Chapter 1

Theses on the philosophy of Hollywood history

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At one time, the main tools necessary for picture-making were a megaphone, a strong cranking arm, and a plot. Only the last has resisted change.

(Weegee and Mel Harris, Naked Hollywood)

There have been, I know, a lot of new Hollywoods . . . (Jon Lewis, Whom God Wishes to Destroy: Francis Coppola and the New Hollywood)

Since the 1960s, there has been a proliferation of terms designating more-or-less 4 fundamental shifts in the nature - and thus the appropriate periodization - of Hollywood cinema: the New Hollywood, the New New Hollywood, postclassicism, and more indirectly, post-Fordism and postmodernism. And before these terms came into currency, critics had already noted what they saw as significant shifts in the nature of American filmmaking through terms which have since fallen out of use - Manny Farber's 'New Movie', for example, or the 'maximized' cinema posited by Lawrence Alloway to encompass the period 1946-64. Many of the contributors to this volume assume, argue or imply that the classical Hollywood cinema of the studio era has been partly transformed or wholly superseded.

The watchwords in virtually all analyses of 'classical Hollywood cinema' are stability and regulation, features which can either be prized for the way in control which they enabled a great popular art, or decried for the constraints they imposed & 4 accounts upon filmmakers. But just what is said to have been regulated in such a way that a way that a high degree of stability was ensured varies considerably. First, and most obviously, classicism may refer to certain narrative and aesthetic features (the stability of a manufacture) system of genres, or of continuity principles, for example); or, it may refer to the west. studio system as a mode of production. Moving out from the films themselves in Aller to be a studio another direction, 'classicism' may be said to describe a certain kind of spectatorship, Marian 2 one characterized by a high degree of 'homogenization' or psychic regulation.'

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Although the notion of a 'classical' American cinema had been in circulation for decades, the concept became a focus of theoretical attention in journals such as Monogram and Screen in the 1970s, and was given far greater substance by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson in their landmark 1985 work The Classical Hollywood Cinema (CHC). Influenced by both André Bazin³ and - less obviously but perhaps just as significantly - Jan Mukařovský, Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson use the phrase 'classical Hollywood cinema' to refer to a mode of film practice (an aesthetic of 'decorum, proportion, formal harmony' (CHC, p. 4)) supporting and supported by a mode of film production (the studio system). 4 "The label "classicism" serves well', the authors argue, 'because it swiftly conveys distinct aesthetic qualities (elegance, unity, rule-governed craftsmanship) and historical functions (Hollywood's role as the world's mainstream film style)' (CHC, p. 4). 'Classical', then, connotes not only particular aesthetic qualities, but the historical role of Hollywood filmmaking as a template for filmmaking worldwide: classical films are classical in the sense that they are definitive.

Following Mukařovský, Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson separate several dimensions of form: they write of material, technical, aesthetic and socio-ethicalpolitical ('practical') norms. Each of these can be said to have been highly regulated in the studio era (many material and technical norms, for example, were regulated and stabilized by co-operation among the majors, while many practical norms were regulated by the Production Code). The emphasis of The Classical Hollywood Cinema is very clearly and explicitly placed on technical and aesthetic norms, though to that statement we need to add two qualifications. First, material and 'practical' norms are considered, though only to the extent that these impinge upon technical and aesthetic norms (the norm of the union of a heterosexual couple is examined as an instance of Hollywood's interest in narrative closure, for example). Second, there is an important principle of interdependence in operation: not only between the mode of production and mode of film practice, but also, implicitly at least, among the various norms. One might argue, for example, that the technical norms of narrative closure and shot/reverse-shot editing are interdependent with the aesthetic norms of 'unity' and 'harmony'. This extends into a kind of holistic principle (also evident in Bazin): the idea that the regulated stability of each of the formal norms, along with the ordered nature of the mode , of production, generates a greater overall level of stability than the sum of each of these levels. There is, to recall Bazin's metaphor, an overall 'equilibrium profile' which arises from the stability achieved in each of the institutional and formal dimensions.

Where Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson argue that the classical style has 'persisted' since 1960 (the date at which the detail of their study ends) in spite of the he shift to package production, and the later process of conglomeration, other authors have argued that the classical aesthetic gradually dissipated with the

breakdown of the studio system (and, for some authors, the wider emergence of postmodernity). Indeed, for almost as long as Hollywood has been conceptualized as a 'classical' cinema, there have been claims regarding the end of the classical period. Probably the first such claim was implicitly made by Bazin, who suggested that the classicism of 1930s Hollywood began to give way to a 'baroque' cinema in single the 1940s, a cinema of greater self-consciousness and stylization, in the form of, for example, 'superwesterns' like Duel in the Sun (1946), High Noop (1952), and Shane (1953). In 1952 Manny Farber lambasted the 'new mannerist flicker', which seemed more concerned with thematic seriousness and stylistic ostentatiousness than with the traditional Hollywood virtue of entertaining storytelling. In 197132-new France we find one of the earliest uses of the phrase 'post-classical', which explicitly takes and the earliest uses of the phrase 'post-classical', which explicitly takes its cue from Bazin. Contemplating Bazin's characterization of American cinema in the late 1930s as a cinema of 'classical perfection', Lawrence Alloway noted 'it follows that the later developments must be post-classical. Extending the morphology of styles implicit in Bazin's formula, the movies I grew up with [in the 1940s and production] and 1950s] were baroque, Hellenistic, overblown, late." In an argument that in some ways prefigures an aspect of the study by Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, Alloway rejects this thesis, claiming instead that Hollywood films of the 1940s and " ?! 1950s intensified or 'maximized' the themes and formal possibilities established in a sample. the 1930s, rather than overthrowing them.

There are essentially two ways of understanding the thesis that the classical mode of practice persisted beyond the breakdown of studio system. The first, and more circumspect, argument involves the claim that one or more aspects of the system described above persists: classical narrative structure, for example, but not the practical norms with which it was associated in the 1930s and 1940s. This is a the practical norms with which stresses the multi-faceted nature of Hollywood and accepts that change may well be uneven, occurring at different rates and at different moments Fig. across these facets.8 The second, and much stronger, claim is that it is not merely isolated elements of the system that persist, but that the equilibrium obtaining among and across the various levels — that supervening feature which adds greatly to the sense of stability in the system as a whole - has also persisted. This stronger claim is much more difficult to defend, though it is not clear that anyone, including Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, wishes to make it: they admit, for example, 'that the force of the classical norm was reduced somewhat' (CHC, p. 10) after 1960, even if many formally classical films continued to be made; and more recently, Thompson has argued that certain technical and aesthetic norms associated with classical filmmaking have persisted, not that the broader overall stability has endured."

The question of the existence of a distinctive post-classical cinema – like the γ $e^{i t}$. $e^{i t}$. question of the existence of a classical cinema - is, then, one with both empirical Englishment and conceptual dimensions. Nothing approaching the scale and rigour of The Land estimated

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Classical Hollywood Cinema has been undertaken on the empirical aspect of this question, and this volume cannot claim to make more than a very modest contribution towards it. What I want to focus on here, however, are the conceptual South : Innovation aspects of the issue – aspects which, it should be underlined, are never eradicated by empirical work, no matter how thorough. If there is no agreement at this point on whether there is a post-classical cinema, or on which features of such a cinema are the features which mark it off from a preceding classical cinema, we can at least sketch out what sorts of criteria would be important in answering these questions. Hollywood, as a total institution, is a multi-faceted creature: which of its facets are of most significance in understanding its evolution? Are the most important criteria those of changes in technology, narrative form, or the use of style? Should changes in the mode of production of films, or changes in their marketing, distribution and exhibition have greater priority? Is the positing of an epochal' transition only warranted by a global assessment in which all of these factors play a role and undergo change? In what remains of this essay, I want to explore these questions - questions about the assumptions and criteria present in private or arguments concerning classicism and post-classicism. I will do this through an skee Appunent 3 examination of two arguments - or rather, one argument, and a second family of arguments - in favour of the idea that the classicism of the studio era has given way to something new. The first argument roots itself very much in the nature of industrial organization, while the second family of arguments stresses the interdependence of the aesthetics of Hollywood films with their mode of YEN WERE EN HOW HOW Production. ENTETINY A MOON MONK of

Vertical disintegration and post-Fordism

The equilibrium profile of classicism - its high level of stability - will only be disrupted, Bazin argued, by a 'geological movement', as a result of which 'a new pattern' will be 'dug across the plain'. 10 Bazin's metaphor provides a way into the argument that the most significant development in the post-war Hollywood system reverses e Gauge and the ferm is the shift away from the Fordist principles around which it had been organized during the studio era. For the proponents of the 'post-Fordist thesis', the Paramount decrees of 1948 constitute a seismic 'movement' which fundamentally alters the 'pattern' of Hollywood.

Although the concept of post-Fordism is relatively obscure within film studies, it has a direct bearing on debates regarding the shift to package production. The Passa Passa potion of post-Fordism was coined by sociologists studying shifts in the nature of Survices over - capitalist production, particularly after the Second World War when in many mass-production (economies of scale through standardization and a detailed division of labour) were revised as a result of changes in market conditions. In a series of articles, Michael Storper and Susan

Christopherson have used the development of the US film industry after 1948 as a case study of post-Fordism. As they apply the concept to post-war Hollywood, 3,400 (800) post-Fordism involves a shift from a largely undifferentiated mass market served by a limited array of standardized, mass-produced commodities, to that of a more 10 30-20, 20 heterogeneous range of specific markets to which more specialized products can Turke a production of the special speci be profitably sold. The 'initial shock' of the Paramount decrees, which forced the value of the Paramount decrees, which forced the major studios to sell off their exhibition arms, dramatically raised 'the level of uncertainty [and] instability' in the market for film, Storper argues. 11 Loss of the frame of the film, Storper argues. control over exhibition encouraged the trends (already underway) towards fewer but more expensive films, and 'independent' package production. The details of ak according to this process of vertical disintegration are relatively well-known within film studies. Storper's analysis does, however, draw our attention to a number of less wellunderstood features of the post-war industry. The rise of package production and a producti leads to a growth in the number of independent film companies — both independ ent production companies (small production companies without a corporate relationship with a distribution company 12), as well as specialist firms serving various aspects of preproduction, production and postproduction (talent agencies, special effects houses, catering firms, etc.). These specialist firms then adapt the products and services they offer to the needs of a variety of clients, a process Storper refers and services they offer to the needs of a variety of clients, a process Storper refers to as product variety (as distinct from product differentiation), in order to ensure their own long-term viability. The organization of production is now 'flexibly Franciscon's specialized' in the sense that, relative to a typically Fordist mode of production, the specialized units are far more capable of adapting to shifts in market need (or the the of the needs of a variety of 'niche' markets). This can be seen as parallel with the effect of horizontal integration at the corporate level: as film companies became incorporated within larger conglomerates, with interests in other entertainment fields, so the risk attached to film production - relatively greater because of the by zerhoule ever-increasing investment in individual films - was dissipated by the other products and assets of the conglomerate. A vital part of Storper's analysis, however, is the conglomerate of Storper's analysis. that corporate control of the organization of production, and of the process of Investrus vertical disintregration, is absent once the process reaches a certain point: Posterior 20 months will to skaper

> A process of replacement of internal economies is set into motion, and beyond a certain point the large firms can no longer reverse it, because no single firm can assert enough control for a long enough period of time. Disintegration, in this manner, may begin with subcontracting, but it may end with the appearance of a network of independent supplier firms and a flexibly specialised system. 13

Questions from a variety of angles can be posed with respect to this analysis. First, because films are not absolutely identical - two formulaic genre films still

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have many more significant differences than do two cars of the same model, produced on an assembly line - the 'Fordist' nature of the mode of production in the studio era was always somewhat compromised. (In recognition of this, Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson write of 'serial manufacture' rather than 'mass production' (CHC, p. 92).) Indeed, many descriptions of post-Fordist strategies apply at least as well to the studio era as to the period after 1948; consider, for example, the statement that 'flexible automation uses general-purpose machines to produce a variety of products'. 14 In spite of the emphasis on the homogeneity of the Hollywood audience in the 1930s and 1940s, along with the idea that cinemagoers went to the cinema as much as part of a ritual of attendance as to see particular films, the variety of genres and the range of stars testified to and catered for a range of different audience tastes; and as we have already noted, the individual film is distinctive to a degree that most mass-produced commodities are

Matthew Bernstein's arguments concerning the continuities and similarities between 'unit production' and 'semi-independent' package production in the studio era add further weight to the queries. Bernstein demonstrates that sensus former, 'independent' production companies with distribution agreements with the majors (such as Selznick, Goldwyn and Wanger) functioned, in almost all cases, in exactly the same way as studio production units. This, in turn, implies that the shift to package production in the 1950s was not as fundamental as many commentaries - including Storper's - suggest, since 'semi-independent' package production had long been a practice, albeit a minority one, used by the studios. 15 The challenge to Storper's thesis raised by this line of thinking, then, concerns the appropriateness of the US film industry as a case study for the shift to post-Fordism, given its 'non-Fordist' peculiarities in the era when it was supposedly run along Fordist lines. (16)

According to Storper, the 'hallmarks of Fordist industries' are 'vertical integration, mass production, and stable oligopolistic market structures'. 17 In spite of the shifts in the organization of production that he details, however, the oligopolistic nature of the American film industry has not been undermined. This fact has been leapt upon by various critics, who have berated Storper for failing to discuss the crucial role of distribution in the maintenance of the oligopolistic control of the industry as a whole by a small group of major corporations. 18 The reason for the sharpness of the disagreement here lies ultimately in the different focus of Storper's argument, and those of his critics who stress the importance of finance and (perus) tande we distribution. Storper is interested, precisely, in the organization of production within industries which have moved away from (quasi-)Fordist, vertically integrated, assembly line models of manufacture. Although the shift from the Fordist mode of production is evidently related to the nature of the product and habits of consumption as well, these remain, for Storper, matters of secondary interest.

More seriously, though, Storper's work fails to account for the trend towards house land to th x vertical re-integration evident in the 1980s and 1990s (see the chapters by Maltby, Gomery and Balio in this volume).

Storper makes few detailed claims about the impact that vertical disintegration storper makes few detailed claims about the impact that vertical disintegration had upon film form and style. He does, however, note that the industry responded to disintegration by intensifying product differentiation (through the introduction, Product of the content of of widescreen etc.), ushering in a period of 'constant innovation'. This development is in keeping with the 'new pluralism of products' and 'new importance for the post - F. innovation' said to be characteristic of post-Fordism more generally, 19 and is a second response surely at odds with a central implication of classicism: "Classical" works conform.'20 However, the enduring control of the industry by the major film companies, exercised now through the financing and distribution of films, continues to act as a major constraint on such innovation and diversity. As has been documentation and diversity act as a major constraint on such innovation and diversity. mented by both Bernstein and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of expression - in The same and Tino Balio, greater freedom of the same and the thematic, formal and stylistic terms – is by no means guaranteed by the package wetanaters system. 'Hollywood's unit and semi-independent production . . . offered only the thematic package wetanaters and the contract of th potential for procedural autonomy and distinctive filmmaking, if the right historical circumstances . . . enhanced that potential . . . This is why the semiindependents' departure from the studio system "is more apparent than real".'21 Others have argued that this continued dominance not only constrains US 'independent' filmmaking, but also reinforces American cultural hegemony abroad. The possibility of distinctive national and regional film cultures is eroded by the globalization of the Hollywood aesthetic.²²

On the one hand, then, the 'freedoms' of the post-divestment era were, to an are greater greater extent than is often recognized, already present in the studio era; and on the studio the other hand, the 'constraints' and controls of the studio system were main - vec week tained, albeit through different legal and corporate mechanisms, in the age of Louis on other package production. Storper's claim about the relative increase in the significance and power of independent firms essentially applies to supplier firms within the domain of film production. There can be little doubt that, in terms of 'final market concentration', the major film companies have in general maintained their market share throughout the period in question. Indeed, one might well argue that the US film industry is an example not of post-Fordism, but of industrial dualism, in which independent production companies act at once as 'shock absorbers' and research arms ('pilot fish') for the majors, 'by attracting risk capital and creative talent which the majors can then exploit through their control of distribution' 23

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Post-classicism, neoclassicism and the New Hollywood

The post-Fordist argument is, then, essentially an argument about the nature of industrial organization, with only inchoate implications about the form of films themselves. By contrast, the second cluster of arguments I will examine places greater emphasis on aesthetic questions; either through an exclusive attention to them, or more commonly, through arguments concerning the interdependence of the form of Hollywood films and their mode of production - a key assumption, as we have seen, in the work of Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson. I will refer generally to these arguments as arguments for a 'post-classical' period, though, as we will see, a variety of terms have been used to name the new period.

Post-classicism is a term of relatively recent coinage. The notion of the 'New Hollywood' has been around quite a lot longer - or at least, it has been subjected to far greater intensity of discussion and revision of meaning since being coined. Peter Krämer has traced back the earliest uses of the phrase to 1959,24 but the academic adoption of the concept occurred in the 1970s, when it came to be applied to the period of relative experimentation in the late 1960s and 1970s in Hollywood, made possible by the economic insecurity of Hollywood, still casting around for forms of durable and predictable appeal after the massive post-war decline in audiences, and the more immediate problems of overproduction in the mid- to late 1960s. One of the key accounts of this period was Thomas Elsaesser's THE TELES of Files 1975 essay 'The pathos of failure', which reflected on the 'New Hollywood' of directors like Altman, Hellman and Spielberg, against the background of earlier writings on the classical Hollywood cinema by Elsaesser and his colleagues in the journal Monogram. 25 The causal dynamics and key features of this phase of American filmmaking are now well-known: incorporating elements drawn from European art cinema, these films depicted uncertain, counter-cultural and marginal protagonists, whose goals were often relatively ill-defined and ultimately unattained, in contrast to the heroic and typically successful figures around which classical films revolved.

This 'New Hollywood' - or what David James calls the 'American art film' represented a trend in dialectical tension with the blockbuster films of the era, most notably the disaster film cycle. While a few 'art' films like Bonnie and Clyde (1967) and Easy Rider (1969) were very successful, many of these films were based on relatively complex narrative premises, lacked major stars, and some, like MacCabe and Mrs Miller (1971), exhibited a deliberately rough-hewn, 'primitive' quality. The blockbusters and the 'art' films are also dialectically related in terms of narrative. Elsaesser argued that the 'unmotivated hero' eroded the very narrative fabric of the 'art' films; writing of the opening of The Mean Machine (1974), (The nonwood Elsaesser wonders whether he 'has seen the last 15 minutes of the previous film, some comment in themanice

or the pre-credit scene to a flashback movie that never follows'. 26 In developing projects such as Star Wars (1977) and Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981), Lucas and we are considered. Spielberg are said to have been seeking a return to narrative tautness and transitivity. Ironically, however, as we will see, some critics see these films as () at the manifesting another form of narrative malaise.

The work of Elsaesser and his associates at Monogram seems to have been highly with the seems to have been highly and the seems to have been highly all the seems to have been highly all the seems to have been highly all the se influential on the historiography of Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, who among en an analysis influential on the historiography of Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, who among en an analysis influential on the historiography of Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, who among en an analysis influential on the historiography of Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, who among en an analysis influential on the historiography of Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, who among en an analysis influential on the historiography of Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, who among en an analysis influential on the historiography of Bordwell and the staiger and Thompson, who among en an analysis influential on the historiography of Bordwell and the staiger and the other things fleshed out the hypothesis of an extended classical period beginning $\omega \sim p_1 r_1$ in the mid-1910s, continuing beyond the Paramount decrees and into the 1960s. With respect to the question of just how significant the innovations of the New name of the Ne Hollywood were, however, there is an important difference. While Elsaesser (21.3) thousand maintains that these films retained an underlying architecture drawn from the churchen genre film, as well as the emotional punch characteristic of Hollywood films with throughout their history, his argument implies that the period marks a fundamental break with the classical Hollywood cinema. The new prominence of 'marginal' audiences for Hollywood, along with the critical and cynical attitudes ascribed to these groups, undermined the 'can do' ideology which Elsaesser argued was implicit in classical narrative form itself. These 'transitional' films 245seemed to be harbingers of a wholly new kind of American filmmaking. Like at Edmonth Elsaesser, Bordwell and his colleagues argue for the continuing role of genre conventions, around which the elements from art cinema are moulded. But Bordwell distinguishes his argument from that of the Monogram writers in proposing that this amounts to an example of stylistic assimilation, rather than overall formal transformation: the underlying system of conventions - at the level of functions, rather than devices – remains the same (CHC, pp. 373-5). 27 In a sense, Bordwell's argument can be seen as the reiteration, within his own theoretical framework, of Bazin's famous remark concerning the 'fertility' of the 'classical art' of American cinema 'when it comes into contact with new elements'. 28 NO THECH POOR WAR

The notion of the New Hollywood, however, underwent a strange mutation, which were ending up designating either something diametrically opposed to the American art film, or something inclusive of but much larger than it. On this view - articulated most concisely by Thomas Schatz -- the thematic, narrative and stylistic innovations of the late 1960s and 1970s were but one phase of a gradual and ongoing reorientation and restabilization of the film industry, finally achieved after 1975. This new stability was secured not by the flirtation of American cinema with the art cinemas of Europe, but by what has sometimes been termed - again extending the analogy with art history - neoclassicism; a return to genre filmmaking, but now marked by greater self-consciousness, as well as supercharged by new special which have effects, saturation booking, engorged production budgets and, occasionally, even larger advertising budgets. Although some 'arty' projects continued to be supported by the studios into the late 1970s - Days of Heaven (1978), Apocalypse Now

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(1979), All that Jazz (1979), Heaven's Gate (1980) - the direction of the industry had been set by the monumental success of those 'hyperbolic simulations of Hollywood B-movies', Jaws (1975) and Star Wars. 29 Many of the features of these neoclassical 'event' movies are borne out of the horizontal integration now existing between film producers and other entertainment companies, in which films are 'designed with the multimedia marketplace and franchise status in mind'. 30 While Schatz has argued that these films are unlike classical Hollywood films in their emphasis on 'visceral, kinetic and fast-paced' plotting at the expense of character, one might argue instead that such films draw on a different strain of between as riles west, the legacy of studio era Hollywood — the serial B-film, most obviously in Star Wars, the Indiana Jones series, and in the British remake of Flash Gordon (1980).

In an argument which parallels Schatz's in several respects, Justin Wyatt has European along argued that the economic and institutional changes in Hollywood since 1960 have irrevocably altered the forms of product from Hollywood'.31 Given the principle prevocably altered the form and industrial context, there is one institutional change in particular which we might expect to have had an impact on the form of Hollywood films. Following on the process of conglomeration, and the emergence of cable, satellite, and home video markets, the bulk of the profits on most films are now derived from these 'ancillary' markets rather than from theatrical box office.³² Why should this development be of such moment – of any greater significance than all the other changes since 1948? When the bulk of profits is derived from sources other than the theatrical market, it is reasonable to assume that the pressures from these 'secondary' markets will command more attention The making of the product. 33 One example of this concerns the changes in widescreen compositional practices due to the significance of the television market, discussed by Steve Neale in this volume; according to Wyatt, a more dramatic set of formal changes has been driven by the synergies with music marketing (music videos and soundtrack albums) and advertising, resulting in what he terms a 'modular' aesthetic, which tends to stall and 'fragment' narrative form.

Wyatt locates the modular aesthetic in the immensely popular and influential the the control of Min, high-concept' film, a term and a form that came to prominence in the 1970s. A high-concept film is one which places a great emphasis on style and 'stylishness', revolving around a simple, easily summarized narrative based on physically typed characters, which in turn affords striking icons, images and shappy plot descriptions as marketing 'hooks'. The high-concept film is heavily reliant upon stars, and gives great prominence to its soundtrack (usually a mixture of original scoring and pop songs), which is marketed separately as one or more soundtrack albums associated with the film (as discussed by K. J. Donnelly in Chapter 9 of this volume in relation to the first two Batman films). In addition, music videos often rework aspects of the film in order to promote both the film and the music. These are the factors that give rise, he argues, to the modularity of the high-concept

film, in which sections of the film are apt to exceed the requirements of the man at the narrative and take on a quasi-autonomous function, in contrast to the economical 'knitting' of segments in the classical film.

High-concept films are the most overtly 'market driven' films made by Hollywood, according to Wyatt. As the major film companies became absorbed would be within larger conglomerates, so the potential for synergies between the previously separate entertainment industries could be realized. As several essays in this volume make clear, the 'big screen' film is now just the beginning of a profit stream involving television, home video, CDs, computer games, clothing and so home video forth. Wyatt places a special emphasis on marketing: it is not merely that the weekly mode of production has changed, but that the stress on the marketing and 'pitching' of individual films, and the convergence between fiction films and advertising, has directly affected the form of these films. The influence of advertising is evident, for example, in the development of product placement, soundtrack mar-1/2 like evident, for example, in the development of product placement, southerness, souther polished visual style of directors weaned on advertising, and the substitutability of among film performers, stars and fashion models.

Other authors take a less measured stance on the impact of marketing and and antiadvertising on narrative. Richard Schickel claims that 'Hollywood seems to have lost or abandoned the art of narrative'; most contemporary films, he suggests, offer little more than 'a succession of undifferentiated sensations, lucky or unlucky accidents, that have little or nothing to do with whatever went before or is about to come next'.34 From such an account, one would be forgiven for thinking that a Dada film like Entr'acte (1924) had become the model of Hollywood filmmaking. Reports of the death of narrative in Hollywood filmmaking, however, are surely much exaggerated (and usually either impressionistic speculations or generalizations based on a single or very few examples). Narrative has not disappeared, but the new technologies and new markets have encouraged certain the markets have encoura kinds of narrative, traceable to serials, B-adventures and episodic melodramas. Given the potential profits to be made from computer games, for example, it is an all the same of the potential profits to be made from computer games, for example, it is a same of the potential profits to be made from computer games, for example, it is a same of the potential profits to be made from computer games, for example, it is a same of the potential profits to be made from computer games, for example, it is a same of the potential profits to be made from computer games. should not surprise us that action-adventure films – like The Lost World (1997) – B-1----are perceived as potential high-earners, since their chase scenarios dovetail easily with the formats of such games. But even here, narrative is still omnipresent... There may be less attention to detailed character motivation, greater emphasis on motivation spectacle - the kinds of features that Thomas Schatz stresses - and even straightforward narrative sloppiness, but narrative has certainly not disappeared under a market washall cloud of special effects. In action films, the plot advances through spectacle; the spectacular elements are, generally speaking, as 'narrativized' as are the less in ostentatious spaces of other genres. As the chapters by Peter Krämer and Warren Buckland in this volume demonstrate, careful narrative patterning - a prerequisite for the kind of emotional response associated with classical narratives - is still

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every much in evidence in the biggest blockbusters of our time; and as K. I. Donnelly demonstrates, the conglomerate, multimedia nature of the industry does not necessarily shatter a film into a string of wholly unconnected sounds and images. The dinosaurs in Spielberg's recent films are not just impressive spectacles, but creatures of terror and wonderment - characters, antagonists, in a tale. It is this emotional dimension which, among other things, makes the movies memorable, and thus fosters the 'memorialization' of the experience through further purchases - be it games, videos, clothing or theme parks. It is not so much, then, that narrative has been displaced by the new technologies and markets of the last fifteen to twenty years, as that the demands and opportunities provided by them have led to an emphasis on certain genres and episodic forms of narrative. The modular segments of which Wyatt writes are not merely held in check by the narratives of such films, but given meaning by them. Just as the 'big screen' movie experience plays a far greater role in driving the profitability of the multimedia marketplace than theatrical ticket sales would suggest, so the movie provides a primary narrative baseline which both endows isolated movie icons with meaning and emotional resonance, and provides a backdrop against which to toy with these associations in other media contexts. 36 - fen topidage mont on live , while drawal is have walnut a more with secondary produce pro

The continuity of Hollywood

Many critics throughout the post-war period have, then, argued that Hollywood filmmaking had crossed, or was on the brink of crossing, a threshold into a new epoch. Equally, however, there have been many critics who have cautioned against overhasty judgements regarding such fundamental shifts, suggesting that superficial changes are likely to obscure our view of underlying continuities. From this point of view, historians of the 'New' or post-classical Hollywood, while correctly recognizing new phases or trends in product differentiation, are not warranted in positing a break with classicism. Indeed, the very regularity with which declarations of new epochs have been made, the sheer number of 'New Hollywoods' that one finds posited over the course of film history, recommends this more sober view: if things are always 'new', nothing is ever really new. There is a constant process of adjustment and adaptation to new circumstances, but this is an adaptation made on the basis of certain underlying and constant goals: the maximizing of profits through the production of classical narrative films. Rather than looking for a fundamental break between classicism and a putative post-classicism, we would do better to look for smaller-scale changes and shifts, at both the institutional and aesthetic levels, within a more broadly continuous system of American commercial filmmaking.³⁷ It is not that change has not occurred, but that the scale of change has consistently been overestimated.

There is a related historiographical position which has not been articulated in notice bounded ut system musical had

such a unified fashion and as a consequence has received far less attention. This thesis is similar to the argument that the Hollywood system has maintained essentially the same character from the teens to the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the present day – with the vital and the contract of the additional proviso that we should not think of this enduring system as in any sense 'classical'. The 'weighting' of the analysis towards aesthetic questions, inevitably introduced by the use of art-historical language, is rejected. Like its near twin, this argument acknowledges the endurance of the profit motive, but demurs from the premise that this has been or is always best fulfilled by the appeal of classical narrative form. Many individual Hollywood films, and perhaps entire genres, of the studio era, so the argument goes, are not characterized by the formal harmony or 'decorum' which forms the main justification for the appellation 'classical'. The norms of narrative classicism, while certainly expressed as goals within marking screenwriting manuals and more informal Hollywood lore, are compromised and interrupted by other forms of interest: the drive towards comedy (and other ham) emotions), the display of stars, the impetus towards sheer spectacle. Richard Maltby and Ian Craven, for example, discuss Hollywood in terms of a commercial aesthetic' that is 'too opportunistic to prize coherence, organic unity, or even the absence of contradiction among its-primary virtues', an analysis that 'sits uneasily " about the comment of the contradiction among its primary virtues', an analysis that 'sits uneasily " about the contradiction among its primary virtues', and analysis that 'sits uneasily " about the contradiction among its primary virtues', and analysis that 'sits uneasily " about the contradiction among its primary virtues', and analysis that 'sits uneasily " about the contradiction among its primary virtues', and analysis that 'sits uneasily " about the contradiction among its primary virtues', and analysis that 'sits uneasily " about the contradiction among its primary virtues', and analysis that 'sits uneasily " about the contradiction among its primary virtues'. with the stylistically determined view of a movie's organization implicit in the constitution. idea of classicism'. 39 In the terminology of The Classical Hollywood Cinema, classic- of Automatical Hollywood Cinema, classically harmonious narrative is not the 'dominant' of any era of Hollywood filmmaking, even if it is present as one key compositional principle. This, of course, wet nucleon of the course, we have not a supply of the course of the co removes altogether the motivation for positing a 'post-classical' era, since the work son work aesthetic features of so-called 'post-classical' cinema are revealed to have been an aspect of so-called 'classical' cinema all along.

A charge sometimes levelled at Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson is that, for all the post-land the wealth of historical detail contained in their work, the description of the classical Hollywood mode becomes an ahistorical one. The classical system they posit becomes so abstract, generalized and encompassing that anything can be assimilated and nothing can make a difference. 41 Dirk Eitzen, for example, has represent argued that underlying the study by Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson are a set of when functionalist principles, principles which are most apt for the study of long-term historical processes. But to the extent that a functionalist account is designed to any the standard of the countries of the explain how a given system perpetuates itself and remains stable over long periods, historical development may appear to be sidelimed.

While Eitzen notes that such functionalism is much more robust and subtle Live than its detractors claim, and that it is perhaps the only theory which accounts from the only theory which accounts for long-term historical development while avoiding teleological assumptions, he have nevertheless points out that functionalism has its limitations. These limitations and activities become apparent precisely in the study of briefer historical episodes, when ... the intentions and interventions of both individual and institutional agents — the watching

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things that account for the events which force the system either to reorient itself, or collapse - take on more weight than the longer-term patterns and constraints. 42 Arguing along similar lines, Henry Jenkins suggests that there is a home 'necessary process of experimentation and accommodation which surrounds the adoption of alien aesthetic norms into the dominant classical system', 43 a process which Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson tend to downplay in favour of the ultimate assimilation of 'alien' elements within the existing system. In its eagerness to The subversiveness' of this film or that genre, the where the single functionalist bent of The Classical Hollywood Cinema perhaps flattens the local and immediate experience of change and discontinuity.

homelia stage As the Annales historians have taught us, however, history consists of many A hardward layers which change at very different rates, and stasis is as much a fact of history as have see the see is change. Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson do not banish history; rather, their Adrage to prefer account implies that there are various levels of historical change and development. There is a history of devices, but this is distinct from the history of the functions of devices, and from the history of the relations between the systems within which they function (CHC, pp. 6-7, 9-10). The mode as a whole - the 'total style' - which wolling encompasses all of these levels, can be subverted: it is just that the standards for such subversion are high indeed - the continuity of classicism is argued for in part by contrasting the American art film with more radically different kinds of cinema, such as the 'counter-cinema' of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle

Huillet. To argue that Elsaesser's New Hollywood fails to mark an epochal divide is, thus, hardly to argue that a shift had not occurred at a less fundamental level.

menin-very This problem - a lack of clarity about what aspect of Hollywood is being #TOUTH TO WE discussed - is one that has frequently afflicted debate around classical and 'postclassical' Hollywood. Critics have often argued at cross-purposes with one another, rushing to judgement without checking the scope of the problem or being clear about the purview of their arguments. No matter what other factors are relevant - including the careful empirical study of a representative body of films - assessing the plausibility of arguments concerning classicism and postclassicism will require that we begin by considering the breadth and nature of the claims being made.

Notes

- 1 Miriam Hansen, 'Early cinema, late cinema: permutations of the public sphere', Screen, vol. 34, no. 3 (Autumn 1993), pp. 197-210. Hansen even suggests that one sign of the end of this regulated, classical spectatorship is the rise in complaints about talking in movie theatres (p. 198).
- 2 David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960 (New York: Columbia University Press,

1985). All subsequent page references in the main text are to this edition, abbreviated as CHC, followed by page number(s).

- 3 For André Bazin, the stability and 'maturity' of Hollywood filmmaking in the 1930s, in terms of subject matter (a range of genres with established conventions), style (conventions of editing, cinematography, sound, etc.) and technological development, as well as its worldwide success as 'a common form of cinematic language', warranted its description as a 'classical art'. André Bazin, 'The evolution of the language of cinema', in What is Cinema? vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 28-30.
- 4 Although this interdependence is not absolute: 'the Hollywood mode of production . . . while congruent in some respects, cannot be simply superimposed upon stylistic history' (CHC, p. 9). The emphasis on style (albeit in relation to mode of production) is implicit in the very word 'classical' - we would be unlikely to label an industrial practice 'classical' if it were not associated with a commodity apt to be described in aesthetic and art historical terms. The art historical origins of the term 'classical' are plainly visible in the key definitions of it in the first few pages of The Classical Hollywood Cinema, and are stressed by Bordwell when he insists that 'the history of an art' may periodize history differently from histories prioritizing political or social matters (p. 9).
- 5 The same sort of continuity is argued for from an economic and institutional perspective by Douglas Gomery, 'The American film industry of the 1970s: stasis in the "New Hollywood", Wide Angle, vol. 5, no. 4 (1983), pp. 52-9.
- 6 André Bazin, 'The evolution of the western', in What is Cinema? vol. 2, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 149-57; Manny Farber, 'The Gimp', in Negative Space (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 71.
- 7 Lawrence Alloway, Violent America: The Movies, 1946-64 (New York: MOMA, 1971), p. 11.
- 8 For general historiographical discussions of these issues, see David Hackett Fisher, Historian's Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 146; and Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, Film History: Theory and Practice (New York: Knopf, 1985), pp. 48-9.
- 9 Kristin Thompson, 'Narrative structure in early classical cinema', in John Fullerton (ed.), Celebrating 1895 (University of Luton/John Libbey, forthcoming). Thompson specifically argues for the persistence of a kind of temporal 'golden mean', which dictates that a large-scale portion of narrative should last between twenty and thirty minutes.
- 10 Bazin, 'The evolution of the language of cinema', p. 31.
- 11 Michael Storper, 'The transition to flexible specialisation in the US film industry: external economies, the division of labour and the crossing of industrial divides', in Ash Amin (ed.), Post-Fordism: A Reader (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 217.
- 12 This is the definition provided by Janet Staiger in 'Individualism versus collectivism', Screen, vol. 24, nos. 4-5 (July-October 1983), pp. 68-9; and reiterated in The Classical Hollywood Cinema, p. 317.
- 13 Storper, 'Flexible specialization in the US film industry,' p. 218. The notion of 'flexible specialization' is derived from the work of Michael Piore and Charles Sabel; see especially The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity (New York: Basic Books, 1984). A very useful discussion of 'flexibility' in relation to film and other media can be found in Michael Curtin, 'On edge: culture industries in the neo-network era', in

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- Richard Ohmann (ed.), Making and Selling Culture (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England, 1996), pp. 181-202.
- 14 Robin Murray, 'Fordism and post-Fordism', in Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew (eds), Modernity and its Futures (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 218.
- 15 Matthew Bernstein, 'Hollywood's semi-independent production', Cinema Journal, vol. 32, no. 3 (Spring 1993), pp. 50, 54.
- · 16 Indeed, the post-Fordist thesis has been challenged on home territory by those who point out that the production of cars incorporated the need for 'flexible specialization' from the late 1920s onwards; 'it is thus to be seriously doubted whether mass production has ever consistently corresponded to the Fordist paradigm'. Mark Elam, From Davision of Premoi - Puzzling out the post-Fordist debate: technology, markets and institutions', in Amin (ed.), Post-Fordism, p. 55.
 - 17 Storper, 'Flexible specialisation in the US film industry', p. 195.
 - 18 Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins, 'Hollywood for the 21st century: global competition for critical mass in image markets', Cambridge Journal of Economics, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 7, 13, 16. In fairness to Storper, it should be noted that this anomaly in the argument was acknowledged by him, though he does downplay its significance: Storper, 'Flexible specialisation in the US film industry', p. 222, note 9.
 - 19 Murray, 'Post-Fordism', p. 218.
 - 20 Richard Maltby and Ian Craven, Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 7.
 - 21 Bernstein, 'Semi-independent production', p. 51; see also p. 52, note 4. Bernstein is quoting Richard Dyer MacCann, 'Independence with a vengeance', Film Quarterly, vol. 15, no. 4 (1962), p. 4. Also of relevance are Tino Balio, United Artists: The Company That Changed the Film Industry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); and Tino Balio, 'When is an independent producer independent? The case of United Artists after 1948', The Velvet Light Trap, no. 22 (1986), along with other essays in this issue by Bernstein, Kevin Hagopian and Ed Lowry.
 - 22 Aksoy and Robins, 'Hollywood for the 21st century', p. 20. See also Tino Balio, "A major presence in all of the world markets": the globalization of Hollywood in the 1990s', this volume, pp. 58-73. Other authors, however, have discussed some of the 'localizing' responses to the global power of the Hollywood aesthetic. See, for example, Curtin, 'On edge', p. 187; and Dana Polan, 'Globalism's localisms', in Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (eds), Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 255-83.
 - 23 Nicholas Garnham, quoted by Aksoy and Robins, 'Hollywood for the 21st century', p. 11; see also Curtin, 'On edge', p. 197; and chapters 4-6 by Balio, Wyatt and Schamus of this volume.
 - 24 Peter Krämer, 'Post-classical Hollywood', in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (eds), The Oxford Guide to Film Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 296.
 - 25 Thomas Elsaesser, 'The pathos of failure: American films in the 70s notes on the unmotivated hero', Monogram, no. 6 (1975), pp. 13-19.
 - 26 Elsaesser, 'The pathos of failure', p. 16.
 - 27 In his early overview of arguments concerning the 'New Hollywood', Steve Neale signalled a similar scepticism. "New Hollywood Cinema", Screen, vol. 17, no. 2 (1976), p. 120,
 - 28 André Bazin, 'On the politique des auteurs', in Jim Hillier (ed.), Cahiers du Cinema: The

- 1950s Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985). p. 258.
- 29 J. Hoberman, Vulgar Modernism: Writing on Movies and Other Media (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), p. 284.
- 30 Thomas Schatz, 'The New Hollywood', in Jim Collins, Hilary Radner and Ava Preacher Collins (eds), Film Theory Goes to the Movies (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 35. See also the essay by Tino Balio in this volume. For an analysis which draws upon the notion of 'neoclassicism', see the essay by K. J. Donnelly on the first two Batman films, Chapter 9 of this volume.
- 31 Justin Wyatt, High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), p. 16.
- 32 See Douglas Gomery, Chapter 3 of this volume, p. 52.
- 33 James Schamus, Chapter 6 of this volume, p. 94,
- 34 Quoted in Schatz, 'New Hollywood', p. 33; see also chapters 2 and 6 by Richard Maltby and James Schamus in this volume. For another account which argues that Hollywood films have suffered a breakdown of narrative due to the influence of advertising, see Mark Crispin Miller, 'Advertising: end of story', in Mark Crispin Miller (ed.), Seeing Through Movies (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), pp. 186-246.
- 35 Peter Krämer, 'The lure of the big picture: film, television and Hollywood', in John Hill and Martin McLoone, Big Picture, Small Screen: The Relations between Film and X Television (Luton: University of Luton/John Libbey, 1996), pp. 9-46.
- 36 Schatz, 'New Hollywood', pp. 33-4.
- 37 This is the line of argument taken by Douglas Gomery in 'Toward a new media economics', in David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (eds), Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 407-18.
- 38 See Rick Altman, The American Film Musical (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Henry Jenkins, What Made Pistachio Nuts? Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Experience (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Dirk Eitzen, 'Comedy and classicism', in Richard Allen and Murray Smith (eds), Film Theory and Philosophy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 394-411; and Elizabeth Cowie, Chapter 12 of this volume.
- 39 Maltby and Craven, Hollywood Cinema, pp. 35 and 37.
- 40 Maltby's position in Chapter-2-of this volume is somewhat different to that in his earlierbook with Craven. In this volume, he argues that though the potentially disunifying presence of the commercial intertext has been present throughout Hollywood his where I tory, the pressures threatening to fragment narrative unity and stylistic coherence have increased.

Christopher Williams has similarly argued against the aptness of the adjective 'classical', though with no particular stress on the commercial factors which, for particular Maltby, lead to the loss of formal 'decorum': 'After the classic, the classical and ideology: the differences of realism', Screen, vol. 35 no.3 (1994), pp. 284-5. Like Andrew Britton ('The philosophy of the pigeonhole: Wisconsin formalism and "the classical style", CineAction!, no. 15 (Winter 1988/9), pp. 47-63), Williams is more concerned to stress the diversity of aesthetic strands within Hollywood cinema. It should be noted here, however, that Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson neither deny the existence of non-narrative impulses within Hollywood films, nor that many of the streams running into Hollywood filmmaking were anything but classical (CHC, p. 4). But they do argue that classical narrative requirements acted as the 'constructive

principle' in Hollywood filmmaking. Robin Wood justifies the term 'classicism' in a somewhat similar way, albeit in a critical language informed by psychoanalysis rather than Formalism, in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 48–9.

41 See Elizabeth Cowie, Chapter 12 of this volume; and Maltby and Craven, *Hollywood Cinema*, p. 218.

42 Dirk Eitzen, 'Evolution, functionalism, and the study of American cinema', The Velvet Light Trap, no. 28 (Fall 1991), pp. 82-3.

43 Henry Jenkins, 'Historical poetics', in Joanne Hollows and Mark Jancovich (eds), Approaches to Popular Film (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 114; see also Murray Smith, 'Technological determination, aesthetic resistance', Wide Angle, vol. 12, no. 3 (July 1990), pp. 92–3.

Chapter 2

'Nobody knows everything'

Post-classical historiographies and consolidated entertainment

Richard Maltby

Griffin (Tim Robbins):

[The story] lacked certain elements that we

need to market a film successfully.

June (Greta Scacchi):

What elements?

Griffin:

Suspense, laughter, violence, hope, heart, nudity, sex, happy endings. Mainly happy

endings.

The Player (1992)

As a classical metanarrative, the history of classical Hollywood cinema lacks only one element: a happy ending. Its resolution is problematic, untidy and uncertain. Among its chroniclers, there is no consensus as to when (if ever) classical Hollywood ended. But whenever its final scenes are set, they are seen to act out a prolonged decline. The metaphors of evolution that brought Hollywood from primitivism to maturity are replaced by notions of decadence and decay. The last three decades of Hollywood's history are most often presented as a story of failed promise: the promises made to, or at least believed by, that generation of critics who espoused cinema as 'the most important art of the twentieth century,' and constructed its study as an academic discipline. In his historical survey of American cinema, John Belton entitles the section on contemporary Hollywood 'The failure of the new', and invokes Fredric Jameson in support of his account of contemporary Hollywood as 'stylistically youthful and inventive but politically conservative', constrained by 'the inability to say anything that has not already been said. . . . The authentic expression of ideas that took place in the past is today replaced by quotation and allusion to that authentic expression.'2 By the 1980s, he concludes, the continuity of the Hollywood tradition had begun to fall apart:

Each new film existed in an aesthetic vacuum, though it continued to compete with the box-office statistics of its predecessors. Audiences who expected little were enthralled by the little they got. And they had even