

What does one make of a juxtaposition like the one in John Woo's *The Killer* (1989)? The eponymous assassin and his admiring policeman foil are united in the final shoot-out, which takes place in a church, where the men are defending themselves and the blinded heroine from a horde of villains. At a climactic moment said bad guys' perfidy reaches a breaking point, which point is demonstrated when they machine-gun a statue of the Virgin Mary. It shatters in slow motion, and at that moment the sound track strikes up the strains of the sinfonia from Handel's *Messiah*. Woo's montage fireworks and operatic melodrama literally explode from this point, and although the combination of music with image and story could be seen as having sacrilegious implications—consider the figure summoned by this particular music, the nature of this sacrifice, and the merit of the cinematic savior—to take it as such seems a touch oversensitive.

Having bypassed offense, confusion still remains. What motivates this quotation? Does it refer to the killer's sacrifice? The virginal ideal represented by the blinded singer? Is it all pure sensation, with intertextual correspondences being purely unwitting? Given such proliferations it is easy to take note of Woo's breathlessly exhilarating yet absurd enactment, enumerate the elements contributing to it, shrug one's shoulders and move on.⁴⁴

Shrugging aside, this is the course recommended by the formalist schools mentioned in the first chapter. Where we don't know, or don't acknowledge the importance of intent, where the results are aboundingly complex, it is a good course. This is especially true when we think of the many unconsidered and under-considered uses of this music throughout film history.

Still critical elaborations can be appropriate when we see clearly how clumsy cues have exceeded the filmmaker's intent and expectation, leaving us with unwitting but still substantial insights. *Chapayev* (1934), by Georgi and Sergei Vasiliev, was one of the most celebrated successes of Soviet socialist realism. Its aims were to celebrate the revolution and to condemn the reactionary forms and factions that opposed it. In one scene a hulking peasant soldier, adjutant to the sinister White Russian General, appears to be dancing in stolid fashion to the first movement of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* (no. 14). His commander—dressed and groomed, incidentally, like Erich von