# Afterword

*John Corner (University of Leeds)*

I have benefited greatly from reading this collection of essays variously exploring, in relation to specific projects, how the new possibilities of digital humanities research can enhance cultural historiography. The inquiry into the production, forms, and consequences of cultural practice—here, practices concerning the positioning and functions of music with film—is clearly entering a new phase of both expanded and intensified endeavor. I am struck by the way in which the chapters show both a highly detailed specificity in pursuing their analyses of particular contexts and works and, at the same time, a broader connection both to more general cultural patterns and to interdisciplinary perspectives for investigating these. This is not, of course, a straight contrast between the specific and the general since, as many writers here bring out well, expanded historical 'surveillance' and searchability at the general level brings out more sharply interconnections, parallels and precedents at the level of specific examples. So the increased informational range of the broad 'map' leads to enhanced engagement with points upon it or, to put it temporally, with moments within the historical flows which it charts.

In this short note of comment, I want to reflect upon what I have read, indicating whilst doing so some of the directions towards which it points future research. I shall carry out the task by the use of five subheadings, although I am aware that the presence of strong interconnections rather than separation in respect of much of this work means that some of what I say might be seen to belong under more than one heading.

## Maps

'Mapping' is one of the key activities made possible by the application of digital technology and associated research methods. It provides the researcher with

a much greater range of data than before, including from sources that might previously not have been included but whose availability in digital forms (such as on websites and within television archives, for instance) now enables access and analysis. This massively expanded overview allows the (continuous) ordering of material into chronologies, classifications, and patterns, permitting research both to 'read inwards' and to 'read outwards.' 'Reading inwards,' as I have already suggested, involves using data resources to identify and assess the significance of elements and combinations in artefacts and production settings that only become fully apparent when put within a more extensive body of accessible material and its surrounding contexts and timeframes. 'Reading outwards' involves taking the products of localized analysis and adding them to the broader informational repository, where they can form part of the data used in tracing more general patterns and trends, data which will be subsequently used in the conducting of further acts of local analysis.

## Forms

All of the research collected here variously concerns media forms, mostly the location of music within the audiovisual contexts of films in what is often a varied and dense context of intermediality. In part, therefore, it attempts to develop further our understanding of the varieties of aesthetic organization not only of musical examples themselves but of their location and framing within broader schemes of sound design developed in relation to the broader aesthetic and social purposes at work in filmmaking. It identifies the significant figures and tropes at work, patterns of conventional meaning and association, as part of its close scrutiny of formal structures and style. What horizontal and vertical relations are established? In what ways does repetition feature? Such analysis is carried out by reference to the expansive comparative materials which research can now assemble so that the aesthetic vocabularies become more visible in the character and function of their local application (another example of the movement between 'reading outwards' and 'reading inwards' noted above). At points, issues of generic transformation are raised as work initially developed for one medium is made active within the terms of another. Indeed, the use of preexisting music as soundtrack or the use of music played within a film (via recording or diegetic performance) necessarily involves new kinds of fusion, incorporating but also modifying and expand-

ing through its intermediality the core musical aesthetic itself. There is also suggestive consideration, warranting further inquiry, of the distinctive 'music of the voice,' the modes of speech, particularly nondramatic recorded speech, which are a powerful part both of the aesthetics of sound and our shifting historical sense of social and individual identities. The factors at work here, in forms, meanings and feelings, were decisively shaped and expanded by radio talk, reworked by television and are now being further changed by web usage.

## Histories

Much of the work is concerned with aspects of history, both the history of forms and expressive patterns and also the historical knowledge and feelings which specific forms and usages at work in the films seem variously to signify and bring to consciousness. Apprehensions of the historical thus appear in many of the chapters. They are framed both in terms of academic inquiry, what the data and previous research tells us about specific people, events, and the deployment of artistic works across a chronology but also, more obliquely, in terms of the imaginative response, the 'sense of the historical,' which listeners and viewers might generate from given films. This sense can be seen as in part phenomenological in that it is a product of particular encounters within the structure of an aesthetic experience (see below) rather than an analytic practice. As a form of historical imaginary, it can be organized for experiencing around a particular historical event, a place, a specific person (e.g. composer), or be more generally commemorative (e.g. a 'period') in character. Such organization will bring information to bear but, with its mythic richness and resonance, this information will not simply convert into 'knowledge' but also be an important contributor to the mood in which sounds are heard and therefore in which the broader audiovisual pattern is interpreted, often via schemata and frames of which the interpreter is unaware.

## Audiovisual Experience

I have noted how many of the studies connect with the kinds of audiovisual experience, and their yield of information and feeling, that given strategies of sound design encourage. This is where questions of consequences are raised,

both for the appreciation of films and music and for the ways in which the productions, however modestly, combine with other factors in the construction of political and social perspectives, often embedded in perceptions of history, and subject themselves to almost constant revision and change. Of course, the subjectivities which people bring to their viewing and listening are diverse, resourced from what are sometimes very different bodies of knowledge and previous experience. Speculating too freely about what is 'taken' from what is seen and heard can be hazardous, although close textual analysis continues to offer a guide to the kind of routes and destinations which listeners and viewers are offered. Although it is rightly out of the frame for many of the research priorities at work here, subsequent developments might expand into limited kinds of empirical viewer study in order to plot more precisely the range of pleasures and understandings that specific works generate. This would almost certainly inform more refined analytic accounts both of active aesthetics and of the significance of thematic variations.

## Protocols of Analysis

This is a rather clumsy phrase but it covers the wide range of thoughtful attempts here to examine the best procedures and sequences of investigation to pursue, along with some of the risks, analytic and ethical, to which certain routes may expose themselves. At stages, research is often necessarily strongly quantitative in character, requiring a tight statistical discipline. At other stages, it is qualitative in ways that draw on a range of approaches from musicology, film and new media studies as well as on historical scholarship, including that which places an emphasis on forms of narrative. The idea of interdisciplinarity is relevant here of course. This has been widely used as a descriptor of research ambitions in media, communication and cultural studies but demonstrating it in practice, in relation to particular analytic tasks, has often proved a challenge. What elements are to be taken from what disciplinary sources and how are they to be combined to produce not only coherence but improved understanding? Such questions make for a tough investigative agenda but many of the chapters show the potential for this to be productive if there is a clear sense of research priorities and a proper recognition of the way in which the scope of argument relates not only to the quality of analysis but also to the strength of available evidence.

I will conclude by noting, first of all, how my own longstanding involvement in media research—including media history, the analysis of production practices, media forms, and audience studies—has informed my appreciation of the work assembled here. More specifically, an interest in the use of music within documentary film and television brings me very close to many of its key themes.[1]

Continued dialogue across the relevant disciplines, aided by conferencing and journal activities, will be important in engaging further with questions of approach, questions which are bound to involve dispute as well as agreement. This is a necessary part of interdisciplinarity, which is best seen as *dynamic*, involving continuous exchange and modification of its terms, rather than as *static*, a somehow *already achieved* integration. Comparative studies, possibly extending to investigate the responses of 'ordinary' media users, will help further to identify the strengths and limitations of particular conceptualizations. We can all readily agree that the broadest access to relevant data by the international research community will help both in the assessment and impact of published work and in the development of new projects. We can also agree that the forms taken by published work need to go beyond conventional academic writing, however useful that may continue to be, and to connect with the full possibilities of the digital culture upon which much investigation is now based.

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1    My first attempt at looking at the general relationships and variations involved here was in the article "Sounds Real: Music and Documentary." *Popular Music* 21, 3 (2002): 357–66. I developed this further in relation to diverse examples in Chapter 8 "Music and the Aesthetics of the Recorded World" of Holly Rogers's, ed. *Music and Sound in Documentary Film*. London: Routledge, 2014. My most recent involvement in related questions was as coeditor with Geoffrey Cox of the collection *Soundings: Documentary Film and the Listening Experience.* Huddersfield: Huddersfield Univ. Press, 2018. This collection, exploring a range both of conventional and experimental applications of music and sound, including aspects of sound design, is free to download at https://unipress. hud.ac.uk/plugins/books/17/ (last accessed 16 April 2020)