

IN FOCUS: Revoicing the Screen

Introduction

by TESSA DWYER and JENNIFER O'MEARA, editors

The paradoxes engendered by voice on-screen are manifold. Screen voices both leverage and disrupt associations with agency, presence, immediacy, and intimacy. Concurrently, they institute artifice and distance, otherness and uncanniness. Screen voices are always, to an extent, disembodied, partial, and unstable, their technological mediation facilitating manipulation, remix, and even subterfuge. The audiovisual nature of screen media places voice in relation to—yet separate from—the image, creating gaps and connections between different sensory modes, techniques, and technologies, allowing for further disjunction and mismatch. These elusive dynamics of screen voices—whether on-screen or off-screen, in dialogue or voice-over, as soundtrack or audioscape—have already been much commented on and theorized by such notables as Rick Altman, Michel Chion, Rey Chow, Mary Ann Doane, Kaja Silverman, and Mikhail Yampolsky, among others.¹ Focusing primarily on cinema, these scholars have made seminal contributions to the very ways that film and screen media are conceptualized through their focus on voice, voice recording and mixing, and postsynchronization as fundamental filmmaking processes. Altman

- 1 Rick Altman, "Moving Lips: Cinema as Ventriloquism," *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 67–79; Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Rey Chow, "The Writing Voice in Cinema: A Preliminary Discussion," in *Locating the Voice in Film: Critical Approaches and Global Practices*, ed. Tom Whitaker and Sarah Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 17–30; Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space," *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 33–50; Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Mikhail Yampolsky, "Voice Devoured: Artaud and Borges on Dubbing," trans. Larry P. Joseph, *October* 64 (Spring 1993): 57–77.

and Chion, for instance, both note the vococentrism of cinema and the obsession with “moving lips” epitomized by classic shot–reverse-shot sequences. Indeed, Chion claims that the soundtrack, as such, does not exist, sound and image being utterly inseparable in cinema and unable to operate independently.

So, why revisit the screen voice *yet again*? Significantly, despite the centrality of voice to screen since at least the “silent” era (through lecturing, live dubbing, and intertitles, for instance), it has been routinely marginalized within screen studies, with scholars repeatedly needing to rescue or resuscitate this essential, ubiquitous area of inquiry. It is this slippery complexity of the screen voice that this dossier addresses by prioritizing concepts and practices of vocal return and refashioning, voice doubling and dissemination, verbal tiers, folds, and modulation. Such tactics have always been integral to technologies of recorded voice on-screen, representing core, constituent practices rather than aberrant possibilities. As Yampolsky notes, the verbal “chimera” created by dubbing points to “fundamental characteristics of film” and “is present in an inconspicuous way in any sound film, since the voice in a film is never actually produced by the visible mouth on the screen; its source always lies outside the body of the speaker at the location of the sound system.”² The inherently split nature of voice on-screen (and of vocalization in general, according to Jacques Derrida), is brought to the surface via acts of vocal re-mediation, respeaking, and reconstruction deemed necessary because of the voice’s entanglements with language and nation, difference, and translation.³ While film dubbing and sound engineering share entwined histories, practices, and processes, screen “audibilities” (according to Pooja Rangan, “the product of sonic forms and auditory practices of listening”) also generate and rely on cultural specificities, performative politics, and identity play, producing mediated voices that echo across diverse, global screens.⁴

Examining instances of vocal remix and dubbing, live festival translation (during screenings) and subtitling, podcasting, and accent maneuvering and manipulation, the six essays in this dossier extend and build on seminal work by Chion, Silverman, Sarah Kozloff, and Hamid Naficy while also taking stock of more recent scholarship collected in anthologies such as *VOICE: Vocal Aesthetics in Digital Arts and Media*, *Locating the Voice in Film*, and *Vocal Projections: Voices in Documentary*.⁵ The dossier begins with examples tied to contemporary media formats and technologies, yet these are framed in relation to older practices (like the history of ventriloquism) and preexisting screen voices (now remediated via podcast), leading us into the diverse ways that the screen has been revoiced across time and place. Each of the six essays provides insights into specific

2 Yampolsky, “Voice Devoured,” 72.

3 See Jacques Derrida, “The Voice That Keeps Silence [1973],” in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sterne (London: Routledge, 2012), 495–503.

4 See Pooja Rangan, “Audibilities: Voice and Listening in the Penumbra of Documentary; An Introduction,” *Discourse* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 279–291.

5 Sarah Kozloff, *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Chion, *Voice in Cinema*; Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Silverman, *Acoustic Mirror*; Norie Neumark, Ross Gibson, and Theo van Leeuwen, eds., *VOICE: Vocal Aesthetics in Digital Arts and Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010); Tom Whittaker and Sarah Wright, eds., *Locating the Voice in Film: Critical Approaches and Global Practices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Annabelle Honess Roe and Maria Pramaggiore, eds., *Vocal Projections: Voices in Documentary* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).

practices for vocal refashioning and demonstrates how such strategies are embedded in the broader traditions of audiovisual screen history and culture. In their opening essays, Jaimie Baron and Jennifer O'Meara consider how filmic enunciation is refracted and repurposed through social media, podcasting, and the televisual, exploring the digital dissemination and replay of screen voices in present-day mediascapes. Baron focuses on mechanisms of political critique through revoicings of Donald Trump on Twitter that channel Sméagol/Gollum's creepy inflection from *The Lord of the Rings* films (Peter Jackson, 2001–2003), while O'Meara examines film historical revisionism via the *You Must Remember This* (2014–present) podcast, noting how it redirects attention toward voice, speech, and accent, offering a form of retelling that gives voice back to women in the industry.

The next two essays in this dossier bring to light instances of vocal fashioning and accent shift within narrative and experimental cinema, drawing out sociocultural implications and contexts. Reflecting on Boots Riley's *Sorry to Bother You* (2012) and short films by Katarina Zdjelar, Rangan interrogates racial ventriloquism and vocal class hierarchies on-screen to develop a theory of the "poor voice" inspired by Hito Steyerl's treatise "In Defence of the Poor Image." Class and cultural striations are also scrutinized in Nicholas O'Riordan's study of indigenous Irish cinema and accent shift. O'Riordan proposes a taxonomy of five core categories to account for the way that national identity politics play out via accent in millennial Irish cinema. To conclude, the final two essays turn to revoicing as a functional tool, examining simultaneous interpreting and subtitling at film festivals. Antoine Damiens analyzes the artisanal subtitling at the Paris Lesbian and Feminist Film Festival, Cineffable. By effectively revoicing films via amateur subtitles, Cineffable makes visible the presence of the translator while inscribing on the screen the specificity of LGBT subjectivities. In contrast, Elena Razlogova provides historical analysis of the simultaneous revoicing techniques employed at the Soviet Union's biennial Tashkent film festival, which lasted from 1969 to 1989. Underlining the pains taken (and inevitable mishaps that ensued) at Tashkent to preserve the internationalism of the Third World filmmaking movement, Razlogova details the festival's particular mode of live voice-over translation that accommodated guests from diverse language communities.

Uniting these essays is an understanding of the screen voice as a malleable tool, one capable of being altered not only at the moment it is produced and recorded but also whenever it is deemed practical or politically beneficial to do so. By revealing how verbal-vocal expressions are *remade* by translators, festival organizers, podcast, film, and television creators, the dossier details the varied stages, layers, and flows involved in constructing, circulating, and hearing voices on-screen—ultimately offering new tools for vocal excavation. By focusing on the specific coordinates of revoicing, this dossier draws attention foremost to vocal contingencies: how on-screen voices can change and why they lend themselves to varied modes of concrete and conceptual manipulation. Such vocal play unearths underlying instabilities that arise from and expose screen constructs and constraints—technological, textual, and geopolitical. *

Re-sounding Trump's Voice (My Precious)

by JAIMIE BARON

It is a particular feature of society post-gramophone that we can become intensely familiar with voices that emanate from the bodies of people we have never met. Although these people may be strangers, the sense of familiarity generated by their spoken words can be just as powerful as those spoken by a close friend. Most regular film viewers, for instance, will not fail to recognize the cadences of Morgan Freeman's voice, which has been widely recorded and disseminated, often in the visually disembodied form of a voice-over. At times, this sense of familiarity can be an irritant. Watching an animated film, for instance, we may sometimes hear a voice that we are certain we *know*, and we cannot rest until we are able to identify the invisible speaker. Diana Sidtis and Jody Kreiman have examined the biological and neurological foundations of recognizing a familiar voice, arguing "that familiar voice patterns are special in human affairs; that their salient role in infant survival begins even before birth; that inherent in each is an elaborate constellation of biographical information; and that it takes the whole brain and, by extension, the whole person to participate in producing and perceiving a voice."¹ Thus, voices of strangers have traced pathways in our neural networks such that we cannot help but respond to them. Indeed, the experience of the stranger's voice as familiar is a paradox—but one with profound psychological and even political implications.

Andy Serkis's sonic embodiment of Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Peter Jackson, 2001–2003) has become both inextricable from J. R. R. Tolkien's character and immediately recognizable to everyone who has seen the films. Serkis was widely praised for his physical performance, which—with the help of motion capture, blend-shape animation, and other types of computer-generated imagery—gave rise to the figure of Gollum. Numerous media scholars have attempted to assess the theoretical implications of this hybrid form of performance.² Serkis's vocal performance,

1 Diana Sidtis and Jody Kreiman, "In the Beginning Was the Familiar Voice: Personally Familiar Voices in the Evolutionary and Contemporary Biology of Communication," *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 46, no. 2 (2012): 147.

2 See, e.g., Tanine Allison, "More Than a Man in a Monkey Suit: Andy Serkis, Motion Capture, and Digital Realism," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 28, no. 4 (2011): 325–341;

however, has been given less attention, most likely because it did not involve complex technological intervention (unlike the visible aspects of his performance). Ironically, this vocal performance is so transformative of Serkis's normal speaking voice that many assumed it had been technologically altered. Sound recordist and editor Chris Ward has noted that "people find it hard to believe that there is no electronic processing applied to the original vocal track to enhance the texture or timbre of Gollum's voice, and even other sound editors have difficulty believing that the magic is one hundred percent pure Andy."³ This virtuoso vocal performance deserves greater attention simply as an artistic production, but what interests me here is that, although the voice of Gollum is not only the voice of a stranger but also that of a fictional, fantastical creature, I would know it anywhere.

The familiarity of strangers' voices extends beyond Hollywood, however. Several years into his term, US president Donald Trump's voice has become instantly recognizable even to many who were not already familiar with him from his many years in the celebrity spotlight. Like other presidents before him, his particular speech patterns and intonations are now so well known that they can be impersonated. Alec Baldwin, in particular, has imitated Trump's cadences such that audiences are either amused or offended by the near (though never total) accuracy.⁴ Moreover, certain phrases Trump has uttered—"When you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab them [women] by the pussy. You can do anything"—have been so frequently replayed that I can remember the precise emphases with which he pronounced each word.⁵

Yet the main way that most people encounter Trump on a daily (or hourly) basis is through his Twitter account. This raises a provocative question: What do we "hear" when we read Trump's tweets? What is "audible" when we are scrolling down a Twitter feed? Of course, we likely read the tweets silently to ourselves, but we also automatically summon an echo of Trump's voice that seems to speak to us from inside our heads. Is this one key to Trump's appeal to so many, the fact that, as we scroll through his tweets, we seem to hear his voice in our minds? There is, indeed, a strange intimacy involved in reading the written words of someone whose voice so readily resounds. Jennifer O'Meara has discussed the place of endophony—a term meaning "inner speech" or the act of "mentally enunciating"—in digital culture, which plays a role in activist memes that rely on images of familiar movie or television characters, whose voices we have heard many times, combined with text of their recognizable

Lisa Bode, "No Longer Themselves? Framing Digitally Enabled Posthumous 'Performance,'" *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 4 (2010): 46–70; Mihaela Mihailova, "'You Were Not So Very Different from a Hobbit Once': Motion Capture as an Estrangement Device in Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy," *Post Script* 33, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 3–16; Pamela Robertson Wojcik, "The Sound of Film Acting," *Journal of Film and Video* 58, nos. 1–2 (2006): 71–83.

3 "Press Release: *The Lord of the Rings: Gollum: How We Made Movie Magic* by Andy Serkis," Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/booksellers/press_release/gollum/.

4 See "Donald Trump Sketches," <http://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/cast/alec-baldwin-57921/impersonation/donald-trump-285097>.

5 David A. Fahrenthold, "Trump Recorded Having Extremely Lewd Conversation about Women in 2005," *Washington Post*, October 8, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-recorded-having-extremely-lewd-conversation-about-women-in-2005/2016/10/07/3b9ce776-8cb4-11e6-bf8a-3d26847eed4_story.html.

dialogue.⁶ The endophony that occurs as we scan these memes draws on our past experiences and encourages us “to hear those words in the tone in which they were originally spoken.”⁷ In the case of Trump’s tweets, we have never actually heard him speak the written lines aloud, but we can draw on our memories of similar things we have heard him say. This feeling of summoning Trump’s voice may be due in part to the specific formal features of Trump’s tweets. Examining the perception of Trump’s “authenticity” through a close analysis of his tweets, Tommy Shane writes, “Trump’s ‘voice’ here is constituted by this use of rhythm and tone, conveyed through staccato sentences and question and exclamation marks, imbuing the tweets with an aural quality.”⁸ The combination of Trump’s particular Twitter syntax and the general ubiquity and familiarity of his recorded voice (famously resistant to the influence of the teleprompter) seems to contribute to the feeling that we can conjure his voice from the written word on the screen.

What happens, however, when two familiar celebrities’ voices are combined in one speech act? On a July 2017 episode of *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* (CBS, 2015–), we find our host interviewing Andy Serkis about a recent film in which he appeared. As the interview comes to a close, Colbert (a notorious *Lord of the Rings* fan) asks Serkis, as a favor, to read some of Trump’s tweets in the voice of Gollum. Serkis laughs but then, without hesitation, leaps from a normal seated position into a tense crouch on the interview chair. Along with his posture, his voice, which a moment before had been deep and resonant, suddenly transforms into a wheedling whine. Serkis-as-Gollum then looks into the camera and says, “The fake news media has never been so wrong or so dirty. Purposely incorrect stories and phony sources to meet their agenda of hate. Sad.”⁹ The polyvocality of this performance is the root of its (potential) hilarity. In her discussion of Serkis’s performance as Gollum, Pamela Robertson Wojcik describes “the tension between the twisted, almost cartoonish quality of the gurgling voice and the vocal tremors and teary intonations conveying a deep emotional pathos behind the ‘precious’ monologues that characterize Gollum.”¹⁰ The addition of this cartoonish gurgling and emotional pathos to Trump’s tweet has a transformative effect on the otherwise seemingly banal text (“banal” because we have heard or read a version of it so many times before). We can “hear” Trump’s imagined voice overlaid with Gollum’s simpering whine. Both voices have power rooted in their familiarity, but these two familiarities struggle for dominance.

Serkis’s stunt may seem like just a throwaway moment on a talk show, but I would argue that it reveals something more about how voice operates in our contemporary mediated experience. Of course, the reading is intended as a mocking critique of Trump, who is audibly equated with Gollum, an unfavorable comparison to say the least. As Mihaela Mihailova puts it, Gollum “represents the final stages of moral and physical

6 Jennifer O’Meara, “Meme Girls versus Trump: Digitally Recycled Screen Dialogue as Political Discourse,” *Velvet Light Trap* 82 (2018): 37.

7 O’Meara, 38.

8 Tommy Shane, “The Semiotics of Authenticity: Indexicality in Donald Trump’s Tweets,” *Social Media + Society* 4, no. 3 (2018): 6.

9 “Andy Serkis Becomes Gollum to Read Trump’s Tweets,” *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, filmed July 12, 2017, at CBS Studios in New York City, video, 6:53, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64mWOoj68qo>.

10 Wojcik, “Sound of Film Acting,” 80.

degradation driven by greed and obsession—the very picture of humanity undone.”¹¹ This is an apt description of how many of Trump’s detractors view him. Beyond this critique, however, I would argue that Serkis’s impersonation serves to defamiliarize what has become insidiously familiar. This defamiliarization may be part of the politics of impersonation more broadly, but it takes on an additional resonance during a presidency in which the limits of the “normal” are loosened daily. (That world politics are affected by Trump tweeting in the middle of the night, that his lies and factual errors increasingly go unmentioned, and that he can tweet vile insults without political repercussion are just a few examples of norms being drastically extended.) Although we are perhaps “meant” to read Trump’s tweets in his voice, this is, in fact, an act of ventriloquism that we ourselves perform. In this performance, however, we are not positioned as the ventriloquist but as the dummy, as a conduit for someone else’s voice. In his cultural history of ventriloquism, Steven Connor notes that “ventriloquism has an active and a passive form, depending on whether it is thought of as the power to speak through others or as the experience of being spoken through by others.”¹² In reading Trump’s tweets, we are placed in the passive position of being “spoken through.” This is perhaps true of reading anyone’s written words, but the fact that we can so readily summon his voice adds an additional aspect to this “speaking through.” The words on the screen have no voice, but we transform Trump’s written words into (internal) vocalizations, allowing his voice into our homes, into our heads. There is nothing inherently wrong with this aspect of reading the words of a familiar speaker, but it is a dynamic that often goes unacknowledged. Moreover, the stakes of participating in this dynamic are increased by the political and social power that accompany Trump’s tweets.

Thus, when Serkis reads the tweets in the voice of Gollum, he not only defamiliarizes this bizarre but normalized behavior on the part of the president of the United States; he also reveals the labor that we perform for the president. In addition, by reading Trump’s words in the voice of Gollum, Serkis swaps the passive and active positions described by Connor. In this impersonation, Trump—present through his unmistakable tweeting style—suddenly becomes Serkis’s dummy. His own words are made to speak but in a different voice, one that brings with it a host of unanticipated (and likely unwanted) associations. It is worth noting that both Serkis’s reading of Trump’s tweets and Baldwin’s impersonations of the president on *Saturday Night Live* (NBC, 1975–) serve to defamiliarize what has become familiar during this presidential administration and to mock Trump in the process. The emphasis in Baldwin’s performance, however, is on likeness and exaggeration; he is made up to look like Trump, he imitates his facial expressions, and he deploys similar speech patterns. Serkis-as-Gollum neither looks nor sounds anything like Trump, but he turns Trump’s own exact words—and the voice that accompanies them in our minds—against their original speaker. This trace of Trump’s voice is thus evacuated of its (literally) unspoken power. Ever since I saw this video, I have tried to read Trump’s tweets to myself in the voice of Gollum.¹³

11 Mihailova, “‘You Were Not So Very Different from a Hobbit Once,’” 6.

12 Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14.

13 I am, apparently, not the only one. The parody Twitter account for Gollum J. Trump posts tweets written in Gollum’s

Serkis's reading of Trump's tweets in another voice was, in fact, not the earliest instance of this practice. The first appears to be Mark Hamill reading them when Trump was still president-elect in the voice of the villainous Joker, whom Hamill voiced for *Batman: The Animated Series* (Fox, 1992–1995).¹⁴ Since then, reading Trump's tweets in other familiar voices has occurred several times on late-night comedy shows. One can now watch segments in which Kristen Bell reads Trump tweets in the voice of "Gossip Girl" or Josh Brolin reads them in the voice of the Marvel character Thanos.¹⁵ In each instance, a commonality between Trump and these characters is established, and just as important, the bizarre aspects of Trump's tweets are reasserted. Revoicing Trump through other familiar voices has thus become a political tool. It will not convince any of his followers to abandon him, of course, but it reminds his opponents that his ubiquitous voice—whether spoken aloud or conjured through his tweets—is that of a stranger. *

syntax but referencing the president's own preoccupations; it also includes disturbing videos in which Gollum's speaking face is digitally grafted onto Trump's head and moving body. You can find Gollum J. Trump's tweets at <https://twitter.com/realgollumtrump?lang=en>. It is also worth noting that there are many other Trump parody Twitter accounts, including @writeintrump, @dungeonsdonald, @RealDonalDrumpf, @trumpshair, @DeepDrumpf, and @RealPressSecBot, all of which parody Trump's tweets but do a different kind of work vis-à-vis Trump's voice.

14 "Mark Hamill Is Reading Trump's Tweets in His Iconic Joker Voice," *Tech Insider*, January 9, 2017, video, 1:26, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLS2D_UREQE.

15 "Josh Brolin Reads Trump Tweets as Thanos," *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, filmed June 20, 2018, at CBS Studios in New York City, video, 11:11, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d853h-8rsPQ>; "Kristen Bell Reads Donald Trump's Tweets as Gossip Girl," *Late Night with Seth Meyers*, filmed September 27, 2018, at NBC Studios in New York City, video, 1:36, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RO8NAZwAG0o>.

Remixing Actresses' Voices on the *You Must Remember This* Podcast

by JENNIFER O'MEARA

With a focus on Karina Longworth's *You Must Remember This* (Panoply / Slate Podcasts, 2014–present) podcast series, this essay examines how this audio medium allows for the voices of female Hollywood stars to be disseminated in new ways that can reorient listeners' attention to women's verbal and vocal representations. For the past six years, Longworth has researched and shared her own interpretation of events and figures from Hollywood film history in a format that combines audio clips from films and interviews with her narration and, occasionally, vocal reenactments. Through a focus on “Jean and Jane” (a nine-part comparison of Jean Seberg and Jane Fonda from the 1950s through the 1980s), I analyze how the specifics of the podcast format allow for a new understanding of these actresses' voices and their roles in the film industry. Across the series, Longworth pays consistent attention to Seberg's and Fonda's verbal (dis)empowerment at the hands of male directors, partners, and journalists, and she uses her own voice—both her narration and her figurative power as podcast producer—to help the women tell their own stories. Longworth initially recorded and edited *You Must Remember This* entirely in her own home, before joining the Panoply podcast network in September 2015. Meant predominantly for cinephiles, the podcast has gained a considerable following and has been profiled by a range of mainstream publications, including *Variety*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The Guardian*.

In “Jean and Otto Preminger / Jane in New York,” accents are presented as an important bone of contention in the tumultuous relationship of Seberg and director Otto Preminger.¹ As Longworth's research reveals, Preminger took credit for catapulting Seberg from small-town girl to international star. In the process, he also attempted to control Seberg's voice. Longworth quotes Preminger's triple insult before filming *Bonjour Tristesse* (Otto Preminger, 1958): “I don't like the way you talk, walk, or dress.” She also details how Preminger made Seberg take French lessons and diction classes in

1 Karina Longworth, “Jean and Otto Preminger / Jane in New York (Jean & Jane Part 2),” July 3, 2017, in *You Must Remember This*, produced by Karina Longworth, podcast, MP3 audio, 54:44, <https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/stitcher/you-must-remember-this/e/51968390>.

an effort to replace her midwestern US accent with a more “neutral” sound. Yet as Longworth signals, issues of inflection were important to the changeable power dynamic between director and actress, eventually allowing Seberg to assert her authority by mimicking Preminger’s own far-from-neutral Austro-Hungarian accent. The eighteen-year-old Seberg began to “openly rebel” on set in Paris, including verbally, as she repeated a line of Preminger’s directions in what Longworth describes as “a mockery of Preminger’s accent.” Seberg’s increased courage in challenging the director thus depended on her vocal skills as a performer: Preminger didn’t have the ability to disguise his accent when directing Seberg, but she had the ability to mimic his.

Listeners hear not only how Preminger routinely critiqued Seberg’s voice and accent, but also how the director ignored the actress’s cries for help when she was accidentally set on fire during the filming of *Saint Joan* (Otto Preminger, 1957). After recounting Seberg’s pleading during the shooting—“‘I’m burning,’ Jean yelled, not in character”—Longworth delivers another instance of the director’s cruelty: Preminger used parts of this footage in the final film, only presumably without the sound. For Preminger, Seberg’s cries for help were extraneous—easily removed, like any other outtake. Longworth instead works to give Seberg the last word.

A “he said, she said” dynamic often underlies the podcast’s retelling of Seberg’s and Fonda’s experiences in the film industry. Longworth’s historiography tends to support the women by allowing them to be heard and, ultimately, believed. At the start of “Jean and Jane in Paris,” we hear Seberg on *The Mike Wallis Interview* (ABC, 1957–1958) being belittled extensively by Wallis.² Longworth frames the clip—which seems scathing by contemporary standards—as one of several instances in which Seberg “had her very right to exist called into question by men like Wallis.” Beyond this example, Longworth’s use of archival audio materials is particularly important to her style of revisionist feminist historiography. A short audio montage of Seberg and Fonda speaking, or being spoken about, plays at the start of each podcast. The montage primes listeners to think about the women’s vocal lives and afterlives, while the missing images of their famous bodies provide a useful, structuring absence. For instance, by preceding a news report about Seberg’s suicide in 1979 with a clip of her character Patricia in *À bout de souffle* (*Breathless*; Jean-Luc Godard, 1960) talking about her unhappiness and lack of freedom, Longworth refocuses attention on what Seberg has to say, albeit conflating her personal troubles with this character portrayal. With Fonda, audio clips of her in activist mode (in the early 1970s) and instructional mode (in a 1982 exercise video) serve to underscore the actress’s varied uses of her voice beyond the big screen.

Fonda’s vocal empowerment is more prominent than Seberg’s, and it is presented as one that develops despite notable attempts by men—including family members, directors, and FBI agents—to silence her. Longworth’s recurrent focus on Fonda’s voice includes an audio clip of her English-language monologue in *Tout va bien* (*All’s Well*; Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin, 1972), one that is drowned out by an unseen Frenchwoman translating over it. By playing a twenty-two-second audio clip of this

2 Karina Longworth, “Jean and Jane in Paris (Jean & Jane Part 3),” July 10, 2017, in *You Must Remember This*, produced by Karina Longworth, podcast, MP3 audio, 49:37, <https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/stitcher/you-must-remember-this/e/51968389>.

sequence, Longworth provides listeners with the time to consider how Fonda's vocal presence has been displaced by that of the French woman. This decision ironically undermines her desire at this time to work only with other women. In this case, working with another unnamed woman is an indirect and disempowering situation, one implicitly tied to Jean-Luc Godard's desires to exploit the star value of Fonda's image in both *Tout va bien* and its postscript film, *Letter to Jane* (Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin, 1972).

Beyond the cinema screen and soundtrack, Fonda's use of her voice as an antiwar activist becomes all the more evident when removed from the iconic and often controversial imagery of her protesting in the United States or Vietnam. In "Hanoi Jane & The FBI vs. Jean Seberg's Baby," an episode focused on Fonda's antiwar activities, listeners learn how Fonda live-narrated her own footage from Vietnam, first in Paris and then in New York, when the actual soundtrack to the footage was held at customs in France.³ This anecdote gains additional significance in the subsequent episode when we learn how, in *Letter to Jane*, directors Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin comment on a singular news picture of Fonda in Vietnam. The two setups, including the relationship they present between Fonda's body and voice, are virtual opposites in every sense. In *Letter to Jane*, a singular image of Fonda is effectively pinned down when it is subject to critical, authoritative commentary by the two male filmmakers. They talk over her image, commenting on the meanings behind her expression. Fonda has no opportunity to respond or articulate what she was actually thinking at the time. The problematic dynamic of an unseen (and unacknowledged) Frenchwoman speaking over Fonda in *Tout va bien* is thus taken further in the postscript film, because Fonda's voice was not recorded at all. In contrast, commenting live on her personal footage from Vietnam gives Fonda the opportunity to take agency with regard to a media output, one in which she contributes as a vocal rather than a visual presence. Her sense of urgency with regard to sharing her material leads her to take up the challenge of unplanned, ad hoc narration. As such, Fonda is revealed as not just a guerrilla filmmaker—chronicling her antiwar mission to North Vietnam—but a guerrilla orator, whose close attachment to the footage means she can provide a live soundtrack to the visuals.

Although never explicitly stated by Longworth, the eighth and ninth episodes of the season contrast the treatment of Fonda in *Letter to Jane*—silent, pinned down by male narrators—with Fonda's increased confidence in her own voice, on- and off-screen. For instance, despite, or perhaps because of, Fonda's brief but frustrating experience working in the male-dominated world of *la nouvelle vague*, the actress decided to appear in Delphine Seyrig's documentary *Sois belle et tais-toi* (*Be Pretty but Shut Up*, 1981). Already known in France for her women's rights activism, Seyrig films Fonda and other American and European actresses as they discuss their experiences of sexism in the film industry. Its premise and title alone speak to the experiences that Longworth's series reveals both Fonda and Seberg to have endured. The dual narrative that Longworth assembles makes it clear that Fonda, and to a lesser extent Seberg,

3 Karina Longworth, "Hanoi Jane & The FBI vs. Jean Seberg's Baby (Jean & Jane Part 7)," August 7, 2017, in *You Must Remember This*, produced by Karina Longworth, podcast, MP3 audio, 66:30, <https://www.stitcher.com/s?eid=51968385>.

were unwilling to conform to the directive of simply being pretty and shutting up. Longworth's strategy thus helps round out the representation of Fonda—her star image—in the popular media at the time and today. For although Longworth's series only chronicles Fonda's life until the mid-1980s, her focus on Fonda as an articulate, educated activist provides a new narrative for younger generations whose contemporary impression of Fonda, now in her eighties, is likely guided by popular media attention on her “age-defying” body.⁴ Or, at least this was the case until October 2019, when Fonda's series of high-profile arrests for protesting against political inaction on climate change led to renewed attention on her long history of protest and activism.

In surveying recent studies of the voice in podcasting, digital culture, and cinema, one is struck by the difficulty of examining the multitude of voices in *You Must Remember This*, which includes archival voices from film and television, Longworth's contemporary narration, and Longworth and guests' vocal impersonations of historical figures. Virginia Madsen and John Potts use the term “voice-cast” to refer to how podcasting “opens up a new sphere of voicings and words in motion and ‘in suspension’ . . . await[ing] activation as they find their listeners.”⁵ They also underscore that one of the “revolutionary” attributes of podcasting is its “creation of a new and extended sphere for the performance of the essentially *acousmatic* voice,” wherein voices are transmitted and received “without their origin being visible.”⁶ Following from this, the term “voice-cast” could similarly be used to describe instances when the image track is deliberately cast off from voices. That is, when the podcast format incorporates audio from audiovisual media like cinema, it can effectively turn any screened voice into an acousmatic voice of sorts. Although several seasons of *You Must Remember This* are not focused on women, in the case of Longworth's actress-themed series the acousmatic vocal elements can thus retroactively attribute the female characters and performers with the kind of disembodied voice they were rarely allowed in the related Hollywood films.⁷

In distinguishing the “radio-*acousmètre*” from that of cinema, Michel Chion defines the former as inherently acousmatic but asserts that “one cannot play with showing, partially showing, and not showing,” given that there is no possibility of seeing the radio-*acousmètre*.⁸ Although the podcast medium may generally be aligned with such an acousmatic voice, the “Jean and Jane” series continually toys with our familiarity with images and embodied voices. As such, it can function much as Chion's cinematic *acousmètre*, where “what we have seen and heard makes us prejudge what we don't see.”⁹

4 See, e.g., Frances Kindon and Alistair McGeorge, “Age-Defying Jane Fonda, 79, shows off youthful figure as she owns the catwalk at Paris Fashion Week,” *Mirror*, October 1, 2017, <https://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/jane-fonda-defies-age-loreal-11269983>.

5 Virginia Madsen and John Potts, “Voice-Cast: The Distribution of the Voice via Podcasting,” in *VOICE: Vocal Aesthetics in Digital Arts and Media*, ed. Norie Neumark, Ross Gibson, and Theo van Leeuwen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 33–59, 33.

6 Madsen and Potts, 33.

7 See Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

8 Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 21.

9 Chion, 22.

But while a familiarity with Seberg's and Fonda's appearance may allow their voices to trigger images of their faces and bodies (a kind of memory-driven playback function), the podcast format precludes the idea that we interpret what we hear in relation to "what we might see."¹⁰ Knowing that, in Longworth's series at least, we are never going to see Seberg and Fonda while they speak, the format primes us to listen more intently. However, in other respects, the podcast can potentially influence "what we might see"—in that listeners may choose to watch particular films or performers as a result of hearing so much about them.

The revisionist potential of remixing preexisting filmic voices in the podcast format becomes even more apparent in light of Helen Macallan and Andrew Plain's study of the digital filmic voice.¹¹ They discuss Walter Murch's 2001 remastering of *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979), which altered the delivery of the voice-over narration by spreading it across all three loudspeakers behind the screen.¹² Macallan and Plain situate this as an exceptional departure from historical practices, noting that since the 1950s there has been resistance to moving the voice away from the center loudspeaker because of a fear that it would be "perceived as floating free of the body, hence rupturing the film's narrative."¹³ Their insights are useful to rethink in relation to *You Must Remember This*, as "rupturing" Hollywood narratives is one of Longworth's precise goals. While Macallan and Plain's discussion of narrative refers to the film's plot, this idea can be reapplied to the cultural narratives that have led to women's experiences being written out of popular histories of Hollywood. In an interview, Longworth articulates her goals of disrupting preexisting accounts of Hollywood. In reference to the podcast's tagline of capturing the "secret and/or forgotten histories of Hollywood's first century," she explains to *Jezebel's* Kelly Faircloth how this often means correcting for the default framing of events: "When you start reading a lot of news stories that were written in the 1930s, '40s, '50s, you really become aware of the extent to which the default perspective of mainstream reporting used to be the white male perspective, even when the reporter was female."¹⁴

Longworth's awareness of this history, including the complicity of women such as gossip columnist Hedda Hopper in shaming women in the film industry, informs the way she uses her podcast (at least in those seasons focused on actresses) to retroactively support many of the women who were formerly dismissed or silenced by cinema's sexist power structures. Hollywood's industry narrative is purposefully and productively ruptured through a resurrection of female voices, although the women under focus still tend to be white. Longworth has dedicated episodes of the podcast to African American actresses Lena Horne, Dorothy Dandridge, and Hattie McDaniel, and to

10 Chion, 22.

11 Helen Macallan and Andrew Plain, "Filmic Voices," in *VOICE: Vocal Aesthetics in Digital Arts and Media*, ed. Norie Neumark, Ross Gibson and Theo van Leeuwen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 243–266.

12 Macallan and Plain, 243.

13 Macallan and Plain, 245.

14 Kelly Faircloth, "A Chat with the Creator of Can't-Miss Classic Hollywood Podcast *You Must Remember This*," *Jezebel*, June 21, 2016, <https://pictorial.jezebel.com/a-chat-with-the-creator-of-cant-miss-classic-hollywood-1782364338>.

the Mexican actress Lupe Vélez, yet both “Jean and Jane” and the 2017 season on “Dead Blondes” prioritize the voices of white women.¹⁵

Throughout the “Jean and Jane” season, listeners are provided with audio clips and narrated examples that emphasize the significance of vocal modulation and manipulation to Seberg’s and Fonda’s working lives, including instances when Seberg’s accent was critiqued or Fonda spoken over. *You Must Remember This* draws attention to, and at times deliberately reverses, these dynamics to help them reclaim their vocal agency. In “Coming Home” Longworth refers to Seberg’s attempts to “take back the narrative” from the press after her newborn daughter’s death (following vicious rumors about the race of the baby’s father during Seberg’s pregnancy).¹⁶ More broadly, this concept of reclaiming and revoicing the narrative can be used to describe what Longworth as digital historiographer facilitates through the podcast format; using this new audio medium to allow Fonda, Seberg, and other women to redirect popular understandings of their lives. *

15 Starting with: Karina Longworth, “Peg Entwistle (Dead Blondes Part 1),” January 30, 2017, in *You Must Remember This*, produced by Karina Longworth, podcast, MP3 audio, 50:11, <https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/stitcher/you-must-remember-this/e/48980464>.

16 Karina Longworth, “Coming Home (Jean & Jane Part 8),” August 14, 2017, in *You Must Remember This*, produced by Karina Longworth, podcast, MP3 audio, 63:22, <https://www.stitcher.com/s?eid=51968384>.

In Praise of the Poor Voice

by POOJA RANGAN

“If you could put a Brooks Brothers jacket and a pair of dockers [*sic*] on a voice, that’s what we’ve got.” This is voice actor David Cross, describing his performance of a black telemarketer’s “white voice” in Boots Riley’s *Sorry to Bother You* (2018).¹ Schooled in the mores of sonic whiteness by a veteran black telemarketer, newbie agent Cassius Green (Lakeith Stanfield) crafts a voice whose place and ethnicity connote a class distinction. The conceit of Riley’s film invokes the reality of accent neutralization programs commonly associated with metropolitan call centers in India, where agents are trained to switch off local and regional linguistic habits by emulating the phonological features of Euro-American English accents.² In Riley’s film, the particularity of Cross’s voice also stands for neutrality, an aspirational norm. Riley’s rendition of Cassius’s racial ventriloquism as a shoddy disguise—Cross’s tony voice is crudely overdubbed, like an ill-fitting costume—borrows from the iconography of global outsourcing to satirize whiteness as a simulacrum of vocal refinement and placelessness. Cassius’s customers may be fooled but we are in on the joke.

Riley’s film also sets up the topic of my essay: the surreal predicament of the voice that is a poor copy of a fake original. In the neoliberal economy of global telecommunication, regionally or ethnically marked voices are treated as impoverished, whereas a so-called neutral accent represents a class position of access, privilege, and mobility. No matter how closely they approximate this standard, marked voices are heard as an auditory analog of what Hito Steyerl calls “poor images”: facsimiles lacking in resolution, clarity, and intelligibility.³ I investigate the coding of accents as class distinctions and the complicity of the cinematic protocols of linguistic realism in reinforcing a class hierarchy of vocal sounds. Using readings of three short experimental documentary videos by the Serbian moving-image artist Katarina Zdjelar, I develop a concept, auditory poverty, that reconfigures these protocols and the

1 Hunter Harris, “How *Sorry to Bother You* Found (and Used) Its White Voice,” *Vulture*, July 18, 2018, <https://www.vulture.com/2018/07/boots-riley-sorry-to-bother-you-found-and-used-its-white-voice.html>.

2 See A. Aneesh, *Neutral Accents: How Language, Labor, and Life Became Global* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 6–8.

3 Hito Steyerl, “In Defense of the Poor Image,” in *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 31–45.

raciolinguistic ideologies they hold in place.⁴ Zdjelar's films involve everyday accented encounters: a voice-training class, a conversation among friends, the act of singing along to a pop song. Her gestural language in the films amplifies the corporeal and existential violence of evacuating a voice of its bodily habitations, as well as the surprising and sometimes rejuvenating outcomes of the mimetic traffic between desiring voices. With Zdjelar and Steyerl as interlocutors, I offer an account of the poor voice that locates democratic potential not in its smooth circulation but in the auditory bonds forged from its abjected material.

Steyerl's "In Defense of the Poor Image" has achieved notoriety as a manifesto that frames itinerant digital images as the medial counterpart of stateless migrants. But it is equally potent as a provocation regarding migratory voices in neoliberal times. Steyerl sees a parallel between images and people who seem to exist purely to be displaced and whose dispossession lubricates the political and technological infrastructures of neoliberal capital. She writes: "Poor images are the contemporary Wretched of the Screen, the debris of audiovisual production, the trash that washes up on the digital economies' shores. They testify to the violent dislocation, transfers, and displacement of images—their acceleration and circulation within the vicious cycles of audiovisual capitalism."⁵ By "poor images" Steyerl has in mind low-resolution image formats that enable the rapid distribution and circulation of their "rich" counterparts in the form of memes, rips, and bootlegs. Poor images, she notes, gain in speed what they lose in matter. Their dematerialization attests to the mandate of compression: the technical drive to streamline communication to facilitate greater mobility and efficiency.⁶

As a compressed format designed to be copied and shared, often illicitly, the MP3 is technically the sonic equivalent of the poor image. But from a geopolitical perspective, there is no better testament to the dramatic compression, appropriation, and displacement of sounds than the poor approximation of a "classy" or "neutral" accent, emblemized by the call-center voice. Having an accent is a telltale mark of obsolescence in the age of mandatory compression. It is, to quote Rey Chow, "tantamount to leaving on display—rather than successfully covering up—the embarrassing evidence of one's alien origins and migratory status."⁷

Compression has cultural as well as technical dimensions. Technically speaking, compression refers to the algorithmic process of removing redundant data from a file, specifically, parts of the audio signal that are unlikely to be audible to the average listener. This can involve the elimination or the addition of a supplement that paradoxically subtracts information, for instance, the addition of "masking noise" that

4 Jonathan Rosa and Nelson Flores describe "raciolinguistic ideologies" as ideologies that "produce racialized speaking subjects who are constructed as linguistically deviant when engaging in linguistic practices positioned as normative or innovative when produced by privileged white subjects." See Jonathan Rosa and Nelson Flores, "Do You Hear What I Hear? Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies," in *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies*, ed. Django Paris and H. Samy Alim (New York: Teachers College Press, 2017), 150.

5 Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," 32.

6 See Jonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 5.

7 Rey Chow, *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Language as a Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 58.

cancels out undesirable noise that can interfere with intelligibility.⁸ The cultural logic of compression has arguably defined the transmission and reception of vocal sounds since the advent of industrial capital, when the replacement of phonological features associated with provinciality and “underbreeding” by the standardized “Received Pronunciation” was incorporated into formal and informal English-language education.⁹ In other words, those with “poor voices” have gained access to and mobility within enclaves of privilege by neutralizing or masking undesirable vocal “data” likely to be heard as redundant or “backward.”

Mainstream narrative cinema is relatively transparent in its tactics of auditory discrimination. Non-Anglophone speech is marginalized institutionally (the categorization of “subtitled” or “foreign-language films” as a distinct genre), and accented Englishes are marginalized diegetically (as an exaggerated racial performance of a black, yellow, red, or brown voice).¹⁰ These linguistic protocols subscribe to the realist fallacy that Chow calls “coercive mimeticism,” in that accented voices are expected to resemble what the dominant culture hears and recognizes as “other.”¹¹ The cinematic expectation that “ethnic” speakers will “look like a language and sound like a race” confirms what Jonathan Rosa has observed in a different context: that linguistic practices shape racial ontology just as racialized expectations shape linguistic ontology.¹² Documentary realism, in contrast, has been associated with vocal fidelity, not intelligibility, and an openness to syntactical, accentual, and dialectical variations.¹³ But despite its reputation as an “accented cinema,” documentary has evolved its own protocols of speaking and listening “without an accent.”¹⁴ Measures such as subtitles, anchoring images, and overdubbed narration naturalize the distinction between neutral voices that simply speak or narrate in a manner that seemingly requires no translation or mediation, and accented voices that are spoken about, analyzed, interpreted, overdubbed, captioned, or subtitled.¹⁵ Conventional documentary listening is, to quote Irina Leimbacher, “inquisitive and acquisitive”: it emphasizes speech’s referential function, “minimizing, if not eliminating, digressions, paralinguistic expression, and reflection on vocalized speech itself.”¹⁶

8 See Sterne, *MP3*, 21–22, 120.

9 See Lynda Mugglestone, “Accent as a Social Symbol,” in *The Handbook of English Pronunciation*, ed. Marnie Reed and John M. Levis (London: John Wiley and Sons, 2015), 19–35.

10 See Shiipa S. Davé, *Indian Accents: Brown Voice and Racial Performance in American Television and Film* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 11–13; John Mowitt, *Re-takes: Postcoloniality and Foreign Film Languages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xxxi, 70.

11 Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 107.

12 Jonathan Rosa, *Looking Like a Language, Sounding Like a Race: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and the Learning of Latinidad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 150.

13 See Jeffrey Ruoff, “Conventions of Sound in Documentary,” *Cinema Journal* 32, no. 3 (1993): 29.

14 See Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4.

15 I discuss these dynamics in more detail in “Audibilities: Voice and Listening in the Penumbra of Documentary,” *Discourse* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 279–291, and “Auditing the Call Center Voice: Accented Speech and Listening in Sonali Gulati’s *Nalini by Day, Nancy by Night* (2005),” in *Vocal Projections: Voices in Documentary*, ed. Annabelle Honess Roe and Maria Pramaggiore (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 29–44.

16 Irina Leimbacher, “Hearing Voice(s): Experiments with Documentary Listening,” *Discourse* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 295.

What if it is not the accented voice that is impoverished but the homogenizing auditory culture of which it is both a symptom and product? Following Steyerl, we might speculate that the dominant cinema and its accented counterparts are both complicit in reinforcing a culture of auditory poverty—one in which, to paraphrase Jennifer Stoeber, the complexities of embodied speaking and listening experiences are subordinated to the mandates of immediacy, neutrality, and intelligibility.¹⁷

Katarina Zdjelar's films respond to this predicament. A Rotterdam-based immigrant from Belgrade, Zdjelar is fascinated by oral and aural differences as obstacles to social membership and by the labor required both of speakers and listeners to manufacture neutral sounds. Zdjelar rejects the audiovisual conventions that make accented voices signify by marking them as poor. Her films evolve a gestural idiom, drawing on choreography and dance, that animates accent as a threshold of mutual inhabitation and disorientation. In the three videos I discuss, the first two of which were installed in the Serbian Pavilion at the Fifty-Third Biennale di Venezia (2009), Zdjelar focuses on different aspects of the frictive, mimetic, or haptic space between desiring bodies and languages. Rather than masking or neutralizing the stigmatizing elements of non-standard speech, she decompresses the encounters among "accented" and "neutral" speakers, dwelling on these spaces of encounter as sites where affiliation and belonging are negotiated daily, with unpredictable results.

There Is No Is (Katarina Zdjelar, 2006) dramatizes the frictive transactions that call centers lubricate by giving Indian telemarketers American pseudonyms and by requiring them to undertake voice training that diminishes the influence of their native language on their English pronunciation. The encounter here is between two accented immigrants to the Netherlands: Katarina Zdjelar, whose acousmatic voice we hear from behind the camera, and a Japanese friend who struggles to pronounce the filmmaker's last name. The two-minute-long film is broken up by black frames, so that the young Japanese woman's failed attempts at the Serbian pronunciation resemble a series of discarded takes. Zdjelar maintains a close framing on her friend's face and subsequently her mouth. Both evince the tremendous bodily effort of overcoming the stubborn molding of her larynx, mouth, and tongue that function as borders separating her from the linguistic territory to which she seeks entry. Repeating after Zdjelar, who instructs her from off-screen, the woman attempts to articulate the syllables "Zdje" and "lar," but they elude her even as they roll easily and automatically off the filmmaker's tongue. She fails over and over: "Is-ze-is-is-is-de-le-yaar? J-de-ra?" She even stops and writes on her hand at one point, breaking down the syllables in Japanese characters to make them more tractable. She briefly triumphs in imitating Zdjelar's rapid delivery before lapsing back into inarticulacy and dissolving laughter. The filmmaker's off-screen scrutiny registers on her friend's face in ripples of shyness, disappointment, frustration, and apology, as she grimaces, narrows her eyes, looks sideways, smiles, and turns down her lips, her eyes and mouth pleading for approval. Toward the end when she is struggling with the "Z," saying "iz iz iz," Zdjelar loses her patience and corrects her sharply: "There is no is. Just Zuh. Zdjelar."

17 See Jennifer Lynn Stoeber, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 15.

In the space of this sentence, the supposed common tongue, English, that connects the two women dissolves into a preverbal sound (“is”/“iz”), opening up an uncertain space that has to be negotiated anew. The negotiation of this space, described by Anke Bangma as “a zone where language is not yet communication and does not yet denote anything,” is the subject of *The Perfect Sound* (Katarina Zdjelar, 2009), one of several longer works that examine adult subjects learning or unlearning language.¹⁸ Zdjelar here films an English speech therapist and an immigrant client wishing to lose his “foreign” accent. The two men exchange few complete words; instead, they practice the articulation of monosyllables: “ding”-“dong,” “mee”-“oww,” “mum”-“mum”-“mum,” “the”-“the,” “d”-“d.” Zdjelar renders their interactions not as call-and-response or shot-reverse shot but as a dance of mutual contortion and muscular strain. The therapist uses exaggerated facial movements and hand gestures to illustrate his intonations, which Zdjelar depicts as a series of rhythmic close-ups. The result, a corporeal gymnastics that is at turns graceful, awkward, and grotesque, at once captures the embodied effort involved in producing a voice that sounds effortlessly at ease and questions the conditioned negative response with which “mispronunciation” is routinely greeted. Zdjelar desynchronizes sound and image as if to suggest that the preverbal sounds we hear do not belong to either “talking head” but attest, rather, to the mimetic space of becoming between them. At times we see a moving face with no voice; at other times, the back of the listener’s head eclipses the speaker’s face. The final shot, a blurry reflection of the client’s face in a mirror held up by the therapist, is a fitting conclusion to this formal reflection on the myth of the perfect accent: one whose ghostly presence distorts every voice as an image out of focus, a sound out of tune.

There is no greater expression of glossy and inimitable vocal originality than the studio recording of an iconic pop song. *Shoum* (Katarina Zdjelar, 2009) begins in darkness as we hear the opening lines of a hit song by Tears for Fears: “Shout, shout, let it all out / These are the things I can do without / Come on / I’m talking to you, come on.” But the film’s title, which unfolds letter by letter, ends not with a “t” but an “m”: *Shoum*. The scenario of the film is as simple as its mise-en-scène: two Serbian men replay the song on an iPod, and we see their hands in close-up as they transcribe its lyrics on a sheet of paper. It becomes quickly apparent that the men don’t speak or understand English, and that they are phonetically transcribing what they hear using the Latin alphabet, occasionally stopping to consult and revise, and as the subtitles inform us, to curse (“Damn English”). They write, “šaom šaom lajdi o lau / pizat t pizat. dju a van kaman / kaman a man to kenti ju kaman / šaon šan lejdi o lajv / plis akn plis akn dju li lav / kaman, an token tju kaman.” The final rendition of the song by one of the men is a bizarre karaoke performance: instead of following the lyrics he performs his own invented words. To an accented English speaker like myself, this performance is oddly exhilarating. It is an exercise in what Leimbacher calls a “haptic” attunement to sonorous and not merely referential meaning.¹⁹ The man’s passionate rendition of words he does not understand (“An token tju”), evacuating singer Curt Smith’s vocal

18 Anke Bangma, “Voice Exercises: An Introduction,” in *But If You Take My Voice What Will Be Left to Me?: Katarina Zdjelar*, (Venice: Serbian Pavilion at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 2009), 23.

19 Leimbacher, “Hearing Voice(s),” 293.

comportment of its meaning, *does* speak to me. It is a reminder that the auratic originality of the standard rendition bears within it the capacity to be undone, enriched, and opened up to new depths, in the form of a foreign accent—and its counterpart, the accented ear.

In an essay reflecting on her work, Zdjelar writes, “When we are not quite sure what we hear, when we don’t speak the language we hear and try to translate our experience of listening into speech, we enter the sphere of a provisional and improvisational production of sounds and meanings.”²⁰ I read this, like Zdjelar’s films, as a cinematic manifesto in praise of the poor voice. Zdjelar’s works are audiovisual experiments in inhabiting the frictive, mimetic, and haptic itineraries of the poor voice. Ultimately, this voice expresses a system of values and social relations that is both driven by and defiant of the impoverished auditory culture from which it arises—values that thwart the enduring emphasis on originality and authenticity in the artistic exhibition of experimental film and video. To recognize ourselves in these itineraries and to realize their potential for cinema may require translation, retraining, and effort of the kind that the subjects of Zdjelar’s films struggle with. The outcome of this struggle is uncertain, but it holds out the promise of abundance, not poverty. *

20 Katarina Zdjelar, “I Think That Here I Have Heard My Own Voice Coming to Me from Somewhere Else,” catalog (Venice: Serbian Pavilion at the 53rd Biennale di Venezia, 2009), 79.

The Voices of Irish Identity: A Taxonomy of Cinematic Accents

by NICHOLAS O'RIORDAN

The reestablishment of the Irish Film Board in 1993 sparked a rapid increase in the amount of indigenous films being produced in Ireland. This growth paralleled a significant cultural, economic, and social shift in Ireland known as the Celtic Tiger. As cultural commentators observed, this shift manifested to some degree in a change in indigenous accents.¹ During this period and subsequently, accent performance began to occupy a more loaded and publicly recognized position in relation to national and class-based identity in Ireland, leading the journalist Ed Power to note in 2005 that if “our accents are integral to who we are then Ireland is suffering a collective identity crisis.”²

Identity politics have been a key component of Irish film scholarship since the publication of the foundational text *Cinema and Ireland* in 1988,³ with much written in subsequent years on gender, class, landscape, religion, and even language.⁴ However, while accent is used for ideological purposes in many contemporary texts, and popular criticism of accents in Irish film is common in online and print media, the scholarship dedicated to accent in the national cinema is limited. My approach works to redress this imbalance; in this essay, I outline a taxonomy of five categories, which I argue encapsulate the current possibilities for thinking about accents in Irish film. Examples from each, where available, are discussed as a demonstration of the current taxonomy and a means of understanding some of the multitude of ways that accent is featured and reshaped in cinematic texts. Although the current essay focuses on Irish-related texts, the taxonomy offered can be applied to cinema more generally as a means of approaching accent in

1 See Raymond Hickey, *Irish English: History and Present-Day Forms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

2 Ed Power, “It’s Just Like So the End of Irish Accents,” *Irish Independent*, March 24, 2005, <http://www.independent.ie/unsorted/features/its-just-like-so-the-end-of-irish-accents-25996450.html>.

3 Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons, and John Hill, *Cinema and Ireland* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1988).

4 See Martin McLoone, *Irish Film: The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema* (London: BFI, 2000); Barry Monahan, ed., *Ireland and Cinema: Culture and Contexts* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

cinematic texts. With the word “accent,” I invoke a vocal concept with specific characteristics: (1) a regional identity, (2) a related identity position (e.g., race, age, or class), (3) a possibility for blending both of these in one simultaneous performance, and (4) the possibility for recognition or identification by a third party of all of the above. Accent therefore precludes other acoustic vocal qualities such as tone (e.g., gravelly, hoarse, or soothing) and pitch (high or low register). As with any taxonomy, categorical traits may be shared from grouping to grouping; the categorization here is informed by the primary identifiers of each film placed in a given section.

The first category in this taxonomy, accent as central theme, features the most significant use of accent in any film. Although there exists a rich tapestry of Irish accent variation and modulation in contemporary Irish cinema, to date no single film addresses accent thematically in a sustained way. For such an example we must turn to the work of an exiled Irish playwright who was markedly sensitive to the cultural, social, and identity ramifications of accent performance—George Bernard Shaw and his play *Pygmalion* (1913). Most popularly known as the source text for the musical *My Fair Lady* (George Cukor, 1964), one of the only English-language films to place accent at the center of the text as core theme, the narrative follows the molding of a young Cockney flower girl into a lady, through accent shift, by the older Professor Higgins. In this category, accent represents a substantial aspect of the diegesis of the text, with *My Fair Lady*’s phonetician protagonist Higgins waxing lyrical about the accents of contemporary Britain. In fact, the entire *raison d’être* of the central couple in *Pygmalion* and its subsequent adaptations is accent.

The second category I propose, accent as peripheral thematic connection, comprises moments in which diegetic accent use or styling contributes to a central theme of the text, even when this is a minor contribution. For an example of this we can turn to Lenny Abrahamson’s *Adam and Paul* (2004), a film that follows a day in the life of two heroin addicts in Celtic Tiger Dublin. Dervila Layden notes the formal ways in which the film “establish[es] the two protagonists themselves as outsiders; their homelessness, their lack of social skills, their behavior, their treatment in the text, their naming (or lack of it), their framing and so on all perform this function.”⁵ Accent equally positions the characters as outsiders in one moment in particular. In search of their next fix, Adam and Paul enter a café in north Dublin with the intention of stealing a patron’s handbag to fund their addiction. Paul is expected to keep the proprietor occupied until Adam has acquired the handbag. As characters who straddle the liminal spaces of society, both physically and socially, they are keenly aware of their position as outsiders. Attempting to pass as belonging to a more prestigious social set, Paul employs accent accommodation, a performative alteration (either conscious or unconscious) in one’s accent in an often explicit attempt to pass as belonging to a different social set. However, Paul’s accent shift from a heavy working-class accent to an attempt at an upper-class accent can be read as an instance of accent overaccommodation by which “the speaker is accommodating not to [their interlocutor], but rather to a stereotype

5 Dervila Layden, “Gender and the Social Outsider in Contemporary Irish Comedy,” in *Cinemas of Ireland*, ed. Isabelle le Corff and Estelle Epinoux (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), 132.

[associated with their interlocutor's in-group, or perceived in-group]."⁶ As the proprietor's accent is actually regionally and socially close to Paul's, his overshooting indicates that his perception of the distance is greater than the actual distance; hence the accent shift further expresses his perceived marginality as outsider. Other examples of contemporary Irish films in which diegetic accent use or styling contributes to a central theme of the text are *A Date for Mad Mary* (Darren Thornton, 2016), *The Stag* (John Butler, 2013), and *Trouble with Sex* (Fintan Connolly, 2005).

The third category in this taxonomy, accent as plot point, includes moments in which accent is utilized as a plot point in cinematic texts, as is demonstrated in instances of accent play in the 2016 film *The Flag* (Declan Recks). This comedic film tells the fictional story of Harry Hambridge, an Irish builder who discovers that his grandfather raised the Irish flag at the General Post Office in Dublin, the symbolic center of the 1916 Irish rebellion. This flag now resides in a British army barracks, and the protagonists must break into the barracks to retrieve it. Attempting to linguistically pass as "other" to go undetected in the barracks, the protagonists Harry and Mouse are coached in, and perform, the Received Pronunciation (RP) "standard" British accent of authority to pass as British officers. Accomplice Patrick sources British army uniforms, and he tells them, "I've persuaded Liz to help you talk proper," with "proper" here denoting the RP accent. Diegetically, the RP accent is recognized as the accent of traditional British authority, marking the protagonists' Irish accents as less prestigious. Harry also utilizes the British soldiers' lack of familiarity with strong regional Irish accent and dialect to confuse the soldiers during a reconnaissance mission. He decides, as the dialogue puts it, to "play on the Irish builder stereotype" and "play the Paddy," as he and his accomplices set up a fake construction project across the road from the barracks. When questioned about the project by two soldiers on guard, Harry utilizes a strong regional Irish accent, a regional dialect, and confusing dialogue to buy the crew more time to continue their reconnaissance mission. Marking the success of Harry's plan, the soldiers look to each other confusedly and ask, "What are you saying?"

In many cases in this category, as in *Dollhouse* (Kirsten Sheridan, 2012), accent shift is used in a moment of plot revelation, with one accent suddenly revealed as diegetically performed and giving way to a character's "real" accent and (usually) "real" identity. In *Dollhouse*, this moment occurs when it is revealed that the lead character Jeannie has been performing a working-class identity (through accent) to reject or conceal her privileged middle-class background, which her "real" accent would have immediately exposed.

While all accenting contributes to character development (for actor and spectator), and all characterization requires accent performance, it is common to see the deliberate diegetic alteration of an accent by a character to reveal that character to be unreliable or insincere. The fourth category in this taxonomy, accent as characterization, comprises such uses of accent. Inevitably, character design blends into thematic endeavors, but for the sake of clarity I provide some examples that show how a character develops by a toying with accent. Peter Ormrod's *Eat the Peach* (1985) introduces the viewer to Boots, an American-accented patron in the local bar as he attempts to seduce a female patron by telling her of his time working in Memphis, Tennessee, and

of his “contacts in TV.” Boots’s accent and costume signify to the audience an American visitor in Ireland; however, this impression is exploded minutes later when the dual protagonists arrive and ask him for money and his American accent immediately disappears and is replaced by a rural Irish accent. As a local smuggler, Boots performs his desired identity of the wealthy Dixie businessman, later admitting that he’s “never even been to the United States.”

Moving to a more contemporary example, in 2016’s *Calvary* (John Michael McDonagh), Leo is presented as a gay New Yorker prostitute living in rural Sligo, characterized by a stereotypical Italian American New York persona complete with the associated accent. Leo performs otherness as a means of escapism, with inconsistencies in accent revealing his performance. These momentary lapses in accent performance reveal the more consistent enactments of accent as rehearsed, often used, or prepared. Leo’s American-accent performance is most convincing when describing his sexual acts and position as a prostitute, acts that most strikingly clash with the morals of the local community. This position is further acknowledged in his deliberate and notable dropping of accent to speak in his “own” accent, or linguistic baseline, after being asked, “Do you need help? Are you OK?” At this moment, Leo attempts to answer in his adopted accent; however, caught by the directness and persistence of his interlocutor, he quickly resorts to his own Irish accent, stating: “There’s nothing wrong with me Father, all right? I’m feeling fine.” Leo’s performance of identity represents an exaggerated version of a character escaping the confines of a traditional and conservative Ireland, particularly the oppressive and abusive Catholic Church. While both examples offered here involve Irish characters performing American accents, this is merely symptomatic of a proliferation of American media in contemporary Ireland, and of the position of America as cultural “other” and symbol of modernity in Ireland. Other Irish films that utilize diegetic accent play for characterization include *Charlie Casanova* (Terry McMahon, 2010), in which an Irish character from a working-class area performs a less marked accent to express his dislike for his own working-class background.

The final category proposed here, accent as perceived misrepresentation, reflects the strong and pervasive reaction of Irish audiences to the performance of Irish accents in foreign films. As Kevin Rockett notes, “There has [*sic*] been far more films made about the Irish by American’s [*sic*] than the Irish themselves,” and this has led to criticism of many aspects of the international representations of Ireland on-screen.⁷ Given the history of questionable foreign representations of the Irish, the recent politicization of accent in contemporary Ireland, and recent national social and cultural shifts, these accented representations of Ireland have proved problematic for Irish audiences. The representation and perceived misrepresentation of accents in Irish cinema have sparked some of the most sustained and common popular criticism. One must only perform a simple Google search of the words “Irish Accent Film” to reveal a host of “Top ten worst Irish accents in film” lists and scathing reviews of these performances. These questionable accent performances are particularly common in American productions either set in Ireland, usually with foreign actors, or in films set

7 Kevin Rockett, “Five Minutes with . . . Irish Film Historian Dr. Kevin Rockett,” interview by Eva Hall, *IFTN*, May 03, 2012, <http://www.iftn.ie/news/?act1=record&only=1&aid=73&rid=4284889&tpl=archnews&force=1>.

abroad with Irish characters. Films that commonly appear on such lists include *Far and Away* (Ron Howard, 1992), *P.S. I Love You* (Richard LaGravenese, 2007), and *Leap Year* (Anand Tucker, 2010). Arguably targeted to an American audience, these films often avoid racial, cultural, or linguistic plurality in favor of a vision of Ireland as premodern rural idyll, and the accents in these texts are often more evocative of accents used in stereotypical stage Irish representations than those spoken in contemporary Ireland. In addition to this, the accents of single characters typically evoke linguistic markers of several disparate regions of Ireland. While accent blending is common in society, because of a lack of diegetic justification for such blending an audience familiar with Irish accents can deem the performance problematic. Researching Irish accents on the stage, Shane Walshe points to dialect handbooks as the source of these poor imitations, many of which perpetuate stereotypical accent instructions or point to often criticized filmic examples as exemplary.⁸ Conversely, actors such as Jack Reynor and Jamie Dornan have admitted to softening their Irish accents for the purpose of intelligibility when acting outside of Ireland. While misrepresentation of accent is widely recognized in representations of the Irish on-screen, similarly stereotypical accent representations are met with comparable disdain by many national cinema audiences; such problematic representations of accent are common in representations of, among others, Italian, Chinese, and Indian characters.

Although the cinematic moments discussed here are used as examples of each individual category, it is important to note that cinematic moments of accent use are not isolated to a singular category; in fact, a single film can feature in all categories, or even a single instance of accent use in a text can fit several categories, depending on one's reading of the moment. While Irish cinema has, since its inception, often presented themes of identity and nation, the recent social developments in accent in Ireland have encouraged a more ideological and nuanced employment of accent by practitioners. This taxonomy offers a way to categorize moments and gain a richer understanding of the multiple ways that accent operates in Irish films while also signaling broader uses of accents as a cinematic device. As Robert Moore notes, "In every linguistic community, variations in the way a language is pronounced can be seized upon as reliable indicators of the speaker's provenance, and/or membership in ethnic, class, or other social groupings."⁹ By using a taxonomic approach my textual examples aim to establish just some of the multitude of ways Irish and international filmmakers are utilizing accent as a representative device. *

8 Shane Walshe, "Treading the Boards? Be Sure to Put on the Right Brogues! The Actor's Search for the Perfect Irish Accent," in *National Identities and Imperfections in Contemporary Irish Literature*, ed. Luz Mar González-Arias (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 201–218.

9 Robert Moore, "Overhearing Ireland: Mediatized Personae in Irish Accent Culture," *Language & Communication* 31, no. 3 (2011): 229, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2011.03.002>.

Subtitles as Revoicing: Film Festivals and the Globalization of Film

by ANTOINE DAMIENS

Film festivals constitute a privileged vantage point for thinking about “the transnational dynamics of cinema.”¹ In screening films from all over the world, they shape film traffic and articulate particular discourses on the globalization of national cinemas.² As cultural gatekeepers, festivals presuppose a form of cinematic knowledge organized in discrete and distinct programmatic categories; through their curatorial decisions and selections, programmers (re)order the grids of intelligibility through which we come to understand particular films. Liz Czach eloquently argues that “programmers are making powerful decisions. . . . The programming decisions amount to an argument about what defines that field, genre, or national cinema.”³

While scholars have argued that festivals translate the idea of world cinema or define what we mean by “national” cinemas, the question of actual translation made by and at festivals has remained undertheorized.⁴ This is quite paradoxical: festivals routinely position themselves as panoramas of international films; they presuppose the coexistence of various languages. In other words, the soundscape of the festival theater is fundamentally multilingual. In turn, this plurality of languages both refracts the imagined geography of world cinemas and reinforces festival locations as key nodes shaping film traffic and cinematic knowledge.⁵

1 Dina Iordanova, “Foreword: The Film Festival and Film Culture’s Transnational Essence,” in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist (New York: Routledge, 2016), xiv.

2 Dina Iordanova, “The Film Festival Circuit,” in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit*, ed. Dina Iordanova and Ragan Rhyne (St. Andrews, Scotland: St. Andrews Film Studies, 2009), 23–39.

3 Liz Czach, “Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema,” *The Moving Image* 4, no. 1 (2004): 85.

4 This is particularly clear in the notion of festivals as “sites of translation,” developed in Chris Berry and Luke Robinson, *Chinese Film Festivals: Sites of Translation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). On festivals as translating “national cinemas,” see Czach, “Film Festivals, Programming, and the Building of a National Cinema”; Julian Stringer, “Regarding Film Festivals” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2003).

5 With two notable exceptions: festivals focusing on a specific, unilingual, national cinema and silent film festivals.

Translation at festivals is thus both a necessity and a mechanism that shapes how festivalgoers perceive world cinemas; it simultaneously enables curators to screen foreign films and positions festivalgoing as a local experience of international cinematic cultures. In that context, festival organizers have used various techniques to translate and revoice world cinemas for a festival's (local and international) audience. Ranging from simultaneous transcription to interpretation to subtitles, these techniques cannot be thought of as neutral devices that simply enable festivalgoers' experiences of world cinemas.⁶ For in fact the translation technique chosen by a festival fundamentally influences how festivalgoers understand a foreign film and its relationship to a festival's curatorial focus.

To that end, I argue that translation techniques at festivals revoice films as an experience of being in the world, thereby reinforcing the discursive and political parameters through which a festival operates. I contend that the translation techniques used by large international festivals exemplify how a festival defines transnational cinematic cultures: these festivals' use of subtitling often both bolsters their international prestige and localizes or domesticates world cinemas.⁷ I contrast the ideological effects of such festival translation to the amateur techniques used by smaller, identity-based festivals. Unable to professionally subtitle films, these events have developed ways of translating films that both visualize the work of translators and "give voice" to a festival's imagined audiences.

Because of the cost, time, and labor needed to translate films, international festivals screened films in their original language—without any translation—through the 1950s.⁸ This situation corresponded to a specific historical context: up until the 1960s, international festivals were an instrument of diplomacy. At the time, international festivals (e.g., Cannes, Venice, Berlin) did not select the films they screened. Rather, they relied on the recommendations made by cultural embassies, with each country submitting a national entry. Festivals conceived of films as both reflecting the character of a country and replaying or pacifying conflicts through celluloid. During this phase, festivals did not seek to translate national films into other languages but rather willingly adopted untranslatability as a form of national representation.⁹

Festivals started providing their audiences with some sort of translation in the mid-1950s. At that time, most festivals changed their submission guidelines to require prints subtitled in the local language. In some cases, festivals provided additional translations through simultaneous interpretation. For instance, the Berlin International Film Festival supplied its audience with headphones plugged into high-frequency transistor receivers as early as 1959; the devices let festivalgoers access a live translation in

6 Festivals have generally not used dubbing: translation at festivals aims to accommodate both local and transnational festivalgoers.

7 Throughout this article, I understand "domestication" as the processes through which a film is made readable and understandable in a foreign local context. Domestication typically involves prioritizing the target audience over the source material: syntax and reference points are chosen to correspond to the target language. For an analysis of the binary between domestication and foreignization, see Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

8 Estella Oncins, "The Process of Subtitling at Film Festivals: Death in Venice?," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3, no. 14 (2013): 73.

9 What Thomas Elsaesser calls a "parliament of national cinemas," in *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 88.

English, French, Spanish, and later Russian.¹⁰ This technique further refracted the geopolitical position of the Berlin festival: founded in 1951 by a film officer for the US military, it was explicitly conceived as an effort to promote Western cinemas and values.¹¹ In that context, the festival's use of radio receivers enabled a form of translation that did not involve the dominance of a single language but reflected the auditive landscape of Berlin, a multilingual city then occupied by foreign forces. Furthermore, this method recalled the linguistic policy of the European project: to avoid the dominance of French or German, the European Economic Community relied on strict guidelines to guarantee multilingualism. Hence documents and speeches were to be systematically translated into every language recognized by the European Community. This multilingualism was conceived of as facilitating a political utopia, building the European project as an experience of commonality despite and through national and linguistic differences. Berlin's use of high-frequency receivers similarly created a common cinematic experience despite or through a plurality of languages.

Such an appreciation of linguistic differences partly explains why Eastern European and Soviet film festivals have generally favored simultaneous interpretation. As Elena Razlogova makes clear, "East European festivals needed multilingual translation all the more because they courted filmmakers and critics from Asia, Africa, and Latin America."¹² The mode of interpretation adopted at these festivals often entailed a specific experience of film: the soundscape of these festivals, which combined a tuned-down film soundtrack, a Russian live translation on loudspeakers, and simultaneous interpretations in other languages via headphones, was "a price paid for a unique experience of seeing a film *together* with a politically charged local public."¹³ The cacophonous nature of this form of simultaneous translation both symbolized the political nature of Eastern European festival screenings and exemplified the transnational dimension of the Soviet project.

Since the 1980s, festivalgoers most commonly experience international films through subtitled translation. Subtitling can be a particularly advantageous technique, as it enables festival organizers to address (at least) two linguistically situated communities at the same time.¹⁴ Furthermore, subtitles help in making a film more intelligible for viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing. Most important, the use of subtitles often shifts the burden of translation from festival organizers to distributors, as festivals rarely translate films and simply screen already subtitled prints.

As a translation technique, subtitling typically reinforces festivals' prior ideological discourses and geographic imaginaries. According to Abé Markus Nornes, subtitling conceals the ideological effects of translation. Indeed, the presence of a subtitled

10 Elena Razlogova, "The Politics of Translation at Soviet Film Festivals during the Cold War," *SubStance* 44, no. 2 (2015): 69.

11 Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 50–53.

12 Razlogova, "Politics of Translation," 71. See also Razlogova's essay in this dossier.

13 Razlogova, 81 (emphasis mine).

14 Subtitling is sometimes used by festivals organized in countries with more than one national language. This use of translation as bridging the gaps between several linguistic communities is far from systematic and largely depends on a festival's resources and imagined audience.

translation maintains a film's original soundscape, thereby contributing to the illusion of immediate access to a foreign culture. In the process of converting a film's soundscape into a translated text, however, subtitles adopt the conventions of the target language. Nornes thus argues that subtitling is "a practice of translation that smooths over its textual violence and domesticates all otherness while it pretends to bring the audience to an experience of the foreign."¹⁵ This illusion of immediate access to and domestication of a foreign language echoes international festivals' self-positioning as panoramas of international cinematic cultures. International film festivals routinely claim to be bringing "new" cinemas into focus; they require what Julian Stringer calls the "projection and management of cultural otherness."¹⁶ Subtitling simultaneously helps position festivalgoing as an experience of aurally diverse cinematic cultures and enables festivals to provide their audiences with localized understanding of international films. In both maintaining a film's national language and providing the audience with a (written) translation, subtitling enables festivals to make national cinemas "legible, but inescapably foreign."¹⁷

Some festivals cannot rely on the existence of already subtitled prints. For instance, large, competitive international festivals premiere many films; their success is predicated on selecting films that may not have already been translated. Furthermore, most international festivals are held in non-Anglophone countries and hence must translate a film into both English and the local language. Most of them rely on the principles of soft titling; they screen a film subtitled into the local language and provide an additional English translation on a second display, below the first. This mode of translation hinges on an ideology of linguistic transparency wherein three languages would be almost identical to one another. As the two subtitle tracks must both appear at the same time and have the same semantic content, translators are forced to consider subtitle length and spotting—reducing the differences that may exist among languages. To that end, the presence of two subtitle tracks both makes visible the transnational nature of a festival's audience and reinforces the role festivals play in domesticating foreign cinematic cultures.

Smaller themed or identity-based film festivals are also burdened with translating the films they screen; they often select films that may not be distributed in their domestic market or may not already be subtitled. Significantly, most of these festivals do not have access to the resources necessary to professionally subtitle a film. In that context, smaller themed or identity-based festivals have developed specific forms of translation that rely on underpaid or volunteer labor.

Cineffable, Paris's lesbian film festival, constitutes an interesting example of how amateur translation can give voice to a festival's imagined audiences. Created in 1989 as a reaction to the absence of lesbian representation on- and off-screen at both feminist and gay festivals, the festival premieres and translates a large number

15 Abé Markus Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 155.

16 Stringer, "Regarding Film Festivals," 65.

17 Nornes, *Cinema Babel*, 7. See also Lan Duong, "Traitors and Translators: Reframing Trinh T. Minh-Ha's 'Surname Viet Given Name Nam,'" *Discourse* 31, no. 3 (2009): 195–219.

of international films into French. It usually relies on amateur techniques, using not one but two projectors—one for the film and one for a superimposed word-processing document containing subtitles created by volunteers. A staff member manually scrolls down the document as the film progresses.¹⁸ This technique makes the labor of translation visible; the manual nature of the two-projector system entails lags and delays, imperfect superimpositions, and human errors that betray the imperfect nature of translation. While subtitles traditionally uphold the principle of “synthetic unity” (synchronizing a translated text with its utterance), Cineffable distances the viewer from the fantasy of effortless linguistic transparency; instead of being burned into the film, the subtitles act as a reminder of both the (physical) presence of a translator and the work of festival organizers.¹⁹

In revealing a labor traditionally hidden to the audience, this technique also personalizes translation. Because of the artisanal nature of the two-projector system, Cineffable’s subtitlers are defined first and foremost as festivalgoers or festival organizers. These translators are not anonymous, external cultural workers; they are bound not by professional subtitling standards but by a commitment to lesbian politics. This emphasis on community-based translation partly explains why Cineffable’s subtitles often contain lengthy explanations of cultural notions that may be foreign to French audiences: in describing the differences between French and non-French lesbian subjectivities, Cineffable’s subtitlers aim to translate not only a film but also the larger regimes of sexual politics that surround it.

Furthermore, Cineffable’s subtitles enable a form of below-the-radar cooperation across festivals based on economic, social, and political marginality, as many LGBT festivals have used Cineffable’s translations. Working with these subtitles can be tricky, however. One has to be familiar with both the film and the subtitle file to operate the two-projector system. In that context, Cineffable’s organizers are usually invited to participate in other LGBT festivals in exchange for their translation and manual labor. While Cineffable has been criticized by LGBT festival organizers (most of whom are men) for its women-only policy, its amateur subtitling processes enable its organizers to tour other festivals, thereby building coalitions, exchanging programming practices, and sharing expertise. From their focus on the labor performed by translators (clearly identified as working for a lesbian festival) to the moments of cultural translation they contain (reframing foreign lesbian history, subjectivities, and politics for a French audience), Cineffable’s subtitles “give voice” to lesbian politics and bodies within LGBT cultural organizing, which is largely dominated by gay men.

Exploring a few techniques used by film festivals to translate films, I have argued that translations made by and at festivals draw attention to the intercultural dialogue at play

18 The technique is a variation on what festival organizers commonly refer to as the “PowerPoint technique.” See Jonathan Petrychyn and Claudia Sicondolfo, “Archived Passions, Censored Bodies: Passiflora and the Regulation of Sexuality at the NFB,” *Senses of Cinema*, no. 90 (2019), <http://sensesofcinema.com/2019/feature-articles/archived-passions-censored-bodies-passiflora-and-the-regulation-of-sexuality-at-the-nfb/>. With the advent of the internet, some festivals have also used fan-made subtitles, although this practice is still quite rare: the films screened by festivals are often too recent to be found online.

19 Mark Betz, “The Name above the (Sub)Title: Internationalism, Coproduction, and Polyglot European Art Cinema,” *Camera Obscura* 16, no. 1 (2001): 34.

in festival screenings. While translation often works to be unmarked, invisible, and unnoticed by the audience, the techniques used by festivals shape specific experiences of the transnational nature of cinematic cultures. In visualizing or exemplifying festivals' imagined relationship to world cinemas and their role in film traffic flows, these translation techniques constitute powerful mechanisms that activate and define a festival's position within the larger cinematic circuit. Whereas international festivals' use of subtitling often conceals the ideological effects of translation (its propensity for textual domestication), Cineffable brings its politics and processes to light. From cultural explanations in the form of translators' notes and glosses to the physical presence of a translator, Cineffable's subtitles effectively "give voice" to the festival's community. *

The Liberation Politics of Live Translation: Global South Cinemas in Soviet Tashkent

by ELENA RAZLOGOVA

When new Global South cinemas entered transnational circulation in the decolonization era, film translation became a weapon of liberation.¹ In reconstructing this key role, this essay seeks to temper the current tendency in film studies to celebrate untranslatability in Global South cinemas. It focuses on the Festival of Asian, African, and Latin American Cinema in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, a biannual event that hosted hundreds of films and filmmakers from dozens of Global South countries between 1968 and 1988.² At Tashkent, translators literally revociced

1 On translation and "the transnational," see Nataša Đurovičová, "Vector, Flow, Zone: Towards a History of Cinematic Translatio," in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Nataša Đurovičová and Kathleen Newman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 90–120; Masha Salazkina, "Translating the Academe: Conceptualizing the Transnational in Film and Media," in *The Multilingual Screen: New Reflections on Cinema and Linguistic Difference*, ed. Tijana Mamula and Lisa Patti (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 17–35.

2 Rossen Djalalov and Masha Salazkina, "Tashkent '68: A Cinematic Contact Zone," *Slavic Review* 75 (2016): 279–298. The festival officially included Latin America as of 1976. By then, Tashkent hosted four hundred guests from seventy-three Asian, African, and Latin American countries. Sharof Rashidov and Filipp Yermash, report to

films via a live performance piped into the movie theater on top of the original soundtrack.³ In the Soviet “relay” system, interpreters translated films made in an array of colonial and indigenous languages: first, via loudspeaker, into Russian for local Uzbek audiences and Soviet participants, and then, via headphones, from the Russian translation into the other official languages: English, French, and, after 1976, also Spanish and Arabic.⁴ The festival employed translators working from subtitles, dialogue lists, or live soundtracks in European languages. It also brought in experts in non-Western languages and cultures. Translators worked with several languages in one day or even one screening—what Japanese poetry scholar Aleksandr Dolin remembered as a “linguistic bootcamp” in Japanese, English, and French.⁵ Finally, during projections, escort interpreters whispered their translation in Khmer, Bengali, Wolof, and other indigenous tongues to delegates who did not speak official festival languages, a type of interpreting called *chuchotage*.⁶ Soviet organizers provided simultaneous translation for every single guest. The Tashkent festival was the most ambitious multilingual film translation project of its era.

As film translation scholars have demonstrated, and as mentioned in previous essays in this dossier, standard dubbing and subtitling techniques aim to get rid of the inconsistencies between source text and translation. In so doing, they strip the original text of its “otherness,” destroying especially the specificity of cultures originating outside of Western Europe and North America.⁷ Echoing this argument, recent work on multilingual cinema finds critical potential in incomprehensible or hard-to-understand “heterolingual” film dialogue. A director’s decision not to translate such “heterolanguage,” these scholars argue, subverts the erasure of diasporic, indigenous, and minority languages and cultures.⁸

In contrast, decolonization-era Global South filmmakers considered translation essential to reach their multilingual, often illiterate audiences. At Tashkent in the 1970s, the Chilean director Miguel Littín decried untranslated Hollywood English in Latin American theaters.⁹ Egyptian participants convinced the Tashkent festival to

the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR (hereafter Central Committee), June 2, 1976, *opis* 2944, *delo* 26, *ed. kh.* 69, Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (hereafter RGALI).

3 In this essay, I use “revoicing” to denote film translation in various forms, but especially oral commentary during projection.

4 Rashidov and Yermash to Central Committee.

5 Aleksandr Dolin, “V iaponskii mir vrasti nelzia,” *Chastnyi Korrespondent*, June 10, 2009, http://www.chaskor.ru/article/aleksandr_dolin_v_yaponskij_mir_vrasti_nelzia_7310.

6 List of escort translators for the 1980 Tashkent festival, May 1980, *opis* 3159, *delo* 1, *ed. kh.* 283, RGALI (Khmer); Budget for the 1976 Tashkent festival, *opis* 3159, *delo* 1, *ed. kh.* 604, RGALI (Bengali, Wolof). On *chuchotage*, a French term commonly used by English-language professionals to denote whispered interpreting, see Robert Neal Baxter, “A Discussion of Chuchotage and Boothless Simultaneous as Marginal and Unorthodox Interpreting Modes,” *Translator* 22 (2016): 59–71.

7 Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, “The Cinema after Babel: Language, Difference, Power,” *Screen* 26 (1985): 35–58; Abé Mark Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

8 See, e.g., Carol O’Sullivan, *Translating Popular Film* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2011), 5–6; Mamula and Patti, *Multilingual Screen*.

9 *Kino v borbe za mir, sotsialnyi progress i svobodu narodov* (Moscow: VNIIC, 1981), 20.

add Arabic as an official language in 1976.¹⁰ And the Senegalese director Ousmane Sembène proposed educating African filmmakers in indigenous languages.¹¹ These Tashkent debates echoed the anticolonial Third World Cinema Committee's 1973 resolution to make "the new films understandable to the masses of people."¹² To that end, the Senegalese filmmaker and film historian Paulin Soumanou Vieyra proposed that all films distributed in Senegal be dubbed in Wolof.¹³ The Bolivian director Jorge Sanjinés planned two versions of *Yawar Mallku* (1969), shot in Quechua and Spanish and each dubbed entirely in one of the native languages, Quechua (dubbing the Spanish dialogue) and Aymara.¹⁴ Arab producers discussed adopting a revision of classical Arabic developed for international radio broadcasting to convey films across Arab nations and dialects.¹⁵ Whether Global South filmmakers approached revoicing from a nationalist, regionalist, or militant "Third Worldist" point of view, they rarely proposed withholding translation as an effective strategy.

In the West, translation was withheld during the Cold War, in the name of Western cultural diplomacy and art cinema. In 1946, the Cannes and Venice international film festivals invited national governments to submit only unsubtitled "national" versions.¹⁶ The Cinémathèque Française in Paris and the Anthology Film Archive in New York showed unsubtitled "original" versions into the 1970s.¹⁷ "There is a sacrifice involved in the substitution of the purity of the image for the sense of the words, but it is a necessary one," Anthology founders responded to patrons' complaints.¹⁸ This notion of cinema as a universal visual language, common since the silent era, justified a solution to a decolonization-era economic problem.¹⁹ Even after subtitles became standard for festival and art-house screenings, most Global South filmmakers often could not afford them.²⁰ Only a few activist institutions, such as the International Forum of Young Cinema at Berlinale, covered the cost.²¹ Most cinematheques instead supplemented

10 Hasan Imam Omar, "Egyptian Film's Overwhelming Success," *Al-Musawwar* (Egypt), June 14, 1974; Russian translation in *III festival stran Azii i Afriki v Tashkente: Otkliki zarubezhnoi pressy*, 18–19.

11 *Kino v borbe za mir, sotsyallyni progress i svobodu narodov* (Moscow: VNIIC, 1978), 39.

12 "Resolutions of the Third World Filmmakers Meeting (Algeria, 1973)," in *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Scott MacKenzie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 280.

13 Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, "Film and the Problem of Languages in Africa," *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58 (2019): 123.

14 Jorge Sanjinés, "Ukamau and Yawar Mallku: An interview with Jorge Sanjinés," *Afterimage* 3 (1971): 46.

15 Galal El Charkawi, "Language in the Arab Countries," in *The Cinema in the Arab Countries*, ed. Georges Sadoul (Beirut: Interarab Centre of Cinema & Television, 1966), 62–63.

16 Sergei Budaev, report to Andrei Zhdanov, Secretary of the Central Committee, on the 1946 Venice Festival, December 24, 1946; and Mikhail Kalatozov, report to Zhdanov on the 1946 Cannes Festival, November 14, 1946, both in *opis 2456, delo 4, ed. kh.* 103, RGALI.

17 Vincent Canby, "Now You Can See Invisible Cinema," *New York Times*, November 29, 1970.

18 P. Adams Sitney, qtd. in Tessa Dwyer, *Speaking in Subtitles: Revaluing Screen Translation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 60, 57.

19 John Mowitz, *Re-takes: Postcoloniality and Foreign Film Languages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 51, 64; Sarah Kozloff, *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 6–14.

20 See Adrienne Mancia's report to the Museum of Modern Art on her trip to Tunis, November 1, 1972, 7, box 23, folder 3, Jay and Si-Lan Chen Leyda Papers, Tamiment Library, New York University.

21 Telegram about *Mueda, Memory and Massacre*, in Catarina Simao, *UHURU* (Bratislava: Apart, 2015), 8.

original versions with printed texts meant to be read before the screening. They ranged from a full list of translated silent-film intertitles to, most often, a short synopsis. During the 1978 Senegalese cinema retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley, California, twenty-six out of thirty-six features and shorts played in Wolof and French accompanied by synopses in English.²² Whereas anticolonial filmmakers aimed to convey their audiovisual message to the masses, only the visual integrity of their films became a priority for Western programmers.

The Soviet Union wielded translation as a weapon in the cultural Cold War, in the form of commentary written in advance to be spoken during projection. At the 1946 Cannes and Venice festivals, the Soviet delegation alone screened films with prepared commentary, insisting that Soviet films' unique "ideological richness" requires "detailed elucidation."²³ At Tashkent, Soviet officials planned to translate festival films in a way that confirmed official Soviet internationalism. Soviet leaders took credit for bringing Global South filmmakers together and making their works accessible to the international festival public. Many shorts and documentaries and some features from newly liberated nations had their international premiere at the festival. Vieyra, for example, encountered the first shorts from Ghana and Somalia and met their directors at Tashkent in 1968.²⁴ These films had to align with Soviet ideology. No documentary should play without "the most careful vetting" of the translated dialogue list, one of the organizers argued in 1976.²⁵

In practice, however, live commentary evaded political oversight at Tashkent.²⁶ Most films arrived late, leaving no time for translation and vetting. Many films had partial or missing subtitles or dialogue lists. Some interpreters had to translate films in unfamiliar languages, such as Punjabi or Bambara, from subtitles in a language they understood, such as English or French. Often entire scenes would remain unsubtitled, forcing interpreters to make up the missing dialogue and reinvent voice-overs for documentaries from visual cues. In the relay system for foreign guests, the English or Arabic translation of the Russian translation came half a minute after the original dialogue. Occasionally, it added humor to the film, as when an English saying, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," arrived as "The drinks are pretty good, but the meat is lousy."²⁷

Tashkent spectators relied on the Soviet art of live translation, developed previously during the 1950s and 1960s. After Joseph Stalin's death in 1953, special screenings of foreign films with live commentary became possible, in addition to censored and dubbed foreign films in general circulation. The best Soviet film interpreters had

22 "Films from Senegal: 15 Years of an African Cinema, 1962–1977," *MoMA* 5 (Winter 1978): 2; PFA programs, February and March 1978.

23 Kalatozov, report to Zhdanov.

24 *Rol kinoiskusstva v borbe za mir, sotsyialnyi progress i svobodu narodov* (Moscow: USSR Filmmakers Union, 1972), 12.

25 Budget for the 1976 Tashkent festival.

26 Descriptions of live translation draw on Elena Razlogova, "Listening to the Inaudible Foreign: Simultaneous Translators and Soviet Experience of Foreign Cinema," in *Sound, Speech, Music in Soviet and Post-Soviet Cinema*, ed. Lilya Kaganovsky and Masha Salazkina (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 162–178.

27 Gordon Hitchens, "Tashkent Festival," 1968, 3, box 1, folder 5, Gordon Hitchens Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

improvisation skills honed at festivals and at public theaters, such as the Illiuzion, opened in 1966 in Moscow, which ran talkies in live translation eight times a day, every day. The Tashkent festival brought in such expert translators from Moscow. One of them, Grigory Libergal, explained: “You, the viewer, have to clearly hear the original soundtrack of the film. If the translator is a master of his craft, he will not ‘dominate’ the screen, speak on top of the actors. If he is a virtuoso, if he can feel the balance between the film proper and his own voice, after several minutes the spectator in the theater will forget about the translator; it will seem that he himself can understand English, French, or Japanese.”²⁸

Soviet simultaneous film translators kept the original soundtrack audible, reminding the spectators that they experienced a foreign language, then helped the audience relate to the foreign through domesticating techniques, such as reinterpreting jokes and obscenities to match the local context.²⁹ Despite forgetting about the translator while films were screening, Soviet cinephiles knew the best translators by name and, whenever possible, chose festival screenings depending on the interpreter.³⁰

At Tashkent, skilled translators refashioned film dialogue in real time unbeknownst to festival censors. According to one account, at a 1968 screening of the Uzbek film *Vsadniki revoliutsii* (*Riders of Revolution*; Kamil Yarmatov, 1968), a heroic scout, “riddled with bullets,” collapsed on-screen before his Bolshevik commander, who bent down and asked—via earphones in a translator’s “ironic” English—“‘Well, now, what’s the matter?’ in a rather petulant, irritated voice.”³¹ This translator performed for Anglophone festival guests, opening up Uzbek revolutionary history for their reassessment. Multiple translation channels created separate festival publics. Interpreters into Russian addressed a different, Russian-speaking public longing for sexual liberation; some Uzbek festivalgoers recalled going to the screenings for the erotic scenes, knowing censors had no time to edit them out.³² When forced to make up dialogue during screenings, these translators occasionally invented steamy innuendoes and love affairs.³³

Heterolingual—partial, improvised, and provisional—translation also helped militant Global South filmmakers, another key coalition present at Tashkent, reach transnational audiences. The first feature made in independent Mozambique, *Mueda, memoria e massacre* (*Mueda, Memory and Massacre*; Ruy Guerra, 1979), was shot in Portuguese and Makonde but arrived in Tashkent with a French dialogue list and was most likely translated from French during projection.³⁴ Yet it became “the most talked about” film of the festival; it went on to the Berlinale Forum. At Tashkent, it impressed

28 Grigory Libergal, “Illuzion—shkola dlya perevodchikov,” in *Kinoteatr Gosfilmofonda Rossii Illuzion: Vchera, segodnia, zavtra*, ed. Vladimir Soloviev (Moscow: Interklama, 2008), 148–149 (my translation).

29 On domestication, see Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility* (London: Routledge, 1994).

30 Razlogova, “Listening to the Inaudible Foreign,” 170.

31 Hitchens, “Tashkent Festival.”

32 “South by Soviet East: Uzbekistan’s Rule-Breaking Feast of Film,” *Eurasianet*, October 5, 2018, <https://eurasianet.org/south-by-soviet-east-uzbekistans-rule-breaking-feast-of-film>.

33 Leonid Volodarsky, “Interview,” *Maxim*, 1990, <http://www.lvobodarsky.ru/leonid-volodarskij-intervyu-dlya-zhurnala-maxim.html>.

34 Report about *Mueda* screening for the 1980 Tashkent festival selection committee, May 6, 1980, *fond 3159, opis 1, ed. kh. 18*, RGALI.

Global South participants who could not travel to Berlin.³⁵ “Militant, revolutionary” cinema, the Cuban director José Massip reported in 1968, found a “passionate, sensitive, and receptive” public at Tashkent.³⁶

Live revoicing at Tashkent helps us theorize how multiple translocal and transnational cinematic affinities can form and intersect in a “contact zone” of unequal power and linguistic diversity.³⁷ The choices to translate or not and between particular forms of translation—dubbing, subtitles, printed matter, or live commentary—have different valences depending on the contact zone and the particular public or movement that takes them up. Heterolingual film dialogue can be subversive today, when subtitling costs little and English has become a global language. During the decolonization era, subtitles and dubbing remained a desired but often unattainable luxury and live interpreting a frequent stopgap. The Carthage Festival for Arab and African Cinema in Tunis did not require subtitles for Arab films in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, so as Vieyra pointed out, sub-Saharan African viewers occasionally relied on their Arabic-speaking neighbors in the movie theater for *chuchotage*.³⁸ Heterolanguage remains a useful analytical term for Tashkent screenings because of the festival’s multilingual audiences and provisional translation. However, it applies to the situation rather than to the cinematic “original.” At Tashkent, Carthage, and elsewhere, each revoicing left its trace as films circulated further, “forever in translation and rooted in material practices of cooperation, organization, and struggle.”³⁹ In the decolonization era, understanding a Global South film was hard but necessary work.⁴⁰ *

35 Ron Holloway, “Mueda,” *Variety*, June 18, 1980, 22.

36 José Massip, “Tashkent: Breve crónica de un festival,” *Cine Cubano* 58–59 (1969): 71.

37 Djalalov and Salazkina, “Tashkent ‘68”; Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* 91 (1991): 33–40.

38 Vieyra, “Film and the Problem of Languages in Africa,” 127.

39 Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 275. See also Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.

40 As Antoine Damiens demonstrates in this issue, this labor of translation remains visible in informal film translation practices at alternative festivals today.

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