Studying music in the audio-visual media
— an epistemological mess —

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Family matters

My mother often used to say things like [*miserable voice* →] 'don't worry about me, I'm OK'. [*Normal voice* →] As a child, I learnt to interpret that sort of statement in two ways. I could either take what she said at verbal-semantic face value, i.e. as 'don't worry about me, I really am OK'; or else I could privilege the more musical value of her statement, i.e. 'I am feeling bad: please be nice to me'.

The second interpretation was usually nearer the truth than the first one, often because of the narrative context of her statement (e.g. after an argument with my father) and because of her facial expression, body posture and gestures (or lack of gesture), all of which emphasised her vocal timbre and intonation but contradicted her words.[2] Sometimes it was easier to take her statement at no more than verbal face value, especially if my father were to tell me off for annoying my mother. I could then quip 'but she told me not to worry'. This of course might prompt my father to tell me to be more sensitive, which I then took to mean that I should listen more to people's 'music' and less to their words. The only trouble with this was that I would start sizing people up emotionally, on the basis of their 'music' (in the sense of timbre, volume, inflexion, gesturality and facial expression), and I would more or less ignore their words.[3] In other words, it took me a long time to learn that you could consider the dialogue, the narrative context, the visuals, the sound effects *and* the music of my mother's statements *as a whole*.

I suppose that a keynote speech in the overlap between the *Screen* and IASPM conferences would do well to milk such a holistic view of meaning. With music in the modern media we are, after all, dealing with multiple and simultaneous communicative codes, each with its own internal set of rules. We are also dealing with an area of increasing importance in everyday life, thanks to the ubiquity of video, the proliferation of TV channels, the advent of video games, CD-ROM, CD-i, etc. If we want to study music in the audio-visual media, we clearly need analytical methods helping us understand music's role in a multiplicity of simultaneous communicative codes. There is, however, a problem because I have had to realise that contradictory messages and the inability to deal

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1.   This is basically the original text I prepared for the Glasgow conference. I have left it 'as is', complete with out-of-date technological terms, and have only corrected typos and missing references.

2.   It is difficult to sound miserable with a cheerful face and with lively body movements.

3.   I was well into my twenties before I realised that you could actually listen to both at the same time. This was a bit late to start understanding that mother saying [*miserable voice* →] 'don't worry about me' [*normal voice* →] actually meant something like 'I am very sad, poor me, after that tiff with your Dad and I find it hard to put on the brave face of self-control I know I should: please pity me, especially for putting on such a brave show, even if I expect you to see through it'. I admit that I am still prone to interpreting people's voices before their words. For example, I am always suspicious of people like John Major who sound as though they have haemorrhoids on their vocal chords.

with multiple communicative codes are not traits peculiar to the Tagg family. On the contrary, twenty-four years of teaching and research in music and the media have brought home to me that the inability to deal with multiple communicative codes is also a symptom of our academic life, even when we are supposed to be dealing with such patently interdisciplinary and interprofessional areas of study as film music or popular music. In attempts to develop semiotic methods of analysis for film and TV music, I have experienced what I can only qualify as an unholy epistemological mess. It's not the sort of mess that can be sorted by one person in twenty years, let alone in twenty minutes.

Symptoms of the epistemological mess

One important characteristic of the great epistemological mess is the relatively weak position of music in film studies and in studies of popular culture in general. If this mess is to be sorted out, we shall need to identify its most chronic symptoms, to discuss their causes and to suggest appropriate cures. I shall refer to the four main symptoms with equal disrespect as (i) the muso mess, (ii) the musicological mess, (iii) the cult-studs mess, and (iv) the logocentric and eidocentric mess.[4] All these messes are symbiotically entangled into the one big mess of studying music in the audio-visual media.

The muso mess

One of the biggest problems facing any musicologist of the mass media is that many musicians, especially in the non-art sphere, are reluctant to talk about their music.[5] Even when musicians are approachable, they cannot always be expected to make sense at verbal-semantic face value. In fact, muso jargon often seems to prescribe scepticism or flippancy towards intelligent talk about music.[6] The most usual muso reason given for such an attitude is of course that 'the music speaks for itself'. This statement is sometimes uttered in an understandably indignant tone, as if to say 'look here, you stupid academic, my job is to communicate through music, not to analyse what I do with a load of intellectual jargon'.

Another attitude I have encountered amongst musicians (including myself) is that

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4.　'Muso' is colloquial English for a musician who seems to bother about his/her music and little else. 'Cult-studs' is the author's personal slang for cultural studies, a 'cult-stud' being a scholar of cultural studies and a play on words, since *cult* is not only short for culture but can also mean 'a specific system of religious beliefs' or 'any popular fashion or craze', while the colloquial meaning of stud is 'a virile or sexually active man' (*Collins Concise English Dictionary*, 1982). Thus, a cult-stud would be someone who invests considerable energy in being part of a cultural studies cult. By eidocentric is meant fixated on the visual (ειδειν [eidein] = to see).

5.　For example, despite valiant efforts, I never got through to any member of Abba when I did my original *Fernando* analysis in the late seventies. Similarly, thirty items of correspondence, twenty phone calls and even one personal visit to Universal Plaza in Hollywood, produced no contact whatsoever with the composer of the *Kojak* theme (Tagg 1979). Music analysis is also considered a bit of a joke in circles of popular music production. For example, John Lennon just laughed at The Times music critic who, in an article entitled 'What songs the Beatles sang' (2 January 1964), wrote that 'Not A Second Time' (*With The Beatles*, 1963) ended with an aeolian cadence. Popular muso unwillingness to verbalise was parodied quite early on by Zappa in 'You're Probably Wondering Why I'm Here' (*Freak Out* 1965) in which the musician / singer, after presenting a devastatingly critical view of mindless Californian middle-class life, sings 'but maybe that's not for me to say; they only pay me here to play'.

many academics writing about music seem unaware of the creative processes of music, the clearest symptom being (at least in the non-art-music world) that so few writers seem to talk about what musicians rightly or wrongly regard as 'the music itself'.[7] Now, there is no room here to discuss definitions of musical 'structure' or 'text', but it should be clear that, given a particular cultural and historical context, the musician's job is to come up with the right sounds to produce at particular pitches with particular timbres in particular rhythms in particular frameworks of tempo, metre, periodicity, musical narrative, acoustic space, etc. In short, musicians, composers, singers and re-cording engineers spend a great deal of time and energy working with all the parameters of expression at their disposal in an effort to make their music communicate one thing and not another. They will consider the sounding results of this work as 'the music'and will be understandably sceptical towards the academic who disregards the significance of their labour.

The musicological mess

Musicology was invented in the 1830s in Germanic Europe. Since then it has largely functioned as an intellectual apparatus for a basically anti-intellectual view of music according to which instrumental art music, written mainly by European males between around 1700 and 1950 and played without visual or verbal accompaniment, is regarded, implicitly or explicitly, as superior to other types of music. Hegel describes the precepts for such evaluation of musical excellence quite clearly in his *Aesthetics*:

> 'What the layman (*Laie*) likes in music is the comprehensible expression of emotions and ideas, something substantial, its content, for which reason he prefers accompanimental music (*Begleitmusik*); the connoisseur (*Kenner*), on the other hand, who has access to the inner musical relation of tones and instruments, likes instrumental music for its artistic use of harmonies and of melodic intricacy, as well as for its changing forms; he can be quite fulfilled by the music on its own.'[8]

Most musicologists specialising in analysis, however much they may disagree with Hegel in theory, have in practice adopted his idealist principles of music aesthetics by continuing to treat 'inner musical relations' as more important than the analysis of music in terms of 'expression' and 'content'.[9] In short, since the 1830s, scholarly music analy-

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6. For example, one research students (Mike Knowles) is currently writing an MA thesis about notions of englishness in the music of the Kinks. Knowles was recently granted an audience with Ray Davies who was friendly enough and who answered a few questions quite clearly. However, surrounded backstage by fellow musicians and a complete court of fans and roadies full of tour circuit jargon, the old star manage to fell a few comments that were enigmatic to say the least. My experience has been that muso jargon develops on the road, in the studio or at rehearsals amongst working peers who often constitute the only coherent sense of community that many musicians experience. Other forms of discourse can become quite alienating under those circumstances.

7. See, for example, Sirpa Koiranen's comparison of rock and classical music reviews in Finnish dailies. I regret I'm unable to find any reference to this publication.

8. Author's translation of excerpt from Hegel's *Ästhetik* (Berlin, 1955), cited in Zoltai (1970: 260). By 'accompanimental music' (*Begleitmusik*) is meant music accompanying other symbolic activities than just music (author's comment).

9. Even such a recent publication on music analysis as *A Guide to Music Analysis* (Cook, 1987) devotes only 28 of its 376 pages (7.5%) to semiotic music analysis. At least half of those 28 pages consists of musical transcriptions, leaving much less than the length of this article to discuss how musical structures actually relate to anything apart from themselves.

sis has remained into a largely formalist activity which studies the internal structures of the European art music canon and which pays little or no attention to the relationship of those structures to anything outside the same body of musical practices.[10]

Described in such terms, musicologists specialising in analysis do not seem to have much to offer the study of music in the audio-visual media. Unfortunately, similar conclusions can be drawn by observing the strategies followed by two other groups of music scholars whose explicit interests are directly related to music in the modern media. The first group tries to set up 'alternative' canons of jazz, rock or film music and attempts to demonstrate the aesthetic superiority of one artist, composer or style over another by using the same sort of intrageneric formalism as traditional musicology applies to European art music. The other group throws the musicological baby out with the bath water, discarding not only elitist formalism but the structural analysis of music altogether. These latter scholars, once competent musicians in the art music field, seem to have been so disillusioned by their own musical education that they totally abandon their previous concern with what musicians seem to mean by 'music' and saddle totally over to the verbal realm of cultural studies.[11]

So far we have identified three tendencies of epistemological mess on the music side: (i) musicians who are unfortunately but understandably reluctant, embarrassed or sceptical about explaining their music; (ii) musicologists who won't talk about anything but the intramusical; (iii) musicologists or musicians who have given up making music and talking about musical structuration.

Cultural studies and the logocentric mess

With few exceptions, the serious study of music in the audio-visual media has been dominated by various branches of cultural studies. One of the reasons for this disciplinary domination by the extramusical is obvious: if there is such an epistemological mess on the muso and musicological fronts as I just suggested, then those whose expertise lies outside the immanently musical sphere will be those who will do most of the talking and writing about the music other people make.

Another related reason for this domination is the hierarchy of symbolic systems in academic life. It can be seen as a sort of epistemological hit parade:

1. numbers (rational, quantifiable, fixed, scribal, supposedly irrefutable);
2. the written word (visible, verbal, fixed, scribal);
3. static images (non-verbal but at least visible and fixed);
4. moving images (non-verbal and unfixed but still visible);
5. the spoken word (invisible and unfixed but at least verbal);

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10. Hence the need for less conventional musicologists to identify themselves as 'ethnomusicologists', 'sociologists of music', 'anthropologists of music', 'popular music scholars', etc. Traditional musicology also relies extensively on notation — and has created an arsenal of concepts and methods explaining the formal internal construction of European art music in terms of readily notatable parameters of expression. This means, for example, that traditional musicology privileges such parameters as harmony and form at the expense of rhythm and timbre.

11. Musicology ought logically to be part of cultural studies. I am, however, referring here to such subjects as anthropology, communication studies, film studies, media studies and sociology.

6.   music (non-verbal, non-visual, unfixed, only partially scribal if notatable);
7.   kinetic, gestural (as n° 6 but almost totally non-scribal);
8.   non-verbal, non-musical sound (as n° 7 but studied even less);
9.   the olfactory (studied even less than n° 8, if at all);
10. the tactile (studied as little as n° 9).

Seen in this light, the high profile of verbally and visually rather than musically informed discourse about music in the audio-visual media should come as no surprise. After all, there are many more jobs in cultural studies than in musicology and Routledge is far more likely to market yet another account of Madonna's sexuality than to publish analyses of her music. Why? Because words rather than music still rule the roost in universities and because most people can't decipher those blobs and squiggles called notation.[12]

Behind the inability to decipher notation lurks another reason for the scholarly avoidance of music in cultural studies: a feeling of embarrassment in the presence of what seems to be a mysterious sphere of hidden language, a sort of intangible, non-representational medium of communication that is so difficult to tie down in words. At the same time, the right kind of music at the right time can, in a thoroughly tangible way, make anyone tearful, content, scared, delighted, reflective, cheerful or ready to shake their ass. The corporeally and emotionally tangible being so logocentrically intangible must be a real problem to those who centre their discourse about music on everything *but* music. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that such musical essentials as 'diddly-diddly-dum', 'oom-pah', [*threatening* →] 'da-daaa', [*normal* →] 'tra-la-la', 'boom-thwack' and [*Twilight Zone Theme* →] 'oo-ee-oo-oh, oo-ee-oo-oh' [*normal* →] are all about as embarrassing as tits and willies to those keen on maintaining their credibility as serious scholars. Add to notational illiteracy and 'diddly-dum' embarrassment an ignorance of such common terms of musical structure as polyrhythm, pentatonicism or panning and it becomes difficult to see how music will ever appear in cultural studies discourse relating to music.

As long as musicians remain silent or enigmatic towards academics, as long as musicologists remain strictly formalist or largely dismissive of their discipline and as long as scholarly work on music must always be presented in scribal form rather than, where applicable, on a CD-ROM capable of storing and recalling all the necessary sound bytes, then we shall continue to have discourse on music that mostly steers clear of music as meaningful sound structures. The formalist musicologist's reification of the musical work will just be replaced by an equally undialectic reification of communities created around music without consideration of that music as humanly and socially produced structures of meaningful sound. As Franco Fabbri put it, referring to the general intellectual direction taken by IASPM internationally and by the journal *Popular Music*, 'music and musicians seem to have become some kind of troublesome appendage to popular music studies'.[13]

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12.   Also, there are huge copyright and book production problems with the inclusion of sound recordings.

Film studies — the scopocentric [was 'eidocentric'] *mess*

The 'cult stud' domination of popular music studies may well be a case for prosecution under The Trades Description Act. However, such an indictment cannot be levelled at Media Studies because it has in my experience been a discipline which has rarely pretended to deal with music. For example. since I came to Liverpool University in 1991 and offered those following the film studies option a twelve-hour short course in film music, I have been asked to give one three-hour lecture to each batch of students.[14] This amounts to 0.3% of all teaching they receive during their three-year degree course. I somehow doubt that the situation is radically different in most other departments of media studies. For example, shortly before I left the Musicology Department at the University of Göteborg, media studies scholars came to us asking for help with the analysis of music in the mass media because they had discovered that 70% of all TV viewing hours included music.[15] How, wondered the mass media scholars (and so did we), should they deal with what appeared to be a radically new situation?

Like many other media studies departments, the Göteborg outfit started as a unit inside the Department of Political Studies. Their brief was to study the presentation of explicitly political messages in the mass media and academic staff were appointed accordingly. However, as media studies departments became more autonomous, they started to look at the production of meaning and ideology in film and television. Once again, academic staff were appointed accordingly. Visual communication needed to be analysed as rigorously as verbal. With at least two generations of adults brought up in the TV age *and* with the increasing ubiquity of music[16] (not to mention those who have grown up with video and those now growing up with CD-ROM, CD-i and the internet) perhaps the time has come for media studies to start reflecting that development in its

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13. 'Where is music and where are the musicians? Can researchers learn something from them, or are musicians some kind of unnecessary appendix of popular music studies?'. This rhetorical question in response to my question 'what do you think is currently wrong with IASPM internationally?', comes from Franco Fabbri, founder member of IASPM, guitarist (rock and classical), composer, computer network company manager, ex-record company organiser, active in cultural policy-making, chairperson of IASPM Italy and music journalist (e-mail to the author, June 23rd 1995). I have received similar comments from Chris Cutler, Reebee Garofalo, Charles Hamm and Gerard Kempers, other intellectually competent musicians who were once actively involved in IASPM internationally but who have become disenchanted with what they see as a hierarchy of politically cool but epistemologically restrictive hierarchy of ideas, discourses and approaches.

   Another example of music's marginalisation in the world of institutionalised cultural studies is the fact that the last assistant to be taken on by Birmingham University's legendary CCCS and the first to be discarded was an interdisciplinarily competent musicologist. Dick Bradley joined the CCCS in the late seventies but was forced to leave in the early eighties when the Thatcher government, through its education minister, Sir Keith Joseph, launched an attack on anything resembling sociology and forced institutions studying society to make radical cuts. Of course, propagating the idea that society is a useless term or declaring society as 'classless' is an old Nazi trick, as documented by Kolland 1978: xxi

14. Apart from in 1992 when I was told there would be no film music teaching because 'there isn't room on the timetable'. All the other teaching is in other words nearly three hundred times more important.

15. This was in about 1988, a few years after the establishment of cable TV in the Göteborg area. Figures from Lennart Weibull, professor of Media Studies, University of Göteborg. The TV programming either included music as underscore, jingles, title themes, etc. or was actual music programming, 'live' or as videos.

16. It is also important to consider here those who have grown up with video and those now growing up with CD-ROM, CD-i and the Internet).

personnel policy. However, I am still unaware of any media studies department, apart from the University of Stockholm, with a musicologist on its academic staff.[17]

Summing up the mess

The main problem, then, is that music plays a central role in the audio-visual media and in the everyday life of the vast majority of people alive today but that it is marginalised in academe. As we have seen, this marginalisation is the result of a complex negative dialectic: on one side you have the musos who will not talk about their knowledge *in* music and those music scholars who present their knowledge *about* music in mainly formalist terms; on the other hand you have scholars in all the various branches of cultural studies, who cannot be expected to know about the technicalities of musical production and who continue, through no fault of their own, to pussyfoot around music or to pretend that it just isn't there. We need to do something about this.

In my opinion, musicians need to become less afraid of being verbal, while musicologists need reschooling in their discipline and scholars of media and cultural studies need training in the understanding music as a symbolic system. None of this need be particularly difficult, and in the rest of this presentation I hope to give you one example of how studying film music can be of particular benefit to reintegrating music as one particularly important symbolic system amongst several others.

The test

Rationale and procedure

My earlier attempts to develop a semiotic analysis of music were largely informed by structuralist and hermeneutic method coupled with elements of Marxist cultural theory (Tagg 1979, 1982, 1992). This work, which adapted Seeger's concept of the museme (1960) and established the methods of interobjective comparison and hypothetical substitution (commutation), attracted some criticism — most of it justified — for its lack of empirical underpinning.[18] Realising full well that the proof of the semiotic pudding is in its eating, I conducted a series of reception tests to find out what sort of things people felt, saw and heard when listening to popular music. There is no room here to provide a complete run-down of the theoretical background to these tests, nor to give any more than the most sketchy details of how they were conducted and what results they produced.[19] What follows is therefore a drastic summary of tiny part of an extensive research report that should soon become available (Tagg & Clarida, 2003).

Since the object of the exercise was to gain methodological and theoretical insights into the semiotics of music through empirical confrontation with certain realities of contem-

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17. Two notable exceptions are the University of Stockholm (Johan Fornäs) and Carleton University (John Shepherd).

18. I am referring here to research documented in Tagg (1979, 1982) where I adopted and adapted Seeger's concept of the museme (1960) and established the methods of interobjective comparison and hypothetical substitution (commutation).

19. What follows from this point on is therefore a drastic summary of tiny part of an extensive research report that should soon become available (Tagg & Clarida, 2003).

porary culture, I opted to work with music whose semiotic functions I had hypothesised, mainly on the basis of the paramusical contexts in which they had in fact been used, as reasonably unambiguous. In other words, it seemed more efficient an intellectual strategy to base eventual theories on what seemed to be the rule rather than the exception to everyday semiotic practices in music. I chose instrumental music without visual accompaniment to minimise risks of response to verbal, visual or linguistic symbols and I chose title themes because of their brevity and verifiable original functions. I chose music mainly unknown to my respondents in order to test general affective recognition rather than particular mnemonic identification. The examples were all short, with only short pauses between each tune, in order to get immediate rather than reflected responses to the music.

Respondents were mainly Swedish students, both male and female, aged between 17 and 30.[20] Free induction was used, i.e. respondents were merely told they would hear a few short pieces of music from film or TV and they were simply instructed to write down whatever each piece suggested to them by way of mood and images. Responses were categorised according to an extensive taxonomy based mainly on either generic and narrative categories or on recorded library music categorisation practices. Each respondent provided an average of several discretisable responses per tune, this resulting in statistically reliable and unique profiles of response for each tune. The responses provided a wealth of information about the semiotics of music, far too rich to be reported here. I will therefore summarise one single aspect of all that information, an aspect of particular relevance to the topic of this paper.

'Male' and 'female' title tunes

One clear difference of response profile between the test tunes was that of gender, some tunes eliciting more citings of females than males, others considerably more males than females. For purposes of brevity I will refer to the four title tunes in response to which people associated to far more male than female figures as 'the male tunes', to the four others as 'the female tunes'.[21] The first two columns of figures in table 1(p.9), show, as percentages, occurrences of words or phrases denoting male and female humans in relation to all responses for each tune. The third column sums columns one and two, while the last two columns show, as percentages of the sum in column three, the proportion of 'male' to 'female' associations provided by respondents for each tune.

Some of the basic musical differences between the male and female tunes are then summarised in table 2 (p.9)

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20.   About 85% were Swedish, 5% Norwegian and 10% Latin American. All tunes were tested on at least 125 people, three tunes on 607 people and one on 415. About 40% were students of music or students with a particular interest in music while around 10% were older than 30. The tests were conducted between 1980 and 1985.

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Table 1   'Male' and 'female' responses

Tune	male	female	total	male %	female %
'Male' tunes:					
The Virginian	36.9	0.7	38.0	98.2	1.8
Sportsnight	16.3	1.6	18.0	90.9	9.1
Owed to 'g'	22.1	1.4	23.0	94.1	5.9
Miami Vice	11.4	1.0	12.0	70.0	30.0
'Female' tunes:					
Dream of Olwen	0.5	12.7	13.0	3.7	96.3
Romeo & Juliet	4.8	17.2	22.0	21.9	78.1
Emmerdale Farm	—	4.1	4.1	—	100
Sayonara	4.1	13.1	17.0	23.8	76.2

Table 2   Some musical characteristics of 'male' and 'female' tunes in test

musical characteristic	male tunes	female tunes
average tempo	109 bpm	83 bpm
surface rate[i]	c. 400	c. 180
phrase length	short	long
phrasing	staccato	legato
repeated notes	common	none
volume change	none	some
bass line	active and angular	quite static
offbeats and syncopation	common	rare
melodic instrumentation	electric guitar, guitar synth, trumpet, xylophone[ii]	strings, flute, mandolin, oboe, piano
accompanimental instrumentation	guitar riffs + strum, brass stabs, sequenced synth, percussion	strings, piano, woodwind, no brass, no percussion
tonal idiom	rock, (diluted) jazz common	classical, romantic common

21. The 'female tunes' are italicised in table 1. The sources of the eight recordings are: [1] *The Dream of Olwen* (Charles Williams), composed for the British film *Before I Die* (1944); extract from cover version by Geoff Love and his Orchestra on *Big Concerto Movie Themes*, Music for Pleasure MFP 4261 (1972). [2] *The Virginian* (Percy Faith), for the NBC television series of the same name (ran 1962-69); test extract from cover version by 101 Strings (plus oboe, guitar and percussion) on *Golden Hour of Favourite TV Themes*, Golden Hour GH 845 (1976). [3] *Romeo and Juliet* (Nino Rota), theme for the Zeffirelli film version (UK, 1968); extract from cover version by The Tony Hatch Orchestra on *Hit the Road to Themeland*, Pye NSPL 41029 (1974). [4] *Sportsnight* (Tony Hatch); extract from version used for homonymous BBC TV series; source as n° 3. [5] *Emmerdale Farm* (Tony Hatch); extended version of thirty-second theme for the Yorkshire Television soap of the same name (started in 1972, still running in the late 1980s); source as n° 3. [6] *Sayonara* (Alex North); extract from original title music to the 1958 Warner Brothers film; source *Fifty Years of Film Music*, Warner Brothers 3XX 2736 (1973). [7] *Owed to 'g'* (Bolin / Deep Purple), instrumental rock numbert presumed to be suitable for urban thriller featuring young criminals, in fact, as I learnt in January 2008 (thanks to David Dean, London) used as outro music to BBC TV's spy series *Quiller* (1975); from Deep Purple album *Come Taste The Band*, Warner Brothers PR 2895 (1975). [8] *Miami Vice* (Jan Hammer); title theme for TVM series of same name; recorded directly to videocassette during Swedish TV première (no lead 'guitar' (synth) track for the first episodes); also with lead 'guitar' in mix on album *Miami Vice*, MCA 252 493-1 (1985).

i. By 'surface rate' is meant the general speed of the quickest notes, i.e. the 'diddly-diddly' factor rather than 'boom-thwack' rate of tone beats (=pulse or tempo)..

ii. Some of *The Virginian*'s Fender guitar tune is doubled by oboe and the major key section is led by lively unison strings. The reason for this exception to the male=modern instruments rule is too complex to explain here. Suffice it to say that it is connected to Hollywood music's notion of olden times in the West..

The basic structural differences between recordings of the eight pieces listed is striking and might easily lead you to the conclusion that men and women, as represented by the music in question, can be interpreted according to the characteristics enumerated in table 3. In order to see whether the music really presented such a stereotypical view of gender, it seemed wise to check what other associations our respondents had made to the male and female tunes and to see whether those other responses created any patterns refuting or confirming the somewhat sexist hypotheses of table 3. Table 4 summarises some of those other responses.

Table 3 Polarities of gender hypothesised from musical characteristics listed in Table 2					
male	**female**	**male**	**female**	**male**	**female**
fast	slow	sudden	gradual	active	passive
dynamic	static	upwards	downwards	outwards	inwards
hard	soft	jagged	smooth	sharp	rounded
urban	rural	modern	old times	strong	weak

The pattern of responses shown in table 4 (p. 11) seems to reinforce the hypotheses of table 3 which, in their turn, were based on the musical characteristics of table 2. To cut a long story short, these eight stereotypical title themes elicited responses creating archetypal semantic fields that might have suited rugby club changing rooms or popular romantic novels forty years ago but which would be totally out of place in any contemporary discourse on gender. Men are associated with concrete, traffic, crime, rebellion, cities, fighting, the future, machines and speeding to and fro: women are not. Women, it appears, are associated with parting, crying, the past, nature, destiny and so on: men are not. In fact, our respondents provided us with some rather drastic statistics:

- women are twice as likely as men to be associated with the outdoors;
- women are 7 times more likely than men to be related to seasons or the weather;
- women are 12 times more rural than men;
- women are 13 times more likely than men to be associated with quiet and calm;
- women are 25% more likely than men to be associated with love;
- women are never asocial and never carry weapons;
- women may often be sad, melancholic or nostalgic;
- men are 8 times more urban than women;
- men are 9 times more likely to be indoors than women;
- men are 20 times more likely than women to be associated with cars;
- men are 35 times more likely to be in clubs and bars than women;
- men are 33% more likely than women to be in meetings, parades, etc.;
- men are 50% stronger than women;
- men are never seen or heard in isolated or secluded spots;
- men can be asocial and carry weapons: women do not;
- men are never sad.

Table 4 Associations to 'male' and 'female' tunes in order of response frequency. (♂ = exclusive to 'male' tunes, ♀ = exclusive to 'female' tunes)			
male tunes (1)	**male tunes (2)**	**female tunes (1)**	**female tunes (2)**
cars	bustling ♂	love	19th century
chase	crowds	sad ♀	ending
city	rebellious ♂	couple	destiny ♀
young people	threat ♂	countryside	coast ♀
action	video ♂	grass	evening
Western ♂	sports ♂	parting ♀	neutral
fast ♂	smoke	melancholy ♀	flowers ♀
detective ♂	slums	loneliness	against will ... ♀
riding	about to ...	summer	Russian ♀
USA ♂	motorways	syrupy	dark ♀
horses	thriller ♂	scene	fog
cowboys	comedy ♂	calm	remembering
excitement	business ♂	pastoral	small town
tough ♂	performance ♂	tragic ♀	kissing ♀
modern	disturbing ♂	sea	always has been ♀
rock music ♂	shooting ♂	sunrise ♀	two people
stress	disaster ♂	walking	sitting ♀
traffic ♂	robbery ♂	British	sailing
cruel	space ♂	beautiful	white ♀
cigarettes	the future ♂	emotion	rivers ♀
social rejects ♂	living it up ♂	family	springtime ♀
driving	war	crying ♀	gliding
hard ♂	planning ♂	old times	lakes
spies	alcohol	after something ♀	ecstatic ♀
introduction	ladies	sun	secluded spot ♀
concrete ♂	'hot stuff'	meeting	park ♀
desert	bad ♂	nostalgia	France ♀
streets	machines ♂	sentimental ♀	waves ♀
aeroplanes	chromium ♂	green ♀	wind
villains ♂	pulse ♂	boats	harmonious ♀
night	skyscraper ♂	death ♀	upper class ♀
heroes	to and fro ♂	caressing ♀	outdoors

At this point it is worth remembering that these statistics are based on what a few hundred respondents imagined seeing when listening to eight short pieces of title music. Of course, the stereotypical character of the tunes is bound to tie in with the respondents' previous experience of equally stereotypical visual narrative accompanied by such music. However, it should also be remembered that any such narrative and its archetypal personalities, props, scenarios and patterns of action were elicited by *instrumental music alone* and that it would be highly unlikely for a similar test based on a comparable series of, say, photographs, paintings or short poems to produce the same

results.[22] Why? Because tall grass, rolling hills, shampoo, a light breeze, sea swell in the sunshine, long hair, Austria, flowing dresses, slow motion takes, cornfields, couples caressing, billowing sails etc. (all recurrent associations to *The Dream of Olwen*) are verbally and visually incongruent entities: hills just do not resemble hair, nor shampoo a cornfield and Austria has little to do with the sea. However, all those verbally and visually incongruent associations are highly congruent in terms of emotion, touch, gesture etc. and music is famed for its ability to arrange such aspects of our experience. Thus *The Dream of Olwen* elicited a set of associations which the respondents heard, either directly or indirectly, as representing emotional, tactile and corporeal qualities of slow, smooth and pleasantly wavy motion.[23] In short, music arranges our experience into socially constructed categories of experience that hang together musically, not visually or verbally, even though there may be the occasional synaesthetic overlap.[24]

If these short observations on the specificity of music as a symbolic system are of any use and if the thin slice of research dealing with musically mediated notions of male and female are not worth less than the paper they are written on, then it might be wise to accord the analysis of musical 'texts' a little more space in film and media studies than has hitherto been the case. For, even though there has been no room here to provide more than a slight taste of the empirical materials and theoretical issues involved, it should be clear that music — even without words or accompanying visuals — is capable of creating and communicating semantic fields of considerable ideological potential.[25] If this is true, then it seems essential to include some sort of musical analysis in the majority of cultural studies courses. The only questions left now are: what sort of music analysis is needed and how should we go about including that analysis in, for example, film and media studies?

Constructive suggestions

For three consecutive years I have run course modules for non-musicologists in the semiotic analysis of popular music. The module's main assignment breaks down into the following twenty points.

1. Choose any piece of recorded music lasting between one and five minutes.[26]

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22. The construction of such association tests, based on a verbal or visual starting point, ought indeed to be a task for future research. The unlikelihood of such tests producing the same results can be attributed to certain axioms about the specificity of musical communication, for example the indexical quality of most musical signs (Karbušicky 1983) and to the relative rarity of sonic anaphones in most musical discourse (Tagg 1992; updated as Chapter 9 in Tagg 2011).

23. Obviously, the 'Austria' occurrences are specific to outdoor scenarios in *The Sound of Music* and the shampoo is clearly that advertised in the Timotei shampoo spot showing a young woman with long blonde hair in a long, flowing white dress walking slow motion through a 'sea' of long grass. Indeed, advertisers frequently think in musicogenic terms of gesturality and tactility.

24. See, for example, such synaesthetic verbal metaphors as 'a sea of grass', 'loud colours', 'waves of passion'. Anaphones, especially of those of the sonic type, are the only main category of musical signs to significantly overlap with words and picture (see Tagg, 1992; updated as Chapter 9 in Tagg 2011).

25. For instance, instead of accounting for 'male' and 'female' in title music, we could have discussed musical categorisation of other broadly connotative concepts, some of which — like 'Hero', 'Nature', 'Time' or 'Death' (Tagg, 1979: 123-126; 1982; 1984; 1990) — might even be anthropologically basic enough to qualify as archetypes, in the Jungian sense of the word (Jung, 1964: 56, ff; Hendrson, 1964: 101-119).

2. Transcribe all the lyrics (if any) and/or make a detailed storyboard of visual events (if recorded on video).

3. Read the handout *Introduction to the Semiotics of Music*,[27] paying particular attention to the sections headed 'Interobjective comparison', 'Musical sign types' and 'Checklist of parameters of expression'.

4. List all the musical ideas, sounds, riffs, rhythms and phrases you can hear in the piece. Number these events or musemes, give each of them a short description and put them all together in a table for future reference (see 6, below).[28]

5. Using a stopwatch or real time counter,[29] make a time grid for the duration of the entire piece, allowing enough space for the simultaneous occurrence of lyrics and/ or picture descriptions (if any), as well as for the maximum number of concurrent musical events (musemes).

6. Place all recorded events, including lyrics and visuals (if any), in their correct positions along the time grid (see 5, above). Musemes can be presented as small shaded bars, frames or boxes, each marked with its number referring to a verbal description of its structural or phenomenological character (see 4, above).

7. Mark in with timings on the time grid start and end points of the piece's various sections, e.g. introduction, verses, choruses, instrumentals, bridge passages, middle eights, coda. Name the sections appropriately.

8. Characterise each of the musical events or musemes (see 3, above) in your own words, using whatever nomenclature you see fit (e.g. musical structural, descriptive, onompatopoeic, connotative) and construct hypotheses about what you think each musical event communicates.

9. Check each sound event (museme) for similarities with any other music you know. Sing or beat each one of them until it reminds you of some other piece of music. Ask as many people as possible to tell you if anything in your piece reminds them of any other music. If you get stuck on a particular sound, play just that relevant passage to other people. This way you can build up interobjective comparison material (IOCM) for your piece and check if all that other music is associated with lyrics, pictures or actions that might give you a clue about what each museme may be communicating.

10. Get as many people as possible (including yourself) to associate freely about the various musical sounds in your piece. Note all these associations and see if they have anything in common. If it is difficult to determine what you think a particular museme 'means', zoom in on the relevant section and ask others to associate to that particular sound or passage.

11. Try and describe the musemes as accurately as you can. Ask the course tutor or other musicians for help in identifying instruments, harmonies or any other aspect of the music you find hard to describe.

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26. I usually add: 'your analysis piece should ideally be something that fascinates you considerably, either positively or negatively, because you will have to listen to the piece until you are sick of it.' The piece must also be chosen in consultation with the course tutor in order to avoid pieces that may be too difficult, too easy or too complex for the individual student and to avoid unnecessary duplication.

27. This handout has been expanded, improved and updated as the following chapters in Tagg (2011): [5] 'Meaning and Communication', [6] 'Intersubjectivity', [7] 'Interobjectivity', [8] 'Parameters of musical expression', [9] 'A simple sign typology' and [10] 'Notes on vocal persona'.

28. There are usually between ten and fifteen different main musemes in an average pop song.

29. Real time counters are available on many video recorders, all DAT recorders, all mini disc players / recorders and all CD players.

12. Use your own voice to imitate the type of sound produced by singers and to determine what mood, posture and state of mind someone would be in if they were to talk, scream, whisper, grunt or groan in that sort of voice.[30] Describe melodic gesture in terms of contour, pitch in terms of height and depth, breadth and restriction.
13. Use the sign typology provided to help relate each museme to something outside the music and use the checklist of parameters of musical expression to ensure you have not missed any aspect of the sounds in your piece.[31]
14. Describe the complete musical piece in terms of processes based on changes in the presentation of musical events.
15. Describe how musical and paramusical events interact within the piece. Do they complement or contradict each other? Use the checklist of parameters of paramusical expression to ensure you have not missed any such aspect in your analysis.
16. Provide correct discographical information on the piece.
17. Write a short biographical profile of the piece's 'transmitters' (i.e. composers, authors, musicians, singers) and of their probable intentions with the piece.
18. Write a short description of the probable functions and reception of the piece (i.e. its audience, where such music might be popular, why the audience would want to listen to it and what you think they would get out of it).
19. Describe what you think the piece communicates to you and to others, basing that description on all the points covered so far.
20. Evaluate the piece's meanings and functions in a broader social and political context (e.g. contemporary issues such as gender, ethnicity, unemployment, oppression, alienation, business, entertainment, family, private v. public, etc.).

The vast majority of students subjected to this assignment are neither musicians nor musicologists. They cannot read notation and have no idea what a diminished seventh is. They do not need to know these things because their musical competence resides in their ability to respond to sound *x* in one way and to sound *y* in another, all in general accordance with other members of the culture or subculture to which they belong. The only major difficulties they experience with the assignment are (i) describing the sounds in words and (ii) the connection of those descriptions to the music's social and political context. These difficulties are not insurmountable if, at initial stages in the analysis, verbal discourse is allowed that may seem frivolous in an academic setting (the 'diddly-dums' and 'boom-thwacks' again) but which are often highly apposite to the musical cognition involved. This implies allowing students access to and respect for their own musical cognition and competence, a process that is aided by the inclusion of both intersubjective and interobjective methods of inquiry.[32] Once this obstacle of initial adherence to academically acceptable discourse (like that of this sentence) has been removed, the music's patterns of signification usually become apparent and valid hy-

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30. I usually add that it is advisable to use Lomax's descriptions of vocal timbre rather than the academically more fashionable Barthes.
31. Students are reminded here that: (i) anaphones are musical events bearing physical resemblance to touch, motion and extramusical sounds; (ii) genre synecdoches are musical events referring the listener to music in another style than that of the piece under analysis and hence to the complete social and cultural context of that other music; (iii) episodic markers are musical events signalling change or recurrence; (iv) style indicators are musical events signalling the home style of your piece. Students are also reminded that all four sign types may contribute to the signification of the same museme, except that style indicators and genre synecdoches are mutually exclusive.

potheses about the music's meaning can be established, this facilitating the connection between the music as a sounding object and its functions in a broader context.[33] The vast majority of students complete the assignment successfully, providing quite well reasoned accounts of musical communication in given cultural contexts.[34]

If undergraduates with no formal training in music or musicology are capable of discussing musical signification in a productive way, then cultural studies scholars ought to be able to do likewise. The only logical problem is that of teaching and administrative commitments that many of us are committed to. Nevertheless, I think we need to decide on a strategy for including music in cultural studies of musical practice and I take this opportunity to start that ball rolling by promising (i) to publish, at the earliest opportunity, a semiotics of music for non-musicologists; (ii) to try and set up a short course for scholars in the field of media and cultural studies who would like to know more about such things as the specificity of musical communication, the semiotic analysis of music, the functions and aesthetics of music for the moving image.

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32. 'Interobjective': see points 9 and 12, above. 'Intersubjective': see points 10 and 17-19, above. Of course, students are asked to distinguish between intrinsically personal associations to the music (e.g. 'all Abba songs remind me of my Mum doing the washing up when I was a kid' or 'I was in love with this absolutely gorgeous woman at the time') and those that have some interobjective or intersubjective basis.

33. Later on in this conference, Garry Tamlyn will illustrate how essential the discussion of musical structures is to a full understanding of popular music history. He will use extensive empirical evidence of musical structuring to refute widely accepted notions of the social origins of early rock and roll.

34. Pieces chosen have ranged from Max Steiner's title music for *Casablanca* to the *Neighbours* theme tune (Tony Hatch), from the Beatles and The Pet Shop Boys (frequently!) to Tom Waits and X-Ray Specs, from Dolly Parton to alternative techno.