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ELLIPTICAL BODIES. AVANT-GARDE, AND THE PHYSICAL SHAPE OF FLAMENCO
RHYTHMS

by

Julie Galle Baggenstoss

Under the Direction of Elena del Río Parra, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Cuban writer and arts critic Severo Sarduy theorized that essential baroque qualities are defined by the ellipse with one focus invisible so that the visible focus is exaggerated. An analysis of rhythmic and visual aesthetics of two Flamenco artists, Vicente Escudero and his contemporary Israel Galván, brings to light how these artists refine the double foci in works that often reach into other disciplines and avant-garde movements of expressionism, cubism, and aleatoric music. The results are baroque expressions that are in contrast to artistic norms that preceded these artists and depended on balance, order, and predictability associated with classicism. In the case of Escudero, a number of his practices, including the posture of a male dancer, use of *contra-tiempo*, and isolating bursts of

footwork, have become standards of virtuosity among dancers today and shape the contemporary baroque identity of Flamenco.

INDEX WORDS: Severo Sarduy, Flamenco rhythm, Spanish dance, Vicente Escudero, Israel Galván, Elipse, Elipsis, Flamenco dance

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JULIE GALLE BAGGENSTOSS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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Julie Galle Baggenstoss
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DEDICATION

For Jack and William

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1 INTRODUCTION

It would seem that Flamenco dancing on powder would be pointless. Footwork would not sound. Flying dust would blur arm movements and choke deep breathing for energy production. In the production of “La Curva” at the Festival flamenco de Jerez XVI in February, 2012, the star of the show, Israel Galván (Seville, 1973) proved just the opposite. His Flamenco dancing on powder created a booming sound that seemed to push through theater walls. Its walloping vibrations crashed into spectators in a multi-sensory spectacle that could be felt, as well as heard. Movement fused with the aleatoric music of a piano that played with Galván through long silences. The Seville-born dancer who chose to create percussive dance in footwork, by rapping on his teeth, by squeaking his leather jacket, and by drumming on a chair hung around his neck. His modernism was contrasted by the constant presence of two pillars of the art of Flamenco: vocalist Inés Bacan (Inés Peña Peña, Lebrija, Spain 1952) and palmero José Jiménez Santiago “Bobote” (Seville 1962). These icons of Gypsy Flamenco¹ accompanied Galván in only a few select moments, enough to be interwoven with the silences and randomness³ of modernism in a manner that created a contrast between the traditional and contemporary, even the avant-garde. They were not the stars of the plot as they are usually positioned in Flamenco performances, but their purist traditions were a constant reminder of what Galván was tearing apart in Flamenco.

Galván is one of a growing number of artists creating new vocabulary in their expression of Flamenco today, and one of a number of Flamenco artists who shows signs that he is changing the aesthetics and musical codes of the art from, from the perspective of dance. Because Flamenco exists in the public eye, it has evolved with trends and to adapt to changes around it, with innovative expressions often pulling the art form through cycles of

rebirth. Each new beginning offers a wave of interest for audiences, and when innovation reaches into high-art, the avant-garde piques interest of intellectuals and those who are not typically drawn to Flamenco environments. But, not all progress is welcomed, as Flamenco hosts a gamut of interpretive styles, from the conservative “purists” to the touring professional performers. Within that range, contemporary and avant-garde artists of Flamenco have challenged their contemporaries. They threaten purists to strip away the essential elements that bring sacral value to the art form in its original ritual state and they are ridiculed by colleagues who do not know how to read Flamenco vocabulary fused with another genre.

An analysis of three such artists, whose work in the same one Flamenco *palo*², the *seguiriyas*, shows how they fragment Flamenco and other art forms and then fuse the pieces to construct a new expression that satisfies their creative needs. Despite efforts to tear apart Flamenco in exploration of singular units of expression, all three artists depend on rhythm to guide them. They cannot destroy this basic structure, but they work diligently to reduce it, obscure it so that they can focus on the singular goal of expressing emotion. Reading their work through the theories of Cuban writer and arts critic Severo Sarduy (Camagüey, Cuba, 1937 – Paris, 1993), it is clear to identify the role of rhythm as a source of creation and as a constant reference in their works. Yet, Sarduy’s theories show that rhythm is pushed to the background to the extent that its absence complicates the communication of ideas. Sarduy left Cuba in 1960 bound for Madrid to continue his studies in a program that was cut short due to political changes. Sarduy immediately moved to Paris, and did not return to Cuba. He became a French citizen, and spent years traveling across Europe, including returning to Spain in 1964. He certainly would have had the

opportunity to experience Flamenco at a time when the work of dancer Vicente Escudero was maturing in both avant-garde and Flamenco circles, but had not yet been adopted in a widespread manner. The publication dates of his theories in the book *Barroco* (1974) and his book of poetry entitled *Flamenco* (1969) make it possible to speculate that Sarduy's work was informed by Escudero, though no direct link has been found between the two pioneers, the poet's work was informed by the innovations of the dancer.

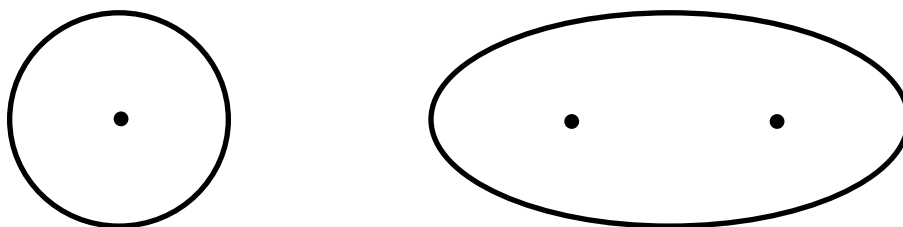


Figure 1.1 Circle and Ellipse

A circle is shown with a single center of focus, and an ellipse is shown with two foci.

Severo Sarduy looked to Johannes Kepler (Weil der Stadt, Germany 1571 – Regensburg, Germany 1630) in theorizing about shapes in baroque art. Based on mathematical calculations, Kepler insisted that planets took an elliptical path around the sun, rather than a circular path, as suggested by Galileo. Sarduy theorized that Baroque expressions of art can be defined by the physical shape of an ellipse, and he applied it to architectural work of Francesco Borromini (Francesco Castelli, Bissone, Duchy of Lombardy 1599 – Rome 1667). His theories provide a reading of the unbalanced aesthetic qualities of Baroque art. Just as a circle represents the perfection sought in arts of the renaissance period, the ellipse is the imperfect form of the circle. In his theory of the ellipse, Sarduy suggests a number of manners in which the shape appears in Baroque visual art.

For example, Sarduy demonstrated his theory of positive double focalization via ellipses in the painting “El Intercambio de Princesas” by Rubens, noting one ellipse formed by the image of the sky and heavens and the other formed on the ground by the princesses of France and Spain. He borrowed the definition of François Wall to explain, “Los centros inocuados no se limitan a totalizar alternativamente la composición, a desplazar la mirada de un término a corto, contiguo, sino que marcan la función de la carencia organizadora en el interior de la cadena signficante, la importancia de la focalización denegada en la red metonímica de la representación” (Sarduy 64). The Cuban writer connected the geometric shape to literature by way of the ellipsis, suggesting that one of two halves created by an ellipsis will naturally suppress the other in a double negative focalization. He also theorized that at times the ellipsis is not used to omit words but to omit an idea. Thus, using metaphor, the expressed idea is not the essential message being communicated. Rather, the unspoken, or invisible focus, is truly the content intended for the audience. Reading works of Escudero and Galván, through the lens of Sarduy’s theories provides a new structure in which to understand and validate their interpretations within Flamenco. Such double-planned analysis begins with an understanding of Flamenco arts history, theory, and evolution.

2 CHANGING ROLES AND TRADITIONS

Flamenco emerged as an art form of improvisation and oral transmission, a result of hybridization of cultural expressions present in Spain before and during the public debut of Flamenco in the mid-19th century. Along with Arab, African, Latin American, Jewish, and Indian influences, Flamenco’s Romani influence is most widely recognized worldwide. This group shaped the aesthetic of Flamenco that is widely referred to as “Gypsy” and is

challenged by contemporary interpretations. The Romani people first arrived in southern Spain in the 15th century, bringing with them a tradition of nomadic life, short-term employment as farm help, fortune tellers, and entertainers. Their early presence in Andalusia is relevant because they adapted the music of Andalusia as they sang and danced to earn money as entertainers. The 15th century adaptation of the Spanish music by the Gypsies did not result in Flamenco, but laid the groundwork for the later development of Flamenco during the 16th to 19th centuries (Leblon 10). The most easily noted of these influences is the imitation of 19th century Gypsy fashion in Flamenco costuming; use of words from the Caló dialect in Flamenco song lyrics; and the constant presence of professional Gypsy artists who express to audiences their perspective, keeping their image at the forefront of the art form. Literary and visual arts reinforced the Gypsy presence during the late 19th century, including Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen*, which suggested Flamenco or proto-Flamenco styling. American John Singer Sargent is one of several painters who depicted Gypsies dancing Flamenco during this time. His benefactor in Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner (New York, 1840 – Boston, 1924), purchased and put on display his painting "El jaleo" (1882), known internationally today as one of the most iconic representations of Flamenco dance.

Flamenco is not solely a Gypsy art form. Flamenco emerged from ballet via the *bailes boleros*, which developed in Spain when Spanish ballet dancers created their own style in a wave of nationalism in the mid-18th century, to set themselves apart from French and Italian ballerinas with whom they had been performing. This new form included movements that made dancers look as if they were flying. The name "*bailes voleros*" (flying dances) was given to the new style, and it was quickly changed to "*bailes boleros*" through

mispronunciation. These *bailes boleros* were featured in a theater format in Spain popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, which consisted of a variety of vignettes of plays and dances. During these performances, dancers were often hired as actors and actors were often hired as dancers, and within productions, characters on stage were played by people who held such roles or professions in real life, such as a professional bullfighter would portray a bullfighter on stage or a Gypsy would portray a Gypsy on stage. Throughout these theater productions, a mixture of Gypsy style of dance and *bailes boleros* was present on stage. The two fused in the mid-19th century to create Flamenco.

For as much as the news media affirms existence, June 6, 1847 can be marked as the day Flamenco was recognized as a popular form of entertainment. The newspaper *El Espectador*, published on that date a short article that indicates Flamenco and its artists had reached a level of notoriety, specifically its Gypsy artists. The newspaper article stated:

Hace pocos días que ha llegado a esta Corte donde piensa residir algún tiempo, según nos han asegurado, el célebre cantante del género gitano Lázaro Quintana; cualquiera que haya viajado por Andalucía, y concurrido en Cádiz o Sevilla a algunas de las funciones que tan frecuentemente se ejecutan en aquellas capitales, entre las personas afectas a esas diversiones, habrá cuando menos oído el respeto que su nombre merece entre los cantadores de este género: entusiastas nosotros por las costumbres españoles y más principalmente por las del suelo andaluz cuyo poesía a todos interesa y a muchos encanta, concurrimos a una reunión donde debía asistir este y la nunca bien país por sus bailes y canto; mucho escuchamos de notable a ambos y más de una vez nos pulsó la vena la corazón las sentidas canciones flamencas que les escuchamos,

tan propias del mediodía del acomodadas a aquellas imaginaciones poéticas que los hijos de aquel suelo por lo regular poseen (Espectador).

Even with coverage in newspapers, Flamenco in its earliest days smoldered in taverns and private gatherings of marginalized Gypsies before it was thrust into awareness by the cultivated experts of literary and fine arts circles who were enamored by this underbelly of society. It was — and still exists as — a form of sacral art within closed circles. In this form, Flamenco was transmitted orally within families and social networks. As a ritual of music and dance in which some members of the community led others in emotional expression via singing, dance, and music, everyone present affects the ebb and flow of music and corporeal interpretation. Those not actively involved in interpretation influenced the action through their roles as witnesses, by supporting, or not supporting, an emotional expression by way of hand clapping and cheering terms of encouragement (Hecht 180). Instead of witness, Flamenco critic and historian Juan Vergillos Gómez uses the word “public” in his description of how those who surround the playing artists contribute to the communal nature of Flamenco in its ritual setting. “La identificación, en el sentido más físico, llega hasta tal punto que todos, guitarristas, cantaores, bailaores, palmeros, participando un mismo y exacto sentimiento, y el guitarrista canta y los palmeros bailan y el público se levanta de su asiento” (40). Besides creating a communal ritual, the oral transmission of Flamenco makes it accessible without admission to formal dance or music academies, yet limited to those who entered the tradition through its organic means. Virtuosity is defined by measures that do not require technical excellence in the arts and instead call on an aesthetic that goes against the grain of perfection, balance, and harmony. An overweight, old woman dancing in street shoes and an apron satisfies Flamenco fans as

much as a singer who cries out discordantly during an evening production in Seville's refined Maestranza Theater.

A dichotomy developed in aesthetic of Flamenco dance with its exit into commercial markets. Flamenco was featured on stages before ticket-buying audiences during the era of the *Cafés cantantes*⁴, which first opened in the 19th century; the economic-fueled trend of *Ópera flamenca*⁵ during the early 20th century; and touring Spanish dance companies born in the 1960s. This public aesthetic was a combination of bourgeois taste and politicizing of the art form. It created commercially viable variations of the original sacral form to cater to the tourist and show business industries. For example during the *Ópera flamenca* era, theater producers hired large groups of dancers to recite choreographies and groups of musicians to arrange music based on outside influences to create theater concepts that would entertain the masses. The traditional clan of artists who created performance art through improvised dance and music was replaced by dance corps and bands of musicians, even orchestras at times, reciting pre-arranged and rehearsed material. Repertoire was modified to meet audience demands, which meant at times striking *cante jondo*⁶ pieces from the bill. The showcase of technical ability overpowered the idea of sharing emotional expression in the communal creation of music and dance. While this opposed the tradition of orality and the sacral ritual of Flamenco, it catered to the desire for virtuosity as demonstrated by ballet companies and western classical music that were part of the bourgeois theater experience prescribed for ascent in the class system.

In addition to the format of the performance art, plastic qualities evolved to keep up with trends in fashion, popular music, and dance. Flamenco dance costumes followed fashion trends, shedding their layers of skirts and aprons of the 19th century for sleek look

of the early 20th century that included satin in the 1930s and baubles by the 1940s. Skirts shortened in the 1960s and then again lengthened 20 years later when Lycra material became fashionable just before ruffles were omitted to return to a sleek line for dancers. In the era of *Ópera Flamenca*, Andalusian pop music was included in performance repertoire, and later internationally acclaimed Flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucía (Algeciras, Spain 1947 – Playa del Carmen, Mexico, 2014) collaborated with jazz great John McLaughlin (Doncaster, England 1942) to create the first new sound in Flamenco guitar since the contributions of Ramón Montoya (1880 - 1949), who standardized classical guitar technique and alternate tunings in the Flamenco canon (Manuel 17). Antonia Mercé y Luque “*La Argentina*” (Buenos Aires, 1890 - 1936) is credited with introducing ballet technique into Flamenco, and she and Lucero Tena brought castanets into wide use during the early 20th century. Renowned world-class artists fused modern dance and jazz dance with Flamenco at the turn of the 21st century, including Eva la Yerbabuena and Belén Maya in a trend that continues today. Much of the innovation was brought on by the globalization of Flamenco, as influences from Germany and the United States of America found their way into an already hybrid dance form. But, a portion of the public molding of the Flamenco aesthetic was driven by the Spanish government under the Franco regime, whose expression of nationalism included a specific aesthetic within the gamut of Flamenco expression: a non-Gypsy dancer clad in polka dots, tall hair comb and shawl accompanied in the background by a singer and guitarist lacking the crying quality of Gypsy-style singing or the heavy guitar strum of pueblo players. This selective projection of Flamenco circulated inside and outside of Spain, while the tradition of Flamenco as a past time deepened among farm workers and in secret gatherings of Gypsies in back rooms, resulting

in a public vision of Flamenco that is far from its origins as a ritual. This duality continues today, with *cante jondo* largely limited to settings of Flamenco artists and their families and devoted aficionados at singing contests. The *cante jondo* showcased briefly in world-class theater performances is but a drop of the lament that is sung at Flamenco gatherings that last for hours into the night and at times until sunrise the next day. On the other hand, more upbeat songs and lively dances are served to tourists visiting Spain and theater patrons globally, and they fill commercial music sales of Flamenco songs intended for mass consumption by the general public.

The changes created during the Franco regime were not the only reason that a dichotomy began in the expression of Flamenco: one form as a past time shared privately and the other a public representation of the art form for mass audiences. As Flamenco flourished commercially, it came to be studied next to ballet and classical music in formal academies, which injected into the art form measures of documentation and technical mastery that had not been relevant previously. Flamenco also changed as it unhinged from its original aura when it adapted to new markets opened by film, world tours, and higher education. Outside of its marginalized populations of Andalucía, the communal expression of a single emotion in Flamenco was examined by show business and critical thinkers. Those in control of Flamenco's new environments took apart the art form and used its pieces in new creations. For example, in the 1930s, the new genre of ballet Flamenco, female dancers could tell stories with song and movement within films. Where family and friends would have surrounded these on-screen artists with Flamenco's renowned hell-raising of rhythmic hand clapping and encouraging cheers of "Olé!", instead directors, lights, and cameras filled the space around the Flamenco action. In 1955, the word

Flamencología was coined by Anselmo González Clement, who published a book that he titled with the term and in which he explains his theories about the origin and development of Flamenco in Spain. In English, the word means Flamencology, an academic field devoted to the preservation and diffusion of the art of Flamenco through research, documentation, and teaching in higher education.

Two conflicts arise in the dichotomy between Flamenco as a sacral art and its bourgeois presentation in performance and in study. In informal settings where Flamenco is meant for sharing emotional expression, the art form exists as a whole without need to study, pull apart, or repurpose any part of it. In theaters and in study, this gestalt is destroyed to the dismay of purists who wish for the art form to be left unchanged, always pulling together those elite “*enterado*” members of an artistic circle who come together to celebrate a ritual of music and dance that permits them to share in emotional expression as transmitted over generations by their ancestors. New vocabulary of contemporary Flamenco and the avant-garde sits in the cross-hairs of this conflict, as it depends on extreme mastery of Flamenco's codes of conduct, communication, and improvisation, as well as technical virtuosity. In addition, it depends on the innovative artist to study both Flamenco and other disciplines outside of Flamenco, and then perform in his original aesthetic before a public audience. Flamenco today encompasses a gamut of variations from the oldest expression of the art form as it originated in Spain to a commercially sold aesthetic that producers believe will satisfy global audiences. Experiments in music and dance are part of that gamut and have become the most difficult expressions of Flamenco to define, qualify, and appreciate within and without of Flamenco circles.

As it is practiced today, Flamenco is still a tradition of improvisation between practitioners of music and dance who master and advance their personal skills and repertoire as individuals, and then come together to create performance art in a structure of non-verbal codes of communication. The role of the Flamenco dancer is to accompany the Flamenco singer, with the guitarist following the singer and dancer in his accompaniment. Widely accepted as the most traditional practice of Flamenco today, this design took shape in the mid-20th century, replacing earlier formats in which dancers were also singers within their solo pieces and singers were divided into two groups: one to sing for dancers and one to sing as solo artists. At its core, Flamenco relies on a system of interaction between dancer, singer, and guitarist, as well as anyone else present playing *palmas*⁸ (rhythmic hand clapping) or shouting *jaleos*⁹. Practitioners of Flamenco arts share a common knowledge of a somewhat finite set of non-verbal codes that signal moments of action and reaction. They also share a common knowledge of the possible outcomes of each signal. Exactly how those outcomes occur is the space where improvisation takes place within Flamenco, as artists toy with rhythmic accents, speed, extension or shortening of melody, and even pitch. While the singer mandates the expression of each *letra*¹⁰, the dancer and guitarist have opportunities to change the flow of a song through their reactions to the singer's choices. Often a dancer can speed up a song, forcing the singer to stop singing one *palo* and begin singing another within the same dance piece. A guitarist often needs to play in a conservative manner, always observing the nuances in the delivery of a *letra* or dance step, desiring to strike a guitar chord at just the right moment so as to contribute to the expression rather than overwhelm it or fail to drive energy upward as necessary.

The tradition of Flamenco is largely closed to outsiders, in part due to the fact that its improvisational nature and oral transmission are difficult to represent pedagogically, and likely also due to the tightly-knit social structure of Gypsy families that comprise much of the population of Flamenco artists. As Vicente Escudero notes in his autobiography, the quest to become “*enterado*” is a required path for any artist who wishes to work professionally in Flamenco. Such status signifies that an artist can be hired to work in a variety of conditions and with a variety of artists, because he is versed in repertoire, as well as skill of communication via improvisation. Becoming an insider to Flamenco also signifies a knowledge of how to respectfully and communally share the expression of an emotion as a member of a group wading through that emotion together.

While the artists Vicente Escudero and Israel Galván have shaped the visual esthetic of Flamenco dance, including the alignment of arms and use of hands, the following analysis primarily addresses Flamenco dance in terms of rhythm, given the dancer’s role as a musician in physically embodying the music they accompany. Their percussive vocabulary, which includes footwork, snapping, hand clapping, and body slapping, as well as the silences, add to the audible aesthetic of the rhythm and melody produced by the singer and guitarist he accompanies. The dancer is responsible not only for moving in time with the music, but for placing appropriate accents of down beats, up beats, and *contra-tiempos* in the correct positions with a *compás*, a phrase of music, or an entire *letra*. Misplacing such elements change the aesthetic of a song. For example, a percussive phrase of footwork danced in the *remate*¹¹ of a song *letra*, called the *caida del cante*, should end on the first accented downbeat of a *letra por soleá de Alcalá*¹², according to tradition. This effect brings the singing, guitar playing, and dance to a stop together to form a short dramatic pause

followed by one more burst of sound on a second down beat, that signals the final climax of the phrase before a low-energy diffusion of tension. In some interpretations, the dancer does not stop at this traditional point. Instead, the percussive vocabulary extends to that second down beat that is followed immediately by the low-energy diffusion of tension. This alteration of percussive vocabulary changes the shading of the intensity of the *letra* and the reaction of the witnesses who are compelled to cheer and shout in response to the increased percussiveness. This is an example of a widely-accepted variation from tradition. Trained dancers are aware of the climaxes and valleys in a measure of music, or in phrase of music, or a letra, composed of many measures. Part of their work is to use percussive vocabulary in a manner that amplifies the presentation of the song lyrics and guitar melodies.

3 FLAMENCO AS A PIONEER

Vicente Escudero's creations from the 1920s - 1970s set him apart from his contemporaries in terms of movement and music. It is important to note that his career spanned the period in which the aesthetic of Flamenco of today was formed, and it is greatly different from its predecessor because the role of the dancer now has much more influence on the direction of the music, injecting percussive footwork within singing segments to amplify the sensory effect of the singing, a technique that was unheard of prior to the 1930s. Audiences trying to read the work of Escudero see it through the lens of today's aesthetic, which he informed decades before the fashion changed. One must see the base from which he grew to understand how his work was ultimately embraced after decades of rejection by his peers. Despite being taught Flamenco by Gypsies of Valladolid during his childhood, Escudero described in his autobiography, *Mi baile* (1947), how he

was shunned by fellow guitarists, singers, and even his tailor for his unconventional manners, including his use of rhythmic accents and the cut of his costume jacket. Keeping in mind that Flamenco artists are bound to follow rules of improvisational codes and adhere to rhythmic structures that define and color the emotive qualities of a song and dance, Escudero was not necessarily working within the parameters that were expected by his peers.

Escudero created his first choreography when he was a teenager, and titled it “El tren”. It was a *solo de pie*¹³ that imitated the sound of a train, and was performed originally without musical accompaniment. In an art form dependent on the interaction of dance, music, and rhythm, this creation could never have been considered Flamenco. And, it was just one of his many creations that challenged the need for customary Flamenco music. Escudero explained in his autobiography, “Pues lo mismo bailo con guitarra que sin ella, al son del frote de dos piñas, al rugido de los leones, al compás del martillo de un zapatero remendón y mejor todavía con los ruidos de una herrería,” (48). It was his aim to find a way for the dance to take priority over the music, so that as a dancer he could move without regard to the music. Escudero worked for years on the fringe of Flamenco, creating work that suited his creative style, and did eventually find acceptance as an “*enterado*” artist, only to reject the opportunity to work in Flamenco environments. He explains that the iniquitous nature of the lifestyle drove him away. He elected to leave the life he had hoped for and return to working in his own projects.

Video recordings and written accounts of Escudero’s work shows how it was at odds with both the sacral aesthetic and the bourgeois aesthetic of his time. Escudero had little concern over the opinions of traditionalists, and instead had a keen focus on creating dance

to communicate his ideas. In his autobiography, Escudero denounced the widespread desire that Flamenco dancers historically held to learn and repeat technique and expression of previous generations. He wrote, “A pesar de mi incultura, latía dentro de mí una rebeldía intuitiva que me hacía presentir que existía algo más importante que la perfección mecánica de los pasos” (103). His attitude about producing work was shaped by early modern dance pioneer Isadora Duncan and the Ballets Russes de Sergéi Diágilev, which he saw in Paris after he moved to the city in 1910. After that year, Escudero lived and worked in Paris intermittently for nearly a decade, including his debut as a concert dancer in 1922 at Salle Gaveau and performances at his own theater, La Courbe in 1924. This was the time when the Paris neighborhood of Montparnasse transformed into a hive of activity of modernist artists, and Escudero befriended cubist and surrealist painters, including Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró and Juan Gris, whose works reflected Flamenco themes in the artists’ protest of social and political changes. Through their work and friendship, Escudero realized that self-expression free of conventional standard was possible.

Victoria Cavia Naya identifies Escudero’s innovations in terms of three postulates: reduce dance to the simplest unit, which is expression; free dance from the rigidity of structure created by rhythmic accents in music; create movement in the sense of spontaneity. When the theories of Severo Sarduy are applied to the works corresponding to each of these postulates, a clearly baroque esthetic emerges. Under the first postulate, Escudero wished to create without music. “El ideal del artista en estado puro es el de aquel que crea desde la nada. Dado que esto no es viable, sí lo es al menos tomar el papel de demiurgo que llega de alguna manera a la nada por la vía de la eliminación, de la destrucción,” (Cavia Naya 141). This led to the exploration of movement without the

confines of melody, as seen in his work in Paris. In 1928 he created “Ritmos”, a dance of 8 minutes without musical accompaniment, in which Escudero improvised with his tongue, his fingers, fingernails and hand clapping. Limited only by compás, he moved spontaneously and created postures and rhythms based on ideas that came to mind in the moment. Sounds and movements burst from the silence during what was deemed an inner monologue on behalf of Escudero. His feet were directed by “the music that his heart dictated to them” (Navarro 49). The piece was described as unconceivable in a review published in the section “Concerts divers” of *Le Ménestrel* on June 1, 1928. It stated:

Rythmes, tel était alors le seul titre indiqué. Mais si complexes, ces rythmes, et de telle totalité (tout l'être, en eux, de tout son nerf, électriquement, devenu musique,— et musique non seulement de lui-même, mais de la terre au-dessous de lui, et de l'espace alentour) que le seul sens rythmique ne les peut expliquer. Eux aussi abstraction d'une double mélodie, que l'être se chante intérieurement, et dont il est comme possédé. Notes trop centrales en lui, peut-être, et intérieures, pour qu'il puisse les percevoir distinctement, les dénombrer, leur donner un nom ; et ces rythmes où il les condense, c'est leur double trace bondissante, — leur mythologique contrepoint (248).

Based on observations video recordings of Escudero's work, that “mythological counterpoint” indicates *contra-tiempo* footwork. Escudero often included the technique of sounding percussive *golpes*, *tacones* and *plantas* on the *contra-tiempos* in his dances. The word “*contra-tiempo*” signifies in Flamenco the eighth notes that fall between the beats in a measure, marking the half-way point of each beat. Placing a percussive sound on these eighth-notes – and not the beats themselves – gives focus to the portions of the beat that had been typically unaccented in Flamenco footwork. This creates a tension that can only be resolved by a finishing step, today known as a *cierre*¹⁴.

Footwork was not seen in Flamenco until the beginning of the 20th century, and then it was largely based in patterns of triplets, accenting the beats of the music rather than the

spaces between. This was the preferred rhythmic structure over the division of two, as Fernández R.A. Pérez writes in his book, *La Binarización de los ritmos ternarios Africanos en América Latina*. "...como es sabido, en el Medioevo se practicaba preferentemente la división ternaria. Esta era considerada perfecta, mientras que la subdivisión binaria se calificaba de imperfecta" (54). As shown in Figure 1, a dancer would make three sounds in the space of one beat of music, placing the strongest sound on the beat itself and the weaker sounds between the beats. The resulting rhythm is balanced in nature and creates an upward feel to music. It is the equivalent of the circle in the theories of Kepler and Sarduy, as the witnesses are directed from one beat to the next through an even and unending cycle of three sounds. The ending of one beat and the arrival of the next are perfectly spaced and predictable. The *contra-tiempo* accents on the other hand protrude from the silences, as in a negative double focus in the theory of Sarduy. In the absence of the base musical beats, the *contra-tiempos* are surprising and dramatic as they pull accompanists and witnesses from one beat to the next in a musical suspension that does not reach a firm base beat until the dancer directs the end of his phrase in a percussive explosion of a *remate*. The use of *contra-tiempo* technique is the mark of virtuosity among dancers today, but they were rarely used in *taconeo*¹⁵ prior to the 1980s. Vicente Escudero was one of two dancers of the 1930s who used this technique to create a musical effect via percussive dance. Carmen Amaya (Barcelona 1918 – 1963) is also heard on a recording applying percussive footwork in the *contra-tiempos* in a manner to stand out against the grounding beats.

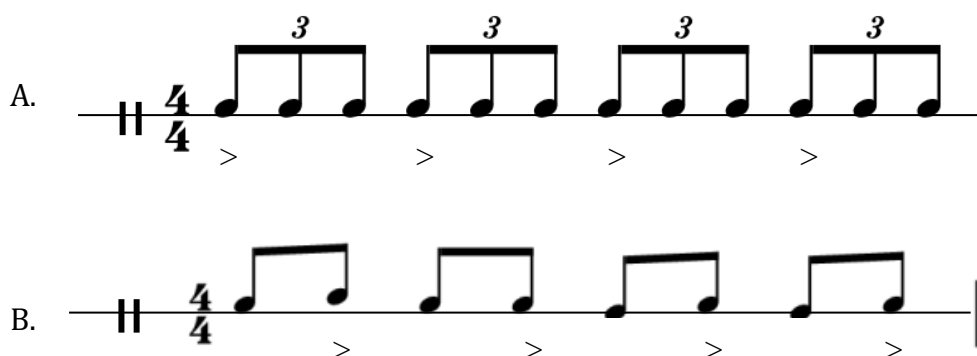


Figure 3.1 Contrasting Rhythms of Triplets and *Contra-tempos*

In line A, four beats divided into triplets are counted one la li, two la li, three la li, four la li, with an accent on the first set of three beats. Line B demonstrates a series of four beats that are divided into two parts, each being an eighth note counted as one la, two la, three la, four la. These are referred to as *contra-tempos* in Flamenco.



Figure 3.2 *Contra-tempo* accents visually represented

One 12-beat measure of *contra-tempo* accents is represented in a series of ellipses. The numbers represent the beats, beginning with the number 12, typical of Flamenco dancers and musicians. The plus signs represent the mid-beat eighth-note, or the *contra-tempo*. Visually, the numbers recede while the plus signs call the attention of the eye, representing the audial effect of accenting each mid-beat eighth note and leaving silent the beginning sound of each beat.



Figure 3.3 Triplet rhythm visually accented

One 12-beat measure of triplets is represented in a series of circles. The beats and the accents between beats receive the same emphasis and provide a continuous pattern visually and audially during percussive footwork.

Further analysis shows the “mythological counterpoint” as it is described in the 1928 review has a meaning deeper than just *contra-tiempo* in terms of Sarduy’s theories. That analysis continues with the second postulate defined by Cavia Naya as a time when Escudero aimed to create dance from a subconscious level, free from structure (143). In terms of Flamenco music, that structure is *compás*, which signifies a measure of music, as well as the patterns of rhythmic accents that color uniquely the identity of each *palo*. Under this theory, Escudero would have been bound by rhythmic rules that prescribed certain dance steps to be placed in specific spaces within a measure of music, within a phrase of music, or within a section of singing. Escudero showed how he could operate outside of this structure in his work at Salle Pleyel in Paris. He created a piece in which he danced to the sounds of two motors, with the intention of expressing “mentally and emotionally” that which the mind cannot communicate rationally or intellectually (Escudero 114, Cavia Naya 141). Simultaneously, he also brought the everyday into the world of art. Escudero created pieces in which he danced to the sound of his fingernails and teeth, inspired by both nature and machines, such as in his work “Romance al molino”, to which he danced to the sound of a ticking motor. For Escudero, Flamenco dance could be embedded in the milieu rather than the instruments and voice of its sacral or performance forms. When he did work with musical accompaniment, he chose only the sound of a guitar until he taught himself to sing.

Escudero did not abandon completely the Flamenco rhythm structure, but sought to apply his spontaneous methods in a *palo* that would challenge him. For that, he elected *seguiriya gitana*, as he explains in his autobiography.

Quise crear otro baile enfrentándome con la sorpresa del ritmo en el mismo momento de la improvisación. Para ello elegí el más ingrato para bailar, esto es, la

“seguriya gitana”, que es el compás más complicado y trágico por lo primitivo, tan indio como gitano, y el único realmente misterioso del flamenco (124).

Escudero was the first Flamenco artist to dance *seguriya*, a song that has been part of the Flamenco repertoire since the art form brewed before taking to the public stages. Seguriya was derived from the old song form called “*seguidilla gitana*”, a derivation of the regional dances known as seguidillas¹⁶. Flamenco singer Silverio Franconetti is credited as the founder of this song within Flamenco, because he sang *seguriya* in his *café cantante* in Seville at the close of the 19th century (Buendía 861). The song was widely known as deeply sentimental. Paco Sevilla wrote in his historic novel *Seeking Silverio* about the song’s physical effect on transmitters and receptors of the *seguriyas*. “It eats at the insides of he who sings it and grips and shatters the hearts of those who listen” (165). Besides the deeply emotive nature of the singing, *seguriyas* has a reputation as the most difficult song to master due to its complicated rhythmic accents. Here, the “mystical counterpoint” described in 1928 reconciles completely with the theory of Sarduy’s negative double focalization, as the asymmetry and complexity create a larger ellipse in which to place a second one, in a truly baroque style.



Figure 3.4 Hemiola of Baroque Music

Three quarter notes are shown above two dotted quarter notes in an example of the hemiola of Baroque music.

The already discussed *contra-tiempos* that Escudero employed can be compared to the *contrapunto* of Baroque music, in which accents are placed on upbeat. This style of music has a polyrhythmic structure called hemiola, which layers binary and ternary rhythms on top of one another, resulting in music that appears abstruse to the listener. The baroque hemiola can be demonstrated in an example by Robert Donnington in his book *Baroque Music: Style and Performance: A Handbook*. He explains, one measure of music with a time signature of 3/4 and another measure of music with a time signature of 6/8 can be combined to one single measure of music with a time signature of 3/2. He writes, “Instead of **one**, two, three, **one**, two, three, we hear **one**, two, **three**, one, **two** three” (39), as shown in Table 2. By contrast, the majority of Flamenco music is based on a horizontal hemiola, which is a measure of music that contains 12 beats divided into two distinct yet complementary halves. The first half is based on a 6/8 time signature and the second half is based on a 3/4 time signature. Truly in musical terms, a combination of 6/8 and 3/4 time signatures would yield a measure of five beats, but the counting system of Flamenco is based on the combination yielding 12 beats. This discrepancy is notated in Table 3, which shows also in the group of 12 beats there are two groupings of three beats followed by three groupings of two beats (3+3+2 + 2 + 2). The result is a measure of music that is counted as **twelve**, one, two, **three**, four, five, **six**, seven, **eight**, nine, **ten**, eleven, with the italicized beats accented. One half is typically played with more emphasis than the other, and the measure is counted from the last beat of “twelve” rather than the “one” beat, in part due to the African customs of using the last beat of the measure as a pick-up. That pick-up converted to the downbeat, signifying the first beat, of the proceeding measure. Additionally, African use of the horizontal hemiola indicated that one group of 6 beats

would suppress the other half (Perez 71). The listener can interpret the stronger half as the visible focus of ellipse in Sarduy's terms, and the weaker half as the invisible focus point.

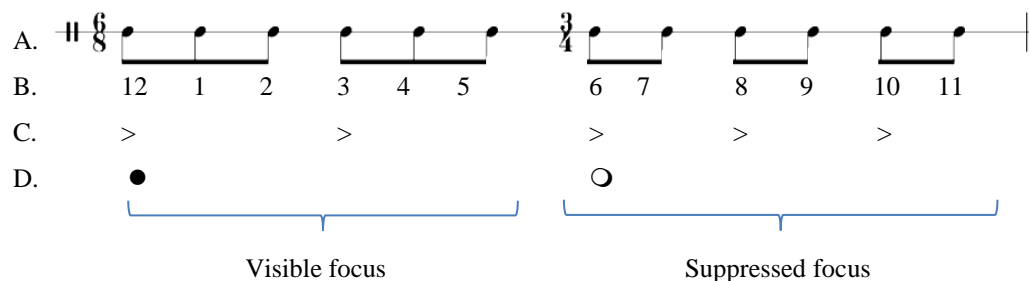


Figure 3.5 Horizontal Hemiola of Flamenco

Line A shows the combination of the 6/8 and 3/4 time signatures in the horizontal hemiola of Flamenco (i.e., *soleares*) as represented in five beats, according to Western classical music notation. These eighth notes convert to quarter notes in the Flamenco counting system of the same hemiola pattern, as shown in line B. Line C shows where the accented beats are within the Flamenco *compás*. Line D shows the foci points of Sarduy's ellipse as it is applied to Flamenco *compás*.

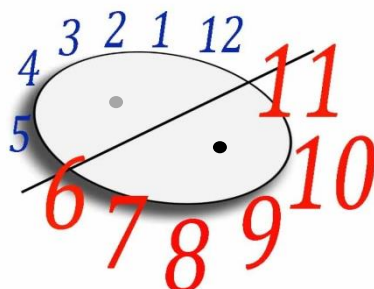


Figure 3.6 Flamenco Hemiola Represented in a Double Negative Focus

The 12-beat measure is represented in an ellipse with two points of focus. The line divides the ellipse 6/8 and 3/4 time. The gray point represents the suppressed focus point, and the black point represents the visible focus point.

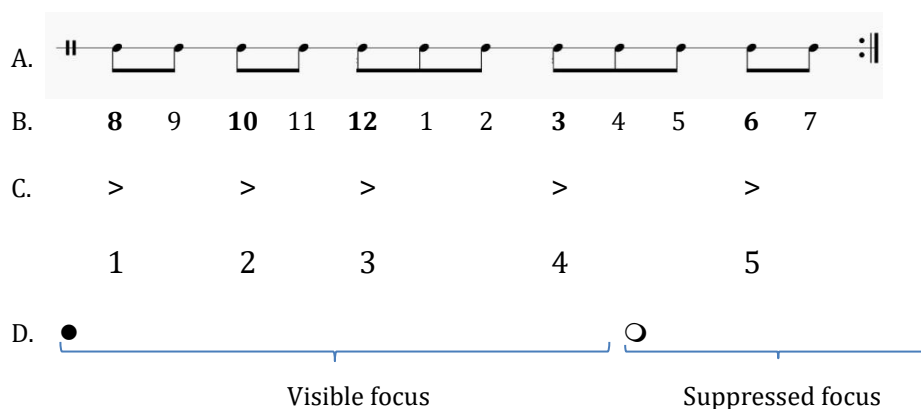


Figure 3.7 Hemiola of *seguidiyas*

Line A shows the horizontal hemiola of *seguidiyas*¹⁷ as written in sets of quarter notes. Line B shows the accented beats in bold-faced font as counted in a 12-count compás. Line C shows the five accented beats notated in the typical Flamenco counting system. Line D shows the visible and suppressed foci.

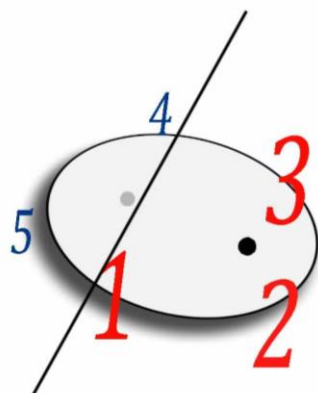


Figure 3.8 Hemiola of *seguidiyas*

A 12-beat measure is represented in the typical 5-beat counting structure used by Flamenco artists. The line divides the ellipse $6/8$ and $3/4$ time. In a visual representation, the gray point represents the suppressed focus point, and the black point represents the visible focus point.

The horizontal hemiola has a different form in *seguidiyas*¹⁶ because the combinations of rhythmic groupings of two and three are not distributed evenly, as in other *palos* based on this compound measure. There are two groupings of two beat followed by

two groupings of three beats followed by one grouping of two beats, for a total of 12 beats: $2 + 2 + 3 + 3 + 2$. This structure is shown in Table 4, which demonstrates how the first grouping of 3 beats straddles the center of the measure, which would be beats six and seven. The more heavily accented half becomes less than a half, only 4 beats instead of six, but still it overpowers the remaining portion of the measure, further off-setting the musical effect of imbalance. Percussively, dancers and guitarists accent the first beat of each group, making the effect of *eight*, nine, *ten*, eleven, *twelve*, one, two, *three*, four, five, *six*, seven. Typically, however, *seguiriyas* is counted as a five-beat measure, rather than 12, with the understanding that there is a rest of one beat between each of the first three beats, a two rests of one beat each between beats three, four, and five, and then another single-beat rest after beat five (see Table 5). The beats left silent create gaps between sounds that guide the listener and participants through the song. Dancers may choose to silence or percussion in the silences. When they chose to move, artists today often inject percussive dance in the spaces of the contra-tiempos, deepening the recess of the invisible focus in the ellipse (see Figure 3.9).

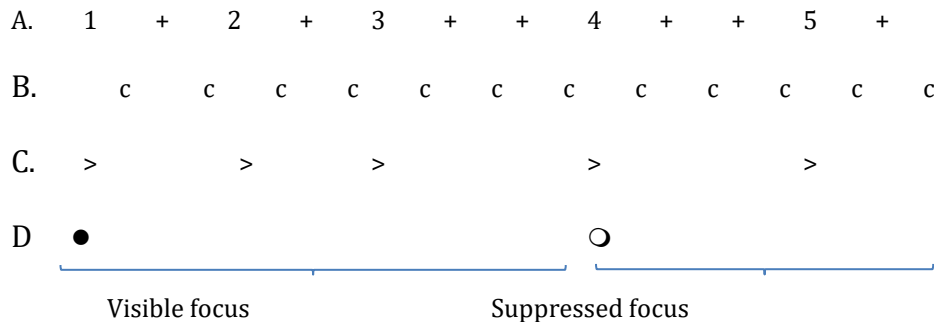


Figure 3.9 Hemiola of seguidiyas as typically counted by Flamenco dancers

Line A shows the traditional counting structure of *seguidiyas* in a 5-beat rhythm, within Flamenco circles. In Line B, “c” indicates *contra-tiempo*. Line C shows the accented beats, and Line D shows the visible and suppressed foci.

Escudero found in *seguidiya* a structure of imbalance in which he could place his *contra-tiempo* footwork, causing a doubling of the negative double focus, or an ellipse inside of an ellipse. *Seguidiyas* appears to be played slowly, but at 100-140 beats per minute the tempo is actually quite fast. The method of counting the music with five beats per measure gives it the appearance of a much slower song. As seen in Table 5, footwork can be sounded two or three times in *contra-tiempos* in the vast spaces between accented beats.

Now, decades later when the use of *contra-tiempo* is customary and desired among dancers, *seguidiyas* (footnote 16) provides an extreme complexity in which percussive dance can be can be doubled and tripled in the long spaces between beats, making percussive dance steps difficult to follow as the visible and invisible foci of Sarduy’s ellipse are placed in the layering effect of the musical rhythm. This technique of *contra-tiempo* footwork is employed in dances of all *palos* of Flamenco, and it has a specific use as a tool to build tension in a manner that combines Sarduy’s theory of the ellipse based on the

negative double focus and the ellipsis, a theory that relates to literature. This use comes to light in Escudero's creations within the expressionist movement.

Freed from the traditional structure of *compás* and able to create dance in a truly improvisational manner from the subconscious, Escudero evolved to create Flamenco pieces in the style of free dance, a precursor of modern dance. This is where Cavia Naya builds the third postulate in the development of Escudero's work. She points to his transition to an expressionist aesthetic, observing "En cuanto que sus movimientos evolucionan en la música de manera espontánea y con una estética escenográfica cercana al expresionismo" (146). Expressionism called for emotion to be expressed free of logic, which resulted in Escudero introducing clusters of footwork, informed by his use of percussive steps in the *contra-tiempos* and widely spaced rhythmic accents of *seguiriyas*. This clustering, while not in use when Escudero began dancing, is today a method used by Flamenco artists to build tension musically in the process of improvisation within a system of coded nonverbal communication. Today, the clusters themselves are a climax in a sequence of four or six measures that represent an over-arching ellipse. A dancer opens a sequence with footwork steps or marking steps that are subdued or silent. Many times this is danced as a steady repetition of percussive steps between base beats – or in the *contra-tiempos* – during the first two to four measures of the sequence. This footwork technique builds tension perceived by onlookers through the use of unresolved ellipses. In the theory of Sarduy, this run is a series that makes note of negative double foci but not their counterpoint of invisible foci for up to 48 beats. When that invisible foci is finally recognized by the dancer's sounding of a quarter note, rather than the space between quarter notes, the percussive step grounds the dancer, musicians, *palmeros*, and onlookers,

in a moment that opens the culmination of the sequence: an explosive lick of percussive dance that guides artists and witnesses to cheer “Olé!” in response to the emotional climax that closes the ellipse opened by the *contra-tiempo* run. It is a standard tool employed by dancers today in a variety of *palos* while dancing a *remate* during closing of a *letra* or in dancing an *escobilla*¹⁷. Far removed chronologically from their origins in expressionism, this clustering and use of tension in key moments today creates the highly emotional characteristic of Flamenco arts. And, it aligns directly with the synthesis of the ellipsis and the expression of emotion, according to Sarduy.

“Supresión en general, ocultación teatral de un término en beneficio de otro que recibe la luz abruptamente, caravaggismo, rebajamiento, rechazo hacia lo oscuro del fondo/alzamiento cenital del objeto” (67). The bursts become not only the elements that stand out in the silences, but a flash of emotional expression in the sense of Baroque art. This technique changed the way dancers embodied baroque qualities of art, though it was not widely used until decades after Escudero’s work in Paris. By using subdued footwork - or no footwork at all – followed by a burst of percussive dance, Escudero effectively created an ellipsis that today gives onlookers the opportunity to anticipate a grand ending to a footwork sequence.



Figure 3.10 Photography by Man Ray

A photograph of Vicente Escudero showing the angular alignment of the torso, raised arms, and use of finger snapping.

While this analysis focuses on rhythm as it pertains to the Flamenco dancer's role as a musician, it is important to note some of the innovations that Escudero brought to dance technique of arms and hands for men. His work included gestures for the arms and hands that were executed at the same time as the footwork, something that set him apart from his contemporaries. He wrote in his autobiography of a challenge he made to those dancers who criticized his style, "¿A que no sois capaces de hacer este 'redoble' con los dos pies y levantar los brazos al mismo tiempo?" (50). Sarduy's theory about a positive double focus

is evident in the changes that Escudero brought to the alignment of the upper body and arms for men. Women had a tradition of dancing with their upper bodies in an erect posture while lifting their arms and turning their hands at the wrist. Little emphasis was put on their legs or feet, and for the first decades of Flamenco dance on the public stage, they did not perform footwork. Meantime, men had been using more ornate dance steps for their legs and feet, and they had kept their arms in a lowered position. Escudero added to his movement vocabulary arm and hand movements that flowed through the air in an effort to pantomime panting, based on his study of avant-garde artists Picasso and Joan Miró. Escudero's alignment set the hips, shoulders and head at different angles, creating a spiral that is a technical staple in Flamenco dancers today. Escudero's alignment is easily visible in a photograph taken by avant-garde photographer Man Ray (Figure 1), as part of his studies of angles in 1928. Escudero's raising of his arms created an ellipse above the body that would complement another between the shoulders and the ground. Together the two were balanced visibly, but it is arguable that from a perspective that takes into account both the visual and musical qualities of the Flamenco dancer, the two ellipses are at odds in the battle for dominance. The high chest and intense facial expressions are notable in Flamenco dance technique, and raised arms draw out those aspects in a performance. However, an explosion of percussive footwork demands attention be given to the lower ellipse. This duality in the body creates an ebb and flow of drama and movement that underscore the Baroque nature of Escudero's new aesthetic for men.

4 AMPLIFYING SILENCE

Flamenco dancer Israel Galván is today creating work that many compare to the creations of Escudero. In part, this is because Galván has discussed publicly his study of Escudero's life

and work, as well as his efforts to remount the dancer's choreography. Even without knowledge of the history of Escudero, one can see Galván as an artist so far outside of the Flamenco repertoire that his work is unrecognizable as Flamenco and difficult to understand within the genre, as Flamenco historian and critic Estela Zatanía explains in her review of Galván's show "FLA.CO.MEN.", which he performed in Seville in 2014.

La libertad de expresión incondicional es un elemento poderoso que sólo unos cuantos están capacitados para manejar, y el propio Israel no siempre acierta. Ha habido obras oscuras y lentas, alejadas de ninguna referencia flamenca, en las que una sobrecarga de intelectualismo ha vencido a la experiencia teatral, que por encima de todo, se supone que ha de ser positiva, edificante o enriquecedora.

Galván's work is not necessarily meant to be read by the 20th and 21st century bourgeois aesthetic of Flamenco standards. His productions are informed by musical and dance genres that rarely enter discourse within Flamenco, and they often include metaphors beyond those typically portrayed in Flamenco, such as social repression, death, and religion. He challenges the purists on the grounds of tearing apart their sacral practice, and he challenges audiences to embrace a new aesthetic, just as Escudero did nearly a century earlier.

By the time that Galván was born, in 1973, to Gypsy and non-Gypsy parents who were Flamenco dancers, Escudero's innovations of raised arms and circling hands for men and the use of *contra-tiempo* in footwork technique were commonplace for both artist and audiences. The use of clustering, and silences in percussive dance sequences became commonplace during Galván's adolescence and the years when he emerged as a professional dancer. After years of dancing professionally as a child and young man, Galván

left the traditional expression of Flamenco and searched for freedom to dance in his own style, with influences of Michael Jackson, Fred Astaire, Pina Bausch, and the Japanese art of Butoh (Mackrell). He follows in the path of Escudero, using silence in his pursuit of a cubist experience that takes apart the roles of singer, guitarist, and dancer in Flamenco. He has even performed a 45-minute production entitled "Solo", in which he dances without music as Escudero did, recognizing his predecessor's work of freeing dance from its musical structure years before Merce Cunningham became renowned for the same liberation within modern dance. Whereas Escudero looked to painters for inspiration, Galván reaches to the avant-garde in music to express himself through his basic Flamenco movement vocabulary and rhythmic structures. The Seville dancer broadens the use of silence esteemed by expressionist composers and his predecessor Escudero in a new design of rhythmic accents for Flamenco audiences, who are not accustomed to reading vast spaces between sounds. In the history of the art form, dancers have stood silent while accompanying singers. Dancers silenced their footwork to the accompaniment of the guitar. Thus far silence – true absence of sound - extended longer than one or two beats has not been a tool in the codes between practicing artists. Galván communicates through a fusion of avant-garde musical genres superimposed on Flamenco rhythms and movement vocabulary. He cuts fragments from various disciplines and mounts them together, almost in the sense of Dadaism, expecting audiences to see the new product in its synthesized whole made of precise pieces without regard to their original auras. Pedro Antonio Férrez Mora explains, the concept of gaining a new idea from fragmentation of the old is part of the Baroque and neo-baroque theory of Omar Calabrese. "It is always about the loss of context values, about the liking for uncertainty and causality coming from the confines of

the work of art that was fragmented and about the acquisition of new appreciations stemming from the isolation of fragments, from their staging” (1144). It is no surprise that Flamenco audiences did not understand Galván’s work when they had not been informed of his method of delivering his message.

Among Galván’s numerous theater productions, his piece “Seguiriyas 1938” stands out because it was first mounted in 2010 as an homage to Escudero’s time in Paris. The Seville dancer painted in the air, jumped and posed in angular postures as Escudero had shown audiences. Galván has since used the piece repeatedly, including in his production “La Curva”, an evening-length theater production that debuted in the same year in Paris. That show paid tribute to Escudero’s work at La Courbe, the theater that he owned and in which he performed in the same city.

I saw a performance of the production at the *Festival flamenco de Jerez XVI* in 2012. Galván’s inclusion of Flamenco icons Inés Bacán and Bobote was cause for traditionalists to be confronted by the avant-garde as it was represented in his body and on the piano. Galván explained the juxtaposition in the online program dossier writing, *“La Curva is born out of my familiarity with silence, from my need to remove the structure from flamenco recitals, where song, music and dance are intimately linked. I wanted to see each element on its own and show the silence” (Galván)*. The Flamenco musicians sang and rapped out a rhythm on a table-top where Galván joined them periodically. Between brief moments of singing and rhythm with Galván, they returned to being quiet observers who were captive to witness the destruction of their sacral tradition, which took place in the interaction between the dancer and pianist Sylvie Courvoisier (Lausanne, Switzerland 1968), who plucked and scratched the strings of the piano more than she played the keys. Arts critic

Marina Harss noted that the piano was full of avant-garde references, writing in her review, “Courvoisier’s wide-ranging soliloquies bear traces of Debussy, John Cage, Keith Jarrett, and bebop. There is even a long quotation of *The Rite of Spring*, an homage to Galván’s Modernist sources of inspiration: Cubism, the Futurists, the Flamenco experimentalist Vicente Escudero” (Harss). What she provided in music Galván embodied in choreography. The dancer emulated the role of Cage in his use of everyday objects to create music. His costume included a leather jacket that would squeak in rhythm with footwork. Galván rapped a rhythm on the back of a chair while dancing with it hanging around his neck. The dancer imitated in footwork the sounds made when a tower of metal cafe chairs crashed to the ground, and played rhythms on his teeth. The sounds at times were cacophonous and at times danced perfectly in rhythmic time to break the silence of the theater. Galván used these tools to show Flamenco in the praxis of Andalusia, rather than in its bourgeois form of the Flamenco *cuadro*¹⁸ normally presented to the public.

As Sarduy theorized, an ellipsis is not just a technique to omit words, but a technique to display a metaphor while leaving the true meaning of the symbolism so far in the background that it must be deciphered by intellectuals. Galván created his own metaphor by dancing to the accompaniment of everyday items. According to his artists’ statement in his online dossier, the goal was to create outside of the boundaries of traditional Flamenco music structure and its improvisational rules. However, the presence of the praxis symbolized that both Flamenco and the country of Spain are caught between the old and the new, unable to let go of a legacy that gives meaning to identity in order to experience the rebirth that comes with advancement.

The height of the metaphor struck with synesthesia in the *seguiriyas*. Galván accompanied Courvoisier with his footwork while he danced on a rectangle of powdered chalk meant to represent flour. The bass sound produced by the dance could be felt as a vibration that entered through my eyes and ears and traveled through my bones and my stomach. The powder rose into the air with every pound of a heel and ball of the foot on the stage. It moved to the rhythm of the inverted hemiola, played by Galván's footwork as he accompanied sounds created on the piano by strikes and scratches of the strings and touches of the keys. As the piece reached its climax, Bobote joined the music playing *palmas* and Galván turned his focus back to the table, where tradition was represented in sacral song and rhythm. After the dancer and pianist played with silences for several moments, Bobote, counted the rhythm out loud, "*Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco,*" he said. As Escudero noted, *seguiriyas* is the most difficult palo to dance due to its complex rhythm. Bobote made it accessible to the audience in his instructive performance synchronized with vibrating dance. The primal rhythm occupied our cerebral functions and our bones at the same time that the ensemble demonstrated how it is intertwined with the everyday experience in Andalusia.

5 MAKING COMPÁS COMMUNAL IN POETRY

Perhaps it is the complexity of the *palo* or perhaps it is the space created by the unbalanced and open rhythmic structure that attracts the avant-garde to *seguiriyas*. Even Sarduy himself experimented with the form in a collection of poetry entitled *Flamenco*, published in 1970. The collection is informed by Stéphane Mallarmé, not to challenge conventions but to explore fragmentation itself.

Sarduy constructed the poems in the visual form of geometric shapes, some of which are arranged in crossing rectangles and angles. Lines typed in uppercase letters suppress others of lower-case letters, challenging a second reading and at times a third reading, just as the work of Baroque poet Luis de Góngora y Argote (Córdoba, 1561-1527), to whom he alludes through the use of gold and red colors throughout the work. Sarduy also depicted movement inside the poems, such triangles, prisms, and spirals that represent a dancer in “Alegrías.” A white cube from which movement lurches is woven through the collection in which Sarduy fragments the human body, as well as the lines of text themselves.

Each poem in the book is titled by the name of Flamenco *palo*, though the titles have little bearing on the theme, content or form of the works themselves, with the exception of the poem “Seguidillas”, seen in Table 6. That poem is based on the rhythmic structure of the Flamenco *palo seguiriyas*, which was performed in public spaces during Sarudy’s years in Madrid and Paris, and by that time the dance and song had evolved to the modern tradition that is practiced today. It, and other Flamenco dance forms, had taken up as common practice, the long silences broken by bursts of footwork, as well as footwork in *contra-tiempo*, as Escudero had begun expressing decades before. These techniques would have deepened the fragmentation of the song’s rhythmic spaces, which became elongated as the tempo slowed at the request of dancers who were accompanying the singing. Likewise, the lines that contain the uppercase letters correspond to the portion of the *seguiriyas compás* that is the visible focus, as shown in Table 6.

As seen in the printed poem, the words written in uppercase draw the reader's attention, portraying the outcome of every pull of the lever of a slot machine. Receding on the pages are the lines written in all lowercase letters that describe the function and structure of the machines. This negative double ellipse portrays Sarduy's message about the chance involved in the function of slot machines, in a time when their use was spreading in casinos. The blank white spaces around the words are vast and meant to create an absence of ink, yet another invisible focus of an ellipse from which the words can protrude, especially those in uppercase.

Experts such as Mora argue that the poem is a metaphor of a fragmented society in the age of slot machines gaining popularity in casinos. This is the first of two ellipses communicated in the poem. The other is a statement about Flamenco's evolution in the early 20th century and under the Franco regime. Understanding the movement of Flamenco art from the sacral circle to the bourgeois public, the poem, as well as the others of *Flamenco*, reflects the state of Flamenco itself in the 1960s: a creation of the Franco regime that was a far cry from its ritual origins practiced by the very Gypsies he subdued. For purists, it was an art form in crisis, because its sacral origins and the very people who gave rise to the music and dance were not part of the vision displayed to Spain and the world at that time. Sarduy, in his exploration of form and text, brings *seguiriyas* from its consumer-induced spectacle back to its sacral past. He strives for a rhythm to drive the poem's function of uniting readers in a common reaction to the message he wants to share with his circles.

It is important to note how clearly the arrangement of words represents the rhythmic structure of the *palo*: an inverted *Hemiola* pattern, counted by Flamenco artists as three strongly accented beats followed by two accented, but less emphasized beats. In

“Seguidillas” the message interested Sarduy less than the psychophysicalchemical aspect of Flamenco music, according to Pedro Antonio Férrez Mora, who analyzed the function of fragmentation in the poem.

This poem almost fully deactivates its verbal-conceptual dimension. In it the logical-discursive function almost disappears in favour of direct-analogical expression. This is why the poem loses most of its connection with the world of ideas just to reveal itself as a drive, as a concrete poem which reduces subjectivity, abstraction, or logic to a minimum (1145).

Like Flamenco at its sacral root, the poem is a primal entity, uniting individuals in a common expression of emotion. In the manner of Mallarmé it is pulled apart and reassembled, re-purposed even for intellectual exploitation. It reaches the mind and the body in a multi-sensory spectacle, such as that created by Galván when his dancing on top of chalk created a booming effect that penetrated skin and bones of the audience in his production of “La Curva”. Purists argue that recompilation of Flamenco is not necessary to cause such sensory response in Flamenco, as the compound expression of the song, guitar, and dance are in their gestalt meant to bring witnesses to the point of jumping up and cheering out in response to the emotion shared through the art form. The presence of the ellipse and ellipsis keeps the interaction going between high culture and Flamenco, as the complexities that each create offer a means of study and creation in the depths of the search for emotional expression that addresses social, political, and economic issues no matter the century.

A new project by Galván, author Filiep Tacq and Pedro G. Romero continues the long interplay between music, poetry and dance, as they are linked by rhythm in terms of Sarduy’s theory. In the fall of 2016 the three embarked on the project in which the Seville Flamenco artist would interpret in dance the visual art that Marcel Broodthaers created in

his 1969 portrayal of Stéphane Mallarmé's poem "*Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard*" ("A Roll of the Dice"), published in 1914. Broodthaers turned the scattered lines of poetry by Mallarmé into long and short rectangles set against white paper. Galván was challenged with exploring silence and percussive movement, improvised in the moment at and his will. Tacq will interpret Galván's movements in words, which will then be published in a book. Whether or not the unstructured placement of Mallarmé's words will find their way to a rhythm in percussive dance, Sarduy's theory of negative and visible foci should be applicable to Galván's interpretation, since Broodthaers has already demonstrated that the ellipse exists in the visual arrangement of the poem.

In all of the lending and borrowing between literature, music, and Flamenco dance that contributes to creation, the presence or absence of an ellipse or ellipsis does not necessarily qualify work as avant-garde or traditional. But, it does assist in identifying in hindsight when artists initiated temporary trends or brought about key changes in Flamenco dance, innovations that altered the structure or codes of engagement. Escudero is the first Flamenco dancer to perform footwork in *contra-tiempos* and to use silence to build tension. He is the first dancer to move without music in performance. Galván is striking similar firsts, in his work with Modernist music and now his rhythmic interpretation of poetry and visual art interpretation. While such projects may not convince purists within Flamenco to join in experimental dance, they are bringing to Flamenco audiences that might not have engaged the art form without the innovation of contemporary artists or those who stretched to the avant-garde. Galván is just one Flamenco artist invited to participate in festivals outside of Spain, where he is winning awards for his innovation. At a time when Flamenco may be at a crossroads to survive the after-effects of a

seven-year economic crisis in Spain, such outreach may well help the art form reinvent itself at a critical moment.

Notes

1. Gypsy Flamenco refers to a style of Flamenco singing, dance, guitar, and rhythmic accenting that is associated with Gypsy families known for singing, dancing, and playing Flamenco music to celebrate within familiar circles. It relies less on technical virtuosity and more on emotive qualities. While newspaper accounts from the 19th century describe a Gypsy style of dance as Flamenco emerged from *bailes boleros* and theater productions, it was 1881 that Antonio *Machado y Álvarez* “Demófilo” defined the genre of Gypsy Flamenco as a singular style within Flamenco. He argued that Gypsy Flamenco developed from Gypsy origins, while the rest of Flamenco developed as a hybridization of Gypsy and Andalusian music. I argue that the hybridization includes also influences of north and west African tribes, Cuban farm workers, Argentinian *tango*, and *fandango* styles of Central and South America, including Mexico and Brazil. The style includes the Flamenco *palos* of *soleares*, *seguiriyas*, *tangos*, and *bulerías*. These songs have developed with specific *letras* that reflect Gypsy lifestyle, challenges, and joys, as well as a singing technique that produces a raspy and crying quality to the voice, a guitar technique focused on simple and powerful strumming patterns, and a dance technique that is void of rapid footwork and complicated steps. While this style is associated with Gypsy families that have passed their practices from one generation the next via informal education, non-Gypsies also employ it, learned in formal study or by observation in a self-taught regimen.
2. The Real Academia Española has 27 entries for the definition of *palo*. One is pertinent to the discussion of Flamenco in which *palo* means each of the traditional varieties of Flamenco singing. Since Flamenco is a tradition of dance, music, and singing, the term may be used across the disciplines rather than only as it pertains to singing. The standard way to express that someone is dancing a *seguiriyas* is to say, “*baila por seguiriyas*.” Perhaps due to the relationship to the definition “stick”, Flamenco *palos* are often visualized as a family tree, showing how one developed from another or is related to another in terms of origin, rhythm, or location of use.
3. Prior to World War I, chance, or randomness, was employed by Expressionists who wanted to strip away the structure of art so that they could create an expression of emotion that was not bound by the conventions of a discipline. A Flamenco dancer, therefor, could dance at any time without regard to the syntax and semantics that relate to the accepted organization of music and movement. Later, in the 1950s, John Cage brought this concept to popular culture in his performances of aleatoric music.
4. A *café cantante* was a small theater in which food and drinks were sold and performances of Flamenco and other disciplines were given. They existed in southern Spain in the late 19th century.
5. *Ópera Flamenca* was created in reaction to a ruling on the Tax Code of 1926 in Spain, which charged a 10% tax rate for variety shows and *café cantantes* and a 3% tax rate for instrumental and opera performances. This change moved Flamenco performances into a variety of venues, including bullrings, and placed Flamenco, orchestral, and popular Andalusian music in the same performances.
6. *Cante jondo*, also known as Flamenco *jondo*, has been substituted through history for the term Gypsy Flamenco. It refers to *palos* known for the expression of deep emotion, including *tonás*, *soleares*, and *seguiriyas*. These are the songs often thought of as having a crying quality, and appear to unfold slowly and painfully. García Lorca and Manuel de Falla brought the term “*cante jondo*” to fashion when they organized the 1922 Concurso de Cante Jondo in Granada as a means to preserve Flamenco *palos* being lost to the commercial sale of Flamenco on theater stages, which Falla termed “*flamenquismo*”. Cante jondo was again used in 1956, when another Flamenco contest, focused on Flamenco singing, was established in Córdoba and named the Concurso de Cante Jondo.

7. Ballet Flamenco emerged as a combination of pantomime and flamenco movement that was used to tell stories. Pastora Imperio (Pastora Rojas Monte, Seville 1889 – Madrid 1971) was one of the early stars of this genre, appearing in films, such as *Maria de la O* (1936).
8. The term “playing” is used with *palmas* to signify that the handclapping that accompanies Flamenco music and dance is considered both melodic and rhythmic. Tonal differences of muted and high-pitched clapping technique, as well as and rhythmic accents and stops, color the *palo* that the hand clapper is accompanying. *Palmas* played in a rhythm of *contra-tiempos* have been heard and seen since the earliest recordings of Flamenco, such as in the film “Spanish dance of the Seville Fair” made by the Lumière brothers at the World’s Fair in Paris in 1900.
9. The ruckus that accompanies Flamenco music and dance is known as *jaleo*. Often artists and witnesses will shout *jaleos*, such as “Olé,” to encourage or acknowledge an emotional expression. The term has significance in fine arts circles as the title the highly debated painting “El jaleo” (1882), by John Singer Sargent (Florence 1856 – London 1925).
10. *Letra* signifies a song verse, typically composed of a three or five-line poem that is sung in a standard pattern of repetition that creates a structure for musical and dance accompaniment. The melody of a *letra* falls to the home tone to signify that it is ending. The descent of notes at the end of a *letra* is known as the *caída del cante*, which signifies the possibility for a music or dance accompanist to change the manner of playing or dancing to recognize the change in singing, creating the improvisational play between artists. The *letra* differs from an *estribillo* or *copla* in its melodic form and flexibility in improvisation.
11. *Remate* signifies the end of a musical phrase, in terms of dance, music, or song. It is accented by a climactic burst of music, song or dance that is followed by a calmer sequence that contrasts the previous closing sequence. A *remate* may be used to close an entire segment of a Flamenco song or dance or it may be used to highlight a momentary break in a musical phrase. The aesthetic of the *remate* has developed significantly since the end of the 20th century, as dancers have added more percussive movements to their vocabulary. Whereas a dancer may have silently accented through arm movement the ending beats of a phrase during the first half of the century, it is customary today for dancers to use complex footwork for several beats leading to the end of the phrase.
12. Like many Flamenco *palos*, there are many variations of *soleares*, which results in a subdivision of music and dance styles within the *palo*. Variations within *palos* developed due to geographic isolation of singers or the specific style of a single singer whose mark of individuality converted to an accepted norm in the cannon. The variations occur within the measure of music, called *compás*. While the total number of beats in a *compás* remains the same across the variations, the pattern of rhythmic accents and melody vary to give each variation its unique identity within the group. *Soleá de Alcalá* is one variation of *soleares*, named after Joaquín el de La Paula (Alcalá de Guadaira 1875-1933). It carries a low register melody and rhythmic structure that are unique as compared with other variations of this *palo*.
13. A *solo de pie* is percussive footwork danced without guitar or singing accompaniment, and it is often accompanied by rhythmic handclapping. It is not to be confused with the *escobilla*, which is a portion of a choreography dedicated to showcasing the dancer’s footwork accompanied by guitar melodies or *toque seco* technique (guitar strumming without melody).
14. The closing of a melody or footwork sequence is referred to as a *cierre*, and it is typically marked by a warning note or step, followed by a brisk and strong stop of action.
15. In Flamenco argot, *taconeo* refers to any percussive footwork, which requires dancers to strike the ground with different parts of the foot. A *golpe* is a strike with the whole bottom of the foot at once. A *tacón* is a strike with the heel. A *planta* is a strike by the ball of the foot. Flamenco dancers emphasize strikes to lead or follow rhythmically in improvisational work with musicians.

16. *Seguidillas* were partner dances that varied regionally across Spain. One form evolved to the dance and song known as *sevillanas* and another. Songs called *seguidillas* are also in the operas *Carmen* and *The Barber of Seville*, and there is a dance by the same name in the ballet *Don Quixote*.
17. *Seguiriyas* is the name of a palo and the name of a family of *palos* that includes *seguiriyas*. The other palos in the family include *cabales*, *livianas*, *serranas*, and *seguiriya*. They all are based on the same rhythmic structure.
18. Flamenco *cuadro* refers to a group of people who are performing Flamenco. It typically includes a guitarist, singer, and dancer.

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