



really heated up the day the star insisted the director fire his sound recordist.

Denied his wishes, Kinski announced to anyone within a square mile that he was quitting the picture. To this, Herzog replied that, should the performer make good his promise, he would have no choice other than to shoot him. Herzog added, after slaying Kinski, he would turn the gun on himself after telling the unit manager to inform the authorities a hunting accident had occurred.

When the red mist lifted and shooting recommenced, Herzog found himself waging a different war on another front. This time, it was the Amazon itself that drove the director to distraction. From flooding to fire ants, the director and his crew were confronted with every imaginable woe. To his credit, Herzog tried to make the best of what Peru threw at him, turning disasters such as the aforementioned flooding into an element of the story. Meanwhile, amenities such as the crew's outhouse were pressed into service as film sets.

Any hope he might have had that the return to Germany would bring a change of fortunes would also prove misplaced. One listen to the movie's soundtrack was all the director needed to know that he'd have to re-record everything. Of course, being a contrary sod both in and out of the jungle, Kinski had no interest in dubbing his part and so the Belgian actor Gerd Martienzen was brought to the recording studio. The substitute did such a good job that Kinski in *Aguirre* sounds exactly like he does in most of his other movies.

And this is the thing – despite the thousand-and-one obstacles the cast and crew had to overcome, *Aguirre, The Wrath Of God* isn't just a good film – it's a great film. In fact, an argument could be made for the problems that beset the shoot actually aiding the finished film.

Take the stunning opening scene where *Aguirre*'s men descend a mountain shrouded in cloud – Herzog had been praying for good weather but the sequence wouldn't feel anywhere near as ethereal had it played out under blue skies. And since the film was shot in sequence, the increasing weariness on the part of the cast perfectly complements their performances. As for Kinski, he comes on less like an actor playing a part than a force of nature carving his way through the landscape with the force of a river. To see him quarrelling with squirrel monkeys in the film's latter stages is as close to madness as any sane man would wish to come.

Ignored by the Academy, awards came the way of *Aguirre* courtesy of directors acknowledging the debt they owed the film: moviemakers such as Francis Ford Coppola who cited the picture as having a direct impact upon his own tale of jungle madness, *Apocalypse Now*.

Any serious discussion of European cinema is impossible without mention of the epic. You could be forgiven for thinking Kinski and Herzog never spoke again. Despite the ferocious enmity between them, the pair recognised the ability of the one to bring out the best in the other. They went on to make four features together. The pick of these was 1982's *Fitzcarraldo*, another story of fevered delusion and jungle madness.

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*Aguirre  
Wrath Of  
God*  
Photo: Cover  
Images

# THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE WATER TO FIND ORIGINS OF LANGUAGE

Some words can be recognised in many tongues, for example weeter, wasser and water. But, **PETER TRUDGILL** explains, it is not always that simple



Anyone noticing that the Dutch word for water is water and the German word is wasser might guess that these two languages are closely related to English. The fact that Spanish *agua*, Catalan *aigua* and Italian *acqua* all mean water would also suggest to us that these three languages are historically related to each other. And we might infer the same from observing that in Czech and Bulgarian the word for water is *voda*, while in Polish it is *woda*.

These would all be correct guesses and inferences.

Of course, it would generally be unwise to draw strong conclusions about linguistic relationships and language family membership just from similarities between individual words.

These might be due to chance: the Malay word for name is, totally coincidentally, *nama*. Or they might be due to common borrowings from the same external source: the Azerbaijani word for banana is *banan*, but this language is not even slightly related to English. Azerbaijani is a Turkic language related to languages like Turkish and Kazakh: their common word for water is *su*.

Words for water are a more reliable pointer to relatedness between languages than words for bananas. We can often get a feel for the different degrees of relatedness between European languages by looking carefully at their basic vocabularies for culturally neutral, fundamental terms such as water, sun, moon, arm, hand.

I don't need to explain what the German words *sonne*, *mond*, *arm*, *hand* mean, nor the Dutch words *zon*, *maan*, *arm*, *hand*.

English, Dutch and German are all members of the West Germanic language family. So are West Frisian and North Frisian, where the words for water are, respectively, *wetter* and *weeter*. Low German has *water*; and in Luxembourgish it is *waasser*.

The Scandinavian languages are all members of the North Germanic family, which are related to English, though not so closely as Dutch and German.

Their words for water are rather similar to the West Germanic words and extremely similar to each other: in Norwegian, Icelandic and Faroese the

word is *vatn*, the Swedish is *vatten*, and the Danish is *vand*.

Czech, Polish, and Bulgarian are all members of another language family, Slavic. *Voda* is the word for water not only in these languages but also in Slovak, Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian and the other Slavic languages of the Balkans (*Vodka* means 'little water').

Philologists believe that the similarities between *voda*, *water* and *vatten* are a consequence of a distant historical relationship between the Germanic and Slavic languages.

Spanish, Catalan and Italian are all members of the Romance family of languages descended from Latin.

So are Portuguese and Romanian, where *water* is rendered as *agua* and *apa* respectively. These words all derive from Latin *acqua*.

Even though the Romance languages are related to English, we can't tell this from their words for water because *acqua* goes back to a totally different source in our parent Indo-European language. *Water*, *vatn* and *voda* came from Indo-European *wod-or*; while the Latin word descends from the root *akwa*.

Getting a feel for relationships between languages just by looking at individual words can be fun, but it's no substitute for deeper scientific linguistic research.

The Welsh word for water is *dwr*; and the Modern Greek word is *neró*, both of which are so different from the other European words for water that we might conclude that Welsh and Greek are not related to English or Czech or French. But this conclusion would be wrong: Welsh and Greek are Indo-European languages.

But Welsh *dwr* comes from yet another Indo-European root, *dubros*, which meant 'deep'. And the Greek word *neró* is a testament to the many different types of development which can occur as languages change.

The Modern Greek word does in a way come from ancient *wod-or*; but it is a shortening of Ancient Greek *niron ydor* 'fresh water', where it was *ydor* which descended from *wod-or*. But you can't tell that just by looking.

## LOIRE

Many western European river names are Celtic. The name of the Loire came from Gaulish *Liga* 'silt, sediment', via Latin *Liger*. This Gaulish word was also the source of the French word *lie(s)*, which we have borrowed into English as *lees* 'sediment at the bottom of a bottle of wine' – including, of course, bottles of wine from the Loire valley.