-sopranos, for instance, Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*. However, when nineteenth-century composers started altering the soprano range to sing extended *fiorituri* passages in a high tessitura, for example, in *Norma*, *I Puritani* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the need arose for the heavier, lower voice. As composers started writing roles specifically for the mezzo-soprano voice, they realised that this timbre can portray different emotions than those of the lighter and higher soprano voice.

In the essay ‘Operatic Characters and Voice Type’, Kent Mitchells states:

The voluptuous and alluring tone quality of the mezzo-soprano and contralto evokes the sensually seductive type of woman (e.g. Dalila in Saint-Saëns’s *Samson et Dalila* and Maddalena in *Rigoletto*). The richer and earthier timbre of the lower female voice suggests the basically instinctive nature of such gypsy characters as Azucena in *Il Trovatore* and Preziosilla in *La Forza del Destino*. These connotations explain why the figure of Carmen is more tellingly impersonated by a mezzo-soprano than by a soprano.²

The author continues by arguing that mezzo-soprano and contralto voices resemble the male voice and therefore composers often cast women in this *fach* as the jealous and malicious characters compared to the true and simplistic nature of the soprano (e.g. Ortrud versus Elsa in *Lohengrin*).³

When one looks at the significant mezzo-soprano roles in nineteenth-century opera, it is clear that the majority of these roles can be seen as representations of the Other. The aim of the thesis will be to investigate some of the most important nineteenth-century mezzo-soprano roles that represent the Other.

1

M. Kennedy & J. Bourne Kennedy, ‘Mezzo-soprano’, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*. Current online version, <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezprozy.uct.ac.za>.

² K. Mitchells, ‘Operatic Characters and Voice Type’, *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 97, (1970), 55.

³ Mitchells, *Operatic Characters and Voice Type*, 55.

The main research question is:

To what extent do the selected roles represent the various templates delineated in theories of alterity?

The roles will be classified and discussed according to four templates of alterity: social, religious, moral and emotional.

The following sub-questions will be addressed:

1. How is alterity reflected in the libretto and in the music?
2. What were the ideas and intentions of the librettist and composer as revealed in other primary sources?

Most musicologists reduce Otherness to exoticism and often use these two terms as synonyms. For instance, in his article ‘Beyond the Exotic: How “Eastern” is *Aida*?’ Ralph Locke addresses the matter of the Ethiopians as Others in Egypt and argues that Aida is being othered by Amneris in Act II. However, in the thesis the subject of alterity will be approached from a different angle. It is more a question of psychology or social dynamics (rather than nationality) and it is a point that is not focused on enough. I will concentrate specifically on the Otherness of the mezzo-soprano character. Notwithstanding, if the character in question is part of the nation or group being othered, as in *Carmen* and *Samson et Dalila*, for instance, I will discuss the nation or group as Others, as well as the alterity of the character.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.2.1 Philosophical perspectives on alterity or Otherness

The others are defined by negation; they are everything the self is not, the mirror in which the self recognizes its own identity ... the other represents not only what the self is not, but also what it may wish to be.⁴

Identities are often defined through the branding of another ‘different’ person or group. This process relies on the concept of the Other, described by the term ‘alterity’. The term is rooted in *alteritas*, the Latin word meaning ‘the state of being other or different: diversity, otherness.’⁵

⁴ L. Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 34.

⁵ C.T. Lewis, *A Latin Dictionary, Founded on Andrews’ Edition of Freud’s Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), 98.

Hegel was amongst the first to establish the concept of the Other in developing the theory of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. He postulated that noticing a difference and distinguishing between oneself and another creates a sense of estrangement and isolation, which one then tries to resolve by becoming like the Other. Many found Hegel's dialectical theory somewhat abstract and it lay dormant for many years before becoming a central focus in Karl Marx and in more contemporary 'continental' philosophy, with Lacan, Levinas, Derrida and Foucault all expanding on and adapting Hegel's theory for their own ends. Foucault argues that the Other are people who are 'excluded from positions of power and that are often victimized within a predominantly liberal humanist view of the subject.'⁶ Simone de Beauvoir adjusted the Hegelian dialectic to convey her feminist critique of male-dominated society. De Beauvoir argues that society regards and acts towards women as the Other in opposition to men. According to De Beauvoir, 'the Other [is] the minority, the least favoured one and often a woman.'⁷ Edward Said agrees with De Beauvoir's perceptions, but he expands her definition of the oppressed Other to include politically, culturally and/or economically disadvantaged societies.⁸

In *Postmodern Thought*, Sim defines othering as:

The privileging of one term over and above the other (good over evil, light over dark, reason over emotion, master over slave, model over copy, original over reproduction, literature over criticism, high culture over popular culture, etc.) ... [it] reveals that the preference for one term always works at the expense or exclusion of the other subordinated term.⁹

Foucault argues that it is often the victim, the repressed or the outcast who are othered, the people perceived as standing in opposition to the subject.¹⁰ Indeed, the guiding principle in the continental view of alterity seems to be that it is the less privileged or the oppressed person who is perceived as the Other, for instance, the slave is 'othered' by the master, but not vice versa. However, it also seems that the circumstances or society in which one finds oneself define the different borders of Otherness. An immigrant might find himself 'othered' in his adopted country, but if he returns to own country, he would no longer be the Other. But there he might also in turn be othering women or someone from a different race or religion. Many people are at once victims and perpetrators of othering.

These views illustrate some of the different classifications or templates of alterity that can be

⁶ M. Foucault, *Religion and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 181.

⁷ S. de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Knopf, 2010), 56.

⁸ E.W. Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 3.

⁹ S. Sim, *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought* (London: Penguin, 1998), 222.

¹⁰ Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, 58.

derived from issues of language, race, class, gender, nationality and ideology. The classification of alterity – specifically in the field under investigation (mezzo-soprano roles in nineteenth-century opera) – can be divided into four principal categories:

1. Social, which incorporates ethnic, gender or economic Otherness;
2. Religious;
3. Moral, resulting from the deviance of established morality;
4. Emotional, usually in the form of unreciprocated attachment.

These four templates do not apply only to the mezzo-soprano in nineteenth-century opera, of course. Often the baritone can also be classified as the Other, for instance, Rigoletto in Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Scarpia in Puccini's *Tosca*. However, in this thesis only the mezzo-soprano as representation of the Other will be discussed.

1.2.2 The mezzo-soprano as representation of the Other in nineteenth-century opera

Throughout the course of opera history composers have often cast the mezzo-soprano as the 'second lady', the supporting actress who is either the maid, the mother or the elderly nurse of one of the leading characters. The mezzo is also often cast in the role of a man or young boy. In nineteenth-century opera composers tended to cast the mezzo-soprano as the outsider on an emotional, social, moral and/or religious level.

This tendency can be traced back to the earliest years of the genre. The 'father of opera', Claudio Monteverdi, was probably one of the first composers to cast the darker voiced female in the role of the outsider. In *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1643), Ottavia, plots to kill her husband's mistress and is sent into exile. She is presented as an outsider on different levels: emotionally (as the unloved individual in a love triangle), morally (as the instigator of an assassination plot) and socially (as an exile).

For much of the next 150 years mezzo-sopranos played a fairly minor role in opera and were almost never cast as the outsider. The mezzo-soprano shared the vocal range of the castrati, who were the undisputed protagonists of the operatic stage at that time. Today, however, with the renewed interest in Baroque opera, most of these heroic travesty roles are sung by mezzo-sopranos or counter-tenors.¹¹

¹¹ A. Riding & L. Dunton-Downer, *Opera* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 85-95.

The rapid decline of the castrato after 1750 saw a corresponding rise in the deployment of the mezzo-soprano, often also in male roles (known as *Hosenrollen*). Instances include Cherubino (in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, 1786) and Sesto and Annio (in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, 1791). Mozart's only important female role for the mezzo-soprano is Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* (1790). Interestingly, Dorabella is also a morally ambiguous character, compared to soprano roles like Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*.

During the nineteenth century the decline of the castrato led to an increase in the importance of the soprano and tenor, who almost always filled the principal roles.¹² In accordance with Romantic ideals, these roles usually represented the good, the pure and/or the heroic. The darker middle voices were used to represent darker aspects of human nature. The gradual increase in the size of the orchestra and in the level of expressive intensity required also caused mezzo-sopranos to develop a more robust chest register. Composers started to associate this sound with the sensual (Carmen in *Carmen*, Dalila in *Samson et Dalila*) and the immoral (Ortrud in *Lohengrin*, Eboli in *Don Carlo*, Azucena in *Il trovatore*) and, in general, with deviation from the 'uprightness' represented by the main characters.

1.3 RATIONALE

I chose this subject because, as a mezzo-soprano, my understanding of the roles under investigation would be greatly enhanced. Also, the research should lead other performers to a more insightful and truthful interpretation of these roles in the future. The roles that were chosen for discussion in the thesis are taken from some of the most frequently performed nineteenth-century operas, according to sources such as Rudolph Kloiber's *Handbuch der Oper* and Marita Knobel and Brigitte Steinert's *Singing Opera in Germany*.

The criteria which were used to select the roles are:

1. The character in the opera must represent the Other. For instance, Charlotte in Jules Massenet's *Werther* (1892) is the leading female role, but she does not represent any of the different templates of the Other;
2. The role must be substantial. Maddalena in Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto* (1851) definitely qualifies as a representation of the Other, but she appears only in the third act in a subsidiary

¹² A notable exception to this can be found in the operas of Rossini, who wrote most of his leading female roles for his wife, the coloratura mezzo Isabella Colbran.

capacity;

3. The character must be multifaceted and complex, neither entirely good (Adalgisa in Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma* - 1831), nor entirely bad (The Witch in Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* - 1893) in order to warrant closer scrutiny, and should show evidence of inner conflict and/or growth. The exception to this rule is Ortrud, who is completely evil. However, I find that she is so obsessed with destroying Elsa and Lohengrin that the role is definitely worth discussing.

In accordance with the criteria stated above, the scope of the study has been narrowed down to seven operas. The list of operas selected for this dissertation is outlined below in chronological order.

1. Ortrud in *Lohengrin* (Wagner) – 1850

Ortrud can be classified as a moral and religious Other. Most of the characters who are discussed in this thesis are usually complex and struggle to distinguish between right and wrong, often because they lack clarity of thought and find themselves in complicated situations. However, all Ortrud's actions are evil and malicious, because she is consumed with jealousy, and seeks power above everything else. She will do anything to destroy Elsa and Lohengrin. Robert Donington states that 'Ortrud is here the villainess whose formidable ambitions precipitate the crisis.'¹³

2. Azucena in *Il trovatore* (Verdi) – 1853

Azucena is the first of Verdi's roles designated for mezzo who are, according to Andreas Batta, 'contradictory in nature, combining both positive and negative features, and the vocal register indicates the character itself.'¹⁴ He adds that 'Azucena is the most mysterious and complex of Verdi's characters, and the most important mezzo part in any of his operas.'¹⁵ Azucena is haunted by her past, and her present is consumed by events that happened long ago. Her sanity is compromised by the thoughts of how her mother died at the stake and how she threw her own child into a fire by mistake. She can be classified as a moral and social Other.

4. Mignon in *Mignon* (Thomas) – 1866

Unlike most of the other roles that are discussed of the mezzo-soprano character who has a dubious

¹³ R. Donington, *Opera and its Symbols, the Unity of Words, Music and Staging* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), 100.

¹⁴ A. Batta, *Opera, Composers, Works, Performers* (Köln: Könnemann, 2005), 702.

¹⁵ Batta, *Opera*, 703.

moral compass and makes her own set of social criteria to live by, Mignon is a goodhearted, sweet young girl who is othered by her debauched travel companions. Mignon is a social Other because she is othered by the gypsies. However, she is also an emotional Other, because she is in love with Wilhelm, who does not reciprocate her love.

5. Eboli in *Don Carlo* (Verdi) – 1884

Eboli is another illustration of Verdi's preference for casting the mezzo as a scheming adulteress with questionable ethical values. Despite being King Philip's mistress, Eboli is secretly in love with his son, Carlo. He, however, is in love with his father's wife Elisabetta. After Eboli realises that Carlo is in love with his stepmother, she steals Elisabetta's casket containing a photo of Carlo and hands it over to the King. Eboli corresponds to two templates of Otherness: moral and emotional.

6. Amneris in *Aida* (Verdi) – 1871

Locke describes Amneris as follows in his essay 'Beyond the Exotic: How "Eastern" is *Aida*': 'Amneris is so many things, successively or all at once, that one can see why commentators often prefer her to all the other characters. She is a pampered princess but a stereotypically lustful, man-hungry Middle-Eastern woman; she is a control freak, furious when she doesn't get her way; a seductive schemer, a gloating sadist; and – yes – a tender heart that has come to know love, however unrequited.'¹⁶ Although Amneris is guilty of othering Aida, she can be described as simultaneously the emotional Other, because of her unreciprocated love for Radames. Radames, in turn, is in love with Aida and even though the King of Egypt (Amneris's father) has offered his daughter to Radames, he prefers to die rather than marry Amneris.

7. Carmen in *Carmen* (Bizet) – 1875

Carmen is probably the best known example of the mezzo-soprano as representation of the Other. The story of the untamed gypsy who seduces the unwitting and righteous citizen Don José, just to leave him for a more exciting option, the glamorous bullfighter Escamillo, is one of opera's most popular narratives. Don Jose's love for and obsession with Carmen leads to his downfall as he finally kills her at the conclusion of the opera. Batta contests that '[t]he social motive is unimportant in her case: she is not a revolutionary, but is a social outsider. Her actions therefore cannot be measured by the prevailing moral standards. Like a natural phenomenon, Carmen has her own laws.'¹⁷ Because Carmen is a gypsy whose lifestyle does not correspond to society's conventions,

¹⁶ R.P. Locke, 'Beyond the Exotic: How "Eastern" is *Aida*', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 17(2), (2005), 132.

¹⁷ Batta, *Opera*, 58.

she falls into two categories of the Other: social and moral.

8. Dalila in *Samson et Dalila* (Saint-Saëns) – 1877

Dalila is a very complex character and much of her characterisation depends on the choices of the director and the singer who is portraying the role. In ‘Constructing the Oriental “Other”’: Saint-Saëns’s “Samson et Dalila”, Ralph Locke gives a summary of the character of Dalila:

Delilah’s potent mixture of irreconcilable motives, especially in a work that guides the audience to identify primarily with the Hebrews, makes her a chief example of the ‘dangerous Other’ – at once *femme fatale* and devious Oriental. She is also very complex, and may not always be saying what she means, even when speaking to the High Priest and especially when speaking to Samson.¹⁸

As the Other, Dalila follows her own rules, and consequently is an outsider on several different levels – morally, socially as well as religious.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

Alterity and its expression in art have been the subject of many doctoral theses and articles, but rarely in relation to the mezzo-soprano in nineteenth-century opera. A notable exception is Ralph Locke’s ‘Constructing the Oriental “Other”’: Saint-Saëns’s “Samson et Dalila”,¹⁹ while his ‘Beyond the Exotic: How “Eastern” is *Aida*?’²⁰ also looks at issues of alterity in a nineteenth-century opera. More general studies on characters portrayed by mezzo-sopranos in various nineteenth-century operas include Naomi Andre’s ‘Azucena, Eboli, and Amneris: Verdi’s Writing for Women’s Lower Voices’²¹ and Mary Ann Smart’s ‘*Dalla tomba uscita*: Representations of madness in nineteenth-century Italian opera.’²² Patricia Adkins-Chiti discusses in depth the origins of the mezzo-soprano as the Other in the article ‘The mezzo-soprano voice: the melodramatic soul of enchantment, evil, motherhood and masculinity.’²³

In *The Encyclopaedia of Identity*²⁴ Ronald L. Jackson delves into the concept of the Other. There is

¹⁸ R.P. Locke, ‘Constructing the Oriental “Other”’: Saint-Saëns’s “Samson et Dalila”, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 3(3), (1991), 293.

¹⁹ Locke, ‘Constructing the Oriental Other’, 261- 302.

²⁰ Locke, ‘Beyond the Exotic: How “Eastern” is *Aida*?’, 105-139.

²¹ N.A Andre, ‘Azucena, Eboli and Amneris: Verdi’s Writing for Women’s Lower Voices’ (Harvard University, 1996) Proquest Dissertations and Theses, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304292391?accountid=14500>.

²² M.A. Smart, ‘*Dalla Tomba Uscita*: Representations of Madness in Nineteenth-century Italian Opera’ (Cornell University, 1994). Proquest Dissertations and Theses, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304121155?accountid=14500>.

²³ P. Adkins-Chiti, ‘The Mezzo-soprano Voice: the Melodramatic Soul of Enchantment, Evil, Motherhood and Masculinity’, *Frauenstimmen, Frauenrollen in der Oper und Frauen-Selbstzeugnisse* (Herzbolzheim: Centaurus, 2000).

²⁴ R.L. Jackson & M.A. Hogg (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Identity* (California: SAGE, 2010).

also an article on the history of Otherness. Jackson also investigates the different aspects involved in classifying one as an Other. Jackson's 'Black "Manhood" as Xenophobe: An Ontological Exploration of the Hegelian Dialectic'²⁵ will also be investigated. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*²⁶ will also be examined, as will studies based on de Beauvoir's work, for instance Spelman's *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*.²⁷ Books consulted on Foucault's and Lacan's concept of Otherness include *The Works of Jacques Lacan – An Introduction*²⁸ and *Lacan: The Absolute Master*.²⁹ In *Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness* Connolly writes of Foucault's concept of the Other, although Foucault himself never actually used the term 'the Other'. One of the most important works on alterity is probably Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*. Said, who grounds his theories on those of other postmodern philosophers such as Foucault, who considers all post-colonial culture as outcast, argues that Westerners are 'dealing with [the Orient] by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.'³⁰ However, Said expands his ideas by stating that it is not just the Orient that represents the outcast, but most countries that are now independent in the post-colonial period, such as the Caribbean and Africa as well as South-East Asia. In 2007 Ibn Warraq published *Defending the West – A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism*, in which he states that Said's facts are mostly untrue and that Said's statements only teach Easterners self-pity.³¹

Catherine Clement's book *Opera, or the Undoing of Woman*³² examines the plots of 30 operas. Clement studies the characters and their actions, and specifically looks at the words of the libretti to substantiate her argument that women are often portrayed in a negative light in nineteenth-century opera. In *Georges Bizet, Carmen*,³³ Susan McClary analyses the character of Carmen from a feminist perspective. She is of the opinion that because Carmen is such a well-known opera, very few people actually approach the opera with the appropriate rigour and thoughtfulness. McClary also emphasises the differences in class, race and gender which appear in the opera. This book provides a number of original, if somewhat debatable, insights. In *Feminine Endings – Music, Gender, and*

²⁵ R.L. Jackson, 'Black "Manhood" as Xenophobe: An Ontological Exploration of the Hegelian Dialectic', *Journal of Black Studies*, 27(6), 731-750.

²⁶ De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*.

²⁷ E.V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).

²⁸ B. Benvenuto & R. Kennedy, *The Works of Jacques Lacan – an Introduction* (London: Free Association Books, 1986).

²⁹ M. Borch-Jacobson, *Lacan: the Absolute Master* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

³⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

³¹ I. Warraq, *Defending the West- A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism*. (New York: Prometheus Books, 2007).

³² C. Clement, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

³³ S. McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Sexuality,³⁴ McClary investigates the way in which music shapes our response to different female characters. The book discusses different styles of music (from early seventeenth-century to present-day pop) and how we perceive gender differences through the music.

In the dissertation ‘*Dalla tomba uscita: Representations of madness in nineteenth-century Italian opera*’, Smart discusses characters who succumb to madness in nineteenth-century opera. Although these are mostly soprano characters (*Lucia di Lammermoor, I Puritani, I pazzi per progetto, Maria Padilla*), there is also a chapter dealing with Azucena and the question of why Verdi did not write a mad scene for her. Two books that are important to any scholar studying the operas of Verdi are Godefroy’s *Verdi: Studies of Selected Operas, Volumes I and II*³⁵ and Julian Budden’s analysis of the Verdi operas.³⁶ Godefroy examines the way in which Verdi portrays the characters and drama through his music. References to the original play or book are important in illuminating the intentions of the librettist and the composer. Hughes’s comprehensive guide to twelve of Verdi’s operas focuses more on the musical aspects of the works.³⁷ It examines all three Verdi operas that will be discussed in this thesis and studies each act individually with many references to the music. It also demonstrates how Verdi’s composition methods developed throughout his life. *The Music Dramas of Richard Wagner and his Festival Theatre in Bayreuth*³⁸ by Albert Lavignac is one of many books written on the Wagner operas. Its careful analysis of the libretto and music offers many new insights into *Lohengrin*. The books and studies by Barry Millington³⁹ and by Deathridge and Dahlhaus⁴⁰ will be used as well.

In terms of looking at correspondence on the selected operatic works: *Family Letters of Richard Wagner*⁴¹ and *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt*⁴² will be consulted. *Verdi, the Man in his Letters*,⁴³ will give more insight into the genesis of *Aida, Il trovatore* and *Don Carlo*. *My Life*,⁴⁴ Richard Wagner’s autobiography in two volumes, provides insights into Wagner’s life as well as the background to the composition of *Lohengrin*. Other books that will also provide background

³⁴ S. McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

³⁵ V. Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi: Studies of Selected Operas* (London: Gollancz, 1975).

³⁶ J. Budden, *The Operas of Verdi* (London: Cassell, 1984).

³⁷ S. Hughes, *Famous Verdi Operas: an Analytical Guide for the Opera-Goer and Armchair Listener* (London: Hale, 1968).

³⁸ A. Lavignac & E. Singleton, *The Music Dramas of Richard Wagner and his Festival Theatre in Bayreuth*, (London: Nisbet, 1921).

³⁹ B. Millington, *Wagner* (London: Dent, 1986).

⁴⁰ J. Deathridge & C. Dahlhaus, *The New Grove Wagner* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

⁴¹ R. Wagner & W.A. Ellis, *Family Letters of Richard Wagner* (London: Macmillan, 1911).

⁴² R. Wagner et. al., *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* (New York: Vienna House, 1973).

⁴³ G. Verdi, F. Werfel & P. Stefan-Gruenfeldt, *Verdi, the Man in his Letters* (New York: Vienna House, 1973).

⁴⁴ R. Wagner, *My Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

information on the composer, librettist and the time which the opera was written are *Encounters with Verdi*⁴⁵ and *Opera Offstage: Passion and Politics behind the Great Operas*.⁴⁶

1.5 METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

The first part of my study will consist of an investigation of the origin, history, theory and concept behind the predominantly post-colonial term ‘the Other’. I will then continue my research by examining each of the four templates of alterity, namely social, moral, emotional and religious. Within each template I will draw from the various theorists and in this way relate the theorists’ concept of Otherness to the four templates mentioned above. Edward W. Said, Simone de Beauvoir, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault and Ronald L. Jackson are the theorists who will be discussed under the different templates of alterity.

In the second part of my study I will start with a thorough analysis of the seven chosen mezzo-soprano roles in the specifically named operas. They will be grouped according to the different templates of Otherness. The characters who are gypsies and who fit the template of social Otherness will be discussed first. These are: Carmen, Azucena and Mignon (although Mignon was actually kidnapped as a child and is not really part of the group of gypsies). Dalila, Amneris and Eboli are all three *femme fatales*. Each of these three characters fit different templates of Otherness and they will be discussed in succession. The second part of the thesis ends with the analysis of Ortrud as moral and religious Other.

Each of these individual roles will be investigated and analysed in relation to the concept of alterity. The following matters will be discussed:

1. The intentions of the librettist and composer as evinced in relevant correspondence and in the work itself;
2. The manifestations of Otherness of the role in the libretto;
3. The way in which these elements are manifested in the music: meter, rhythm and phrasing, dissonance, chromaticism and key, orchestration, the use of specific motifs, rhythmical motifs and melodic contour, range and vocal timbre, and the frequent use of set pieces will all be analysed and examined.

⁴⁵ G. Verdi, M. Conati & R Stokes, *Encounters with Verdi* (New York: Cornell University, 1984).

⁴⁶ M.E. Brener, *Opera Offstage: Passion and Politics Behind the Great Operas* (London: Robson, 2003).

In the concluding chapter I will sum up the various characteristics of Otherness found in the libretti in relation to the theorists. Then I will also summarise the different ways in which these features of Otherness in the libretto have been mirrored in the music and the different ways in which the mezzo-soprano as the Other manifests in the music.

2. THE CONCEPT OF THE OTHER

2.1 DEFINITION AND HISTORY OF THE TERM

The Encyclopaedia of Identity defines the Other as follows:

The Other (which can refer to just one person or a group of people) is directly related to personal identity and how a person defines himself or herself. Typically, the Other is perceived negatively and is deemed different from and less admired or respected than the self.¹

The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy states the Other is a term

... intended to circumscribe other human beings, and their differences from me (or us). The otherness of other people can be underplayed, leading to charges of privileging the self or selves from whom they are supposed to be not so different, or overplayed, leading unfortunately to just the same charge, as when women are thought of as failed men, Orientals as failed Europeans, etc.²

Plato's theory of negation was the first step towards the idea of Otherness; he stated that 'when we assert that black is *not* white, we are asserting that black is *other* than white.'³ However, it was millennia later that Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) defined the concept in more detail in his writing on the master-slave dialectic in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, with the slave being othered by the master and thus in the less desirable position. The notion of the Other developed from thinking about the nature of identity and the realisation that one establishes one's own personal identity through differentiation between your 'self' and an 'other' – 'one's self often becomes defined *against* another, a phenomenon that can be called "definition through difference"⁴. The linguist Ferdinand de Saussure defined identity or alterity as 'x, in part because it is not y, and only through the knowledge of y can we understand the identity of x (as "*not-y*").'⁵ Barnett Savary argues in his essay 'Identity and Difference' that, '[w]ithout the relation of Otherness, everything would be identical.'⁶ Many philosophers, social theorists and feminists have written and contributed towards our ideas on the Other. Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida were some of the leaders among these theorists. Levinas argues that the Other is within ourselves and is part of our unconscious which one must converge with ethically. Derrida postulated that 'putting the matter in those terms already implies a privileged status for the self.'⁷ Out of 'the Other' developed the terms 'Otherness' and 'othering'. The most popular usage of the word 'the Other' is

¹ A.J. Critchfield, 'The Other', *The Encyclopedia of Identity*, ed. by R.L. Jackson (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 519.

² S. Blackburn (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 264.

³ B. Savary, 'Identity and Difference', *The Philosophical Review*, 51(2), 205.

⁴ Critchfield, *The Encyclopedia of Identity*, 526.

⁵ Critchfield, *The Encyclopedia of Identity*, 526.

⁶ Savary, *Identity and Difference*, 205.

⁷ Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 264.

to describe a person or group of people who are excluded and seen as outcasts because of race, culture, gender, sexual preferences or class.⁸

The list of theorists chosen for discussion (Simone de Beauvoir, Edward W. Said, Ronald L. Jackson, Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan) is tailored specifically to the operas examined. Their ideas on alterity correspond to the notion of Otherness as discussed in the operas in the thesis.

2.2 THE FOUR TEMPLATES OF OTHERNESS

2.2.1 Social Otherness

For the purpose of this thesis social Otherness incorporates ethnic, racial, gender as well as economic Otherness. Both Carmen and Azucena can be classified as social Others because they are part of a marginalized group of gypsies. However, Mignon is not only part of a marginalized group, she is also is othered by these same gypsies. During the first part of the opera Amneris fits the template of an emotional Other, but when she does not accept the social norms when Radames is punished for his actions, she becomes a social outsider. Said, Jackson, Foucault, de Beauvoir as well as Lacan's ideas on the Other can be connected to social Otherness.

Beauvoir built upon the ideas of Hegel but she postulates in *Pyrrhus & Cinéas* that the Other is the one who is free. It is precisely the difference that makes one the Other that sets one free.⁹ This idea contrasts with Hegel's concept of Otherness, where the slave is by definition not free. In *Pyrrhus & Cinéas* Beauvoir considered the position of the Other to be more positive.

In *The Second Sex* the philosopher argues that in modern society women can be classified as the Other. Women are othered by men who place them in a secondary role in comparison to themselves. This theory was not new as it can be traced back as far as Plato's *Republic*.¹⁰ Beauvoir, however, elaborates on this concept by stating that men make women the Other by deeming them 'mysterious' and 'objects of fascination': 'She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute.

⁸ Critchfield, *The Encyclopedia of Identity*, 526.

⁹ Genoni, *Encyclopedia of Identity*, 528.

¹⁰ Genoni, *Encyclopedia of Identity*, 528.

She is the Other.’¹¹

But what singularly defines the situation of woman is that being, like all humans, an autonomous freedom, she discovers and chooses herself in a world where men force her to assume herself as Other: an attempt is made to freeze her as an object and doom her to immanence, since her transcendence will be forever transcended by another essential and sovereign consciousness.¹²

Beauvoir argues that a woman is not only the Other to the subject of men – a woman is man’s inferior Other. She notes the ways in which women internalise a feeling of inferiority. The second volume starts with the famous line: ‘One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.’ Beauvoir describes how girls are groomed from a young age in countless ways to develop a feminine nature that is obedient and submissive. However, it is later in life, in puberty, that feelings of shame, which become the basis of inferiority, begin. According to Sonia Kruks in ‘Reading Beauvoir with and against Foucault’, ‘[i]n the experience of menstruation (at least in Western Society) a young women’s profound sense of herself as not only the Other but as the inferior Other is dramatically discovered.’¹³ Kruks adds: ‘Shame, as what we might call a primary structure of a woman’s lived experience ... becomes integral to a generalized sense of inferiority of the feminine body-subject.’¹⁴ Simone de Beauvoir states throughout *The Second Sex* that shame is an impulse that women experience throughout all the stages of her life, from early childhood to motherhood to old age. She is of the opinion that shame makes women feel inferior and embarrassed about their ‘embodied self’, and that the feeling of unworthiness is a major factor in women’s countless superfluous daily duties that generate submissiveness and ‘accepted’ feminine demeanour.

However, critics noted that Beauvoir was looking at the Other from a heterosexual point of view, because she deals only with the subject of Otherness from a perspective of gender and not sexuality. She does not take homosexual people into account. In Elisabeth Spelman’s *Inessential Women*, the author comments that in Beauvoir’s treatment of the women as the Other, all the women are of the same religion and culture.

A troubling characteristic of much contemporary feminist theory is its failure to take seriously the intertwining of sexism with other forms of oppression ... In de Beauvoir’s work, we have all the essential elements of a feminist account of “women’s lives” that would not conflate “women” with a small group of women – namely white middle-class heterosexual Christian women in Western countries. Yet Beauvoir ends up producing an account which does just that.¹⁵

Beauvoir was also criticised for treating racial differences very one-dimensionally in discussions in *The Second Sex*. In her work *America Day by Day* she ‘discusses both American “Jews” and

¹¹ S. de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010) 6.

¹² Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 17.

¹³ Kruks, ‘Reading Beauvoir with and against Foucault’, *Simone de Beauvoir’s Political Thinking*, ed. by L.J. Marso & P. Moynagh, (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2006), 56.

¹⁴ Kruks, ‘Reading Beauvoir with and against Foucault’, 56.

¹⁵ Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988) 58.

American “women”, but not Jewish American women.’¹⁶

The Coming of Age is in many ways similar to *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir argues that the elderly are being othered by society. However, in this work the author reminds us that ageing is something that will happen to us all. Race, class and background determine the manner and degree to which people are othered as they become elderly. As one ages it becomes more difficult to engage with the world, physically as well as spiritually, but this is no reason, according to Beauvoir, to relegate the elderly person to the status of Other.¹⁷

Edward W. Said argues that Western society interprets the East as the powerless, feminized Other. Said’s most important contributions to the academic world are his book *Orientalism* and his ideas on the Other. When Said published *Orientalism* in 1978, it caused an immense uproar in the academic world, with many scholars criticising Said’s theory, including academics with Eastern roots, such as Bernhard Lewis and Albert Hourani. He postulates in *Orientalism* that Western society hold many prejudices about Eastern cultures, often romanticizing or having negative preconceptions about anyone of a non-Western origin. In the article ‘Islam through Western Eyes’, the author argues that

[s]o far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world.¹⁸

Said identifies orientalism as being ‘an antecedent of postmodernism and postcolonialism.’¹⁹ Throughout the book one can see the influence of Foucault and his concept of the power-knowledge relation. In *Orientalism* Said states that there is no such thing as an unchanging and uninfluenced identity and so he ‘undermines the belief in the certain positivity and unchanging historicity of a culture, a self or a national identity.’²⁰

Ronald. L. Jackson applies Said's notion of Otherness to American culture by stating that the African American male is placed in the position of the Other. There is also a lack of motivation or need to negotiate cultural assimilation by the dominant culture (in this case, the European American). Richard Jenkins states in the *Encyclopedia of Identity* that our identities are socially

¹⁶ P. Deutscher, *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir, Ambiguity, Conversion, Resistance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 133.

¹⁷ S. de Beauvoir, *The Coming of Age* (New York: Putman, 1977).

¹⁸ E.W. Said, ‘Islam Through Western Eyes’, *The Nation*, 26 April 1980, first posted online 1 January 1998, <http://www.thenation.com/doc/19800426/19800426said>

¹⁹ Sim, *Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, 354.

²⁰ Sim, *Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, 354.

formed and that:

Human beings learn all that they know and most of what they can do directly *from*, or indirectly *with*, other humans ... Identities are no different, and are definitively social: Their production and reproduction depends on interaction with other humans, with some of whom they will be in some senses shared.²¹

Culture, ethnicity, race, gender and economic circumstances are all contributing factors to what defines us and how we define ourselves socially. These components are at the foundation of how we manufacture our identities and therefore identify others. One's social identity is in all probability one of the greatest contributory factors to one's relationships with others. Anyone who does not belong to the established and dominant group will then be classified as Other.

Jackson argues that the African American male is othered in American society: 'Black males are hypervisible and Othered by essentializing. Black males are often hypersexualized, stigmatized as criminals and underestimated in education and occupational levels'.²² Jackson also believes that identities are socially manufactured. Culture is the basis of being, which in turn unionises the social processes which form the cornerstone of identity.²³ In *The Negotiation of Cultural Identity*,

Jackson theorizes the process of identity negotiation through the metaphor of a contractual agreement that is worked out in the course with interacting with others. People do not necessarily have a mutually shared understanding of their own and the other's cultural identity to 'sign a contract,' but they do coordinate social interaction based on negotiation over cultural perceptions, values, and beliefs. The importance or salience of the relationship also determines the degree to which a cultural contract may be open to further revision or change.²⁴

Ronald L Jackson II's CCT means that 'all human beings have cultural identity contracts that become evident when interactions between ingroup and outgroup members take place; these contacts are particularly salient in dominant-nondominant communicative acts.'²⁵ The CCT takes place between different cultures, where one culture dominates over the marginalized other. According to Jackson, these cultural contracts will only be negotiated when there is a strong need from both parties involved, for instance, in a marriage or in work-related circumstances.²⁶ To feel a certain amount of connectivity to your own culture is healthy, but when individuals move outside of their cultural circles and come into contact with Others, it may become a problem for people to adapt. Individuals can choose to accept or reject learning about and absorbing the other culture.

²¹ R. Jenkins, 'Society and Social Identity', *The Encyclopedia of Identity*, ed. by R.L. Jackson (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 767.

²² Critchfield, *The Other*, 521.

²³ Ronald L. Jackson II, *Introduction*, xxvi, C.G. Christians, 'The Ethics of Identity', *The Encyclopedia of Identity*, ed. by R.L. Jackson (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 255.

²⁴ L. M Cooks, 'Negotiation of Cultural Identity', *The Encyclopedia of Identity*, ed. by R.L. Jackson (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010) 366.

²⁵ Robinson-Moore, 'Cultural Contracts Theory', *The Encyclopedia of Identity*, ed. by R.L. Jackson (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010) 164.

²⁶ Robinson-Moore, *Cultural Contracts Theory*, 166-167.

In 1999 Jackson made a study of the identity negotiation process between European American and African American students.

Results from his study show that both White and Black students claim to resist identity negotiation intercultural encounters with the other. Resistance of both groups illustrates the relationships between cultural identity, power, and identity negotiation. For Black students, resistance was based on historical experiences of Blacks in the United States – enough negotiation had already taken place. Black participants also expressed the desire to hold onto their own cultural identities and still have positive intercultural encounters with Whites. There was a ‘those days are over’ mentality’, and many Black participants associated the desire to assimilate with Whites with a weak cultural identity and lack of self-esteem. White students, however, reported a lack of need for the negotiation process ... From this study, Jackson concluded that the negotiation of cultural identities is, in large part, a marginalized group phenomenon – mandated by dominant cultural groups. As with any contractual negotiations, identity negotiation is motivated by power balances that influence benefits and consequences for all parties. Dominant groups *dictate* relational coordination, not negotiate. Hence, there is a lack of motivation to negotiate among dominant groups.²⁷

CCT can be applied, for instance, in the university classroom, where cultural identities and historical prejudices impact on students’ views on African American professors’ competence: ‘race [also] impacts on White students’ perspective of Black male educators in another way – White fear of Black males.’²⁸ In another study CCT was used to demonstrate how European beauty ideals are projected upon African beauty standards: ‘Eurocentric beauty paradigms communicate that African/Black/dark is ugly whereas European/White/light is attractive. Hair that is African/nappy/short is bad, whereas hair that is European/straight/long is good.’²⁹

Jackson states that ‘my [black] skin color conjures certain feelings, apprehensions and insecurities for some people. Race as a biological construct is social and physiognomic, because it carries with it a memory of a set of experiences or episodes.’³⁰ In the study ‘The Face of Crime’ the authors explore the theory that many Americans are more likely to see an African American than an European American as a criminal who has committed a violent crime. However, it is not only the skin colour but also Afrocentric features such as the nose, eyes and chin that feed into prejudices about the appearance of a violent criminal: ‘people’s prototypes of criminal suspects are not simply more likely to be African American, but are also more closely associated with Afrocentric rather than Eurocentric phenotypes.’³¹

From his many studies it is clear that Jackson sees the African American male as the Other in American society. He also views the European American lifestyle as the dominant culture that is often othering the marginalized Others. However, Jackson and Crawley also point out that White

²⁷ Robinson-Moore, *Cultural Contracts Theory*, 166.

²⁸ Robinson-Moore, *Cultural Contracts Theory*, 168.

²⁹ Robinson-Moore, *Cultural Contracts Theory*, 168.

³⁰ T. Sikka, ‘Articulation Theory’, *The Encyclopaedia of Identity*, ed. by R.L. Jackson (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 37.

³¹ M.B. Oliver, R.L. Jackson, N.N. Moses & C.L. Dangerfield, ‘The Face of Crime: Viewers’ Memory of Race-Related Facial Features of Individuals Pictured in the News’, *Journal of Communication*, 54(1), 2004, 89.

Americans do not realise the privileges that their Whiteness brings, as they quote Peggy McIntosh in 'White Student Confessions': 'As a White person, I realised I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.'³²

Unlike Simone de Beauvoir, Said and Jackson, Michel Foucault never actually used the term 'the Other'. He often wrote about marginalized groups and the ways in which society exercises power over individuals or groups to make them behave in certain 'accepted' ways. This power can be good (preventing crime) or bad (preventing people from moving outside certain accepted boundaries, for instance homosexuals).

According to the *Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, the Other can be defined in the writings of Foucault as referring to

... those who are excluded from positions of power, and are often victimized within a predominantly liberal humanist view of the subject ... those who have been excluded from intellectual consideration, and have consequently had their political rights either ignored or erased. The 'Other' in this context are homosexuals, women, the clinically insane, non-whites and prisoners.³³

Jacques Lacan's writings on mental illness can be connected to social Otherness, as it is the way in which the symbolic castration is resolved that is a contributing factor in mental health. According to Lacan, it is during the mirror stage that a young child first becomes aware of himself and makes the distinction between himself and another. During the Oedipal stage, when the child tries to be a complete fulfilling love object to his mother and realizes that he can never fulfil her every need, he goes through what Lacan calls a 'symbolic castration'. According to Lacan's view of the Oedipal complex, the first person who resembles the big Other is the mother, because she is the first primary care-giver. After a certain age the child comprehends that this Other is lacking – there is a desire in the Other which the child then tries to fill by making itself a 'fully satisfying love-object.'³⁴ However, when the child is 5 or 6 years old, the father (or as Lacan states 'the symbolic father') steps in, and the child realises his or her place. This is when the symbolic castration is meant to take place. The father does this not as an individual, but as part of a bigger social structure. 'This body of *nomoi* is what Lacan calls the big Other of the child's given sociolinguistic community.'³⁵ According to Lacan, the way in which this castration is resolved and

³² R.L. Jackson & R.L. Crawley, 'White Student Confessions about a Black Male Professor: a Cultural Contracts Theory Approach to Intimate Conversations about Race and Worldview', *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 12(1), 2003, 20.

³³ S. Sim(ed.), *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought* (London: Penguin, 1998), 181.

³⁴ Sharpe, *Jacques Lacan*.

³⁵ Sharpe, *Jacques Lacan*.

the child's acceptance of this is a major contributing factor to mental health. When diagnosing a patient, Lacan always establishes how fully and completely the person has submitted to the 'symbolic castration'. Matthew Sharpe summarizes this as follows:

According to the Lacanian conceptualization, the neurotic is someone who has submitted to castration, but not without remainder. His/her symptoms stand testimony to a lasting refusal of, and resentment towards, the castrating agency of the big Other. The pervert is someone who has only partially acceded to castration. For him/her, the Law does not function wholly to repress or render inaccessible what s/he deeply desires (the maternal body). Because of this, this Law comes itself (either in prosecution, or in sufferance) to function as the object of her/his desire. Finally, the psychotic is someone who has never acceded (or been drawn to accede) to the symbolic order of social interchange bound by the name of the father. For him/her, this order of the big Other, in which people follow the Law 'because it is the Law' can thus only ever appear to be a semblance. As is most clear in the delusions of paranoiacs, s/he will thus permanently be prey to the delusion that there must be some 'Other of the big Other' (for example: aliens, the CIA, God) behind the scenes, pulling the strings of the social charade.³⁶

Jacques Lacan's theories had a considerable influence on his followers, especially on feminist theorists such as Julia Kristeva and Simone de Beauvoir.

2.2.2 Moral Otherness

Moral Otherness is applicable to the characters who deviate from the established code of morality, often as a means to get them closer to their goals and to what they desire. All the characters discussed in the thesis, except for two (Mignon and Amneris), can be described as moral Others. However, each character has her own reasons and circumstances for the defying the established code of morality. Firstly, Ortrud's immorality is in a league of its own. Her moral Otherness is born out of selfish ambition and she will definitely not let a preconceived moral code established in society stand in the way of what she wants. Eboli is a moral Other because when she realises she is the unwelcome third party in a love triangle, she is set on getting revenge and her actions throughout the whole opera are demonstrative of her defiance of the established code of morality (the stealing of the casket, as well as having an affair with Philip). Dalila and Carmen's self-serving behaviour is less evil than that of Ortrud and their erotic charm usually lets them get their way. Lastly, Azucena and Carmen are gypsies from a group that has been persecuted for centuries. Because of this persecution they were often forced to fend for themselves and in this way became moral Others. In the essay 'Otherness and the Problem of Evil: How Does That Which is Other Become Evil?' Calvin O. Schrag suggests that

[t]he other is deemed to be intrinsically repugnant and unassimilable, not only to be kept at a distance as an outcast group of untouchables but veritably to be annihilated ... [they] are bent upon the unrelenting persecution of a group of persons simply because they are members of that group, including men, women, and

³⁶ Sharpe, *Jacques Lacan*.

children. The group is ‘the others’ who are to be exterminated indiscriminately.³⁷

Michel Foucault’s work can be broadly connected to both social as well as moral Otherness – more specifically, people classifying individuals as Others because they are living outside of society’s moral code. In the essay ‘Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault’, William E. Connolly states:

He [Foucault] challenges established morality in pursuit of a higher ethical sensibility. For to challenge fixed conceptions of will, identity, responsibility, normality and punishment is to be cruel to people (and aspects of oneself) attached to established moral codes; it is to open up new uncertainties within established terms of judgement, and sometimes it is to incite punitive reactions among those whose sense of moral self-assurance has been jeopardized. The Foucauldian sensibility shares these characteristics within every experiment in morality, including those enacted today in courts, families, schools, churches, hospitals, armies, welfare offices, prisons, and workplaces.³⁸

Foucault’s ideas with regard to power and knowledge led him to believe that, among others, prisoners, homosexuals and the mentally insane were classified as Other.

Foucault’s earlier works can be classified as historical classifications of human and social sciences, while his later works ‘regard power as a discursive system of knowledge that shapes institutional practices in specific sites, such as asylums, barracks, prisons and schools.’³⁹ The philosopher’s abridged version of his doctoral thesis, *Madness and Civilization*, was his first major work. In this work Foucault lashes out at modern psychiatry and its concept of madness as being a ‘mental illness’ and at the ways in which society treats psychologically challenged people by branding them the Other. Foucault’s 1975 study, *Discipline and Punish*, examines the modern means of rehabilitating criminals through imprisonment instead of getting revenge on them by persecution and execution. While he does acknowledge the ways in which prisons have improved from previous centuries, he also states that ‘the new mode of punishment becomes the model for control of an entire society, with factories, hospitals, and schools modelled on the modern prison with three primary techniques of control, hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement, and the examination.’⁴⁰ In *The History of Modern Sexuality* Foucault states that there are similarities between restraining crime and controlling sexuality in contemporary society. Nonetheless, there are other dimensions involved in sexuality in society. Control of people is kept through others’ knowledge of themselves as well as knowledge of others; people also conform to and internalize the

³⁷ C.O. Schrag, ‘Otherness and the Problem of Evil: How Does That Which is Other Become Evil?’, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 60(1/3), 2006, 151.

³⁸ W.E. Connolly, ‘Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault’, *Political Theory*, 21(3), 1993, 365.

³⁹ E. Carrabine, ‘Michel Foucault’, *Fifty Key Sociologists: The Contemporary Theorists*, ed. by J. Scott (London: Routledge, 2007), 81.

⁴⁰ Gutting, *Michel Foucault*.

rules that are laid down by society. ‘They are controlled not only as *objects* of disciplines but also as self-scrutinizing and self-forming *subjects*.’⁴¹

Though many philosophers have drawn inspiration from Foucault’s concept of Otherness, and his investigation centres on the marginalized in society, Foucault himself actually would have preferred the disintegration of identity altogether. The philosopher postulates that the founding or sustainment of a strong identity is a form of oppressing others by branding them ‘Others’. According to Clare O’Farrell, ‘[i]t is a manner of exercising power over them and keeping them from moving outside set boundaries.’⁴²

2.2.3 Religious Otherness

Religious Otherness is very closely connected to cultural Otherness. Because one’s religious identity is so closely attached to one’s culture as well as social environment, it is often difficult to completely isolate one’s religion without taking culture and background into account as well. The critical theorist whose work explained religious Otherness most clearly is Edward W. Said. Said’s theories of religious othering and Otherness are reflected in some of the libretti of the selected operas, where there are characters that are viewed as essentially ‘good’ characters worshipping one god and the ‘bad’ characters worshipping a different ‘Other’ god. Ortrud worships Wotan and Freia, and calls upon them to help her to deceive and destroy Elsa. Dalila as a Philistine is influenced by her High Priest to seduce Samson, the Hebrew, to learn the secret of his formidable strength. This religious Otherness is also reflected in their behaviour, because both of these characters also fit the template of the moral Other.

Said argues that Western travellers, artists and writers had certain preconceived ideas from historical reports of the East, which became known as ‘orientalism’. Influenced by Gramsci and Foucault, Said argued four points in his book. Firstly, the author states that Western theorists simplify and fundamentalize pliant and ever-changing and evolving cultures and traditions. Secondly, the East is the Other as opposed to the West. David Howarth summarizes this as follows in his chapter on Edward Said in the book *Fifty Key Sociologists, The Contemporary Theorists*:

In this way, the relationship between the Occident and the Orient forms a binary opposition, in which the latter term and its alleged properties – such as a propensity for tyrannical forms of political rule (so-called ‘Oriental despotism’) – are used to construct a sense of western identity as external to the Orient. This identity is then

⁴¹ Gutting, *Michel Foucault*.

⁴² C. O’Farrell, Michel-Foucault.com, 1997, <http://www.michel-foucault.com/info/about.html>

reinforced by presenting the East as an antagonistic threat to the West and its values. In more technical terms, the Orient performs the role of a 'constitutive outside' that fixes the identity of the West while potentially destabilizing and subverting it.⁴³

Thirdly, by putting the Orient in the position of the Other and making prejudiced statements about it, the West establishes restrictions on their relationship with the East. Fourthly, orientalist references prevent the East and West from having a mutually beneficial and respectful relationship.⁴⁴

After Said's work was published it was met with much controversy and critique. Said states that the West is

... dealing with it [the East] by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.⁴⁵

Ernst Gellner contradicted Said by saying that it was completely untrue and that the Ottoman Empire could never be portrayed as being under Western rule.⁴⁶ In *Defending the West*, Ibn Warraq, criticized Said for portraying the West as a homogeneous unit, while failing to see that Said is criticising the West for doing exactly that to the East. Warraq continues by invalidating Said's statement: 'It is therefore correct that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric.'⁴⁷ Warraq dismisses Said's notions further by arguing that 'not only is every European a racist, but he must necessarily be so. "All Europeans" ... is a whole lot of people.'⁴⁸ (sic) He is also of the opinion that Said 'taught an entire generation of Arabs the art of self-pity'. He continues:

One of his [Said's] preferred moves is to depict the Orient as a perpetual victim of Western imperialism, dominance, and aggression. The Orient is never seen as an actor, an agent with free will or designs or ideas of its own. It is to this propensity that we owe that immature and unattractive quality of so much contemporary Middle-Eastern culture, self-pity, and the belief that all its ills are the result of imaginary Western-Zionist conspiracies.⁴⁹

Robert Irwin wrote in the article 'Edward's Said Shadowy Legacy' that Said did not differentiate carefully enough between the various authors discussed in *Orientalism* – for instance, Goethe, who never set foot in the East, and Edward William Lane, who spoke fluent Arabic.⁵⁰ The most general

⁴³ Howarth, 'Edward Said', *Fifty Key Sociologists, The Contemporary Theorists*, edited by J. Scott, (London: Routledge, 2007), 197.

⁴⁴ Howarth, *Fifty Key Sociologists, The Contemporary Theorists*, 197-198.

⁴⁵ E.W. Said, *Orientalism*, (England: Penguin, 1978), 3.

⁴⁶ E. Gellner, 'The Mightier Pen? Edward Said and the Double Standards of Inside-out Colonialism', *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 February 1993, 3-4

⁴⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 204.

⁴⁸ I. Warraq, *Defending the West – A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 2007), 409.

⁴⁹ Warraq, *Defending the West*, 28.

⁵⁰ R. Irwin, 'Edward Said's shadowy legacy', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 May 2008, http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/the_tls/article3885948.ece.

concern about *Orientalism* is Said's lack of differentiation in the depiction of the East between popular culture and academic studies and arts.

In 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for the Ontological Security' Catarina Kinnvall postulates that in recent years globalization has given people a greater existential anxiety, and a reaction to that 'is to seek reaffirmation of one's self-identity by drawing closer to any collective that is perceived as being able to reduce insecurity and existential anxiety.'⁵¹ She continues by saying that we do this by drawing closer to religion, and then differentiating between ourselves and religious Others.

The construction of self and other is therefore almost always a way to define superior and inferior beings. Superior are those on the inside (of the religion or nation) who represent purity, order, truth, beauty, goodness, and right (order), while those on the outside are affected by pollution, falsity, ugliness, bad and wrong.⁵²

While I do agree with Kinnvall's general point, in my view that this not has happened only in recent years. Branding a group as the religious Other has been happening since the beginning of humankind, as has been recorded many times in ancient scriptures.

2.2.4 Emotional Otherness

The emotional Other is the template that is least discussed by the theorists. Nevertheless, it is the template that is used quite often in Romantic opera. The emotional Other can be related back as being the third person in a love triangle, as being the subject of unrequited love. As was mentioned before, the dramatic structure of many Romantic operas is based upon a triangular relationship. With only a very few exceptions (*Werther*, *Carmen*), most operatic composers in the nineteenth century cast the soprano and tenor as the romantic leads and the mezzo-soprano or the baritone as the emotional Other. A very clear example of this is *Aida*. Most of the dramatic flow and tension of the opera derive from the love triangle between Aida, Radames and Amneris. However, because Radames and Aida truly love each other and Amneris is the unwanted third party trying to convince Radames to marry her, she is a very fine example of an emotional Other. Mignon also starts out as an emotional Other, when her love for Wilhelm is unrequited. However, at the end of the opera Wilhelm realises his love for Mignon and then she no longer fits the template. Eboli is also classified as an emotional Other as she is in love with Carlo, who does not reciprocate her love.

Of all the theorist's, Lacan's theories can be the most closely connected to the emotional Other. Lacan differentiated between the other and Other. The other constituted the self or 'the Imaginary

⁵¹ C. Kinnvall, 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for the Ontological Security', *Political Psychology*, 25(5) 741.

⁵² Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for the Ontological Security*, 763.

ego and its accompanying alter egos ... when relating to others as alter egos, one does so on the basis of what one “imagines” about them.’⁵³ Through these invented imaginings, one is able to endure and manoeuvre through social life, which may otherwise be completely unsettling and unknown. The Other can also ‘refer to (often fictional) ideas of anonymous authoritative power and/or knowledge.’⁵⁴ These ‘Powers’ can be God, the government, parents, nature, aliens, etc.

In Lacan’s article ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I’ he postulates that children between 6 and 18 months of age start to recognize themselves in the mirror. Before the mirror stage the infant sees himself or herself as a ‘body in bits and pieces’ through the eyes of his or her mother. The child is incapable of properly distinguishing between the self and an Other.⁵⁵ This is manifested in the behaviour of many children of that age. ‘The child who strikes another says that he has been struck; the child who sees another fall, cries.’⁵⁶ When the child sees him/herself in the mirror, he/she sees him/herself as an Other before he/she recognizes him/herself as a Self. Like the poet Rimbaud, Lacan stated: ‘I is an Other’; that is why we often think of ourselves in the third person. The mirror stage is crucial for the development of the identity of the individual.

Just like his predecessor Freud, Lacan also views the Oedipal stage as an important phase in a child’s development. Lacan, however, focuses on the resolution of the Oedipal complex. The basis of this theory is Lacan’s view that ‘[d]esire is the desire of the other’, meaning that one only desires something that is also desired by someone else. However, if the first person should cease to desire this specific object, the object will lose all its desirability and the second person will lose interest in the object.⁵⁷

Although I have delineated the four templates of alterity in distinct categories in the preceding pages, the boundaries are not so clear in the operas. Richard B. Miller points out in his article ‘On Making a Cultural Turn in Religious Ethics’⁵⁸ that culture, religion and moral values are often so intertwined that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the one from the other. In some of the operas discussed, the person from the marginalized group (social Other), for instance Carmen, does not ‘obey’ the rules of the dominant group and therefore she becomes the moral Other. It is also

⁵³ A. Johnston, ‘Jacques Lacan’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/lacan/>

⁵⁴ A. Johnston, ‘Jacques Lacan’

⁵⁵ M. Sharpe, ‘Jacques Lacan’, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2005, <http://www.iep.edu/lacweb/>

⁵⁶ B. Benevuto & R. Kennedy, *The Works of Jacques Lacan, an Introduction* (London: Free Association Books, 1986) 58.

⁵⁷ Benevuto & Kennedy, *The Works of Jacques Lacan*, 58.

⁵⁸ R.B. Miller, ‘On Making a Cultural Turn in Religious Ethics’, *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 33(3) 409-443.

important to note that the different templates are flexible over types; as a gypsy, Carmen is originally a social Other; however, living as an outcast on the fringes of society contributes to her becoming a moral Other (see Chapter 3). Azucena's social Otherness leads to her fitting the template of the moral Other (see Chapter 4).

3. CARMEN

3.1 THE CREATION OF CARMEN

When Camille du Locle and Adolphe de Leuven commissioned Bizet to write a new opera for the *Opéra-Comique*, the composer instantly thought of an opera based on Mérimée's novella *Carmen* (du Locle had also completed the libretto of *Don Carlos* some years before). However, the two directors of the *Opéra-Comique* were not immediately convinced, seeing that their opera house was more family orientated. Two librettists were assigned to the project: Henri Meilhac was to write the dialogue and Ludovic Halévy the verse.¹ According to Halévy's diaries, everybody was very passionate about writing an opera on Mérimée's *Carmen*, except for de Leuven:

I had not finished my first sentence when [de Leuven] interrupted: "Carmen! The Carmen of Mérimée? Wasn't she murdered by her lover? And the underworld of thieves, Gypsies, cigarette girls – at the Opéra-Comique, the theatre of families ... No, no, impossible!" I persisted, explaining that ours would be a softer, tamer Carmen. In addition, we would introduce a character in the tradition of the Opéra-Comique – a young, innocent girl, very pure. True, we would have Gypsies, but Gypsy comedians. And the death of Carmen would be glossed over at the very end, in a holiday atmosphere, with a parade, a ballet, a joyful fanfare. After a long difficult struggle, M. de Leuven acceded, "But I pray you," he said, "try not to have her die. Death – at the Opéra-Comique! This has never been seen, never! Don't make her die, my friend, I pray you!"²

The rehearsals started on 2 October 1874, two years after Bizet and his librettists initially started working on the opera. According to McClary, '[e]arly drafts of *Carmen* revealed that the elements of Mérimée's novella over which the Opéra-Comique administration had been apprehensive remained intact in the emerging opera, and de Leuven resigned from his post as co-director early in 1874.'³ The librettists were also doubtful about some of the elements that had been retained from the *novella*, and Meilhac pleaded that Don José does not have to murder Carmen at the end of the opera. The two lead singers, however, in support of Bizet, threatened to walk out if the ending got changed.

Casting the leading part of Carmen was not an easy task for Bizet. The first two mezzo-sopranos rejected the role. Zulma Bouffar, one of the singers who was offered the part, according to the gossip at the time, refused the role because she thought it was impossible for her to be stabbed at the end of the opera. Célestine Galli-Marié, a mezzo-soprano who had never read Mérimée's novel, accepted the role of Carmen. Luckily for Bizet, she became a fierce protector of the role and she never yielded to anybody who insisted that she should tone down her interpretation of the gypsy.

¹ S. McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 15-19.

² As quoted in: McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 19-20.

³ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 23.

‘[S]he became Bizet’s staunchest ally in the production. She brought to the role a fine musicianship, powerful acting abilities and a high degree of professionalism.’⁴ However, her greatest achievement is probably the fact that after she disliked Bizet’s first draft for Carmen’s entrance, she collaborated with the composer on writing one of opera’s most famous tunes, the ‘Habanera’.⁵ But there were still other problems to follow. The orchestra complained that sections of the score were unperformable, and the chorus who were used to standing still while singing (oratorio style) were required to move and act while singing their chorus parts. This, however, caused quite an uproar and they intended to strike.

They insisted that the two first-act choruses were unperformable: the entrance of the cigarette girls and the scuffle around the officer after the arrest of Carmen ... necessitated not only singing, but at the same time motion, action, coming and going – life, in short. This was without precedent at the Opéra-Comique. The members of the chorus were in the habit of singing the ensembles, standing motionless in line, their arms slack, their eyes fixed on the conductor’s baton, their thoughts elsewhere.⁶

Not only had Bizet, du Locle and the rest of the opera management to deal with these problems, but during the whole rehearsal period there was a constant shortage of rehearsal space as well, because *Carmen* was only one of twenty productions in the *Opéra-Comique*’s repertoire that year.

On 3 March 1875 *Carmen* had its première. Halévy wrote,

The entry of Carmen was well received and applauded, as well as the duet between Micaela and Don José. As the first act ended there were many curtain calls. Backstage, Bizet was surrounded, congratulated! The second act, less enthusiasm. It opened brilliantly. The entrance of Escamillo was most effective. But then the audience cooled ... surprised, unhappy, ill-at-ease. Backstage, fewer admirers, congratulations restrained. No enthusiasm at all for the third act except for Micaela’s aria. The audience was frigid during the fourth act. Only a few devotees of Bizet came backstage. *Carmen* was not a success. Meilhac and I walked home with Bizet. Our hearts were heavy.⁷

The dismal failure of the first performance of *Carmen* is by now one of opera’s most repeated stories. According to Dean, Bizet said, ‘Don’t you see that all these bourgeois have not understood a wretched word of the work I have written for them?’⁸ McClary postulated that *Carmen* was rejected on the basis of its ‘moral propriety and musical style.’⁹

After the huge disappointment at the unenthusiastic reception of *Carmen*, Bizet left Paris to stay in his house in the countryside. He became ill, and after two heart attacks he died a few days later on 3 June 1875. About eight months later *Carmen* premièred in Vienna, where Ernest Guiraud

⁴ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 24.

⁵ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 24.

⁶ As quoted in: McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 24.

⁷ As quoted in: McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 27.

⁸ W. Dean, *Georges Bizet, His Life and Work* (London: J.M. Dent, 1965), 116.

⁹ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 111.

substituted the spoken dialogue with recitatives, and *Carmen* became one of the most successful and best loved operas of all times. But Bizet never lived to see this.

3.2 THE OTHERNESS OF CARMEN IN THE LIBRETTO OF CARMEN

When Carmen first enters in Act I she sings the ‘Habanera’, a performance within a performance. She sings that ‘love is like a rebellious bird that nothing can tame ... love is a child of Bohemia ... if I love you, watch out for yourself’.¹⁰ The ‘Habanera’ defines Carmen from the first moment as an Other through the music (see section 3.3). The ‘Habanera’ is also a set piece and while this aria does not contribute to the opera’s narrative as such, it does give us a vital glimpse into the character of Carmen. Through this aria the listener may perceive Carmen as a moral or ‘sexual’ Other. Dean defines Carmen's main characteristics as her love of freedom, unscrupulousness and spirit. These characteristics are all highlighted in the ‘Habanera’. While the words indicate that she is philosophising about love, this aria may be Carmen’s comment on life and love, and is similar to Eboli’s ‘Song of the Veil’, which is also a set piece not part of the opera narrative but establishes the character of Eboli moments of entering the stage. The young men all surround Carmen; she, however, catches a glimpse of Don José and asks him what he is doing and when he tells her that he is working on his saber pin, she laughs and replies, ‘Your saber pin, really! Saber-pinner of my soul!’¹¹ These words may be indicating that she mocks Jose and that she wants to attach him to her soul in the same way he is attaching his saber pin to the chain. These are actually prophetic words, as their fates become completely intertwined during the course of the opera. After she leaves, he muses that the flower that she threw at him had the effect of a bullet hitting him. This is an indication of the tremendous impact Carmen's womanly presence had on him, a meeting that indeed changes his life from that day on.

After Carmen’s fight in the factory, she is detained by José. However, when Zuniga tries to question Carmen she replies with ‘Tra, la, la ... I defy everything, fire, the iron, and heaven itself!’¹² He insists on an answer, but she just keeps on singing and replies that she keeps secrets well. Zuniga instructs her to sing her songs to the prison walls; she in return tries to attack her fellow factory

¹⁰ N. Castel, *French Opera Libretti* (New York: Leyerle, Geneseo, 2005), 80. When the libretto is quoted, sometimes the order of the words is changed so that the sentence reads easier.

¹¹ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 81.

¹² Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 91.

workers and to bite Zuniga. He gives José the instruction to tie her wrists together. Carmen tells José that he can throw away the flower that she gave him, because the spell is already working, and he will do anything that she tells him to do. When José orders her to stop talking, she starts singing the ‘Seguidilla’. She will go to Lillas Pastia and ‘dance the Seguidilla and drink some Manzanilla’.¹³ José tells her to stop talking, whereupon she replies, that she was just singing and thinking and she is allowed to do that. ‘I am thinking of a certain officer, who loves me, and whom at my turn I could really love.’¹⁴ José starts losing his grip and tells her he is completely besotted with her, and if she promises that she will love him, he’ll let her go. Her response is that they will dance the Seguidille and drink manzanilla. When Zuniga enters, Carmen whispers to José that she will push him and he has to let it look like she escaped by accident. Nevertheless, Zuniga arrests Jose for failing to detain Carmen. By the end of Act I, Carmen fits the template of a social and moral Other. She is a Spanish gypsy, who works in a cigarette factory, which makes her a social Other. She fits the template of the moral Other, because she gets into fights and seduces José, so that he may help her get out of jail. This is all living outside of the established code of morality. Dean summarises it as follows: ‘In *Carmen* the heroine and the villain are combined in one person ... Carmen on the other hand not only seduced José, but set about it on the stage, and only too successfully: when the ‘true’ love of Micaela is thrown in the balance, the scales sink down heavily on the wrong side.’¹⁵

As Act II opens, Carmen’s social Otherness is immediately re-established in the ‘Chanson Bohème’. This is a ‘performance’ within the opera that she renders together with Frasquita and Mercédès in Lillas Pastia’s bar. The words as such do not bear any significance to the libretto: The girls just sing of the frenzied way in which gypsies dance and make music. This is also a set piece, a performance, within the opera, that demonstrates her Otherness. This social Otherness is supported by the music (see description of musical Otherness below). Grounds of moral Otherness are found in the Quintet when Dancairo and Remendado tell the three ladies that they have plans for a few ‘jobs’. They discuss how they will go about their mischief and tell the ladies, ‘When it’s a matter of trickery, of deceit, of thievery, it is always good, upon my faith, having women with us’.¹⁶ However, Carmen responds that she cannot come along because she is in love with a soldier who saved her from a tricky situation and ended up in jail for it. The other four do not take her declaration of love too seriously, because they have heard it all before and they do not even believe that her soldier will come. However, they hear José’s voice, and Remendado tells Carmen to ask José to come with

¹³ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 94.

¹⁴ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 95.

¹⁵ Dean, *Georges Bizet, His Life and Work*, 225.

¹⁶ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 107.

them. Carmen asks José if he loves her, to which he replies in the affirmative. Carmen starts to dance for Don José, while she accompanies herself on the castanets. While José watches her dance, there is the sound of bugles telling the army to return back to camp. When José says to Carmen that he has to go, she gets very angry and starts lashing out at him. She calls him a coward and tells him to leave. José asks her, ‘So, you don’t believe in my love?’, she replies ‘Of course not!’, and for the first time José asserts himself a little bit and tells her, ‘You will hear me out!’¹⁷ He sings his famous flower song in which he passionately declares his love for Carmen. After the aria has ended, Carmen softly responds, ‘No, you don’t love me! For if you loved me, you would follow me over there ... into the mountains!’¹⁸ She continues telling José that if he really loved her, he would leave everything and become one of them, only being dependent on one thing, and that is freedom. José tries to protest that he cannot do such a thing; however, Carmen is spinning her web of seduction tighter around José and tells him to leave, because she does not love him anymore. Just as José is about to leave, Zuniga enters and he and José become entangled in an argument. Carmen calls out to some of the other gypsies to help her, and they take Zuniga away. However, now that José has publicly defied his senior officer, he cannot go back to the army. He has to stay with Carmen and the rest of the gypsies. When Bizet and his librettists were asked by the *Opera-Comique’s* management to tone down Carmen’s wild side, they only complied to a certain extent, and Dean postulates that ‘[i]n Mérimée she is a thief and a perpetual liar; in the opera we have little of this, but those sides of her character that are essential to the tragedy – her unscrupulousness, courage, love of freedom and endless fascination – are preserved and exploited.’¹⁹

Act III opens in the mountains with gypsies smuggling objects in the dark of the night. The gypsies take a break from their activities and José tells Carmen that he is thinking of his dear mother, who believes he is an honest man. Carmen doesn’t have any patience for such talk and tells him to leave them and go to his mother because he does not respect their business. He orders her not to say that again. She challenges him in return and asks, what would he do, kill her? He just stares at her, ‘What a look, you don’t answer anything ... what do I care, after all, destiny is our master.’²⁰ In this scene, Carmen fits the template of the moral Other. Firstly, she breaks the law by smuggling. And secondly, when José just thinks of his mother, she tells him to leave; she does not care that his mother is ill – with her it is all or nothing, and it is this intensity that drives José insane at the end of the opera. Mercédès and Frasquita start reading their cards, but this is just girlish games, and they

¹⁷ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 116-117.

¹⁸ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 119-120.

¹⁹ Dean, *Georges Bizet, His Life and Work*, 214.

²⁰ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 129.

sing of fortune and love. But when Carmen starts reading her future, she sees death for her and José. She sings that you cannot change your fate; even if you re-shuffle the cards, you will get the same fate spelled out, ‘Again, again! Always death!’²¹

Escamillo comes to find Carmen; however, he meets José and they start fighting. Escamillo leaves and when José sees that Carmen is staring at the bullfighter, he warns her, ‘Watch out, Carmen, I am tired of suffering!’²² Micaela is found hiding nearby and she pleads to José that he has to come home because his mother is dying. Carmen responds by saying that he should leave as he doesn’t belong there any more, but José replies, ‘the chain that binds us, will bind us until death!’²³ José leaves, but not before promising Carmen that they will meet again.

In Act IV Carmen and Escamillo sing a short duet mirroring their feelings of love for one another. Mercedes and Frasquita warn Carmen about José’s presence, but she tells them that she doesn’t fear anything. When they meet, José begs Carmen to come with him so that they may spend their life together. She, on the other hand, tells him that she never lies and that it is over between them. José implores her, ‘Let me save you, you whom I adore, and save myself with you!’²⁴ However, she refuses to give in and tells him that their relationship is over. Again, he implores her, saying that he will do anything, become anything that she wants. The crowds start cheering the bullfighters on. José watches Carmen and upon seeing her face react to the crowd’s cheers, accuses her that Escamillo is her new lover. He grabs her and Carmen screams that he should leave her. Carmen shouts at José, ‘I love him! And in the face of death itself, I will repeat that I love him!’²⁵ The crowds are heard cheering the bullfighters on. José commands that Carmen that come with him however, she throws the ring that he gave her back at him. This drives José completely insane and he stabs her; the crowds can be heard singing ‘Toreador’. José holds Carmen’s body, weeping, ‘Ah, Carmen, my adored Carmen!’²⁶

The character of Carmen is a very complex part to define. In the libretto she fits the template of a social and moral Other. Batta argues that

Carmen has often been seen, inappropriately, as a femme fatale ... It is not she who conquers men: they run after her. Perhaps she feels that a relationship can consist of something more than sexual attraction. Yet when she recognises that Don José wants to possess not only her body but also her soul, she needs to escape ...

²¹ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 133.

²² Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 143.

²³ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 144.

²⁴ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 154.

²⁵ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 157.

²⁶ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 158.

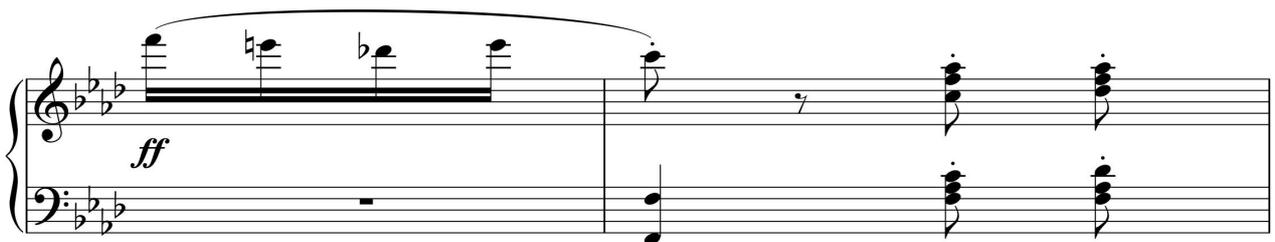
whereas Don José perishes as a result of his desire, Carmen is destroyed in the encounter with her emotions.²⁷

3.3 THE OTHERNESS OF CARMEN IN THE MUSIC OF *CARMEN*

Carmen's first entry is announced by a motif that is heard for the first time during the prelude, called by many musicologists 'the fate motif' (Ex. 1). However, when this motif is played by the orchestra during Carmen's entry, the motif is modified and played much faster (Ex. 2). For the rest of the chapter this motif will be referred to as the 'fate motif'.²⁸ The elements of Otherness that are displayed are the raised second in the 'fate-motif' and the 'fate-motif' itself. One could argue that this motif is not just associated with the fate of Carmen, but also with the fate of Don José as well. The augmented seconds that can be heard in this motif also make the music sound exotic, like the music of an Other.



Example 1, Act I, prelude – 'fate motif'²⁹



Example 2, Act 1 – speeded up 'fate motif' heard upon Carmen's entry

After a very short recitative Carmen sings the 'Habanera'. This aria is in 2/4 and in D minor, which also happens to be the key of the 'fate motif' shown in Example 1.

²⁷ A. Batta, *Opera: Composers, Works, Performers* (Köln: Könnemann, 2005), 58.

²⁸ Batta, McClary, as well as other authors refer to this a fate motif.

²⁹ All music examples in this chapter are taken from: G. Bizet, *Carmen* (Kassel: Alkor, 1964).

ALLEGRETTO QUASI ANDANTINO [♩ = 72] CARMEN

pp possibile

L'a-mour est un oi-seau re -

bel-le que nul ne peut — ap - pri voi - ser, et c'est bien en vain qu'on l'ap-

Example 3, Act 1 - 'Habanera'

After Galli-Marié rejected Bizet's first draft as an insufficient vehicle for her entrance, Bizet turned to the music of Sebastian Yradier. He used Yradier's song 'El Arrieglito' as a foundation for the 'Habanera'. Yradier's songs were regularly performed on the cabaret stages of Paris and the 'Habanera' is meant to be a song and dance number in the opera. Nico Castel states that the 'Habanera', is a 'slow sensuous rhythm' that began in Havana, Cuba.³⁰ However, Bizet extracted this Cuban song from the Parisian cabaret stages, and as such it 'belongs to a social milieu quite antithetical to that of the *Opéra-Comique*. This intrusion of music from "houses of ill-fame" onto the stage of the *Opéra-Comique* becomes one of the reigning tensions in *Carmen*.³¹ The aria starts with a strong dance rhythm played by the double basses. When Carmen enters on the words

³⁰ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 79. 'The spelling is **habanera**, and not **habañera**, a mistake that has been perpetuated for decades by one of our most esteemed music publishers in the mezzo-soprano anthology.'

³¹ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 52.

‘L’amour est un oiseau rebelle’ there is a descending chromatic motif. This descending chromatic line underpinned by a steady dance rhythm played by the double basses, gives the aria a distinct air of sensuality. According to McClary it is her chromatic descend through the tetrachord that also contributes to this sensuality:

[A]s she moves through that decent, she alternately coaxes and frustrates. What is set up as normative rhythmic motion from d2 to c#2 is halted on c natural 2, where she plays with our expectations not only by lingering, but also by reciting in irregular triplets that strain against the beat. The b natural 1 that follows is quick, suggesting that she will descend immediately to the expected goal; but the b flat 1, which ought to have been a mere passing-note on a weak pulse, is given an insinuating nudge by the declamation of ‘re-belle.’³²

In the next section Carmen sings the words ‘L’amour’ four times in D major before she continues with the rest of the chorus section. The chorus echoes her verse before she repeats the D minor verse again, however with different words. McClary postulates that ‘While there is never any question of tonal or melodic orientation in this phrase, her erratic means of descending through the tetrachord ... reveals her as an expert in the seductive rhetoric. She knows how to hook and manipulate desire. In her musical discourse she is slippery, unpredictable, maddening, irresistible’.³³

After Carmen is captured and Zuniga tries to question her, Carmen refuses to answer his questions and only responds with ‘tra la, la, la...’ (Ex. 4). It is important to observe the difference between Bizet’s original spoken dialogue and Guiraud’s sung recitative. McClary argues that because in Guiraud’s version everybody sings, Carmen’s provocation as well as the fact that she is a singer by profession is not so clear.

³² McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 76.

³³ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 76-77.

ALLEGRETTO MOLTO MODERATO

CARMEN (*fredonnant*) ***P***

ZUNIGA *Avez-vous quelque chose à répondre? ... Parlez, j'attends! Tra*

la, la, la, la, la, la, la, cou-pe-moi, brû-le-moi, je ne te di-rai rien! Tra,

Example 4, Act 1– Carmen, Zuniga scene (Bizet version)

After Zuniga leaves, Carmen entertains Don José with the ‘Seguidille’. The flute enters with the melody in 3/8, which is repeated twice.

CARMEN (*avec intention et regardant souvent Don José qui se rapproche peu à peu*)

Près des rem - parts de Sé - vil - - le,

Example 5, Act 1 - ‘Seguidille’

The key shifts often from B minor which is the dominating key, to F sharp and then D major and ends back in B minor. When Don José interrupts her with the words ‘Tais-toi, je t’avais dit de ne pas me parler!’ Carmen replies softly ‘Je ne te parle pas ...’ and keeps on provoking him, which can also be heard in the orchestra when the flutes repeat the first phrase. The more emotional and desperate José becomes, the more she teases and mocks him, always with the same melody, ‘Mon officier n’est pas un capitaine...’, until she sings the whole verse again, this time *forte*, with the orchestra supporting her. The last two phrases, however, are different, when she abandons the words and sings ‘tra, la, la la...’, ending on a B5.³⁴ Carmen is clearly visible as the Other in this part of the opera as the composer uses a set piece as a vehicle to convey Otherness. This set piece, which is given the name of a dance, ‘Seguidille’, the second set piece after the ‘Habanera’, is in triple meter and the dance rhythms also suggest her Otherness. Even though José interrupts Carmen halfway through her song, in the end she takes the lead musically again and in this way displays who is in charge in the relationship.

The finale of Act I consists of a fugue played in the strings, which acts as a reminder of the women’s fighting scene earlier in Act I. Above this *Allegro vivo* fugue, Zuniga and Carmen sing their lines. However, when the women’s chorus was sung earlier in the opera it was in F sharp minor; now the key is a half tone lower in F minor. The same applies when Carmen taunts Zuniga with the ‘Habanera’: instead of D minor, it is now in D flat minor. The flutes play the descending chromatic motif of the ‘Habanera’ before the orchestra enters with a postlude in F sharp minor/A major during which Carmen escapes. McClary argues that in the postlude of Act I the music returns tonally to where it came from in the prelude to the first act, while Bizet returns thematically to the women’s chorus.

In both cases, we have the triumph of what has been marked as Other: the female factory workers, Carmen and the Spanish exoticism of the prelude. The *boulevardiers* of the opening segments and Don José have been drawn into a world in which they thought they had been merely observing these “odd people.” By the end of Act I, they now have been overwhelmed by those very Others who now seem to control the frame.³⁵

After the prelude to Act II Carmen, Mercedes and Frasquita perform the ‘Chanson Bohème’. Just like the ‘Habanera’, this is a set piece, which is an actual ‘performance’ within a performance. The ‘Chanson Bohème’ is in 3/4 time and in E minor. Here are many characteristics of Carmen’s Otherness. Strong dance rhythms with lots of percussion, especially the tambourine, are the strongest indication of Spanish flavours.

³⁴ The pitches in this thesis will be referred to according to the ASA system with ‘middle C’ being C4, etc.

³⁵ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 89.

CARMEN (*bien rythmé*) ***p***

Les

smorzando

dim. - - - - -

pp

tring-les des sis-tres tin taient a-vec un é-clat mé-tal-li-que, et

Example 6, Act II – ‘Chanson Bohème’

However, the form is very simple. It is basic two-part AB form, which is repeated three times. Dalhaus also argues that ‘non-functional chromatic colouration’³⁶ is a vital device that is used for depicting Otherness or exoticism. This is evident here when

[t]he tetrachord descend so characteristic of flamenco music permeates the opening number of Act II, but its manipulation is pure Bizet: the first descend (E to B) pivots without warning into another (B to F#), followed by a colorful, arbitrary alternation between F# and F natural before sliding back (without functional logic) to the tonic E. The listener is treated to the thrill of illicit pitches, but is spared the burden of trying to unravel an alien musical language.³⁷

Non-functional chromatic colouration as described by McClary above, as well as the use of repetitive dance rhythms, contributes to the sense of Carmen’s alterity. The use of colourful percussion, i.e. the tambourine, also classifies Carmen and the other girls singing as Others. ‘Chanson Bohème’ is another set piece, just like ‘Habanera’ and ‘Seguidille’, that establishes Carmen as different from the other characters in the opera.

³⁶ As quoted in McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 55.

³⁷ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 55.

In the following part of the opera, which includes the quintet, there is no musical evidence of Otherness. However, in the libretto the moral Otherness of Carmen and her companions are displayed. (See section 3.2)

The Act II duet between Carmen and Don José contains many very fascinating elements. The duet starts off in B flat major with Carmen singing

Example 7, Act II – duet between Carmen and José

Although the template of Carmen's Otherness is still characterised by strong rhythmic patterns as well as colourful percussive effects – for instance, castanets are used during the first part of the duet – 'her usual chromaticism and modal ambiguity are gone, replaced here by a diatonic tune harmonized by predictable tonic and dominant alternations.'³⁸ After a while two trumpets join in and then Don José interrupts Carmen. The trumpets perfectly accompany Carmen's dance to the chagrin of Don José, who views the sound of trumpets playing as part of the honorary code of the army. When he tells her that he has to return to his quarters, she becomes completely enraged. With a swift cadence from the orchestra that ends in G major, she sings short mocking phrases, with intervals that leap up and down (Ex. 8). 'She unleashes a whole range of vituperations (self-mockery, sarcasm, insults, rage) that José doubtless has never heard issuing from a woman. Her phrases are short, aggressive, unpredictable in their onslaught'.³⁹

³⁸ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 95.

³⁹ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 96.

f *dim...* *p* *f*

p *dim...* *pp* *p* *mf*

p *f* *p* *cresc.*

p *mf* *p* *cresc.*

Je crois, Dieu me par-don-ne, qu'un peu plus — je l'ai - mais — Ta ra ta

ta... c'est le clai-ron qui son-ne! Ta ra ta ta... Il part... il est par

Example 8, Act II duet between Carmen and José

When Don José starts singing, the key changes to G minor. It is also important to note that Don José can now also be classified as an Other, because he is an outsider amongst the gypsies. His lyricism is supported by triplet arpeggios in the accompaniment. However, this fails to make any impression on Carmen and she comes in with short phrases, changing the key to B major. Don José becomes emotional and the key changes back to G minor and, as he asserts himself for once against Carmen and tells her ‘Tu m’entendras!’, the fate motif is heard again before the key settles into D flat major and Don José sings his famous aria ‘La fleur que tu m’avais jetée’.

At the end of Don José’s aria, after he has sung ‘Carmen, je t’aime!’ she just whispers to him on a repeated D4 ‘Non! Tu ne m’aimes pas!’ and the orchestra changes to a 6/8 dance rhythm in C major, which may be an indication that Carmen is in charge again (Ex. 9).

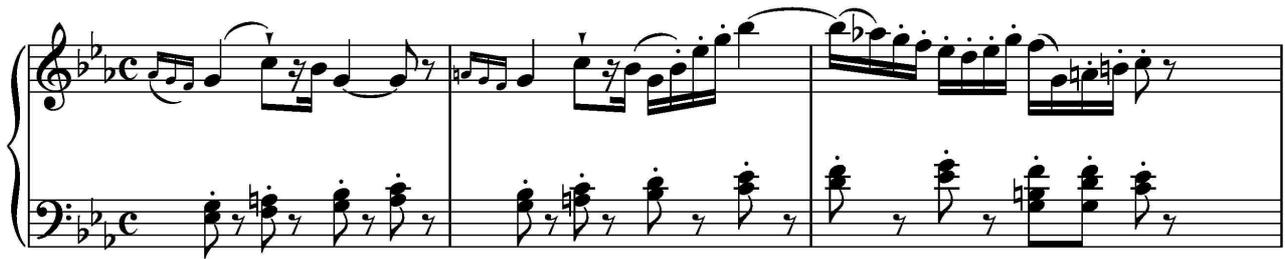


Example 9, Act II – rhythmic pattern in Carmen, José scene

While Carmen reveals her plans to Don José, the orchestra continues in 6/8 and in C major. However, when Don José objects to this, the meter and key change to 4/4 and C minor. The finale, which consists mostly of ensemble and chorus parts, ends in C major and contains no elements of Otherness. Up until the end of Act II the Otherness in the music of Carmen can be summarised as follows:

1. Fate motif in D minor;
2. Raised second used in fate motif shows her social Otherness;
3. D minor used in 'fate motif' and 'Habanera';
4. Strong dance rhythms used in the 'Habanera', 'Seguidilla' as well as the 'Chanson Bohème' highlight her Otherness;
5. The descending chromatic line underpinned by dance rhythms in the 'Habanera' accentuates her Otherness;
6. Colourful percussive effects used to strengthen the feeling of 'exoticism'/Otherness, for instance, castanets and tambourine;
7. The use of set pieces as a vehicle for Otherness, e.g. 'Habanera', 'Seguidilla' and 'Chanson Bohème'.

The prelude to Act III is a calm, serene orchestral piece in E flat major. The melody is played by the flute and there are arpeggio motifs in the harp which accompanies the flute. The melody is taken over from the flute, first by the clarinet, then by the English horn as the orchestration thickens and moves toward the climax. However, near the end of the prelude, the music calms down and the flute plays the melody again. The act opens in the relative minor, C minor, and after two horn calls a much more rhythmic motif is heard in contrast to the melodic motif of the previous number. Again the melody is first played by the flute, and then later taken over by the strings.



Example 10, Act III – Prelude

The male chorus enters with ‘Ecoule! É coule!’ and then the remainder of the ensemble enter. The preceding section has not indicated any characteristics of Otherness except for the strong rhythmic motif mentioned above. There is a short recitative between Carmen and Don José when they confront each other. A trio between Mercédès, Frasquita and Carmen ensues. They are reading their fortunes. Mercédès and Frasquita start in a playful manner. The strings start in a 2/4 *Allegretto con moto* playing a regular rhythm of eight semiquavers per bar. The two girls read the cards in A minor (Ex. 11). The orchestration is still dominated by strings and the flute. When the refrain commences, the key moves to F major.

p *con grazia*

Et main - te - nant, par - lez, — mes — bel - les,

p

Et main - te - nant, par - lez, — mes — bel - les,

Example 11, Act III – ‘Card scene’

The two girls sing a second verse, carrying on with their playful antics and afterwards sing the refrain for the second time again in F major. The key moves back to A minor, there are ‘open fifths’ played by the horn. After moving into 6/8 there is a familiar chromatic motif, before Carmen sings ‘Carreau! Pique!’ The short chromatic motifs are played again before she sees her death in the cards. The music now changes into something that sounds more like a funeral march played in

syncopated rhythms by the brass instruments. The key moves to F minor and Carmen sings in 3/4 time in equal quaver rhythms (Ex. 12).

ANDANTINO [♩ = 66]

très-également et simplement

pp

ppp

En vain, pour é - vi -

ter les ré - pon - ses a - mè res, en vain tu mê - le - ras! _____

Example 12, Act III - 'Card scene'

Unlike the 'Habanera', 'Seguidille' or 'Chanson Bohème', which have always been a performance, the 'Card scene' is the first time in the opera that one of Carmen's arias is not a 'performance', and according to McClary,

... here where we presumably overhear her private thoughts for the first time, she sings not in the style of her characteristic gypsy discourse, but in the tongue of "universal" subjectivity. As she faces death, she is no longer radically Other; she is just like everybody else – i.e. just like José and his audience.⁴⁰

This 'lack of Otherness' is evident from the absence of strong dance rhythms as well as the absence of colourful percussive effects that were very prominent in the three other 'performance' arias. In three rising sequences she makes her ascent to the climax, returning from A flat major to the relative minor. In broken phrases she sings 'encor! ... toujours la mort!' before the refrain returns in F major. However, while Mercédès and Frasquita return with their playful melody, Carmen carries her on with her foreboding thoughts, singing 'Encor ... toujours la mort!' The lack of Otherness in the

⁴⁰ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 101.

‘Card scene’ can be seen mainly in the orchestration and rhythm. The orchestration is no longer laced with interesting percussive effects, for instance, castanets and tambourines, but this time the orchestra consists mainly of strings and later brass instruments playing in syncopation. The voice sings in regular quaver rhythms above that.

In the Finale of Act III, after Carmen prevents José from killing Escamillo, it becomes clear that José’s character has descended into a dark abyss from which he would probably not re-emerge. Bizet uses many previously heard themes, like the Toreodor theme, though it is this time played by the strings in a more lyrical fashion. When Micaela is discovered, she sings a theme from her and José’s Act I duet, before Carmen tells José, ‘Vat’en, vat’en, tu feras bien...’. José sings a short aria in G flat major, and after the gypsies interrupt to say that they have to break up camp, he sings part of this arietta again, but now in G major. The gypsies interrupt for a second time and then Michaela informs José that his mother is on her deathbed. He tells Carmen, ‘Sois contente.. je pars...mais... nous nous reverons!’ before her transposed fate motif is heard. The key moves to F major and ‘Toreodor’ is sung by José’s rival off-stage. The orchestral postlude is also in F major and reminds one of the introduction of the third act.

In the orchestral intermezzo between Acts III and IV the composer returns to the music of the Other. In this number the Otherness are displayed through strong accents on dance rhythms, 3/8 meter, as well as the D minor key.

ALLEGRO VIVO [♩ = 80]

Example 13, Act IV - Prelude

The oboe features very strongly and there are interesting percussive effects with timpani, triangle, drums and cymbals, tambourine as well as the harp all forming part of this number. ‘Again Bizet suggests flamenco music through modal inflections, guitar-like vamps, sharp rhythmic punctuations, exotic percussion, sinuous chromaticism and descending tetrachords.’⁴¹

⁴¹ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 106.

The chorus section in Act IV is followed by another ensemble scene in which the music of the prelude is repeated again in the original key of A major. Above that, there is a children's chorus together with the regular chorus that sings excitedly of the toreadors. When Escamillo arrives, the chorus starts to sing 'Toreador'; however, this time instead of F major it is also in A major. McClary postulates that Escamillo with his stardom and success 'seems to have captured the tonality of the opera.'⁴² Escamillo then turns to Carmen and in a very simple melody in D major, he says to her 'Si tu m'aimes, Carmen'. She echoes this melody almost exactly in G major, before they end together.

MODERATO

(cour) *pp*

Ah! je t'ai - me! — oui, je t'ai - me!

Ah! je t'ai - me! — oui, je t'ai - me!

Example 14, Act IV – Carmen, Escamillo duettino

Bizet never presents such unanimity of feeling between Carmen and José. They sing the same music only when Carmen mocks José or tricks him into thinking they speak the same tongue, as in the 'Seguidilla'. The Escamillo/Carmen duet is sometimes criticised as a cliché, in contrast to the complex, passionate relationship between José and Carmen. But this brief exchange can be heard as revealing those qualities the affair with José lacks: tenderness, mutual trust, equality.⁴³

Frasquita and Mercédès warn Carmen of the danger in a section with dominant flute. Nevertheless, despite her friends' warning, when José arrives, they confront each other in the final duet. The final duet is discussed extensively in the section on Otherness in the libretto. Musically, because she is fighting for survival, there is no musical Otherness in this scene, except for the repeated use of the 'fate motif' near the end of the opera before the opera ends in F sharp major.

⁴² McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 107.

⁴³ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 107

3.4 SUMMARY

Several elements of Otherness are found in the music and libretto of *Carmen*.

1. Being a gypsy, Carmen fits the template of a social Other.
2. Carmen is a moral Other because of the lifestyle choices she makes: thievery, smuggling, the way in which she often changes lovers (this even becomes a joke amongst her fellow gypsies).
3. She can also be classified as a moral Other because of the careless way in which she seduces Don José and the moment she tires of him, she moves on to a new lover.
4. The fate motif in D minor.
5. The raised second used in fate motif conveys her Otherness.
6. The strong dance rhythms used in the ‘Habanera’, ‘Seguidilla’ as well as the ‘Chanson Bohème’ highlight her Otherness.
7. The descending chromatic line in the ‘Habanera’ accentuates her sensuality or Otherness.
8. Colourful percussive effects are used to strengthen the feeling of ‘exoticism’/Otherness, for instance, castanets, tambourine, triangle and cymbals.
9. A, F sharp, D are significant keys. The opera starts in A major, and often in the Entr’acte returns to this key. D minor is the key of the fate motif and the ‘Habanera’; one could argue that it is Carmen’s key; however, the opera ends a minor third lower than the original key of A, in F sharp major.
10. Carmen often sings in triple meter, with the ‘Seguidille’, ‘Chanson Bohème’, as well as her part of the ‘Card scene’ being in triple meter.
11. Set pieces are also used as showpieces for Otherness with the ‘Habanera’, ‘Seguidilla’, and the ‘Chanson Bohème’ being performances, one of the few occasion that the ‘real’ Carmen is seen is during the ‘Card scene’.

4. IL TROVATORE

4.1 THE CREATION OF *IL TROVATORE*

After the première of *Rigoletto* in the *Teatro La Fenice* in Venice on 11 March 1851, Verdi set his sights on a subject for a new opera. The composer had been thinking about the subject which was based on the Spanish play *El trovador* by Antonio García Gutiérrez for almost a year. In the play the old gypsy woman gives this heart-wrenching soliloquy,

He went off without saying anything to me, without even looking this way. How selfish! And yet he does not know the truth ... May he never discover it ... If I were to say to him, 'You are not my son. You belong to an illustrious family; you have no ties with me ...,' he would turn against me and abandon me to my lonely old age. He came very near to finding out ... but he must never, never know. What does his existence matter, if he can't go on being my son? ¹

The above excerpt from Gutiérrez's play summarizes much of the character of Azucena's inner conflict. There had previously been many operas casting the tenor and soprano as the hero and heroine respectively and the baritone as the villain. However, in the character of Azucena, the possibility of casting the mezzo-soprano as the outcast or the Other became a new reality for the composer. Julian Budden states in his book *Verdi*,

In Azucena Verdi first exploits the potentialities of the mezzo-soprano voice as a female equivalent of the baritone. His [Verdi's] model is sometimes said to be Fidès in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*, the first of the great mother-figures in opera. But Fidès is a 'noble mother' throughout; Azucena is far more varied and interesting.²

In contrast to some of the previous mezzo-soprano roles that Verdi wrote, for instance, Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, who appears only in the third act, Azucena is on a par with the three other leading characters in the opera, with her two arias and the top line in an ensemble as well as two duets with the tenor. Verdi wrote to his librettist Salvatore Cammarano on 2 January 1850, 'It [the subject of *El trovador*] seems to me very fine, rich in ideas and in strong situations. I should like to have two feminine roles. First, the gypsy, a woman of unusual character after whom I want to name the opera.'³ Verdi wrote again to Cammarano on 9 April 1851 that Azucena's character, 'with her two great passions – *filial and maternal love*' are particularly fascinating for him.⁴ The composer continued by instructing his librettist: 'This woman's two great passions, her love for Manrico and her wild thirst to avenge her mother, must be sustained to the end. When Manrico is dead, her feeling of revenge becomes stupendous; and in the utmost agitation she cries "Yes, he was your brother! ... You fool! ... Mother, you are avenged!"'⁵ *Il trovatore* was scheduled to have its

¹ As quoted by: V. Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi: Studies of Selected Operas, Vol I* (London: Gollancz, 1975), 229.

² J. Budden, *Verdi* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 221.

³ G. Verdi & F. Werfel, *Verdi, The Man in his Letters* (New York: Vienna House, 1973), 149-150.

⁴ G. Verdi & F. Werfel, *Verdi, The Man in his Letters*, 164.

⁵ G. Verdi & F. Werfel, *Verdi, The Man in his Letters*, 167.

première on 19 January 1853 at the *Teatro Apollo* in Rome. The three other leading characters were easily cast, but Verdi wrote to Cammarano, that he still hadn't cast the role of Azucena, and that it was the old gypsy who was the most complicated and special character to him. In July 1852 Cammarano died suddenly, leaving part of Act III and the whole of Act IV incomplete. Verdi wrote to their mutual friend Cesare De Sanctis on 5 August 1852, 'I was thunderstruck at the sad news of the death of our Cammarano. I simply can't tell you how grieved I am! And I read of his death not in a friendly letter but in a stupid theatrical magazine! You who loved him as I did, will understand all that I can't express. Poor Cammarano! What a loss!'⁶ De Sanctis suggested that Leone Emanuele Bardare, a young Neopolitan poet, complete the libretto.

The role of Azucena was created by Emilia Goggi at the Rome première. The opera was an immediate success. However, when critics complained about the opera being too sad and the many deaths at the end of *Il trovatore*, Verdi responded in a letter to his friend Countess Maffei on 29 January 1853: 'You've probably heard about *Il trovatore* ... People say the opera is too sad, and there are too many deaths in it. But after all, death is all there is in life. What else is there?''⁷

The immediate success of *Il trovatore* and its ability to remain in opera houses' regular repertoire is explained eloquently by Francis Toye:

Some of the effects, since repeatedly copied by many other composers, may strike us as commonplace. Nevertheless, there is a quality in *Il Trovatore*, democratic, if you will, rather than aristocratic, but none the less impressive. It is this, in conjunction, of course, with its extraordinary wealth of melody, which has assured the triumph of the opera. Periodically, after a succession of conventional or trivial pages, something emerges and hits you, as it were, between the eyes, something elemental, furious, wholly true. *Il Trovatore* has been reproached with vulgarity and the reproach is not unfounded. But this vulgarity is the vulgarity of greatness, a by-product of the vitality and passion without which there can be no great art. Is Shakespeare never vulgar? Or Beethoven?⁸

4.2 THE OTHERNESS OF AZUCENA IN THE LIBRETTO OF *IL TROVATORE*

From the very beginning of *Il trovatore* Azucena's character is established as an Other. Ferrando, an officer in Di Luna's army, narrates what happened to Count di Luna's brother 20 years before. While the Count's young brother, Garcia, was sleeping in his cradle, his nurse saw an old gypsy woman giving him the evil eye. Not long after that, the young boy fell ill. His father, the old Count di Luna, dragged the gypsy woman to the stake and burned her alive. Nobody is exactly sure what

⁶ G.Verdi & F. Werfel, *Verdi, The Man in his Letters*, 171-172.

⁷ G.Verdi & F. Werfel, *Verdi, The Man in his Letters*, 173.

⁸ F. Toye, *Giuseppe Verdi: His Life and Works* (New York: Knopf, 1931), 320.

happened after that, but the young boy vanished and the remains of an infant were found in the smouldering heap of what was left after the old gypsy's execution by fire. Count di Luna began a witch-hunt for the gypsy's daughter, whom everybody thought was just as evil as the old woman, and was believed to have kidnapped and killed the Count's son to avenge the death of her mother. However, she disappeared without a trace. Thus right after the curtain has lifted, without even being on stage or singing a word, Azucena already fits two templates of Otherness: moral and social. Azucena fits the template of a social Other because she is a gypsy, a marginalised group that is othered in society. She is a moral Other by implication in that she stole and killed the son of the Count.

The first time Azucena is actually seen is in the gypsy camp in the beginning of Act II. Immediately after the 'Anvil chorus' Azucena sings 'Stride la vampa', recalling how her mother burned at the stake. The gypsies answer that her song is too sad. This distinguishes her not only from the other characters in the opera, but from the other gypsies as well. She turns her head away and murmurs 'Avenge me!'. This is the first time these words are heard, but they are extremely important. It becomes clear later in the opera that these are the last words that Azucena's mother shouted to her before she was burned at the stake. These words also form a recurring motif during the rest of the opera that haunt Azucena until she destroys everything that she loves to avenge her mother's death. After the gypsies have left, Manrico asks his mother to tell him the story of his grandmother's death. Azucena then starts 'Condotta ell'era in ceppi', her long narration of what happened on the day her mother died. While Ferrando tells the first part of the story of the day the old gypsy woman was burned in Act I, the audience now hears the second part, as told by Azucena. She first tells us how she could not get to her mother, how the soldiers forced her mother with their swords to the stake. With a broken voice, 'Avenge me' she said! How those words will forever be engraved in her soul. Then she stole the son of the Count and dragged him to the fire. The boy stood there, sobbing, but then she got confused, she saw her mother, the torture, heard her mother's voice, and before she realised it, she pushed the boy into the flames. When she turned around, she saw the Count's son before her; she had pushed her own son into the fire. In this narrative it is again confirmed that Azucena fits the template of a social and moral Other.

When Azucena finished her emotional outburst, Manrico just stands there asking, 'Who am I then? Am I not your son?' She interrupts him with 'Of course you are, every time I think of that awful day, I just get so confused, and speak complete nonsense.' Then she quickly changes the subject to her love for him and how she nursed him back to health after he was injured on the battlefield. They

speak of how Manrico couldn't kill Di Luna because of a strange bond that he was feeling with his enemy. Throughout this whole exchange there is no evidence of any Otherness of Azucena. However, the moment Manrico receives the letter from the messenger that Leonora is taking the veil, the mood instantly changes. Azucena's love for Manrico is accentuated when she tries to stop him from putting himself in danger by attempting to rescue Leonora. When Azucena says 'No, I cannot suffer it, your blood is my blood! Every drop that you spill of it you press it from my heart!'⁹, one feels her urgency not to allow Manrico to leave; one senses her overpowering maternal love, which is also reflected in the music characterising her Otherness (see next section). Here in the libretto it is already evident that Azucena has two obsessions: avenging her mother's death, and her love for her son.

In Act III Azucena can be very clearly defined as a social Other, not only because she is a gypsy, but also because she is a prisoner. Ferrando announces to Di Luna that his soldiers have caught a gypsy woman wandering about. When they ask her where she comes from, she answers 'From Biscay'. This immediately arouses the suspicions of Ferrando and Di Luna. Azucena sings 'Giorni poveri vivea' in which she recounts how she lives in the mountains and how she is searching for the son whom she loves so much. While the two men were interrogating Azucena, the style was quite conversational, until Ferrando recognises the gypsy woman's face, and when he shouts 'She is the one who burned the boy!' the whole conversation moves into a faster tempo and intensifies. When Azucena calls out to Manrico to ask why he does not come to the aid of his mother, Di Luna realises how lucky he is to have caught the mother of his rival in love and war. 'The Count is exultant. He has captured his rival's mother as well as his own brother's murderess. Sheer force of hatred causes Azucena to rally. In the final stretta ('Deh, rallentate, o barbari, crudi mie ritorte') she reviles the Count – 'cruel son of a still more wicked father'¹⁰ – but she is led away to suffer the same fate as her mother.

Act IV, scene 2, opens with mother and son captured and in prison. The stage directions state: 'A grim prison. In one corner is a barred window. There is a door and a dim light. Azucena is lying on a rough blanket and Manrico is seated by her.'¹¹ When Manrico asks his mother if she is sleeping, she replies that she tried, but cannot; she is praying. She would like to escape from this tomb of the living, as she can already feel death's dark print on her forehead. The executioners will return only to find a corpse, a skeleton. Manrico pleads with her to stop; however, she does not hear him and

⁹ N. Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti* (New York: Leyerle, Geneseo, 1996), 363.

¹⁰ J. Budden, *The Operas of Verdi, Vol 2* (London: Cassel, 1984), 95.

¹¹ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 399.

becomes very scared and hysterical. She can already hear the executioners coming to drag her away and burn her at the stake. In vain Manrico tries to calm his mother down. Azucena then relives the day her mother died at the stake with memories so powerful that it appears as if it is happening right at this instant. ‘See the terrible flame! She is touched by it already! Already her burning hair sends sparks to the sky! Look at her eyes, hanging out of their sockets! Ah! Who will save me from a sight so horrible!’¹² From these words one would deduce that Azucena is completely insane; however, it is important to note what Verdi wrote to Cammarano on 9 April 1851: ‘Don’t have Azucena go mad. Exhausted with fatigue, suffering, terror, and sleeplessness, she speaks confusedly. Her faculties are weakened, but she is not mad.’¹³ According to Budden, this can be justified as follows: ‘One realises now why Verdi was so insistent that Azucena should not be mad in the final scene. In the trappings of conventional operatic insanity she would lose all dramatic identity. The truth is that she is slightly crazed throughout the opera.’¹⁴ Manrico pleads with his mother that if she really loves him, she will try to calm down and get some rest. Azucena replies, ‘Yes, weariness oppresses me ... But if you see the stake’s horrible flame’s burning, wake me.’¹⁵ Mother and son then sing a wonderfully peaceful duet, Manrico to calm his mother down and Azucena between sleeping and waking. It is interesting to note that when Azucena has calmed down emotionally, the composer chooses to evoke again her musical Otherness (as discussed in the next section), emphasizing Azucena’s meter and key.

Azucena is now asleep while Leonora enters and spends her last minutes with Manrico. The moment Azucena wakes up, she asks where her son is, while Di Luna answers gleefully ‘Hastening to his death’, she tries to make Di Luna stop, however, the Count forces the mother to watch as her beloved son is beheaded. ‘He was your brother!’, she informs the Count, before calling out, ‘You’re avenged, oh mother!’¹⁶

Azucena can be classified as representing two types of Otherness; social and moral. Because she is a gypsy, Azucena is part of a marginalised group. Her mother is accused of a crime she did not commit on the grounds of superstition and prejudice against a group that has been discriminated against and marginalized for centuries. In Act III this social othering is demonstrated again when the soldiers take the gypsy woman who is just wandering about as prisoner. They tie her up and hold her prisoner even before they find out that she was the one who stole Count di Luna’s brother.

¹² Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 401.

¹³ G. Verdi & F. Werfel, *Verdi, The Man in his Letters*, 167.

¹⁴ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 104.

¹⁵ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 402.

¹⁶ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 409-410.

The strongest manifestation of moral Otherness is Azucena's obsession to get revenge for the death of her mother. Stealing the old Count di Luna's son and planning to throw him into the fire, even if she then mistakenly threw her own child into the flames, establishes the fact that she does not act in accordance with society's moral code. Her conduct reveals strong deviance from the established morality of society, which classifies her as a moral Other.

4.3 THE OTHERNESS IN THE MUSIC OF AZUCENA IN *IL TROVATORE*

In the beginning of Act II when Azucena makes her entry with 'Stride la vampa' she can be classified as an Other. Immediately the audience witnesses the first two key characteristics of Azucena's musical Otherness: 3/8 meter and E minor. It is important to note that right at the beginning of Azucena's entry the composer establishes her character very clearly. The first aria that she sings is 'Stride la vampa'. The first phrase is a recurring motif that haunts her throughout the opera. The audience hears this recurring motif three times, once in the beginning of Act II, when Azucena sings the aria as a whole, then again during 'Condotta ell'era in ceppi' played by the strings, and the third time during Act IV when Azucena is in prison, this time played by the flute, bassoon and clarinet.

AZUCENA (canta: gli zingari le si fanno allato)

Stri - de la vam - pa!

Example 1, Act II, scene 1 – 'Stride la vampa'¹⁷

Although this recurring motif is varied in its three appearances, it is always in the same key and meter.

¹⁷ All the music examples in this chapter are taken from: G. Verdi, *Il trovatore* (London: Ricordi, 2005).

Julian Budden explains the tonal relationships between the different characters in *Il trovatore*:

[E]ach woman inhabits her own sphere of tonality – Leonora moves in A flat and its related keys, Azucena hovers ambiguously between E minor and G major, the first associated with her thirst for revenge, the second with her love for Manrico; and her influence reaches to A minor and C major as well. Again it must be emphasized that in Verdi even when keys are exploited it is merely as contrasted systems of pitch designed to keep the dramatic elements apart; there is no attempt to use their manifold relationships as a principle of structure.¹⁸

William Drabkin postulates that because E minor and G major are linked with Azucena, and B is a note that is in both G major and E minor chords, this note is particularly significant. Because B is the third in G major and the dominant note in E minor, it links both keys. Thus the note B also links Azucena's two great obsessions, her thirst to avenge her mother's death (E minor) and her love for Manrico (G major). This can be seen in the beginning of 'Stride la vampa' with the repeated B4s at the beginning of each verse and then again with the four-bar trill on a B4 at the end of each verse.¹⁹

Julian Budden describes how Verdi establishes Azucena as the Other through a distinct rhythmical language:

While the heroine, Leonora, is the epitome of everything lyrical, an aristocrat who expresses herself in long flowing melodies, Azucena is a woman of the people, speaking a demotic language, mostly in 3/8 or 6/8, mostly of short-breathed rhythmic patterns.²⁰

One finds evidence of this rhythmical language right from the start of the opera, because Azucena speaks in either 3/8 or 6/8, which are meters more often associated with dance rhythms.

Because Azucena's music is often in dance rhythms, as well as shorter rhythmic patterns, her character is portrayed as more earthy and folk-like. This is illustrated by the simple orchestral accompaniment, with the bass often only playing the first quaver of the bar, while the other two quavers are two staccato chords in the strings. At other times the orchestra merely doubles the vocal line, while the rest of the accompaniment continues with its waltz-like rhythm. Thus, with Azucena's first entry the composer already establishes the gypsy's Otherness in various ways: the 3/8 dance rhythm and the more simple musical language in which she sings, which mark her as someone from a lower social class as opposed to that of Count di Luna and Leonora. The 'Strida la vampa' recurring motif, in E minor key, which is associated with the revenge for the death of her mother, the triple meter, which is also simple and folk-like all establish Azucena as an Other. B is a pivotal note and also the note around which the first phrase of 'Stride la vampa' centres.

Immediately after her aria, the chorus sings softly 'Mesta è la tua canzon!' and Azucena answers

¹⁸ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, Vol 2, 70.

¹⁹ W. Drabkin, 'Characters, Key Relations and Tonal Structure in *Il trovatore*', *Music Analysis*, 1982, 145.

²⁰ Budden, *Verdi*, 221.

ASSAI MODERATO *cupo ea allarg.*

Del pa - ri me - sta che la sto - ri - a fu -
- ne - sta da cui trag - ge ar - go - men - to!

Example 2, Act II, scene 1 – Azucena’s answer to the gypsies

This sets her apart from the group of gypsies. This phrase insinuates the idea that not only is Azucena the Other among the other soloists in the opera, but she is also not part of the group of gypsies either. For the first time the words that her mother said to her right before she died on the stake are heard:

Mi ven - - - - di - ca...

Example 3, Act II, scene 1 – ‘Mi vendica’ recurring motif

These words will become a type of recurring motif in Azucena’s mind, haunting her throughout the opera until she hovers on the brink of insanity. When Azucena and Manrico are left alone, she tells him the story of how she threw her own child into the fire by mistake. The scene ‘Condotta ell’era in ceppi’ follows the rhythmic meter of 6/8. Godefroy argues in the chapter on Azucena:

The rhythm is deliberate, reinforced with a pitiless repetition of suppressed horror from oboe and violins with here and there an underlying touch of drums. This type of rhythmic insistence sticks to Azucena and singles her out as though Verdi was well aware that a Spanish gypsy must be portrayed in such a manner, though well past the age for castanets.²¹

When Azucena reminisces about how she held the weeping son of Count di Luna in her arms, the key changes from the initial A minor to G major, which symbolises her maternal instincts. Suddenly the tender moment changes, the strings play a B tremolo to what Budden calls ‘the eternal pivot of Azucena’s emotions.’²² B is also the note around which the recurring motif of ‘Strida la vampa’ revolves; thus each time the orchestra repeats it, it is associated with very intense emotions of Azucena. The meter changes to 3/8 when Azucena says ‘Quand’ ecco agl’ egri spirti’. When she speaks in a broken voice of how she had visions of how her mother was murdered, the upper violins

²¹ Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi*, 236.

²² Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 84.

return with the ‘Stride la vampa’ melody. Azucena’s Otherness is again highlighted the moment the ‘Stride la vampa’ recurring motif is heard in the orchestra and this, together with the meter changing to 3/8, reinforces her fragile emotional state and indicates how haunted she is by the past. As Azucena recalls how her mother died at the stake, the vocal line intensifies through the use of short-breathed rhythmical patterns. This is also supported by the thickening of the orchestration. Then the phrase ‘Mi vendica!’ returns, but this time it is varied and leaps up to a high A5. For the first time the meter changes to 4/4 and it stays that way until the end of the scene. Every time Azucena is fighting for survival, either physically or mentally, the meter moves into 4/4 (see Act III, scene 1, as well as Act IV, scene II). The moment Azucena recalls her mother’s last words before she died at the stake with a big jump in the vocal line, the tension is reinforced by downward chromatic sweeps in the orchestra. This is punctuated by a bar of staccato quavers in the strings. In broken rhythmic patterns Azucena begins to tell Manrico how she threw the wrong child in the fire, these rhythms are supported by the orchestra. Verdi wrote an ascending line that intensifies with orchestral support, until she cries out ‘Il figlio mio, figlio avea bruciato!’

Il fi - glio mi - o, mio

Ah, che di - ci?

figlio avea bru-cia - to! Ah! Quale error! Ah!

8^{va}

b

Example 4, Act II, scene 1 – ‘Condotta ell’era in ceppi’

Azucena continues to reiterate these words, ‘My son, my son, I had burned!’ until the emotional climax where she sings these words on repeated F5s, while Verdi scores the full orchestra to support her in the emotional culmination. The string instruments descend in tremolo, the emotion subsides until Azucena utters the last phrase,

allarg. a poco a poco e morendo

ca - po mi - o le chio - me sen - to driz - zar - si an

col canto

(Azucena ricade trambasciata sul proprio seggio; Manrico ammutolisce, colpito d'orrore e di sorpresa)

cor! driz - zar - si an - cor! driz - zar - si an - cor!

morendo *pp* *ppp*

pp

Example 5, Act II, scene 1 – ‘Condotta ell’era in ceppi’

Budden’s statement can be further supported when Azucena sings ‘Condotta ell’era in ceppi’ which is mostly in A minor.

Thus far the evidence of Azucena’s musical Otherness can be summarized as follows:

1. The meter is mostly in 3/8 or 6/8 emphasizing the fact that she is a gypsy and that she speaks a more common, folk-like language than the other characters in the opera;
2. Her music hovers mostly around E minor or G major, E minor representing her quest for revenge for the death of her mother, and G major is her love for Manrico. C major and A minor can also be associated with Azucena’s character.

One would suspect that Verdi and Cammarano realised that the audience needed a change of pace after this emotional narrative. After a recitative between Manrico and Azucena, they sing their first duet. However, in this duet between mother and son there is no evidence of any musical Otherness; the assumption could thus be made that this is because she is not singing about either of her two obsessions.²³

²³ What is interesting to note are the striking similarities between this duet and the beginning of the famous quartet in Act III of *Rigoletto*. Both ensembles start with a lyrical solo tenor line that goes up to an A5/A5 flat; the mezzo-soprano then enters with staccati notes however, while Maddalena’s line descends to C4, Azucena’s ascends to G5. Both of these duets are also in 4/4 meter.

MENO MOSSO (♩ = 92)

declamato
Ma nell' al-ma dell' in - gra - to non par-lò del ciel un det - to non par - lò del cie - lo un detto

Example 6, Act II, scene 1- first duet between Azucena and Manrico

A horn call is heard, in an interval of a third; it is a message from Ruiz. However, as Azucena is oblivious to what is happening, she reiterates her thoughts with her recurring motif 'Mi vendica.' This is the third time the phrase 'Mi vendica' is heard. Azucena sings this phrase *sotto voce* and it is once again an reaffirmation of her alterity. Azucena tries to stop Manrico, who wants to prevent Leonora from entering a convent, and this serves as the impetus for their second duet. Here again Azucena's Otherness becomes evident. The duet is in 3/8 and Azucena starts the first verse in G minor with the words 'Perigliarti ancor languente'; at the end of her verse she accentuates her feeling of desperation by singing a cadenza that goes up to a C6 before her son repeats the same melody as his mother, but only in G major. The duet ends with mother and son singing together, the same melody on the same pitch, in G major. However, there is additional evidence of Azucena's Otherness as well – the meter is in 3/8 and the musical language is very simple, almost dance-like. Budden states that 'its only novelty lies in the pace and in the concision, the dynamic quality of the melody, articulated in so many of the Azucena scenes from small self-propagating rhythmic motifs, and the deceptive simplicity of the accompaniments.'²⁴ (Ex. 7)

Vincent Godefroy postulates that,

Azucena is using simple gypsy cunning as against Iago's distillations of malignity; but the original guile is there. However, it is lost on Manrico, who allows her to end with a frantic and wholly justifiable cadenza and then plunges ahead with his terrific 'Un momento puo involarmi' prompted by Verdi's written instruction that the two notes on which its opening is based must be well accented. This must sound, Verdi saw, like the rhythmic gallop of a ride to the rescue. So he has written tearaway stuff full of true operatic excitement ... All Azucena's build-up, her gory narration, her maternal cossetting, her anxious plea and subtle cajoling – all have been of no avail. Filial love gives way to sexual.²⁵

²⁴ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 87.

²⁵ Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi*, 239.

Example 7, Act II, scene 1 – second duet between Azucena and Manrico

Azucena’s entry in Act III sets one of the most dramatic scenes of the opera in motion. The gypsy is caught by soldiers and when she is questioned by Di Luna and Ferrando, she inadvertently mentions that she is a gypsy living in the mountains in Biscay. Throughout the interrogation the gypsy ‘is vague ... she is craftily playing for time ... She then continues in phrases broken by little comments on the strings, as though in her perplexity she is pausing to think what to say next.’²⁶ Azucena stalls some more by telling the men about her life as a gypsy. Verdi accentuates her Otherness at this moment again by letting her return to 3/8 meter and writing this lyrical passage in E minor (Ex. 8). The strings accompany the vocal line with the basses only playing octaves on the first quaver of the bar, while the other strings fill out the bar with chords in regular quaver rhythms. Above this uncomplicated accompaniment a simple melody is sung by the gypsy, with the stress often on the second beat of the bar. Azucena’s Otherness is clearly visible in the music through the triple meter, E minor key and the simple folk-like musical language.

Example 8, Act III, scene 1 – ‘Giorni poveri vivea’

Godefroy compares this passage in *Il trovatore* with the ‘Seguidille’ in *Carmen*, because both are in

²⁶ Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi*, 241.

fact sung by gypsies trying to manipulate their captors and getting out of detention.²⁷ At the end of this arietta there is an outburst in E major when Azucena cries out for Manrico. This is nearly an exact transposition of part of Leonora's 'Tacea la notte'. Budden is of the opinion that the phrase 'Qual per esso provo amore' (Example 9),

... is so similar to Leonora's 'E versi melanconoci un trovator cantò' (Example 10) that it is tempting to read into it a Freudian significance regarding Azucena's relationship with her 'son' ... In each case the singer is referring to the most precious object in her life. But observe how Leonora's phrase is underpinned by a firm dominant suggestive of joyous certainty; with Azucena the harmonic motion reflects her poignant sense of loss.²⁸

Qual per es - so pro - vo a - mo - re, qual per es - so pro - vo a -
mo - re ma - dre in ter - ra non pro - vò

Example 9, Act III, scene 1 – Azucena's echo of Leonora's earlier phrase in 'Tacea la notte' when she calls out to Manrico.

pp
e ver - si me - lan - co - ni - ci e
f
ver - si me - lan - co - ni - ci un tro - va - tor can - tó.

Example 10, Act I, scene 2 – passage from Leonora's 'Tacea la notte'

When Di Luna and Ferrando surmise Azucena's identity, a trio starts which is supported by male chorus. This ensemble is actually quite short; however, dramatically as well as vocally it is a *tour de force* for the mezzo-soprano. Unlike most of her other music, this ensemble is in 4/4 meter and F major. Pierluigi Petrobelli justifies this as follows:

... none of the elements associated with her character appears here. The reason for this can be drawn from the dramatic situation; at this moment in the action Azucena is no longer a daughter or a mother, her two 'passions' for the moment being overpowered by the more urgent, basic need for survival. Thus all her characteristic ambivalences are suppressed.²⁹

²⁷ Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi*, 242.

²⁸ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 94.

²⁹ P. Petrobelli & W. Drabkin, 'Towards an Explanation of the Dramatic Structure of *Il trovatore*', *Music Analysis*,

Azucena enters again in the second scene of the fourth act when she is in prison with Manrico. The scene commences with sustained, *pppp* chords. The meter is 4/4; thus she is fighting for survival emotionally or physically. After Azucena declares to her son that she would rather perish in prison than go anywhere with her executioners, the meter changes to 3/8 and the audience once again hears the ‘Stride la vampa’ theme. This recurring motif is repeated in the key of E minor, symbolising Azucena’s obsession to avenge the death of her mother. On top of the melody played by a single flute, clarinet and bassoon the gypsy sings the words ‘Un giorno turba feroce’ on repeated B4s, which accentuate the reverberation of the note B, as discussed earlier in the chapter. The vocal line leaps a seventh on the word ‘al rogo!’ While Azucena is recalling the way in which her mother burnt at the stake, her vocal line ascends slowly with repeated notes from an E4; in between her ascending phrases the lower strings accentuate the rising tension by playing a short chromatic ascending motive. At last she exclaims ‘Who will save me from a sight so terrible?’ using almost the full mezzo-soprano range from A5 to B3.

tutta forza

Ahi, chi mi to - - glie a spet -

ff

dim. (cade tutta convulsa tra le braccia di Man.)

ta - col sì a tro - - ce!

dim. *p*

Example 11, Act IV, scene II – ‘Prison scene’ with Azucena and Manrico

Manrico tries to calm her and Azucena quietens down. She sings ‘Si, la stanchezza’, which returns to Azucena’s meter of 3/8 and is in G minor. Pizzicato in the strings with the last beat of the bar being a rest, while the vocal line sings shorter rhythmical patterns above that, reminds the listener of Azucena’s alterity. Manrico answers in G major with ‘Riposa, o madre’.

Budden postulates that:

Then just when we might expect a modified repeat of previous material Verdi springs the surprise of an entirely new melody, the famous ‘Ai nostri monti’. The style with its short phrases in triple time is unmistakably Azucena’s, but in the arpeggio-born theme to which the mezzo-soprano voice in its middle register gives a horn-like quality Verdi seems to join hands with Brahms at his most romantically ‘volkstümlich’... Manrico repeats his verse, its expression heightened by its new context. Then the two voices unite in a coda as to a low sustained D on the flute and a hypnotic pattern of muted violins *divisi* Azucena sinks into a slumber.³⁰

The author continues: ‘In all this Verdi has idealised the gypsy of Gutiérrez’s drama to some extent.’ The difference between the play and the opera at this point is that the gypsy in the play is entirely devoured by the terror of dying in the exact same way her mother did. One can only assume that Cammarano moved the line ‘Ma se del rogo arder si veda l’orrida fiamma, destami allor’ a few measures earlier, since he and Verdi decided to let Azucena end in a more dignified way. By doing this and letting the audience hear her sing that line first and then calm down while singing about sleeping peacefully, she retains much more of her self-worth.³¹

AZU. (tra il sonno e la veglia)

Example 12, Act IV, scene II – ‘Ai nostri monti’

When Azucena sings this melody the first time, it is in G major and 3/8 time – two key characteristics of her Otherness. The short, folk-like rhythmical language also contributes to this. Pizzicato in the strings with the basses playing the first beat of the bar and the other strings playing chords on the other two beats also gives the music a waltz-like feeling. When this melody is sung for the second time in the trio with Manrico and Leonora, the meter is in 4/4; however, Azucena

³⁰ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 104-105.

³¹ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 105.

retains her feeling of singing in triple meter because her music is in triplets. When Azucena joins the trio, the accompaniment also changes to triplets. As Azucena wakes up, the action moves very fast and within two pages the opera has come to the end. Immediately after the two slow finales, Verdi changes the mood, with the orchestra, laced with heavy brass instruments, playing chords plunging downwards in quick succession. Azucena cries ‘Sei vendicata, o madre!’,

(cade a pié della finestra)

Sei ven - di - ca - ta, o ma - dre!

(inorridito)

-ror! E vi - vo an - cor!

sf >

ff ————— *ff* —————

pp

Example 13, Act IV, scene 2 – last words of Azucena to Di Luna

before the Count says ‘And I still live!’. However, his words are usually drowned out by the orchestra which ends with a succession of *fortissimo* chords in E flat minor.

4.4 SUMMARY

The elements of Otherness found in the libretto and music of Azucena are listed below.

1. In the libretto, she fits the template of a social Other, because she is part of a group of marginalised people, in this case Spanish gypsies.
2. Azucena also fits the template of a moral Other. Her actions show that she lives in defiance of the moral values of society.
3. Her music is often in 3/8 or 6/8 meter.
4. However, when she is fighting for survival (emotionally or physically) the meter moves to 4/4.

5. G major is associated with Azucena's love for Manrico, while E minor is associated with her obsession to avenge the death of her mother. Her music is also in A minor or C major.
6. She often follows short rhythmic patterns in contrast with Leonora's long lyrical passages. Azucena also has a strong rhythmical language that sounds more folk-like and simple.
7. The 'Stride la vampa' theme is a recurring motif. It returns every time Azucena recalls the day her mother died.
8. The note B is pivotal. It is the only note E minor (revenge for mother's death) and G major (love for her son) have in common. It is also a crucial note in the emotions of Azucena and it is heard repeatedly in 'Stride la vampa'.
9. Azucena also uses the full extent of her range in emotionally charged scenes; for instance, in 'Condotta ell'era in ceppi' the aria ranges from B5 flat to A3. In the Prison scene in Act IV she sings a phrase the ranges from A5 to B3, and later reaches a B5 flat.

Just like Carmen, Azucena can be classified as a social Other because of her being a gypsy. Although both of these characters are moral Others, Carmen is a moral Other because of the lifestyle choices she makes, namely thievery, smuggling, the careless way in which she seduces Don Jose and then throwing him aside for Escamillo when she tires of him. Azucena, on the other hand, becomes a moral Other when she avenges the death of her mother. Although both of these characters are social and moral Others, they still differ tremendously, which is expressed in the music. Carmen's music can be described as much more 'exotic', whereas this chromatic colouration is not present in Azucena's music. They both have motifs – Azucena has 'Stride la vampa' and Carmen the 'fate motif'. Both of these characters also speak a strong rhythmical language, which can be derived from the fact that they are gypsies. Both Carmen and Azucena often sing in triple meter.

5. MIGNON

5.1 THE CREATION OF MIGNON

In May 1862 Emile Perrin, the Director of the *Opéra-Comique*, first started approaching various composers with his idea of writing an opera based on Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1796). However, Ambroise Thomas was not at the top of his list. He first approached the star composer of that time, Giacomo Meyerbeer, who rejected the subject. Perrin's second choice was Charles Gounod and when he, as well as Ernest Reyer, also refused the offer, Thomas was approached about setting Goethe's novel as an opera.¹ The libretto was written by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré. When the opera premièred at the *Opéra-Comique* on 17 November 1866, it was an straightaway success. Elisabeth Forbes argues that '*Mignon* was an immediate success, in large measure because of the performance of Célestine Galli-Marié (who later created Carmen) in the title role. Although she did not have an outstanding voice, Galli-Marié was a fine singing actress and possessed exactly the waifish charm that the part required.'² Within eight months *Mignon* was performed one hundred times at the *Opéra-Comique*. The opera was translated into various languages for performances in different countries. After Thomas's work premièred in Berlin, the German audience, who were well acquainted with the novel on which the work was based, were unhappy about the superficial way in which the librettist had modified the ending of the novel. This was still a few years before the première of *Carmen* and at that time the *Opéra-Comique* was known for its happy endings and spoken dialogue. However, after the ending was changed, the German public and critics were still unsatisfied with the conclusion of the opera. The ending now corresponded to that in the novel, where Mignon dies. Some stated that the Mignon of Carré and Barbier still seemed very far removed from the Mignon of Goethe, and to let her die at the end of the opera almost seems unmotivated and heartless. Nevertheless, despite the German version not being well received, the French version was still a great success and the composer wrote an Italian version for the London première on 5 July 1870. The spoken dialogue was replaced with recitatives and the role of Mignon, which had been cast as a mezzo-soprano in the French version, was now written for a soprano. The role of Frédéric, which had been sung by a tenor, was now changed into a contralto role.

¹ A. Fauser, 'Thomas: Mignon', *Pipers Enzyklopädie des Musiktheaters*, ed. by C. Dahlhaus (München: Piper, 1997), 284.

² E. Forbes, '*Mignon*', *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. by S. Sadie & C. Bashford (London: Macmillan, 1992), 382.

5.2 THE OTHERNESS OF MIGNON IN THE LIBRETTO OF MIGNON

Mignon is first established as an Other because she is part of a group of gypsies. However, when Jarno, the leader of the group, tries to force Mignon to dance, she refuses and he threatens to beat her with a stick. This classifies Mignon as a social Other not only through the fact that she is part of a marginalised group of gypsies, but also because she is regarded as an outsider by the other gypsies. She is othered by the Others. Lothario, an old man who is an onlooker to this whole scene, tries to save her, but this just makes Jarno even angrier. Lothario can also be classified as an Other as he is described as a half-crazed wanderer. Wilhelm Meister, a travelling student, steps in and threatens to kill Jarno if he takes even one step towards Mignon.

A while later everyone has left and Mignon is alone with Wilhelm. He tells her that tomorrow he will be gone and then her troubles would start again. Mignon sings her famous recitative and aria in which she recounts to Wilhelm that she does not know where she comes from; all she remembers is that she was abducted while taking a walk one summer evening. She then recounts the place that she remembers in the aria ‘Connais-tu le pays’. She tells him of a land where the orange tree blooms, where there is eternal spring and the sky is always blue. During this aria Mignon's social Otherness is highlighted through of her longing for her homeland and freedom. Jarno enters and tells Wilhelm that he can buy Mignon from him if he wishes. When Lothario comes to say goodbye to Mignon; she feels sad because the man who defended her has to leave so soon. She asks for his lute and they sing the duet ‘Légères hirondelles’ about the weightless swallows that are blessed by God; they can open their wings and fly away.³ In this musical number the traditional musical style of the gypsies is more evident (see section 5.3), and although there is no evidence of Otherness in the libretto at this point, the music clearly makes it clear to the listener does that she is a social Other. Later it is decided that Mignon will stay with Wilhelm; however, she will be disguised as a boy. The actress Philine and Wilhelm start to fall in love, much to Mignon’s dismay. They decide to go with the actors to a party at the house of Frederic’s uncle. At the end of Act I Wilhelm buys Mignon’s freedom; however, she decides to travel with him. She started out a social Other and changed into an emotional Other, being the outsider in a love triangle.

In Act II Wilhelm enters with Mignon, who is dressed as his page. They are in Philine’s boudoir and

³ N. Castel, *French Opera Libretti* (New York: Leyerle, Geneseo, 2005) 299.

much to Mignon's alarm, Philine and Wilhelm continue their dalliance. After the two of them have left, Mignon is all alone and puts on Philine's clothes and make-up while singing the *Styrienne*. Evidence of the musical Otherness is discussed in section 5.3. When Wilhelm returns looking for Mignon, Frederic is also in Philine's rooms and a fight ensues between the two men. Mignon rushes in, forgetting that she still has Philine's clothes on and tries to stop the two men from fighting. After Frederic has left, Wilhelm realises that it is inappropriate for a young girl to follow him around and he sends her away. Upon hearing this, Mignon is very heartbroken and sorrowful and tells Wilhelm that if she cannot be with him, she wants to be free as before and return to '[w]hat I was, Mignon! And forever I shall return to my gypsy clothes!'⁴ When Philine returns and sees Mignon wearing her clothes, she mocks the girl telling Wilhelm that Mignon is obviously jealous of her. Arm in arm Philine and Wilhelm leave the room, and after Mignon has changed back into her own clothes, she says, 'That Philine, I hate her!'⁵

The second scene from Act II begins with Mignon wandering in the gardens of the castle lamenting that Wilhelm loves Philine. Just as she is ready to commit suicide by throwing herself into the lake, a harp is heard and Lothario enters. He asks, 'Is it you, Sperata? Answer!'⁶ When she responds in the negative, he realises it is Mignon. A duet between the two ensues in which they both sing of the pain and suffering that life sometimes casts on one. When they hear the applause that Philine is receiving after her performance of Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mignon becomes so overwhelmed with jealousy that she tells Lothario she wishes that the castle would catch fire. Lothario, being a bit senile after all the traumatic things that happened in his past, misunderstands Mignon and actually sets fire to the castle. When Philine sees Mignon, she realises that she has forgotten the bouquet of flowers that Wilhelm gave her in the theatre and asks Mignon to fetch it for her. Philine is unaware of the fire in the castle as well as of the fact that Mignon actually gave the flowers first to Wilhelm, who then passed them on to Philine. Wilhelm now realises that Mignon has gone into a burning building and rushes in after her and saves her from the flames. Up to this part of the opera, Mignon is a social and emotional Other. She is an emotional Other, because she is in love with Wilhelm, who does not reciprocate her feelings. Mignon is also a social Other, because she is an outsider amongst the gypsies. Mignon is also the outsider when she is with Wilhelm, because he sees her as a child and not as an equal. The listener may also often get the feeling that Wilhelm does not want her around, because he actually wants to be alone with Philine.

⁴ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 334-335.

⁵ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 338.

⁶ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 340.

The third act of the opera opens in a castle in Italy. Lothario has taken Mignon there to recover. Wilhelm, who is also there, now realises that he loves Mignon and declares his love for her. Mignon, however, has still not completely recovered from the fire. Lothario appears completely changed; he is no longer the half-crazed wanderer, but seems to be a rich nobleman who is also the owner of the castle in which they are staying. His memory has returned and he shows Mignon a casket with a child's scarf in it. He tells her that it belonged to his daughter Sperata. He also shows her a coral bracelet that belonged to his daughter, together with a prayer book. When Mignon sees the prayer book she opens it and starts to read from it, 'O Virgin Mary, the Lord is with you ...'.⁷ She closes the book and recites the rest of the prayer from memory. Mignon remembers snippets of her childhood and her mother in their home and country, Italy. Then she realises that Lothario is her father. And in the final trio Mignon sings the same words she sang in her first aria but substituting the verb *voudrais* (would like) with *voulais* (wanted to) in the phrase 'Ah! C'est la que je voulais vivre, aimer et mourir!' It is there I wanted to live, love and die!⁸

In the beginning of the opera Mignon can be classified as a social Other in two senses. Not only is she part of a marginalised group of gypsies, but she is also an outsider amongst these gypsies. During the first scene when she is forced to dance by the leader of the group of gypsies, she is clearly othered by the Others. However, when Wilhelm rescues her and she falls in love with him, Mignon's Otherness changes from social to emotional. As her situation in the opera changes, so her Otherness is also bound to change. She fits the template of the emotional Other, because her love for Wilhelm is unreciprocated as he is infatuated with the actress Philine. During the third act of the opera the situation changes again, when Mignon realises that Lothario is in fact her father and Italy her home. Wilhelm also professes his love for Mignon. Therefore, Mignon started out as a social Other, then became an emotional Other as well. However, by the end of the opera she has found her long lost father and her home, Wilhelm also reciprocates her feelings, and Mignon is no longer an Other.

5.3 THE OTHERNESS OF MIGNON IN THE MUSIC OF *MIGNON*

In Act I when Jarno introduces Mignon to the audience, the chorus greets his words with a *fortissimo*, sustained note on 'Vivat!' followed by a *pianissimo*, *staccato* downward motif. The flutes enter with a melody played in thirds, accompanying Jarno (Ex. 1). This melody is repeated a

⁷ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 365.

⁸ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 368.

few times and then followed by a new motif in the violins (Ex. 2) before Philine starts singing.

Example 1, Act I, scene 1 – first motif, played by the flutes⁹

Example 2, Act I, scene 1 – second motif, played by the violins

The flute motif is heard again when Jarno describes Mignon and the violin motif is heard not long after. Mignon enters with ‘Ces yeux fixés sur moi!’ and when Jarno tries to force her to dance in front of the crowd of people she protests with a repeated, ‘Non, non non!’ The crowd also tries to force her to dance, and with a sudden shift from G major to E major the chorus enters with ‘Elle a raison de dire non!’ in 2/4 meter. Prominent strings as well syncopated rhythms in the orchestra and chorus let the music sound exotic, or in this case like gypsy music. Lothario and Jarno sing individual phrases before the chorus and orchestra repeat the same music as before. The action comes to a halt as Wilhelm sings on a repeated E, together with a key change to C major, ‘Holà, coquin!’ As the sextet commences, which moves back to the key of E major, Philine sings the first line, which is characterised by semi-quavers. This motif is also supported by a short three-quaver motif laced with woodwinds in the orchestra. Wilhelm echoes this motif, but varies it in the second half. When Mignon enters, her Otherness is immediately evident through her music. She sings the most beautiful, lyrical line, accompanied by the strings. While the meter remains in 9/8, the rhythmic motifs feels completely changed from the others' music, because each bar is characterised by longer note values (e.g. two dotted crotchets and three quavers). The orchestra, which only

⁹ All the music examples in this chapter are taken from: A. Thomas, *Mignon* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1881).

commented with short three-quaver motifs up until this point, also plays a more dominant role with the strings playing in a thicker texture and longer lines.

PHILINE (à part) **ANDANTE (120 = ♩)**

p Quel est, je veux le savoir Ce beau coureur d'aven

rit. *pp*

Example 3, Act I, scene 1 – Philine’s first phrase in sextet

MIGNON (priant à part)

p O Vier - ge, mon seul es - poir. Pro - le - ge ta cré a

dim. *pp*

Example 4, Act I, scene 1 – Mignon’s first phrase in sextet

The other singers join in and a sextet develops together with the chorus. In the rest of the number there are no new elements of Otherness.

The next time we hear Mignon, she speaks to Wilhelm. This recitative is very simply written, with the first part on repeated E4 flats and then Mignon moves a whole step lower to a C sharp. In between her (half-)sung phrases, Wilhelm interjects with spoken sentences. One can argue that the simplicity of the recitative is an indication of the simplicity and childlikeness of Mignon’s character. The well-known aria ‘Connais-tu le pays’ starts with an introduction played by the flutes in 6/8, before a staccato semi-quaver motif is heard. One bar of two chords is heard before Mignon enters with:

MIGNON *dol.*

Con - nais-tu le pays où fleurit l'or - an - ger?

Example 5, Act I, scene 2 – first motif from ‘Connais-tu’

This eight-bar phrase is repeated twice before the structure of the aria changes, with the accompaniment changing to flutes and the vocal line remaining on repeated E4 flats before moving with an upward motion to a sustained E5 flat. As Mignon sings the words ‘Hélas! Que ne puisje te suivre!’, the orchestral accompaniment changes to *pianissimo* repeated quaver chords in the strings. The phrase ‘c’est là que je voudrais vivre’ is repeated twice albeit on different words, and the third is a sequential variation.

C'est là! c'est là que je vou - drais

vi - vre, Ai - mer, ai - mer et mou - rir!

Example 6, Act I, scene 2 – second motif from ‘Connais-tu’ (previous page)

This is accompanied by an arpeggio motif in the strings and the sequential variation supported by two bars of two chords per bar. There is an interlude, which is the same as the introduction, before the second verse commences. Mignon’s Otherness is established in this aria through the following musical elements: cantabile singing that accentuates her demure and innocent character, 6/8 meter, strings and woodwinds (mostly flutes) in the orchestra, and the ‘Connais-tu’ motif.

In the duet ‘Légères hirondelles’ between Mignon and Lothario the meter is in 2/4 and the key D major. After two chords played by the harp, the strings play a dance rhythm, while above that Mignon sings a simple melody with a triplet motif.

MIGNON

dolce. 3

Lé - gè - res hir-on - del - les, Oi-seaux bé - nis de

Example 7, Act I, scene 2 – ‘Légères hirondelles’

Throughout this duet this dance motif in the strings is the only element of Otherness.

The trio at the end of Act I starts with Mignon singing lyrical phrases in 2/4 meter with strings dominating the orchestration. The first part is mainly a duet between her and Wilhelm. When Mignon enters with the phrase ‘Envers qui me délivre ...’, the rhythmic structure changes, while still staying in 2/4 time,

vers qui me dé - li - vre Je vou - lais m'acquitter!

Example 8, Act I, scene 2 – trio between Mignon, Wilhelm and Lothario

This is a strong dance-like rhythmic pattern, and can also be identified by its staccati notes, which is repeated as Wilhelm sings. Although as Lothario sings, this rhythmic pattern changes. It is a prominent element of Otherness in the trio. As the three voices join in at the end of the trio, this rhythmic pattern is repeated again. This repeated dance rhythm as well as the duple meter is evidence of Mignon's alterity.

During the rest of the finale of Act I there are no new elements of Otherness present in the music.

In Act II Mignon is heard for the first time during the trio that she sings with Philine and Wilhelm. During this trio Philine sings very coquettish and playful music, and Wilhelm is obviously in love with her; this becomes evident through his passionate music. Mignon is very clearly established as the Other during this trio, with her music always being 'motivically' different from those of the other two singers.

PHILINE

Cha - cun m'ad - mi - re!

Je ne veux rien en - ten - dre!

cet - te_ voix_ ten - dre.

Example 9, Act II – trio between Mignon, Philine and Wilhelm

The *Styrienne* has many characteristics that make this piece sound distinctly 'different' like music often associated with the exotic or the Other. The many woodwinds and colourful percussive effects establish this aria very quickly as exotic or expressive of the Other. Mignon enters with a very simple phrase, singing in unison with orchestra. Insistent dance rhythms throughout the piece as well as the non-stop use of interesting percussive effects also contribute to the feeling of Otherness.

f

Ah! ah! ah! ah! ah! la folle his - toi - re!

dimin.

p

p
en - vain je m'en dé - fend _____ Je me trou ve bien

dimin.
mieux, _____ je ne suis plus la mê - me.

dimin.

Example 10, Act II, scene 1 – ‘Styrienne’

The aria is in two-part form, the second verse starting with the voice in unison with orchestra. The *Styrienne* ends with a coda, with prominent oboe and a long cadenza which is left to the discretion of the singer. Evidence of Mignon’s Otherness is also supported by the use of 2/4 meter and D major.

Later in Act II Mignon sings another aria. It starts with a simple recitative, with strings dominating the orchestral palate. An *agitato* theme is heard which portrays Mignon’s mood. The meter changes to 9/8 and the lower strings enter with a lyrical *andante* theme, to which Mignon declares, ‘Elle est aimée!’

The orchestration thickens and Mignon’s emotions also intensify as is evident from the tessitura that rises, reaching three consecutive B5 flats. The last outpouring from Mignon is clear when she jumps an octave from B4 flat to B5 flat and sings a cadenza-like scale downwards. The orchestra also contributes to this intensity by the dense orchestration in the strings and a bar of *fortissimo* chords,

and for the first time during Mignon's solo music brass instruments are heard. The mood then changes with tremolo from the high strings and below that Mignon sings a calm, lyrical line before the harp enters announcing Lothario's entrance.

Lothario enters and sings a recitative with Mignon, which contains no elements of Otherness. However, when their duet commences, Mignon sings

ANDANTE (74 = ♩)
MIGNON *p*

LOTHARIO As - tu souf - fert? as - tu pleu - re?

ANDANTE (74 = ♩)
p *pp*

Example 11, act II, scene 2 – duet between Mignon and Lothario

As becomes evident from the above example, this is a very simple, lyrical phrase, supported by chords on the first and third beat in 3/8 meter from the orchestra. Two prominent elements of Otherness are repeated here: a cantabile melody sung by Mignon and the orchestra that supports this lyrical singing with strings and woodwinds (mostly flutes). During the whole of the duet these are the main elements of Otherness that are reiterated. Throughout the finale of Act II there are no elements of Otherness.

Up to this part in the opera several elements of Otherness can be found in Mignon's music.

1. *Cantabile* singing with lyrical lines that accentuate the innocence of Mignon's character.
2. This *cantabile* singing is supported by strings and woodwinds, mostly flutes, in the orchestra.
3. Sometimes the fact that Mignon is a gypsy is much more accentuated in the music than in the libretto through repetitive dance rhythms e.g. in the *Styrienne*.
4. Interesting percussive effects.
5. Simple structures of forms e.g. in 'Connais-tu'.

6. 2/4 or 6/8 meter.
7. The frequent use of D major.

The first time Mignon is heard in Act III is during her duet with Wilhelm. She enters with a new thematic idea, a syncopated rhythm, supported by triplets in the orchestra. This is echoed by Wilhelm before they join up and sing together. Philine is heard singing 'Je suis Titania' offstage, while Mignon mutters short phrases to herself. The orchestra enters passionately in 6/8, and this is the beginning of the trio between Mignon, Wilhelm and Philine. There are no other elements of Otherness in the remainder of the trio, although Philine's music stays true to her light and playful character, which makes Mignon's music seem much more impassioned and sincere. Throughout the opera the composer makes sure to let each of the two ladies remain true to their musical personae. Philine has a lighter character with lots of coloratura in contrast to Mignon's lyrical lines. Mignon and Wilhelm's music now seems much more unified, with Philine's music sounding apart, in contrast to earlier in the opera when Philine and Wilhelm's music was a unit, and Mignon's music established her as the outsider. At the end of the trio it becomes evident that Philine is now the emotional Other in terms of her musical motifs being set completely apart from those of Mignon and Wilhelm.

The first part of the trio between Mignon, Wilhelm and Lothario contains no elements of Otherness. However, during the course of the trio a new motif is introduced in a rhythmical 2/4 meter by the orchestra.

Example 12, Act III – rhythmical motif in the trio between Mignon, Wilhelm and Lothario

Mignon sings a very simple, cantabile melody, with the minimum of orchestral accompaniment, which is a reminder of her innocent character.

ANDANTINO

MIGNON (ouvrant le livre et lisant)

p O vier - ge Ma - ri - e, Le Seigneur est a - vec vous

pp

Example 13, Act III – Mignon's arietta

An *allegro* with semi-quavers in the strings leads to the emotional climax of the opera when Mignon and Lothario realise that they are father and daughter. This section ends in E flat major and moves a semitone higher to E major for the final section. A reminder from 'Connais-tu' is first reiterated by solo flute and then repeated by the oboe. Above *pianissimo* tremolo strings, the flute plays the first motif from 'Connais-tu'. Above this musical motif Wilhelm sings 'Chère Mignon! Je t'aime, oui, je t'aime!' To this Mignon answers with the second motif from 'Connais-tu', 'C'est la que je voulais vivre! However, this time it differs in that it is in E major instead of D flat major.

ff C'est là que je vou - lais

ff C'est là que tu dois

ff C'est là

6 6

Example 14, Act III – Mignon, Wilhelm, Lothario trio

This is also supported by the orchestra and the opera ends in E major. Musically, the fact that Mignon is no longer an Other is also corroborated by this last few phrases which she sings together with Lothario and Wilhelm.

5.4 SUMMARY

Several elements define Mignon's Otherness.

1. In the beginning of the opera Mignon can be classified as a social Other. Not only is she part of a marginalised group of gypsies, but she is also an outsider amongst these gypsies. She is also social Other when she is with Wilhelm, because one may get the feeling that he does not really want her around.
2. When Wilhelm rescues her and she falls in love with him, she fits the template of the emotional Other, because her love for Wilhelm is unreciprocated as he is infatuated with the actress Philine.
3. During the third act of the opera Mignon realises that Lothario is in fact her father and Italy her home. Wilhelm also professes his love for Mignon. Therefore, Mignon starts out as a social Other and then becomes an emotional Other as well. By the end of the opera she is reunited with her long-lost father and home, and Wilhelm reciprocates her feelings, Mignon is no longer an Other.
4. *Cantabile* singing and lyrical lines that accentuate the innocence of Mignon's character.
5. This *cantabile* singing is supported by strings and woodwinds in the orchestra.
6. At times the fact that Mignon is a gypsy is much more accentuated in the music through repetitive dance rhythms e.g. in the 'Styrienne'.
7. Interesting percussive effects.
8. The form of arias is simple e.g. in 'Connais-tu'.
9. The two recurring motifs from 'Connais-tu' are used repeatedly in the opera.
10. Duple meter, 2/4 and 6/8.
11. The frequent use of D major.

Just like Carmen and Azucena, Mignon as a gypsy fits the template of a social Other. However, Mignon differs from the characters discussed previously as she is an emotional Other. In contrast to the other two characters, her music is not characterised by a strong rhythmical language throughout,

although there are a few musical numbers where these strong rhythms are accentuated. This reminds one of the fact that Mignon is a gypsy (or thinks that she is). Just as in *Carmen*, the music of *Mignon* also uses colourful percussive effects. There are simple formal designs used in arias like 'Connais-tu', just as in the 'Habanera', 'Seguidille', as well as 'Stride la vampa'.

6. SAMSON ET DALILA

6.1 THE CREATION OF *SAMSON ET DALILA*

Saint-Saëns started creating work of *Samson et Dalila* two years after he completed the composition of his first opera, *Le timbre d'argent*. However, during that time in 1867 Saint-Saëns still considered setting the biblical story in the form of an oratorio. The composer wrote in a letter,

A young relative of mine had married a charming young man who wrote verse on the side. I realized that he was gifted and had in fact real talent. I asked him to work with me on an oratorio on a biblical subject. "An oratorio!", he said, 'no, let's make it an opera!', and he began to dig through the bible while I outlined the plan of the work, even sketching scenes, and leave him only the versification to do. For some reason I began the music with Act 2, and I played it at home to a select audience who could make nothing of it at all.³³

The libretto, based on a play by Voltaire, was written by Ferdinand Lemaire. The original story was drawn from the Book of Judges, chapter 16. However, there are a few alterations from the original biblical plot. According to Hugh Macdonald, the opera 'omits Samson's mighty deeds such as the slaughter of a lion and the slaying of one thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass which earned his fame and his leadership of the Hebrews.'³⁴ Abimelech, the old Hebrew whom Samson kills in Act I of the opera, is fictional. Although the story of Samson and Dalila has a tendency to get complicated with the political, cultural and religious differences between the two nations, Macdonald summarises the approach to the opera very clearly when he states that it 'concentrates instead on the story of Delilah, presenting Samson as an inspiring leader whose heart can be touched by love of a woman and Delilah as a scheming, merciless avenger.'³⁵

After Saint-Saëns had completed the opera in 1876, French theatres seemed uninterested in the composer's latest creation. A year previously there had been a concert performance of the second act, but this was unfavourably received by critics and public alike. Nevertheless, Saint-Saëns's long-time friend, Franz Liszt, believed the opera would be a success and used his influence to have it staged in Weimar. The première of *Samson et Dalila* took place on 2 December 1877 at the *Hoftheater*, Weimar, with Franz Ferenczy as Samson and Auguste von Müller singing Dalila. However, it was still a while before the composer saw his work being performed in his native city. *Samson et Dalila* premièred at the *Paris Opéra* only in 1892.

³³

As quoted in: H. Macdonald. 'Samson et Dalila.' *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. by Stanley Sadie. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O904621>.

³⁴ Macdonald, *Samson et Dalila*.

³⁵ Macdonald, *Samson et Dalila*.

6.2 THE OTHERNESS OF DALILA IN THE LIBRETTO OF SAMSON ET DALILA

Dalila enters for the first time near the end of the first act and leaves the temple of Dagon together with the other Philistine women. The women sing the ‘Spring Chorus’, telling the Hebrew men that they ought celebrate their victory. When Dalila addresses Samson, Samson prays that God may help him resist this woman, ‘Close my eyes, close my heart to the sweet voice that is urging me!’³⁶ The old Hebrew warns Samson that he should not be misled by this foreign woman. During the ensuing trio Samson prays to God that He hide her beauty because it disturbs everything in him. Dalila continues telling Samson that ‘my kisses are even sweeter than the lily-of-the-valley. Open your arms to your mistress, and draw her to your heart ...’³⁷ The trio ends with the old Hebrew’s warning, ‘Your eyes will never have sufficient tears to turn aside the wrath of heaven!’ before Samson ends with ‘O God’ and simultaneously Dalila ends with ‘O, come!’

The young girls who are with Dalila dance seductively for the Hebrew warriors in ‘The Dance of the Priestesses of Dagon’. The elements of religious Otherness reflected in the music are discussed in the section 6.3. Samson tries to avoid looking at Dalila; however, he is unable to avert his eyes as she dances with the other women in an enticing manner.

After the dance has ended, Dalila sings very sweetly to Samson that spring is beginning and hence there is hope of love again. ‘You give the earth back a gentle mystery ... In vain I am beautiful! My heart is full of love, weeping for the faithless one, I await his return.’³⁸ She keeps on singing these gentle words to Samson, when the old Hebrew intercepts, ‘The spirit of evil has led this woman across your path to trouble your peace.’³⁹ However, she seems to be undisturbed by this and keeps on singing her sweet words to Samson. By the end of her aria, he is completely caught up in her spell and he follows her as she leaves.

At the end of Act I Dalila can be classified as a religious Other, because she is a Philistine and not a Hebrew like Samson. Evidence of this is mainly found in the music. One question that is actually

³⁶ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 175.

³⁷ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 176-177.

³⁸ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 178.

³⁹ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 179.

raised from the start of the opera is whether or not Dalila really loves Samson. According to Locke, in Milton's and Handel's versions of *Samson and Dalila*, the two of them are married and, after he is captured by the Philistines, she is utterly distraught, because she thinks that they were only going to cut off his strength-giving hair, not capture and blind him. However, if Dalila is perceived to love Samson at this point in the opera, then, according to Locke,

... the word 'love', if applicable at all to Delilah, must imply not Gilda-like tenderness and devotion but something hotter and scarier, the kind of love-hate seen to varying extents in Donizetti's calculating queens, Verdi's Count di Luna, Eboli and Amneris, and Puccini's Baron Scarpia.⁴⁰

The prelude of the second act starts with the storm music. Dalila is on stage alone, singing that this is the hour for vengeance and, as a reward for her efforts, Samson will be enchained tomorrow. 'He would wish in vain to be able to banish me, to expel me from his soul ... He is mine! He is my slave!'⁴¹ When the High Priest enters, there is faint lightning simulated by the orchestra, introducing a brief repetition of the storm music. He tells Dalila that the city has been handed over to the Hebrew slaves, 'Our soldiers before them did run filled with fear at the very name of Samson whose frightful boldness has troubled their reason.'⁴² He continues to tell Dalila about Samson's strength that has been given to him by God in order to bring the Hebrews back to power. Dalila suggests in turn that she is capable of manipulating him. 'It is in vain that he resists me, he is strong in battle, but he is my slave, and he trembles in my arms.'⁴³ The High Priest asks her to lend them her support, and that if they succeed in apprehending him while he is defenceless in her power, she can choose from his riches. However, to the High Priest's surprise Dalila replies that she does not want any riches; she abhors Samson and her reward will be vengeance. She attempted to learn the secret of his strength three times before, yet he never revealed anything to her. But today, 'I have prepared my weapons; Samson won't be able to resist my tears.'⁴⁴ The High Priest is very pleased upon hearing this and exclaims, 'May Dagon, our god, deign to extend his arm! You fight for his glory, and through him you will triumph!'⁴⁵ He confides to her that in her lies all his hope and they sing together, 'Death to the leader of the Hebrews!'⁴⁶ The High Priest leaves, but not before telling her that the fate of all the Philistines lies in her hands.

When Samson arrives, Dalila starts whispering irresistible words into his ears. However, he wants

⁴⁰ R.P. Locke, 'Constructing the Oriental 'Other': Saint-Saëns's "Samson et Dalila"', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 3(3), (1991) 292.

⁴¹ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 180.

⁴² Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 182.

⁴³ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 182.

⁴⁴ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 186.

⁴⁵ Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 186.

⁴⁶ Castel, *French Opera Libretti* 187.

nothing of that and tells her, ‘Stop those raptures, I cannot listen to you without shame and remorse!’⁴⁷ Dalila is not easily put off and asks the Hebrew warrior how he can doubt her heart and have any fear around her. Samson replies that they have to stop their relationship as his Lord has chosen him as the leader of his people with the aim of ending their suffering. Dalila starts to weep and accuses Samson of not keeping his promises; she states that the only fruit of his victory is the happiness which has now been taken away from her. Samson becomes completely moved and overwhelmed by her tears and responds that he loves her. She replies that her god is the god of love and asks if he can remember the beautiful days they spent together. There is more distant lightning. Samson declares ‘For you my love is so great, that I dare to love you despite God himself!’⁴⁸ The next scene has most famous aria from the opera and Dalila sings ‘Ah, respond to my tenderness, fill me with rapture!’ and in the second verse of the aria Samson joins in singing, ‘With my kisses I want to dry your tears, and drive all the fears from your heart!’⁴⁹ But then Dalila changes direction, saying that he has to prove his love not by his frivolous words, but by revealing the secret of his strength to her. However, he refuses to divulge his secret. The storm outside increases, which Samson believes is the wrath of God. Dalila enters her house, and after hesitating for a moment, Samson follows her inside. Dalila calls the Philistines and they capture Samson.

In Act II Dalila can be classified primarily as a moral Other. The ways in which she mercilessly seduces Samson and lies to him without any feelings of remorse or guilt, just to hand him over to the Philistines, is definitely not part of the established moral code of society. However, Locke makes the interesting argument that,

Delilah’s potent mixture of irreconcilable motives, especially in a work that guides the audience to identify primarily with the Hebrews, makes her a chief example of the ‘dangerous Other’– at once *femme fatale* and devious Oriental. She is also very complex, and may not always be saying what she means, even when speaking to the High Priest and especially when speaking to Samson.⁵⁰

In Act III, after Samson has been captured and blinded, the Philistines are celebrating a feast. Here, during the ‘Bacchanale’, an orgy, the Philistine as a group is established as religious Others through the music (see section 6.3). The staging may also establish the Philistines as religious Others during this part of the opera; however, that depends on the director and production.

The mixture of plots enriches rather than confuses, largely because the added elements (national liberation, Western piety, *femme fatale*) reinforce rather than contradict the opera’s underlying binary opposition between a morally superior ‘us’ (or collective Self) and an appealing but dangerous ‘them’ (‘collective Other’) who come close to causing ‘our’ downfall ... And precisely because Saint-Saëns tugged and pulled at the Orientalist paradigm, it is essential to view the opera in the larger context of the Orientalist world view that flourished in

⁴⁷ Castel, *French Opera Libretti* 188.

⁴⁸ Castel, *French Opera Libretti* 192.

⁴⁹ Castel, *French Opera Libretti* 192-193.

⁵⁰ Locke, *Constructing the Oriental ‘Other’*, 293.

France at the time.⁵¹

Dalila approaches Samson and mocks their love: ‘Remember our ecstasies! Remember my caresses! Love served my plan; so as to satisfy my vengeance ... Dalila avenges on this day her god, her people and her hatred.’⁵² Dalila, the High Priest and the Philistines carry on with their celebrations, and give praise and glory to their god, Dagon. When the young boy who is leading Samson takes him between two marble pillars, the Hebrew leader prays for strength, and with one ultimate attempt, he pushes the pillars over and the temple collapses on him killing all the Philistines, the High Priest and Dalila.

Samson et Dalila is an opera rich with notions of Otherness. Firstly there are the cultural and religious differences between the Hebrews and the Philistines. Secondly, Dalila not only fits the template of the religious Other, but also of the moral Other. And it can be argued that Dalila, as the only principal woman character who fits the template of Beauvoir’s ‘woman as the Other’, is used and manipulated by men to further their own political agendas. However, I do not see Dalila as someone who is easily manipulated, but rather as a woman who knows what she wants and is actually the one manipulating other people. Viewing the character from this perspective and keeping her exoticism in mind, it should be said that she fits the template of the religious and moral Other.

6.3 THE OTHERNESS OF DALILA IN THE MUSIC OF *SAMSON ET DALILA*

The first entrance of Dalila occurs near the end of Act I, when she enters with the Philistine women. The women sing a *dolcissimo* four-part chorus in A major. After the chorus ends, Dalila continues singing in this lyrical fashion, addressing Samson with the words ‘Je viens célébrer la victoire’. Samson and the old Hebrew join Dalila and a trio follows.

Ralph P. Locke describes the ‘Dance of the Priestesses of Dagon’ as follows:

Part of the demure yet intriguing effect comes from the elusive modal language of the music: the opening phrase uses a minor third degree but a major sixth, in addition to a lowered seventh, that single most distinctive sign of temporal or geographical displacement in Western music of recent centuries. Certain orchestral touches reinforce the sense of Easternness or perhaps ‘ancientness’ (e.g., the fourth beat ... lightly graced by a tap on the tambour de Basque and flicked notes in the harp). Though it would be hard to claim anything specifically Middle Eastern or biblical here, the music ... characterises the pagan priestesses who dance to it as voluptuous yet innocently so.⁵³

⁵¹ Locke, *Constructing the Oriental ‘Other’*, 263.

⁵² Castel, *French Opera Libretti*, 204.

⁵³ Locke, *Constructing the Oriental ‘Other’*, 266.



Example 1, Act I, scene 6 - 'Dance of the Priestesses of Dagon'⁵⁴

The characteristics that contribute to the exoticism or Otherness of the 'Dance of the Priestesses of Dagon' lie in the orchestration. Woodwinds together with the harp and some unusual percussive effects such as the use of the tambour highlight the feeling of alterity. The augmented second and diminished seventh also give this number its distinctly exotic flavour. After the dance has finished, there is a sustained B from the orchestra. Dalila enters *dolce* with her first aria 'Printemps qui commence'.

ANDANTE (84 = ♩)

DELILAH *dolce*

Prin-temps qui com-men-ce.

Example 2, Act I, scene 6 – 'Printemps qui commence'

While she is singing this phrase, the sustained B is still held and repeated in syncopated fashion, while the bass descends in steps. Her last motif 'Aux cœur amoureux' is echoed by the orchestra. This whole phrase is heard twice before a variation of the first phrase is introduced. This is also heard twice. The aria now moves into a *poco animato* section and the orchestra plays a downward motif in parallel octaves that makes a turn at the bottom C sharp before it starts rising again and Dalila sings the first phrase of the aria again. However, this time she only sings it once before it moves on to a little *codetta*. The old Hebrew intercepts with sixteen bars of his own before Dalila

⁵⁴ All the music examples in this chapter, with the exception of example 12, are taken from: C. Saint-Saëns, *Samson et Dalila* (New York: Schirmer, 1964).

finishes her aria. Ralph P. Locke notes that this aria as well as ‘Mon cœur’ does not contain any elements of exoticism in the form. ‘Rather they involve standard era techniques for conveying beauty, passion and seductiveness. These techniques include ecstatic vocal leaps, melodic phrases that extend asymmetrically, rich harmony, liquid writing for winds.’⁵⁵ Locke states that Dalila seduces Samson very carefully with this aria.

Even more evocative, and plainly more effective in breaking Samson’s resistance, is her aria ‘Printemps qui commence’. This aria begins ... entirely syllabic in declamation and supported by the barest of held-note accompaniments: a syncopated dominant pedal, faintly alluding perhaps to pedal tones in Middle Eastern music. But the intensity soon builds about and below the obstinate (40-bar-long) pedal, ensnaring not only Samson but the listener in the long stretch of seductively melismatic melody ... the eight bars are now built of two large phrases that are themselves powerfully asymmetrical.⁵⁶

It is important to stress that the exoticism discussed in this context is parallel to connoting the religious Other. This can be seen in the repeated use of augmented seconds, diminished sevenths as well as orchestration that consists of the use of a lot of woodwinds, in particular double reed instruments, e.g. oboes and bassoons.

Act II opens with a prelude that Steven Huebner calls ‘the breeze and storm music.’⁵⁷ This music also sets the scene for Dalila’s second aria. The strings play *allegro agitato* chords in octave syncopated rhythms and Dalila enters with the first words of her recitative ‘Samson, recherchant ma présence.’ After a short twelve-bar recitative, the strings enter in A flat major in 3/4 time, playing sequences in regular six quavers per bar, before Dalila enters with her first phrase:



Example 3, Act II, scene 1 – ‘Amour! Viens aider ma faiblesse!’

It is a wonderfully melodic phrase, which first sweeps upwards before making a turn and then ending on an E4 flat, accentuating the seductiveness of Dalila’s voice. The middle section of this aria moves into a slightly faster tempo supported by regular quavers beats in the orchestra. When she sings ‘Moi, seule, entre tous’, there is a tremolo in the bass indicating her desire to get Samson under her spell. On the words ‘je le brave,’ the orchestra still moving towards a climax, with

⁵⁵ R.P. Locke, ‘A Broader View of Musical Exoticism’, *The Journal of Musicology*, 24(4), 2007, 478.

⁵⁶ Locke, *Constructing the Oriental ‘Other’*, 277.

⁵⁷ S. Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle; Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 207.

accelerando and *crescendo* marked in the score, Dalila jumps a third from an E5 flat to a G5. However, many singers substitute the G5 with a B5 flat before gliding two octaves downwards to a B3 flat. The complete first theme is heard again (thus making the aria ABA form) before there is a coda that is sung *dolcissimo*. With each phrase the coda descend gradually in tessitura, which can be demonstrative of what Locke calls 'the dangerous Other' until the last phrase, 'Succombera sous mes effort!' ends on an A3 flat. In contrast to the 'Dance of the Priestesses of Dagon', in this aria as well as in 'Printemps qui commence' there is a 'lack of Otherness' because Dalila sings in the usual language of Romanticism. However, Dalila's alterity can still be seen in the way she seduces Samson. She sings many whole and half steps in the lower register, a sixth or seventh leap followed by a descending motif as well as *dolce*, *cantabile* phrases echoed by the orchestra.

Vincent Giroud postulates that '[t]he composer's admiration for Wagner is perceptible in the resolutely "through-composed" structure of each act and his energetic use of recurrent themes, notably in the great Act 2 duet, where the orchestra depicts the storm raging as tension mounts between the characters.'⁵⁸ A recurring motif is played by the orchestra and Dalila greets the High Priest with the phrase:

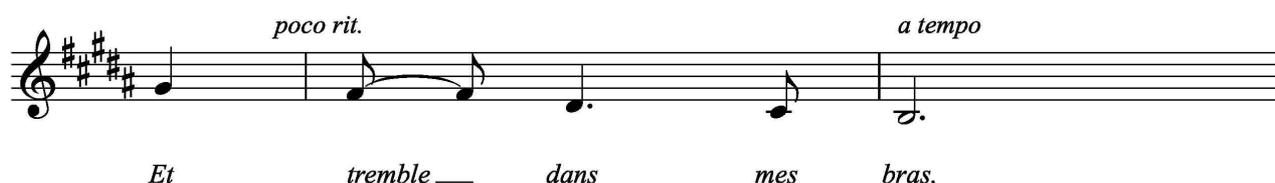
DELILAH *p*

Sa - lut à vous, mon père! So - yez le bien - ve - nu,

Example 4, Act II, scene 2 – duet between Dalila and High Priest

The first part of this duet is dominated by the High Priest. Dalila's vocal line has many octave leaps, either between a B3 flat, B3 natural or middle C to the octave above that. The last phrase of the aria 'Amour viens aider ma faiblesse!' is also repeated, although now instead of the words, 'Sous mes effort!' she sings 'Et tremble dans mes bras.' This time the phrase in question is also repeated a minor third higher. (Ex. 5)

⁵⁸ V. Giroud, *French Opera, A Short History* (London: Yale University Press, 2010) 219.



Example 5, Act II, scene 2 – a recurring motif from duet between Dalila and High Priest

A moment later a new theme is heard for the first time. It is a dotted rhythm played by the strings. The music calms down. However, this does not last for long. The strings and woodwinds enter with a staccato declamatory theme that sounds distinctly ‘Oriental’:

Example 6, Act II, scene 2 – new motif from duet between Dalila and High Priest

The orchestration thickens as Dalila narrates the story. For the final part of the duet between Dalila and the High Priest the tempo moves into a 6/8 *Allegro moderato* in the key of F minor. The orchestra has steady semiquaver rhythms that contribute to the feeling of tension. Dalila has a two bar coloratura passage before she and the High Priest sing a section in unison; they each alternate the word ‘Mort’ twice and end the last phrase with the words ‘Mort au chef des Hébreux!’

Up to this point in the opera several elements of musical Otherness are evident in the music of Dalila.

3. There are many whole and half steps in the lower register; this is evidence of her Otherness and the way she tries to seduce Samson.
4. *Dolce, cantabile* phrases, often echoed by the orchestra.
5. Elements of Dalila’s Otherness are prevalent during ‘Dance of the Priestesses of Dagon’ in Act I. The repeated use of augmented second and diminished sevenths gives the music an ‘exotic’ flavour.

qu*oi* re - pous - ser ————— ma ten - dres - se?

Example 8, Act II, scene 3 – Dalila, Samson scene

The tempo changes to *piu allegro* and Samson declares, ‘D’Israël renaît l’espérance!’ The orchestra supports the vocal part with accented chords laced with heavy brass. However, after hearing this emotional statement from Samson, Dalila sings *piano* in her lower register to manipulate Samson. She also does this by singing in small intervals of half or whole steps in her lower voice and then by leaping a sixth, seventh or an octave. This technique of seduction works on the Israelite and he expresses his love with, ‘Dalila, Dalila, je t’aime!’ A tremolo from the orchestra is heard. A syncopated repeated F sharp which is reminiscent of the introductory bar of ‘Printemps qui commence’ is played (however, this time it is a fifth higher). Nevertheless, saying that he loves her is still not enough for her and after a simple melody is played by the woodwinds Dalila sings an unaccompanied vocal line. This simple motif played by the woodwinds is repeated twice, but the second time it is a whole step higher. The meter moves into 3/4 and with triplet accompaniment from the bass, Dalila further manipulates Samson into getting what she wants. Again Saint-Saëns uses small intervals of half and whole tones in her lower register, which emphasise her sensuality, immorality and alterity (Ex.9).

Pas - sés aux ge - noux d'une a - man - te

Example 9, Act II, scene 3 – whole and half steps in the lower range of the voice demonstrate Dalila's alterity

This technique of seduction leaves Samson vulnerable and with a passionate cry he says ‘Que j’ose aime malgré Dieu même!’ These words are the impetus for Dalila’s famous aria ‘Mon cœur s’ouvre à ta voix’.

The aria is in regular two-part form with strings playing semiquaver accompaniment in 3/4 time. This accompaniment moves in a sweeping upward and downward motion throughout the A section of the aria. When the B section starts, the meter moves into 4/4 and the orchestral support changes to broken chord patterns below the descending vocal line.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef, key of B-flat major, and 3/4 time. It begins with a long, sweeping melodic line that includes a leap of a minor seventh. The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff, key of B-flat major, and 3/4 time. It features semiquaver chords in the right hand and a descending chromatic line in the left hand. The lyrics are: 'Ah! ré - ponds à ma ten - dres - se!'.

Example 10, Act II, scene 3 – ‘Mon cœur ouvre à ta voix!’

Here the composer also accentuates Dalila's Otherness through whole and half steps in the lower range of her voice. This phrase is repeated twice. The next section consists of three ascending sequences with a leap of a minor seventh and the rest of the phrase descending in half- and whole steps. After the third climatic (half)phrase, the last phrase finishes by descending to a B3 flat before the resolution. According to Locke,

Delilah leaps beyond the sixth used in Act I, expanding to a seventh that is stated four times, the first two in a rising sequence, and then – in a broad cadential gesture, with the voice doubled by the winds – the second two in a descending sequence that describes the progression I-vi, a deepening shift of harmony that adds a pang just before the moment of resolution ... Franz Liszt, who generally disliked love duets in biblical works, argued that this scene was the rule-proving exception, being ‘perfectly to the point, for Samson and Delilah needed to go to their doom through loving’.⁵⁹

Samson intercepts with the word ‘Dalila, Dalila je t’aime!’, while below that the oboe repeats the previous phrase. There are two bars of interlude between the sections and in these bars there is a descending chromatic motif that is repeated twice in each bar, followed by a beat of repeated semiquavers. The A section repeats this downwards chromatic motif below the vocal line. With the

⁵⁹ Locke, *Constructing the Oriental ‘Other’*, 296.

repetition of the B section Samson joins Dalila and the aria becomes a duet that ends with Samson singing ‘Dalila, Dalila je t’aime!’ Samson sings a sustained B5 flat before going to the leading note and then ending in the tonic of D flat major. It is important to note that in this aria, just as in ‘Printemps qui commence’, there is a complete absence of any ‘Oriental’ effects. Saint-Saëns used the usual Romantic methods of composition and there is a possibility that while she is seducing Samson her cultural differences and Otherness are underplayed. Also, Saint-Saëns applies methods of Otherness used before in the music (leaps of sevenths, followed by a descending motif), many whole and half steps in the lower register and the use of woodwinds, especially double reeds in the orchestration: see the oboe solo in ‘Mon cœur’.

The tempo moves into *un poco piu animato* and after one smashing chord from the orchestra that simulates a crash of thunder, the strings play a syncopated rhythm. Dalila sings ‘Mais! ... non que dis-je, hélas!’ continuing her games with Samson. In the following duet between Samson and Dalila Saint-Saëns incorporates no new elements of Otherness. This scene is a continuation of the previous music and the orchestra depicts a growing storm, which can also be perceived as the increasing tension on stage.

Edward Said argued that,

we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate. What it is trying to do ... is at one and the same time to characterize the Orient as alien and to incorporate it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager, and actors are for Europe, and only for Europe.⁶⁰

This statement can also be applied to the ‘Bacchanale’ in *Samson et Dalila*. Saint-Saëns used many effects (see discussion below) to let the music sound ‘Oriental’ and thus also stress the alterity of Dalila and the Philistines as a nation.

After the chorus of Philistines, which is essentially a repetition of the ‘Spring Chorus’ of the first act, however this time with the men joining the women, there is a recitative for oboe.



Example 11, Act III, scene 2 – oboe solo in ‘Bacchanale’

⁶⁰ E.W. Said, *Orientalism* (England: Penguin, 1978) 71-72.

According to Locke, '[t]he rhapsodic oboe solo that opens the number captures something of the improvisatory freedom that Westerners find so remarkable in much Middle Eastern music, and its opening bears an uncanny resemblance to (Example 12) and other versions of the muezzin's call to prayer.'⁶¹

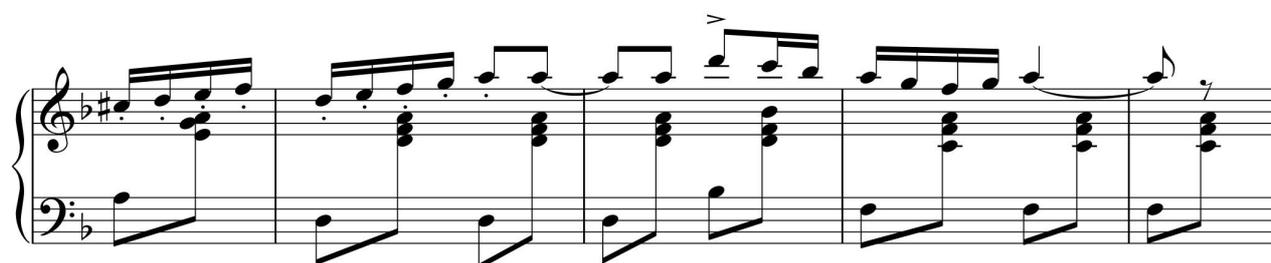


Example 12, Muezzin call ⁶²

Locke contests that the 'Bacchanale' is based on the Arabic hijaz mode, 'which provides a lower tetra- chord containing an augmented second (here the tetrachord is A-B- flat-C-sharp-D); then, for the upper tetrachord Saint-Saëns uses a transposition of this (i.e., E-F, natural-G-sharp-A).'⁶³ According to Locke, the augmented second is often used in Eastern music; however, the composer's exaggerated use of this method is an illustration of just one of the ways in which the West is stereotyping the Orient, as Said notes. Scott makes the fundamental observation that:

If Saint-Saëns was, indeed, concerned with the accuracy of the Arabic mode, it may strike an Arab listener as odd to hear the sound of castanets accompanying this dance. The whole thing becomes more bizarre when one considers that it was originally written, though not completed, as a *marche turque*.⁶⁴

Syncopated rhythms as well as stresses on weak beats help accentuate the 'Oriental' flavour of the piece. Again double-reeded instruments are also used to accentuate the Otherness in the 'Bacchanale'.



Example 13, Act III, scene 2 - 'Bacchanale'

The Bacchanale confirms that the Philistines are a nation of Others. This Otherness is evident

⁶¹ Locke, *Constructing the Oriental 'Other'*, 267.

⁶² Locke, *Constructing the Oriental 'Other'*, 268.

⁶³ D.B. Scott, 'Orientalism and Musical Style', *The Musical Quarterly*, 82(2), (1998) 313.

⁶⁴ Scott, *Orientalism and Musical Style*, 314.

throughout the number; however, already at the start of the ‘Bacchanale’ through the solo oboe recitative with the augmented seconds this Otherness is strongly accentuated. Repeated dance rhythms with the stresses on weak beats, as well as the use of woodwinds in the orchestration, also contribute to this alterity. There are also many grace notes and colourful percussive effects with the cymbal and castanets being especially prominent. After the ‘Bacchanale’ has finished, Dalila approaches Samson. Elements indicating her Otherness are: leaps of sevenths followed by a downward motif (a reminder of ‘A, versemoi’) and small intervals of half and whole tones in the lower register of her voice. She also sings a mocking version of ‘Ah, répondez à ma tendresse!’ on the words, ‘Souviens toi de mes caresse!’, of which the orchestra then plays the other half of the motif (Ex.14).

The image displays a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "Sou - - viens - - toi de" and the piano accompaniment. The piano part features a forte (*sf*) dynamic and a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "nos _____ i - vres - - - ses," and the piano accompaniment. The piano part features a *cresc.* (crescendo) dynamic. The score is written in G major and 2/4 time.

Example 14, Act III, scene 2 – Dalila’s mocking version of ‘Ah verse moi’

The ‘Gloire à Dagon’, which also forms part of the Philistine’s celebrations is called by Locke a ‘fascinating mix of Bach and Offenbach’.⁶⁵ This canon is written in a Baroque style and Locke adds:

The instrumental forces become more shrill as the hymn proceeds (extensive melodic passages for glockenspiel!), and – at the singers’ words ‘Dagon se revele’ (Dagon reveals himself), when the sacred fire flares up – the music changes into a *con brio* dance, something between a quick polka and a cancan. Delilah eventually adds some coloratura swoops ... and (with the High Priest) fifteen bars of chromatic vocalising ... though the swoops at least might be heard as vulgarly theatrical – or perhaps simply as Italian-operatic.

DELILAH

Gloire à Dagon vain-queur!

-gon vain-queur! Gloire à Da-

Example 15, Act III, scene 2 – Gloire à Dagon

Mon-tre sa puis-san-ce! Ah!

Example 16, Act III, scene 2 - Gloire à Dagon

6.4 SUMMARY

The elements of Otherness in the music and libretto of Dalila in *Samson et Dalila* are listed below.

5. In the libretto Dalila fits the template of a religious Other by being a Philistine and

⁶⁵ Locke, *Constructing the Oriental ‘Other’*, 286.

worshipping the god Dagon, and the audience is guided to adopt a more sympathetic view of the Hebrews.

6. She can also be classified as a moral Other. Firstly she seduces Samson and then she tells the Philistines that they can find him in her house, where they capture and blind him.
7. Musical evidence of Dalila's Otherness can be heard in the manner in which she seduces him, with many whole and half step intervals in the lower register.
8. *Dolce, cantabile* phrases, often echoed by the orchestra.
9. Sixth, or a seventh leaps followed by a descending motif.
10. Otherness is prevalent mostly during the 'Bacchanale' in Act III and the 'Dance of the Priestesses of Dagon' in Act I. The repeated use of the augmented second and diminished sevenths gives the music an 'Oriental' flavour.
11. Syncopated rhythms and stresses on weak beats.
12. The use of woodwinds also accentuates the Otherness in the music, especially the use of double reeds, e.g. oboes and bassoons.
13. During the 'Bacchanale' the Philistines as a nation are categorised as Other through the following musical techniques: an extensive solo recitative for oboe with augmented seconds, repeated dance rhythms with stresses on weak beats, grace notes, the use of woodwinds in the orchestration together with colourful percussive effects, for instance, cymbals and castanets.
14. There is also a conspicuous 'lack of Otherness' in her three arias, when Dalila sings in the usual language of Romanticism. This 'lack of Otherness' may be underplayed so that her moral Otherness and devious seduction of Samson can be more accentuated.

Like Carmen, Dalila is also fits the template of moral Otherness because she uses her sexuality to get what she wants. The repeated use of the augmented second and diminished sevenths is also used in the music of *Carmen*, which gives the music the feeling of Otherness or exoticism. The use of woodwinds adds an 'Eastern' flavour. However, in *Mignon* flutes together with strings are more often used, while in *Samson et Dalila* Saint-Saëns uses more double-reeded instruments. Vibrant percussive effects, with a strong rhythmical language, are also used to display Otherness during the 'Bacchanale', features which are also prevalent in *Carmen* during 'Chanson Bohème' and the Prelude to Act Four.

7. AIDA

7.1 THE CREATION OF AIDA

After the *Don Carlos* première in 1867, Verdi suffered a series of misfortunes. Firstly, Antonio Barezzi, who was not only his benefactor but also a father figure for the composer, passed away. Secondly, Piave, Verdi's long-time collaborator, suffered a stroke and remained in a coma for eight years. The composer helped Piave's wife and daughter financially throughout this time. Lastly, the composer's father also died and, although he had not been close to him, this together with the loss of his two other friends had a big impact on Verdi's emotional state.

Verdi's librettist, Camille du Locle, who collaborated with him on *Don Carlos*, continually came up with ideas for new operas. Most of these ideas were turned down by Verdi. In a letter to the librettist on 7 December 1869 the composer vents his opinions about the *Paris Opéra*,

There is respect for the work and the composer, and the decisions are left to the public. [In Italy] In the foyer of the Opéra on the other hand, everybody starts to whisper after the first four chords ... The conclusion from all this is that I'm no composer for Paris. I don't know whether it's for lack of talent or not, but in any case my ideas of art are too different from those held in your country. I believe in *inspiration*; you people believe in construction.¹

Du Locle, who had in the meantime become the director of the *Paris Opéra*, suggested, among others, *Froufrou* (1869) by Meilhac and Halévy, *Tartuffe* (1664) by Molière and a Spanish play by López de Ayala.² All these scenarios were, however, turned down by Verdi. Together with the Spanish play Du Locle sent Verdi a four-page scenario of a story written by the French Egyptologist, Auguste Mariette. According to Verdi in a letter written to his publisher on 25 June 1870,

Last year I was invited to write an opera in a far distant country. I answered no. When I was in Paris, Du Locle was commissioned to speak to me about it again and to offer me a good sum of money. Still I answered no. A month later he sent me a printed outline of a plot, telling me it was written by a powerful personage (which I don't believe), that it seemed good to him, and that I should read it. I found it excellent, and I answered that I would put it to music on such and such conditions. Three days after the telegram he answered: "Accepted"³

However, according to Osborne,

Mariette ... suggested to the Khedive of Egypt that it could be made into a splendid opera to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal. Mariette entrusted Du Locle with interesting an internationally known composer in the project. Verdi was first choice, but the Khedive was willing that Gounod and then Wagner should be approached if he refused. By the time the synopsis came into Verdi's hands in the spring of 1870, the Suez Canal had been open for several months, so the persistent story that *Aida* was first performed at the opening of

¹ G. Verdi & F. Werfel, *Verdi, The Man in his Letters* (New York: Vienna House, 1973), 269.

² C. Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Verdi* (London: Gollancz, 1969), 372.

³ Werfel, *Verdi, The Man in his Letters*, 274-275.

the Canal must be disregarded. The opera was not even, as one also still reads, commissioned for the inauguration of the Cairo Opera House, for the Opera House opened (with *Rigoletto*), on November 1, 1869, two weeks before the Canal.⁴

Du Locle drafted the libretto in French, and when Verdi agreed to compose an opera on the subject, the date for the première was set in January 1871 at the Cairo Opera House. Verdi, however, did not want to compose another opera in French after the whole *Don Carlos* debacle and insisted that Du Locle's libretto be translated into Italian. For that task he employed Antonio Ghislanzoni. Osborne is of the opinion that Ghislanzoni 'was the kind of librettist Verdi liked: the kind he could bully. His correspondence with Ghislanzoni reveals how great a part Verdi played in the writing of the libretto, reveals in fact that the completed libretto was much more the product of his imagination than of Du Locle's or Ghislanzoni's.'⁵

Again it was the casting of the mezzo-soprano that became to the composer the most problematic aspect of the opera. He wrote to Giulio Ricordi on 10 July 1871 about the performance in Milan:

You know the libretto of "Aida", and you know that Amneris requires an artist who has dramatic character and can dominate the stage. How can anyone expect this quality from a near-beginner? The voice alone, however beautiful (and that, by the way, is hard to judge in a room or empty theatre), is not enough for the role. So-called vocal perfection concerns me little; I like to have roles sung as I wish, but I am unable to provide the voice, the soul, that certain something which should be called the spark – it is usually described by the Italian phrase "to have the Devil on your back" ... finding an Amneris will not be easy.⁶

The mezzo-soprano Eleonora Grossi was eventually cast to create the role of Amneris. The première of *Aida* on 24 December 1871 at the Cairo Opera House in Egypt was an immediate success and it is still one of Verdi's most beloved and often performed operas.

7.2 THE OTHERNESS OF AMNERIS IN THE LIBRETTO OF AIDA

Amneris first enters in Act I speaking to Radames and thinking by herself that any woman who can make Radames reflect joy must be envied. We hear the Princess singing these loving words against her love theme, thus immediately establishing that Amneris is in love with Radames. Godefroy states,

Pharaoh's daughter, like Potiphar's wife, seems to be a 'femme fatale' a temptress lurking with intent to destroy innocence. Perhaps originally conceived in this light, her tragic stature will grow until she can hold the tale together with a desperate grandeur of classic proportions.⁷

⁴ Werfel, *Verdi, The Man in his Letters*, 274-275.

⁵ Werfel, *Verdi, The Man in his Letters*, 373.

⁶ Werfel, *Verdi, the Man in his Letters*, 303-304.

⁷ V. Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi: Studies of Selected Operas* (London: Gollancz, 1975), 184.

It is important to note that Amneris grows and changes during the course of the opera. Radames, in turn, tells Amneris that he was dreaming of being chosen as the leader of the Egyptian troops. She starts probing, and wants to know if there is no other desire that he has, closer to home. With these words they start their duet, and in asides Radames sings that perhaps Amneris has found out about his secret love for the slave girl Aida, while Amneris sings she should be careful of the woman who has his love. Aida enters and Amneris wonders, can it be she? She turns to her rival and sweetly addresses her, telling Aida that she is not a slave nor a handmaiden, but a sister to her. And what is the reason for her tears? Aida responds by saying that she fears for her people as well as for Radames in the coming war. However, Amneris is still suspicious and sings the words ‘Tremble! Oh guilty slave girl, let me into your heart descend!’⁸ These words are evidence that Amneris is already othering Aida at this point in the opera.

The King, together with his entourage made up of Ramphis, priests, ministers and other people, enters and announces that there is an important message regarding the war against the Ethiopians who, led by Amonasro, invaded a part of Egypt. The King declares war against Ethiopia and says that Radames will lead the troops in the war. This is the start of the big ensemble piece ‘Su! Del Nilo al sacro lido’. Aida thinks to herself, asking, ‘For whom do I weep, for whom do I pray? ... I must love him ... and he is an enemy, a foreigner!’⁹ Amneris, who had earlier left the stage, returns with a banner and hands it to Radames. She tells him that she gives this banner to him as ‘a guide and light on your path to glory’. The ensemble ends with Amneris crying out to Radames ‘Return victorious!’ and everyone echoes her words.

In Act I of *Aida* Amneris can be classified as an emotional Other. She is clearly in love with Radames. However, he is completely infatuated with the Ethiopian slave girl Aida. This form of unreciprocated attachment fits the template of an emotional Other. However, it is important to mention the difference between Amneris’s and Aida’s social positions. Amneris is the daughter of the King, she is an insider, while Aida is an Ethiopian slave, although she is actually also the daughter of the Ethiopian king. Robinson states: ‘In terms of Said’s orientalist metaphor, white Egypt ought properly to be equated with imperial Europe, while black Ethiopia, stands unambiguously in the role of the imperialised non-European Other.’¹⁰ Aida thus fulfils the template of a social Other. Amneris, on the other hand, while being the emotional Other, is at the same time othering Aida.

⁸ N. Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, (New York: Leyerle, Geneseo, 1996) 10.

⁹ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 13.

¹⁰ P. Robinson, ‘Is *Aida* an Orientalist Opera?’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 5(2), 1993, 135.

Act II opens with Amneris being prepared for the celebrations by slave girls. Between the choral verses Amneris sings the words ‘Ah! Come my love, intoxicate me and make my heart blissful!’¹¹

According to Godefroy:

This scene belongs to Amneris. But Verdi resisted any temptation to give her a ‘show-stopping’ bravura number à la Princess Eboli with her mandolins and cadenzas. Yet he had Eboli in mind when he criticized Ghislanzoni’s draft for being ‘too cold and insignificant’ and cited the ‘character and colour’ of the similar one in *Don Carlos*. He sketched out the way he wanted it to go; but he never envisaged Amneris having more than two solo lines after each verse of the chorus. He had planned that these lines should be ‘voluptuous’. But they turned out to be far more than that. For, taking care that Amneris should be both credible and sympathetic, he underlines her charm and fidelity in a thrice repeated phrase which is a yearning daydream.¹²

In between the chorus section, there is an instrumental interlude in which the children of the Moorish slaves entertain Amneris. Paul Robinson states that ‘the Little Moorish Slaves who entertain Amneris are of course captives – like the Ethiopians – they are the victims of Egyptian imperialism.’¹³ What needs to be noted is that Amneris is surrounded by ‘Others’, and these Others – the Ethiopians – and their music are also portrayed as exotic in the opera. However, Amneris is not part of this group of Others, but rather she is othering them.

When Aida enters, Amneris pretends to be extremely worried about her, saying how dreadful it must be that her country was defeated in the battle. She tells her that time will heal all wounds and that a more powerful healer exists: love. Upon seeing Aida’s reaction to her words, she tries to persuade Aida to reveal her secret, whether she has someone special back at home. She continues: ‘Fate was not cruel to all men ... Even though the fearless leader Radames fell fatally wounded in the field of battle.’¹⁴ Upon hearing this Aida can no longer conceal her dismay and absolute alarm. Amneris realises that Aida is her rival in love and tells her, ‘Look me in my face ... I was deceiving you, Radames is alive ... yes, you love him ... but I love him too ... do you understand? ... I am your rival ... daughter of the Pharaohs.’¹⁵ Aida’s reaction is first to stand up to Amneris, telling her that she, too, is a daughter of a king, but she stops herself just in time and begs Amneris to have mercy. In the background the people are heard singing and Amneris tells Aida that she must come with her to the gathering where she will humiliate her in front of everybody.

Act II, Scene II is set at a gate of the city of Thebes. All the people are gathered to welcome and praise Radames and the other warriors who have won the battle against the Ethiopians. The King offers Radames anything he wants as a gift for his bravery during battle. Radames responds by

¹¹ Robinson, *Is Aida an Orientalist opera?*, 20.

¹² Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi*, 190 – 191.

¹³ Robinson, *Is Aida an Orientalist opera?*, 137.

¹⁴ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 23.

¹⁵ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 24-25.

asking that all the prisoners of war be released. Ramphis, however, advises the King that Amonasro (who was captured in battle and whom the Egyptians do not know is the king of Ethiopia) and Aida be kept as prisoners. The King offers Amneris as wife to Radames, which means succession as King of Egypt.

Act III takes place on the banks of the river Nile. Amneris goes into the temple to pray for her marriage to Radames that is supposed to take place the next day. However, when Amneris and Ramphis exit the Temple of Isis, they come upon on Radames, Aida and her father making plans to flee. Amneris just says one word ‘Traditor’. In this way she also others Radames; she puts him outside the accepted social norms. According to Godefroy, ‘[t]he old operas would have indulged in a furious onslaught here. Handel or Mozart would have cast vocal thunderbolts at Radames from the temple steps. Verdi chose the one word. Its wounding yet accurate accusation is more than enough.’¹⁶ Aida and Amonasro flee while Radames lets himself be arrested by the guards.

Act IV – Amneris is alone in a hall of the King’s palace. She is thinking out loud that Radames is awaiting punishment for betraying the secret of the state to the Ethiopians. He wanted to flee with Aida, so they both deserve to die. Then, to her love motif (Example 1, section 7.3) she sings the following words, ‘I love him still ... desperate, insane is this love which my life destroys. Oh, if he could love me!’¹⁷ She decides that she wants to save him and commands the guards to call him. When the guards bring Radames in, Amneris tells him that if he defends himself she will plead for pardon from the throne. Radames responds by telling her that he revealed a secret by mistake; he did not do it on purpose and he will not defend himself. When Amneris continues to plead with Radames to save himself, he tells her, ‘I abhor life. The source of every joy has dried up, every hope has vanished and my only desire is to die.’¹⁸ Amneris is completely horrified by this thought and begs him to live for her love, ‘I loved you, I suffered so much ... I lay awake at night in tears .. my country, my throne, my life, all I would give for you.’¹⁹ Radames tells her that she only made him miserable and because of her, Aida is dead. However, Amneris reassures Radames that only Amonasro died in flight and nobody knows where Aida is. Amneris tells him that if she were to save him, he should promise never to see Aida again. Three times she repeats this request, but Radames refuses and Amneris’s love turns to a fury and she tells him that ‘the revenge for my weeping will be fulfilled by heaven.’²⁰ Radames is taken back to his prison by his guards.

¹⁶ Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi*, p 206.

¹⁷ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 55.

¹⁸ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 57.

¹⁹ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 57.

²⁰ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 59.

The second scene of Act IV starts with Amneris all alone, saying that she feels as if she wants to die, and who can save Radames now? One can also classify her as a social Other, because she does not accept the established social norms, i.e. punishment for a traitor. She curses her jealousy that caused him to be put in this position. When she sees the priests she says ‘There are the fatal, the inexorable ministers of death ... And into the power of those men I myself cast him!’²¹ Amneris prays to the gods to have pity on her and save the innocent man. When she sees Radames with the guards going into the dungeon she exclaims, ‘Who will save him? Alas! I feel I am dying!’²² Three times Radames is accused of his different crimes and each time Amneris asks the gods to have pity on him because he is innocent. When Radames does not defend himself after the third accusation, the priests and Ramphis decide that he is guilty and will be buried alive in a tomb. Upon hearing this, Amneris responds angrily by telling the priests: ‘You’ve committed a crime! You infamous tigers thirsty for blood ... you outrage the gods and the earth. You punish an innocent man.’²³ Ramphis’ and the priests’ only reply that he is a traitor and that he must die, the third time they only say one word, ‘traitor’. To this Amneris replies, ‘Wicked race! Curses on you! The revenge of Heaven will descend!’²⁴ before she leaves in utmost desperation.

In the last scene of the opera, while Aida and Radames are already inside the tomb, Amneris comes into the temple and stands in front of the stone that seals the tomb. She is dressed in mourning. In a monotone voice Amneris repeatedly sings the words, ‘Peace I implore for you, peace, peace!’²⁵

The first template of Otherness that Amneris fulfils is that of the emotional Other. However, when she realises that Aida is her rival in love and that Radames is also in love with her, she turns the tables and is in fact othering Aida (as seen in the duet in Act II). She is both the Other and the one who Others another person. Amneris’s emotional Otherness turns her into a social Other when she shuns the social norms applied to Radames, in this case, punishment for a traitor, during the second part of the judgement scene.

²¹ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 61.

²² Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 61.

²³ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 64.

²⁴ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 65.

²⁵ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 70.

7.3 THE OTHERNESS OF AMNERIS IN THE MUSIC OF *AIDA*

When Amneris enters, Verdi introduces her love theme immediately through the violins playing on the G string (Ex. 1).

AMNERIS

Qua - le in - so - li - ta gio - ia nel tuo sguar - do!

Allegro assai moderato ♩ = 92

VI. I
Fg. Hm.
Str. *p*

Example 1, Act I, scene 1 – Amneris's love theme²⁶

This motif is repeated throughout the opera when Amneris thinks of her love for Radames. He answers in recitative, and when Amneris responds to him, the violins enter with a *dolcissimo* motif, which she repeats *grazioso* a third lower. A duet commences and an *allegro agitato* theme, connected to Amneris's jealousy, is played by the strings (Ex. 2).

- chies - ta! (For - se l'ar - ca - no a -

Allegro agitato e presto ♩ = 132

Fläs.
Hm.
Str. *pp*

(Vc.)

²⁶ All the music examples in this chapter are taken from: G. Verdi, *Aida* (London: Ricordi, 1965).

Example 2, Act I, scene 1 – Amneris’s jealousy theme (previous page)

Julian Budden refers to this as ‘the old device of the double-aside, each singer looking away from the other even where at the end their voices join. Yet in a sense both are thinking identical thoughts. Radames is hoping desperately that Amneris has not discovered his secret – and so is Amneris. Again the regularity of the melody is striking: twenty-four bars with a twelve-bar coda.’²⁷ When Aida enters accompanied by a *dolce espressivo* motif on the clarinet, Amneris becomes suspicious. The jealousy theme is heard again for eight bars before the music changes to C major and a regular rhythmic pattern of four crotchets per bar. Above that Amneris sings ‘Vieni, o diletta, appressati’ to Aida. This music is marked *con grazia* (this may be to emphasise the falseness of her words) in the same rhythmic pattern of a half note and two semi-quaver triplets as shown in Example 1 above. The jealousy theme is repeated for the third time and with a sudden shift to E major Aida joins Radames and Amneris and she sings long, pouring lines over the shorter dotted rhythms of other two singers. At the end of the trio the music returns to the first key of E minor with, as Budden states, ‘rising chromatic lines and syncopations aggravating the moods of stress. Once again Verdi has combined dramatic truth and excitement with a musical structure of classical regularity – in this case the classical rondo.’²⁸ Spike Hughes makes the very interesting observation: ‘Indeed, I can think offhand of no other Verdi opera where so early in the course of the drama three people are so deeply involved in a situation.’²⁹

The next scene starts with trumpets, trombones and horns announcing the King’s entry. Throughout this scene there is very little evidence of Amneris’s Otherness in either the music or the libretto. It is evident that Amneris fits into society as daughter of the King, while Aida as the ‘slave’ can be called the social Other. According to Budden, ‘[i]n the rising scale of A minor formed by the cries of ‘Guerra!’ the B is flattened, so producing that Ancient Egyptian scale of Verdi’s imagination; it will be very prominent in the next scene.’³⁰ The King renders the familiar ‘Su! del Nilo al sacro lido’. Ramphis sings the second verse, in which he is joined by the King as well as the chorus. From Radames the third variation on the theme is heard. However, this time it is in C major and above it is Aida’s line ‘Per chi piango? Per chi prego?’ in syncopated rhythms before it goes to an A5 flat. Budden makes the intriguing observation that if Aida’s verse is isolated, it would feel more like A

²⁷ J. Budden, *The Operas of Verdi* (London: Cassell, 1984) 205.

²⁸ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 206.

²⁹ S. Hughes, *Famous Verdi Operas: An Analytical Guide for the Opera-Goer and the Armchair Listener*, (London: Hale, 1968), 387.

³⁰ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 206.

minor and not C major, giving this part of music ‘an implied bitonality though no harmonic clash.’³¹ Amneris enters with her verse which ends in A major. The orchestra, chorus and soloists now all join together. The key changes again to A minor when the cries of ‘Guerra’ returns; however, the key returns to the major just before the end, when Amneris sings the phrase ‘Ritorna vincitor!’, before everyone else echoes her thoughts.

As the curtain rises on Act II, the harp is heard playing a regular beat of four crotchets per bar, with *pppp* interruption on a D5 from the trumpet on every second bar. The chorus of slave girls enters with ‘Chi mai, fra gl’inni e i plausi’, which changes the mood. Amneris sings the languid phrase,



Ah! vie - ni, vie - ni, amor mio, m'i - ne - bria, fam - mi be - a - to il cor,

Example 3, Act II, scene1 – Women's chorus

‘These five bars, with the D sharp in the first bar, and the G sharp in the fourth bar so neatly avoided in the third, are a superb example of those instinctive touches that made Verdi the unique melodist that he was.’³² A second verse is sung, before a musical interlude called ‘The Dance of the Little Moorish Slaves’ begins.

Più mosso ♩ = 152

 A piano score for a piece titled 'Dance of the Moorish Slaves'. The tempo is 'Più mosso' with a metronome marking of ♩ = 152. The music is in 4/4 time and key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score consists of two systems. The first system has a treble clef staff with a melody of eighth notes and a bass clef staff with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. Performance instructions include 'pp leggeriss. staccato assai' for the treble staff, and 'Bläs. Str.' and 'Pg. Hr.' for the bass staff.

Example 4, Act II, scene 1 – 'Dance of the Moorish Slaves'

Budden summarizes the exoticism of the music:

As the music is Moorish, not Egyptian, all the usual nineteenth-century exotic devices are laid under contribution – flattened leading notes, ‘Turkish’ scoring with piccolo, side drum and cymbals, the progression by semitones from soh to la and back again in an inner part, so beloved of the Russians in their Oriental moods,

³¹ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 207.

³² Hughes, *Famous Verdi Operas*, 394.

a middle episode in C major where one would expect B flat, a drone bass and an abundance of grace notes.³³

The women's chorus (or a part thereof) is heard again for the third time before Aida makes her entry on her theme, which is played on bassoon, viola and cellos. Here there are many characteristics associated with exoticism: insistent dance rhythms, orchestration that contains exciting percussive effects, e.g. cymbals, many grace notes, a bass drone, as well as a flattened leading note.

The scene and duet between Aida and Amneris starts with the princess probing with lyrical *cantabile* phrases (again to illustrate her falseness towards Aida). Between some of these phrases is a timpani motif playing softly in what Budden describes as ‘a barely suppressed growl’.³⁴ Hearing that between Amneris’s sweet lyrical phrases, one can sense that Amneris is not being honest. Aida changes the tempo to *allegro animando* with ‘Amore, amore!’ and the key changes to F major. The feeling of movement is also accentuated by the quaver triplets in the orchestra and as being sung by Amneris. The tempo relaxes into a *poco piu lento* (Ex. 5) and,

Amneris resumes her questioning with a leisurely conversational theme which recalls the coaxings of another mezzo-soprano, Eboli, through a similar insistence on an E flat over dominant harmony of B flat major. Amneris, being subtler than her predecessor, allows the orchestra to hint at her thoughts before she utters them.³⁵

-ror.) Eb - ben: qual nuo - vo

Poco più lento ♩ = 88

Viol. Ob. Kl.
p *espress.*

pizz. Hr.

³³ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 216.

³⁴ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 218.

³⁵ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 218

fre - mi - to t'as - sal, gen til A - i - da? I tuoi se - gre - ti'

Example 5, Act II, scene 1 – duet between Amneris and Aida

Throughout all of Amneris's persuasive ways of getting the truth out of Aida, the orchestra doubles the vocal line in the strings, oboe and clarinet. After she tells Aida that Radames has died and realises Aida's love for Radames, Amneris responds with 'Trema! In cor ti lessi!' with a leap from E5 flat to E4 flat. Amneris continues trying to force Aida to admit her love for Radames, and there is a tremolo in the strings accentuating the tension between the two women. Without any accompaniment from the orchestra Amneris tells Aida 'Radames vive!'. Aida responds with a sustained A5, which descends with an arpeggio motif back into F major. Amneris's fury over this realisation is accentuated by another tremolo in the bass. Budden states that '[e]ach [singer] has her own orchestral palette; Aida's is made up of woodwind strands with low flute and a pattern of bassoon semiquavers that forecast the 'Ingemisco' of the Requiem; Amneris' seething fury is expressed in tremolando strings and rolling timpani and a snarling descent into the contralto area.'³⁶ Aida sings a short lyrical 'Numi pietà', which highlights Amneris's rage and fury in the next section even more. Amneris's alterity can be seen in the string tremolandi and rolling timpani, while the big leaps in the vocal line accentuate her rage. The orchestration of Amneris's music in Act II is much more dominated by string instruments.

³⁶ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 220.

AMNERIS

Tre - ma, vil schia - va! spez - za il tuo co - re...

Str.

Pk.

Example 6, Act II, scene 1 – Amneris othering Aida

In this duet it becomes evident that Amneris's anger at being the unwanted third in the love triangle between her, Radames and Aida, makes her simultaneously the Other and the person othering Aida (Ex. 6). Amneris's anger can be seen in the pattern of quaver triplets (as Eboli's is seen in the trio of *Don Carlo*), as well as the tremolando in the bass. The low tessitura also accentuates this. When the pattern of triplets is broken, there is another strong rhythmic pattern of dotted quaver-semiquavers. In the background 'Su! Del Nilo' from Act 1 can be heard. Above this Amneris sings 'Alla pompa che s'appresta', which continues in the same vein (she wants to humiliate Aida), and again patterns of quaver triplets as well as dotted notes are present. However, this time her feelings of fury are enforced by large leaps in the vocal line (octaves as well as ninths). Aida enters with faster quaver notes that completely separate her from the chorus heard previously. Amneris leaves her rival with the words, 'e apprenderai se lottar tu puoi con me', which end on a A5 flat, before Aida partially repeats the 'Numi pieta!' heard earlier.

In Act II the Otherness in the music of Amneris is summarized in the points below.

1. Lyrical, cantabile phrases when she speaks of Radames.
2. A low tessitura during times of fury accentuates her anger.
3. Big leaps in the vocal line (octaves and ninths).
4. Tremolando in the strings and rolling timpani.
5. Strong rhythmic patterns – either quaver triplets or patterns of dotted quaver, semi-quaver rhythms, which are emphasised with an additional accent on the dotted quaver note.

In the end of Act II as well as during Act III, Amneris displays no new evidence of musical Otherness.

Act IV opens with a downward arpeggio figure in the woodwinds, before the rest of the orchestra enters with Amneris's jealousy theme. According to Hughes, the feeling of tension created by the first seven bars is reinforced through the development of the jealousy theme 'played *pp* by first violins only, accompanied *ppp* by a quaver figure on the flutes and sustained notes by the piccolo. Amneris' theme is developed briefly in the strings and the short instrumental introduction ends with the first few notes of the woodwind unison.³⁷ Amneris starts this scene with the recitative 'L'abborrita rivale a me sfuggia'; her jealousy theme is repeated briefly for four bars in the strings. Throughout her recitative one can sense her agitation and confusion. Then she murmurs, 'Oh! Che mai parlo!' without any support from the orchestra. Suddenly the mood changes and Amneris's love theme is heard. She sings of her love for Radames –this insane, hopeless love that is destroying everything – in a lyrical melody that is divided into two phrases that first leap upward before resolving downwards. She commands the guards to call him.

Vincent Godefroy makes an interesting observation:

When she orders the guards to fetch Radames we feel, as in the Shakespearean tragedies, that we have reached a point where compromise and a happy ending are possible, while we know in fact that they will not be realized. The orchestra warns us of this in the eight bars introducing the prisoner. Oboe, cor anglais and bassoon spell out a theme loaded with judicial doom bound by the strings in a taut tremolo.³⁸

The bass clarinet enters with a triplet arpeggio figure in E flat minor, and Amneris tells Radames

AMNERIS *con passione*

Già — sa - cer - do - tia - du - nan - si

lunga e dimin.

p *ppp*

Bkl. Trp. Str.

³⁷ Hughes, *Famous Verdi Operas*, 413.

³⁸ Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi*, 208.

Example 7, Act IV, scene 1 – Judgement scene, part 1 (previous page)

Radames repeats Amneris's music with the same triplet arpeggio accompaniment; however, the key shifts to F sharp minor. She in turn, pleads with him that he has to live in a *cantabile* melody that is mostly in D flat major and 3/4 and accompanied by the strings playing semiquavers. Amneris tries to force Radames to renounce Aida, but he will not. The tempo moves into a *Poco più* and the orchestra exemplifies the tension by playing three upward chromatic motifs in semiquavers and the last chromatic motif in slower quaver triplets. The music of Example 7 is heard, this time sung by Radames; however, Amneris interrupts Radames to state that Aida is actually alive. 'Ma, s'io ti salvo' are the first words of the recitative which starts on a B4 and ascends chromatically, while a tremolo in the strings reinforces the tension. This is the same technique Verdi used in 'Condotta ell'era in ceppi', *Il trovatore* to build up nervous tension. When Radames refuses to do what Amneris wants, she erupts in fury:



Chi ti sal - va, soia - gu - ra - to, dal la sor — te che t'a - spet - ta?

Example 8, Act IV, scene 1 – Judgement scene, part 1

Her anger builds up to a B5 flat, before it releases itself to the tonic note in C minor. Radames answers her in a short contrasting *cantabile* verse that he is willing to die, whereupon she repeats her C minor verse in wrath and fury. They both end the scene singing in unison, before the orchestra erupts with a frantic postlude heavily laced with syncopated rhythms while Radames is being led away by the guards. In this scene both Amneris's love and jealousy themes are heard as vehicles of Otherness, highlighting the fact that Radames does not love her. The orchestral palette consists of much more woodwinds and brass instruments in contrast to the strings dominating in the second act.

The second part of the judgement scene starts with the Priests' motif, to which we were first introduced in the beginning of Act I (Ex. 9).

(in tiefster Verzweiflung)
(nella massima desolazione)

AMNERIS

Ohi mè!... mo rir mi

Pos.

pppp

Kb.

Example 9, Act IV, scene II – Priest’s motif in second part of Judgement scene

According to Hughes, this motif is ‘played only by muted double basses whose phrases are punctuated at intervals by the sombre sound of long single notes from three single trombones *ppp* in their low register.’³⁹ This motif keeps on repeating, sounding like what Hughes calls a ‘funeral march.’⁴⁰ Above this motif, Amneris laments ‘Ohime! ... morir mi sento!’ In this scene many of the previous established methods of indicating Otherness are repeated. Amneris sings in a very low tessitura, the vocal line rises as her anguish and despair rises at the situation at hand; she also repeats the previously established rhythmic patterns of quaver triplets as well as a dotted quaver, semi-quaver pattern. The tremolo in the timpani conveys a feeling of doom. The chorus and Ramphis sing an unaccompanied chant. On hearing this, Amneris prays, ‘Numi pieta!’ ‘The distraught Aida at the end of the first scene opened her prayer with these very words, but in calm resignation. How differently do they now spring from the tortured lips of Amneris!’⁴¹ Ramphis calls to Radames three times, a motif which is copied by the trumpets. When he doesn’t answer, the chorus and Ramphis respond with ‘Traditor!’ and Amneris responds with

AMNERIS

Ah! Pie - tà! — e - gli é inno - cen - te Nu - mi, — pie

³⁹ Hughes, *Famous Verdi Operas*, 415.

⁴⁰ Hughes, *Famous Verdi Operas*, 415.

⁴¹ Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi*, 210.

According to Godefroy,

The effect of Amneris' lone mezzo-soprano voice set persistently against the implacable basses of the priesthood is that of a virtuoso concerto; and when the curtain falls on that pugnacious postlude no Amneris can fail to bring the house down and capture the pitiful tale of Aida and Radames for herself.⁴⁴

During the last part of the opera when Aida and Radames sing their final duet, Amneris enters, praying for them with the words 'Pace t'imploro'. She sings these words on a monotone D4 flat and during the whole course of the last scene she only once varies from this pattern and sings a descending scale from a G4 flat to a C4 flat. The opera ends with Amneris singing the words 'Pace t'imploro, pace, pace!' on a D4 flat.

7.4 SUMMARY

The points below summarise Amneris's Otherness in the music and libretto.

4. Amneris is an emotional Other because of her unreciprocated love for Radames.
5. Amneris is also othering Aida, who is an Ethiopian slave in Egypt, when she realises that Aida is her rival for Radames's love.
6. Amneris's emotional Otherness turns her into a social Other when she shuns the social norms applied to Radames, in this case, punishment for a traitor, during the second part of the judgement scene.
7. Amneris has a love theme (Ex 1, section 7.3).
8. She also has a jealousy theme (Ex 2, section 7.3).
9. She uses lyrical, *cantabile* phrases when she speaks of Radames.
10. Tremolo in the strings and rolling timpani change as her character changes. In Act IV Amneris's orchestration contains a lot more woodwinds and brass instruments.
11. Strong rhythmic patterns; quaver triplets or a pattern of dotted quaver-semiquavers rhythms as well as big leaps (octaves and ninths) during times of fury.
12. A very low tessitura, which accentuates her anger and desperation and only rises during times of extreme emotional distress, for example, at the end of Act IV, scene I 'Chi ti salva?'
13. In the 'Dance of the Moorish Slaves' there are many characteristics associated with exoticism: dance rhythms, orchestration that contains colourful percussive effects, e.g. cymbals. Many grace notes, a bass drone, as well as a flattened leading note also make this music sound more exotic. Although Amneris is not part of the group of Moorish slaves, one associates this scene with her, because of the languid phrasing she sings in between the

⁴⁴ Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi*, 212.

chorus sections and her visual part in the women's chorus.

Amneris is an emotional Other just like Mignon because of their unreciprocated love. Amneris has two very distinct themes: love and jealousy. The use of a recurring motif is also seen in Carmen's fate motif, Azucena's 'Stride la vampa' theme and Mignon's two recurring motifs from 'Connais-tu'. Just like Ortrud and Eboli, Amneris also have big leaps in the vocal line at times of fury.

8. DON CARLO

8.1 THE CREATION OF *DON CARLO*

Verdi's second significant mezzo-soprano role is Princess Eboli in *Don Carlo*, a grand opera based on the play *Don Carlos, Infant von Spanien* (1879) by Friederich Schiller. The opera was first composed in French for its première at the *Paris Opéra* on 11 March 1867. However, according to András Batta,

There are differences even between the version used at the Paris première and a version used for the second performance given two days later. The first Italian version was made for performance in Naples in 1872, the revised four-act Italian version for Milan in 1884, and the five-act Italian version, without the ballet, for Modena in 1886. Today the usual distinction is between the French version of 1867 and the Italian version of 1884.¹

For the purpose of this thesis the four-act 1884 version of *Don Carlo* will be discussed. However, references will be made to the French version of 1867, because it is not feasible to discuss the Italian version without taking into consideration the French version, which was written first.

During the winter of 1865-1866, while Verdi was in Paris, the *Paris Opéra* commissioned the composer to write a new opera. Verdi turned to Schiller for a subject, because he had already used three of Schiller's plays as sources for his operas, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (1801), *Die Räuber* (1781) and *Kabale und Liebe* (1784). This time, Verdi chose Schiller's *Don Carlos, Infant von Spanien* as the subject for his new opera. Joseph Méry was to write the libretto. However, the elderly author died before the libretto was finished and the onus was on Verdi to find a new librettist. Camille du Locle, who was also the son-in-law of the general manager of the *Opéra*, was eventually selected to complete the libretto. At first everything proceeded without any difficulties; however, when war broke out between Italy and Austria, Verdi had to evacuate his house at Sant'Agata near Parma. This, together with Verdi being ill, artistic disagreements and the death of Verdi's father contributed to various postponements of the première of *Don Carlos*. Nevertheless, the first performance of *Don Carlos* was given in French at the *Paris Opéra* on 1867. There was an assortment of reviews, but the opera was not greeted with the same kind of immediate enthusiasm as, for instance, *Nabucco* or *Il trovatore* had been. Verdi wrote to Count Opprandino Arrivabene on 12 March 1867: 'Last night "Don Carlos." It was not a success! I don't know what the future may hold, but I shouldn't be surprised if things were to change.'²

¹ A. Batta, *Opera: Composers, Works, Performers* (Köln: Könemann, 2005), 732.

² G. Verdi & F. Werfel, *Verdi, the Man in his Letters* (New York: Vienna House, 1973) 248.

Many people were influenced by Empress Eugénie's notion that *Don Carlos* with its religious facets was offensive. Some also thought that the *Paris Opéra* should not have spent so much time and money on an Italian, but should rather have used it on a French composer.³ Some years later Verdi decided to revise *Don Carlos* in its entirety, which became *Don Carlo*, to transform it into the Italian version in four acts for the *La Scala* première on 10 January 1884. The Italian translation was done by Angelo Zanardini and Achille de Lauzières.⁴

8.2 WHO WAS THE REAL EBOLI?

The real Eboli was born on 29 June 1540 in Spain. Her full names were Ana de Mendoza y de la Cerda. It is said that she lost her eye during a playful sword fight with a page as a child and that is cited as the reason she always wore an eye patch. This theory, however, is disputed by some who allege that she only wore the eye patch to hide the fact that she was cross-eyed. Despite all this, she was still called one of the most beautiful women in Spain, and married Ruy Gómez de Silva, who was a nobleman from Portugal and the first Prince of Eboli, when she was only 12 years old. He left for England almost immediately after they were married and only returned to stay permanently five years later. Nevertheless, the princess still bore her husband ten children, six of whom lived past infancy. Ruy was a confidante and minister to Felipe II. Ana was very good friends with Felipe's second wife, Elisabeth de Valois. Elisabeth died in 1568 and Ruy died five years later in 1573. After her husband's death, Eboli formed an alliance with Antonio Pérez, the king's secretary. It was also rumoured that he was Ruy's illegitimate son. Before his death, he and Ruy were very close and Ruy always treated him like his own child. Part of the rumour was that Ana and Pérez had had an affair. In 1579 she and Pérez were arrested under the pretext that they had disclosed state secrets. However, it is widely believed that Ana had had an affair with King Felipe, who became consumed with jealousy after she decided to leave him for Antonio Pérez and had her imprisoned out of spite. Whatever the case may be, historians refer to most of this as speculation. What we do know for sure is that Ana was imprisoned in various palaces for thirteen years and died in 1592 in her own palace in Pastrana with her daughter, also named Ana, and her servants around her.⁵

³ C. Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Verdi* (London: Gollancz, 1969) 352.

⁴ J. Budden, *The Operas of Verdi* (London: Cassell, 1984) 4.

⁵ J.H. Elliot, *Imperial Spain: 1469 – 1716* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1963), 255, 259-261.

8.3 THE OTHERNESS OF EBOLI IN THE LIBRETTO OF *DON CARLO*

Princess Eboli appears for the first time in *Don Carlo* in the second part of Act I. She is seen outside the San Yuste monastery, sitting in the garden with the other ladies of the court, the Countess Aremborg and Tebaldo, Queen Elisabeth's page. The ladies are singing about nature, when Eboli asks them if she should sing them a song. Eboli's 'Song of the Veil' is a Moorish entertainment piece and she sings the song simply to entertain the ladies. However, while the words of the song does not contribute to the story of the opera as such, they do give the listener a vital glimpse into the character of Eboli. The aria tells a story of adultery, which may be Eboli's way of commenting on marriage and fidelity. At this point in the opera Eboli is part of the Court and the libretto suggests no sense of Otherness, an important point to notice. She is not an Other from the beginning of the opera, as Azucena is. Eboli is part of life in the Court and she is very much liked and respected by the other women. It is only later in the opera after certain events that Eboli fits different templates of Otherness. Noticeable are also a few of Eboli's character traits through this song, namely that she is an extrovert, enjoys being the centre of attention, and she is a good storyteller. According to Godefroy,

The incredible Eboli, a princess in the Queen's entourage, holds forth in brilliant abandon on the subject of marital infidelity, a tale with a moral slant and a concealed twist. This is the only light interlude in the work but it plays an important dramatic part. It highlights the sombre, humourless spectre that is the King of Spain; for when he chances to enter the garden, the romantic cypress and citrus walks are suddenly transformed into corridors of power ... Verdi never gets over this spectacular launching of his mezzo-soprano. His Eboli wavers between princess, actress, adventuress, mistress, and tigress.⁶

When Queen Elisabeth comes out of the convent, Eboli notices a sadness that always surrounds her. A moment later Rodrigo, the Marquis of Posa, approaches the ladies. He slips a letter into the hand of the Queen and starts talking to Eboli about pleasantries. Eboli thinks to herself, 'One day when I was standing close to Elisabeth I saw Carlo trembling ... Could he be in love with me?'⁷ Eboli is evidently confusing Carlo's feelings for Elisabeth with his feelings for her. When he trembles it is obviously at the sight of Elisabeth, his father's wife. Nevertheless, throughout the whole ensemble, Eboli asks 'Why does he hide it from me, will he ever dare to tell me? If only he could open his heart to me!'⁸ Throughout the first act of *Don Carlo*, Princess Eboli is first established as an insider, as one of society and there does not appear to be any evidence of Otherness in the libretto. However, after Rodrigo appears, and Carlo's name is mentioned, the first indications of emotional

⁶ V. Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi: Studies from Selected Operas* (London: Gollancz, 1975), 148-149.

⁷ N. Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti* (New York: Leyerle, Geneseo, 1996), 47.

⁸ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 48.

Otherness became apparent. This is evinced in the fact that there is an emotional bond between Elisabeth and Carlo, and then Eboli forms an unreciprocated attachment to Carlo.

Act II, scene I is pivotal in the Elisabeth-Carlo-Eboli triangle. This scene has been revised extensively with the cutting of the ballet as well as a scene between Eboli and Elisabeth which influences the next scene. According to Godefroy, the ‘Garden scene’ is ‘a collection of unsubtle operatic tricks – the mask, the veil, the mistaken identity, the crucial misunderstanding, the brandished dagger, the *furibondo* exit – all packed into a taut little *terzetto*’.⁹ It is midnight in the gardens of the Queen in Madrid. Carlo is reading a note from the Queen. Eboli enters, her face hidden by a mask. However, Carlo believes she is the Queen and addresses her, declaring his love for her. Eboli is beside herself with happiness and removes her mask. Immediately Carlo’s entire joyous demeanour changes, which is also reflected in the music (see section 8.4), and he realises panic-stricken that it is Princess Eboli and not the Queen for whom he proclaimed his love. Noticing his sudden change of attitude, the Princess asks him what thought made him so pale, does he fear that she does not really love him? He should know that a trap is being set for him, because she heard his father, the King, and Rodrigo speak ill of him. However, she can save him. Yet again, Eboli affirms her love for Carlo. Carlo tries diplomatically to get himself out of the situation, ‘You have, in truth, a wonderful heart, but my heart must remain closed to such bliss! We both have been living a strange dream, on a night so lovely among the scent of the flowers.’ Eboli in turn is first utterly shocked: ‘A dream! O heaven! You believed, deceivingly, to be addressing those ardent words to another woman!’ and then she becomes completely enraged, ‘What a discovery! What a secret! You are in love with the Queen!’¹⁰ Carlo begs Eboli not to divulge his secret, when Rodrigo enters, immediately attacking her, saying that she cannot believe anything that Carlo is saying because he is completely disturbed. Eboli replies that she has seen the truth in his heart. When Rodrigo asks the Princess what she actually means, she answers, ‘It isn’t unknown to me that you are the King’s confidante. But I am a formidable and powerful enemy: Your power is known to me, but you don’t know my power yet!’¹¹ Rodrigo, Eboli and Carlo sing a trio in which Eboli says to Rodrigo, ‘From my fury you flee in vain. His destiny is in my hand ... I am the tigress who has been wounded in the heart and this offence invites revenge.’¹² Rodrigo answers that she ought to be clear with what she means, and that God will punish her and defend the innocent. Carlo, in turn, laments to himself that he has ruined his family name and that God should decide if he has any guilt

⁹ Godefroy, *The Dramatic Genius of Verdi*, 156.

¹⁰ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti* 69.

¹¹ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti* 70.

¹² Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti* 71.

in this whole ordeal. When the trio has ended, Eboli states with contempt, ‘She, Elisabeth, this modern saint, disguising her heart in heavenly virtue, wished to taste pleasure and drain the love cup to the last drop. Ah, by my faith! She was brazen indeed!’¹³ This is just too much for Rodrigo and he draws his sword proclaiming to Eboli that she will die here. While Carlo tries to stop him, Eboli challenges Rodrigo even further, saying ‘Why do you delay in striking me?’ Rodrigo throws his sword to the floor and another trio commences in which Rodrigo tells the Princess, ‘Be silent. Respect his grief or a severe God will punish you. Be silent you must or the ground will open under your feet.’¹⁴ Eboli responds by telling Carlo that she will get her revenge and that the ground will also open under him, while Carlo is just concerned that Eboli has discovered his big secret. In this part of the opera Eboli is very clearly established as an emotional Other, because she is in love with Carlo, who in turn is in love with the Queen. This results in her eventually becoming a moral Other, because she wants to get revenge for her scorned heart.

In Act Three Elisabeth rushes to King Philip demanding justice, for her casket containing her most treasured possessions has been stolen. Her husband hands it to her and asks her to open it. When she refuses, the King breaks the casket open himself. He asks his wife, ‘The portrait of Carlo! Have you nothing to say? ... Among your jewels?’¹⁵ Elisabeth denies that there is any kind of romantic involvement between her and the King’s son. After a heated argument between husband and wife, Elisabeth faints and Philip calls for someone to help his wife. Eboli enters and when she sees the Queen lying on the ground, she fearfully thinks that she has gone too far. Rodrigo also enters and tries to calm the King. A quartet starts.

Philip II has been abusing his wife out of jealousy, and he rebukes himself for his rage; Rodrigue the Marquis of Posa comes to urge him to act quickly to save the Infante and his ideals; Eboli, who has encouraged the King’s jealousy, sees the disastrous results of her intrigues; finally, Elisabeth, who has fainted, regains consciousness during the quartet and sings of her distress as an unjustly suspected wife.¹⁶

Eboli is consumed with regret and she sings the same words over and over again, ‘I’ve ruined her! Oh fatal remorse! ...I committed an infernal crime! O grief! I betrayed that noble heart! I will die of it, from grief I will die! No more forgiveness I shall not have on earth and in heaven!’¹⁸ After the King and Rodrigo leave, Eboli and Elisabeth are left alone. Eboli falls at the Queen’s feet, crying, begging the Queen for forgiveness. Elisabeth is very surprised and asks her friend what she had done to plead for forgiveness. When the Princess confesses that it was indeed she who stole the

¹³ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti* 72.

¹⁴ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti* 73.

¹⁵ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti* 93.

¹⁶ G. de Van, *Verdi’s Theatre: Creating Drama through Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 287.

¹⁷ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 95-97.

casket from the Queen's room and gave it to Philip, all that Elisabeth can say is 'You!'¹⁸ However, Eboli, intending to reveal to Elisabeth everything she has done, tells her that it was she who accused the Queen of having an affair with Carlo, the son of her husband. Eboli is consumed by remorse and tries to explain to Elisabeth that she was in love with Carlo and when he rejected her on the grounds of his love for Elisabeth, she was so overcome by jealousy that all she could think of was getting revenge. The Queen is astounded and asks Eboli if she really loved Carlo. However, Eboli pleads with her to wait, because she first has to confess one last sin: 'The King ... don't curse against me! Yes seduced ... ruined ... the sin that I accused you of I .. myself ... had committed!'¹⁹ Upon hearing that one of her closest allies and friends in the Court had been the mistress of her husband, the Queen commands Eboli to leave the Court early the next morning, giving her the option of choosing between exile or entering a convent.

The Queen leaves and Eboli is alone. The following scene is in all likelihood the greatest *tour de force* in the entire mezzo-soprano repertoire. Alone, and overwhelmed by guilt and remorse because she ruined at least three people's lives, Eboli is left alone with her thoughts. The first thought that comes to her mind is that she will never see the Queen again. She curses her beauty as a cruel and deadly gift: 'O fatal and cruel gift of beauty which heaven in its rage bestowed upon me! You that make us so vain, proud, I curse you, O my beauty!'²⁰ In the second part of the aria, Eboli laments the fact that she hurt the Queen for her own lust for revenge and makes the choice that 'Only in a cloister from the world henceforth must I hide my grief!'²¹ Then, suddenly, she realises that Carlo is condemned to death the following day. However, the aria changes pace and she decides to save him from a premature death. Francis Toye summarizes it as follows:

"O don fatale," is admirable, particularly the passage where she confesses her misconduct with the King ... after the passionate regret of the opening *Allegro*, can the portrayal of her changing moods, remorse at her treatment of the Queen, determination to save Don Carlo, preserve its full value, the whole point of the number being that it is an essay in contrasting emotions.²²

After Eboli's great aria she is only seen briefly once more leading in the second scene of Act III. Rodrigo accuses himself of treachery and Philip shows no mercy and kills his former friend. He goes to the prison to free his son, believing that Carlo was also betrayed by Rodrigo. However, Carlo tells him otherwise, namely that Rodrigo sacrificed his life for Carlo. The King is completely stricken with grief over what he has done; however, the alarm sounds and a mob of people led by

¹⁸ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti* 98.

¹⁹ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 99.

²⁰ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti* 100.

²¹ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 101.

²² F. Toye, *Giuseppe Verdi: His Life and Works* (New York: Knopf, 1931), 390.

Princess Eboli comes rushing into the prison shouting ‘Whoever tries to stop us will die!’²³ When Eboli reaches Carlo she quickly frees him and tells him to run away.

From the libretto of *Don Carlo* Princess Eboli can be classified as fitting two templates of Otherness: emotional and moral. At the start of the opera there is no indication of any sign of her Otherness in the libretto. Eboli is established as an insider and part of the Court as well as a close friend of Elisabeth de Valois. Eboli fits the template of an emotional Other when she falls in love with Carlo. He, however, is in love with Elisabeth, his stepmother and the wife of his father, the King. In the second act, after Eboli realises that Carlo does not love her, she feels completely scorned and hurt by that; as she is determined to get revenge, Eboli becomes a moral Other. She steals the Queen’s casket, which she knows contains a photo of Carlo, and gives it to King Philip, telling him that his wife and son has been having an affair – all this, while she herself had been the mistress of the King. Through these actions it is clear that Eboli does not follow the same moral code as others and often defies established morality in order to survive in the Court. However, in the third act, when she sees the results of her actions, she is filled with remorse, confesses her sins to the Queen and decides to rescue Carlo from prison. Eboli is not an immoral or evil person; she is ‘A fiery Spanish lady, [she] reduces three people to despair in her blind love for Carlos.’²⁴ She will do whatever needs to be done in order to survive life in Court. Andrew Porter interprets Princess Eboli’s character as follows:

What did Verdi think of her, this proud, beautiful princess, driven by her passions to baseness? We find an answer in the letter (1 December 1882) where he rejects Nutter’s (or du Locle’s) suggestion of retaining the masquerading episode, and perhaps making Eboli seem less odious:

As for making Eboli less odious: I am even of the opinion that ever the most odious characters should be revealed to the public as they are. Eboli is not and cannot be anything other than a *coquine*.

A *coquine*, a ‘slut, jade or hussy’? We tend to think of her, perhaps as a sister to Amneris. Did Verdi, perhaps think of her rather as a well-born cousin to Preziosilla?²⁵

8.4 THE OTHERNESS OF EBOLI IN THE MUSIC OF *DON CARLO*

Princess Eboli’s first entrance in the 1884 version of *Don Carlo* occurs in the second part of Act I. She enters with the other ladies. This section commences with a spirited orchestral section marked *allegro brillante*, and for the first time since the start of the opera the mood has lifted. The orchestration is now marked with colourful instrumental effects. The use of cymbals together with brass instruments, and then in the chorus section flutes with the triangle accentuate the exotic

²³ Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti*, 107.

²⁴ Batta, *Opera*, 734.

²⁵ A. Porter, ‘A note on Princess Eboli’, *The Musical Times*, 113 (1554), (1972), 754.

flavour in the music. The women's chorus sings a short three-part introduction. Tebaldo enters with Princess Eboli and after the Princess has rendered a short recitative, she sings her first show piece, the 'Song of the Veil'.

Example 1, Act I, scene 2 – 'Song of the Veil'²⁶

Although Eboli is visually accompanied by Tebaldo on the lute, the whole orchestra is actually supporting the music and the lute accompaniment is only for visual and dramatic effect. The aria is in 6/8, but during the refrain the meter changes to 4/4. Eboli then returns with a second verse, again first in 6/8, and then first with Tebaldo and the chorus in 4/4. The aria is in A major; however, the rhythm is the most important element in this aria. According to Charles Osborne, 'Verdi takes its Saracen origins seriously, and inserts in both stanzas a series of flamingo-like flourishes in the chest register ... its orchestral colour is deliberately exotic.'²⁷ According to Budden,

[t]he introduction makes use of one of those folk-dance rhythms with which nineteenth-century composers from Offenbach to Chabrier liked to signalize a Spanish ambience – allegro 6/8 with implications of 3/4. The verse has the same kind of stylized exoticism as Carmen's Seguidilla, witness the flattened leading note in the third bar, the decoration on the eleventh and the flamboyant pseudo-flamenco cadenza at the end.²⁸

After Eboli has completed the second verse, Tebaldo joins her again singing the melody and the ladies join after eight bars with a climatic ending with Eboli on a high A5. The elements of Otherness that characterize this aria are: the flattened seventh, interesting percussive effects as heard with the use of cymbal and triangle, repetitive dance rhythms and simple forms. However, it is important to note that 'Song of the Veil' is a set piece and the elements of Otherness are those of

²⁶ All music examples in this chapter are taken from: G Verdi, *Don Carlo* (New York: Schirmer, 1963).

²⁷ Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Verdi*, 360.

²⁸ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 68.

the exotic Other. It can be argued that through this aria Eboli is established as the Other, although the musical characteristics pertain only to ‘Song of the Veil and not to her other music.

The Queen enters and an oboe solo is responsible for changing the mood. There is a short recitative before Rodrigo, the Marquis of Posa, enters. The next scene between Eboli, Rodrigo and Elisabeth is, according to Osborne, ‘characteristic of Verdi’s genius for advancing the dramatic action under the cover of apparently inconsequential melodic dalliance.’²⁹ Eboli and Rodrigo’s conversation takes place over an elegant orchestral mazurka, which Hughes thinks ‘is not an inspired tune’.³⁰ Nevertheless, this tune creates the perfect atmosphere between two people discussing niceties. While Eboli and Rodrigo sing about social events in France, Elisabeth inserts short anguished aside phrases about Carlo. Near the end of the trio the idea of Carlo loving her first enters Eboli’s mind. During this scene there are no elements of Otherness in the music and it can be argued that this is because Eboli is still part of the court and society. The set piece ‘Song of the Veil’ hints at her Otherness through the music, but one must also take into account that ‘Song of the Veil is a ‘performance within a performance’; there are no other indications of Otherness found in her music when the ‘real’ Eboli is singing in Act I.

Act II commences with an orchestral prelude in C major. The first phrase (Ex. 2) commences with the melody played by the horn, bassoon and clarinets. The motif ascends and later the violins play a tremolo, while the melody is carried by the cellos.



Example 2, Act II, prelude

Carlo starts his recitative on a C major chord, reading the letter of the Queen. When Eboli, whom Carlo mistakes for the Queen, enters, the key shifts to D flat major, which is the key of Carlo’s ‘illusory happiness’, according to Budden.³¹ Eboli responds jubilantly and the two sing a love duet leading to a climatic phrase that they sing in unison, which jumps to a B5 flat and ends on a D5 flat. Eboli takes off her mask and Carlo realises he has been singing a love duet with the wrong woman.

²⁹ Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Verdi*, 361.

³⁰ S. Hughes, *Famous Verdi Operas: an Analytical Guide for the Opera-Goer and the Armchair Listener*, (London: Hale, 1968), 336.

³¹ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 107.

Immediately the music changes; there are two forte chords in the orchestra before Carlo sings ‘Ciel! Non è la Regina!’. When Carlo doesn’t respond to the Princess’s probing questions, the music changes to 3/4 and B flat major. Eboli sings repeated E flat quavers where she reassures Carlo of her loyalty and love. The lyrical duet ends with Eboli singing ‘Qual ballen! Qual mister! Voi la regina amate!’ Rodrigo comes in, the meter changes to 6/8 and, according to Budden, ‘the *allegro agitato*, strictly transitional, as is balanced on an F minor – E major axis...’.³² The following trio is actually a battle between Rodrigo and Eboli. The trio starts in 12/8, andante sostenuto, Aflat/ f minor. Eboli sings semiquavers, while Carlo and Rodrigo’s lines are more lyrical and sustained. Eboli renders many florid motifs in the lower voice, and although Eboli’s semiquaver patterns are not in the same Eastern colour with the flattened seventh as that of the florid motifs in ‘Nei garden del bello’, it is an unmistakable reminder of the first aria (Ex. 3). During the first part of this scene the elements of Otherness displayed in the music of Eboli are big leaps in the vocal line, the use of brass instruments in the orchestra, which contributes to the tension and drama in the music, and semiquaver patterns in the lower range of her voice.

The musical score consists of five systems. The first system shows Eboli's vocal line starting with a forte (*p*) dynamic, marked with a semiquaver pattern. The lyrics are: "Ah! voi m'a - ve - te in cor fe -". The second system continues Eboli's line with lyrics: "- chia - to! Sol Id - dio in - da - gar po -". The third system shows Rodrigo's vocal line with lyrics: "- tor. Par - lar do ve - te, a nois ve - la - te". The fourth system shows Carlo's vocal line with lyrics: "Par - lar do ve - te, a nois ve - la - te". The fifth system shows the piano accompaniment, marked with a forte (*p*) dynamic and *espress.* (espressivo) marking, featuring a semiquaver pattern in the lower register.

Example 3, Act II, scene 1 – trio between Eboli, Carlo, and Rodrigo

The final part of the trio starts with Eboli singing ‘Ed io che trema a suo a spetto’ unaccompanied.

³² Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 109.

At the end of her second phrase she has a trill in unison with the orchestra which reinforces the sarcastic undertone in her voice. An important rhythmic motif is the quaver triplets, which may indicate her anxious fury. A reason for this can also be that triplets are never on the beat, so there is always a feeling of restlessness. On her words ‘dell’amor’ the key shifts from A flat major to C major; there are three *fortissimo* chords from the orchestra before Eboli sings a sustained note on an A5 and a downward motif on the words ‘per mia fè! Fu ben ardita! The strings enter immediately with a five-note motif, while Rodrigo vows to Eboli ‘Tu qui morrai.’ (Ex.4).

The musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is for Eboli (E), the second for Carlo (D.CAR), the third for Rodrigo (ROD), and the bottom for Piano. Eboli's line has lyrics 'fè! fu ben ar - di - ta!' and a trill. Carlo's line has 'Ro - dri - go!'. Rodrigo's line has 'Tu qui mor - rai.' and 'Il ve-'. The piano accompaniment features a five-note motif in the right hand and quaver triplets in the left hand, with dynamics markings 'p' and 'mf'.

Example 4, Act II, scene 1 – five-note motif in trio between Eboli, Carlo and Rodrigo

The *allegro agitato* starts with Eboli singing ‘Trema per te’ unaccompanied (Ex. 5). The key is G major and the meter is 4/4. Budden points out that ‘Eboli’s is the opening theme, unaccompanied except for the final note of each phrase, which is underpinned by oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons with a unison sneer.’³³ Rodrigo then enters with the orchestra, repeating the first half of the rhythmic motif (quaver triplets and a quarter note), while Carlo and Eboli join later. The cornets and violins enter with ‘a pattern of quavers which conflicts strikingly with the triplets implied in the melodic line.’³⁴ All three soloists sing the first motif in unison, this motif is also multiplied and

³³ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 110.

³⁴ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 110.

expanded by the oboes, clarinets, cellos and basses.

Allegro Agitato
EBOLI (to Don Carlo)

Tre ma per te, fal - so fi - gliuo - lo,

Allegro Agitato

Example 5, Act II, scene 1 – final part of trio between Eboli, Carlo and Rodrigo

The tempo moves into *piu mosso*, but the singers' rhythmic pattern remains in unison; however, it then changes to syncopated rhythms before the phrase ascends towards a sustained B5 and resolves to an E5 before Eboli leaves in a fury. During this scene Eboli's Otherness is evident through the use of semi-quaver patterns in lower range of her voice; this was also used previously in the 'Song of the Veil'. The frequent use of quaver triplets in the last part of the trio also characterizes Eboli's alterity, although after Eboli initially introduces this motif, the other two soloists also join in singing this rhythmical motif. Eboli's Otherness is again portrayed through the use of brass instruments and big leaps in the vocal line.

Several elements of Otherness are evident in the music of Eboli until this part of the opera.

4. The 'Song of the Veil' is a set piece that is used as a vehicle of Otherness; it is a 'performance' within the opera in the same way that 'Habanera', 'Seguidille' and 'Chanson Bohème' are performances in their respective operas.
5. Elements of Otherness found in the 'Song of the Veil' are: the flattened seventh, interesting percussive effects as heard with the use of cymbal and triangle, repetitive dance rhythms and simple forms. However, it is important to note that 'Song of the Veil' is a set piece and the elements of Otherness are those of the exotic Other. It can be argued that through this aria Eboli is established as the Other, although these musical characteristics only pertain to 'Song of the Veil' and not to her other music.
6. During the 'Song of Veil' there are many semiquaver patters sung in chest voice, and a

similar pattern is repeated when Eboli sings the trio in Act II with Carlo and Rodrigo.

7. The quaver triplets are a very important rhythmic pattern.
8. Big leaps in the vocal line.
9. The use of brass and string instruments.

When Eboli enters again in the third act, it is after the Queen has fainted during the confrontation with King Philip regarding the casket bearing the picture of Carlo. Eboli runs in saying ‘Ciel! Che mai feci! Ahimè!’ in an octave jump between F5 and F4. The quartet, which Osborne states ‘is easily the equal of the quartet in the last act of *Rigoletto* in its masterly characterisation, and possibly its superior in purely musical terms’,³⁵ starts with the melody sung by the King. This quartet was altered extensively throughout all the revisions. After four bars Eboli enters, with Rodrigo joining them after another four bars.

mi - a, ognun quaggiù m' abban - do - nò, più spe - me o
 tra - dia! oh! ri - mor - so fa - ta - le! io tra dia quel no - bi - le
 per la Span - gna un uo - mo mo - ra, io lie - ti di le la - sce -
 del co - ste i non fu!

³⁵ Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Verdi*, 365.

Example 6, Act III, scene 1 – Quartet between Eboli, Elisabeth, Rodrigo and Philip (previous page)

Just as in the second act, Eboli again has her quaver triplets motif. The meter is 4/4, but the movement is 12/8.³⁶ When Elisabeth regains consciousness, she starts singing with three flutes and later a clarinet is added, accompanying her with an arpeggio figure. Eboli firstly joins her only singing softly ‘O dolor!’ on a D4/E4flat; however, when the Princess joins the phrase the second time, both women sing a B4 flat, Elisabeth ascending and Eboli descending in a *dolcissimo* fashion. Later the two women sing almost four bars in unison, an octave apart, before the men join and the music works up to a *forte* and then *diminuendo* down to a *pianissimo*. After the quartet the men depart and Eboli and Elisabeth are left alone. Immediately Eboli bursts out asking the Queen’s forgiveness. While the strings play a *tremolando*, Eboli confesses ‘Quello scrigno son io che l’involai’, the orchestra plays two chords before the Queen answers ‘Voi’ on an E5 natural. There are three variational ascending sequences of this phrase that contribute to the intensifying of tension. With a sweeping upward jump and then downward phrase she states in triplets ‘la gelosia che strazia vami il cor contro voi m’eccitar!’ Eboli tells the Queen that there is another sin that she must confess. ‘An atmosphere of sudden tension is created by a simple syncopated figure played *pp* by the flutes in their low register and supported by strings.’³⁷

EBOLI **Moderato** ♩ = 92

pp *cupo*

Pie-tà! pie

Moderato ♩ = 92

pp

³⁶ Hughes, *Famous Verdi Operas*, 360.

³⁷ Hughes, *Famous Verdi Operas*, 360.

The musical score shows a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). It begins with a quarter note 'tà!' followed by a half rest. The next measure has a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note 'Il' on a C#4, a quarter note 'Re...' on a C#4, and a quarter note 'non' on a C#4. The final measure has a quarter note 'im-' on a C#4, a quarter note 'pre-' on a C#4, a quarter note 'cate' on a C#4, and a quarter note 'a' on a C#4. The piano accompaniment is in bass clef and consists of a chromatic descent from middle C to G sharp below it and back up, played by violins and double basses.

Example 7, Act III, scene 1 – Eboli, Elisabeth scene

In broken phrases Eboli utters ‘Pietà! Pietà!’; softly she sings ‘Il Re...’ on a C#4 then she bursts out ‘non imprecate a me!’ (Ex. 7). The score is marked *ff con forza* and there are additional accents on each quaver note which is the C sharp an octave higher of the previous phrase. Then she continues confessing her last sin in broken phrases punctuated by rests, the phrase marked *ppp con voce soffocata*. When, at last, Eboli finishes her confession, Elisabeth keeps quiet.

It is left to the orchestra to comment with an astonishing *fortissimo* two-bar phrase consisting of nothing more original than a chromatic descent from middle C to the G sharp below it and back again, but coloured by such unusual instrumentation that the effect is quite startling. The ‘tune’ – that is, the chromatic fall and rise – is played only by the violins doubled two octaves lower by the double basses. Violoncellos, violas, bassoons and tuba (no trombones), flutes, oboes, clarinets and four horns combine in a penetrating and sinister passage of sustained unison C’s from middle C down over two octaves. The chromatic phrase is played three times, the second time *pianissimo*, the third still more quietly with the orchestration limited to strings and timpani.³⁸

Elisabeth eventually answers with ‘Redetemi la croce!’ on a repeated *pianissimo* E4 flat, then the chromatic phrase in the orchestra is repeated but without the middle C in the beginning of the phrase, and she sings ‘La Corte vi convien lasciar col di novello!’ This time the phrase is repeated a minor third higher on a G flat. The chromatic phrase is repeated again in *ppp*; the next phrase ‘Fra l’esilio ed il vel sceglier potrete!’ she sings on a B flat, with the phrase resolving to an E5 flat. As the Queen leaves, Eboli realises the situation in which she finds herself and expresses her dismay in a sweeping phrase punctuated with syncopated rhythms in the first half of the phrase and two groups of quaver triplets in the second part of the phrase. The trumpets, cornets and horns start with quaver triplets that lead to an arpeggio figure played by strings, flutes, oboes and clarinets. She curses her beauty

³⁸ Hughes, *Famous Verdi Operas*, 360-361.

Example 8, Act III, scene 1 – ‘O don fatale’

This phrase and the subsequent ones are supported only by a quaver, semiquaver, quaver-chord motif played by the orchestra. An important aspect to note is that every time Eboli mentions the words ‘ti maledico’ or ‘o mia beltà’ the music is scored in quaver triplets. The first section then moves into a *piu mosso*. The orchestration thickens with quaver triplets until ‘the final sentence, punctuated by tutti chords with a constant hammering of triplets on the trumpet.’³⁹ When, as the first time when Eboli sings ‘ti maledico, o mia beltà’, she leaps to a C6 flat and in a cadence encompassing two octaves, descends to a C4 flat, before the orchestra crashes in with a rising chromatic scale in quaver triplet chords. After six chords concluding the dramatic first section of the aria, the strings slow down to a *molto meno* for the lyrical middle section (Ex 9).

Example 9, Act III, scene 1 – middle section of ‘O don fatale’

³⁹ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 136.

According to Budden, '[t]he central section is Verdi's first essay before the Requiem in pure contralto sonority; nor was he prepared to modify it when he knew that he would not have a full contralto for his first performance.'⁴⁰ This middle section is measured, consisting of very lyrical lines. The meter is still 4/4; however, now the orchestra supports the singer in bars of four crotchets and this does not change throughout this whole section. In the last part of the aria Eboli realises that Carlo is going to die the next day and in a flashing coda that reaches a B5 flat twice she resolves that she will save him. Eboli's Otherness in this aria can be seen through the use of the full extent of her range. This is used in emotionally charged phrases, such as the 'o mia beltà, Ah! Ti maledico, o mia beltà!', where Eboli sings a cadenza ranging two octaves from C6 flat to C4 flat. Other methods that highlight her alterity are: quaver triplet motif and the use of brass instruments in the orchestration.

With all the revisions made to *Don Carlo*, a part that kept getting shorter with every revision is the uprising of the people. In the beginning the King challenged the people, but now he asks them what they want. Eboli entered dressed as a young boy, but now she merely wears a mask. Nevertheless, after her glorious 'O don fatale', she is only seen once more wearing a mask, singing two words 'Va! Fuggi!' and fulfilling her promise to save Carlo's life. It can only be assumed that after this she will spend the rest of her days in a convent.

8.5 SUMMARY

The Otherness of Eboli is not as easy to define as that of Azucena and of Dalila. Andrew Porter argues that because of all the revisions made to *Don Carlo* the role of Princess Eboli is of extreme musical importance; however, dramatically it remains undeveloped.⁴¹ I do not agree with this and think Toye has a more valid point: 'Eboli's passion for Don Carlos, her attempt at seduction, her own intrigue with Philip, are dealt with far too casually in the opera. More unsatisfactory still is her attempted revenge on the Queen, linked in the play with Alva's political ambitions in Flanders and hatred for Don Carlos. The audience scarcely realise its existence and certainly fail to appreciate its importance.'⁴²

One may deduce several signs of Otherness from the score.

⁴⁰ Budden, *The Operas of Verdi*, 136.

⁴¹ Porter, *A note on Princess Eboli*, 745.

⁴² Toye, *Verdi, His Life and Works*, 385.

8. Emotional Other – Eboli fits the template of an emotional Other when she is in love with Carlo and he does not return that love in the same fashion.
9. Moral Other – Eboli turns into a moral Other when she wants to get revenge on the Queen and Carlo for her scorned heart.
10. Although the ‘Song of the Veil’ is a set piece that stands outside the opera, the flattened seventh, interesting percussive effects as heard with the use of cymbal and triangle, repetitive dance rhythms and simple forms give the aria an Eastern flavour. Although Eboli is not portrayed as ‘exotic’, it may be that the composer wished to let this aria be the first aspect demonstrating her Otherness.
11. In the ‘Song of the Veil’ there are a lot of semi-quaver patterns sung in chest voice, and a similar pattern is repeated again when Eboli sings the trio in Act II with Carlo and Rodrigo.
12. The quaver triplets are a very important rhythmic pattern. This can be seen, for instance, in Act II, the Act III quartet and ‘O don fatale’.
13. Big leaps in the vocal line.
14. The use of brass instruments in the orchestration.
15. During times of extreme emotional stress Eboli sings in extreme ranges of either high or low. This is evident in the trio between her, Rodrigo and Carlo as well as ‘O don fatale!’
16. According to Batta, *Don Carlo* is characterised by its dotted semi-quaver, quaver rhythms. ‘They illustrate the solemn ceremonial and rigidity of the royal court of Spain in the 16th century.’⁴³ However, the fact that the characteristic rhythmic pattern is not present in any of Eboli’s music may be an indication of her Otherness through its lack of rigidity suggesting her untamed behaviour.
17. Syncopated rhythms during times of extreme emotional stress may also be a sign of Otherness.

Eboli fits the template of an emotional Other, just like Amneris and Mignon. This emotional Otherness lead to her becoming a moral Other. Thus it becomes evident that one type of Otherness often leads to alignment with another template of Otherness; in this case Eboli’s emotional Otherness leads to her becoming a moral Other. Azucena’s social Otherness prompts her to become a moral Other. The ‘Song of the Veil’ is a set piece that defines Eboli’s character from the start of the opera. Other set pieces discussed so far include: ‘Habanera’, ‘Seguidilla’, ‘Chanson Bohème’ and ‘Stride la vampa’. The flattened seventh in the ‘Song of the ‘Veil’ gives the aria an ‘Eastern favour’; the flattened seventh is also used in *Carmen* and *Samson et Dalila* to highlight the feeling

⁴³ Batta, *Opera*, 736.

of 'exoticism'. During times of emotional stress Eboli also uses the full extent of her vocal range, singing either very low and/or high. This is particularly evident during 'O don fatale'. This can also be seen in the two other Verdi mezzo roles discussed, for instance, the Judgement scene of Amneris and Act IV, scene 2 with Azucena.

9. LOHENGRIN

9.1 THE CREATION OF *LOHENGRIN*

During the winter of 1841-1842, while Richard Wagner was working on *Tannhäuser*, he became familiar with Christian Theodor Ludwig Lukas's *The Wartburg Contest*. This essay was to form not only the basis of *Tannhäuser*, but also serve as inspiration for *Lohengrin*. In the summer of 1845, while he was employed as the conductor of the Dresden Opera, he was recuperating and resting at a spa in Marienbad. It was during his stay there, that he became further acquainted with the *Lohengrin* legend, reading editions by Görres, as well as *Parzival* and *Titirel* by Wolfram von Eschenbach.¹ It was while he was resting at Marienbad that inspiration struck and Wagner began working on the text of *Lohengrin*. The composer was so excited about the subject of *Lohengrin* that he left Marienbad and travelled back to Dresden to continue working at home. After the *Tannhäuser* première on 19 October of the same year, Wagner finished the text for *Lohengrin*. When he read it to some friends, amongst them Robert Schumann, Ferdinand Hiller famously remarked: 'What a pity that Wagner means to set it to music himself. His musical gifts are not equal to that.'²

Wagner began his work on the music of *Lohengrin* during the summer of 1846 by first sketching a draft of the whole opera. He started composition with the third act, whereupon he moved back and composed Act I and finished Act II during August 1847. This is the only opera Wagner composed in a non-chronological order. The première was planned at the *Dresden Oper* for the season of 1849/1850. However, as often before, Wagner was in dire financial straits and lacked the means to support himself and fulfil his vision of renewing German theatre. When he wrote to the Prussian King asking for funding to support his plans, the King rejected him. This, together with the King's refusal to grant him a commission for *Lohengrin*, have been cited as some of the reasons for his becoming involved in the political unrest that had been fermenting in Dresden for some time. After he published a number of polemic poems and articles – and even though they were published anonymously, it was no secret they were actually written by Wagner – the *Dresden Oper* cancelled the production of *Lohengrin*. Brener cites two reasons for the cancellation: 'too ambitious an undertaking for such unsettled times, and too good an opportunity to teach the impertinent conductor a lesson.'³

¹ M.E. Brener, *Opera Offstage: Passion and Politics Behind the Great Operas* (London: Robson, 2003), 53; A. Batta, *Opera: Composers, Works, Performers* (Köln: Könemann, 2005), 776.

² Brener, *Opera Offstage*, 53.

³ Brener, *Opera Offstage*, 54.

The composer wrote to his sister, Klara, ‘You don’t reflect how I must feel with a work like my “Lohengrin” lying finished two years without been able to present it even at Dresden.’⁴ The composer continued his revolutionary activities and wrote in an article, ‘I will destroy every illusion that has power over men ... I will destroy every trace of this insane order of things ... I am the revolution.’⁵ According to Brener, Wagner associated with Mikhail Bakunin, a Russian Jew who ‘had a habit of showing up in various cities right before the outbreak of hostilities.’⁶ Wagner also assisted August Roedel with the publishing of his revolutionary newspaper as well as in ordering 1 500 grenades. With the uprising fully under way, Wagner took his wife, Minna, to the safety of his sister’s house in Chemnitz. However, on his return, the uprising had been quelled and a warrant for his arrest was issued. Wagner fled to Switzerland on a borrowed passport.

Once Wagner was safe, his thoughts returned to how he could get *Lohengrin* performed. On 21 April 1851 he wrote to Franz Liszt, ‘Perform my *Lohengrin*! *You are the only one* to whom I could address this prayer; to none but you I should entrust the creation of this opera; to you I give it with perfect and joyous confidence ... Perform *Lohengrin*, and let its existence be *your* work.’⁷ As soon as Liszt showed his willingness to perform Wagner’s newest opera, the composer wrote a long letter to Liszt with exact instructions on how *Lohengrin* should be staged. A letter dated 2 July stated,

First of all, I have in the enclosed treated of scenery and decorations. My drawings made for that purpose will give you great delight; I count them amongst the most successful creations of my genius ... *Give the opera as it is; cut nothing!*... As for the rest, I must request you urgently, let me for once do as I like. I have been intent upon establishing so unflinching, so plastic, a connection between the music and the poem and the action, that I feel quite certain as to the result. Rely upon me, and do not attribute it to my being in love with my own work ...⁸

In response to this letter Liszt wrote,

The number of violins will be slightly increased (from sixteen to eighteen), and a bass clarinet has been purchased. Nothing essential will be wanting in the musical material or design ... *It is understood that we shall cut not a note, not an iota*, of your work, and that we shall give it in its *absolute beauty*, as far as is in our power.⁹

Lohengrin premièred on 28 August 1850 at the Hoftheater in Weimar. However, contrary to Wagner’s strict instructions and Liszt’s promises, there were only twenty-one strings and a total of thirty-five members in the orchestra. Nevertheless, the opera was a great success and became part of the regular repertoire of many opera houses in Germany. Wagner, however, had to wait another

⁴ R. Wagner & W.A. Ellis, *Family Letters of Richard Wagner* (London: Macmillan, 1911), 153.

⁵ As quoted in Brener, *Opera Offstage*, 55.

⁶ Brener, *Opera Offstage*, 55.

⁷ F. Hueffer, *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* (New York: Vienna House, 1973), 63. (Italics in original letter.)

⁸ Hueffer, *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt*, 64-65. (Italics in original letter.)

⁹ Hueffer, *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt*, 70. (Italics in original letter.)

eleven years before he could witness his work being performed. He saw *Lohengrin* for the first time only on 11 May 1861 at the Kärntnertor Theatre in Vienna.

9.2 THE OTHERNESS OF ORTRUD IN THE LIBRETTO OF LOHENGRIN

Throughout Act I Ortrud keeps a very low profile next to her husband's side. Although Ortrud rarely says anything during the first act of the opera, she fits the template of a moral Other, because she supports her husband in his false accusations of Elsa. This quietness of Ortrud is also mirrored in her music.

In Act II Ortrud and Friedrich have fallen from grace and sit outside in the dark, dressed in black robes that signify shame and repentance. Friedrich is obviously upset and during the course of their conversation it becomes evident that it was Ortrud who was the instigator of the plot to destroy Elsa. Friedrich feels guilty and asks Ortrud what spell she put on him that he cannot run away from her. He holds her responsible for losing everything that is precious to him, his honour, glory – even the sword with which he would have struck her down has been lost. While Friedrich continues his lamentations, it becomes even more evident that Ortrud was indeed the mastermind behind this whole scheme to fulfil their – or more precisely, her – ambitions. Ortrud told Friedrich that she had seen Elsa drown her brother; she also prophesied that the House of Rabod, whose last heir she was, would rule Brabant again.

Friedrich accuses Ortrud of making him an accomplice in her lies and reasons that God is punishing him for allowing it. She mocks his belief, however, and says, 'God's might?' Ha-ha! Give me might, and will surely show you what a weak god it is that protects him.'¹⁰ Ortrud tells Friedrich that her 'prophetic eye must enlighten' him. She informs him that if the mysterious hero was to reveal his name and origin, he would immediately lose all his power. She and Friedrich have to generate the thought in Elsa's mind that she must find out who her saviour is, as she is the only one who can put the question to him. If this does not work, they can also cut off a small part of his body such as a finger, for instance, which will cause him to lose all his power. Friedrich is very eager to restore his honour, but he swears to Ortrud that if she is deceiving him, she will live to regret it. However, Ortrud persuades him to remain calm and they will get their revenge.

¹⁰ N. Castel, *German Miscellaneous Opera Libretti* (New York: Leyerle, Geneseo, 2005) 118.

Up until this part of the opera is it evident that Ortrud can be classified by her behaviour as a moral Other. In the Act II duet with Friedrich it becomes clear that Ortrud's ambitions are the reason why she convinced Friedrich to accuse Elsa of murdering her brother.

In the second scene of Act II Elsa appears on the balcony and sings of her happiness and her love. Ortrud tells Friedrich to hide from sight and that she will deal with Elsa, before she calls her enemy's name. The mood abruptly changes in the music (see section 9.3) when Ortrud comes into view from the darkness. Ortrud asks Elsa if she has forgotten what the voice of the woman she has destroyed sounds like? Ortrud states that she had always lived peacefully in the woods and she married the man whom Elsa had rejected, but had she ever done anything to Elsa? Friedrich is remorseful about the false accusation he made against her, but they have to pay the price and be punished for what they have done, while she, Elsa, is so blessed with happiness and joy. Elsa is consumed with guilt and thinks, 'I would badly show my appreciation to Thy goodness, almighty God who smiles upon me so.'¹¹ She requests that Ortrud wait for her; she will immediately come downstairs and take her into the Kementate. However, the moment Elsa is out of earshot, Ortrud jumps up from the steps in a demented rapture, calling on her gods, Wotan and Freia, to help her get her revenge on Elsa, 'Profaned gods! Help now in my revenge! Banish the shame that was done to you! ... Bless my deceit and hypocrisy, so that successful my revenge may be!'¹²

When Elsa arrives downstairs, Ortrud falls at her feet, pretending to beg for mercy and forgiveness. Elsa, being so touched by this, says that she forgives Ortrud and also implores the woman to forgive her in return. She will also ask her future husband to show mercy towards Friedrich tomorrow. Ortrud insincerely thanks Elsa and when Elsa tells Ortrud that she should dress in her finest clothes the following day to join in the wedding procedures, Ortrud replies to Elsa that there is only one gift she can give her. She can see into the future and 'Ortrud warns her not to place too blind a trust in her present happiness ... The orchestra at this point makes Ortrud's malevolence clear, though not to Elsa.'¹³ Ortrud tells Elsa that her saviour might disappear just as quickly and inexplicably as he arrived. However, Elsa feels only pity for Ortrud and tells her that she has never known happiness that comes from absolute faith. As they enter the ladies' quarters, Ortrud murmurs to herself, 'This pride shall teach me how I shall combat her devotion. Against it I will aim my weapons; by her arrogance she will feel her repentance!'¹⁴ Rieger states that there are ample distinctions between the

¹¹ Castel, *German Miscellaneous Opera Libretti*, 127.

¹² Castel, *German Miscellaneous Opera Libretti*, 128.

¹³ C. Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Richard Wagner* (New York: Da Capo, 1990), 121.

¹⁴ Castel, *German Miscellaneous Opera Libretti*, 133.

two female characters: ‘Elsa’s concerns are the heart, love, happiness, faith, joy, and fidelity whereas Ortrud is concerned with pride, deceit, battles and weapons.’¹⁵

A while later during the wedding procession Ortrud, who is also part of the fanfare, breaks loose from the other women and stands in front of Elsa, confronting her with the words, ‘Back Elsa! No longer shall I suffer to follow you like a maid! You shall give me precedence everywhere and bow down humbly before me!’¹⁶ She ignores everybody’s shocked reactions and asks Elsa if she knows anything about the man she is about to marry. Does she know his name or his origin? Elsa is not thrown by Ortrud’s tirade and tells her that her hero defeated Friedrich in battle. Nevertheless, this does not stop Ortrud’s attack on Lohengrin, and she tells Elsa that her hero gets his strength from magic powers and if Elsa does not question him about his name and origin, everybody will know that she, Elsa, doubts the purity of his powers. Just as Ortrud has finished saying this, Elsa’s maids hurry to defend her, but the scene is interrupted by the entrance of the King. During the ensemble at the end of the second act, Ortrud and Friedrich sing that they can see that doubt is starting to grow in Elsa’s mind and that this hero will be crushed if Elsa asks him the forbidden question.

Ortrud’s last entrance is in Act III while Lohengrin is getting ready to leave. She jumps up crying that Lohengrin should go home and tell Elsa who the swan is that is pulling his boat. She recognizes him by the chain that is wrapped around his neck, because it is she who cursed him. The swan is actually Gottfried, Elsa’s brother, the heir of Brabant. Had Lohengrin stayed any longer, he would have freed the swan.

Wagner wrote the following to Liszt about Ortrud’s character,

Politics are her essence. A political man is repulsive, but a political woman is ghastly. This ghastliness is what I had to portray. Her ‘love’ can only express itself as hatred for everything living, everything that actually exists ... Her pride in her forebears, her tendency to hand on things past, this all becomes a murderous fanaticism ... Nothing petty at all may appear in her portrayal; she may never appear malicious or annoyed; her every expression of mockery, of deviousness has to let us perceive the whole violence of her terrible madness that can only be stilled by the destruction of others – or even by her own self-destruction.¹⁷

This excerpt reveals Wagner intense dislike of the character of Ortrud, and although she was loosely based on Matabrune from *The Knight of the Swan*, Wagner had mostly created the character himself. Nevertheless, according to Rieger, ‘[i]t was less her old, heathen, anti-Christian magic arts that Wagner held against her than her urge to power.’¹⁸

¹⁵ Castel, *German Miscellaneous Opera Libretti*, 64.

¹⁶ Castel, *German Miscellaneous Opera Libretti*, 140.

¹⁷ As quoted in: E. Rieger & C. Walton, *Richard Wagner’s Women* (Suffolk: Boydell, 2011), 62.

¹⁸ Rieger, *Richard Wagner’s Women*, 63.

Example 2, Act II, scene 1 – The Doubt (previous page)

This motif is played by two bassoons and the cellos. A third motif in the introduction is repeatedly connected to Ortrud.

Example 3, Act II, scene 1 – third motif connected to Ortrud

By this time Ortrud's character has been established through the music, although the listener has not really heard her sing yet. During the first act she just sang low-lying parts in ensembles in which she hardly could be heard. However, in the introduction to Act II her character is constituted very clearly through these three motifs. It only becomes evident later during the duet with Friedrich that, although she remained silent at her husband's side while he made all the accusations against Elsa, she was actually the person who instigated the entire affair. The alterity of Ortrud's character is established very early in the second act through the use of three leitmotifs associated with her: Dark Plots, The Doubt, and a third motif played by brass instruments. The orchestration is characterised by low string instruments, cellos and double basses as well as brass instruments. The key of F sharp minor, the relative minor of Lohengrin's key, is also associated with the character of Ortrud.

Eva Rieger argues in her book *Richard Wagner's Women* that Ortrud 'leads an insidious fight against Lohengrin, the representative of the good. That is why the music mobilizes its affects against her.'²¹ Rieger continues by stating that Ortrud's Otherness manifests itself through the repeated use of:

12. A descending diminished seventh chord;
13. This chord is also prominent in The Dark Plots leitmotif (example 1);
14. String tremolandi;
15. The instrumentation characterised by cellos, double basses as well as muted brass

²¹ Rieger, *Richard Wagner's Women*, 63.

instruments;

16. Contrast between Lohengrin's key of A major and Ortrud's key of F sharp minor, which is evident in the introduction to the second act;

17. Big leaps in the vocal line as well as fragmented rhythms.²²

Ortrud addresses Friedrich with the words 'Ich kann nicht fort: hierher bin ich gebannt'. There is a first aspect of Otherness with a big leap on the word 'Feinde' with an octave jump from an F5 to an F4 and again when she says 'Schmach' on a G5 and 'und' on a A4 sharp. This element of musical Otherness, namely big leaps in the vocal line, is present numerous times in the music during the course of the next few pages of music.

Willst du mir drohn? mir, ein-em Wei-be, drohn? O Fei-ger!

ff trem.

ff

ff

Red. * *Red.*

Example 4, Act II, scene 1 – a section in the duet between Ortrud and Friedrich demonstrating, big leaps and fragmented phrases in Ortrud's vocal line

When Ortrud sings the phrase 'Gottes Kraft? Ha-ha!' (Ex. 5) Rieger postulates that

[i]n the second act, what is striking is the extremely high pitch of her cry and her laughter, as well as the sudden descent of almost two octaves. The small steps of a second are reduced still further, resulting in chromaticism. At the words 'power' and 'weak god' Wagner writes a tritone in the melody. All these means ... together with the rhythmic fragmentation of Ortrud's line, convey a sense of evil and hectic excitement.²³

²² Rieger, *Richard Wagner's Women*, 63.

²³ Rieger, *Richard Wagner's Women*, 63.

Got - tes Kraft? Ha, ha! Gib mir die Macht, und si - cher

zeig ich dir, welch schwa - cher Gott es ist, der ihn be - schützt

ff *8va* *Ped.* *** *ff* *Ped.* ***

Str. *f* *(pizz.)* *p*

Example 5, Act II, scene 1 – Ortrud, Friedrich scene

Throughout the first part of this scene Ortrud's vocal line is characterised not only by large leaps, but also fragmented phrases as is evident above. This is also characteristic of Ortrud's music as the other singers, especially Elsa's vocal line, consists of longer legato lines.

The motif shown in Example 1 commonly is called 'The Dark Plots' and the second motif 'The Doubt' (Example 2).²⁴ To avoid confusion, the leitmotifs will also be referred to by these names. Just before Ortrud sings the line 'Die Schwelger streckten sich zur üppgen Ruh', The Dark Plot motif returns in the English horn.

²⁴ For example in: A. Lavignac & E. Singleton, *The Music Dramas of Richard Wagner and his Festival Theatre in Bayreuth* (London: Nisbet), 279-280.

ORTRUD (auf den Pallas deutend, in dem das Licht verlöscht ist).

Die Schwel-ger streck-ten sich zur üpp - gen Ruh;

Geist mir neu be - rü- cken!

Engl. H.

Example 6, Act II, scene 1 – The Dark Plots leitmotif returning in the English Horn

Ortrud's Otherness is again accentuated when she sings two octave leaps from F5 to F4 on the word 'Seher' and from C5 to C4 on the word 'leuchten'. Just before she utters the phrase 'Weisst du, wer dieser Held', the motif from Example 3 is played twice by the English horn and the bass clarinet. One bar later the bassoons and the English horn enter with The Dark Plots leitmotif. After four bars the bassoons and alto clarinet play The Doubt motif. This occurs frequently during this duet between Ortrud and Friedrich. The orchestra plays the Dark Plots motif, followed by The Doubt motif and the strings play tremolandi below that. Ortrud's vocal line consists of big leaps and broken phrases. This is evident in the following section:

Ha, wie be-greifst du schnell und wohl! Hör!

-ließ Doch wie soll das ge - lin - gen?

p

P

*

Example 7, Act II, scene 1 – The Doubt motif with string tremolandi

After Ortrud has sung ‘Ha, wie du rases’, the tempo slows down and the key returns to F sharp minor. There are tremolandi in the strings and the motif from Example 3 is played twice by the bassoons and bass clarinet before The Dark Plots motif returns. Ortrud and Friedrich sing in octave unison until the end of this section. However, her shorter, disconnected rhythms are now substituted with longer legato lines (Ex. 8).

p

Der Ra - che Werk sei nun be schwo -

ff

p

Der Ra - che Werk sei nun be schwo -

ff

più p

pp

cresc.

f

Bl. Pos.

Ped.

*

P

*

P

ren aus mei - nes Bu - sens wil - der

ren aus mei - nes Bu - sens wil - der

dim. *pp*

Example 8, Act II, scene 1 – last part of the scene between Ortrud and Friedrich

Ortrud's and Friedrich's sinister plans are emphasised with the bass clarinet repeating a motif twice and the trombones ending off the duet with a *pianissimo* chord.

Rieger states that

Ortrud remains a successor of the evil, raging women found in operas of the 18th and 19th centuries, from Mozart's *Electra* and his *Queen of the Night* to Weber's *Eglantine*. The difference between Elsa's tender nature and the world of Ortrud ... is portrayed by the use of chromaticism and the minor mode for Ortrud, then diatonicism and the major for Elsa.²⁵

When Elsa enters, the woodwinds play a melody which not only lifts the mood, but also reminds the listener of the wedding music at the end of Act II. During Elsa's long, flowing lines, Ortrud interjects with short *parlando* phrases singing *sotto voce* 'Sie ist es' and 'Der Stunde soll sie fluchen, in der sie jetzt mein Blick gewahrt!' While Elsa is singing of her love for Lohengrin, the soothing atmosphere is suddenly broken when the harmony changes to minor and, accompanied only by oboe and stopped horns, Ortrud calls,

²⁵ Rieger, *Richard Wagner's Women*, 63.

Example 9, Act II, scene 2 – Ortrud's call to Elsa

Rieger notices that in contrast to the interval that is used when Ortrud calls Elsa, that is an 'ornamental sighing suspension', when Ortrud's name is called a tritone is heard, which according to Rieger, is 'the devil's interval'.²⁶

Example 10, Act II, scene 2 – Elsa's call to Ortrud

In the remainder of the first part of the duet between Elsa and Ortrud there are no new elements of Otherness. However, the moment Elsa tells Ortrud that she will come down from the balcony to speak with her, Ortrud jumps up in a frenzy and the repeated Ds played *Sehr lebhaft* in syncopation by the strings add to this atmosphere of delirium. These syncopated Ds are punctuated by a rising motif from the brass instruments before Ortrud enters with

²⁶ Rieger, *Richard Wagner's Women*, 63.

Sehr lebhaft (Sie eilt in die Kemenate zurück. Ortrud springt in wilder Begeisterung von den Stufen auf.)

ORTRUD

Ent -

Sehr lebhaft

Str. *ff*

Bl. *ff*

BT. *ff*

Kb. *ff*

Red. * *Red.* *

weih - - - te Göt - - ter!

ffp *cresc.*

3 *ff* 6

Example 11, Act II, scene 2 – 'Entweihte Götter'

With triplets in the strings as well as punctuation by the brass instruments, the feeling of agitation and the drama are enhanced. This section returns to Ortrud's key of F sharp minor. There are big leaps in the vocal line, often jumping to an A5 or A5 sharp, only to sustain this note for four to eight beats. Six fortississimo chords are played by all the brass instruments when Ortrud calls on her gods, Wotan and Freia. In between there are shorter, fragmented phrases in the vocal line above string tremolandi. Ortrud ends the aria with 'dass glücklich meine Rache sei' in which the vocal line again leaps to an A5 sharp that is sustained for six beats. This is followed by a short, dramatic postlude in which there are triplets in the orchestra and brass instruments plays a strong rhythm of dotted quaver, semiquaver rhythm below that. This scene contains all the previously mentioned musical elements of Ortrud's Otherness; string tremolandi, numerous big leaps in the vocal line, the orchestration that consists mainly of strings and brass instruments, the key of F sharp minor and a very high tessitura that almost gives the effect of screaming. After the postlude the key changes to G major and Elsa enters with the phrase 'Ortrud, wo bist du?' The flute plays a melody that changes

the atmosphere, while Ortrud hypocritically asks Elsa's forgiveness as she falls before her enemy's feet. It is important to note that during this section, Ortrud's vocal line matches that of Elsa, and there are no more big leaps and fragmented phrases; rather she sings long flowing lines, which are unnatural to her character musically as well as dramatically (Ex. 12). However, one could argue that it is because she is being untruthful and hypocritical that her words are being mirrored by her music.

Soll ich in Gnaden bei dir wohnen,

stets bleibe ich die Bettlerin!

Example 12, Act II, scene 2 – scene between Ortrud and Elsa

Just after Ortrud sings the line 'Wohl dass ich dich warne, zu blind nicht deinem Glück zu traun', the bassoons enter with The Doubt leitmotif, which is followed by The Mystery of thy Name. Elsa sings of the joy of her love for Lohengrin and Ortrud joins in saying, 'Ha! Dieser Stolz, er soll mich lehren, wie ich bekämpfe ihre Treu.' The strings support the lyrical, flowing vocal line. Just as before, Ortrud joins in the lyricism unwillingly:

Sehr ruhig, doch nicht langsam

Reu! Laß mich dich

ORTRUD (für sich).

Ha! Die - ser Stolz, er soll mich leh - ren, wie ich be -

Sehr ruhig, doch nicht langsam

p *più p*

♩ * ♩ * ♩ *

leh ren, wie süß die Won - ne rein - ster

käm - pfe ih - re Treu, er soll mich's leh-ren! Gen ihn will ich die

p

♩ * ♩ * ♩ * ♩ *

Example 13, Act II, scene2 – duet between Ortrud and Elsa

During the fourth scene of Act II, when Ortrud explodes with contempt and anger towards Elsa, there is again a repetition of the elements of Otherness that we have witnessed before. The strings play an agitated syncopated rhythm which is accentuated with chords played by the brass

instruments before Ortrud enters with the phrase:

des Münsters setzt, tritt Ortrud, welche bisher unter den letzten Frauen des Zuges gegangen, heftig hervor, schreitet auf dieselbe Stufe und stellt sich so Elsa entgegen. ORTRUD

Zu - rück, El - sa!

trem.

Hr. Bl.

Str. *ff*

Example 14, Act II, scene 4 – ‘Zurück Elsa!’

The instrumentation is mainly strings and brass instruments, while the vocal line consists of big leaps supported by tremolandi in the strings, syncopated rhythms in the orchestra, as well as a very high tessitura in the vocal line. These are all elements that are repeatedly used to express Ortrud’s Otherness and are the same as those used in ‘Entweihte Götter’.

A little later Ortrud sings a new melody (Ex. 15),

ORTRUD (mit dem Anschein tiefer Gekränktheit und stolz)

Wenn falsch Ge - richt mir den Ge - mahl ver - bann - te,

Example 15, Act II, scene 4 – new motif

This section, however, stands out because the vocal line does not contain large leaps or fragmented phrases, as is even more evident in the last part of the scene where Ortrud sings long phrases in regular rhythm, supported by quaver triplets in the strings (Ex. 16).

wie wä - re sie so bald ge - trübt,

p *più p*

P *

Example 16, Act II, scene 4 – 'lack of Otherness' in Ortrud's music

Also, Wagner uses no more of Ortrud's leitmotifs until later in scene five.

In Scene five of Act II Ortrud is part of the ensemble and there are no other musical indications of Otherness in her music. However, Wagner makes substantial use of leitmotifs with the return of The Doubt, The Mystery of the Name and the Dark Plots. The King's Call and Mystery of the Name return for the second time before the act draws to an end.²⁷

Ortrud's only significant musical appearance is near the end of the opera, when she enters with the words 'Fahr heim!'

Fahr heim! Fahr

tr *ff* *tr* *ff*

6 6 6 6

P

²⁷ Lavignac, *The Music Dramas of Richard Wagner*, 281.

Example 16, Act III, scene 2 – ‘Fahr heim’

Here, all the previous characteristics of musical Otherness are combined. Ortrud has a very sudden entrance that is coupled with a key change to F sharp minor. There are many big leaps in the vocal line, as well as a very high tessitura. Often Ortrud’s vocal line reaches A5 or A5 sharp. The orchestration is characterised by triplets in the strings as well a rising motif from the oboe. The chorus interjects twice, but this does not stop Ortrud from continuing her tirade. Her last phrase is punctuated with *fortepiano* chords played by the brass and woodwinds. The last cadence resolves to the major key of A, which is Lohengrin’s key and the The Grail leitmotif is played by the entire orchestra.

9.4 SUMMARY

The elements of Ortrud’s Otherness in the music and libretto of *Lohengrin* are listed below.

3. Ortrud is a moral Other, because she defies the established code of morality.
4. She is also a religious Other. She is classified as such because she is a sorceress who worships different gods from those of the other characters, namely Wotan and Freia.
5. The use of leitmotifs: The Dark Plots and The Doubt.
6. The repeated use of a third motif played by the brass instruments (Example 3).
7. A descending diminished seventh chord that is also prominent in The Doubt leitmotif.
8. String tremolandi.
9. During times of extreme emotional excitement Ortrud sings in extreme ranges of either high or low, using the full extent of her range. This is most prominent in emotionally highly charged scenes such as ‘Entweihte Götter’ and ‘Fahr Heim!’.

10. Instrumentation that is characterised by low strings and brass instruments.
11. In contrast to Lohengrin's 'pure' key of A major, Ortrud's key is F sharp minor.
12. Big leaps in the vocal line as well as fragmented phrases.
13. Ortrud sings mainly in the minor keys and her music is often heavily laced with chromaticism, while Elsa's music is more diatonic and often in a major key.²⁸

Ortrud is the only character discussed in the thesis who is completely morally corrupt. She also fits the template of the religious Other, just like Dalila, who is also a moral and religious Other. Wagner uses leitmotifs associated with Ortrud's character: The Doubt, The Dark Plots and a third motif played by the brass instruments. This distinct use of a recurring motif associated with a character, event or idea was also heard in *Carmen* (fate motif), *Il trovatore* ('Stride la vampa'), *Mignon* ('Connais-tu') and *Aida* (love and jealousy motifs). Ortrud also often sings in the key of F sharp minor. In *Il trovatore* G major is associated with Azucena's love for Manrico and E minor for her obsession to avenge the death of her mother. The orchestration of Ortrud's music is characterised by string tremolandi, brass instruments and low strings, which are also evident in the music of Amneris, although in Act IV Amneris's music contains more woodwinds.

²⁸ Rieger, *Richard Wagner's Women*, 63.

10. EPILOGUE

The question that can be asked now is what makes the music and personalities in the operas discussed take on the characteristics of ‘the Other’?

To the complexity of exoticism must be added the complexity of opera, which groups together several independent artistic domains, each with its own history, evolution and language. There are three dimensions of an opera touched by the theme of exoticism: (1) the visual spectacle (costumes, stage sets, production); (2) the libretto (not only the plot but also its characters and literary form); and (3) the music. Dance – a crucial element of this repertory – participates in all three dimensions.¹

This study analysed the libretto and music to see to what extent the selected roles represent the various templates of Otherness and to determine how alterity is reflected in both the libretto and the music.

In this thesis social Otherness has been defined to incorporate ethnicity, or race, gender and economic Otherness. Simone de Beauvoir believes that women are othered by men; they are the ‘inferior Other’ to man’s superior Self. She is also of the opinion that the elderly are placed in the position of the Other because they have lost their mental and physical strength. In *Orientalism* Said postulates that the West views the East as the Other by making prejudiced and judgemental statements. However, Said’s work can also be applied to both social and religious Otherness. From Jackson’s many studies it is clear that he sees the African American male as the Other in American society. He also views the European American lifestyle as the dominant culture that is often othering the marginalised Others. According to Foucault, the Other includes homosexuals, women, the clinically insane, non-whites and prisoners, namely people who are generally excluded from positions of power. Lacan argues that it is the way in which the symbolic castration is resolved that is a contributing factor in mental health. Bearing this in mind: the three gypsy women who are discussed in the thesis all fall into the category of the social Other: Carmen and Azucena are both social Others as they fit Said’s and Jackson’s notions of Otherness. It can also be argued that Azucena as an old woman fits de Beauvoir definition of the Other. However, in Act Four when Azucena is in prison and hovers on the brink of insanity, she becomes an emblem of Foucault’s idea that the insane and prisoners are also othered in society. It is also important to note that Mignon’s Otherness changes during the course of the opera and by the end she can no longer be classified as an Other. Also, Mignon is classified as a social Other not only because she is a gypsy, but also because she is othered by her fellow gypsies in the beginning of the opera. While Amneris fits the

¹ D.B. Scott, ‘Orientalism and Musical Style’, *The Musical Quarterly*, 82(2), (1998), 135-136.

template of a social Other only at the end of the opera, after she does not accept the established social norms – in this case facing punishment for being a traitor – it is Aida as an Ethiopian who can be classified as the social Other, while Amneris fits the template of the emotional Other throughout the first part of the opera. Amneris is also othering Aida during the Act II duet.

Michel Foucault's work is also applicable to moral Otherness – more specifically, to people classifying individuals as Others because they are living outside of society's moral codes. Foucault's ideas with regard to power and knowledge led him to believe that anyone who is excluded from a position of power can be classified as the Other. He also argued that people conform to the rules laid down by society; this can be positive (preventing crime) or negative (preventing people from moving beyond certain boundaries). Ortrud defies the established code of morality and will do anything and destroy anyone to get what she wants or what she thinks rightfully belongs to her. Ortrud is also different from all the other characters discussed because of her insatiable appetite for power, in this case her desire to destroy Elsa so that she can fulfil her ambitions to rule Brabant with Friedrich again. While Dalila and Carmen are less evil than Ortrud, their self-serving behaviour classifies them as moral Others. Eboli turns into a moral Other after Carlo rejects her and she wants to get revenge on the Queen and Carlo for her scorned heart. Azucena and Carmen are gypsies, members of a group of marginalised Others; this social Otherness leads to their becoming moral Others.

Said's theories of religious othering and Otherness are mirrored in some of the libretti of the selected operas, where the mezzo-soprano characters are viewed as the 'bad' characters worshipping a different or 'Other' gods. Both Dalila and Ortrud have different gods from the other characters in the opera. Dalila, as a Philistine, seduces Samson, a Hebrew, in order to find out the source of his strength. Throughout the opera, one can argue, the listener is guided towards having a sympathetic view of the Hebrew nation. Ortrud calls upon her gods, Wotan and Freia, to help her destroy Elsa and Lohengrin. What is interesting to note is that both these characters who fit the template of the religious Other also fit the template of the moral Other.

The emotional Other is the template that is discussed the least by any of the theorists. Nevertheless, it is a template that is used quite often in Romantic opera. The emotional Other can be defined as the third person in a love triangle, the subject of unrequited love. Lacan's view that one only desires something that is also desired by someone else can be connected to notions of the emotional Other. The dramatic structure of many Romantic operas is based upon this triangular relationship of

desiring a man who is actually in love with someone else. In *Aida* Amneris is the unwelcome third between Radames and Aida. Eboli also fits the template of the emotional Other, because of her unrequited love for Don Carlo. One can argue that Eboli is a very clear example of Lacan's theory of one only desire something that is also desired by someone else. This can be seen when she first has an affair with the Queen's husband and then falls in love with the Queen's lover. In the beginning of Thomas's opera, Mignon is an emotional Other since her love for Wilhelm is unreciprocated as he is in love with the actress Philline. However, at the end of the opera Wilhelm realises his love for Mignon and she no longer fits the template of the emotional Other.

Even though many musicologists have explored the question of what makes music express the Other in sound, it is important to note that most of them describe Otherness in terms of exoticism. Exoticism in the context of this thesis relates only to social or religious Otherness. McClary argues that the following are characterisations of the Other or the exotic: the Dorian sixth, Mixolydian seventh, raised second, augmented fourth, non-functional chromatic coloration, bass drones, ostinatos, pedal points, colourful timbral effects, especially in the percussion, simple formal designs, insistent dance rhythms.² However, it is also essential to observe that these types of writing methods used by the nineteenth-century composers discussed in this thesis were not only applied to distinguish the Others from the self, or to characterise the exotic, e.g. the Gypsies in *Carmen*, the Ethiopians in *Aida* and the Philistines in *Samson et Dalila*, but these methods were also often used to differentiate between various characters. However, it was also the purpose of this thesis to find a specific musical language, be it exotic or not, that applies to the character in question and that contributes towards classifying her as an Other – especially if this character is an outsider or an Other and needs a different musical language to express his or her individual persona. Ralph P. Locke states: ‘Music in these dramatic genres thus helps “characterize” ... just as it often does when the representation involves madness, supernatural creatures, women, or other conditions, groups, or individuals that have long been viewed as Other, i.e. as departing in some basic way from the heroic, masculine norm.’³

10.1 METER, RHYTHM AND PHRASING

In the operas in which the character discussed is a gypsy, it is evident that the composer often writes

² S. McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 53.

³ R.P. Locke, ‘Constructing the Oriental “Other”’: Saint-Saëns’s “Samson et Dalila”’, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 3(3), (1991), 492.

triple meter, e.g. in 3/8 or 3/4 meter. In *Il trovatore* Azucena's music keeps on returning to 3/8 or 6/8. Azucena renders the 'Stride la vampa' in 3/8 meter. Her next big scene 'Condotta ell'era in ceppi' starts out in 6/8, changes to 3/8 and then ends in 4/4. Later during Act II Azucena's second duet with her son is also in 3/8. After Azucena is captured in Act III, she tells her captors where she comes from and when she speaks of the mountains, her meter moves back to 3/8. During the second scene of Act Four, Manrico calms his hysterical mother down and when she sings 'Si, la stanchezza' the meter is once again 3/8. In *Carmen* the 'Seguidilla' is also in 3/8 meter, and the 'Chanson Bohème' is in 3/4 meter. The triple meter motif repeats itself again during the 'Card scene'. However, interestingly enough, when Frasquita and Mercédès sing their refrain, the meter is in 2/4, and it only changes to triple meter again when Carmen starts singing 'En vain, pour éviter les réponses amères'. The intermezzo between Act III and IV is also in 3/4 meter. Although Mignon is classified as a gypsy as well, it is important to note that she is not part of that specific group of Others as such. However, because she is othered by the group of marginalised Others, she also fits the template of the social Other. One can only wonder if this was what Thomas had in mind when he was composing *Mignon*. Her music is not in triple meter like that of the other gypsies discussed; rather Mignon's music is often in 2/4 or 6/8. Her very well-known aria 'Connais-tu le pays' is in 6/8 meter and after that Mignon sings a duet with Lothario, 'Légères hirondelles', which is also in duple meter (2/4). The trio between Mignon, Wilhelm and Lothario at the end of the first act as well as the 'Styrienne' are both in duple meter. At the end of the opera Mignon, Wilhelm and Lothario sing together and again they return to 2/4 meter.

Mitchells states that because of the low, dark and sultry colour of the mezzo-soprano voice, she is also often cast as the moral or 'seductive' Other, e.g. Carmen and Dalila.⁴ McClary argues: 'The energy of the opera is, of course, located in the musical characterisation of Carmen herself: she is the dissonant Other who is necessary for the motivation and sustaining of the plot.'⁵ The author continues by stating that the opera is also driven by the dance rhythms of the music of Carmen, who knows how to show off and use her body with these dance rhythms. 'She arouses desire; and because she apparently has the power to deliver or withhold gratification of the desires she instils, she is immediately marked as a potential victimizer.'⁶ Many of Carmen's numbers also have the name of a dance, e.g. 'Habanera', 'Seguidilla' or 'Chanson Bohème.'

In *Mignon* the dance rhythms are not as prominent as in *Carmen*. The musical numbers vary

⁴ K. Mitchells, 'Operatic Characters and Voice Type', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 97, (1970), 48.

⁵ S. McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) 57.

⁶ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 57.

between those with dance rhythms and those which emphasize the naïve, innocent character of Mignon through long, melodic phrases. The duet, ‘Légères hirondelles’ and the ‘Styrienne’ bear witness to the gypsy ‘influences’ in Mignon’s music. Azucena also has a strong rhythmical language that sounds more folk-like and simple; she often sings short rhythmical patterns in contrast to Leonora’s long lyrical phrases. Another composer who is specific about giving each of his female characters a separate rhythmical language is Wagner in *Lohengrin*. He makes sure that while Elsa has long phrases, Ortrud’s evil character is brought out by ‘large leaps and fragmented phrases.’⁷ Ortrud is in all probability one of opera’s most evil characters and

in *Lohengrin* the character of Ortrud is largely [Wagner’s] own invention, independent of the sources. By making her *Lohengrin*’s antagonist Wagner transforms her into an incarnation of evil. Even this crass contrast between Ortrud and The Knight of the Grail shows how subliminally Wagner implies that danger lies in women: in Ortrud, all the negative functions are united that Wagner found in his source in the figure of Matabrune.⁸

10.2 DISSONANCE, CHROMATICISM, AND KEY

One additional distinguishing factor in Ortrud’s music is the use of chromaticism. This use of chromaticism contributes to making Ortrud sound more evil or morally Other, especially in contrast to Elsa’s music which is more diatonic. Elsa sings more often in a major key and her music is more diatonic, in contrast to Ortrud’s minor mode and music that is often heavily laced with chromaticism. The composer also makes use of descending diminished-seventh chords, which are also prominent in The Doubt leitmotif. This light against darkness, major against minor mode, is also evident between *Lohengrin* (light) whose key is A major and Ortrud (darkness) whose key is F sharp minor. The composer used F sharp minor in places where he wanted to establish the darkness and maliciousness of Ortrud’s character, for instance, the introduction to the second act as well as ‘Entweihte Götter’. McClary also states in her study on *Carmen* that non-functional chromatic coloration is one of the characteristics of exoticism, or Otherness.⁹ In *Carmen* there are many significant keys; A major, F sharp major and D minor are all keys that Bizet keeps using in important moments in the opera. It can be argued that D minor is *Carmen*’s key, because the fate motif as well as the ‘Habanera’ are in this key. This descending chromatic line underpinned by a steady dance rhythm played by pizzicato in the double basses, gives the aria a distinct air of sensuality. According to McClary it is her chromatic descend through the tetrachord that also contributes to this sensuality: ‘[w]hile there is never any question of her tonal or melodic orientation

⁷ E. Rieger & C. Walton, *Richard Wagner’s Women* (Suffolk: Boydell, 2011), 63.

⁸ Rieger, *Richard Wagner’s Women*, 211.

⁹ McClary, *Georges Bizet, Carmen*, 53.

in this phrase, her erratic means of descending through the tetrachord ... reveals her as a “master” of seductive rhetoric.’¹⁰ Another characteristic that emphasises Carmen’s social Otherness from the beginning of the opera is the raised second in the fate motif. This augmented second gives the music its exotic ‘flavour’; Saint-Saëns also used this method, together with lowered sevenths, to let *Samson et Dalila* sound more ‘Oriental’. The flattened seventh in Eboli’s ‘Song of the Veil’ also contributes to letting the music sound ‘Exotic’. Although Eboli is not Eastern, this exoticism also contributes towards her being classified as an Other from the start of the opera. Verdi orders Azucena’s thoughts very neatly according to her two obsessions: her first obsession, namely her love for Manrico, is usually associated with G major, while her other obsession, namely to avenge the death of her mother, is more often associated with E minor. However, the gypsy’s music also sometimes hovers around A minor and C major.

10.3 ORCHESTRATION

The manner in which the Other’s music is orchestrated also contributes to the way one perceives the character. Often when composers want to let the music sound more ‘oriental’ or exotic, like that of the social Other, they make use of a lot of woodwinds, in particular double-reed instruments, e.g. oboes and bassoons. However, flutes are also often used to highlight this Otherness. In *Samson et Dalila* Saint-Saëns often makes use of woodwinds, for instance, in the Act II duet between Dalila and the High Priest, the interlude between the two verses in Dalila’s famous aria ‘Mon cœur souvre a ta voix!’ and the ‘Bacchanale’. Mignon’s Otherness is also accentuated by the use of woodwinds; however, this time it is more the use of flutes together with strings that paint the picture of the innocent, naïve and lost young girl. In *Lohengrin* low strings like cellos and double basses as well as brass instruments depict Ortrud’s evil character. Another way in which the orchestration contributes to depicting the Otherness of the character is through colourful percussive effects, for instance, Carmen’s Otherness is represented through the use of castanets and tambourines. Colourful percussive effects can also be heard in the ‘Bacchanale’ in *Samson et Dalila*, e.g. cymbals and castanets. Amneris’s orchestration is characterised by tremolo in the strings and rolling timpani. However, this changes as her character changes. In Act IV Amneris’s orchestration contains a lot more woodwinds and brass instruments. Eboli’s alterity is also characterised by the use of lots of brass instruments in the orchestra.

¹⁰ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 58.

10.4 MOTIFS

In almost all the operas certain recurring ideas are used to establish the Otherness of the respective characters. In *Lohengrin* Wagner used leitmotifs already in the opening of the second act to create the dark and evil character of Ortrud. The Dark Plots motif, The Doubt motif and the repeated use of a third motif played by the brass instruments are used to make Ortrud's music sound like that of the moral Other. In *Il trovatore* Azucena is only linked to one very important theme, which is the 'Stride la vampa' melody. It recurs every time she speaks or thinks of the day her mother was burned at the stake. The note B is also pivotal. It is the only note the key of E minor (revenge for her mother's death) and G major (her love for Manrico) have in common. It is the note that 'Stride la vampa' starts on, and around which the aria revolves, because it is a crucial note in the emotions of Azucena. Mignon has two recurring motifs taken from the first aria 'Connais tu le pays'. During this aria the composer establishes the character of Mignon as a lost, innocent girl. These motifs are heard again at the end of the opera. As Mignon, Wilhelm and Lothario render their final trio, the three characters sing the second motif from that aria 'C'est la que je voulais vivre' together. Amneris has two themes and both underline the fact that she is an emotional Other. These themes are also heard within the first few minutes of Amneris being on stage. Firstly, Amneris has a love motif, which is heard when she speaks of her love for Radames. She also has a jealousy motif that is heard for the first time during her first duet with Radames. Carmen has one prominent motif, namely the fate motif in D minor. This motif, however, is not linked exclusively to the character of Carmen and is heard throughout the opera. Although Dalila does not have any specific motifs as such, the composer does use recurring ideas or phrases from Dalila's arias in other parts of the opera; for instance, a recurring motif is first heard in the aria 'Amour! Viens aider ma faiblesse!' and again during the High Priest's recitative in Act II. Saint-Saëns's also uses the phrase 'Ah! Verse moi! Verse moi l'ivresse!' in a speeded up version at the end of the opera.

10.5 RHYTHMICAL MOTIFS AND MELODIC CONTOUR

As already mentioned, Azucena's music has short rhythmical patterns as opposed to Leonora's long lyrical lines. Azucena also has a strong rhythmical language that sounds more folk-like and simple. At certain times in *Mignon*, in contrast to the lyrical *cantabile* singing, the repetitive dance patterns, for instance in the 'Styrienne', accentuate the gypsy influences in the music of Mignon. In *Don Carlo* there are many semiquaver patterns sung in a low, chest voice tessitura. This is first heard

during Eboli's 'Song of the Veil' and a similar pattern is repeated again when Eboli sings the trio in Act III with Carlo and Rodrigo. Another important rhythmical pattern is the quaver triplet motif. This is used repeatedly in Act II, the Act III quartet and 'O don fatale', for instance. According to Batta, *Don Carlo* can be characterised by its dotted semi-quaver, quaver rhythms. 'They illustrate the solemn ceremonial and rigidity of the royal court of Spain in the 16th century.'¹¹ However, the fact that the characteristic rhythmic pattern is not present in any of Eboli's music may be an indication of her Otherness. Amneris's music also contains strong rhythmic pattern, especially in times of fury: quaver triplets or a pattern of dotted quaver or semiquaver rhythms characterise her emotional Otherness. In *Samson et Dalila* Dalila's moral Otherness becomes evident through the syncopated rhythms and stresses on weak beats. It can be argued, too, that these two factors may contribute to the listener perceiving Dalila to be unpredictable and dishonest. Dalila's moral Otherness can also be seen in the manner in which she seduces Samson with many whole and half step intervals in the lower register. Ortrud, Amneris and Eboli have big leaps in the vocal line during times of fury.

10.6 RANGE AND VOCAL TIMBRE

Almost all of these characters have the fact in common that during times of extreme emotional stress they also sing in extreme ranges of either high or low. Especially, the three Verdi mezzos and Ortrud often use the full extent of their range. This is most prominent in the emotionally highly charged scenes such as 'Condotta ell'era in ceppi', in Act Four, scene II in *Il trovatore*, in 'O don fatale', the 'Judgement scene' from *Aida*, as well as 'Entweihte Götter!' in *Lohengrin*.

10.7 SET PIECES

Often composers also insert set pieces as showpieces for Otherness. This is an aria that is not distinctly part of the opera as a whole, but is usually written as a vehicle for entertainment more than telling the story. However, while the words of the song does not contribute to the narrative of the opera as such, they often give the listener a vital glimpse into the character. It is usually a 'performance' within the performance. In *Carmen* this can be seen with the 'Habanera', 'Seguidilla' and 'Chanson Bohème'. Azucena sings the 'Stride la vampa' to the other gypsies. When Eboli sings 'Song of the Veil' it immediately establishes her character as fun-loving, outgoing princess.

¹¹ Batta, *Opera, Composers, Works, Performers* (Köln: Könnemann, 2005), 736.

Patricia Adkins-Chiti delves into the psychology and history of the mezzo-soprano voice and states that in the past the low-voiced females were used as singers and prostitutes in the temples of Ashera and Astarte.¹² 'Their abilities to support their families depended on three things: their low voices, their beauty and 'availability for extra work (usually in the bed chambers)'¹³ Although one can argue that many of the composers that are discussed in this thesis were born long after this tradition faded away, the idea behind dividing the female characters into the high-pitched 'properly behaved' soprano character, versus the more low voiced 'bad-girl' mezzo-soprano Other remained.

In reflecting more extensively on the Otherness of the mezzo-soprano, Mitchells explains that 'When we experience high notes as active, gay or tense, and low notes, comparatively, as inert, serious or reposeful, we link them specifically and directly with the corresponding human feelings and moods. This affinity of high and low notes to universal character traits appertaining to persons and things applies equally to high and low voices, and provides a fundamental clue for understanding the characterizing power of voices of different pitch.'¹⁴

It is important to take this statement into consideration when one thinks of the casting of the female characters in an opera. Mitchells's comment explains quite eloquently why the nineteenth-century operatic composers tapped into this source of expression in the female voice. It is because the mezzo-soprano's voice is special, and has countless possibilities for expression, especially as the outsider, that the seductress, the bad-girl, in other words as the Other in the operatic repertoire.

¹² Adkins-Chiti, *The Mezzo-Soprano Voice*, p 64-64.

¹³ Adkins-Chiti, *The Mezzo-Soprano Voice*, p 64-64.

¹⁴ Mitchells, *Operatic Characters and Voice Type*, 48.

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