

# Metaphors of Spanish Culture in Flamenco, Gender Roles and Gender Issues: Modern Metaphors to Understand Some Traditional Female Flamenco Movements and Steps

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The art of Flamenco dance teaches Spanish culture through the dance steps and the metaphors they communicate. Some metaphors from the past are hard to understand, especially when referring to women's role and social status, as women of the 21st century in Spain have democratic rights women from past centuries did not have. Expressing some of those metaphors through the movements of flamenco is very hard, unless you understand the patriarchal society of then. I will analyze some metaphors flamenco teachers use to explain concepts and gender roles from the past that are hard to understand by younger generations who live in a democratic Spain. By studying the meaning of what *flamencas* perform on stage, and the role of musicians on stage, we find gender issues and tensions between the female and male artist. Writers like Pardo Bazán, Carmen de Burgos, or Lorca perceived flamenco differently in the past, and their views helped recognize flamenco as a refined art.

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*Keywords:* Flamenco; Pardo Bazán; Carmen de Burgos; Modern Flamenco Metaphors; Cultural Studies; Women's Studies; Gender Studies.

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El arte del baile flamenco enseña la cultura española a través de los pasos de baile y las metáforas que comunican. Algunas metáforas del pasado son difíciles de entender, especialmente cuando se refieren al rol y el estatus social de la mujer, ya que las mujeres del siglo XXI en España tienen derechos democráticos que las mujeres de siglos pasados no tuvieron. Expresar algunas de esas metáforas a través de los movimientos del flamenco es muy difícil, a no ser que entiendas la sociedad patriarcal de entonces. Analizaré algunas metáforas que usan los maestros flamencos para explicar conceptos y roles de género del pasado que son difíciles de entender para las generaciones más jóvenes que viven en una España democrática. Al estudiar el significado de lo que las flamencas interpretan en el escenario y el papel de los músicos en el escenario, encontramos problemas de género y tensiones entre el artista femenino y masculino. Escritores como Pardo Bazán, Carmen de Burgos o Lorca percibieron el flamenco de otra manera en el pasado, y sus puntos de vista ayudaron a reconocer el flamenco como un arte refinado.

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*Palabras clave:* Flamenco, Pardo Bazán; Carmen de Burgos; metáforas del flamenco moderno; estudios culturales; estudios de la mujer; estudios de género.

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## 1. Introduction

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*Because flamenco is not notated, the score is written as the dance proceeds. The performer is the conductor and guitarists, and singers must obey the percussive lead of the dancer. I have put down these comments again and again. The form is poorly understood and rather esoteric and arcane. The responsibility lies on the dancer and to have this knowledge is imperative (Inesita, 2020).*

When you learn about flamenco and flamenco dance, you would not normally think it is gendered, or that it has gender and class issues present in it. We can use dances from a specific country to learn about the culture or aspects of the culture of that country. Dances from Spain, and, specifically flamenco, can be used as well to learn parts of language, language structures, vocabulary, some history of the dance and its origins, social norms from the past, and specific cultural aspect of the society where flamenco was born. In this study, we will analyze several metaphors used in flamenco dance sessions to allow female students of flamenco dance understand what their bodies are supposed to communicate with the flamenco moves and steps they are learning from the teacher. As a student of flamenco dance myself, it is important to me to understand what the dance means, and what I need to express and communicate with my body through the movements and clothes I use. All the dance movements and steps are connected to Spanish culture from the past, and have influences from other countries. Even though gender roles and gender issues are not openly communicated in a modern flamenco class, we can find these issues embedded in the dance movements. Somehow, the flamenco movements *flamencas* perform can remind us of the past cultural and social context women lived in. By studying *flamencas* from the past and their social context, female students of flamenco can better understand what they are communicating with the dance. Some of the dance steps *flamencas* use challenge the audience, tease them, show flirting, or disdain. Why would they challenge the audience, or show audacity, or disdain? The art of Flamenco dance teaches Spanish culture through the dance steps and its metaphors. Some of those metaphors, are hard to understand, especially when referring to women's role and social status. Spanish Women of the twenty first century have the same democratic rights as men, something women of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not have, and nowadays, women live as free citizens of a democratic society. The cultural and social context of the *gitanas* and *flamencas* from past centuries was very different. By studying what women and *flamencas* had to endure in the past, flamenco movements performed by females become more powerful and have meaning for the performer. This can help female students of flamenco learn what they would like to communicate with their dance and body movements.

Some of the metaphors flamenco teachers use today to explain social concepts and gender roles from the past are hard to understand by younger generations. Expressing some of those metaphors is very hard unless you understand the patriarchal society of then. By studying the meaning of what flamenco dancers perform on stage, as well as the role of musicians on stage, and how that has changed in more recent years, we can find gender and class issues and tensions between *bailaoras* and *cantaoras* or *tocaoras*. Many researchers of flamenco consider the musicians are the conductors, and others say it is the dancers who are in control of the stage. There seems to be tension between the different artists for power and control on stage, when flamenco started as a business. Men took over the stage and *flamencas* were relegated to a secondary role. I will use the words and view of Inesita, a contemporary flamenco performer who lives in the United States, and who is still performing at her advanced age. She very firmly expresses that the dancer is always the conductor of the song and has the power on stage. In addition to my personal experience with flamenco, we will also have in mind different fields, like Cultural Studies, Academic Feminism, and Gender Studies. *Flamencas* lived during specific times in a patriarchal society that did not enjoy women's presence in the public sphere. We use some videos of interviews as well, and the research of Spanish journalist Ángeles Cruzado (2020), who has put together an important study of Spanish *flamencas* from the 1860s to the 1980s. In her study she presents female flamenco dancers in chronological order. Most of those *flamencas* were famous during their lifetimes, but were forgotten, and Cruzado brought them back to complete the history of Spanish female artists and performers. Most of these performers were removed and forgotten during the Franco Regime. We also include the views Pardo Bazán, Burgos, or Lorca had about flamenco.



## 2. Dance from a Sociological Perspective

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To explore dance as a form of not only art, but as a form which communicates different meanings and aspects about a society, we will use Nicole English's sociological study. She expresses in her doctoral dissertation, *Dance as Community of Practice: Exploring Dance Groups in the Kansas City Area Through the Lifespan* (University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2015), dance can be studied as a cultural practice, rather than a specific form of art that is open to interpretation. In her dissertation, English (2015) explains that her study:

...analyzes the way dance is used as a cultural practice to communicate cultural information in an embodied form, to convey social roles and socialization, and to help form cultural and personal identity. This study also explores how such cultural practices can be used to solidify personal identity cohesiveness, family relations, group identity, community cohesiveness, and social well-being, regardless of age (p. 21).

Dance in general can be used to communicate cultural information in an embodied form as English explains, and her study uses group dances and communities in Kansas City, Missouri. English (2015) also explains that «we should look at a different culture's perspective of dance and its purpose in society» (p. 26). When an embodied form of dance is gendered, it allows us to analyze gender, gender and class issues, and even social issues that were not apparent in the initial dance, but that are present in the culture of the dance, in the politics and society of the time, in what the dance and dancers want to communicate, in what the dance is about, and in what the bodies (male and female) are telling us through the dance and their body movements. We find this perspective in William Washabaugh's different studies about dance, flamenco, and other interesting dances, like the Argentine tango, or rebetika from Greece. Washabaugh (1998a) explains in his book *The Passion of Music and Dance: Body Gender and Sexuality*, where flamenco, tango, and rebetika are analyzed, that in dances like the Argentine tango, the stage becomes a literal battlefield of the female body dancing to fight for space that has been controlled by the male body. Her legs and feet will look like she is kicking the male dancer to liberate herself from the male embrace. Her upper body does not move at all, only her legs and feet move: «Tangueros are caught up in the complicated and repressed ties to the other men, and the tangueras deploy self-empowering choreographic maneuvers while seeming to submit to their macho partners» (p. 20). Even though tango and flamenco display androcentrism, Washabaugh does not oversimplify the social history of tango (p. 19).

In flamenco, after the nineteenth century Romantics commercialized this art, and women lost the power they had over the flamenco dance and music, it was men, *cantaors*, *tocaors* and *bailaors* who started controlling the stage, the song or *cante*, the instruments, and everything on stage and related to the business of flamenco. Women were allowed to dance or became more decorative elements on stage with their beautiful and colorful flamenco dresses. The press and Impresarios were the ones who controlled the flamenco shows and artists in the Cafés Cantantes. Women were left to only dance and to a more decorative function on stage. As in tango, where male and female dancers seem to be fighting for space and power, the same could be seen in flamenco. *Cantaor* and *guitarrista* are competing on stage for their space and recognition with the female dancer, *la flamenca*.

Flamenco is a dance that expresses many human emotions, and one of them is freedom from all bourgeoisie social norms. Washabaugh (1996) explains in *Flamenco: Passion, Politics, and Popular Culture* (1995) that «Flamenco bodies, moving within the long-lived political force field of Andalusian social life, inadvertently comply with or resist specific political agendas» (p. 5). *Flamencas* were either humble women from the lower class, women who belonged to the *gitano*

(gypsy) community, or women who were in the lower middle-class in the south of Spain and wanted to become artists. What is interesting for this study is that even though men relegated these artist women to the margins and silenced them taking over the songs and instruments, as Washabaugh (1996) explains, they were on stage dancing flamenco and performing as females, when possible, and directly competing with the men in the public sphere, the stage:

These public men carried forward this jondo style as they gathered together in public fraternity, tarrying with other men rather than returning to their woman-dominated houses. By sitting and chatting and drinking and eventually singing long into the night, they preserved tradition. What's more, their songs became the banner of their masculinity, outward signs of manly control over the public sphere (p. 14).

### 3. Women and the Male Public Sphere

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To explain this specific context further, women in the nineteenth century in Spain were not supposed to be on stage or in the public sphere, but at home. Rita Felski (1995), in *The Gender of Modernity*, explains:

In the texts of early Romanticism one finds some of the most explicitly nostalgic representations of femininity as a redemptive refuge from the constraints of civilization. Seen to be less specialized and differentiated than man, located within the household and an intimate web of familial relations, more closely linked to nature through her reproductive capacity, woman embodied a sphere of atemporal authenticity seemingly untouched by the alienation and fragmentation of modern life (p. 25).

Women of the middle class had a domestic life and were not part of the public modern life, as that was reserved for the men of that period. The domestic sphere was seen as the peaceful space where men could relax from the public sphere. The division of the two spheres, one for men and one for women, is explained in the ideology of domesticity Bridget Aldaraca presents in her book, *El Ángel Del Hogar: Galdós and the Ideology of Domesticity in Spain* (1991). Women of the middle class were not to work outside the domestic sphere, which was reserved for the men. Even so, female artist performed on stage with men, but the society of that time would have censored these women. *Flamencas* performed mainly for a male audience. Respectable women were not supposed to be in these public spaces. At the same time, this would cause tensions on stage, as women were working in the public sphere reserved for the men. Felski (1991) also explains that, «actress, sex object, prostitute, performer, spectacle; all these identities render her the paradigmatic symbol of a culture increasingly structured around the erotics and aesthetics of the commodity» (p. 13). The female artist was not seen as a positive element in the 19th century, and she was associated with the prostitute, or women with a poor reputation as they worked in the public sphere. The female on stage was an object of pleasure for the male audience.

### 4. Learning Gendered Movements and Metaphors in Flamenco Classes

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Going back to the metaphors of flamenco and how to communicate them to students of flamenco I was mentioning at the beginning of this study, it is important to explain how flamenco teachers communicate some of those gendered metaphors and teach gender roles as part of the flamenco tradition, so that the students learning flamenco understand what their bodies need to perform when a dance is gendered. As a student of flamenco at Sara Martín Flamenco School (Madrid, Spain), I learn some of those gendered metaphors each week, while I take different live



classes online from different flamenco teachers. We only have one male student in one of our classes, and it is Initiation to *danza estilizada* (Spanish Classical Dance). Some of the step the male student learns are different from the step we learn as the dance is gendered. *Danza estilizada*, as the famous dancer and choreographer Mariemma (Iscar, Valladolid, 1917-Madrid, 2008) defined it, is the free composition of steps and choreographies based on popular dances, flamenco, and the Bolera School. It is a more refined and stylized type of dance with intimate connections to the Bolera School and Flamenco. All the students in this dance class learn new metaphors for each dance movement, and what they mean, so we can perform the steps and movements the way the teacher wants us to perform them. Some of the movements we learned are gendered and the fact that females wear a skirt for practice is example of this, be it flamenco or *estilizada*. Teachers might not openly explain this in class, and will simply say the skirts are part of the tradition of flamenco dance or *estilizada*, an accessory for the *flamencas* as the fan, the castanets, or the *mantón de Manila*. Some of the female dancers wear pants as they are more comfortable for practice, and they allow teachers to see our legs and feet while we dance, and allow better corrections of movements and *zapateados*. A skirt is normally required for flamenco dancing. As Timothy deWaal Malefyt (1998b) explains in “‘Inside’ and ‘Outside’ Spanish Flamenco”, «Flamenco music is “about” sex, love, and the allure or rejection of charismatic males and females to each other» (p. 64). Malefyt (1998b) explains about the sexual qualities in flamenco, and how erotically charged and gendered this form of art can be:

The guitar is often compared to a woman’s body and guitarists are always men, sparking many jokes, and much mild lewdness. Even castanets played in the right and left hands, are distinguished as male or female (right female, left male mine): the “male” castanet is recognized for the ever-so-subtle but evident “protrusion” at its base. These sexual qualities in flamenco (although mentioned only in brief here) add to the strong gender divisions already present in Andalusian society, and make flamenco a charged, but relevant subject in which to explore issues of gender and local/national identity. Flamenco, like many dance forms, is drenched in eroticism (p. 64).

When in a flamenco class, female teachers pull up their skirts most of the time, so students can see the legs and feet while learning the steps and *zapateados*. Most of the students in the physical classroom struggle with how to express and idea the teacher is explaining to us through the movements we are learning. As older metaphors do not really work anymore for the female student of the 21st century, some metaphors prevail, and new ones, more modern ones, are created to communicate the idea of the movements and *zapateado* we are learning in class. Sometimes, we do not really understand what the movement means or what we are supposed to communicate with that movement. Flamenco is learned by repetition, and we imitate the movements the teacher performs for us and repeat them until they look as close as the ones the teacher does. Our bodies memorize the movements somehow, as a mechanical exercise. Some movements are odd and feel unnatural to our bodies. Others seems daring and provocative, or highly erotic, like some hip movements in tango flamenco, for instance. Spanish women of the 21st century have different views of the world from the *flamencas* who danced during the 19th and early 20th centuries in Spain. Nowadays, women have more freedoms in Spain, and might not understand some of the struggle *flamencas*, and women in general, had to go through in life, and on stage, while competing with the musicians, and *cantaores* (male singers), as Washabaugh explains. There is sexism in flamenco, and if only that, women would have a much harder time having a space in the male sphere. To understand why there is sexism in flamenco, we need to look at the society of the 19th and early 20th centuries in Spain. The Spanish patriarchal society of the 19th and early 20th centuries was sexist and flamenco dance would pick up the social and cultural aspects

of that sexist society and make them part of the performances. *Flamencas* used their bodies and dance movements in the past to tease and provoke the male audience, while competing with their male counterparts on stage. The pulling up of the skirt to show the feet and legs, so footwork could be appreciated, the tapping in general, and the flirting and eroticizing of the female dance were all forms of keeping the attention of the male audience, while at the same time we could see those dance movements as transgressions of the social norms.

The skirt is an accessory that hides women's legs and feet. In the past, long skirts were the normal piece of clothing women wore. On special occasions or festivities, those long skirts, or long dresses would be very pretty and colorful, and women would wear them to be more attractive and allow men to admire their beauty. Men wore pants and still wear them, and they do not hide their legs when they dance. Every time the *flamenca* has to tap the *zapateado*, she needs to lift her skirt, so she does not trip with her skirt, but this also shows her feet and ankles to the audience. This way her footwork can be seen while she is dancing. In our modern society, showing ankles, or feet is unimportant, but during the time flamenco was created, women who were respectable did not show their feet, ankles, nor legs in public. This means, each time a *flamenca* lifted her skirt to show her legs and feet to the audience, so her tapping could be appreciated, it would be an act of rebellion against social norms and the status quo. At the same time, that skirt would remind the audience that a woman was dancing. Men were the ones who normally tapped, and jumped, and women would use their upper bodies, hands and arms, and facial expressions more when dancing flamenco. We could almost say those skirts would somehow immobilize women from the waist down. It was a provocation and challenge of the social norms to show the feet and legs to the audience. Flirting while showing your feet and doing some footwork was also part of the dance movements we learned in a flamenco class, and even though being flirtatious is something we do not consider negative, for a woman of the 19th and early 20th centuries, it would be a provocation of the male audience. When we raise our skirt to start some footwork in a flamenco class, we are inviting the audience to look at our feet and ankles. The metaphor would be, "look what I got for you" ("mira lo que tengo para ti") while we are smiling to the audience. We have seen more offensive and provocative body movements nowadays, like twerking for instance, or samba movements that are more erotically charged than those flamenco steps which mean to provoke the audience, but that is precisely what flamenco teachers try to teach us. The intention in those flamenco steps is to tease and provoke the male audience. They were quite provocative then and some of us struggle in the flamenco class today, when trying to show that provocation, as in our society, it would not be such a provocation. It would be more about showing our dancing skills. Flirtation must be part of the female flamenco dancer, and must be seen in our face, body position, smile, eyes, and body posture. Flamenco is then erotically charged, and by extension gendered, and men concentrate more on tapping and lower body movements and jumps, and less on hands and arms, and facial expressions. Washabaugh (1998c) explains in "Fashioning Masculinity in Flamenco Dance" that men in flamenco have specific movements and body postures that indicate aggressiveness, provocation, masculinity, and *machismo* in general, but that they also make reference to some feminine movements, like *bailaor* Farruco does, when he lifts his hem, or vest in the manner women lift their skirts when tapping (p. 47). It seems to be a flamenco movement both genders use when doing *escobillas* or *remates* but I would differentiate between the skirt and the pants, as skirts are worn by women, and pants, hems and vests are normally worn by men during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Some *flamencas* would challenge their female role by using pants and male flamenco outfits when they danced, and their footwork would be as impressive as the one performed by a *bailaor*. We can think of Carmen Amaya as example, but there are many more *flamencas* who challenged the flamenco gendered role assigned to them. They were real gender transgressors. This, however, will be a topic for future study.



Another metaphor is when flamenco dancers have to express anger, passion, power or strength. One of my teachers always says: “Que te dé un arrebató”, when we have to do specific footwork that is quite hard, and complex, and we cannot get it right. *Arrebato* (un arranque de emoción) can be translated as a fit of rage, fit of madness, or an outburst of emotion. The *escobilla* or *remate* (footwork) is hard on its own, and when we have to add a specific emotion to the footwork as well, it becomes even harder. I believe the teacher wants to communicate that if we do the footwork with an *arrebató*, it will come out easily, and that is true. The metaphor is that a particular *escobilla* or *remate* we are attempting needs power, energy, and strength to get it completed correctly. A fit of rage would be perfect while performing the footwork, as it would help get us through the combination with power and decision. To show an *arrebató* on stage may not mean much today to us apart from trying to express power, passion, or strength with a specific *zapateado*, but to women who lived in previous centuries, dancing with passion and power would probably be a very transgressive act, as women were supposed to be passive and mild. *Flamencas* would feel empowered by that act, as they were not allowed to do much in their patriarchal society. Many *flamencas* express that dancing flamenco is a liberating experience, and they use flamenco to let emotions flow out. The little I have learned so far is a very liberating experience.

## 5. The Birth and Business of Flamenco

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When flamenco started being commercialized in the 19th century during Romanticism, bourgeoisie women were placed in the home again and their role was to be mothers, wives, and the Angel of the House, a role model that Aldaraca perfectly explains in her book from 1991, *El ángel del hogar. Galdós and the Ideology of Domesticity in Spain*. Espino-Bravo explains in, *Emilia Pardo Bazán y Carmen de Burgos: resistencia al matrimonio desde la novel de la Restauración* how the Spanish nation (2017), the Spanish Realist novel, and the role of men and women was created in the 19th century by men. The Spanish nation and the Realist novel were to be created to accommodate the new middle class that was emerging with more power in all the different social arenas of Spain. Middle-class women were controlled by staying at home and outside the public sphere by giving them a domestic education, and by controlling all of their movements (11). Two female writers, one canonical and both of them very famous during their lifetime, Emilia Pardo Bazán and Carmen de Burgos *Colombine* resisted this model of the Angel of the House, and created a better option for Spanish women, a woman who was able to work in the public sphere, who did not have a domestic education and was able to study, and who would challenge all bourgeoisie norms by working and existing in the public sphere, the male sphere (11-12). They created a space for the New Woman to emerge at the beginning of the 20th century in Spain, and that space was in the public and male sphere. These two writers challenged the vision men had for the middle-class woman by creating characters in their novels and short stories that would directly or indirectly defy and challenge the male model. Burgos went even farther and tried to educate Spanish women with her essays on women’s issues, and her short stories, which explained real cases of Spanish women’s misfortunes. Her short novels and stories were aimed at the middle-class women to educate them. It is in this space that many *flamencas* were able to perform in the public sphere, compete with male dancers, or guitarists. Many of them were very famous during their lifetimes and recognized artists. The public sphere was dangerous and polluted and it was not seen with good eyes that women of the middle class would work outside the domestic sphere. Female artists had a bad reputation and flamenco was considered a low-class dance until it mixed with other dances of the period during the 19th and early 20th centuries (the Bolera School dances, Folkloric dances), and became much more refined and apt for broader audiences, which would include women. It is also important to note that notions of gender were

constantly transformed and reinterpreted during the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. Felski (1995) explains that:

Gender is continually in process, an identity that is performed and actualized over time within given social constraints. To acknowledge the social determination of femininity is not, therefore, to advocate a logic of identity which assumes that women's experiences of modernity can simply be assimilated to those of men. To be sure, women's lives have been radically transformed by such quintessentially modern phenomena as industrialization, urbanization, the advent of the nuclear family, new forms of time-space regulation, and the development of the mass media. In this sense, there can be no separate sphere of women's history outside the prevailing structures and logics of modernity (p. 30).

To explain how *flamencas* lost their stage space to men, we need to go back to the Romantics. Flamenco was first commercialized in the 19th century with the Romantics. Europeans traveled to Spain to experience flamenco and exotic dances. Washabaugh (1998b) explains that during the Romantic period, the prostitute and the prostitute's lament were favorite elements of the romantics. It is interesting to see how the prostitute and the *flamenca* are connected:

Romantics contended that one could maximize the possibilities of accessing this dark and raging soul by searching out the riskiest passion and the most thoroughly forgotten pain. Their favored site for spiritual spelunking was, logically enough, the prostitute. This logic helps make sense of the long running Romantic concern with the prostitute's lament (p. 34).

Washabaugh (1998b) continues explaining about the Romantics and the prostitute's lament or heartache as he calls it, to conclude that:

For the middle-class listener, attending to this heartache is an act that makes space for a soul to stretch and breathe. To listen to this heartache is to live in fullness. So it happens that *flamencas* sing, and aficionados come away convinced that they have been involved in a truly and authentically HUMAN activity (p. 35).

Washabaugh explains that Andalusian men usurped women's voices. They «supplanted women and became the humic, whole-bodied adepts of Andalusian song» (ibidem). *Cantaores* like Antonio Chacón (turn of the century), Pepe Marchena (1950s) or Fernando Montor (1970s) used a falsetto voice to sing, murmured the songs and whispered his passion, or used long moans, sobs and hiccoughs when singing, it seems clear to Washabaugh that men were impersonating *flamencas* and women were turned into mere window dressing (ibidem). Women were marginalized in flamenco and were purely a decoration of the stage.

Students in a modern flamenco class understand flamenco is a passionate dance and try to express what the teachers explain somehow through their dancing and body movements, but students of flamenco do not see how sexist flamenco really is. If we were told that flamenco is gendered, and that women had a tough time as artists in the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries in Spain, and that they had to compete with the men for a space on stage, we would be able to better understand some of the steps we learn in flamenco as females, some of the attitudes in the movements, like the flirting, or provoking the audience with gestures of disdain, or the showing of feet and ankles as an act of challenge, transgression, and rebellion, even showing our legs when pulling the skirt up to be able to tap is an act of rebellion to a certain extent, as tapping was more reserved for men. Tapping was more reserved for the male dancer so he could show off his power and strength through the footwork, and women were not supposed to show anything below their skirts to anybody, less to an audience. They were to use the upper bodies, facial expressions, head movements, and arms and hands when they danced. My point is



that flamenco is extremely hard to learn, and all these expressions of emotion have little meaning without a context. If female flamenco students were told they are performing a step to transgress the norms of their society, they would probably understand better the emotions they need to use to communicate that through the steps. Flamenco was provocative and challenging in that sense and *flamencas* themselves represented that challenge, using their bodies and their flamenco dance. Washabaugh (1998a) explains that at the end of the 19th century in Spain, we could find the gender and class ambivalences embodied in specific characters like the Carmen from Bizet, for instance, and that these ambivalences «that she embodied served to link these developing aspects of modern society to music, binding class, gender, music and dance together into a very beautiful but very volatile package» (p. 11). So, Romantic characters like Carmen and Don José from the Opera Carmen (1874) by Bizet and what they symbolized allows us to observe the gender and class struggles through music from the beginning of modernity until the present times. Carmen is the gypsy woman, and Washabaugh describes her as a bohemian, a free spirit. She is brutally honest, and disdainful of bureaucrats, wage checks. She is the opposite of the bourgeoisie, rejects all class, «and swimming in the free and passionate-but very smoky-air of an untrammelled spirit» (ibidem). On the other side, Don José is a well-disciplined fellow, but was doomed because he briefly flirted with Carmen. He is described as a man who succumbed to the seductions of a bohemian woman (ibidem). Carmen is then the female gypsy (*la gitana*), and Washabaugh (1998a) mentions a study by J. Seigel, where we can find this opposition between *señoritos* who attended the *Cafés cantantes* (spaces where male and female artists could perform different dances, including flamenco, play songs and the audience was mostly male between 1847 y 1920), and the *gitanos*. The image of the *gitano* was created for the purpose of liberating the middle class from their money (p. 12). Washabaugh explains that «early popular styles of flamenco and tango embody ambivalent and constantly shifting negotiations» (ibidem). Washabaugh (1998a) explains that post-napoleonic era in Spain was full of nationalism. Dance academies were being created at that time, and Andalusians nurtured the love and hate relationship they had with Italian opera, and although they had rejected it, they copied its vocal style (p. 13). The French Romantics influenced Spain and brought interest in the Spanish soul associated with the *gitano*'s life of transgression and suffering (ibidem). In later years, women were silenced and relegated to a secondary role on the stage. Men took over flamenco song and music, and women would either be allowed to dance on stage, or just be there for decorative purposes (p. 14). As Washabaugh (1998b) explains, women's voices were marginalized by the voices of the poets in the 19th century (p. 33). In this context, to have an *arrebato* on stage while doing a *remate*, would have more meaning for a students of flamenco, as we would be the metaphor of a woman without any stage space nor power, who is dancing and competing with male artists for recognition.

## 6. Bringing Back All the *Flamencas*

Even though *flamencas* were marginalized, they were on stage and competing with the male artists, and they were not only a decorative element, but the dancers who stole the attention of the audience. Ángeles Cruzado (2020), a Spanish journalist and researcher of flamenco has done an important study on *flamencas* and the history of female flamenco dancers by compiling in chronological order all these *flamencas* who existed in Spain since the beginning of flamenco. To do this she used the newspapers of the time that talked about these *flamencas* and their successful performances. In the 2020 online Conference, “II Aula de Flamenco: Bailaoras”, organized by the Diputación de Badajoz and the University of Extremadura, Cruzado presents all of the famous and not so famous *flamencas* who existed in Spain from the Romantic period around 1860, the Franco Regime years of the 1950s, until the 1980s in Spain. This gives us a sense of continuity

in the history of females in flamenco. Most of these women in the performing arts were forgotten during the years Franco was in power, just as the famous female writer Carmen de Burgos was. Cruzado explains the national and international success these *flamencas* had dancing flamenco, the money they made, some of the shows they managed and choreographed, and so on. Her study is very valuable for academic feminists, as it shows all the women who worked in the public sphere with men during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Cruzado mentions women were not paid the same as men, and they had to fight the negative stigma of being a female artist. We learn about the New Woman in the arts in Spain. Most of these women disappeared during Franco's Regime, some remained and were remembered in the history of flamenco, especially the ones who were able to travel the world and become famous in the United States, and outside of Spain, like Carmen Dauset Moreno known as *Carmencita* (the first *flamenca* to be dancing on film for some seconds), or Carmen Amaya, the *flamenca* who is still remembered in the United States, and Spain for the energy and power she used in her *zapateados* and for her male outfits.

A few important ideas Cruzado presents in her conference is that before the Romantic period, there existed a primitive form of flamenco, the *Zambra*. From the end of the 18th century this primitive flamenco was appreciated by the English and French who traveled to Spain. The Bolero dances (*La Escuela Bolera*) were very important in the formation of flamenco. At the parties, Bolero dances and flamenco would be performed, and the Gypsies would be brought to these parties to dance flamenco. Flamenco and Bolero dances would get mixed and both dances would be performed together. These two dance styles influenced each other. Cruzado (2020) explains:

El flamenco surge en la década de 1860-69 con unas características específicas: profesionalización de los artistas, edad de oro del flamenco, los artistas muestran su arte en los cafés cantantes. En esta etapa hay cambios que marcan lo que será el flamenco posterior: la especialización y división sexual del trabajo. El baile pierde fuerza ante el cante y la guitarra (hombres). Las mujeres pasan a un segundo plano (baile). Se asocia un desprestigio a la bailaora, por los lugares donde trabajaban, ya que se jugaba, bebía, había prostitución, peleas, asesinatos (19'50").

Cruzado thus mentions that flamenco was gendered to some extent. Women lost the stage to the male musicians and singers, and she explains that being a *flamenca* had negative connotations, since the places where they performed were not designed for respectable women. As for the differences we can appreciate in the flamenco dance itself, men would dance moving more the lower parts of their bodies, the legs, and would concentrate on the *zapateados*. Women would dance moving from their waists up, torso, arms, and hands (*floreo*), facial expressions, and head movements. The *flamenca* was an object of desire and she used beautiful dresses and accessories to have the audience's attention. Cruzado explains this would later be the base for the Sevillian School of Flamenco. Cruzado mentions so many *flamencas* in her conference that it is hard to remember them all, but we will mention some who are not very well known, and one in particular, who was very famous during her lifetime, and who was mentioned by Emilia Pardo Bazán in a short article about flamenco, *la Macarrona*. Cruzado explains that one of the pioneers in flamenco was Rosario Monje *la Mejorana* (Cádiz 1858-1922), Pastora Imperio and Víctor Rojas' mother. Both followed her steps. Cruzado explains that the *cantes* of *la Mejorana* inspired Manuel de Falla's *El amor brujo*. Another *flamenca* was Magdalena Seda Loreto *la Malena* (Jerez 1877-Sevilla 1956). *La Malena* developed her flamenco career with *la Macarrona* and she danced with a group of gitanas. Other *flamencas* were Antonia (El Puerto 1874-Madrid 1942) and Josefa Gallardo Rueda (El Puerto 1871-Madrid 1935) and they were *las Coquineras*. They moved their hands with *desplante* (rudeness, defiance, arrogance, with contempt). The great star of this period



is Juana la Macarrona<sup>1</sup>. She lived in Seville and came from a very flamenco family. Her father played the guitar, and her mother sang. Her sister also danced and sang. La Macarrona became famous in the Café de Silverio, Café del Burrero and other Andalusian cities. She traveled to Paris in 1889 for the first time to perform at the Exposición Universal of that city. Emilia Pardo Bazán would see her perform there.

## 7. Emilia Pardo Bazán, Carmen de Burgos, Federico García Lorca, and Flamenco

Ángeles Ezama Gil studies the dances in the narratives of Emilia Pardo Bazán in “La danza en la prosa de Emilia Pardo Bazán: de la tradición a la modernidad” (2017), and even though Pardo Bazán wrote many times about the *muñeira*, the folkloric dance from her homeland Galicia, she writes only once or twice about flamenco. Ezama Gil presents a very interesting study about the different texts Pardo Bazán wrote about dances. There is one particular article she wrote that interests us, as it talks about flamenco, and it was called “Sesión flamenca” from 1886. Ezama (2017) explains: «Con el mismo afán de mostrar los bailes característicamente españoles escribí Pardo Bazán el único artículo que dedicó al flamenco, titulado “Sesión flamenca”, que se publicó en 1886 en *Les Matinéas Espagnoles*» (p. 69)<sup>2</sup>. Ezama mentions that in some of Pardo Bazán’s prose writings, we can find another reference to flamenco, like in the short story “El casamiento del diablo”<sup>3</sup>. In this short story, Pardo Bazán describes a *gitana*:

Tenía la primera ojos de lumbre, aceitunada tez, pelo color de ala de cuervo, talle flexible, y entre sus dedos morenos y afinados temblaban las andaluzas castañuelas y repicaba la pandereta encintada de vivos colores. A su cuerpo de serpentina curvas se ceñía el mantón manileño, y sus pies calzados de raso herían el suelo con gracioso ritmo (as cited in Ezama, 2017, p. 69).

Interesting to us is to learn that Pardo Bazán did not care for flamenco, as she was a Naturalist. The literary and artistic movement she belonged to rejected anything that came from the Romantics. Flamenco was born during the Romantic period, and all Realists and Naturalist were anti-flamenco. We can find that rejection of flamenco in her words when Pardo Bazán describes the Gypsies and la Macarrona. According to Isabel Clúa (cited in Ezama, 2017, p. 69), Pardo Bazán did not write much about flamenco except for this little article, because it was performed in the Cafés cantantes, and these places were not appropriate for aristocratic women, as it would compromise their honorability and social status. Ezama (2017) explains that:

En el artículo se glosa el espectáculo en el contexto de una fiesta de sociedad en el que intervienen dos cantoras, una chula y una gitana, y un bailar, descritos con todo detalle, destacando los elementos pintorescos (exóticos) de su aspecto físico (la belleza de la chula y la fealdad de los gitanos), de su atuendo (el mantón de Manila y el chal bordado de color rojo) y del baile que ejecutan. La chula canta y luego baila (p. 69).

It is interesting to notice how Pardo Bazán disqualifies la Macarrona, even though she was one of the most well-known and famous *flamencas* of her time. Pardo Bazán considers her dancing

<sup>1</sup>Juana Vargas de las Heras la Macarrona, Jerez 1870-Sevilla 1947.

<sup>2</sup>In footnotes, Ezama continues explaining where this article appeared translated into Spanish: the translation of this article was published in *El Museo popular: periódico-biblioteca*, año I, n.º 2, pp. 2-4; año I, n.º 3, pp. 1-3. This newspaper from Madrid was first published in January 1887. A fragment of this article was published with the title “Flamenco” in the special number dedicated to L’Espagne by *Nouvelle Revue Internationale* (1900, pages 217-218) and, previously, in a special number of the *Pâques Fleuries* (1898, pages 82-83).

<sup>3</sup>*El Guadalete*, Jerez de la Frontera, 31 de enero de 1896, p. 1.

vulgar, and she also makes fun of her nickname. We know Pardo Bazán had enough money and social status to do whatever she wanted, and that she did. For her, flamenco was a low-class dance, and she was a classist. In fact, she did go to los Cafés cantantes, and Ezema (2017) explain the moment when she sees la Macarrona performing in *un cafetucho* and in the Exposición Universal of 1889 in Paris:

...se pasan de feas, traperas, descocadas, inhábiles en bailar y aguardentosas en cantar. La estrella de la compañía es la Macarrona (¡vaya nombre para gitana!), ¡si dijese Macarena!), la cual baila un poco mejor y no carece de sandunga; así es que los franceses la consideran una hurí, una Carmen, y se pirran por sus pataditas y sus quiebros. El resto de las gitanas repito que no colaría por acá, ni tiene que ver con las famosas bailadoras de Silverio y otras artistas de lo fino del género, en que caben muchos grados, y hay seda y estopa (pp. 70-71).

Pardo Bazán did not understand flamenco at all. She belonged to the aristocracy, and anything that was considered vulgar, low class, or was created by the Romantics would have been rejected by her. She recognizes that the audience loved to watch la Macarrona, but her description of flamenco in general is not positive. Pardo Bazán was from Galicia and flamenco was not part of her culture. Ezema explains that in Pardo Bazán's *Dulce Dueño*, there is a scene where Lina, the protagonist, is watching some women dancing a fandango, the oldest style of flamenco dance. Fandango was in decline, and it was not until the 1930s that it would make a great comeback. Pardo Bazán (1911/1989), using her character Lina, says that «la música del fandango es una especie de relincho árabe, una cadencia salvajemente voluptuosa, monótona enervante a la larga» (p. 196). Pardo Bazán was clearly *anti-flamenquista*.

La Macarrona was very famous during her lifetime. She was a renowned flamenco star, and the world knew of her and her dancing. La Macarrona danced until her last days. She was invited by Manuel de Falla to dance in the famous Contest of Granada in 1922. Her last years were not great, and she was not doing good financially. She needed money so she would continue dancing in *juergas*. Cruzado (2020) explains how la Macarrona became famous:

Iba con una compañía que se llamaba Las gitanas de Granada, aunque no eran de Granada, y ahí actuaron durante varios meses, conquistando al público y a la prensa. Llevaban un repertorio de bailes boleros y de bailes flamencos, y la Macarrona era la gran estrella de la compañía (elenco). Cuentan las crónicas que el Sah de Persia cayó rendido al ver sus bailes. Los bailes de la Macarrona no se parecen a los bailes de otras flamencas del momento (en las descripciones que hace la prensa de ellos). En esta época Juana tenía 19 años, y con el tiempo se iría sosegando. La prensa destacó su gran flexibilidad, sus contorsiones, sus saltos, la comparan con una pantera, con una serpiente que sorprende la brusquedad de sus movimientos, la alternancia entre estados de calma y agitación, la dureza de su expresión facial, el carácter salvaje de su baile, hablan mucho de su fealdad. Decían que la Macarrona era el mismísimo demonio, pero cuando hace sus bailes resultaba tan fascinante, que todos acababan rendidos a sus pies. Fue una artista incombustible. Esta fue su primera etapa, pero al final del siglo XIX, también estuvo en la Rusia de los Zares. En 1895 viajó a Berlín con una compañía de flamenco en la que trabajaba. Iban también Salud Rodríguez y su hermana Lola y al menos una de las Coquineras... hasta 27 artistas. La Macarrona era también la estrella del espectáculo, que sorprendió mucho a los alemanes por su autenticidad, tanto de los bailes que parecían no tener una coreografía propiamente dicha, sino que parecían improvisados, y también por la autenticidad de los artistas. El Cantaor Rafael Pareja que coincidió con ella trabajando en el Café del Burrero o El Burrero, cuenta que la Macarrona era la mujer que más cobraba ahí de todas las artistas del Burrero (sueldo de 12 pesetas), pero todos los hombres cobraban más que ella. La brecha salarial no es una invención de nuestros días. En el siglo XX siguió triunfando en los salones de variedades de Sevilla, de Madrid, de toda



España, viajó en varias ocasiones más a París para trabajar en diferentes Music Halls, en fiestas privadas, en el restaurante La Feria, que tenía un tablao flamenco, que regentaba el guitarrista Mario Cuenca. En 1910 fue retratada por el pintor Kees Van Dongen (48’59”).

La Macarrona was an important artist of the beginning of the 20th century, and many others would also be. Thanks to Carmen de Burgos, Antonio Machado, and Federico García Lorca, who praised, elevated, and gave recognition to flamenco in general, flamenco was brought back to be considered a respectful and refined art. The *flamencas* were able to dance in the public sphere, competing with the male artists. They were the representation of the New Woman Carmen de Burgos described in her short stories, the female artists during the Avant Garde period. The Modernist and Avant Garde artists would see in flamenco the beautiful art it always was, and they would forget about the *anti-flamenquismo* sold by previous literary movements, like Realism, Naturalism and the Generación del 98. Flamenco helped express intimate moments, emotions, and beautiful images for these authors. Carmen de Burgos, Machado, and Lorca were from the south of Spain, so flamenco was part of their culture and lives. They were very familiar with the different flamenco *palos* (styles) and rhythms. Burgos interviewed many famous people during her lifetime as she was also a journalist. In fact, she was the first female war correspondent of Spain, apart from being a defender of women’s rights, an essayist, and a short story writer. Some of the famous people Burgos interviewed were Emilia Pardo Bazán, la Niña de los Peines, one of the greatest flamenco singers in flamenco history, and female guitarist Adela Cubas, a rare artist who became a virtuosa of the flamenco guitar. Songs were normally sung by men and the guitar was normally played by men as well, so it is interesting to see Cubas and la Niña de los Peines as two females who emerged as singer and guitarist of flamenco, and who directly competed with the male musicians for a space and recognition on stage. Carmen de Burgos also wrote poems that were flamenco songs to be sung like *soleares*, *fandangos*, *tarantas* or *peteneras*, and they appeared in her first book published in Almería (Andalusia) called *Ensayos Literarios* (1900).

On the other hand, Federico García Lorca played the piano and was a musician himself. He created flamenco songs which he rehearsed with La Argentinita (Federico García Lorca y La Argentinita, 2016), he perfectly understood flamenco music, lyrics, and flamenco culture, and defended the marginalized *gitano* figure and his *cante jondo*. He also defended women and especially rural women and brought the popular and everyday problems of common life to poetry and to his dramas (theater). These poets and writers understood flamenco, were raised with flamenco culture, and therefore defended it and the people who performed it.

## 8. Flamenco Dancer Inesita

My last paragraph is about Inesita, a contemporary flamenco dancer who is from the United States, from New York. Inesita explains what flamenco dance is for her. I use a short film by Tina Love, and you can see it here, *Flamenco: The Enduring Art of Inesita*. Tina Love. YouTube, uploaded by TinaLoveDigitalProductions, 16 Nov. 2020. What is flamenco to this performer and how does she define it? Flamenco is not written, so it is open and free to change and interpretation. For Inesita, Flamenco has no beginning, and no end. It can be longer or shorter. We know what flamenco has musical structure and there are some structural hints that let you know what palo is being played, or if it is a *llamada*, a *remate* or a *falseta*. But there is a lot of flamenco music and dance that is open to improvisation. Inesita appeared and danced flamenco in a film with Bob Hope, *Here Come the Girls* and directed by Claude Binyon (1953). And in the film, she danced with pants and suit. For her, it is important that the dancer is the conductor. Flamenco is a physical sensation, and she think only another dancer can understand. The tradition of flamenco is very strong. Inesita has an open mind and welcomes change in flamenco. She never gets tired

because she always finds a new approach to flamenco. She likes to evolve and dances differently today than when she was younger. Inesita says she has the feeling she is expressing, in an artistic way, something she has inside. However, she says, it is not really any personal feeling. Inesita explains that if she was emotionally disturbed, she would not be able to dance at all. She believes the word *passion* is used too much in flamenco, and she has substituted this word for the word “power”. «It is very important for the dancer as the conductor to have a strong attack in the heel work, and all of the movements are bold. I think the word “power” is a better word to use for flamenco» (Love, 2020, 16’10”). The perception of a dancer is different from may be a historian of flamenco, or a flamencologist, but not less valuable and legitimate. The word “power” is a strong word and coming from a *flamenca* in her later years in life means the female dancing flamenco shows power, and by performing the dance, she is empowered by her own flamenco.

To finalize, the metaphors used in flamenco dancing by the *flamencas* who danced during the 19th and 20th centuries are different from the metaphors we learn today. Flamenco students today try to understand those metaphors and imitate the flamenco teachers in class the best they can, but it is harder to perform a flamenco movement and what it means, when we are not familiar with the context of that flamenco movement and its original meaning. Gender and class issues are embedded in all flamenco movements, and females dancing flamenco and tapping with the skirts lifted are a transgression of the status quo. At the same time, flamenco traditions reinforce the different genders with the clothes and different movements for females and males, keeping flamenco gendered. This, however, is changing, and women are nowadays dancing with pants, and some men are daring enough to use skirts and *bata de cola* in some performances.

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