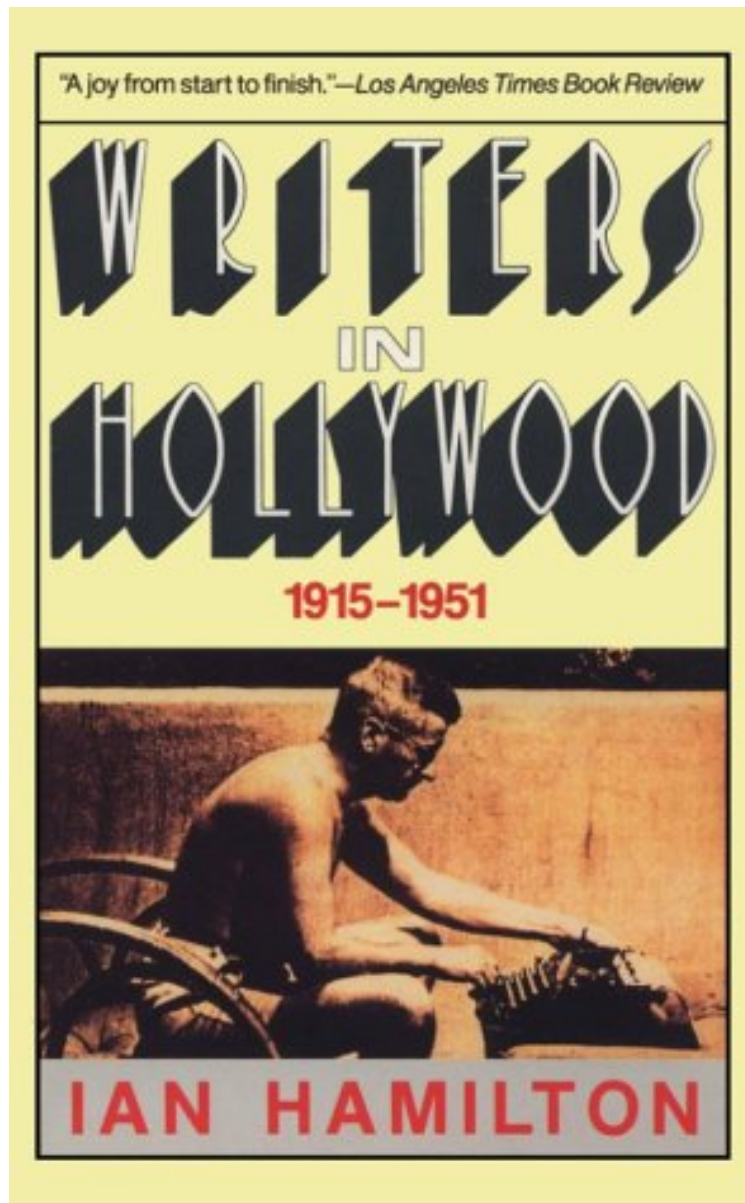


[Free pdf] Writers in Hollywood, 1915-1951

Writers in Hollywood, 1915-1951

Ian Hamilton

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Ian Hamilton : Writers in Hollywood, 1915-1951 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Writers in Hollywood, 1915-1951:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Hamilton over HollywoodBy Christopher (o.d.c.)...There is a story that Harry Cohn, the greatly dreaded boss of Columbia Pictures, once approached his writers' building and, finding it

in silence, shouted: "You people in there are supposed to be working." All at once, the typewriters within began to clatter. Cohn, enraged by this obedience, yelled: "Liars!" Having enjoyed Ian Hamilton's *Against Oblivion: Some Lives of the Twentieth-Century Poets*, and *Keepers of the Flame: Literary Estates and the Rise of Biography*, I expected *Writers in Hollywood* to be a pithy and engaging history of an inherently interesting time and place. Surely, some of this history is already legendary- F. Scott Fitzgerald's work on *Three Comrades*, Faulkner's work on *The Big Sleep* (with the assistance of young Leigh Brackett), the struggle of the tycoons against the Screen Writers' Guild which forms the backdrop of *What Makes Sammy Run?*- none of these and many more twice-told tales fall flat in Hamilton's re-telling. The entire book is rich with the ziest quotes and wryest critical remarks. An absolute treat from *Birth of a Nation* to the Hollywood Ten (about whom, it may be said, Mr. Hamilton lets the facts speak for themselves)...At the 1941 Academy Awards, Hollywood made a point of not honoring Orson Welles. *Citizen Kane* got one nomination--for the screenplay. Neither Welles nor Mankiewicz attended the ceremony. Welles was in Mexico, and Mankiewicz believed he was being set up for a humiliation: "He thought he'd get mad," his wife said, "and do something drastic if he didn't win." He did win, and when the award was announced: "Herman J. Mankiewicz," the "and Orson Welles" got "drowned out by voices all through the audience calling out 'Mank! Mank! Where is he?'" Mank was at home, listening to it all on the radio, already composing--for dining-out purposes--the speech he would have made if he had been there: "I am very happy to accept this award in Mr. Welles's absence because the script was written in Mr. Welles's absence."...On the day before shooting began, Wilder was "literally cr*pping in his pants." He confided his fears to Lubitsch, who decided that a bit of German-American solidarity was called for. On the first day, he turned up on Wilder's set with a small army of migr directors, "to lend Billy support and technical advice." William Wyler, Michael Curtiz, William Dieterle, and others were in attendance as Wilder launched into his Scene One. To start the picture, Brackett had written one of his best-ever lines: "Why don't you get out of that wet coat and into a dry martini?" The assembled geniuses, we might surmise, took this advice to heart: Day One was "a shambles," yielding not "a single foot of usable film." Highest recommendation. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A great place to live if you're an orange! By Christopher (o.d.c.)... "I do not predict the arrival of a screen Shakespeare this year, or next, or possibly during the lifetime of any of us. But there is a crying need and I, for one, am sure that the super-author of pictures will in the not too distant future rise like a colossus in our midst." The cadences are assuredly not those of H. L. Mencken. The speaker here is Jesse L. Lasky, partner of Adolph Zukor in *Famous Players-Lasky*, and we can tell from his prose what sort of Shakespeare he would settle for. This book is so rich, so brimfull with stories and quotes, that I have no compunctions about writing a second review (for the dead trees edition). Get it, read it, give it to a friend who loves old movies. Enhance your own enjoyment of *Casablanca*, *Citizen Kane*, even *I Was a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*..... Herman [Mankiewicz] was entranced by the climate and the vegetation: palms, vines, and eucalyptus trees could be gazed on from your office window, and on a good day you could have lunch with Charlie Chaplin. As to the work, the quick-tongued Mankiewicz had little trouble staying ahead of the game. Titles like "SHE WAS COOL IN AN EMERGENCY AND WARM IN A TAXI" or "PARIS, WHERE HALF THE WOMEN ARE WORKING WOMEN ... AND HALF THE WOMEN ARE WORKING MEN" seemed, to the Paramount chieftains, to be crackling with East Coast savoir faire. For Mankiewicz this was easier work than having lunch at the Algonquin: here no one answered back.... According to Julius Epstein, this Robinson claim is preposterous: "He wrote some test scenes for the actors, which we rewrote to fit the script. The only line of his that remains that I can remember is, 'A franc for your thoughts,' which I always thought was a terrible line. We fought to get it cut. Let me just say this ... the studio knows who did what. They made us producers right after *Casablanca*. ... They gave us a new contract. They gave us a whole bungalow with fireplaces." As to the Koch claim that it was he who shaped the politics: "If there was an arbitration panel in those days--if such a thing had existed--Howard Koch would not have received a credit. Because you have to have at least 30 per cent of a script to get credit. He never would have come close. No way." Of course, there was an arbitration panel in 1942, but none of the four claimants thought to make use of it. This could be because none of them knew that he was working on a movie that would turn out to be something to boast about: all the signs were that *Casablanca* was a stinker. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. *Sodom by the Sea*, *Dialectical Materialism by the Pool* By Ted Fontenot "Millions are to be grabbed out here and your only competition is idiots," Herman Manckiewicz urgently cabled to Ben Hecht in 1926, urging him to emigrate poste-haste to Hollywood. This book has a lot of great quotes like that, really good anecdotes go with them. I've read the thing three or four times over the years and refer to it often. It's about the role of writers in Hollywood, especially with the advent of talkies, and how those writers, usually novelists, playwrights, and newspaperman out of their element, only there for the money, adapted to Hollywood. This book is very well written, researched, and organized. It's an absorbing read. It covers guys like Mank (screenwriter of *Citizen Kane*, among others) and Hecht (who is in the finals for best writer of the golden age of Hollywood--the bit on how he "fixed" *Gone With the Wind* is priceless), who became Hollywood staples, but also those who were fishes out of water. It stresses the conflict that developed between the producers and the writers, their politics and creativity, culminating in the disastrous HUAC hearings. There's a lot about those who found screenwriting to be their metier, and also about those who found themselves strangers in a strange land, like F. Scott Fitzgerald and Wiliam Faulkner. Hecht: "A movie is never better

than the stupidest man connected with it."H.L. Mencken: "If Los Angeles is not the authentic rectum of civilization, then I am no anatomist."Jack Warner: "I don't want it good. I want it Tuesday." And: "I would rather take a fifty mile hike than crawl through a book."Sam Goldwyn: "I read part of it all the way through."And my favorite (David O. Selznick to Mankiewicz): "Write whatever you like as long as there's a love scene and the girl jumps in the volcano at the end."

The story of Hollywood has often been told from the point of view of the stars, the directors, the tycoons, but not until now from the point of view of the gallery of writers who helped shape it, including Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Chandler, and many others.

From Publishers WeeklyHamilton (In Search of J. D. Salinger) fails largely in his purpose to equate the work of often overlooked film scripters to the contributions of famous directors. The book opens with promise, telling about writers hired to subtitle early silents and pioneers like Anita Loos who sold original stories to the studios. But the chapters thereafter dwell on certain films per se rather than on the writers. There are, moreover, errors: In *The Best Years of Our Lives* , the veteran's hands were blown off, not, as Hamilton has it, his arms; the Nazi in *Lifeboat* amputated the American's torn leg, not his arm. It is another surprise to read here of Garbo's "frozen eyes, mid-European or muscular mid-Bronx" speech (*Queen Christina*). In later sections the author covers such developments as censorship, the founding of the Screen Writers Guild and the competing Screen Playwrights, fights for credits between collaborators--for example, Orson Welles vs. Herman Mankiewicz(*Citizen Kane*)--and the House UnAmerican Activities Committee hearings. The book ends in 1951 with the imprisonment of the Hollywood Ten for defying HUAC. Film buffs will find the book disappointing. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.From *Library Journal*Promising a new view of movie history--through the eyes of its screenwriters--Hamilton instead has produced a pastiche of tales: about successful screenwriters (Anita Loos, Dalton Trumbo), successful novelists who failed as screenwriters (Fitzgerald, Faulkner), blacklisted writers (the Hollywood Ten), and frustrated screenwriters (Ben Hecht, Herman J. Mankiewicz). Anyone who has perused a smattering of film histories will be familiar with most of this material, and even though the author attempts to sort out several writer controversies, e.g., who wrote *Citizen Kane* , there's not much focus and precious little new insight here.-Thomas Wiener, formerly with "American Film," Washington, D.C.Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.