Shakertown and the World of Tomorrow: Local-Global Perspectives on Twenty-first Century Issues

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Introduction

One of the cultural landmarks of central Kentucky is the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill. Shaker Village (or Shakertown, as it is typically called) is operated by a non-profit, educational corporation and directed by a board of prominent citizens, business people, and philanthropists. As a historic museum, Shakertown comprises some 34 original 19th-century buildings and 2,800 acres of farmland supported by income generated from its thousands of visitors, its sales of replicas of Shaker products, and generous private gifts and contributions. Poised on a rolling hill above the palisades of the Kentucky River near Harrodsburg, Kentucky, this rebuilt site stands out amidst the rural farmland surrounding it as a ghost of yesteryear and points to spiritual, communal, and ecological values that beckon us to reconsider the frenetic pace of everyday life in our techno-corporate and increasingly urban society. Its sumptuous cuisine and well-made crafts hearken to an earlier era where the sensuousness of hearty food and the adherence to high craft standards cast a critical and negative light on fast food lifestyles and our industry's conformity to mass standards for a mass consumer market.

Today, Shakertown at Pleasant Hill is a cultural treasure of the past that is dying. To the casual observer or infrequent visitor, it strikes one as a marvelous celebration of a bygone people and a continuing testimony to the vision of Earl Wallace, who spearheaded its restoration in the 1960s (Parrish, 2005). Still, the steady drop in attendance, compounded by the sameness and lack of vibrancy of its presentation of the former Shaker community, hints at deeper troubles. As this Shaker village proceeds further into the new century, sober assessment of its role in the dawning millennium seems imperative. For the Shakertown experience as a window to a less hurried, but communal life of richness and sharing speaks less and less with a loud and insistent voice to the problems we confront or to the meaning we seek beyond the buzz and boom of our everyday existence. We need a sense of the presence of the past, perhaps a usable past, but this museum village seems almost frozen in a past—a past increasingly deaf to our everyday concerns and irrelevant to our possible future.

My focus in this lecture/presentation is four-fold:

--first, to deploy a set of ideas and concepts organized around the sustainability movement slowly and ambivalently proliferating around the globe;

--second, to highlight the way that the shift in thinking about general education in the new century spurred by national debates in various national organizations open the curricular field for general education reform

--third, to demonstrate the need to reinvent Shakertown and make it germane to the growing local-global problems of the twenty-first century; and

--fourth, to show how the reappropriating of themes and concerns of the Shaker community and their repositioning in the futurity provides the outline for a course that responds to the emerging UK curriculum framework—and in particular one of its four key learning outcomes

Grounding Concepts for Curricular Change and Pedagogical Innovation

Although “sustainable development’ and its more generic term ‘sustainability’ have become watchwords at global conferences and rallying cries for social movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), their meanings and implications have remained ‘essentially contest concepts’ concealing as much as they reveal. The most popular of definitions of the former derives from the Bruntland Commission report—namely, development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). This rendering however says little about the character of those needs of the present or the future or the constituencies who may have to bear the costs of preserving those potentialities for meeting future needs. Instead, it has largely served as a minimalist definition around which social consensus might coalesce to initiate such broadly based and loosely organized programs.

Ever since Dick Levine and I published two founding works of the UK Center for Sustainable Cities (Yanarella and Levine, 1992a and b), we have striven to give more concrete meaning and substances to these terms, as well as determine a scale at which such development can feasible take place. For this quest, we have resolved these issues in favor of a definition that grounds sustainability in a local and equitable area budget and the city-region scale. For us, then, sustainability is “a Local, Informed, Balance-Seeking Process, operating within its Sustainable Area Budget, and by so doing Exports no negative imbalances beyond its budgeted territory or into the future, thus Opening spaces of possibility and opportunity.” For us, this means then that it is the city-region that comprises “the largest unit [or scale] capable of addressing the many urban architectural, social, economic, political, natural resource, and environmental imbalances besetting the modern world and, at the same time, the smallest scale at which such problems can be meaningfully resolved in an integrated and holistic fashion.”

These definitional anchor points thus help us to work through the issue of scale and political strategy that has dogged environmental politics and sustainability initiatives ever since futurist Hazel Henderson popularized the adage, “Think Globally, Act Locally.” Henderson rendering of the relationship between local and global in the Age of Globalization has become something of a mantra from environmental groups worldwide,

but has also prompted counter-interpretations of that relationship. Kentucky native son and poet laureate, Wendell Berry, has demurred from Henderson's motto, instead arguing that the abstract and distant nature of the global requires that community activists and other change agents should instead "think locally and act locally." And for good reason. Insofar as the 'global' is a social construction mistakenly understood as operating above and beyond lower scales and ultimately unconnected to the local and regional scales, Berry offers a valid point. Others like Vandana Shiva make compelling arguments that their conception of global is always tied to a place despite the seeming distance from the space of flows such as financial and credit transactions that in their complexity obscure how local school districts and a small country like Iceland can become virtually bankrupt by the ebb and flow of transnational capital. In some respects closest to the debate over the relationship between local and global scales and its implications for political strategy is the reframing of Henderson's catch phrase offered by sociologists, Alan Schnaiberg and Lori Ridgeway"—i.e., "Think Globally, Plan Regionally, Act Locally." This controversy open out onto a field of contestation among academic theorists and policy analysts that exceeds our lecture focus. But, as we shall see, it does have important implications for the teaching of the course I will outline later in this presentation, especially as it bears on globalization as an economic and cultural phenomenon.

Likewise, these worries also meld into the significance of place and environmental consciousness as grounding concepts for the course's theme of Shakertown and the world of tomorrow. The salience of place as a facet of human identity and a wellspring of environmental concern can be seen in so erudite and seemingly abstruse a treatment of the notion of dwelling as can be found in Martin Heidegger's work. In his controversial and often misunderstood essay, "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger meditates on the concept of dwelling and how human beings dwell authentically. Dwelling, for Heidegger, is intimately tied to building, whether it be a house, a farm or a city. True dwelling, for him, implies a sparing and preserving attitude—a tolerance of a thing in its essence, a willingness to let something be. Respectful sparing then stands in contrast with the modernist impulse to seize and dominate things, to thoughtlessly refashion them according to our subjectivistic designs.

Authentic dwelling, such as we see in the labor and community of Shakers, incorporates what Heidegger calls the fourfold—earth, sky, gods, mortals: "to dwell is to spare the earth, receive the sky, expect the gods, and have a capacity for death" (Vycinas, 1969: 15). Sparing the earth and receiving the sky mean respectfully allowing the things of the earth and in the sky to be how they are in their essence and not try to subjugate them to our subjectivistic values or whims. Awaiting the gods means adopting an openness to the signs of the divine in our intimate surroundings or acknowledging their absence. Accepting our mortality and the inevitability of our death involves understanding human life in its completeness and in its ultimate ties to the rhythms of nature. Still, this sparing and preserving attitude does not entail that humans inhabit the world in a passive manner. Human beings, as creatures of need, must act in and upon the earth; but when they do so authentically, they build in the company of the fourfold. By assembling the fourfold in the act of work, tools, constructions, artifices like communities and cities receive from the foursome the references and standards for organization and

mutual interrelationship among built and natural environment. So, to build a home, to forge a community, means to be disposed to the higher realities of the fourfold and to stand under their direction. As I will try to show later, the timelessness of the Shaker utopian experiment lay in heeding Heidegger's words decades, even a century before they were written.

Similarly, humanist geographers like Yi-Fu Tuan have explored in a loosely Heideggerian manner the crucial character of place in the union of self and landscape through the exploration of topophilia--the love of a site, literally love of place, the bond between people and place. Other geographers like Edward (Ted) Relph, more directly influenced by Heidegger has connected together his treatment of dwelling and fourfold to the origin and evolution of environmental or ecological consciousness. Just as the sparing and preserving orientation to the rural farm communities the Shakers built and came to dwell in demonstrated a profound ecological concern with the relationship among land, people, place, work, and prayerful expectation, Relph's examination of place and placelessness in the modern world triggered an important exercise that will be a feature of one of my course's assignment: the writing of one's environmental autobiography. This exercise involves drawing out from students the genesis and flowering of their environmental consciousness and concern so often tied to the experience of a single place. In offering my own as an example, I point to my ecological center of gravity as inhabiting that place on the Cold Spring dock in the Hudson Valley where from that place on earth I can at once look upriver to the awesome majesty of Storm King Mountain (the famous site of an environmental controversy over siting a nuclear power plant there), then look down river to the verdant splendor and granite beauty of West Point, and finally turn behind me to view the relaxed busy-ness and community warmth of the town of Cold Spring, NY. In so many ways, the key to understanding who I am, what I believe, and what I would willingly die for is encapsulated in that place and those poses.

Many of us renewed our acquaintance with one of William Faulkner's most acute aphorisms when Barack Obama incorporated it into his Philadelphia Speech on Race at a crucial moment in his primary and caucus campaign. Faulkner famously stated, "The past is not dead and buried. In fact, it isn't even past." This recollection prompted me to think about the citizen's, scholar's, and politician's quest for a usable past and its value for my search for the continuing relevance of the Shaker utopian experiment.

In this quest, I found myself turning to three philosophical guides to historical memory and to the residues of cultural products like those of the Shakers. Whether DeTocqueville's critique of Americans' historical amnesia or Horkheimer and Adorno's argument that "all reification is a forgetting" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972: 274), social thinkers have lamented the price paid in American society and culture for the social and historical loss of memory. Working from his reading of Freud, Herbert Marcuse in his book, *Eros and Civilization*, speaks of the "explosive force of memory" and assigns to it the capacity of preserving "promises and potentialities which are betrayed and even outlawed by the mature, civilized individual, but which has once [in early childhood]

been fulfilled in his dim past and which are never entirely forgotten" (1955: 18 and 29 respectively.)

In thinking about this theoretical point in the context of course development and curricular reform, I turned to my philosophical mentor Ernst Bloch who, in his multi-volume work, *The Principle of Hope*, argued that cultural objects and projects formed out of deeply-grounded human experiences always overflow their transitory, historically conditioned forms and thus contain a latency within them—i.e., a "cultural surplus." This cultural surplus, this forgotten or ideologically concealed remainder of a particularly powerful cultural formation like the Shaker experience retains utopian residues that can be reactivated by individuals, groups, and movements in the present for the future. The task of cultural critique and political action is to uncover these "not-yet-present" dimensions of cultural objects (including wishes, dreams, fantasies, and even utopian blueprints) and release those immanent possibilities in the present so they can be realized in the future. As we shall see, what I have in mind for reinventing Shakertown and working in the classroom with first-year students next semester involves precisely this effort to re-investigate the Shakers cultural and other products, discover their cultural surplus, and reawaken the possibilities for a better world of tomorrow contained in the not-yet realized potential in their many different policies, programs, and projects.

National Trends in Higher Education

Each generation of undergraduate innovators at colleges and universities wrestles with the new ideas and proposed reforms presented in reports commissioned by national higher education organizations and books written by celebrated scholars, teachers, and administrators reflecting on their experiences or generated by their imagination. For some while at this University, the report, "Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for Research Universities," prepared by the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University, served as a guide for initiatives at reforming undergraduate education generally and general education in particular. In the latest round of reform efforts, Derek Bok's book, *Our Underachieving Colleges*, and the Association of American Colleges and Universities' National Panel report, "Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College," became essential touchstones for general education reform.

During the GERA phase of the present campaign for general education reform here at the University of Kentucky, I became quiet enamored of the ideas and insights of the AAC&U report. One insight from the report highlighted by Carol Geary Schneider that impressed me was her exploration of changing design for liberal and general education in America in the transit from the nineteenth century college (with its accent on a common-core curriculum and a belief that all learning is general) to the twentieth century university (with its emphasis on the division of breadth and depth and its assignment of breadth to general studies and of depth to the major) to the outline of the twenty-first century academy (with its rethinking of educational purposes and practices, especially its accentuation on preparing students for a diverse, globally interdependent, and

knowledge-driven world). Also tied to the emergence of the twenty-first century academy is a shift—among other things—toward:

--a focus on learning and learning outcomes;

--an emphasis on informed probing of questions and values;

--a recognition of diversity of students and multiculturalism;

--an effort to link critical thinking to real-life problems, often involving contested values;

--a concern with finding connections within and across disciplines; and

--a greater examination and engagement with a range of cultures, cultural complexity, and global issues, among others.

General Education Curriculum and Pedagogy

Now three-and-a-half years and counting, the general education reform initiative has sought to take the liberal arts core of this University's undergraduate education beyond the framework and philosophy of the University Studies Program and refound it upon a 21st century liberal education footing. In many respects, it reflects the new elements emergent from the national conversations and debates spurred by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and especially its Greater Education publication. From the USP Exernal Review Committee and GERA to the General Education Steering Committee and now 10 (actually 11) Curriculum Teams, this reform effort was abetted by a number of committees that has tackled the movement from one century to another and the ramifications of that shift for teaching undergraduates and preparing them for the realities and possibilities, the new and daunting demands and emergent possibilities and rewards of this new century.

This effort has been most recently grounded upon four learning outcomes that has become the bases for the development of course templates to instantiate them into a new general education curriculum:

I. Students will demonstrate an understanding of and ability to employ the processes of intellectual inquiry. [12 credit hours]

II. Students will demonstrate competent written, oral, and visual communication skills both as producers and consumers of information. [6 credit hours]

III. Students will demonstrate an understanding of and ability to employ methods of quantitative reasoning. [6 credit hours]

IV. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of citizenship and the process for making informed choices as engaged citizens in a diverse, multilingual2 world. [6 credit hours]

The course I have developed, tentative designated and titled, GP 301: Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill: Local-Global Perspectives on the Twentieth Century, springs from my long-term fascination with the Shaker experience and legacy in the Kentucky Bluegrass and beyond, as well as my involvement in the Shaker Roundtable process headed for some years by noted newspaper editor and writer and television publicist, Al Smith. In my view, the contours and components of the course converge with the new directions in the national debate over general education in the twenty-first century and is compatible with, and even exemplary of the inchoate UK general education framework currently being designed. It is also replete with possibilities for innovative pedagogical techniques that two curriculum teams are currently exploring.

Its overriding interests are reflected in its learning objectives or outcomes:

--Achieving greater cross-cultural understanding and appreciation for cultural difference: One learning goal of this course is *to encourage students to understand social, political, and economic principles and practices that differentiate cultures*. Different cultural beliefs and practices often fuel political confusion and misunderstanding and cross-culturally lead to bitter conflict and even violence.

--Making local-global and global-local connections: Another learning objective is to assist them in recognizing how some of the causes of local problems and injustices are often connected to wider regional, national, and even global scales, just as wide scale problems can sometimes be solved or significantly mitigated through local policies and actions.

--Understanding the many forms and faces of globalization in economic, cultural, and ecological realms: No less important is the need for students to comprehend the emerging economic interdependence and social collaboration that underlies some forms of globalization. So too must students develop a grasp at how the increasing connections of locales, regions, and nations with global processes can be restructured in ways that can promote multiculturalism, greater harmony between the built environment and the Ecosystem, creative forms of collaboration and cooperation, more peace methods of conflict resolution, and the forging of institutions and practices promoting and defending the Global Commons.

--Recognizing the opportunities for nurturing sustainability from the local to the global: Standing as a central learning objective in this course is fostering hope and possibility in the cultural and political realm that the emergent worldview, institutions, policies, and practices associated with the worldwide sustainability movement provide a real and compelling alternative to an endless war on terrorism, bitter and persistent regional and international conflict, ecological overshoot and collapse, environmental degradation, and Malthusian solutions to population growth and ecological scarcity.

Global Perspectives (GP) 301 then is intended to be an upper-division core course in the new General Education curriculum that opens up comparative and local-global connections on existing or looming problems shaping the twenty-first century. The daunting realities of globalization necessitate that graduates become citizens of the world as well as place-based citizens. Student must also understand different cultures and how these cultures interact with the United States. as well as the dynamic interaction between local and global issues and problems like poverty and homelessness, pollution and other forms of environmental degradation, social and economic injustice, sexism and racism, and ethnic, religious, and other forms of conflict.

GP 301 takes a rather novel approach to pressing world problems and issues by linking them to a nearby experiment in utopian community building attempted by the Shakers in Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, and elsewhere in the early to mid-1800s. The virtue of this approach to global issues is that it brings close to home the problems and attempted solutions to issues like:

- nutrition and agricultural security;
- sustainable communities;
- industry and technological development;
- gender relations;
- ecological well being;
- architecture and the built environment;
- human fertility and population size;
- a culture of life, caring, and sustenance;
- religious faith and tolerance, and ultimate questions;
- health and medicine; and
- civic politics and democratic governance.

Before disclosing further the status of its course development, I would like to turn to a number of the above themes that will both inform this course and its pedagogy and illuminate the possibilities for reinventing Shakertown on a twenty-first century foundation.

Reinventing Shakertown: New Themes for Bridging the Next Century

The Shakers were a people of paradox, contradiction, and possibility. The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing took the form of a millenarian movement with apocalyptic overtones that also exhibited exacting craft standards and enormous patience in their labors and almost sensual pleasure in their diet and eating habits. They also manifested a profoundly contradictory attitude toward sexuality—on the on hand, preaching sexual abstinence as a means of quelling the evil, lustful side of human nature and yet, on the other, exhibiting extraordinary fascination with animal husbandry and reproduction as an aspect of farming. The utopian impulse of their religion carried with it a deeply this-worldly bent toward living a life where heavenly existence is taken up and realized in an earthly place.

Today they are encapsulated in a tourist experience that embeds Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill in the World of Yesterday, as the animating purpose of its historic restoration and preservation by those generous and civic-spirited benefactors led by Earl Wallace that has proven to be a monumental impediment to its further relevance to the World of Tomorrow.

Could it be that the rethinking and reinvention of Shakertown through our cultural and political imagination require nothing less than carving a new grounding image, a new function, and a new manner of demonstrating its value as a cultural resource and a pedagogical opportunity? Simply put, does not the renewal of Shakertown necessitate forging a new model of a usable past better aligned to the new issues, developing problems, and unfolding agenda of city and countryside alike in this new time and old place? If we reflect upon the various elements of the dis-ease of our times, the continuing relevance of the Shakers to our emerging future is not hard to recognize. These include:

Shaker Responses to the Global Farm Crisis

The Shakers were a resourceful and inventive community. The products of their efficient use of natural resources and their embrace of laborsaving technology are apparent even to the first-time visitor. That they might speak to us about our emergent condition by pointing the way to a future of rural promise beyond the tobacco wars is not self-evident. So we might ask: Could not some of the many acres of rich farmland comprising Pleasant Hill be given over to agricultural experimentation by the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture and groups like the Community Farm Alliance as a challenge to discover new uses of agricultural land for small Kentucky farmers beyond tobacco? Might these institutions and organizations not be put in competition to find the best and most viable agricultural alternatives and the most balanced ways to honor the Shaker farming legacy in a new era where making peace with the earth and finding nonexploitative uses for technology are pressing concerns?

Shaker Perspectives on the Global Population Explosion

As a utopian religious community, Shakertown may still have much to teach us about a key pedagogical function of utopias: the education of the senses and the education of desire. Surely their practice of sexual renunciation strikes our late modern sensibilities as hopelessly antiquarian and ultimately self-liquidating. As it was. Such sexual abstinence also points to a very truncated and limiting way of expressing their humanity and educating their instincts. On the other hand, the Shakers' patient discipline of their bodies and interpersonal relationships was inextricably connected with other, more emotional and aesthetic aspects of their lives. Whether the good food prepared to satisfy the hearty appetites built up by physical labor, or the whirling, circle dances featured in their worship services or the profound fascination they exhibited toward animal husbandry, the Shakers found ways to channel their sublimated sexual energies into creative, symbolic, and productive practices heightening their senses and enriching their collective lives.

What can we take from these strange and wonderful people about desire and the human senses at the millennium that enlarges our experiences of self and others and responds to the needs of a planet edging to six, eight, even ten billion inhabitants? Surely, if the carrying capacity of the earth is not to be overwhelmed by such an unbearable level of environmental demand, the Shaker example of the disciplining of the sexual instinct may have limited import in an age of increasingly safe and effective contraceptive means.

Shaker Contributions to the Dialogue on Simple Living and Sustainable Development

The Shakers' lifestyle also prefigures a way of dwelling in the land and living with others in community convergent with the voluntary simplicity movement. Living a simple existence where basic human needs are satisfied and nature's boundaries and finite resources are shepherded is the basis of a powerful movement subverting the often profligate consumer lifestyles and habits in which so many of us feel trapped. Shaker living demonstrated to their contemporaries how rich and rewarding a communal life of meaningful work, Christian fellowship, and social and economic simplicity could be. Wendell Berry reminds us of the deeper wisdom of Shaker living and its capacity to overcome an apparent contradiction in its millennialist religion and exacting craft standards:

> Asked why the Shakers, who expected the end of the world at any moment, were nevertheless consummate craftsmen, Thomas Merton replied: “When you expect the word to end at any moment, you know there is no need to hurry. You take your time, you do your work well.” (Berry, 2004: 161)

And Merton himself goes further in noting the source of the “peculiar grace” of a Shaker chair as residing in “the fact that it was made by someone capable of believing that an angel might come and sit on it” (Merton, 2003:11). The pull of that way of life remains strong in the United States and elsewhere. Indeed, it poses fundamental lessons of relevance and urgency in an increasingly crowded world calling not only for the forging of a program of sustainable development for the nations of the Southern Hemisphere, but for the greening of the North as well.

Shaker Lessons on God and the Sacred

As a devoutly religious people, the Shakers provide another element of a usable past in their gender-inclusive image of God. For the Shakers, the towering influence and profound message of their founder, Mother Ann Lee, encouraged them to imagine a Godhead who was dual in nature, combining male and female components. A living legacy anchored in part in Shaker theology and doctrine opens up a spiritual and cultural conversation with the contemporary feminist movement about the idea of a God for all of us, a God of and beyond gender. Again, the precise framing of this controversial conception, as some theologians have suggested, may reflect the hidebound nature of the circumstances in which it was developed. But the progressive nature of this insight in the

context of prevailing Christian doctrine and controversies in mainline Protestant and Catholic denominations over sexism and God talk remains powerful and noteworthy.

While the Shakers clearly do not have the last word in debates regarding efforts to overcome sexist language in liturgies and the written Word, they certainly offer a valuable starting point for feminist theologians in carrying the women's revolution into religious organizations and doctrines in order to purge the sacred of its longstanding sexist biases. For beneath and beyond the stifling implications of their renunciation of sex and their rigid segregation of women and men were the shaping influence of their woman founder and a parallel structure of organization placing brothers and sisters, elders and eldresses, on relatively equal footing. (See generally Mercadante, 1990, for the definitive accounting of the Shaker contribution to the post-modern feminist project.)

The Shaker Nexus Between City and Countryside

The Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill stood at the juncture of trade and commerce between the growing city of Lexington and small towns like Harrodsburg. Its economic character as a juncture point suggests that while its religious doctrine encouraged its isolation from the secular temptations of the big city and the confinements of the small town, its post-millennial future may best be found in reconnecting its cultural and intellectual endowments to those of the city through state-of-the-art information and communications technologies.

Imagine a city museum of Lexington united to Shakertown through live television cameras and vice versa so that in novel and instructional ways the resources of each could be shared and serve to mutually educate visitors to the place of each in the historical development of the other. Imagine Shaker singing and dance performances being televised to Lexington and live performances of the Lexington Philharmonic or Children's Theatre beamed to Shakertown or outlying rural communities. Imagine how these experiences of mutual cultural enrichment might become a model for linking city, rural communities, and countryside in other places around the Commonwealth in a manner that simultaneously undercuts prevailing cultural stereotypes and expands the appreciation of local and regional cultures and folkways. If we could find creative roles for academia to mediate these programs, at least some of the anti-intellectual attitudes hobbling greater understanding and tolerance in the Commonwealth might be overcome.

The Black Shakers and the Inclusive Community

From the Shaker belief in the nature of God as Almighty Power (Father) and Eternal Wisdom (Mother) came their embrace of the principle that all human beings were equally children of Holy Father/Blessed Mother God. This egalitarian Christian fellowship/sistership extended to all of God's children, whatever their race, gender, or ethnicity. Being creatures of their time and place, the Shakers of Pleasant Hill identified with a position with respect to African-Americans and the institution of slavery that made them "emancipationists" rather than "abolitionists."

As emancipationists, they worked within the bounds of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and existing state laws and did not participate in the Underground Railroad. But because they also adhered to the principle of communal ownership of property, which meant that when a slave-owning convert signed a covenant with the Shaker community, that person committed all of his or her world possessions to the society of believers for their productive use. Such property sometimes included African-Americans who were enslaved. If a convert later renounced his or her membership in the Shaker community, the society would typically buy the former slave rather than see him or her returned to bondage or sold to other slaveholders. As a freed person achieved through papers of manumission, the former slave was eligible at his or her volition to become a full member of the Shakers, even rising to elder or eldress status, or was transported across the Ohio River to the free states of Indiana or Ohio.

The Shaker's example of forging and carrying out the beliefs, norms, and practices of a beloved and inclusive community points to a model of community life that challenges today's churches and societies to shed remaining prejudices against those who still experience bias, hatred, and victimization because of sexual orientation, religious loyalty or nonbelief or gender. Their legacy of an open and welcoming commonwealth should trigger an active inheritance where sexual, religious, and other differences foreswearing violence, dominance and manipulation toward the other provides the basis for an even more inclusive community where difference and otherness become sources of mutual enrichment, respect for human diversity, appreciation for the mystery and wonder of humankind's social and cultural expressions, and a catalyst for further human and social development of the individual and the wider community.

Shakertown Between Local Economy and Global Economic Restructuring

Despite thriving trade and commerce in the region, the Shaker community struggled to remain self-sufficient on its own terms. The agricultural basis of its local economic foundations provided most of the necessities of the community. The Shaker's practicality not only made them receptive to inventing many laborsaving implements but gave them a keen sense of the economic advantages of converting raw materials into value-added products like Shaker seeds, jams and jellies, and pharmaceuticals.

In some respects, Shakertown was a precursor to the kind of sustainable communities that scholars and policymakers, citizen action groups and ecological organizations have striven to realize as a counterpoise to pressures and forces advancing the integration and subordination of locales and regions into a tightly-structured, hierarchical global economy. It is instructive that today's Shaker museum village has largely broken from these self-sufficient practices. As one example, the Shaker brooms sold in its craft shop, while made by volunteer senior citizens, are a testimony to globalization processes affecting its local industry: the straw is imported from Mexico, the wood handles from Thailand, and the hemp from the Fiji Islands. If these globalizing tendencies are not to overwhelm efforts to promote local and regional economic sustainability and if this Shakertown community is to honor its economic heritage as a model to the future, its

administration will need to find ways of restoring the village to its local and regional setting and utilizing its own resources for its craft and other products.

The Shakertown Inhabitation in Regional Geology and Ecology

Pleasant Hill is not only the site of the Shaker Village. It is part of a wider geological and biological region that has undergone slow change and transformation. The many layers of rock comprising the Kentucky River palisades reminds us of the long, but palpable mutations occurring over the sweep of geological time. These subtle changes need to be structured into the presentation of Shakertown. We cannot know what natural and human-made forces shaped this area without appreciating the slow, but inexorable gathering up, layering, and remolding of the land we recognize today as Pleasant Hill. Could we not imagine geological studies and tours offered to travelers curious about the Shakers' inhabitation of the region and its natural resources—studies and tours that marry the religious devotion of the Shakers to the land with the spiritual ecology of the region's ecology? Would this hybrid intellectual venture not say something about the finite moment of the Shakers' experiment and the eternal clockwork of nature? Might we not find ourselves in the presence of the nexus that combines and infuses the evanescent and the A/almighty?

In/conclusion: An Unfinished Pedagogical Agenda and a Post-millennial Vision of Shakertown

The introduction of these themes will no doubt be a demanding exercise in an undergraduate course—but, I believe, a rewarding one for teacher and student alike. I am scheduled to offer Global Studies 301 as a Discovery Seminar during the Fall 2009 semester. In addition to an early semester field trip to Pleasant Hill, students will be treated to perspectives on the Black Shaker experience by former education coordinator of Shaker museums at South Union, Ky., and Old Chatham, NY, Sharon Koomler. A portion of a play on the Shaker spiritual awakening period, "As It is in Heaven," recently featured on the grounds at Pleasant Hill by the UK Theatre Department troupe, will be presented.

Remaining on the agenda for further activity is the necessity of scaling up the course format from a seminar to an advanced undergraduate course. If approved, this course would likely be offered to third- or fourth-year students to fulfill part of the requirements of Learning Outcome #4. I have not yet begun to think in operational terms about how to assess the course objectives and learning outcomes, partly because the course template for this part of the unfolding General Education curriculum has not yet been finalized. I also plan to work with the Teaching and Academic Support Center staff for assistance in this area. Since course approval mechanisms have yet to be established and such clearance is likely to take place during the 2009-2010 academic year, these and other matters will be targeted for completion sometime during the Fall 2009 semester, assuming the General Education initiative is finally approved by the University Senate.

Meanwhile, the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill beckons as twenty-first century cultural resource. When the last Shaker believer dies, Shaker faith and experience need not be consigned to the dustbin of history or simply housed in buildings and displays that point only to a past that is no more. Nor should the Shaker commercial furniture and artifact industries be the only trace of this once beloved intentional community. Far from being silent to the unfulfilled needs and emergent desires increasingly populating the Bluegrass, Kentucky, America, and the world, the Shaker example and spirit speak across the millennial divide in ways that should—and could—be a lightning rod for public interest, cultural attraction, and economic value. Simply put, Shakertown must not succumb to the passage of time and the grip of a suffocating tradition and lifeless legacy. It can be renovated and refurbished so that it will stand as a beacon of hope and a school of instruction for the next century and to new generations of citizens of the Commonwealth and beyond.

Critical to this rebuilding process is the formidable task of carrying the Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill into this New Millennium. These activities would be organized around transforming Shakertown from its present museum village into what Patrick Geddes and Lewis Mumford called a regional museum or civic gallery. The operative words are 'regional' and 'civic.' The goal of this renovation would be to convert Shakertown into a cultural magnet that gathers together the social, economic, and geographic facets and dimensions of the region of which it is a vital part. Its civic purpose lies in connecting the ideas and perspectives opened up by Shaker experience and legacy with issues and themes reverberating through our emerging post-millennial culture and politics. Together, these elements can transform Shaker's history into a usable past for present and future generations along lines outlined earlier.

The transition to a regional museum or civic gallery will no doubt take time, money, and an enlarged and forward-looking vista on the Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill. Surely, the original idea of Earl Wallace—i.e., to use the facility as a conference center—has proved its mettle. That function should not only be retained; it should be expanded. One strong possibility convergent with its transformation into a regional museum/civic gallery is to expand the conference center framework into a local-regional-global Chautauqua. Drawing upon the success of the town of Chautauqua in New York State, a renewed Shakertown might seek to find its greater economic potential and financial viability in striving to become the southern Chautauqua. Without destroying the scenic beauty of its immediate environs, consideration might be given to gradually adding additional structures to house and feed many more conference attendees throughout the year. Naturally, such additional construction would need to be tasteful and keeping with the architectural style and criteria dictated by the present configuration of buildings.

In conclusion, whatever the merits of holding onto the Shaker experience in its pastness, a future insensitive to the ways that that legacy continues to speak to us and beckon our attention will only close us off to the spiritual example and robust practices that the Shaker community represented. With a new millennium upon us, it is time to shape the contours of a new identity and fashion new and viable roles for Shakertown in keeping with the inchoate needs of the twenty-first century limned in the themes and

perspectives above. In this effort, past, present, and future generations will be able to honor its traditions by joining in a new and expanding circle dance of love, reverence, and gift-giving—and, in so doing,

> "To turn, turn, will be our delight,
>
> 'til by turning, turning we come round right." (Simple Gifts)

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