

The American Lectures in the History of Religions and
The NC State Annual Impact of Religion Lecture presents

Cinematic Spectacles of Sacred Suffering: Ethical Challenges in Dreyer and Von Trier



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Withers 140

The cinematic sacred is found wherever motion pictures depict something as worthy of reverent celebration, contemplation, remembrance, or protection, either by displaying its excellence positively or by evoking horror at its violation, destruction, or profanation. This lecture examines the ethical challenges of depicting and viewing the infliction of horrific suffering on victims regarded as sacred or saintly. Critics rank Dreyer's film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* as one of the best films ever made. Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* and Lars Von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* echo Dreyer's worries about voyeurism. Pasolini's *The Gospel According to Matthew* and Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* respond to those worries by directing attention away from the primary victim.