GLOBAL ENGLISH IDEOGRAPHY AND THE DISSOLVE TRANSLATION IN HOLLYWOOD FILM

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The appearance of three Chinese actresses as Japanese geishas in Sony Pictures' 2005 adaptation *Memoirs of a Geisha* injected new blood into an ongoing debate on the tense relationship between theatrical "representation" and racial or cultural "identity." Some reviewers argued that there was something jarringly strange, even politically incorrect, about coaching Chinese actresses to speak English with a Japanese accent. Others argued that the casting decisions were not discriminatory, but merely reflected the box office star power of the Chinese actresses Ziyi Zhang, Gong Li, and Michelle Yeoh who, even in Japan, are a stronger draw for audiences than any contemporary Japanese actresses. In the midst of this debate, however, no one thought to ask the more obvious question: why English in the first place? Is Japanese-accented English merely intended here to signal an act of translation? Or is the real scandal (to twist a phrase from Lawrence Venuti) a *lack* of translation, an effort to "represent" or "stand in" for translation—to cause us to temporarily forget that one ever needs translation?[1] Is there a connection, perhaps, between asking why English in the first place and why English, among other languages, seems always to be in "first place"?

These are, of course, the same questions one could ask of any number of Hollywood films. Why, for example, in Lasse Hallström's *Chocolat* (2000), is the French actress Juliette Binoche—like everyone else in the film—speaking English? When did English become the lingua franca of provincial French villages? To have allowed for French dialogue with English subtitles in this case, to *re*-present the process of translation rather than "represent" it (which is only to say "erase" it), would undoubtedly have been a less domesticating technique. But the fact that such a simple and ordinary technique would have effectively

Figures 1–3. Dissolve translation in *Daughter of the Dragon*.
Paramount, 1931.

minoritized the dialogic imagination of American audiences only illustrates the degree to which Hollywood has so completely domesticated its translation of the foreign. What for an international audience would be a drastic defamiliarization (the world speaking English, everywhere) becomes for American viewers absolutely quotidian, a simple representation of the world as such. Hollywood's "foreign" characters are, to borrow Jacques Derrida's words, monolingual *aphasics* "thrown into absolute translation" (*Monolingualism*, 61).

One can quickly surmise, however, that Hollywood studios have significant financial reasons for not re-presenting "foreign" languages in these cases. With few exceptions, monolingual American audiences have been notoriously insular and intolerant of "foreign" language programming or films.[2] In her keynote address at the 2004 San Francisco International Film Festival, B. Ruby Rich tried to explain this ongoing American resistance to subtitled foreign films, speculating that perhaps "foreign films function as a rebuke for some viewers, offering up evidence of something that watching television or Hollywood movies cannot yield, namely, evidence that the world is not made in 'our' image, and that neither our society nor our language is universal" (166). In an impassioned post–9/11 call for more subtitled foreign-language films in American theaters, Rich suggests that the use of subtitles might even be something like an "anti-war gesture," allowing us to "hear other people's voices intact," providing a more immediate "access to their subjectivity," making it, somehow, "harder to kill people when you hear their voices" (168). Rich may not have known at the time, perhaps, though it is widely known today, that the summer before her argument for the inherent "anti-war gesture" performed by subtitled films in the United States, the Pentagon held a special screening of Gillo Pontecorvo's French- and Arabic-language classic, *The Battle of Algiers* (1966)—with subtitles. It may have been that Pentagon officials wanted a more immediate access to the subjectivity of the insurgents depicted in Pontecorvo's film, but most likely for purposes antithetical to Rich's hopeful cosmopolitanism.[3] Still, it seems fair to say that most Americans have not seen Pontecorvo's film, and that while foreign-language films constitute a legitimate niche market in American film distribution, foreign-language films most often meet with a mainstream resistance in American culture that betrays an ongoing insensitivity to "other" voices.[4]

However, if the "English Only" rules of Hollywood cinema have contributed to a further entrenchment of American monolingualism and cultural insularity, something Rich does not explore is the vexing question of how those same Hollywood films have influenced the homo-hegemony of "Global English" in an era of late capitalism.[5] Certainly, it comes as no surprise that among the top 350 all-time grossing films in the United States, as of June 2007, only two were filmed in a language other than English. However, it is somewhat startling that among the top 350 all-time grossing films in the *international* marketplace, only six were filmed primarily in a language other than English.[6] Seen as percentages, then, non-English-language film earnings represent 0.57 percent of the top-grossing films in the United States, and only 1.7 percent of the top-grossing films internationally. These figures would seem to confirm the phenomenon that Franco Moretti has labeled "Planet Hollywood," as he finds that between 1986 and 1995, American films made up 75 to 90 percent of the decade's top hits in twenty-four countries and 90 percent of top hits in thirteen countries; and in five countries that percentage climbs to 100. But one of Moretti's more interesting conclusions based on this data is that because "action films" constitute the most successful genre both inside and outside the United States, these stories "travel well" because they are experienced largely "independent of language." According to Moretti, the "relative autonomy of the story-line explains the ease with which action films dispense with words, replacing them with sheer noise (explosions, crashes, gunshots, screams . . .); while this brisk dismissal of language, in turn, facilitates their international distribution"("Planet Hollywood," 94).[7] I will return to this question of film "language" below, but it is crucial to note here that what Moretti does not consider is how many of these films (in which language is supposedly "dismissed") were viewed with subtitles, how many dubbed, and how many watched simply in English—and how these different uses of American cinema might affect target cultures and even, in a proleptic sense, American films as well.

While there is no complete data on how much of "Planet Hollywood" is experienced as an English-language phenomenon, fragmentary evidence suggests that the general trend in global viewing patterns is a move away from dubbing and toward subtitling.[8] But even if dubbing were universally practiced outside the United States, it would be

hard to deny that the ongoing acceleration of Global English constitutes a distinct boon for Hollywood, whose products are largely tailored for the monolingual American markets that provide its largest box office revenue. Thus, even if "Planet Hollywood" achieves its global dominance by the distribution of a product that is, in Moretti's words, "independent of language," there is another sense in which such a statement overlooks the production of *linguistic* capital that emanates from American cultural hegemony. How, then, did English become the "universal" language of the most successful films in the world? What are the cultural and aesthetic consequences of such a phenomenon? If, as David Gomery has suggested, the Hollywood studio system was "among the most powerful cultural and social institutions in twentieth-century capitalism," then to what extent has that symbolic domination coincided with developments in the global linguistic marketplace (18)?

This essay argues that Hollywood film corporations have not only benefited from and contributed to the rise of Global English but also integrated into a variety of American films the story of Hollywood's role as global translator. In developing this thesis, I will return to some important, often-forgotten political and cinematic developments in the transition from silent to sound films, and analyze a series of previously unexamined international responses to the post-1927 circulation of American cinema. I will also focus on a cinematic technique or apparatus that I have dubbed the "dissolve translation," which was employed by Hollywood studios through the 1940s in an effort to translate foreign texts for monolingual American audiences. Ultimately, I will argue that what this particular apparatus revealed about Hollywood's role as global translator was not something American audiences wanted to acknowledge, and that this is why it went out of fashion in the postwar period and has never returned to popular American cinema.

It is important to note at the outset that such a thesis is not intended to accuse the Hollywood studio system (which has often been led by multilingual immigrants) of consciously promulgating English as an "official" language. As Pierre Bourdieu explains,

> The recognition of the legitimacy of the official language has nothing in
> common with an explicitly professed, deliberate and revocable belief, or
> with an intentional act of accepting a "norm." It is inscribed, in a prac
> tical state, in dispositions which are impalpably inculcated, through a

> long and slow process of acquisition, by the sanctions of the linguistic market, and which are therefore adjusted, without any cynical calculation or consciously experienced constraint, to the chances of material and symbolic profit which the laws of price formation characteristic of a given market objectively offer to the holders of a given linguistic capital. (51)

As a product of "linguistic capital," then, English-language American cinema may not "cause" anyone to speak English, any more than foreign-language films "cause" viewers to learn a foreign language, and this seems particularly true in cases where American films are dubbed into other languages. Moreover, it would be somewhat reductive to characterize Bourdieu's notion of a cultural "habitus" only in the context of linguistic capital. However, I would argue that the decisions to learn—or to *not* learn—a given language are necessarily part of these market-driven phenomena. The cultural capital of the American cinema may rely on stories that "travel well," but the degree to which language travels with that story must also be taken into consideration.

In order to better illustrate the cultural mechanisms to which I am referring, it will be helpful to remember that foreign-language instructors in academia have often referred to the cinema as an important "weapon" in promoting foreign-language instruction. Giovanni Previtali, for example, basking in the golden aura of financial support that followed the 1958 *Sputnik*-inspired National Defense Education Act (NDEA), published an article in the *Modern Language Journal*, reminding his colleagues that "Americans are no longer isolated from world affairs," and that "close cooperation with other nations in various fields which are vital to our common interest" requires, more than ever, instruction in modern foreign languages (171). To better accomplish this task, Previtali argued, schools should spend more of their NDEA money on foreign-language films, our "best weapon" in the training of future global citizens. He discovered this fact, he says, through an experience that he had in Rome, which he relates to his readers in the following manner:

> Assume you have a teen-age daughter. You take her to Rome, Italy, and introduce her to a crowd of youngsters her own age. As soon as the party warms up, she will have one of the surprises of her life. It is that her young friends will be chatting with her in English. Their easy command of current expressions is astonishing. Certainly they must have picked it

up in the United States. They say no. They have never been outside of Italy. But, they have done the next best thing to living in America. They have been going to American movies. The phenomenon of teen-agers in Rome who speak English like Americans is repeated in Paris, Munich, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro. The truth of the matter is that all of these young-sters have lived in the United States through the motion pictures. (171)

Since "immersion" in a foreign culture through travel is the best way to learn a foreign language, and since such opportunities are expensive and impractical, Previtali posits foreign-language cinema as the next best thing (172). Film, he writes, "has the power to teach students another language as if they were living in a foreign country" (176). But more than this, the power of film to transcend national boundaries makes it nothing short of a "miracle": "like the parable of the five loaves of bread and the two fish, it can also extend the same benefit to multitudes of learners almost anywhere. Wherever there are moving picture projectors or television sets it will provide better foreign language training" (176).

Excited by the cosmopolitan multilingualism he sees in his daughter's Italian friends, Previtali is clearly hoping that foreign-language cinema will help transform young American monolinguals into a more global, multilingual citizenry. But the analogy between Christ's miraculous power to universalize private-consumption goods and the power of American cinema to accelerate the spread of Global English indicates how complicated, ethically, these arguments can be. Jessica Hagedorn, for instance, remembers growing up in the Philippines where Hollywood cinema seemed to command the lion's share of America's cultural capital:

Better than books, movies were immediate and reached more people—both literate and illiterate. Movies were instantly gratifying. Bigger than life. I was a child. The movies were God. And therefore, true . . . . [I]t was pretty clear to most of us growing up in the fifties and early sixties that what was really important, what was inevitably preferred, was the aping of our mythologized Hollywood universe. (xii–xxiii)

In mapping out the trajectory of this cultural capital, it will be necessary to go back to the silent era, when English had not yet become the "official" language of world cinema, and when America's international influence had only begun to benefit from the linguistic

inheritance of the British Empire. What I hope to articulate in this brief history of language and cinema is that these linguistic decisions were not only influenced by the economic realities of production and circulation but also by a series of political interventions and technological innovations that allowed American cinema to dominate the global linguistic marketplace without directly reflecting the multilingual realities of its international audiences.

When American mogul Adolf Zukor visited France in 1910, he observed there the production and distribution strategies of what was then the largest global empire in film history: the French film company, Pathé. Impressed by one religious film in particular, *The Passion Play*, and recognizing that French-language intertitles could be easily replaced with English, Zukor purchased the film and distributed it to great success throughout the United States. When World War I destroyed both German and French film production companies, Zukor's Paramount corporation was ready to establish its own global film industry, such that by 1921 he had not only firmly established a monopoly in the United States but had also formed production companies in Britain, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, India, Poland, Scandinavia, and Spain.[9] As other Hollywood studios attempted to copy Zukor's success, American films gained even greater access to international film markets. Tino Balio reports that within the decade, aided by a year-round production schedule (made possible, in part, by the temperate southern California climate), American film companies were producing 70 to 85 percent of all motion pictures exhibited in the world, earning roughly $200,000,000 of the annual world gross of $275,000,000. By 1930, foreign-language markets accounted for roughly 25 percent of a film's worldwide gross (32). Attempts by German, French, and British film companies to curtail the distribution of American films were largely ineffective, and it was only with the introduction of sound films that American cinema met any real obstacles to its expanding international distribution network.

Naturally, in the silent era, Hollywood studios could more easily transcend the linguistic barriers between market audiences. Indeed, Walter Benjamin's argument that the "age of mechanical reproduction" had led to a "decay of aura" in the work of art seemed hardly true for Hollywood corporations (222).[10] Silent film exhibited a kind of market plasticity, in which "aura" was impeded only by the advent

of the *aural*. However, in examining the linguistic effects of this pro-
liferation of aura without the aural, it is useful to remember that, as
Benedict Anderson argues, the "age of mechanical reproduction" actu-
ally began much earlier than Walter Benjamin's focus on photography
and film would imply. By 1500, Anderson explains, "at least 20,000,000
books had already been printed" (37). Indeed, for Anderson, one of
the most important elements in the creation of the modern nation-
state was the advent of mechanical *print* capitalism, which had the
effect of assembling linguistic idiolects into progressively larger clus-
ters of monoglot reading publics:

> In pre-print Europe, and, of course, elsewhere in the world, the diversity
> of spoken languages, those languages that for their speakers were (and
> are) the warp and woof of their lives, was immense; so immense, indeed,
> that had print-capitalism sought to exploit each potential oral vernacu-
> lar market, it would have remained a capitalism of petty proportions. But
> these varied idiolects were capable of being assembled, within definite
> limits, into print languages far fewer in number. (43)

Then, in an important aside, Anderson notes that, "At the same time,
the more ideographic the signs, the vaster the potential assembling
zone" (43). What Anderson means by "ideographic signs" are those
semiotic elements in a text that do not depend directly on consistent,
phonetic pronunciation. He identifies a "descending hierarchy here
from algebra through Chinese and English, to the regular syllabaries
of French or Indonesian." The sign *ough,* for example, "is pronounced
differently in the words although, bough, lough, rough, cough, and
hiccough," and consequently "shows both the ideolectic variety out
of which the now-standard spelling of English emerged, and the ideo-
graphic quality of the final product" (43). Thus, Anderson argues,
given this orthographic proclivity toward the ideographic in the early
modern period, nothing did more to "assemble related vernaculars"
than print capitalism, which "created mechanically reproduced print-
languages capable of disseminating through the market" (44).[11]

   If Anderson is correct that print capitalism served to assemble
previously disconnected idiolects, and that "the more ideographic
the signs, the vaster the potential assembling zone," and that these
mechanisms formed "the embryo of the nationally imagined com-
munity," then it makes sense to ask whether American cinema may
have served a similarly "ideographic" function in the construction of

a *trans*nationally imagined community in an era of global capitalism. Jeremy Tunstall argues in *The Media Are American* that the "mutual use of the English language was crucial in American entry to the British and Commonwealth markets. This entry both consolidated English as the world media language and gave the American media a flying start into the world market" (125). In the era of silent films, the ideographic nature of film as a vehicle for the global consolidation of American corporate capitalism was most often described as an appeal to a new "universal language." As Miriam Hansen argues, "In the American context, the universal language metaphor assumed a particular significance, especially with the rise of the nickelodeon, considering the cinema's appeal to recent 'foreigners' unfamiliar with the English language or illiterate, hence its potential usefulness for dealing with the problems of an immigrant society" (*Babel and Babylon*, 77). The utopian convictions embedded in the ideography of silent film were most obvious in the films of D. W. Griffith, who once described Lillian Gish as "working in the universal language that had been predicted in the Bible, which was to make all men brothers because they would understand each other. This could end wars and bring about the millennium."[12] In fact, some of these arguments seem to reflect Griffith's textual strategy of using hieroglyphics in the background of the intertitles for his 1916 film *Intolerance*.

But if the "universal language" of silent film lent itself to an international marketing of Hollywood ideography, what would become of Hollywood's international markets after the advent of sound? What would happen to this profitable ideography? Ian Jarvie has succinctly summarized the dilemma:

> An important consequence of the changeover to sound was that it contracted the overseas market for U.S. films in their original versions. Subtitled or even dubbed, they became identifiably foreign to all non-English speakers, and even to English speakers in the United Kingdom and the Empire. . . . Some of the continuity of silent films had been provided by intertitles, which were easily and cheaply supplied in any local language. . . . Hollywood thus faced a momentous fallout from the introduction of sound. (139)

Just as important as these overseas markets, however, were the non-English-speaking immigrant communities that had formed a large part of American audiences before 1927. One could even argue that

the competitiveness between studios to overcome this problem led to moments of meta-cinematic self-reflexivity, such that a story like *The Jazz Singer* (1927) allegorizes Warner Bros.' hope that despite the introduction of sound (and the necessary death of silent pictures performed in the film), non-English-speaking immigrant communities would continue to flock to the theaters. Although Jackie Rabinowitz's mother cannot read (as the immigrant communities would not be able to "read" the films), the final scene implies that "the show must go on," and his mother happily takes her place in the audience.[13]

Forced suddenly to market across linguistic and national boundaries, films began to experience what economists call a "cultural discount" in which viewers in other places are less likely to identify with the cultural forms and practices represented in the film.[14] And it is precisely with the aim of transcending this cultural discount that the first episodes of sound in Hollywood film were relatively "ideographic," that is, in this case, almost entirely enjoyable without relying on specific linguistic pronunciations. One need only recall, for example, the 1927 Fox newsreels featuring the roaring engines of Lindberg as he takes off for Paris, or Al Jolson's fantastic whistling and singing in not only *The Jazz Singer* but also his even more successful sequel *The Singing Fool* (1928); or, later, Charlie Chaplin's decision to sing a kind of comic italo-gibberish in *Modern Times* (1936).[15] But, fast-forwarding for a moment, this is also why it is not at all surprising that the only two all-foreign-language films among the top 350 all-time box office reports in the United States are first, *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), in which the icono-ideographic violence of the Christ story induces a terror more important than the language (the "Word" here sublimating the "word" for American audiences); and second, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), in which the most exciting and visually stunning moments of the film are also ideographic, requiring little or no dialogue for viewers to enjoy them.[16] Like the ideographic elements of action sequences, religious iconography, or the cult status of beautiful Hollywood stars, musical numbers tended to reduce the cultural discount of a given film, transcending the linguistic barriers that might have otherwise impeded transnational distribution.

However, in the early years of the sound era, without any guarantees that American internationalism would eventually place the United States at the center of global capitalism, film studios were not

certain that the residual power of cinematic ideography could sufficiently account for the potential loss of Hollywood's international markets. In fact, foreign markets showed a great deal of ambivalence about the new transition to English-language sound films. On the one hand, international audiences flocked to theaters, as had American audiences, fascinated by the new spectacle of talking motion pictures. Morris Gilbert, for example, as Paris correspondent for the *New York Times* in 1930, noted that French audiences generally had responded to the previous yearlong "invasion" of English-language sound films with an "exceptionally high degree of indulgence" ("French Cinema," X6). Love films, he explained, seemed to do especially well, since "the language of the heart is a most adequate Esperanto" (X6). On the other hand, critics in many countries were alarmed at the cultural force of the English-language films, and the disruption it caused to local cultures and economies. French and German filmmakers were the most aggressive in this regard, lobbying their governments to enforce quotas on the number of "foreign" (read: American) sound films shown in each country. Eventually, however, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA), led by Will Hays (former cabinet member of President Warren G. Harding), secured the help of the U.S. State Department to counteract these quotas, arguing that "trade follows the film."[17]

Many critics outside the United States noted that the failure of these attempts to stem the tidal wave of Hollywood films was having an undeniable impact on the status of English as a foreign language throughout the world. Morris Gilbert also noted, for instance, that some audiences in France were reacting to the "American invasion" of sound film with a "clearly expressed fear that French speech and thought will be injured" ("French Screen," X7). In Argentina, a series of fiery editorials appeared in the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Prensa* in late April 1930, deploring the "dislodging of our language" caused by "the nearly total monopoly of sound films today."[18] Influenced in part by musicians in the local orchestra who had lost their job with the advent of sound films, the editors of *La Prensa* lamented specifically the impact of an American film invasion on the language and culture of their youth: "Sound films, and the like, with foreign music and English, have only aggravated the problem of the neutralization of the artistic and nationalist teaching in our schools." To remain

insensitive to the "de-nationalization of our children," made possible by "sound film with foreign music and English dialogue" was tantamount to endangering Argentina's national identity.[19] The *New York Times* picked up on the controversy, reporting that in Argentina, citizens were accusing American talkies of "forcing" into the country a "spiritual consciousness of a foreign language" ("Talkies under Fire," 5).[20]

The *New York Times* also reported on a series of editorials published in Bogota, Colombia, dealing with the same topic, although recommending a slightly different strategy. In these articles, the editors of Colombia's *El Tiempo* criticize a recent attempt by a municipal council in the state of Atioquia to "double the tax on sound film in any language other than Spanish."[21] The editors argue that a tax of this sort would be justified if, as was the case in Spain, France, Italy, or Germany, it were designed to protect the country's national film industry. But, they explain, "we are sure it has another object, very noble in origin but decidedly erroneous: to impede the spread of the English language in the Indo-American countries" ("Hits Plan," 17). Such linguistic provincialism should be avoided:

> This form of nationalism has sentimental sympathizers who operate from Patagonia to the Texas border. They shout that we shall be engulfed by the imperialism of Washington. There are few inanities more sublime than that. What they should advocate is that, in order to defend ourselves from the Yankee if it is necessary, we should learn his language because that foreign language on our lips is a weapon and a shield. (17)

But if some non-English-speaking audiences thought this fear of English was irrational, Hollywood filmmakers were not anxious to gamble over it, and so began scrambling to find some way to sustain the foreign-language film markets that had accounted for 25 percent of their pre-sound-era profits. In the early 1930s, specifically, when initial experiments in dubbing and subtitling proved unsuccessful, studio executives quickly began bankrolling multilingual projects. Paramount, for example, sent Jesse L. Lasky to Paris in order to begin converting American talking films into six different foreign languages (returning, incidentally, with Sergei Eisenstein, on loan from the Soviet government). Lasky's plan was to completely reshoot a number of Hollywood pictures with European actors. As he reassuringly explained, "now people will see that the Americanization of the world's screen will no

longer go on, that each country will have its own life reflected in the playing of its actors" ("Talkies on Home Grounds," 15).[22] A variety of films emerged from these projects, one of them, most interestingly, a small short in Esperanto (Flint, X6).

MGM/Loew's, not wanting to be outdone, announced in 1929 that it was pledging more than $2 million toward a "program of multilingual films that are to be made solely in the language of the countries for which they are intended" ("Foreign Language," X5). By 1930, MGM/Loew's production schedule included over fifty feature-length films in French, German, and Spanish. Warner Bros. similarly announced that its schedule for 1930–31 would include at least eighteen foreign-language pictures, six each in German, French, and Spanish, signing contracts with more than sixty foreign actors to come to the United States to participate in making the new foreign-language films ("On the Screen," 99). Multilingual stars such as Marlene Dietrich and Adophe Menjou were suddenly in higher demand, and many other Hollywood actors began taking foreign-language classes. Hal Roach even had his "Little Rascals" learning Spanish to increase the potential market value of his *Our Gang* films.[23]

The Fox schedule for 1931 included seventy-two feature-length productions, twenty of which were in foreign languages ("On the Cinema," 111). One of these films, for instance, was *Eran Trece* (1931), a Spanish-language version of *Charlie Chan Carries On,* shot entirely with Spanish actors on location, using the same sets and stock footage as the English-language version. In this film, thirteen people (the title translates to "They Were Thirteen") are on a world tour on a cruise ship, making stops in Europe, Egypt, China, and Honolulu, among other places. Along the way, one of the thirteen gets murdered, and when the cruise ship stops in Honolulu, Inspector Chan comes on board to solve the case. And, again, competition between Fox and the other studios seems to produce moments of meta-cinematic self-reflexivity within the film, such that it is rather easy to read *Eran Trece* as not only a product of Fox's attempt to compensate for the problem created by foreign-language markets in the sound era but also a dramatization of that problem and its potential solution. The death on the ship, much like the death of the rabbi father in Warner Bros.' *The Jazz Singer,* could very well symbolize the death of silent cinema, which had, before its "murder," been on a very comfortable "world

tour." Charlie Chan (read: Fox) is brought in to solve the case, eventually narrowing his pool of suspects to four passengers (the four major languages of film distribution: English, French, German, and Spanish). But how to determine which of the four is the murderer? Simple: Chan slips an identical note under the door of all four suspects, claiming to know that each one is the murderer, forcing the real culprit to reveal himself. This was, of course, precisely Fox's initial solution to the sound-era problems of international marketing: send each country an individualized version of the same film, using all the same sets and stock footage, setting the stage so that the "crime" (of Fox losing its international markets) could be solved.

Eventually, however, it became clear that if multilingual productions offered a solution to the cultural discount of Hollywood film in an international market, it was not the cheapest fix. Whereas a silent film could have been retitled in several languages for less than $10,000, multilingual productions in the early 1930s were costing the studios more than $70,000 for *each* foreign-language production (Balio, 33). Ultimately, then, the buying power of the American monolingual market led Hollywood studios to abandon these multilingual projects. However, that Hollywood studios were initially willing to produce multilingual films, and might have continued to do so if it had proved cost-efficient, only demonstrates the complexity of assertions such as Siegfried Kracauer's in 1927 that "Films are the mirror of the prevailing society. They are financed by corporations, which must pinpoint the tastes of the audience at all costs in order to make a profit" (291). A producer, Kracauer continues, "will never allow himself to be driven to present material that in any way attacks the foundations of society, for to do so would destroy his own existence as a capitalist entrepreneur" (291). It is no doubt true that when addressing the demands of a linguistic market, film corporations have to "mirror" the "prevailing society." But which society is allowed to "prevail" in an international market? It became apparent to Hollywood corporations that while, say, Spanish-language cinema may be the prevailing linguistic foundation of Spain, the question of "prevailing society" in an era of *transnational* capitalism meant that what really mattered was which prevailing globality would triumph over all other local prevailing societies. It was not simply that a film producer could "never allow himself to present material that in any way attacks the foundations of

society." On the contrary, film producers were extremely aware that they were dealing with more than one local foundation, and that it was in their best interest not to "mirror" some preexisting prevailing society, but rather install a greater, global prevailing system. How, then, did they do this?

The ultimate success of "English Only" in Hollywood (and world) cinema came through a combination of internal corporate/artistic developments and external political opportunities. First, as I have indicated above, Hollywood continued to accentuate the more ideographic elements in American film. The cult status of the Hollywood star system, for example, action sequences, and religious iconography all provided a means of transcending the linguistic barriers that might have otherwise impeded transnational distribution. But if foregrounding the ideographic in American cinema allowed Hollywood corporations to both appeal to American monolingual audiences and overcome cultural discounts in international distribution, the rise of World War II distribution channels and postwar American imperialism provided a sociopolitical context in which these corporate/artistic decisions could be financially rewarded. As John Trumpbour has explained, "the global size of the English-language market has been a distinct advantage to Hollywood" (10). In the postwar years, for example, the implementation of ideographic film capitalism as a product of America's new status as a quasi-imperial power led to what Reinhold Wagnleitner has called the "Marilyn Monroe Doctrine," in which the value of American culture—including the English language—took on new value in the global marketplace. Eugen Sharin, the "films officer" for the U.S. Forces in Austria, for example, wrote the Office of War Information in New York:

> They're killing me with inquiries about Walt Disney films. *Fantasia* is awaited with particular eagerness in a country where *Toscanini* can run as a feature. . . . *Snow White* was announced but, so they say, never released here. And they further say, the American occupation cannot be complete without Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. . . . What about it? (quoted in Wagnleitner 285)

As this plea clearly illustrates, Hollywood film was one of the most important Cold War weapons in the campaign to sell the American way to the rest of the world. By 1948, U.S. officials in Austria had

clearly picked up on the political power of American cinematic "ideography." As one official would write: "It makes no difference what we have to show them. They will come to see anything. . . . There is a fascination that films have for people. Even among the intellectuals there, they come to be critical. . . . You can do anything you want with them as long as you don't drive them away" (Wagnleitner, 294). Given this cultural climate, it comes as no surprise that, as Wagnleitner explains, between 1946 and 1953, "English replaced French as the dominant foreign language" in Vienna (292). In short, aided by the ideographic-yet-English-only machine of Hollywood cinema, the postwar American occupation of many parts of the world only accelerated the globalization of the English language that had begun under the British Empire.

To the American viewer, these developments seemed to provide both comfort and anxiety. In one sense, the world seemed to be learning English, and so any monolingual handicap among the American people could be comfortably ignored, or at least left to the experts to handle. But in another sense, America was very much on the world's stage, and any effort to return to the prewar comforts of isolationism seemed suddenly unfeasible. Adding to these anxieties, American officials such as Mortimer Graves, the administrative secretary of the American Council of Learned Societies in Washington, D.C., began arguing in the late 1940s that American monolingualism was a dangerous Cold War liability. [24] Likewise, William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick's enormously popular novel *The Ugly American* (1958) offered a stinging criticism of America's linguistic provincialism. Thus, even as much of the world seemed anxious to get access to American culture, there was just as much a sense that American monolingualism had become a problem. How, then, could Hollywood accommodate this new push for internationalism without alienating its primary market's already-tested English-only parameters? It was as a corollary to these concerns that Hollywood employed a variety of cinematic techniques in order to reassure the public that if not everyone in the world was learning English, American corporations would translate into English everything the American monolingual public might possibly need to know about its new "others." Thus, American cinema became not only a means of transporting the "other" to within visual striking

distance but also a vehicle for the translation and packaging of those "others" for English-only American audiences.

One of the more interesting developments in this context was the rise and fall of what I call the "dissolve translation," a moment when a shot of a text in a "foreign" language gradually fades off the screen, only to dissolve into its translation in the film's "official" language. Because no one has ever kept records on when exactly dissolve translations occur, it is not clear when the technique was first used, though it clearly emerged as part of the experimentation with montage and special effects during the silent era. By the 1920s and 1930s, the dissolve translation had become a staple of cinematic representations of linguistic transformation, spanning both A-list productions and cheaper low-budget fare. For example, one of the more creative (if generally ignored) filmmakers of the period to use the dissolve translation was William Nigh, a director whose career enjoyed both mainstream successes at MGM in the 1920s and Poverty Row films at Monogram in the 1930s. In the silent Orientalist drama *Mr. Wu* (1927), Nigh is clearly thinking about the aesthetic possibilities of film and language. When the young imperial maid played by Anna May Wong angrily chides her mistress in Chinese, the film's intertitles flicker vividly with faux-Chinese characters juxtaposed in terse, rapid cuts—the characters exploding across the screen (see Figures 4–6).

What matters here in these intertitles is not that the "Chinese" characters mean anything (they don't); rather, it is the representation of the characters *as exploding* that carries meaning, that is, as a reflection of Wong's exasperation with her mistress. The effect is designed here to provide a reminder that some "other" linguistic communication is occurring—and particularly in a way that what takes on diegetic significance is the *way* the text appears, not what it says (put simply, form rather than content). But what to do when a Chinese language text in the story must be understood on its own terms, and not just as Chinese "chatter"? Here Nigh turns to the dissolve translation (see Figures 7–9). In contrast to the faux-Chinese exploding characters earlier in the film, what is diegetically important in these shots is *not* the way the self-translating text appears (that is, its mechano-cinematic form), but the meaning of the text itself (that is, its narrative-semantic content). The fact that a "special effect" is occurring is not part of the film's story, and in fact could not be without it dramatically altering the narrative.

Figures 4–6. Exploding faux-Chinese intertitles in *Mr. Wu.*
MGM, 1927.

Figures 7–9. Dissolve translation in *Mr. Wu*. MGM, 1927.

In the 1930s, William Nigh would sometimes use the dissolve translation to further plot development, often in creative ways that relied specifically on the audience not knowing the "foreign" language. In the Monogram film *The Mysterious Mr. Wong* (1934), the Fu Manchu–like Bela Lugosi is trying to steal one of the golden coins of Confucius when the wise-guy reporter Wallace Ford stumbles onto a laundry ticket with the location of the coin written in Chinese characters on it. But because Ford (and Ford's audience, it is presumed) does not speak Chinese, Nigh has only small parts of the phrase on the laundry ticket revealed through dissolve translation as the film progresses. When the full ticket has been translated, the mystery is solved and Bela Lugosi's Mr. Wong is brought to justice (see Figures 10–18).

There are literally hundreds (probably thousands) of films from the 1920s and 1930s that utilized this technique, though by the 1950s, the dissolve translation seems to have faded from use.[25] In order to fully understand the significance of the dissolve translation and its eventual demise, it will be useful to turn to a few important moments in the development of "apparatus theory." First, there is Freud's 1925 attempt to explain his psychoanalytic theory by turning, as he had several times before, to the question of writing. At some point during this year, Freud came across a small contrivance known as (in translation, anyway) the "Mystic Writing-Pad." The pad consisted of a slab of dark brown wax, over which two thin sheets were placed, the layer closest to the slab made of thin translucent waxed paper, and the upper layer made of transparent celluloid. What struck Freud as interesting about this Mystic Pad was that it allowed for the markings of a stylus to be temporarily engraved and then erased—even while retaining a thin (unconscious) "trace" in the dark brown resin underneath the celluloid. This trace provided an analogy in apparatus form of Freud's notion that "our mind consists of two layers, of an external protective shield whose task it is to diminish the strength of excitations coming in, and of a surface behind it which receives the stimuli" (178–79).

In "Freud and the Scene of Writing," Jacques Derrida analyzes Freud's constant recourse to the process of writing in explaining the structure (Derrida will recast it as the "*archi-écriture*") of the psyche. What interests Derrida is not whether or not the Mystic Pad is an apt metaphor for the processes of the psyche, but rather "what apparatus we must create in order to represent psychical writing, and what the

Figures 10–12. Dissolve translation in *The Mysterious Mr. Wong*.
Monogram, 1934. 14:30 minutes into the film.
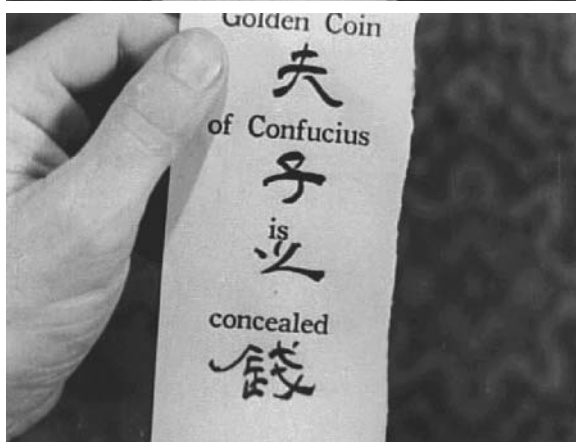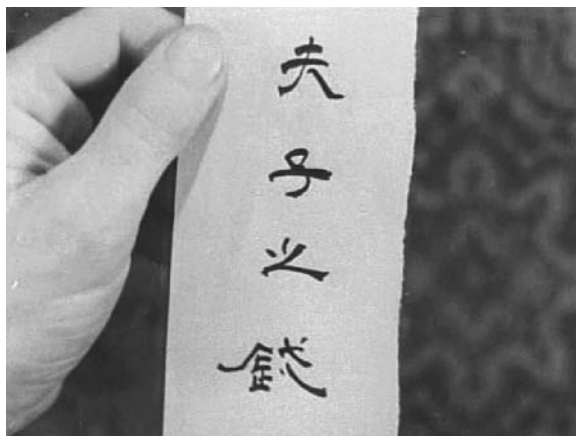
Figures 13–15. Dissolve translation in *The Mysterious Mr. Wong*.
Monogram, 1934. 18:51 minutes into the film.

Figures 16–18. Dissolve translation in *The Mysterious Mr. Wong.*
Monogram, 1934. 31:05 minutes into the film.

imitation, projected and liberated in a machine, of something like psychical writing might mean" (76). In other words, what Freud's attention to the Mystic Pad reveals is something about the nature of representation itself: that the apparatus is both prior to and inseparable from the development of the unconscious—that "we are written only as we write" (226). What Derrida extricates from Freud's metaphysical project is a line of thinking that goes against the whole tradition of logo-phonocentrism.[26] Speech and "presence" are no longer privileged in a semantic hierarchy of Western philosophy, but are recast as a kind of writing onto the temporal resin of air, just as (im)permanent, in terms of epistemological grounding, as Freud's Mystic Pad.

Jean-Louis Baudry's influential and controversial essay on the "cinematographic apparatus" suggests that Derrida's critical disruption of Freud's analogy of the Mystic Pad could be seen as a "decentering" moment, when Freud's analogic dualism is ruptured—the machine suddenly exposing its role in the elucidation of the psyche. Baudry points to scenes in cinema when the audience becomes suddenly aware of the ideological mechanisms at work in the cinematic apparatus, which, he says, are "similar, precisely, to those elements indicating the return of the repressed [and] signify without fail the arrival of the instrument 'in flesh and blood,' as in Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*" (364). Indeed, as Baudry argues, "both specular tranquility and the assurance of one's own identity collapse simultaneously with the revealing of the mechanism, that is, of the inscription of the film work" (364). However, for Baudry, the real power of the cinematic apparatus is its ability, usually, to disguise its own inscription, that is, its ability to become a mere "dream screen" in its mainstream manifestation. I refer to these discussions because it is vital to remember that post-silent-era Hollywood cinema was grappling with the high financial stakes of a newfound *phono*-centrism (not the kind that Derrida analyzes as an impossible philosophical quest for "presence," but a capitalist species of it, nonetheless), which, in turn, dictated the very nature of cinematic representation and distribution. The question was how to deal with the intransigence of linguistically bound markets when suddenly burdened by an extra-ideographic product. And just as Freud would turn to the Mystic Writing-Pad as a means of explaining the role of the psyche, so the "dissolve translation" apparatus can be seen as Hollywood's self-reflexive allegory for its role in the new world of sound.

But unlike the "dream screen" power of Baudry's general cinematic apparatus, the dissolve translation involved an apparatus technique that could not disguise itself as such. As we have already seen in the William Nigh films, the dissolve translation, ostensibly a rendering transparent of some foreign linguistic code, is in fact a heuristic mechanism—a rendering in apparatus form—that requires a certain amount of cinematic literacy. For the dissolve translation to work, audiences have to know already that what they are seeing is an extradramatic intervention, not a "magical" text transformation that is functioning within the narrative. That is, it is explicitly extradiegetic: the viewer has to recognize that the technology making possible the view (that is, the intersplicing of two pieces of celluloid) exceeds the technology that is being viewed (that is, writing on paper). In Cecil B. DeMille's 1927 film *King of Kings*, for example, the viewer has to be able to distinguish between Christ's miraculous ability (as he squats in the sand and begins to write, after having told the men accusing the woman of adultery, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone") to discern the particular sins of the potential stone-throwers and the "miracle" of writing in the sand that magically changes language before their very eyes (see Figures 19–24). For the technique to function at all, then, it has to draw attention to the mediating position of film as a translation device, that is, as an extratextual vehicle of *intent*. In short, the audience must be able to recognize which miracle is Christ's and which is DeMille's; that is, one has to know that the dissolve translation itself has an author.

In considering this necessary recognition of the camera as translator, it may be useful to notice that Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels conjure up something like a dissolve translation in their argument "Against Theory." Arguing that categories such as "the meaning of texts" and "authorial intention" are in fact inseparable, Knapp and Michaels imagine the following hypothetical situation: suppose you are walking along the beach one day when you come upon a series of squiggles carved into the sand. After stepping back, you notice that the words spell out the first stanza of Wordsworth's "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal." Eventually, a wave washes up to where you are standing and recedes, leaving another set of squiggles, this time the second stanza of Wordsworth's lyric. As Knapp and Michaels explain,

Figures 19–21. Dissolve translation in *King of Kings.* DeMille, 1927.
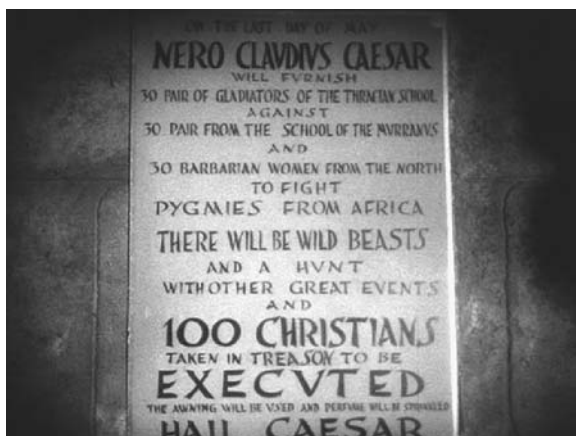
Figures 22–24. Dissolve translation in *King of Kings*. DeMille, 1927.

> You will now, we suspect, feel compelled to explain what you have just seen. Are these marks mere accidents, produced by the mechanical operation of the waves on the sand (through some subtle and unprecedented process of erosion, percolation, etc.)? Or is the sea alive and striving to express its pantheistic faith? Or has Wordsworth, since his death, become a sort of genius of the shore who inhabits the waves and periodically inscribes on the sand his elegiac sentiments? You might go on extending the list of explanations indefinitely, but you would find, we think, that all the explanations fall into two categories. You will either be ascribing these marks to some agent capable of intentions (the living sea, the haunting Wordsworth, etc.), or you will count them as nonintentional effects of mechanical processes (erosion, percolation, etc.). But in the second case—where the marks now seem to be accidents—will they still seem to be words? (728)

In a cinematic dissolve translation, the audience is presented with a similar set of choices. Either the dissolve is a result of the technology being viewed, in which case it is some mystical force or accident—necessarily part of the story; or it is a result of the technology making possible the viewing, in which case the dissolve is the product of intention, and therefore has an author. This makes the dissolve translation somewhat different from the more diegetic function of the cinematic "special effect." For the dissolve translation to make sense at all, the audience has to experience a Brechtian moment of *Verfremdungseffekt* when they cannot help but remember that they are watching a film.[27]

In DeMille's 1932 film *The Sign of the Cross* (the much anticipated "sequel" to *King of Kings*), he seems to relish this alienating moment, crafting the visual transformation of the dissolve translation to reveal a subtle meta-cinematic critique of MGM, who had just recently decided not to renew DeMille's three-film contract (*Sign of the Cross* had to be half-financed by DeMille himself, under a reluctant partnership with Paramount). Nero's poster advertising the execution of Christians (see Figures 25–27) becomes an unmistakable allusion to film advertising. "C. CLAVDI NERONIS" dissolves to "NERO CLAUDIVS CAESAR"—which is, of course, not far from "METRO GOLDWYN MAYER"—this right before the (MGM?) lions kill the Christians in a voyeuristic spectacle.[28] But beyond these subtle jabs at MGM, one could also see DeMille's use of the dissolve translation here as an attempt to associate English (the new linguistic medium for his films) with the cultural capital of Latin, as a new language linking audiences together

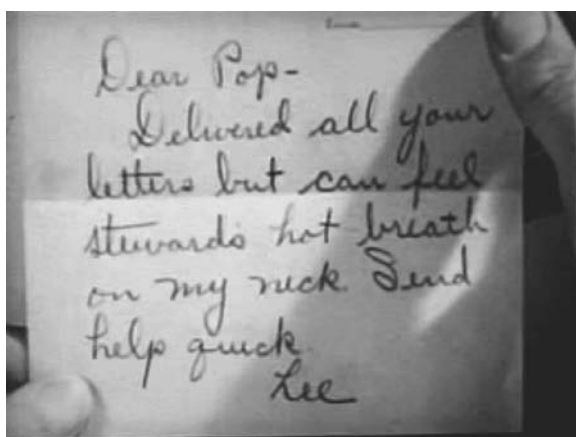Figures 25–27. Dissolve translation in *The Sign of the Cross*.
DeMille, 1932.

in a common "faith"—perhaps in an effort to resolve the international concerns for the ethnic and national "spirituality" of the people who were suddenly drawn to a new language. For DeMille, the "Sign of the Cross" is the ideographic answer to America's "phonocentric" market problems. By the miraculous power of DeMille's celluloid, English has resurrected the meaning of an otherwise dead language.

Employed as a technique throughout the 1930s, it is tempting to see the dissolve translation as a transparent dramatization of Hollywood's mission to bring "other" voices to its American monolingual audiences. The writing of "foreign" characters such as Charlie Chan (see Figures 28–30), Mr. Moto (Figures 31–33), and Anna May Wong (Figures 1–3) seems magically translated for the American screen, and American monolingualism is kept safe and secure.[29] And again, in moments when Hollywood portrays Americans abroad, as when Gary Cooper and Frederic March are supposedly in Paris, the dissolve translation comes to the rescue (Figures 34–36). Wasn't this exactly what American viewers wanted? Why did this technique fall out of use?

As far as I know, there were no actual discussions of the dissolve translation among studio executives that would explain their various reasons for moving away from the technique.[30] I want to argue, however, that the technique may have gradually faded from film precisely because it requires the overt recognition of the film as translator, in much the same way that Baudry's "disturbing cinematic elements" are those that "signify without fail the arrival of the instrument 'in flesh and blood'" (364). That is, the apparent domestication of the dissolve translation, in fact, conveys an inherently minoritizing effect. In a dissolve translation, the foreign language is translated for the viewer, but done so in a way that necessarily reminds the viewer that an act of translation has occurred. It is the ideographic trace that renders false the monolingual "phonocentrism" of Hollywood film.

One way of explaining this historical fading of the dissolve translation is to think of it in terms of cinematic "writing" in Theodor W. Adorno's sense. Recent attempts to recuperate Adorno's theories on the culture industry have often turned to his relatively rare moments of optimistic enthusiasm for film as a form of "writing." As Miriam Hansen has shown, "for film to become art, in Adorno's view, it would have to inhibit the photographic iconicity of the image flow by means of cinematic techniques that make it 'resemble the phenomenon of
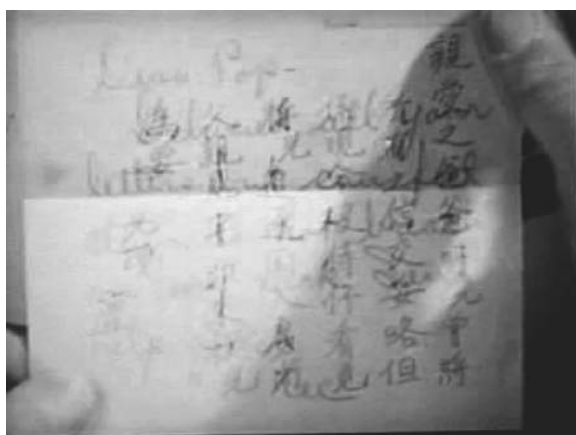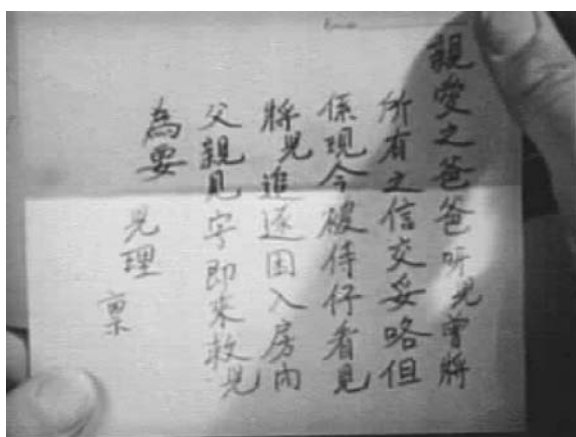
Figures 28–30. Dissolve translation in *Charlie Chan at the Race Track*. Fox, 1936.
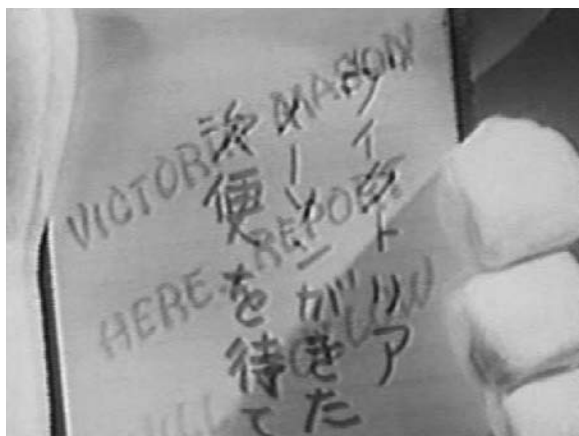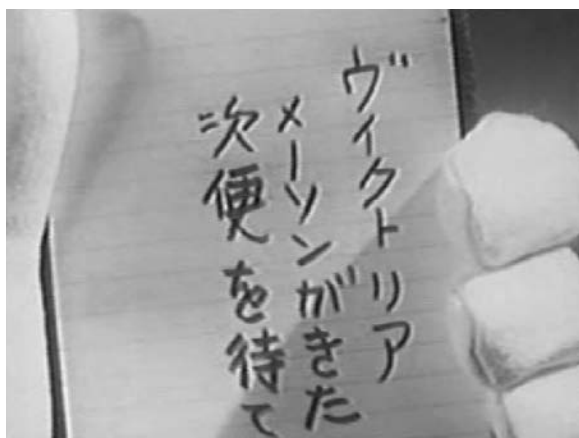
Figures 31–33. Dissolve translation in *Mr. Moto Takes a Chance*. Fox, 1938.

Figures 34–36. Dissolve translation in *Design for Living*. Paramount, 1933.

writing'" ("Mass Culture," 58). Some scholars have suggested that in Adorno's "Transparencies on Film" (1966), he turns, like Eisenstein or Vertov before him, to the principle of montage as a moment in film that "arranges [things] in a constellation akin to writing," opening, perhaps, the possibility for a democratic resistance from within mass culture.[31] But what these attempts tend to overlook is that Adorno more consistently refers to montage as a "*gentle* jolt"—as in "Prologue to Television" (55) and again in "The Schema of Mass Culture" (93; emphasis mine in both)—which seems to imply that for Adorno, even in montage, the powerful "priestly hieroglyphic script" of film "addresses its images to those who have been *subjugated* not in order that they might be enjoyed but only that they be read" ("Schema," 93; emphasis mine). Montage, in other words, does not resemble "writing" in any way that could transcend the powerful hieroglyphic authority of film. With the "gentle" transitional effect of montage, a viewer will hardly recognize that he or she is being written *onto* (one might even argue, without apologizing for the pun, that Adorno viewed the mimetic seamlessness of montage as an *onto*logical power[32]), which is exactly why the transition to sound represented a *more* hieroglyphic moment for Adorno. As he and Horkheimer argue in *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* "The more densely and completely its techniques duplicate empirical objects, the more easily it creates the illusion that the world outside is a seamless extension of the one which has been revealed in the cinema. Since the abrupt introduction of the sound film, mechanical duplication has become entirely subservient to this objective" (99). In the sound film, montage hardly permits the viewer to "lose the thread" of the film, thereby forcing "those exposed to it to identify film directly with reality" (100). But, as I have shown, what Adorno saw montage as incapable of doing in American cinema was in fact a primary feature of the dissolve translation's very legibility. That is, the dissolve translation is closer to Tom Conley's theorization of cinematic "writing," in which "the gap between what a film would wish to say or mean and the impact of writing in the field of the image [is] discerned as an effect of *rupture*" (x; emphasis in original). According to Conley, it is precisely in moments where "graphic traits" intercede in the film that the "illusion of reality seen within the frame [becomes] subject to graphic treatment that might forcibly call cinematic illusion into question" (x).

Thus, if what monolingual American audiences wanted was not simply translation, but the *invisibility* of translation as well—if they wanted the "other" everywhere speaking English without being reminded that they needed a machine/corporation to translate the other—then the dissolve translation was clearly not the best cinematic apparatus for the job. And I would argue that this is why the dissolve translation was eventually "repressed," and that the technique that prevailed was a more widespread (if subtle) process of *aural* dissolve. Specifically, I am referring to the common practice of portraying a "foreign" setting in which all of the actors speak English. Notice, for example, that in Universal–International's 1963 film version of *The Ugly American* the explicit critique of American monolingualism, while absolutely central to the book, gets completely eliminated. In fact, "ugliness" in the film version of *The Ugly American* has nothing to do with language, and everything to do with the implied necessity of an aggressively militant foreign policy. Unlike the book, the film version's character MacWhite (Marlon Brando) is decidedly monolingual. Instead, it is the "Sarkhanese" character, Deong (Eiji Okada), who is "bilingual" in the film, although his bilingualism is signaled through accented English, and not through any sustained "foreign" language dialogue.

There are literally thousands of films that employ this aural dissolve or variations on it. When Frankenheimer's version of *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) portrays a group of Russian, Chinese, and Korean Communists plotting to overthrow the U.S. government, their lingua franca is, unbelievably, English. In *Flower Drum Song* (1961), illegal immigrants arriving directly from Communist China step off the boat speaking English, while their Chinese American contacts speak so well that some of them can no longer recognize Chinese characters at all. When William Holden's character in *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) stops traffic in the middle of Hong Kong to ask for directions (Chinese phrasebook in hand), he is shocked to discover that the officer already speaks wonderful English, as does nearly everyone he comes in contact with throughout the film. When Ingrid Bergman's character in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958) learns Chinese, the film illustrates this transformation by simply having all of the Asian actors suddenly begin speaking English. MGM's adaptation of Pearl Buck's *The Dragon Seed* (1944) featured an all-star cast of American actors as

Chinese peasants, all speaking English. "Here is a motion picture," film critic Bosley Crowther explained, "with sufficient inner strength to make you believe, while you are seeing it, that Chinese peasants speak English and sleep in beds" (Crowther, X1)[33]

Naturally, it is worth distinguishing here among films in which "foreign" characters speak English (often accented), even though the audience is meant to understand the characters are actually speaking something else, films in which "foreign" characters happen to speak English because some diegetic element (however improbable) provides a context for their having learned English, and films in which "foreign" characters speak English because they worship American culture and hope to emulate it.[34] These differences reflect varying degrees of technique and indoctrination, but if the final result of all these variations is that everyone in American cinema speaks English all the time, it becomes crucial to ask how this linguistic homogeny affects the cultural hegemony of American monolingualism (and, indirectly, Global English). My point is that in "making [audiences] believe" according to these linguistic domestications, Hollywood corporations have consistently engaged in what Robert Stam has identified as a discourse of "pseudo-polyphony," which "marginalizes and disempowers certain voices, and then pretends to undertake a dialogue with a puppet-like entity that has already been forced to make crucial compromises" ("Bakhtin," 263). Stam is using the word "polyphony" in the Bakhtinian sense, and I would extend his discussion to argue that this particular aural dissolve technique might be understood as an instantiation of "unitary language," which Bakhtin defines as "a system of linguistic norms" in which a series of "generative forces . . . struggle to overcome the heteroglossia of language, forces that unite and centralize verbal–ideological thought" (270–71). And while Bakhtin sees heteroglossic elements within single modes of literary transmission, it is not hard to see this corporate cinematic technique as a perversion, or even repression, of his "dialogic imagination" in which dialogue is *only* ever imagined, but never completely realized. As Baudry has explained, "The system of repression (primarily economic) has as its goal the prevention of deviations and of the active exposure of this 'model'" (Baudry, 364–65).[35]

There have been a variety of filmmakers who have attempted to disrupt this pseudo-polyphony (Godard's *Le Mépris,* for instance, is

so multilingual that it literally defies dubbing),[36] and international film distributors have occasionally tried to break through the monolingual hegemony of English-language film. But in the United States, such attempts are usually disastrous. B. Ruby Rich, for example, has shown that in the 1980s, in the midst of rising English-only activism and declining foreign-language classroom enrollment, the foreign film circuit found itself battling an increasing resistance to subtitled films in the United States. If foreign-language films carried an air of "hipness" in the 1960s and 1970s, by the 1980s, "the rise of a homegrown art cinema—the independent feature movement—cut into the audience for foreign films . . . hijacking hipness into a new made-in-the-USA format ready for subtitle-free absorption" (157). Indeed, if an influx of erotic foreign-language films in the 1960s had, as Stephen Vaughn explains in *Freedom and Entertainment,* helped bring down the Hays' Office Production Code (replaced in 1968 by the Ratings Board), in the 1970s those erotic foreign-language films had long since been replaced with English-language independent productions.[37] By the early 1970s, the novelty of foreign-language films had worn off. Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, Bess Myerson, for example, was proposing legislation in 1972 that would "force theaters showing foreign-language films to indicate that fact in their advertising" ("City Wants," 49). Myerson was concerned, she said, because foreign-language films "whose titles are in English can easily mislead moviegoers into believing that the actors will speak English" (49).

In 1985, executives at Orion (now Sony Picture Classics) responded to this quandary with a creative, if deceptive, solution, creating no-dialogue trailers that would "trick" audiences into thinking they had come to see an English-language picture. This strategy became the rule for foreign-film marketers in the late 1980s and 1990s, and it often worked, although audiences sometimes reacted with annoyance. New York Films founder Don Talbot remembers going to see Zhang Yimou's Chinese-language classic *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991). When the opening credits had ended, and the dialogue—and subtitles—began, a "sudden burst of groaning was audible. The audience was face-to-face with a ruse and realized it had been duped" (Rich, 158). Still, the audience stayed, and *Raise the Red Lantern* did relatively well at the box office (for a non-English film).[38]

The need for such deceptive tactics in marketing foreign-language

films, however, only highlights the degree to which corporate inter-
ests are continually caught up with the linguistic marketplace. It may
not be possible to hypostatize statistically the effects of English-only
cinema in examining the rise of Global English, but it is clear that
"Planet Hollywood" would not have had the same marketing success
that it did without the simultaneous entrenchment of American mono-
lingualism and the political opening of foreign markets to a mix of
cinematic ideography, subtitling, dubbing, and English-language learn-
ing that all made possible the international reception of American cin-
ema. If Stam is correct in arguing that, "Although languages as abstract
entities do not exist in hierarchies of value, languages as lived entities
operate within hierarchies of power" (*Subversive Pleasures*, 77), one can
just as reasonably conclude that Hollywood's use of an "official" lan-
guage has had important consequences for this intersection of lan-
guage and power. Mark Abley has recently noted, "Almost anywhere
you care to go—the Cayman Islands, the Andaman Islands, the Mar-
shall Islands, the Galapagos Islands—young people are absorbing the
same music and watching the same movies, most of them from Holly-
wood. Local cultures, less forceful, less alluring, are swept aside" (4).
I have been suggesting that the question of how these local languages
begin to "dissolve" must be considered in conjunction with the larger
mechanism of English-language cinema, and its ultimate success in
the global marketplace. What emerges in Planet Hollywood's delicate
balance between ideography and "phonocentrism" is precisely the ten-
sion between apparatus and repression, language and market, "self"
and "other."

Notes

1. Here I am using Lawrence Venuti's Deleuze-inflected distinction between
"domesticating" and "minoritizing" translations. See Venuti, 9–11.
2. See Hoskins, McFadyen, and Finn, 45. Renaud and Litman suggest that
the American aversion to the "foreign" includes not only subtitling or dubbing
but also quite often programs and films with British accents (245). One wonders
if films made in heavily British-accented English, such as *The Limey* (1999), which
earned around $3 million (but was made at a cost of over $9 million), do not sim-
ilarly fall prey to the homo-hegemony of American monolingualism.
3. See Hirsch, 361–63 and Kaufman, 3.
4. My criteria for this resistance are the various box office reports collected

at imdb.com. Many non-English-language films that are sometimes remembered as having been hugely successful commercially were in fact relatively minor box office achievements. Claire Denis's 1988 French-language film *Chocolat*, for example, is sometimes remembered as very successful, but made only $2.3 million at the box office (whereas Lasse Hallström's English-language film by the same name made over $71 million in 2000). The Spanish-language film *Men with Guns* made only $742,032. *Das Boot* made $10 million when it was released in 1982, and $11 million again when it was reissued in 1997, but cost around $14 million to make, and ended up grossing $73 million outside the United States (and, in any case, was usually viewed in the United States with English dubbing). *L'Auberge espagnole* made a mere $3.8 million in 2002. Mel Gibson's recent *Apocalypto* returned an impressive $50 million, but cost more than $40 million to make, earning a mere $10 million in net revenue. (Gibson's *Passion of the Christ*, however, is a legitimate exception to this rule, for reasons I will discuss below.) On occasion, a foreign-language film will make up to $20–30 million, such as *Como Agua Para Chocolat* (1992) or *Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (2001), but when compared to English-language successes it becomes very clear that what advocates of foreign-language films in the United States usually mean when they describe a foreign-language film as a "mainstream success" is that the film was a success *for a foreign-language film*. For an excellent speculative essay on the issues of translation and cinema, see Shohat, 106–38.

5. In *Monolingualism of the Other* (1998), Derrida reflects on his experience growing up in Algeria, and on the cultural mechanisms that initially kept him from learning Arabic or Berber, arguing that "The monolingualism imposed by the other operates by relying upon that foundation, here, through a sovereignty whose essence is always colonial, which tends, repressively and irrepressibly, to reduce language to the One, that is, to the hegemony of the homogenous. This can be verified everywhere, everywhere this homo-hegemony remains at work in the culture, effacing the folds and flattening the text" (40). Part of my argument here will be that this homo-hegemony is responsible for "effacing the [linguistic] folds and flattening the text" of American cinema.

6. Figures listed as of June 29, 2007 at imdb.com. Three of these six non–U.S. box office successes were Hayao Miyazaki animated pictures—which has made their international distribution (via dubbing) even easier.

7. This also explains for Moretti why comedies do not "travel well" (94–95).

8. In four European countries (France, Germany, Italy, and Spain), dubbing continues as the most common method of linguistic transfer, although there is also evidence that younger populations (who quite often speak English) in these countries are beginning to prefer subtitling. See, for example, Ariza's 2004 case study of Spain as a dubbing country. As Ariza notes, the reason for this initial preference for dubbing has to do with the early decisions regarding sound films in the 1930s. For more on dubbing vs. subtitling, see studies by Danan, Dries, Whitman-Linsen, and a comprehensive overview by Luyken.

9. See Gomery, 18.

10.   As Benjamin explains: the "technique of reproduction detaches the pro-duced object from the domain of tradition" (221). And, although the withering of "aura" associated with this detachment may have political potential, film studios have responded to it by initiating an "artificial build-up of the 'personality' out-side the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film indus-try, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the 'spell of personality,' the phony spell of a commodity" (231). Adorno's main contention with Benjamin is very close to mine here: that the culture industry transformed and preserved a sense of "aura" rather than eliminating it by means of supposedly democratically inflected mechanical reproduction. See Adorno's letter to Benjamin in "Complete Correspondence" (128).

11.   Sergei Eisenstein's first theorization of film montage in 1929 relied directly on a somewhat different notion of the ideographic. If Ezra Pound had seen the extragrammatical juxtaposition of images in Chinese and Japanese ideograms as an essential vehicle for the reinvigoration of modern American poetry, Eisenstein saw that same method as an "essential method and device in any cinemato-graphic exposition" (14). The cinematic shot, he argues, is a "montage cell" forming part of a "collision" of images that created the power of modern cinematography (14). For a discussion of the orientalist mythologies embedded in such a vision of Chinese orthography, see DeFrancis. According to Eisenstein (who was perhaps more concerned with aesthetic considerations than market distribution), the advent of sound technology threatened to weigh down the ideography of the montage technique by adding an unwanted inertia to each shot. His proposed solution to this problem was to permit only the nonsynchronous use of sound. As he argued in a "Statement on Sound," the straightforward "theatrical" use of sound tech-nology could "destroy the culture of montage" (371). Hence, the "first experiments in sound must aim at a sharp discord with the visual images" (371). Only then will "the sound film not be imprisoned within national markets" and able to preserve its "world-wide viability" (372). It is also worth pointing out here that Anderson's thesis is borrowed almost directly from Marshall McLuhan, although McLuhan's use of "ideographic" is much closer to Pound's and Eisenstein's. See McLuhan, 177.

12.   See Gish, 60, also quoted in Hansen's *Babel and Babylon*, 77.

13.   Michael Rogin's reading of *The Jazz Singer* brilliantly analyzes the meta-cinematic aspects of the film as a narrative of Jewish assimilation facilitated by blackface performance. He is less helpful, however, on this aspect of audience "lit-eracy" in the post–silent era of film inaugurated by *The Jazz Singer.* I am indebted to Jerome Christensen for this insight.

14.   See Hoskins's *Global Television*, 33.

15.   See Bell, 429; Gomery, 42. As I will elaborate more fully below, Adorno would even claim that film only really became "hieroglyphic" *after* the introduc-tion of sound.

16.   Among the 369 most successful films at the U.S. box office listed at imdb.com, *The Passion of the Christ* is number 11, and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is number 216. See http://www.imdb.com/boxoffice/alltimegross. One could also

include *Dances with Wolves,* in which approximately 25 percent of the dialogue is in Lakota. In fact, it would be interesting to explore successful American films like *Dances* that sometimes romanticize the sensitivity or brilliance of monolingual English-speaking characters who take the trouble to learn a foreign language. One might contrast films of this sort with examples such as Phillip Noyce's 2002 film version of Graham Greene's *The Quiet American,* which thematizes the degree to which hearing and understanding other people's voices may in fact (contra Rich's assertion) make it that much easier to kill them: whereas the "quiet" American character in Greene's 1956 novel is a monolingual pawn, and the "quiet" American character in Joseph Mankiewicz's 1958 film version is a monolingual saint, the "quiet" American character in Noyce's 2002 film version is a *multi*lingual CIA agent, using his fluency in Vietnamese to initiate acts of terrorism in the name of a "benevolent" American empire. Unfortunately, Noyce's film did rather modestly at the box office ($12 million), and its release was significantly delayed by 9/11. Christina Klein has also argued that the politics of linguistic marketing played an important role in Ang Lee's decision to use Mandarin Chinese rather than Cantonese in *Crouching Tiger.* See Klein, 18–42.

17. See Gomery, 64–65; Trumpbour, 4–5.

18. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted. The original Spanish reads: "desalojamiento de nuestro idioma [por] el monopolio, hoy casi total, del 'film' sonoro." See "El 'Film' Sonoro," 14.

19. That is, "Las películas sonoras y parientes con música extranjera y en ingles acaban de agravar el problema, al neutralizar la enseñanza artística nacionalista de las escuelas . . . desnacionalización del niño . . . el cinematógrafo sonoro con música extranjera y parlante en ingles." See "La Sensibilidad Infantil," 11.

20. A special commission was eventually set up to study the problems created by talking movies, particularly regarding "the displacing of Argentine musicians in the theatres and the use of foreign language" ("Board to Study Talkies," 34). Not surprisingly, two members of the commission were associated with the recently dismissed Opera House orchestra.

21. This translation is from the *New York Times,* as I have not been able to locate an original copy of *El Tiempo.* See "Hits Plan," 17.

22. See also "Lasky Brings Plans for Foreign Films," 16.

23. For the increased demand for multilingual stars, see Flint, X6; "Suave Mr. Menjou," X4. On Hollywood actors taking foreign-language classes, see Hall's "Chaplin's Film Nearing Completion," 91 and "Lubitsch's 'Monte Carlo'," X3. On the *Little Rascals,* see "Comedy for the Screen," 111.

24. Graves, 12. Other advocates of foreign-language instruction began noticing that the imposition of the English language by the British Empire had led to pockets of linguistic resistance among decolonizing subjects. S. M. Brownell, U.S. Commissioner of Education, in a speech at a meeting of the Central States MLTA in 1955, pointed out that the demise of the English colonial empire had led to growing movements of "vibrant nationalism," which had led to greater pride in "native tongues": "Whoever would have more than a superficial acquaintance with

these [recently decolonized] peoples now must learn to communicate—or I might even say to be in communion—with them through their native tongues" (222–23).

25. While this general trend is clear from even superficial viewing, one hopes that future archivists will have access to searchable databases that could (via Moretti's notion of "distant reading") more precisely depict the gradual demise of the dissolve translation. See Moretti, *Graphs*, 4–33.

26. Zuckert offers a concise summary of Derrida's rereading of Freud: "The metaphor of the writing pad raises a question Freud himself failed to make explicit— a question concerning the relation or, really, inseparability of the organization of our inner psyche and that of the external world. We become able to understand the character of the complex operation of our memory only by virtue of the invention of a 'supplementary machine,' a writing pad designed to overcome the limits of that same memory. The invention outlives its cause or source; used metaphorically, it has unanticipated effects. Only by having an effect or leaving such a trace, by writing upon the external world, can we come to understand how we ourselves are constituted or 'written' upon internally. That internal writing or text determines, in turn, the way in which we see and thus act in the world. We do not and can never entirely control either the effects of our action in the world or the impressions we receive of it. 'We are written only as we write.' Inner and outer, past and present, life and death are not, strictly speaking or completely, divisible. They are both joined and separable, in part, like the sheets of the pad" (214–15).

27. The dissolve translation also differs from other extradiegetic effects in early cinema in that it accommodates for a specifically *cultural* (rather than more generally human) deficiency. Unlike extradiegetic effects such as multiple image superimposition, the montage balloon, or crosscutting (all of which are introduced as a means of overcoming the basic spatial/temporal constraints of everyday life in narrative representation), the dissolve translation occurs only because the audience is presumably bound by the *linguistic* constraints of a given community.

28. DeMille's subtle jab at MGM may have also been due to his dissatisfaction with the studio's delay in loaning Frederic March for his part in the film, for which MGM eventually paid $7,459 to cover the cost of the production crew who had been left waiting to begin filming. See Birchard, 253.

29. I should note here that the marketing power of the dissolve translation was not exclusive to Hollywood film. The French version of Fritz Lang's classic *M* (1932) uses the technique when zooming in on the reward poster for the murderer.

30. In a bizarre twist on this technique, the 2003 American version of the KINO video reissue of Fritz Lang's classic *Metropolis* (1927), touted as a "Restored, Authorized Version," has digitally superimposed English writing over all of the original German-language text in the film so that it appears in a similar font in English—as though Lang had only ever intended English to begin with (a post-dissolve translation, as it were). The most recent use of the dissolve translation I have seen is in the opening credits of *The Hunt for Red October* (1990), but its placement at the beginning of the film creates a very different effect than if it occupied a central part of the film.

31.   Here I am using Hansen's more accurate translation from Adorno ("Mass Culture," 58).

32.   In "Schema," Adorno criticizes Heidegger for failing to see that our disconnect with Being is a product of the material realities of the culture industry. Heidegger "accorded a place of honor to curiosity as an invariant feature in the 'fallenness' of human existence, as a fundamental existential–ontological 'constitution' within the 'ontological tendency of everydayness,'" but Heidegger "nevertheless committed an injustice upon mankind by ascribing curiosity to man as such and virtually making the victim responsible rather than the jail-keeper. Whatever Aristotle knew about the intrinsic desire to see, today visibility [via the 'writing' of film, etc.] is thrust upon everything that can possibly be seen" (83).

33.   Ella Shohat rather succinctly describes the absurdity of such a technique, noting, "In Cecil B. epics, both the ancient Egyptians and the Israelites spoke English, and so, for that matter, did God" (108). Recently, a few filmmakers have tried to draw attention to the folly of this process, even while engaging in it themselves. In *The Hunt for Red October* (1990), for example, the Russian characters played by Sean Connery and Sam Neill speak in Russian (with subtitles) until another character on board reading from the Bible says the word "Armageddon," at which point all of the dialogue, magically, reverts to English. In *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002), when a prisoner breaks into the protagonist's nearby cell, he asks "Parlez vous anglais?" briefly drawing attention to the assumption that these characters have been speaking French all along (after which they go on speaking English to each other). I am indebted to one of my anonymous readers at *Cultural Critique* for also pointing out that similar "dissolves" occur in Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil* (1958), Stanley Kramer's *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), and John McTiernan's *The 13th Warrior* (1999).

34.   I am indebted here to an anonymous reader at *Cultural Critique* for this distinction.

35.   I would point to the monolingual tendencies of Hollywood film as an (at least partial) recuperation of Baudry's theories, particularly in the wake of Vance Kepley's contention that "Apparatus theory takes account of neither matter in its description of the conditions of film viewing" (536). While I agree with Kepley (and even Noël Carroll's more acerbic critique) that Baudry's use of psychoanalytical theory is overextended, I would hope that my own historically informed study here demonstrates how certain aspects of apparatus theory can indeed help explain the complex tension between the poles of ideography and "phonocentrism" in post–silent-era Hollywood film as dramatized in the dissolve translation.

36.   See especially Stam's discussion of this film's multilingualism in *Subversive Pleasures*, 74–75.

37.   See Vaughn, 12–14; also Gardner, 56.

38.   In 1995, the trailer for *Il Postino (The Postman)* even enlisted an entire cast of Hollywood movie stars to read Pablo Neruda's poetry in translation, implying subtly in the preview that they had been part of the Italian-language, subtitled film. See Rich, 159.

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