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Tales of Plagiarism And Pastiche

THE GODFATHER, IL GATTOPARDO and THE GLASS MOUNTAIN

In 1972 the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences refused the nomination of *The Godfather* for an Oscar in the category of Best Original Dramatic Score. They argued that for the love theme its composer, Nino Rota, had re-used music from an earlier film, *Fortunella* (1957), and thus that the *Godfather* score could not be deemed original.¹ They seem not to have realised that the main theme is based on a motif already used by Rota in *Fellini-Satyricon* (1969) and Michael's theme on one used for the funeral at the end of *I clowns* (1970).²

Many, then and subsequently, would consider the music for *The Godfather* among the finest of all film scores, certainly more distinguished than the others nominated (*Images, Napoleon and Samantha, The Poseidon Adventure, Sleuth*³ (all 1972)); bizarrely, the score that won was for *Limelight*, a film made twenty years earlier, whose nomination was accepted on a technicality.⁴ Besides, Rota had after all re-used his own music, and when he did so again, in *Godfather II* (1974), he was awarded the Oscar. Yet *Godfather II* contains very much more of his music for *The Godfather* than the latter does of *Fortunella*. Nonetheless, on this occasion the Academy saw no problems of unoriginality in his nomination and award. They probably did not know that several of the new elements in *Godfather II* were also recycled: the song the child Vito sings while waiting in quarantine on Ellis Island is taken from Rota's music for Visconti's 1957 stage production of Goldoni's *L'impresario delle Smirne*; the theme for Kay is taken from his music for the television series *Il giornalino di Gian Burrasca* (1965), hugely successful and fondly remembered in Italy but unknown outside it; and the important new motif, known as 'The Immigrant', reworked the fourth (andante sostenuto ed espressivo) of his fifteen *Preludes* for piano (1964).

In its own terms, the Academy's decision on the first *Godfather* was correct. The primary burden of 'original' in the category's designation is that the music be expressly written for the film in question. Rota's use of music from *Fortunella* for *The Godfather* was not in this sense original; it was, in the most exacting sense of the term, plagiarism. He knew he was using music he'd used before and does not appear to have made that clear to Coppola or Paramount. They thought they were getting new ('original') music from

him; he knew they weren't, and he presumably presumed that no one would realise because *Fortunella* was a pretty obscure film. Presenting something already heard as never heard before in circumstances where you assume you can get away with it are hallmarks of plagiarism. However, the *Godfather*–*Fortunella* link is only a point of entry to a trail of connections, which in turn open onto readily confused meanings of (un)originality, to wit, plagiarism and pastiche.

It seems to have been a product of a kind of laziness. Rota was, as always, extremely busy when Coppola made a late request for a theme for the Sicily sequence. Deeming it 'inutile che mi spremessi le meningi' ('a waste of time racking my brains') to come up with a new tune, Rota pulled out a number of old ones and, 'secondo il mio solito' ('as is my way'), ran them past a few friends to see which they thought best (Comuzio and Vecchi, 1986: 10). In any case, said Rota later, all composers re-use material, sometimes an idea jotted down waiting for the right moment, but other times 'an idea already made use of but transformed, re-elaborated'.⁵ It is only one theme out of the whole score, about twenty minutes in a nearly three-hour film, and played very differently from its previous use. In *Fortunella* it appears first as a fast march, played with the kind of reckless enthusiasm that Rota often used to suggest the circus or amateur town band; Rota (Comuzio and Vecchi, 1986: 10) refers to it as 'una marcetta sfottente' ('a nice little send-up of a march'). It then goes through a number of variations, including ones much closer in tempo to its reappearance in *The Godfather* (although in context even the more sentimental variant is either comic or sad, neither of which it is in *The Godfather*). At no point is it used, as in *The Godfather*, in an arrangement for mandolins and strings, nor played fortissimo over the images or in relation to the romantic evocation of landscape and love. Aside from the tune itself, the actual sequence of the melodic line, it is really quite far musically and affectively from its appearance in *The Godfather*. This is unlike the re-use of the song from *L'impresario delle Smirne* in *Godfather II*, where the feeling evoked in both cases is very similar: in its earlier incarnation, it is an intensely melancholic serenade sung by a small, lonely boy in prison, just like Vito on Ellis Island.

All of the markers and mitigations of plagiarism in the *Fortunella*–*Godfather* case contrast with another instance of Rota's re-use of a (different) melody in *Fortunella*. In a contemporary review, 'm.m.' (Morando Morandini) observed that in *Fortunella*, Rota 'arriva al punto di plagiare se stesso' ('goes so far as to plagiarise himself').⁶ However, unless plagiarism means here (as it often does) stale but not literal repetition of previous work, only one element of the *Fortunella* score actually comes from an earlier film and thus might on the face of it be thought auto-plagiarism. This is a fanfare-like motif composed for *Il bidone*. However, as the latter was made only two years earlier (1955) and was directed by one of *Fortunella*'s scriptwriters, Federico Fellini, it is unlikely that no one knew what Rota was up to. The theme is very little altered between the two films, punctuating events on and off; the bitter, and in the end tragic, feeling of the earlier film,

The Godfather: Johnny Fontane (Al Martino) croons for Connie Corleone (Talia Shire) on her wedding day



carried in this theme, makes available an undertow to the more whimsical tone of the later one. Not only did those making *Fortunella* know the theme was being re-used, but in fact the film works better if the audience pick up on it too. Declared and purposeful re-use is not plagiarism.

Compared to this, Rota's re-use of a *Fortunella* theme in *The Godfather* is indisputably, technically, plagiarism yet all the same it seems pretty innocent at the level of intention and affect. As already noted, it is musically very different, really only involving a melody, and constituting only a small part of the score. It only became plagiarism that mattered when it started to make money. Much to Rota's surprise, Paramount chose the last minute, *Fortunella*-derived theme for the short Sicily sequence as 'The Theme from *The Godfather*'. It was widely used in the promotion of the film, including in the form of the hit ballad 'Speak Softly Love' (words by Larry Kusik), recorded by, among many others, Johnny Mathis, Andy Williams and Al Martino, who plays the crooner Johnny Fontane in the film.⁷ It thus became seen as the principal musical element of the film, sidelining the film's other much more pervasive and expressly written motifs and perhaps giving the Sicily sequence an undue significance. Paramount had reduced the score to a single marketable element, a tune that could be made into a song. It was this though that caused a problem for the Academy.

It is in fact rather surprising that the latter had even heard of *Fortunella*. In Italy it had been a flop, albeit a high-profile one, involving as it did a notable line-up: Eduardo De Filippo, the most famous name in Italian theatre, as director and co-star; Giulietta Masina and Alberto Sordi, very well-established stars by this time; an American star, Paul Douglas; Fellini as one of the scriptwriters;⁸ and Rota's music. Masina, Fellini and Rota were riding high from the success of *La strada* (1956), which had won the Oscar for Best Foreign Film, and the character of Nanda (nicknamed 'Fortunella') is clearly built on Gelsomina, the winsome character played by Masina in *La strada*. Rota was also now internationally known for his music for *War and Peace* (1957). None of this though could secure *Fortunella* art-house success abroad any more than it could box-office success in Italy. The tune that Paramount had promoted to main-theme status and that was under fire from the Academy was from a film most people had never even heard of. The Academy only learnt of the prior existence of the theme from a telegram, signed by 'I compositori italiani di colonne sonore' ('The Italian film music composers'). It seems probable that Dino De Laurentiis, the producer of *Fortunella*, was behind this, as he hoped to make money from the huge success of 'Speak Softly Love' by claiming his rights in it, even though he had never paid Rota for the music for *Fortunella*, nor even got him to sign a contract (Lombardi, 2000: 152). In short, plagiarism was an issue because Paramount promoted a tune to main theme status and put words to it to make it at once a money-spinner and a form of advertising, but only really became one when Di Laurentiis thought he could profit from it too. The underlying economic imperative for both Paramount and Di Laurentiis was in turn wittily highlighted when in 1972 the record company Cora reissued the *Fortunella* soundtrack on LP with the by-line (in much bigger letters than the title itself) 'La madrina del padrino' ('The Godmother of the Godfather'), thus brazenly milking the scandal, and money-making potential, of the accusation of plagiarism.

Rota had never particularly wanted to write the music for *The Godfather*. By 1971, with a string of successes behind him, to say nothing of a very active life as a composer and teacher, he was not interested in taking on yet more work, especially with a then-unknown American director, Francis Ford Coppola.⁹ The latter, against the wishes of the studio, who wanted Henry Mancini (Cowie, 1997: 63–4), went specially to visit Rota in Rome to beg him to take it on; when Rota, to shake him off, imposed extravagant conditions (such as that he would only compose the music when the film was finished, would never himself come to the USA and

The *Fortunella* score repackaged by Cora Records as 'The Godmother of the Godfather'



would send someone else to conduct it and adjust the score in synchronising it for the image), Coppola went ahead and accepted. It is interesting that he so much wanted Rota (and that, with more promise than track record behind him, he was able to get his way with Paramount). Rota had only once, with *War and Peace*, worked on a Hollywood film, and then not actually in Hollywood as it was shot in Rome, and though he had worked in many genres, including one or two psychological thrillers, he had never done a Mafia or gangster film. Coppola, however, did not want him to write action thriller music. Rather, as Rota recounted (in De Santi, 1992: 104–5), he wanted music that would evoke, rather broadly, even vaguely, Sicily, such as to suggest how far away it was from America.

In short, what Coppola wanted from Rota was pastiche, music that, precisely by not actually being Sicilian, suggested Sicily as an idea, that at once communicated directly the feeling of Sicilianness while indicating the fact that this is a notion carried in the fading memories and passed-on values of the characters. Pastiche is able to convey the emotional pull of this notion even while signalling it as a notion, and it is precisely the affective power of everything suggested by this Sicilianness (notably family, loyalty, honour, male bonding) that draws the characters (and especially Michael) inexorably into crime and violence. Rota provided this sense of culturally and historically constructed feeling, above all in the film's real main theme, a slow waltz, first heard on a solo trumpet recorded with considerable echo, to give a blowsy sound suggesting faraway, nostalgia, longing, loneliness, melancholy.

The theme that caused all the trouble for the Academy (now usually referred to as the love theme) ratchets pastiche up a further notch. The main theme insinuates itself into the texture of the soundtrack, often reticently. The love theme, withheld for just under an hour and three-quarters, appears only in the Sicily sequence; the orchestra plunges straight into the melody, first with gloopy massed strings, then augmented by mandolins insistently to the fore, thus combining, almost to excess, the folkloristic/touristic aural image of Sicily and the conventions of Hollywoodian romanticism. It seems to underline the fantasy of Sicily that the character of Michael experiences, even when, indeed only when, he is actually in Sicily – a fantasy coloured by the American culture that he is in reality so much a part of. You don't have to take it this way: it is possible to take the Sicily episode straight, as a largely idyllic escape from the tension and carnage of New York. But neither Coppola or Rota are straight in that way, and the ambiguity of pastiche, poised exactly on the cusp of straight and ironic, is at the heart of both artists' work.

Rota's love theme for *The Godfather* was not original in the Academy's sense. Melodically, it was plagiarism (albeit auto-plagiarist and guileless), though in all other musical aspects (harmony, tempo, orchestration) it was not, to say nothing of the fact that it was such a small fraction of the whole score that was, nominally, nominated. The theme was also, in all its musical dimensions, pastiche. This is almost by definition not original, except in a technical sense (that is, it is not plagiarism). Yet Coppola seems to have

recognised in Rota's pastiching both a consummate skill and an unusual complexity of relationship between the pastiche, that which it is pastiching and the context (the film) in which it is being deployed. It is a vindication of pastiche.

* * *

There is virtually no original music, in the Academy's sense, in *Il gattopardo* (1963). It comes from one of Rota's symphonies and two of his earlier films, together with a Verdi waltz.¹⁰ There is, but in a markedly different sense from above, pastiche.

The non-diegetic score has two main elements. A rising stately romantic theme in a predominantly string arrangement accompanies the credits (a tracking shot taking us into the grounds of the di Salina palazzo near Palermo) and such sequences as Tancredi leaving the palazzo to join Garibaldi and the Risorgimento, Tancredi and Angelina exploring the palazzo in Donnafugata during their courtship and Don Fabrizio contemplating his mortality in the final moments of the film. Second, there is a poundingly dramatic theme, carried principally on violins with brass and timpani, mostly used for the Risorgimento battle sequences. The themes are drawn respectively from the third (andante sostenuto)¹¹ and fourth (allegro impetuoso) movements of Rota's *Sinfonia sopra una canzone d'amore* (Symphony on a Love Song), written in 1947. Although the director, Luchino Visconti, did use expressly written scores in some of his films (including by Rota in *Le notti bianche*, 1957, and *Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, 1960), he more commonly used already existing music for the resonances they carried with them (e.g., Donizetti in *Bellissima*, 1951; Bruckner in *Senso*, 1954; Mahler in *Morte in Venezia*, 1972). According to Rota, Visconti had considered Massenet, Wagner and Gounod's *Faust* for *Il gattopardo*, and Rota played some of these themes over as they discussed the matter, segueing distractedly into the andante from his symphony; Visconti at once recognised that 'this was the music of *Il gattopardo*' (De Santi, 1992: 90). On this occasion, Visconti could not be using the music for its associations, since it had never been published or performed,¹² yet it is almost uncannily appropriate for the film. A symphony of the period, which would have been new in the period, would sound familiar and be encrusted with association. The Rota symphony can have a sense of newness (unfamiliarity) while at the same time being recognisable as old (the style of the period) and this fits with the general aesthetic strategies of the film.

Il gattopardo is based on the novel by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, written between 1954 and 1957 and published in 1958. It is set principally between 1860 and 1862 (with later episodes omitted from the film) and tells of the moment of the Risorgimento, the mid-nineteenth-century movement for the unification of Italy, through its impact on an aristocratic Sicilian, Prince Fabrizio, and his family. It is written in a faintly ironic realist style, untouched by twentieth-century literary modernism. Rota's *Sinfonia sopra una canzone d'amore* was written ten years earlier, yet it too could have been

written a hundred years before: Suso Cecchi D'Amico, in the critical study that came out with the film, simply refers to it as a 'nineteenth century style symphony' (1963: 172). It uses large orchestral forces, but with none of the exotic instrumentation, lush chromaticism or folk and jazz inflections that were to come in symphonic composition (and not least in classic film music: Steiner, Rózsa, Korngold, Herrman). If the credits did not indicate to the contrary, you might think it was a mid-nineteenth-century symphony you happen never to have heard, by Tchaikovsky perhaps. The film *Il gattopardo* is shot largely on locations carefully restored to how they would have looked in the period (Bertetto, 2000: 203–6), with costumes meticulously recreated by Piero Tosi; its style approximates nineteenth-century art, both painting (composition within the 'landscape' (that is, scope) frame that is reminiscent of, and sometimes specifically refers to, nineteenth-century Italian painting, a quality brought out by an overall 'tempo rallentato' (slowed-down pace) (Severi, 2001)) and also the novel (naturalistic accumulation of physical detail; 'omniscient narration with a plurality of unsubjective points of view' (Bertetto, 2000: 218), achieved by long takes and, mainly, pans, techniques that hold back from a scene rather than entering it and fostering identification). In short, the novel, symphony and film, produced within fifteen years of each other, all evoke an older world in something approaching the style of that world.

One might say that this is what a film – and score – of *Il gattopardo* would have been like if there had been cinema in the 1860s. It is more nineteenth century than mainstream cinema, strongly marked though that is by both the novel and melodrama. It was, moreover, made by a high-profile director in a period when cinema's nineteenth-century inheritance was under attack, the period, to mention only Italian examples, of *Accattone* (1961, Pasolini), *La commare secca* (1962, Bertolucci), *L'eclisse* (1962, Antonioni) and *8½* (1963, Fellini). The score is likewise out of step with prevailing styles of film music, the Cinecittà/Hollywood mainstream as well as the spare atonality of Giovanni Fusco (*L'eclisse*), Bach cantatas over sordid imagery (*Accattone*) or the exuberant collage of evident pastiche, quotation and parody of the Rota of *8½*. If it could never be possible to make a nineteenth-century film, it was even more remarkable to be trying to do so in this period.

Some aspects of the film may even seem to underline this. The *mise en scène* is excessive in its detail, always in danger of drawing attention to its pictorial sources and the pains that have been taken; the casting of stars, notably Burt Lancaster, Alain Delon and Claudia Cardinale, puts familiar, twentieth-century faces amid all this strenuous recreation; and as the film's central source of understanding, Don Fabrizio's perspective 'at times seems too advanced and twentieth century to fit realistically and coherently with the film's diegetic world' (Bertetto, 2000: 219). Even without these elements, the film would have to be considered anachronistic, albeit anachronism of a peculiar kind, for it seems to want to recreate a form that never in fact existed, the nineteenth-century film. It is, if not pastiche proper, at any rate

in that neck of the woods, an imitation that, in context (a film and score out of synch with its time) and perhaps textually (*mise en scène*, stars, central character), is evidently an imitation, but in a medium that the thing imitated neither did nor could have deployed. Much of the melancholy of the film resides not only in Don Fabrizio's sense of the ironies of history and his own mortality, but in the fact that the film itself, including its score, cannot be what it wants to be, cannot achieve the imagined fullness and presence of nineteenth-century cinema.

Rota also composed the dances for the ballroom sequence that makes up the last third of the film. These are diegetic music: you wouldn't necessarily know that they were written by Rota at all, and indeed one of them, a valzer brillante (a gay waltz), is in fact by Giuseppe Verdi.¹³ It was discovered by a friend of Visconti's on a bookstall in autographed manuscript form, scored for piano and dedicated to Countess Maffei, whose Milanese salon played a significant role in the Risorgimento; Verdi himself has also been considered 'Il vate del Risorgimento' (the Bard of the Risorgimento).¹⁴ Rota arranged it for orchestra along with six other dances, including another waltz. The Verdi waltz carries particular narrative weight in the film: it is the first dance we hear and see and is also the music for the dance between Don Fabrizio and Angelica, a dance startlingly erotically charged and pregnant with class significance, the aristocracy dancing with the rising bourgeoisie. However, I find it hard to believe that one could pick out the Verdi dance from the Rota



The Verdi waltz in
Il gattopardo

ones – the orchestration ensures that they seem all of a piece. So does the playing. A local orchestra was used during the shooting, and their playing is less polished, with smaller orchestral forces, than originally planned. Visconti and Rota, however, liked this less-than-perfect sound, perhaps on grounds of realism, but in any case folding Verdi and Rota on a par into the film's processes of recreation.

All of the dances sound nineteenth century. As with the score, their unfamiliarity to the film audience is well judged: they sound of their period, they carry no baggage and, for the characters, they are present-day. They are a memory of something that the film's audience in fact has never known. One at least though may be more. This is another waltz that Rota had used in an earlier film, *Appassionatamente* (1954), with just the same orchestration. Here too there is a long ball sequence, where questions of shifts of class structure (in this case, an aristocratic woman marrying into the rising new professional class) are played out in the gyrations and couplings of the dance floor. *Appassionatamente* is unashamedly a period melodrama, but clearly Rota saw no incongruity in transposing the music from one film representing social relations through interpersonal ones to another doing the same thing within the more highbrow accurate period gloss of *Il gattopardo*. Visconti seems not to have known of the borrowing.

There is also a galop in *Appassionatamente* that is re-used in *Il gattopardo* (as well as a polka that, entirely in keeping with the style of the other dances, is nonetheless not re-used). The only other dance in *Appassionatamente* (*Il gattopardo* has four others) is a then well-known old waltz tune that gives the film its title, composed by Dino Rulli in 1928 (and acknowledged in the credits). Thus there is here no question of plagiarism: though also used non-diegetically, the film's title and the credit to Rulli draw attention to the tune as a reference. This is also part of the way *Appassionatamente* works differently to *Il gattopardo* as a historical film. The former assumes that the audience will recognise its eponymous theme, suggesting an attitude of awareness of the past as past, and perhaps of nostalgia, in its visual and aural *mise en scène* (even while being modern in its contemporary melodramatic identity, not least by virtue of stars specialised in the genre, Myriam Bru and Amadeo Nazzari). *Il gattopardo*, in contrast, works on the assumption that, though obviously old fashioned, everything about the film is nonetheless contemporary with the characters.

In 1947 Romeo Carreri observed, in the course of an enthusiastic article on Rota's film music, 'Who could forget the delicate waltz in *Un americano in vacanza?*' (Carreri, 2000: 40). Yet clearly many could (forget), since this is the waltz in *Appassionatamente* and *Il gattopardo*. *Un americano in vacanza* (1945) tells of an encounter between Dick, an American GI on a few days' leave in Rome, and a young Italian teacher, Maria. She resists his advances, thinking he just wants a fling, like other GIs and indeed many Italian girls, a situation illustrated in the 'Melody Club' (sic) and its hot swing music (which, as is common in films of this period, is associated with loose morals¹⁵). Later Dick takes her to an American reception held in an old

Italian villa; Maria is not dressed for the occasion, but the villa's owner, the Countess Arcieri, lends her an elegant ballroom gown; as she dances with Dick, she finally comes to believe in the honourableness of his intentions. The music they dance to is the 'unforgettable' waltz. The villa, the ball gown, the waltz all affirm the values of an older age, still alive despite fascism, the war and the American invasion of jazz and loose morals (emphasised by a brutal cut from the waltz to blaring swing later at the party). It is not actually an old waltz – it is the idea or echo of one.

In the ball in *Il gattopardo*, where it is called the 'valzer del commiato' (parting waltz), it occurs twice. The first time it accompanies Tancredi introducing Don Calogero (Angelica's father, representative of the petit bourgeois class who have profited from the Risorgimento) to the hostess, a princess of ancient noble family; it continues behind Don Fabrizio looking on at the new vulgarity of the young aristocrats at the ball and with the first intimation of his own death. It appears at the end, as the ball is breaking up, coming in on the soundtrack as Don Fabrizio looks at himself in the mirror, next to a room full of unemptied piss pots, and sheds a tear.

In *Un americano in vacanza*, the waltz represents the survival of old values in a world imperilled by modernity; eleven years later, in *Appassionatamente*, it suggests the tension between values; in *Il gattopardo*, another nine years on, set nearly a hundred years earlier, it is an elegy for the eclipse of those values. Both the score and the dances in *Il gattopardo* are



Il gattopardo: Don Fabrizio, the gattopardo (Burt Lancaster), contemplates his demise

pastiche, in that they are imitations that know themselves to be such (rather than simply imitating prevalent styles, the basis of nearly all cultural production) but they are not textually marked as pastiche (unlike the *Godfather* score). They contribute to the creative anachronism of the film and to its melancholy, for a world that is passed, for a film form that never was.

* * *

Il gattopardo is not the only film with music in common with the *Sinfonia sopra una canzone d'amore*. The latter's first movement (allegro) uses music written for an earlier film, *La donna della montagna* (1943), which Rota then re-used, after writing the symphony, in what was in its time one of his greatest hits, *The Glass Mountain* (1948). Both films are about the lure – the beauty and danger – of mountains; in each, a dead woman is associated with that lure. The *Sinfonia*'s allegro theme is associated with the lure in both cases, though the films' overall tones are very different: *La donna della montagna*, made and not really completed in the last year of the war in Italy (Trasati, 1984: 33–6), is bleak and perverse, whereas *The Glass Mountain*, a British film, with Italy figuring as a place of wartime heroism and peacetime exoticism, tempers melodrama with sweetness and light. Ostensibly, both end happily, but the reconciliation of the couple in *La donna* is perfunctory and formulaic and we have never seen love between them anywhere else in the film, whereas we have idyllic scenes of love and marriage between the couple in *The Glass Mountain*, and they come together at the end as a result of an arduous journey towards each other. The use of the *Sinfonia* theme in the two films underlines the difference. In *La donna* it is used throughout the film, broken down into phrases and not given a full, orchestrally affirmative statement at the end. In *The Glass Mountain*, there is an alternative theme for the central (married English) couple, Anne and Richard Wilder, and it is this that accompanies their reconciliation. After this, *The Glass Mountain* does have a full statement of the *Sinfonia* theme, but over a panorama of the mountains as the couple and rescue party ski safely away from them. The most important statement of the theme occurs in the opera, 'The Glass Mountain', composed by Richard (and in fact of course by Rota), which is about a fateful love story, wherein a woman scorned kills herself in the mountains and then in turn, perhaps only in his imagination, lures her fickle lover to his death with her plaintive song. Here, within the opera, there prevails something of the sense of emotional doom that pervades *La donna della montagna*, albeit more grandiose, less bleak, and the return to the theme at the very end of the film itself, as the English couple leaves the mountains, perhaps suggests the abiding presence, and lure, of such terrain.

Rota's re-use of the *La donna/Sinfonia* theme in *The Glass Mountain* is a different case from his use of the *Fortunella* theme in *The Godfather*. In the latter instance, there is a radical reorchestration and change of tempo in the theme in the context of huge differences in setting, period, story and tone, whereas the orchestration alters only slightly between the two mountain films. Although one would be hard put to it to claim that there is something

intrinsically ‘mountainy’ about the music (it does not, for instance, draw on the music of the German Bergfilm of the 1930s), it is reasonable to assume that Rota heard doomed love in it (whether in the cadences of the theme itself or in its association with the events in *La donna della montagna*), not least because it is the *canzone d’amore* on which the symphony is built, and in undoubtedly dark, turbulent colours. While it is probably the case that Rota assumed that few if any would see both films and make the musical connection between them, it would also not matter aesthetically if they did, since their emotional material is so close.

As a piece of film music the allegro (and other music) in *La donna della montagna* and *The Glass Mountain* conforms to what had become standard practice by the mid-twentieth century: formally modified nineteenth-century symphonic in style, subordinate to the story-telling, offering the audience emotional response cues. Perhaps because, unlike the symphony’s andante sostenuto and allegro impetuoso movements, the allegro was originally conceived as a piece of film music, and perhaps also because, unlike *Il gattopardo*, the setting of both films is contemporary, there is nothing remarkable about the allegro here. If it is, in relation to developments in both highbrow (atonality, serialism) and popular (hit songs, jazz) music, anachronistic, then this is because film music in general was. Anachronism is put to particular ends in *Il gattopardo*, but in *The Glass Mountain* it is just business as usual.

As already noted, the allegro theme also occurs in the opera-within-the-film, ‘The Glass Mountain’. Works-within-works have a propensity to seem to be being held up for stylistic inspection, but this does not have to be the case and is not so here, and this despite the fact that ‘The Glass Mountain’ is an amalgam of musical styles. There is the allegro theme, here sung by both lovers, whereas it only functions as purely orchestral, non-diegetic music for the surrounding story. It also draws on the modes of operatic verismo associated especially with the Mascagni of *Cavalleria rusticana*; four years later, Rota arranged and supplemented the music for the Mascagni biopic, *Melodie immortali* (1952). As in ‘The Glass Mountain’, Mascagnian verismo promotes a chimera of noble poverty and peasant vitality. The opera also quotes a song, ‘La montanara’ (‘The Song of the Mountains’), sung by the mountaineers in the surrounding story. This combination of references in a work which is moreover, as far as the film is concerned, written by an Englishman, might suggest multiple foregrounding of the constructedness of musical affect.

Yet this is not how the opera works in the film. This is partly because the musical elements are themselves related: opera, and especially verismo, had a direct influence on film scoring, especially in Italy, and, notionally at any rate, verismo gestured towards folk sources (a point made in many biopics, including *Melodie immortali*). Even were this not so, the scoring of the opera folds all the elements into a stylistically unified whole. Most suggestive of all is the presence of the Italian male lead in the film, Tito Gobbi, the most famous baritone (and perhaps male opera star) of the period, not least by

The Glass Mountain:
Tito Gobbi as Tito, singing
'La montanara'



virtue of his many film appearances. As with the films of other opera stars (e.g., Beniamino Gigli, Gino Bechi) and the biopic *Enrico Caruso: leggenda di una voce* (1951), Gobbi's films present him as a man of the people, even often of poor origins, able to move musically and naturally between opera, folk and music hall, an embodiment of an ideal of unified Italian identity achieved through music (e.g., *Musica proibita* (1943), *O sole mio* (1946), *Avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma* (1946)). The different musical styles are not seen as inimical but quite the contrary, wholly compatible, as both Gobbi's practice and star persona, and the opera in the film, demonstrate. Further authentication is provided by the fact that Gobbi plays a character in the surrounding story who sings in the opera, suggesting the continuity between the two realms.

The Glass Mountain is in part about the recovery of past, perhaps lost emotion. For Richard, the opera itself seeks to recapture his feelings for Alida, the woman he fell in love with when his plane crashed in the Alps during the war; and he remembers her through a legend she told him, about a man whose dead fiancée forces him to remember her forever. Like *Il gattopardo*, the opera recalls a past moment in the musical language of that moment – except that the musical language of the opera, both its verismo and its folklore, were already past by the time the film was made and in which is set. The anomaly of its style is highlighted by the fact that it is supposedly premiered at La Fenice in Venice, which in the immediately following years premiered two unmistakably mid-twentieth century operas, *The Rake's Progress* (1951, Igor Stravinsky) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1954, Benjamin Britten). Moreover, Britten had had remarkable success with *Peter Grimes* (1945), premiered just after the war (that is, before *The Glass*



The Glass Mountain:
Richard Wilder (Michael
Denison) composing

Mountain and ‘The Glass Mountain’), establishing a contemporary British approach to opera very different to Richard Wilder’s unselfconsciously anachronistic style.

The Glass Mountain, in its use of ‘La montanara’, also takes us back to the question of plagiarism. The song had been found/composed by Antonio Ortelli and Luigi Pigarelli, specifically for the Coro della Società Alpinisti Tridentini (cf. Borgna, 1992: 102),¹⁶ and presented probably by the composers and certainly by the film as an authentic emanation of the alpine spirit. The credits of the film clearly attribute ‘La montanara’ to Ortelli and Pigarelli, and Rota seems to have tried to sort out his right to use it before leaving for London to complete the score;¹⁷ in the programme of music for the film, Rota claims that every single second of use of ‘La montanara’, as song or as cited in the non-diegetic score, was spelled out.¹⁸

In the film, the people of the village of San Felice (including Tito Gobbi) are seen singing it, so that when it appears in the non-diegetic score it can readily be understood as having been picked up and reworked from this source. Most viewers are perhaps unlikely to take in the small print (literally) of the credits and might well take ‘La montanara’ to be Rota’s invention or, even more probably, a genuine folk song. This last was how it was referred to in coverage in 1948 in the British magazine *The Cinema*,¹⁹ apparently on the basis of interviewing Rota, and the song was well known in Italy, certainly in the Dolomites, at least since the late 1920s. Besides, as so often with folk song, to what extent one should consider it composed rather than collected by Ortelli and Pigarelli is unclear, as is what (artistic as well as legal) right of ownership collection would give them. Folk music is characterised by just such fudges of composition and discovery, authenticity and invention.

In all these ways, there may have been aesthetic conundrums about originality, but no clear-cut issues of ownership. However, Rota was persuaded to produce a version of the much-admired score in the form of a piece for piano and orchestra, aiming at the same market that had made hits out of other British ‘concertos’ such as the *Warsaw Concerto* (Richard Addinsell, from *Dangerous Moonlight*, 1941), the *Cornish Rhapsody* (Hubert Bath, *Love Story*, 1945) and *The Dream of Olwen* (Charles Williams, *While I Live*, 1947), to say nothing of the popular success of Rachmaninov’s Second Piano Concerto following its use in *Brief Encounter* (1945, much admired by Rota²⁰). This ‘concerto’ (short enough – just over four minutes – to fit on one side of a 78 rpm record), entitled *The Legend of the Glass Mountain*, had a phenomenal success in Britain, on radio, in record and sheet music sales (De Santi, 1983: 48), appearing in the top ten of the hit parade for over a year. *The Legend* incorporated phrases from ‘La montanara’ and, as ‘Song of the Mountains’, it appeared in non-vocal form on the B-side the disc; with English words, it became a popular song, sung by the most beloved star of her generation, Gracie Fields, at the Royal Variety Show in 1950. Royalties poured in. As with ‘Speak Softly Love’, who owned the song came to be of considerable significance. What, within the discourse of folk music, ought to have been considered traditional, autochthonous, and thus beyond issues of individual authorship and ownership, of originality and copyright, came to matter financially a great deal in those terms. Rota commented later (De Santi, 1992: 61):

With ‘La montanara’ I did the same sort of thing that Tchaikovsky did with our folk music in *Capriccio italiano*. But there was nothing for it: along with the success came the first accusation against me of plagiarism. And I did feel aggrieved about it, even though the tribunal came down on my side.²¹

The score of *The Glass Mountain* also a couple of times incorporates a snatch of the tune ‘Lilliburlero’,²² to underline moments of cheerfulness between Richard and Anne. This is a standard item of British light music, and thus a familiar musical point of reference in the middle-class culture to which the couple belong, a tune seen as so traditional as to be beyond questions of origin or authorship and thus beyond those of plagiarism. It is an overt citation, perhaps also constituting some kind of homage by an Italian composer working in a British context.

* * *

Nino Rota was a composer responsive to what was asked of him, enormously at ease with generic and historical musical styles, delighting in the possibilities of irony and pastiche and, not least, always very busy. At the same time he was caught up in the legal, financial, practical and aesthetic realities of the situation in which he worked. *The Godfather*, *Il gattopardo* and *The Glass Mountain* illustrate the interaction of this compositional sensibility with these production circumstances. They also throw into relief the matter of imitation.

Imitation is the foundation of all expression and performance but it also constitutes a faultline in modern Western culture. On the one hand, it is viewed with disdain from the perspectives of individualism, expressive and autographic notions of authorship, and copyright. On the other hand, the centrality of genre and branding to capitalist cultural production and the rise of identity politics and multiculturalism emphasise the value of similarity, which, whether fully perceived or not, entails imitation. Within academic discourse, imitation's other, originality, has been resoundingly routed by critiques of romanticism and the rise of post- and post-postmodernism, yet in public intellectual life, in highbrow journalism, in examination guidelines, the criterion of originality continues unaffected.

Plagiarism and pastiche are two registers of this. They are two forms of imitation that share the characteristic of being formally very close to that which they imitate, so close as to be on occasion mistakenly taken to be that which they imitate (pastiche) or deliberately intended to be taken as it (plagiarism): this is the first way in which they straddle the discursive faultline of imitation. At the same time they are near-opposites: plagiarism only works as plagiarism if it is not recognised as such, whereas pastiche has to be recognised as pastiche to work as pastiche. Yet despite this glaring difference, in practice, because of their closeness to their referent, they are also often taken for one another: that is, in given circumstances, the accusation of plagiarism is often levelled at a work pastiching another work, while pastiche is often condemned as nothing better than plagiarism. This confounding of the two is a second way in which they throw into relief the faultline of imitation.

Plagiarism and pastiche both violate the culturally privileged principle of originality, but this doesn't need to matter. Plagiarism flouts the principle of originality by directly ripping off a previous work and even claiming itself as original. Though the examples here do not go that far, the initial proposal that *The Godfather* score be nominated did so inadvertently. However, plagiarism's deceit only matters when something – money or acclaim, or it might be status or competitive examination – is at stake. Pastiche signals the issue of unoriginality because it acknowledges that all expression and performance involve imitation. However, pastiche may nonetheless take that which it imitates at face value, as if acknowledging its own activity of imitation without perceiving that that which it imitates is also involved in imitation. *The Glass Mountain* knows that it is producing a new version of verismo and reproducing an established version of folk, but shows no recognition of the problem of authenticity in both of these traditions. *Il gattopardo* and *The Godfather*, in contrast, recognise that they are in the realm of the already said and use it, not to spuriously authenticate nor yet, as in much modernist and postmodernist consideration of such recognition, to distance or critique, but to get close, formally (*Il gattopardo*) and/or affectively (*The Godfather*), to acknowledge the sources of imagination and emotion without in the process extinguishing them.

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