

PART 3:
ART



INTRODUCTION: TEACHING THE BIBLE WITH ART

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The opening line of John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word," seemingly sets the tone for teaching and learning within the field of biblical studies. Those who reside and teach in this field of study not only begin with "the Word," but also typically remain focused, perhaps obsessively, upon words. However, John's Gospel pushes us to shift our glance away from the page, as it is arguably as much about the visual as it is about the verbal. On more than one occasion, John depicts Jesus asserting that whoever has *seen* him has *seen* God (12:44–45; 14:9; cf. 1:14–18). Throughout the Johannine text, the verbal or textual and the visual are intricately related—reinforcing, interpreting, and expanding upon one another. Taking a cue from the Johannine tradition, we contend that visual art, including but not limited to works of art that specifically reference the Bible, can be an integral part of the biblical studies classroom: reinforcing, interpreting, and expanding upon the texts we explore.

In this introduction we will highlight some of the reasons for employing art in this traditionally textual environment, outline some of the ways that visual art can be incorporated into teaching, and discuss how one might guide students in the interpretation of images.

Beyond the Johannine call that we attend to the visual, there are obvious pedagogical reasons for making the visual a presence in the biblical studies classroom. First, while most of us who specialize in biblical studies are close readers of the texts in their original languages, our students often have to be taught how to "see" even the most obvious textures in these ancient writings. This is particularly true given that Western culture has been saturated with biblical imagery, themes, language, and thinking patterns. This saturation effectively blinds many students to the complexity of the biblical writings. Exploring visual art with students trains their eyes to see detail in an image, which helps them see detail in other things, such as writings. Using two different types of material, textual and visual/artistic, to develop students' seeing and reading skills acknowledges the widely accepted notion, articu-

lated famously by Howard Gardner, that attending to multiple intelligences enhances student learning and the retention of ideas and skills.¹

Second, in an age of biblical fundamentalism (an interpretive perspective adopted by both “conservatives” and “liberals”), students have to be prodded to see the possibility of multiple interpretations in texts, especially texts that many hold as sacred. Most students have been better trained to think that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” which assumes that an interpreter’s perspective shapes her interaction with a piece of art, than to recognize the same phenomenon exists when approaching a written text. Hopefully their recognition that a Picasso or Matisse yields many interpretive possibilities dependent upon the “eye of the beholder” will be translated to the prophets and the Gospels when we address the visual and the textual side by side.

Third, even when we as teachers do not incorporate the visual into our classrooms, it is present in our students’ minds. Regardless of their religious upbringings, as products of Western culture, our students carry with them images related to the writings we explore, including mental pictures of Jesus shaped by the memory of Jim Caviezel playing Jesus in Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* and visions of God colored by Michelangelo’s depiction on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Many students come to class “knowing” exactly what these figures look like and how they act in certain situations. Such “knowledge” often negates genuine, open interaction with the text. Intentionally incorporating the visual into our classrooms sheds light on these culturally given images, allowing both students and instructors to be more critical of how we use mental images to fill in textual gaps. The use of images, therefore, can disrupt students’ mental images, encourage them to develop more complex mental pictures, and prepare them for the multivocality of the text.

In addition, attention to the visual requires students to think metaphorically, abstractly, and in other nonliteral ways. These ways of “seeing” are similar to the forms of perception employed in religion and religious texts.² Religious discourse, including biblical writings, swells with metaphor and imagery. Students, often pressed into literal reading of textbooks, are sometimes hesitant to engage fully the metaphors and images presented in the Bible. Examining visual art, including abstract art, can help students think in abstract and metaphorical terms.

1. For a brief discussion of artistic intelligence in relation to the theory of multiple intelligences, see Howard Gardner, “Artistic Intelligence,” *Art Education* 36 (1983): 47–49.

2. Margaret R. Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 4.

CATEGORIES FOR EMPLOYING ART IN THE CLASSROOM

There are a variety of ways that art can be used in a biblical studies class; here we will outline three general approaches: (1) art as illustration; (2) art as narrative interpretation; (3) art as illumination. These three fluid categories are borrowed from the work of Katharine Martinez on the use of images in the field of American history.³ This is a subject that, like ours, has been historically beholden to the textual, and so Martinez's categories are easily adaptable to our work.

ART AS ILLUSTRATION

Using visual art as an illustration of a particular point or idea about a text or tradition is the most basic approach to employing the visual in the classroom. An image can be employed to underscore a specific interpretation or to help students recognize something about the text that they might otherwise overlook. For example, if we wanted to have students remember the observation made at the beginning of this chapter—that John's Gospel is as much about the visual as it is about the verbal—we might show students an image of a twelfth-century manuscript in which the words of the first chapter of John are printed in the form of a cross.⁴ Similarly, a teacher may want to emphasize that in the nativity stories, especially Luke's annunciation scene, the designation "virgin" implies a young girl. However, students sometimes have difficulty grasping that within Luke's social context an unmarried girl was truly a girl and not a young woman. To help them appreciate this, one might show an image that highlights Mary's youth, such as *The Annunciation*, by Jennifer Linton, which depicts Mary as a pubescent girl lying on the ground with her head propped on her arm.⁵ Even though Linton's image places the story of the annunciation in a contemporary context, it allows students to analyze the text in relation to its historical context and invites students to see something about the text that they might have overlooked or misunderstood.

3. Katharine Martinez, "Imaging the Past: Historians, Visual Images and the Contested Definition of History," *Visual Resources* 11 (1995): 21–45.

4. "Gospel of St. John," *Gospel Lectionary*, twelfth century. British Library, London. Cited 13 March 2007. Online: www.imagesonline.bl.uk/britishlibrary/controller/textsearch?text=john%20cross&id=1&startid=13401.

5. Jennifer Linton, *The Annunciation*, 2002. Collection of the Artist, Toronto. Cited 13 March 2007. Online: www.jenniferlinton.ca.

ART AS NARRATIVE INTERPRETATION

While images can be utilized to illustrate texts, works of visual art often involve more complex relationships between text and image than the illustrative model allows. In fact, simply treating visual art in terms of textual illustration runs the risk of replicating a problematic assumption that has historically plagued textually focused fields of study—that images are somehow easier to comprehend or less complex than written texts. We might describe this as the legacy of Gregory the Great and his infamous claim (in *Ep.* 105 of book 9) that church art was primarily to teach the unlearned masses what they were unable to read in the text.⁶ Implied in this assertion is an assumption that images are readily understandable even when an audience has little or no resources for interpreting images. Despite Gregory’s claim, images are not necessarily easier to understand than texts and they require their own sort of “reading.”⁷ In a way similar to how we make sense of a psalm or a Pauline letter, we make sense out of images by interpreting the signs within the image in relation to certain concepts and ideas, within a certain contextual frame. This approach can involve having students read images explicitly framed as narrative interpretations of biblical texts or reframing nonbiblical images in relationship to a specific document or pericope.

For example, Marc Chagall’s *Creation of Man* is an interpretation of Gen 1:26–27 (“Let us make humankind in our image...”).⁸ Chagall renders this verse by depicting a winged, human-like creature holding the limp body of man in its arms. This winged creature occupies the center of the canvas, which is painted primarily in shades of blue, while in the upper right-hand corner rainbow colors spiral out of a red orb. Intermingled with the spiraling colors are various images, including a ram-headed person carrying a scroll, a crucifix, a praying figure, another angelic being, and hands holding tablets.

When presented with an image such as this, students should first describe what they see. What are the elements of art in the image? Lines, colors, composition? Then students may ponder how what they see reads the text: What does it capture from the text? What does it highlight? What does it downplay? Specifically, one might ask students what the red globe might represent? Something from the text? Why does it have these attendant images—a cruci-

6. While Gregory’s claim may appear to be disparaging toward art, it was part of his defense against the destruction of icons or images.

7. Mieke Bal, “Reading Art?” in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings* (ed. G. Pollock; London: Routledge, 1996), 25–41, esp. 32.

8. Marc Chagall, *The Creation of Man*, 1956–58. Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall, Nice. Cited 27 March 2007. Online: www.musee-chagall.fr.

fix, angels, animals? In this way, we begin to unpack the meanings of the image in relation to the text. This method of reading the image parallels the method of reading texts in which we look first at its component parts—the words, grammar, syntax, structure, imagery—before addressing its meaning(s).⁹

Chagall's painting shows us, moreover, the complex ways in which an image reads a text. With its allusions to the giving of the Mosaic Law suggested by the tablets, to the crucifixion, and to cultural gender roles (through an image of the bride and groom), Chagall's painting rings with many of the same intertextual allusions and echoes that are often brought by interpreters to the text of Genesis. In this way, the painting does not “solve,” but rather highlights, the interpretive challenges. The depiction of an angel holding the body of the man, for example, does little to explain Genesis' use of the plural, “Let us make humankind/Adam in our image.” Is this Chagall's depiction of God? Or, could this winged figure be a co-creator implied in the plural pronouns? Chagall's painting, indeed, is as multilayered and complex as Gen 1.

One issue to be aware of is that the language of images, just as the language of biblical texts, is not universal.¹⁰ The meanings of the various elements that comprise a particular piece of visual art may need to be translated into a language understandable by students. For example, in Chagall's painting, students may not recognize the stone tablets as a visual sign of the Decalogue, unless, of course they have seen Charleston Heston in *The Ten Commandments* (to use one image as a cipher for translating another)! Leading students through a piece of art often requires helping them translate the unfamiliar and ambiguous.

With images that are explicitly framed as biblical interpretations, it can be illuminating to show more than one image interpreting the same text as a way of highlighting how texts yield multiple meanings. For instance, alongside Chagall's twentieth-century version of the sixth day of creation, one might have students view a medieval manuscript that illustrates the same text. Juxtaposing different images, especially ones from different time periods, allows students to see the various ways a single text can be imagined and understood. This can also be used to help students see the diachronic development of interpretations in the Western tradition in general.¹¹ More-

9. For a useful guide in thinking about what to look for in a piece of art, see Steven Engler and Irene Naested, “Reading Images in the Religious Studies Classroom,” *Teaching Theology and Religion* (2002): 161–68.

10. Miles, *Image as Insight*, 29–34.

11. For a discussion of how art can be used to discuss the history of a biblical text's interpretation, see Robin M. Jensen, *The Substance of Things Seen: Art, Faith, and the Christian Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 34–45.

over, the use of images from different historical, social, and cultural settings demonstrates how textual interpretations are shaped by contextual concerns, issues, and questions. This, in turn, can allow us to talk with students about how their own locations similarly shape the interpretive grids that they bring to the biblical texts.

Besides paintings that explicitly frame themselves as biblical interpretations, we find it particularly enriching to reframe images depicting subjects other than biblical ones, encouraging students to read these images in relation to particular biblical texts.¹² Often images that are explicitly biblical replicate the ideological assumptions communicated through the texts, while images of other subjects, reframed in relation to the Bible, challenge those ideological presuppositions.

For example, read in relationship to 1 Corinthians, Robert Mapplethorpe's 1982 black-and-white photograph of body builder Lisa Lyon, simply entitled *Lisa Lyon*, provides a provocative starting point for a critical discussion of Paul's comments regarding women's roles in worship, specifically his suggestion that women who pray and prophesy in the religious assembly be veiled.¹³ The "portrait" displays the female body builder from the waist up. Her right arm is flexed and her left hand pushes her right wrist for resistance. Lyon wears a black leather bustier and a black hat with a sheer black veil. Through the veil, the audience can see a stoic Lyon. Admittedly, the veil that Lyon wears is different from veils worn in the ancient world; however, the image allows students to think about some of the implications involved with veiling. In particular, Lyon's posture of power, as suggested in her flexed arm, prompts students to read 1 Cor 11:2–16 (concerning the veiling of women who prophesy) as a text about power and limiting power. One might ask them to imagine that this portrait of Lyon represents women in Paul's congregation: Does she represent the women Paul hopes to address in his letter or does Lyon embody the women in the congregation after they have received the letter? If students suggest the former, we might encourage them to use elements from the image to explain why they think Paul felt the need to address these women. If students suggest the latter, then have them imagine how Lyon's image functions as a response to Paul. In particular, what does this portrait suggest about how Paul's audience might have responded to his assertion that women ought to be veiled? Among other things, this image allows students to imagine that Paul's view may have met with various responses among the women in the

12. See Bal, "Reading Art?" 27–28, for a discussion of framing and reframing.

13. Robert Mapplethorpe, *Lisa Lyon*, 1982. Reproduced in *Robert Mapplethorpe and the Classical Tradition* (ed. G. Celant et. al.; New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2004), pl. 75.

Corinthian community. It suggests the possibility, for instance, that women remained powerful even under the veil.

ART AS ILLUMINATION

Martinez identifies as a final pedagogical approach using art as illumination, which entails making connections between different subjects with and through visual art, employing artistic pieces to make one's way through complex ideas. Abstract art can be a helpful avenue into many of the topics that arise in the examination of biblical texts, including issues of hermeneutics and the creation and function of texts. While abstract art is sometimes understood as nondenotative or nonrepresentational, works of art typically recognized as abstract still show patterns, feelings, and ideas.

Using pieces of abstract art in the biblical studies context involves metaphorical thinking, using the visual experience to consider an idea or feeling. Because these pieces are typically open-ended, they can serve as conversation partners for understanding a variety of difficult concepts.¹⁴ For instance, it can be challenging for students to grasp that their view of a particular writing is filtered through layers of interpretive tradition. It can be even more difficult for them to understand that many of the biblical writings began as oral traditions that have been shaped to fit into written narratives, adding to the interpretive layers surrounding a particular story. An image such as Paul Klee's *Around the Kernel*, a painting that consists of a spiraling line and layers of color around a small drop-like center, provides a path into these issues with students. Students can be asked to imagine the line as a textual tradition which develops around the "kernel" of an oral tradition or they might be prompted to think about the colors of the painting as overlapping traditions.¹⁵

In addition, as teachers of biblical subjects, we often find ourselves addressing topics of ethical, political, and social importance. Our subject matter necessarily raises discussions of class, ethnic identity, peace and war, sexuality, and family relationships. Given the cultural importance of the biblical texts in these discussions and students' differing relationships to these texts, at times it is helpful to offer a "neutral" text or image to begin these often polarizing conversations. As Robin Jensen points out, visual art often

14. Doug Adams and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, "Art as Religious Studies: Insights into the Judeo-Christian Traditions," in *Art as Religious Studies* (ed. D. Adams and D. Apostolos-Cappadona; Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1987), 3–11, esp. 8.

15. See the discussion of Klee's work in this volume on pp. ####.

serves a prophetic function, illuminating “individual and communal evil.”¹⁶ Art, such as Mary Lovelace O’Neal’s abstract lithograph *Racism Is Like Rain, Either It’s Raining or It’s Gathering*, challenges the viewer to imagine how racism functions and how it might be challenged.¹⁷ Using a piece of art to discuss topics such as racism or poverty, before turning to the biblical texts, helps students see the historical and contemporary reality of such problems and allows them to reflect on their understanding of the issues before considering the way in which they are addressed in biblical texts. Hopefully, this has the effect of making some students less defensive when studying the Bible critically and other students more aware of how these ancient texts might have contemporary relevance.

TEACHING STUDENTS TO READ AND THINK THROUGH IMAGES

Successfully employing visual art in the biblical studies classroom requires teaching students how to read and think through images in a careful and critical fashion. Sometimes we assume that they will be better equipped to interpret images or visual art than texts, since students have been raised in a world in which they are bombarded with images. However, it is problematic to equate exposure to the visual with an ability to navigate critically the complexities inherent in a piece of visual art. In fact, the need to teach students how to read biblical texts is paralleled by the need to teach students how to read visual texts. Furthermore, students must be taught to take time with art, to not just look at a piece, but to really *see* a piece. As Douglas Adams and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona have observed, the learned discipline of seeing means that viewers allows a piece of art to engage, challenge, and even transform them.¹⁸

There are a variety of ways to encourage students to become more careful readers of images. For example, students can study images outside of class in conjunction with the texts they read for class. Course websites and blogs make this relatively easy, since an instructor can gather images electronically for students to view. It is also interesting to have students find and share relevant images. In our own classrooms, students have submitted images ranging from Adam and Eve for an Altoids advertisement to a *Rolling Stone* photograph of Madonna, taken by David LaChapelle, which can be read as an allusion to Revelation’s Great Prostitute. This approach allows students to gather images and analyze them on their own. In addition, it can help instructors build their own image collections.

16. Jensen, *The Substance of Things Seen*, 97.

17. See the discussion of this piece in this volume on pp. ####.

18. Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona, “Art as Religious Studies,” 4–5.

To help students read images, especially ones that involve the interpretation of biblical texts, it can be advantageous to provide a guideline for them to follow. First, encourage students to take time to look carefully at an image. This may seem obvious; however, students tend to turn quickly to the question of what an image means. Second, have students describe the artistic elements within the image. It may be necessary to provide them with the requisite vocabulary (color, line, texture, balance, etc.) and a set of explicit questions to consider: What media are used to create the image? What lines, shapes, textures, colors, and patterns do you see? Do the lines and shapes of the image suggest movement? How does the image use space? Is there negative space? Or, is the piece completely “full”? Is the piece monochromatic?

Third, prompt students to read the image either alone or in relation to a particular text. For instance, ask them to talk about what the text “says” and how it “says” it. If they are reading an image in relation to a text, ask them to describe what parts of the text the image captures and what parts it seems to ignore. Finally, students should be given the opportunity to communicate their own opinions about the piece. Given the deliberate nature of the process, the opinions they articulate are hopefully grounded in their observations of the image rather than their initial impressions.

Making art an integral part of the classroom requires a number of commitments on behalf of the teacher. First, it takes time to find pieces that provoke us and speak to us. While images are becoming easier to access through electronic resources, developing a collection of high-quality images still is labor intensive. Image databases, such as ARTstor (a nonprofit digital library sponsored by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation) and CAMIO (a nonprofit database sustained by OCLC—the Online Computer Library Center), allow instructors and students at subscribing institutions access to thousands of images for instructional purposes.¹⁹ Thankfully, these electronic resources make it possible for instructors to use copyrighted images legally, which is a growing concern in the digital age. Also, we would recommend using images that captivate or challenge you as a teacher; this makes it much easier to help students engage with the piece. Second, it takes a certain willingness to consider different types of art. If all of our images are medieval manuscripts or renaissance paintings they lose their power to provoke students to look for the different ways texts and images function and communicate. We need to look in unexpected places, among the self-taught artists,

19. ARTstor (www.artstor.org) provides access to over 500,000 digital images, including artistic works and images of material culture, and CAMIO (www.oclc.org/camio/default.htm) provides access to over 90,000 images. Most museum websites have online collections that are searchable by artist's last name or by title.

the conceptual artists, and photographers. Artists, especially modern and contemporary ones, often challenge commonly held ideologies and theological assumptions. Before we bring these types of images into the classroom, we have to consider whether we are ready for those challenges.²⁰

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20. In addition to items catalogued in this chapter, Roncace and Gray, *Teaching the Bible*, contains other strategies using art: see Daniel E. Goodman, "Guernica and the Art of Biblical Hermeneutics," 5–6; Sandie Gravett, "Genesis 22: Artists' Renderings," 97–98; Lynn R. Huber, "Introducing Revelation through the Visual Arts," 398–400; and Jaime Clark-Soles, "Christology Slideshow," 282–84.

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BIBLICAL SUBJECTS IN ART

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The works discussed in the chapter are organized roughly according to the order in which their subject matter appears in the canon. Due to the impermanent nature of many website addresses, it will frequently be necessary to perform a simple artist or title search at the sites listed with many of these works. The indices may be consulted to find entries with classroom strategies related to particular texts and topics. All secondary literature cited here is included in the preceding bibliography (pp. #####).

Domenichino, *Adam and Eve* (1623–25) [Musée des Beaux-Arts, Grenoble; www.artrenewal.org]

This early seventeenth-century oil portrays the encounter between Yahweh and the first humans in Gen 3:8–13. Both humans have eaten of the Tree, and now Yahweh is confronting them about their disobedience. Domenichino renders this scene with a wonderful flourish, as God hovers above the lush landscape with his divine council. On the ground below, we see not only a lion and lamb lying together (perhaps a nod to the idyllic nature of the Garden that is about to be shattered), but also the serpent as it slithers away. We also see the two humans portrayed, just as they embark on the “blame game” found in 3:11–13. There is obviously a humorous inference here, as Domenichino renders Adam with shrugged shoulders, holding his hands in a gesture of resignation as he motions to Eve as the source of the disobedience. One can almost hear Adam saying, “What am I gonna do with her, eh? Fugedaboutit!” As such, this piece can be used to indicate not only Adam’s attempt to blame Eve (which is problematic in light of the Hebrew word *immah* in 3:6), but also to demonstrate the continued attempt to read Gen 2–3 as somehow Eve’s fault.

Gustave Doré, *The Deluge* (1865) [www.biblical-art.com]

This image invites students to see the flood story from a different perspective. Many artistic renderings follow the biblical text, which focuses on

the character of Noah and the ark as a vehicle of salvation. Instead of looking at the ark, Doré depicts what one might see looking from the ark out into the rising flood waters. He shows people scrambling up a rock, parents pushing their children to the highest point possible to escape the deluge. A tiger, with a cub in its mouth and others at its feet, is perched atop the rock. The sky is dark and the crashing waves take the shape of a hand about to swallow the victims. When students are asked what issues this image raises, they typically note that it calls into question God's indiscriminate destruction of the earth. How can the young children, pathetically huddled on the rock before their demise, deserve to die? And what about the animals? Are they also wicked? Indeed, the biblical deity is clear that the flood is intended to destroy animals as well as humans (Gen 6:7). But why? The juxtaposed images of the cubs and the children underscore the death of two groups who seemingly cannot be morally culpable. Moreover, the adults in the image are endeavoring to save the children—that is, they are acting righteously, which, again, raises the question of wholesale annihilation. Can “all flesh” warrant death (6:13)? The image also compels one to imagine the scene awaiting Noah and his family when they exit the ark. There is the rainbow, of course, and a chance at new life, but there would also be the aftermath of the flood—the countless dead bodies of the animals and humans who did not survive. In short, Doré's provision of an alternate point of view invites thought about the image of the deity and the complexity of the flood story.

Guercino, *The Angel Appears to Hagar and Ishmael* (ca. 1652–53) [National Gallery, London; www.nationalgallery.org.uk]

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, *Hagar in the Wilderness* (1835) [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; www.metmuseum.org]

Pietro Berrettini da Cortona, *The Return of Hagar* (ca. 1637) [Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; www.khm.at/homeE3.html]

Avi Katz, *The Angel Comforteth Hagar* (late twentieth century) [www.avikatz.net/sf/aliencorn/alienframe.htm]

Guercino, *Abraham Casting Out Hagar and Ishmael* (1657) [Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan; www.wga.hu]

Barent Fabritius, *Hagar and Ishmael* (1658) [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; www.metmuseum.org]

Willem Bartsius, *Abraham Pleading with Sarah on Behalf of Hagar* (1631) [J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; www.biblical-art.com]

The story of Hagar in Gen 16 and 21 is confusing for several reasons. First, readers are not entirely sure how the two chapters relate to one another; that is, should we read them in narrative succession so that chapter 21 follows chapter 16 in the plot, or should we regard chapter 21 as a doublet from a different literary source? Second, the reader is unsure about the identity of Hagar. Is she a slave or a maidservant? Is she Abraham's wife, or merely a surrogate womb for Sarah? Third, it is uncertain as to how the parties in this triangular relationship and their offspring relate to one another. Is Abraham in love with Hagar? Does he love his son Ishmael? How does Sarah regard Ishmael? Does she treat Hagar brutally, or in accordance with the social mores of the time? Alongside these key questions, we can discern the singular importance of Hagar in this narrative: She is the first woman to have a theophanic experience as well as a promise of progeny. She even becomes the only character in the Bible to name God in 16:13, and is the only mother who finds a wife for her son. Even so, ambiguity and perplexity surround Hagar.

Comparatively speaking, there has not been much art with Hagar as its subject. The pieces we do have, though, can serve not only to address the uncertainties of this significant character, but also to help students with them as they see how other biblical interpreters have addressed them in the past.

Regarding the first difficulty, that of the relationship of chapters 16 and 21, artistic renderings of Hagar are admittedly not much help. This is because, as Zefira Gitay has noted, artists have always favored chapter 21 because of the added drama of the danger young Ishmael faces. They can portray the distress of Hagar, the impending death, and timely appearance of the angel. Many of the most famous pieces of Hagar do indeed focus on this peril in the wilderness, such as those by Guercino and Corot. Others, however, focus on chapter 16. In Cortona's work, for example, we see Abraham welcoming Hagar back from the wilderness with open arms while Sarah lurks in the background, looking none too pleased (see the piece by Katz). By juxtaposing these images and asking students to identify the chapter on which the image is based, one can easily begin a conversation addressing narrative and source-critical issues.

Art is far more useful, however, in dealing with the second and third ambiguities. That is, a thoughtful panoply of images can initiate and stimulate fruitful discussions on these matters. A good place to begin is Guercino's 1657 oil. Here we see Abraham facing Hagar and a weeping Ishmael, pointing with his right hand, but holding his left palm up either in a gesture of blessing or one indicating a command of silence. Sarah is shown in the left of the frame, glancing over her right shoulder in what appears to be a dismissive look. The emotion here on Ishmael's part is palpable, but Abraham appears steady as a rock. One can then compare this piece with the one by

Willem Bartsius in which Abraham is tugging at Sarah's robe in an attempt to persuade her to change her mind about banishing Hagar and Ishmael, while Isaac looks off of the frame, probably at his brother leaving. Here we see a much more emotional Abraham who appears to be devastated by the forced exile of his wife and son. It is crucial for students to understand and identify with the emotions present in these chapters, because once they become emotionally invested in a narrative, their excitement and advocacy are piqued. In contrast to the pieces that focus primarily on Abraham, the work of Fabritius centers on Hagar's reaction to Abraham's decision. She is weeping in his arms, while a wide-eyed Ishmael looks on. Comparing these images (and others in this vein) will allow teachers to present variant readings of these characters, evidence for which can be found in the text. One could then ask students to identify the passage(s) that could support such a rendering over another, and once students become involved in working out the mechanics of representation and interpretation, they will be able to formulate their own reading(s) of the text.

Albrecht Dürer, *Lot and His Daughters* (1496–99) [National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; www.nga.gov]

Lucas van Leyden, *Lot and His Daughters* (ca. 1520) [The Louvre, Paris; www.wga.hu]

Albrecht Altdorfer, *Lot and His Daughters* (1537) [Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; www.artchive.com]

Joachim Wtewael, *Lot and His Daughters* (ca. 1600) [State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; www.hermitagemuseum.org]

Hendrik Goltzius, *Lot and His Daughters* (1616) [Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; www.rijksmuseum.nl]

Orazio Gentileschi, *Lot and His Daughters* (ca. 1621–24) [National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; cybermuse.gallery.ca]

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 18–19, along with the story of Lot and his family, has long fascinated interpreters and artists. A study of various images can help students consider the traits and motivations of the different characters; it can also help them glimpse how artists pick up on and perpetuate biblical views on key moral issues, such as sex, alcohol, and revenge. One can begin with the rather docile treatment of the story by Albrecht Dürer which depicts a scene after the destruction of the cities and the transformation of Lot's wife, but prior to the sexual encounter in 19:30–38. Lot is portrayed as a well-dressed patriarch, and his girls are

dutifully following him in their trek. Dürer's work is more interested in the spectacular rendering of the destruction of the cities in the top of the frame than it is in the sexual aspects of the story. In almost all of the pieces that are more focused on the fantastic rain of fire from heaven, one can ask students to play a variant of "Where's Waldo," because Lot's wife is usually present, but nearly camouflaged in her new existence as a pillar of salt.

Beginning with Dürer allows instructors to illustrate the near-chronological move away from an interest in the destruction of the cities to a more eroticizing focus on the sexual encounter in later works. A medial position between these two trends is found in the piece by Van Leyden which portrays several events in the story. At the top of the work, we see a colorful burst of devastation, but we also see Lot and his daughters leaving the city with their mother left behind at the right center. Dominating the lower central region is a scene of Lot and his daughters after their journey. One daughter is pouring wine for their father, while the other sits, visibly uncomfortable, with her hands in her lap as Lot begins to embrace her. All the figures are fully clothed, and the viewer may recognize that this is but a preamble to the sexual act not depicted.

After examining the works of Dürer and van Leyden, students can view several pieces that focus almost exclusively on the sexual, alcoholic aspects of the story, beginning with Albrecht Altdorfer's depiction. The frame here is dominated by a horizontal pairing of Lot and one of his daughters, both fully nude, with a quite lecherous smile on Lot's face. We also see the prominence of wine, as well as Lot's other nude daughter either resting up or waiting in the wings, as Sodom and Gomorrah burn in the top right of the frame. In this same vein of images that focus on sex and liquor are the works of Joachim Wtewael and Hendrik Goltzius. Both of these show two naked daughters lounging with Lot as they all drink. Everyone seems to be enjoying themselves, and there is no indication that either daughter has any compunction.

Since students should consider carefully the interests and motivations of the daughters, it is helpful to conclude with Orazio Gentileschi's piece. Here, we see no lecherous sex, no glorification of liquor, and no destruction. Instead, it depicts two women, crouching over the form of their father, incapacitated from liquor, looking and pointing off the frame to, we assume, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The starkness of the painting allows students to focus on the daughters and what they might be thinking. Obviously they have already made the decision to ply Lot with alcohol, but they have not yet engaged in any sexual activity with him. The off-frame destruction they are witnessing might lead them to believe that they must act. As Sharon Pace Jeansonne (*Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife*) notes, the motivation for the actions of the daughters is complicated not only by their belief

that their father is the only man left in a world that will need repopulating, but they may also be continuing the cycle of sexual abuse he nearly initiated when he offered them up to the men of Sodom. In other words, there could be a motive of revenge in their drunken exploits with Lot. Gentileschi's work, in short, allows teachers to focus closely on the plight of the daughters, and as such is able to elicit more concentrated cogitations from students.

George Segal, *Sacrifice of Isaac* (1979) [Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.; speccoll.library.kent.edu/4may70/exhibit/memorials/segal.html]

Albert J. Winn, *Akedah* (1995) [Jewish Museum, New York; www.jewishmuseum.org]

When George Segal was commissioned to memorialize the campus riots against the War in Vietnam and the subsequent death of four students at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, he created a statue that depicted a modernized version of Abraham (see Gen 22), with knife in hand, standing over a kneeling supplicant Isaac, bound at the wrists and wearing only athletic shorts. Kent State declined the statue—it was deemed inappropriate—but Princeton purchased the bronze cast and erected it near its chapel. This statue may facilitate discussion of the sacrifice of children: Abraham's, Jephthah's, God's, and the fathers of soldiers ever since. How does the story of the Akedah justify or challenge the sacrifice made by parents during times of war? Or, more generally, how does this provocative artwork understand the original text? What aspect does it emphasize? What does it miss?

Albert J. Winn's black-and-white photograph *Akedah* encourages students to think about some of the implications of the story of Isaac's binding. In particular, it can be used to highlight the issue of theodicy, which is central in this story, in a contemporary way. Winn captures the image of a male torso, including the left arm, which bears tefillin and which has a bandage, suggesting a blood test recently has been taken. In his explanation of the piece, Winn, who is Jewish and HIV positive, compares the tourniquet used in taking a monthly blood test to the ritual of wearing tefillin. Among other things, Winn's image seems to push the audience to consider the story from the perspective of Isaac, since the only figure in the image is the one who is "bound." Isaac, one might argue, is being metaphorically represented by a modern HIV positive man. After telling students about Winn's explanation of the piece, one might ask them to discuss why Winn names his piece *Akedah*. What part of the story does Winn seem to capture? What does he leave out? In particular, an instructor might encourage students to explore what Winn's image communicates about the story's notion of sacrifice. How could God ask for the sacrifice of Abraham's precious son? Similarly, how could God

allow for the deaths of so many from HIV/AIDS? (For related exercises, see Gravett, “Genesis 22: Artists’ Renderings,” in Roncace and Gray, *Teaching the Bible*, 97–98.)

Gustave Doré, *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel* (1855) [Granger Collection, New York; www.ibiblio.org]

Doré depicts a winged angel, dressed in white, struggling with Jacob (Gen 32:22–32). The angel is prevailing, as he calmly clasps both of Jacob’s wrists and pushes him down off of the rock where they are perched, despite Jacob’s strained resistance. This portrayal is what one would expect: the divine being easily forcing the human into submission. But this, of course, is different from the biblical scene where it is reported that the “man” did not prevail against Jacob (32:25) and the confrontation culminates with Jacob releasing his unidentified opponent (32:26). Students may consider why Doré does not follow the biblical script more closely. Are we to imagine that it is scene earlier in the contest—before Jacob ultimately triumphs? Or is the artist uncomfortable with the notion that Jacob “wrestled with God . . . and prevailed” (32:28)? What are the theological implications of Jacob’s victory? Further, the biblical text does not refer to Jacob’s adversary as an “angel” (cf. the title). Rather, it says that Jacob wrestled with “a man,” but Jacob later interprets the experience as having struggled with the deity (32:30). In light of this ambiguity, how are viewers to interpret Doré’s figure? Is it God? If not, then why not simply render the figure as a man (i.e., without wings)? Finally, Jacob’s garb is reddish in color. Does this recall his brother Esau/Edom, whose name means “red” (Gen 25:30)? Indeed, the biblical text implies that Jacob, as he is about to meet his brother for the first time in years, is struggling with past issues—hence the themes of blessing (32:26) and the mixing of pronouns in the Hebrew text, suggesting the “likeness” (i.e., twins) of the two combatants.

Avi Katz, *The Alien Corn Series* (late twentieth century): *Judah Meeteth Tamar by the Roadside*; *Samson and Delilah*; *The Angel Comforteth Hagar* [www.avikatz.net/sf/aliencorn/alienframe.htm]

If students tire of Baroque and Renaissance paintings, a series of works on biblical characters created by Avi Katz called *The Alien Corn* series can offer fresh perspectives. Since 1990 he has been the staff artist for the *Jerusalem Report*, illustrated over one hundred books, and helped found the Israel Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy. This eclecticism, and especially the interest in science fiction is obvious in his work for *The Alien Corn* series, which renders all of its subjects in bright, almost neon, colors and in futuristic settings. In so doing, Katz defamiliarizes these figures, and allows students to approach them in a very different environment.

For example, in Katz's piece titled, *Judah Meeteth Tamar by the Roadside*, we see a bleak terrain with only two figures in the fore. One is wearing what appears to be armor from Old Spain, driving a vehicle that resembles a Land Speeder from *Star Wars*. This figure, who we know from the title is Judah, is leaning out of the right side of his craft, beckoning the other figure, Tamar, to enter. She is dressed in an outfit reminiscent of the 1980s TV show *Miami Vice*, with her bikini top, large sunglasses, and "pageant hair." Her right hand is lifted, and she seems to be gesturing for Judah to come to her, as well. In the top right corner of the piece we see a short snippet—in both Hebrew and English—from Gen 38, so that we can identify easily the scriptural context of the image, even without the accompanying title. Genesis 38 is notoriously difficult to understand, in terms of its place in the surrounding Joseph novella as well as the intentions and possibly scandalous behavior of Tamar. By placing this scene in such a novel context, Katz allows students to come to the story with fresh eyes. Students can ask questions about Tamar's behavior and dress, as well as Judah's role in the incident, so that new stock can be taken of this narrative.

An even more provocative rendering is Katz's *Samson and Delilah*, in which we see the brief narrative of Judg 16 transplanted into a seedy-looking motel. Samson is completely naked on the bed, with a very satisfied look on his face. Delilah is wearing nothing but a negligée, and her position in the frame makes it obvious that she has just finished sexually gratifying Samson. As Samson rests, Delilah signals to a robot standing in the doorway to come in. The robot's torso is shaped and colored like an old barbershop pole, with red and white swirls, so the viewer knows that Samson is about to be sheared. In depicting the scene in this fashion, Katz allows us to ask various questions: What is Delilah's role? Does she cut Samson's hair, or does someone else? In the Masoretic Text, it is clear that even though Delilah "calls to a man," she is the one who does the cutting. However, in the Septuagint and Vulgate, this man is called a barber, and it is he who does the shaving, so the textual evidence is sketchy. Does Delilah seduce Samson? The Masoretic Text (Hebrew Bible) tells us, "She made (or let) him sleep on (or between) her knees," but does not tell us anything about intercourse. In sum, by portraying Delilah in this way, Katz counters the biblical text, and students can be asked to compare and contrast the text and image, as well as be queried as to the history of interpretation of Delilah that may have influenced this depiction.

A final example will suffice. In his work *The Angel Comforteth Hagar*, Katz bucks the dominant depiction of Hagar in Western art by focusing not on Gen 21, but rather on Gen 16 in which a pregnant Hagar runs away from Sarah's rather brutal treatment (16:6). His work depicts Hagar as a runaway, pregnant teen waiting at what appears to be a bus stop. Hagar has removed her roller

skates, but looks extremely depressed as she sits on the bus bench, fountain drink in hand. Next to her sits what we presume to be the angel, but this angel looks more like a robot, or even a bit player from *Tron*, than the typical angel in Western art. Nevertheless, the angel puts its arm around Hagar in a show of comfort that contrasts with the command in 16:9 to return to Sarah so that she can abuse Hagar more. As such, Katz has provided ample material here for students to return to Gen 16 and 21 and ask newly formed questions about (1) Hagar's status as an unwed, pregnant woman in the ancient world; (2) Sarah's treatment of Hagar; and (3) the fate of this notable, yet often overlooked character in the Torah.

In short, Katz's series—which also depicts Esau as a red Wookiee and Ruth as a sexually charged Vulcan—takes familiar biblical characters and resituates them in the far reaches of the galaxy. In so doing, students' imaginations can be fired to (re)approach these figures from alternative vantages with innovative interrogations, so that their investigations into the biblical texts can be deeper and more rewarding.

Michelangelo, *Moses* (ca. 1515) [San Pietro Church in Vincoli, Rome; www.wga.hu]

This monumental marble statue, 235 cm in height, was commissioned for the tomb of Julius II, which was never completed. Moses is presented as a towering, powerfully built figure, with unkempt hair and a long beard, certainly not the hesitant, stuttering figure we encounter early on in texts like Exod 4:10. The most noticeable attribute of this figure, though, are the two short, stubby horns Michelangelo has placed on the crown of his head. This iconic feature of Moses is based in a physiognomic description of the great leader in Torah. In Exod 34:29, as Moses descends from Mount Sinai, he is described as “not aware that the skin of his face was radiant, since he had spoken with Him [God]” (JPS). The verb “was radiant” is translated from the Hebrew verb *qāran*, which is a near homonym for *qeren*, the Hebrew word for horn, as in an animal horn. The conflation of the two words is somewhat understandable; even in Ps 69:32, the verbal form is used as a participle to indicate an animal “being with horns.” Jerome, in the Vulgate, renders Exod 34:29 in part, “his face was horned as a result of his speaking with God.” All of this may seem but an interesting footnote, but when we add this textual tradition to other literature like John 8:44, in which Jesus tells a group of Jews, “You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires” (NRSV), then we see the beginnings of one of the most prevalent anti-Jewish myths in history: that Jews have horns because in some way, they are connected to the devil. As such, Michelangelo's work can be used not only to contrast images of Moses in the Torah, but also to highlight the

seemingly trivial origin of an anti-Semitic myth, with the hope of countering it.

Gustave Doré, *Jephthah's Daughter Coming to Meet her Father* (1865) [www.biblical-art.com]

Arnulf Rainer, *Jephthah's Daughter Goes to Greet Her Father* (1995–98) [Museum Freider Burda, Baden-Baden; www.samm lung-frieder-burda.de]

Barry Moser, *The Daughter on the Pyre* (2003) [Illustration in Moser, *The Holy Bible: King James Version: The Pennyroyal Caxton Bible* (New York: Viking Studio, 1999); www.womeninthebible.net/BIBLE-1.9C.htm]

These three paintings relate the story of Judg 11 in dramatic and telling ways. Without disclosing the title, one can show students the woodcut by Gustave Doré. Central to the composition, the daughter leads a crowd of young women in exuberant but modest dance, stepping lightly, almost suspended over the earthen mountain path. The grain of the woodcut rises and falls with the energy of her dance. Does the illustration capture the moment when she celebrates her father's victory or bewails her virginity? Students can make a decision based on evidence they identify, both from the content and the artistry of the work. If they argue, for example, that the moment captured must be before the daughter learns of her fate, they might point to the presence of her timbrels and the fact that she is dancing (cf. Judg 11:34). Alternatively, they may reason that the black and white of the illustration suggests that the daughter knows she has only two choices: to die or to live.

Next, one can consider the revision of Doré's woodcut by Arnulf Rainer. Rainer takes Doré's woodcut and colors it with streams of bright red, blue, yellow, and pink rays emanating from the dancing daughter, as though she were the center of radiant flames of fire. The whole scene is haloed with entwining lines. Students can speculate on the meaning of these lines. Are they brambles of wood, foreshadowing the fuel of her sacrifice and, perhaps evoking the Akedah? Or do they suggest barbed wire, emphasizing her loss of freedom (to live or to choose her own destiny)? Or is Rainer evoking a motif of the Jewish Holocaust, offering a social critique of those who went to their death without resistance? Here, too, students could make arguments one way or another using evidence from Rainer's illustration.

Finally, Barry Moser's engraving captures an anorexic adolescent already half-consumed by the pyre in which she lies. Her resolute face reaches upward, yet her eyes are closed. She goes to her death with intention, to honor her father.

These depictions of Jephthah's daughter may be used to pose a number of questions: (1) Which image best conveys the sense of moral and political chaos that pervades the second half of Judges? (2) Which is the best illustration of the story in Judg 11? (3) What do these images suggest about the value and purpose of women and their sacrifices in the Bible, and how are these sacrifices often expected today in the shaping of young girls?

Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Bathsheba* (1889) [Private collection; www.biblical-art.com]

Most people assume that the story of David and Bathsheba is one of adultery (2 Sam 11:1–12:14). In order to provoke a careful reading of the text and to set the stage for a consideration of the image, students can perform an exercise in which they “put the characters on trial.” If this were a modern story, what charges could be laid and what might stick? Is it a seduction, voyeurism, sexual harassment, adultery, or a rape? Teachers can also take the opportunity to define these terms and discuss the possible consequences of the charges. It is sometimes enlightening to ask the men first and then the women what they conclude, which provides a chance to discuss gender perspective and feminist biblical hermeneutics.

Then, when students are presented with this painting, they can describe what Gérôme has interpreted this narrative, and how it is communicated in his painting. Students might say, for example, that Gérôme depicts a seduction. Bathsheba entices David: She is bathing naked on an open rooftop; she is turned to the sun—and to David—and her chest is illumined; her hip is hitched up in a traditionally provocative pose; she stands in the center of the symbol of a fertile woman, a “v” created by the black shadowy woman on the left and the white garment on the right. The black and white come together at her feet and suggest that she has power. Furthermore, the angle of the kneeling woman and the pointed tower direct both Bathsheba's and the observer's gaze to David. She is “inviting his attention.” Alternatively, students might suggest that, according to Gérôme, David is a voyeur: David is partially concealed by the balustrade and the altitude of his balcony; he is in the shadowy background; he is alongside a phallic pointed tower. Bathsheba has not noticed him (yet) or she would cover up. Or they might argue that Gérôme is depicting sexual harassment; that is, in David's exalted state (at the top of the painting and in the building) and unreachable position (distant perspective), he can do whatever he likes without consequences. The evening assignation and the outstretched arms of both Bathsheba and David creating mutual union might suggest adultery. Bathsheba has cast her veil of purity (the white garment) to the side. Then again, rape might be implied by the dark and crooked visual line of the wall reaching to David set against the con-

trast of Bathsheba's white skin and garment. In short, placing this open-ended painting of Bathsheba beside 2 Sam 11 demonstrates how biblical interpretation is truly "in the eye of the beholder."

Dieric Bouts the Elder, *Prophet Elijah in the Desert* (1464–68) [Sint-Pieterskerk, Leuven; www.biblical-art.com]

Peter Paul Rubens, *The Prophet Elijah Receiving Bread and Water from an Angel* (1625–28) [Musée Bonnat, Bayonne, France; www.ibiblio.org]

Abraham Bloemaert, *Landscape with the Prophet Elijah in the Desert* (1610) [The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; www.hermitagemuseum.org]

Washington Allston, *Elijah in the Desert* (1818) [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; www.mfa.org]

Among the themes upon which to focus when reading the stories of Elijah (1 Kgs 17:1–19:25; 2 Kgs 1:1–2:12) is that of eating in the wilderness. In the first, Elijah curses Israel with a drought and goes to the Wadi Cherith east of the Jordan where he is fed bread and meat by ravens (1 Kgs 17:6). In the second, fearing Jezebel, Elijah flees to Judah, leaves his servant, and then goes another day's journey into the wilderness. There he sits down under a tree and hopes to die (1 Kgs 19:4). An angel awakens him from sleep with "a cake baked on hot stones" and a jar of water. Again, he falls asleep and is fed by the angel, who says, "Get up and eat otherwise the journey will be too much for you." Elijah went "in the strength of that food" for forty days (1 Kgs 19:8). With students, brainstorm a list of possible related themes, such as the Exodus, Babylonian exile, Jesus' temptation, or his multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Remind them that the Deuteronomistic Historian was likely writing from the exile and thus experiencing some form of wilderness at that time. How might these feeding miracles of Elijah be received by the Babylonian exiles?

One might continue the discussion by breaking students into groups and giving each group a color copy of one of the paintings listed above. Ask them to work together to identify what the artist emphasizes with composition, color, background, foreground, structures, characters, props, garments, gestures, space, light and dark, and flow lines. By emphasizing these features, what emotions does the artist try to evoke in his contemporary audience? For example, does the painting suggest hope at a time of war, shame for overindulgence during times of peace, or confidence in God's providence during times of famine? Ask them to form guesses based on their observations of the paintings. Each group can then collaborate with each of the other

groups, sharing what they have learned and discussed. As they rotate around the room, each group is able to incorporate new insights. In the plenary session that follows, each group can explain what they learned about (1) Elijah, (2) the use of traditional motifs in later biblical texts, and (3) how artists use these motifs rhetorically for their own audiences.

John Singer Sargent, *Frieze of the Prophets* (1895) [Boston Public Library, Boston; sargentmurals.bpl.org]

This frieze, part of Sargent's giant mural *Triumph of Religion*, which he executed (but never completed) for the Boston Public Library between the years 1890–1919, is well-known and easily the most famous piece of the larger mural. It depicts an imposing golden and winged Moses holding the Ten Commandments. At his right is Elijah; at his left, Joshua. Spread out on either side of this central triad are sixteen other prophetic figures: the three major prophets, the twelve minor prophets, and Daniel.

The painting has had a rather lively and interesting history of reception in both Jewish and Christian circles and has a number of potential uses in classroom contexts. With a total of nineteen figures represented, the range of possibilities for discussion can at best be only hinted at here.

(1) One may note the individualism at work in Sargent's presentation of the prophets in contrast to the more schematic images represented immediately above (which have to do with the Egyptian oppression). This artistic observation is certainly significant for the mural as a whole: Egypt, despite its power, is ultimately depersonalized, whereas these few lone figures and the religion they represent, in no small way “triumph” over the glory that was Egypt. But it is also somewhat indicative of earlier approaches to the prophets (e.g., Wellhausen) which saw them as the high point of and *telos* in the development of Israelite religion.

(2) The centrality of Moses to the entire tableau and especially the centerpiece where he appears with Joshua and Elijah might be analyzed. Why these three? Why does Sargent portray Moses with the prophets anyway? Is it a construal of Exod 3 as a prophetic call narrative? And why Joshua and Elijah as opposed to, say, Samuel or Nathan, who are arguably as important?

(3) In addition to the winged (!) Moses with two tablets, there are other distinctive elements of representation: Joshua is appropriately drawing a sword; Amos has a shepherd's crook; Daniel carries a scroll; and Jonah is mostly concealed behind Jeremiah and Isaiah—a reluctant prophet to the end! Equally as intriguing and more interpretively daring is the pathos Sargent captures with a number of the figures, especially Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Joel, and Obadiah. Students could be asked about how and where Sargent's

depictions reflect the biblical text. How are they *interpretations*? Finally, do they cast any light on the text and in what way? Obadiah, for instance, is probably the most poignantly depicted. A comparison with the grief and cry for justice, even vengeance, that pervades this briefest of prophetic books supports Sargent's depiction. But Sargent's depiction, in turn, may cast further light on Obadiah. Perhaps the grief that is captured so poignantly and visually in the painting is two-part: (a) the grief the prophet feels after the destruction of Jerusalem, and (b) the grief the prophet feels for having personally to carry a rather vicious message of retribution. This latter point, if correct, is at least implicitly present in the text but is brought to the fore in a powerful and visual way by Sargent's painting of Obadiah.

Raphael, *The Vision of Ezekiel* (1518) [Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence; www.wga.hu]

William Blake, *The Whirlwind: Ezekiel's Vision of the Cherubim and Eyed Wheels* (1803–5) [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; www.mfa.org/collections]

William H. Johnson, *Ezekiel Saw the Wheel* (1944–45) [Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; americanart.si.edu]

Norbert H. Kox, *Ezekiel's Vision* (contemporary) [Collection of the Artist; www.apocalypsehouse.homestead.com/EZEKIEL.html]

Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *The Glory of God* (1851–60) [Illustration in von Carolsfeld, *Die Bibel in Bildern* (Leipzig: Georg Wigand 1906); www.pitts.emory.edu/woodcuts/1853BibID/00011489.jpg]

The vision of divine in the first chapter of Ezekiel is a particularly powerful text; however, as is the case with other visionary texts, such as the book of Revelation, a literal reading of the vision yields an almost absurd portrait of divine being and power. Reading this text in conjunction with select images can encourage students to think beyond the constraints of literal language and to understand the details of the text as evoking moods and abstract qualities of the divine, rather than as a literal description of God.

One way of beginning this conversation is to have students sketch the vision as the instructor, or a student, reads aloud the text of Ezekiel. Students should be provided with blank paper and encouraged to capture the details of the text. Of course, this requires that the reader read slowly and deliberately. After they have tried their own sketches, students can discuss what they think Ezekiel's vision is about. Is it about the winged creatures with multiple faces? The wheels that move and spin? Or, is it about communicating characteristics associated with God? If it is about more abstract characteristics, why does the

author include such vivid detail? The conversation can encourage students to think about the vision as a rhetorical construction, which aims to persuade its audience to accept a particular view of God and of Ezekiel.

Students may then consider what the various artists capture in the text and how they interpret the purpose of Ezekiel's vision in their illustrations. The images by Raphael and William Blake are the most detailed. In Raphael's painting one is able to see the winged creatures, but one of the most striking aspects of the painting is the proximity between God and earth. Even though Raphael does not depict the "wheels" described in the vision, he seemingly captures the text's suggestion that the divine vision is close to the earth (Ezek 1:15). Blake's watercolor rendition utilizes the male body to represent the human form of the living creatures described by Ezekiel (1:5). This muscular body conveys a sense of strength and power. Like Raphael, Blake avoids depicting literal wheels; however, he does allude to a circular form and motion around the body of the living creature. In both images, we see the artists communicating particular themes in the text, by highlighting certain details and disregarding others.

After showing Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld's work and inviting students to make sound effects and to move "in any of the four directions without veering," students may contemplate why Ezekiel's vision of God has wheels. Is it meant to imply that God is able to move, in this case, to Babylon? This leads easily to questions of why God might leave Jerusalem (it was defiled) and go with the exiles (the privileged). Kinesthetic learners appreciate acting this out: God sits in Jerusalem, stands up, the temple (chair) is forcefully knocked over, and then God crosses the room, sits down in exile, and chats with Ezekiel. (Perhaps other players can be included: the people left behind who do not have access to God, and the exiles in Babylon who do have access to God. The tension of the Reconstruction between the Jews and the people of the land comes into clearer focus.)

The paintings by Johnson and Kox, both self-taught artists, are simpler than the others. These paintings lend themselves to discussions of the text's function. Johnson's work uses a primitive style to depict Ezekiel experiencing the vision of the wheels. The audience sees a partially clothed prophet, looking up into the sky, with two wheels floating above his head. The prophet's arms and hands are in the air and he looks as though he has fallen to the ground. Johnson reminds the viewer and the reader that the vision of Ezekiel communicates something about Ezekiel, as a prophet, and is part of a larger story in which the prophet plays a key role. In contrast to Johnson's focus on Ezekiel, Kox uses oranges, reds, and yellows to depict an abstract vision of rotating "wheels" that blaze above a body of water. Above the wheels, which look strikingly similar to depictions of UFOs, is a spot of light, which might

be the divine. In some sense, Kox places the viewer in the role of Ezekiel experiencing the fiery vision. What does Kox imply by placing the viewer in the role of Ezekiel? Does it suggest, for example, that Ezekiel's vision is meant to reveal the divine nature to the audience?

For a related exercise, see Johanna Stiebert, "Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision," in Roncace and Gray, *Teaching the Bible*, 179–80.

Albert Pinkham Ryder, *Jonah* (ca. 1885–95) [Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; americanart.si.edu]

Most images of Jonah focus on either the "great fish" swallowing the recalcitrant prophet or the typological relationship between Jonah and the risen Christ. In fact, Jonah (along with Susanna) is depicted frequently in early Christian art and sarcophagi. In Ryder's oil, we see a chaotic, dark scene in which Jonah has just been tossed overboard by the "pagan" sailors after discovering he is the cause of the storm that plagues them. God is seen hovering above the action, flanked by wing-like spans of gold light, while Jonah is in the choppy waves, holding his arms aloft, helpless and seemingly ready for oblivion. This piece challenges both of the standard *topoi* of Jonah mentioned above; it also raises questions for students about the character of God and Jonah, and the nature of the narrative itself. For example, is God controlling all this action? If so, why? If Jonah is a prophet, why is he so ready to accept death? What kind of a prophet would act like this, or, why is Jonah so negative about carrying out God's commission? If he is ready for death, why does God commission the "great fish" to swallow him? Energetic teachers can also ask students to reflect on the technical aspects of Ryder's work, adumbrated nicely on the Smithsonian's webpage, complete with QuickTime movie commentary (see americanart.si.edu/collections/tours/ryder/). Ryder fiddled constantly with his works, and his *Jonah* is no exception. He even reused an older canvas, as a faint image of a female character is visible via an autoradiograph. The technical aspects of Ryder's paintings could also be incorporated into a discussion of Jonah, insofar as God seems to be constantly fiddling with Jonah, attempting to perfect his understanding of treating Gentiles with justice, while Jonah is trying to reuse the traditional understanding of "insider-outsider" categories prevalent in Israelite ideology for so long.

Jean Fouquet, *Job sur le fumier* (1452–60) [Musée Condé, Chantilly; expositions.bnf.fr/fouquet/grand/f093.htm]

In a miniature illustration from the Book of Hours of Étienne Chevalier, Jean Fouquet depicts Job on the ash heap being instructed by his three friends. Job has come to the end of his strength; his ribs and sinews show through his darkened boil-stricken skin, his beard and hair hang unkempt and grey. The

ashes cradle his broken body. In contrast, his three pious friends, dressed in rich hues of red, gold, blue, and white and with crowns on their heads, keep their distance from Job, stand over him and “look down their noses” at him. One friend extends his delicate foot in Job’s direction, perhaps to check for life, or perhaps in disdain that his foot is soiled. A castle stands in the background, and travelers (perhaps Elihu?) approach along the way. All things seem to point heavenward—the trees, the castle, the visual lines of the friends’ figures, the clear blue sky—except for Job who has succumbed to despair. Will he curse God now? The Latin subscript ironically appears to cite Ps 95:1, “O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us rejoice in our salvation!”

One can ask students if they can identify one friend from the other by their gestures and stance. Teachers might assign one of the speeches of the various “friends” of Job to each of several small groups, and ask them to match the speech with one of the characters in the painting. Which is the agitated Zophar (20:1–29), Eliphaz the accuser (22:1–30), and Bildad the cynic (8:1–22; 18:1–21)? Can they identify the intent of the friends’ accusations: What would be an equivalent contemporary friend’s comment? How might they themselves respond to this friendly piece of advice? How does Job respond? Finally, students may reflect on the way the order and the clarity in this small painting challenge the disorder and chaos of Job’s reality (cf. Job 2:12). The artistry of the painting suggests that order is more divine.

Marc Chagall, *Ahasuerus Sends Vashti Away* (1960) [Svetlana & Lubos Jelinek, Chrudim, Czech Republic; www.spaightwoodgalleries.com/Pages/Chagall_60Bible_lithos3.html]

Gustave Doré, *The Queen Vashti Refusing to Obey the Command of Ahasuerus* (1865) [www.biblical-art.com]

Edwin Long, *Vashti Refuses the King’s Summons* (1879) [Bob Jones University Museum and Gallery, Greenville, S.C.; www.bjumg.org/collections/old_masters/centuries_18_19/long.htm]

When Vashti refuses King Ahasuerus’s request to be exhibited, the king and his sages send out an edict to all the provinces so that people know that “every man should be master in his own house.” This story obviously supports male domination in the household, but this introductory tale, as well as the greater narrative of Esther, demonstrates that female subversion works. Vashti gets what she wants by refusing to use her sexuality; Esther gets what she wants by using her sexuality. The king never seems to get what he wants, except perhaps Esther.

Art captures both sides of this story as well. In Chagall’s color lithograph, Ahasuerus dominates. The royal red of rage in his ornate robe bleeds into the

innumerable people close to him, and extends down the stairs. His height and weight—supported by the dark diagonal lines dividing the pair—overshadows Vashti, who hides crouching under the stairway, face downcast and fading pink and green, seeing darkness. Compare this to Gustave Doré's engraving. Here, Vashti stands straight and proud at the top of stairs, with her arm outstretched in restraint, bathed in light and in layers of white clothes (as innocent), but no crown. She is surrounded by angry men looking and leaning into her; they are in shadow. Finally, in Edwin Long's painting, Vashti looks weak, uncertain, and sad; she clutches her garments in a gesture of modesty. Her servants are pleading for her to go to the king.

This series of paintings can serve to demonstrate how an artist (and author's) perspectives and commitments may be communicated in the construction of a story or an artistic rendering, in this case, the (in)appropriate response of Vashti.

Botticelli, *The Return of Judith* (1470) [Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; www.arca.net/uffizi1/Uffizi_Pictures.asp?Contatore=112]

Giorgione, *Judith* (1504) [The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; www.hermitagemuseum.org]

Jan Sanders van Hemessen, *Judith* (ca. 1540) [Art Institute of Chicago; www.artic.edu/aic/collections]

Caravaggio, *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (1598–99) [Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome; www.wga.hu]

Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (ca. 1620) [Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; www.wga.hu]

Valentin de Boulogne, *Judith and Holofernes* (ca. 1626) [National Museum of Fine Arts in La Valletta, Malta; www.wga.hu]

Johann Liss, *Judith and Holofernes* (1628) [Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; www.wga.hu]

While the apocryphal narrative of Judith has long fascinated interpreters due to its rather gruesome, yet religious heroine, many students are unfamiliar with this story. Once they engage it, however, they find themselves caught up in the many issues raised by the text, such as divine justice; what makes a Jew a Jew during the Second Temple period; the status of women during this period; and finally, deceit and violence in the name of God. Unfortunately, the depiction of Judith in the Western artistic tradition has focused almost exclusively on only one moment in the narrative: Judith's beheading of Holofernes in 13:8. As such, the tradition has siphoned Judith into a singular

mode of feminine violence, and usually she is doomed to be presented in one of two ways: as a brutish woman who readily embraces her role in the killing; or as a highly feminized figure who looks as if she could not possibly partake in this murderous act.

Both depictions find support in the narrative. Students can view a sampling of both trends to illustrate how different ideas of “woman” permeate both the apocryphal text and the artistic tradition. Put another way, if, as some scholars claim, Judith is a cipher for “Jews” during the Second Temple period, then how we interpret her character affects not only the way we understand women during that period, but also how we interpret Jewish identity therein. As such, these different trends of interpretation allow us to raise important questions, such as: What could be the ideological motivations for portraying “troublesome” women like Judith in certain ways? Is there a dominant trend in biblical scholarship akin to the trend(s) we see in art? Which one of these pieces resonates with your view of the story, and why? And, How do these images of Judith address the larger view(s) of and concerns about women within biblical literature?

Botticelli’s work portrays a “feminine Judith” in which we see Judith and her maid on their way back from the enemy camp, presumably heading to Bethulia. There is no hint here of any urgency, no sense that a hideous beheading has just taken place. Rather, Botticelli has painted a pastoral scene, with Judith in lovely attire, looking as if she and her servant were simply out for an afternoon stroll. Only the small sword in Judith’s hand and the severed head of Holofernes in the servant’s basket betray what has just happened. Similarly, the piece by Giorgione shows a serene looking Judith with a pious visage standing near a large tree, looking down upon the severed head of Holofernes, upon which she has placed her left foot. Giorgione’s Judith displays no trace of the grim determination found in her apocryphal counterpart, and in fact she seems almost too “dainty” to have performed such a grisly task.

On the other hand, there are copious examples of a more macabre trend in portraying Judith. Jan Sanders van Hemessen shows us a totally nude, muscular Judith with Holofernes’ sword raised in her right hand and the bag she will use for his severed head in her left. Looking at this Judith, the viewer is left with little doubt that this woman is fully capable of lopping off Holofernes’ head. Along these same lines, we must mention the grand tradition of Judiths begun by Caravaggio. We are told in the apocryphal narrative that Judith has to whack Holofernes’ head not once but twice in order to decapitate him. Caravaggio and those who follow him, including Artemisia Gentileschi and Valentin de Boulogne, focus on this precise moment in order to depict the action of the beheading itself, complete with what students familiar with the television drama *CSI* would term “arterial spatter.” These gruesome renderings

allow us to pursue the issue of violence in the name of God and its justification. Finally, concluding with the work by Johann Liss allows students to enter into the psyche created by this line of representation. Liss shows the viewer the massively muscular back of Judith, as well as the freshly decapitated body of Holofernes, as she is loading his head into her basket. The real key to this work, though, is that she is gazing out at the viewer with a look that radiates determination and ruthlessness. It is truly a “Schwarzenegger” moment, and it allows teachers to broach this character in a very different light than many other renderings, focusing as they do on Judith’s feminine presence.

In sum, comparing and contrasting these two trends of interpreting Judith permits instructors to illustrate not only divergent renderings of the same narrative, but it opens up space for questions about women and violence in the Bible.

Ralf Kresin, *Susanna im Bade* (1999) [www.kresin.de/websites/oelbilder/susanna.html]

Sisto Badalocchio, *Susanna and the Elders* (ca. 1609) [Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota; www.ringling.org/collections.asp. The Ringling Museum attributes this painting to Agostino Carracci]

Rembrandt van Rijn, *Susanna and the Elders* (ca. 1636) [Mauritshuis, The Hague; www.mauritshuis.nl/index.aspx?Contentid=17521&Chapterid=2341&Filterid=988]

Artemisia Gentileschi, *Susanna and the Elders* (1610) [Schonborn Collection, Pommerfelden; www.metmuseum.org]

Allesandro Allori, *Susanna and the Elders* (1561) [Musée Magnin, Dijon; www.musee-magnin.fr/homes/home_id24567_u112.htm]

George Pencz, *Susanna and the Elders* (ca. 1532) [Spaightwood Galleries, Upton, Mass.; spaightwoodgalleries.com/Pages/Bible_Susanna.html]

Agostino Carracci, *Susanna and the Elders* (from *The Lascivious Series*, mid-1590s) [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; reproduced in Diane De Grazia Bohlin, *Prints and Related Drawings by the Carracci Family* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1979), 291]

The story of Susanna represents one of the narrative gems of the apocryphal corpus, and has been rendered in numerous media, including music, literature, and art. Containing as it does a plot that focuses on an attempted rape and cover-up by those in authority, as well as a pious and beautiful heroine, it is no coincidence that artistic renderings of the story have been somewhat schizophrenic in their approach to depicting the story. That is,

within the works that treat this theme, one can find scenes of sexual aggression and seduction alongside of depictions of righteous refusal and pictorial piety. For this reason, paintings of Susanna can serve to demonstrate several important concepts in the biblical studies classroom, for example, (1) the multiple possibilities of interpretations of narratives about women; (2) the ways in which mostly male interpreters read this story of an embattled woman, which can serve as a springboard to discuss ideologies in interpretation; and (3) the process by which potentially harmful readings of female characters can be dissected to reveal the tentative foundations on which they stand.

Students should pay attention specifically to the two main thematic levels of the story: the sexual level in which we find the attempted rape and the discussion of the elders' lust; and the level of piety, which includes Susanna's refusal and prayer, as well as all of Daniel's presence and dialogue. Even though the latter level appears to dominate within the story, it is the former we find most often in the artistic tradition. Nonetheless, it is helpful for students to view artistic renderings that treat both themes in an attempt to highlight the three concepts mentioned above. In addition to the variety of material from the Renaissance, earlier and later examples exist. The earliest is from the mid-fourth century C.E., and is a painting from the Praetextatus Catacomb in Rome, depicting Susanna as a lamb between two wolves (cf. du Bourguet, *Early Christian Painting*, pl. 55). In 1999, Ralf Kresin painted Susanna drying off in a shower, with the elders peering at her through a turned corner in the tiles.

Badalocchio's oil is one of the "Pious Susanna" pieces. She is depicted as both shocked and terrified, grasping her cloak in an attempt to cover herself. Her hand is raised to defend or shield herself from the advances of the elders, and her eyes are fixed skyward to symbolize her reliance on God to save her from this predicament, lyrically stated in the narrative in her prayer in verses 42–43. Rembrandt's and Gentileschi's famous pieces are similar. In the former, the figure of Susanna dominates the frame as she struggles and contorts her body in order to hide her nakedness from the elders, all the while gazing directly at the viewer, out of the frame. This image is quite discomfiting, as this Susanna seems to be imploring the viewer for help in an immediate fashion. No less gripping is Gentileschi's work, which depicts a Susanna in clear emotional turmoil, arms raised to resist the elders, all placed in a cold stone setting. Using these images allows students to empathize with Susanna in her plight to remain true to God, as she is presented in the story. Teachers can also utilize these images to note the ways in which both male and female interpreters focus on the more ethical, less erotic themes in the story, and thereby stimulate discussion on the role of background in interpretation.

At the same time pious readings of Susanna are present in Western art, a more sexually aggressive interpretation tends to dominate the tradition. One can turn directly from Gentileschi's stark and painful expression of Susanna's confusion and despair to Alessandro Allori's mid-sixteenth-century oil. Here we see a scene of enjoyed seduction, in which Susanna seems to be caressing the heads of both elders, as one edges his hand up her inner thigh. We get no sense from this work that Susanna is conflicted, scared, or in despair, as the narrative describes her. Instead we see a woman who might be willing to acquiesce to the elders' advances. Other works in this vein heighten the theme of sexual aggression, some depicting an attempted rape. For example, Georg Pencz's engraving depicts Susanna with a leg draped over the knee of one of the elders, while both of them are holding her wrists tightly, and one of them is fondling her left breast. Similarly, Carracci's piece shows a terrified, fully naked Susanna trying to get away from the elders, one of whom is grabbing her *derriere*, and one of whom has pulled his robe up to allow himself to masturbate behind a column on the right side of the piece. Given the level of violence and sexuality exhibited here, it is safe to say that Carracci was interested in Susanna for the opportunity to portray a scene of erotic aggression, not a picture of piety.

These sexually charged, and often lewd, images allow students to interrogate the story as to the sexual elements within it, as well as discuss larger issues raised by such renderings. For example, was Susanna "asking for it" by bathing nude? How does this portrayal of sexual violence connect with other examples in biblical literature? What effect does viewing scenes of sexual violence have on us and the way we return to the story time and time again? The artistic renderings of this text, both pious and pornographic, are fertile ground for feminist and ideological queries.

Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation* (ca. 1440–45) [Museo di San Marco, Florence, Italy; www.artstor.org; a number of annunciation paintings are attributed to Fra Angelico and his workshop; one similar to this fresco resides in the Prado in Madrid and is viewable online at museoprado.mcu.es]

Henry Ossawa Tanner, *The Annunciation* (1898) [Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; www.philamuseum.org]

Raphael Soyer, *Annunciation* (1980) [Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.; americanart.si.edu]

Viewing these three markedly different annunciation paintings together provides an opportunity to explore themes introduced in Luke's narrative and to push students to think critically about "truth" and what is represented as

real. After reading Luke 1:26–56, students view these images and are asked to describe how each image captures the text.

Fra Angelico's work serves as a beautiful example of a Renaissance annunciation scene: Mary sits indoors on a columned portico as an angel with rainbow hued wings kneels before her. Mary is haloed and wears a blue robe. In the background and to the left, we see a fence that suggests the garden off of the portico is closed off. Students viewing this image might be encouraged to think about how this depiction of Mary indoors and separated from the world by a fence highlights her virginal or "untouched" nature. For many students, Mary's gesture indicates her faithful acceptance of Gabriel's news.

Painted at the end of the nineteenth century, Henry O. Tanner's oil painting uses realism to render Luke's story of Mary. Tanner's painting captures the moment when Gabriel, represented as a glowing pillar of light, approaches the young, Jewish girl. Mary, clothed in simple robes, sits on a bed and hesitantly looks up at the luminous figure. Her expression is marked neither by fear nor eagerness. Mary's surroundings appear to be earthen or stucco-like, a woven rug is on the floor and a simple blanket hangs behind Mary. As students experience this painting, they can compare its portrayal of Mary's social context to Fra Angelico's portrayal. It might be illuminating to remind students of Luke 1:46–56, since Tanner's painting can be read as highlighting the "lowliness" of Mary.

After viewing Tanner's rendition, Raphael Soyer's 1980 painting might prove quite thought provoking, since it depicts a modern scene of two women in a bath or dressing room. The painting's title frames it as an annunciation scene. A woman, dressed in a pink skirt and black top, leans against a cool blue wall and gazes at a second woman. This second woman is dressed in a slip of pale blue, the traditional blue identifying her with Mary. Mary's hair is tied back and she carries a towel that indicates she has just washed in the sink basin. Prompting students to read this painting in relation to the annunciation story might involve asking them what washing and water suggests about Mary's character in Luke. One might encourage students to read her tied-back hair as an indication of controlled sexuality, a common trope in visual depictions of women. In addition, students can consider what Soyer communicates by translating this story into a modern context. Is this a way of capturing Mary's claim that "from now on all generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48)?

Furthermore, these paintings can serve as entry into a conversation about truth and realism. When viewing these images, students often comment on how Tanner's depiction seems so real. This sense of reality is communicated primarily through the setting, which fits how many of modern Westerners imagine the first-century Palestinian setting. The knowledge that Tanner was

the son of an African Methodist Episcopal bishop who often painted religious and biblical scenes and that he even traveled to Palestine to capture better the settings might initially reassure students that Tanner's painting captures "how it must have happened." However, this type of assumption can be troubled by adding that Tanner explicitly sought to "humanize" the characters in his biblical paintings, showing that they were "kin" to everyone. As an African American painter living at the turn of the twentieth century, this had social and political implications. For Tanner, this painting of Mary is not simply about capturing a realistic picture, but it is also about depicting Mary's connectedness to all people, regardless of race. In other words, while Tanner sought to capture some of the reality of ancient Palestine, his painting was shaped by complex social, historical, and political issues (Boime, "Henry Ossawa Tanner's Subversion of Genre," 415–42). What appears real, students learn, is shaped by the artist's political and theological commitments. One might ask students: Does this make Tanner's painting any less true to the text? Once students have thought about how realism functions in Tanner's painting, they can think about how Fra Angelico and Soyer's paintings may be just as true to the text, even though they do not strive for historical realism. This question opens up a conversation about distinctions between realism and truth.

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Luc Olivier Merson, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (1879) [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; www.mfa.org]

Matthew's depiction of the holy family's "flight" into and out of Egypt (Matt 2:13–23) is one of the ways that the author constructs his understanding of Jesus' identity, especially as he portrays Jesus as a new Moses. French artist Luc Olivier Merson provides a way of illustrating this interpretation, as well as providing a way of highlighting the differences between the Matthean and the Lukan birth narratives.

Merson's painting, dominated by the dark colors of a night sky, positions the view at a distance from this desert scene. To the left we see a statue of the sphinx, partially buried in sand. Resting between the front feet of the sphinx is a female figure, presumably Mary, with an infant in her arms. The infant glows, the light reflecting onto Mary's face. To the right of the statue we see a figure laying face down on the ground by a campfire and a lone donkey next to a saddle. The night sky, the sphinx, and the glowing child create a scene of mystery and dramatic importance.

This painting provides an effective way into a conversation about the unique elements of Matthew's birth narrative. Students should make a connection between the sphinx, a symbolic image of Egypt, and the depiction of Jesus as a new Moses. Further, students can discuss whether Merson's

focus on Mary and his depiction of Joseph face down faithfully portrays Matthew's narrative or whether this depiction of Mary seems more in line with Luke's Gospel.

Otto Dix, *The Temptation of Jesus* (1960) [Marian Library, Dayton; campus.udayton.edu/mary//gallery/works/temptationofjesus.htm]

Buoninsegna di Duccio, *The Temptation of Christ on the Mountain* (ca. 1308–11) [The Frick Collection, New York; collections.frick.org]

The story of the temptation of Christ links Jesus and humans most profoundly. As Matt 4:1–11 tells it, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. For forty days and nights, Jesus eats and drinks nothing. Then the devil comes to him and tempts him three times: first with bread, second with protection, and third, “all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor” if Jesus falls down and worships him.

In Otto Dix's lithograph, the kingdoms of the world are represented by the façade of a skyscraper and the hash marks of other undistinguished buildings; they are well lit but too far off to impress. In the foreground, a rather weary looking Jesus is overshadowed by a menacing devil whose four horns and pointed chin form strong visual lines piercing the head of Jesus, extending down his face and back. The seated Jesus raises a weak hand in response but the slump of his body and hollowed eyes suggest that he is defeated.

The painting raises a variety of questions. Is Jesus calmly responding to a pesky annoyance, or is he overcome? Is Jesus connected to the divine or abandoned? Is this a positive or a negative view of Christ? If Jesus meets humanity most closely in this narrative, what is Dix saying about humanity and the pursuit of power and the wealth of the nations (e.g., the devil controls the cities; humans disappear in the city)? What does Dix imagine for the future? (A continual decline of cities through evil; the good are helpless to stop it?) How does this painting alter the meaning of Matt 4? (Jesus can no longer resist temptation; the cities are too nebulous, the devil too powerful?)

Compare Dix's lithograph with Buoninsegna di Duccio's tempera painting on wood. Here, Jesus is robed in royal red and navy robes, flanked by two angels, with his hand extended in command to the devil to leave. His feet are planted solidly on a rock and the lines and textures of the painting support him. The devil, in contrast, is old, naked, winged, and possibly only one-armed; he is so dark that his features are obscured. He perches precariously on a precipice ready for a fall or flight. Three superb cities stand in subordination to these four figures; complete with the details of loggias, battlements, towers, Gothic windows, and red-tiled roofs, the bright pink and yellow cities are protected by stout walls and fed with lively running streams

of water. Compared to Dix, how does Duccio represent Jesus? Is Jesus more human or divine? What is the relationship between Jesus and the development of cities? It would seem that Jesus is casting the devil out of the cities in order to preserve them for habitation, to “bless them.” Does this corrupt the meaning of Matt 4?

Henry Wolf, *Christ Walking on the Sea* (1899) [Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; americanart.si.edu]

Henry Ossawa Tanner, *Christ Walking on the Water* (no date) [Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; americanart.si.edu]

B. J. O. Nordfeldt, *Christ Walking on Water* (1951) [Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; americanart.si.edu]

Each of these pieces literally provides a different angle on the story of Jesus walking on water (Mark 6:45–52; Matt 14:22–33; John 6:16–59). Comparing these different paintings alongside the Gospel accounts opens up conversation about how writers, like artists, shape the elements of a story to communicate a particular idea or to fulfill a specific function.

Henry Wolf highlights the storm at sea, as sea swells dominate the foreground of the picture. The boat filled with the disciples is about to be overcome by the waves. To the upper right, however, we see a haloed Jesus walking on water that is still. Jesus, arms outstretched in a cruciform pose, emerges out of the darkness toward the boat. In this way, Wolf’s artwork seemingly suggests peace and salvation in relation to Christ and his crucifixion. Like Wolf, Henry O. Tanner places Jesus toward the upper right hand corner of his illustration, although he is represented through the faintest of sketching. Tanner captures Matthew’s and Mark’s references to the ghost-like figure of Jesus. In the foreground of this artwork, Tanner depicts a view into the hull of the boat. We see the ribs of the boat’s hull as it seems about to tip over. Most of the disciples are huddled at the far end, but one disciple, probably Peter, hangs on to the edge of the vessel. Perhaps, Peter is ready to jump out of the boat toward the apparition, making this artwork a story about Peter’s sudden burst of eager faith.

B. J. O. Nordfeldt’s modern oil painting is the most distinctive of the three. Nordfeldt does not include a boat, focusing on Jesus instead. The absence of the boat has the effect of placing the viewer in the boat, viewing Jesus as he approaches. The figure of Jesus, which is in the center of the painting, is abstract and surrounded by an abstract outline alluding to the disciples’ mistaking Jesus for a ghost. Underneath Jesus’ feet are fish, linking this story to the feeding miracle which precedes it in Matthew and Mark and which surrounds the story in John. In the latter account, the story of Jesus walking on the water ties together the feeding of the five thousand with Jesus’ teaching

about the bread of life, claiming “I am the bread of life” (John 1:35). Read in relation to John’s Gospel, Nordfeldt’s painting might be understood as a visual blending of the story of the fish and bread, if we read Jesus as the bread, and the story of Jesus walking on the water.

These three visual depictions of the “same” story, which has three textual versions, allow students to see how artists and authors shape the meaning of an image or a story by selecting and arranging its parts. To make this point, students can identify the focus or significance of each piece (e.g., faith, Jesus, disciples) in relation to the angles from which the viewer approaches various aspects of the images. What, for example, does the view into the boat suggest about the meaning of Tanner’s painting? Is this an attempt at having the viewer empathize with the experience of the disciples in the boat? This line of inquiry can be expanded to compare the angles and arrangements of the paintings in relation to the texts. What does Nordfeldt communicate about this story by having the viewer see Jesus in relation to the fish? Does this perspective capture the perspective taken in the Johannine account?

Ian Pollock, *Talents* (2000) [Private collection, Macclesfield, United Kingdom; www.eichgallery.abelgratis.com/p10.html]

Jesus’ parable of the talents evokes multiple interpretations (Matt 25:14–30). To illustrate this, students can study Pollock’s work which features a large Caucasian male in a black suit juggling three smaller males with different racial features (possibly African American and East Asian). Students may consider some of these questions: What is a talent, according to Pollock: the ability to juggle balls, finances, or slaves? Is the master good? What do the colors and positions of the players suggest? Is a picture worth a thousand words—that is, is the picture as effective as the parable? Gauging effectiveness depends in part on the intended effect. What is the intended effect of the painting: Is it simply to reproduce Jesus’ lesson in a different medium? To apply the parable to a different historical setting? Does Pollock depend on a prior familiarity with the Matthean text? How might a viewer without this familiarity respond to this work? The painting may also be used to discuss the role of slavery in America and how the parable has been used to rationalize injustice in the pursuit of multiplying talents, or to discuss problems of translation, as in the word “talent.” Students’ mixed responses will demonstrate to them the “riddle of parables,” the need for interpretation, and the impact of bias on their interpretation.

Pollock has produced forty paintings based on Jesus’ parables which may be used in a similar way. For a related exercise dealing with divergent responses to the parables, see Guy D. Nave Jr., “The Social Functions of Parables,” in Roncace and Gray, *Teaching the Bible*, 297–98.

Henri Lindegaard, *On the Earth and in Heaven* (2003) [Reproduced in *La Bible des contrastes: Méditations par la plume et le trait* (Lyons: Réveil, 2003); www.biblical-art.com]

Henri Lindegaard, *The Gift for Today* (2003) [Reproduced in *La Bible des contrastes: Méditations par la plume et le trait* (Lyons: Réveil, 2003); www.biblical-art.com]

In John 3, Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night seeking the one who comes from God. Jesus answers, “No one can see the kingdom of God without being born again/from above.” (The Greek here can mean either “from above” or “anew.”) Nicodemus is confused and asks Jesus how he can be born again; Jesus says that he must be born of “water and of Spirit.”

Lindegaard’s *On the Earth and in Heaven* can illustrate the complex distinction between the world of Jesus and that of Nicodemus. The “earthly” horizontal blinds on the left reveal Nicodemus’s reverse-question-mark shape edged in black, suspended halfway between sitting and seated. One hand holds his chest; the left hand droops pointing to a womb-shaped void. To the right, the vertical “transcendent” lines capture Jesus’ figure with predominantly white overlaid on black. He points upwards with his left hand and extends his right to Nicodemus, the line of his hand forming the top of the womb-shape, but now suggesting a baptismal font. The vertical and horizontal lines meet in the center in the form a cross, indicating that Jesus brings the spiritual and the earthly together.

Compare the illustration and story of Nicodemus in John 3 to Lindegaard’s *The Gift for Today* and the story of the Samaritan Woman in John 4. Whereas Jesus meets Nicodemus at night, he meets the woman at noon. Nicodemus is a male Jewish authority-figure who does not understand Jesus; she is a female Samaritan outcast (possibly) who recognizes Jesus as the Messiah. Lindegaard captures these differences well in his illustrations. The white and black contrast is still sharp, but rather than vertical and horizontal lines separating the two characters, the two characters in *The Gift for Today* are embraced by five bright beams emanating from the sun in the top center of the illustration. Jesus’ hand is outstretched to the woman; she cradles her water jug tipped toward him at hip level (perhaps that she is offering herself to him sexually, as the allusions to “living water” might suggest). He leans toward her; she leans away from him. He beseeches her with upturned white face; she is turned to him, her face in the dark. The innocent and modest buttons on her dress challenge our presuppositions of this woman as one who is seductive and “of a certain age.”

These two illustrations can be employed to highlight contrasts in these two particular stories in the Gospel of John and as prime examples of other

contrasts in this gospel, such as light/dark, earthly/heavenly, us/them, day/night, and male/female.

Lucas Cranach II, *Christ and the Fallen Woman* (1532) [The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; hermitagemuseum.org]

Valentin de Boulogne, *Christ and the Adulteress* (1620s) [J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; www.getty.edu]

Rembrandt, *The Woman Taken in Adultery* (1644) [National Gallery, London; www.nationalgallery.org.uk]

William Blake, *The Woman Taken in Adultery* (1805) [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; www.mfa.org]

Even though most scholars regard the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery in John 8 as a later addition, it has captured the imaginations of visual artists throughout history. Representations of this text are especially interesting because of the diverse ways in which they depict the relation between the woman and her accusers, the scribes and Pharisees, and the relation between these characters and Jesus. These images provide an entry point into conversations about John's characterizations of women and "the Jews" and the ways in which subsequent interpreters have approached these gender and ethnic categories.

Students can analyze how each artist depicts the characters or set of characters from the text, including the accusers, the woman, and Jesus. What types of costumes do the artists use? Are certain characters depicted in particular colors? How are the different characters positioned in the paintings? Encourage them to write down notes as they view each of the paintings.

Lucas Cranach's painting offers the most explicitly negative depiction of the scribes and Pharisees, employing stereotypes, such as crooked noses and scowling faces. In fact, one of the accusers, immediately to the left of Jesus, bears a striking resemblance to a pig. Although Jesus is depicted with neatly tended side curls, these seemingly convey a sense that he is the ideal Jewish rabbi in contrast to those around him. Cranach suggests the judgmental nature of the scribes and Pharisees in contrast to the compassion of Jesus, as the accused woman stands demurely, her head bowed, indicating her probable innocence. In contrast, Valentin de Boulogne's painting depicts a woman whose head hangs apparently in shame, as she is brought before Christ with her blouse falling off. The accusers stand in the darkness behind Jesus, carefully watching him (perhaps judging him) as he bends down to write on the ground. Jesus looks up at the woman and the light which shines on both of

these characters suggests a connection. The woman may be guilty, but she is drawn to and considered by a gentle-looking Jesus.

Rembrandt's painting of this scene offers a unique depiction, as we see the action from afar. The action takes place within or just outside of a large and seemingly opulent structure, although it is depicted in dark and somber tones. The only light in the painting seems to fall upon Jesus and the woman, who kneels before him in a white dress. Even though the scribes and Pharisees are adorned luxuriously, Jesus is clearly the central focus as he stands head and shoulders above those around him. Jesus' simple dress, moreover, sets him apart from the surroundings and the scribes and Pharisees. Again, the scene depicts the woman in positive terms; she kneels before Jesus and her white robe could be mistaken for a baptismal garment.

In contrast to the other paintings, William Blake's watercolor eschews stereotypical depictions of Jewish leaders; we simply see the backs of the accusers as they turn away. Blake focuses instead on the interaction between Jesus and the woman, which is highlighted by their matching pale robes and light hair. The woman watches intently as Jesus is still bent over and writing on the ground.

Additional questions for students: Do they see any patterns in how the characters are portrayed? If they do, what do these patterns say about how people have read and interpreted this text? In particular, what might these patterns say about how people have tended to interpret John's negative depictions of "the Jews" throughout the Gospel?

As students talk about the artists' depiction of the woman, they should note her somewhat sympathetic portrayal. Arguably, in each of the paintings the audience is given the sense that she actually takes Jesus up on his command to "Go and sin no more" (8:11). In other words, through the close connections the artists draw between Jesus and the woman we are given the sense that she repents or converts. However, students can discuss how this repentant woman is characterized: Is she depicted as strong and active or weak and passive? What does this say about the understandings of gender that each artist brings to the text? Does this understanding of gender cohere with this particular text or even John's Gospel as a whole?

Margo Humphrey, *The Last Bar-B-Que* (1989) [David C. Driskell Collection, University of Maryland Art Gallery, College Park; www.artgallery.umd.edu/exhibit/02-03/driskell2003/humphrey_bbq.html. The print reproduction does a better job of capturing the color and detail of this art work; see Juanita Marie Holland, ed., *Narratives of African American Art and Identity: The David C. Driskell Collection* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1998), pl. 76]

Albrecht Dürer, *The Last Supper* (1523) [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; www.mfa.org]

While there are countless depictions of the Last Supper, this lithograph by Margo Humphrey is unique because of the artist's explicit attempt at reinterpreting traditional portrayals of the scene. Specifically, Humphrey draws upon African and African American imagery and culture. Most notably, she depicts Jesus and the disciples as African or African American, using brown and blue pigments for their skin. She also clothes the traditional characters in patterns that echo traditional African prints. The context of a bar-b-que itself, which includes chicken along with wine and bread, places the story of the Last Supper in the context of southern African American traditions. It is important that students realize that this recontextualization of the Gospel story is not a parody or a piece of humor. Humphrey explains, "*The Last Bar-B-Que* is a serious piece: a rewriting of history through the eyes of my ancestry, a portrayal of a savior who looks like my people" (Strychasz, "Margo Humphrey *The Last Bar-B-Que*, 1989").

This image can be used to highlight both the Last Supper as a Passover meal, at least in the Synoptic Gospels, and African American hermeneutical traditions. Specifically, the allusion to the Exodus narrative in the story of the Last Supper allows us to think about the Gospels' appropriations of the narrative in relation to traditional African American appropriations of the narrative. We might encourage students to think about how these more recent interpretive strategies resemble ancient strategies. In order to accomplish this, students can read one or more of the Synoptic accounts of the Last Supper, as well as a reading which discusses African American interpretations of the Exodus narratives (such as Kirk-Duggan, "Let My People Go! Threads of Exodus in African American Narratives," 123–43). Humphrey's lithograph can facilitate discussion about the intersections between Exodus, the Last Supper, and African American interpretations. One might ask students to consider whether or how the Exodus narrative and African American appropriations of this narrative relate to other themes within the synoptic Gospels. It is also possible to compare Humphrey's lithograph with another more famous depiction of the Last Supper, such as one of Albrecht Dürer's woodcut versions, asking students to compare the images in relation to the text or texts.

El Greco, *The Disrobing of Christ (El Espolio)* (1579) [Toledo Cathedral, Toledo, Spain; www.wga.hu]

One of El Greco's most famous works, *The Disrobing of Christ*, completed in 1579, hangs in the sacristy (priests' change room) in the Cathedral in Toledo. Students can compare the accuracy of the content in this painting to

the account in Mark 15:16–24 and its parallels. What does El Greco change or add (e.g., the number of people present, the unlikely scarlet robe, the Spanish gentleman)?

What does El Greco emphasize? Consider the elongated figures, the off-balance focus on Jesus, his red robe and his eyes pointing upward reinforced by the ascending clouds in the background, the press of people, and the unnatural lighting. With these types of emphases, what Christology is El Greco communicating? (Jesus is central but oppressed by evil; he transcends the physical; he wears royal signs of wealth in spite of the description of his undignified death in the Gospels, etc.) Students should be alerted to the fact that the details in a painting help us to identify what is central to the artist's interpretation of the narrative.

Finally, what response was El Greco trying to evoke from his primary audience, that is, the religious authorities who change their clothes to prepare for or to conclude worship? (The scarlet robe might suggest cardinals.) On the one hand, the religious authorities will discard their regal clothes of status and power to enter worship; on the other hand, they also put on these clothes of status and power! How does this image align with Jesus' status and power during his crucifixion? Might this suggest anything about El Greco's attitude toward the religious authorities of his day? This painting demonstrates how artists use biblical art to both affirm and to challenge the religious authorities and social conventions of their contemporaries.

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Macha Chmakoff, *J'ai soif (I Am Thirsty)* (twentieth century) [From *Les 7 dernières paroles du Christ*; arts-cultures.cef.fr/artists/chmakoff/mchma34.htm]

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus states that he is thirsty while he hangs on the cross. After a drink of wine, he says, "It is finished," and "gives up his spirit" (John 19:28–30). Given the abundance of water themes in the Gospel of John (see 2:6; 3:23; 4:7–15; 5:7; 7:38; 13:5; 19:34), and especially the claim that Jesus is the source for living water (4:10; 7:38), his words on the cross come as a surprise. Macha Chmakoff's image can help one to consider the irony of this phrase in John. The painting is awash in aqua, blue, greens, and yellows swirling out from Jesus in a fluid cross; he seems about to drown in the color, but he reaches—with his arm attached to the beam of the cross—upward into the light. He is both the source and the victim of water.

Matthias Grünewald, *The Small Crucifixion* (ca. 1511–20) [National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; www.nga.gov. This is a less famous but more easily accessible version of the Isenheim Altarpiece (Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar; www.wga.hu)]

El Greco, *Christ on the Cross Adored by Donors* (ca. 1590) [The Louvre, Paris; www.louvre.fr]

Thomas Eakins, *The Crucifixion* (1880) [Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; www.philamuseum.org]

Marc Chagall, *The Crucifixion* (1940) [Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; www.philamuseum.org]

Arnulf Rainer, *Wine Crucifix* (1957/1978) [Tate Britain, London; www.tate.org.uk]

These paintings represent a variety of ways of understanding the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion and of Jesus' crucified body. An effective method of incorporating these into the New Testament classroom is to show these images after students have explored in some detail the Gospel accounts of Jesus on the cross. The images bring into relief different emphases in the Gospel stories. Students can note—perhaps on a handout containing the titles and artists—which images capture which aspects of the Gospel accounts.

El Greco's painting depicts the body of Jesus as a beautiful thing; the elongated and pale body hanging on the cross suggests a fine line between the erotic and the violent. Jesus turns his head upwards, which can be read as a questioning, pleading, or even longing. The troubled sky in the background alludes to the Gospel accounts of a darkened sky, as well as to the turmoil preceding and following the crucifixion event in the Gospels. Matthias Grünewald's painting, in stark contrast, famously depicts the tortured and seemingly decaying body of Jesus on the cross. Another version of the crucifixion by Grünewald, the Isenheim altarpiece, hung in a hospital offering perhaps solace or meaning to those whose bodies were also decaying (Jensen, *The Substance of Things Seen*, 139–42). Among other things, Grünewald's piece raises the question of the purpose of depictions of the crucifixion, an issue to be examined with students in relation to the Gospels as well. For instance, are depictions of the crucifixion intended to comfort or to challenge, to engender devotion or to prompt action?

Thomas Eakins's painting, which originally was received with much criticism for its realism, suggests the humanity of Jesus (cf. Milroy, "‘Consummatum est...’: A Reassessment of Thomas Eakins' Crucifixion of 1880," 269–84). The expression of Jesus, his head hanging in darkness, evokes the abandonment of Jesus' expression in Mark 15:34, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Arnulf Rainer's painting offers only the sense of a body on the cross, alluding to a body in the contours of his abstract cross. Rainer's use of dark red splattering and staining, however, clearly connotes blood and, thus, the violence of the crucifixion. (It may be possible to con-

nect discussion of this aspect of the piece to the various reactions to the violence Mel Gibson incorporates in his interpretation of the cross in *The Passion of the Christ*.) The title of this piece, *Wine Crucifix*, points to Christian tradition's association of the Eucharist with the crucifixion. In this way, the piece can be utilized to discuss theological and Christological interpretations of the crucified body. Rainer originally produced it as an altarpiece for the Student Chapel of the Catholic University in Graz, Austria. After the work was removed from this setting, he bought it back and decided to rework it, explaining that he "realised that the quality and truth of the picture only grew as it became darker and darker." The history of the piece thus provides an analogy for the way in which the meaning of a work can sometimes change over time, even for the author.

On first glance, one might think that Marc Chagall's painting is the least focused upon the body of Jesus. Surely, it lacks the bloodiness of Rainer's painting and the realistic depiction of the body seen in Eakins's version of the event. Chagall's painting, however, highlights the ethnic and religious orientation of this body by suggesting Jesus' Jewish identity by clothing him with a Tallit or Jewish prayer shawl. Instead of the plain white loincloth employed by other artists seemingly to preserve Jesus' modesty, Chagall covers Jesus' genitals with an emblem of Jewish identity. Chagall's painting provides an important reminder for many students who might read the Passion narratives as "the Jews" crucifying Jesus, as though Jesus were not himself Jewish (let alone the fact that his crucifixion is carried out by the Romans!).

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Matthias Grünewald, *Crucifixion* (1501–2) [Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe; www.wga.hu]

O. A. Stemler and Bess Bruce Cleaveland, *Consider the Lilies* (1928) [Illustration from Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers, Book One* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1928); www.lavistachurchofchrist.org/Picture.htm]

Anonymous, *Worship the Lamb* (1702) [Illustration from Martin Luther, *Biblia: Das ist die gantze Heilige Schrift, Alten und Neuen Testaments*; www.pitts.emory.edu/woodcuts/1702BibID/00012955.pdf]

To emphasize the unique perspective of Jesus presented in each New Testament text, to reinforce these differences, and to encourage students to bridge the gap between verbal and visual learning, one might cut and paste three portraits of Jesus and give the following instructions: "Describe how three New Testament texts emphasize the role and significance of Jesus in different ways, linking each text to one of the paintings below. Support your answer with details from both the paintings and the text." The portraits of

Jesus should highlight various aspects of his character or function (e.g., as teacher, crucified one, exalted one, wonder worker, or prophet). There are myriad examples from which to choose in addition to these three (see www.biblical-art.com). Thus, for example, Grünewald's black chalk drawing on grey paper emphasizes Jesus' suffering and death; alone, Jesus' face is downcast and hollow, his head wrapped in heavy thorns, and his crooked body strains against the pull of gravity. This drawing might be used to illustrate the central characteristics of the Gospel of Mark with its extended passion narrative. In contrast, Lillie Faris's children's book illustration depicts Jesus in a garden of lilies surrounded by several women, one child, and a solitary man, all listening in rapt attention. Jesus is sitting on a rock in a white robe with his arms out in explanatory gesture. Birds feed at his feet. The mountain in the background suggests that this is a scene from the Sermon on the Mount, or more explicitly, Matt 6:28–29. Students might conclude that this painting represents the teaching Jesus of the Gospel of Matthew with its five major blocks of sayings. Alternatively, *Worship the Lamb*, by the unknown illustrator of Martin Luther's *Biblia*, presents Jesus as a lamb before God on the heavenly throne surrounded by angels and witnesses. Students would likely identify this representation of Jesus as coming from Revelation (5:8) or the Gospel of John (1:29). This summative evaluation can help students see the "larger picture" of the Gospels, their diversity, and their emphases.

For other images, see Jaime Clark-Soles, "Christology Slideshow," in Roncace and Gray, *Teaching the Bible*, 282–84.

The Arch of Titus [Many websites contain images of this Roman landmark; www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/titus/titus.html]

After the Maccabean revolt, the Jews governed themselves for about a century until Pompey established Roman supervision of Judea. Many Jews actively resisted this occupation. According to Josephus, this "Fourth Philosophy" persisted in challenging Rome, leading to a devastating war from 66 to 70 c.e. During the Roman siege led by Titus, Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed and many Jews were killed; some were taken to Rome as slaves. (book 6 of Josephus's *Jewish War* provides the best account of the revolt and its aftermath.) When Titus died in 81 c.e., the city of Rome commemorated the conquest of Judea by erecting the Arch of Titus. On the inside of this arch is a carved relief depicting the Romans taking some of the treasures out of the temple, specifically a very large seven-branched candelabra (menorah) and several silver trumpets.

The triumph depicted in this arch has an accompanying sorrow. For the Jews, the destruction of the temple as the center of their sacrificial worship required a reformation of their sense of the sacred. Students can imagine

themselves as one of the slaves being marched into Rome on that day and can make a list questions they might have had about God and their own identity.

The class can then read Acts 6:8–15 (cf. Luke 19:41–44) and check their list with the complaints made against Stephen and the followers of Jesus. Then one can examine Acts 7 to identify ways that the book of Acts—and the early Christians—responded to these allegations. In brief, the Jews blamed the Christians for the destruction of the temple because they believed that Jesus was God; the Christians blamed the Jews for the destruction of the temple because they did not believe that Jesus was God. This provides background for some of the Jewish-Christian polemic found in the New Testament.

At the conclusion of the discussion, students may be apprised of the fact that Jews have refused to walk under the Arch of Titus, with one notable exception: On the day when Israel was given independence in 1948, a contingent of Roman Jews marched under the arch in the opposite direction from the original triumphal entry. As their own sign of triumph, Israel used the image of the menorah from the Arch of Titus in their coat of arms, an image seen on all Israeli passports.

ART

Buonarroti Michelangelo, *The Conversion of St. Paul* (1542–45) [Capella Paolina, Palazzi Pontifici, Vatican City; www.wga.hu]

After students have read and carefully compared the third-person accounts of Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1–19; 22:6–21; 26:12–18) with Paul's own accounts (Gal 1:11–24; 1 Cor 15:1–11), they can consider Michelangelo's Vatican fresco *The Conversion of St. Paul*. This painting facilitates discussion of composition in terms of both the content (what part of the narrative is captured, the characters, the gestures, etc.) and the form of the painting (background, foreground, focal lines, use of color, shadow, light, etc.). Students may be asked to make a list of what they see in the painting. In the ensuing discussion, one should outline the focal line from the top left corner, through the figure of Christ and his outstretched arm, through the uplifted arms of the soldiers, the bright face and arm of the man bent over Paul, into the upturned white face of Paul. The line continues through Paul's right leg, through the valley of people, to the city in the distance (Damascus? Jerusalem? Rome?). The message is clear: Paul is inspired to carry the light to all people and, as some would have it because the sight line is in the shape of a shepherd/bishop's hook, oversee the church. This fresco can open conversation about the nuances of storytelling and art. Other queries to pose: Which of the specific conversion accounts does Michelangelo represent, or does he harmonize them? What does he add to the basic biblical account?

Caravaggio, *The Conversion of St. Paul* (1600–01) [Cerasi Chapel, S. Maria del Popolo, Rome; www.artstor.org]

Raphael, *St. Paul Preaching in Athens* (1515–16) [Victoria and Albert Museum, London; www.vam.ac.uk]

Valentin de Boulogne (?), *Saint Paul Writing His Epistles* (ca. 1618–20) [Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; www.mfah.org]

Rembrandt, *The Apostle Paul* (ca. 1657) [National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; www.nga.gov]

Rembrandt, *St. Paul in Prison* (1627) [Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart; www.staatsgalerie.de/gemaeldeundskulpturen/nl_matrix.php]

Having students interact with a variety of portraits of Paul provides a creative way of discussing the life of Paul as it is seen in Acts and the Pauline letters (e.g., Acts 9:1–31; 1 Cor 15:3–10; Gal 1:11–24; Phil 3:4–6). Each of the above paintings depicts a different aspect of Paul’s life. For example, Caravaggio shows the conversion of Paul in a dramatic fashion. Dressed in Roman garb, Paul lies flat on the ground after having fallen off his horse. Pointing out Paul’s clothing in this image provides an opportunity to remind students of Paul’s Roman citizenship. While Caravaggio captures the beginning of Paul’s Christian life, as depicted in Acts, Rembrandt paints an elderly Paul. He sits in prison with a sword (a traditional indication of his death), a number of leather-bound books perhaps alluding to his familiarity with the Scriptures, and a stylus suggesting he has written or is about to write.

It is possible to have students interact with these images in a number of ways. One approach is to show students the images before they have read the texts that describe Paul’s life. Students can think about what the images “say” about Paul, his life, and his significance; they can also record their impressions of Paul in the portraits. Is the Paul they see the same as or different from the Paul described in the texts. Since certain images directly relate to Acts, namely, the paintings by Caravaggio and Raphael, and others seem to capture Paul’s letter writing activity, this can lead into a discussion of how Paul’s life is portrayed in Acts (which never mentions his letters) in contrast to how Paul describes his own life.

Teachers can print out color copies of the images for small group use in class. Each group describes how its image relates to the assigned readings (from both Acts and the Letters) about Paul. Which text or texts does the image best capture? What parts of Paul’s story does the image neglect? This might lead to a conversation about the different portraits of Paul in the New Testament, including the differing portraits in Acts and in the Letters.

Wisnu Sasongko, *The Ceremony of Resurrection* (2003) [Asian Christian Art Association, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; www.asianchristianart.org]

This abstract acrylic painting by Indonesian artist Wisnu Sasongko depicts resurrection in relation to the crucifixion, thereby linking the general resurrection of the faithful to Christ's resurrection. As such Sasongko's painting provides a visual context for discussing 1 Cor 15.

Sasongko's painting consists of dark background with abstract patches of color, which provides a contrast to the light, off-center cross shape in the foreground. The cross shape is made up of tiny human figures wearing white. The human figures are abstract and featureless, although they appear linked together by thin arms. The amorphous nature of the figures prompts one to ask if they are bodies or souls and how this relates to 1 Cor 15. The off-centered position of the cross, specifically the horizontal beam close to the top edge of the painting, creates the effect of it being raised or moving upwards. In this way, Sasongko suggests that the cross, composed of human bodies or souls, is being resurrected. To the right side of the cross on a patch of yellow, it is possible to see faint hash marks, presumably marking off those who are being raised or resurrected. Interestingly, the piece offers no indication as to where these figures have come from or where they are headed. This would be something an instructor might want to ask students about, encouraging them to use the Pauline text to help "fill in the gaps."

Students can consider how the image captures or fails to capture Paul's understanding of the resurrection. For example, if Paul understands the church as "the body of Christ"—a body that has been crucified as well as raised—is this an image that Paul would endorse? Or, if Paul had been an eyewitness to the moment of resurrection, what would he have expected to see (e.g., something like the giant talking cross of the *Gospel of Peter*)? Or would he say that resurrection is not something that can be depicted? Students should use details from the text and from the image to support their interpretation. In particular, they can study Sasongko's use of color, light and dark contrasts, and abstraction (in reference to the small bodies or souls) in relation to Paul's text.

Rembrandt van Rijn, *St. Paul in Prison* (1627) [Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart; www.staatsgalerie-stuttgart.de/gemaeldeundskulpturen/nl_rundg.php?id=7]

Paul Klee, *The Captive* (1940) [Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Zimmerman, New York; www.sai.msu.su/wm/paint/auth/klee/klee.captive.jpg]

Students soon learn that when they are reading Paul's letters, they are

reading over his audience's shoulder, just as one overhears one side of a phone conversation. They have to figure out what is happening in the background to understand the letter. Several of the Pauline letters are written from prison (e.g., Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 2 Timothy, and Philemon), and this setting frequently influences the tone and content of the correspondence. After reading 2 Timothy or other letters from prison, students are assigned to write a detailed description of a painting that would capture the essence of Paul in prison. In class, they share their responses. Then, one after the other, these two paintings are displayed without identifying the title of the works.

Rembrandt presents Paul as an old man pausing in thought while in the midst of writing. One arm rests on a large open book, probably the Scriptures; his elbow rests on loose pages, perhaps one of his letters, and his hand is pensively raised to his chin. His eyes are unfocused and tired. His foot is on a discarded sandal; does it indicate that he has "finished the race" (2 Tim 4:7), or that he is ready to put on "whatever will make him ready to proclaim the gospel of peace" (Eph 6:15), or that he is not really "bound" after all? Beside him on the cot lie other large tomes, some personal belongings, and a leather bag. Leaning against the bed is a sword with its tip buried in the floor. Its cross-shape hilt evokes both the crucifixion and the metaphor for the word of God, the "sword of the spirit" (Eph 6:17). The sword also foreshadows his impending death. On the far left, the edge of a barred window permits light to halo Paul's face and lift him upwards, transcending the dark prison and this "earthly life." In chiaroscuro fashion, the extension of light suggests the reality of a greater presence around Paul. The prison is filled with this presence. Paul is neither overcome by the darkness nor the prison walls. He suffers hardship, "even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained" (2 Tim 2:9). Rembrandt's painting suggests freedom rather than imprisonment.

In an abstract self-portrait from the end of his own life, Paul Klee captures the torment of prison. The flattening of three-dimensional features provides two facial expressions: one perhaps identified as contentment, the other as alertness. Both are the "stand up expressions" of someone in pain. But the head-shaped body gives another facial expression, that of peaceful death. The strong black crosshatches over a red background might evoke the debilitating connective tissue disease that crippled Klee; they might also represent the swastikas of Nazi Germany and the pain of Klee's exile to Switzerland. The central pale blue light connects his prison walls to his heart and mind and "holds him together," in spite of the forces that fragment him.

As students compare and contrast these two paintings, they might note that the common elements—the bars, light, death images—are used to convey two very different messages. In one, prison has no power even if it is physical;

in the other, prison is overwhelmingly powerful even if it is metaphorical. This comparison will help students to pay attention to the details of both the texts and the visual arts in order to construct meaning. It will also challenge their understanding of metaphor and reality in language.

Alternatively, these images may be used to discuss various uses of the “prison” metaphor (e.g., Ps 68:6; 79:11; 107:10–16; Eccles 7:26; Isa 42:7; 58:6; 61:1; Luke 4:18–19; Rom 7:23; Gal 3:22; Rev 1:18), texts written to or by prisoners, or narratives that take place in captivity (e.g., the stories of Joseph, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the apostles in Acts).

The Bamberg Apocalypse (ca. 1000) [Staatsbibliothek, Bamberg, Germany; www.bamberger-apokalypse.de]

Albrecht Dürer, *The Apocalypse* (ca. 1496) [Wetmore Print Collection, Connecticut College, New London; camel.conncoll.edu/visual/Durer-prints/index.html]

William Blake, *The Four and Twenty Elders Casting Their Crowns before the Divine Throne* (ca. 1803–5) [Tate Britain, London; www.tate.org.uk]

Grace Cossington Smith, *‘I Looked, and Behold, a Door Was Opened in Heaven’* (1953) [National Gallery of Art, Canberra; nga.gov.au]

Myrtice West, *Thou Art Worthy ...* (1985) [Reproduced in Carol Crown, ed., *Wonders to Behold: The Visionary Art of Myrtice West* (Memphis: Mustang, 1999), 59]

Robert Roberg, *John Sees God* (1992) [Reproduced in Nancy Grubb, *Revelations: Art of the Apocalypse* (New York: Abbeville, 1997), 40]

Students often associate the book of Revelation with violence and destruction, even though the book includes an extended scene of heavenly worship (Rev 4–5) and seven subsequent visions of worship. These scenes of worship reflect one of Revelation’s main rhetorical aims, to assert divine authority over and against earthly or political authorities. It is possible to draw upon the rich tradition of artistic renderings of Revelation as a means of highlighting this aspect of the text.

It is also possible to use these images as a way of showing students how interpreters’ imaginations—the ways that interpreters visualize the text—engage in theological interpretation of the text. Since the visual nature of Revelation’s narrative itself encourages students to imagine their own vision of the text and the heavenly throne room, teachers might begin by reading chapter four aloud and having students do a quick sketch of what they imagine as they hear John’s description of the heavenly throne room. The class

can then compare their own visual interpretations to various artistic renderings of the throne room scene. Students can reflect on how the text describes the divine presence and how the visual depictions, including their own, try to make sense of the text's abstract description of God. Do they, like Blake's watercolor or Dürer's woodcut, depict God in human form? Or, do they take a more literal approach, such as Robert Roberg in his multimedia depiction of a hot pink (his rendering of carnelian) abstraction sitting upon a throne, or Myrtice West with her abstract figure? Do the depictions of the divine replicate or challenge cultural assumptions about God? Concerning the depiction of the elders that surround the throne, do they, like the illumination from the *Bamberg Apocalypse*, highlight the political nature of the elders by including crown imagery? Or do they interpret the crowns as halos, making the elders religious figures? How do these interpretive moves reveal the artist's assumptions about the nature of God's influence? In addition, what meanings are implied by the various locations of the heavenly throne room in relation to earth or in relation to John? What does Dürer suggest about heaven and God by showing the throne room just above the horizon of the earth? Does this communicate something about the relationship between heaven and earth that is found in Revelation? Or, what does Grace Cossington Smith's painting imply by John looking up through the door of heaven only to see the seats of the elders on their thrones? Does this suggest some distance between the divine and the earthly?

Beatus of La Seu d'Urgell (tenth century) [Museu diocesà d'Urgell, Spain; casal.upc.es/~ramon25/beatus/beat_65.jpg]

Bamberg Apocalypse (ca. 1000) [Staatsbibliothek, Bamberg, Germany; www.bamberger-apokalypse.de]

Albrecht Dürer, *The Apocalypse* (ca. 1496) [Wetmore Print Collection, Connecticut College, New London; camel.conncoll.edu/visual/Durer-prints/index.html]

William Blake, *The Whore of Babylon* (ca. 1800–9) [The British Museum, London. Frances Carey, ed., *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come* (London: British Museum Press, 1999)]

Robert Roberg, *The Whore of Babylon Riding of a Beast with Seven Heads* (1991) [Collection of the artist; www.robertroberg.com/art.php]

Norbert Kox, *Mother of Harlots: The Pie-Eyed Piper* (1996) [Collection of the artist; www.nkox.homestead.com/writings_west.html; also available in Carol Crown, ed., *Wonders to Behold: The Visionary Art of Myrtice West* (Memphis: Mustang, 1999), 120]

The image of Babylon, the great prostitute, in Rev 17 has captured the imaginations of artists over the centuries. The text's depiction of Babylon combines gendered, sexual, and political references to build a critique of the Roman Empire. These pieces of art emphasize different aspects of Revelation's imagery in unique ways, reflecting six distinct interpretations of the chapter. The two manuscript illustrations, from the *Beatus of La Seu d'Urgell* and the *Bamberg Apocalypse*, downplay the sexualized aspect of Revelation's depiction in favor of the religious and political nature of the imagery. The latter depicts a somewhat regal looking prostitute, clothed in purple robes. One has the sense that this prostitute is a medieval European queen or noblewoman. The illustration from the former, however, appears to connect the prostitute to Muslim influences in medieval Spain, as she wears a crown with a crescent moon and sits in a position that echoes the depiction of princesses in medieval Islamic manuscripts. Dürer's woodcut also captures the religious and political elements of the imagery by highlighting the complicity of the "kings of the earth" in the activities of the prostitute. This detailed image shows the prostitute on a beast as a variety of figures representing different social roles come before the prostitute, including a kneeling monk!

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In contrast to the medieval images, William Blake's watercolor, which depicts a bare-breasted Babylon, and Robert Roberg's mixed-media, in which a bleached blonde Babylon rides a hot pink beast, emphasize the sexuality of Revelation's imagery. This approach communicates Revelation's assertion that the prostitute, or the political power that the imagery symbolizes, is seductive. Even John is "greatly amazed" by the prostitute's appearance (Rev 17:6). In addition, Blake's painting captures the text's suggestion that the prostitute is drunk on the blood of the saints, as he portrays faint soul-like figures flowing out of (or in to) the large goblet held by the prostitute.

The painting by Norbert Kox is certainly the most provocative as it depicts the prostitute as a cross-dressing Jesus figure riding the beast onto the island of Manhattan. The prostitute's face resembles traditional images of Jesus and her left arm is taken from the Statue of Liberty, including the torch. Kox depicts Manhattan on the verge of destruction under the feet of the beast, creating an image that evokes 1950s monster movies. Given the criticism of traditional American Christianity (the Jesus-prostitute wears a flaming sacred heart) and civic religion (the Statue of Liberty) inherent in Kox's depiction, the painting provides an entry into conversations about whether or not the U.S. might be indicted by Rev 17. While some students might find this image extremely offensive, it reflects a salient modern interpretation of Revelation's imagery.

A final idea: students can look at the images prior to reading Rev 17 and develop a portrait of Babylon based on the artwork, which can then be compared to the text itself.

ABSTRACT AND NONBIBLICAL ART

Lynn R. Huber

The possible ways that abstract and reframed nonbiblical art might be used to explore biblical studies themes and topics with students are limited only by the instructor's imagination. The works discussed in this chapter are organized alphabetically according to the name of the artist. Due to the impermanent nature of many website addresses, it will frequently be necessary to perform a simple artist or title search at the sites listed with many of these works. The indices may be consulted to find entries with classroom strategies related to particular texts topics. All secondary literature cited here is included in the preceding bibliography (pp. #####).

Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain* (1917/1964) [Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; www.sfmoma.org]

Fountain (originally exhibited in 1917, although later copies were exhibited in 1964) is one example of the "ready-made" genre of art made famous by Marcel Duchamp. Similar to art made of "found objects," Duchamp's ready-mades were functional objects that the artist transformed into art works by renaming them and placing them within artistic contexts. One of the most famous examples of this genre, *Fountain* consists of a ceramic urinal, signed "R. Mutt, 1917." *Fountain* provides a way of talking about a number of topics related to biblical studies, including how context shapes perception and interpretation and how things and ideas can be redefined. For example, an image of *Fountain* can be used to facilitate student discussion about how the biblical texts are approached and understood differently in different contexts. A writing that is treated as sacred in a religious context is approached differently in an academic context. The writing, like the ready-made object, does not change; but how the piece is perceived and interpreted changes. Presenting a urinal as a fountain is sufficiently jarring to drive this point home.

In a specifically New Testament context, *Fountain* can assist discussion about how the Gospels portray Jesus' approach toward those traditionally understood as undesirable (e.g., sinners and tax collectors). In a way similar

to Duchamp's redefinition of a urinal into a piece of art, Jesus redefines or renames these cultural outsiders, naming them as followers and participants in the kingdom of God. For instance, Jesus' invitation to Levi (Matthew) effectively redefines the tax collector, traditionally unacceptable as the follower of a Jewish religious leader, as a disciple (Luke 5:27–32; Mark 2:13–17; Matt 9:9–12). In some sense, Jesus places these culturally unacceptable people into a new context—the kingdom of God.

Paul Klee, *Around the Core* (1935) [Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas; camio.oclc.org]

This work by Swiss expressionist Paul Klee provides a tool for discussing the complex ways that textual interpretations accrue and develop. The center of this mixed-media painting is a bright red teardrop shape with an open center. The image evokes a blood drop or a kernel, although it is possible to “see through” the open center in the drop. The drop is surrounded by what at first glance appears to be overlapping ovals; however, a closer inspection reveals that the ovals are formed by a single line. The overlapping layers are created by a unified “thread.” Further, the largest of the ovals reaches past the edge of the canvas, effectively leaving the multiple layers open and unbounded.

It can be difficult for students to grasp that their view of a particular writing is filtered through layers of interpretive tradition. It can be even more challenging for them to understand that many of the biblical writings began as oral traditions that have been shaped to fit into written narratives, adding to the interpretive layers surrounding a particular story. *Around the Core* can be used as a visual aid for addressing these concepts. As the image is shown to the students, ask them to imagine the drop or the kernel as a story. If this small drop is the creation story, then how do we understand the rest of the image? It is helpful to have students first describe what they see and then describe what the ovals, layers, and lines might represent in this scenario, namely the layers of meaning that develop around an oral tradition or a text. The line around the oval might be understood as suggesting that there is some unity to these layers of interpretation, although this would be something one may question. Are the layers of interpretation around a text bound together or unified in some way?

Furthermore, students may contemplate and discuss where, if the drop represents a text or a story, they as textual interpreters are located in relation to the text. Are they, like the viewer of the painting, looking at the whole picture, able to see how the layers move out from the drop? Are we able to see a narrative's interpretive layers as we read it? Or, are they standing in the ovals, their view of the drop colored by the earth-toned pigments of the ovals? One

may, moreover, press students to consider the “hole” in the drop. Why does it have a hole? If we imagine the drop as a text or a story, does this suggest that the story is, even in its original form, somehow incomplete? This can lead to discussions about how even supposedly original versions of stories involve interpretive decisions that leave out possible elements.

Barbara Kruger, *You Invest in the Divinity of the Masterpiece* (1982) [Museum of Modern Art, New York; www.moma.org]

Barbara Kruger's *You Invest in the Divinity of the Masterpiece* prompts the viewer to question how individuals and communities “invest” in particular visions of the divine. The composition of the piece is similar to many of Kruger's works: black-and-white photographic prints (here of the Sistine Chapel ceiling) are framed in a red border, while black bands across the work bear the text of the piece's title. In this case, the word “divinity” is the focal point, as it is on a black band in the middle of the image and its font is much larger than the rest of the title. The images that Kruger employs in this artwork are taken from Michelangelo's painting of God creating Adam on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. However, these images are only portions of the creation scene; the iconic “fingers touching” scene comprises the top portion of her work.

This artwork can be used as entryway into conversations about how cultures and individuals imagine and construct, especially through images and texts, notions of the divine. In particular, the artwork encourages a feminist analysis of the Judeo-Christian theological imagination, as Krueger, a feminist artist, specifically uses images of the creation of man by a God depicted in male terms. To engage these issues, students can consider Krueger's choice of words or images. For example, what does the word “invest” imply? Why does Krueger utilize these images and not, for instance, images of Eve in the garden.

Robert Mapplethorpe, *Ken, Lydia, and Tyler* (1985) [Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, New York; www.guggenheim.org/exhibitions/mapplethorpe; also in the catalog *Robert Mapplethorpe and the Classical Tradition* (ed. Germano Celant et. al.; New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2004), pl. 100]

In this black-and-white photograph, Mapplethorpe draws upon the classical artistic tradition of depicting nude bodies in highly formal poses. In this image Mapplethorpe presents his subjects, all three nude, from the shoulders down. The sculpted bodies of Ken and Tyler are turned toward the similarly sculpted body of Lydia, who stands between them and facing the camera. The arms of Ken and Tyler mirror each other: they each have one arm behind Lydia and their other arms in front of Lydia, hands clasping in front of her

pubic area. Lydia is encircled by Ken and Tyler's arms, although their bodies remain somewhat distant from hers.

This image provides a tool for reflection on biblical constructions of gender and sexuality. More specifically, it can be used to introduce elements of the gender ideology underlying the Levitical regulations about menstruation and childbirth and about acceptable and unacceptable sexual practices (Lev 12; 15:19–33; 18; 20:10–21). For instance, after reading aloud Lev 12 or 15:19–33, students may comment upon how the photography visually represents ideas in the text. Students should observe the way in which Maplethorpe depicts the female body as circumscribed by the males' arms. This is analogous to the separation of the female from the community after giving birth and during menstruation, which similarly is being circumscribed by male boundaries. Given that the center of this image is the handclasp of Ken and Tyler over Lydia's pubic area, students likely will also note that the image suggests masculine control over feminine sexuality and reproduction. Notably, it is the priest who makes atonement to God on the woman's behalf (e.g., Lev 12:7). The handclasp also can be used as a way of explaining the Levitical use of "uncovering nakedness" to describe sexual intercourse (Lev 18).

Further, the calm mood of *Ken, Lydia, and Tyler* allows students to think about how gender ideologies function in a culture. Ideologies are not often enforced through coercion; rather, power relationships and dynamics are commonly accepted unthinkingly by those living within them, even those who benefit least. Likewise, Lydia seemingly allows her body to be hemmed in by the arms of Ken and Tyler.

Barbara Morgan, *Martha Graham-Letter to the World-(Swirl)* (1940, printed ca. 1980) [Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; americanart.si.edu]

This photograph captures dancer and choreographer Martha Graham "mid-swirl" in one of her most famous dance compositions, *Letter to the World*, which was inspired by the writings of Emily Dickinson. In the photograph we see Graham stepping forward, in the direction of the camera, in an exaggerated fashion while her arms seem to pull backwards. This image, especially with its title, evokes the biblical instances of women communicating a message of prophetic or divine significance. It can be used, for example, as an illustration of the Samaritan woman who tells her village about the stranger at the well (John 4) or the story of the women who are entrusted with the news of the empty tomb in the Gospel accounts. The image of Graham, which conveys a simultaneous urge to move forward and a hesitation, seemingly captures the women's mood as described in Matt 28:8: "So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples" (NRSV). An

instructor might project this image in order to help students imagine the text and ponder how it fits with the narrative's mood and message.

Mary Lovelace O'Neal, *Racism Is like Rain, Either It's Raining or It's Gathering Somewhere* (1993) [David C. Driskell Collection, University of Maryland Art Gallery, College Park; www.artgallery.umd.edu/exhibit/02-03/driskell2003/oneal_racism.html. The print reproduction captures better the detail of this artwork; see Juanita Marie Holland, ed., *Narratives of African American Art and Identity: The David C. Driskell Collection* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1998), pl. 87]

This lithograph by American artist Mary Lovelace O'Neal evokes a sense imminent crisis and change, a mood that permeates the biblical canon, including Jesus' warnings of coming judgment and strife in the Gospels (e.g., Luke 12:49–59). The layout of the piece, the left half of the image a stark dark gray and the right side a mass of competing colors and abstract shapes, creates this sense of tension. The colors and shapes on the right, including bright orange-reds, pinks, purples, blues, and black, run down the painting, suggesting movement and disorder. The dripping effect contributes to the sense that the mass of color is in the foreground of the artwork and is about to move over the stark gray space. Viewed in relation to the title, the color mass appears as a storm ready to overtake the gray. A curved line of black stretches from a black mass in “the storm” across the gray to the edge of the piece.

The title of O'Neal's piece and its inclusion in an exhibit that served as response to the Rodney King verdict, the “No Justice, No Peace? Resolutions” exhibit at the California Afro-American Museum, indicates its political nature and power. The chaos of the colors, which push against and begin to overtake the gray, might be read either as racism itself or as various reactions and responses to the gray of racism and oppression. In terms of the later reading, these responses are neither neat nor unified; rather, they are jumbled and bleed into one another.

While the evocative nature of this piece would allow it to be used in a number of ways, one option is to view it in relation to Jesus' announcements of the division his presence will bring to the earth. In Luke, Jesus proclaims,

I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! Do you think I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you but rather division! ... When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, “It is going to rain”; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, “There will be scorching heat”; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth

and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? (Luke 13:49–51, 54–56, NRSV)

Students may view the image as they hear the text being read aloud. After describing the details of the image, they may consider how it could be understood in relation to the text. Could the cloud of colors be interpreted as the division that Jesus brings? If so, what kind of division is this? Is it solely those who follow Jesus in opposition to those who do not follow? Or, is it something more complex? If colors are the division brought by Jesus, what is the dark gray? Could this be the kingdom of the world in contrast to the kingdom of God?

Pablo Picasso, *Guernica* (1937) [Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Carsten-Peter Warncke, *Pablo Picasso, 1881–1973* (Cologne: Borders, 1998), 148–49]

Arguably Pablo Picasso's most famous painting, *Guernica* depicts the terrors of war in powerful fashion. The painting, as is well known, depicts the destruction of the Basque town of Guernica during the Spanish civil war in 1937. The painting lends itself to discussions of destruction and war in biblical texts, especially since the painting includes a sun-like eye of God (positioned in the upper left half of the painting and somewhat near the center) or some other all-seeing entity watching the destruction unfold. The action occurring beneath the eye includes a number of images that can be related to violent biblical texts: a writhing horse, a fallen statue, humans (especially women) crying out in horror. Students should consider the eye's relation to the violence. Is there anything in the biblical text that corresponds to the eye? *Guernica* truly captures the feel of texts such as Lamentations or Ezek 7:4, in which God says to Israel, "My eye will not spare you, I will have no pity. I will punish you for your ways, while your abominations are among you" (NRSV).

Picasso's inclusion of four explicitly female figures, including a mother and child, make this image a helpful resource for engaging biblical texts from a critical feminist perspective (although Picasso himself was not known to espouse a feminist attitude). For instance, the image provides a compelling counterpart to prophetic texts, such as Isa 1, which depicts Israel's destruction using feminine imagery. In particular, viewing the image of the mother wailing over her dead child highlights the irony in the prophetic explanation of Israel's misfortune because the people "did not defend the orphan" (Isa 1:23). The inclusion of primarily female figures highlights that women are often the victims of war and violence, a fact often hidden in the biblical depictions of the destruction of an unfaithful Israel. God's willingness to let Israel, his whore-of-a-wife, be destroyed at the hands of other nations stands in contrast to the image of women wailing in the midst of war. Picasso poignantly reminds the viewer that it is women and children who typically suffer most during war.

At the lower edge of the painting is a fallen statue of a man. This element, along with the depictions of women fleeing from destruction, also makes *Guernica* a compelling illustration of apocalyptic texts. Students can view this image alongside Mark 13, for example, which describes the desolating sacrilege in the Temple and which laments over those who are pregnant and nursing during the coming destruction.

Guernica is such an important piece of modern art that it is easily found in a variety of print sources and photographs of the painting can be found in art databases such as ARTstor. The original painting is quite large (349.3 x 776.6 cm), which contributes to its power; thus it is ideal for students to view it in a large format.

Edward Rauscha, *The End #1* (1993) [Tate Modern, London; www.tate.org.uk]

The *End #1* is an acrylic and pencil piece done in shades of gray, black, and white. It appears as if Rauscha has captured a moment between two frames from an early black-and-white movie: the top frame cut off at the top of the painting and the bottom frame cut off at the bottom of the painting. The piece takes its name from the text that appears, cut off of course, in each of the frames. Printed at the top and the bottom of the image in gothic text is “The End.” “Scratch marks” on the painting contribute to the illusion that these are movie frames.

Rauscha’s work provides an illustrative tool for discussions about biblical eschatologies. Is the “end” as described by Revelation, for example, really an end or is it also a beginning? How might Rauscha’s capturing of the moment between two “The End” frames be similar to the eschatological thinking in the writings of Paul? Are Paul’s audiences, like Rauscha’s viewer, experiencing a suspension of the end (it is here, but not quite)? One might simply ask students to assay how this image captures or does not capture the sense of “the end” described in a given text.

Robert Rauschenberg, *Yellow Body* (1968) [Guggenheim Museum, New York; www.guggenheim.org]

Yellow Body by Robert Rauschenberg is made by a process of solvent transfer, in which images from print sources, such as newspaper and magazine pictures, are burnished onto the canvas. Bound together by the square of yellow color, these appropriated images appear as traces and blurred memories. The piece of art is complex, yet the process of solvent transfer means the images are subtle.

Students can ponder how this piece might be understood like a text such as the biblical writings. How does Rauschenberg’s work relate to its histori-

cal and social context? How is its use of sources similar to or different from that of the writings of the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament? If we imagine this piece of art as a biblical text, what does the square of yellow represent? Is it a concept or story around which the author of the text anchors the pieces that are combined to make his or her own story? For instance, is it the story of the historical Jesus around which prophetic images, ideas about the Messiah, and Greco-Roman conventions about miracle workers are arranged? How we should interpret and assess the appropriation of images, whether by Rauschenberg, Paul the Apostle, or John the Seer? Do we interpret them in relation to their original contexts or in relation to their new contexts or both? Further, students may contemplate the overall effect of appropriated images on the viewer or audience. For example, does appropriation primarily serve to make the innovative seem familiar?

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–80) [*Untitled Film Still #21*, 1978. Museum of Modern Art, New York; www.moma.org; *Untitled Film Still # 15*, 1978. Guggenheim Museum, New York; www.guggenheimcollection.org]

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The sixty-nine black-and-white photographs that make up Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* series can be used to introduce conversations about topics such as genre and traditional feminine imagery. In these images, Sherman creates self-portraits that mimic typical film scenes of the 1950–60s. In one of the most famous ones, *Untitled Film Still # 21*, Sherman depicts a young woman in a business suit and a dress hat. The camera angle allows the viewer to see the skyscrapers towering above Sherman. She looks off camera and her expression is one of hesitation. The scene is reminiscent of films in which a young heroine is off to her first job in the “big city.” In contrast to this “innocent” young woman, the young woman in *Untitled Film Still # 15* appears provocative and sexually alluring. Her long legs, hot-pants, and high heels worn with anklet socks suggest the woman might be a dancer. Her pose, sitting in a windowsill looking down into a street, could suggest regret, sadness, or loneliness. Jennifer Blessing's commentary on the image for the Guggenheim Museum describes the image as “the tough girl with the heart of gold.” (Jennifer Blessing, “Cindy Sherman”).

Sherman's photographs use visual cues, such as angle, setting, and costume, to allude to generic films. These scenes, as the above two images suggest, often revolve around stereotyped female roles. “Reading” these visual cues in Sherman's images can help students appreciate how even the most subtle detail in an image or text can prompt an audience to interpret it according to a particular set of criteria. Something as simple as Sherman's hat in *Untitled Film Still # 21*, for example, instructs the viewer to read the image as a young

woman's first job or her first trip to the city. Similarly, certain words and phrases (e.g., "begat," "verily," "behold!") direct a reader to interpret a biblical text according to a certain genre or a set of interpretive criteria.

Since the film stills focus on feminine imagery, they also can be used as analogies to the biblical depictions of the feminine according to certain types, such as the prostitute with a heart of gold (Rahab), or the virgin and the whore of Revelation. One might employ Sherman's photographs as a way of elucidating how biblical depictions of the feminine similarly draw upon cultural conventions, rather than depicting the lives of actual women. In addition, the film stills can facilitate conversation of how biblical texts have contributed to the construction of feminine stereotypes.

