

(Dis)articulating Identities: Multilingualism in the Catalan Countries

RHIANNON McGLADE

University of Cambridge

BRAD EPPS

University of Cambridge

Quien sólo sabe su lengua / decía
Goethe /, ni aun su lengua sabe.

Miguel de Unamuno, *El porvenir de España*

L'única expressió universal serà,
doncs, aquella tan variada com la
varietat mateixa de les terres i
llurs gents.

Joan Maragall, *Elogi de la paraula*

What does it mean to be monolingual in a multilingual society? Or, indeed, multilingual in a predominantly monolingual society? How multifarious, or heterogenous, is “multilingualism”? How singular, or homogenous, is “monolingualism”? What, for that matter, constitutes a language? To what degree do sound and music, gestures, gazes and gaits, clothes and cuisine, appearance and ability figure in considerations of multilingualism? What about the deaf, the mute, the blind? Or as Monsterrat Lunati asks, what about the dead, the disappeared, the silenced and suppressed? These questions, amongst others, hovered at the humanistic and post-humanistic fringes of the AHRC-Open World Research Initiative, *Multilingualism: Empowering Individuals Transforming Societies* (MEITS), launched in 2016 and orientated, at its socio-scientific centre, to more familiar and delimited understandings of language(s). The four-year project, led by scholars at the University of Cambridge in collaboration with partners from the academic, private and public sphere, strove for a holistic investigation of multilingualism across a range of disciplines that included literary,

film and cultural studies, linguistics, the history of ideas, conflict resolution, education and health and wellbeing. Stemming from multidisciplinary research and intellectual exchanges in the MEITS strand ‘Arts of Identity,’ the contributors to this collection consider various conceptions and practices of multilingualism and its implications for Catalan culture and civil society (the other language and culture addressed in the strand was Ukrainian). The following essays, produced and gathered under the title, “(Dis)articulating Identities: Multilingualism in the Catalan Countries,” query the relationships between multilingualism, diversity and identity that are at play on and across individual, local, regional, national and global levels. In keeping with the aforementioned commitment to the multiple (and its relative singularities and specificities), the dossier spans the fields of Catalan theatre, literature, documentary cinema, performance and sociolinguistic practice in the educational sphere. It explores how the insights that are arguably gained from stepping outside and/or from moving betwixt and between any number of languages, cultures and modes of thought, are vital to understanding the implications of multilingualism for so-called minority, or minoritized, languages and their attendant – but also accidental and unexpected – cultural identities.

The continued polemics surrounding language and identity in Catalonia and the Spanish state – as evidenced by the *Tribunal Supremo*’s decision on 23 November 2021 to uphold a lower court ruling that effectively put an end to the ‘total immersion’ model – render the reflections on cultural production, diversity and the processes of identity construction here assembled particularly relevant.¹ These reflections rely, in turn, on acute understandings of sociolinguistic history and legislative and social stances on language as well as on nuanced appreciations of the importance of language in cultural, social and legal spheres, not only in Catalonia but also in exile, during the dictatorship and/or in other Catalan-speaking communities elsewhere. Moving beyond historic and geographic boundaries, of which they are nonetheless quite aware, many of the present articles seek to understand how politics animate, interpellate and/or quell language use in multilingual societies, but also how linguistic culture enables, contributes to, and even spurs, political practice. As such, the dossier examines a variety of ways in which cultural products and performances contribute to understandings – and misunderstandings – about the place and function of languages in civil society. Moreover, it asks how linguistic diversity bears on

¹ See, for example, ‘El Tribunal Supremo tumba la inmersión lingüística en Cataluña’, *ABC*, 23 November 2021; ‘Nationalist fury at ruling against Catalan language policy in schools’, *Irish Times*, 26 November 2021.

local, regional, national and international identities and communities affected by a complex colonial past and a no less complex post- and neo-colonial present, particularly in the multifaceted realm of culture.

The articles featured in this collection undertake both formal-aesthetic and symbolic-ideological analyses of texts and contexts with particular attentiveness to notions of affect and emotion in the production, reception and dissemination of cultural artifacts, acts and attitudes. As many of the essays attest, language is often deployed, indeed instrumentalized, and perhaps even fetishized, in divergent projects of national renegotiation and/or secession that have profound implications for international relations and for immigration and citizenship in a globalizing world. Far from engaging in an unequivocal celebration of the multilingual experience, the contributors probe into the “case” of Catalan to consider not only multilingualism’s capacity to act as a benefit to individuals, enhance communities, enrich cultures and foster social cohesion, but also its capacity to disadvantage individuals, divide communities and fragment societies. In so doing, the essays bring into play concerns that may be muffled in the more positive, and aspirational, moniker of “Empowering Individuals, Transforming Societies,” in which transformation is implicitly articulated as “for the better.” Of course, even “transformation for the better” can vary dramatically, depending on one’s ideological position and coordinates. With this important proviso in mind, the contributors to the present volume consider linguistic practices as well as cultural texts and/or events that foreground, problematize and inform questions of linguistic unity, diversity, identity, community and power in and out of the public sphere.

Notwithstanding the capacious scope of the ideas and themes addressed by “(Dis)articulating Identities,” the articles that follow this introduction comprise a comprehensive-while-dynamic whole. The opening essays by Sharon Feldman and Helena Buffery set their sights on the Catalan multilingual stage. Feldman explores the extent to which Catalan playwrights have embraced a new cosmopolitanism understood in terms of Kwame Anthony Appiah’s “rooted” approach to cultural diversity that “transcends” the local and the particular in order to reach beyond the linguistic and cultural precarity of their more immediate geographic and political surroundings. In her detailed overview of Catalan theatrical programming over the past two decades, Feldman notes that even when a play *appears* monolingual, it may easily have been imagined and thus implicitly equipped for audiences *au fait* with multilingual performance culture. Indeed, Feldman’s survey of Catalan plays

identifies many works which echo the more inviting spirit of cosmopolitanism by accentuating the value of multilingualism and intercultural openness. Tellingly, contemporary efforts to capture multilingual experience on the Catalan stage often take a figurative approach; linguistic verisimilitude, in other words, is not the express or primary aim here. Rather, these works draw upon themes of travel, mobility, migration and nomadism, amongst others, to evince linguistic fluidity.

The nomad, in particular, Feldman argues, serves as an apt metaphor for what she sees as the often fluctuating and precarious quality of Catalan identity. In this respect, she pays particular attention to the plays of Josep Maria Miró and Carles Batlle. Miró's *Olvidémonos de ser turistas* (2018) is indicative of what Feldman presents as a widespread fixation in contemporary Catalan drama on mobility and transcendence, which at times offers "a break with monolingual paradigms." Underscoring the predominant presence of metaphoric representations of multilingualism in the plays in question, Feldman also discusses the importance of so-called 'multilingual zones' such as the hotel which she identifies as a common feature of Miró's works. With respect to Batlle, we discern a pervasive aesthetic that engages cultural hybridity in cosmopolitan contexts as "an unavoidable, ever-present, and even necessary state of being." Indeed, in the yet-to-be-staged *Nòmades (o el camell blau)* (2019), cultural hybridity extends to the languages of the theatre, thereby "fusing a contemporary European polyphonic theatrical idiom [...] [with] traditions originating in the Maghreb." Thus, from literal displays of multilingualism to more figurative manifestations grounded in artistic pretence, Feldman convincingly explores the multiple ways in which multilingualism informs the cosmopolitan "impulse" on the Catalan stage. In so doing, she brings into focus a performance culture underpinned by a worldview that embraces global equality and community.

In the following article, in which theatre again takes centre stage, Helena Buffery draws upon Michael Cronin's *Eco-translation* and Sherry Simon's *Cities in Translation*, with an eye to the works of Calitxo Bieito and Oriol Broggi, in order to explore the connections between translation, multilingualism and trauma as "inflected by place, resilience and relatedness." Beginning with audience responses to multilingual interplay in Bieito's *Forests* (2012), Buffery highlights the ways in which popular reactions often reflect and reiterate the potentially divisive issue of the "naturalization" of linguistic asymmetries. For Bieito, Buffery explains, *Forests* signals his awareness of the relationships between language, landscape and identity as "spanning the local and the global, the personal and the

political, the emotional and the ecological.” However, the play’s reception points to the way in which many audience members saw language itself or, rather, languages themselves as playing a central role. Turning to the work of Oriol Broggi and his collaboration with the theatre group La Perla 29, Buffery considers how questions of translation, multilingualism and trauma play out at the local level. Echoing the trends adduced by Feldman, Buffery notes that Broggi’s productions are set apart by a “multilingual and cosmopolitan diversity, particularly in the city of Barcelona.”

Buffery (re)visits Broggi’s work on the cycle *Le sang des promesses*, by Lebanese-Canadian playwright Wajdi Mouawad, comprised of the tetralogy *Littoral*, *Incendies*, *Forêts* and *Ciels*. In her analysis of two of these plays, both of which are underpinned by a search for identity that must be constructed from shattered remains, Buffery explores what the attention to place, resilience and relatedness can teach us about the translation and reception of these works on a “minority” stage. Examining Genebat’s Catalan translation of Broggi’s *Incendies*, Buffery tracks the tense balancing act between omission and compensation in treating, amongst other things, the multilingual asymmetries that underly the play; the reproduction of distant origins from the perspective of the new home; and the opposition between silence and expression. In comparison with Mouawad’s original, in which trauma is portrayed as universal, Broggi’s version explores a multicultural dimension that highlights efforts to understand the other as a key factor of post-traumatic resilience. According to Buffery, *Boscós*, the translated adaptation of *Forêts*, is thus also a play about the translatability of trauma and, importantly, about Spanish history more specifically. With her essay, Buffery thus makes a critical contribution to the examination of theatre and translation as well as of theatre *in translation* that underscores the importance of engaging with other languages, identities and cultures. As she poignantly reminds us, such engagement “ultimately involves taking account of one’s own place in the landscape” and of recognising “one’s own responsibility and agency along with that of others.”

Yairen Jerez Columbié also places performance and language at the heart of her historically and archivally informed examination of the *Jocs Florals* in Havana, Cuba in 1923 and 1944. Exploring the role of these poetic competitions and cultural events in the fractured consolidation of the Catalan diasporic community in Cuba’s capital, Jerez Columbié draws upon theories of transculturation, surrogation and performance to suggest that the spatial, linguistic and cultural framework of the *Jocs Florals* which played a major role in the recuperation of medieval practices that fuelled the mid-nineteenth

century *Renaixença* is more transnational and multilingual than is commonly imagined. Tracing the history of orature and performance associated with the Games, Jerez Columbié effectively repositions, with solid historical evidence, modern Catalan culture as trans-Atlantic, international and shaped through the four intertwining categories of memory, imagination, invention and substitution. In her comparativist close-reading of the opening addresses of the 1923 *Jocs Florals* celebrations in Barcelona and Havana, she carefully unpacks the approaches of the organisers Josep Maria Roca and Josep Conangla. While Roca positions himself as occupying a radically peripheral stance vis-à-vis both Spanish nationalism and hegemonic forms of Catalanism within Catalonia, Conangla carries out his Catalanist cultural activism in a context of relative diasporic “normality.”

The Catalan-Cuban Games of 1944, however, could make no such claims to “normality,” for they took place within the volatile, still fluctuating context of the Second World War and the diasporic influx of Republican exiles who fled Franco’s Spain, in the wake of the Spanish Civil War, not just north, to Europe, but west, to the Americas. Within this space, contributions from a wider geographical and also ideological spread saw the more conservative institutional dimensions of the *Jocs Florals* encounter opposition from an incoming generation of contributors, profoundly marked by the experience of war. Nevertheless, the sense of international adversity and uncertainty imbued the events with new symbolic value. Jerez Columbié complements her reading of the 1944 Games with an examination of the symbolic significance of the designated “Queen” of the *Jocs*, Rosa Clavería, a woman whose versatility allowed her to perform diverse roles in the different processes of surrogation that invested her with multinational and multilingual symbolism that was at once Spanish, Catalan, Latin-American and Cuban. Clavería’s ‘coronation,’ in short, exemplifies the significance of ceremony and performance in processes of cultural transportation, surrogation, recreation and reinvention. Indeed, the author develops this crucial point to support a broader analysis of the cultural resonances of the Games as a civic platform and instrument of cultural and linguistic propaganda, or promotion, in a world characterised by dynamic process of reimagination, re-staging and rehearsal, trial and error, loss and gain in a word, transculturation of language, writing, and creative performance.

The Catalan diasporic community, this time in Mexico, also figures as part of Rhiannon McGlade’s treatment of humour and multilingual identities in two works of narrative fiction. The first of these novels, Avel·lí Artís Gener’s *Paraules d’Opoton el Vell* (1968),

navigates issues of linguistic and cultural plurality in a comical while problematic inversion and transposition of Columbus's famous expedition of 'discovery' in which Aztec explorers stumble on the coasts of pre-modern Spain. Written in the context of Mexican exile during the Franco dictatorship, Artís Gener's mock-epic saga ponders the universality of multiple languages in a transhistoric, trans-Atlantic vein that serves as a critique of the persistent monolingual, Hispanophone dominance and oppression of the author's Catalan homeland. The second text in McGlade's study, Juan Marsé's *El amante bilingüe* (1990), is likewise a "tongue-in-cheek response to the totalising approach of cultural and linguistic politics and policy," this time set in Barcelona in the 1980s. In *El amante*, however, it is Catalan essentialism which is on the receiving end of a sardonic subversion of the trope of Catalonia and its language as victims. Although divided by time and geographical space, as well as by the very languages in which they are written (one Catalan, the other Spanish), what unites these two texts, and by implication these two Catalan writers, is, as McGlade explains, their transgressive deployment of humour as a way to reflect upon the dynamic and promiscuous intersections of languages and identities in which the "imaginative limits of hegemonic monolingualism" are undermined in order to trouble and subvert the intransigent linguistic practises of their respective times.

The texts in question, McGlade contends, are not only multilingual, in the more obvious sense that they include more than one language, but also heteroglossic, in their recourse to different landscapes of diegeses, dialogic register, dialect and archaisms, as well as in their "metalinguistic ruminations on translation, signification and neology." A key point for reflection here — one that bears more specifically on the interrelation between humour and linguistic identity — is that humour is itself multifaceted and, in important ways, multilingual. Accordingly, across both novels, McGlade re-views concepts of Bakhtinian polyglossia and the carnivalesque through the lens of humour theory to consider the ways that humour traces diverse responses to the complexities of multilingual space. On the one hand, *Paraules* delivers a "light-hearted, slapstick farce with moments of bathos" to capture the discombobulating experience when multiple languages and cultures collide; on the other hand, and chiming with the questions of trauma raised by Buffery, *El amante*'s overt deployment of multilingualism as a metaphor for a split or schizophrenic sense of self effects a barbed humorous tone, wherein the experiences of multilingualism are also ironically and sardonically shown to be fraught and at times tragic.

The sense of the tragic is also traced in Montserrat Lunati's comparativist exposition of mourning in the poetry of Maria Mercè Marçal and Christopher Whyte. Opening with a progressively positioned assessment of the ongoing, and recently renewed, assault on "minority languages" in the Spanish State, Lunati hones in on Scottish writer Christopher Whyte in Gaelic, Crisdean MacIlleBhàin as representative of an "open-minded, multilingual and tolerant approach to languages and cultures." Noting Whyte's interest in diversifying the canon by attending to questions of gender and sexuality, amongst others, Lunati examines one of his longer poems, "Leabhar Nach Deach a Sgrìobhadh," written in memory of Marçal and translated into Catalan by Francesc Parcerisas and Jaume Subirana, both of whom are, like Whyte, scholar-poets or poet-scholars in their own right. Translated as "Un llibre no escrit," Whyte's Scottish text enters a cross-cultural communicative field whose devastating measure is partially captured and, of course, partially lost in the title, the image, the trope of an unwritten book. One of the most celebrated and studied of modern Catalan writers, Marçal, who died of cancer at the age of 45, was also, importantly, Whyte's friend. It is thus from a loving, mournful and inevitably melancholy stance (as Lunati notes, even Freud expressed doubts about "a successful mourning without residue") that Whyte produces what Lunati elegantly describes as a "requiem in words," rich with ethico-poetic implications. Chief amongst these implications is the "minoritized" status of the languages that Whyte and Marçal cultivate: Scottish Gaelic and Catalan, both of which have been subject to various modes of repression and suppression, especially vis-à-vis their more hegemonic "neighbours," French, Spanish and English. Whyte's (or perhaps more accurately, MacIlleBhàin's) decision not to translate his poetry into English but to leave that task to *others* occupies Lunati's critical attention, but so too do the textuality of mourning more generally and the sexual orientation of the two writers more specifically.

Rightly remarking that Whyte, a gay poet, and Marçal, a lesbian poet, "never had any qualms about giving a political dimension to their sexual orientation," Lunati teases out important, though by no means flatly determinative, points of contact between historically and culturally oppressed languages and historically and culturally oppressed sexualities. Drawing on a wide array of theoretical and creative works, Lunati, after tarrying with the Catalan version of Whyte's poem and its moments of friendly, remembered affection, turns to Jacques Derrida, whose "views on friendship, death, mourning and the self" resonate with Whyte's "requiem" to Marçal. Despite the high-sounding theoretical connotations of such a turn,

Lunati, in her reading of Whyte's and Marçal's writing, movingly foregrounds the quotidian and the conversational, the so-called little things in life, the personal interactions whose intimacy is shadowed, especially in the act of going public, by something extimate. Whyte's grief, indeed all grief, she contends, is multidirectional, implicating moons and streets, trees and mirrors, hands and windows, all of which figure in Whyte's and Marçal's poetry. Multidirectional, indeed multitemporal (at once "proleptic and analeptic," as Lunati puts it), grief is also multilingual, implicating a welter of languages (Whyte and Marçal both took a hand in translating, for instance, poems by famed Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva) and expressive, communicational modes. Lunati produces a subtle, suggestive brief on behalf of an appreciation of multilingualism that does not dispense with the ill, the dead, the lost, the absent and the forgotten but that understands them, instead, as powerfully entwined in the reality, and vitality, of linguistic interactions in the forever receding, yet forever insistent, present.

As has already been noted with regard to a number of the essays in this collection, the attention to the interplay between majority and minority/minoritized languages in post-imperial states, raises questions about prescriptive standardization in the service of national cohesion and modernization. Building on this theme, language attitudes and linguistic practice frame the final section loosely defined of the collection. In their qualitative study of the role, function and reception of the Catalan language in secondary education in Catalonia, Llorenç Comajoan, F. Xavier Vila and Vanessa Bretxa address the impact of the tensely intertwined phenomena of globalisation and immigration on the day-to-day realities of educational practice. Although the conversational exchanges that are at the centre of attention in Comajoan, Vila and Bretxa's sociolinguistic study differ markedly from those that Lunati explores in the realm of poetry, the shared attention to interlocution, to conversation, is nonetheless notable. Indeed, the multi-authored status of their study, part and parcel of a collaborative ethos that is more prominent in the social sciences than the humanities (including, if not indeed especially, those marked by a "post-humanistic" approach) aptly sets the stage for the interviews with, and the variegated comments by, the teachers who grapple daily with attitudes, situations and habits that are, on the whole, less common in the more rarefied and privileged context of the university. It is therefore not surprising that their examination of the ongoing demographic and demolinguistic transformations at once momentous and miniscule in the social sphere lead the three investigators to pay close attention to both the Catalan educational

system, writ large, and the discursively diverse perceptions and practices of educators, more specifically.

Structured in three interlocking parts, the study 1) revisits the “evolution” of the linguistic model operant in the public sphere of Catalan education, with an eye to different systems of multilingual education in other parts of the world; 2) summarizes, in quasi-narrative form, the data obtained through the interviewing process, and, finally, 3) offers a discursive analysis of what the writers describe as a “polyphony of voices” marked by direct and indirect, or reported, speech. Amongst the many questions examined are the “Catalanisation” of educational practice; the promises and pitfalls of linguistic immersion; the plays of plurilingualism and interculturality that are anything but self-evident or devoid of affect; the lag between, on the one hand, conceptual and terminological innovations and, on the other hand, pedagogical and social adjustments; the tensions between monoglossic and heteroglossic models; new formulations such as “translanguaging;” debates over bilingualism as a new national norm; resistance, organised and not, to the “imposition” of Catalan but also of Castilian in the classroom; the fissures, or “esquerdes”, in systemic approaches, and, perhaps most significantly, the inadequacy of a longstanding Castilian-Catalan binary in the face of widescale multilingual, economically, racially and socially diverse immigration.

Considerations of language use that push beyond the monolithic dichotomy of the Catalan-Castilian experience, course throughout Antonio Monegal’s engaging exploration of three recent documentary films: Óscar Pérez’s *El sastre* (2007), Eva Vila’s *Bajari* (2013) and Claudio Zulián’s *A través del Carmel* (2009), the last two tellingly translated into English as *Gypsy Barcelona* (as Monegal notes, “Bajari” is the Caló word for “Barcelona”) and *The Shifting City* respectively. By focusing on cinematic works that position themselves beyond the bilingual enclosure of Castilian and Catalan (which nonetheless persists as a dominant individual practice in Catalonia) to include Berber, Ukrainian, Urdu, Tagalog, French, Caló and other languages, and by attending to the “internal” multifariousness of linguistic and non-linguistic expression alike, Monegal charts various “sound maps” that highlight the importance of, for instance, accent and music and that bring into greater visibility the documentaries are, after all, audio-visual works the realities of ethno-racial diversity, working-class culture, immigrant experience, social marginalisation and the complex interplay of the everyday, the anonymous and the collective. Citing José Luis Guerin’s *En construcción* (2001) as a catalyst for a growing “trend” of “linguistic naturalism” and deploying an assortment of theoretical

insights from Jacques Rancière and Raymond Williams to Homi Bhabha and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Monegal attunes himself, via the films he examines, to something like the hum of the street and its relation to locally and globally or, better yet, “glocally” inflected questions of artistic production and political action. He also delves into the renewed interest in the interrelations between documentary filmmaking and reality in which issues of realist representation, interventionism and activism loom large. Be it the tailor’s shop in *El sastre*, which functions as a “microcosm of the multicultural city” marked by exchange and conflict, negotiation, collaboration and exploitation (a Pakistani boss and his Indian employee); or the fraught but creative soundscape of musical forms such as rumba and flamenco in a diasporic and internally othered gypsy community in *Bajarí*; or the “puzzle or collage of voices” in the Carmel (a metaphor that Balló and Jiménez-Morales also deploy, in relation to the Raval) that is brought to the fore in *A través del Carmel*, the three films that Monegal reviews and rehears proffer fragmented choral effects, at once mellifluous and dissonant, that push at the normative delimitation of multilingualism as a play between and across words, speech and writing. In so doing, he subtly and sagaciously reminds his readers (and the films’ viewers and listeners) that language is also tonal, gestural, visual, sartorial, corporeal and so on.

Monegal thus implicitly makes a case for a non-verbal multilingualism that productively exceeds the traditional academic confines of “languages and literatures” to encompass music, dance, performance, fashion, appearance, gaze, gait and more. The “landscape of relations” that he teases out of these three extraordinary ordinary films are, as he persuasively notes, endlessly scale-sensitive and prolifically symbolic, rife with any number of displacements, disorientations, fleeting encounters, reiterated itineraries and crisscrossed differences in accent, class, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality and, of course, language. Finally, but by no means least importantly, Monegal posits viewing as an action that understands that presumptive totalities a shop, a neighbourhood, a city, a stateless nation, a nation state, a continent, a world are both scale-dependent (here “chaos theory” might be brought into play with Glissant’s notion, cited in the epigraph, of “the chaos-world”) and riven by an incalculable number of fissures (family, memory, tradition, etc.). Like Comajoan, Vila and Bretxa, though in the context of shops and streets rather than schools, Monegal adduces a “polyphony of voices” that “claim recognition as citizens.” The fact that many of those whose voices are “captured” in these films are *not* citizens, and may not even have “their papers,”

only accentuates the word choice is deliberate the problematic status of the very concept of the “citizen” and, to be sure, the challenges that face any truly multilingual, multicultural, democratic society.

Documentary film is also at the centre of Jordi Balló and Manel Jiménez-Morales’ critical reflection on politically and aesthetically charged status of the Catalan language in recent Catalan filmmaking. Signalling the conflictive, if intersecting, pitfalls of the imposition of Spanish for commercial reasons and of the imposition of Catalan for cultural reasons, Balló and Jiménez-Morales revisit the perpetually vexed tension between political engagement and aesthetic autonomy. Not surprisingly, they confront the politics and policies of linguistic standardization and “normalisation,” intense in the years of the so-called Transition from dictatorship to democracy but still insistent today, alongside reiterated notions of authorial liberty and narrative integrity. Far from a dogmatic, one-size-fits-all approach, they recognise, explicitly, that “attempts at employing Catalan as an unmarked language in film” and as a “common language beyond the private sphere” have taken various routes. They also recognise, if more implicitly, that such terms as “unmarked,” “common” and “public” are not self-evident and continue to be objects of critical debate – critical debate with far-reaching and often quite divergent cultural, educational, political and artistic implications. Taken together, the three terms and others, like “civil society,” point to film as a potentially “naturalised”, shared vehicle of communicative expression in the social sphere. More specifically, if suggestively, they point to film *in Catalan* as capable of installing a state of democratic “agoraphilia” – the term is ours – that overcomes, to varying degrees, the dictatorial claustrophobia of a regime that for nearly forty years was hell-bent on silencing and erasing, or at the very least of restricting and “domesticating” the Catalan language as a tongue which, if it would be used, *should* be used behind closed doors.

Crucially, Balló and Jiménez-Morales acknowledge the impact of television and other small-screen formats as playing a consequential role in cinematic production. Adducing a “Catalan space of communication” via Josep Gifreu’s work on the process of linguistic and cultural normalisation in the media, they query how and to what degree otherwise progressive, and well-intentioned, policies have glossed over the reality of linguistic heterogeneity in a society that has undergone and is still undergoing substantive transformations in the dual guise of immigration and tourism. Indeed, the two scholars perceptively note that true “normalisation,” at least in documentary and realist fiction, necessarily entails “linguistic verisimilitude,” which in turn entails a recognition that

the “Catalan space of communication” is neither exclusively, nor monolingually, Catalan but, in fact, manifold, punctuated by other languages, Castilian most obviously (and hegemonically), but also French, English, Arabic, Chinese, Romanian, Wolof and so on. Like Monegal, Balló and Jiménez-Morales pay tribute to Guerin’s *En construcció* for its commitment to tracking the vagaries and varieties of linguistic expression in the densely populated, and long marginalised, district, or neighbourhood, of the Raval. But they also marshal a miscellany of multilingual features that include Carla Simón’s *Estiu 1993* (2017), Albert Solé’s *Bucarest, la memòria perduda* (2008), Carles Bosch’s *Bicicleta, cullera, poma* (2010), Isaki Lacuesta’s *Cravan versus Cravan* (2002) and Neus Ballús’s *La plaga* (2013), amongst many others.

Importantly, Balló and Jiménez-Morales not only attend to cinematic products but also to the *processes* of cinematic production as well as the training, in select University programmes, of budding filmmakers. These academic programmes, they argue, have had an impressive impact on the audio-visual industry in Catalonia and beyond it. They make special mention of Joaquim Jordà, notable for his involvement in the ground-breaking Escola de Barcelona under Francoism and a masterful innovator of creative documentaries, which often trouble the supposedly neat separation of documentary, experimental and fictional modalities. With respect to Jordà’s disturbingly brilliant *Mones com la Becky* (1999), directed in collaboration with Núria Villazán, the two critics contend, in what amounts to a *tour de force* of interpretative nuance, that the use of Spanish, “the language of the State,” by characters whose native language had clearly been established as Catalan constitutes a performative “fabrication.” The implications are profoundly structural, suggesting as they do that the cinematic apparatus, the industry and its practitioners are overdetermined by monolithic linguistic habits, practices and principles that effectively frame and funnel direct encounters with the camera into a Hispanophone circuit that at once precedes and exceeds the individuals who speak before the camera – as if before the law.

In a similar structurally attentive vein, the authors signal gender as an important, though non-essentialist, factor in social, and linguistic, representation. Noting the existence and growing vitality of such movements as *Dones visuals*, created in 2017, they point out how questions of “social justice, equality and fairness,” long associated with feminist critique and practice, are intertwined with questions of linguistic diversity. In the same sweep, they imply that there is more than a passing affinity between the language of the State and the languages of masculinity, such as they are, that have

traditionally been hegemonic in the State. The attention to the complex plays of gender is thus of a piece with the attention to such crucial issues as territory and identity, trauma and memory (and by implication, amnesia and anamnesis), movement and migration, “the language of intimacy, the representation of the intangible, the weight of history (and counterhistory)” and much more. In what amounts to an intersectional approach in which plurality, diversity and difference are prominent, Balló and Jiménez-Morales – not unlike all of the contributors to this volume – understand that multiple locations, multiple histories, multiple genres, multiple techniques, multiple identities, and, of course, multiple “ambient languages” are all at play in what goes by the deceptively simple name of “multilingualism.”

Works Cited

- Maragall, Joan. *Elogi de la paraula i altres assaigs*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1978 ed.
- Unamuno, Miguel de. *El porvenir de España*. In Ángel Ganivet. *Idearium español/El porvenir de España*. Madrid: Austral, 1999 ed.