



VULNERABILITY AND TOLERANCE

COV&R-Conference Amsterdam, 4-8 July 2007

"At this very moment I live in one of the most interesting countries in Europe". This is the opening line of an essay written by the Dutch novelist, Margriet DE MOOR. In her essay, which was published in one of the Dutch daily newspapers on March 10, 2007, DE MOOR explores the potential of the Netherlands as a laboratory to study tolerance. Actually, to claim to live in one of the most interesting countries in Europe is almost considered an act of megalomania in the eyes of the Dutch, used as we are that things are done rather unobtrusively. And yet, Margriet DE MOOR articulates an intuition that over the last two years has grown into a more or less outspoken 'truth'.

From the very beginning this 'truth' has been part of the process of organizing the COV&R Conference 2007. The steering committee met for the first time on November 5, 2004, just three days after the killing of Theo VAN GOGH.



"De Schreeuw (The Outcry)",
Monument for Theo van Gogh by Jeroen
Henneman

By the time the second meeting was held on February 25, 2005, Geert MAK had published his seminal pamphlet as a reaction on the killing and in support of a *culture of vulnerability*. During the months that followed more pamphlets and articles saw the light, some written in a polemical and others in a more impressionistic style, but all exposing the difficulties of the Dutch intellectual

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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COV&R AWARDS AND GRANTS

Raymund Schwager Memorial Award

To honor the memory of Raymund SCHWAGER, SJ († 2004), the Colloquium on Violence and Religion is offering an **award of \$ 1,000** shared by up to three persons for the three best papers given by graduate students at the yearly COV&R main conference in spring.

Students presenting papers at that 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) to the conference organizer and chair of the three-person COV&R Awards Committee. Duedate for submissions for the meeting in Amsterdam was May 1, 2007, as has been posted in the last Fall Bulletin. But there is a next time. Winners will be announced in the conference program. Prize-winning essays will be considered for publication in *Contagion*.

COV&R Graduate Students Sponsorship

COV&R **members** are **invited to suggest** graduate students or other scholars to the COV&R Board for scholarships supporting their conference attendance. Only first-time attendees are eligible. The board will sponsor the attendance of up to three persons with normally an amount of \$ 200, maximum \$ 300 each. The officers of COV&R will base their decision above all on the need of the suggested persons.

and political elites to come to grips with the issues at stake: vulnerability and tolerance in a multicultural society at the crossroads of local values and global tendencies. Moreover, and quite surprisingly to the Dutch, foreigners had joined in as well.

The intuition that the debate in and about the Netherlands does epitomise fundamental questions concerning vulnerability and tolerance in today's world, as is written in the call for papers, has proved to be true, even more so over the last half year. The COV&R 2007 Conference, therefore, is a unique opportunity to join the debate and to explore these questions from a mimetic point of view. We are happy that a number of interesting speakers has agreed to take part in this endeavour.

Speakers: The opening session will take place at the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, the university that bestowed René GIRARD with his first honorary doctorate in 1985. Mgr. Ad VAN LUYN S.D.B., the bishop of Rotterdam and chairman of the Netherlands chapter of Pax Christi will open the conference. Being involved with Pax Christi and representing the Catholic Church in its relations with the Jewish community Bishop VAN LUYN has shown a keen interest in a peaceful and just solution to the conflict in the Middle East. Being based in Rotterdam, the most controversial multicultural city in the Netherlands, Bishop VAN LUYN has been outspoken on issues concerning

migration, stressing an approach to immigrants, which stimulates them to participate and not necessarily to integrate.

We invited Ian BURUMA to deliver the keynote lecture and are happy that he agreed to do so. BURUMA, born in the Netherlands but having lived most of his life in Japan, the UK and United States, is the author of *Murder in Amsterdam* and also known as the co-author, together with Avishai MARGALIT, of the widely acclaimed essay *Occidentalism. The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (2004). In an earlier book, *God's Dust. A Modern Asian Journey* (1989), BURUMA deconstructs a romantic view on modern Asia. A common theme in all his books is the rejection of stereotypical cultural dichotomies. BURUMA portrays the complexities of the lives people live and narrate, constrained and motivated as they are by their personal and collective histories. In his latest book *Murder in Amsterdam*, he applies this approach to the situation in the Netherlands and draws a sharp and insightful picture of the different actors in the 'Dutch drama'. BURUMA holds the mirror and this hasn't been that pleasant for some of the most prominent actors. It comes to no surprise that from the moment of publication the book has triggered a new thread in the debates, both in the Netherlands and in international fora (see the link on the COV&R 2007 website). Or to formulate it in the words of BURUMA, the book, like MAK's pamphlet, has gradually turned

into a *bludgeon*, a verbal stick to beat up people whose views one dislikes.

While BURUMA will focus on the developments in the Netherlands, Wolfgang PALAVER (University of Innsbruck) will follow up on his lecture and explore the potential of the mimetic theory to further clarify the tensions and complexities presented by BURUMA.

Mgr. VAN LUYN, Ian BURUMA and Wolfgang PALAVER are only three of the many speakers during the conference. First of all, René GIRARD should be mentioned. He will speak on representations of animal scapegoating at the neolithic site of Çatalhöyük in central Turkey. Jean-Michel OUGHOURLIAN will address issues of envy and resentment in the current terror wars. He will be followed by Henri BEUNDERS, professor of History of Society, Media and Culture at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam, whose lecture will focus on the role of the media in the formation of envy and resentment. Multiculturalism, resentment and democracy are the topics Stefano TOMELLERI is going to address. Roberto FARNETI has agreed to open the session on 'Reconciliation as the conversion of negative into positive reciprocity' with a talk on theories of conflict in Western thought. Mark ANSPACH will speak on revenge and reconciliation and Sergio MANGHI (University of Parma) will look at reconciliation in Batesonian therapy. Joachim DUYNDAM, chairman of the Netherlands Lévinas Study Circle has agreed to give a keynote on self-sacrifice, with Sandor GOODHART as respondent. A special session will be devoted to complex systems. Here the speakers are David CHAVALARIAS (Centre de Recherches et Epistémologie Appliqué – CREA) and Gusti EIBEN (University of Maastricht). The lecture of the Dutch theologian Erik BORGMAN (Radboud University Nijmegen) has the title 'The

Weak Presence of Grace. A Theological Plea for the Return to the Ambivalences of Modernity'. Another speaker is the Iranian Islamic scholar and 2004 laureate of the Erasmus Prize, Abdolkarim SOROUSH.

As the programme is still in progress we recommend the conference website for the latest update: http://www.bezinningscentrum.nl/links/special_links3/covr2007.shtml

Papers: But let us not forget to mention the sixty participants who have sent abstracts of their papers. They come from different parts of the world, including South Africa, Colombia, Algeria, and Portugal. Together the abstracts present a promising picture of the varied ways in which the theme of the conference can be approached. We are looking forward to the discussions and exchange of views stimulated by the paper presenters. In order to facilitate pre-conference communication the abstracts, together with the contact information of the authors, are posted on the conference website (http://www.bezinningscentrum.nl/links/special_links3/abstracts.shtml). We would kindly urge the paper presenters to send us their papers **before June 1, 2007**, so that we can make them available to all participants before the conference starts. By having the papers available in advance the steering committee aims to organize more space for discussion during the conference.

Accommodation: A well framed programme requires space for socializing and relaxation. We are preparing a recreational programme on Friday evening, with some specially designed city walks through parts of the old city of Amsterdam, followed by a dinner cruise on the canals. Meanwhile *Kontakt der Kontinenten* has ample possibilities for relaxation. There are playing grounds for sports ranging from jeux de boules to volley-

MEMENTO

Elizabeth Bailie †

January 4, 1954 – February 18, 2007



Gil has been among those at the heart of COV&R since its beginning and we all share his sorrow in the loss of his beloved Liz. Those of us who were fortunate enough to know her feel her loss deeply and personally. We were inspired by her spirituality, warmed by her friendship and awed by her courage. Her voice, stilled too soon, lives on in her poems and in our hearts, and for that we are grateful.

Martha and René Girard

ball. There are bicycles for hire and on Sunday a special bicycle trip is scheduled for those who like to stay a little longer.



Kontakt der Kontinenten

All together we are confident that both the programme and the venue guarantee an inspiring conference. We are looking forward to welcome you all on the 4th July in Amsterdam.

Thérèse Onderdenwijngaard

COV&R AT THE AAR/SBL MEETING

As new coordinator of COV&R at the AAR/SBL annual meeting I can report that progress is being made on moving toward an enhanced presence for COV&R at the annual meeting. Through an e-mail survey and on-site survey at the November 2006 meeting of COV&R, I have learned the following from the COV&R membership:

- The meeting of COV&R at the AAR is likely to survive the AAR and SBL split because a majority of respondents indicate they will attend the AAR meeting rather than the SBL meeting after the split.
- There is unanimous support among survey respondents for COV&R becoming an affiliated organization within the AAR.
- The membership has offered enough ideas for session topics to keep things humming at the AAR for several years.
- Survey respondents recommend by a strong majority that programs at the AAR should be a combination of invited and proposal-driven sessions, with a slight preference for programming by invitation until we have multiple sessions.
- Survey respondents recommend by a strong majority that we should encourage and promote the involvement of younger scholars in these sessions.
- Survey respondents recommend by a strong majority that we should also include presenters not from COV&R who share our interest in the topic of violence and religion.

- The preferred format for the COV&R meeting at the AAR/SBL annual meeting is ½ presentation and ½ discussion.

The survey also asked for nominations/volunteers for a new steering committee to assist the coordinator in planning the COV&R session(s) at the AAR annual meeting. As a result of that effort, a steering committee has been formed. Members include: Paul BELLAN-BOYER, Matthew CONDON, Michael HARDIN, Stephanie J. PERDEW, Susann PANGERL, and Nikolaus WANDINGER.

I can also report that conversations have begun with the AAR about COV&R becoming an affiliated organization. I hope to have a full picture to report at the COV&R meeting this summer, so that the membership can formally agree at that meeting to submit a request to the AAR for affiliated organization status. Attaining affiliated status is a helpful step to being able to offer sessions on the main program of the annual meeting without incurring additional charges.

Martha Reineke

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT: “NAVIGATING FATEFUL PASSAGES”

I have never liked goodbyes. When my college classes end each semester, I customarily say something like “Have a nice life,” or “Don’t be a stranger,” which never fails to elicit from my students nervous snickers. Nonetheless, I think such moments are important. I think I may even have entered the profession for them, because although you are forced to say goodbye a lot, you also get to start over almost as often. Perhaps saying goodbye is really designed to enhance or speed up starting over.

I ask your indulgence, then, if I address somewhat more fully in this column my time on the advisory board, first as executive secretary, then as president, and if I wax a bit more philosophic than in the past in speaking with you about it.

This will be a piece, then, about recognition, remembering, reflection, and reconstitution.

* * * * *

A lot has happened since I joined the COV&R advisory board. René’s work has finally been recognized for the intellectual powerhouse that it is, a bulwark of insights regarding the origin and nature of human culture that will serve us, if Michel SERRES is right, as the signature thought

of our century concerning sacrifice, scapegoating, and violence. Acknowledged in language of high praise long overdue, it has entered the ranks of the immortals along with the likes of FREUD, DURKHEIM, and other researchers in the human sciences who have altered the way we think about things, perhaps the way we live our lives.

Others have been (and should be) acknowledged within our ranks. James WILLIAMS, Cesáreo BANDERA, and Eric GANS have become lifetime members of COV&R, linking forever the power of their insights with ours. Bill JOHNSEN's accession to the position so ably filled by Andrew MCKENNA at the helm of *Contagion* promises a continuation of that quality and craft—if Bill's beautiful first (double) issue of the journal is any indication. Still others on the advisory board—too numerous to name here—I have come to know better and appreciate through many hours of their good work. I mention only Diane CULBERTSON, who served as President when I first became an officer, Wolfgang PALAVER, who served first as the *Bulletin's* founding editor and later as Executive Secretary during my term as President, Nikolaus WANDINGER, who took over *Bulletin* editorship and whose handling of its current intricacies inspires all of us, and Dietmar REGENSBURGER and Julie SHINNICK, who served as European treasurer and North American treasurer respectively. Dietmar's creation and maintenance of the COV&R webpage is a marvel, and Julie's help to me during all these years has been indispensable. Our hope remains that with the coming of non-profit status in the US, the COV&R organization can assume a new life and a range of new activities under her financial leadership.

The passage has not occurred, however, without marked sadness. Father Raymund SCHWAGER's untimely passing—and the equally unforeseen passing of Ruel KAPTEIN, Bill MISHLER, and most recently Elizabeth BAILIE—remind us of the transitory nature of all our endeavors, the short time we are given to get to know each other, to share thoughts and achievements, to witness through them and with them an encounter with the infinite. In memory lies redemption, the rabbis tell us, and their memory confers upon us honor and dignity.

Along with our success, there are also dangers that have come and as we enter a new phase, I would like to draw your attention to four of them,

although I am constrained to do so elliptically. This will be the Dwight David EISENHOWER portion of my farewell piece.

(a) The first danger is the belief that Girardianism is a version of, or synonymous with, Christianity. Girardianism is not a religion. It is not a system of beliefs, creeds, or practices of the revealed religion variety (though a large number of its adherents happen to be Christian and do express Christian beliefs, creeds, and practices, René GIRARD among them). Girardian thinking remains a body of critical thinking, an intellectual tool, a theory of the sacred as violence and of the origin of culture in collective sacrificial substitution of a surrogate victim. If GIRARD's work points to Greek tragedy, or the great European novel, or religious scripture of Judaism or Christianity, it does so as a way of situating an anthropological insight, of explaining how we can know about sacrificial violence and survive it. It does not derive from or depend upon private conversations within these (or any) religious orientations between divinity and practitioners.

(b) The second danger is the idea that Girardianism privileges Christian or Judeo-Christian matrices. It does not. It remains open to other religious orientations within which similar insights may be obtained about the sacrificial practices. Recently, GIRARD has been describing the wealth of understanding regarding sacrifice and commentary about sacrifice within ancient Hindu texts and we have to imagine similar insights in other contexts—if we can only unearth them. Judaism and Christianity may be our way into these understandings, our access to them, but that does not mean other ways—via Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or other religious orientations—are not available and as valuable. Nor does it privilege religious texts over non-religious texts. New approaches to science, for example, have opened new vistas for Girardian research as the upcoming Cerisy conference demonstrates.

(c) Girardianism is, however, an iconoclasm. And like other iconoclasm, this one needs to take stock of the dangers of becoming itself an idolatry, an idolatry in this case of anti-idolatry, since its central insight is already a critique of the sacred. Supersessionism and triumphalism are not limited to certain versions of Christian or Jewish self-understanding. Such dangers stalk any intellectual endeavor. Girardianism needs to

remain auto-critical, intensely self-reflective about its own history, if it is to remain viable.

(d) Finally, the forefront of Girardian research is the ethical. Girardianism remains a form of critical thinking. But while it leads us to the door of the ethical, it does not take us through it. Once I have uncovered the mechanism, noticed the sacrificial crisis, what do I do? Is there a modality of the anti-sacrificial? Is there a way of living without violence that remains consonant with Girardian insights without at the same time assuming a religious structure? I have at times myself proposed Levinasian thinking—and our infinite responsibility for the other individual—in this capacity, but other schemas are equally possible and no doubt will be proposed.

The danger here resides in thinking that Girardianism has answered all questions about human culture. Girardianism arose in European thinking after existentialism, within French versions of structuralism and poststructuralism in which context the hypothesis of textuality or difference, and the constitution of the conditions of that difference, had already been posed. It globalized that hypothesis as the question of the sacred and introduced the mechanism of the sacrificial scapegoat and collective substitution as the mechanism that made at all such difference possible. But more questions remain if the understanding of human community we have sought since the beginning of the nineteenth century is to complete itself. And answers to these questions will come from elsewhere, from other arenas of science and religious study, or other intellectual endeavors, answers that continue Girardian thinking without being identical to it.

These four dangers—and there are others—are offered here, it goes without saying, not as criticisms but as signposts. Girardian thinking is undergoing a growth spurt, moving from the idyllic childhood in which most of us discovered it to adolescence, and as any parent knows there are difficulties to be faced as the child begins feeling its oats. It remains the hope of all of us that the child grows to maturity, assuming its place in years to come, alongside other great human ideas, as a thinking of adults

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I understand now, in any event, my anxiety about leave-takings. They are never authentic, never complete. We are always between things, always awaiting a world-to-come. Even Christi-

anity, which takes upon itself the wager of the arrival of the messianic age, has had to invent a second coming. But if we come to accept such incompleteness as an opportunity (as they used to say), perhaps something becomes available to us. Talmud teaches that you do not have to complete the task, but neither are you free not to begin it. And there is only one way to begin, however daunting the task: one foot in front of the other.

Thank you, then, for the honor of having served you for these past nine plus years. Thank you, moreover, for the capacity to write to you now and to thank you.

Goodbye. Good luck. Don't be a stranger.

Sandor Goodhart, President of COV&R

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Looking forward towards our forthcoming conference in the Netherlands "Vulnerability and Tolerance" and taking the current state of our world into account I think it has become an important challenge to mimetic theory and our *Colloquium* to focus on the question of how Islam fits into our theoretical map explaining the relationship between religion and violence. A small group of us in Innsbruck has started to focus on this question. We are, of course, still beginners starting to find some first answers. Therefore I would like to invite many of you to join us in our commitment. In this short note I will recommend some interesting introductory books that help us to start this project and hint at some seminal insights one gets from reading these books.

At the beginning I like to mention a new and interesting book by Bruce LAWRENCE, a professor of Islamic Studies at Duke University (USA), whom I met personally at the first COV&R meeting I attended in New Orleans 1990: *The Qur'an: A Biography* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006). This book shows how many different interpretations of the Qur'an have been offered throughout history. Among these different understandings you find—by focusing on contemporary interpretations—among others on the one hand W. D. MOHAMMED, an Imam and spokesperson for more than two million African American Muslims, pleading for racial equality; on the other hand there is Osama BIN LADEN, the militant Islamist and founder of al-Qaeda, who uses some verses of the Quran very selectively to support his militant and violent understanding of *jihad*.

Taking the difficult Sword Verse (Sura 9:5: “But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem [of war]; but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”) as an example, LAWRENCE convincingly explains how Osama BIN LADEN reduces it to its first half, takes it out of its original context and also ignores the variety of historical differences among committed Muslim commentators in interpreting it in order to make it fit his message.

The Abrahamic Revolution: Breaking with the Scapegoat Mechanism

Compared to the Bible, the Qur'an is not so much a narrative text but a collection of prophetic words addressed to different problems and situations the prophet Muhammad had to deal with. Due to this reason it is important to read not only the text of the Qur'an but also the biography of the prophet helping us to come to a better understanding of the text itself. A traditional perspective is given in Martin LINGS' *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2006; originally published in 1983). From a mimetic perspective this biography includes a moving story about the grandfather of Muhammad, Abd al-Muttalib, who once vowed to sacrifice one of his sons, if God would bless him with ten sons that would all grow to manhood. This vow forced him into deep troubles when he finally had ten grown up sons. In the end, however, he did not sacrifice his son but hundred camels instead, thus saving the life of 'Abd Allāh who became later the father of Muhammad. This story is of course a biographical parallel to the biblical story about Abraham and Isaac which we can also find in the Qur'an telling us that Abraham sacrificed an animal instead of his son Ishmael (Sura 37:107: “And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice”). These stories show us that Islam is part of the Abrahamic Revolution that breaks with the sacrificial culture rooted in the scapegoat mechanism. Like Judaism and Christianity it sides with the victims of aggression and condemns the persecution of the innocent. Life is sacred and killing the innocent is not permitted (Sura 5:32: “If any one slew a person, ... it would be as if he slew the whole

people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people” and Sura 17:33: “Nor take life—which Allah has made sacred—except for just cause”).

The Dangerous Temptations Accompanying Just Wars

A very readable and even-handed biography of Muhammad was written by Karen ARMSTRONG at the time of the Salman RUSHDIE crisis: *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (London: Phoenix, 2001; originally published in 1991). In this book we find an important indication of the respect under which Islam—not very different from the other two Abrahamic religions—tends towards the legitimization of violence. In connection with Sura 2:217 (“They ask thee concerning fighting in the Prohibited Month. Say: ‘Fighting therein is a grave [offence]; but graver is it in the sight of Allah to prevent access to the path of Allah, to deny Him, to prevent access to the Sacred Mosque, and drive out its members.’ Tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter”) that reflects the possibility of warfare during those sacred months that traditionally outlawed war and marks the first justification of violence against opponents of Muslims in Islam's history. ARMSTRONG concludes:

“Muslims respect the pacifist message of Jesus ... but they accept that force is sometimes necessary. If tyrants and loathsome regimes were not opposed militarily, evil would have swamped the whole world. ... Most Christians would agree with this conception of a just war, recognizing that against a Hitler or a Ceausescu fighting an armed combat is the only effective way. Instead of being a pacifist religion that turns the other cheek, therefore, Islam fights tyranny and injustice. A Muslim may feel that he has a sacred duty to champion the weak and the oppressed.” (172).

ARMSTRONG addresses in this passage the problem of just war thinking. She refers to Sura 2:251 to underline her argument: “Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief.” Truly sometimes violence as a last resort is justified and cannot be avoided in our world. But this way of thinking can also lead to an increase of violence unknown to the archaic world. As we know especially from Christian history, just war arguments can be used to cloak warmongering, a spirit of revenge or a moralistic way of crusading. The Abrahamic Revolution overcame the violent sacred that emerged from the scapegoat mechanism

but opened also a door to a dangerous temptation of too quickly justifying the persecution of scapegoaters. This temptation is a form of a *corruptio optimi pessima*—a perversion of the best that leads to the worst. René GIRARD discusses this temptation, where he reflects on the Antichrist. His insight that the Biblical concern for victims easily leads to even more cruel acts of violence applies to all religions stemming from the Abrahamic Revolution. Islam is not an exception in this regard. We need the spirit of forgiveness to overcome this destructive side of the Abrahamic Revolution that threatens our world today. In the New Testament we can find many examples emphasizing forgiveness. But also Judaism and Islam recommend it. See for instance the following verse in the Qur'an: "The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah." (Sura 42:40)

Positive Mimesis in the Qur'an

The last book that I like to recommend in this short note is *The Other in the Light of the One: The Universality of the Qur'an and Interfaith Dialogue* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2006) by Reza SHAH-KAZEMI. The author is a Muslim scholar working in London. I met him for the first time during a weekend gathering of Muslims and Christians with the title "Prayer as Meeting" at York University last September that was organized by Sheelah HIDDEN, one of our members. SHAH-KAZEMI's book shows us that we can find in the Qur'an a hermeneutic that allows an opening towards a pluralistic world with different religions without endorsing relativism at the same time. I think he represents a very important perspective that will help us to build bridges between different religions and cultures in the future. What struck me most in SHAH-KAZEMI's book was his emphasis on a verse in the Qur'an that clearly illustrates how he understands religious pluralism from a Muslim perspective: "To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute." (Sura 5:48; cf. 2:148) This verse is especially important from the perspective of mimetic theory because it recommends a posi-

tive emulation or mimesis between the different religions. It is in some way an answer similar to the one given to Christian monks in the Rule of Saint BENEDICT when they asked if emulation between monks is allowed and something good. According to this rule there is a good emulation between monks if they aim their longings towards God, following the way of Jesus Christ. Taking the long Christian tradition of good emulation as well as the emphasis of the Qur'an on it into account, it is no big surprise that NICOLAS OF CUSA also stressed the importance of a good emulation between different religions in his important treatise *De pace fidei—On Peaceful Unity of Faith*—that was written after Muslim Turks—with the help of Christian Venice—conquered Constantinople in 1453. At the end of his little book he lets Paul recommend a positive mimesis between the different religions as a way to foster peace in the world: "Where conformity of mode cannot be had, nations are entitled to their own devotions and ceremonies, provided faith and peace be maintained. Perhaps as a result of a certain diversity devotion will even be increased, since each nation will endeavor with zeal and diligence to make its own rite more splendid, in order that in this respect it may excel some other [nation] and thereby obtain greater merit with God and [greater] praise in the world." (XIX.67)

Wolfgang Palaver

REPORTS ON CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Report on the 2006 COV&R Meeting at the AAR/SBL in Washington, D.C.

Last year's additional meeting of COV&R at the annual AAR/SBL-conference had been very well organized by Martha REINEKE, who had selected two interesting new books for discussion and had assembled two intriguing panels for the purpose.

The first panel dealt with David FRANKFURTER's *Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Ritual Abuse in History* (Princeton University Press 2006) and consisted of the author and Mark JUERGENSMEYER, Director of Global and International Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara. David FRANKFURTER highlighted some of the themes of his book: It is the mechanism of labeling people as evil (e.g. as witches or otherwise possessed by the Satanic) that finally compels a community to use violence against them. FRANKFURTER calls

this a mimetic process, whereby the term “mimesis” is understood as the total performance through which someone enacts myth. Such a mimesis is a progressive interaction between enactor and audience. FRANKFURTER emphasized that there is a mutual dependence between enactor and audience, or between victims and perpetrators because the victims often are actively playing the role of witch, sorcerer, etc. FRANKFURTER talks of “direct mimesis” on the part of the person enacting the witch or Satan, of “indirect mimesis” on the side of those who persecute that “evil”. In the whole enactment evil receives an embodied reality in the community.

In his response Mark JUERGENSMEYER linked these phenomena to the current brand of terrorism and the fight against it: they also are direct and indirect mimesis, in FRANKFURTER’s sense. He went on to emphasize that the point of comparison between FRANKFURTER’s book and the work of René GIRARD is not the term “mimesis” because FRANKFURTER’s use of the term differs from GIRARD’s; the point of comparison is that both FRANKFURTER and GIRARD treat the same phenomena: witch-hunts, panics associated with witchcraft or terrorism, and the reaction to these phenomena. JUERGENSMEYER stated his observation that FRANKFURTER skirted around religion and alluded to repressed *individual* desires as causes of these violent mechanisms. This amounted to a disagreement with GIRARD, who looked for *social* causes for social upheavals. JUERGENSMEYER doubted that purely personal anxieties would have so emphatically social consequences. He expressed his own reservations about GIRARD’s analysis of mimesis as the most adequate answer to the question, but he agreed with GIRARD that we should primarily look for social causes. JUERGENSMEYER pointed out that the religious ritualizations of these panics are themselves a source of fear—a phenomenon he called the religious fear of religion; the religious character of panics should be seen more clearly. Asked whether GIRARD’s analysis of ritual was a narrowly regulated re-enactment of the original panic, he again differentiated his stance: he agrees with GIRARD’s position that the panic is prior to ritual, yet he is unsure of whether mimesis (in GIRARD’s sense) is the only motor of the process. In any case, he stated, GIRARD names such a motor, while FRANKFURTER does not.

David FRANKFURTER responded that he was quite surprised by the contention that he did not suggest social causes. He sees himself as working with social, and not Freudian, categories. He emphasized that personal misfortune and the anxiety linked with it influence the community.

In the ensuing general discussion many of these elements were taken up and numerous examples for the analyzed structures given.



Panelists: Swartley, Hays, Hardin

The second panel discussed Willard SWARTLEY’s *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Eerdmans, 2006) and consisted of the author, Michael HARDIN, Director, School of Peace Theology, Lancaster PA and Richard B. HAYS, George Washington Ivey Professor of New Testament, the Divinity School, Duke University. Since the book got an excellent review by James WILLIAMS in last fall’s *Bulletin* (pp. 18-20), it suffices to say here that the panel found it equally exciting, and the author of this report concluded that he had to buy and read it too—although I have to admit that I still haven’t made good on the latter part of that resolution. After the session a large group of COV&R members went for a very nice and happy lunch together.

While normally a report about COV&R at the AAR would end here, this time I think there was one event at the AAR that is of interest to the COV&R membership: the plenary session with former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine ALBRIGHT, who talked about her book *The Mighty and the Almighty. Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs*. (HarperCollins: New York, N.Y. 2006). It deals with the way Western, especially U.S., policy-makers have treated, or rather neglected, religion as a political

factor for a long time (the next Fall Bulletin will run a review of the book). At the AAR Mrs. ALBRIGHT did not give a lecture but talked in a relaxed interview atmosphere. Her topics, however, were not so relaxed.

Of the many interesting aspects of her talk, just a few should be noted here:

She explained that Western states had for long neglected an important qualification for diplomats: religious competence in the religions of their host countries. ALBRIGHT argued strongly that such a qualification was necessary for diplomats and emphasized, with a stab at Pope BENEDICT's Regensburg lecture, that also religious leaders should learn the art of diplomacy and come to terms with the sound-bite-reality of today's media business. ALBRIGHT related that when she introduced the topic of religion at a meeting with former European Foreign Ministers, her former colleagues were very reluctant to address the topic at all, but she thought it was important not to artificially exclude it.



Madeleine Albright



At lunch after the COV&R session

With respect to the war on terrorism and in Iraq, ALBRIGHT voiced firm but differentiated opinions. She took a clear stance against torture and argued that the Iraq war had been a war of choice—not of necessity. Yet she warned against an overhasty withdrawal. It was a necessity to get out in a good way. To Europeans who argue that solving the situation in Iraq is only an American problem because the U.S. started it in the first

place, ALBRIGHT replied that the two World Wars had not been started by the U.S. and still America helped to bring them to a good end. The same would now apply the other way round.

ALBRIGHT's talk was met very warmly by a hall packed with listeners. Afterwards the former Secretary of State spent more than an hour signing her book, thus at the same time promoting her sales and enhancing the (mimetic) pride of the owners of such a book, including myself.

Nikolaus Wandinger

Network Meeting

Lonerган–Dramatic Theology in Innsbruck

On January 8-10, 2007 the Dramatic Theology group within the Research Focus *Religion – Violence – Communication – World Order* at the theological faculty in Innsbruck met with LONERGAN specialists from the U.S., Canada and Ireland, some of whom have also attended COV&R conferences in the past years and have a special interest in the dialog between mimetic theory and Bernard LONERGAN's thought. Together with Robert DORAN, Gilles MONGEAU, Fredrick LAWRENCE, and William MATTHEWS the Innsbruck participants—in addition to the usual suspects also Otto MUCK of our philosophy department—discussed methodological questions in theology and philosophy, theology in a political mode, and questions of Trinitarian theology. All these topics were considered with an eye to pressing problems of the relationship between religion and violence. The meeting was organized by Roman SIEBENROCK, successor on the Chair of Raymund SCHWAGER, and myself and proved to be a stimulating and enriching experience.

Nikolaus Wandinger

Imitation, Mimetic Theory, and Religious & Cultural Evolution

The Templeton Advanced Research Program at Stanford University held a conference on the topic April 28-29, 2007. We hope to have a report in the Fall Bulletin. In the meantime visit the website:

<http://www.mimetictheory.org/index.html>

Bandera, Cesáreo: *The Humble Story of Don Quixote: Reflections on the Birth of the Modern Novel*. Washington, D.C. The Catholic University of America Press, 2006 (xii, 317 pp.) ISBN: 0-8132-1425-1 \$79.95

The introduction to Cesáreo BANDERA's new book on CERVANTES contains as an epigraph Lionel TRILLING's remark, by now an academic commonplace, to the effect that "all prose fiction is a variation on the theme of *Don Quixote*." TRILLING portrays this theme, as critics very often do, in terms of a clash of "two movements of thought, two different and opposed notions of reality," namely, "the world of ordinary practicality ... of hunger, cold, and pain" and what he goes on to call "the real reality, ... the wildly conceiving, madly fantasizing mind of the Don: people change, practical reality changes, when they come into its presence." Here the critic, like many another, unwittingly instantiates the folly he is describing: in the presence of the Don available to him through CERVANTES' novel, he seems to accept the changes as more real than the people and practicality outside the Don's orbit. He goes on to describe the novel as involving "the problem of appearance and reality, ... the problem of knowledge, of how we know and how reliable our knowledge is, which at that very moment of history is vexing philosophers and scientists." This is indeed the case, and remains so even more acutely for us today, but, as BANDERA shows in his limpid reading of the novel and its literary contexts, the problem is not with reality but with our fairly systematic distortion of it, as practical reality and prosaic identity are abandoned in favor of fictional desires, of which the Don's desire for fiction is the emblem, the cardinal instance and interpretive model, token and type at once. Objective and subjective mimesis, the way we represent reality and the way we imitate one another's desires, are inseparable at the birth of the modern novel that Bandera elucidates with marvelous clarity.

The Don's farcical exploits are infectious for the behavior of people around him, including and especially those who would disabuse him of his folly or, contrariwise, play along with it to enjoy their superior sanity in deriding him the more. We see this in two widely separated but structurally continuous episodes in book II of the novel.

The law student Sansón Carrasco devises a plan to cure the Don of his chivalric delusion. Disguising himself as a knight, he sets out to defeat him in a joust, whereupon he could reveal his true identity as a mere provincial acquaintance, and oblige the victim of his demystifying triumph to acknowledge the senselessness of his heroic self-fashioning. Accidental circumstances result in the young man's being violently unhorsed instead of the rickety old hidalgo, and his discomfiture issues in the hot vow to seek retribution against his bumbling vanquisher. This failed rivalry is sufficient to contaminate the law student's desire; he is virtually converted to the illusory world of violent conquest that he had sought to discredit.

This sort of contagion isn't just a guy thing, as a much later episode reveals. The lady's maid Altisadora, seeking to mock the Don by pretending to be in love with him, receives an exquisitely polite rebuff from the ever faithful lover of Dulcinea de Toboso, the barmaid whom he has reinvented as the object of his courtly love quest. Rather than being amused, as the reader is, by the integrity of the Don's fantasy, Altisadora "became angry and excited," fuming with all the resentful wrath of the proverbial woman scorned at "Don Codfish, Don Cudgel, Don Vainquished." She wants no more to look upon "his mournful countenance, his ugly and abominable features," for she can only behold there a perpetual repudiation of her allure. Here is our problem of knowledge, which cannot be cast in the traditional philosophical terms of a knowing subject and a knowable object: it is not at all the Don's notoriously gentle face that she sees, but the hateful—to her—reflection of her lack of appeal.

These episodes correlate with numerous others in which we find, "the mockers as mad as their victims," as we read in one scene in the novel, or, as the title of BANDERA's last chapter states succinctly, "Tricksters tricked." Human agents are lured from their position in the real world to become characters in a scenario they set out to dictate. As a fuel for enkindling desire, nothing succeeds like failure, whose dynamics lie at the core of BANDERA's deft and at times poignant analyses.

What the novel makes available is not modern humanist skepticism but real knowledge, especially in terms of the illusions cast by mimetic desire, where rivalry obliterates objective reality: "Scandalized as you are," BANDERA writes, "glued to the

obstacle, to the other as obstacle, reality means nothing to you (298)". This rivalrous complex where the other is at once model and obstacle to one's desire is the crux of CERVANTES' novel, which is not at all about alternative visions, high and low, lofty and commonsensical, literary and commonplace, as in the literary minded Don and the down-to-earth Sancho, whom we often find to be only slightly less beguiled by his master's fantasies than the vast population of romantic and post-romantic critics—the case of UNAMUNO is explored at length—who side with the Don against a prosaic world. Far from being a praise of literary folly, the novel works therapeutically in its portrayal of the very real devastation that results in the lives of perfectly ordinary people when they surrender to fictional desires, where obstacles replace the objects of desire as the focus of intense and self-defeating energies.

A chapter on pastoral tradition that CERVANTES mined and undermined in his narrative traces the vectors of desire circulating contagiously among rustics in direct proportion to the obstacles to its satisfaction. The novel's citified swains exhibit the same pathology, so that in the analogous stories of Grisóstomo, Anselmo, and Cardenio, lovers succumb to suicidal madness as a result of sowing impediments to their amorous pursuits. As a literary convention, pastoral variously stages the fictions of desire that are inseparable from and complicit with desire for fiction itself, whereupon CERVANTES redirects towards us the laughter we enjoy at the Don's expense. His characters' madness is our own, and it lurks wherever we capitulate to others' desires, real or imagined, that transform objects into simulacra of rivalry, derealizing them for all practical purposes.

When Don Quixote orders a lion to be released from its cage so he can prove his mettle against it, the beast rejects the contest with a yawn, showing his hindquarters to his challenger's bravura. The Don regularly lands on his own hindquarters in his several violent encounters with a reality he twists along the lines of his fantastical models, as in the notorious episode of windmills taken for giants. BANDERA's pellucid analysis deserves extensive citation:

The fact is that Don Quixote's heroism would look far more convincing if he really knew what he was up against. But does he? In other words, does he see reality here any more clearly than he does, for example, in the case of the windmills? For, courage for courage, I do not see why facing a huge and hungry lion should be any more dangerous than facing "more than thirty monstrous giants." The point is that, in spite of appearances, *the lion the Don Quixote perceives* is no more real than were the giants in the earlier episode. (160-61)

The emphasis here is BANDERA's, by way of reminding us that when we applaud the knight's courage, we forget he is mad, inhabiting an entirely bookish, imaginary world, which we identify with at the peril of our own sanity, which is at issue throughout the novel.

The book devotes two chapters to the picaresque tradition, which either consigns the fool irredeemably to ridicule, locking him up within the walls of our laughter, or employs him as a critical scold with which to condemn the unheroic world of his readers. This feeds into historical reflections on madness with a keen eye to its "interindividual roots" (92) as a "man-made catastrophe" (95). Aided by the research of Henri GRIVOIS and Gladys SWAIN, BANDERA shows CERVANTES anticipating modern breakthroughs on mental alienation as a relation to the crowd of which the madman is at once a member and a victim. Breaking with the crowd, CERVANTES reverses a tradition of sacralizing expulsion, which even Michel FOUCAULT endorses in his own way, in favor of a compassionate search for a cure, as inaugurated by PINEL in the early nineteenth century.

The tutelary theme here, as throughout, is hope, "hope in God and hope in science" (113), as enabled in a thoroughly desacralized world in which no magical powers preside over human destinies. There are no supernatural forces hovering over or beneath or around whose violence must be appeased by sacrificial practices, in which René GIRARD's fundamental anthropology has taught us to see the dynamics of crowd violence discharged against a scapegoat victim whom the culture thereafter reveals as its saving divinity. Throughout these analyses, BANDERA redeploys the powerful argument developed in his previous, indispensable book, *The Sacred Game* (Penn State Press, 1994), in which Christian revelation is shown to inspire a confidence, especially as of the Renaissance, in a fully disenchanted world, in which fiction and non-fiction, *mythos* and *logos*, can pursue independent careers; and where our best fiction, as GIRARD has long argued, is host to enduring and systematic insights into human interaction. Thanks to BANDERA's reading of *Don Quixote*, the work emerges as the pivotal chapter in the long "discovery procedure" by which Eric GANS has labeled our literary tradition.

In this book, as in *The Sacred Game*, BANDERA assembles the components of fully matured epistemology, one grounded in human freedom, with all the uncertainty implied therein, "an uncertainty that scientific reason will not only never eliminate, but that is in fact essential to the possibility of science itself" (254). The astonishing richness that all admire in CERVANTES' narrative is funded by this freedom—for weal or woe—that he lends to his characters. We call this his "creative genius," to which we add other demiurgic tags; BANDERA shows it to be his humble submission to a reality inspired by "faith in the possibility of literary fiction to tell the truth in spite of itself" (19), by "faith in reality, in the independent existence of reality and truth, which are ultimately the same thing" (304).

BANDERA does not disguise the theological dimension of his argument, but this does not intrude from

anywhere outside the frame of CERVANTES' narrative; it does not descend from above, nor from any hieratic authority whatsoever. Rather it tends to rise up from below, way down below, from evidence of the "existential hell" of our own construction when, in a grotesque parody of authentic religion, we cast one another in alternately divine and demonic roles. This is "an ever present danger in all human relationships," which is diagnosed as

the loss of transcendence in the relationship between the I and the other, the ever present possibility of a relationship without any point of reference beyond the relationship itself. It is within this immanent reciprocity that envy thrives and the object of envy may easily become a profoundly ambivalent idol both fascinating and hateful, a model and a rival, a stumbling block, *piedra de escandalo*, a scandal. (192-93)

This is the self-propelled inferno that Grisóstomo versifies posthumously in precise detail from within his suicidal despair of being unable to love the shepherdess Marcela without hating her, and himself as her failed suitor, for he loves her because rather than in spite of her studied indifference to his desire. Here as in DOSTOEVSKY, hell is not portrayed as a place to which we are thrust down by any power or will but our own, its gates being forged by "bitterness and resentment" of those who "refuse to accept any hope." Such a desire, magnetized by the obstacle, "feeds on hopelessness itself" (226) in negatively reinforcing feedback loops of desire and the obstacles it propagates: "Existentially speaking, a desire that feeds and grows on its own negation, on the obstacle in its path, on the presence real or imagined of a rival, if left to itself, can only lead to a mental breakdown or death." (211) In counterpoint to Grisóstomo's suicidal abyss, Don Quixote gratefully renounces his folly on his deathbed, in a scene which CERVANTES draws out in admirably plausible detail.

The author's desire to save us from the Don's madness is inseparable from his compassionate desire to save the Don from his own. He created his characters, we might say, so that's his privilege. No; CERVANTES does not play god with his creatures, but unveils the false gods we become for one another. The privilege goes to the reality of windmills, and to the unreality of giants; in sum, to the representation of the very real desires that generate preposterous fictions, "the truth to me in the past and to my detriment," as the Don confesses, "*verdaderos en mi daño*." Truth is the keynote in this defining "*desengaño*," as it is for the novel as a whole. In his reflections on madness and the cures we seek for it, BANDERA remarks that it is "possible to write a history of hope" (106). His book on CERVANTES' masterpiece installs it as a thrilling chapter in that history.

Andrew McKenna

Cayley, David: *The Rivers North of the Future: The Testament of Ivan Illich as told by David Cayley*.

Foreword by Charles Taylor (Toronto: Anansi, 2005) 256 pages. ISBN 0887847145, \$ 19.95.

David CAYLEY, a Canadian writer and broadcaster published this book comprising interviews with the late Ivan ILLICH (1926–2002) that address thoughts on religion and society. The focus of this book is ILLICH's thesis that the modern West is a perversion or betrayal of Christian faith. Again and again ILLICH refers to the Latin saying *perversio optimi quae est pessima* [the perversion of the best is the worst] to underline his main insight. In the following I will emphasize ILLICH's apocalyptic thoughts which I think are highly relevant to understand our world today. If it is true that the problems of the modern world are a perversion of the best that has been given to it, we should first summarize what ILLICH understood as this best. For him the best is the Incarnation, God's becoming a human being in Jesus Christ. I especially like the broad ecumenical tone in which ILLICH summarizes this turning point in history: "I do think ... that I can demonstrate that the Incarnation, the enfleshment, of the Biblical, the Koranic, the Christian, Allah, represents a turning point in the history of the world for believer and unbeliever alike. Belief refers to what exceeds history, but it also enters history and changes it forever." (48) The best illustration ILLICH gives us about this fundamental change is his understanding of the parable of the Samaritan with which Jesus answered the question about our neighbor. According to ILLICH, the only way to understand this parable today is "to imagine the Samaritan as a Palestinian ministering to a wounded Jew" (50). This story marks a significant break with all forms of ethics that are based on a special care of one's own family, group or race. "This deeply threatens the traditional basis for ethics, which was always an *ethnos*, an historically given 'we' which precedes any pronunciation of the word 'I.'" (p. 47) The incarnation brings a new form of love into the world that undermines and exceeds all traditional understandings of it. ILLICH in such insights comes close to the mimetic theory and its insight into the Biblical overcoming of the scapegoat mechanism. The *ethnos* of a group gives way to individuality and universalism as soon as the scapegoat mechanism is uncovered. René GIRARD's reading of Jesus' saving the adulterous woman (John 8) is an interesting parallel to ILLICH's reflections on the parable of the Samaritan. Both ILLICH and GIRARD agree on the epochal meaning of the Incarnation.

But why can God's tremendous gift to humanity turn into something very bad? What does ILLICH mean by the corruption of the best that turns into the worst? There are two main dangers that ILLICH addresses in this book, understanding

them as possible perversions of the Christian message. First, he refers to the negative consequences that may result from the institutionalization of Christian love and second the creation of needy human beings. On the danger of institutionalization ILLICH claims the following: "There is a temptation to try to manage and, eventually, to legislate this new love, to create an institution that will guarantee it, insure it, and protect it by criminalizing its opposite. So, along with this new ability to give freely of oneself has appeared the possibility of exercising an entirely new kind of power, the power of those who organize Christianity and use this vocation to claim their superiority as social institutions. This power is claimed first by the Church and later by the many secular institutions stamped from its mould. Wherever I look for the roots of modernity, I find them in the attempts of the churches to institutionalize, legitimize, and manage Christian vocation." (47-8) One might, of course, discuss ILLICH's overcritical view of institutions but he nevertheless points to real dangers that must not be neglected. Institutions easily can become counterproductive. His critique of institutions like schools, modern medicine or car traffic is worth to be considered seriously.

ILLICH's critique of the needy man seems to me an even more important danger. According to ILLICH, "needs are much more cruel than tyrants" (103). What are the specific needs that ILLICH views as perverted offspring of Christianity and that easily turn into threats in our world? ILLICH mentions "the need for education, the need for ever-increasing health services" and "the need for shelter" (63). What is most striking in this book is the fact that ILLICH connects these dangers with some of the most puzzling passages in the New Testament. He refers to the Second Letter to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:2-7) where the *katechon*—the containing order or the restrainer—and the *mysterium iniquitatis*, the mystery of lawlessness, are mentioned. All this refers also to the Antichrist, a New Testament figure that many theologians avoid to address at all, leaving it completely to the fundamentalists. ILLICH avoided talking about his understanding of these Biblical passages to explain the problems of the modern world for over thirty years because he feared to be misunderstood as an obscurantist sectarian. In his interviews with David CAYLEY, ILLICH dared to address these difficult but impor-

tant issues for the first time and we have to be grateful that we are now able to read these thoughts. As an example I will quote a passage in which ILLICH connects the needy man with the Antichrist:

"The Anti-Christ, which looks, in so many things, just like Christ, and which preaches universal responsibility, global perception, humble acceptance of teaching instead of finding out for oneself, and guidance through institutions. The Anti-Christ, or let's say the *mysterium iniquitatis*, is the conglomerate of a series of perversions by which we try to give security, survival ability, and independence from individual persons to the new possibilities that were opened through the Gospel by institutionalizing them." (167)

Again we can draw a parallel between ILLICH's reflections on the corruption of the message of the Gospel and mimetic theory. GIRARD also dares to address the Antichrist, identifying him with the "radicalization of contemporary victimology" (GIRARD, *Satan*, 181). In this regard GIRARD recognizes a dangerous perversion of the Biblical concern for victims that overcame the scapegoat mechanism. He refers to the fact that today we often "practice a hunt for scapegoats to the second degree, a hunt for hunters of scapegoats. Our society's obligatory compassion authorizes new forms of cruelty" (GIRARD, *Satan*, 158). It is close to this line of thinking that the Canadian philosopher Charles TAYLOR—who wrote the foreword to ILLICH's book—explains how the biblically inspired concern for victims contributes to a certain degree to contemporary terrorism (see C. TAYLOR, "Notes on the Sources of Violence: Perennial and Modern," in *Beyond Violence: Religious Sources for Social Transformation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, edited by J. L. Heft, Ashland: Fordham University Press, 2004, 15-42). Like ILLICH, GIRARD knows about the *corruptio optimi pessima*. In his article "Innovation and Repetition" (*SubStance* 62-63 [1990], 7-20) he remarks in connection with his critique of contemporary art and literature often enslaved by an innovation cult how the best can enable the worst: "I certainly believe in the value of literature and philosophy. But I also think that our cultural activities are vulnerable to the distress of the time in direct proportion to the spiritual greatness that should be theirs. The old scholastic adage always applies: *Corruptio optimi pessima*." Even closer to ILLICH's way of connecting Christianity to the problems of our modern world comes a remark GIRARD made in an interview with James G. WILLIAMS included in the

Girard Reader: “All the excesses of the modern world are distortions of Christian truth.” (Girard Reader, 279) In the same interview he refers also to BERNANOS’s remark that “the modern world is full of Christian ideas gone berserk” (*Girard Reader*, 287 cf. also R. GIRARD, *Quand ces choses commenceront ... Entretiens avec Michel Treguer*, Paris 1994). It is these words of BERNANOS that Jean-Pierre DUPUY uses to summarize the growing perversion of the concern for victims in our world in an important article comparing ILLICH with GIRARD (“Detour and Sacrifice: Ilich and Girard,” in *The Challenges of Ivan Ilich: A Collective Reflection*, edited by L. Hoinacki and C. Mitcham, New York: State University of New York Press, 2002, 189-204).

ILLICH is an apocalyptic thinker at his best. According to him we are not living in a “post-Christian” but in an “apocalyptic world” (177, 179). This does not mean, however, that he hopes for a divine act of final revenge and destruction like many fundamentalists do. ILLICH underlines that, contrary to the modern identification of “apocalyptic” with “disaster”, it means to him “revealing, or unveiling” (179). Being an apocalyptic thinker he comes again close to the apocalyptic insights of René GIRARD. Both thinkers understand that we are living at a time where fundamental decisions are forced on us. We are faced with the fact that a perversion of the Biblical may lead to the destruction of the whole world. Confronted with the possibility of the worst we have to make sure that we remain faithful to the best that God has given us. Living in an apocalyptic age means first of all to recognize that our world is by far the “worst ... and by far the best of all worlds” (Girard, *Satan*, 165). This description of the state of our world is not a gloomy image typical of apocalyptic thinkers making us uneasy. It is a true assessment and it is not by chance that one of the most optimistic texts in the Catholic tradition, the “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” of the Second Vatican Council expresses it, too: “The modern world shows itself at once powerful and weak, capable of the noblest deeds or the foulest; before it lies the path to freedom or to slavery, to progress or retreat, to brotherhood or hatred.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, No. 9)

Does ILLICH see any way to overcome the crisis of our world? We can only find a few hints in this book. First there is an emphasis on the im-

portance of renunciation to free ourselves from the tyranny of needs (101-3). Second ILLICH underlines the importance of grace and forgiveness to develop a relation to sin that does not end in the deadlock of criminalization. Thirdly it is important to recognize that ILLICH does not view the mystery of lawlessness as something entirely negative. To the contrary, he even calls it once “the entrance door into the entire mystery of Incarnation” (170). He expects the resurrection of the Church “from the humiliation, for which the Church itself must be blamed, of having gestated and brought forth the world of modernity” (179). ILLICH believes in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting. The former he identifies with the “resurrection of the Church” (180). This hope reminds me of what Dietrich BONHOEFFER said when he claims that besides the political order of the restrainer it is the “miracle of a new awakening of faith” that may help to “avert the final plunge into the void” (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 108). According to BONHOEFFER, this miracle is “the saving act of God, which intervenes from above, from beyond whatever is historically attainable or probable, and creates new life out of the void. It is the raising of the dead.” I think it is not by chance that the resurrection also plays a key role in mimetic theory. GIRARD concluded his first book *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* with one of DOSTOEVSKI’s images of the resurrection and explained in his systematic sum *I See Satan Fall like Lightning* that it is the resurrection that ultimately enabled the disciples to unveil the scapegoat mechanism. We, of course, also know that GIRARD had to leave the purely anthropological context of his theory to come to this conclusion.

Wolfgang Palaver

Christensen, Allan Conrad:
Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Contagion
(London: Routledge, 2005). 350 pages.
ISBN 0-415-36048-X, \$ 155

COV&R members are prepared to welcome the convergence of their own disciplines, mimetic theory, and the biological sciences. However, it is salutary to follow the late and lamented Francisco VARELA’s test for even the most attractive and persuasively presented convergences with the question ‘From this what follows?’ (See his implacable interventions in the *Disorder and Order* conference volume edited by Paisley LIVINGSTON). We may measure the increasingly influential connections between literary criti-

cism and the biological sciences by how seriously literature is recognized as a parallel field of research, not just a welcoming blissful bower of echoing metaphors.

Laura OTIS (*Membranes*: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) first trained as a neurologist before entering English. She explains that her introduction to graduate study in literary criticism was Jonathan CULLER's positioning of structural linguistics as the key to literary study: a system of pure differences with no positive terms. That rhymed for her with her previous scientific training, but "how could there be truth" if we define our ideas only negatively? (2) From *that* convergence nothing much follows, except the assiduous tracking of common metaphors in scientific and belletristic writing, giving us an *instance* of mimetic contagion, the mind tinctured in the milieu's prevailing metaphors, but not a *revelation* of the mechanism of contagion itself.

GIRARD's careful insistence on the promise and limits of a *hypothesis* is a better guide to this interdisciplinary labour, where the promise of the most comprehensive explanation not yet a proof must survive testing or be changed out for a better hypothesis. Secondly, the mimetic hypothesis is the theory of a *mechanism*. The choice of the term *mechanism* or *metaphor* to plot such consequences of mimesis as contagion neatly captures the difference between the search for truth or the esthetic digestion of 'convergences.'

Although CHRISTENSEN defers (4) to Athena VRETTOS's *Somatic Fictions* (Stanford University Press, 1995) for noting "the ubiquity of contagion as a master narrative in Victorian culture," he presses the concepts of narrative and metaphor much further than OTIS or VRETTOS. Why? I suspect that the novels he discusses weigh sufficiently on his loyalty so that he is unwilling to stop *because they do not stop* at the idea that contagion of ideas or behavior in literature is a mere metaphor or secondary notation for biological processes. AINSWORTH's *Old Saint Paul's* (1841), MANZONI's *I promessi sposi* (rev. 1841-1842), DICKENS's *Bleak House* (1852-53); GASKELL's *Ruth* (1853), KINGSLEY's *Two Years Ago* (1857), RUFFINI's *Lavinia* (1860), BULWER's *A Strange Story* (1861-62) and ZOLA's *Le Docteur Pascal* (1893) are themselves associated to each other in "a common field of contagion" (9), in a way at once very familiar and very different to the consort of literary works in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* and *Theatre of Envy*:

On that field, which can be called history as well, compelling influences travel and spread from individual to individual, imposing themselves or meeting with resistance. Individuals are thus overpowered or overpower others in a process that suggests the disciplinary forces that succeed or fail in the maintenance of the social hierarchies. And as the powerful influences, for which contagion is such an effective metaphor, spread

among individuals, they may seem to spread among the eight novels as well. The novels themselves become highly permeable and vulnerable to one another in this vision of their intertextuality. As the themes, the characters and the episodes of various works interpenetrate and overlap, they are discovered to be versions and parts of a single master text. (9)

GIRARD's comradely association of his five beloved novelists in a revelation of the mechanism of mimetic desire, or the unity of SHAKESPEARE's work guaranteed by his discovery of that mechanism, is here a somewhat more sinister discourse of influence among novelists. For CHRISTENSEN, the interaction of these novels reveals the plan of a master text for a particular historical moment: contagion is the dominant nineteenth century discourse of influence, a fit metaphor for all forms of metabolic up to metaphysical influence in a time of great discord.

In a remarkable feat of organisation, successive chapters repeat the consort of all the novels as he discusses different issues, figures and agents of both metabolic and metaphysical contagion: (3) swordsmen and needlewomen, (4) physicians, nurses and patients, (5) mothers, daughters and lovers, (6) writers and readers, (7) speakers, singers and listeners, and concluding in money handlers and bookkeepers.

GIRARD is active throughout CHRISTENSEN's book, brought in to explain the development, configuration, and consequences of mimetic contagion. It is in particular the GIRARD of the essays in *To Double Business Bound* he refers to most, including the valuable introduction. Reading *Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Contagion* makes me realise that I haven't referred to these essays often enough myself, even though they were my introduction to GIRARD's work.

GIRARD argues that it is Christianity's demythologising of superstition that makes the modern scientific spirit possible. Yet the demythologisation of plague as God's scourge in the nineteenth century also caused great personal anguish. Reading the works CHRISTENSEN discusses reminds us of the terrible toll for those who felt deeply that the loss of certainty that the God they worshiped sent plagues and contagions to chasten them may have meant the loss of the only god they knew. It is not just the scientific climate of the nineteenth century quest for origins and generative models which leads to the mimetic hypothesis. The clarity of choice GIRARD outlines between sacrificial and postsacrificial Christianity, and the release from the necessity of choosing between religion and science, has been partly paid for in the nineteenth century.

CHRISTENSEN is careful and scrupulously annotative throughout because he is proving an argument. CHRISTENSEN gives us not only a map of the concept of contagion in nineteenth century writing, but the pressuring of his evidence to think more about this

omnipresent pattern than as a mind-pleasing convergence. At the end of his book he considers recent meme-research, but I suspect that he is no more excited about it than we are, and memes do not play a role in his discussion of these novels.

CHRISTENSEN's first chapter is the most important, perhaps the most difficult, as the pressure of all the subsequent chapters weighs on it: History itself as contagion. CHRISTENSEN, following Fredric JAMESON's *The Political Unconscious* (1980), positions History as the replacement for the disappeared God as the absent cause of nineteenth century history. History in JAMESON's language, is the inexorable form of events; history is what hurts.

Perhaps CHRISTENSEN's eloquent designation of History as contagion as the most inclusive model for 'how things go' in the nineteenth century is holding the place of a more inclusive model for the worldly results of the motive and mechanism of living beings who make their history by their efforts to be with, be like, be as others, a movement or pulsion we call helplessly desire, élan. Could further converging development of research in the biological and social sciences and mimetic theory transcode CHRISTENSEN's History as contagion into the mimetic hypothesis? In any case, CHRISTENSEN has given us a remarkable reflection on the inaugurating conception which presides over COV&R: reciprocity as contagion, for better or worse.

William A. Johnsen

Heim, S. Mark:

Saved from Sacrifice. A Theology of the Cross.

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans 2006,

346 pages. ISBN 978-0-8028-3215-3, \$ 27

In an age in which many people see no sense at all in the cross and its message, in which, however, a lot of people view the cross as source and cause of unnecessary suffering—even as inspiration for abuse of any kind—HEIM wants to shed new light on the liberating effect of the cross, and thus to rehabilitate faith in the redemption by the cross. HEIM finds the most important sources for his own inspiration in the work of René GIRARD. He explicitly mentions GIRARD's *I See Satan Fall like Lightning* and James WILLIAMS's *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred* as books that could be read instead of his book or at least instead of parts thereof. Also Gil BAILIE's *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* is one of his main inspirational sources. In assessing the importance of GIRARD's theory for a new interpretation of the message of the cross, HEIM concurs with Walter WINK (*Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992, 155): "Even if aspects of Girard's overall thesis fail to convince, his understanding of mimetic rivalry and conflict and of the scapegoat are among the most pro-

found intellectual discoveries of our time, and will remain permanent contributions to our understanding of the meaning of the crucifixion." (12)

HEIM's book is clearly structured: A first part ("Things Hidden from the Foundation of the World"; 37-104) introduces the mythic structure of the world and explains its problems. HEIM juxtaposes the invisible scapegoats with the outcry of Job. Thus sacrifice is contested. And yet, why does the Hebrew Bible command sacrifice and approve it? For example, HEIM offers a differentiated analysis of Lev 24:10-14: "The behavior is the same that recurs constantly in human religion and culture, but the description is not. ... Instead of an elaborate story that seems to be about something else, we get a direct account. ... The sacrificial killing is linked explicitly to the prohibitions whose purpose is to prevent the escalation of retribution, the problem that sacrifice has to solve." (75) Although Israel engages in an extensive practice of ritual sacrifice, which can be viewed in analogy to the rites of other peoples and cultures, the difference may not be overlooked. The focus is being shifted ever more from the ritually effected channeling of conflicts to a consciously practiced reconciliation. HEIM illustrates this with Yom Kippur: "The Day of Atonement required not simply that people associate themselves with the collective violence against the scapegoat, but that they all participate by fasting and repentance for their own sins." (77) Moreover the Hebrew Bible steers our attention to the voice of the victims and teaches us to see "the truth about our human condition, about the fundamental dynamics that lead to human bloodshed, and most particularly, the truth about the integral connection between religion and violence." (101)

Part Two "Visible Victim" (105-215) presents us "The Cross We Can't Forget". Following GIRARD's reasoning, HEIM describes how the New Testament unveils the logic of sacrifice and overcomes it. The crucifixion is seen as "Sacrifice to End Sacrifice". Many steps of the argument are known from GIRARD's *Satan*-book, but HEIM's creative considerations about "the Sign of Jonah" and the accusation and rehabilitation of Susanna (165-76) are innovative and inspiring. The unveiling of the logic of sacrifice, however, also implies the problem of an abuse of sacrifice. Therefore one of the main questions of this part is: "How could the same thing be experienced as liberating and transforming on one hand and as destructive and perverse on the other?" (215) HEIM acknowledges:

"In fact, a dangerous theology of the cross is much closer at hand than aggressive Christian apologists may want to acknowledge. The Gospel narrative follows the outline of an ancient pattern of sin (in the course of revealing and opposing) that can be read as a prescription rather than a diagnosis. And even when the truth it of-

fers is received, it can be twisted into a novel rationale for sacrifice.” (215)

The third part, “Remembrance of Me” (217-329), looks for a substitute for sacrifice. Since biblical revelation disavowed the possibility of pacifying through the logic of sacrifice, an effective replacement has to be found. Biblical revelation recognizes the truth about the “redemptive violence” of ritual sacrifice. Yet, “this truth alone cannot save us unless there is an alternative, peaceful way of overcoming the rivalry and reciprocal violence that sacrifice exists to contain.” (220) We need a “positive form of contagion” (220). The New Testament offers such a replacement “in its description of Christian faith and the life of the church.” It is precisely “a substitute for sacrifice” (220). In an array of thematic approaches HEIM sets out to outline this substitute more clearly. The most important approach for him is the working of the Spirit. HEIM describes the Holy Spirit in his role as the paraclete, the advocate and defender of scapegoats.

“The Spirit sides with sacrificial victims and inspires others to do the same. But it is not enough to expose and oppose the sacrificial solution to community harmony. There is a positive task on the other side of this negative one. The Holy Spirit’s other characteristic work is the inspiration and nurture of a new kind of community.” (227) “The notable work of the Holy Spirit ... is to bring unity across difference and division.” (228)

HEIM also devotes much space to the significance of the Eucharist:

“Celebration of the Eucharist explicitly mirrors the sacrificial event. It gathers the community as a crowd around the altar and the victim. But it gathers to remember the victim’s innocence, to make peace without violence.” (232-3). “The crowd does not gather around a body, it gathers to become Christ’s body in the world, animated by the Holy Spirit of peace.” (233)

Referring to Stephen J. PATTERSON, *Beyond the Passion: Rethinking the Death and Life of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004, 89) HEIM emphasizes: “To eat meat (from the altar), to participate in sacrifice, was to participate in the great cultural project of sustaining the world as it is.” (234). The Eucharist takes the place held by sacrifice in other religions and it enables the participants to build a new structure of the world. This building process, however, is only possible when the fundamental problem of rivalry is being solved. On the one hand the insight into the nature of sin and original sin contributes to that solution:

“The Genesis accounts of the fall as a human misreading of divine motive, a projection of jealousy, alert us to a key feature of the otherness of God. This is a

feature of crucial value: God’s position as a nonrival to humans. ... The capacity to turn any relation into one of conflict, of rivalry, is the virus that can escalate violence into a threat to all forms of human community. ... There is a real original sin in the ‘conflictualization’ of the one relation that offered special purchase against this cycle, the relation with God.” (237)

Therefore the image of God is “God beyond rivalry”, the model *par excellence* that purifies our desire. We can accept this model by becoming sensitized to the Christological logic. Reducing Christology to the logic of imitating a good person is not sufficient to free us from the temptation of rivalry. Instead of engaging in a mimesis of acquisition, the task is to open up for the logic of grace: “Everything Jesus has and is, including above all his relationship with the Father, he offers to his disciples.” (242)

And what is to be said about the problem of the abuse of the cross in a misguided spirituality of the cross? HEIM stresses with unequivocal clarity: “Redemptive violence is what we are to be saved from, not what we are to copy, either as perpetrators or victims. ... To follow the crucified one is to live all life without sacrifice, where ‘sacrifice’ is redefined to be an offering of praise, and rivalry is transformed into outdoing each other in love. The necessary path away from scapegoating, both cognitively and practically, is identification with the victims. Yet with such identification comes also the risk of sharing their fate.” (245) The long path ends with a reformulated Christian anthropology: “The Christian life is about the formation, or reformation, of our desire.” (246)

HEIM has written an important book. Its significance in the first place lies in a systematization of manifold approaches of expressing the meaning of the cross. This systematization is opened up by the new perspective provided through GIRARD’s theory. However, HEIM’s delineation of the scope of “sacrifice” tempts to object. HEIM excludes economic structures, the legal system, war, and many other problems from his purview. He does not see any sacrificial violence in these contexts. And on first sight his argument seems convincing: “Any of these can exhibit features of scapegoating or become captive to sacrificial violence” (254). Yet, HEIM argues that their problematic can be addressed by Christians “without necessarily making reference to the cross” (253-4) because: “The full dimensions of the Christian life cannot be constructed from the cross alone.” (254) That may well be true. Still HEIM’s solution is not completely satisfac-

tory, in the first place because it does not do justice to the theoretical principles of GIRARD's theory: The scapegoat mechanism cannot be detached from cultural and social structures; on the contrary these structures have their roots in the mechanism. The cross thus would mean a transformation of culture itself. HEIM, however, does not agree with the universal cultural claim of GIRARD's theory ("I do not think that Girard's thought represents the global truth about mythology, early religion, human psychology, and community that its more extreme devotees maintain." 12). Consequently it does not necessitate him to decipher the truth of the cross in a universal context. Still he approximates that universality on a different path, namely by a theological reflection on the meaning of *satisfaction*. His idea is not, as ANSELM's, that of a "hidden transaction at the cross, a transaction between God's justice and God's mercy" (327) but that of a ransom "demanded by crime". (327) The power of a sacrificial culture cannot be fought with its own means because that would mean "to participate in the same evil." (327)

"So God accepts to be a victim of our original social sin, to step into the place of the scapegoat, and to do what no human being can do. ... In exchanging an ordinary victim for the incarnate one, ... the 'ransom' is like money that leaves an indelible dye on the hand of the kidnappers. Resurrection vindicates the victim, and makes him a living witness against the process that sacrificed him. Faith preserves the account of the cross, from the perspective of the crucified, and destabilizes all myth. A new community seeks peace by remembering what hitherto communities generally united by forgetting." (327)

Viewed from a systematic perspective HEIM ends up where GIRARD was when he revised his criticism of the concept of sacrifice. As we know, GIRARD for a long time refused to apply that concept to Jesus' death on the cross (cf. esp. *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 231-7). As a consequence of his discussion with Raymund SCHWAGER GIRARD revised that attitude and acknowledged his indebtedness to SCHWAGER in this respect. In his contribution to a volume in honor of SCHWAGER's 60th birthday ("Mimetische Theorie und Theologie", in: NIEWIADOMSKI, J. / PALAVER, W. (eds.): *Vom Fluch und Segen der Sündenböcke*. Thaur: Kulturverlag 1995, 15-29) GIRARD emphasizes that the application of one and the same concept (*sacrifice*) expresses the paradoxical unity of all religion in the entire human history (cf. *ibid.* 27). This unity

also indicates the only viable systematic solution to the problem of ambivalence: God Himself enacts the pattern of the scapegoat again, this time, however, to His own disadvantage and in order to overthrow it (cf. *ibid.* 28). This essay was published in German in 1995 and in 2001 in French (in: René GIRARD, *Celui par qui le scandale arrive*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer 2001, 63-82), but to my knowledge has not been published in English.

I have two wishes for the book on its way: Firstly, it should find many readers. Secondly, it should engage in a systematic discussion with Raymund SCHWAGER's position. HEIM appears to know only SCHWAGER's earlier works, but not his *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation: Toward a Biblical Doctrine of Redemption*. Tr. J. Williams and P. Haddon. (New York: Crossroad 1999) and, of course, not yet *Banished from Eden. Original Sin and Evolutionary Theory in the Drama of Salvation*. Tr. J. Williams. (Gracewing 2006). SCHWAGER's solution to the ambivalence of the cross, a solution gained by interpreting the cross as one act within a five-act drama, can help to dissolve the unbalanced tension between the universality of the cross on the one hand and the fact that not all facets of Christian life can be sufficiently enlightened by the cross alone on the other hand. SCHWAGER clarifies that the entirety of Christian life can indeed not be described from the cross alone but from the grace and the requirements expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. Nevertheless the cross remains one aspect to be reckoned with, when looking for solutions in all realms of human life. And this for the very reason that the reality of divine grace is separated from the proper human response to it by the abyss of failure and self-judgment. This chasm, however, is bridged by the Son's giving of himself in the cross.

Józef Niewiadomski

Translation: Nikolaus Wandinger

Notice

Due to the slow reaction of two publishers reviewers did not receive their copies in time. Therefore we have to postpone the review of Raymund SCHWAGER's *Banished from Eden* to the next issue again (because I felt that it should not be reviewed by one of us Innsbruck people). Also Ann ASTELL's *Eating Beauty* had been marked down for this Bulletin but will receive its due attention in the fall.

The Editor

1) Books concerning the entire work of René Girard

Girard, René and Vattimo, Gianni: *Verità o fede debole? Dialogo su cristianesimo e relativismo*. A cura di Pierpaolo Antonello. Massa: Transeuropa, 2006.

René Girard: *Deseo mimético y estructura antropológica*. In *Revista Anthropos* no. 213 (2007) 224 pp. (special issue dedicated to the work of René Girard, coordinated by Jesús Camarero Arribas)

2) Articles concerning the entire work of René Girard

Camarero Arribas, Jesús: "Bibliografía de y sobre René Girard." In *Revista Anthropos* no. 213 (2007) 38-40.

Camarero Arribas, Jesús: "Cronología de René Girard." In *Revista Anthropos* no. 213 (2007) 35-37.

Camarero Arribas, Jesús: "La inversión del paradigma crítico." In *Revista Anthropos* no. 213 (2007) 70-80.

Camarero Arribas, Jesús: "René Girard: El deseo mimético, contenido de la estructura factual y vigente de la sociedad actual." In *Revista Anthropos* no. 213 (2007) 3-15.

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We 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: Dietmar.Regensburger@uibk.ac.at or Fax: (43 512) 507-2761 or by mail: Girard-Dokumentation, c/o Dr. Dietmar Regensburger, University of Innsbruck, Karl-Rahner-Platz 1, A-6020 Innsbruck / Austria.

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EDITOR'S THANKS

Once again it has become a substantial Bulletin despite the fact that two reviews had to be postponed. That is thanks to the authors of the contributions in here and thanks to all who draw my attention to interesting events, books, web-sites, etc. So thank you to all of you. Please continue to do so.

This time a special thanks to our President Sandor Goodhart is certainly not out of place here. Indeed he often needed some prodding to send his letters for the Bulletin in time. But it was always worth the wait, especially, I think, this time. On behalf of the Bulletin and its readers: Thank you, Sandy, for your work for and in COV&R, and I hope we will still read about your thoughts in this Bulletin in the future—or as you said: Don't be a stranger.

Nikolaus Wandering

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