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Albéniz, Malats, *Iberia* and the ultimate *españolismo*

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Abstract

Iberia, a collection of twelve piano pieces arranged in four books of three pieces each, is by far Isaac Albéniz's most famous composition. Responding to a letter from Albéniz to the pianist Joaquín Malats, in which the composer confessed that with the third book of *Iberia* he carried the "españolismo [Spanishness] to its ultimate extreme," I will argue that there are subtle stylistic differences between books one and two on the one hand, and books three and four on the other. As Paul Mast has observed, Albéniz's use of the whole-tone scale decreased in books three and four, "after their 'French' aspect had undoubtedly been pointed out to the composer" (Mast, 1974). I will not only unveil Albéniz's specific use of the whole-tone scale, but also point out an alternative compositional strategy that fulfills the same function in books three and four. Moreover, this renewed "Spanishness" entailed not only an emphasis on folkloristic elements on the foreground level, but also a more sophisticated use of the Phrygian (flamenco) mode in Albéniz's recapitulations on the dominant. In other words, Albéniz's conception of "Spanishness" entailed the structural translation of one of the "quintessential" features of flamenco music.

Keywords: Isaac Albéniz, *Iberia*, Joaquín Malats, whole-tone scale, españolismo, Spanishness, flamenco

Resumen

Iberia, una colección de doce piezas para piano organizadas en cuatro libros de tres piezas cada uno, es, sin lugar a duda, la composición más famosa de Isaac Albéniz. Basándome en una carta del compositor a Joaquín Malats, en la cual Albéniz confesaba que con el tercer libro de *Iberia* había llevado "el españolismo y la dificultad técnica al último extremo", argumentaré que hay diferencias estilísticas sutiles entre los libros uno y dos por un lado, y tres y cuatro por el otro. Tal y como observó Paul Mast, Albéniz utilizó la escala de tonos enteros con menor frecuencia en los libros tres y cuatro, "después de que su aspecto francés le fuese manifestado al compositor" (Mast, 1974). Además de desvelar el uso específico que Albéniz dio a la escala de tonos enteros, también pondré de manifiesto una estrategia compositiva alternativa que desempeñó la misma función en los libros tres y cuatro de la colección. El renovado españolismo supuso no solamente un énfasis en los elementos folclóricos en el nivel superficial schenkeriano, sino también un sofisticado uso del "modo flamenco" en las reexposiciones de Albéniz en la dominante. Dicho de otro modo, la concepción albeniziana del españolismo implicó la traducción estructural de una de las características esenciales de la música flamenca.

Palabras clave: Isaac Albéniz, *Iberia*, Joaquín Malats, escala de tonos enteros, españolismo, flamenco

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In 1906, Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909) was living in Paris and writing the second book of *Iberia*. *Iberia* is a monumental collection of twelve piano pieces arranged in four books of three pieces each: *Evocation, El Puerto, Fête-Dieu a Séville*; ² *Rondeña, Almería, Triana; El Albaicín, El Polo, Lavapiés; Málaga, Jerez, and Eritaña*. The books were independently published by *Edition Mutuelle* and premiered by Blanche Selva between 1906 and 1909 in France. However, before Selva premiered the complete book in Saint Jean de Luz (September 1907), Joaquín Malats performed some of the numbers of the second book in Madrid and Barcelona.³ In December 1906, Albéniz wrote to Malats.

Since I was lucky enough to hear your performance of Triana I can tell you that I only write for you; I have just finished under the direct influence of your marvellous interpretation, the third book of *Iberia*: the title of the numbers is as follows: El Albaicín, El Polo y Lavapiés; I think that in these numbers I carried *españolismo* (spanishness) and technical difficulty to the ultimate extreme, and I feel compelled to confirm that you are at fault for it...⁴ [emphasis added]

It does not seem difficult to corroborate how Albéniz could “carry the technical difficulty to the ultimate extreme.” Some of the pieces of the first two books are already incredibly demanding for the pianist (especially *El Corpus en Sevilla* and *Triana*),⁵ but in the last two books Albéniz increases the technical demands a step further, and *Lavapiés* could easily be the most difficult piece to perform of the entire collection. Apparently, this was the piece that made Albéniz wonder about the playability of *Iberia*, to the point that he almost destroyed the manuscripts.⁶ We see in this letter how Malats could have been at least partly responsible for the level of technical sophistication required to play the third and fourth books of *Iberia*.

However, a slightly more difficult question to answer is how exactly Albéniz raises the level of *españolismo*. Of course, being Albéniz known as “a champion of late-Romantic and early-modern

² Henceforth, I will refer to this piece as *El Corpus en Sevilla*, the best-known title of this piece.

³ Jacinto Torres, *Catálogo sistemático descriptivo de las obras musicales de Isaac Albéniz* (Madrid: Instituto de Bibliografía Musical, 2001), 412.

⁴ “... desde que tuve la dicha de oír tu interpretación de Triana puedo decirte que no escribo más que para ti; acabo de terminar bajo tu estricta influencia de intérprete maravilloso el tercer cuaderno de *Iberia*: el título de sus números es como sigue: El Albaicín, El Polo y Lavapiés; creo que en estos números he llevado el españolismo y la dificultad técnica al último extremo y me apresuro a confirmar que tú tienes la culpa de ello...” Letter to Joaquín Malats, December 1906. Reprinted in Enrique Franco, *Albéniz y su tiempo* (Spain: Fundación Isaac Albéniz, 1990), 131. Translated by Walter Aaron Clark in his *Isaac Albéniz: Portrait of a Romantic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 250.

⁵ Apparently, after Blanche Selva complained about the difficulty of *Triana*, Albeniz responded that he wrote it “to see your little white hands flying back and forth.” (*Pour voir tes petites mains blanches biceloter*). As quoted in Paul Mast, *Style and Structure in Iberia by Isaac Albéniz* (PhD diss., Eastman School of Music, 1974), 39.

⁶ This has been mentioned by many authors including: Walter Aaron Clark (Clark, 224), Linton Powell, *A History of Spanish Piano Music* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1980), 80; and Mast, *Style and Structure*, 39 and 310.

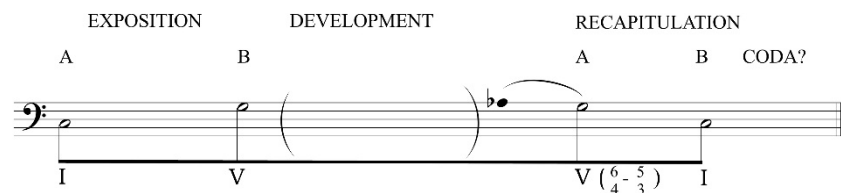
españolismo,”⁷ one would immediately tend to associate this renewed Spanishness with a greater emphasis on Spanish folklore-elements in books three and four of the collection. Although a detailed analysis of the exact manifestations of these elements would be worth pursuing, the focus of this paper will be on classical-romantic conventions, *avant-garde* compositional techniques, and tonal/formal processes and their interaction with certain folkloristic elements. Given Albéniz’s confession to Malats, I will explore the differences between those aspects in books one and two on the one hand, and books three and four on the other. Therefore, I believe that Albéniz’s words are a symptom of a slight stylistic change between these books.

Albéniz’s confession to Malats coincides with one of Paul Mast’s observations about books three and four of the collection. Mast noticed a decreased use of the whole-tone scale in books three and four, “after their ‘French’ aspect had undoubtedly been pointed out to the composer.”⁸ My observations about the use of the whole-tone scale coincide with Mast’s, and this paper will reveal an alternative compositional strategy to this scale in books three and four. As mentioned above, these books also exhibit a renewed emphasis on Spanish folk-elements, and, consequently, a more extensive use of modality. I will explore some of the structural consequences of this renewed use of modality in the last section of this paper.

In general, these “new” features need to be viewed against the general tonal and formal processes of *Iberia*, and against the specific and highly personal use of the whole-tone scale in the collection. Hence, the following two sections of the text are devoted to unveil the general Iberian framework in which we can insert the “new” stylistic features of books three and four.

Iberia and sonata form

To talk about formal and tonal processes in *Iberia* means to talk about sonata form, given that nine out of the twelve pieces of the collection are in this form.⁹ From a comparison of all, two sonata-form models (major and minor respectively) emerge:¹⁰



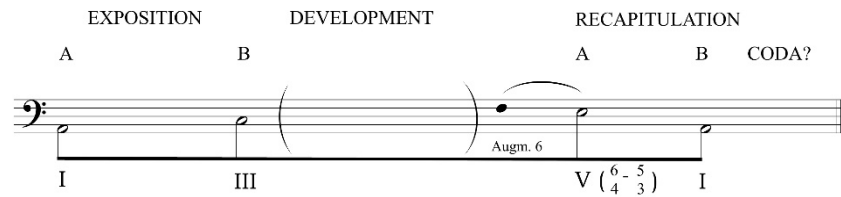
Example 1a: *Iberia*, sonata form model major.

⁷ Walter Aaron Clark, “Variety within Logic: Classicism in the Works of Isaac Albéniz,” *Diagonal: An Ibero-American Music Review* 1 (2015), 106.

⁸ Mast, *Style and Structure*, 369.

⁹ The only exceptions are *El Puerto* and *El Corpus en Sevilla*, from the first book, and *El Albaicín*, from the third.

¹⁰ The only exception to the major model is *Almería*, whose second theme is on the subdominant.



Example 1b: *Iberia*, sonata form model minor.

Albéniz's first themes normally display the characteristic melodic and rhythmic elements of the folkloristic source they evoke; they provide the essential rhythmic drive of the piece and are very often vivid and developmental. Second themes, on the contrary, are always extremely lyrical and tight-knit. That is, *Iberia*'s second themes are framed in regular phrases, with clear and regular phrase subdivisions, and the entire themes are often fully repeated (maybe in a different register or with slight variations). At the same time, they usually alternate tonic and dominant harmonies with an underlying tonic pedal point.¹¹ Moreover, second themes typically involve periodicity on some level of the phrase. By periodicity I mean symmetrical and complementary relationships between musical statements.

Development sections naturally grow out of the second themes and seldom include materials from the first theme. In some cases, it might be possible to consider the development as internal to the second theme. In *Iberia*, there are only three tonal progressions in the development sections of these sonata forms: descending fifths, ascending or descending thirds, and stepwise motion — and these can all be combined. The goal of the development section is the dominant-function chord that initiates the recapitulation.¹²

In *Iberia*, the V_4^6 at the beginning of the recapitulation resolves to V_3^5 throughout the course of the first theme's recapitulation, ultimately leading to the final tonic, either a few bars after the arrival of the first theme (*Almería*, *Lavapiés*, *Rondeña*) or at the beginning of the second theme (*Evocation*, *Triana*, *El Polo*, *Málaga*, *Jerez*, and *Eritaña*). The arrival of the dominant-function chord that triggers the recapitulation often constitutes the climax of the whole piece. This dominant arrival releases the tension generated during the development, and it is, therefore, very well prepared and expected. But what strategies does Albéniz employ to prepare the recapitulation and its initial dominant-function chord? Towards the end of the development there is usually a process of acceleration and gaining energy. This is often achieved by fragmentation and sequential repetition of short phrases often in ascending step-wise motion. The process leads to an augmented chord, which finally resolves to the dominant-function chord that initiates the recapitulation. This is illustrated on example 2.

¹¹ Although many first themes are underlined by a tonic pedal point as well.

¹² As pointed out by Mast and Clark. See Mast, *Style and Structure*, 192, and Clark, "Isaac Albéniz: Portrait of a Romantic," 227.

Iberia, impressionism, and the whole tone scale

Paul Mast has defined Albéniz’s language in *Iberia* as “a mixture of Spanish style traits and French impressionism in a context based on nineteenth-century functional harmony.” However, both Mast, Clark, and previously Henri Collet have pointed out Albéniz’s partial disaffection for Debussy and French Impressionism,¹³ and his closer relationship to the Schola Cantorum (where he was a piano teacher for three years) and their more “conservative” aesthetics.¹⁴ Mast also points out that “the label French impressionism is a false generalization [...] Most of the impressionistic traits of *Iberia*—modality, parallel motion, secundal, quartal and added-tone sonorities and bichords— have their origins in Andalusian folk music.” He concludes: “Albéniz was a romantic nationalist rather than an impressionist.”¹⁵

This does not deny that some of Albéniz’s stylistic traits in *Iberia* and other late compositions are directly indebted to his Parisian associations. Particularly, the use of the whole-tone scale can be directly related to Albéniz’s acquaintance with Paul Dukas, who advised Albéniz on the orchestration of *Merlin* and *Catalonia*, written a few years before *Iberia*. As Clark points out: “The whole-tone scales and augmented chords Albéniz employs also suggest the assimilation of a French harmonic idiom alien to his earlier compositions, and further reinforce the impression that Duka’s famous tone poem served as a model for *Catalonia*.”¹⁶

Other “impressionistic traits” like added-tone sonorities, modality, etc... might have their origin in Andalusian folk music, as Mast points out; but some of these traits are essentially new to Albéniz’s musical language and can be directly connected with his association with Parisian *avant-garde* circles, which provided the necessary aesthetic framework for these innovations. In respect to the added-tone sonorities, it is worth mentioning Albéniz’s preference for clashing semitones and “all-intervals” chords.¹⁷ As Mast reminds us, Albéniz’s preferred way of forming such semitones is the addition of augmented fourths to a major triad and its inversion (a minor second to a minor triad). This preference for “all-intervals”-chords would explain Albéniz’s choice for a particular augmented

¹³ “Albéniz himself strenuously rejected the notion” (of French Impressionism). Clark, “Isaac Albéniz: Portrait of a Romantic,” 227. Henri Collet also made some remarks about Albéniz’s dislike of Debussy and Pelleas “*il n’aime jamais Debussy. Pelleas lui paraissait désagréable.*” Henri Collet, *Albeniz et Granados* (Paris: Le Bon Plaisir, 1948).

¹⁴ This is, nonetheless, a complex subject. Laura Sanz García has also pointed out that Albéniz advised Manuel de Falla not to enter in the Schola Cantorum, and that, after Fauré was appointed director of the Paris Conservatory, Albéniz subscribed the “reformative airs of the Conservatory.” At the same time, Clark also pointed out that Albéniz’s *Iberia* (12 *nouvelles impressions*) might have been inspired by Debussy’s *Images*. Laura Sanz García, “Isaac Albéniz y la difusión de la cultura española en París, a través del género epistolar,” *Anuario Musical* 65 (2010): 111-132. Clark, “Isaac Albéniz: Portrait of a Romantic,” 227.

¹⁵ Mast, *Style and Structure*, 367.

¹⁶ Clark, “Variety within Logic,” 197.

¹⁷ Mast, *Style and Structure*, 180.

chord that Paul Mast has labeled as the “Iberian chord.”¹⁸ This chord results from a combination of both French and German augmented chords: it involves both the root of the French augmented and the seventh of the German augmented, creating a clashing semitone between the two. An example of the “Iberian chord” is provided in the penultimate chord of example 4.

As Paul Mast has already observed, Albéniz does not use the whole-tone scale as a mere coloristic device. Rather, the scale is always used *functionally*; it fulfills both formal and harmonic functions, and its use often has important structural implications. The whole-tone scale typically unfolds augmented chords—usually the French-augmented—which ultimately lead to a dominant. And, of course, as the reader might remember from a previous discussion, the most important dominant-function chord of the piece is the one that announces the beginning of the recapitulation. Hence, the use of the whole-tone scale and its implied augmented chord very often indicate an important point of articulation in the form. The following example, taken from the development section of *Rondeña* (first piece of the second book), reflects some of the developmental processes here discussed, both the general developmental features presented above and the specific use of the whole-tone scale.

Theme 1 model (8)

Theme 1 sequence (8)

Example 1: *Rondeña*, end of the development section.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 158.

Musical score for measures 177-180. The score is in G major and 6/8 time. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes in both hands. A bracket above the staff spans measures 177-180.

Theme 1 sequence (4)

Musical score for measures 181-184. The score is in G major and 6/8 time. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes in both hands. A bracket above the staff spans measures 181-184. The dynamic marking *p* is present. The letter 'F:' is written below the bass staff.

Theme 1 sequence (4)

Musical score for measures 185-188. The score is in G major and 6/8 time. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes in both hands. A bracket above the staff spans measures 185-188. The letter 'G:' is written below the bass staff.

Theme 1 and 2 combined (13)

Musical score for measures 189-192. The score is in G major and 6/8 time. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes in both hands. A bracket above the staff spans measures 189-192. The dynamic marking *A:* is present.

Fragmentation

Musical score for measures 193-196. The score is in G major and 6/8 time. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes in both hands. A bracket above the staff spans measures 193-196. The dynamic marking *fff* is present.

whole-tone

Recapitulation

Musical score for measures 197-200. The score is in G major and 6/8 time. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes in both hands. A bracket above the staff spans measures 197-200. The dynamic marking *fff* is present. The letter 'D: V(4)' is written below the bass staff.

Example 2 (continued): Rondeña, end of the development section.

The process of gaining energy and increasing tension towards the beginning of the recapitulation is here achieved through the ascending (whole-tone) sequential progression (Db, Eb, F, G, A), the dynamic contrast, and the fragmentation process. The latter is clearly visible not only in the internal construction of the Db Mixolydian phrase (165-172), but also, and more importantly, in the phrase structure itself (Db 8 measures; Eb 8; F 4; G 4). The overall acceleration process is partially resolved in an initial climax (m.189), where both first and second themes are combined in a thirteen-measure sentential phrase, whose “continuation”¹⁹ dissolves into the whole-tone passage that leads to the $V\left(\frac{6}{4}\right)$ chord that begins the recapitulation, and which constitutes the climax of the entire piece.

In the same way, the development section of *Evocation* creates process of gaining energy through ascending sequential repetition of a four-bar phrase derived from the second theme. After a clear fragmentation process, the section culminates in a whole-tone passage supported by a fortissimo French-augmented chord, and a fragmented version of the second theme’s main motive in the “tenor.” The augmented chord(s) become in the last moment an Iberian augmented chord that leads directly to the recapitulation on the dominant.

Theme 2 model (4)

The image shows two musical staves for piano. The top staff is labeled 'Theme 2 model (4)' and starts at measure 75. It features a complex texture with multiple voices in both hands, including chords and melodic lines. The bottom staff is labeled 'Theme 2 sequence (4)' and starts at measure 79. It shows a similar texture but with a different harmonic progression. Both staves are in a key with three flats (B-flat major/C minor) and a 3/4 time signature. The dynamic marking 'pp' is present at the beginning of the first staff, and 'Db:' is at the beginning of the second staff.

Example 3: *Evocation*, end of the development section.

¹⁹ “Continuation” here refers to William Caplin’s usage of the term. For a detailed description of its meaning see William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 35-49 and 41-42.

The musical score is divided into four systems, each with a piano and a bass clef staff. The first system (measures 83-90) is labeled 'Fragmentation Theme 2 sequence (2)' and 'French Augmented (2)'. It features a *cresc.* dynamic in the piano staff and a *ff* dynamic in the bass staff. The second system (measures 87-90) continues the 'French Augmented' theme with a *fff* dynamic. The third system (measures 91-95) is labeled 'whole tone' and 'Digression', with a *ff* dynamic in the piano staff and a *pp* dynamic in the bass staff. The fourth system (measures 96-100) is labeled 'Ib. Aug Recapitulation' and features a *p* dynamic. The score concludes with a $V \left(\frac{6}{4} \right)$ chord.

Example 3 (continued): *Evocation*, end of the development section.

The following scheme summarizes the harmonic process from mm. 85-103.

The harmonic reduction is presented in a piano-style notation with two staves. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. Above the staff, measure numbers 85, 92, 99, 102, and 103 are marked. A dashed line labeled '8va' spans from measure 85 to 92, and a line labeled 'loco' spans from measure 99 to 102. The word 'Recapitulation' is written above measure 103. The chord symbols below the staff are: Abm, Fr², VI $\frac{6}{3}$, DDm7, lb, and V ($\frac{6}{4}$).

Example 4: *Evocation*, end of the development section, harmonic reduction.

Both *El Puerto* and *El Corpus* (both in the first book) employ similar strategies to reach the dominant chord that begins the recapitulation. In all these pieces the end of the development section leads to an extended whole-tone passage supported by an augmented chord that will resolve to the dominant of the recapitulation. Therefore, the first four pieces of the collection (*Evocation*, *El Puerto*, *El Corpus* and *Rondeña*) use the whole-tone scale in a very similar way. Even though this procedure does not exhaust the possibilities of the scale, alternative usages are by far not as prominent and important as the one here presented, and still have very similar functional implications, unfolding an augmented chord and leading to a dominant.

Other compositional strategies: the “omnibus” progression

As mentioned in the introduction, the new levels of *españolismo* that Albéniz achieved with the third book of *Iberia* (starting with *El Albaicín*) coincide with an interesting change observed by Paul Mast. Even though Mast was probably not aware of the above quoted letter from Albéniz to Joaquín Malats, he noticed a decreased use of the whole-tone scale from the third book onwards, compensated with a more extensive use of the folk-inspired elements and a more persistent use of modality. Indeed, from *El Albaicín* onwards, I could not find similar extensive whole-tone passages comparable to the ones described above. Mast speculates that the decreased use of the whole-tone scale could be attributed to Albéniz’s awareness of its French origins, as mentioned above. However, more recent research has shown that the scale can already be found in Schubert (basically as a means to link major thirds),²⁰ as well as in early nineteenth-century Russian music.²¹ Some of these authors even claim that French impressionistic composers imported it from Russia as an exotic device. Regardless of the national origins, the absence of extended whole-tone passages in books three and four of *Iberia* posits a new compositional challenge, since Albéniz will have to find other effective

²⁰ Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 101.

²¹ Mary S. Woodside, “Glinka’s Use of the Whole-Tone Scale” *19th-Century Music* 14 (1990): 67-74. Gerald Abraham “The Whole-Tone Scale in Russian Music” *The Musical Times* 74 (1933): 602-604.

alternatives that could generate the same amount of tension to be resolved with the arrival of the dominant that begins the recapitulation.

The alternative compositional strategy that he found can be seen at the end of the development section of *El Polo*. The following harmonic reduction summarizes the passage from mm. 227-235:

The harmonic reduction shows a sequence of chords in a key with three flats (B-flat major/C minor). Measure 227 features an augmented chord (F-A-C-E). Measure 229 has a chord with notes F, A, and C. Measure 231 has a chord with notes F, A, and C. Measure 234 has a chord with notes F, A, and C. Measure 235, labeled 'Recapitulation', has a chord with notes F, A, and C. Voice-leading lines connect the notes between measures, showing chromatic movement in some voices.

Example 5: *El Polo*, end of the development section, harmonic reduction.

Albéniz emphasizes the arrival of the recapitulation with the parallel voice-leading between the last two chords, which I tried to represent literally in my harmonic reduction. This “careless” voice-leading is often encountered in similar passages throughout the entire collection. At the same time, the augmented chord at m. 227 is prolonged throughout a long span of time with a “simple” voice exchange. This constitutes a segment of what some scholars have called an “omnibus” progression. In an “omnibus” progression two voices move chromatically in contrary motion while the two others are held. The voices in chromatic contrary motion are usually the outer voices. In *Iberia*, however, the chromatic contrary motion occurs between the bass and an inner voice. The following example reproduces what Victor Fell Yellin called a “classical omnibus progression.”²²

The notation shows a sequence of five measures. Measure 1 has a chord with notes F, A, and C. Measure 2 has a chord with notes F, A, and C. Measure 3 has a chord with notes F, A, and C. Measure 4 has a chord with notes F, A, and C. Measure 5 has a chord with notes F, A, and C. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes and 2, 4, 6, 7, 5 below the notes.

Example 6: “Classical omnibus progression.”

According to Yellin, examples of this progression can already be found in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* (1787). The “classical omnibus” prolongs a dominant seventh chord and interchanges its

²² Victor Fell Yellin, *The Omnibus Idea* (Warren: Harmonie Park Press, 1998). The quoted example can be found in Robert Wason, *Viennese Harmonic Theory from Albrechtsberger to Schenker and Schoenberg*. Revision of PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1985.

root and $\frac{6}{5}$ positions; just as Albéniz does with his augmented chord in example 5, which exactly corresponds with stages 2 and 4 of the “classical omnibus.” Finally, Yellin also noticed that the fourth chord of the progression could start a new “omnibus” by moving the chromatic descending line to a different voice, and that this process could be repeated *ad infinitum*. Therefore, one could easily harmonize an entire chromatic scale, resulting in what Robert Wason called an “extended omnibus”.²³ In general, omnibus progressions are very common in the romantic repertoire, since they can both easily serve to prolong a single chord, or be used to modulate to the most remote tonalities thanks to the enharmonic re-spelling of the dominant-seventh and augmented chords. These two possibilities coincide with Schenkerian and Schoenbergian interpretations of the progression. According to Yellin, the former viewed it as a prolongation of a dominant seventh chord and the latter as “functionless, not expressing an unmistakable tonality or requiring definite continuation.”²⁴ Although at first sight, the “omnibus” is not a progression that one tends to associate with Albéniz’s musical language, its use in Albéniz’s works can be dated back (at least) to *Merlin*, an ambitious opera composed between 1898 and 1902, and which is often unfairly disdained for its strong Wagnerian flavor. The following example is taken from the first act of *Merlin*.



Example 7: Omnibus progression in *Merlin*. Mer/32/3.

Albéniz used the same technique at the end of the development section of *Malaga* (mm. 122-134), the first piece of the last book of *Iberia*.

Recapitulation

Example 8: *Malaga*, end of the development section, harmonic reduction.

²³ Wason, *Viennese Harmonic Theory*, 18.

²⁴ Arnold Schoenberg, *Structural Functions of Harmony* (London: Ernest Benn, 1969), as quoted in Yellin, *Omnibus Idea*, 14.

The omnibus progression and Albéniz's disregard for conventional inversions could also be responsible for this passage at the very end of the development section of *Eritaña* (mm. 77-81), as well as for the uncommon German-augmented - tonic progression. Compare my reduction of the passage (example 9) with a hypothetical "extended omnibus" (example 10).

Recapitulation

C: Gr I Gr E \flat : Gr V ($\begin{smallmatrix} 6 \\ 4 \end{smallmatrix}$)

Example 9: *Eritaña*, end of the development section, omnibus progression.

Example 10: Extended omnibus.

So far, we have seen some of Albéniz's strategies to accumulate tension at the end of the development sections and emphasize the arrival of the dominant that initiates the recapitulation. These strategies include conventional developmental features mentioned earlier, and either extended whole-tone passages (books one and two) or the "omnibus progression" (books three and four). The whole-tone scale and the omnibus progression are used as alternative strategies to prolong the augmented chord that resolves to the dominant that initiates the recapitulation. As Robert Wason pointed out, similar progressions to Yellin's "classical omnibus" were already shown by Abbé Vogler as harmonizations of a chromatic scale (a chromatic version of the well-known rule of the octave) and explained as a succession of diminished seventh chords in his *Kuhrpfälzische Tonschule* (1778).²⁵ Mast explained the decreased use of the whole-tone scale in books three and four because of its "Frenchness." The irony here is that a "French" technique was substituted by a "German" one, precisely in some of the pieces where Albéniz "carried the *españolismo* to its ultimate extreme."

²⁵ Wason, *Viennese Harmonic Theory*, 18.

The Prinner, a galant schema, typically functions as a “riposte,” an elegant “conventional” answer to a question posed by a previous musical phrase. In fact, Gjerdingen presents the Prinner as one of the most common “riposte” to another schema: the Romanesca, which presents in one of its variants an initial stepwise descending bass line (8-5). Therefore, it does seem very logical that these two schemata are related, given that the Prinner nicely complements the initial descending bass-line of the Romanesca, forming a full stepwise (8-1) descend of the diatonic scale.²⁷ Indeed, Albéniz’s top voice does not follow the typical parallel tenths present in Gjerdingen’s Prinner (example 13); it rather matches one of the options for a beginning of a Romanesca: a **3 5 1** arpeggiation of the initial tonic. In general, this was Albéniz’s preferred formula of a modulating Prinner, and he extensively used it throughout his entire career. Example 13 shows both schemata in combination in Locatelli’s sonata op.6 no.11, mvt.1 measure 16, as reproduced by Gjerdingen in “Music in the Galant Style.”

Example 13: Romanesca-Prinner in Locatelli’s sonata.

The fact that I can easily trace this progression in *Eritaña* (example 11) to an eighteenth-century galant schema speaks for its conventionality, and for the sharp contrast that this harmonic language poses to the whole-tone vocabulary of the first pieces of *Iberia*. Therefore, *Eritaña* not only looks back to the “joyful mornings” at the sunny quarters of Sevilla,²⁸ but also to Albéniz’s earliest compositions. In fact, one can easily find multiple examples of this “schema” in early Albéniz, since the modulating Prinner, both in a galant context and in Albéniz, “provided an excellent means to moving rapidly to the dominant while at the same time fulfilling the expectation for a riposte,”²⁹ and the movement towards the dominant was one of Albéniz’s favorite tonal strategies. The following example reproduces a passage from *Cataluña*, the second piece of the *Suite Espagnole* op.47 composed in 1886, 20 years before *Eritaña*.

²⁷ This point has been made by William Caplin. See William Caplin, “Harmony and Cadence in Gjerdingen’s Prinner,” in *What is a Cadence?: Theoretical and Analytical Perspectives on Cadences in the Classical Repertoire*, eds. Markus Neuwirth and Peter Berge (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), 50.

²⁸ To paraphrase Debussy’s famous description of the piece. Quoted in Mast, *Style and Structure*, 6, and Clark, “Isaac Albéniz: Portrait of a Romantic,” 252.

²⁹ Gjerdingen, *Galant Style*, “The Prinner.”

Prinner

Gm: ④ ③ ② ⑤ ①

Example 14: Prinner in *Cataluña*.

Structural implications

A comparison of the tonal/formal processes of the last six pieces of *Iberia* reveal that five of them are in clear sonata form (the exception is *El Albaicín*), and that all these employ very similar tonal patterns in their respective development sections. Perhaps as a way of increasing the tension towards the expected recapitulation on the dominant, all development sections employ rising sequential progressions: either ascending thirds (*El Polo*, *Lavapiés*, *Málaga*) or ascending step-wise motion (*Jerez*) or a combination of both (*Eritaña*). At the same time, the consequences of an increased use of Spanish folklore-elements and a more extensive use of modality in books three and four are not exclusively foreground phenomena. The following section of the text will examine some of the structural repercussions of this.

When describing possible approaches to the dominant chord, Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter mention the IV⁶-V progression in the minor mode. This semicadence is often referred to as “the Phrygian cadence,” due to the half-step motion in the bass between 6 and 5, which replicates the cadential $b2-1$ motion of the Phrygian mode. In their own words: “The term Phrygian cadence is often applied to the semicadence IV⁶-V in minor, not because the piece in question is even partly in the Phrygian mode, but merely because a similar chord progression often appears at cadences in genuine Phrygian compositions.”³⁰ The examples of the progression they provide are a Bach Chorale (281), Handel’s *Concerto Grosso*, op.3/22, I, and a “genuine Phrygian composition” by Bartolomeo Tromboncino (*Non val aqua*, 1500). Thus, “the Phrygian cadence” in common-practice, tonal repertoire is always considered as a half cadence, and, therefore, inextricably linked to the last chord’s dominant function. However, in a “genuinely Phrygian” composition, either a Renaissance/Medieval work or a folk song, or, most likely, in a twentieth-century modal composition, one would rather label the last chord of the cadence as I and associate it with a tonic.

Nonetheless, it is not always possible to make a clear-cut distinction between tonic and dominant functions in a “Phrygian cadence”, especially when this mode is (re)-introduced in Western

³⁰ Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading* (Boston: Schirmer, 2011), 200.

music during the *fin de siècle*, and when the chord on D^{\flat} of the Phrygian mode is harmonized as a major chord, as it is customary in Flamenco music. In that respect, Albéniz is a particularly good example, since given the prominent influence of Spanish folklore in his music, and given that this music is often characterized by an extensive use of this mode, he uses the Phrygian mode almost since the beginning of his compositional career. In general, the functional ambiguity of the final chord could hold sway over long passages, and an entire section could be functionally ambiguous. Even in a genuinely Phrygian context, I believe that the final chord has always dominant potentiality — given that the Phrygian scale shares the same pitch collection with a natural minor scale a fifth below. Although one could give better and worse interpretations depending on the context, the functional ambiguity of such passages seems manifest. Albéniz must have been aware of such potential ambiguity, and despite of using the Phrygian mode extensively in *Iberia*, only from *El Albaicín* onwards (the first piece of the third book) he explicitly acknowledges the mode by writing its proper accidentals in the key signature. What I intend to show next is if this foreground functional ambiguity had deeper structural repercussions.

Although, given its key signature and its ending, Jacinto Torres has classified *Málaga* as being in B^{\flat} minor,³¹ the piece is initially in F Phrygian (example 14). If the reader has in mind the sonata-form model presented in page 3, it would perhaps come as a surprise that, for the very first time in *Iberia*, Albéniz begins a recapitulation in the initial key (F), and not in its dominant (C). However, a close look to the graph presented in example 12 reveals that if the initial key were B^{\flat} minor (represented in brackets in the graph), *Malaga's* tonal scheme would exactly match the minor sonata-form model presented in page 3. This is why B^{\flat} Minor acts as what I would like to call an “apparent key”, a power in the shadow that ultimately governs the tonal structure. Given that all recapitulations in *Iberia* start on the dominant, the only explanation for the initial key of F at the beginning of the recapitulation would be that this key ultimately operates as a dominant for the final B^{\flat} key introduced in the second theme of the recapitulation. And the key of F operates as a dominant because it appears in the Phrygian mode. In other words, the inherent functional ambiguity of the Phrygian mode (its dominant potentiality) has been translated to the background level of the structure.

Example 15: *Malaga*, formal/tonal scheme.

A similar model is used in *Jerez* (example 16). In this case, the initial key and the Phrygian mode return in the coda, but the Phrygian mode is finally transformed into Mixolydian — perhaps another symptom of Albéniz’s consciousness of the potential tonal ambiguity of the Phrygian mode.

³¹ Torres, *Catálogo sistemático*, 425.



Example 16: Jerez, tonal/formal scheme.

The other piece with a predominant Phrygian mode, *El Albaicín*, although with a different formal design, makes use of the same functional ambiguity of the Phrygian mode and structurally plays with its dominant potentiality. Although initially in B \flat Minor, the music quickly falls into F Phrygian, the key of the main theme. In the final recapitulation, the main theme returns in F Phrygian, which acts as a dominant for the second theme in B \flat . *El Albaicín* is also the piece with stronger folk/flamenco flavor of the entire collection. Echoes of the *bulerías* and *malagueñas* resonate throughout the introduction and the main theme, which are contrasted with the *cante jondo*-like second theme. Albéniz also recreates some of the techniques of the guitar and the deep lamentations of the *cante-jondo* (deep song) singer. After all, this was the piece that Albéniz was referring to in the letter quoted at the beginning of this paper; this was one of the pieces with which Albéniz “carried the *españolismo* to the ultimate extreme.”



Example 17: *El Albaicín*, tonal/formal scheme.

Conclusions

Responding to Albéniz’s correspondence with Malats, and relying on Paul Mast’s investigation on *Iberia*, this paper has examined some of the musical implications of Albéniz’s words to Malats in December 1906, confessing that with *El Albaicín*, *El Polo*, and *Lavapiés* he has “carried the *españolismo* and the technical demands to the ultimate extreme.” On the process, I hope that I have answered questions about compositional strategies and tonal/formal processes in *Iberia*, and, at the same time, briefly explore the interaction between folkloristic elements, modality, sonata forms, and other contemporary compositional techniques.

In that sense, I have revealed the specific sonata-form models used in *Iberia* and some of its peculiar characteristics, as well as mentioned some of the interactions between the nature of the folk-derived materials and classical-romantic conventions. Finally, I have tried to clarify the specific use Albéniz makes of compositional techniques such as the whole-tone scale. It might be worth recalling the strong functional implications that the scale conveys, and the concrete use Albéniz

makes of it. Contrary to what normally happens in other contemporary compositions that employ the whole-tone scale, in *Iberia*, the use of this scale does not result in a weakening of the tonal syntax, but rather in its reinforcement.

The new levels of *españolismo* announced by Albéniz coincide with Mast's observation about the less frequent use of the whole-tone scale in those books, perhaps compensated with more emphasis on folk-derived elements and their modal implications. What my investigation has revealed, however, is that this often-called "impressionistic device," the whole tone scale, was substituted by other nineteenth (or even eighteenth)-century conventions, such as the "omnibus progression." Indeed, the specific use of the whole-tone scale at the end of the development sections in the first two books was replaced with the "omnibus" idea in the third and fourth books, and both served as alternative compositional strategies to prolong the augmented chord that precedes the dominant that initiates the recapitulation. This alternation between the whole-tone scale and the omnibus might be a subtle symptom of a slight stylistic change in the last two books of *Iberia*. As this paper has shown, this hypothesis is further corroborated in *Eritaña*, the last piece of the collection. The harmonic language of *Eritaña* displays some patterns that could have been easily found in the "abstract, neutral piano sonatas"³² or other early compositions, and which further emphasizes Albéniz's classicism; a classicism that constitutes an indispensable element in Albéniz's style, as Walter Clark has recently pointed out.³³ Therefore, if, as many commentators have pointed out, *Evocation* (the first piece of the collection) is the most impressionistic of all, *Eritaña* (the last one) is the most "classical."

The final section of this paper was devoted to background-level implications of Albéniz's use of folklore and modality in the last pieces of the collection. My investigation has revealed an extrapolation of the inherent functional ambiguity of the Phrygian mode to the deepest levels of the tonal-formal structure. This was only possible to achieve through Albéniz's specific handling of sonata form and the "default"³⁴ establishment of a "standing on the dominant" recapitulation. Hence, the highly original form of the last pieces of *Iberia* (*El Albaicín*, *Málaga*, *Lavapiés*) results from the unique fusion of typical characteristics of folk-inspired materials with Albéniz's particular use of sonata form. We can conclude that the structural translation of this quintessential feature of Spanish music constituted for Albéniz the achievement of the ultimate *españolismo*.

³² "La inspiración clásica de Isaac Albéniz," liner notes for Isaac Albéniz: Sonatas para piano nos. 3, 4, 5. L'Automne, Albert Guinovart, piano, Harmonia Mundi CD HMI 987007, 1994. Reissued 2003 (HMA 1957007) English translation by Christine Losty. Quoted in Clark, "Variety within Logic," 112.

³³ Classicism as defined by Clark: [Classicism] can also apply more generally to the entire eighteenth century, including the Baroque, especially the compositional techniques and dance forms of that period. This is certainly the sense in which Neoclassicism is intended, and it is this more inclusive definition I apply here. Quoted in Clark, "Variety within Logic," 106.

³⁴ I invoke here Hepokoski and Darcy's concepts of "dialogic form" and "deformation." See James A. Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

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