

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’auvergne 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.

Gala Rebane & Ralf Junkerjürgen

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