

Call for Papers
Historical Reception
***Montage AV* 30/2/2021**

Working from the premise that films and other media texts do not simply contain meanings, but rather that meaning is created in active reception processes, one is confronted with a number of problems in regard to historical media: How is it possible to discern what a film meant to an audience in 1900, 1930, or 1970? Or, more precisely, what did it mean for individual spectators or for audience groups? If current reception can (at least to some extent) be grasped using empirical or ethnographic methods, that is not possible for the past.

So the question is then, how can one reconstruct historical reception? Various approaches have tried to answer these questions, including semiotics, reception aesthetics, Cultural Studies, psychoanalytic or Marxist-based film theories, apparatus theory, feminist theory, queer studies, fan studies, New Cinema History, post-colonial theory, or approaches to identity politics, but none has provided a fully satisfactory approach.

The media studies journal *Montage AV* would like to encourage a debate on this issue, which is still open and important. On the one hand, this could mean re-examining or re-contextualizing existing methods, for example by looking at questions of historical reception in other disciplines such as theater or art studies or in connection with various media (film, TV, internet, exhibitions, or installations) and critically examining methodology. Of interest is also how digitalization makes it possible to pose these questions in new ways. Not only historical research profits from the availability of digitalized primary sources, (discourse) theoretical approaches can also build on a much broader empirical basis.

Such considerations could focus on historical pragmatics, which understands the reception of texts as dependent on contexts and enables approaches to the complex interconnections of meanings and forms of reception beyond any simple concepts of effects (such as in propaganda) or purely hermeneutic interpretation. Empirical and theoretical approaches have often been seen as incompatible (or have simply ignored one another), but we believe that they need to engage in a productive dialogue. If empirical studies can, for example, determine which film were popular, who made up the audience, etc., while pragmatics and theories of cultural discourses can make hypotheses about what the films meant for their spectators. With the help of historical research and pragmatics it could be possible to view media reception history in connection social history.

Questions that are relevant to the reconstruction of historical reception include:

- How is a text constructed in order to be understood in a certain way? What ‘preferred reading’ or what ‘contract’ does it suggest?
- Which para-texts influence reception, provide prior knowledge, or suggest ways of reading? What roles do advertising and marketing play in movie-goers’ choices and in the constitution of the audience?
- What institutions and discourses shape the understanding of texts (e.g. school and education, secondary and tertiary texts, fan clubs or Cinéclubs, kinds of theaters and exhibition such as arthouse, campus films, or midnight movies)?
- What forms of transmediality and intermediality are involved?
- How are films embedded in discursive systems such as fashion, music, advertising and consumption, lifestyles, entertainment/art, generations, subcultures, gender, race, or class, and how can such networks be reconstructed?

- What forms of lived reception practices and specialized knowledge are involved, particularly in group reception by subcultures, lifestyle communities, cult movie audiences, etc.?
- How can theoretical reconstructions of reception be correlated with empirical data and models? Which historical sources (diaries, reviews, statistics) are available and productive?
- How does the experience of reception change in connection with shifts in media dispositifs? For example, what forms of the use of social media have already become historical? How has reality TV changed forms of perception and attitudes?

Montage AV is looking for articles that engage with these and related questions, that open them to debate and approach them from theoretical, historical, and methodical perspectives. Both overviews and specialized topics are of interest; concrete case studies particularly when they are contextualized within theoretical or methodological frameworks. As well as articles, shorter texts, commentaries, or debates are welcome (no reviews). Articles should not be longer than 5500 words (35,000 characters). Please send submissions to montage@snafu.de by 2021-04-30. If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact Stephen Lowry (sl-mav@online.de).