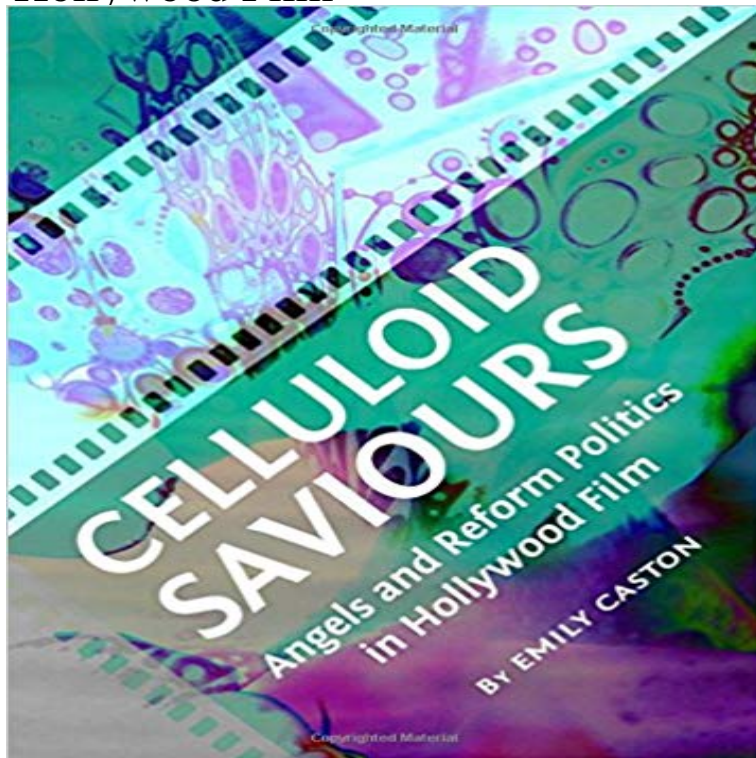


Celluloid Saviours: Angels, Deus Ex Machina and Reform Politics in Hollywood Film



In *Celluloid Saviours*, the author analyses a corpus of US films dating from the silent era that she calls film blanc. In these fantasy films, a guardian spirit with extraordinary powers suspends the ordinary, known laws of time and space, and a main character reforms himself or herself in life-changing ways. The author argues that the historical pattern of film blanc relates to the rise and fall of liberal and reform thought in US politics, specifically to conceptions of human nature as a tabula rasa. This conception is evident both in the early feature films featuring angels such as Chaplin's *The Kid* and much later examples such as the 1980s box office hit, *Trading Places*. She argues that this narrative tradition runs from Hollywood's beginnings to the present day and is foreshadowed in the English ghost stories of Charles Dickens. The classic era of film blanc is epitomised in the enduringly popular film, *It's a Wonderful Life*. More recent examples of narrative form analysed by Caston include *The Truman Show* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

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