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# EMBODIED IDENTITIES: NEGOTIATING THE SELF THROUGH FLAMENCO DANCE

by

PAMELA ANN CALTABIANO

Under the Direction of Emanuela Guano

## ABSTRACT

Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Atlanta, this study analyzes how transnational practices of, and discourse about, flamenco dance contribute to the performance and embodiment of gender, ethnic, and national identities. It argues that, in the context of the flamenco studio, women dancers renegotiate authenticity and hybridity against the backdrop of an embodied “exotic” passion.

INDEX WORDS: Gender, Dance, Flamenco, Identity, Exoticism, Embodiment, Performance

EMBODIED IDENTITIES: NEGOTIATING THE SELF THROUGH FLAMENCO DANCE

by

PAMELA ANN CALTABIANO

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

2009

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2009

EMBODIED IDENTITIES: NEGOTIATING THE SELF THROUGH FLAMENCO DANCE

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December 2009

## **DEDICATION**

To my mom, Patricia Caltabiano, my dad, Philip Caltabiano, and my brother, Brett Caltabiano.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my parents, first and foremost. Without their support, this could not have been done. My parents supported me and offered me guidance, confidence and love when I needed it most, and never stopped believing in my ability to complete this research.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Soledad: ¿por quién preguntas	‘Soledad, who do you ask for,
Sin compañía y a estas horas?	unaccompanied, at this hour?’
Pregunte por quien pregunte,	‘Whoever I ask for,
Dime: ¿a ti qué se te importa?	tell me: what business of it is yours?
Vengo a buscar lo que busco,	I come in search of what I am seeking,
Mi alegría y mi persona.	My joy and my own self.’

-Federico García Lorca

*Romance de la Pena Negra*

Romancero Gitano

The gamut of emotions experienced by those who perform, observe, and avoid dance includes polarizing binaries of pleasure and pain and nearly everything in between. All these feelings I have experienced myself and I continue to experience when I dance, particularly as a participant in the flamenco dance community of Atlanta. Since dance elicits such a wide range of emotion and is a strong presence in American society in the forms of leisure, work, and even religious doctrine, it is nearly unimaginable to think that something as integral to understanding a people would not be a pertinent topic of anthropological study. Due to this and my own personal interest, I have decided to observe the flamenco community in Atlanta to further understand the identity creation and negotiation of the people who participate in the community.

### ***1.1 Personal Involvement***

My first experience with flamenco was in 2005, when I stayed a month in Cádiz, a city in

southern Spain. The main purpose of my trip was to gain study abroad credits for my undergraduate degree. The one reason I chose Spain was because I knew a family I could live with, which would cut down on my expenses. During my stay, the family was determined to submerge me into as much “Spanish culture” as possible. We traveled extensively through the southern region of Andalusia, and the one common thread to nearly all our experiences was flamenco. Flamenco was everywhere and permeated my entire experience. The city I stayed in was the hometown to one of the most famous *cantaoras*, or flamenco singers, of all time. Each week I participated in a class to learn the *sevillanas*, a choreographed flamenco dance for couples characterized by its four *coplas*, or couplets. The lessons were in preparation for the *feria* [fair] where hundreds of people were dressed in flamenco costumes known as *traje de gitano*. The costumed crowd danced, ate and sang through the day and night. I was taken to flamenco performances featuring singers, dancers and guitar players. I sat in a theater named for the composer Manuel de Falla, who popularized flamenco style in classical music. The family regaled me with tales of how *gitano* [gypsy] children would grow up in communal homes living and breathing flamenco, and how most importantly the only word that could ever define flamenco is *duende*: a word with a range of definitions; however, regarding flamenco it cannot be simply defined. In this use *duende* refers to a type of magical internalized passion. As Federico García Lorca (1933) put it, the *duende* is the “*poder misterioso que todos sienten y que ningún filósofo explica*” [mysterious power which everyone feels and no philosopher explains].

When I returned from Spain, I had fallen in love with flamenco and I had been taken over by its *duende*. I bemoaned the fact that I did not know when I would ever have the opportunity to return to Spain and relive my flamenco experience. Of course I had heard of flamenco before I went to Spain, but my memories of it were vague, perhaps of something mentioned once in a

Spanish class I took in high school. It never would have occurred to me that even in a city as diverse as Atlanta that I could find flamenco like in Spain, but the city took me by surprise.

Later that same summer on a Saturday night, I found myself in a café on Tenth Street, sitting inches away from a troupe of flamenco performers. While I watched them I was full of misperceptions and questions. I assumed the dancers must have been Spaniards, but why of all places in the world would they be here? I was amazed again by the singing, clapping, footwork, spinning, and I felt the *duende*. At the end of the show, the performers asked anyone who wanted to attempt dancing flamenco to step forward. Some people were chosen out of the crowd to dance by the performers, and others volunteered themselves and danced beautifully. I began to realize that those volunteered dancers must have been students of flamenco, and again came the assumptions. They must have already known all about Spain and flamenco, how else could they possibly have found this dance in Atlanta? I never found the answers to my questions about that group; I was too shy to ask.

Four years later I find myself again addressing my questions of the flamenco dancers. This time, however, the questions are more in depth and critical. I delve into this research with the eyes of an anthropologist, not the starry-eyed gaze of an *aficionada* [fan], although it would be naïve to ignore that throughout this research I would be again faced by my own assumptions and predeterminations. The question is still basically the same; who are the dancers? But now I am asking this question with a little more background knowledge- the dancers are from all over the world, from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, and no, they are not all experts on Spain and flamenco. They each have distinct stories. I am going to share some of their stories as I have used them to answer the question- how are complex identities negotiated within the space of the Atlanta flamenco community?

## 1.2 A Brief History of Flamenco

Flamenco dance and culture is closely tied to the gitanos within the borders of Spain. The exact origins of flamenco and the gitanos are unknown, but it is mostly agreed by scholars that they entered Spain through Africa in the mid-fifteenth century (Esteban 2006:22). However, their origins beyond Africa remain uncertain. Most likely the gitanos were a nomadic group originating in India, passing through various countries until they reached Andalusia. The gitanos are said to have exalted musical expression in many aspects of their lives, including ceremonies, celebrations, and above all, their laments (2006:24). Flamenco was developed through song, and even now there is a common thread in the context of lyrics that speak to the hardships and laments of the gitanos. From the song sprang the dance, which has developed into what we now acknowledge as flamenco. Throughout the history of Spain and in many other parts of Europe, gypsies have been discriminated against, due to their race and class. Gypsies have been seen as a dark and mysterious outsider; an exotic Other, although they mingle among other Europeans who consider themselves civilized Westerners in contrast to the dangerous and strange gypsy (McClary 1992:30). For much time, flamenco was considered a pastime of the Other, something that flourished in southern Spain, although the Spaniards themselves would not partake in what they considered a lowly form of entertainment. Flamenco performance was left either to the private sphere of the gitano, or it was relegated to bars where middle class men known as *señoritos* would partake in debauchery associated with that sphere (Chuse 2003:261). However, by the early 1900s, flamenco dance trickled into mainstream Spanish culture. Flamenco remained popular in the *café cantantes*, and guitar pieces became more intricate. Part of its spread was due to the new recording technologies available. Poet and playwright Federico García Lorca began recording flamenco song and cataloging it in the archive *Colección de Canciones Populares Antiguas*.

The Spaniards appropriated it until a flamenco national culture was created, which became symbolic of Spain to the rest of the world. Flamenco became acceptable, particularly for women, in contexts of fairs and national celebrations. In the mid 1900s, the Spanish government carefully manufactured flamenco in order to appeal to international tourist interest (Chuse 2003:257-258). When Francisco Franco rose to power in the 1930s, he used flamenco as a symbol of national culture. He moved flamenco away from the *café cantantes* and into the more respectable *tablaos*, where individuality was stifled for the sake of representing a Catholic country. During Franco's regime, creativity in flamenco suffered. However, after his death in 1975, Spain experienced a revitalization of flamenco with artists such as Camarón de la Isla re-claiming flamenco. Flamenco experienced a boom in the 1980s, and began to experiment with new sounds to create a "new flamenco", continuing to this day (Pryor 2009). It is important to also note that the ways in which flamenco was appropriated in other parts of the world affected flamenco performance in Spain, introducing new music and dance techniques. Take for example the fact that many of the *palos*, or styles, developed thanks to influences from Caribbean and African communities in the Americas during the Spanish colonial endeavors (Esteban 2006:76). Due to its development, flamenco is a transnational dance. Therefore, it becomes clearer how people may identify with the dance in a multitude of contexts.

### **1.3 Background**

Flamenco is a dance that has historically been male-dominated; however, it has changed in the past century to include a more equal amount of female participants. Identities of people associated with flamenco have been stigmatized due to gender and race politics as well as class standing. A discussion of flamenco can easily be turned into a discussion of gender, race and class. However, once flamenco has left its homeland of Spain and situated itself in a new context

such as the United States, it becomes more complex as the participants begin to interpret flamenco and infuse it with their own discourses. It is relevant to look at who is participating in flamenco, and to see if those people are leaving their own inscriptions on flamenco, or whether flamenco is inscribing meaning on their bodies. The sensual pleasure of music and dance converts into a basis of identity renegotiation, paving the way for the affected to create a number of “possible selves” or “self-identifications” (Vester 1996:99). The effects of ethnocentrism, nationalism and racism as they are tied to modernity offer a peculiar communication with the Other, and the identity creating musical styles become part of a “supra-national artistic creation” (Steingress 1998:151). The style ceases to identify on the national level of representation. It becomes part of a global dialogue intertwined with new histories, stories and contexts. Through this link between dance and context, dancer’s bodies are inscribed with links between themselves and the world (Washabaugh 1998:4).

#### ***1.4 People and Place***

The site of my fieldwork is a dance school found just outside of Atlanta, located in Sandy Springs. Until recently, this particular area was considered to be part of Atlanta until Sandy Springs decided to separate and become its own city, but businesses are still allowed to keep their Atlanta address. The road on which the school is located is a main artery that leads through Buckhead and into downtown Atlanta. It lies north of the city, and in the area where the school is located there are a significant number of immigrants, specifically Brazilian immigrants. The dance school is located inside a shopping center that boasts an international selection of businesses. Among the businesses there is a Portuguese deli, a Portuguese hair salon, a Brazilian drug store, an African food mart, a Mexican restaurant, an American diner, the government-run DMV, and a Russian deli. The dance school itself is rather varied and international as they offer

classes for salsa, merengue, flamenco, ballroom, belly dancing, even capoeira, which is a Brazilian martial art that uses techniques of dance. The school is open all days of the week. Along with offering a wide variety of classes, they also hold social gatherings once a month for the dancers to get together to practice and enjoy the company of other dancers. The school also promotes itself as a facility for special events, from corporate parties to *quinceañeras*, as it caters to many different people within the community. The owners are international themselves, one being Hispanic and the other being Asian. The dance school is in the heart of an international community and located conveniently in relation to cosmopolitan Atlanta. It is also minutes away from suburban white Atlanta and the small country-styled historic center of that suburb. The community is full of small business owners, yet shares itself well with larger supermarkets, banks and corporate offices all within blocks of each other. Its proximity to a major highway also makes it a cut-through for a multitude of people as they commute to and from work everyday, situating the dance school in a place heavily trafficked by people from all different genders, ethnicities and social classes.

The group of women who regularly participate in the class is diverse, ranging in age from early twenties to mid-forties. They are diverse not only in age but in ethnicity as well. The dancers are Spanish, Russian, Venezuelan, American, Indian, Mexican, Chilean, and the instructor is Japanese. All of those participants are not only of that heritage but all but one were born in their respective countries and have moved to the United States years ago. The American dancers are of African-American, Italian and Ashkenazi ancestry, respectively. The varied ethnicities of the dancers at the studio are representative of the international area in which the school is located; however, I have only met two people who live near the area of the dance school. One student lives in Athens, Georgia and the others live in Decatur or in downtown Atlanta

Regarding class relations at the flamenco school, what I have learned about the dancers is that they come from at least a middle class background. The classes are expensive, with the cheapest class costing fifty dollars. What I have heard repeatedly from students is that this particular dance school is the cheapest they could find in Atlanta. That is the reason why they drive out of their way to attend class instead of dancing at a school more local to them. However, in speaking with the students and learning about them and the universities they graduated from, and seeing them at events at expensive restaurants and theater venues in town, I can discern that they do have a relatively large disposable income with which they are able to participate freely in the flamenco community and its events. They frequently travel overseas to visit friends and family. Sometimes class is rescheduled due to too many people traveling out of town, and only once has one person put their work schedule on a higher priority than flamenco by leaving the class altogether. However that student also signed up for private lessons at the instructor's house, so it seems that perhaps money was not the issue so much as time.

### ***1.5 Literature Review***

The anthropology of dance is a relatively new field of study, gaining a foothold in the 1960s with the work of Gertrude P. Kurath, the “mother of dance ethnology” (Kassing 2007:37), and experiencing a boom of academic interest in the 1980s. As with most anthropological disciplines, the perspectives of dance and how it is studied and understood within the social sciences has changed. It has ceded a more comprehensive form of study that no longer identifies dance as a tool of communication and observation to learn about the culture that it supposedly symbolizes (Spencer 1985:38). In previous dance studies it has been suggested that one must know the societal context surrounding a dance before a dance can be understood (Polhemus 1993:9).

Antiquated assumptions on how dance related to society implied that, since dance could

only be properly observed in its original context, the original context of dance must still exist in a non-modified form for anthropologists to explore it. In this perspective, a specific dance being performed outside its original context would simply be an imitation, and any performance of that dance would become a poor imitation at that (Archetti and Dyck 2003:116). Aside from positing a problematic notion of “authenticity”, this assumption would preempt any research into dance genres that have acquired a transnational dimension by traveling a round the globe- flamenco in the first place.

Dance is situated within a larger discourse, which includes information about what is regarded as a “culture”. Dance is an integral part of the creation of identities, gender, race, class, social change and values. While it may be used purely as entertainment and play, the form it takes can still speak about what is acceptable entertainment and play within a society. As Judith Hanna explains, dance is a multi-sensory form of communication drawing from everyday life and experiences (2006:2). Historically, dance has produced a variety of implications regarding the dancers and the meanings they create for themselves and the people around them. Local and folk dances re-enact roles to demonstrate the appropriate gender norms are of a given setting. They also have the ability to comment upon racial tensions between groups or create a sexually charged atmosphere (Hanna 2006:3). At times, the dancers may be seen as people who create meaning within their society; however, they may also be regarded as loose and promiscuous people who only aim to fulfill their sexual appetites (Kapchan 1994:86).

One must only think of the words “exotic”, “tribal”, “ball”, “break” and “Latin”. Those words take on completely new meanings and a new significance when paired with the word “dance”. Each style of dance is dynamic and imbued with meanings developed by centuries of change and both past and current influence from transcultural processes. Societies are spaces

constantly in a state of flux. Dance may both reflect and contribute to societal change, and it can be used as either a tool of compliance or defiance. According to Hanna (2006:3), nude dancing is an example. A nude female dancer may be complying with normalized male sexual dominance and internalizing the male gaze upon her body. However, the women may also defy responsibilities of respectability that the norm requires by dancing naked in front of unknown men.

The scope of the anthropology of dance reaches into understanding all dance form and observing how they are:

...part of a religion, as an aspect of social order and power... gender, as exemplified in classical forms, as a way of bringing about the fusion of different cultural traditions, as a medium of individual accomplishment and creativity, and finally as a statement of where we are today... (Jonas 1992)

Dance draws upon similar components in the brain as verbal communication, much in the way of sign language (Hanna 2006:2). According to Hanna, anthropologists need to be looking at dance in a similar way, just as one would take verbal communication into account when observing and studying a society. Ultimately the goal within the study of dance as an anthropological endeavor is to look at the multifaceted discourses in order to understand how it can create or change identities and key societal issues within a culture.

Studies in the anthropology of dance include a wide array of approaches. The concept of transnationalism is a relevant issue in the context of dance, and imperative to address in this research. Flamenco is not native to the United States, and in this thesis I address the ways in which it is negotiated and appropriated within this country, and Atlanta in particular. Performers and fans alike disseminate dances throughout the world. Once they are performed in other contexts, they add new layers to the representation of their culture of origin as well as the culture of the

host country, thus creating a hybrid (Washabaugh 1998:4). Crucial to understanding is that when I discuss culture, I am not referring to a static entity. Culture is constantly changing, being affected by and affecting those who participate in it. Hybrid practices emerging at the intersections of different discourses are not fixed actuality, nor are they the product of the encounter between “pure” forms. Furthermore, the term hybrid is not to be used in contrast with the word authentic, because the concept of authenticity is problematic as well. When discussing a practice as authentic, it is again referring to a staticness that does not exist. For a practice to be defined as authentic, there is an underlying assumption attached that there is one pristine form of the practice, isolated from everything outside of itself. Richard Handler (1986) discusses authenticity as a Western construct. He describes the construction of authenticity as affected by Western notions of individualism, whereby “authentic” cultures and practices are viewed as singular units, each of which is unaffected by another (1986:2). Despite associations of a collective identity (all participants in one group share the same meanings and discourses), the implication of marking something as authentic points to Western ideas of individualism.

There are no absolute truths of performance, nor is dance a bounded unit. Instead, dance forms have constantly changed across time and space. Marta Savigliano (1995) addresses this in her study of the Argentine tango as a continuum spanning a wide variety of international contexts. When the tango arrived in France, it was a hybrid of race and class, simultaneously appealing and unappealing for the upper and lower classes of Parisian society (1995:109). The dance was sanitized and re-contextualized in ways that allowed it to be a performance of both the colonized and the colonizer (1995:110). The tango passed through a process of transnational change, as it was developed in Argentina, sanitized in France, then returned to Argentina with a new set of meanings and contexts. The tango was not limited to global influence solely through a passage

of French re-contextualization, and Savigliano shares the influence of the Japanese on tango as its popularity proliferated in Tokyo. In Japan, tango was recirculated with other exotic styles of music and performance (1995: 175-176). The Argentines saw the Japanese as exotic and belonging to the East, while the Japanese saw the Argentines as exotic as well, and embraced singing in Spanish and performing the exotic dance of the colonized New World.

The situation of two “exotics”, each of whom is exoticizing the other, emphasizes the powerful effect of orientalism. Orientalism is the deeply ideological strategy through which Westerners depict and essentialize eastern cultures as inferior to the West (Said 1978). Edward Said refers to the Orient as almost a European invention, created in contexts of power and domination (1978:67). Through their authority and their power to represent their colonized Others, Westerners were able to speak for the Orient, thus dominating it and distinguishing it as a lesser force (1978:72). The relations of domination/submission depicted the Orient to be emotional, wild, sexual, deviant, irrational, indulgent, uncivilized, primitive, and in need of saving- everything the West was not. Despite flamenco being rooted in a western European country, it too becomes a target for orientalizing practices. The Iberian Peninsula was on the margins of the rest of Europe, and Spain was a semi-peripheral country after losing most of its colonies during the early to mid 1800s. The history of flamenco is unclear; however, its origin is most often attributed to the gypsies who have settled in southern Spain (Esteban 2006:23). They are believed to have come from India, the Middle East and Africa, and therefore have been stigmatized as coming from the eastern or therefore “less civilized” places of the world (McClary 1992:32). Due to the historical connection between the gypsies and the East, the same orientalist sentiments have pervaded flamenco culture for centuries. Recreations of the Oriental world became objects on dis-

play for the dominant European gaze (Mitchell 1989:218). Flamenco, like many other “cultural exports” from the Orient, has been seen as an inversion of Western sensibilities.

The ways in which flamenco is exoticized is born from an orientalist viewpoint. Flamenco is considered an exotic recreation, which is perceived as sexual, irrational, emotional and even primitive (McClary 1992:32). Exoticism and orientalism have been ingrained in the image of flamenco for much of its recorded history. The possibly most exoticized form of flamenco is the *cante jondo* [deep song], which is described as the heart and soul of flamenco that is exposed once the lies have been peeled away (Washabaugh 1998:14). The Spanish poet Federico García Lorca promoted a *cante jondo* competition in 1922 that was to take place, to show people what real flamenco was. In his description of the “authentic” song, he described it as something primitive, untainted by modern Spanish society, and essentialized it to a very basic form to which suited his own opinions of flamenco. García Lorca glorified the gitanos in his writing, and used the sad lyrics typical of *cante jondo* in his poetry to reflect his own sense of a tragic life. Flamenco was to be something beautiful and seductive with its sorrowful notes and poor beginnings. While García Lorca was not the original organizer of the contest, he became deeply involved as he shared the same intense search for authentic flamenco with Manuel de Falla, a composer and the principal organizer of the contest. *Cante jondo* was considered so pure that it could not even be considered flamenco, since flamenco had become bastardized in their opinion. De Falla (1962) wrote to a friend a letter of the contest’s purpose, “*queremos purificar y hacer revivir ese admirable cante jondo, que no hay que confundir con el cante flamenco, degeneración y casi caricatura de aquél*” [we want to purify and revive the admirable *cante jondo*, which should not be confused with flamenco song, which is degenerative and almost a caricature of it]. He searched for contestants in the streets to find the voice of his flamenco, restricting any profes-

sional or well-known singers from the contest (Chuse 2003:266). García Lorca believed that flamenco was something for poor, pained men who were untouched by the western world, for only they could purely sing true *cante jondo* without bias. García Lorca in particular created a romanticized conflict between the *gitano* and the *Guardia Civil Española* [Spanish Civil Guard], and he saw the song that reflected the life of pain and suffering to be authentic (Esteban 2006:18). The exotification began with the song and ended with the dance.

The fascination with the exotic in flamenco began long before the *cante jondo* contest of 1922. In fact, it began in the late eighteenth century. The French and Italians created the myth of the dark mysterious and sexual gypsy woman. The exotic *gitana* is an image that has reach many other parts of the world, United States included, as is evident in the advertisements and the displays of flamenco performance within and around the city of Atlanta. The advertisement for a flamenco show at an Atlanta restaurant presents the exotic *gitana* in the form of a drawing<sup>1</sup>. She is standing in a pose where her chest is extended and cleavage is apparent. She is lifting her dress, which is common in flamenco dancing, in a manner that creates a fold giving her a more voluptuous backside while simultaneously exposing her leg up to the thigh. As a drawing it is subtle, but quite sexualized nonetheless. She is covered in a shadow and has dark hair, typical of the *gitana* stereotype. However she does not dominate the ad alone, there is a man hunched over the guitar playing for her. The man is not sexualized, in fact he is drawn sitting in such a posture that when I looked at the ad I could picture every flamenco guitarist I had ever seen sitting in that exact position.

A key element to understanding the popularity of the image of the exotic *gitana* is that she grinds against Western norms of female respectability. Kapchan (1994) explored the blurred lines between the private and public sphere for females and respectability in her article on Mo-

roccan *shikhat* performers. The *shikhat* are women whose performance is central in celebratory events in Morocco. Their performances are both verbally and corporeally open, exposing what should be part of the secluded domestic sphere to the public, therefore positioning the woman as shameless and without respectability. The freedom of her body translates in Moroccan society the supposed looseness of her sexuality (1994:86). The ways in which dance and movement speaks to female respectability varies in different contexts, but it is nonetheless a given that meaning is ascribed to it. This topic of respectability leads into the discussion of gender identity in flamenco, as flamenco has historically moved from a male dominated arena to what I have observed in Atlanta as a female dominated field. The field is that of a feminized field of practice that encompasses both the public and the private.

Pierre Bourdieu (1984) discusses the field as a setting in which agents and social positions are located in relation to the interactions between the agents of the field. The interactions are characterized by special rules, ideologies, and roles. The flamenco dance field of Atlanta is part of a larger feminized sphere. Historically and currently, the appropriate sphere of the woman is often regarded as the domestic, while the public space is reserved for men (Guano 2007). Even though these women are participating in dance classes in the public setting of the dance school, the arena of dance is feminized within the United States. Therefore, the space of the class becomes more intimate and private, hidden within the confines of the dance school. Since dance is feminized in the United States, feminized space is comparable to that of domestic and private space. In order to participate in the space of the dance studio, one must enroll in and pay the studio. The steps involved in accessing the dance space restrict who enters it, thus producing a space that is comparable to that of the domestic in the sense of a feminized and private space. The presence of females in public space has been a long contested issue as traditionally male-

dominated societies have seen women in public spaces as loose or immoral. Since the presence of women in public spaces was an issue, new spaces were created to be safe zones for women. Erika Rappaport (1996) showed, how, at the turn of the twentieth century, shopping malls and stores became safe zones for women as symbols of economic growth rather than of moral indecency (1996:61). Since a woman in public was a sign of indecency, the development of private spheres within the public sector became a solution. Because of these preoccupations with a woman's decency, a woman dancing in public would suggest the woman to not only be someone without respectability, but she could also be seen as a prostitute. As flamenco has become more mainstream the presence of female dancers in the flamenco clubs, *cafés cantantes*, and *tablaos*, has become not only acceptable but expected much owed to the rise of Romanticism in Europe and the boom of exoticized operas portraying flamenco dancers and mysterious sexy women as one and the same (Chuse 2003:258). Flamenco continues to be a masculine dance in Spain, as it is male dominated and dance is not feminized; however, as far as tourists are concerned, the woman must dance.

While Spaniards did not create the stereotype of the gitana, they embrace and recreate it as a means of publicity, and so flamenco began to be publicly depicted with images of beautiful female dancers (Chuse 2003:268). The popularity of those images helped solidify the woman's place in flamenco dance and the images are recognized in the global arena of tourism as a symbol for "real" flamenco. The vast majority of flamenco advertisements in Atlanta follow the same pattern. There are some minute differences, but all the ads share a woman wearing a ruffled skirt. She is in motion, and never faces the penetrating lens of the camera directly. Her arms are raised, and many times her back is exposed to the viewer. But the most important similarity is that all images are of women. Therefore, it is of no surprise to find that female dancers dominate

the field and the most prominent male dancers come from Spain on tour to provide a workshop between performances.

Racial identity is an integral part of flamenco culture, as there is an argument about whether or not a true flamenco dancer has to be a gitano or not. Middle class Spanish men and other middle to upper class European Romanticists both reviled and idolized the gitanos who performed flamenco. It was their fascination that originally bred the mainstream popularity of flamenco. The men, *señoritos*, were typically unmarried young adults who shared a love for music, dance and festivity. They were romanticists, and looked to the flamenco clubs to bask in pleasure. They slowly introduced flamenco into a mainstream context, however, flamenco became a dance for nearly anyone when the government of Spain (under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco) popularized it as a tourist event in order to help a sagging economy (Heffner Hayes 2009:88). When flamenco became acceptable for non-gitanos to practice, there was still an acknowledgement that flamenco was something particular to the gitanos. This was not only because their social sphere was the original context of the dance, but also because the *cante* [song] used lyrics that spoke to the social repression of the gitanos in Spain. Also, most gitanos who perform flamenco never attended a flamenco school; in fact, flamenco is taught to children informally. It simply exists in a common social context, where children learn by spending time with others who model that activity. The early exposure to flamenco that has allowed many gitanos to become accomplished dancers before adolescence and has helped construct the myth that gitanos are born with flamenco “in their blood”. This naturalization of a skill is not uncommon in marginalized and colonized groups. In some cases, as Said (1978) suggests, post-colonized (or in this case, marginalized) peoples attempt to create themselves as they imagine they might have been before the repression, internalizing the orientalism. The naturalization of a skill is some-

thing that can “belong” to said group, and not be taken away by any dominant force. Inevitably, orientalism works by naturalizing the alleged essence of the Other. This myth of naturalized skill pervades the flamenco scene around the world. For example, dance instructors with whom I have conducted my research taught their students about flamenco’s origins. Therefore, identity construction between people who are not of gitano heritage and the gitanos is an issue of much interest in this thesis.

A question I tackle in this research is about how the dancers imagine the exotic and relate themselves to it. None of the dancers that I have met are *gitano por cuatro costaos*, or of pure gypsy blood as is preferred by many *flamencos* [people who participate in flamenco] around the world (Papapavlou 2003:14). The emphasis on the historical importance of the gitano flamenco dancer in contrast with the overwhelmingly large international participation of non-gitanos opens a necessary space in anthropological study to research how different groups who lay claim to flamenco on seemingly different terms due to their different social histories negotiate that difference.

The dance school becomes an integral space for observing that difference as an anthropologist, as even within the international context of flamenco, not one individual in the classroom will be like another. The difference in the ways in which flamenco is understood can be observed on a micro-level by studying the shared differences between the dancers, much like Deborah Kapchan (2006) did with her research at a salsa club in Texas. The dance school is a place where people’s identities are frequently created and re-negotiated, as the school itself can become a community within a community. Kapchan observed how a diverse group of salsa dancers in Texas created a home and a community within the anti-home of the dominant Anglo culture in the outside community (2006:361). Due to the difference in the communities, the salsa

dancers were able to construct identities that sometimes conflicted with their identities outside of the dance club. Certain social rules were no longer applicable, and women who otherwise would not be permitted to dance in other public spaces were regulars who danced confidently with strangers with no fear of repercussion. The combination of the identities and the ways in which they mesh together creates a unique community of shared difference. Due to the diverse ethnic heritages of the participants in the dance class, I suggest that the space of the flamenco class allows the same possibilities as the salsa club did for the dancers to find a haven in which they may create their own meaning and culture. The flamenco dancers do experience a variety of social expectations related to their gender and ethnicity outside the dance studio, and I wanted to see how the dancers constructed their own community of shared difference if at all, as compared to Kapchan's research.

There has been little academic research done on flamenco performance and performers outside of Spain; hence, this research purports to offer new perspectives. Understanding how identities are built around flamenco and communicated through the dance addresses American values and societal issues as the dancers are identified within the context of Atlanta society. It shows what parts of society are being drawn to flamenco dance and what their social commentary is through the movements and presentations of their bodies. This research also highlights correlations between groups that are so seemingly different, while showing that similar values may be appropriated in new ways.

## ***1.6 Methods***

The methods I used for this particular study are qualitative and ethnographic. This research is focused on a small group of people and their self-concepts of identity and flamenco

dance performance. Therefore, I utilized mainly participant-observation, interviews and basic observation during which I would record field notes.

Gertrude P. Kurath (1956) outlined unique methods of choreology for ethnographers to utilize in their research. While the field of dance anthropology is constantly changing, her methods and analysis of formal components are still relevant. The analysis addresses the relationships present in the dance, and the influence and changes brought by the merger of different dance techniques and the blurring of discourses as this practice moves around the world. It addresses the analysis of the movement on a micro level in order to explore issues such as whether the individual goes along with the mass production, or whether the individual creates more original movements within the whole complex. Attention to movement not only addresses the question of individuality, but also can be a medium for displaying ingrained sociocultural habits. A dancer who might relate strongly to dominant representations of female respectability might avoid movements that are aggressive or sensual. The researcher should note the ways in which the dancer moves and question the significance of the movements on that deeper, sociocultural level. Movements are to be carefully observed, recorded and coded as to best understand what the dance and movements mean to the individual.

As a dance researcher, it was imperative for me participate in and learn about the dance. Even when the focus of the research is not on the movement, the movement should be considered. It is through the movement that the dancers are communicating to themselves and others who they are. Confidence, insecurity and even gender roles become apparent through body language. In order to participate, I enrolled in three flamenco classes at a dance school in Atlanta. I chose to enroll in three to insure the opportunity to meet people who might not participate in all the classes. Also, it provided opportunity for bonding with the people who participate in every

class. I was able to note the strengths, weaknesses, frustrations and joys of the fellow dancers in the room, as well as understand challenges and strengths of my own. Experiencing the same movements and physical learning helped me to empathize when the participants discussed their thoughts and opinions as they related to flamenco. As I quickly learned, participating in the classes was not simply an opportunity to learn the movement but it also was an active way to learn more about flamenco culture in general. The participation involved me in the flamenco community of Atlanta and I gained perspectives from people I might not ordinarily have come into contact with.

Interviews were an integral part of this research, as I sought to understand the identities that the participants at the dance school are creating for themselves. I casually approached the interviews while at the dance school, rather than structuring formal interviews. Since the communication between dancers in the class is casual, I wanted to maintain that style of communication. The relationship between the people at the dance school is open and fluid, with students visiting the instructor's home for extra practice and family members visiting during class. I worked to maintain that relationship as to not create any discomfort in the dance school. I obtained consent from the dance school and also the instructor to perform the role of not only student but also researcher, and the instructor announced to the class that I would be performing dual roles. However, as I needed the participants to be at ease while elaborating on their concepts of identity, I interviewed them outside of the dance school in a semi-formal interview setting. I followed an interview guide in order to gain a better understanding of them and their ideas of flamenco as they pertained to their own individual lives. I interviewed the students in my dance class as well as the instructor; however, I found new informants through networking. As I met new people

within the community, I asked for their verbal consent to use information discussed casually in this research.

In addition to participating in the dance and interviewing the students at the dance school, I observed flamenco performance in the several settings that were available to me in Atlanta. Taking the role of observer, I recorded detailed field notes of the different dynamics of flamenco performances in both formal and casual settings. There is an online community that identifies all flamenco events that happen in Atlanta, created by my flamenco instructor, Lorena. The website has been very helpful for me in locating the performances, and became a useful tool to guide me to additional events. These observations gave me an opportunity to see not only how the students presented themselves and created themselves in the dance class, but how they presented themselves to the public as flamenco dancers.

In order to obtain the disclosure I needed, I established myself not only as a researcher but also as a dance student. I love flamenco dance and I had been planning on taking classes for years. This research enabled me to do something I enjoy, even though in this case, this activity has a larger purpose than simply entertainment and leisure. I showed interest in each of the students as individuals to let them know that I saw them as more than just research subjects- that we were also comrades in dance. This was important because the people participating in the dance classes view the classroom as a safe haven, and I did not desire to disrupt it by being the “sterile researcher”. However, I did need to position myself in a way in which it was clear that I was not only a student. I was also a researcher, and my interest in flamenco was both personal and academic. It was important to clarify that role fully despite my concerns of “fitting in”, because the students needed to be aware at all times that our conversations and my observations were subject to be included in the research. While they were two different roles that I was performing, it was

not be difficult to perform them both adequately, as the terms “researcher” and “excited participant” need not be mutually exclusive.

### **1.7 Ethics**

The Hippocratic Oath for medicine states a promise to “abstain from doing harm”, and that statement is relevant for the social sciences as well as the medical sciences. Through research with human subjects there is a high capacity for the possibility of harm, be it physical, mental, emotional or any combination thereof. It is important to recognize subjects not as objectified informants, but as people, just like the researcher. Research on how flamenco dancers in the Atlanta community construct their identities may seem on the surface to be a rather risk-free topic; however, the practice of identity creation is complex and not necessarily easy. Sharing personal stories in a public manner is a frightening and vulnerable experience. My utmost priority is respecting all the people who have graciously volunteered their time and personal details in order to allow me to complete this research. In order to maintain privacy and anonymity, I have employed the use of pseudonyms and changed some descriptive traits that could potentially be used to identify the participants.

Regarding permission to complete my fieldwork, I received a written statement allowing me to do research at the dance studio, and also written permission from the dance instructor. All students of the class were made aware of my research intentions and aware that through my participant observation, any conversations were subject to be included in the final written product. All participants were asked to sign an informed consent form, and were made aware of their ability to opt out of participating in the research project.

While the topic of flamenco dance is not particularly risqué or difficult to broach, the issue of identity construction can certainly bring up negative as well as positive emotions. The

process of negotiating identities is not based solely on positive experiences in ones life, but also difficult or painful ones. In my discussions with the dancers regarding the ways in which they constructed their identities, I found that they both agreed and disagreed with me about the socially constructed nature of identity. All the dancers I interviewed told me ways in which participation in flamenco dance has changed them. They acknowledged other social aspects of their lives that contributed to their self-construction of identity, such as their jobs, their familial roles, and even effects of the media. However, there were constant references to nature and gender, and how, as women, they naturally fulfilled certain identities and roles. There were contradictions, and those contradictions are imperative to address as a researcher. Therefore, acknowledging the contradictions serves as a constant reminder that I cannot take the conversations I have had with individuals for granted, and that I must maintain respect, sensitivity and privacy with all information given to me.

The roles that are performed in research, those of the researcher and of the informant, indicate a particular power structure that must be acknowledged. According to Shay (2008:22), authors become both the subject and object of the study once they immerse themselves in the research, and must practice reflexivity to allow transparency and acknowledge the possible biases, manipulations and performances that occur between the researcher and the research participants. The relationships must be handled and developed carefully as to avoid any exploitation of the research participants though be it unintentional. I have developed friendships through this research, and I have a prior professional relationship with one person who participated in my study.

### ***1.8 Difficulties, Limitations, and Strengths***

The most prominent struggle I encountered in this research was accepting the role of re-

searcher. In my first real ethnographic experience, I was unsure of how to gain the trust of the people I was researching. I was afraid of seeming like a false friend if I created relationships with the people I was researching, then used our conversations for the benefit of this research. I kept thinking of relationships in binary terms, the binary being the cold, impersonal, self-benefiting researcher and the warm, friendly, selfless friend. Due to this concern, for the first month of class I did not share with anyone other than the instructor that I was going to be doing research, and I used that period of time to create relationships before I began this research. I found that as soon as I shared my research goals and informed them that I would be using all observations and conversations from the class in the research, the dancers were excited. Regardless, I continued to feel nervous and uncomfortable. Of course, I had to address my worries and realize that the two roles did not have to be opposing binaries, but rather could complement each other.

Another challenge presented in this research involved obtaining full participation from all members of the dance class. There are few members of the class, and several either declined to participate or approached me excited to participate but never followed through. Another difficulty encountered with the participants was scheduling the interviews. Due to complicated work and school schedules, members of the class would come and go, and finding a place to meet proved difficult. One student in the class has already had to change to private classes because of her work schedule and another student drove several hours to the dance school every Saturday from Athens, Georgia before leaving the class entirely mid-way through this research. I employed methods other than face-to-face interviews with some of the participants, such as interviews through e-mail and over the phone. The e-mail interviews proved especially arduous as they spanned weeks in order to continue with follow-up questions and further probing. With the help of some creative scheduling, I was able to break up interviews into small chunks of fifteen minutes or so

over a couple weeks during one participant's lunch break at work, without compromising the time of her break.

There are two main limitations that I found in this research. For one, I could only focus on one flamenco school in particular, even though there are several in Atlanta. I would have enjoyed the opportunity to participate in several flamenco schools and get a wider population of dancers to work with and observe; however, in order to do so, I would have needed to enroll in the schools to allow myself the necessary amount of time with those people. Since the classes are relatively expensive, I was not able to participate as widely as I would have liked; however, I am confident that the group of individuals from the dance school with which I worked is sufficient. The flamenco community is interconnected, with our instructor (as a principal organizer of the online community) being at the center of the interconnectedness. Both she and the dance students interact with other members of the community at events. The other limitation to my study is that of time. Classes are held only once a week and while that will be acceptable exposure I would have preferred to have had more extended exposure and time with the group of people I was studying. However, as the flamenco community extends beyond this research period timeline, I anticipate continuing flamenco dance studies, and I am open to the possibility that I will be able to conduct more research over a longer period of time with more in-depth exposure in the future.

Despite some challenges and limitations, when I began this research there were certain strengths that contributed to the work on this research. Those strengths include my prior knowledge of flamenco, the open atmosphere of the dance school and the non-invasiveness of this study. Since I am already familiar with much about flamenco culture and I have taken flamenco dance classes before in Spain, I felt comfortable enough in class to be able to observe the other students and take mental notes on the dynamics of the class, rather than being focused solely on

myself and my own movements. The prior knowledge allowed me to take my attention away from me and give it to the other students, since I would not be concerned with how I looked or how I was moving. Also my prior knowledge allowed me to assist other students who struggled, and it gave me an opportunity to create a more personal relationship with those particular people. The atmosphere of the dance studio was also beneficial for this research, because it allowed people to feel comfortable and created a level of trust where dancers could share their own experiences and talk about their lives. The opportunity to participate in certain self-disclosure creates bonds with the other students. It encouraged more openness in our conversations, which carried through to the interviews. Last but not least, the non-invasiveness of the research was also an advantage because, even though the interviews have the possibility of bringing up sensitive topics with people about their identities, it is research about people, and about flamenco. It allows the students to talk about themselves and something that they love to participate in, and the risk for harm is low.

### ***1.9 Thesis Structure: An Overview***

Accepting a transnational practice such as flamenco dance as a part of a national culture in a different context is crucial in understanding how dance is applied in creation of individual identities. Moving away from the notion of dance as a symbol of culture and strictly a means of communication (Merriam 1974:14) allows us to better understand how people use dance and dance culture to negotiate identity in multiple performative ways. I use the term performative figuratively and literally, because through literal dance performance and practice, also being performed and embodied are gender and multicultural identities. In the following chapters, I discuss these identities and the individuals that surround the flamenco community.

In chapter two, I explore the flamenco community as a whole. I acknowledge the transna-

tional practice of the dance and its creation in the context of the American participants. I address the physical and perceived space of the flamenco community, and explore how the space is used in meaningful ways that build camaraderie and community among the participants rather than a simple room to dance. In this chapter, I tell the story of Lorena in order to exemplify the meaning of the flamenco community for individuals that participate in it.

In chapter three, I observe how flamenco as a transnational and hybrid practice works in the construction of individual identities in Atlanta. I address the different arenas through which flamenco performance becomes part of the larger (trans)national culture, and how it relates to the participants on a personal level. A group of individuals that particularly interests me in this section is that of the Spanish-American flamenco dancer. The majority of the dancers are not Spanish or of Spanish origin; however, there are a few that participate regularly in the classes. Some are first generation Americans and others moved here in their teens and early twenties. I use interviews with Almudena and Amalia, an immigrant and a first generation American to discuss the topic of transnationalism and how it has affected the development of their own identities.

Chapter four addresses the embodied identities in two forms- embodying the exotic and authentic dance, and embodying the flamenco “look” and history. These aspects of embodiment are related and tied together by an exotic fetishism. In the first section, I address the fascination with the exotic and the pursuit of authenticity. When I discuss the concept of authenticity in relation to flamenco, I am referring to the essentialization of flamenco into a static form that is characterized by passion and exotics. I tell Cerena’s story of her pursuit for authentic and pure flamenco as she traveled to Spain and back. In chapter five, I discuss how one achieves a particular “look” as a flamenca and how the identity becomes internalized. As I describe the embodiment and consumption of a particular flamenco physical and emotional identity I share Jennifer’s story

of embodying what it means to be a flamenco dancer.

In chapter six, I address the gendered body in flamenco and how that translates to a gendered identity. I explore the lexicon of movement as it pertains to gender roles within international flamenco dance and how it is simultaneously reinforced and challenged by the individuals in the flamenco dance community. Gender is always performative, culturally constructed, and reinforced through repetitive stylized bodily acts (Butler 1990:12). It is normalized through the perpetuation of gender roles in order to create a societally cohesive person (Foucault 1975), but I observe the ways in which it is performed in the classroom and in the public performances, and how representations of sexuality affect the dancers, particularly male dancers. For this chapter, I have chosen to use Brock's experiences with flamenco to exemplify the male absence in the community and explore reasons why, and how his story relates to dominant notions of sexuality and of gender roles.

In the last chapter, chapter seven, I discuss the literal on-stage performed identities. A commonality among the individuals in the flamenco community is a preference for dance performed for the general public rather than for private consumption. I look at the spectacle of the public performance and how the viewer's gaze both empowers and disempowers the dancers and how these performances shape their identities and sense of self. I also readdress the commodification of flamenco dance and the ways in which the performative dance is consumed by the dancers and public alike. In this chapter, we will meet Joanna, a flamenco dancer and an anthropologist, who performs regularly on stage and also has performed other "exotic" dances such as belly dance.

Through these stories, I attempt to start a dialogue on how identities are both created and maintained through dance. I use flamenco as an example of how dance affects all people who

participate by observing notions of authenticity and tradition juxtaposed with modernity, and how it is all related to exoticized ideas of flamenco and passion.

## 2 THE FLAMENCO COMMUNITY

The flamenco class in Atlanta has become a space where the women who participate can forge a bond that allows for the women to realize themselves as a community. Like the dance itself, the community is not an unchanging permanence, and the ways in which the women relate to each other shape it (Washabaugh 1998:24). The dichotomies between the public and private spheres have long been associated with the dichotomies of authenticity and lack thereof (Malefyt 1998:55). Authenticity is determined in flamenco by both performers and spectators. Typically, authentic flamenco is defined as within the private sphere of the gitano home and community. The dichotomies create a space for identity and relation within flamenco, as they come into play under the guise of performance. The proliferation of private flamenco clubs in Spain, such as *peñas*, allows women a space where they are performing informally in both a public and private setting due to the exclusivity of the clubs. Another setting in which this occurs is the *juerga*, which is a less exclusive setting where people get together to informally perform flamenco (Chuse 2003:261). The only exclusivity exhibited in the *juerga* is the in-status of a group of friends. There are no *peñas* in Atlanta, and very few *juergas*, and one of the flamenco dancers who participated in this research implied that performance and practice can border on less fulfilling and dull when there is not that social aspect. Since Atlanta is lacking that space where flamenco dancers can interact and relate on a regular basis, the classroom has become the social zone where meaning is created and bonds are made. Every dancer I spoke with told me that there is no competition between the dancers; there is only camaraderie. According to Malefyt (1998:59), the cooperation between the dancers forges deeper bonds, and the intimacy of the group creates a “fictive-kinship”. The ways the women of the dance class in Atlanta relate to

each other is in accordance, as many of the dancers spoke of the bonds created and shared within the space of the class and community. One woman, Cari, had to stop taking classes due to a busy work and school schedule, but she continues to foster close relationships with some of the women she met in the flamenco class. She does, however, recall that she spent more time with the women when she was in the class. They frequently would go to lunch after class ended at one in the afternoon, and attended parties with the instructor. Another woman, Cerena, mentioned that she switched flamenco instructors in Atlanta to find someone who taught like her previous teacher in Spain. She said that, in Spain, classes were rigorous, and performance and play occurred frequently in informal settings. Since those settings are not available in Atlanta, she has exchanged a space for social bonding with her instructor and classmates for an intense instruction.

### ***2.1 Space and Place***

Atlanta's flamenco community is relatively small; however, its size allows it to be an intimate community. There are many dance schools across the metropolitan area, and by the advertisements of the much-frequented dance clubs it is easy to observe the popularity of Latin dances, such as salsa. Latin dance is an American craze; it entices women and men with hypersexual imagery, performance of that imagery, and a rapid beat. It is widespread, and most people who dance can guess how to participate in a salsa-styled dance. Those people would consider their dance knowledge of salsa to be part of the general repertoire, something that everyone is slightly familiar with but only few are experts in. Flamenco, however, is not a widely known dance. The music- particularly the singing- does not appeal to the taste of the general American public. The participants share what they describe as a passion for flamenco, and the widespread social network of flamenco performers and aficionados is held together by a shared intense emotion of "feeling" flamenco. One flamenco dancer in Atlanta knows another flamenco dancer, and so the

social chain goes. However, for someone beginning to get involved with the flamenco community, it is difficult to know how to start, how to get involved and meet people with similar interests. A quick search on the Internet will retrieve [www.jaleole.com](http://www.jaleole.com), a website that serves as a cultural headquarters for flamenco in the Atlanta area. There is no physical place for the community to regularly meet and share ideas and discuss events. There are many flamenco social events and shared performances, which are mostly organized and promoted through JaleOlé. E-mails are sent to participants in the community and encourage members to come to the events and look to the website for more information.

The flamenco classes take place in a variety of settings. They are held in dance studios, homes and empty classrooms. Throughout our classes, Lorena has repeatedly made comments regarding the performance space of flamenco, saying that flamenco can be performed anywhere; however, it is clear that the studio space plays an important role in the cohesiveness and intimacy of the community. Articles appear on JaleOlé instructing flamenco dancers on how to choose the correct wood to create their own studio spaces at home for ideal practice. This ideal has to do with the sound the shoes will make on the floor, and of course minimizing any property damages related to the dancing itself. While these home studios are encouraged, they are not to be a replacement for the classroom. While individual classes are available for make-up sessions and tutoring, there is clearly an added benefit of practicing in a group. In fact, Lorena lowers her price of private tutoring the more people who come to her home for practice. There is a collective identity and a collective unity among the group members. Within the space of the class, learning occurs, not just on a technical dance level but also on a personal and interpersonal level.

Prior to this research I assumed that classes were held in any logical setting- a space that could be rented and had a mirror against the wall. However, Lorena quickly helped me realize

that the space was not simply a room to practice dance, but it needed to be a meaningful place for flamenco as well. I asked how she chose her current teaching location outside the studio space in the basement of her own home. She told me that it was important for her to find a public space where the owner would be comfortable with the powerful beating the floors would take from the shoes of the flamenco dancers. Flamenco dancer shoes have nails in the toe, so the metal makes an even more impressive sound when slapped, stomped or slid against the surface of which dance is being performed. Furthermore, the physical necessities of the dance space are not the only issues to be considered in choosing a location for flamenco dance. Lorena wants the owner to be aware of what flamenco is, and to have knowledge on the type of dance to occur in the space. She explained to me how she met the owner of the dance studio where she currently teaches, and showed him the shoes while they discussed the floor. She determined that the studio would be an adequate space of practice, as the owner understood the dance he was welcoming, he was excited by flamenco, and the floor did not have a concrete base. The absence of concrete in the floor would allow for better sound, and a dance studio that was sympathetic to the needs of the flamenco community would allow it to flourish. On nearly a monthly basis, the studio would allow Lorena to schedule additional time on weekend nights to have a flamenco social. During the flamenco socials, all dance students were welcome to drop by and enjoy a potluck dinner and flamenco dancing in a casual setting. Lorena creates these friendly events to foster the bond between the women in the class and reach out to the community to find more people involved and interested in flamenco dance.

## ***2.2 Creating a Community in Other Spaces***

In her study on the salsa dance club in Texas, Kapchan (2006) noted how the participants would often lead different lives within the club and in relation to the people at the club than they

would outside. The dancers would no longer need to adhere to certain social or gender roles, and the latter were changed, shunned or newly appropriated within the space of the salsa club. In the classroom, everyone is a flamenca, and regardless whether or not she thinks of herself as a dancer outside the classroom, this is a place where no one challenges it or considers it to not even be an option. However, lives outside of the classroom are not completely discarded. Occasionally personal announcements are made, such as pregnancy and events important to that person; however, they are usually connected to flamenco in some manner. Pregnancy will become obvious within months and will result in missed classes. Another woman talked about her attending the University of Georgia, because she would drive over an hour every Saturday morning to attend class, and traffic would occasionally make her late. We also learned she would participate in a beauty pageant, but we only learned this because her talent was to be flamenco dancing. Any other personal information would be learned outside of class, in a different environment. The women lead dual lives, even Lorena, whose time appears to be consumed by flamenco dance also makes a living through graphic design at a company downtown. Some of the women have physical maladies, and find the flamenco community to be a satisfying space of therapy. Due to an accident, a former violinist suffered serious injuries, and could no longer play her instrument. She found flamenco to fill the creative void left by the accident and she also enjoyed performing something that she felt reflected her heritage as a Spaniard. The women have found a community, a group in which they accept each other as flamencas and whatever follows next in their formation of themselves, rather than having to address the past in order to find their future. The women are aware of the special bonds created in this space, and, for many of them, these are lasting bonds. One dancer wrote an article on JaleOlé discussing the very topic of a bond lasting beyond the period of the class. Another dancer had a slightly different opinion on the bonds

created. She felt very close to the women in the class, but said that, if she were to spend time with them in a context outside of the flamenco community, she would feel slightly uncomfortable.

The participants in the flamenco class are diverse, and all share liminality in their lives outside the dance school. Victor Turner (1969:95) defines liminal individuals as “neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony”. The flamenco class offers an “other space” (heterotopia) where the marginalized notions of the self can convene in a sanctified way. As Foucault (1967) suggests, we do not live in empty space, a void in which objects may be placed in or moved. The spaces in which we live and interact have sets of relations, and that space is heterogeneous, affected by our time and our history. Through practice, the women create meaning and a shared history through both their shared difference and their shared interest in the space of the class. Just as Kapchan (2006) describes, this shared difference has allowed for these women to create a “home” within the walls of the flamenco studio which lies within the larger “anti-home” of Atlanta. Participants in the dance class are from distinct parts of the world such as Russia, Chile, India, Japan, Spain, Mexico and the United States. These people are not related to those countries by heritage, but they have immigrated to the United States from these places; hence, the liminality experienced by them is very specific in ways that a second or third generation American might not necessarily experience. Immigrants and other individuals who live actively between two or more cultures tend to experience greater liminality than people who have been rooted in one place for longer. The dancers range in age from early twenties to mid-forties and all physical-markers of a social hierarchy from outside of class are left at the door. The space functions as a heterotopia (Foucault 1967), or “other space”. The dance class has a function in relation to all the space outside of

the room, because in contrast to the outside, the flamenco class is a safe space, where passion and emotion can be freely expressed. The rituals that are expected of the dancers to participate in to gain figurative entry and prove their devotion isolate it, but the space is vulnerable to penetration by those who do not partake in the ritual. Anyone may grant themselves entry through the literal act of walking into the space and disrupting the atmosphere. When the dancers walk into the room they all perform the same routine- specific skirts are placed over pants, and most importantly the dancers must change shoes. Changing shoes is one of the most marked rituals and events that transform the dancer from the outside world of Atlanta to flamenco. Students are directed to wear the shoes only when dancing, and so once they are placed on, you cease to be who you were and you become a flamenca. Inside the dance studio, there are no age relations in respect to who needs to be treated more respectfully; there is simply a student/teacher relationship to be respected. However, even with the student/teacher relationship being performed, there is still a sense of equality within the room. The teacher is to guide and direct, but she is also a person with whom the dancers may be direct with and speak to on the same social level as any of their peers. The ways in which the dancers interact within the confines of the flamenco class create meaning on the other space. The fantasy of becoming a flamenco dancer is no longer an imagined space; it rather takes a counter-position to the space usually occupied by the dancer outside of the classroom. Upon entering the classroom, the dancer has crossed a particular boundary that pulls the imagined fantasy into the realm of reality. I have experienced this boundary crossing on many occasions during different periods of my life. I dreamed of what it would be like to be a dancer, and when I see myself in front of the mirror, I experience a transformation. Seeing my clothes and where I am changes me- I am a dancer. Inside the dance studio it does not matter what job or position the dancer may have outside the studio, and it is not known what

each dancer's life outside the studio exactly is. In the studio it is simply not discussed, and it is not necessary to be that person, only to accept that all together they become part of one larger and flamenco identity.

### **2.3 *Lorena's Story***

Lorena, my instructor, is co-founder of the acknowledgeable flamenco community, and wants to be a "vehicle to spread flamenco through Atlanta". She moved from Japan to the United States when she was in her late teens, and she began to dance flamenco several years thereafter. She was always interested in dance; trying different styles until she found flamenco, which she felt suited her. She has now been practicing for eleven years, and began teaching flamenco because she wanted to give back and share flamenco with others. Flamenco is an important part of her life, and she told me that she constantly has it in her head. She sleeps thinking about flamenco, and she becomes easily irritated if she does not do something flamenco related. She somehow involves flamenco in her life every day, and tries to keep herself surrounded by the dance or music. Lorena went as far to as say that if she does not have opportunity to dance or sing at some point in the day, she becomes fidgety and "normal people" stare at her. Her devotion to flamenco does not stop at bodily movement, as she also has extensively studied the Spanish language to become closer to flamenco. It is through her self-declared passion that she found her motivation to begin the website JaleOlé as a way to spread flamenco to the Atlanta community. As Savigliano (1995:169) argued, "passion plays a major role in the production of exoticism... but the passion of the exotics is molded by the exoticizer's Desire". The website reproduces exoticism through images, but one of the main functions of the website is to locate teachers and classes around the metro-Atlanta area. Lorena's desire to create a broader flamenco community is an expansion the "home" of the classroom. The website becomes a tool of communication with oth-

er flamenco participants, creating a “home” on a virtual plane. This is reminiscent of Kapchan’s (2006) analysis of salsa dancers creating a “home” in a salsa club, however, the boundaries of the flamenco “home” are more flexible. They no longer encompass only a physical space; members of that “home” do not need to be located in the same physical space as the other members.

The website also becomes a tool for what I light-heartedly refer to as Lorena’s “flamenco outreach program”. She is intense in her quest to develop the flamenco community and knowledge of the dance in Atlanta. She also tries to combine flamenco with community in ways that are meaningful for people who are not necessarily familiar with flamenco or even consistent dancers or performers. Through JaleOlé, flamenco dance workshops have been held at local libraries for seniors to provide new avenues of gentle exercise. There have been other performances at libraries in order to share histories of flamenco in an educational environment. Lorena also brings flamenco to support local Hispanic businesses for special events, and other fundraising events for the suburban Atlanta community. Through both the JaleOlé website and her own personal e-mail, Lorena supports and encourages local artists and those that come from long distances. Through these mediums, she has been able to involve and support her community as well as introduce flamenco to people who may not have known it before.

Flamenco dance is not immediately apparent in the Atlanta landscape of dance performance, and as Lorena and other flamenco dancers realized, you have to really want to find flamenco in order for it to become available. The community of flamenco performers in Atlanta is small, and those that participate in this community created by JaleOlé are close-knit. There is no outward competition between the flamenco instructors or groups as far as Lorena is concerned, and she says that she is constantly searching for more dancers and instructors that she has yet to meet. She says that she will never stop learning flamenco, and that she feels that she can always

learn something from another dancer, and wants to use those acquaintances to grow the community.

### 3 TRANSNATIONAL AND HYBRID IDENTITIES

Passionate and sensual musical styles and performances are a powerful medium for intercultural communication in the global dialogue. That globalization reduces the value of the performance as an ethnic or cultural identity and the shift creates categories of markets and fans in a worldwide identity (Steingress 1998:167-170). As mentioned before, flamenco is not a dance that has been developed in a vacuum in southern Spain, and then carefully exported to another country, where it is consumed in a pure and authentic form. It is and has been a constantly changing and complex transnational practice. It has grown and developed to a multi-cultural based performative dance that has arrived in new contexts thanks to global flows of information, ideas and cultures. Arjun Appadurai (1996) critiques how imperialist models of globalization are introduced and “indigenized” by local cultures, thus having globalized forces moving from the center (dominant Western imperialist cultures) to the periphery (submissive “Othered” cultures). In the case of flamenco, the global movement adjusts for the opposite flow; flamenco has moved from the periphery to the center, and then has been re-appropriated by that center. Flamenco is de-territorialized and de-contextualized, separating itself from Mediterranean gypsy origin, and is re-territorialized and re-contextualized within a global space. This movement is not a one-way flow, as the appropriations freely move through the global flamenco arena. Just as culture is never static, dance is not either; therefore, it is not reasonable to assume that there is one pure and authentic form. Individuals tend to “own” dances and practices as their own (Shay 2008:23), and there is always something flamenco has adapted from and will adapt to. It becomes a powerful hybrid, and the hybrid highlights aspects of identity as flamenco is affected by and moves away from institutional forces linked to dominant ideology (Washabaugh 1998:4). This adaptability

and contextual change in the dance is important in its consumption and appropriation in American and Atlantan context, as it becomes a powerful force of hybridity of Spanish and global culture.

### ***3.1 Arenas of Hybridity***

Hybridity can be discussed in a variety of terms regarding flamenco dance performance. It is created in spaces, social relations, the media, and internalized selves. With regards to space, flamenco resides in the dance studio where it is practiced, and also the public stage. In the preliminary Spanish context, the public stage was specific to bars, such as *tablaos* and *café cantantes*, where the tourist and public could consume a commercially friendly type of flamenco. The public stage also encompassed *peñas* and *juergas*, where flamenco is performed for exclusive groups of fellow performers. Of course, the high-brow theater settings where it is sanitized for the bourgeois is a public stage, and the streets where it has been traditionally cast-off as low class and undesirable are as well. Propaganda is limited to the tourist performances offered in Spain, but the flyers passed out on the street or given out at information booths all promise the same brand of flamenco- a woman twirling in an intensely red dress<sup>ii</sup>. Flamenco in Atlanta is limited in the ways in which it is performed and for whom, but the arenas of performance for the general public vary, as the community attempts to reach a vast audience. Flamenco in Atlanta is performed both on formal stages in theatrical settings, and also at other non-traditional venues, such as schools and libraries. Rituals and transformative processes, such as construction of the environment and the dance, regular practice, and the installation of the location influence these arenas of practice. Publicity materials and propaganda forged by a global idea of what flamenco is can be found in these areas, particularly in the dance studio. Upon entering the studio, the person is greeted by a large wall covered in flyers that offer information about the studio and its ser-

vices. Text is not the only form of notification, as pictures are integral to the “selling” of dance. Cards and flyers that feature Lorena advertise flamenco dance<sup>iii</sup>. On the front they read “planting a seed”, and “of a life time” on the back. The visual is beautiful, exotic, and focuses on the flows and form of the dancer, and effectively sets the scene for dance to be learned at the studio.

Social arenas relate to the physical spaces of the literal arenas of practice; however, these arenas tend to deal more closely with the community within the space, rather than just the space itself. It is through these social relations that the identity of what flamenco is to the dancers in Atlanta begins to become visible. The performed practices from the social arena are not based strictly on the media, as each individual contributes to what is produced in the larger social aspect. The flamenco community in Atlanta lives on both the physical and the virtual platform. On the main page of the website, there are several articles, which are written by people in the flamenco dance community, and all members of said community are invited to submit articles for review. The topic depends upon the individual author, so long as it relates to flamenco, and the article goes through a thorough editing process. Locality does not matter, since articles can be written nearly anywhere, and so you see contributions by Americans about flamenco in Guatemala, for example. Some of the articles offer practical advice on materials needed for creating an at-home dance studio or for beginning a full-body workout to strengthen for the dance, and some articles are opinions, stories of experiences and flamenco tales from abroad. Occasionally, there are articles that serve as advertisements, and all together the diverse articles serve to create a distinct environment for flamenco dance and what it is in Atlanta. There is a clear penchant for what has become expected as “traditional” in flamenco regarding the photos and visual aspects of the website; however, the social arena of the flamenco community uses as very modern technology to disperse and celebrate the social aspects of the dance. The website is utilized by many of the

dancers as an outlet for them to share their experiences with flamenco. The ability to share experiences and relate flamenco to all aspects of their lives attracts many of the dancers to contribute articles. The stories are the bulk of the website, with only a few side links to the classified and calendar sections. The dancers agree that the website is useful for people who are not necessarily familiar with flamenco and want to learn more, or are looking for classes. One of the dancers I spoke with even found the flamenco class through the website by entering “flamenco in Atlanta” into the search engine Google. So while the website may be of logistical importance to those who need contact information in order to locate a dance school, for the majority of the dancers it is more of a tool to share.

The media further perpetuates the hybridity of flamenco through the arena of cultural production, which is found in the wide availability of films, books, photographs and other propaganda. Bizet’s famous opera of the eighteenth century, *Carmen*, is an excellent example. The focus of the opera is not on flamenco, but it is on the gitana who belongs to flamenco. In *Carmen*, a French archaeologist goes to Andalusia to find a battlefield; however, his story is interrupted by a series of events involving a bandit, Don José, and a gypsy, Carmen. He learns that Don José used to be a Spanish soldier, but his life as a fugitive began when he became trapped in Carmen’s web of sexuality and danger. The Frenchman follows the two, learning their stories, only to become separated from them. By the time he is able to locate Don José again, the latter is in prison for having killed Carmen. Don José is then able to relate how he became so deeply entangled in Carmen, who he could not tame and take as his wife, that he was left with no choice but to dominate her through her death. This story was directed particularly at middle to upper class French society in the mid 1700s, a group that was enchanted with the idea of the wild, sexual being that was the gypsy woman. The French placed themselves in positions of power and domin-

ance over “lesser cultures”. Depicting the brash, irrational and untamable Other through Carmen assisted in that construction of power. This imperial dominance is still perpetuated by the West, and thus *Carmen* has remained popular and the story has been retold through several film adaptations in several countries. In addressing the imperial dominance exerted through dance, Savigliano (1995:77) relates the dancers to the colonized Other and the colonizer. The Other lacks control, yet exceeds the colonizer in passion. The colonizer provides external leadership and control, all the while feeding on the Other’s passion. This relationship of imperialism to passion is present throughout *Carmen*. White Europeans and North Americans are not the only ones who have identified with and reappropriated the story of flamenco, as marginalized groups of people also share the story from the perspective of Carmen herself. The story of *Carmen* has many times over become the story of flamenco, and in the 1990s, hip-hop artist Beyoncé Knowles recreated *Carmen* as a film, calling it a “hip-hopera”. In *Carmen: A Hip-Hopera* (2001), Carmen is an aspiring actress who inadvertently gets herself in trouble wherever she goes. She meets an army soldier named Derek Hill who she seduces. After he falls for her charms, his life is destroyed. His fiancée leaves him, and he is arrested for not following instructions on what to do with Carmen in the first place. Just like Don José’s life is destroyed after meeting Carmen, Hill’s life is destroyed. Unlike in Bizet’s *Carmen*, Hill does not kill Carmen. He is, however, held responsible for her accidental death. This story takes place in Philadelphia and Los Angeles, and the characters involved are actresses, military men and rappers, but the woman is still irrational, dangerous, and unable to be controlled by the dominant force of the man. It would not be the first time Bizet’s *Carmen* has been appropriated in America, as there are numerous films that take the underlying story and retell it in a way that models the lives and identities of marginalized people within the United States. Regardless of the context, the films have an underlying exotification of the

marginalized, which is the mysterious, exotic allure of the flamenco dancer to the non-gitano. Fiction books such as *The Flamenco Academy* (Bird 2006) glorify the dance, and other books that are non-fiction such as *Duende: A Journey into the Heart of Flamenco* (Webster 2002) and *No Singing Allowed: Flamenco & Photography* (Lebrero Stals 2009) tell the story of flamenco from the gaze of the author and of the photographer. *Duende: A Journey into the Heart of Flamenco* (Webster 2002) is the story of one man's journey to leave his old life behind and start the adventure of becoming a flamenco guitarist. His personal biography that appears on the inside cover of the book quickly sets the tone of the book- he lists that he currently lives in Valencia, with "the flamenco dancer Soledad". *No Singing Allowed: Flamenco & Photography* is a "coffee table" style photography book. It is a compilation of shots of flamenco dancers, all dressed in elaborate costumes. This is reminiscent of Malek Alloula's work on orientalism (1986), where the author discusses the gaze of the French photographers upon the veiled Algerian women. Alloula identifies the western European men's fascination with the exotic women, and the photographers need to capture the woman unveiled. The unveiling was both symbolic and literal, because what was behind the veil was a mystery- both physically and mentally, as it was an unusual custom for Westerners. This book of photographs, *No Singing Allowed: Flamenco & Photography*, comes across as a forced gaze upon the flamenco subject; however, instead of unveiling to obtain the exotic, the photographer veils the dancers in elaborate costumes- for there is where the exotic lies. These images create a very distinct visual in the international community of whom and what a flamenco dancer is. This is relevant to how the women in the dance class construct their identities of what a flamenco dancer is, as all materials related to flamenco are encouraged and borrowed. Lorena even keeps a lending library of music, and in class has mentioned wanting to show a particular film related to flamenco. Since flamenco is not a mainstream

dance form in the United States, the dancers in the flamenco class become excited and eager to share when they discover a new medium that discusses flamenco. While the media perpetuates a particular myth about flamenco dancers, it also re-contextualizes them in a multitude of ways that encompass global influences, creating and recreating the image of a newly appropriated dancer.

Another global phenomenon of flamenco is the relatively recent dispersion of *flamenco fusión* [new flamenco]. It is a reinvention of flamenco music in ways that apply to the current popular music landscape, and while it is being discussed as a new occurrence, it has been a part of flamenco music for a long time. Flamenco fusión draws in younger audiences to flamenco music through its appropriations of popular music, which draws criticism from flamenco purists. As recently as several decades ago, two names that have now become synonymous with flamenco completely changed the face of flamenco by making it more accessible to younger generations. Those names were Paco de Lucía and Camarón de la Isla (José Monges Cruz). The changes in flamenco music and performance were difficult for many people to accept, as nation and culture were seen as synonymous, and flamenco had become a national representation of folklore (Steingress 1998:159,164). The evolutionary transculturation creates a renegotiation of identity through dialogue, and this hybridization of flamenco moves away from ethnocentric, nationalist and essentialist approaches (1998:151-152). All of the dancers are familiar with the flamenco fusión, and most of them appreciate it in a certain context, but that context is outside of their flamenco performance. What is interesting about flamenco fusión is that as it becomes a transcultural style in world music, the “cultural and ethnic peculiarities” of identity construction are lost (1998:153). Important to note is that those cultural and ethnic peculiarities are part of the allure of flamenco to the dancers.

The last arena of hybridity is the dimension of experience and self-formation, which is perhaps the most specific to this research. This addresses the individual's experience of embodied practice in the shaping of the self. This particular arena is the most comprehensive of all, because the self-involvement in the identity of flamenco in Atlanta as relating to one's own identity encompasses all of the three previously mentioned arenas. The combinations of the media flow from the literal arenas, social arenas and arenas of cultural production ascribe meaning to the bodies and selves of the dancers in ways that develop re-negotiated identities. The dance students partially model themselves after the instructor, and the latter permeates every aspect and every arena in the Atlanta flamenco community with her persona and her presence- her image is on the walls of the studio, she is the core of the community both online and outside, she maintains a flamenco library of music and film to share within the community, and in class she is the model for the strong solitary woman who moves with both grace and power.

While these arenas are important for all performers of flamenco dance and the formation of their identities through a transnational context, I am particularly interested in how this de/re-contextualized dance becomes part of how Spanish flamenco performers negotiate their identities in Atlanta. The process of de/re-contextualization of dance can be best explained through Savigliano's (1995) research on tango. The tango originated in Argentina, but the dance was colonized by France. Europeans created a sanitized version of the dance, and made it acceptable for middle to upper class consumption (1995:110). The sanitized tango returned to Argentina, where it was re-contextualized and performed with the new French influences. Through the process of re-contextualization, flamenco is not only part of an American context, but an Atlantan context. There is somehow a constant re-contextualization of the self for the Spanish immigrant and that person is re-negotiating her own identity with a re-negotiated practice.

### 3.2 *Almudena's Story*

Almudena is a Spaniard who moved to the United States at twenty years of age after she married an American man. She grew up in Andalusia during the regime of Francisco Franco, where modern-day flamenco was born. The city where she lived is known as one of the most important cities in the development of flamenco. Almudena grew up with flamenco music, not due solely to her location, but because her father was a flamenco aficionado and would play flamenco music constantly in their home. She told me that she always felt a strong emotional connection to the songs. This connection and appeal to flamenco for her was not something based on the fact that she was a Spaniard and that Spaniards must therefore like flamenco, and she admitted that, during her childhood, flamenco was not popular. She never danced flamenco while growing up, and said that under Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975), flamenco was not for the mainstream Spanish population. She said, "this generation is everybody dances [sic]. It was the gitanos during Franco, performing in streets, all on T.V.". Regardless, she loved the music and performances that she was able to see on the television.

When Almudena moved to the United States, she still had the means to visit her family in Spain, and she began a career in Spanish education. She has adapted well to living in the United States, and she adapted in the way of the proverbial "salad bowl". She assimilated to American culture while maintaining aspects of her Spanish culture. The ways she stays connected to her Spanish identity were shared to me by way of understanding flamenco in her life. It is not far from her, and on the wall of her workplace there is a picture of a little girl wearing the traje de gitana, who she tells me, is her daughter. When I asked her what the picture was for, she said that it was not for any particular reason. She simply always had flamenco in her life, and she wanted to take her daughter to get a professional photograph wearing the traje de gitana. She continued

to tell me how flamenco lives through her children and that they have also grown up listening to the same music. Even her daughter-in-law, who is from Mexico, loves flamenco. Her grandchildren, too, are surrounded by flamenco, and they all have their own *traje de gitano*. There is an importance attached to children enjoying flamenco. In reference to her daughter's feelings on flamenco, she says, beaming, "Carolina loves it". Lorena expressed this same sentiment, when she told me that finally, after years of being exposed to flamenco and trained, her daughter is interested. As if it were a sigh of relief, Lorena exhaled, "thank goodness".

Flamenco was clearly important to her and her family as she explained to me how the two were connected, and so I was surprised when she told me that even though she listened to the music for years, she did not learn anything about the history of flamenco and the dance until she moved to the United States. She began to take dance lessons in 2007 with a private instructor in a small group before she moved to the class with Lorena in 2008. Once she began dancing flamenco, she felt a connection to her Spanish identity; she felt *un lazo* [a tie] to her childhood in Spain. In the time between her two instructors, she had an operation that left her unable to dance for nearly a year, and so when she was feeling better, she was only too ready to return to the flamenco classroom. She felt the dance was good exercise, a way to meet new friends, and of course a way to revisit her ties to her Spanish culture. Almudena does not stress about whether or not she is learning some manner of "authentic" flamenco, a flamenco that is "unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional" (Handler 1986:2) and unaffected by people not belonging to a gitano flamenco community in Andalusia. Much of her experience with flamenco dance has been manipulated in the American arenas of media production and consumption, but she still always relates it back to Spain.

Almudena focuses on her familial relations and defines herself as a woman in terms of

being a mother, grandmother, sister and wife. However, she follows those identifiers with where she is from, and who she is as a Spaniard. Throughout our conversations, she related flamenco to being a Spaniard; however, when she discussed her Spanish identity without tying it to flamenco she became a little lost. She confided that since she has been living in the United States for so long that she does not know where she is from. She feels that she does not fit in Spain anymore because she hardly knows what is occurring there and does not even speak the same as she did before. She says that speaking gives her away, in Spanish because she does not know recent slang, and in English because of her thick Spanish accent. Through our interviews, it became clear that she found flamenco as a place to fit in- the transnational dance is not purely Spanish, it is not purely American- it is a conglomeration of multiple cultures, and it creates a space for her to be comfortable.

### **3.3 *Amalia's Story***

Amalia is an American born to Spanish parents. While she was born in the United States, she maintains a close national relationship to Spain and travels extensively with her family to visit other members of her extended family in Spain. Her family comes from a region where flamenco is not popular. While she knew what flamenco was, she did not know anything telling about the dance. She used to be an accomplished violinist; however, due to an accident she can no longer play. She used to travel all over the world with her family for her music, and now she is looking for a new art form to help her find her place as an artist and as a Spaniard living in the United States. Amalia was headed toward a career as a professional performer, and already participated in that field; however, as a college student she remained limited to what she could do professionally during that period of time.

During class, she felt awkward that she did not know how to dance and that she was

struggling with the *pasos* [steps] in the sevillanas and other palos. She felt that, as a Spaniard, she was expected to have a stronger knowledge base on flamenco and the movements, even though this was a stress that she projected onto herself and never was a contentious issue with anyone in the class. In fact, throughout the time that Amalia participated in the class, she was the one dancer that could be visually pinpointed as left behind. While no one told her she was required to purchase new clothes to dance in, or that she was not good enough, she struggled to find herself in the context of the flamenco class. She was the last to buy a skirt and shoes, and when she did, she treated it like an accomplishment. Money was never discussed in the terms of obtaining proper flamenco dance attire; however, there was a notion of authenticity attached to obtaining the dance attire, because “all” flamenco dancers must have a “proper” flamenco skirt. This was never explicitly said, but dancing in a skirt is a practice that is constantly reinforced. Once, she came to my house to get a CD of flamenco music, and she acted slightly embarrassed to admit she had no flamenco music whatsoever, despite her being both a musician and a Spaniard. She became frustrated in class with her inability to automatically pick up the dance rhythms and steps and began taking additional private lessons, which eventually turned to exclusively private lessons until she disappeared altogether. Amalia felt a pressure from the arenas around her to perform flamenco since she is a Spaniard, and felt pressure from flamenco to define her as a Spaniard in one seamless form. She simply was not someone who grew up with flamenco in her life, and she stated the geographical location of her family’s roots as the main reason.

Amalia eventually did find her own way to connect with flamenco and her Spanish identity in a re-contextualized manner that suited her life. She continued her private lessons long enough to learn a dance to perform for a beauty pageant, and the reason she chose flamenco was

because she found it to be something that was representative of Spanish culture and her Spanish identity. And yet, her flamenco was to be performed in a safe context where she did not feel judged by others who were perhaps more knowledgeable about flamenco- though they were not Spaniards. Interesting to me was that she saw flamenco as something so distinctly Spanish, without consciously acknowledging the transnational aspects of the dance, however she did not realize that she re-contextualized the dance in the distinctly American context of the beauty pageant.

## 4 EXOTIC AND AUTHENTIC IDENTITIES

### 4.1 *Exoticism*

“A large woman stands up at the back of the stage and approaches the audience... raising an arm above her head, she stamps her foot hard, sweeps her hand down sharply to the side, and stares at us in defiance. The music stops and everyone falls silent.” (Webster 2002:6).

Thus begins the first chapter of Jason Webster’s memoir of how he became captivated by flamenco and learned to play the flamenco guitar. This moment describes what would become Webster’s “empowering moment” (Shay 2008:41) and lead to his participation in the flamenco world. People who perform flamenco and other decidedly “exotic” dances frequently have in common a similar moment of empowerment when something strikes a chord in them and makes them say, “I can do this, I need to do this”. A moment and decision as such cannot be something as simple as realizing that one can move arms and legs in tandem or at random like the performers onstage, but rather it is something much more complex- it is a moment fraught with exoticism- escapism and transposing one’s self into another time, place and context. The person seeking the exotic ceases to be the rational and logical spectator, and begins to transform into the emotional and free participant who not only observes, but also feels the spirit of the dance resonating through the body and mind. This shift to impulsive and emotional ways of experiencing the dance is derived from the emotional and supposedly irrational “nature” of the exotic Other, in contrast to the rational and logical West. Within flamenco, the exotic Other is not to be pitied or to be avoided, it is desired. Whatever it may be that creates this exoticness, it can be harnessed and belong to anyone, as if it were a commodity.

Marta Savigliano (1995:83) addresses the correlations between luxury and primitiveness, as a driving force in the manufacturing of exoticism. The capability of the “cultural elite” to consume the commodified exotic affirms their affluent lifestyle. Both goods and practices contribute to this commodified exoticism, and create a cultural context for what is being consumed. In the case of Atlanta and flamenco, both food and dance are examples, and pairing the two creates a space for the elite to participate in the consumption of the exotic.

Lorena used to perform in such a space every other week at a Spanish restaurant in Atlanta, alternating with another flamenco group. The restaurant closed during the summer of 2009, effectively putting an end to the collaboration of selling food through performance and performance through food. Lorena and I discussed possible reasons as to why the restaurant closed, as it was packed on the nights of the flamenco performances. Lorena theorized that since the restaurant tried to cater to the elite by being elitist in price and décor, they failed at delivering what the consumer desired in a Spanish restaurant. She suggested that opening a cheap tapas bar, even a dingy one like might be common in Spain, would better represent Spanish cuisine and culture for those who want to consume it. This comment relies on the implication that Spanish cuisine and culture is cheap and dingy, and that a “fancy” restaurant is not properly representative. American consumers want to “slum it” and consume Spanish culture in an unpredictable and less controlled environment, in terms of food and dance.

When flamenco is exoticized, it is also essentialized. The colonial gaze by eighteenth century European Romanticists captured the gitanos and flamenco in a sphere of suspended time and manipulated meaning, created by the imagination. The Orient was a “free zone” for European imagination (McClary 1992:29), and Andalusia, isolated from the rest of Western Europe and heavily influenced by Africa and the Middle East, became part of that Orient. The margina-

lized society of the gitanos became an “object of desire” for the bourgeois, and flamenco came to represent a site of collective identity, known as an Andalusian essence (Steingress 1998:155,164). The East is feminized, and identities of exoticism begin to emerge due to the imaginations of the West. I was curious to know how the dancers in the Atlanta flamenco community understood flamenco in relation to exotic dance, and I received a variety of responses. Cari, a dancer from Chile, would not commit to the label of exotic, as she felt that the word “exotic” was subjective. She offered me two possible scenarios. If exotic was sexual and wild, it was not flamenco, but if exotic was simply something “different and cool, then sure, flamenco is exotic dance”. Cari used to perform a dance with footwork similar to flamenco, so I suspect her previous experience with dance influences her own perceptions of exotic dance. Another woman, Jennifer, was quick to tell me that flamenco was not exotic dance. She explained, “say exotic dancing in the U.S. and we’re talking about a woman on a pole... in global terms... belly dancing comes to mind, but not flamenco at all. There is a tease factor in both that flamenco does not have”. While the women tended to separate exotic from flamenco in terms of sexuality, they did not in terms of passion. However it was Almudena, one of the dancers from Spain, who best captured the group’s sentiments when she said, “flamenco gets in your heart, gets you goose bumps. You feel happy, sad, energetic, moved... it brings teardrops”. And as Washabaugh (1998:7) discusses, there is a fascination with introspection and emotionality with a distant regard for the marginalized community of the gitano. Everyone spoke of the passion; nearly no one had much knowledge of the group with which they were enamored.

For flamenco, the dance and physical performance onstage or in private is not the only way to attain participation in the exotic- audience members are invited to become part of the performance as well. Audience members are encouraged to shout out calls of “*óle*” and other forms

of approval, because a quiet audience is not a flamenco audience. These people also feel the music and experience the freedom and escapism that those fascinated with performing feel, but something different occurs with the people who make the move from active audience to active participant. Very frequently, the person who experiences the empowering moment of exotic dance has close associations to that performance and the performance of authenticity. Within this research of flamenco dance, I have found that representations of exoticism and authenticity are partners.

#### **4.2 *The Quest for “Authentic” Flamenco***

William Washabaugh (1998:3) states “flamenco is riddled with traditionalisms that have been overlaid with discourses of authenticity and purity”. The search for authentic flamenco has not been limited to foreigners. Many people who study flamenco and its history are at least familiar with the name of Federico Garcia Lorca, who romanticized flamenco song in his poetic work, *Poema del Cante Jondo; Romancero Gitano* (1977). The presentation of flamenco has changed significantly depending on political contexts in Spain, and García Lorca spent a period of his life trying to revitalize flamenco through returning to its “pure” sound- through cante jondo. This return to “pure” flamenco is a common theme present even in a transnational context such as a flamenco community in Atlanta. The core of identifying the pure and authentic flamenco is the song, the voice, and the lyrics. The accompanying guitar and dance are integral; however, they thrive on the song. The actual performance of flamenco is not the only way in which flamenco is branded as “authentic” or “inauthentic”. Even the ways in which it is taught are brought to scrutiny by students seeking more, something closer to Spain and closer to the gitanos. Flamenco dance is not typically choreographed, unless it is being performed in a formal theater or unless it is the sevillanas we are speaking about- which are commonly not classified as

flamenco by many aficionados. There are styles in which each palo may be danced, and knowledge of those palos and their *compás* [rhythm] (which require meticulous training to learn) allows for the improvisation that is characteristic of flamenco. Improvisation is even a word lacking in meaning to describe flamenco dance, as dancers experience the dance in ways that are literally improvised; however, for the dancer they are simply felt. The dancers feel the emotion, are touched by what they frequently describe as the power of the music, and they let the music move them. All the while they are keeping in *compás*, mixing the technical and the emotional in the performance, although it is important to note that dancers do not count *compás*, they internalize it. Their bodies learn it and the music offers the trigger of recognition to which their bodies comply. Due to this traditional performance of flamenco as a dance that cannot be planned in advance, some of the dancers in the Atlanta community look down on that particular type of performance. It does not help them to achieve their personal goals within flamenco and it does not allow them to “truly experience” flamenco. While traditionally the dancer was guided and manipulated by the male *guitarrista* [guitarist] and/or *cantaor*, the relation between the players in the Atlanta scene has become more of a “call and response”. Each player responds to a call from another performer and through that response creates a new question to be answered by another performer. The ability to seamlessly move between these interactions through dance is seen as a mastering of movements and an acknowledgement of agency. As one advanced dancer explained to me, she feels control in her choreographed and planned dancing as a response to the performers around her, but “not the control yet of dancing impromptu and leading a guitarist”.

The memory of flamenco and its often exoticized and glorified history also creates a bond between the members of the community. Even while the dancers practice multiple palos of flamenco, there is still a reverence for *flamenco puro* [pure flamenco], which, depending on the

source, can be anything from original performances of one of the many palos to only performance of the cante jondo. Part of the exotification prevalent in the history shared in the dance class is that of glorifying the gitanos for their creation and contribution to flamenco, even though the history and trajectory of flamenco is unknown. The gitano is assumed to be without doubt the best flamenco dancer/singer/guitarist based on race almost exclusively. Hence, many flamenco dancers have a far off, but nonetheless existing, dream of one day being able to perform like a gitano. Several of the dancers conversed with me on the topic of the gitano being the best and most authentic dancer. While two people told me that they believe many gitanos have an advantage in that they are surrounded by flamenco growing up, anyone who works hard all their life can achieve that level of greatness. All the other dancers, however, disagreed. Some women believed flamenco ran in the blood of the gitanos, but were not able to elaborate much further. Cerena gave me a much more specific and detailed account as to why she believed gitanos were such better dancers than anyone else could ever be. She said that she used to think that anyone who danced flamenco looked beautiful, but once she went to Spain and saw “real gypsies” dance, she saw how different the dance really was. The gitanos had a passion that no one else could have, because they learned it as children and since it is “in the culture”, the gitanos grow as dancers in a different way. She was quick to mention that not all gitanos are good dancers, but since flamenco has such a strong culture of meaning to Andalusia, there is a difference in the way the gitanos treat it. In the United States, Cerena says people learn dance because it is fun, but for the gitanos it is part of life, and tells the story of their people’s historical repression. She compared the history of the gitanos to the history of African-Americans, and stated that history simply could not be appropriated. According to Cerena, one could be educated in the history of the gitanos and draw comparisons of it to their own history, but it would still not create the same

emotion and effect in the dance.

In reference to the idea of gitanos being the best at performing authentic flamenco, the second best option would be to be like a Spaniard, as flamenco became a solidified performance in Spain. During rehearsals for a show performed in May of 2009, the class was able to meet a cantaora, and as she was introduced it was part of her introduction to identify her as a Spaniard. Why would that be important? Her nationality is indicative of the desire and aspiration to become such a talented performer that one could be mistaken for a Spaniard, or better yet, a gitano. It is also representative of flamenco's history. This shared history becomes a shared language of the class- descriptions of flamenco and the lexicon associated with flamenco is sprinkled with words in Spanish and *Caló*, the language of the gitanos. Despite the multilingualism of the group and also the commonality of English, the code switching involved in teaching and learning flamenco in these languages all becomes a formative part of the community.

### **4.3 Cerena's Story**

As a child and young woman in Chile, Cerena watched flamenco on the television and became enamored with the dance. While flamenco was not particularly common in Chile, she attributes the historical ties to her colonial Spanish ancestors as the reason for the presentation of flamenco in a public format. She had dance experience growing up, mainly performing folk dances and Chile's national dance, Cueca, which she says shares common *zapateo* [footwork] with flamenco. After Cerena moved to the United States as an adult, she found Lorena's class and began flamenco lessons in December 2008. Cerena described Lorena's classes as fun and developed close bonds with other women in the class, but as a dancer she felt "useless". Her feeling of disparity as a dancer came from months of working on one choreography for one performance that year, but not learning enough technique to be able to dance improvisationally. De-

spite her complaints, she still enjoyed the class and chose to participate in it until the summer.

During the summer, Cerena took a trip to Spain for a vacation. She had been looking forward to it for months, especially because she was planning on taking flamenco lessons once she was there. The ability to learn flamenco dance in its original national setting was a thrilling opportunity for her, and so while she was in Madrid, she took several classes on flamenco dance technique. Cerena was impressed by her experiences in the Spanish flamenco school, and noted the difference on emphasis placed on learning technique. The instructor was not gentle; he was assertive and very honest. When the students made rhythmic mistakes, he would shout criticisms such as “*no tienes oído, no es compás*” [you don’t have the ear for it, that is not compás]. For Cerena, this brutal honesty and concern for technique was much more authentic than what she was experiencing in her classes with Lorena, and she attributed one of the differences to national culture. While she appreciated the social bonding with the females in Lorena’s class, Cerena found the class environment in Spain to be more familial because of the honesty at any cost. She said that it was acceptable to have an aggressive attitude in Spain, because “you know how Spanish are”, but she understood that in Lorena’s classes, she could never “tell people off” otherwise she would lose customers, since Americans are not used to being criticized.

Cerena strives to be the best flamenco dancer she can be, but acknowledges that she cannot ever be as authentic a dancer as a gitano. I asked her what she meant by that comment and she gave me the following example: “It’s like if you want to learn Michael Jackson’s Thriller. You can learn all the steps, learn them perfectly, but you still can’t dance like him. You know? Just because you can copy his moves on one dance doesn’t mean you can dance like he does any time”. Cerena said that in Lorena’s class, by focusing on only one dance for several months, she could not learn how to dance on her own, which is all she can hope for since she believes she

could never dance like a gitano (or “be” Michael Jackson per her example).

When Cerena returned to the United States, she found a new flamenco teacher who instructs in a manner that is more like what Cerena experienced in Spain. When she first found out about this new instructor, she excitedly sent me an e-mail to tell me. After she began her new classes, she admitted that while she was learning technique like she always wanted, class was boring since she no longer had the social aspect that she had with Lorena’s class. Regardless, she is happy with her new instructor, because she finally feels that she is getting “authentic” flamenco instruction, since it so closely mirrors the instruction she received in Spain. What I find ironic is that while her focus on receiving authentic instruction in the flamenco class remained fixedly on technique and direction, when I asked her to describe authentic flamenco, she told me, “passion- that’s the way to describe it- flamenco is passion”.

## 5 EMBODIED IDENTITIES

What does a flamenco dancer look like? She has to be “confident... she has to believe herself to be convincing if expecting others to accept her.” The first time I saw the dancer who made this statement to me, she was dancing in the front of the class, and it appeared to me that she was leading the choreography being practiced. I quickly realized the other students were not following her, and she was dancing with an individual flair that was relevant to her abilities and not the other students’. I was entranced with how well she danced, and so I watched her as she changed her facial expressions with the same frequency and ease as she danced. Her brow would furrow and her lips would part as she moved from one side to the other. Her eyes would shut, they would open, and every muscle in her face was moving to create meaning. My initial reaction to watching her move in ways I had only seen professional Spanish dancers move was of immediate distrust. I was raised in social and cultural environments where females who were too confident were often distrusted and disliked. Even though I no longer believe that a confident woman is not to be trusted, I am aware of the judgments that immediately pass through my head. If it was not for the t-shirt of a South American flag that she were wearing, I would have immediately assumed she was a Spaniard, she embodied the intensity that is associated with flamenco. I was correct that she was not a Spaniard, however, I had assumed that she was from South America, which was incorrect. She is from Georgia. However, through her body movement and her confidence, in any other costume I am positive that I would have accepted her as a professional flamenco dancer.

Her comment implied three very important things. First, the flamenco dancer (genderless in the question) is a female. Secondly, in order to be a flamenco dancer, one must be accepted as

such by someone other than the self. Lastly, there is an embodied spirit to the flamenco dancer, of confidence that is exuded. When I asked dancers about what a flamenco dancer looks like, I received responses based on an embodied emotion- however when I look to the media for what a flamenco dancer looks like, I can identify a particular “look”.

### ***5.1 Commodification of a Look***

Robert Foster (2002) recognized the important role played by advertising in the construction of a national identity. Advertisements have the potential to present constructs of a nation, for example advertisements the national Development Lottery in Sri Lanka. Ads for the lottery stressed how profits gained from ticket purchases would fund projects benefiting the Sri Lankans. Through these advertisements, gambling through the lottery became practically patriotic (2002:113). His assertions of the connection between advertisement and national identity, as I found out, are correct. Nations can exploit themselves in ways that they find beneficial, and this has been the case with flamenco, and the flamenco community, for many years. When Romanticism was flourishing in Spain in the late eighteenth century, Europeans found themselves longing for the countryside, for escapes to rural and exotic locales and with an appreciation for folk culture. Southern Spain was still underdeveloped industrially, and its scenic countryside and its folksy and local color on display at the bars and cafés cantantes where flamenco was blooming were especially appealing for modern Europeans (Chuse 2003:262). Even though flamenco was originally a male dominated dance, the image that began to be painted (literally and figuratively) by the European bourgeoisie was that of the beautiful decorated flamenco woman dancing in her traje de gitana. It was the image of postcards and art. It attracted the attention of many people, and even though it was an exotic exploitation of flamenco, the Andalusians took full advantage of the publicity and used those very images of them to promote themselves, and in that respect

affirmed their exoticness (Chuse 2003:268). Those images remain popular today and are apparent even in the community of flamenco with which I have been interacting. Flyers for the yearly performance are adorned with the slightly hazy image of a slender woman gracefully spinning in her beautiful dress- while it is a gender-accurate representation of the demographics of our particular class; it is not an accurate or complete image representative of flamenco. It is that same exploited image that helps to encourage the consumption of flamenco culture and dance in Atlanta, as it is offered in clubs and bars to enjoy while eating, and the full skirts are available at any large dance store. The beautiful images create a flamenco persona that can be emulated with something as simple as wearing hair slicked back with a flower clip.

However, these embodied “looks” can be and are defied, and I experienced flamenco dance as a tool of defiance during the summer of 2008 while I was in Córdoba, Spain. Flamenco as a tourist experience is ubiquitous in Andalusia. The normalized flamenco performance for tourists involves at least one woman dancing in a complete traje de gitana, and for the guitarists and singers to also wear the typical traje de gitano. The performance I attended in Córdoba deviated from this norm, as all the performers were men, none dressed in the traje de gitano. The performance was spontaneous and lively, with one man sporadically jumping onto the stage to offer a beat on the *cajón* [box used as a hand drum]. At the end of the show, the men noticed the confused expressions on several people’s faces and defiantly exclaimed that the audience experienced real flamenco- no disguises, no pretenses.

## **5.2 *Internalization of Compás and Passion***

Another aspect of this embodiment of flamenco is the internalizing of compás. The compás is most relatable in English to being the rhythm; however, in flamenco circles it is discussed as something that is not to be counted, a beat to be kept, or even a specific rhythm to be

followed. Instead, the compás is felt, and the compás is lived. It is the backbone of the different palos and each palo has a different compás. For example, the compás of a palo such as *tientos* [particular style of flamenco] might be “one two three four, one two three four” with the emphasis on the fourth beat. However, because this is not just a simple rhythm, there is not necessarily an actual beat. There is only an emphasis every fourth beat, and it can be expressed in different speeds and each “beat” can be expressed at varying lengths. Due to the flexibility of the compás, the dancer, singer and guitar player must all be very closely following each other to hear what is coming next and when, because it is unpredictable. They each have to be finely in tune to each other’s emotion, because they need to feel it. There is in flamenco, and the Atlanta flamenco community being no exception, a constant training and internalization of feeling the compás and finding it not just in the music but also in everyday life and activities.

The compás is not the only aspect of flamenco that is embodied. The embodiment of feeling is just as important. It has been repetitively brought to my attention by the dancers that the difference between flamenco dance and other dance forms is that there is a deeper emotional connection in flamenco, and that it fills a part of the soul that was previously hungry and empty. Passion and emotion are highly valued in the flamenco community, and as they are believed to be inherent in the gitano dancer as well as compás (and compás is something inherently felt with emotion). Savigliano (1995:169) states that the assumed passion of the exoticized is based on the desire of the exoticizer, and that passion is the “currency through which exotics negotiate their identity with other exotics and with exoticizers”. In her own research on tango, Savigliano mentions the popularity of tango in Japan, and how the appropriation of the dance becomes a type of “double exotic” (1995:170). This is interesting in terms of power, and I observe a similar phenomenon of the double exotic in the group I researched. The exoticized flamenco dance is being

performed by an international group of women, minorities in the history of flamenco dance, and most of these women are from South America and Asian countries where they are themselves exoticized. In a small space of an international shopping center in an Anglo-dominant society, the exotics are trying to harness the exotic gitano's passion. Internalizing the passion and compás is the closest the dancers can come to having the "inherent" ability. This idea supports the idea of human nature and ability based on race, but in their lives outside of flamenco, the women do not base their ability to accomplish goals based on their race or other social constructions, such as gender.

### 5.3 *Jennifer's Story*

One particular student who speaks strongly of her bond with an embodied flamenco is Jennifer. Jennifer is an American in her late twenties, early thirties. She began dancing flamenco after she became aware that a friend of hers was learning it. She was intrigued that flamenco dance was accessible in Atlanta, and began taking classes. She began learning with her friend's instructor, but after that instructor stopped teaching due to maternity leave, Jennifer decided to join Lorena's class after watching her dance. Jennifer did not know much about flamenco when she began, but she was quickly hooked and became a dedicated student of flamenco, practicing multiple times a week and reading as much information as she could in order to learn more about the history of flamenco.

She feels a deep connection to flamenco and its histories, not in the sense that it is nomadic, but in the sense that it is tied to strong and deep emotions. Although Jennifer has begun to participate in the singing, she predominantly dances flamenco and has been practicing for two years. She says that she especially relates to the dance and even to the singing as well because they are emotional outlets for her. She finds the cante and the *baile* [dance] to be related, because

cante teaches her to “support a dancer and baile to dance flowing with the emotions of the singer”.

The feeling and emotion of flamenco is something she says she wholly embodies, and she related to me many of her thoughts and experiences with flamenco through emotion. While she repeated several times that her motivation is internal and her passion for flamenco is something she feels to be natural inside her, she does cite her instructors as people she greatly admires, particularly because they are where she wants to be rhythmically.

The emotion and feelings are not the only things Jennifer embodies in her identity as a flamenco dancer. She internalizes the rhythm and compás as well. When I asked her how often she practiced flamenco, she divided her answer into a formal and non-formal response. I was more interested in her non-formal response as she said she is rhythmically always thinking about compás. She admitted that she could not help but to give compás to all the things in her life. The internalization she experiences with compás is not an internalization of the technical, but rather of the emotion involved in the compás. Due to the move away from a fixation on to technique, she does not sense pressure or competition with others when she dances. She dances for herself, and likes to learn in the front of the classroom because it is something she does for herself. Jennifer hinted at an insecurity in her dancing, although for her it seems to be not so much an insecurity as much as an acknowledgeable fact. She said that she feels in control when she dances, but it is because she has a strong memory. She is still working toward feeling in control of her dancing when she is dancing impromptu or leading a musician. Jennifer does not feel self-conscious by those around her, and says that dancing flamenco is simply “you against yourself striving to be an improved version”.

## 6 GENDERED IDENTITIES

Upon entering the flamenco class at the dance studio, one thing becomes immediately apparent- the classroom is full of women. This is not a far departure from the environment of many dance classes in the United States as dance is seen as an overwhelmingly feminine form of movement (Gerstner 2002:50). However, the masculine absence is not without acknowledgment. Occasionally, the instructor will remind students of the ways in which men dance, since we cannot personally observe a particular style in its original masculine context. During a sevillanas class, I had one student ask me how the coplas [couplets] finished when danced with a male and female, and I let her know that the male's position framed the female's final flourish. She smiled with her newfound piece of knowledge and continued to dance in the way that she was taught. Despite the overwhelming feminine presence of the flamenco class, the women who participate in it have not considered it an exclusive feminine space. Several times men have entered the space, however their presence is only fleeting. Occasionally the owner of the studio visits and participates in the *técnica* [technique] class, and during my observations two other men joined the group.

### 6.1 *The Absent Male*

What I call the absent male could be attributed to several causes, one in particular being dominant representations of masculinity and the fear of homosexuality in U.S. society. Heteronormativity creates an anxiety over male sexuality and masculinity in the United States, yet for men dancing flamenco in Spain, there is a different relation to homosexuality. It is toyed with and joked about as a term for hetero-masculine bonding, much like the behavior of American

male athletes when they pat each other's backsides. Male flamenco dancers in Spain are not uncommon and they frequently call each other *mariquita* and *maricón*, which are derogatory terms for a homosexual male (Papapavlou 2003:47). The behavior is part of a masculinity that simply does not exist in the field of flamenco dance in Atlanta. I have come to wonder if the reasons a choreographed flamenco, like the sevillanas, is not performed as much in Atlanta or the United States is because flamenco and exoticized foreign dance has been feminized. Dance as a feminized sector in the United States is the likely cause to Jennifer, who suggested that maybe Atlanta men connect flamenco to tap dancing. In looking for supporting research, I was surprised by the number of articles regarding masculinity and dance having to do with homosexual men performing different styles of dance. The academic search engine GALILEO presented me with a wealth of titles involving sexuality. I also found a lack of articles that discussed concepts of masculinity and dance regardless of sexual orientation. I find this interesting, and possibly even supportive in my ideas, because, in the United States, male homosexuality has been feminized, when in fact being a homosexual male does not make one feminine.

There has been a struggle in American culture to cast dance as a practice worthy of heterosexual men. In a program titled *Dancing: A Man's Game* broadcast in 1958, Gene Kelly tried to equate male dancing with male athleticism by blending the two and focusing on the strength involved. He attempted to distinguish between beauty of male bodily movement and effeminacy, but the two were already inextricably linked in the minds of his audience. The sevillanas are by no means overtly athletic dances, and it seems that dancing still cannot escape the stigma of femininity. The fear of effeminacy still resides in the movement of the male body. I wanted my brother to meet someone that was in my sevillanas class so I invited him to join. I told him that it was a couple's dance and would give him an opportunity to learn and also dance with that person

and talk with her, but he immediately rejected the idea because he did not want to be seen as feminine by participating in the dance. Another male who came to one class enjoyed it immensely, despite telling me he felt a little awkward in the “women’s class”. After class I accompanied him and another dancer who is from southern Spain to the local dance shop to help him purchase dance shoes. Just as we were leaving the shop, the dancer said to him that she was so pleased he came to class. She encouraged him not to worry, that dancing flamenco was very macho, and that no one would think he was... and she was at a loss for the word in English. I knew she was referring to his sexuality, and so I touched my right thumb to just below the right corner of my mouth. That gesture is well known in southern Spain to imply homosexuality; the dancer smiled at me and found the word: “homosexual!”. Her need to assure him of his masculinity by linking it to his sexuality surprised me- especially since she did not know his sexual orientation. He smiled and nodded, but as I realized when I broached this moment in conversation at a later date, he did not recall the comment by that woman and felt frustrated by it. He said that those concepts of sexuality would not have changed his desire to go to class. Nonetheless, he never returned.

## **6.2 *Lexicon of Movements***

The lack of a masculine presence was always acknowledged in the instruction of new movements during the técnica class, as the instructor would inform students of the “masculine way” of doing things. While the women would perform with flowery hands, extending and spreading their fingers like a fan along with twirls of the wrist, men would either snap or hold their fingers straight out and side by side with no spaces between. These comments in class and small bits of instruction would lead me to see how, within flamenco dance, the movement is gendered. There is a clear correlation between soft, delicate, flourishing movements being feminine, and the masculine movements being strong, forceful and rigid. Washabaugh (1998:40-48)

describes masculine movements as aggressive in posture and gesture, defiant, dominant and competitive to the point where sexuality may be implied violently to enforce gender as a code of power. By contrast, the feminine movements are submissive, following the male whether physically in dance or responsively through music (Washabaugh 1998:15). The woman dances cooperatively, privately, and suggestively. I was reminded of my own experience in Chiclana when I took the sevillanas classes. I would be working hard on my footwork and hand movements, while the men would practice how to properly frame the female, by staying mostly rigid and with extended fingers. Through my observations I see this type of gendered movement reproduced in the media, Spain, and the Atlanta flamenco community. The one exception to my observations was seeing women who would slap their chest and thighs in dance, and the only time in which this was observed was in a video of an older woman performing. She was a larger woman, seemingly in her fifties, and she would dance using small movements of her feet, but her power was revealed in those slaps. What made her able to perform such forceful movements? What was the relation of age and appearance to femininity? I would soon find out that in the Atlanta flamenco community, these unspoken rules of feminine and masculine movement would be broken.

In early 2009, the *técnica* class became a warm-up for a *coreografía* [choreography] class and we began to learn a dance to be performed in May. Throughout our rehearsals and through the performance, I began to see more masculine movement being introduced to an all-women performance. Part of the choreography being learned included a sequence of claps, thigh slaps and stomps followed by *pitos*, or soft snapping. Curiously, this particular sequence of movement proved to be difficult for the women performing, and was a constant source of stress and additional practice within the group. We were even instructed to not even try to do the *pitos* until we all had the proper arm movement- and the *pitos* ended up being cut from the actual performance.

What was it that was so difficult about this movement? For one, it was a departure from the typical feminine movements being practiced during *técnica*, and there also seemed to be an added association of discomfort with the more difficult and powerful masculine movement. While this class struggled with the masculine movement, other groups during the performance did not. One of the performances included two women dressed in what would be an appropriation of the male *traje de gitano*, including a vest and pants. This style of dress allowed for a wider variety of movements, which are considered within flamenco to be masculine. The dancers I interviewed felt comfortable performing masculine movement, but only one, Joanna, discussed enjoying the development of her masculine dance lexicon. In conversations with my instructor, I would soon realize that while she saw no reason for women to avoid masculine movements or vice versa, she tended to follow a traditional gendered dress code, and that dress code would be what would allow such movement. She explained to me that since women wore skirts, movements that could be seen beneath the skirt that would showcase the outfit were important. Since men wore pants, they had more freedom to move in ways that would be pointless to do hidden under a long skirt. She became animated as she told me about flamenco performers who had shunned acceptable gender roles, and in the example of one man, dressed as a woman (Frida Kahlo<sup>1</sup>) to perform. Lorena seemed excited by the modernity of performance shunning gender roles, but attached to the tradition and the costumes that demonstrate at least a visually gendered performance.

### **6.3 *Constraint and Freedom***

These concepts of being bound by roles and tied to stereotypes contradict what nearly all my informants have shared with me- a sense of freedom and release. This feeling of freedom

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<sup>1</sup> Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) was a Mexican painter. She frequently painted in a style influenced by indigenous Mexican cultures and European styles. Her many self-portraits referred to her own pain and sexuality.

through flamenco dance is something that the dancers have closely connected to their emotions, and they have referred to flamenco dance as an emotional outlet. The majority of the dancers have previous dance experience, performing styles as diverse as hip-hop, ballet, salsa, belly dance and tango. During the interviews, I asked the dancers why they felt connected to flamenco and what created the bond lacking for them in other dance forms that they found less fulfilling. The responses I received mentioned that in flamenco, the dancers could be creative, because this dance form is versatile; they also highlighted the importance of the freedom of movement. One of the dancers, Catalina, informed me that the importance of the freedom of movement was the freedom of emotion. Flamenco was more serious and challenging than any other dance form that she had performed, and she emphasized that while she found flamenco to be physically challenging, it was the emotional journey that presented the most challenge. However, the opportunity to embrace that emotional journey is what presented her with freedom. In a sense, freedom became tied to arduous emotional practices.

What is notable about these ties of freedom to emotion is that these women are experiencing emotion in ways that opens themselves to themselves. They are embracing, learning, and developing who they are. When Lorena told me of her relation to flamenco as something freeing, she told me that there is a struggle because the difficulty and depth is intimidating. She said you must admit who you are to flamenco, and because of that intense release of the self, it is not a half-hearted hobby. The admission of the self in flamenco creates agency, and that reach to obtain it is reminded to the group in e-mails where Lorena adds “be in charge of your own learning desire”- because through flamenco, the women have the freedom to be in charge of whom they are.

#### **6.4 Brock's Story**

One of the three males to participate in the dance class during the period of time I was researching was Brock. Brock only attended one dance class, but was willing to share about his experience and talk about his own gender roles and expectations as a man.

Brock grew up in suburban Atlanta and led a childhood not atypical from that of most boys. He played some sports, and later grew an interest in what he referred to as more alternative sports, such as BMX and skateboarding. He told me that his participation with other males in the alternative crowd is partly responsible for the ways in which he relates to masculinity. While he still ascribes to most masculine social norms, if he chooses to move outside of those norms he is not concerned of the consequences or what toll it may take on his masculinity. Brock credits that group mentality of not preoccupying oneself with what others think and also the presence of women in his life for his views and opinions. In his own words, he is a “guy’s guy who doesn’t care what other guys think”.

Brock hardly had any prior knowledge of flamenco before going to the class; in fact, he recalls his first experience with flamenco as being exciting. He still recalls watching a Robby William’s music video of a sexy woman dancing flamenco. He made a comment regarding seeing flamenco as an exotic dance due to the sexiness the women portrayed, but he was clear to distinguish that it was not the brand of “sexy” that you find on MTV or with girls in bikinis. He felt that the clothing, which he described as beautiful and incredible, created an illusion of sensuality more than sexuality displayed through the body by the talent of the dancer and her movement.

During his first class, Brock commented that he was not aware that he was joining a woman’s class. He seemed lost in terms of what to do with his physical movements, but at the

same time he appeared at ease with his surroundings, and nothing about his demeanor suggested he felt uncomfortable surrounded by women. During our interview, he even made a comment partially in jest that it was impossible and unreasonable to feel uncomfortable when surrounded by beautiful women dancing. Later, Brock clarified his feelings of comfort and security amongst the group even as the gendered minority. He told me that he could understand, based off his previous experiences with issues of masculinity, how a man could feel threatened by being surrounded by women who have power and knowledge of such a complicated dance. He said that he did not expect for flamenco dance to be so complex and difficult, and that it was something that a man could not simply “hammer” through. When I asked for more clarification, he drew a correlation to concepts of human nature and said that women are naturally more graceful than men, so it is more difficult for a man to break into the sphere of dancing even though men are capable of being strong dancers. To further his point, Brock drew a comparison saying that a man entering the dance studio is like a man trying out for a female sports league. He stated that facing a league of the opposite sex could be intimidating for many men.

Brock also talked with me about the issue of sexuality, and how men in the United States see dance as feminized and male participation is deemed as “gay”. According to Brock, when a male is a great dancer it means either he is homosexual, or he is a strong person who looks beyond the pride typically applied to masculinity. In Brock’s opinion, flamenco is a male-dominated dance, because he says that the women basically dance around the man. He did, however, say about the woman that, “frankly, she’s doing all the damn work”, and said that while the male does have the dominant position, the female has the knowledge and power because she knows what she is doing and is manipulating the dance. Brock also offered a suggestion as a way to circumvent the idea that flamenco dance is feminine by publicizing it more in ways that in-

cluded masculine figures, such as on the television show *Dancing With The Stars*.

Regarding Brock's thoughts on freedom through flamenco dance, he said that he felt that through movement he could understand dance as something that might be freeing; however, in the case of flamenco he associated a feeling of accomplishment and pride with the understanding of the difficult physical technicalities of the dance. I found his focus on the technical throughout our conversations to be intriguing, especially because he made frequent correlations between inner strength, knowledge and dancing.

## 7 PERFORMED IDENTITIES

“You don’t just bake a pie for yourself, you share it with others so they can enjoy it, try to make it and share it with others.” One thing became abundantly clear about the community’s view on flamenco- it is imperative that it be performed. There is a desire to not only reproduce flamenco dance but to do so publicly. Every informant with whom I spoke told me that they believed flamenco should be performed publicly, so that people could learn about it and keep it alive. The existence of this community and the ways in which it is run speaks to the publicness encouraged by the participants. The JaleOlé website serves as a virtual flamenco enclave and exists mainly for reasons of publicity. The website offers a mailing list which keeps people updated with community events, reaching out to share flamenco. These flamenco “outreach” events are varied to encompass anyone regardless of age or gender, and are held in public settings, such as the library.

### 7.1 *The Public Spectacle*

The spectacle of the flamenco performance provides for me a physical setting for the development of identity under a power struggle. Guy Debord (1967) relates the stage performance to a spectacle in which the performer onstage is dictating the terms and context and is empowered by her control over the gazes cast on her body, while the audience receives the meaning of the performance in a passive and disempowered way. This situation and dynamic between the empowered performers and disempowered audience is the typical structure of the American theater. The only thing of importance is the visuals and dialogue happening on stage, not off-stage. In fact any extraordinary visual or speaking in the audience while watching a performance would be

considered rude and going against the social norm. The American audience is not participatory, but rather contemplative. The dynamics of a traditional flamenco audience and performance juxtaposed with those of a traditional American audience and performance also seem to create a tension for the performers. This begs the question of whose gaze is more dominant and inscribes meaning on the other. Is it the gaze of the dancer upon the audience or is it the audience's gaze upon the dancer? Who controls the story? The audience certainly has a gaze, although it is typically disempowered during a performance, but the performer also has a gaze, regardless of whether or not the audience is visible from the performance platform. As the empowered performer, whoever is onstage can convey meaning to an individual in the audience. I recall the experience of my friend Samuel. Samuel moved to the United States from Portugal, and was going through a period of difficult readjustment and nostalgia for his old life, so I purchased him tickets to see a popular Portuguese singer who was performing in Atlanta. He was only one person in an audience cloaked with darkness, but he said that, during the performance, the singer's eyes and voice penetrated his being and completely overpowered him to the point where he cried openly. While there were multiple factors in the way that Samuel experienced that performance, he undoubtedly felt the meaning inscribed by the performer, becoming completely receptive to her message.

The typical mainstream American protocol for a dance performance is that every individual movement of the performance is planned. The performers know what they are going to convey to the audience, and the audience expects to passively receive the meaning that is given to them. The audience usually responds by quietly observing the performance and offering appreciation for the event only after it has finished- be it due to their pleasure or out of politeness. In flamenco performances in Spain, the flamenco audience does not hesitate to show an opinion

throughout the show. The performers usually do not have a choreographed and meticulously planned event, they move with the flow of the surroundings. The flamenco audience does not hesitate to cheer or offer encouragement to the performers while they are on stage. There is a constant dialogue between the performer and the audience, who play off each other. Even other performers themselves move on and off stage again when moved to participate by *tocando las palmas* [clapping hands rhythmically] or shouting a well-timed “¡óle!” Just as the flamenco dance itself has become transnational, the audience dynamics have as well.

Within flamenco in Atlanta, there is not one particular type of audience, although the habits of the traditional American audience are blatantly present, along with the Spanish flamenco audience habits. Where this becomes a particular interest to me is when the flamenco performers are not all Americans, and they are not all Spaniards either. Instead, they are a diverse group of individuals with different histories, and therefore respond differently to the audience during a performance. The audience response is a relevant part of the flamenco performance, and is encouraged by Lorena. She reminds the performers to shout calls of encouragement from the side of the stage, including during rehearsals. The contradictions of performance practices collide in rehearsal when the instructor encourages the *jaleos* [shouts] to the point where they become planned- shout here, not there. This effect is reminiscent of an interpretive frame of quotation presented by Richard Bauman (1975:293), in which the words spoken by the performer are to be interpreted as words of someone other than the performer. When the flamenco dancers are calling out *jaleos* from the wings, they are still performing; however, their words are representative of an audience, not dancers. The improvised *jaleos* are non-forced communications between the performers, but when they become planned, the performers then begin to play the part of the audience as actors on a stage. How do the audience and this planned audience effect within the per-

formance affect the dancer's sense of self?

The ways in which the flamenco performance is consumed is not necessarily limited to an audience purchasing tickets and re-contextualizing the show in ways that fit into their own lives. The planning that goes behind a show and the consumption that is associated with flamenco through the shows is one of the ways in which the dancers are able to express and further develop their identities as flamencas.

## ***7.2 Commodification of the Performance***

To demonstrate the commodification of the flamenco performance, what follows is an analysis of a performance I saw at the Rialto Theater in the fall of 2008. Before going to the show, I considered wearing a shawl or something flamenco inspired, but I decided it would not be appropriate (per my American audience role) and chose not to. Upon arriving I could visually identify members of the American audience and distinguish them from members of the Spanish audience. The Americans had dressed in their everyday clothes, whereas a large percentage of the Spanish audience dressed in flamenco inspired clothes and in some cases in the complete *traje de gitano*. For women, the *traje de gitana* is either a dress or skirt with full ruffles at the bottom. The skirts are specifically designed to create flourishes while dancing, and most have secret pockets inside the ruffles where women can hide accessories. Women wearing the *traje de gitana* often accessorize with matching fans, large plastic earrings, a shawl and possibly a large decorative hair comb. For men, the *traje de gitano* is a long-sleeved white shirt and a pair of tight-fitting, high-waisted brown pants held up by suspenders. The only accessory worn is a large brimmed hat with a flat top. This audience participation in dress is not particular to Atlanta, as this same use of costume occurs in Spain during the late spring at the *ferias*, most notably the *Feria de Sevilla*. It is not a symbol of national belonging, so much as a display of solidarity and

participation. When I went to the Feria de Chiclana in 2005<sup>iv</sup>, I spent over a week preparing my traje de gitana. I was nervous I would be one of few people dressed up, but to my surprise nearly every person at the feria was wearing the traje de gitano.

A very particular image has been created to be representative of flamenco dancers and performances. That “look” has turned into commodified objects for public consumption. This image of the flamenco dancer and performance has been carefully crafted through an international reshaping process to appeal to the senses of an international and imperialist consumer, as the trajes de gitano are representative of particular gender roles and antiquated dress of Andalusia. However, it sells, and while flamenco paraphernalia are not immediately available in most dance stores beyond the dancing skirt, most businesses try to accommodate customers by placing a specialized order to obtain more specific items such as shawls, shrugs and accessories to complete the look. Through JaleOlé, dancers and others interested in flamenco can find a list of websites where they are able to purchase flamenco goods, and also there is a classified section where used items are sold. Through these venues of consumption, connections are made within the community, as was made apparent through an article that shared how a small group of flamenco dancers from Mexico was found through a purchase of shoes.

Before performance time, performers find new ways to procure desired items, such as shoes. There are several members of the community who regularly travel to Spain, and it is not difficult to find someone who has travel plans. The opportunity to obtain materials from Spain, be it music, clothing or accessories, is something that the dancers are eager to take advantage of. Business cards begin to be passed out as a way to offer professional tailoring services for the dancers to create a costume for the performance. Flamenco goods seemed to be coming out of the woodwork.

Within the space of the theater and performance comes a new wealth of flamenco commodities. The dance itself becomes commodified. The May 2009 performance was recorded by professional videographers and photographers, and both participants of the dance as well as audience members were encouraged to purchase the photos or DVDs as souvenirs. The commodities that participate in and surround the performance become part of the larger commodification of flamenco performance, such as ticket sales, show times, stage lights, and even the practices and rehearsals. While there is no doubt that the members of the flamenco community want to share their passion for the dance with others, there is a need for monetary stability and gain. Money is a driving force in the availability of flamenco in Atlanta, and Lorena would remind her students every month that she needed to know who was going to commit to class, because if there were not enough participants, there would not be enough money to justify renting the space. Just like Cerena reflected that Lorena could not be honest with dancers about technique for fear of losing clients (and therefore money), the performance needs to play into stereotypes that will encourage consumption (Washabaugh 1998:12). It is courtesy of tourism and popular display that helped develop flamenco as a public commodity to be readily consumed (Malefyt 1998:56).

### ***7.3 Re-negotiation of Performance Space***

In any society, dance is a cultural practice that is constantly evolving and renegotiating contested meanings in order to create new ones. These renegotiations may occur over many settings, one example being that of space and practice. In Atlanta, there are several *tapas* bars and restaurants that hire flamenco dancers to perform on certain nights of the week. The restaurant managers are paying the dancers for a particular form of entertainment, with the personal agenda of promoting the restaurant and encouraging consumption. In this context, the dancers have the

ability to re-negotiate and evolve the space of dance, which they do. The dancers are not merely displays of beauty and exoticism, made to generate appeal for the restaurant. They use the space as a training ground for new dancers in a discrete manner. During the performance, the women take a break and encourage “anyone and everyone” who would like to try dancing flamenco to take the stage. While it is an open invitation for all clients at the restaurant, the only people who ever get up to dance are the flamenco students, who are mixed with the other clients of the restaurant. The style of music played makes a shift from flamenco to sevillanas, of which only the performers know the rules. The audience is generally unaware that the volunteers are flamenco dance students. This renegotiation of space creates a new space of training for the students to dance in public without the added pressure of expectation from the audience.

#### **7.4 *Joanna’s Story***

Joanna, a young American woman of Ashkenazi descent, has been performing dances considered exotic to the United States for several years. She has been interested in music and public performance all her life; however, her interest in “exotic” dances began to develop during her adolescence. She realized that she could use dance performance to manipulate attention from the opposite sex, and after seeing an ad for belly dancing in a magazine, she decided to begin classes as a way to enhance her sexuality. Joanna said that she did not immediately change her perspectives on dance, but after practicing belly dance for an extended period of time, she came to see dance as something that could be satisfying for the self, rather than to give pleasure and entertainment for others.

Through belly dancing, Joanna became introduced to flamenco by an instructor who recommended that Joanna try to learn it, based on similarities to movement in belly dancing and Joanna’s interest. Joanna found that her belly dancing skills helped her learn flamenco, and her

newly acquired flamenco skills helped her further develop her belly dancing skills. In time she was able to move into the advanced dance levels of the flamenco class, and eventually started to teach belly dancing on the side. I wanted to know how Joanna felt about flamenco dance performance as compared to her experience with belly dance, and she surprised me by being the only woman I interviewed who acknowledged flamenco as controlled performance. The reason Joanna began teaching belly dancing was because she wanted to give women a space to understand that dance performance did not have to be about an audience, and that it could be a liberating experience. She told me that flamenco did not offer the same liberation in the dance, because instead of feeling the dance through free movements, there was always a control to be had in the movements and posture.

Even though Joanna does not find flamenco to be as freeing as belly dancing, she does say that when she performs, she feels empowered. She dances with grace and also with aggression. She says that is aggression and passion that empower her, because, for an American woman, it is not common for powerful emotions and movements to be made public through dance. She has a sense of ownership when she dances that is in her words, “relevant to flamenco”, but acknowledges a vulnerability to the audience when she performs. As a performer, she says she will always be judged, and her body will always be on display, but the risk involved with vulnerability is “the beauty of it”.

Joanna recalled her first time performing flamenco. She was onstage at the annual flamenco show held in Atlanta with three other girls, all from different countries. She was nervous being on display, but her fear quickly dissipated as she began to dance and heard other dancers lined up at the back of the stage doing jaleos. The support offered by her fellow performers gave her the platform to own her dance and become empowered in the knowledge that she could either suc-

cumb to the audience's judging gaze, or internalize the support from the community to be a strong dancer. After discovering this ownership, Joanna recognized that her performance practices translated into her daily activities. Physically, her posture improved and helped her stand taller. Emotionally, she began to internalize that posture and strong core to become more assertive, and socially she began to embrace her masculine side. Joanna related the strength and control of her public flamenco performance to masculinity, and the sensuality and intuition of her private belly dancing performance to femininity. The ways in which she internalized gender performance fit into already defined social relegations of men to the public sphere and women to the private sphere. However, in order to understand how her experiences relate to a dance scene that includes belly dance, a separate investigation is necessary.

## CONCLUSIONS

The future of flamenco in Atlanta is certain, particularly as an empowered, feminine space. The shared difference of the women provides the basis for a tight social network through shared histories of flamenco, rather than competition. Competition would likely discourage new participants in the fledgling flamenco scene, and so cooperation becomes an important and integral thread in Atlanta's dance community. Through cooperation, flamenco can be reproduced in meaningful ways.

When traveling flamenco shows come to Atlanta, they give platforms for the dancers to bring their own flamenco brand to the table, diversifying the tradition. Since Lorena and other founders of the website JaleOlé are involved with the main stage flamenco performances exhibited in the city of Atlanta, they arrange for their students to dance as an "opening act" for many of the performers. Each performer brings a multicultural and individual twist to the dance and music, and finds new ways to recreate themselves through flamenco. The dancers have limited access to flamenco related products. Any flamenco related material brought to light is thrilling, and dancers are eager to relate to it and also relate flamenco to their own lives. One dancer uses movement learned through flamenco dance to ride horses and go white-water rafting. This re-contextualization occurring within the community is reinventing selves and flamenco.

While focus on what is authentic flamenco still exists, it exists only in the dimly lit background of the stage of the dancers' lives. All the women become authentic in the sense that they embody the passion of flamenco, they feel the compás and they perform to the role of a flamenco dancer. They have experienced many different forms of dance, but since flamenco speaks to their souls, they realize that they have become flamencas- and there is never talk of a fake flamenca.

They feel they embody the spirit (*duende*), which is really just embracing themselves through dance, and they embody the look, mainly for the sake of performance and fun.

Embodying the look is reminiscent of little girls playing dress-up in their mother's clothing. Those little girls can never be the exact same person as the mother, but the embodiment of the mother's identity is used as a means to create the little girls' own identity as a woman in the context of the social sphere. Dancers appropriate the look of a flamenco dancer much in the same way, and they also have toyed with understanding themselves with masculine components as well, due to curiosity and the lack of a male presence. That lack creates a space for exploration, and a welcome space for another gender in performance. There is a freedom involved, being able to function in a fully female space, addressing masculinity and taking the reins of one's own performance.

The feeling of empowerment that is fostered in the space of learning and practice is translated to the stage. The women create a spectacle in which they are empowered and able to confidently receive meaning from an active audience, while still sharing their meaning and stories through dance. The dancers use their display of femininity, masculinity, and the exotic Other to introduce their passion and performance to others, hoping to encourage its spread. Simultaneously, they manipulate a performance crafted to raise funds necessary to maintain the public performance and practice of flamenco.

The thread which connects the different aspects of identity negotiation in the flamenco community is exoticism. Exoticized ideas of authenticity and performance shape the ways the dancers construct their identities. The ways in which identity is negotiated are complex, and developed through a multitude of processes that shape the self. Concepts of exoticism, authenticity and tradition are juxtaposed with modernity. This allows for the dancers to break roles and ste-

reotypes. Dancers have ideas of moving beyond traditional roles, yet the decision to continue performance in a traditional way creates a mixture of conflicting identities, where they result in becoming coexisting partners in dance. The differences have been embraced, ultimately placing the Atlanta flamenco community in the space of an empowering female sphere where there is no “in” or “out” group, simply differences in performance practices that are embraced in the global flow of dance.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A Glossary

*Aficionado*- a fan

*Baile*- dance

*Café cantante*- a type of bar where flamenco first became professionalized

*Caló*- language spoken by the gitanos of southern Spain

*Cantaor/Cantaora/Cantaores*- flamenco singer

*Cante*- song

*Cante jondo*- meaning deep song, considered by many to be authentic flamenco song

*Compás*- rhythm of a palo

*Coplas*- couplets

*Coreografía*- choreography

*Duende*- a type of magical essence of art, implies emotion and authenticity

*Feria*- a fair

*Flamenca/Flamenco*- a person who participates in flamenco dance

*Flamenco fusión*- new flamenco (music)

*Flamenco puro*- pure flamenco

*Gitano/Gitana*- gypsy, a person of Romani descent

*Gitano por cuatro costaos*- a person of Romani descent by maternal and paternal grandparents

*Guitarrista*- guitarist

*Jaleos*- shouts

*Juerga*- late night flamenco socials

*Lazo*- a tie

*Maricón, mariquita*- derogatory term for a male homosexual

*Óle*- a shout of approval commonly heard during flamenco performances

*Palos*- specific styles of flamenco song

*Pasos*- steps

*Peña*- a private club where flamenco is performed

*Pitos*- snaps

*Sevillanas*- a flamenco dance characterized by four choreographed couplets

*Señoritos*- middle class young men (flamenco aficionados) whose main concern is leisure

*Tablao*- a type of commercialized flamenco bar, popular amongst tourists

*Técnica*- technique

*Tientos*- a flamenco palo that follows beats of four

*Tocando las palmas*- clapping hands rhythmically as part of performance

*Traje de gitana*- traditional dress worn by women dancing flamenco in public

*Traje de gitano*- traditional suit worn by men dancing flamenco in public

*Zapateo*- footwork

## Appendix B Interview Guide

### Interview Guide

*The following questions will be my base questions in the interviews which depending upon the participant's response can elicit further spontaneous questions into the constructions of their identities.*

How long have you been practicing flamenco?

What is your ethnic heritage?

Where did you grow up?

Why did you decide to begin dancing flamenco?

How did you find out about this particular school and why did you choose it?

Is this something you would feel comfortable performing in front of others?

What changes have you noticed in your life since dancing flamenco, if any?

What do you know about the origins of flamenco?

How often do you practice flamenco?

Which aspects of flamenco do you perform, **and why**? Do you strictly dance or do you play guitar or sing as well?

What is the extent of it in your life?

What kind of relationship do you have with your flamenco instructor and other dancers?

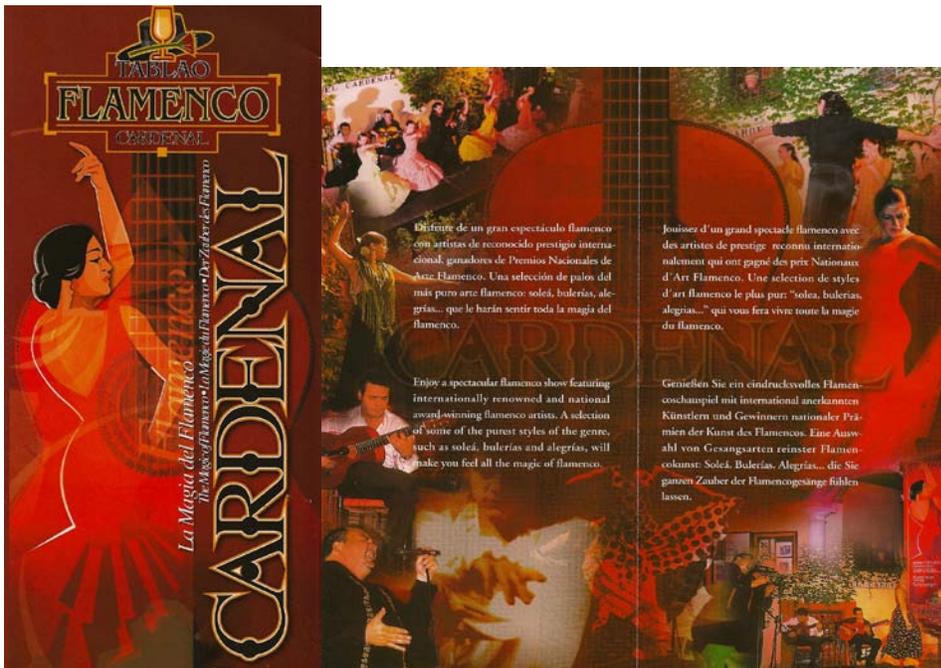
Do you think that there are specific gender roles in flamenco?

If someone you just met at the park asked you who you are, how would you *begin* to answer that question in five sentences or less?

How do you define who you are?



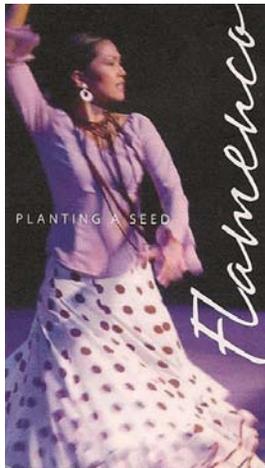
Advertisement for flamenco show at Cuerno Restaurant in Atlanta.



ii

Flyer advertising a

flamenco tablao, given to me in Spain at an information booth.



iii Lorena's business card.



iv Author's photograph in La Voz de Cádiz newspaper, taken at the Feria de Chiclana in 2005.