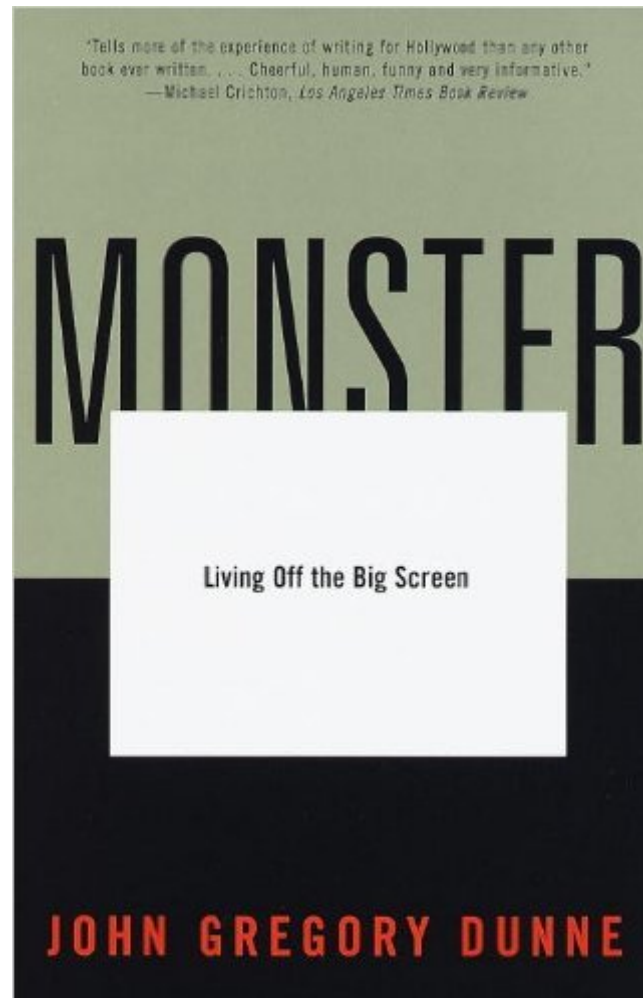


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Monster: Living Off The Big Screen



Synopsis

In Hollywood, screenwriters are a curse to be borne, and beating up on them is an industry blood sport. But in this ferociously funny and accurate account of life on the Hollywood food chain, it's a screenwriter who gets the last murderous laugh. That may be because the writer is John Gregory Dunne, who has written screenplays, along with novels and non-fiction, for thirty years. In 1988 Dunne and his wife, Joan Didion, were asked to write a screenplay about the dark and complicated life of the late TV anchorwoman Jessica Savitch. Eight years and twenty-seven drafts later, this script was made into the fairy tale "Up Close and Personal" starring Robert Redford and Michelle Pfeiffer. Detailing the meetings, rewrites, fights, firings, and distractions attendant to the making of a single picture, *Monster* illuminates the process with sagacity and raucous wit.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If one likes a film, one may read about it to enhance the pleasure. In the case of "Up Close and Personal," that order for me was reversed. I read "Monster" before seeing the movie, the making of which is the subject of John Gregory Dunne's (1932-2003) book. This turns out to be the right order. The film, about love and ambition in the news business, is a smooth, competent Hollywood job, with A list performers (Robert Redford, Michelle Pfeiffer), but, in a word invented by Donald Barthelme, a *sub-memorable*. According to Dunne, it took years and countless rewrites before "Up Close and Personal" was produced. The first half of his account is a highly amusing, funny, ironic insider's look at the movie business from a screenwriter's perspective, full of sharp, cynical views of Hollywood foibles, customs, jargon, greediness, vanities, animosities, and

eccentric, sometimes self-destructive behavior and thinking. Many laughs. Dunne and his wife, Joan Didion, do rewrite after rewrite of the original script idea, a fictionalized biography of Jessica Savitch (1947-1093). Savitch led the kind of life on which tabloid newspapers dote. Attractive but not very smart, she went from rags-to-riches, with multiple bed partners, â™ & â™ , some famous, and had a cocaine habit and an on-air meltdown, followed by an early death. Gradually, to make a more conventional, commercially viable story, these edges were smoothed away. Why did Dunne and Didion agree to that? They needed money, and they were paid extremely well, although often they had to fight to get what was contractually theirs. The cheapness and borderline illegal ruthlessness of the Disney studio is a running theme throughout. The second half of "Monster" is less amusing than the first.

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