

Globalizing the Rainbow Madonna Old Time Religion in the Present Age

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ON THE morning of 17 December 1996, a client at the Seminole Finance Corporation of Clearwater, Florida, noticed a strange phenomenon on the building's facade: large panes of reflective glass had become discolored, creating a three-story-high shape that bore a striking resemblance to images of the Virgin Mary. Iridescent shades of color formed a 'Rainbow Madonna' with a covered head slightly tilted to one side, eyes gazing downward toward the asphalt parking lot of the corporation. Within two hours of the sighting, this parking lot was filled with curious onlookers who had come from throughout Tampa Bay, armed with video cameras and rosary beads. Most had seen a brief story on the apparition aired on the local midday news. By early evening, traffic was stop-and-go on the six-lane highway along which the corporation is located, amid gas stations and strip-malls. Crowds overflowed on the road adjacent to the parking lot and news helicopters swarmed overhead, carrying cameras which broadcast the story on CNN and national network news. Over the course of the next few days, stories of the apparition ran in newspapers across the globe. The owner of the Seminole Finance Corporation granted interviews to reporters from Brazil and England and bank employees gave directions to pilgrims traveling from France and Australia. Meanwhile, in Cincinnati, Ohio, a visionary named Rita Ring announced that she was receiving messages from the Mary appearing in Clearwater. With the help of an international Catholic organization called the Shepherds of Christ, she began to publicize these messages.

Although the story of the apparition of 'Our Lady of Clearwater' is extraordinary in many ways, it is but one of the many recent sightings of

■ *Theory, Culture & Society* 2000 (SAGE, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi),
Vol. 17(4): 119–143
[0263-2764(200008)17:4;119–143:013705]

Mary worldwide. According to Pelikan (1996), more manifestations of Mary have been reported since 1980 than between 1830 and 1930, considered the 'great century of Marian apparitions'. Almost 50 apparitions have occurred since 1980, in places as diverse as the USA, Nicaragua, Brazil, Rwanda and Australia.

How are we to explain the proliferation of Marian apparitions throughout the world in an age that many have called postmodern? In this article, we argue that this phenomenon is not merely the result of *fin-de-millénaire* anxiety, nor is it just an impotent backlash against the extreme secularization and rationalization of today's society. As the case of Our Lady of Clearwater will show, in recent times Marian apparitions are part of a complex process involving 'the global creation of the local' (Featherstone and Lash, 1995: 4), whereby traditional local religious practices and discourses enter large-scale dynamics, including the Internet, TV and the Vatican's New Evangelization project.

Since the article focuses on a religious phenomenon with an essentially pre-modern core,¹ we begin with a discussion of the theory of secularization, the dominant modernist approach to religion and social change. Despite claims that with secularization 'old time' religious phenomena, such as the Marian apparitions, will eventually disappear or become marginal, pre-modern religious practices not only show enduring vitality but are gaining a great deal of visibility worldwide. In view of the secularization model's limitations, we offer our own reading of the apparition, drawing from theories of globalization and transnationalism. Our aim here will be to show how, with some caveats, globalization provides a more useful framework for understanding the key dynamics that accompany the apparition. Globalization, as Bauman (1998: 1) rightly complains, 'is on everybody's lips; a fad word turning into a shibboleth, a magic incantation, a pass-key meant to unlock the gates to all present and future mysteries'. We want to avoid this type of obfuscation by specifying through a case study some of the ways in which globalization is shaping religion. In the process, we begin to operationalize globalization theories, which so far have remained at macro-structural and institutional levels of analysis.

We continue with an exploration of the impact of the apparition at the local level, on the town of Clearwater and in the parish of St Theresa's, which is adjacent to the apparition site. As our focus is on how a local religious phenomenon gained global visibility, we will not offer a full ethnography of the site. Rather, we will only provide enough descriptive elements to illustrate the complex relation between the local and the global and the role religion plays in mediating this relation. The interpenetration of global and local processes has mixed, and even contradictory, consequences. On the one hand, the apparition in Clearwater is articulating a new transnational sacred space that challenges the provincial and static nature of the parish of St Theresa's. On the other, the changing ethnic composition of the parish – exemplified most dramatically by the growing presence of Mexican transmigrants – leads to the emergence and reinforcement of exclusionary and

hierarchical practices. In short, ‘globalization divides as much as it unites’ (Bauman, 1998: 2).

The article closes with some reflections on the study of religion and society in a globalizing setting. We argue for theories of religious change that transcend the totalizing and teleological bent of modernist approaches without falling into an uncritical celebration of fragmentation and hybridity.

Modernist Explanations

According to Wallis and Bruce (1992: 9) secularization ‘asserts that the social significance of religion diminishes in response to the operation of three salient features of modernization . . . namely (1) social differentiation, (2) societalization, and (3) rationalization’. Since the Reformation, religion’s central role in social life has decreased. With the advent of modernity, spheres of human action, such as politics, the arts and law, which were under the tutelage of religion in the overarching Catholic medieval world, have gained autonomy, generating their own rational foundations and rules. This process has been connected to the collapse of the feudal order built on small rural communities, which the Catholic world-view sanctioned, and the rise of cities with their large industrial centers. Within this new, highly differentiated context, the twilight of revelation as ground for legitimation and the ascendance of critical and scientific thought meant for some, like Marx, that religion was bound to disappear.

This reading of secularization is hardly defensible in the light of the resurgence of religious movements, many fundamentalist, throughout the world. A more sophisticated interpretation of secularization theory would argue that it is not so much that religion is bound to disappear, but that it will be dislodged from the public sphere and forced to change its configuration to adapt to this displacement (Luckmann, 1967). Pointing to the decline in church attendance and affiliation, especially among mainstream churches, some argue that religion will become privatized – its proper scope reduced to a personal, and at most local, relation with the sacred – and more rationalistic, stripped of its supernatural referents and bound to the logic of the market. As options increase through differentiation and globalization, a religious market emerges in which traditions lose their normative power, becoming nothing more than products that consumers purchase as emblems of an individual lifestyle. However, the fact that religion is being lived so publicly and emotionally, on the Internet, on TV, on the covers of *Newsweek* and the *New York Times Magazine*, and at the Mall in Washington, DC (as in the case of the Million Man March and the Promise Keepers), seems to contradict this thesis of privatization.

Some argue that, in fact, all these religious expressions prove the privatization hypothesis. As Miles (1997: 56) observes, contemporary religion in the USA is more than ever a case of ‘institutionalized anti-institutionalism’. ‘Americans’, he tells us, ‘are particularly at ease with forms of religion that require little in the way of organizational commitment and impose little in the way of group identity. Religious books, television shows and one-time

events like marches and revivals all meet those criteria.² However, recent sociological studies in the USA (Roozen and Hadaway, 1993) show that the fastest growing Christian churches are evangelical, usually emphasizing the power of the divine to irrupt into history and produce a total personal conversion. Evangelical growth has occurred through both mega-churches and more traditional small, storefront churches in poor urban and rural areas, a combination that defies, on the one hand, the privatization claim, and on the other, the assertion that religion is now bound only to the logic of the market.

What, then, accounts for the flourishing of this vocal, affective and non-rational (sometimes outright anti-rational) religion? Are we witnessing a revival of old, dying traditions? Is it a case of spiritual backlash, in the face of a world that has become, as Weber (1958: 181) had feared, an 'iron cage'? The hypothesis of re-enchantment of the world provides yet another side of the core secularization claim. According to the Frankfurt School, heir of the Weberian tradition, scientific rationality, which was meant to liberate, ends up leading to the emptying out of all meaning and the objectification of human subjects through the logic of the capitalist market and the rise of the omnipotent bureaucratic state (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1972). Along these lines, Habermas (1987:153–97) warns us against 'pathologies in the life-world' generated when the sphere of interpersonal communication and meaning is colonized by the demands of the system. Deprived of its norms of reciprocity, authenticity and rational debate, the public square becomes the domain either of 'specialists without spirit' or of religious fanatics threatening to escape modernity by taking us back to pre-modern times. Could this be what is behind the proliferation of Marian apparitions?

Certain patterns in the apparitions support this hypothesis. A great majority of the apparitions have happened in the countryside, harking back to the simplicity of the agrarian way of life that was so violently overturned by modernity. In the case of Medjugorje, the apparition occurs in the midst of an utterly broken civil society. The visionaries were village children, once again suggesting a nostalgia for pristine origins. In Conyers, one of the most frequently visited apparition sites in the world, the landscape has changed rapidly, as this formerly rural area has become a booming suburb of Atlanta. In the midst of this change, visionary Nancy Fowler brings tens of thousands of people to her non-functioning farm, evoking memories of simpler times. The apparition messages in general are critical of humanity for having turned its back on God and for worshiping secular, anti-life and consumerist values. Mary calls upon devotees to repent and change their ways lest it be too late to escape final divine judgment. In Clearwater, for instance, the Virgin calls us to task for having made money 'our God. Do you know how cold are your hearts? You turn away from my Son, Jesus, for your money. Your money is your God.'

Thus, the resurgence of religion would appear as resistance to the rationalization of the world under neoliberal capitalism. As the world becomes more 'McDonaldized' (Barber, 1995), there is a powerful, sublimated longing for meaning and depth that gets expressed in pre-modern

ways. Pointing to the apocalyptic content of Mary's recent messages, one might even add that in a postmodern time of general disenchantment, miraculous apparitions and other contemporary religious phenomena are desperate responses to increasing anxiety about end of the millennium. Castells summarizes this view well when he states that there is in our age a 'split between [the] abstract, universal instrumentalism' of what he calls the network society and 'historically rooted, particularistic identities' built on the basis of religion and ethnicity. According to Castells, we live in a world 'typified by the widespread destructuring of organizations, delegitimation of institutions, fading away of major social movements, and ephemeral cultural expressions.' In this context,

... people increasingly organize their meaning not around what they do but on the basis of what they are, or believe they are. Meanwhile, on the other hand, global networks of instrumental exchanges selectively switch on and off individuals, groups, regions, and even countries, according to their relevance in fulfilling the goals processed in the network ... (1996: 3)

The apparition at Clearwater, however, shows a far more complicated picture. First, why, as an article in the *News and Observer* of Raleigh, North Carolina, asks, 'would the Holy Virgin appear next door to the Pelican Car Wash and the Quick Lube oil change? On a business that specializes in auto loans that carry up to 25 percent interest?' (Snow, 1997). The owner of the bank on which Mary appeared does not seem to think that the apparition is a condemnation of his capitalist enterprise. Rather, he reported in several interviews in front of his now famous bank that he was 'enjoying Christmas ... [and] feeling inspired more and more' (Leiser, 1996). Further, within few days of the apparition, the parking-lot-turned-sacred-space was full of vendors hawking glossy photos of the Virgin, airbrushed T-shirts that read 'I believe ... The Miracle on US 19', greeting cards and key chains, all bearing the image of the Rainbow Madonna. It thus seems counter-intuitive to hypothesize that the apparition is a reaction against the obstreperous consumerism of the suburban business strip. As we shall see later on, the parking lot at Clearwater differs greatly from the farm at Conyers and similar settings in New York, New Jersey and Texas. Although once a very small town, Clearwater is now a sprawling city of malls and highways. The large, box-shaped Seminole Finance building, where the epiphany occurred, is right in the midst of this urban bustle. In this context, Mary does not seem to be protesting against modernity by calling us back to a beleaguered farm. Rather, she seems to be using the supposed tools of secularization to make her point. The apparition is popular not *despite* the trappings of our 'post-modern world', but *because* of them.

Our Lady of Clearwater and Globalization

Before analyzing the apparition at Clearwater from the perspective of globalization, we need to clarify the meaning of the term and provide some

theoretical background. As Wallerstein (1974) has shown, the rise of national economies and their interconnectedness is not a new phenomenon, but dates back to the mercantilist period. Robertson (1992), too, traces the beginnings of the trend towards making the world a 'single place' to as early as the 15th century, taking into account not only economic and political factors but also cultural dynamics such as the standardization of time through the first widespread use of the Gregorian calendar. Nevertheless, in the last three decades of this century we have experienced what David Harvey (1989) calls a radical 'time-space compression', due to a complex host of variables, including advances in information and transportation technology, a shift to flexible production and an accelerating turnover in the production, exchange and consumption of goods. Part and parcel of this time-space compression is the pervasiveness of transnational flows of capital, goods, people and information. Especially significant for our purposes are the latter two: tourists, pilgrims, migrants and refugees, in constant motion, join information traveling through an increasingly globalized media and the World Wide Web to bring into contact areas of the world that previously had been relatively isolated from each other. This contact creates a 'hyperspace' that transcends traditional (national) boundaries. In this hyperspace various (contradictory) discourses and practices interact, are juxtaposed and/or mixed, at times, to give rise to 'hybrid cultures' (García Canclini, 1995), and at other times, to lead to tension, conflict, and the violent reassertion of particularity and locality.

The current production of hybrid cultures is different from previous forms of syncretism. What we are currently experiencing is qualitatively different from age-old practices such as tourism, missions, mercantilism and colonialism in terms of the speed, breadth and depth of the sociocultural fragmentation and re-articulation made possible by the recent time-space compression. At least two dynamics are at play here: first, there has been a radical autonomization and intensification of cultural production, as reflected in the rise of a global consumer culture (Featherstone, 1995). Second, the rise of new media, like videos and the Internet, has contributed to a decoupling of signifiers from the signified, leading to a general skepticism towards capital 'T' Truth so characteristic of postmodernism (Baudrillard, 1981). Together, these two dynamics have made possible the rapid global circulation of symbols, their constant attachment and re-attachment to varying objects, and their combination and re-combination in various settings. This, in turn, has blurred the spatial, temporal and conceptual distinctions at modernity's core.

Scholars are divided on the overarching cultural effects of globalization. Some argue that it leads to homogeneity, as the lifestyles and values of the core capitalist countries penetrate peripheral societies (Giddens, 1994: 96–7). In contrast to 'homogenizers', the 'heterogenizers' contend that the global media provide access to a plurality of discourses and practices, which people around the world can use to create new individual and collective identities (Neederveen Pieterse, 1995). To overcome the dichotomy,

Robertson (1995) suggests that homogenization and heterogenization are complementary processes. The case of Clearwater supports the claim that homogenization is not opposed to heterogenization; rather the two processes are ‘mutually implicative’ (Robertson, 1995).

How then is globalization, understood as this time-space compression, related to Our Lady of Clearwater?

Global Pilgrimage and Transnational Migration

As mentioned above, the Seminole Finance Corporation is sandwiched between a Mitsubishi car dealership and an Amoco gas station in an overcrowded suburban business district, barely distinguishable from other such areas. With Mary’s apparition on the side of the bank building in the midst of this homogenized geography, one small square of asphalt, the parking lot, was circumscribed by the Clearwater police with yellow crime-scene tape, effectively transforming it into a sacred space. This space stands out, setting itself apart from the surrounding strip-shopping malls and chain supermarkets. A long, 3-foot high concrete wall has become the makeshift altar along which visitors place thousands of candles bearing the image of our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and Jesus. Visitors have also draped hundreds of rosary beads, flowers and potted plants along the wall, and posted prayer requests written on all kinds of scraps of paper. Most requests are written in English or Spanish, but others are in German or Italian. Many visitors to the site express a sense of awe at the transformation of a parking lot into a place where people kneel down to say the rosary while others whisper quietly as if in a sanctuary. A policeman directing traffic at the site explained to the *St. Petersburg Times* how visitors to the apparition ‘become very pious, very quiet’. He described the visitors saying, ‘They embrace, they cry, they pray together. It’s a pretty heavy scene’ (Norton, 1996: A10).

While the newly created sacred space is local in the physical sense, it is clearly subject to globalizing tendencies. It has become a cosmopolitan place, as Tampa natives meet, pray and exchange stories of apparitions and miraculous healings with pilgrims from various parts of the world. On any given day at the site, one might encounter visitors speaking German, Italian, Spanish, English or any number of other languages. This linguistic pluralism is just one expression of the crowd’s diversity. One member of a local parish described the site in the following terms: ‘There were biker chicks up there, there were hippies up there, there were people in suits, people in short pants, people from Canada that were burnt redder than lobsters – all standing around talking together.’ Indeed, the image reflected off of the Seminole Finance Building was dubbed the ‘Rainbow Madonna’ not only because of her curved shape and bright colors, but also because, as one letter to the editor explains, ‘the people who visit the site are a rainbow of all ages, nationalities, and beliefs. . . . As a rainbow forms an arc or a circle of many colors, the Rainbow Madonna’s appeal is one of inclusiveness’ (Canale, 1996: 9A). Tampa Bay residents repeatedly voiced the theme of ‘unity in

diversity' as Mary's paramount message in Clearwater. This theme has become especially salient in the region as the Latino population continues to increase and racial tensions have recently exploded into riots in nearby St Petersburg.

Another important globalizing dynamic is illustrated by the consistency between the ways in which pilgrims make sense both of the apparition in Clearwater and of experiences in other Marian sites throughout the world. Pilgrims in various parts of the world share a script which shapes and legitimates their encounters with Mary. This script comes in part from the institutional Catholic Church's new evangelization project, which we discuss later on, but it also includes other significant elements which are less clearly institutionalized – most notably, the circulation of symbols and rituals commonly associated with devotional practices in traditional popular Catholicism in the mass media. One is as likely to see makeshift altars with candles, rosary beads, written prayer requests and flowers in Clearwater as in Medjugorje. Further, the miracles witnessed at Clearwater bear striking similarities to experiences in Medjugorje, where pilgrims see the sun spinning and pulsating; in Conyers, where Polaroid pictures reveal the glowing gates of heaven; in San Nicolas, Argentina, where the links of the rosary beads turn to gold; or in Mexico City, where in February 1988 Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared reflected on the floor tiles of a busy subway station.

Whether they have traveled physically to the various apparition sites worldwide or visited them via some form of media (we discuss the Internet later), pilgrims at Clearwater are drawing from a global script to construct their local sacred space and to make sense of their personal experiences. This generalized script is constantly disseminated through various forms of media which pilgrims deploy locally, adding their own inflections. It is in this sense that homogenization – characterized by sets of discourses and practices shared across the world which have attained a certain canonical force through which they legitimize apparitions – and heterogenization – as the local deployment of the scripts which acquires its own autochthonous flavor – are mutuality implicative, as Robertson argues.

Even acknowledging the use of generalized apparition scripts, could one not explain pilgrimage in Clearwater without making reference to globalization as we have defined it? After all, pilgrimage and apparitions are really nothing new to Christianity. In fact, in the Middle Ages, these practices were inextricably linked to the consolidation of popular religious traditions. Nor are they inimical to modernity. Several studies detail how the 19th century witnessed an increase in miracles and apparitions. However, whereas in the last century apparitions and pilgrimages were part of a complex process of turning the local into the national, today they occur in the context of a crisis in nation-states. Kselman (1983), for instance, describes how the Catholic Church saw in promotion of devotions to Virgins at La Salette and Lourdes an excellent strategy to counter humanist and anti-clerical tendencies through an appeal to French nationalism. According to Kselman, Church-approved miracle cults 'were designed to create a national community of

Catholics and so to replicate in the modern world the kind of belief thought to have characterized an older, more stable [and more Catholic] France’.

Our Lady of Clearwater shatters this nationalist *imaginaire*, in which the Catholic Church represented the only legitimate glue joining the various nation-states. For one thing, there were reports of busloads of European tourists/pilgrims paying up to \$2,000 to come and see the Virgin and, on the side, take in some of the Florida sights (Coyne, 1996: D1). More significant, however, is the presence among the pilgrims of transnational Mexican migrants, who come to revere the apparition as an expression of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the quintessential symbol of Mexican national identity. These migrants, Roger Rouse (1991) argues, challenge both the fixity of US borders and the ideal of the melting pot. In their constant back-and-forth movement across national borders, they problematize the notion of homogeneous, geographically and culturally bounded communities arranged hierarchically in the capitalist world-system through the binary opposition of center and periphery.

Here, however, we need to sound a note of caution. Mexico–USA migratory flows do not originate with the recent period of globalization, for Mexicans have been crossing borders since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, when half of Mexico became part of the USA. Nevertheless, as we shall see later when we discuss Clearwater, recent dynamics closely tied to globalization such as NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Treaty), repeated economic crises in Mexico, the decline of agriculture and the growth of the service sector in central Florida, have led to increased migration from Mexico and to the expansion of settled Hispanic communities in the area. Clearwater, which up until 1980 had a negligible Latino population, is now home to many Mexican immigrants, most of them from the municipality of Ixmiquilpan in Hidalgo, one of Mexico’s poorest states. Mexicans in Clearwater maintain a close connection with friends and relatives in Ixmiquilpan through the same changes in technology that have allowed news of the presence of the Rainbow Madonna to explode across the globe: rapid communication technology allows them to call home, send audio and videotapes, and wire remittances with ease; transport technology gives them the ability to return home frequently for baptisms, marriages, burials and vacations.

This transnationalism – the flow of people, goods and, more importantly, ideas, across national boundaries – has had an impact on the apparition at Clearwater. On the feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe, many of the Mexican migrants come to venerate the Rainbow Madonna dressed as *Matlachines*, wearing body paint and head-dresses as they imagine their ancestors did in their ‘pagan’ ceremonies. Then they dance in honor of the Guadalupana, as millions of pilgrims do in Mexico City. Mario Esquivel, a *Matlachin* from neighboring Plant City, explained that the Rainbow Madonna is ‘showing us that you cannot distinguish between races and kinds of people here. All kinds of people are talking to each other’ (Headrick, 1996: 6B). Here Esquivel is pointing toward the articulation of a hybrid

sacred space. The *Matlachines*, with their traditional dances, highlight the already hybrid nature of Guadalupe, in particular its association with *Tonantzin*, an Aztec goddess of fertility at Tepeyac, the hill where the Virgin appeared to the recently converted native American Juan Diego. In Clearwater, the *Matlachines* add yet another layer to this syncretic tension, bringing together pre-Columbian and colonial symbols with the Virgin on the bank.

The Rainbow Madonna thus provides an example of how religion can become a medium for hybridity in a globalizing setting. Rather than seeing the homogenization of culture, as the rationalization hypothesis would have us believe, we see the production of new sacred spaces, practices and collective identities through the blending of the pre-modern (apparitions and pilgrimages) with the modern/postmodern (the media and the Internet). A miraculous event, to many a symbol of the supernatural in our midst, unfolds itself globally through the tools of our rational and monetarized age. This stands in direct contradiction to the hypothesis that religion and society are becoming increasingly disenchanting.

Mediascapes

Another crucial ingredient in the construction of a globalized local sacred space in Clearwater is what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990) has termed 'mediascapes'. According to Appadurai, the rapid production and worldwide circulation of images facilitated by recent changes in computer and communication technology have made possible the development of transnational audiences. While the images shared may lead to a certain homogenization of experience, often they become indigenized, that is, appropriated with different local inflections. Mediascapes are:

... image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of other living in other places. (1990: 299)

In other words, precisely because of their configuration and content, mediascapes allow local discourses and practices such as those connected with Marian apparitions to survive, and even thrive, in a globalized setting.

The popularity of the apparition at Clearwater, in large part, relies on the construction of a mediascape. Within two days of the apparition's arrival, the story had been picked up by a major TV network (*NBC News at Sunrise*), and soon after, ABC nightly news ran a segment on it. In the ensuing days several newspaper articles documented the translocal aspect of the apparition through interviews with people who had come to Clearwater after traveling to Medjugorje, Fatima, Mexico, Conyers and Lubbock, Texas.

The Internet adds an important element that we may call 'virtual pilgrimage'. In contrast to early forms of pilgrimage, or even to the gathering

of people at Clearwater, in this electronic pilgrimage people do not move physically or interact face to face, in a public arena bounded by the miraculous event. Indeed, the boundaries created by the police crime-scene tape to circumscribe Clearwater's local sacred space are transgressed as a person from Australia, India or Mexico enters the space through his/her computer and glances at the vivid image of the Rainbow Madonna [<http://www.frontier.net/Apparitions/apparitions.html>]. At a distance, the pilgrim inscribes his/her existence in a global sacred 'hyperspace', a protean translocal space, 'a place that is no place' (O'Leary, 1996: 799) that is custom-made to fit his/her specific needs, as s/he invests her/his crises and desires on the various apparitions. This geography, to draw from Derrida (1967), defies the 'metaphysics of presence', it is a 'trace', neither here nor there, always ephemeral, blinking in and out of the computer screen, and only charted on paper as the pilgrim downloads it. It is a geography that defies passports, national immigration laws, and clerical and state regulation. Nevertheless, the fact that this new shifting religious geography is a personal articulation does not make it into a private phenomenon. As the virtual pilgrim enters talk groups and electronic conference rooms, leaves her/his testimony of conversion, or reads those left by other fellow travelers, s/he becomes a member of global, often polyglot 'virtual community' of believers (Rheingold, 1993). Appadurai (1996: 8) argues that, just as, at modernity's outset, print capitalism was instrumental in the emergence of nationalism by bringing together groups that never had met face to face (cf. Anderson, 1983), today it is the electronic mass media that are creating global 'communities of sentiment', that 'begin to imagine and feel things together'. In these transnational 'sodalities of worship and charisma', religion, particularly the lived religion of devotional practices like those connected with Marian apparitions, provide what, borrowing from Raymond Williams (1977: 128–35), we may call 'structures of feeling', psycho-cognitive horizons which enable and delimit the construction of self and group. The emergence of web sites such as 'Jesus 2000: Virtual Pilgrimage to the Holy Land' [www.Jesus2000.com] and another connected to the Muslim Hajj [www.Haj2000.com], both created by a Luxembourg-based company, portends an auspicious future for electronic pilgrimage.

What we see, then, in the electronic pilgrimage to Clearwater, is not the disappearance of a practice connected to a medieval world of villages, with the values of small community and attachment to the land crushed under weight of the rootlessness of urban sprawl or of the global media. Rather, in what a recent *New York Times* article (Stanley, 1998: A1) on the Turin shroud and its 30 web sites describes as 'an odd marriage of ancient faith and cyberspace', pre-modern religious expressions, such as Marian apparitions, find themselves projected beyond the local, past the national, on to a worldwide stage, where they can incite and fulfill multiple desires. Indeed, as the Rainbow Madonna enters a mediascape, she becomes a new fragment of the script that the electronic pilgrim may now use to re-enact or stage a new apparition in his/her own locality.

We should not assume that this newly found freedom for religious images and scripts to roam around the world in an instant has finally liberated lay popular religiosity from the shackles of institutional orthodoxy or corporate influence. Our Lady of Clearwater is implicated in another key global dimension: the Vatican's New Evangelization project, which has sought to foster personal forms of devotion, especially those connected to Mary, as an antidote to the crisis of modern emancipatory projects and the rapid growth of evangelical and fundamentalist movements worldwide.

The Shepherds of Christ and the New Evangelization: An Example of Glocalization

When it comes to Our Lady of Clearwater, not everything goes. The task of constructing an orthodox reading of the apparition has fallen into the hands of Shepherds of Christ Ministries, a movement founded in June 1994 by Father Edward J. Carter, a professor of theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. If one is to take the movement's self-description at face value, a complex picture emerges. A handout at the apparition site describes the ministry as 'multi-faceted, international', 'open to priests, religious and the laity . . . [with] over 150 prayer "chapters" in its worldwide network devoted to the spiritual welfare of priests'. A further exploration of their bilingual (English/Spanish) home page [<http://www.Shepherds-of-Christ.org>] reveals that they publish four newsletters – with Shepherds of Christ as the flagship, soon to be offered in Spanish, Portuguese, Ukrainian, Russian and other languages – with copies sent to 'individuals who in turn distribute the materials in foreign lands from Sri Lanka to Nigeria to Nepal to Puerto Rico'. They have also produced 11 books, including *God's Blue Book*, Father Carter's *Tell My People*, an associates handbook (a prayer manual), and several inspirational audio and videotapes.

From their headquarters in Cincinnati, hundreds of miles from Clearwater, the Shepherds have sought to establish a monopoly over the correct interpretation of the apparition through the work of visionary Rita Ring. On this score, the Rainbow Madonna has been very explicit in her messages to Ring. Again, quoting from handouts at the apparition site:

I appear to you on the building to draw men to the messages given in *God's Blue Book*, *Rosaries from the Hearts of Jesus and Mary*, and *Tell My People*. These books are messages we give from our hearts to draw men to our hearts. They are the messages my Son gives to bring about the reign of His Most Sacred Heart.

Or even more explicitly:

I ask you to circulate *Mary's Message* [an audiotape] in Florida and the rosaries [special Marian meditations and messages] of December 13, 1996, and January 13, 1997. These messages were given to reveal insights into His Most Intimate Love. My appearance in Florida and the Shepherds of Christ Movement must be connected.

Notwithstanding this drive to fix a normative reading of the apparition, could the Shepherds of Christ be a movement independent from, even in opposition to, the official Church? After all, the Virgin (not Jesus) is revealing herself to a woman (not to a priest). In fact, the diocese of St Petersburg, which includes Clearwater, has been very reluctant to accept the miraculous event. According to a spokesperson from the diocese, ‘there is no reason for us to believe it [the image at the bank] is beyond natural causes. . . . If you want contact with the Lord, you can keep his commandments and love one another and help those in need’ (Coyne, 1996: D1). This reading, nonetheless, proves too charitable when we learn that the Virgin’s messages through Ring ‘are meant to be disseminated to everyone in the world after Father Edward Carter, S.J. has thoroughly discerned them’. Here the mention of Father Carter is followed by a citation of his credentials, including prominently his membership in the global Society of Jesus. According to the movement’s homepage, its handbook ‘now carries the *Imprimi Potest* approval of the Jesuit Provincial of Chicago but, as each translation emerges the prayer manual section of the handbook is being submitted to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for *Imprimatur*’. The homepage also includes letters of support from Archbishop Daniel Buechlein (through his Vicar General) of Indianapolis and from Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk of Cincinnati. Interestingly, what sectors of the official Church are endorsing here is not the voice of Ring, but the work of the Shepherds, who, as transnational actors, have appropriated a local, lay-produced message to advance their overarching pastoral goals. We will return to this ‘disciplining’ of the local later.

The endorsement of the Shepherds’ work by the dioceses of Indianapolis and Cincinnati sets up an interesting tension with the diocese of St Petersburg, in which the phenomenon has occurred but which has reservations about it. The tension is a new expression of the old tension between particularity and universality in Catholicism (Casanova, 1997). Indeed, to carry out its New Evangelization campaign, the Vatican has relied heavily on translocal movements such as the Opus Dei and the Charismatic Renewal Movement. This approach, which benefits from the latest innovation in media technology (through Lumen 2000), exists in tension with the preservation of the hierarchical parish and diocesan structures that are based on medieval notions of a clearly defined locality and a unified community.

But what is this New Evangelization? And how does the work of the Shepherds of Christ dovetail with it? The New Evangelization (NE) is a broad initiative launched by Pope John Paul II in 1983, in preparation for the upcoming celebration of 500 years of the discovery of the new world (the beginning of the first evangelization) and the third millennium. Partly a reaction to the increasing fragmentation of the global religious field, dramatized by the rapid growth of evangelical Protestantism in Latin America, long a Catholic stronghold, the New Evangelization has sought to redirect the Church’s energy towards gaining new converts and renewing the faith of nominal Catholics. The NE also comes at a time of ideological and institutional re-alignment within the Church. Seeking to reaffirm the Church’s

unity, universality and hierarchical authority against the most radically historicizing consequences of the Second Vatican Council, the Vatican has undertaken a 'restoration offensive'. In practical terms this has meant a consolidation of the clergy's monopoly of legitimate symbolic goods through an emphasis on the sacraments and personal spirituality and a reaffirmation of the ban on women becoming priests.

But how can the Church reconcile the need to proselytize with renewed fervor, which requires active work from the laity, with the Vatican restoration and its call for unity and universality in the face of the fragmentation produced by globalization? The Church's solution has been to develop global pastoral strategies flexible enough to be deployed by the laity in various settings but still susceptible to the centralizing oversight of the clergy. The Church has used the term 'inculturation' to characterize this synthesis between particularity and universality. Inculturation is defined as the 'call to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures'.

And what better a way to 'penetrate' indigenous Catholic culture than by returning to devotional traditions, such as apparitions and miracles, which are inherently local. Under the right clerical supervision, devotional traditions, including those connected to Mary, provide a good vehicle to renew faith in everyday life, at the local and personal levels, through the work of the laity. They also present the Church as a spiritual beacon in the normative wasteland created by postmodernism without challenging the authority of the hierarchy. John Paul II has, in fact, made Mary, in her various expressions, one of the key elements in his pastoral work. He devoted his papacy to her with the slogan '*totus tuus*' ('entirely yours') and by designing a coat of arms which bears a large 'M' for Mary in the bottom right corner. He has visited numerous apparition sites – the last in El Cobre, Cuba – and attributed his survival from an assassin's bullet to the protection of Our Lady of Fatima (Cunneen, 1996: 271). Moreover, there has been much speculation that Mary might be proclaimed co-redemptrix during John Paul II's papacy (Woodward et al., 1997: 49–55).

Against the backdrop of the NE and the papal emphasis on Marian devotions, we can say that in the hands of the Shepherds, the apparition at Clearwater is an instance of 'religious glocalization'. This term is a neologism that describes the Japanese practice of *dochukuka*, that is, adapting one's practices to local conditions. As a business model, glocalization has meant 'micro-marketing: the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets' (Robertson, 1995: 28). Amin (1994) and Harvey (1989) have documented the crisis of Fordist modes of production in a climate of increased global competition. In the endless search for profits, rigid, corporatist economies of scale that produce for homogeneous national markets are giving way to flexible, decentralized production for diverse global markets. Glocalization is precisely a set of flexible production strategies, which increase the 'local content' of products, and thus allow for a rapid response to changing local needs, while facilitating the concentration of management

and profits in ‘global cities’ (Sassen, 1991), where transnational companies are based. Glocalization then appears as a triumph of diversity and the local, when in fact, it is also part and parcel of the global process of capitalist penetration. But this process does not simply lead to homogenization, as the Frankfurt School would have it. Rather it elevates diversity and the local as a globally feasible economic practice – or, as Robertson puts it, ‘diversity sells’ (1995: 29).

Since religious markets are also becoming increasingly global and competitive, it is not a stretch to transpose the notion of glocalization to the religious field. Indeed, we can hypothesize that the parish – the cornerstone of the Catholic edifice – tends to operate in a Fordist mode, as a religious economy of scale that dispenses ‘one-size-fits-all’ products in an impersonal fashion. In contrast, the NE, with its stress on inculturation and spiritual renewal through Marian devotions and movements like the Charismatics, both of which address personal and community needs but are not bound geographically, would conform more to post-Fordism. Applying the glocalization hypothesis to the apparition at Clearwater, we can see how the Shepherds’ work is simultaneously a source of personalized religious goods (built through the global circulation of their scripts of the apparition) and a vehicle for the reaffirmation of Catholic orthodoxy and hierarchy (as the scripts are sanctioned by the institution). Seen in this light, the Shepherds offer a flexible strategy that allows the institutional Church to embody itself in the local, that is, to impress upon the local its discipline, hierarchy and global aims and methods. In this process, however, the local is not obliterated; it maintains its locality, but it is shaped and re-appropriated in the context of the overarching narrative provided by the universal Church.

The Rainbow Madonna, as an instance of the NE’s religious glocalization, thus shows the other side of the global–local tension embodied in the apparition at Clearwater. While mediascapes provide a way for the local traditional religious practices to explode on to the global level, the NE offers an example of how global processes impress themselves on the local. In the case of Our Lady of Clearwater these two dynamics feed each other, leading to an ascending spiral of religious renewal. Religious renewal here is not just a desperate reaction to disenchantment. While the latter may provide the background condition in which renewal happens, we need to go beyond secularization-based models to understand how religion operates in a global context.

Clearwater on a Global Stage

We have been referring to the local and the global throughout this essay and, while we have given examples of global processes in the mediascapes and NE, we have not dealt adequately with the local. Let us take the local in its most traditional sense: as a geographically bounded setting. What are the effects of the apparition and its globalizing force on the town of Clearwater?

Up until 1970, Clearwater was a sleepy, sparsely populated resort town. Although nearby Tampa had a significant Spanish-speaking immigrant

population as early as the turn of the century, Clearwater remained an enclave of primarily white middle-class residents and middle-to-upper-class seasonal visitors. In the last three decades, however, the population of Clearwater has doubled, reaching just over 100,000 by 1995 (Floyd et al., 1996: 16). This increase has been accompanied by a diversification of the city's population. According to United States census figures, from 1980 to 1995 Clearwater's Spanish-speaking population more than tripled to reach almost 4,000, an estimate that can be considered conservative given the source. Many of these Spanish-speakers come from the impoverished state of Hidalgo in Mexico; more specifically from the small municipality Ixmiquilpan. Local legend has it that the first Ixmiquilpanenses settled in 1987. They were driving toward the orange groves in South Florida, hoping to find work there, when their car broke down. They quickly found work in a beachfront hotel and decided to stay in Clearwater, letting their friends and relatives know about the plentiful job opportunities in the area. So many Ixmiquilpanenses have come to Clearwater since then that the mayor of the municipality paid an official visit to the city in 1995. This event signifies the transnational character of the population, as does the fact that Ixmiquilpan receives the highest volume of international mail and monetary remittance of any municipality in Hidalgo (INEGI, 1994: 81–2, 85).

Most of the Spanish-speaking population in Clearwater can be classified as working class, and most work in Clearwater's burgeoning service industry. Since the late 1970s, Clearwater has followed national trends toward rapid growth in the service sector of the economy and toward the segmentation of the labor markets in two groups: a core of professionals working in the finance, real estate, managerial and tourist industries, and a much larger peripheral group of low-wage earners such as janitors, sales clerks, secretaries, waiters and maids (Sassen, 1988). As the high-paid core managerial class formed enclaves in the city's suburbs, the demand for low-wage service workers (such as housekeepers, nannies, gardeners and dog walkers) to support their lifestyles has increased. Because African-Americans are already firmly established in their urban communities and perceive open discrimination in the suburbs, this demand has been met primarily by recent immigrants, many of whom have left the unpredictability of seasonal work in the fields to enter the service sector (Mahler, 1996). This is corroborated in the oral histories we collected at the parish of St Theresa, in which informants tell us that jobs are very easy to find, especially in restaurants and hotels.

Parallel to these changes in the receiving society, the Mexican economy has suffered repeated shocks under neoliberal policies, endorsed by multilateral organizations like the World Bank and the IMF, seeking to integrate it into global markets. The consequences for Mexico's poor and working class have been severe, particularly in view of widespread reductions in welfare programs. Under these conditions, Mexicans have increasingly relied on defensive strategies such as the informal economy and migration to the USA. Thus, the combination of push-pull factors in the USA

and in Mexico in the context of increasing globalization explains the rapid growth of Latino communities in places like Clearwater.

This context of rapid change, dislocation and immigration may also help us understand the Marian apparition at Clearwater. We might argue that the creation of a new integrated, multicultural and multinational sacred space might be a reflection of deeper structural changes at the local level. Under this hypothesis, the religious phenomenon may be a manifestation and a legitimation of the erasure of sharp racial, and possibly economic, boundaries. Indeed, rather than zeroing in on Rita Ring's calls from Cincinnati not to make money our God, Tampa Bay residents have chosen to emphasize the theme of 'unity in diversity', which has circulated widely in local newspaper articles, letters to the editor and TV reports. Commenting on the apparition, one resident said:

Now, if we can just maintain these feelings toward one-another and use this event as a catalyst toward better understanding and respect for our cultural differences, then we will all have our Christmas miracle. . . . People of all races, colors, and creeds are standing side-by-side as one community, united, indivisible, and loving toward one-another. (Canale, 1996: 19A)

Perhaps, then, the apparition can be understood as both an expression of and a means to order the increasing fragmentation and diversity at the local level.

A closer look at conditions in the local parish, nevertheless, throws this reading into question. The apparition is neither a mere epiphenomenon of socioeconomic changes, as a crude materialist interpretation would conclude, nor is it necessarily contributing to erasing boundaries and hierarchies at the local level. What one observes is, rather, a disjuncture between the dominant discourse of unity in diversity and the power relations within the parish. In the spring of 1993, St Theresa's parish was home to 2,500 families in Clearwater. Most of these families were middle-to-upper-middle class, white United States citizens. By 1995, also congregating at St Theresa's were 659 Spanish-speaking families, most of them Mexican immigrants from Ixmiquilpan residing in lower-income areas near the parish seat. Most of the members of St Theresa's parish, both Spanish and English-speaking, have visited the apparition at least once; many even go weekly to pray. And while these members also all voice a desire for the dissolution of boundaries and affirm the unity in diversity discourse at the newly created sacred site, they agree that there exists a clear and virtually impenetrable boundary between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking members of the parish. In interviews, we constantly heard such statement as 'two parishes have developed', '[we] have two totally separate systems', 'it's such a segregated community', and '[we] have St Theresa and Santa Teresa's'. One of the members of the parish staff explained in reference to the church's Spanish-speakers that 'they're almost a separate little community. . . . They really like to stay to themselves.'

This racial and cultural divide has both spatial and temporal components. Although English-speaking parishioners share the same physical facility with the Spanish-speaking members of the church, the two groups almost never come together for common activities. The schedule is carefully orchestrated to maintain this separation. The parish manager, who has the responsibility for assigning the use of the physical facilities, explained:

There is still a disconnection . . . in that their [the Spanish-speaking parishioners'] Mass is on Sunday night at eight o'clock, so the majority of our 5,000 parishioners don't see them. They see it in the bulletin. They know that there's a Spanish Mass, but there's not mixture.

The parish manager's comments above indicate that the Spanish-speaking members of the church are a group at the margins, an invisible 'them' versus 'us' – 'us' being the 5,000 'real' parishioners, who can have a Mass in the morning, not under the cover of darkness. As one English-speaking parishioner explained:

I don't think the parish has accepted that the practice [of a Spanish Mass] exists in the parish. I think there is one parish with a poor third cousin – I mean the parish has not even accepted the fact that it exists, at least not in my eyes.

This parishioner's statement is especially striking in light of a comment made by the priest who celebrates Spanish Mass: 'I bet you that half of the total population of the parish right now is Mexican.'

The physical segregation of 'us' versus 'them' is often accompanied by other discursive and non-discursive strategies that create distinct identities drawing on stereotypes and fears in the larger society. Borders are constructed around clusters like 'illegality', poverty, language, ethnicity, geographic origin and culture. We see, then, that along with the articulation of a 'unity in diversity' rhetoric at the apparition site – a rhetoric readily appropriated by members of the St Theresa parish – there is the construction of power asymmetries within the parish. There seems to be a gap between the 'cosmopolitanism' created in the Rainbow Madonna's sacred space through global and virtual pilgrimage and the provincial character of the parish space. Globalization seems to be affecting the local in its various forms (the apparition and the parish) at different rates and in different manners. The existence of these divergent realities in the same geographical locality supports Bauman's contention that time-space compression does not have 'the commonly assumed unity of effects' (1998: 2).

Nevertheless, even within division one finds unity, for globalization has also affected one segment of the parish in ways similar to the effects on the apparition space. The weekly Spanish Mass is attended and planned not only by Mexicans, but also many Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Central and South Americans. Esperanza Montoya, a Mexican parishioner, explained this Mass to us saying:

The Mass is now a complete mixture [*mezcla*] of different cultures. It includes the styles of Mexicans, Caribbeans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians. . . . When I arrived here, I had to learn a little about how things are done here. I asked why? Why is it different? But I learned that in the Caribbean, already the mix of people is different. What has happened here is that people have arrived with so many mixtures already, and they form another type of environment, and then another environment. It's a change, but it's good because people mix their – well, we learn from different cultures. Each learns from the others.

The '*mezcla*' which Esperanza describes is not simply the result of combination of discrete national styles of worship. Individuals arrive at St Theresa's 'with so many mixtures already'. They are already drawing on multiple sources to construct their worship both at the personal and collective levels. What goes on each Sunday night at St Theresa is an expression of hybridity 'all the way down', which challenges assertions about cultural purity and the boundaries of national and ethnic groups, fulfilling within the institution the 'unity in diversity' enshrined in the Rainbow Madonna's sacred space. Like the 'unity in diversity' motto surrounding the Rainbow Madonna, this hybrid worship practice serves as one of many possible strategies for 'chart[ing] our way through the confusion of the present' in which different ways of life are constantly brought into 'vivid, often violent juxtaposition' (Rouse, 1991: 18–19).

As the parish of St Theresa's shows, globalization is a complex phenomenon, not leading automatically to homogeneity or heterogeneity in every aspect of local life. The effect of globalization can be best described as multi-layered and differential. At some levels, it may produce hybridity and unity in diversity, harmoniously juxtaposing symbols, goods and people previously separated. At others, it may create dissonance, reinforcing entrenched boundaries, practices and power asymmetries, or encouraging their redeployment along new lines of 'us' and 'them'.

Conclusion

The case of the apparition at Clearwater challenges some of the fundamental assumptions of secularization theory, in particular its teleological and totalizing vision of the fate of religion. In the face of contemporary social and cultural transformations, religion is neither disappearing nor just becoming privatized. Nor is it just an impotent or pathological reaction to the disenchantment of the world. As Rudolph puts it, modern social science 'asserted that religion would fade, then disappear, with the triumph of science and rationalism. But religion has expanded explosively, stimulated as much by secular global processes – migration, multinational capitalism, the media revolution – as by proselytizing activity' (1997: 1).

If Clearwater is any indication, what we are seeing in some cases is rather a *re-sacralization of the secular*. Mary is using modern technologies associated with our post-industrial age literally as a mirror on which she can project her old-time devotion worldwide. The building at Clearwater is

acting as a prism that magnifies and disperses the colors of the Rainbow Madonna. In the process, that which is most secular, a bank, the ultimate symbol of the logic of the market, is sacralized, appropriated into a shifting sacred space and time. In a twist that further transforms the profane into the sacred, the Shepherds have acquired the bank building to convert it into a shrine, a 'center for spiritual renewal'. And, in hopes of attracting more pilgrims to the new center, they have recently unveiled an 18-foot cedar crucifix next to the apparition.

We contend that the apparition at Clearwater is not an isolated instance of the sacralization of the secular; that, in fact, this process is more generalized. We live in a time when everyday practices such as shopping are 'religious experiences that re-charge us spiritually' through the consumption of products 'awash' with an 'aura', a 'nameless energy', which gives us an individual and collective 'sense of well-being . . . security and contentment' (Dellilo, 1984: 20, 36–7). While these mystical experiences at the heart of the 'secular' are no doubt linked to a fetishism of commodities, they cannot be seen as a mere reflection of the current capitalist mode of production. The re-sacralization of the secular is partly the result of the autonomization of popular culture and the rise of technologies like the Internet, which, having the ability to detach signifiers from the signified in ways that increase the likelihood of syncretism, make it possible for us to experience transcendence, transgression and surplus of meaning – aspects which are central to the experience of the sacred. Free-floating, opaque messages come to us as revelations unfolding in popular culture, full of mystery and fascination, bringing down to earth Rudolph Otto's (1923) holy from its 'tremendum' heights. In this sense, it is misguided automatically to oppose the 'Net', with its 'abstract, universal instrumentalism', to the 'Self' and its expressive and hermeneutic aspects, as Castells does, following the Frankfurt School's critical modernism. As Wilbur (1997: 9–10) notes, despite its imbrication with corporate power, the Internet has symbolic and ludic dimensions. After all:

. . . the deepest roots of virtuality seem to reach back into a religious world view where power and moral goodness are united in virtue. And the characteristic of the virtual is that it is able to produce effects, or to produce itself as an effect even in the absence of the 'real effect'. The air of the miraculous that clings to virtue helps obscure the distinction between real power effects and/or goodness and the effects that are as good as real.

All this is not to say that secularization has not taken place or does not occur. What we need to realize is that secularization and sacralization sustain complex relations that defy mechanistic models and require analysis of local conditions rather than efforts to fit data on to fixed paradigms. While it is common for secularization and sacralization to enter into agonistic relations, sometimes they reinforce each other, so that the Protestant ethic might be a condition for the rise of the spirit of capitalism at one point, and strip malls, banks and the Internet might be the carriers of ancient

hierophanies at another. This is because reason does not stand in opposition to faith. At a time when rationality has been shown to be implicated with a ‘will to power’, faith and religion can no longer be understood just in negative terms, as a lack, anomie or any other social pathology of an incomplete or extreme process of rationalization and emancipation from superstition. Rather, religion is abundance of meaning, a font for the cosmopolitan juxtaposition and/or syncretism of multiple practices and discourses.

From the foregoing discussion it may seem that we are rejecting modernist approaches *tout court* and advocating a full-blown adoption of postmodernist readings that stress the local, ephemeral, undecidable and aesthetic nature of current social and religious practices. Nonetheless, we have shown how local processes are mutually implicated with global projects, making the rejection of macro-perspectives unwise. It is one thing to give up grand metaphysical narratives and quite another to lose sight of the historical global processes in which local practices are embedded. The latter would lead to a failure to recognize the persistence of institutional, structural and systemic power dynamics which seek to normalize practices and discourses in various settings. These hegemonic effects are clear in the new evangelization and the efforts of the Shepherds of Christ to impose an orthodox reading of the apparition at Clearwater. Furthermore, globalization does not automatically mean that every boundary is erased or transgressed, that all hierarchies have been dismantled, or that the social space is inescapably fluid and incomprehensible due to the rapid process of hybridization. As we saw in Clearwater, there is a sharp disjuncture between the sacred space surrounding the apparition, with its cosmopolitan juxtaposition and mixing of pilgrims, and the parish, with its creation of two churches, one predominantly Anglo and another at the margins made up by a growing number of Latinos. This disjuncture issues from the fact that globalization is not a mechanical, totalizing process, but a polyvalent phenomenon that has differential effects, producing different forms of change at varying rates across the social space.

If Robertson (1991: 283) is right that globalization ‘produces variety – more accurately, it encourages heterogeneity-within-homogeneity, or difference-within-identity . . . [since] it involves the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism’, what we need then are approaches to religion which take into account the complex roles it plays at both the local and global levels, in deterritorializing and reterritorializing sacred spaces and times, transgressing and re-inscribing power dynamics, blending traditional symbols and rituals with contemporary discourses and practices and emerging media, and in homogenizing and heterogenizing the social space. Methodologically, this would require that we go beyond overly abstract and theoretical studies of religion and globalization (Robertson, 1992; Beyer, 1994; Rudolph and Piscatori, 1997) to study the specific links between the macro and the micro by comparing locations within a global framework, or by analyzing how the global is embodied in the local and how the local is the context where the global is reproduced and/or contested

(Marcus and Fischer, 1986; McMullen, 1998). To do this we would have to work with various sources, combining ethnography with institutional, structural and systemic approaches, and with textual analysis of a variety of media such as the Internet, TV news, newspapers, magazines and handouts at the site.³

We cannot predict the future of 'old time' religion in a globalizing age. It may come to exist side by side with the new religions, or it may become part of a 'new spiritual marketplace of virtual culture as raw material for playful cyborgs who cut-and-paste at will through the fragments of our traditions' (O'Leary, 1996: 804). This latter option may eventually erase the boundaries between new and old religions. Perhaps both scenarios are possible. However, we can no longer see 'old time' religion as nothing more than a fading anachronism in our rational, informational age or as just a desperate reaction to the millennium.

Notes

We wish to thank Nancy Eiesland, Dennis Owen, Anna Peterson and our two anonymous readers for their helpful suggestions.

1. Here we define pre-modern primarily in a conceptual sense. Following Weber (1958), pre-modern religious discourses and practices, such as those surrounding the cult of the saints and Marian devotions, presuppose that the natural world is imbued with and ultimately grounded on the supernatural. The Reformation, with its emphasis on individual conscience and direct approach to the Scriptures, 'disenchants' this Catholic world, leading to a modern 'religion within the bounds of reason alone' (Kant). This does not spell the end of pre-modern religious expressions. Rather, they are displaced to the life-world of the 'popular' classes, where they exist always in tension with the normative, rationalized religion of the elites. Part of our argument is that globalization appears to be reversing this retrenchment.

2. Luckmann (1991: 178) also points to the example of New Age religions, as 'invisible religion . . . [with] no stable organization, canonized dogma, recruitment system, or disciplining apparatus', that is the product of an 'individual bricolage'. By the same token, one can argue that religion has become mainly a spectacle, one that has proven very lucrative for the entertainment industry. A case in point is pop artist Madonna's latest album, *Ray of Hope*.

3. According to Hexam and Poewe, 'most new and contemporary religions are legitimate expressions of spirituality that can be best understood from an interdisciplinary perspective grounded in a theory of global culture' (1997: xiii). We argue that the prism of globalization can also be helpful in understanding the renewed vitality of old time religion throughout the world.

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