Absent Presences in the Colonial Archive

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Published by Leuven University Press

Hilden, Irene. Absent Presences in the Colonial Archive: Dealing with the Berlin Sound Archive's Acoustic Legacies.


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There are two narrative threads pervading this book, which I have yet to discuss in detail. The first and most obvious strand concerns the acoustic, the object of sound, and conceptions of listening. The second, more subtle, strand regards practices of preserving and the historical paradigm of ‘salvage anthropology’ (e.g. Clifford 1986, 1987). As my points of departure in this chapter, I choose crucial accounts by eminent sound and media scholars, Jonathan Sterne (2003) and Brian Hochman (2014), for instance, carried out major research on the interrelationship between early sound technologies and anthropology. Placing emphasis on cultural practices, their interests lie with the social and cultural implications of media history. In their works, both scholars show that media history is inseparable from ideologies of race and difference. This chapter therefore seeks to position the history of the *Lautarchiv* in the nexus between technology and race. How can one best assess the epistemic field of the employed technologies and media practices? Are they the consequence and/or constitutive elements of discourses of race and difference? While Hochman is primarily concerned with change and development in the histories of media technology and anthropology, Sterne is more interested in the histories of sound reproduction and preservation, both of which he introduces as cultural techniques. Though the two scholars mainly concentrate their research on North American histories, I believe it is a worthwhile endeavour to consult and redirect their accounts to examine European and German contexts. Hence, this chapter intends to connect their thought to the history of the *Lautarchiv* and the recording practices I have been dealing with in the previous chapters.

At the heart of this book are three case studies enacting three different listening practices. Employing these modes of listening allowed me to reflect on three approaches to different sonic events. Conceptually, I discussed notions of
the ethnographic and archival by drawing on the project of historical anthropology and looking into genealogies of archival theories (see Chapter 2 and 4). In doing so, I constructed the theoretical framework of my approach to my object of study—the Lautarchiv. This chapter expands my conceptual structure by utilising analytical premises stemming from the fields of sound studies and media history.

Crucial to the analysis of sound, the auditory, and the acoustic is the conviction that historical sound objects change over time. They change over time depending on the perspective and context within which one perceives objects of sound as historical sources. Another notion that is crucial to the investigation of sound is that of changing listening practices, as media historian Kate Lacey has convincingly demonstrated. With regard to the complex processes of modernisation, Lacey discusses Western practices of listening in mediated public life, paying special attention to what she terms the “modern media age” (2013: 11), beginning in the 1870s and encompassing a multitude of different media histories. In her insightful study on the politics and experience of listening, Lacey understands “listening to be a cultural practice that changes under changing historical and material conditions” (18). She goes on to note: “Like any other cultural practice, listening is embedded in the complex realities of unequal power relations, cultural specificities and the dynamics of continuity and change” (22). In line with Sterne, one of Lacey’s central concerns is to argue that narratives of modernity have long been overlooked transfigurations of the auditory and practices of listening in favour of focusing on conditions of vision, space, or time. This chapter therefore tackles the question to what extent a shift of attention towards the acoustic, as well as towards epistemes of listening, can modify an approach to formations of the modern world and perceptions of modern thinking. This is of particular significance when understanding the enterprise of the Lautarchiv as a manifestation of constituent principles of modernity.

The distinction between vision and sound was and continues to be highly controversial, not only with regard to notions of modernity. For a considerable period of time, turns proclaimed as iconic, pictorial, or visual, as well as the fields of visual culture and visual history, have been well-established in the humanities. Likewise, notions of the material turn and material culture studies in addition to the discursive field of a new materialism, gained importance as new analytical lenses and sites of inquiry. Over the last decades, the idea of an acoustic, auditory, or sonic turn has frequently been invoked but does not (yet) seem to have the same impact across disciplines (e.g. Braun 2017; Meyer 2008).1 Although this book concentrates mainly on sound as a pertinent object of knowledge, and listening as an instructive concept of knowing, it also aims
to explore analytical synergies emerging from a multidirectional approach, combining different senses, materialities, and schools of thought. This chapter thus also considers conceptual ideas drawn from broader realms in media studies and visual anthropology. For certain branches in visual anthropology, for instance, the question of how to deal with photographic records from the colonial past has been an important issue; an issue, as I show, that seems to be directly applicable to sonic records generated under colonial conditions.

In this book, it is not historical imagery but single sound documents from the past that have formed the points of access around which I clustered my analysis. In each case study, my attempt was to carve out the sonic conditions of the source material. In part, however, this also meant including other material, such as texts or images. More often than not, it was precisely the interplay among, or the opposition to, different media formats that informed my interpretation in the first place. Using a methodology of juxtaposition, my wish was to negotiate the specificity of particular sound events against the background of their emergence in the past, their assessment over time, and their adoption in the present. Exploring different listening practices—both in synchronic and diachronic terms—was crucial for the interpretation of the sound events. Here, it became particularly evident why focusing on changing practices of listening and diverging listening positions can be so decisive.

This chapter focuses on the relationship between race and technology in general, and race and sound in particular. By drawing on different approaches from sound, media, and cultural history, I show that historical and discursive layers correlate not only with each other but also with stipulations of the archive. This brings me back to my examination of the archive in Chapter 4 and leads me to think of genealogies of media and archives together. I then turn to the paradigm of salvage anthropology, by recalling sections of my three case studies and salvage anthropology’s effects on the history of the Lautarchiv. As the chapter progresses, I ask in what ways phenomena of sound were constitutive of formations of modernity. In this regard, attention to the imperative of objectivity (or more precisely, the notion of \textit{mechanical objectivity}) is as important as a focus on changing scientific techniques and figurations of the scientific self and its objects. I continue to discuss rationales of vision and an essentialising impetus related to visuality. While the engagement with sound also faces the risk of naturalisation, I point to possibilities of denaturalising sound through, for instance, \textit{sonic imagination} (Sterne 2012b) or the \textit{practice of vibration} (Eidsheim 2015). Finally, the last part of this chapter draws on both contrasting and shared characteristics of visual anthropology and what might
be called *sonic anthropology*, before concluding by highlighting the analytical strengths I see in the field of sound studies for my work.

**Recording Sound, Constructing Race**

“Our imaginaries of race have been technologized and our imaginings of technology have been racialized” (2009: 2). This is how media scholar Lynne Joyrich puts it in the preface to a special issue of the journal *Camera Obscura*, edited together with Wendy H. K. Chun. With reference to the special issue’s title “Race and/as Technology,” Chun (2009: 7) begins her introduction by claiming that race should be regarded as a technology or a media form in order to better understand it as a construct of race. With this evocative, and for some, provocative, call, the editors Joyrich and Chun push discourses on race and technology further, opening up discussions, as they argue, beyond essentialised notions of race and difference. In her essay, Chun contends that mobile media technologies serve(d) both cultural and biological constructs of race. Consequently, understanding race as a form of technology allows us to reveal its mobile quality.

For my investigation of the *Lautarchiv*, the notion of race as technology and how this notion can be used to illuminate the ramifications of racial discourses seem equally relevant. In the context of the *Lautarchiv*, racial discourses have been and continue to be mobilised and negotiated. Following Joyrich and Chun, and applying their arguments to sound, it is possible to trace how race has been constituted via sound technologies and how, in turn, sound recordings have been constituted by formations of race. Would the *Lautarchiv*’s initial collection of sound recordings of (colonial) prisoners of war have been imaginable without the race question? Would the emerging entertainment industry in Western metropoleis have been as commercially successful without exoticisation and racialisation? And would the institutionalisation of a range of academic disciplines, such as anthropology or linguistics, have succeeded without the political and social patronage of a white and Christian mainstream society? Answering these rhetorical questions in the negative, it follows that the *Lautarchiv*’s very basis served, and even rested on, constructs of race and difference and their multiple mobilisations.

The contributions to the aforementioned special issue mainly concentrate on modes of visualisation and visual technologies. Therefore, Brian Hochman’s
historical study of modern media technologies offers valuable supplements, as he looks at the intersections between sonic and racial discourses. Hochman productively correlates his thoughts on early sound technologies with practices of colour photography and documentary film. His focus on racial formations is key to exploring the relations between race and sound. According to Hochman, for contemporaries, “the promise of media and the problem of race were inextricably linked” (2014: xii). This points towards the fact that the emergence of the phonograph is closely interconnected with both discursive formations of race and the paradigm of salvage anthropology—or *Savage Preservation*, as the title of Hochman’s book suggests.

While I strongly doubt that one must invoke the figure of the ‘savage,’ which in my view is always derogatory, even when it comes with deconstructive intentions, I follow Hochman in his preoccupation with the motif of salvage as a central analytical lens. Under the premise of media archaeology (see also Chapter 4), Hochman’s study pursues two main objectives. Besides shedding light on—both well- and lesser-known—historical figures, Hochman shows “that ideologies of race and difference are absolutely necessary to the story of media history in the United States” (xx). To him, this story often remains to be told in neutral terms of progress and social use. One of the strengths of media archaeology is that it does not attempt to trace a linear and teleological path of technological development, but points to the ruptures, detours, and (dis)continuities of modern media technology. The concept of salvage prompts Hochman to argue that his “book performs a salvage operation of a different sort” (xxiv). By building his case studies on ‘residual’ media objects, implying new or alternative stories, Hochman claims to be saving these objects from oblivion.

Deriving his definition of salvage anthropology from James Clifford, Hochman suggests that the logic of the salvage paradigm “reduces culture to little more than a ‘disappearing object’ to be collected, classified, and preserved” (xiii, referencing Clifford 1986: 112–113). Following from this, Hochman outlines two important assumptions reaching back to nineteenth-century traditions of the Western academy that form the basis of salvage mentality. First, he mentions the dominant and essentialising conviction that the world is structured by difference and racially divided by culture, religion, and bodies. This concept was not limited to human spheres but included the encyclopaedic interest in other species, organisms, and artifacts. Particularly during the nineteenth century, natural and human sciences, such as zoology and botany as well as philosophy and the gradually institutionalised discipline of anthropology, strengthened this conviction. Second, Hochman emphasises the prevailing sen-
The desire to understand and order the world, then, was dependent on the accumulation of natural, anthropological, and ethnographic artifacts and data, which was gathered in Western knowledge institutions and then newly-established national museums. The collecting strategies involved the development of systemised recording techniques and media for cataloguing, classifying, and comparing the compiled knowledge. In many cases, this meant applying methods derived from the natural sciences to the humanities, a point I will come back to below (see also Kaschuba 1999 [2006]: 52–54).

While the subtitle to Hochman’s book lays emphasis on the *Ethnographic Origins of Modern Media Technology*, Sterne, for his part, promises no less than to examine the *Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Sterne’s account goes far beyond the consideration of ethnographic practices. For instance, he links the history of sound preservation to the larger context of socio-cultural histories of practices of embalming dead bodies and canning food. Sterne associates these cultural techniques with a general Western struggle against decay and a nineteenth-century “culture of death” (2003: 305). In this way, he pinpoints particular historical situations that brought forth advancements, such as canning or recording sound. Despite the impressive scope of Sterne’s study, I wish to limit my attention to his remarks on what he calls “audio or phonographic ethnography” (311).

Sterne describes the emergence of the possibility of sound reproduction and its application to ethnographic purposes as a logical “extension of the preservative ethos at the turn of the twentieth century” (324). He juxtaposes the initial assertion of the phonograph’s inventor, Thomas Alva Edison, with anthropology’s agendas. While Edison promised to save the voices of dying individuals, prevailing doctrines in anthropology intended to capture entire cultures that were presumably threatened with extinction. Linking questions of sound to different senses of time, Sterne connects anthropology’s desire to preserve the melodies of ‘dying cultures’ back to Johannes Fabian’s deconstruction of ethnographic time. With reference to Fabian’s ‘denial of coeval existence’ as performed by US American anthropologists, Sterne explains that the scholars located Native Americans “in a different temporal zone” (312, referencing Fabian 1983). As opposed to European anthropologists who mostly went on field expeditions outside of Europe, North American anthropologists acted in the same geographic space as the ethnographic *Other*. This spatial simultaneity explains why nineteenth-century anthropologists were in need of another
marker of difference in order to disconnect themselves from their research objects: the marker being time.

Sterne suggests that contrasting academic positions influenced US American anthropologists. While evolutionist cultural theories continued to play a major role, more pluralistic, empirical, and relativistic tendencies were also gaining ground. The latter stood in the scholarly tradition of German-born Franz Boas and his students. Despite this more nuanced differentiation, it was, nonetheless, a dominant sense of cultural difference and a belief in constant change that were crucial to the ethnographic practice of recording traditions by means of the modern technology of the phonograph. The aim was to capture fragmented pieces of a present which would soon become the past. The idea was to preserve this past for the upcoming generations of an anticipated future (see also Chapter 2). In *The Audible Past*, Sterne frequently returns to notions of time and temporality. With regard to phonographic ethnography, he discovers that:

The very idea of making recordings for listeners in a distant and unknown future [...] carries within it a distinctively threefold sense of time: this time is at once (1) a linear, progressive historical time, (2) the internally consistent time on a record, a present cut into fragments, and (3) the almost geologic time of the physical recordings itself. (310)

To give a brief example of these three notions of time, I return to the historical figure of Heinrich Lüders and the recording activities that took place during the First World War, before recalling this context in more detail below. Here, I point to the recordist’s aspirations, indicating at least three objectives that can be associated with the triple temporality, as described by Sterne. First, Lüders felt it was a unique opportunity and his scholarly duty to document what he presumed to be a ‘natural’ historical process of one dominant language (modern Nepalese) slowly replacing a multitude of other languages. Second, he wished to capture this process of a changing use of vocabulary among the imprisoned soldiers of so-called Gurkha regiments, by recording traditional folk tales and songs. Hence, Lüders wished to cut into the present moment as he encountered it in the camps; a moment that would soon be part of the past. Lastly, Lüders’ contemporaries had faith in the enduring quality of the material of shellac. However, perhaps because Lüders approached the new medium with a certain scepticism, or because no one could confidently predict how permanent the material actually was, Lüders and his colleagues invested a lot of additional effort into taking notes and making transliterations of the tales and songs they
recorded. Back then, the institution of what is today known as the Lautarchiv did not yet exist. The necessary collaboration with locally-based record companies was, however, already well underway. Despite Wilhelm Doegen’s vision to found a sound archive and voice museum, it was not until 1920 that the Sound Department at the Prussian State Library was officially established.

During the early years of the phonograph and its successor, the gramophone, institutional frameworks were not yet in place. From the very beginning, sound pioneers had, nevertheless, a future for the reproduction and preservation of sound in mind. They presumed that this future would offer the necessary institutional and technological features. The phonographic ethnographers Doegen emulated had similar visions. “The speaking dead needed a cemetery for their resonant tombs” (327), Sterne metaphorically states, stressing the necessity for the establishment of a new archival infrastructure.

The sound archives that could and actually did preserve recordings for future generations were themselves part of the anthropological impulse towards preservation. They derived their justification from the ethics of the disciplines of anthropology, musicology, and linguistics. Beyond sharing the temporal sensibility of their contemporaries in the phonograph industry and elsewhere, academic and government researchers had the added justification of systematic study and research. (328)

This implicit contingency between media and archive history will be the point of departure for the following pages. I argue that when recounting the history of recording and reproducing sound, one must also pay attention to the history of preserving and archiving sound. At the same time, these parallel histories need to be approached as consistently interrelated with academic, economic, material, political, racist, and social forces.

**Historical Subjects and (Disappearing) Objects**

This section, then, suggests that it is hardly possible to tell a media history of recording sound without also considering the history of archival notions of preserving sound. These parallel histories, I argue, need to be approached against the
backdrop of broader historical and discursive media formations. When attempting to do media history, one can pose a number of different research questions. One can ask how modern ideas of communication developed, how modes of perception changed, or what political choices and social structures promoted and/or interfered with certain transformations. Hence, doing media and sound history implies a multiplicity of intellectual projects. Like Hochman, media historian Lisa Gitelman (2008: 1) makes the case that media history should not be confined to an apolitical history of technological progress of changing methods and devices. Rather, her starting point in Always Already New is to understand media as historical subjects. For Gitelman, addressing media in the plural—as complicated and at times contradictory historical subjects with social and cultural histories—is a way to prevent the tendency to naturalise or essentialise them. Gitelman holds the opinion that media is all too often depicted as one unified technology, thereby neglecting the plurality of media and its discursive impact. There are media histories, she argues, trying to prove that one type of history, for instance, one that focuses on technological progress, would be more revelatory than one that concentrates on, say, media epistemologies or social practices (2). Eidsheim voices similar unease when it comes to the common notion of a singular “figure of sound” (2015: 2; see also Novak and Sakakeeny 2015: 7). Explaining that sound would too often be viewed as a stable, static, and naturalised referent, Eidsheim promotes an understanding of sonic events as highly dynamic, multi-faceted, and multi-sensorial phenomena. Below, I shall return to Eidsheim’s suggestion to reconceptualise the understanding of sounds as fixed by means of the practice of vibration. I will draw further on her politics of listening and her call for “listening to listening” (2019: 57).

In my account of the archival in Chapter 4, I stressed that the archive can be understood as a medium of history, encoding certain knowledges and narratives. This chapter adds to this understanding with the depiction of the Lautarchiv as an object, or rather subject, of a nuanced media history. According to Gitelman, “history of emergent media [...] is partly the history of history, of what (and who) gets preserved—written down, printed up, recorded, filmed, taped, or scanned—and why” (2008: 26). Earlier in her book, she argues: “If history is a term that means both what happened in the past and the varied practices of representing that past, then media are historical at several different levels” (5). As I hope to have shown in this book, the Lautarchiv serves as a remarkable example of the exploration of events in the past, and of considering different practices of representing this past in the present (see Chapter 2). In Chapter 4, I emphasised that the archive in its discursive form bears little
relation to formal archival institutions or—and this is important for the point I wish to make here—to media. The archive as dispositive deems only certain statements and knowledges imaginable. In this sense, the medial status of the archive and its meaning remain diffuse. Hence, in media archaeology, the Foucauldian archive as ‘the law of what can be said’ becomes a medial law—regulating the production and transmission “of what could be deployed [...] in the order of things” (Foucault: 1972 [1969]: 145). In other words, when bringing the archive together with notions of history and media, the archive becomes a medium of knowledge and a device of its transmission.

Another intention of my conceptual account of the archive was to show to what extent and on what grounds theorising the politics of the archive may be productive for engaging with the physical archive and actual archival histories. I pointed out that this means being capable of handling the idea of the archive as two analytical objects; walking a tightrope between the two bodies of the archive—the literal and the metaphorical (Ebeling and Günzel 2009: 10). At this stage, I continue my reflections on the practices and politics of archiving, arguing that one might benefit from taking into account broader concepts of preserving and doctrines of salvaging. I refer to literal practices of preserving, but also to more conceptual ideas and past ideologies, such as Sterne’s above-mentioned assertion of a Western ‘preservative ethos’ in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In what follows, I contemplate the question of how this ethos played out both in the history of anthropology, and with regard to the Lautarchiv’s enterprise—which, as this book argues, is strongly linked to the anthropological project.

As indicated before, practices of preservation have found an expression in the discipline of anthropology in rather drastic ways. It was especially during its founding phase in the nineteenth century that scholarly strands in anthropology resorted to unilinear and evolutionist cultural theories, which were closely connected to the idea of modernity’s inevitable progression (Kaschuba 1999 [2006]: 25; Stangl 2000: 75–77). For a crucial period of time, the salvage paradigm was an important principle in European and North American anthropology, causing lasting repercussions, even after the discipline’s reorientation. According to Wolfgang Kaschuba (1999 [2006]: 54), the paradigm was also part of the discipline’s compensatory strategy of looking back in order to tackle the contingent challenges of the present and future, the acceleration of industrialisation and urbanisation processes.

It was James Clifford who notably problematised the legacy of the salvage mentality, which affected ongoing developments and schools of thought
in the field. In his contribution to *Writing Culture* (1986), co-edited with George E. Marcus, Clifford connects the problem of representational strategies and practices specific to the production of ethnographic texts to the formerly dominant motif of salvage. At the time, he claimed that the ‘allegory of salvage’ remains ingrained in the theory and practice of ethnography (112–113; see also Clifford 1987: 121). However, a lot has changed since Clifford made these assertions. For example, a lot has changed since a number of anthropologists pushed the debate on writing culture forward, since the crisis of representation was proclaimed, since post- and decolonial critique became an integral part of certain branches in anthropological scholarship and other academic, political, and social spheres. If doing media and sound history is more complex than following up on media change and technological development, as Gitelman states, the same can be said about tracing the genealogies of anthropological and ethnographic knowledge production. Shedding light on epistemological legacies in all their complexity must go beyond the examination of changing scholarly mentalities and practices of documenting, interpreting, and writing. In order to retrace the connection to the knowledge regimes relevant to this book, the following presents a retrospective view on my case studies and the ways in which they are linked to the salvage paradigm. I bring to bear my unpacking of the ‘allegory of salvage’ and its echo in each recording act—in each colonial situation and sonic event—this book examines. In a next step, I relate the intentions expressed in the recording practices to broader understandings of configurations of modernity and the imperative of objectivity.

The *Lautarchiv* and the Salvage Paradigm

The discourse of salvage anthropology was perhaps the most powerful force shaping nineteenth-century ethnology and the development of both German and non-German ethnographic museums. It combined feelings of urgency, loss, and possibility with scientific competence to create a sense of purpose that demanded extraordinary sacrifices to possess cultural artifacts. (Penny 2002: 52)

The aim was not to protect the cultures ‘threatened with extinction’ by improving the political circumstances, but rather to compile as
These two quotes by H. Glenn Penny and Britta Lange illustrate not only the impact the salvage paradigm had on the institutionalisation of anthropology but also the institutionalisation of ethnographic collections in German-speaking contexts. In his work on the discipline of anthropology and ethnographic museums in imperial Germany, Penny examines the political means and affective strategies shaping dominant discourses of the time. For Lange (2013a: 107), the quintessential assertion of salvage anthropology is that the salvage paradigm was not a social but a media(l) project. As Lange shows, this holds particularly true for the studies undertaken in German and Austro-Hungarian POW camps during the First World War, to which she dedicated a large part of her academic work (see also Chapter 3). In line with Penny, Lange notes that scholars mobilised the salvage paradigm and ‘feelings of urgency’ to legitimate their research agenda. In this way, anthropologists and collectors alike sought to obtain funding for their field expeditions abroad or, alternatively, the research site of an internment camp ‘at home.’ Salvage anthropology claimed to know which ethnicised and racialised groups should be documented and studied, archived and preserved, even exhibited and displayed publicly (Clifford 1987: 122). Recontextualising the Lautarchiv’s material against the backdrop of the history of anthropology and media history, and their respective relationship to the salvage paradigm, thus seems to be of key importance. How, I therefore ask, did salvage anthropology find expression in the three case studies of this book?

As part of my first case study, in Chapter 3, I took a close look at the Orientalist Heinrich Lüders. Lüders considered it a rare opportunity to gather linguistic data among soldiers of the Gurkha regiments in the British Indian Army. Between 1916 and 1918, Lüders and his colleague Wilhelm Schulze compiled a considerable amount of sound recordings and transcriptions of so-called Gurkha soldiers, first imprisoned in a POW camp in Germany and later Romania. Due to the longstanding and cross-generational service in the British Indian Regiments, during most of which the soldiers were stationed in regions of pre-partition northern India, their knowledge of Tibeto-Burman languages was in the process of being replaced due to the dominant use of the Indo-Aryan languages, such as Nepali, Hindi, and Hindustani. Against this backdrop, it was Lüders’ intention to study the linguistic proficiencies among Nepalese members of the British Indian troops, wishing to capture their ‘remaining’ language knowledge and vocabulary. As the Indologist himself highlighted,
many of the young soldiers were neither recruited nor born in Nepal. In most of the cases, they were born and raised on Indian military bases as so-called “line-boys” (Lüders 1925: 126). Consequently, the majority of them had little or no knowledge of other native languages. Lüders stated that there were only a few soldiers left with a first language other than Nepalese. His scholarly interest was directed towards documenting which parts of the vocabulary the speakers adapted in their narratives and songs. He asked which words and phrases they integrated into Nepalese and which they no longer used and thus, in a way, ‘lost’ over time. I analysed Lüders’ accounts with reference to Fabian, who famously deconstructed anthropology’s Eurocentric methodologies and belief in cultural and racial stratification. Following Fabian, I argued that, in his writing, Lüders positioned the knowledge and use of Tibeto-Burman languages on a preceding temporal and lower cultural stage. While Lüders did not expect Tibeto-Burman languages to disappear, he nevertheless held the opinion that the languages were losing speakers because of the effects of labour movements and the homogenising force of modernisation under colonial rule in South Asia. In view of processes of modernisation—in this case expressed primarily in the form of military labour regimes—it was Lüders’ Eurocentric wish to salvage processes of changing linguistic genealogies among the Other.

In my second case study, I dealt with sound recorded at a metropolitan colonial spectacle, a so-called India Show. Here, I went back to the very beginnings of the Lautarchiv’s predecessor and sibling institution, the Berlin Phonogram Archive (see Chapter 5). Transpiring simultaneously with the archive’s formation, I discussed the emergence of comparative musicology at the turn of the twentieth century, which became known as the Berlin School. I showed that the field of study was highly influenced by, if not constitutive of, the conviction that Western scholarship had to study and preserve non-Western music traditions before the allegedly relentless impact of modernity became too strong. I pointed out that leading figures in comparative musicology of the time, such as Carl Stumpf, Erich Moritz von Hornbostel, and Otto Abraham, welcomed the opportunities to explore music as part of and during colonial spectacles in the Western metropolis. In their attempt to gather as much empirical data as possible, Stumpf, Hornbostel, and Abraham used every opportunity to collect melodies and songs that were foreign to them. They made their own recordings during performances in the imperial capital, commissioned traveling researchers whom they equipped with a phonograph, or exchanged recordings with other archives and phonographic companies (Ames 2003: 300, referencing Stumpf 2000 [1908]). Musicologists and anthropologists alike had to deal
with the fact that non-Western performers were often well aware of common Western expectations and imaginations of allegedly ‘authentic’ and ‘exotic’ musical representations, and met them in order to earn a living. “Performers resisted anthropologists’ designs,” Andrew Zimmerman writes, “for they were cosmopolitan cultural hybrids, often with political agendas of their own, rather than the pure natural peoples anthropologists wished to study” (2001: 7). The promise of early sound technology to ‘fix’ and salvage music traditions by turning ephemeral sound into tangible objects seemed simply too tempting for many musicologists and anthropologists. Yet it must be noted that the technical setup only allowed for recording those who were willing to go on record. Hence, the contextual and technological possibilities of the time prescribed what could be salvaged. In other words, the musicologist and his apparatus—as documentarians—prescribed the availability and interpretability of the empirical data. “They [were] active participants in the culture that he claim[ed] they study from the outside” (2003: 320), Sterne explains with regard to the US American anthropologist and early sound ethnographer Jesse Walter Fewkes (1850–1930).

In the previous chapter, and the last of my three case studies, I drew on accounts of former missionary and influential Africanist, Diedrich Westermann. I discussed an essay in which Westermann (1931) wrote about both of his professions, elaborating on possibilities of their mutual improvement. Here, I also observed resemblances to the principles of salvage anthropology. Since Westermann was well-aware and in support of social and political transformations set in motion by missionary work and colonial rule, he promoted the urgency to gather as much knowledge about vernacular languages and indigenous life as possible. He was convinced that this racialised knowledge was useful and necessary for the implementation of social development in the colonies. At the same time, Westermann cautioned that modernisation would cause an undesirable level of so-called detribalisation. In the longer term, according to Westermann, this would endanger colonial governing and the deployment of non-white labour. In his patronising rhetoric, he claimed that people from the African continent

‘were losing the basis of their existence (the tribe) ... (and) had lost Lebenslust, Lebensinhalt, Lebenszweck [love of life, content of life and purpose of life]. When a race no longer knew what it was living for, it might well be in danger of decay.’ (Tilley 2011: 238, quoting remarks made by Westermann in 1929)
As evinced in this quote, Westermann’s assumptions must also be seen as being in line with the principles of indirect rule, for which ethnicised knowledge of vernacular languages and customs was regarded as indispensable. Following Hochman, and considering Westermann’s general attitude, I argue that, for Westermann, the salvage endeavour was not merely a media project, but a “moral imperative” (Hochman 2014: xv): ‘disappearing cultures and people’ had to be salvaged from ‘losing the basis of their existence.’ Westermann made this argument out of his paternalistic, and ostensibly humanistic, concern that African people could lose their ‘purpose of life.’ What pervades Westermann’s statements is his cultural racism, which saw language and culture as markers of alterity and inferiority. Forging a bridge back to Lange’s assertion that the salvage paradigm pursued a media and not a social project, my point here demonstrates the paradigm’s patronising and morally charged character. For Westermann, salvaging knowledge was a moral project—despite the double standard of those morals.

From this selective overview of my three case studies, it is clear that the salvage operation and constructs of race play out in nuanced ways and on different levels in the Lautarchiv. The notion of salvage becomes a common condition that subsists through the Lautarchiv’s activities under colonial conditions. The elements of ‘urgency, loss, and possibility,’ alluded to in Penny’s quote at the outset to this section, matter for all three cases. It strikes one as remarkable that it is a particular attitude towards modernisation processes on the part of the recordists that is fundamental to the divergent sound projects. In all three cases, the narrative of technological progress, as manifested through the modern device of the gramophone, epitomises ambivalent, if not antithetical, notions. Sound reproduction promised the possibility of archiving—and thus objectifying—the speech and music of the ethnographic Other. Yet by studying the ethnographic Other, the anthropological project also sought to define its own society and legitimise its cultural superiority through the mirror of the Other (Kaschuba 1999 [2006]: 32). At the same time, modernisation processes, not least in the form of technological innovation, were one of the catalysts for the destruction of what the academy wished to rescue and secure—that is, the categories of difference it needed to define itself against. This points to only some of the contradictions scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century had to face. The following pages deal with yet another discrepancy between prevailing epistemic ideals and the figuration of the scientific self.
Making Difference Audible and the Imperative of Objectivity

The idea of ‘scientific objectivity’ finds its expression not only in the aforementioned examples from the case studies in this book, but also in the general characteristics of the salvage paradigm and the recording procedures described. The scholars involved in the Lautarchiv’s recording activities were confident in their disciplinary authority and scientific performance—be it in the fields of linguistics, comparative musicology, or anthropology. In their eminent book *Objectivity* (2007), Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison follow the history of scientific objectivity as a guiding concept, carving out the interrelations between epistemic concepts and scientific practices. By examining images in anthropological atlases, mainly from the nineteenth but also from the first half of the twentieth century, the two scholars demonstrate how image-making and visualising techniques shaped both subjects and objects of science at the time. Ideals like *truth-to-nature* and *mechanical objectivity* were attempts to restrain the scholar’s subjectivity, which, however, seemed to function as a necessary definitional counterpart to objectivity. In this way, a scientific self was cultivated that converged knowing and knower (36–37). In reference to Daston and Galison, Lange (2013a: 15) poses the question of whether and how the postulate of scientific objectivity can be used for the examination of the production of other media, such as film or sound recordings. I understand objectivity as a historical concept—a concept constituting a scientific paradigm, shaping hypotheses, methods, and results.

In German-speaking contexts, physical anthropology is an anthropology that was and is conceived as a natural science. Here, knowledge production was based on the practice of compiling physical collections—in many cases, consisting of human remains. This compilation of physical objects—or rather subjects—coincided with the practice of generating new objects of knowledge, which depended, for instance, on detailed body descriptions. In her work, Lange has been concerned with the disciplinary history of physical anthropology in German-speaking academia. Her interests lie with research practices of collecting and/or producing data, rather than with the physical objects themselves (see also Chapter 6, on the concept of sensitive collections). For Lange, it is crucial to study the practices of generating data since it is precisely these techniques that create the discipline’s objects of study—epistemic objects that would not exist without, and do not exist prior to, the scientific urge for knowledge. She places special focus on visualising techniques that constitute anthropological
and ethnographic data in the form of metric, numerical, visual, but also acoustic information. According to her, (physical) anthropologists sought to make human characteristics visible by compiling anthropometric information, such as measuring data, body descriptions, photographs, films, plaster casts, and sound recordings. The applied visualising techniques constituted new objects of knowledge. Tables, schemes, and graphics promised to make humans ‘measurable’ and ‘objectively’ comparable. At the same time, as anthropologist Andre Gingrich writes, “machines and tools of measurement and documentation shaped the reified relation between superior ‘white’ researchers and their inferiorized and dehumanized alien objects of research” (2010: 372). It was about making difference visible—by making it legible and measurable. In the case of sound, instead, it was about making difference audible.

In her engagement with historical sound recordings, Lange (2011a: 31–37) introduces the term audibilisation (Hörbarmachung), as analogous to visualisation (Sichtbarmachung). Audibilisation describes the practice of creating objects of sound, understood as sonic objects of knowledge. Historically, recording sound with a technological device has been an active and effective process of producing linguistic, phonetic, musicological, or anthropological knowledge by constructing and maintaining difference. But Lange further states that compiling sound recordings for linguistic, phonetic, musicological, or anthropological purposes has also always made other things audible. For instance, historical sound recordings make the human voice audible as a characteristic and unique sign of an individual. Sound files reveal early sound technology with its distinctive noise; and they might also contain messages addressed to future audiences.

Anthropological techniques and media technologies brought about new epistemic objects, not least by means of mechanical objectivity. In this way, the object of sound became a crucial element not only for anthropological, but also linguistic and musicological knowledge production. What is so striking about Lange’s argument is that it allows me to make sense of the particular conditions of the sonic events dealt with in this book. “The sound recordings […],” Lange claims, “are not authentic traces of people, but artificial documents producing a scientific sound object” (2013: 49). Hence, the sound recordings can only be understood in their artificial and constructed nature—that of serving modernity’s imperatives of objectivity and technological progress. However, as Lange suggests, mediated sound can also contain other, unintended, even subversive traces: traces undermining such imperatives—implicitly or explicitly, in technological or epistemological terms. As I have shown in this book, one way to
make these traces visible, or audible, is through different modes of listening. This book, then, performs another form of audibilisation—an audibilisation that seeks to account for certain limitations and boundaries (see Chapter 3 on failed listening), ruptures and distinct technological conditions (see Chapter 5 on close listening), and the power over who is speaking and who is listening (see Chapter 6 on collective listening).

**Sonic Imaginations and Sensory Economies**

Returning to approaches in sound studies, the undermining quality of figurations of sound and voice, as well as practices of listening and hearing, can also be explored in other ways. Possibly, and as suggested by Sterne (2012b: 9), drawing on the notion of *sonic imaginations* can be a pertinent tool to examine sound phenomena. For Sterne, tensions between different knowledges of sound are characterised by the desire to rely, on the one hand, on familiar ways and vocabularies of approaching, knowing, and analysing sound as practiced in one’s own field, and on the other hand, the attempt to detach oneself from this familiar knowledge, and turn to other ways of knowing sound. “Sound studies,” Sterne believes, “should be a central meeting place where sonic imaginations go to be challenged, nurtured, refreshed and transformed” (10). It is in this sense, then, that a sound studies approach to historical sounds from the *Lautarchiv* makes it possible to challenge presumably stable notions of sound and its meaning, and instead accounts for a multiplicity of the audible and its intelligibility.

In their collection of *Keywords in Sound*, Novak and Sakakeeny (2015: 7) emphasise, too, that sound is not a stable object, technologically determined, or perceptible in general or universal terms. But Sterne (2003: 14) points out that many theorists and historians of sound do in fact understand hearing as having static, transhistorical, and ‘natural’ qualities. In his litany of difference, Sterne brings together a supposedly naturalised and timeless set of attributes of hearing as opposed to seeing. In this, by now famous, audiovisual litany, hearing is considered to be spherical and immersive, tending towards subjectivity and affect. With these attributes, hearing is falsely equated with listening and is only intelligible in opposition to seeing and vision. Seeing, in turn, is considered directional and perspectival, leaning towards objectivity and intellect. Sterne points out the risk that, in this antithetical depiction, one sense appears
intelligible only in opposition and in an excluding stance to another sense. In his work, he aims at dismantling and rethinking such ostensibly transhistorical and universal constructs of sound and hearing. He therefore reminds his readers time and again that listening and seeing are learned bodily practices and historically-shaped cultural techniques that create(d) centuries of Western (and Christian) knowledge, thought, and cultural theory.

In the ideologically charged list of differences, it is not only a mutual conditionality of the two senses that becomes visible. Indeed, a privileging of the sense of vision over hearing is exposed. The opposition shows that seeing is idealised in its association with modernity’s rationality and reason, while hearing signifies the opposite, “manifesting a kind of pure interiority” (15). What follows is that examining sound and hearing succeeds all too often solely by distinguishing it from vision and seeing. This is another reason for Sterne to call for refiguring sound. He wishes to “reopen the question of the sources of rationality and modern ways of knowing” (18). Ultimately, this leads me back to efforts to deconstruct the sound/vision binary and tackle the ‘hegemony of vision’ within conceptions of modernity. While the sense of seeing and the status of vision are crucial fields of inquiry in cultural theory and history, the sense of hearing and the object of sound have long been ignored as a theoretical subject matter. This is particularly astonishing considering the multitude of sound phenomena that ought to be understood as a direct consequence of the invention of modernity. At the heart of Sterne’s work lies thus the call for taking “seriously the role of sound and hearing in modern life [...] to trouble the visualist definition of modernity” (3, emphasis in the original).

The editors of the volume Sensible Objects (2006) have a slightly different understanding when it comes to prioritising one sense over another in terms of figurations of modernity. To Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth B. Phillips, it is a variety of sensory experiences and mechanisms of control that are integral to modernity. For instance, they refer to transformations of smell and noise through sanitation and industrialisation. While admitting that vision plays a dominant role in and for the analysis of colonial and modernist experiences, Edwards, Gosden, and Phillips see hearing as one of the two “primary senses for the production of rational knowledge” (7). They therefore attempt to tackle the fact that the Western sensory schema elides feeling, smelling, and tasting by classifying these senses as negligible. Instead, they advocate for a multi-sensory approach when exploring objects and other trajectories of sensory economies of colonialism and modernity. “Thinking through the senses” (2), they posit, means to understand vision as only one possible way to grasp colo-
nial encounters and the material traces accumulated in Western institutions. I will come back to the notion of a multi-sensory approach in the conclusion to this chapter.

**Anthropology’s Visual and Acoustic Legacies**

The preoccupation with questions of visuality and the colonial gaze in general, and anthropology’s visual legacy in particular, is a rich and varied field of study. The urgency to deal with anthropology’s visual archives emerged not least as a response to, and in the aftermath of growing concerns regarding the discipline’s knowledge making processes. By contrast, work on acoustic legacies and the relationship between anthropology and phonography does not have such long-standing trajectories of critical debate to look back to. This is why the following section explores which analytical angles, developed in the realms of visual anthropology and visual history, may be transferable to acoustic legacies. However, it is not my aim to consider the entire range of extensive scholarship on the entangled relations between anthropology and photography (e.g. Edwards 2001; Pinney 2011; Sekula 1989), not to mention the massive body of literature on linkages between photography and history (by scholars such as Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, or Roland Barthes). Rather, I concentrate on introducing perspectives from visual anthropology to what might be considered an approach of *sonic anthropology*.

When looking at anthropology’s visualising practices of the past, there seem to be certain traits shared with the sonic practices I outlined previously. But there are also striking differences between visual and sonic traces. In often contrasting ways, the two legacies have left both epistemic and literal marks in a variety of disciplines and institutions. In material terms alone, visual holdings of historical imagery surpass acoustic repositories—not only in Berlin. In this study, the holdings of the *Lautarchiv* are the starting point for an investigation of the practices and histories associated with the different archival collections housed at the sound archive. As outlined in my introduction, the archive’s core consists of 4,500 shellac records and almost the same number of duplicates. From this massive accumulation, however, only a relatively small number of files suggest an immediate connection to colonial presences and colonial knowledge production. Appraising these files, I decided to examine the modest amount of five recordings as part of my case studies.
A quantitative distinction hence becomes obvious when considering the sheer number of archival records, as well as the extent of research carried out on the history of anthropology’s relationship with visuality. Quantity becomes further apparent with regard to the efforts undertaken over the past decades on the part of ethnographic museums and other knowledge institutions to deal with their audiovisual collections from colonial times. This effort includes large digitisation and cataloguing projects, providing online access to digital collections, and reaching out to descendants and other possible stakeholders. In this context, attempts by postcolonial subjects to re-appropriate visual objects from the archives are tremendously important (e.g. Edwards and Morton 2009). But the predominance of visuality cannot be explained in quantitative terms alone. Visuality and the question of representation play out on different levels, both past and present. Photographs from the past, categorised as ‘anthropological’ or ‘ethnographic’, indicate different visualising practices. Understood as indexical traces, they served and partly continue to serve as sources of evidence and truth—and often as markers of difference. As collection items, they fill hundreds and thousands of pages and registers; they are hidden in drawers, forgotten in museum depots, public and private archives. As exhibition objects, ethnographic museums often show them either as illustrative large-scale projections or in dimmed showcases in an effort to protect what is displayed from natural light and the irreverent gaze.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Edwards argues, the predominance of visuality related to “an ordering of knowledge that was itself premised on a privileging of vision on which photography was both constitutive and constituted” (2001: 11). In anthropology, the ‘ordering of knowledge’ through photographic technologies found its most instrumentalising expression in anthropometric imagery. It did not take long until anthropologists employed anthropometric methods during their field trips, compiling large amounts of visual and measuring data. Today, these racialising images belong to the most contentious collections in the visual colonial archive. In the catalogues of ethnographic collections, there exist many photographs not taken ‘in the field’ but in professional photo studios or at research institutions in the (Western) metropolis. Here, the same distinction between different collection types applies as for acoustic collections. Colonial photography did not solely originate in colonised territories, but in the imperial metropolis as well. The fact that all of the sound recordings housed at the Lautarchiv were compiled in Germany and Europe prompted me to consider the Lautarchiv a colonial archive ‘at home’, generated in the heart of the European metropolis.
As the subtitle of her book, *Photographs, Anthropology, and Museums*, suggests, Elizabeth Edwards aims to uncover the interdependent relationship between medium, discipline, and institution. In her introduction, Edwards mentions that she deliberately chose to concentrate on specific photographic events, arguing that her conceptual and methodological ideas “might be extended to other bodies of material and to contribute to a broader understanding” (4) of the relationship between media and institutions. I wish to take Edwards up on this, although she may be alluding to other bodies of imagery and broader questions of photography, ethnography, and history than other media, such as sound. Yet in Chapter 4, I already showed how Edwards’ thoughts on the colonial archive ‘at home,’ which in her case refers to visual archives in British institutions, also offer valuable incentives for the metropolitan archive I am dealing with. One of the crucial questions Edwards, like many other visual anthropologists, poses is how to work with, through, and against colonial photography. Likewise, and as a common thread throughout this book, students of colonialism ask how to move within—along and against the grain of—the colonial archive. As for my part, I wonder how to tell histories with, through, and against colonial sounds.

Important for Edwards’ research on historical imagery is the assumption that focusing on surface and content alone will reveal only the obvious. “Instead,” she claims, “one should concentrate on detail” (2). Paying attention to the photographs’ historicity, meaning the intersecting histories of photographic practices, is key when wishing to address details and “little narratives” (3; see also my introduction). Together with Christopher Morton, Edwards advocates for “a more nuanced approach in which the production, dissemination, consumption, possession and display of photographs are all considered as generating photography’s situational and historical meanings” (2009: 6). Ultimately, this may also offer insight into the question of how and when canonical, yet fluid, (historical) categories deem photos as ‘ethnographic’ or ‘anthropological.’ Understanding photographs from the past as highly ambiguous and time-contingent media fits in with my depiction of sound recordings from the past. In both cases, the temporal ambiguity arises from the notion of a captured piece of the past retrieved and seized in the present. As conceived in nineteenth-century anthropology, a fragment of space and time becomes a placeholder for some sort of imagined and arbitrary whole.

While photographic technologies promised to fix observed realities, cultures, and not least, race, they in fact fabricated and reified those realities, cultures, and race. Yet anthropologist Deborah Poole shows that:
the understanding of race that emerges from a history of anthropological photography is clearly as much about the instability of the photograph as ethnological evidence and the unshakeable suspicion that perhaps things are not what they appear to be as it is about fixing the native subject as a particular racial type. (2005: 165)

It is this search for moments of fracture that might manifest a possibility to counter initial promises of stability by means of technology. What seems to sustain the work of visual anthropologists and postcolonial subjects alike is this ambivalent condition of historical photographs. On the one hand, photographs are symbols of the asymmetries of power caused by the epistemic framing of their production. On the other hand, photographs also carry the potential of contesting established colonial histories and epistemologies. In her case studies, Edwards looks for destabilising points of fracture in order to find alternative histories and new narrative spaces—“even in the most dense colonial documents” (2001: 12). A similar stance applies to the institution of the archive and the (ethnographic) museum. As highly contested places because of their histories of colonial complicity, they have simultaneously become places of debate and renewal. After all, it is the colonial archive, which keeps and reifies colonial documents, where both visual and acoustic legacies emerge. It is the archive, with its practices and politics, in which both legacies become decodable and possibly recodable.

Moreover, Edwards sees the relevance in investigating the social and material biographies of photographs. In this, she follows important thinkers, such as Arjun Appadurai (1986) and Igor Kopytoff (1986) in their accounts of the social life and an anthropology of things. The photograph, Edwards says, “must be examined through the process of its production, exchange, and consumption” (2001: 13). “Integral to social biography,” she goes on:

is the way in which the meaning of photographs, generated by viewers, depends on the context of their viewing, and their dependence on written or spoken ‘text’ to control semiotic energy and anchor meaning in relation to embodied subjectivities of the viewer. These are acts upon photographs, and result in shifts in its meaning and performance, over time and space […]. (14)

What strikes me here is the emphasis Edwards lays on the viewer and their viewing. This perspective seems easily translatable into the listener and their
listening. Depending on their contexts, viewers and listeners alike generate situational, and hence shifting, meaning. In one moment, a sound recording stands for a language sample of a specific language type. In the next moment, it is the recording’s medium, the material of shellac, which bears witness to early sound technology and a colonial commodity. And in yet another moment, the same sound recording can act as the acoustic testament of a historical subject, which may have left no other trace.

Edwards believes that the concept of the objects’ social biographies can be linked to questions of materiality. “What things are made of and how they are materially presented,” she argues, “relates directly to their social, economic and political discourses and their function as documents” (15). For her, this also alludes to the model of visual economy as developed by Poole. Poole introduces this concept in order to refer to the “organization of people, ideas, and objects” (1997: 8). For her, the principles of visual economy involve at least three levels of organisation: the production of images, their circulation, and the value attached to them within specific cultural and discursive systems. Again, I suggest translating this concept to the notion of a model of sonic economy. In doing so, questions arise as to who produced the Lautarchiv’s sound recordings, how and in which form they circulated, and what kind of meaning they stood and stand for.15

There are plenty of conceptual and methodological strands in visual anthropology and visual history that tie in with the sonic contexts of the Lautarchiv. Nevertheless, inquiries into historical sound cannot assemble their analytical toolkit exclusively from approaches to visual legacies. Sound studies share questions and concerns with other domains, but also address very distinct analytical problems. In the following, I return to positions from the field of sound studies once more, to show that sound scholars draw from a variety of influences and approaches.

**Historicising Sound**

*Reflexivity, historicity, and positionality*—for Sterne, these are crucial cornerstones of the field of sound studies. While these key parameters resonate throughout the book, they have not always appeared merely in relation to sound and its analysis. The previous section, for instance, showed that visuality
and anthropological photography are fluid categories, embedded in broader and mobile contexts of knowledge, and therefore require a nuanced and reflexive approach. The following, then, aims to pinpoint how the object of sound and its inquiry relate to concepts of reflexivity, historicity, and positionality.

Sound students produce and transform knowledge about sound and in the process reflexively attend to the (cultural, political, environmental, aesthetic…) stakes of that knowledge production. By reflexivity, I [Sterne] refer to arguments developed by Pierre Bourdieu and Donna Haraway. Both argue that knowers must place themselves in relation to what it is they want to know: they must account for their own positions and prejudices, lest scholars misattribute them as qualities of the object of study. This means that if we use concepts drawn from the study of human auditory perception, we must account for the historicity of that knowledge […]. Depending on the positioning of hearers, a space may sound totally different. […] Hearing requires positionality. (Sterne 2012b: 3–4, my emphasis)

Naturally, expecting a high degree of reflexivity from knowers and knowledge producers is not unique to the field of sound studies, as the reference to Pierre Bourdieu and Donna Haraway illustrates. Phenomena of sound can evoke many research interests and questions, emerging discursively and from a pool of possible concerns (see also Chapter 4 and my discussion of Arlette Farge). Accordingly, the research questions I developed are not inherent to my object of study, but bound to my position and the trajectories I wish to follow. In a similar vein, Paul Ricœur (2004: 177) reminds us that what constitutes historical knowledge is exactly the reciprocity between trace, document, and question. It is important to acknowledge that Sterne regards reflexivity as a constitutive pillar of any approach to sound. His argument stands in stark contrast to the previous assertions in this chapter, where I drew on the paradigm of objectivity and the desire to disconnect knowledge production from a scientific self. Likewise, a demand for reflexivity and historicity seems to contradict the premises of early sound reproduction. At the turn of the twentieth century, the phonograph was seen as a surgical instrument that could dissect speech and music in their formal structures (Ames 2003: 314). It was assumed that sound could be fixed on a recording medium like a corpse on a dissecting table. For the imperative of (mechanical) objectivity, the historicity of knowledge associated with sound, sound technology, and auditory practices was not a driving
factor. However, just as practices of listening change, so do other modes of perception and conception of sound. It is in this vein that Novak and Sakakeeny (2015: 6) warn against the risk of generalising sound and ignoring historical and cultural particularities of sonic categories. Instead, they plead for destabilising and denaturalising sound as a static and distinct object. Finally, I hope Sterne’s reminder that ‘hearing requires positionality’ resonates through all of my chapters, both through the different modes of listening and the conceptual framing. Eidsheim even goes so far as to advocate a radical shift towards a focus on processes of hearing, away from the essentialised figure of sound. According to her, this shift allows for allocating certain qualities not to the object of sound but to the one who studies the object. As stressed in my introduction, I follow Eidsheim’s credo that listening is always already political for ways of listening reflect “the listener’s historical, cultural, social, political, moral, ethical, academic, or any other positionality” (2019: 58).

In *The Race of Sound* (2019), Eidsheim takes the project of denaturalising sound to a new level. One of her central arguments is to pay more attention to hearing and the politics of listening. Although Eidsheim looks at contemporary practices of racialised constructs of sound, she also points to the long history of scientific racism and to genealogies of practices of measuring race by sonic means. Arguing “that the body has been objectified and used as a measure of race and as evidence of innate racial difference,” she suggests that “voice is equally objectified, entrained, and used as a ‘measure’ of race (i.e., a feature that is believed to represent something specific but has the power to do so only through social consensus)” (17). Eidsheim’s recent work can be seen as a continuation of her earlier research interests in the relation between voice, performativity, and race. Conceptually, her work ties in with what Sterne (2003: 13) had already called for in *The Audible Past*: showing that sound is a variable and not a constant; understanding that sound is not a distinct object of research, but requires attention to its historical particularity and discursive embeddedness. Yet, as Kara Keeling made clear at a lecture in Berlin in 2018, Eidsheim’s assertions must be understood in more radical terms. For Keeling, Eidsheim’s earlier monograph, *Sensing Sound* (2015) was a radical intervention, not only for the discipline of musicology, but also for the broader field of sound studies. With the aim to re-envision how to think about sound and music, Eidsheim revisits practices of listening by means of a multi-sensory perspective—the practice of vibration. By approaching music (and sound) in terms of a vibrational practice, Eidsheim wants to consider all aural, tactile, spatial, physical, and material sensations. The practice of vibration takes into account the nonfixity of music, “and
recognizes that it always comes into being through an unfolding and dynamic material set of relations” (2015: 10). As the previous chapters suggest, I follow Eidsheim in her understanding of sound as a multi-layered phenomenon and as defined by the one who listens.

The interventionist work of Eidsheim illustrates that sound studies are neither a unified field of study, nor based on unified methodologies, concepts, and research questions. Nevertheless, over the past decades, there have been attempts to map genealogies of sound research, of common concepts, and terminologies. Today, one can consult an impressive body of literature that deals with the question of what sound studies are and what they do. There exists a wide range of basic research, anthologies, and emerging journals that bring together a whole array of theories and disciplines (e.g. Novak and Sakakeeny 2015; Papenburg and Schulze 2016; Pinch and Bijsterveld 2011; Radano and Olaniyan 2016; Smith 2004; Sterne 2012a). Sound scholarship found its niche in a variety of disciplines, ranging from history and musicology, anthropology and architecture, to media, literary and cultural studies. Despite intra-disciplinary discourses on sound, there is also the conviction that sound is “a problem that cuts across academic disciplines, methods and objects” (Sterne 2012b: 5). It is this traversing character of sound that makes sound studies a multi-faceted and a transdisciplinary project, where nurturing and contradictory forces exist side by side. However, one also has to acknowledge, as most of the anthologies and research networks admit, that “the field as a whole has remained deeply committed to Western intellectual lineages and histories” (Novak and Sakakeeny 2015: 7).

A common thread in the scholarly field of sound studies is to understand sound as an analytical problem, which means to assess sound in all its multivalence—ranging from music and vibration to voice, noise, and silence. With this understanding also comes the idea that “sound studies is an academic field in the humanities and social sciences defined by combination of object and approach” (Sterne 2012b: 4). In this book, especially with regard to the three case studies, the combination of object and approach becomes evident. My three case studies evolved around specific sound objects; in each case study, the approach was concerned with a different mode of and reflection upon listening and knowing sound. As Karin Bijsterveld (2019: 5) suggests, sonic skills and their analyses are not limited to practices of listening, but include practices of making, recording, storing, and retrieving sound. Thinking sonically allows us to address the big questions of cultural crises (Sterne 2012b: 3), characterised not least by the coloniality of power and knowledge. Subsequently, this book aimed to pose the
big question of how to work through colonial and postcolonial discourses by means of thinking with and through sound. In the course of this study, I have taken principles of sound studies as key vectors, arguing that approaches to the *Lautarchiv* must be transdisciplinary, multitemporal *and* multisensorial.

### Conclusion

By bringing together strands from the field of sound studies, and in particular from sound and media history, this chapter aimed to complement and complete the conceptual framing of this book. Concentrating on lineages of the salvage paradigm, moreover, it sought to recall and discuss aspects of the history of anthropology. For both contexts—the genealogy of the medium of the gramophone and the discipline of anthropology—, a reflection on ideologies of race and difference was of crucial significance. I demonstrated that constructs of race have to be understood as constitutive, and at the same time as the outcome, of early sound reproduction, preservation, and exploration. In reference to perspectives in cultural history and theory, I structured my analytical approach by focusing on the role of media practices and listening techniques. Within the investigation of sound phenomena, the attention on practices, those of hearing and listening in particular, allows us to shift our awareness first and foremost to the one who listens—but also to the one who makes, records, stores, and retrieves sound.

In reference to Poole’s *model of visual economy*, developed as part of her account of vision, race, and modernity of the Andean world, this chapter suggests that it may be worth thinking in terms of a *model of sonic economy*. A model of sonic economy attends to the production, circulation, and transformation of concepts and practices related to mediated sound and the auditory. It also allows for describing moments of transition of the material entity of sound in temporal, material, and spatial terms. Inscribed on wax plates, the recorded sound was transferred to copper masters and pressed to shellac discs. From archival backup copies on tapes and CDs, it was transferred into digital MP3 and WAV files. As Poole (1997: 9–13) argues, the material forms of photographs follow their respective social, economic, and political function. On the one hand, the initial collection of shellac records was supposed to form the core of an archive yet to be institutionally established. At the same time, the records
also served as a product that could be exchanged between archival institutions, circulated among researchers, and purchased by interested listeners. The backup copies, on the other hand, remain in the archive, while the digital files are constantly downloaded and shared, thereby crossing disciplinary and discursive boundaries, imaginary and actual borders (Hennig 2016: 362–363).

“They were made for a reason,” Edwards writes. Photographs are “objects created with a clear biographical intention: they are inextricably linked to the past, but they are also about the future – a moment, fixed and active in the present, specifically to communicate the past in the future” (2001: 14). For Edwards, the ‘desire’ to transfer a past present into the future is “fundamental to the act of photography” (14). In this chapter, I showed that the same can be said about the act of recording sound. However, even if objects are created with a ‘clear biographical intention,’ their social and discursive career does not necessarily continue to follow the path set out by their initial purpose of production. Rather, the social life of things is mobile and versatile (Appadurai 1986). Thinking in terms of social and cultural biographies of things, historical photographs as well as sound recordings appear as active and mobile objects that change depending on multiple and shifting modes of producing meaning.

It is not only objects that are mobile; concepts, technologies, and practices are too. At the very beginning of this chapter, and with reference to Chun and Joyrich, I showed how understanding race as a mobilising technology allows us to grasp the complexities of racial assemblages. Following the argument that sound technologies mobilise race formations and that, in turn, race constitutes sound recordings, I showed that objects of sound and practices of listening should be regarded as pertinent lenses for understanding figurations of modernity. This also ties in with the work of those who point out that constructions of race and conceptions of European modernity are inextricably linked (e.g. Bruns, Hampf, and Kämpf 2018; Conrad and Randeria 2013 [2002]). Furthermore, with a focus on the sonic, it is possible to oppose the powerful trope of the hegemony of vision. It becomes possible to counter the common critique that conceptions of modernity privilege the visual over the acoustic—a prominent concern of scholars subscribing to the field of sound studies (Morat and Ziemer 2018: IX).

Looking back on my depictions of the archival in Chapter 4, I wished to recall the peculiarities of the notions of both the discursive archive and the sound archive. Thinking critically in archival terms may include possible prospects for the sound archive’s future, and may even serve the attempt at decolonising the Lautarchiv. In an interview dealing with the big question-mark
hovering over the future of the archive, Petra Löffler advocates the concept of thinking in terms of an archive of relations (Kuster, Lange, and Löffler 2019: 106). Together with Brigitta Kuster and Britta Lange, Löffler discusses topics ranging from the politics of collecting and the colonial archive to possibilities of decolonising knowledge. Löffler understands the archive of relations as not defined by the institution, by materiality, or by ownership. Rather, the media scholar argues, one should shift the attention to practices of the archive. How does one archive and de-archive, Löffler asks. For me, this assertion is another move away from a rather normative figure—the figure of the archive—and towards an understanding of dynamic practices of exchange, circulation, and assemblage. In her thoughts on the practices and politics of the archive, Lange holds the opinion that one must reflect on epistemology and on questions of knowledge production in terms of both the past and the present. In other words, decolonising the archive becomes possible only through decolonising knowledge and knowledge making (see also Chapter 6).

With respect to archival practices, Löffler also wonders whether the search for what was not archived, what did not fit the colonial logic of the archive, can be understood as a subversive practice of the non-archived. In relation to the colonial sound archive, the non-archived has two facets. First, it refers to the archival order, which abided by specific ideas regarding who, and for what purpose, should or should not go on record. Secondly, it relates to the ones who refused to give their voice, to the ones who did not conform to the archival order. The manifest absence of female voices among the sound recordings, for instance, was not opposed to the archival logic, as discussed in detail in Chapter 5. When engaging with the acoustic traces that have been archived, when reflecting on different modes of listening of the past and the present, one also needs to consider silences and non-sounds, which account for the untold testimonies that have neither been inscribed on wax nor archived, but can only be imagined. However, as discussed previously, listening to silence and considering archival gaps comes with two risks: one risk is the desire to fill those gaps in the sense of repair and closure. A second is the peril of (re)constituting gaps and silences by the act of re-codifying and updating them. Considering Eidsheim’s account that the “definition of sound is dependent on who is listening” (2015: 151), the question, then, is how does one define silence. Following the perception of sound not as a fixed figure but a “composite of visual, textural, discursive, and other kinds of information” (Eidsheim 2012: 9), I argue, allows for the possibility and, in fact, the necessity to speak about silence and absence as determined by a multiplicity of information.