

## ***What's Up, Tiger Lily?* On Woody Allen and the Screen Translator's Trojan Horse**

### ***Lily la tigresse* : Woody Allen et le cheval de Troie de la traduction audiovisuelle**

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Résumé de l'article

Ce n'est pas en tant qu'acteur, mais grâce à l'adaptation de dialogues et au doublage de films que Woody Allen est parvenu à passer du monde de la *stand-up comedy* à celui du cinéma. En 1966, il transforme un film d'espionnage japonais en comédie américaine en supprimant le dialogue original et la bande son du film puis en inventant un nouveau dialogue de son cru à partir des images du film. Le résultat fut *Lily la tigresse* (1966), un film où Allen force un groupe de personnages japonais à suivre, sans le savoir, un scénario par leurs gestes tout en prononçant des paroles correspondant à un autre scénario. Le film ouvre un champ de réflexion théorique sur la traduction audio-visuelle en tant que mode d'appropriation (ou d'aliénation) interculturelle. En premier lieu, *Lily la tigresse* remet en question le statut de l'auteur au cinéma. Allen fait de la « réécriture » un alibi contre des accusateurs potentiels qui pourraient réagir contre l'étrange distorsion de la relation son-image, et contre l'usage hautement stéréotypé de la culture asiatique. En deuxième lieu, le film offre une nouvelle perspective sur l'antagonisme entre la voix et l'image, qui est le propre de tout film doublé en langue étrangère. L'examen du film de Woody Allen offre à la théorie le moyen de dépasser le mépris que le discours universitaire réserve souvent au doublage, mettant celui-ci au service de la parodie interculturelle. Le dernier ouvrage de Michael Cronin (2009) sur la mondialisation et Hollywood fournit des concepts clés pour mener l'analyse du film.

# *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* On Woody Allen and the Screen Translator's Trojan Horse<sup>1</sup>

Ryan Fraser

## Introduction

Academe has been scrutinizing the films of Woody Allen for the past 25 years from a variety of aesthetic, ethno-cultural, and theological perspectives in a scattering of reviews that have either become discontinued or simply hard to find. This is why Charles P. Silet, Professor of English at Iowa State University, undertook the task of culling the literature and compiling an anthology. *The Films of Woody Allen: Critical Essays* (2006) contains a cross section—from 1987 to 2003—of scholarly discourse on the filmmaker, with a focus on his production in the 1980s, the period that he considers “the most significant of Allen’s career” (xi). He may well be right. The years between 1979 and 1989 yielded a number of insightful contemplations on the dichotomy of life vs. art (*Stardust Memories* (1980), *Broadway Danny Rose* (1984), *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985)), inter-generational romance and ethnic identity (*Manhattan* (1979), *Zelig* (1983)), and filial bonds (*Hannah and her Sisters* (1986)). Included on either end of this decade, and interpreted as either its shallow forerunners or ironic afterthoughts, are a number of unavoidable works from the late 1970s and the early 1990s: *Annie Hall* (1977), *Husbands and Wives* (1992), and *Deconstructing Harry* (1997). Receiving passing

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1 Pour cet article, l’auteur a reçu le Prix Vinay et Darbelnet 2010, décerné par l’ACT (N.D.L.R.).

reference are his parodies and inter-textual comedies (*Love and Death* (1975), *A Mid-Summer Night's Sex Comedy* (1982)); and the socio-politically themed comedies that he authored and directed in the early 1970s (*Bananas* (1971), *Sleeper* (1973)).

I use the word “culling” expressly here, for anthologies like this tend to speak as much about the films that they exclude as about those that they help canonize. During his transition years between stand-up comedy and cinema (1961-1970), Woody Allen made one maverick film that is as unprecedented and unrepeated in his own repertoire as it is conspicuously absent in Silet’s anthology, save for passing references in the chronologies. In 1965, Tōhō productions in Japan sold to the Western studios a film called *Kokusai himitsu keisatsu: Kagi no kagi* (*International Secret Police: Key of Keys*). It was their attempt at a James Bond-style spy film, and it played so poorly to American test audiences, generated so much unsolicited laughter, that producer Charles Joffe had the idea of hiring Woody Allen to dub it over with a comic Anglo-American dialogue largely unrelated to the plot of the original film, to transform this failed spy-film knock-off from the East into a successful Western comedy.

What came of this experiment is Allen’s 1966 film *What’s Up, Tiger Lily?*, and the comedian himself is more or less responsible for its exclusion from subsequent discourse on his repertoire. He prefaces the film with a disclaimer of sorts, which occurs at the film’s beginning in the first of three cut-away interviews:

Interviewer: I’m sitting here with Woody Allen, the author of this film. Woody, is the word “author” quite the correct word to use? I mean, what exactly did you do with that film?

Allen: Well, let me see if I can explain this to you accurately. They wanted Hollywood to make the definitive spy picture, and they came to me to supervise the project, you know, because I think that if you know me at all, you know that [...] death and danger are my various breads and various butters. So we took a Japanese film, made in Japan by Japanese actors and actresses. We bought it. And it’s a great film, beautiful color, and there’s raping and looting and killing in it. And I took out

all the [soundtrack]. I knocked out all their voices. And I wrote a comedy. And I got together with some actors and actresses, and we put our comedy in where they were formerly raping and looting, and the result is a movie where people are running around killing one another, and doing all those James Bondian things, but what's coming out of their mouths is something wholly other.

Interviewer: I see. To my recollection, I've never heard of that kind of thing being done before, where the actors would be acting one story and saying another [...].

Allen: It was, actually. It was done in *Gone with the Wind*. Not many people know that. That was [...] those were Japanese people actually, and they dubbed in American voices on that, Southern voices [...]

Interviewer: Really [...].?

Allen: Oh yes. That was years ago, though, during the war [...] and the many naval bases and things [...] and so, you know, it was kept quiet[...] (Allen, 1966, n.p.)

For those interested in the subject of screen translation as a mode of intercultural appropriation (or misappropriation), this short dialogue points up some intriguing vectors for reflection. The first of these demonstrates the extent to which both foreign-film cultures and the theorists who observe them are caught up in the paradigm of the “Trojan horse” when it comes to the subject of foreign-language film dubbing.

Two translational “Trojan horses” are trotted out in Allen’s film, the first being of the type conceived by Anthony Pym: the author hides behind the status of “re-writer” for the purpose of slipping potentially offensive material past the institutional guardians of good taste. Then, Allen’s playful comments on *Gone with the Wind* invoke the second Trojan horse, which is more or less aligned with diehard conceptions of audio-visual translation as ethnocentric power play: AV adaptors replace vital dimensions of the film’s cultural provenance with a shallow, domestic-language disguise to permit a smooth passage into the cinematic space of the target culture. This negative conception of foreign-language dubbing is only reinforced by the specific cultures brought into contact in Allen’s film. Of the world’s foreign-film cultures, Japan’s has historically demonstrated the most steadfast rejection of adaptation, specifically dubbing. Allen responds not

by refusing to dub, but rather by adapting his Japanese film to such an ethnocentric extreme that dubbing as a practice gets the treatment of parody.

There is, however, a second vector for reflection suggested by Allen's film, one that could very well help translation scholarship conceive a more positive and productive interface between dubbing and contemporary conceptions of the intercultural. Allen's dialogue with the interviewer underscores *Tiger Lily's* other salient feature: the overwhelming "constructedness" of its adaptational "faults." He is quick to point out that if the perceived fracture between sound and image opens a space of intercultural tension, it also constitutes the principal device by which the film's comic premise is driven. Rather than fall into line with what anti-dubbing sentiment seems to expect from cinema—an art form that does its level best to mimic the "natural" language event—Allen further widens the breach as an artful means of generating ironic distance both within and from the type of adversarial interface between cultures that at first glance seems to prevail in the film.

What is designed to come across as incompetent dubbing and injurious representation of the Other is in reality a most sophisticated and competent adaptational effort forcing the spectator *outside* of the film's discourse, to a remove where all negative intercultural representations, as well as the tensions they create, resolve to their most positive end in laughter. It is precisely this comic potentiality of cinema's seemingly problematic, tension-generating translation techniques that Michael Cronin examines in *Translation Goes to the Movies* (2009), his most recent book dedicated to Hollywood's global influence, a book that offers a perspective that could prove helpful in conceiving dubbing practices as a way of resolving—as opposed to generating—intercultural tensions.

### **The First Trojan Horse: The Author Forfeits His Status**

For its preeminence in discourse over the past fifteen years, the notion of "the translator's visibility" seems to have yielded a relatively simple triangulation of conflicting views summed up

by three critics: Lawrence Venuti (1991), who challenges the ethics of invisibility; Anthony Pym (1997), who sees a certain advantage in being able to disappear behind an author if the situation warrants it; and most recently Barbara Folkart (2007, pp. 342-412), who rejects the question altogether as a form of pre-scientific advocacy conceived for the purpose of academic turf-building.

It is only Pym (1994), however, and in a text that is primarily historical and philological, who suggests that the forfeiture of visibility has indeed been an asset to purveyors of texts that might otherwise be suppressed as abnormal, offensive, or extremist. In twelfth century Toledo, he proposes, authors of potentially aberrant texts might deliberately have couched them in the translationese of contemporary Arabic-Latin versions so that they might protect themselves behind the lesser status of re-writer. Translationese, then, became a disguise for slipping texts past the guard, a way to alter the receiving culture's perception by introducing a foreign vector: what is aberrant when coming from the cultural inside becomes acceptable—indeed desirable as a sort of xenomorphic curiosity—when coming from the outside, labeled exemplary of the Other.

Beyond Pym's particular stance in the debate surrounding the School of Toledo are the transferable conceptualities that emerge from his work, ones that cut across periods, cultures and sectors of production. Pym's Trojan horse—the idea of concealing authorship behind the lesser (and liberating) status of “re-writer” for the purpose of getting potentially controversial work published—speaks directly to Woody Allen's strategy in *Tiger Lily*, where the filmmaker himself “appears” in three cut-away dialogues with the singular purpose of pulling a “disappearing act.” The first five minutes of the film are a sequence —jarring because completely un-prefaced—of the original *Kagi no Kagi*. Allen takes care to provide an unadulterated sample of the source film before cutting to the first dialogue, where he explains his dubbing experiment and then shifts to the American soundtrack. Interventionist, and not authorial, is the writer's initial and most enduring representation of his involvement with the Tohō film, and through his subsequent appearances, he abandons the

authorial persona further still. The second dialogue, spliced into the middle of the film, cuts back to the perplexed interviewer who asks Allen for help in summing up the plot for those who have lost the thread. A simple yet emphatic “no” is Allen’s only response: he himself never possessed the thread in the first place. Toward the film’s end, a third dialogue cuts away to a darkened theater where *Tiger Lily* is showing and where Allen appears as a mere spectator, his attention fixed firmly on his female companion rather than on the screen, against which his profile appears in chiaroscuro relief and then vanishes altogether.

Woody Allen the cineaste vanishes in his own collage of Japanese montage and American dialogue. Obviously, he has an interest in doing so, for the film runs the risk of a dual curse, not only as a foreign import that has already proven unpalatable, but also as a bizarre cinematic experiment in the sound-image relationship. Allen not only pulls this vanishing act during the film, but presents himself throughout as equal parts author and bungling, techno-fetishist defrauder. In the film’s artwork, he is a trench-coated spy absconding with a reel of film. Instead of “directed by...” his credits read “a no-star cast aided and abetted by...” (Allen, 1966, n.p.). Foreign language re-writing and dubbing are systematically represented as technical dimensions of cinematic production commandeered by incompetent forgers. This over-arching meta-discourse not only explains the film’s impenetrability both at the narrative and linguistic levels, but also *justifies it*, protects it against attack. Established here is the type of comic self-awareness that turns the absurd into camp. Such self-awareness is a license for licentious behavior, opens up vital maneuvering room for Allen’s unique mode of experimentation.

### **The Second Trojan Horse: Cinematic Image And Sound Create An Intercultural “Hard-Boiled Egg”**

Maneuvering room to assume certain thematic risks as well, to whet the edge of parody with an offensive ethnocentrism. The latter proliferates at loci of intercultural tension, and points up the second Trojan horse alluded to playfully by Allen with reference to *Gone with the Wind* (1939): the act of concealing the foreign film in the “disguise” of the domestic language. Allen’s

film could well be construed as a polemic statement about this particular act: foreign-language dubbing is not driven only by functional concerns, but also by the ideological concerns of a target culture seeking to appropriate a film by excising and replacing one of its major components rather than simply supplementing it by other translational modes such as subtitling. According to this position, dubbing is profoundly ethnocentric, radically domesticating to the detriment of the film's foreign cultural provenance, which it treats dismissively, as a liability rather than an asset.<sup>2</sup>

This claim is by no means new, and is of course motivated by its own ideological position based in aesthetics (the defense of the foreign film's artistic integrity) and in elitism (the defense of the foreign film as belonging to an intellectual class that sets appropriate stock in the film's linguistic alterity). Both come forward, at their most rhetorically colorful, in Jorge Luis Borges's classic criticism:

The Greeks engendered a chimera, a monster with the head of a lion, the body of a dragon and the tail of a goat [...] Hollywood has just enriched this frivolous, teratological museum by means of the perverse artifice they call dubbing. They offer monsters that combine the well-known features of Greta Garbo with the voice of Aldonza Lorenzo. (Cozarinsky, 1988, p. 62)

It is common enough to see this sort of rhetoric supported in various forms of meta-discourse, in theory or in parodies such as Allen's. It is quite rare, however, to see it supported by the reality of a modern, consumer-driven culture. Translation scholarship, in its preoccupation with migrational flows in the West, has remained until very recently oblivious to the case of Japan, to which Woody Allen directs his comedic acumen in *Tiger Lily*. And Japan's film

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2 The claim that cinema translation theories are prone to speak favorably of subtitling—and hold dubbing in disfavor—is gaining justification in the increasing number of comparative studies. See Jorge Diaz Cintas' comparative analysis of the Spanish translation of another of Woody Allen's films, *Manhattan Murder Mystery* (1998), where the standard opinion is only reinforced: subtitling offers greater transparency onto the film's source culture, and dubbing domesticates.



culture is unique in the world for being one that, on the type of aesthetic and elitist grounds described above, *rarely ever* imports cinema dubbed in Japanese. In a ground-breaking doctoral dissertation examining the cultural expansion of American film in inter-war Japan, Yuji Tosaka (2003) examines the dynamics of reception that made the practice of dubbing in Imperial Japan a locus of intra-cultural tension when it was introduced during the talkie revolution of the late 1920s. This initial tension was decisive because it succeeded in shaping Japan's current foreign-film culture, which shuns foreign-language dubbing to this day.

Unlike the European film cultures of the inter-war period—specifically those of France and Germany, which viewed Hollywood as the exporter of a functional commodity of no particular cultural capital, one that would ultimately compete with, and possibly undermine, domestic film production—Japan's foreign-film culture viewed Hollywood films as prestige items (Tosaka, pp. 132-180). In the provinces, their circulation was consistently poor, and their role was mostly to supplement domestic cinema, which took in the better part of the receipts. It was in the more exclusive and expensive foreign-film houses of the urban centers—Tokyo, Osaka, Yokohama, Kyoto, Kobe, and Nagoya—that Hollywood films enjoyed their greatest success, appealing to a small elite composed for the most part of educated, middle-class urbanites who identified with the “progressivist” Western values that they saw depicted there: democracy, social mobility, and sexual liberation.

More importantly, this elite was equipped linguistically and/or intellectually to comprehend these films, and the very fact of this comprehension, Tosaka argues with reference to Bourdieu (see Swartz, 1997), pointed up a distinct social standing: “Foreign movies were therefore an essential part of the ‘cultural capital’ [...] an explicit aesthetic stance, or good taste, that was made to legitimate the position of the educated urban middle class and assert its status distinction in Japan's interwar social space” (p. 146). Dubbing was naturally perceived as a threat to this caste system. Tosaka argues:

To be sure, dubbing would have made Hollywood talkies less foreign and more accessible to Japanese moviegoers as a whole. But the technical ability to hear Japanese language was hardly a desirable choice for their main constituency because it would make foreign films socially less scarce objects and diminish the cultural capital requirements necessary to understand and appreciate them in a manner inaccessible to those with less cultural capital. (p. 177)

Foreign-film consumption in Japan is defined here as an accomplishment against the perceived deficiencies of a lower caste: knowing American films is a badge of honor, a proof of cosmopolitanism that retains its value only as long as there is a majority of provincial filmgoers who cannot know them as well. Foreign-language dubbing vulgarizes the film's "high-caste" and "exotic" image by harmonizing it with a disappointingly "low-caste" and "common" voice. The dubbed voice is the domestic peasant that brings the foreign nobility down—Borges's Garbo brought down by the voice of Aldonza Lorenzo (Cozarinsky, 1988, p. 62).

Foreign-language dubbing was Hollywood's way of letting the domestic voice invade the film's space, produce dissonance and dislocation, *speak for the film instead of letting the film speak for itself*. Beyond this social-class argument against dubbing, there is perhaps another argument rooted in a cultural mainstay of domestic cinema in inter-war Japan, one that had existed since the advent of the silent film, and one that progressivist urban consumers of foreign cinema would ultimately phase out—*benshi*. This was a system of on-stage explainers who provided dramatic interpretation and translation of silent films from the advent of cinema in Japan (1900s and 1910s) until the talkie revolution in the late 1920s. *Benshi* were not conceived for cinema, but were rather a cultural transference from the Japanese oral theater tradition. Early Japanese short-reel films, Tosaka explains, "were basically intended to be exact copies of theater productions, which were re-enacted vicariously in movie halls by having several *benshi* provide voices for different screen characters." (p. 150)

What implicates *benshi* in the power positioning behind the consumption of foreign cinema in Japan, and perhaps even in

the decision not to dub, is the particular restraint to which they were confined when interpreting foreign films in urban centers. In a doctoral dissertation devoted to the documentation of this lost narrative art, Jeffrey A. Dym (1998) points up *benshi*'s insertion as mediator in the two-caste, urban and provincial foreign-film cultures of inter-war Japan. Performances for the working class in Tokyo and for the provinces were marked by *benshi*'s flamboyant possession of the film, where narration between scenes would combine with artful improvisations often having little or nothing to do with the film.

In the foreign-film houses of urban centers, *benshi*'s mediation was a good deal more subdued, and more supplemental:

This style focused on "realism," in which *benshi* avoided becoming an overpowering presence and sought instead to narrate foreign films in a more objective, less emotional manner. The idea was that *benshi*'s narration would not destroy the original feeling of foreign films and that the educated, cultured audience thus would be allowed to appreciate them as an individual experience in a genteel, quiet atmosphere—as if *benshi* were not present. (p. 152)

"As if *benshi* were not present." Two significant observations could be made based upon this imposed subordination of the traditional mediator: The first is that the general tendency of the culture was toward the phasing out of specifically domestic and oral mediations that at some point, and by a specific caste of filmgoer, were seen as intrusive. The second is that external mediations of foreign films that were "supplemental" in nature were long familiar to Japanese filmgoers.

The first observation could well help explain why dubbing was eventually rejected. The first attempts by *benshi* to mediate American talkies orally by engaging in a shouting match with screen actors, or by speaking Japanese over muted sound, or by voiceover, or by interrupting the film at certain points, would have appeared to spectators as a futile attempt to make an outmoded oral tradition adapt to cinematic innovations that would only continue evolving. Foreign-language dubbing would not only irreparably mar the prestige object by removing its original

dialogue track. It would also have come across as a throwback to the most flamboyant of provincial possessions, where *benshi* spoke fast and loose through the lips of silenced characters.

The second observation could help to explain why subtitling was accepted when the talkies came to Japan. Urban Japanese film culture was used to a type of mediation that was subdued and supplemental rather than active and adaptational. As long as the foreign film remained in its original form, an unobtrusive medium could well be added for the purpose of explanation. Every form of oral mediation having been attempted and found irreconcilable with film's own orality, supplemental text became the best possible solution. The subtitle would be the new and evolved version of the subdued *benshi*.

It was the coincidence of two events that significantly improved the standing of Hollywood talkies in inter-war Japan: the decision to subtitle, which became after 1935 the accepted solution to the language problem; and the rise of a domestic film company Tōhō (1934-1935), which was built on the organizational model of the American studios. Tōhō, like the Hollywood majors, established a firm contractual control over the theater outlets that showed its films. While building up its stock of locally produced cinema, it had to fill theatre time for its growing circuit of exhibitors, and subtitled films rented en masse from the Hollywood majors became the solution. From the beginning, Tōhō would entertain a close relationship with the American studios, and after the Second World War, quotas were set, which guaranteed a certain level of reciprocity in film trade. As had become the norm since the early 30s, films would be translated by the studio's affiliates working in the foreign territory. In other words, a Japanese film would arrive in the US in its original version and would be translated there by Tōhō affiliates who were well aware of Japan's translation policies and would make sure that they were observed.

All of this is to say that the Tōhō film *Kokusai himitsu keisatsu: Kagi no kagi* arrived on American soil in its original version and was test-screened with English subtitles. When it tested poorly, Tōhō cut its losses and sold the film to Joffe-Rollins

outright, to do with as they pleased. Joffe's idea for adaptation was remarkably like that of the early provincial *benshi* tradition of the Japanese silent era: gather a cast of flamboyant comedians to re-vocalize the film into an alternative narrative that pleases the locals if it has little to do with the narrative of the original film. Woody Allen then added the dimension of sophistication that transformed this premise into camp for Anglophone intellectuals: re-vocalize the film into an alternative narrative that pleases the locals *because they have been informed specifically of how and by what means* it has nothing to do with the narrative of the original film.

To bring this *how and by what means*—specifically the practice of foreign-language dubbing—to the fore in spectator consciousness, to make *dubbing* the object of parody, Allen shows *Tiger Lily's* first five-minute sequence in its original version, with no subtitles. He then intercedes in the first cut-away interview to explain his role as re-writer, and then the film resumes in the adapted version where the clash between domesticating American voices and subordinated Japanese characters begins in the very first words of spoken dialogue: Mie Hama, in the middle of disrobing for her paramour, asks him to “name three presidents” (Allen, 1966, n.p.). There begins *Tiger Lily's* unique emulsion of the Japanese and the American.

Woody Allen envisions such an emulsion throughout in the architecture of the hardboiled egg—a “yellow” interior in contrast to a “white” exterior. This is the comical node image condensing the cultural duality of a film that Allen makes visibly Asian and audibly North American. In *What's Up, Tiger Lily?*, the sounds of the white and the images of the yellow conflict to create intercultural tension and spawn an endless series of gags founded on cultural stereotypes. Ethnocentric North American dialogue unfolds in singular unawareness of, or crude condescension toward, the gesturing characters' visible Asian provenance. Through dubbing, Allen transforms the hero of the Tōhō film, played by Japanese actor Tatsuya Mihashi, into Interpol agent Phil Moscovitz, hired by a wealthy land baron to recover his stolen egg salad recipe. Accompanied by his female sidekicks, actresses Akiko Wakabayashi and Mie Hama playing Asian gangster molls, Phil stumbles through the mishaps of

the typical caper film to music from *The Lovin' Spoonful*, until he recovers the recipe from mob boss Shepherd Wong. The Anglo-American voices channeled through these characters have the overblown, cartoonish tone of a Punch and Judy show. Laundry-man pidgin of the Charlie Chan and Hop Sing variety, celebrity impersonations, the sociolect of the Jewish cultural scene of Manhattan (complete with phrases in Yiddish)—all are forced through the lips of the Tōhō characters, who in the end are commandeered as puppets played for sport by the faceless, Anglo-Saxon powers-that-be holding forth in the seclusion of the audio booth.

This Punch and Judy show creates an intercultural power differential along the fault line between cinematic image and sound. It was only in the late nineties that researchers began to approach foreign language dubbing as one of the ways that translators run a receptive interface between cultures, “play[ing] the ventriloquist,” as it were (see Ascheid, 1997). In this line of reflection, translation and dubbing deploy a system of domesticating strategies for either appropriating the materials of the Other (see Gambier, 2008), and/or defining a collective identity against it (see Plourde, 2003). Woody Allen’s particular adaptation experiment, however, has greater resonance with cinema theory’s more aesthetic perspectives on the specificity of the sound-image relationship in film, and how this relationship might be exploited to elevate the audible cinematic voice to a position of power over the moving image.

Michel Chion (1999) is the cinema theorist behind the notion of the “acousmatic voice.” This is the voice that is essentially disembodied, heard from off-screen, but which is nevertheless an agent of the film’s diegesis. He takes the word “acousmatic” from the Greek “akousma” (“thing heard”), used by the Pythagorean sect “whose followers would listen to their Master speak behind a curtain” (Chion, 1999, p. 19). The possessor of the “acousmatic voice” is what Chion calls the “acousmètre,” and like the Master of this sect that forbids its followers from looking at their leader, this faceless speaker in cinema is traditionally invested with certain powers over the image:

In the case where [the acousmètre] remains not-yet-seen, even an insignificant acousmatic voice becomes invested with magical powers as soon as it is involved, however slightly, in the image. The powers are usually malevolent, occasionally tutelary. Being involved in the image means that the voice doesn't merely speak as an observer (as commentary), but that it bears with the image a relationship of *possible inclusion*, a relationship of power and possession. (p. 23)

Chion bases his study on a number of European and North American films starting from the early years of the sound era, when cinema began experimenting with modes of off-screen vocalization to surround film characters with an aura of malevolence or to invest them with magical powers: the voice of murderer or the genius's ghost in Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) and *The Last Will of Dr. Mabuse* (1933), of the Wizard in Victor Fleming's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), of the director in Orson Welles's *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), of Mother in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), and of the ship in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). The "acousmètre," in all of these films, has the dual status as character of the narrative and as fully autonomous, omniscient presence revealing dimensions—thematic, psychological, and technical—of the film's motivation that no single character could express alone.

It is the last sentence of the citation that resonates with Allen's dubbing project: "being involved in the image means that the voice doesn't merely speak as an observer (as commentary), but that it bears with the image a relationship of *possible inclusion*, a relationship of power and possession" (*ibid.*, p. 23). Chion's "acousmatic voice" does not refer specifically to the dubbed foreign language voice, but rather to an ominous or controlling patriarchal (or matriarchal) voice coming from off-screen and asserting power over an on-screen character: the voice of Mother in *Psycho*, for example. However, there is a direct and compelling connection to be made between Chion's concept and the jarring aesthetic of Allen's *Tiger Lily*. Tying them together is the notion of an audible cinematic voice demonstrating a *potential relationship of inclusion* with a corresponding image: the voice is perceived at once as integrating with and escaping from the image, remaining oddly *contiguous* to it, as if coming at once from the character

and some off-screen critic or commentator (*ibid.*, p. 24). Woody Allen's white Anglo-American voices do just this: they possess the image and assume control over it by hovering in an interstitial space, which is never entirely integrated or separated.

### **Putting Down The War Horse**

Of course, this breach in the ethics of intercultural representation, occurring as it does along the editorial suturing line of foreign-language dubbing, can open only so wide before the tensions that it generates collapse into the chasm and resolve in laughter, before the absurdity of the comic premise points up to the filmgoer the absurdity of the very real cultural stereotypes that it sends up. And here, *Tiger Lily's* value manifests. The dub is neither fraudulent nor deficient. On the contrary, Allen has only exploited the popular illusion of its fraudulence and deficiency—the illusion of the Trojan horse—for the purpose of bringing it to its most salutary end: creating the requisite ironic distance for bringing ideologues outside of the culturally biased discourse in which they are usually submersed to the point of blindness. Discourses of cultural bias and racism, Allen suggests, are every bit as constructed—that is to say without any transcendent truth value—as is the strange, cobbled idiom forced through the lips of the Tōhō characters.

This goes as well for the paradigm of the Trojan horse. For all that cultural biases against film dubbing are entrenched, they are ultimately as constructed as any other, and therefore subject to challenge. And *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* is a remarkable challenge in that it uses foreign-language dubbing toward a purpose that is the diametric opposite of the expectation created by the bias: rather than create the type of lexically transparent, domesticating, and source-culture-dismissive version that anti-dubbing sentiment seems to expect, it creates a film that is lexically opaque while generating a type of intercultural consciousness to which not even the most competently subtitled films can aspire.

The sophisticated nature of this dialogue calls out for the type of theoretical circumscription that has only recently become available in the framework of Intercultural Studies.



In his most recent work, *Translation Goes to the Movies* (2009), Michael Cronin extends his reflection on translation and globalization into the realm of Hollywood cinema. In *Translation and Globalisation* (Routledge, 2003), he introduces the concept of the mobile “liminal zone”—the gap or synapse—defining the space where world cultures come into contact as a result of globalization. These “liminal zones” are not geographically or politically demarcated, but are rather *micro-contextually* defined at the infinitely numbered and varying points of interface between the denizens of different cultures. This “liminal zone” is a space of tension where the differences between opposing cultures are subject to a negotiation. This negotiation, in any and all of its forms, is for Cronin “translation,” and what globalization entails is the diversification of specific modes of negotiating as cultures come into contact in unexpected and increasingly complex ways.

There is no reason why a foreign-language dub, and specifically the fracture that it constructs between the film’s semiotic regimes of image and dialogue, could not be conceived as just such a liminal zone. Indeed, in his recent work on Hollywood (2009, Chapter 3, “Translation Howlers”), Cronin specifically addresses the situation in which the spectator of a film becomes acutely aware that, due to translation effects and the forms of constructed discourse by which Hollywood traditionally negotiates the liminal zone between cultures, cinema often departs so obviously from known linguistic and cultural realities that it challenges its spectators, and specifically the denizens of the cultures so mis-represented, to negotiate the space between their own reality and the fictional world of the film through laughter, questioning, and dialogue.

Cronin speaks specifically about two modes of comedic discourse construction designed to generate distance between film characters and spectators: the first is contrived character accenting of the type used in the Marx Brothers *A Night at the Opera* (1935), where Italian characters in their native culture are made to speak to each other in English with a contrived Italian accent. The other is the cinematic pseudo-language, specifically Charlie Chaplin’s fabricated tissue of nonsense sounds made to pass for German in *The Great Dictator* (1940). In all of these cases,

there is a lingering sense of studio artifice “left behind” to play out on the screen as a result of Hollywood’s artful—in the sense of designed and necessarily “artificial”—modes of negotiating the liminal zone between cultures (Italian-American/German-American). When the artifice that is left behind, which Cronin calls the “translation remainder,” is used as a device for comedy, it opens the type of liminal zone negotiable through laughter between the film’s representations and the spectator.

It is precisely this leftover effect from the foreign-language dub, this “translation remainder,” that is activated in *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* to maintain tension and therefore drive the film’s sub-texted intercultural commentary. In *Tiger Lily*, Allen accomplishes this in one predominant way: the forging of comic blindness between the Anglo-American discourse that unfolds in the soundtrack and the Japanese cultural reality evidenced in the image. About fifteen minutes into the film comes the first sequence where this sort of blindness is in play: Tatsuya Mihashi’s character is waiting in a car just outside the wall of a Yokohama prison. A masked escapee suddenly gets into the car. While he looks on shocked, the prisoner slowly unravels the mask from around her face and reveals herself as Akiko Wakabayashi’s character. The first words out of Mihashi’s mouth are: “An oriental!” “You didn’t know?” she asks. “I’m flabbergasted!” he replies (Allen, 1966, n.p.).

At other points, the “voice that cannot see” inexplicably relegates the film’s Japanese characters to undetermined, fictional countries. The land baron in Yokohama who assigns Mihashi’s character his mission introduces himself with the following speech: “Good afternoon. I am the grand, exalted high Maja of Rasbur, a non-existent but real sounding country. ... Yes, we’re on a waiting list. As soon as there’s an opening on the map, we’re next. It’s rough with a new country. Do you realize that the entire population is still packed in crates?” (Allen, 1966, n.p.). The written word does not escape this treatment, either. The film culminates in a scene where the protagonist, at gunpoint and in front of a typewriter, is being coerced to crack a code. What appears on the screen is a line of Japanese text, which Tatsuya’s character is called upon to read out loud. What comes out of his mouth is pure clash

fodder: “there once was a man from Nantucket” (Allen, 1966, n.p.). Further coercion then causes him to produce from his belt a strip of de-coding film, which he lays on top of the Japanese text, so that every third character is revealed. The voice, once again, speaks forth in utter blindness to the image: “Take two chopped, hardboiled eggs, two tablespoons of mayonnaise, add a pinch of salt...” (Allen, 1966, n.p.).

## Conclusion

And so Allen’s secret egg-salad recipe is finally revealed: forge such a rift between the egg’s visibly yellow interior and audibly white exterior that the spectator cannot help but delight in the contrast, forget the paper thin plot, and bring the questions of re-writing, foreign-language dubbing, and intercultural representation front and center. It is the familiar “Trojan horses”—the illusion of the re-writer and foreign-language dubber as self-abnegating personage, and that of the dubbed film as low caste and culturally disenfranchised—that are in the end held up to ridicule, as Allen’s dub, like any cinematic language constructed to negotiate the liminal zone between cultures, generates the “translation remainder” that is the film’s entire comic premise. Cronin’s notion of the remainder might well be expanded to include not only discursive but also iconic evidence of translation, and so Woody Allen himself, in the form of a bumbling, white cartoon figure wandering the screen’s surface during the film’s initial credit sequence, could himself be an aspect of the remainder, even as he roams mischievously over the image of a scantily clad Akiko Wakabayashi—presumably his “Tiger Lily”—whom he “de-flowers” by pulling the film’s credits out from underneath her clothing. “Asian exploitation” cannot be more literally defined—nor more affectionately—for that matter.

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**ABSTRACT:** *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* On Woody Allen and Strategies of the Screen Translator's Trojan Horse — Woody Allen made his transition from stand-up comedy to cinema not as an author, but as a dialogue adaptor and film dubber. In 1966,

he transformed a Japanese spy thriller into an American comedy by removing the film's original dialogue and soundtracks, and then synchronizing a new dialogue of his own penning with the original film's images. The result was *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* (1966), a film where Allen forces a cast of unwitting Japanese characters to act out one narrative visibly as they speak out another audibly. The film suggests a number of intriguing theoretical vectors for those interested in the subject of screen translation as a mode of intercultural appropriation (or misappropriation). *What's Up, Tiger Lily?*, first of all, is a comedic exploration of authorial status in cinema. Indeed, the lesser status of "re-writer" becomes Allen's cover, a way to avoid taking responsibility for a film that not only indulges in the most counterintuitive of experiments in the sound-image relationship, but also creates a particularly condescending form of Asian exploitation. Perhaps most important, however, is the perspective that the film offers on the voice-image antagonism implicit in any foreign-language dubbed film. Allen's film may well offer a way for theory to transcend the aura of negativity with which academic discourse tends to surround the practice of dubbing, specifically by putting the latter to use in the service of intercultural parody. Michael Cronin's latest work on globalization and Hollywood (2009) offers some helpful concepts for examining Allen's film.

**RESUMÉ : *Lily la tigresse* : Woody Allen et le cheval de Troie de la traduction audiovisuelle** — Ce n'est pas en tant qu'acteur, mais grâce à l'adaptation de dialogues et au doublage de films que Woody Allen est parvenu à passer du monde de la *stand-up comedy* à celui du cinéma. En 1966, il transforme un film d'espionnage japonais en comédie américaine en supprimant le dialogue original et la bande son du film puis en inventant un nouveau dialogue de son cru à partir des images du film. Le résultat fut *Lily la tigresse* (1966), un film où Allen force un groupe de personnages japonais à suivre, sans le savoir, un scénario par leurs gestes tout en prononçant des paroles correspondant à un autre scénario. Le film ouvre un champ de réflexion théorique sur la traduction audio-visuelle en tant que mode d'appropriation (ou d'aliénation) interculturelle. En premier lieu, *Lily la tigresse* remet en question le statut de l'auteur au cinéma. Allen fait de la « réécriture » un alibi contre des accusateurs potentiels qui

pourraient réagir contre l'étrange distorsion de la relation son-image, et contre l'usage hautement stéréotypé de la culture asiatique. En deuxième lieu, le film offre une nouvelle perspective sur l'antagonisme entre la voix et l'image, qui est le propre de tout film doublé en langue étrangère. L'examen du film de Woody Allen offre à la théorie le moyen de dépasser le mépris que le discours universitaire réserve souvent au doublage, mettant celui-ci au service de la parodie interculturelle. Le dernier ouvrage de Michael Cronin (2009) sur la mondialisation et Hollywood fournit des concepts clés pour mener l'analyse du film.

**Keywords:** Woody Allen, cinema, dubbing, Japan, intercultural appropriation

**Mots clés :** Woody Allen, cinéma, doublage, Japon, appropriation interculturelle

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