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The central idea of this book is to explore the nature of motion picture art through a series of essays written over the past fifty years. All the material is of a historical kind in that it deals essentially with the different ways in which film expression can be creative. There is also a programmatic dimension, not accidental, in the differences in technique and structure between movies and theater, and a third, more subtle, relation, philosophy and doctrine.

In selecting the material, I have looked mostly to material in American publications, much of it was collected in magazines of varying interest in the field suggested by individual authors. Many originated in English, French and one of very occasional other languages, some had to be translated from the films of the studios. The essays are usually responsive to the present-day conditions of film art, events, technical and commercial developments, they were written by varied authors.

Because this is a retrospective collection, many of the essays were chosen aside from their historical value for their suitability in a broad survey of the subject, creative growth. For this reason they are presented in a chronological format from 1920 to the present day. This arrangement is done, as is usual, with the essay in a more meaningful context, in dealing with the historical situation in which and in such a way as to demonstrate the reasons for the existence of the art itself. The chronological format means that it was significant in the way it was written, as evidence of a development in the art itself, and as a historical record.

It is my hope that this book will provide some stimulus to the study of motion picture art, and that it will be a valuable addition to the literature of the subject.