

# Contents

Preface      vii

---

**Introduction: The Analysis of Primary Sources**      1

PRIMARY SOURCES AND CRITICAL THINKING	1
THE MOTION PICTURE AS PRIMARY SOURCE	2
READING FILM: THE ANALYTICAL PROCESS	3
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE ORIGINS OF THE MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY	4

**PART I: Progressive America: Militant Reform and the Postwar Reaction**

---

**Chapter 1: Social Protest: *A Corner in Wheat* (1909) as Muckraking Film**      9

THE LITERARY INSPIRATION FOR <i>A CORNER IN WHEAT</i>	13
U.S. SENATOR ROBERT M. LA FOLLETTE ATTACKS FINANCIAL MANIPULATORS	14
THE SELLING OF <i>A CORNER IN WHEAT</i>	15
CRITICAL REACTION TO THE FILM	16

---

**Chapter 2: Cultural History Through a Cloudy Lens: *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and the Racial Climate of Progressive America**      19

THE NAACP CHALLENGES HOLLYWOOD TO RESPECT THE WILL OF THE NATIONAL BOARD OF CENSORSHIP	25
NAACP MOBILIZES NATIONAL RESISTANCE TO THE SCREENING OF A RACIST FILM	26
THE FILM'S PRODUCERS REACT TO THE THREAT OF CENSORSHIP	27
NAACP CONSIDERS A FILM AS AN ANSWER TO <i>THE BIRTH OF A NATION</i>	28

---

**Chapter 3: Social Change and Sexual Politics: *Dancing Mothers* (1926) and Moral Ambiguity in the Jazz Age**      31

ELINOR GLYN DESCRIBES "IT"	37
A NEW MARRIAGE STYLE DISCUSSED BY FANNIE HURST	37
SUZANNE LA FOLLETTE DESCRIBES A NEW ATTITUDE ON DIVORCE	38
FREDERICK LEWIS ALLEN ASSESSES THE IMPACT OF THE MOVIES AND THE PRODUCERS' RESPONSE TO THE CRITICS	39
THE MOTION PICTURE CODE PRESCRIBES APPROPRIATE TREATMENT OF SEXUAL ISSUES AND RELATIONSHIPS	40

**Chapter 4: The End of Romantic War: *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) and Disillusionment in the Interwar Era** 44

---

DETERMINATION TO AVOID WORLD WAR	50	
NEW YORK TIMES REVIEWER ACKNOWLEDGES MILESTONE'S ACHIEVEMENT		51
ERICH MARIA REMARQUE SURVEYS WAR'S DEVASTATING IMPACT ON THOSE WHO SERVED	52	

**PART II: A Nation Under Stress: The Depths of Economic Despair**

**Chapter 5: Making It in Depression America: The Street or the Stage in *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933)** 55

---

A RECOLLECTION OF THE BONUS MARCH	61	
THE EXHILARATING DEPRESSION OF FDR	61	
DIRECTOR MERVYN LEROY ASSESSES THE MARKET	62	
A SOCIAL HISTORIAN RECALLS AVOIDANCE OF UNPLEASANT REALITIES		63

**Chapter 6: The Resilient People: *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) Exposes Poverty in the Land of Plenty** 65

---

A MIGRANT MOTHER	73	
JOHN STEINBECK DESCRIBES THE MIGRANT EXPERIENCE	73	
CALIFORNIANS REACT TO STEINBECK'S PORTRAYAL OF GOLDEN CALIFORNIA		75
AN "OKIE" VIEW OF THE FILM FROM WOODY GUTHRIE	76	

**PART III: A Democracy at War**

**Chapter 7: Thinking of Intervention: *Foreign Correspondent* (1940) and the Winds of War** 78

---

WALTER WANGER DESCRIBES THE IMPEDIMENTS TO THE PRODUCTION OF <i>FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT</i>	85	
A HOLLYWOOD EXECUTIVE SEES A CONNECTION AMONG GOOD BUSINESS, GOOD PROPAGANDA, AND GOOD POLICY	85	
WALTER WANGER AND HOLLYWOOD INTERNATIONALISTS ENDORSE ROOSEVELT'S LEADERSHIP DURING THE PREWAR CRISIS	86	
SENATOR GERALD P. NYE SPEAKS OUT FOR THE ISOLATIONISTS AGAINST ALLEGED HOLLYWOOD PROPAGANDA	87	
WANGER RECALLS HIS OBJECTIVE IN THE PRODUCTION OF <i>FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT</i>	88	

**Chapter 8: Government Persuasion: *Prelude to War* (1943), *The Negro Soldier* (1944), and the Issues of the War** 90

---

THE ARMY STATES ITS OBJECTIVES FOR THE <i>WHY WE FIGHT</i> SERIES	98	
AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL ANALYSIS OF <i>PRELUDE TO WAR</i> PREPARES THE WAY FOR WIDESPREAD CIVILIAN DISTRIBUTION	98	

THE OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION'S DIRECTOR EXPLAINS THE AGENCY'S RESERVATIONS ABOUT PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION OF <i>PRELUDE TO WAR</i>	99
LOWELL MELLETT EXPRESSES THE BUREAU OF MOTION PICTURES' REASONS FOR LIMITED DISTRIBUTION OF ARMY PRODUCTIONS	100
THE HOLLYWOOD WAR ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE PROMOTES <i>THE NEGRO SOLDIER</i>	101

---

**Chapter 9: Social Unity in a Nation at War: *Since You Went Away* (1944)  
and Women's Mobilization for Victory** 104

---

OWI OUTLINES HOLLYWOOD'S WARTIME RESPONSIBILITIES	110
A RECOLLECTION OF WARTIME SACRIFICE	112
A WARTIME ANALYSIS OF SELZNICK'S WORK FROM <i>TIME</i>	114
VISUAL IMAGES OF THE WOMEN'S WAR	115

**PART IV: Cold War America: Domestic Anticommunism  
and Fear of Failure**

---

**Chapter 10: Hollywood's Cold War: The Suppression  
of *Salt of the Earth* (1954)** 117

---

CONGRESSMAN DONALD L. JACKSON SOUNDS THE ALARM	125
ROY BREWER PROMISES LABOR ACTION	126
HOWARD HUGHES OUTLINES A BLUEPRINT FOR SUPPRESSION	127
PAUL JARRICO'S CHRONICLE OF EXTERNAL HARASSMENT	128

---

**Chapter 11: A Cautionary Tale: *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) as a Vision  
of Nuclear Endgame** 131

---

SANE LAUNCHES THE DEBATE OVER NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION	137
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT McNAMARA EXPLAINS ASSURED DESTRUCTION	139
JOURNALIST I. F. STONE READS THE LESSONS OF THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS	140
TERRY SOUTHERN RECALLS THE ORIGINS OF <i>DR. STRANGELOVE</i>	140
AMBIGUENCE IN A <i>NEW YORK TIMES</i> REVIEW	141

---

**Chapter 12: The Alienation Films of the 1960s: *Alice's Restaurant* (1969),  
*The Graduate* (1967), and Social Fragmentation** 144

---

AN ACCOUNT OF THE "CRIME OF THE CENTURY"	150
THE PRODUCERS ARE WARNED OF POSSIBLE LOCAL RESISTANCE TO <i>ALICE'S RESTAURANT</i>	150
MIXED REVIEWS REFLECT HISTORICAL CONTEXT	151
REVIEW IN THE <i>NEW YORK TIMES</i>	151
REVIEW IN <i>NEWSWEEK</i>	152
REVIEW IN THE <i>BOSTON GLOBE</i>	153
<i>SECOND SIGHT</i>	154

## PART V: Legacies: Toward Modern America

<b>Chapter 13: Worker Solidarity and Human Dignity: <i>Norma Rae</i> (1979) and Southern Labor Activism</b>	157
CRYSTAL LEE SUTTON ASSERTS THE NEED FOR UNION ORGANIZATION	163
TWO CONTEMPORARY EVALUATIONS OF <i>NORMA RAE</i> AS A DEPICTION OF WORKING-CLASS LIFE	165
<i>NORMA RAE</i> , AN OLD-FASHIONED FILM	165
TEXTILE MILL ORGANIZING	166
ACTWU USES <i>NORMA RAE</i> AS AN ORGANIZING TOOL	167
<b>Chapter 14: <i>Coming Home</i> (1978): Vietnam and the Uncertain Future of American Foreign Policy</b>	169
JANE FONDA'S RADIO HANOI BROADCAST	175
A REVIEWER'S ANALYSIS OF <i>COMING HOME</i> AS A STATEMENT ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE VIETNAM WAR	176
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD THE WAR	177
GENERAL NORMAN SCHWARTZKOPF ASSESSES VIETNAM'S IMPACT ON THE ARMY	179
CYNICISM IN THE POST-VIETNAM GENERATION	180
<b>Chapter 15: Unfinished Business: <i>Do the Right Thing</i> (1989) and the Escalation of Social Tension</b>	182
THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION ON CIVIL DISORDERS OUTLINES THE PROBLEMS OF URBAN AMERICA	188
SPIKE LEE EXPLAINS VIOLENCE IN HIS FILM	189
ROGER EBERT'S ANALYSIS OF <i>DO THE RIGHT THING</i>	191
LEE USES THE LYRICS OF PUBLIC ENEMY'S RECORDING "FIGHT THE POWER" TO SET A TONE FOR THE VIOLENCE TO COME	192
<b>Chapter 16: Suburban Anxiety in Modern America: <i>American Beauty</i> (1999) and the Pitfalls of Prosperity</b>	195
DIRECTOR SAM MENDES DESCRIBES HIS FIRST REACTION TO THE SCRIPT	200
TWO CONFLICTING CRITICAL REACTIONS TO THE FILM	201
DARK SIDE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM	201
<i>AMERICAN BEAUTY</i> IS AN AMERICAN HORROR	202
<b>Epilogue: Thinking About Your Movies</b>	204
<b>Credits</b>	207
<b>Index</b>	209