Domains of public activity in touristic flamenco shows

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Abstract: The article explores the perseverance of particular aspects of flamenco popular culture. It focuses on the touristic manifestations of the Andalusian genre and their historical reconfigurations. Particular emphasis is placed on the correlations between the era of romanticism and contemporary times. Through the analysis of flamenco evolution I aim to demonstrate how flamenco’s heritage influences gender distribution in the touristic dance and song realm. Such gender-related allocation remained unchanged over long periods of time.

Keywords: flamenco public domains; Andalusia; tourism; heritage; anthropology; gender; flamenco dance; flamenco song; popular culture.


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1 Introduction

“Heritage is constantly reconstructed and reinterpreted in an attempt to meet the specific demands of tourists and reflect the socio-cultural changes of the contemporary world” [Park, (2014), p.1]. The paper’s predominant objective can be encapsulated in the above quotation. The main interest lies within the analysis of the preserved and reconfigured aspects of the earlier features of touristic, Andalusian flamenco. Recontextualising the past to match the requirements of contemporary audiences is an essential part of reviving flamenco heritage. The article begins with presenting an outline of flamenco history, accentuating its touristic forms. While scrutinising structural aspects of flamenco-text over centuries, the consistent tendency to assign particular domains (song and dance) to each gender was observed. Such stereotypical gender-distribution is present in the touristic, public realm of flamenco performances. The subsequent parts of the article are devoted to the analysis of gender-related dynamics in flamenco culture.
Flamenco had initially been part of a romantic obsession of foreign poets and novelists. It has eventually enlarged its auditorium and became easily accessible to all potential, contemporary consumers: “Heritage has significantly expanded its base and market appeal over the recent decades. Heritage was once exclusive to the elitist group as part of high culture” [Park, (2014), p.9]. In other words, the touristic realm of flamenco as a mythologised and exoticised consumption product of the romantic ‘westerners’ became an even more accessible commodity in the contemporary context. Its key structural components, after withstanding the processes of re-contextualisation, managed to maintain their core, unmodified essence.

The article is based on a field research conducted between 2010 and 2011 in the following Andalusian cities: Malaga, Sevilla, Granada, Cádiz, Jerez de la Frontera and small towns: Fondón, Vejer de la Frontera, Carmona, Pegalajar, Ronda, Nijar. The research involved observing public flamenco shows, performances, festivals, competitions, etc., I also participated in private, intimate flamenco gatherings. However, in this article I focus primarily on public manifestations of the described Andalusian genre.

2 Touristic transformations of flamenco: from romanticism to contemporary times

Nineteenth century European romantics were fascinated with hysteria, pain of unrequited love, insatiable passion and existential suffering (Janion, 2007). That period’s art also drew inspirations from the wild, authentic, ‘primitive’ element. All these nineteenth century obsessions materialised in romantic, large-scale interest in Andalusian flamenco. That genre seemed to have incorporated all the romantic expectations, offering passionate, painful, exotic, wild dance. Westerners’ touristic excursions to Southern Spain boomed at that time, contributing to the emergence of peculiar flamenco-places devoted almost solely to foreign visitors. Hence, the 19th and the beginning of 20th century are identified by the majority of flamenco related publications as the key periods of foreign interest in that genre. That stage of flamenco evolution is referred to as ‘The Golden Age of Flamenco’ (La Edad de Oro de Flamenco); however, flamencologists struggle to establish its exact dates (Heffner Hayes, 2009).

It is believed that shortly before the beginning of 18th century, population of Andalusian Gypsies' and other ostracised social groups practiced two forms of musical activity (López Ruiz, 2007). First of all, they performed public interpretations of lively, exuberant elements of Andalusian folklore. Secondly, they pursued a parallel, distinct (yet still deriving from Andalusian folklore), intimate, private musical form. During hermetic gatherings, they practiced their gritos (screams or cries), which supposedly initiated, brought into existence earliest forms of flamenco song (cante). Some flamencologists argue that first cases of opening up to external, public audiences in the flamenco realm, took place as early as in the 18th century. Manuel (1989) suggests that during that time Andalusian Gypsies who had houses, (unlike nomadic groups of anderro and canastero Gypsies), initiated processes of interactions with flamenco aficionados from outside their intimate, private circles. As mentioned above, during ‘The Golden Age’, flamenco gained further recognition and slowly became a product capable of responding to touristic imagination.
In the 19th century, Andalusian financial elites as well as foreigners began to hire Gypsies to perform flamenco in taverns and private parties (Chuse, 2007; Heffner Hayes, 2009). Soon enough cafés cantantes, touristic bars devoted mostly to flamenco shows, began to emerge (Heffner Hayes, 2009; Álvarez Caballero, 1998). As the popularity of cafés cantantes increased, they started being identified with places responsible for commercialisation of flamenco. Some flamencologist argue that they contributed to the loss of ‘authenticity’ of that genre. Álvarez Caballero (1998) suggests that cafés cantantes were solely serving purposes of entertainment rather than being ‘temples of art’. He argues that for the tourists the art of flamenco could merely be an excuse for excessive drinking; attending such bars also provided opportunities for sexual encounters. Flamenco, after all, bears a reputation of a genre associated with prostitution practiced among female dancers in cafés cantantes.Prostitutes’ sponsors and wealthy patrons of such procedures were known as señoritos (Heffner Hayes, 2009). American flamencologist Washabaugh (1998, p.33) describes the popularity of flamenco bars at that time as an example of romantic ‘spiritual spelunking’.

It should come as no surprise that foreigners (predominantly western European romantics) produced the majority of written accounts about the 19th century Andalusia². They particularly enjoyed the romantic travel journal genre. Lord Byron travelled to Southern Spain in 1809, with the purpose of gathering material for his book Don Juan, published ten years later. George Borrow wrote two works about his experiences related to staying among Andalusian Gypsies: The Zincali: an Account of the Gypsies in Spain from 1841 and The Bible in Spain – a book published a year later. Richard Ford’s Gatherings from Spain (1845) gained a particular recognition among future generations of researchers. It has been perceived as one of the few attempts of portraying Andalusian, 19th century culture in a “realistic” manner deprived of mythologisation and othering mechanisms. One can also find numerous works in which the representatives of French Romanticism exoticise Andalusia. It is worth mentioning Viscount Chateubriand’s book The Adventures of Dernier Abencerage (1826), Theophile Gautier’s A Romantic in Spain (1841), Jean Charles Daviller’s Spain (1874) or, one of the most prominent works of such kind, Carmen (1845), written by Prosper Merimee. This novella has been a base for future, numerous interpretations including famous George Bizet’s opera, which premiered in 1875 in Opéra Comique in Paris. Victor Hugo’s collection of poems: Les Orientales (1829) exemplifies romantic fascination with the exoticism of Andalusian architectonic landscapes, which originated within the realm of Moorish influences during their occupation of that region (711 – 1492).

Towards the beginning of the 20th century groups of flamenco artists began to travel outside of Spain, adding to further popularity of that genre (Heffner Hayes, 2009). The emigration of Spanish population after the outbreak of civil war in 1936 also contributed to the demand for flamenco in European and American metropolises. Simultaneously to these tendencies, flamenco became popular in the realm of theatre in Spain (López Ruiz, 2007; Ríos Ruiz, 1972). Stage requirements provoked some stylistic modifications in cante (flamenco song) and baile (dance). In the 1950s flamenco was noticed by Hollywood cinematography. American directors made movies about famous flamenco artists, such as legendary dancer Carmen Amaya (Heffner Hayes, 2009). It was at that time when baile, perceived by foreigners as more spectacular than flamenco song, became the main Andalusian export product. In order to satisfy foreign requirements, further stylistic modifications were introduced in the area of dance. Characteristic jumps
and flips deriving from the tradition of classical ballet dance were incorporated in the popular version of flamenco. Such tendencies, brimming with flamboyant flamenco clichés, colourful costumes and stylised dance shows contributed to an exaggerated, joyful image of Spain. That image was further reinforced through españolada – cinematographic, grotesque representations of typical, model elements of Spanish culture (Navarrete Cardero, 2009). Francisco Franco’s regime enhanced and supported stereotypical, hyperbolised image of bailaora (female dancer) with flamenco being an essential component of the country’s development plan (Labanyi, 2004).

Since 1975, the year of the dictator’s death, Spain has yet again opened up to tourism. More taverns, flamenco cafes became adapted to touristic requirements, further altering, adjusting the genre stylistically. DeWaal Malefyt (1998b) explains that during that time a ‘new tradition’ of tablao (modern, touristic flamenco bars) was born, enhancing competition for recognition between flamenco performers. Simultaneously peñas, communities inclined toward protecting the ‘authenticity’ and stylistic purity of flamenco, emphasised their distinctiveness and isolation from popular versions.

Tablao’s fundamental component is its exposure to what is foreign – the touristic factor determines the existence of such taverns in the Spanish context. Quite frequently flamenco aficionados question the ‘authentic’ quality of tablao performances, as designed primarily for foreign audience (Millán Vázquez de la Torre, 2016). Contemporary tablao can be found not only in Andalusia (the region in which flamenco originated), but also in Madrid, Barcelona and other big Spanish cities. This is symptomatic of its commercial and public nature. While discussing the contemporary popularity of tablao, it is essential to mention the existence of touristic flamenco outside of Spain. Several scholars analyse the phenomenon of the ‘global’ reach of flamenco and the role of the consumption of flamenco products by foreign markets (for example, Aoyama, 2007; Ede Van, 2014; González 2008; Gorman, 2007). Flamenco art form gained particular recognition among Japanese aficionados – Japan has in fact the largest group of flamenco followers outside of Spain (Shikaze, 2004). As pointed out by González (2006) the flamenco biennale in Seville in 2006 welcomed more than 2,000 Japanese aficionados and in 2003, 250,000 Japanese tourists visited Spain (Aoyama, 2007). As Aoyama (2007, p.103) observed, the openness to foreign touristic influx could represent “the need for regional markets to establish links to export markets for their survival”. Japanese visitors are interested in specific group of flamenco-related tourism products. “The product should not be simply a performance program (as for leisure tourists), but include courses, workshops, conferences with artists and, in general, participation and a deeper integration in the whole flamenco culture” [González, (2008), p.809]. The demand for flamenco among Japanese tourists could be perceived as a representation of the ‘authenticity tourism’ trend [Cruces Roldán, (2014), p.825]. According to Cruces Roldán (2014) such trend relies on the need for immersion in the flamenco culture, rooted in awareness, consciousness, experience, participation in the Andalusian art.

Over 80 thousand students learn the art of flamenco in 650 classes in Japan (Millán Vázquez de la Torre, 2016). The relocation of Andalusian flamenco into the Japanese touristic realm involved its cultural adaptation and resulted in genre alterations (Ede Van, 2014). The popularity of flamenco in Japan could be, at least to some extent, a consequence of the trend of consuming Western exoticised products, resulting in their dramatic cultural transformations. ‘Japanization’ (Ede Van, 2014; Gorman, 2007) of the Andalusian genre compels researchers to view touristic flamenco from a different angle.
Flamenco tourism products in that perspective can become a new commodity in a foreign context, rather than a relocated Andalusian art form.

In the study carried out by Junta Andalucía in 2004 it was reported that 3% of tourists visited Andalusia solely with the purpose of experiencing flamenco. In 2009, 700,000 tourists travelled to Spain to participate in flamenco performances, workshops, etc., (Millán Vázquez de la Torre, 2016). Given the popularity of that art form, touristic flamenco can be perceived as a ‘cultural industry’ [Cruces Roldán, (2014), p.828], especially when addressed to aficionados who travel to Andalusia with specific flamenco-related purpose. However, it also has a potential of appealing to those tourists who, while in Southern Spain, may find themselves attracted to flamenco; in 2004 Spain was the world’s second most visited by international tourist’s country (Aoyama, 2009). The increase of cultural tourism in Spain reflects a wider, global trend: “The rise of cultural industries is in part facilitated by the growing popularity of leisure and entertainment activities in the advanced industrialised economies” [Aoyama, (2007), p.103]. Aoyama refers to that tendency as ‘cosmopolitan consumerism’ (Aoyama, 2009). The cultural tourism as a manifestation of the foreign interest in the Andalusian flamenco can be qualified as ethnic-folklore tourism (Millán Vázquez de la Torre, 2016). Flamenco remains one of the primary components of Spanish cultural tourism (Aoyama, 2007) also due to the revenues it generates. This type of heritage industry continues to affect the areas of training, entertainment and all flamenco-related industries (Millán Vázquez de la Torre, 2016). Tourism products as part of such cultural industry include: flamenco fashion, footwear, musical instruments, and accessories (such as fans, castanets, etc.), CDs (in 2009 profits gained from selling flamenco records amounted to 20 thousands Euro), books, performances and concerts (19.4% of all concerts in Andalusia were devoted to flamenco in 2009), workshops (Millán Vázquez de la Torre, 2016). The relationship between tourism and flamenco could be summarised in the following way: “Through the active participation of tourists, particularly international tourists, the region of Andalusia has (...) successfully generated a co-dependent relationship in which a regionally embedded art complex is financed, produced and consumed” [Aoyama, (2009), p.81].

A particularly important part of symbolic appropriation of flamenco within the tourism industry was its inclusion in the UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010. This was an important milestone, which marked the incorporation of flamenco into cultural management politics (Cruces Roldán, 2014). Andalusian public sector also actively contributes to the preservation and promotion of flamenco. Previous steps towards the institutionalisation of that art form include the creation of Centro Andaluz de Flamenco in 1993. A year later Compañía Andaluza de Danza launched its activity. In 2005 Agencia Andaluza para el Desarrollo de Flamenco was created as an institution designed to study, preserve and promote the intangible character of that art form. All these efforts contribute to recognising the actual flamenco culture with its peculiar politics, esthetics, etc., (Cruces Roldán, 2014). The recognition of flamenco by UNESCO indicates its appreciation as a touristic commodity as it formalises the promotion of the intangible heritage. It can also contribute to the steady growth of touristic interest in the Andalusian dance. In 2010 alone, there has been over 100% increase in profits obtained from flamenco performances (Millán Vázquez de la Torre, 2016). The UNESCO’s acknowledgement of flamenco as intangible heritage
reflects its inimitable character, which is one of flamenco’s undeniable assets (Millán Vázquez de la Torre, 2016).

Dance is always a main component of the touristic tablao’s show – it might be due to its more ‘spectacular’ than cante (song) nature. Additionally, the flamenco movement has the potential of luring audiences with its seductive, erotic component. In the context of peña (which does not target mass audiences with eye-catching dance), one can encounter gatherings deprived of a dance element. Furthermore, some peñas are devoted solely to practicing flamenco song (Malefyt, 1998a; Heffner Hayes, 2009).

Contemporary tablao revives the romantic expectations for touristic flamenco by recontextualising its heritage. Similarly to its romantic equivalent, it is a product of foreign fascination with exemplary Andalusian emblems; it exhibits and emphasises dance as the eye-catching component, directly responding to touristic needs. Contemporary existence of tablao demonstrates the continuous perseverance of heritage as a domain ‘commercially contrived for entertainment’ [Park, (2014), p.2]. With the touristic interest in the art of flamenco initiated in the romantic era, it was “gradually transformed from a ‘regional tradition’ to an export commodity, from a cultural heritage of Andalusia to exotic entertainment” [Aoyama, (2007), p.106]. During the early stages of cafés cantantes, Romanticism implemented a general ‘shift’, interest in femininity. It depicted romantic fascination with female subconscious, intuitive capacity, symbolic representations of women as bearers of dark, and primitive, wild powers, associated with nature (Janion, 1996, 2007). These obsessions boosted romantic interest in cafés cantantes. As mentioned previously, such flamenco places provided opportunities for indulging in gazing at passionate flamenco with its wild, untamed female movement, combined with possibilities of sexual encounters with exotic Spanish, Gypsy bailaoras. It is, after all, the erotic atmosphere of cafés cantantes that initiated a large-scale foreign interest in Andalusian genre. Flamencologist Chuse (2007) insists that female dancers-prostitutes were aware of romantic fantasies and were eagerly reinforcing touristic expectations. She argues that they deliberately engaged in scandalous behaviours in the 19th century bars and taverns, fully aware of foreign obsessions. Through practices of whetting and stimulating romantic, stereotypical expectations of the wild, mythologised and ‘exotic’ flamenco, bailaoras could enjoy a significant, financial gain. Being in the spotlight, they understood which movements, behaviours have the potential to ignite foreign, romantic imaginarium.

Back then, a female flamenco dancer was a displayed, exposed, emphasised ‘element’ of flamenco performance – and that tradition is still evident in the context of contemporary tablao. After all, “heritage is a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past” [Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, (1998), p.7]. Interestingly enough, contemporary, public flamenco eliminated or – more accurately – recontextualised and reinterpreted the erotic component of café cantante show. The contemporary flamenco spectacle eradicated the self-evident sexual element while maintaining a more subtle, indirect reference to the erotic, seductive nature of flamenco movement. Such assertion should not surprise given that tourists seem to have a tendency to prefer a ‘sanitised and selective version of the past’ [Huxtable, (1992), p.24–25]. Current trends, therefore, enforce a ‘disinfected’ version of the 19th century, promiscuous cafés cantantes: the heritage industry promotes ‘commodification and sanitisation of the past’ [Park, (2014), p.19]. What is more tablao reproduces the previous, touristic distinction of gender-specific flamenco domains. The subsequent subchapter aims to shed more light on that remark.
3 Female and male flamenco domains in the touristic context: corporal versus intellectual realms

Commenting on Jacques Derrida’s idea, Polish anthropologist Zbigniew Libera emphasises the perpetual, enduring presence of binary oppositions in the area of humanities. He argues that the discipline of philosophy is grounded with the following binary scheme: reality – representation, spirit – matter, soul – body, culture – nature (Libera, 1997; Derrida, 1986). Feminist theorist Hyży (2003) uses theories of corporal feminism to illustrate the enduring tradition of a body – mind duality. She asserts that a woman is associated with the body domain, whereas mind is perceived as a typically male realm. Since the ancient times, femininity has been identified with the material component of the universe. Plato argued that the female has the capacity to supply future generations with matter, whereas the male provides the form (Aristoteles, 1979). Perception of femininity as culturally associated with tangibility, definiteness and substance is reflected in the material, bodily archetype of Anima in Carl Jung’s theory (Jung, 1991). Anthropologist Janusz Barański also scrutinises the fundamental duality: matter – spirit. He traces the etymology of the term ‘matter’ in the word ‘mother’. The world was created from the matter (mother), which was inseminated by the spirit (father). Christian tradition associates the Messiah’s appearance with the insemination of Mary’s womb (mother, body, matter) by the Holy Spirit (father, soul, idea) (Barański, 2007). We could augment the analyses of structural, binary relation: body (matter) versus mind (spirit) with Maria Janion’s remark. She argues that a woman is symbolically associated with nature whereas man represents history realm (Janion, 1996).

3.1 Flamenco dance/Baile

Woman is culturally identified as being more corporal than man. Material (corporal) aspect of femininity pertains to erotic domain and suggests the perception of a woman as a sexual object. The title of one of the subchapters of Masculine Domination by Pierre Bourdieu: “Female being as being perceived” [Bourdieu, (2001), p.63] supports woman’s presence as an object of male gaze. The relationship: dance – woman seems particularly justified if we assume that dancing implies visual availability of a moving body.

In the field of ballet dance femininity and masculinity are clearly assigned to explicit areas of activity. Dempster (1995) comments on gender-specific domains of ballet using George Balanchine’s remarks. He presented the process of creating choreography as a male, intellectual activity. According to the Georgian choreographer, it is the male’s duty to tame, direct and creatively process the raw material of female body (Dempster, 1995). Choreography, perceived as intellectual formulation of the dance matter, was in the ballet tradition reserved almost exclusively for men. Following Balanchine’s reasoning, Dempster (1995) characterises the creation of choreography as a process of writing movement guidelines. Such analogy (writing) directs to the domains of reasoning, logic, idea, and mind. Therefore, traditionally male association with the field of ballet choreography seems like a culturally desired status quo. Whenever a couple is engaged in a ballet performance, male role usually comes down to being a ‘crane’, which lifts female body. Man is, naturally, a physically stronger element of a dancing couple. However, putting this practical justification aside, we could attempt searching for cultural reasons for such role distribution. While lifting his female partner, male dancer guarantees her a
greater visibility. The audience can see her body better. Thereby, female body as ‘traditionally’ intended for watching becomes culturally acknowledged and appreciated.

Female, cultural corporeality and male intellectual domain can be naturalised also in the flamenco realm. This is particularly visible in public, touristic flamenco performances. Private, intimate, ‘traditional’ peña gatherings do not always replicate such public role distribution.

As discussed above, it all began with romantic, exoticising fantasies. Orientalising tendencies translated into the correlation between the ‘exotic’ and female element. That analogy initiated associating sensual, voluptuous, exotic flamenco dance with female domain. Romantic, foreign stereotypes and depictions of flamenco triggered the process of normalising its gender domains. Labajo (2003) argues that, regardless of the time distance between contemporary reality and the cafés cantantes era, external, public, touristic expectations continuously shape stereotypical norms of using body, voice, and gesture in flamenco performances. Timothy deWaal Malefyt acknowledges an objectifying component in the stereotypical, exoticised shows. The researcher perceives the presence of bailaoras (female dancers), cantaores (singers) and tocaores (guitarist) in tablaos as products intended for mass-consumption (Malefyt, 1998a). Daily, private flamenco manifestations quite often differ from the public ones. Stereotypes are constantly recreated and renegotiated in touristic performances. Audience preferences translate into the following expectations, materialised in tablaos: a woman occupies the dance domain and a man is usually appointed to singing and playing guitar (Labajo, 2003). Outside the context of touristic performances, a woman can be (and very often is) a singer and a man – a dancer.

Throughout my first field research in Andalusia, before I managed to participate in informal, private peña gatherings, I focused on observing touristic shows in bars and taverns. During that time, I was convinced that experiencing male dance shows would turn out to be an extremely challenging task. My future visits in peñas dispelled my concerns, providing numerous opportunities for observing male performances. However, the time spent experiencing touristic shows confirmed the accuracy of Labajo’s (2003) statements about gender domains in flamenco.

As demonstrated above, dance was clearly a displayed, emphasised domain in the 19thcentury flamenco bars. After analysis of various, contemporary forms of flamenco advertising: leaflets, brochures, posters, catalogues of flamenco festivals, the same conclusion was reached. Contemporary, touristic flamenco-text in its visual layer accentuates the female dancer’s figure as an element encouraging touristic consumption. If the leaflet or brochure includes the representations of male performers, they are usually placed in the background.

Prior to the cafés cantantes era, flamenco performances took place in the safe environment of houses, familiar taverns or streets where dancers were protected by the presence of friends, family members or the elderly – community’s authorities (Labajo, 2003). In the new public context of the 19th century taverns, bailaoras (female dancers), performing as ‘bait’ for male audience, were introduced into a thoroughly new, unfamiliar role. Flamencologists claim that there were no women among followers of cafés cantantes shows (Álvarez Caballero, 1998). Placing men: singers and guitarists on the stage behind bailaora could therefore have a practical connotation. Such procedure equipped the dancer with self-assurance, provided protection. It was an essential tactic given the presence of invigorated male audience, gazing at female dancing body (Labajo, 2003). Contemporary, visual representations of touristic flamenco can therefore echo the
19th century cafés cantantes reality. This once again demonstrates the significance of flamenco heritage in determining touristic experiences and its adaptation in the contemporary context. Additionally, displaying female dancer in front of the stage, accentuating her presence in flamenco brochures, can have other connotations. She might be an element semantically more important – since the spectacularity of dance has the potential of encouraging touristic consumption of the flamenco ‘product’.

Figure 1 A brochure advertising festival of flamenco song in Puente Genil, Spain (see online version for colours)

Figure 1 clearly demonstrates gender-specific distribution of public flamenco domains. What seems particularly interesting is the fact that the following brochure does not illustrate a dance show per se. The leaflet refers to a festival of song, where dance appears only as an element accompanying the event’s main objective. The female dancer, even though she is not the festival’s predominant attraction, appears as an element semantically most relevant. Such effect was achieved through the use of bright,
expressive colours to paint her figure. Her amber silhouette is contrasting with the remaining elements of the illustration. The male singer, guitarist and palmero (a person clapping to flamenco rhythm) were sketched with delicate, pastel tones, similar to the brochure’s background. Figure 2 also depicts a singing event. Despite the fact that it is an advertisement of the “Thirteen National Competition of Flamenco Song”, no representations of cantaores (male singers) are included. Depriving the leaflet of the event’s key component, demonstrates the importance of female dance for touristic purposes.

**Figure 2** A brochure advertising flamenco song competition in Vejer de la Frontera, Spain (see online version for colours)

Such leaflets, posters usually portray the dancer as a sensual seductress. However, her eroticism is subtle, indirect, merely implied. Advertisements of flamenco bars, festivals or tablaos do not accentuate the most obvious female attributes. There are generally no depictions of breasts or naked thighs. Such subtle, sensual message is also replicated in the female dance performance. Since the “Golden Age of Flamenco” seductive, hypercorporal, yet performed from the distance of the stage dance has stimulated male senses. Female movement has been evocative, suggestive yet reserved, creating distance. Dancers’ seduction tactics seem to be based on the fusion of ‘teasing’ through limited
direct interactions and flirtatious yet subtle eroticism. As was mentioned previously, preferred type of visual, touristic representations include referencing bailaora’s voluptuousness, sensuality. She is often presented backwards, her body is arched, and arms are naked. Such image is present on the Figures 3 and 4. Embodiment of elusive flirtatiousness is also visible on the fifth brochure, advertising flamenco festival in Fondón. Here bailaora’s sensuality has taken the form of allusive, enigmatic, ephemeral presence. In the textual layer of the leaflet a guitarist with a nickname Tomatito Hijo is introduced as the event’s main, special guest. His portrait appears at the bottom right of the illustration. However, the dancer’s ‘shadow’ dominates the photography, diminishing implied significance of the festival’s special guest. ‘Veiling’ the misty silhouette of bailaora reduces such visual and semantic disproportion. I have included below two more advertisements of flamenco (Figures 6 and 7). They demonstrate the same tendencies of illustrating gender-related domains in touristic flamenco performances. During several visits to Andalusia in a two-year time span, I gathered an extensive selection of flamenco brochures, advertisements of such kind. In my collection, I only found one or two leaflets with a male dancer’s image advertising a touristic place per se (Figure 8). To complete and conclude the presented material, I chose two examples of brochures advertising stores with flamenco footwear. Male dancers also require appropriate flamenco shoes and costumes, yet female accessories are once again accentuated in these advertisements (Figures 9 and 10).

**Figure 3**  A brochure advertising festival of flamenco song in Malaga, Spain (see online version for colours)
Figure 4  A brochure advertising flamenco festival in Ardales, Spain (see online version for colours)

Source: Author’s archive

Figure 5  A poster advertising flamenco festival in Fondón, Spain (see online version for colours)

Source: Author’s archive
Such transformations result in the perception of female dance as a particularly exotic, sensual and emotional form of artistic expression.

Figure 8  A brochure advertising tablao in Sevilla, Spain (see online version for colours)

In the past, the appearance of women in public flamenco places such as cafés cantantes had pejorative connotations. Such belittling perception could also reflect the immoral profession of some bailaoras at that time. That ‘depraved’ aspect, however, could explain female presence in public ergo: representative space, given the androcentric nature of Andalusian culture. A female dancer’s existence in the public context of tablao could potentially provoke a more problematic situation. After all, in the androcentric reality, man should occupy the representative realm. While scrutinising that conundrum, I analysed the actual (not imagined or culturally emphasised) female to male dancer’s proportion. Through reviewing dance anthologies, it was revealed that the disproportion between famous bailaores and bailaora is smaller than I initially anticipated. In the anthology written by Manuel Ríos Vargas, biographies of acclaimed flamenco dancers are included. After counting the number of all performers distinguished by Ríos Vargas (2009) the following proportion was revealed: thirty nine bailaores to forty six bailaoras. In tablaos, flamenco bars, and taverns, however, dancing women are the vast majority. It seems that male dancers, even tough there are fewer of them, more often achieve international recognition. Such observation could explain female presence in less ‘spectacular’ settings. At the same time, both men and women can occupy domains,
which imply a greater acknowledgement (since dance exists as a naturalised female domain).

**Figure 9** A brochures advertising a store with flamenco shoes in Sevilla, Spain (see online version for colours)

Source: Author’s archive

**Figure 10** A brochures advertising a store with flamenco shoes in Sevilla, Spain (see online version for colours)

Source: Author’s archive

The most famous flamenco dancer of all times (such remark appears in the vast majority of flamenco publications) was a woman – Carmen Amaya, who placed a great emphasis on *zapateado* (footwork). What seems particularly interesting in the light of the above considerations is the fact that this is a technique ordinarily associated with male dance. In traditional female performances *zapateado* had been an added value. Carmen
Amaya remoulded that customarily male technique into her trademark (Labajo, 2003). In order to emphasise her footwork she danced in trousers and mastered typically male flamenco genres such as *farruca* (Labajo, 2003). Carmen Amaya’s ‘androgy nousness’, her manlike costume, and the use of traditionally male craft, sheds new light on her international, impressive career. It seems interesting that in the female-dominated realm of flamenco dance the woman, who incorporated male elements in her performance, achieved the greatest fame.

### 3.2 Flamenco song/Cante

Chuse (2007) argues that despite the numerous female achievements in the area of flamenco song, their presence in that field was ignored or belittled (Heffner Hayes, 2009). Initially, women were performing flamenco song in the forms of laments in the context of *cafés cantantes*. Gradually men began to compete with them, chanting their expressions of suffering, dramatising the pain of marginalised, ostracised Gypsies. Eventually, men dominated the realm of flamenco song, appropriating initially female practices (Labajo, 2003). Labajo (2003) wrote an article about the appropriation of gender domains in the realm of flamenco. One of the subchapters of her publication has the following title: “The Deep Song is a Male Thing…” [Labajo, (2003), p.69]. She adds that despite the historical presence of some female singers, flamenco literature emphasises the role of *cantaores* (male singers). After studying anthologies of professional singers, she acknowledged: “only one in four or five singers happened to be female” [Labajo, (2003), p.70]. The naturalisation of flamenco song as a typically male domain (especially in public, touristic contexts) can be associated with preferences for a certain type of voice. In the stereotypical perception, male bass and baritone supposedly release the emotional value of *cante jondo* (deep flamenco song): “It is easy to observe that the deep song attains its full expression in the bass and baritone voices; women who have practiced a good *cante* owe their success largely to their naturally thick, harsh and low voices, which gave them virility. This means that the deep song is only appropriate for male performances. Or, as it is often stated by fans impressed with this marked virility: it is mostly for machos” [Labajo, (2003), p.70; Cabalanda and Cabalanda, (1998), p.118].

The belief in a particularly male ability to express deep emotions in flamenco song, defines the public existence of contemporary *cante*. Expressive quality of song is rooted in the genesis of flamenco. As stated previously, this genre was supposedly created out of the verbalisation of suffering of the marginalised Andalusian minorities, such as the Gypsies. Gypsies themselves eagerly participate in the processes of ‘theatricalisation of pain’ [Labajo, (2003), p.80] in their singing performances. The following remark is particularly fundamental for the issues under discussion: Gypsies are convinced that the beauty and genuineness of flamenco song is directly conditioned by the performer’s gender (Labajo, 2003). Male verbalisation of painful experiences in *cante* is socially approved. In the perception of Gypsies “women cry over any trifle but when a man weeps, one falls apart” [Labajo, (2003), p.80]. Male laments that could connote pejorative associations in different contexts (‘a man who cries is weak’), in the reality of Andalusia pertain to a great social esteem. The transparency, clarity of emotions in *cante* is recognised as a highest form of artistry. Such perception can justify positive viewpoint on male weeping. A man ‘crying with his song’ on stage is perceived as an authentic, sincere, genuine artist. *Jondo* (deep) and *puro* (pure) variations of song, etymologically
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Praise purity of expression and the depth of articulated emotions. Papapavlou (2003, p.16) argues: “The capability of a person to open their heart and soul and let the others see directly into it is exactly the promise of sincerity and clarity.” Additionally, she illustrates the typical reactions of the audience enjoying cante jondo. Among the most frequent comments heard during such performances were the following: ‘everyone had wet eyes’, ‘powerful voice’, ‘the force of emotions’, “what a power he has, how he dominated the scene” [Papapavlou, (2003), p.16]. Therefore, the articulation of pain and the expression of profound emotions in male performances are the qualities determining the artist’s success.

Figure 11  A poster advertising flamenco song competitions in Carmona, Spain

The exoticising tendencies in the male cante realm relate to the heritage of that art, its traumatic beginnings. In the past, Gypsies frequently lamented over their solitude and ostracism in Andalusian prisons (Labajo, 2003). One can observe here foreign mythologising inclinations. They involve the creation of dangerous, wild image of the prisoner, Andalusian Gypsy. Such imagery responds to romantic fascinations with the primitive, savage element. Additionally, pure, authentic sensitivity and emotional depth of a flamenco singer is emphasised. Even nowadays, in commercial flamenco places, the factor of male suffering is highlighted during singing performance. Accentuating male expression of traumatic experiences encourages the touristic consumption of ‘pure’ flamenco. Contemporary, visual representations of cante (Figures 11 and 12), replicate such depictions. In the provided examples of advertisements, singers’ faces are contorted, frowned, we can see grimace of pain. Closed eyes, lines on their foreheads suggest
deeply felt emotions. All these elements emphasise the imagined statues of Andalusian man as the only appropriate depositary of ‘authentic’ feelings, communicated through ‘pure’ cante.

**Figure 12** A brochure advertising flamenco events in Vejer de la Frontera, Spain (see online version for colours)

Source: Author’s archive

Androcentric nature of Andalusian culture implies a privileged male position. It does not mean, however, that Andalusian men are not bonded by social expectations. Male singers are obliged by cultural duties, which limit their artistic freedom. Women must fulfil exoticising and eroticising expectations of the audience. Men must be submissive to cultural requirements for expressive, emotionally draining singing performance. Failing to satisfy the demand for deep and emotional cante results in the lack of social and touristic approval. Such man will not be perceived as a genuine artist or a ‘manly’ depositary of Andalusian values. Cultural norms tangle men in the processes of recreating a mythologised ‘macho’ image. Andalusian men are aware of how to reaffirm the notion of their hypermasculinity. They tell stories about spending days and nights in taverns, drinking and smoking. Such activities supposedly allow improving their craftsmanship (Labajo, 2003). The relationship: flamenco song – Andalusian ‘macho’ requires such particular narrative. *Cantaores* (male singers) argue that spending time in bars enhances low timbre, characteristic hoarseness of voice. Cigarettes smoke, alcohol, tavern imply the singer’s masculinity. Thanks to these attributes “the singers demonstrate that they live like men” [Labajo, (2003), p.70]. Such ‘macho’ occupies highly masculine territory. The ‘necessity’ to work on the singers’ craft through inhaling smoke and pouring alcohol
down their throats, eliminates women from the cante realm. Male territory of the tavern reaffirms the stereotypical correlation between Andalusian men and cante jondo (deep song).

4 Conclusions

The analysis of flamenco domains in the androcentric reality of Andalusia reveals that both genders are subject to the net of social and touristic expectations. The essence of foreign, romantic flamenco-text includes mechanisms of fetishizing the exoticism of bailaoras (female dancers). Contemporary, touristic contexts reconfigure old connotations of the mythologised image of flamenco dancer. They maintain, however, the structural quality of exhibiting her exoticism and sensuality. These components display bailaora as an ‘export product’ intended for mass consumption. Male, contemporary cante domain is based on reaffirming the stereotype of the Spanish ‘macho’, together with accentuating an emotional, ‘authentic’ aspect of the song. In the stereotypical perception of flamenco, only male expression of pain is ‘genuine’.

The unchanged quality, which organises public performances over long periods of time, is based on gender-related disposition of flamenco domains. The standardised, romantic perception of an Andalusian dancer as the exoticised object of admiration is renegotiated and reinforced in the contemporary touristic contexts. It is true after all that “Heritage can be viewed as a symbolic embodiment of the past reconstructed and reinterpreted in the collective memories and traditions of contemporary societies” [Park, (2014), p.9].

References

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Notes

1 I intentionally use the term ‘Gypsies’ instead of ‘Roma’ or ‘Romani’ people. This is a result of adapting inner, Andalusian terminology. They call themselves gitanos, which translates into the word ‘Gypsy’.

2 Selected examples of romantic, non-Spanish publications about Andalusian culture can be found in Heffner Hayes’ (2009, p.38) work or in Lou Charnon-Deutsch’s book The Spanish Gypsy: the History of a European Obsession (2004), particularly in its two chapters: The Discovery of the Romantic Spanish Gypsy and Spreading the Good Word.