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From the Editor

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Abstract
The Editor introduces the October 1999 issue of the Journal of Religion and Film.
With this issue of the *Journal*, we are adding a section which includes movie reviews. One of our readers suggested this new section and our editorial board approved it. The brief reviews (500-750 words) will focus upon religion in film. Although we encourage reviews of mainstream Hollywood movies, we also encourage reviews of independent and foreign films. We have two examples in this issue of the Journal.

The reviews will be criticism as well as reporting. They will not offer details about pending release dates, the costs of production, the fees of the main stars, etc. Rather, the reviews will describe, analyze, and evaluate the films, especially as they intersect with our broad sense of religions and religious themes. Included will be a condensed plot synopsis, possible background information, an analysis of the plot, and possible arguments regarding the implications of the film. We hope that by including these reviews we will help our readers to keep up with movie and film releases that approach our interest in religion(s).

In addition to films written explicitly and particularly about religious traditions, many popular films consider religious themes symbolically. Such films make more sense if interpreted through religious categories, such as redemption, the Tao, compassion, after-life, forgiveness, awakening, discipline, etc.
In addition to films dealing symbolically with particular religion’s themes, others reflect what some claim is every culture's search for a shared sense of the sacred. This search and what a culture views as sacred are present in art and architecture, in fashions, advertising, dreams, and popular films. Hence, cinema often involves mythic narratives, struggles between good and evil, the roles of heroes and monsters, times of initiation and of ordeals, etc. Critics may propose how a particular film embodies the connection between such life experiences and what the culture holds sacred.

Finally, some films are political or social declarations that affirm or attack particular social structures, such as American foreign policy, the quest for (immediate) personal satisfaction, the rights of minorities (including women and native Americans), the role of virtue and self-sacrifice, and also the whole value of inherited traditions. These and other references may be part of a review.

Brent Plate, of the University of Vermont, has agreed to serve as the movie review editor for the Journal. You can send reviews to him on disc or hard copy at: Department of Religion, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont 05401. You can also send him your reviews by e-mail at B.plate@tcu.edu. Readers who are interested in writing a review should contact Professor Plate before submitting a review to be sure that one has not already been written.
In this issue we have included an article by Greg Watkins that offers an alternative way of thinking about religion and film. This alternative applies what is unique to film as an art form to our understanding of religion. Drawing on Stanley Cavell's *The World Viewed*, Watkins applies this alternative method to an understanding of Lars von Trier's film, *Breaking the Waves* (released in 1996) and Andrei Tarkovsky's 1986 film, *The Sacrifice*. Also taking up a film by Andrei Tarkovsky is the essay by Nigel Savio D'Sa. D'Sa's essay addresses the idea of religious epiphany in art taking Tarkovsky's second feature film, *Andrei Rublev* (1966), as its focus.

Jennifer Levi's essay concerns the production of auto/biographical films as a mechanism for dealing with the difficulties of being a child of Holocaust survivors. The two films that she considers are Abraham Ravett's *Everything for You* (1989) and Deb Filler's *Punch Me in the Stomach* (1995, directed by Francine Zuckerman). Both of these films were shown at the 1997 AAR meetings in San Francisco as part of the film screening series.

In his essay on *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Mark Goodacre reevaluates the movie in light of the intervening years. He finds that the movie is more interesting to us at the present moment than it was when it was originally released. Goodacre sees the movie as one that uses a particular context (1970's, English speaking, Western culture) to investigate Jesus and his mission on earth. Unlike typical Jesus
movies which are designed to pay homage to Jesus, Jesus Christ Superstar is more like The Last Temptation of Christ or Jesus of Montreal.

Finally, Carl Greiner's essay on Robert Duvall's The Apostle considers the behavior of the lead character from a psychological as well as religious perspective. Part of Duvall's purpose in producing this movie was to show a person of strong religious commitment without either hiding the person's faults or demeaning his/her position. Greiner's essay carries further and reevaluates this effort at an even-handed portrayal.