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Flamenco as Decolonial Praxis: An Introduction

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1.

We open a handbook about flamenco[1] and see the image of a tree. The Tree of Flamenco. A tree consisting of roots, a trunk and branches; a series of elements that reflects the historical and artistic development of what is still considered the essence of all artistic and vital practices that are part of flamenco: song. At the bottom of the tree, we find the primitive song styles, the historical roots, generally associated with the origins of deep song. From there, the trunk grows and branches out into a variety of basic, essential song styles, and from there, an ever larger and more diverse series of smaller branches representing very divergent styles, some of which are considered minor, though they are all still related. In any case, all styles are connected in a very specific way: to understand where the branches and leaves come from and how they are related we need to always look downward, towards the roots and trunk. Without the latter, the rest of tree would have no meaning.

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[1] In the Spanish version of this text we use the term "lo flamenco," that is to say, we use the neutral article "lo," which has the advantage of neutralising the term both when it is used as a noun and as an adjective. See Pedro Ordóñez Eslava, *Autorretrato compartido sobre fondo verdiblanco. Materiales de Musicología Radical* (Libargo, 2024), 72.

The tree metaphor is omnipresent in Western thought and has structured our ways of understanding and ordering historical, familial and moral relationships for centuries. As Scott B. Weingart explains, the importance of this metaphor is due in large part to two central images in the Old Testament: the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. The tree has become a particularly important image to discuss genealogies, as indicated by the term "family tree." However, the image of the tree reflects only a limited understanding of genealogies; since, as Weingart continues, the division of a genealogy into a set of singular relations between the trunk and its branches establishes questionable hierarchies.[2] One example of this hierarchical structure of thought can be found in the work of the writer Domingo Manfredi Cano, who produced a tree of flamenco deep song in his work *Cante y baile flamencos* [*Flamenco Song and Dance*] (1973)[3] and developed a detailed discussion of the concept of genealogy in his essay *Geografía del cante jondo* [*Geography of Deep Song*] (1988). In this second text, Manfredi uses the image of the family tree to summarise different theories by various other writers about the origins and lineages of different song styles.[4] Thus, he classifies these styles using oppositions between the primitive and the new, and depth (*jondura*) and *flamencura* (the degree to which something is considered flamenco or not), whilst acknowledging that both of these dichotomies are questionable. In fact, and maybe this occurred more clearly in the decade starting in 1963 —the year in which *Mundo y formas del cante flamenco*, which we will discuss below, was published— and ending in 1973, historiographers of flamenco and of the texts that have tried to explain this music have situated themselves within an extremely polarised framework, thereby reinforcing apparent oppositions between different conceptual and aesthetic positions. In Manfredi's case, the factor that unifies all song styles beyond the aforementioned dichotomies is the fact that they are, in his words, *songs from Andalusia*; understood by this writer as a geography that is unique, that enjoys flamenco dance and song as a whole and that has only had limited exposure to the influences of other peoples and continents.[5] Basing himself on the work of José María Pemán, a writer who —like Manfredi— was

[2] Scott B. Weingart, "From trees to webs: uprooting knowledge through visualization," pre-print (2013): 57, accessed 15 October, 2024, https://www.scottbot.net/HIAL/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/WeingartUDC2013PrePrint.pdf.

[3] A reproduction can be found here: https://www.flamencoviejo.com/arbol-del-cante-flamenco.

[4] Domingo Manfredi Cano, *Geografía del cante jondo* (Universidad de Cádiz, 1988), 87-97.

[5] Manfredi Cano, *Geografía*, 19.

affiliated to the Falange party, Manfredi puts some emphasis on the notion that the Andalusian people have always maintained an autonomous status in regard to other peoples who have lived in the south of the Iberian Peninsula. Quoting Pemán, who "in principle does not like theories that link, almost always arbitrarily, Andalusian and Levantine phenomena to African lineages,"[6] Manfredi notes that *inheriting* means to defer oneself to the influences of other cultures; something that Pemán cannot contemplate for Andalusian culture since he considers "the Andalusian" to be "a fierce independent being."[7] Thus, Manfredi's discussion about genealogy is underpinned by a colonialist view of transmission processes, in which Spain is at one and the same time seen as a generous propagator (Manfredi defines the colonisation of the Americas as a process of "bringing civilisation"[8] to the continent) and a generous, proud and autonomous receiver of cultural and musical influences from elsewhere.[9]

Perhaps the most influential genealogy of deep song is that which Antonio Mairena and Ricardo Molina presented in their famous *Mundo y formas del cante flamenco* [*The World and Forms of Flamenco Song*] (1963), a work that served as the basis for the detailed painting *Árbol del Cante Flamenco* [*Tree of Flamenco Song*] by Enrique Asensi. Unlike other trees, such as that in Manfredi's work or others that are shown on the website *Flamenco Viejo*,[10] Asensi's tree not only shows the trunk and branches, but also meticulously details the substratum, the location, according to Mairena and Molina, of the historical roots of deep song. It is here that we find the musical influences of different civilisations that lived on the Iberian Peninsula between the 8th and 15th centuries (among them, the Iberian, Muslim and Tartessian civilisations).[11] Furthermore, in the centre of the trunk, Asensi records the arrival of the Roma people to the Peninsula and highlights the importance of one specific location in Lower Andalusia for the subsequent crystallisation of deep song: Triana. The "intimacy of the Gitano home" is visualised

[6] Manfredi Cano, *Geografía*, 19 (our translation).
[7] Manfredi Cano, *Geografía*, 20 (our translation).
[8] Manfredi Cano, *Geografía*, 18 (our translation).
[9] It is worth remembering that Manfredi was an important disseminator of writings about Africa during the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) and that he was named Commander in the Order of Africa by Luis Carrero Blanco. Moreover, his novel *Tierra negra* [*Black Earth*] (1957) vindicates the material and spiritual colonisation of Equatorial Guinea. See Diana Arbaiza, "The Last Mission: Religion and Colonial Francoism in Spanish Representations of Africa," *Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos* 44, no. 2 (2020): 273, 285.
[10] https://www.flamencoviejo.com/arbol-del-cante-flamenco.
[11] Antonio Mairena and Ricardo Molina, *Mundo y formas del cante flamenco* (Revista de Occidente, 1963), 27-30.

in a closed circle a little higher up, an allusion to the breeding ground that, according to Mairena and Molina's theory, was essential for the development of Gitano song and for protecting it from the influences of folklorisation. On a visual level, Asensi represents the Gitano home as a lively and enclosed microcosm that splits the tree trunk in two whilst also nourishing it; in a way, it is an autonomous cell that never incorporates itself into the plant's structure, yet, nevertheless, at the same time as it keeps itself alive, discharges the necessary nutrients to sustain the trunk, branches and leaves.[12]

We have presented these two examples not only to demonstrate the limitations of the hierarchical logic that, as Weingart reminds us, usually underpins the image of the tree in Western thought, but also to cast doubt on the very manner in which the concepts of genealogy and trees have been thought of for flamenco. In Michel Foucault's influential study about genealogies, the transmission of knowledge, habits and behaviours down the centuries is not a lineal process but rather one that lacks a clear origin and ending.[13] For Foucault, genealogy is a method of analysis that questions traditional historiographies that consider history to be an accumulative process —previous generations pass on their knowledge to us; we safeguard it and subsequently pass it on to the next generation, and so forth. According to Foucault, any historical event is connected with a number of other contingent events, and none of these is part of a single chain.[14]

By the same token, the extent to which the image of the tree helps us think in a non-hierarchical manner about the gestation and development of musical practices depends on how exactly we understand this figure and its constituent parts. As the dancer and researcher Fernando López Rodríguez observes later in this special issue, roots are a botanical metaphor that in flamenco discourse frequently allude to a "fantasised origin." On the other hand, Pedro Ordóñez Eslava suggests that the metaphor is interesting

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[12] A reproduction and more detailed discussion of the painting can be found in Alfredo Asensi Díaz, "*Mundo y formas del cante flamenco*, de Ricardo Molina y Antonio Mairena, semilla del cuadro *Árbol del Cante Flamenco*, de Enrique Asensi," *Boletín de la Real Academia de Córdoba de Ciencias, Bellas Letras y Nobles Artes* 101, no. 171 (2022): 195-214.

[13] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Panteon, 1984).

[14] For a more detailed discussion of Foucault's theory of genealogy and its application to flamenco, see Carlos van Tongeren, "Genealogía y memoria en el cante de Enrique Morente," in *Estamos vivos de milagro. 10 años después de Morente*, ed. Pedro Ordóñez Eslava (Universidad de Granada, 2022). For an expansion of the concept of genealogy beyond anthropocentrism, see Gabriel Ruiz-Larrea, "Geologías críticas postnaturales," in *Más allá de lo humano*, VV.AA. (Bartlebooth, 2018).

because it points towards different ways of being and growing; on the one hand, roots are multiple, they zigzag, undulate, twist and turn, and hide; but, on the other, we relate to them, they allow us to situate ourselves in a territory (rather than a fixed parcel of land), in a place.[15] Roots give us an awareness of our surroundings, an awareness that allows musical practices to gain meaning as situated practices anchored in a specific context whilst not preventing them from growing in unexpected and unrestricted ways — an idea also alluded to by K. Meira Goldberg and Antoni Pizà in their edited volume about the *tangled roots* of flamenco.[16]

Taking inspiration from anthropology and ecocriticism, perhaps we could add here that roots and trees are also part of a complex ecology where they interact with fungi, hyphae and mosses. Fungi have of late been receiving ever more attention in anthropological, artistic and philosophical reflections about *multispecies* ecologies not only because they are among the largest and most complex living beings on earth, but also because they can help us rethink questions of (co-)existence on the planet. As Robert Macfarlane writes in his essay "The Understory," where he cites the biologist Merlin Sheldrake, fungi "screw up our hereditary model of evolutionary descent" since they do not grow in one single direction and cannot even be considered as independent organisms.[17] Therefore, fungi "do strange things to time, because it is not easy to say where a fungus ends or begins, when it is born or when it dies."[18] The anthropologist Anna Tsing notes, deploying similar terms, that we have become so used to disentangling plants from their natural habitats (uprooting them, reproducing them through monoculture and manipulating their development through artificial fertilisation) that both these uprooted plants and some of us humans have lost the ability to participate in the rich cosmopolitan worlds that exist beneath the top soil.[19]

Let's now take another look at the Tree of Flamenco. Or let's leave it aside. What matters is that we consider not only the image of the tree as it appeared in earlier work about flamenco, but that we try to imagine everything that lies hidden beneath this image or that we humans have uprooted from it. Let's think, accordingly, about flamenco as a distinctive collection of practices that is becoming increasingly visible the world over; that

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[15] Ordóñez Eslava, *Autorretrato*, 77-78.
[16] K. Meira Goldberg and Antoni Pizà, eds., *Celebrating Flamenco's Tangled Roots: The Body Questions* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022).
[17] Robert Marfarlane, "The Understory," *Emergence Magazine*, 26 June, 2019, https://emergencemagazine.org/essay/the-understory/.
[18] Macfarlane, "The Understory."
[19] Anna Tsing, "Arts of Inclusion, or How to Love a Mushroom," *Mānoa* 22, no. 2 (2010): 192.

nurtures itself with artistic and cultural traditions and practices that at first glance seem to be unrelated, but also as something that, according to Ordóñez Eslava, "is located in the darkness of today's world."[20]

2.

Flamenco today is a multidisciplinary field that has expanded to reach a variety of continents, cultures and histories. An increasing number of flamenco artists and researchers, whose locus of enunciation is often not (only) Andalusia, are working with the idea that flamenco constitutes, in the words of K. Meira Goldberg and Antoni Pizà, a "diasporic complex"; in other words, that it is a musical practice that, rather than being rooted in a single culture or territory, has its origins mainly in the (forced) displacement of people that has taken place since the colonial era.[21] Although traditionally this has not been acknowledged, today it is difficult to think about flamenco, its melodies, rhythms, movements, and gestures without taking into account the enslavement of African and Indigenous peoples by European colonisers, or without considering the complex forms of negotiation, assimilation and resistance engendered by this process in the cultural and musical sphere in Europe, Africa and the Americas.

Accordingly, the influence of Afro-American rhythms, dance and song styles on the configuration of proto-flamenco practices has started to receive increasingly more attention in critical and artistic contexts.[22] There is also a growing number of studies about other, more recent colonisation processes, which can be characterised as internal[23] since they have developed within the borders of the state —for instance, scholarship about historical and contemporary forms of violence that have impacted (and keep on impacting) the conversion of flamenco's diverse expressions into a form of "heritage"

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[20] Ordóñez Eslava, *Autorretrato*, 60. On the relation between contemporaneity and darkness, also see Giorgio Agamben, "What Is the Contemporary?," in *"What Is an Apparatus?" and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford University Press, 2009).

[21] K. Meira Goldberg and Antoni Pizà, "Introduction: The Body Wonders, The Body Knows," in *Celebrating Flamenco's Tangled Roots: The Body Questions*, eds. K. Meira Goldberg and Antoni Pizà (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022): x.

[22] See K. Meira Goldberg, *Sonidos Negros: On the Blackness of Flamenco* (Oxford University Press, 2019); Agnes Nasozi Kamya, "Interrogating the African Origins of Flamenco: An East African Perspective," in *Celebrating Flamenco's Tangled Roots: The Body Questions*, eds. K. Meira Goldberg and Antoni Pizà (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022); Faustino Núñez, *América en el flamenco* (Flamencópolis, 2021).

[23] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 4-5.

that is easily recognisable and politically and economically exploitable.[24] Thus, when in the nineteenth century "flamenco" emerged as a relatively coherent body of dance and song styles, it was quickly adopted by nationalist projects that sought to propose local and popular alternatives to high European culture.[25] There was a resurgence of such propagandistic and commercial uses of flamenco during the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) where flamenco (especially dance) was given an ever-higher profile in institutional spaces and in the context of tourism. The journalist Francisco Almazán, referring to the so-called co-optation of flamenco by the Franco regime, coined the term *nacional-flamenquismo*, a play on words based on the official name of the regime's ideology (National Catholicism). Although Almazán deployed this term somewhat sarcastically, this has not stopped it from gaining some analytical importance as a way to think about how and why flamenco has come to be *associated* with an authoritarian and nationalist ideology. This process has sometimes been simplified as if it were a unilateral gesture of appropriation, an interpretation that overlooks the complex negotiations or subtle acts of resistance by the artists who participated in the ideological projection of flamenco during 36 years of dictatorial rule. Furthermore, what has not yet been conceptualised is the importance that the Francoist apparatus had in supporting, precisely, this new genealogical ideology that has tried to inscribe flamenco into a fixed territory with static borders.

Regarding the shadows cast over flamenco by the Francoist dictatorship, we should also not forget the processes of migration embarked on by a number of flamenco artists during this period; their experiences of exile and internal and external displacement; the marginalisation and vigorous discrimination suffered by Gitanos, as exemplified by the "ghettoisation" of Gitano families and migrant groups in marginal neighbourhoods or "frontier-neighbourhoods"[26] that began to emerge in various Iberian cities from

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[24] See Cristina Cruces Roldán, "Flamenco Heritage and the Politics of Identity," in *Music and the Making of Portugal and Spain*, eds. Matthew Machin-Autenrieth, Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco and Samuel Llano (University of Illinois Press, 2023); Iván Periáñez-Bolaño, "Discursos y representaciones locales sobre la patrimonialización del flamenco en Andalucía, un proceso multinivel," *Revista de Antropología Social* 28, no. 1 (2019): 71-93; José Luis Venegas, "Populism without the People: The Cultural Politics of the Junta de Andalucía," *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 21 (2017): 215-33.

[25] Lou Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy: The History of a European Obsession* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

[26] Iván Periáñez-Bolaño, *Cosmosonoridades: Cante-gitano y canción-gyu. Epistemologías del sentir* (Akal, 2023), 179-81.

the 1960s onwards.[27] Therefore, the repression of the people, bodies and voices protagonising the flamenco spectacles that became so popular during the dictatorship years is yet another episode in a much longer history of violence that constitutes the *darkness* of flamenco both in the past and present.

3.

In this special issue we set out to examine the echoes of these experiences of violence and forms of resistance to them in the field of contemporary flamenco. Based on a growing body of academic scholarship, as well as artistic and "artivist" pieces that deal with the relations between flamenco and the transnational legacies of colonialism, and finding inspiration in the field of decolonial scholarship, practice and activism, in this special issue we have invited a group of people who work in the fields of research, performance, dance, architecture and anthropology to explore ways of decolonising flamenco through the arts, research and pedagogy. Through a collection of pieces that try to articulate collective and interdisciplinary voices, this issue aims to respond critically to the reductionist cultural policies that have converted flamenco, in all its rich manifestations, in a monolithic block anchored in a singular manner in Spanish or Andalusian identity. In order to do so, we understand flamenco as a plural repertoire of knowledges, practices and memories that expands towards a multitude of geographies, which constantly crosses different types of cultural, territorial and disciplinary borders, and which, therefore, constitutes a privileged site to explore the synergies between the arts, scholarship and activism.

The decolonial turn in the humanities and other fields has led to different forms of criticism, suspicions and calls for an end to vague and metaphorical (ab)uses of the term. In an incisive paper Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang posit that decolonisation "is not a metaphor"[28] and that any initiatives that pretend to appropriate the concept should primarily aim to facilitate both the devolution of colonised territories and the reparation of the lives of first nations. From this perspective, Tuck and Yang invite consideration of

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[27] Carlos van Tongeren, "Distinctive culture: framing flamenco artistry in *Polígono Sur: El arte de Las Tres Mil* by Dominique Abel," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 18, no. 2 (2017): 169-89, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14636204.2017.1308633; Carlos van Tongeren, "Francoism, urban displacement, and nostalgia in flamenco dance from Seville," *Twentieth-Century Music* 21, no. 2 (2024): 209-37, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478572223000075.

[28] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization."

the fact that even academic reflections about different types of social injustice can be a way of perpetuating the privileges of the settlers and exonerating them of their historical responsibilities.[29] For the case at hand, it should also be observed that, as Iván Periáñez Bolaño and Miguel Ángel Vargas have noted, the Roma continue to have lower life expectancy than non-Roma people, and that it is not even worth discussing flamenco without attempting to acknowledge and change that fact.[30]

Although we do not pretend that we can achieve the aim of material reparation through an academic publication, our involvement in this project stems from a belief that there remains ample work to be done so that flamenco can be thought and rethought, practised and re-practised using a variety of languages, disciplines and loci of enunciation; and therefore, we hope that this proposal makes a positive contribution to a series of broader reflections and struggles. As Marta Savigliano notes in her study about the racial and geopolitical dynamics of Argentinean tango, decolonisation is not only a material operation but also an intellectual and a symbolical one, which involves questioning "the interpretative privileges of intellectual vanguards over 'doers,' their discourses and messy theories of how to go about seemingly insignificant lives in a world consistently ruled by power and its irrationality."[31] Savigliano and others invite us to think about "occupation" and "disoccupation" in an epistemic sense,[32] without pretending that this is the sole activity to needs to be pursued to remedy material colonisation. According to Nelson Maldonado-Torres, the decolonial turn consists of problematising and thematising coloniality in the modern era from a variety of perspectives and showing scepticism toward dehumanising methods and practises.[33] Thus, it means changing the (Eurocentric and regional) epistemic horizons from which knowledge is produced and generating new types of knowledge beyond disciplinary borders.[34] This also translates into new formats and registers of writing and artistic practice, in an attempt to create new ways of relating to the world and *world-making*, as Rolando

[29] Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization," 17-21.
[30] Conversations with the authors on 21 and 22 June 2023 in Factoría Cultural in Seville, which were also the starting point for Periáñez Bolaño's contribution to this special issue.
[31] Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (Westview Press, 1995), 13.
[32] Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy and Critique —An Introduction," *Transmodernity* 1, no. 2 (2011): 4, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/59w8j02x.
[33] Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking," 2.
[34] Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking," 10.

Vázquez and Miriam Barrera Contreras suggest in their proposals about "decolonial aesthesis."[35]

This special issue was born, precisely, out of an attempt to articulate new ways of embarking on artistic and academic scholarship, from a place where what is essential is: patience for the time needed to write and publish, a willingness to listen, an attempt to translate and communicate despite (or thanks to) the radical heterogeneity between voices, epistemologies and cosmovisions; where we take "the trouble to pay attention, to listen, suspending the claim to solve or explain";[36] where we respect the diversity of loci of enunciation of the contributors as well as the idea that such "loci" can be fluid, changing, and polyphonic. In this way, and continuing with the previous assertation by Elena Casado and Amparo Lasén, we have put forward a series of pieces where the relation between authors and editors is characterised not only by attention and respect, but also by discomfort, and where "those who participate can object to what we are proposing to them, they can react to the discomfort that our proposal may cause them and cause us discomfort in our proposal, forcing us to change it."[37] In a similar vein, during the process that has led to this special issue we have tried to connect different ways of thinking and practising flamenco through a variety of formats, registers and languages, creating a type of expanded text, a textual, transmedia and experimental dispositive that is alive and can be inhabited, and which tries to some degree to reflect the "eventness" of each individual contribution.

In order to do this, we invited the contributors to reflect on three interrelated issues where flamenco can be relevant as a decolonial praxis, within both the realm of artistic and of intellectual production: bodies, senses, and memories. Regarding the first theme, we have aimed to interrogate the way in which the bodies of flamenco artists can be a site where the legacies of colonialism are negotiated, performed and resisted. What role do flamenco bodies have in interrogating and giving visibility to the complex lineages of different diasporic cultures that extend across various

[35] Rolando Vázquez and Miriam Barrera Contreras, "Aesthesis decolonial y tiempos relacionales. Una entrevista a Rolando Vázquez," *Calle 14: Revista de investigación en el campo del arte* 11, no. 18, https://doi.org/10.14483/udistrital.jour.c14.2016.1.a06. Also see Iván Periáñez Bolaño's contribution to this special issue.
[36] Elena Casado and Amparo Lasén quoted in Ordóñez Eslava, *Autorretrato*, 63 (our translation).
[37] Elena Casado and Amparo Lasén quoted in Ordóñez Eslava, *Autorretrato*, 63 (our translation).

continents? In line with earlier work by Niurca E. Márquez,[38] how do flamenco bodies interact with the dominant sensorial regimes that have imposed expectations, desires and restrictions on flamenco song, dance and guitar playing for over a century? How can bodies resist those legacies through irony, tumult, nonsense[39] and other tactics?

Regarding the relation between sensorial domains and coloniality, this issue does not only seek to analyse a variety of artistic practices as such, but also to develop new ways of writing and undertaking research about them. Thus, we build here on decolonial studies to critically interrogate the centrality of writing in academic research and to give a stronger presence to other sensorial aspects of flamenco. How can we use multimedia formats — and we would like to thank this journal for its commitment to them— to explore the localised times and spaces that give flamenco a distinctive meaning for different families, communities and peoples?[40] How can those elements in the multidisciplinary languages of flamenco that cannot be easily circumscribed by verbal or textual media help question the colonial power relations that continue to impact the production of a large part of academic knowledge?

Third, and taking inspiration from decolonial approaches to memory studies[41] we aim here to understand flamenco as a repertoire not only of artistic practices but also of subalternised memories of different episodes of systemic violence both within and outside of the Iberian Peninsula. How can decolonial perspectives help reinterpret the audio-visual archive of flamenco from the perspective of memory? What memories, and whose memories, would have to be included in this archive?

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[38] Niurca E. Márquez, "Dancing my Otherness/Multiplicity or *Sin Pedir Permiso, Me Agarro Aquí,*" in *Celebrating Flamenco's Tangled Roots: The Body Questions*, eds. K. Meira Goldberg and Antoni Pizà (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022).

[39] Goldberg and Pizà, "Introduction," x.

[40] Iván Periáñez-Bolaño, "Ser y sentir flamenco: descolonizando la estética moderno-colonial desde los bordes," *Revista Andaluza de Antropología* 10 (2016): 29-53.

[41] Rosa Cordillera A. Castillo, "The Past, Present, and Future Entangled: Memory-Work as Decolonial Praxis," in *Decolonial Enactments in Community Psychology*, eds. Shose Kessi, Shahnaaz Suffla and Mohamed Seedat (Springer, 2022); Jill Jarvis, *Decolonizing Memory: Algeria & the Politics of Testimony* (Duke University Press, 2021); Iván Periáñez-Bolaño, "Huellas del Trauma Colonial Romaní-Gitano en España (1499–1978): Narrativas de Recuperación y Reparación de un Pueblo con Historia(-s)," *Open Library of Humanities 7*, no. 1 (2021), https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.619; Catherine Walsh and Juan García Salazar, "Memoria colectiva, escritura y Estado. Prácticas pedagógicas de existencia afroecuatoriana," *Cuadernos de Literatura* 18, no. 38 (2015): 79-98.

4.

The contributions to this special issue use a variety of formats that move between academic research, artistic reflection, and spoken and written dialogue. The first contribution, by the architect, researcher and visual artist María García Ruiz, is based on the author's broader line of inquiry about the relation between flamenco, the notion of territory and architectonic spaces, as can be seen in her projects *Máquinas de vivir: Flamenco y arquitectura en la ocupación y desocupación de espacios* [*Machines for Living: Flamenco and Architecture in the Occupation and Disoccupation of Spaces*] or in the exhibition *Doblar/desdoblar. Arquitectura, flamenco y operaciones coloniales* [*Folding/Unfolding. Architecture, Flamenco and Colonial Operations*].[42] For this special issue, García Ruiz has contributed a subtitled video sequence that is part of a piece entitled *Rüsselsheim, 2016 (un ensayo para* Oratorio*)* [*Rüsselsheim, 2016 (An Essay for* Oratorio*)*] in which she addresses the relation between flamenco, independent theatre from the 1970s and Spanish migrant workers. In this piece, García Ruiz and a team of artists have revisited the memory of a workers' residence that was part of the automobile industry in Germany (specifically, the Opel factory headquartered in the city of Rüsselsheim) through a recontextualised representation of the theatre play *Oratorio* by Teatro Estudio Lebrijano. Inspired originally by the Greek tragedy *Antigone*, which was performed by an endless number of independent theatre companies during the sixties and seventies, *Oratorio* is based on concepts of ambulant theatre and was constantly actualised with new memories and experiences based on the company's encounters with different audiences.[43] In the new representation of *Oratorio* created and directed by García Ruiz, special importance is given to the relations between bodily gestures, the space of the factory, labour, and memory. Thus, both in the video sequence and in the framing essay, García Ruiz reflects about the factory's ability to create "placeness," or according to the voice-over that accompanies us in the video, "the factory places the place." Thus, this piece also speaks to us about the importance that practising flamenco can have in diasporic and alienating situations,

[42] Pedro G. Romero and María García Ruiz, *Máquinas de vivir. Flamenco y arquitectura en la ocupación y desocupación de espacios* (Puente Editores, 2019); María García Ruiz, *Doblar/desdoblar. Arquitectura, flamenco y operaciones coloniales*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (2016), https://radio.museoreinasofia.es/flamenco.

[43] Apart from García Ruiz's essay in this special issue, also see Óscar Cornago Bernal, *La vanguardia teatral en España (1965-1975): Del ritual al juego* (Visor, 1999), 104-17; David Rodríguez-Solás, "La resignificación de los márgenes del teatro independiente: *Oratorio*, del Teatro Estudio Lebrijano," *Romance Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2019): 17-29.

where the workers "are present, and yet they aren't." In such contexts, flamenco contributes to the search for affective bonds by migrant workers and their families; and it also creates possibilities for the bodies of workers and migrants to resist their "colonisation," in García Ruiz's words, by the machines in Fordist and post-Fordist labour regimes.

The contribution by the scholars and flamenco dancers K. Meira Goldberg and Yinka Esi Graves also interrogates the decolonisation of bodies and sensorial regimes; in particular, the domain of vision, given the latter's historical importance in prescribing normative ideas about bodies. This question underpins various earlier works by the authors, such as the performance *The Disappearing Act* by Yinka Esi Graves and K. Meira Goldberg's monograph *Sonidos Negros: On the Blackness of Flamenco*.[44] Based on these earlier works, the authors have contributed a recorded conversation where they explore the case study of flamenco dancer Jacinto Padilla, better known as El Negro Meri, who is seen in *Danse espagnole de La Feria Sevillanos*, the first film to show images of a scene of flamenco dance that was recorded by the Lumière brothers during the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1900. [45] This dancer, as the authors discuss, was never able to "be" Jacinto Padilla since he was made invisible by his racialised nickname, as well as by the dominant sensorial regimes that until very recently have impeded so many people from seeing that it is, in fact, Padilla, and not the dancer José Otero from Seville, who appears in the Lumière brothers' film. In their conversation, both authors express their amazement not only at the fact that a Black person is shown dancing flamenco in the sequence from the Lumière brothers; but also, at the fact that even they were initially unable to see this. Goldberg and Graves go on to comment on the urgency, the strength, the brave character of El Negro Meri's movements and how this artist might help us trace an alternative genealogy of flamenco where Blackness in its racial and ideological dimension can be fully acknowledged. To whom does this dancer's strength belong? How is it transmitted? How can Jacinto Padilla be an ancestor for all flamencos? Flamenco, then, emerges here as a decolonial process, since dancing it, embodying it, is a way of interacting with those alternative genealogies despite the fact that these have limited discursive presence to this day. Dance, following Goldberg and Graves's

[44] Goldberg, *Sonidos Negros*.

[45] For more information about El Negro Meri, see Kiko Mora, "¡Y dale con Otero!... Flamencos en la Exposición Universal de París de 1900," https://cadaverparaiso.wordpress.com/2016/06/03/y-dale-con-otero-flamencos-en-la-exposicion-universal-de-paris-de-1900/; Goldberg, *Sonidos Negros*, 134-48.

understanding of it is an emergent process, and it can be a meaningful decolonial praxis since it constantly actualises and interrogates itself.

In his monograph *Cosmosonoridades*: *cante-gitano y canción-gyu. Epistemologías del sentir* [*Cosmosonorities: Gitano-song and Gyu-song. Epistemologies of Feeling*],[46] the anthropologist Iván Periáñez Bolaño develops a detailed theoretical framework about Gitano song (which he writes as "Gitano-song," using hyphenation to emphasise the intimate connections between song and its situated values for the Roma-Gitano people), its epistemic and sensorial meanings, its relations with memory, with other knowledges of the Global South, and its capacity to resist the forms of colonial violence that the Gitano people have suffered since at least the 15th century. For this special issue, we invited Periáñez Bolaño to think with us about the possibility of putting some of the proposals from his book into practice through the creation of an audio essay, which for the occasion we have named an "audiobook," and where some of the key preoccupations from his reflections about *cosmosonorities* could be further developed. The outcome is an audio piece with various converging layers: firstly, fragments from a conversation that took place between 21 and 22 June 2023 on the premises of Factoría Cultural in Seville's Polígono Sur with the artist, researcher and producer Miguel Ángel Vargas, the coordinators of this special issue, and the members of the production team Oficina Co2; furthermore, the piece contains fragments from some of the song styles that are closest to Periáñez Bolaño's personal soundscape, as well as elements from the composition "Cosmosonoridades" by the flamenco guitarist Amador Gabarri. This audiobook is complemented by a framing essay, written by Periáñez Bolaño, which registers some of the issues mentioned above in a textual format and through an "aesthesic" exercise. Thus, both contributions by Periáñez Bolaño address the following two questions in a critical manner: to what extent is it possible to attenuate and traverse the colonial violences that underpin traditional registers of understanding, such as academic texts and audio recordings? And how can the notion of register be thought alongside that of erasure, given that the institutional, economic and ideological dynamics that shape the configuration of academic discourse can both enable the communication of certain types of knowledge (or one type of knowledge) as well as make others invisible?

In the context of these questions, Periáñez Bolaño's prose aims to foment a type of reading that is paused, rhythmic, and also, we might add, shaped by questions about the power hierarchies and dynamics that are

[46] Periáñez-Bolaño, *Cosmosonoridades*.

internalised in different aspects of language, such as grammar, orthography and punctuation. Thus, Periáñez Bolaño opts systematically for the extension of the meaning of certain nouns (see, for example, the substantivized adjective "cultural-ontologies"), for the association of the term "flamenco" with "coloniality," for the term "Gitano-song" instead of "Gitano song," as we already mentioned; for the use of certain prefixes decoupled from their lexical root ("re-cognise") to emphasise the need to decolonise the apparent natural outlook of language; and for the use of prolonged enumerations with no commas. In this manner, Periáñez's contribution delves deeply into written language, trying to highlight its point of resistance and to interrogate the reasons for that resistance. Our translation of his text into English is an attempt at amplifying what the author names "directed translation"; in other words, to negotiate a multitude of incommensurable registers through the conventions of a non-vernacular language where voices mix and mingle and the border between representation and self-representation becomes fluid.

The fourth and final contribution was created by the dancers and researchers Javiera de la Fuente and Fernando López Rodríguez, who dedicate their co-authored essay to the performance *Envioletá* by Javiera de la Fuente, which premiered at the Festival de Nîmes in 2023. *Envioletá* is based on this Chilean dancer's dialogue with the music of Violeta Parra, an artist who, apart from having been elevated to be a symbol of national identity in Chile, had an interesting encounter with the world of Andalusian folklore. The historical trajectory that shaped this encounter was the displacement of Spanish Republicans to Latin America after the Spanish Civil War, which led to the popularisation of flamenco, Andalusian popular song and other aspects of Spanish folklore in different parts of the continent. There was a period in her life when Parra performed this so-called Spanish genre very successfully under the stage name Violeta de Mayo. However, De la Fuente and López point to various moments in Violeta Parra's trajectory where the Chilean singer suddenly debunked her relationship with Spanish folklore: first, due to the impact seeing a live performance by the flamenco dancer La Chunga had on her, and second, because she started associating this repertoire with Franco's dictatorial regime. Based on these sudden changes in Violeta Parra's career, the dancers reflect in their text about their own artistic trajectories, about different ways of seeing the flamenco tradition and of relating to this tradition and to some of its most common metaphors (roots, harvesting, the earth).

These reflections are shaped around two video sequences from the premiere of *Envioletá* that have been included here, and where De la Fuente performs versions of two of Parra's most influential songs: "La Zarzamora"

("The Blackberry") and "El Gavilán" ("The Hawk"). "La Zarzamora" engenders a reflection about the acts of "harvesting" or "re-collection" carried out by Parra in the context of rural Chilean folklore during a period that comes *after* her encounters with flamenco. Rather than following simplistic interpretations of this activity as an act of "salvation" of materials on the brink of disappearance, De la Fuente and López pay heed to the ways in which the relation with the tradition is always expressed through change. By contrast, "El Gavilán" is an avant-gardist composition by Parra that has become known as an anti-cueca as it positions itself critically *in front of* the cueca, the latter being one of the key elements in the popular dance repertoire in Chile and other parts of Latin America. "El Gavilán", then, raises questions about different ways of relating critically to the tradition and ways to rethink it from queer and decolonial perspectives.

Overall, the contributions to this special issue develop various lines of inquiry that we opened with the research project "Flamenco after Franco: New Interdisciplinary Approaches to Performances of Memory in Post-Dictatorial Spain" which we carried out at the universities of Manchester and Granada between 2021 and 2023 with a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the United Kingdom. This grant has helped us propose new ways of thinking flamenco in relation to the contemporary debates and struggles about the memory of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship —an issue to which the contributions in this special issue are related in different ways. In a broader sense, thanks to this subvention we have had the opportunity to experiment with and interrogate different formats, registers and academic and artistic contexts in which we can communicate about flamenco, ask how we can capture aspects of its pulse of resistance, of the strength of its gestures, bravery, a strength that is *envioletá*, and identify issues of representation and translation for which there is no clear solution. *What does an Andalusian stew sound like?*

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