GIORGIO
BIANCOROSSO

REMIXING WONG KAR-WAI

MUSIC, BRICOLAGE, AND THE AESTHETICS OF OBLIVION

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WONG KAR-WAI

ASIA-PACIFIC: CULTURE, POLITICS, AND SOCIETY

EDITED BY REY CHOW, MICHAEL DUTTON, HARRY HAROOTUNIAN, AND ROSALIND C. MORRIS

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TO AIKO /

“OCEAN BLUE” /

PIGMENT OF THE IMAGINATION

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I dedicate this book to my daughter, Aiko, living proof of the dynamic possibilities of bricolage.

[Robert] Rauschenberg: Also, being a good artist is like committing the perfect crime—you don't get caught.

[William] Seitz: I'm talking about crimes you get caught for.

Rauschenberg: That's not art.

UNPUBLISHED TRANSCRIPT, CITED IN KATZ, "'COMMITTING THE PERFECT CRIME'"

/ INTRODUCTION

You should go in for a blending of the two elements, no? Memory and oblivion, and we call that imagination.

JORGE LUIS BORGES

It's said that memory is the root of Man's troubles
That year, I started to lose my memory

HUANG YAOSHI, *ASHES OF TIME*

MUSICAL BORROWING *REDUX*

Cinema's most famous depiction of bricolage is itself the work of bricolage. In Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), under a gloomy sky, Moon Watcher is squatting leisurely in a semi-open area not far from a shelter (see fig. I.1). Behind him, in the distance and slightly out of focus, is the unforgiving African desert. In front, laid out rather like the dishes of a macabre banquet or ensemble of discarded toys, are the remains of an animal. Did it die a natural death, or is Moon Watcher contemplating the remains of someone else's meal? A bass drone appears in perfect sync with the image. Initially, the sonic intrusion barely registers as sound (let alone as music). Yet we'd do well to honor its appearance. For the sync point marks both the beginning of the episode and a shift in attitude on Moon Watcher's part: from boredom to hunger, frustration, and then curiosity and even playfulness. By the

1.1–1.4 A bone turned into a weapon: *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

time the trombones intone the famous C major triad that opens Richard Strauss's "Also Sprach Zarathustra," we realize we've heard this music already (over the beginning titles). The awareness of a repetition matters more than the title or programmatic tenor of the piece. Given its triumphant quality, a quality broadly accessible irrespective of any prior knowledge, the recurrence tells us that something pivotal is about to happen. What would otherwise pass as just another day in the life of a hungry ape man, the music seems to be implying, is of vital importance to no less than the emergence of a new species.

The remainder of the sequence bears this out. At first, the actions performed by Moon Watcher belie the grandiosity of the music. Having quickly surveyed the scene with what (anthropomorphically) looks like a bored look, the ape appears to lack anything resembling a plan of action until the crucial moment in which he moves closer to the bones lying on the ground. He seizes a femur, inspects it, then smells it. Unimpressed, he drops it and then picks it up, only to drop it again. The gesture causes a long, arched rib bone to pirouette before his eyes. Aimless tinkering gives way to a more deliberate chain of actions as Moon Watcher realizes he can break bone with bone. The found object has morphed into a tool—indeed, a weapon—a crucial passage that Kubrick marks with a striking change of tempo and camera setup.[1]

A new image shows the cloudy sky as seen at an angle (fig. I.2). Kubrick's ulterior aim is to capture to best advantage Moon Watcher's charging arm ripping through the frame—in slow motion (fig. I.3). As if possessed, Moon Watcher continues to crash the remaining bones, including the large skull that lay prominently to his left, largely intact. It is a striking reversal. Images of a plump tapir collapsing on the ground as the result of being bludgeoned to death—the very same animal whose skeleton he is now breaking into fragments—flash through Moon Watcher's mind (fig. I.4). They prefigure his future status as predator. At last, the solemnity of the music is commensurate with the significance of the passage. No longer merely simultaneous to the images of Moon Watcher, Strauss's "Also Sprach Zarathustra" is now *synchronized* to them, moving at the same tempo as they do, its own majestic tempo contributing to the monumentalization of Moon Watcher's triumph. The music also determines the length of the episode (which is cut to its strains). As the sound of a distant organ ceases to prolong the sound of the final, glorious C major chord, Moon Watcher fades from view.

THE LISTENER AS BRICOLEUR

Like the bone turned into a weapon, Strauss's music has been found, tinkered with, and retooled.[2] The fanfare matches the narrative segment of *2001* that Kubrick had in mind: the way the bone fit in Moon Watcher's hand, setting into motion a process that altered not only the direction of the narrative but the very mode of existence of the music. The exhilaration that accompanies Moon Watcher's epiphany (femur = weapon) may be said to also apply, self-reflexively on the director's part, to the realization that Strauss's symphonic poem functions brilliantly as the film's recurrent theme. Along with Jean-Luc Godard's abrasive use of the classics and Pier Paolo Pasolini's montages of high and low, Kubrick's reinventions of Strauss and Beethoven (among others) have since resonated across the world of film with the force of a manifesto. This lesson was not lost on the filmmakers of the Hong Kong new wave and, through them, on Wong Kar-wai, the filmmaker who more than anyone else embodied the resurgence of the spirit of the 1960s in Hong Kong.[3] Wong's films are lauded for their striking visuals, poetic dialogues, and sensuous re-creations of 1960s Hong Kong. Seemingly incapable of going down a well-trodden path, Wong has injected new life into such genres as Chinese melodrama, the road movie, and the action film. Central to this effort is the wide range of preexisting music that has found its way into the soundtracks of his films. The musical nexus at the heart of Wong's cinema has been shaped by the circumstances of his films' production and reception, the history of Chinese-language cinema, and the involved relationship, in his oeuvre, of cinephilia and musicophilia. Consider the use of Laurie Anderson's "Speak My Language" in *Fallen Angels* (1995). The song is of a piece with an elaborate feat of self-presentation on the part of the hitman's female partner. Styled after MTV and gesturing toward New York's rarefied downtown scene, the episode is nonetheless informed by a bluntly melodramatic premise: the music fills a void left behind by an absent lover (the hitman, who seems blissfully unaware that the "partner" is in love with him). Played by the improbably glamorous Michelle Reis, the "partner" sets the song into motion by dropping a coin into a beaming, impressively built retro jukebox bathed in pitch black. The machine doubles as an impassible partner, the music choreographing a series of frustrated sexual innuendos. The presciently digital vibe of the locale, barren arrangement, and breathy, closely miked

voice make Anderson sound like a crooner from cyberspace. Wong's enshrining of Anderson's voice stands in stark contrast with the treatment the same song underwent in the likely source, Wim Wenders's *Faraway, So Close* (1993). The retooling betrays a debt to an admired filmmaker but is also a lesson in musical curation and a "perfect crime" in Rauschenberg's sense (see the first epigraph). In Wenders's film the same song is hardly audible. It is only on looking up the history of Anderson's song and subsequently the items listed on the CD of the soundtrack that I became aware that Wenders had used the song in the first place.

Remixing Wong Kar-wai charts the emergence of a unique modus operandi, which I interpret as a way of channeling creatively the habit of chancing on, collecting, and listening to music in the commercial and artistic entrepôt of Hong Kong. Directing films, I argue, turns Wong Kar-wai the music lover and end user into a bona fide composer or, better, re-composer of the very repertoires he explores—the listener as bricoleur. Bricoleur seems an intuitive description of Wong the urban dweller and media consumer conjuring worlds from the detritus of the mediascape. Correspondingly, I use *bricolage* to refer to a mode of creating film soundtracks characterized by the choice and assemblage of already-existing music. This modus operandi stands in contrast to the creation, ex nihilo, of new sound structures tailor-made for the final edit of the film (as in the traditional notion of film scoring). But in one important sense it is symptomatic of filmmaking, tout court. Bricolage pervades set design, costuming, and makeup and is built into the postproduction process as a matter of course across all other meaning-making elements of film.[4] By the time the director begins to edit a film, for example, the footage shot in production has, too, become preexisting. What becomes fixed in the final edit is the work of a collective, which produces a single entity in the director-as-bricoleur. While directors can justifiably lay claim to bringing all the material produced by their collaborators under a single, unifying vision, the result, to adapt a statement by Claude Lévi-Strauss, will always be a compromise between the structure of the instrumental set and that of the project. After it materializes, the project will therefore be inevitably at a remove from the initial aim (which was moreover a mere sketch), a phenomenon that the surrealists have felicitously called "objective hazard."[5] Hence the propensity of bricolage, despite its apparently constrained means, to produce "brilliant unforeseen results."[6] For this reason, in this book "Wong Kar-wai" refers

to the flesh-and-blood director but is also a placeholder for collaborative work with materials—visual, sonic, plastic—the affordances of which do not emerge until one begins to combine them.[7]

BRICOLAGE: A REAPPRAISAL

The term *bricolage* requires if not an endorsement then at least a qualification. Famously introduced by Lévi-Strauss to capture a dimension of mythical thought, the metaphor of bricolage initially gave a new impetus to the study of style in fashion and the emergence of subcultural movements such as punk.[8] It has since languished at the margins of the academic discourse on the arts. This was initially due to its association with structural anthropology—a branch of the social sciences then thought to have been superseded, if not altogether discredited—and deconstructive critiques by the likes of Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.[9] Derrida's critique is worth revisiting if only to correct what I see as his misperception or strategic misappropriation—which comes to the same thing—of Lévi-Strauss's thinking (not to mention that it is in part responsible for our lingering unwillingness to build on it). In a philosophical vein, Derrida questions not so much the applicability or heuristic value of Lévi-Strauss's metaphor but rather its logical validity. In particular, he questions the key dialectic that underpins Lévi-Strauss's introduction of the term, that between the bricoleur proper, who creates by imaginatively combining ready-to-hand things, and the figure of the engineer, who has a precise goal in mind and builds out of raw materials or components made or sourced.[10] Swiftly moving to considering the engineer the counterpart to a writer or thinker, as per Lévi-Strauss's metaphor, Derrida makes the point that it is both practically and logically impossible for anyone to be "the absolute origin of his own discourse."[11] To the extent that there is borrowing involved, as must be the case, every kind of discourse is a kind of bricolage. The figure of the engineer, concludes Derrida, is itself a "myth" created by the bricoleur.[12]

Derrida is correct in questioning the absolute difference between the bricoleur and the engineer and indeed denying that the existence of the latter is at all plausible (he calls the engineer a "theological figure"). Speaking a language, to make an example, always involves borrowing of one sort or another.[13] The counterpart of the engineer in the realm

of speech would be the etymologist or, worse still, the "neologist" (notwithstanding the fact that neologisms are in fact the result of bricolage: the combination of two or more already-existing words). This is a patently absurd scenario and would fly in the face of our knowledge of how language works. Yet it is not to say that differences do not remain and, what is just as important, that they are not observable in our everyday commerce with the world. Derrida exercises a kind of logical purism, which robs the bricolage/engineer distinction, however imprecise or blunt, of its considerable—and continuing—descriptive and explanatory power. In subjecting Lévi-Strauss's argument to such stringent logical analysis, moreover, he betrays the spirit of the text he critiques. The very figure of the bricoleur is introduced precisely to demonstrate the value, to the bricoleur, of pragmatic compromises (such as, for example, classifications based on sensible properties). In so quickly moving from the vehicle (bricolage) to the tenor (myth) of the metaphor, finally, Derrida underplays the (admittedly unresolved) status of the metaphor itself. For Lévi-Strauss is as interested in bricolage and engineering as practices as much as metaphorical counterparts to mythological and scientific discourse. Not coincidentally he follows with a cogent exploration of the artist (his example is a painting by Camille Claudel).[14]

For all its strengths, however, I am less indebted to Lévi-Strauss's discussion of art-making than his elucidation of the operations of bricolage. By the same token, I do not draw on Lévi-Strauss's analogy, suggested in various forms in *The Raw and the Cooked*, between music and myth. The analogy depends on a belletristic and unduly narrow view of music as a self-standing art form as exemplified by sonatas, quartets, symphonies—and Richard Wagner's operas. It is a decidedly Eurocentric view from a man who in his ethnography surely noticed that music is inseparable from work, sociality, and ritual. Or did he? Be that as it may, Lévi-Strauss understood music as an almost perfect equivalent of mythic structure: recursive, unified, and transcendent. It is the kind of formal reductionism that gave structuralism a bad name.[15]

Royal S. Brown has revived Lévi-Strauss's analogy between music and myth to argue that film music affords the spectator a "mythic mode of perception."[16] A mythic or paradigmatic, as Brown also calls it, passage transcends the determinations of the here-and-now of a narrative. A leitmotif associated with a place or a character, for example, transports us intratextually beyond the immediate present to call up prior or subsequent moments in the narrative. The use of a waltz in a scene of

courtship is, on the other hand, an example of extratextual relation. As a widely recognizable topos, the waltz helps convey the gist of the action by tapping into a vast pool of shared memories.[17] Brown's application of the notion of paradigm to film music is fertile. But to account for the power of film music to afford a mythic mode of perception on the basis of Lévi-Strauss's analogy between music and myth is a non sequitur. It is a characteristic of all narratives, whether they feature music or not, that they resonate with our experience, irrespective of their specific features. To the extent that film music supports Lévi-Strauss's understanding of myth and its underlying cognitive principle, the paradigmatic, this has little to do with his view of music as a formal homology of myth. It is bricolage—plundering the musical archive for the purposes of telling a story—that accounts for the successful retooling of a specific piece of music in order to serve the paradigmatic ambitions of a narrative.

There is another reason why Lévi-Strauss's notion of bricolage is more germane to the study of film music than his belief in the homology between myth and music. This is the feedback loop between chancing on recordings and creating film soundtracks. We must appeal to bricolage if we wish to grasp the mutual implication that binds, in the artistic sphere, aesthetics and poetics. Consider Pablo Picasso's well-known sculpture *Bull's Head* (fig. I.5). The work is the record of a moment of looking, of seeing-as to be precise: the saddle and handlebars change aspect. By combining them, Picasso gives material form to this perception, preserving it for posterity as in a time capsule. Seeing is one with making. The gesture of combining two found objects sanctions not merely a new union but a newborn identity in something like the way synchronization helps congeal a moment of listening or brings to light a new facet of a familiar sound through a new, expanded form of musical composition.

Bull's Head is unique in Picasso's oeuvre in its invitation to recognize the bicycle parts as such. This brings me to another aspect of Lévi-Strauss's discussion of bricolage that is central to my undertaking, and elided in Derrida's critique: the ability of the bricoleur to repurpose the borrowed or discovered material in ways that make its past use or identity difficult to detect or, even when flaunted, simply immaterial. In *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the ape man's bricolage is akin to film music in that, in the words of Pasolini, "film music can be conceived before a film is made . . . but it is only at the very moment it is cut to the images, that is

1.5 Pablo Picasso, *Bull's Head* (1942).

born as film music. Why? Because the encounter and subsequent amalgam between music and the moving image is fundamentally poetic, that is empirical."[18] By the same token, a bone is born as weapon only in the act of manipulating it.[19] The bone-as-weapon is neither a found object nor a readymade. For it to be an example of the former, its novel use value would have to be discovered *before* one can say it has been found (a patently absurd scenario). As to the latter, "The feature of the 'ready-made,'" as Claude Lévi-Strauss stated in a little publicized yet enlightening 1959 interview with Georges Charbonnier, examined afresh by Julia Kelly, "was very rarely reducible to a single object: in order to make a 'ready-made,' there must be at least two objects."[20] Kelly continues:

> Charbonnier posited Duchamp's *Bottleneck* as a counterexample of a single-object readymade, to which Lévi-Strauss responded that to remove the bottle rack from its original context was to bring about a semantic "fission" separating the signifier and the signified and, by separating them, creating "an unexpected fusion between another signifier and another signified." For Lévi-Strauss, then, all uses of found objects are a kind of assemblage, involving the collision of meanings: "It is the 'sentences' made with objects which have a meaning not the objects themselves."[21]

Lévi-Strauss's analogy between ready-mades and the sentence in language is needlessly reductionist. Even so, his basic point is well taken: despite manipulating one and only object (albeit in multiples), Moon Watcher reinvents the bone by removing it from its original context and mentally placing it in another. The outcome is contingent on the object being subsumed under the novel situation—what Lévi-Strauss calls a "sentence"—brought into being by Moon Watcher's tinkering with it. Kubrick, too, has a "second object" at his disposal: the moving image. He reinvents Strauss's music not merely by assembling or fusing it with the image but also by tinkering with it in the process of editing the film and hearing it under a dual aspect: as integral to a dramatic *situation*, itself the target of the attention of a situated listener, namely the film spectator.[22]

Before retooling the idea of bricolage to buttress the impossibility of a "discourse breaking with a received historical discourse," Derrida refers to the borrowing of concepts as carrying with it a formidable baggage: "Since these concepts are not elements or atoms and since they are taken from a syntax and a system, every particular borrowing drags along with it the whole of metaphysics."[23] Again, Derrida extrapolates from philosophical discourse and privileges logic over experience.[24] His truism tells us precious little about the extraordinarily wide range of outcomes produced by borrowing in the arts and their impact and significance at a particular time in a particular place under particular circumstances. A successful retooling, pace Derrida, sheds baggage as much as drags it. Forgetting is of the essence to the creative reinvention of the received tradition. To unleash its full potential, Lévi-Strauss's notion of bricolage must be lifted from the rarefied time-space of philosophical commentary and reclaimed by the very "human sciences"—anthropology, history, and art criticism—whose value Derrida's intrusion sought to question.

My interest in bricolage has been spurred by Derrida's deconstructive critique of Lévi-Strauss—and my wish to counter it. As a critical category, however, bricolage did not fade into the margins only because of Derrida's attack on structural anthropology. Its loss of potency can also be attributed to its dilution in a cultural field dominated by adjacent and to an extent also overlapping notions of intertextuality, appropriation, and allusion, and such practices as hyperreferentiality, sampling, remix, and nowadays also content generated by artificial intelligence. Yet it would be a mistake to subsume bricolage under, not to mention confuse it with, these adjacent, if undoubtedly significant, practices. Con-

sider, for example, Véronique Altglas's work. Drawing on Roger Bastide's scholarship on religious syncretism in the Americas, Altglas has revived the idea of "bricolage as a response to the holes of 'collective memory.' It is thus about replacing something missing. As such, bricolage can be seen as a quest for coherence rather than a celebration of eclecticism."[25] Altglas's timely rediscovery of Bastide reminds us that if Wong's cinema would be unthinkable without access to a plethora of cultural resources, it is also a symptom of a quest for a lost tradition.[26] If I revive bricolage as a metaphor and an analytical tool, then, this is also in the attempt to liberate what we might call its literary resonances. Bricolage captures the expedient nature of borrowing in a saturated marketplace. It makes palpable the gestural quality of stitching together found music and the moving image.[27] Indelibly tied to mythology and myth-making, as per Lévi-Strauss's seminal formulation, bricolage also evokes end-of-history scenarios and the exhaustion of genres and ideas that underpin the use of all manner of preexisting materials by such artists as Andy Warhol, Godard, Cindy Sherman, and, more recently, Christian Marclay.[28] Such preoccupations are central to the reflections on contemporary pop culture by the likes of Simon Reynolds.[29] As a filmmaker but also pop artist in the broad sense of the term, Wong may be said to partake of the "addiction to the past" that, as Reynolds rightly observes, informs so much popular music of the past twenty or so years. Yet his winning bricolage of music and the moving image is not reproductive but transformative. Wong's films exemplify the very changes—stylistic, formal, of sensibility—that Reynolds finds to be lacking in the trajectory of pop itself.[30] Lévi-Strauss, too, was haunted by the end of history but in a literal, material sense: nuclear Armageddon.[31] It is therefore only too fitting that the artwork that perhaps best captures the climate of fear that defined the postwar period would be Bruce Conner's *Crossroads* (1976), itself a montage of preexisting footage of the July 25, 1946, Operation Crossroads Baker underwater nuclear test at Bikini Atoll. Through the recursive use of disturbingly beautiful images, complete with a compilation soundtrack, Connor's bricolage brings to life a world bent on destroying itself.

Bricolage and *remix* are like the recto and verso of cultural production. As used in arts criticism, bricolage is product-oriented.[32] In keeping with this understanding of the term, I understand a film as a finished product, a closed system. This is a crucial heuristic, for without positing the film, albeit temporarily, as a complete, self-contained entity, it would be

impossible to contemplate the new identity the borrowed music has assumed in it. But, of course, a film is but one link—a station—in an open-ended, and potentially infinite, process of transformations. This is the domain of remix, which is process-oriented. Bricolage goes to the heart of the ontological change that, from the music as a self-standing object, forces us to consider it as an integral element of a dynamic combinatoire of elements. Remix stresses the open-endedness of the history of the musical borrowing viewed as an independent, recognizable entity with a history apart—both prior and subsequent to—the film in which it is embedded.

Remix also describes the concrete steps the director takes in splicing the music to the image and the sound mix: the material conditions under which a soundtrack is put together. Like turntablists and DJs, many filmmakers work with mediated audio objects and transform them in the studio via recording and mixing technology. In *2001: A Space Odyssey*, to return to my initial example, Kubrick used a specific performance of "The Blue Danube" as found on a commercial release. The singular qualities of the recording may or may not impinge on the impact of the episode. I personally believe it does but suffice to say here that on using preexisting music, directors do not cite musical works but rather remix recordings, a fact that is self-evident when the music in question is a pop track: for a case can be made that in pop the recording is the work.[33] It isn't just that the music arrives on a filmmaker's desk in the form of commodity. It is also that it has already been mixed or, indeed, is itself the product of remix and a chain of rewritings and transformative performances at the hands of multiple agents. It follows that the filmic use of a given piece or repertoire is but one step in a potentially infinite chain of materializations that stretches back into the past but also forward into the future. Insofar as the physical output remains the same, each materialization is a repetition. Yet the music evolves and sheds the traces of the past as it breathes new life into a new configuration. This is the space of the imagination, as per Borges's epigraph quoted earlier. Borges's definition of the imagination as a mix of memory and oblivion is not only consistent with the psychology of creativity: it also makes Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence moot.

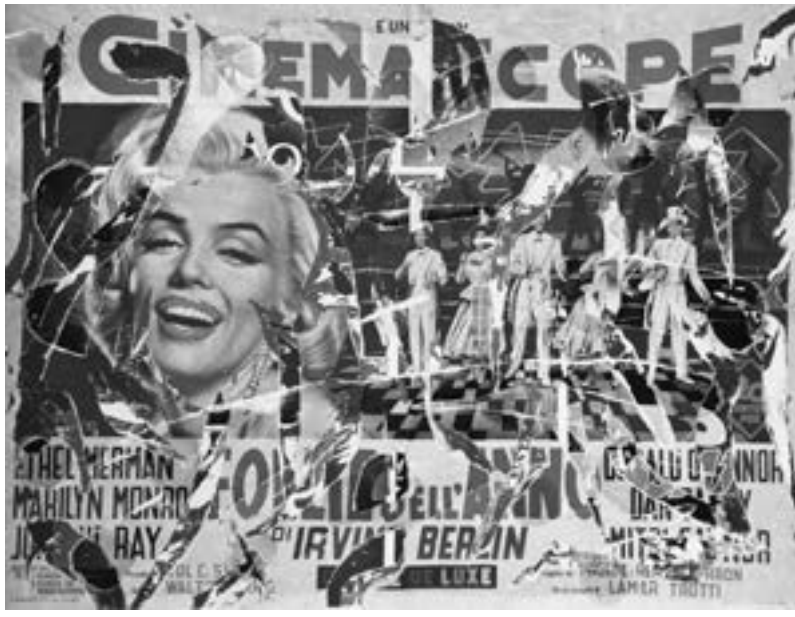
Interpretation and criticism partake of the remixing process. In viewing Wong's films as an exemplary site for the study of musical borrowing, I am myself remixing his cinematic oeuvre—hence the title of this book. My own remix entails that certain aspects of Wong's films are

emphasized at the expense of others. The emergence of the book's main argument will, I hope, provide a rationale for the exclusion from the discussion of such films as *Fallen Angels* (1995), *Eros* (2005), or *My Blueberry Nights* (2006) and such memorable moments in the Wong canon as, to give two examples, the use of Astor Piazzolla in *Happy Together* or the radio broadcast of Chinese regional operas and especially "Hua Yang de Nian Hua" in *In the Mood for Love*. Having covered this territory in previous publications of mine in terms that I find are no longer consistent with my current interests and methodological orientation, I dare say that in this book I am also remixing my own work.

THE GLOBAL VERNACULAR

With virtuoso camera work, a proneness to punning, and the unabashed exploitation of their leads' star power, Wong Kar-wai's films are deeply indebted to the values and practices that have jelled in and around the most representative genres of the Hong Kong film industry.[34] At the same time, they represent a signal departure in that they trade in those very genres in a decidedly reflexive, indeed predatory, mode. As with Godard, Wong's almost excessive love of cinema, and exuberant, unselfconscious penchant for borrowing, has resulted in films that are at once viscerally derivative and utterly different from the mainstream fare feeding it. To the knowing cinephile, his films come across as a kaleidoscope of citations, chunks of borrowed materials reshaped into a fractured yet strangely compelling original surface (for a visual analogy, see Mimmo Rotella's "décollage" in fig. I.6). Conversely, they may be described as a finely textured collage or mosaic exhibiting what initially appears to be a novel design yet consisting, upon closer scrutiny, of tiles borrowed from preexisting representations in now-fluid, now-jarring combinations (fig. I.7). Wong's borrowings range from narrative tropes to title songs, from costumes to the casting of old actors. While the extent of his plundering may seem perplexing, one cannot help but admire the brilliance and clarity of the retooling.

The reference to photomosaic or, say, collage paintings is not meant to suggest a deliberate convergence, let alone a genealogy.[35] But it is representative of my attempt, throughout this book, of aligning Wong's oeuvre with explicit bricolage practices, such as appropriative photography, mixed media arts, DJ-ing, and mashups.[36] The analogy with



1.6 Mimmo Rotella, *Cinemascope / Marylin* (décollage, 1963).

1.7 Photomosaic.

photomosaic is also specific in that, like a photomosaic, Wong's films are complete, self-sustaining representations. Their appeal does not depend on the deciphering of the borrowed materials that constitute their material substratum (though they may invite one to ponder them). Consider, for a revealing contrast, Japanese portraitist Yasumasa Morimura (fig. I.8). Having chosen photographs of exceedingly well-known artworks (e.g., Édouard Manet's *Olympia*) or icons (a celebrated close-up of Che Guevara), Morimura craftily inserts his own image in place of the putative subject. In so doing he makes the recognition of what he borrows not only easy to achieve but also of the essence to the uncanny effect of the insertion. An equally instructive counterpart to Wong's modus operandi is the installation pieces of the acclaimed Vietnamese-Danish artist Dahn Vo (fig. I.9). Many of Vo's works consist of ingenious combinations of what at first blush appear to be found objects from disparate sources (the raw materials, that is, of the bricoleur). Whether they come across as carefully executed assemblages, provocative juxtapositions, or lumps of objects casually put together, the stark setting of the contemporary art gallery or museum provides them with a striking frame that enhances their ritualistic power. Paratextual materials add to the ponderousness of their presentation, aiding us to view the installations as powerful statements about the life of objects, colonization, and displacement. At this juncture, however, one realizes that Vo is no bricoleur at all. The repurposed objects are not chanced on but, to the contrary, hounded, indeed scouted with the relentlessness of a prodigal son retracing the path to one's lost home (the Vietnam of his forgotten childhood). They may be said to be "lost and found." They evoke a highly personal, even esoteric trajectory. Their selection and presentation are studied in the extreme. It follows that without knowledge of what they are and what they stand for, Vo's works are all but opaque. Viewers have no choice but to excavate meanings and associations for their encounter with them to be meaningful. In prosaic terms, access to the aboriginal meaning of the objects, and hence the key to Vo's works, is possible only through a careful reading of the captions. The caption inverts the literal or surface meaning of the object (be it a chandelier, washing machine, or piece of fabric). In this way, the objective remnants of the colonizers' world are turned on their heads, as it were, to tell a story their very production and deployment were in fact once upon a time meant to conceal. It is a powerful reversal of mimicry, to be sure. But it comes at a cost: the return or, better, retreat to what I would call the "aesthetics

1.8 Yasumasa Morimura, *Portrait (Futago)* (color photograph, 1988).

1.9
Dahn Vo, *Oma Totem*
(mixed media, 2009).

of the gloss." As Claire Bishop has suggested, "For many of Vo's fans, the idea of research and the lure of history still lend a certain assurance of critical substance to his art."[37] Worse still, such a retreat into "research" is forced down our throat. Given the moral turpitude of the narratives alluded to—colonization, the Vietnam wars, the "boat people" crisis of the late 1970s—any attempt to escape or evade the programs implicit in his works would make us complicit in the moral failures that precipitated the crises they allegorize. So, we reach for the gallery walls.

If I dwell at some length on Vo, this is because he typifies the successful postcolonial artist crafting an original language out of the remnants of the colonial past. Wong Kar-wai, too, is a postcolonial subject coming to terms with a colonial past (most explicitly in his 1960s trilogy). Yet the configurations that emerge in the here and now of the film experience take precedence over the provenance of the borrowed materials that form their inspiration. This is first and foremost because of the apparent polish and sensuality of the finished product. Wong's borrowings do not come across as fragments but are seamlessly integrated into a new and internally coherent gestalt. Such a process of seamless integration is facilitated by the fact that film is a time-based medium that encourages the stringing together of disparate elements to create a coherent narrative (compare, in this respect, film spectatorship to the leisurely and contemplative nature of art viewing). But to insist on medium specificity begs the question of why Wong borrows so copiously in the first place. Wong seems blissfully unpreoccupied with the adaptation of Western classics (as, say, Akira Kurosawa was). This is not to say he is not privy to the reasons behind his own preference toward recurring motifs, texts, sounds, or images. Homages to older Chinese films and divas, for example, are often delivered in poignant tones. Outside this first circle of references, however, whether the source is Louis Cha or Julio Cortázar, Michelangelo Antonioni or Seijun Suzuki, Brian Ferry or Piazzolla, one detects a joyful and not infrequently expedient indiscriminateness as to what Wong borrows, as if combining the catholic taste of a true cosmopolitan with the expediency of an artist on the run.

Several concomitant factors account for Wong's seemingly cavalier attitude toward borrowing and repurposing. First, he inherits a long-standing Chinese tradition of allusionism in both prose and especially poetry, the tendency to draw as a matter of course on a deep well of shared texts and motifs.[38] Given the opening of this tradition in republican-era Shanghai and subsequently colonial Hong Kong to the

sounds, texts, and images of global media—especially Anglophone and Japanese—this tendency has naturally resulted in a frenzy of borrowings whose range is beyond the pale of most filmmakers working in other film industries. Hong Kong has been as much a cosmopolitan free-trade zone as a colony. As such, it presents us with the compelling case of a distinctive culture emerging to the beat of the pulse of alternating cosmopolitan and vernacular tendencies (rather than the friction between colonizer and colonized or the struggle for emancipation from venerable local traditions or Western models).[39] Of this culture, and despite their distinctiveness vis-à-vis mainstream Hong Kong cinema, Wong's films are an exceptionally representative example. He came of age in a film and television industry bent on plagiarizing and delivering knockoffs that winked at a knowing audience while simultaneously minimizing production costs. For all the arty pretensions of his work, Wong's break from the ethos of Hong Kong's "copycat" culture has in my opinion never been clean.[40] He would fit the mold of the quintessential *shanzhai* artist except that he seems incapable of not remodeling, sometimes to the point of making the materials he borrows unrecognizable.[41] One could almost say he is an original despite himself. The personal nature of Wong's trajectory in the Hong Kong (and subsequently global) film industry, his hard-earned status of auteur, vindicates the right of the postcolonial artist to carve a unique space as shaped by one's own proclivities and choice of collaborators as much as impersonal sociohistorical processes. For this reason, this book is also a study in the irreducible individuality of the creative process. But if I focus on Wong's musical borrowings, this is not only for their range, scope, and intrinsic interest; it is also because I intend to draw attention to the emergence of a new and important form of music-making. Folded in my argument about Wong Kar-wai as artistically emancipated postcolonial artist is a reflection on borrowing and repurposing in film as central to musical culture.

RELINQUISHING AUTHORSHIP?

Exploring the use of preexisting music through the lens of bricolage brings to light several ambiguities that are central to the significance—and continuing appeal—of Wong's films. Consider, first, the extent to which music shapes our understanding of Wong as a film auteur. Compilation soundtracks have given new impetus to auteur cinema and added

a new dimension to our understanding of it.[42] In the wake of the invention of the cassette, the MIDI and portable devices, and even virtual music archives, directors have reverted to their collections more and more, their musical taste and sensibility imbuing their work with the unmistakable veneer of personal style.[43] My interest, however, lies less in authorship per se than in the ambiguities nested in the sourcing of preexisting music and its subsequent utilization in a film. Wong's oeuvre is a choice example of such ambivalence. For the more marked the music, and distinctive its deployment, the greater not only a director's ability to project its appearance as a function of his taste and proclivities but also the risk that he will come across as having abdicated the role of creator. Put bluntly, by using already-constituted materials a director is relinquishing responsibility as much as exercising it. The music originates with someone other than the director or, at best, the hired composer working under his supervision. It is not just that the director does not literally craft the material. After all, that is precisely the difference between the bricoleur and what Lévi-Strauss called the engineer (namely, someone who works with component pieces that are conceived and procured specifically for the project at hand). It is also that the borrowed or found musical material is itself used as music. In contrast, the bricoleur recycles, say, gingerbread to make a house or an emptied-out watermelon as a cup, thereby masking the natural function or point of origin of the found object. Not so with preexisting music, whose baggage of associations may in fact overwhelm the image and indeed defeat the very purpose of its borrowing.[44] Second, the film director deals with elements—footage, recorded dialogue, music tracks—that are singularly cumbersome, unmalleable, and ultimately intractable due to the high degree of technological mediation involved in their creation and/or combination. Alfred Hitchcock was speaking on behalf of many a director when he complained about and agonized over the lack of control over the composition of the soundtrack (and by implication, aware as he was of its significance, the film in its entirety). The choice to work with preexisting music is a partial remedy to this predicament. But it does not return full control to the filmmaker. The sole window of intervention lies in the right to exercise one's taste and cunning in the selection of a track and the display of skill in combining the chosen music with a given shot or sequence. The end result of this combinatory art is by its very nature emergent, which is not to say unpredictable or, worse, arbitrary but nevertheless constantly subject to negotiations and thus to

some extent endemically outside the remit of the director. Lévi-Strauss's model of the bricoleur working in blissful isolation and in full control of the process of retooling is an idealization inspired, one presumes, by the likes of Duchamp or Picasso.[45] Preexisting music speaks through the director as much as the director speaks through it. It is a significant instance of the diffusion of agency. This is not to say that authorship is made irrelevant—to the contrary—but rather that its affirmation is of a piece with the appearance of relinquishing it: hence the paradoxical role of preexisting music in both diffusing and fostering the director's identity as auteur.[46]

THE (AMATEUR) MUSICIAN AS (PROFESSIONAL) FILMMAKER

Through their compilation soundtracks, directors such as Wong, Quentin Tarantino, or Sofia Coppola channel their own history as listeners in an intensely mediatized, DIY world. Only they do it on a world stage, that of global film distribution. Substituting for the piano and the actual engagement with music-making, the mass media have fostered the emergence of listeners who cultivate an art whose rules of composition and performance they are not acquainted with.[47] Such listeners purchase music as produced, curated, and distributed by agents and commercial entities beyond their control and listen to it mediated through technologies outside their remit. For all this, the exercise of a certain musical taste and sensibility remains an active pursuit, one that is not confined to musically literate individuals (let alone professional musicians). Music lovers, and filmmakers among them, build collections, develop a set of preferences, and form listening and social habits that are at once expressive and constitutive of their identity.[48] To cultivate one's love for music is not only to perform the self; it is also to re-compose the music by playing it under circumstances that cast it in a novel or even unique perspective. This occurs whether one searches, collects, and listens to music privately for one's own sake or whether one adapts it for the purposes of making a film. The outcomes are vastly different, however. The soundtracks or song lists of a famous filmmaker are distributed, publicly observable manifestations of the productive nature of any such performance of agency.[49] Films are vehicles of a director's musicality, thanks to their imaginatively mixed, technically polished, and often

also lucrative soundtrack releases. The inclusion of a certain piece of music, even more so when skillfully executed, is an oblique endorsement that endows it with a new lease on life.[50] It is against this context that Wong passes as a musical "taste-maker" on a par with famous performers, DJs, and critics.

Wong's use of preexisting music points to the world of amateur filmmaking as well. As with the Coen Brothers, Tarantino, and, further back in film history, George Lucas, Kubrick, and Pasolini—to name but three—the roots of Wong's soundtracks lie in the rudimentary synchronizing practices that have sustained the work of photographers, cinephiles, and amateur filmmakers since the advent of recorded sound. Professional film releases have historically provided models of how music and the moving image might be combined in the context of an 8mm family film or a slide show. The use of preexisting music by noted filmmakers in the 1960s marked a new phase of this development in that it not only legitimized but emboldened countless image makers to make unabashed use of their recordings. This applies to amateur filmmakers, lecturers, DJs, photographers, video artists and makers, as well as, more recently, mashup artists, social media mavericks, and YouTubers.[51] Compilation soundtracks consisting wholly or at least in part of preexisting music have galvanized the process by which listening has become an aspect of making: the premise for an audiovisual poetics. The use of one's favorite music as the soundtrack to a film brings the amateur and professional image maker closer together in the name of a shared practice, and their shared status of musical amateurs and record collectors. Wong wears his love of music on his sleeve, so to speak, all the while inviting us to join in the game. In this respect, too, and not only in respect to the quality of the musical selections themselves, he employs music to reach out to a hip, urban, global audience. The underlying methods of selecting, compiling, and editing preexisting music are to some extent the same for professional and amateur filmmakers alike. Access to relatively inexpensive technological equipment has made filmmaking and compiling one's own soundtracks a distinct possibility for practically everyone. The high degree of professionalization of studio filmmaking entails unbridgeable differences, however. Wong the amateur musician is nested within Wong the professional—and celebrated—filmmaker. The full realization of his musical vision depends on the support of considerable logistical, technological, and financial instruments. Like any director working with a budget, he has access to technology, labor, and

a huge archive. These conditions underpin the emergence of new skills and ultimately new forms of musical creativity, which remain out of reach for the amateur. It is a set of circumstances that has set the stage not merely for the assumption of authorship over the music in the form of mechanical and especially recording rights but also for the remediation of whole repertoires in keeping with a wholly original audiovisual language.[52] Wong has transfigured the basics of film scoring—spotting, selecting, and synchronizing—into a wholly new musical practice, one the amateur or occasional filmmaker can only dream of.

RECASTING "CASTA DIVA"

There is no denying Wong's uncanny ability to reinvent, as opposed to merely cite or reference, a repertoire. The term *uncanny* applies literally here, as his films make the familiar sound new (if not altogether strange). Like a consummate DJ, Wong has turned the tools of musical reproduction—cassette and CD players, turntables, iPods, and so forth—into means for music-making. Where the DJ reframes a piece by breaking it or mixing with other pieces, Wong places it in the context of a dramatic situation or setting, with striking imagery, thereby creating a metaphorical loop between output (the playback system) and input (the film). Like a microphone, the latter picks up the musical signal but repurposes it to fit its own specifications. The resulting feedback amounts to a new and unfamiliar performance of even the best-known musical work.

Arved Ashby has called the use of preexisting music by filmmakers a new "form of music-making."[53] Wong's practices tempt one to take a step further and call such activities of choosing, compiling, and synchronizing music to a given scene a new form of image-driven composition. Historical musicologists call the repurposing of preexisting music via the fusion of old and new "parody."[54] Wong's repurposing of well-known pieces is sometimes so radical and whimsical that it divests preexisting music of all but its most familiar associations. Like a medieval scribe composing a new text for an old melody, thereby turning, say, a secular piece into a sacred one—a practice sometimes referred to as *contrafactum*—Wong creates dramatic situations that transform the music's acknowledged identity by shifting the terms of its reception. Far from being citations, allusions, or appropriations, many of his borrowings are deployed in such a way that the provenance of the music

either is rendered irrelevant or remains unknown.[55] This is due to several, sometimes concomitant, factors: the audacity of the retooling, the sheer obscurity of the source, the tendency of a given musical selection to camouflage itself in a new context, Bloomean "misprision" or self-citation. Mikhail Iampolski refers to this process as "source repression" and views it as the seed out of which new figures of cinematic language germinate.[56]

The idea of bricolage throws much-needed light onto Wong's multimedia combinatorial art, paving the way for a new understanding of the dynamics put in place by preexisting materials both in his cinema and the history of film music, and filmmaking, more generally. Like any product that involves craftsmanship, music-making may seem inaccessible to those who are not themselves well versed in the craft itself. Wong is not in the position of forging the musical materials from scratch but can only manipulate them (by altering the balance of the parts, manipulating the acoustics, or pushing volume to the threshold of inaudibility). This limitation is to some extent convenient for, insofar as he seeks to retain the identity of the music he has borrowed, he is unwilling to change its outward appearance. As heard in *2046* (2004), for instance, "Casta Diva," from Vincenzo Bellini's opera *Norma*, is a well-known token of the operatic repertoire. Its very recognizability depends on the integrity of its musical parameters (rhythm, melodic contour, range, and so forth). Wong leaves these parameters untouched, but the filmic context eats into the historical associations accrued around the piece by operating on the conditions of its reception. Unlike the operagoer or record collector, the film spectator will not lavish much attention on Bellini's music. In fact, the film makes a point of its incidental status by introducing it as a distracting sound through which a protective father and former opera singer seek—in vain, as it turns out—to drown out his and his daughter's voices amid a heated argument.[57] The episode neatly allegorizes the true raison d'être of the musical bricolage practiced by Wong: expediency. It is expediency rather than allusion—or homage—that underpins the musical borrowings in Wong's oeuvre.

The same example also clarifies the process by which his films invest music with new meanings. Wong shows little concern with the opera's historical background or the associations it has acquired over its long reception history. Deploying characters as vectors, he invites us to listen to the operatic excerpts the way they do. When Bellini's music reappears later in *2046*, it choreographs the slow-motion ballet of the

I.10 The space stewardess (Faye Wong) moving to the sounds of "Casta Diva" in *2046*.

stewardess on the spaceship heading toward *2046* (see fig. I.10). The stewardess is played by Faye Wong, who also impersonates the young woman involved in the altercation that is responsible for the aria's appearance near the beginning of the film. We could not be further away from the world of Bellini's opera, even in its most radical stage incarnations. Repetition and recasting tie the music to a new set of concerns, characters, and a wholly new iconography.

THE ANXIETY OF REPRESENTATION

As indicated above, I understand Wong's soundtracks as simultaneously affirming and relinquishing his responsibility as author. My stance is at least partially spurred by the same desire to demystify the idea of the author as the sole source of an artwork that also informed the emergence of intertextuality in literary studies.[58] Stressing that Wong re-composes the music he borrows, as distinct from merely citing it, is compatible with the questioning of authorship I pursue in this book. For to re-compose, in the model adopted here, is not to be the author of a musical work in the traditional sense but rather to create a participatory space in which preexisting music, as reconfigured in a film, is heard anew (or made unrecognizable). To be sure, Wong is deeply aware of the unique qualities of the materials he is manipulating (if only to clear rights). In fact, he often chooses a track precisely because of its origins and history. Yet in the end he uses it in ways that render the significance of provenance

irrelevant or moot. Why a track is chosen and the work it ends up doing in its new "host body" are very different things, a point that is well worth rehearsing because a director will often describe his musical choices in terms of the former (rather than the latter).[59] We heed a director's statements about his sources or rehearse the place of a borrowing in the culture at large—its received meanings—at our own risk. At bottom, such statements are casual reminiscences or rationalizations. As basis for interpretation, they are a function of that old chestnut: genetic criticism and the intentional fallacy that is its foil.

Let us look at the same issue from the other end of the analytical spectrum instead—that of the spectator. Provenance, even when obvious, can and very often will be glossed over. The spectator may ignore where the music comes from or they may exercise the right to ignore the intertextual resonances of what for a director is an explicit citation or allusion, wallowing instead in the new dimensions it takes in a richly nuanced dramatic situation.[60] It would take a very pedantic or, worse, patronizing neighbor or filmgoing companion to interrupt the show halfway to point out that a track was lifted from such and such record or film. Yet that is precisely what we scholars often do when, with undisguised pride, we point to the source or provenance of any given musical selection (especially when it turns out to be esoteric). For it to work, preexisting music must perform some kind of function (whether thematically or in terms of tone). Consequently, and unsurprisingly, it will invariably be found to be "meaningful," "enriching," "appropriate," or alluding to a symbol, theme, or other artwork. Thus, the judicious work of glossers and philologists transforms a *contrafactum* into a buried or hidden, esoteric intertextual reference (a reference that, because it is buried or concealed, requires the work of an interpreter, in a seemingly endless, self-reinforcing cycle). Glossing of this kind is a welcome exercise insofar as it makes us more informed spectators. All too often, however, it has the unfortunate effect of surgically removing the music from the context in which it is embedded. Insisting on provenance frames it apart from the film, turning it into a historical, musealized construct rather than as an unstable field of potential, and unforeseeable, meanings temporarily activated by a new configuration. The entirety of its sustained, moment-to-moment impact is reduced to its having a role in a static intertextual system, the recognition of an ostensible reference or association (one that, moreover, takes place almost by definition after the fact in the form of a footnote or commentary). In glossing borrowed

music through one's received wisdom, in other words, we overlook its unfolding in time in a multimedia construct that may or may not honor the associations by which the music is known or remembered. We create an "origin myth," according to which a piece of music must be judged on its own prior to being used in a film, without realizing that what we believe to be the music's aboriginal manifestation may itself have been the result of a recontextualization, or even a chain of recontextualizations, planned or accidental, reaching all the way back to its historical birth. We do expect a horn to evoke a hunting scene, but can we apply the same kind of expectation to a musical work and even a whole repertoire? Doesn't the appeal of a form like opera lie precisely in its capacity for renewal at the hands of, among others, singers, set designers, stage directors—and filmmakers? Instead of glossing Wong's films as if they were exercises in musical citationism, or poems riddled by now-obscure, now-platitudinous musical references, I propose that we focus on the sensuous dimensions and dramatic values of the music, irrespective of its identity and reception history (no matter how conveniently pertinent they may seem in revisiting the films).[61] This is not to engage in a patronizing or disingenuous parroting of the "average" spectator. The researcher is in a unique, delicate, and ultimately ironic position when it comes to borrowing. Knowledge of Wong's sources, when possible, is not merely desirable but must be pursued, only not so much as evidence that Wong is quoting earlier models but rather as a background against which to appreciate music's remarkable capacity for self-renewal.

As far as Wong's soundtracks are concerned, no anxiety of influence applies. It is a matter, rather, of the anxiety to represent.[62] Wong the bricoleur is not, or at any rate not only, referencing his sources; he is engaging in (expedient) parody like the medieval musician or troping his sources, in the manner of a Shakespeare, with the goal of creating a new world all along. Intertextuality posits the work as an open, dynamic field that both reconfigures and prefigures other works. The cases in which borrowings from other works are not recognizable as such—even by the author—are perhaps the most revealing, for they would seem to prove that language speaks through authors as much as they through it. Equally pertinent to a theory of intertextuality is the work of readers whose readerly past affects the way in which the present text is interpreted (again, through the filter of texts that may all be unknown to the author). What this means is that the workings of shared practices at both the production and reception point are as important as the singu-

lar, flesh-and-blood author in determining the meaning and impact of a work. This much is unproblematic. Intertextual readings, however, have the unfortunate result of privileging textuality over representation.[63] We can preserve a sense of the openness of the work, and the shared, inherently social and historical nature of artistic processes, by reference to the real world in which artworks exist, the circumstances—personal, social, political—that frame both their production and reception, and the situations they depict. Hence my appeal to worldmaking or, to paraphrase André Malraux's famous dictum, the move from pastiche to full-blown representation.[64] Like figure and ground, worldmaking and intertextuality are not merely alternatives: they exist on different orders of reality—hence, ironically, their ability to coexist in our encounter with an artwork (whether literary or cinematic). Which path we choose is not just a matter of preference, let alone the intrinsic nature of the texts we interpret, but a point of view. My own take on Wong's work is that for all their mashing and mixing of an extraordinarily wide range of preexisting materials—musical and otherwise—his films are first and foremost an attempt to conjure a world. The foundational role of music in conjuring such a world deserves a second hearing. It is the job of this book to argue for the boundedness of this vision to Hong Kong as both a subject and sociocultural space but also to account for its global resonance.

/ NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Epigraphs: Rauschenberg and Seitz, unpublished transcript, cited in Jonathan D. Katz, "'Committing the Perfect Crime': Sexuality, Assemblage, and the Postmodern Turn in American Art," *Art Journal* 67, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 38–53; "Thirteen Questions: A Dialogue with Jorge Luis Borges," interview by Willis Barnstone, *Chicago Review* 31, no. 3 (Winter 1980): 11–28; *Ashes of Time*, directed by Wong Kar-wai (Block 2 Pictures, 1994), 1 hr., 40 min.

1 In Arthur C. Clarke's novel, written on the basis of the screenplay after, not prior to, the film, the discovery of the weapon is somewhat different. Moon Watcher uses a stone—not a bone—"as if in a dream," while within a group of warthogs (a more realistic detail, because tapirs are not known to have inhabited Africa, where the beginning of the film is set). See Clarke, *2001*, 18–19. The iconic timpani motif of Strauss's fanfare is adumbrated in an earlier passage of the novel describing the apes' encounter with the monolith (11–12). In the film, the latter is just as famously scored with György Ligeti's "Requiem."

2 It makes sense to talk about "Also Sprach Zarathustra" as being found, tinkered with, and retooled because Strauss's symphonic poem had a long life as a self-standing artistic expression before its emplotment in Kubrick's film (whether in the form of live performances or recordings). Interestingly enough, Strauss's fanfare bears striking similarities to and indeed appears to have been modeled after a composition by Danish composer Niels Gade. Christopher Reynolds leaves it undecided

whether the similarities are the result of deliberate allusion or expedient borrowing. See C. Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion*, 14–15.

3 On the role of Hong Kong Television (TVB) in the development in the new wave and especially the career of Wong's mentor Patrick Tam, see Yau, "Urban Nomads"; and Fang, "'Pity about the Furniture.'"

4 On stage production as bricolage, see Atkinson's pioneering article, "Making Opera Work." On the postproduction in film as a form of bricolage, see also the introduction to Baumgartner, *Metafilm Music*, and Cecchi, "Collaboration and/as Bricolage." Godard's relentless subversion of editing conventions produced results that are vastly different from Wong's camouflaged retoolings, summarized by Baumgartner with the term "Metafilm Music."

5 On objective hazard as "an active synthesis of the subjective and the objective," see Carrouges, *André Breton*, 191. (In the English edition of the book, the word *hazard* is translated as *chance*.)

6 Kelly, "The Anthropology of Assemblage," 29.

7 Key to my understanding of the transformative power of postproduction, therefore, is its multimedia dimension or, better, dramaturgical impetus. Nicolas Bourriaud likewise extols the productive powers of reframing and retooling in contemporary culture. Despite his clever play with cinematic metaphors, however, his vision is bound to a conventional understanding of artistic practices (and their attendant markets: the art market, music industry, etc.) as separate endeavors—an understanding that, in my opinion, cinema has irreversibly upended. See Bourriaud, *Postproduction*.

8 Hebdige, *Subculture*.

9 See Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*; and Derrida, "Sign, Structure and Play."

10 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 16–22. These two figures appear to map rather neatly onto those of the collagist, record mixer, or indeed the director / music compiler on the one hand and the film composer conceiving and cutting music to the images and soundtrack of a given film on the other.

11 Derrida, "Sign, Structure and Play," 231.

12 Derrida, "Sign, Structure and Play," 232.

13 The artist or musician whose works are a pastiche of other styles or practices, as opposed to a collage of ready-mades, is to an extent also a bricoleur.

14 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 22ff.

15 Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, 15. On this problematic aspect of Lévi-Strauss's work, see Prieto, *Listening In*, 258ff. See also Kerman, *Contemplating Music*, 181.

16 See Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, 10.

17 Brown, *Overtones and Undertones*, 10.

18 Pier Paolo Pasolini, liner notes to *Dimensioni Sonore I* (translation mine).

19 "As he swung his hand around, puzzled by its suddenly increased weight, he felt a pleasing sense of power and authority" (Clarke, *2001*, 18–19).

20 Kelly, "The Anthropology of Assemblage," 28.

21 Kelly, "The Anthropology of Assemblage," 28–29.

22 See Biancorosso, *Situated Listening*.

23 Derrida, "Sign, Structure and Play," 227.

24 Such privileging of logic over experience also informs the work of countless critics and scholars for whom a borrowing invariably "drags along with it" the whole of the source from which it was lifted. Iampolski refers to this process as a process of "normalization" (*The Memory of Tyresias*, 51ff.).

25 Altglas, "'Bricolage,'" 477.

26 On moving to Hong Kong, ease of access was to me epitomized by the multizone DVD player. To my delight, I could watch films from all over the world without nary a murmur or complaint from the playback system.

27 Film scoring as is sometimes still practiced today also calls to mind bricolage in the eighteenth-century sense of the term, namely "fixing" something by way of a provisional repair (the music coming to the rescue of a rough cut or providing the requisite expression, which is found to be lacking in the images and the dialogue, for example).

28 This sobering scenario is different from Arthur Danto's idea of "the end of art," which is "a declaration of artistic freedom, and hence the impossibility of any further large narrative. . . . It is a wholesale case of living happily ever after" (Danto, "The End of Art," 128).

29 S. Reynolds, *Retromania*.

30 While Reynolds considers film remakes, it does not occur to him that it is through cinema that the rejuvenation of pop may have occurred in the first place.

31 On the ideological dimension of the bricoleur/engineer distinction, and Lévi-Strauss's view of nuclear science as a background to its formulation, see Johnson, "Bricoleur and Bricolage."

32 See Markham, "Bricolage."

33 See, for instance, Fisher, "Rock 'n' Recording." For a recent summary of the debate, see Davies, "Works of Music."

34 On this, see Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*; and Bettinson, *The Sensuous Cinema of Wong Kar-wai*.

35 I am also thinking of the collages by such artists as Anthony Brown, Nancy Spero, and John Stezaker (to name but three). The mosaic technique has also undergone a revival in the late paintings of Chuck Close.

36 The key work in the Wong Kar-wai canon, in this respect, is the little-known short *Hua Yang de Nian Hua*, a two-minute-and-twenty-second film built by stitching together extremely short excerpts of old Chinese nitrate movies. On this film, see Biancorosso, "Popular Music"; and Ma, *Sounding the Modern Woman*, 216–17.

37 Bishop, "History Depletes Itself," 329.

38 For a comprehensive survey of the use of allusion in classical Chinese poetry, see Peng, "The Role of Allusion." See also Williams, *Imitations of the Self*, especially the introduction and chapter 6.

39 On the vernacular/cosmopolitan dialectic in Southeast Asia, see Pollock, "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular." For an account of the process of indigenization, see Arjun Appadurai's virtuosic reconstruction of the history of cricket in India in "Playing with Modernity." For yet two more scenarios specific to Chinese-language cinema, see Yiman Wang's discussion of self-conscious remakes of Western models in "Remade in China," and Hu, *Worldly Desires*.

40 "Knock-off" phones may "refer to" precedents, playfully or clandestinely as the case may be, but they supersede their status as imitations or parodies to, quite simply, work as telephones (as in bricolage, the references pale compared to the use afforded by the retooling). As observed by Jeroen de Kloet, Chow Yiu Fai, and Lena Scheen, "*shanzhai* cultures may also help to revalidate the importance of craftsmanship, as the focus is more on making than on creating" (*Boredom,* Shanzhai*, and Digitisation*, 17). On the "subcultural" and even militant dimension of *shanzhai* culture, see Hennessey, "Deconstructing Shanzhai."

41 "You so often obliterate the sources of the things you use, that I did not regard you as essentially an assembler but as a sculptor," wrote curator William Seitz to David Smith, in order to justify the exclusion of so many of his works in the landmark *Art of Assemblage* exhibition (at the Museum of Modern Art, 1961). Cited in Dezeuze, "Assemblage," 31.

42 The key intervention is Gorbman, "Auteur Music." For a recent critical survey, see also the introduction to Ashby, *Popular Music and the New Auteur*, 1–28. On compilation soundtracks, see Hubbert, "The Compilation Soundtrack," and "Jonathan Romney and Adrian Wootton / Interviews from *The Celluloid Jukebox* (1995)," in Hubbert, *Celluloid Symphonies*, 452–64.

43 It should be noted that the use of preexisting music predates the period that is the focus of Gorbman's 2007 essay. Godard, Pasolini, and, outside the mainstream circuit, Kenneth Anger drew on their record collections for their films starting in the early 1960s.

44 Kubrick's use of the "Blue Danube" waltz in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, to discuss a glaring example, is both a huge gamble and a rare balancing act. On Kubrick's use of preexisting music, see McQuiston, *We'll Meet Again*,

especially chapter 6, and (the sadly untranslated) Bassetti, *La musica secondo Kubrick*.

45 In *The Savage Mind*, Lévi-Strauss never makes explicit references to twentieth-century collage and ready-mades. Yet it is hard to escape the impression that whether consciously or not, dada, cubist, and surrealist artists played a role in suggesting the analogy between myth creation and the manipulation of ready-to-hand objects.

46 Warhol's career, from his Campbell's soup cans to the serial paintings, was predicated on the successful exploitation of precisely this paradox.

47 In *Remix*, Lawrence Lessig refers to this as "Read-only" culture.

48 On the performative nature of musical taste, see Hennion, *The Passion for Music*. The difference between user knowledge and builder knowledge maps onto that between bricoleur and engineer and is—or ought to be—of central concern to music educators.

49 For a sobering evaluation of music "taste-makers" under the conditions of what he calls "new capitalism," see Taylor, *Music in the World*, 155–73.

50 To use an enological analogy, famous filmmakers are like Burgundian wine *négociants* selling under their name wine whose grapes are sourced and sometimes even vinified in other premises.

51 The reverse is also true as YouTubers "play" images to a given music track. Social media have occasioned a return to the raucously and joyously anarchic scene of the early years of the medium, years in which almost any music would do, provided that it lasted for as long as the screen presentation. The main difference, of course, is that music was performed live. For a wide array of theoretical essays on sampling and mixing practices, see Laderman and Westrup, *Sampling Media*. For a nuanced historical account of the role of the DJ in the emergence of hip-hop, see Katz, *Groove Music*.

52 By clearing rights, Wong sustains the illusion of single-origin creation. To use Foucault's terminology, Wong is the author of the music not so much as its composer as the "function" of the audiovisual discourse in which the music is implicated. See Foucault, "What Is an Author?"

53 Ashby, *Popular Music and the New Auteur*, 17.

54 On parody in renaissance music, see, for instance, *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Parody," by Michael Tilmouth and Richard Sherr, accessed June 13, 2021, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.eproxy1.lib.hku.hk.

55 In the case of *contrafacta*, erasing previous associations *was* the point, not a felicitous spin-off, especially when trespassing the threshold between sacred and secular was concerned. On borrowing, citation, and authority in the European Middle Ages, see Clark and Leach, *Citation and Authority*, especially the introduction and chapter 11. As described by Hon-Lun Yang, the covers of Western tunes in Hong Kong musicals come close to *contrafacta* (Yang, "Cosmopolitanism," 157ff.).

56 Iampolski, *The Memory of Tyresias*, 51–82.

57 For a reading of the sequence in terms of surveillance, see Chen, "Sonic Secrets as Counter-Surveillance."

58 For a classic account, see Kristeva, *Desire in Language*.

59 Consider, for example, Wong's exchange with Martin Scorsese regarding his homage to Sergio Leone via Morricone's music while shooting *The Grandmaster*. See Deadline Hollywood, "Martin Scorsese and Kar Wai Wong Interview," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xB9JvRbBZRM at 18:00ff. (accessed March 22, 2024).

60 Preexisting music is transformed as much as it transforms the environment in which it is embedded.

61 While I refuse to interpret borrowing solely or even primarily as a function of intertextuality, I also refrain from embracing the dichotomy between "interpretation" and, to quote Susan Sontag, the "erotics of art." Sensorial impact is key to the cinematic experience but so is world-making and the imaginative engagement with the medium that sustains filmmaking of the sort practiced by Wong. Interpretation amounts to more than the unpacking of intertextual references in any case. See Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 95–104.

62 Thanks to Zhang Jingyi for the pun on Bloom.

63 Consider "topic theory," a branch of scholarship inspired by Leonard Ratner's revival and systematization of eighteenth-century understanding of musical topoi. Like intertextual readings, "topical" readings of musical works reaffirm the value of socially shared knowledge in guiding reception. At the same time, topic theorists privilege the study of topoi as dispatchers of stable meanings rather than focusing on the ways in which they are transformed or are no longer recognizable as such. See Ratner, *Classic Music*; and Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*.

64 While I vindicate the significance of Wong's films as *representations* as against the reductionism implicit in intertextual readings bent on reading texts primarily through other texts, Rey Chow has cautioned us against another kind of reductionism, what she calls the "reflectionism" prevalent "in the reading of non-Western cultural work in general (so that a film made in Hong Kong around 1997, for instance, is invariably approached as having something to do with the factographic, geopolitical reality of Hong Kong's return to the People's Republic of China)" (Chow, "Nostalgia of the New Wave," 49). If more obliquely, Ackbar Abbas's work on Hong Kong cinema and literature may be said to suffer from the same reflectionist tendency (see Abbas, *Hong Kong*). I also address this difficulty in Biancorosso, "Romance, Insularity, and Representation."