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Paula Marantz Cohen

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#856188 in Books Paula Marantz Cohen 2001-05-03Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.90 x .70 x 5.70l, .74 #File Name: 019514094X234 pagesSilent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth | File size: 24.Mb

Paula Marantz Cohen : Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Great read for anyone interested in media and visual cultureBy Natori MooreThis surprisingly profound book provides significant insight into the history of silent film in the United

States and how the primary building blocks of body, landscape and face came to be combined in film to put forth both conscious and subconscious ideals of American culture. The author uses excellent examples from U.S. film history and provides provocative food for thought throughout the book. The chapters are organized thematically very well and grant pleasure on first read, yet this book bears careful and repeated reading to glean maximum meaning. Anyone interested in how myth is promulgated through film and how the film medium as it developed in the United States was particularly suited to carry forth uniquely American ideals will find this book a good read. In addition, any reader who wants insight into how American visual culture came to dominate world media, for good or ill, will also gain value from this book. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This one is interesting. By Maria-Dolores Garcia-Borrón I like this one. Very interesting. Cohen is sensitive, and sensible; although I found some paragraphs that look so alike in most of the books I also book; these American authors who wrote on landscape and film, they probably had the same of very similar professors, and all read Barbara Novak, and other contemporary art historians. But I like this book.

Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth connects the rise of film and the rise of America as a cultural center and twentieth-century world power. Silent film, Paula Cohen reveals, allowed America to sever its literary and linguistic ties to Europe and answer the call by nineteenth-century writers like Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman for an original form of expression compatible with American strengths and weaknesses. When film finally began to talk in 1927, the medium had already done its work. It had helped translate representation into a dynamic visual form and had "Americanized" the world. Cohen explores the way film emerged as an American medium through its synthesis of three basic elements: the body, the landscape, and the face. Nineteenth-century American culture had already charged these elements with meaning--the body through vaudeville and burlesque, landscape through landscape painting and moving panoramas, and the face through portrait photography. Integrating these popular forms, silent film also developed genres that showcased each of its basic elements: the body in comedy, the landscape in the western, and the face in melodrama. At the same time, it helped produce a new idea of character, embodied in the American movie star. Cohen's book offers a fascinating new perspective on American cultural history. It shows how nineteenth-century literature can be said to anticipate twentieth-century film--how Douglas Fairbanks was, in a sense, successor to Walt Whitman. And rather than condemning the culture of celebrity and consumption that early Hollywood helped inspire, the book highlights the creative and democratic features of the silent-film ethos. Just as notable, Cohen champions the concept of the "American myth" in the wake of recent attempts to discredit it. She maintains that American silent film helped consolidate and promote a myth of possibility and self-making that continues to dominate the public imagination and stands behind the best impulses of our contemporary world.

From *Library Journal* Veteran cultural critic Cohen (*Alfred Hitchcock: The Legacy of Victorianism*) explores the advent of the silent film, asserting that the early 20th-century medium represented what American society at the time both embraced (e.g., authentic expression and self-determinism) and rejected (e.g., antiquated European notions and societal stasis). The author considers the "raw materials" of film the body, the landscape, and the face and these components' respective 19th-century antecedents in vaudeville, panoramic displays, and portrait photography. She also discusses their corollaries in genre (comedy, the Western, and melodrama) and their film "vocabulary" (the cut, the long shot, and the close-up). Her contention that the medium is reflexive is not new, yet her seamless integration of seemingly disparate facts is refreshing and convincing. Cohen even reserves some praise for the consumerism fed by the star system and its concomitant fandom. The reader will gain insights into the American "myth" and will regret only that the book is so slim. A thoughtful, engaging, and scholarly study of the American myth of self-creation. Jayne Plymale, Univ. of Georgia, Athens Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Much of [Cohen's] stimulating book deals with a conjunction in American history, the arrival of film around 1900 just at the right time for a vibrant national mythology to find its perfect medium.... [She] posits a strong case for a marriage made in historical heaven between this mythology and film."--Stanley Kauffmann, *The New Republic* "Why as American pop culture become so dominant? One intriguing [explanation] is given [here.] Cohen...shows that the development of the silent film 'sustained the American myth and sold it to the world.'"--Edward Rothstein, *New York Times* "Cohen's seamless integration of seemingly disparate facts is refreshing and convincing.... A thoughtful, engaging [exploration] of the American myth of self-creation."--*Library Journal* "Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth is the most accessible account I know of the aesthetic and historical ramifications of this most remarkable of art forms. Beautifully written and imaginatively conceived, it provides a powerful introduction to the form for those who have never thought seriously about silent films and offers a splendid evocation of their power for those who already know and love them."--Jonathan Freedman, coeditor of *Hitchcock's America* About the Author Paula Marantz Cohen is Professor of Humanities and Director of the Literature Program at Drexel University in Philadelphia. Her books include *Alfred Hitchcock: The Legacy of Victorianism* and *The Daughter's Dilemma: Family Process and the Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel*.