RICHARD BARSAM • DAVE MONAHAN

LOOKING AT MOVIES

AN INTRODUCTION TO FILM

THIRD EDITION

MOVIES

AN INTRODUCTION TO FILM

RICHARD BARSAM & DAVE MONAHAN

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藏书章

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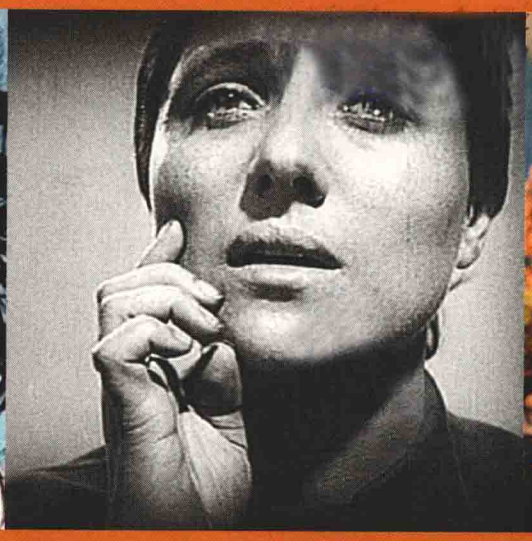

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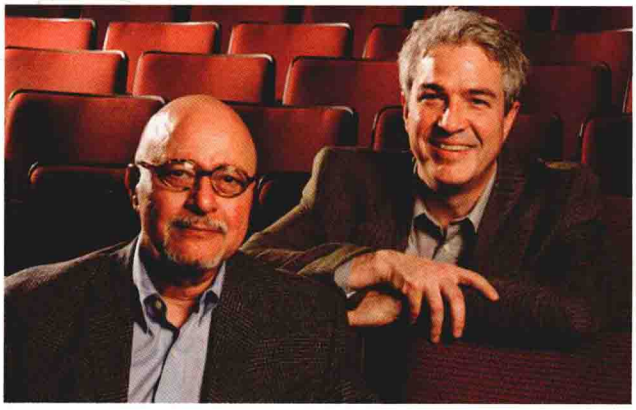

RICHARD BARSAM (Ph.D., University of Southern California) is Professor Emeritus of Film Studies at Hunter College, City University of New York. He is the author of *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History* (rev. and exp. ed., 1992), *The Vision of Robert Flaherty: The Artist as Myth and Filmmaker* (1988), *In the Dark: A Primer for the Movies* (1977), and *Filmguide to "Triumph of the Will"* (1975); editor of *Nonfiction Film: Theory and Criticism* (1976); and contributing author to Paul Monaco's *The Sixties: 1960–1969* (Vol. 8 in the History of the American Cinema series, 2001) and *Filming Robert Flaherty's "Louisiana Story": The Helen Van Dongen Diary* (ed. Eva Orbanz, 1998). His articles and book reviews have appeared in *Cinema Journal*, *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, *Film Comment*, *Studies in Visual Communication*, and *Harper's*. He has been a member of the Executive Council of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies and the Editorial Board of *Cinema Journal,* and he cofounded the journal *Persistence of Vision.*

DAVE MONAHAN (M.F.A., Columbia University) is an Associate Professor of Film Studies at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. His work as a writer, director, or editor includes *Ringo* (2005); *Monkey Junction* (2005); *Prime Time* (1996); and *Angels Watching over Me* (1993). His work has been screened internationally in over fifty film festivals and has earned numerous awards, including the New Line Cinema Award for Most Original Film (*Prime Time*) and the Seattle International Film Festival Grand Jury Prize for Best Animated Short Film (*Ringo*).

To Students

In 1936, art historian Erwin Panofsky had an insight into the movies as a form of popular art—an observation that is more true today than it was when he wrote it:

> If all the serious lyrical poets, composers, painters and sculptors were forced by law to stop their activities, a rather small fraction of the general public would become aware of the fact and a still smaller fraction would seriously regret it. If the same thing were to happen with the movies the social consequences would be catastrophic.[1]

Decades later, we would hardly know what to do without movies. They are a major presence in our lives and, like personal computers, perhaps one of the most influential products of our technological age. In fact, some commentators feel that movies are too popular, too influential, too much a part of our lives. Since their invention a little more than a hundred years ago, movies have become one of the world's largest industries and the most powerful art form of our time.

A source of entertainment that makes us see beyond the borders of our previous experience, movies have always possessed powers to amaze, frighten, and enlighten us. They challenge our senses, emotions, and intellect, pushing us to say, often passionately, that we love (or hate) them. Because they arouse our most public and private feelings—and can overwhelm us with their sights and sounds—it's easy to be excited by movies. The challenge is to join that enthusiasm with understanding, to say why we feel so strongly about particular movies. That's one reason why this book encourages you to go beyond movies' stories, to understand how those stories are told. Movies are not reality, after all—only illusions of reality—and (as with most works of art) their form and content work as an interrelated system, one that asks us to accept it as a given rather than as the product of a process. But as you read this book devoted to looking at movies—that is, not just passively watching them, but actively considering the relation of their form and their content—remember that there is no one way to look at any film, no one critical perspective that is inherently better than another, no one meaning that you can insist on after a single screening. Indeed, movies are so diverse in their nature that no single approach could ever do them justice.

This is not a book on film history, but it includes relevant historical information and covers a broad range of movies; not a book on theory, but it introduces some of the most essential approaches to interpreting movies; not a book about filmmaking, but one that explains production processes, equipment, and techniques; not a book of criticism, but one that shows you how to think and write about the films you study in your classes.

Everything we see on the movie screen—everything that engages our senses, emotions, and minds—results from hundreds of decisions affecting the interrelation of formal cinematic elements: narrative, composition, design, cinematography, acting, editing, and sound. Organized around chapters devoted to those formal elements, this book encourages you to look at movies with an understanding and appreciation of how filmmakers make the decisions that help them tell a story and create

[1] Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 280.

the foundation for its meaning. After all, in the real life of the movies, on the screen, it is not historians, theorists, or critics—important and valuable as their work is—but filmmakers who continually shape and revise our understanding and appreciation of film art.

The second century of movie history is well under way. The entire process of making, exhibiting, and archiving movies is fast becoming a digital enterprise, especially outside of the mainstream industry. As the technology for making movies continues to evolve, however, the principles of film art covered in this book remain essentially the same. The things you learn about these principles and the analytic skills you hone as you read this book will help you look at motion pictures intelligently and perceptively throughout your life, no matter which medium delivers those pictures to you.

About the Book

Students in an introductory film course who read *Looking at Movies* carefully and take full advantage of the accompanying DVD and other support materials surrounding the text will finish the course with a solid grounding in the major principles of film form as well as a more perceptive and analytic eye. A short description of the book's main features follows.

A Comprehensive Overview of Film

Recognized from its first publication as an accessible introduction to film form, *Looking at Movies* has expanded its coverage of other key topics in its Third Edition to be as comprehensive as possible, too. Three new and significantly revised chapters tackle important subject areas—film genres, film history, and the relationship(s) between film and culture—in an extensive but characteristically accessible way, thus rounding out the book's coverage of the major subject areas in film studies.

New Chapter 1, "Looking at Movies"

Focusing on the formal and cultural "invisibility" at play in film, this entirely new chapter strives to open students' eyes to the machinations of film form and encourages them to be aware of the unspoken cultural assumptions that inform both the filmmakers' work and their own viewing. A sustained, jargon-free analysis of Jason Reitman's *Juno* (2007) anchors the chapter and points students immediately toward the goal of acquiring the single most important skill in the study of film: an analytical eye.

New Chapter 3, "Types of Movies"

This chapter, built from the previous edition and from entirely new material, significantly expands *Looking at Movies* coverage of documentary, experimental, and animated films, and offers an entirely new, twenty-five-page introduction to film genre that helps students see why and how genre is such an important force in film production and film consumption. Six major American film genres—the gangster film, film noir, the science-fiction film, the horror film, the Western, and the musical—are discussed in depth.

New Chapter 10, "Film History"

This new chapter provides a brisk but substantial overview of major milestones in film history, focusing on the most important and influential movements and filmmakers.

A Focus on Analytic Skills

A good introductory film book needs to help students make the transition from the natural enjoyment of movies to a critical understanding of the form, content, and meaning(s) of movies. *Looking at Movies* accomplishes this task in several different ways:

Model Analyses

Hundreds of illustrative examples and analytic readings of films throughout the book provide students with concrete models for their own analytic work. The sustained analysis of *Juno*—a film that many undergraduates will have seen and enjoyed but perhaps not viewed with a critical eye—in

Chapter 1 discusses not only its formal structures and techniques, but also its social and cultural meanings. This analysis offers students an accessible and jargon-free introduction to most of the major themes and goals of the introductory film course, and it shows them that looking at movies analytically can start immediately—even before they learn the specialized vocabulary of academic film study.

DVD Tutorials

Disc 1 of the *Looking at Movies* DVD offers 25 separate "tutorials"—written directed, and hosted by the authors—that complement and expand upon the book's analyses. Ranging from 1 minute to 15 minutes in length, these tutorials show students what the book can only describe, and they further develop students' analytical skills.

"Screening Checklists"

Each chapter ends with an "Analyzing" section that includes a "Screening Checklist" feature. This series of leading questions prompts students to apply what they've learned in the chapter to their own critical viewing, in class or at home. Printable versions of these checklists are available on the *Looking at Movies* website, at www.wwnorton.com/movies.

"Writing about Movies"

Written by Karen Gocsik (Executive Director of the Writing & Rhetoric Program at Dartmouth College) and Richard Barsam, "Writing about Movies" is a clear and practical overview of the process of writing papers for film-studies courses. This supplement is packaged free of charge with every new copy of *Looking at Movies* and is also available on the *Looking at Movies* Web site, www.wwnorton.com/movies.

The Most Visually Dynamic Text Available

Looking at Movies was written with one goal in mind: to prepare students for a lifetime of intelligent and perceptive viewing of motion pictures. In recognition of the central role played by visuals in the film-studies classroom, *Looking at Movies* includes an illustration program that is both visually appealing and pedagogically focused, as well as accompanying moving-image media that are second to none.

Hundreds of In-Text Illustrations

The text is accompanied by over 700 illustrations in color and in black and white. Nearly all the still pictures were captured from digital or analog sources, thus ensuring that the images directly reflect the textual discussions and the films from which they're taken. Unlike publicity stills, which are attractive as photographs but less useful as teaching aids, the captured stills throughout this book provide visual information that will help students learn as they read and—because they are reproduced in the aspect ratio of the original source—will serve as accurate reference points for students' analysis.

Five Hours of Moving-Image Media

The two DVDs that are packaged with every new copy of *Looking at Movies* offer 5 hours of two different types of content:

- On disc 1 are the 25 tutorials described above. These DVD tutorials were specifically created to complement *Looking at Movies*, and they are exclusive to this text. The tutorials guide students' eyes to see what the text describes, and because they are presented in full-screen format, they are suitable for presentation in class as "lecture launchers" as well as for students' self-study.
- On disc 2, we offer a mini-anthology of 12 complete short films, ranging from 5 to 30 minutes in length. These short films are accomplished and entertaining examples of the form, as well as useful material for short in-class activities or for students' analysis. Most of the films are also accompanied by optional audio commentary from the filmmakers. This commentary was recorded specifically for *Looking at Movies* and is exclusive to this text.

Accessible Presentation; Effective Pedagogy

Building on its reputation as the clearest and most accessible introductory film text available, *Looking at Movies*, Third Edition, has been revised to be even clearer and more direct in its presentation of key concepts than its previous editions. The first three chapters of the book—"Looking at Movies," "Principles of Film Form," and "Types of Movies"—new to the Third Edition, provide a comprehensive yet truly "introductory" overview of the major topics and themes of any film course, giving students a solid grounding in the basics before they move on to study those topics in greater depth.

Having proven popular with students and teachers who used the Second Edition, the pedagogical features introduced in that edition have been retained. The following sections describe the highlights of the text's pedagogy.

Learning Objectives

A checklist at the beginning of every chapter provides students with a brief summary of the core concepts to be covered in the chapter.

Extensive Captions

As in previous editions, each illustration in *Looking at Movies*, Third Edition, is accompanied by a caption that elaborates on a key concept or that guides students to look at elements of the film more analytically. These captions expand on the in-text presentation and reinforce students' retention of key concepts.

Questions for Review

"Questions for Review" at the end of each chapter test students' knowledge of the concepts first mentioned in the "Learning Objectives" section at the beginning of the chapter.

Chapter-by-Chapter Pedagogical Materials on the Web (www.wwnorton.com/movies)

- Chapter overviews provide a short prose summary of each chapter's main ideas.
- The "Learning Objectives" section reviews core concepts for each chapter.
- More than 250 quiz questions test students' retention of core concepts.
- Printable versions of the end-of-chapter screening checklists allow students to take notes during screenings.
- The entire "Writing about Movies" supplement is available in convenient searchable and downloadable PDF format.
- The full text of the glossary is available online for easy reference.

ebook

An ebook version of *Looking at Movies* is also available, offering students an alternative to the printed text that is less expensive and that offers features—such as animated frame sequences of select illustrations—that are unique to the ebook. Students buying the ebook also receive the two supplementary DVDs. Visit www.norton**ebooks**.com for more information.

Ancillaries for Instructors

Instructor Resource Disc

For each chapter in the book, there are over 50 lecture PowerPoint slides that incorporate art from the book and concept quizzes; the Instructor Resource Disc also includes a separate set of art and figures from the book in PowerPoint and JPEG formats.

Test Bank

Available in Microsoft Word–, ExamView-, Blackboard-, and WebCT-compatible formats, the test bank for *Looking at Movies* offers nearly 500 multiple-choice questions.

WebCT and Blackboard Coursepacks

These ready-to-use, free coursepacks offer chapter overviews and learning objectives, quiz questions, streaming video of the DVD tutorials, questions on the DVD tutorials and short films, the test bank, and more.

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DVD Questions

Suitable for classroom discussion or for evaluation purposes, these 130 questions guide students' analysis of the short film clips and help them to understand the concepts described in the tutorials.

Norton Instructor Resources Site

The test bank, a brief instructor's guide to the DVDs, course Packs, and a sample syllabus are among the resources available at the online Norton Instructor Resources Site: wwnorton.com/instructors.

A Note about Textual Conventions

Boldface type is used to highlight terms that are defined in the glossary at the point where they are introduced in the text. *Italics* are used occasionally for emphasis. References to movies in the text include the year the movie was released and the director's name. Members of the crew who are particularly important to the main topic of the chapter are also identified. For example, in Chapter 6, on cinematography, a reference to *The Matrix* might look like this: Andy and Larry Wachowski's *The Matrix* (1999; cinematographer: Bill Pope). The movie lists provided at the end of each chapter identify films that are used as illustrations of examples in the chapter. In each case, only the movie title, year, and director are included. Other relevant information about the films listed can be found in the chapter itself.

Acknowledgments

Writing a book seems very much at times like the collaborative effort involved in making a movie. In writing this Third Edition of *Looking at Movies*, we are grateful to our excellent partners at W. W. Norton & Company. Chief among them is our editor Pete Simon, who guided us through the planning, compromise, and preparation that resulted in this revised, expanded edition. Other collaborators at Norton were Carol Flechner, developmental/manuscript editor; Thomas Foley, senior project editor; Marian Johnson, managing editor; Benjamin Reynolds, senior production manager; Eileen Connell, e-media editor; Jack Lamb, media designer; Katie Hannah and Spencer Richardson-Jones, marketers; and Conor Sullivan, assistant editor. It has been a pleasure to work with such a responsive, creative, and supportive team, and we believe that our collective efforts have resulted in a much stronger book.

Richard Barsam thanks the friends and colleagues who contributed suggestions for this edition, including Luis-Antonio Bocchi, Richard Koss, Vinny LoBrutto, and Renato Tonelli. In particular, I am delighted that Dave Monahan, with whom I worked closely on the First and Second Editions, has now brought his perspective as a teacher and filmmaker to his new role as a coauthor. For this edition, he reworked several chapters and, for the DVDs, created new tutorials and coordinated the selection of the short films. He is tireless in his energies, inventive in his approach to solving problems, and always frank in his opinions—in short, a perfect collaborator. Finally, I am grateful to Edgar Munhall for his interest, patience, and companionship.

Dave Monahan would like to thank the faculty and students of the Film Studies Department at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. My colleagues James Kreul, Mariana Johnson, Shannon Silva, Andre Silva, Tim Palmer, Todd Berliner, Chip Hackler, Lou Buttino, Glenn Pack, and Sue Richardson contributed a great deal of expertise and advice. In addition, many film-studies students contributed to the new and revised DVD materials by working on film crews, reviewing and rating short-film submissions, assembling filmmaker commentaries, and scouring movies for new examples and illustrations. Students Leo Hageman, Felix Trolldenier, and Brandon Smith deserve special thanks. Leo and Felix created the animation and graphic-design elements featured in the revised tutorials; Brandon did everything from assisting with film editing to building a homemade teleprompter.

I'd also like to thank my wife, Julie, and daughters, Iris and Elsa, for their patience, support, and encouragement.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my friend and mentor Richard Barsam for inviting me to be his writing partner. He's an insightful teacher and a generous collaborator. My contributions to this edition are a product of his guidance and inspiration.

Reviewers

We would like to join the publisher in thanking all of the professors and students who provided valuable guidance as we planned this revision. *Looking at Movies* is as much their book as ours, and we are grateful to both students and faculty who have cared enough about this text to offer a hand in making it better.

The following colleagues provided extensive reviews of the Second Edition and many ideas for improving the book in its Third Edition: Donna Casella (Minnesota State University), John G.

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