



The Movies on my Mind: Selected Criticism, 2002-2007

Bert Cardullo

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The main purpose of *The Movies on My Mind: Collected Criticism, 2002-2007* is to stake out territory for a certain type of film critic, somewhere between a reviewer-journalist and a scholar-theorist. At a time when the movie review has degenerated into mere publicity for Hollywood pictures and film scholarship has become entangled in its own pseudo-scientific discourse, the author offers close readings of individual films that go beyond simple plot summaries and vague impressions about acting (the province of the newspaper review), on the one hand, yet that pull up short of arid hermetic academic discourse (the province of the scholarly monograph), on the other hand. With elegance, clarity, and rigor, the author tries ever to demonstrate that the cinema means as well as shows, and his ultimate aim is to explain how moviemakers use the resources of the medium to pursue complex, significant humanistic goals. Thus, in addition to chronicling the vitality and richness of international film art, *The Movies on My Mind* aims to facilitate its understanding and appreciation. To wit, the reviewsâor, better, chroniclesâcontained in *The Movies on My Mind* are acts of analysis and interpretation in the humanistic senses of those words; they are neither theoretical musings nor pedantic tracts. As such, this book can be considered a call for the return of practical criticism as the best way to understand and appreciate the work of cinematic artists. These include, in the present collection, directors from such countries as France, England, the United States, Austria, Iran, Italy, Israel, Senegal, Afghanistan, Sweden, Finland, Columbia, (post-Soviet) Georgia, Japan, Argentina, South Korea, and Belgium. Contemporary films like *The Passion of the Christ*, *The Pianist*, *The Hours*, and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* are treated, as well as classics like *Winter Light*, *La Strada*, *To Be or Not to Be*, and *How I Won the War*. These review-essays themselves are supplemented by a bibliography of related criticism, directorsâ filmographies, individual film credits, and a thoroughgoing index. There are other books on international, art-house cinema, but there are few that feature the international or global perspective of *The Movies on My Mind*. It is to other collections of film criticism that this book should be compared, however, since its real strength is critical. And there arenât very many recent books that provide this kind of close analysis of contemporary movies together with a number of classics, and of some important directorial and critical careers as well. *The Movies on My Mind* thus offers a refreshing, readable alternative to both the facile, stargazing monographs that one can find in any chain bookstore and the arcane academic publications that deal with phenomenology, historiography, the politics of gender, race, and class, and the cognitive dissection of film style and technique.

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