

The New Film History

THOMAS ELSAESSER

For anyone following specialised film magazines like *Cinema Journal*, *Wide Angle*, *Film Reader*, *Iris*, *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* or *Screen*, it hardly comes as a surprise that after the wave of film theory, one of the busiest areas of publishing recently has been in film history. Two types of pressure have produced the *New Film History*: a political dissatisfaction with the surveys and overviews, the tales of pioneers and adventurers that for too long passed as film histories; and sober arguments among professionals now that, thanks to preservation and restoration projects by the world's archives, much more material has become available, for instance on the early silent period. The cinema is undergoing its biggest changes for many decades. A new interest in its beginnings is justified by the very fact that we might be witnessing the end: movies on the big screen could soon be the exception rather than the rule. Already, public exhibition is just one phase in the life of the multi-media product known as film.

'What is film history?' ask the authors of *Film History Theory and Practice*, and the answer that emerges in the very first pages is that it is a subject needing to be taught: 'It is quite probable that cinema studies was the fastest growing academic discipline in American universities between 1965 and 1975. In 1967

some 200 colleges offered courses in film. Ten years later the number had passed 1,000... This boom in film study gave rise to a huge demand for film scholar-

FILM HISTORY

THEORY AND PRACTICE

by Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery
(Knopf/\$19.95, 1985)

FILM STYLE AND TECHNOLOGY:

HISTORY AND ANALYSIS

by Barry Sait
(Starword/£16, 1983)

CINEMA AND TECHNOLOGY:

IMAGE, SOUND, COLOUR

by Steve Neale
(BFI/Macmillan/£6.95, paper, 1985)

FILM SOUND

THEORY AND PRACTICE

edited by Elisabeth Weis and John Belton
(Columbia University Press
\$14.50, 1985)

ship... Because of the spectacular growth of film as an academic discipline, the demand for film history books has far outrun the pace of original research...

An academic discipline starts life in a militant, secessionist mood. Film History has been carved out of Film Studies, itself the result of a war of

independence against English Literature, Mass Communication Studies, American Studies, Modern Language Departments. But just as a country only exists when its boundaries have been drawn and its landmarks established, so does the discipline. With Douglas Gomery and Robert C. Allen's book, *Film History* now has its own, Ordnance survey map: a textbook guide to the textbooks which gives reliable information about the known sights, points out where the terrain gets murky and indicates where the map is still white. *Film History Theory and Practice* takes the reader firmly by the hand ('rest assured that the path will lead back to the movies'); there are plenty of wayside stops for stragglers to catch up, and enough do-it-yourself projects and exercises to justify the practice part of the title for anyone put off by theory.

The authors, however, are no popularisers. Each is a highly skilled, trail-blazingly original historian in his own field (Allen for the interaction of the cinema with other entertainment media, especially vaudeville; Gomery made his reputation as an economic historian, changing our views about the coming of sound but also revitalising local film history with studies about Milwaukee and Chicago). Pooling their considerable experience as teachers and researchers, they have written what on another level

is a very ambitious study in film historiography or meta-film history. For what hides modestly and deceptively inside this how-to and how-not-to guide is nothing less than a critique and challenge to an activity which dates back as far as Terry Ramsaye's *A Million and One Nights*.

The basic problems about 'doing' film history are the same as with any other form of history: what is the object of study, what counts as evidence and, finally, what is being explained. One's first surprise, therefore, with *Film History* is that the films themselves are not the object of study. The chapter devoted to film evidence talks about the fragility of film and the difficulties of preservation, the staggering number of films lost and how poor are many of the prints that have survived. But it says next to nothing about what in films themselves might be of historical interest: It is true that for one narrow form of film historical inquiry prints of films are the only valid data. However, for broader (and more interesting) questions, we think, non-filmic materials prove invaluable. For certain investigations film viewing is really an inappropriate research method.

This last sentence has, like so much in the book, the virtue of clarity. To be fair, the authors want to argue against the laziness and diffidence of scholars who, because of preservation problems, see the scope of "answerable" film historical questions to be extremely limited. But if one goes to the chapters devoted to Aesthetic and Social Film History, where one might expect to find something about the, after all, quite considerable number of films we do possess, the case studies (one on Murnau's *Sunrise*, the other on Joan Crawford's role as a star) concentrate mainly on the many different discourses that marketing or publicity create so that a film, a director or an actor may function as a recognition sign for the consumer.

Generality in this area is no accident: it might be taken as one of the defining characteristics of the New Film History,

which has resolutely turned its back on interpretation and on the question of what beliefs or ideas films shape and transmit. This is in marked contrast to the celebration of the director's personal vision during the 1960s, the decade of auteurism. It even makes a change from the interest in social or collective value systems that preoccupied the 1970s, with its insistence on stereotypes and ideology.

But here the books under review also differ crucially in attitude and tone. Although they finally but firmly reject his use of ideology as an explanatory model, Allen and Gomery give ample and sympathetic space to Jean-Louis Comolli, an important French source for rethinking film history. Barry Salt, on the other hand, takes time off in his opening chapters for a sustained attack on what he calls French Film Theory into English. His own position, 'Scientific Realism' (parallel to the relation that exists between science, technology and the real world. The rest is just words'), is very much concerned with films, their analysis, classification and evaluation. Steve Neale's approach to film technology, and many of his quotations about its wider significance, come from 'French Film Theory into English'. Weis and Belton's collection on Film Sound, and contributions from Gomery, Salt, David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Noel Burch, Christian Metz, Arthur Knight, among others, represents a range of views from Old and New History, American Theory and French Theory.

It would therefore be too simple to say that the study of film, as it became institutionalised in the 1970s, progressively shed its radical origins in favour of more limited but factually more secure investigations. Academic legitimisation has made the subject aspire towards scientific or empirical standards of exactitude and knowledge, while an equally strong desire to distinguish between interpretation as artistic appreciation (still practised in literature classes) and textual analysis proper has

led scholars to look to formalist methods and linguistic models. Old film history, conceived as a history of films following each other in orderly progression or of film-makers passing on the torch of innovation, found itself opposed by a new theory of history, but also by a new theory of films. Their tactical alliance brought about New Film History, which should really be called New History of the Cinema.

More than a history
of films...

Allen and Gomery's plea to look not merely at films has to be seen less in the light of the discovery of new facts than of the relevance of evidence disregarded by traditional film histories: business papers, court records, city ordinances and the regulations, urban transport policy and demographic data of all kinds.

The cinema is a complex historical, sociological, legal and economic phenomenon: films are merely one manifestation of the working of the system as a whole, and it is the system which fascinates them. They have a voracious appetite for the minutiae of company files, a nose for such seemingly trivial aspects of the movie experience as popcorn franchises and air-conditioning. Who would have thought that the problems of Chicago meatpackers might have influenced the development of the cinema's picture palaces? Attention to detail, informed by a grasp of wider implications, made Allen and Gomery's work truly illuminating when it began appearing around 1976. They dispelled widely held misconceptions about specific issues (Allen's veritable campaign against the so-called 'classier' theory of early films in vaudeville theatres; Gomery's contention that Warner Brothers didn't just gamble on sound because the company was faced with bankruptcy). They proved—to the greatest possible satisfaction of anyone

Stills from Barry Salt's book, which relates technology to style.

Below: the first shot of G. A. Smith's *As Seen Through a Telescope* (1901): a man watches another man helping a woman on to a bicycle.



The second shot of the film: a point of view shot simulating the view through the telescope with a circular black vignette mask.



ever moved by Hegelian notions of totality and synthesis—that in the cinema everything connects. Film is an open system... The artistic effects that can be achieved in the cinema at any given time are in part dependent on the state of film technology. Technological developments are conditioned in many instances by economic factors. Economic decision-making occurs within a social context, and so forth. Furthermore, historically, film can never be separated from other systems: the popular entertainment industry, other means of mass communication, national economies, or other art forms.

To do film history today, one has to become an economic historian, a legal expert, a sociologist, an architectural historian, know about censorship and fiscal policy, read trade papers and fan magazines, even study Lloyd's Lists of ships sunk during World War One to calculate how much of the film footage exported to Europe actually reached its destination. The takeover of the old studios by multinational conglomerates in the 1960s and 70s meant that huge stocks of company files were dumped or donated to university libraries. One can now begin to write film history from both ends: from the top (David O. Selznick's memos, an MGM script conference, the entire United Artists company records), but also from the bottom upwards (the Balaban and Katz theatre chain, real estate values and the sifting of local cinemas, the drive-in economy). Film scholars are beginning to apply to the audio-visual culture of our century the sort of micro-history ^{historical} that the 'Annalist School' in France developed for medieval popular culture. Some of this spirit of discovery still breathes through the pages of *Film History*, but the textbook format and the need to cover all aspects tend to neutralise in the presentation what the argument is at pains to stress, 'that the force or causal power of generative mechanisms is ^{historical} in any particular historical event.' Which I take to mean that in history one can rarely quantify by any statistically reliable method, but has to remain as specific as possible and always attend to the actual dynamics of local phenomena. The authors' reasonable but non-committal pluralism is finally less satisfying than their own earlier investigations, which felt no need to conform to any abstract model. There are more than enough researchable topics in film history to keep scholars busy for the foreseeable future; they persuasively suggest. But a possible sense of unease comes from the fact that they only intermittently reflect on why they study film at all, rather than turning their formidable powers of analysis to the motor industry or the tobacco trade. Film history's danger as a discipline is that it becomes a kind of intellectual challenge, whose pleasure ^{of the} lies in the ever greater complexity of the ^{best} method compared with the relative simplicity of the data.

Does film history need a theory, or is it ultimately a descriptive rather than an

analytical exercise, rearranging certain data in terms of their functioning and developing material for an interminable graduate research project? Allen and Gomery are weakest when they try to spell out the totality; strongest where they merely suggest it by attending to the specific.

**Can technology explain style?
explain style?**

Can technology explain style? This is the question Garry Salt tries to answer. In the forthright manner of the first five chapters of *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, he might have voiced some of these objections to the New Film History's apparent indifference to 'actual films'. On the other hand, Salt would be the first to agree that, given the conflicting interpretations habitually produced by film critics, 'the response of anyone with any scientific inclination or training is to use some extra system of real knowledge to determine relative pertinence and validity of these different interpretations.' Which is itself a fair description of how Allen and Gomery would tackle the problem.

Salt's life work has been to build up the elements for a comparative history of film styles. For instance, directorial style analysis, he argues, has rarely gone beyond saying that Howard Hawks keeps his camera at eye level. Salt offers a 'commonsense' or functional explanation: it allows for faster work, because it requires fewer changes to the lighting set-up. But Henry Hathaway, too, keeps the camera at eye level. 'The real stylistic distinction' is that 'Hawks keeps his Average Shot Length a little longer than normal, whereas Hathaway uses faster cutting.'

Salt's main qualification as a historian is a truly encyclopedic knowledge of films. He has, by his own claims, logged in detail not hundreds, but thousands, of

features. He has an exhaustive list of what camera, what lighting equipment or film stock was used for the first time where, in what film and by whom. He has made it his business to ascertain when film-makers first used 'correct' entrances and exits, 'correct' eyeline matches, when they got their scene-dissolution right. Salt constructs the history of the cinema backwards, from the point of perfection of what he calls 'continuity cinema', but he is very much aware that the first application of a technique does not necessarily establish its general use. He might well be reluctant to admit it, but his own examples show that a strictly evolutionary history cannot be written without also accounting for the gaps and discontinuities, and that therefore the cinema involves cultural codes of intelligibility and meaning as well as scientifically established norms.

For each period, Salt isolates what seem to him the most telling criteria by which the norm can be tested and deviation assessed. So, for 1900-06 it is the relation of close-up to general shot, the function of inserts, different ways of handling shot transitions and first examples of analytical editing. For the early 1910s he concentrates on composition and staging in depth. His research on set design, on the use of studio interiors and exteriors, on matte work and trick photography is equally impressive, because he covers both the United States and Europe. His engrossing knowledge of equipment means that his 'stylistic' attention focuses mainly on the technical aspects, but anyone wanting to know how many painted sets there were in the German cinema before *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* can be sure that Salt has found and listed them. The interest of this and other examples is that there were few real 'firsts' in the cinema: most so-called inventions of ^{revised} technique resulted from a series of ^{practical} diverse and more or less successful ^{possible} applications, often in films no longer ^{remembered}. If crediting certain films

In the beginning: *La Sortie des Usines Lumiere à Lyons* (1895).



and film-makers (such as Griffith) with 'firsts' is a typical sign of the old film history, Salt is very much a representative of the new school: not-biased samples, criteria of relevance that are verifiable, quantifiable and constant throughout.

Where Salt is in a class of his own is in his patented invention, statistical style analysis, the centrepiece of which is the ASL (Average Shot Length), a unit of cutting rate that Salt has tabulated in hundreds of films to pin down a director's personality ('Where does Sternberg's heart beat? In the centre of the frame. How does it beat? Slowly. Is this just rhetorical hyperbole? No, I will explain'), or to measure the difference between American and German films (Germans use longer takes) or to plot changes from one decade to the next (the ASL, bar-charted at around nine seconds for the period 1946-51). Other pertinent statistics for Salt's purposes are shot scale, reverse angle (not to be confused with point-of-view shots) and, finally, camera movements.

In search of variables that might characterise films, Salt thus takes up, rather surprisingly, much the same stylistic features that Andrew Sarris, auteurism's American high priest, had first seized on. They in turn are not so dissimilar from the criteria that Salt's *bête noire*, Raymond Bellour, used in his analysis of a sequence from Hitchcock's *The Birds*. The difference is all in the application. Where Sarris or Victor Perkins would interpret editing style or camera movements expressively in relation to theme, and Bellour described the functioning of a film by organising its stylistic figures in pairs (static shot/moving shot, close shot/medium shot, seeing/seen) in order to define the building blocks of an internally coherent system, Salt's method is objective to the point of madness: although he gives us all the data, only he holds the keys to its ultimate significance. There are hints that eventually (when more work has

been done) one will be able to correlate, say, the percentage of camera movements with the ASL figure in a director's work, to arrive at a grid of mean average norms for a country or period or genre. For the moment, however, the play of similarity and difference that Salt pursues with such dedication reads like a structuralist's nightmare.

Salt's work may be seen as a technological history of the cinema: it is difficult to verify, since he is so sparing with his sources. The ambition, though, clearly goes beyond providing a mere handbook of cameras, lenses, moviola and sound equipment, with examples of stylistic effects resulting from their use. Because *Film Style and Technology* is wholly production-oriented (director, cameraman, art director, sound engineer are the agents of change through intention, originally and influence), there is, however, a danger of mistaking technology for technique, as though a film-maker were simply handed the tools, to select the ones most useful for the job, or as if technology, constantly evolving towards some ultimate goal, merely had to be plucked like ripe fruit from the tree of knowledge. And although Salt does not tell the old adventure story of wizards, inventors and geniuses, he seems quite uninterested in how far the stylistic norms he describes are dependent on the industry's ability to standardise the required technology or to regulate its use. Nor does he tell us what pressures brought about the technology in the first place.

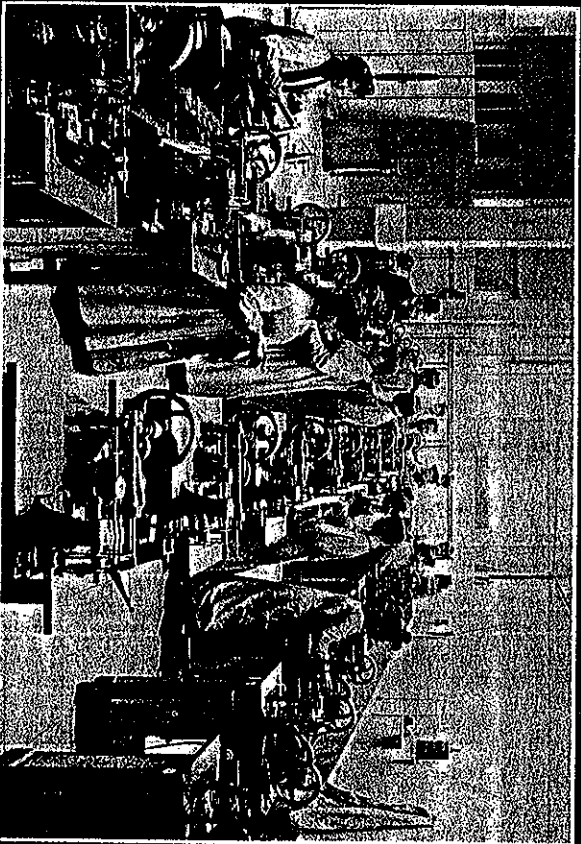
The New History has an easy time proving that inventions are rarely a matter of individuals, and that commercial application and exploitation is a complex process. For Allen and Gomery, there is some truth in the assertion that the state of technology at any given moment imposes certain limits on film production. But would a historian not have to ask: limits in respect to what? Total self-expression? Total realism? Total illusionism? Further, what factors

or forces hinder technology in its relentless forward thrust? Missing from the idea of the cinema as technology-intensive, as exemplified by Salt, is above all a sense of the economic conditions through which technology develops in a capitalist society. It has been clear for some time, for instance, that Edison, who inspired so much of the mythology of the inventor genius, contributed little to developing the cinema but much to controlling the patents necessary for its exploitation. As the leading figure behind the Motion Picture Trust, he could be said to be the father not of cinema, but of the monopolistic practices typical of the film industry. Technology in application is bounded on the one side by economic considerations (how costly is it to introduce and how profitable to apply?) and on the other by questions of what resistance it encounters and from whom.

Can economics explain technology?

Gomery's articles, two of which are reprinted in *Film Sound*, developed his general argument out of specific researches into the history of the coming of sound. Within the overall logic of capitalism, the balance between the different variables involved in technological innovation is struck by a single objective, the 'long term maximisation of profits.' Gomery is able to show that because sound films were an immediate success, all other problems—improvement to the equipment, cost of installation, training personnel, refurbishing production facilities and exhibition outlets—were overcome in record time. Yet although the hero of his narrative is neither Edison or De Forest, nor even the brothers Warner, there is a central character: Waddill Catchings, Warner Brothers' business manager and financial adviser. Are we back to a great man theory?

If we take maximisation of profits as the underlying dynamic of technological change, we have not explained very much. Edward Buscombe once argued that there were many different ways for a capitalist enterprise to make money, and therefore innovations like sound and colour could not be derived simply from the profit (or supply and demand) motive. Given the monopolistic organisation of the film industry, certain competitive strategies, like price cuts or increasing market share, are usually not available to the producer. The only competitive advantage is enjoyed by those who create a new kind of product. Sound film in this perspective was precisely that: a new kind of product. The implication is that the pursuit of profit always requires a weighing of different factors to attain the same goal, and Gomery's emphasis on business management in his account of Warner Brothers means that, however plural his model purports to be, it is framed within the



A little later: women workers in the Pathécolor print room.

terms of perhaps too narrow an economic determinism.

If the economist's approach of Allen and Gomery gives no active role to social forces or to the films themselves, and if the stylistics of Salt leave no room for economic determinants, could any form of history explain why change took one direction rather than another, or why audiences were attracted to the cinema at all, to make it such a powerful entertainment medium?

A certain line of inquiry, usually associated with Jean-Louis Comolli, proceeded from the assumption that we owe the existence of the cinema to two mutually reinforcing social demands: 'to see life as it is' combining with the desire to make this a source of profit. An ideological priority joins an economic one, and it is the interplay between the two that regulates both the technological and the stylistic developments. Yet during the relatively short history of the cinema, what strikes the observer is also the slowness of change.

For instance, it is now accepted that as a universally intelligible system of visual representation, mainstream cinema has not changed since roughly 1917. The addition of sound and colour had little effect on the 'basic cinematic apparatus'. Rick Altman and Mary Anne Doane make the point forcefully in *Film Sound*, showing how inaudible sound editing paralleled invisible image editing. In an article on 'Colour and Cinema', Edward Branigan had similarly argued that colour related to deep focus, which in turn depended on coated lens technology. Resistance to change is therefore just as important and just as much in need of explanation. Historians such as Allen and Gomery conclude from this that the cinema, instead of responding to some ideological demand such as the perfection of realism, actually functions according to the checks and balances of self-regulation, whether on the economic level or as a story-telling medium. Such notions as the maintenance of stability between different elements are themselves historically determined.

Can the audience explain the cinema?

These potentially 'structuralist' tendencies among the New Historicists are echoed in the pessimism of another French theorist, Jean-Louis Baudry, whose influence (along with that of Christian Metz and Comolli) gives *Cinema and Technology: Image, Sound, Colour* what might be called an anthropological slant. Starting essentially from the space film viewing creates for the spectator—placed between screen and projector light source and image, seeing but not being seen—Baudry conceives of the cinema first and foremost as a certain type of experience, in one sense as old as Plato's parable of the cave, in another typically modern, because representing an unmediated collision

between technology and non-productive, regressive fantasy. The cinema's history, its implicit goal, is determined not by a striving after realism, not by narrative (which is simply its motivating support), nor even illusionism and the magic of effects without cause, but the always already realised duplication of life, a mirroring of the self, and with it an anticipation of the self's own disappearance.

To provide a kind of anthropology of the cinema's involvement with 'vision, life, reality, movement—and death' seems to have been one of the less overt objectives of *Cinema and Technology*. Steve Neale has divided his subject into three chapters—*Image, Sound, Colour*—and in each he discusses a complex of questions, ranging from a rehearsal of names and dates to metaphysical speculation. 'Over and above the technology, on the one hand, and the films themselves, on the other, what was important, with the move towards cinema projection and the elaboration of the relation between spectator, projector and screen, was the experience of cinema, and the institutionalisation of that experience across society.'

Much of what Neale has to say is, in the best as well as the worst sense, technical: clear as writing, but uncertain whom it addresses. One sometimes wonders why the novice should be required to know in so much detail what for the specialist is presented in quite an elementary manner. Like Allen and Gomery, Neale wants to impress upon his readers the materiality and heterogeneous elements that make up the cinematic apparatus. Like Salt, he is fascinated by the intricacy of the machines themselves. But among the collage of illustrations and quotations, the upbeat technological story and the downbeat philosophical reflections perform a rather delicate balancing act. The thesis I take to be this: that the developments of the cinema towards illusionist substitution and duplication necessarily involve an ever greater predominance of the technological aspect over the craft and bricoleur spirit of the cinema's

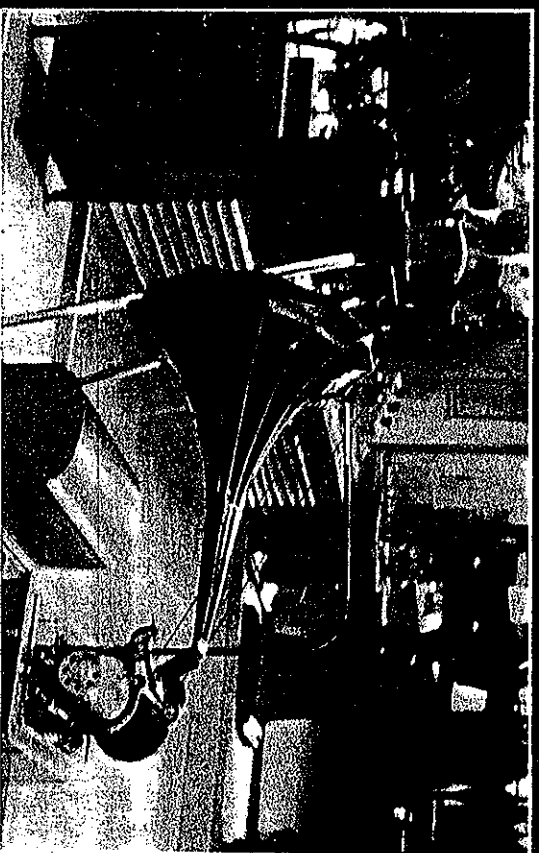
origins, which in turn demands an ever more complex organisation of the industrial base.

The sound that exists in the mind.

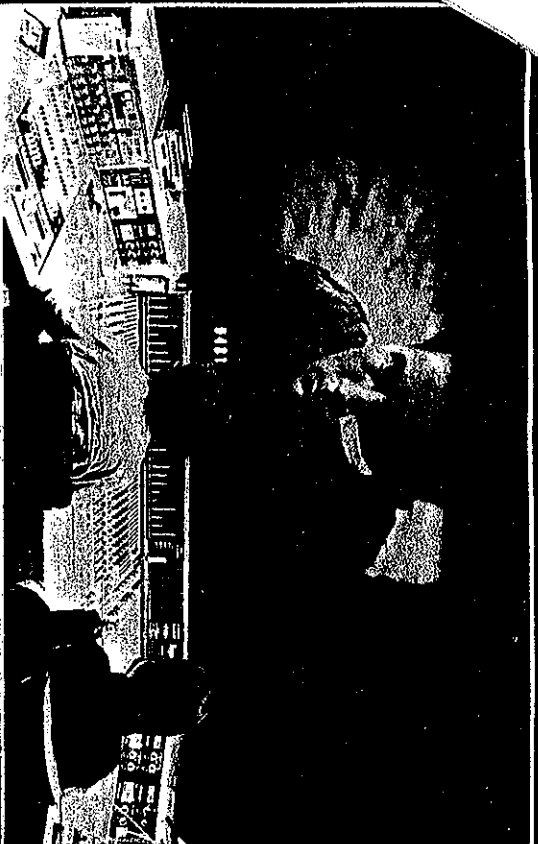
Nothing could be further from the minds of the editors of *Film Sound Theory and Practice* than global pessimism. This anthology convincingly suggests that an exciting new field has been opened up, one that may well come to determine the way we look at the cinema as a whole—and this for precise historical reasons. Sound for a long time has been the neglected field of film studies, for reasons Rick Altman explains in his 'Evolution of Sound Technology'. Because writers treated first the image and then sound, they committed the 'historical fallacy'. Instead of treating sound and image as simultaneous and co-existent, the historical fallacy orders them chronologically, thus implicitly hierarchising them.

Altman's essay deserves special mention, as a bold and original recasting of many traditional questions. He makes it clear that the turn to sound also comes from a problem in film theory, namely the unsatisfactory explanations of what it is that makes the cinema attractive to the viewer in the first place. Without a theory of pleasure—and the possibility that this may have changed its nature over time—it is difficult to see how one could write a history of the cinema. The traditional explanation has always been the public's craving for realism; but on closer inspection, as we saw, this is at variance with the facts. Sound films were popular not because they were particularly realistic, but because one could see and hear at the same time. The attraction lay in the additional source of sense perception—as it did with colour which at first was felt to be highly unrealistic.

The notion that colour was more suitable for fantasy subjects persisted



Edison's first sound apparatus.



Laying the soundtrack for *Apocalypse Now*. Stills from *Cinema and Technology*.

well into the 1940s; it was only the advent of colour television that eventually 'naturalised' its use in the cinema. With television having the edge on realism, the movies have returned, especially since the reorganisation of the industry in the 1970s, to the controlled environment of the studios and the sound stages. Rather than effacing itself, technology in the form of special effects has become the cinema's major attraction.

History, in this respect, has come full circle: the cinema first wooed patrons with the novelty of its technological marvels, before stars and story-telling became its chief selling points. The position taken by historians such as David Bordwell is that technology or technique cannot be isolated from other processes, chief among them being the development of narrative. Barry Salt would not quarrel with this, since for him the 'job' of movies is 'putting across the story'. Yet even if one replaces the idea of realism-as-pleasure with that of narrative-as-pleasure, the question does not quite resolve itself. Few historians fully address the question of why narrative became the driving force of cinema, and whether this may itself be subject to change. Today, the success of science fiction as a genre, or of directors like Steven Spielberg whose narratives are simply anthology pieces from basic movie plots, suggests that narrative has to some extent become an excuse for the pyrotechnics of Industrial Light and Magic.

The material gathered in *Film Sound* affords a good opportunity to compare the state-of-theory on sound (represented by Altman, Mary Anne Doane, Alan Williams) not only with its economic history but with current practice and the attitudes of sound engineers to their craft. What is most instructive is to see how, under a certain angle, the theoretical and practical discourses mirror each other.

Altman and Doane (and, from a related perspective, the contributions of Noël Burch, Noël Carroll and Alan Williams) underline the discontinuity between

sound and image, their wholly constructed nature, and the tendencies of classical sound practice to efface that sound/image separation. The difference between a 'structural' (Burch's term), 'contrapuntal' (Lucy Fischer's analysis of Vertov), 'silent' use of sound (Carroll's description for Fritz Lang's *M*) and the 'illusionist' practice typical of commercial feature films, has often served to distinguish European film-makers (Clair, Renoir) from Hollywood, and politically avant-garde directors (Straub, Godard) from 'bourgeois ideology'.

Hollywood practice depends on strict synchronisation. The spectator's pleasure in classical narrative film demands not only being 'centred' by the image and the story, but that the aural space should have 'presence'. Technology, however, creates a 'fantasmatic body, which offers a support as well as a point of identification for the subject addressed by the film' (Doane). Precisely because sound is fundamentally disembodied and illusionist, in the sense that its source is only by convention recognised as located in the image, anti-illusionist directors tend to foreground the integrity of their soundtrack. Jean-Marie Straub's total rejection of dubbing implies that aural space dominates visual space. Jean-Luc Godard, by contrast, recognises no hierarchies: he multiplies sound sources within a single image; he makes the spectator both viewer *and* listener, and no attempt is made to unify the two.

Yet as Altman (Rick, discussing Robert) points out, sound practice is a challenge to film theorists, because contemporary film-making at the industrial level is moving rather in the direction of giving sound precedence over the image. Avant-garde positions, such as that of Noël Burch, are being outflanked by commercial directors who take their cue from the technology' and techniques of the record business. Developments in recording are concerned with what Altman calls 'the splitting of the subject'—that is to say, giving the ear the thrills of divided pleasure, of sound densities and sound perspectives which, if translated into images, would not only be

extremely avant-garde to the eye but positively threatening to that sense of coherence which is assumed to govern Hollywood ideology. One of the contributors to *Film Sound* speaks of a 'Second Sound Revolution' and quotes Michael Chino, for whom Dolby sound 'can demolish the wall separating the viewer from the film. You can come close to demolishing the screen.' The goal, however, seems to be the creation of a sound space that is entirely in the listener's head. Walter Murch, 'sound designer on *Apocalypse Now*: 'You try to get the audience to a point, somehow, where they can imagine the sound. They hear the sound in their minds, and it really isn't on the track at all. That's the ideal sound, the one that exists totally in the mind.'

If special effects work, where the image is composed and layered in analogy to the soundtrack of an *LV*, is to become the model of film-making, this can only intensify the 'imaginary' status of the cinema and its form of representation. And if sound as a system of subject effects is to determine the logic of the image, then one can expect to see changes in the relation of cinema to narrative as well, and some of the objections that have inspired the New Film History may have to be revised. Economic and technological histories have shifted the emphasis from text to context. But a study of sound in relation to image would mean a return to the film text and the imaginary space in which it places the spectator. For film theory has long recognised that one of the major sources of audience pleasure is the splitting of the subject in representation. This becomes more evident once film texts are no longer unified by narrative but by the effects technology can produce, and by the divisions and multiplications it imposes on sound and image.

It is at this point that what I have described as the history of the cinema might reconcile itself with the concerns of film theory. And the new history stands back to back with television, of which it is beginning to look like the pre-history: the predominance of economic factors, or the direct impact of technology and institutional constraints on narrative, are even more significant for television than for cinema. And at the same time television, in spite of appearing to be all about the 'outside', the real world, is, like sound, happening 'inside'.

The individual 'tv slot or programme becomes almost impossible to analyse in isolation, except as a system of cues and stimuli for the distracted viewer/listener.

What in this respect is missing from Allen and Gomery, from Salt and Neale, is a more direct awareness of the historical changes underlying their own perspective: none of these books, except *Film Sound*, pays attention to the new technologies as they affect not only the cinema but how we come to view its history. The New History, depending on the one hand on archivists and restorers and on the other on video and television, may well be the phoenix that rises from the ashes of the cinema we once knew. ■