

The Theme of Freedom in Bizet's *Carmen*

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Freedom of thought and action are exemplified dramatically during the opera, *Carmen*. Carmen and José, the protagonists, struggle with separation dynamics, unresolved quasi-oedipal matters, and identity diffusion anxiety. Both characters triangulate on the Toreador and manifest confusion in their management of sexuality and commitment. Don José contends with tendencies toward dedifferentiation and is attracted to the rebellious unlawfulness and excitement of Carmen. Although *Carmen* is often thought of as a tragic tale of a woman's fickleness, that description represents an oversimplified phenomenology. Carmen, during the entire opera, fights for the 'intoxication' of freedom and is punished for this by the tyranny of the men and the culture she encounters.