

In the period since the foundation of IASPM, a fixation on mass media has indeed produced some arguments that 'exclude' significant musical practices...I argue that the centralizing of mediations as a sine qua non of 'popular music' fulfils the same political function as Samuel Johnson's decision to confine his English lexicon exclusively to words that had appeared in print (Johnson and Cloonan 2009: 43 44). Both maneuvers exclude from their field all practices that are not sanctioned by some form of technological dissemination...It banishes the intense quotidian, the oral 'coal face' of communication, where the links between music and identity are germinated, and where a decisive cultural history is created.

—Johnson, p.98

- Do you agree that not all popular music is mass-mediated?
- If so, how should we define popular music?
- What do you think of Johnson's term 'vernacular music'?

The point emerges in the way cultural theory tends to reduce its field to visual entities. This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in film studies. A review of relevant bibliographies discloses an overwhelming privileging of the visual, in a medium which is in equal measure sonic...Cultural theory talks of all meaningful artifacts as 'texts', of which it supplies 'readings'. The selective focus of 'reading' as both an activity and as a trope for attentiveness and analysis, makes it much easier to ignore any inconvenient material datum than does 'listening', which occurs in a less discriminated sonic flood. Visual epistemologies analyse and compartmentalize, while acoustic orders and their phenomenologies are characterised by leakages within and between material and intellectual spaces. The study of music and emotion "dissolves intractable dichotomies concerning nature versus culture, and scientific universalism versus cultural particularism" (Becker 2001: 154).

—Johnson, p.104

- What do you think of Johnson's ideas here?
- Do you think sonic approaches are inherently less constraining? (Sterne: the audiovisual litany)