COV&R will celebrate the 25th anniversary of its founding at its 2015 meeting July 8-12, at St. Louis University (SLU) in St. Louis, MO. Grant Kaplan, the conference organizer, has issued the Call for Papers and announced the conference theme, “The One By Whom Scandal Has Come: Critically Engaging the Girardian Corpus.” A noted African-American woman theologian at Boston College, M. Shawn Copeland, has graciously agreed to give the Raymund Schwager S.J. Memorial Lecture. Professor Copeland will pick up on the theme of scapegoating and lynching to which COV&R has directed its special attention over the past five years, thanks to the project organized by Julia Robinson and Sandor Goodhart, to which Patrice Rankine and others have contributed.

Professor Kaplan has awakened great enthusiasm at SLU for the conference, and we expect the conference will be very well organized. Centrally located in a large, historic city in the American Midwest, COV&R 2015 should be a very memorable, well attended, anniversary celebration.

Please support COV&R Advisory Board member Kathy Frost (St. Joseph’s College, New York) in her effort to “welcome home” to the anniversary meeting in St. Louis all those who have been active in the Colloquium at some point during the past 25 years. Each one of them, each one of us, has contributed to the history of COV&R. It’s time to remember that and to do so together.

Sincerely yours,

Ann

MUSINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Niki Wandinger kindly sent me a reminder to have this article to him by October 12th. I always try to comply. I promptly entered it into my calendar but did not notice that I was entering it on November 12th. When nothing appeared on my calendar last weekend, I forgot and did nothing. I mention this not just to point to my own foibles but to bring to mind how the Bulletin and the way it works stands as a kind of symbol for the whole of COV&R. Many different people take time out of their already busy lives to contribute something to the making of the Bulletin. The editor then takes time from his busy life, herds the cats to get slackers like myself off their duff, edits all the contributions so that an issue can come out by the appropriate date. The Bulletin has been an invaluable source of information for the community that is COV&R. It is the one place where book reviews are consistently published on books relating to mimetic theory. Through the bibliography it provides a continual update on the publications that touch upon mimetic theory. It has allowed conference organizers a chance to entice people to make the trip to the annual conference. And through the follow-up reports from participants, it allows those who could not make the trip to at least get a sense of what went on during the conference. It has kept all of us up to date on the activities of COV&R members at the AAR. Finally, it gives the President and the Executive Secretary an easy forum for communicating with members.

All of this buildup is to bring up both a specific question and a broader challenge. Niki has expertly put out the Bulletin for over ten years now. We are all massively in his debt. But he has indicated that he is ready to relinquish his post as Editor and that we should look for his successor. This was announced at the Business Meeting at the Conference but I wish to sound the message again now and ask if we have anyone interested in carrying on this important task. If you would like to discuss this as a possibility, please contact either Ann Astell or myself (jalberg@gmail.com).

Related to this is the request by Martha Reineke to find someone who could take over as our liaison with AAR. Martha, like Niki, has done yeoman’s service for COV&R by arranging the various speakers and activities at these annual meetings. She succeeded in formalizing our relationship with AAR and obtaining precious space in their program and at the annual meeting. So now we need someone to carry on this fine tradition. Again, contact me if you would like to discuss the possibility.

I see part of my responsibility as Executive Secretary to work to maintain the health of COV&R by involving as many people as possible in COV&R’s activities and governance. I think that there are many members who are willing to serve in various capacities and the more who get involved the better.
One of the things that I like very much about COV&R’s way of doing things is the way it is continually bringing new people on to the Advisory Board. It gives a number of our members a chance to really exercise some ownership of the organization. We strive to find a balance on the Board but if you feel that something or someone is missing, please let me know.

Finally, we have an outstanding conference being planned for our 25th year as an organization in St. Louis next year. 2016 will take COV&R to the Southern Hemisphere and Down-under. We need to be thinking of 2017 and where we might be holding the meeting in that year.

Jeremiah Alberg

REPORTS ON CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Report on the COV&R-conference 2014 in Freising, Germany, on “Battling to the End” 1914-2014

This year’s colloquium was my first, and perhaps readers will be interested in hearing from a newcomer. I begin with superficial, yet baroque, praises of how classy everyone and everything was at the Kardinal-Döpfner-Haus, atop the central hill in Freising, Germany. Where else can one find rooms full of hospitable, capable, multi-lingual scholars, not only enjoying and giving lectures but savoring a string quartet followed by rounds of champagne in some medieval bar? I hasten to praise, as well, one of the famous plenary lecturers, Herfried Münkler, for his magisterial beard, consummate fashion, and exquisite German, if nothing else. Only a French gentleman, reportedly a member of the Dutch Girardian group, came near this grandeur with his estimable handlebar mustache.

But there was far more than mere class at the Döpfner-Haus. The first, highly anticipated event, was Jean-Luc Marion’s lecture, devoted to what one might call the apophasis of forgiveness. Drawing partly from the insight of Christ not forgiving, per se, but asking the Father to forgive, Marion highlighted the notion of “letting Being be.” By this, he meant the refusal to “fill the space” that judgment and assurance (among other ontological over-presences) so often fill. By not rushing to fill this space, we open up eschatological space. Instead of establishing sheer presence and oursous, through, say, casting judgment or hatred, we make space by forgiveness: the par-ousious. Hence, the inner logic of love and patience in the “second coming”. That is, instead of just practicing the gift, geben—the “given,” being—we must learn to practice vergeben, forgiveness.

Other plenary lectures included the four student Schwager award-winners’ presentations—all erudite and detailed. Given the conference’s theme surrounding WWI, one of them, Simon De Keukelaere, interpreted the binding of Isaac in light of Europe having “killed half its seed” because it refused to “sacrifice the ram of pride,” as a poem by Wilfrid Owen (1893-1918) expresses it. In his lecture titled “Do This in Memory of Me” Bernard Disco offered a Girardian interpretation of the institution narratives, which all include some amount of betrayal, though no retribution. Markus Wierschem proved himself a deft interpreter of the American psycho-social landscape of violence and living with(out) hope, as portrayed through Cormac McCarthy’s apocalyptic genre. And Petro Sette Camara e Silva interpreted Bernanos’ Under the Sun of Satan in the light of mimetic theory.

Some other highlights from plenaries: The aforementioned Herfried Münkler delivered a considerable lecture on the cultural status of sacrifice and myth in Germany surrounding WWI. Benoit Chantre not only reviewed the content and backstory of Achever Clausewitz but commented on U.S. foreign policy. From the apocalyptic advent of the bomb to the hubristic escalations in Iraq, Girard’s thought—with its deep suspicion of politics, combined with a world-savvy realism about the katechon—is naturally contextualized in, and prophetic to, the U.S. political landscape. Mathias Moosbrugger traced the trajectory of Girardian apocalyptic thought throughout Girard’s career. And Malise Ruthven offered an in depth historical account of the battle of Gallipoli—including trench courtesies and mirror neuron empathy. Lastly, Michael Staudigl reflected on the disappearance of the face of the enemy and the twentieth century as one long war, while John Duvall extrapolated the intersection of race, lynching, and print media.

In the parallel session devoted to “Modernity, Apocalypse and Total War,” there ensued a