

composition, but it was very possible for the model music itself to blend in, seamlessly and, figuratively speaking, silently.

Gino Stefani suggests that “in a minimal sense, competence at opus or work level is the trivial fact of recognizing a piece.”³⁴ Similarly, film composer David Raksin speaks of the oxymoronic “esoteric howler,” of a predominant kind of musical joke that requires the *Grove* musical dictionary to understand it.³⁵ Just as this kind of joke may not quite reach the cheap seats—nor is it guaranteed comprehension by the initiates—so too it is with the use of apparently familiar music: much of it will remain unrecognized, and will thus be unable to distract.

In addition to the likelihood of unfamiliarity, utilitarian practices in the past reveal for us the possibilities of familiarity. Richard Bush points out how often music composed for one thing can be quite aptly used for something else.³⁶ His discussion of recycled music from serial pictures pertains to a strictly industrial setting, with strictly practical motivations: reusing music was cheap and fast. What applies in this instance also pertains to classical cues we recognize, and music’s circumstantial transposability is that much more true in other settings where quotations are more rational and responses more studied.

If practical motivations are an important factor in dealing with musical quotation, so too are impractical motivations. In other words, we are sometimes at a loss to understand exactly what a filmmaker or musician is doing. Silent film organist Gaylord Carter holds that “the key of D flat has a rich brown velour feeling, like lush drapes.”³⁷ This seems a valid enough observation, but it points to the complicated fact that an artist’s mind has its own reasons, and they are not always communicated clearly to the outside. Godard’s *Pierrot le Fou* (1965), *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1966), and *Tour/Detour* (1978), Pasolini’s *Uccellacci e Uccellini* (1966) and *Oedipus Rex* (1967), and Bresson’s *L’Argent* (1983) are a few examples of films in which classical quotation seems careful and at least semirational, but where substantial opaqueness makes comprehension difficult for the viewer.

What, then, of the mandates of communication outlined in the last chapter? Our misunderstandings, whether derived from a flaw of authorial execution, a gap in our own perceptions, or a