


Fall 2011

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Recommended Citation

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**The Barzakh of Flamenco: Tracing the Spirituality, Locality and Musicality
of Flamenco from South of the Strait of Gibraltar**

Tania Flores
Occidental College
Migration and Transnational Identity: Fall 2011

Acknowledgments

I could not have completed this project without the advice and guidance of my academic director, Professor Souad Eddouada; my advisor, Professor Taieb Belghazi; my professor of music at Occidental College, Professor Simeon Pillich; my professor of Islamic studies at Occidental, Professor Malek Moazzam-Doulat; or my gracious and helpful interviewees. I am also grateful to Elvira Roca Rey for allowing me to use her studio to choreograph after we had finished dance class, and to Professor Said Graiouid for his guidance and time.

I certainly could not have completed this research project without my friend Asif Majid, who provided incomparable support, advice, and feedback as my project evolved.

Preface

“On that arid square, that fragment nipped off from hot/Africa, soldered so crudely to inventive Europe;/On that tableland scored by rivers,/Our thoughts have bodies; the menacing shapes of our fever/Are precise and alive.”

-W.H. Auden, *Spain* (1937)

I do not remember when or how my fascination with the Strait of Gibraltar began, but I do know that the fascination persists: that I am still awed by the stream-like proportions that the Strait assumes on a globe, even on the exacting virtual swatch of Google Maps, and that my sense of surprise, like a small shock, has not faded or lessened when I think of the paradoxical joining of waters and division of lands that the Strait enacts. When I stepped into the Bay of Tangier recently, meeting the waves and coastline of the Strait for the first time, for a brief moment I did so as a young woman studying postcolonial and critical race theory in Los Angeles, California; my mind flashed to the underdevelopment and Othering and the systems of colonialism and neo-colonialism that this geographic barrier had enabled.

But on that morning, dipping my feet between continents, I also, and perhaps primarily, met the Strait of Gibraltar as a *bailaora*; as the girl who fell in love with flamenco nearly 6,000 miles away and nearly 15 years ago. More recently, I wrote an essay about the way flamenco has gained strength inside of me over the course of those 15 years,¹ about the way in which the growth and maturation of my dancing is directly related to the growth and maturation of my emotional reservoir. This process has triggered a parallel evolution in my interest in the development of flamenco and flamenco theory; since 2008, I have been thinking and writing

¹ This essay was published on New America Media on 29 July 2009 under the title “Flamenco: It’s All About the Compás” (http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=80c48ad5845567692306652c90322817), on ChicoSol.org in July 2009 under the title “Dance of Passion Demands Patience, Control” (http://chicosol.org/ENGLISH/Y001_en_07_01_2009/TaniaFlamenco_en.htm), and on California Dance Network on 9 December 2009 under the title “Finding Flamenco: A Journey Full of Duende” (<http://www.californiadancenetwork.org/node/63>).

extensively about the disparate influences on flamenco. This academic and intellectual focus has resulted in several unpublished and published papers² and collaboration on a fusion flamenco and Bharatanatyam piece with an Indian classical dancer.

It is not surprising, then, that my flamenco research and my interest in Spanish/Moroccan relations and the Strait of Gibraltar should meet and that for the last several years, I have thought extensively about the understudied – and perhaps even that modifier is an understatement – influence of Morocco (and North Africa more generally), Islam, Andalusian classical music as it is practiced contemporarily, and other cultures and countries construed as “Arab”, on flamenco.³ The absence of a body of literature on this topic has rendered my research over the course of the last month simultaneously exciting, daunting and frustrating. Because I began my research by asking questions that, to my knowledge, have not been vocalized or articulated within *flamencología*, as aficionados refer to the existing academic literature on flamenco, my paper consists partially of laying the groundwork for an exploration of the themes and questions to be considered in future research on this topic and of proposing a particular interpretive lens and theoretical framework for relating these themes and questions. As my paper and the results of my fieldwork will illustrate, not only have the questions I am asking been neglected in

² See my paper titled “Georges Bataille’s Vertigo and the Flamenco of the Other”, published in the *Critical Theory & Social Justice Journal of Undergraduate Research of Occidental College* in February 2011 (<http://scholar.oxy.edu/ctsjs/vol2/iss1/6/>).

³ I do not wish to appear to be conflating these terms or to be using them interchangeably. I group them together here and will do so throughout the paper with the understanding that any examination of the manner in which North Africa, Islam, Andalusian classical music, and/or other Arab cultures and countries have affected the development of flamenco would for historical reasons necessarily involve, to some degree, an application of the context of Spanish/Moroccan relations. In addition, considering the understudied nature of my research topic, a highly specialized examination of any one of these terms in relation to flamenco is beyond the scope of this paper. Thus, rather than conflate the Moroccan influence with the North African or Islamic or Andalusian music or Arab influence, I have chosen to refer repeatedly to all of these terms in order to emphasize their complex and interconnected relationships to each other and to Moroccan/Spanish relations. In the section of my paper titled “Characterizations of Flamenco as Influenced by the Morocco/North Africa/Andalusian Music/Islam/Arab Cultures and Countries”, I will conduct a discursive analysis of the ways in which these terms are chosen and used in *flamencología* to narrow the focus of my research and formulate more specific questions to direct my research.

flamencología, but in some circles, they appear to have been actively avoided for historical and political reasons that I hope to explain.

I believe that the dynamic, fused, hybrid nature of flamenco was at least partially responsible for attracting me to the art form; it allowed me to see my mixed identity and heritage reflected and epitomized in art, and I believe that I am not alone in that sentiment. In this context, it is ironic that the flamenco *puro* movement – promoted and adhered to by aficionados who dislike and discourage experimentation and fusion in flamenco – holds so much sway and are able to discourage experimentation so effectively. I think that these circles would say that they believe that flamenco loses its power, its essence – the quality of *duende* that I will discuss thoroughly in this paper – in experimentation and fusion pieces. However, the outcomes of my research over the course of the last month lead me to believe that it is by means of the exploration of flamenco's roots, and specifically, its North African, Arab, and Islamic roots, that we – the aficionados, the transfixed six-year-old girls, the *cantaores*, *bailaores*, and *tocaores*⁴, the teachers of flamenco, the students of flamenco, the audience members – can enrich our understanding of *duende*, the essence and spirituality of flamenco.

Introduction

Flamenco performance – which scholars often describe in terms of the three dimensions of *cante*, or singing, *baile*, or dance, and *toque*, or instrumentation – is a complex synthesis of cultural influences across several centuries. In discussing the evolution of flamenco, scholars typically begin with the history of the *gitanos*, the subgroup of the Romani or Gypsy people that settled in Spain. Drawing upon a large body of ethnographic, historic and scientific evidence, scholars agree that the *gitanos* originated in the northwestern regions of contemporary India and

⁴ In accordance with flamenco terminology, I will refer to flamenco singers as *cantaores* (*cantaor* or *cantaora* in singular form), to flamenco dancers as *bailaores* (*bailaor* or *bailaora* in singular form), and to flamenco musicians as *tocaores* (*tocaor* or *tocaora*) in this paper.

Pakistan – specifically, Rajasthan and the Punjab region (Iovita 275; Hancock) – and had arrived in Andalucía, or southern Spain, by the first half of the 15th century (Iovita 279; Manuel 50).

Within these efforts to document the migratory movements of the Romani, scholars often emphasize the genetic data that suggest that endogamy figured largely in the cultural practices of the Romani and genetic data that, as Radu P. Iovita and Theodore G. Schurr note, “imply that Gypsies have experienced some degree of isolation from other ethnic groups following their establishment as founding populations in various regions in Europe” (270). The recognition of this isolation by Iovita and Schurr is significant for its cultural implications on the integration and assimilation of the gitanos into mainstream Spanish society. As Iovita and Schurr go on to add, the gitanos, as well as the majority of the other Romani migrant groups, have been and in many cases, continue to be, discriminated against and politically disenfranchised (268). In addition, Timothy Dewaal Malefyt notes that the gitanos synthesized the influences that constitute flamenco while occupying one of the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder in Spain (65), while other flamenco scholars assert that the gitanos’ sense of oppression in fact characterizes the art form (Manuel 48).

The isolationist tendencies of the *gitanos* and their ostracization within Spanish society are particularly interesting in light of the gradual incorporation of outside cultural and musical practices into flamenco beginning in the 18th century. Peter Manuel suggests that “it was primarily [the] *casero* (‘house-owning’) gypsies, as opposed to their nomadic *andarrio* and *canastero* kin, that nurtured and developed flamenco in a complex process of syncretic, dialectic interaction with non-gypsy audiences and musics”, adding that the *casero gitanos* were more “assimilated” and “settled” (51). Despite the fact that Manuel’s proposition does not fully explain the impetus to incorporate diverse styles into flamenco within a larger context of

isolation and estrangement, Manuel articulately identifies the centrality of the confluence of disparate cultural influences in flamenco.

Despite the fact that scholars agree that flamenco's influences include the music of Andalusian folk traditions, Sephardic Jews, the Byzantine Church, Latin America, India, and the Moors (Washabaugh 75; Herrera y Sánchez 88-89), the vast majority of the work of academics in defining the precise nature of these influences has largely rested on the Indian context.⁵ This trend has likely been furthered by the focus within Romani studies on the Indian origin hypothesis in recent years; Ian Hancock, David Gresham and his colleagues, George C. Soulis, Radu Iovita and Theodore Schurr, among many others, have emphasized the question of this hypothesis in their work on the Romani. This trend has also legitimized the collaborations between Indian classical dancers and flamenco artists, of which there have been several in recent years.⁶ However, despite the steadily rising number of collaborations between Moroccan musicians and Spanish flamenco artists and despite the fact that Morocco is much closer than Spain, in the geographic and temporal senses, to the history of flamenco, I am not familiar with a single academic article, let alone book-length work, entirely devoted to an examination of the relationship between Morocco, North Africa, Islam, or even Andalusian classical music and flamenco.

Unsurprisingly, the paucity of academic work on this subject has dictated my points of departure in this research project. The first portion of my paper will consist of a methodical reconsideration and re-evaluation of those characterizations of flamenco as influenced by the

⁵ See, for example: Phillips, Miriam S. "A Shared Technique/Shared Roots? A Comparison of Kathak and Flamenco Dance History." *Proceedings of the Society of Dance History Scholars: Dance in Hispanic Cultures* (1991): 47-53. <<http://www.worldartswest.org/plm/guide/locator/KFHHistory1991.pdf>>.

⁶ See the work of Rajika Puri and her project "Flamenco Natyam" (<http://www.rajikapuri.com/flamyam.html>), as well as the work of Sharmini Tharmaratnam, who has also written a book on the subject titled *El Flamenco Made in India* (<http://sharmini.org/>).

Maghreb that have been made by flamencologists in passing, as well as with a review of the trajectory of collaborations between Moroccan and Spanish music and dance artists. The results of this initial stage of research surface the themes of locality and spirituality within the broader question I have posed thus far of the relationship between the musicality of flamenco and the musicality of Morocco. I will emphasize questions of exile, migration, and transnationalism when discussing locality and questions of corporality, the means by which one can connect with God, love, and bewilderment/mystery when discussing spirituality.

In the second portion of my paper, I will propose that the work of Andalusian Sufi philosopher Ibn al-‘Arabi can serve as a theoretical framework for determining the extent to which theories of flamenco fit within the philosophical structures of the Sufism of Andalusian music. I will also suggest that an application of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s concept of *barzakh* to flamenco can function to re-imagine flamenco as it relates to Morocco and its potential for remaking Spanish and Moroccan relations. This theoretical framework will necessitate the integration of my fieldwork with an analysis and application of the academic literature of flamencología, Sufism, Andalusian music, political relations between Spain and Morocco, and the Mediterranean. My fieldwork, although preliminary and limited in quantity, exemplifies the disparate strains of the current discourse on this issue that I will argue can be reconciled by means of an interpretation of flamenco in terms of *barzakh*.

The nature of my fieldwork is twofold. The first dimension consists of a series of three interviews that I conducted in Spanish during the months of November and December 2011 with three Moroccan residents who are linked in different ways to the popularization and promotion of flamenco in Morocco. The first interview was held in Fes on 24 November 2011 with Antonio Rodríguez Jiménez, the director of the Cervantes Institute in Fes and the organizer of the first

annual flamenco festival in Morocco, which was held in April 2011. Mr. Jiménez, a published poet and flamenco aficionado, was born in Granada, Spain and has served as the director of the Cervantes Institute in Fes since 2009. The second interview was held in Marrakech on 29 November 2011 with Elvira Roca Rey, the director of the Centro Cultural Córdoba, an Andalusian cultural center in Marrakech which offers Spanish class and flamenco classes. The third interview was held in Tetouan on 3 December 2011 with Samira Kadiri, arguably Morocco's most renowned living female singer of Andalusian music and the director of the Casa de Cultura in Tetouan. Although I regret having encountered difficulties in contacting other musicians and artists who would have been of help to my project – all too often, I could not find contact information for a particular musician, found that the contact information that was listed was outdated or erroneous, or did not receive a response when I did manage to find current contact information – I believe that the interviewees for this project, in conjunction with one another, represent the discourse on this topic well and bring to the surface several important issues that I will address in this paper.

The second dimension of my fieldwork consists of my own observations and involvement in the promotion of flamenco in Morocco as a student of flamenco dance for the last eight years; I had the privilege of taking a set of 10 flamenco classes with Ms. Roca Rey over the course of a month in Marrakech. I have also choreographed a short *soleá* to perform as part of my research; at the end of this paper, I will explicate my choreography and its relationship with the outcomes of my research.

Characterizations of Flamenco as Influenced by Morocco/North Africa/Andalusi Music/Islam/Arab Cultures and Countries⁷

⁷ See footnote #3 on page 2.

In the context of my research, the scarcity of available information on the topic of the influence of Morocco and North Africa, Islam, and other Arab countries on flamenco has functioned as a call for a discursive analysis of those instances in which these influences are suggested. The usefulness of this discursive analysis lies in its capacity for identifying the disjunctions between the various rhetorical constructions of these influences. In delineating the different ways that Moroccan/Andalusian/Islamic/Arab influence is perceived and portrayed, this discursive analysis provided me with a basic understanding of the sociopolitical tensions flamencologists engage and wrestle with when describing this influence, however briefly.

Significantly, the entry on flamenco in the prestigious Oxford Dictionary of Dance does not make reference to any influences other than “Moorish” and “Arabic”, and those are referenced in the first sentence. The writers of the entry describe the “traditional gypsy dance and music of S. Spain, in whose undulating vocals, supple arm movements, and stamping footwork (*zapateado*) can be discerned powerful Moorish and Arabic influences” (“flamenco”).

This definition is noteworthy for the terminology that its diction conceals. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the term “Moor” encompasses geographic, religious, political and ethnic factors; the word refers to “a member of a Muslim people of mixed Berber and Arab descent inhabiting north-western Africa (now mainly present-day Mauritania), who in the 8th cent. conquered Spain” (“Moor, n.2”). While religion is implicit in the term, “Moor” fits into a larger cultural milieu. In light of these connotations, the authors’ reference the “undulating vocals” of flamenco *cante* rather than to a more specific description of melismatic techniques and their prominence in recitations of the Qur’an and the adhan, or the call to prayer, is not surprising. The absence of the term “Islamic” is made even more glaring by the ambiguity of the term “Arabic”, which according to the OED denotes something “of or pertaining to Arabia or its

language” (“Arabic”). It is unclear what relationship “undulating vocals, supple arm movements, and stamping footwork” bear to the Arabian Peninsula or to the Arabic language, unless it is again an indirect relationship between the classical Arabic of the Qur’an and the “undulating vocals” of flamenco. The word seems to function primarily as a euphemism.

The most direct reference to the Moorish influence on flamenco that I have encountered in flamenco literature occurs in F. Herrera y Sánchez’s brief article on *cante jondo*.⁸ Herrera y Sánchez argues that *cante jondo* was influenced by three primary traditions, the second of which is the tradition of “old Moorish songs”:

The second historical origin of the *estilo jondo* is to be found in old Moorish songs. The Moorish invasion of Spain beginning in 711 did not add much to the musical form already existing in the peninsula but only reformed certain ornamental baroque figures, which are found in Oriental and Persian music. The melodic chants of subtle musical patterns and the open revelation of sensual pleasures common to Arabia changed to the Andalusian combination of an enharmonic theme of a monotone (or on the use of intervals less than a semitone) and the love lyrics of the early Spanish ballads. By the eleventh century, then, we find this synthesis of Greco-Latin art. (88-89)

Though Herrera y Sánchez is clear and precise on the issue of the musical and lyrical changes undergone by *cante jondo* as a result of its contact with “old Moorish songs”, he too circumvents directly referencing Islam. Not only does he avoid confronting the relationship of “certain ornamental baroque figures” in “Oriental and Persian music” to Qur’anic recitation, but as will be seen, he avoids acknowledging the religious dimension of “the open revelation of sensual pleasures common to Arabia.”

⁸ *Cante jondo*, which literally translates to “deep song”, is the most serious and emotive subgenre of flamenco *cante* and is often privileged by flamenco purists, who consider *cante jondo* to be the oldest and most original form of flamenco (Malefyt 66-67).

Unlike the authors of the Oxford Dictionary of Dance and Herrera y Sánchez, William Washabaugh, in his article on the role of the “flamenco body” in *cante*, elects the term “Muslim” over the term “Moor.” Adhering to the often-used format of the list for recognizing the disparate cultural practices that constitute flamenco, Washabaugh writes, “Flamenco forms like *Soleá*, *Alegría*, *Bulería*, *Fandango*, *Malagueña*, *Tango*, *Rumba*, etc., are derived from Andalusian peoples, including Muslims, Jews, *Gitanos* (Gypsies), and from Latin American influences” (75). In this particular statement, Washabaugh chooses to frame the development of flamenco in “Andalusian” terms, a reference to the period of al-Andalus⁹ made slightly oblique and concealed by the use of the adjective “Andalusian”, which can be applied to the contemporary context of southern Spain just as readily as it can be applied to al-Andalus. Despite the fact Washabaugh glosses over the influences on flamenco, including that of the “Muslims”, Washabaugh’s assertion dovetails with the assertions of the Oxford Dictionary of Dance and Herrera y Sánchez; he unapologetically marks Islam in the historical context of al-Andalus as an element to be examined in relation to flamenco.

However, it is Anouar Majid who inadvertently provides an explanation for the reticence of flamencologists to credit Islam with influences on flamenco in the introduction to his book titled *We Are All Moors*. In describing the rhetoric of right-wing activist Oriana Fallaci, Majid quotes her as referencing the Battle of Poitiers, in which the French successfully inhibited the advancement of the army of the Umayyad Caliphate into France: “Feeling persecuted by a new, secular inquisition that tortures the soul, not the body, the ‘Christian atheist’ Fallaci was bent on alerting a somnolent Europe to the fact that, like Troy, it is burning because Europe is becoming a province, a ‘colony’ of Islam. Remember, she said, had Charles Martel not won the battle of

⁹ I use the term al-Andalus in this paper to refer to the Iberian Peninsula during the period in which it was under Islamic rule, between the years 711 CE and 1492 CE.

Poitiers in 732, the French would also be dancing the flamenco” (15). Not only is Fallaci’s statement remarkable for ease with which she characterizes flamenco as a cultural relic of the period of Islamic governance, but it is significant in light of Majid’s thesis as articulated in the introduction to the book. Following David Levering Lewis, who posits that the term *Europenses* (and later, of course, Europeans) was first used to describe the French who defeated the Muslims at the Battle of Poitiers, Majid suggests that European identity has been constructed in opposition to Islam and that Europe has defined itself in opposition to Islam. Majid writes, “Even before the Renaissance, especially during the fifteenth century, when the Moor emerged as the foil against which Europe would define itself, the vexed relationship (or confrontation) with Islam had been the primordial element in the constitution of an unconscious form of Europeanness” (4). According to Majid, even the archetype of the Moor, then, is inextricable from the constructed binary of Europe versus Islam.

I contend that this binary is the source of the hesitation on the part of flamencologists to explore the relationship between Islam and flamenco. Flamenco, with its “powerful Moorish and Arabic influences”, threatens to undermine this binary by blurring the lines between Islam and Europeanness, between the period of al-Andalus and the Reconquista, between the margin and the mainstream, and between Spain and Morocco.

Review of Trajectory of Collaborations between Moroccan Musicians and Flamenco Artists

Abdessadeq Cheqara and José Heredia Maya: Bent Bladi

“Cheqara will be remembered forever as the artist who knew how to reconcile tradition and modernity, music of faith and faith of music, imprinting his era with the music of his city.”¹⁰

–Eduardo Paniagua, “Abdesadeq Cheqara. Melodías de una vida.”

By the time of his death in 1998, Abdessadeq Cheqara, a violinist and singer, had become one of Morocco’s most legendary performers of *al-Ala*¹¹ and Moroccan Andalusian music more broadly. Among other accomplishments, Cheqara participated in the orchestra of Sheikh Arafa al-Harrak, the Andalusian classical orchestras of Fes and Casablanca, co-founded the Tetuan National Conservatory of Music and Dance and the Orchestra of the Conservatory of Tetuan, and made several seminal recordings of the *nubas* of Andalusian music and of traditional Andalusian folk songs from rural northern Morocco (Paniagua, “Abdesadeq Cheqara: Melodías de una vida”). Cheqara’s work has significantly determined the direction of Andalusian music in the contemporary context.

Fittingly, the song that is arguably the best-known within Cheqara’s repertoire is Bent Bladi. This song was the product of Cheqara’s 1982 collaboration with José Heredia Maya, a Spanish actor, musician and writer. The song was part of an effort by the two artists to fuse flamenco and Andalusian folkloric music, and is one of the earliest attempts at this kind of fusion. In his short biography of Cheqara, Eduardo Paniagua notes that Bent Bladi is “considered the pinnacle of Cheqara’s work in this [Andalusian] genre”¹² (“Abdesadeq Cheqara: Melodías de una vida”). In notes written about the album of Cheqara’s recordings titled “*Melodías de una*

¹⁰ “*Cheqara quedará para siempre como el artista que ha sabido conciliar tradición y modernidad, música de fe y fe de la música, marcando en su época la música de su ciudad.*” My translation.

¹¹ Refers to instrumental Andalusian music (Shannon 321).

¹² “...la canción ‘Bent bladi’...[es] considerada la cima del trabajo de Cheqara en este género.” My translation.

vida”,¹³ Omar Metioui, colleague of Paniagua and performer of Andalusian music in his own right, adds:

This song, famous in all of Morocco as well as in some neighboring countries like Algeria, crowns the marriage that has been made between the Andalusian music of both sides of the Mediterranean Sea. It has often been performed in conjunction with ‘La Tarara’, a popular Spanish song, ever since Cheqara performed it this way alongside the flamenco singer Pepe Heredia. Today it continues to be sung by all of the groups attempting to fuse Andalusian music and flamenco. Its text describes the beauty of the woman in a very colloquial style characteristic of northern Morocco and its rhythm invites one to dance.¹⁴

Metioui’s analysis of “Bent Bladi” is interesting not only for the information it provides about the historical function of the song as a precedent for the fusion of flamenco and Andalusian music, but also for Metioui’s posture toward these fusion efforts. Although his overall tone is removed and analytic, Metioui takes a firm, albeit quiet, position toward the validity of this fusion in referring to the “Andalusian music of both sides of the Mediterranean Sea.” Although this may not seem like what should be termed a “firm” position, as will be seen, a large part of the discourse that rejects a musical link between Morocco and flamenco finds itself on the argument that Andalusian music is a Moroccan (and North African) genre and that Andalusian music has no relation to the musical traditions of Spain. In this context, Metioui is making a statement about Andalusian music as a genre that transcends national borders, and he thus

¹³ Translates to “Melodies of a Lifetime.” My translation.

¹⁴ “*Esta canción, famosa en todo Marruecos e incluso en algún país vecino como Argelia, corona el maridaje que se ha hecho entre la música andalusí de las dos orillas del mar Mediterráneo. A menudo se ha interpretado intercalada con la “La tarara”, popular canción hispana, desde que así lo hiciera Cheqara junto al cantante flamenco Pepe Heredia. Hoy la siguen cantando todos los grupos que intentan hacer fusión entre lo andalusí y el flamenco. Su texto describe la belleza de la mujer con un estilo muy coloquial propio del norte de Marruecos y su ritmo incita al baile.*” My translation.

introduces the recurring theme of the movement of music and its relationship to the movement of people.

Perhaps the most interesting facet of the life and work of this musical pioneer in the area of Andalusian music/flamenco collaboration, however, is his deep-seated tie to Zawia al-Harrakiya, a Moroccan Sufi brotherhood that connects with and practices remembrance of Allah by means of Andalusian music. Paniagua writes that Cheqara “from a very young age was captivated by the religious chants of the brotherhood”¹⁵; in annotating a *sama* recording on “*Melodías de una vida*”, Metioui notes that “few people outside of Tetouan and Tangier know Cheqara as master of *sama*, the religious ceremony. Nevertheless, it was thanks to his teacher of *sama*, the sheikh of Zawya Harraqiyya of Tetouan, Mr. l-Gali al Harraq, that he initiated a musical career.”¹⁶ Metioui elaborates by explaining:

The relationship between song, dance and the Sufi movement is known. Rumi said, “There are various paths to reach God, and I chose the one of music and dance.” From this relationship is born a certain consecration of music that has permitted the presence of musical instruments in the headquarters of the brotherhoods, something that does not occur in the mosques. Until his death, Cheqara was the person who directed the *sama* session every Friday at the Zawya Harraqiyya of Tetouan, where he is buried next to the grave of his other teacher, Tamsamani.¹⁷

¹⁵ “*Cheqara desde muy joven quedó seducido por los cantos religiosos de la cofradía.*” My translation.

¹⁶ “*Poca gente fuera de Tetuán y Tánger conoce a Cheqara como maestro de la sama’, la ceremonia religiosa. Sin embargo, fue gracias a su maestro de la sama’, el sheij de la Zawya Harraqiyya de Tetuán sidi l-Gali al Harraq, el que se iniciara en su carrera musical.*” My translation.

¹⁷ “*Es conocida la relación entre el canto, la danza y el movimiento sufí. Rumi dice ‘Hay varios caminos para llegar a Dios, yo elegí el de la música y la danza’. De esta relación nace una cierta sacralización de la música que ha permitido la presencia de los instrumentos musicales en las sedes de las cofradías, cosa que no ocurre en las mezquitas. Hasta su muerte Cheqara fue quien dirigía todos los viernes la sesión de sama’ dentro de la Zawya Harraqiyya de Tetuán, donde está enterrado junto a la tumba de su otro maestro, Tamsamani.*” My translation.

I find Cheqara's relationship with Zawya Harraqiyya particularly interesting in light of both his efforts to fuse Andalusian music and flamenco and the terms in which flamencologists have described the quality of *duende* in flamenco. This will be addressed later on, but it is important to note here that the experience of flamenco is often described as spiritual, ecstatic, semi-religious or religious, and/or otherworldly. Upon learning about Cheqara's ties with Zawya Harraqiyya, and upon confirming that, as will be seen, a significant number of other Moroccan Andalusian music artists perceive links between their music and Sufism as well as Islam more broadly, the entire direction of my research changed.

Ensemble Ibn Baya

Eduardo Paniagua and Omar Metioui, the biographers of and commentators on Abdessadeq Cheqara, are themselves perpetuating his legacy in the form of Ensemble Ibn Baya. The ensemble, of which Paniagua and Metioui are the founding members and leaders, describes itself as a project to reconstruct medieval works and instruments as well as the "original texts of the nubas of Andalusian music and the religious Sufi-Andalusi music"¹⁸ ("Grupo Ibn Baya: Omar Metioui & Eduardo Paniagua."). Although the Ensemble has not collaborated with flamenco artists, Paniagua and Metioui emphasize the transnational nature of the music and reiterate Metioui's assertion in his annotations of Abdessadeq Cheqara's music that Andalusian music derives from and belongs in both countries.

Like other performers of Andalusian music, Paniagua and Metioui appeal to the period of al-Andalus in order to justify this belief; in an interview with *Strictly Mundial*, Paniagua traces Andalusian music to al-Andalus and proposes that it reached Morocco as a result of the expulsion of the Moriscos between 1492 and 1609 (Paniagua, "Interview"). He concludes,

¹⁸ "...y los textos originales de la música andalusí de las Nubas y de la música religiosa Sufi-Andalusí."

“Ensemble Ibn Baya has achieved a meeting between Spaniards and Moroccans to rescue this music – not rescue it because it is alive, it is performed as classical ancient music – rather, return to the origin, search for its evolution...”¹⁹ When asked why the genre has been “forgotten”, Paniagua responds, “There has been an important cultural separation between the Arab world and the Western world. And there really is in Spain a barrier that is the Mediterranean Sea and where all that lies to the south has been forgotten.”²⁰ Paniagua’s statement echoes that of Majid; although he too avoids using the word “Islam”, his response implies the aforementioned binary opposition and the way in which it renders relevant musical genres, particularly those that have links to the *convivencia*, or coexistence, of the three monotheistic religions in al-Andalus, as contested and ambiguous spaces.

In accordance with his recognition of this “cultural separation”, Paniagua goes on to emphasize the Ensemble’s objective of giving equal weight to the Spanish and Moroccan dimensions of Andalusian music. He maintains that “the act of uniting – unity and friendship between Spanish and Moroccan musicians is very important. For that reason the group has not wished to have only a Spanish director or only a Moroccan director – we have two heads, which is very difficult to coordinate, but [we do this] so that, in some way, the balance is equilibrated between Spanish and Moroccan musicians.”²¹ Upon being asked whether the work of the Ensemble Ibn Baya has any role in alleviating current political tensions between Spain and Morocco, Paniagua replied, “Our intention, evidently, is not political, it is artistic. Now, this is a

¹⁹ “*El Ensemble Ibn Baya, lo que ha hecho es un encuentro entre españoles y marroquíes para rescatar esta música – no rescatarla exclusivamente porque está viva, se interpreta como música clásica antigua – sino volver al origen, buscar cómo se hizo...*” My translation.

²⁰ “*Ha habido una separación cultural importante entre el mundo árabe y el mundo Occidental. Y concretamente en España hay una frontera que es el mar Mediterráneo donde se ha olvidado todo lo que es el sur.*” My translation.

²¹ “*Por otro lado, el unir – la unión y la amistad entre músicos españoles y marroquíes es muy importante. Por eso este grupo no querido tener un director solo español o un director solo Marroquí – tiene dos cabezas, lo que es muy difícil de coordinar, pero para que, de alguna manera, la balanza este equilibrada entre los españoles y los músicos marroquíes.*” My translation.

reality that we encounter, that by means of art, through music, we build friendships, and through friendships we show what is best about cultures...and if in the course of events – music is a beautiful thing and we reap pleasure from it – if in the course of events we can dignify some countries in relation to others, that seems to me to be the best course.”²² The latter half of Paniagua’s statement, and in particular, his use of the phrase “dignify some countries in relation to others”, also points toward the systems of power and inequality that the binary between the “Arab world” and the “Western world” has enabled. His stress on the commitment to equalizing power relations between Spaniards and Moroccans in the microcosm of the Ensemble and the shared history of Andalusian music bring to the surface the question of the locality of Andalusian music; in construing the genre as equal parts North African and Spanish, Paniagua by extension implies that the genre possesses a fundamentally transnational character.

Equally important in the Ensemble Ibn Baya, however, if not more important, are the spiritual and religious components of the music. In 2002, the Ensemble released an album titled “Ibn’ Arabí. El Intérprete De Los Deseos”, a musical rendition of the poetry of the 13th century Andalusian Sufi philosopher Ibn al-Arabi. For Omar Metioui and Eduardo Paniagua as for Abdessadeq Cheqara, Sufism is the essence of Andalusian music. This review of the various interpretations of the relationship between Andalusian music and flamenco will be followed by a return to the mystical philosophy of Ibn al-Arabi in order to determine whether this philosophy might serve as a part of a framework for understanding the Islamic influence on flamenco via Andalusian music.

²² “Nuestra intención, evidentemente, no es política, es artística. Ahora, es una realidad que nos encontramos, que a través del arte, a través de la música, hacemos amistad, y a través de la amistad mostramos lo mejor de las culturas...y si de paso – que la música es una belleza y disfrutamos con ella – y si de paso podemos dignificar unos pueblos a otros, me parece el mejor camino.” My translation.

Despite the fact that the Ensemble Ibn Baya has not, to my knowledge, collaborated on any recordings with flamenco artists, Paniagua recalls Herrera y Sánchez's assertion about the influence of "the open revelation of sensual pleasures common to Arabia" (88) on the development of "the love lyrics of the early Spanish ballads" (89) in the interview with *Strictly Mundial*. In response to a question about the role of poetry in al-Andalus in the time of Ibn al-Arabi, Paniagua speaks about the interpretation of these "sensual pleasures" in the Andalusian musical tradition, noting "that everywhere there was prohibition of wine and there are so many songs that contain references to wine, and sometimes it is actual wine because they are talking about love and garden and 'let's go and get drunk,' but in many instances, this passes to another mystical language in which wine represents union with God and so there is a marvelous double language that constitutes all of this poetry."²³ Although the fact that flamenco inherited this language of sensuality and eroticism is not referenced here – Paniagua is more concerned with the origins of Andalusian music than with its derivatives – this inheritance is nevertheless clear, and it prompts the question of to what extent flamenco also inherited this language's double, its metaphor for spirituality.

Al-Andalus Ensemble

In the same way that Abdessadeq Cheqara and Ensemble Ibn Baya have challenged the boundaries of Andalusian music while simultaneously being perceived as or portraying themselves as embodying the traditions and essential core of the genre, the Al-Andalus Ensemble, led by Tarik and Julia Banzi, presents itself as simultaneously tied to the origins of Andalusian music and committed to innovation and the evolution of the genre; in a statement on

²³ *“Que en España había una crítica porque eran muy permisivos, eran muy amables, en todos lados había prohibición del vino y hay tantas canciones que hablan del vino y a veces es el vino físico porque están hablando del amor y de los jardines y vamos y emborrachémonos, pero muchos veces eso pasa a otro lenguaje místico donde el vino es la unión con Dios y entonces hay un doble lenguaje maravilloso que envuelve toda esta poesía.”* My translation.

its website, the ensemble, which is based in the United States, described itself as follows: “Far from the scholarly approach of Early Music or the traditionalism of much World Music, this collaboration yields a vigorous new hybrid: a contemporary World-chamber ensemble skillfully creating new and original music, retaining the essential soul and spirit of the Arab, North African and European sources while fearlessly [sic] exploring new territory” (Banzi, “About Us”). Because the group incorporates dance and musical practices from the Americas, the work of Al-Andalus is sometimes labeled “new Andalusian.”

In the background information and context Al-Andalus Ensemble provides for its music on its website, two central themes emerge: the evocation of al-Andalus and a celebration of the *convivencia* of that period and the process of striving for that same *convivencia* between “East” and “West” in the contemporary context. The group adheres to and promulgates the same narrative of the history of Andalusian music that was related by Eduardo Paniagua in his interview with *Strictly Mundial*, but as its name implies, differs from Ensemble Ibn Baya in the artistic project it extrapolates from this narrative. While Ensemble Ibn Baya, as has been seen, embraces the spirituality and religiosity that unfolded in and was enabled by al-Andalus, Ensemble Al-Andalus embraces the idea of al-Andalus itself. Despite the problematics of the ensemble’s unwavering and uncritical imagining of al-Andalus as a utopic site of religious equality, like Ensemble Ibn Baya, Ensemble Al-Andalus perceives itself as occupying an intermediate space in a strict binary opposition and its music as possessing the historical and cultural ingredients required for the dissolution of that binary.

Flamenco holds a highly privileged place in the work of Al-Andalus Ensemble. The biographies that the Banzis provide of themselves on their website highlight the importance of flamenco and flamenco collaborations to both of their careers as well as the Andalusian ancestry

of Tarik Banzi, who is Moroccan. Tarik Banzi's biography mentions his collaborations with "flamenco and Jazz masters", while Julia Banzi's biography emphasizes her training as a flamenco guitarist and her studies "with some of Spain's finest guitarists including Manolo Sanlucar, Isidro Muñoz, David Serva, Felipe Maya and Juan Maya 'Marote.'" In addition, Laura Dubroca, a "Modern Andalusian" dancer trained in flamenco, often performs with the Ensemble. The Ensemble's 1996 album *Illumination* is billed as an exploration of the commonalities between flamenco and Andalusian music.

This attention to flamenco, al-Andalus, and Spain in the work of Al-Andalus Ensemble, as well as the changing locations from which the Banzis produce their music – they have lived and worked in Spain, Morocco, and the United States – surfaces the same themes of human movement/migration/exile and locality and the decentralization of Andalusian music that the work of Abdessadeq Cheqara with José Heredia Maya and the work of Eduardo Paniagua and Omar Metioui do.

Although the concept of peaceful religious coexistence and equality seems to have supplanted the spirituality and religiosity of Cheqara and Ensemble Ibn Baya in the new Andalusian music of Al-Andalus Ensemble, it should be noted that the group collaborated with Nouredine Cheqara, the son of Abdessadeq Cheqara, on its 2006 album, *Alchemy*. According to a profile of Nouredine on virtualWOMEX, a "virtual trade fair for world music on the internet" where music artists can register to promote themselves, Nouredine Cheqara is an active member of Zawia al-Harraqiyya; the profile notes his musical and professional accomplishments and then includes the following about his membership in the Sufi brotherhood:

Of equal importance is Nouredine's lifelong participation in the Sufi Zawia Al-Harraqiya, a religious brotherhood recognized as one of the most influential Sufi orders

connected to Andalusian music traditions in Morocco. Sufism, like Buddhism, is a way of life. It develops an inner way to mystical union with God. Nouredine's unfailing participation as a musician in the Zawia which connects with God through Andalusian music has been a constant affirmation of music as something with profound implications. (“Nouredine Chekara”)

From the outcomes of my research, it appears that the younger Cheqara is a well-respected musician but that his work with Al-Andalus Ensemble in 2006 is his best-known recording.

Samira Kadiri: “Zambra” with Rocío Márquez

Samira Kadiri is one of the best-known and most beloved living singers of Andalusian music in Morocco. The director of the Casa de Cultura in Tetouan and a musicologist herself, Kadiri specializes in multiple subgenres of medieval Andalusian music; her repertoire includes romances, Sephardic ballads, the *cantigas*, the songs of the troubadours, and Syriac sacral songs. Kadiri also showcases an impressive range and number of endangered languages in her work; in addition to singing in Spanish and Arabic, she sings in Ladino-Haketia, Aramaic, and Aljamiado. Kadiri attributes a large portion of her musical inclinations to the musical influences of the Sufi brotherhood her family belongs to, Zawia Kadiria Charkaouiya.

Kadiri has collaborated with the flamenco *cantaora* Rocío Márquez on the flamenco *palo*, or style, called *zambra*. The *zambra* is the most often-performed flamenco *palo* widely acknowledged to have Moorish influences. I will discuss this collaboration further in the second part of my paper when I integrate my interview with Ms. Kadiri, but it is important to note that the inclusion of flamenco in the Kadiri's work, which pivots around al-Andalus and the expulsion of the *moriscos* in 1609, reiterates and reinforces the perception of a link between flamenco and the period of al-Andalus.

Juan Peña “El Lebrijano”

Widely considered one of the greatest living flamenco *cantaors*, Juan Peña “El Lebrijano”, who is of *gitano* background, has embarked on several collaborations over the course of the last two decades with Moroccan Andalusian orchestras. In 1995, he released the album *Encuentros*,²⁴ a collaboration with the Andalusian Orchestra of Tangier; in 2000, he released the album *Casablanca*, a collaboration with the Arabigo-Andalusi Orchestra; and in 2005, he released the album *Puertas Abiertas*,²⁵ a collaboration with the Moroccan violinist Faïçal Kourrich.

El Lebrijano has spoken extensively in interviews about the resistance he has met in these fusion efforts and others, as well as about the sense he has that flamenco urgently requires innovation and fusion to continue to evolve and thrive. In an interview with Alberto García Reyes, El Lebrijano recalled, “When I did Arabic-Andalusian music I remember they all said I was crazy” (Peña, “Interview with Alberto García Reyes”). In a separate interview, he was asked what it has been like to experience this initial opposition to his work. He responded, “I couldn’t understand it, but people were so turned off, there was a time no one called me for festivals because they said I’d betrayed who knows what cause. Over the years these works have been accepted, and I have the satisfaction of knowing I did what I felt, without worrying what anyone might think.” El Lebrijano’s observations about the reception of these albums underscores the absence of discussions both in aficionado communities and flamencología about the links between these genres in spite of the substantial body of collaborations between flamenco artists and Moroccan musicians, as this section of my paper has demonstrated.

Summary of Emergent Themes in the Discursive Analysis and Musical Review

²⁴ Encounters or meetings. My translation.

²⁵ Open Doors. My translation.

The juxtaposition of the preceding discursive analysis of the influences on the development of flamenco and the above review of the approximately chronological trajectory of collaborations between performers of Andalusian music and performers of flamenco reveals a glaring discrepancy between flamencología and flamenco practice: while flamenco artists and Andalusian music artists are collaborating and exploring not simply their compatibility but rather, their common heritage, flamencologists have not endeavored any comprehensive or methodical studies of the relationship between Andalusian music and flamenco.

The recurring themes in the musical review and the recurring themes in the discursive analysis are best understood in connection with each other. Sufism, as I believe I made clear, emerges as a central aspect of Andalusian music for many of the Moroccan artists collaborating with flamenco artists. The importance given it by the performers of Andalusian music renders the lack of references to the Islamic impact on flamenco by flamencologists (save Washabaugh) all the more astonishing. Its centrality also highlights the need for a comparative study of the spirituality of flamenco as articulated by flamencologists – usually referred to as *duende* – and the branches of Andalusian and Moroccan Sufism that might have influenced conceptions of spirituality in flamenco. In the following portion of my paper, I will attempt to establish the framework of this study for future research on this topic, and I will also attempt to relate this framework to theme of locality and place, another recurring theme of the musical review.

The Spirituality of Flamenco: Tracing the Discourse of *Duende* in Flamencología and Fieldwork

As a *bailaora*, I know that any discussion of spirituality in relation to flamenco must begin with, pivot around, and end with *duende*. Duende is the essence of flamenco, its core. Its power lies in its elusive character, in the fact that it cannot be taught or learned. If there is a

spirituality of flamenco, it is *duende*; if there are influences from other spiritual traditions to be found in flamenco, they will be found in *duende*.

The discourse surrounding *duende*, however, is voluminous, complex, and steeped in the deeply subjective interpretations of the term by flamencologists. The word literally translates to “elf” or “goblin”, hence the tendency to say that a dancer or singer or musician “has *duende*” or “had *duende*” on a particular occasion. I will begin with a brief survey of the various definitions of the term by flamencologists as well as an analysis of the spiritual or religious implications of those definitions. I will follow this section with an integration of the responses of my interviewees on spirituality and Islam in flamenco with additional literature that will contextualize their answers for those unfamiliar with the motifs of flamencología.

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Dance, “great flamenco dancers are known for their *duende*, a quality which expresses both their soul and their ability to translate themselves into pure states of emotion.” In contrast, although he does not explicitly use the term ‘*duende*’, Herrera y Sánchez describes *cante jondo* as a “plastic expression of music and poetry, [which] springs from the mysterious creative instinct and artistic genius of the andaluz in a spiritual, almost frenzied, lament, uttering his sacred and pagan culture” and as a synthesis of “the racial distinction, the elegance, the sadness, the frustration, the dreams, the loves, and the individualism of the *andaluz*, who sings in a lament that throbs with a passion for life and a spiritual union with death” (88). The difference between these two definitions of the emotive nature of flamenco is the difference between a performer who lacks *duende* and a performer who possesses *duende*.

Herrera y Sánchez’s interpretation of the essence of *cante jondo*, often considered the purest form of flamenco, encompasses multiple relevant aspects of *duende*. The first of these appears in his choice to use the word “mysterious”, which typically figures largely in

descriptions of duende. The second component is that of the amalgamation of emotions involved; all too often, flamenco is perceived and construed as consisting solely of grief and sorrow. Herrera y Sánchez, however, articulates the melding of grief and joy in the clause about the *andaluz*, “who sings in a lament that throbs with a passion for life” (88). Thirdly and perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this paper, Herrera y Sánchez links *cante jondo* to a “spiritual” and “sacred” experience.

In 1933, Federico García Lorca delivered a now famous speech in Argentina titled “Theory and Play of the Duende.” The role of corporality and sensuality in Lorca’s “theory” of duende is salient and sometimes surprising. Lorca asserts “that the *duende* has to be roused from the furthest habitations of the blood” (7) and that duende is drawn to “the possibility of death” (17) and “the wound” (18). His lecture ends with the stunning and sensual lines, “The *duende*...Where is the *duende*? Through the empty archway a wind of the spirit enters, blowing insistently over the heads of the dead, in search of new landscapes and unknown accents: a wind with the odour of a child’s saliva, crushed grass, and medusa’s veil, announcing the endless baptism of freshly created things” (22-23). In his discussion of St. Teresa’s relationship with duende, Lorca implies that duende’s power lies in its transform these sensory experiences into experiences of the divine: “Remember the example of the *flamenca*, *duende*-filled St. Teresa...*Flamenca*...because she was one of those few creatures whose *duende* (not angel, for the angel never attacks anyone) pierced her with an arrow and wanted to kill her for having stolen his ultimate secret, the subtle link that joins the five senses to what is core to the living flesh, the living cloud, the living ocean of love liberated from time” (18). For Lorca, then, duende has the capacity for transforming a holistic and intense sensorial experience of the world

into a moment of contact with “the living ocean of love liberated from time”, presumably the divine.

Like Herrera y Sánchez, Lorca is not afraid to discuss the spiritual and religious dimensions of flamenco. He also appears to perceive a similar quality in flamenco to the one referred to as “almost frenzied” by Herrera y Sánchez; Lorca writes that “the arrival of the *duende* presupposes a radical change to all the old kinds of form, brings totally unknown and fresh sensations, with the qualities of a newly created rose, miraculous, generating an almost religious enthusiasm” (10). Herrera y Sánchez and Lorca appear to be referring to an ecstatic or trance-like experience here, particularly interesting in the context of the question of the impact of Sufism on flamenco. This “almost religious enthusiasm” aside, Lorca goes on to argue, “In Spain (as among Oriental races, where the dance is religious expression) the *duende* has a limitless hold over the bodies of the dancers of Cadiz, praised by Martial, the breasts of those who sing, praised by Juvenal, and over all the liturgies of the bullring, an authentic religious drama, where in the same manner as in the Mass, a God is sacrificed to, and adored” (18). In this statement, Lorca places flamenco on the same plane as dances that fulfill specifically religious functions, simply by virtue of the power of *duende*.

The segment of Lorca’s lecture, however, with the most far-reaching ramifications for a study of the influence of Morocco, Andalusian music, and Islam on flamenco is his argument that the famous “¡Olé!” of flamenco performance and Spanish bullfights derives from “Allah”:

In all Arab music, dance, song or elegy, the arrival of *duende* is greeted with vigorous cries of ‘Allah! Allah!’ so close to the ‘Olé!’ of the bullfight, and who knows whether they are not the same? And in all the songs of Southern Spain, the appearance of the *duende* is followed by sincere cries of: ‘Viva Dios!’ deep, human, tender cries of

communication with God through the five senses, thanks to the *duende* that shakes the voice and body of the dancer, a real, poetic escape from this world. (11)

In addition to elaborating on the spiritual dimension of his theory of *duende* by suggesting direct Islamic influences on flamenco culture, and proposing that flamenco performance might function as a form of communication with God, this passage also reiterates Lorca's prior implication that *duende* serves to move the performer beyond the sphere of the corporeal, an ideal that will resurge shortly.

Antonio Rodríguez Jiménez on the Spirituality of Flamenco

In my interview with Mr. Jiménez, the director of the Cervantes Institute – a Spanish cultural and language center – in Fes and the organizer of the first annual Moroccan flamenco festival, which was held in April 2011 and which will be continue to be an annual event in Fes – Mr. Jiménez affirmed a relationship between holding the Moroccan flamenco festival in Fes, widely considered the religious and spiritual capital of Morocco, and the nature of flamenco itself. He remarked that flamenco is like poetry in that it is an expression of emotion, of “what one carries most deeply within oneself”,²⁶ of “human tragedy and the human drama”,²⁷ and of suffering. Similarly, he said, Fes is a “city of mystery”²⁸ and a city that holds all of the spiritual richness of Morocco.

Mr. Jiménez joins Lorca, among others, in likening flamenco and poetry; this area of overlap is unsurprising considering that both are writers. In his lecture, Lorca notes, “All the arts are capable of *duende*, but where it naturally creates most space, as in music, dance and spoken poetry, the living flesh is needed to interpret them, since they have forms that are born and die, perpetually, and raise their contours above the precise present” (11-12). Mr. Jiménez also joins a

²⁶ “...de lo que uno lleva más dentro de sí.” My translation.

²⁷ “...de la tragedia humana y del drama humano...” My translation.

²⁸ “Fes...es una ciudad de misterio.” My translation.

long line of flamencologists in inferring not only mystery, as we have already seen, in flamenco, but also suffering; Malefyt, for example, writes, “Aficionados claim flamenco song is an art form that imparts cultural heritage in its capacity to transmit the collective sentiments of Andalusian suffering” (63). It is in this sense that Mr. Jiménez believes Fes is the ideal city for a flamenco festival.

Elvira Roca Rey on the Spirituality of Flamenco

When I initially asked Ms. Roca Rey, the director of the Centro Cultural Córdoba in Marrakech and teacher of flamenco classes at that center, whether she perceives any Arab, Moroccan or Islamic influences on flamenco, she replied that she “definitely” does not perceive “any Islamic influences.”²⁹ She emphasized that she believes the origins of flamenco are Indian and cited similarities between the footwork in Kathak, a form of Indian classical dance, and flamenco. When I asked her about the spirituality of flamenco, she reiterated this belief and said that she would attribute the spirituality of flamenco to Indian mysticism. She described the emotional core of flamenco as constituted by a balance of darker emotions, which she compared to “the night”,³⁰ and more lighthearted aspects, including “flirtatiousness” and “humor”.³¹ She described this confluence of emotions as maintaining equilibrium, as in the concept of “ying-yang.” Ms. Roca Rey said that in her opinion, the most spiritual of all flamenco *palos*, or styles, is the *saeta*, which is typically sung during Lent in Spain and has ties to the Catholic Church. In her mind, the *saeta* is the “maximum expression of spirituality”³² and its spiritual quality “does not belong to any religion.”³³ She added that for her, the spirituality of the *saeta* comes from its ties to the themes of love and death and described the experience of hearing a *saeta* sung from a

²⁹ “*Ningunas influencias islámicas, por seguro.*” My translation.

³⁰ “*...como la noche...*” My translation.

³¹ “*...la coquetería y el humor.*” My translation.

³² “*La saeta es la máxima expresión de la espiritualidad para mí.*” My translation.

³³ “*No pertenece a ninguna religión.*” My translation.

balcony during *Semana Santa* as an instance of being “overcome with emotion in the face of the unknown.”³⁴ In flamenco, she said, “the experience of the rhythm has nothing to do with reason.”³⁵ Describing herself as an “agnostic”,³⁶ Ms. Roca Rey that she believes in a divine force that “cannot be defined. It is gaseous, diffuse, it cannot be explained.”³⁷

Ms. Roca Rey’s recognition of the humor and coquetry of flamenco echoes the same observation by Herrera y Sánchez, who writes, “In *cante jondo* the Andalusian reveals a character of fertile imagination, exotic, conservative, of subtle irony, of witty satire, of reflective mood, of pagan morbidity, and of broad humor” (90). Although her conception of the relationship between this lightheartedness and the “darker” emotional aspects of flamenco differs slightly from that of most flamencologists – she sees the two aspects as coexisting while remaining separate, while most scholars, including Herrera y Sánchez, see them as becoming more undifferentiated – her recognition of this dual emotionality of flamenco is important, and will be addressed in the application of the work of Ibn al-‘Arabi.

Finally, Ms. Roca Rey’s discussion of the *saeta* is also important, particularly in the context of her standpoint on the issue of the Moroccan and Islamic influences on flamenco. Because Samira Kadiri, my third interviewee, also discussed the *saeta*, I will provide the flamencological contextualization for the *saeta* in the section below.

Samira Kadiri on the Spirituality of Flamenco

Ms. Kadiri, who believes that there is a strong link between Andalusian musical traditions and flamenco, noted in our discussion of *duende* that she believes the concept is linked to the Islamic concept of *istikhara* in its focus on improvisation and suffering.

³⁴ “...la experiencia de sobrecogimiento cuando uno enfrenta lo desconocido.” My translation.

³⁵ “...el sentimiento del ritmo no tiene que ver con la razón.” My translation.

³⁶ “Soy agnóstica.” My translation.

³⁷ “Creo que el divino no se puede definir. Es gaseoso, difuso, no se puede explicar.” My translation.

She also spoke over the course of the interview about the *saeta*, and specifically, about its genealogy in the Andalusian music tradition. Ms. Kadiri contends that the *saeta* derives from the *aita*, an Andalusian musical style from northern Morocco and Tetouan in particular. According to Ms. Kadiri, the emotional natures of the styles are extremely similar. “They have the same sentiments of sorrow, strength, profundity,”³⁸ Ms. Kadiri said. This theory seems to be substantiated, at least in part, by J.B. Trend’s piece titled “Recollections of Falla”, in which Trend discusses the work of Manuel de Falla, one of the most prominent proponents of *cante jondo* in the 20th century. Trend writes:

At the same time Falla was acutely sensitive to tunes from the country and folk-songs of all ages: not only the melodies of ancient Castilian ballads, but also the strange, remote Andalusian melodies which seem to belong to the furthest borders of Europe...He wished to get behind the corrupt, popular, 'gypsified' versions which seem so glamorous to those who are imperfectly acquainted with Spanish music, and recover the genuine, older and uncorrupted Andalusian song: *cante andaluz*. (15)

Trend seems to be referring here to the medieval Andalusian songs which Ms. Kadiri specializes in; he goes on to note that the “real musical interest of Holy Week - for Falla - lay with the singers of *cante andaluz*; for, by tradition, they could always signal to a procession to stop, and sing some *saetas*, 'arrows' (that is the literal meaning of the word) of passionately devotional song, sung unaccompanied” (15). *Saetas* belonging to the period of al-Andalus would have likely been influenced by northern Moroccan folk traditions brought to the Iberian Peninsula by the Moors.

³⁸ “*Tienen los mismos sentimientos de tristeza, fuerza, profundidad.*” My translation.

The philosophical posture behind Ms. Kadiri's work, similar to that of Ensemble Ibn Baya, is grounded in what she terms a "dialogue of love."³⁹ For Ms. Kadiri, the concept of love unites both the themes of her work and her artistic objectives for her work – the recognition that "we are all Andalusian,"⁴⁰ by which she means that Moroccans and Spanish alike derive from the common context of al-Andalus.

Summary of the Emergent Themes Related to Duende and Spirituality in Flamencología and Fieldwork

Two of the primary aspects of the theories of duende in the literature of flamencología have direct correlates in the results of my interview questions on the spirituality of flamenco. The first aspect is that of the "mystery" and unknowability of duende as described by Herrera y Sánchez and Lorca, which is reinforced by the responses of Mr. Jiménez and Ms. Roca Rey. In addition, Ms. Roca Rey went on to describe the moment of being overcome, the moment of what is referred to in the work of Ibn al-'Arabi as "bewilderment" (Almond). The second aspect is that of the duality of emotion in flamenco implied by Herrera y Sánchez, the synthesis of joy and grief that typifies the art form, which is also addressed in the response of Ms. Roca Rey.

Two other critical themes emerge in the flamencología related to duende but not in my fieldwork, likely due to the small number of interviewees in my study. The first of these themes is the dichotomy of the corporeal and the spiritual in duende; the second is the conception of flamenco performance as a means of connecting with God, which is in keeping with the beliefs of the members of the Moroccan Sufi brotherhoods for whom Andalusian music serves this purpose.

³⁹ "Diálogo de amor."

⁴⁰ "Todos somos Andaluces."

Together, these four themes comprise potential areas of overlap between Andalusian music, flamenco, and Sufism. In the following section of my paper, I will interpret these areas within the context of the philosophy of Ibn al-‘Arabi with the objective of determining the limitations of Sufism as an interpretive lens for flamenco as well as the elements of flamenco which merit further study with respect to Sufism.

Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Concepts of Love, Bewilderment, *Barzakh*, and Exile in Flamenco

I believe that an application of the philosophy of Ibn al-‘Arabi, of all Sufi philosophers, is particularly apt and relevant in the case of studying the Moroccan and Sufi influences on flamenco for three primary reasons. First, Ibn al-‘Arabi, considered by the “whole Islamic world” to be the “greatest theoretician of Sufism, that is, the mystical and spiritual dimension of Islam” (Chittick 1993, 5), was born in Andalucía during the period of al-Andalus and traveled and studied in Fes; in that sense, he is a temporal and geographic contemporary of the context I am focusing on, yet he also significantly predated the arrival of *gitanos* in Spain and the development of flamenco. Second, as has been seen, the poetry of Ibn al-‘Arabi has been put to music by the Ensemble Ibn Baya, and Ibn al-‘Arabi thus occupies an importance position with respect to the relationship between Sufism and Andalusian music in the scope of this paper. And finally, I am following several scholars of Mediterranean politics, history, and music who have highlighted the usefulness of the concept of *barzakh* in this geopolitical context, and *barzakh* is a concept whose development has largely been attributed to Ibn al-‘Arabi.

This section of my paper will attempt a preliminary application of the basic structure of Ibn al-‘Arabi to the spirituality of flamenco as it has been outlined in the preceding section and is intended only as an initial sizing, as it were, of the two areas of spirituality. I will apply and

relate Ibn al-‘Arabi’s ideas of bewilderment, love, *barzakh*, and exile, and integrate these four concepts with the spirituality of flamenco as it has been discussed in this paper and with further information gained from my interviews.

In speaking about the role of love in Ibn al-‘Arabi’s work, William Chittick, one of the pre-eminent scholars on Ibn al-‘Arabi, asserts that the love is seen as “both as God’s underlying motivation for creating the universe and as the internal human response to God’s love for creation. By following the path of love, human beings complete God’s creative act” (4). Chittick continues this line of thought, stating, “God created the world through love, so love brings about separation, distinction, and multiplicity. It is the origin of all movement and change. Within the created order, love keeps the universe in a constant state of transformation and flux, and because of love, the world subsists” (8). Finally, this understanding of the role of love concludes in the following notion:

In order for creation to achieve its purpose, human beings must come to know that all creatures are nothing but God’s self-manifestation. They must see themselves and all things in the divine context and recognize God in and through the created world. Hence, just as love brings about separation – the creation of the cosmos – so also it brings about union, or the return of the cosmos to its proper place in God. (9)

The conclusion that Chittick draws in this passage – that “human beings must come to know that all creatures are nothing but God’s self-manifestation” and that “they must see themselves and all things in the divine context and recognize God in and through the created world” – draws us back to Lorca’s notion of the moment of “Olé!” as a “real, poetic escape from this world” (11). The moment in which duende appears, in other words, is the moment in which the audience and the performers recognize God in a particular performer, when the manifestations of God’s

attributes in that performer become apparent through the art of flamenco. The moment of *duende* is the moment of a performer's 'response' to "God's love for creation." It is the moment in which, in the words of my interviewee Mr. Jiménez, the performer unburies what he or she holds most deeply within and affirms this internal manifestation of God. This is why Lorca distinguishes between the "angel" or "the Muse," which he says "come from outside us", and *duende*, which we must "rouse" from within; it could be argued that flamenco is fundamentally an inward-looking art because of this need to recognize oneself as a manifestation of God in order to attain, or entertain, *duende*.

Equally important in Chittick's analysis of Ibn al-'Arabi's conception of love is his recognition that "love brings about separation, distinction, and multiplicity." These separations, distinctions, and multiplicities are what Ian Almond refers to as "unruly elements" that produce not only "confusion" and "instability" (518) but also produce the experiences of "bewilderment" and "perplexity" (519). This is the experience that my Moroccan flamenco teacher and interviewee, Ms. Roca Rey, referred to when she spoke of the experience of witnessing and hearing the performance of a *saeta* – the sensation of being overcome with emotion in the face of the "unknown", the experience of not being able to "define" or "explain" the divine force she believes in. In the philosophy of Ibn al-'Arabi, as interpreted by Almond, this state of bewilderment is in fact productive; Almond describes "Ibn 'Arabi's perfect gnostic, [who,] when in a state of complete *hayrah* or perplexity, is no longer willing or able to fix any image onto the Real" (523). Almond goes on to wonder if "the true goal is not so much confusion but a certain attitude toward confusion; whether true *hayrah* is not so much a state but, rather, the calm acceptance of a situation, perhaps even the *celebration* of such a moment" (528).

The translation of the separating, distinguishing, multiplying effect of love translates easily onto the flamenco context. The “unruly elements” of flamenco are the multiplying and certainly bewildering emotions of the dance: the ‘synthesis’ of the “the elegance, the sadness, the frustration, the dreams, the loves, and the individualism of the *andaluz*” (Herrera y Sánchez 88). ‘Synthesis’ is a key term here; I would argue that it is the successful synthesis of disparate and conflicting emotions in flamenco that produces *duende*. This successful synthesis of the emotions occurs when one can celebrate the bewildering nature of their coexistence. I will return to this theme in the final portion of my paper, an explication of my choreography and personal observations about the question raised in this paper.

This process of synthesis brings us to the unifying concept of my paper, the *barzakh*. The *barzakh* is defined by Chittick as “something stands between and separates two other things, yet combines the attributes of both. Strictly speaking, every existent thing is a *barzakh*, since everything has its own niche between two other niches within the ontological hierarchy known as the cosmos” (1989, 14). He adds that in “the hierarchy of worlds which makes up the cosmos, the term *barzakh* refers to an intermediate world standing between the luminous or spiritual world and the dark or corporeal world” (14). Jonathan Shannon frames the spirituality/corporality binary within the *barzakh* in similar terms, stating that the *barzakh* “is the realm where spiritual, imaginal, and corporeal domains of existence intermingle: where spirits take on flesh and fleshy bodies partake of the spirit” (310). Taken together, these definitions embody *duende* and explain the centrality of corporality in Lorca’s lecture. The utilization and application of corporality to art are a means to entering the *barzakh* where “fleshy bodies partake of the spirit”, where *duende* inhabits the performer.

The *barzakh* of duende, of the meeting place of corporality and spirituality, bears traces of the influences of Andalusian music on flamenco in the form of eroticism. As Shannon notes: Interestingly, many of the poetic texts of the Andalusian repertoire are often erotic, though these are often interpreted as having mystical significance – or, as in the case of an entire suite of songs (*nubat raml al-maya*), the lyrics were changed in the nineteenth century to religious praise poetry and are deemed permissible. In this regard, the music plays an important role in the symbolic negotiation of Moroccan national identity as a signifier of Moroccan piety. (326)

In my interview with her, Ms. Kadiri also addressed the 19th century change to what Shannon terms “religious praise poetry”, noting that the eroticism of these songs is still apparent in their rhythms.⁴¹ As has been seen, Herrera y Sánchez has documented the movement of these lyrics to flamenco, which flamencologists and aficionados regularly characterize as erotic; Malefyt, for example, notes that flamenco is “drenched in eroticism” (64), while Ms. Roca Rey emphasized the “vindication of the woman” in flamenco through “erotic expression.”⁴² In light of the concept of *barzakh*, the eroticism of flamenco is critical to the experience of duende because of it simultaneously retains a corporal quality and a metaphorical mystical quality.

In addition to resolving the question of corporality/spirituality in flamenco, however, I argue that it is the ramifications of the concept of *barzakh* on issues of human movement that are still unfolding and that hold the potential for determining the future of flamenco as the artistic *barzakh*, the artistic Strait of Gibraltar, between Spain and Morocco. Interpreted in this way, the idea of flamenco as *barzakh* encompasses the various histories of migration and exile that have impacted the evolution of the art form – among others, those of the Gypsies, the Moors, and the

⁴¹ “*Los aspectos eróticos y amorosos de la música andalusí fueron interpretados en el contexto religioso, pero todavía se sienten estos aspectos en los ritmos.*” My translation.

⁴² “*La vindicación de la mujer a través de la expresión erótica.*”

Moriscos – as well as the marginalization of these groups. These are issues that recur in the discourses of Romani studies and the history of Spanish/Moroccan relations: Iovita notes the “marginalized place [of the Romani] in traditional European and Asian history and their relative lack of political organization (until relatively recently)” (268) while Hancock insists that the Romani were exiled from the northwestern India as a result of the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni; Anouar Majid contends that “because of his or her quintessential difference in the long European imagination, the Moor, I want to show in this book, is not only someone who is religiously Muslim; even more importantly, he or she is also a figure that stands for anyone who is not considered to be part of the social mainstream” (5) while thousands of Moroccans and Sub-Saharan migrants attempt to cross the Strait of Gibraltar every year to Europe.

The question of exile surged not only in this literature, but also in my fieldwork. Both Ms. Roca Rey and Ms. Kadiri emphasized the importance of exile in flamenco and Andalusian music, respectively. When I asked her what she thought the main themes of flamenco music are, I was surprised when her first three responses were “the drama of immigration,” “exile” and “marginalization.”⁴³ She spoke about identifying strongly with these themes as a Peruvian woman of Spanish descent who has lived in Spain (from which she was forced to leave during the dictatorship of Franco), Peru, India, Japan, and Morocco.

Meanwhile, Ms. Kadiri spoke at length about the expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain in 1609 as her work centers on the diasporic music genres of al-Andalus, but in addressing the relationship between flamenco and Andalusian music, noted that the Muslims who chose to convert to Christianity and stay in Andalucía often lived in the same communities that the *gitanos* did, and that flamenco’s Andalusian influences derive largely from these shared

⁴³ “*El drama de la inmigración,*” “*el exilio,*” and “*la marginación.*”

communities. She spoke about these communities as “two groups thrown out of society”,⁴⁴ often framing musical meetings in terms of exile. However, she emphasized that despite the fact that the Spanish government has issued a formal apology to the Jewish community for their expulsion and not to the Muslim community, she would simply like to see a large-scale recognition of the wrongs committed with respect to Muslims during the Reconquista and of the shared Andalusian heritage of Muslims, Jews, and Christians. She pointed out that had the expulsion of the Moriscos not taken place, much of the rich musical traditions she works to preserve would not exist.

Interestingly, this discourse of exile does not provoke a reaction within flamenco to return to a homeland. Gay y Blasco observes that *gitanos* “rarely claim for themselves a land of origin, a history, or any kind of overarching political project to debate or share” (173). Though this might seem paradoxical, thinking of flamenco as a *barzakh* resolves any contradictions that a long history of migration and exile, together with the absence of a ‘return’ movement, might present. As has been seen, the origins of and influences on flamenco are highly contested with respect to Morocco, Islam, and the Arab world because flamenco can be seen to function as a *barzakh* between Islam and the West. In an article about Sufi conceptions of exile, Walid El Khachab writes, “The prominent thirteenth-century Sufi Ibn al-Arabi dismisses the negative effects of ‘geographic’ displacement. According to his reasoning, an expatriate does not feel estranged anywhere he or she travels, since the world — and the divine — are in continuity with the human subject. The real exile is a psychological experience resulting from the disruption of monist unity and harmony between human and divine, man and the world” (59). Perhaps this is the conception of exile at the heart of flamenco; because flamenco is very much in continuity with the world and the divine, exile in flamenco can only be exile from *duende*.

⁴⁴ “*Dos grupos echados de la sociedad.*” My translation.

Conclusion

The first portion of my research reveals the astonishing and alarming lack of literature on the subject of the Moroccan, North African, Islamic, and Arab influences on flamenco, particularly surprising in the context of the trend in recent decades of collaborations between flamenco artists and Moroccan musicians. A discursive analysis of the passing references to these influences indicates that despite that the influences themselves are undisputed, the sociopolitical ramifications of affirming these influences in academia have discouraged flamencologists from seriously pursuing this topic. Future research in this area should focus on the references to these influences in book-length works on flamenco, which I did not have the time or resources to explore, and on the contextualization of the lack of literature on these influences within flamencología; aside from the literature on the Indian influences on flamenco, I am not familiar with the bodies of literatures on the other influences on flamenco or with how they compare to each other.

My review of the recent musical collaborations produced unexpected results; upon beginning this research project, I certainly did not expect to find such a strong and enduring link between Sufism and the Andalusian music genre. This review drastically changed the direction of my research; my questions became much more focused on the spirituality of flamenco after I had completed this review. However, there were a large number of collaborations that I read or heard about but did not have time to explore or write about because they were outside the scope of my project. For example, the Qawwali musician Faiz Ali Faiz recently completed a long-term collaboration with several flamenco artists, but because this was not relevant to the Moroccan

context, I was forced to abandon it as a research focus. I believe that a study of musical collaborations between Sufi music artists and flamenco artists should be an absolute priority.

The interviews I conducted were limited in number – this topic is deserving of many more conversations with many of the other people living in Morocco with ties to flamenco performance – but in my opinion, they represent the discourse on this subject well. Mr. Jiménez spoke to me as the director of a Cervantes Institute, whose mission it is to diffuse the Spanish culture and language in non-Spanish speaking countries, but he also affirmed a belief in a common musical heritage between Morocco and Spain and in significant Moroccan influences on the development of flamenco. Ms. Roca Rey spoke to me as someone who does not believe that Morocco or Islam has had a significant impact on the development of flamenco but who nevertheless perceives spirituality in flamenco that derives, as I hope I have shown, at least partially from Andalusian Sufi beliefs. Ms. Kadiri spoke to me as a singer and musicologist who believes wholeheartedly in the existence links between Andalusian music and flamenco and who termed those who deny these links “revisionists.” Further research in this area should include, for obvious reasons, a larger interview pool and should focus on obtaining interviews with musicians who have direct links to Sufism as well as to collaborations with flamenco artists.

The theoretical portion of my research, consisting of the application of the work of Ibn ‘Arabi to the spirituality of flamenco, was heavily constrained by my deadlines as well as by the scope of this paper. However, I hope that my preliminary and experimental attempt to locate Andalusian Sufism in conceptions of duende communicated the compatibility of these two areas and potentially, a common intellectual lineage between the two, a possibility to be explored by someone with more expertise in this religious philosophy than I.

Perhaps the most interesting outcome of my research is that of the dynamic nature of the contemporary relationship of flamenco to Morocco, Andalusian music, and philosophy. As my research progressed, I gradually came to the realization that several of the challenges I was encountering stemmed from the fact that I was attempting to pin down something that was still growing or changing. Flamenco is very much alive and thriving in Morocco – now, let’s acknowledge it.

Bailaora’s Note

I have choreographed a short piece, a *soleá*, to perform as part of my research. Because I consider this piece to be closely tied to my research, I would like to give a brief explication of the choreography in the context of the more personal dimension of my fieldwork, which consisted of 10 flamenco classes at the Centro Cultural Córdoba in Marrakech and this choreography.

I have selected the piece “Rezo” by Juan Peña “El Lebrijano” for several reasons. The piece exemplifies the kinds of collaborations embarked upon recently by flamenco artists and Moroccan performers of Andalusian music; this particular piece features the Arabigo-Andalusí Orchestra. Second, the piece is a *soleá*, a style known for its synthesis of joy and grief, something discussed at length in this paper. Third, the piece is titled “Rezo,” which is the Spanish word for “prayer.” This was perhaps the most important aspect of the piece to me; I wanted to recognize the importance of Lorca’s argument regarding dance holding the potential for being a connection with God.

My choreography incorporates some steps typical of the *Petenera*, a flamenco *palo* with roots in Sephardic Jewish history; my use of the shawl also comes from the *Petenera palo*. Aside from being a chilling and beautiful style in its own right, I made a conscious decision to evoke *la*

Petenera in my choreography in an effort to render my piece a complete image of al-Andalus:

With the inclusion of this style, my piece contains musical and dance references to Christianity,

Islam, and Judaism.

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