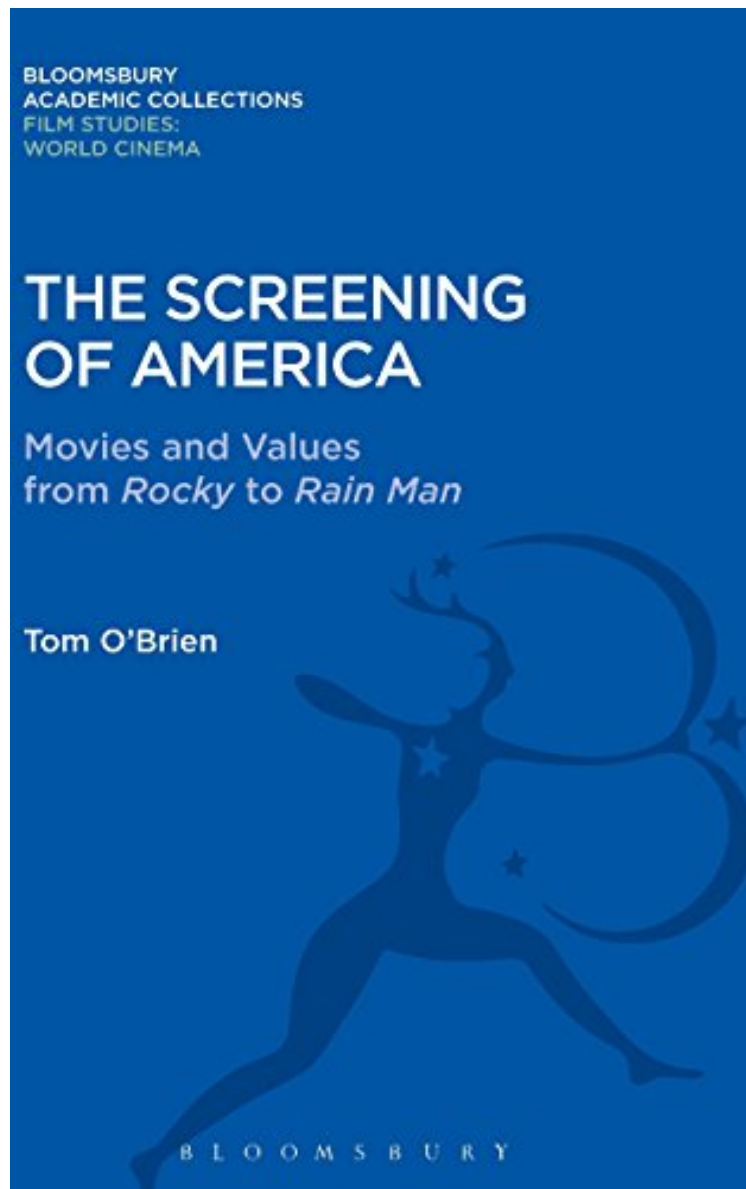


[FREE] The Screening of America: Movies and Values from Rocky to Rain Man (Film Studies: Bloomsbury Academic Collections)

## The Screening of America: Movies and Values from Rocky to Rain Man (Film Studies: Bloomsbury Academic Collections)

Tom O'Brien

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Tom O'Brien 2016-10-06 2016-10-06 Original language: English 233.93 x .56 x 6.141, .0 #File Name: 1474287972224 pages The Screening of America Movies and Values from Rocky to Rain Man Film Studies Bloomsbury Academic Collections | File size: 69.Mb

**Tom O'Brien : The Screening of America: Movies and Values from Rocky to Rain Man (Film Studies: Bloomsbury Academic Collections)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time,

and all praised *The Screening of America: Movies and Values from Rocky to Rain Man* (Film Studies: Bloomsbury Academic Collections):

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Learning How to See: Tom O'Brien, A Tutored Eye By Saul H. Benjamin When Tom O'Brien, the brilliant and complicated movie critic, died in 2007, few if any noted his passing. That he was a key leadership team member at the National Endowment for the Humanities, a former Dean of Manhattan College, a Rhodes Scholar and a Danforth Fellow and a Watson Fellow: these facts were recorded in his public obituary. But there may be, somewhere along the uncharted reader's road ahead, someone searching for a book about how to look at movies who might want to know something about Tom's remarkable, if in the end self-shattered life. I'm posting here the memorial I wrote about Tom, published in "The American Oxonian": Thomas W. O'Brien Colgate University, BA summa cum laude Oxford University, MA (Rhodes Scholar, New York Jesus) Columbia University, Ph.D. with distinction (Danforth Fellow) Watson Traveling Fellow Mellon Aspen Fellow February 27th 2007 When I first met Tom O'Brien, he was holding court --- animated, brilliant, self-deprecating --- from the closet of a flat in Oxford. Tall and brilliantly earnest, full of mischief and confident opinions; Tom stood out. If one were too quick to judge, it would have been possible to suppose that Tom was like those he most, and perhaps rightly, deplored. Years later in a letter recollecting those early days, Tom wrote: "None of us were anointed, but some of us sure acted as if we were". From the first, he recognized that Oxford was a gift to all of us; even though it easily encouraged, in some, the conduct of a preening rookery of show-birds. Not Tom. He believed and acted otherwise. He felt that the gods had thrown open a protected gate, and that he had somehow undeservedly crossed through and landed in a version of Paradise. New Yorker and Irish to the bone: energetic gratitude is what Tom felt. He would take Oxford for what its glories might provide. He loved every day: plunging into books and high teas, meandering through Wales and (with his dear friend and Jesus College fellow Scholar Darryl Banks) taking voluble sprints to Paris and beyond; returning often to his beloved Wordsworth's home precincts. And sometimes plunging into the River Cherwell, too. Given the upsetting facts of his death --- its long-coming, its haunted predictions --- those of us who knew and cared so much for Tom are especially aware that his life's journey after Oxford earned its hard mileage but left its worthy mark. There is much to salute. His hundreds and hundreds of students at Fordham and Manhattan School of Music and the University of Maryland, for example, surely know. His questions and stories and high standards will always be inscribed in their lives to their advantage. "Every question is a story", Tom would say. "Let the question teach". When I was invited to create an interdisciplinary honors program at Montana State University, I invited Tom to set us an example. An example he gave. His spirited talk about "Aristotle Goes to the Movies" held an over-packed auditorium in thrall; stunning in its scholarship, whimsically cunning in its interpretive ambitions. For two subsequent hours in The Conversation Room, Tom demonstrated that rare mix of exuberance and patience that is the signature of the born teacher. For weeks after his visit, students and faculty across the University found themselves citing and being re-inspired by what Tom had weeks before tempted them towards tackling and understanding. His readers, too. In "The Screening of America" Tom broke ground in film criticism in a series of coherently argued essays that offered stirring insights into how films make and move us; bringing into the public's view the larger moral and political currency of story-telling itself. In his widely appreciated articles in USA Today about the Civil War, Tom brought his vibrant and deeply-informed appetite for connecting history to our continuing everyday lives. Old books and past events came to life in Tom's journalism and story-telling. He had the blessings (and the burdens) of an enormously determined intellect: ever demanding upon the books he read or the films he reviewed; but chiefly on himself. But whatever his own self-indictment --- somehow he felt he had fallen short of what was expected of him, but by whom expected and why he could never settle the pressure of those questions --- Tom was in fact among the most accomplished of his generation. As Dean of Humanities at the Manhattan School of Music he designed and implemented truly innovative interdisciplinary programs of studies that integrated the liberal arts and the creative and performing arts. At the NEH, he reformed and extended the candidacy pool for scholars in the humanities, including interdisciplinary initiatives with the natural sciences. While at times at costly professional odds with the powers-that-ever-shall-bureaucratically-be, at his best Tom sparkled with humility but stood his principled ground. Through the years, he enjoyed and reveled much. A marriage to a talented and supportive partner, Alden Tullis O'Brien, that began with promise and shared delight but whose rough mileage at the end Tom in his knowing heart would lay the cause at his own failings. And the greatest of Tom's joy: Lydia (12) and Celia (10), his darling girls; like their father, engines of brilliance and sweetness. In the end, professionals argued and disagreed about how best to address Tom's increasingly fraught health and emotional balance. It is impossible to conjure what Tom must have been feeling or imagining as he stood on the platform of a Washington DC Metro subway platform, anticipating the in-coming force of a Red Line train on January 13th 2007. Put aside sophisticated or empirical diagnoses. Perhaps an old-fashioned account is best; a life's tenacity gave way to unforgiving sadness. But whatever he might at the end have believed, Tom's was not a failed life. Better to say it was a life incomplete, unfinished; deeply (perhaps too longingly) lived. Over the years since our years together at Oxford, Tom and I remained life-long friends. To fortunate others of our "young and promising" crew, Tom brought brotherhood; delightful and loyal, the most heartening of gifts. At times, his company was difficult

to share: so taxing on himself, so demanding of others, so opinionated about the world's failures. But most memorable, his humanity was his great achievement. Always, Tom was conscious of the world's mystery and its possibilities. He loved to learn and to teach. When he could, he tried to help others. If ever there were a telling insight to be voiced, Tom's brains and mischief would bring it forth. "We shall not see another", goes the fabled line. That is true. He was loved by many. We will, and always will, miss him. Even now I can picture him: standing in that North Oxford flat's closet, telling impossibly funny stories; tempting a crowd of us to offer our own. Even now, I can hear his mighty-hearted voice; the pitch and roll of it. Over the years, that voice changed; fell silent. But no matter how battered, something deeply wonderful could still rise. Especially when, turning to Lydia and Celia, the grace of reading a story aloud would bring out, now ever lost, Tom's abiding gift. Saul Hillel Benjamin April 5th 2007 Los Angeles

This is an original investigation of how movies have reflected and helped to shape the values of a generation. From *All the President's Men* to *Wall Street*, US films of the 1970s and 80s were a kaleidoscope of shifting values and contrasting moral viewpoints. Knowing that movies mirror the way we think we are or would like to be O'Brien focuses on the key values (or their absence) found in films from this period in order to see more clearly what Americans really cherished in life, and how these values have evolved or changed. Comprehensive and thought provoking, this book addresses how and why movies glamorized and portrayed certain professions; the changing role of women; the targeting of religion for satire; the addressing of environmental issues and film's representation of and engagement with history.

From Publishers Weekly The trend pieces collected here by Commonweal film critic O'Brien are meant to decipher how "old-fashioned values"--"patriotism, hard work, justice, and a sense of tradition or delight in history"--have revealed themselves in movies over the past decade. Beginning with a quote from Cher and ending with another from St. Paul, the author addresses recent developments in the film genre. *Rambo*, he asserts, reflects a growing American nationalism; sports movies reinforce our need to win; many flicks of the 1980s idealize the virtues of home. However, the book does not come to life until O'Brien seizes on the theme of religion and posits the "worship of irony" as an "odd kind" of new native faith. He claims that certain ideological assaults against films like *The Last Temptation of Christ* "reflect growing secularization in American society"; religion, he argues, is regarded by a number of that movie's detractors as simply another value, no more meaningful than any other. Not only are his thoughts in this vein original, they seem to be where O'Brien's heart lies. More detailed frame-by-frame analyses of films would have strengthened his polemics. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. About the Author Tom O'Brien worked as film critic for Commonweal and formerly chaired Humanities at the Manhattan School of Music in New York, USA.