As Gerhard Steingress has pointed out, the region’s resistance to French invasion and the ‘exoticism’ in the eyes of European Romantics were traits that fascinated many Spanish intellectuals, both conservative and liberal. Given the lack of socio-economic development in Andalusia, often a cornerstone of other European nationalisms, folklore acquired added significance in the emergent Andalusian ethno-nationalism, and flamenco was one of its most striking and unique features. Studies of Andalusian folklore and flamenco by Antonio Machado y Álvarez, Manuel Balmaseda and Hugo Schuchardt appeared from the early 1880s and were complemented by folk-song collections of the region, the most comprehensive being that of Eduardo Ocio. Despite these developments, the musical expression of Andalusian identity in Falla’s early works was initially modelled upon exotic elements in Romantic salon music and the zarzuela (Spanish operetta), which often had recourse to folk melodies taken from anthologies. Yet even at this early stage Falla was searching for new ways of representing flamenco and gypsies. In his first opera, La vida breve (1905), Falla drew on notes he had taken of flamenco rhythms and guitar figures and employed a flamenco singer (cantarero) on stage. The opera’s protagonist, Sahad, is a gypsy who is portrayed sympathetically rather than as a stereotype in the mould of Carmen. By going beyond the token gypsy presence as merely an element of local colour Falla broke away from common practice in contemporary zarzuelas.

During his Paris years (1907–14) Falla’s output became more clearly indebted to Romantic and Impressionistic imagery of Spain, with its perceptions of Andalusia as the nearest manifestation of the Orient. He began to read the seminal French texts by François René Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo and Théophile Gautier which disseminated the nostalgic vision of the Andalusian town of Granada, and by extension Spain, as the last European refuge of Arab culture and presented its gypsy dwellers as their progeny or exotic substitutes. Though predating Falla’s arrival in Paris, such nineteenth-century representations of Spain had culminated in

CHAPTER 15
Manuel de Falla, flamenco and Spanish identity
Michael Christoforidis

Throughout his career, Manuel de Falla sought to create a Spanish identity in music, and until 1936 foregrounded his Andalusian origins in order to achieve this. Flamenco and gypsy culture formed the cornerstone of his construction, even though by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries these elements had become problematic in Spain. The perceived exoticism and otherness of flamenco and gypsy culture, both within and outside the country, led to a questioning of their relevance in emerging debates on Andalusian and Spanish nationalism and race. Falla became a key figure in overturning these views, transforming contemporary Spanish appreciation of flamenco both by his general advocacy of the genre and by his own flamenco-influenced creative output. He helped to shape Spanish perceptions of flamenco, and did so partly by relating racial categories to accounts of its origins and performance style.

ANDALUSIA, EXOTICISM AND THE MUSIC OF MANUEL DE FALLA

Falla’s assertion of a distinctly Andalusian identity cannot be traced to his earliest works from the turn of the twentieth century and reflects ideas of Andalusia as a region with a distinct culture, which had become prevalent in the second half of the nineteenth century. Unlike other constructions of Spanish nationalism, especially in the Basque and Catalan regions, Andalusian identity was not predicated on notions of racial purity. Andalusia’s unique identity was often defined by the very multiplicity of cultural and racial layers from which it had evolved. By the nineteenth century only the gypsy population maintained a separate racial status, while still forming an integral part of Andalusian culture.
closely resembled the type of music that characterized the gypsies in prehistoric times, given his belief that they had originated in India. This assumption was based upon the speculations of Sales Mayo, which Falla had undertaken in Francisco Manzano Pabón's 1913 book on the history and customs of the gypsies. In his search for primitive musical elements which could be explored in the ritualistic passages of his drama Falla turned to Judith Gautier's *Les musiques bizarres*, which included transcriptions by Benedectus of Oriental music heard at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900. In doing so Falla paralleled some of the exoticist strategies of French composers and the type of cultural conflation evident in 'Andalouise au temps du Maures'.

Falla copied Gautier's commentaries on the influence of Arab music, and was especially interested in the transcriptions of the *Danza jazmín* and the Ceylonese *Dance du diable*. From the two dances Falla noted various effects that he would employ in *El amor brujo*, most notably in the 'Danza ritual de fuego'. These include the insistence repetition of a single note, the ritualistic repetition of a short phrase, loudly and softly, the employment of arpeggiated but harmonically static lines, and the use of the extended trill. In *El amor brujo* Falla also drew from musical traditions which had closer ties to the Iberian peninsula and flamenco forms. He stated that this work's peculiar orchestral colouring was not only due to his attempts to imitate the guitar; it sprang from his desire to evoke 'primitive Arab instruments', which he associated with the Hispano-Arabic tradition.

While *El amor brujo* is now viewed as a quintessential representation of Spanish gypsyness, and even Spanish musical nationalism, contemporary commentators were estranged by Falla's primitiveist and orientalist conception of flamenco, and by his modernist musical language. These were at odds with the employment of flamenco as an element of local colour in the zarzuela and its harmonic and rhythmic domestication in the *cigüeña* popular song style of the early twentieth century.

Over the following years Falla continued to draw parallels between the music of the Orient and that of Andalusia, which in turn informed his composition of *El número de tres piezas* (1917–19) and the *Fantasia Baética* (1919). This process had intensified with his greater exposure to performances of *cante jondo* – a term which designates certain flamenco song forms – particularly during the composition of *El amor brujo* and in the

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11. In his extensive monograph on this work, Antonio Cappello describes the often vague flamenco references given by Adolfo Marsós, and encouraged by Falla in the initial programme note, which included references to both music and dance of the gypsy. In the same note he referred to the 'Danza del sol', *cante jondo* in *Antonio Cappello, Manuel de Falla: la danza del sol*, Madrid: Reina Sofia, 1980.


course of his journeys to Andalusia in the company of Serge Diaghilev and Léonide Massine in 1916 and 1917, Falla’s perspectives on flamenco were undoubtedly conditioned by the value accorded to the primitive art form and the Orient in his European cultural milieu. His association with the Ballets Russes prompted Falla to argue that oriental influences were responsible for the similarities between Russian and Spanish music, and this claim was echoed by his admired friend Igor Stravinsky, who stated in 1922:

“It is not solely a matter of curiosity. Between the popular music of Spain, and that of Russia, I perceive a profound affinity which is, without a doubt, related to their common Eastern origins. Certain Andalusian songs remind me of the melodies from Russian provinces, awakening atavistic memories in me.”  

Was this merely cultural rapprochement based on aesthetic sympathy?  
Falla’s orientalist conception of flamenco resonated with emerging constructions of Andalusian identity, which had cultural, racial and political dimensions, most notably in relation to Spanish expansionism into Morocco. Similarly, Stravinsky’s fascination with flamenco’s supposed Eastern origins may have drawn on his contemporary interest in radical proto-fascist Eurasian theories that highlighted the Oriental substratum of Russian identity.  

**Granada and the Cante Jondo Competition**

In 1920 Falla realised his long-held dream of moving to Granada, one of the emblematic Andalusian towns known for its Moorish legacy, large gypsy population and flamenco traditions. Within a year Falla became concerned with the progressive contamination and possible extinction of “pure” cante jondo styles. In doing so he was echoing contemporary notions of the “vanishing rarity” of the primitive art form. Falla’s response was to organise, in collaboration with the poet Federico García Lorca and a circle of artists and intellectuals, the first Cante Jondo Competition in Granada in 1922, a pivotal event in the revival, dissemination and broader acceptance of flamenco in Spain and abroad, coinciding with this event Falla wrote an extended essay entitled ‘Cante Jondo’, in which he identified three historic factors that had an impact on Spanish music history: the adoption by the Church of Byzantine chants, the Arab invasion and the settlement in Spain of numerous groups of gypsies. Falla echoed here late nineteenth-century anthropological constructions of Andalusian identity in which, in Steinberg’s words, “flamenco was viewed by many liberal intellectuals as an aesthetic manifestation and [atavistic] memory of the various ‘races’ that had set foot in Andalusia.”  

Of the gypsies Falla claimed: “Those tribes, who arrived from the East, according to historical hypothesis, give Andalusian singing a new character which consists of the cante jondo.” By underlining the historic role of the gypsies in the definitive formation of its styles, Falla consciously sought to give pre-eminence to the primitive Indian roots of flamenco. He then proceeded to trace the origins of most flamenco songs to the (gypsy) siguiriya gitanas and pointed out that “it is perhaps the only European song which preserves in all its purity the highest quality of the primitive song of oriental people.” In comparing ‘the essential elements of cante jondo’ with ‘the songs of India and other oriental countries’, Falla observed various similarities including: the use of harmonic intervals melodically and as a means of transposition, restricted melodic range of a sixth, and the repeated, even obsessive, use of one note, frequently accompanied by an upper or by a lower appoggiatura.

Despite stressing its Oriental origins, Falla highlighted the importance of local Spanish conditions and the influence of the ‘Spanish race’ in shaping flamenco forms:

“...but it must not be thought, however, that the siguiriya and its derivatives are simply songs that have been imported from the East. At the most, it is a grafting or earlier, a case of the coincidence of origins that certainly did not reveal itself at one particular moment, but that is the result, as we have already pointed out, of an accumulation of historical facts taking place through many centuries in our peninsula. That is why the kind of song peculiar to Andalusia (cante jondo) although it coincides in its essential elements with those developed in countries so far away from ours, shows such typical, so national, a character, that it becomes unmistakable.”

Falla conceived of cante jondo as a folk manifestation of Andalusia and one of its principal markers of identity, although he believed in its relevance for all Spaniards. In doing so he positioned gypsy culture in the peninsula as an integral component of Spanishness.

One of the principal aims of the organisers of the Cante Jondo Competition was to encounter unadulterated renditions of this repertory.
from amateurs and they therefore excluded professional cantantes (flamenco singers) from competing, although they were employed among the jury. In setting these criteria Falla was not primarily invoking notions of purity versus contamination, which had racist overtones at this time. Rather, he was echoing writers from the late nineteenth century, such as Antonio Machado y Álvarez, who had bemoaned the commercialisation of flamenco and its loss of purity in the tablao (flamenco taverns) and cafés cantantes, due to the professionalisation of artists and the formation of new styles in combination with Andalusian popular idioms. Machado had argued that flamenco songs were losing, bit by bit, their primitive character and originality. On the eve of the Concurso flamenco Competition Falla echoed these concerns.

We would not have gone to the trouble of organising this competition for the sake of flamenco songs now in vogue. ... What we propose is to bring about a renaissance of an admirable Andalusian folk art that was about to disappear for ever, victim of the opulent and modern flamenco songs, which are about as Andalusian as I am Chinese. 18

While it may not have been Falla's intention, this position has been taken as a critique of the gypsies' pivotal role in the professionalisation of the genre. Some flamenco purists had argued, partly on racial grounds, that the contamination of the pure cante jondo style was predominantly due to gypsy innovations in the tablao of the second half of the nineteenth century. However, Antonio Mairena's later influential revivification of pure cante jondo styles was predicated on bringing the gypsy elements to the fore. 19

Although several prominent Spanish intellectuals signed a proclamation of support for the Concurso Jondo Competition, many expressed their misgivings. Flamenco music and its subculture were seemingly incompatible with the calls for greater Europeanisation or the search for a new Spanish identity steeped in the values of Castile, which were espoused by the intelligentsia of the cultural Generation of 1898. In the aftermath of the Spanish–American War and loss of Empire, and the ensuing search for identity, many of the intellectuals associated with the Generation of 1898 aimed their criticism at flamenco and its associated contexts.

Debates on antiflamenquismo first came to a head in the late nineteenth century in the context of a flamenco spectacle organised for the Foreign delegates to Madrid's Congress Artístico y Literario Internacional of 1887. Gaspar de Núñez de Arce, president of the Asociación de Escritores y Artistas argued vehemently for the cancellation of the performance, not so much as a form of protest against the custom of presenting foreigners with flamenco acts that graced Madrid's popular stages. By the turn of the century the popularity of flamenco, especially in Madrid, was such that intellectuals became obsessed with it, identifying it with Spain's supposed decadence, an attitude evident in the antiflamenquismo of writers such as Miguel de Unamuno, Pío Baroja and José Ortega y Gasset. Writing in the 1910s, Carlos and Pedro Cabo pointed to the roots of this antiflamenquismo, in their classic work Andalucía, un comunismo y un cante jondo.

Another prejudice of the Generation of 1898 ... was the espagñolité, the florid writings with which a Byron, a Gautier or a Mérimée presented Spain ... they gave such great importance to the judgements of these literary tourists, and that they were so alarmed at the thought that Europe could believe that Spain could be like that ... that they ended up venting their spleen on bullfighters and flamencos. 20

For the antiflamenquistas flamenco and its associated contexts (including taverns, jails, and bordellos) were seen as grotesque caricatures of Spanishness which encapsulated the backwardness of the peninsula's relation to Europe. The perceived lower-class, low-life and immoral associations of its public and settings - which did not preclude aristocratic and intellectuals slumming it at the tablao - was also linked by the antiflamenquistas with the gypsy's gypsy protagonists. There had been numerous Spanish royal decrees dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that had attempted to outlaw and later assimilate the gypsies within Spanish society, and many had settled in southern Spain (as so-called 'New Castilians'). Unlike the case in much of Europe, many gypsies became established in sectors of Andalusian towns and cities by the nineteenth century - such as Alhaurín in Granada - and did not form part of an itinerant transnational population. However, this did not preclude an exciting attitude and they were often still considered outsiders. Writing at the time of the Concurso Jondo Competition, Vicente Matanzas highlighted both an identification and an overriding sense of
Noel’s description of the constans singing brings to mind racist contemporary accounts of deformity and mental retardation among gypsies. To sing (flamenco) one needs a very special vocal quality, an exceptional muscular membrane in the throat and an artistic taste that is grotesquely exaggerated and absurd that it reflects... voluntary stupidity and tunes produced or accompanied by mysterious convulsions.

And yet Noel was also highly knowledgeable of flamenco forms and this sensibility is evident in many of his essays. His critique of the dancer Pastora Imperio acknowledges her artistry while lamenting the consequences of her gypsy art for the progress of Spanish culture:

If only this spirit contained something of an artistic ideal!... What great surprises it could have offered. But it is indescribable, tiny, brutal, rough, crude and gypsy. Her gypsiness is savage and pure; there is nothing more genuine or lamentable. I have long been a student of gipsiness. I know that it is the cause of our civil and moral decline. But this discouraging woman has convinced me that gipsiness is the supreme formula of our art at present. Damn this art... as it is an imitable movement backwards!

Noel’s ambivalence is palpable and in his comments on Pastora Imperio’s dance one senses his difficulty in disparaging something that is so deeply rooted in his culture and sensibility.

Racial stereotypes of gypsies also precluded them in the eyes of some commentators from having contributed to the formation of flamenco genre. This was due to their perceived appropriation of the cultural artefacts they came into contact with. Well into the twentieth century Spanish writers on music, and even flamenco, have remarked on the gypsies’ supposed limited musical talent, creativity and their lack of poetic ability. Some authors, like the eminent philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, have gone so far as to deny on racial grounds the overall importance given to the gypsy element in Spanish culture, claiming that the image of gypsy Spain was historically false:

We are, in effect, convinced that the base of the Spanish people is, racially, one of the most homogenous, consisting of a Romanised Celtic-Siberian substratum, and that the various invaders and immigrants, numerically very few, were soon mixed with it... And we come to believe that a people [like the gypsies], who pushed into Spain uninvited, without a homeland, history, literature or great historical figures... has been given more importance than it deserves. Can people believe that in Spain there is more gypsy blood than that of the Visigoths?

99 Such notions are alluded to in Pablos’ 1925 Historia y gentes.
100 Eugenio Noel, Suenos, chocas, flamencos, gentes y gitanos (Madrid: Bensasson, 1948).
101 Eugenio Noel, Favoritos y anecdotas de la comparsa auténtica (Madrid: Librería Pelayo, 1945).
104 Miguel de Unamuno, Gitanas y judíos, 33 Sal, 27 January 1918, 2.
Local context

Antiflamenquesismo persisted in the debates surrounding the Cante Jondo Competition of 1922, with many intellectuals wary of reviving interest in music that had been so closely associated with cronicismo and derogatory images of Spain. However, the leading modernist critic, Adolfo Salazar, pointed out that one should not reject such incredible sources of 'popular' music, because of the ways in which they have been abused by bad musicians, and if this abusive cronicismo [Hispanic traditionalism] has degenerated into a topic, it is no less a topic to reject [flamenco] in the name of a second-hand Europeanism.39

By the late nineteenth century the aura of creativity within flamenco performance had begun to rest with the individual and this gradually translated into the rising status of the gypsy cantantes, bailarinas and tocahores (guitarists). Even antiflamenques such as Núñez suggested that flamenco owed more to the caprices of its latest performer than to its lengthy historical genealogy.90

Falla and Lorca's espousal of flamenco and the gypsies' contributions to Andalusian and Spanish culture helped transform the attitudes of intellectuals and the subsequent cultural Generation of 1927.91 Lorca's characterisation of the gypsy as encapsulating the ideals of the Andalusian race is presented in the introduction to his Romancero gitano (1924–7):

The book as a whole, though entitled 'Gypsy', is the poem of Andalusia. I have called it gypsy because the gypsy epitomises the finest, the most profound, the most aristocratic characteristics of my country; he is the most representative of its way of living, the keeper of the flame, the blood, and the alphabet of a truth both Andalusian and Univeral.

Falla and Debates on The Racial Origins of Flamenco

The primacy accorded the gypsies in Lorca's constructions of flamenco and Falla's notion of the origins of cante jondo were not always in accord with contemporary Spanish cultural and musical perspectives. The importance Falla gave to the Indian roots of flamenco contrasted with the thoughts of his Andalusian companion Joaquín Turina, who speculated on the defining role of Arab music in the transformation of Southern Spanish music, in line with his own Hispano-Arabic Orientalist musical style. Falla's essay provoked a bemused response from Turina, who wrote to him on 7 October 1922, 'I am now more completely disoriented. Do you really believe that cante jondo comes from India? Are we making Indians of ourselves?44 (a colloquial expression in Spanish for making a fool of oneself).

Falla also disagreed with his teacher Felipe Pedrell's assertion that the persistence of musical orientalism in various Spanish popular songs was solely the result of 'the influence exerted by the most ancient Byzantine civilisation', and that even Andalusian song 'does not owe anything essential to the Arabs'.46 While Pedrell did give some credit to the role of gypsies, whose origins he traced to upper Egypt, it was only to stress their role in transferring Syrian influences and thus reinforcing the Byzantine legacy. Pedrell's promotion of Byzantine music as the possible conduit for Oriental influence can also be seen as an attempt to marginalise the Arab and Jewish legacies in Spain. Theories advancing Arab and Jewish influence on the evolution of flamenco only became more prominent from the 1930s.47 Antiflamenques at times referred to the mixed origins of flamenco but generally regarded its hybrid nature as a negative.

While Falla had also alluded to Byzantine influence, he respectfully challenged Pedrell's ideas by admitting the Hispano-Arabic cross-influences on the rhythmic contours and instrumental timbres associated with some of the dance forms. He specifically related aspects of the sevillanas, zapateados and siguidillas to the Moorish Andalusian music of North Africa, and had even made attempts to bring a group from Morocco to perform for the 1932 Cante Jondo Competition.48 At this time and later in 1930 Falla also considered visiting Morocco to study Arab-Andalusian music.49 In a 1932 letter to the eminent music critic Adolfo Salazar, he expanded on the possible Arab influences on flamenco styles and even cited the sources he had studied:

As far as Arab-Andalusian influences are concerned, I have only found these in the music for dance. (Independently, of course, of the evident relationship of the purely Andalusian cante with those of Oriental origin). You have the Yafi

45 Falla, H11 Cante Jondo, p. 222. For an extensive discussion of Falla's essay and the sources of Indian influence see Christopher Hollings, "Un ascenso incierto..."
46 In terms of Arab influences see for instance Arturo Paniagua, Cante jondo. Su origen y desarrollo (Madrid: Ediciones españolas, 1934), and in terms of Jewish influence see, for instance, Malcolm Atten, Cante jondo y su música española, Barcelona: Anagrama, 1986.
47 Falla's insistence on Arab influence may have also been due to a degree of anti-Semitism inspired by his Catholicism. For some propagandists the 'cultural pluralism of the high Middle Ages was a source of artistic power' (see Carolyn L. Poston, History Beyond Politics: France, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1796–1805. Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 831), and these ideas became even more prevalent during the Spanish Civil War.
48 See copy of a letter from Salazar to José Martínez Ribón, AMF.
49 Falla's proposed trip to Morocco to look into Arabic-Andalusian music is referred to in a letter from Prosper Ricard (February 1927), AMF.
50 J. B. Trend's descriptions (and transcription of Moroccan music found in letters to Falla from March 1917, especially letter dated March 1918, AMF. In a postcard dated 1 March 1917 Trend attempted to organise a trip to Marrakesh for Falla, AMF.
collection. Look at numbers 17 and 22 (Yachats Ghibri and Siba): Sevillanas and Zapateados. But how can one know if the origin of both is Moorish or Spanish? In any case, both examples are interesting.87

Falla’s personal library includes copies of the Collection Yafil which display the composer’s annotations.88 It is also evident from Falla’s remarks to Salazar that he did not discount the possibility of the influences travelling in the other direction, from Spain to North Africa.

Despite admitting the possible, if somewhat limited, influence of the Arabs on certain flamenco forms, Falla denied their more generalised impact upon Spanish music. While displaying interest in Julián Ribera’s initial studies on correspondences between Spanish and Arab music, Falla became openly critical of Ribera’s more controversial affirmations,89 which signalled the impact of the Arabs upon a wide spectrum of Iberian music, from the Araboscope Jota to the medieval Castiglos de Santa María. Some of the tenors of Falla’s position can be viewed within a tradition of Spanish scholarship which sought to minimise the Arab influence on the Spanish peninsula, its culture and race. The Reconquista (the Christian reclamation of the Peninsula from the Moors and the Jews) was interpreted as a defining force in Spanish Nationalism and identity and the disiusuous contemporary military campaigns against the Moroccans (1918–23) were viewed by some commentators as a continuation of that struggle.90 Falla’s identification of pan-Andalusian elements in flamenco that cross the Ibero-African divide also parallels contemporary cultural-political theories of identity, such as those of the modern of Andalusian nationalism Blas Infante, who sought to incorporate Northern Morocco as an integral part of the Andalusian state within Spain.91

In the early 1920s Falla’s musical nationalism progressively assimilated some of the ideals of the Generation of 1898, most notably their Castilian bias and modern European aspirations. His music shifted from evoking Spanish folklore, and especially the flamenco genre of Andalucía, to exploring Spain’s musical past in the light of emerging neo-classical trends, a style followed by most musicians of the cultural Generation of 1922. However, Falla retained elements of flamenco and the music that had supposedly played a part in its evolution.92 Examples of this shift include

87 Manuel de Falla, letter to Adolfo Salazar, 11 March 1942, AMF.
88 The Latin title Nicae included in the above letters is marked “Sevillana and Falla’s annotations provide a preliminary harmonisation while transcribing the entries included in the same year—1941.”
89 Adolfo Salazar, letter to Manuel de Falla, March 1942, AMF.
90 Both Catholic conservatives and progressives embraced the concept of the Reconquista, although progressive commentators were more ambivalent about its significance. While celebrating the triumph of the Abencerrajes (with concepts of nation and political unity) over the Arabs, they recognised the extraordinary achievements of Hispano Arabic culture. Boal, Memorias, p 31.
91 Neogrec, Ideología epistperialista y la construcción de la identidad cultural, p 208.
92 For instance, in El retablo de Maese Pedro elements of the pre-Hispanic and Norman are included in flamenco practices, and there are references to Indian types in the sketches.
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