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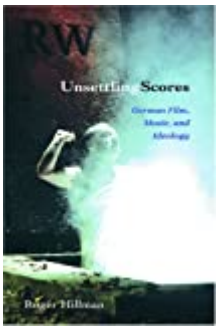

Roger Hillman. *Unsettling Scores: German Film, Music, and Ideology.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005. xi + 219 pp. $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-253-21754-7; $50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-253-34537-0.

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Watching Polyphony: Classical Music in the New German Cinema

From the cover readers of this book are greeted by a Hitler doppelganger, wrapped in a Roman-style toga (or bath towel?) and emerging from Richard Wagner's grave. This image, taken from Hans-JÃ¼rgen Syberberg's *Hitler. Ein Film aus Deutschland* (1977) sets the scene for the scope and focus of Richard Hillman's book. The author, who heads the Film Studies Program and convenes the German Studies Program at the Australian National University in Canberra, explores the use of classical music in the New German Cinema during the 1970s and early 1980s.

In the introduction, Hillman highlights the great extent to which originally composed and preexisting music function differently within the context of images and narrative. While an original score tends to serve solely as "mood music" (think soaring strings), pre-existing pieces function as a "cultural marker" (p. 4) and evoke "a world beyond the film we are watching" (p. 3). This effect applies even more to classical music with its long and–in the special case of the German tradition–fraught reception history. The author is particularly interested in the overtones musical works acquired during the Third Reich and how the directors of the New German Cinema used and redefined such associations. Thus, Hillman's book is part of the ongoing investigation of the unsettled German national identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The opening of the first chapter, "Establishing a Tonal Center," emphasizes again the greater narrative weight of preexisting film music. In order to demonstrate his strategies, Hillman discusses the use of classical music in non-German films: as drama/mood music with and without national significance, as marker of the "other" and as emblem of Western culture as such. Examples range from the prominent to the obscure and their brief interpretations are a particular strength of the book. Instead of providing lengthy synopses, Hillman focuses on one relevant scene, contextualizes it with some swift brushstrokes, characterizes the musical piece in refreshingly non-technical language and explains their combined cultural significance. Thus the scope and method of the book are convincingly outlined; indeed, the limitations of the printed format when conveying the intricacies of multimedia art forms are elegantly overcome. A similar study

across national boundaries would be highly desirable.

The second chapter turns to "Music as Cultural Marker in German Film." Hillman successfully transfers the concept of "polyphony" (p. 27) to characterize the simultaneous processes of signification in film. Elsewhere he uses the term "counterpoint" in a similar vein, particularly when image and sound seem to contradict each other. Again he draws attention to the national-identity quest, although the opposition of the New German Cinema with "Hollywood" probably applies to most European art film traditions. The short introductions to the German cultural tradition and the 1970s and 1980s touch on many interesting events and movements, but their kaleidoscopic presentation requires an in-depth familiarity with German history (from Schopenhauer to the RAF and reunification). A similar level of expertise is necessary to make the most of the frequent references German films. The second part of this chapter contains a brief and not wholly connected discussion of theoretical perspectives such as psychomusicology and musical semiotics. The latter does not contribute much, since the author has already in chapter 1 neatly sidestepped the issue of representation in and through non-vocal music (p. 9).

The third chapter, "History on the Soundtrack: The Example of Beethoven's Ninth," follows the various messages the famous "Ode to Joy" can convey through four case studies. Apart from Helke Sander's *Redupers* (1977)–which also features a thought-provoking but not wholly convincing excursion into gender studies–the other examples are again drawn from non-German cinema (Tarkovsky: *Nostalghia* [1983] and *Stalker* [1979]; Makavejev: *Covek nije tika* [1965]). They map out the tension between the tune's German, pan-German, European or all-embracing associations and its potential to symbolize a utopian vision of humanity. Unfortunately the reception history of Beethoven's music leading up to these films is confined to the decades from the 1930s onwards, cutting short the rich and diverse layers of meaning the Ninth Symphony had accumulated during the nineteenth century (the 1872 Bayreuth performance only foreshadows the reopening of the festival in 1951). The preoccupation with the fate of Beethoven's music during the Third Reich is of course crucial to postwar cinema, since its directors play with these Nazi associations. However, it would have been helpful if the author had openly acknowledged that this emphasis is a conscious decision, both on his own part and among the directors he investigates.

Chapters 4 to 8 then focus on one director each and in several cases on one film only. Again the "thick descriptions" of selected scenes are most convincing, and the patient disentangling of the various strands of meaning are often fascinating to read. Although Hillman claims that his main concern is reception (p. 44), his case studies foreground authorial intent: they ask how the directors (and presumably their intended audiences) received German classical music, not how this music was received when accompanied by the moving images. Since each chapter explores a multitude of facets, some indications have to suffice here.

Despite its heading "A Wagnerian German Requiem" the fourth chapter explores not only how Syberberg reclaims Wagner's music from both Hitler's and Hollywood's appropriation, but also the "occupied territories" (p. 78) Liszt, Mozart and Haydn. The case of Liszt's *Les PrÃ©ludes*, which was associated with news from the Eastern front, is quite convincing, while Mozart's tune "Ãb immer Treu und Redlichkeit" and Haydn's "Deutschlandlied" raise the question of whether audiences really perceive(d) them as instances of Viennese classical music gone astray.[1] The discussion of "Alexander Kluge's Songs without Words: *Die Patriotin* (1979)" in chapter 5 benefits from a detailed list of musical extracts and provides another example for the ambiguous messages of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy." Sibelius's *Swan of Tuonela* is convincingly contextualized with the German Sibelius reception during the Third Reich, but I doubt whether Skryabin's piano music really invites a "meditation on what was, and what still is, 'German' and "Germany' " (p. 102), only by virtue of sounding somehow "romantic." "Fassbinder's Compromised Request Concert: *Lili Marleen* (1980)" opens new vistas by contrasting "U-Musik" (entertaining, popular music), associated throughout the film with the German characters, with German "E-Musik" (serious, classical music), associated in an ironic inversion with the Jewish conductor Mendelssohn. Chapter 7 provides a similar inversion when "The Great Eclecticism of the Filmmaker Werner Herzog" is investigated. Herzog's soundtracks eschew the historical concerns of his colleagues and employ classical music primarily for its emotional value. Finally, yet another angle is taken in "Pivot Chords: Austrian Music and Visconti's *Senso* (1954)." Hillman's intricate discussion of the significance of Bruckner's music made me once more wish that the author had focused less persistently on the German identity issue but had tackled this particular problem within a wider array of signification strategies.

The bibliography is divided according to subject mat-

ter (film music, music and culture, German cinema, history, and so on), which makes it a highly useful tool for the reader who wants to explore the many avenues opened in the book. However, the division also indicates that ideal readers for this book might be few and far between. They should have a strong interest in German (art) cinema, should be aware of the events and issues of German history during the past two hundred years and they should have the canon of classical music (not just the German tradition) at their fingertips. Nevertheless Hillman's study will be highly instructive for historians, musicologists, cinema lovers and *Kulturwissenschaftler* in general. Despite some shortcomings on the local level, it is to be hoped that this book will inspire many similar studies.

Note

[1]. This irksome detail recurs throughout the book: Hillman does not always make clear whether by "Deutschlandlied" he means the slow movement of Haydn's *Emperor* quartet op. 76 no. 3, or the German national anthem. The former would be an instance of classical music, while for the latter it is difficult to see how the use of the tune (with words and possibly a brass band) differs in principle from a quotation of "Dixie" or the Marseillaise. Information about the genesis and reception of the string quartet/anthem is scattered throughout the book (Hofmann von Fallersleben, the author of the text, finally enters in chapter 5) and partly hidden away in the notes.

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