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CINEMA PARADISO: RE-PICTURING THE MEDIEVAL CULT OF SAINTS

By M.A. HALL

Transmission, appropriation, and change are fundamental to the notion of cultural continuity; continuity is often achieved through change. It is with some frequency that this presents itself as a self-evident pattern when one studies medieval material culture. Most recently this was the case in an analysis undertaken by the author on the cult of saints in medieval Perthshire (Hall 2006). There an observation was made on the continuation of relic cults in our apparently more secular world and out-with – but frequently overlapping with – the orthodoxy of the main religious bodies. In the wake of the release of Mel Gibson’s film *The Passion of the Christ* (US 2003) the media were full of stories of the mass production of holy relics, including nails and crowns of thorns, many of them available via the Internet. The popularity of Peter Jackson’s film trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings* (NZ/US 2001-03) created a huge demand for relics relating to the film (and to the author of the book from which the films were adapted, J R R Tolkien) including scams based around faked costumes from the film (Cameron-Wilson & Keen 2004, 159). Historically contextualised phenomenon these may be (they are most definitely of our times) but such relics of Tolkien or of the filmed Christ stand for many in the same psychological relationship to parts of our cultural landscape as the relics of saints did for some of our medieval forebears. I wish to examine this contemporary, part-continuing and part-appropriated notion of the cult of saints by looking at filmed depictions of saints, primarily in European tradition of cinema but also (to a lesser degree) its American off-shoot, i.e. the Hollywood tradition. Just as the colonization of America can be viewed as the last great medieval migration (see for example White Jnr. 1965) so the U.S development of cinema has its roots in European technological and cultural innovation. Cinema is not, of course, a medieval cultural form but its evolutionary trajectory can perhaps be seen as rooted in aspects of medieval material culture, particularly the plastic arts, manuscript illumination and printing and the performing arts, particularly religious drama with its propensity for movement. Cinema’s moving pictures of the saints stand on the border between faith and psychological anguish and its manifestations (on two levels, that of a given character in a film but also as cinematic or visual metaphor). As pieces of material culture they are broadly proportional to our own complex relationship with the cult of saints, as was medieval material culture to the medieval cult of saints. The cult of saints as a cultural form has also evolved and is not confined to a medieval temporality. It has evolved but continues to fulfil many of the same spiritual and psychological purposes, something that its portrayal in cinema helps to record. The present paper can be read as a chapter both in the cultural biography of cinema and the cult of saints.

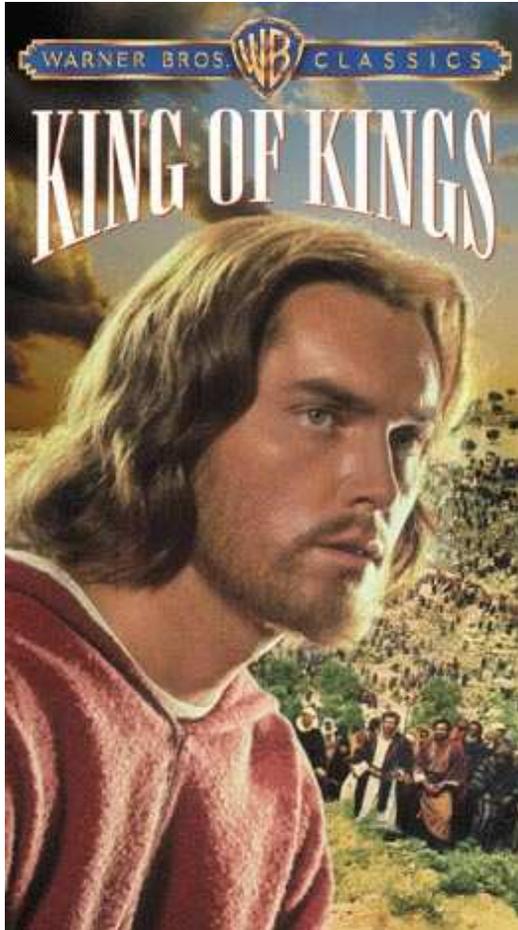


Figure 1: Movie Poster of King of Kings, 1961. Photo: Anonymous Collection.

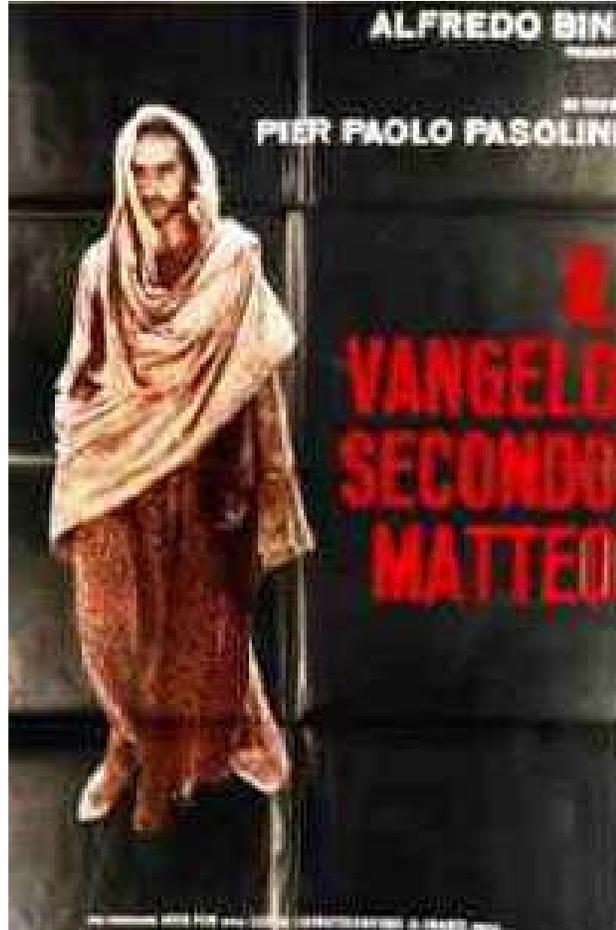


Figure 2: Movie Poster of Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo, 1964. Photo: Anonymous Collection.

Films that deal with the cult of saints fall into three main categories: biographical approaches to a particular saint, historical or contemporary dramas in which the cult of saints has a role (pivotal or incidental) and documentary or semi-documentary studies of the cult of saints as a contemporary phenomenon. The three categories are not exclusive and often they overlap but in the interest of clarity I propose to treat them discreetly. In terms of the biographical approach to particular saints this gives us by far the largest category of films. As one might expect the life of Christ is a popular cinematic subject and is a good example of where the categories structuring this analysis overlap, for the films of Christ break-down into three main categories where: Christ is the main subject, Christ is a supporting figure in a historical drama and Christ or a Christ-like figure has a role in a contemporary drama. Of the bio-pics there are at least 15 of these, most rather turgid and lamentable, though the 1960s Hollywood pair of *King of Kings* (1961) (**fig. 1**) and *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965) are notable for their hippy-generation Christs. Both are in marked contrast to P P Pasolini's *Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel According to St Mathew*, IT 1964), (**fig. 2**) a rhythmically poetical black and white portrayal that captures the humanity of Christ and emphasises his socially levelling role

(some would say his Marxist credentials). It is a film that stands in marked contrast to Pasolini's earlier anti-clerical Crucifixion short contributed to the film *RoGoPaG* (IT 1962). *Il Vangelo...* is also the film which has probably had most influence on the later re-picturings of Christ, notably *The Miracle Maker* (UK/US 1999) an authentically orthodox, not to say didactic, animated version with lively characterisations and a socially subversive dimension. More unorthodox is Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (US 1997) which also focuses on Christ's humanity, very much his personal humanity, that of a lived-life afflicted by all the temptations faced by every man. The eponymous temptation is that of Christ's dying vision of a full and sexual life with Mary Magdalene. In the medieval period this would have been an act of heresy but in a changed contemporary context compellingly defines Christ's life as fully human, though at the same time (and unintentionally) it also fuels the liminal or fringe fires of the conspiracy theory that posits Mary Magdalene as the Holy Grail (i.e. the vessel via which Christ passed on his blood-line), a notion given popular credence most recently by the fictional *Da Vinci Code* (Hall 2005 and the 2006 film). Finally we have the already mentioned *The Passion of the Christ*. This is in some ways orthodox and in others not: it fuses elements from all the gospels into one story with additions of its own and tries to persuade us of its verisimilitude by being filmed in (subtitled) Aramaic. It is visceral in the extreme and heavily concerned with inflicted pain and redemption. These elements have rather misguidedly led to its labelling as a "medieval vision".

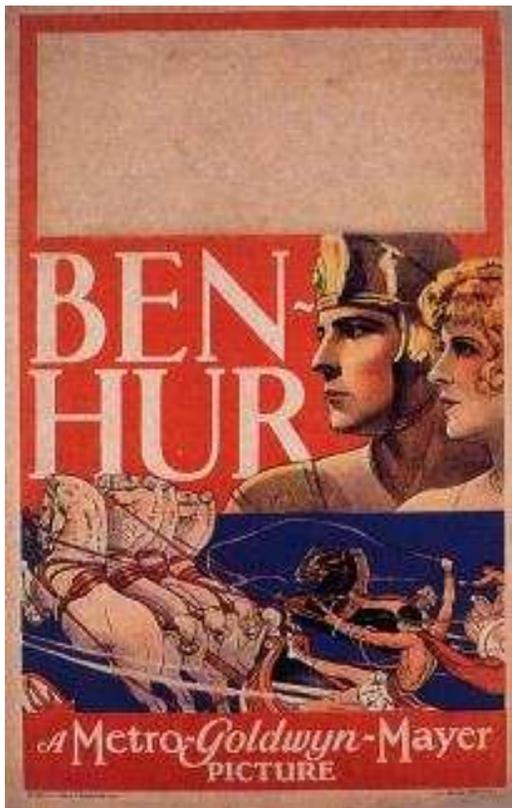


Figure 3: Movie Poster of Ben Hur, 1926. Photo: Anonymous Collection.

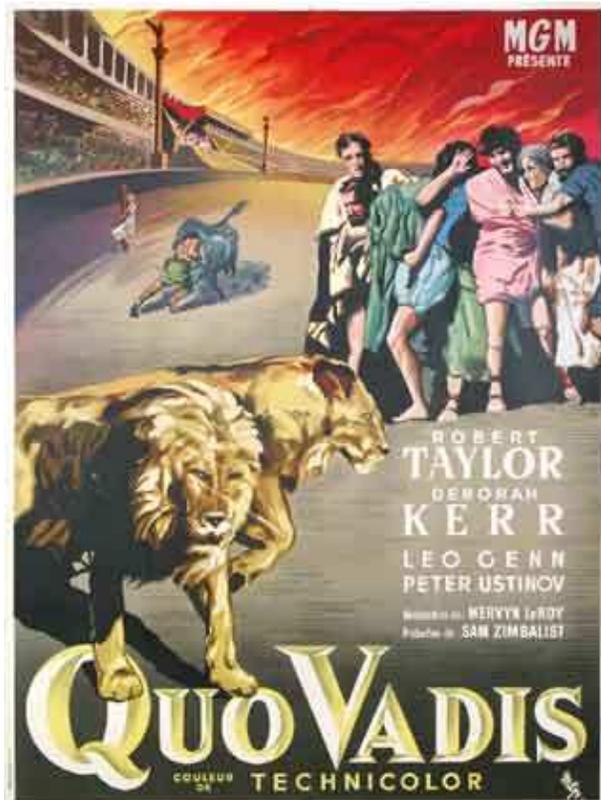


Figure 4: Movie Poster of Quo Vadis, 1951. Photo: Anonymous Collection.

The category of Christ as a supporting character in historical dramas comprises mostly Hollywood epics of the 1950s and 1960s (though there are earlier films); most of them weighty, worthy and rather dull but not without some colour and flashes of insight. They include *Ben-Hur* (US 1926 and 1959), (fig. 3) *Quo Vadis* (US 1951), (fig. 4) *Barabbas* (US/IT 1962), *The Robe* (US 1953) et al. They are usually set at the time of Christ's crucifixion or in its immediate aftermath. They do not usually center Christ as a character (i.e. his screen time is usually brief) and as a result generally give more telling portraits, with strong accents on redemption and forgiveness. *Quo Vadis?* is also notable for re-picturing the martyrdom of St Peter and the very medieval symbolic miracle of Peter's pilgrim staff set into the ground and sprouting into a tree. *The Robe* and its sequel, *Demetrius and the Gladiators* (US 1954) presence their Christ primarily through the relic of his robe, gifted to Demetrius on his conversion to Christianity and of which he becomes its keeper.

In the third category there are some half-dozen or so contemporary dramas in which Christ or Christ-like figures appear. Three recent examples of note are Denys Arcand's *Jesus of Montreal* (CAN 1986) – in which the priest of Montreal Basilica in charge of the annual Passion Play institutes changes that update the play and impact on the lives of those involved – Bruno Dumant's *La Vie de Jesus* (FR 1996) – a hard-edged updating in the cynical context of petty crime and drug abuse – and Alison MacLean's *Jesus' Son* (FR 1999), which also charts a hard-edged road to redemption. An earlier foray into anti-clericalism and a critical dissection of Catholic dogma is Luis Bunuel's *La Voie Lactée* (*The Milky Way*, FR/IT 1968) in which two tramps undertake a Bunuelesque pilgrimage from Paris to Santiago de Compostella, (fig. 5) their various adventures including an encounter with Christ. In contrast a number of more straightforward, sentimental portraits include *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* (UK 1935), (fig. 6) *Strange Cargo* (US 1940), *The Face* (SWE 1958) and *The Fugitive* (US 1947). Of valuable note is Francesco Rosi's *Cristosiè Fermato a Eboli* (*Christ stopped at Eboli*, IT 1979) a powerful political metaphor in this studied journey through anti-fascist politics in rural Campania of the 1930s.



Figure 5: Movie Poster of *La Voie Lactée* (*The Milky Way*), 1968. Photo: Anonymous Collection.

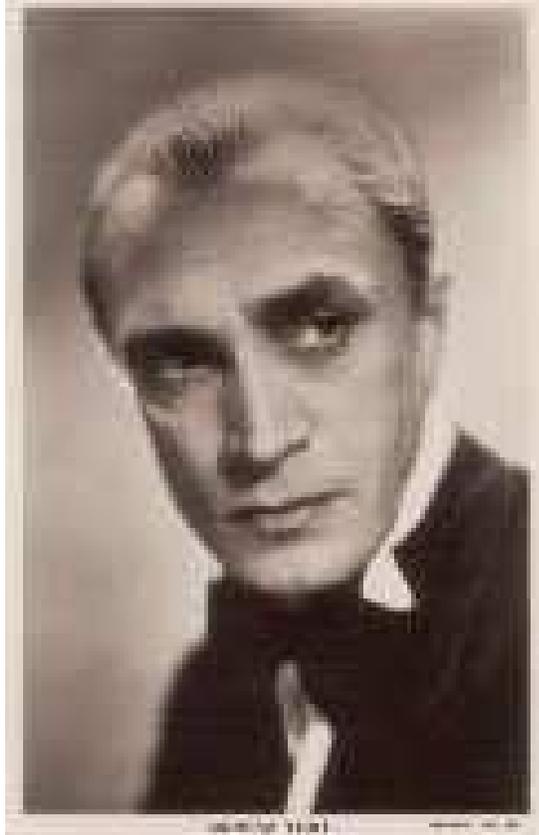


Figure 6: *Publicity Still of Conrad Veit from The Passing of the Third Floor Back, 1935. Photo: Anonymous Collection.*

Christ, of course can be seen as the well-spring of the cult of saints. His life and the impulse to religion are brilliantly satirized in *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (UK 1979). In a key scene, Brian's new followers see affirmation of his spirituality in a gourd he has given away and in one of his lost sandals (variously interpreted as signs of holiness and as rejections of materiality). The sandal is an astute observation and links into a long history of sacred feet that extends beyond Christianity. For example it evokes both Celtic inauguration rituals in the early medieval period, which in several places (notably in Ireland) is known to have included stone footprints and actual shoes (in Scotland the most well known of the footprints is at Dunadd¹) and with Christian pilgrimage: the footprint of Adam was a pilgrimage destination for both Christians and Muslims on a mountain top in Ceylon (as described by Ibn Battutah, see Mackintosh-Smith 2002, 247-9) and by the 16th century a common form of amulet was the measure of Christ's foot and that of the Virgin Mary. The foot and the shoe (perhaps the most intimate representation of any body part) had a wider ritual significance: the concealing of shoes within buildings was common across Europe from the medieval period on, mainly for purposes of averting evil and bringing luck (Merrifield 1989, 127-36). In later medieval England pilgrimage to the shrine of John Schorn, parish priest at North Marston, Bucks – who reputedly conjured the devil into a boot and trapped him there – was so popular that in 1478 the Dean of Windsor (Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Winchester) secured the transfer of John's shrine to St. George's Chapel; over 70 pilgrim badges are known (Spencer 1998, 192-95 and Merrifield 1989, 134-5). The foot was

clearly a body-part capable of symbolising the whole body or person and so also was the shoe, which as an item of dress so closely takes on the shape of the body part it covers. Its symbolic value was well known in the Roman period – foot-brooches are a common find as votive deposits (indeed the most common object-shaped enamelled brooch from Roman Britain is that in the shape of a shoe or sandal-sole – see Johns 1996, 177-8). Foot or rather footwear-shaped badges and amulets remained popular in the later medieval period and several examples are known from the Low Countries (van Beuningen *et al*, 2001, 316).

The link between feet and Christianity appears to have been made early: in the Coptic tradition Christianity was brought to Egypt by St. Mark. On arriving in Alexandria his first convert was a cobbler who repaired his worn sandal (Cannuyer 2001, 19). The story combines a religious symbolism with an awareness of the necessities of daily life. The sandals of other apostles were also culted. Trier Cathedral's relics include the presumed sandal of St. Andrew, kept in an elaborate reliquary surmounted by a golden right foot with diamond sandal straps (Henderson 1977, 15; Nees 2002, 231 and pl. 134).² Somewhat ironically we get a glimpse of the church's economic necessities through foot-related placenames. A cluster of Pictish-originating names around the church centre of Abernethy, Perthshire has been analysed by Simon Taylor and they include a Pittenbrog or 'holding/estate of the shoes', indicating a piece of land whose income/produce was dedicated to providing footwear to the religious community in Abernethy. At a later date, Shoe Lane, London, referred to an endowment of land to provide footwear to a monastic community (Taylor forthcoming; Hart 1972). Feet were of course generally essential to pilgrimage, and the sheer act of movement across the landscape would have given the culting of feet an extra resonance.

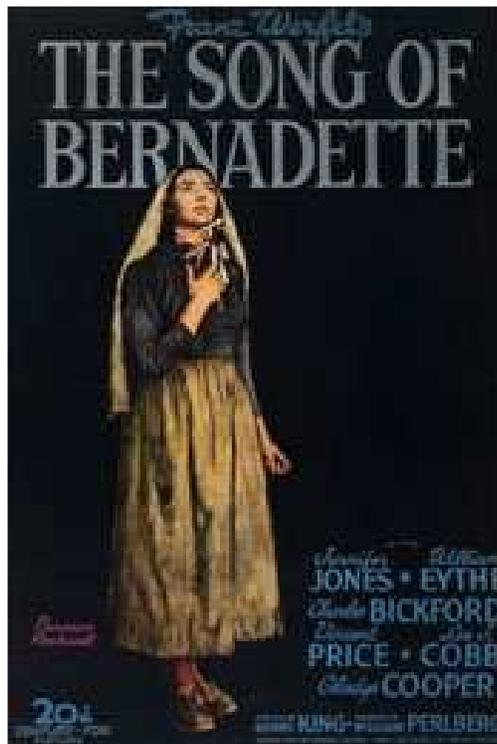


Figure 7: *Movie Poster of The Song of Bernadette, 1943.*
Photo: Anonymous Collection.

To return to the cinematic path, even more prolific than films of Christ are cinematic re-picturings of St. Joan of Arc (see Farmer 1992 for a synopsis of this saint). Medieval female saints are infrequently depicted in film and often more recent saints are preferred, e.g. St. Bernadette of Lourdes (which, of course, is also a tale of Marian devotion) in the sanitised, unquestioning *The Song of Bernadette* (US 1943, d. H. King). **(fig. 7)** Film critic James Agee astutely commented on this film: ‘A tamed and pretty image, highly varnished, sensitively lit and exhibited behind immaculate glass, the window at once of a shrine and of a box office.’ ; in fact a not untypical combination for a medieval saints’ shrine. Generally however the female saints are confined to supporting role in cinema which makes it all the more surprising at first glance to see the huge attention lavished on St. Joan. She was only officially canonized by the Vatican in 1920, but the popular lauding of saints that were not always officially recognised is a persistent trait of medieval Christian practice (e.g. St. William of Perth, St. Guinefort and John Schorn, see Hall 2006, Schmitt 1983 and Spencer 1998, 192-95). From the perspective of the Catholic church she is venerated as a holy virgin rather than as a martyr (another medieval tradition) and it took the Church nearly 500 years to fully accept its role in what was basically a political murder (she was burnt at the stake as a heretic). This acceptance of guilt happened partly in response to the huge popularity she had acquired by the 20th century. Joan is an interesting liminal figure in terms of medieval sainthood but it is primarily her political martyrdom and her gender that has attracted the attention of film-makers, though, of course, both these aspects are linked to her sainthood. She is not what one might call a typical saint (if such exists) but, in terms of her filmography, she confirms the divergence between Catholic-influenced sensibilities (fused with a Marxist outlook) and secular ones (mainly evidenced in American popular cinema but not exclusively). In Hollywood saintly virtues have generally been transformed by capitalism into innumerable Santa Claus’s who work the miracle of endowing greed-induced materiality. Even where there is a glimmer of light any thoughtful ambiguity is often replaced by a drowning sentimentality, as, for example, in *It’s a Wonderful Life* (US 1946 d. F. Capra).



Figure 8: Movie Poster of Joan of Paris, 1942.
Photo: Anonymous Collection.

St. Joan's story has been filmed at least 14 times (see Lerner 1996, 54-59; and individual entries in Shipman 1984 for some examples) but this tally rises when one includes those films that allude to Joan as an example or that model their central character on her and her symbolic value, e.g. *Joan of Arc* (US 1949) and *Joan of Paris* (US 1942). (**fig. 8**) Of the direct filmings four have been made in the last decade, most recently the French version by Luc Besson, *Joan of Arc* (2000), but her film pedigree stretches back to the earliest decades of cinema, including Cecile B. de Mille's *Joan the Woman* (US 1916). In 1928 came C T Dreyer's Danish, austere masterpiece, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (*The Passion of Joan of Arc*, FR/IT). Lacklustre Hollywood versions followed in 1948 (*Joan of Arc*) and 1957 (*St. Joan*). The 1948 version starred Ingrid Bergman who went on to play Joan for a second time on film, in the 1954 Italian version, *Giovanna d'Arco al rojo* (*Joan of Arc at the Stake*), directed by her then husband Roberto Rossellini. Before that she had also played Joan on the stage. Frenchman Robert Bresson's elliptical, stripped down version which again focussed on the final hours of Joan's life, *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc* (*The Trial of Joan of Arc*) followed in 1962. Like Dreyer's film its prime source was the minutes of Joan's trial. St Joan is, of course, a French national and anti-royal heroine so it is not surprising that the French film industry has found her so appealing; but the European versions of her life also draw out the moral and spiritual complexities of a notable female saint who out-warriors many of her male contemporaries.

This exploratory foray into the subject cannot be exhaustive but one or two other saints deserve mention. First amongst them is St. Francis of Assisi. His story has been most recently filmed in 1972, as *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* (IT, d. F. Zeffirelli), a film

which lacks any medieval grit and gets (revealingly) side-tracked by presenting Francis in the contemporary early 1970s guise of a flower-power hippy. Indeed this updating so incensed Hollywood producer Stanley Kaufman that he commented on the film, in a pithily medieval vein: 'If I were Pope I would burn it.' Much more successful is the re-telling or re-picturing, *Francesco Giullare Di Dio* (*Francis, Jester of God*; IT 1950, d. R. Rossellini) which employed non-professional actors (including Franciscan monks) and emphasises the rejection of materialism and violence in a warm, earthy manner. It included a final scene in which Francis's brothers all spin around until collapsing giddy, the direction each is pointing to in their prone positions then becomes the direction each must travel on their preaching journeys – a brilliant visual evocation of the spirit breathing where it will (see *Un Condamne ...* below), but also of one aspect of medieval divination. The structure of the film also skilfully evokes its medieval source material because the film comprises a series of episodes each preceded by its own intertitle captioning the sequence, rather like a medieval combination of word and image in any number of tableaux and saints' lives sequential paintings. Rossellini went on to make a bio-pic of St. Augustine of Hippo and earlier had filmed a somewhat more caustic (because scripted by Federico Fellini), allegorical re-telling of the nativity in which a shepherdess permits her seduction by a stranger she thinks is St. Joseph so she can give birth to the Messiah: *Il Miracalo* (*The Miracle*, IT 1948). The filming of saintliness was an abiding concern of Rossellini's and we will meet it again shortly in its role as a backdrop to contemporary drama. Film critic Robin Wood (1980, 892) has adroitly analyzed this concern of Rossellini's

... as both mystical and practical: mystical, inescapably because the concern is with inner spiritual movement and perception, with mysteries only partly susceptible to explanation; yet Rossellini's saints are invariably recognisable human beings – they are like ourselves and we register their holiness as an extension of potentialities we intuitively understand and share. Its achievement is almost invariably linked with the confrontation of the fact of death and with the acceptance of the otherness of things: the human being becomes aware of his smallness in an infinite universe which is infinite above all in its possibilities of 'being'. The moment of self-realisation for Rossellini involves a simultaneous awareness of the strangeness and frivolity of things: everything is different, 'other', yet everything relates. Such an awareness dissolves the obstinacies of the personal ego, the self is released from its prison, the wholeness of the world is apprehended through the manifold otherness of creation. Through this experience the identical reaches the joy of acceptance and is transfigured.

St. Nicholas puts in a reasonably authentic medieval appearance as a supporting envisioned character in *Millions* (see below) but his filmography has tended to focus on his later cult manifestation as Santa Claus/Father Christmas, basically a Victorian re-invention that over-emphasises his seasonal role as gift-giver and turns him into the patron saint of capitalism and so sanctioner of greed. Of the numerous films that feature Santa Claus the theme of sanctioned greed is strong and often endorsed, usually with a weak, sentimental attempt to identify Father Christmas with the true meaning of Christmas (including *Miracle on 34th Street*, *Santa Claus*, *Santa Claus 2* and *Santa Claus*

the Movie), though the most recent foray into this territory, *Bad Santa* (GY/US 2003, d. T. Zwigoff) bravely attempts to do so with a criminal Santa whose redemption at least avoids sentimentality.

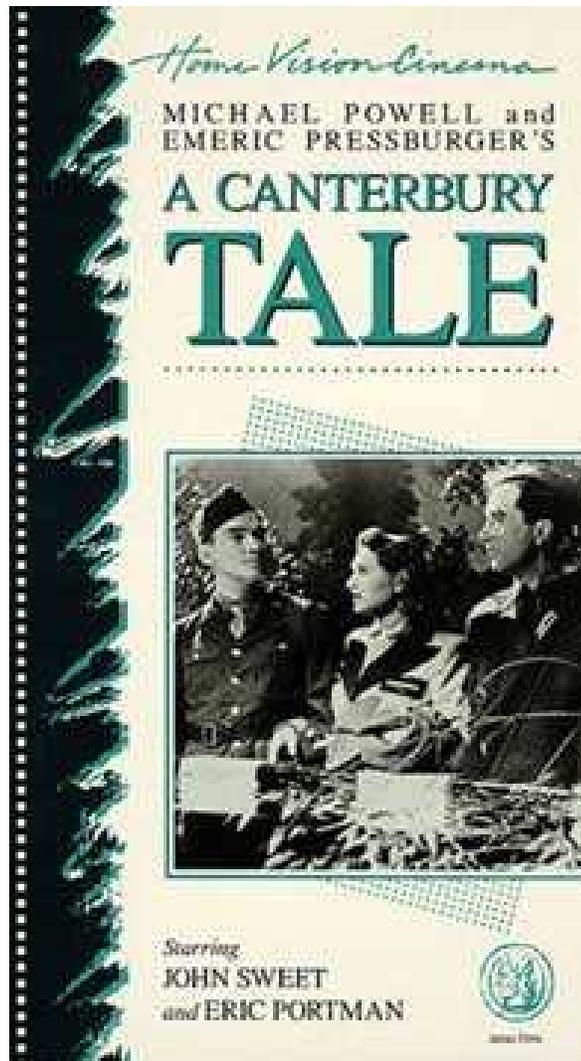


Figure 9: *Movie Poster of A Canterbury Tale, 1944.*
Photo: Anonymous Collection.

There is one film deserving consideration that makes no specific, explicit reference to a saint, but does make an implicit one, to St. Thomas a Becket and his shrine at Canterbury. The film is *A Canterbury Tale* (UK 1944, w., d. and p. M. Powell & E. Pressburger), (**fig. 9**) which thorough its title and narrative structure echoes or references (indeed the opening scene reconstructs) both Chaucer's literary evocation of pilgrimage – *The Canterbury Tales* – and actual pilgrimage to Canterbury. It is set during World War II and follows the fortunes of two soldiers and a land-girl. It concludes with a mass at Canterbury Cathedral (to mark the departure of troops before D-Day) that imparts a sense of the miraculous to the revelation that the land-girl's fiancé, long-presumed dead-in-action is actually alive. But this is an elusive thread and the film does not dwell on any

continuing cult of saints but instead emphasises a sense of what one can only call a changing-continuity and a rootedness in the landscape that the pilgrim's way conveys.

If we turn to our second category of films in which the cult of saints is more incidental or rather not concerned with a single, specific saint we might note to begin with that the magic lantern of cinema is almost the ideal artistic medium for depicting miracles (as it is for exposing them) for in the framework of belief-suspended that it can create it gives faith a convincing, real-world reality. This has never been more brilliantly achieved for a depiction of the medieval past than by Ingmar Bergman in *The Seventh Seal* (SWE 1957), structured as a film essay on the Dance Macabre and the devastating impact of the Black Death. It boasts a riveting and haunting sequence in which a vision of the Virgin Mary, as queen of Heaven, gliding across the ground through the early morning mist, beside a camp of travellers. Returning to Italy, E. Olmi's 1978 film *L'Albero Degli Zoccoli* (*Tree of Wooden Clogs*) includes a scene in which a woman's cow, found to be ill, is prayed for by its owner and it miraculously recovers. It graphically illustrates the popular Catholic culture in which the Italian peasantry were both liberated and confined. Olmi's camera observes the belief in saints and also politically condemns the social hierarchy with which it was entwined: the act of making a pair of child's clogs out of one of the landlord's trees so that the child could walk to school is done so without the landlord's permission and so the family is thrown off the land, with no trace of miracle to save them. A more sceptical tone is taken by F. Fellini in *La Dolce Vita* (IT/FR 1960), which plays its early miracle scene straight, but identifies it with popular, public hysteria, whilst prompting his audience to identify with the jaded, cynical journalist observing the event. It is almost the reverse to Rossellini's obverse, *Viaggio in Italia* (*Journey to Italy* FR/ IT 1953) in which a British couple whose marriage we have watched disintegrating are finally reconciled at the point immediately following a miracle (a man holds up his crutches) as a crowd watches a Marian procession in Naples: we are invited to see the reconciliation as a second miracle.

Perhaps the most spiritually focussed evocation of the miraculous is to be found in Robert Bresson's *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé* (*A Condemned Man Escapes*, FR 1956), the (real-life) story of a miraculous escape on the eve of his execution (thus evoking an episode from the life of St. Peter) of a French resistance fighter from a German prison. The film's alternative title is *The Spirit Breathes Where It Will*, a reference to Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3. This axiom can be said to inform another of Ermanno Olmi's films, *La Leggenda del Santo Bavitore* (*The Legend of the Holy Drinker*, IT/FR 1988) which charts the spiritual salvation of an alcoholic living on the streets of Paris, a salvation that is tracked through the alcoholic's visions of St. Theresa of Lisieux. Theresa, like Bernadette mentioned earlier, is a modern saint, still virginal but much gentler than her medieval counterparts. One final film remains to be considered within this category: *Millions* (UK 2004, d. Danny Boyle). A key strand of this film is that one of its principal characters is Damian, a 10 year-old boy who has visions of the saints. At various plot-points in the film's comic narrative he is visited in turn by st Clare, St. Joseph, St. Francis, St. Nicholas and St. Peter. They are visually presented as real characters though the implication is that they are psychological manifestations of Damian's troubled, Catholic-educated mind, struggling to cope with the recent death of his mother. But the film is not adamant about this and creates ambiguity around the question by having the saints – especially Peter – directly intervene in

Damian's life, raising questions about the power of faith and the metaphysical qualities of film. Damian's practice of the cult of saints is very stripped-down: we never see a church, an altar, a relic or an actively employed depiction of a saint. Damian's faith is very much an inner, non-material spirituality. When the saints appear they are a fusion of medieval and contemporary. Their dress is very much simple, even ascetic, medieval dress (with, for example, apostolic robes preferred to ostentatious papal ones for Peter) and their language (with regionally and nationally identifying accents) and manners (both Clare and Peter are smokers). We have a moving picture of holiness that is allegorical and veiled but also functions pragmatically.

Turning to the final category, documentary or semi-documentary studies of the cult of saints as a contemporary phenomenon, the number of films is much more limited. A number of the films already discussed are from the Italian Neo-realist school, the aesthetics of which give us natural, real-world looking depictions of contemporary practice, including religious festivals and processions. *Viaggio in Italia* and its Marian procession has already been cited. Watching the film makes it evident that the procession is a real event appropriated by the film for its narrative and for its ecstatic miracle of a cured cripple. Indeed, the film takes great pains to give its viewers a real social backdrop. Through out the film Ingrid Bergman's character visits a number of museums and archaeological sites, which allow her to make a bridge between now and then. One of the sites she visits is that of the temple of the Cumaean Sibyl and cult of Apollo, which she explores, led by an elderly male guide who tells her of the sibyl's association with young lovers and ecstatic prophesies. This visit, along with that to the Christian catacombs in Naples and the enforced participation in the Marian procession creates a sub-text in the film about the continuity and evolution of popular religious cult practice or syncretism. This accords well with more academic understandings of cultic continuity and appropriation. It has been noted for example that the close association between the sibyl and Rome led early Christians to consult her in their quest for evidence from pagan sources for the truth of Christian beliefs (Hornblower & Spawforth 1999, 1401). This can be seen as a reflection of a deeply rooted psychological response that can be paralleled in medieval attitudes, a way of wrapping-up continuity within change. By the end of the 15th century, for example, the recognized moral behaviour and good conduct of the pagan (but Christian tolerant) Roman emperor Trajan made him an honorary Christian to those late medieval eyes, one important enough to take his place in the cult of saints (see for e.g. the Burgundian Trajan tapestry, 'Trajan and Herkinbald', in which Trajan's remains are treated as holy relics, in Buri and Stucky-Schürer 2001, 41-63, pl. 32-35).

A parallel strand of documentary-like realism can be found in the cinematic supporting role given to the primary school Nativity play (a distinct modern day equivalent to medieval religious drama and again skilfully satirised in *Monty Python's Life of Brian*). As a manifestation of Nativity cult its filmic depictions are concerned less with the Nativity than with childhood (e.g., *Penny Serenade* US 1941, d. G. Stevens and *The Long Kiss Goodnight* US 2000, d. R. Harlin) or comic irony and the parodying of the adult world (e.g. *Love Actually* UK 2003, d. R. Curtis and *Millions*).

The remaining two films are more overtly documentaries. *Temenos* (UK/FR 1998, d. Nina Danino) is a visual exploration of places in Europe where the Virgin has "been seen" (including Lourdes, Fatima and Medjugorje) which on the surface is almost the

complete opposite of the medieval notion of sanctity, for it focuses on the places within their landscapes and their stillness and less on the creative appropriation of those places by people. This focus on place is also the driver of the documentary *Scared Sacred* (CAN 2004, d. Velcrow Ripper), which charts Ripper's five year pilgrimage (1999-2004) to the world's ground-zeros or sites of great human catastrophe, including Bhopal, Cambodia, Sarajevo, Auschwitz, Hiroshima and New York. It succeeds in revealing the link between sacredness and suffering and how places can become holy because of what people do or did there and how those events are responded to.

NOTES

1. For the use of footprints in the Irish context see Lane and Campbell 2000, 247-9 and pl. 28; at 248 they note comparisons from Ireland as analysed by Fitzpatrick, who suggests that paired footprints, where they occur, may have had an ecclesiastical rather than royal function. See also MacCana 1973, 160-66. For Dunadd see also Campbell 2003, 43-60; other Scottish examples include Finlaggan, see Caldwell 2003, 61-76. Footprints could also be linked to the cults of heroes, notably King Arthur, e.g. see Thomas 1988, 38-43.

2. Shoe and foot relics may have been more common than their meagre survival suggests: in Ireland there was the enshrined shoe of St Donard of Maghera, a brazen (i.e. a metal reliquary) shoe of Fínán of Kinnitty and the post-medieval shrine of St Brigid's shoe, see Bourke 2000, 10. Powerful feet could be manifested in other ways: royal St Wenceslas of Hungary is commemorated in the carol *Good King Wenceslas*, which includes reference to him leaving heated footprints in the snow which sustained his retainer.

References

N.B. Production details and credits for all the pre-1985 films mentioned in the text can be found, along with the unreferenced short quotes, in Halliwell 1984 and 1985 and also Shipman 1982 and 1984; for post 1985 films see the British Film Institute's monthly film magazine, *Sight and Sound*.

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