



There's something
I haven't told you yet.

SPEAKING IN SUBTITLES

REVALUING SCREEN TRANSLATION

TESSA DWYER

Speaking in Subtitles
Revaluing Screen Translation

Tessa Dwyer

EDINBURGH
University Press

Edinburgh University Press is one of the leading university presses in the UK.
We publish academic books and journals in our selected subject areas across the humanities and social sciences, combining cutting-edge scholarship with high editorial and production values to produce academic works of lasting importance. For more information visit our website: edinburghuniversitypress.com

© Tessa Dwyer, 2017

Edinburgh University Press Ltd
The Tun – Holyrood Road
12 (2f) Jackson's Entry
Edinburgh EH8 8PJ

Typeset in Monotype Ehrhardt by
Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Stockport, Cheshire,
and printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 4744 1094 6 (hardback)
ISBN 978 1 4744 1095 3 (webready PDF)
ISBN 978 1 4744 1096 0 (epub)

The right of Tessa Dwyer to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and the Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003 (SI No. 2498).

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
Introduction	1
Part 1 Devaluation and Deconstruction	
1. Sub/Dub Wars: Attitudes to Screen Translation	19
2. Vanishing Subtitles: The Invisible Cinema (1970–4)	52
3. Dubbing Undone: <i>Can Dialectics Break Bricks?</i> (1973)	79
Part 2 Errant and Emergent Practices	
4. Media Piracy, Censorship and Misuse	109
5. Fansubbing and Abuse: Anime and Beyond	135
6. Streaming, Subbing, Sharing: Viki Global TV	164
Conclusion: Error Screens	186
<i>Bibliography</i>	189
<i>Index</i>	220

CHAPTER 2

Vanishing Subtitles: The Invisible Cinema (1970–4)

Opening on 1 December 1970 to launch the foundation of New York's Anthology Film Archives, the Invisible Cinema was utterly unique in its design, programme and philosophy. In a review for *Vogue* magazine, Barbara Rose (1971: 70) described its seating bank as nothing short of 'revolutionary'. Meanwhile, Anthology declared it the 'first true Cinema', positioning it as the centrepiece of its 'film museum exclusively devoted to the *film as an art*' (Sitney 1975: vi–viii). The cinema featured ritualised, cyclic screenings of a handpicked selection of 'essential' viewing comprising 'monuments of cinematic art' (v). Within this reverential space,



Figure 2.1 Launch of the Invisible Cinema with (left to right) Paul Morrissey, Michel Auder and Andy Warhol. Photograph by Gretchen Berg. © Gretchen Berg and Anthology Film Archives.

anything considered extraneous to a formalist avant-garde appreciation of 'pure' cinema was eradicated or, at the least, minimised as far as possible to the point of invisibility – whence its name. Such impurities ranged from banter between audience members to commercialism of any kind (hence, largely excluding narrative cinema) to the violations of dubbing and subtitling. The Invisible Cinema's blanket rejection of screen translation methods exceeds the binary logic of the sub versus dub debate canvassed in Chapter 1. Moreover, the rationale behind this rejection appears far removed from Bosley Crowther's anti-subtitle campaign of the previous decade. Rather than making foreign-language films accessible for a mass public, Anthology's uncompromising insistence upon untranslated foreign 'originals' seems almost engineered to alienate and exclude a general audience. In an interview with Stanley Eichelbaum (1971), Anthology's Jonas Mekas conceded that the Invisible Cinema's no-subtitles policy had met with some complaints, retorting: 'but we're not concerned with the audience. We're interested in film.' By banning both dubbing and subtitling Anthology instituted a strict division between production and reception, clearly prioritising the former over the later. Admittedly, the Invisible Cinema obsessed over the act of reception, even attempting to foster a suitable 'posture' for film contemplation (Sitney 1975: viii). However, this focus on reception was solely concerned with reducing its impact on the film itself as hallowed object, curtailing the contamination of film 'art' via extra-filmic elements such as the audience. In a nutshell, the act, context and agent of reception were to be made 'invisible' in order to ensure the untainted purity of film. Annette Michelson (1998: 5) notes that even the historically accurate practice of providing musical accompaniment for silent films was strictly forbidden at the Invisible Cinema, 'on the grounds that such accompaniment – including that of specially or originally commissioned scores – had been primarily the response to the demands of exhibitors, and not necessarily structurally intrinsic to the author's filmic project'.

Providing a colourful conclusion to the sub/dub debates of the preceding decade, the Invisible Cinema's public denouncement of screen translation *as a whole* produces a moment of crystallisation, making it possible to see – almost in petrified form – a number of converging interests, attitudes, prejudices and practices. The crystal that is formed in this unique cultural-historical moment points foremost to the productive, transformative power of translation – to its socio-cultural impact beyond the linguistic, communicative realm. This chapter examines the Invisible Cinema and its extremist, zero-translation screenings in order to demonstrate how Anglo-American film culture (whether alternative

or mainstream) deploys the inevitable flaws of dubbing and subtitling to excuse and defend widespread disengagement from language difference and translation in general. It proceeds by first detailing the disappearing act that the Invisible Cinema performed on screen translation, along with the various effects this disappearance wrought on foreign-language films and their reception. It then proceeds to consider how Anthology utilised issues of translation to define and cement its own aesthetic and ideological position. Ultimately, despite its strategy of differentiation, striking similarities emerge between the Invisible Cinema's radical rejection of translation and less severe instances of mainstream resistance.

Throughout this discussion, notions of failure continually surface. Motivated by the supposed inadequacies of both dubbing and subtitling, Anthology's no-translation screening policy was largely scrapped following the Invisible Cinema's demise in 1974, remaining in relic form only. Today, foreign-language films included in Anthology's Essential Cinema repertory tend to be screened both with and without subtitles. Audiences can pick and choose which format they prefer. Outside the Essential Cinema collection however, foreign-language films are screened with English subtitles. In part, the end of the Invisible Cinema and the unique vision for which it stood signals the gap separating ideas from their realisation. To its credit, Anthology proactively set out to bridge this gap, seeking to produce a new mode of 'practical criticism' (Sitney 1975: vi). Conceived as the embodiment or physical manifestation of Anthology's critical position, the Invisible Cinema constituted an integral part of this plan. It was here that formalist film avant-garde concepts could be put to practical effect. Yet, processes of actualisation necessarily involve transformation and re-routing. While the Invisible Cinema's ban on screen translation presented a forceful statement in support of its purist vision, when put to the test this policy failed on numerous fronts, frustrating audience members and compromising Anthology's corollary aim to raise the visibility and impact of experimental film, growing audiences via the availability of regular, affordable screenings (see Alfaro 2012b: 45–6).¹

Ironically, the Invisible Cinema's denunciation of both dubbing and subtitling had a reverse-effect. Instead of demonstrating the *inessential* nature of translation for film, this radical, zero-tolerance policy ultimately demonstrated the ongoing indispensability of translation to this first global, mass medium. If anything, the Invisible Cinema threw the spotlight *on to* translation not away from it, while its anti-subtitling stance proved short-lived and unsustainable. Although translation-free screenings do persist at Anthology, preserved in fossilised form as an optional mode of viewing some Essential Cinema films only, subtitles have wreaked

their revenge, becoming a mainstay of its feature programming. Hence, the Invisible Cinema's failed legacy is that today translation remains the critical factor in distinguishing 'essential' from 'non-essential', regular programming.

Disappearing Act

Setting out to redefine 'the essentials of the film experience' (Sitney 1975: vi), the Invisible Cinema constituted a ninety-seat screening space designed by Austrian experimental filmmaker Peter Kubelka, also a founding member of Anthology and part of its selection committee. As its name suggests, the Invisible Cinema sought to 'practically not be there'. According to Kubelka (1974: 32), 'an ideal cinema should not at all be felt'. Rather, all feeling or sensation should occur in response to the film and all attention be devoted exclusively to the screen. Anthology's manifesto declared that the 'viewer should not have any sense of the presence of walls or the size of the auditorium. He should have only the white screen, isolated in darkness as his guide to scale and distance' (Sitney 1971: vii). To this end, the Invisible Cinema sought to stage its own disappearance through a range of technical and interior design innovations that aimed to direct all attention 'on the filmic image and sound, without distractions' (vii). 'In a cinema', states Kubelka (1974: 32), 'one shouldn't be aware of the architectural space, so that the film can completely dictate the sensation of space'.

To achieve this ideal of non-presence, the Invisible Cinema took standard blackening procedures to the extreme. Seats, ceilings and walls were all lined in black velvet, the floor in black carpet and 'doors and everything else were painted black' (Kubelka 1974: 32). On the *Cinema Treasures* website, cinemagoer Gerald A. DeLuca (2004) recalls the 'all-black, side-partitioned seating', which for Stan Brakhage (quoted in Sitney 2005: 108) created an effect of 'drifting in a black space, a black box, and black ahead of you, nothing visible except the screen'. Inside, a strong white lamp directed audiences towards this unadorned, illuminated screen. Kubelka clarifies that the 'cinema had ... no curtains in front of the screen, as, unlike most film spaces, it was not conceived as an imitation of theatre' (32). All architectural features were removed apart from some large cast-iron columns that proved too solid for the sledgehammer (Sitney 2005: 35), as well as exit signs above the doors that Kubelka (35) felt compromised the overall design. Finally, by far the most controversial and emblematic aspect of the Invisible Cinema was its seating bank. Steeply raked to ensure unencumbered sight lines, seating rows comprised



Figure 2.2 The Invisible Cinema's emblematic seating pods. Photograph by Michael Chikiris. © unknown.

head-height side partitions that encased viewers in a wooden surround. As Rose (1971) reports, these 'unique viewing facilities ... caused as much controversy as the highly selective group of works assembled as a kind of canon of pure film art'.

The Invisible Cinema's partitioned seating pods sought to shield audience members from their neighbours, both visually and aurally, in order to heighten concentration on the film. For Kubelka (1974: 34), this seating arrangement fostered the creation of a 'sympathetic community' in which one was aware of others yet not disturbed by them. 'Isolated visually,' notes Michelson (1998: 5), 'the viewer could establish minimal tactile contact with her neighbor's hand, but aurally, one was well insulated, with structure and materials inhibiting conversation and effectively muffling all sound from sources other than that of the screen'. Complementing its ritualised, program of Essential Cinema, this seating design was based on the principle that 'one responds to the anticipation of art with a different posture than to the expectation of an entertainment' (Sitney 1975: viii). *Vogue* art critic Rose (1971) expressed her approval: 'I find the viewing situation at Anthology the best I have ever experienced ... The concentration permitted by such a seating arrangement lends a particular degree of both intensity and abstraction to the film experience that the self-conscious works shown at Anthology appear to demand.'²

In addition to subduing unwelcome noises from other audience members, the seating pods were designed to amplify sounds emitted from the centre of the screen, mimicking hearing devices used during World War II resembling ‘big ears’ (Kubelka 1974: 32). The wooden encasings ‘concentrated the sound coming in directly from the screen and subdued sounds coming from other directions in the room, thereby creating a maximum of silence within which the sound from the film would be undiluted’. For Kubelka (qtd in Thompson 1970), the ‘isolated seat, like a handcupped ear, simply directs and connects the spectator to the screen, ruling out interferences’. Evidently, Anthology recognised both image *and* sound as essential components of film art. The absorbent coverings used throughout the interior also served an acoustic purpose by enhancing sound insulation, while state-of-the-art equipment included ‘remote control of focus and sound so that the manager ... [could] ... ensure optimal quality from his seat in the house’ (Sitney 1975: viii) which was equipped with a direct telephone link to the projection booth (Sitney 2005: 35).

As part and parcel of its commitment to purity, this ‘best conditions’ (Sitney 1975: vi) cinema refused to screen films that were either dubbed or subtitled, denouncing translated prints as ‘defaced’ copies (viii):

One of the essential principles put forward by Anthology Film Archives is the presentation of film in *absolutely* original versions, without dubbing or subtitles. Synopses will be provided for the audience when necessary. At first a few films will be shown in their titled versions, but these will be replaced as soon as arrangements can be made for the undefaced copies. It is possible to see the subtitled prints of many of the films in our collection in the commercial theatres throughout the country. But where else can one see the film exactly as the author made it? There is a sacrifice involved in the substitution of the purity of the image for the sense of the words, but it is a necessary one.

Evidently, dubbing and subtitling were understood by Anthology as strictly post-production devices, completely inessential to the primary process of filmmaking. Considered extraneous to the essence of film and destructive of its visual and/or aural purity, they were no more welcomed in the theatre than the sound of crunching popcorn. As Mekas put it, subtitles ‘destroy the rhythm and form of a film’ (qtd in Eichelbaum 1971: 140). Although in many ways a spectacle in its own right, the unique design of the Invisible Cinema – at once both minimal and hyperbolic – ostensibly sought to eliminate anything that might distract and thus detract from the film as the filmmaker intended it to be shown. Since ‘the author works for the eye and the ear of the beholder,’ states Kubelka (1974: 32), ‘it is evident that no other visual or acoustic signals, other than those planned

by the film's author, should reach the beholder'. Dubbing and subtitling techniques were seen as a concession to the desire of the audience over and above that of the filmmaker. In contradistinction, Anthology declared itself a museum to film art and deified the name of the author-*auteur* above all else, operating much like a temple of worship (Michelson 1998: 5).

Despite this strict ruling against dubbing and subtitling, translation of a sort persisted at the Invisible Cinema nevertheless. Translations of foreign-language dialogue and/or inter-titling were prepared in-house as typed, print synopses. Reminiscent of silent film days when synopses might be posted in the cinema lobby in lieu of a lecturer or narrator (Bowser 1990: 19), this practice sought to effect a form of 'invisible' translation, banishing it from the visual and acoustic terrain of screenings and relegating it instead to the extra-filmic space of the page. Evidently, print synopses were seen to offer means of translation that did not compete or otherwise interfere with the audio-visual domain of film itself, as the printed pages would have surely been illegible in the dramatically darkened conditions of the cinema. In effect, Anthology's synopses sought to render subtitles as invisible as the cinema's blackened co-ordinates, shifting them from the illuminated space of the screen to the dim obscurity of the page.

As many of the foreign-language films screened at the Invisible Cinema belonged to the silent era, synopses often constituted translated transcripts of film inter-titles. A number of these transcripts remain on file at Anthology, including one prepared for Dziga Vertov's *Shagai, Soviet! / Stride, Soviet!* (1926), signed by Matt Sliwowski (n.d.), that announces itself a 'translation of the titles as they appear in the film'. In the 'Translator's Note', Sliwowski stresses the effort he has taken 'to retain the original graphic design and word order to the maximum'. Fidelity to the source material is obviously a primary concern, as one would expect from a translation prepared under the auspices of Anthology. Sliwowski goes to great lengths to preserve the visual poetry of the inter-titles by retaining elements of layout and capitalisation. In this regard, the transcript faithfully captures the way in which the film's inter-titles underscore the graphic and aural materiality of language, experimenting with textual composition while introducing tonal difference via the mix of uppercase and lowercase letters. Sliwowski also retains Russian-language syntax where possible and uses parentheses to indicate words added 'to make the English translation more clear'. Caption 13, for instance, reads: 'and [when] the steam HEATING operates'.

At several points, Sliwowski (n.d.) adds a brace bracket [}] by hand to indicate 'captions which come in a series without any image in between'.

The need for such a strategy and accompanying notation results from the qualitative difference that exists between the multimodality of the audiovisual and the singular, static entity of the page. Had the translations appeared on screen in the form of subtitles or intertitles, this cumbersome textual device would not have been necessary. At one point in the film, a pile of books is being burned. Part of a book title is obscured and Sliwowski indicates this omission by inserting a question mark in parentheses: '(?...) of the Old Testament'. This use of brackets and symbols repeatedly exposes the means of production, interrupting the translation's flow and highlighting the translator's agency. By preserving the original word order, the English titles are made to sound unfamiliar, as in captions 22 ('somewhere / a horse fallen / from hunger') and 23 ('somewhere / dies a camel / covered with / snow'). While some concessions are made to the norms of the target language, these are clearly marked so that any alteration to the 'original' can be identified. Clearly, this transcript aims towards a literal, word-for-word fidelity to its source, and seeks to provide an experience of foreignness over and above familiarity. The alienating effect of foreign word order combined with highlighting of the translator's mediating role disrupts the text's overall fluency. The reader is continually reminded of the very fact of translation. In this way, although making translation 'vanish' during film screenings, the Invisible Cinema foregrounded it within these in-house synopses. Sliwowski's careful, foreignising translation provides a key for decoding Anthology's mixed approach to foreign-language films and film viewing.

Sound/Side Effects

While the exaggerated darkness inside the Invisible Cinema prevented patrons from reading synopses during screenings, nevertheless Anthology committee member Ken Kelman identifies 'rattling papers' as a characteristic sound within the screening space (Sitney 2005: 34). By making it a matter of policy to issue audiences with typed translation transcripts, an unintended rustling noise resulted. The materiality of these translation transcripts is noted in a *New York Times* review by Howard Thompson (1970), who comments on the 'predominantly young, casually clad and near capacity' audience that the cinema attracted for Aleksandr Dovzhenko's first sound film *Ivan* (1932): '[c]lutching a synopsis and credits they tested the unconventional-looking seats a bit tentatively'. Kelman goes so far as to suggest that rather than subduing the extraneous sounds of rustling papers, the unique design of the cinema actually 'made it worse' as 'noises bounced around a little' (quoted in Sitney 2005: 34). It seems that the act

of removing translation from the screen to ensure the absolute ‘originality’ of the cinema’s images and sounds produced an unintentional side/sound effect, with rattling papers compromising Kubelka’s (1974: 32) ideal ‘maximum of silence’. As one impurity is traded for another, we glimpse the distance separating concept and realisation.

Even in visual terms alone, the Invisible Cinema did not quite live up to its name. Complaining about the shininess of the black seat hoods, Kelman (quoted in Sitney 2005: 34) states: ‘That was a little distracting because right in front of me was this shine that didn’t exactly reflect the movement of the screen. Anything more or less at eye level, you’re going to see, and so the Invisible Cinema was not invisible.’ Moreover, Sitney recalls how the seating pods ‘generated a great deal of heat’ and seemed to escape the reach of the air-conditioner, creating a ‘soporific problem’ referred to by Kelman as ‘the dozing off phenomenon’ (109). Brazilian experimental filmmaker Hélio Oiticica also noted this effect. Describing the Invisible Cinema as ‘a horrible place’, Oiticica (quoted in Small 2008: 86n16) writes in 1971:

the place is completely black, one sits in a way in which you can only see the screen, as the chairs have ‘ears’, with [flaps], so that you are isolated from your neighbor; i feel the worst claustrophobia; it seems as if everything has stopped, and i don’t understand how this could be the best way to see films (it makes you go to sleep).

In addition to introducing acoustic and visual impurities and hindering airflow, both the design and philosophy of the Invisible Cinema disappointed in yet other ways. Another anticipated effect of transferring translation from the screen to the page was a consequent lack of comprehension. ‘There is a sacrifice involved,’ announced Anthology, ‘... in the substitution of the purity of the image for the sense of the words, but it is a necessary one’ (Sitney 1975: viii). Anthology seems here to concede that, despite its specially prepared synopses, the language of foreign films would, to a degree, be lost. As Mekas conceded (quoted in Eichelbaum 1971: 140), the sacrifice was not welcomed by many in the audience. Indeed, *New York Times* film critic Vincent Canby (1970: 38) argued that Anthology’s anti-subtitle stance stifled the sensual possibilities of film while disrespecting the work of seminal theorists and filmmakers such as Bazin and Godard who ‘fought to elevate the importance of movie sound (by which, I think, they must also mean sense) to that of the image’.

For Canby (1970: 38), the Invisible Cinema’s austere translation policy reflected its general tone of aesthetic militancy and effectively foreclosed the ‘potential sensual experience’ of film. Declaring its no-translation stance of ‘debatable value’, he proposed that it perpetuated the ‘esthetic

[*sic*] domination' of the image over sound. By publicly sacrificing the 'sense' of foreign words, language is reduced to a surface sound-effect. Presented as yet another aesthetic *object*, foreign language is appreciated for its material qualities alone – its grain, pitch, tone, timbre and texture, rather than its meaning or functionality. Despite recognising sound as an essential component of film art (as reflected in its high-end sound technology and idiosyncratic seating design), the Invisible Cinema did not accord language the same respect. Rather, in emphasising materiality over and above meaning, sense was forsaken for surface.

Through the Cracks

Reporting on the Invisible Cinema for the *New York Times*, Canby (1970: 38) writes: 'All films, whenever possible, will be shown in their original versions, meaning, in the case of foreign films, with their original soundtracks and without subtitles'. Here, Canby collapses the Invisible Cinema's translation-free screening policy into one all-encompassing issue: subtitling. To a degree, this response is quite valid. For Canby, dubbing simply did not fit the profile of the 'serious' (Sitney 1975: ix), devotional audience coveted by Anthology. Nevertheless, Canby's response both cuts to the heart of the matter *and* misses the mark. Certainly, it correctly surmises that Anthology's blanket rejection of film translation actually played out in relation to subtitles alone. In reality, it was subtitles, and, by extension, art cinema conventions and mores, that were being contested. In neglecting to mention dubbing at all, Canby suggests that this translation practice was beneath consideration, understood as so antithetical to Anthology's mission as to be largely irrelevant. However, Canby fails to note that in becoming doubly invisible in this way, dubbing might potentially slip through the cracks. Indeed, I contend that it is precisely in relation to dubbing that some of the preconceptions upon which Anthology's translation policy was based become unstuck.

Films that typically utilise dubbing in their very construction – such as musicals – have certainly been included in Anthology's programme after the Invisible Cinema's demise, and it is not inconceivable to imagine that a European co-production – dubbed in its 'original' version – could have made its way into the Essential Cinema collection.³ Including a film like Rossellini's *La prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV / The Rise to Power of Louis XIV* (1966) at least complicates the collection's claim to linguistic purity and authenticity. Made at a point when Rossellini declared himself a veritable dubbing enthusiast, *La prise* contains a polyglot cast and crew, registering the multilingual hybridity of European filmmaking

at the time. Moreover, the film was made for television, commissioned by the Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Français (ORTF) (Norman 1974: 11), and consequently courted a mass audience. In fact, for the US market, Rossellini specifically preferred that his late-career history films like *La prise* be broadcast dubbed on television (see Betz 2009: 298n7). Evidently, Rossellini never *intended* that ‘the sense of the words’ in his films be sacrificed for the ‘purity of the image’ (Sitney 1975: viii). Hence, in screening *La prise* untranslated altogether, the Invisible Cinema actually undermined Anthology’s stated objective ‘to respect the filmmaker as an artist and show the film as it was intended to be shown’ (Mekas quoted in Eichelbaum 1971: 140).

Concurring with Canby, I agree that the target of Anthology’s non-translation screening policy was in fact quite singularly focused: it was subtitling that was being rejected, and, along with it, the attitudes and demands of the international art cinema movement. However, rather than opposing this method outright, the Invisible Cinema simply attempted to hide it from view. Dialogue titling persisted, but in a space removed from the filmic. Here, a destabilising ambiguity emerges. Despite ostensibly transcending the dualistic sub/dub logic and proposing an alternative, archaic form of print translation in its wake, the Invisible Cinema’s screening policy ultimately extends many of the arguments fleshed out by *pro*-subtitle advocates, admittedly stretching them to breaking point. In this way, the Invisible Cinema’s anti-translation measures demonstrate the circular and self-defeating nature of debates that typically surround film translation practices. Unlike dubbing, it is argued, subtitling enables the ‘original’ film to remain intact, thus preserving its integrity. While some critics concede it is not optimal to obscure a portion of the screen with this added textual supplement, they argue that such a level of interference is minimal in comparison to dubbing and hence, sufferable (see, for example, Canby 1983; Kauffmann 1960; Bordwell and Thompson 2004: 388). Anthology agreed with this argument up to a point. The ‘original’ film was to be respected and to remain intact. In contradistinction however, Anthology viewed the interference of subtitles as major and *insufferable*. In this way, Anthology’s Invisible Cinema can be seen to take *pro*-subtitling arguments regarding authenticity and purity to their logical conclusion. Ironically, this results in a particularly mixed, ambiguous message: *pro*-subtitling arguments redouble, folding back upon themselves to expose their ultimate unsustainability, mutating into a denunciation of subtitling itself.

On the Map

According to Noam Elcott (2008: 18), Anthology's founding mission was 'to promote American avant-garde film and its European predecessors'. Many foreign-language filmmakers are represented in the collection (including Bresson, Buñuel, Clair, Cocteau, Dovzhenko, Duchamp, Eisenstein, Feuillade, the Lumières, Rossellini and Ozu amongst others), thereby forcing the issue of translation. Indeed, Anthology recognised the issues raised by translation as central to its project, identifying translation as a convenient means of consolidating and concretising its philosophical and artistic position. In choosing to publicly reject both subtitling and dubbing, Anthology implicitly recognised the crucial role that translation plays in culture work, mediating experiences of the foreign, conditioning modes of reception and defining different genres of *audiences* in addition to *films*. In this way, the Invisible Cinema's translation policy brought to light issues generally ignored or trivialised within screen discourse and culture. Moreover, the extremity of its translation policy attracted attention, coming to function as a kind of position statement differentiating this fledgling organisation from venues like The Carnegie and Joseph Papp's Little Theatre also seeking to stake a claim for 'the art of film' (Sitney 1975: vi).⁴

By prioritising the topic of translation, Anthology utilised this commonly overlooked issue to mark itself on the map, attracting attention by the extremity of its position and its trend-bucking nature: it was precisely the association between European art cinema and *subtitling* that Anthology set out to attack. In declining to mention dubbing at all, therefore, Canby correctly identified subtitling as the true target of Anthology's no-translation policy and, along with it, the predisposition and predilections of the art house circuit. It was this largely narrative-based, international art cinema from which Anthology sought to distance itself, denouncing its commercialism and lack of purity:

the art of cinema surfaces primarily when it divests itself of commercial norms. The narrative commercial films included in our collection represent radical exceptions, cases where art has emerged despite the conditions of production and popular expectation. (Sitney 1975: x)

If Anthology aimed foremost to redefine the very notion of film art as primarily non-narrative, formalist and avant-garde, then subtitling – the hitherto darling of foreign-language art cinema – had to be taken to task. The Invisible Cinema's no-subtitles stance one-upped the elitist aura of art cinema, proving its more serious, formal and pious credentials whilst

promising a level of purity and authenticity normally unattainable. So much more than simply a movie theatre or film club, Anthology established itself as a *museum* dedicated to ‘furthering serious film viewing’ (Sitney 1975: ix–xi).

On staff at the *New York Times* during Crowther’s reign, Canby would have been well aware of Crowther’s position on the topic of film translation. In fact, it does not seem unlikely that Canby’s very interest in Anthology could have been piqued by its unusual foregrounding of screen translation. It is also likely that the founders of Anthology, for their part, would have been aware of the *New York Times* sub/dub debate. As Fausto Pauluzzi (1983: 131) notes, this debate ‘soon became a source of reference to those who habitually saw and discussed foreign films’. In reaction to Crowther’s maverick pro-dubbing position, numerous critics rallied together in defence of the subtitle’s artistic credentials, restating and reinvigorating the prevailing wisdom that subtitles present a more authentic and less deleterious form of film translation than dubbing. When the Invisible Cinema opened and Anthology issued its manifesto, it deliberately and provocatively challenged this logic. In this way, its puritan, no-translation screening policy functioned as a kind of position statement, no less significant than its canon of Essential Cinema and its controversial seating pods.

Ultimately, the Invisible Cinema’s rejection of screen translation *in total* ends up prioritising it as an issue, inadvertently serving to highlight its role in defining viewing experiences and social hierarchies, and in cultural gate-keeping. In this way, the Invisible Cinema’s experimental screening regulations testify to the performative, productive power of translation and its capacity to produce ‘a new utterance whose primary purpose is an independent statement about or reference to the subject matter itself’ (Tymoczko 2009: 404). Apart from its utilitarian, interlingual function, subtitling (and dubbing) was intolerable for Anthology because of the manner in which it inevitably draws attention to the mutable conditions of film reception and, by extension, the contingencies of film production. In this way, subtitling and dubbing directly contravened Anthology’s conception of film as an ahistorical and transcendental, aesthetic artefact. As Sitney (1975: v) explains, matters of historical context were considered inessential and subordinate to ‘formal properties’. Moreover, the subtitle’s embeddedness within art house cinemagoing signals its particularly active role in meaning-making processes – how subtitling itself can create a set of assumptions regarding both films and their audiences. While the Invisible Cinema’s opposition to both subtitling and dubbing distinguished it from the broader art cinema movement, at the same time it nevertheless exag-

gerated the art house desire for foreign authenticity and originality. In this sense, the Invisible Cinema opposed the prioritised translation method of the art house circuit while paradoxically reaffirming its underlying philosophy, fighting its means rather than its ends. While Crowther challenged the art house desire for linguistic authenticity, declaring it illusionistic and fetishising, the Invisible Cinema merely asserted that such desires were ill served by the subtitle.

Out of Sync

Michelson (1998: 10–12) interprets Anthology's idiosyncratic selection, screening and seating practices as 'perverse acts of sacralization of the fetish', which she describes as 'oppositional' and 'transgressive'. Elcott (2008) disagrees. Quoting Kubelka who claims that the Invisible Cinema was a 'normal cinema... as normal as a camera or a projector' (1974: 35), Elcott (2008: 20) takes this idea further, suggesting that it was in fact a 'classical cinema', one that 'shored up the conditions of reception taken more or less for granted since the 1920s and now threatened by multimedia and expanded cinema ... and by the increasingly dominant televisual distribution of movies'. Consequently, for Elcott (19) the Invisible Cinema as an institution was markedly incongruent with its own exhibition programme and Anthology's avant-garde vision.⁵ Elcott (21–2) views the avant-garde films that constituted the mainstay of the Essential Cinema collection as experimental and radically self-reflexive, while he sees the Invisible Cinema's 'disappearing' design as continuing the illusionary project of classical narrative cinema in which the viewer is absorbed within a totalising filmic universe and transported away from the realities of film exhibition and reception. For Elcott, the fetishistic nature of the Invisible Cinema blocked its avant-garde potential.

According to Jean-Louis Baudry (1974–5 [1970]: 40), whose 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus' is attributed with launching Apparatus Theory, traditional cinema viewing is based on the model of the camera obscura, which reiterates the 'perspective construction of the Renaissance'. Kubelka's (1974: 35) conception of the Invisible Cinema as a 'machine for viewing' recalls Baudry's commentary on cinema 'as an ideological machine' where 'the darkened room and the screen bordered with black like a letter of condolences already present privileged conditions of effectiveness – no exchange, no circulation, no communication with any outside' (1974–5 [1970]: 44). He continues, 'projection and reflection take place in a closed space and those who remain there, whether they know it or not (but they do not), find themselves chained, captured, or captivated'

(44). For Baudry, cinema's ideological effects resulted as much through identification with the camera (the apparatus) as with the world or characters portrayed on screen, leading him to declare, 'the forms of narrative adopted, the "contents" of the image, are of little importance so long as an identification remains possible' (46). In striving to make itself disappear, the Invisible Cinema recalls Baudry's postulation that 'concealment of the technical base will also bring about an inevitable ideological effect' (41).

While many of the experimental films included in Anthology's collection consciously partake in 'the revealing of the mechanism, that is of the inscription of the film work' (Baudry 1974–5 [1970]: 46), exposing the means of production and highlighting the materiality of the filmic medium, the Invisible Cinema itself perpetuated traditional viewing conditions, and hence produced the 'transcendental subject' (43) that Baudry argues is 'necessary to the dominant ideology' (46). While a film like Brakhage's *Blue Moses* (1963), for instance, reveals a preoccupation with the 'pure' materiality of film-as-film, the Invisible Cinema's design encouraged absorbed contemplation via a process of self-effacement. Indeed, for Elcott (2008: 19), 'the Invisible Cinema was conceived and implemented as a buffer against the televisualization of movies, not as an extension of an avant-garde project'. He deems it classical, reactionary and out-of-sync with the experimental nature of its screening programme (19–21).

On the other hand, Eric de Bruyn (2004) identifies retrograde elements as systemic to the entire nature of the formalist film avant-garde. Although the Invisible Cinema fostered a formalist preoccupation with the filmic, for de Bruyn (2004: 166) this interest in the apparatus went only so far. Its 'literal function' he suggests was downplayed in favour of its 'transcendent quality'. Here, de Bruyn takes to task the visible/invisible dynamic deliberately invoked by Anthology's radical cinema, suggesting that the 'apparatus of projection was made invisible to make the medium itself wholly apparent'. Elcott (2008: 21) echoes this sentiment, stating that this was 'an invisible cinema for the exhibition of visible film'.

In contrast to Elcott, neither de Bruyn nor Michelson identifies any incongruity between Anthology's critical position and the Invisible Cinema. While Michelson (1998: 10) refers to the sacralising and fetishistic nature of Anthology's museological mode of cinephilia, the Invisible Cinema only confirms and concretises this 'perversity'. Similarly, for de Bruyn, the films being screened at the Invisible Cinema were not at odds with their surroundings. Rather, the classically illusionist, transcendental leanings of the Invisible Cinema demonstrate the limitations of Anthology's brand of avant-gardism. For de Bruyn (2008: 165),

Anthology limited itself to a restricted notion of the cinema as a single-screen, single-source entity and hence achieved only a limited sense of political consciousness or critique. In contrast, the more materialist strain of the formalist avant-garde represented by Expanded Cinema exponents such as Stan VanDerBeek, Malcolm Le Grice and Oiticia sought to step outside the film frame, engaging with conditions of reception and making the audience a part of the work.

Taking formalism to a point of ‘extreme “purism” or “essentialism”’, for Wollen (1975: 172), the artisanal American avant-garde movement (mostly centred around New York), ‘ironically ... ended up sharing many preoccupations in common with its worst enemies.’ The ‘anti-illusionist, anti-realist film,’ for instance, repeats the commitment to ontology and essence driving advocates of cinematic realism like Bazin (Wollen 1975: 172). Hand in hand with its overt essentialism and fetishisation of quality, the Invisible Cinema massaged Anthology’s elitist tendencies. Although affordable, this ‘temple for the ritual celebration of cinema as an artistic practice’ (Michelson 1998: 5) was designed for a limited and devoted crowd – those able to withstand the alienating experience of subtitle-free screenings and isolationist seating. In this way, the Invisible Cinema limited the scope of Anthology’s vision. Ultimately, its concrete manifestation of Anthology’s critical overhaul proved too rigid and prescriptive, resulting in a crumbling effect that culminated in the cinema’s abrupt demise three years after its construction (Sitney 2005: 112–13).

Dream’s End

In 1974, the experiment of the Invisible Cinema came to a resounding end. Anthology’s patron, filmmaker Jerome Hill, died of cancer, and funding from his estate was withdrawn. Anthology was forced to relocate to premises in Soho where it remained until 1979 when its present home was purchased – a refurbished courthouse on Second Avenue in the East Village. With the move to Soho, the question of reconstructing the Invisible Cinema was raised yet, according to Sitney (2005: 112), Mekas never seriously contemplated reconstruction. ‘Dreams are very difficult to repeat,’ he states, ‘and that was a dream’ (quoted in Sitney: 113). Although de Bruyn’s (2008: 165) dismissal of the Invisible Cinema as a ‘financial fiasco’ does not seem entirely fair (as its admission price of US\$1 – equivalent to around \$6 today – suggests that it was never envisioned as financially self-sustaining), without the patronage of Hill the experiment seemed to become untenable. Disappointed, Kubelka (1974: 35) clung to the hope that the Invisible Cinema’s time was yet to come, seeing it as a

'model for the future'. Eventually, over a decade later, it was resurrected as 'Das Unsichtbare Kino' at the Austrian Film Museum, Vienna, in 1989 and remains in operation today.

With the Invisible Cinema's demise, Anthology's translation policy was revised. Along with most other independent screening venues declaring allegiance to cinematic 'art', Anthology submitted to the ruling logic of the subtitle. Foreign-language films that do not form part of the Essential Cinema collection are today screened in their 'original' language versions *with subtitles*. Additionally, many Essential Cinema screenings are also accompanied by subtitles. In May 2016, for instance, Jia Zhangke's *Still Life* (2006) was screened in Mandarin with English subtitles, while three Jean Cocteau films included in the Essential Cinema collection were also screened with subtitles. Unsurprisingly, dubbed prints do not appear in the programme, unless perhaps their presence remains 'invisible'. Anthology's decision to amend its anti-translation (or anti-*subtitling*) stance following the Invisible Cinema's closure suggests the compromised nature of its effort to disrupt the association between subtitling, art and authenticity. Unlike Crowther, Anthology's opposition to the subtitle did not seek to expose the underlying fetishism and essentialism of pro-subtitling arguments or to debunk any perceived elitism. Neither did it offer a sustainable alternative. Rather, the 'sacrifice involved in the substitution of the purity of the image for the sense of the words' (Sitney 1975: viii) created an ongoing point of tension between Anthology's early vision and that of foreign-language filmmakers and foreign film audiences. Failure thus inhabits both the means and the message of Anthology's zero-translation policy. Although the Invisible Cinema strategically set out to distinguish itself from other alternative cinemas by declaring both dubbing and subtitling banned, the shortcomings of these translation devices were re-evaluated following its own eventual demise.

Non-translation

Another way to frame the Invisible Cinema's rejection of screen translation is to see it as one iteration of an idea recurrent throughout screen history, which John Sallis unpacks in relation to Western philosophical thought: the 'dream of nontranslation' (2002: 1). In declaring that foreign-language films were to be viewed without screen translation of any sort, the Invisible Cinema insisted that the medium of film transcends translation, existing somehow *beyond* it. Interestingly, the idea that film *is*, should *be*, or might in the future *become*, a medium that exists beyond translation unites screen culture across continents and eras, and relates

directly to its global aspirations.⁶ The Invisible Cinema's translation-free screenings rehearse this dream or myth of film-as-universal language. Since the silent era, this myth has played an instrumental role in shaping film discourse and culture, despite the myriad modes of translation that accompanied film from its inception.⁷ During the silent era, film's ability to communicate across national and linguistic boundaries was repeatedly framed in relation to the biblical Tower of Babel story, as Miriam Hansen (1991: 76–7) has productively explored.⁸ Hansen declares that the 'myth of a visual language overcoming divisions of nationality, culture, and class, already a topos in the discourse on photography, accompanied the cinema from the Lumières' first screening through the 1920s' (78). The notion of universality was enthusiastically adopted by the US industry to explain its appeal to diverse immigrant and illiterate audiences and used as a marketing device to facilitate foreign expansion (Hansen 1991: 78). Even after the wide-scale adoption of sound in the late 1920s, some still clung to this ideal of non-translation, advocating for Esperanto to become the official *lingua franca* of talkies (Rossholm 2006: 53; Quaresima 2006: 20).

For Sallis (2002: 1), the recurrent, unshakeable 'dream of nontranslation' does not *efface* the importance of translation but rather *affirms* it. Without translation there can be no possibility of its transcendence. Noting how ideas of non-translation often collapse into forms of utopian idealism or colonising mastery, Sallis (4) argues that this dream persists 'against mounting odds' precisely because, without it, translation cannot occur. The dream endures because it is conditional to translation itself. For Sallis, non-translation and untranslatability are necessary, foundational aspects of all translation. At the Invisible Cinema, Anthology sought to realise its dream of non-translation via radical screening protocols. Here, the 'purity' of film art was cultivated, largely conceived as an expression of form over content. Consequently, words were sacrificed in favour of images, and foreign film viewers were left adrift in a sea of indecipherable words. In concretising this dream, however, Anthology inevitably compromised its vision and reduced its force. Translated synopses were produced that contaminated screenings nevertheless due to the audible obdurateness (rustling) of the printed page. Audience members complained. The filmmaker's intended effect was sacrificed and, enduringly, the issue of translation was prioritised, not minimised. Publicly denouncing dubbing and subtitling in its manifesto, the Invisible Cinema raised the visibility of these mundane techniques and underlined the significance of translation as a whole by using it to differentiate itself from other independent and experimental screening spaces, cement its

formalist agenda and, finally, disturb audience members' expectations, making them sit up (quite literally, in seating pods) and take notice.

Today, translation continues to trouble Anthology's critical position, long after the Invisible Cinema's demise, bifurcating its screening programme. Translation synopses are provided for *some* Essential Cinema screenings. Yet, most foreign-language films in the Essential Cinema collection are now accompanied by English subtitles, and English subtitles feature regularly throughout the rest of the programme. In 2016, for instance, Essential Cinema screenings included Cocteau's *Orpheus* (1954) in French with English subtitles and Vertov's *Three Songs about Lenin* (1934) in Russian with no subtitles and an available English synopsis. Hence, the early ban against both subtitling and dubbing is inconsistently practised. Translation synopses remain in limited form as a relic of an earlier era and a signifying characteristic of the Essential Cinema collection and its 'purist' aesthetic. Issues of translation not only differentiate some 'essential' films from others but also serve to quarantine the Essential Collection from the rest of the Anthology programme.

According to Mekas, the dream of non-translation embodied by the Invisible Cinema never finally converted into the practical (see Sitney 2005: 41). Rather, it was a compromised, failed venture. For Derrida, translation is also inherently flawed, and this structural failure becomes a central concern of deconstruction. Indeed, translation is at the crux of Derrida's (1984: 123) search via deconstruction 'for the "other" and the "other of language", as it challenges Western metaphysics' 'ideal of perfect self-presence, of the immediate possession of meaning' (115). In *The Ear of the Other*, he states that translation represents the 'thesis of philosophy' and that the 'philosophical operation, if it has an originality and specificity, defines itself as a project of translation' (1985b: 119–20). Here, he echoes Walter Benjamin (1968 [1923]: 77) who states, 'the language of truth ... whose divination and description is the only perfection a philosopher can hope for, is concealed in concentrated fashion in translations'. Derrida (1985b: 125) goes on to assert, 'every contract must be a translation contract. There is no contract possible, no social contract possible without a translation contract, bringing with it ... paradox.' Ultimately, he is interested in the limit of philosophy as translation, the points where philosophy 'finds itself defeated' – finds that it 'cannot master a word meaning two things at the same time and which therefore cannot be translated without an essential loss' (120). Deconstruction for Derrida exists at this limit point between translation and untranslatability, transmissibility and the irreducibly specific (1979: 93).

Derrida describes translation as an arbitrary form of arrest or suspen-

sion [*arrêt*] that by putting something ‘in other words’ does not paralyse so much as set in motion (1979: 114–15). The process of translation can never ‘put the same thing into other words,’ he writes, or ‘clarify an ambiguous expression’ (75). Rather, it ‘amasses the powers of indecision and adds to the foregoing utterance its capacity for skidding’. In choosing a word, phrase or signified to replace another, the translator necessarily curtails the free play of signification set in motion by words, yet, at the same time, she starts new words on new signifiatory trajectories via her selection. Translation necessarily involves actualisation. Hence, ‘meaning’ in its pure virtuality or open possibility is made concrete: every decision the translator makes is an interpretation whereby meaning is captured, frozen, seized. For Derrida, the loss or failure that inhabits all translation results from this necessary concretising and arresting of open ‘polysemia’ and ‘dissemination’ (1979: 91). Such loss is nevertheless vital and productive. As Deleuze (1991 [1966]: 103) offers, ‘differentiation is never a negation but a creation, and that difference is never negative but essentially positive and creative.’

Following Benjamin, Derrida (1985b) proposes that translation expresses the virtual kinship amongst languages. Consequently, translation is not concerned with representing or communicating any ‘original’. Rather, it exceeds the ‘original’ by intimating a purely virtual point of contact that exists *between* ‘original’ and translation. Benjamin (1968 [1923]: 79–80) describes this point of contact or kinship as ‘pure language’ [*reine Sprache*]. Glossing Benjamin, Derrida (1985b: 124) states that translation expresses ‘that there is language, that language is of language, and that there is a plurality of languages which have that kinship with each other coming from their being languages’. The ‘impossible’ aim of translation is to reconstitute a whole ‘in such a way that the whole ... will be greater than the original itself and, of course, than the translation itself’ (123). As Paul de Man (1986: 82) notes, the ‘pure’, linguistic kinship that Benjamin invokes suggests that translation is ‘a relation from language to language, not a relation to an extralinguistic meaning’. In this way, it is metalinguistic and hence, inherently theoretical or philosophical (82). This metalinguistic kinship equates to a type of virtual unity found within actual, specific differences, suggesting that languages are unified precisely by their incommensurable differences from one another.

For Derrida, Benjamin’s concept of ‘pure language’ constitutes an ideal that cannot be rendered concrete. As Edwin Gentzler (2002: 200) notes, the ‘translator, unlike the deconstructionist, must stop the fertile and enjoyable play of the signifier between literary systems and take a stand’. For Derrida (1985b: 123), actual translations are predestined to fail in their

aim to render concrete virtual potentialities of meaning. Nevertheless, this failure is itself significant and productive. Moreover, as failure is a conditional component of all translation, it does not preclude success. Although 'translation never succeeds in the pure and absolute sense of the term', for Derrida, a 'good' translation succeeds in 'promising success' by providing a 'presentiment' of the 'possible reconciliation among languages' (123). Translation acts as a meeting point between languages: rendered or actual language registers the virtual imprint of another. Kinship is expressed in this relationship *between* languages, and, additionally, in the incommensurability between the actual and the virtual.

Concrete Impurity

In relation to the Invisible Cinema, how does Derrida's re-evaluation of translation as failure challenge Anthology's denouncement of screen translation as a form of 'defacement'? Alternatively, do dubbing and subtitling challenge Derrida's own qualitative distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' translations? As detailed in Chapter 1, anti-subtitle advocates argue that this form of translation is so technically constrained that it cannot manage even a sense of promise, only destroying (rather than deconstructing) the 'original'. Certainly, dubbing and subtitling fall outside Derrida's purview. However, their concrete limitations do not invalidate his arguments. Derrida never proposes that *all* translation error or failure should be celebrated. Rather, both Derrida (1985b: 123) and Benjamin (1968 [1923]: 69) maintain a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' translation, yet they allow these categories to remain abstractly defined. Significantly, Derrida (1985b: 100) teaches that the identification of translation flaw or fault (of 'essential loss') should neither put an end to discussion nor provide grounds for dismissal.

Following Derrida, I argue that the impurities of screen translation cannot ultimately be opposed to the 'purity' of film, as the Invisible Cinema proposed. Rather, the impurities of translation are conditional to film and other screen media. Indeed, translation 'disarticulates' the purity of film 'originals', alerting audiences to the risky, contaminating process of circulation and translation upon which 'originals' depend. For Benjamin (1968 [1923]: 71), it is the 'original' that is indebted to the translation, and not the other way around, for it is translation that enables the 'original' to be marked as such (as an 'original'), to be canonised, and to live on, in transformation. According to de Man (1986: 85), translation 'decanonises' and 'desacralises' the 'original'; it constitutes 'a making prosaic of what appeared to be poetic in the original' (97). In this way, translation exposes

that the 'original' is also *actual* and grounded – reliant upon specific contexts, politics and contingencies. Indeed, it is translation that both marks and produces the 'original's' purity (its connection to 'pure language') and ensures its survival. Similarly, the risks that attend screen translation processes keep screen culture moving, mutating and 'living on'.

Today, on its website, Anthology announces itself 'an international centre for the preservation, study and exhibition of film and video, with a particular focus on independent, experimental and avant-garde cinema'. Its screening programme is 'innovative and eclectic', encompassing a wide range of media and genres beyond the Essential Cinema collection. As Kristen Alfaro (2012a: 57) reveals, Anthology's current, expansive vision now covers 'lesser known experimental filmmakers and also orphan films: home movies, unfinished student films, and behind-the-scenes porn footage'. Additionally, since 2010, Anthology has been increasing online access to its collection, making selected moving-image content available through streaming channels (Vimeo and YouTube) and providing free access to rare documents and specially commissioned publications (56–7). For Alfaro, its developing online archive is proof of the fact that accessibility has always been high on Anthology's agenda. Noting how Mekas was arrested and convicted in 1964 for screening *Flaming Creatures* (1963) as part of the Film-Makers' Cinematheque programme, Alfaro claims that Anthology was partly established in reaction to this form of censorship, with the aim of providing ongoing access to avant-garde and experimental film via a permanent, legal home (48–51).

Anthology advocates for access as a strategy of preservation, particularly for digital media. For Mekas, the 'open and democratic' nature of much digital reproduction can enable experimental media to remain in circulation through 'fresh copies' (quoted in Alfaro 2012a: 59). This transformative afterlife that Anthology seeks to ensure for avant-garde, experimental and marginalised screen media cannot be disassociated from translation. Tellingly, in its current configuration, Anthology (mostly) embraces subtitling along with digital technologies and online accessibility. In contrast to its 'frozen', prematurely petrified and preserved monument to the essentials of cinematic art,⁹ it is this open, evolving engagement with experimental screen culture that has enabled Anthology to endure, becoming more than just a dream.

Muted Voices

Although Anthology sought to distance itself from the international art cinema movement by repudiating its reverence for the subtitle, it

nevertheless reiterated with further vehemency the demand for *audible* foreignness. In this sense, art house and avant-garde unite in the resolve that foreignness must be *heard to be believed*. According to John Mowitt (2005) a similar demand was espoused by the America's Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS). In his institutional history of AMPAS and the rules governing its Foreign Language Film Award, Mowitt (2005: 45) interrogates 'how the relation between language and foreignness has been forged within the cinematic domain'. Within this regulatory discourse, he identifies an ideology at work that is similar, I contend, to that informing the Invisible Cinema's translation-free screenings. This discourse insists that the authenticity of foreignness lies in its aural inscription: in its audible non-English ('original') dialogue. For Mowitt, this prescriptive equation serves to severely delimit and impoverish cinematic engagement with both foreignness and language *per se*.

Mowitt (2005: 47–52; 182n3) charts the historical development of the Foreign Language Film Award from its beginnings in 1944, when 'motion pictures from all countries' became eligible for Special Award consideration and 'English subtitling was included among the traits of foreignness', through to 1956 when it became an award in its own right. In 1949, for instance, foreign films were defined as 'films first made in a language other than English', thereby excluding those from Anglophone countries like Australia and the UK, which the Academy thus intended to treat as American films (54). Additionally, eligibility was restricted to foreign films released in *commercial* theatres. The rules set out in 1956 specify that eligible films needed to be: (1) feature-length; (2) 'produced by a foreign company with a non-English soundtrack'; (3) first released during the award year; and (4) 'shown in a commercial theatre for the profit of the producer and the exhibitor' (52). Neither a US release nor English subtitles were required. These stipulations were revised in 1958 when the Academy advised that it would be glad to have prints submitted for voting with English subtitles if available, and explicitly stated that dubbed films, or films not in their 'original' language, would not be accepted (53). In the early 1970s, inclusion of English subtitles became mandatory (see 183n3).

Mowitt deems the Academy's insistence upon *audible* foreignness fetishistic and objectifying. He argues that it effectively renders cultural difference into an exotic sound-effect. 'Once foreignness is reduced to the speech of foreigners, the vocal sounds delivered as dialogue on the soundtrack and translated in the subtitles,' Mowitt (2005: 63) states, 'language is, as it were, spoken for'. To demand that foreignness be audible on the sound track 'in the speech of those "foreigners" recorded there',

facilitates its elimination from all other aspects of the film: 'Once expelled from the cinema, foreignness echoes, that is, it returns, as sound' (62–3). Consequently, foreign speech is not afforded the full signifying force or status of language and comes to function instead as an aesthetic object (perhaps resembling the manner in which foreign accents have often functioned within Hollywood).¹⁰

For Mowitt (2005: 63), the AMPAS stipulation that foreign films be 'in a language other than English' acts as decoy, drawing attention away from the fact that, ultimately, to be eligible for an award, they must 'look and *sound* like the sorts of films perceived to be appropriate for commercial distribution and exhibition in the United States'. Mowitt's (60) inference is that although dialogue must be non-English, in all other respects (such as its sound-effects, musical scoring and technology), the sound track is expected to conform to Hollywood's 'standardization of practices'. Further, by stipulating that foreign-language films be 'shown in commercial theatres, and produced for profit', he writes, 'AMPAS was implicitly intervening in the domain of indigenous cultural practices not only to impose the capitalist logic of standardization, but also, in effect, to eliminate foreignness from the cinema' (62). To be eligible for an award, Mowitt concludes, films could not exhibit foreignness in any regard other than their language (narrowly interpreted as dialogue). Ultimately, Mowitt contends that the processes of capitalist consumption so central to mass culture and globalisation (epitomised by Hollywood) function to construct foreignness in the image of the same, implicating screen translation modes and preferences in these socio-political machinations.

Despite insisting upon English subtitles, the AMPAS attitude to foreign-language films is not significantly distinct from that promoted by the Invisible Cinema, demonstrating that although Anthology utilised issues of translation to differentiate itself from what it deemed a more commercial, art house sensibility, it never strayed far from this more conventional position, effecting more of a sideways step than any major departure. While Anthology's practice of screening foreign films in their 'original' language aimed to expose audiences to otherness and cultural difference, providing a distinctly foreign and defamiliarising experience, this radical strategy ultimately involved inherent forms of domestication. By refusing to subtitle or dub, the Invisible Cinema reduced language to sound effect – elevating its acoustic surface over and above any expressive or communicative depth. In banishing translated text from the screen and repositioning it on the page, the language of foreign films was rendered mute. Keeping in mind Mowitt's analysis of the Academy's Foreign Language Film Award, the Invisible Cinema's rejection of both subtitling

and dubbing suggests a rejection of language itself, conceived as inessential to film meaning.

Distinctions between sound, language and speech are crucial to the growing discipline of Sound Studies as well as screen translation. Many film sound specialists, such as Rick Altman (1980: 63) and Michel Chion (2009 [2003]: 73), present language as a privileged, dominant subset of sound. Mowitt offers a different perspective, asserting that language amounts to more than sound alone, and that neither represents a subset of the other. To reduce language to dialogue or speech is to compartmentalise and contain its overall significance. In contrast, for Mowitt (2005: 80), language in cinema is an 'apparatus of enunciation' that shapes 'the way images, sounds, and events get assembled' (57). For Mowitt, the reduction of language to sound has enabled Anglo-American film culture to effectively dodge meaningful engagement with foreign cinematic codes, actual language difference and, the question of 'how foreign languages ... have been represented within Western cinemas' (45).

Dionysis Kapsaskis (2008: 48) reads cultural resistance to subtitling in 'geopolitical terms'. When dominant cultures and language communities refuse to read subtitles, he suggests, they exhibit the 'pathology of national narcissism... linguistic essentialism, and a mechanism for perpetuating cultural dominance'. But is it fair to view the Invisible Cinema's denunciation of subtitling and dubbing in this light, as simply an exaggeration of mainstream resistance to translation within Anglo-American culture? In constructing the Invisible Cinema as the physical manifestation of its 'critical enterprise' (Sitney 1975: v), Anthology set out to do something quite oppositional and 'tentative' (Sitney quoted in MacDonald 1994: 34). Nevertheless, in its desire to provide a direct, unmediated experience of the foreign, Anthology may well have unwittingly put into effect exoticising strategies that effectively reduced the meaning of foreign words to surface acoustics. Ironically, the Invisible Cinema's controversial zero-translation stance took to the extreme the *pro*-subtitling mindset and its preoccupation with purity and authenticity. Paradoxically, in the process, subtitling itself was rejected alongside dubbing.

The Invisible Cinema's short lifespan signifies its ultimate failure – further reinforced by the fact that, following its demise, Anthology renounced its objection to subtitling. If failure and impossibility are pre-conditions of all translation, as Derrida suggests, it is interesting to plot how the Invisible Cinema's fall and fortune developed hand-in-hand with issues of translation. The cinema's extreme stance against screen translation effectively denaturalises more conventional approaches towards foreign film reception and translation. As I have plotted in this chapter,

mainstream attitudes towards subtitling and dubbing invest in the same cultural distinctions operating within more self-conscious cultural institutions belonging to art house and avant-garde circuits. All partake in the regular elision of foreignness through prescriptive notions of authenticity and originality. The cultural status of translation methods and practices points to the significance of such operations beyond a purely functional realm. For film theory, the challenge remains: how to account for translation's influential yet largely uncharted role?

Notes

1. According to Kristen Alfaro (2012b: 76), Anthology was not as exclusive as is often suggested. Referring to the Invisible Cinema's affordable ticket price, Alfaro writes: 'Anthology was less a dictatorship and more of a pedagogical community center for the experimental film; the primary goal remained access, and through access, Anthology developed goals of preservation and pedagogy' (83). While admitting that the Essential Cinema canon and the Invisible Cinema exuded more than a whiff of 'avant-garde film hierarchy' (Alfaro 2012a: 46), she counters that Anthology now prioritises online access over canons and has ceased to call itself a museum (62n25).
2. In Howard Thompson's review (1970) he quotes film student Vincent Joliet: 'Those partitions by your ears, they're great. To me the very silence was something like music itself. It made the visual image even stronger.'
3. In June 2011, for instance, a collection of Hollywood musicals from the 1970s and 1980s were screened – a genre of film notorious for post-synchronised sound tracks and ghosted singing.
4. As Vincent Canby (1970) notes in his review, the only other organisations screening translation-free foreign-language films at the time were cultural institutions like the Alliance Française.
5. Noam Elcott (2008: 19) stresses that Kubelka conceived the Invisible Cinema in 1958, well before the idea of Anthology had been formed. For more on the early conception of the Invisible Cinema, see Kubelka (1974: 35).
6. Significantly, John Sallis (2002: 6) links ideals of translation transcendence to conditions of globalisation, underlining 'a certain complicity between the spread of English almost everywhere and the dream of nontranslation'.
7. See also Tessa Dwyer (2005) and Torey Liepa (2008).
8. Notable directors who advocated for 'film as universal language' include Carl Laemmle, D. W. Griffith and Dziga Vertov. See Rossholm (2006: 51).
9. As Adams P. Sitney (1975: vi) explains, the Essential Cinema collection was never conceived as something 'finished' or 'fixed' as 'new films or newly discovered old films, have the potential of modifying the whole history of cinema'. Hence, he promises, 'new films will be added each year as they are made' (x).

10. Writing on the early sound era, Anna Sofia Rossholm (2006: 73) states: 'For foreign actors in Hollywood, the task was to learn to speak intelligible "Hollywood English" with a slight accent adding a touch of the exotic', which involved an 'adjustment of differences into "sameness"'.