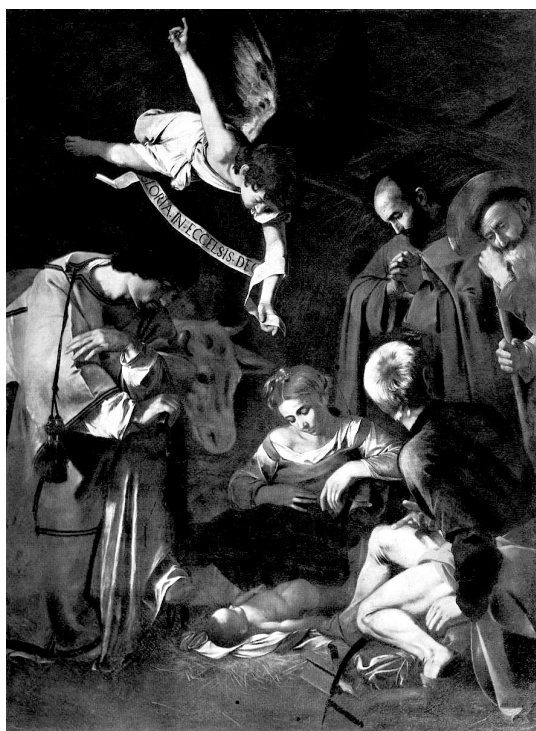




No. 37

October 2010

**DISORDER/ORDER  
IN HISTORY AND POLITICS**



Caravaggio, Nativity with the saints Lawrence and Francis (1609)

**COV&R Conference: June 15-18, 2011  
Salina – Aeolian Islands, Italy**

*B.C. Hearing you, someone could take you as a defender of order.*

*R.G. And he would be wrong! [...] In a society without crisis, completely stabilized in the absence of violence, history is not possible.*

*René Girard, Achever Clausewitz*

In René GIRARD's latest book, *Achever Clausewitz*, the continuum of disorder and order in history and politics is considered from an apocalyptic standpoint. In the case of CLAUSEWITZ facing NAPOLEON, the encounter between the imitator and his model turns into an escalation which inexorably propagates to the whole of Europe. At the end of his analysis, GIRARD comes to the conclusion that there is no difference between chaos and order anymore. Neither political aims, nor objects or victims make the difference. It is only the "escalation to the extremes!" which will drive—from now on—the relationship between doubles. Can we agree with

*continued on p. 4*

*COV&R Object: "To explore, criticize, and develop the mimetic model of the relationship between violence and religion in the genesis and maintenance of culture. The Colloquium will be concerned with questions of both research and application. Scholars from various fields and diverse theoretical orientations will be encouraged to participate both in the conferences and the publications sponsored by the Colloquium, but the focus of activity will be the relevance of the mimetic model for the study of religion."*

The *Bulletin* is also available online:  
<http://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/bulletin/>

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**COV&R AT THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION ANNUAL MEETING  
IN ATLANTA, GA, 2010**

All COV&R members attending the AAR meeting in Atlanta, GA October 30-November 1, are encouraged to participate in COV&R events. Please invite interested colleagues to attend also. Questions can be directed to Martha REINEKE, Coordinator, COV&R at the AAR, martha.reineke@uni.edu.

**Three AAR Events:**

**M30-101 COV&R Saturday Morning Session, Saturday, October 30, 2010 9:00 AM-11:30 AM in the Marriott L404.**

**9:00-10:45 a.m. Book Session:** Jon PAHL's *Empire of Sacrifice: The Religious Origins of American Violence*.

Panelists: Jon PAHL, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia; Responding: Kathryn LOFTON, Yale University; Michael HARDIN, Preachingpeace;

**10:45-10:50 Break**

**10:50-11:30 Business Meeting** to plan sessions for next year.

**A31-322 M31-200 Joint session: Psychology, Culture and Religion Group and COV&R  
Sunday 5-6:30 p.m. MM-A708**

Theme: Discussion of *Blood That Cries Out From the Earth. The Psychology of Religious Terrorism*, James W. JONES, Oxford University

Hetty ZOCK, University of Groningen, Presiding

Panelists: Naomi R. GOLDENBERG, University of Ottawa; Martha J. REINEKE, University of Northern Iowa; Responding: James W. JONES, Rutgers University

**M31-200 Colloquium on Violence and Religion Sunday, October 31, 2010,  
1:00 PM-3:30 PM in the Hyatt Techwood**

Theme: Girard, Global Christianity, and Social Conflict

Martha REINEKE, University of Northern Iowa, Presiding

Nathan R.B. LOEWEN, Vanier College: *Religions as contingent variables in social conflict*

Miguel ROLLAND, Arizona State University *The Maya Tzotzil Chamula of Chiapas, México and René Girard's Anthropology of Mimetic Desire*

Jennifer HECKART, Union Theological Seminary, New York *What's Justice Got To Do With It?: Truth, Reconciliation, and René Girard in South Africa*

**An invitation to attend the "COV&R at the AAR" Business Meeting**

Please join us at the end of the Saturday morning session (described above) to plan our 2011 AAR events. At our 2011 meeting in San Francisco, what would you like to see discussed? What newly published books with implications for mimetic theory excite you? With which AAR units should we plan a joint session? Bring your insights and ideas to the meeting.

**Stop by the Michigan State University Press Booth at the AAR Book Exhibit:**

At the MSU Press exhibition booth, you can buy books from the series *Violence*, *Mimesis*, and *Culture* as well as back issues of *Contagion*.

**Call for members of the "COV&R at the AAR" Planning Committee**

New committee members are sought to help brain-storm COV&R involvement at the AAR. If you can make a commitment to attend three consecutive AAR Annual Meetings and would like to help plan COV&R sessions, please tell Martha Reineke of your interest at the Business Meeting or e-mail her.

*Martha Reineke*

## FIRST AUSTRALIAN GIRARD-CONFERENCE

The first Australian conference of scholars and others interested in the work of GIRARD will be held on 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> January, 2011, in Sydney. The conference, entitled “Violence, Desire, and the Sacred: The Inaugural Conference of the Australian Girard Seminar”, will be held at St Paul’s College, the University of Sydney, with Prof. Wolfgang PALAVER as the keynote speaker. It is an inter-disciplinary conference that has already attracted interest from scholars in various fields (e.g., theology, anthropology, philosophy, literary studies, psychology, mathematics, peace & conflict studies, music) as well as others outside academia, including clergy and those working in church organisations.

The conference will be a forum for Australian and Asian scholars to discuss their work in relation to GIRARD’s insights and will also have a focus on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*. The aim of the conference is to form an association (the “Australian Girard Seminar”) that will continue to meet and promote GIRARD’s work in Australia (and beyond). The conference is being organised by Rev. Canon Dr. Scott COWDELL (Associate Professor at Charles Sturt University), Dr. Chris FLEMING (Senior Lecturer, the University of Western Sydney), and Dr. Joel HODGE (Australian Catholic University). For any information, please contact Joel Hodge at [joel.hodge@acu.edu.au](mailto:joel.hodge@acu.edu.au).

## RAVEN FOUNDATION ESSAY CONTEST

Dear COV&R members,

If you enjoy explaining mimetic theory to family and friends, then this contest is for you. The Raven Foundation is looking for people proficient in mimetic theory to communicate the theme of the 2011 COV&R conference, *Disorder/Order: History and Politics* to a variety of media outlets in the language of pop culture. Winning essays will be posted on the Raven Foundation website and used to promote the conference. Submissions will be accepted from 1 September 2010 through midnight CT, 1 February 2011.

Essays must be written in English, must not exceed 2,000 words and must be submitted electronically. (PDF files are preferred.) The judging standards are:

- \* Rigorous representation of mimetic theory
- \* Creative use of the images and idiom of popular culture
- \* Clarity of the connection between theory and practical application
- \* Relevance to contemporary life
- \* Accessibility of language and presentation style

The author of the First Place essay will be awarded travel expenses to the 2011 COV&R conference in Salina, Aeolian Islands, Sicily, (not to exceed \$1,000) plus registration and accommodations. The authors of the two Honorable Mention essays will receive registration and accommodations for the conference. At the discretion of the conference organizers, all three papers will be presented together at a panel during a conference session.

To submit your essay or to read the contest rules, terms and conditions, please visit [www.ravenfoundation.org](http://www.ravenfoundation.org).

We eagerly anticipate reading your essays.



Sincerely,  
Suzanne and Keith Ross  
Founders  
The Raven Foundation

GIRARD that the mimetic clash between enemy brothers will eventually lead to sheer mutual destruction? This is the starting point of the Conference.

Within the framework of current international politics, this critical issue may be further developed. Are we approaching the day when the civilizations influenced by the West will play a global role, without further need for a legitimizing model?

Hence a third group of questions, which America as well as Europe is concerned with. Will the West accept a 'painless decline'? Or will it, rather, face a future of mimetic chaos, where more and more violence will be daily news? Can that really be the last word from the West about the mimetic roots of human culture? Of course, it is not our intention to launch some sort of pathetic call for the support of Western culture. We might rather feel challenged to prove the persistence of its roots. In the course of its own mimetic crisis, will the Western culture be able to face up to disorder and rivalry by establishing a model for creative mimesis?

The main topic of disorder/order in history and politics will be developed through four sections of study.

### **Europe: the Land opposite**

The panel focuses on the different aspects—historical as well as cultural, religious, political and institutional—that have determined the mimetic nature of European identity.

Its title draws on a literary inspiration: from the very beginning of its history, poets have been moved by the ambiguous position of Europe, as a "desired land".

As a result, the Alexandrine author Moschus of Syracuse reinterpreted a myth about young Europe. In one of his poems, the enemy regions of Asia and West fight upon a girl called, indeed, Europa.

"'Twas at that hour which is the outgoing time of the flock of true dreams, that whenas Phoenix' daughter the maid Europa slept in her bower under the roof, she dreamt that two lands near and far strove with one another for the possession of her. Their guise was the guise of women, and the one had the look of an outland wife and the other was like to the dames of her own country." (The Greek Bucolic Poets, Transl. by J. M. Edmonds, Loeb

Classical Library, 28, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1912.)

Some centuries later, Dante in *Inferno* XIV suggests the image of the "land opposite" talking about Rome, seen by the "Old Man" of Crete as his own mirror:

"Within the mountain stands a huge old man. He keeps his back turned on Damietta, gazing on Rome as in his mirror." (Dante, *Divina Commedia*, *Inferno*, XIV, ll. 103-105, transl. Allen Mandelbaum)

When all is about possession and mimetic strife, myths and mythologems often mark the rhythm of politics and history.

Let us mention a few examples of mimesis in the history of the European identity: first, the conflict between paganism and Christianity during the third and fourth centuries A.D. (Virgil's *Eclogue* IV vs. Macrobius' *Saturnaliorum Convivia*); then, the transition from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages through the relationship between Rome and Byzantium; further, the relationship between the Papacy and the Empire; finally, the theological struggle between Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The secular counterpart of this last opposition is the fight between the State-Leviathan (HOBBS, 1651) and its arch-enemy, the Church of Rome.

### **The Mediterranean Sea: What Are We Doing in Here?**

It has become fashionable to look at the Mediterranean as a sea bound to be a peaceful dwelling for the different peoples living along its coasts. This portrait risks becoming sheer rhetoric, unless it is balanced by a study of its real history. At the very dawn of civilization, the Mediterranean had been a huge and unique laboratory for experimenting with sacrifice. From then on, the Mediterranean area has been a really hellish region. Let's just remember the events not remote from us: two World Wars, the Spanish Civil War, the Cold War, the war in Algeria, the never ending conflict between Arabs and Israelis, the fighting between European and Islamic countries, not to mention the continuing tensions due to oil, immigration, and terrorism. A pretty awkward story for a peaceful place! From the archaic era down to our times, the apparent paradox can only be solved by the consideration that peace can

make sense only where conflicts have already taken place.

### **Revenge: Get Your Own Back!**

Revenge, or vendetta, is the most perfect—almost didactic—example of mimetic violence. Based on symmetrical imitation, revenge should definitely be the most straightforward way towards human destruction.

However, if ritualized, revenge is able to absorb violence itself, thus turning it into a means to maintain social order. We may wonder whether this is the case with today's international politics and economy. The section aims to better understand the different aspects of the phenomenon of revenge by investigating the historical and cultural traditions where it is not uncommon.

### **Realism and Sacrifice in Figurative Arts, Literature and Cinema.**

Without a doubt, the most distinctive feature of Western art is realism. But what is realism? Is it copying a natural, or metaphysical, reality? Or else, is it discovering a cultural and anthropological reality normally invisible?

An answer is provided by the mimetic theory, which suggests that behind realism there is sacrifice. It is the victimary mechanism which enables humankind to see reality as it actually is. More particularly, in the Christian tradition the victim becomes the accomplished figura of realism in art. Victimary realism shows that the arts bear a representative and cognitive potential, which Christianity has freed and used in unprecedented ways.

### **Call for papers**

**Proposals for papers, panels, sessions, and seminars are due March 14, 2011.** They should include contact information, a title, and an abstract of 300 words, sent to the Organizers per e-mail.

### **Call for Seminar Topics**

In addition to paper proposals, the Organizers of COV&R 2011 welcome proposals for seminars on specific topics of interest to the Colloquium. Such proposals should include a designated seminar leader to coordinate the discussion, a description of the topic to be discussed, and a reading list. Accepted seminar proposals will be

posted on the Conference webpage. Seminar participants in the Conference should sign up in advance for the given seminar, they will read the assigned essay(s), and they will be requested to write a short reflection (150 words) in response to the reading(s) as a preparation for the discussion.

### **Raymund Schwager, S.J., Memorial Essay Contest**

To honor the memory of Raymund SCHWAGER, SJ (+ 2004), the Colloquium on Violence and Religion is offering an award of \$ 1,500 shared by up to three persons for the three best papers given at the COV&R 2011 meeting by graduate students or by scholars who have received their doctorate within the twelve months prior to this meeting. Students presenting papers at the conference are invited to apply for the Raymund Schwager Memorial Award by sending a letter to that effect and the full text of their paper (in English, maximum length: 10 pages) in an e-mail attachment to Maria Stella Barberi, COV&R 2011 Awards Committee. **Due date** for submission is the closing date of the conference registration, **June 1, 2011**. Winners will be announced in the Conference program. Prize-winning essays should reflect an engagement with mimetic theory; they will be presented in a plenary session and be considered for publication in *Contagion*.

### **COV&R Travel Grants**

Travel grants to attend COV&R 2011 will be available for graduate students or independent scholars who are first-time attendees of the COV&R conference. Such applicants will normally be expected to give a paper at the conference. Please write a letter of application accompanied by a letter of recommendation by a COV&R member to the organizers. The **application deadline** is the closing date of the Conference pre-registration, **June 1, 2011**. The COV&R Advisory Board will sponsor the attendance of up to ten persons with a maximum award of \$ 500 each. The Officers of COV&R will award the grant following the order of submission of the application.

For further information, for proposals of any kind mentioned here and for any application mentioned here, the **e-mail contact address is [cover2011@unime.it](mailto:cover2011@unime.it)**

Organization: Università di Messina

Centro Europeo di Studi su Mito e Simbolo:  
director Domenica MAZZÙ

Cultural and scientific coordination of  
COV&R 2011: Maria Stella BARBERI

COV&R 2011 logistic organization: Pasquale  
Maria MORABITO & Margherita GENIALE

***A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT,  
AND AN ESSAY ON ISLAM AND  
THE RETURN TO THE ARCHAIC***

Our recent annual meeting hosted by Ann ASTELL and Margaret PFEIL at Notre Dame University focusing on “Transforming Violence: Cult, Culture, and Acculturation” was again a very fruitful and an inspiring meeting. We all are grateful to Ann and Margaret for all the effort they have put into bringing us together at their university. I was especially happy that we also got the opportunity to come into closer contact with the nearby Mennonite community. Most remarkable was our afternoon trip to Mennohof in Shipshewana and also the session on “The Amish Response to the Violence at Nickel Mines: Practicing a Patient Spirituality” with Steven NOLT and Willard M. SWARTLEY. And there were, of course, many more interesting papers and panels about which you can find out more in Jonathan SAUDER’s report on the conference (see p. 12).

One issue that was intensely discussed before, during and after the conference is the perspective of mimetic theory on Islam. I would like to mention just a couple of colleagues and friends who urged me to write this essay in this or in another way. First, there is Jim WILLIAMS, a long-time friend and one of our honorary members, who again and again asked me to address this question. It took him months to get a response but finally he succeeded. Stephen GARDNER, a political philosopher living not too far away from Jim in the South of the US, wrote a challenging review of GIRARD’s *Battling to End* (“The Deepening Impasse of Modernity,” *Society* 47/5 [2010], 452-460) that has also made me think about this topic. And finally I have to mention the sociologist Charles SELENGUT, who has discussed with us the Palestine-Israel problem in recent years and provoked a hot debate at Notre Dame with his challenging response to James W. JONES’s paper on “Mimesis and the Globalization of Religious Terror”. Due to the current cultural and

political climate in the world, debates of this issue are often quite emotionally loaded. It is therefore not easy to address it soberly. But let me try. One frequently mentioned starting point is the “Epilogue” in René GIRARD’s most recent book *Battling to the End*, in which he claims that Islam is a religion that “has used the Bible as a support to rebuild an archaic religion that is more powerful than all the others” (p. 214). Could one draw from this and similar remarks the conclusion that Islam is an archaic religion and not at all comparable with Judaism and Christianity, even going as far as rejecting any notion that addresses these three religions together as “Abrahamic religions”? This question is much more complicated than it seems at first sight.

First of all, René GIRARD is very careful when he addresses Islam, always telling the people with whom he discusses this religion that he is not an expert in this field and has never studied Islam or the Koran thoroughly. He is also very much aware of the danger to be mimetically drawn into a Western opposition against Islam without really coming to an understanding of it. GIRARD therefore warns of the danger to find explanations that “often belong to the province of fraudulent propaganda against Muslims” (p. 215). His claim that there is a “return to the archaic” (p. 212), coming along with Islam, is also clearly in need of some further clarification, because GIRARD at the same time maintains that there are “no longer any archaic religions” (p. 214) in today’s modern world. What does GIRARD mean when he talks about a “return of the archaic” in his book on CLAUSEWITZ (pp. 81, 105, 212)? He realizes that the subversion of sacrificial culture and institutions that follows the Biblical exposure of the scapegoat mechanism brings all the violence that marked the mimetic crisis in which archaic religions originated out into the open. The return of the archaic means the unleashing of violence that was religiously contained before. It also results in scapegoating by again unloading the unfettered violence on single victims or external enemies. This is the sacrificial side of the return of the archaic. But these acts of scapegoating will no longer reach the religious solution that archaic religions have achieved. There is a big difference between the archaic world containing violence with the help of archaic religion and the world that has come into contact with the Biblical revelation that prevents

the relative peace that was earlier gained by archaic religion. According to GIRARD, the “return of an archaic world” will no longer have the “face of Dionysus” but will be a “world of total destruction” (p.105): “Dionysiac chaos was a chaos that founded something. The one threatening us is radical.” This is exactly the apocalyptic development that marks GIRARD’s book on CLAUSEWITZ so much. In his brilliant introduction to this book he writes how much the return of the sacred differs from its archaic origin, becoming even a type of satanized return:

“The sacred, which has been ‘returning’ for 2000 years, is thus not an archaic form of the sacred, but a sacred that has been ‘satanized’ by the awareness we have of it, and that indicates, through its very excesses, the imminence of the Second Coming.” (p. xi)

It is this general theoretical framework that has to be applied to what GIRARD says in the same book about Islam. Islam cannot be an archaic religion in the strict sense but has to be understood as a religion that came into being when the unleashing of violence brought forward by the Biblical revelation has already been under way. For this reason GIRARD claims that Islam is a new type of religion, “an archaic religion strengthened by aspects of the Bible and Christianity” (p. 214). What does this exactly mean if we take into account that the distinction between archaic religions and the Biblical religions is the essential key to GIRARD’s theory of religion? I think GIRARD himself is struggling with how Islam fits into his general scheme and he has not really come up with a final and definitive answer to it. There are several possible readings of his remarks on Islam. One reading would be to view Islam as a type of sacrificial religion close to what GIRARD calls sacrificial Christianity. GIRARD, for instance, calls the Crusades an “archaic regression” (p. 215). Similarly he calls the lynchings that happened in the South of the U.S. a “kind of archaic religious act” in his recent interview with Robert DORAN (“Apocalyptic Thinking after 9/11” *Sub-Stance* 37/1 [2008], 31). The following passage also points in this direction:

“Archaic religion collapsed in the face of Judeo-Christian revelation, but Islam resists. While Christianity eliminates sacrifice wherever it gains a foothold, Islam seems in many respects to situate itself prior to that rejection.” (p. 214)

This passage must not be understood, however, to mean that Islam is an archaic religion in the strict sense because two paragraphs later GIRARD

refers to a Muslim tradition that he already mentioned in *Violence and the Sacred* showing how much Islam is aware of the connection between violence and sacrifice as well as making indirectly clear why it belongs to the Abrahamic legacy. According to the Koran, the ram sacrificed by Abel, the animal sacrifice enabling Abel not to kill his brother, was the very same ram that God sent to Abraham to spare the life of his own son. This means that Islam clearly understands sacrifice as an important means to contain violence and that it is also part of what I call the “Abrahamic revolution” (cf. *Bulletin* No. 30 [2007], p. 7), namely the exodus from human sacrifice which is expressed in the story of the almost-sacrifice of Abraham’s son in the Hebrew Bible as well as in the Koran.

To be part of this Abrahamic legacy does not entail, however, that no elements from the sacrificial past linger on in these three religions even until today. Furthermore, GIRARD claims that with respect to sacrifice Islam is superior to the modern neglect of sacrificial containments of violence. The “Koran contains understanding of things that secular mentality cannot fathom, namely that sacrifice prevents vengeance” (p. 215). But because Islam is not an archaic religion in the strict sense it also does not maintain a sacrificial stance as its core message. According to GIRARD, the topic of sacrifice “has disappeared from Islam, just as it has disappeared in Western thought” (p. 215). It could only have disappeared because all Abrahamic religions are—despite any sacrificial remnants—on the move away from archaic sacrifice. But what is important to understand is the fact that the exodus from sacrifice is not without its own dangers. There are potential dangers going along with Abrahamic religions that clearly surpass the violence of archaic religions. These dangers are those types of scapegoating of the second degree that legitimize violence as a consequence of taking the side of the victim. The histories both of Christianity and Islam are full of examples of this dangerous distortion of the Biblical revelation. The corruption of the best is the worst: *corruptio optimi pessima*. I would claim that the Crusades belong to this type of perversion. This form of a vengeful lament has also become a typical secular pattern and characterized nearly all terrorist movements in our world.

This temptation to scapegoat the scapegoaters arises inevitably already from the Abrahamic religions' connection to their archaic past. There is always the possibility of either slowly transforming the archaic world towards the perspective of the Kingdom of God or of cutting short a long and difficult path by violently eradicating the archaic past. Chinua ACHEBE's novel *Things Fall Apart* impressively illustrates these two possibilities by describing two different Christian missionaries who are coming into an African village that is deeply rooted in archaic religion. The second way represents uncompromising and radical reform, which seems to completely break away from the archaic past but in reality paradoxically continues and even aggressively intensifies the archaic pattern of scapegoating.

The Canadian philosopher Charles TAYLOR clearly understands this temptation, which haunts the Abrahamic religions from their very beginnings, as well as our modern world. According to TAYLOR, the

“recreation of scapegoating violence both in Christendom ... and in the modern secular world” results from attempts of reform that try to break entirely with the past: “It is precisely these claims fully to supersede the problematic past which blinds us to the ways in which we are repeating some of its horrors in our own way” (*A Secular Age*, Cambridge 2007, p. 772).

GIRARD's book on CLAUSEWITZ is fully aware of this danger and therefore, in the probably most important chapter of this book, he follows HÖLDERLIN's insight that there is not only a “fundamental discontinuity” but also a “continuity between the Passion and archaic religion” (p. xv; cf. p. 129). Whereas the earlier GIRARD only emphasized the fundamental difference between Dionysus and the Crucified in reversing NIETZSCHE, the mature GIRARD complements this important insight with HÖLDERLIN's emphasis on the connection between Dionysus and Christ—“you are the brother also of Evius”.—That does not, however, hide the truth that “Dionysus is violence and Christ is peace” (pp. 127, 130).

This important development of mimetic theory applies to the question about the relationship between Islam and archaic religions, too. Islam, not being an archaic religion itself, is also haunted by the temptation to eradicate the archaic past by cutting short the laborious path of transformation. GIRARD's most earnestly expressed concern regarding Islam is that the Koran “contains no real awareness of collective murder” (p. 216). In an

interview that I conducted with him in 2006 in Ottawa, he made this concern even more explicit:

“Islam is very different from archaic religions on the one hand, and from Christianity on the other, because it does not have, at its centre, any version of the scapegoat drama that, in my opinion, determines the main significance of Christianity. ... The Qur'an sees the Christian Passion as an intolerable form of blasphemy.” (“The Bloody Skin of the Victim,” in *The New Visibility of Religion*, ed. by M. Hoelzl & G. Ward, London 2008, p. 64-65).

GIRARD also refers to this issue in an interview with Giulio MEOTTI: “In Islam, the most important thing is missing: a Cross” (“René Girard's Accusation: Intellectuals are the Castrators of Meaning,” *Modern Age* 50/2 [2008], p. 184) It is true that compared with the Bible the Koran is far less “dramatic” or “tragic”—to use Tariq RAMADAN's term (*Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity*, Leicester 2008, p. 205). This lack of drama—the absence of the cross—could possibly mean that Islam is even further removed from Dionysus—from archaic religion—than Judaism and Christianity. This distance may increase the likelihood to avoid the burdensome effort of transformation; however, a heightened probability by no means amounts to a necessity. Much more work is to be done on this issue and we should not forget that certain types of Christianity, as well as secular ways of thinking, are also threatened by this temptation because they also tend to neglect the sacrifice of the cross.

Let me quickly refer to some recent indications that show us how Islam is on its way to break rigorously with the archaic past. V. S. NAIPAUL, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001 (immediately after 9/11!) and who is sometimes criticized for being too negative on Islam, referred in his book *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples*, which he published after travelling to Indonesia, Pakistan, Iran and Malaysia to the problematic tension between “revealed religions” and older “earth religions”:

“The crossover from the classical world to Christianity is now history. It is not easy, reading the texts, imaginatively to enter the long disputes and anguishes of that crossover. But in some of the cultures described in this book the crossover to Islam—and sometimes to Christianity—is still going on. It is the extra drama in the background, like a cultural big bang, a steady grinding down of the old world.” (*Beyond Belief*, New York 1999, pp. xii-xiii).



One can find Asian types of Islam resulting from an inculturation that slowly transformed older religions leading to a type of Islam that is not at all prone to violence or aggression. And there are also variants of Islam puristically aiming at the eradication of the religious past. What we face today, for instance, in Pakistan is a bloody battle of radical reformers who fight with “puritanical severity” against those types of Islam that, as a result of its inculturation, remained closer to the indigenous religions. The prize-winning historian and travel-writer William DALRYMPLE describes the war of iconoclastic Taliban against Sufi shrines in Pakistan as a type of aggressive puritanism in his marvellous narration “The Red Fairy”:

“Here in the deserts of Sindh it seems that Sufi Islam, and the deeply rooted cult of the saints, with all its borrowings from the indigenous religious traditions of the area, may yet be able to act as a powerful home-grown resistance movement to the Wahhabis and their jihadi intolerance of all other faiths.” (*Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*, London 2009, p. 141)

One last step is necessary to come to a clearer understanding of GIRARD’s remarks on Islam and Islam’s relation to the archaic past. Most of GIRARD’s references to Islam are, of course, not dealing with traditional Islam at all but with Islamism and the way Islam today is hijacked by terrorist movements. GIRARD clearly emphasizes the modern side of Islamist terrorism:

“Today’s terrorism is new, even from an Islamic point of view. It is a modern effort to counter the most powerful and refined tool of the Western world: technology. It counters technology in a way that we do not understand, and that classical Islam may not understand either.” (p. 214)

And in another passage he again claims that “Islamism ... is a kind of event internal to the development of technology” (p. 215).

Charles TAYLOR’s “grand narrative” about the evolution of religions and its current situation helps us to interpret GIRARD’s remarks on Islamism. According to TAYLOR, we have to understand Islamism as a religio-political development that is closely connected to globalization and especially to what he calls the modern “age of mobilization”. This age is characterized by a growing number of people who, due to an ongoing wave of disembedding, lost their place in the traditional networks of clan, family and so on and were therefore forced to find a political identity that is often, but not always, connected to a relig-

ion which tends towards political friend-enemy patterns. According to Taylor, the age of mobilization favours the development of “neo-Durkheimian identities” typical of modern nationalism. In order to understand the terrorist attacks of 9/11 better we have to bring them closer to this type of nationalism:

“May it not be that ‘Islamic’ action is being driven by the sense that ‘we’ are being despised and mishandled by ‘them,’ quite like nationalist reactions that have become very familiar to us?” (“The Future of the Religious Past,” In *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, ed. by H de Vries, New York 2008, p. 240).

Regarding religion TAYLOR draws a parallel between the terrorists’ abuse of Islam and the role of the clergy in all the warring countries during World War I, who—with few exceptions—“bestowed God’s blessing on their nation’s army”, thus betraying their Christian commitment.

TAYLOR’s comparison with World War I leads us to a very interesting example of a certain type of the return of the archaic. The Italian writer Roberto CALASSO summarized this return, which went along with the two world wars, in one of his concise aphorisms:

“When sacrifice ceased to be an institution, it withdrew into its subordinate power: war. In August 1914, the entire liturgical apparatus of sacrifice was once again unpacked from the trunks. The bloody images were dusted off and made the center of attention in homes and newspapers. During the Second World War, in contrast, it was enough to focus on a single word: ‘holocaust.’” (*The Ruin of Kasch*, Cambridge 1994, p. 136)

What CALASSO expresses in these few words is exactly the historical background that brought mimetic theory into being. In his speech at GIRARD’s reception into the French Academy in 2005, Michel SERRES mentioned the explosion of violence that characterized the two World Wars, sacrificing millions of young people and exterminating nearly all Jews in Europe, and called it the nearly incomprehensible history that precedes the unfolding of mimetic anthropology (“Receiving René Girard into the Académie Française,” In *For René Girard: Essays in Friendship and in Truth*, ed. by S. Goodhart, a.o., East Lansing 2009, p. 8). This return of the archaic is part of the apocalyptic history that characterizes our world.

The First World War was a decisive step in the unfolding of the apocalypse that begun, according to GIRARD, at Verdun (*Battling*, p. xii).

We have to understand this apocalypse in order to grasp the explosion of violence in our world. A closer look at World War I and the history that followed helps us, for instance, to understand suicide terrorism because we can discover similar sacrificial attitudes among soldiers that died in the trenches of Verdun. Modern nationalist wars and suicide bombings are closer to each other than we might think. Louise RICHARDSON, a political scientist and expert on terrorism, opens the chapter “Why Do Terrorists Kill Themselves?” in her seminal book on terrorism by quoting the *New York Times* from 1916 reporting on Verdun:

“Whole regiments melted in a few minutes, but others took their place, only to perish in the same way. ‘It is a battle of madmen in the midst of a volcanic eruption’ was the description of a staff captain ... they fought in tunnels, screaming with the lust of butchery.” (*What Terrorists Want*, London 2006, p. 133).

A powerful example in this direction is also given by the Italian poet, nationalist and proto-fascist Gabriele D’ANNUNZIO, who conquered the Croatian town Rijeka with a troop of Italian irregulars in 1919 and governed there for sixteen months. He motivated his troops with sacrificial speeches reminding us of contemporary suicide terrorists. His famous slogan motivating his followers used the Italian name of Rijeka and is obviously utilizing the readiness to die as a deadly weapon: “*O Fiume o morte*—Either Fiume or death.” His writings are full of sacrificial images and archaic concepts. This became especially visible at the time when he was forced to retreat:

“We are living a life of plenitude and honesty because our life is not a gift that we owe to others but, rather, a gift that we can offer to others. ... No other—divine or human—power can ever match the power of the sacrifice which throws itself into the darkness of the future in order to make new images and the new order rise. ... The sacrifice is the highest vocation and the highest dignifying of our earthly life. What is written in blood can never be taken away.” (quoted in H.U. Gumbrecht, “I redentori della vittoria: On Fiume’s Place in the Genealogy of Fascism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31/2 [1996], pp. 267-268)

Whereas the Abrahamic revolution meant the ending of human sacrifice, we can recognize a return to the archaic coming along with the apocalyptic unfolding of modern wars and global terrorism. It is marked by the unleashing of violence and by new types of scapegoating and violent cleansings without, however, leading to the relative peace provided by archaic religion. Benjamin BRITTEN’s *War Requiem* quotes the young

English poet Wilfred OWEN, who died in the trenches just before the end of World War I, to show us in what way the Abrahamic Revolution was reversed by a return to the archaic that resulted in the slaughtering of the European youth, opening the gates of the apocalypse that challenges our world (quoted in A. J. Reimer, *The Dogmatic Imagination: The Dynamics of Christian Belief*, Scottsdale 2003, p. 104):

“So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,  
And took the fire with him, and a knife.  
And as they sojourned both of them together,  
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,  
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,  
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?  
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,  
And builded parapets and trenches there,  
And stretched forth the knife to slay his son.  
When lo! An angel called him out of heaven,  
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,  
Neither do anything to him. Behold,  
A ram caught in a thicket by its horns;  
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.  
But the old man would not so  
but slew his son, —  
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.”

Wolfgang Palaver

### MUSINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Writing two months after the COV&R 2010 Conference held at the University of Notre Dame, which I was privileged to co-organize with Margaret PFEIL, I still feel almost too close to the events to comment on them objectively. Putting off my hat as co-organizer and replacing it with my hat as Executive Secretary, let me try to offer a few evaluative comments on how that meeting fulfilled the mandates of the mission statement of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion. I do so by asking three questions: (1) Did we explore René Girard’s mimetic theory? (2) Did we criticize it? (3) Did we develop it?

**First, exploration.** No one would, I think, deny that participants in the conference explored mimetic theory, seeking to understand better its key terms. In keeping with COV&R’s well-established practice, virtually every paper that was given somewhat invoked GIRARD’s work. I especially appreciated the willingness of non-COV&R members—including several of our invited speakers—to engage GIRARD’s thought respectfully, to learn from it, and to fit their presentations to the conference theme, “Transforming

Violence: Cult, Culture, and Acculturation.” COV&R respondents generously and helpfully bridged the gap, when necessary, between such presentations and the key concepts of mimetic theory. More than one of the newcomers (first-time attendees) remarked to me how much they had learned during the course of the meeting and how impressed they were by the ethos of the proceedings.

Historical studies and personal memoirs contributed to this exploration of mimetic theory, as three founding members of the Colloquium (Charles MABEE, James WILLIAMS, and Robert HAMERTON-KELLY) and many other COV&R veterans (e.g., Diana CULBERTSON, Gil BAILIE, Robert DALY, Willard SWARTLEY), including several of GIRARD’s former students (Sandor GOODHART, Tobin SIEBERS), were present. MABEE and WILLIAMS related the story of COV&R’s pre-history at Notre Dame in connection with a meeting there of the Westar Project (best known through the work of the “Jesus Seminar”). BAILIE and HAMERTON-KELLY shared anecdotes from conversations with René GIRARD. And, during the powerfully moving session on “Images of Lynching,” GOODHART related that GIRARD had once told him that the whole idea of the scapegoat mechanism had come to him when he pondered lynching as a social phenomenon.

**Exegesis** also played a role in this exploration of mimetic theory, as participants wrestled, first, with the question of what has priority in mimetic theory—mimesis itself or violence. This question, and the related question of the possibility of “positive mimesis,” was the focus of the opening session during which COV&R’s historian James WILLIAMS gave his critical appreciation of the thought of Robert HAMERTON-KELLY and pointed to one of several “fault-lines” among Girardians, who understand and apply mimetic theory in different ways. The response given by Martha REINEKE and the Question-and-Answer session that followed raised the issue whether GIRARD has recently expanded his technical vocabulary of mimesis in *Battling to the End* to include a third type, distinguishable from “external mediation” and “internal mediation”—namely, the mystical “inmost mediation” of the imitation of Christ.

Also related to the exegesis of a key term of mimetic theory was Anne MCTAGGART’s paper on the “guilt” and/or the “shame” attached to the

victim in GIRARD’s understanding. (MCTAGGART’s paper was one of three by young scholars to be heard in a plenary session and to be honored with an award in the Raymund Schwager, S.J., Memorial Essay Competition.)

Finally, from the point of view of exegesis, several papers (for example, those by Kevin MONGRAIN, Jordan WALES, and Sheila MCCARTHY) reopened the question of GIRARD’s status as a “theologian”—a title he has disclaimed, but which he arguably deserves.

At COV&R 2010 the **critique** of mimetic theory inspired a wealth of comparative studies. Cyril O’REGAN’s keynote address, “Girard in the Spaces of Apocalyptic,” highlighted what is distinctive in GIRARD’s apocalypticism by placing his work not only in contrast to other postmodern apocalyptic thinkers, but also in close proximity to the ethical concerns of Emmanuel LEVINAS and Johann Baptist METZ. Anthony BARTLETT’s and Dorothy WHISTON’s seminar on GIRARD’s Apocalypticism also tried to characterize it critically.

Other comparative studies placed GIRARD’s work in critical conversation with the theories of such thinkers as Hannah ARENDT, Simone WEIL, Jürgen HABERMAS, Philip RIEFF, Giorgio AGAMBEN, Fritz FANON, Homi BHABHA, PLATO, and Hans Urs von BALTHASAR. Such studies are and remain important to the work of the Colloquium. They help to explain to wider audiences the significance of GIRARD’s work and to illumine its distinctive features; they provide COV&R members with an apologetic means to address criticisms of the mimetic theory; they challenge COV&R members to employ a “hermeneutics of unity” in those cases where another thinker appears to study topics of interest to Girardians—for example, sacrifice, scapegoating, mimesis, desire—using different terminology. Finally, they are also potentially instructive in studying GIRARD’s own mimetic relationships to his intellectual interlocutors (e.g., NIETZSCHE, HÖLDERLIN, HEIDEGGER, PLATO, WEIL), as they have affected his thought.

As for the **development** of mimetic theory, I believe that COV&R 2010 contributed to it mainly through its application to new topics and fields and through the use of new media and styles of presentation (for example, in the workshops and seminars). The program featured studies in areas of traditional strength for COV&R

members: peace and reconciliation, prison ministry, non-violence, ritual, literature, theology, philosophy, spiritual formation, film, economics, popular culture, socio-linguistics, and psychology. It opened new ground in showing the implications of mimetic theory for family law (as shown in the papers by Margaret BRINIG and Tobin SIEBERS); for commerce as contributing to world peace (in the panel discussion of Georges ENDERLE, Wilhelm GUGGENBERGER, and Keith ROSS, chaired by John MCGEENEY); creative writing (the play of Anthony BARLETT and the poetry of Henry WEINFELD); and pedagogy (with grateful acknowledgement to the leadership shown by Suzanne ROSS, with support from the Raven Foundation, and *Imitatio*).

The interest in mimetic theory across national, linguistic, disciplinary, professional, and generational lines—for young and old—was heartwarmingly evident at the Conference. The book exhibits showed that the work of the members of the Colloquium continues to find a wide reception. In this regard, we have much for which to thank William JOHNSEN, the editor of *Contagion* and the editor of the Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture series at the University of Michigan Press.

In conclusion, wearing both my hats as Executive Secretary and as COV&R 2010's co-organizer, I want to express once again my gratitude to everyone who contributed in any way to making our most recent gathering of the Colloquium the stimulating event that it was. Truly, COV&R is alive and well, thanks to you.

*Ann W. Astell*

## REPORTS ON CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

### 'Transforming Violence' COV&R Conference 2010 at the University of Notre Dame

The 2010 conference of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion was held at McKenna Hall on the lovely campus of Notre Dame University. The conference was well attended, well planned, and produced some very lively conversations, both inside and outside of the formal sessions.

Many thanks are due to Margaret PFEIL and Ann ASTELL who assembled an impressive group of speakers and a fascinating array of topics organized around the theme of "Transforming Violence: Cult, Culture, and Acculturation." They should be especially commended that all the ab-

stracts and papers presented at the conference are accessible in full at the conference web-site, provided the authors made them available.

The sometimes vigorous debate that characterized so many of the large and small sessions this year began promptly with the first plenary lecture of the conference, James G. WILLIAMS' "Critical Appreciation" of the legacy of Robert HAMERTON-KELLY's substantial contributions to the mimetic theory. This was continued in the opening keynote lecture by Cyril O'REGAN, who put Girard's thought in a wide range of ideas, to which James ALISON and Wolfgang PALAVER responded.

The sheer amount of material presented and discussed at this conference guarantees that any reporting must be highly selective and this summary does not pretend to provide full coverage. The variety available to attendees was vast and invigorating, ranging from a panel discussion of "mimesis and peace through commerce" to a pre-release special screening of the new documentary film on the life and witness of Archbishop Oscar ROMERO. There was even a dinner theatre play in one act, comprising Anthony BARTLETT's submission for the Raven Foundation Essay Contest of 2009. BARTLETT's play is set in a high school and shows how easy it is for teenagers (and other humans) to simultaneously understand the power of rivalrous desire and yet unwittingly generate their own group solidarity through spontaneous scapegoating.

The annual Raymund Schwager Memorial Lecture (funded by *Imitatio*) was initiated by a short introduction of Raymund SCHWAGER by Józef NIEWIADOMSKI. The lecture dealt with an icon of modern American literature: J. D. SALINGER's *Catcher in the Rye*. Susan L. Mizruchi drew the audience's attention to the hero's problematic character aspects, as well, and managed to deliver not only an interesting but also a highly entertaining lecture, as did her respondent William JOHNSEN.

This year's student award winners of the Raymund Schwager, S.J. Memorial Essay Prizes were Anne MCTAGGART, Vanessa AVERY-WALL, and Pasquale Maria MORABITO.

MCTAGGART discussed the way in which CHAUCER, in crafting the tale of *Troilus and Cressida*, tells the story of Cressida's shame but not her guilt. MCTAGGART then argued that CHAUCER is thus an exception to René GIRARD's

assertion in the first few pages of his book *The Scapegoat* that people in the Fourteenth Century couldn't recognize scapegoating. Later in the paper she recommended GIRARD's inderividual psychology as a corrective to the current over-valuation of the social value of shame in the discourse of the human sciences.



*The Schwager Award Winners*

AVERY-WALL presented a brilliant reading of the story of Jacob blessing Joseph's sons (contrary to the custom of preferring the eldest) as a sort of bookend to the series of scenes in Genesis that critique the violent social order. She then presented the Jewish Sabbath as a sort of vaccine against out of control mimetic desire in a religious community. In his response to her paper, Sandor GOODHART referred to the capacity of the Jewish tradition to produce "ritualistic antiritual."

MORABITO enhanced his presentation on artistic displays of the story of *St. George and the Dragon* with an illustrating slide show, analyzing the implications of different renderings of the story for the founding narrative of the city and in St. Augustine's theology from a Girardian point of view. These versions ranged from the classical story of St. George killing the dragon to him converting the beast.

Two of the parallel sessions that made reference to local cultural heritage focused on the experiences of the Potawatomi People and the Old Order Amish.

Two Mennonite scholars, Steven NOLT, a historian of the Amish, and Willard SWARTLEY, a theologian, discussed the amazing capacity of the Amish community in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, to disrupt the cycle of reciprocal violence by publicly offering forgiveness after a traumatic school shooting.

In what was quite possibly the first public session on the Potawatomi story in the history of the Notre Dame University, a very knowledgeable panel discussed the contrasting histories of that people's interaction with the U.S. government and with the Roman Catholic Church. The coura-

geous Jesuit ministry to, friendship with, and advocacy for the Potawatomi people was a great contrast to Andrew JACKSON's Indian Removal Policy. The 1838 Trail of Death was one of several forced removals of the Potawatomi to the American West. Chief MENOMINEE was caged on a hay wagon and at least one fifth of his people died on the march. The presentations also included a description of twenty-first century efforts to raise awareness of this part of U.S. national history. These include planned events in which campers retrace the trail.

This theme of awareness was also present in the plenary session called "Images of Lynching." Mechal SOBEL provided an excellent synopsis of the life and work of the African-American artist Bill TRAYLOR. Erika DOSS discussed efforts in recent decades to memorialize the lynchings that have marred the fabric of American ethnic/racial history and are thus too easily ignored by those who want to visualize the national past as a spotless tapestry of progress. She also presented disturbing pictures of White U.S. citizens of decades past, calmly and proudly posing next to the mangled bodies of the African-Americans they had just lynched.

The respondent to this session, Sandor GOODHART, said that he once asked René GIRARD where he got the idea of sacrifice. René replied that he came to the United States and learned about lynching. GOODHART proposes that we study lynching for the next five years at COV&R.

Concurrent sessions, being quite numerous, were, in consequence, quite small, but attendees found them richly rewarding. They ranged from literary analysis, to a comparison of GIRARD and Simone WEIL, to a presentation on a high school theology course on "theology and film with a mimetic focus." The latter presentation came complete with a group of high school students from the St Theresa High School of Kansas City, Missouri. An attendee of this session told me that the student body "queen bee" in that school consciously tries not to allow students to build their solidarity by expelling each other because she has been taught the mimetic theory in class.

As a first year member of the Colloquium, I was honored to meet and converse with so many of the torchbearers of the Mimetic Theory. It seems to me quite possible that the energy that René himself brought to an earlier era of confer-

ences will now be provided by a friendly contest over the direction that MT should take and over which of its emphases will come to the fore in the perception of academic and popular audiences. This sort of divergence among experts, though it has a potential for counterproductive conflict, is, in my view, necessary to the long term growth of any school of thought that wishes to escape stagnation.

While the old guard continues the necessary work of clarification and definition, in addition to breaking new ground, younger and more recent arrivals to the Girardian round table are also using a stance of mimetic realism to provide analyses of social violence that do not themselves participate in recriminatory reciprocation. A prime example of this is the work of Julia ROBINSON-HARMON, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, whose presentation this year, "Strange Fruit: Mimetic Theory and the Lynching of Black Bodies," in one of the concurrent sessions was an excellent prototype of the combination of primary history and noncombative analysis that will be necessary to carry forward the COV&R theme suggested by GOODHART.

It should be mentioned that all plenary sessions began with musical introductions and the concluding banquet not only was made even more enjoyable by the music performed but also received a very thoughtful and touching note through Henry WEINFELD's reading of his poetry—the most beautiful language evoking images of the most gruesome crimes perpetrated by humankind. Yet, he ended on a positive note with his very own reverence to the Lady of the Lake.

I am personally disappointed when I encounter any uses of mimetic theory that name the crimes of others and stop short of implicating one's own people and person in the human tendency to organize identity around oppositional exclusion. And so I end this report with a commendation of ROBINSON-HARMON's work and an echo of GOODHART's proposal.

The same "conversion" from accusation to forgiveness that marks the published work and private conversation of James ALISON is present in the work of ROBINSON-HARMON. They both work to call their listeners from the cul-de-sac of angry victim status to the freedom of an identity that transcends *without denying* the violence that has been perpetrated against their people in the past. Having conversed with her previously at a

different conference, I am impressed with how Julia refuses to anchor her identity in superiority to scapegoaters and with how she seeks to aid her African-American students and friends to escape mimetic rivalry.

If in the next decade, COV&R conferences can include a series (analogous, it was suggested in the business meeting, to the ongoing series on the Arab-Israeli conflict) of sessions on how today's social "orders" are beholden in many ways to the past and present lynchings they deny, and if those sessions are as academically rigorous and rancor-free as Julia's work this year, then I think we can anticipate a steady and fruitful growth for the Colloquium.

*Jonathan Sauder, Lancaster, Pennsylvania*

### **Brief Info from the Business Meeting**

Ann ASTELL was reelected for a second term as COV&R Executive Secretary, Bruce WARD and Thérèse ONDERDENWIJNGAARD were re-elected for a second term on the advisory board.

William JOHNSEN gave an impressive overview of publication activities at MSU Press. A new contract for *Contagion* has been negotiated. Its readership has increased tremendously through its inclusion in the "premier edition" of Project Muse, to which many libraries subscribe. In 2009-2010, COV&R members have received three new books published in the MSUP series: *For René Girard: Essays in Friendship and Truth* (2009); René Girard: *Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoît Chantre* (2009); and Jean-Michel Oughourlian: *The Genesis of Desire* (2010). The latter two belong to the series of translated texts supported by Imitatio. New books (by G. Fornari, W. Palaver, M. Reineke) are being prepared for publication in the series. Bill reminded COV&R members that they can continue to support publications in mimetic theory by urging their university libraries to subscribe to *Contagion*. Libraries can subscribe directly through MSU Press; or, if a library has subscribed to Project Muse but has not included *Contagion* among its journal selection, *Contagion* can be added for only \$ 20. That small investment for a library results in enhanced access to and visibility for scholarship in mimetic theory.

Nikolaus Wandinger reported concerning the *Bulletin* that more people are receiving it electronically, but that it remains available to

COV&R members in print format. He commented, in particular, on the importance of book reviews in the *Bulletin* and indicated that he had personally learned some lessons concerning the genre of the review in this past year, which also saw the publication of some Letters to the Editor (a new genre).

Sandy GOODHART proposed to devote special sessions to the phenomenon of lynching during the next five COV&R conferences, and it was agreed that he would prepare a conception of how to do this.

Finally a preview was given of the upcoming conferences: 2011 will be held in Italy (see p. 1) and for 2012 plans to have the first-ever regular COV&R conference in Japan are being pursued.

*N. Wandinger (with help from A. Astell)*

**European Summer School  
Mimetic Theory  
12-25 July 2010 Netherlands  
“Crisis and Truth”**

The European Summer School Mimetic Theory, “Crisis and Truth” was designed to provide a thorough introduction and an interdisciplinary approach to the thinking of René GIRARD in the fields of theology, anthropology, literature and political science. The objective of this report is to provide a comprehensive impression of the Summer School, however, as the Summer School lasted for two weeks, it is very hard, if not impossible, to capture in this article the magnitude of learning, shared experiences and joint work that transpired.

The Summer School’s daily program consisted of three sessions, comprised of two lectures in the morning and one in the afternoon, with each of them being divided equally between the speakers’ presentation and a follow up discussion. The emphasis on debating enabled the creation of an open and interdisciplinary ambience of the Summer School, in which the presentation of new topics and questions was not only allowed but greatly welcomed. Every day was dedicated to a different subject and the lectures were conducted by specialists. A wide range of guest speakers further enriched the program.

The Summer School began with a two-day introduction to the thinking of René GIRARD. These days provided an opportunity for students and teachers to get to know each other, and Paul DUMOUCHEL’s presentation of his current re-

search provided an excellent insight into the respective applications of mimetic theory. Paul DUMOUCHEL, professor at the Graduate School of Core Ethics and Frontier Sciences, Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, explores the concepts of artificial empathy and social robots. Keeping in mind the rules of interhuman and human machine communication, he observes that one can only communicate with people, if one understands their emotions. This serves as an aim for various robot constructors. However, what seems to be problematic is that after a machine gains the capability to truly communicate, it becomes impossible to further control it. It is in this moment that a machine, a robot, becomes similar to a human being and starts copying people in their predictability.

Equally interesting and inspiring were the lectures presented after the introduction. One day was fully dedicated to analyzing SHAKESPEARE in the eyes of mimetic theory. The basis for this was two plays—*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Julius Caesar*.

Michael HARDIN, Michael KIRWAN and Michael ELIAS started a discussion on positive and negative mimesis. As was established, mimesis is neutral by its nature, but its models may be either positive or negative. According to HARDIN, KIRWAN and ELIAS, Christianity promotes an alternative to the lack of positive cultural models by providing a model of positive mimesis. Maybe then a question about good mimesis is rather a question about finding good desire?

Simon SIMONSE’s lecture proved to be just as interesting. After a theoretical introduction to the issue of sacrifice, the anthropologist and member of the Dutch Girard Society presented as an example the killing of the Pari queen. This African tribe lives in Sudan close to the border of Uganda and its tradition of scapegoating of the kings in time of drought served as a very instructive illustration of the scapegoat mechanism as a model of sacrificial action.

The lectures were diverse and discussed mimetic theory in the fields of anthropology and literature, philosophy, with special regard to HEIDEGGER and his *Mitsein* theory, theology, the thoughts of Raymund SCHWAGER, and issues of political violence and reciprocity. Readings provided for all the classes were quite a help and served to widen one’s knowledge of the subject. The program was enriched by showing and dis-

curring interviews with René GIRARD as well as movies suggested by the students in the Summer School course.

The Summer School participants were students and professionals from many different fields. In order to engage students further in the program and René GIRARD's thoughts, students were invited in the beginning to choose a problem to work on during the following weeks. The topics varied immensely. The process of working on the problems had 3 stages. The first was to introduce the topic of interest, the second, at the end of the first week, was to present findings on a poster. On that day Summer School was visited by members of the Dutch Girard Society who, together with other students and teachers, discussed the presentations and helped to expand the research. The last stage was summing up of the work done. Of course, students worked on their projects throughout the whole two weeks and the three stages served only as orientation points and as a possibility to talk with all the other participants about the problems they encountered with their projects.

The interesting aspect of the students' work was the interdisciplinary dimension. It was interesting to see how different students applied mimetic theory to their respective fields. While some were trying to fully apply mimetic theory in their work, others were focusing only on some key aspects of René GIRARD's thoughts and trying to expand the ideas in a given direction. The topics included e.g. the analysis of chapters taken from the Bible, a story by Flannery O'CONNOR, desire as seen by LACAN and GIRARD, the image of Pontius Pilate in art history, organ transplants, and violence in technology.

Perhaps the only shortcoming of the Summer School was the lack of constructive critique of the ideas of René GIRARD in some points of the program. Unquestionably the participants gained a thorough understanding of mimetic theory, but perhaps the critique would have enriched the discussions and helped to form a more objective and firm view of the subject.

The Summer School—the first event of its kind—was organized by the Dutch Girard Society in the Netherlands and designed to enhance progression and retention of René GIRARD's work among students and professionals around the world; due to its open environment and interdisciplinary dimension it enabled all the participants to benefit immensely on the academic level.

*Bogumila Jablecka, Krakow, Poland*

**Current plans are to revise the curriculum of the Summer School in 2011 to be able to conduct another course in 2012.**

*The Editor*

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Hardin, Michael: *The Jesus Driven Life. Reconnecting Humanity with Jesus*  
Lancaster, PA: JDL Press, (2010), 318 pages,  
ISBN: 978-1-4507-0945-3; \$ 17.95**

In a storm at sea you have two options: put in to the nearest harbor and measure wind and wave safely from the shore; or spread sail to the gale and ride boldly in front of it. Michael HARDIN has chosen the latter. His book, *The Jesus Driven Life, Reconnecting Humanity With Jesus* is a cry from the deck of a surging, storm-driven craft.

The storm HARDIN is riding is the profound change in human culture wrought by the gospel and made both intelligible and insistent in the work of GIRARD. The actual craft he is piloting is the kerygma itself, the proclamation of human redemption through Christ. HARDIN has written a book of evangelism, an evangelical book, but one that looks very little like traditional evangelism. He is writing out of a moment in time when the gospel is discovering a new identity, one that has been working in the wheelhouse of history for two thousand years and that has now, in these latter days, produced conditions in which it can be heard as if for the first time.

Nevertheless, although it is Girardian anthropology clearly teaching HARDIN that “surf’s up” he does not spend time at the beginning outlining a Girardian framework. Rather he strives to display his argument as a perennial gospel, a truth that has always been there within the Christian scripture and tradition. For authentic belief that must indeed be the case—“Christ the same yesterday, today and forever”. But the urgency of HARDIN's approach and his constant threading between worn-out channels of liberal and fundamentalist thought speak to a fresh hermeneutic carrying him forward, a current he has discovered and that he now articulates with verve and passion. All the same his direct approach, his firm grasp of the tiller, is exactly as it should be: a message that of its own power has changed the parameters in which we experience the human, and whose ability to do is cresting in our time, has essentially no need of framing. It can be presented in and for its own sake. In a moment that the gospel itself has created the gospel may itself speak.

HARDIN sets out on a biblical journey which will take him from the Great Commandment preached by Jesus to the radical Logos declared by John. His journey as it proceeds will bring him back to primeval waters at the origins of culture and then across the tides of the Old Testament. His book has a chiasmic structure beginning and ending with the New Testament while intersecting it with both human and biblical genesis. It is in this middle piece, obviously, that GIRARD is presented and the pivotal role of the an-



thropology of violence and the victim is unpacked. There appear a number of underlying reasons for this structure. First, connected to the kerygmatic purpose, the form of the book echoes and narrates its own central and constantly repeated proposition: that the bible can only and ever be understood from the standpoint of Jesus, “our primary interpretive matrix” (38). Second, and somewhat more awkwardly, there is need to enshrine the Girardian hermeneutic within the larger discipline of New Testament criticism. Why? Because for HARDIN, like all New Testament scholars, there is a scholarly discipline governing his work, with its own exacting canon and method. Mixing GIRARD with this discipline leads to the accusation of a single overpowering grid by which every text is read, preventing it perhaps from speaking for itself. I will return to this crucial question momentarily, but let me first flesh out the vital message HARDIN is relaying.

He begins with the love commandment in Jesus’ teaching, interpreted by the words of the lawyer that love of God and neighbor is “more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices” (37). He moves to Jesus’ relationship with his Father which cannot be a blend of love and wrath, producing a “Janus-faced God”, but rather consists solely of love. Then there is the Sermon on the Mount as a to-be-taken-completely-seriously catechesis for Christian converts. By now it is clear that HARDIN is himself providing a catechesis, one that shows us Jesus engaged in a redefinition of God. “By removing retribution from the work and character of God, Jesus, for the first time in human history, opened up a new way, a path, which he invites us to travel.” (64) As we continue familiar topics are understood in new ways, judgment, hell, Messiah, retaliation, atonement, and at the end there are valuable expository sections on Paul and John, especially Paul. But to establish this catechesis HARDIN has also to deal with why this has so manifestly not been the dominant paradigm for two thousand years: he is obliged to stir the waters of church history. He indicts Constantinian (armed) Christianity alongside assimilation to a Platonic thought-world beginning in the second century. He sees JUSTIN MARTYR as a pivotal figure but he also suggests there was a whole atmosphere breathed by the sub-apostolic church which set up the eternal idea of God behind the scriptures and thus missed the radical shift brought by Jesus. HARDIN also names AUGUSTINE “the most influential Christian ever” and says he “provided a theological justification for victimizing” (123). It’s hard to exaggerate the break from a long acculturation which HARDIN is making.

But I sense an unresolved tension in HARDIN’s scriptural account, and I comment on it because I think it is in fact a fruitful and promising tension. It seems difficult for him to establish clearly his relationship to historical critical Jesus studies. He says he

reads the gospels “through several lenses all at the same time” and holds all the various methods of criticism in a “suspended state” (29), which is in effect a way of saying “trust me” when it comes to reading a text. Of course all scholars do this and seek to hide the fact by the force of rhetoric and/or logical analysis. We have all heard by now of the constructed nature of texts. However, the New Testament, and the gospels in particular, are a special case: they make a claim to history and no interpreter is going to deny that at some point and in some measure there is real history here. Something must have really happened to create Christianity. If we then introduce the Girardian hypothesis to the mix we add a new, profoundly historical layer, a meta-history which can even account for all of history. How do you combine these levels with any kind of symmetry, let alone humility? I personally believe the confluence of the two (gospel history and scapegoat anthropology) is little less than “the sign of the Son of Man” and that a truly consistent approach will at some point acknowledge this. In other words we must put all our cards face up on the table. The vigor of HARDIN’s writing, as already suggested, is testimony to this dramatically new hermeneutic context. But how does it work in practice? The beginning sections of HARDIN’s volume, the ones on Jesus, are, I think, the most compelling of the book. At one point he relates the episode in Luke 4—Jesus’ preaching in his hometown synagogue in Nazareth—and suggests “there is an authentic story underlying this text” (59). According to HARDIN, therefore, what we have is a moment in time when Jesus consciously and deliberately breaks from the violent nationalism of his contemporaries, from the words and interpretations that fed this. But an even more persuasive “real time” episode is, I think, the “shutting down of the temple” as HARDIN terms it and describes very well. This is such a scandalous episode that it not only certainly precipitated the decision to kill him but it seems to be not plainly understood by the Synoptics (Mark and Matthew) or it is even deliberately played down (Luke). Only John fully exposes the anti-sacrificial content, as HARDIN points out. And John moves the incident to the front of his gospel, in order to signal from the beginning the religion-shattering character of Jesus’ intervention. To begin a catechesis of Jesus from this point would effectively merge GIRARD’s meta-reading of the New Testament and actual historical criticism. Jesus really did shut down the temple and this together with his death and resurrection has remade the world.

Michael HARDIN is the first authentic Girardian evangelical. His is not an evangelicalism about guilt, death, forgiveness of sins and eternal life, but about the way we are, and the way we destroy each other and our world. Its thrust is entirely contemporary and part of a crisis the gospel itself has helped produce.

What is implied is an historical transcendental, a concept which is a scandal in itself: an intervention within the contingency of human events that remakes the absolute condition of the human. The considerable power and brio of Michael HARDIN's work derive from the way it rides this hermeneutical moment, radicalizing our understanding of gospel and inviting whoever will pay attention to become part of it.

*Anthony W. Bartlett*

**Kelly, Anthony: *The Resurrection Effect. Transforming Christian Life and Thought*  
Amsterdam – New York: Orbis, 2008. (205 pp.)  
ISBN: 978-1570757709; € 30**

Another book, *The Resurrection Effect, Transforming Christian Life and Thought*, by Anthony Kelly appears to belong more to the traditional theological style, working out of timeless doctrine, but it is in fact extremely alert to the storm surge provoked by the gospel. No doubt it is watching the waves from the security of the shoreline but for the theological tradition just to catch these winds is enormously exciting. KELLY seeks to bring the confessional article "He rose from the dead" front and center in theological thought, and to do so he turns to the phenomenological work of Jean Luc MARION. Phenomenology is the philosophy of perception and MARION has advanced the notion of "saturated phenomenon", something in the perceived world that exceeds our ability ever to contain in any given framework. He gives examples of public meetings, war, birth, death, the work of art, phenomena which overflow boundaries and provoke endless possible meaning. It's clear that these are very human phenomena and we are close here to the matter of anthropology and the topics analyzed by GIRARD, though with more determinative tools. The crucial point is convergence on the grounds of human experience and when Marion, in the course of his researches, has added Christian revelation to the field of legitimate phenomenological inquiry the convergence is even more pointed. In his *In Excess, Studies of Saturated Phenomena* MARION declared that revelation itself deploys phenomenality and so is a subject of phenomenology.

KELLY picks up from this direction of MARION and makes the resurrection of Christ the material of a phenomenological approach. In this manner he signals it as a powerful event in the human world and moreover, by definition, uncontainable within strict parameters of confessional existence. As saturated phenomenon its meaning always expands beyond any given cultural horizon. We can see clearly how the delineations of KELLY's method begin to approach those of GIRARD. And so it is not at all surprising that KELLY turns directly to GIRARD to give evidence of the phenomenal effect of the resurrection. MARION may provide the philosophical method by which to

describe the resurrection effect, but GIRARD supplies the data of its concrete character in the world.

KELLY continually employs Girardian language—of the victim, the generativity of violence, ontology of violence, of cultural transformation—as well as explicitly invoking GIRARD both in the introduction and in a key chapter, "Extensions Of The Resurrection Effect". By adding Girardian meta-history to a phenomenology of revelation KELLY can state: "Despite the waning of what was once termed 'Christian civilization', it would seem that the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection has in fact been penetrating human history in a surprising way ... the resurrection effect has had its influence." And a little later: "A pacific humanity is in-the-making" (162-3). At the same time such reflections reinforce the phenomena associated directly with the resurrection. For example, KELLY gives a powerful meditation on the empty tomb, on its destabilizing effect on all "idolic certitudes of violence, pride and greed" (142).

Thus when KELLY plays out the phenomenality of resurrection through the New Testament material, showing us its dynamic realism *as* phenomenon, he is always working toward an anthropological horizon, i.e. a transformative experience in humanity. Is not this the same horizon which governs Michael HARDIN's work? Thus, where the latter discovers within the contemporary horizon an exciting new announcement of the gospel itself, the former connects the horizon with the philosophical tradition, the discipline of knowable truth in relation to which theology has always worked (remembering also that phenomenology stands at the headwaters of some of the most vital 20<sup>th</sup> century thought). KELLY's work, therefore, both validates the anthropological horizon within that intellectual tradition and demonstrates reciprocally how the philosophical tradition is itself deeply inflected by Christian revelation, by its transformative anthropology. Here again is the historical transcendental, the astonishing storm surge which has set the world in motion toward the real possibility of the humanly new.

*Anthony W. Bartlett*

**Oughourlian, Jean-Michel:  
*The Genesis of Desire***

**Translated by Eugene Webb. East Lansing:  
Michigan State University Press, 2010. 174 pages.  
ISBN 978-087013-876-8, \$24.95**

Those who would like to understand better the psychological dimension of mimetic theory and to explore its utility in negotiating the difficulties of everyday relationships will welcome the publication of this study by Jean-Michel OUGHOURLIAN, in which he continues work begun in collaboration with René GIRARD and Guy LEFORT in *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* and deepened in his *The Puppet of Desire: The Psychology of Hysteria, Pos-*

session, and Hypnosis. Although relatively brief, *The Genesis of Desire* is more comprehensive in its scope than *The Puppet of Desire*, and it combines theoretical and clinical perspectives in an accessible manner that should appeal to a wide audience. In his acknowledgements, OUGHOURLIAN praises Eugene WEBB's elegant and lucid translation for enhancing the original French text (*Genèse du désir*, 2007).

OUGHOURLIAN frames his theoretical exposition with a series of detailed vignettes of individuals and couples whom he has seen in his clinical work as a psychiatrist in Paris, observing that many of the people who seek him out do not suffer from any identifiable mental illness but nonetheless struggle with painful and puzzling conflicts. He locates the cause of their distress in their relationships rather than within their psyches, and posits that their problems can be solved only by understanding the mimetic dynamics that govern these and all other human relations. OUGHOURLIAN then goes on in the theoretical portion of his book to propose a psychology based on the insight that desire, defined as "psychological movement" and understood as ineluctably mimetic and inevitably leading to rivalrous conflict, is the fundamental "driving force" shaping all the complexities of psychic life (17). Mimetic processes are thus said to underlie aspects of psychology, such as emotions, cognitions, personality traits, and selfhood, that other theories see as having greater autonomy. For example, whatever feelings a person might have toward an object of desire "are only a coloration produced by the mimetic mechanism" (137).

OUGHOURLIAN offers an extended, subtle, and playful interpretation of the first three chapters of *Genesis* as a metaphorical account of the birth of humanity through the emergence of mimetic desire. He views the serpent as the spirit of conflictual mimetism, inciting Eve to regard God as a rival who wants to keep for himself the knowledge and power that the forbidden fruit imparts. When Adam allows himself to be drawn into this drama, imitating Eve's desire, the two become caught up in the dynamics of envy, accusation, and obfuscation that have plagued couples ever since. A crucial point is that "[t]he birth of desire and of human psychology goes hand in hand with ignorance and misunderstanding of the mimetic mechanisms that give birth to them" (80).

In the following two chapters, OUGHOURLIAN looks more systematically at the strategies that human beings use to forget both the mimetic origin of their desires and the constitution of the self in those same misunderstood mimetic desires, "a double forgetting that makes possible the subsistence of the self" (100). On this basis, he lays out a diagnostic schematization based on whether a given subject regards her models as rivals, obstacles, or merely as models (the healthiest possibility), and on whether the subject focuses on

her models' appearance, possessions, being, or desires. In this way, OUGHOURLIAN is able to offer brief but highly suggestive reconceptualizations of fundamental diagnostic distinctions, such as neurosis and psychosis, or hysterical and obsessional pathologies. He also provides a valuable summary of research from neuroscience on mirror neurons, which may provide "hard" scientific validation of a theory that has its origins in GIRARD's studies of literary works.

Finally, OUGHOURLIAN returns to the patients from the introductory vignettes, and he describes how he helped them to see the mimetic dynamics, previously opaque and therefore intractable, that were causing the distress in their relationships, and he advises them on tactics for getting out of their various impasses and, in the happiest outcomes, becoming able to enjoy a more fluid and playful experience of desire. In an epilogue, OUGHOURLIAN reflects on the implications of his work, arguing that the only reliable means of protecting a relationship from the threats posed by mimetic conflict is a tireless and lucid watchfulness that amounts to "a form of ascesis, and ... calls for a real conversion," making possible "a gradual acquisition of wisdom, that is, of the capacity to desire what one has" (146).

The brevity of this work inevitably leaves open many theoretical and clinical questions, and this reader is eager to see further development in a number of areas. The diagnostic schematization, while compelling, remains sketchy, and greater detail, more case studies, and comparison with other psychiatric nosologies would be welcome. OUGHOURLIAN's reflections on the connection between desire and love in human relations are stimulating and at times profound, but this topic, about which the literature on mimetic theory has tended (with a few notable exceptions) to be curiously evasive, calls for a more extensive and rigorous treatment.

OUGHOURLIAN's descriptions of his clinical technique also raise a number of questions. His therapeutic interventions, as described in the vignettes, appear to be brief and primarily cognitive and behavioral, in that he concentrates on educating his patients about mimetism and offering guidance to them in changing the dynamics of their relationships. On occasion, his suggestions frankly employ deceit and manipulation, as when he advises a woman to hint that she has an (imaginary) lover in order to incite jealousy in her husband. Along with ethical concerns, the question arises as to whether lasting changes can be brought about by such methods, especially in case where there are long-established patterns of destructive rivalry.

At least to an Anglo-American reader, OUGHOURLIAN's occasional references to psychoanalysis sound dated and polemical, as in an anecdote in which he attributes to a particular analyst a supposedly typical view of the unconscious as "a psychic

power that plays dirty tricks on you” (27). Such dismissive remarks notwithstanding, OUGHOURLIAN borrows from psychoanalysis the concepts of transference and countertransference, and he occasionally offers intriguing reflections on his own role in the clinical encounter. For example, in one vignette he observes that he had to take care not to be drawn into a rivalrous attraction to a female patient who already had two men in her life, and at another point he comments on patients who are “of bad faith” and wish only “to checkmate their therapist and add him to their long list of victims” (10). However, he does not seem to regard the clinical relationship itself as a potential arena in which therapeutic change might occur, and he does not offer any thoughts on working with those challenging patients who make the therapist into a rival or an obstacle. In this regard, there may be an opportunity for fruitful dialogue between mimetic theory and relationally oriented schools of psychoanalysis, such as object relations and self psychology, which see therapeutic change as occurring in part through the novel and healing experiences of relationship that come about between patient and therapist in the course of longer-term and more intensive treatments.

I would go further and suggest that mimetic psychology could offer new and helpful perspectives on some of the central concepts of psychoanalytic clinical work. OUGHOURLIAN’s approach to diagnosis posits that many people seeking psychotherapy have distinctive modes of experiencing painful relationships, patterns that can helpfully be understood in terms of mimetic dynamics. Or, in other words, each person has a characteristic way of being scandalized by others, of experiencing others as a particular sort of rival or obstacle. (The *skandalon*, which was explored at length in *Things Hidden*, makes a brief appearance in *The Genesis of Desire*.) One could, then, understand the patient’s transference to the therapist as the emergence of his characteristic pattern of scandal in the therapeutic relationship. The course of a psychoanalytic therapy, then, can be conceptualized as a process of helping the patient to understand and to see exactly how he is scandalized, by the therapist and by other important figures in his life, and thereby to provide the opportunity to free himself from the tangled skein of scandal and come to experience all of his rela-

tionships in ways that are freer and less encumbered by rivalry.

I offer these comments in hope of continuing a conversation about the implications of mimetic theory for psychology and psychotherapy, a conversation to which *The Genesis of Desire* makes an innovative and challenging contribution.

Martin Heggstad

**Pawel, Miriam: *The Union of Their Dreams: Power, Hope, and Struggle in Cesar Chavez’s Farm Worker Movement.***

**New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009. Pp. xii + 372. \$28.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-1596914605**

Although this title would not cause a blip on the radar of most Girardians, it should. PAWEL provides a fascinating and critical analysis of one of the most important social movements in twentieth century America. *The Union of Their Dreams* tells the story of the farm worker movement through the perspective of many of CHAVEZ’s closest collaborators, including organizers, lawyers, and ministers. It retells the earliest, and improbable victories in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, recounts the growing pains from movement to union, and the fear and paranoia that led to a series of internal purges until all of the characters profiled became outsiders.

Cesar CHAVEZ was an unknown, unprivileged American of Mexican descent who took on the powerful network of growers in order to gain contracts and living wages and rights for a section of the workforce—farm laborers—that had hitherto been invisible to most Americans. CHAVEZ preached non-violence and endured countless hunger strikes and fasts, which made him an icon of self-sacrifice and a model of leadership for millions of people. California and seven other states honor him with a state holiday on his birthday.

From the perspective of Girardian thought and mimetic theory, there are two key themes that CHAVEZ seemed to realize: the contagion of violence and the dynamism of group solidarity. Although PAWEL’s narrative begins in 1965, it comes into shape when she retells the story of CHAVEZ’s 1968 fast (41-47). As PAWEL recalls, CHAVEZ became increasingly frustrated that boycotting workers would resort to vandalism and violence. His fast lasted twenty-five days and galvanized the movement.

Unlike later hunger strikes, the fast was not undertaken as a negotiating plea. Instead, it was meant as an act of penance for the movement and for CHAVEZ himself, as he declared, “The Fast was first for me and then for all of us in this Union. It was a Fast for non-violence and a call to sacrifice” (46). A volunteer echoed, “It was not a hunger strike and its purpose was not strategic, but as an act of prayer and of love for us” (42). In an organization whose very existence depended on sacrifice—working for nearly nothing, material discomfort, being subject to violence on picket lines—CHAVEZ, in PAWEL’s words, “upped the stakes. The appeal resonated most with the deeply religious and the overwhelmingly Catholic workers” (45). It also answered skeptics who thought non-violence was not manly. At the breaking of the fast, when he was too weak to speak, his words were read: “I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally non-violent struggle for justice. To be a man is to suffer for others” (46-47). The fast gave CHAVEZ and his movement the moral authority to win hearts and minds.

CHAVEZ seemed to possess a high level of what James ALISON calls “the intelligence of the victim.” This intelligence recognizes that sin is neither something to which the Other holds exclusive rights, nor that violence can be safely contained and controlled (GIRARD’s analysis of CLAUSEWITZ’s fear of the repercussions of “total war” provide a striking example). Another element of this “intelligence” is a kind of social intelligence that recognizes how a victim provides the glue that gives groups their solidarity. In a pre-Judeo-Christian world, GIRARD warns, the best that humanity can hope for is solidarity minus one. CHAVEZ seemed to recognize this as well, but in PAWEL’s account he was unable to imagine a better way of Christian community.

Admirers of CHAVEZ will find the later chapters that recount the UFW’s demise difficult to swallow. Upon negotiating the country’s best labor laws with then-Governor Jerry BROWN, the UFW seemed poised to erect structures that would ensure farm workers the wages and rights given to other labor industries. Just two years later, in 1976, CHAVEZ began to suspect outside infiltrators, which upset members who placed immense faith in CHAVEZ. Using Caiaphas’s logic (John 11:50), CHAVEZ—admitting that his

firing of an employee may have been wrong—argued that it was worth the risk for the sake of the movement (200). Slowly, longtime members had to choose between extreme loyalty bereft of any critical spirit, or to be cast off as a spy, outsider, or insufficiently devoted. All of the characters featured in PAWEL’s retelling are eventually discarded. As former chief legal counsel Jerome COHEN later put it, “Kronos ate his own children.”

Particularly disturbing was CHAVEZ’s use of “The Game” invented as a therapeutic technique by the founder of Synanon, Chuck DEDERICH. (DEDERICH and his group would later be subject to criminal investigation and charges of murder.) As PAWEL describes it, the Game was a “group exercise where players ‘indicted’ one another for bad behavior and hurled obscenities in a therapeutic effort to enhance communication” (203). CHAVEZ not only brought his team to the Synanon camp to play the Game, but made the Game part of community life. It was used at CHAVEZ’s community of La Paz to mob weaker or suspect members.

PAWEL sees this strategy as evidence of CHAVEZ’s wider, Schmittean worldview wherein one always needs an enemy. Accordingly, the movement lost steam because it had vanquished more suitable enemies like the growers and the Teamsters Union. PAWEL explains, “Villains helped Chavez generate excitement, bring people together, and direct their collective anger toward action that furthered his goals” (218). This logic seems irreconcilable with the CHAVEZ from the ’68 fast. Less than a decade later, CHAVEZ would reminisce, “When we had a visible opponent, we had unity, a real purpose. It was like a religious war” (218-19).

At the heart of the gospel and of much religion is an ethic of communal belonging and an asceticism that requires self-sacrifice. From this perspective it is possible to regard the struggle of CHAVEZ’s movement in *religious* terms. CHAVEZ’s 1968 appeal to non-violence and a need for internal repentance and self-scrutiny manifested the spirit of Christian social change more commonly associated with Martin Luther KING and the Civil Rights movement. The desire to distinguish between a good, holy CHAVEZ (or UFW) and a corrupted, evil CHAVEZ (or UFW) is animated by the same Manichean tendency to see the growers as purely evil and the farm workers as purely good. For GIRARD, Christianity offers

the best resource not only to avoid this bifurcation, but also to understand it both on a social and an interpersonal level. PAWEL's book offers a fascinating view inside a movement that caused great social upheaval and that was inspired by the non-violent witness of Jesus. Its conclusions remind its readers that adherence to and inspiration derived from the gospel do not buffer anyone from the social patterns that create victims and put Jesus on the cross.

[This review has benefited from a phone conversation with former chief legal counsel, Jerome COHEN, and his article, "Gringo Justice," which is housed at Amherst College's special collection: <https://www.amherst.edu/library/archives/holdings/electexts/cohen> The author thanks Mr. COHEN for his generosity of time and spirit.]

*Grant Kaplan, Saint Louis University*

**Guggenberger, W. / Palaver, W. (eds):**  
***Im Wettstreit um das Gute. Annäherung an den Islam aus der Sicht der mimetischen Theorie.***  
**Wien-Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009 (= Beiträge zur mimetischen Theorie 25). (241 pp.)**  
**ISBN: 978-3-643-50038-0, € 19.90.**

The study of Islam and Islamism still remains one of the blind spots of mimetic theory. René GIRARD himself did not publish a treatise on Islam that could be compared to his studies on Christianity and Judaism. His views on Islam and Islamism are rather scattered over several interviews and a few pages in *Achever Clausewitz* that produce more open questions than answers: Has Islam been hijacked by global mimetic rivalry, as GIRARD proposed in his interview with Henri TINCQ in *Le Monde* of November 5, 2001? Or is it essentially an "archaic religion strengthened by aspects of the Bible and Christianity" – a possibility that GIRARD ventilates at the end of *Achever Clausewitz*, while, at the same time, admitting that much more work needs to be done to understand both classical and modern Islam. The editors of the present volume, both Catholic theologians and members of the interdisciplinary research program "World Order – Religion – Violence" at Innsbruck University, attempt to use mimetic theory in order to develop more nuanced and less sketchy approaches to Islam from a Christian perspective than the father of mimetic theory himself has been able to produce so far (p. 13). The editors modestly claim to provide no more than "spotlights" on a vast subject, but their

adjacent remark about the long, difficult, and view-changing process of producing the book (p. 20) testifies to the intensity of their discussions.

The book's programmatic title—"Im Wettstreit um das Gute" (Competing for the Good)—evokes a famous verse of the Koran (5:48) which proclaims that religious diversity is God-willed and that humans, instead of fighting each other, should rather compete in good deeds. In the last decades, this motto has been frequently used by moderate Muslims in order to justify Christian-Muslim dialogue from an inner-Islamic perspective, but it may also be read as a fitting counterpart to mimetic theory: Shifting the focus of conflict from persecution and killing to competition in good deeds is an attempt to restrain the escalation of mimetic rivalry, but it requires also a deeper search for common ground between the contending sides.

Of the volume's six contributions, three are explicitly devoted to the application and further development of mimetic theory with respect to Islam. Wolfgang PALAVER, in his "Abrahamitic Revolution, Political Violence, and Positive Mimesis", provides a landmark presentation of mimetic theory in which he uncovers numerous examples of Islamic traditions that aim at restraining the temptations of mimetic rivalry through mercy, forgiveness, and, above all, turning one's life towards the One God. PALAVER holds that Islam—like Judaism and Christianity—shares the heritage of the Abrahamitic revolution, i.e., the de-mystification of collective violence, but he also claims that, due to the early development of a Muslim religious state, the theological temptation to legitimize political violence has been particularly strong in Islam (pp. 39-44)—a reasoning that provokes the question whether violence and politics are ontologically related and whether there is any hope for liberation from violence without simultaneous abolition of politics and the state.

In an equally fascinating essay on "Radical Transcendence and Political Violence", Wilhelm GUGGENBERGER discusses the thought of Sayyid QUTB (1906-1966), one of the most prominent ideological master-minds of modern violent Islamism. GUGGENBERGER discovers many surprising parallels between QUTB's plea for social justice and Catholic social teaching. Both lines of thought converge in assuming that there can be no social justice without awareness of the "transcendent" dimension of human existence. The

obvious differences between QUTB's violent and uncompromising jihadism and Catholic social teaching, however, lead GUGGENBERGER to stress the distinction between two concepts of "transcendence": on the one hand, in QUTB's case, a "radical", world-denying transcendence in which an external, unfathomable God imposes His will as Law on humans, forcing them to a rupture with the "old" world; on the other hand, an "intermediate transcendence" (*vermittelte Transzendenz*) in which the "people of God" traverse this world while using, on its way to ultimate salvation, the means of the immanent mundane order (pp. 181-188).

In a subtle essay on the stoning of adulterers, Maximilian PAULIN compares several key narratives of Christianity and Islam: The story of Jesus, the Pharisees, and the adulteress in John 8; and several stoning narratives in Muslim hadith collections. At first glance, these narratives could be used to emphasize the irreconcilability of Christianity and Islam with respect to legal violence: Jesus, by asking for someone without sin to throw the first stone, seems to abolish capital punishment; whereas in the Muslim narratives the legal punishment is finally enforced. PAULIN, however, suggests a deeper and more nuanced approach: Jesus does not abolish religious Law, but rather confirms the latter's validity in its fullness; Muhammad does not appear as a bloodthirsty persecutor, but as someone trying to mitigate the application of harsh religious laws as long as possible. PAULIN also shows that it makes a difference whether these stories are read as *prescriptive* narratives or as *descriptive* ones.

The remaining three contributions to the volume, although not explicitly referring to GIRARD and mimetic theory, are providing important material and ideas for further discussion. It is striking that these essays tend to put more emphasis on the *differences* between Islam and Christianity. This is especially true of Franz GMAINER-PRANZL's chapter on the hermeneutics of the Koran. GMAINER-PRANZL, quoting Johan GALTUNG,

is in search of a "cultural genetical code" of Islam (p. 199, 211)—and finds it in the idea of the "*inlibration*" of the Divine (as opposed to the concept of "incarnation" in Christianity). GMAINER-PRANZL claims that "Islam" considers the Koran as God's direct and eternal word and that, hence, the foundational grammar of Islam would solicit more violent pressure towards conformism than Christianity—a problematic way of reasoning that underrates the heterogeneity and historicity of Muslim views on the status of the Koran and that will also earn him accusations of "essentialism" by many cultural anthropologists.

Roman SIEBENROCK and Hüseyin CICEK in their essay "Witnesses and/or Martyrs?" present a comparison of martyrdom traditions in Christianity and Islam in two distinct parts. A lot of material and often less-known aspects of martyrdom in both traditions are presented, but one would have wished for a longer and overarching conclusion that would have bridged the findings in the "Christian" and the "Muslim" sub-chapters in the light of mimetic theory.

Werner ERNST finally circumvents the hurdles of any Christian-Muslim "dialogue" by categorically refusing any "judgment" about religious "others" while, at the same time, hinting at the possibility of an invisible community of true faithful "lights" across the divides of institutionalized religions (pp. 234-236). Based on his personal experiences in Telfs (a Tyrolean city known for its controversies about the building of a local mosque), ERNST also shows that many local conflicts between Christians and Muslims are less rooted in theological differences than in differences on the level of cultural symbols that constitute parts of a modernization process among Turko-Austrian citizens that has, from a religious perspective, taken a wrong turn, namely an adaption to the consumerist "system" of modern society—a path that many Christians have taken before them.

*Thomas Scheffler*

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LITERATURE ON THE MIMETIC THEORY**

Unfortunately the bibliography had to be postponed to the the spring issue of the Bulletin.

Nevertheless we ask and invite you to send us copies of your articles (digital or print format), as well as references to any kind of literature dealing with the Mimetic Theory by E-mail: <mailto:Dietmar.Regensburger@uibk.ac.at> or Fax: ++43 512 5072761 or by mail: Girard-Documentation, c/o Dr. Dietmar Regensburger, University of Innsbruck, Karl-Rahner-Platz 1, A-6020 Innsbruck / Austria.

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