

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

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

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

EUCHARIST IS “GOD’S ABSOLUTE ‘NO’ TO VIOLENCE”

3rd Lenten Sermon by Father Cantalamessa

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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BOOK REVIEWS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thanks to the Eucharist, God's absolute 'no' to violence, spoken on the cross, echoes alive down the centuries. And, at the same time, it is God's 'yes' to the innocent victims, and it is the place where all the blood spilled on earth joins with the blood of Christ and cries out to God and 'pleads more insistently than Abel's'. "But Christ's meekness is no justification for the violence that is done today to his person, and in fact renders it the queerer, the more odious. This is not just a question of the pressure to remove the cross from Understanding 'substance' and 'accident' is fundamental to contemplating the Eucharistic. Anyone studying the sacred mysteries should know these terms.Â The Real Presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist is among the greatest mysteries of our faith.Â St. Thomas replies: God is the first and absolute cause of all being "the being of substances as well as of their accidents" and whatever is the first and absolute cause of a composite is also the cause of its aspects or components taken one by one. Thus, He is able, in His omnipotence, to cause a substance to exist by itself without its usual sensible characteristics, and to sustain accidents in being apart from their customary subject