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Jann Cather Weaver©  
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## **Beyond Entertainment: Film as Religious Art for Congregational Vitality**

### **ABSTRACT:**

Film is trendy entertainment in congregations. On the surface, film tenders the illusion that its meanings are passively understood: film is illustrative, visual, and entertaining storytelling. Rather, film is a visual art form with living theological dimensions. Delving into films' interior art deepens the viewers' theological and spiritual discernment of the films' meanings for their lives. This essay proposes film-viewing methods as approaches to querying films' religious and spiritual dimensions as a means for congregational vitality. Congregational vitality requires rich religious and spiritual experience with theological understanding. Seeing film as religious art with specific methods and techniques serves this purpose.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Wednesday Evening Film Nights

#### Seeing film beyond entertainment

#### Seeing film as religious art

Film is trendy in congregations. Holding Wednesday evening ‘film nights’ is commonplace, as are seasonal film series. People huddle on chairs and couches with popcorn and soft drinks to watch a DVD version of a film. At times, the church has a typical television for viewing the film. Some churches have invested in large screen/platinum/HDTV televisions. Regardless, the purpose of the evening is to watch a film together and discuss it afterwards. The film night is church programming. It builds community. It is entertainment.<sup>1</sup>

Film nights are perhaps common in churches because, on the surface, film tinders the illusion that its meanings are obvious, requiring little work on the part of the viewer: one can passively understand a film’s meaning, for a film is merely meant for entertainment. Film, to many people, is illustrative, visual storytelling—except for the subjectively based documentaries that preach to the choir. The discussion following the film usually begins with the innocent yet insignificant question, “Does anyone have any comments?” Some viewers might comment on their favourite scene in the film. Other viewers might ask questions about ‘the meaning’ of a particular part of the film.

Perhaps someone might comment on a theological or spiritual dimension of the film.

Rarely, however, is the film engaged methodically or for any length of time.

Congregational vitality requires rich religious and spiritual experience with theological understanding. Seeing film beyond a Wednesday evening's community entertainment— seeing film as religious art— can provide the congregation with abundant religious and spiritual experience in congregational vitalization. Encountering God, living as God would have us live, and being expectant of God's continual healing and revelation, renews and revitalizes us. Congregational members renew and revitalize their congregations with rich religious and spiritual experiences, especially if matched with enlivening worship experiences. Thus, recognizing film as a specific form of religious art in which the individual and the community 'see' meaningful religious and spiritual dimensions contributes to congregational vitality.<sup>2</sup>

A 'good' film is a visual art form with living theological dimensions. What constitutes a 'good' film for theological and religious inquiry is debatable. For this essay, a 'good' film questions what lies at life's core, questions theodicy, meaning and alienation, with 'answers' left for viewers to ponder and discern. A 'good' film's narrative is poignant—particular and collective. The narrative has analogy of action, as it turns long-established myths into parables of perspective.<sup>3</sup> A 'good' film is aesthetically layered and multi-dimensional; it is cinematically beautiful. A 'good' film aesthetically moves us; the cinematography tells layers of story by evoking visual beauty through precisely composed artistically moving images. The art of cinematography creates beauty through *mise en scène* and montage, through the cameras' points of view and pans, shallow focus and slow motion.<sup>4</sup>

Films entrust musical scores to push human sensibilities to experience the interior of the film as an encounter with the numinous. Film that is religious art merges

the aesthetics of the visual, narrative, and musical score into a whole, illuminating art form; it lives within an “aesthetic reality” of immanent and transcendent meaning.<sup>5</sup> To paraphrase Jane Daggett Dillenberger, for art to be religious, it must be aesthetically excellent.<sup>6</sup> Delving into films’ interior art deepens the viewers’ theological and spiritual discernment of films’ meanings for their lives.

## COMMON GROUND

### Basic premises

Film is a community medium. Essential to discerning religious and spiritual dimensions of film is the community’s accumulative readings. No one interpretation or understanding of a film stands as the ‘truth’. Rather, interpretations and understandings arise from community discourse—at times, contentious discourse. When interpreting a film’s religious and spiritual dimensions, no ‘right’ answer exists. Many ‘answers’ and understandings exist. Many times the film leaves us with ‘answers’ in the form of more questions.

I liken this to the centuries of community who accumulatively discern the spiritual dimensions of visual art. This community sees Giotto di Bondone’s (1267-1337) early Renaissance frescos at the Arena Chapel in Padua, Italy, as religious art.<sup>7</sup>



This community sees Jacob Lawrence’s *Migration of the*

*Negro* series of 1940-1941 as religious art expressive of the hope and affliction of the



northern migrating african american<sup>8</sup>

And this

community of artists and archaeologists are left with more questions than answers when they imagine that the art in the Cave of Lascaux in France is religious art of the earliest



kind.<sup>9</sup>

Film, as any art, has a life of its own, beyond the intent of the artist/director. When released from the ‘control’ of the filmmaker, the interpretation of the film is unfettered from the filmmaker’s intent and meaning. God presents Godself in art regardless of the intention of the artist. God’s medium for revelation, for religious substance and significance, is not confined to sacred writings. Art—filmic art—mediates God to us and for us. The meaning the filmmaker initially meant in the art is transitory, uncertain, and available for scores of other possible meanings. At the same time, however, we must ready ourselves to confess the inherent possibility of eisegeting meaning from a film.

Furthermore, we are to listen and be prepared to change our interpretations and understandings of the film—and of God, our theological beliefs, and ourselves. Film as religious art invites us to move beyond entertainment and into the interior of film's religious and spiritual dimensions. These dimensions are never static. They are like quarks and particles randomly playing with each other, changing the nature of energy and matter. Therefore, too, we are to play imaginatively.<sup>10</sup> Guess! Propose possibilities! Play Ultimate Frisbee with the film. Within this playfulness, the film lets go within us; we behold God doing new things—and we perceive them (Isaiah 43:19).

## INTERPRETATIONS

### Allegory Analogy

Another issue with film as entertainment is an issue of interpretative forms. Interpreting film can become an interpretation of film as allegory. Allegory, meaning, “to speak figuratively,” is an expression made by means of symbolic figures. For example, the classic allegorical viewing method is to look for a ‘Christ figure’ in every film. To see Matthew Poncelet (Sean Penn) strapped to his cross-shaped execution table in *Dead Man Walking* (1996), or the re-programmed once-Terminator-now-saviour (Arnold Schwarzenegger) in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991), as ‘Christ Figures’, is to see film characters as symbolic re-presentations of Christ, that is, allegorically.<sup>11</sup>

While this allegorical understanding may ‘work’ for some viewers, it is laying upon the film our expected interpretation. If we expect to find a Christ Figure, we will find a Christ Figure, even if he is female, even if she is not there.<sup>12</sup>

To interpret *Chariots of Fire* (1981) allegorically, the Prince of Wales, HRH Edward, and his royal court of Lords symbolically re-present the multi-allegiant institutional church.<sup>13</sup> They pressure the Christian runner, Eric Liddell, to run his Olympic heat on the Christian Sabbath for the prestige of winning for the British Empire. The Jewish runner, Harold Abrahams, allegorically re-presents the oppressed Jewish people to whom God has promised victory and gold. Harold's devotion to his coach, Sam Mussabini, would, allegorically, make Harold a devoted disciple of Jesus. Eric Liddell, the Christian minister whose gift of running pleases and glorifies God, allegorically, would be Jesus, or even the Spirit of God.

Interpreting film allegorically fails to honor the visual art form of film as authoritatively authentic. This method assumes that film cannot be an art form with religious integrity unto itself. Analogously, to treat a Van Gogh painting allegorically, would be to say that his dimensional paint strokes are the Holy Spirit in his work. Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers* (1888) would allegorically be creation.<sup>14</sup>



*A Starry Night* (1889) is allegorically the angels whirling above us in the night sky.<sup>15</sup> These allegorical interpretations of the religious dimensions of Van Gogh's art disrespect the interior art's authentic religious and spiritual



dimensions. Allegorically interpreting

any art form places the viewer as eisegete over the art form's vision, rather than allowing the art to show its authentic realities to the viewer. When congregations entertain on Wednesday evenings by searching film's allegorical meaning, an opportunity is lost for viewers to encounter film as religious art; an opportunity is foregone for viewers to experience the religious vitality in film.

Another way to interpret film as religious art is through analogy. Analogy is a resemblance of some particulars between things otherwise unrelated or unlike. An analogue notes similarities and likeness, a metaphor, or a sign. An analogy, as a sign, does not participate in what it signifies; it does not symbolically point to something other than what it is. A book is a book, not the Bible. A table is a table, not the Table of Eucharist. Stars are stars, not seraphim and cherubim.

Analogically, however, a book can be a source of insight for characters in the film. A table can be a place of community, or where family breaks bread together regardless of conflict and trial. A starry night can evoke awe and wonder, a questioning about one's place within all the heavens. We query the film with questions about what is similar in our life, the life of a community, and the life in the world. How does/does

not the story in film, as cinematically presented, expand and re-arrange our view of God and ourselves?

*Dead Man Walking* is a story based on the life of Sr. Helen Prejean. As a screenplay, the story is a conflation of Sr. Helen's experiences working with prisoners on death row. Interpretative claims on this film range from anti-death penalty to a religious tract on the importance of salvation before death. All viewers have a right to an interpretation given substantiation. (More on this under the sub-section, *Discerning the Religious*.) One interpretative claim may be that the film is speaking about the nature of ministry. Analogically, Sr. Helen's experiences in the film lead us to examine the dilemmas in the ministry of accompaniment (lay or ordained) and power of relentless unconditional love.

To work analogically, instead of allegorically, the religious and spiritual dimensions of *Dead Man Walking* are im-mediate (not mediated by symbols) and pertinent to living out the vocation to which God calls us. Matthew Poncelet is not a Christ figure dying for our sins. He is a man, dying for *his* sins. Sr. Prejean's persistent love is God's love through her for Matthew. He never knew the healing of God's love until the last thirty minutes of his life. How do we bring forth God's persistent love for people we know and meet?

In *Chariots of Fire*, the Prince of Wales (in the year of 1924) has immense power, as is often the case for those in positions of power. Eric Liddell, a missionary Christian with convictions of faith more powerful than the Prince of Wales' power or the aspiration to win the Olympic Gold Medal, is analogous to someone whose faith

convictions (ethical, moral, theological) will not bend to the pressures of society to break with their belief system.

Harold Abrahams is uncertain about his place in the world as a “newly rich Jew ... in Cambridge Society,” given the stereotyping of Jewish people.<sup>16</sup> To prove his ethnicity as a Jew and as a member of the British upper crust, he needs to prove to that he, as a Jew, is equally as colonialistic and snobbish as any British Anglo-Saxon, if not more so. This is analogous to the ‘other’ determined by differences in ethnicity, race, gender, age, and *ad nauseum*-ism in a dominant culture, who acculturate to the dominant group’s ethics and ideologies of power and prejudice to lord-over the new ‘others.’<sup>17</sup>

To see film as religious art, the Wednesday evening film night group have the beginning interpretative tasks of discerning that evening’s film as, 1) a ‘good’ film capable of revealing religious and spiritual dimensions, and, 2) as analogy rather than allegory. The next element we need to discern is whether the film is explicitly or implicitly religious, to which we now turn.

## DISCERNING THE RELIGIOUS

Paul Tillich  
Explicit Religious Art  
Implicit Religious Art

Methods: Dialectic and Postmodern “Both/And”



According to theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965), art can be explicitly or implicitly religious.<sup>18</sup> In this Tillichian model, a film with theological and spiritual dimensions need not be explicitly religious, that is, about a religious figure or set in a religious setting. While many good films are explicitly religious, by confining the range of religious film to the explicitly religious, we imprison ourselves to a narrow set of films and a narrow experience of film as religious art.

Many good films are implicitly religious. While they do not explicitly deal with religious figures or stories, they engage core theological and spiritual dimensions of the religious life: compassion to the undeserving, hope against despair, belief over indifference, sin and forgiveness, reconciliation and healing, resurrection over injustice. Films engaging world conditions within human history reveal our religious and spiritual responsibility in righting relationships (righteousness) between nations and peoples. Films calling us into a wider world perspective and into a response of lived-out action are also implicitly religious.

Since Tillich’s method of discerning the religious dimensions of art is essentially dualistic, let us re-vision his method as either dialectical, and/or within a

postmodern paradigm of “both/and.” Visually, Tillich’s method, placed within a dialectical model may look like the following diagram.

**Explicitly Religious**



**Implicitly**

<p><i>Biblical Epics, The Last Temptation of Christ, The Passion of Christ, The Nativity, Mass Appeal, Jesus of Montreal, The Priest</i></p>	<p><i>Malcolm X, The Color Purple, Daughters of the Dust, Chariots of Fire, Chocolat, Matrix, Star Wars, Crash, The Constant Gardner</i></p>	<p><i>Billy Elliot, The House of Sand, Rabbit-Proof Fence, My Left Foot, Touch the Sound, A Beautiful Mind, The Namesake, Superman, Spider Man, Avatar</i></p>
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This model eliminates the dualistic fallacy in Tillich’s understanding of religious dimensions in art. We can work with a wide canon of films, seeing meaning, revelation, and other religious elements in non-explicitly religious films.

A postmodern “both/and” paradigm accepts and expects dissonance, discontinuity, unpredictability, ambiguous truths, and mystery, along with the seemingly opposites of consonance, continuity, predictability, and knowable truth. We live in “the between” and “the among,” in the “Yes” and the “No,” in the love and in the hate, not as opposites, rather as both together at the same moment and in the same event. We experience this “both/and” as religious and spiritual encounters.

Philosophers, theologians, scientists, and artists find resonance with a postmodern “both/and” religious worldview. In the Enlightenment (second half of the 18th century—the birth of modernism where reason was the authority), science abandoned religious elements to the realm of superstition and the improvable— that is,

lacking empirical evidence to prove its reality. In postmodernism and poststructuralism, scientific quantum theories are again speaking religious language of mystery and multiple truths.<sup>19</sup> As science in quantum theories returns to meet the religious, so too do theologies return to meet art in its various forms and styles.

Adding a “both/and” interpretative method to a dialectical revision of Tillich’s model liberates Tillich’s classifications from any semblance of dualism. We release from the dialectical model the tension of dialectics, and encounter a confluence of seemingly opposites. Discerning the religious in film becomes a holistic way of ‘seeing’ and accepting dissonance and truth as whole elements of faiths and realities. These two film-viewing models lead us to query film’s religious, numinous, and spiritual dimensions as a means for congregational vitality.

## CONCLUSIONS

Congregations can use the fad of film for developing theologically astute laity for congregational vitality. Film is a visual art form with living theological dimensions. By methodically delving into films’ interior art, the viewers’ abilities for theological and spiritual discernment in film and in their lives deepens. By ‘seeing’ the film text authentically, without eisegesis or allegorical interpretation, implicitly and explicitly religious film can analogously reveal ways of God moving in people’s lives.

Congregational vitality requires rich religious and spiritual experience with theological understanding. Seeing film as religious art with specific methods and techniques serves this purpose.

## ***SHORTHAND HANDOUT I***

### **WAYS OF "TROUBLING" THE FILM TEXT<sup>20</sup>**

#### Theological Reflection and Construction

1. Use a "praxis" approach to film as theological text. Move from the film, to religious and theological analysis of the film, which enables us to see the film anew. Repeat this movement. Similar to a praxis approach, we can repeatedly spiral between the film and theological reflection, spiralling into the concrete details and images of the film to deeper theological reflection. Spiralling adds dimensionality to the praxis approach, enabling richer encounters with the divine/numinous.

2. Allow for the inherent possibility of discerning meaning in the text beyond the director's/writers' intent, while at the same time confessing the inherent possibility of reading into/projecting onto the film a meaning that is not present. Art has a life of interpretations and meanings beyond the intent of the artist.

3. Examine film techniques for visual codes of meaning: shadows convey secrets or partial truths; film angles convey authority and perspective; the framed subject's relationship to others denotes levels and changes in relationships; mirrors reflect secrets; editing/montage effects transitions between scenes. These visual codes are interpretative devices for us to discern.

4. Examine narrative structure's use of time. The passing of chronological time is conveyed in various ways with visual codes. *Kairos* time occurs outside of chronological time. *Kairos* time is never measured; it is opportune, quality time. In a

transition point in the film, or in a time of crisis, time is experienced as *kairos* time.

Crisis is a rupture of the established order, bringing change and new prospects in *kairos* time

- 5. Move beyond the affective level of the film. Remaining on the affective level of a film sabotages a critical read of the text. Consider the movie, *The Piano*.<sup>21</sup> I talked with many people who had different responses to the film than I did. We see through our subjective nature. Nothing is objective or factual (postmodernism). It is art and interpretation.

6. See the film as one who lives in the margins of dominant society. Ask who is not re-presented or mis-re-presented. Ask what stereotypes (inherently oppressive) are repeated and reinforced. Ask how someone in a different race, gender, class, and culture might read this film as colonial discourse.<sup>22</sup> This is also known as using a “hermeneutic of suspicion.” A hermeneutic of suspicion listens for the silences in the text. “Search for clues and allusions that indicate the reality (peoples' experiences, and so forth) about which the text is silent.”<sup>23</sup> Whose story in the film text is not being told? Consider, for example, Korean and Korean Americans in urban America as portrayed in *Menace II Society*.<sup>24</sup> Talking back to films' silences leads to a discussion where hope may lie, where "transformation of silence into language and action" may happen.<sup>25</sup>

7. See in the film the images and narratives revealing (as in revelation) God's/the divine's vision more fully. Were the images and narratives purposely employed or not employed by filmmakers? Does the filmmaker purpose matter? Does this revelation have a theological/religious *analogy*? Ask whose reality or realities the film reveals that are new to viewer(s). What is that reality(ies)? For example, Ibo landing in *Daughters*

*of the Dust* reveals the storied-reality of captive slaves walking on water back to Africa rather than live lives of slavery.<sup>26</sup> The “Houses,” the communities of belonging in *Paris is Burning* reveals humanity’s need for commonality if the group is distinctive and particular from the dominant culture.<sup>27</sup>

8. If a film is based on a novel, examine the inevitable shifts and differences in the literary text when put to film. As if these shifts have theological and/or cultural meaning.

9. Find possible analogical comparisons in order to show a similarity in some aspect of current life. For example, in *Farewell, My Concubine*, the debate over classic Chinese opera and its inaccessibility to the “masses” of the Cultural Revolution is in analogical relationship to the debate over liturgy and the questions about its accessibility to Generation Y, millennials, and Generation E(lectronic).<sup>28</sup>

## ***SHORTHAND HANDOUT II***

### **RULES and RIGHTS OF DISCUSSION OF FILM**

*No 'right' answers* exist in interpreting a film. Rather, many answers arise out of the community gathered to see and discuss the film. Film is a community medium.

*Dialogue* by engaging the material and honouring others' insights. Arguments about interpretation defeat the theological task of viewing the film together.

*Listen and be prepared to change* your interpretation and understanding of the film, yourself, God, and theology issues.

*Play!* Use your imagination. Film has no static meaning.

### ***SHORTHAND HANDOUT III***

#### **SUGGESTED VIEWING TECHNIQUES**

See the film at minimum two times, if possible.

View the entire film from opening through the end of the credits; the film is not over until the credits are finished. For example, *Rain Man* has critical photographic images in the credits needed to complete the film.<sup>29</sup>

The visual aspect of film is not secondary to the narrative. Rather, see how the visual tells the narrative.

*Participate!* Look for and ‘see’ the visual and narrative subtleties, nuances. Nothing, especially visual, is accidental.

Look for visual “metaphors” and tropes/conventions:

A *synecdoche* is part of something the points to the whole, such as fast moving feet on sidewalk is a metaphor for the hectic pace of work.

A *metonymy* is an attribute of something that is used to stand for the “thing” itself. For example, a frame filled with the image of a gun in someone’s hand is a metaphor for the trigger-happy character of the person.<sup>30</sup>

Look for visual continuities or discontinuities between scenes.

Compare and contrast opening scenes with closing scenes.

Look for visual repetitions, that is, visual “phrases” which repeat, expand, or bookend the film.

Films are usually not allegories of biblical stories: Rather, any biblical stories hinted at might lift more meaning out of the film text. Honor the film as a film, a text in its own right.

Camera movement and angles denote meaning and the power in relationships.

Above all, do not look for a Christ figure. Rather, ask, “What theological issues or themes do the film raise in you/the community?”

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In its fifteenth-century Latin and French origins, ‘entertainment,’ meant to “maintain,” to hold together. (Old French, *entretenir*, from *entre-* “among” + *tenir* “to hold,” from the Latin word *tenere*. “Tenet” is also rooted in *tenere*.) By the seventeenth century, entertainment had taken on the sense of “to amuse,” as an entertainer was a public performer to amuse.  
<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=e&p=7>. Online Etymology Dictionary (accessed June 7, 2007). In Neil Postman’s *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, understands “amusement” as that which casts an unexamined spell on the viewer. In this spell, viewers adjust to incoherence and dissonance, and are amused into indifference. Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985), 110-111, 161.

<sup>2</sup> Jann Cather Weaver, “Seeing” in *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, ed. Letty Russell and Shannon J. Clarkson (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 254-255.

<sup>3</sup> Analogy of action, simply, is a double plot within a play or film. On a deeper level, analogy of action is “the interdependence of several stories so juxtaposed one to another so that each elucidates the central action, first by its similarity but finally by its difference. . . . In other words, various stories with their own characters are analogous; the unity of the work as a whole is to be found in the analogy of action.” Analogy of action deepens the meaning of a film, often leading us to the point where possible religious meaning can be discovered. Ernest Ferlita, “The Analogy of Action in Film,” in *Religion In Film*, ed. John R. May and Michael Bird (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 44, 45, 47.

Myths, in this case, are stories that maintain the established order and meaning of a particular worldview. Parables are stories that subvert the established order, disrupt meaning, and not meant to comfort us, often leading to a renewed and open worldview. For more study on this topic, see John Dominic Crossan, *The Dark Interval* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1988). As applied to film, see John R. May, “Visual Story and the Interpretation of Film,” in *Religion in Film*, ed. John R. May and Michael Bird (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 23-43.

<sup>4</sup> *Mise-en-scène* is a French term that originated in theatre. Literally, it means, “put in the scene.” “For film, it has a broader meaning, and refers to almost everything that goes into the composition of the shot, including the composition itself: framing, movement of the camera and characters, lighting, set design and general visual environment, even sound as it helps elaborate the composition. *Mise-en-scène* can be defined as the articulation of cinematic space, and it is precisely space that it is about.”  
[http://userpages.umbc.edu/~landon/Local\\_Information\\_Files/Mise-en-Scene.htm](http://userpages.umbc.edu/~landon/Local_Information_Files/Mise-en-Scene.htm) (accessed September 1, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Wilson Yates, “The Church and the Arts: Historical Reflections” (paper presented at the National Consultation of the Arts at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, New Brighton, Minnesota, June 7, 2007). N.B. ‘Transcendent’ does not need to imply only that which is higher, supreme, and above us. ‘Transcendent’ also means that which is beyond us, in a holistic, multi-dimensional form.

<sup>6</sup> *The Portrait of Jesus: A Shade of Difference*, VHS (New York: Manhattan Center studies, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Giotto di Bondone (c. 1267 – January 8, 1337), better known simply as Giotto, was an Italian painter and architect from Florence. He is generally considered the first in a line of great artists who

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contributed to the early Italian Renaissance. *Lamentation of Christ*.

[http://www.eyeconart.net/history/Renaissance/early\\_ren.htm](http://www.eyeconart.net/history/Renaissance/early_ren.htm) (accessed June 7, 2007-06-07).

<sup>8</sup> Jacob Lawrence, *Migration of the Negro Series*, 1940-1941. "No. 1: *During the World War there was a great migration North by Southern Negroes*." Panel 1, 1940-1941. Tempera on hardboard, 12 x 18. <http://www.uwrf.edu/~rw66/minority/minam/afr/oxford/69.jpg> (accessed June 8, 2007) and <http://northbysouth.kenyon.edu/1998/art/pages/lawrence.htm> (accessed September 3, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> *One of the Chinese Horses*, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/index.html> (accessed June 7, 2007). For further study, see *How Art Made the World*, DVD, directed by Francis Whatley (BBC, 2006), and Nigel Spivey, *How Art Made the World: A Journey to the Origins of Human Creativity* (Basic Books, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Victor Turner places 'play' as between and betwixt "reality and virtual reality." These liminal aspects of play may be understood as "a domain of 'as-if' rather than 'as-is.'" 'As-if' is subjunctive possibility, a place of great imaginative leeway, where what may be or might be have permeable edges of interpretation. Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York, NY: PAJ publications, 1988), 169.

<sup>11</sup> Symbolic re-presentations participate in the thing they re-present. They are signifiers that participate with the signified. For further study, see Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiotics* (Hill & Wang Publishers, 1977).

<sup>12</sup> *Dead Man Walking*, DVD, directed by Tim Robbins (1995; Polygram Video, 2000). *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, DVD, directed by James Cameron (1991; Le Studio Canal, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> *Chariots of Fire*, DVD, directed by Hugh Hudson (1981; Warner Home Video, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Vincent van Gogh, *Sunflowers*, 1888. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/paintingflowers/full\\_res/sunflowers\\_van\\_gogh.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/paintingflowers/full_res/sunflowers_van_gogh.shtml) (accessed September 4, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night*, 1889. <http://www.poster.net/van-gogh-vincent/van-gogh-vincent-starry-night-7900683.jpg> (accessed September 4, 2007)

<sup>16</sup> The Internet Movie Database: IMDB, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082158/plotsummary> (accessed June 7, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> For a study of this acculturation of prejudices, see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995.)

<sup>18</sup> [http://encarta.msn.com/media\\_121619522/Paul\\_Tillich.html?partner=orpFirefoxHTML%255CShell%255COpen%255C%20Command](http://encarta.msn.com/media_121619522/Paul_Tillich.html?partner=orpFirefoxHTML%255CShell%255COpen%255C%20Command) (accessed May 31, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> For further study see, Michio Kaku, *Hyperspace: A Scientific Odyssey through Parallel Universes, Time Warps, and the 10<sup>th</sup> Dimension* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994.)

<sup>20</sup> "Troubling" comes from an allusion to the Johanian text in John 5:2-9, where the pool in Bethesda healed people when it was 'troubled' by angels. John 5:4: "For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." (KJV) The African American Spiritual *Wade in the Water* has a chorus saying, "Wade in the water. Wade in the water, children. Wade in the water. God's gonna trouble the water." During the time of African American slavery, one source claims that *Wade in*

*the Water* meant, “while you’re going north, don’t stay on dry land, but get in the water. It will throw the bloodhounds off your scent. God’s gonna trouble the water, like throwing sand over the footprints—the water will have a saving effect.” <http://www.firstchurchoakland.org/wadeinthewater1joshua310116/> (accessed September 4, 2007). ‘Troubling’ a film is to cross the more difficult and spiritually troubling terrain of a film.

<sup>21</sup> *This Piano*, DVD, directed by Jane Campion (1993; Lions Gate, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> For further study on colonial and post-colonial discourse, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge Classics, 2nd Edition (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (Crossroads, 1992), 41.

<sup>24</sup> *Menace II Society*, DVD, directed by Albert Hughes (1993; New Line Home Video, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> Audre Lorde, quoted in Letty Russell, *The Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 35.

<sup>26</sup> *Daughters of the Dust*, DVD, directed by Julie Dash (1999; Kino, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> *Paris is Burning*, DVD, directed by Jennie Livingston (1990; Miramax, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> *Farewell, My Concubine*, DVD, directed by Kaige Chen (1993; Miramax, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> *Rain Man*, DVD, directed by Barry Levinson (1988; MGM Video & DVD, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> For further study of filmic metaphors see James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media, Multimedia: Language, History, and Theory*, 30th Anniversary Edition (New York: Oxford Press, 2007).