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Levinas and the Cinema of Redemption: Time, Ethics, and the Feminine (Film and Culture Series)

Sam B. Girgus

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In his philosophy of ethics and time, Emmanuel Levinas highlighted the tension that exists between the "ontological adventure" of immediate experience and the "ethical adventure" of redemptive relationships-associations in which absolute responsibility engenders a transcendence of being and self.

In an original commingling of philosophy and cinema study, Sam B. Girgus applies Levinas's ethics to a variety of international films. His efforts point to a transnational pattern he terms the "cinema of redemption" that portrays the struggle to connect to others in redeeming ways. Girgus not only reveals the power of these films to articulate the crisis between ontological identity and ethical subjectivity. He also locates time and ethics within the structure and content of film itself. Drawing on the work of Luce Irigaray, Tina Chanter, Kelly Oliver, and Ewa Ziarek, Girgus reconsiders Levinas and his relationship to film, engaging with a feminist focus on the sexualized female body. Girgus offers fresh readings of films from several decades and cultures, including Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1959), Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'avventura* (1960), John Huston's *The Misfits* (1961), and Philip Kaufman's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1988).

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