

4

1. Can you think of a movie, television program, or musical recording that transported you “elsewhere”? Discuss how and why you think this happened.

There are plenty of movies that I feel transport me “elsewhere”. One example would be a show that I recently watched called *Night Agent*. I feel as though it took me “elsewhere” because the setting is so outside of my usual environment. The characters and situation while being different from my typical routines on a day to day basis, were still relatable which allowed me to enter into that space.

2. What are some of the problems with “a strictly evangelistic understanding of art”?

I think this is the same issue that surrounds exegesis and eisegesis. This is because exegesis is taking the scripture for what it says while eisegesis is reading into scripture based on our own understanding and situations. There are benefits to both but say we constantly only used eisegesis we would be missing the message of the original author. This is the case when it comes to art. Especially when someone created something themselves, it is a method to see things from our own perspective but there was intention and meaning to what was made by that artist. Having a strictly evangelistic understanding of art can keep us from seeing the true meaning the creator intended for others to see, experience, and understand.

3. The author suggests, “When someone says, ‘That song ministers to me,’ I think they are trying to explain an artistic experience as a spiritual one.” Discuss this and consider ways that Christians might learn to think differently about engaging popular art based on the understanding of culture presented in earlier chapters. This is something I have even asked myself in the past especially when it comes to explanations to people who are not Christians. There is definitely a “linguistic” that Christians use when speaking to one another but if you weren’t Christian, this would be quite confusing. I do not have a problem with this but I think it’s always important to recognize your audience. This is the same as being considerate and respectful to other cultures that aren’t your own. There are different aspects of communication and respect that are different that we need to be mindful of and the same is true when it comes to popular art.

4. Why are distinctions between high and popular art problematic and unhelpful for approaching popular art and culture?

This is because we do not have to depend on the high culture of an era gone by to understand how to invent and transform contemporary art forms and new technologies for service in God’s kingdom. Also trying to turn popular art into high art overlooks the reality that today’s popular art is produced in different social, cultural, and industrial contexts than the traditional high arts.

5. Discuss ways the division between high and low culture and the “spiritualizing” of art have affected Christian attitudes and also the roles and character of popular art.

This division has affected Christian attitudes because people get stuck in both eras of not being able to adapt with society when it comes to technology and its use for the church or even going overboard and making church more of a show because of all of the technological advances we have today. We have seen popular art in the way worship services are run even through groups such as Bethel and Maverick City.

5

1. Using the four roles for popular art considered in this chapter, create a list of movies, television programs, or popular songs/videos that serve in each of these categories. Looking at this list, what does it reveal about our culture (e.g., cherished ideals and values, key beliefs and attitudes, basic assumptions about life, purpose, social and gender roles, and so forth)?

- 1) Communicating culture -Blue Bayou-The Color of Friedship-Black Panther-Everything Everywhere All at Once
- 2) Playing the role of social and cultural critic -The Menu-Don't Look Up-
- 3) Providing social unity -Women Talking- Friends
- 4) Contributing to our collective memory-Wanda Vision- Hairspray

Based on the list I have made, I can see that we have our ideals and beliefs set around inclusivity and the need for representation and acceptance. All of these films deal with one subground not getting treated, respected, or accepted in society the way that they deserve to be.

2. "By offering a vision, a popular artwork sets up the possibility for our accepting or criticizing that vision, and an insightful and honest Christian response will often mean affirming certain aspects while rejecting others," the author argues. "Our critical guard sometimes goes down because we expect popular art to entertain us." How can we learn to balance being entertained with maintaining a critical posture?

I think this comes by setting boundaries. There are certain things that we know are not good for us while others, don't affect some the way they would others. The first step is by acknowledging our weaknesses and if for example horror movies is something you can't handle then there is no need to force that. Another example could be a great film about friendship, which happens to involve alot of cursing. While you may not curse yourself, the movie may bring entertainment, while still not causing you to curse. There are always things we can appreciate and others we can question in life, I think we find that we can comfortably do this by starting with the small things.

3. In a conversation, a friend argues that all movies are purely for entertainment reasons. How would you respond?

I would say that this isn't necessarily true. Today there are documentaries which are informational films that happen to be visual. Especially today people have understood that not everyone learns the same way so while movies can be entertainment, they can also be a great way to learn for those who are visual learners.

4. Why is the distinction between popular art and entertainment important for developing a Christian approach?

This is important because entertainment can be different for everyone while, popular art is a generalized understanding and agreement of "good" art. Knowing the difference can allow Christians to be engage with discussions and ideas that society may idolize when the only opposite would be spiritual.

1. Find examples of music, movie, or TV criticism that represent the moralistic, ideological, and theological approaches described in this chapter. Discuss the merits of these reviews.

Music related to the moralistic approach would be that of the artist NF. I have heard many people question his faith because they feel that his music is too dark and depressing which can lead people away from God. While he does claim Christianity, he has been vulnerable with his music which some people feel he should be releasing this kind of music if, and instead sharing uplifting music to encourage others.

The ideological approach would be the film *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, there were people on both sides who claimed this movie deserved to win an Oscar, while other Christians were saying that no one should go and see the movie because of the inclusion of the lesbian daughter and different sexual references in the film. The argument was that the film wasn't truly that good but satisfies a skewed perspective in which society appreciated.

A show related to the theological approach is the series *The Chosen*. There are people who claim that the narrative of some of the characters is unlike the biblical stories and are angry that the writers have filmed the show in this way.

2. What are the benefits of these approaches to criticism? What are the limitations?

The benefits to the approaches to criticism include the fact that we are able to categorize art in a way that keeps us aware of what people may be sensitive about. The limitations include the fact that some people aren't able to see past their criticisms and simply see art in its beauty. It becomes more of a challenge than a way to grow and understand one another.

3. "A Christian critique of popular art will criticize the gratuitous inclusion of profanity, sex, or violence," the author asserts, while also asking, "But are there not appropriate uses of these elements in popular art?" Respond to this question.

I do believe there are appropriate uses of these elements. All of these elements are discussed in the bible which is considered holy and sacred.

4. Where do you get your information about popular art? How do these sources typically evaluate art?

I most normally get my information of popular art through social media, and the evaluations normally start and continue on growing from people with certain status. Those who hold high influence on society begin the discussions.

1. Name and discuss elements that are crucial to a Christian criticism of the popular arts.

Elements include, prayer and relating the content back to what the scripture says. Even discussing these popular arts within the church and other members of the body.

2. The author shows that "it is through artistic elements that popular artworks transform the external world in ways that engage our reason, memory, emotions, and imagination." Consider ways that you can become more "media literate."

I have become more media literate through documentaries. This has helped me both understand and pay attention to topics that I would not otherwise research or discuss past a certain point.

3. Give a repeat viewing of a favorite film or television episode and pay attention to one artistic aspect (e.g., story, characterization, dialogue, cinematography, lighting, sound, editing, costuming, use of rhetoric, and narrative structure). Or listen to the songs on a CD while paying attention to vocal style, instrumentation, metaphors and symbols, and the relationship between musical style and lyrical content. Does this change your appreciation of the work? If so, in what ways?

Watching the lion king while paying attention to the musical style offered me more of an appreciation for the African culture. As a child I liked the animation of the animals but now I appreciate the culture and the representation through music.