

together in one's mind. Even so, a book that engages one this actively probably has already succeeded.

Hekima College, Nairobi

JAMES R. STORMES, S.J.

WORLD CINEMA, THEOLOGY, AND THE HUMAN: HUMANITY IN DEEP FOCUS. By Antonio D. Sison. New York: Routledge, 2012. Pp. viii + 161. \$125.

Sison here proposes the creation of an enriching interdisciplinary dialogue between Christian/religious theology and film. Although this dialogue is not new within the field of religion and theological studies, the insightful novelty of this book involves three important achievements that advance the conversation emerging between film hermeneutics and theological reflection.

A first achievement is the method S. proposes for this interdisciplinary dialogue. Theologians can easily be tempted to impose theological categories on film analysis, baptizing it with religious grammar. This method usually ends limiting the outcomes of a fair dialogue by setting an agenda that often manipulates both the questions and the results. S. avoids this by first looking at film *qua* film with its own autonomy and language, learning from the horizon of its own creative space. Theology thus benefits from its honest engagement with audiovisual storytelling, taking the way the story is told in the cinematic presentation as an organic whole. This strategy opens a more honest and critical dialogue, allowing theology both to give voice to the art-language of film and to encourage proactive theological conversations. When theology recognizes the “sacramental power of film as art, it can discover cinema as a *locus theologicus*, a place of divine revelation.”

S. leads the reader to exercise this methodology, but his eloquent and beautiful style takes the reader beyond the mere technicalities. As a great storyteller, he focuses on the film narrative, allowing theological reflection to sprout. While the reader may perceive in S. the training of a theologian with a well-rounded knowledge of film, S., being a filmmaker as well, clearly has a great passion for film. His knowledge and love for film making are such that his writings put into practice a method for art making: the art of discovering humanity in depth by means of an insightful interdisciplinary dialogue.

The book's second achievement relates to its content. By reflecting on films beyond the scope of popular Anglo-American blockbusters, S. immerses the reader in the current experience of living in an intercultural world, a “liquid” world in which cultural, national, ethnic, and religious identities are constantly being reconstructed. The reader is invited to focus deeply on the polysemic expression of the *humanum*, as narrated by films like *Billy Elliot* (Stephen Daldry, 2000); *Be With Me* (Eric Khoo, 2005); *The Son* (Jeanne-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 2002); *Kite Runner* (Mike Foster, 2007);

Lagaan (Ashutosh Gowariker, 2002); *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle, 2008); *Motorcycle Diaries* (Walter Salles, 2004); *Yesterday* (Darrell Roodt, 2004); and *Whale Rider* (Nikki Caro, 2002). These films present narratives that unsettle any attempt to make supremacist claims to what it means to be human. The content of S.'s deconstructive anthropology can be found in the works of the 20th-century Dominican theologian Edward Schillebeeckx, for whom the *humanum* is encountered not only in the positive prospects of human integrity but also in its negative counterparts or "contrast experiences." In the face of inhumanity—as portrayed in these film narratives—we are invited to discover a contrastive, "fragile" meaning of being human. These film narratives give voice and vision to contrasting experiences of suffering and struggle yet also express stories of human creativity and resistance to evil and injustice. The argument regarding what constitutes the *humanum* is therefore founded on a paradox rather than on a solid axiom. Following Schillebeeckx, S. suggests that God's mysterious presence among us can also be found in the paradox and fragility of human experience. Although S.'s choice of films does not display explicit or direct "religious" themes, it enkindles theological imagination, so that sparks of the divine may be perceived within cinematic stories portraying the paradox of being human.

The book's third achievement relates to its theological content. In S.'s thought-provoking work on Christian theology of incarnation, human corporality and experience express the divine, displaying the invisible in the visible, transfiguring the created world into a sacramental sign without suppressing the concrete lived, incarnate world. God's incarnation is dynamic and perplexing, for even in the midst of the imperfections and brokenness of life, we can encounter God's perpetual performance of love and compassion. This theological proposal enables creative crossings, inviting to a hermeneutical practice of intertextuality, wherein the human and the divine texts are intertwined through an enriching conversation between film and theology.

While the book can please a great number of readers interested in the relationship between film and theology, it nonetheless springs from concrete academic disciplines—mainly within the fields of film theory and theological studies—and may thus mostly attract students, researchers, and professors within these two fields. The book's close look at world cinema, and at intercultural and non-Western-centered worldviews, may also be appreciated by those interested in humanities in general, and in postcolonial studies in particular.