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Mobile voices, flamenco and ethics of representation in Andalucía, un siglo de fascinación / Andalusia, A Century of Fascination (1996)

ABSTRACT
This article studies the mobility of human voices in Basilio Martín Patino’s series of television films about Andalusia. It explores the voice as an object of cinematic representation and as a focal point of affective investments in a transnational context of postcolonial and neo-colonial power struggles. Furthermore, it scrutinizes a selection of voices that speak and sing throughout the series and considers the location of these voices across the soundtrack of Patino’s films. Through its mobile vocal aesthetic, Patino’s film series gestures towards an ethics of representation in which flamenco becomes a wandering signifier that can only be envisioned in the plural, through a myriad set of accented voices and memories.

KEYWORDS
Basilio Martín Patino
voice
flamenco
ethics
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INTRODUCTION

Since the first manipulations of the human voice by the archaic recording machines that led to the invention of the phonograph, the apparently natural relationship between the voice and the interior workings of the human body has become a questionable topic. As theorists have argued, once the voice has been brought into the realm of scientific experimentation and commercial exploitation, it stops being ‘some “inner” thing’ and becomes a disembodied ‘sound effect’ (Chow 2014: 13; Dolar 2006: 6–7). Within the realm of cinema, the voice can indeed travel a long way from its bodily origins, through processes of recording and post-production, towards the ears of the spectators. Assuming, then, that the voice starts resonating with its spatial surroundings once it leaves the inner cavity of the mouth, where after it travels across different devices before it reaches us, it seems relevant to draw attention to the influence of those trajectories on what we assume the voice to, actually, be.

Voices can travel both in time and through space. They emancipate themselves from the bodies of singers and actors from bygone ages and they continue to evolve once new imaginaries and listening practices become attached to them (Dennig 2015: 172–73). Is it appropriate, then, to continue thinking of the voice as a centralized collection of bodily produced sounds, particularly in an age of transnational mobility where musical and cinematic voices are continuously translated into new contexts and languages? What parts of the voice are preserved when it migrates from older technological formats (fragile wax cylinders or film reels) to new recording devices and becomes a source of inspiration for communities acquainted with other languages and ‘audio-visual contracts’ than those belonging to the original context?

Desde lo más hondo: Silverio/Out of the Greatest Depth: Silverio (Martín Patino, 1996b), a film by the Spanish filmmaker Basilio Martín Patino about the voice of an acclaimed flamenco singer from the nineteenth century, offers a privileged opportunity to explore these questions. The work is part of a series of seven films, entitled Andalucía, un siglo de fascinación/Andalusia, A Century of Fascination (Martín Patino, 1996), produced between 1994 and 1996 and aired monthly on the Spanish public television channel Canal Sur between 1997 and 1998. The series explores how Andalusia has been represented in different international imaginaries about music (flamenco, copla and opera), art (poetry and museums) and society (libertarianism and republicanism). Importantly, the borders between the true and the false are continuously under siege in these films. Thus, they integrate the spectators into the process of producing different and, at times, conflicting accounts of Andalusia (González-Martín 2016: 127; Pérez-Millán 2002: 293). Previous scholarship, accordingly, has examined how Martín Patino deploys the cinematic medium to problematize notions of truth and falsehood. Cornago Bernal sees in the Andalucía series a sort of Benjaminian montage wherein traces of history enter in a dialectical relation with the present. According to this critic, Martín Patino did not aim to construct a single authoritative vision about the past, but rather to present a playful account of history to his spectators (Cornago Bernal 2011: 227). In a similar vein, Kim shows how the third film of the series, entitled Casas Viejas: El grito del sur/Casas Viejas: Cry from the South (Martín Patino, 1996), undermines the archive as a static authoritative entity by juxtaposing an array of aesthetic framings of a libertarian struggle that took place in 1933 (Kim 2015: 113–19).
This article will shed light on a crucial aspect of these films that previous criticism has not attended to: how they represent the human voice on-screen and make it audible as part of the soundtrack.\(^2\) As any cursory viewing of the Andalucía series reveals, these films deploy manifold ways to deal with human voices. Languages other than Spanish, for instance, are dubbed both on-screen and off-screen, yet other parts of the series contain carefully scripted monologues where the accents of non-native speakers of Spanish are at times deliberately exaggerated. Moreover, through loose editing techniques, voices are frequently detached from a speaker’s body. Finally, the director manipulates the non-semantic sonic properties of voices through prominent uses of reverb and volume adjustments. In what follows, I will hone in on this complex set of representations and manipulations of the voice, arguing that it is part of a wider cinematographic ethics of representation that questions fixed notions of territory, identity and memory.

This argument will be developed with reference to the concept of the ‘mobile voice’, advanced by Tom Whittaker and Sarah Wright in their edited volume Locating the Voice in Film: Global Practices and Critical Approaches (2017a). As Whittaker and Wright affirm, the possible meanings of the cinematic voice in a transnational context of production, distribution and reception of film are influenced by a wide range of technological processes and practices that may be culturally specific, such as dubbing and subtitling. With their concept of the ‘mobile voice’, taken as ‘a powerful figure of transcultural contact’ (Whittaker and Wright 2017b: 3), these scholars seek to explore the insecure in-between spaces that the voice occupies with respect to emitting and receiving bodies, as well as its ambivalent relationship with meaning. The articles in their volume attend to the multiple locations of the voice on the soundtrack of different films and to the migratory movements of the voice across the global cinema industry as a consequence of processes of re-voicing and translation (Whittaker and Wright 2017b: 3–4). By theorizing the voice as a product of different forms of cultural and spatial mobility, they enhance scholarship by, among others, Pamela Robertson Wojcik about how acting is constructed as much by sound technology as by the acting body (2006); by Jacob Smith on how vocal performances are shaped by media technologies (2008) and by Rick Altman on the ‘spatial signatures’ borne by all sound recordings (1992: 24).\(^3\)

Through a reading of Patino’s filmic work on Andalusia, this article will further explore several interrelated meanings for the mobility of the cinematic voice. As I will argue, the voice’s recognizability as an actual, centralized collection of sounds with a clear bodily source is problematized in Patino’s work, where it rather becomes an object of conflicting material and affective investments by different film characters. I will illustrate this claim by analysing the flamenco singing voice in Silverio and the human cry in Casas Viejas: El grito del sur. Secondly, focusing on Silverio, I will show how voices move across the soundtrack. Here, I explore how speech is disentangled from fixed notions of territory and identity as a result of Patino’s attention to accent, volume and other non-semantic properties of the voice. I will conclude by arguing that these instances of mobility in Silverio and other parts of the Andalucía series are not an uncritical celebration of diversity and cosmopolitanism, but rather an ethical reflection on the power struggles that shape the audibility of any voice.

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\(^2\) Previous criticism has overlooked the implications of Martin Patino’s complex voicing strategies. Both García (2009: 89) and González-Martín (2016: 129) suggest that Martin Patino merely uses voice-over, dubbing and subtitling to simulate the authority of traditional documentary films. Other studies about one or more films from the Andalucía series, such as those by Corrigan Bernal (2011) and Kim (2015) do pay attention to the mixture of real and fictional elements in these films, but not to their sonic properties.

\(^3\) On a more general level, they enhance theoretical work in cultural studies, cinema studies and philosophy on the elusive character of the cinematic voice; see, for instance, Chion (1999), Doane (1980) and Dolar (2006).
VOICES AS UNSTABLE OBJECTS

Silverio, the fifth film of the series, starts with the announcement of the mysterious appearance of a tin roll that presumably contains a recording of the lost voice of Silverio Franconetti, a flamenco singer who attained great fame by the end of the nineteenth century.

Immediately following the announcement, we are introduced into the complex trajectories of the cylinder as it passes hands between artists, collectors and entrepreneurs around the globe before becoming known in the public domain. In this respect, the storyline of Silverio is clearly related to the development of the first recording devices and the ensuing competition for the commodification of vernacular musical cultures by corporate capitalism since the turn of the twentieth century (Dennig 2015). According to Patino’s largely apocryphal recreation of this history, Silverio’s voice was recorded as part of a world tour to promote Thomas Edison’s first talking machine in 1877. A spokesperson for the British auction house Christie’s explains that her employer was able to obtain a tin roll that had materialized from one of these recording sessions but thereafter sold it. The next sequence is staged in an antiquarian shop in southern Spain, where two women explain that their fathers bought the tin roll at Christie’s but then resold it to a Japanese bidder. The latter, named Eikichi, is a scientist and sound engineer who leads the fictional Museo del Cante Hondo in Tokyo. Not only does his team work on the restoration of old flamenco recordings; Eikichi’s most ambitious endeavour is to recreate human voices – particularly those of flamenco singers – with the use of modern computer technologies.
Using Silverio’s voice as a case study, the film documents a series of fictionalized debates, speculations and criticisms about the technological, commercial and ethical stakes of Eikichi’s project. Interestingly, however, the film leaves the recording of Silverio’s voice unheard. This striking lack of attention to the recording itself indicates how Patino shifts attention away from the possible material traces left by a mythical singer. The film seems to be more interested in documenting the complex affective legacy of Silverio in a context of transnational flows of capital investments, anxieties over musical purity and struggles for cultural authority.

In my reading of Silverio, then, the film aptly illustrates how the voice is not so much a stable auditive force, but rather a focal point for economic and affective investments by others. In other words, the voice fluctuates in accordance with the flows of capital, desires and anxieties that different people invest in it in order to either corroborate or deny its full status of vocality. For instance, the recording is not accepted by all the characters as a faithful registration of Silverio’s real voice. According to one sound engineer in Eikichi’s lab, it is not certain that the sounds on the tin cylinder do emanate from a human body. Furthermore, in a fictitious talk show, the singer and flamenco scholar Amós Rodríguez Rey categorically dismisses the significance of the recording, adding that flamenco cannot be recreated through technology and is only pure when performed by pure Andalusians.

While expressing these statements, he continuously interrupts the more prudent voices of his interlocutors and reacts aggressively when they try to interrupt him in turn. Clearly amused by Rodríguez’s grotesque performance, one of the other guests laughingly concludes that, were we to follow Rodríguez’s own line of argument, we should consider him as the only pure Andalusian on earth.4
Eikichi himself seems less worried about the veracity of the cylinder recording than about altogether eliminating the traditional connection between bodies and voices. As he explains during one of his on-camera monologues, his project seeks to erase the ties of singing voices to the bodies of the Gitanos from Spain, the African American community from Harlem or the Rastafari from Jamaica. The new voice that emerges from this shift of perspective is an exploitable and desirable object not so much because of its strong connections with local performative cultures, but mainly because it will motivate future innovations on the transnational market of sound technology.

Using Eikichi as a spokesperson, Silverio debunks a basic pillar that has traditionally been deployed to measure the authenticity of flamenco singing: the conception that song emanates from the interiority of the singer’s body, both in a material sense (song as produced in the interior cavities of the body) and in an emotional sense (song as the product of an artist’s exploration of their inner self). To be sure, the first part of the film’s title – Desde lo más hondo – clearly points towards this double sense of profundity in which all flamenco singing would originate. In a wider sense, this conception of human singing is indebted to the tradition of ‘phonocentrism’ which, as Derrida has shown (1997: 10–18), presupposes that the voice gives immediate access to the human mind, soul and emotions, whereas it conceives of writing as a derivative system that first needs to convert speech into a signified, in order to thereafter render it graphically through a system of written signifiers (Chow 2017: 19; Sterne 2003: 17). Contrary to such traditional conceptions, Eikichi’s project allows us to rethink Silverio’s voice as a disembodied object whose meaningfulness emerges precisely from its malleable and movable status. Along the lines set out by Eikichi, future work in sound technology can continue seizing the voice’s preliminary fixity and, by doing so, it will progressively move the voice even farther away from any form of bodily anchorage.

In order to specify how the status of Silverio’s voice becomes dependent on investments of both capital and affect, it is productive to refer to Marta Savigliano’s work on the ‘political economy of Passion’ in her study of Argentinean tango. As Savigliano eloquently argues, the power struggles and colonial relations involved in the production, distribution and consumption of music have motivated not only a global circulation of products and performances, but also of desires and affects:

A trackable trafficking in emotions and affects has paralleled the processes by which the core countries of the capitalist world system have extracted material goods and labor from, and imposed colonial bureaucratic state apparatuses and ideological devices on, the Third World (periphery).

(Savigliano 1995: 1–2)

A pertinent example of this dynamic is the investment of energy and desire into musical cultures deemed to embody ‘mysterious’, ‘untamed’ or ‘passionate’ modes of expression, such as tango and flamenco. As Savigliano shows, the global circulation of musical practices may create tensions between communities that consume, practice and study those musical cultures. This tension helps explain the emergence of anxiety over purity and authenticity, a problem that is conspicuously present in Silverio. As Savigliano continues, Japan has historically occupied a complex position within the political economy of Passion, being, on the one hand, an exotic peripheral from the perspective...
of western imperialism and, on the other hand, an imperial power in itself with renewed economic force in the era of neoliberal globalization (1995: 7). From this perspective, it is interesting that Patino’s film explores a complex cultural dialogue between two countries – Spain and Japan – that have been both subjects and objects of exoticizing practices in other parts of the world.

It should be stressed that Silverio interferes in the political economy of Passion not by subscribing to the anger and anxiety of Spanish aficionados, but rather by subtly debunking their criticisms. For example, the Museo de Cante Hondo, led by Eikichi in Tokyo, is a fictional construct for which Patino used footage from the Belgian pavilion at the Expo ’92 in Seville (Pérez-Millán 2002: 318).

5. Many viewers of Martín Patino’s film were unaware of the museum’s fictional nature and called Canal Sur to learn more about it (García 2009: 92).

Figure 3: The fictional Museo de Cante Hondo in Tokio in Desde lo más hondo: Silverio.

The overarching theme of the Expo was ‘discovery’, in explicit reference of Columbus’ ‘discovery’ of America. In other words, by locating Eikichi’s company at the heart of Spain’s own history of colonial exploitation, the film poses an astute contestation to Spanish flamenco aficionados accusing the Japanese of cultural imperialism.

Silverio includes an interview with Manuel Bellido, an acclaimed guitar luthier from Granada, which poses further challenges to notions of flamenco that are firmly grounded in the territory of Andalusia and the cultural authority of Andalusians. The interview takes place while Bellido is working on the manual construction of a rosette for the adornment of a sound hole. He explains that the rosette has now become one of the first objects to be delegated to automatized production companies, as it requires a considerable investment of working hours while being largely irrelevant to the sonorous quality of the instrument itself. Bellido, however, is one of the few who is still committed to delivering instruments that are entirely handmade.
In this sense, Bellido’s integrative construction work can be read as an allegory for bodily integrity, in opposition to the model of outsourcing that, if we follow this analogy, dismembers and amputates the bodily plenitude of an authentic flamenco instrument. Additional support for this reading is offered in a profoundly ironic story about Ibanez, the famous guitar brand from Japan that, as Manuel Bellido’s father explains during the interview, took its company name from the first surname of the Bellido family – Ibáñez – and brought the construction of different guitar parts to large foreign factories.

Figure 4: Manuel Bellido making a rosette in Desde lo más hondo: Silverio.

Figure 5: Ibanez guitar factory in Desde lo más hondo: Silverio.
Thus, Bellido’s Japanese competitor has dismembered not only the organic plenitude of the instruments, but also that of the Spanish family. While appropriating the second family name for its own commercial purposes, Ibanez has also amputated the ñ, the phoneme that makes that name most clearly identifiable as Spanish.\textsuperscript{6}

New allegorical meanings for the disintegration of bodies and sounds emerge when Bellido shows the soundboard of a lute that, as he states, once belonged to the flamenco singer Camarón de la Isla.

\textbf{Figure 6: Bellido showing the soundboard of Camarón’s lute.} Desde lo más hondo: Silverio.

It is highly significant that Camarón, the most famous flamenco singer of the twentieth century who is known to have also been a skilful guitar player, gains metonymical presence in the film through an instrument that is not commonly used in flamenco. As an instrument associated with rituals of Sufi mysticism and, thereby, with the non-Christian heritage of Andalusia, the lute problematizes, once more, the many claims to purity in flamenco that are made throughout the film. It even gives an unexpected twist to a comment made in another sequence by one flamenco scholar who states that ‘mysticism’ constitutes an idiosyncratic trademark of Andalusian culture. While this comment was made to emphasize the strong ties between flamenco song and local culture, the connection between Camarón and Sufi music suggests that the religious and musical practices that have historically existed on Andalusian soil are much more diverse.

\textsuperscript{6} The name ‘Ibanez’ was taken up by a distribution company in Nagoya, Japan, which was originally called Hoshino Gakki. It is true that this company took its name from the Spanish luthier Salvador Ibáñez, who had been in charge of building the classical guitars that were avidly imported to Japan in the 1920s (Brill 2015). However, the Bellido family from Granada was not involved in this transaction. The first family name of Manuel Bellido is López.
Bellido goes on to suggest that Camarón’s decision to concentrate his career on his singing has stopped him from becoming a potentially great player. By highlighting a vein in Camarón’s life and career that is unrelated to his singing, Bellido destabilizes more common forms of understanding Camarón’s artistic trajectory. In a way similar to the figure of Silverio Franconetti, then, Camarón also emerges from the film as a dehumanized object that can only be represented in the plural: as a name onto which a range of imaginaries about the artist’s personal and professional lives can be projected.

A small detour into another episode from the Andalucía series helps put the malleability of the voice, as highlighted in the previous analysis of Silverio, into a wider historical and political perspective. Casas Viejas: El grito del sur is the third film of the series, revolving around the memories of the libertarian struggles and their violent breakdown in 1933 in a small village located in the Cádiz province. The film includes a collection of conflicting aesthetic framings of the struggle, such as apocryphal footage from British and Soviet documentary films presumably produced during the revolt (García 2009: 88–91; Kim 2015: 114–18; Pérez-Millán 2002: 303–09). There is a sequence that previous scholars have not attended to, however, in which two historians reflect on the possible meanings of the cry or scream – the grito referenced in the movie title – in relation to the wider history of peasant struggles in Andalusia.

The first interpretation is by A. Miguel Bernal, a professor of History at the University of Seville who states that the toponym Casas Viejas could also be understood as the 1000-year-old cry of landless peasants fighting for the land that has historically been taken from them. However, Bernal immediately adds that due to the remoteness of previous struggles, it is unclear to what extent the latter still had any resonance in the cries of those who fought against the police forces of the Second Republic in 1933. With this reflection, Bernal casts doubt on his very own attempt at creating a centralized interpretation for the tragedy and thus implicitly problematizes the movie title, with its reference to a single scream that was emitted in, or from, the south.

Another historian, Antonio Elorza, adds in the following sequence that the massacre is ultimately what has converted the struggle in Casas Viejas into a tragedy with universal meaning. If it weren’t for this tragic outcome, Elorza continues, then Casas Viejas would probably have been doomed to represent only the failures of Bakuninism, a particular strain of anarchism characterized, as he explains, by its confidence in the self-organizing capacities of the people and a strong belief that the proclamation of libertarian communism at one place would thereafter have been taken up by other communities. If we recall the movie title once more, in this particular instance the grito would refer to the voices that proclaimed libertarian communism in Casas Viejas but were not heard, understood or acted upon in other parts of the country. To use Mladen Dolar’s terminology, the cry failed as an appeal since its meaning was not recognized by an Other (2006: 27). When read alongside one another, the reflections by both historians pluralize the meaning of the movie title, indicating that the cry is a highly complex trace in the archive of memories about Casas Viejas: both as an autonomous sonorous quality and as the bearer of a message, its meaning is unstable and as yet undeciphered.

7. On the temporality involved in the transformation of a voice from a sound object into the signifier, see Dolar (2006: 137–43).
In this way, Casas Viejas: El grito del sur becomes another articulation of the fluctuations of the voice between actuality and virtuality. It is unclear when exactly the grito, as a singular noun referenced in the title, was articulated, who listened to it and to what extent it was clearly understood by anyone. Read alongside Silverio, this film illustrates how voices emerge from Patino’s work as complex objects that cannot be appropriated as clearly circumscribed articulations of sound, and whose meanings fluctuate between the cultural, historical and political readings that they receive from different listeners and interpreters.  

**MOBILITY ACROSS THE SOUNDTRACK**

Returning to Silverio, while the voice of the eponymous singer remains absent, the voices of those who are present and do speak in the film are situated on alternative locations in the soundtrack. This section will focus on the voice of the Japanese entrepreneur Eikichi, which is part of a wider collection of (heavily) accented voices that appear throughout the Andalucía series. Careful attention to the alternative uses of on- and off-screen translation and to the non-semantic sonic properties of Eikichi’s speech in Japanese and Spanish is necessary to fully grasp the relation between the mobility of voices and Patino’s cinematic ethics of representation.

Unlike the majority of Spanish flamenco authorities that appear in the film, Eikichi’s character, played by the actor Reiji Nagakawa, is entirely fictitious. A successful scientist and entrepreneur, Eikichi is also a flamenco aficionado and a speaker of Spanish. He, therefore, occupies a highly unstable position on the axis that connects western imperialism with its colonial Others. From the perspective of the Spanish aficionados claiming authority over flamenco, Eikichi represents a menacing Other – and certainly also of the most relevant Others in contemporary flamenco culture, due to the unmatched popularity of this music in Japan. On the other hand, Eikichi can also be said to embody the colonizer in a neo-colonial situation where Japanese entrepreneurs and aficionados invest capital and affect in the music of an exotic Other – represented, in this case, by Spanish flamenco. This fundamental ambivalence of Eikichi’s character is underscored by the diverse set of locations that his voice comes to occupy on the soundtrack.

Jane Hill’s work on oral narrative (1995) shows how the alternate positions of voices within a story give them different levels of proximity to the moral universe of both the narrator and their listeners. From this perspective, it is instructive to chart the migrations of Eikichi’s voice across the soundtrack of Silverio and the alternate senses of proximity and alienation that emerge from these movements. Eikichi first appears in Silverio as what film theorist Michel Chion has famously dubbed an acousmêtre, a voice that lacks a clear bodily source (1999: 21). During this initial sequence, Eikichi’s voice is heard as he speaks calmly in Japanese about his introduction to flamenco during his childhood. His voice is dubbed by an off-screen voice in Spanish and, to add further complexity, both voices sound alongside the flamenco singing of Manolo Caracol. At the same time, the camera moves through the laboratories of the Museo del Cante Hondo, where Eikichi’s name is projected on the wall.

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8. Here, similarities with other films from the Andalucía series can be found Carmen y la libertad/Carmen and Freedom (Martín Patino, 1996a), for instance, narrates the digital recreation of Georges Bizet’s opera Carmen by an international team of artists and producers. By the end of the film, Carmen remains as a provisory work, forever under construction, a collage composed by past representations and present adaptations, multiple technological devices and the accented voices of an international team who all invest the work with their capital, labour and professional and personal desires.

9. Other examples are Jonas Marshall (played by Reginald Shave, who also appears as the British filmmaker Joseph Cameron in Casas Viejas: El grito del sur), member of a wealthy Sephardic family and founder a utopian community in the locality of Río Tinto in Paraisos/Paradises (Martín Patino, 1996d); Stephan Lupasko (played by John Drummond), the director of a digitalized version of the famous opera by Bizet in Carmen y la libertad, and the Italian and French opera singers in the same film (played by Paula Soldevila and Nathalie Seseña), who speak chaotic and heavily accented mixtures of Spanish, Italian and French.

10. As Savigliano shows, Japan has long been an ‘[o]riental, Far East exotic to the West’, but an increase in contact, the incorporation of Japanese artistic and performance practices at the end of the nineteenth century
The fact that this projection is shown at the exact same moment when his speech can be heard off-screen, illustrates how Eikichi’s presence is disembodied and mediated by different technological apparatuses. As Chion repeatedly claims, the authority of the *acousmêtre* increases precisely when the human bearer of the voice is unknown to us (1999: 28–31). To be sure, this initial detachment of speech from Eikichi’s body contrasts with Eikichi’s cinematic representation in other moments of *Silverio* and, particularly, in the sequel to *Silverio* entitled *Desde lo más hondo II: El museo japonés/Out of the Greatest Depth II: The Japanese Museum* (Martín Patino, 1996c). In those scenes, Eikichi’s authority is enforced precisely through a combination of shots of his vigilant gaze when observing the activities in his lab from an adjacent room, and his silence on the soundtrack.

During his second appearance, Eikichi is dubbed by an extradiegetic voice in Spanish while delivering his inauguration speech at the museum, in which he speaks about the fascination for flamenco felt by so many Japanese visitors of Spain. The political stakes of dubbing have been discussed by different cinema scholars. According to Jennifer Fleeger, watching a dubbed film forces us to partake in a rather uncomplex reception of foreign speech, as it distracts from possible mistranslations and other possible losses ensuing from the dubbing process (Fleeger 2017: 34). Moreover, dubbing situates us within a territory where such speech is marked as decidedly foreign and supposedly in need of mediation by a fellow national of the intended audience. In Nataša Durovicová’s illustrative expression, dubbing blocks out ‘the sound of foreign tongues’ and provides ‘an “acoustic roof” over the native soil’ (quoted in Whittaker 2017: 126).
Silverio, however, only occasionally forces us to receive speech in Japanese along these lines. The film uses a variety of strategies to render languages other than Spanish, thereby converting the creation of a unique Spanish, or Andalusian, roof over other cultures into an object of reflection in itself. For example, in one sequence a member of Eikichi’s team explains how he is working on the technological reproduction of a flamenco singing style, the soleares. He speaks in Japanese and is translated into Spanish by Eikichi’s secretary who is sitting next to him.

Contrary to Eikichi’s speech at the museum, then, the company workers here preserve authority over the linguistic representation of their scientific endeavours. A curious effect of acoustic layeredness emerges when Hiroshi’s explanation in Japanese, the Spanish translation by his colleague and the intradiegetic flamenco singing on a recording start sounding simultaneously. This moment opens up a new pathway for listening to flamenco – one that is attentive to the direct material underpinnings of this music, such as the recording practices and scientific processes of manipulation and restoration used to make it audible to listeners and preserve it for future generations. From this perspective, this sequence illustrates how Patino’s work is informed by what could be called a materialist ethics of vocality. Rather than seeking to restore an allegedly purer version of the voice, un tarnished by processes of technological manipulation, Patino makes audible precisely those material and technological apparatuses that embody the continued fascination for those voices in the present.
It is only during Eikichi’s third appearance in the film that his voice becomes what Chion calls an ‘I-voice’ (1999: 49–51), that is, a true pivot of identification capable of bringing about a corporeal implication of the spectators with the words spoken in the film (53). During his inauguration speech at the museum, he suddenly switches to Spanish. His voice is recorded from a nearby position and now becomes a unique auditive source in the soundtrack. Eikichi’s nearness to the audience is enhanced by the content of his emotive statement. Firstly, it is crucial that his speculations about the achievements of his scientific project are intonated as questions, in poignant contrast with the aggressive attacks on his work formulated by Andalusian commentators. Secondly, by quoting a verse from the ‘Égloga I’ by Garcilaso de la Vega, a pastoral poem dealing with lost love, Eikichi recurs to the literary heritage of Spain to voice his thoughts and ideas, which illustrates how he constructs an intellectual proximity to Spanish culture without laying an authoritarian claim to it.

Having analysed the mobility of Eikichi’s voice across the soundtrack, I would finally like to consider several non-semantic aspects of his speech, such as its pace, tone and occasional lack of fluidity. These elements are comparable to uses of volume adjustments and digital sound effects used in other part of the film series. What all of these strategies indicate is that Patino’s reflection on Andalusia ultimately also takes place through the careful creation of a multifaceted sonorous landscape that alternatively highlights the ‘sonic texture’ of voices, and their more instrumental function as conduits for language (Whittaker and Wright 2017b: 2). In my view, this project extends itself towards apparently insignificant moments of dialogue where voices stumble over words or, alternatively, pause at unexpected places. For instance, on one occasion Eikichi states that his friend and colleague Manuel Bellido possesses duende, the mystical force often perceived to emanate from sublime moments in performances of flamenco. Importantly, however, Eikichi falters when pronouncing the word duende. This moment of dysfluency is a clear manifestation of what film theorists have called the encounter between voice and language (Whittaker and Wright 2017b: 4). Eikichi’s encounter with the word duende illustrates how the latter is not a natural element in discourses about flamenco, but also a term that foreign aficionados need to incorporate into their linguistic repertoire. This supports Hill’s assertion, following Mikhail Bakhtin, that some words cannot be easily assimilated and seem to be putting themselves in quotation marks against the speaker’s will (1995: 108–09). Similarly, Brandon LaBelle proposes that stuttering can open a view onto ‘a subject under duress by the force of a linguistic order’ (2014: 131), an idea that seems particularly appropriate here as the word duende is often pronounced with emphasis and solemnity. Eikichi’s stuttering at a key term in flamenco jargon is thus not necessarily a linguistic error that should be abandoned to the margins of linguistic interaction; it can be interpreted more fruitfully as an empathic gesture with which Patino introduces small bursts into the apparently self-evident discourses used to give meaning to flamenco.

The calm pace of Eikichi’s monologues in Spanish is also relevant in this regard, showing how he carefully approaches the objects of his speech in diametrical opposition to the loud, intrusive and impatient voices of some of the Andalusian men who defend flamenco as their property. This contrast becomes particularly poignant halfway through Silverio. During a heated discussion by the members of a flamenco peña, one speaker claims that
flamenco is the product of a series of ‘accents’ and ‘experiences’ that belong to the Andalusian people and are therefore untranslatable.

The next scene, however, moves to Eikichi who with remarkable tranquillity speaks, in Spanish, about the revolution his project appears to have started. The movement made between the two sequences reflects an implicit criticism of the statement that only Andalusian accents can make a meaningful contribution to flamenco.

The same calmness is present in Eikichi’s final testimony, which is preceded by scenes from his family home where he is playing with his grandchildren and watering his bonsai trees, images that symbolize growth and the continuity of life in a clear contrast with the abundant references to loss in the discourse of Eikichi’s opponents. In this final monologue, Eikichi recounts his repeated visits to small flamenco bars in Seville, Jerez and Cádiz. Night after night, he would bear witness to sublime performances and thereafter wander home in a state of trance. This testimony is followed by a polite smile into the camera, an explicit appeal to the cinematic medium as an indication of the constructed nature of his memory.

However, the scripted character of Eikichi’s words becomes even more apparent through the remarkably unhesitating pace with which he deploys complex syntax and vocabulary in Spanish. His speech now lacks the interruptions, hesitations and reformulations that are present in other parts of the film. A few sounds are articulated with particular emphasis: the word ‘affected’ (‘emocionado’), with which Eikichi refers to the emotional impact of flamenco singing, and the final fricatives of the words ‘Cádiz’ and ‘callejas’ (‘small streets’).

Rey Chow’s work on postcolonial language encounters is helpful to determine the significance of these aspects of Eikichi’s pronunciation. In Not Like

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Figure 9: Discussion by members of Peña La Macarena in Seville. Desde lo más hondo: Silverio.
Chow proposes to rethink language as a discontinuous ‘multiplicity of accents’ (2014: 59), following Foucault’s notion of discourse as an assemblage of available statements, memories and reflections that do not pertain to any person in particular. Specifically, in the postcolonial language encounters studied by Chow, such understanding of language imbues postcolonial speakers with an advantageous sense of reflexivity: ‘the colonized is much closer to the truth of the mediated and divisive character of all linguistic communication’ (2014: 42). Chow offers a new framework for language in a postcolonial context with her concepts of the xenophone (2014: 11), and xenophonic memories (2014: 59). She understands the former as a ‘foreign-sounding speech/tone’ which, crucially, is not limited to foreign speakers but rather constitutes a form of ‘emergent languaging’ that is always already present within any register but has been abandoned to unthinkability (2014: 11). It carries the ‘noise – and historical force – of a fundamental disruption’ (2014: 59) and permits an understanding of speech in postcoloniality as a ‘discordant, vertiginous discourse archive’ (2014: 60) where the unicity of language and the sovereignty of the native speaker are inexorably transformed. Xenophonic memories are, accordingly, articulations of history where such noises and discordances, as well as a plurality of accents and registers, coexist (2014: 59–60).

From the perspective of Chow’s theory, it can be argued that the surprising moments of emphasis and unfamiliar pace in Eikichi’s speech disrupt the ways in which flamenco discourses are uttered by Spanish aficionados in other parts of Patino’s film. Following Foucault’s and Chow’s notion of discourse, this underlines that familiar narratives about the origins and meaning of flamenco are always open to new experiences and memories. The mobility of Eikichi’s voice across the soundtrack of Silverio is, in this regard, a clear token of the film’s xenophonic take on flamenco culture. The alternative uses of dubbing, on-screen translation and accented speech throughout the film dramatize the extent to which flamenco culture is a product of multiple forms of identification by speakers of many different languages.

A final aspect to be considered here is the music that accompanies the final shots from Eikichi’s family home. These scenes illustrate, once more, that Silverio deals with the vitality and transnational mobility of flamenco singing. At first, we hear a siguiriya sung by Camarón de la Isla. Then, there is a cut to the Centro Andaluz de Flamenco in Jerez de la Frontera, where the folklorist Luis Suárez explains that forgetfulness has historically had a crucial impact on the flamenco repertoire. In Suárez’s view, singing styles, while obeying to standard patterns of rhythm and melody, have been able to evolve precisely thanks to the capacity of artists to freely appropriate existing materials and thereafter transmit their own take on it. This historical dynamic is aptly illustrated by Camarón’s refreshing take on the siguiriya that accompanies these final sequences, given that the siguiriya is a singing style that had first been cultivated and popularized by Silverio (Didi-Huberman 2017: 202). On the one hand, then, the film leaves us with the impression that the recording of Silverio’s voice will never receive a widespread acknowledgement as an archival document, haunted as it is by incredulence and fierce criticisms in Andalusia. Departing from this deadlock, however, Patino’s film shows how the singer’s voice lives on in collective memory as an emblem that is now unattached to a specific body and has even been able to evolve into a singing style – la siguiriya
de Silverio – that has come to occupy a central place in the flamenco repertoire and is cultivated by Camarón and other innovative singers. Furthermore, from a cinematographic viewpoint, it is relevant that the siguiriya, whose desolate lyrics deal with loneliness after a family fight, is here combined with the appeasing visual impressions from Eikichi’s home in Japan. This generates a curious juxtaposition of the tragic charges of the siguiriya and the film’s visual impression of growth and harmonious co-existence between old and young generations. A similar effect appears with an old recording of a soleá, sung by Juan Talega, that can be heard at the very end of Eikichi’s speech. This tragic song now becomes an auditive accompaniment for a scene of family life in Japan, with Eikichi, dressed in casual clothing, playing and laughing with his granddaughter. These tensions between soundtrack and visual narration are one final gesture with which the film restages the flamenco singing archive as an emergent body of xenophonic voices – one that is open to associations with persons, situations and forms of speech that would not have found a place in traditional understandings of flamenco culture.

MOBILE VOICES AND ETHICS OF REPRESENTATION

To conclude, Patino’s film presents the voices of those persons who participate in the preservation of the legacy of Silverio Franconetti as an unstable collection of viewpoints and expressions, which challenges the fantasy that an absolute coincidence between body, voice, identity and territory is possible. Instead of being a conduit to stable opinions and strongly territorialized forms of singing, in Silverio the voice becomes a free-floating object that occasions an ethical encounter with the new and the unknown. As such, it can be compared to Erin Graff Zivin’s use of the notion of the ‘wandering signifier’ in her study of representations of Jewishness in Latin American literature (2008). Graff Zivin deploys an ethical perspective to representations in the film are taken from the Rito y geografía del cante/ Rite and Geography of Flamenco Song series, which was aired on Spanish television between 1971 and 1973 and still constitutes an unmatched collection of audio-visual recordings of acclaimed singers. For a more in-depth study of this series of documentary films see Washabaugh (1997).

12 This conclusion places my reading of Patino’s work alongside Parvati Nair’s analysis of Isaki Lacuesta’s film La leyenda del tiempo (2006), where, following James Clifford, she proposes to rethink flamenco culture in terms of migrancy, as an unfinished and moving set of representations and performances rather than as a static cultural frame (2012: 138–40). Antonio Gómez López-Quíñones, in his interpretation of the
of Jewishness, asking how literary texts from Latin America respond to the Levinasian ethical imperative of coming face-to-face to the Other without fully appropriating Otherness into the imperialistic framework of selfhood. The signifier of the ‘Jew’ aptly lends itself to such a reflection, as it has traditionally been imbued with highly diverse and even contrastive meanings and affects, such as desire, anxiety and paranoia. Jewishness, then, becomes a wandering signifier not only because of the tropes of mobility and diaspora that have traditionally been attached to Jewish culture, but also because, as Graff Zivin shows, Latin American literary texts occasionally construct Jewishness as an absent object that resists appropriation (2008: 4–5, 120). Drawing critically on Levinas’ work, Graff Zivin seeks for those moments where literary representations of Jewishness do not merely exert discursive violence onto the Other by reducing otherness to selfhood; she contends that literary representation can also be non-totalizing and testify to the Other’s radical difference (2008: 123–24).13

From this perspective, we may add a final implication to the mobility of the cinematic voice that has been analysed in this essay. In Patino’s work, not only does the voice move continuously between virtuality and actuality and does it migrate across different locations on the soundtrack; its occasional resistance to full appropriation also situates it within an ethical face-to-face encounter with Otherness. We should be prudent, however, and not define the director’s mobile take on Andalusian culture as an uncritical celebration of diversity. In this regard, it is relevant to recall how Chow’s work situates the xenophone within a context of power struggles. The xenophone opens up language to alternative registers, accents and memories and, as such, can be interpreted as an example of how language can help forge an ethical encounter with a plurality of voices and memories. Yet, referring to the split character of literary voices as understood by Mikhail Bakthin, Chow adds: ‘[d]ouble-voicedness or polyphony signifies not exactly neoliberal inclusion (as is often assumed) but a fundamental strife for survival’ (2017: 19–20). Considering these remarks, it seems appropriate not to define the xenophone as a token of equality, but rather as a concept that highlights the power struggles that are present even on the micro-levels of speech and multilingualistic performance.

Therefore, the most productive way to situate Patino’s work along the ethical grids drawn out by Graff Zivin’s work is to view Silverio as a reflection on the struggles for dominance that affect the audibility of any voice. The fact that xenophonic articulations of flamenco exist, as Patino appropriately shows us, does not automatically give them more credence or visibility on a transnational market where flows of capital, desires and anxieties over purity and identity, as well as diverse fluxes of technological innovation and economic speculation, ultimately determine how flamenco singing is transmitted to diverse international audiences. In this context, how to react ethically to what might be one of Patino’s most daunting challenges to common perceptions of flamenco: the sequence in the film that shows a group of Japanese performers singing and playing flamenco during a private party – in spite, obviously, of the presence of a film crew?
When viewing and listening to the unfamiliar, accented elements of their playing and singing, how to move beyond a reception of these xenophonic performances in terms of the impure and the uncanny? Ultimately, Silverio tests our willingness to listen attentively to these xenophonic voices, understandings and fascinations for flamenco, considering them as a fundamental part of what this music is, and can still become.

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