

Federico García Lorca

Deep Song

**(Importancia histórica y artística del primitivo canto Andaluz
llamado 'Cante Jondo' 1922)**

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(A lecture given in Granada, 19th February 1922)

You are gathered together tonight, in the salon of the Centro Artístico, to hear my humble, yet sincere words, and I wish them to be luminous and profound, so as to convince you of the marvellous artistic truth contained in primitive Andalusian song, that which is called deep song, *cante jondo*.

The group of enthusiastic friends and intellectuals who support the idea of this festival are sounding no less than an alarm. Gentlemen, the musical soul of the race is in grave danger! The artistic riches of a whole people are on their way to oblivion! It seems that each day which passes another leaf falls from the wondrous tree of Andalusian lyric, old men carry to the grave the priceless treasures of past generations, and an avalanche, gross and stupid, of cheap music obscures the delightful popular culture of all Spain.

It is a noble work of patriotism that we are trying to realize; a work of salvation, a work of friendship and of love.

You have all heard of *cante jondo*, and indeed have a more or less precise idea of it...yet it is almost certain that for those of you who are not initiated into its historical and artistic transcendence it evokes a certain immorality, the atmosphere of taverns, rowdiness, the ethos of the café dance floor, a ridiculous sobbing, something typically Spanish, in fact – yet we must suppress this feeling for the sake of Andalusia, our millennial spirit and our individual hearts.

It cannot be that the most moving and profound songs of our mysterious soul should be maligned as mean and debauched; it cannot be that they wish to fasten that thread which links us to the impenetrable Orient to the neck of the drunkard's guitar; it cannot be that they seek to stain the most diamantine of our songs with the clouded wine of the professional scoundrel.

The time has come then for the voices of Spanish musicians, poets and artists to merge, driven by an instinct for preservation, to mark and exalt the limpid beauties and suggestiveness of such singing.

To confuse the patriotic and idealistic idea of this festival with the lamentable vision of the *cantaor* with his tapping stick and caricatured wailing about cemeteries indicates a total lack of comprehension, and a total misunderstanding of what is intended. On reading the notice of this festival every man of sense, uninformed on the matter, must ask: 'What then is this *cante jondo*?'

Before proceeding we should draw an essential distinction between *cante jondo* and flamenco singing, an essential distinction based on antiquity, structure and spirit.

The name *cante jondo* is given to a category of Andalusian song, of which the perfect and genuine prototype is the Gipsy *siguiriya*, from which derive other songs preserved by the people, such as *polos*, *martinetes*, *carceleras*, and *soleares*. Those called *malagueñas*, *granadinas*, *rondeñas*, *peteneras* etc., should be considered as merely offshoots of those mentioned, since they differ from them in their architecture as much as their rhythm. They are those grouped as flamenco song.

The great master Manuel de Falla, true glory of Spain, and soul of this festival, believes that the *caña* and the *playera*, which have all but vanished, show in their primitive style the same mode of composition as the *siguiriya* and its brethren, and that not so long ago they were simple variants of such songs. Relatively recent texts suggest to him that during the first third of the nineteenth century, they occupied the place we now grant to the *siguiriya*. Estébanez Calderón, in his lovely *Escenas andaluzas*, notes that the *cana* is the primitive stem of these songs, which preserve their Arab and Moorish affiliation, and observes, with his characteristic perspicacity, that the word *caña* is little different from *gannia*, which is Arabic for 'song'.

The essential difference between *cante jondo* and flamenco is that the origin of the former must be sought in the primitive musical systems of India, that is, in the first manifestations of song, while the latter, a consequence of the first, cannot be said to acquire its definitive form until the eighteenth century.

The former is song imbued with the mysterious colour of primordial ages; the latter is relatively modern, its emotional interest eclipsed by that of the other. Spiritual colour versus local colour: that is the profound difference.

That is to say that, *cante jondo*, like the primitive musical systems of India, is merely a stammer, an emission, higher or lower in pitch, of the voice, a marvelous buccal undulation, that breaks out of the echoing prison of our tempered scale, will not suffer the cold rigid pentagram of our modern music, and makes the hermetic flowers of semitones open in a thousand petals.

Flamenco singing proceeds not by undulations but by leaps; its rhythm is as measured as that of our music, and was born centuries after Guido of Arezzo gave names to the notes.

Cante jondo is like the trilling of birds, the cry of the cockerel, and the natural music of woods and streams.

It is, then, the rarest specimen of primitive song, the oldest in Europe, bearing in its notes the naked, shiver of emotion of the first oriental races.

Manuel de Falla, who has studied the matter deeply, and on whose work I base my own, affirms that the Gypsy *siguiriya* is the prototype of deep song and roundly declares that it is the only genre on our continent that preserves in all its purity, as much structurally as stylistically, the primary qualities of the primitive songs of the oriental peoples.

Before I knew the master's opinion, the Gypsy *siguiriya* had always evoked for me (an incurable lyricist) the endless road, one without crossroads, which ends at the pulsating fountain of the girl-child, poetry, the road where the first bird died and the first arrow rusted.

The Gypsy *siguiriya* begins with a dreadful cry, a cry that divides the landscape into two perfect hemispheres. It is the cry of dead generations, a poignant elegy for vanished centuries, the evocation of love filled with pathos beneath other winds and other moons.

Then the melodic phrase begins to unfold the mystery of tone, and withdraw the precious stone of a sob, a sonorous tear borne on the river of the voice. No Andalusian, hearing that cry, can resist a quiver of emotion, no regional song can compare in poetic grandeur, and it is seldom, very seldom, that the human spirit has created works of such nature.

But do not believe that the *siguiriya* and its variants are simply songs transplanted from east to west. No. 'It is more a matter of grafting (says Manuel de Falla), or rather, of coincident sources, which were not revealed at one specific moment, but represent the accumulated effect of the historical and secular events that unfolded in our peninsula', and thus it is that the songs peculiar to Andalusia, though essentially akin to those of peoples geographically remote from us, possess their own intimate and unmistakable national character.

The historical events which Manuel de Falla refers to, of a magnitude to disproportionately influence our songs, are threefold: the Spanish Church's adoption of liturgical chant, the Saracen invasion, and the arrival in Spain of numerous bands of Gypsies. They are the mysterious migrant folk who gave *cante jondo* its definitive form.

That is shown by the qualifying term 'Gipsy' which the *siguiriya* retains, and by the extraordinary number of Gypsy words in the texts of the songs.

That is not to say, of course, that this singing is purely Gypsy, since Gypsies exist throughout Europe and elsewhere in our peninsula, while these songs are only nurtured in Andalusia.

It is a purely Andalusian singing, the seeds of which existed in this region before the Gypsies arrived.

The essential similarities which Manuel de Falla notes between *cante jondo* and certain extant songs of India are: 'Enharmonics, as in intermediate modulation; a restricted melodic line, rarely exceeding the compass of a sixth, and the reiterative well-nigh obsessive use of a single note, a process proper to certain forms of incantation, including recitations which might be termed prehistoric, and have led many to suppose that chanting is the earliest form of language.'

In this manner *cante jondo*, especially the *siguiriya* creates the impression of sung prose, destroying all sense of rhythmic metre, though in reality its literary texts are assonant tercets and quatrains.

According to Manuel de Falla: 'Though Gipsy melody is rich in ornamental turns, they are used – as in those songs of India – only at certain moments, as outbursts or fits of expressiveness suggested by the emotional power of the text, and we must consider them more as amplified vocal inflexions than as ornamental turns, though that is ultimately their form when transposed into the geometric intervals of the tempered scale.'

One can definitely affirm that in deep song, as in those songs from the heart of Asia, the musical scale is a direct consequence of what we might call the oral scale.

Many authors have been led to suppose that word and song were once the same thing, and Louis Lucas in his *Acoustique Nouvelle*, published in Paris in 1840, when discussing the excellence of the enharmonic genre, says: 'It makes its first appearance naturally, as an imitation of birdsong, of animal calls, and of the endless range of sounds made by material things.'

Hugo Riemann, in his *Catechism of Musical Aesthetics*, affirms that the song of birds approaches true music and cannot be treated separately from human song since both are the expressions of a single sensibility.

The great master Felipe Pedrell, one of the first Spaniards to treat questions of folklore scientifically, writes, in his magnificent *Cancionero popular español*: 'Musical orientalism survives in various popular songs and is deeply rooted in our nation through the influence of ancient Byzantine civilization on the ritual used in the Spanish Church, from the conversion of our country to Christianity until the eleventh century when the Roman liturgy can be said to have been fully introduced.'

Manuel de Falla adds to this statement of his old master, specifying the elements of Byzantine liturgical chant revealed in the *siguiriya*, which are: the tonal modes of primitive systems (not to be confused with those known as Greek modes), the enharmony inherent in those modes, and the lack of

metric rhythm in the melodic line. ‘These same properties characterize certain Andalusian songs which appeared long after the Spanish Church’s adoption of Byzantine liturgical music, songs which have a close affinity with the music which in Morocco, Algiers and Tunis is still called in a manner that stirs the hearts of all true Granadans, “the music of the Moors of Granada.”’

Returning to our analysis of the *siguiriya*, Manuel de Falla, with solid musical knowledge and exquisite intuition, finds in this singing ‘specific forms and characteristics distinct from its relationship to sacred chant and the music of the Moors of Granada.’ That is, having investigated their surprising melodies he has found an extraordinary agglutinative Gypsy element. He accepts the historical thesis that attributes an Indic origin to the Gypsies; a thesis that agrees wonderfully with the results of his fascinating research.

According to this thesis, about the year 1400, the Gypsy race fled from India, driven out by the hundred thousand horsemen of the mighty Tamerlane.

Twenty years later, their tribes appeared in various European cities, entering Spain with the Saracen armies that periodically arrived on our coast from Egypt and Arabia.

This race, arriving in our own Andalusia, united ancient indigenous elements to what they themselves had brought, and gave definitive form to what we call *cante jondo*.

So it is to them that we owe the creation of these songs, the core of our spirit: to them we owe the construction of those lyrical channels through which all the pain and ritual gestures of the race freely flow.

And it is these songs, gentlemen, that for more than fifty years we have tried to confine to foul-smelling taverns and brothels. That dreadful, doubting era of the Spanish lyric-drama, the *zarzuela*, the era of Antonio Griolo, and of historical painting, is to blame. While the Russians were burning with love of folklore, a unique source, as Robert Schumann said, of all true and characteristic art, while in France the gilded wave of Impression quivered, in Spain, a country almost unique in its tradition of popular beauty, the guitar and *cante jondo* were things for the lower classes.

As time has gone on this prejudice has become so great that we must now cry out in defence of these pure and truthful songs.

The spiritual young people of Spain understand the situation thus.

Cante jondo has been cultivated since time immemorial, and every illustrious traveller who has ventured to journey over our surprising and varied landscapes, has been affected by this profound psalmody which has

traversed and defined our complex and unique Andalusia, from the peaks of the Sierra Nevada to the thirsty olive-groves of Córdoba, from the Sierra de Cazorla to the joyful mouth of the Guadalquivir.

Between the time when Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos called attention to the lovely incoherent *danza prima* of Asturias and the days of the formidable Menéndez Pelayo, great progress was made in the understanding of folklore. Isolated artists, minor poets studied the matter from various points of view until Spain began the essential and patriotic task of collecting the poems and songs. Evidence of this are the *Songbooks* generously subsidized by respective provincial governments, that of *Burgos* by Federico Olmeda, *Salamanca* by Dámaso Ledesma, and *Asturia* by Eduardo Martínez Torner.

Yet we most readily recognize the extraordinary importance of *cante jondo* in its well-nigh decisive influence on the formation of the modern Russian school and by the high esteem in which it was held by Claude Debussy, that lyrical Argonaut and discoverer of a new musical world.

In 1847 Mikhail Glinka visited Granada. He had been in Berlin studying composition with Siegfried Dehn and was aware of Weber's patriotic struggle to combat the pernicious musical influence of the Italian composers. He was deeply impressed with the songs of the Russian immensities and dreamed of a natural music, a national music that would convey the sense of her vast landscape.

This visit to our city by the father and founder of the Slavic-Orientalist school is of great interest. He befriended a celebrated guitarist of the day, Francisco Rodríguez Murciano; and listened to him playing variations on and accompaniments to our songs; and amidst the eternal rhythms of our city's waters the marvellous idea of creating a school was born, and the bold concept of utilizing, for the first time, the whole-tone scale.

On his return home, he publicized his ideas and explained the peculiarities of our mode of singing, which he studied and employed in his works.

Music altered its course; the composer had at last found its true source.

His friends and disciples turned to folk songs and sought the structure for their creations not only in Russia but in southern Spain.

Proofs of this are his *Souvenir d'une nuit d'été á Madrid* and parts of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherezade* and *Capriccio Espagnol*, which you all know.

Conceive of the sorrowful modulations and grave orientalism of our *cante* bearing their influence from Granada to Moscow, the mysterious bells of the Kremlin echoing the melancholy of our Vela.

In the Spanish Pavilion, at the great Paris Exhibition of 1900, a group of Gypsies sang *cante jondo* in all its purity. They attracted the attention of the whole city, but especially of one young musician who was engaged in the struggle all young artists must undertake, the struggle for the new, for the unforeseen, the search through the seas of thought for un-tarnished emotion.

Day after day he listened to the Andalusian *cantaores*, and he whose soul lay wide open to the four winds of the spirit was impregnated with the ancient Orient by our melodies. He was Claude Debussy.

Afterwards he would rise to the summit of European music as the begetter of new theories.

From many of his works, indeed, there emerge the subtlest evocations of Spain and above all of Granada, which he considered the true paradise it is.

Claude Debussy, a composer of scents and iridescences, reaches his highest creative pitch in the tone-poem *Iberia* a truly brilliant work through which Andalusian perfumes and essences float as if in dream.

But he reveals the precise extent of the influence of *cante jondo* on his work, in the marvellous prelude entitled *La Puerta del Vino* and in the vague, tender *Soirée en Grenade*, where are found, in my judgment, all the emotional themes of the Granadan night, the blue remoteness of the Vega, the sierra saluting the tremulous Mediterranean, the enormous teeth of cloud sunk in the distance, the admirable rubato of the city and the hallucinatory play of its subterranean waters.

And the most remarkable thing about this is that Debussy, though he studied our *cante* profoundly, never saw Granada.

It is a stupendous example, then, of artistic divination, of brilliant intuition, which I mention in praise of the great composer as an honour to our people. It reminds me of that great mystic Swedenborg's ability to view the burning of Stockholm from London, and of the profound prophecies of the saints of antiquity.

In Spain, *cante jondo* has had an undeniable influence on all our best composers, in the 'great Spanish line' from Albéniz to Falla, via Granados. Felipe Pedrell had already used popular songs in his magnificent opera *La Celestina* (never performed in Spain, to our shame) and pointed the direction, but the masterstroke was left to Isaac Albéniz, who employed the lyric depth of Andalusian song in his work. Years later Manuel de Falla fills his music with such motifs pure and lovely in their far off, spectral form.

The latest generation of Spanish composers: Adolfo Salazar, Roberto Gerhard, Federico Mompou and our own Angel Barrios, enthusiastic organizers of this festival, have set their glittering sights on the pure revivifying fount of deep song and the delightful songs of Granada, which might well be termed Castilian-Andalusian.

Note the transcendence of *cante jondo*, gentlemen, and how right our people are in describing it as such. It is deep, truly deep, more so than any well, more so than all the seas that bathe the world, deeper than the present spirit that creates it or the voice that sings it, because it is well nigh infinite. It arises from remote peoples, traversing the graveyard of the years, and the fronds of parched winds. It comes from the first cry and the first kiss.

Not only the quintessential melodies of *cante jondo*, but the words too are marvellous.

All we poets who truly concern ourselves, to a greater or lesser degree, with pruning and nurturing the over-luxuriant lyric tree that the Romantics and post-Romantics left us, are astounded by these poems.

The most profound gradations of Grief and Pain, in the service of the purest and most exact expression, throb in the tercets and quatrains of the *siguiriya* and its derivatives.

There is nothing, absolutely nothing, in all Spain to equal the *siguiriya*, in style, atmosphere, or emotional truth.

The metaphors that fill our Andalusian songbook are almost always within its orbit; the spiritual limbs of its verses are never disproportioned and are able to grip our hearts in a definitive way.

It is strange and marvellous how the anonymous poet of the people can capture the rare complexity of our highest moments of human feeling, in three or four lines. There are songs where the lyric tremor reaches a point attained by few poets:

*A halo rings the moon,
my love has died.*

There is a much deeper mystery in these two lines than in all the plays of Maeterlinck, simple genuine mystery, clear and sound, free of gloomy forests and rudderless boats, it is the eternal vivid enigma of death.

*A halo rings the moon,
my love has died.*

Whether from the heart of the sierra, the orange groves of Seville, or the harmonious Mediterranean shore, these songs have a common source: Love and Death....but Love and Death as seen by the Sibyl, that deeply oriental character, the true sphinx of Andalusia.

In the depths of all these poems a question lurks, but a terrible question that has no answer. Our people cross their arms in prayer, gaze at the stars, and await in vain a sign of salvation. It is a gesture filled with pathos, but a true one. The poem either poses a profound and unanswerable emotional question, or resolves it in Death, the question of questions.

Most of our region's poetry (except for much of what is created in Seville) possesses the foregoing characteristics. We are a sorrowful and ecstatic race.

As Turgenev viewed his countrymen; as Russian blood and marrow turned to sphinxes, so I view many of our regional lyrics.

O sphinx of the Andalusias!

*You can knock there on my door now,
I shall never rise to open,
you shall listen to my weeping.*

Those lines hide behind an impenetrable veil, and rest awaiting some passing Oedipus to wake and decipher them and return them to silence.

One of the most notable characteristics of the words of *cante jondo* is the almost total absence of half-tones.

In the songs of Asturias, as in those of Castile, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia, there is a certain balance of sentiment, and a meditative lyricism that lends itself to the expression of simple states of mind and naïve feeling, which is almost entirely absent from Andalusian song. We Andalusians seldom notice half-tones. An Andalusian either cries to the stars or kisses the red dust of the roadway. Half tones do not exist for him. He slumbers through them. And when on rare occasions he uses them, he says:

*What does it matter to me
if a bird in the 'poplar grove'
goes flying from tree to tree.*

And even in this song, in its feeling if not its architecture, we note a marked Asturian affiliation. And thus, the most striking characteristic of *cante jondo* is its emotiveness.

That is why, though many of the songs of our peninsula have the ability to evoke the landscapes where they are sung, *cante jondo* sings like a sightless nightingale, singing blindly, since both its passionate notes and ancient melodies are best suited to the night...the azure night of our land.

Thus the capacity of many Spanish popular songs for plastic evocation deprives them of the depth and intimacy of *cante jondo*.

Here is one song (among thousands) of Asturian musical lyricism that is a prime example of such evocation.

*Ay me, I've lost my way
climbing this sad mountain,
Ay me, I've lost my way.
For God's sake let me pen
my lost sheep in your cabin;*

*Among the swirling clouds,
Ay me, I've lost my way!
Let me pass the night
in your hut, I say,
I have lost my way
in the misty light,
Ay me, I've lost my way!*

It is such a marvellous evocation of the mountain, with pine trees swaying in the wind, so exact and real the feel of the track climbing towards the peaks where the snow lies sleeping, so true the vision of that mist ascending from the abyss to cloud the rocks with infinite shades of grey, that it makes one forget the 'honest shepherd' who asks like a child for shelter of the poem's unknown shepherd girl. 'It leads one to forget the very essence of the poem.' This song's melody, with its monotonous grey-green rhythm of misted landscapes, adds extraordinarily to the plasticity of evocation.

By contrast, *cante jondo* always sings at night. It knows nothing of morning or evening, mountain or plain. It knows only the night, a deep night studded with stars. The rest is forgotten.

It is a song without landscape, concentrated in itself and terrible in the shadows, shooting its golden arrows that pierce the heart. It is like a formidable archer of azure whose quiver is never emptied.

The question everyone asks is: who created these poems, what anonymous poet threw them onto the crude popular stage? A question to which there is no answer.

Alfred Jeanroy, in his book *Les Origines de la poésie lyrique en France au moyen age*, writes that: ‘popular art is not simply confined to impersonal, imprecise, and unconscious composition; it also comprises ‘individual’ composition adopted by the people and adapted to suit their own sensibility. Jeanroy is partially correct, but it needs little sensibility to detect the creative source of such work, however savage the colour with which it is painted. The people sing the songs of Melchor de Palau, Salvador Rueda, Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, Manuel Machado and others, but how vast a difference between the verses of such poets and those which the people create! It is the gulf between an artificial rose and a real one!

The poets who compose popular songs cloud the clear lymph of the living heart; and how noticeable, in their poems, is the unpleasant studied rhythm of the grammarian! We should take from the people nothing but the ultimate essence and a few colouristic trills, and should never seek close imitation of their ineffable modulations, because we will only blur them. Simply because we are ‘educated’.

True poems of *cante jondo* are attributable to no one at all but float on the wind like golden thistledown and each generation clothes them in its own distinctive colour, in releasing them to the future.

True poems of *cante jondo* are in essence tied to a weathervane of the ideal that shows the direction of the winds of Time.

They are born of themselves, one more tree in the landscape; one more stream in the poplar grove.

Woman, the heart of the world and immortal possessor of ‘the rose, the lyre, and the science of harmony’ inhabits the endless horizons of these poems. The woman of deep song is called Suffering...

It is admirable the way feeling begins to take shape in these lyrical constructs and almost solidifies as a material thing. This is the case with Suffering.

In these poems, Suffering takes on flesh, acquires human form, and reveals a definite outline. She is the dark-haired woman who longs to catch birds in the nets of the breeze.

All the poems of *cante jondo* are full of a magnificent pantheism, consulting with earth, air, moon and seas, with things as simple as rosemary, violets; some bird or other. All external objects take on precise personality, and even play an active part in the lyrical action:

*Amidst the sea
a rock was standing
my girl sat down
to tell her suffering.*

*Only to Earth
will I tell my ruin,
in all the world
there's none to trust in.*

*I ask the rosemary
ask each morning
if love has cure,
for, oh, I'm dying.*

The Andalusian, with a profound spiritual feeling, surrenders the most intimate treasures to Nature completely confident of being heard.

One feature of *cante jondo* is the manner in which with admirable poetic reality the wind materializes in many of the songs.

The wind emerges, personified, in moments of deepest feeling, appearing like a giant preoccupied with bringing down the stars and scattering nebulae, but in no other folksong have I heard him utter words of consolation as in ours:

*I climbed the wall;
the wind cried to me:
'Why these sighs,
when there's no remedy?'*

*It wept, the breeze,
to see wounds so deep,
deep, deep in my heart.*

*Enamoured of air
the air of woman,
since woman is air
in air I lingered.*

*I'm jealous of air
on your cheek, its breath,
if the breeze were a man
he'd be marked for death.*

*I've no fear of rowing,
if I want to I will.
I fear only the breeze
from your bay blowing still.*

There is a delightful individuality about these poems, poems entangled with the immobile propeller of the compass-rose.

Another theme peculiar to these songs and repeated endlessly in most of them is that of weeping...

In the Gipsy *siguriya*, the perfect poem of tears, the melody weeps as do the words. There are lost bells in the depths, and windows open to the dawn.

*At night in the yard
down my tears fall,
knowing I love you,
and you not at all.*

*Weep, weep my eyes,
weep if you've reason,
no shame for a man
to cry for a woman.*

*If you see me cry
leave me my handkerchief,
my pain is so great
it soothes me to weep.*

And this final one, Gipsy and Andalusian:

*If my heart possessed
windows, you could
look deep there, and see
me weep drops of blood.*

These poems have an unmistakably popular feel, and in my judgment are the ones best suited to the melodic pathos of *cante jondo*.

Their melancholy is so irresistible and their emotive force so overwhelming, that they produce in all true Andalusians an inner weeping, a weeping that cleanses the spirit transporting it to the burning lemon-grove of Love.

Nothing compares to the delicacy and tenderness of these songs, and I insist once more on the infamy we commit if we relegate them to oblivion or prostitute them with base sensual intent, or through gross caricature. But that occurs only in the city, since, fortunately for Virgin Poetry and for the poets, there are still sailors who sing on the waves, women who rock their children to sleep in the shade of the vines, and reclusive shepherds treading the mountain paths; and, adding fuel to the flames which are not yet extinguished, the passionate winds of poetry will rekindle the flames and the women beneath the vine's shade will continue to sing, and so will the shepherds on their rough paths, and sailors to the fertile rhythms of the sea.

Just as in the *siguiriya* and its offspring the oldest elements of the Orient are found, so in many of the poems employed by *cante jondo* their affinity with the most ancient eastern songs is noticeable.

When our songs achieve extremes of Suffering and Love, they are sisters in expression to the magnificent verses of the Arabic and Persian poets.

It is the simple truth that in the air of Cordoba and Granada the gestures and lineaments of remote Arabia still linger, as clearly as the evocation of lost cities rises from the blurred palimpsest of the Albaicín.

The same themes, of sacrifice, undying Love, and Wine, expressed with the same spirit, appear in the works of the mysterious Asiatic poets.

The Arabic poet Siraj-al-Warak says:

*The dove that does pine
and so prevents sleep,
has a breast like mine,
where living fires leap.*

Ibn Sa 'īd, another Arabic poet, writes, on the death of his mistress, the same elegy an Andalusian countryman might have written:

*Visit the tomb of your lover,
my friends say, find rest.
I reply: 'Has she another
tomb but in my breast?'*

But where the affinity is evident beyond question of coincidence is in the sublime *Amorous Ghazals* of Hafiz, the national poet of Persia, who sang the wine, beautiful women, mysterious stones, and infinite blue nights of Shiraz.

Since remote times art has employed the telegraphy and mirrors of the stars.

Hafiz, in his *Ghazals*, reveals various lyric obsessions, among them an exquisite obsession with hair.

*Even if she could not
love me, I would trade
the whole orb of Earth
for one thread of her hair.*

And later he writes:

*My heart since infancy
is lost in your dark tresses
till death, so sweet a bond
cannot break or be undone.*

The same obsession with hair is found in many of the songs of our own unique *cante jondo* filled with allusions to tresses preserved in reliquaries, the lock of hair on the brow that provokes a whole tragedy.

*If I chance to die, I charge you
bind my hands with tresses,
bind them with your long dark hair.*

There is nothing more profoundly poetic than those three lines with their sorrowful aristocratic eroticism.

When Hafiz treats the theme of lament he employs the same expressions as our popular poet, with the same creative spectrum and, at heart, the same sentiments:

*I weep your loss forever,
but what use is longing
if the breeze cannot carry,
my sighs where you may hear?*

It is the same with:

*I sigh into the air,
yet there's none, poor me,
who'll pluck them from the breeze!*

Hafiz declares:

*Now you'll not hear my voice's echo,
now my heart is plunged in sorrow,
and jets of burning blood
invade my eyes.*

And our poet:

*Whenever I look at the place
where we spoke when we could,
these poor eyes, in my face,
start weeping tears of blood.*

Or this terrifying song, a *siguiriya*:

*That yearning I must
forget now for good,
now my heart weeps
tears of blood.*

In his twenty-seventh *ghazal* the poet of Shiraz sings:

*In the end my bones
will turn to dust in the grave,
but my soul will never
forget so fierce a love.*

Which is the exact same resolution proclaimed by countless songs of the *cante jondo*. That Love is far stronger than death.

It was therefore with great emotion that I read these Asiatic poems translated into Spanish by Don Gaspar María de Nava published in Paris in 1838, since they immediately evoked our own 'deepest' poetry.

Then, there is a strong affinity between our creators of *siguiriyas* and the oriental poets in their praise of wine. Both groups sing the clear grape, the easeful wine that recalls girls' lips; a joyful wine, far from that fearful wine of Baudelaire's. I will cite one song (I think it is a *martinete*), a rarity in that it is sung by a character who gives his Christian name and surname (an isolated example among our singers) and in whom I see personified all the true poets of Andalusia:

*They call me Curro Pulla
by land and by sea,
in the arch of the tavern
I am the key.*

In Curro Pulla's songs it is praise of wine which is heard loudest. Like the marvellous Omar Khayyam he knows that:

*It will end, my love,
it will end, my weeping,
it will end, my torment,
all will have an ending.*

Wreathing his brow with a crown of transient roses and gazing into a vase filled with nectar, he watches a star fall into the depths...And like the magnificent lyricist of Nishapur he perceives that life is a game of chess.

Cante jondo, then, Gentlemen is, as much for its melody as its words, one of the most powerful creations of popular art in the world and to your hands fall the tasks of preserving and dignifying it to the honour of Andalusia and its people.

Before I bring this poor badly-constructed lecture to an end I want to remember the marvellous singers, the *cantaores* thanks to whom *cante jondo* has survived to this day.

The figure of the *cantaor* is delineated by two great paths; the arc of the sky outside him and the zigzag track within that snakes through his heart.

The *cantaor*, in singing, celebrates a solemn rite, stirs ancient essences from sleep and flings them furling in his voice into the wind...he has a profoundly religious sense of song.

The race allows its suffering and its true history to escape through their singing. They are simply *mediums*, lyrical summits of our people's experience.

Gazing, as they sing, at a brilliant and hallucinatory point quivering on the horizon, they are both strange and simple.

The women sing *soleares*, a melancholy and human genre within relatively easy reach of the heart; by contrast the men have preferred to cultivate the marvellous Gipsy *siguiriya*...and almost all of them have been martyrs to an irresistible passion for deep song. The *siguiriya* is like a cautery that burns the heart, throat, and lips of those who sing it. One must prepare against the fire and sing at the right moment.

I wish to recall Romerillo, the spiritual Loco Mateo (Mateo Lasera), Antonia 'la de San Roque', Anita 'la de Ronda', Dolores la Parrala and Juan Brea who all sang *soleares* beyond compare, evoking the virgin Suffering, in the lemon-groves of Málaga or beneath the night skies of maritime Cadiz.

I wish to recall also the masters of the *siguiriya*, Curro Pabla 'el Curro', Manuel Molina, Manuel Torre (Manuel de Soto Loreto), and the

marvellous Silverio Franconetti, who sang the song of songs better than anyone else and whose cry would split apart the dead mercury of the mirrors.

They were profound interpreters of the people's soul who shattered their own souls in tempests of feeling. Almost all died of heart seizure, that is to say they exploded like giant cicadas after filling our atmosphere with the rhythm of the ideal...

Ladies and Gentlemen: all of you who in the course of your life have been moved by a far-off song heard on the road, all whose ripened hearts have been pecked by the white dove of love, all the lovers of a tradition strung with futures, whether you study books or plough the earth, I respectfully beg you not to allow the precious living jewels of our race, our immense thousand-year-old treasure studding the spiritual surface of Andalusia, to die, and I beg you to meditate, beneath this Granadan night, on the transcendent patriotism of a project which a small handful of Spanish artists are about to present.