



4-1-2019

## Who is Like God? The Deer Hunter as Angelic Allegory

Nicholas J. Schaser  
*Macalester College*, [nschaser@macalester.edu](mailto:nschaser@macalester.edu)

---

### Recommended Citation

Schaser, Nicholas J. (2019) "Who is Like God? The Deer Hunter as Angelic Allegory," *Journal of Religion & Film*: Vol. 23 : Iss. 1 , Article 46.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol23/iss1/46>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Religion & Film by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).

---

# Who is Like God? The Deer Hunter as Angelic Allegory

## **Abstract**

Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* utilizes Christian contexts and biblical motifs in order to present an allegory in which Michael (Robert De Niro) represents an angelic being. While Michael displays powers that parallel those of biblical angels, his lack of religious reverence and divine self-perception lead to a metaphorical fall in Vietnam. Michael's friend Nick (Christopher Walken) is also an allegorical symbol for imperiled humanity in need of salvation. When Michael is unable to rescue Nick from a Russian roulette table in Saigon, Cimino's film emerges as a theological statement about the problem of human violence and the necessity for hope in God.

## **Keywords**

The Deer Hunter, allegory, symbolism, angels, Bible, Eden, Adam

## **Author Notes**

Nicholas J. Schaser is Visiting Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Macalester College in St. Paul, MN. His research interests include Biblical Studies, early Judaism and Christianity, Jewish-Christian relations, and the Bible and Film.

## Introduction

This past December marked the fortieth anniversary of Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter*.<sup>1</sup> The film's initial reception sparked as much controversy as it garnered acclaim, with many critics censuring its ahistorical approach to the Vietnam War (particularly with respect to the historically unattested Russian roulette scenes), its apparent celebration of violence, and its perceived dehumanization of the Vietnamese people.<sup>2</sup> Scholars of both political and cinematic history have analyzed the film's presentation of the war, as well as its impact on American popular thought vis-à-vis military conflict.<sup>3</sup> Without dismissing the validity of readings from socio-political and historical perspectives, I argue that *The Deer Hunter* conveys a religious message that operates beyond the realm of *Realpolitik*. Rather than being a record of historical realities, the film can be read as an extended allegory that expresses the misplaced human desire for omnipotence and humanity's ultimate need for God. Specifically, Cimino presents Michael (Robert De Niro) as an angel who undergoes a fall when he chooses the path of violence rather than the help of God. As a result, Michael not only suffers from his own emotional collapse, but also fails to save his friends from the effects of the war—especially Nick (Christopher Walken), whose tragic death represents the ruinous impact of warfare on humanity. In this way, *The Deer Hunter* both renounces violence and asserts that, no matter how angelically powerful human beings believe themselves to be, only God will be able to repair the American collective conscience after Vietnam.

*The Deer Hunter* proceeds in four acts. The first act establishes the characters in their hometown of Clairton; the second portrays Michael, Nick, and Steven playing Russian roulette in a North Vietnamese POW camp; the third focuses on Michael's post-war return to Clairton; and the fourth follows Michael's unsuccessful attempt to save Nick from a Russian roulette game in Saigon. Finally, these four acts conclude with an epilogue that includes Nick's funeral and his

mourning friends singing “God Bless America.” In the first act, Cimino situates the film within a religious framework via reference to Christian symbols and imagery. Against this religious backdrop, Cimino’s dialogue—both on screen and in the original script—alludes to Michael’s angelic status. The film contains several points of contact between Michael and divine beings described in the Bible, including royal appellations, the ability to interpret signs in the heavens, disinterest in marriage, guardianship over others, and mastery over nature. Yet, while Michael maintains a quasi-divine self-perception, he disdains religious reverence and refuses to acknowledge any power higher than himself. Michael’s irreverence reaches an apex when he implicitly equates himself with God in Vietnam, and suffers a fall that leads him to realize his very human limitations. While in the first half of the film Michael wields godlike dominion in his Edenic hometown, and even delivers his friends from captivity in a hellish Vietcong POW camp, he is unable to “save to the uttermost” (Heb 7:25) when he fails to rescue Nick from Saigon. Ultimately, Michael must admit that he is not divine and leave the salvation of his town and country up to God.

### **Critical Reception and Allegory**

Soon after the release of *The Deer Hunter*, several critics argued that Cimino misrepresented the realities of the Vietnam war and, in so doing, presented an unfair picture of the Vietnamese people. For instance, critiquing the film as ahistorical, Gloria Emerson claimed, “The most brilliant dissections of *The Deer Hunter* have come not from professional critics, but from men who reported the war in Vietnam.”<sup>4</sup> Taking issue with Cimino’s treatment of the warfare that occurred in Vietnam, Pauline Kael stated, “The impression the viewer gets is that if we [Americans] did some bad things over there [in Vietnam] we did them ruthlessly but impersonally; the Vietcong

were cruel and sadistic. The film seems to be saying that the Americans had no choice, but the V.C. enjoyed it.”<sup>5</sup> In response to such criticism, Cimino asserted that “the film is not realistic – it’s surrealistic.... And time is compressed. In trying to compress the experience of war into a film... I had to deal with it in a non-literal way.... But if you attack the film on its facts, then you’re fighting a phantom, because literal accuracy was never intended.”<sup>6</sup> Whereas negative criticism of *The Deer Hunter* begins from an historical perspective, Cimino seems to have assumed the need for a suspension of facticity on the part of the viewer.

While Cimino’s call for non-literalism does not remove the potential problems with *The Deer Hunter*’s presentation of Vietnam, following the director’s interpretational cues can produce alternative cinematic messages that resonate on a religious level. One of the ways to achieve such resonance is by approaching the film as an allegory. Allegorical interpretation explains “a work, or a figure in myth, or any created entity, as if there were another sense to which it referred.”<sup>7</sup> In the most fundamental sense, *The Deer Hunter* considers the physical and psychological impact of war on its protagonists; however, an allegorical reading of the film offers “another sense” that favors the theological over the historical, and offers a meditation on the limits of humanity, the perils of hubris, and the need for God in the midst of violence.

### **Michael as an Angel**

Cimino locates his characters within a Christian world that provides the backdrop for comparing Michael to an angel.<sup>8</sup> The large Russian Orthodox church in the small steel town of Clairton establishes the centrality of Christianity at the outset.<sup>9</sup> Crucifixes hang prominently in the homes of the two lead female characters, Linda (Meryl Streep) and Angela (Rutanya Alda). Inside the wedding reception hall—the setting that dominates the majority of the film’s first act—a massive

banner reads, “Serving God and Country Proudly.” After a post-wedding deer hunting trip, Michael and his friends stumble drunkenly into Welsh’s Lounge, the local bar, singing the chorus of “Dropkick me, Jesus”: “Dropkick me, Jesus, through the goalposts of life, and over end neither left nor right; straight through the heart of them righteous uprights; dropkick me, Jesus, through the goalposts of life.” The abundance of Christian language and symbolism throughout the opening act casts Clairton as a kind of Eden.<sup>10</sup> This Edenic presentation of America contrasts with Vietnam as a “hell” that Cimino introduces amid fiery explosions and Michael setting ablaze an enemy soldier with a flamethrower.<sup>11</sup> The Christian environment in which Cimino sets *The Deer Hunter* provides the foundation for understanding Michael’s angelic function within the narrative.

From the perspective of Christian Scripture, Michael’s namesake is “Michael the archangel” (Μιχαήλ ὁ ἀρχάγγελος; Jude 1:9), whom the Bible describes as heavenly royalty (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1) and the commander of God’s armies (Rev 12:7).<sup>12</sup> The archangel resonates particularly well within Cimino’s Russian Orthodox framework, since Michael is the patron saint of Kiev,<sup>13</sup> and his name appears prominently in Eastern Orthodox prayers.<sup>14</sup> As Bernard Brandon Scott notes, the “archangel Michael is the patron of Russia, and Michael fulfills the guardian angel role for his friends.”<sup>15</sup> Cimino equates his main character with the archangel in scripted dialogue that was left out of the final film. While Michael is forced to play Russian roulette opposite Nick, he asks his North Vietnamese captors, “Who here is for Michael...? Michael, the Archangel!”<sup>16</sup> After equating himself specifically with the archangel, Michael proclaims, “Who is for the Angel? The Angel is mighty! The Angel is strong! The Angel is magic!”<sup>17</sup> In the film itself, Michael implies that he enjoys a royal status that parallels the biblical description of the archangel. Before his friend Steven (John Savage) gets married at the Russian Orthodox church, a tuxedoed Michael stares into the mirror wearing his dirty Mack trucker’s cap like a blue-collar crown. Nick asks him,

“You trying to look like a prince?” To which Michael responds, “What do you mean, ‘Trying’?” Michael’s inference that he looks like a “prince” echoes the description of the archangel as “the great prince” (השר הגדול) in the book of Daniel (12:1 cf. 10:13, 21).

Michael can also interpret the meaning of heavenly signs for uniformed onlookers—an ability that he shares with biblical angels. Early in the film, the following discussion ensues when Michael’s friends spot a mysterious light in the passing clouds:

Steven: “What the hell is that?”

Michael: “... You know what that is? Those are sun dogs!”

Axel: “What does it mean?”

Michael: “It means a blessing on the hunter sent by the Great Wolf to his children.”

This discursive structure—a question about an overhead vision followed by a spiritual interpretation—mirrors interactions between humans and angels in Scripture. For example, the prophet Zechariah needs angelic assistance to interpret a heavenly vision that symbolizes the people’s sin: “The angel who talked with me came forward and said to me, ‘Lift up your eyes and see....’ And I said, ‘What is it?’ [The angel] said to me, ‘This is the basket that... [represents] their iniquity in all the land’ (Zech 5:5-6). Elsewhere in Zechariah, the angel, like Michael with his friends, asks the prophet whether he knows what he sees: “Then I [Zechariah] said to him [the angel], ‘What are these two olive trees on the right and on the left of the lampstand?’ [...] He said to me, ‘Do you not know what these are?’ I said, ‘No, my lord.’ Then he said, ‘These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord’” (4:11, 13). When Michael asserts that the sun dogs constitute an “omen” that portends a successful hunting trip, his friend Stanley (John Cazale) responds, “You know, Mike, there’s times when nobody but a doctor can understand you.” Michael speaks in the “language of angels” that, to his all-too-human pals, is the incomprehensible equivalent of “a loud gong or a clanging symbol” (1 Cor 13:1).

Michael's seeming disinterest in women also links him with the angels that are said to abstain from marriage according to the Gospels. When Michael refuses to lend Stanley his extra pair of boots before their hunting trip, Stan resorts to demeaning Michael's masculinity. First addressing Michael and then the rest of the group, Stanley declares, "I fixed you up a million times. I fixed him up a million times. I don't know how many times I must have fixed him up with girls, and nothing ever happens! Zero." As Stan continues to question Michael's sexuality, complete with sexual slurs and recollections of Michael's missed opportunity with "that new red-headed waitress" at the bowling alley, Michael looks through the scope of his rifle without the slightest concern for Stan's accusations. That Michael's gun captivates him more than women do betrays an indifference to romantic relationships; his thoughts and actions extend beyond such apparent trivialities. In the Gospels, Jesus tells the Sadducees that after the eschatological resurrection of the dead, those who are raised "neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Matt 22:30; Mk 12:25; cf. Lk 20:34-36). Michael's seeming apathy towards marriage supplements Cimino's angelic presentation of his main character.

The car that Michael drives, a white 1959 Cadillac Coupe Deville, both recalls the steed of the protective western hero and establishes Michael as a guardian angel.<sup>18</sup> Cimino utilizes and reworks elements from the Western genre throughout *The Deer Hunter*.<sup>19</sup> According to John Hellmann, "The film turns on such characteristic devices of the western as male-bonding, the repressed love of the hero for a 'good woman,' the terror of confrontation with savage denizens of a hostile landscape, dancehall girls, even a 'shoot out' across a table in a crowded gambling room."<sup>20</sup> In light of these motifs, Michael's car stands in for the white horse of the Western protagonist. As Roy Anker notes, the automobile is "a proud and flashing 'mount,' a variation on the Lone Ranger's celebrated white horse Silver in frontier lore."<sup>21</sup> Michael's car also evokes the



biblical picture of Jesus and his angels atop white warhorses. Revelation records a vision of “heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called trustworthy and true, and he judges and makes war in righteousness.... And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses” (Rev 19:11, 14; cf. Zech 1:8; 6:3-6). The fact that Michael will soon join the army and save his friends during the war provides a further connection with the embattled angels of John’s Apocalypse.

The pseudo-equestrian skill that Michael displays behind the wheel is almost superhuman. As Michael drives his friends from work, they find themselves behind a semitruck. Nick dares Michael to “pass him on the inside,” which puts the Cadillac between the truck and a concrete barrier. Nick is so confident that Michael will be unable to pass that he bets Michael’s “Caddy” against his own truck. Ultimately, Michael runs the front of his car into the truck to make more room to pass. As the tires of the Cadillac screech past the much larger vehicle, Michael’s friends are amazed that his car has triumphed, and Steven lauds the victory of “Mighty Mike”—a moniker that, according to the screenplay, foreshadows Michael’s self-assertion during Russian roulette that “the Angel is mighty.”<sup>22</sup> As the group enters Welsh’s Lounge, Michael tells Nick that his bet was “a million-to-one shot against a sure thing.” Nick retorts that “there’s no such thing as a ‘sure thing,’” but Michael’s success over the truck argues against Nick’s assumption. Several scenes later, just before Steven’s wedding, Nick comments that Michael’s car “makes me feel safe,” which underscores Michael’s custodial role among his friends and foreshadows the protection that he will provide for them in Vietnam.

Cimino highlights this picture of Michael as a protective angel in the dialogue between Mike and Nick after the wedding reception. A drunk Michael strips naked—leaving only a silver crucifix hanging around his neck—and runs through the streets until he lays down underneath a

basketball hoop. Nick follows him, covers his nakedness with a piece of clothing, and sits down to talk. Initially, the naked Michael evokes Adam in the Garden of Eden, with the tall hoop looming over him like the Tree of Life.<sup>23</sup> Yet, when Nick asks Michael to watch over him in Vietnam, Nick becomes the Adamic everyman praying to his guardian angel.<sup>24</sup> Nick pleads, “If anything happens, Mike, don’t leave me over there. Just don’t leave me. You gotta promise me that, Mike.” Michael responds, “Hey, Nicky. You got it, pal.” This custodial contract evokes biblical verses promising the worshiper that God “will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways” (Ps 91:11; cf. Exod 23:20). Just as angels guard those on earth, Michael accepts the job of guarding Nick when the two descend into the fiery abyss of Vietnam.

A final scene in which Michael stands out as an angelic figure is the deer hunt before entering the army. As Michael stalks his deer through the mountains outside of Clairton, the sacral, choral score highlights the hunt as a spiritual endeavor. Earlier in the film, Michael had stressed the importance of killing a deer with “one shot,” and during the hunt he withholds his bullet until he can get a clear line of sight to his chosen animal. For Michael, pulling the trigger more than once would amount to ruining a rustic ritual.<sup>25</sup> Eventually, he kills the deer with a single shot, a show of restraint and precision that confirms Nick’s earlier description of Michael on the hunt as a “control freak.” In his swift dispatching of the deer, Michael deals out death in a way not unlike that of the biblical “angel of the Lord” who is able to take human life in an instant (e.g., Acts 12:23; cf. 2 Kgs 19:35; Isa 37:36).

The fact that Michael traverses mountains as he hunts is particularly significant because, according to the Bible, mountains are the dwelling place of God.<sup>26</sup> Exodus refers to Mount Sinai (also called Horeb) as the “mountain of God” (cf. Exod 3:1; 4:27; 18:5; 24:13), and several biblical verses describe the Lord’s “holy mountain” as the proper place of worship and the source of

heavenly aid (e.g., Isa 11:9; Ps 2:6; 3:4; Dan 11:45).<sup>27</sup> As Michael ascends the mountains on the outskirts of his own personal Eden—a garden that, like the mountain, Scripture identifies as the divine abode (cf. Gen 3:8; Isa 51:3; Ezek 28:13)—he is imbued with Godlike power over creation.<sup>28</sup>

For the biblically literate reader, however, Michael's prowess amidst the mountains also foreshadows his upcoming fall from divine proximity. The book of Ezekiel contains a poetic polemic against the King of Tyre that describes the monarch in terms of a heavenly being whose arrogance causes his banishment from the mountain of God:

You were in Eden, the garden of God.... You were an anointed guardian cherub and I appointed you; you were on the holy mountain of God—you walked around in the midst of the stones of fire. You were innocent in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you.... You were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned, so I profaned you from the mountain of God, and I banished you, guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was arrogant because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground. (Ezek 28:13-17)

This description of Tyre's king as an exceedingly wise guardian who walks upon God's mountain fits Michael particularly well. As we will see presently, the biblical king's fall from the divine garden/mountain due to his arrogance and violence also aligns with Michael's haughty disposition towards God and his violent action in Vietnam.

### **Michael as a Fallen Angel**

While Michael exhibits angelic qualities, he operates without recourse to the Divine. More, he has an overt lack of respect for Christian ritual and he exalts himself at the same time that he dismisses any need for God. Thus, Michael parallels a *fallen* angel who believes that he can replace the Most High. In Clairton, Michael does not hesitate to show his disdain for divine reverence, and his hubris culminates when he implicitly equates himself with God in the Vietcong prison camp. After his

denial of the Divine in Vietnam, Michael suffers a metaphorical fall from heaven—his salvific powers and concomitant self-confidence begin to diminish, and he is emotionally damaged when he returns home.

Cimino prepares the viewer for Michael's fall in Vietnam during the film's first act. At Steven's wedding ceremony, Stanley—one of the groomsmen along with Michael—crosses himself as the priest sings, "Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Now and ever, and unto ages of ages." The camera lingers on Michael's disapproving gaze at Stan's religiosity; Michael stares at him, looking him up and down, and silently mouths, "What was that?" Michael's disregard for Christian ritual is all the more striking amidst the ornate beauty of the sanctuary and the choir's chorus: "Entreat, entreat the Lord. And he will have mercy on our souls." Michael refuses to entreat the Lord, and instead derides Stanley's outward expression of worship.

Michael's divine posturing and disregard for God reach their fullest expression in Vietnam, which results in his fall. The most apparent indication of Michael's pretensions to divinity is his biblical name (מיכאל), which, in Hebrew, forms a question: "Who is like God?" Throughout the first act, Michael's words and actions imply that, if one were to pose this question to him, he would answer that *he* is like God. The culmination of this divine self-perception comes when Michael tells Nick of his plan to escape from the POW camp by killing their captors. When Nick asks how they will also rescue their friend Steven, whom the prison guards have dropped into a watery pit, Michael tells Nick to "forget him, he ain't gonna make it." Stunned, Nick asks Michael, "Who do you think are? God?" Michael stares back at Nick, but does not respond. Still, Michael's silence implies an affirmative answer—Michael *does* think that he is God, and therefore does not need a God in heaven to rescue him; instead, Michael tells Nick that he is going to "will us out of here."

Having rejected the need for God in the prison camp, Michael tells Nick that they need to get more bullets into the gun before they play each other. Convinced that the two friends will get through three exchanges without being killed, Michael says that he will use the remaining bullets to attack their prisoners, at which time Nick must find an unmanned gun and start shooting. After Michael convinces the captors to put three bullets into the six-shot revolver, the first spin of the weapon lands on Nick, whose hesitation is met with Michael's repeated screams to "Shoot! Shoot, Nicky!" When Nick continues to delay, Michael roars, "Do it!" This excessive pressure finally gets Nick to pull the trigger, which gives way to Michael taking his turn. He confidently picks up the firearm, stares into the faces of his captors, and yells as he pulls the trigger. The gun does not fire, and he slams it down on the table as he quivers with adrenaline. Once again, Nick raises the weapon as Michael implores him loudly to "put an empty chamber in that gun!" After Nick finds that last empty chamber, Michael lifts the gun to his head and then turns it on his enemies. Michael's escape plan comes to fruition as he and Nick unleash a fury of gunfire that leaves all of their adversaries dead. This first Russian roulette scene exemplifies Michael's proclivity for violence and his sole reliance on his own might.

However, despite the Americans' successful escape, Michael's implied declaration of divinity in the POW camp begins his descent from grace and the decline of his superhuman abilities. Although Michael frees himself and his friends from their prison, there is cinematic evidence that God may have more to do with their escape than Michael would be willing to admit. For instance, when Michael demands to play Nick with three bullets instead of one, he repeats the number three several times: "I play with three bullets: one, two, three. Three!" This repetition conjures Trinitarian imagery (which recalls the Orthodox priest's evocation of "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" at the wedding ceremony) and thus the notion that God engineers the escape.

Furthermore, in a deleted scene, an imprisoned Steven intersperses his cries for Michael with prayers to God, saying, “Father! Father! Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause I came unto this hour.” Steven’s prayer repurposes Jesus’ rhetorical question regarding the upcoming hour of his crucifixion: “What shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But it was for this purpose that I have come to this hour” (Jn 12:27). Jesus refuses to be saved from his impending death, but Steven’s is a genuine request for God to save him—a prayer that is answered when Michael and Nick free him from his watery cage. Whereas God glorifies the divine name through Jesus’ death in the Gospel, in the context of *The Deer Hunter*, God is glorified through the friends’ escape. While this scene did not survive the editing room, the fact that Cimino’s initial footage included explicit references to God provides a counterpoint to Michael as the sole salvific agent.

Whether or not Michael deserves full credit for the escape, his inability to extricate Steven from Vietnam unscathed betrays a weakening of his formerly unassailable power. When an American helicopter spots the three escapees floating downriver on a tree branch, Nick makes it into the chopper while Steven and Michael grab onto its skids. As Michael and Steven are hanging from the bottom of the aircraft, the latter loses his grip and plummets to the bottom of the river. Michael lets go, leaving Nick in the helicopter. Yet, when Michael gets Steven to dry land, he sees that his friend has broken his legs after falling onto underwater rocks. Michael is able to put Steven on his back and carry him to allied Vietnamese soldiers, but the damage to Steven’s legs will leave him a double amputee in a Pennsylvania veterans’ hospital. Whereas Steven had hailed Michael as “Mighty Mike” in Clairton, Michael is not mighty enough to save him from horrendous physical harm in Vietnam. Not only is Michael unable to protect Steven, but he also fails to uphold his promise to Nick when he leaves him in Saigon. Insofar as the promise not to leave Nick in Vietnam

had indicated Michael's angelic guardianship, the failure to fulfill the contract points to Michael's fallen state.

Upon his return from Vietnam, Michael is not a confident and commanding guardian angel, but rather a marginal figure who keeps his distance from those he once watched over. Michael's distance throughout the film's second act confirms that he is not Godlike, since the nearness of God is an overarching biblical theme. For instance, Moses asks the Israelites, "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?" (Deut 4:7). Similarly, the psalmist asserts that "the Lord is near to all who call upon him" (Ps 145:18a), and the Epistle of James exhorts, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (Jas 4:8). Yet, Michael refuses to draw near to his friends after Vietnam. As he returns to Clairton in a taxi, he deliberately avoids the welcome-home party that his friends have thrown in his trailer, telling the driver to "just keep going" to a hotel. The next morning, Michael watches his friends leave his trailer from a distance, but he does not engage them. Once everyone but Linda has left, Michael approaches his home and reconnects with her. However, the meeting is somber and awkward, and that evening Michael tells Linda, "I feel a lot of distance. I feel far away." This admission contrasts with God's declaration: "I bring my righteousness near, it is not far away" (Isa 46:13). Michael's distance now contradicts the idea that he is like God; his name, and therefore his former angelic identity, has been stripped of its meaning.

Whereas Michael used to have obscure knowledge of the heavens before Vietnam, he needs to beg others for information upon his return to Clairton. In an exchange between Michael and his friends, the dialogue belabors Mike's obliviousness with respect to Steven's wife Angela, as well as her husband's whereabouts:

Michael: "How's Angela?"

John: "Not so good, Mike. Worse since she talked to him."

Michael: "Talked to who [*sic*]?"

John: "Steven."

Michael: "She talked to Steve? I didn't know he was back."

Stan: "You didn't know he's back?"

Michael: "No, I didn't know he was back. Is he back? Where is he? Where is he? Where is he? Just answer me; where is he? Just tell me where he is."

John: "Angela wouldn't tell us. Angela wouldn't tell us. She wouldn't talk to anybody."

Michael [to Stan and Axel]: "Is that true?"

When Michael visits Angela, he echoes his uncertainty:

"Angela, I heard Steven was alive. Where is he? Where is Steven? Where is he? Just tell me where he is; Angela, where is Steven? Just tell me where he is; where is he? Where is he? Please, you've got to tell me now; where is he? Do you know?"

Finally, Angela writes down the address of the veterans' hospital at which Steven, now a double amputee, is a patient. Heightening the reversal of Michael's former omniscience is the fact that he must inquire of "Angela" – an "angel" who now imparts the kind of knowledge that he once possessed.

During the second deer hunting sequence, in which Michael returns to the mountains with Stan, Axel, and John (but, glaringly, without Nick), the once mighty angel seems to acknowledge his fallenness in an exchange with the Numinous. When Michael finally lines up his single shot at a large buck, he intentionally misses; rather than using his "one shot" to do violence, this post-war Michael chooses to abolish his venatic code and save the animal. At the sound of the bullet, the deer looks toward Michael and the hunter asks the hunted, "Okay?" Michael then sits down and repeats into the echoing wilderness, "Okay!" Rather than inflecting the word as a question, this time Michael makes an exclamation into the vast creation. In light of Michael's initial angelic power and the deleterious effect that his hubris has had on him, his declaration seems to constitute



an admission: Michael proclaims to God, “Okay! I acknowledge my transgression and accept my fallenness.”

### **Nick as an Adamic Representative of Humanity**

Michael’s failure to maintain his promised guardianship of Nick allegorizes the plight of human beings in the aftermath of war. In particular, Cimino uses Nick to extend the allegory of *The Deer Hunter*: whereas Michael represents a heavenly (but now fallen) angel, Nick is an Adamic symbol of earth-bound humanity. After Nick gets separated from his friends at the river, he recovers in the Army Hospital in Saigon. When a member of the hospital staff asks Nick for his background information, he states that his mother’s name is “Eva,” the Eastern European rendering of “Eve,” which reminds the viewer of the Eden back in America. The hospital staff member calls Nick by his full name, “Nicanor”—a Greek name that means “man of victory” (Νικάνωρ) and, like “Michael,” also appears in Scripture (see Acts 6:5). On the one hand, Nick’s name is ironic, since he is not victorious in the Russian roulette game that ends his life. On the other hand, “Nicanor,” the man of victory, reflects Nick’s attitude toward the war prior to his departure from Clairton. During his brief meeting with a green beret at Steven’s wedding reception, Nick declares that he hopes “they send us where the bullets are flying.” Nick’s confidence reflects the feeling of many Americans prior to the country’s military involvement in Vietnam.

After Nick is released from the hospital, a Frenchman in Saigon tries to convince him to play Russian roulette. This meeting underscores Nick’s Adamic role by recalling the temptation of the primordial pair in Genesis. When Nick hears a gunshot on the streets and follows the sound, he encounters the suited Frenchman sitting in a luxurious car under a flowering tree that conjures images of the biblical “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil” (cf. Gen 2:9, 17). Nick sees

several corpses with bullet wounds to the head, and he intuits that they are the product of Russian roulette games. The Frenchman clarifies that the participants in these games are playing “for a great deal of money,” and offers Nick champagne. Nick refuses, and the Frenchman responds, “Don’t say no. When a man says no to champagne, he says no to life.” When Nick says that he has to go, his interlocutor responds, “But you *must* come in. I insist.” The Frenchman’s attempt to coerce Nick into playing Russian roulette mirrors the Edenic serpent’s successful bid to tempt Adam and Eve into eating the forbidden fruit.

The discussion between Nick and the Frenchman also recalls Satan’s temptation of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Matt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13). After Nick’s initial refusal, the Frenchman approaches him, pours him a glass of champagne, and says, “*Naturellement*, I pay my players. Cash. American. However, should you prefer German Marks or perhaps Swiss Franc, that, of course, can be arranged.” This offer of various national currencies recalls Satan’s offer to Jesus of “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory” (Matt 4:8).<sup>29</sup> According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus’ temptation makes him a representative of all humanity: “For because he himself suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.... In every respect [Jesus] has been tempted as we are, yet is without sin” (Heb 2:18; 4:15). While Nick is like Jesus insofar as he typifies tempted humanity, Nick diverges from Jesus when he gives into the Frenchman’s plea for him to play. In this difference, Nick is like Adam, who also gave into temptation when Eve gave the forbidden fruit “to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (Gen 3:6). Cimino will solidify Nick’s representative status in the fourth act when Michael, who wants to play Nick in Russian roulette in a final bid to bring him home, says to this same Frenchman that he “wants to play the American.” As Frank Burke notes, Nick becomes “a mere abstraction or role” insofar as

he undergoes “a reduction to ‘the American’ in Michael’s statement.”<sup>30</sup> As a captive in yet another Vietnamese prison camp, Nick represents every American disillusioned by the horrors of war.

### **Final Act and Epilogue: Humanity’s Need for God**

In the film’s final act, Cimino reverses the elements of the first Russian roulette scene in order to portray Michael as both emptied of angelic power and repentant of his sin against God. In traveling to Saigon in an effort to bring Nick home, Michael attempts to diffuse the violence that he had once encouraged in the POW camp. As a soldier, Michael had demanded the use of more bullets, and employed verbal force to get Nick to pull the trigger. Now, he pleads gently with Nick to put the gun down so that he can rescue his friend from his impending death. The tragedy of the fourth act lies in the fact that, despite a non-violent approach that conveys his repentance for his prior rejection of God, Michael is unable to save his friend from the violence that he had promoted during the war.

After Michael accepts his fallenness and acknowledges his transgression in the mountains during the second deer hunt, he visits Steven’s hospital room to discover that Nick has been sending Steve his earnings from Saigon. When Michael realizes that Nick is still alive, he resolves to return to Vietnam to fulfill his promise not to leave Nick “over there.” Once in Saigon, Michael also meets the Frenchman, who agrees to lead him to Nick. The journey necessitates a trip down a river amidst the wild fires and burning buildings that mark the last days of the war—once again, in the fourth act, Vietnam symbolizes a hell that contrasts with Clairton’s Eden. According to Anker, “Scene after scene resembles the dark and labyrinthine chaos of Dante’s *Inferno*, replete with suffering and confusion, water, mobs, and fires... [in the] purgatorial back-alleys of Saigon.”<sup>31</sup> In this second descent into hell, however, Michael is not the omnipotently overconfident

angel who rescued his friends from their watery prison camp; rather, he must inquire about Nick's location, and has to plead in order to gain an audience with his friend at the Russian roulette table.

Eventually Michael finds Nick (who has suffered emotional and physical trauma as a professional Russian roulette player), but Nick does not recognize him. When Nick bypasses Michael and sits at the roulette table, the final dialogue between the film's two main characters takes place at either side of a loaded revolver. After Nick is the first to raise the gun to his head and find an empty chamber, Michael takes the gun and says, "Is this what you want? I love you, Nicky." Michael's expression of love is the inverse of his merciless demands for Nick to overcome his fear and enact violence in the POW camp. Whereas the angelic pretender of the second act was confident enough to ask for more bullets in the gun, the Michael of the fourth act closes his eyes in trepidation as he slowly pulls the trigger. When Michael survives his turn, Nick brings the gun to his temple, but Michael pulls his friend's hand back down to the table, once again shunning the violence that he had once affirmed. In a final effort to jog Nick's memory, Michael asks him, "Nicky, do you remember the trees? Remember all the different ways in the trees, do you remember that? The mountains? You remember all that?" These references to "trees" and "mountains" recall Clairton as God's abode. Suddenly, Nick remembers Eden and responds, "One shot," immediately before raising the gun and firing a bullet into his head. As Mike holds Nick's lifeless head in his hands, the viewer sees that the violence that Michael had wrought in Vietnam has come back—not on his own head, but onto the head of his best friend. Michael's inability to save Nick underscores America's misguided involvement in Vietnam and the inability to bring "victory" home.

*The Deer Hunter's* epilogue includes Nick's funeral in Clairton and his friends gathering for breakfast at Welsh's lounge. As John prepares eggs in the kitchen, he begins to hum the melody

to “God Bless America.” When Linda begins to sing the lyrics, the rest of the group joins in song. In light of the film’s thoroughgoing religious context, this closing hymn functions as a prayer.<sup>32</sup> As John Hellman notes, “‘God Bless America’ is a humble acknowledgment that the divine favor seemingly manifest in the American landscape can be achieved only if a spiritual consciousness will guide America.”<sup>33</sup> Since Michael was unable to save Nick, the remaining residents of Clairton finally acknowledge that only God has the ability to restore the damage done after America’s involvement in Vietnam. In the end, Michael does not manifest angelic power; he, and every American, can only hope that the Divine will bring salvation. Thus, the conclusion of the film constitutes a religious appeal for God to fix the brokenness that human beings create in their inclination towards violence. Through Michael, *The Deer Hunter* poses the question, “Who is like God?” The resounding answer is “God alone,” but the closing prayer points to the possibility of a similar biblical question being asked of post-Vietnam America, and answered affirmatively: “Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord?” (Deut 33:29).

## **Conclusion**

Upon its release over forty years ago, Michael Cimino’s *The Deer Hunter* was met with both criticism and condemnation. When viewed from an American political and military perspective, the film seems to elide historical realities in its problematic portrayal of Russian roulette scenes and its unnuanced presentation of the Vietnamese as America’s enemies. In response to such critical assessments, Cimino argued that the film was meant to be “surreal,” rather than historical, and highlighted the meta-themes of “courage and friendship” as the driving forces of the picture.<sup>34</sup> In light of the religious motifs in the film, *The Deer Hunter* can be seen as an allegory in which Michael assumes the role of an angel in his Edenic hometown. Michael shares several attributes

with biblical angels, including royal status, the ability to interpret heavenly signs, and supremacy over his surroundings. Yet, as an angel who does not give credit to his Creator, Michael undergoes a fall from grace in Vietnam that eradicates his former powers of near omnipotence and omniscience. While he acknowledges the error of his impiety after the war, Michael is unable to keep his promise to protect Nick, whom Cimino presents as an Adamic representative of humanity. In his attempt to stop the Russian roulette game that ends Nick's life, Michael eschews his former dedication to violence. Tragically, however, Michael's failure to save Nick confirms the misguided futility of his prior angelic pretensions. The emotional conclusion to *The Deer Hunter* both indicts human violence and asserts that the task of saving America from such violence must fall to God alone. Yet, insofar as the prayerful lyrics of "God Bless America" are the film's last words, *The Deer Hunter* also presents a petition for the country's continued repentance and the hope for reconciliation.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Deer Hunter* had a limited release on December 8 in Los Angeles and December 15 in New York, followed by a nationwide release February 23, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> For summaries of critical reception, see Roy M. Anker, "'Just Come Home': Violence and Redemption in *The Deer Hunter*," in Anker, *Catching Light: Looking for God in the Movies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 114-115; Sylvia Shin Huey Chong, "Restaging the War: 'The Deer Hunter' and the Primal Scene of Violence," *Cinema Journal* 44 (2005), 90-93.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., John Hellmann, "Vietnam and the Hollywood Genre Film: Inversions of American Mythology in *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*," in Michael Anderegg, ed., *Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 56-80; Edwin A. Martini, *Invisible Enemies: The American War on Vietnam, 1975-2000* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 54-62; cf. H. Bruce Franklin, *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 14-17.

<sup>4</sup> Gloria Emerson, "Oscars for Our Sins," *The Nation*, May 12, 1979, 541. Quoted in Sylvia Shin Huey Chong, *The Oriental Obscene: Violence and Racial Fantasies in the Vietnam Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 138.

<sup>5</sup> Pauline Kael, "The Current Cinema: The God-Bless-America Symphony," *The New Yorker*, December 18, 1978: 72. Quoted in Chong, "Restaging the War," 92.

---

<sup>6</sup> Leticia Kent, "Ready for Vietnam? A Talk with Michael Cimino," *The New York Times*, December 10, 1978. <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/12/10/archives/ready-for-vietnam-a-talk-with-michael-cimino-cimino.html>. Retrieved January 28, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck, "Introduction," in Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Avent Childress Beck includes *The Deer Hunter* alongside *Platoon* (Stone: 1986) as a film that is both "Christian and mythic," which balances the "religious or psychological experience of war" with "balms of religious myth." Avent Childress Beck, "The Christian Allegorical Structure of *Platoon*," in Joel W. Martin and Conrad E. Oswald, Jr., eds., *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 44-54, here 54.

<sup>9</sup> The wedding ceremony is authentically Ruthenian (Rusyn) and was performed by an actual Russian Orthodox priest. See Michael Molloy, *The Christian Experience: An Introduction to Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 357.

<sup>10</sup> For Cimino's presentation of Clairton as Edenic, cf. Don Francis, "The Regeneration of America: Uses of Landscape in *The Deer Hunter*," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 11 (1983): 16-21, esp. 18; Linda Dittmar, "All the Hollywood Allows: Film and the Working Class," in Robert C. Rosen, ed., *Class and the College Classroom: Essays on Teaching* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 153-68, esp. 157, 162; Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud, "America's Vietnam War Films: Marching Toward Denial," in Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud, eds., *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 1-18, esp. 8; Leonard Quart, "The Deer Hunter: The Superman in Vietnam," in Dittmar and Michaud, eds., *Hanoi to Hollywood*, 159-68, esp. 165.

<sup>11</sup> For Cimino's Vietnam as a kind of hell, cf. Anker, *Catching Light*, 102-105; Chong, *Oriental Obscene*, 131; John Hellmann, *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 179; Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hollywood Dreams and Biblical Stories* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 169; Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frenzt, *Projecting the Shadow: The Cyborg Hero in American Film* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 110.

<sup>12</sup> All translations of the biblical text are my own.

<sup>13</sup> See Donald Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 148.

<sup>14</sup> See Sergius Bulgakov, "The Virgin and the Saints in Orthodoxy," in Daniel B. Clendenin, ed., *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader* [2<sup>nd</sup> edition] (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 75.

<sup>15</sup> Scott, *Hollywood Dreams*, 170. While Scott does not cite specific cinematic examples to support this (correct) assertion, he alludes to Michael's return to Saigon for Nick. Yet, since Michael does not succeed in bringing Nick home, the main character actually fails to be an effective guardian in this case. However, see below for specific instances of Michael as a successful guardian angel.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Cimino, *The Deer Hunter* [screenplay; 5<sup>th</sup> and final draft] (Los Angeles: EMI Films, Inc., 1977), 61.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Scott, *Hollywood Dreams*, 170.

<sup>19</sup> See David Boyd, "The Deer Hunter: The Hero and the Tradition," *AJAS* 1 (1980): 41-51, esp. 44.

<sup>20</sup> Hellmann, *American Myth*, 175; cf. 173-74, 193.

<sup>21</sup> Anker, *Catching Light*, 97.

<sup>22</sup> Cimino, *Deer Hunter*, 61.

<sup>23</sup> On Michael as an Adamic character, see John R. May, “Visual Story and the Religious Interpretation of Film,” in John R. May and Michael Bird, eds., *Religion in Film* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 44-58, esp. 40; cf. Hellmann, *American Myth*, 183.

<sup>24</sup> On the notion of “guardian angels” in early Jewish and Christian thought, see Darrell D. Hannah, “Guardian Angels and Angelic National Patrons in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity,” in Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, and Karin Schöpflin, eds., *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception* [Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature, Yearbook 2007] (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 413-36.

<sup>25</sup> On the deer hunt as ritual, see Al Auster and Leonard Quart, “Hollywood and Vietnam: The Triumph of the Will,” *Cinéaste* 9 (1979): 4-9, esp. 8; cf. Hellmann, “Vietnam,” 60.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1985), *passim*; Thomas B. Dozeman, *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology, and Canon in Exodus 19-24* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), *passim*; Bryan D. Estelle, *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing a Biblical Motif* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2018), esp. 98-102.

<sup>27</sup> See also Isa 27:13; 56:7, 13; 65:11, 25; 66:20; Ezek 20:40; 28:14; Joel 2:1; 3:17; Obad 1:16; Zech 8:3; Ps 15:1; 43:3; 48:1; 99:9; Dan 9:16, 20; cf. 2 Pet 1:18.

<sup>28</sup> On God’s dwelling place as both the Garden of Eden and various mountains, see Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “Zechariah’s Spies and Ezekiel’s Cherubim,” in Mark Boda and Michael Floyd, eds., *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology* (New York/London: T&T Clark, 2008), 104-27, esp. 107-09.

<sup>29</sup> Stewart O’Nan also describes the Frenchman as “satanic.” See Stewart O’Nan, “*The Deer Hunter, Coming Home, and Apocalypse Now*,” in Stewart O’Nan, ed., *The Vietnam Reader: The Definitive Collection of American Fiction and Nonfiction on the War* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998), 266; cf. Anker’s [*Catching Light*, 103] description of the Frenchman as “a Mephistophelean character.”

<sup>30</sup> Frank Burke, “Reading Michael Cimino’s ‘The Deer Hunter’: Interpretation as Melting Pot,” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 20 (1992), 256.

<sup>31</sup> Anker, *Catching Light*, 109, 117.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>33</sup> Hellman, *American Myth*, 187.

<sup>34</sup> See John Baxter, *Robert De Niro* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2002), 170.



## References

- Anker, Roy M. *Catching Light: Looking for God in the Movies*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Auster, Al and Leonard Quart. "Hollywood and Vietnam: The Triumph of the Will." *Cinéaste* 9 (1979): 4-9.
- Baxter, John. *Robert De Niro*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2002.
- Beck, Avent Childress. "The Christian Allegorical Structure of *Platoon*," 44-54. In *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film*. Edited by Joel W. Martin and Conrad E. Oswalt, Jr. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995.
- Boyd, David. "The *Deer Hunter*: The Hero and the Tradition," *Australia New Zealand American Studies Association* 1 (1980): 41-51.
- Bulgakov, Sergius. "The Virgin and the Saints in Orthodoxy," 65-78. In *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader*. Second Edition. Edited by Daniel B. Clendenin. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Burke, Frank. "Reading Michael Cimino's 'The Deer Hunter': Interpretation as Melting Pot," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 20 (1992): 249-259.
- Cimino, Michael. *The Deer Hunter*. Los Angeles: EMI Films, Inc., 1977.
- Chong, Sylvia Shin Huey. *The Oriental Obscene: Violence and Racial Fantasies in the Vietnam Era*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.
- Chong, Sylvia Shin Huey. "Restaging the War: 'The Deer Hunter' and the Primal Scene of Violence," *Cinema Journal* 44 (2005): 89-106.
- Copeland, Rita and Peter T. Struck, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Dittmar, Linda. "All the Hollywood Allows: Film and the Working Class," 153-68. In *Class and the College Classroom: Essays on Teaching*. Edited by Robert C. Rosen. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Dittmar, Linda and Gene Michaud. "America's Vietnam War Films: Marching Toward Denial," 1-18. In *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film*. Edited by Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- Dozeman, Thomas B. *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology, and Canon in Exodus 19-24*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.
- Estelle, Bryan D. *Echoes of Exodus: Tracing a Biblical Motif*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2018.
- Fairbairn, Donald. *Eastern Orthodoxy through Western Eyes*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Francis, Don. "The Regeneration of America: Uses of Landscape in *The Deer Hunter*." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 11 (1983): 16-21.
- Franklin, H. Bruce. *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000.
- Hannah, Darrell D. "Guardian Angels and Angelic National Patrons in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity," 413-46. In *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception*

---

(Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature, Yearbook 2007). Edited by Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, and Karin Schöpflin. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007.

Hellmann, John. *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Hellmann, John. "Vietnam and the Hollywood Genre Film: Inversions of American Mythology in *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*," 56-80. In *Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television*. Edited by Michael Anderegg. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.

Kent, Leticia. "Ready for Vietnam? A Talk with Michael Cimino," *The New York Times*, December 10, 1978. <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/12/10/archives/ready-for-vietnam-a-talk-with-michael-cimino-cimino.html>.

Levenson, Jon D. *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1985.

Martini, Edwin A. *Invisible Enemies: The American War on Vietnam, 1975-2000*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007.

May John R. and Michael Bird, eds. *Religion in Film*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982.

Molloy, Michael. *The Christian Experience: An Introduction to Christianity*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.

O'Nan, Stewart. "*The Deer Hunter*, *Coming Home*, and *Apocalypse Now*," 259-278. In *The Vietnam Reader: The Definitive Collection of American Fiction and Nonfiction on the War*. Edited by Stewart O'Nan. New York: Anchor Books, 1998.

Quart, Leonard. "*The Deer Hunter*: The Superman in Vietnam," 159-68. In *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film*. Edited by Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990.

Rushing, Janice Hocker and Thomas S. Frentz. *Projecting the Shadow: The Cyborg Hero in American Film*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Scott, Bernard Brandon. *Hollywood Dreams and Biblical Stories* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.

Tiemeyer, Lena-Sofia. "Zechariah's Spies and Ezekiel's Cherubim," 104-27. In *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology*. Edited by Mark Boda and Michael Floyd. New York/London: T&T Clark, 2008.