The Bulletin of the Colloquium on Violence & Religion

COV&R

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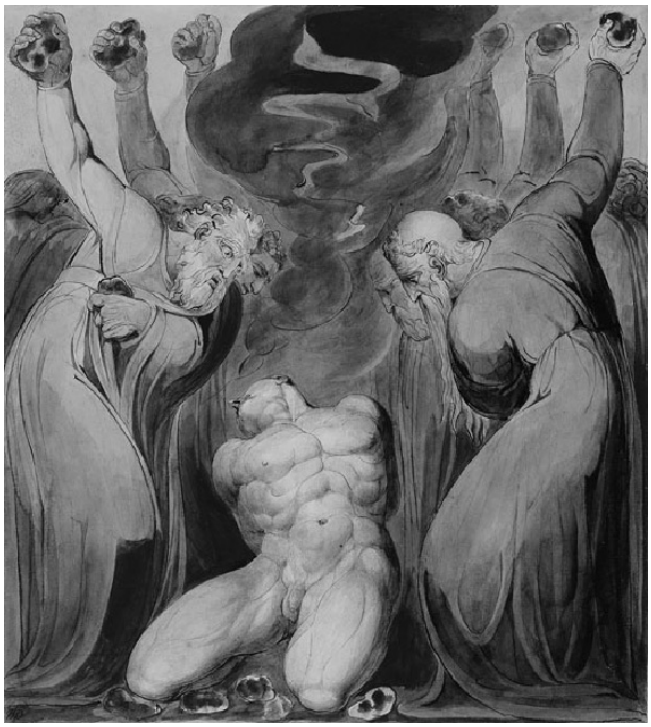
"Fearful Symmetries": Religion, Co-Existence and the Secular



COV&R-Conference July 8-12, 2009

WELCOME TO LONDON!

We look forward to welcoming you to COV&R 2009, at the fine venue of St Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, London. As usual, the Colloquium will explore the richness of the mimetic model of culture and religion; specifically, **Fearful Symmetries** will continue the dialogue from Boston (2000) and Amsterdam (2007), in which the implications of mimetic theory for inter-religious relations were explored.

To this end we are very happy to welcome as a keynote speaker Professor Tariq Said RAMADAN, an internationally-renowned commentator on Islam. Professor RAMADAN is Senior Research Fellow at St Antony's College, University of Oxford, and President of the European Muslim Network. He has written extensively on Muslim themes, including the challenges of globalisation, modernity and European identity, and will give the Raymund Schwager Lecture on the opening evening of the conference. A response from COV&R's Presi-

continued on p. 3

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**

Contents

COV&R AT THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION ANNUAL MEETING

November 7-10, 2009, Montreal, Canada

At the upcoming AAR Annual Meeting, COV&R will be sponsoring our usual Saturday morning session. We also will be offering our first session ever on the main program of the annual meeting, as a result of our new status as a related scholarly organization (RSO). In addition, also as a result of our RSO status, we will be co-sponsoring one session with the Christian Spirituality Group. And, for a little "icing on the cake," COV&R members will be co-presenting in a session sponsored by the Teaching Religion section. As indicated below, details on days, times, and/or locations will be announced in a later bulletin.

Saturday, November 7, 9-11:30 a.m. (location TBA)

Martha REINEKE, Coordinator of COV&R at the AAR, Presiding:

9-10:10 a.m: Book session: *Abraham's Curse: The Roots of Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* by Bruce Chilton

Presentation by Bruce CHILTON, Bard College; Respondent: Zijad DELIC, National Executive Director of the Canadian Islamic Congress.

10:20-11:30 a.m.: Book session: *The Virgin Mary, Monotheism, and Sacrifice* by Cleo Kearns

Presentation by Cleo KEARNS, Princeton University, Center for the Study of Religion; Respondent: Martha REINEKE, University of Northern Iowa;

Discussion will follow each presentation/response.

For the mentioned books see review on p. 10.

Session on the Main Program (2 ½ hour session, day/time/location TBA)

René Girard's *Achever Clausewitz;* Ann ASTELL, Executive Secretary, COV&R, Presiding

Panelists: Paul DUMOUCHEL, Ritsumeikan University; Stephen GARDNER, University of Tulsa; Sandor GOODHART, Purdue University; William JOHNSEN, Michigan State University; Charles MABEE, Oakland University/Ecumenical Theological Center.

COV&R Co-Sponsored Session with Christian Spirituality Group (Nov. 8, time/location TBA):

Bruce LESCHER, Graduate Theological Union, Presiding

Presentations by: Bruce WARD, Laurentian University: "Word-Violence and Silence: The Practice of Hesychasm as a Response to Violence"

John ROEDEL, Graduate Theological Union: "An Argument in Support of the Effectiveness of Principled Nonviolence using Girardian Mimetic Theory"

Gregory LOVE, San Francisco Theological Seminary: "Trauma, the Cross, and the Christian 'Virtue of Self-Sacrificial Love': Is Girard a Help, or a Problem?"

Ann ASTELL, University of Notre Dame, responding

Teaching Religion Section: (day/time/location TBA)

Presenters: Martha REINEKE, University of Northern Iowa; Suzanne ROSS, Raven Foundation: *Thinking Global, Teaching Local: Mimetic Theory on YouTube*

This session will focus on REINEKE's course on "Violence and Religion: Strangers and Scapegoats in a Time of Terrorism" and explore how YouTube *Mimetic Theory 101* sessions on Girard produced by the Raven Foundation help students to use mimetic theory to better understand global conflict.

Martha Reineke

PLEASE HELP WITH THE HISTORY OF COV&R

As some of you know, I am working on a history of COV&R, from its inception in 1990 to (probably) the conference in 2010. I invite all COV&R members and friends to send me information that will help me. I am of course in the process of delving into my own memories and into records to which I have access. However, that will not suffice as I compose the story of the Colloquium. In the coming months I will contact and converse with some of you, but please feel free to volunteer your recollections and documents. I am looking in particular for the following:

1) Letters and other documents bearing on the history of COV&R and/or colleagues who have made significant contributions to advancing the mimetic theory brought to the light by René GIRARD.
2) Records or notes of annual conferences or meetings of COV&R at the AAR/SBL that have not been published in the *Bulletin*. I did not attend the annual conferences in 1999 (Atlanta), 2000 (Boston), 2001 (Antwerp), 2003 (Innsbruck), 2005 (Koblenz), and 2007 (Amsterdam), so I would be especially grateful for conference information and personal anecdotes from those meetings.
3) Personal anecdotes about persons and events that are relevant to the history of COV&R. This overlaps no. 2.
4) Points of view, positive and negative, on the history of COV&R or particular matters pertaining to the history of COV&R. If any respondent wishes to remain anonymous, I will respect the request for anonymity. In all instances I will seek permission from the speaker/writer if I decide to quote written statements or oral remarks.
5) Photos: I have a number of photographs from the early years and many photos have been published in the *Bulletin*. However, if you possess pictures that you think are relevant to the history of COV&R, or just interesting for whatever reason, please let me see them. I don't know yet whether we will be able to use photographs, but if we can it would enhance the book.

I will greatly appreciate any assistance you can give me in this project. What has happened in the last two decades in the spread of René GIRARD's thought, in the new fields of inquiry and application that are emerging from it, and the intellectual and spiritual fellowship that has grown up around him is too significant to let relevant facts and perspectives perish in the flow of time.

James Williams

dent, Wolfgang PALAVER, will set out the parameters for a discussion of Mimetic Theory and Islam.

This is an important turning point for COV&R. Are we committed to the claim that the resources for non-violent transformation – that is, the overcoming of violent mimesis and the rejection of scapegoating – are to be found with the Judaeo-Christian tradition alone? What, then, are we to make of the presence of pacific spiritual resources within other religious traditions? We have felt that this important theme required a sustained and focussed dialogue: on Thursday 9th July we will be further guided by Dr Michael BARNES SJ and Professor Gwen GRIFFITH-DICKSON. Dr BARNES is a specialist in the Theology of Inter-Religious Dialogue at Heythrop College, with a background in Indian religions. He is the author of *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, and runs the de Nobili Inter-Faith Centre in Southall, West London. Professor GRIFFITH-DICKSON is the Director of the Lokahi Foundation, which seeks to progress a more diverse and harmonious society through research and grassroots activity. Her academic background is in philosophical theology and the theology of religions; she is also Visiting Professor at King's College, University of London.

Scholars from the three Abrahamic traditions will converse together on themes of mutual concern. Dr Reza SHA-KAZEMI, who researches at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, has a background in international relations and politics, as well as the study of religion. He is the founding editor of the *Islamic World Report*, and has written extensively on Shi'i and comparative spirituality. Jonathan GORSKY and Ahmad ACHTAR lecture in Jewish and Islamic Studies, respectively, at Heythrop College; while Dr Peter TYLER is Senior Lecturer in Spirituality at St Mary's University College, with specialist interest in Carmelite spirituality and the philosophy of Ludwig WITTGENSTEIN. Dr Nur MASALHA directs the *Holy Land Research Project* at St

Mary's University College. He is the editor of *Holy Land Studies*, a multidisciplinary journal, and the author of several works on Palestinian politics. Sheelah Treflé HIDDEN and James ALISON will present insights on these themes from the perspective of mimetic theory. Sheelah is a research student at the University of Wales at Lampeter, with specialist interest in the dialogue between the contemplative traditions of the Abrahamic religions. James is the Director of Educational Projects for the *Imitatio Foundation*, and a freelance theologian with numerous books on mimetic theory to his name, including *The Joy of Being Wrong* and *Faith Beyond Resentment*. We hope to confirm the name of at least one high-profile Muslim woman speaker for these sessions.

The rest of the Colloquium will explore more widely the implications of mimetic theory, specifically (on Friday 10th July) via a series of parallel workshops, to which participants will be invited to sign up at the beginning of the Colloquium. The purpose of these groups will be to consolidate existing insights, such as: the convergence between the thought of René GIRARD and Bernard LONERGAN, and the fecundity of mimetic theory for new paradigms in science. These sessions will also enable new breakthroughs – not least geographical, as we explore the reception of mimetic theory in the countries of 'the South', and in central and eastern Europe twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Participants who have a special interest or expertise in these workshop themes are invited to think how they might contribute, however informally.

The philosophical resonances of GIRARD's mimetic theory will be the theme of presentations from Rev Canon Dr Giles FRASER and Dr Marcus POUND. Giles FRASER is a former lecturer in philosophy at the University of Oxford; he is currently Vicar of St Mary's Church, Putney (South London), a well-known media commentator on religion, and the author of *Christianity and Violence: Girard, Nietzsche, Anselm and Tutu*. Marcus POUND is Catholic Research Fellow, Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Durham. He has an interest in the thought of Slavoj ZIZEK, and is the author of *Theology, Psychoanalysis and Trauma*.

The final keynote speaker of the conference will be Professor Christopher ROWLAND, who is Professor of Biblical Studies at the University of Oxford, with extensive writings on the Book of Revelation, and radical traditions of Christianity. His presentation on William BLAKE (with response from Michael KIRWAN) will strike an appropriately English tone. Blake's phrase 'fearful symmetry' has bequeathed us the title of the Colloquium, and his haunting images will illustrate many of the themes under discussion.

As usual, there is a daunting variety of proposals for short papers, with over a hundred having been accepted, as well as a healthy number of applications for the Raymund Schwager Memorial Prize. Successful candidates will be notified within the next four weeks, and will be invited to present their papers to a plenary session on the evening of Friday July 10th. Prize-winning essays will be considered for publication in *Contagion*. As well as the usual COV&R business meeting, it will be noted that we have scheduled an extended forum on the 'Future of COV&R', as the last event of the Colloquium. It was felt at Riverside that there should be an opportunity for strategic thinking about COV&R, as our activities increase and diversify. It is hoped that as many participants as possible are able to stay and contribute to this important session.

We are lucky with the fine venue which is available to us. St. Mary's College is a historic university campus to the south-west of London, with good access to the city. At the heart of the campus is the 18th century villa built by Horace WALPOLE, with 19th century additions by Lady WALDEGRAVE. The College stands in some 35 acres of lawns near the River Thames, close to attractions such as Kew Gardens and Richmond Park. The opening reception and the colloquium banquet will take place in the beautiful Waldegrave Rooms, and the excursion on the Saturday 11th July will consist of a river trip on the Thames to Hampton Court. As an acknowledgement of René GIRARD's indebtedness to William SHAKESPEARE we hope to arrange one event in conjunction with the Globe Theatre, which is reasonably accessible via Waterloo station. The St Mary's campus is able to accommodate all participants, but information on local hotels and Bed & Breakfast can be found at: www.visitrichmond.co.uk/accommodation and www.popesgrotto.co.uk. The possibilities for tourism and leisure (especially for those whom the exchange rate favours!) are, of course, considerable. We are reasonably hopeful of good weather in July, though nothing

to compare with the wonderful climate and ambience of Riverside 2008!

Just before the Colloquium, St Mary's will be hosting an important conference on Christian spirituality: 'Sources of Transformation', with Professor Bernard MCGINN and James ALISON as keynote speakers. This runs from 30th June to 3rd July. Full information about both conferences, including arrangements for bursaries, is available on the conference websites: COV&R: http://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/events; Heythrop College: http://www.heythrop.ac.uk/ St Mary's University College: http://www.smuc.ac.uk/ A full mailing to participants will be sent out within the next few weeks. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us about any aspect of the Colloquium, at coverconference2009@heythrop.ac.uk

Once again: welcome!

Dr Michael Kirwan
Dr Birute Briliute
Sheelah Treflé Hidden

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Soon, many of us will come together at our annual meeting in London. Eleven years after our meeting in Paris in 1998 we will again have a conference in one of the big European capitals. I am sure that it will become an exciting and fascinating meeting. Michael KIRWAN and his team invite us to a conference on the topic "Fearful Symmetries: Religion, Co-Existence and the Secular". One of the central issues will be to address the relationship between mimetic theory and inter-religious dialogue, especially its relationship with Islam. Focusing on these questions will partly continue the work that we have begun already a couple of years ago. In 2000 we addressed the issue of inter-religious dialogue at Boston College. "Violence and Institution in Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam" was the theme of that conference. In the Netherlands in 2007 ("Vulnerability and Tolerance") we discussed questions regarding the role of Islam in Europe. I think that it is very important to continue this work.

Our pluralistic and multicultural world of today is an important challenge for the development of mimetic theory. We have to try to combine GIRARD's critique of relativism, his important unfolding of the truth of the Gospels, with a pluralistic perspective, following James ALISON's idea to find out if we will be able to understand the uniqueness of the Gospels in a non-exclusive way. Going in this direction necessitates a further development of mimetic theory not by giving up its claim about the truth of Christianity but by trying to reconcile pluralism and the truth of the Bible. Due to the fact that until today the great majority of scholars committed to mimetic theory belongs to the Judeo-Christian tradition the understanding of this particular tradition should be deepened and developed even further. It contributes to the central core of mimetic theory. Concerning other religious traditions we should follow the example of Mahatma GANDHI who recommended to look always first at the true insights of other religions that we recognize and understand from our own perspective, trying to follow the best scholars of these traditions to understand those aspects we do not comprehend and to prefer self-criticism to superficial criticism from the outside. Hopefully we will soon be able to encourage scholars from other traditions to engage with mimetic theory, so that it can be applied to a broader variety of religious traditions from the inside enriching by this mimetic theory itself. Our meeting in London seems to give us the great opportunity to start such a discussion with several Muslim scholars. I am especially looking forward to these exchanges and I am very confident that we will return home afterwards with many new insights and new perspectives.

Regarding future meetings we already decided that we will go to Notre Dame (USA) in July 2010. Maria Stella BARBERI and a very active group of people dedicated to mimetic theory at the University of Messina in Sicily (Italy) will make a proposal to the Board of COV&R in London to have our annual conference in 2011 in Messina. I am very happy about this proposal because for a very long time we were looking forward to having a meeting in Italy. It seems that we are now ready to do this. There is still an open slot regarding a meeting in North America in 2012. I encourage members to think about good places for a meeting in three years.

Wolfgang Palaver

MUSINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Given the liveliness of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion, I am always hard pressed to choose one thing or another upon which to comment. Certainly the MLA Lifetime Achievement Award, given to René GIRARD at the 2008 meeting of the Modern Language Association, deserves special mention. The 2008 COV&R Sessions (organized by Martha REINEKE) at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion mark another landmark, as COV&R gains in enhanced recognition by the AAR. The upcoming *Theology and Peace* conference in Chicago, May 26-28, 2009, at which James ALLISON, Tony BARTLETT, and Andrew MARR, O.S.B., will be speaking, shows the fruitfulness of the work done by COV&R members (notably Michael and Lorri HARDEN and Dorothy WHISTON) involved in *Preaching Peace*. Gil BAILIE's *Emmaeus Road Initiative* (a recent project of the *Cornerstone Forum)* is an outstanding example of Girardian, pastoral outreach, as in Paul NUECHTERLEIN's "Girardian Reflections on the Lectionary."

Since other articles within the Bulletin are devoted to these and other wonderful events, efforts, and initiatives (including the upcoming COV&R Conference in London), however, I choose to focus on a single topic with recent experiential force for me, a topic of pressing concern for the future of the Colloquium: namely, its efforts in the education of youth.

The case of Peter THIEL, co-founder with Robert HAMERTON-KELLY and René GIRARD of Imitatio, Inc. (2007), makes the point. THIEL, now a highly successful corporate businessman, was one of GIRARD's undergraduate students at Stanford University when he was first introduced to mimetic theory, a theory that has affected his thinking ever since. What is COV&R doing to introduce undergraduate and High School students to mimetic theory, as these young people seek to make sense of a political culture suffused with mimetic behaviors, and of a global economy now at a point of severe recession?

COV&R members Suzanne and Keith ROSS, founders of The Raven Foundation, are among those who have emphasized the need to analyze popular culture in mimetic terms, as a way of showing the significance of the theory for a broad range of people. Suzanne ROSS' book, *The Wicked Truth* (2007), insightfully examines Stephen SCHWARTZ's Broadway blockbuster musical *Wicked* (based on the novel by Gregory MAGUIRE, which rereads Frank BAUM's classic fiction, *The Wizard of Oz*). ROSS' study could easily be used in an undergraduate or High School classroom, alongside such works as John GARDINER's *Grendel* (1971, a rereading of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* from the point of view of the monster) and Stephen SONDHEIM's *Into the Woods* (like *Wicked,* a musical demythologizing of fairytales, and one of Sandor GOODHART's favorite productions). Through ROSS' *The Wicked Truth,* students could be led to do their own critical analyses of popular myths and their retellings. Nikolaus WANDINGER's work on the *Harry Potter* books and films provides yet another model for the pedagogical study of popular culture through the lens of mimetic theory.

This spring semester I am teaching a 2000-level Theology course at the University of Notre Dame entitled "From Bernard to Bernadette: The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception." At first sight, this Marian topic might not seem a likely occasion for introducing students to Girardian mimetic theory. Since the Immaculate Conception entails, however, the belief that Mary was preserved free from the stain of Original Sin, the first part of the course was devoted to the doctrine of Original Sin. Alongside primary texts by St. AUGUSTINE, St. ANSELM, Jean-Jacques ROUSSEAU, and Blaise PASCAL, we read Alan JACOBS' *Original Sin: A Cultural History* (2008) and Raymund SCHWAGER's *Banished from Eden: Original Sin and Evolutionary Theory in the Drama of Salvation* (2006). In the context of the latter (which does not, curiously, even mention the Immaculate Conception!), we read an essay by René GIRARD.

Since SCHWAGER's book puts mimetic theory into conversation with evolutionary theory, and since 2009 marks a major centennial anniversary for Charles DARWIN, I allowed students "extra credit" points for viewing, analyzing, and discussing the classic 1960 film, *Inherit the Wind,* which was showing on campus and alludes explicitly (albeit inaccurately) to the doctrine of Original Sin. That film, directed by Stanley KRAMER, fictionalizes the famous 1925 "Monkey Trial," which took place over a twelve-day period in Dayton, Tennessee. A test case for the 1925 Butler Act, which outlawed the teaching of evo-

lution in Tennessee schools, the historic trial set the state of Tennessee against John Thomas SCOPES, who had introduced DARWIN's work into the classroom. It involved two famous lawyers, Clarence DARROW and William Jennings BRYAN, and made the sleepy Southern town the center of national attention. In the film, DARROW and BRYAN are recreated as Henry Drummond (played by Spencer TRACY) and Matthew Harrison Brady (played by Fredric MARCH), respectively.

To my happy amazement, the students immediately and skillfully recognized the relevance of mimetic theory to the interpretation of *Inherit the Wind.* In the small town they saw a community whose very way of life and traditional understanding of things were threatened. Marching lockstep to the tune "Gimme that ol' time religion," the townspeople had all turned against the young schoolteacher, Bertram Cates, who had been jailed and whose effigy was burnt one night, amidst threats of lynching. By the end of the film, however, as public sentiment quickly shifts, the lawyer for the prosecution has been substituted as the victim and collapses, presumably dead, on the floor of the courtroom. The students easily identified the all-against-one mechanism and traced the chain of sacrificial substitutions. The brightest among them worried that the film had actually scapegoated the townspeople in the process, since its depiction of them as scapegoaters rendered it virtually impossible to empathize with them. In this way, the students recognized in themselves the propensity to cast blame one-sidedly, instead of owning it oneself.

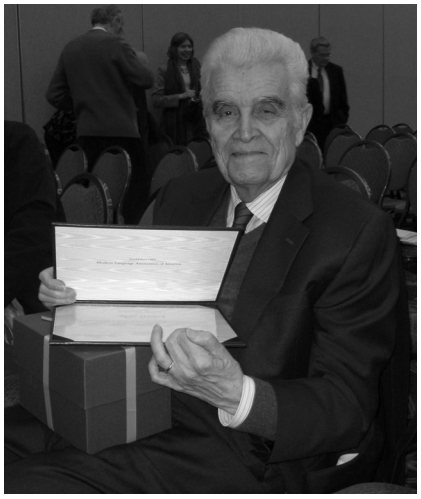
If, as GIRARD likes to remind us, the success of mimetic theory is measured by our recognition of the scapegoater not in the other but in ourselves, then this teaching was successful in ways I had not expected. I share this recent classroom experience in the hope that it will encourage COV&R members to share similar experiences and to seize opportunities, as they arise, to introduce the younger generation to mimetic theory. The question: "Need there be scapegoats?" remains ever alive, the more so as the world-wide economic crisis escalates and human life, especially in its most vulnerable forms, stands increasingly at risk.

Ann W. Astell

REPORTS ON CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

MLA Lifetime Achievement Award for René Girard

On December 28, 2008, at an evening ceremony during the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association (MLA) in San Francisco, René GIRARD received the award for Lifetime Scholarly Achievement, only the fifth such award in the organization's history. Founded in 1883 and with over 30,000 members, the MLA is one of the oldest and largest scholarly organizations in the world. Its principal mission is to promote the study of language and literature in the United States and to provide a forum for intellectual exchange for scholars from around the world.



René Girard accepting his award (photo by Sabine Doran)

This is GIRARD's second MLA award. He won the William Riley Parker Prize in 1965 for his essay "Camus's Stranger Retried" (first published in *PMLA*, the association's journal, and later collected in *To Double Business Bound*).

Among all of the distinctions GIRARD has received in the past few years—the election to the Academy Française in 2005 being the most notable—this honor may have been the least expected. Though GIRARD is a lifelong member of the MLA and has often attended and presented at its meetings, he has had a somewhat strained relationship with the American literary academy, particularly during its poststructuralist phase. However, this award has merely confirmed what many have long believed: that, in addition to his renowned work on religion and violence, GIRARD is also one of the most important literary critics of the twentieth-century.

Present at the award ceremony were GIRARD's daughter Mary, as well several COV&R members, including Sandor GOODHART, Bob HAMERTON-KELLY, Bill and Rosemary JOHNSEN, Sabine

DORAN, and Tom COUSINEAU. The award was presented by outgoing MLA President Gerald GRAFF, who began by observing that "as a literary critic, historian, and philosopher of social science, throughout his distinguished career René Girard has embodied the very best of scholarship in the humanities." GRAFF offered some personal reflections, including the following remark, which provoked chuckles from the audience: "I myself particularly admire Girard's influential analysis of triangular desire, which helps to illuminate everything from classic novels such as *The Red and the Black*, to our own academic prestige and hiring system…" GIRARD then delivered a short acceptance speech, which began: "I have been searching long and hard for something original to say, but I just had to confess that no originality was possible. This is not that bad, because we like traditions, and in the modern academic world we have very few." GIRARD then proceeded to reflect on the difficult situation facing literary studies in the United States, but ended on an optimistic note.

The following day GIRARD was a respondent on a panel organized by Bill JOHNSEN, "René Girard and the Consequences of Literary Study," which rounded out a very memorable MLA convention.

Robert Doran

Girard Panel at MLA 2008

The morning after the tribute paid to René GIRARD at the MLA 2008 Convention, William JOHNSEN chaired a standing-room-only panel, for which GIRARD himself served as respondent, that explored the contribution of mimetic theory to literary studies. Yves CHAMPINOT, whose paper was read by JOHNSEN in his absence, contended that the impressive range of the later research that evolved from the mimetic theory, while surely admirable, has blinded GIRARD to alternative perspectives. After offering a critique of GIRARD's religiously oriented vision of the modern world as one in which human beings, deprived of transcendent external mediators, find themselves trapped by necessarily rivalistic relationships with their neighbors, CHAMPINOT moved to an analysis of STENDHAL's *Le Rouge et le noir* and *La Chartreuse de Parme* in which, *contra* GIRARD, he argued that these novels prove that liberation from mimetic desire is possible even in the absence of an external mediator. It is, rather, thanks to what he called "the strength of their aspirations," that both Julien Sorel and Fabrice del Dongo are able to escape from enslavement to their mimetic impulses. What each of them requires is, not an external mediator – lest of all the one supplied by religious belief – but a "sister soul" that will allow them to live their love-passion to the fullest possible intensity.

Robert DORAN placed GIRARD's method in the context of the conflict between the formalist approach to literary studies espoused by the new critics and the poststructuralists and approaches that emphasize what a particular work may have to say about the human condition. As DORAN acknowledged, GIRARD has often been reproached for his concentration on the content of a work and his apparent indifference to its formal properties. In responding to this objection, DORAN pointed in passing to the surprising number of times that the word "aesthetic" appears in the volume of GIRARD's literary essays that he recently edited. He also reminded his audience that GIRARD's method – although GIRARD himself has applied it to several extra-literary disciplines – began, and remains in essential ways, a form of literary analysis. He further suggested – citing Jonathan CULLER, among others – that the pendulum within literary studies may be now swinging in a direction more welcoming of the Girardian approach. He concluded his presentation by affirming that "Though it is possible to read Girard's literary criticism *for the theory*, for its mimetic insights alone, one can also read him *for the literature*, for entry into the world of the work."

Beginning with the observation that GIRARD's method is fundamentally "comparatist," William JOHNSEN proposed to explore the question of what his method could say to the discipline of comparative literature itself. After remarking the central role of comparison in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (in which human beings are diagnosed as comparing their own emptiness to the plenitude of others) and also noting the nuanced readings of classic novels that GIRARD achieves by comparing them with each other, JOHNSEN then argued that GIRARD's later discovery of "sacred violence" offered, in its turn, a perspective from which we can make comparative analyses of different human cultures. Alluding both to CLAUSEWITZ, whose theory of perpetual war GIRARD discusses in his recently published *Achever Clause-*

witz, and to Eric AUERBACH's concept of *weltliteratur*, JOHNSEN concluded with the intriguing, as well as unsettling, idea that "there is an endless list of texts that propose themselves as *weltliteratur* which touch on the frightening prospect of endlessly spreading conflict." Following the presentation of these papers, GIRARD, perhaps with CHAMPINOT's paper in mind, elaborated on his classic reading of STENDHAL, stressing in particular, the distinction between vanity and passion, and the importance of our not confusing a novel with a set of ideas. In response to questions from the audience, he admitted that he – much more a reader of the Comtesse de SÉGUR – had read very little of Georg LUKACS and that he had never understood a word of Jacques LACAN.

Thomas Cousineau, Washington College

COV&R Meeting at the AAR in Chicago, November 1, 2008

The COV&R session at the AAR in 2008 was the last one that did not appear on the official program of the AAR – and that was only due to the fact that COV&R's official status at the AAR was confirmed too late for the program book. Still, the news about our session had found its way to interested persons because it also was the first time that I attended a COV&R/AAR session and there were not enough chairs in the room, so that many in the audience humbly took seats on the floor. In other words, the – admittedly modestly sized – room was packed.

In the first part of the session Kathryn MCCLYMOND introduced the audience to the results or her study *Beyond Sacred Violence: A Comparative Study of Sacrifice*. Her talk centered on the way that sacrificial traditions themselves view and interpret their sacrificial practice. Here she found that killing or destroying the victim does not stand at the center of their theology of sacrifice but rather the nurturing of the gods or rendering them a gift. Moreover, sacrifice is not a single, unified act but a cluster of activities. MCCLYMOND illustrated that by giving closer accounts of the Vedic and Jewish traditions.

Her respondent Thomas WILSON acknowledged that MCCLYMOND's work does not fit into GIRARD's setting because she was looking for the original practitioners' theories while GIRARD provided a modern analysis of that practice. Depending on that view-point, the victim and her/his/its killing is not central at all – or it is the crucial center for understanding sacrifice and seeing violence at its core.

The ensuing discussion served to clarify some questions about details of certain sacrificial practices but then centered on the question about the two perspectives: the modern outside perspective that claims to explain what the sacrificers *really* did, and their own self-understanding, which the modern Girardian analyst classifies as mythological. It is certainly not surprising that the two views do not come to an agreement. I personally felt that the search for criteria for when to accept the self-understanding of a tradition and when to override that self-understanding with exterior insights has not come to a successful end.

In the second part of the session Mark HEIM offered additional thoughts on his *Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross*. He explained that it was meant as a contribution to the question as to how the cross can and should be understood, when it is clear that it should not be understood as atonement in the traditional sense. Only GIRARD had avoided using sacrificial language with respect to Christ's death but then differentiated his stance because of the dialogue with Raymund SCHWAGER and distinguished different types of sacrifice. HEIM argued that there were three sides to the cross: a mythological-sacrificial one that has to be deconstructed; one that sees God's saving purpose subversively operating through the cross; and finally what follows from that: the empty cross. He wanted to emphasize this third point and to look for the positive kind of mimesis that comes forth from it.

The respondent, Józef NIEWIADOMSKI, reflected that SCHWAGER had looked at both of the two latter sides of the cross in his theology, realizing that even positive mimesis was not safe from deteriorating into mimetic rivalry. NIEWIADOMSKI argued that all of HEIM's points could fit into the larger framework of SCHWAGER's theology of the cross, while there is one point in SCHWAGER's approach that could not be placed into HEIM's structure, namely the idea that there still is need for a self-sacrifice of love, as Christ's doing on the cross must be understood. This need, however, does not arise from any divine vindictiveness or tendency to violence but from human inability to live positive mimesis, as it should be lived.

In the discussion Mark HEIM agreed that SCHWAGER's framework provided a larger struc-

ture than did his book because there he especially wanted to address believers' problems with the cross.

The COV&R session was followed by a lunch in a nearby Russian restaurant, during which all participants were invited by Martha REINEKE to share their ideas on how COV&R should conduct its meetings at the AAR. The result of that discussion manifests itself already in this year's upcoming program (see page 2). I'd like to say here that while I am very happy with COV&R's new status at the AAR, I think the separation of the AAR from the SBL is a grave disadvantage. The overall range of high-quality sessions shrank quite a bit because of the split, and it can only be hoped that this regrettable decision will be reversed.

Finally, the biggest event of the conference happened a day after the conference: the election of a new U.S. president, and we happened to be in the city where the winner gave his acceptance speech. So, two European visitors (Józef and me) greatly enjoyed a city of Chicago, which definitely was in a positive state of emergency, and newly elected President OBAMA giving his acceptance speech in Grant Park.

Nikolaus Wandinger

BOOK REVIEWS

Chilton, Bruce: *Abraham's Curse: The Roots of Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. New York: Doubleday, 2008. (259 pp.) ISBN: 978-0-385-52027-0, $27.95

Kearns, Cleo McNelly: *The Virgin Mary, Monotheism, and Sacrifice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. (356 pp.) ISBN: 978-0-521-87156-3, $85.00.

CHILTON and KEARNS have written books about the legacy of the Aqedah (Genesis 22) in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. CHILTON focuses his attention on martyrdom, which he argues is a highly problematic legacy of the Aqedah with critical implications for our time. KEARNS explores how Mary emerges from the shadow of Sarah to play a key role in the reception of the Aqedah in Christianity and Islam across the centuries. Distinctive to both scholars' approaches is their understanding that the Abrahamic faiths did not emerge in three, hermetically sealed environments: when we explore the Aqedah we need to do so within a context inclusive of Judaism, Christianity, *and* Islam. Although scholars have in recent decades examined with increasing frequency how our understanding of early Christianity and rabbinic Judaism is enhanced when we reflect on their interactions and shared environments, Islam is less commonly included in this reflective nexus. Further, Christian scholars who find it crucial to contextualize the legacy of the Aqedah in the New Testament with reference to its *antecedent* appearance in the Hebrew Bible often don't feel similarly compelled to explore the Aqedah's *subsequent* appearance in the Qur'an. But CHILTON and KEARNS perceive that receptions of the text in Islam do contribute to their analyses of the Aqedah in Judaism and Christianity. That they construct their arguments about sacrifice within an historical and theological space inclusive of all three faiths enhances their contributions to scholarship on the Aqedah and to research on GIRARD and mimetic theory.

Abraham's Curse: In this book, CHILTON takes his readers to Mt. Moriah, there to reflect with him on a compelling and disturbing biblical story that has resonated across the centuries for Jews, Christians and Muslims. What happened on that mountain? Did God command Abraham to sacrifice his son? Was Abraham's hand stopped or did he kill his son? Searching for answers, CHILTON looks at the legacy of the Aqedah (Genesis 22) in the Abrahamic faiths. According to CHILTON, what he calls "Abraham's curse" has followed Judaism, Christianity, and Islam across time because, in their efforts to account for and warrant human violence, these faiths have interpreted the Aqedah in ways that justify the killing of innocents. Whether or not Abraham stopped his hand, his heirs have not stopped theirs. A "blood harvest" is the primary legacy of the Aqedah. From the first pages of the book to its concluding sentences, CHILTON argues passionately that questions emerging from the Aqedah demand answers now more than ever. The compulsion to take innocent life attested to by this story takes us not only to "the foundations of human culture and of how people understand the divine," but also to today's headlines. For CHILTON, "the Christian soldier, the Israeli conscript, and the Muslim jihadist are poised for conflict and prepared for death, by an ethos that is thousands of years old." CHILTON asks that we come to terms with that which is "embedded in the cultural DNA of the West" and that we do so now, before more innocent persons die. He pleas for us to "descend from Moriah with our children," free ourselves of the curse of violence, and "at last inherit the promise that has been articulated in countless covenants and visions and dreams" of the Abrahamic faiths (6, 223-224).

CHILTON turns to GIRARD in search of a theory that will secure and illuminate his argument. He enumerates key elements of GIRARD's theory: desire for what the other has is endemic to human life; every community is brought to the brink of destruction by this drive; envy is compensated for and neutralized by the scapegoat. However, CHILTON also narrows the scope of envy to "greed," bypassing the foundational question of the lack of being that drives desire (35). CHILTON also understands GIRARD to claim that, at the conclusion of the sacrificial crisis, communities

remember their victims "as dying *voluntarily* for the common good" (36, italics CHILTON's). CHILTON wants scapegoats to be willing victims because he is intent on explaining the origins of martyrdom in the Abrahamic faiths as a primary legacy of the Aqedah.

But in using GIRARD's theory of the scapegoat to account for how the sacrifice of Isaac becomes a model for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim martyrs in later centuries, CHILTON's reading of GIRARD is problematic. GIRARD does write that, at the end of the sacrificial crisis, the community understands *retrospectively* that it has been completely passive before a scapegoat who alone has been responsible for the cure for violence as he/she has been for its cause. But when GIRARD states that "all initiative comes from him" (43, *The Scapegoat,* "toute initiative lui revient," 65, *Le Bouc Émissaire*), he is not saying that victims of persecution volunteer to die. GIRARD takes pains to distinguish the persecutor's myth-encased violence from the victim's life-ending experience of violence. Further, if we think about GIRARD's paradigm of scapegoating—Jews killed for causing the Black Death as reported by Guillaume de Machaut—neither the persecutors nor the victims would have described the Jews as "martyrs" who voluntarily gave up their lives in order to stop the Black Death from claiming their neighbors' lives. CHILTON confuses the perspectives of persecutors and victims, sometimes describing martyrs, especially children, as caught in the mythic, persecutory schemes of others and sometimes describing martyrs as initiating their own deaths when they believe that a greater good will be attained for themselves and for others through their sacrifice. As a consequence of his uneven application of GIRARD's theory to his constructive argument (discussed below), CHILTON falls short of realizing the full potential of GIRARD to contribute to his analysis. Problematic also are CHILTON's standard-issue criticisms of GIRARD's theory: GIRARD's theory does not correspond to any documented examples of ritual sacrifice; GIRARD believes that Christianity is the only religion that can cure violence; GIRARD ignores the scapegoating of Jews by Christians (e.g., Matt. 27:25); and GIRARD reduces sacrifice to aggression, bypassing communal festivities associated with it (35-37). But GIRARD addresses these concerns in his larger corpus, (although I will not discuss that here). Thus, in multiple respects, CHILTON's comments suggest an inattention to "the letter" of that corpus.

Notwithstanding shortcomings in CHILTON's reading of GIRARD, most striking in his appeal to GIRARD is how strongly CHILTON is motivated by "the spirit" of mimetic theory. Indeed, for CHILTON, mimetic theory provides *the key* to unlocking the legacy of the Aqedah. The scriptures record that, as Abraham laid the knife against his son's throat, his son looked up and saw angels (3). In doing so, these stories follow the Septuagint's translation of the Hebrew *ra'ah* ("was seen" or "made himself seen"). In the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh, not the ram, is the subject of Abraham's gaze (199). Abraham, looking into his son's eyes, sees reflected in them the face of God (200). Breaking through the traditions of child sacrifice in ancient times, which had kings raise their sons over the walls of their cities and offer them to their god(s) in order that their gift might stop invading armies, the Aqedah tells us that when Abraham raised his own knife, he saw in Isaac's eyes a presence that sundered the mimeticized practices of ancient war. God, reflected in the eyes of the victim, now shows all who hear or read the Aqedah that God does not want any more victims. Writes CHILTON, "If you want to know what God wants, it is reflected more directly in Isaac's eyes than in Abraham's, in the perspective of the victim rather than the slayer" (205). Like Abraham, when we too look into Isaac's eyes, we can see God in another's face and turn away from violence.

Never completely hidden, the anti-sacrificial intent of the Aqedah persists as a thread in its interpretive fabric within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. CHILTON's goal in *Abraham's Curse* is to inspire the reader to join him in gently pulling that thread from the interpretative traditions, braiding it as we go, until at last we have a rope to use in our climb down from Moriah. In doing so, CHILTON augments GIRARD's analysis of the anti-sacrificial message of the scriptures in helpful ways while also cataloging how martyrdom has remained captive to what GIRARD would typify as myth, recapitulating traditions of sacrifice. In all three Abrahamic faiths, what happened on Mt. Moriah has been used to justify the violence involved in taking life and as well as to promise salvific benefits to those who do so.

CHILTON first documents the loss of the anti-sacrificial message of the Aqedah in its appropriation by the Maccabees and later Jewish martyrs. The Macccabean interpreters of Genesis 22 find in it a call to martyrdom. Facing threats to Jewish existence, the Maccabees uphold as a key example of righteousness Abraham's offering of Isaac. When Jews sacrifice themselves, and, especially their children, they will save Israel. During the Roman period, Isaac's willingness to be killed and his perfect obedience to his father are increasingly emphasized. Rushing to be offered, Isaac represents, according to CHILTON, a pattern of suicide-martyrdom that the Maccabees come to favor over armed resistance because they believe it will bring victory if broadly emulated (59). In 4 Maccabees 16:20, Abraham wields a sword rather than a knife, creating a powerful evocation of execution under the Romans (62). The offering of sons, as Isaac was offered, will save a persecuted Israel. In the Talmud, rabbis secure Isaac's status as a replacement for the temple sacrifice: he ages to thirty-seven, asks to

be bound fast in order to be acceptable as an unblemished sacrifice, is reduced to ashes after his death (the Babylonian Talmud), and is rewarded with resurrection (64-68).

In writing about Christianity, CHILTON faces an interpretive challenge: How is the self-giving of Jesus to be distinguished from traditions of sacrificial martyrdom that glorify violence? On the one hand, CHILTON asserts that Jesus did make a willingness to "take up a cross" a condition of discipleship. Such a demonstration is necessary for entering a life oriented toward God and neighbor. Service to others defines that self-giving: "for even the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life: redemption for many" (Mark 10:45) (77-79). On the other hand, CHILTON argues that Jesus' message has been misinterpreted as a call to sacrificial martyrdom, especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews. (Here CHILTON's discussion could have been enriched by reference to the GIRARD/SCHWAGER discussion of Hebrews, which would have supported distinctions that are important to CHILTON's argument). In Hebrews, the Aqedah foreshadows God's desire to immolate his own child in a single and definitive sacrifice: God only takes pleasure in the perfect offering of his son, who completes what the Aqedah did not. When believers become martyrs, they open themselves to the sacrifice of Christ who can effect the removal of sin.

According to CHILTON, the Crusades become the fullest expression within the Christian tradition of the Aqedah as a call to sacrifice. The blood of martyrs *and* their foes is salvific: both the pure sacrifice of the innocent and the cleansing of the guilty meet with divine approval (139). Hence, crusaders who give their lives in battle have their sins forgiven and experience joy for eternity and the blood of Jews and Muslims who die at the crusaders' hand fulfill the Father's pleasure (132). In both instances, blood is salvific.

Finally, CHILTON observes the newest iteration of the Aqedah in Islam. He argues that, because the interpretive tradition of Islam provides us with one of the clearest anti-sacrificial readings of the Aqedah, Islam can contribute strong anti-sacrificial strands to the rope he wants us to construct to support our journey down from Moriah and away from persecutory myths of Aqedah that hide its anti-sacrificial intent. The Aqedah of Islam (*Al Saffat* 37:84-111) is set within the context of Ibrahim defending Allah against other gods. In the midst of this discussion, Ibrahim says to his son, "I see in vision that I sacrifice you. Look, what do you see?" The son responds that his father should do what he is commanded, if his vision is from Allah. However, as they submit their wills to Allah, Ibrahim hears, "You have already fulfilled the vision!" The trial ends without the sacrifice of the son (148-49). In this story, the identity of the son is not the focus; he remains unnamed because the focal point in the story is Ibrahim's obedience to Allah (though later interpretations in Islam, developed in contact and *competition* with Judaism [italics mine] will assert that the son is Isma'il, 167). Ibrahim is shown as one who is attentive to God and remains open through prayer and vision to Allah. In the aftermath of his vision, once Ibrahim has demonstrated his willingness to obey, the sacrifice is revealed as unwanted by Allah. In fact, the Muslim interpretive tradition states, "this was an obvious trial;" Allah was never the source of the command to sacrifice; its impetus came from Ibrahim. All Allah wanted was a redemptive animal sacrifice (161-163).

Admittedly, in Islam as in the other Abrahamic faiths, this anti-sacrificial message has not always been heard. CHILTON notes that Islam is not a pacifist religion: military confrontation may be required in defense of faith. But the parameters of what counts as defense are set in *Al Baqarah* (2:256): those who would prevent worship of Allah must be stopped from doing so (216). CHILTON traces the trajectory from Jihad for *defense* to Jihad for *martyrdom* through Al-Shaybani's "doctrine of four swords" (which authorized violence against dissenters from Islam) to Saladin who, in the midst of a campaign to liberate Jerusalem and distraught over his son's death, makes a vow to free the earth of anyone who does not believe in God or to die in the attempt (183-85). Traditions in Islam associated with the martyrdom of Husayn also attest to his blood which has salvific powers: his death and that of his infant son "complete the sacrifice that remains visionary in the case of Ibrahim and his son" (192).

In the concluding chapter of *Abraham's Curse*, CHILTON asserts that sacrificial violence is not inevitable to the Abrahamic faiths. Because each tradition possesses scriptural resources to recall what happened on Moriah—Abraham was blessed to see the face of God in the eyes of his son—all can descend the mountain. In Judaism, Leviticus Rabbah preserves the blessing of the Aqedah. Abraham and Isaac come down from Moriah with different stories: While Abraham wonders if his sacrifice has been disqualified because a blemish has made Isaac unacceptable to God, Isaac runs to tell Sarah what has happened. Shocked and incredulous after being told by Isaac about his father's plan, Sarah calls out, "'Had it not been for the angel you would have been slain?'" Uttering six cries (corresponding to the six blasts of the shofar) Sarah dies, but her grief over Abraham's blindness to God becomes a gift to those who hear Isaac's story and know that God does not want human sacrifice (204-205).

The blessing of the Aqedah is retrievable also in Christianity. Mark, emphasizing the importance of Jesus' fear and doubt at Gethsemane, shows that Jesus is not a model of obedient martyrdom. CHILTON per-

ceives that Mark exposes the power of martyrdom as a mimetic fascination which, across the centuries, has led many to respond compulsively, almost automatically, to its call. But Jesus' self-offering sunders the mirror-work of martyrdom. Jesus searches, expressing doubt and fear, struggling for insight into the situation and then directs his prayer in complete openness to *Abba* (father and source in Aramaic). Martyrdom undertaken on other grounds becomes mere "play acting." CHILTON notes in some second century texts a vociferous injunction against enthusiasm for martyrdom because the Fathers see in it signs of idolatry. That the Fathers issue a warning about the potential for a mimeticized distortion of self-giving is important for us to heed, concludes CHILTON (209-210).

Although CHILTON does not cite GIRARD, his understanding of the distinction of Jesus' self-giving (what GIRARD calls self-sacrifice) from the martyrdom CHILTON criticizes both echoes and challenges GIRARD's own insights. GIRARD does recognize that, when early Christians experienced persecution, they were scapegoats; however, like CHILTON, GIRARD perceives also that "self-sacrifice can serve to camouflage the forms of slavery brought into being by mimetic desire." The desire to "sacralize *oneself* and make *oneself* godlike" (italics GIRARD's) in acts of martyrdom are linked to a sacrificial economy, not the anti-sacrificial economy of the Gospels (236, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*). But in a 2001 *Le Monde* interview, GIRARD parses variants of martyrdom differently. He asserts that "in Christianity the martyr does not die in order to be copied" whereas in Islam "you die as a martyr in order to be copied and thus manifest a project of transforming the world politically" (interview is on the COV&R website).

By contrast, CHILTON specifies that martyrdom is a mimeticized distortion of anti-sacrificial messages found in Christianity *and* Islam. Indeed, the blessing of the Aqedah is visible in the Feast of Sacrifice in Islam. Admittedly, alone of the Abrahamic faiths, Islam does continue to offer animals in sacrifice to God. However, according to CHILTON, the ambiguity that haunts the interpretive traditions of the Aqedah in Judaism and Christianity—did Abraham actually kill his son on Moriah—is missing from the scriptures of Islam. The Feast of Sacrifice commemorates Allah's clear message to Ibrahim in *Al Saffat*: The vision *you* had was a trial. *I* do not want human sacrifice. In fact, I will intervene now with an "immense sacrifice" of an animal (37:107) in order to show you that only animals will ever be sacrificed again. In *Al Hajj* (22:37) and *Al Kawthar* (108:2) Allah speaks again, saying that in that offering the animals' flesh and blood do not reach Allah but devotion does (218). Thus, countering a potential Girardian reading of the Feast that would see in the persistence of animal sacrifice in Islam a problematic preservation of a sacrificial mentality, the scriptures of Islam articulate through a communal practice of animal sacrifice an anti-sacrificial intent that aligns this ritual with those communal Eucharistic practices that preserve an anti-sacrificial message within Christianity.

The Virgin Mary, Monotheism, and Sacrifice: KEARN's book, unlike CHILTON's, is grounded in multiple theories of sacrifice: HUBERT and MAUSS, BURKERT, DOUGLAS, FREUD, GIRARD, and LACAN. Interestingly, KEARNS cites CHILTON in her criticism of GIRARD, repeating his reservations about GIRARD's work (already noted above). Because KEARNS' most regular theoretical interlocutor is Nancy JAY (*Throughout Your Generations Forever*), GIRARD's theory does not echo through the pages of her work as directly as it does through CHILTON's. However, because KEARNS is interested in tracing a multivalent legacy of the Aqedah that both challenges and supports ongoing traditions of sacrifice, her work offers provocative insights that will be of strong interest to GIRARD scholars. KEARNS' focus on Mary brings into view a figure whose crucial role in sacrificial and anti-sacrificial trajectories within Christianity and Islam has, for the most part, been elided in scholarship on/by GIRARD.

KEARNS suggests that sacrifice develops as a strategy for addressing a particular problem with monotheism. The God of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is distinctive for God's proximity to humans, living among them, talking to them, intervening in their affairs, and sharing their emotions. But such closeness of the divine to the human poses dangers: humans and God participate in a force field of multivalent powers, including the powers of generativity and death, which poses risks to humans not found in religions with firmer boundaries between divine and human spaces (8-9). Most significantly, because this is a creator God, boundaries between human and divine creativity that would maintain clear lines of lineage become confused, resulting in what the Girardian reader recognizes as a mimetic conflict between human and divine desires. Writes KEARNS: "The resulting sense of anxiety and rivalry are intense" (71).

The scriptures of the Abrahamic faiths are filled with stories of those who have not successfully negotiated the force field on which divine and human relations are deployed, taking for themselves powers that belong to God, presuming more intimacy with God than is appropriate, etc. Sanctions from banishment to death resound in these traditions. KEARNS argues that sacrifice is the most potent strategy humans employ for more successfully negotiating what is all too often a mine field. Moreover, a son—often a first-born—is the sacrificial mediator of choice, in part because he is "the most vital connection a parent can have with the powers of earth and heaven" (13). Joined in the son are two key forces—the cultural capital of his father

and the sacred fertility of his mother. Through the son and relationships of identity, inheritance, and kinship, the force field on which human and divine life are deployed can be ordered and maintained. Further, in the face of great crisis, the offering up of the son can be an occasion for the successful reconstitution of that field. Understood in light of this anthropological theory, the Aqedah, as interpreted by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, describes three distinct reconstitutions of that field, centered on the son of Abraham and, in Christianity, on Jesus as well, successor to that son.

KEARNS, following JAY, understands that the Aqedah of the Hebrew Bible works to rectify confusions in divine and human relations by reconstituting Abraham's relationship with his son on the field of human and divine relations. God and Abraham "give Isaac a new birth," securing God as the sponsor of Abraham's lineage and controller of the forces of life and death (74-76). In discussing the Aqedah in Islam, KEARNS' views complement CHILTON's. Of the three faiths, Islam has established the clearest boundaries between God and humanity: God is not a father and is not interested in problems of male lineage. As a consequence, Islam does not take the son as its focus in replicating the story of the Aqedah, nor is the name of the son important. The story is retold as a story about Abraham finding his way through mine fields of human willfulness (which his vision implies) to submission to Allah (82). Only when lines of succession in Islam become an issue (leading to the Sunni/Shia split) does the telling of the Aqedah in the Muslim world diverge from the anti-sacrificial text of the Qur'an. Ibrahim is told by God to sacrifice Ishmael (a son who plays a role in a contested male lineage) in order to be nearer to God; a ram appears as the knife is placed to Ishmael's throat; and Ibrahim sacrifices the ram. Ibrahim then founds Mecca, confirming that, on the field of sacrifice, divine/human relationships and the true lineage of faith have been resecured (83). Whereas CHILTON sees preserved in the Feast of Sacrifice the original anti-sacrificial intent of the Aqedah, KEARNS, citing HAMMOUDI, suggests that in practice (as ethnographically documented by HAMMOUDI) *tfaska* may also fall into a sacrificial rather than anti-sacrificial orbit. When that happens, the animal sacrifice of *tfaska* no longer is understood to explicitly confirm Allah's "no" to human sacrifice (46-51).

KEARNS observes that if we are to understand the reception of the Aqedah in Christianity, we need to attend to the role of mothers in the anthropological world of male lineage described above. Anthropologists, KEARNS tells us, understand that mothers are marginal to what transpires between fathers, sons, and God because the key to establishing and maintaining human and divine order is masculine lineage (14). Even so, KEARNS argues (citing SHERWOOD) that when mothers do appear in these stories, they tend to be "'major sites of ethical opposition' to the sacrifice of the son" (15). However, theirs is an ambivalent opposition enabling them to both support and contest sacrificial traditions. For example, KEARNS cites several stories of Sarah, including the story from Leviticus Rabbah referenced by CHILTON, to demonstrate Sarah's witness against sacrifice; however, KEARNS also cites a story that is almost identical to the Leviticus Rabbah story *except* that the Isaac who challenges his father's misguided faith is actually Satan. Similarly, in Christianity, Mary is first summoned by the tradition to bolster the force field of its economy of salvation—her genealogy, history of conception, and mute testimony at the foot of the cross all support a son's efforts to reconcile through sacrifice human and divine spaces and to establish Jesus' lineage as the favored son of God and the bearer of the spiritual legacy of Israel (89). Moreover, the agonistic efforts of early Christians to delineate their differences from Jews and a Jewish lineage that connects Jews to God through circumcision, temple, and priesthood show early Christians caught within the force field of sacrifice sketched by JAY. However, intimations of an alternative to sacrifice are found in all Marian traditions, because she is a witness to the "logic of sacrifice as a believer, rather than simply as a mother." Her dual standing is key to Mary's capacity to both *repair* the sacrificial economy, supporting its reemergence in Christianity, and to *critique* that economy (86). These dual roles are the focus of KEARNS' study.

KEARNS' argument is offered in three parts. In Part I, drawing on anthropology, she offers evidence for the argument about divine and human relations in monotheistic traditions sketched above. In Part II, she explores the Gospels, finding in them both Mary's confirmation of a sacrificial economy *and* another stance, more mobile and complex, that points to an alternative economy of salvation. Finally, in Part III, reading the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Protoevangelion of James, and the Suras about Mary in the Qur'an, KEARNS shows intimations in the figure of Mary of a different space for God. Through reflecting on different works in the literature of the Abrahamic faiths, KEARNS shows that "Mary is both the wound and the medicine of the monotheisms" (19).

KEARNS offers her readers a rich opportunity to explore ways in which Mary functions in the traditions of Christianity and Islam to carry forth the anti-sacrificial testimony of Sarah in rabbinic interpretations of the Aqedah. For students of GIRARD, KEARNS' study also offers us an opportunity to attend more expansively than in the past to GIRARD's comments on the virgin birth (*Things Hidden*, 220-223). GIRARD notes that the virgin birth of Jesus is among the themes in the Gospels that appear on first reading most mythical (i.e., rooted in a sacrificial universe).

But when gods couple with women, often raping them violently, they produce monstrosities. The gods thereby recreate on a microcosmic level a reciprocal violence that already has tainted the macrocosmic field of divine/human relations. The revelation of the virgin birth is not that god/human relations can work only when human sexual expression is removed from that field but that violent mimesis is absent from the reconciliatory work of Mary who with her body "gives birth to a new cultural order" (*Things Hidden*, 221). Thus, in a manner similar to KEARNS, GIRARD perceives that the Gospels use the "mythical code" to subvert that code and Mary becomes a centerpiece for that revelatory subversion. Even though KEARNS does not make GIRARD an interlocutor when she writes about Mary, her argument could be read by those attuned to GIRARD's mimetic theory as an extension of his trenchant insights on the virgin birth.

A summary of each sacred text explored by KEARNS is beyond the scope of this review; therefore, I offer two texts that exemplify her arguments: the birth narratives in Luke and the Qur'an. In Luke, we see one instance of how Mary's story is told in ways that frame it as a problem to be solved: how can members of a developing Christian community make claims on traditions of descent for Jesus, son of God and child of a human (and Jewish) mother? Anthropologically speaking, major transitions in lines of male lineage, deployed on the force field of divine and human agency, are always fraught with risk. If God establishes a new lineage in too close proximity to human life, God's own being may be compromised; if God establishes that lineage too far distant from current patterns of lineage, a risk arises that the new order will represent a false line of descent. This dilemma in the history of monotheism is most often avoided by telling only a story of sacrifice, for it is the death of the son that has historically resolved such issues. But, in their *birth* narratives, Luke and the Qur'an confront the dilemma at the front end: their stories emphasize that a new lineage/relationship with God has been initiated. This shared attention to the birth narrative of Jesus in Gospel narratives (of which Luke is our example) and in the Qur'an results in stories that can be understood to replicate a sacrificial economy (as they seemingly move toward a sacrificial conclusion) but also to "inaugurate a more generous and open discourse." Thus, traditions develop in both faiths that, instead of focusing on expiatory sacrifice, center on feasts of celebration and praise (93-94).

KEARNS argues that the birth narrative in Luke accomplishes this opening to an anti-sacrificial economy of salvation through several strategies that address questions of a new lineage for God and humans. First, Mary is introduced in Luke as a virgin, a trope that resonates with Greek and Jewish meanings. In the Greek tradition, virgins regularly exhibit a capacity to move between divine and human realms and to bear truth in so doing (e.g., the Delphic oracle, Athena, Antigone). In the Jewish tradition, virginity largely is understood as a privation of children that would sustain a family line. Mary's virginal conception, contained by neither myth nor natural order, exhibits a singularity that foreshadows everything that follows (141-43). Subsequently, Mary's story is told with Elizabeth's, John's story with Jesus'. These sons could become rivals, competing for rightful claim to a sacred lineage. That they do not is central to the anti-sacrificial message of this narrative. The transmission of blessing by Elizabeth and the child in her womb who leaps when it hears Mary's voice authorizes the most important Marian text: the Magnificat. Though the lineage of Abraham is summoned throughout Luke, it also is transformed, as an evocation of a maternal lineage ushers in a transformation of the field of divine/human encounter, making the last first and the first last (154-55). Moreover, paternal and maternal lines of descent are braided as the birth narrative unfolds in childhood: both Mary and Joseph present their child at the temple; both take him to Jerusalem for Passover (95). Finally, because the narrative of Luke sustains a place for Mary past the crucifixion, an end that would install the new order as the outcome of sacrifice is averted. Instead, when Mary joins the disciples (Acts 1:14) she shows that the new family in Christ will hinge not on the sacrifice of a son but rather on the transforming potential of a paternal and maternal heritage that both retains and transforms prior relations among humans and between the divine and the human (164-65).

In the Qur'an, the birth narrative of Jesus is presented also with John's. Zachariah prays for a son and heir and his prayer is answered with the conception of John. The virginal conception of Jesus that follows echoes an identical power: it was easy for God (109-110). Thus, there are no theological complications or constraints in the joining of human and divine powers. Further, when the circumstances of the birth are questioned, Jesus speaks from the cradle to affirm his own identity as prophet and his mother's identity as faithful (111). There is no sacrifice needed for the divine/human bond represented by Jesus' prophetic voice to be sustained (and in Islam the crucifixion is typically understood as an illusion); instead, the three figures—John, Mary, Jesus—exemplify the obedient hearts of the faithful that alone are required to effect right human relationships with God. Indeed, KEARNS suggests, citing Yusuf ALI, when the crucifixion is understood as sacrifice, it becomes a theological and anthropological issue of authentic lineage; if a sacrifice is accepted by God, contested questions of inheritance and potential loss of divine favor are resolved in favor of those who offered it. But the Qur'an obviates the question of lineage, making sacrifice unnecessary

and irrelevant. Instead all humans are servants of Allah "rather than quarreling siblings." Pronounces the Qur'an, "it is We who will inherit the earth and all who are on it: they will all be returned to Us" (Sura 19:40) (253).

Like CHILTON, KEARNS perceives in that, of the three faiths, Islam offers the clearest anti-sacrificial reading of the Aqedah. Moreover, she underscores the anti-sacrificial understanding within Islam of Jesus' prophetic role while noting that rivalries concerning lineage among leaders in Islam emerge simultaneously with the reinstitution of a sacrificial reading of the Aqedah and a sacrificial understanding of the death of Husayn. However, when in its practices Islam is able to hold fast to its anti-sacrificial traditions, Islam secures the borders of the force field on which the divine/human encounter transpires in three distinct ways: Islam prioritizes ethical purity, protects the integrity of its revelation, and accentuates the theme of apocalyptic judgment, in which God alone determines the legacy of each human life (112).

KEARNS and CHILTON have authored two powerful works. While their respective perspectives on the anti-sacrificial trajectories of each Abrahamic faith share much in common, KEARNS and CHILTON's distinct conclusions will give their readers pause. CHILTON is adamant that Jews, Christians and Muslims leave Mt. Moriah, never to visit it again (224). KEARNS, equally cognizant that our ability to do so is grounded in the anti-sacrificial messages of these three faiths, is more circumspect. When believers in the Abrahamic faiths read the Aqedah as a story of an averted sacrifice and move toward non-sacrificial alternatives for relationship with God—Torah study, interior contrition, surrender and obedience—KEARNS wonders if they become more or less capable of coming to terms with the human dilemma that sacrifice captures. The Aqedah confronts us face-to-face with *the* human quandary: we want life but because we are mortal all of us will die. In offering across the centuries incommensurable readings of the Aqedah, perhaps the Abrahamic faiths attest to a mortality that shadows our lives and our narratives, making them inherently unstable and contradictory(296-97). If that instability is our legacy, so also may Abraham's curse persist.

Martha Reineke

Cousineau, Thomas J. *Three-Part Inventions: The Novels of Thomas Bernhard*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008. (181 pp.) ISBN: 978-0874130188; $ 48.50.

It is nearly thirty years ago that I was a young student in German studies being introduced to the work of the Austrian writer Thomas BERNHARD. One of the first papers that I delivered at that time was on BERNHARD's book *Walking*. During the 1980s it became very fashionable among young critical students in Austria to read BERNHARD. I was among them and really enjoyed reading BERNHARD's harsh criticism of Austrian politics, Austrian society and especially also his bashing of the Catholic Church. BERNHARD's provocations and exaggerations caused a strong reaction in Austria's public. The writer and his work became a real scandal to many people in Austria. From a mimetic point of view it is clear that the more BERNHARD was criticized by the Austrian establishment the more people like me embraced his work. In an atmosphere of growing resentment, reading BERNHARD's novels was a very good way to nourish my own resentful relationship with Austrian society. After a couple of years – after BERNHARD's death in 1989 and after the scandals slowly faded away – I stopped reading BERNHARD. One of the main reasons for giving up reading BERNHARD was that I felt that it became spiritually destructive to live so much on resentment. Despite the fact, however, that I also started to study mimetic theory in the middle of the 1980s reading most of the novels that Girard discussed in his *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* I never recognized any connection between mimetic theory and the work of Thomas BERNHARD at that time.

Thomas COUSINEAU's book opened my eyes regarding my own way of reading BERNHARD in the eighties. COUSINEAU shows convincingly how strongly BERNHARD's work is governed by mimetic rivalry. BERNHARD belongs to our modern world of internal mediation with its strong tendencies towards rivalries, violence and scapegoating. One can see that immediately by focusing on BERNHARD's view of the relationship between the individual and human society. Throughout BERNHARD's work we can find many powerful examples of what KANT once called the "unsocial sociability" of human beings. We often desperately seek the companionship of others and try to escape soon afterwards their embracement by all means. Mimesis draws human beings together to force them often immediately into repelling antagonisms. BERNHARD powerfully describes such oscillations between intimacy and isolation. It seems to me today that during the time when I eagerly read BERNHARD I was caught so much in a mimetic entanglement with Austrian society that despite my growing knowledge of mimetic theory I did not recognize how much I myself was caught in such a mimetic trap.

COUSINEAU studies in his book six major novels by BERNHARD – *The Lime Works* (1970), *Correction* (1975), *The Loser* (1983), *Woodcutters* (1984), *Old Masters* (1985) and *Extinction* (1986) – and discovers two triangular patterns that characterize these novels. The first pattern consists of a protagonist, an obstacle, and a scapegoat. A good example to illustrate this triangle can be found in *The Loser*. Glenn Gould, Wertheimer and the narrator are competing with each other

to become the greatest piano virtuoso. Emulation is the driving force in this competition that ends in scapegoating. BERNHARD writes "Glenn is the victor, we are all the failures" and, later, that "only Glenn succeeded in doing what all three of us had planned". Wertheimer commits suicide after being defeated by Glenn Gould. A second triangle shows that Wertheimer's death is a substitute enabling the narrator to create his literary work. The second or "metafictional" triangle consists, according to COUSINEAU, of the narrator (closely related to the writer BERNHARD), an artistic precursor who serves as a model rather than an adversary and the readers of BERNHARD's work. Taking again *The Loser* as an example we realize that the narrator is not destroyed like Wertheimer because he makes the composer Bach his model which inspires him to his novel, a literary composition that does not compete with Bach's music: "Unlike Wertheimer, who was destroyed by a rivalrous relationship with Glenn Gould that he could not win and from which he could not extricate himself, the narrator's pursuit of his literary work helps him to overcome his earlier, and necessarily futile, ambition of becoming the world's greatest piano virtuoso. He avoids competition, not only with Glenn Gould, but also with Bach himself in the sense that he produces a work that, while modelled on the masterpieces of his predecessors, does not propose itself as a rival work that intends in any way to eclipse the sources of their inspiration." (p. 99) COUSINEAU gives a good summary of the interplay of the two triangles that characterizes BERNHARD's work as well as the work of his great modernist predecessors like PROUST, T. S. ELIOT or JOYCE: "In all of their work, final comprehension depends on our recognizing the continuous interplay between crippling relationships within the represented world of the story and their creative counterparts within the constructed world of the works itself." (p. 169)

COUSINEAU's careful reading of these novels also shows how much BERNHARD was beyond pure resentment. Beginning with the *Woodcutters*, BERNHARD's protagonists not only expressed their critical anathemas against Austrian society, in which he lived, but started to become more and more self-critical. The protagonists are not better than the people they harshly reject. BERNHARD deconstructs resentment. A good example can be found in *Old Masters*. Reger, the protagonist, criticizes strongly his surrounding culture, especially Catholicism that has shaped Austrian culture over a long time: "You cannot find *a single natural painted face* in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, *always only a Catholic visage*. Just look at any well-painted head here for some length of time, in the end it will be just a Catholic head, Reger said. Even the grass in these paintings grows as Catholic grass and the soup in the Dutch soup bowls is nothing but Catholic soup, Reger now said." Such exaggerations show quite clearly BERNHARD's irony that deconstructs resentment. COUSINEAU makes clear that mimetic relations are governing such verbal exorcisms in BERNHARD's novels: "Reger's peremptory judgments of cultural achievements throughout the novel resemble nothing so much as an excommunication, a practice borrowed from precisely the culture that he affects to despise." (p. 135)

Are BERNHARD's master-pieces just *reflecting* the mimetic age in which we live or are they *revealing* mimetic desire as the great novelists did after converting from their own mimetic temptation, as Girard has made clear in the concluding chapter of his book *Deceit, desire, and the Novel*? COUSINEAU does not give a direct answer to this question. He carefully remains inside the field of literary studies avoiding digressions into spirituality, religion or theology. But between the lines we can find some interesting hints that may help us to answer this question. In *Old Masters* one can discover an interesting type of "spiritual awakening" in Reger who is mourning the death of his wife. Reger becomes aware how much his wife really meant to him, much more than all art, philosophy or writing: "You realize that it was not those great minds and not those old masters which kept you alive for decades but that it was that one single person whom you loved more than anyone else." Contrary to some other interpreters of this novel, however, COUSINEAU does not recognize too much of a spiritual awakening in this and similar passages. But if we take into account that *Old Masters* was written immediately after the death of BERNHARD's *Lebensmensch* (companion for life) Hedwig STAVIANICEK one could give such passages a much greater importance. COUSINEAU himself refers to this woman in his essay on *Extinction* telling us that she is the person that is reflected in Maria, a positive model in this novel that does not force the protagonist into the deadlocks of mimetic rivalry but contributes to his creative development. COUSINEAU even goes so far to compare Maria with Beatrice in DANTE's *Divine Comedy*. At several occasions COUSINEAU refers to parallels between DANTE and BERNHARD. These convincing hints may lead us to the conclusion that BERNHARD can be understood as a novelistic author that has undergone his own conversion.

I am grateful to Thomas COUSINEAU for this clear and very well written book. After many years it helped me to understand the mimetic reasons for my earlier attraction to BERNHARD's work. COUSINEAU's book led me again to the novels of BERNHARD. I have started to read them again, even some that I have not read before. It is literary criticism at its best that is able to inspire us in this way.

Wolfgang Palaver

Heyman, George: *The Power of Sacrifice: Roman and Christian Discourses in Conflict.* Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007. (xxv + 256 pp.) ISBN 978-0813214894, $69.95.

George HEYMAN's new book is a largely successful attempt to parse the language of sacrifice, first as employed by Rome during its progression from republic to empire, then in Christian martyrology, which adapted the Empire's discourse, recasting victims as victors. HEYMAN will hold the attention of religious historians and biblical specialists alike, with Girardian scholars included in the bargain. The volume divides into four main chapters, beginning with "Roman Religion and Sacrificial Practice" and a chapter on the imperial cult of emperor-worship, moving in due course to "The New Testament and the Discourse of Sacrifice," and finally considering the ways in which the Christian martyrological genre developed in the first few centuries that followed. A concluding chapter summarizes HEYMAN's findings, though unfortunately without much development of the discursive and theological implications of his argument. Thoroughly interdisciplinary, the book deploys historical and socio-rhetorical methods, with all the strengths and necessary compromises that this combination implies; but where HEYMAN succeeds, he sets a brilliantly analytical example for many interdisciplinary scholars, including this reviewer, to follow.

HEYMAN immediately removes any assumptions about religion as a matter of private, personal faith. In a lengthy but thoughtful introduction, he insists that "religious belief" is a Christian category, while the Roman Empire was more concerned with religion as a behavioral issue of public order (x-xi, recapitulated on p. 12). Public transcripts, then, are the natural focus of his search for ideological emphases, and he wisely turns to James C. SCOTT's work for help in this discipline. Sacrifice is outlined here and in the first chapter as a phenomenon intended to create or restore order, establishing (or resetting) the boundaries of sacred space, whether in the microcosm of the Roman home or the whole of Roman civilization. As such – though HEYMAN does not put it in quite this way – sacrifice is essentially a *performative* discourse, requiring staging and roles for participants and audience, if any. A similar point could be made about the triumphal procession, the Roman victory ritual to which HEYMAN will turn his attention in Chapter Two. Before moving there, however, HEYMAN fixes a compelling point in his readers' minds. Sacrifice in Rome cemented relationships of power, whether in the sacralizing of the state's origins in the myth of the divinized Romulus and Remus, or in the eventual divinization of Rome and Roman interests in the form of the goddess Roma (30, though she was not worshipped *per se* until Hadrian's time, p. 66).

HEYMAN's second chapter is based on an admitted anachronism: "The Roman Imperial Cult" is a modern, scholarly term (46) for a phenomenon that functioned differently in the empire's capital and various provincial regions. The cult is itself a discourse, representative of power relationships, with a complexity and diversity that defy attempts to plot diachronic developmental patterns (68). HEYMAN thus models an implicit caution against synchronic readings of history. He reads the celebration of the *triumphator*, the conquering hero parading through Rome, as an act of conscious god-impersonation, and he compares the ritual to a tickertape parade (56-57), as Michael P. KNOWLES has done independently. HEYMAN's exploration of the triumph is not as thorough as in recent studies by Mary BEARD and Davina LOPEZ, but his aim is to portray the triumph as a notably public expression of the imperial cult. As Rome expands, it gives more attention to personal power, finding divinization to be a convenient tool for mitigating the political instability that followed a ruler's death (59, 62). The concluding equation HEYMAN works out is difficult to disprove: as a sacrificial discourse, the language of the cult personifies Rome in the identity of the emperor, a figure made ritually present throughout empire, which allows conquered lands to return thanks for political benefaction (78).

Apotheosis was effectively state-sponsored in Rome's time, notes HEYMAN (91), as he moves to consider the New Testament. It is not lost on him that executions were sponsored, too (172), as terrorizing measures of social control. The first problem that the New Testament authors had to address was the need to cope with Jesus' execution, finding a saving efficacy in a form of capital punishment in which the "good news" was not self-evident (11, 122). It should not surprise us then that the earliest Christian writers turned to a familiar sacrificial discourse, not adopting Rome's ideology in its entirety, but allowing their rhetoric to be shaped by opposition.

HEYMAN's New Testament treatment serves to forward the themes he has already developed, and it betrays some inconsistency: the author wants the texts to be immediately evident as rhetoric, coalescing into an imprecise but forceful discourse of sacrifice that will be augmented by later martyrological accounts, yet he insists that the New Testament has no coherent theology of sacrifice (xviii, 96, 218). His textual survey fast-forwards accordingly, pausing when he finds a locus of sacrificial thought in the atonement ritual (as an alternative to Rome's theology of victory) in Hebrews, or a critique of Rome as a composite of the traits of prior empires in Revelation. Biblical scholars will thank HEYMAN for the provocative questions raised in his concise moments of exegesis. How, for example, are the "living sacrifice" of Romans 12 and the sacrificial rhetoric of suffering in 2 Corinthians

intended to frame Christian lives and attitudes toward death? Paul frames the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11 as participation in a memorial meal, implying that this sacrificial thought was understood very early in Christian tradition (112, 118); how were believers expected to "proclaim the Lord's death" in practice?

As HEYMAN prepares to transition from the New Testament era to the increasing persecution that marked the apostolic and post-apostolic periods, he pauses for a six-page excursus that should be of great interest to readers of this journal. He adapts René GIRARD's work, deliberately selecting it as a critical but *non-sacrificial* method. Borrowing from James G. WILLIAMS, he summarizes GIRARD's approach to literary theory, highlighting mimesis and the scapegoat mechanism with particular attention to New Testament texts. HEYMAN does not appropriate Girardian methods blindly, and he supplies some of the criticism that mimetic theory has faced. Nonetheless, his reasons for appealing to Girard are twofold: he desires first to unmask instances of what he calls "rhetorical violence," and he requires a categorical label for discursive mimicry and violence. The best illustration of the first comes in HEYMAN's brief analysis of 1 Corinthians, where he posits, "If Jesus has come to 'destroy' death (1 Cor. 15:26), this must mean that a type of violence was somehow envisioned by Paul" as implicit in Christ's kingdom (154). This is an incisive point, but I wish that HEYMAN had pushed the implications further: does this implicitly violent kingdom tell us more about the god who rules it, or about the imperial society that shapes the way its promoters envision it? Does violence perpetrated exclusively in a textual world qualify as violence in the same way as it does in the "real" world? This scriptural text has also been treated by Walter WINK, another scholar who has adapted GIRARD's work. WINK translates "destroy" as "neutralize," downplaying violence and increasing the passage's redemptive quality – but neither he nor HEYMAN answers my questions fully.

For HEYMAN's second reason for Girardian appropriation, we turn to the violence that he profiles in his fourth chapter, "The Sacrifice of the Martyr." Unfortunately for GIRARD fans, the author's description of "mimetic" rhetoric (163) often breaks down into a mere sampling of Girardian vocabulary, shorthand for a much more complex relationship between competing discourses. Happily, HEYMAN certainly understands this complexity, even if the label is not always adequate. Perhaps thinking back to his comments on violence as a problematic trait of the kingdom of God, he notes the inherent tension in Christian sources that portrayed Jesus as that kingdom's (imperial) leader *and* sacrificial victim (162). As early Christianity's martyrological discourse develops, human bodies and lives become counter-imperial weapons, destabilizing Rome's ideology, especially with regard to timely questions over the use of torture (168-69).

HEYMAN has done his primary-source homework: while dwelling at length upon Christian martyrs such as Ignatius and Perpetua, he continues to listen to their contemporaries in the empire. Particularly fascinating is Seneca the Younger, who describes Scipio, the conqueror of Carthage, as having "conquered death" by choosing suicide over captivity (182). This helps HEYMAN toward an important martyrological insight, in that the decision to "conquer" death as Jesus did is "rhetorically invincible" (217-218). The "narrativizing" of self-sacrifice, when focused in memory of a given martyr and in conscious imitation of the Passion narratives (208-210), is where HEYMAN's application of Girardian theory works well; mimesis is readily apparent in the composition of the discourse.

The lingering comparative difficulty, however, is how cohesive the competing discourses really were. Certainly Christian sacrificial thought owes a substantial debt to Roman ideology. At issue, when HEYMAN wants to discuss martyrologies as narratives and clearly leans toward grouping them together as a meta-narrative, is discursive coherence. There was no single-source "rhetoric of empire," no monolithic "Christian" and "Roman" discourses in consistent competition with one another, only disparate accounts from multiple literary genres which historians and biblical scholars must work to assemble, compare, and contrast. Does HEYMAN want to assert that the triumph ritual, the arena, and the imperial cult – to the extent that the phenomenon is more than an anachronistic, scholarly construct – function as components of a meta-narrative? If so, how might such a meta-narrative be observable in sacrifice's discursive forms? If HEYMAN's opening assessment is correct (and I believe it is) that today's world is also steeped in sacrifice (xv), then where should we seek after the contemporary discursive counterparts? HEYMAN asks and answers many excellent questions, but he leaves pressing, worthwhile issues open for discussion in subsequent research.

Matthew Forrest Lowe

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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-Documentation, c/o Dr. Dietmar Regensburger, University of Innsbruck, Karl-Rahner-Platz 1, A-6020 Innsbruck / Austria.

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If there are any suggestions for the improvement of the Bulletin, please let me know. I am looking forward to seeing many of you in London.

Nikolaus Wandinger

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