



The Movies: Texts, Receptions, Exposures

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The medium of film has entertained audiences for more than 100 years. It has also intrigued scholars. What qualities give a film the complexity and resonance of high art? What effects do films produce in spectators and in society? How is our appreciation of a film dependent on such different elements as the screen, the stars, the zeitgeist, and even the petty business deals in Hollywood studios? Laurence Goldstein and Ira Konigsberg, the editors of *The Movies: Texts, Receptions, Exposures*, have sought to answer these questions by gathering writing and visual art from a variety of perspectives that describe the history, art, and technology of motion pictures in deep-focus detail.

The book's first part, "Analyzing Films," offers essays on six important films: *Secrets of a Soul*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, *The Last Emperor*, *The King of Comedy*, and *Menace II Society*. Each reading uses a different methodology to reveal intricate structure and cultural provenance of the film narrative.

The second part, "Making Films," takes the reader behind the camera for some expert testimony, including an interview with the great director Billy Wilder, a montage by screenwriter William Harrison of his fateful meetings in the film capital, a memoir by Arthur Miller, and an account by M-G-M producer Sam Marx of how the first film about the atomic bomb came into being.

The third part, "Screening Films," measures the impact of movies on their audiences. Diane Kirkpatrick contributes an essay on how artists have responded to the movies. In short stories Laura Antillano, a Venezuelan, and Janset Berkok Shami, a Jordanian, dramatize the colonizing of other continents by the Hollywood dream factory. Leo Braudy assesses the treatment of the male body in the Brando and Dean flicks of the 1950s, while William Paul chronicles the narrative of the screen, that looked-at and overlooked monitor for the moviegoing public.

A fourth part, "The Poetry of Film," collects some compelling recent poems about the movies: Margaret Atwood on Ava Gardner, Mordechai Geldmann on pornography, and Pier Paolo Pasolini on Marilyn Monroe, among others. Also included are archival essays by modernist poets H.D. and Vachel Lindsay, on Greta Garbo and the necessity of censorship, respectively.

It is rare for a collection to investigate cinema with this much wit, creative play, and scholarly rigor. Common to all the contents, however, is a thoroughly contemporary manner of treating what Arthur Miller calls "the single great cultural invention of this civilization." Laurence Goldstein is the author of *The American Poet at the Movies: A Critical History*, editor of *The Female Body: Figures, Styles, Speculations*, and *The Male Body: Features, Destinies, Exposures*, and Professor of English, University of Michigan. Ira Konigsberg is Professor of English and Film/Video Studies, University of Michigan.

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