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The Milwaukee Film Festival ran from October 18th to November 1st and included an array of foreign language films alongside its impressive line-up of 2018 indie hits, such as David and Nathan Zellner's *Damsel*, award winning documentaries like Bing Liu's *Minding the Gap*; and locally based and produced features including Emir Cakaroz's *Riverwest Film & Video*.

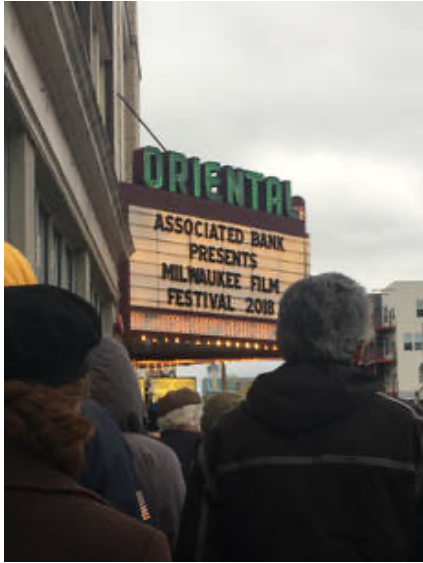
As a recent transplant from Southern California, I must confess that I underestimated the scope of the Milwaukee Film Festival. And, as a somewhat regular at the Hollywood Arclight and a previous attendee of the San Diego Film Festival, I thought I knew long lines and high demand and did not imagine that attending a screening, with tickets in hand, would present any issues. So, I bought pre-tickets for *Shoplifters*, the latest offering from Japanese director Kore-eda Hirokazu since I had loved some of his previous films including *After the Storm* and *My Little Sister*.

Though I knew that Kore-eda is a successful filmmaker (*Shoplifters* has ranked as the fourth highest grossing Japanese film of the year), when my husband and I arrived to the Oriental theater with an hour to spare, I was shocked by the attendance. The line for the film snaked around the corner, people huddled against the exterior of the adjacent buildings as film festival volunteers politely called out reminders to have tickets ready, fostering a sense of urgency. That sense of urgency soon proved unwarranted for those of us in the second half of the line as the minutes continued to pass and the gusty winds continued to pick up. Murmurs of concern began to rustle throughout the crowd: there was a chance we would not all get in, even those of us who had tickets in hand.

Despite my strong desire to see the film – and to be in the warmth of an auditorium – I reflected on the significance of the moment. Here we were, somewhere in Midwestern America in the Fall 2018 – in this political moment that sometimes seems like it's leading nowhere but backward, fostering xenophobia and regression – on a very cold day, and people (a lot of them) had come out to see a Japanese-language film about, of all things, class inequities and injustices. And these people were getting pretty huffy at the notion that they might not get to see it! The investment was high.

In English 812 this semester, we have talked a lot about issues related to inclusivity and multiculturalism as means for combatting regressive and myopic thinking. And as rhetoricians who are exploring how to more equitably teach writing, we are primarily concerned about how to create multi-cultural classrooms that model value for all Englishes. And I often wonder if one of the main routes for doing that – for fostering appreciation of languages more broadly – may be more exposure to foreign languages. People sometimes express dislike for foreign language films, generally citing the reading requirements involved. I often worry that this aversion to foreign language films and other content, no matter what the reason, fits too conveniently into a monolingual culture, one in which English-only speakers can too easily avoid interacting with other languages.

But, as the beyond sold-out showing of *Shoplifters* demonstrates, there is an interest in and a demand for content in other languages and for stories outside of the audiences' own experiences. This should not be news, but it bears repeating to the larger American film industry



that often chooses to shy away from challenging content, and certainly, on the whole, shies away from foreign language content, wanting to avoid challenging or annoying its audience, even though doing so has often proved fruitful. Just think of the generally positive reception to Quentin Tarantino's 2009 *Inglourious Basterds*, a film that has an 87% audience score on Rotten Tomatoes and earned over \$120 million in the U.S. The is noteworthy because the film begins with an extended sequence in French and prominently features French, German, and English throughout along with some sly commentary on the use of different language for various settings, purposes, and audiences. This film, along with films like *Shoplifters*, is just another example of American audiences' desire for foreign language content and need for more exposure to it. I think more films like these – both American films featuring foreign languages and various Englishes and foreign-made films – in

major cinemas would have a profoundly positive impact on our culture.

P.S. We did eventually get into the movie theater, with about five seconds to show time, a volunteer ushering us to separate seats, two of the last admitted audience members to the dark auditorium. The screen illuminated the room, and for the next two hours and one minute, the packed room was captivated by a quiet, moving, and well-crafted story in a language almost everyone, if not all, in the room did not speak. We listened to the characters' voices, understanding their stories, with help from the subtitles as needed.

Trailer for *Shoplifters*:

<https://youtu.be/9382rwoMiRc>