



# Robert Altman: In the American Grain

*Frank Caso*

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Known as an iconoclast and maverick, film director Robert Altman has consistently pushed against the boundaries of genre. From refashioning film noir in *The Long Goodbye*, the western in *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, the psychological drama in *Images*, science fiction in *Quintet*, and the romantic comedy in *A Perfect Couple*, he has always tested the limits of what film can and should do. In this book, Frank Caso examines the development of Altman's artistic method from his earliest days in industrial film to his work in television and feature films.

Altman is one of those directors whose films audiences can easily recognize, but what exactly are the distinctive elements that have become his signature? Caso identifies more than twenty such elements in Altman's style, tracing some—such as his use of free-hand cameras and engagement with Christian imagery—to the beginning of his career. Caso also examines Altman's unsettling mix of offbeat comedic tone with a predominance of violence, murder, and death, showing how their counterpointing effects rendered his films at once naturalistic and otherworldly.

Exploring these and other aspects of the Altmanesque style, Caso maps the innovations that have made Altman a master filmmaker. Enriched with illustration throughout, *Robert Altman* will appeal to fans of this distinctive American auteur or anyone interested in ground-breaking cinema.

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