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## RELIGION AND MORALITY: PRIVATE OR PUBLIC?\*

**THEOPHILUS OKERE\*\***

This paper is designed to enable us to refocus more practically on the general theme of “Religion in Public Life,” while at the same time allowing for some observations from the distinctive standpoint of an African Christian. From this standpoint one perceives almost with the sensitivity of a victim the tragic absence of the religious in the public arena of the global village. At the same time that I explain this phenomenon, I will venture to propose [in Part Two, forthcoming—eds.] some elements of another culture and religion that could help to make a difference.

In a lecture I delivered in Kumasi, Ghana in September, 1989, to the [Roman Catholic] Association of the Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone West Africa, I took a rather pessimistic view of the outcome of evangelization in the old Christianities, judging from:

- the massive losses in the numbers of the faithful
- the massive losses in numbers of priests and religious
- the shrunken numbers in the growth of vocations
- the qualitative losses recorded through the growth in religious indifference, the general decline in the influence of religion in daily life
- the dwindling influence of religion in the decisive areas of interest for humanity.

I expressed the view that since the state of Christianity in places where it was 2000 years old was no inspiring goal to aim at for a young [Roman Catholic, African post-colonial] church, our evangelizing methods would have to change if we are not

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\*Permission to reprint granted by the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP), Catholic U. of America, holder of the copyright: T. Okere, “Religion and Morality: Private or Public?” in G. McLean et al., eds., *Religion, Morality, and Communication Between Peoples: Religion in Public Life* (RVP, 2004), pp. 205-220. Some textual alterations have been made to accommodate the *DES Journal's* house style. Part Two of Msgr. Okere’s paper will be published in a forthcoming issue.

\*\* Rt. Rev. Msgr. Dr. Theophilus Okere is Director of the Whelan Research Academy for Religion, Culture and Society, Owerri, Nigeria. He was the first president of the Catholic Theological Assoc. of Nigeria and first Rector of the Seat of Wisdom Seminary, Owerri (557 seminarians in residence as of 2009).

to have the same results 2000 years hence as old churches have today. In a document prepared for the workshops of the 1971 Synod of Bishops, a synthesis of the general debate on "Justice in the World" reads in part:

How is it that after 80 years of modern social teaching and 2000 years of the Gospel of love, that the Church has to admit her inability to make more impact upon the conscience of her people? . . . But it was stressed again and again that the faithful, particularly the more wealthy and comfortable among them, simply do not see structural social injustice as sin. They simply feel no personal responsibility for it and simply feel no obligation to do anything about it. Sunday observance, the Church's rules on sex and marriage tend to enter the Catholic consciousness profoundly as sin. To live like Dives with Lazarus at the gate is not even perceived as sinful.<sup>1</sup>

This frustration expressed at this level of Christian leadership confirms what historians, sociologists and others have been observing of the great divorce between religion and public life.

Let us define our use of terms:

- Religion: For the purposes of this reflection we shall understand "religion" as the historical, organized religions and more specifically Christianity whose numerical superiority and geographical spread qualifies to ideally typify the other religions.

We could well limit this paper's title to read: "The Christian Religion in Public Life." We need to know if Christianity as a religion has made, makes, or can make a difference in the public life of its adherents.

- Public Life: Public life is an ambiguous expression for it can mean (a) the public section of an individual's life, that is, one's relation to others, especially beyond the level of family; (b) the entire life of the community itself, whether this community is a village or country or the world community; (c) the area of inter-subjective interaction and the locus of decisions on what touches the whole. Our usage shall include these three levels of meaning while distinguishing them. By "public life" we shall mean the moral quality of that life. We ask whether religion makes or has made any difference in the ability of people to act justly toward each other in building a just and peaceful human society.

At the end we shall see that the Christian religion, on account of both (1) constraints imposed on it by historical contexts, and (2) its own deliberate choices, has tended to exert its strongest influence on the private lives of its individual adherents, less influence on the public life of the same individuals, and the least influence on public life understood as the life of the community or society.

## **The Positive Influence of Religion in Public Life**

### *The Influence of Religion*

Religion expresses itself in many forms, which encompass creed, ritual or liturgy, and morality. In a well-articulated theology, all these elements can be seen to be interconnected and even integrated—hence an understanding of one element often sheds light on another. However, for the purposes of this essay we may pass over other elements and concentrate on the moral component as the most direct link between religion and society. It is not that the others are less important. For instance, as a belief system, no one will doubt that Christianity has generated and promoted values which are today part of the proud legacy of civilization. This has been made possible because the values so inculcated have been internalized as ideals and models for life.

Through Scripture-reading and spiritual reading, in sermons, retreats, catechisms, pastoral letters and other forms of catechesis, ideals of behaviour have been upheld and models proposed—especially those of Jesus Himself, His Mother and the various saints—which have had profound effect on people and lasting influence on their private lives. Through such exhortations to virtue and the placement of powerful models and ideals before the people, Christianity has indirectly but immensely contributed to setting the moral tone of society. By setting up institutions like monasteries where these ideals are “realized,” it has been possible to put a Christian stamp on the surrounding culture. Religion with its emphasis on the other-worldly dimension contains a decisive spiritual element, which accounts for values that are perceived to be lasting and universal. It is these values which often appear in secular garb, such as liberty, equality and fraternity. They keep their meaning and continue to give regenerative energy to the lives of peoples and nations.

In the last one hundred years Christianity has most noticeably fulfilled its prophetic role in pleading for social justice in a series of papal encyclicals on the social question, beginning with Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum*. Nevertheless none of these forms of religious influence or intervention in public life would make up—either singly or together—for the lack of an appropriate morality or a Christian ethics of public life. Their collective inadequacy has been made painfully obvious and the tragedies of this century [this paper precedes the turn of the century—eds.] oblige us to look for other solutions.

Exhortations to virtue based on Gospel values do not carry the same force as commandments against evil. The measures which are decisive in determining the influence of a religion are not the mere recommendation of ideals and models, nor mere exhortations to good behaviour—essential as these may be for personal

holiness and for instituting a vague religiosity in a culture. Rather, measures which are decisive [as far as influence is concerned] involve commandments, prohibitions and the prescription of minimally acceptable behaviour backed up by moral sanction,—in other words, the overt designation of particularized issues as matters of morality, i.e., matters of conscience, sin and punishment. Beliefs, values, ideals, exhortations must be translated into a binding moral code if they are to influence public life from a moral point of view.

Secondly, modern society seems to be advancing in the direction of greater helplessness on the part of the individual in effecting anything in society. Even as he thinks himself never so free the individual finds out that he can do almost nothing with his freedom. The decisions that matter in public life are taken, most of the time, at the corporate or governmental level.

At present, private religious morality has been developed in view of individual action. But if such individual action is proving increasingly irrelevant to public life, then religious morality becomes proportionately irrelevant to public life. This seems to indicate that what may be needed is rather a religious morality of public action, a morality of collective action.

Thirdly, it is debatable whether the aggregate of religiously influenced private lives could add up to a religiously influenced public life; whether a morality designed for the individual's private life is transferable and cumulatively effective at the public level; and whether the behaviour of a society as a whole will become automatically and totally good if every individual obeys the Ten Commandments. Yet something like such an atomistic view of society and also of morality seems to have inspired the massive optimism by which Christianity has concentrated its moral theological/ethical effort on the individual's life in the vain hope that public life thereby would be sufficiently provided for.

But over and above individual actions, there would still remain in public life an important residue of actions for which no one individual alone would be liable or could claim responsibility—no one except the corporate persona as a whole. As is often the case, here also the whole seems to be something more than the sum of its parts.

### **The Failure of Christianity in Public Life**

That the Christian religion has failed to influence public life significantly in the sense and the direction of the Gospel is an understatement. The confession of failure credited to the 1971 Synod of Bishops mentioned earlier is fully borne out by the following random list of acts that have been perpetrated by Christian

peoples in recent history:

- The Slave Trade: The degradation of fellow human beings to mere objects of merchandise and property ownership.
- Colonialism: The usurpation of the freedom and sovereignty of weaker peoples, the ethnocides that made colonial occupation possible. The partition and sharing of a whole continent such as Africa like a piece of cake among Christian States.
- Racism: The systematic hatred of or non-recognition of the dignity of persons of another race.
- *Machtpolitik*: War as a tool of foreign policy, in the service of a politics of pure national interest.
- Unjust trade terms which involve the manipulation of prices, debts and currencies, and the imposition of barriers perpetuating the impoverishment of the poor.
- Genocide: The Holocaust whereby Christians [i.e., a historically "Christian" people] systematically organized the physical liquidation of six million Jews and others.
- Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The atomic bomb that destroyed life in these two Japanese cities in 1945.
- The wastage of the world's resources in arms production.<sup>2</sup>

To lodge these indictments against Christian religion because of its failure to prevent such evils of the public life is *not* to say that some Christians or even the Christian leadership were in complicity with or did not protest these evils. Often enough they did protest, if often belatedly. Rather, the tragedy is that these crimes took place at all in a Christian dispensation, and that they were perpetuated by Christians, sometimes by people who might pass for saints in their private lives. *That* is the tragedy. Also, it would be bad enough if any one of these crimes took place by way of a strange exception. But that so many and even more happened must indicate a serious absence of the Christian Code at this public level of events.

And not only is the list of failures alarming, but the general impression of failure of the Christian religion in public life is alarming. Speaking in the case of the United States of America, Harold J. Laski's verdict, even if biased, is pertinent:

All in all, it is true to say that the influence of Christianity in the United States is everywhere pervasive without being anywhere generally profound. . . . To this, I think, there must be added the important fact that the pervasiveness of the churches, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant, comes in a large degree from the subtle compromise they have made with the world, rather than from a defiant proclamation of their doctrine. They have not been able seriously to compete with the growing secularization of American life.<sup>3</sup>

Nearly half a century since Laski's assessment and despite increased visibility—religion being everywhere pervasive—the “subtle compromise” has assured the effective marginalization of Christianity, not only in the U.S.A., but worldwide.

### The Privatization of Religion

Religion has always understood itself to be a way of life, and whenever it is left free to fully express itself, it encompasses the whole of man's life—private and public, individual and communal. To exclude religion from any major area of life would amount to a major, disabling amputation which would drastically reduce religion's effectiveness and indeed distort its meaning.

To a great extent this explains the failure of Christianity, that is, the phenomenon of the privatization of religion. This is the gradual reduction of the jurisdiction of religion from the whole of life, private and public, to only the private and individual arena. With the privatization of religion, Christianity became effectively neutralized since its competence became limited to the private life and conscience of its adherents, while the public arena—the vast and growing area of social, economic and political affairs touching the lives and shaping the destinies of millions—became a prohibited, no-entry area for the Christian conscience. This eclipse of religion from public life created the twilight zone of amorality and set the stage for the compromises, the accommodations with the intolerable situations of injustice and inhumanity documented above. Robert N. Bellah aptly remarks: “To the extent that privatization succeeded, religion was in danger of becoming like the family ‘a heaven in a heartless world’, but one that did more to reinforce that world, by caring for its casualties, than to challenge its assumptions.”<sup>4</sup>

Commentators have variously attributed the privatization of religion—depending on the country—to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, to the disestablishment of the churches, to liberal rationalism and secularization, to persecution by atheistic communism, to growing pluralism and relativism, to the modern industrial civilization, to the insidious new religion of materialism, and to hedonism and consumerism. Without denying these links and causalities, one might yet insist that its ancestry must be traced along a route which goes back beyond the Enlightenment to take in the settlement of the Wars of Religion (*cuius regio, eius religio* implied a regionalization of religious affiliation) and indeed the Pandora's box of the Protestant reformation (*sola scriptura, scriptura sui interpretans*, allowing for a purely personal competence in the interpretation of Scripture).

It is through these events that Christianity lost its earlier visibility and the

ascendancy it had won, for instance, in a Hildebrand or an Innocent III. The gains of the Constantinian revolution were once again reversed and a retreat to the catacombs left the public square once again naked.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> J. A. Coleman, ed., *One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Thought: Celebration and Change* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 306.
- <sup>2</sup> To mention only some of the weapons systems used in the [first] Gulf War: a Tomahawk missile cost 1.5 billion lire [\$1,116,000]; the Patriot anti-ballistic missile, 1.2 billion lire [\$892,800]; the F-14 Tomcat fighter plane, 60 billion lire [\$44,640,000]; a Tornado fighter plane, 70 billion lire [\$52,080,000]; an AWACS radar plane, 121 billion lire [\$90,024,000]; the radar-evading F-117 Stealth fighter plane, 130 billion lire [\$96,720,000]; an Apache helicopter, 12 billion lire [\$8,928,000]; an Abrams M-1 tank, 5 billion lire [\$3,720,000]; and a Challenger tank, 10 billion lire [\$7,440,000]. It is a question of wasting immense wealth that could—and should—be used to eliminate the poverty of the millions of people dying of hunger. Culled from “*La Civiltà Cattolica*: ‘Modern War and Christian Conscience’,” in *Moral Issues and Christian Response*, eds., P. T. Jersild and D. A. Johnson (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1993).
- <sup>3</sup> Harold J Laski, *The American Democracy* (New York: Viking, 1948), p. 296.
- <sup>4</sup> R. N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), p. 224.



## FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND THE ITALIAN CINEMA

MARIA GONNELLA TRAUB\*

The story of Francis of Assisi has an immense drawing power for believers as well as non-believers. The most complete pictorial rendering of the saint's life remains that of Giotto, whose frescoes line the nave of the upper Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi. They offer a visual narrative for meditation within the embrace of sacred space. Not until the twentieth century would movement and sound be added to permanent visual compositions about the life of the saint. Though several films on Francis were made prior to World War II, after the war four renowned Italian filmmakers created several important works that have been viewed by millions of spectators and continue to be seen. Here, the films of Roberto Rossellini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Franco Zeffirelli, and Liliana Cavani will be examined. It should be noted that films for television about Francis have been made in Italy, but our focus here shall be on films for cinema.

Just following the war, Roberto Rossellini (1906-1977) gained fame as one of the outstanding filmmakers of Europe. He is also credited with being the inventor of Neorealism. Films such as *Roma*, *Città Aperta*, *Paisà*, and *Germania Anno Zero* relate to the World War II period. *Stromboli*, a film starring Ingrid Bergman, is best known in the United States. It was after making *Stromboli* that Rossellini began to make a film about Francis of Assisi.

*Francesco, giullare di Dio* ("Francis, God's Jester"), made in 1950, seeks to give an historical representation of the life of Francis, capturing an austere, medieval lifestyle in all its grittiness, while preserving an overtly religious nature. Rossellini's film is very poetic. It is also a product of Neorealism in that it follows real people in real time through a slice of daily life – in this case, the daily life of Francis and his very first followers. It is based on the *Fioretti* ("Little Flowers," so named in the Italian tradition), a collection from the oral tradition about Francis, compiled some one hundred fifty years after Francis' death (Brown: 2002: 736-7).

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The film is a series of episodes, with inter-titles taken directly from the *Fioretti* and shown on screen before each new episode. It was made with the collaboration of Federico Fellini in screenwriting (Brunette, 1987: 129).

To help invent incidents and some dialog, Rossellini also called on the assistance of Father Alberto Maisano, the master of novices from the convent of Baronissi, near Nocera, from which the Franciscan players had come (Gallagher, 1998: 342). Notwithstanding, the film did elicit some controversy. Some critics considered it to be Catholic propaganda, while some ecclesiastical authorities were displeased because the film gave a “too human portrayal of the saint” (Brunette, 1987: 130).

Rossellini’s emphasis on the historic has the added value of his use of authentic friars who serve as the actors in this film. Both Rossellini and his associate Federico Fellini were intrigued with the idea of using real friars to make a film that would go back to the innocent naïveté and generosity of the saint himself. However, among the friars in the film, he included a very poor vagabond beggar whom he had befriended, who had always stopped him, to ask for money. This one inauthentic friar was the most challenging as far as scene direction went, for he always repeated everything he was told verbatim, and re-takes would constantly have to be made because he would repeat everything, his lines and his directions as well, out loud (Gallagher, 1998: 343). To solve the problem, Rossellini would simply push him into a scene in progress and allow him to improvise. This strategy worked very well and the resulting scene was funny too. The very caring way that the other friars would guide him, take his arm, etc., is testimony to how the dim-witted should be properly attended.

As the film begins, we hear the *Cantico delle Creature* (“Canticle of the Creatures”) and view beautiful shots of nature. Rossellini’s effort to capture a spiritual essence is holistic. He de-centers Francis, who is seen as a member of a group of friars. There are no visible marks of status. We do not learn who Francis is, until one of the friars calls out to him. The film as a whole puts the viewer into a spiritual frame of mind. The friar who is cast as Francis is not the good-looking, generic Hollywood hero. He has the face of an ordinary man, yet it is an ascetic face.

Fra (“Brother”) Ginepro gets a lot of footage. The character’s literal simplicity makes his adventures comic and yet important. With youthful zeal and boundless enthusiasm, he sets out to convert an encampment of barbarians. Among the friars, the only professional actor engaged by Rossellini is the great Italian actor Aldo Fabrizi, cast as the barbarian warlord, Nicolaio (Brunette, 1987: 130). Fra Ginepro seizes an opportunity to demonstrate peace and love while being continuously buffeted and mocked by the barbarians. An increasingly incredulous

Nicolaio is so stumped by the little friar's goodwill, that Ginepro is released. The enormous accoutrements of war and power designed to be worn by Nicolaio, make him so exaggerated and grotesque looking, that he appears ridiculous.

In the concluding scene all the friars are invested with God's mission by Francis. Giovanni il Semplice ("John the Simple"), who is none other than our dim-witted vagabond beggar, leaves an endearing portrait. As told by Rossellini:

At the end of Francesco, all the monks [friars] decide to spin themselves around to determine what direction they will go in, and as he was lame, he turned around very slowly and it took him half an hour to fall down. When he fell he was supposed to say, "I'm pointing to Embolo," but he couldn't understand it however much we tried to explain. When he fell, Saint Francis asked him where he would go and he said, "After that bird," because there was a bird flying by. It was a priceless phrase and I kept it in. (Gallagher, 1998: 343-4)

Rossellini's didactic in making this film is his concern with the despair and cynicism in postwar Europe. He unashamedly offered Saint Francis and the saint's philosophy as an answer. As Rossellini states:

It was important for me then to affirm everything that stood against slyness and cunning. In other words, I believed then and still believe that simplicity is a very powerful weapon . . . the innocent one will always defeat the evil one. I am absolutely convinced of this. . . . Then, if we want to go back to the historical moment, we must remember that these were cruel and violent centuries, and yet in those centuries of violence appeared Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Catherine of Siena. (Brunette, 1987: 131)

Even more radical is Rossellini's formal technique, which relies overtly on discontinuity, fragmentation, and a productive tension between extremes of realism and stylization. The film gives an idea of the difficult lifestyle led by Francis and his early followers, but nevertheless a message of joy in all things is clearly transmitted.

Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-75) was fascinated by the very poor. He initially became a member of the Communist Party in Italy because he believed that only Communism could really change culture and provide a better life for the severely underprivileged (Siciliano, 1982:103-5). As a writer of twenty-six novels, six volumes of poetry, and a director of fifteen major films, he had a prolific artistic output. In many ways, he wanted to maintain a sense of awe and reverence for life, for the world – a sense he believed that the peasantry still possessed.

Pasolini the poet, novelist, and filmmaker, would not have been the choice of the Catholic Church to make a film or film segment about Francis and Franciscans. A tortured, wayward soul, Pasolini sought beauty in artistic expression and invested it with his own ideas for a better world. Politically, he sided with the downtrodden and the excluded. Perhaps idealistically, perhaps foolishly, he tried to reconcile Marxist and Christian ideologies (Siciliano, 1982: 162-3).

*Uccellacci e uccellini* ("Hawks and Sparrows") is a film that Pasolini as director made for political reasons. Indeed, the segment in which Francis commissions two friars to go forth and preach contains the moral injunction to combat poverty and injustice. Pasolini had absorbed the ideas of Antonio Gramsci, whose thinking played a large role in the development of post-World War II Italian cinema (Siciliano, 1982: 205-212). Gramsci's concern for economic and political change was intrinsically tied to the role of culture and education. Made in 1966, the film reflects the forceful, direct, political statements of the director.

Notwithstanding its didactic bent, the film is quite light-hearted. Pasolini originally called it an "ideo-comic film" but upon its completion, he considered it more a "sociopolitical allegory" (Schwartz, 1998: 485). That Pasolini was influenced by Rossellini's work is evident. Not only are the film's episodes titled, just as they were in *Francesco, giullare di Dio*, but there are distinct touches of "omaggio" ("homage") for Rossellini. This approach is evident in the scene of the friars receiving their mission, and in another of the young novice friar being tossed and buffeted about by a gang of vagabond bandits.

In Rossellini's film, Francis says to the birds: "Can you not be quiet so that I might pray?" while in Pasolini's film, the older Francis decides to pray for insight on how to make the birds listen to his preaching.

The film unfolds in a series of episodes. A crusty old gentleman and his son walk down the highway of life. They could be Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, or Don Quixote and Sancho Panza (Siciliano, 1982: 296). The Italian actor Totò, with his Buster Keaton visage and his Charlie Chaplin gait, cuts a tragic figure. The son represents the budding generation full of hopes. A crow urges them to go beyond appearances to more profound truths. The crow lectures them on ideology. With a fable he transports them to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and they become monk and friar with a mission to bring God's love to the birds. They are disheartened when after their evangelizing a hawk swoops down and devours a sparrow. Pasolini is showing us that even the converted can prey upon and exploit the weak. Pasolini was a Marxist but in this film he reveals his disillusionment with that ideology. He felt that the Marxists had failed to understand the sub-proletariat. He also hoped for a relationship between the political and the religious

worlds. He admired Pope John XXIII, a very human individual, of peasant stock, with an ecumenical and open spirit. In the scene of preaching to the birds, Pasolini wished to create something light . . . as though from the opera *The Magic Flute* (Schwartz, 1998: 489). Thanks to the comic genius of Totò, the episode leaves us with a sweet, human impression of Franciscans.

Franco Zeffirelli was born in Florence, Italy in 1923. World famous director of film and opera productions, he has served as production designer for the metropolitan Opera of New York, as writer for such films as *Callas Forever*, *Tea with Mussolini*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Tre Fratelli* (“Three Brothers”), among others. He has also worked as costume designer, producer, art director, and actor in the film world. Among his most famous film productions is *Romeo and Juliet*.

*Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, by Franco Zeffirelli, is a film rooted in the spirit of the 1960’s but released in the 1970’s, opening on Easter Day, 1972 (Zeffirelli, 1986: 253). Of particular interest is the film’s genesis, which gives insight to the director’s state of mind and its consequent influence on the resulting film. In a chapter titled “Through Pain,” from his book “*Zeffirelli, an Autobiography*,” Zeffirelli writes of an automobile accident. He was riding with Gina Lollobrigida, when she lost control of the car and in the accident that ensued one side of his face was entirely crushed. It had to be re-structured with the bones carefully set over a concrete mould. To quote from his autobiography:

Despite sedatives, the pain was present and ever shifting as the bones settled and set against the mould. As the hellish days crept by, the pain seemed to increase. Weeks passed, then as the bones finally hardened, a new torture was added, a terrible itching just below the surface. The unbearable irritation made me want to scratch and claw at my face, tear open the flesh and yank out the concrete foundation that was driving me insane. The sensation was uncontrollable. They tied me down to prevent me from hurting myself. It was the ultimate humiliation.

As I lay trussed like a prisoner in the very depths of degradation and misery, the hospital chaplain, Father Callaghan, asked if there was anything he could do, -- perhaps I would like him to read aloud to me something of comfort from the Bible. My mind was in turmoil, I couldn’t remember anything from the Bible at all. Then suddenly, I thought of the Sermon on the Mount: perhaps he would read that. It was a bizarre choice, almost as if I wanted to add moral anguish to my physical suffering. After all, I belonged to a profession that takes pride in vanities and worldly successes, and now here I was, racked and bound, listening to those solemn words lauding the poor and meek above all others. Yet despite this incongruity, the words were somehow comforting. I made an effort. I tried to pray even though the words were at first mechanical, thoughtless things learned in childhood. I forced

myself to say them, and perhaps because I was for once in my life immobile and trapped, they began to have a point. Confined to a hospital bed, far from the distractions of a church – the ceremony, the paintings, the people, - the very ordinariness of prayer suddenly became meaningful. When you are absolutely alone, you can talk to God.

One night ... I had a dream in which I saw my patron saint, Francis of Assisi. It was one of those crystal-clear encounters and, when I awoke, I remembered the dream and knew with certainty why he had come to me. I spoke to Father Callaghan as soon as he came on his rounds and told him what had happened. He asked me what I made of it, and I said I thought it was a sign that I had to do something positive about these new religious thoughts which were preoccupying me. I told him that I intended to make a vow to dedicate my work to God whenever possible. (Zeffirelli, 1986: 237-8)

As a result, the making of the film *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* began in the sixties, but was not completed until late 1971. Zeffirelli had at first enlisted the Beatles, then Leonard Bernstein for the film's music, which was finally done by Donovan. As screenwriters he worked with two accomplished directors in their own right: Lina Wertmuller and Suso Cecchi d'Amico (Zeffirelli, 1986: 252).

In an early scene, we see Francis exhibit youthful, foolish bravado, in his love of nature. Graham Faulkner, the actor playing Francis, is shown walking gingerly across the tiled roof of his father's house, in order to capture a bird. Here we have a good-looking, Hollywood rendition of Francis, accompanied by lots of theatrical flourishes,—for example, his reception of Clare is before a spectacular waterfall, and not in the church of the Portiuncula.

The most magnificent scene is that of Francis and his companions meeting with the Pope. The eleventh century cathedral of Monreale in Sicily was the setting, with Sir Alec Guinness in the role of the pope. The elaborate stair with the pope enthroned on the top landing, backed by the enormous mosaic of Christ, the slow descent of the Holy Father to the ground to embrace Francis, is an astute and powerful *mise en scène*. The filming at Monreale was not without adventure. Zeffirelli includes this anecdote:

... a bus carrying forty of our crew began to run down a steep, winding road out of control when its brakes failed. The chief electrician called out: "Saint Francis save us!" and they bounced into a wall on one of the bends, which broke their descent, but left them dangling over the precipice with both front wheels spinning in mid-air. (Zeffirelli, 1986: 256)

Apparently there were also earth tremors in Sicily during the filming and Valentina Cortese, who played Francis's mother, was so terrified of falling beams and heavy debris, she walked around with a pillow permanently attached to her head. A very touching moment in the film occurs with that of Francis and his brothers walking and singing through the streets of Assisi in the rain. Noting that the door to his father's house is ajar, he enters the courtyard and prays the Beatitudes out loud. His parents hear the voice of their son outside in the rain, yet continue to dine as if nothing unusual were taking place. In retrospect, the inclusion of this scene had to have special meaning for Zeffirelli.

Liliana Cavani was born in Carpi, Italy in 1937. An extraordinary female filmmaker, she has explored transgression, psychological extremes and spiritual questing in her *oeuvre*. Films such as *Night Porter*, *The Berlin Affair*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Galileo*, *The Cannibals*, and *Ripley's Game*, have earned international celebrity for her. In 1966, she also worked on a television series for RAI on the life of Francis of Assisi.

In the film *Francesco*, by Liliana Cavani, made in 1989, again we have a good-looking Francis. Francis is played by the Hollywood actor Mickey Rourke. Cavani is a director who likes to show her intellectual acumen but she is also one who likes experimentation. In *Francesco* we see a raggedy group of friars, among whom sits Clare in short hair and unveiled, who are reminiscing about Francis after his death. They might be composing what will become the *Fioretti*, since one of them is recording their thoughts. The result is a presentation of images as memory, yet unfolding with continuity. Francis is presented as a proto-revolutionary and as a lucid madman. Cavani has Francis show this madness at various moments. Biographers have mentioned that Francis, when once tempted by sins of the flesh, preferred to throw himself into the snow. Cavani gives us such a scene, but without enough input to understand that the saint is resisting temptation. Cavani has the actor strip naked and frolic in the snow, thus giving the viewer a rather skewed idea of Francis's intention.

Early moments in the film present the youthful Francis, enjoying abundant spreads of food and wine among his friends and being named "King of Revelers." After his conversion, the film takes on a gritty character, with scenes of Francis and his brothers ministering to the poor who live in a hillside shanty town. We see Francis sitting outside a shack while Clare assists a woman who is giving birth. At another moment, there is a horrific mudslide and Francis is there with his brothers helping with the rescue efforts. The film does not draw any attention to the cloistered aspect of Clare's life, though she spent most of her subsequent life in a cloister.

Many have wondered whether Francis ever had any contact with his parents after his renunciation of his earthly inheritance. Particularly touching is Cavani's treatment of this question. In a scene depicting his father's final illness, we see Francis return home to his father's bedside.

To sum up, the intention in this study has been discussion of film *per se*. The personal lives and beliefs of the directors have not been the focus, but rather the representations of and about Francis of Assisi in Italian cinema. The films examined here have become part of the international canon and are viewed around the world.

The films of Rossellini and Pasolini are episodic. These two films are constructed via a fragmented chronology. Both films are poetic, using imagery, dialogue, metonym, and metaphor. Their fragmentation or discontinuous story-line accentuates their unconventional and poetic composition. Both directors espouse didactic agendas that explore specific truths through short-storied situations that are not sequentially connected. The films of Zeffirelli and Cavani follow a linear chronology that explores the life of Francis according to its timeline, albeit with much imagination and many fictional elements included. These latter two films are in color, while those of Rossellini and Pasolini are in black and white.

These films, made at different moments in time during the second half of the twentieth century, by men and women of his native land, present human and individual visions of Francis that are diverse and often invested with the director's understanding or political agenda. Notwithstanding, essentially transmitted is the legacy of "il Poverello" ("the little poor one") whose love of Jesus Christ and service to others cannot be denied.

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## “MANIFESTO”: MANIFESTING THE IDEOLOGY OF WENDELL BERRY

LAUREN E. TYRRELL\*

It's a Friday morning in New York City. Thousands of people pack the streets, sporting the latest fashions, chattering on cellular devices, and steering gas-guzzling vehicles through the crowded avenues. They are so engaged with their own concerns that they fail to hear the persistent shouts from a man dwelling in every library and bookshop they pass: “So friends, every day do something/that won't compute. Love the Lord./Love the world. Work for nothing” (Berry 12-14).

These advisories come from “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front,” a poem by contemporary poet, essayist, and novelist Wendell Berry. Berry, a subsistence farmer living in northeastern Kentucky, has written over twenty non-fiction works, seventeen novels and collections of short stories, and over two dozen volumes of poetry. “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front,” a touchstone poem in Berry's extensive writings, manages in fifty-seven lines to encompass not only several of the major themes prevalent throughout his writings but also the ideology of Wendell Berry himself. These themes crop up not only in “Manifesto” but in other works by Berry as well; the universality and frequency of these themes in his body of work evince them as significant components of this prodigious writer's ideology.

Central to “Manifesto” is its speaker, the “Mad Farmer,” who serves as a spokesperson for his creator. Berry himself describes this persona, who has starred in ten of his poems, as “the voice of a force in the world and in ourselves that our current civilization has been put together to deny...The mad farmer is full of celebration and he's full of the praise of fertility and rutting and loving and dancing and singing” (Williamson 16). Indeed, these words depict a man joyous in his refusal to conform; they depict a man like Wendell Berry, who chose to abandon a prosperous urban life to subsist on a small Kentucky farm and who now rejoices in his choice, publicizing the fulfillment he has found there. Considering this strong parallel, the Mad Farmer is not just a Berry's character but Berry's own voice as well.

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The Mad Farmer certainly fulfills his role in the context of “Manifesto”; throughout the piece, Berry, through this “mad” spokesman, encourages readers to reject corporate demands, such as, in the opening lines, “lov[ing] the quick profit, the annual raise,/vacation with pay” and “want[ing] more of everything ready-made” (1-3). The Mad Farmer recommends instead doing things “that won’t compute” (13) – for example, planting sequoias, laughing, and savoring nature. These alternative suggestions evince the celebratory, worshipful speaker that Berry describes. Other suggestions that Berry proposes in “Manifesto,” however, depict a seemingly nonsensical side to the “Mad Farmer.” He advises readers to call rotted leaves profit, to listen to animal carcasses, and to distract pursuers with false trails. While the advice appears impractical, it actually promotes the very sensible action of recognizing the renewal that occurs unsolicited in nature and refusing to become another nameless member of society. The dual nature of these unconventional words of wisdom lead many readers and scholars to question exactly what type of “madness” the spokesperson farmer is exhibiting.

The dictionary offers several definitions for “mad,” each of which presents a potential understanding of Berry’s persona. The word can describe insanity, anger or outrage, foolishness or irrationality, excitement, enthusiasm, or merriness (“Mad”). This discrepancy among definitions parallels the worth of the Mad Farmer’s words, which fluctuates according to interpretation. Readers who take the advice at a literal level might deem listening to carcasses absurd, while those who recognize its figurative worth might consider reevaluating one’s place in nature sensible. In “Wendell Berry: The Mad Farmer and Wilderness,” David Gamble writes that “Berry has both practical and philosophical reasons for describing his poetic farmer in such unusual terms” (45). He points out that one of Berry’s predominant themes is emulating nature in its “self-renewing, self-sustaining health” (45). Therefore, the contrast between interpretations of madness exhibits the contrast between Berry’s farming ideology – imitating nature – and that of other farmers – producing as much as possible to earn as much as possible. The latter view the Mad Farmer as angrily deranged, while Berry views him as enthusiastically merry. And, because the Mad Farmer is a spokesman for Berry himself, Berry encapsulates in this one short word both the world’s and his own perception of himself.

These dual interpretations of madness relate to the poem’s label as a “Manifesto” and “Liberation Front.” The word “manifesto” connotes powerful meanings. Literally defined as “a public declaration of intentions, opinions, objectives, or motives” (“Manifesto”), it also calls to mind prominent documents such as *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Fascist Manifesto*, *The Southern Manifesto*,

and *The SCUM Manifesto*. Like “manifesto,” the words “liberation front” carry implicit meanings. Paraphrasing the dictionary definition, “liberation front” could be understood as a coalition or movement to achieve some type of equality or freedom (“liberation,” “front”). However, drawing on influences such as the Women’s Liberation Front, the Gay Liberation Front, and the Animal Liberation Front, the phrase implies a movement that is direct, extreme, usually rebellious, and responding to a history of past segregation or inequality. By employing terms like “manifesto” and “liberation front” that are so entrenched in drastic anti-establishment movements, Berry casts “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer’s Liberation Front” in a similarly radical light.

Thus, in “Manifesto,” Berry encapsulates the many connotations and denotations of the title’s words to imply that the poem that follows is a summary of the beliefs and demands of a radical, self-declared madman who hopes to inspire an ideological catharsis in the minds of his readers. Before even delving into the poem, readers enter with expectations of hearing wild proposals and leftist philosophy; the context of the poem established by its title dictates how most readers will interpret the Mad Farmer’s advice. Though Gamble says that, “Berry’s mad farmer boldly states the essentials of a new agriculture which defies the conventions and platitudes of agribusiness” (41), he overlooks the calm and articulate manner in which the Mad Farmer does so. Yet the readers, aroused by the title, won’t see his words as the simple, straightforward advice that forms the basis of this “new agriculture,” but rather, as the impassioned doctrines of a hotheaded farmer. This discrepancy between expectations and their fulfillment echoes that of the Farmer’s advice that seems preposterous but is actually sensible, furthering Berry’s goal of confounding and recasting the reader’s mindset.

Moving past the title of the poem, readers dive into an array of varying tones from the Mad Farmer, including mocking, advisory, and neighborly. The first, derisive tone is evident in the opening four lines as Berry’s spokesman commands readers to embrace the modern conveniences and instant gratification that predominate in the corporation-ruled world. The final imperative in this tone, “Be afraid/to know your neighbors and to die” (3-4), contrasts the pleasant aspects of the easy life just described, pinpointing that these lines criticize rather than endorse such a lifestyle. Here, the Mad Farmer switches to dispensing his caveats, citing the negative consequences of surrendering to the corporate voice, such as becoming marked, controlled, anonymous, and exploited. Having thus anguished the reader, the Farmer switches tactics again, employing a neighborly tone and addressing his audience as his “friends” (12). This time, most of the commands are pleasant and appealing in their liberating quality. For example, he urges that people “go with

[their] love to the fields./Lie easy in the shade. Rest your head/in her lap” (46-48). However, the Mad Farmer in this tone likewise addresses tougher lifestyle changes, such as “expect[ing] the end of the world” (37). Each of these three disparate tones invokes its own set of feelings within the reader. The mocking one encourages self-recognition and self-consciousness; the second, fear; and the third, duty and hopefulness. Berry unites them without separation in the poem in order to produce a continuous flow of each, a method that targets readers as an inherent part of the problem and, more importantly, as an essential component of the solution.

In addition to containing these various tones, “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front” likewise contains several important and interrelated themes that are significant not only in the context of this poem but also, based on their presence throughout Berry’s writings, his personal ideology. These themes include: profit and progress as an obstacle to happiness, conservation as a necessity for future generations, and knowledge as a barrier to wisdom.

The first theme, profit and progress as an obstacle to happiness, is evident throughout “Manifesto.” The Mad Farmer warns that when the corporate identity “wants you to buy something/they will call you” (9-10). He emphasizes that this type of progress borne of the “quick profit” and “annual raise” (1) result not in happiness but in becoming another nameless face in the corporate system. Through his spokesman, Berry suggests several antidotes to this dangerous type of control. He recommends planting trees as an “invest[ment] in the millennium” (24) and commands readers to, “Say that the leaves are harvested when they have rotted into the mold./Call that profit” (28-29). Clearly, Berry seeks to redefine his audience’s understanding of profit and progress from fiscal terms to ones more associated with nature. In “*The Country of Marriage: Wendell Berry’s Personal Political Vision*,” Daniel Cornell likewise identifies Berry’s belief that “the notions of investment and profit” should not correlate to a “false cash value,” but rather, to “organic significance” (65). This change in worldview, Cornell feels, would lead people to rethink how they approach problems (65). This predominant theme encourages readers to reevaluate the extent to which they adhere to materialist and industrialist values, reminding them of the ultimate worthlessness of possessions and money compared to the true worthiness of nature’s self-renewal.

Berry expresses this same theme in much of his work, worrying that corporation-endorsed progress is substituting for meaningful growth and development and cheating people of the ultimate satisfaction of being the best they can be. For example, in his Sabbath poem “Six days of work are spent,” Berry writes:

In hopeless fret and fuss,  
In rage at worldly plight  
Creation is defied,  
All order is unpropped,  
All light and singing stopped. (22-26)

In these lines, Berry identifies that people's fixation on accumulating more knowledge, wealth, and possessions ultimately represents their frustration with their "worldly plight" (23). Furthermore, in all the ado to forget or fight against this plight, they are destroying the natural world, which in Berry's eyes is the true source of happiness, expressed metaphorically by the "light and singing" (26). Berry echoes this theme in a more recent poem, "Some Further Words," by saying:

Science  
at the bidding of corporations  
is knowledge reduced to merchandise;  
it is a whoredom of the mind,  
and so is the art that calls this "progress." (27-31)

This passage condemns corporate control of knowledge. Berry labels it a form of prostitution, an apt metaphor as people sell their reasoning to corporations in exchange for worldly goods. Berry disagrees with the label "progress" for these types of transactions, which relates to his demands in "Manifesto" to term not new technology and increased wealth but seeds and humus instead as "progress."

The theme of stewardship proves a frequent subject in Berry's essays as well as in his poetry. For example, in "The Landscaping of Hell: Strip-Mine Morality in East Kentucky," Berry discusses the behavior of a coal company in his home state. The company, seeking to strip mine a mountainside, refused to adhere to any regulations that would impede its profit (14). "The land destroyed by strip mining is destroyed forever;" Berry writes, "it will never again be what it was; it will never be what it would have become if let alone" (20). The company's actions, therefore, while perhaps productive in terms of fiscal profit, rape the local landscape, which no amount of money can replace or restore. This lust for profit and progress results in the short-lived happiness of gaining them as well as the eternal unhappiness of having obliterated something irreplaceable.

This theme's repeated appearance throughout Wendell Berry's various genres of writing proves that this esteemed writer embraces it not only as a discourse topic but also as a major facet of his ideology. Berry expresses why he feels so strongly about unraveling people's misconceptions of progress in a recent interview with

Rose Marie Berger of *Sojourners*. He worries that a corporation-based understanding of development substitutes for true personal growth and fulfillment, thus cheating people of the ultimate satisfaction of leading fulfilling lives. “[The myth of progress] takes people’s minds off the important things,” Berry said. “It becomes, at its worst, a kind of determinism: all we have to do is just passively go along and things will get better and better, and we’ll be happier and happier” (Berger 174). Considering the downhill slope to which such mythical understandings inevitably lead people, the Mad Farmer of “Manifesto” serves as a welcome voice of warning to the world with his prodigious instructions to invest in nature’s self-rejuvenation.

Another theme present in Berry’s “Manifesto” is conservation as a necessity for future generations. Berry, via the Mad Farmer, issues the following advice: “Say that your main crop is the forest/that you did not plant,/that you will not live to harvest” (25-27). Here, Berry exhibits his belief in sustaining something that will stretch beyond a person’s time on earth and therefore brush shoulders with eternity. The Mad Farmer encourages his readers to “put [their] faith in the two inches of humus/that will build under the trees/every thousand years” (31-33), an image that recognizes the self-renewing aspects of nature that occur at perhaps a slower rate than our instant-gratification society is accustomed to. Additionally, he tells readers to question if their actions will upset someone bringing new life to the world, asking, “Will this disturb the sleep/of a woman near to giving birth?” (44-45). This interrogation targets readers, forcing them to consider the net destruction they are causing and how it will affect the next generation. The theme demonstrated in these lines charges readers to examine the consequences of their actions, strongly relating to the previous theme, as people’s obsession with material progress and fiscal profit increases the already enormous need for conservation.

Present in this theme of stewardship is some of the most prevalent and most symbolic language in Berry’s writing: the representation of hope contained within a seed. In his essay “Wendell Berry, Seeds of Hope, and the Survival of Creation,” Harold K. Bush, Jr. explains, “Seeds are also reminders of the past, in that they must by definition have antecedents, and are potentially artifacts of the future, in that they contain much more than can be readily observed” (304). The trees produced from these seeds, then, stand as living testimony to the power of this hope (308). This theory adds another layer of meaning to the Mad Farmer’s urges to “plant sequoias” (24), a phrase that in its literal sense means both to plant a tree and to place one’s foot in the future. Bush also points out that seeds are a sign of resurrection, as a seed must die in order to produce the sapling that will become, one day, a mighty tree (305). Therefore, one can also glean added meaning from Berry’s

closing words, "Practice resurrection" (57). While this mission seems impossible for humans, it becomes, with this understanding, a project as plain as sowing seeds. Considering Bush's interpretation, conservation bears spiritual significance as well as material. People must preserve the environment because it is their religious and moral duty to sustain God's creation for future generations.

"Manifesto" is far from unique in conveying this critical theme; Berry also incorporates it into much of his other writings. In a poem entitled "The Future," he confronts the belief that the next generation will live in a better world than the present one, calling such adages "blasphemy" (3). Berry then urges readers, "*Do something!*" (8), an imperative he follows with a list of caretaking duties, such as cutting weeds and collecting trash. This poem, like "Manifesto," targets readers as a responsible party in maintaining the earth. Likewise, in the Sabbath poem "The seed is in the ground," he writes, "The seed is in the ground./Now may we rest in hope/While darkness does its work" (1-3). With Bush's symbolic interpretation in mind, these lines push taking action in the present in order to enact changes for the future. Both of these poems seek to increase the conscientiousness of Berry's readers as stewards of the world who must participate actively in its maintenance. While doing so does not guarantee a brighter future, these actions do give, as the latter poem suggests, hope.

Many of Berry's essays also encompass the theme of stewardship. In "The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture," he says that nature "must stand at the apex of the conservation effort" because it remains the source of our biological and cultural roots (29). "We need places in reach of every community where children can imagine the prehistoric and the beginning of history: the unknown, the trackless, the first comers," he says (29-30). With this understanding, conservation is necessary as more than just the home of future generations; it is also essential to preserving humanity's origins. Nature represents the world before people wreaked havoc in it, and Berry feels that future generations should be made aware of this not through stories and pictures but through the real, untarnished natural world itself.

This theme also appears in "The Loss of the Future," an essay in which Berry focuses on how people have ignored the responsibilities inherent in power. He writes that "we are still an exceedingly destructive people, and our destructions are still carried out, as they have been from the beginning, on the assumption that the earth is inexhaustible" (47). Though nature is self-renewing, it cannot replenish itself at the rate that humans are obliterating it. Humans hold the earth in their hands, a point which Berry impresses upon the reader while describing how people should treat this incredible responsibility. "But the ideal community would include not just the living; it would include the unborn," he says. "It would be aware, with a

clarity and concern which the best of us have hardly imagined, that the living cannot think or speak or act without changing the lives of those who will live after them” (64). Here, Berry clarifies the direct correlation between people’s actions today and the quality of life for people tomorrow, driving home the point that conservation is not a lofty ideal but a dire necessity to ensure the survival of the human race.

The theme’s presence in these essays and poems as well as in many others of Berry’s extensive writings evinces it as a component of his very ideology. He explains its significance in his life in an interview with Jordan Fisher Smith of *Orion*. “The most suggestive and comprehensive understanding of the world is that it’s God’s property, but of course we could understand it also as belonging to our children and their children and their children,” he said (Smith 95-96). These words demonstrate Berry’s commitment to sustaining the welfare of the planet beyond this generation and into the future. Berry also expresses his fear of Americans’ lack of stewardship in an interview with Carl Polsgrove and Scott Russell Sanders of *The Progressive*. People, he says, are choosing “affluence, economic growth, [and] unrestrained economic behavior” over the welfare of the environment, a decision that produces problems with no easy solutions (Polsgrove, Sanders 27-28). This interview snippet exhibits Berry’s fierce fixation on stewardship and the environment. He promotes changes that, though difficult, will conserve the environment for future generations; the Mad Farmer aids Berry in bringing forth these changes, encouraging readers to act as responsible stewards of the earth, or, as he suggests in “Manifesto,” practitioners of resurrection.

In addition to these themes of profit and progress and of stewardship, “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front” also incorporates the theme of knowledge as a barrier to wisdom. “Give your approval to all you cannot/understand,” the Mad Farmer urges. “Praise ignorance, for what man/has not encountered he has not destroyed” (20-22). In these lines, Berry, through his spokesperson, points out that people, upon acquiring new information, seek to conquer it rather than accept their mortal limitations; the problem, Berry suggests, is that often their knowledge is limited, so the ways in which they seek to conquer prove harmful. The Mad Farmer later adds, “Swear allegiance/to what is highest your thoughts” (48-49), a command that endorses emotional thinking. Berry proposes here that people should heed their instincts in order to identify any qualms that indicate a moral compromise as well as any affirmations that indicate love or passion for someone or something. By “swear[ing] allegiance” to these inklings, people will not make choices for the wrong reasons; they will recognize the value, for example, of the natural landscape and not destroy it for financial profit. This theme relates closely

to the aforementioned two, as oftentimes people forget their role as stewards in an effort to achieve as much material progress as possible. When they discover a venue for increased profit, they tend to plunge into the situation without regard to what natural resources they harm.

Like the previous themes, this one also recurs throughout Berry's writings. In fact, in "The Mad Farmer Manifesto: The First Amendment," a later addition to "Manifesto," Berry writes that he will not deal with "*ignorant money*" (15) because it stems from "streets of absence,/stranding the pasture trees/in the deserted language of banks" (18-20). These lines indicate Berry's concern for the toll nature is paying due to people's lack of understanding of how closely their actions and the state of the world correlate. Additionally, in "Original Sin," Berry suggests that people have an inborn badness that is "causing pain/to ourselves, to others, to the world, to God/by ignorance, by knowledge" (6-8). Here, Berry makes two important connections. First, he links ignorance to knowledge as dual perpetrators; this connection fosters an understanding that knowing something can be as dangerous as not knowing. Second, Berry labels these abstractions as concrete causes of pain to all. This theme, in questioning the benefits of knowledge, likewise forces readers to question to whose knowledge they subscribe and the consequences of such a subscription.

Berry broaches this theme in his essays as well. One hotspot for the subject is "The Way of Ignorance," in which this attentive writer warns of people's increasing hubris and their lack of recognition of exactly how much they do not know. He targets the corporate mind, about which he says that, for all its "factual knowledge," it is completely ignorant of its limitations (59). Drawing from T.S. Eliot, Berry describes a "way of ignorance," which is a way in which humans value all that they do not know or cannot expect, finding wonder in everything (66-67). In these essays, Berry emphasizes that knowledge grants people a sense of power and control; however, without ignorance, this authority will have no boundaries. The truly wise path is that on which people recognize their ignorance as humans, leading them to consider that their actions have some effects they cannot comprehend but that happen just the same.

This theme, present in "Manifesto" and throughout Berry's writing, forms another crucial part of Berry's ideology. As he discussed with Vince Pennington of *The Kentucky Review*, people's overconfidence in the extent of their knowledge proves a major problem in American society:

...if we were operating strictly according to the capacities of consciousness, we wouldn't amount to very much... We just don't know how to live, as a people, with good fortune or misfortune or blessedness or chance. We don't know how to deal

with mystery; we don't know how to deal with ignorance. All we want to do is draw a little circle around what we are conscious of and try to control that—and, of course, the results are disastrous. (39)

What Berry stresses here is that, though people's knowledge gives them the feeling of safety, it ultimately hurts them because it blinds their perception of what they do not and cannot know. Berry uses his Mad Farmer in "Manifesto" as well as his speaker in other works to force people to confront their lack of knowledge and the consequences of their failure to recognize it, or, to paraphrase the words of the touchstone poem itself, to become wise by advocating ignorance and embracing their "nighest" (48) thoughts.

Progress and profit, stewardship, and true wisdom: these three major themes of Berry's "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front" bear significance not only within the context of this poem but also within the context of its writer's ideology, as exhibited through their universality in many of his writings. Furthermore, as Berry himself expresses, these themes encompass not airy, hypothetical subjects but rather, moral topics with practical dimensions. The themes affect how people view their world in terms of what they expect of it, how they take care of it, and how much they know – and do not know – about it. Indeed, "Manifesto" manifests the ideology that incorporates these themes, using it as a touchstone piece amongst Berry's extensive writings. Now, above the persistent roar of technological white noise, above the shouts and traffic of urban life, above the unending stream of advertisements for something more that bombard people's daily lives, they hear the powerful voice of Wendell Berry, the Mad Farmer himself. One question remains: will they listen?

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## THE STORY OF W & DH

CLARA K. MAGLIOLA\*

--for La

**T**hey met at a place called the Hallows. DH was drawn in by the sweet sound of laughter tangled with chords of low music and playful voices. Seven silhouettes cast their form against the retiring sun, undulating in and out of the halo surrounding the blue column of smoke reaching high into the sky above the trees. DH had walked by this scene many times before and would, after this night, as a matter of calming custom and eager appetite, be among these celebrants in the many months to follow. DH's approach that first time was met with a palpable ambivalence as some stopped like frightened rabbits and others like bulls marking their targets. When they caught the expression on DH's face, however, and the gentle but clear covetousness it displayed, they dropped their frozen poses and continued on as though the stranger were merely a curious cat invited by the warmth of the fire, the possibility of some scraps of fallen meat, and the absent-minded attention of some stroking anonymous hands. DH lowered down on a blanket next to the only sitting figure among them and watched the friends play, drink, smoke, and converse in their foreign tongue.

They both sat in silence amused by the game being played before them. DH became infected by the levity and strangeness of it all, whilst unable to understand the general contours of its logic. When her companion laughed, she laughed. As the participants chanted in phrase and song, and when certain commands were issued and the formation of the players changed, and as each jostled for the lead position, which could only be kept if the response elicited satisfied nods instead of mocking, kind-hearted laughter, DH was gradually able to learn all the players' names. It was only at the end of the night, some four hours later, by which time the others had long moved on to more intimate conversations across the fire or taken off in twos and threes into the forest returning with more firewood, or gone to take

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in moonbeams on a distant precipice, that DH learned that it was W who had been stroking her hair all these hours as though there were never a time he hadn't.

DH returned the next night, and the next, to lie in W's lap under the cover of stars, and watch him move with such comfort and confidence in the web of his friends. English was only ever spoken with and for her, but DH didn't mind being left out of the general conversation as it worked to arrange their voices into one beautiful piece of music for her ears, and made her feel like an honored guest. W was her interpreter and lover in roles that were inseparable from one another.

When the weather began to change, and the nightly gatherings were moved to the dry and cozy interiors of some of the friends' homes, DH naturally followed. But the replacement of the intoxicating moonshine and the clean open air with the thick unctuous presence of parents, regardless of how intermittent their appearance, suffocated DH. The smiling mouths betrayed by cold scrutinizing eyes fleetingly fixed upon her, the absolute grace with which they moved in the domestic proprietary universe they had carved for themselves and their families, the muffled persistent sound of their spectral steps, the clang of busy preparations in the kitchen, and the purity of their unabashed foreign talk and laughter covered DH in a gummy, utterly bitter self-consciousness and an unidentified but agreed-upon guilt.

In the short space of those wet, chilly months, DH's attendance swiftly fell away. And when the warm nights reinstated themselves, and the Hallows became once again inhabited, she was missed by no one—except occasionally by W, who thought of her whenever he saw a hungry, pretty cat.

*“Diamond Heart, you are much more than  
someone to be loved!”*

—Tibetan Buddhist inscription found on a  
wall in New York City

*“. . . Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,  
O let them be left, wildness and wet;  
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.”*

—Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., “Inversnaid”

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF NOMINEES FOR NATIONAL OFFICE**

(A mail-in ballot will be found between pages 92 and 93.)

### **DR. JUNE-ANN GREELEY SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY, CT**

Dr. June-Ann Greeley, Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, CT, is seeking a three-year term on the Executive Committee. She is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies and the Director of the Middle Eastern Studies Program. Until this past spring, she was also the director of CCTEC, the Center for Catholic Thought, Ethics and Culture at SHU. Trained as a medievalist, her scholarship focuses on a few primary topics: medieval theology of the Carolingian and Early Medieval period; women in Christianity, specifically medieval women mystics and theologians; the emergence of Islam in the medieval West and the relationship between Christian mystical theology and Sufism; and theological anthropology. She is currently at work on two contracted books, one on an 8th-century bishop and poet, another on the “spiritual mothers” of medieval Christianity. She has been the advisor to SHU’s DES chapter (Delta Gamma) since 2004.



### **DR. CHRISTOPHER N. LORENTZ THOMAS MORE COLLEGE, KY**

Dr. Chris Lorentz, Professor of Biology, Thomas More College, was recently elected to his second term on the Executive Committee and has agreed to stand for election to the vice presidency of the Executive Committee, assuming the presidency in two years. He has a B.A. in Biology from Columbia University and a Ph.D. from Kent State University in Systematic and Evolutionary Biology. An Outstanding Teacher of the Year, he regularly takes students to Australia to study

the natural history of rain forests and coral reefs, and has developed workshops for middle school science teachers and science camps for grade school children. Dr. Lorentz has served as DES moderator at Thomas More. He also is the Director of the Center for Ohio River Research and Education at the college's Biology Field Station, and he works with the Newport Aquarium in the collection and care of freshwater specimens. In addition, he volunteers as adjunct curator of fishes at the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History. He is active and a leader in a number of professional organizations and societies. He has agreed to stand for another term in order to provide stability and continuity during this time of transition for DES.



## **NOMINATIONS FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: AN INVITATION**

Members are invited to submit nominations for the Executive Committee of Delta Epsilon Sigma. Each nomination (including curriculum vitae) should be received by the National Secretary-Treasurer by December 1 in order to be considered at the Annual Meeting for inclusion in the list of candidates to be published in Fall 2010.



## **WINNER OF THE NATIONAL 2009 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AWARD**

The Delta Epsilon Sigma National Student Award has been granted to Barbara Perry of the Delta Pi Chapter at Neumann University (PA). This outstanding award is not frequently granted by the Society. Our congratulations go to this distinguished student.



## **DELTA EPSILON SIGMA SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS**

Delta Epsilon Sigma sponsors an annual scholarship and fellowship competition for its members. Junior-year members may apply for twelve Fitzgerald Scholarships at \$1,000 each, to be applied toward tuition costs for their senior year. Senior-year members may apply for twelve Fitzgerald Fellowships at \$1,000 each, to be applied toward tuition costs for first-year graduate work. These scholarships and fellowships are named after the founder and first Secretary-Treasurer of DES, Most Rev. Edward A. Fitzgerald of Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa. The awards will be made available on a competitive basis to students who have been initiated into the society and who have also been nominated by their chapters for the competition. Applications may be obtained from the Office of the National Secretary-Treasurer.



## THE UNDERGRADUATE COMPETITION IN CREATIVE AND SCHOLARLY WRITING

Delta Epsilon Sigma sponsors an annual writing contest open to any undergraduate (member or non-member) in an institution which has a chapter of the society. Manuscripts may be submitted in any of four categories: (a) poetry, (b) short fiction, (c) non-fiction prose, and (d) scholarly research. There will be a first prize of five hundred dollars and a second prize of two hundred fifty dollars in each of the four categories. No award may be made in a given category if the committee does not judge any submission to be of sufficient merit.

The first phase of the competition is to be conducted by local chapters, each of which is encouraged to sponsor its own contest. A chapter may forward to the national competition only one entry in each category. Editorial comment and advice by a faculty mentor is appropriate as an aid preparatory to student revision, so long as all writing is done by the student.

Prose manuscripts should be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, 1,500-5,000 words in length. Scholarly papers should attach an abstract, should include primary research, and should present some original insight. Documentation should follow one of the established scholarly methods such as MLA (old or new) or APA. A long poem should be submitted singly; shorter lyrics may be submitted singly or in groups of two or three. Moderators should send all entries to the National Secretary-Treasurer by December 1.

Final judging and the announcement of the result will take place not later than May 1st of the following year. Winners will be notified through the office of the local chapter moderator.



## **THE DELTA EPSILON SIGMA DISTINGUISHED LECTURERS PROGRAM**

Delta Epsilon Sigma offers each year an award of one thousand dollars for a speaker at a major meeting sponsored or co-sponsored by a chapter of Delta Epsilon Sigma or by a Catholic professional society. Application for this award must be filed with the National Secretary-Treasurer one year in advance.

The society also offers awards to help subsidize lectures sponsored by local DES chapters. An application for one of these must be filed with the National Secretary-Treasurer thirty days in advance; the maximum award will be two hundred dollars.



## **THE DELTA EPSILON SIGMA WEB PAGE**

The Delta Epsilon Sigma Web page is available at <http://www.deltaepsilonsigma.org>. Application forms and announcements of DES programs are available there.



## THE DELTA EPSILON SIGMA NATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AWARD

Delta Epsilon Sigma has a national award to be presented to outstanding students who are members of the society and are completing their undergraduate program. It is a means by which a chapter can bring national attention to its most distinguished graduates.

The National Office has a distinctive gold and bronze medallion which it will provide without cost to the recipient's chapter for appropriate presentation. Names of recipients will be published in the *Delta Epsilon Sigma Journal*. Qualifications for the award include the following:

1. Membership in Delta Epsilon Sigma.
2. An overall Grade Point Average of 3.9–4.00 on all work taken as an undergraduate.
3. Further evidence of high scholarship:
  - a) a grade of "A" or with the highest level of distinction on an approved undergraduate thesis or its equivalent in the major field,
  - or
  - b) scores at the 90th percentile or better on a nationally recognized test (e.g., GRE, LSAT, GMAT, MCAT).
4. Endorsements by the chapter advisor, the department chair or mentor, and the chief academic officer.
5. Nominations must be made no later than six (6) months after the granting of the undergraduate degree.



# Delta Epsilon Sigma Official Jewelry

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# THE DES NATIONAL SCHOLASTIC HONOR SOCIETY EMBLEM



The emblem of DES contains the motto, the name, the symbols, and the founding date of the society. Delta Epsilon Sigma is an abbreviation constructed from the initial Greek letters of the words in the motto, *Dei Epitattein Sophon*. Drawn from Aristotle and much used by medieval Catholic philosophers, the phrase is taken to mean: “It is the mission of a wise person to put order” into knowledge.

The Society’s Ritual for Induction explains that a wise person is one “who discriminates between the true and the false, who appraises things at their proper worth, and who then can use this knowledge, along with the humility born of it, to go forward to accept the responsibilities and obligations which this ability imposes.”

Thus the three words on the *Journal’s* cover, Wisdom · Leadership · Service, point to the challenges as well as the responsibilities associated with the DES motto. The emblem prominently figures the *Chi Rho* symbol (the first two Greek letters of the word Christ), and the flaming lamp of wisdom shining forth the light of Truth.

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