



**KOBLENZ – SCHÖNSTATT – VALLENDAR**

**Site of the COV&R-Conference, July 6-10, 2005**



*Viewing Rhine and Mosel as they meet*

As announced in the Call for Papers (see Bulletin 25), the theme of the 2005 meeting of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion is "Mimetic Theory and the Imitation of the Divine." The conference, which is to be held in Koblenz (Vallendar-Schönstatt), Germany, July 6-10, will be hosted by the Schönstatt Sisters of Mary, in collaboration with the theological faculty of the University of Innsbruck, Austria.

Over a hundred papers and workshops are scheduled to be given by scholars representing twenty different countries across the globe. Jean-Luc Marion, Margaret R. Miles, and Allen Frantzen will be distinguished keynote speakers. Józef Niewiadomski, Billy Hewett, Ann W. Astell, and Sandor Goodhart will also speak in plenary session.

The conference will feature a special session on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, at which two eminent political scientists of the Middle East—Mumtaz Ahmad and Eliezer Don-Yehiya—will speak on the religious dimensions of that strife. Also featured on the program will be a special session on Bernard Lonergan and René Girard, organized by Sonja Bardelang, and an evening session marking the centenary anniversary of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, at which Cesáreo Bandera will present a paper (to which James Alison and René Girard will respond).

Other sessions will take up topics relating mimetic theory to theology (including a session devoted to Eucharistic themes), to political philosophy and philosophy of religion, to postmodern

*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://theol.uibk.ac.at/cover/bulletin/x1.html>

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theories of subjectivity, to economics, to anthropology, to literature, to biblical criticism, to catechesis, to spirituality, to rhetoric and composition, to psychology, to popular culture, to economics, to film studies and visual art. The sheer multiplicity of topics and approaches bears witness to the seminal power of mimetic theory.

Cultural events will include a boat-ride on the Rhine River and an evening concert by the Youth Chamber Choir and the Girls Cantors of the Liebfrauenkirche in Koblenz, directed by Manfred Faig.

**Registration** is available at the Conference Homepage <http://www.sla.purdue.edu/academic/engl/conferences/covar/index.htm>

**Location and History.** Koblenz is located in Germany at the confluence of the Rhine and Mosel rivers (its name deriving from Latin *Confluentes*), 92 kilometers (57 miles) southeast of Cologne, it has little more than 100,000 inhabitants. Koblenz was one of the military posts established by the Romans about 9 B.C. Later it was the residence of the Frankish kings, and in 860 and 922 the scene of ecclesiastical synods. In 1018 the city, after receiving a charter, was given to the archbishop of Trier by the emperor Henry II., and it remained in the possession of the archbishop-electors till the close of the 18th century. From 1249-1254 it was surrounded with new walls by Archbishop Arnold II (of Isenburg); successive archbishops built and strengthened the fortress of *Ehrenbreitstein* that dominates the city. As a member of the League of the Rhenish cities, which took its rise in the 13th century, Koblenz attained to great prosperity; and it continued to advance till the disasters of the Thirty Years' War occasioned a rapid decline.

**Sightseeing.** The more ancient part of Koblenz contains several buildings of historical interest. Prominent among these, near the point of confluence of the rivers, is the church of Saint Castor, with four towers. The church was originally founded in 836 by Louis the Pious, but the present Romanesque building was completed in 1208, the Gothic vaulted roof dating from 1498. In front of the church the French erected a fountain in 1812, with an inscription to commemorate Napoleon's invasion of Russia. Not long after, Russian troops occupied Koblenz and their commander, added in irony: "Vu et approuvé par nous, Commandant russe de la Ville de Coblenz: Janvier 1er, 1814."

In this quarter of the town one can also find the Liebfrauenkirche, a fine church (nave 1250, choir 1404-1431) with lofty late Romanesque towers; the castle of the electors of Trier, erected in 1280, which now contains the municipal picture gallery; and the family house of the Metternichs, where Prince Metternich, the Austrian statesman, was born in 1773.

In the modern part of the town you'll find the palace (Residenzschloss). It was built from 1778-1786 by Clement Wenceslaus, the last elector of Trier, and contains among other curiosities some fine Gobelin tapestries. From it some pretty gardens and promenades (Kaiserin Augusta Anlagen) stretch along the bank of the Rhine, containing a memorial to the poet Max von Schenkendorf. A fine statue to the empress Augusta, whose favorite residence Koblenz was, stands in the Luisenplatz. But the most striking of all public memorials is the colossal equestrian statue of the emperor Wilhelm I of Germany, erected by the Rhine provinces in 1897, standing on a lofty and massive pedestal, at the point where the Rhine and Mosel meet. This place is also called *Deutsches Eck*, German corner, because here the monastery of the German order, *Ordo Teutonicus*, stood beginning with 1216.

Koblenz has also handsome law courts, government buildings, a theatre, a museum of antiquities, a conservatory of music, schools, five hospitals and numerous charitable institutions. It is a principal seat of the Mosel and Rhenish wine trade and an important transit center for the Rhine railways and for the Rhine navigation.

**Conference Site.** Celebrated for their modern architectural design, the buildings on Berg Schönstatt overlook the valley below. Marienland, the largest complex on Berg Schönstatt, will provide a memorable setting for the talks and discussions at the conference, as well as comfortable, affordable, living accommodations for an estimated 200 participants. An additional hundred can be accommodated in the various houses for pilgrims in the valley.

Schönstatt is renowned as a place of religious pilgrimage and as the place of foundation for the international Schönstatt Movement. Dedicated to work of moral and religious renewal, it was founded in 1914 by Fr. Joseph Kentenich (1885-1968). Called by Pope John Paul II "one of the great spiritual leaders of this century," Fr. Kentenich courageously opposed Hitler and suffered as a political prisoner in the concentration camp in Dachau from 1942-1945. Fr. Kentenich conducted pedagogical conferences in Schönstatt in the 1930s and envisioned Schönstatt as a site for academic meetings, such as COV&R 2005.

**Travel Information.** There is an easy, direct train connection from the airport in Frankfurt to Koblenz. From the train station in Koblenz, participants can take a short ride by cab to the conference site on Berg Schönstatt, at the outskirts of the little village of Vallendar (a suburb 8 km / 5 miles north of Koblenz).

*Compiled by N. Wandinger from information provided by Ann Astell and Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koblenz>)*

**ANNOUNCING:  
RAYMUND SCHWAGER MEMORIAL  
AWARDS COMPETITION FOR GRADUATE  
STUDENTS**

To honor the memory of Raymund Schwager, SJ († 2004), the Colloquium on Violence and Religion is offering **awards of \$ 200** each for the three best papers given by graduate students at the COV&R 2005 meeting in Koblenz-Schönstatt, Germany, July 6-10.

Students presenting papers at the conference are invited to apply for the **Raymund Schwager Memorial Awards** by sending a letter to that effect and the full text of their paper in an e-mail attachment to Ann Astell ([astell@purdue.edu](mailto:astell@purdue.edu)), organizer of COV&R 2005 and chair of the three-person COV&R Awards Committee. **Due date for submission: June 1, 2005.** Winners will be announced at the COV&R Business Meeting on Saturday, July 9. Prize-winning essays will be considered for publication in *Contagion*.

**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE  
COV&R MEMBERSHIP**

Greetings! The warm weather is in breaking through in Indiana, and I am reminded of the observation that the narrator of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* makes when he senses the onset of spring and contemplates new beginnings: "Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages."

I feel especially lucky to be a part of the COV&R organization at a time when recognition of René Girard's work is on the increase world-wide. As many of you may have heard, he is being awarded highest honors in his native country (see Wolfgang's letter below), and I just learned from Ann Astell that he was recently quoted in a sermon on the Eucharist as the sacrament of non-violence delivered to the Papal Curia (see report p. 7). The conference that Ann Astell has planned for us in July at her Schönstatt Center in Koblenz is extraordinarily rich in diversity and depth. Last year's tribute to Father Raymund Schwager at the AAR/SBL in San Antonio in November developed some of the connections Father Schwager draws between evolutionary theory, original sin, and Girardian ideas (see report p. 5), and a session for next year in Philadelphia is being planned. Even the *Bulletin* in which I am currently writing this column has swelled to 24 pages!

Things are bustling, and I encourage you to participate in all of it. Make the journey to Koblenz with your family, friends, and students. Come to Philadelphia. Write for the *Bulletin*. Join us in celebrating and perusing a body of work and thought that has been changing the way we think about imitation, sacrifice, and violence in our culture and to which now at last,

in René's eighty-second year, appropriate recognition is beginning to be given.

*Sandor Goodhart, Purdue University, President of  
COV&R*

**A NOTE FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

There is some very good news I am happy to report. Mimetic theory now seems to get the recognition it deserves. Two new English books on mimetic theory—Michael Kirwan's *Discovering Girard* and Chris Fleming's *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis*—clearly emphasize the growing and lasting importance of Girard's work. Also French high culture expressed most recently a clear sign of approval. On March 17, 2005, René Girard was elected to become a member of the famous *Académie française*. We congratulate René on his specific seat among the forty *immortels* (immortals according to the seal granted to the Académie by Cardinal Richelieu).

Looking at the program of our forthcoming conference at Koblenz in Germany makes me also aware of a strong sign of life in COV&R. I expect a wonderful meeting with many thought-provoking contributions. Many thanks especially to Ann Astell who devotes a lot of her time to make this meeting possible. I am very sure that COV&R has a promising future. Questioning the relationship between religion and violence has become a key issue in our contemporary world. For this reason I want to refer you to a special issue of *The Hedgehog Review* ("Religion and Violence"; Vol. 6, No. 1 [Spring 2004]). Besides contributions by scholars like Mark Juergensmeyer you will also find a brilliant essay by René Girard ("Violence and Religion: Cause or Effect?") that summarizes his position in a very clear and precise way.

William T. Cavanaugh, an American theologian teaching at the University of St. Thomas (St. Paul, Minnesota) and connected to a group called "Radical Orthodoxy", challenges in his contribution the often used "religion and violence" argument. He convincingly shows how difficult it is to distinguish religion from politics, economy or even matters like sport. If that is true there is no easy way to discuss the relationship between religion and violence. The "religion and violence" argument too easily makes religion the scapegoat of our modern world blurring the fact that mimetic rivalry, exploitation and social injustice are our real problems. Blaming religion brings fundamentalist dangers to the fore but hides all problems connected to all seemingly secular uses of violence. Identifying religion and violence in such a simplistic manner even bereaves us from important religious contributions leading towards a more peaceful world. Cavanaugh is right. We "must treat violence as the problem—violence as such, that is, not absolutism,

blind obedience, and the rest. Only in this way can we tell the difference between the abbot of a Trappist monastery and Jim Jones. Both command obedience, but only the latter does so in service to violence instead of peace.”

*Wolfgang Palaver*

## **COV&R AT OTHER CONFERENCES**

### **René Girard with German Theologians Munich, September 2004**

When, in 2002, Raymund Schwager proposed the topic “Religion and Violence” for the next meeting of the German-speaking dogmatic and fundamental theologians, nobody would have guessed that he wouldn’t live to attend it. When he suggested René Girard as one of the speakers for the meeting, there was doubt as to whether Girard, considering his age, would still be able to attend in 2004. Schwager responded that in this case he would take on the task himself. Yet in September 2004 René Girard gave his presentation; Raymund Schwager had died the previous February. I found three elements in Girard’s freely held paper that were especially remarkable.

The whole conference was titled “Monotheism – Trinity – Violence” and started out by deliberating on the thesis of the Egyptologist Jan Assmann, which had been widely discussed in the German speaking countries. According to Assmann the Mosaic distinction of God and idols, i.e. monotheism, initiated a development in religion and society which enhanced violence and counteracted the pacific function of ancient polytheism. Only European enlightenment rekindled the memory of Egypt as the source of a polytheistic tradition. Thus Mosaic monotheism as the initiator of cultural doom?

Erich Zenger, Old Testament scholar from Münster, who only recently had still polemicized against Schwager’s hermeneutical key of reading the Old Testament as “Mixed Texts”, argued against Assmann by pointing to the different versions which the deuteronomistic and the priestly traditions of the Pentateuch supply – of course without mentioning Schwager or the meaning and importance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The systematic theologians present, who for the most part were adherents to the school of transcendental theology in the vein of Th. Pröpper and H. J. Verwey, neither contributed anything to the question of the relationship between monotheism and violence nor did they offer any consideration of the topic of religion and violence at all.

So the first remarkable aspect of Girard’s contribution was that he was the only one who took up the question, argued from a biblical and systematic viewpoint and used a Christological criterion. The theologians present did not offer any important contribution

to the topic because the transcendental trinitarian speculations of their dominant faction dealt with realms beyond history, beyond conflict and strife, and for the most part with problems internal to their group.

The second remarkable facet was the authentic bearing of Girard: he did not hide – as has become typical for German theologians – behind a jargon only accessible to insiders but exposed himself to the listeners by his open style of presentation, and he also tackled the question of violence existentially. He included his listeners in his deliberations, when he suggested that rivalry certainly could not be an alien phenomenon to the academic theologians gathered in front of him. By that he made perfectly clear that “violence” was not a topic that excluded ourselves. Violence and religion are to humanity not like a piece of garment that can be worn or laid aside arbitrarily. Therefore Girard’s presentation was a real event offering a beneficial contrast to the self-referential language games of the theologians.

The most remarkable element, however, were Girard’s introductory remarks in which he appraised Raymund Schwager’s contribution to the development of the mimetic theory. René Girard emphasized that the theory in its current, developed form was to be seen as a common achievement of Schwager and himself. Only Schwager’s humility had prevented that from being made clear earlier. In a time when the insistence on originality and on one’s own approach is valued so highly this was a deeply moving gesture. Whether it is true – the interpreters will research that one day. But in that moment Raymund Schwager was present with us at the conference.

I went home with the impression that only René Girard had accepted the challenge and ventured a historic interpretation and defense of Christianity. The task to defend the gospel publicly has to be re-learned by us German theologians.

*Roman Siebenrock, University of Innsbruck  
(Translation: N. Wandinger)*

### **Celebrating Girard in London, October 2004**

We were delighted to be able to host René and Martha Girard at a conference in London on 9th-10th October 2004, entitled “René Girard: A Celebration.” The weekend event was held at Heythrop College (University of London), a specialist college for Theology and Philosophy run by the British Jesuits. The conference was joint-sponsored by Heythrop College, the Tablet, an important Catholic periodical which has recently given a lot of publicity to René Girard’s writings; and the publishing firm Darton, Longman and Todd.

The conference opened with a brief introduction to René's work from Michael Kirwan SJ. Sadly, the second speaker, Sandy Goodhart, was unable to deliver his paper, "Reading René Girard: Mimesis, Sacrifice and Scripture", owing to the illness and subsequent death of his mother. Billy Hewett SJ read Sandy's paper, which highlighted the importance of the Servant Songs of Second Isaiah for mimetic theory. James Alison followed, with "Girard and a New Paradigm for Evangelisation".

Afternoon Workshops included Andrew McKenna, "Fellini's Crowds and the Remains of Religion", Paolo Diego Bubbio on "Girard and Philosophy", Simon Taylor: "Girard and Sacrifice", Scott Thomas on Mimetic theory and International relations. Austen Ivereigh offered a Girardian reading of the clerical sex abuse crisis, while Charles Hampton presented a workshop entitled "The Pleasures and perils of Interdividuality".



*Michael Kirwan and René Girard at the Conference*

The evening saw a very effective "Dialogue with René Girard", with questions being put to René, James Alison and Michael Kirwan. James took this opportunity to address some of the issues raised by Sandy's paper, and thereby to continue the conversation between Christian and Jewish readings of mimetic theory which has been under way for some years now. This was followed by the booklaunch of Michael Kirwan's "Discovering Girard" (DLT, 2004), which received great critical acclaim (see review p. 15).

On Sunday, René's address to the conference was a reading of the story of Susannah and the Elders. The conference concluded with a Symposium on Dramatic Theology: a tribute to the work of Raymund Schwager SJ. This was a nail-biting affair as we waited for the arrival of Niki Wandinger, whose flight from Innsbruck had been delayed. It was worth the wait, however, as Niki delivered a warm and accessible

tribute to Raymund, for an audience who for the most part were not familiar with his work.

The conference over two days drew between a hundred and fifty to two hundred people. This included academics but for the most part these were interested and intrigued people from all walks of life; the conference was virtually over-subscribed after just one advert in the Easter edition of the Tablet. There is clearly a great deal of interest in René and his work, and this small-scale conference was an encouragement to us to think of similar and bigger events in the future.

*Michael Kirwan*

### **Celebrating Raymund Schwager At the AAR Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, November 2004**

Raymund Schwager's last book – on the theology of original sin – was to come out soon in an English translation by James Williams, so it seemed a good idea to present and discuss the book at the meeting of the *American Academy of Religion* in San Antonio, Texas – at least on the sidelines of this conference, in the additional meetings. The panel whose job was to introduce and critically appraise the book consisted of Sandor Goodhart, James Williams, Robert Daly SJ, Thomas Ryba and myself, Nikolaus Wandinger. In the preparations for this event it turned out that the formatting of the text had not been completed, so that it was quite difficult to obtain two chapters of the final text for the panelists in time to prepare properly. To this day the book has not appeared, but hopefully the publication date of June 2005 can be held: Raymund Schwager, *Banished from Eden: Original Sin and Evolutionary Theory in the Drama of Salvation*. London: Gracewing 2005.



*James Williams and Sandor Goodhart*

The panel discussion was lively and the contributions complemented each other, so that we could present a fairly unified and informative view on the book. COV&R President Sandor Goodhart introduced the person Raymund Schwager and told us how a

misplaced automated internet translation of Schwager's name as "brother in law" prompted in him the realization that indeed he, the Jewish literary scholar, could relate to Schwager, the Christian theologian, as a true brother in law. James Williams acquainted the listeners with some of the difficulties he faced in translating Schwager's work and gave some thoughts from the side of the biblical scholar. He called our attention to some problems in Schwager's approach of reading the Old Testament through the New Testament. While he agreed in principle with that hermeneutical position for the Christian scholar, he asked whether Schwager had paid enough attention to the Jewish traditions of reading these texts. In some instances this was neglected according to Williams, and as a result the counter-position between Old and New Testament seems graver in Schwager's book than it needed to.

Robert Daly proceeded to appraise the main purpose of the book and its realization: It proposes a hypothetical, non-historicizing, explanation of the reality of original sin, an explanation that accepts and indeed welcomes the hypothetical reality of the evolutionary hypothesis. It is thus an explanation that enables us to take seriously (in faith seeking understanding) the traditional doctrine of original sin – at least in its main features. To help us in this task Schwager lays out for us a powerful explanatory hypothesis that does not argue against, but actually uses, and even supports and confirms many of the results, many of the *genuine findings* of contemporary science. Daly suggests that Schwager's concept of a compression of time in the Christ event, which redeemed human tendencies of violence that had entrenched themselves during two million years of brain development, could be complemented by one of decompression: to appropriate this into our lives, time is decompressed again, which allows for a being involved in undoing the bondage to sin in a *non-Pelagian* way.

Tom Ryba considered in his talk the relationship between original sin and freedom and emphasized that Schwager's approach was on the one hand creative and innovative, while on the other hand trying to adhere to Catholic teaching and tradition. He suggested, however, that with respect to some topics, monogenism and the direct creation of every human soul by God, there was still need for discussion.

In my own contribution I once again emphasized that Schwager's approach to creation and original sin incorporates the results of modern science, thereby not only avoiding contradictions between faith and the theory of evolution but – more than that – showing that a certain interpretation of evolutionary theory is more in tune with the biblical view of creation than a static, so-called creationist, model. Schwager also deals with some of the serious questions still remaining, namely how we are to conceive of "Paradise" un-

der the assumption of evolution: we have to rethink some old tenets of popular belief, which however, have not become official church doctrines, e.g. the physical immortality of the first humans. I then related that in the German-speaking countries Schwager's book was received with much controversy, some scholars accusing him of falling prey to a philosophical naturalism. This, however, is not true, since Schwager does not identify original sin with some genetic developments, he merely acknowledges that there is also a genetic and evolutionary aspect to the doctrine of original sin.

After all the presentations we embarked on an interesting discussion, which began with the problems of differing Jewish and Christian readings of the same texts that Jim Williams had already touched upon. Sandy Goodhart remarked that Jewish Midrash gives different readings to the texts of Genesis than what Schwager calls a Jewish reading of the text. Schwager's non-treatment of Midrash has to be seen as a weakness, according to Goodhart, because the Hebrew understanding of the bible is connected to Midrash. We approached an agreement along the lines that the New Testament could be seen as that Midrashic reading of the Old Testament that was definitive for Christians. Other points of discussion were the relation of Schwager's ideas to Catholic tradition and the naturalism debate.



*The panelists: S. Goodhart, J. Williams, N. Wandinger, R. Daly, Th. Ryba*

I was told afterwards that the panel presentations and discussions were received quite well by the audience and left the impression that we had "really all read the same book", as one listener put it. However, a serious flaw of the event should not be concealed: The audience was not much more numerous than the panel. The placement of the event in the additional program, the allocation of a removed basement room, and the title might have contributed to the almost complete disregard for our talk. "Celebrating Raymond Schwager" unfortunately gave no hint that there would be interesting theological content at the event, and moreover it was only likely to interest folks already familiar with Schwager. "Discussing Original

Sin, Evolution and Redemption” would have enticed more listeners, I suspect, “Celebrating Raymund Schwager” would have made a nice subtitle.

Thanks to Robert Daly, however, a reviewer from the *Theological Studies* was present, who was quite taken by our discussion and got very interested in Schwager’s book. That way we still may have contributed to the spread of its ideas (a review of the book is also scheduled to be published in one of the next issues of *Religion*).

*Nikolaus Wandinger with material by Robert Daly,  
pictures taken by Vern Redekop*

## ***EUCARIST IS “GOD’S ABSOLUTE ‘NO’ TO VIOLENCE”***

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Lenten Sermon by Father Cantalamessa**

VATICAN CITY, MARCH 11, 2005 (Zenit.org: ZE05031105).- Thanks to the Eucharist, “God’s absolute ‘no’ to violence, pronounced on the cross, is kept alive through the centuries,” said the Pontifical Household preacher in a Lenten meditation.

With his sacrifice, “Christ defeated violence, not opposing it with greater violence, but suffering it and laying bare all its injustice and uselessness,” said Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa ... as he led the third in a series of weekly meditations during Lent.

“Why blood, precisely? Perhaps it must be thought that Christ’s sacrifice—and, therefore, the Eucharist, which renews it sacramentally—only confirms the affirmation according to which ‘violence is the secret heart and soul of the sacred,’” said the preacher.

But, “today we have the possibility to shed a new and liberating light on the Eucharist, precisely following the path that led René Girard to the affirmation that violence is intrinsic to the sacred, to the conviction that the paschal mystery of Christ has unmasked and broken for ever the alliance between the sacred and violence,” he continued. “According to this thinker, with his doctrine and life, Jesus un masks and tears apart the mechanism of the scapegoat that canonizes violence, making himself innocent, the victim of all violence,” Father Cantalamessa added.

In this connection, it is “emblematic that over his death there were gathered ‘Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel’; those who were enemies before became friends, exactly as in every crisis of the scapegoat,” he said, citing Acts 4:27. “Christ defeated violence, not by opposing it with greater violence, but suffering it and laying bare its injustice and uselessness,” the preacher said. “He inaugurated a new kind of victory that St. Augustine condenses in three words: ‘victor quia victima’: victor because he is victim.” And “resurrecting him from the dead, the Father declared, once and for

all, on what side truth and justice are, and on what side error and lies,” stated the Pontifical Household preacher.

The “novelty of Christ’s sacrifice is made relevant from different points of view in Hebrews: ‘He has no need, as did the high priests, to offer sacrifice day after day’; ‘he would have had to suffer repeatedly from the foundation of the world. But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sin by his sacrifice.’” Referring to texts on Christ’s sacrifice and the redemption, Father Cantalamessa said that “the events and experiences of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, never before lived in such proportions by humanity, posed new to questions to Scripture, and Scripture, as always, revealed itself capable of answers to the measure of the questions.” “The abolition of the death penalty also received a new light from the analysis on violence and the sacred. Something of the mechanism of the scapegoat is under way in every capital execution, including in those endorsed by the law,” he said. “‘One died for all.’ The believer has another reason—Eucharistic—to oppose the death penalty. How can Christians, in certain countries, approve and rejoice over the news that a criminal has been condemned to death, when we read in the Bible: ‘Do I indeed derive any pleasure from the death of the wicked? says the Lord God. Do I not rather rejoice when he turns from his evil way that he may live?’” asked Father Cantalamessa.

In the preacher’s opinion, “the modern debate on violence and the sacred thus helps us to accept a new dimension of the Eucharist,” thanks to which “God’s absolute ‘no’ to violence, pronounced on the cross, is kept alive through the centuries. The Eucharist is the sacrament of non-violence!” At the same time, the Eucharist “appears, positively, as God’s ‘yes’ to innocent victims, the place where every day blood spilt on earth is united to that of Christ, whose ‘sprinkled blood ... speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.” Father Cantalamessa added: “From this we understand also what is robbed from the Mass, and the world, if it is robbed of this dramatic character, expressed always with the term sacrifice.”

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## ***BOOK REVIEWS***

### **Thomas J. Cousineau, *Ritual Unbound. Reading Sacrifice in Modernist Fiction***

Newark: University of Delaware P, 2004. 187pp.  
ISBN: 0-87413-851-5 \$ 39.50

How can we place Cousineau’s treatment of *the* subject of modern fiction? Northrop Frye at mid-century declared that modern literature’s heroes were usually ironic anti-heroes, subjects more powerless and iso-



lated than their audience. Frye's scheme for classifying the subjects of literature in relation to myth and ritual was the most remarkably successful model of literary study for his generation, but the complex dynamic implied in this greater power of the modern audience ominously gathered around the 'scapegoat' received less attention. Cousineau invokes both Kenneth Burke and René Girard to caution us about what often happens when the modern audience sees a scapegoat 'ritual' in action: it turns the tables, tendentiously defending the scapegoat by accusing his accusers of scapegoating, by scapegoating the scapegoater!

Cousineau sees as well that modern fiction almost invariably shows a mythic substratum beneath ordinary reality as it defends an isolated individual against society. He reveals the pre-eminent subject of modern fiction, persecution of the individual by his society, as the atavistic persistence of scapegoat rituals, now seen from the point of view of society's victims. Cousineau's special subject or "distinctive subgroup" becomes those fictions that plot the potentially aggressive and perhaps interminable unbinding of modern ritual: the narrator's initial unbinding of victims from their (false) accusers, by unleashing in the name of his sympathetic readers his accusation of false accusing *onto* these accusers. The narrator's accusations are further revealed by the reader's evolving understanding of events independent of an unreliable narrator to be (you guessed it) his own arbitrary, unjustifiable scapegoating.

Cousineau sets his work in relation to two fine books that depend on Girard's mimetic hypothesis for reading fiction: Michiel Heyn's *Expulsion and the Nineteenth Century Novel* (1994) and Andrew Mozina's *Joseph Conrad and the Art of Sacrifice: The Evolution of the Scapegoat Theme in Joseph Conrad's Fiction* (2001). For Heyn and Mozina, the revelation of scapegoating invariably leads to a disabling and demystifying of scapegoating. Cousineau finds James and Conrad more aware of the difficulties of cleansing the community altogether of this immemorial practice. Namely, their narrators see the scapegoating of others, but not their own role as a perpetrator of a new round of persecuting the persecutors. Their novels offer more complicated but limited demystifications of scapegoating, enabled by the formal events of the novel falsely interpreted by the narrator. As Cousineau says, the "pattern created by these events—which constitutes a form of order not dependent on the expulsion of a sacrificial victim—serves throughout the novels themselves as a silent challenge to the scapegoating discourse of the narrator" (18).

Therefore, Cousineau does not see modernist fiction depicting an inevitable progression from blind scapegoating to its revelation and renunciation, from

blindness to insight, but a delaying or hijacking of its revelation for another round of all against one. Here Cousineau follows the most recent developments of Girard's thinking, which have advanced beyond the declaration of the modern period as the time where "victims have rights," to focus more somberly on the deceptive ease with which we see the scapegoats of others, which makes more difficult and more necessary the task of recognizing one's own scapegoat victims. Can "objective" (29) novelistic patterns themselves propose, as Cousineau argues, the imaginary nonsacrificial order of the community, or is the deposed narrator our new victim? If we have learned to mistrust narrators, can we trust their authors? Can we trust the audience to recognize its own complicity, to break the chain of collective violence?

*Ritual Unbound* offers fine, balanced readings of six fictional texts of High Modernism which, according to Cousineau, attempt to demystify the "atavistic" persistence of the human practice, since Abraham, for ritually displacing violence onto victims we could care less about. Perhaps Cousineau as author suggests what one form of a nonsacrificial social order might look like, in the careful and considerate way that he treats the dangerously large group of commentators already gathered around his subjects: Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Ford Maddox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Cousineau never proposes himself as the only reader left standing, worth reading. He peacefully establishes good working relations even with critics opposed to his position.

Cousineau reveals "occulted rivalry" in the various narrators of James's *The Turn of the Screw*. If in the frame tale we can see the mild competitiveness in Douglas's proffering of his own story as superior to Griffin, his predecessor in ghost-storytelling, we are better able to recognize the governess blaming young Miles's persecution on Miss Jessel and Peter Quint, the servants who preceded her. Against all the previously published interpretations of spiritual and psychological deviancy in *The Turn of the Screw*, James's true subject is now seen as the complex moral relation between narrator and listeners, "the complicitous relationship between rhetorically effective demagogues and their audiences" (37).

For Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Cousineau is especially careful of rival psychologies and critical methodologies in the secondary literature surrounding the story, as he employs the minimal term "outsider" to designate the victim of the social practice which Conrad demystifies. Marlow defends the outsider Kurtz when the Company accuses him. In fact, Marlow glorifies Kurtz. Cousineau shrewdly argues that Kurtz is thus twice mystified, for the sake of the accusing and admiring communities surrounding him.



But the three consecutive retellings of Kurtz's story (Marlow in Brussels, Marlow on the Nellie, and the narrator in the lap of the reader) ultimately demystify the role of the outsider in society and clarify Conrad's purpose of presenting "the activity of the storyteller as a sublimated alternative to the violent, atavistic methods for achieving solidarity to which human communities are otherwise likely to resort" (62-63). As an alternative to the violent solidarities depicted in Conrad's fictions which depend on expelling outsiders, Conrad's creation of Marlow furthers the remarkable goal of an all-inclusive solidarity without exceptions promised in the well-known preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, written a year earlier than *Heart of Darkness*. (An earlier version of the Conrad chapter appeared in *Conradiana*, achieving nearly all of the goals of *Ritual Unbound* without mentioning Girard, relying solely on a common understanding of the mystifications and degradations that outsiders suffer at the hands of the group, and never using the provocative but indispensable term for this book: "scapegoat." The earlier essay prudently recognizes that in a crowd of Conradians, to utter "scapegoat" is to be identified with the repudiated myth-ritual school which has 'ruined the district', to risk being scapegoated for even mentioning scapegoats).

The narrator of Ford's *The Good Soldier* gives more incentive to the reader to pass on to the objective truth conveyed by the formal elements of the novel he narrates by admitting that he doesn't understand what has happened. The narrator would see his hero's death as persecution for breaking the interdictions of society, but he alternately recognizes the declining of those interdictions and the self-destructiveness of desire. Chapter 3, "Borrowed Desire in *The Good Soldier*" gets along nicely with one of Girard's homelier adjectives for mimetic desire as the demystification of the "romantic myth of spontaneous desire" (105) without recourse to Girard's full demonstration in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*. There Girard argues that because characters wish to be more like someone else they admire, they borrow their desire. Those desirable objects which cannot be shared produce rivalry, but increasingly desire will be fixed to what it can't have (indicated by rivalry and interdiction) as the only thing worth having.

"Romance or Holocaust," the subtitle of Cousineau's chapter on *The Great Gatsby*, marks the deepest resonance of *Ritual Unbound*, at least for American readers. Bearing on the choice of accepting or rejecting the narrator's version of the 'great' Gatsby as victim/hero is the service he has rendered to the romancing of the American literary tradition itself. Cousineau fully gathers the critical controversy over Gatsby to settle it: Nick Carraway lives vicariously through Gatsby, sharing with him a desire for Daisy and rivalry with Tom. By accusing all of

Gatsby's other friends as exploiters, Carraway exonerates himself from exploitation. Gatsby is 'great' in Carraway's eyes. Carraway's seemingly inflated or misused term 'holocaust' is appropriate to his interpretation of the sacrifice of Gatsby, but inappropriate to the novelistic truth. The novel demystifies borrowed desire, as well as the relationship, whether celebratory or expiatory, between "a community and a designated individual who has become the privileged object of its attention" (128).

Cousineau ends with Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, where the language of sacrifice is at once offhand and yet relevant to modern life. He sees a conflict in Woolf between a recognition that there must be social sacrifices to keep distinctions and to keep the peace (Mrs. Ramsay deferring to the Mr., Lily chatting up Tansley), but also a resentment against society's sacrificial exclusion of women. Cousineau concludes his most difficult assignment by proposing a double-ending to the novel. In the boat, Mr. Ramsay passes the control of the tiller-blade to his son, an action that perhaps excludes Cam; back on shore, Lily finishes her painting under the approving presence of Mr Carmichael, gathered into an artistic tradition formerly exclusive of women.

Unlike the earlier novels discussed, *To the Lighthouse* presents no character as narrator who the reader could demystify by superior interpretations of the formal events of the novel. As Woolf's readers we do not demystify others. Ultimately, no character is a stranger, no scapegoating is proposed to the audience.

The oldest members of COV&R who read Girard's books as he completed them will remember the sheer exhilaration of being thrown back in their reading chairs by the gravitational force of the soaring leap from *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* to *La violence et le sacré*. Who could ever regret that experience? Yet one chapter alone ("Du desir mimétique au double monstreux") reaches back to bring his earlier book on board, and Girard's lucid and penetrating discussions of Freud must substitute for a consideration of Freud's novelist cohorts waiting in place a short march beyond the romanesque novelists Girard discussed with such loving care in his earlier book.

*Ritual Unbound* has proceeded directly to this cohort of High Moderns who connect the exacerbations of modern desire to the atavistic preparation of collective victims, but it is very difficult to unbind the entangled double business of fiction and theory. When Cousineau terms the presence of ritual in modern life as 'atavistic', he is splitting the difference between D.H. Lawrence and Girard, between Lawrence's return to blood consciousness (see Cousineau on p. 164 n. 11) and Girard's concept of a mechanism unattached to any idea of tribal migration or collective

(un)consciousness, to explain the 'return' of ritual and myth in modern life.

Similarly, Cousineau begins *Ritual Unbound* in gratitude to a long-ago fiction seminar, and is clearly affectionate towards his authors, taking good care of each of them. The chronological sequence in which he discusses them does not martial up his novels so strictly that we are clearly enjoined to declare that Woolf is further along than Conrad, but neither are we certain if awareness of collective violence is advancing in history or (at best) running in place.

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**René Girard, *Les origines de la culture, Entretiens avec Pierpaolo Antonello et João de Castro Rocha*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2004, 280pp, ISBN 2-220-05355-5 € 22**

Before *Les origines de la culture* appeared in French in March 2004, it was published in Portuguese in Rio de Janeiro (*Um longo argumento do princípio ao fim*, Dialogos com João Cezar de Castro Rocha Pierpaolo Antonello, Rio de Janeiro: TopBooks, 2003, 230pp, ISBN 85.7475.020) and in Italian (*Origine della cultura e fine della storia*, Dialoghi con Pierpaolo Antonello e João de Castro Rocha, xxi + 221 pp, Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 2003, pp180, ISBN 88.7078.827 X.). Both in the Italian and French texts the work of translators is acknowledged. The French translation and text has been upgraded in consultation with René Girard. The French book ends with Girard's reply to the criticism of his work by Régis Debray in *Le feu sacré* (Fayard, 2003), a text not included in the Italian and Portuguese versions and not discussed here.

In its composition *Les origines de la culture* reminds us of *Des choses cachées*. It is built up as a series of dialogues between René Girard and two gentlemen knowledgeable about mimetic theory. They are Pierpaolo Antonello, professor of Italian at the University of Cambridge and João Cezar de Castro Rocha, professor of Comparative Literature at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. Compared to the interlocutors of *Des choses cachées*, Antonello and Castro Rocha keep a low profile offering René Girard maximum opportunity to give clarifications on his theory. They operate as a team. The text does not indicate who of the two it is who is asking a particular question. The interviewers are equal to their task. They are at home in most fields to which mimetic theory has been applied. Whether their questions relate to the anthropological issues, to the Bible, or to philosophy, they are well argued and to the point. While most readers of the *Bulletin* will be attracted to the book because of the biographical chapters, I estimate that social science practitioners with an interest in Girard are the prime beneficiaries of this book. Never before did Girard position his research so

clearly in continuity with mainstream anthropology. For the open-minded anthropologist *La Violence et le sacré* and *Des choses cachées* were inspiring texts suggesting a whole range of new questions and new possibilities of integrating the different human sciences. Girard's relationship with ongoing research and with the established schools of thought remained largely predatory and polemical. Girard took from existing knowledge what suited his argument while exposing the rather extensive patches of academic blindness. Despite Girard's protests to the contrary, social scientists felt they had little reason to believe they were dealing with a fellow traveller. In *Les origines de la culture* we find a Girard who is eager to explain how the mimetic angle can help tackle unresolved issues in the study of the emergence and variation of human culture. He is happy to compare his way of working and his ambition to Darwin's. The affinity between the two scholars is emphasised in many ways, most chapters opening with quotations from Darwin's autobiography or from the notebooks. The Brazilian title is a quote from Darwin: towards the end of his life he characterised his work as "one long argument from the beginning to the end" (*um longo argumento do princípio ao fim*). The French title must have been 'Darwinised' at the very last moment. Internet booksellers still advertise the book under the predictable Girardian title *La culture dévoilée* ('Cultured Unveiled'). The definitive title stops short of mimicking Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, the plural being reserved to 'origin' while 'culture' is left singular: a gesture to those who criticise him for a single-factor explanations?

Anthropological evolutionists have on the whole been materialists, giving pre-eminence to technological and economic changes as motors of change. For Girard the discovery of the effectiveness of sacrifice and the subsequent revelation of the violence contained in the sacrificial mechanism are the fundamental motors of progress in peaceful human coexistence. In the fourth chapter *L'homme: un "animal symbolique"* Girard argues how an understanding of the role of sacrifice can contribute to tackling unresolved issues in human evolution. He suggests an intimate connection between Darwin's concept of 'natural selection' and 'sacrifice' both being processes resulting in the death of outsiders. In this chapter he enters in debate with a number of leading scholars in the study of human evolution: with Edward Osborne Wilson (who admits an adaptive role of religion in human evolution, animal hierarchy as protection against violence), with Richard Dawkins, (the inventor of the 'memes': non-mnemonic, non-genetic, quasi-mimetic replicators of behaviour between individuals), Konrad Lorenz (observations on human laughter, redirection of mutual aggression to an external object among animals), Merlin Donald (the three stages of mental

evolution: from mimetic via myth to theory, the anteriority of myth to articulated language), Terence Duncan (two stages: from indexation to symbolicity), Irenaeus Eibl-Eibesfeldt (dehumanisation in enemy scenario), Carl Vogt (cannibalism as an advanced, at times “civilised”, form of sacrifice). Girard expounds on his old thesis of the religious origin of the domestication of animals, now also extending it to agriculture. The chapter with Frazer and Lévi-Strauss in the title provides more precisions on sources of inspiration other than those deriving from these scholars. I mention Emile Durkheim (who, we discover here with some surprise, was marginal to Girard’s intellectual itinerary), Walter Burkert, and Gabriel Tarde.

The last chapter deals with the problem of verification: with proving the validity of mimetic theory. A parallel is drawn between the first years of the development of evolutionist theory and the now emerging mimetic theory. While the theory had many adversaries it was impossible for these adversaries to disprove the theory. Today there is a multitude of indications of the plausibility of mimetic theory, that is statements that are not contradicted. Yet these statements cannot be said to be proven (or disproven). Only after the establishment of the comparative method, did direct evidence turn into proof. The first real skull that was found exhibiting properties intermediate between primates and humans (the skull of Gibraltar) did not convince anybody. The conjunction of predicted, hypothesised species and the identification of really existing remnants of these species makes evidence turn into proof.

The challenge for mimetic cultural theory is to build hypotheses concerning cultural variety and then identify the hypothesised corresponding cultural constellations in ethnographic or archaeological reality. The myriad of scattered indications of validity we have today, can then acquire the status of scientific proof. Today’s anthropologist should proceed as a police investigator basing himself on circumstantial evidence. The work of the anthropologist Arthur M. Hocart and the historian Carlo Ginzburg are discussed as exemplary of this detective approach.

The first chapters *Les origines de la culture* are devoted to René Girard’s intellectual and spiritual biography including memories of his youth and adolescence in wartime France. We follow Girard’s career in different American universities: meet Girard as one of the organisers of the conference at Johns Hopkins University in 1966 that introduced structuralism and de-constructivism to the United States and in which many members of the French intellectual avant-garde of the time participated (Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, and others). At the same university a first circle of disciples was formed (Eric Gans, Andrew McKenna, Cesareo Bandera, Eugenio Donato). The book has more on the relationship with

Michel Serres (guest professor in Buffalo), Lucien Goldmann (Girard’s promoter in Europe in the 60s), the anthropologist Victor Turner and many others. Successive interests – the novel, ethnographic monographs, Greek tragedies, Shakespeare – are given a university context: Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore), New York State University (Buffalo) and Stanford University (Palo Alto). In the process it becomes clear that Girard’s successive interests were hardly influenced by the intellectual climate of his immediate environment. In fact, he decided to leave Johns Hopkins when the ‘French ideas’ started booming there.

In another section ideas that have been the subject of earlier publications are passed in review and further articulated. For those who are new to Girard’s work the book can very well serve as a summary of his ideas. Those familiar with his work will find known arguments applied to new cases, old cases put in a new light (for example: the two meanings of sacrifice – immolation and renouncing on one’s self-interest – in the story of the Judgment of Salomon). Nietzsche and Freud demand their usual space, but there is also attention for thinkers that remained marginal in earlier books (Auerbach, Hocart), for recent responses to Girard’s work (Robert Calasso), for the work of anthropologists applying the mimetic theory (Lucien Scubla). The chapter on Christianity makes interesting observations on the fundamental difference of monotheism and polytheism taking the non-violence of Jainism as a case in point.

In the last part of the book René Girard defends himself against the misunderstanding of his work by Régis Debray in his last book *Le feu sacré* (Paris: 2003 Fayard). Debray is a French intellectual well known for the controversial positions he has taken on political developments in South America during the 1970s. In this book he deals with religious violence in the context of 9/11/2001. Since I do not have Debray’s text at my disposal I will refrain from mingling in the debate.

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**William A. Johnsen, *Violence and Modernism: Ibsen, Joyce and Woolf*.**

Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003.  
169 pp. ISBN 0813026652 \$ 55

This book brings together in one satisfying volume a body of William Johnsen’s careful scholarship on modernist literature and modern life. It is a pleasure to read work so well-informed both by thorough knowledge of René Girard’s thinking and by mastery of the formidable figures it gets into in the same room with Girard. Henrik Ibsen, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf are certainly not marginal lightweights, after all, but Johnsen walks a path through the mountainous

scholarship on them with sure-stepping grace. (Good scholarship is good partly by knowing what to leave out of the reader's way.) It satisfies, too, to perceive continuities in Johnsen's own thought, continuities hidden by his essays having appeared in different journals at different times. Here, one catches on more easily to Johnsen's notion of the modern phenomenon called *hypocriticism*; to his quiet insistence that in correctly directed analyses of sacrificial dynamics in modern society (where our awareness of persecution can always be perverted into the self-promoting victimary) we must expect not so much that the victim is always perfectly innocent, but more that we the persecutors will be no less guilty than the victim; to Johnsen's redefinition of (the best) literary modernism as a post-sacrificial life-affirming esthetic that chooses peace without indulging sentimentalism, that celebrates a hard-earned conviction of the need for a unilateral renunciation of violence.

Johnsen's opening chapter is one of the best summaries of Girard's work anywhere, and probably the most useful of all such summaries for students of literature (as distinct from theology) in Anglo-American universities. The evolution of his thought in relation to that of Levi-Strauss, Sartre, Freud, and the Cambridge ritualists (among others) is condensed but not compromised; nothing essential is missing. Most originally, the chapter brings together Girard and Northrop Frye, in a careful "mimeticization" of Frye's "Historical Criticism: Theory of Modes" from the hugely influential *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). Frye surveyed the long devolution in Western literature of the gradual diminution of the protagonist's power of action – from gods in myth through epic heroes to novelistic protagonists to the tormented ironic figures of modernism proper – arranging the ingeniously defined stages in a succession of historical "modes," but ending with an unconvincing prediction that the modernist era would somehow produce a new unifying myth to re-start the cycle which originated in primitive myth. Johnsen contends that the thinking of Frye and Girard about the historical evolution of Western literature shares several tendencies. Both view "secular literature as part of a tradition of Judeo-Christian writing which [takes] them past the modern" (viii-ix); both affirm a "correspondence between secular and sacred writing" (vii); both leave under-developed, however, their proposals about how to locate and illuminate that tradition of correspondence "completing itself in the modern" (vii). Those under-developed, implicit ideas are the ones Johnsen aims to work out in the whole book.

Any who have fretted to figure out the relations between Girard's and Frye's views of myth will find Johnsen immensely helpful. Like Girard, Johnsen argues, Frye defines human desires "comparatively" across cultures; like Girard, Frye's method implies

that "human desires become legible collectively as the drives that cultural prohibitions imperfectly and variously restrain" (15). Unlike Girard, however, Frye subscribed unsuspiciously to Freud's "absorption" theory of identification; Frye's foundational monomyth of the "one being who rises, sets and returns like the sun" (14) animates his view of the motive of literature as a whole – "to articulate the desirable already comprehended most clearly in primitive myth and ritual" (14). However, in the long run, for Frye, "Dionysus would do just as well as Christ" (17) as a source of knowledge – presumably due to an assumption that the "instinctive" is ethically neutral if not mythically innocent. We see Frye and Girard part ways, Johnsen points out, when we recall that for Girard the desire to appropriate is *not* (as in Freud) instinctive. For Girard, the "archetypes" so beloved of Frye would not be the projections of instincts but would be instead "understood as 'articulating' the desires that culture prohibitions **project onto the disciples**" (16). The "long devolution" of historical mode in Frye, ending with that improbable prophecy about a new myth, when "read mimetically" through René Girard, becomes instead the story of the contest between "the two logoi of Satan and the Paraclete, the accuser and the advocate, respectively, of the persecuted" (18) – a story in which Dionysus certainly will *not* do as well as Jesus does. For Johnsen, Frye's hinted-at-but-undefined future myth of Western literature should be sought *not* in the guise of a new "myth" at all but rather, modifying Girard, in "the revelation of violence generated from an emerging postsacrificial comprehension, whose critical moment (kairos) is achieved in modern literature" (18). In other words, modern literature "finalizes Western literature's progressive *thematization* of the scapegoat mechanism" (18). And the best modernist writing – including that of Ibsen, Joyce and Woolf – contributes definitely to that finalizing.

Nor does the first chapter end there. Johnsen marks the outer limits of the modern, beginning and ending, with fine analyses of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and George Orwell's *1984*. Shakespeare, aware of the metaphysical nature of modern desire – thus the tragic thematics of "nothing" in *Lear* – was determinedly revealing stereotypes and not simply playing with archetypes, Johnsen suggests. If you remain (as I did before Johnsen) wistfully unconvinced by the countless interpretations of the scene of *Lear*'s banishment of Cordelia, then Johnsen's brilliant mimetizing of it will click for you (it would be criminal to give it away here; alone itself it is reason enough to get hold of the book). His reading of the play shows how *Lear* (the character) blames all women, but Shakespeare, with his deep intuition of the modern, "exonerates all the accused" (22) and underlines the futility of blame in the context of pre-Christian sacri-

ficial crisis: "All are guilty, but none does offend. *King Lear* forgives all those who know not what they do" (23). Then Johnsen's interpretation of Orwell's 1984 details the dystopia's enactment of the knowledge of violent unanimity's productiveness taken to its most horrifically cynical extreme: "Orwell imagines the end of the modern in the ruthless hijacking of the comprehension of scapegoat practices in order to perfect them in perfect violence for its own sake" (33).

The bulk of the book creates a cross-textual dialogue between René Gerard and the three major modernist writers of the subtitle. Johnsen places Ibsen, Joyce, and Woolf together on territory bounded by several lines of shared belief. All three were "provoked by ... signs of a sacrificial crisis, an outbreak of mimetic violence *that cannot be resolved by blaming it on someone else*" (x; emphasis added); that knowledge of the futility of blaming leads ultimately to their various moments of renunciation of violence. Ibsen, Joyce, and Woolf investigate the way that, in modern societies, "conflictual mimesis persists in all those places not administered by the judicial system – in particular, the world of culture and consent" (31). Inside modernity the sacrificial mechanism properly speaking operates only [1] where the judicial system remains ineffective; [2] where private, domestic, and social conflicts "short of illegal behaviour" (x) fall prey to vicious rivalry; [3] where conflicts between nations, unregulated by any court of global authority, escalate into runaway violence. Thus appears a certain coherence in these chapters. Henrik Ibsen represents the sacrificial dynamics of politics and the media, areas where "law" strictly speaking does not regulate violence; James Joyce excavates the debilitating tendency of sacrificial Irish nationalism, a symptom of hateful conflicts between nations and "culture" as remedy; Virginia Woolf bravely transcends the cage of domestic vengeance in which a self-essentialising feminism might lock itself up. Johnsen shows, in addition, the way these writers are vigilant especially regarding the generational conflicts between artists, the endless temptation to despise and to satirize one's immediate esthetic fathers and mothers. He calls this temptation "Western culture's sacrificial compulsion to 'modernize,' that is, [to] confer value on whatever can *force* the past to pass for obsolete" (xii). Ibsen and Joyce and Woolf in different ways resist that temptation to forceful rejection of the past. They "come to understand the sole way to peace in the modern period of limitless destructive power [is] a unilateral and certainly dangerous refusal to do violence" (xi); their greatness lies in their "redefinition of the modern away from mimetic rivalry and violence, towards a tradition of peaceful identity and reciprocity" (xiii).

The chapters on Ibsen offer research into *The Pillars of Society* and *An Enemy of the People*. Perhaps the key notion in Johnsen's treatment of Ibsen is that of *hypocriticism*: "hypocriticism, the social world where everyone denies their investment in what the crowd believes, but everyone does what the crowd represented by the media wants" (33). We might be surprised that Ibsen was in the habit of reading (only) two things: the Bible, and newspapers. Ibsen's research into human behaviour, as represented and worked out in his plays, reveals that in "modern life, the drama of sacrifice, especially the appearance of self-sacrifice, is carried out for others, and at a certain level of community, [carried out] for and in the press, rather than at some predetermined public altar or arena" (37). His characters are distinctly modern by virtue of their full "knowledge of the influence of self-sacrifice," of "the secular, often even calculated and *hypocritical* nature of sacrifice" (37). In *The Pillars of Society*, the characters celebrate self-sacrifice, their performances "varying between serving without compulsion its compulsive force, and calculated manipulation of it" (38). Johnsen finds in *An Enemy of the People* hypotheses concerning modern political leadership: "in the modern period, reports of crowds abstracted by politicians and journalists substitute for real crowds. Journalists and politicians speak for a crowd too large to gather, which perhaps only exists in the hypothetical form they give to it" (57). A temptation in politics is to pervert the modern knowledge of the victimary in order to mobilize crowds, ostensibly in the cause of vindicating the innocent but actually with the motive of gaining power by *blaming others* for the innocents' victimization. Ibsen, Johnsen reveals, was keenly aware of that temptation "to make an idol of the persecuted as uniquely innocent, to deify self-sacrifice, instead of recognizing the persecuted as being no guiltier than the rest" (58).

The most intriguing cultural problem which James Joyce recognized and struggled against, Johnsen posits, was that of Irish culture as a system which deified self-sacrifice in another way, by forcing too many of its young to become sentimental idolized martyrs to the "cause" of Irish nationalism. In a careful study of the revisions of "The Sisters," the first story in *Dubliners*, Johnsen uncovers the hidden clues to Joyce's progressively increasing awareness of the limits of modernist irony as a way to real knowledge; and he locates an invaluable interpretive skeleton key in Joyce's figure of the "loveless Irishman" (77; 89), a particularly convoluted incarnation of the modernist temptation to "self-defeating" irony and posturing as the victim of an oppressing Other. Johnsen then offers a razor-sharp reading of "The Dead," which, like his reading of *King Lear*, must remain reserved for those who get their hands on the book. Suffice it to say you will never think of the snow falling on Gabriel's clos-

ing nightscape the same way again, and you will understand your affection for Greta as you never have.

The next chapter moves on to a sophisticated reading of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. One problem here is what to do with James Joyce's scandalous comparison of himself as victim to Christ as victim. Part of Johnsen's answer is that Joyce saw more than most the "metaphysical" quality of the hate-activated rivalry between England and Ireland, and recognized that in fact Irish nationalism suffers from its appetite for the production of victims from among its young: "The sign of Christ becomes cultural masochism. What springs forth is a political martyrology, ostensibly made in the church's image, but in fact a monstrous satire of the Passion" (91). Once more, one small moment in a text sheds great light on the surrounding darkness: in *Portrait*, the moment when Stephen Dadelus' father Simon wishes to pass on to Stephen, on the occasion of the boy's first communion, a love for the past and an identity with the past that does not ask Stephen to sacrifice himself for Ireland (100-101). The perpetual return to the scene of son-deposing-father-scandalizing-son is not a necessity. Here, Johnsen suggests, Joyce and Girard concur; they both choose to understand (despite Freud) that identification between fathers and sons (or in Woolf, between fathers and daughters) need not be always a curse and cause of violence: "*identification* ... is not inherently, by nature, in advance, a desire to take the place of the other. Identification expresses the great wish to *be with*, to *be like*, the great wish for positive reciprocity" (101). In the possibility of that "great wish" lies an alternative future for Ireland's young.

The single chapter on Virginia Woolf certainly ends things with a full orchestra rather than a dying fall. Johnsen argues that Woolf was preoccupied with the problem of her *own* conditions of possibility as a modernist and a feminist – that Woolf, without giving up one iota of her passion for equality and freedom for women, used her fiction as a research procedure "to theorize an origin for ... feminism, in the observed behaviour of women, before finding analogies in other liberationist enterprises" (109). In *A Room of One's Own*, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and in *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf is trying "to imagine into visible being a tradition of this anonymous work" (119) that women before her must have done to prepare the way for feminist awareness: "Woolf tells stories about the antecedents who made her possible, against the odds, as they struggle against a tyranny they can't even name with skills they didn't know they had" (119-120). Thus Woolf's analysis of "anger" should be seen, Johnsen argues, not as the sign of a cowering timidity complicit with patriarchal violence, but rather as a lucid de-mythicization of the supposed "instinct" of anger that seemed, in the light of the First and Second

World Wars, ineradicable and undeniable: "Woolf's immediate contribution to a theory of mimetic conflict is to suggest that the 'fact' of anger must by de-mythologized in international politics as well as gender politics" (117). Once more, certain moments in the text – in *To the Lighthouse* especially – reveal a Virginia Woolf who allowed her characters to show feminism's mixed debt, a debt which need not be a source of scandal or humiliation, to certain gestures of certain fathers. Even though "personal relations are moderated by social forms functioning as 'instincts'" (130), Woolf shows that "personal will can modify, however slightly, their brute force" (130). Johnsen argues along such lines that according to Virginia Woolf the patriarchy indeed does oppress women, but it is possible to be a feminist and to "recognize how it can also (to a much lesser extent) sponsor them" (135). The patriarchy can sponsor women: now there is a revolutionary thought which Woolf had the prescient courage to think. As Simon the father of Stephen Daedulus wished good for his son, so in Lily's moments of lucidity regarding her father in *To the Lighthouse*, Johnsen posits, "Woolf wants to recover the great wish all fathers have for their children, that they live in peace, as a cultural resource too precious to be discarded" (135). The consequence is a respectful but pointed diagnosis: "Without admitting the fathers, feminists propose themselves as self-born, the disease of modernism. Woolf proposes to us a new feminism and a new modernism without rivalry and without violence" (138).

I have not here provided much sense of either Johnsen's impressive micro-scholarship and multilingual expertise, or the authority of his archival research (into such things as Ibsen's wordplay, Joyce's lectures in Italy, Woolf's familial correspondence). More to be regretted, my preoccupation with thesis might have given the false impression that Johnsen does not concern himself with character interaction as a level of description. He does so in the best traditions of "close reading"; characters are named, dramatic scenes deftly contextualized, dialogic interactions analysed in detail; textual analysis flows into and out of theoretical reflection throughout. Indeed, one of the delights of the book is the gracefulness of its movements between "literary" example and social or political hypothesis about modern life. But perhaps I have said enough already. I will be very surprised if anybody who gives *Violence and Modernism* the attention it deserves comes away disappointed. Nobody anywhere has done with mimetic theory and modernism what William Johnsen does here. For that we would do well to say thanks to him, after reading the book.

Andrew Bartlett

**Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*.**

London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004.

137 pp.; ISBN 0-232-52526-9 £10.95

Michael Kirwan, a Jesuit priest who lectures at Heythrop College at the University of London and who is also a long-time member of COV&R, published the first comprehensive and short English introduction to René Girard's mimetic theory. Despite the fact that this book only comprises 137 pages it provides us with a quite complete view of Girard's theory. Besides an introduction, a bibliography and an index the book contains five chapters. The first three chapters give us an overlook over the three main pillars of mimetic theory: mimetic desire, the scapegoat mechanism and the difference between pagan myth and the biblical revelation. Each of these three chapters begins with seven short theses summarizing its content that help us to get an immediate insight and ends with an attempt to situate Girard's thinking within modern theory. The first chapter focuses on mimetic desire and how it was discovered by novelists like Cervantes, Proust or Dostoevski. It also explains how mimetic desire—a basic dimension of human life—turns into rivalry and violence, as soon as we long for those goods which cannot be shared or possessed together. Turning towards modern philosophy Kirwan concludes this chapter by relating Girard's insight about desire to Hegel's treatment of the desire for recognition and Scheler's account of resentment, showing us parallels and even more important differences between the three.

The second chapter explains the scapegoat mechanism. It describes Girard's theory of culture and how social order emerges from a violent solution to a primordial crisis. Culture is not built on a social contract but is rooted in the scapegoat mechanism. The easiest and most common attempt to create social order relies on the channeling of internal violence to the outside. Either an internal scapegoat or an external enemy helps to establish peace. This violent origin of culture is at the same time also the origin of archaic religion. The founding murder conceals its own way of functioning by transforming the scapegoat into a primitive deity. Social order and the sacred are born at the same time. Kirwan concludes his elaboration of the scapegoat mechanism by comparing it with Sigmund Freud's founding murder. In this case too, differences are more important than parallels.

"Dionysus versus 'The Crucified'" is the heading of the third chapter, which introduces Girard's interpretation of the Bible to us. Contrary to pagan myths, key passages in the Bible—especially the passion narratives in the Gospel—no longer side with the persecuting mob but with its scapegoat. Hence, the Bible results in the dismantling of the primitive sacred. Kirwan draws our attention to several passages in the

Old and New Testaments to demonstrate the important difference between myth and the Gospel. Concerning Christ's passion and resurrection he refers us to Raymund Schwager's dramatic account in his seminal book *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation*. This reference to Schwager's dramatic theology exemplifies Kirwan's claim that Girard's work has to be distinguished from mimetic theory as such because it now has a life of its own. Raymund Schwager made, according to Kirwan, "a highly significant theological appropriation of Girard's anthropology" (p. 7). This third chapter is concluded by relating Girard's work to Nietzsche. This German philosopher was, according to Girard, the first thinker who really understood the parallels and differences between myth and the Gospel. Girard called Nietzsche the best theologian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This, however does not mean that Girard is simply following Nietzsche. On the contrary, as Kirwan makes clear, Girard's project has to be described as "against – or anti – Nietzsche" (p. 64).

The fourth chapter of Kirwan's book brings Girard's method and objections to his theory to the fore. Kirwan explains to what extent Girard's mimetic theory can be called a theory and how it relates to philosophy. Much criticism against Girard, for instance, is due to widespread reservations about all-encompassing theoretical systems. Quoting Terry Eagleton's recent book *After Theory* (2003), however, Kirwan defends Girard's way of radical grand theorizing: "At just the point that we have begun to think small, history has begun to act big. ... The inescapable conclusion is that cultural theory must start thinking ambitiously once again – not so that it can hand the West its legitimation, but so that it can seek to make sense of the grand narratives in which it is now embroiled" (pp. 96-97). Girard's attempt to develop a universal explanation of religions should not be dismissed shortsightedly but has to be evaluated by its ability to explain the development of our modern world and the particular challenges we face right now. Kirwan also deals with questions related to the anthropology of the scapegoat or to Girard's account of historical Christianity, his apparent Gnosticism and feminist critiques of mimetic theory. A special section is devoted to theological discussions and applications of Girard's anthropology. Here again Kirwan deals especially with Schwager's dramatic theology—which even led Girard to a more nuanced understanding of sacrifice—and also with von Balthasar's appraisal of mimetic theory.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to the future of mimetic theory. It is important to note in the *Bulletin* that Kirwan emphasizes the fact that its future "lies with a body called *Colloquium on Violence and Religion*" (p. 113). Concerning the scientific and theoretical development of mimetic theory he especially points to the interdisciplinary Research Group, based



at the University of Innsbruck, "Religion – Violence – Communication – World Order" founded by Raymond Schwager, and to Eric Gans's project of a "Generative Anthropology". A key question that should be addressed by these groups and other researchers connected with COV&R is a "structured and responsible reflection upon religion in the contemporary world" (p. 116). But mimetic theory will also remain important as a seminal way of reading texts. Kirwan refers to the work of Gil Balie and James Alison to give us examples of how fruitful a mimetic reading can be. This role of mimetic theory

has to be understood very broadly because besides literary texts or biblical passages also film and other popular media will more and more be interpreted with the help of mimetic theory. Michael Kirwan's book provides us with a carefully written introduction into Girard's work. It is a joy to read it and it gives us a clear view. I completely agree with what René Girard has written about it: "Really wonderful: an elegantly written initiation into the mimetic theory. I am lucky to have interpreters who understand what I want to say and who can write so well."

Wolfgang Palaver

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## EDITOR'S THANKS

The editor thanks all who have contributed so generously to this *Bulletin*.

May others emulate them, for the benefit of the whole enterprise!

Nikolaus Wandinger

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My special interests are in the following fields:

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☐ Political Science, Economics, Social Ethics

☐ Biblical Theology

☐ Systematic Theology, Philosophy

☐ Gender Concerns

☐ Psychology and Psychiatry

☐ Education, Practice

☐ Anthropology, Religious Studies

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