

Overall, the Howell book is well-balanced ideologically, pointing out the major problems of each major type of communication system within the context of that system. When comparative judgments are made, these are fair and follow logically from the evidence presented. All types of media systems are compared on similar criteria, and a major strength of the book is found in its world wide comparative scope. Tables are numerous and helpful in summarizing material. The main weakness is a lack of detail and background of communications systems outside the western world.

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Current Research in Film:
Audiences, Economics and Law
Bruce A. Austin (ed.)
Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1985
Norwood, New Jersey

Since the late 1970s, Film Studies as a discipline within North America has come to display many of the signs of paradigmatic coherence. Polemics within the field are increasingly rooted in shared sets of terms and premises, and the theoretical developments produced over the last decade in influential journals such as Screen have trickled down to undergraduate text-books, and laterally into such hitherto isolated enterprises as the writing of corporate histories. For a discipline which suffered for decades from an eclecticism and discontinuity with few parallels elsewhere, this new coherence has brought a sense of community to the field, and an elusive academic respectability. At the same time, a heightened awareness of the political stakes within theoretical debates has meant that a high level of vigilance exists concerning the acceptability of certain concerns and procedures within academic writing on film.

Part of the novelty of Current Research in Film: Audiences, Economics and Law resides in the fact that, almost without exception, its various contributors speak from positions far removed from those of "Film Theory" (as the complex of feminist, psychoanalytic, semiotic and other discourses within the discipline has come to be termed). Even more strikingly, perhaps, this collection does not participate in recent attempts to snipe away at "Film Theory" from its margins, in the name of a greater rigour or science. There are few signs of a hidden polemical agenda underlying Current Research in Film, beyond the editor's announcement that the series is interested in "providing an outlet for researchers which does not mandate that authors twist their writing to fit the biases and traditions of film and communications journals" (ix). The articles published here should be seen as fitting comfortably within existing traditions of social-scientific research into the mass media, rather than as calculated interventions within the configuration of discourses currently dominating the study of the cinema itself.

The methodological currents represented here include market analysis, consumer behavior research, economic-institutional history, and media effects studies. The bringing together of articles manifesting such a variety of concerns and approaches is likely to be far more unsettling to those readers within Film Studies itself than to those within Communications Studies or Sociology who are accustomed to the side-by-side publication of articles based on widely divergent, if not incompatible, premises. The principal difference between these two groups of possible readers, and their respective disciplinary bases, has to do with the relationship within each between localized analysis and macro-level theory.

Partly as a result of its centrality within Anglo-American cultural studies in recent years, Film Studies participates in wider tendencies towards the convergence of theories of signification, ideology and sexual difference; and towards generalized theoretical accounts of the

cinema as an institution. Indeed, the weakness of many localized instances of film analysis, as these proliferate within journals and academic work, is that they frequently appear trivial or redundant in relationship to the theoretical complexes which underly them. Social scientific work, of the kind represented in this volume, appears on the contrary bottom-heavy, offering empirical detail within threadbare historical or anecdotal narrative forms, or isolating social-psychological variables with little indication that these are rooted in coherent, and therefore debatable, conceptions of the social or the subjective.

Given the incommensurability of these disciplinary traditions, the articles collected here likely will meet with three different responses on the part of those working within Film Studies. Some, concise and well-documented, will become useful resources; others, presenting empirical detail within the context of a sociological argument, will become the focus of polemic. Those contributions, clearly within an alien and ultimately incompatible tradition, (that of social-psychological variable-based research), will most likely be ignored.

There is a tradition of respect within Film Studies towards those corporate or legal analysts of the cinema whose work is appreciated for its rigour, and often pillaged for information to be deployed within theoretical arguments or *historical research*. A number of articles in this volume are likely to receive attention for those very reasons. Olen J. Earnest's article on the marketing of Star Wars is a particularly well-informed and concise case study, which should find a place in one of the standard anthologies of economic studies of the film industry. Garth Jowett's history of audience research in Hollywood, and Bruce Austin's examination of the drive-in movie theatre as an institution, are both rather pedestrian chronological accounts, but consolidate hitherto scattered factual detail, and map out terrains for further investigation. Janet Wasko and Thomas Guback each direct analyses of Hollywood's functioning within international financial and film markets towards a condemnation of "free-market" defences of American domination of the movie business world-wide. Their's is an argument which, however

familiar and often anti-climatic, needs to be repeated and supported in this manner.

Mary Beth Haralovich's study of controversies within the American film industry during the 1940's over the sexual permissiveness of film publicity pin-up photographs manifests the clearest links with mainstream Film Studies research. Curiously, her intermittent reference to related work within Film Theory, (the only such references in the book), amidst a wealth of primary source documentation, functions more as an index of the volume's eclecticism and pluralism than as evidence of an attempt to open onto this discourse. Ian Jarvie's examination of the hostility confronting two Warner Brothers films, (Objective Burma and Monty Python's Life of Brian), by governmental and religious forces, presents interesting background, but is persistently frustrating in its refusal to draw conclusions whose validity extends beyond application to those two films exclusively. The contributions of both Haralovich and Jarvie would benefit from insertion into an ongoing context of polemic and development.

The volume's three survey-based studies suffer from the weaknesses frequently found within such work: the predictability of results, doubts as to the generalized applicability of those results, and an inadequate basis in a more global theory of the cinema's functioning. These weaknesses are compounded, in these cases, by a failure to arrive at conclusions which go much beyond what more firmly-grounded industry analyses of consumption patterns would reveal.

The success of the Current Research in Film series is likely to depend on the consistency with which it makes available research requiring the sorts of expertise and domains of specialization not found, currently, within the discipline of Film Studies. In particular, a concentration on economic and legal analyses, and the institution of some polemical continuity (admittedly difficult in an annual volume) would insure its utility for a field which, while highly politicized, has

thus far conceived its political and critical project in rather limited, and increasingly unproductive, terms.

Reviewed by: William Straw
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Foundations, Alan Plaunt and The Early Days of CBC Radio
Michael Nolan
CBC Enterprises, 1986
Toronto, Ontario

This book is very aptly named, for it was Alan Plaunt, more than any other individual, who set the philosophical and organizational foundations of the CBC and its progenitor, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission.

Plaunt's pivotal role in the genesis of public broadcasting in Canada was initially set out by Michael Nolan as his doctoral study for the University of Western Ontario where today Nolan teaches at the Graduate School of Journalism. CBC Enterprises published Nolan's work along with several other books in the fall of 1986 in celebration of CBC's 50 years of public broadcasting service. The 162 page narrative is enhanced by its thorough footnoting and seven pages of reference sources on Canadian broadcasting history.

Nolan's study is particularly detailed with regard to Plaunt's English-French family background, his education, (straight Cs at the University of Toronto and only third class honours at Oxford), his politics, his friends, the forces that shaped his beliefs, the several causes he gave his energies to, his contradictory personality, and his extraordinary organizational skills.

During his two years at Oxford (1927-29), Plaunt was a keen observer of the BBC in its first decade under the dominating leadership