

Get the Picture

Conscious Creation Goes to the Movies

Brent Marchant

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Igniting the Flame of Manifestation

Exercising Free Will and the Power of Choice

Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will.

George Bernard Shaw

Oh, how I love a smorgasbord! Ever since I was a kid, I've always craved visits to these do-it-yourself feasts (which, food beliefs aside, probably accounts for my pleasantly rotund physique). I've typically looked upon these bountiful buffets' endless offerings with great glee and anxious anticipation, their mouthwatering savories and irresistible confections all waiting to be plucked from their brimming platters and plopped onto my welcoming plate. (I can practically hear the growing chorus of "yums" reverberating out there in the reading audience right now.)

But, as much as I enjoy the delectable fare of these rapturous repasts, that is only part of their appeal. What I like just as much, if not more, is what smorgasbords represent—choice. This was especially true in my younger years; it was one time when I could be the boss—I could make the decision about what I wanted. It was all so very liberating. And, as a budding conscious creator, I naturally manifested dishes that I thoroughly enjoyed, too. To have what I desired available to me *and* the freedom to choose it—now that was the best of all worlds!

Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw apparently understood this principle as well, as the opening quote illustrates. He also knew how to make it happen; the three steps he outlines essentially amount to an encapsulated summary of what constitutes conscious creation. But he mentions a component of the process that we haven't yet discussed—free will.

Free will is one of those theoretical constructs whose being and validity have been debated for eons by everyone from theologians to philosophers to scientists. Many have tried to marginalize, if not squelch, its existence, but others have valiantly championed its defense, singing its praises and celebrating its capabilities. As I see it, free will has to exist, for if it didn't, conscious creation would otherwise be impossible.

I think of free will as the match that lights the fire of manifestation. After our consciousness assesses the intellectual and intuitional input furnished through the magical approach, it then formulates a proposal of sorts for what it would like to materialize, expressed as a belief. It's then up to free will, a kind of adjunct to its arbitrator cousin, to say yea or nay on proceeding.

Beliefs that get the green light move forward to materialization, while those that see red are scrapped, and those flashing amber are sent back for further deliberation. It's all rather straightforward really, provided one knows how to read the signals. The problem is that we don't always know how to interpret them, and that's how we end up stopping short, running lights, or finding ourselves in pile-ups, literally or metaphorically. Therefore, to understand and make effective use of free will, it's worth examining some of its important qualities. Otherwise, we're liable to get gridlocked at the intersection.

★ ★ ★

When a belief gets the nod to proceed, our free will facilitates its materialization by sanctioning the necessary intentions and emotions of manifestation and by placing an energetic work order with our conscious creation collaborator, All That Is, to marshal the elements, at the quantum level and otherwise, required for physical expression. With that, the process is thus set in motion.

For many of us, all of the things that we're supposed to aspire to in life are not at all what we hope to achieve out of it. As well as we may know that for ourselves, however, it's often difficult to make the decision to embrace it openly, especially when those around us adhere to a different set of expectations. Having the courage to make the necessary choices to live out what we know is right for us is something to be commended, for making the right decisions to follow one's heart carries the promise of great rewards and tremendous satisfaction. If only the others knew what they were missing . . .

Double Feature: The Canvas of Life

"Frida"

Year of Release: 2002

Principal Cast: Salma Hayek, Alfred Molina, Mia Maestro, Patricia Reyes Spindola, Roger Rees, Valerie Golino, Geoffrey Rush, Antonio Banderas, Edward Norton, Ashley Judd, Karine Plantadit-Bageot

Director: Julie Taymor

Book: Hayden Herrera

Screenplay: Clancy Sigal, Diane Lake, Gregory Nava, Anna Thomas

"Pollock"

Year of Release: 2000

Principal Cast: Ed Harris, Marcia Gay Harden, Jennifer Connelly, Bud Cort, Amy Madigan, Jeffrey Tambor, Sally Murphy, Val Kilmer, John Heard, Sada Thompson, Norbert Weisser

Director: Ed Harris

Book: Steven Naifeh, Gregory White Smith

Screenplay: Barbara Turner, Susan J. Emshwiller

In conscious creation circles, life is often compared to a painter's canvas. It is a medium that exquisitely facilitates the expression of physical existence as an art form in all its intricacies, meaning, and mysteries. And sometimes it even incorporates the very medium to which it is so frequently compared. A painter's canvas is truly an ideal physical medium for reflecting one's reality, presenting artistic, allegorical impressions of life and all its attendant beliefs, perspectives, and aspirations. Those interpretations manifest in

all forms of articulation, too, from authentic to expressionist to surreal and even abstract, each with its own intrinsic validity. That breadth of scope in itself illustrates the tremendous range of probabilities we all have access to for expressing ourselves, all made possible by our innate sense of choice. This is an incredibly liberating prospect. What's more, one doesn't even have to be a painter to draw inspiration from that idea, for we're all inherently creative beings capable of expressing ourselves in our own particular idioms. Two movies that splendidly explore these concepts are the biographies of a pair of provocative painters, "Frida" and "Pollock."

"Frida" tells the story of Mexican painter Frida Kahlo (1907–1954) (Salma Hayek), an enigmatic artist known for her highly distinctive style that combined elements of surrealism, realism, and symbolism with rich, vibrant colors. She was especially known for works with female themes, most notably her unusual collection of self-portraits, some of which depict her elegantly, some ghastly.

The film examines how various events and forces in Kahlo's life shaped her art, particularly her lifelong chronic pain (the result of injuries suffered in a near-fatal bus accident at age 18), her zealous endorsement of Communist politics, and her two turbulent marriages to muralist Diego Rivera (Alfred Molina). The movie portrays her as a fiercely independent spirit, a hard-drinking, salty-tongued individualist who readily speaks her mind and never hesitates to scoff at the behavior expected of her, eschewing both proper ladylike manners and devout Catholic piety. She freely engages in extramarital affairs, such as a tryst with exiled Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky (Geoffrey Rush), and experiments with bisexuality, most notably with a black Parisian chanteuse (Karine Plantadit-Bageot) who bears more than a passing resemblance to Josephine Baker, the American-born singer, dancer, and actress with whom the real-life Kahlo allegedly had an affair.

But it is primarily her relationship with Rivera that the film explores. He is portrayed as an artistic mentor, a political comrade, and an openly philandering spouse, all qualities that figured significantly in Kahlo's life lessons and that she, in turn, would draw upon in making choices for how to live her life. Theirs was a real love-hate relationship, but, ironically enough,

life expectancies. Special law enforcement officers known as blade runners are deployed to eliminate these renegades before trouble arises. For both hunter and hunted, however, the story ultimately turns into an examination of the fear each must face when time is about to run out. (1982; Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Edward James Olmos, M. Emmet Walsh, Daryl Hannah, William Sanderson, Brion James, Joanna Cassidy, Joe Turkel; Ridley Scott, director; Philip K. Dick, book; Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, screenplay; two Oscar nominations, one Golden Globe nomination)

Living Heroically Films

“The China Syndrome”: A long-tenured, fiercely loyal nuclear power plant worker makes plans to blow the whistle on his corporate employer when he discovers potentially serious safety issues at its new facility, aided by a local television reporter and her cameraman, who captures a near meltdown on film. The intrepid trio moves forward to expose the disaster-in-waiting before it materializes amidst threats from powerful forces seeking to silence them. Ironically, this film was released just a few weeks prior to the accident at Pennsylvania’s Three Mile Island nuclear power plant. (1979; Jane Fonda, Jack Lemmon [Cannes Film Festival winner], Michael Douglas, Wilford Brimley, Donald Hotton, Daniel Valdez, James Karen, Richard Herd; James Bridges, director; Mike Gray, T.S. Cook, and James Bridges, screenplay; four Oscar nominations, five Golden Globe nominations; Palme D’Or nominee and best actor award winner, Cannes Film Festival)

“JFK”: This painstakingly detailed drama documents the heroic investigation conducted by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison (1921–1992) into the alleged conspiracy behind the assassination of President John F. Kennedy (1917–1963), dubbed “the story that won’t go away,” according to the film’s tagline. Quixotic though his quest may have been, Garrison nevertheless moved forward in the face of staggering opposition to try to expose the elusive truth behind one of the twentieth century’s most vexing mysteries. (1991; Kevin Costner, Tommy Lee Jones, Kevin Bacon, Gary Oldman, Jack Lemmon, Laurie Metcalf, Sissy Spacek, Joe Pesci, John Candy, Walter Matthau, Sally Kirkland, Donald Sutherland,

Edward Asner, Brian Doyle-Murray, Michael Rooker; Oliver Stone, director [Golden Globe winner]; Jim Marrs and Jim Garrison, book; Oliver Stone and Zachary Sklar, screenplay; two Oscar wins on eight nominations, one Golden Globe win on four nominations)

“Casablanca”: Rick Blaine, a crusty American bar owner in Nazi-controlled Casablanca, faces the dilemma of whether to engage in acts that are wholly self-serving or eminently selfless, potentially benefiting millions threatened by totalitarian aggression during World War II. In the end, only he can decide to play the scoundrel or the hero. A classic for any age based on the play, *Everybody Comes to Rick’s*. (1942; Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Paul Henreid, Claude Rains, Conrad Veidt, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre, Dooley Wilson; Michael Curtiz, director [Oscar winner]; Murray Burnett and Joan Alison, play; Julius J. Epstein, Philip G. Epstein, and Howard Koch, screenplay [Oscar winner]; three Oscar wins, including best picture, on eight nominations)

“The Front”: When successful television writer Alfred Miller is labeled a Communist sympathizer and blacklisted from working during the McCarthy era of the early 1950s, he turns to his longtime friend, Howard Prince, to front his scripts for him. Howard, a restaurant cashier and part-time bookmaker, jumps at the opportunity, especially since he’ll get a cut of the script fees for his efforts. But as Howard’s star rises, so, too, do the eyebrows of government investigators, who begin looking into where this previous unknown came from and how he got to be so popular so quickly. Interestingly, three of the film’s performers, along with its writer and director, were themselves at one time blacklisted. (1976; Woody Allen, Zero Mostel, Andrea Marcovici, Herschel Bernardi, Michael Murphy, Remak Ramsay, Lloyd Gough, David Margulies, Marvin Lichterman, Charles Kimbrough, Josef Sommer; Martin Ritt, director; Walter Bernstein, screenplay; one Oscar nomination, one Golden Globe nomination)

“Hotel Rwanda”: This fact-based drama about hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina chronicles his heroic humanitarian efforts to save lives during the insanity of the Rwandan civil war of 1994, a bitter and bloody conflict between rival Hutu and Tutsi tribal factions. By housing refugees in his hotel and doing whatever it took to survive, Rusesabagina miraculously managed to spare the lives of many who would have otherwise perished in this unfathomable

before matters escalate by Simon (Danny Glover), a street-savvy savior in the guise of a tow truck driver. The two become fast friends afterward, prompting Mack to repay the favor, first by offering assistance to Simon's sister Deborah (Tina Lifford) and nephew Otis (Patrick Malone), and later by introducing Simon to a possible love interest, Jane (Alfre Woodard).

Love, however, is an area in which Mack has his own troubles. His marriage to Claire (Mary McDonnell) is teetering now that they're approaching the empty nest stage, their only child, Roberto (Jeremy Sisto), nearing college age. Mack deals with the distance opening up between them by having a fling with his secretary, Dee (Mary-Louise Parker), while Claire attempts to cope by lobbying Mack into adopting an abandoned baby. Meanwhile, they also have to contend with the fallout from the near-fatal shooting of their good friend Davis (Steve Martin), a producer of gratuitously violent action films who casually absolves himself of all responsibility for his work, believing his art merely portrays what's going on in the world at large, an irony that comes home to roost in a far too realistic way.

In all of the plotlines in "Grand Canyon," we see the connectiveness theme primarily as it extends outward from one character. But in "Crash," the intertwining story line idea is taken to an entirely different level. The interactions of the characters overlap continuously, going beyond the bounds of mere synchronicity and presenting a mosaic of the connectedness that truly binds us all. The crisscrossing plots are far too numerous to detail, but they involve an eclectic array of characters, including:

- ★ a racist patrol cop (Matt Dillon) and his idealistic young partner (Ryan Phillippe).
- ★ a pair of carjackers, one who's in it for a living (Larenz Tate) and one who's in it to make a sociopolitical statement (Chris "Ludacris" Bridges).
- ★ a well-intentioned yet pragmatic district attorney (Brendan Fraser) and his perpetually angry wife (Sandra Bullock).
- ★ a detective (Cheadle) who struggles to find his place on a police force that's as much concerned with image as it is with justice.

- ★ a successful television director (Terrence Howard) and his wife (Thandie Newton), both of whom wrestle with issues of racial identity.
- ★ an embittered shopkeeper (Shaun Toub) seeking someone to blame for his many misfortunes.
- ★ a young locksmith (Michael Peña) doing all he can to provide a secure life for himself and his family.
- ★ a smuggler of illegal Asian immigrants (Greg Kinnear) and his brash, argumentative wife (Alexis Rhee).

As diverse as these stories may sound, however, they all weave together and have one common thread—the characters' burning desire for connection.

The profound sense of separation felt by the characters in each film gives rise to related emotions that push them ever more toward connectedness as a means to ameliorate such distressed feelings. In "Grand Canyon," for instance, the characters frequently experience fear, of perpetually living on the brink of peril. To get by, many of the characters seek the comfort of one another and the sense of security that interpersonal connection often provides. But those who doubt the value of this coping mechanism, by approaching it with attitudes of cynicism or disbelief, experience a very different outcome in their search for solace.

In "Crash," the prevailing feelings are anger and frustration, again brought about by a lack of meaningful contact. Interaction—of any kind—is perceived as the antidote, a reminder to the characters of their own innate humanity, an awareness that they have largely lost or allowed to become obscured and that they desperately seek to regain by any means possible. Some succeed, some don't, again for reasons not unlike those cited earlier.

Of course, why the characters in these pictures would create circumstances like these is a question many of us are no doubt curious about. In my view, the answer hearkens back to this chapter's introduction—that these scenarios are meant to serve as reminders of the importance of connectedness, showing the characters (and us) its value by its absence. Detective Waters' opening statement in

13. In this film's sequel, "Star Trek III: The Search for Spock" (1984), this theme was materially reversed to be restated as "The needs of the one outweigh the needs of the many." Philosophical twists like this have been hallmarks of the *Star Trek* franchise since its inception. Such thoughtful elements have contributed significantly to its enduring popularity for over four decades.

14. This picture played a significant role in saving the day for the *Star Trek* franchise. After the original TV series was unceremoniously dumped by NBC in 1969 just three seasons into its self-proclaimed five-year mission, the franchise went on a ten-year hiatus. The original cast was then reunited in 1979 for a feature film, "Star Trek: The Motion Picture," an overlong, boring, talky affair that was often fittingly dubbed, "Star Trek: The Motionless Picture." The future of the franchise was thus riding on the success or failure of this second feature. Fortunately, it succeeded critically, artistically, and financially, giving an enthusiastic green light to a variety of future undertakings, including eight more feature films and four spin-off TV series.

Epilogue | Inspiring the Multiplex of the Mind

1. Henry H. Saylor, "Make No Little Plans," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (March 1957), pp. 95-99.

2. Jane Roberts, *The Magical Approach* (San Rafael, CA: Amber-Allen Publishing/New World Library, 1995), p. 109 (Seth Session 13, September 24, 1980).

3. Ingmar Bergman, as quoted by John Berger in "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye," *Sight & Sound* (London: June 1991).

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Roll Credits!

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