

in people and things, we are reminded, as long as we are proud or contemptuous, haughty or self-absorbed. The good news is that this egocentric blindness can be cured by boisterous and self-effacing laughter, which enlarges our perceptions by restoring our sense of proportion.

5. Gratitude and Limitation: If humility is the only soil in which wonder can grow, then gratitude is wonder's fruit and limitation is wonder's flower. Put more prosaically, this theme may be represented as the conjunction of two thoughts: first, that all good things should be received as gifts; second, that our enjoyment of such gifts is perfected only when made subject to restrictions and prohibitions.

In addition to shedding some much-needed light on Chesterton's philosophical outlook, Ker's biography provides readers with an extremely detailed account of its subject's life. Due attention is paid to Chesterton's family background and upbringing, the trajectory of his career in journalism, his marriage to Frances Blogg, his relationships with friends and associates (especially Hilaire Belloc, H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, Maurice Baring, Father Ronald Knox, and Father John O'Connor, the real-life inspiration for Father Brown), his relationship with his younger brother Cecil (who converted to Catholicism roughly a decade before Chesterton did), his opinions on the leading political and social questions of the day, the evolution of his religious convictions, his conversion to Catholicism in 1922, his travels and lecture tours, and his final years. All of Chesterton's major works, and many of his minor ones, are analyzed with care and sympathy – perhaps a trifle too much sympathy, in fact. After all, not everything written by 'the prince of paradox' was pure gold, and a few of his countless socio-political pronouncements now seem facile or wrong-headed.

On the whole, however, I am struck by the fundamental soundness of Ker's account of Chesterton's many virtues as a man and of his excellences as an author. Although I am still not fully convinced by one of the book's major contentions – viz., that Chesterton was Cardinal Newman's intellectual successor – I am confident that most fair-minded readers of *G.K. Chesterton: A Biography* will conclude that its subject is a writer ripe for rediscovery, and that his best works deserve a sober second look from scholars. For this reason, Ker's scrupulously documented biography should definitely be judged a success.

DOUGLAS McDERMID

THE CELLULOID MADONNA: FROM SCRIPTURE TO SCREEN by Catherine O'Brien, *Wallflower Press*, London and New York, 2011, pp. ix + 192, £17.50, pbk

Catherine O'Brien is senior lecturer in film studies and French at Kingston University in the United Kingdom. She has published widely on the intersections between Marian theology and secular culture.

The Celluloid Madonna is possibly the first book to analyze the life of Mary — the Mother of Jesus — as portrayed on film. Focusing on the challenge of adapting Scripture to the silver screen, O'Brien discusses mainly those films that are Mary hagiopics — films that focus on the life, or some part of the life, of a religious hero versus representations of the Jungian archetype of the 'Eternal Feminine' or Virgin Mary archetype. She examines the often quite different ways in which Marian episodes have been portrayed in such films as Cecil B. DeMille's *The King of Kings* (1927), Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964), Franco Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977), Jean-Luc Godard's *Hail Mary*

(1984), Jean Delannoy's *Mary of Nazareth* (1994), Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), Catherine Hardwicke's *The Nativity Story* (2006), and Mark Dornford-May's *Son of Man* (2006). O'Brien analyses the cinematic portrayal of Mary from the intersection of Mariology (particularly that of a feminist critique) and secular culture that has inspired some of the most intriguing and contentious visions of this icon in cinema history.

The book is divided into five chapters. Chapter one presents the foundations of Marian hagiography mostly from the Gospel narratives but also from the long traditions of tales about Mary (including from the Koran) and the centuries of apparition stories. Chapter two offers us the different interpretations of the Annunciation and Visitation episodes. Chapter three analyses the depiction of the relationship between Joseph and Mary, particularly Joseph's reaction to Mary's unexpected pregnancy. Chapter four explores the life of Mary from the journey to Bethlehem to the Flight into Egypt (the 'hidden years' of Jesus's life) and Mary's response to the ('possible') divinity of her son. Chapter five studies the presentations of Mary during Jesus's public ministry to his passion and death. O'Brien concludes her book with Joseph Cheah's argument that 'when Christians talk about Mary, the first question should not be 'Who is Mary?' but rather, 'Who is Jesus?' ' (p. 162). She ends by stating that, although Hollywood is only partly successful on its portrayal of Mary, it still continues to pose these questions and invites the audience to respond.

O'Brien is to be commended for being the first to deal with the difficult portrayal of Mary on film or any other mass media. The book takes up the challenge not only of listing and commenting on films about Mary but tries to offer biblical and theological contexts for the key representations of Mary on screen. However, I would disagree with some reviewers (viz., Columbia University Press) that O'Brien offers solid biblical and theological contexts for the key representations of Mary. As a matter of fact, I would claim that the main weakness of the book lies in its Mariology that tends to be more from the 'First Wave' Feminist School, which limited itself to analysis of images of gender, than that of contemporary feminist critiques that are formally more sophisticated drawing on such methods as psychoanalysis and semiotics. The book also simply skims through a more traditional Catholic Mariology. This deprives the reader of a stronger point of reference to judge the different portrayals of the Virgin Mary on the big screen. Her Mariology becomes just one more interpretation of Mary as that of the film directors. Although the book claims in the introduction to explore the portrayal of Mary in Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Marxist, and atheist contexts, the book focuses mostly on films from a Catholic perspective thus leaving us dissatisfied regarding representations of Mary in other religious and non-religious contexts. From the films' perspective, O'Brien neglects to give the director's viewpoint or reasons for portraying Mary or a Marian scene in a certain way (which could be drawn from interviews and DVD 'extra features'); nor does she engage in a 'political valuation' of the films that would take into consideration the social, political, economic and religious milieu in which these films were produced (see Douglas Kellner's *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and Postmodern*). This would provide us with a richer insight on why a specific film chose to portray Mary in a particular manner.

Overall, the general public will find the book quite engaging and straightforward. It should be read by anyone interested in gender or religion in film, and equally by anyone concerned with the reception of religion in a secularized world.

ALEJANDRO CROSTHWAITE OP