

Tony Watkins

Art's Desire: Responding to Film and Literature

The media (including the arts) play a dominant role in western society. This article argues that Christians should engage with them positively, since they are the product of God's image-bearers, yet critically, since they are also the expression of human fallenness. Focusing particularly on film and literature, this article briefly considers media and the arts in relation to the transcendental values of beauty, truth, and goodness. It sets out five aspects of a holistic response, taking account of the aesthetic, emotional, worldview, moral and spiritual aspects.

Reflecting or shaping?

Marvin doesn't like living in a media-dominated world. He doesn't watch television, avoids the cinema, shuns social networking and only reads non-fiction. He's on the sidelines of contemporary culture, but firmly believes that the world is in steep moral decline and desperately needs the gospel.

Zoë loves arts and media; her leisure time is packed with music, films, books and Facebook. She feels that traditional models of church are outdated and irrelevant, and that Christian gatherings should be creative, and unthreatening to people who don't share our faith.

These are not wildly extreme views, but most of us are somewhere between the two. Perhaps we feel some sympathy with both perspectives. What Marvin and Zoë both realise is that the defining feature of our society is the media. However hard we may try, we cannot insulate ourselves from the entire culture.

The media shape our attitudes, priorities and perspectives. Media producers often claim they simply hold a mirror up to society. In some ways they do, but it's a distorting mirror which shapes as well as reflects. We tend to assume that what we see on our screens is normal, and subconsciously we start behaving in similar ways. As Marshall McLuhan once shrewdly observed (drawing on Ps. 115:8), 'We become what we behold.' ¹ If the media don't strongly influence our behaviour, why did UK advertisers lobby so hard for the lifting of the ban on television product placement?

Quite *how* media and art affect us, though, can be hard to fathom. It is not simply an intellectual matter, though that is certainly a core part of it. No, their impact goes much deeper. Art – whether visual, narrative or musical – stirs our emotions with a force that statements of fact rarely achieve. We can be profoundly moved by something without being able to articulate a single thought about it. Our response to art is not *irrational*, but something besides rational thought is at work (the term *nonrational* seems too negative; perhaps *pararational* would be more useful). Since the Enlightenment, western culture has tended to over-emphasise reasoning and evidence, while downplaying emotions and spirituality. This infected the church too, which has profoundly shaped our attitudes to creative expression. At

a psychological level, this was a disastrous mistake, since humans are not (or shouldn't be) divided beings.

The image of the Creator

It is also mistaken at a theological level. The opening chapters of Genesis are vital for understanding what it means to be human. The most fundamental thing they tell us is that we are made in God's image (Gen. 1:27). There are many aspects of what that means, but one stares us in the face from Gen. 1. Dorothy L. Sayers, in her book *The Mind of the Maker*, writes:

[Had] the author of Genesis anything particular in his mind when he wrote [about human beings being made in God's image]? It is observable that in the passage leading up to the statement about man, he has given no detailed information about God. Looking at man, he sees in him something essentially divine, but when we turn back to see what he says about the original upon which the "image" of God was modelled, we find only the single assertion, "God created". The characteristic common to God and man is apparently that: the desire and the ability to make things. 2

If all we knew about God came from Gen. 1, we would value creativity much more highly than we do. Of course, we do have much more revelation in the Bible, so the nature of the image of God is clearly much more complex, and it would perhaps be unwise to argue that creativity is the foundational aspect of humanity. Nevertheless, we must take seriously that this is the first aspect of God that we learn about in Scripture.

Sub-creators

This has enormous implications for understanding culture, especially the arts and media. It means that all human creative endeavours are echoes of God's creativity. Our culture-making activities derive from our nature as bearers of God's image. Our appreciation of good things in culture reflects God looking at creation and recognising it as 'good'.

Christians, of all people, should be celebrating culture, not condemning it. There is even a sense in which art and culture declare our glory as sub-creators who bear God's image, in a reflection of creation declaring the glory of God (Ps. 19:1). So art that is done in the most authentically human way brings some glory to the artist who made it, but even more glory to the One who created the artist.

This is, of course, why art has always been important, even in those periods when dry rationalism has prevailed. Whatever worldview dominates a culture, its members are still human, with profound spiritual, emotional and aesthetic needs. Art is a fundamental expression of the image of God, and we ignore it at our peril. We should value it much more highly than the Protestant church has tended to in the past.

All this challenges Marvin's negativity about the media. There are clearly bad things about it, but there are also things to celebrate, and it is a fertile area of common ground with those who don't share our faith. Zoë, however, is good at celebrating culture, but she has an inadequate appreciation of Genesis 3, which is also vital for a robust theology of art.

Two-faced human beings

Adam and Eve were tempted by the freedom to make their own moral choices; they wanted to pursue wisdom on their terms, not God's. This brought humanity into rebellion against God, with the result that his image in us is damaged, twisted and broken. The consequences of this are seen in everything humans do and create. The urge for complete autonomy makes us push at – or ignore – the boundaries of morality. The urge to seek wisdom independently of God means that all kinds of ideas and worldviews are expressed within the media, and the Christian message is frequently excluded. The upshot is that all the art and culture we produce is tainted, to a greater or lesser extent, by our rebellion against God. How tragic that we use the very capacities and abilities that God has given us to resist him.

Zoë seems to overlook all this, and is too uncritical in her acceptance of media culture, while Marvin sees the dangers clearly and understands just how desperately the gospel is needed. They are both partly right and partly wrong, of course – like all of us. We all see some things more clearly and get some other things completely wrong.

It is vital that Christians understand the consequences of the fact that all of us have two faces – one reflecting God and one resisting him. It means that in everything we do and everything we create there is a double dynamic at work. All culture, including art and media, is the product of God's image bearers, yet all of it is the product of rebels against him. So all of it reflects God's image, and all of it reflects human fallenness. It is rare, if not impossible, that something manifests just one of these aspects. Tragically, it is all too possible for someone to use their artistic gifts, which are reflective of God's image, in order to give powerful expression to their rebellion. Philip Pullman is just one of countless examples we could list of writers and artists who do this explicitly.

Transcendental values

It is worth reflecting on art and media in terms of the three traditional transcendental values of beauty, truth, and goodness. Beauty is the obvious one, of course, since our engagement with any art is, first and foremost, an aesthetic one. Beauty is, certainly, highly subjective, but it somehow points beyond itself to something even greater, something transcendent. It ignites within us a sense of hope, or perhaps of longing, because our aesthetic sense is bound up with our spirituality. That, too, is part of being made in God's image. C.S. Lewis used the German word *Sehnsucht* for what he called the 'inconsolable longing' in the human heart for something elusive. It was, for him, intimately tied up with the experience of joy, the key quality of which is 'that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction'. ³

A character in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* famously claims that 'Beauty saves the world.' When Alexander Solzhenitzyn won the Nobel Prize for literature, in his acceptance speech, he quoted Dostoevsky, and remarked that he had come to believe that he was right. He said:

There is, however, a certain peculiarity in the essence of beauty, a peculiarity in the status of art: namely, the convincingness of a true work of art is completely irrefutable and it forces even an opposing heart to surrender. ⁴

Solzhenitsyn ties truth to the concept of beauty. Tolkien makes the connection between beauty and goodness when he writes, 'evil and ugliness seem indissolubly allied. We find it difficult to conceive of evil and beauty together.' ⁵ Truth and goodness are as important in art as beauty, but sometimes harder to grasp (they are more obvious in literature or film than in music, for example). That is not to say that art should always make a point, or communicate some moral or religious message – that diminishes it into propaganda, not art. Nevertheless, good art and media will always express, or at least remind us of, truth, goodness and beauty.

Honest art

Good art should have integrity, and it should be honest about life. That means art should never solely deal with nice things – beautiful sunsets, pastoral idylls, and glowing hearths – which is why the work of the late Thomas Kinkade is, to my mind, lacking in integrity. Art must sometimes show us the darkness and brokenness of life, as in the film *Slumdog Millionaire* or the harrowing but powerful and tentatively redemptive *Tyrannosaur*. ⁶ Some films successfully convey both the beauty and brokenness of life, as Terrence Malick does in *The Tree of Life*. Art needs to remind us of both the nobility of human heart, and its corruption. It needs to bring us insights, and expose our misunderstandings. It needs to ask searching questions about life and reality, and sometimes we need to encounter works that don't pretend to have all the answers, such as the Coen brothers' *A Serious Man*. Sometimes art and media should be making us deeply uncomfortable.

Narrative art forms, like films and literature, enable us to see the world through other people's eyes, which is immensely valuable in helping us understand and respond to those who see the world differently from us. Lewis writes,

Those of us who have been true readers all our life seldom fully realise the enormous extension of our being which we owe to authors... My own eyes are not enough for me, I will see through the eyes of others. Reality, even seen through the eyes of many, is not enough. I will see what others have invented. Even the eyes of all humanity are not enough. I regret that the brutes cannot write books... But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do. ⁷

Good art – whomever it is by, and whatever the medium by which it comes to us – moves us emotionally, confronting us with the truth of the human condition, prompting us to respond to the brokenness of our world, and to open our eyes to signs of God's grace at work. It will also stir up the deepest longing of the human heart: the longing for peace with God, which is exactly what Lewis discovered was the ultimate goal of his experience of *Sehnsucht*.

Five aspects of responding to art

If, then, art is the product of people made in God's image, who are nevertheless rebels against God, and if art needs to be seen in terms of truth, goodness and beauty, how should we respond to it and engage with it? What does this mean for a particular book or film? There are five crucial aspects:

1. Aesthetics

The first is unsurprising in view of what I have already written, but is an unfamiliar starting point for too many Christians. Our danger is that we tend to jump too quickly into the intellectual dimensions, wanting to analyse the ideas and (all too often) refute them. But film and literature are, first and foremost, art forms and we must engage with them at that aesthetic level. What works well at an artistic level? Is it good writing? Are the characters believable? Is it well structured? How good is the cinematography?

2. Emotions

The second aspect is intimately connected with the first, and yet quite different. All art generates emotional responses in those who engage with it. That is a primary function of art – artists want us to feel something, though they may or may not be concerned to stimulate a specific emotion. The strong emotions engendered by great art form some of our most valuable experiences. When we are engaging with narratives, as in books and films, our emotional responses are connected not only with the aesthetic dimensions, but with the characters within the story. They are not real people, yet we feel sympathy or fear or elation because of what is happening to them.

Since our emotions are a very fundamental aspect of our being, it is important that we stop to reflect on how we feel. Art manipulates our emotions (we only complain about something being manipulative if it does so in a very crass, artificial or unearned way; we do not accuse Shakespeare of being manipulative when Juliet dies), and we need to reflect on what emotional journey the film or book has taken us on.

3. Worldviews

This is the point at which we begin to engage with the more intellectual components of the material. Many people neglect to think deeply about the ideas within a book or film, contenting themselves instead with simply being entertained. There is nothing wrong with simple entertainment, but we do need to remember that a film or book is like a deep lake. We can happily play on the surface, but we need to dive down under the surface where we discover that the book or film has a message: the writer is saying something about identity, relationships, community, society, morality, sexuality, freedom, or happiness. Such issues are constantly being explored by arts and media. Since 9/11 and the global financial crisis, for example, there has been a marked increase in films exploring social and political issues, whether fictional, such as *Precious*, *Four Lions* or *Margin Call*, or documentary films like *The Interrupters* or *Inside Job*.

If we go deeper still in this lake, we discover that the most interesting things are some way down: all the ideas about these issues arise from very fundamental beliefs and values – from the writers' worldviews. Changing the metaphor for a moment, the worldviews of a narrative are a framework of ideas which holds up, and gives shape to, the narrative which is like a cover stretched over the framework. We need to pull back the fabric to peer underneath to see what beliefs are holding the whole thing up.

While not wishing to over-emphasise this aspect of responding to art, it is important that we briefly consider how to identify, understand and respond to worldviews. There are four key aspects to this – a process called *positive deconstruction*. 8 We need to analyse the worldview and evaluate it. As we do so, we must celebrate the good and challenge the bad.

Analyse the worldview 9

First, we need to identify the worldviews we encounter in films or literature. I am not so much interested in applying a particular label to a worldview (merely labelling can fail to allow for the deeply individual nature of worldviews) as in discerning and analysing its core components. What beliefs, values and attitudes underpin what we are hearing? Where is the writer or director – or my friend – coming from? It *is* helpful to be familiar with the broad worldview categories, but more helpful to know what questions to ask of any worldview, any person or any film.

Various writers have suggested frameworks for considering worldviews. I use a set of five key questions which I formulated some years ago. 10 I keep this framework in mind every time I watch a film, read a book or have a significant conversation.

a. What is reality?

Is the physical world all there is, or is there a spiritual dimension as well? Why is the world like it is? Where did it come from? What kind of God or gods are there, if any? Many books and films deal explicitly with this theme. For example, Alex Proyas's film, *Knowing*, centres on a physics lecturer who has turned his back on his father's Christianity and embraced a purely materialist view of reality. But when strange things start happening, he begins to wonder if there is more to the world than meets the eye. *The Invention of Lying*, by Ricky Gervais and Matthew Robinson, repeats the common notion that religion is just a human invention – a lie to make us feel better about death.

b. What does it mean to be human?

What are the distinctive things – if any – about human beings? What is the point of life? Where did we come from? What happens when we die? Are some human beings more important than others? What does community mean? How should we relate to each other? This is one of the most significant areas of exploration in literature and film. Proyas's earlier film, *I, Robot*, for example, questions whether there is anything unique about humanity. Could an artificially-intelligent robot develop emotions and the ability to dream? That is, could it *become* a person, worthy of being considered as equal to a human in every way, except biologically?

c. How do we know anything?

This is often the hardest of the five questions to think about. Why do we believe the things we do? What are good and bad reasons for believing? How do we know what is true? Where does wisdom come from? Where does

meaning come from? These kinds of questions are a key element in Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi*, a film adaptation of which is to be released in December 2012.

d. How do we know what is good and bad?

Is there such a thing as good and evil? How do we know what is right and wrong? Should we be concerned primarily with the consequences of our actions, with ethical principles, or being a good person? What values should we live by? What do goodness or beauty mean? There are plenty of examples of books and films exploring morality, including Suzanne Collins's best-selling *Hunger Games* trilogy, Christopher Nolan's trilogy of Batman films, and countless others. We need to consider not only what moral choices characters make, but also the overall ethical framework.

e. What is the fundamental problem confronting all human beings, and what is the solution?

Within films, there is often an implicit, if not explicit, suggestion of a right way to live and think in order to be happy, fulfilled or complete, or a way to be redeemed in some sense from the problems which humans face. *Amélie* has a clear message that the world can be made a better place by an accumulation of acts of kindness to other people. *Gandhi* powerfully argues for the importance of peaceful resistance and simplicity of lifestyle.

We will not be able to answer every one of these questions for every film or book. Many films, for example, never touch on the question of how we know things or why we believe things. However, by thinking carefully about each of these five areas, you will often be able to identify what is being *assumed* as well as what is being shown more explicitly.

Evaluate the worldview 11

Having identified the beliefs, values and attitudes that are being communicated through a particular film, or those that shape the communication, we need to evaluate them. Which can we be positive about because they are consistent with a Christian worldview, and of which do we need to be more critical? So we have some more questions to ask:

f. Coherence

Do the ideas *cohere*? That is, do they hang together and make sense? Something which does not make sense cannot be true; something which is true should make sense. 12

g. Correspondence

Secondly, we need to ask, do these ideas *correspond* with reality? Do they describe the world as it really is? Or are they a distortion, or even complete

invention? Do they ignore some significant factor? The more truthful a worldview is, the better its description of reality and of human beings will fit with our experience. The biblical understanding of humans as rebellious image-bearers explains what we see in human nature better than any other perspective – it explains why we can be so noble and good, and yet so selfish and wicked. Looking for correspondence with reality is not something confined to realist films. Fantasy and science fiction films and literature are sometimes profoundly true in their view of humanity and the problems we face, and their non-realistic context can help us to see the truth more clearly. *Beauty and the Beast* is a fairy tale for children, but who could doubt that it has much to say which is true on the subject of relationships and how we perceive others?

h. Pragmatism

Thirdly, we need to ask if the ideas *work*. What happens if you push them a little further? What kinds of tensions and difficulties would you run into? If a worldview is true we should expect it to work in practice – it should have some pragmatic results. Perhaps a more helpful way of thinking about this is, does this worldview enable an individual or a society to flourish?

As we evaluate the ideas within a film or book in terms of coherence, correspondence and the potential for human flourishing, we are looking for truth which we can affirm as well as untruth which we must dispute. This is the approach taken by Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16-34). So parts three and four of the process do not happen *after* part two, but instead happen concurrently with it. I separate them out here to highlight the need to pay close attention to both aspects.

Celebrate the good 13

If the ideas make sense, we need to acknowledge it – *even if* we profoundly disagree with them. A coherent worldview deserves respect. We must engage with it critically, but positively. We should take seriously any approach to life that seems to promote flourishing, because others take it seriously. Where a film or a worldview truthfully reflects reality, we should highlight the fact. If other people feel that we do nothing but disparage, attack and ridicule ideas which seem to them to be true, they will soon hold us in contempt. Besides, as Nick Pollard points out:

Whether we like it or not, other worldviews contain truth. If we reject them totally, we shall find that, as well as rejecting error, we are also rejecting truth. And if we reject truth, we push ourselves into error. 14

Paul tells us to 'Fix [our] thoughts on what is true and honourable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise' (Phil. 4:8). 15 William Romanowski says that Christians,

often employ this passage to defend whatever appears nice, heart-warming, and comforting over what is true, right and excellent. This has contributed to a preference within the church for popular art that is sentimental and melodramatic. 16

He points out that the Bible includes accounts of 'the most heinous, violent, and immoral behaviour' 17 yet it surely meets Paul's criteria. Romanowski continues:

The advice to the Philippians suggests an attitude and way of looking at things; in short, a perspective... The virtues listed in Philippians are meant to serve as a guide for Christian discernment. This passage should be used not so much to limit artistic engagement but to open the whole world up to Christian treatment and evaluation. 18

Thinking about what is true means recognising the grim reality of our fallen nature – 'the waste and ugliness of war and injustice, the depths of human despair, the chaos and confusion of life' 19 – as much as valuing integrity, compassion, and other Christian virtues. Thinking about 'things that are excellent and worthy of praise' means that we should applaud a work's emotional honesty and artistic excellence. In fact, Peter Fraser writes concerning films:

Our first concern should be *cinematic and dramatic excellence*. Regardless of the message of the individual film, Christians ought to be the first to recognize and praise a film's artistry. All beauty reflects God's beauty, whether it is understood to be from the Creator or not. 20

In short, we are looking for anything which reflects the likeness of God: creativity, truth, insight into the nature of things, and a right sensitivity to the difficulties, dilemmas and tensions of life. We are also looking for evidence of the longing for God which is innate in every human being. We were created to know him and worship him, and if we cannot do so we express that urge in many other ways. Our longings for happiness, love, freedom, fulfilment and peace are really expressions of our deeper longing for God.

Challenge the bad

We must not, however, become so concerned to be positive that we neglect to point out those things which fall short of truth and excellence. There is strong pressure not to disagree with someone's beliefs or values, but to sweep disagreement under the carpet is intellectually dishonest. We *disrespect* someone's view if we refuse to engage with it in any meaningful way. If I disagree with someone, the respectful response is to enter into dialogue so that I understand it more fully, attempting to see it from their point of view, so that we can both see exactly how and why we think differently. We all (consciously or not) form judgments about every film we see, and on the characters within it. Challenging a lack of artistic excellence or integrity, or the values and ideas expressed within a film, is a very constructive way of opening up stimulating debate – especially when we are first being positive about other things, rather than expressing a knee-jerk response.

So we must also look for error, for examples of human blindness and of people looking for the right things in the wrong direction. We must identify those God-

substitutes which people chase when they are not pursuing a relationship with the Creator himself. We must watch for ways in which rebellion against God is expressed consciously and unconsciously.

This process of engaging with worldviews in films or books (or people) can seem daunting at first, and it requires some hard thinking. But it does get easier with practice, and after a while it can become second nature to engage with a film without this getting in the way of our enjoyment of it. I long to see Christians find this way of thinking becoming so much a part of them that they cannot help but watch films 'worldviewishly' – and so become far more effective at naturally sharing Christian perspectives on what they watch.

4. Morality

After responding to the aesthetic, emotional and worldview aspects of the film, we also need to respond to the morality of the book or film as a whole, relating back to my earlier comments about beauty, truth and goodness. Is this a work of art which has integrity? Is it being honest about life? The morality *within* a book may be reprehensible, but does the work as a whole reveal the writer's moral stance towards that behaviour? Is it criticising or celebrating the behaviour?

5. Spirituality

Since we are God's image-bearers, it's no surprise that explicitly spiritual or religious themes keep surfacing in the arts and media. *The Tree of Life* is a stunning, though enigmatic, reflection on the book of Job, exploring suffering and grace. ²¹ That film is unusual in the way it has Christian theology right at its heart, but it's far from alone. In the last few years we've had films like *Gran Torino*, with a powerful theme of redemption, and *The Blind Side*, an inspiring true story of Christian compassion for the disadvantaged. More often, though, Christian belief is relativised or straightforwardly attacked, as in *The Invention of Lying* and, more recently, *Prometheus* spring to mind in the film world. In the world of literature there have been books like Kevin Brooks's *Killing God*, and Philip Pullman's controversial *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*, as well as contributions from the New Atheists. But spiritual and religious themes go well beyond whether the film or book is pro- or anti-Christian, as in *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* or *Life of Pi*.

But the spiritual aspect of responding to art and media is not simply whether or not explicitly spiritual or religious ideas are present. It's also about what the book or film is suggesting about the right way to live, or about the meaning of life. This relates closely to the fifth of the worldview dimensions – what is it we really need above all else?

Another way of thinking about this aspect is to ask, what deep longings of the human heart are being expressed here? Is it the pursuit of happiness? A craving for freedom? Is it a yearning for love, or a desperate search for purpose and meaning? All these are good things; all of them come out of being made in God's image. But all of them can be idols. The longing for these things is actually a pale reflection of the longing for *shalom*, and for God himself. They are expressions of Lewis's *Sehnsucht*. The tragedy

is that so few people ever realise it, which is why we need to help them think more deeply about the books they read and the films they watch.

Filmography

Amélie (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Momentum, 2001)

Batman Begins (Christopher Nolan, Warner Bros., 2005)

Beauty and the Beast (Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, Walt Disney Pictures, 1991)

Blind Side, The (John Lee Hancock, Warner Bros., 2010)

Dark Knight, The (Christopher Nolan, Warner Bros., 2008)

Dark Knight Rises, The (Christopher Nolan, Warner Bros., 2012)

Four Lions (Chris Morris, Optimum Releasing, 2010)

Gandhi (Richard Attenborough, Columbia Tristar, 1982)

Gran Torino (Clint Eastwood, Warner Bros., 2009)

Hunger Games, The (Gary Ross, Lionsgate, 2012)

Inside Job (Charles Ferguson, Sony Pictures, 2011)

Interrupters, The (Steve James, Dogwoof Pictures, 2011)

Invention of Lying, The (Ricky Gervais and Matthew Robinson, Universal Pictures, 2009)

I, Robot (Alex Proyas, Twentieth Century Fox, 2004)

Knowing (Alex Proyas, Icon, 2009)

Life of Pi (Ang Lee, Twentieth Century Fox, 2012)

Margin Call (J.C. Chandor, Stealth Media, 2011)

Precious (Lee Daniels, Icon, 2010)

Prometheus (Ridley Scott, Twentieth Century Fox, 2012)

Salmon Fishing in the Yemen (Lasse Hallström, Lionsgate, 2012)

Serious Man, A (Joel Coen and Ethan Coen, Universal Pictures, 2009)

Slumdog Millionaire (Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan, Pathé, 2009)

Tree of Life, The (Terrence Malick, Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2011)

Tyrannosaur (Paddy Considine, Optimum Releasing, 2011)



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Endnotes

1 McLuhan 1994: 19

2 Sayers, 1941, Chapter 2:

www.worldinvisible.com/library/dlsayers/mindofmaker/mind.02.htm

3 Lewis 1966: 17-18

4 Solzhenitsyn 1970:

www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1970/solzhenitsyn-lecture.html

5 Tolkien 1984: 151

6 Articles on many of the films mentioned in this article are available at

www.culturewatch.org

7 Lewis, 1997: 139-141

8 Pollard 1997: 48-56. Note that I use different labels for the four stages of the process, but the methodology remains the same

9 Pollard expresses this as 'identifying the worldview' (Pollard, 1997: 48). This seems to suggest finding the correct label to apply to a worldview as a whole. However, since many people feel that they do not have the knowledge to be able to do so accurately, and since labelling has limited value, I think it is more helpful to see this stage as teasing out, or analysing, the component parts of the worldview

10 Drawing on Sire 2004: 20, and Walsh 1984: 35

11 Pollard expresses this as 'analysing the worldview' (Pollard 1997: 52). Analysis seems to suggest the kind of process described in the first stage – identifying the component parts. This second stage is perhaps more helpfully understood as evaluation since we are trying to determine the truth or falsity of the ideas

12 We do, however, need to allow for the possibility of a paradox as opposed to a contradiction

13 For parts three and four of the process of positive deconstruction, I have substituted 'celebrate the good' and 'challenge the bad' for Pollard's labels of 'affirm the truth' and 'discern the error' (1997: 55-56). While these are appropriate labels when talking about worldviews in terms of their belief content, they seem to be too narrow in the context of art and media. We need to be engaging with the emotional and aesthetic dimensions, not only the intellectual ones

14 Pollard 1997: 55

15 New Living Translation

16 Romanowski 2001: 142

17 Romanowski 2001: 143

18 Romanowski 2001: 143

19 Romanowski 2001: 143

20 Fraser 2000: 32 (original italics)

Tony Watkins, "Art's Desire: Responding to Film and Literature," *Anvil* 28.3 (2011).

21 See 'He Will Wipe Every Tear – Terrence Malick's The Tree of Life' at www.tonywatkins.co.uk/tree-of-life