

BOOKS

Greeley's 'Lord of the Dance' Is 'Appalling'

"Lord of the Dance," by Father Andrew M. Greeley. Warner Books. (New York, 1984). 401 pp., \$17.50.

Reviewed by Katharine Bird
NC News Service

As a novelist, Father Andrew Greeley is appalling. After reading his latest novel I found myself wondering what makes him tick. Why would a priest, a respectable sociologist and researcher, want to write trash?

"Lord of the Dance," intended apparently to appeal to readers who enjoy Sidney Sheldon and his ilk, has all the right ingredients: a vibrant young heroine, Noele Farrell, determined to ferret out the mystery that she senses has haunted her family for decades; a grandmother, Brigid, sure she is destined for hell because of her

long-time adulterous love affair and other sins; a spy-hero, Daniel, shot down over China and secretly imprisoned there for many years; a priest, Msgr. John Farrell, building a reputation as a TV interviewer, who lusts after his brother's wife.

Explaining why he writes novels, Father Greeley said in a New York Times Magazine article May 6, "Stories have always been the best way to talk about religion because stories appeal to the emotions and the whole personality and not just to the mind."

To me, however, this kind of religious storytelling should involve more than simply presenting Catholic characters who make passing references to the sins they are committing. It should mean more than offering up an innocent victim to be sacrificed as the writer does in describing

Noele's shocking, brutal rape before her boyfriend's horrified eyes.

And religious storytelling should mean more than producing a Pollyanna conclusion where characters find the slate neatly wiped clean and the opportunity for a new, better life in the offing.

The good news about this novel is that it shows Father Greeley has progressed considerably as a writer since his even worse first fiction effort, "The Cardinal Sins."

"Lord of the Dance" has an absorbing story line which keeps the reader's attention throughout. The author's technique of having the story told by each character is effective since it provides different points of view for the same events.

But as a novelist Father Greeley has other shortcomings which irritate. He can't avoid cliches: "rushing to embrace the lions;" "ponderously dull;" "He was so eager to

possess her that he could not think straight;" "Their kisses ignited like tiny fires on a dry prairie."

On occasion, he is so delighted with a phrase he can't resist using it repeatedly, for example, "balloonhead," Msgr. Farrell's oft-repeated contemptuous term for fatuous priests.

Father Greeley tries hard to portray teen-agers through what he imagines is teen talk. Sometimes it jars badly. He describes Noele as "totally bummed" and "really jazzed." "Really!" is used so much it sets a reader's teeth on edge.

To sum up what to do about Father Greeley's book: Don't bother.

Ms. Bird is associate editor of Faith Today, NC News religious education supplement.

Future of Liturgy

"Remembering the Future," edited by Carl A. Last. Paulist Press (New York-Ramsey, N.J., 1983). 113 pp., \$5.95.

Reviewed by Sister Mary Collins, OSB
NC News Service

Opening a collection of essays is like reaching into a grab bag. What distinguishes this collection is that the book is full of articles of genuine value.

The authors prepared their papers for a 1983 symposium sponsored by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the promulgation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

Msgr. Frederick McManus's essay describes the conciliar process from "Mediator Dei" in 1947 to the 1963 promulgation of the liturgy document. His concern is "to illustrate that the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy did not appear suddenly or full blown, but grew out of a profound movement within the Church community."

He names the men and moments that advanced the process, taking time to note U.S. contributions.

Father Ed Kilmartin takes a running jump into the present after turning back briefly to the 16th century liturgical reform of the Council of Trent. From that background, he launches into a survey of the distinctive theology of the liturgy constitution and its pastoral consequences.

He offers a general assessment of how well the Vatican II theological vision and pastoral directives have been faring in the Church, as well as a personal judgment about the precondition for advancing the Church's liturgical project. That precondition is religious insight into Christian identity in late 20th century culture.

Father Kevin Seasoltz looks hard at the assertion that the Church was not ready for what happened at Vatican II nor for what has happened since. He looks particularly at the conflict of interpretation of liturgical texts and directives and shows the several sources of such conflicts.

Father Anscar Chupungco, Filipino rector of the Pontifical Liturgical Institute at San Anselmo in Rome, suggests lines of future development by remembering how the early Roman liturgy first took shape.

Ancient Rome's cultural taste expressed itself in simple, sober and functional forms. Rome's neighbors to the north adopted Roman liturgy, dressed it up with dramatic touches and flair more to their own liking, and eventually sent the liturgy back home, still the Roman liturgy, but culturally transformed. Father Chupungco says that Vatican II stripped the liturgy back to its ancient Roman simplicity and sent it out again to all the Churches.

Therese Koernke looks at the relationship between the spirituality embodied in the liturgy and the way Christians live in the world. She raises the central question: Does the Church find credible for its life what it celebrates in its liturgy? Is death the way to life?

The title of the collection is catchy but misleading. This is a good book about a living tradition in its present moment.

Benedictine Sister Mary Collins, vice president of the North American Academy of Liturgy, directs the liturgical studies program at The Catholic University of America.

Vatican Radio

Is Anybody Here Listening?

Vatican City (NC) — Who in the United States is listening to "the pope's radio"?

That is the question of Jesuit Father Henry Lavin, director of English programming at Vatican Radio.

He sends two daily short-wave broadcasts of news and views about Pope John Paul II and church activities to the United States.

But much of his mail from the United States comes from short-wave operators sending form cards acknowledging reception of the broadcasts.

"But I'd like to hear from other than happy short-wave fans," he said.

Father Lavin said that the English division of Vatican Radio prepares 33 minutes of broadcasts for the United States daily. The first program, at 10:45 a.m. EDT, is a 14-minute show he described as "largely informational and regarding the pope's activities and papal initiatives throughout the world."

The program "stresses the pope, human rights and justice issues," he said.

The second broadcast, a 19-minute show at 4:50 p.m. EDT, is issue-oriented and include church history and discussion of contemporary church issues. A future series plans to broadcast interviews with U.S. nuns living in Rome.

Father Lavin said that despite its name,

Vatican Radio is not an official voice of the Vatican.

"You can't say that a position we take is the Vatican position," said Father Lavin. "We're not told what to do."

He added, however, that Vatican authorities issue general directives on occasion. As an example, he said that Vatican Radio had been instructed not to emphasize the recent incident in Seoul, South Korea, when a young man leaped in front of the pope and shot at him with a toy gun.

"The Vatican did not want to embarrass the host country," said Father Lavin.

Sometimes Vatican Radio is told "not to harp on a certain issue, even if the secular press is doing so," he said.

Vatican Radio broadcasts in 35 languages.

"The major thrust of Vatican Radio is Africa, the Far East and the Iron Curtain countries. We have no satellite link to the United States because it's too expensive," he said, adding that he would like to see the U.S. bishops fund a satellite link.

Anyone wishing to listen to Vatican Radio via short wave can locate the station at KHZ 6015-41 m, KHZ 9605-31 m, or KHZ 11845-25 m.

Vatican Radio program guides are available free by writing: Vatican Radio, Vatican City 00120.

MOVIES

Recent Movie Listings

New York (NC) — Here is a list of recent films which the U.S. Catholic Conference Department of Communication has rated on the basis of moral suitability.

The first symbol after each title is the USCC rating. The second symbol is the rating of the Motion Picture Association of America.

These are the USCC symbols and their meanings: A-I — general patronage; A-II — adults and adolescents; A-III — adults; A-IV — adults with reservations (an A-IV classification is for certain films which, while not morally offensive in themselves, require caution and some analysis and explanation as a protection to the uninformed against wrong interpretations and false conclusions); O — morally offensive. The word "recommended" appears behind the titles of those films that merit such a designation.

Here are the Motion Picture Association of America symbols and their meanings: G — general audiences, all ages admitted; PG — parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children; R — restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; X — no one under 17 admitted (age limit may vary in certain areas).

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|---|---|-------|---|
| A | Against All Odds, O (R) | G | Gorky Park, A-IV (R) |
| B | The Big Chill, A-III (R) | B | Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, A-III (PG) |
| C | Blame It on Rio, O (R) | H | Hard to Hold, A-III (PG) |
| D | Broadway Danny Rose, A-III (PG) | O | Harry and Son, O (PG) |
| E | Children of the Corn, A-III (R) | P | Hotel New Hampshire, O (R) |
| F | The Dresser, A-II (PG) | R | Iceman, A-II (PG) |
| G | Educating Rita, A-III (PG) | N | Ice Pirates, A-III (PG) |
| H | Fanny and Alexander, A-IV (R) | O | Lassiter, O (R) |
| I | Footloose, A-III (PG) | A-II | Lonely Guy, A-III (PG) |
| J | Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter, O (R) | A-III | The Man Who Loved Women, O (R) |
| K | | A-III | Mike's Murder, A-III (R) |
| L | | A-III | Misunderstood, A-II (PG) |
| M | | A-III | |
| N | | A-III | |
| O | | A-III | |
| P | | A-III | |
| Q | | A-III | |
| R | | A-III | |
| S | | A-III | |
| T | | A-III | |
| U | | A-III | |
| V | | A-III | |
| W | | A-III | |
| X | | A-III | |
| Y | | A-III | |
| Z | | A-III | |

- Moscow on the Hudson, O (R)
- N
- Never Cry Wolf, A-II (PG)
- Never Say Never Again, O (PG)
- A Night in Heaven, O (R)
- Night of the Shooting Stars, A-II
- O
- Over the Brooklyn Bridge, A-III (R)
- P
- Police Academy, O (R)
- Privates on Parade, A-III (R)
- The Prodigal, A-II (PG)
- R
- Racing with the Moon, O (PG)
- Reckless, O (R)
- The Return of Martin Guerre, A-III
- Reuben, Reuben, A-III (R)
- The Right Stuff, A-III (PG)
- Romancing the Stone, A-III (PG)
- S
- Scarface, O (R)

Capsule Movie Reviews

"Privates on Parade" (Orion Classics) A motley collection of misfit soldiers, under the inspired leadership of a flamboyant homosexual director (Deanis Quilty), put on a variety show called "Jungle Jamboree" for British troops fighting communist guerrillas in Malaya in 1948. Thanks to the invincible stupidity of their unit commander (John Cleese), they become directly involved in the conflict. The film tries to hit several different notes — it's farcical, sentimental, tender and even patriotic and comes close to carrying it off. Thanks to the dull

director Michael Blakemore and the fine writing of Peter Nichols, most viewers will be quite ready to forgive its shortcomings. (A traitor whose crimes are especially heinous, for example, seems too heavy a weight for the material to bear.) Good entertainment for mature viewers, but an abundance of double entendres, some blasphemy, a brief bedroom scene involving some nudity and the prominence of homosexuality in the story line rule out younger viewers. The U.S. Catholic Conference has classified it A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

"This Is Spinal Tap" (Embassy) This mock documentary on the last, inglorious American tour of an aging English heavy metal group whose fame is long gone is a subtle, sometimes very funny satire both on rock groups and on the idealized documentaries made about them. The four principals — Rob Reiner as the Martin Scorsese-like filmmaker and Michael McKean, Christopher Guest, and Harry Shearer as the three not over-bright leaders of the group — also collaborated on the script. Reiner tripled as director. This is the wittiest, most satirical American film to appear in ages. "Spinal Tap" is a must-see for those who have any strong feelings, love or hate, toward rock music. Even those who are indifferent to the subject but appreciate satire will find it entertaining. There is a great deal of crude language and many sexual references in the dialogue and song lyrics, but these are essential to the satirical nature of the film. The U.S. Catholic Conference has classified it A-II — adults and adolescents. The industry rating is R — restricted.

"Weekend Pass" (Crown International) Four sailors just out of boot camp hit Los Angeles on a weekend pass in this mediocre effort. The young actors have some appeal and director Lawrence Bassoff has put a variety of Los Angeles backgrounds to good use, but the script, also by Bassoff, is pedestrian. Though the movie is innocuous for the most part, and even veers toward romantic wholesomeness, some graphic, utterly gratuitous nudity in an early cabaret sequence is highly offensive. The U.S. Catholic Conference has classified it O — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.