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Multilingualism in Film



Gala Rebane / Ralf Junkerjürgen (eds.)

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PETER LANG

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Foreword

Although every society in the world is in essence multilingual, film has, throughout its history, been largely monolingual. Reading the comprehensive lists of films that feature more than one language (e.g. in O'Sullivan 2007, Bleichenbacher 2008, Şerban 2012, Mamula & Patti 2016) leaves the impression that there is a relative absence of linguistic diversity in popular cinema. Scarce onscreen depictions of actual linguistic realities could, for one thing, be chalked up to the tenacious legacy of monolingualism rooted in the nation-state building processes and their hegemonic narratives of unity and identity (cf. Gramling 2016). Literature, and later cinema, played a key role in these processes as the media supported a restrictive understanding of languages as *national languages*, propagated purist linguistic standards, and advocated the monolingual habitus of fictional representation. However, worldwide political, social and cultural developments in recent decades have brought about a shift of focus towards, and reappraisal of, multilingualism on screen. The establishment and evolution of the European Union and the major migratory movements of the 20th and 21st centuries, among other developments that are often interpreted as processes and effects of globalisation, have fuelled much interest in topical contemporary issues such as intercultural communication, migration, multiculturalism and cultural heritage, and spawned a plethora of films in which multilingualism is an essential part of their overall politics and aesthetics. Yet, with a few notable exceptions such as the ones cited above, international and, more importantly still, interdisciplinary scholarship is still reacting to this trend.

Indeed, the monolingual habitus has long been holding sway over national systems of science and education, as well. While mainstream onscreen representations of daily life are already often purged of all linguistic variation, film scholars have traditionally been adopting a likewise purist stance towards language, thus easily overlooking what cinema might still have to offer, even though it may be only carefully selected and censored samples of polyglossia involving not only foreign languages but also different speech varieties, deliberately deployed to the ends of

ethnic, gender-related and socio-economic *othering*. Even as postcolonial sentiment is steadily gaining momentum, scholarly inquiries into multilingualism in film are still rare to come by.

Depending on the respective national academic tradition, most scholarly explorations of multilingualism in film have so far cropped up in either translatology or film studies. While each discipline deploys its specific methodological tools and theoretical frameworks of reference when dealing with language diversity on screen, it also projects its specific blind spots on the object of inquiry. The international conference 'Multilingualism in Film', which took place in Regensburg in October 2017 as a result of cooperation between the chair of Romance culture studies (Regensburg University) and associate professorship of intercultural competence (Chemnitz University of Technology), sought to encourage a vibrant cross-disciplinary dialogue by bringing together scholars from a broad variety of academic fields and traditions who engage with multilingual cinema under different perspectives. The intense exchange of ideas that occurred with not only colleagues and students, but also professionals involved in production of multilingual films, represents the foundation of the present publication.

This collection of essays encompasses various takes on the phenomenon of multilingualism in cinema that weave together narratological, linguistic, cultural, historical, sociological, and political concerns, and are also interdisciplinary in nature. In his paper on multilingual humour in film and television translation, **Patrick Zabalbeascoa** addresses the challenges it posits, making a forceful argument for a revision of traditional translatic paradigms that have their origin in Bible studies. He puts forth a plea for a context-based pragmatic approach to audiovisual translation that would extend its scope beyond 'objective' rendering of purely linguistic original expression into other languages and take into account further factors and variables such as multimodality, specific multilingual constellations, respective language attitudes and attributions of filmmakers and their international audiences, as well as social, cultural, and political sources of (multilingual) humour on screen.

Laura Langer Rossi, too, discusses general theoretical premises of audiovisual translation, albeit not from a pragma-semantic standpoint but, rather, under an aesthetical and ideological perspective. She explores

dubbing and subtitling in the overall context of audiovisual production's aesthetics and politics, tracing, among other things, the power relations which are both embedded and produced within written and spoken translation, and questions their impact on the representation of cultural difference in transnational cinema.

The interrelation between linguistic representation and ideology lies at the core of **Christoph Fasbender's** overview of the history of the Middle Ages Movie. The author argues that attempts at an authentic depiction of multilingual constellations in medieval Europe are a very recent phenomenon, whereas for most of its history, questions of interlinguistic and intercultural communication lay outside of this genre's scope for ideological reasons related to the construction of the (national) Self against the foil of the medieval historical Other. As Fasbender shows, the only notable exception was posited by Latin, and its overwhelmingly negative treatment on screen has likewise far-reaching ideological implications.

In his discussion of German language attributions in films about the Occupation of France by the Nazi troops, **Fabian Hauner** addresses a similar set of issues. By adopting an imagological approach in his analysis of three examples, *Le silence de la mer* (1949), *La grande vadrouille* (1966), and *Inglorious Basterds* (2009), he traces the fifty-year long evolution of national stereotypes about Germans as they appear in multilingual scenes. Quite importantly, Hauner also treats silence – in the case of *Le silence de la mer*, a deliberate renunciation of any verbal expression as an act of resistance – as a language in its own right, thus critically questioning its 'classical' understanding.

While likewise focusing on the depiction of multilingual Germans in the film *Joyeux Noël* (2005) and the TV series *Un village français* (2009–2017), **Marie-Christine Scholz** enquires into the reasons for a paradoxical near-absence of French language errors in their main protagonists, absence that runs counter to the otherwise aspired authenticity of representation. While her discussion largely confirms some of the observations made by Hauner and Fasbender inasmuch as she discerns one persistent onscreen stereotype about polyglot Germans as 'evil (Nazi) masterminds', whose perfect language mastery enables them to control and thwart other people, Scholz also identifies another one of apparently recent arrival: that of a

‘good educated European’ who is fluent in several languages and open to a peaceful dialogue of cultures.

Thea Kruse introduces the European heritage film as a topical genre entrenched in cosmopolitan ideology of the EU and explores the role of multilingualism in two recent biopics, *Django* (2017) and *Vor der Morgenröte* (2016), both set in the time of World War II, where the deployment of foreign languages serves to mediate the protagonists’ experience of displacement and migration. While the multilingual settings of these films and their characters’ proficiency in different languages parallel the prerequisites of the European Union language policy, the negotiation of one’s identity, as Kruse’s analysis shows, takes place through the language one ‘feels at home’ with, be it a national language of the country of origin or, as in jazz musician Django’s case, music as an alternative means of personal expression and meaning creation.

Whereas in *Django* and *Vor der Morgenröte* alike, their historical protagonists’ identity is still caught in a force field between world-openness and homesickness, as **Ralf Junkerjürgen** shows in his discussion of two Erasmus movies, the now-classical *L’auberge espagnole* (2002) and *Júlia ist* (2017), dedicated to the eponymous student exchange programme, a cosmopolitan and multilingual identity of Europeans should be an achieved project by now, if only among educated socio-economic elites. While back in the early 2000s, the filmmaker Klapisch still addressed issues of *intercultural* communication and competence, which account for much conflict and comical effects, fifteen years later, Elena Martín presents the viewership with a vision of an essentially *transcultural* and multilingual group of European youth whose common challenges no longer consist in language mastery or knowledge of foreign ‘cultures’ that are shown as a given but, rather, in possibilities of individual growth and evolvment towards personal independence and maturity.

A similar vision is largely adopted by actress **Laura Weissmahr** who also had a role in *Júlia ist*. In the interview she gave in the framework of the conference, Weissmahr addresses, among other things, the command of multiple languages – in her exceptional case, seven – as an increasingly normal capacity in young educated Europeans born and raised in cosmopolitan settings, and discusses the implications of ‘natural multilingualism’

both for the film and for the shaping of the identity of the new transcultural generation.

While the previous three texts uphold the prospect of a cosmopolitan European, and possibly global, society in which, as Weissmahr puts it, “[t]he language shouldn’t be much of an issue anymore”, in her analysis of the acclaimed *Game of Thrones* HBO series (2011–2019), **Gala Rebane** shows the lasting legacy of Eurocentrist elitist ideologies on screen. Despite its ostensible ‘democratic’ and ‘liberal’ pull, the series extensively deploys linguistic performance of its protagonists as means of narrative characterisation in terms of race, social descent, power, but also personality traits, and by so doing subtly recreates many of the real-world ‘fine distinctions’. This concerns not only different varieties of English and forms of accented speech but also the invented languages exclusively created for the show.

As the example of *Game of Thrones* evidences, close attention to language-related issues are on the rise even in those fictional genres in which monolingual habitus traditionally prevailed. **Cristina Alonso-Villa** addresses the action film – “not a genre of words” by definition – and pinpoints the growing sensitivity of its makers and audiences towards the actual wealth of languages spoken in global networks of organised crime, international politics, and intelligence agencies alike. She shows a transition toward a new type of onscreen heroic masculinity that does not solely involve brawn anymore but features new skills and faculties. In the mastery of foreign languages Alonso-Villa sees a novel weapon of this new action hero who dispenses not only physical blows but is also at the ready to deal out ‘multilingual kicks’, with the *John Wick* franchise (2014-) providing some spectacular examples of such topical polyglot prowess.

The awareness of language as a ‘weapon’, or a ‘tool’ to exert social power, settle conflicts, and achieve solutions on a global scale pervades, indeed, much of contemporary cinema productions including Hollywood-based ones. **Gemma King** charts out Denis Villeneuve’s takes at multilingualism in his increasingly transnational filming career from trilingual *Incendies* (2010) to heptalingual *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), providing an in-depth exploration of *Arrival* (2016) – a film where language as faculty is presented as a powerful agency of its own. Not only do Villeneuve’s

characters cross borders of national territories in the process of multilingual communication; as King shows, in this science fiction drama, Villeneuve conceives language in terms similar to those espoused by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf in their much-disputed language relativity hypothesis: as a formative matrix of the experience of reality.

The collection of essays closes with **Christian Koch's** chapter on presentation modes and narrative functions of Kichwa, the main indigenous language of the Andean Community, in four short films produced in the Imbabura region of Ecuador: *Ayllu* (2010), *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda* (1996), *Feriado* (2014), and *Qué tan lejos* (2006). On one hand, Koch shows the recent shift of attention towards a more balanced representation of actual societal bilingualism in Ecuadorian cinema that used to be dominated by Spanish, identifying the long film *Killa* (2017) as a definite breaking point in the long-standing colonial legacy in film. On the other hand, his enquiry also provides an innovative break from a likewise long-standing tradition in language studies which, with the sole exception of translatology, hardly ever focused on films as a source of linguistic material.

While the scope of this book is by necessity limited, as is the case in all such publications, it nevertheless offers a relatively rich variety of disciplinary takes on and methodological approaches to multilingualism in national and transnational cinema, both historical and of recent date. While individual chapters give in-depth insights into specific phenomena, in their entirety, they also provide a diachronic and diagnostic framework to address such superordinate issues as power struggles and language ideologies, linguistic stereotyping and identity construction, as well as language at large, its nature, makings, and function on screen and beyond.

Considering the centrality of linguistic expression and multilingualism for this book's concept, we deemed it appropriate to give the authors free reign in using the English varieties of their choice and liking, and would like to thank them once again for their fruitful cooperation and insightful contributions. Last but not least, and on behalf of the authors just as much as on our own, we are expressing our most sincere gratitude to Jeffrey Karnitz for his constructive critical remarks and attentive proofreading of the manuscripts.

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Patrick Zabalbeascoa

“That’s just what we need, a fourth language”. Multilingual humour in film and television translation¹

Abstract: With the benefit of insight into multilingualism in fiction within the field of audiovisual translation, and careful analysis of just a few examples, I show that there is a compelling argument to be made for updating traditional approaches to translation. In all actuality, the core model of translation may be flawed or incomplete, as multimodal, audiovisual, multilingual and humorous factors and variables must be incorporated into translation models from the beginning, rather than as an afterthought. Otherwise, we will not be in the best position to make a positive scholarly contribution to the worries and needs of the profession today, nor for the foreseeable future.

Initial considerations

Translation is typically seen as an operation performed on language, usually written, generally well-written (e.g., prestigious prose), in order to transmit the meaning expressed in one language (L1) into the words of another language (L2), thereby involving two languages (L1=>L2 interlingual translation) to reflect the meaning of a single message. In western cultures, this tenet regarding translation is deeply rooted in the tradition of Bible translation (the requirement of a faithful, non-interventionist 100% ideal rendering of a “superior” source text), even when discussing translation issues of other texts, sacred or otherwise (e.g., Nida [1964] 2003). Thus, there is a pervasive influence of the principles of Bible translation in almost all approaches to translation in Europe and its former colonies. In short, these principles involve a view of the importance of being faithful to the words of the source text (as “the Word of God”). The trouble with models of translation based on this kind of thinking is that so much is left

1 This chapter was written as part of the Trafilm Project, (FFI2014-55952-P) funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. This publication reflects the views only of its author.

out, especially as societies and their types of text production and communication evolve. This is precisely what makes audiovisual humour and language variation such interesting, challenging topics (I prefer the term *challenge* to *problem*, as I see translating more like searching for solutions to different puzzles than something troublesome or somehow “philosophically” unattainable) simply because these three aspects of humour, audiovisual communication, and multilingualism are not, to put it mildly, typical traits of the Bible. First, then, we need to accept that translators are faced with such issues on a daily basis. Second, we need to come up with an account of translation that can include these challenges and their related issues.

Another “given” in many traditional explanations of how translation works and how translators should work is that there is no room for creativity (and, hence, authorship) or subjectivity while translating. Translators should be objective and faithful, which seems to mean that they should work mechanically. This objective, mechanical quality of ideal translation is the stuff of dreams of computerised, automatic machine translation tools. Two points on this. One is that we might be tempted to say that such dreams are ultimately impossible given the inherent ambiguity of natural human (pragmatic) communication. The other is almost the opposite: we already have such popular internet translation tools as Google Translate that do quite a decent job in many cases. Curiously, these seemingly opposite views about machine translation – one, its “theoretical impossibility”, the other, the reality of its real-life success and efficiency – actually, somehow, lead to the same logical conclusion. If human translators wish to stay in business they will probably find more work precisely where more creativity is required, as the space in translation that humans can claim for themselves, admitting that machines can already translate “Biblically” very efficiently, and more and more so, is the space kept for texts that call for creative, imaginative solutions for their translated versions, and when more creativity is required, the “theoretical impossibility” of machine translation is that much more apparent.

So, as we break free from the narrow view imposed by looking at all translations as if they are governed by the same laws as Bible translation (the Nida-esque principle of: what is good for the Bible and its translations must also be good enough for any other type of translation) we will not

only find that alternative models can be proposed but even that it is ultimately for the good of human translation as a profession, and for its preservation. For Steiner (1975: 234) the infallibility of machine translation is questionable inasmuch that translation is a hermeneutical task, “not a science, but an exact art.”

Objective (nonmanipulative) 100% rendering that requires no interpreting on the translator’s part as a model for Bible translation and general translation theory is paradoxical and unrealistic because it overlooks the wealth of divergent interpretations of the Bible. This model seems to demand that the translator should do the job of providing “the (single) interpretation” of the text (in the words of a second language for those who cannot read the first) for all to be able to grasp the full meaning of the Scripture. This amounts to an expectation that the translator could settle all disputes over how to interpret the Holy Scripture, thus surpassing all Biblical scholars and authorities.

In his “For an Abusive Subtitling”, Mark Nornes (1999), somewhat like George Steiner (1975: 236–296) before him, likes to use metaphors of violence to make a forceful argument. Although “abusive” is probably used so as to sound deliberately misleading, given that the alternative Nornes offers is “corrupt”. *Abusive* is borrowed from Philip E. Lewis ([1985] 2000) to express that translators must cope with dissimilarities between languages, “proposing strong, forceful translation that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalences or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own”. *Corrupt* subtitlers respond to the abusive challenge by “conspiring to hide

Table 1. Extremes of ideal writing (ST) and ideal translating (TT) vs. a cline of real-life in-betweens and variation

Ideal TT	=> 0% original, 0% manipulation, 100% equivalent. Only input: ST. Mechanical, objective application of translation “techniques”.
Ideal ST	=> 100% original. Only input: blank page and author’s mind. Creative, authorial writing process.
Real-life variability	=> A range of degrees of originality, creativity and intertextuality (i.e., input from other texts and other sources of inspiration) for producing both STs and translations.

their repeated acts of violence through codified rules and a tradition of suppress... feigning completeness in their own violent world”.

Aspects of multilingualism and language variation in fiction

Back in the 1980s, when one of us two started looking into literary bilingualism, scholars working on the topic often felt obliged to justify their interest in such an unconventional domain of study. Bilingual writers and multilingual texts were still very much frowned upon, being freak-like exceptions to the unwritten rule of monolingualism in the literary realm, notwithstanding the (by now well-documented) fact that every century and every genre has seen its share of language-related experiments. (Delabastita & Grutman 2005: 11)

The first and most important aspect of multilingualism in fiction is that it is part of the fiction, in the sense that it is a rhetorical device. And we know that it is a rhetorical device because its alternatives are also rhetorical devices. Thus, authors have several means of reflecting the presence of different languages either in the prose narrative, or in the dialogues, through reported speech or direct speech (e.g., Sternberg’s 1981 widely accepted distinction between homogenizing and vehicular matching). An even earlier strategic decision to be made by any author is whether or not they actually want to reflect language diversity, depending on their choice of topic, its treatment, the point of view and the other ingredients of prose fiction or screenwriting. What follows from this is the realization that *language variation*, in composition (e.g., novels, film scripts) can take on different forms and perform different functions. Now that there is more research available on this topic, and presumably much more to come, we are in a position to say that there are more variables and possibilities than might be apparent at first glance. For example, typically and traditionally, little prior thought had gone into the issue, so when it came to Bible-style translation norms and criteria, the unwritten rule was literally not to do anything with “other languages” that may appear in a text; i.e., transcribe such passages or pieces of dialogue as if they were a “strange body” within the text, similarly to what some would do with proper nouns and numerals, as if one could translate “around” these textual elements (words denoting numbers or names, or foreign words) and just deal with the “normal” parts of speech.

The phenomenon we are interested in looking at is the use of languages other than the text's main language. I think the focus should lie on language variation in films (Ellender 2015) rather than multilingualism as defining a type of film. Types of films, like polyglot films, multilingual films (Heiss 2004; de Higes 2014; Beseghi 2017), present the theoretical need to define conditions for type membership, such as Díaz-Cintas (2016): "there must be at least one character speaking more than one language".

Typologies can sometimes be problematic, so rather than offer multilingual films as a new type of film (like Díaz-Cintas 2016), or having to define the borderline between what would constitute an instance of an additional language regardless of any specific film or novel, it might be more productive (theoretically and practically) – and less contentious – to speak of instances of *language variation* (Corrius & Zabalbeascoa 2011) as a means of referring to a phenomenon characterised by the co-presence, mixing or code-switching of different languages, dialects, sociolects, creoles, made-up languages, diglossia, jargons, slang, and even special cases of speech disorders or temporary speech impediments (*conditioned speech*, see Zabalbeascoa & Sokoli 2018: 2, 13, 19), such as a film character being gagged, emotionally upset, anxious, or under the influence of medication, drugs or alcohol (Parra, forthcoming). Specifically, what I mean by language variation as a challenge for translation is the presence of relevant features within one or more parts of a text that make certain utterances stand out from the main variety, usually referred to as *the language of the text*. We might even dare to go so far as to regard all texts as being potentially multilingual – whereby ST=L1+L3 and TT=L2+L3. L1 and L2 representing the main language, and, following the Trafilm project (Zabalbeascoa & Sokoli 2018: 5), L3 is a notation for the purpose of translation analysis to indicate the presence – in the source text and the target text – of any language or any form of language variation other than the main language of each text.

Aspects of humour translation

Just as the case of language variation and intratextual multilingualism, humour is another feature of writing and fiction that is not at all prominent in the Bible, and even less so in Bible translation recommendations. If

anything, humour of the unwanted variety is strongly ill-advised. Nida warns us not to use any words in our translation that might give rise to unwanted puns or other such humorous interpretations (e.g., for Jesus riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, use the word *donkey*, not *ass*). For many scholars, there is no place for humour in the Bible.² What does that tell us about theories and norms for translation based on the Bible model? Even if we cannot say for sure whether or not there is any humour in the Bible, no one can deny the pervasiveness of humour in all kinds of texts, particularly, but certainly not exclusively, comedy, much of which has to be (and is) translated. There is a gaping hole in translation “prescriptions” that do not really cater to humour other than by coincidence. The fact of the matter is that humour is a feature of human communication that often requires considerable *creativity* to be translated. The all-too-easy cop out is to claim that humour is by and large impossible to translate, and that successful foreign-language versions do not really constitute translation (according to some narrow conception inspired by Bible translation practices) but *adaptation* that is not really *translation proper*.

Furthermore, it also seems to be the case that the most challenging form of humour for the purpose of translation is humour based on wordplay. Overlapping with the issue of wordplay we might add that something that is always tricky to render in translation is the presence of metalinguistic features. This is not surprising given that translation (largely interlinguistic) involves changing the wording from one language to another. Therefore, that part of a text or message which can easily be expressed in several different ways (in one or more languages) because the propositional value or the intention of the message (the function) is much more important (and univocal) than a specific choice of words (the form) is usually easier to translate (especially by Google or Bible scholars, or literal-minded people) mechanically and “objectively” than the metalinguistic references or intense exploitation of language-specific grammatical features (e.g., phonemes, graphemes, polysemy, multiword expressions)

2 There are also scholarly attempts to claim the presence of humour in certain passages, but they seem more the result of first accepting humour as a positive value for any text and then setting out to find it in the Bible, which surely must encompass every literary virtue.

and their various forms of interaction. A text talking about or stylistically exploiting aspects of a particular language is not such a straightforward matter for translation as a weather report or an explanation of the solar system. So, if humour is not easy to translate (except for happy coincidences) and language-based texts or passages are also not easy, it might be fairly safe to say that humour based on wordplay, aspects of a particular language and linguistic commentary must presumably be very challenging. There are a number of different factors that can make a translation challenging or difficult (e.g., lack of means or motivation) but what I mean here is *challenging* in the sense of textual and crosslinguistic complications calling upon a translator to be more resourceful, including creativity as well as among other skills. Creativity is a taboo in some areas of translation, but it should not be that way for all areas. On the contrary, it is becoming increasingly urgent for translation studies to either ditch the prescription of translation “techniques” (with a name that implies that they are mechanical and objective) or at least complement them with creative alternatives for more challenging cases.

Metalinguistic humour and humour based on wordplay must include humour derived from intentional comical use of language variation and combinations of different languages (L3, as defined above).

Aspects of audiovisual translation (AVT)

We have pointed out that language variation and humour are the poor relatives of reflection on translation criteria and possible strategies for interlingual transference, due to the historical weight of sacred text translation traditions. So too is AV communication, because sacred texts tend to be written, and the Bible predates the invention of cinematography by many centuries. Of course, the bias towards written texts is not only thanks to the Bible but also promoted by linguistic science, that starts off with studying phonemic, graphemic and lexical units and combinations used for the construction of (monolingual and serious) messages by grammatical rules, while proposing that there are only two modes of linguistic expression: oral and written, leaving out for a much later date the fact that real-life natural (and artistic) human communication relies heavily on body language, paralinguistic items, context (setting, occasion, etc.)

and social norms of interpersonal interaction and textual composition and publication, not to mention multimodality. Just as translating “other languages” (L3) within a text constituted a non sequitur among translation scholars, and humour was largely ignored, so too any attempt to update mainstream translation theory based on the reality of audiovisual translation has been delayed until quite recently, especially if we consider that film was invented more than a century ago, and translation and multilingualism have been associated to film production and distribution almost since its birth.

The title Chaume (2018) chooses for his review of the state of the art is already revealing in itself: “Is audiovisual translation putting the concept of translation up against the ropes?”. Chaume largely picks up from where Zabalbeascoa (2012) left off in considering how research into audiovisual translation reverberates around the whole area of translation studies and its theorization. Chaume focuses in particular on the need to find the right place in the field for new terms and concepts, such as: localisation, (trans) media adaptation, transadaptation and transcreation. I think this needs to be done within the field of translation studies, and it should not become an excuse to strengthen a caricature or a prejudiced view of an ideal extreme definition of translation (Table 1) that is incapable of recognising anything other than linguistic equivalents of written words as actual translations.

AV text composition is a complex process, undertaken by the film director, its intellectual author, (although the situation is often the result of important contributions from others, like the scriptwriter), and this process involves creating a semiotic construct that combines verbal and non-verbal elements which are conveyed through audio and visual sign systems (words, music, sound effects, photography...). AV translators are rarely allowed to change non-verbal semiotic elements, but at the same time their work is expected to fit in seamlessly with the rest of the fabric of the audiovisual composition. This can become a daunting endeavour in the case of humour translation, given that humour can be created and communicated through any combination of all sorts of semiotic means.

There are various modes of AVT, the most frequent being dubbing and subtitling. Each mode presents limitations and possibilities of its own, with a wide range of solutions (real or hypothetical) available to the translator for rendering humour faithfully or creatively. Some of these include a

combination of dubbing and subtitling within the same version; this practice is normally considered a strategy within translation for dubbing but never for subtitling. Subtitling is not only used within dubbing but also may be used for humorous purposes by the film director, i.e., as part of the AV source text. Examples of this kind of practice can be found in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, among many other titles listed in Wikipedia (subtitles as a source of humour).

In any discussion on the options available for translation, and AVT in particular, three main factors must be taken into account. First, the technology of the moment; certain things can only be done if the necessary technology with which to do them is available, and this is as true for translation as for anything else. Actually, all forms of translation are dependent upon technology, with the exception of liaison (as represented, albeit farcically, in example 1) and whispered interpreting without note-taking. Writing necessarily involves some form of technology (pen, paper, keyboard), as well as voice recording and transmission, too. Nowadays, computer technology is pervasive in producing, publishing and receiving translations. We need to explore and be aware of how existing and available technology might affect or promote certain types of (creative) translational solutions. However, technology might be expensive, so, the second factor to consider is the financial feasibility of any translation project or particular translation strategy. A traditional notion of financial aid is called patronage (Lefevere 1992); more recent terms would include the need to make a profit. We cannot propose translation solutions that are too expensive for our budget, even if the technology has developed sufficiently. Connected to the financial aspect is also the labour market; some problems pointed out about dubbing, for example, have more to do with a shortage of different voice actors and actresses than any theoretical shortcoming.

The third essential factor to make a translation project work becomes relevant once we have overcome technological and financial problems, and it has to do with social acceptance, including the aesthetics and ethics of the proposed solution. In the case of AVT any solutions proposing “radical” changes (manipulation) of the non-verbal elements may be faced with firm opposition by stakeholders and/or the general public, who may defend a position that audiovisual texts should not be “tampered with” to preserve their integrity. In short, in searching for AVT solutions a translation

project first has to find the necessary technology, a feasible budget, and short- or medium-term social acceptability.

Once we have sorted out these three essential contextual factors, it is then time to concentrate on the textual make up both of the source text and its translated version(s). Audiovisual composition, as we have pointed out, entails developing a complex web of relationships among all the AV elements, words and otherwise, audio and visual. While admitting that there may be others, these relationships include: complementarity, redundancy, contradiction, incoherence, separability, aesthetic value (Zabalbeascoa 2008: 33–35). Using a different terminology, Yus (2019) applies a similar approach regarding relationships between words and nonverbal items to the study of memes and multimodality.

[...] in search of different categories that these memes might fit into depending on the relationship existing between picture and text and its impact on the quality of the eventual interpretation. An underlying assumption in the chapter, broadly within a cyberpragmatic framework [...], is that different text-picture combinations will have an impact on eventual relevance by yielding different balances of cognitive effects and mental effort, the latter sometimes compensated for by an offset of additional cognitive effects in the shape of implications. (Yus 2019: 105).

Critically, and unfortunately, Yus uses the term “text” with the same meaning as “words”.

Presentation of examples

Example 1: Frasier, season 2, episode 21. Scene Seven, “Get out your dictionaries.”

In the living room of Niles’s house, Gunnar – a tall, athletic young German – is getting his fencing gear ready for Maris. Niles Crane comes down the stairs, followed by his brother Frasier, and his Guatemalan maid, Marta.

Niles: There you are! [Gunnar looks up] Yes, I’m talking to you, strudel boy! No one seduces my wife and gets away with it! You probably thought because of my refined bearing and swimmer’s build that I wouldn’t put up a fight for the woman I love. But you’re dead wrong, because real men have a thing called “honor!” [Gunnar stands up; he’s a full head taller than Niles] Yow! You wouldn’t know about that, would you? You wouldn’t know how decent people behave. You wouldn’t know the meaning of the word “rectitude!”

Frasier: Niles, he wouldn’t know the meaning of the word “dog,” “cat,” or “pencil!” He doesn’t speak English, remember?!

Gunnar: [to Marta] Wieso ist er so böse?

Marta: Ich weiß es nicht.

Niles: Marta! You speak German?

Marta: ¿Qué?

Frasier: ¿Uh, habla alemán?

Marta: ¡Sí! Yo trabajé para una familia alemana que llegó a Guatemala después de la Guerra.

Frasier: Apparently, she worked for a German family that turned up in Guatemala... [deep voice] just after the war.

Niles: Well, well. Good, good! She can translate for me! Tell her to tell him—

Frasier: Niles, Niles, just wait! Look at him! God, if he knew you were calling him “strudel boy,” he’d be wiping his feet on your face!

Niles: Hang that, Frasier! If there’re going to be scuffs, they’ll be scuffs of honor.

[to Gunnar] How dare you steal my wife! [to Frasier] Translate!

Frasier: Oh, all right. [to Marta] Senor Crane quiere que preguntas a Gunnar, uh, “¿Cómo se atrevez a robar mis zapatos!” (sic.)

Marta: [to Gunnar] Was fällt dir ein, meine Schuhe zu stehlen?

Gunnar [draws his sword on Niles]: Schweinehund! [Frasier and Marta jump back in alarm.]

Niles: All right, fine, you want to challenge me? [throws off his jacket and grabs the other sword] En garde!

Frasier: Oh yes, Niles, that’s just what we need, a fourth language!

Example 1 shows metalinguistic traits (talking about language) as an important ingredient of the scene, which links up a series of interdependent jokes. The TV series’ main ST language, L1, is standard American English, and one of its manifestations of language variety is L3-British English, in the speech of the in-house physiotherapist character, from Manchester, England, who appears in most of the episodes. In this particular scene, L1 is combined with other languages (L3) in the construction of the jokes as well as the development of the plot and further reinforcement of the portrayal of the characters. L3, then, includes German (L3Ge), Spanish (L3Sp) and French (L3Fr), each one an interesting case in its own right. For a successful sitcom such as this one, foreign languages may be potentially funny simply because they are foreign, almost regardless of which language it is and what is being said in L3. From this point of view, we might say that this kind of technique is better used sparingly because the effect will probably soon wear off, so it is used in small doses

or very skilfully, yet we might also say that the fact that there are so many in example 1 has at least the potential of making it funnier, due to the contrasting sounds that interact and seem funny when thrown together in such a manner. The next step towards a slightly more refined analysis would be to ask how each foreign language can be funny in a different way or for different reasons.

For the purpose of translation analysis, a key variable is the relationship between L1 and L3 in the ST. German, Spanish and French have different relationships with English (and its speakers, originally American in this case), morphological and sociohistorical, and these can be exploited for humour. An important factor is comprehensibility, and a scriptwriter can “plant” L3 words at certain points according to their being readily understandable, both phonologically and semantically. Some American viewers may even know the whole sentence “Ich weiß nicht”, and most will at least be familiar with the *Schwein* part of *Schweinehund*. Other instances of the L3Ge and L3Sp utterances will not be understood, and others may be deduced from situation, setting and body language (like shrugging) combined with paralinguistic features (like raising one’s voice and sounding angry). This leads us to another consideration. Who uses each L3, and how does their behaviour and appearance confirm any stereotype or preconception the audience might have about a language and its native speakers? The German speaker is tall and blonde; the native Spanish speaker is short and dark.

Languages are not necessarily spoken by their native speakers, and another source of humour can come from languages being “butchered” by non-natives, and, even worse, by parodies of the language so far removed from grammatical correctness that they must be regarded as pseudolanguages. An instance of this might be *Frasier*’s “¿Cómo se atreve a robar mis zapatos!” (i.e., “How dare you steal my shoes!” with a misspelling of *atreve* for *atrevez* possibly to indicate poor command of the language, just as *senor* for *señor*) with the conspicuous “z” and the total disparity of actual and intended meaning. In the film *A Fish Called Wanda* an uncouth character has a prominent trait of speaking pseudo-Italian because his girlfriend likes to hear foreign languages while having sex... and he does not really know any. In example 1, Marta is a native speaker of Spanish, a fairly proficient speaker of German, but a poor speaker of

English, if we are to believe that she is not just pretending. However, the real joke is on the two psychiatrist brothers, Frasier and Niles, who are caricatures of pedantry, and one aspect of this is their belief that they can speak foreign languages much better than they really can. The humour related to these aspects is in keeping with a well-defined theme/joke that runs through the whole series: Frasier and Niles frequently find that their displays of pedantry often get them into trouble and they tend to be embarrassed by people who are less assuming but more knowledgeable. In this case, Marta is the only one who can act as a competent interpreter and she leaves the impression (not only in this scene) that she does not do a better job with her English oral skills because it is to her benefit to feign ignorance.

What Frasier calls the “fourth language” in example 1 – the French expression *en garde* – provides additional proof of the complexity of an issue (L3 sprinkled at certain points of an otherwise monolingual text) that may seem more straightforward at first glance. This short expression shows how easy it is to assign a language to a phrase too quickly. The words may come from French, they are French, but they are also the only way to say *en garde* in English, and from that angle the expression is a legitimate part of the English language. So, is it L1 or L3 (and how should it be rendered in translation)? The answer to this intriguing question is, like so many things in translation practice and analysis, that it depends; it depends on the context of the words and the text it appears in. This means that translators and translation scholars should not be called upon to do a linguist or a lexicographer’s job of establishing which words and expressions belong to which language or of drawing the lines that divide one dialect from another, or upgrading a dialect to a language, and so on. For translators and translation researchers, what matters is the interpretation of the text as a whole and the parts of the text as they help construct the overall meaning of the text, as a vital part of the interpretation stage of the translating process.

Sometimes a foreign word or expression will be given L1 status as a loan word, but not always. In example 1, *en garde* is analysed as L3Fr because there is textual evidence: Frasier literally says “not a fourth language” thereby highlighting its L3 status, even though some English speakers will simply think of *en garde* as the only (L1) way you can say

that in English. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that part of the joke relies on this paradox (irony) that *en garde* can be either a foreign language (L3) or an L1-English expression (borrowed from French). Even in this case, and for the purpose of translating, not *en garde*, but “not a fourth language” the translator will have to present the viewers of the TT (dubbed or subtitled) with something that can plausibly be interpreted as four different languages or otherwise incorporate changes from the ST proposal of combining utterances in four different languages into a smaller number and compensate accordingly for the “not a fourth language” utterance. This particular challenge might be easier if *en garde* were the usual expression in L2, but this is not the case for Spanish at least, which uses “*en guardia*”. So, the TT for Spain cannot use the strategy of the ST script, that is, exploiting the ambiguity of whether an expression borrowed from a foreign language can be ascribed to both the main language and the L3.

Valdeón (2005) demonstrates in a case study of *Frasier* how a particular combination of main language+L3 can be – and is – reversed in the target text (especially when L3ST happens to coincide with L2) to maintain the effect of language variation or multilingualism; his analysis shows that if the priority is to embarrass the Crane brothers for their pedantry by speaking foreign languages, and this is often done in the English-speaking world (for historical reasons) by resorting to French words or sentences, in France the same effect can be achieved to portray pedantry via English dubbing over the utterances that were originally L3 French. So, the ST version combining L1Eng+L3Fr is rendered in the TT as L2Fr+L3Eng, thereby avoiding a conflation of languages, given that the whole point of the joke is to combine and display two languages.

One key factor that would affect this instance of “four languages” is the scenario where the ST is translated for Spain and Germany, and even France, and/or other countries that use one of the languages of example 1, Spanish, German or French for their dubbing or subtitling. This poses the following problem: if, for the case of Spanish dubbing, L1-English is translated into L2-Spanish, in all instances, and the various L3 instances are all kept the same, then we only have three languages because L2-Spanish will replace both L1-English and L3Sp, and likewise for ST L3Ge for TT-German, and ST L3Fr for TT-French. The dubbing practice in Germany is more systematic than in Spain when dealing with L3 and every effort is

made to keep L3 unaltered in the TT, whereas Spanish dubbing practices show room for some creative solutions, although the general tendency is the same. Example 1 is one of the rare examples where the German dubbed version indeed changed ST-L3Ge to a different language in the TT despite keeping ST-L3Ge as German in translation in almost all other cases. The German dubbed version for example 1 has created a fencing instructor who is Danish instead of German, enabling “four languages” to be kept: L1-English rendered as L2-German, L3Sp and L3Fr remain the same, and ST-L3Ge is substituted for TT-L3-Danish. In Spanish dubbing, L3 status can be kept by the same means, if the maid’s native language were changed to Portuguese, for example, making her Brazilian in the TT. Another option would be to make her variety of Spanish stand out as quite different from standard Iberian Spanish, in an attempt to make ST-L3Sp be perceived in the TT as L3-Guatemalan Spanish dialect while L1-English is rendered as L2-Iberian Spanish. This would be forcing the idea that there are “four languages” unless she mostly used dialect words that are not known by most Spanish citizens. It is striking that in Spain Spanish utterances reflecting varieties of Spanish from other parts of the world are often redubbed with Iberian Spanish accents, resulting in a mismatch of Iberian Spanish accent spoken by characters supposedly coming from Argentina, Mexico, and so on. This kind of mismatch is never funny nor is it meant to be (even when dealing with comedy). On the contrary, Latin American varieties of Spanish are avoided across the board for dubbing (Menéndez-Otero 2013) in Spain because of the fear among distributors that they will sound ridiculous, or off-putting, as has historically been recorded when such attempts were made.

Example 2. *The Hudsucker Proxy* (script corresponding to minutes 66’47” to 67’11”).

The hula-hoop has suddenly been discovered by the American public and become hugely popular overnight in the USA. This scene is part of a newsreel report about the new craze.

NEWSREEL 72: A scientist with a Van Dyke beard, wearing a laboratory smock, is facing the camera. Behind him we see other scientists studying a hoop that has been hooked up to a gyroscopic-looking device that analyzes its various movements and properties.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER: What scientific principle explains the mind-bending

motion of this whipping wheel of wonder? A title supered over the Scientist's chest identifies him as Professor Erwin Schweide.

SCIENTIST: Ze dinkus is kvite zimple, really. It operates on ze same principle zat keeps ze earth spinning 'round ze sun, and zat keeps you from flying off ze earth into ze coldest reaches of outer space vere you vood die like a miserable shvine! Yes, ze principle is ze same, except for ze piece of grrrit zey put in to make ze whole experience more pleasant (the spelling here is copied from the script).

(Spanish dubbed version 1:06:47 - 1:07:10. SCIENTIST: En realidad es un chisme muy sencillo. Se basa en los mismos principios que mantienen a la tierra girando alrededor del sol y que les impiden a Uds. salir volando de la Tierra a los fríos confines del espacio donde morirían de forma miserable. Sí es el mismo principio... excepto por el pedazo de tierra que le han metido dentro para que la experiencia resulte más agradable.)

Although Hollywood, among others, tends to use L3Ge mostly as part of the Nazi stereotype (see, for example, Bleichenbacher 2008: 47), there are occasions when the stereotype is a different one. In example 1, we saw a German fencing instructor, who was not overtly playing on the Nazi stereotype. Christie Davies (2006), in his response to Dirk Delabastita's (2005) otherwise brilliant study of Shakespeare's exploitation of multilingualism in drama (so relevant, too, to the *Henry V* film adaptation), offers an interesting word of caution about rushing into racist or colonialist explanations for all comic use of foreign languages. Example 2 shows the stereotype of the (mad) scientist. While there does seem to be a stereotype of Germany as producing much good science and engineering, it is less clear whether the German scientist sounds a bit sinister because he is a scientist or, maybe, because (as in the *Frasier* reference to post-war Nazi refugees) he might be a Nazi, after all; or a former refugee escaping from Nazi Germany. The funniness of the scene relies more on the sinister overtones of the scientist's utterances than his foreignness, even though there is room for a possible sinister stereotype of (German or all foreign?) scientists. The joke relies on the incongruity of explaining something that is pleasant and fun in terms (and tones) that are quite the opposite. In the Spanish dubbed version, unfortunately, there is no trace of foreignness, nor the sinister tone and tempo having applied standardised (dubbing) speed and intonation, as well as normative pronunciation. All that is left, then, are a few words "morirían de forma miserable" [you would die despicably] that sound more out-of-place with the rest of the

discourse than sinister. In example 2, L3 is not German proper, but non-native English, sprinkled with the odd German word. The Spanish version not only leaves out the few German words but also misses the opportunity to create a caricature of (off-putting) scientific discourse with such key words as *grit*. What this means is that it was not even totally necessary to reflect so clearly the German origin of the scientist, especially if Spain does not share the German-scientist stereotype, for a successful or efficient dubbed version of the humour intended in the ST. The translation strategy would focus on reflecting (somehow, with or without L3) the incongruity of a stereotypical scientific discourse that is completely stripped of empathy, yet used to explain something that is meant to be a toy and fun for all. The Spanish translation for the dubbed version shows how this was not the case because it does not attempt to achieve an unpleasant discourse through L3 (the accent mostly, plus *Schwein*), nor through the other ST rhetorical devices with carefully chosen words like “grit”, and the weird AV-ST pauses in midsentence that sound more threatening than instructive.

Conclusion

With the benefit of a growing number of studies on the issue of multilingualism in audiovisual fiction within the field of translation studies, and careful analysis of just a few examples, I hope to have shown that there is a compelling argument for revisiting and updating traditional thinking and models applied to translation. I believe that the case presented here does not only affect the small area of translating language combinations that appear in audiovisual comedy, but any general claims to be made about translation as well. It is no longer an attempt to convince scholars and professionals that we need a more refined theory and set of guidelines, but a realisation that the cornerstone, the core model of translation, may be flawed or incomplete. In other words, multimodal, audiovisual, multilingual and humorous factors and variables must be incorporated into translation models from the very beginning, not as an afterthought or a concession to a late trend. Otherwise we will not be in the best possible position to make a positive scholarly contribution to the worries and needs of the profession today, nor for the foreseeable future.

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Laura Langer Rossi

The translated text. The aesthetic impact of language on transnational cinema

Abstract: The presence of the translated text in audiovisual realms, particularly those of multi-language films, is an issue of *mise-en-scène*. Focusing on transnational cinema, this essay proposes to expose how translation can either improve or depreciate the cinematic experience, thus calling for a more conscious use of subtitles and dubbing, making aesthetic and political concerns more central when dealing with audiovisual translation.

Introduction

The issue of the translated text in an audiovisual medium is not an easy one to approach. Especially with increased internationalization processes in the audiovisual market, which was fostered by the emergence of International Film Festivals in the sixties, easier access to foreign content derived from the digitalization of the medium, and the rise of international coproductions (a consequence both of current financial strategies and the cultural scenario of interconnectivity that has emerged from globalization). With that, almost every film produced today receives at least one translated version in addition to its original. However, despite the hegemonic presence of the translated text today, little work has been done in understanding its influence on audiovisual narratives, restraining any theories to the realm of its linguistic value in decoding the foreign discourse.

However, if translated text is an unavoidable requirement for films to travel beyond their national borders, one has to face the issues that its presence potentially causes, disturbing some canons of the cinematic language. From visual to audio composition, this alien-format-inserted-into-a-finished-work is not only incapable of fully merging into the film's aesthetic, but it also requires a certain level of aesthetic differentiation to serve its purposes. Furthermore, in its overall standardized form, such a text may be deemed incompatible with specifics of particular forms of onscreen speech. After all, the translated text is primarily a decodification

tool within a field filled with the ambiguity of artistic expression. As long as this difference in purpose remains, these formats will be doomed to a problematic relationship.

It is in the realm of multi-language films that the issue is much more central. In such films that are composed in two or more languages, the presence of the translated text is a given; that is, the presence of the translated text in such films is borne simultaneously with the very decision to make a multi-language film. From the moment it captures the encounter of two languages, or the moment where, through montage, two or more forms of speech are put into dialogue, issues of translation are activated. Even if the choice is made to not translate the dialogue, this decision already reflects on the politics of translating. Translating, not translating and how to translate are important decisions in regard to the audience's reception of said material.

But in a global context, the reception of the film and its message is bound to find spectators that are knowledgeable in all of the languages, spectators that know none of them, and some who are somewhere in between. So even the translated text as a tool does not fully control all levels of knowledge, although it can be used to communicate how the filmmaker intends to negotiate the message with the public. Used as the film's active first person speech, this translated text can go beyond decodifying language, and also serve as a political tool.

However, despite its potential on the content level – not to mention its hegemonic presence – little work has been done in understanding the place of the translated text in the overall audiovisual language beyond its linguistic value. How subtitles have escaped almost unharmed from studies on aesthetics up to this point is unsettling at best. Even when the aesthetic implications of the translated text are acknowledged by academia, the conclusions drawn seem to mainly reinforce the ongoing assumptions that either such an alien presence has been normalized, or that there is no foreseeable way to tackle the issue besides recognizing its existence as an issue of audiovisual aesthetics.

Responding to such a deficiency, this essay proposes to expose how much translation can either improve or depreciate the cinematic experience of multilingual films by approaching the translated text as one of the many codes that compose what we understand as an audiovisual work.

Raising its status in cinema studies by calling for a more conscious use of subtitles and dubbing – one that goes beyond the approach of the translated text as means to access codified information – and thus entering into the aesthetic and political fields – invites reflection on the possibilities that could arise from a more conscious use of translation in cinema.

For this reason, the article will start by briefly approaching the space of the *written text* in cinema through mapping out what has been hinted at so far in terms of an *aesthetics of the translated text* within both the fields of cinema studies and translation studies. The second part of this essay will then present examples from multilingual films, in order to discuss the political and aesthetic impact of language on transnational cinema. On one hand, in order to highlight the concept of a *forbidden subtitle*, the article will offer special case studies of translated texts that clash with the aesthetic intent of the source. On the other hand, it will conclude with the analysis of films that have actively and positively responded to issues of audiovisual translation, highlighting the successful examples found in Hansen-Løve's *Eden* (2014) and István Szabó's *Szerelmesfilm* (1970), and finally a special focus on the treatment of the translated text in the multilingual border film *Sleep Dealer* (Alex Rivera 2009).

The translated text in cinema

In *Cine y Traducción*, a one-of-a-kind publication that is fully devoted to the issue of translation in cinema, Chaume defines the audiovisual text as a semiotic construction simultaneously composed of different codes in order to produce meaning, but he does not acknowledge the translation as a part of such a compound (Chaume Varela 2004: 19). Such perspective reflects the general feeling of the field, where the translated text – be it in the form of subtitles, dubbing, voice-over or any other format – has been seen only as an unavoidable facilitator that allows films to travel. That is to say that, for no apparent reason, a medium which throughout history has had to defend its status as *Art* has permitted one of its components to be understood as a mere communication tool, with no other function besides relaying information to the spectator.

Both in cinema studies and translation studies, very few authors have focused on issues of the translated text as an audiovisual presence

on screen. And, as noted before, when the issue is acknowledged, the approaches remain mostly conservative, as mere exposition of trends or fatalist conclusions that show no way out. Yu Haikuo, for instance, presents a very timid approach to the subject when he acknowledges that the “viewer’s attention is inevitably divided between the subtitles at the bottom of the screen and the rest of the image” (Haikuo 2015: 500). While the accuracy of the observation is well supported by him, Haikuo shies away from predicting ways in which movies could actively respond to this fact. Even Yves Gambier, a strong advocate on the ideological issues surrounding translated text, restricts his contribution to the aesthetics by hinting to the fact that, although usually studied through the perspective of linguistics, “AVT is actually a multi semiotic blend” (Gambier 2008: 11). Although acknowledging the translated text as one of the many codes that compose the compound medium of audiovisual works, Gambier’s research is much more concerned with the specifics of translation in relation to language.

Abé Mark Nornes, a translator of cinema, presents the most comprehensive approach to the theme, one that crosses ideological and aesthetic issues. Nornes affirms that subtitles and dubs are “legible, but inescapably foreign” (Nornes 2007: 8), and therefore they are always implying issues of appropriation. In *Cinema Babel: Translation in Global Cinema*, not only does he advocate in favor of the visibility of the translated text, but he also discusses the negotiation of meaning that occurs between the original text and its translation. Incorporating Phillip E. Lewis’ term *abusive translation*,¹ Nornes dedicates an extensive chapter in defending the need for translators “who are [...] not transparently naked”, and, defending the idea of a positive kind of abuse, calling for “translators with attitude” (Nornes 2007: 27).

However, as his rhetoric targets only the *makers* of the translated text, it is understated that the reach of Nornes’ call for revolution is limited to

1 “The real possibility of translation – the translatability that emerges in the movement of difference as a fundamental property of languages – points to a risk to be assumed: that of the strong, forceful translation that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own” (Lewis 2000: 270).

the realm of post-production. That is to say, that both the examples and the provocations he includes place the weight of creation exclusively on the translator and their decisions, which are made in the post-production stage. With that, this theory shows a reaffirmation of the tendency to deal with the translated text as an attachment, something that comes *after the fact*.

Offering another perspective in approaching the aesthetics and ideology of translation, Michael Raine affirms that “subtitles are both the way and in the way of an encounter with foreign films” (Raine 2014: 152). The author discusses the space of subtitles on screen, but also brings about spectatorship by debating issues of audience reception, due to the fact that the original text and translation are coexisting mediums in subtitled films. From a political standpoint, Raine is in direct dialogue with other works by Christine Heiss (2014) and the before mentioned Yves Gambier (2008), all of whom make important connections between the access granted by translation in foreign products and the deriving assumption that foreign culture is as equally accessible and de-codified as its language that was translated.

Such perspective of the translated text, however, seems to trend towards downgrading the weight of subtitles, and for that reason this perspective should be absorbed with care and with a critical eye. In the work of Massidda, for instance, while acknowledging that subtitles’ primary issues – space and time – are the same as cinema in general, Massidda affirms that “good subtitles are supposed to pass unnoticed” (Massidda 2015: 46). This assumption has little ground in formal analysis, as even if one hopes for transparency, one must readily admit that, in practical terms, the translated text is always noticeable.

Furthermore, it can be said that in order to work, their audiovisual presence has to be not only noticeable but even foregrounded in relation to the other elements of image and sound. Dubbed films are known for having an unbalanced mixing of sounds and effects precisely because, in lacking the visual reinforcement of lip motion to communicate dialogue, the dubbed version must reduce other sonic information in order to present the message more clearly. Equally, the recurrent choice of yellow for subtitles – with a black margin around the letters – is not meant to make these elements *pass unnoticed*, but rather to make them stand out.

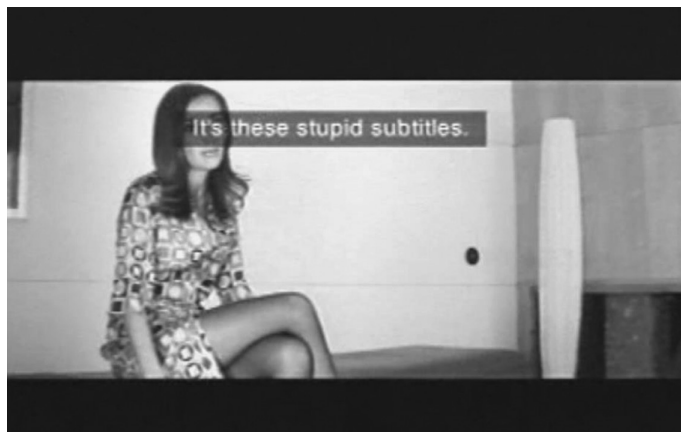


Figure 1. Still taken from *Aristoc. For legs. For eyes* (Portuguese-subtitled version), 00:00:33 ff.

The aesthetics of the translated text

The level to which the translated text has been marginalized is exemplified by the little space allotted to subtitles in the recent book devoted to the written text in film by Michel Chion. While acknowledging that “subtitles are the case par excellence of the continued presence of non-diegetic written material over diegetic space” (Chion 2017: 54), Chion is never interested in further exploring the consequences of its problematic presence – which is in constant dialogue with all other elements on screen – while still not being perceived as a full component of the film per se.

His book does however present an interesting concept for understanding the effects of subtitles. When discussing the time factor of the written text in film – that is, that the film passes, and therefore reading acquires a predetermined duration that is decided by the enunciator rather than the receptor – Chion uses the concept of *entrelire*: “to read briefly or indistinctly, such that we can only half-read (Chion 2017: 124). While the author exploits this concept in relation to our experience of the written text, one could easily argue that a similar effect happens to the other elements of the audiovisual format precisely as a consequence of having to split the attention of the spectator with the written text. To an extent,

the other visual and sound elements, when coexisting with subtitles, can only be half-experienced, for audience attention is partially devoted to decoding the written text on the screen.

A helpful example that illustrates this idea is the 2000 advertising campaign for the pantyhose brand Aristoc,² which uses a self-referential plot that focuses on the idea of subtitles as a barrier. In this commercial, one that targets an English-speaking audience, an Italian couple is having an argument about the fact that the subtitles shift from the top to the bottom of the screen, being placed on the bottom of the man's body, but on the top of the woman's body, therefore covering her face in order to avoid covering her legs (Fig. 1). The comic effect sought after by this narrative relies precisely on the normalization of the presence of subtitles, as well as a sort of aesthetic transparency inherent to them. The gag works on the assumption that its audience will not be able to perceive that they are being denied access to the woman's face until her speech addresses it, thus creating a comic moment through her punch line (*Aristoc. For legs. For eyes.* 2000).³

This experience serves to illustrate Zoe De Linde & Neil Kay's argument that "when both mediums are competing for the same visual channel, as with text and image, they can only be processed in succession" (De Linde & Kay 1999: 32). Thus, it states how much the spectator renounces watching the other elements of the audiovisual medium in order to retrieve information from the translated text. And because this collateral effect is not restricted to productive uses of the *dispositif*, this example serves to inform that, even when the subtitles are not being used purposefully, it is still necessary to consider the fact that any visual element presented in a subtitled film will share the attention of the audience with this other source of relevant information. In other words, subtitles have the power to attract the eye of the audience away from what would traditionally be its focal point.

2 "Aristoc. For legs. For eyes" (Ad campaign by Miles Calcraft Briginshaw Duffy, Media planned and bought by MCB, 2000, US, spoken in Italian with fixed English subtitles).

3 To see this example in an audiovisual format, please refer to the video essay which complements this article: <https://vimeo.com/216354327>

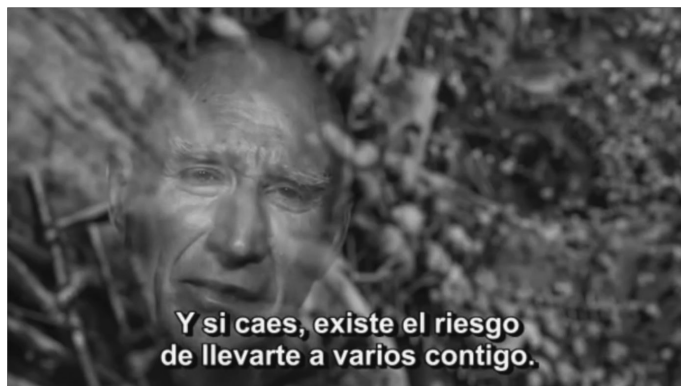


Figure 2. Still taken from *The Salt of the Earth* (Portuguese-subtitled version), 00:02:25 ff.

Translation scholar John Minchiton assertively analyzed that viewers “blink down at the subtitles for information. They ‘photograph’ them rather than read them” (Minchiton 1993: 15). But while his intention was to diminish the weight of the translated text on screen, the concept of the spectator *photographing* subtitles seems adequate as the term serves as a reminder of the basic nature of subtitles on screen: their presence as a visual sign. But whereas in the Aristoc advertising campaign the issue of subtitles was a central tool in building the narrative of the pantyhose advertising, most audiovisual materials do not build off of the relationship between image and translated text.

One example of the unproductive relationship between film and translation is present in the film *The Salt of The Earth*,⁴ a documentary about a Brazilian photographer based in France who made his name as an explorer and photographer of native cultures and their struggles. Despite the clear relevance of cultural interrelations presented by the theme of the film, the use of translated text adopted by the film does not respond well to the challenge of integrating the material.

4 *The Salt of the Earth* (Juliano Ribeiro Salgado, Wim Wenders, 2014, France/Brasil/Italy, mainly spoken in English, French and Portuguese).

As it spans multiple languages, the material has the opportunity to make a constructive use of the mash up of cultures which were made iconic in the photographic work of Sebastião Salgado. Instead, the film approaches subtitling through its traditional standardized practices, even when the translated text is superimposed on recurrent multi-layered compositions that visually braid together the recorded interviews and Salgado's original photographic works.

The complexity of said compositions, which include layers of photo, interview and voice, resist the presence of any other added layers, such as the bold-lettered subtitles placed on the low center of the screen (Fig. 2).⁵ The result is that the format chosen for the inclusion of translation, instead of having the multiplicity of languages building on the theme – an artist who worked on diverse cultures – the translated text rather ends up disturbing the construction of the composition, to the extent that linguistic diversity becomes a limitation, rather than a creative resource.

Nevertheless, as disruptive as they may be, the role of subtitles in affecting the audience goes beyond its influence in mere composition. An experiment conducted by a group of researchers at Clemson University and compiled in the article “Visual Reaction to Subtitling in Television and Media” shows that subtitles have the power to increase the attention level of the spectator. Combining both the use of eye-tracking devices to map the sight patterns of viewers, and questionnaires to measure the retaining of information, the group found out that, while subtitles tended to draw eyes away from the other visual components, the effort put into understanding the increased number of layers made the audience more attentive to the events portrayed in the film (Bryant et al. 2004). This is a particularly interesting finding that supports the potential of the translated text to be used in cinema as a creative source of meaning, since it implies that the translated text could be used to draw attention or highlight elements, in a similar manner to how filmmakers nowadays make use of close shots, sounds, colors, focus; in short, all elements available to construct the message of the film.

5 To see this example in an audiovisual format, please refer to the video essay which complements this article: <https://vimeo.com/216354327>

This power of attraction via subtitles may not have been largely acknowledged in the past for its aesthetic potential, but this aspect can certainly be felt in many filmic examples. Whenever it is being used without agency, however, it brings no major benefits. For instance, while capturing the attention of a spectator might be very productive in many cases, in the case of sequences which rely heavily on fluidity, provoking the excessive concentration of the audience towards the written text might get in the way of creating the effect that should derive from a rhythmic experience. One example can be found in *Faubourg Saint-Denis*,⁶ a segment of *Paris I love you*, the French version of the global phenomenon of contemporary city homages, where famous filmmakers are joined together to produce short films exploring aspects of different nationalities. Appearing in both French and English and catering to an international audience, the film fits into the case study of films that require the translated text already from its development.

Faubourg Saint-Denis revolves around a romantic relationship between an American girl and a blind French boy. Utilizing a blind protagonist, the narrative makes a conscious choice to highlight different forms of communication evoked by the protagonist, such as voice, sounds and touch. Within this aesthetic search to pair the experience of the audience with that of a character that cannot rely on sight, there is a long section composed as a rhythmic montage, which is based on sounds, colors, repetition and movement, so refined in its time-space construction that the superposition of a layer of yellow subtitles does not integrate well in any manner (*Faubourg Saint-Denis* 2006, 00:03:27 ff.).

However, when using subtitles to make the French voiceover that accompanies the images accessible in English, this element clashes with the aesthetic needs of its rhythmic montage. This is because, in the intention to build a rhythmic message almost purely associative, several cuts are made per second, which breaks a basic rule of subtitling which advises against maintaining them through montage cuts (Kruger et al. 2015). The result is that, instead of complementing the flow of the association of images and rhythm created by the other elements, the translated text

6 *Faubourg Saint-Denis* (Tom Tykwer, 2006, France/Liechtenstein/Switzerland/Germany, spoken in French and English – segment of *Paris, je t'aime*).

focuses the attention of the spectator. In short, it acts against the intent of the sequence.⁷

However, from the point of view of conceptual intent, this section of *Faubourg Saint-Denis* is much more problematic than an action scene that might have its fluidity affected by the coexisting cuts and written translated text. This montage sequence in *Faubourg Saint-Denis* carries the weight of being more than just an aesthetic effect. Rather, the sequence seems to attempt to be the translation of a perspective which is seldomly acknowledged by cinema: a first-person account in a non-visual focalization. That is, in the impossibility of creating images as if through the “eyes” of a blind character, this builds a subjective sequence by reconstructing the impressions of the memories in more sonic/rhythmic terms. Considering this sequence as a suggestion of subjectivity, the fact that the subtitles are the only direct, objective source of information which are not inserted in the rhythmic logic that this character uses to make sense of the world represents not only an artistic flaw but it compromises the ideological relevance of such a powerful sequence. That is, it not only harms the aesthetic qualities of the scene, but it also calls for a debate on the possible ethical implications of deconstructing the experience of film beyond a mainly visual device which is proposed by this sequence of the blind character’s subjectivity.

Political implications of translation choices

In the same manner that the former example shows the power of cinema in portraying difference, the emergence of the digital and its accessible cost has made national cinema productions bloom around the world, giving voice to different cultures, and with that, the possibility of responding to Imperialist oppression. But subtitles, as many scholars point out, have the problematic power of normalizing difference. Nornes points out how the mystic machine of cinema translation “smooths over its textual violence and domesticates all otherness while it pretends to bring the audience to an experience of the foreign” (Nornes 2007: 155), while Christine Heiss

7 To see this example in an audiovisual format, please refer to the video essay which complements this article: <https://vimeo.com/216354327>

questions to “what extent the translation of the film allow the viewers to understand the complexity of a life that is very different from their own” (Heiss 2014: 1), calling attention to the fact that traditional translation in film disentangles the language variations present in international works (ibid.: 26). On the same issue, Yves Gambier spots a political implication of the use of translation in cinema, stating that the fact that the audience understands the subtitles makes them assume that they also understand the culture (Gambier 2008: 14).

But while Nornes, Heiss and Gambier may have focused on subtitles, their conclusions are applicable to the concept of translation as a whole. The phenomena observed by them can be discerned, for instance, in the trend of making multi-versions of the same film in different languages – popular in the emergence of early 1930s talkies – as a strategy to overcome the barriers posed in relation to international markets and distribution that are created by spoken dialogues. In time, due to cost and time efficiency, subtitles and dubbed versions established themselves as the primary formats of translation in film, but some rare contemporary examples of multi-version films still exist. One such is the directorial debut of Angelina Jolie, *In the Land of Blood and Honey*,⁸ a war film portraying the story of the Bosnian war that was shot in two versions: one with dialogues in the original local languages Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian, and a more widely distributed version spoken fully in English. From a practical standpoint, the English version of the film appeals to audiences because it makes a foreign film ‘easy to digest’. However, the linguistic simplification also erases the political implications of a territory dispute narrative that is raised by the multi-language version, where different languages serve as a trace of multiple nationalities, which is a key factor in telling the story of a country’s fight for independence.

Stephen Crofts reflected on the power of cross-cultural contextualization in erasing the culturally specific in national cinemas (1993: 950), going one step further than the translation specialists in the analysis of the translation text as a way to make the foreign seem tamable. With a theory which does not deal specifically with the issue of subtitles, Crofts’ theory

8 *In The Land of Blood and Honey* (Angelina Jolie, 2011, USA, one version spoken mainly in Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian, one version spoken in English).

is still valuable to the discussion since he is critical of the same issues of cultural specificity which make the standardized use of the translated text so problematic. For instance, Crofts is very critical of transnational cinema, saying that international co-productions confound nationalities and encourage the “culturally bland” (ibid.: 954). Indeed, thinking of the way the fully English version of *In the Land of Blood and Honey* blends together multiple cultures in conflict under the same form of expression, the critique made by Croft seems fitting.

However, when watching examples of self-aware multi-national films which are critical of the power relations among nations, transnational cinema does not seem to oppose the concepts presented by Croft, but rather presents itself as an evolution of them. The multilingual version of Jolie’s debut, in opposition to the fully English version, presents the possibility of reflecting on international relations more deeply since it does not renounce the cultural mark of varying forms of speech. In the film, however, the subtitles still present no form of non-differentiating between these languages, exposing the same erasure of difference presented in the English spoken version, just now through a different channel.

A different decision was made with the use of subtitles in Chan-wook Park’s *Ab-ga-ssi/Handmaiden’s Tale*.⁹ The film, which makes a critique on Japanese oppressive dominance over Korean national sovereignty, starts with an intertitle meant to inform the audience of a narrative convention: subtitles for Korean and Japanese dialogues will be shown in different colors. By making such a decision, the film shows not only its awareness as a translational product, but finds a way to actively engage the audience in the implications of the interchanging of languages, implications which could pass unnoticed to a non-Asian spectator.

During the concluding remarks of “Reconceptualizing national cinema/s”, Crofts talks about a theory by Edward Said which demonstrates that countries’ political and cultural ties with certain nationalities affects the scope of the world-view theories it produces (Crofts 1993: 952). The use of multi-colored subtitles in *Ab-ga-ssi* engages the translated text in this power that transnational cinema has, a power that helps expose such

9 *Ab-ga-ssi (Handmaiden’s Tale)*, Chan-wook Park, 2016, South Korea, spoken in Korean and Japanese).

ties and influence in local culture. For its cheap cost and effectiveness, such a resource seems like the perfect medium to, if used critically, explore transnational relations of influence and power.

Sleep Dealer,¹⁰ a US-Mexico coproduction, is also a prime example of this type of cinema, one which is critically informed of both the fluidity and concreteness of national borders. The film is a contemporary American-Mexican co-production that uses science fiction to tell the story of a future where borders are physically closed, but the digital network provides a new way to access the world beyond its borders. In the plot, this accessibility has, for the most part, a pessimistic connotation, evoking the ways in which the other continues to colonize the local, even at a distance. And while many aesthetic elements in *Sleep Dealer* are generally flawless in depicting the issue of barriers and contamination, one that particularly stands out is the use the film makes of *active dubbing*. That is, the inclusion of “instant translation” devices between English and Spanish in the original version of the film, and therefore in all subsequent translated versions. In a film about the imperialist presence of American forces in Mexican territory, such an aesthetic choice in translation critically acknowledges the English language status as the *lingua franca* (Nornes 2007: 165), highlighting both the foreignness of this cultural element and the possibility of subversion within the impossibility of the foreign to understand nonstandard discourse.

Already in the opening sequence of the film, we see the protagonist walking with his father towards a gated property. Contacting the individuals *on the other side* only through the intermediation of technology, they are received via camera and a sound device. The voice of a guard we never get to see on screen *greets* them in English by telling them not to make any sudden moves. This voice is directly followed by a computerized Spanish voice which repeats “quietos, no se muevan”. The Mexican father responds to the voice in Spanish, which is followed by a short silence left on the narrative, representing the time the device takes to translate the message into English for the other party. The following response by the guard is transmitted again in English, followed by

10 *Sleep Dealer* (Alex Rivera, 2008, Mexico/US, spoken in Spanish and English).

the Spanish instant oral translation. The conversation continues to occur in this dynamic, incorporating the breaks necessary for the machine to decodify speech, until the communication culminates in the purchase of water by the colonized Mexican locals through the use of dollars, the currency of the foreigner (*Sleep Dealer* 2008, 00:04:00 ff.).¹¹

Despite the fact that the English subtitled version provides further access to all Spanish-spoken dialogue through the written translation, the incorporation of the dubbing of the foreigner into the original version of the film shows a potential to work with the translated text as one of many elements used to convey the ideas of foreign presence and imperialist influence. Through the repetition of the same information in two different languages, the movie effectively hints at the issue it will later explore through narrative: the automatic robotic translation of the English character highlights that there is an external presence factored into the Mexican culture, one whose chosen mode of connecting with the local population was through building an automated device that mediates all relation with the Mexicans while they can be kept at a safe distance outside the gates. The need for the device in itself is evidence (maybe even bigger than the walls surrounding it) that this foreign presence makes no effort to integrate into the culture of the space they now occupy.

The power of the active use of translation in *Sleep Dealer* is undeniable, as it is through the incorporation of instant translation that the audience is provided with essential information on how this text hopes they interpret the power relation between these two nations. Nevertheless, it is also through the inability of translation – the inability of understanding – that the film continues to reflect on the issues arising from the presence of the other. That is, through emphasizing the artificial and non-incorporated presence of the other, the film links the concepts of geographic occupation and cultural alienation, hinting at an exploitative relation happening between the US and Mexico. This issue of communication is further represented in *Sleep Dealer* through the memory-seller Dolores and her interaction with her computer system through voice control. It is through this device that the characters access *Truenode*, a blog-like software where

11 To see this example in an audiovisual format, please refer to the video essay which complements this article: <https://vimeo.com/216354327>

individuals can share their memories for profit, described in the film as *the world's number one memory market* (*Sleep Dealer* 2008, 00:13:20 ff.), which establishes the globalized nature of the business.

While for the most part this system is only approached critically from an economic standpoint, there is one small segment in the film where language plays a role in contextualizing the relationship between Dolores and *Truenode* in terms of the infiltration of the foreigner into the local culture. At one point in the film when Dolores receives a good offer from an American buyer, the Mexican has a spontaneous reaction by using the idiomatic expression “híjole”, which is a shortened and much more socially accepted version of the expression “hijo de puta” (“son of a bitch”). While in local culture this an appropriate way to indicate a reaction of surprise, the colloquialness of the remark makes it unaccessible to the pre-configured automated computer system. The automated Spanish voice responds to her in a inquisitive tone “no entiendo” (“I don’t understand”), to which Dolores only laughs (*Sleep Dealer* 2008, 00:28:35 ff.).¹² Through the automated Spanish voice of Dolores’ computer system the film again highlights that, although globalized in reach, the program is foreign in essence. This small glitch in communication is enough to establish the lack of ability of the foreign technology to understand the cultural specificities of the Mexican language. That is, the incorporation of this small exchange suffices to highlight the much larger issue of global infiltration which permeates the narrative of *Sleep Dealer* as a whole. The issue of globalization is present in the subtext of the plot of the film, exemplified by the inclusion of a program which collects the local narratives of a Mexican in order to sell it in other parts of the world for profit. But it is the very impossibility of full access to Dolores’ speech which also hints to the revolutionary idea that the foreigner will never be able to fully grasp all the dimensions of the local and, with that, will never be able to fully colonize it. This subversive potential within the dominant presence of the foreigner is presented with similar intent throughout the story, and at the end of the film the protagonists are able to hack into the system of the foreigners to get revenge for the exploitation of the locals. Nevertheless, despite

12 To see this example in an audiovisual format, please refer to the video essay which complements this article: <https://vimeo.com/216354327>

these traditional cinematic methods of conveying information, these two segments that revolve around the use of language and translation retain the innovative potential to show the often underestimated power of the translated text to work in combination with other elements of the compound medium that defines the cinematic arts.

Further examples using written text

As shown above, *Sleep Dealer* is an example of the use of dubbing in a productive manner, as the translated text is used to expose imperialist foreign influences in the Mexican continent, going so far as to provoke subversiveness by presenting the impossibility of the foreign to fully grasp national culture. However, the reality of international cinema nowadays – including even *Sleep Dealer* for the most part – is to avoid dubbing in favor of the use of subtitles. In addition to historical reasons, the naturalization of its use, and the lower financial cost of producing subtitled versions, the written text is also the format preferred by film enthusiasts concerned with the preservation of the original text. Needless to say, such preservation is nothing but an illusion, generated by the fact that such technique does not involve the removal of original parts of the media (in opposition to dubbing, removing the original dialogue track). However, through the addition of the written layer, it also contaminates and modifies it, and for this reason it is important to dedicate a portion of this essay to discuss examples of films which have approached the written form of translation in a productive manner, either by showing special care in composing the aesthetics of the translated text or by including the subtitles as a source of meaning, working in an integrated fashion with the other mediums.

The French film *Eden*¹³ can hardly be considered a transnational or multilingual film. A French-only production, mostly shot in France and spoken in French, the film has only a few international contaminations that surround the figure of an American character. Although her presence is not constant, by being the first love of the protagonist, her memories and influences are frequently evoked throughout the film, and her foreignness materializes both with the use of English language and in a segment shot

13 *Eden* (Mia Hansen-Løve, 2014, France, spoken in English and French).



Figure 3. Still taken from *Eden* (English-subtitled version), 02:00:18 ff.

in New York. Nevertheless, in *Eden*, a film about different artists and their materials, the filmmaker was very careful when choosing how to depict the contents of a book written by this American character in English.

In the final scene of the film, as we see the protagonist on screen reading the book, a voiceover of the American's voice and a superposition of her image looking at the camera while reading the text is combined with a layer of written text which is added on screen. The text follows the pace and structure of her speech, appearing and disappearing as if accompanying the fluid experience of reading a poem. The multiple layers amount to a heavy but beautiful composition, which instead of ruining its aesthetics by the addition of the translated text in the form of subtitles, gives to the translated text a treatment complementary to the other elements: the text appears written on screen simultaneously in French and English, following the same logic (Fig. 3). The format chosen by *Eden* fights the constant speed of the standard subtitle format, adapting the obliteration of the message to the time of the poetry, an issue already theorized by Nornes when he addresses the different constraints of time and space present in poetry and subtitles (Nornes 2007: 161 f.).

Another film which also makes an interesting use of subtitling is *Szerelmesfilm*¹⁴. Although approaching translation in a very traditional

14 *Szerelmesfilm* (*Lovefilm*, István Szabó, 1970, Hungary, spoken in Bulgarian and French).

mode throughout most of the film, this Hungarian production, which deals with exile and concepts of non-belonging through an audiovisual form that mimics the mind process of memory, shows its Hungarian protagonist, towards the end of the film, daydreaming as he is riding the subway in France. Caught up in the conversation of a French elderly couple, the mind of the protagonist is triggered to recall memories from the Russian invasion. But the *dispositif* presents a twist to reinforce the discussion surrounding foreignness implied in this film about borders and exile.

On the English-subtitled version of *Szerelmesfilm*, the *mise-en-scène* highlights this process of becoming aware of the language of the other through showing the couple first speaking in Russian without subtitles and in a slightly de-synchronized sound. Then, when the mind of the protagonist returns to the present moment, the translated text is also used to highlight as the couple starts to speak in French, by including French subtitles to the French spoken dialogue (*Szerelmesfilm* 1970, 01:51:39 ff.). This translation choice not only helps the audience dive into the game of perceptions of the protagonist, but it also creates a distance by denying the spectator easy access to the content of the speech given in French, a language which is not the protagonist's native tongue.¹⁵ In other words, "the viewer is no longer granted a privileged position where communication barriers are overcome via the use of subtitles" (Hassapoulou 2008: 2); the audience is invited, via an active use of subtitles, to instead experience the game of perceptions that the protagonist experiences.

Closing remarks

The choice to analyze only films which deal with multi-language text from within is derived from the belief that multilingual films are inherently situated in the very center of this discussion since such films have an undetachable dependency on translation. This ontological connection to the translated text calls for a deeper commitment from those films towards a more active and conscious use of translation. As a result, a special focus of this essay was to highlight those examples which deal with issues of barriers in multi-national

15 To see this example in an audiovisual format, please refer to the video essay which complements this article: <https://vimeo.com/216354327>

relations in a globalized environment, especially focusing on the problem of borders. While the theme of barriers and miscommunications are at the very heart of the plot of all other examples given here, it is certainly more explicit in the transnational example of *Sleep Dealer*. By the use of this US-Mexican co-production which exposes the issue of physical and cultural borders, this essay tried to expose how much translation can either improve or depreciate the cinematic experience of multilingual films, calling for a more conscious use of subtitles and dubbing that goes beyond the approach of the translated text as means to access information, but also understood as means to emphasize or raise important political discussions in the films.

And while this essay ends in the positive light of the constructive examples presented in *Sleep Dealer*, *Eden*, *Szerelmesfilm* and *Ab-ga-ssi*, it is important to remember that these are a suitable starting point to provoke awareness of the need for further research on the subject, and they are far from representative of all of the possibilities of this cinema-specific medium. Most importantly, it is important to not assume that productive uses of the translated text can only be restrained to certain excerpts of the film. Rather, we see in these exceptional uses shown in these films the germ of a much bigger revolution in the use of translation in cinema, where standardized uses of any part of the audiovisual medium becomes exclusive to mass productions, with a focus on commercial uses of cinema. As for any cinema in an artistic vein, this essay hopes to have proven that continuing to dismiss the aesthetic value of the translated text not only affects the artistic value of a film, but also has an important ideological weight which has to be considered.

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Filmography

Ab-ga-ssi (*Handmaiden's Tale*, 2016). Dir. Chan-wook Park. Moho Film & Yong Film. South Korea. *Spoken in Korean and Japanese*.

Aristoc. For legs. For eyes (2000). Dir. Peter Thwaites. Miles Calcraft Briginshaw. USA. *Spoken in Italian with fixed English subtitles*.

- Eden* (2014). Dir. Mia Hansen-Løve. CG Cinéma. France. *Spoken in English and French.*
- Faubourg Saint-Denis* (2006). Dir. Tom Tykwer. In: *Paris, je t'aime*. Victoires International & Pirol Stiftung. France/Liechtenstein/Switzerland/Germany. *Segment spoken in French and English.*
- Szerelmesfilm* (*Lovefilm*, 1970). Dir. István Szabó. MAFILM 3. Játékfilmstúdió. Hungary. *Mainly spoken in Hungarian.*
- In The Land of Blood and Honey* (2011). Dir. Angelina Jolie. GK Films USA, *One version spoken mainly in Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian; one version spoken in English.*
- The Salt of the Earth* (2014). Dir. Juliano Ribeiro Salgado and Wim Wenders. Decia Films, Amazonas Images & Solares Fondazione delle arti. France/Brasil/Italy. *Mainly spoken in English, French and Portuguese.*
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Christoph Fasbender

Multilingualism in the Middle Ages Movie

Abstract: The article discusses multilingualism and the role of foreign languages in the Middle Ages Movie under a diachronic perspective, focusing on several select examples from various national traditions. It shows that until recently, the Middle Ages Movie was far less concerned with authenticity of historical representation and language constellations on screen, with the notable exception of Latin, a language which was, however, placed in a dichotomic relationship to the language of the film-makers and their target auditory as the antiquated and opaque code used by medieval Church and oppressive authorities alike to thwart the democratic and progressive spirit of the simple folk. While contemporary cinema is on the whole more attentive to language issues, multilingualism still plays a subordinate role in the films' plot, never becoming a tool of conflict resolution and intercultural dialogue. Moreover, proficiency in foreign languages is often associated with scheming and deceit.

Although there are numerous studies on multilingualism in the Middle Ages, and certainly many studies dedicated to the Middle Ages Film genre, there is, seemingly, no research on multilingualism in the Middle Ages Movie.¹ This is probably best explained by the fact that both issues – multilingualism in the Middle Ages and multilingualism in the Middle Ages Movie – have basically nothing to do with each other. Multilingualism in the Middle Ages is a subject of historical enquiry into culture and communication, and, as far as the surviving texts are concerned, a philological issue.² Those who address it try to comprehend a bygone historical period. Multilingualism in the Middle Ages Movie is, by contrast, a question of Middle Ages reception. Those who deal with it deliver a commentary on self-analysis of modern society.

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- 1 It is quite conspicuous that virtually all research on Middle Ages Movies is either concerned with topics and myths these tackle, or else, memory cultures and construction of history. The language-related dimension of these films is, conversely, hardly ever touched upon.
 - 2 For a strictly philological perspective see Putzo 2011: 3–34; Classen 2016.

1.

First of all, I'd like to make a few introductory remarks on the Middle Ages Movie. In his influential work, Christian Kiening defines it as "ein Genre, das keines ist" ("a genre that is not a genre"; Kiening 2006a: 3). Indeed, we must consider a large variety of things in order to talk about the "Middle Ages Film" in a generalising manner. As an aesthetic phenomenon, the Middle Ages Films of the 20th century were on the whole shaped by the national contexts in which they originated. The US-American Middle Ages Film was essentially different from its Russian counterpart, the French from the British, the British from the German, and so on. National cinema traditions influenced its aesthetics, and national political outlooks and social conventions informed the respective images of the Middle Ages that were created on screen.

For instance, German Middle Ages Films of the 1930s often focused on historical characters whose stories epitomised the triumph of a pragmatically oriented German folk culture over the ivory-tower Latin scholarly culture. Here, *Paracelsus* (1943) could be cited as a fitting example (cf. Wolnik 2004: 422–434). A production like Sergei Eisenstein's *Aleksander Nevsky* from 1938 can best be interpreted as Russia's threat regarding the outcome of the World War II, with the decisive battle on Lake Peipus as a prophecy for Stalingrad.³ American Middle Ages Movies from the period between 1930 and 1968 filmed under the censoring regime of the national 'Motion Picture Production Code' championed an image of feudal Middle Ages where – like in *Robin Hood* (1938) – the simple folk, who represent a community of shared democratic values, is unanimously fighting for the preservation of a constitutional monarchy of sorts (cf. Gentry 1986: 282 f.). The aesthetics of those Middle Ages-inspired films cannot be fully appreciated without a concurrent consideration of the aesthetic impact of the Western. Similarly, the Italian Middle Ages Films stood

3 The details concerning most of the films cited below can be found in Christian Kiening's filmographic inventory: Kiening 2006b, 373–445. Kiening's work complements and/or supersedes the prior overviews. For *Aleksander Nevsky* see p. 375. An in-depth analysis of the film, as well as its premises and reception, is offered by Schenk 2004: 288–373.

under a powerful influence of the visual language of the so-called “sword and sandal movies”.

In the Middle Ages Films of the 20th century we therefore observe an anachronism. In retrospect, each nation created its own Middle Ages and, as François Amy de la Bretèque holds it, this helped put forth their own myths of origin (cf. de la Bretèque 1998: 285). Spain picked up on *El Cid*, the Scots rediscovered William Wallace.⁴ This could lead both to rivalry and to strategic alliances. In the 1970s, film-makers of the French *Nouvelle Vague* attempted to reclaim for the nation the Matter of Britain, a founding myth that the Americans cinematically occupied (cf. Wodianka 2009: 284–288).

On the other hand, the Cold War also promoted a certain team spirit within medieval Europe, in the face of the common threat from the East. The French-Italian production *I Mongoli* from 1960, with Anita Ekberg as a Mongol bombshell, reaches its climax in its victory of the Alliance over the Mongolian host and its clear message: “As long as the peoples of Europe close their ranks, they [the Mongols] will never come back.”⁵

In contrast to earlier productions, the Middle Ages Movies of the 21st century are much more ‘medieval’. Here, we observe the internationalisation of the highly commercialised genre characterised by transparent ethics and catchy medieval-fantastical aesthetics. It can be shown that the end of the nationalistically-shaped Middle Ages Film is also accompanied by a change in its linguistic dimension. With that said, I am now embarking on a discussion of my subject proper: language and multilingualism in the Middle Ages Movie. I’d like to point out that my analysis should not be understood as a critique of ideology or a commentary on cultural politics but, rather, as a diachronic phenomenological inquiry. Although I also touch on the ideologies behind the use of multilingualism in the Middle Ages Film, I treat them as a part of a given historical context. In the framework of this paper, multilingualism does not possess an abstract positive value; it is first and foremost a cinematic phenomenon.

4 See Morton 2004 and Meyer 2007: 69–83 on a chauvinist reception of *Braveheart* in Scotland. However, critical research also discerned “crypto-fascist elements in American society” that are reflected in *Braveheart*: “This fabricated Scotland closely echoes contemporary rhetoric.” (Niemi 2006: 4).

5 Cf. Kiening 2006b: 417.

2.

The original language of all Middle Ages Movies is that of the country in which they were produced: English, Russian, French, Italian, or German. For this reason, the language of their main characters, the ‘lingua franca’ of the narrated world, is mostly identical with that of their primary spectatorship. This holds true for productions from the first two thirds of the 20th century. No films are apparent that are completely produced in a medieval vernacular. Historian Hedwig Röckelein holds that medieval languages are on the whole “als Kommunikationsmittel der Leinwandakteure völlig ungeeignet, jedenfalls dann, wenn man seine Kosten wieder einspielen möchte” (“entirely inadequate as means of onscreen communication, at least if one wishes to turn a profit”; Röckelein 2007: 61).⁶ Robert Bresson’s *Lancelot du Lac*, a 1974 repatriation of the Matter of Britain, would only make waves and become a sensation among scholars and experts. The anti-illusionist film concept required, among other things, passages from Chrétien de Troyes’s text in Old French quoted verbatim by the knights.⁷ At the same time, as films produced by Mel Gibson make apparent, the use of languages unknown to the audience is possible even in blockbusters, as long as it is not a tribute to antiquarian sentiments but is predicated on a clear concept of reception aesthetics.

Naturally, the fact that a modern national language cannot serve as the language of medieval film protagonists came, time and again, to the attention of Middle-Ages inspired moviemakers (cf. Osberg & Crow 1999). German productions from the 1930s favoured, for example, a constructed language whose syntax and vocabulary were oriented towards a meta-idiom of the 16th century à la Hans Sachs. Dialectal and obsolete words (“nit” instead of “nicht”, “hochgelahrt” for “hochgelehrt”) shift the spoken language back to its earlier stages of development; anacolutha and auxiliary ellipses endow the speech with an archaic expressive

6 Röckelein cites *Barbara* (1997), a Danish film, which takes place in the 17th century and where the actors speak “Old Faeroese”, as an example of an amateur production with no commercial ambition.

7 Cf. Röckelein 2007: 62; Wodianka 2009: 290–295.

power.⁸ Since that constructed language remained fully understandable for the audience, it produced emotional closeness and antiquarian distance at once. Another strategy was put forth in 1978 by Eric Rohmer, who, in the wake of Bresson, adapted Chrétien de Troyes's twelfth-century novel *Perceval*.⁹ While the protagonists spoke in modern French verses, the film was subtitled in the original Old French of Chrétien. Despite the risk of becoming a second-rate adaptation, the film was not a failure, mainly due to its artificial neogothic and anti-illusionist scenery, “die offenbar mittelalterlichen Miniaturen nachgestaltet sein soll” (“which was apparently modelled on medieval miniatures”; Müller 1982: 626).

With regard to the linguistic concepts underlying Middle Ages Films one can so far postulate the following: 1) No film uses a premodern original language as means of communication between the protagonists; 2) Most productions use the contemporary language of their primary audience; 3) Some arthouse films attempt to create a distance between the world onscreen and the spectator through the use of a constructed medievalised language that draws on obsolete vocabulary, syntax, or else, rhymed couplets. At the same time, the distance thus created is not conceived as insurmountable. The alienated language of the protagonists is a part of a discourse on otherness that extends to the entire depicted world.

The fact that language is only rarely used as an instrument of making the spectator aware of alterity can apparently be explained by the somewhat rare ambition of the filmmakers to represent the Middle Ages as a paradigmatic Otherworld. Nearly all productions are characterised by an internal stratification. While the scenic backdrop qualifies it as ‘truly medieval’ through such codes as ‘physical violence’ and ‘dirt’, the Middle Ages Movie itself foregrounds the topical issues of the society for which it was conceived.¹⁰ Therefore, the medieval society represented in the films is marked by a civilisational imbalance which the modern spectator should

8 The same phenomenon can be observed in the contemporaneous (German) novels with a medieval backdrop, for example, in Lily Hohenstein's novel *Wolfram von Eschenbach* (1943). An inquiry into the “medieval” constructed language in the art and literature of that epoch would be desirable.

9 The most up-to-date overview over the research on this widely discussed film is offered by Quast 2006: 319–331; cf. Wodianka 2009: 285–290.

10 Cf. Groebner 2003; Scharff 2007: 73–77.

interpret as a result of its asynchronical development. For that reason, every film puts forth a stratified image of the Middle Ages, in which some persons or groups appear to be more ‘medieval’ than others. Some characters hold on to their ‘medievalness’ and perish after 90 minutes. Some other characters manage to move away from their ‘medievalness’ and survive. Yet others survive their ‘unmedieval’ minority status, however through great strain. In that context, languages and language competences play an important role.

3.

The easiest way of marking off social stratification in a Middle Ages Movie by linguistic means is in itself medieval, and consists of using Latin along with the contemporary language. For many centuries, Latin was part of a multilingual constellation that sustained the life of society.¹¹ Latin alone opened pathways to education, and education alone made possible a career in the higher ranks of the Church and government. It is therefore not a surprise that Middle Ages Movies explore the social significance of Latin by introducing protagonists who speak it. However, out of consideration for the spectators, the use of Latin is restricted in all occurrences to just a few sequences, otherwise one would have to film monastery thrillers and most parts of films about Luther in Latin. In a well-calculated contrast to historical authenticity, Middle Ages Movies practically never show functionaries in key positions, clerks, scholars, physicians, or lawyers speaking Latin. The use of Latin in Middle Ages Films is limited to the Church and its representatives. On one hand, Latin characterises the elevated dignity of the Christian mass. At the same time, it also connotes a self-contained lifeworld which is, in the literary sense, ‘incomprehensible’ for modern spectators and medieval laymen alike. In Middle Ages Film, ordinary folk and their representatives usually react to this lifeworld with scepticism. While scholars, doctors, and functionaries are nearly always considered a part of modern society and are therefore conceived as speakers of the vernacular, through the use of Latin, Middle Ages Movies assert a premodern divide between the Church and the State – not in the constitutional sense

11 Cf. Langosch 1990: 15–18.

but, rather, as a separation of two clearly defined and antithetical spheres. While the laymen speak the same language as the audience, Latin functions as a code of an opaque secret society. Latin is the language of liars. Truth speaks the language of the folk.¹²

One early and certainly somewhat primitive example of that antagonism is the already mentioned German film *Paracelsus* from 1943.¹³ Right at the outset, it shows a confrontation between a town physician, who is an educated magister of medicine, and an itinerant medical practitioner who speaks the vernacular. Whereas the cultivated physician ministers with old-fashioned methods to the elites, Paracelsus places his expertise at the disposal of simple folk for free. After he had thus attracted the attention of the city magistrate, Paracelsus is invited to the local university for a disputation. He greets the students first, and the scholars, whom he calls “meine Feinde und Widersacher” (“my foes and antagonists”), last. As his adversary insists on Latin as the language of the disputation, Paracelsus remarks: “Wir sind doch hier in Deutschland will mir scheinen, und nit in Babel oder in Rom.” (“We are in Germany here if I am not mistaken, and not in Babylon or Rome.”). The magister rebukes: “Weißt du nit, daß die Sprache der Gelehrten Lateinisch ist?” (“Don’t you know that the language of the educated is Latin?”), to which Paracelsus answers: “Wollt ihr damit sagen, daß ein Deutscher kein Gelehrter sein kann?” (“Do you therefore mean to say that a German cannot be a learned man?”). The magister: “Mag der Bauer mit seinem Vieh auf Deutsch philosophieren – denn das Vieh versteht kein Latein...” (“Let a farmer philosophise with his cattle in German, for the cattle does not know Latin...”).¹⁴ On the whole, the film is a perfect illustration of the national-socialist concept of history. For our purposes, however, it suffices to say that Latin does not only stand for reactionary science. Gordon Wolnik demonstrates that the movie “die gesamte vorgeblich volksfremde Geistlichkeit des Mittelalters [...] diskreditiert, ohne sie auch nur zu nennen” (“discredits the medieval

12 In *Aleksander Nevsky* (1938), German knights sing a hymn in Latin, while the composer Sergei Prokofiev endows the Russian scenes with a leitmotif that is reminiscent of Russian folk tunes (cf. Schenk 2004: 345).

13 For the discussion below cf. the analysis in Wolnik 2004: 422–433.

14 Quotes in Wolnik 2004: 432.

clergy, allegedly completely alien to the people, without so much as mentioning them once”; Wolnik 2004: 432 f.). Later productions, especially those from the United States, establish an even more explicit relationship of the Church and Latin as entities that are completely separated from the life of the simple folk.

In *The Sword of Lancelot* (1963), Cornel Wilde offers a somewhat more gracious version of the opposition between everyday vernacular and Latin.¹⁵ In one key episode, described as a “mehrdimensionale[r] Akt der Übertragung” (“pluridimensional act of transmission”) by Kiening (2006a: 97), Guinevere, the wife of King Arthur, encounters her secret love, Lancelot, immersed in lecture in the garden. The latter claims to be reading the Odes of Horace in order to get instructed in the art of self-sufficiency. The queen expresses her regret that all literature be written in Latin or Greek and therefore remain inaccessible to her. She would have loved to write an amorous letter to the king! Upon hearing that, Lancelot writes “Amo te” in the sand in Latin and translates it with “I love you”, which the queen interprets as the knight’s long-awaited confession, and rewards it with a kiss. As in Dante, here lecture is again surpassed by life. Horace’s age-old doctrine of self-sufficiency is outdone by the vitality of love, the phrase written in the sand by the cultivated man remains mute and attains its actual meaning only through the lively vernacular.¹⁶ – In the following, I shall briefly discuss two special cases.

In *The Name of the Rose*, the role allotted to Latin, and language in general, is too complex to be thoroughly discussed in the present context.¹⁷ Jean-Jacques Annaud’s much-debated and highly controversial adaptation from 1986 leads the spectator into the world, one in which educated men speak a language that he understands, whereas the laymen – if they are not mute like the girl – use the incomprehensible *volgare*. The language spoken in the film by the monks and clergy depends on the respective dubbing. That it certainly cannot be Latin is clear in the passages in which, regardless of the language of translation, one explicitly switches to Latin – as is the case with the librarian Jorge’s erotic interpretation of the Song of

15 Cf. Kiening 2006b: 438.

16 A good analysis of transmissions is offered by Kiening 2006a: 97 f.

17 Cf. Koch 2016 as the most recent publication.

Songs. But how do the international monks actually communicate with each other? Do they converse in English, Italian, Spanish or French, as their names suggest? The cosmopolite European Umberto Eco seems to have invented a language of international intelligentsia, one which logically should be Latin – and yet is not. With this, the linguist transgresses the topical rivalry between the languages. What comes to the fore is, by contrast, a common challenge.

In hardly any other Hollywood production does language stand so much in the focus of attention as in John McTiernan's *The 13th Warrior* from 1999 – a film based on a novel by Michael Crichton from 1970.¹⁸ Right from the outset, when a ship with Northmen arrives at the shore of an anonymous Mediterranean country, the Arab narrator Ibn Fadlan (Antonio Banderas) finds himself in a multilingual setting dominated by an experience of alterity. Rudimentary communication between two cultures that could not have been more different from each other is only possible because both Ibn Fadlan's old companion (played by Omar Sharif) and one of the Northmen speak Latin. The dialogues are restricted to questions and exchange of information and take place in a plausibly primitive Latin. Nevertheless, the spectators would not be able to follow the conversation if Ibn Fadlan's companion was not translating everything into the language of his master. The film presents Latin as a necessary instrument of basic communication between the East and the West (or, more precisely, between Southeast and the North). At the same time, the porous language of the two erudite men suggests that Latin cannot serve as a basis for all future communication.

We shall get back to this issue shortly. For the present, I'd like to emphasise the following points: 1) In many Middle Ages Movies, Latin as the language of the Church is clearly separated from the language of the folk; 2) The anticlericalism of the films is often conveyed through the attribution of Latin to the elites who take advantage of the gullible common Christians to suit their ends; 3) Even in the cases where Latin does not metonymically stand for the Church, it nevertheless represents a life-alienated culture which fails to help people and their human needs; 4) Just in a few

¹⁸ In recent times, the film has been discussed more frequently (cf. Aberth 2003: 59 f.; Scharff 2007: 78; Peetz 2007: 302 ff.).

cases is Latin validated in its historical significance as a means of basic cross-cultural communication. It is never addressed as a fundament for a united Europe.

4.

Insofar as Latin, in Middle Ages Films, became a code for a mostly negatively connoted culture, it also attained the status of a ‘secret language’, which is in actuality no one’s own, and which one only hears when evil is near. By this token, in the movies, Latin is essentially different from all other national languages plausible within the framework of the European Middle Ages. With its specific connotations, it fulfils a function which cannot be performed by any other language. It is not a coincidence that the films are very reserved with regards to the multilingualism in the European Middle Ages that they construct. They ignore, admittedly, the historic fact that “multilinguale Konstellationen sind [...] Ausdruck eines wesentlichen, vielleicht des wesentlichsten Bestandteils vormoderner Spracherfahrung” (“multilingual constellations are [...] a typical, perhaps even essential, property of the premodern language experience”) (Putzo 2011: 24).

Middle Ages Movies have generally little interest in imparting this “premodern language experience” on their spectators. What they show is (not only in the case of Latin) the inseparable unity of language and culture. Languages stand for oppositions. The ‘incomprehensible’ is the alien just as much as the alien is the ‘incomprehensible’.

For a long time, the problem of language competence played no role in Middle Ages Films. This also held true for the films whose plotline allows them to be defined as ‘Culture Contact Movies’, and by this token, they should actually also be ‘Language Contact Movies’. In Sergei Eisenstein’s *Aleksander Nevsky* (1938), the Teutonic Knights also speak Russian; in Cecil DeMilles *The Crusades* (1935) – a film promoting “friedliche Verständigung zwischen den Völkern” (“peaceful understanding between different peoples”) (Kiening 2006b: 388) – the English spoken by the Muslims is every bit as accent-free as the invaders’ language mastered by the English in the film *The Vikings* (1958) or by the Normans and the Frisians in *The War Lord* (1965). By contrast, competence in foreign languages is not displayed by any of those films’ protagonists.

It was in the 1990s only that the subject of language competence surfaced in Middle Ages Films for the first time. In his consequential discussion of Mel Gibson's blockbuster *Braveheart* (1995), Lukas Bleichenbacher shows the role which the language competence of a protagonist could play in a Middle Ages Film (cf. Bleichenbacher 2008: 206 ff.). I consciously use the subjunctive mood here, for this film introduces the issue without further exploring it in a productive way. William Wallace, who heads the rebellion of Scottish nobility and peasants, proves to be a multilingual hero. As he is standing in front of his enemy, the French-born princess Isabelle, conversation is first held in English. In order to give the princess a sign and also to exclude Wallace from the conversation, Isabelle's counsellor Hamilton switches to Latin. To everyone's great surprise, the warrior instantly refutes the charge made against him by the counsellor in Latin, too, and tops it off with a scornful question, inquiring whether the others would rather speak French ("Ou en francais, si vous préférez?"). For a moment, the multilingual skills of the protagonist transform him to a full member of cultivated society. Yet they remain but an unexpected weapon against temporary exclusion. The (Latin!) scheme of the counsellor is fended off, the princess and the audience are cheering. But that's all there is to it. In *Braveheart*, language competence is not conceived as an instrument of mutual understanding of the protagonists. Unlike Bleichenbacher, I therefore would not say that "these code-switches remain eminently realistic because they depict pragmatic motivations typical of real-life multilingual discourse" (Bleichenbacher 2008: 207 f.). As Mel Gibson exemplifies, language and culture competence alone are not enough to settle an archaic conflict.

Initially, I maintained that multilingualism in Middle Ages Films was not only positively implied but also had a positive impact on the course of action. This is, however, not the case in *Braveheart*. In Jerry Bruckheimer's *King Arthur* (2004), in which the Roman-bred Sarmatian Arthur rescues and subsequently marries the Pict Guinevere, the language competence of the future king is likewise not the ultimate reason for the trust of Merlin and the love of the woman. The bicultural Arthur understands the revelations of Wizard Merlin in the language of the Picts, yet he acts foremost as an antagonist against the decadent Rome and unites the British tribes as the king of all Brits. These are grand objectives that cannot be reached by language skills alone. In *King Arthur*, multilingualism has a decorative character.

The Russian production *Alexander: The Neva Battle* from 2008 offers a further example. Unlike Sergey Eisenstein's monumental film, this contemporary low-budget movie does not deal with the final battle against the Teutonic Knights in 1242.¹⁹ Rather, it depicts the conflicts that accompanied Alexander's rule in the years prior to it. These are conflicts with the rich Boyars of Novgorod, conflicts with the Orthodox Church, conflicts with the exiles, conflicts with friends for the love of a woman, conflicts with the Teutonic Order, and conflicts with the Swedes. Behind nearly all these conflicts there stands one person: a Teutonic Knight whom Alexander (not yet Nevsky) rescues as the former is assailed by Russian robbers in a forest. Only a short soliloquy clearly indicates that the Knight's mother tongue is German. He speaks Russian with his rescuer Alexander from the very first moment, and also with the Boyars of Novgorod, whom he instigates to revolt against the prince. The complot is carried forward by monks who, like all liars, obviously speak Latin. As the complot becomes known, the German Knight must flee and turns to the Swedes, with whom he immediately starts conspiring in Swedish. Once again, multilingualism has no positive connotation here. The multilingual Teutonic Knight is by far the worst character in the film: he repeatedly deceives the man who saved his life. Although the German speaks many languages, he only uses his skill to damage Russia. This seems to be an unambiguous message.

5.

Multilingualism in Middle Ages Movies is, as we may conclude, an issue that has no relevance for the plotline. Although it reproduces central conflicts between the main characters, language competence does not help to resolve them. Languages indicate borders, and these borders are brought into being by conflictual interests that cannot be reconciled. Languages themselves are not represented as barriers that prevent an adoption of a different position. Often, competence in several languages might even be associated with deception, yet never with a hope for conflict resolution.

¹⁹ Initially, the film was distributed in Germany under the ambiguous title *Alexander der Kreuzritter* (*Alexander the Crusader*; 2008), which was changed in 2014 to *1240 – Die Schlacht an der Neva* (*1240 – the Battle at the Neva*).

This could perhaps be explained quite easily. All the characters who speak several languages are already proficient in them. We don't know why the Scot William Wallace speaks Latin and French, or how a Teutonic Knight learned Russian and Swedish. Our judgment on their multilingualism could have been totally different if the spectator was given a chance to witness the process of their language acquisition. My next proposition is, therefore, the following: multilingualism does not, as such, have a positive value in Middle Ages Films. A second language becomes an instrument of conflict resolution only when its acquisition is explicitly addressed.

This is emphatically shown – and this be my last example – in the already mentioned film by John McTiernan, *The 13th Warrior* (1999). At first, a dialogue is only possible because the old companion of the protagonist and an educated Viking both speak Latin. As the Arab Ibn Fadlan sets out with the Northmen, he is on his own. The language barrier separates him from the twelve warriors who scarcely pay him any attention. In the kaleidoscope of the following sequences, we see the Vikings at the fire, talking to each other in their language. In the absence of subtitles, the spectator follows the example of the attentive Ibn Fadlan and understands a couple more words within each sequence. Like in a language manual, expressions become sentences, sentences become messages. As Ibn Fadlan is insulted by one of the Vikings, he is suddenly able to counter the offender in the foreign tongue. This astonishes even the cool Northmen. To the question of where he learned their language, the Arab answers: “I've listened.” It is, in a nutshell, the message of this ‘Culture Contact Movie’. In order to understand others, one should listen. An acquisition of a foreign language is the key to the gateway of a foreign culture. That the Vikings at first speak a language incomprehensible to all others is by no means “a nice touch of realism”, as John Aberth (2003: 60) puts it. This circumstance is of major significance for the later course of action and for the concepts of interculturality which the film builds upon.²⁰

20 Surprisingly, the conceptual meaning of the scene has so far hardly ever been analysed. Even Peetz (2007: 303) only remarked that “[Ibn Fadlan] gewinnt die Achtung der Wikinger, indem er sich ihre Sprache aneignet” (“[Ibn Fadlan] wins the respect of the Vikings by learning their language”).

6.

To summarise, nearly all Middle Ages Movies are set in multicultural contexts: Saxons raid Britain under Roman rule, Frenchmen and Brits march to Palestine, Germans and Swedes ride to Russia, Spaniards fight against the Muslims, an Arab becomes a companion of twelve Vikings. These multicultural settings may appear spectacular, and yet they fully correspond to medieval realities. Nevertheless, for over sixty years, Middle Ages Movies had been consistently eclipsing the language issue. The only exception from the outset had been Latin. It stands metonymically for a Church culture that is alien to the people, and therefore bears predominantly negative connotations. It is only from the 1990s on that other languages have started finding their way on screen. While this has repeatedly been described as “realism”, the fact that multilingualism is not shown as a regular occurrence stands in well-calculated contrast to historical medieval reality. The Middle Ages that are constructed in these films connect the use of foreign languages with calculated exclusion. Those who master multiple languages can also abuse their skill for evil purposes. Only rarely does language competence become an instrument of conflict resolution.

At the beginning, I said that the treatment of multilingualism in Middle Ages Films reveals more about Middle Ages reception in modern times than about Middle Ages proper. I see this hypothesis to be largely confirmed. The Middle Ages Movie of modernity is essentially predicated on the idea of a culturally backward premodern society in which conflicts around honour and property are solved by violence. Despite differences in details, this medieval image is a common trait of major international productions. Language competence celebrated as an achievement of Humanist grammar schools does not fit in those Middle Ages. As the dark world of the Church suggests, it is foremost an instrument of deception that is deployed on credulous monolingual people. Should it be true that multilingualism in Middle Ages Movies is “realistic”, then it is first and foremost “realistic” only so far as the concept of Middle Ages that underlies the films is concerned.

Filmography

Aleksander Nevsky (1938). Dir. Sergej M. Eisenstein & Dmitrij I. Vasiliev. Mosfilm.

- Alexander Nevsky* (2008). Dir. Igor Kaljonow. Paragon Movies.
- Braveheart* (1995). Dir. Mel Gibson. 20th Century Fox.
- The Crusades* (1935) Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Paramount.
- King Arthur* (2004). Dir. Antoine Fuqua. Touchstone Pictures.
- Lancelot du Lac* (1974). Dir. Robert Bresson. Mara Films.
- I Mongoli* (1960). Dir. Andre de Toth, Leopoldo Savona & Riccardo Freda. Royal Film & France Cinéma.
- Paracelsus* (1943). Dir. Georg Wilhelm Pabst. Bavaria Filmkunst GmbH.
- Perceval le gallois* (1978). Dir. Eric Rohmer. Gaumont-Films du Losange.
- Robin Hood* (1938). Dir. Michael Curtiz, William Keighley. Warner Brothers.
- The Sword of Lancelot* (1963). Dir. Cornel Wilde. Emblem Productions.
- The 13th Warrior* (1999). Dir. John McTiernan & Michael Crichton.
- The Vikings* (1958). Dir. Richard Fleischer. Brynaprod. S. A. & United Artists.
- The War Lord* (1965). Dir. Franklin J. Schaffner. Universal Pictures.

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Fabian Hauner

The Sophisticated, the Comic and the Nazi: Images of the German and German Language in Three Movies about Occupied France

Abstract: This article explores the various ways in which multilingualism is used to convey or challenge national stereotypes in a corpus made of films about the occupation of France during World War II by Nazi Germany. Based on the results of the analysis of the aesthetic modeling of multilingualism, an answer to how national stereotypes change in a diachronic dimension will be given. At the center of research interests are the representation of the German and the German language and how it is defined by polyglot language use.

1 The *Occupation* and the Arts – A Playground for National Stereotypes

At least since the Franco-Prussian War, Germany has been a target of derision and a source of distrust in the eyes of its neighbor, France; yet the French also often view Germany with a sense of esteem and curiosity.¹ Nevertheless, the image of Germans and their language is subjected to the experience of hostile foreign policy and the impact of two World Wars. Despite the importance of World War I, World War II also plays a significant role in the national memory of France.² It was during this war that Nazi Germany occupied France, and it is this memory that remains present throughout literary works.³ Likewise, this historical experience has contributed onscreen to many masterpieces of French cinema. In the history of French cinema, one may find comedies and tragedies, documentaries

1 Cf. Leiner (1991: 154 f.) See also Fischer (1979: 33).

2 One might think of the 8th of May, the day of Germany's unconditional surrender, as a day of national commemoration.

3 Cf. for instance Tournier, Michel (1970): *Le roi des aulnes*. Paris: Gallimard; Littell, Jonathan (2006): *Les Bienveillantes*. Paris: Gallimard. Both received the renowned *Prix Goncourt*.

and fiction which all use the times of the *Occupation* as a source of artistic creations. The representations and stereotypes of the German and the German language are at the very heart of this type of film.⁴ However, the function and the way Germans and their language are illustrated varies as time goes by, and are subject to synchronous sociopolitical developments just like memory culture on a general level.⁵ My aim is to look for the imagological implications of German language in films about occupied France, putting them into relation with other languages spoken in these films. Therefore, the description of the aesthetic and narrative modeling of multilingualism plays a major role in the analytic part of this contribution.⁶ For this purpose, I suggest that we begin with a short definition and insight into the various concepts of imagology by taking a special look at the language. Afterwards, I will sketch a short introduction of the history of the *Occupation* to clarify the historical basis of the movie adaptations. In the analytic section, I will examine three scenes taken out of movies which deal with the *Occupation*: *Le silence de la mer* (*The Silence of the Sea*, 1949) by Jean-Pierre Melville, *La Grande Vadrouille* (*Don't Look Now... We Are Being Shot At!*, 1966) by Gérard Oury and *Inglorious Basterds* (2009) by Quentin Tarantino. This corpus might seem arbitrary, but the selection will give a clear insight into the possibilities proposed by multilingualism as an aesthetic means, and how these are linked to imagology. Furthermore, the selection offers the possibility to study the development of national stereotypes and thereby the role of language use. Above all, *Inglorious Basterds* doesn't seem to fit very well with two French films. But remember: *Inglorious Basterds* is also a European production and at least

4 Cf. Hewitt (2008: 4), who rightfully suggests the role that media plays in conveying national stereotypes: "For better or for worse, in the contemporary period, the media have frequently taken on the task of transmitting and/or creating collective memories that confirm (but sometimes challenge) national identities."

5 Cf. Leiner (1991: 12).

6 For the social and political implications of language use and attribution see Kroskrity (2000: 1): "They [political implications of language] serve to keep us aware of the status of language as a primary site of political process and of the discursive mediation of those very activities and events we recognize as political."

half of the actors have a European background.⁷ Besides, Tarantino is a profound *aficionado* of European cinema,⁸ who uses a wealth of languages to attain particular objectives in the narration of this movie. Therefore, for an understanding of these procedures of language use, it is necessary to take a closer look at imagology in order to understand how to classify different language practices.

2 What is Imagology?

Imagology refers to a scientific discipline which deals with images of Self (auto-images) and Others (hetero-images) based on the images of nations in literature and literary studies.⁹ Since the 1980s, imagology has aimed to set these images into a specific sociohistorical context.¹⁰ Nowadays, we know that these images have a concrete function in shaping the identity of a group by introducing a coherent selection of hetero-images and auto-images. And as contemporary culture-clash-comedies like *My big fat greek wedding* (2002), *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* (2008) or *Maria ihm schmeckts nicht* (2009) have pointed out, national stereotypes are not just restricted to the literary field. It is not only literature which creates and absorbs these images produced by language. Also, visual arts, especially film, have – literally spoken – an important role to play. Film – due to its specific multichannel possibilities – uses two techniques simultaneously, the visual and the auditive channel, to illustrate national stereotypes. For a better understanding of the use of several languages in movies, I adopt the model by Jean-Pierre Moura, who distinguishes three levels: “le référent, l’imaginaire socio-culturel, les structures d’une œuvre” (“the reference point, the socio-cultural imaginary, the structures of a work”).¹¹ It is in particular this third level that needs to be kept in mind when analyzing the aesthetic modeling of multilingualism in the narrative structure

7 Cf. Seeßlen (2010: 41 ff).

8 Cf. *ibid.*: 13 f. and 20.

9 Cf. *Metzler Lexikon Literatur und Kulturtheorie* (2013: 332 ff.), art. Imagologie, komparatistische. A literary perspective on this topic is offered by Florack (2007).

10 Cf. *ibid.*

11 Moura (1999: 184).

of film. This will furthermore be expanded by a classification made by Lukas Bleichenbacher, who distinguishes “three major functional categories: realism, social criticism, and humour”¹² as far as language use in movies is concerned. A combination of these two models seems to be very promising in relation to the examination and classification of language use in the movie corpus, because it combines research on imagology and multilingualism. Another important aspect is mentioned by Thomas Bleicher, who states that national stereotypes change throughout time.¹³ At any rate, the common ground for the recurrent national images of France and Germany in the above-mentioned films remains the same: the experience of war and occupation suffered by the French population during World War II.

3 The *Occupation* and its Legacy

World War II deeply wounded France and its self-perception as one of the great nations.¹⁴ After the so called *drôle de guerre* – the quick and harsh invasion of France by German troops – from September 1939 to May 1940, France was divided into two zones: one occupied in the North with Paris as the political center and the so-called ‘free’ zone with Vichy as its political center under German control.¹⁵ The *Occupation* ended in 1944 with the landing of Allied troops on Omaha Beach in Normandie and the subsequent liberation of Paris in the same year. The role of France during World War II is still very controversial, especially on a political level. As an example, one can think about the shocking comments by the former leader of the Front National, a right-wing extremist party, Jean-Marie Le Pen, on the deportation of Jews and the Shoah as a “detail of history”.¹⁶ *Occupation* and even more the *Collaboration* of French authorities and parts of the population with the Nazi regime is a chapter of French history that is far away from being closed.¹⁷ When *Libération* began in 1944,

12 Bleichenbacher (2008: 26).

13 Cf. Bleicher (1980: 16).

14 Cf. Sapiro (1999: 11).

15 For a short overview see Muracciole (2002).

16 Cf. Dézé (2012: 98 f).

17 Jacquet (2004: 12).

some also began to ask painful questions: Why has there been the will to help others kill people? Could there be any reason? Possible answers were not only discussed in academies, journals or literature.¹⁸ The cinema also took a major part in interrogating French society on its involvement in Nazi politics. So, each epoch brought up a unique imagination and adaptation of the *Occupation*. By doing so, film was very important as a means of converting an historical event into an aesthetic form.¹⁹ Nevertheless, we should not forget that this wartime was also a time of language contact and multilingualism, as historical documents reveal. Thus, it is not surprising that many films have used this historical multilingualism for their own aesthetic purpose.

4 Spoken Silence: *Le silence de la mer*

A chronological approach to the chosen movies seems to be the best way to get an idea on how the conceptions of the German language changed throughout time. The oldest example chosen, *Le silence de la mer* (1949) by Jean-Pierre Melville, is completely different from the two films discussed below. Melville adapts a famous *Résistance* story to screen and, unlike the other films, this example has a direct connection with the historical setting. It is the story of the German officer Werner von Ebrennac, who is quartered within the house of a French family, which is composed of an uncle and his niece. Ebrennac reveals himself to be very francophile: “J’aimais toujours la France.” (“I always loved France.”; *Le silence de la mer* 1949, 00:18:13) And almost every evening he descends to the living room of the house to speak in fluent French to the silent uncle and niece (cf. *ibid.*,

18 See especially for the literary field Sapiro (1999: 563–685).

19 Hence Hewitt (2008: 5 f.) emphasises the role of cinema as a special media: “Because of film’s accessibility and popularity, it is perhaps the most forceful of art forms in articulating a public sense of the historical and political stakes of the war. It is an effective way to create public (national) identity via a shared story, a communal fiction that can organize recognizable elements of a past – whether as myth or as critical re-evaluation – as totalizing narrative or deconstructive multiplicity.”

00:15:21 ff.).²⁰ The German language is mainly used in flashbacks, when Ebrennac recounts stories of his life (cf. for instance *ibid.*, 00:39:15 ff.). Apart from that, the main language spoken is French, also by the German officer, for one thing because it addresses a French audience. We will see another reason for this language choice later on. The silence of the French persists,²¹ but Ebrennac doesn't give up (cf. *ibid.*, 00:37:06 ff.), even more so as he has obviously fallen in love with the niece (*ibid.*, 00:15:45 ff.).²² During his evening visits, he gives lengthy monologues about the common and too often hostile historical relationship between Germany and France, which he deeply deplores (cf. *ibid.*, 00:18:29 ff.). He seems to be blind towards the crimes the Nazis are committing in France: "Et pourtant, je ne regrette pas cette guerre. Non, je crois que de ceci, il sortira de grandes choses." ("However, I do not regret this war. Actually, I believe that it will bring about grand things."; *ibid.*, 00:19:59 ff). In a first step, I want to analyse the role of the German in one flashback (*ibid.*, 00:40:43 ff.). In a second step, I aim to enlarge the concept of multilingualism by drafting silence as a proper form of language, at least in this movie.

In this flashback, Ebrennac goes for a walk with a German girl with whom he has fallen in love. They talk about the greatness of nature and of creation. The beginning is portrayed in a sublime dignity, which is not too surprising: the German forest is one of the most romantic topics of all and thus also part of German national stereotypes. The language is pathetic, nearly biblical: "Wie heilig sind doch alle Geschöpfe Gottes." ("How sacred all of God's creatures are."; *ibid.*, 00:42:20 ff.) But with a sudden sting the atmosphere, and also the use of German language,

20 Later on, Ebrennac also tells the uncle and his niece about the feelings that he has about France. Previously, he only attempted some small talk (cf. *Le silence de la mer* 1949, 00:16:03 ff.).

21 Though the uncle is not sure whether it is right as he comments from offscreen via voiceover: "C'est peut-être inhumain de lui refuser l'obole d'un seul mot." ("Perhaps it was inhumane not to offer him a single word."; *ibid.*, 00:21:01)

22 Cf. Jacquet (2004: 38), who assumes that it is Ebrennac's aim to unsettle the niece. One might even go further and claim that Ebrennac also wants to conquer the niece like the Germans did with France, as he is saying: "Il faudra vaincre ce silence, il faudra vaincre le silence de la France. Cela me plaît." ("I want to vanquish this silence [of the young lady], one has to vanquish the silence of France. I like this."; *Le silence de la mer* 1949, 00:28:12 ff.)

changes profoundly as the girl says: “So ein elendes Biest.” (“What a wretched beast.”; *ibid.*, 00:42:35 ff.). Afterwards she even proceeds in punishing the insect by tearing off his legs: “Ein Bein nach dem andern werd’ ich ihm ausreißen.” (“I’ll tear out its legs, one after another.”; *ibid.*, 00:42:49 ff.). Moreover, she is punishing it with a kind of delight as we can guess from her physiognomy. We should also take into consideration that, here, a German girl, rather than a man or officer is saying this phrase, as we could guess from the historical background. In an imagological perspective – and as Ebrennac explains afterwards (*ibid.*, 00:43:26 ff.) – here, we have *in nuce* a short characterization of the German psyche that can celebrate nature as God’s gift by using sacred language, yet also is capable of inflicting pain mercilessly, accompanied by and expressed through the German language. The anonymity of the German girl reinforces the general validity of this supposition. Her namelessness makes her stand for ‘just any German’. The flashback provides the spectator with typical images of the German and their language, and the language itself plays its own role in the violent excess. While in his narrative digressions, Ebrennac mostly speaks German²³, on other occasions, he prefers using French, speaking a distinguished and almost accent-free variety. This characterizes him as a representative of *Bildungsbürgertum*, that is, a privileged social class with a membership gained by a profound knowledge in the humanities. He cherishes the Frenchman and his niece, but they prefer to keep silent and ignore their German fellow lodger. Ebrennac tries to become part of the French family, who refuse to take him in. They seem to know that the ideals which the French language stands for (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*) are incompatible with Ebrennac’s actions.²⁴ But as Ebrennac occupies their mother tongue by mastering it, they have no other choice but to maintain their own dignity by keeping silent.²⁵ In this movie, silence evidently has

23 There are but two exceptions: when the uncle meets Ebrennac in the *Kommandantur*, where the latter gives orders in German to a soldier (cf. *ibid.*: 00:54:44 ff.), and at the end, when the niece looks at Ebrennac directly for the first time (cf. *ibid.*: 01:01:21 ff.).

24 For instance, Ebrennac commands to shoot at the cathedral of Chartres (cf. *Le silence de la mer* 1949, 00:39:14 ff.).

25 Jacquet (2004: 39), on the contrary, regards the silence of the French as a sort of submission in the face of the German officer.

a communicative function, which is by the way also acknowledged by Ebrennac, who respects it but also tries to break it – subtly. Here, silence is a form of language and it is part of the multilingual onscreen constellation. Facing the crimes of the Nazi regime and the *Occupation*, one can only remain silent in order to preserve their own humanity.

As it is, silence seems to have a pragmatic function, and therefore we can ask, in the vein of Austin: How to do things *without* words? Some aspects have already been touched on above.

Vernon Jensen (1973) distinguishes five further functions of silence:

- Linkage function: Silence links/isolates.
- Affecting function: Silence heals/hurts.
- Revelational function: Silence reveals/hides.
- Judgmental function: With silence one agrees/disagrees.
- Activating function: Silence means activity/inactivity.

These functions can be either positive or negative. In the film, silence links the uncle to his niece and reinforces their alliance against the German intruder. It excludes and isolates Ebrennac. The silence has a healing effect on the French and their own hurt pride by refusing any word to the German officer who occupies their home. Silence reveals the chasm between Ebrennac and his compelled hosts, which cannot be bridged by his proficiency in French. Even though he often refers to the common history and an imagined common future of the two countries, the silence emphasises that they forever remain on the different sides of that chasm. And above all, silence also has an extradiegetic purpose: It activates the spectators to take sides in this interaction. The silence illustrates that the French see what has been happening in their country, whereas Ebrennac for now remains blind – as long as he speaks French. Only after a visit to Paris, where he meets some of his friends, he becomes aware of the crimes his companions are committing (cf. *ibid.*, 01:02:47 ff.). They are even discussing the destruction of France – this, again, in German (cf. *ibid.*, 01:06:12 ff.). The discussion in German certainly renders a realistic mode of storytelling; however, the German language is connected here with destruction and death – just as much as Nazi politics. Yet Ebrennac's reaction to that is paradoxical (as is the whole character): At the end, he leaves France for the Russian front. But before he leaves, the French

speak to him for the first time: “Entrez, Monsieur!” (“Come in, sir!”; *ibid.*, 00:59:15). Nonetheless, Ebrennac never really had the courage to revolt and disobey the barbarity of the Nazis (cf. *ibid.*, 00:02:49 ff.).

5 Classic and Comic: Dumb German Soldiers in *La Grande Vadrouille*

I have already mentioned comedy as a genre which has also dealt with the theme of *Occupation*. As one can suppose, a comedy set in World War II can be seen as extremely controversial – especially one that deals with the *Occupation* just a few years after the ending of the War. Nevertheless, with *La Grande Vadrouille*, Gérard Oury created one of the most successful films in the history of French cinema, and even nowadays this movie is still enduringly popular in France, which can perhaps be partly explained by the popularity of its protagonists Louis de Funès and Bourvil.²⁶ In this comedy,

26 Jacquet (2004: 44) explains the movie’s success by the favorable conditions of ‘les trente glorieuses’ [the thirty years between 1945 and 1975], a time of economic growth and wealth: “Parvenu en cette année 1966, il serait difficile de passer sous silence le phénoménal succès rencontré par *La Grande Vadrouille*, de Gérard Oury. Cette pochade, aujourd’hui intégrée au patrimoine cinématographique national ne brillait pourtant pas par son audace. Louis de Funès et Bourvil, dont l’association constituait le support et le prétexte du film, y cautionnaient une vision aussi rassurante que convenable de la France occupée. [...] Aussi différents que complémentaires [Stanislas LeFort et Augustin Bouvet], ils surmontent toutes les difficultés et délivrent un message dont l’optimisme s’accordait très bien avec l’euphorie des ‘trente glorieuses’.” (“Speaking of 1966, it would be hard not to mention the phenomenal success of *La Grande Vadrouille* by Gérard Oury. Yet this sketch, nowadays a part of national cinematic heritage, did not shine due to its boldness. Louis de Funès and Bourvil, whose joint performance was the film’s reason and justification for existence, championed in the film a vision of occupied France that was just as reassuring as it was convenient. [...] As different as they [Stanislas LeFort and Augustin Bouvet] were complementary, they overcome all obstacles and deliver a message whose optimism tied in well with the euphoria of the ‘trente glorieuses’.”) Grassin & Sender (2011: 16) see it in the same way: “Mais si le film marche d’emblée, c’est aussi qu’il offre une approche révisée, donc acceptable, des Français sous l’Occupation: pas un collaborateur, un pétainiste ni même un attentiste à l’horizon.” (“But if the film instantly became a hit, it was also because it offered a revised, and thus acceptable, version of the French under the Occupation: not a single collaborator, Petainist, nor even a believer in a wait-and-see policy is anywhere in view there.”)

Oury tells the story of three British pilots who are shot down in an airplane above Paris (cf. *La Grande Vadrouille* 1966, 00:03:50 ff.). They survive but they lose each other and find help in occupied Paris in the person of Augustin Bouvet (Bourvil), a phlegmatic painter, and Stanislas LeFort (Louis de Funès), a choleric orchestra conductor. The five have to make it to the *zone libre*, where the British have a chance to get back to England. On the frontier to this zone one of the Brits (cf. *ibid.*, 01:00:31 ff.) and the two Frenchmen get arrested by German troops (cf. *ibid.*, 01:33:23 ff.) and are brought to a German *Kommandantur*. The British are in the basement of the *Kommandantur* and use a lot of cognac to set the building on fire, in order to free their French friends, who are meanwhile being interrogated by the German officer Achbach (cf. *ibid.*, 01:39:56 ff.).

The scene starts with an exclamation by the British: “Vive Napoléon!” (*ibid.*, 01:42:28). While capitalising on both the name of the cognac brand and an evocation of an historical French political regime, the pun develops its full potential by giving birth to a community based on the opposition to the enemy – the Germans – through the language choice. The cheering exclamation confirms not only the brotherhood with the French friends but also the shared enmity against the Germans.²⁷

However, one should not forget the comedic aspects of the situation. For one thing, the humorous effect is achieved by the cheering officer’s being drunk. For another thing, the incongruity of the exclamation also serves the comic ends. A British officer suddenly hailing Napoleon in French is so unanticipated that it makes the spectator laugh. Furthermore, travesty – here, the Brits disguised as German soldiers – is also a common trope in comedy and it is hyperbolically intensified by the language. Moreover, the British use the German language against their native-speaking enemies by shouting “Feuer! Feuer!” when they are leaving the burning basement of the *Kommandantur* (*ibid.*: 01:43:30 ff.).²⁸ The sudden fire

27 This exclamation conjures up the age-old enmity between France and Britain which now must be overcome in the face of a new common enemy: Hitler and Nazi Germany. In the scene, the spectators assist in the settling of a historical antagonism by the language choice and the concomitant action.

28 In a previous scene, LeFort and Bouvet almost fled out of their holding cell in the *Kommandantur* by using the same strategy (*ibid.*: 01:38:20 ff.). Remembering

and smoke leads to such a mess that the British and the French can leave the building. The knowledge of a little bit of German enables the British to create a diversion and free their French friends from German officer Achbach (cf. *ibid.*: 01:43:40 ff.). The figure of Achbach corresponds to the classic stereotypical image of a German: an utterly ill-tempered and martial person who speaks every language in an imperative and harsh military tone (cf. *ibid.*: 01:37:58 and 01:39:46). Of course, the hyperbolic conception of this German is required by the comedy genre and the context in which he features. He masters foreign languages but imbues his speech with ‘typical German’ attributes like emphasized plosives and roaring. His character lacks in nuances and so does his exaggerated language. Achbach’s grotesque behaviour is a source of laughter because it seeks to menace but in fact does not.²⁹ So, the Germans are depicted as more or less intelligent and less flexible in language questions and thus in this film, they do not seem to be very dangerous but rather comic (unlike Hans Landa in the 2009 movie *Inglorious Basterds*). The conception of the protagonists and their language use obeys the rules of comedy, which generally seek to provide a clear and evident attribution of good and evil, which here offers big entertainment despite the high frequency of foreign languages.

As far as these foreign languages are concerned, we should also concentrate on the acoustic and scripted setting of this scene, especially the tumultuous mass scene in the courtyard, organized by the chaotic shouting of German orders (cf. *La Grande Vadrouille* 1966, 01:44:28 ff.). This

that LeFort is an orchestra conductor, Bouvet asks him if he knows the German word for ‘Enter!’. Bouvet’s argument is surprising and simple at once: his orchestra had most certainly performed Wagner. Considering that Wagner was one of Hitler’s favorite composers (this circumstance casting shade on his legacy for a long time after World War II and relegating it to the stereotypical imagery of Nazi Germany), in this scene, the French turn an important element of Nazi ideology against Nazis. And indeed, the plan works: Bouvet says ‘Herein!’ to the German guard, who enters and is knocked out by the French who escape.

29 We can think of another previous scene in this movie, where Achbach snores deeply like a big cat (cf. *ibid.*: 01:20:44 ff.). While Kremer (2017: 327) believes the scene to be suspenseful, suspense actually disappears because of the hyperbolic depiction of the characters.

use of the German language in a French setting reinforces the authenticity of the scene and emphasises the historical accuracy, according to the classification by Bleichenbacher.³⁰ This goal is maintained by the shots on German signs and guideposts inside the *Kommandantur*: “*Zimmer 3 Hauptverwaltung*” (“*Room 3 Main administration*”; *ibid.*: 01:39:28), “*Luftschutzkeller*” (“*Air-raid shelter*”; *ibid.*: 01:45:37), to cite just two examples.³¹ But one can also recognize a deteriorated tell-tale sign in French: “*Entraide sociale*” (“*Mutual Social Aid*”; *ibid.*: 01:36:36, 01:39:36). This aspect is important because it also shows the German language as an invader.³² The *Kommandantur* is placed in a former school or town hall, as we can gather from a previous scene that shows the arrest room of LeFort and Bouvet in which many symbols of the French Republic are stored. There, one can see a *Marianne* next to a *Drapeau tricolore* (*ibid.*: 01:36:30 ff.).

The functions of multilingualism in this movie might be reconstituted as follows: On an esthetic level, the grotesque, militaristic German language is needed to give birth to a (linguistic) community that is set up against the Nazis. This community emerges through shared laughter directed towards the completely unnatural behavior of the German officer Achbach, who is described as a one-dimensional character or classic caricature of a German. The spectators can laugh at Achbach because his manner of speaking does not create empathy, in contrast to the British who use French to establish a new brotherhood. In addition, the German that is being spoken is an integral component of the simulation of authenticity through its use as an acoustic environment. One could describe the use of German on the walls of the *Kommandantur* as a *mise en abyme* which reflects the occupation of France on a visual and script-based level.

30 Cf. Bleichenbacher (2008: 26).

31 In *Le silence de la mer*, Ebrennac also sees many signs in German during his stay in Paris (cf. *Le silence de la mer*: 01:04:01 ff., 01:04:32).

32 See for instance Chion (2017: 86–90) on how written signs and signposts can structure a ‘*mise en scène*’.

6 *Inglorious Basterds* or *The Cattivo* as a Perfect Nazi

Inglorius Basterds is the last film I analyse with regard to multilingualism in movies about occupied France. It is important to bear in mind that, unlike the other two examples, this movie was meant to cater to an English-speaking audience. It tells the story of a Jewish-American army troop in five chapters. The sole mission of the group led by Aldo Raine is to hunt down and to kill Nazis. Later on, the group has to make an assault on the Nazi government officials who are staging the premiere of a propaganda film in a Parisian cinema. With the help of Bridget von Hammersmark, a German actress who also serves as a British agent, Raine and two of his companions get into the cinema. There, Hans Landa, an SS-officer and evil counterpart, is already awaiting them. Landa starts an interrogation, disguised as a conversation with Hammersmark. This ruse introduces Landa as a highly intelligent but ruthless and violent detective, who is also revealed to be a polyglot. This particular scene (cf. *Inglorious Basterds* 2009: 01:46:46 ff.) demonstrates how multilingualism can be applied, again, as an aesthetic strategy.

The scene starts with a dialogue in German, which is determined by digression (cf. *ibid.*). Since both Hammersmark and Landa are native speakers of German, it would have been unnatural if two Germans used a language different from their mother tongue in a non-official conversation. It is also a dramaturgic necessity, because the three ‘basterds’ in tuxedos speak no German and only very little Italian, as we learn in an earlier scene (cf. *ibid.*: 01:38:22 ff.). The use of German makes the scene appear realistic. With Hans Landa, the German language has a narrative function which, at first glance, could be described as ambivalent. On one hand, Landa speaks in a jovial and friendly way (cf. *ibid.*: 01:47:01 ff.). On the other hand, his persistent questioning of Hammersmark makes her feel uncomfortable, because he’s pressuring the actress more and more (cf. *ibid.*: 01:47:59 ff.). When he turns to Hammersmark’s companions, she and the spectator think that the interrogation is over. She presents Hans Landa to Aldo Raine/Enzo Grolomi, Donny Donnowitz/Antonio Marghereti and Omar Ulmer/Dominick Decocco in Italian with a strong German accent (cf. *ibid.*: 01:49:04). The suspense which could be felt during the interrogation seems to be over, until Aldo Raine/Enzo Grolomi

needs to say “Buongiorno” (ibid.: 01:49:11) with a deeply American accent. While the German accent of Hammersmark could be equally attributed to a realistic mode of the production, the American accent of Raine/Gorlomi is only grotesque. Apart from a few words, none of the three American ‘basterds’ really know Italian. The contrast between the show pulled off by Hammersmark and the linguistic blunder committed by Raine/Gorlomi instantly makes the situation comical and alleviates the suspense of just a few moments before. But Landa continues his game and all of a sudden begins a flowing, accent-free conversation in Italian with the four (cf. ibid.: 01:49:13 ff.). The code-switching is quite abrupt. In fact, it marks a divide between two different genres: thriller conjured up by the use of German, and comedy ushered in by the use of Italian. In this scene, Tarantino refers to three major comical devices: disguise, language use and anagnorisis/recognition as we already know it from *La Grande Vadrouille*. Italian language also reminds of the *commedia dell’arte* on whose narrative conventions the scene possibly draws: the “basterds” have to play along if they don’t want to be uncovered. Just like the German language before, now, Italian is used to exert power and the one who manages this is the German officer Hans Landa. This distinguishes Tarantino’s film from that of Oury, in which most of the Germans remain dumb. Also, the different languages perform different functions. German is used to create suspense, whereas Italian is used for comedic purposes. At the same time, humor in this scene is highly ambivalent, because language choice and use make the spectator oscillate between fear and laughter. The scene is comical, undoubtedly, but simultaneously bitter, even evil. Landa, the perfect Nazi, forces the spectator to choose with whom to laugh and whether to laugh at all. If the spectator laughs, he automatically sides with Landa and approves of his cruel game. Thus, the use of different languages is not only based on aesthetic premises but also serves as a device for activating the spectator and making him or her choose their position. Again, with Hans Landa, Christoph Waltz conceives the image of a highly intelligent but ruthless German Nazi officer who unconditionally serves the regime, that is, until it is clear that he will not be on the side of the winner (cf. *Inglorious Basterds* 2009: 02:00:30 ff. and 02:24:01 ff.). He really seems to be a double of the *cattivo* in Sergio Leone’s film *Il buono, il brutto e il cattivo*,

whereas Raine might be regarded as the *brutto*.³³ To sum it up, Tarantino and Waltz don't exclusively draw on the image of an imperative and militaristic German,³⁴ and the German language is only one of many that are used by the Nazis to achieve their goals.

7 Summary

The aim of this study was to ask whether an imagological approach can help us to analyse more deeply the role of multilingualism in movies about occupied France. The imagological approach made clear that the visual stereotyping of Germans (but also of other figures) is often reinforced and doubled by their language use. The polyglottism of the three German figures of Ebrennac, Achbach and Landa seems to be one constant characteristic of Germans as they were imagined on screen during the second half of the 20th century.³⁵ But there is also some variation in this national stereotype concerning the language. Ebrennac mainly speaks French and does it on a very high level. The French language enables him to flee from the cruel reality that he witnesses in Paris while speaking German with his comrades. And as their own language also seems to be occupied by the German officer Ebrennac, the uncle and the niece are constrained to retire in a language that Ebrennac can't claim for his own: silence. Under imagological perspective, one sees the failure of a sophisticated German, one who can deal with abstract culture but not with the cruel reality. Achbach's language use is just unnatural and therefore funny. Imagologically speaking, the comedy genre reanimates, only some twenty years after World War II, the classic and comic national image of a German, who shouts loudly and speaks foreign languages with a typical harsh accent. Landa, by contrast, is more similar to Ebrennac as he is also highly proficient in a foreign

33 Seeßlen (2010: 57 f.).

34 The stereotype of this kind of German exists, but it is only one among many (cf. *Inglorious Basterds* 2009, 01:15:18 ff.).

35 Indeed, in all the discussed movies there are other German figures who master only their mother tongue, i.e. German. Nonetheless, this also serves the realistic setting of diegesis, which is their only narrative function. The polyglot speaker takes a larger part in developing the plot and therefore must speak different languages.

language. But on all occasions Landa speaks German, the narrative situation grows sinister, the language choice underscoring cold calculation and pitilessness as the main attributes of Landa. On screen, mastery of different languages is not unambiguously related to only one type of character. The polyglot Landa is an evil and dangerous character who has nothing of the romantic reveries of Ebrennac, nor does he display any kind of the hyperbolic eccentricities of Achbach, which, in the latter case, are reflected in his behaviour in general and language use in particular. To cite Bleicher once again: national stereotypes change throughout the years.³⁶

As far as the function of language in the creation of national images in works of art is concerned, it could be said that the aesthetic quality of multilingualism is not restricted to a salvation of external reality in the realm of authenticity. In these movies, multilingualism fulfills different functions. The German language can be associated with fear (Landa), or humor (Achbach), or violence (Ebrennac's German girl). Code-switching marks the transition from one genre to another and activates the spectator to join the game – but not without clarifying the role of the spectators as we saw in the example taken from *Inglorious Basterds*. Moreover, the languages themselves sometimes appear like another actor on screen, as silence does, in this case filling up the room where the main characters sit. Different languages do not only convey different national stereotypes, but also different ideas of the world.

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Marie-Christine Scholz

The limits of authenticity. On the flawless French of Germans in *Merry Christmas* and *Un village français*

Abstract: Multilingualism in film can be interpreted as an attempt to let the narration appear more authentic to the spectator, but filmmakers usually fail to create an authentic image of characters speaking a foreign language, since linguistic mistakes are mostly unable to be found in their speech. The film *Merry Christmas/Joyeux Noël* (2005) and the series *Un village français* (2009–2017) will hereby serve as prime examples to analyze this phenomenon.

Introduction

When foreigners appear in movies (hispanics [sic] in particular) they seem to be able to speak perfect english [sic] without making one single mistake except it seems they NEVER manage to learn how to say ‘Sir’ or ‘Thank you’... they always say ‘Senor’ and ‘Gracias’¹

This observation, posted on the internet website *The Movie Clichés List*, does not only apply to American films. If you look at European productions in which multilingual characters appear, in most cases, you will come to the same conclusion as the user of the Internet platform: If characters in films speak foreign languages, they do so flawlessly.

This phenomenon can be observed not only in characters who use English as their second language, but also in speakers of French. It seems that, on the big screen, error-free oral communication in a foreign language is not the exception but the rule. This phenomenon can be observed particularly

1 Anonymous, Language. In: *The Movie Clichés List*, ed. Giancarlo Cairella, <http://www.moviecliches.com/cliche2.html#language> (Accessed: 03/20/2018). Lukas Bleichenbacher (2008: 93) also uses this quotation in his work *Multilingualism in the Movies* to introduce the topic of multilingualism of film characters. However, he draws another conclusion from the platform post by developing the research question of whether non-English native speakers have inferior L2 knowledge in English than English native speakers have in a respective L2.

well in films in which German characters interact with French ones. The thematic framework within which such encounters take place is often a historical one; the turbulent German-French history since World War I, in particular, offers many possibilities for screenwriters.

Therefore, numerous productions take the step towards multilingualism: allowing germanophone film characters to speak German and francophones to speak French, without synchronizing the dialogues for the audience. Despite this concession to the authenticity of the narrative, it can be generally observed that characters who perform code-switching into another language do so fluently and without any mistakes.

This divergence between the claim of authentic representation that films make and the unrealistic absence of mistakes in spoken foreign languages will be discussed in more detail in this article. Exemplified by *Merry Christmas* (2005) and the series *Un village français* (2009–2017), reasons for the divergence between the claim for authenticity and the absence of mistakes will be identified. These films will be examined with a focus on germanophone figures speaking French.

Interestingly enough, most viewers do not notice the lack of characters who make mistakes speaking foreign languages – the post in the *Movie Clichés List* is an exception. To prove this, internet forums that offer the opportunity to review the respective films will be analyzed below. The platforms were selected based on the number of comments that can be found in a given language. While *allociné*, a popular French platform, is available as a reliable source, the search for a German equivalent turns out to be more difficult. However, the sales page *amazon.de* can at least serve as a guideline in this matter.

Multilingual films: authenticity for historical plots

Why, in fact, do filmmakers use multilingualism in their works (particularly in historical films), when this seems to be more difficult for all parties involved in the creation of the work? In an attempt to answer this, Bleichenbacher (2008: 26–30) discusses three functions of multilingualism in fictional texts and film: realism, social criticism, and humor.

The author defines the first aspect as follows: “In a straightforward manner, the notion of *realism* in representation means that multilingualism

in the text is motivated by the desire to represent a situation of language contact in the story as faithfully as possible” (ibid.: 26). Adriana Șerban (2012: 44) also points to realism as a reason for multilingualism in films and even claims that it is the main one. This explains why especially films based on historical events are multilingual. Ralf Junkerjürgen (2019: 312) elaborates on this point that “le plurilinguisme est en règle générale une marque de réalisme, et un film sur un événement historique ne peut se passer d’être réaliste s’il ne veut pas perdre toute vraisemblance.” (“multilingualism is usually a token of realism, and a film about an historical event cannot but be realistic if it doesn’t want to lose all veracity.”). This function of multilingualism is particularly prominent in the films discussed in this article.

Regardless of the three features of multilingualism outlined above, Alison Smith (2010: 39) reminds that, particularly for the analysis of multilingual films, “film is a communication from filmmaker(s) to audience.” Multilingualism and its use, in particular with regard to the films analyzed below, can be understood not only as a concession by the filmmakers to the reality that the film seeks to portray, but also as a narrative tool that supports the creation of the characters’ personalities. Particularly interesting in the following chapters is an aspect that Smith (2010: 39) merely mentions in passing: “The film thus imposes, or at least proposes, a pattern of language presence, organizing the languages that we will hear – how much of each we will be exposed to and in what circumstances, [...] what sort of characters will be allowed access to more than one language [...].” The analysis of the film corpus aims at answering the following question: what sort of image do directors and scriptwriters aim to produce using characters speaking several languages, more specifically: germanophone characters speaking French?

***Merry Christmas/Joyeux Noël*: error-free communication by ‘perfect Europeans’ fighting in World War I**

At first glance, the film *Merry Christmas* or *Joyeux Noël* from 2005 might be deemed a successful example of a multilingual film. The fact that it is a Franco-British-Belgian-Romanian-German co-production already indicates that the project has tried to remove its national origin and

reception limits. Based on real events, director and screenwriter Christian Carion tells the story of the fraternization of enemy troops in the First World War on Christmas in 1914.

The viewer sees characters of German, French and Scottish descent in the trenches in the first months of the war. On the German side are the soldiers Nikolaus Sprink, a famous Berlin tenor singer, and Lieutenant Colonel Horstmayer, a prima facie strict order-follower and commander. Sprink's Danish singing and life partner Anna Sörensen comes to an agreement with the Prussian crown prince that she and her lover be allowed to give a small concert for the senior officers on the front in France on Christmas. After the performance, Sprink, accompanied by his partner, returns to the trenches to sing for his comrades.

His singing can be heard across the trenches – soon he is accompanied by a Scottish bagpipe player. Sprink climbs over the trench and walks towards the enemy line, still singing. The enthusiasm of the Scottish soldiers leads to a spontaneous meeting of the commanding lieutenants in no-man's land: Horstmayer, Gordon, the Scotsman, and the French Audebert decide to bring together their combat units for Christmas – a fraternization that continues over several days.

What is so special about *Merry Christmas* is that every character in the film speaks his or her own language. As a result, the film features English, French and German, as well as Latin, which is used during the Christmas Mass. This has a special effect on the viewer, as they experience a rare phenomenon: subject to the scene, the spectator understands sometimes more and sometimes less of the dialogues, and then must focus on the subtitles. However, multilingualism also means that the events on the screen are perceived by the audience as authentic. A reviewer writes on imdb.com:

Prepare yourself, because this entire movie is not entirely spoken in English, the characters speak in French, German, and Latin as well. I love that the directors chose to do this because it allows the movie to be a true representation of the people involved in this event along with the languages that they spoke.²

2 Harris, Brea: Joyeux Noel Evaluation. In: *Merry Christmas User Reviews*, www.imdb.com/title/tt0424205/reviews?ref_=tt_ql_3 (Accessed: 03/14/2018).

But how do the characters with different first languages communicate? As for the ordinary soldiers, direct communication is mainly achieved through the use of sign language, gestures and mimics; some know a few words that help them speak French or English (such as “Merci”). For the main characters, the situation is different: The three lieutenants negotiate fluently in English. Lieutenant Audebert has no difficulties speaking English – despite his modest answer to the question of whether he knows it (“Yes, a little.” 00:49:42). Horstmayer, however, turns out to be the most linguistically gifted character in the film, and also speaks French fluently with Audebert.

Among the bilingual characters, the germanophones are especially skilled: Smith (2010: 45) states that they are depicted as “remarkably accomplished codeswitchers”. She counts eleven situations in which germanophone characters switch to French, not taking into account the scenes in which they switch to English.

In most of these cases it is Lieutenant Colonel Horstmayer who addresses his dialogue partner, who is nearly always Audebert, in French. In Horstmayer’s first switching from German to French, he explains: “Il y a un petit hôtel, rue Vavin ? J’étais là une semaine avec ma femme, ça fait deux ans. C’était notre voyage de noces.” (“Isn’t there a small hotel in rue Vavin ? I spent a week there with my wife two years ago. It was our honeymoon.”; 00:56:51). Already at this point it is striking that the lieutenant speaks French fluently. In a later scene, it becomes apparent that he also effortlessly masters verbal constructions that are unfamiliar to germanophones. After an artillery attack during which Horstmayer has given the French and Scottish troops refuge in the German trenches, they return the favor during the ensuing counterattack. When the fire is stopped, Horstmayer notes with regard to the future course of the war: “Cette fois-ci, je crois qu’on va *en rester là*.” (“For now, I believe that we will *call it quits*.”; 01:23:20, emphasis added). The use of the idiomatic phrase *en rester là* verifies Horstmayer’s high level of French. A less well-versed germanophone French-speaker would have most likely stated: “Je crois qu’on va s’arrêter maintenant.” (“I believe we will stop now.”)

But where does this character’s proficiency in French come from? The answer is given by Horstmayer himself in the course of a dialogue in which Audebert invites him to visit him in Paris after the war. Horstmayer answers:

- Ce serait... chouette. C'est comme ça qu'on dit, non ?
- Oui. Vous connaissez mieux le français que moi l'allemand !
- Je n'ai pas de mérite. Votre femme n'est pas allemande. (01:23:46 ff.)
- (– That would be... fab. It's how one says it, isn't it?)
- Yes. Your French is better than my German!
- It is not my merit. Your wife is not German. [01:23:46 ff.]

Now that the spectator knows that Horstmayer is married to a French woman, the character no longer appears to the viewer as the typical 'strict German soldier', but, rather, as a cosmopolitan contemporary, who is involuntarily involved in a war between his homeland and that of his wife. Lieutenant Audebert seems to have the same impression of Horstmayer as he responds to Horstmayer's farewell "Bonne chance !" ("Good luck!") with "Toi aussi." ("To you, too.;" 01:24:05 ff.) and uses the informal pronoun "tu" for the first time here instead of the formal "vous".

The other germanophone figure, who often and easily dives into French, is opera singer Anna Sörensen. Despite her Danish nationality, she acts on the German side in the film: she has a 'job' in Berlin, is in a relationship with a German and manages to persuade the Prussian crown prince to allow her to sing for the German officers and himself. All this calls for an examination of her special, yet not exclusively 'German', role in the constellation of the characters.

Smith (2010: 48) notes that Sörensen is the first character in the film to perform code switching. After arriving at the manor house, where the German officers are housed behind the front, she is looking for her lover in the kitchen and encounters an elderly couple. After failing to get an answer to her question in German as to where she could find Sprink, she repeats her request in French: "Euh... Pardon, savez-vous où est installé Nikolaus Sprink ? Il a dû arriver il y a une heure environ." ("Er... Excuse me, do you know where Nikolaus Sprink has been lodged? He must have arrived about an hour ago.;" 00:30:49). In Sörensen's first sentence one can hear some uncertainty; then, however, she proceeds to speak fluently and at the same speed as a native French speaker. The use of the construction "il a dû arriver" is unfamiliar to germanophones since in German, not the modal verb "müssen [must]", but the following infinitive is put into the past tense, much like in English: "er muss angekommen sein [he must have arrived]". Sörensen avoids a mistake, easily made by non-native

French-speakers, of formulating the sentence incorrectly as follows: **Il doit être arrivé il y a une heure environ.*

In other scenes in the film, too, Sörensen performs brilliantly in French at mother tongue level. Unlike Horstmayer's case, the viewer is offered no explanation for her proficiency. The probability of having acquired it as a presumably well-traveled opera singer does not explain her seemingly fluent French throughout the rest of the film. Nor can French language classes that she might have attended at school account for her smooth oral communication: until well into the mid-twentieth century, at secondary schools, French was taught, similarly to ancient Greek and Latin, with the grammar translation method. Students were taught almost no oral skills in the foreign language, but instead had to focus on learning and applying grammatical rules and written translation of original texts. Christiane Fäcke (2010: 33) writes in her introductory work on the didactics of French that learners "who take French lessons using this method will, after a few years, be able to read and translate texts by Rabelais or Flaubert, but they can hardly order a café au lait or talk about the weather in France" (transl. by the author).

How do the viewers react to the unrealistic French language skills of the characters? Is the divergence between authenticity and the portrayal of the character even noticed? The answer is no. Neither in the 721 French audience reviews on the internet platform *allociné*³ nor among the 96 German comments on the sales site *amazon*⁴ could I find a single comment or critique on the subject. Most viewers' evaluations are guided by the touching storyline.

A seemingly self-evident function of the above-average French language skills of the characters has not yet been explained: Hearing mistakes or halting speech is troublesome for the viewers of a film – particularly if this concerns the main characters with the most lines. Especially the French

3 Cf. *Allociné Joyeux Noël Critiques Spectateurs*, <http://www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm-56539/critiques/spectateurs/> (Accessed: 03/20/2018).

4 Cf. *Amazon.de Merry Christmas Kundenrezensionen*, https://www.amazon.de/Merry-Christmas-dt-Diane-Kr%C3%BCger/product-reviews/B00LAND3VE/ref=cm_cr_dp_d_show_all_top?ie=UTF8&reviewerType=all_reviews (Accessed 03/20/2018).

audience of *Merry Christmas* benefits from the fact that Horstmayer and Sörensen have no difficulty in correctly expressing themselves in that language.

In addition, communication that is free of errors and misunderstandings facilitates the progress of action in the film. Imagine Horstmayer having to look for the right vocabulary and delaying the delivery of his message when he warns the French combat unit that the German troops are going to bombard them in a matter of minutes: his speech, dotted with the typical “um” (or “äh” in German) familiar to any foreign language learner. Any words or hesitations that are unnecessary to the plot are thus eliminated from the script and do not surface in Horstmayer’s error-free speech. It is historical events that take precedence: for one thing, the storyline has to evolve clearly, for another, no trivial details are to distract the spectators from the importance of the historical moment.

It can be said that the film creates a kind of linguistic ideology of the ‘perfect European cosmopolite’: a role assumed by anyone who can express themselves well in a foreign language. It should be noted that the ‘evil’ officers who are responsible for the brutal war in the film only speak their mother tongue, whereas Horstmayer and Sörensen openly seek contact with the ‘enemy’ in English and French. Here, a contrast reminiscent of the one between the good and evil archetypes of a fairy tale is created. Junkerjürgen (2019: 320) even speaks of an “idéologie européeniste” regarding *Merry Christmas*, and Laurent Véray (2009: 163) notes in an article addressing the same film that Christian Carion offers an anachronistic revision of World War I by making the soldiers the victims of the war: “le film reprend l’idée que les soldats dans chaque camp auraient combattu sans haine, si ce n’est contre la guerre elle-même, et qu’ils se faisaient ‘casser la figure’ contraints et forcés.” (“the film draws on the idea that the soldiers in each camp would have fought without hatred, even against the war itself, and that they were compelled and coerced to ‘smash each other up’.”).

Junkerjürgen (2019: 322) emphasizes that the multilingualism in *Merry Christmas* plays a crucial role in this precise construction of a ‘European myth’:

Le traitement du plurilinguisme fait partie de cette idéologie européeniste et célèbre la devise européenne “in varietate concordia”. Dans le plurilinguisme,

l'esthétique se transforme en éthique : le film montre que l'on peut parler des langues différentes et être uni par un même sort.

(The treatment of multilingualism is part of this Europeanist ideology and celebrates the European motto “in varietate concordia” [unity in diversity]. In the framework of multilingualism, aesthetics transforms into ethics: the film shows that people can speak different languages and be united by sharing the same fate.)

It is interesting that the linguistic “varietas” the film celebrates has its limits after all: linguistic mistakes that the characters are not allowed to make.

Un village français: German occupiers speaking perfect French

En 2005, Emmanuel Daucé (producteur), Frédéric Krivine (scénariste-producteur associé) et Philippe Triboit (réalisateur-producteur associé) présentent pour la première fois à France 3 le projet d'*Un village français* et annoncent clairement l'ambition : proposer une vision nuancée de l'Occupation, en refusant à la fois le mythe ‘tous résistants’ [...] et le mythe ‘tous collabos’ [...]. (Boutet 2017: 21).

(In 2005, Emmanuel Daucé (producer), Frédéric Krivine (screenwriter and associate producer), and Philippe Triboit (director and associate producer) for the first time presented to France 3 the project of *Un village français*, clearly stating their ambition to put forth a nuanced vision of the Occupation, casting aside both the myth of ‘everybody in the Resistance’ [...] and the myth of ‘everybody as collaborators’ [...].)

The idea, which Daucé, Krivine and Triboit presented to the public broadcaster France 3, has been implemented: in its seven seasons, broadcasted from 2009 to 2017 in France, *Un village français* tells the story of the fictional village of Villeneuve during France's occupation by the German army. The series makers wanted to approach the subject with the greatest possible realism and historical accuracy, which is why Frédéric Krivine consistently developed the scripts in collaboration with historian Jean-Pierre Azéma (cf. Boutet 2017: 6 f.).

The complexity of the series commented on in the above quote and acclaimed by critics and audience alike is one of the most remarkable features of *Un village français*. However, the two most important German figures are, interestingly enough, among those who best fit the “good/evil” dichotomy: Heinrich Müller, an unscrupulous chief of the SD in Villeneuve, and Kurt Wagner, a nice Wehrmacht soldier, whose love story with the young primary school teacher of the village unfolds in the series.

The contrast between these two figures could hardly be stronger. And yet they share a quality: Heinrich and Kurt both speak – what a surprise – excellent French.

Already in Heinrich's first appearance in season 2, the viewer becomes aware of his language competence and high level of education. At an identity check south of the demarcation line, he meets De Kervern, a police inspector from Villeneuve. He questions the latter, with a slight accent but no hesitation: "Que faites-vous *du* mauvais côté de la Ligne, commissaire ?" ("What are you doing *at* the wrong side of the front, inspector?"; Season 2, Episode 1, "La loterie", 00:45:16 ff., emphasis added). A less well-versed germanophone speaker of the French language would have surely made a linguistic mistake here, by using the wrong preposition *à*, derived directly from German: **Que faites-vous au mauvais côté de la Ligne ?*

De Kervern snaps back at him: "Je croyais que les Allemands n'avaient pas le droit de venir en zone sud, monsieur... ?" ("I thought Germans did not have the right to come to the South zone, sir...?"). To which Heinrich answers: "Le droit est un rapport de forces, c'est Montesquieu qui l'a dit. Nous n'avons pas le droit de venir officiellement... Mais nous pouvons venir faire du tourisme." ("The right is a question of the relation of forces, it was Montesquieu who said that. We do not have a right to come here officially... But we can come here as tourists."). The quick-witted way in which Heinrich rejects De Kervern's accusation proves his eloquence in French. To cite yet another example of his foreign language competence, a quote from a later episode of the same season shows him conferring with a French colleague on how to track down a messenger who is delivering secret information to the Resistance: "Ce qu'il faudrait, c'est que nous sachions exactement quand ils vont transmettre un message..." ("It would be necessary to find out when exactly they are going to deliver a message..."; Season 2, Episode 3, "La leçon de choses", 00:09:23). In this sentence, Heinrich skillfully uses several difficult grammatical elements: for instance, the *subjonctif* (subjunctive mood) in "sachions" and the use of the future form of "transmettre", although the German equivalent sentence would rather consist of the verb in the present tense.

The image of the 'evil Nazi' who masters several foreign languages can be found in numerous films. The most prominent example is Hans

Landa in Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds* (2009). This "Jew hunter", as people call him in the film, is characterized by intelligence and cruelty like Heinrich Müller in *Un village français*, a man who is known in the series for his sadistic interrogation methods. Even less prominent Nazi figures in other films often speak French very fluently, like the ruthless officials who want to benefit from the Parisian Jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt in *Django* (2017).

All these examples, including the character of Heinrich Müller, give the impression that the 'evil Nazi' dominates everything: the Germans have not only occupied France, but also master the language of this country. The superiority and rigidity of the National Socialists is also expressed when they speak French.

Interestingly, Bleichenbacher's observation (2008: 83) regarding such negative foreign characters as, for instance, bad Russian guys in James Bond films, likewise pertains to Nazi figures in movies: "Code-switching and interlanguage are typical for negative or laughable minor characters, whereas higher up in the hierarchy, the evil masterminds are more often portrayed as fluent users of standard English." The same 'distribution of roles' can be observed in *Un village français*. In a scene at the border between the 'Zone nord' and 'Zone sud', a strained Wehrmacht soldier wants to ward off the angry French on both sides of the closed border. His remarks clearly show that he speaks French poorly: "La ligne fermée ! [...] Geschlossen, pas marchandise... Personne passe, geschlossen ! [...] Pas klaxonne !" ("Border closed! [...] Geschlossen ("Closed" in German), no goods... Nobody passes, geschlossen! [...] No beep!"); Season 2, Episode 1, "La loterie", 00:18:12 ff.). The "interlanguage" (Bleichenbacher) signals the insignificance of this soldier's part within the series: The spectator will already have forgotten him after this scene – this is intentional. The bilingual and evil mastermind Heinrich Müller, on the contrary, remains one of the most visible characters throughout the series.

Imperfect language mastery is not only associated with the insignificance of individual characters, but also serves as comic relief: as Bleichenbacher (2018: 29) notes, humor is another benefit of using multilingualism in fictional texts. Frequent language mistakes or strong accents in films often fulfill the purpose of portraying the character speaking as ridiculous. An example of this can be found in the French crowd-pleaser *La*

grande vadrouille (1966) in which the strong German accent of the Major Achbach stigmatizes him as stupid, incompetent and involuntarily comical (see also Hauner, in this volume). To avoid this characterization of Heinrich Müller in *Un village français*, it seems logical to use a figure that speaks flawless French with only a slight German accent.

Wehrmacht soldier Kurt Wagner also does not make grammatical mistakes typical of a German native when speaking French, however he has a slight accent. Kurt appears in the first season, where he catches the attention of Lucienne, the elementary school teacher, by protecting a child who unknowingly wrote down a homework assignment on a Resistance leaflet (cf. Season 1, Episode 6, “Coup de froid”). When he realizes in the second season that Lucienne plays the violin, he sees that they have common interests and uses this to get closer to her. While they are on a walk, he tells her: “Le Feldkommandant veut que nous donnons un concert pour le 150ème anniversaire de la mort de Mozart.” (“The Feldkommandant wants that we give a concert in celebration of the 150th anniversary of Mozart’s death.”; Season 2, Episode 1, “La loterie”, 00:19:50 ff.). Here, Wagner makes a linguistic mistake by forgetting to use the *subjonctif* (subjunctive mood) after the verb “vouloir”. Directly afterwards, however, he avoids a typical error by formulating the number “cent cinquantième” (“hundred-and-fiftieth”) in a fluid and apparently effortless way. The dialogue continues:

- [Lucienne] Le commandant Von Ritter aime la musique ?
- [Kurt] Non, il aime les ordres... Et les ordres... c’est d’utiliser la musique parce qu’elle rend la vie... moins dure, elle...
- [Lucienne] “Elle adoucit les mœurs.”⁵
- [Kurt] Voilà, c’est ça. Alors, avec trois camarades, on va jouer le quatuor à cordes Köchel 421...
- (– [Lucienne] Commander Von Ritter likes music?)
- [Kurt] No, he likes orders... The orders being... to use music, because it makes life... less hard, it...
- [Lucienne] “Music has charms to soothe a savage breast.”
- [Kurt] Yes, that’s it. So, together with three friends, we are going to play the string quartet Köchel 421...)

5 Here, Lucienne refers to a well-known dictum “La musique adoucit les mœurs”, sometimes attributed to Plato, its likewise popular English equivalent being “Music has charms to soothe a savage breast” (William Congreve, *The Mourning Bride*, 1697).

Kurt's less sophisticated phrases at the beginning of this passage offer a rather convincing portrayal of someone who is looking for the right words to use in a foreign language. However, his knowledge of the French proverb "La musique adoucit les mœurs" (which does not have an equivalent in German) is not as realistic, although at first, he asks her to help him recollect the saying. In another episode, Kurt asks Lucienne to explain a word that she uses. In this scene, Lucienne comments on her violin skills: "Je joue comme une crécelle." ("I play like a rattle"; Season 2, Episode 2, "L'engagement", 00:10:40 ff.). Kurt does not understand the word "crécelle" ("rattle") and asks Lucienne to explain and spell it, trying to pronounce it correctly several times. While his exaggerated interest in learning a new word can be interpreted as a part of the advances he makes towards the elementary school teacher, it also serves another purpose: his struggle with the comprehension of this word gives the audience the impression that he does not have a perfect grasp of the foreign language. The use of this same strategy can be seen in the example we have already examined in which Lieutenant Horstmayer says to Audebert: "Ce serait... chouette. C'est comme ça qu'on dit, non ?" ("That would be... fab. It's how one says it, isn't it?") in *Merry Christmas* (01:23:46).

Once again, we go back to the conversation between Kurt and Lucienne, in which he tells her about the concert project: Another element in Kurt's speech suggests that he has quite a high level of language proficiency in French. He uses the French formulation "*avec trois camarades, on va...*" ("together with three friends, we are going..."; emphasis added) – a sentence structure that cannot be translated directly into German (nor English) and that could not have been learned in school, as it is a colloquial phrase. To avoid mistakes, a germanophone would most likely use the phrase "les camarades et moi, *nous* allons..." ("the friends and I, we are going...").

On the whole, these are only a few attempts to give the figure Kurt Wagner the appearance of someone who does not speak perfect French. His portrayal is somewhat comparable to the German characters in *Merry Christmas*. Just like them, Kurt makes no distinction between the Germans and the French – and speaks the language of the neighboring country almost perfectly. The series does not provide a possible explanation for his level in French; only the fact that his brother works as a teacher in

Saarbrücken (cf. Season 2, Episode 2, “L’engagement”, 00:10:49) suggests that he grew up close to the French border. However, Kurt’s interest in music, his violin playing, and the fact that his brother earns his living as a teacher imply that Kurt comes from a middle-class household – a possible explanation for his good French.

His background coincides with an imaginary type that is not uncommonly encountered – the well-educated German citizen, the “Bildungsbürger”, who, as a versatile, educated and open-minded person, does not hate other peoples, but admires them for their strengths. In his contribution to this volume Fabian Hauner analyses the main German character of the film *Le silence de la mer* who is somewhat like Kurt Wagner. This film explores the story of the German officer Ebrennac, who is lodged in occupied France in the house of an elderly gentleman and his niece. Every evening he tries to communicate (in perfect French) with his unwelcoming hosts who remain silent – a small act of resistance. Nevertheless, Ebrennac does not give up, especially since he has fallen in love with the young woman of the house. In his monologues in the evening in the presence of the French, he quotes German and French books, philosophizes about the relationship between the two peoples – and thus proves to be a representative of the educated German middle class, the “Bildungsbürgertum”. Kurt Wagner in *Un village français* does not only share this high level of education with Ebrennac, but also the fact that he falls in love with a young Frenchwoman whilst being a German soldier in France.

In summary, the two most important German figures in *Un village français* each fulfill a cliché of a German soldier in occupied France: the ‘good’ educated Wehrmacht soldier and the ‘evil’ intelligent Nazi. Their proficiency in French serves the purpose of supporting their characterization as ‘cosmopolitan’ or ‘superior’, thus reinforcing the audience’s expectations. It is therefore unsurprising that none of the 132 spectator reviews of the series on *allociné* show an interest in the high French level of the German characters.⁶

6 Cf. *Allociné Un village français Critique Spectateurs*, <http://www.allocine.fr/series/ficheserie-4117/critiques/> (Accessed: 03/27/2018).

Conclusion

The analysis of these examples has shown that germanophone film characters are hardly ever allowed to make any linguistic mistakes in French for a variety of reasons – which, however, is not noticed by large parts of the audience or at least not rated negatively. The lack of linguistic errors in the films stands in opposition to the main function of the multilingualism shown in them, whose aim is to depict communication in film as realistically as possible.

One of the reasons for the absence of language mistakes is that flawless communication is more enjoyable for the audiences. Authenticity is therefore conveyed by a slight accent, or sometimes an explanation for the characters' proficiency in French is provided by their background (such as a French wife).

Especially in the examples that were analyzed in this article, the subject of the films generally requires error-free communication in the dialogues. The historical genre requires on one hand that the action progresses quickly and is not held back by language barriers. On the other hand, flawed communication in films is often used as a comedic tool, creating a humorous atmosphere in the film, one that is often avoided in 'serious' history films.

Thirdly, the above-average foreign language skills of the characters support their respective traits, e.g. empathy, openness, intelligence, but also their power-consciousness. This is often used to create archetypal and cliché characters. Additionally, the creation of multilingual characters can also allow filmmakers to convey a pacifist message that is driven by a cosmopolitan ideology that goes beyond the film.

The praise of the diversity of peoples and languages shown in films attempts to break up and combat linguistic ideologies and monolingual norms. Nevertheless, the way they go about doing so can sometimes seem a bit awkward: the films analyzed in this article do not keep this promise of breaking from linguistic ideologies, and even reproduce a well-known one: namely, that only grammatically correct language is considered to be proper language.

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Thea Kruse

Migration, Multilingualism and European Heritage: The Biopics *Django* (2017) and *Vor der Morgenröte* (2016)

Abstract: This article discusses the concept of the ‘European heritage film’, integrating, among other things, the use of multilingualism, as shown in two recent biopics, *Django* (2017) and *Vor der Morgenröte* (2016). Focusing on migration as an ideologically charged topic and a central theme in multilingual film, the analysis not only reveals the various functions of multilingualism in narrating the protagonists’ migration experiences, but also its political dimension.

Introduction

Of the various topics multilingual film covers, migration is certainly one of its prevalent themes. Treatment of migration in contemporary cinema takes on various forms that range from culture clash comedies like *Almanya* (Yasemin Şamdereli 2011) or more recently the tragicomedy *Toivon tuolla puolen*¹ (Aki Kaurismäki 2017), to contemporary dramas like the roadmovie *Djam* (Tony Gatlif 2017), or even historical films like the two recent biopics *Django* (Etienne Comar 2017) and *Vor der Morgenröte*² (Maria Schrader 2016). What these films all have in common is the negotiation of attitudes towards migration and cultural diversity through the use of more than one language. What is particularly interesting about the two aforementioned biopics is that they both engage with the topic of migration by portraying well-known historical figures as refugees during World War II, namely, French Sinti musician Django Reinhardt and Austrian Jewish writer and intellectual Stefan Zweig. Released in 2016 and 2017, they are embedded in the vibrant debate about EU immigration policy that started in 2015 with the arrival of more than a million refugees in Europe. By presenting two famous persons as refugees, both films adopt a

1 English title: *The other Side of Hope*.

2 English title: *Farewell Europe*.

pro-refugee position, and, by using historical examples from World War II, they draw on an argument similar to the one employed by EU institutions. For instance, EU Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker appealed to the Europeans in his 2015 State of the European Union speech, right before the peak of the refugee ‘crisis’, with a plea to welcome refugees in Europe as “a matter of historical fairness”:³ “We Europeans should remember well that Europe is a continent where nearly everyone has at one time been a refugee. Our common history is marked by millions of Europeans fleeing from religious or political persecution, from war, dictatorship, or oppression.”⁴

This is a good illustration of how current debates and problems inform contemporary discourses about the past, and how history is used in discussions about the present, both on and off screen. Thus, such heritage films as the biopics *Django* and *Vor der Morgenröte* say as much about European conflicts in the 20th century as they do about contemporary debates in Europe. Since these two EU-funded heritage films narrate history not from an exclusive (e.g. national), but from an inclusive, transnational perspective, I argue that they can be regarded as ‘European heritage films’. In my analysis, I focus on the multilingual character of both films, which is not only a marker of ‘Europeanness’ in the sense that it represents European linguistic diversity, but also a central tool for the mediation of the protagonists’ experience of flight and exile, including the (re-)negotiation of their cultural identities. The use of several languages can also be considered a key tool for conveying the films’ humanitarian and political message. Before discussing multilingualism in the context of migration in these two films, I will address the concept of the ‘European heritage film’, and will then cover the particular case of biopics. Finally, the comparison between both films will shed light on the commonalities and differences in their respective treatment of the shared past.

3 Juncker, Jean-Claude: State of the Union 2015: Time for Honesty, Unity and Solidarity. In: <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-5614_en.htm> (15.05.2018).

4 Ibid.

European Heritage Film

Heritage is a broad concept, including history as such as well as a wide range of cultural artefacts (cf. Bondebjerg 2016: 5). Understanding of what constitutes the heritage of a certain community, be it local, regional, national, or transnational, is influenced by its representations in various media. Fiction especially, with its emotional appeal, plays a key role in these processes. In the context of film studies, the terms ‘heritage cinema’ or ‘heritage film’ have been used since the 1980s to discuss historical films, more specifically costume dramas, literary adaptations or biopics that tend to celebrate mostly national histories and receive much criticism for doing so (cf. Vidal 2012). The term originated in Britain, where the genre has been particularly popular since the 1980s, however, heritage film in its various forms is now commonplace in all of Europe. According to Belén Vidal, the contemporary heritage film can be considered as

a hybrid genre with porous borders, a genre that is becoming less consensual and more political through its own staunch preference for emotional histories, and also more adventurous in its continuous incorporation of a popular historical iconography informed not only by literature or painting, but also by fashion, popular music and television. (2012: 4)

The two films I discuss in this article belong to the strand of heritage films that actively partakes in contemporary political debates, in this case migration, the protection of ethnic and religious minorities, the relationship between art and politics, and European integration. Despite the traditionally national scope that is typical of heritage films, Ib Bondebjerg and Belén Vidal, among others, have made attempts to put a stronger emphasis on the trans- and international realities of heritage film production, distribution, and reception in Europe (cf. Vidal 2012; Bondebjerg 2016). While having coined the term, Vidal nevertheless expressed doubts that European heritage film existed as of yet (2012: 5). In her influential book on the images of Europe in contemporary cinema, Mariana Liz seems to be guided by a similar concept. Although she never puts forth a definition, her leading criterion for singling out this transnational cinematic phenomenon appears to be EU funding (2016: 67; 69; 72). Axel Bangert et al. admit that “European heritage film is certainly more diverse than it is unified, but it is also impossible to deny its persistence and impact across various

European film cultures” (2016: xxiii). Consequently, for them, European heritage film is simply heritage film from Europe. These discussions show that, while the phenomenon itself is gaining momentum, the concept of European heritage film has not yet been conclusively defined. Since EU funding and the geographical origins of a film cannot be the only criteria for defining it as a culture-related theoretical concept, I devise a larger set of four formal and four content-related hallmarks that enables differing between a heritage film from Europe and a European heritage film:

The fact that these criteria remain relatively open, especially the content-related ones, allows both a flexible and more accurate categorization of the European heritage film than the taxonomies based on geographical origins or source of funding alone. However, it must be noted that in most cases, even heritage films with a strong national bias offer both national and European readings (cf. Bondebjerg 2016: 11; 20 f.), as the national and the European (or even universal) dimensions may overlap in certain ways. Thus, both national and transnational elements can be co-present at the plot level. Therefore, as with any genre definition, it is important to keep in mind that they can never be ‘waterproof’ but, rather, should be seen as a starting point for a more in-depth analysis. *Django* and *Vor der*

Table 1. Characteristics of the European heritage film

Formal criteria (at least two out of four should be fulfilled)	Content-related criteria (at least two out of four should be fulfilled)
Received funding from the EU or the Eurimages fund of the Council of Europe.	Transports a (political) message linked to the core values and freedoms of the European Union, e.g. as fixed in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.
Has been distributed in at least two European countries.	Shows transnational or transcultural rapprochement or interplay between different ethnic, religious, or national groups.
Includes characters that are from at least two European countries.	Celebrates aspects of cultural heritage from Europe that crossed the borders of nation states (e.g. music, philosophical/political thought, cinema, religion).
Two or more languages are spoken.	Deals with major European historical events or personalities.

Morgenröte, for instance, fulfill all the formal and content-related criteria. However, in my analysis, I focus only on the issue of multilingualism as one of their chief properties.

Within the plethora of European heritage films, Liz (2016: 69–76) emphasizes, among other things, the specific role of (artist) biopics as a particularly noteworthy subgenre that portrays historical figures as “distinguished Europeans” (2016: 72). As there are a large number of biopics that have been released in recent years, also including multilingual ones like *Gauguin* (Edouard Deluc 2018), *Le Jeune Karl Marx*⁵ (Raoul Peck 2017), or *Hannah Arendt* (Margarethe von Trotta 2012), it is indeed worth looking at the biopic and its specific properties. The biopic, as defined by George Custen, is “minimally composed of a life, or the portion of a life, of a real person whose real name is used” (1992: 6). Henry M. Taylor stresses that, in contrast to other historical films that typically concentrate on events, a biopic’s plot focuses on a central personality (2002: 22). Since biopics commemorate historical persons who are considered extraordinary within a certain society, one may say that biopics can operate as “filmic equivalent[s] of statues and monuments” (Liz 2016: 72). As these films potentially present both intra- and extra-filmic identification figures to the public through the historical ‘role models’ they portray, the biopic is an extremely persuasive form of heritage cinema indeed. At the level of narrative, this strong focus on characters makes processes of personal development and identity searching as well as renegotiations of individual-collective relationships a pivotal subject of the biopic (cf. Taylor 2002: 21). As a fundamental component of identity, language plays a crucial role in the depiction of such processes. With regard to the focus of this article – the experience of flight and exile in two biopics – it is thus useful to consider the connections between languages and identities, since migration can initiate a renegotiation of the protagonist’s identity in relation with his or her rapidly changing, among other things linguistic, environment. Vidal also underlines the importance of identity and identification, although in her argument, she veers toward its potential for memory politics and

5 English title: *The Young Karl Marx*.

claims that “the modern biopic has become a site of competing memories, in which the emphasis falls on identity rather than action” (2014: 22).

Another noteworthy trait of the biopic is identified by Lukas Werner: On one hand, the biopic refers to an extra-filmic historical personality, while on the other hand, as a fictional genre, it is not obliged to be historically accurate. Thus, the biopic, as it is located in between fiction and non-fiction, is characterized by a ‘communicative-ontological hybridity’⁶ (cf. Werner 2012: 269). According to Werner, it is precisely this hybrid status that raises questions of authenticity, as he claims that in factual communication, things can either be true or false while in fictional communication, the status is not questioned at all, because what is said is exclusively part of the fictional world and not about the ‘real’ one. Werner goes as far as to assert that authenticity has become a core trait of the aesthetics, marketing, and reception of biopics (2012: 269). Indeed, aiming for authenticity, it is this very combination of historicity with fictional storytelling that constitutes the persuasiveness of biopics. The use of more than one language in many contemporary biopics can also be understood in this context as part of a larger authentication strategy. Many of the biopics’ protagonists knew several languages by the virtue of their profession and/or socioeconomic status, therefore their depiction as multilingual in the films is a tribute to historical authenticity. Yet this function of polyglotism in biopics is but merely a starting point in an interpretative analysis of multilingual European heritage films.

***Django*: finding home on the run**

The biopic *Django* deals with a short period of Sinti jazz guitar player Django Reinhardt’s life between 1943 and the end of World War II in May 1945. This temporal limitation, among other things, underlines that *Django* strives to present its protagonist as an almost political actor in troubled times, contrary to more conventional films that primarily celebrate the entire life and oeuvre of an artist. Nearly two thirds of the film take place at the Swiss border where he is waiting for an opportunity to flee (0:40:02–1:43:38). His attempt to escape and, more importantly,

6 Own translation.

his time spent waiting, are thus turned into the film's focus, making this state of flux a central emotion of the film. Reinhardt wants to take refuge in Switzerland because of his ethnic affiliation as a Sinto, an often persecuted and marginalized group. *Django* is thus also about the question of Reinhardt's experience of displacement as well as about his way of dealing with the persecution of the ethnic minority he belongs to. This goes along with a negotiation of his cultural self-understanding and his responsibility as the most prominent representative of the Sinti people. My analysis deals with the use of different languages and music, Django's language-like medium of expression that changes through the course of his journey, and in particular, the protagonist's identity shift from a Parisian dandy towards a community-minded Sinto, which is mediated through multilingualism and music. A descriptive presentation of the languages' distribution throughout the film will be the basis for this.

Django did receive EU funding, but it nevertheless remains an entirely French production, set exclusively in France. It is therefore unsurprising that French is the main language of the film, making up 62 % of the dialogues. Other languages used in the film are Romani (27 %), German (9 %) and English (2 %).⁷ The film is structured chronologically and its narrative macrostructure is composed of four parts: it starts with a prologue (0:00:21–0:02:47), ends with an epilogue (1:43:38–1:48:27), and has a main story divided into two parts, with the first taking place before Django's attempt to escape (0:02:48–0:40:02) and the second showing him waiting and trying to leave the country at the Swiss border (0:40:03–1:43:38). This structure is also reflected in the use of different languages:

French dominates the first 37 minutes of the main action taking place in Paris, with only a few words in Romani and German and two short scenes in English to dilute its otherwise monolingual character. In the second part, which takes place in Thonon-les-Bains, there is an increased use of Romani and German. The prologue and the epilogue are entirely in Romani, which only appears through singing in these two scenes. Thus, Romani is the only language present in all parts of the film, although its quantitative presence is much lower than the presence of French. With

7 The following analysis is based on the multilingual original version with French subtitles.

Table 2. Language use in *Django*

Language	Total share	Used in part (P;1;2;E) ^a
French	62 %	1;2
Romani	27 %	P;1;2;E
German	9 %	1;2
English	2 %	1

^a P = prologue; E = epilogue.

the biopics' focus on characters as their key attribute, the protagonist's language use is especially important. Django Reinhardt speaks French, Romani and English throughout the film, with French and Romani being his two mother tongues.

Monolingual consensus, multilingual confrontation

Since the film takes place in France, speakers of French and its conversational contexts by necessity greatly vary, so there is no specific emotional or situational focus associated with the use of the French language. With French as the common main language, the first part of the film's plot does not underline a division between 'good' and 'bad' through the use of different languages. The protagonist himself nearly exclusively speaks French in the first part of the film – even with his wife and his mother who are both Sinti. In Paris, French is presented as the only language for 'real' communication: Django only speaks Romani to his monkey Joko (0:31:01–0:31:02) and the English scenes are only imitations of existing dialogues. In this way, Django Reinhardt is at first presented as a predominantly French artist. In Paris, the German occupiers have a positive attitude towards Django and use his language instead of theirs, trying to convince him to go on a tour to Germany. They are still the solicitors while Django is a popular star who believes he is being protected from the National Socialists because of his fame. In one scene in Paris, the Germans' linguistic shortcomings are underlined, where a German captain tells Django that his concert was "diversant", and is then corrected by someone saying "divertissant" ("entertaining"; 0:13:31–0:13:34). Through this small mistake, as well as through the occupiers' German accent, which is mocked

in the first third of the film (0:35:40–0:36:06), French-speaking Germans are portrayed as ridiculous. Non-native speech in *Django* is thus used for caricature-like characterizations of certain groups, as well as for the demonstration of power relations between them.

This linguistic interplay between superiority and inferiority is reversed through the course of the film, with the National Socialists becoming increasingly dangerous for Django and the other Sinti. Comments on German accents and mistakes in French are no longer present in the second part of the film. Moreover, the German occupiers appear as bilingual, asserting their dominant position through their mastery of both languages and control over both countries. The development from a mostly monolingual towards a multilingual language code thus echoes the plot's development from consensus, or at least coexistence, towards dissent and conflict. The lack of comprehension of the other's language complicates communication and hinders understanding, fosters mistrust and underlines confrontation by stressing varying levels of otherness. Multilingualism makes the different actors in conflict more visible and easily distinguishable – the use of different languages underlines that Django and the occupants are no longer potential business partners but, rather, perpetrators and their victim.

In contrast to French, which is spoken by everyone in *Django*, only the German occupants speak German. In the first part of the main plot it only appears on a sign that forbids swing dancing during concerts (0:08:28–0:08:30) and thereby shows from the beginning that the German speakers are the ones issuing bans. In general, German is the language orders are made in, but in Thonon these come more frequently, sound more aggressive, and are linked to the direct danger of getting arrested. For instance, in one scene in Thonon, Django, his wife Naguine and his mother Négros get chased from the house they are squatting in. From a narrative point of view, the use of German has an important effect here: as the first direct confrontation between Django and the occupiers, it makes the change in relationship between them harsher, since the preceding encounters with Germans were marked by politeness, as shown by the use of French.

- Soldier 1: Was machen Sie hier? Sie müssen sofort weg!
- Lieutenant: Was ist hier los? Das Haus ist beschlagnahmt. Sie müssen sofort gehen. (*throws a suitcase at him*) Na los!

- Négros *in Romani*: We didn't do anything to you!⁸
- Soldier 2 *to Négros*: Treppe runter!
- Soldier 1: Beeilen Sie sich bitte.
- Soldier 1: What are you doing here? You have to go away at once!
- Lieutenant: What's going on here? This house is confiscated. You have to go away instantly. (*throws a suitcase at him*) Off with you!
- Négros *in Romani*: We didn't do anything to you!
- Soldier 2 *to Négros*: Get downstairs!
- Soldier 1: Please hurry up.

(0:56:17-0:56-42)

Django's mother Négros speaks Romani in this scene even though it would be more probable to be understood by the soldiers if she had spoken French. Through the use of Romani and German instead of a common language such as French, it is underlined that Négros, Django and Naguine are discriminated against not as French people, but as Sinti, and that the perpetrators are not French, but rather German.

Compared with the other three languages used in *Django*, English seems to play an unimportant role, but with regard to the representation of Django's cultural self-understanding and its development throughout the film, its actual function is crucial. English can be found in the first part, for instance through the use of words from the world of jazz music and in the lyrics of a jazz song inside a jazz club in Paris (0:17:30–0:19:45), with the guests singing the song out loud. The only spoken dialogue in English is in the form of imitation and not in a genuine conversation. In this scene, Django's lover Louise asks him to imitate the famous actor and Django's idol Clark Gable (0:26:51–0:27:32). For one thing, this dialogue symbolizes American culture as a source of entertainment and as a possible way to forget about the war. Inside the jazz club, English also enables the guests to move without dancing prohibitions and to forget the restrictions imposed by the German occupation. Most importantly, English stands for Django's admiration of US culture, which is very present during the first part, notably through references to Clark Gable and the American jazz music which had an important influence on Django's musical style. Django

8 The sentence is written in English in this transcription because no written version could be found, since she speaks in a rare Romani dialect which has no common written language.

even says “Depuis qu’il y a plus de jazz américain à Paris, c’est moi le King of Swing.” (“Since there is no American jazz in Paris anymore, I am now the King of Swing.”; 0:18:38–0:18:41). As the new “King of Swing”, Django, whose real name is Jean, even positions himself as part of the American jazz tradition. By contrast, during the second part in Thonon, English is hardly used at all. It underlines that Django’s focus shifts from the admiration and imitation of US culture towards a reinforced feeling of belonging to the Romani people. This development also goes along with an increased use of the Romani language.

While it is only used for indicating some characters’ ethnic affiliation in the first part of the main plot, Romani plays an increasingly important role during Django’s attempt to flee. With his mother and his wife, he increasingly speaks in Romani rather than French. The same applies to another part of his family in Thonon, with whom he speaks French at the beginning but later on switches to Romani. In general, Romani is mostly used in (large) family contexts, which are also more important in this part than in Paris. In that way, Romani is associated with the warm welcome by Django’s family and the Sinti community spirit in general, in contrast to a rather individualistic lifestyle in Paris. Given that the Sinti community doesn’t define itself through a certain territory, the use of Romani also serves as a medium through which the Sinti community is given a perceivable cultural ‘space’. Through increasing use of Romani, the film suggests that Django finds home while fleeing, not in a specific geographic location but in the community.

In Thonon, Romani speech often accompanies live music. In these scenes, the music played is presented as a cultural good of the Sinti, not as a product of American culture. This association of Romani with music also constitutes the film’s auditive and narrative frame, with the prologue as well as the epilogue being sung in Romani. Django’s increasing awareness of his Sinti origins finally culminates in his “Requiem for my Gypsy brothers” in the epilogue (1:44:44–1:48:27), with which he commemorates the Sinti murdered during World War II. This requiem scene and the song performed in Romani in the prologue (0:00:21–0:02:43) are the only long non-French scenes in the film that are not subtitled. Shorter scenes in which Romani is spoken in the background are not subtitled either. In these, Romani does thus play not a communicative but a purely aesthetic

and symbolic role – the language of the Sinti blends into the music. Through the missing translation and the incomprehension resulting from it, the language becomes a mere stream of sounds, and ultimately turns into music, or, as Sanaker (2010: 26) puts it when referring to multilingual film in general:

notre manque de compétence linguistique de spectateur [...] nous permet ou nous oblige d'adopter une autre attitude envers l'autre langue que celle à laquelle nous sommes conditionnés par notre culture conceptualisante: en assumant notre non-compréhension, nous découvrons la langue dans sa musicalité, dans sa matérialité.

(our missing language competence as spectators [...] compels us to develop a different attitude towards other languages than the one we have been conditioned to adopt by our culture built on abstract concepts: by accepting our incomprehension, we shall discover the musicality and materiality of the language.)

Conversely, music becomes a language-like means of expression in *Django*, as will be shown below.

Music and language – music as language

The interplay of music and language is, as already stated, a recurrent motif in the biopic about the jazz musician. Numerous passages in which music plays a major intradiegetic role, with several full pieces of music performed, make music one of the most important components of *Django*. Music accompanies the protagonist as a means of artistic and personal expression during the entire film. He even finds artistic inspiration in his situation of displacement, which manifests itself in a shift from the admiration of American jazz culture towards an appreciation of Sinti music. The languages also function as markers of the music's cultural origins, which are multiple in the case of Django's music. This becomes especially clear in the closing scene, where Django plays the requiem for his people, in which he incorporates elements of Christian sacred music. His music represents a 'musical Esperanto' that everyone understands, no matter which language(s) they speak or which ideology they adhere to – even the National Socialists fall for it despite prohibiting jazz. Moreover, music not only operates in *Django* as a form of metalanguage, but also as a language-like medium of communication for the protagonist.

In several instances, he answers via music instead of speech. The most emblematic scene in which this takes place is in Thonon shortly after

Django and his family's arrival. As a specific code which communicates content and emotions, music can be compared to, or even, as it is the case in this film, be used as, a form of language. Thus, Django and Naguine are having a 'trilingual' conversation, in which the former expresses his bad mood through music and the latter answers in Romani and French (0:48:23–0:50:06). As their exchange progresses, Django's music changes from short and dissonant to longer and consonant chords and melodies until he starts speaking and Naguine starts humming. The conversation ends with both of them humming a melody together. This scene demonstrates that music is just as important as verbal languages are for Django. Consequently, music needs to be understood as more than simple entertainment. As one of the main topics in *Django* is the political expression of artists in times of crisis, his music also needs to be understood as a medium that can convey a political message, especially in the second part of the plot. For instance, when Django has an audition at a bar, he starts to play the beginning of the Marseillaise, the French national anthem. Then, he switches to fast Sinti jazz melodies, mixed with elements of the Marseillaise. While the bar owner was bored by the Marseillaise, he is excited by Django's new creation. Thereby, the scene implicitly suggests that cultural diversity is enriching. Moreover, Django takes a symbol of French national pride and reinterprets it – in this way, he demonstrates that the cultures of France and Sinti have the capability to intertwine. However, the tone of his music changes with the ongoing cruelties of war and his long time waiting to flee in Thonon and becomes his main instrument of self-expression. In the epilogue in a church in Paris, after his failed attempt to flee, he does not speak at all, but the music speaks for him. As the lyrics of the requiem he composed are in Romani, the requiem also mirrors his increased feeling of belonging to the Sinti community and conveys Django's humanitarian message.

***Vor der Morgenröte* – multilingualism and the longing for a lost home**

Vor der Morgenröte, an Austrian-French-German coproduction about the intellectual, writer, and committed European Stefan Zweig, stands out among other multilingual films with a total of eight languages depicted

within. Furthermore, in contrast to many other originally multilingual (heritage) films, the fact that the film has not even been dubbed in Germany, a typical dubbing country (cf. Sanaker 2010: 12), underlines the importance of multilingualism in this film. The use of subtitles instead of dubbing can be explained by its concept, which is based on a very detailed and realistic representation of notable moments in Stefan Zweig's life. More than that, it can also be explained by the fact that the film aims at mediating the protagonist's suffering in exile. Like in *Django*, the migration experience is central for the period of Zweig's life depicted in the film, focusing on his travels and his life in exile in America from 1936 to his suicide in February 1942. The exile experience is primarily conveyed through the use of different languages, since Europe and the cruelty of war are not visually present, as the entire film is set in Brazil, Argentina, and the United States. The importance of the connection between language and exile is subtly present throughout the film and becomes explicit in the film's epilogue, where Stefan Zweig's original farewell letter is read out loud, in which he says that he would have liked to build a new life in Brazil after the loss of the 'country of his own language' and after the self-destruction of his intellectual home, Europe.⁹ He adds that he has not been able to do so because of his long years of displacement and nomadic travels. The following discussion concentrates on the protagonist's experience of loss and nostalgia and its negotiation through language.

Because of the frequent changes in location and the high number of languages spoken on screen, it is necessary to get an overview about the use of the different languages at the different places.¹⁰ The film is composed of six parts and set in five different locations, all far off from Zweig's Austrian homeland. These parts each document a single day, in a time span between 1936 and 1942. The locations of the parts (in the film's chronological order) are Rio de Janeiro (0:00:47–0:09:48), Buenos Aires (0:09:49–0:28:26), the Brazilian province of Bahia (0:28:27–0:50:17), New York City (0:50:18–1:11:58), and the Brazilian town of Petrópolis (part 4: 1:11:58–1:32:54; epilogue: 1:32:55–1:38:58). Five of the eight

9 Cf. Stefan Zweig, Declaração. Online under: https://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Abschiedsbrief_Stefan_Zweig (accessed on 23.05.2018).

10 The following analysis is based on the multilingual original version with German subtitles.

Table 3. Language use in *Vor der Morgenröte*

Language	Total share	Used in part (P; 1–4; E)
German	56 %	P;1;2;3;4;E
Portuguese	17 %	P;2;4;E
French	12,2 %	P;1;2;4
English	7 %	P;1;3
Spanish	6 %	1;2
Russian	1 %	1;4
Hebrew	0,7 %	E
Italian	0,1 %	1

languages used in the film are spoken by the protagonist himself: English, German, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. None of the six parts of the film are monolingual but only German is present in all of them:

Given that German is used far more frequently than the other languages, it can be considered the guiding language (or *Leitsprache*; cf. Wahl 2005: 145) of the film. As the film's guiding language, as the protagonist's mother tongue, it is central to the film and I will therefore focus on its use in particular, contrasting it with the use of the other languages. This by no means implies that the other languages are unimportant – it would simply be beyond the scope of this article to analyse the use of each of those separately. Despite the presence of German in a wide range of conversational contexts, it can be noted that the dialogues in German are often concerned with subjects like flight, exile, and war. Stefan Zweig speaks of his thoughts and feelings about Europe exclusively in his German mother tongue. This is the case throughout the film, starting with an interview with journalists at the P.E.N. Congress¹¹ 1936 in Buenos Aires (part 1; 0:12:22–0:18:18), the conversations with his wife Lotte about the organization of travels and assistance to friends who want to escape the war, and in several other scenes including his farewell letter in the epilogue. The monolingual scene

11 P.E.N. (Poets, Essayists, Novelists) is a worldwide association of writers that aims at fostering mutual understanding and cooperation through culture, particularly literature.

that is by far the longest in the film (part 3; 0:50:30–1:06:56) entails a long conversation between Zweig and his ex-wife Friderike in New York City in 1941, where they discuss the war in Europe, the letters Zweig receives from people begging for help, and Friderike's traumatic journey to America. Through the use of German, the spectator gets an intimate insight into Zweig's emotional states. The German language is strongly associated with the war that is devastating Europe, and thus operates as a medium through which the invisible cruelties of war are able to be experienced in the film. Nevertheless, German is also the language of strong positive emotions expressed by Stefan Zweig. Their immediacy and authenticity stand in contrast to the superficially friendly and polite talk in other languages.

Despite their overall strong presence on screen, composing overall 44 % of the spoken text, the other seven languages are utilized in a manner quite different from German. In many cases, the use of languages other than German simply highlights the international character of Zweig's environment or underscores Zweig's language skills. Foreign languages are often used in scenes in which people politely greet each other, have small talk or deliver a speech. Thus, they often remain at a superficial, professional level. With its strong, often gloomy emotionality, the conversational context of German forms a stark contrast to this. The scenes with the most languages spoken, including situations where they are spoken simultaneously, are mostly big events like the P.E.N. Congress. The latter is also the most multilingual part of all (involving six spoken languages in total). These are events during which Zweig appears uncomfortable because he does not want to attend them but has to. He perceives them as a high psychological burden. This way, multilingual situations are often associated with stress and constraints, and as a consequence at least partly have a negative connotation.

Nevertheless, other languages are also used in private contexts, notably French and English. The latter is spoken in Friderike's apartment in New York (part 3) with Zweig's American publisher and friend Ben Huebsch. While the English conversation is marked by strong expressions of happiness, in a preceding and partly parallel exchange, Stefan Zweig relates his depressed mood in German (01:06:45 - 01:07:18):

- Stefan (*reads out loud a letter*): “Und ich stehe vor Ihnen, als Bettler um Hilfe. Ehrenstein.” (*pause*) Du hast vollkommen Recht, Fritzi. Was wiegt meine Arbeit, was wiegt irgendetwas gegen diese Wirklichkeit? (“And thus I stand before you begging for help. Ehrenstein.” (*pause*) You are absolutely right, Fritzi. What weight does my work hold, what weight does anything hold against this reality?)
- Ben (*outside the frame*): Hello? Anybody here?
- Friderike (*leaves the frame to join Ben*): Oh! Ben! I’m so sorry! Please, come in!
- Lotte (*to Stefan*): Wer ist Ehrenstein? (Who is Ehrenstein?)
- Ben (*to Friderike*): My dear friend, welcome to New York!
- Friderike (*to Ben*): I’m so glad you... (*incomprehensible, because of the parallel conversation*)
- Stefan (*to Lotte*): Freund von früher. (A friend from the past.)
- Ben: When did you say you arrived?
- Friederike: Almost ten weeks ago now.
Stefan stands up and goes to Ben, the camera turns towards Ben, Friderike and Stefan.
- Ben: Stefan!
- Stefan Zweig: Ben! (*hug*) So good to see you.
- Ben: Same here, Stefan, same here.

Once again, this scene shows very clearly how far the spheres of conversation in the different languages are from each other, both emotionally and with regard to the content. While Zweig speaks in German about the fate of his poet friend Albert Ehrenstein, Friderike starts a parallel conversation in English with Ben, which is at once jovial and inconsequential. Ben Huebsch enters the apartment from outside and is not visible during his conversation until Stefan Zweig joins in the conversation. The spatial and linguistic separation highlights an emotional distance between inner thoughts and external behaviour as well as between Europe and America.

On the whole, non-German languages are used for friendly and superficial exchanges and the only moment when they are also used to convey negative emotions is the closing scene after Zweig’s suicide. There, in one scene, Stefan Zweig’s Jewish friend sings a kaddish (healing prayer) in Hebrew at the bed with the dead bodies (1:35:55–1:36:14). Directly afterwards, Stefan and Lotte Zweig’s Brazilian gardener sits down next to the bed to pray, too. Even though this is the only scene where Hebrew is used, it plays a key symbolic role because it is only after Stefan Zweig’s death that the Jewish religion is explicitly shown. Thereby, it gives a hint at Zweig’s fate and the fate of the Jewish people in their struggle to find a place they can call home. His Jewishness is the main reason for his life in

American exile in which he yet felt displaced, while the country of exile is represented by the Christian Portuguese prayers said by their Brazilian gardener. That way, Zweig's utopia of a peaceful coexistence of different religions and ethnic groups is depicted without him having the opportunity to experience this vision becoming reality. Thus, there is again a distance, not an emotional, but an existential one, between Zweig and the people speaking in the other languages. The same goes for the Brazilian music with Portuguese lyrics that is playing in the background in the epilogue: while the music sung in Portuguese in the prologue is followed by Zweig's praise of Brazil as the "land of future", the same cheerful tone of the music in the epilogue is not heard by the writer after his suicide, thereby indicating that the blissful country and the culture he had so appreciated failed to make him find a new home there.

It can be noted that the content communicated in the non-German languages tends to be less relevant¹² but their overall effect is a very important one, as it contrasts with the use of the German language – and it is only in contrast with each other that the languages obtain their specific roles. What is suggested at the level of action is reinforced at the level of language: Zweig is welcome everywhere, but he is exhausted by the frequent travels, the receptions he has to attend, and above all by his thoughts about the war in Europe, which he cannot stop thinking about. Through the differing use of the different languages, a marked distance between his inner world, burdened by thoughts about war, and the blithe outside world becomes obvious. An impression of the protagonist's growing inner isolation is mediated through multilingualism and reveals a notion of interconnectedness of mother tongue and feelings of belonging by transporting information about the war in German. Indeed, there is no classical narrative antagonism in *Vor der Morgenröte* because the war is not shown in the film but only hinted at in conversations. Instead, the film depicts an inner conflict of the protagonist and the relationship between 'inner world' and 'outer world', which is emphasized by multilingualism.

12 Examples include a discussion in French about the coffee price in the prologue, a crowd of people in part 1 who want to take photos of Stefan Zweig, etc.

Aspects of mis- and non-comprehension in the experience of exile

Vor der Morgenröte reveals the multifaceted aspects of non-comprehension: its multilingual setting underscores communication problems that are only partly due to language. While the film resolves the issue of possible incomprehension on the part of the spectator by providing translation or subtitles on the interdiegetic level, it also focalises instances in which mis- or incomprehension on the intradiegetic level is caused not only by language differences but also by differences of experience and emotion which different languages connote.

Interpreting is first and foremost a strategy of mediation of foreign-language content in multilingual films (Bleichenbacher 2008: 173 ff.). Nevertheless, interpreters play a special role in multilingual films because they do not only mediate between characters in the film but also make content accessible to the audience (cf. Şerban 2012: 45). Through the high presence of interpreters and interpreting characters in *Vor der Morgenröte*, the necessity of linguistic mediation is not only acoustically but also visually emphasized. Thus, as a form of indirect communication, personal distance is created towards the non-German content. As there is always a third person listening in a dialogue with interpretation, the conversations are inevitably less personal. In *Vor der Morgenröte*, the lack of privacy in interpreted dialogues is particularly strong, for it is in the context of the public events Zweig is forced to attend that the interpreters are present (prologue; part 1; part 2). In these contexts, the interpreters add to the feeling of a multilingual, stressful chaos that is caused, among other things, by their relentless whispered translations.

Even though, as already stated, there is no direct conflict like in *Django*, *Vor der Morgenröte* also uses multilingualism in order to create distance between the characters. Therefore, comprehension problems that are both of a linguistic and personal nature are also key to understanding the representation of the protagonist's experience of displacement. A very graphic example for this type of non-comprehension can be found in the third part, when Stefan Zweig's American publisher tries to give a gift and wish Friderike a good start in her new home in New York. He wants to do so in German, even though he does not speak German at all (01:09:20–01:09:55):

- Ben: Äh.. so.. habe ich hier... einen Auftrag, was ich muss geben. Brot äh Solz.
In the European manner... Fur diese neue... home. (I have here... an assign-
ment which I must to give. Bread a solt. [...] For this new...home.)
- Friderike: Thank you so much, Ben!
- Ben (*opens a piece of paper and reads out loud*): For...äh...für...ähh...
Wohlgähän, for Scheschefteme... ähh...Schescheftig...Scheftig...keit?
- Friderike (*laughs*): Sesshaftigkeit. (Sedentariness.)
- Ben: Sessaftigkeit. (Sedentassness.)
- Friderike: Ja. (Yes.)
- Ben: Fur die Gemein...schaft...äh...lichkeit? (Fir the communality.) With
regards from my wife.

By trying to speak German (and by the type of his gift), Huebsch's intention to create a feeling of home and to please the others is highlighted. At the same time, he unintentionally recalls Stefan and Lotte Zweig that they have not yet found a new home. Ben Huebsch does not directly understand the meaning of his words, neither at the level of language nor at the level of personal experience. As he did not have to flee from persecution, he does not seem conscious of the actual impact of his speech. What is striking here is that he is most struggling with the pronunciation of the word *Sesshaftigkeit* (settledness/sedentariness). This pronunciation problem is a long, involuntary emphasis on a state Stefan and Lotte Zweig are still far from reaching. Another scene in which linguistic non-comprehension is linked with a personal one can be found in the epilogue, which starts with two Portuguese-speaking men that are outside the frame (1:33:01–1:33:28). They jointly try to translate something from German into Portuguese, discussing exclusively grammar and vocabulary aspects of the text they are translating. Therefore, it is not obvious at first glance that the letter is Stefan Zweig's farewell letter he had written shortly before his suicide. The fact that these men talk about this highly emotional letter only by discussing technical aspects of its translation increases the suspense since the situation is difficult to interpret for the film audience, even though subtitles make the content of the conversation accessible. At the same time, this scene suggests that the men cannot make deeper connections regarding the weight of the letter, certainly on a linguistic level, yet also on an emotional level. All of this creates an emotional distance between the characters and the audience, as well as illustrates the omnipresent feeling of not being understood, which contributes to the depiction of Zweig's

isolation amongst a sea of other people, thus providing a conclusive commentary on the experience of exile.

Showing the invisible through language – a comparative perspective on both films

The examples of *Django* and *Vor der Morgenröte* demonstrate that multilingualism is a central element in the mediation of the protagonists' migration experience. However, in these two films, it is employed in quite different ways. While in *Vor der Morgenröte*, Zweig's native language is the key to understanding his identity and experience of exile, *Django* traces the protagonist's transformation in the course of his experience of displacement through the renegotiation of his two mother tongues, namely, French and Romani.

In *Django*, in contrast to *Vor der Morgenröte*, the protagonist is in direct danger of getting arrested by the German occupants after fleeing from Paris. Multilingualism is thus more a tool for delimitating and characterizing different groups and power relations than it is in *Vor der Morgenröte*. The development towards a direct confrontation in *Django* goes along with an increased use of the perpetrators' and the victims' languages, German and Romani. Through the protagonist's increased use of the Romani language, it is stressed that he positions himself on Sinti side. Because of this narrative antagonism, including an easily identifiable enemy, the Nazis, there are languages with more or less positive, or even clearly negative connotations. In *Vor der Morgenröte*, by contrast, there are no antagonistic relations between characters or groups of speakers of certain languages, mostly because Zweig is already in exile where he is secure and warmly welcomed by his environment. It is rather an internal, psychological struggle between Zweig's cosmopolitan attitude and the reality of his exile, in which he was completely uprooted. The latter is mediated through the use of the German language while his new surroundings are represented by the other languages spoken in the film. Through the use of certain languages in certain contexts, his psyche and his emotions on one side and the world surrounding him on the other side, as well as the distance between these spheres, can be identified – and it is only through the use of the German language that we learn about his emotional state.

Through different, more complex representations of situations in which misunderstandings on different levels are at play, Zweig's inner isolation and loneliness in exile is highlighted. This contrasts with the language use in *Django*, which is developing through the course of Django's flight and thus rather underlines the 'external' action as well as Django's transformation from a Parisian dandy towards a more community-conscious Sinto. Unlike in *Vor der Morgenröte*, multilingualism does not make more complex processes visible – since the film does not show a profound reflection of the protagonist about his experience of displacement, language does not play the same existential role as in *Vor der Morgenröte*, at least not at the individual level. At the collective level, however, it has important symbolic implications in *Django*, too.

What both films have in common is the strong connection between music and language, while this is true to a lesser extent for *Vor der Morgenröte* than for *Django*. In both films, prologue and epilogue music with lyrics sung in a language other than the films' respective guiding languages has a key function for the mediation of the protagonists' 'before' and 'after' situations: *Vor der Morgenröte* starts and ends with a Portuguese-language song playing in the background that characterises the country of exile as an easy-going, peaceful place. While in the prologue, it underscores Zweig's enthusiastic attitude towards Brazil, a similar song stands in a stark opposition to the situation of mourning in the epilogue, which shows that the feeling of happiness transported by the music proved to be inaccessible for Zweig. In *Django*'s prologue and epilogue, music and songs in Romani underline the connection of the Sinti people with their music, initially here not directly associated with the figure of Django, but becoming so by the end. Music as a (meta-)language plays a pivotal role in *Django*, highlighting the existential importance and communicative character of his artistic form. By contrast, Zweig's art form, literature, is a solitary one and is strongly linked to verbal expression, which makes it perhaps more difficult for the protagonist to deal with the situation of displacement and further contributes to his isolation. The protagonists' artistic means of expression are thus in both cases fundamentally connected to language(s) and to the way they cope with being uprooted.

Furthermore, in both films, multilingualism keeps together the elliptic, weak narration that, as such, is rather structured in an additive than in a

causal way as it is composed of several separate episodes with relatively large time gaps between them. Through the use of more than one language in the context of the protagonists' migration experience, certain causalities are evoked at least in a subtle way, which is especially the case for the German language in *Vor der Morgenröte* and the Romani language in *Django*. Beside this, it is important to note that both protagonists develop a strong orientation towards their cultural and linguistic origin during the course of their migration experience. This is symbolized through the use of their mother tongue(s): *Django* shows the Sinti musician's rediscovery of his cultural roots and *Vor der Morgenröte* reveals Zweig's desperate longing for his lost home. Another noteworthy parallel between the use of language in both films is that it shows what cannot be seen: While Romani in *Django* represents a culture that doesn't define itself through a certain territory and thus evokes a physically undefinable home, in *Vor der Morgenröte*, German symbolizes the equally invisible homeland that Zweig had to leave behind, one that he was unable to forget. Nevertheless, Django is portrayed as a member of a community by using the Romani language whereas the German language in *Vor der Morgenröte* reveals the protagonist's isolation in his new surroundings.

Finally, the languages of the ethnic or religious groups that were persecuted during World War II are strongly linked with their fate in both films. In *Django*, this connection constitutes the film's linguistic, emotional and thematic frame: the film starts with a Sinto singing in Romani getting shot in the head in the prologue, and ends with the requiem in the epilogue that is also sung in Romani. The epilogues of both *Django* and *Vor der Morgenröte* commemorate the dead in the language that represents the reason for their death: In *Django*, its eponymous protagonist who survived the war composes a requiem in Romani for his 'Gypsy brothers', as he calls them, that were killed during World War II. In *Vor der Morgenröte*, Zweig's Jewish friend Abrahão Koogan sings a kaddish in Hebrew after his death, thereby evoking one of the reasons for Zweig's life in exile and finally his suicide. In that way, each film ends with a commemoration of a minority persecuted during World War II. This message is ultimately reinforced by the use of the language associated with them. Through the endings of the films, the protagonists are turned into figures that stand for the Sinti and Jews persecuted during the war, respectively. Therefore,

the use of multiple languages must also be understood as a persuasive element that communicates central humanitarian and political messages in both films. The spectators' perception of flight and exile is intensified and guided by the appearance of multiple languages through the course of the film. Thereby, they can reinforce empathy for the protagonists and the minorities they represent. More globally, multilingualism in contemporary heritage films also facilitates the accurate depiction of different historical groups, thereby contributing to a new understanding of heritage that includes linguistic, cultural and religious diversity.

As the above-mentioned epilogues show, both heritage films also end on a religious note – a requiem in a church in *Django* and two prayers in *Vor der Morgenröte*, suggesting the shared pacifist values represented by religion, which has the potential power of uniting the peoples at war with each other. The topos of religion is used quite frequently in European heritage films, for instance in Christian Carion's multilingual European anti-war film *Joyeux Noël* (cf. Junkerjürgen 2019 and Scholz in this volume). These films champion the vision of a united Europe that is composed of various peoples, given the presence of the suffering caused by war. As the ultimate reason for the existence of the European Union as a guarantor of peace in Europe, the two World Wars are frequently highlighted in political, cultural, and media discourses, including the European Union's institutional communication. Liz even states that “at least by negation, war is so important for the EU, it must, perhaps paradoxically, be continually remembered” (Liz 2016: 77).

As two biopics financially supported by the European Commission, *Django* and *Vor der Morgenröte* are part of the EU's cultural policy. Furthermore, both films focus on the suffering during World War II in contrast with the shared cultural and artistic heritage and its uniting potential represented by their protagonists. The ideological messages communicated by them resemble the EU's famous maxim “unity in diversity” – multilingual protagonists as refugees who represent cultural and religious diversity, explicit thoughts on European integration in *Vor der Morgenröte*, European music as a universal language in *Django*. Moreover, even though both films do not celebrate multilingualism in a naïve or exaggerated way, the multilingual character of these films' settings and protagonists reflects the guiding principle of the EU's language policy, which is to foster language learning and

multilingualism among EU citizens.¹³ Considering all these elements, both biopics can therefore be considered as European heritage films in the way the term is defined in this article. To a certain extent, both films leave behind the national bias of the ‘traditional’ biopic and indeed offer up to the audience potential ‘European’ figures. Given the specific hybrid and persuasive nature of the biopic, these identification figures are both intra- and extra-filmic as the historical personality that is represented by the film’s protagonist is directly associated with the latter. This article has underlined the central role of multilingualism in the depiction of these figures, as well as their experiences and identities, particularly in the context of migration. More in-depth research on its role in European heritage film as well as in the biopic can provide further insights into the complex functions of multilingualism in film.

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Multilingual Europe. Discourses of Identity in the Erasmus Movies *L'Auberge espagnole* and *Júlia ist*

Abstract: As the most successful European student exchange program, Erasmus has become the framework for international experiences for millions of European students. Movies like *L'Auberge espagnole* and *Júlia ist* reflect on the situation that their protagonists find themselves in while abroad. But while in 2002 *L'Auberge espagnole* presented multilingualism as an exciting challenge for an international community, fifteen years later it seems to have already become an everyday norm for the protagonists of *Júlia ist*, at least for the academic middle class from which the characters come.

Since its establishment in 1987, the Erasmus program has become the most successful European exchange program in history. In 2016 alone roughly 725.000 people studied, trained or volunteered abroad with the help of the 2.2 billion Euro Erasmus budget. Though a large number of Europeans have made their first experience abroad through Erasmus, cinema has taken quantitatively little advantage of it. One possible reason is the dominance of one prototypical and very well-known film, *L'Auberge espagnole* (2002), which seems to be so representative that only a few directors have ever been tempted to follow the path opened by Cédric Klapisch (1961-). One of them is the young Catalan actress and film director Elena Martín (1992-), who in 2017 presented the acclaimed *Júlia ist* about a student who takes an Erasmus year in Berlin. Although fifteen years separate the two films, the representation of Erasmus seems to draw on certain constants such as the documentation of the coming-of-age of the protagonist and the use of a narrative structure that chronicles one academic year's time. The latter is visualized in *Júlia ist* by the passing of the seasons winter, spring, and summer. Erasmus-related stories such as this are coming-of-age stories which center on the development of a personal identity that is put into question by a confrontation with alternative ways of life.

In both films, space plays a central role and is linked to the deep-rooted concepts of the cultures of the North and South of Europe, a paradigm that is much more influential than the East-West axis. The Parisian Xavier (Romain Duris) comes to know the hedonistic Mediterranean Barcelona where he loses his ‘northern’ inhibitions, while Júlia (Elena Martín) leaves the ‘southern’ Barcelona behind to go to Berlin, where she learns independence and responsibility. Both examples use the respective cities for an effect of contrast. In *L’Auberge espagnole*, the Catalan capital seems plain and horizontal and espouses openness, while Paris is conceived as a vertical urban space via the administrative buildings of the university and the Ministry of Economics, where Xavier works, symbolizes a hub of elitist power. If Klapisch’s Barcelona can be regarded as a city of transcultural identity and a symbolic setting that reflects the director’s “pluralist, multicultural, multipolar, multi-ethnic and multilingual visions of European social reality” (Amago 2007: 18), the Barcelona of *Júlia* is definitely less open and pluralist. Its sky is less luminous and most of the shots are interiors, which illustrate that Júlia is caught in the enclosure of a well-off overprotective Catalan bourgeois family. Berlin, on the contrary, is – as one of Júlia’s professors of architecture states – horizontally open and can expand ad infinitum.

Another difference between the two films is that Klapisch’s movie still breathes the European euphoria that preceded the French and the Dutch referendums in 2005 and is discussing how to deal with cultural shocks and stereotypes (Giukin 2007), whereas Martín’s multicultural and multilingual Europe seems to have become a normality that refers much less to the European frame than to the individual choices of the protagonist.

Deeply linked to the question of identity, multilingualism is an important feature in both films. In *L’Auberge espagnole*, a note which hangs next to the telephone and offers standard phrases in the six languages spoken in the flat illustrates how multilingualism can be dealt with in everyday life. In the film, French is the guiding language and is spoken by protagonist Xavier Rousseau, his mother, his girlfriend Martine, his lover Anne-Sophie, her husband, and the Belgian Isabelle, a good friend of Xavier’s. The main perspective is bound to Xavier and combines an internal focalisation with a first-person narrator when Xavier makes off-stage comments.

The second group are the English-speaking characters who are all connected to flatmate Wendy: namely, her brother William, her American lover James, and her official boyfriend Alistair. Though the group lives in Barcelona, Spanish is merely the third language. The other flatmates – Lars from Denmark, Alessandro from Italy and Tobias from Germany – use their mother tongues only on a few occasions. All dramatically important scenes involve the French- and English-speaking characters, a combination which reflects the expected language skills of the target public.

In *Júlia ist*, the protagonist speaks Catalan with her family and friends, whereas in Berlin, she masters German right away. Both languages are equally dominant. Since Júlia speaks German, English is used only sporadically and is therefore less important as a lingua franca. On the radio and on TV one can hear Castilian in some moments, in another scene a French fellow student named Rémi sings a song in French.

Though in both films many languages are present, as we will see, they play a different role. The language question is in turn embedded in an overall identity discourse and has to be analyzed accordingly. Language is linked to three main fields of identity in the movie: social class (in this case middle class), nation, and sexuality. In this respect, both films also deliver a portrait of their generation, as Elena Martín states for her case: “Es gente muy preparada, con formación, hablamos idiomas, de clase media y media alta y sin ningún conflicto externo. Personas muy protegidas con una capacidad muy baja para enfrentarse a sus frustraciones.”¹ (LGI 2017)

Average middle-class adolescents in search of themselves

Both Xavier and Júlia represent the middle class of their respective countries. Xavier’s father studied at the elite university ENA and has good contacts with the Ministry of Economics, and Júlia enjoys the comfort zone of a Catalan family with an academic background, a representative house with a swimming pool, and a caring immediate family. Apart from the fact that Erasmus students normally do not have much money, neither

1 “It is a well-prepared people, educated, we speak foreign languages, belong to the middle and upper-middle class and have no external conflicts. Highly protected people hardly capable of putting up with frustration.”

Xavier nor Júlia are in a precarious situation. When Xavier's landlord raises the rent, they just take in another flatmate to share the costs, and when his girlfriend Martine dumps him, he is able to pay for a spontaneous one-day trip to France. Finances may be tight, but it is never a big issue. In the case of Júlia, money is actually never mentioned and does not preoccupy her at all.

Both protagonists seem to be completely non-religious. In Xavier's flat, the Madonna is exchanged for a telephone and a toy robot. Klapisch seems to state with this that religion is no longer a common ground of European identity and communication, technological advances and commerce have taken its place. Klapisch at least raises the question of religion in his film, whereas in *Júlia ist*, religion is no longer present at all. By studying architecture, Júlia and her friends reflect on how people should live and search for a balance between individualism and community – all this far away from any transcendent aspects. In both films, the protagonists shape their way of life individually, without any religious orientation.

By leaving their home, Xavier and Júlia leave their monocultural background behind and become embedded in a multicultural European context. In *L'Auberge espagnole*, the multinational student flat is a microcosm of Europe that unites French, Italian, German, British, Spanish, and Danish flatmates. Júlia shares her flat only with the German Paula, but has a similar, though less numerous, mixture of nations in her project group of architecture students, composed of the French Rémi, the German Ben, and others.

If Klapisch's European flat share subliminally has an exclusive character because his protagonists are students rather than employees or apprentices, in the case of *Júlia ist*, the elitism is more palpable because she studies at the famous Berlin Universität der Künste (UdK). Both films show that European multiculturalism is mainly explored and enjoyed by the social class of university graduates. Socially, Xavier and Júlia are average Europeans, i.e. conventional middle-class representatives who are 'mediocre' in the sense that they are neither especially ambitious nor have extraordinary gifts or talents. Without their trip abroad, Xavier and Júlia would be rather uninteresting characters, and this is exactly the reason why they are able to be so representative of the majority of Erasmus students.

National discourses of identity

Klapisch is much more concerned with national identities than Martín. In the *Making of* he discusses the question of how a director should represent national standards of behavior and states that one should not caricature the cultures. In a culture-clash comedy like *L'Auberge espagnole*, however, there is a problem: aren't cultural differences an essential source of laughter and entertainment for the public? Klapisch solves the problem by endowing his characters with culturally ambivalent features. On one hand, they correspond to certain stereotypes, but on the other, they break from them: a strategy that allows Klapisch to quote the clichés and to put them into perspective at the same time. The Danish Lars is prototypically taciturn and appears phlegmatic, but he is sexually quite active as the only one in the flat who has a girlfriend and also a child with a Danish girl; the Italian Alessandro is stereotypically messy and has a gift for music, but at the same time is rather introverted. During the interview with Xavier, the German Tobias asks him where he sees himself in five years, an incongruous question which cartoons the German stereotype of strategic organization, but at the same time, Tobias has a visible tattoo on his right upper arm, a sign which is meant to mark him as an individual and, back at that time, still represented a break with conventional rules of middle-class body politics.² Soledad, the only Spaniard in the flat, is notably untagged and does not correspond to the Spanish stereotypes of *fiesta* or *mañana* mentality.

While the construction of characters involves an implicit discourse on stereotypes, Klapisch uses the British William, the brother of Wendy, to stage explicit processes of intercultural learning. William holds caricatural and simplified perspectives on cultures. He qualifies Spain as nothing else but flamenco, identifies Germany with National Socialism, calls the French frogs, and believes Italians to be unorganized. William is interculturally insensitive and offends the others with his simplistic arrogance. He greets Tobias with the Hitler salute and speaks English with a strong German

2 In 2002, when the movie was premiered, tattooing was still on its way to become as popular as it is nowadays. TV shows like *Miami Ink* and its spin-offs started in 2005.

military accent often used in movies about World War II. Wendy takes her brother to task and initiates a learning process which culminates in the sequel of the movie, *Les poupées russes* (2005), when he marries a Russian girl.

While William displays his lack of intercultural awareness in a very blunt way, despite her refined manners, the French Anne-Sophie is not very different from him on that score. The rather uptight middle-class Frenchwoman thinks Barcelona is dirty and uncivilized like the “third world”, an attitude that Xavier criticises as racist. If Klapisch stigmatises cultural insensitivity and racism, he does not negate obvious cultural differences, nor does he completely avoid anecdotic knowledge of cultures. In a night of collective drinking, he shows how differently the cultures deal with functions of the body: the British William takes his trousers off to show the others his naked buttocks, then drinks too much in short time and has to vomit in a corner of the street while next to him, Xavier is urinating in plain sight.

Apart from the comical function of the scene and Klapisch’s autocritical attitude towards his compatriots and their reputation for public urination, the question is raised of how to deal with these differences. The answer in the film is quite explicit: “We want our living together to be cool”, explains Tobias at the beginning of the already mentioned interview with Xavier. This kind of coolness refers to an intercultural tolerance which accepts differences but will start to negotiate if they become too provocative, a “coolness” hence based on the awareness of the intercultural situation.

It is to be noted though that the differences which Klapisch shows are hardly menacing to the stability of the community, which unanimously upholds its basic middle-class values of economic prosperity and secularisation. On the whole, Klapisch integrates the question of national identities into a cognitive process that consists of questioning arrogant attitudes and stereotypes. What remains are more or less anecdotic cultural standards.

None of these problems really matter in *Júlia ist*. When an acquaintance in Berlin, who is a photographer, asks her what she is doing, Júlia responds that she comes from Barcelona – an answer which reveals that she is not yet doing anything which might give her a professional identity, and that her origin still fills in this blank. At the same time, she does not

refer to Spain, but to Barcelona, which implicitly affirms the self-concept of Catalans as belonging to a nation inside of Spain. Catalan language is a crucial aspect of her regional identity. In this respect, it is significant that Júlia never switches between Catalan and Castilian, in fact she doesn't use Castilian at all.

Though the use of Catalan language by the protagonist gives the film a strong regional spin, no stereotypes or features actually define Júlia as Catalan. In Spain, Catalans are said to be thrifty or even miserly, punctual and stubborn, and their imagery has scatological elements (like the *caganer*³). Catalans themselves believe that their national character is marked by *seny*, a concept that refers to a form of common sense. This would be enough stereotypical material to define Júlia as Catalan, but none of it is used. The main cultural feature is the strong bond of the family which has made her more immature and less independent than her German mates who are used to living alone. But this is not specific to Catalan, rather, it is a general social feature of Mediterranean countries such as Spain and Italy. Apart from this and the fact that she likes noise, which is indeed more tolerated in Spain than in Germany, nationality is not an issue in *Júlia ist*. Neither do different cultural standards affect communication, nor do cultural stereotypes play a part. Júlia and her mates do not regard themselves as French, Spanish or German, but as students of architecture, and thus display an “advanced” European mentality as compared to *L'Auberge espagnole*.

Identity and sexual experience

Umberto Eco once called the Erasmus program a “sexual revolution” and predicted that it will bring up numerous intercultural marriages which will profoundly change the ethnic composition of the continent.⁴ Sexuality is indeed a central subject in the movies, too, and is closely linked there to the question of identity. It rules a number of episodes in *L'Auberge*

3 A *caganer* is a figurine depicted in the act of defecation.

4 Cf. Gianni Riotta: “Umberto Eco über den Zusammenhalt in Europa. ‘Nur die Kultur verbindet uns’”, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 26/01/2012 (<https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/umberto-eco-ueber-den-zusammenhalt-in-europa-nur-die-kultur-verbundet-uns-1.1267440>, accessed on 04.10.2018).

espagnole: the apparently unhappy relationship of Xavier and Martine, Xavier's conversation with the homosexual Isabelle, his affair with the married Anne-Sophie, and Wendy's affair with the American James.

Once more Klapisch's notion of "coolness" is shown in the attitude of Xavier towards lesbian Isabelle. She represents sexual differences that Xavier doesn't fully comprehend in the beginning, yet later on becomes accustomed to, to the point that he is no longer shocked when the upset Alessandro tells him that he has seen Isabelle kissing another woman. Isabelle serves a didactic function for Xavier and for the public because she is able to see women from two perspectives – the male and the female – and teach Xavier how to seduce women and explain to him the mechanisms of female psychology. Trained by Isabelle, he finally manages to seduce Anne-Sophie.

What is puzzling about Isabelle is that she holds a rather misogynistic image of women, believing that they are "toutes des salopes" ("all sluts"). In Klapisch's film, sexuality and love are not necessarily connected: Wendy has an affair with James whom she believes to be rather stupid, but still feels physically attracted to him, and Xavier gets together with Anne-Sophie without ever speaking of feelings. This sexual freedom is an important factor of the intercultural encounters the film shows, and one could even go so far as to say that this is one of its most important points. This is clearly shown when Wendy's official boyfriend Alistair is coming for a surprise visit while she is in bed with James. The arrival of Alistair makes Wendy's flatmates give an impressive show of solidarity in defending the right of promiscuity, because each of them rushes to the flat in order to protect Wendy.

Contrary to open relationships, which defend a transparent sexual freedom, the flatmates in *L'Auberge espagnole* make a pact of silence. The flat share turns out to be a community of sexual secrets that allows sexual liberty among the official partners. The inherent contradiction between the right to sexual freedom, which the film claims, and the covering up of extracurricular sexual activity is incompatible. It may in part be explained by the necessities of comedy and drama, which need transgression in order to function. Klapisch is much clearer on that point in the second example of sexual self-discovery and self-fulfillment: after the husband discovers the affair between his wife Anne-Sophie and Xavier, there is only a short

moment of tension. Soon it becomes obvious that the concept of honor, that also encompasses vengeance when it is violated, is no longer regarded as a pillar of male identity: the cuckold himself seems to put up with this form of sexual freedom and says a friendly good-bye to Xavier at his farewell party. Altogether, the sexuality in *L'Auberge espagnole* can be described as a form of 'happy', i.e. unproblematic, promiscuity. Its many shades correspond to the multicultural background of the movie, and maybe it is sexuality which best expresses on screen this form of European pluralism.

Júlia ist starts quite similarly, since Júlia's relationship with Jordi is not really working out any more. Like Martine in *L'Auberge espagnole*, her boyfriend doesn't want her to leave and makes her feel guilty. As soon as Jordi announces that he is about to visit her in Berlin she breaks up with him out of fear that his presence could impede her personal development. Already before this, she had started an affair with her German fellow student Ben. Two explicit sex scenes underline the importance of sexual activity for self-exploration; in the second one, Júlia is shown on top of Ben illustrating her decision to take the lead and to decide how the act is performed. For Júlia, too, sexual experience is a part of the greater intercultural experience. Although she defines the relationship with Ben as 'open', i.e. without the obligation of sexual faithfulness, in reality, it will not work out for her when she sees him with another woman. As a reaction she throws herself into the arms of another guy in a club while under the influence of alcohol and music. Ben's individual way of life, marked by liberalism, postmodern openness and lack of obligations, is hurting Júlia, who is used to commitment.

Identity and language

According to the secularised attitude of his characters, Klapisch presents a materialistic vision of humans and human identity that is uniquely dependent on the brain. Anne-Sophie's husband is a neurologist, in one scene he makes a CT of Xavier and in another he explains the composition of the brain, citing the example of bilingual people who can lose one language completely if the brain is damaged. The brain appears to be the organ of identity and functions like the hardware of a computer, while language is software which can be erased. Later on, Xavier dreams about losing his

mother tongue while walking inside of his brain, which is represented as a white apartment in which some workers tear down some of the walls and clean the floor of numerous papers which are scattered about.

From this point of view, humans are fully conditioned by their brains without any transcendence. Identity and language are thus an amount of data that undergoes a transformation during the course of the learning process. At the same time, this is not a mere mechanical process but also depends on the willingness of the person to incorporate new data.

Language as the main data code is a key factor in this process. Unfortunately, foreign languages are a huge amount of new data, and for most people, it is hard work to learn them and as a result become fully integrated members of a plurilingual society. Indeed, one quickly reaches the limits of language skills, as Klapisch's characters have to experience at the University in Barcelona where one of the Catalan professors refuses to speak Castilian like Isabelle asked him to: "Mire yo la entiendo perfectamente, señorita. De verdad. Perfectamente. Pero usted tendría que entenderme a mí también. Estamos en Cataluña y aquí el catalán es idioma oficial. Si usted quiere hablar español, se va a Madrid o a Suramérica."⁵

Though the reaction is quite harsh, the scene defends multilingualism as a key trait of Europe by giving voice to the Catalan professor. The students later discuss this issue with a co-student from Gambia and Catalonia whose explanations add another answer to the question:

Isabelle: A mí me parece contradictorio defender el catalán en un momento en el que estamos construyendo Europa.

Gambian: Yo no estoy de acuerdo. Primero porque creo que estamos hablando de identidades. Y no hay una única identidad válida. O sea, hay muchas identidades que son perfectamente compatibles. Se trata de respeto. Por ejemplo, yo tengo por lo menos dos identidades: la identidad gambiana, que traigo conmigo mismo, y la identidad catalana. Yo no creo que sea contradictorio combinar las dos identidades. (28'25 ff.)

Isabelle: I think it's a contradiction to defend the Catalan language in the moment we are constructing Europe.

5 "Look, I understand you perfectly, Miss. Really. Perfectly. But you should also understand me. We are in Catalonia and here Catalan is the official language. If you want to speak Spanish, go to Madrid or South America."

Gambian: I don't agree with you. Firstly, because I think we are talking about identities. And there is no unique prevailing identity. In other words, there are many identities which are perfectly compatible. It is a question of respect. For example, I have at least two identities: the Gambian identity which I carry with me and the Catalan identity. I don't think it is a contradiction to combine the two identities.

Isabelle's monolingual habitus and her homogenous concept of Europe and identity is confronted with that of the Gambian, who provides a much more liberal response to the question of plurality and identity. He just explains that there is no problem because identities can easily coexist and hence be multiple. Multilingualism is the best expression of it. Europe's future is not the US 'melting pot'; to preserve its cultural wealth, language learning becomes a central task for the European citizens.

Klapisch may be idealising the process of learning when Xavier, who had only basic language skills when he arrived in Barcelona, learns Spanish in just two months with the help of pub owner Juan. The method sounds easy: rise and go to the country and learn to speak. Language learning is a cognitive process involving much repetition that probably cannot be successfully represented on screen, and it is no surprise that its depiction is elliptic.

The omission of language learning for dramatic reasons should not, however, woo the spectator and minimise the importance of the language skills. This comes to the fore at the end of the film when Xavier decides to become a writer. The whole movie is then put in perspective as a part of the novel Xavier is writing. Sitting in front of his computer and looking at old photographs of him and his flatmates, he comments: "Je ne suis pas ça. Ni ça. Je ne suis plus ça. Ni ça. Ni ça. Ni ça. Et je suis tout ça. Et je suis lui, et lui, et lui aussi. Je suis elle, elle, elle, et elle aussi. Je suis français, espagnol, anglais, danois. Je suis comme l'Europe. Je suis tout ça. Je suis un vrai bordel."⁶ (1'56'30 ff.)

6 "I am not this. Nor that. I am no longer that. Nor that. Nor that. Nor that. I am all that. And I am him, and him, and him too. I am her, her, her, and her too. I am French, Spanish, English, Danish. I am like Europe. I am all that. I am a real mess."

At the end of the movie, Xavier has become a radical version of the Gambian and all his possible identities. This ending certainly causes a stir of emotion in the spectator though it is not really clear exactly how Xavier can be all of them at once. The last images show a plane taking off and then melting into a mosaic. These final metaphors illustrate that the movie and the evolution of the character are to be understood as an “histoire de décollage” (story of a takeoff), as Xavier says, that it is just a beginning and that his identity will evolve into a sort of intercultural patchwork.

Júlia ist is far from making such an explicit take on language and multilingualism. The film does not even use multilingualism for alienating or comedic effects. In *L'Auberge espagnole*, on the contrary, Xavier is fascinated by the exotic sounding name “Urquinaona” of a famous square and metro junction in Barcelona. In another scene, Wendy speaks on the phone to Xavier’s mother, and the Frenchwoman tells her in broken English that “after fac he can telephone maman” (35’), using the French abbreviation “fac” for “university”. Wendy gets quite upset because she is confusing “fac” with a similar-sounding English expletive, until Alessandro tells her to “relax”, which provides an example of how intercultural “coolness” works.

When Júlia comes to Berlin, she seems to already have a B2 level in German because she is able to follow the lectures in UdK from the very beginning. No German name or word captives her as with Xavier in the example above, not even the long compounds that are typical of the language. Júlia navigates fluently between Catalan, German and English. And even if she never uses Castilian, we must not forget that she is bilingual and used to diglossia. Although her German is imperfect and sometimes halting, it does not pose a problem in daily communication and we never see her or her friends learning the language. In one scene, she does have difficulties with a German essay on architecture and admits to not understanding a word (39’). But even her German-speaking friend Fanny is not able to decipher the cryptic academic style. It is thus not a problem of Júlia’s language skills or of the German language as such but of the complicated style and rhetoric.

The language skills of the characters in *Júlia ist* allow for at least two interpretations. On one hand, they can be understood as an attribute of an advanced European youth who have developed in the time since the

release of *L'Auberge espagnole*, in which multilingualism seemed to still be a new and challenging issue. On the other hand, it may also refer to the bourgeois and elitist context the students come from. German has the reputation of being a difficult language and is not necessarily part of the regular language curriculum in Spanish secondary schools. Good skills in German hence point to a special context, like in the case of Elena Martín herself who went to the Escuela Suiza de Barcelona (Engel 2017), which not only offers a multicultural and multilingual education with German as a guiding language, but also charges between 6.000 and 8.000 € per school year.

Conclusions

Although in both cases middle-class university graduates are shown as the building block of Europe, the two films deploy different visions of Europe and its linguistic diversity. In *L'Auberge espagnole*, variety and difference are a challenging and exciting experience. The flat-sharing community represents, *in nuce*, the European Union, and simulates its functioning in a playful everyday life that presents intercultural “coolness” as a solution for stress and misunderstanding. All the flatmates have developed bonds of friendship and are convinced that they are making a very enriching and unique experience. This sentiment culminates when Xavier has to return to Paris. In matters of identity, the movie combines a constructivist and a materialistic vision in which the brain is the hardware and identity is encoded by experience and language. Identity is thus a process in flux, all the more so if the person is willing to learn and open to new experiences. In the case of Xavier, this process does not end with the movie: though Xavier has a good job in the ministry, he decides to pursue his childhood dream and become a writer whose first book will recount the European experience as a flashpoint of personal growth and independence. Languages and multilingualism are the instruments which can make this vision work. Learning foreign languages appears to be a rewarding challenge to create an international community and foster personal evolution.

In this respect, *L'Auberge espagnole* offers an idealised and quite elaborate vision of how European communities of peoples may work, which corresponds to Klapisch's “tendance à intellectualiser” (‘tendency to

intellectualise’), as noted in the bonus material of the movie.⁷ Klapisch’s Europe is characterised by intercultural sensitivity, multilingualism, sexual freedom, frank communication, pragmatic solutions, economic wealth, and secularisation that all contribute to individual evolution.

The conclusions of *Júlia ist* are more open. Júlia’s identity is, like the title suggests, not yet defined. The copula “ist” lacks a noun or an adjective, thus leaving open to interpretation who Júlia really is. In one scene, a friend makes a sketch of her with bare breasts writing on the left side “Julia ist” and on the right “nackig” (‘naked’), which underlines that she is not yet ‘covered’ with an identity.

Unlike Klapisch, Elena Martín does not develop a generalizing concept of European community or identity. Júlia is mainly determined by what in early sociology was called “milieu”, in this case the overprotective Catalan family with its strong bonds and social obligations. Her year in Berlin is a way to break these chains, at least temporarily, and become more independent. She also has to learn that this alternative way of living is linked to less reliable and stable relationships. In *Júlia ist*, Europe has already become so established that the characters do not give it much thought any more. “Ya no estamos en ese punto” (‘we are no longer concerned with it’), Martín said in an interview, “todos somos europeos” (‘we are all European’; Engel 2017). Since the European framework has become nearly invisible, it is Júlia’s personal development that gets placed into the foreground.

Multilingualism is not something that she has to struggle for because it is already achieved. Foreign languages have lost their exotic and challenging appeal, they are a given part of everyday life. The differences between the two films hence point to an evolution towards a normalisation of multilingualism in the last fifteen years. However, both of the films show that this normality only pertains to the European academic middle class.

Filmography

L’Auberge espagnole (2002). Dir. Cédric Klapisch. Ce qui me meut et al.

Les poupées russes (2005). Dir. Cédric Klapisch. Lunar films et al.

Júlia ist (2017). Dir. Elena Martín. Lastor Media et al.

7 See the film director’s commentary in the DVD supplement.

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Ralf Junkerjürgen & Katharina Schryro

“My identity is like a patchwork of different experiences.” A conversation with the multilingual actress Laura Weissmahr

Laura Weissmahr (*1992) grew up in a multilingual family and speaks Italian, German, Swiss German, English, Spanish, Italian, Catalan, and French. After completing a Bachelor of Arts in Film & Television Production at the University of Westminster in 2015, she worked as a producer and actress in several projects, including *Júlia ist* by Elena Martín.



Apart from the Catalan actors, the film crew of *Júlia ist* was composed of Elena’s German friends whom she got to know doing theatre during her Erasmus stay in Berlin. One of the German students in the film is played by Laura Weissmahr, who is a friend of Martín’s from the Swiss School in Barcelona. Multilingual Laura was a valuable asset on set who could, apart

from acting and working as a production assistant, help with translations and subtitling. Fanny (the character Laura plays in the movie), with her cool, hipster-esque appearance, stands for the stereotypical lifestyle of the Erasmus generation as she studies “something creative” in Berlin. Her spontaneity, flexibility and independence reflect, to a certain degree, the attitude of this generation towards life, and she serves as a role model for Júlia in the film.

Besides *Júlia ist*, the two friends Elena and Laura also act side by side on the stage. *Wohnwagen*, a play by Rémi Pràdere, was performed in theatres in Barcelona and Madrid. Although the play is conceived as a fairy tale with some grotesque elements, just like *Júlia ist*, it also focuses on the difficulties the Millennial generation faces when it comes to getting to know oneself and shaping relationships. Laura, in the role of an angel, was able to make use of all seven of her languages during a monologue in which she switches every few minutes from one language to another.¹

In October 2017, at a congress on multilingualism and film that took place at the University of Regensburg, we had a chance to interview her about the ways in which multilingualism affects her identity and her professional career in the film industry.

* * *

Ralf Junkerjürgen: How did you join the project of the film *Júlia ist*?

Laura Weissmahr: Elena, the director, is my best friend. I have known her since we were 12 years old. When we finished school, I moved to London to study film production and she stayed in Barcelona. She studied *Comunicación Audiovisual* at the *Pompeu Fabra* university. For their final degree, they were allowed to do a feature film. That’s why they started with this project. I was pursuing film studies as well, so when she called me and asked me if I wanted to participate, I thought I was just joining a students’ project, going to Berlin and have some fun with them, and now it is everywhere. For me, it was a favour I was doing for her, I didn’t think it was going to be so official.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: You were also translating for the movie. What exactly were your tasks?

1 Mercè Rubià, “Wohnwagen”, Arriesgarte a Ser Quien Eres’, 20 April 2017, <https://www.teatromadrid.es/revista/wohnwagen-arriesgarte-quien>.



Figure 1. Laura Weissmahr at the conference “Multilingualism in film” in Regensburg.

Laura Weissmahr: Later, I did the subtitles. It was a lot of work because it had to be subtitled in Catalan, English and German. I tried to help out as much as I could. The movie itself is only in Catalan and German, because it is filmed either in Barcelona, where Júlia, the main character, speaks Catalan with her family and friends, or in Berlin, where she speaks German. Her German skills are due to her attending a Swiss school when she was younger. However, on set, the languages were Spanish, Catalan, English, and German. This was mainly due to the Catalan or Spanish crew, who didn’t speak German. The film was co-directed, and since one of the co-directors didn’t speak German at all, I sometimes had to translate from German to English, but this wasn’t an official task on set.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: Did you raise the language issue during the project? How did you tackle language? There are some scenes in which TV and radio are in Spanish and the rest is in Catalan. Was it an issue you spoke about?

Laura Weissmahr: No, that wasn't an issue because 70 % of the film is in German. The issue was the ending of the film. When you watch the film, it looks like a very well finished film, but there is about twice as much additional footage that was never used in the final cut. There are a lot of different versions of the film, which also include various endings in Barcelona, thus in a Spanish environment. But when Elena watched the film, she thought that the best parts were her experience in Germany. Furthermore, they were thinking that they were going to show the film in Barcelona. In Germany, it has not premiered yet. I wonder how the German audience is going to react to it, because for me, it's perfect, I understand the whole movie. But I can't imagine the experience of a person who doesn't understand German and has to read the subtitles. Obviously, it's not the same. So, this was an issue that was definitely considered.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: But in Spain, it was very successful.

Laura Weissmahr: Yes, it was. Maybe it has to do with the crisis. In Spain, this is a current issue among the youth. A lot of them want to leave, because it seems like the situation is better anywhere outside of Spain. Therefore, I think the film was very popular among young people, because it represents this generation who have left their homes earlier, lived somewhere else, come back with different experiences, and have not been able to reconnect with their environment because suddenly it seems boring and the view of the people around them is one-sided instead of two-sided. In my opinion, it's more the experience depicted in the film rather than the language of the people. Since we are a generation that is switching from Spanish to English, language is not an issue. It doesn't really become a problem, so you don't point it out.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: You have grown up with seven languages. Can you tell more about your language biography?

Laura Weissmahr: When I was 12, I spoke seven languages. However, this wasn't my achievement, it was thanks to my parents. My father is Swiss and my mother is Italian. I was born in the South of Spain but due to my parents' work, we moved around quite a lot. That's why I lived in the United States, in Switzerland, and when I was 12, we moved to Barcelona. In addition to that, we spoke Italian with my mother. Therefore, speaking



Figure 2. Júlia with her friends back in Barcelona. 01:26:54

all these languages wasn't really my effort. The only language I had to learn at school was French. That's the only effort I have ever made to learn a language. I can only talk about myself, but for me, it's natural. I don't know how my brain would work without it.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: Though you are an exceptional case, you represent a new generation of young Europeans who live in a country different from their home one and are able to communicate in at least three or four foreign languages.

Laura Weissmahr: But there are also cases like Elena. She is completely Catalan but she went to a Swiss school, so she learned German, a little bit of French and English. Then she was on Erasmus in Berlin. I think my case doesn't necessarily represent this generation, because it's due to my family situation, but around me, I see a lot of people who have left, learned another language, come back and switch between languages without effort. It becomes second nature to them.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: Your language profile is also interesting for film directors because they can make use of your capacities for extraordinary characters.

Laura Weissmahr: I guess it's interesting for them because I can do multiple roles. I've been doing a lot of theatre after *Júlia ist*. Moreover, we did one particular theatre play in Barcelona where my friend is the director, and he asked me to do a monologue which lasted about 10 minutes. I would switch languages every two or three sentences. After that came other projects where I've been asked to do exactly the same, so this year has been a year I have been asked to perform within this diversity of languages. However, film directors doing an English or a German movie, which I would really like, for instance, have not approached me. It's a Catalan movie but my part is just German. Actually, when you approached me at the Malaga Film Festival, you were very surprised I spoke Spanish.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: Yes, because you speak without accent on screen and I thought that this girl had to be German. However, she was not, as we now know. Do you have the feeling that film or theatre directors use you as an “element of multilingualism”?

Laura Weissmahr: I think not just with me, but in general, they like working with languages. In all the productions we are doing now, we aren't scared of using other languages anymore. In some plays, I speak English and



Figure 3. Laura Weissmahr as Fanny, a German student. 00:49:50

there are no subtitles. We just assume the audience will understand it. Sometimes I even feel bad about it, because the parents of my boyfriend, for instance, don't speak English. I feel sorry for them but at the same time we agree that almost everybody is bilingual now. At least in the sense of "a little bit of everything". As you said, it's not always for comical use or for creating a historical context. It's just to use the language as it is. As a tool to change something creatively, to add a creative level to the production.

Talking about theatre or a film project: I worked for a video artist named Jordi Colomer, who was the exhibiting artist for the Spanish Pavilion in the Venice Biennale this year. His project was all about how cultures merge and how civilisation is formed. He was very interested in the fact that I could speak so many languages. That's why he asked me to recite Kafka's text about the construction of the Babel tower in different languages, because in a way, it represented the construction, the beginning of civilisation. To conclude this metaphor, I think our generation is beginning to rebel against this kind of punishment from God that separates us and we will unite again.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: Unite again in multilingualism.

Laura Weissmahr: Yes, exactly. Through the Internet, young people just feel as connected to the culture in Britain as they do to Germany, even though they are different. How can you cross this border? The language shouldn't be much of an issue anymore.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: Language is often related to issues of identity. You said you had lived in Switzerland, Germany, Spain, England, and the United States. What's your opinion on this question of identity? How do you shape your identity with respect to languages?

Laura Weissmahr: I definitely don't shape my identity by a nationality. Nationalism or the bond to a specific nationality is very difficult to understand for me. I know the issue in theory but I can't feel it in my heart. My identity is like a patchwork of different experiences. For instance, I prefer one language for being angry and another language for being serious. When I speak German, I usually use a lower tone of voice, so that's what I use when I want to sound serious. Therefore, my identity is linked to my experiences and to the places where I have lived. Obviously,

this is also related to the languages I speak, because that's why I'm here. However, at the same time, I feel a certain distance from each language, because I am not really at home in any of them. You mentioned the case of Stephan Zweig before, a multilingual author who believes nevertheless that speaking other languages affects his German writing. I feel the same. I feel like I'm never going to be able to write a proper piece of paper in one language, because I would like to use all seven languages and I would swap whenever it is convenient for me.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: Where does this come from? You said you link certain ideas or biographical experiences to your languages. German is linked to situations that are more serious or is it just the style of communication?

Laura Weissmahr: It's just because in Switzerland you speak lower, in Spain you shout more and I speak slower when I speak German. It is also linked to the people I am speaking with. When I think, I don't think in language. If I think of a person, I think in the language I speak with that person. In general, I just think in clouds, which then turn into language in my mouth. My thoughts are not written. It's a problem because I don't really think before I speak.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: Can you explain this with the clouds? That's an interesting metaphor.

Laura Weissmahr: Maybe I shouldn't compare it to a cloud. It's more like a concept. I don't put my thoughts into sentences. A sentence has a beginning, a middle part and an end. Therefore, it has a linearity. It has almost a temporality. That doesn't happen in my head. I know I'm thinking of something but not until I say it, do I know exactly the structure of what I was thinking. Moreover, I think that has very much to do with the fact that I can't fully express myself in any language. It sounds amazing, the seven languages, but at the same time I'm limited in each one of them.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: Do you use each language for a certain context?

Laura Weissmahr: No, I mix them. Nevertheless, when it comes to emotions, language comes out very differently depending on which emotion you are talking about. For example, I studied film in English, so it's easier for me to talk about film theory in English.

Katharina Schryro: What's your family language? Which language do you speak when you are together with both of your parents?

Laura Weissmahr: Well, that's where all the craziness came from. At my house, at the dinner table we would swap between Italian, Spanish, German, Swiss German and English. We would go to another language whenever it was convenient. That's why I got this bad habit of not finding a word and saying it in another language. If they had been more disciplined, maybe it would be different.

Right now, I have been living in Spain for a year again and my intimate language is Spanish because I'm speaking Spanish with my friends and my partner. Two years ago, when I was in London, it was definitely English. Therefore, it changes depending on my habitat.

Nolwenn Mingant: I would like to know about the financing of the film. It was a co-production and you said there were four nationalities on set and you translated. I was wondering: why so many nationalities? Was it because of the financing or was it due to the project?

Laura Weissmahr: The film was done without any budget. In the beginning, the four producers and directors put in €1000 each and said: "let's go, we are doing this". The nationalities were just random. Actually, the main nationalities were German and Spanish, or Catalan. However, due to communication reasons, sometimes we would swap to English. Later, once the film was done, it caught the interest of producers. There was this production company, Avalon, which invested in the post-production and distribution, which cost a fair amount of money. They earned a bit with the Malaga Film Festival, but this was due to the post-production. The film itself was made on a zero-budget-basis. It was a nice experience for a group of friends helping each other.

Nolwenn Mingant: Concerning your translation job on set: did you use English because it was technical vocabulary of the film business and because you were studying that in London?

Laura Weissmahr: Yes and no. The technical team was Spanish and the actors and the locals on set were German. The vocabulary wasn't that technical, so it wasn't a problem. As I said, everyone on the set spoke English

as well. I wasn't the main translator. It was just in very specific situations that I would help out and translate.

Reine Maylaerts: I have a more general question. I would consider all of this as a kind of "happy multilingualism". I'm really happy about it as well. The question I have is: within Europe, is this type of multilingualism linked to European multilingualism? Moreover, don't we require of people who come from outside of Europe to rather unlearn their languages, because we are not considering that as multilingualism? That's to say, if you look at the policies on a European level, we are adding up national languages and we consider this as positive. So, why should the other people unlearn their languages?

Laura Weissmahr: When you say other people, whom do you mean?

Reine Maylaerts: Let's say people coming from the North of Africa or Turkey. I'm not saying that they shouldn't learn the language, but my question is: don't we have a different, and in this aspect more negative, attitude to this kind of multilingualism?

Ralf Junkerjürgen: The ideology of "happy multilingualism" might be explained by European history. We are nearly all monolingual. If we think of the oldest nations in Europe, like France, they followed a strictly monolingual policy for a long time since the French Revolution. In the 20th century, European hegemony perishes in the wars, the European Union is a kind of European resurrection, and multilingualism has a very practical and an ideological meaning for the unification of the nations at once. But seen from the outside, this might be, like Reine says, a reductive construction. On the contrary, from the inside, as is shown in these films, it is considered as a historical step forward. Maybe this is the point why it works so well, because it's very constructive.

Patrick Zabalbeascoa: I agree with what you say that it is a starting point. But there are projects at universities at the bachelor's level, as well as the primary school level, that show the negative effects of making very young children unlearn a language. The studies propose environments and methodologies where teachers don't have to know five languages, which the student might have, but they should show awareness of their students'

linguistic situation and reduce embarrassment. Because silent periods these students go through are negative, apparently. However, teachers can start doing simple exercises like asking all the children to say their name in their own language and other initiatives. In Barcelona, for example, the language scope is very complicated. First, because you have people learning Catalan at home and Spanish at school or vice versa. Then, you have the additional immigration population and almost all language combinations are possible. Nevertheless, if the mother tongue is completely suppressed outside the home, that has been shown to be negative. Even for learning the host country's language. Therefore, it doesn't make sense at any level. I imagine that, as that awareness grows, the policy will change. I think, on a European level, funding that policy has changed. Before, it was only for European languages, now there is funding for multilingualism including Arabic, Chinese and non-European languages.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: Combining Reine's remark with a question for Laura: "Happy multilingualism" is often impeded by the school system, especially in Germany. Even if pupils come from families with a certain academic background, for a long time it was nearly impossible for them to get access to university without speaking German perfectly. How did you get through this? School systems are often designed for monolinguals and now, there are people like yourself with five, six, seven languages. How was the contact with the school system in Barcelona or in other countries?

Laura Weissmahr: The thing is, I went to a Swiss school which was predominantly German. I struggled with learning Catalan and Spanish properly. I am lucky, because over the years, I soaked it up quickly. My sister, on the other hand, doesn't speak Catalan to this day. Kids make fun of you, of course, but that's it. The teachers were inclusive enough. Before, we were speaking about Arabic or Chinese. There is a lot of Arabic and Chinese immigration in Barcelona, which is affecting the generations younger than me. I used to work with a foundation that was based in *Raval*² and 80 % of the kids in class were foreigners. Most of them Arabs and some Chinese. Sometimes you notice a certain kind of racism. Especially in small towns in Catalonia, where Catalan families worry that their kids would start

2 *El Raval* is a neighbourhood in Barcelona.

speaking Arabic. Therefore, it was even the other way around. However, my friends, who are Arabic or Chinese, speak perfect Arabic or perfect Chinese, and also perfect Catalan and Spanish. Maybe they are lucky, and I understand the problem you are suggesting, but I think Barcelona had to adapt to it. I can only speak for Catalonia now because that's where I grew up.

Patrick Zabalbeascoa: I want to go back to this multilingual identity. Your name can probably be pronounced differently in all these languages. Do you have a favourite pronunciation for your name in phonological terms? Because the spelling is easy, it doesn't change.

Laura Weissmahr: My first name is definitely Laura (*Italian pronunciation*), the Italian version. That's what my mom uses. My surname is more complicated. When I went to England, I would also say Laura (*Italian pronunciation*). I wouldn't say Laura (*English pronunciation*).

Thea Kruse: What role does English play in *Júlia ist*? I noticed that in some of these modern, young-generation, inter-European migration films, most conversations are in English. I'm thinking of *L'Auberge espagnole* or *Victoria*. They switch to English as a third language in many of these films. That's probably a realistic depiction of Erasmus and other kind of



Figure 4. Júlia with her German friends working on a project. 00:32:35

migration experiences, especially in Berlin. I was curious if that's the case in your film, too, or if the focus is more on German, as a learning experience for the Spanish girl?

Laura Weissmahr: I personally didn't go on an Erasmus, but my friends told me that you made friends with a lot of people from other countries, who are on an Erasmus as well and you speak English with each other. That's not the case in *Júlia ist*. Júlia goes to Berlin by herself and she doesn't have any other Erasmus students around her. She speaks a little bit of German and she is surrounded by a German community, so she has to speak German and they don't speak English. She speaks Catalan with a couple of Spanish and Catalan friends she has in Berlin, but that's about it. The only English part in this film is the music. All of the music is in English with a bit of German rap. But in general, English doesn't play an important role. In real life, it actually happens a lot that you either avoid other foreigners and go with German people, because you want to learn German, or you make a lot of friends from everywhere except Germany.

Ralf Junkerjürgen: There is just one scene, in which there is a mix of German and English phrases. It's at the very beginning of the film, when Júlia goes back to her apartment and the girls are playing a game (see



Figure 5. Júlia with her flatmate and some friends playing a game. 00:07:54

Figure 5). But apart from this, Júlia already has quite a good grasp of German.

Laura Weissmahr: Elena, interpreting Júlia, had to pretend she speaks less German than she actually does. It's very difficult pretending you don't speak a language. Therefore, she was stuttering a lot, although she is quite fluent in German. And it's true, there is one scene where they play a game and the new flatmate is trying to translate for her. I think this is because one of the girls, one of the actresses is Australian. That's why they play the whole game in English. On set, these things happen and then you are suddenly at a conference theorising about it and you haven't thought about it before.

Nolwenn Mingant: When you were studying film production in London, was your linguistic profile the exception or the norm in comparison to other students? I'm thinking about whether the profile of producers is changing with the new generation. That they have more linguistic capacities because there is more co-production in Europe. What did you feel or what did the teachers say?

Laura Weissmahr: At university, there were the English students and half of the class was usually European or Asian. All these students have a very good level of English because that's the requirement to be accepted at the university. Therefore, they would speak their languages as well as English. I haven't met someone with this kind of multilingualism. Maybe English and Swedish or English and German, or English and French. That was very common. All the students there had a very good level of English. I think this has to do with the fact that the film industry is worldwide and not country-based anymore.

Nolwenn Mingant: Did you have that conversation with your teachers about whether speaking more languages than English would give you more job opportunities, or whether English was enough to survive in the world of production?

Laura Weissmahr: I remember one conversation in which he said that it's good to have another language. My profile is interesting but at the end of the day, most of the money for movie production is in America or Great



Figure 6. Júlia trying to study for university. 00:39:17

Britain. He said I could go to Switzerland, but then I would probably work for TV.

Constanze Potthoff: What language do you speak with your sister?

Laura Weissmahr: It depends on the situation we're in. It used to be Spanish. Now she is studying in Lausanne at an English university, so she started speaking a lot of English with me, because she doesn't speak French. When we argue, it is definitely Spanish and when it is very serious, it's going Swiss because the language is quite harsh. It sounds a bit like snakes talking. However, generally we switch between Spanish and English. But again, it has changed with the years. It's not really that interesting. It's just about where we lived at that moment.

Gala Rebane: You have introduced the film as standing in the tradition of Erasmus films and at the same time pointed out (and then it was repeatedly confirmed) that language wasn't a problem. For example, in the scene in which she tries to read the architecture book and drops it on her head. Is her exasperation caused by the academic writing style or the language itself? What are the main challenges for Júlia coming as an Erasmus student on an exchange from Spain to Germany?

Laura Weissmahr: It's the culture and the fact that she is alone and everybody else already has their life sorted out. Even though in the beginning, she would very quickly be able to practice her German, it always takes her one second more to talk. When she asks a question, her professor ridicules her in front of the whole classroom, because she didn't phrase it right or she doesn't know what a *Referat* is. Therefore, the main issue is her loneliness, but it doesn't have anything to do with the language, because Júlia learned it very quickly. At the end of the movie, she speaks German very well. I think it's more the Germanic culture which seems kind of distant.

Gala Rebane: Is this more focused on the differences between the academic cultures of different countries or different cultures in general?

Laura Weissmahr: There is just one scene where they focus on this academic difference. For instance, there is this knocking on the table after class in Germany, but it's not the academic surrounding itself. She studies architecture; I think there is a kind of global language to it.

Nolwenn Mingant: What are your new production projects now, since you said language is not an issue?

Laura Weissmahr: As I said, I am working on theatre. Now, we are starting a new theatre production on Saturday. That one is not necessarily focused on the different languages, it is mainly in Catalan. Nevertheless, we were trying to translate some parts, because there are people working on the play who have several nationalities or speak other languages.

Gala Rebane

‘There is no word for thank you in Dothraki’: Language ideologies in *Game of Thrones*

Abstract: This chapter discusses language ideologies in the acclaimed HBO series *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019) and the role which English vernaculars, foreign languages, and accented speech play in narrative characterisation of the protagonists. It focuses on language attitudes, including language stereotyping and linguistic discrimination, and shows the relationship the series establishes between varying degrees of language proficiency on one hand, and sophistication, culture, and humanness, on the other.

Language issues in high fantasy

With the release of the first *Game of Thrones* (*GoT*) season in 2011, the fictional world of George R.R. Martin’s fantasy saga *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-)¹ inscribed itself into the primary world of international viewership, becoming nothing short of a collective myth. While, unsurprisingly, *The Lord of the Rings* is often cited among the chief sources of inspiration for Martin, his work was also a significant departure from established conventions of the high fantasy genre, as espoused by its founding father, Tolkien, and many other subsequent authors. Indeed, *GoT* (and before it *A Song of Ice and Fire*) veers from a monolithic moral soundness of eucatastrophic fairy epics² to a degree of psychological and ideological twistedness rarely found in traditional heroic fantasy and entertainment media. Magic and fantastic creatures occupy relatively little space in the

1 Between 1996 and 2011, five volumes were published and, according to the author’s official website, two more are forthcoming (<http://www.georgerrmartin.com/bibliography/>, accessed on 13.11.2018).

2 The term ‘Eucatastrophe’ was introduced by Tolkien himself in *On Fairy-stories* – an essay in which he powerfully argues for the fantasy genre and postulates, among other things, that “the Consolation of the Happy Ending” be its necessary attribute ([1947] 2014: 75).

narrative which instead draws upon human fallibility, vice and virtue to underpin its relentless and brutal power struggles.

While Martin certainly gave the genre a new direction, he nevertheless also preserved some of its best and most unique features as set forth by Tolkien. One of these is, quite prominently, the attention to language in the overall fashioning of a full-fledged secondary world. Tolkien's linguistic concoction in his Middle-Earth saga served as a gold standard for subsequent high fantasy authors to look up to. As Shayne Dwyer (2016: 6) states,

[t]he real world has many languages which each serve to add to its depth and culture by allowing culture to grow and develop. In creating a world from scratch there must be a way to create some sort of constant. Language serves as the constant in which culture can build on and mature. In this way language creation is essential to world building, and Tolkien provided an extremely detailed and in-depth example of how to create language.

In fact, for Tolkien ([1931] 2006: 210f.), language was the very prerequisite of mythopoeia:

As one suggestion, I might fling out the view that for a construction of a perfect art-language it is found necessary to construct at least in outline a mythology concomitant. [...] The converse indeed is true, your language construction will *breed* a mythology.

Whereas Tolkien himself remained faithful to his language-based world-creation, subsequent generations of high fantasy authors (as well as their critics) eagerly upheld his famous “green sun” dictum³ and made it the manifesto of the genre, while at the same time dislodging it from its original context. Without a Tolkien-esque passion for linguistic creativity, such as the fourteen artificial languages in his Middle-earth saga (cf. Noel 1980), made-up tongues in ensuing works of the genre were treated more as exotic window-dressing that would enhance the plausibility of the secondary worlds in which they resided, and not as a primary nourishing

3 “Anyone inheriting the fantastic device of human language can say *the green sun*. Many can then imagine or picture it. But that is not enough [...]. To make a Secondary World inside which the green sun will be credible, commanding Secondary Belief [...] will certainly demand a special skill, a kind of elvish craft.” (Tolkien [1947] 2014: 61).

source of world-creation. Even such acclaimed high fantasy authors as Andrzej Sapkowski or Ursula Le Guin admit to the subordinate value of language in their otherwise highly complex fictional worlds. Sapkowski says with regard to his *Witcher* cycle that, unlike Tolkien, he merely created “a cocktail of languages” by mixing French, English, Latin and German elements so that an erudite (Polish) reader could get the gist of phrases in Hen Llinge, the Elder Speech of Aed Seidhe elves.⁴ Le Guin likewise refers to Tolkien as someone who “did it right”;⁵ and as for herself, she constructed the language of the Kesh from *Always Coming Home* only as Todd Barton had started composing the music for the songs that accompanied the book release, and texts in the fictitious ‘original’ tongue were requested (Le Guin 2006: xix). While the *Wheel of Time Companion* to Robert Jordan’s fourteen-volume saga, deemed the most successful fantasy novel after *The Lord of the Rings*, contains a separate section with a 1.000-word glossary as well as syntactic and grammatic rules of the invented Old Tongue (cf. Dwyer 2016: 7), it is nevertheless a far cry from Tolkien’s monumental project.

Multilingualism of the ‘Martinverse’

In many ways, Martin was no exception to this trend. While realising it necessary to reinforce the authenticity of his complex secondary world with a variety of languages spoken across its various lands, he never actually developed any of those in the same way as Tolkien had done, and, as it happens, he was not particularly interested in the business of language creation as such (cf. Tharoor 2013; Peterson 2015: 19). In line with the taxonomy of multilingualism in fictional texts proposed by Petr Mareš (2000a, 2000b, 2003) and further elaborated by Lukas Bleichenbacher (2008: 24) with regard to films, Martin’s strategy in dealing with various

4 An interview with Sapkowski (translated into Russian), online: <https://azatsh.livejournal.com/9143.html#cutid1> (accessed on 22.11.2018). His readers, however, also discuss the obvious appropriations from Gaelic and Welsh; cf. https://pikabu.ru/story/kak_sapkovskiy_starshuyu_rech_sozdaval5248014 (accessed on 22.11.2018).

5 <http://litseen.com/ursula-k-le-guin-breaking-the-boundaries-of-fantasy/> (accessed on 22.11.2018).

languages of Westeros and Essos can be described as *signalisation* through metalinguistic comments with occasional *evocative* interferences that are mainly limited to just one or two words in a foreign tongue (Dothraki, or, else, Valyrian).

Although it is true that Martin did not engage in language creation himself, what he *did* invent, however, were language families. First and foremost among these was the Valyrian that reflected the course of historical and cultural development within his fictional universe (see Table 1). As observed by David J. Peterson (2015: 19), the linguist who was entrusted with the creation of languages in the *GoT* series, “the mere presence of a detailed language history elevates *A Song of Ice and Fire* above comparable works in regard to language (a notable exception, of course, being Tolkien)”.

Despite Martin’s extensive input on the linguistic complexity of his fictional universe, on the whole, language issues as such were of little importance for the plot. Yet, “while in the books Martin, as author, has the

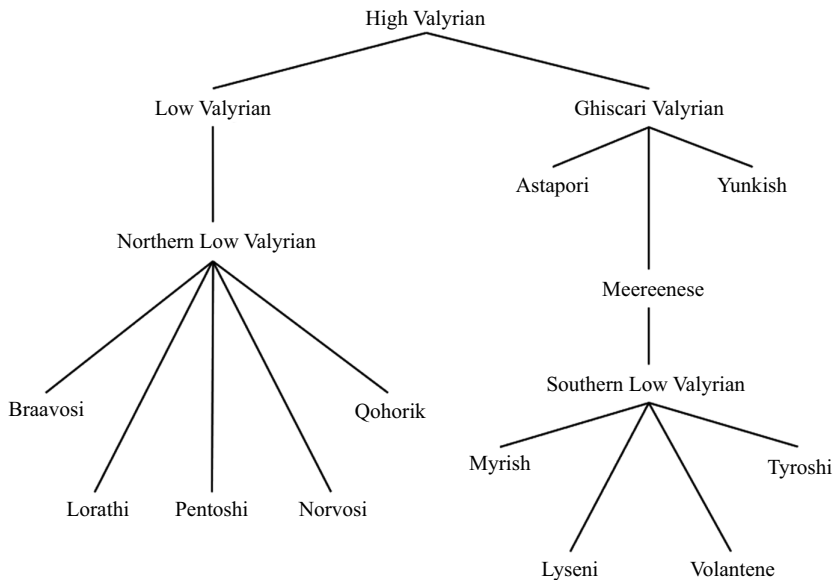


Figure 1. “A potential sketch of the Valyrian language family” (Peterson 2015: 18).

power of narrative convention to focus the reader's attention where he will, and to pass over non-English phrases in the course of narration, the camera has a much wider scope" (ibid.: 19f.), and it was in the transition from *A Song of Ice and Fire* to *Game of Thrones* as its audio-visual rendition that the former's implicit multilingualism became both a narrative challenge and a chance.

The producers' decision to commission an actual expert from the Language Creation Society for the exchanges in Dothraki as they were still preparing to shoot the pilot was, admittedly, one dictated by the high standards of quality that are expected from HBO original programming, as well as the aesthetic expectations of its presumed target audience. HBO's autonomy, made possible by a funding scheme that focuses on viewer subscriptions rather than sponsorship and advertising, has given rise to a new type of consumer, one who is oriented towards issues usually largely avoided by traditional television, and looks for unconventional and complex narratives (DeFino 2013).

The imperative to make the viewing experience immersive and realistic to its fullest extent – all the more important as *GoT* was actually a fantasy series, as opposed to HBO's customary real-life drama productions – also called for the multilingual makings of the 'Martinverse' to play an active role in the series' narrative and auditive aesthetics, reinforcing *GoT*'s claims of verisimilitude. Peterson's account of the producers' rationale behind the decision to commission an expert in language construction, his own tremendous effort in creating artificial languages,⁶ and the attempts of specialised speech coaches to trim the actors' natural English accents so as to best fit their roles (McNeil 2016) all attest to a wide spectrum of considerations at play within that process. Hardly any of those were arbitrary and ideology-free.

6 The languages Peterson developed for the series were Dothraki (appearing already in Season 1), High and Low Valyrian (featured, most notably, in Season 3), and Mag Nuk, a pidgin version of the Old Tongue still spoken by the giants and some of the Wildlings (a single phrase uttered by the giant Wun Wun in Season 5); see more on Peterson's blog under www.dothraki.com

Language ideologies of *Game of Thrones*

Before proceeding with the discussion of language ideologies in the *GoT* series – the subject proper of this paper – it is necessary to briefly touch on the term itself. At a very general level, language ideology connotes “shared bodies of common-sense notions about the nature of language in the world” (Rumsey 1990: 346), including “cultural conceptions not only of language and language variation, but also of the nature and purpose of communication, and of communicative behaviour as an enactment of a collective order” (Woolard 1992: 235; see also Silverstein [1987] 1996). The term as a whole, however, is no less vividly debated than both its semantic components, ‘language’ and ‘ideology’. Woolard & Schieffelin (1994: 57) point out that the numerous strands of respective academic inquiry hinge on two distinct understandings of ideology: as a neutral term encompassing “cultural systems of representation”, and as a negatively charged designation of a set of normative beliefs that underline social practices, particularly focusing on asymmetrical power relations between different groups. However, as she remarks elsewhere (Woolard 1998: 8), it is hard to come by any truly neutral uses of the heavily compromised term, so where a merely descriptive stance is called for, “other labels such as culture, worldview, belief, *mentalité*, and so on” are preferred.

In my analysis, I focus, for one thing, on different examples of linguistic behaviour exhibited by the protagonists as specific narrative elements supporting the plot. I also inquire into the nature of the value attributed to different languages in the series, as well as the multilingual competence that is on display, and in doing so I explore the cultural assumptions and power relations these reflect.

As already mentioned, the show contains exchanges in Dothraki as well as High and Low Valyrian, and occasionally offers further fragments of other languages such as Mag Nuk (the presence of the latter is, however, limited to one phrase only⁷) or Old Ghiscari (the word *mbhysa*, meaning “mother”, with which the liberated Yunkai slaves hail Daenerys; *GoT* 3, 10, 59:03). The wealth of languages spoken in Westeros and Essos is also

7 It is the Giant Wun Wun’s line “Lokh kif rukh?”, which translates to “What are you staring at?” (*GoT* 5, 8, 41:44).

indicated by metalinguistic comments. As Mance Rayder tells Jon Snow, the Wildling tribes under his leadership speak seven different languages (*GoT* 3, 2, 25:00). The language prodigy of the series, slave translator Missandei of Naath, admits to mastering no less than nineteen tongues (*GoT* 3, 8, 43:30).

Additionally, the series features some script samples in Valyrian (Talisa Stark's letter to her mother in Volantene, a Southern Low Valyrian dialect) and the Old Tongue runes (as appearing in the heraldry of the House Royce). While the Old Tongue runes were adopted from the Anglo-Saxon Futhorc runic system,⁸ the scripts in Valyrian use the same writing system as the Common Tongue, i.e. a visually pseudo-medieval Latin alphabet,⁹ rather than glyphs, as described in the books. There are also occasional gaps in consistency within the series' linguistic universe. For instance, in several episodes that take place in Meereen, the protest graffiti "Kill the Masters" is rendered in modern handwriting in the Common Tongue (i.e. factually English), although the city population speaks its own dialect of Low Valyrian.

The rich linguistic variation in the *GoT* universe is also suggested by different accents. As speech coach John Fleming believes, the series' makers "separated the seven kingdoms [...] by dialect";¹⁰ others, however, disagree with the parallel drawn between the real-life distribution of (mainly British) accents and their allotment to the characters coming from different parts of the fictional universe. Chris Taylor (2017) forcefully argues that, in fact, "the show's seven accents do not map to its seven kingdoms in any way" (cf. also Lien 2016: 27ff.).

To someone who is not particularly dialect-savvy, the different English accents in the show may be reduced to 1) a 'Northern' English accent, 2) a 'Londoner' accent, 3) RP (Received Pronunciation, i.e. a 'posh' British accent), and 4) a non-native 'exotic' accent. The domination of British varieties of English in the American series could have been explained by the

8 https://gameofthrones.fandom.com/wiki/Writing_systems (accessed on 28.12.2018).

9 *ibid.*

10 <https://winteriscoming.net/2016/12/24/dialect-coach-analyzes-the-accent-on-game-of-thrones/> (accessed on 27.12.2018).

predominantly British origins of the main cast; however, the fact that most actors had to put on a regional accent different from their own, with the help of specialised speech coaches (cf. Peterson 2015: 21), points to a far more deliberate choice of the filmmakers in that regard.

The storyline of *GoT* is often associated with the medieval history of Western Europe (cf. DeFino 2014: 210), and more specifically, the English Wars of the Roses. Martin used this history as a primary source of inspiration (cf. Larrington 2016: 2), which makes the use of chiefly British regional accents plausible and authentic. Additionally, as recent sociolinguistic studies suggest, British accents are generally held in higher esteem by American listeners than American ones (cf. Anderson et al. 2007: 9; Smith 2017: 35; YouGov Poll *Accents* 2018: 8), and would possibly invoke positive responses from HBO's target audience. Finally, accents provide strong sociocultural clues about their speakers and have long been known to be deployed in film as important means of narrative characterisation.

Accented speech as means of narrative characterisation I: English vernaculars

Characterisation of film protagonists through accented speech is never an innocuous enterprise. In order to work, it draws upon, and often further reinforces, specific sets of linguistic ideologies and widespread stereotypes that are related, among other things, to class, race, and educational level. With regard to the English accents displayed by the *GoT* protagonists, several main functions of these can be identified. One is that of a *moral commentary* on the respective characters. It is best exemplified by the use of Northern accents, most notably Yorkshire.

Howard Giles's (1970) research on evaluative reactions to accents, whose main findings were reconfirmed in more recent studies by Bishop et al. (2005), Coupland & Bishop (2007), as well as Watson & Clark (2015), identified the RP-style accents as the most prestigious phonological variety of British English. While Giles's survey showed that Northern British accents did not rank very high on all three scores he employed (aesthetic, communicative and status-related), Coupland & Bishop (2007: 83) also discovered an age-related bias in the people's perception of different accents. Younger respondents tended to value Northern accents more than

older people, yet they felt, in comparison, less positive about RP. A broadly discussed study by Smith & Workman (2008) likewise demonstrated that out of three accents they assessed – Birmingham ('Brummie'), Yorkshire and RP – Yorkshire was favoured over the 'posh' accent and associated with high intelligence, while the speakers of Birmingham variety were negatively stigmatised.¹¹ Yorkshire-accented people were, on the contrary, "perceived as 'wise, trustworthy, honest and straightforward'",¹² and the choice of this accent for the series' most heroic (and nearly all male) figures – Ned and Robb Stark, Jon Snow, Mance Rayder, Ygritte, Lyanna Mormont – might be explained by this recent positive shift in its perception. Yngvild Audestad Lien (2016: 34) assumes that, "rather than portraying Eddard [Ned] Stark with a prestige accent which might cause the audience of the television show to focus on his position and power, his Northern English accent emphasizes character traits; namely his honesty and masculinity". The international acclaim of *GoT* has likely further reinforced the positive attribution of the Yorkshire accent. As Taylor (2017) humorously observes, the Yorkshire "now stands for unshakeable morality and doomed heroism".

There are also other main characters in the series who speak with markedly Northern accents not accounted for by their geographical origins, accents apparently deployed solely to highlight their moral integrity. For one thing, Samwell Tarly actually speaks with a Mancunian (i.e. Manchester) accent, although he was born in the South of Westeros and had not once been to the North before. Another character whose Northern, more precisely: Geordie (i.e. Newcastle) accent does not match his biography is Ser Davos Seaworth, born and raised in Flee Bottom before coming into the service of Stannis Baratheon. Likewise, the mercenary Bronn, "whelped and whipped" in the same slum in the South (*GoT* 5, 4, 33:41ff.) lacks in neither frankness and sense of justice, nor intelligence – and he, too, speaks with a Northern (in his case, Yorkshire) accent.

11 See <http://theconversation.com/how-outdated-stereotypes-about-british-accent-reinforce-the-class-ceiling-43683> (accessed on 30.12.2018).

12 See <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/apr/04/6> (accessed on 30.12.2018).

While Ser Davos is endowed with “the most attractive accent in England”,¹³ his rather charmless liege speaks with a non-prestige accent otherwise reserved for the soldiers and guards. “To British ears, Stannis sounds a little like a character from *Eastenders*. This is a long-running, hugely popular BBC soap opera about the east end of London, home of bruisers and gangsters who dispense rough justice – perfect for Stannis” (Taylor 2017). Remarkably, while there are different opinions on that score, all associate Stannis with accents traditionally ranking very low in prestige and social attractiveness such as the working-class vernaculars of London, Norwich, or Black Country (cf. Smith 2017: 25; Coupland & Bishop 2007: 79).

Conversely, Stannis’s brother Robert Baratheon has the same marked Yorkshire accent as his boyhood friend Ned Stark. His speech performance is often praised as one of “the best deployments of accent-as-characterization in the series [...] [,] their similar accents reflect[ing] their shared past, communicat[ing] their rapport, and warn[ing] of the distance between the two men and the posh, RP southern-accented Lannisters” (Read 2013).

The use of RP (and, as a linguist would discriminatingly point out, SSBE – Standard Southern British English) in the series posits somewhat of a conundrum. While its name – Received Pronunciation – indicates its rootedness in elite educational practices associated with class and/or socio-economic status rather than geographical origin (the latter being the case with SSBE, if only to a degree), in *GoT* it is not always spoken by the characters one would actually expect.

In her paper on accents in the first season of *GoT*, Lien (2016) outlines two dimensions of narrative characterisation associated with RP: ‘masculinity’ and ‘sophistication’. Here Lien references earlier research on language attitudes by Giles & Marsh (1979) and Trudgill (1983). While the former study found RP speakers to be perceived as more ‘masculine’ in comparison with the speakers of non-standard language varieties regardless of gender, Trudgill asserted that the reverse be true. Furthermore, several other sociolinguistic studies attest to negative stereotyping of speakers

13 <https://www.scotsman.com/news/uk/scots-accent-is-uk-s-second-favourite-1-1092147> (accessed on 05.01.2019).

of non-standard varieties as ‘less sophisticated’ than their RP- or SSEB-spoken counterparts. However, neither the ‘masculinity’ nor the ‘sophistication’ hypotheses really hold up in regard to the *GoT* main characters. For instance, in comparing Viserys and Daenerys Targaryen, or Arya and Sansa Stark, all speak ‘posh’ British English yet score very differently in these two dimensions.

The apparent lack of consistency in the deployment of the RP-type accents in *GoT* likely reflects their twofold reputation. While they traditionally stand for an elevated social origin and/or level of education (or, else, ‘sophistication’) of their speakers, RP is also an accent that is deliberately used by those aspiring to ‘fine society’, and is thus associated with snobbery (cf. Taylor 2017).¹⁴ Speculating on the conscious decisions of the filmmakers behind *all* the language varieties in the show is, of course, an exercise in futility. However, I hold it that while in some cases, RP provides a commentary on the *social self-promotion* of its speakers, e.g. the Lannisters, Catelyn and Sansa Stark, as well as Viserys Targaryen, who are all well aware of their privileged status and eagerly underline it, in others, it is either a *meritocratic educational statement*, with Varys and Missandei as its two paragons, or a *proof of truly noble, moreover: royal descent*. The last function is exemplified both by Robert Baratheon’s bastard son Gendry from the Flea Bottom slum¹⁵ and Daenerys Targaryen, whose RP accents appear to be accounted for by the regality (and perceived magical power) of their blood alone. The case of Daenerys is particularly special, as her linguistic performance is explicitly put into connection with her ancient aristocratic descent – an issue that will be further dealt with later on in this chapter.

The connection the series makes between the identity of a character and the language variety she/he speaks is particularly strong in the case of Lord Bailish ‘Littlefinger’. It has often been observed that Littlefinger’s accent undergoes a major change throughout the series. “Baelish’s accent literally wanders. Watch his scenes in Season 1 and he appears to be doing

14 As Chris Taylor (2017) mockingly notes, “if Catelyn Stark had a phone instead of ravens, she’d probably answer it speaking *extra* posh”.

15 On one occasion, Ser Davos Seaworth apologizes to Daenerys for his “Flea Bottom accent” (*GoT* 7, 3, 08:55); however, Gendry uncannily did not pick it up.

a bad London accent. By Season 4, however, he has slipped into something that sounds sort of like a Welsh accent. Or maybe it's half English, half Irish" (Taylor 2017). While dialect coach John Fleming describes Littlefinger's King's Landing accent in the first season as "quite close to RP", he agrees with Taylor that after the character had left the capital, his accent started showing some of its "Irish qualities" (seeing as Lord Bailish is played by the Irish-born Aidan Gillen).¹⁶ In an interview with *Den of Geek!*, Gillen admits that his character's morphing accent indicates that Littlefinger "pretends he's other things all the time so [...] [his accent is] just not defined. And yeah, it has, it has changed with him. I have done that intentionally, but it's not radical".¹⁷ As sociolinguistic surveys show, speakers often display an "own-accent bias", that is, a strong preference toward accents identical to their own, awarding them an increased social attractiveness (if not social prestige; cf. Coupland & Bishop 2007: 79, 84). In his ever-shifting accent, Littlefinger thus continually betrays not only numerous other protagonists but also the audience and their linguistic expectations.

Accented speech as means of narrative characterisation II: foreign accents

My discussion of accented varieties of English in the language ideologies of *GoT* would not be complete without a comment on foreign-accented speech in the series. The fact that the Common Tongue, i.e. the main language spoken onscreen, is English, the prevalent language in the global film industry, has been met by some with harsh criticism. Dan Hassler-Forest (2014: 169f.) sees in the language-based organisation of the narrative space a normalisation and furthering of "the Eurocentric perspective over its available alternatives", which thereby relegates the non-native accents and foreign tongues to the territories to the East of the 'Empire',

16 <https://winteriscoming.net/2016/12/24/dialect-coach-analyzes-the-accent-on-game-of-thrones/> (accessed on 01.01.2019).

17 <https://www.denofgeek.com/uk/tv/game-of-thrones/51657/game-of-thrones-season-7-aidan-gillen-on-littlefins-accent-and-hidden-warmth> (accessed on 01.01.2019).

displaying the same Orientalist tendencies as much of popular culture (cf. also Hardy 2015).

The examples set by local and standard varieties of British English became a yardstick for the perception of non-native accents. Non-native accented speakers are generally much more likely to experience prejudice than those with native pronunciation and are frequently regarded as less refined, intelligent, or laborious (cf. Kozłowski 2015: 14). Also, they are often perceived as untrustworthy, even if there may be no specific prejudice against the respective outgroup. Research relates this phenomenon to an increased difficulty in processing acoustic signals, which leads to misattribution: “even when speakers just deliver information from others, people perceive this information as less truthful when the speaker has an accent. They misattribute the difficulty of understanding the speech to the truthfulness of the statement” (Lev-Ari & Keysar 2010: 1094). In popular cinema, foreign accents were often linked to ludicrous or evil characters. For instance, in her acclaimed study of accents in Disney, Rosina Lippi-Green (2012: 117) shows that about two-thirds of the villains in the cartoons are dubbed with non-American accents.

Within Westeros, only people from Dorne in the far South speak with a foreign (more precisely: Hispanic) accent, explained out of the original Rhoynish language substrate in that part of the Seven Kingdoms. As Charles Ramírez Berg (2002: 66) shows, in mainstream Hollywood films, male Latino characters mainly cater to three stereotypes: *el bandido*, buffoon, and Latin lover; “[s]ometimes the stereotypes were combined, sometimes they were altered superficially but their core defining-and demeaning-characteristics have remained consistent for more than a century and are still evident today”.

The *GoT* series is no exception in this regard. As Bronn explains to Jaime Lannister, “[t]he Dornish are crazy. All they want to do is fight and fuck, fuck and fight” (*GoT* 5, 4, 03:44 ff). His judgment is echoed by *Vanity Fair* journalist Joanna Robinson (2014) as she swoons over the charismatic Oberyn Martell: “The Dornish prince swung from sex to violence back to sex again without breaking a sweat. Impressive”.¹⁸ Ironically

18 Remarkably, as Pedro Pascal, the Chilean-born actor playing Oberyn, admitted in an interview, it had been his conscious decision to adopt a “bi-warrior Latin lover

enough, in the same breath, Robinson praises the representation of the Dornish in the series as a token of cultural diversity: “It’s refreshing to see actors of color on this show who aren’t slaves or crooks”. Other critics are, however, less rose-coloured:

[i]f you were looking to write a paper on unconscious racism in *Game of Thrones*, this is where you’d start. All the swarthy-looking characters — the Dornish, the people of Slaver’s Bay and Qarth, the token black pirate (Salladhor Saan, who is still criminally under-utilized in the show) – have been given the same accent that has been used for the better part of a century to signal untrustworthiness or villainy in movies. (Taylor 2017)

Prince Oberyn’s representation as a sophisticated and language-savvy person who writes poetry and has “an ear for accents” (*GoT* 4, 6, 28:40) ostensibly challenges the prejudice against Hispanics as uncouth and primal. Yet on the whole, his prodigal life, and even more so his death at the hands of Ser Gregor Clegane ‘the Mountain’, fall in line with stereotypical expectations. While seeking to avenge the murder of his sister Elia and dancing around his already dying opponent, the deadly ‘Red Viper’ Oberyn gets so carried away by the phrases he repeatedly chants at the Mountain: “You raped her! You murdered her! You killed her children!” (*GoT* 4, 8, 47:53ff.)¹⁹ that in his triumph, he lowers his guard and gets himself killed. With all his outstanding valour, honour and sense of justice, the hot-tempered Oberyn crucially fails to show vigilance and restraint (or, simply, ‘reason’), which leads him to an unbecoming and dehumanising end.

The three most important non-Westerosi figures in the series are Red Priestess Melisandre, assassin Jaqen serving the Many-Faced God, and Tyrion Lannister’s ‘whore lover’ Shae, and they do not speak with an English accent. Rather, their speech reflects other Germanic tongues: Dutch in the first case and German in the latter

accent” in his interpretation of the character; see https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/03/game-of-thrones-pedro-pascal-oberyn-martell_n_5440890.html (accessed on 02.01.2019).

19 The whole scene is strongly reminiscent of the combat between Inigo Montoya and Count Rugen in the classic *The Princess Bride* (1987), in which Montoya keeps repeating the same lines: “My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die”, while sparring with the Count.

two.²⁰ While it corresponds to their exotic origins (Melisandre comes from Asshai, Jaquen from Braavos and Shae from Lorath) and thus may fit the indiscriminating category of “vaguely Mediterranean” accents of the Essosi, Chris Taylor (2017) poses a guess that the decision to let these three actors speak with their actual offscreen accents might as well be a tribute to the history of Westeros as paralleling that of Britain and its Germanic invasions.

However, Taylor’s hypothesis leaves open the question as to why only these characters should speak this way. I argue that these marked accents were employed to acoustically single out the three most enigmatically ambiguous figures on the show. Melisandre and Jaquen both dispense and control life and death, entertaining a direct connection to the divine powers they serve and standing above any personal sentiment. What is most striking is the inhumane brutality of the means with which they pursue their missions – missions they declare to be profoundly humane.

Shae, on the other hand, presents a different kind of enigma. While in *A Song of Ice and Fire* books she is depicted as a prostitute whose only craving is money, the *GoT* series gives her character an unsettling edge, which does not allow for an indisputable interpretation of her ultimate motives. She might equally well be a gold-digging camp follower who betrays Tyrion in the hopes of a lavish reward by his father, or perhaps a fallen noblewoman hell-bent on revenge for Tyrion’s treatment of her as a ‘disposable good’ and his own betrayal of her love. The strong foreign accents of Shae, Melisandre and Jaquen can therefore be interpreted as a linguistic marker of the indeterminate legitimacy of their claims (cf.

20 While many critics have also remarked on Jaime Lannister’s Germanic accent (his character is played by Danish-born Nikolaj Coster-Waldau), in his case, the accent appears to have less to do with a conscious decision on that score than with limitations of his speech performance which have been continually improving; as Chris Taylor (2017) observes, the actor “has come a long way since Season 1, in which you basically have to put the subtitles on to understand him”. Chris Anderson (2016) is even more appreciative about Coster-Waldau’s language effort, saying that the actor “does a fairly good job of bringing out his inner RP”.

Lev-Ari & Keysar 2010) and, in the case of the latter two, their ambivalence is also reinforced by their outer appearance.²¹

Multilingualism and linguicism

As the above discussion shows, different accents are not just powerful signals of linguistic diversity in the ‘Martinverse’, but also reflections of the existing real-world stereotypes and attitudes toward different speech varieties and foreign tongues. The same holds true regarding the invented languages. With the domination of the Common Tongue paralleling that of English as means of global communication, the series offers implicit judgment on the level of civilisation, as based on the protagonists’ degree of its mastery, with ‘fine distinctions’ made between its native regional-accented speakers as measured against the standard varieties. Those who do not speak the Common Tongue at all – the Dothraki and much of the Slaver’s Bay population – represent the Oriental, quintessentially barbarian Other, even though the sophistication of the Masters’ age-old civilisation, as shown in their mannerisms, customs, artistry, and architecture, rivals that of Westeros, and the possible actual complexity of Dothraki culture is easily overlooked just because it manifests itself in practices that radically differ from Western norms. In fact, as we learn to know at the very outset, “[t]here is no word for thank you in Dothraki” (*GoT* 1, 1, 55:00ff.). The succinct metalinguistic comment of Ser Jorah is at the same time a telling commentary on the horse-lords’ civilisational level and social relations. Marcel Mauss’s *reciprocity* as an anthropological universal and a prerequisite of mutual recognition and moral commitment is most certainly not at play here. The gaping hole left by the concept’s sheer absence in the Dothraki language does not only leave Daenerys entirely stripped of psychological and social power on this occurrence, but also relegates the Dothraki to the very border between humans and animals. Many scenes

21 Jaqen’s hair has black and white strands, and Melisandre has hair of unnatural red hue. As Ralf Junkerjürgen (2009: 230) observes in his analysis of the cultural history of hair colour, in the portrayal of red-haired women as *femmes fatales*, the symbolic association of red with unrestrained lust is amalgamated with the symbolism of fire as an ambivalent element *par excellence* that can give both life and death.

filled with animalesque sex and gore that follow only reinforce this judgment. A pivotal transformation of the Dothraki way of life is brought about by Daenerys after she has learned their language and introduced some novel concepts into the communication, including, at least implicitly, a notion that resembles gratitude.

While there are many protagonists fluently speaking more than just one language, their multilingualism does not all have the same value, revealing the discriminating tendency to privilege ‘elite’ multilingualism over the ‘folk’ one. In fact, while knowledge and language proficiency acquired through guided study go hand in hand with high social status, most of those who have learned foreign tongues in a purely experiential way are hardly ever credited for it. The polyglot wonder Missandei is a former slave liberated by Daenerys less out of awe for her linguistic skill than out of a feminism-tinged ‘white Messianism’ (cf. Hardy 2015: 417). Her proficiency in 19 languages is merely acknowledged by the latter with “How can anyone speak nineteen languages?” (*GoT* 3, 8, 43:31), and the conversation shifts immediately to Daenerys’s own learning of Dothraki, which she starts explaining with a tell-tale remark: “Yes, well, it was either learn Dothraki or *grunt at my husband and hope...*” (ibid. 43:37ff., emphasis added). Missandei’s earlier comment that Daenerys speaks Dothraki only “reasonably well” provokes the Queen’s vanity; however, she waves aside the discovery of her actual shortcomings in that tongue by saying that she probably is just “a bit out of practice” (ibid. 44:15). After that, Missandei immediately tries to smooth over her criticism with a praise of Daenerys’s outstanding mastery of High Valyrian.

Their brief exchange stands in contradiction to Peterson’s (2015: 20f.) lengthy deliberations on the producers’ efforts to avoid any negative stereotyping of the Dothraki through the language they were supposed to speak in the pilot already: “It would seem, at the least, culturally insensitive, and at the most, downright offensive to have the only occurrence of a non-English natural language in the show be introduced by such acts [as Khal Drogo’s rape of Daenerys]”, and, should they be made to speak English with an identifiable foreign accent, it “might [also] very well cause offence” (ibid.: 21). Yet the conversation between Daenerys and Missandei reveals much linguistic snobbery, negative stereotyping and language-related power hierarchies that are inherent in the series. Daenerys

uncritically assumes her own Dothraki – the only foreign language she has learned – to be impeccable, and is taken aback by Missandei’s carefully worded reservation. It is, however, less her linguistic shortcomings that irk her, than the fact that the critique is expressed by a subaltern (for, as we know, the subaltern cannot speak). Indeed, Daenerys does not seem to care for proficiency in Dothraki as a valuable skill; she could as well have dispensed with learning it altogether, just “grunting” at Drogo and “hoping [*it would do well just the same*].²² While Daenerys’s efforts in learning Dothraki, quite in line with Eurocentric language ideologies, are strongly emphasised and given a privileged depiction over the linguistic biographies of all other multilingual characters, it is worth noting that she gains legitimacy with her Dothraki tribe not by speaking their language but by her re-emergence from Khal Drogo’s funeral pyre flames as the unscorched ‘Mother of Dragons’.²³

Daenerys’s actual lack of genuine appreciation of her ex-slave confidante’s linguistic skill is betrayed both by her vocal intonation and by

22 The Orientalist notion of linguistic superiority of the enlightened West over its Eastern counterpart, showing in Daenerys’s dehumanising metalinguistic comment on Dothraki which virtually equates its native speakers to hogs is also subtly reinforced on two more occasions related to this character. As the warlocks of Qarth plot her assassination, one of them appears to Daenerys as a waif, inviting her to play with a wooden ball concealing a deadly magical scorpion inside, but Ser Barristan Selmy manages to prevent the attempt, causing the waif to hiss menacingly (*GoT* 3, 1, 51:37). While her snake-like hissing might be ascribed to the inhumanity of the warlocks, we are yet to hear the very same sound once again. As Daenerys orders the execution of Mossador, an ex-slave who murdered a captured Son of the Harpy in the cell, despite her decision to subject the latter to a lawful official trial, the Meerenese slaves start hissing at the queen in protest of what they had hoped would end with a royal pardon (*GoT* 5, 2, 51:15). Especially in this last episode, the paralinguistic characterisation of the Essosi as capable of *acting like snakes* not only serves to dehumanise them but also further underscores Daenerys’s (and with her Western) civilisational supremacy over the mean and vindictive ‘savages’.

23 With regard to gender and power in *GoT*, Ingrid Fagnastøl maintains, on the contrary, that the scene is indicative of women’s limited access to power: “[e]ven when she so clearly has broken all expectations people still try to pin motherhood on her and *she* seems to take on that role as well” (2014: 37, emphasis in the original).

an impersonal form of her rhetorical question (“How can anyone speak nineteen languages?”). As a privileged *native speaker* of the Common Tongue and High Valyrian, the two *linguae francae* of Westeros and Essos, Daenerys’s disinterest in Missandei’s linguistic credentials verges on contempt towards those who have inborn ‘deficiencies’ on that score, which the mastery of any number of non-prestige languages would never overcome.

In another scene (*GoT* 4, 10, 20:37ff.), Daenerys politely compliments the former slave teacher Fennesz on his proficiency in the Common Tongue (which he speaks with a distinguishable accent). But her respect for the man’s intellect vanishes the moment he asks for permission to return back to his master, where he had admittedly been held in high esteem. While Daenerys is presented here as a (if still somewhat naïve) champion of a progressive liberal ideology, Fennesz’s own mindset, already betrayed by the accented speech, is shown as ‘Oriental’ and ‘backward’.

One of the narratively most powerful scenes in Daenerys’s storyline is that of her acquisition of the Unsullied slave soldiers in Astapor. Her negotiations with Kraznys mo Nakloz take place in the Common Tongue spoken by Daenerys and Low Valyrian spoken by the slave owner, with Missandei interpreting the exchange for both parties (and glossing over the slaver’s most outrageous remarks). The words of Kraznys are also subtitled, so that while the spectators are let in on his outspoken disdain for Daenerys, whom he repeatedly insults, they are also called on to sympathise with her, as she finds herself in a seemingly weak position due to her lack of means to pay for the Unsullied on one hand and her supposed ignorance of the Astapori Valyrian dialect on the other. Her offer to trade in her largest and strongest dragon for the army, which Kraznys accepts, appears as Daenerys’s last desperate concession that would effectively decimate her military and symbolic power. Yet, as Daenerys receives the whip as a token of her ownership of the Unsullied, and gives Kraznys the enchained Drogon in return, she pulls off a coup, all of a sudden addressing the army in High Valyrian. Kraznys, who is struggling to force Drogon down, remains at first oblivious to her linguistic ‘coming out’ and orders Missandei to “[t]ell the bitch her beast won’t come” (*GoT* 3, 4, 48:15). Daenerys replies to him directly in Valyrian: “*Zaldrīzes buzdari iksos daor*” (“A dragon is not a slave”; *ibid.*, 48:19) and subsequently counters Kraznys’s

incredulous exclamation “*Ydra ji Valyre?!?*”²⁴ (“*You speak Valyrian?!?*”) with the famous line ultimately sealing her power claims: “*Nyke Daenerys Jelmāzmo hen Targārio Lentrot, hen Valyrio Uēpo ānogār iksan. Valyrio muño ēngos űuhys issa*” – “I am Daenerys Stormborn of the House Targaryen, of the blood of Old Valyria. Valyrian is my mother tongue” (ibid., 48:24ff.). While Kraznys is still grappling with his shock, Daenerys commands the army to slay the Masters and orders the dragon to set the slave owner ablaze: “*Dracarys!*” (“Fire!”; ibid.: 49:00).

As Zoë Shacklock (2015: 269) observes, Daenerys’s

triumph over the slave master is simultaneously a triumph over the audience. The audience have been privy to Kraznys mo Nakloz’s Valyrian insults through the subtitles, enjoying a powerful feeling of knowing more than Daenerys and her retinue. However, by speaking in an unfamiliar language, Daenerys reclaims this power, becoming unknowable to us on the level of sound. This doubled experience of comprehending, yet not understanding, Daenerys’s speech creates a strong sense of disorientation, enhancing the power of the scene.

Yet, whereas in this scene, much like in *Braveheart* (1995), the protagonist’s multilingualism serves as “an unexpected weapon” that produces a powerful dramatic effect and restores and augments Daenerys’s symbolic power, it has no lasting value of its own. Moreover, the explanation Daenerys provides for her fluent mastery of Valyrian makes it additionally clear that her authority is legitimised by her ancient aristocratic lineage, which also accounts for her inherited language proficiency. The conjecture that Daenerys’s knowledge of Valyrian actually *lies in her blood* as a ‘genetic heirloom’ may at first seem far-fetched, yet the series offers no other viable explanation: she was exiled while still a baby and, with her mother dying shortly after her birth, it could have only been her elder brother Viserys left to impart on her their “mother tongue”. However, all the conversations between the siblings onscreen take place in the Common Tongue and we only come to know that Daenerys considers Valyrian her native language in the above-described scene.

On one hand, in *GoT*, High Valyrian has much the same status as Latin in the Middle Ages: once the language of a powerful empire, it is long

²⁴ This and other lines in Valyrian are rendered as on David Peterson’s personal blog in the entry dedicated to the scene; see <http://www.dothraki.com/2013/04/sesir-urnebion-z%C8%B3hon-keliton-issa/> (accessed on 04.01.2019).

extinct, having given rise to numerous (and partly mutually unintelligible) modern Essosi tongues, and at the time of the narration, it is only used by scholars and priests of R'hllor, the Fire God. On the other hand, it can only become an effective vehicle of power through the ancient aristocratic pedigree of those who speak it via ingrained birthright. “[A] central concern of ASoIaF [*A Song of Ice and Fire*] is family and bloodline” (Hardy 2015: 419; cf. also Donecker 2016), and even Tyrion Lannister’s “reasonably well”-spoken scholarly High Valyrian, as Missandei might put it, does not specifically endear him to Daenerys, nor does it gain him but an amused smile from her translator (cf. *GoT* 5, 10, 32:10ff.).

A relation established between ‘legitimate blood’ and ‘prestige tongues’ is a rather common trope in high fantasy. Tolkien’s Aragorn, the last living descendant of the ancient rulers of Númenor, the first human civilisation of the Middle-earth, *naturally* speaks the old elvish tongues Quenya and Sindarin; in Sapkowski’s *Witcher* saga, Princess Cirilla of Cintra, the Child of the Elder Blood and likewise the last offspring of the royal elvish line, suddenly slips into the Elder Speech when prophesising in a trance and revealing her unique identity. Prior to this, she had little to no knowledge of that language. We encounter an Old Tongue in Robert Jordan’s novel cycle *Wheel of Time* as the nearly defunct language of the long-gone Age of Legends that is yet still mastered by some nobles and scholars.

In these (and many other) examples, it is, remarkably, an age-old lineage that raises the insight of the native speakers of ancient (‘Old’, or ‘High’) tongues, altogether reinforcing their claims to power. Likewise, in *GoT*, while the knowledge of High Valyrian does not augment the wisdom, nor the actual might, of the Maesters (cf. Cowlishaw 2015), it works well with Daenerys (the Yorkshire-accented Jon Snow, alias Aegon Targaryen, does not reveal any Valyrian language skill along with his true identity in the last season; however, the show has already entered those waters with his aunt).²⁵

25 The third remaining descendant of the Targaryan dynasty, Maester Aemon, certainly speaks High Valyrian due to both his family history and his life-long studies. However, at the beginning of the series, he is already one hundred years old and, even more importantly, had voluntarily renounced his claims to political power.

Parole, langage, and humanity: conclusive remarks

All this has shown that language ideologies displayed in *GoT* reiterate and also reinforce many ideologies that exist in the offscreen sociocultural reality of their makers and consumers. Their most conspicuous trait is, arguably, the language hierarchies applied to both real-world and invented languages and speech varieties. While the righteous in *GoT* are ostensibly bent on a respectful and egalitarian treatment of all the people regardless of their socio-economic status, descent, and cultural heritage, the series nevertheless reveals ingrained prejudices against certain groups which are reflected in the linguistic comments the series makes about them.

With High Valyrian at the top of the ladder, it is the Common Tongue, rendered in English, that comes after it. Though it is situated at the second spot within the language hierarchy, this ‘slight’ is counterbalanced by its clear dominance both in the onscreen and the offscreen world, and its civilisational status is additionally emphasised by the proliferation of texts and inscriptions in English (or, else, Latin alphabet). Its importance and sophistication is furthermore asserted by the attention paid to its different vernaculars, with ‘fine distinctions’ in their treatment that reflect specific language attitudes.

While in *GoT*, numerous forms of native-accented speech enjoy a higher prestige and their speakers are depicted with a deeper psychological nuance, foreign accents are on the whole employed as typification markers of backwardness, untrustworthiness, or downright villainy of their speakers (most of them are also stigmatised in the real world), and these occupy the lowest rungs of language hierarchies in the show. Foreign languages as featured in *GoT* are High and Low (also termed ‘bastard’) Valyrian, Mag Nuk, and Dothraki, and all but High Valyrian clearly rank at the very bottom, with the Giants’ tongue probably closing the list. In fact, the only phrase so far pronounced by Wun Wun in the series also appears to be the sole indication of his race’s human(oid)ness revealing itself via the (seemingly very limited) ability to speak.

Those who possess no language whatsoever are, by this token, both inhuman and inhumane – the profound, insuperable Other. While in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, the White Walkers are said to have a language of their own, and David Peterson had created its rudimentary version (Skroth) for the series pilot, Weiss and Benioff decided against its actual use, opting for

mere ice-cracking sound effects instead.²⁶ The White Walkers' Wights still utter sounds, if not human ones; their commanders, on the contrary, are not just enveloped in glacial silence: it is a radical absence of any form of speech that indicates their impenetrable alterity (cf. Grizelj 2016: 97f.). This precludes any dialogue or communication and extinguishes any glimmer of hope that the men and the White Walkers could ever reach an understanding.

Raymond Williams (1977: 21) famously remarked that “a definition of language is always, implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world”, and this is all the more true for audio-visual media. “There is no word for thank you in Dothraki” is not just an impartial linguistic comment. With its language ideologies on display as a set of normative beliefs about different tongues and vernaculars that pass judgment on culture, degree of cultivation and even humanity of their speakers, *GoT* lends itself well to critical inquiries of assumptions made by its creators and spectators alike.²⁷

Filmography

Game of Thrones. Season 1 (2011). Dir. Tim Van Patten et al.²⁸ Amazon Instant Video Germany GmbH.

Game of Thrones. Season 2 (2012). Dir. Alan Taylor et al. Amazon Instant Video Germany GmbH.

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26 <https://gameofthrones.fandom.com/wiki/Skroth> (accessed on 05.01.2019).

27 The author would like to thank Jeffrey Karnitz for constructive criticism of the article.

28 As there were four to six directors involved in the making of each *GoT* season, only the director of the first episode is explicitly mentioned.

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Cristina Alonso-Villa

John Wick and the multilingual kick

Abstract: Action might not be considered a genre of ‘big ideas’, but it most definitely is a genre of politics. The genre is strongly linked to the white middle-class male, and has focused on telling the tale of this masculinity, especially since its apogee in the 1980s. Border conflicts, the conquest of land or the control of the environment have been at the core of the genre since the beginning. The alien menace – as we are increasingly interested in finding life outside our planet – and the rise of new technologies that render physical strength obsolete and replace it with another set of skills that do not depend on the body itself, too, have become important sources of inspiration for action narratives. Even though the action film is not a genre of words, multilingualism is re-shaping our world, and action films have not failed in noticing that as early as the 1980s. This article explores the attempts, however shy those may be, of action cinema to incorporate and make use of multilingualism, and discusses how the use of multilingualism in the *John Wick* franchise can be understood as yet another step towards a more realistic depiction of action films’ settings within a multicultural world.

Introduction

While concerns with ideals of masculinity have always been central to action films, at present, they show the obsolescence of the traditional, mostly physical strength-based male heroes. It was the political and social changes in the wake of WWII that led to a significant transformation of those ideals. As Anthony Clare (2000: 100) observes, “men are becoming redundant in a biological, social and economic way as the historic roles of ‘heroic masculinity,’ old industrial man’ or simply ‘old man’ have been phased out by ongoing technological, social and political change since the late 1960s”. Thus, in action films, society often seems to have forgotten how pure strength has previously saved the day, and there is always a point where diplomatic means are exhausted. In this context, so the narrative goes, evil forces (earthly and alien alike) take advantage and are about to win the battle, when finally the ones on the good side realize that the use

of force is necessary. The action hero then is finally able to use his strength in order to defeat evil and save the day once more.

Increasingly international sources of danger and the ensuing international hypermobility of contemporary action films' superheroes entail not merely domestic, but also international multilingual settings. In my analysis, I concentrate on instances of multilingualism in action films, paying particular attention to the scenes in which codeswitching has a narrative function, for instance, of "disarming" the opponents or creating effects of surprise and tension. This resembles the effects of a sucker punch, or a surprise blow, and this is why I shall refer to this narrative resource as "multilingual kick". It is a concept related to that of the 'punch line', the sentence that concludes a joke and is intended to make people laugh. In the case of action films, it is not only used as a means to end a joke, but to figuratively punch the adversary in the face with one's language skills, sometimes just for fun, sometimes to perhaps surprise the counterpart and show them that you understand their language.

The use of punch lines in action films is by no means rare. In a genre where words are already scarce, and the action is all that matters, spoken dialogue often has an elevated sense of importance. Through the use of tongue-in-cheek remarks and irony, they usually serve to characterise the hero as a tough and cool person (Tasker 1993: 74 f.).

What is not so common, however, is the use of different languages in such dialogues. The action hero has always been a monolingual character, often reverting to the help of others to communicate with people who do not speak English, or making use of brute force to encourage compliance with the previously expressed English aspirations. This is a technique often used in crime fiction, where the interrogated suspect pretends for a while to not speak the desired language. Nevertheless, there are examples of multilingualism in action films, and it is becoming ever more common.

Multilingual punchlines and codeswitching in action cinema since 1990s

One of the earliest examples of multilingual punchlines, and by far the most famous one, can be found in the acclaimed *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (dir. James Cameron, 1991). Along the lines of how he was taught

by John Connor, the Terminator uses the now widely popular catchphrase “Hasta la vista, baby” (02:09:56–02:10:22) as a farewell to his foe, the T-1000, prior to an (unsuccessful) attempt at eradicating the adversary. This is, however, not the only moment in the film where a sentence in another language is spoken. The young John Connor mixes expressions in French and Spanish here and there throughout the film, so as to define him as a resourceful, street wise boy who knows his way around thug-gish landscapes. The use that Connor makes of languages corresponds to the stereotypes associated with them: Mexican Spanish to show that he is street smart, and French to be cool and hip.

For example, as he gets to know the Terminator and discovers the cyborg is programmed to do his bidding, he dares to tease two common thugs who happen to walk by. As the two feel provoked and respond with insults, John answers, amused: “Did you call *moi* a ‘dipshit’?” (00:48:18). Furthermore, in order to show contempt as he throws away the last pieces of technology related to the development of the Terminators in the future, he utters: “Adiós” (02:24:05–02:24:21). In yet another multilingual moment in the film, John Connor explains to the Terminator how to use language switching in order to deliver an accurate and effective ‘verbal kick’. He tells the cyborg, for instance: “You gotta listen the way people talk”, pointing towards the fact that society itself is becoming multilingual, and it is important to be aware of this in order to be able to react in daily interactions, respond with wit and, “if you wanna shine them on, it’s ‘hasta la vista, baby’” (01:14:10–01:14:59).

Despite the success of this emblematic multilingual punchline in *Terminator 2*,¹ we still have to wait until the late 1990s–beginning of the 2000s in order to see films in which the heroines and heroes do speak other languages and it is shown as an advantage, be it in order to make friends with locals and/or get assistance, or to not be fooled by the ‘bad guys’, who have a long tradition within this genre of usually being foreigners. With globalisation at full throttle, the situation seems to not be changing any time soon. Action films tend to follow social trends and often present possible worst-case scenarios in which a certain phenomenon (like

1 As a side note, it is worth mentioning the Wikipedia entry about this phrase: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasta_la_vista,_baby (accessed: 08.10.2018).

pollution or desertification) has completely changed life as we know it. For instance, the poster for the fifth instalment of *Resident Evil, Retribution* (dir. Paul W.S. Anderson, 2012), captured in its “Think global. Kill local” the worries of many, making a pun on the slogan “think global, act local”, and its variation that was extensively used for various campaigns by different entities to promote sales in local stores against national or multinational competition.

Globalisation and its effects not only on climate and economy, but on work, too, is precisely what is making action heroines and heroes pull their socks up and learn languages: evil goes global, and thus they no longer deal with exclusively domestic threats. They have to be prepared to fight all over the world. Thus, already in the *Tomb Raider* franchise, we see how Lara not only can read ancient languages, but also speak modern ones, such as Khmer in *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001) and Chinese in *The Cradle of Life* (2003). In the first film, she arrives at a harbour in Cambodia after fleeing from her enemies and asks a Buddhist monk for help in Khmer. Further on, she explains to the monk in English that her phone got wet. In the second film, *The Cradle of Life* (2003), she arrives in a remote village in China and her capacity to speak Chinese is also briefly commented on, as she arrives and is warmly welcomed by a woman who seems to be in charge (00:31:18). They hug and exchange courtesies in Chinese, and then change to English when the old woman spots Lara’s male companion.

These two examples show yet another use of multilingual skills, namely, gaining assistance from local people. By speaking their language, Lara Croft is able to gain their trust, learn from them and obtain valuable information. Thus, language skills are presented as a way to attain a deeper knowledge and understanding of the world around us. This way of using multilingualism is especially related to female characters, and it is certainly different from John Connor’s. Whereas he employs single words or short expressions only to deliver a ‘verbal kick’ to his conversational counterpart, action heroines do show command of the language at a conversational level, although sometimes just briefly. However, this apparently small detail points towards traditional gender stereotypes, according to which women are better at learning languages than men and are also more collaborative and less prone to aggression.

Of course, these are both very shy attempts at showing multilingualism, but they already set the base for a new way of understanding the use of foreign languages, not only as something that helps differentiate good from evil in the films, but as a way of being accepted and being able to get assistance all over the world. Further multilingual action heroes are Beatrix Kiddo, aka the Bride, and most of her colleagues at the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad in both *Kill Bill* volumes, where English, Japanese, and Chinese are spoken. In these two films, all characters are able to switch between languages without effort, which is presented as a basic skill for elite assassins, as they have to work in different parts of the world and communicate with the best masters of martial arts, such as Pai Mei, who also speaks other languages but demands that they speak Mandarin and Cantonese. When the Bride meets Pai Mei for the first time, he tests not only her martial arts skills but also her language skills. This scene illustrates one of the biggest issues of foreign languages: being laughed at because your accent is not good enough. This seems to be a particularly present fear in Hollywood movies, which show a long tradition of representation of characters who are not able to speak English properly as less smart. Elspaß and Maitz describe this phenomenon at a social level as *Linguizismus*:

Bestimmte Sprech- bzw. Schreibweisen werden gegenüber ihr abweichenden auf Basis sprachlicher Ideologien und Mythen zur Herstellung oder Aufrechterhaltung sozialer Strukturen abgewertet. Als Messlatte dient dabei nicht selten die sogenannte Standardsprache. (Elspaß & Maitz 2011: 8).

In the 2010s, we encounter more examples of multilingual heroines and heroes. Indeed, as Bleichenbacher observes (2007: 113), recently, non-English dialogues appear in ever more Hollywood blockbusters and their functions and meaning [although I think it is redundant] get ever more differentiated. For instance, both Marvel and DC universes, as an example of two of the most successful action franchises, feature a few characters who can speak different languages. The main example from the Marvel universe is Black Widow, a Russian spy whose language capabilities are thematised at the moment of her introduction in *Iron Man 2* (dir. Jon Favreau, 2010). While she pretends not to know how to fight in a ring with Happy Hogan (Jon Favreau), Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.) checks her resume and goes over the different jobs she had and skills she possesses, among which

the command of several foreign languages and even Latin is highlighted. She is thus presented as a multilingual character so as to illustrate her cunning and mental capacities. Directly after Stark finishes going through her impressive resume, she knocks Happy to the floor with a well-thrown punch, which underlines her guile and outstanding skill in all domains. However, her foreign language abilities are not exploited in any of the films. Later on, other characters with Slavic backgrounds appear, such as Wanda Maximoff/Scarlett Witch (Elizabeth Olsen) and her brother, Pietro Maximoff/Quicksilver (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) in *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (dir. Joss Whedon, 2015). However, they also do not speak in their mother tongue, even though, unlike the Black Widow, they indeed have an accent when they speak in English, which underlines the fact that English is not their mother tongue.

In the DC universe, the recently premiered adaptation of *Wonder Woman* (dir. Patty Jenkins, 2017) shows Diana's ability to speak "1000 languages" in two scenes: the first one is the moment when Steve Trevor (Chris Pine) introduces Diana/Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot) to the group of men he has recruited to assist them. In that moment, Trevor introduces Sameer (Saïd Taghmaoui) as a "top undercover man", who "can talk the skin off a cabbage many ways as you can". Diana is far from impressed and a multilingual dialectical battle between Diana and Sameer begins in which she "attacks" first in Spanish and then Chinese, and Sameer responds. The final blow is delivered by Diana, when she starts talking in ancient Greek, rendering Sameer speechless. The second occasion happens during battle, as Diana wants to assist the women and children and thus needs to communicate with the local people, for which she employs Dutch.

However, none of these films integrate multilingualism in the same manner as the *John Wick* franchise (dir. Chad Stahelski, 2014 and 2017) does. Throughout both films, the protagonist, John Wick, played by Keanu Reeves, speaks English, of course, as well as Russian, Italian, and even sign language.

Multilingual John Wick

John Wick (2014) and *John Wick: Chapter 2* (2017) are two action films directed by Chad Stahelski, a former stunt man and protagonist of

low-budget martial arts films. The franchise is part of a new independent action film production trend whose main characteristic is to make the best out of low budgets. In comparison to such films as the *Avengers: Era of Ultron* (dir. Joss Whedon, 2015), which had a budget of 250 million dollars, *John Wick* cost only 20 million dollars. *Atomic Blonde* (dir. David Leitch, 2017), another film that falls into this category, had a budget of only 30 million dollars. This is relevant precisely because high-budget Hollywood films are much more formulaic, whereas lower-budget features allow for more creative freedom to break stereotypes and transgress the limits of representation, be it at the aesthetic (a more graphical depiction of violence, for instance) or at the narrative level, including new takes on socio-political matters, as well as the appearance of unconventional character traits.

In chapter 1, John Wick is presented as a hitman who used to work for different mafia groups. The crime world in the film is organized around a code of honour, based on blood oaths, and it utilises a worldwide hotel chain as a setting in which the different mafias do their business. Under the cover of these hotels, it is forbidden to attack or kill other hitmen or mafia members, and in this sense, it is a place for dialogue. Although it is not common, some people try to leave this criminal underworld and start a normal life. And that is exactly what John Wick did. He fell in love with a woman and retired from his life as hitman, burying his stash of weapons and money in the basement of the house they built. As John's wife died of an incurable disease, he found himself alone. To help him cope with the loss, his wife had prepared a special posthumous present: a Beagle puppy named Daisy (her favourite flower), in order to provide him with a being to take care of and not become isolated (she knows of John's attachment to his car but in her view it is not the right object to throw affection towards).

However, tragedy strikes back: one day, while filling up his car, John is teased by a group of young Russian thugs, led by Iosef Tarasov (Alfie Allen), the son of the Russian mafia boss Viggo Tarasov (Michael Nyqvist). As the young man is used to getting anything he wants, he tries to buy John's car, not knowing who John is. When John rejects his offer, Iosef insults him in Russian and says that everything has its price, all the while keeping his tone of voice level and friendly so that John would not understand the message. To Iosef's surprise, John responds in Russian

too, and tells him that the car is not for sale in a far less friendly tone, delivering an effective multilingual kick that leaves Iosef confused for a moment, and provokes his fury later on as he realises he has been made to look like a fool.

This sequence allows us to see how John Wick employs multilingualism differently than John Connor: while the boy merely sprinkles his witty comments with foreign words in order to sound even more disdainful and make them thus more effective, Wick shows that he actually speaks the foreign language and can use it quite proficiently, as he is able to rhetorically attack even native speakers. Throughout the film, there are many occasions in which brief multilingual exchanges happen, and John makes use of his language skills in many situations to be able to spy on his enemies or deceive them. For example, having knocked out one of Viggo's security team members, he answers in Russian through the communication system so that nobody notices that he has infiltrated the area. This situation correlates with what is often seen in films such as *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*, in which the action heroine gains the trust of the local people by being able to speak their language. In Wick's scenario, however, it is not trust but subterfuge.

In contrast to other action films, in which the bad guys are only depicted as doing or at least planning to do something bad, in *John Wick*, the adversaries are also allowed to show their concerns and their problems. Thus, in the first instalment, Viggo is presented as a concerned father who is in distress due to the realisation that his son will die because he has made a very big mistake: he messed with John Wick. He will try to protect Iosef and, when he fails to do that, Viggo does his duty to avenge him. In many of the occasions in which Viggo is on screen, he speaks Russian with his men as well as with Avi (Dean Winters), his counsellor and second-in-command. Avi is a citizen of the United States and can only speak English. Viggo talks to him often in Russian, to which Avi always answers, annoyed: "Viggo, English, please". Thus, Avi presents a strong contrast to John as another man who works with a foreign mafia but does not bother to learn the language. Whereas John is cool and tough, Avi is presented as impulsive and vain, and through the just mentioned lack of foreign language skills, he comes across as less resourceful and smart. In this manner, the film launches a veiled criticism of the mindset of many people who want only

a monolingual world, even in societies such as that of the US, where many different cultures coexist.

John Wick: Chapter 2 maintains the multilingual atmosphere, this time by John interacting with the Italian mafia. After John deals with the Russians, the fact that he made use of the resources provided by the underground society signals that he is again active in that world. This calls the attention of Santino D'Antonio (Riccardo Scamarcio), to whom John owes a debt. Santino wants John to kill his sister Gianna D'Antonio (Claudia Gerini), so that he can take control over the assets his sister lawfully inherited from their deceased father. John is forced to fulfil the job, as there is a blood debt involved, which at the same time causes him to fall in disgrace: the very same Santino automatically contracts the obligation to avenge his sister, unregretfully setting a handsome bounty on Wick's head. Then all hell breaks loose and John finds himself persecuted by hitmen of the Italian mafia and other professionals of the trade.

The exchanges in Italian are more brief than the Russian dialogues in the first instalment, but still they are present, and John is shown to also be at ease in the Italian context. However, this is not precisely what makes the second part also pertinent to my analysis. John's ability to speak Italian is again presented as crucial for his survival and excellence in his work. What also makes the second part interesting is the fact that it introduces sign language to the multilingual constellation. The top assassin working for the Italian mafia is Ares (Ruby Rose), a woman who cannot speak, and communicates only through sign language. Once more, John surprises the audience by effectively communicating with her in sign language and establishing an antagonistic relationship with her. Here again, the hero's skill is seen as an advantage and yet another proof of his superiority in comparison to ordinary citizens.

Of course, in both instalments of the film, all the verbal and non-verbal exchanges in foreign languages are subtitled. As already mentioned at the beginning, action is not really the genre for words, let alone for subtitles. However, once again, the John Wick franchise has found an original solution to traditional problems and issues that come with multilingualism in action films, namely, subtitling or explicit translation of the dialogues, to cite but two of those more frequently employed. In the film, when Viggo speaks in Russian, the explicit translation in further dialogues is completely avoided,

leaving subtitles as the only way to convey the meaning. The subtitles themselves are not of the traditional sort, but make use of fancy fonts, with different colours and sizes, illustrating intonation and intent of the speaker and imbuing the text with ‘action’ which makes the task of reading more exciting. The fact that there is no explicit translation in the film also creates a sense of complicity between the audience and Viggo, and it increases the feeling of disdain towards Avi, who does not understand a word of what Viggo says.

With the frequent code switching and the portrayal of multilingual characters as more able and cool, the film achieves a degree of “normalisation” in the sense Bleichenbacher (2007: 123) suggests as the way towards a less biased representation of multilingual characters. Even though the Russians and the Italians are still the mafia, and therefore the bad guys, the audience gains an insight into the tribulations of Viggo as a caring father in his own way and understands the personal reasons behind his actions. Thus, there is not such a big difference between John’s mercenary code and Viggo’s Russian mafia laws and sense of honour and family.

Even though the presence of multilingualism is still scarce, work is being done in order to also include it in fictional representations of the world. By doing so, the filmic tale gives recognition to the presence of multilingualism in the real world, normalises it, and imbues it with new, more positive values. Thus, in action cinema in particular, multilingualism has changed from menace, putting peace and order at risk through chaos and misunderstandings, as in the tower of Babel, to a new skill necessary to survive in a global world.

Action heroines and heroes should be superior to the average human being and excel where ordinary citizens fail, exhibiting a range of abilities that can be considered in any case as superpowers. The physical prowess and amount of damage endured by John Rambo or Mallory Kane (*Haywire*, dir. Steven Soderbergh, 2011) is superhuman at least, even if they are portrayed as earthly people. Films such as *John Wick* show that foreign language skills have a legitimate place among superpowers.

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Gemma King

Denis Villeneuve's multilingual cinema: Decentring space, time and language in *Arrival*

Abstract: In Quebecois filmmaker Denis Villeneuve's multilingual films, the ability to manipulate peripheral and even marginalised languages is the key to unlocking oppressive structures and shifting power dynamics within them. This chapter analyses Denis Villeneuve's multilingual, transnational cinema, in which characters not only speak multiple languages, but deploy them strategically to exert social power. Drawing on Bill Marshall's vision of cinema and nation in *Quebec National Cinema* as a 'very mobile spiral' (2000: 3), it charts the progressive decentring at play in Villeneuve's 2016 quadrilingual film, *Arrival*.

Introduction

With dialogue in Arabic, English, Finnish, French, Hungarian, Japanese, Mandarin, Norwegian, Russian, Somali, Spanish and even extraterrestrial languages, Quebecois filmmaker Denis Villeneuve's cinema revolves around language. From 2010's trilingual *Incendies* to 2017's heptalingual *Blade Runner 2049*, Villeneuve's films increasingly feature protagonists who both speak multiple languages and use multilingualism to exert social power. In these films, lingua francas like English and French remain essential, but it is the ability to manipulate peripheral and even marginalised languages that is key to unlocking oppressive structures and shifting power dynamics within them.

Though Villeneuve's films are increasingly produced within the Hollywood system, they have also been becoming increasingly diverse, moving from his early monolingual films to his recent multilingual portraits of border-crossing, liminal space and transcultural encounters. 2010's *Incendies* depicts a civil war in an Arabic-speaking country which is never named. In 2015's *Sicario*, the monolingual FBI officer Kate finds herself lost in a cross-border operation between the US and Mexico, while her secretive partner Alejandro juggles Spanish and English to manipulate

the operation to his own ends. And in 2016's *Arrival*, the polylingual linguistics professor Louise (Amy Adams) must decode the language of extraterrestrials if she is to defuse escalating tensions that threaten the global order. These films theorise the border, the interstice and the point of encounter. In doing so, they provide a polycentric vision of the relationship between language and power in the globalised world, reconfiguring the stereotype of monolingual Hollywood from within.

Despite having directed nine feature films alongside multiple documentaries and short films during his 30-year career, many of which were critically acclaimed and commercially successful, Denis Villeneuve's filmmaking has mostly escaped scholarly attention. This chapter shines a light onto Villeneuve's multilingual oeuvre for the first time. It analyses the ways in which many of Villeneuve's protagonists not only speak multiple languages, but *deploy* them strategically in violent scenarios. In this use of language such characters can be understood not simply as multilinguals, but as master linguists, "able to deploy their language skills to benefit themselves. For it is not simply the ability to speak multiple languages, but the ability to use them in effective and innovative ways, that makes social power accessible to the multilingual speaker" (King 2017: 41). This chapter draws on Bill Marshall's research on Quebecois cinema and his conceptualisation of the nation as "a very mobile spiral" (2000: 3) to chart the progressive decentring at play in Villeneuve's most linguicentric film, *Arrival*.

Denis Villeneuve's multilingual cinema

On the film blog *Indiewire*, David Erlich (2017) describes Denis Villeneuve as "a filmmaker who's always understood the power of words". The director of nine feature films and seven shorts since the beginning of his directorial career in 1994, with each project Villeneuve's oeuvre has not only become increasingly transnational (portraying a range of countries and engaging a number of international coproduction partners) but progressively multilingual. Villeneuve's early films were produced in his native Francophone Canada, with scripts in the local languages of either French or English. These include *Un 32 août sur terre* (1998), *Maelström* (2000) and *Polytechnique* (2009). However, it was with the release of his French,

English and Arabic-language *Incendies*, situated between Canada and an unnamed, war-torn Middle Eastern country reminiscent of Civil War-era Lebanon, that Villeneuve's oeuvre became multilingual, and began to gain considerable attention on the international stage. *Incendies* follows two parallel stories situated in the 1970s and late 2000s. The first portrays the young Arab woman Nawal (Lubna Azabal), whose first son is taken from her at birth, her harrowing experiences of war, and her escape as a refugee to Quebec. The second takes place in the wake of Nawal's death, as her twins Jeanne and Simon are directed by their mother's will to return to her country and seek out their brother and father. *Incendies* was nominated for the 2011 Best Foreign Language Film Academy Award, the 2012 Best Foreign Film César and the 2012 Best Non-Anglophone Film BAFTA, and gained Villeneuve new-found acclaim that gave him access to larger-budget and more transnational projects.

Following the international recognition of *Incendies*, Villeneuve directed the Canadian-American *Enemy*, a 2013 thriller about a man who discovers and pursues his doppelgänger. This film is also situated in Montreal with some Francophone actors including the French star Mélanie Laurent, but *Enemy's* dialogue is entirely in English and the film stars Hollywood actor Jake Gyllenhaal as both main characters. Also released in 2013 and starring Gyllenhaal, *Prisoners* moves Villeneuve further into mainstream Hollywood territory. Pitting Hugh Jackman as desperate father Keller against Gyllenhaal's detective Loki, *Prisoners* is a sinister child kidnapping thriller set in suburban Pennsylvania, with English dialogue. Then 2015 saw the release of *Sicario*, a thriller situated on the US-Mexico border which explores the shifting power relations between the US government and a Mexican cartel, with frequent code-switching between English and Spanish. The following year, the Oscar-winning science fiction film *Arrival* was released. While the supranational negotiations around how to approach the aliens draw *Arrival's* characters into multilingual discussions with world governments ranging from Sudan to China, the film's primary focus is on the eventual transmission of the creatures' transmedial, multitemporal language to Louise, who is mentally empowered and transformed by her acquisition of this potent code. Finally, Villeneuve's most recent feature is also his highest-profile (and another Oscar-winner); the \$33M sequel to Ridley Scott's 1982 *Blade Runner*, *Blade Runner 2049*

(2017). Though language is less of a dominant narrative motif in *Blade Runner 2049* than in *Arrival*, the characters speak in a mix of English, Finnish, Hungarian, Japanese, Russian, Somali and Spanish. At the time of writing, Villeneuve is in the pre-production stages of another Hollywood science fiction feature (his third in a row): an adaptation of Frank Herbert's 1965 novel *Dune*.

Upon first glance, Denis Villeneuve's career could be traced unilaterally as one moving away from Francophone Canada and towards Anglophone Hollywood. Indeed, in the transition from Quebec-funded, French-language films such as *Maelström* and *Polytechnique* to part-Canadian coproductions like *Incendies* and *Enemy* to US productions like *Prisoners*, Villeneuve's cinema appears to tread a linear path from Quebec to Hollywood. Villeneuve mentioned his strong relationship with US cinema in an interview with *The Guardian* after *Sicario* was nominated for the *Palme d'or* at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival (where only four of the twelve films nominated for that year's *Palme d'or* were monolingual and the average number of languages per nominated film was 2.4.)¹ Expressing surprise at having been included in the Cannes round-up, he confesses "my mind is more in America than Europe right now" (in Heinrich 2015). However, Villeneuve's US-produced films are neither Anglocentric nor monocultural, nor do they abandon Quebecois influences entirely. For despite operating within the Hollywood model, a predominantly monolingual environment, Villeneuve remains fascinated by borders and cross-cultural exchange. In fact, the more Villeneuve's films are embedded within the Hollywood system, the more linguistically and geographically decentred they become.

Villeneuve's theorising of the border space and decentring of the nuclear one can be read against Bill Marshall's influential 2000 book *Quebec National Cinema* (published before Villeneuve had begun directing transnational films). For Marshall, the Quebecois filmmaking space is a unique and privileged one for understanding the pulls between national and supranational, Francophone and Anglophone, local and global. He writes:

1 Author gathered data, cross-referenced from <https://www.allocine.fr> and <https://www.imdb.com>.

“National” film texts are [...] pluralized and even destabilized by the competing discourses of and on the nation that exist in the culture and polity [...] We must imagine, therefore, a constant tension between forces of homogeneity and heterogeneity, between the centripetal and centrifugal. (Marshall 2000: 3)

In recent years, Quebec has become a fertile space for multilingual films depicting physical, cultural and linguistic border-crossing. *Incendies* is perhaps the most striking of these examples. But others include French director Philippe Lioret's *Le Fils de Jean* (2017), a familial drama set in Montreal but including characters from France and Anglophone Vancouver, Xavier Dolan's *Juste la fin du monde* (2016), another familial tale set in suburban Montreal but with a Paris-dwelling protagonist and an all-French cast, and Philippe Falardeau's *Monsieur Lazhar* (2011), a schoolroom drama centred on an Algerian teacher in Montreal, with dialogue in French, English and Arabic. Such films portray Francophone Canada (almost always Montreal) as the site of translanguaging and transcultural encounters. Marshall's “centripetal and centrifugal” mapping of Quebecois cinema, which he sees as “most certainly a ‘national cinema’, but [...] far from [...] a stable object of investigation” (2000: 1), thus provides a useful frame for understanding Villeneuve's movement among Canada, the US, Mexico, France, Lebanon and beyond.

Villeneuve's portrayal of Montreal in *Enemy* decentres it from Quebecois city to anonymous metropolis, filmed in yellow overtones and avoiding any recognisable landmarks. *Enemy*'s Montreal is a city that could be any other, featuring actors mostly of non-Canadian origin. *Arrival* was also filmed in Montreal, but is set in Montana. In *Sicario* the contrast between suburban El Paso Texas and the volatile Mexican Ciudad Juárez, separated only by a border wall, is undermined by the soaring aerial shots which reveal both cities to be part of the same, red-earth landscape. *Incendies*' Middle Eastern setting is never named, perhaps in an attempt to convey the universality of war. *Blade Runner 2049* is set in a dystopian future Los Angeles, yet bears no resemblance to present-day California. *Dune* will be set in an entirely fictional space. This deterritorialised approach to space again evokes Marshall's words on Quebec cinema, in which “the ‘national’ in terms of the ‘normal’ might be read according to more elusive discourses, of the banal, of the non-assertion or at least non-foregrounding of the nation, of the representation of [...] reality in terms of its non-specificity as

opposed to its specificity” (2000: 3). Villeneuve operates within increasingly ‘centripetal’ filmmaking spaces, namely the American Hollywood studio system, but his films are also increasingly ‘centrifugal’ in their multilinguality and deterritorialisation. In fact, he is often described in interviews and film reviews as bringing an ‘anti-Hollywood’ ‘Quebecer’s sensibility’ (Mottram 2015; Heinrich 2015) to American cinema. For example, Nicolas Bauche (2015: 48) writes of *Sicario*:

Avec son dernier film, Villeneuve a trouvé un point d’équilibre entre l’idiome cinématographique (faire un film américain comme un natif) et les obsessions thématiques du cinéma québécois (ne pas renier sa fibre créative de l’autre côté de la frontière canadienne).

(With his latest film, Villeneuve has found a balance between cinematographic dialect [making an American film like a native] and the thematic obsessions of Quebec cinema [without renouncing his creative flair from across the Canadian border]).²

Heightening the transnational and transmedial discourse of his films, Villeneuve also often adapts texts of varied origins: *Arrival* is an adaptation of Ted Chiang’s 1998 novella *Story of Your Life*, *Incendies* is adapted from the 2003 play of the same name by Lebanese-Canadian playwright Wajdi Mouawad, *Enemy* is an adaptation of José Saramago’s 2002 Portuguese novel *O Homem Duplicado* (*The Double*) and *Blade Runner 2049* is the sequel to Ridley Scott’s 1982 *Blade Runner*, itself an adaptation of Philip K. Dick’s 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. In a fitting shift, in 2018 Villeneuve’s *Sicario* was itself given a sequel, *Sicario: Day of the Soldado*, by Stefano Sollima, director of the 2010 multilingual Neapolitan mafia series *Gomorra*. From the Francophone Canadian civil war drama *Incendies* with its substantial Arabic dialogue to the Mexican-American cartel thriller *Sicario* with its English and Spanish-language script, Villeneuve’s films chart the liminal spaces across which peoples, cultures and languages pass and come into conflict.

“Weapon opens time”: language in *Arrival*

In an unspecified period resembling the present day, twelve ovoid UFOs land in locations scattered across Earth. Shots of anonymous cities, forests

2 Author’s translation.

and ocean surfaces situate these ships at once everywhere and nowhere, images of each landing interspersed with sweeping landscape panoramas. With quadrilingual dialogue, filmed in Montreal, set in Montana, focused on outer space, with secondary scenes located all over the world, the film is not anchored in any one location. Each ship contains two giant squid-like extraterrestrials, whose seven tentacle-like appendages earn them the name "heptapod". So begins Denis Villeneuve's 2016 science fiction film, *Arrival*.

In the wake of this titular arrival, soldiers, scientists and linguists in each of the twelve host countries are deployed to try their respective hands at obtaining an answer to a crucial question: 'what is your purpose here (and do you come in peace)?' One spaceship lands above an expansive, green Montana field, and *Arrival* follows polylingual linguistics professor Louise Banks (Amy Adams) as she is called upon by US military General Weber (Forest Whitaker) to attempt to communicate with the heptapods at the Montana site, in collaboration with physicist Ian Donnelly (Jeremy Renner). While the heptapods' clicks and groans remain unintelligible, their written language comprises artful 'logograms', circular symbols etched in the air with ink expelled from the creatures' tentacles. Over several weeks, Louise and Ian build a rapport with their alien interlocutors across a glasslike wall inside the UFO, developing a system using mime, drawings and other non-verbal forms of communication to roughly translate the logograms into English. Nicknaming the heptapods Abbott and Costello, Louise (and to a lesser extent, Ian) begins to bridge the gap between human and heptapod in ways no other global experts prove able to. Finally, we learn that the heptapods' purpose is to offer something to humankind. However, the heptapods' message is difficult to translate: Louise understands them to be offering a 'tool', though she is unable to determine what this tool may be. However, global panic ensues when the team in China arrives at a different translation: 'weapon'.

Arrival's narrative plays out in four languages: English, Mandarin, Russian and Heptapod. Though they are not spoken in the film, we learn that Louise is also fluent in Farsi, Sanskrit and Portuguese (and possibly others). The language learning process and the growing translingual bond between Louise and the heptapods forms the film's narrative arc and the majority of its plot. Thus language, and specifically the mechanics of



Figure 1. Louise and Ian interpret a logogram from the heptapods. *Arrival* (2016). Dir. Denis Villeneuve. 01:09:33

multilingualism, is *Arrival's* central theme. Within this context, the ability to communicate across language barriers is an asset, and the flexibility to navigate new linguistic challenges is invaluable. The heptapods are pure science fiction, but serve a powerful metaphorical function. As Emily Alder (2016) writes in *The Conversation*, “ultimately, *Arrival* is less about communicating with the aliens than with each other – internationally but also individually [...] The film’s message is that difference is not about body shape or colour but language, culture and ways of thinking. It’s not about erasing that difference but communicating through it”.

Arrival plays in depth with the ‘first contact’ motif of key films in the genre such as Steven Spielberg’s *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and Byron Haskin’s *The War of the Worlds* (1953); indeed, *Arrival's* French title is *Premier Contact* (literally ‘First Contact’).³ However, the film’s ultimate function is not to explore the possibilities of extraterrestrial life, but to highlight the power of language, and specifically the value of multilingualism in the contemporary world. As Louise becomes increasingly

3 Indeed, many ‘first contact’ films are multilingual: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* is also quadrilingual (in English, French, Hindi and Spanish) while the 1953 *The War of the Worlds* is bilingual (in English and Spanish).

proficient in heptapod, she begins to experience mental flashes of herself with a young child. As the flashes become more frequent, we learn that this child is Louise's daughter Hannah, and that she has died in adolescence from a rare disease. From the film's outset, the audience is led to believe that Louise's daughter has already died, and that the heptapods arrive when Louise is in mourning. However, *Arrival's* climax draws this assumption into question.

In the film's penultimate act, when the host countries have ceased to share intelligence about their respective ships, all international negotiations have broken down and the Chinese military has threatened to declare war on the heptapods, a renegade group of soldiers at the Montana site set off a bomb inside the spaceship. In the wake of the bombing, as the threat of interplanetary war looms, the US team prepares to abandon the communication mission and evacuate the site. In the frenzied aftermath of the attack, Louise rushes back into the ship, alone, and there discovers the true nature of the heptapods' 'offering':

Louise [*spoken English*]: Costello, where's Abbott?

Costello [*heptapod logograms with English subtitles*]: Abbott is death process.

L: I'm sorry. We're sorry. I need you to send a message to the other sites.

C: Louise has weapon. Use weapon.

L: I don't understand. What is your purpose here?

C: We help humanity. In 3000 years, we need humanity help.

L: But how can you know the future?

[*Costello telepathically sends Louise a mental image of her playing with Hannah*]

L: I don't understand. Who is this child?

C: Louise sees future. Weapon opens time.

This scene provides a double revelation. We discover the heptapod language is not only a means to present the offering: it is the offering itself. The language operates as a radical manifestation of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity, whereby the language one speaks influences one's perception of the world. As Nick Statt (2016) explains, "Louise's understanding of the heptapods' written language reorients her sense of cause and effect". The heptapods' language is not only visually circular, but temporally cyclical: it transforms the way in which the brain experiences time. Using their non-linear language which allows them to see into the future,

the heptapods know that in 3000 years' time they will experience a major crisis. The heptapods are thus offering their language as a gift which can unite the many groups on Earth – an unrending of the Tower of Babel – in the hope that this gift will curry enough favour with humanity to warrant their assistance in the future.

The moment Louise acquires full knowledge of the heptapod language is also the point at which the audience discovers the film's twist: the tender images of Louise and her daughter that increasingly intersperse the film are not flashbacks, but flash-forwards. Louise is not a grieving mother, but a future one who will now enter in to motherhood knowing the tragedy that lies ahead. The significance of the flash-forward in which Louise explains that Hannah's name is "very special because it is a palindrome; it reads the same backwards and forwards" takes on new significance. Her experience with her own daughter, much like her encounter with the heptapods, transcends the linearity of Earthly time. This acquisition of premonitory language is a bittersweet revelation, but also a gift which equips Louise to avert the impending crisis. Rushing out of the ship to attempt to stop the evacuation, she explains the significance of the language to Ian and Weber:

I can read it. I know what it is. It's not a weapon, it's a gift. The weapon is their language. They gave it all to us.... If you learn it, when you really learn it, you begin to perceive time the way that they do, so you can see what's to come. Time, it isn't the same for them, it's non-linear.

However, Weber dismisses Louise; Russia and Sudan have just followed China's suit in delivering ultimatums to their heptapods and the evacuation must proceed. Suddenly, the film flashes forwards, to a seemingly unrelated gala eighteen months in the future. As Louise surveys the gala, the Chinese military leader, General Shang, approaches her.

General Shang [*English*]: Dr Banks. It's a pleasure.

Louise: General Shang. The pleasure is mine, really.

S: Your president said it was an honour to host me in celebration.

L: Of course.

S: But I confess, the only reason why I am here is to meet you in person.

L: Me? Well, I'm flattered. Thank you.

S: Eighteen months ago, you did something remarkable. Something not even my superior has done.

L: What's that?

s: You changed my mind. You are the reason for this unification. All because you reached out to me at my private number.

L: Your private number? General, I don't know your private number.

The general holds out his phone on which his private number is displayed.

s: Now you know. I do not claim to know how your mind works, but I believe it was important for you to see that.

L [*hesitating*]: I called you, didn't I?

s: Yes, you did.

Cut back to the evacuation. Louise steals a government agent's phone and begins to dial.

Louise [*to herself*]: What do I say? What do I say?

Cut to the gala scene.

s: I will never forget what you said. You told me my wife's dying words. [*He speaks the words in Mandarin into her ear, inaudible to the audience.*]

Cut back to the evacuation. Louise begins speaking into the phone, in Mandarin.

The non-Mandarin speaking audience never discovers what the General's wife's final words were (though Mandarin-speaking viewers have a privileged understanding of the depth of the phone conversation). However, this multilingual moment – one which unfolds in both the present and the future – is the crucial turning point in the story. In this scene pairing, Louise's knowledge of Heptapod gives her the ability to access Shang's words in both present and past: as Vox's Tod Van Der Werff (2016) explains,

“Future Louise” knows she's about to have a conversation with Shang that will give “Past Louise” necessary information... so Past Louise can look between two points in time, 18 months apart, like you might look between two rooms in a house.

The mysterious phone call scene, with its sister scene in the future, encapsulates *Arrival's* thesis about the power of multilingualism to bridge divides. This divide is explored most obviously through the transspecies rift between extraterrestrials and humans. But perhaps more importantly, *Arrival* explores the Babelian divide between humans themselves. In these scenes, Louise's multilingualism operates on multiple levels to allow her to exert her abilities as a master linguist. Although General Shang speaks fluent English, making the phone call in Mandarin is not only a diplomatic choice, but allows Louise to utter the exact words his late wife had spoken, in confidence, on her deathbed. It is through the use of Mandarin

that Louise's words ultimately convince the General to withdraw his threat of war. However, while the dialogue in these two scenes switches between English and Mandarin, a third language is also present, as Heptapod exerts its influence via distortion of linear time. Knowledge of Mandarin is crucial for Louise's phone call to have the desired effect. But it is the cyclical temporality of the heptapod language which allows Louise to access the crucial Mandarin words. She is thus able to sway Shang's position, despite their radical power differentials. These scenes reveal Louise's ability not only to learn multiple languages, but to use them to strategic effect.

In the following scene, news bulletins report that the Chinese government has made a shock announcement: in a complete about-face, it will not declare war. Russia and Sudan likewise stand down. Communication lines open back up between world governments. Subsequent flashes forward reveal Louise publishing a Heptapod textbook and teaching the language to international groups. *Arrival* is a science fiction film far removed from real-world scenarios, its interpretation of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis a fantastical exaggeration. Yet the film's central message is one which speaks to the nature of the twenty-first-century, globalised world into which it was released. In *Arrival*, multilingualism is an asset and linguistic openness the key to successful transnational collaboration and diplomacy. Louise speaks English for much of *Arrival*, but she weaves in and out of the many languages she knows not only to advance her own position, but that of the heptapods and ultimately humanity. Her ability to juggle English, Mandarin and the transtemporal properties of Heptapod in the film's climax allows her to harness the power of multilingualism. According to David Erlich (2015), Villeneuve's cinema is about "the cycle of violence" under many guises. However, in contrast to Villeneuve's more violent films, namely *Sicario*, *Arrival* posits multilingualism as a solution to this cycle. As Pablo Villaça (2016) writes,

the context in this case is of dread before the Unknown – and the film understands that, in the face of fear, the reaction of a considerable part of humanity is aggression. It's no wonder, then, that Louise thinks about the challenges ahead of her in terms of language, while her superiors evaluate them following the logic of war.

Bill Marshall writes in *Quebec National Cinema* that "there is no master hermeneutic of 'the nation' for decoding the films of a 'national cinema'. Rather, the nation is unfixed, not one reference point, not a refuge of

stability faced with globalization, but a very mobile spiral.” (2000: 3). Few films illustrate this idea more clearly than *Arrival*. Much like Villeneuve's navigation of space, *Arrival*'s conception of language and time is both a circling and a decentring. For what are the heptapod logograms but 'very mobile spirals', shifting yet circular, spiralling through time? Louise understands the meaning of the circular logograms, the non-linearity of the heptapods' relationship with time, and the multilingual perspective required to save humanity. This decentred picture of language relations also reflects Villeneuve's trajectory as a filmmaker and his relationship with the centralised body of Hollywood cinema. In *Cahiers du cinéma*, Jean-Philippe Tessé (2016) writes of *Arrival* that "l'écriture des aliens 'ouvre le temps', le cinéma aussi" ("the aliens' writing 'opens time', as does cinema"). Villeneuve, like Louise, is a multilingual figure who operates within the monocultural centre but who understands the polycentric nature of the contemporary, multilingual world; one which is not a magnetic nucleus, but a 'very mobile spiral'.

Conclusion

From urban Montreal and pastoral Quebec to suburban Pennsylvania, rural Montana, the US-Mexico border, the Mexican city of Juárez and an unnamed Middle Eastern country resembling Lebanon, Villeneuve's films reveal the crucial importance of language in a world defined by border-crossing, immigration, and globalisation in its myriad forms. Within this multifarious world, the characters best equipped to navigate their surroundings, understand their relationships with others, and manipulate power differentials are those who not only speak multiple languages, but who understand how to use them strategically. In films like *Arrival*, violence is a blunt object where language is a precise tool. In all cases, monolingualism is a barrier and unwillingness to learn new languages spells doom for those who underestimate their value.

Denis Villeneuve's oeuvre so far charts a steady move away from regional Canadian filmmaking towards the larger budgets of Hollywood. From a production studies standpoint, this progression appears linear: a regional filmmaker drawn from a bilingual periphery to an Anglophone centre by the magnetic pull of the Hollywood system. This is one way

of understanding such a career trajectory. But Villeneuve's US-produced films do not conform to traditional conceptions of Hollywood as monolingual and "hegemonic" (Nornes 2007: 230), for these films are also his most culturally and linguistically diverse. The protagonists of films like *Sicario* and *Arrival* understand how to deploy language to exert social power, navigate high-stakes intercultural conflicts and negotiate solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems. *Arrival* is a science fiction drama in which disaster is averted by a lone hero. But in a radical update of this trope, *Arrival*'s hero uses not violence, but language, to achieve these ends. To paraphrase the heptapods themselves, such characters are not simply multilingual, but can use the 'tool', 'gift' and even 'weapon' of language.

In Denis Villeneuve's Hollywood films, English remains an essential lingua franca, but the potential for control lies in mastery of other, 'foreign' and even feared languages. Power is wielded most effectively in *Arrival* not by monolingual English speakers, even if they hold overt positions of authority in the US military or government intelligence agencies. Instead, the narrative is controlled by those most open to linguistic plurality and flexibility. Such films therefore resist the Eurocentric ideals of many cinematic traditions, in which *lingua francas* such as English and French are the only powerful codes, and open their master linguist characters up to the multitudes of power centres which characterise the globalised world. These films unfold in anonymous, plural or shifting environments, in which traditional understandings of space and territory are called into question. Villeneuve's multilingual, transnational filmmaking practises, much like the heptapods' language itself, are best understood as 'a very mobile spiral', at once cyclical – and decentred.

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Christian Koch

Reflecting social bilingualism in film. On Kichwa fragments in Ecuadorian cinema

Abstract: In this chapter, the use of Kichwa fragments in the Ecuadorian films *Ayllu*, *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda*, *Feriado* and *Qué tan lejos* is analysed with focus on the topic of presentation modes (e.g. with or without subtitles, monolingual and bilingual dialogues) and their poetic functions. The fragments reflect the sizable social gap between indigenous and mestizo culture in the small Andean country.

While films produced in the Andean highlands of Ecuador featured the Kichwa language through short fragments, the main language of bigger productions had always been Spanish. The break of this long-standing tradition took place in the long film *Killa* by Alberto Muenala (2017) which contained larger parts in Kichwa. One entry point to bigger parts of Kichwa language are some short films produced in the region of Imbabura where the indigenous language is still widely spoken. This will be illustrated by the short film *Ayllu* (2010). Additionally, three masterpieces of Ecuadorian cinema will be discussed in this chapter: *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda* (1996), *Feriado* (2014) and *Qué tan lejos* (2006). Although it is possible to see the reason for this choice in the importance of these films, as they all have an international reputation, it is significant to mention that the list of potential films is relatively short, as the centre of Ecuadorian film production is nowadays in Guayaquil, i.e. on the coastal portion of Ecuador where indigenous languages are not present in everyday life.

Central questions of this chapter concern the functionality of Kichwa fragments in films for mostly Spanish-speaking audiences and the functions they fulfil in different contexts. The perspective of this chapter is principally situated in the field of linguistics, where film analysis has not been an established approach so far.¹ Some words about the status of Kichwa language and identity in the Ecuadorian society may precede these

1 Cf. Schrader-Kniffki (2017: 43): “Mainly from a media studies and even applied media studies perspective [...], but hardly from a linguistic point of view – in

discussions, as social bilingualism has to be pointed out as one central aspect of the use of Kichwa fragments in films.

Kichwa in the national identity of Ecuador

Kichwa can be seen with different spellings and pronunciations, as there are different varieties currently in use. The most common name of *quechua* refers as a whole to the Inca descendent language that is spoken from the north of Argentina to the south of Colombia. *Quichua* instead refers to the variety spoken in Ecuador. The different vowel is explainable by the fact that in most varieties the first consonant is pronounced as a uvular plosive [q] that produces a transformation of the vocalic phonemes /i/ and /u/ to the allophones [e] and [o]. In Ecuador, the distinction of uvular and velar articulation disappeared towards velar /k/ so that there are no longer these allophones: ['q^hefjwa] vs. ['kifjwa]. *Quechua* and *quichua* correspond to Spanish writing conventions which are especially problematic for the distinction of different plosive sounds. In the last decades new writing conventions emerged and have become more common in present day. Whereas the southern forms of *qhechwa* or *qhichwa* are rarely adapted in other languages, the Ecuadorian spelling *kichwa* has become the customary form in all official Spanish (!) documents. Therefore, we will use here a modern writing of *Kichwa* in English as well.

It is helpful to know that in all varieties it is often more common to name the language as *runa simi* or *runa shimi*. Basically translated, this means 'language of humans', but the word *runa* is in most cases restricted to indigenous people. We will see in this chapter that the distinction between *runa* and *mishu* ('mestizo') is crucial in Kichwa language and in the creation of identity in Kichwa culture.

Starting from the independence era of Ecuador between 1809 and 1830, the creation of a national identity became a central thematic concern of Ecuadorian intellectuals. One famous example from the first generation born in Ecuador is Juan León Mera (1832–1894), the creator of the national anthem *¡Salve, oh Patria!* and the national epos *Cumandá*, who

Spanish and Portuguese film theory and analysis the notions 'film text' and 'textual analysis' are also being used [...]."

refused – as many others – to admit any cultural roots in Europe. However, the Spanish language was never placed in question, whereas Mera even wrote in 1860: “a la vuelta de un siglo [el quechua] será lengua muerta que nadie tratará de aprender”² (Paladines Escudero 2011: 73). The creation of Ecuadorian identity as an act of independence from Europe did not lead to indigenous culture, but rather to a kind of artificial romanticism of the pre-Columbian time.

In a short period of time in the 20th century, the *indigenismo* movement rediscovered indigenous languages and cultures. The most famous representative is the Peruvian writer José María Arguedas (1911–1969). For Ecuador, Jorge Icaza (1906–1978) has to be mentioned with his novel *Huasipungo* from 1934, a text full of Kichwa elements, yet well readable thanks to annotated editions (cf. Icaza 2005). The *indigenismo* movement remained without successors, which Jorge Enrique Adoum expressed on the cusp of the 21st century as a paradox of national identity: “Los intelectuales [...] proclamamos, por todas partes y a gritos, la originalidad de nuestro continente mestizo, [...] pero raros son los que han aprendido alguna lengua aborígen”³ (Adoum 2000: 40).

Nevertheless, Kichwa is nowadays enjoying a relatively stable status. The language shift from the indigenous languages to Spanish, which had been rising due to wider school placement in the entire country since the second half of 20th century, could partially be halted thanks to the realisation of Bilingual Intercultural Education (*Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*), i.e. the promotion of indigenous languages and cultures in school. Among the 14 official languages of Ecuador, Kichwa has obtained an outstanding position in academic education because basic knowledge of the language is now required in various careers, not only in special fields like anthropology, but also in study programmes for future teachers. This means that Kichwa is no longer only transmitted in natural acquisition, but formally studied by the mestizo population. In addition, more and more academic

2 “within one century [Quechua] will be a dead language that nobody wants to learn.”

3 “We intellectuals [...] proclaim, everywhere and full-throated, the originality of our mestizo continent, [...] but rare are those who have learnt any aboriginal language.”

theses are written in Kichwa, which is explainable by the higher percentage of indigenous people reaching academic graduations and the increase of the so-called “*intelectuales bilingües*” (Cerrón-Palomino 2007: 24). The status of diglossia with Kichwa as low variety that is most exclusively used by indigenous people (*runakuna*) persists, as we will see in the following examples of Kichwa use in films.

The bilingual short film *Ayllu*

Before analysing Kichwa fragments in long films, we will take a look at one example of the genre of bilingual short films, which are mainly produced in the northern highland region of Imbabura. The short film *Ayllu* (‘Family’, 2010), directed by José Espinosa, contains several scenes in Kichwa mixed in Spanish. It would not be adequate to call these scenes ‘fragments’ as they are an essential part of the entire film text. As Kichwa parts are subtitled into Spanish, Spanish can still be seen as the matrix language and Kichwa as the embedded language.⁴

In less than 20 minutes, the film deals with a young man named Yauri, who owns a clothing shop in a small town, and his girlfriend Sisa, who leaves the town because she gets a grant to study in an English college. In short scenes, their fading relationship is depicted until at the end Yauri leaves his hometown as well. Their life in the town is bilingual. Based on all scenes of the short film, we can deduce the following linguistic sociogram:

Two scenes show Yauri in selling interactions, once in Spanish (00:02:07–00:02:22) and once in Kichwa (00:13:45–00:14:03), depending on the customer. With the employees of the shop, Yauri speaks in Spanish. His mother represents the older monolingual Kichwa-speaking generation, as all people talk to her exclusively in Kichwa. The couple Yauri and Sisa, representing the younger generation, uses both languages as we see in the following mobile phone call:⁵

4 For this terminology, cf. Helmich (2016: 20).

5 The following examples are transcriptions of the spoken text, combined with given subtitles and/or translations. As the focus is on language choice, the transcription of spoken language is not marked with prosodic elements etc. in favour of a higher readability. Only pause and comment symbols are applied from the transcription system GAT2 (cf. Selting et al. 2009):

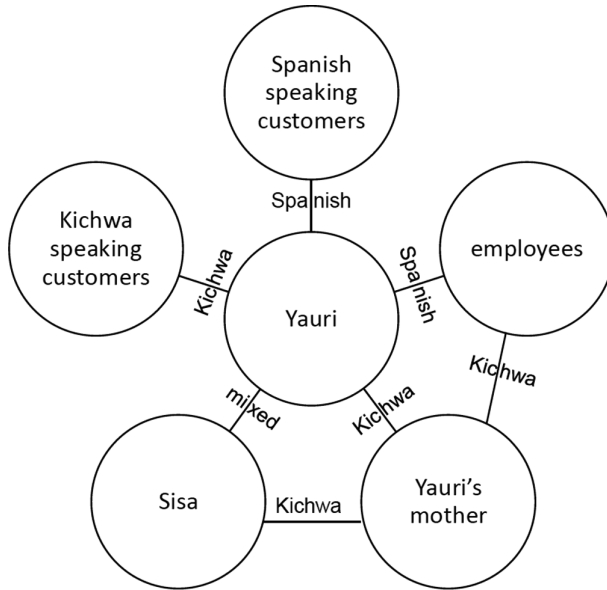


Figure 1. Sociogram of language use in *Ayllu*

- (1)
 Sisa: Aló.⁶ (1.9) Hola. (1.7) Allilla,(---)kikinka?(7.3) Ishkantilla? (3.5)
 subtitles: muy bien ¿y tú? ¿solo los dos?
 translation: Hallo. Hallo. Very good, and you? Only us two?
- Sisa: Hmm. (1.0) Clases⁷ tukurikpi rikurishun. (1.6)
 subtitles: no[s] encontramos despu[é]s que termine clases
 translation: Hmm. Let's meet after I finish classes.

-
- (.) – micro-stop,
 - (-) (--) (---) – estimated breaks of <0.5, <0.8 and <1.0 second,
 - (1.9) – measured breaks in seconds,
 - ((...)) – comment.

For the review of the Kichwa fragments, I thank to Josefina Aguilar Guamán from the Universidad Nacional de Educación in Azuay, Cañar.

6 Aló is a typical contesting marker for telephone calls in South American Spanish.
 7 Some Spanish words in Kichwa may surprise. Due to the permanent contact there is, however, a high grade of “borrowability” (cf. Muysken & Muntendam 2016: 609).

Sisa:	Ya. (-)	Un besito. (-)	Chao chao.
<i>translation:</i>	<i>Well.</i>	<i>A kiss.</i>	<i>Bye bye.</i>

(00:02:36-00:03:04)

The mobile phone call is related to modern society. Therefore, the frames of greetings both at the beginning and at the end are Spanish. The rest of the conversation – here only perceived through one interlocutor – is in Kichwa. In conclusion, we can say that this short film gives an interesting insight in the bilingual Ecuador in times of intergenerational language shift.

Kichwa fragments in three long films

As mentioned in the introduction, the following three films had great success, even internationally, although they were not dubbed. The use of Kichwa, in all three cases, is very limited, and as a result, we will include almost all the Kichwa fragments in our analysis.

Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda

The film *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda* ('Between Marx and a Naked Woman', 1996), directed by Camilo Luzuriaga, is based on the eponymous novel by Jorge Enrique Adoum which was published in 1976 (cf. Koch 2013: 130). Both novel and film deal with the activity of the Communist Party in the time of dictatorships during the 1960s. Beside Kichwa, the film also contains subtitled fragments in Russian by a Soviet party member, and German when Karl Marx appears in imaginary scenes. Kichwa is used several times in an episode between 00:41:26 and 00:49:50 when the party members visit an indigenous community to promote the communist programme. One member of the group has indigenous roots and warns the others about their visit to the community as this one is celebrating a traditional festival that should not be disturbed (00:34:10–00:34:45). However, the political leader Galo Gálvez goes there with his group. On the train, the indigenous people reject political flyers shouting "mana, mana, mana!" ('no, no, no!', 00:41:26–00:41:41).

The first real interaction occurs between Galo Gálvez, who is confined to a wheelchair, and a man in disguise as an ancient dancing divinity:

(2)

dancer: Asinchi mashu, (-- tushuy! (---)
 subtitles: ¡Levántate, hombre y baila!
 translation: Stand up, man, and dance!

Galo: No tengo piernas. (1.4)
 translation: I have no legs.

dancer: Ama shinaka⁸, (---) shinaka manachu tushuyta ushanki.
 subtitles: Entonces no puedes bailar.
 translation: So you cannot dance.
 (00:46:50-00:47:09)

This dialogue itself is multilingual although the interlocutors only produce monolingual utterances. Yet as their logical reactions show, they apparently understand each other. In the following example Galo meets inhabitants of the community:

(3)

Galo: Buenos días, compañeros. (-) Muy buenas. (-)
 translation: Good morning, comrades. Morning.

inhabitant 1: Achkaymanta.
 subtitles: ¡Tienen que irse!
 translation: You have to leave!

Galo: Miren, compañero, (1.4)
 translation: Look, comrade,
 nosotros hemos venido a hablar con ustedes. (-)
 we came to talk to you.

inhabitant 2: Markamanta mishu kawsakkuna (-)
 subtitles: Las autoridades del pueblo
 translation: The authorities of the village

kankuna nishkankichik cubano, (--)
 han dicho que ustedes son cubanos
 have said that you are Cubans,

kankuna daño rurankapak shamun. (---)
 ustedes han venido a hacernos daño.
 you have come to inflict damage on us.

8 This element does not appear in the subtitle and can be translated as ‘not so’, maybe parallel to the typical marker *no pues* in Ecuadorian Spanish.

Galo: ¡Qué pena! (1.3) ¿Cómo pueden creer

translation: *What a pity! How can you believe*

que le vamos a hacer daño en nombre de Cuba? (-)

that we are going to inflict damage on you in the name of Cuba.

indigenous party member: Creo que mejor nos vamos, compañero Galo.

translation: *I think we better leave, comrade Galo.*

(00:48:27-00:48:53)

The style of asymmetric bilingualism with mutual intelligibility in both examples seems to be artificial, based on a written script that does not imitate authentic orality.⁹ The only person who speaks actively in both languages is the indigenous party member. He tries to stop the angry inhabitants who throw stones while screaming “llukshi!” (‘leave!’) with the words “saki, mashikuna, saki!” (‘stop, friends, stop!’, 00:49:50). This form of balanced bilingualism shows his function as a mediator between the languages and cultures. Except for him, the multilingual constellation of Kichwa and Spanish represents a clear social gap that does not only separate indigenous and mestizo populations, but also reflects the question of whether the socialist or communist ideology is compatible to the Andean world-view.

Feriado

Feriado (‘Holiday’, 2014), directed by Diego Araujo, is known as the first Ecuadorian film that discusses a LGBT-related subject: Juan Pablo (called Juampi) is an adolescent boy from a prosperous family from Quito who is visiting his relatives in the countryside. The girls of the region are interested in him, but he does not reply to their advances. He feels more attracted to the young man Juan Pablo (called Juano) and they timidly approach to each other. Whereas the allusion of gay love remains an intimate conflict between the two guys, there is another open conflict that concerns Juampi’s uncle, a banker who appears in front of the indigenous people to

9 Cf. the remark of Bedijs (2017: 136): “Authentic orality means that a speech act is conceived and orally performed by the same person, without being scripted beforehand.”

account for and explain the loss of their money during the financial crisis of 1999. Two scenes contain Kichwa elements that are not subtitled. We will not discuss the second scene where Byron¹⁰ talks to his relative Juano in Kichwa and Juano tries to calm him in Spanish (00:47:10–00:48:00), as the way of communication resembles the first scene where Mamá Rosa, another member of the indigenous community, interviews Juampi while Juano helps out as an interpreter:

(4)

Mamá Rosa: Juanito, pipak familiakunata. (2.2)

translation: *Juanito, from which family is he?*¹¹

Juano: Sí, mamá Rosa, es familiar de don Jorge. (---)

subtitle: *-Yes, Mama Rosa, he's a relative of Don Jorge.*

Mamá Rosa: Hmm. (20.3) Y usted, ¿hijo de quién es? (---)

subtitle: *-And your dad is...?*

Juan Pablo: Mi papá es Pablo. (-)

subtitle: *-My dad is Pablo.*

Mamá Rosa: Ah. (---) Pablo Victoriano uchillakuna kakpi riksirkani. (-)

translation: *Ah. I have known Pablo Victoriano since we were small.*

Kikinpa abuelowan trabajashpa kawsarkani. (1.1)

I was working for your grandfather.

Unay watata, (---)

One year some time ago,

chay trabajashka kullkita rirkani kay don Jorgepa (---)

with the money from the work I went to this Don Jorge's

bankupi sakinkapak. (1.4)

bank to deposit it there.

Eh, (-) ña tigrachiwarka quidarka kullki chaypi. (1.1)

Eh, then they did not return, but kept the money there.

10 It is not uncommon – even in indigenous families – that children get English names.

11 In the published English subtitles, that we use here, they write: “Juanito...? (In Quichua)”. The following Kichwa utterances have only the subtitle “(In Quichua)”.

Juano: Lo que pasa es que mamá Rosa tenía unos ahorros
subtitle: -*Mama Rosa had her money*
 en el banco de tu tío, (--)
in your uncle's bank
 y ahora con lo que han quebrado, (-)
and now that it went broke,
 le han dicho que no le van a devolver nada, ¿no ve? (1.3)
they ain't gonna give her no money.

Mamá Rosa: Payka alli wamrakumi rikurin. (--)
translation: *He looks like a good boy.*

Juano: Dice que pareces una buena persona. (1.2)
subtitle: -*She says you seem like a good person.*

Mamá Rosa: Ñawipash taytalla ñawikuta rikukun. (1.7)
translation: *And the eyes looks like his father's eyes.*

Juano: Y que pareces a tu papá de joven. (1.2)
subtitle: -*And you look like your dad when he was young.*

Mamá Rosa: Kuyaylla ñawikuta charin. (---)
translation: *He has pretty eyes.*

Juano: Que tienes unos ojos bonitos.
subtitle: -*And that you have pretty eyes...*

El Pichi: ¡Ese man! (--); ¡Déjate de mariconadas!
subtitle: -*Easy, Juano, stop being such a sissy.*

((El Pichi and Mamá Rosa laugh.))
 (00:26:20-00:27:48)

Compared to the previous examples from *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda*, this fragment appears more authentic because the conversational situation is realistic: Juampi does not understand any Kichwa and Juano must translate for him. Juano understands Kichwa, but does not speak it actively. Mamá Rosa speaks a few words in Spanish and understands it without problem, which becomes quite clear when she laughs at the end about El Pichi's comment on "mariconadas".¹² This comment breaks from the idea

12 The word *mariconada* would usually be translated as 'nonsense' or 'bullshit'. In this case, it refers particularly to the homosexual allusion when Juano speaks about Juampi's pretty eyes (*maricón* – 'gay').

Table 1. Language dominance of bilingual characters in *Feriado*

	First bilingual generation	Second bilingual generation
Spanish	- Mamá Rosa Byron	+ Juano
Kichwa	+	-

of the interpreter as a neutral person. According to El Pichi the words of Mamá Rosa change their meaning when Juano pronounces them.

For the dominance or preference of one language in bilinguals in inter-generational shift, a model of Thomas Stehl (2012: 117) can be applied to the bilingual characters in *Feriado* (see Table 1).

Juano as the interpreter does not only translate for Juampi, but also for the spectators who do not understand Kichwa. The literal translation of the utterances of Mamá Rosa reveals that Juano does not translate precisely; he provides rather an informal mediation that makes the scene even more realistic than a scripted exact translation. Compared to the two previous films, the presence of multilingualism is more natural here with the absence of subtitles. The comprehension works because the constellations of communication include one speaker without knowledge of Kichwa who gets help by a mediator.

Qué tan lejos

One of the most famous Ecuadorian films is *Qué tan lejos* ('How much further', 2006), directed by Tania Hermida, a road film about of two women from Spain and Ecuador travelling with many troubles from Quito to Cuenca. It is a film full of elements of modern Ecuadorian culture. Hence, the Kichwa presented in this film can be considered to be a cultural sample. Whereas internal variations of Spanish between the woman from Spain and Ecuadorian people is a present linguistic phenomenon in the whole film, Kichwa is only spoken in one scene (00:49:54–00:51:36). Two indigenous young men talk in Kichwa in presence of Tristeza, the Ecuadorian protagonist, who does not understand the language. Subtitles for the Kichwa dialogue exist neither in the original nor in any foreign subtitled version. Tristeza hitchhikes with a young man on his motorcycle. His appearance in leather clothing is not traditional, but he is *runa* and

not *mishu* ('mestizo'). At the end of the trip, he behaves politely towards Tristeza until she tells him that she is Ecuadorian whereas the man hoped to be with a woman from abroad. In that moment a second young man, also wearing leather clothes, arrives on another motorcycle, they have a conversation in Kichwa, and leave Tristeza alone without explaining to her what is happening. As most spectators do not understand the meaning of the dialogue, the scene became famous and the subject of interviews¹³ with the film's director, Tania Hermida. She answers in an interview to Raquel Ruiz (2008):

Para los mestizos en Ecuador el kichwa no es nuestra lengua materna, sino justamente la "lengua del otro" [...] es una lengua de resistencia a las formas hegemónicas del poder. La hemos tenido muy cerca y, a pesar de ello, nos quedamos siempre fuera de ella. En la película yo quería que el público mestizo se sintiera "expulsado" de la escena, igual que el personaje de Tristeza, que en ese momento se siente "extranjera" a pesar de sí misma.¹⁴

Following the intention of Hermida, we might skip the transcription and translation of the scene. However, a closer look is important to help us understand the real meaning:

(5)

guy 1: ¿Qué más, loco? (--)

subtitle: - *What's up man?*

guy 2: ¿Qué fue, loco, qué tal? (1.0)

subtitle: - *How's it going?*

Imamantatik mana utka shamunki? (.)

translation: *Why haven't you come so far?*

Chay solterakunaka ñukanchikta ña shuyakunkuna. (--)

Those single ladies are already waiting for us.

13 A second interview with Tania Hermida by Jerónimo José Martín: http://www.cinececc.com/EDITOR/noticias/entrevista_taniahermida.htm (Accessed: 03.02.2018).

14 Translation: For the mestizos in Ecuador, Kichwa is not our mother tongue, but just the "language of the other" [...] it is a language of resistance to hegemonic forms of power. We hold it very near and, despite that, we always remain outside of it. In the film, I wanted the mestizo audience to feel "expelled" from the scene, in the same way that the character of Tristeza feels in that moment as a "stranger" despite herself.

guy 1: Paywan kashpami mana utka shamuni. (---)

translation: *As I am with her, I won't come soon.*

guy 2: Paywan, paywan. (-) ((Laughs.)) (-)

translation: *With her, with her.*

Kantaka ñamari riksini. (---)

I already know you.

Ñami nishkani (.) kay mishakunaka (-) inkitanllakunami. (---)

I've already told you that these mestizas only want to flirt.

Chaytaka yuyaypi charina kanki. (---)

Keep that in your head.

guy 1: Allitami ninki. (---) Shuyay, shuyay, ñami rishun (---)

translation: *You're right. Wait, wait, let's go.*

guy 1: Bueno. (---)

subtitle: *Well,*

Cuidárase [sic!] a los cuencanos, me tengo que ir. (1.1)

I've got to go now[,] watch out with the Cuencanos, ok?

Tristeza: Ya, y muchas gracias. (-)

subtitle: *Ok, and thanks for the ride.*

guy 1: Bueno.

translation: *Well. ((not subtitled))*

(00:50:58-00:51:36)

The second guy, apparently having more experience with girls, recognises immediately that Tristeza is a mestiza (*misha*) and recommends to his friend not to be with her, as these girls will hardly go beyond any borders of chaste behaviour. The two young men can talk about this subject in Kichwa because the lexical and grammatical structures are too opaque for someone who has never acquired the language. Therefore, Kichwa fulfils here the function of a secret language, which is actually a function in everyday life; in marketplaces, for instance, sellers use Kichwa in order to make their exchanges behind the counter unintelligible to the customers.

Regarding the communication with the audience, this fragment in *Qué tan lejos* differs from the previous examples as without any subtitle or interpreter the intention is to leave the spectators without an understanding of what is being said.

Conclusion

Whereas the question of functionality of Kichwa fragments – i.e. how Kichwa in communication with a Spanish speaking audience can be possible – is rather easy to reveal, the question of the function of these fragments, i.e. the reasons why the scriptwriters and directors implement Kichwa in their films, is more complex. Within the aspect of *functionality*, three methods can be seen: subtitles, a mediator, and incomprehension as a particular way to show that comprehension is not possible. However, as for *function*, reasons can be given that approach the topic from different levels. A switch to another language may attract attention from the audience and delight the spectators with a well-known and simultaneously unknown language, known in the sense of presence in everyday life, unknown in the sense of opaque language structures. This is indeed a factor which is important for all these films.

Another level of approach concerns the ideological message given by these fragments. They serve as “símbolo emblemático” (Haboud 2005: 16) in order to illustrate that the Ecuadorian society is not monolingual. However, the discussed examples show that Kichwa is exclusively spoken by indigenous people (*runakuna*) and not by the mestizo population (*mishukuna*), or only in the mode of interlinguistic interaction, as in the case of *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda*. Further, the examples of *Ayllu* and *Feriado* illustrate asymmetric forms of bilingualism: in older generations with Kichwa dominant and in younger generations with Spanish dominant.

If the use of Kichwa fragments displays, on one hand, the image of language reality in Ecuadorian highlands, on the other hand, it can create artificial or non-realistic situations.¹⁵ A famous example of artificiality in literature is the long Quechua agony in the French play *Quai ouest* by Bernard-Marie Koltès (1985/2011: 100 f.). We can observe such an

15 In his *opus magnum* on multilingualism in literature, Helmich (2016: 34 ff.) summarizes the stated functions of multilingualism in 22 previous studies that frequently reveal the contradiction between the increase of language reality and the production of artificial situations. Multilingualism becomes clearly artificial when it exceeds social realities in terms of polyglot plays (cf. Koch 2016; 2017).

artificial use of Kichwa in *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda* where bilingualism is illustrated, but the way of interaction does not reflect a natural way of bilingual interaction as it does in the other films.

Filmography

Ayllu (2010). Dir. José Espinosa. Incine.

Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda (1996). Dir. Camilo Luzuriaga. Grupo Cine.

Feriado (2014). Dir. Diego Araujo. Lunafilms.

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