

Introduction

Angela Andersen & Eve Millar

2003

Illumine: Journal of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society

UVic Libraries ePublishing Services

© 2003 Andersen & Millar. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons license CC BY-NC 4.0:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Original citation:

Andersen, A., and E. Millar. (2003). Introduction. *Illumine*, 2(1), 1-2.

<https://doi.org/10.18357/illumine2120031566>

Downloaded from UVicSpace Research & Learning Repository

dspace.library.uvic.ca



University
of Victoria

Libraries

Introduction

The 2003 issue of *Illumine* marks the second annual publication of the interdisciplinary journal of the Graduate Student Association of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria. It is with excitement that we, the editors, present this periodical in what we hope is now part of a continuing tradition. *Illumine* offers graduate students the opportunity to publish work that examines the diverse ways in which religion interfaces with society and, as several of the articles in this issue suggest, societal practices influence religious traditions.

It has become somewhat of a trend in our increasingly multicultural and globally-connected communities to speak of religion and its political, historic, artistic, philosophical and scientific manifestations in broad and non-specific terms. Yet, if we are truly to understand how religion functions in society, how religion and society attract, repel and intersect with each other, then it is of the utmost importance that we take seriously our obligation to examine specific examples of this interface and to reflect upon how many people live a life that does not merely adopt religious trappings on a periodic basis, but which gives each essential aspect of thought, action and consequence a spiritual or a religious interpretation. How do people incorporate religious practice into their lives? How do religion and spirituality become active rather than passive components in shaping a sense of responsibility to self, community, the environment, art, history, health, commemoration, and even academic pursuits?

This issue contains seven works by graduate students studying in British Columbia. They come from a variety of backgrounds, with a diverse set of lived experiences. Each of the authors has, in his or her own way, explored the broad theme of “studies in religion and society.” It is perhaps not a coincidence that all of them have addressed, in some form, the marking of belief with a ritual act or a mnemonic device in a material form. Religion, whether in a formal, organised setting or in intimate, personal practice, has always provided a framework for the recognition of the passage of time, of important events and life cycles, of remembering tragedy and of finding ways to heal.

The first article, a thought-provoking piece entitled ‘The Struggle for Protestant Identity in Seventeenth Century England: ‘Catholic’ Pictures and Protestant Buyers’ by Seanine Warrington, looks

at art auction house sales of late seventeenth-century London. In an environment of Puritanical, Protestant protest against religious imagery, paintings of Biblical subject matter, a seemingly ‘Catholic’ commodity, were being bought and sold with great frequency, to be placed in private homes. Warrington examines this phenomenon, the political, religious and aesthetic context for the production of religious iconography, and how the sale and purchase of these paintings by a dissenting population informed the religious and political beliefs of the people of England.

‘From Christianity in China to Chinese Christianity: Missing History Since 1583 and Recent Academic Debates in English’ by Hua Li is a critical look at the place of Christianity in China since the sixteenth century. By reviewing the perspectives of several authors and contrasting their commentary with historic events and outcomes, Li establishes three phases for the Christian faith in its Chinese form: accommodation, inculturation and indigenisation. His contemplation of the process of introducing a new religion to a land with ancient cultural and religious patterns is filled with personal insights while presenting a specific example of how religion can take on malleable qualities in a new setting.

Monika Dix provides fascinating and original research in ‘The *Mukaekō* Ritual at Taimadera: A Living Tradition of Medieval Japanese Pure Land Buddhism.’ Informed by her personal experience of Buddhism in Japan, Dix explains the process of the *Mukaekō* Ritual, currently enacted at Taimadera, in vivid detail. She then traces the unique iconographic and processional details of the ritual to antecedents in Buddhist art, and medieval interpretations of Japanese Buddhism and the tradition of Amida’s Pure Land. The interaction between art, history and belief merge in ritual, which subsequently exerts influence of its own.

‘The Tree on White Mountain: On Ritual, Spirit and Place’ is a short work that delves into the personal experiences of author Alison Pryer. At the urging of the *Illumine* Editorial Board, Pryer has taken her academic interest in rituals and their role as a “holistic form of communication” and shaped them into a personal reflection on the grief, loss and eventual return to balance she experienced following the death of her mother. With sensitivity and honesty, she shares the emotional process of finding

solace and strength through connecting with spirit and place on a Japanese mountain.

In a similar vein, Annick de Witt looks at the role of the natural world in humanity's understanding of the spiritual in 'Our Spiritual Nature: An Exploration into Nature Experiences, Spirituality and Environmental Responsibility.' Seeking to re-define the often vague notion of "the spiritual," de Witt has undertaken a series of interviews with environmentally active residents in the Victoria region in British Columbia to determine how their experiences of nature inform their spirituality. Wrestling with challenging issues of extracting quantifiable data from what has formerly been regarded as ephemeral subject matter, she leads readers through a series of themes that emerge in her research findings. De Witt poses important questions about our sense of self, our values, and our sense of environmental responsibility as they relate to our experiences of nature.

The fifth article in the journal, 'After Ground Zero: Problems of Memory and Memorialisation' is a polemic on the issue of creating a memorial in New York City for the former site of the World Trade Center towers. Geoff Carr undertakes the emotionally charged task of examining proposals for the memorial to be built at this location and critiques the concept that a physical, constructed memorial can embody universal meaning. Noting that the religious, spiritual and symbolic layers of meaning at Ground Zero cannot possibly be captured by any design team, regardless of the demographic representatives included (or forgotten) therein, Carr suggests that a return to the anti-monument movement of Pierre Nora would have been the appropriate approach to this sacred space.

Craig Vance's work 'Walter Rauschenbusch and Charles Gore: Divergent Paths Towards a Christian Social Ethic' is the final piece in the 2003 edition of *Illumine*. Vance, noting the seeming absence of the practice of social justice rooted in the Christian theological tradition today, turns to the works of Walter Rauschenbusch and Charles Gore for his discussion of "Sacramental Socialism." Through his examination, Vance seeks a form of social action that is reflective as well as active, with a personal responsiveness based on the Christian understanding of the Incarnation of God in Christ.

These writers have engaged their subject matter in personal ways, in many instances combining their own belief systems with the methodologies they apply to their academic work. This active approach to the study of religion and spirituality has resulted in work that expresses the dynamic aspects of religion

in daily life. As editors, we saw these qualities in each piece. Sometimes we agreed, sometimes we had doubts and sometimes we outright disagreed with the perspectives offered, but in all instances we were inspired to ponder and ask questions about our own research and our own understanding of religion and spirituality acting within society. We took this to be the defining characteristic of the pieces we wished to include in the journal.

We would like to thank all of the contributors for their dedication and perseverance through a lengthy series of revisions. We also extend our appreciation to those students whose work was submitted but not published. The continued interest and enthusiasm from the staff, friends and fellows of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, as well as the financial support of the Centre, have been invaluable, and the help of Moira Hill and Susan Karim is always given with gracious generosity. To the Managing Editor of the 2002 edition of *Illumine*, Andrew Wender, we are grateful for your guidance and suggestions in passing on the *Illumine* project. Erin Ronse and Nancy Yakimoski, the brilliant, passionate and insightful members of the Editorial Board are worthy of laurels for the countless hours they contributed to this publication. Last but not least, thank you to the fantastic Connie Carter, who put the production details into place, and to Leslie Kenny, who helped us finish the job.

Angela Andersen and Eve Millar,
Illumine Managing Editors, 2003