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2018

<https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/14813>

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version  
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Pauleit, Winfried; Greiner, Rasmus; Frey, Mattias: Audio History of Film: Introduction. In: *Research in Film and History. New Approaches* (2018), S. 1–8. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/14813>.

### Erstmalig hier erschienen / Initial publication here:

<https://film-history.org/approaches/audio-history-film>

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## Audio History of Film Introduction

Winfried Pauleit  
Rasmus Greiner  
Mattias Frey

Published: November 21, 2018

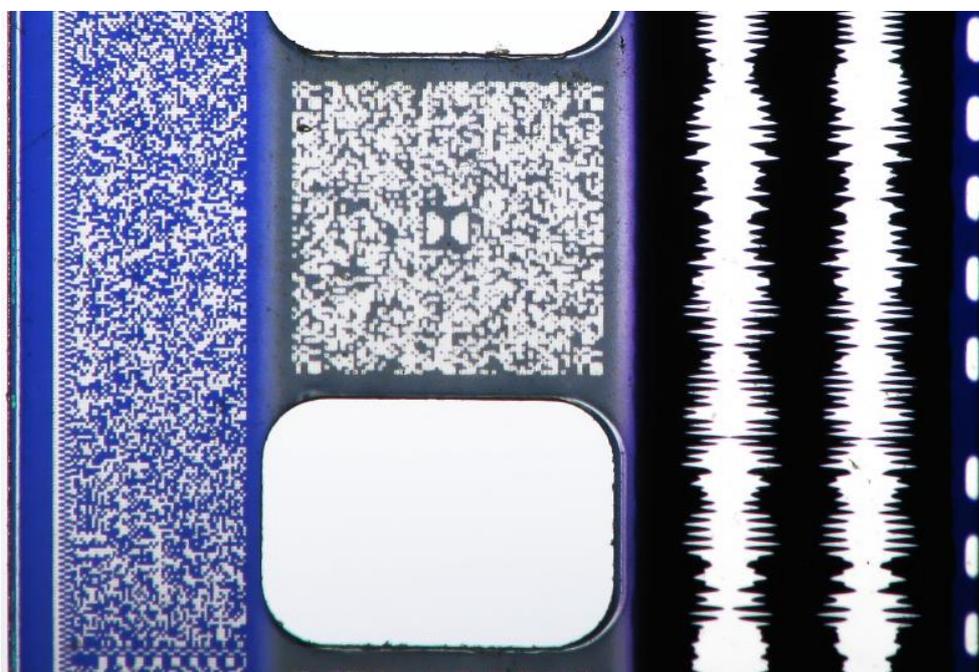


Figure 1. Macro of 35mm film and audio tracks: Sony SDDS, Dolby Digital, analog Optical and DTS time code © CC 3.0 by Rotareng

The relationship between film and history has assumed many and varied forms over the course of time. During the twentieth century, film increasingly became a medium through which contemporary political and historical events were discussed and interpreted.<sup>1</sup> Cinematic narration of history influenced twentieth-century film production in myriad ways and constantly challenged “classical” historiography, especially its function of disseminating historical knowledge. Writing about history has been accompanied by documentary photography and film ever since. Meanwhile, fictional films undertake popular adaptations of historical narratives that shape people’s ideas about bygone eras.

1. See Stephen Lowry: *Pathos und Politik: Ideologie in Spielfilmen des Nationalsozialismus*. Tübingen 1991; Gerhard Paul: “Das Jahrhundert der Bilder. Die visuelle Geschichte und der Bildkanon des kulturellen Gedächtnisses”. In: Stephen Lowry (ed.): *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder*. Bonn 2008, pp. 14–39.

In recent years, images have become a particular focus of scholarly interest. The historian Gerhard Paul's "visual history" approach foregrounds the specific aesthetics of images as historical sources, something long neglected in his discipline.<sup>2</sup> Proclaiming a paradigm shift from the dominance of writing to the dominance of images, "visual history" adapts important antecedents, such as the "pictorial turn";<sup>3</sup> another key influence is the work of the art historian Erwin Panofsky.<sup>4</sup> In this context, the historian Bernd Roeck describes images as "stabilisers" that profoundly influence our ideas about the past but can be interpreted in various ways.<sup>5</sup>

Since historical knowledge is acquired and inflected through media,<sup>6</sup> films help shape understandings of history aesthetically and narratively; they not only bring major historical topics or biographies of historical figures to the screen, but also convey historical knowledge in audio-visual form, thereby influencing popular worldviews and perspectives. By doing so, film challenges established forms of written history and other modes of cultural memory.<sup>7</sup> In the competition over which interpretations hold sway in society, film has proved itself a force to be reckoned with.

Nevertheless, studies of history have long neglected film. Though historians have debated the relevance of films as historical sources ever since Bolesław Matuszewski in 1898,<sup>8</sup> films have tended to serve merely as evidence about the period when they were made, or else have been viewed through the lens of an aesthetically oriented history of film. In the wake of Siegfried Kracauer's book *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947),<sup>9</sup> there were numerous attempts to understand social and historical developments (such as the rise of National Socialism in the early 1930s) by analyzing films contemporaneous with those developments. Even then, however, film and the history of film were still not recognized as legitimate fields of historical inquiry. It was not until the mid-1970s that Marc Ferro provided the crucial impetus for historians to understand every film as a historical document: as an interpretation of its subject matter and of the circumstances during which it was made.<sup>10</sup>

The auditory dimension of film continues to be neglected, even though it is an integral part of the medium. This is despite Thomas Lindenberger's call for historians to treat audiovision as an object of study with a status equal to writing, and his understanding of visual history in terms of a society not just of "co-viewers" (Mitschende) but explicitly also of "co-listeners" (Mithörende).<sup>11</sup> There needs to be a focus not just on the "generative powers of image" (bildgenerative Kräfte)<sup>12</sup> – a term used by Gerhard Paul to emphasise images' active role in shaping history—but also on the 'generative powers of sound'. Paul has taken the first steps in this direction with *Sound des Jahrhunderts* (Sound of the Century, co-edited with Ralph Schock, 2013),<sup>13</sup> an extensive collection of texts on the cultural and media history of sound, the acoustic history of politics and the relevance of sound to twentieth-century history of memory. However, apart from a handful of references, the specific formal features of audio-visual media—especially film—are largely neglected. Other efforts suffer from similar limitations, such as histories of hearing as sensory perception and studies of sound's role in political, social and cultural contexts.<sup>14</sup>

2. Gerhard Paul: "Von der Historischen Bildkunde zur Visual History. Eine Einführung". In: G.P. (ed.): *Visual History: Ein Studienbuch*. Göttingen 2006, pp. 7–36; G.P.: "Visual History, Version: 2.0". In: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte: Begriffe, Methoden und Debatten der zeithistorischen Forschung*. 2012. [https://docupedia.de/zg/Visual\\_History\\_Version\\_2.0\\_Gerhard\\_Paul?oldid=85578](https://docupedia.de/zg/Visual_History_Version_2.0_Gerhard_Paul?oldid=85578)

3. See William J. Thomas Mitchell: *Picture Theory*. Chicago 1994.

4. See Jens Jäger: "Geschichtswissenschaft". In: Klaus Sachs-Hombach (ed.): *Bildwissenschaft: Disziplinen, Themen, Methoden*. Frankfurt am Main 2005, pp. 185–195.

5. Cf. Bernd Roeck: "Gefühlte Geschichte. Bilder haben einen übermächtigen Einfluss auf unsere Vorstellungen von Geschichte". In: *Recherche – Zeitung für Wissenschaft*, 2, 2008. [www.recherche-online.net/bernd-roeck.html](http://www.recherche-online.net/bernd-roeck.html)

6. See Hayden White: "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory". In: *History and Theory*, 23:1, 1984, pp. 1–33; Eva Hohenberger and Judith Keilbach (eds): *Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit: Dokumentarfilm, Fernsehen und Geschichte*. Berlin 2003.

7. See Siegfried Kracauer: "Die Photographie" [1927]. In: S.K.: *Das Ornament der Masse*. Frankfurt am Main 1994, pp. 21–39; Jacques Rancière: "Die Geschichtlichkeit des Films". In: Hohenberger and Keilbach 2003, op. cit., pp. 230–246; Paul 2008, op. cit.

8. See Boleslas Matuszewski: *Une nouvelle source de l'histoire*. Paris 1898.

9. Siegfried Kracauer: *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. New York 1947.

10. See Marc Ferro: *Cinema and History*. Detroit 1988.

11. Thomas Lindenberger: "Vergangenes Hören und Sehen. Zeitgeschichte und ihre Herausforderung durch die audiovisuellen Medien". In: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, 1:1, 2004. <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Lindenberger-1-2004>

12. Paul 2012, op. cit.

13. Gerhard Paul and Ralph Schock (eds): *Der Sound des Jahrhunderts: Geräusche, Töne, Stimmen 1889 bis heute*. Bonn 2013.

14. See Mark Smith: *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America*. Chapel Hill 2001; Richard Cullen Rath: *How Early America Sounded*. Ithaca 2003; Nora M. Alter and Lutz Koepnick (eds): *Sound Matters: Essays on the Acoustics of Modern German Culture*.

A parallel shift in film studies gained momentum in the 1970s, when scholars of film initiated a variety of attempts to reformulate the writing of film history. In the 1980s, these critical approaches were collectively labelled the “new film history”,<sup>15</sup> and later also the “new cinema history”<sup>16</sup> and “media industry studies”.<sup>17</sup> Although defined in various ways by their advocates, in general these labels refer to ways of writing history that consider not just aesthetic questions but also economics, exhibition and distribution practices, media censorship, technology, sociology and contemporary history. Practitioners of these approaches also sought to expand on the scope of the humanities’ conventional methods and objects of inquiry, for example by researching in state archives and the records of censors’ boards, or conducting longitudinal ethnographic studies of film producers or “below the line” freelancers.<sup>18</sup> Thanks to these developments, calls for a more nuanced and complex conception of history emerged in film studies too.

This convergence between film studies and historical studies provides a basis for studying film sound and its significance for the production of history. The linguistic turn, common to both disciplines, provided one key driver. In particular, Hayden White’s much-discussed view that history and its structuring of data are necessarily narrative drew attention to cinematic forms of narration.<sup>19</sup> Robert Rosenstone developed the notion of “history on film”, a new historiographical method based in the medium of film itself, and raised the prospect of multimedia forms of historical scholarship.<sup>20</sup> A similar view is taken by Robert Burgoyne, who describes (historical) films as critical dialogues between past and present. Vivian Sobchack, meanwhile, interrogates the status of historical events that are constructed largely through the viewing and experiencing of film and media images.<sup>21</sup> Other scholars have critically reflected on these constellations of film and history in the context of research on documentary films.<sup>22</sup> Hermann Kappelhoff, by way of contrast, understands modern cinema as a site of historical consciousness that, rather than representing historical events, instead makes palpable the sensuous experiences of past eras.<sup>23</sup> This observation does not just support Ferro’s thesis that films are able to depict the hidden functional mechanisms of a society.<sup>24</sup> It also establishes far-reaching research perspectives concerning the audio-visual nature of visual spaces in film, which are in turn supported by other studies.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the convergence between film studies and historical studies described here, previous research has almost always neglected to register the significance of film sound for the production of history; scholars have typically failed to explicitly consider sound’s relation to the cinematic narration of history<sup>26</sup> or visual history-led approaches.<sup>27</sup> One important exception is Carolyn Birdsall’s recent monograph *Nazi Soundscapes* (2012).<sup>28</sup> Taking the city of Düsseldorf as a case study, Birdsall examines the cultural implications of sound and hearing under National Socialism and pointedly takes film production into account. Beyond this work, the scholarship remains piecemeal at best, usually honing in on close-up details (see, for example, Simon Rothöhler’s discussion of ‘acousmètre’ in his film analyses<sup>29</sup>) at the expense of panoramic treatments of big-picture conceptual issues.

Since the 1980s, sound has become an increasingly important subfield of film studies.<sup>30</sup> However, research on sound largely confines itself to aesthetics, film

15. See Thomas Elsaesser: “The New Film History”. In: *Sight and Sound*, 55:4, 1986, pp. 246–251; Knut Hickethier: “Filmgeschichte zwischen Kunst- und Mediengeschichte”. In: K.H. (ed.): *Filmgeschichte schreiben: Ansätze, Entwürfe und Methoden*. Berlin 1989, pp. 7–23; Paul Kusters: “New Film History. Grundzüge einer neuen Filmgeschichtswissenschaft”. In: *montage AV*, 5:1, 1996, pp. 39–60; James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper (eds): *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches*. Basingstoke 2007.

16. See Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers (eds): *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*. Chichester 2011.

17. See Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren (eds): *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method*. Chichester 2009.

18. See Hans Jürgen Wulff: “Revisionistische Filmgeschichtsschreibung”. In: *Lexikon der Filmbegegnung*. 2011. <http://filmlexikon.uni-kiel.de/index.php?action=lexikon&tag=det&id=311>; Vicki Mayer: *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*. Durham, NC, 2011; John Thornton Caldwell: *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*. Durham, NC, 2008.

19. See White 1984, op. cit.; Hayden White: *Metahistory* [1973]. Baltimore 2014.

20. See Robert A. Rosenstone: *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*. Cambridge, MA, et al. 1995.

21. See Robert Burgoyne: *The Hollywood Historical Film*. Malden, MA, 2008; Vivian Sobchack (ed.): *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*. New York 1996.

22. See Hohenberger and Keilbach 2003, op. cit.; Judith Keilbach: *Geschichtsbilder und Zeitzeugen: Zur Darstellung des Nationalsozialismus im bundesdeutschen Fernsehen*. Münster 2008.

23. See Hermann Kappelhoff: *Realismus. Das Kino und die Politik des Ästhetischen*. Berlin 2008.

24. See Marc Ferro: *Cinema and History*. Detroit 1988.

25. Cf. inter alia Carolyn Birdsall: *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933–1945*. Amsterdam 2012; Michael Wedel: *Der deutsche Musikfilm: Archäologie eines Genres*. Munich 2007; Michael Wedel: *Filmgeschichte als Krisengeschichte: Schnitte und Spuren durch den deutschen Film*. Bielefeld 2011.

production and technology,<sup>31</sup> occasionally extending into the cultural history of sound recording<sup>32</sup> or the medium of documentary film.<sup>33</sup> There are a whole host of studies scrutinizing the dimensions and forms of voice in media, albeit with a primary focus on questions of media aesthetics,<sup>34</sup> technology and narratology,<sup>35</sup> the relationship between voice and image<sup>36</sup> or feminist psychoanalytic theory.<sup>37</sup> Very little scholarship attends to the voice in connection with film and history. One rare exception is Oksana Bulgakowa's 2012 article on the changing timbre of voices in 1950s cinema, which examines historically, culturally and socially conditioned speech norms, technologically contingent recording practices, and artistic conventions.<sup>38</sup> Another is Richard Dyer's 2008 analysis of the African American singer Lena Horne's Hollywood career, in which he considers the aesthetics of her voice from cultural-historical and sociopolitical perspectives.<sup>39</sup>

Research on film music<sup>40</sup> and sound design<sup>41</sup> evinces similar foci and lacunae. Although billed as histories of film sound production, they rarely, if ever, center on the dynamic relations between acoustic dimensions and history. The subfield of film music has, admittedly, made some tentative steps in this direction, even if circumscribed perspectives and narrow analyses prevail: for example, Annette Kreuziger-Herr and Rüdiger Jantzen's treatment of Miklós Rózsa's music (and its desire for authenticity) in historical films such as *QUO VADIS* (Mervyn LeRoy/Anthony Mann, USA 1951), or Stephen C. Meyer's *Epic Sound: Music in Postwar Hollywood Biblical Films* (2015).<sup>42</sup> Despite perennial announcements of a new acoustic turn, only a handful of pioneering studies on film sound and history have emerged—even in the field of sound studies, which is explicitly concerned with sound and its cultural history.<sup>43</sup>

The study of film sound and its relationship to history is still in its infancy; only limited research has been conducted on topics such as sound recording for film and its relationship to contemporary history, or the status of film sound in the production of historicity and in discourses of film reception and film marketing. Against this background, the present volume, *Audio History of Film*, embarks on novel research avenues and explores productive new perspectives. Audio history of film is a field that provides the missing link between film studies, sound studies and historical studies. It investigates how film sound can generate and shape audiences' experience of history. Our concern lies not just with the aesthetic dimension of film sound production, but also with its material, technical and cultural dimensions and their potential to model and produce history. Our endeavor attends not simply to imagined or ideal spectators (often stand-ins for the scholar's own subject position), but also to how real audiences use elements of film sound to interpret history or to how critical and marketing discourses comment on sound and thus co-determine the reception of historical films. This volume presents three essays that offer three different approaches to the audio history of film. Each of them uses a unique approach and methodology in order to complement the others; this triangulation, an exploration of a multiperspectival research itinerary, is intended to establish and develop audio history of film as a viable and autonomous field of study.

26. See Rosenstone 1995, op. cit.; Rasmus Falbe-Hansen: "The Filmmaker as Historian". In: *Point of View*, 16:12, Film & Politics, 2003. [http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue\\_16/section\\_1/artc12A.html](http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_16/section_1/artc12A.html)

27. See Paul 2006, op. cit.; Paul 2008, op. cit.; Paul 2012, op. cit.

28. Birdsall 2012, op. cit.

29. Simon Rothöbler: *Amateur der Weltgeschichte: Historiographische Praktiken im Film der Gegenwart*. Zurich 2011, pp. 35–37, 59f.

30. See Rick Altman (ed.): *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*. New York et al. 1992; Michel Chion: *La voix au cinéma*. Paris 1984; M.C.: *Le son au cinéma*. Paris 1985; M.C.: *Audio-Vision: Ton und Bild im Kino*. Berlin 2012; Barbara Flückiger: *Sound Design: Die virtuelle Klangwelt des Films*. Marburg 2001.

31. See Michel Chion: *Film, a Sound Art*. New York 2009; Rick Altman: *Silent Film Sound*. New York 2004; Peter Rabenalt: *Der Klang des Films: Dramaturgie und Geschichte des Filmtons*. Berlin 2014; Harro Segeberg and Frank Schätzlein (eds): *Sound: Zur Technologie und Ästhetik des Akustischen in den Medien*. Marburg 2005.

32. See Ute Holl: "Medien der Bioakustik: Tiere wiederholt zur Sprache bringen". In: Sabine Nessel, Winfried Pauleit et al. (eds): *Der Film und das Tier: Klassifizierungen, Cinephilien, Philosophien*. Berlin 2012, pp. 97–114.

33. See Eric Lange and Serge Bromberg: *Les premiers pas du cinéma: A la recherche du son*. France: Lobster Films 2003 (DVD, 52 min.).

34. See Cornelia Epping-Jäger and Erika Linz (eds): *Medien/Stimmen*. Cologne 2003.

35. See Chion 1984, op. cit.

36. See Maren Butte and Sabina Brandt (eds): *Bild und Stimme*. Paderborn 2011.

37. See Kaja Silverman: *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Bloomington and Indianapolis 1988.

38. See Oksana Bulgakowa: "StimmiBrüche: Marlon Brando, Innokenti Smoktunowski und der Klang der 1950er Jahre". In: Oksana Bulgakowa (ed.): *Resonanz-Räume: Die Stimme und die Medien*. Berlin 2012.

39. See Richard Dyer: "Singing Prettily: Lena Horne in Hollywood". In: Sabine Nessel, Winfried Pauleit et al. (eds): *Word and Flesh: Cinema Between Text and the Body*. Berlin 2008, pp. 126–135; see also Richard Dyer: *In the Space of a Song: The Uses of Song in Film*. London 2012.

40. See Thony Thomas: *Filmmusik: Die großen Komponisten - ihre Kunst und ihre Technik*. Munich 1995; Anselm C. Kreuzer: *Filmmusik: Geschichte und Analyse*. Frankfurt am Main 2001; James Wierzbicki: *Film Music: A History*. New York 2009.

41. See Flückiger 2001, op. cit.; Jay Beck: *Designing Sound: Audiovisual Aesthetics in 1970s American Cinema*. New Brunswick, NJ, 2016.

42. Christoph Henzel: *Geschichte - Musik - Film*. Würzburg 2010; Caryl Flinn: *The New German Cinema: Music, History, and the Matter of Style*. Berkeley 2004; Annette Kreuziger-Herr and Rüdiger Jantzen: "Mittelalter in Hollywoods Filmmusik. Miklós Rózsa, Ivanhoe und die Suche nach dem Authentischen". In: Henzel 2010, pp. 31–58; Stephen C. Meyer: *Epic Sound: Music in Postwar Hollywood Biblical Films*.

In the first chapter, “Sonic icons: stand-out moments of cinematic self-reflexivity”, Winfried Pauleit investigates “sonic icons”, drawing on the work of Michel Chion and Brian Currid.<sup>44</sup> “Sonic icons” are moments or short sequences in film that stand out prominently due to their acoustic qualities. However, they cannot be reduced to sound alone; rather, they are characterized by a combination of sound, image and text. Such moments can be initiated by, for example, the presence of microphones, sound recording devices or gramophones. They generate a self-reflexive potential that directs film audiences’ attention back to the production and reproduction of sound, identifying film sound as the product of prefilmic sound and the processes used to record and edit it. This form of self-reflexivity provides—often outside the scope of the film’s plot—historical evidence or models of film sound production equipment and the performative processes of work with this equipment. Pauleit hypothesizes that the stand-out moments of sonic icons allow film spectators to simultaneously experience film sound as part of the aesthetics of film and as part of contemporary history.

Pauleit’s analysis of sonic icons draws on an understanding of modern film that characterizes the autonomy of image and sound as an aesthetic play in which sound can seemingly be heard asynchronously or independently of the image.<sup>45</sup> Modern film allows us to see and hear these processes that separate image and sound as relationships of difference, and in some cases also explicitly comments on them. In doing so, it highlights the importance of sound as an element of film aesthetics. Accordingly, sonic icons are primarily aesthetic figurations, but are also marked by, or shot through with, inscriptions of contemporary history. Pauleit studies this relationship between aesthetic production and historical inscription in order to lay out the fundamental features of an audio history of film. He also discusses the relationship between film sound and indexicality. These interrelations are understood not in terms of naive representational realism about sound but rather in terms of the inaccessibility of prefilmic sound events.<sup>46</sup> This furnishes the foundation for an audio history of film, based on exemplary films and the discourses surrounding them, which cannot simply be experienced directly through attentive listening, but can nonetheless be accessed by indirect means.

Pauleit fleshes out his ideas by reference to films from very different genres and periods that are associated with key turning points in the history of sound films. He focuses on different uses of gramophone and phonograph records in cinema. His study ranges from Robert Siodmak and Edgar Ulmer’s silent film *PEOPLE ON SUNDAY* (D 1930) to Howard Hawks’s *A SONG IS BORN* (USA 1948), Agnès Varda’s *SALUT LES CUBAINS* (F/CUB 1963) and *LES PLAGES D’AGNÈS* (*THE BEACHES OF AGNÈS*, F 2008) and Tom Hooper’s historical film *THE KING’S SPEECH* (UK/USA/AUS 2010).

In the second chapter, “Sonic histospheres: sound design and history”, Rasmus Greiner examines the role of sound design in the audio-visual construction of historical films.<sup>47</sup> His investigation is based on a conception of film experience drawn from Vivian Sobchack’s work on the phenomenology

43. See Thomas Porcello: “Three Contributions to the ‘Sonic Turn’”. In: *Current Musicology*, 83, 2007, pp. 153–166; Petra Maria Meyer (ed.): *Acoustic Turn*. Munich 2008.

44. Chion 2012, op. cit., p. 170; Brian Currid: *A National Acoustics: Music and Mass Publicity in Weimar and Nazi Germany*. Minneapolis 2006.

45. See Gilles Deleuze: *Cinema II: The Time-Image* [1985]. London and New York 2013; Ulrich Gregor and Enno Patalas: *Geschichte des modernen Films*. Gütersloh 1965; Christian Metz: *Sprache und Film*. Frankfurt am Main 1973.

46. See Rick Altman: “Four and a Half Film Fallacies”. In Altman 1992, op. cit., pp. 35–45.

47. The term “historical film” refers to films that interact with a larger discourse of history and whose aesthetics and dramaturgy are strongly influenced by documentable historical events; cf. Burgoyne 2008, op. cit., p. 3f.; Robert Rosenstone: *History on Film/Film on History*. Harlow 2006, p. 46.

of film.<sup>48</sup> Sobchack understands the experience of film as an embodied process of synaesthetic perception. In her theory, films convey the experience of history not simply through intensely affective images, but also by synaesthetically combining the visual and aural levels. In order to be able to better describe the role of film sound in this complex process, Greiner develops the model of the sonic histosphere.<sup>49</sup> According to this model, sound actively contributes to the construction of a filmic space-time structure that models and makes palpable a living historical world. In the histosphere, spectators' perceptions oscillate between a supposedly objective external view and the subjective experiences of the film characters. If soundtracks are analyzed according to this approach, the great importance of sound design will become apparent. Greiner begins by discussing how reality and history are constructed through sound, and this discussion forms the theoretical basis for the subsequent investigation. He then analyses three films in turn, with each analysis focusing on different dimensions of the relationship between sound design and the sonic histosphere. Firstly, by reference to Tom Hooper's *THE KING'S SPEECH* he investigates how film can model history through constructing space, time and characters. Secondly, by analyzing Francis Ford Coppola's *APOCALYPSE NOW (USA 1979)* he explores the auditory experience of trauma and painful history. In this context, sound design is linked to cinematic strategies of subjectivization and forms of remembering, and its function as the emotional texture of history is examined. Finally, Greiner analyses Ari Folman's animated film *WALTZ WITH BASHIR (ISR/F/D/USA/FIN/CHE/BEL/AUS 2008)* as an example of auditory reflection on the relationship between traumatic experiences, memory and history. He expands on his discussion of the sonic histosphere by considering, variously, a particular mode of reception (reflective listening), reflective intra- and interfilmic references, and mediatized historiography.

In the third chapter, "The authenticity feeling: language and dialect in the historical film", Mattias Frey investigates how history and sound interact in period films and television series, by far the most widely consumed forms of historical narratives today. Although examples of this genre earn regular scorn in the arts sections of *Die Zeit* and *The Guardian*, such films remain extremely popular with the general public. The Academy Award for Best Picture went to a period production in forty-nine out of the last eighty-six years; every year historical films attract millions of cinemagoers and top lists of box office hits. In this genre, a particularly important role is played by authenticity: an aesthetic striving for "accuracy" and "veracity", or rather a discourse in which this is promised (by filmmakers in interviews, or by adverts) or expected (by audiences and by many critics). Frey formulates the concept of an "authenticity feeling". Authenticity, the main benchmark against which ordinary spectators judge historical films, ultimately amounts to a felt, embodied historicity, the successful confirmation of a subjective idea of historical reality.

In order to critically analyse this social phenomenon, Frey systematically dissects aesthetic strategies of authenticity, placing particular emphasis on the crucial yet under-researched functions of sound. The authenticity feeling is, to be sure, enhanced by costumes and props, set design and location shooting, casting and make-up, superimposed historical dates, text and other visual

48. See Vivian Sobchack: *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton 1992.

49. See Rasmus Greiner and Winfried Pauleit: "Sonic Icons and Histospheres: On the Political Aesthetics of an Audio History of Film". In: Leif Kramp et al. (eds): *Politics, Civil Society and Participation*. Bremen 2016, pp. 311–321.

elements. But music, dialogue, sound effects and silence—the four main elements of film sound—also exercise substantial influence on audiences’ understanding of history. The chapter proceeds to hone in on dialogue, especially language and dialect. Frey explores the discourses that contribute to the authenticity feeling by examining interviews with directors as well as adverts, reviews, online forums and empirical studies on audiences’ reactions to historical films. Here too, the emphasis remains on film sound: Frey asks, for example, what expectations spectators have regarding sound in historical films, or how they subjectively respond to dialects.

In this way, Frey develops a method by which analyses of textual, contextual, paratextual and extratextual elements complement and mutually reinforce one another. The quality, reliability and validity of research results are strengthened and heightened by incorporating different data sources, approaches and methods—esthetic analysis, discourse analysis,<sup>50</sup> media industry studies,<sup>51</sup> fan studies,<sup>52</sup> empirical audience research<sup>53</sup> and paratextual analysis.<sup>54</sup> The chapter’s final section comprises three short case studies of recent historical films: *ZODIAC* (David Fincher, USA 2007), *THE KING’S SPEECH* and *THE MIRACLE OF BERN* (Sönke Wortmann, D/A 2003). This section attempts to sketch a polyvalent audio history of film based on the method put forward in the earlier sections.

In taking this multiperspectival approach, it is expressly not our intention to split off film soundtracks from film images and study their relationship to history in isolation. Nor do we seek to situate film within a general history of sound recording and production, à la sound studies. Rather, we understand audio history of film as a field of research in which, taking sound as our starting point, new and more complex answers about the relationship between film and history emerge. This entails concerns that include (but extend well beyond) soundtracks, the visualizations and narratives of audio history in film (i.e. the complex aesthetics of film), and ultimately also the discourses of film reception and other paratexts such as film marketing and advertising. We foreground the role of sound not in order to exclude other important issues, but rather as a way of highlighting how scholars discussing the relationship between history and film have often overlooked sound and failed to account for its crucial status in this relationship.

Studying the audio history of film also presents us with epistemological issues: for example, the specific form and physiognomy of film sound—just like images—cannot be adequately reproduced in textual form. Readers can only rely on their own experience, perhaps recalling similar sounds and speculating on this basis about what the auditory phenomena described by a text might actually sound like. For, after all, a “description of a sound and the way it is conveyed [vermittelt] are only ever a circumscription, an outline of that sound”.<sup>55</sup> This problem is further complicated by the fact that there is no sonic equivalent to a still image. “This means sound can only be perceived in passing by means of attentive reading; it is always in flux between appearing and disappearing”,<sup>56</sup> as the sound designer Daniel Deshays explains. Digital technology has, for the first time in human history, made it possible to analyse every sound with pinpoint precision and to easily isolate audio fragments.

50. See Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (eds): *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. Los Angeles 2015 (expanded 3rd ed.).

51. See Holt and Perren 2009, op. cit.

52. See Matt Hills: *Fan Cultures*. London 2002.

53. See Martin Barker: *From Antz to Titanic: Reinventing Film Analysis*. London 2000.

54. See Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau (eds): *Demnächst in Ihrem Kino: Grundlagen der Filmwerbung und Filmvermarktung*. Marburg 2005; Jonathan Gray: *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*. New York 2010.

55. Frieder Butzmann and Jean Martin: *Filmgeräusch: Wahrnehmungsfelder eines Mediums*. Hofheim 2012, p. 22.

56. Daniel Deshays: “Film hören”. In: Kamensky and Rohrer 2013, op. cit., p. 319.

Audio history of film attempts to take account of these processes of constant development and integrate them into theory formation. “Cinema changes, and the action of sound is one of the prime reasons for that change”,<sup>57</sup> as Rick Altman pithily puts it. This means that ontological claims about soundtracks and their contribution to films’ production of history are at risk of overgeneralizing and oversimplifying. For this reason, our project does not attempt an ontology of film sound, but instead critically investigates specific fields of inquiry with the aim of tracing multiperspectival connections between them. To this end, *THE KING’S SPEECH*, which all three authors analyse (from different angles and using different methods), plays a particularly important role: as a means to demonstrate how even small shifts in research approaches can produce whole new shades of meaning.

57. Altman 1992, op. cit., p. 37.