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Scripture on the Silver Screen, by Adele Reinhartz

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tial corrective to the repeated equating of the male with the rational. And, indeed, there is a real richness in the comparison between Mary's assent to the angel, which was at one and the same time a forceful fiat combined with the greatest humility, and the role of philosophy to assert its fullest self while remaining conscious of its own limitations. But certainly, despite models of Lady Wisdom in Scripture and Lady Philosophy in Boethius, the Catholic tradition would both benefit from and survive deeper and more potentially painful introspection on how it has repeatedly and regrettably gendered rationality as a predominantly male trait.

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SCRIPTURE ON THE SILVER SCREEN

ADELE REINHARTZ
 WESTMINSTER JOHN KNOX PRESS, 2003
 \$24.95, 256 pages

Reviewed by Ann O. Alokolaro

Even educators in a Catholic school can find it challenging to engage students in a conversation concerning religion or the Bible. Teaching young people today can seem counter-cultural when competing against lessons taught on television, on the radio, and in movies. The Bible does not always seem applicable to today's world and the lives of young people. Thus, educators use creative ways to entice young minds to see a purpose in reading the Bible and learning about its teachings. Adele Reinhartz of McMaster University has discovered a way to engage students by meeting them where

they are. *Scripture on the Silver Screen* explains the connection between the Bible and Hollywood movies, showing how the Bible is used in movies. In gaining an understanding of the Bible, one also gains a deeper understanding of the movie which references the Bible. Reinhartz wants to “help others to an educated reading of the text against which movies and other popular representations of the Bible may be tested” (p. 188).

Reinhartz does not claim to have expertise in the movie industry and has only a limited perspective on cinematic criticism from a love of watching movies. Although a love of movies does not make a “film critic, a professional student of film, or a scholar in film studies” (p. 2), this does not lessen Reinhartz’s credibility. What expertise is lacking, Reinhartz makes up for through research of movies and knowledge of the Bible. Reinhartz developed a course that focused on examining the Bible through movies. Unable to find much text to support such a course, Reinhartz wrote *Scripture on the Silver Screen*, with the intention to begin a “starting point for reflection and discussion, whether by individual readers, students in formal university or college courses, or participants in less formal youth and adult education settings” (p. 4).

Reinhartz chooses 12 films that make references to the Old Testament, the New Testament, even the Book of Revelation. Each chapter begins with an introduction explaining a passage in the Bible, which gives the historical and literary context of the passage. Reinhartz then explains the film in a short summary. The summary gives a good idea of what happened in the movie, yet at the same time protects those who have not seen the movie because it avoids telling the whole story. In the case that a reader may not have seen the movie, such as with *The Sixth Sense*, Reinhartz warns the reader to stop reading until after he or she has seen the movie because this chapter will ruin the ending for the reader. When discussing the use of the Bible in the movies, the author divides this discussion into two sections. One section makes connections between the movie and the Bible within the movie’s plot and characters. The other section makes connections between the Bible and the movie’s themes.

It is in these sections that Reinhartz goes back to thoughts mentioned during the introduction of the chapter to bring everything together. This guides the reader easily through the process of reading the Bible and watching the movie. It is so engaging that the reader may find himself or herself wanting to read the actual passage from the Bible to see the connections made to the movie on his or her own.

When Reinhartz discusses *Fried Green Tomatoes*, the reader learns that Ruth is the only book in the Bible that discusses female friendship. Through explanation of the Book of Ruth and description of the use of the Bible in the movie, the reader can see that *Fried Green Tomatoes* is modeled after the

theme of female friendship in *Ruth*. Although one may have already found *Fried Green Tomatoes* to be a movie about female friendship, one may not have found that same theme in the Bible. *Scripture on the Silver Screen* at first seems to help readers better understand the deeper meaning behind the movies. Yet in some cases, the book actually gives a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Bible as used in the movies.

In most cases, however, one will gain a better insight into the deeper meaning of a movie. Such is the case with *The Sixth Sense*. Reinhartz introduces this chapter by explaining Psalms as a “collection of poems or songs that were probably written for use in worship in the Jerusalem Temple” (p. 82). Through the author’s understanding of the Psalms and *The Sixth Sense*, a relationship is noted between the main characters, Malcolm and Cole, in which both characters have specific responsibilities to each other, based on Psalm 130. In Psalm 130, there are those who cry out for help and those who listen. In *The Sixth Sense*, the ones who cry out for help are the dead people and Malcolm, and the one who listens is Cole. Reinhartz also makes a connection to the Bible with the perception of Cole in a cruciform position, one of the many characters in the 12 movies presented to portray this cruciform position. In understanding the meaning of Psalms, one also understands the deeper meaning of the movie and life: “*The Sixth Sense*, like Psalm 130, may be interpreted metaphorically as a film about the ghosts that plague us all and that can be laid to rest only by talking about them directly with those whom we love” (95).

Scripture on the Silver Screen will change the way one views movies. It will also encourage one to read the Bible. *Scripture on the Silver Screen* does not suggest that moviegoers must understand and read the Bible to enjoy a movie. The book does not suggest that those making films necessarily intend the viewer to catch the biblical references, or that the filmmaker even knows the biblical references. The book does, however, do an excellent job of making connections between two very different genres. *Scripture on the Silver Screen* would be a wonderful book to use as a reference in a classroom to engage students and encourage conversation.

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