In Particularity We Trust: richard Dutcher's Mormon Quartet And A Latter-Day Saint Spiritual Film Style

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Abstract
Between 2000 and 2008, writer/director Richard Dutcher made four films with narratives focused primarily on members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The films are explicitly Mormon-related in their content, but I argue that they are also inherently Mormon in their style. Critic and filmmaker Paul Schrader argues that there is a particular style of filmmaking, a dialect of the cinematic language if you will, that enables viewers to experience an encounter with a Transcendent Divinity. The contention of this dissertation is that Schrader’s views were simultaneously too general and too narrow. I draw on Clive Marsh’s call for an embrace of religious particularity in film criticism and scholarship and reject the idea of some “universal” filmic style Transcendent for all viewers. Rather than ignore the doctrinal specifics of a particular religion, I mine the specifics on my own and examine Dutcher’s movie through those lenses in order to see how Transcendent might be evoked through film. I take Marsh’s hopes of finding how religious particularity can create greater and/or spiritual films and generate greater opportunity for an experience of the Transcendent for viewers. Dutcher’s movies attempt to fuse that which is reflective of Mormon history, doctrine, and worldview at first and evolves over the course of his quartet, his films give concretion to elements of Mormonism that allow viewers to experience a Transcendent Divine.

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