Byron Bland November, 1996

MARCHING AND RISING: THE RITUALS OF SMALL DIFFERENCES AND GREAT VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

What is really needed is the decommissioning of mind-sets in Northern Ireland.

Report of the International Body
on Arms Decommissioning (The Mitchell Report)
January 24, 1996

The 1996 Orange Marching season brought a major setback to the peace process in Northern Ireland. On the Garvaghy Road in the Drumcree community of Portadown, Protestants and Catholics displayed the mutual intolerance and intransigence for which they are notorious. Within each camp, a contagion of ill-will took hold, metamorphosing ancient malice into modern hatred. A volatile fog, toxic with recriminations and threats, descended upon the countryside. The battle-lines drawn at Drumcree energized other historical points of confrontation across the province. Just as the plucked string of a musical instrument sets the all others vibrating harmoniously, so the cord struck in Portadown sounded the key to a counterpoint that seemed almost primordial. As the tragic notes of the final measures faded, a numbing silence enveloped a society once again stunned by the violence unleashed within its soul.

It was as if the North of Ireland looked at the prospect of peace and announced that it was not going to take it lying down. A strangely irrational logic seemed to drive events. Viewed from afar, they never should have happened. Neither Protestants nor Catholics stood to gain anything of tangible value. Only in retrospect—from the finale, backwards, once the standoff had energized every potential division—do substantive political issues emerge. However, this collapsing of events obscures the interactive process from which this mishap arose and leaves the central and confounding mystery unsolved: **how did a dispute about nothing so quickly become a conflict about everything?** The answer to this enigma lies in the mimetic theory of René Girard (see Appendix).

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Sinn Fèin Party Chairman Mitchel McLaughlin parsed correctly, but not insightfully, the social dynamics of this explosive situation. Shortly before the July marching season, he affirmed the right of Protestants to march. Nevertheless, he maintained, Catholics would tolerate no triumphalism. The problem is, of course, that Protestants don't march in the abstract. They march down specific streets, passing through particular communities, toward specified locations. Their Lambeg drums boom out a terrifying cadence. Their bowler hats, black-thorn canes, and orange sashes shout a silent message for *all* to hear. Without triumphalism, an Orange march is simply a pointless stroll. It is nothing—a non-event, a momentous occasion that did not happen.

Orange triumphalism needs serious nationalist resistance to be more than a ludicrous display of paranoia-driven pomposity. Orange "marching" must provoke a Catholic "rising." It has to find a contumacious partner before the mimetic choreography of *"not an inch"* can proceed. Only then can the thundering beat of the Lambeg drum transform the contestants into violent doubles, each captivated by a spellbinding obsession with the other. From the pounding rhythms spring forth entranced rivals who are much more than mere competitors.

Caught in a tragedy replayed thousands of times, Catholics and Protestants stare across the bloody boundary of small differences that separates them. Their opposition defines the mirrored sameness of their common *Irishness* as utterly alien. With melodramatic anticipation, both await the moment when violence seals off the expelled *other* and circumscribes the sacred realm of *our* metaphysical identity. Fully enshrined, the Protestants and Catholics of Ulster feel the fullness of their humanity. They are now complete, but sadly they are no longer whole.

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> *History is a weapon, a poker you keep in your pocket to beat the present senseless and so reorder its alignment to the past and justify present murder.*
>
> Kevin Toolis
> *Rebel Hearts*

Marching and drumming make an Orange parade.[1] The practice first entered Ireland with the arrival of "King Billy"—William of Orange in 1690. His troops—the vanguard of Protestantism—marched to the cadence of kettle drums strapped to the backs of horses. When they routed the Catholic army of James II at the Battle of the Boyne, marching and drumming entered the lexicon of Protestant dominance.

When the Orangemen hit the streets, they take on the identity of King Billy's Protestant troops. They triumph over the Catholics in the communities through which they march. They claim the territory for the Union and for the Protestant community. Their deafening drums awaken Protestants to their victorious heritage and notify Catholics of their subjugated status. For there to be peace, Catholics must acquiesce to their defeat. If they resist, the Orangemen will smite them down just as King Billy did.

Catholics understand the symbolism of marching all too well. The fear and anger that it evokes comes deep from within their being. The thundering drums strain their tolerance beyond the breaking point. As they rise to the confrontation, the victims of past murders come to live within them. They step into the late eighteenth century—a past that is not dead and gone—when Protestants *marched* to murder Catholics and Catholics *rose* to murder Protestants. More is at stake than benign indignation can ignore.

CHAOS IN ORANGE AND GREEN

> *I seen it before, before ever Ireland was divided, and in the twenties, and each time after that; and Ireland will never be at peace, or us and them stop fighting, till* the *end of the world.*
>
> A Belfast Loyalist

In Northern Ireland, they call it the *Troubles*—an explosion of violence and death, which has lasted more than twenty-five years. This spate of murders, bombings, and random killings has touched the lives of virtually everyone who lives there.[2] It is perhaps only the most recent eruption of what is sometimes called the world's longest war—a turmoil begun centuries ago, which is unmatched in the creative ways that it has spilled blood. By naming it euphemistically the Troubles, the Irish aptly express a disturbing insight: *no one is quite sure what all the violence is really about!*

The Troubles might never have happened if the upheavals in the last half of the eighteenth century had not taken Ulster in a sectarian direction. The crisis that originated in the linen triangle of County Armagh lasted about ten years (1784-1792). During these years, Mid-Ulster became the cauldron that produced one of the ways—indeed, the overwhelmingly dominant way, the *Orange* way—that Northern Ireland Protestants would relate to Catholics from that time to the present.

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[1] The Royal Ulster Constabulary Press Office reports that there were 2508 Protestant marches during 1995. In comparison, there were only 285 Catholic marches. (Stevenson, 1996, p154)

[2] For an excellent evaluation of the personal cost of the current turmoil, see "Auditing the Antagonism." (McGarry & O'Leary, 1993, pp8-53)

The social and political milieu of this crisis had at least three dimensions. The first was the gradual relaxation of the penal laws that the Protestant Ascendancy had imposed on both dissenters (Presbyterians) and natives (Catholics) after James II's defeat.[3] In truth, these measures were nothing more than the standard way that governments throughout Europe controlled religious minorities. The difference throughout most of Ireland was that the "minority" was a staggering majority. The exception was Ulster, where the number of Catholics and Protestants was more or less equal. This demographic balance meant that in the North there were a substantial number of impoverished Protestants as well as Catholics. The only thing separating poor Protestants from their Catholic counterparts were the penal laws.

During the mid 1700s, Catholic "disloyalty" waned, and many eagerly put past grievances aside to reach better accords with their Protestant neighbors.[4] Within the context of assimilation, the economic restrictions of the penal laws became counterproductive to the monetary interests of the Ascendancy (Wright, 1996, p15). In particular, landlords could receive higher rents by leasing land to Catholics than Protestants. By the time that the Relief Acts of 1778 and 1782 removed the ban on Catholics' buying land and the stipulations concerning land inheritance, these practices had, by and large, fallen by the wayside. The people most adversely affected by these changes were the poor farmers and weavers of Co. Armagh.

The second factor in the growing crisis was the rising linen industry. This development completely transformed the agricultural landscape of mid-Ulster.[5] The entire economic base of the society shifted from farming to weaving, with north Armagh becoming the hub. In 1784, more than 15 million of the 49 million yards of linen produced in Ireland came to market within a 20-mile radius of Portadown. The total number of weavers in Armagh (16,000-20,000) approached the number of households (approximately 22,000) by 1790 (Miller, 1982, p157).

As the loom became the mainstay of family income, many independent farmers—mostly Protestant—lost their economic footing and virtually disappeared. These farmers either made the transition to small-scale farmer-weaver enterprises or became the landless employees of the larger master-weavers.[6] The superior status that Protestant yeomen of North Armagh had traditionally held over Catholic tenants simply dissolved.

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[3] The Penal Laws prevented Catholics from "bearing arms, educating their children and owning any horse above £5 in value." Catholics also were prohibited from buying land or holding leases of more than 31 years length. Rent had to be at least two thirds of the yearly value of the land. Upon inheritance, all Catholic estates had to be divided equally between sons of the deceased—a provision that effectively carved all Catholic land-holdings into economically unviable units. (Bardon, 1992, pp168-169)

[4] With the death of James II in 1766, Catholics had a chance to escape the pernicious Jacobite label that had been placed upon them by the events of their grandparents' era. Many Catholics were quite enthusiastic about this change in fortune and pursued these opportunities vigorously. When, in 1774, Parliament passed a provision allowing Catholics to forswear the Pope's temporal jurisdiction over British affairs and profess their allegiance to the Hanovarian kings, important members of the Catholic hierarchy jumped at the chance.

[5] Industrialization destroys the low-wage colonial economy upon which settler/native societies, like Ulster, are built. The higher wages offered on the mainland produce a labor shortage in the a settler/native hinterlands. Market forces cause wages to rise and to equalize. The structural differences that previously kept wages low for the native population begin to crumble, and native laborers become equal-wage competitors with working class settlers. (Morrow, 1996; Hepburn & Collins, 1981)

[6] Wealthy drapers often issued yarn to weavers unable to afford it. They would then buy the produced linen on a piece-by-piece basis. The net effect was to make these weavers their employees even if they continued to work at their own homes. (Miller, 1982, p157)

The final element was the rise of the Volunteers in the 1770s. The Volunteers were an unauthorized grassroots militia formed when the British withdrew the bulk of their troops to fight in the American colonies. Ostensibly, their purpose was to defend Ireland from a French invasion; however, the Volunteers also protected the Ascendancy from disgruntled Catholics. Called "the armed property of the nation," the ranks of the Volunteers numbered more than 40,000 by 1779.

Before the century was out, divergent branches of Volunteerism would give birth to both United Irishmen and the Orange Order.[7] However, it was the rivalry between Peep o' Day Boys and the Defenders of Co. Armagh that unleashed a reciprocity of spiraling provocations that eventually put all Ulster in crisis. As the confrontations escalated, each side came to embody what the other feared most. The seeds of *nationalism* and *unionism* were sown and took root.

(There is an additional factor that deserves to be mentioned. Between 1753 and 1791, the population of Ulster more than doubled [from around 600,000-700,000 to 1,400,000]. This dramatic rise was the result of the general prosperity that the linen industry brought to the North of Ireland as well as from economic changes that encouraged earlier marriages. Had it not been for the high rate of emigration—largely Protestant, *Scotch-Irish*, to America, the increase would have been much greater. Certainly, this rapid population growth created strains that exacerbated the tensions mounting in Ulster.)

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> *I have got information from a friend … that there are many papists in the place where he lives, who have taken the oath of allegiance, having gotten long leases, and of course (they) must have arms to shoot sparrows from their grain, and not even that, but the perfidious Volunteers have taken them into their ranks.*
>
> Captain, Nappach Fleet, Peep o' Day Boys (1785)

The initial showdown was over guns. Although Catholics were still prohibited from owning weapons, some landlords lent arms to Catholic tenants so that they might protect their crops from predators. Moreover, some Volunteer units had enlisted Catholics and had thereby issued them rifles. A wide-spread fear grew up among the Protestants most threatened by the breakdown of these penal law divisions. Because they were vulnerable to the advances of Catholic aspirants, they saw native/settler assimilation as encroachment. Furthermore, the landed gentry, whom they had served and whom they relied upon for protection, seemed indifferent to or, even worse, supportive of these developments.

As was often the case in rural societies, normal recreational activities—dances, fairs, markets, cock-fights, horse races—provided occasions for fighting. In these carnival-like settings, things often got out of hand as slurs grew into insults, and taunts recalled previous grievances. Frequently, there was a history of family antagonisms lying in the background. Simply put, a brawl was an expedient way to adjudicate a communal dispute.

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[7] Prominent in the leadership of the Volunteers was a new and rising economic elite composed of Presbyterian merchants and manufacturers. This group felt acutely displeased about the disparity between their economic standing and their political status. The Grattan reforms had left their social ranking untouched. As a result, they saw future gains connected to broader and more radical changes in the political system and reached out to Catholics to join them in dissension against the Anglican exclusivity. They linked their desire for inclusion with Catholic enfranchisement. Their vision for the future was a gradual assimilation of Catholics and Protestants into a common Irish identity.

A second group of Presbyterians viewed matters differently. Centered in the linen triangle, they saw Catholics not as potential allies, but as a serious challenge. Their livelihood depended upon their link with the Ascendancy and upon their separation from the Catholic masses. This groups felt extremely threatened by the relaxation of the penal laws and the changes wrought by the growing linen industry. Furthermore, the special relationship that had existed between Protestant tenants and Anglican gentry was the ground of their individual and collective prestige. Not surprisingly, they envisioned a future that maintained and, indeed, reinforced Protestant/Catholic divisions.

Under these conditions, the administration of popular "justice" appeared very similar to the prosecution of a *feud* (Gibbon, 1975, pp56-57). People with close social ties banded together for protection in vengeance groups called *fleets*. Initially, sectarian identity played little or no role in the formations of these rural gangs—many fleets were mixed. Still, the sectarian divisions of the Armagh countryside gradually affected the complexion of each fleet until the situation became a tinderbox.[8]

As the violence escalated, Protestants and Catholics organized the larger defense leagues that became known as the *Peep o' Day Boys* and the *Defenders*. Soon, the Ascendancy became concerned that the situation was getting out of hand and started raising new companies of Volunteers with the intent of enlisting the Peep o' Day Boys, thereby establishing some control over them. However, the outcome of this move was quite different from what they had hoped.

Instead of combating each other in communal bands, the Peep o' Day Boys and the Defenders now confronted each other in large militia-like demonstrations, which attempted to assert local dominance. Large assemblies of Defenders frequently gathered—often at the celebration of traditional holidays—to intimidate nearby Protestants. For their part, Protestants used their training maneuvers to demarcate their territory. Their drilling and parading for public events were occasions for demonstrating their sovereignty. Draped with Orange insignia, they made a point of marching to Orange tunes through Catholics areas where Defenderism was strong. Often Catholics attacked these quasi-military demonstrations as a way of contesting the dominance they alleged. In this volatile atmosphere, any personal squabble quickly took on symbolic significance, which overshadowed all localized aspects.

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[8] In *An Impartial Account of the Late Disturbances in the County of Armagh* (1792), John Byrne, a prominent Armagh Catholic, presented an account of the catalytic events leading to the sectarian standoff. Shortly before the July 12th celebrations of 1784, a fight between two drunken Presbyterians broke out in Markethill (just south of Portadown in Co. Armagh). The loser, called "Captain Whiskey" by Byrne, blamed a Catholic who intervened for his defeat. In response, he raised a following in his home town of Edenknappagh and called it the Nappach Fleet. They began plundering the houses of the victor's friends, which included several Catholics. These Catholics were singled out for "special treatment." Furthermore, they tried to provoke a fight at a horse race that was arranged for that purpose. Fractional fighting escalated until every altercation ended with opposing sectarian groups facing off. However, Byrne maintained that sectarian lines were not fully drawn until a pamphlet war between Protestant and Catholic clergy in 1786 sparked division.

This episode was probably not the precipitating event that Byrne makes it out to be. Rather, it reflects the typical pattern that had emerged (Miller, 1982, pp183-184). It is more likely that Catholics responded to increasing attacks from the Nappach Fleet by organizing themselves into an association that they called the *Defenders*. Headed initially by a Presbyterian minister, the Defenders managed to defeat the Nappach Fleet, depose its leader, and replace him with a Catholic (Senior, 1966, p8). Soon thereafter, the Nappach Fleet became solely Catholic, merging with the Defenders. Far from ending the feud, Protestants reorganized and took the name *Peep o' Day*. In any event, it remains clear that this melee was part of a larger assault on Catholics whom poor Protestant weavers assumed had weapons.

The "Battle of the Diamond" (September 21, 1795) marked a turning point.[9] Although victorious, the Peep o' Day Boys realized that they needed a more formal structure. Taking the Defenders as a model—the mobilization they had mounted at the "Diamond" was impressive—they founded the Orange Order, pledging to defend "the King and his heirs so long as he or they support the Protestant Ascendancy" (Bardon, 1992, p226). Ten months later, on July 12, 1796, Orangemen met publicly and paraded through the streets of *Portadown*.[10] The institution of Orange marching was born in the city that would become known as the *Orange Citadel*. Over the next few years, the Orange Order grew rapidly and consolidated itself into the heart and soul of anti-Catholic Ulster.[11]

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> *You say it is the good cause that hallows even war? I say unto you: it is the good war that hallows any cause.*
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche
> *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

The situation in Co. Armagh in the late eighteenth century displayed the classic features of a Girardian sacrificial crisis. First, the differences separating Catholics and Protestants eroded as the detrimental economic effects of the penal laws became more pronounced. Secondly, the growth of the linen industry set off a mimetic rivalry between poorer Protestants and aspiring Catholics. Finally, because the Volunteer movement had militarized the countryside, the transition to a violent contagion was almost instantaneous. Protestants and Catholics became violent doubles as each increased the revenge sought by the next.

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[9] In the decade preceding the Battle of the Diamond, an almost ritualized pattern emerged that functioned to limit the amount of violence that might break out. Often marching bands of Defenders and the Peep o' Day Boys would roam the countryside and meet at an agreed-upon location. They would shout insults and exchange shots, all at a safe distance. Eventually, the magistrates would arrive and disperse the two crowds. Each side went home unharmed. The whole affair was conducted in a holiday-like spirit. However, in the Battle of the Diamond, an unexpected development would disrupt this prescription with disastrous results. The full significance of deviating from a ritualized encounter and thereby unleashing violence from its regulated modes will become clear later. For the moment, a chronology of the episode must suffice.

In the week before the showdown, events progressed according to formula. Defenders began assembling in the parish of Tentaraghan and started to loot Protestant farms. The Peep o' Day Boys gathered in defense, counterattacking some Defenders' homes. By September 18, the sides had faced off on opposing hills overlooking the Diamond—a small junction between Portadown and Loughgall in north Armagh. At this point, two magistrates and three Catholic priests intervened and drew up a truce. After signing an accord and posting a £500 guarantee of peace, the sides disbanded and began going home.

However, several large contingents of Defenders were still making their way to the Diamond, and since they were not party to the truce, they did not feel bound to honor it. Meanwhile a returning Peep o' Day unit from north Mayo spotted them and returned to Dan Winter's inn and set up a defense. When these new Defenders troops—numbering several thousand—arrived, a small minority persuaded some local members to join them—perhaps 400 total—in an attack. At about 5:00 AM, they opened fire on a small but well-armed contingent of Protestants hunkered down in Winter's inn. Hearing shots being fired, the Peep o' Day Boys began returning to aid their associates. Wanting the matter decided before the Peep o' Day Boys regrouped, the Defenders launched an assault and were roundly defeated.

[10] The Orange Order claims 1807 as the date of the first Orange march to the Drumcree Church.

[11] In addition to combating Defenderism, the Orange Order also addressed the precarious economic position of many Protestants. Acting unofficially, the Order began a series of nightly raids for the purpose of driving Catholic tenants from the Co. Armagh. Targeted cottages were posted with notices inviting their owners "to hell or Connaught." In a two-month period, they forced more than seven thousand Catholics to flee Ulster. These attacks became known as the *Armagh Outrages* and were halted only when Dublin stationed troops throughout the countryside. Consequently, Peep o' Day-Defender type of feuding became a permanent fixture in the North of Ireland.

Had their mimetic violence fastened on a common scapegoat, the common identity favored by the United Irishmen might have come about. However, no external target emerged, and the mimetic violence remained focused within the confines of their relationship. Protestants and Catholics began scapegoating each other, but neither had the force to expel the other from their midst. Both discovered a new and emerging unity within their increasingly polarized communities. Each embraced an existence founded not upon common aspirations—aspirations that had become entangled because they were common—but upon *fear*. Through their "sacred" violence, they had laid bare the mimetic core of their sectarian identities. To be a Protestant was to fear Catholics, and to be a Catholic was to fear Protestants—the infamous siege mentalities of Ulster.[12]

No society could survive a contagion of mimetic violence of this magnitude for long. Eventually, the need to constrain violence would ritualize the sacrificial exchanges between Catholics and Protestants. The pacification of Ulster was complicated by the fact that the scapegoat mechanism had not produced a common, assimilated community, but rather a deeply divided society composed of two warring sectarian groups. When the British attempt to introduce the transcendent, secular institutions of a modern state failed to stabilize the fractured social relationships, Ulster began adapting its legacy of rural feuding to emerging conditions of urban industrial capitalism (Morrow,1994; Gibbon, 1975, pp34-40).

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The form that a feud takes is highly culturally dependent, and anthropological efforts to define it as a social institution usually end up describing the culture in which the feud is taking place. Nevertheless, two structural features of the classic blood feud correspond closely to conditions in Ulster's countryside. First is the lack of a strong centralized political authority (Evans-Pritchard, 1978, p159). There are literally no effective mechanisms for criminalizing violence and revenge and, therefore, no transcending institutions that protect all citizens equally, irrespective of their group (or clan) identities.

Second is the inability to sever relationships completely and go separate ways (Evans-Pritchard, 1978, pp161-162). A feud occurs when relatively equal social entities maintain a state of active hostility but remain fused together within some larger political unit. Neither side can win a decisive victory, and a full-blown fight to the finish would destroy both groups. Unable to win and unable to leave, they are caught by elastic bands that pull communities together and, at the same time, keep them apart as separate entities. Pushed and pulled by irreconcilable cycles of fission and fusion, they settle for alternating acts of deadly retribution.

The parallels to the situation in Ulster are obvious. The Protestants and Catholics of Ulster trusted no one but themselves. They could not defeat each other, and they had nowhere else to go. Furthermore, their relationship was rife with grievance and abuse.[13] All conditions seemed ripe for a feud—except one. It would be around this anomaly that Ulster would significantly alter the traditional feuding pattern.

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[12] While the Protestant siege mentality is widely recognized, few realize that Catholics also have one based on the metaphor of invasion. Anthony Buckley and Mary Catherine Kenney note that it mirrors the Protestant one almost exactly point by point. The principal difference is that the Catholic metaphor is built upon the rectification of grievances suffered in defeat. However, in all respects, they are mimetic doubles. (Buckley & Kenney, 1995, pp41-54)

[13] Rarely do feuds result from a single overt act of insult or offense. Usually, there is a history of grievences that have brought the groups into tension. It is this larger background that gives the instigating act its special meaning. In Montenegro, feuds have arisen because sheep strayed into another's pastures. What is frequently missed is that this type of thing happens literally thousands of times a year. Only in

After the initial outburst of violence, feuds normally settle into ritualized exchanges of vengeance killings. First, one side strikes, then the other retaliates. Both sides know whose turn it is because people keep a running score. After launching a lethal attack, the culprits go on the defensive until their foes take a life in return. This rhythmic "taking turns" schema contains the violence at a level well below all-out warfare. Because Britain and the rising merchant class within Ulster considered this level of violence as counter to their economic interests, they exerted pressure to curb the violence further. Consequently, a more thoroughly ritualized form of feuding evolved—*Orange marching* and *Catholic rising*.

When the Orangemen march, they become the Peep o' Day Boys moving through the countryside looking for Catholics with guns. The drum summons them for roll-call. The Orange regalia is the insignia worn on the uniforms of the Volunteers. They reenact the formation of their proud identity. When the Catholics rise in defiance, they become the Defenders protecting their homes and livelihoods but also striking back in similar measure. Their stones and taunts are the weapons used by those who do not own a gun. A brave few take shots at the "Orangies" ducking around corners and fences as the Defenders popped in and out of hedges and bogs. They refuse the Orangeman respect but are not strong enough to suffer them the ultimate insult of *indifference*. Theirs is a courageous and indomitable identity.

Within this stylized drama lies concealed an element common to both ritual and the feud—*fear.* Girard's analysis of ritual uncovers the fear of unleashed retributory violence hidden at the heart of its reenactments. In the feud, the driving force is always honor, but it is an honor with an underside of fear (Boehm, 1984, pp58-63). Unless violent reprisal is undertaken, one's weaknesses are exposed and all is laid bare for the taking. *Marching* and *rising* emanate from the fear that Protestants and Catholics have of each other.

Perhaps now it is possible to understand why it matters so much when so little seems at stake. *Marching* and *rising* are the way people deal with fears that would otherwise overwhelm them. *Marching* and *rising* conceal panic and fright under the guise of unionist and nationalist *virtues*.[14] Without *marching* and *rising*, they would have nothing but unbridled violence to protect and sustain them. So they *march* and *rise* to maintain loyalist vigilance on the Protestant side and to pass on the republican ideal on the Catholic. What they really do is condemn the next generation to the same legacy of hatred and recrimination, assassination and murder, domination and rebellion that has cost this generation so much blood.

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particular instances does it become a serious matter. The rest of the time, it is an insignificant event. (Boehm, 1984, p94, 219)

[14] During the IRA cease-fire (1993-1996), Jonathan Stevenson interviewed ex-paramilitary leaders—both loyalists and republicans—about their experience of *Troubles*. He concluded that initially their "motives were more hormonal than political, their concerns more communitarian than constitutional." He continued: "As a practical matter, they were concerned mainly about territory. Next came romance and historical tradition. Politics—that is, whether Northern Ireland stayed British or became Irish—was farther down each man's list. And religion itself came in dead last." Summarizing, Stevenson contended that the conflict is really about "tribal power." (Stevenson, 1996, pp22-23)

[**Special Note to MacArthur Scholars:** Carolyn Nordstrom offers a more general argument that personal grievances, not ideological commitment, are the primary motives within paramilitary units. Her excellent article provides often neglected insight into what really happens on the front lines before it is remolded into fitting ideological propaganda. She writes: "Yet as military endeavor travels down the chain of command to the soldiers on the ground, the rationale for fighting can shift, from large-scale political concerns to very personal ones bereft of either formal or military ideology. What then motivates the actions of ground soldiers? Much more than any conception of political conviction, personal ideas of violence, inter-personal loyalties and antipathies, individual gain, and responses (often spontaneous and unreasoned) to immediate threats dictate soldiers' actions. Military 'tactics' thus become infused with the particular life histories and personalities of the soldiers themselves, and the local cultural traditions in which they operate" (Nordstrom, 1995, p95).]

THE PROBLEM OF A KILLING PEACE

Anyone who isn't confused here doesn't really understand what is going on.

A Belfast Citizen
The Times, 1970

The rituals of marching and rising doomed the people of Ulster to a life of what Frank Wright calls *deterrence relationships* (Wright, 1996). In deterrence relationships, fear and distrust become the principal modes of interaction, determining to a great extent all subsequent social and political dynamics. In the North of Ireland, the reciprocity of Protestant and Catholic fears—as well as their response to being feared—is almost palpable. It is precisely from this starting point that the people of Northern Ireland must begin their search for peace.[15]

In deterrence relationships, violence is *representative*. A person becomes a target because of *who* he/she is, not *what* he/she did. No violence has only private significance. When an act of aggression occurs, the first concern is the religion of the victim. The first question is whether it denotes an attack on the group. In an assault, the individuals involved *represent* the groups of which they are members, the actions taken *represent* group acts. As a result, each violent deed incriminates everyone.

Two aspects of representative violence are of great significance. First, it is not necessary that someone agree with and support the violence to become involved in it. A person becomes implicated the moment he/she understands what is happening and is frightened by it. No matter how much one despises violence, there is no escape from it. Like it or not, this person is in danger, and the only people providing protection are the same individuals who are the chief provokers of violence in the first place. As the violence escalates, so does the fear, and the more deeply entangled everyone becomes.

Secondly, since the whole group is held responsible for the actions of a few, people become typecast by the worst atrocities committed. In the course of a normal day, a person meets and interacts with perhaps hundreds of unknown people. They are strangers about whom one knows nothing of any personal significance. As fear overtakes an individual, he/she learns that it is prudent to expect the worst and act accordingly. Nothing can refute the suspicion that within every chance encounter lurks a gruesome death. The parked car, the baby carriage, the package delivered—all are bombs! Moreover, it is not just a bomb, but the ghastly explosion that took so many lives last year. In his/her eyes, all members of the opposing group become hideous murderers.

These experiences and perceptions do not go away when violence subsides and calm returns. Within the deterrence relationship, as Wright maintains, "The way things work during times of tranquillity is based on the outcome of the last outbreak of violence" (Wright, 1996, p7). The sides erected by confrontation do not easily melt into peaceful accommodation. Divisions created by fear remain submerged in "peaceful" times, but they are never far from the surface. Perhaps common sense can hope for nothing more than forestalling the violence. At least the lull allows a tenuous coexistence that is preferable to the outbreaks of convulsive fury that threaten to engulf all. The ritualized practices of deterrence—*marching* and *rising*—

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[15] The best analyses of Northern Ireland correctly identify the Protestant "siege mentality" as a critical element (e.g., A. T. Q. Stewart [1977] and David W. Miller [1978]). Nevertheless, Wright maintains that they fail to close the circle and include the response of northern Catholics. As a result, they never make the sectarian interactions of Northern Ireland a *relationship*. (Wright, 1996, p3) However, even this framework is incomplete. Catholics have their own version of a siege mentality that is built upon the metaphor of invasion. Structurally, this rendition mirrors the Protestants' outlook in every respect, except for the counter-value it assigns events (Buckley & Kenney, 1995, pp44-46). "To close the circle" an analysis of sectarian relationships in Northern Ireland must also include the Catholics' "invasion mentality" and Protestants' response to being seen as invaders.

divide the community into opposing sides composed of fear transfigured into hate, but they also constrain the violence that would otherwise murder and destroy.

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> *It is always the enemy who started it. Even if he was not the first to speak it out, he was certainly planning it; and if he was not actually planning it, he was thinking of it; and, if he was not thinking of it, he would have thought of it.*
>
> Elias Canetti
> *Crowds and Power*

Current theories of peace are not very helpful when it comes to Northern Ireland.[16] Whether these theories focus on conflict or cooperation, they encounter serious difficulties when confronting the protracted violence of Ulster's deterrence relationships. A certain blindness attends the role that fear play in making conflicts intractable. Still, the core of the problem is conceptual, and the concept of an enemy provides the missing theoretical dimension.

In the *Concept of the Political*, Carl Schmitt elaborates a conception of the enemy that is instructive. For Schmitt, the notion of an enemy always connotes killing violence (Schmitt, 1976, p33). The enemy is *other*, *different*, *alien*, and *strange* to the degree that no commonality exists between us and them. The breach is total, and this severance produces an entity of unmitigated threat. The preservation or negation of one's way of life is now at issue in every dispute. By definition, the enemy is a foe whose existence must be eliminated.

Schmitt's analysis identifies an entire class of conflict for which peaceful resolution is categorically impossible. Between enemies, every conflict is extreme. No disagreement is ever a matter for compromise or forbearance. If these alternatives arise, then our opponent has ceased to be our enemy. Consequently, war is the most appropriate, indeed the only, means of resolving a conflict, because only war seeks "the existential negation" of the adversary.

Contemporary theories of peace overlook the implications raised by this insight. Whether a conflict erupts into violence is not simply a function of how volatile and acrimonious it has become. Violence enters the dynamics of a conflict only if the adversary is identified as an enemy. Consequently, violent disputes are not the extreme end of a single conflict continuum upon which all discord, according to its severity, can be placed. Instead, it is necessary to treat violent and non-violent conflict as two distinctly separate phenomena, with the concept of the enemy demarcating the boundary.[17]

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[16] Almost all contemporary theoretical approaches to peace are variations of either Kenneth Boulding's *Stable Peace* or Adam Curle's *Making Peace*. Briefly, Boulding finds little empirical correspondence between peace and other social goods like justice. He therefore defines peace as not-war and focuses his analysis on preventing conflict from becoming violent. Curle's conception of peace centers on fair and just relationships created by mutually beneficial cooperation. His concern is to remake unpeaceful relationships into peaceful ones. These two approaches represent what is often called negative and positive peace (Barash, 1991, pp7-8). Recently, Thomas Gregor has proposed that a tripartite scheme replace negative and positive peace typologies (Gregor, 1996, pxviii-xxi). At present, it is too early to tell if this suggestion will produce new theoretical insights or simply reproduce the old typologies under new semantics.

[17] Schmitt maintains that all forms of competition have categories appropriate to the nature of their rivalries (Schmitt, 1976, pp25-26). For economics, it is profitable and unprofitable. For morality, it is good and evil. For aesthetics, it is beautiful and ugly. None of these by themselves can supply reasons for designating someone an enemy. Schmitt writes: "There exists no rational purpose, no norm no matter how true, no program no matter how exemplary, no social ideal no matter how beautiful. no legitimacy

Antagonisms generated between enemies defy the conflict resolution mechanisms that work so well in non-violent disputes. The principal reason is that the future survival of the parties is fundamentally at risk in any altercation. When the stakes are matters of life and death, suspicion and skepticism replace more trusting and neighborly modes of interaction. Mediation tools and negotiation techniques cannot defuse the fear and distrust that are engendered, and peace remains elusive.

Theories that focus on promoting cooperation rather than resolving conflict fare no better. The working assumption employed here is that cooperation can bridge the gap—the rupture in commonality—that attends enemy relationships. It produces mutually beneficial results, thereby replacing enmity with amity. Common sense and everyday experience would seemingly validate this intuition. However, there is strong theoretical evidence against making the claim that cooperation causes peace.

In *Rediscovering the Social Group*, John C. Turner argues that cooperation occurs only in the context of a perceived *we-ness* (Turner, 1987, p34). In other words, the perception that *we* share commonality and association makes cooperative activities possible. However, according to Schmitt, it is precisely the perceived lack of any commonality and association that defines the enemy. Consequently, cooperation between enemies is a theoretical impossibility. While cooperation can unquestionably build upon ties of *we-ness* that already exist—and even expand them into new areas of interaction—it cannot create these bonds where they are completely absent. Because the social and political breach between enemies is total, cooperation as a peace-generating activity proves ineffective.

* * *

The concept of the enemy causes problems for peace theories that make either conflict or cooperation the fundamental axis of analysis. The reason lies in the mimetic features of enemy relationships. The dynamics that drive these interactions are *sameness*, *difference*, and *competition* (Volkan, 1990, pp37-39). Those familiar with the work of René Girard will recognize the elements of mimetic rivalry. The crisis that these dynamics produce moves toward resolution in the sacrifice of a scapegoat, and the peace that results is the product of this expulsion and death. In protracted, intractable conflicts, the scapegoat expelled is, of course, the enemy. Therefore, at the conceptual level, peace emerges from the negation of the enemy.

A curious paradox arises: peace may be less the solution for violence than the central motivation for violence. The vision of peace adhered to by the warring sides excludes the other side. The essence of this dilemma is the sacrificial derivation of peace. The mere presence of the enemy represents the negation of peace. Consequently, it is the desire for peace that drives the parties to eliminate each other. The creation of inclusive peace surfaces as the problem.

THE CHALLENGE OF INCLUSIVE PEACE

You make peace with your enemies, not your friends.

Yitzhak Rabin

A detailed presentation of a theoretical framework for addressing protracted, intractable conflicts is well beyond the scope of this paper. An extremely cursory outline must suffice. The fundamental task is the creation of inclusive visions of peace in which the conflicts generated by deterrence relationships can be resolved.[18] This undertaking is no easy assignment because the divisions are laced with so much violence

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nor legality which could justify men in killing each other for this reason" (p49). Only the appellation *the enemy* can compel the slaying of another.

[18] In the wake of the IRA return to violence, Jonathan Stevenson, a journalist for *The Economist* and *The* (London) *Sunday Times* who has lived in Belfast for the past three years, has offered the judgment that neither side sees the other as a trustworthy partner with whom they might govern Northern Ireland

that even first-steps seem impossible. Still, from a Girardian perspective, two separate, but linked, operations appear essential: ***creating transcenders***[19] and ***transforming conflict***.

CREATING TRANSCENDERS

> *In the image of the enemy, we will find the mirror in which we may see our own face most clearly.*
>
> Sam Keen
> *Faces of the Enemy*

If the enemy is someone who was potentially one of us and from whom we have been separated by violence, then the first task is to reestablish the human bonds that once connected us. Very little research has been done in this area, and the available literature is virtually nonexistent. The best way to proceed is through stories. Two from Northern Ireland are noteworthy.

In his Nobel Laureate acceptance speech, Séamus Heaney tells of a group of eleven workers who, on January 5, 1976, were returning home after a day's labor. Near Kingsmill in South Armagh, they were stopped by twelve gunmen at a bogus checkpoint. After they made them get out and line up, they asked if there were any Catholics in the group. There was one, who made a move to step out. A hand reached out to hold him back. The message was one of commonality, of "we-ness." It whispered: don't; we won't tell—you are one of us. However, the move had been made, and the Catholic stepped out. He would not put the lives of his fellow workers in jeopardy. It too was a demonstration of their common humanity. They told him to move away, and they gunned down the remaining ten Protestants. The men in masks were the Provisional IRA. The workers are dead, but their gesture lives on. They are *transcenders* for those who reach across divisions of violence.

On November 8, 1987, Gordon Wilson and his twenty-year old daughter Marie attended the Remembrance Day Parade in Enniskillen.[20] The IRA had planted a bomb under the speaker's podium. When the explosion went off, it killed eleven people, including Marie, and injured sixty-three more. Wilson held his daughter's hand as she lay under piles of rubble. A few hours later, she died at the hospital. Only moments after he left her, he gave an interview to a BBC correspondent in which he pleaded for a cease-fire. In the midst of his loss and pain, he renounced revenge and called for peace. For years, he tried to meet with the IRA to express personally his desire for a halt to the violence. Although Wilson was a member by appointment of the Irish Senate, he wanted to meet them as Gordon Wilson, father of Marie Wilson, who had died. He want to connect with those who had also lost family members. He was finally granted an interview on April 7, 1993. He felt that he failed when the IRA rejected his request.[21] However, one can never be sure. Gordon Wilson was a *transcender*.[22]

(Stevenson, 1996, p55). It is tempting to say that this is as true now as it was in 1974 when the Sunningdale agreement collapsed. Currently, neither side sees the "talks process" as being in their interests. Unionists think that it will only lead to an endless series of concessions culminating in their surrender and a united Ireland. Nationalists believe that neither unionists nor the British are serious about meaningful change. The bottom line remains essentially unchanged: no pragmatic visions of inclusive peace command broad cross-community allegiance—at least among leading politicians.

[19] I borrow the term *transcenders* from Louise Diamond, the co-director of the Center for Multi-Track Diplomacy.

[20] Remembrance Day is the UK's version of Veterans' Day in the United States. Most adults wear red paper poppies in their lapels to honor the fallen soldiers of the two world wars. The most ardent observers of this tradition are Ulster Protestants. Most Catholics in the North leave their lapels unadorned.

[21] At the meeting the IRA offered Wilson a typewritten apology for the death of his daughter. However, the note reiterated that the bomb was a mistake, thereby excusing IRA culpability and blaming everything on

Transcenders are many things—people, actions, events, gestures, metaphors, dreams, and visions. In Northern Ireland, the non-sacrificial stories in the Gospels are central. The form is not important. It is the task they accomplish that is significant: *they connect what violence has severed.* Anwar Sadat's address to the Israeli Knesset in 1977 is an excellent example. Without changing his position is any substantial way, Sadat touched the Israeli people. Listen to the metaphors, images, and emotions he used to link Egyptian and Israeli in a common "we-ness."

> *I come to you today on solid ground to shape a new life and to establish peace ….*
>
> *Any life that is lost in war is a human life, be it that of an Arab or an Israeli. A wife who becomes a widow is a human being entitled to a happy family, whether she be an Arab or an Israeli.*
>
> *Innocent children who are deprived of the care and compassion of their parents are ours. They are ours, be they living on Arab or Israeli land ….*
>
> *You want to live with us, in this part of the world.*
>
> *In all sincerity I tell you we welcome you among us, with full security and safety. This in itself is a tremendous turning point, one of the landmarks of a decisive historical change. We used to reject you. We had our reasons and our fears, yes ….*
>
> *Yet today I tell you, and I declare it to the whole world, that we accept to live with you in permanent peace based on justice ….*
>
> *What is peace for Israel? It means that Israel lives in the region with her Arab neighbors in security and safety ….*
>
> *Peace is not a mere endorsement of written lines. Rather it is a rewriting of history ….*
>
> *This is Egypt, whose people have entrusted me with their sacred message. A message of security, safety and peace to every man, women, and child in Israel. I say, encourage your leadership to struggle for peace. …*
>
> *So we agree* Salam Aleikum—*peace be upon you.*

TRANSFORMING CONFLICT

> *To make peace with an enemy, one must work with*
> *that enemy, and that enemy becomes your partner.*
>
> Nelson Mandela

By definition, intractable conflicts cannot be resolved. Still, they can be transformed into tractable ones that are, in principle, capable of resolution. The only way to do this is to construct a context that includes the sacrificially expelled other. It is here that public peace processes play a crucial role.

The notion of public peace processes is associated with Harold Saunders, a U.S. career diplomat with more than twenty years of experience. Saunders often heard advisors argue that a particular situation was not "ripe" for settlement. Yet, he also knew that conflicts rarely ripen by themselves. It always takes someone working to change the relationship between the parties to "ripen" it. This person is always toiling behind the scenes to help the parties turn from an "us/them" to a "we" relationship. As he once commented: "Thinking as 'we' produces a recognizable shift in mental gears" (Saunders, 1990, p11).

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the British presence in Northern Ireland. Wilson reported that the meeting broke down after he expressd his weariness of hearing the IRA explain away their murders as "mistakes." It was then agreed that they were getting nowhere.

[22] Wilson also attempted to meet with UDA-UFF gunmen after they gunned down seven innocent civilians at Greysteel in retaliation for the bombing of Shankill fish shop in 1993 in which nine were killed (Stevenson, 1996, p258)

Concerning the fear and distrust separating Arabs and Israelis, Saunders writes: "The Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict—like other conflicts—has left few people without their own, individual world of pain. As I flew on the Kissinger shuttles, I saw pain at every turn and in every person, from the president and prime minister to each diplomat, soldier, lawyer, journalist, teacher, driver, chambermaid, husband, wife, mother, father, son, and daughter. Israelis and Arabs and members of the American Jewish and Arab-American communities became personal friends and shared their sensibilities, their fears, and their pain with me in rich human exchanges. … As I reached out on a human level in 1973 to Arabs and Israelis who had suffered in their own ways, I discovered the human bonds that draw together people in pain" (Saunders, 1991, pxii).

Recounting his first encounter with Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel, Saunders tells of her personal concern about his sense of grief and loss— his wife had just died the day before. It was the day when the casualty figures for the 1973 War were announced in Israel, and Meir, full of her own hurt, took his hand and said, "I'm terribly sorry about your loss. I lost a lot of my people. I know how you feel." Saunders recounts: "Moving beyond the pain of individual loss, I realized that many of the highest obstacles to negotiation and peace could be found in the pain of the human being involved. I discovered that those obstacles could be eroded by acknowledgment on each side of the other's suffering and by open acceptance of a common humanity" (Saunders, 1991, pxii).

The role that apology can play is also a rich area for exploration (Goldberg, Green, & Sander, 1987). In *Mea Culpa*, Nicholas Tavuchis contends that apology is a way of owning the grievances that we have committed. In apology, we affirm the normative commitments that bind us together and that our misbehavior transgressed. We express more than remorse and sorrow; we also endorse a vision of what the relationship should be. We acknowledge that no excuse or explanation can cancel the harm we have done. This act of standing defenseless and accountable for the crimes we have perpetrated is in itself a declaration of the moral universe that we have pledged to honor. Apology ratifies our future membership in a community that includes both ourselves as victimizer and those whom we have victimized.[23]

While apology is often an interpersonal affair, one group of people can apologize to another. Although the dynamics are significantly different, collective apology retains the uniquely restorative energies that make individual apology so potent.[24] It establishes a moral self-image in the social ambiance that is shared with the other group. In this way, the moral social bonds needed to reunite the parties are put into play. A future that is not the repetition of old crimes becomes a new and realistic possibility.[25]

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[23] Even the act of considering apologizing betrays moral connectedness that is not normally present across sectarian divides. Take the case of former loyalist prisoners convicted of murder who, since their release, have contemplated contacting the relatives of their victims (Stevenson, 1996, p243). Many decided not to. However, the reasons they give reveal an openhearted sensitivity to the hurt and trauma these people have lived through. Rather than focusing on the need to address their own consciences, they instead respond to the desire of their victims' relatives to put their suffering behind them and get on with their lives. Even this small, and perhaps insignificant, shift in moral attention is instructive of the moral reconstruction apology embodies.

[24] With interpersonal relationship, remorse and sorrow validate the apology. However, collective apologies must turn to the public record to register anguish and regret. By atoning "on the record," a group gives it apology official standing and says to the injured communities that *we mean the contrition that we express*. It accomplishes the same thing that an expression of personal sorrow does for a hurt individual. This step back from interpersonal transactions does not represent a diminished capacity to apologize because the degree of remorse is not the final measure of apology's achievements. The principal evaluation of collective apology lies with its remedial accomplishments.

[25] The cultural and political contexts in which apology occurs are extremely important. Apologizing may mean different things to dissimilar cultures. The contrast between the United States and Japan is often analyzed (Wagatsuma & Rosett, 1986; Tavuchis, 1991, pp37-42). However, a Japanese study concludes that apology has a profound effect on the mediation of conflict, limiting both anger and aggression

These suggestions do not exhaust the possibilities for transforming conflict.[26] The essential point is that they give intractable conflict a new reference point—"we-ness." Numerous institutional configurations are plausible if they are constructed under a common "we-ness." Absent this, no solution is viable—no matter how ingenious, fair, or beneficial! This is the job of *conflict transformation*.[27]

* * *

Apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation are frequently treated by political scientists as religious values—as, of course, they are. However, they are often dismissed as being politically irrelevant and/or morally objectionable because they require that transgression be *forgotten*. Apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation are cast in one way or another as a mode of forgetting.

The notable exception to this standard political tract is Hannah Arendt. Nowhere in her short treatise on forgiveness in *The Human Condition* does she mention forgetting (Arendt, 1958, pp236-243). Instead, she argues that forgiving is truly an act of freedom. Revenge—the alternative to forgiveness—is merely a reaction that stands in contrast to the unpredictable and unexpected character of forgiveness. Arendt emphasizes that forgiveness releases us from the consequences of irreversible human acts. Forgiveness sets aside revenge.

(Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989). It goes on to suggest that apology has a similar role and function in Western societies. Furthermore, there is good reason to expect that U.S. jurisprudence would benefit from incorporating apology within its legal proceedings as the Japanese system does (Wagatsuma & Rosett, 1986).

Likewise, the political context can also alter both the significance and likelihood of an apology. Regarding Northern Ireland, Stevenson notes that it is easier for loyalists than republicans to express remorse for the violence they have done. At the time of their cease-fire, loyalists still had the union—which they proclaimed "safe"—and the principle of consent—the "unionist veto." In contrast, the goal of a united Ireland remains only a distant prospect for the IRA who attributes most, if not all, of its gains to a strategy of "armed struggle" (Stevenson, 1996, p140). [Furthermore, they feel that they have less to apologize for because their ideology shields them from facing the sectarian aspect of their campaign.] The refusal of the IRA to offer any apology at all is a source of deep resentment among Protestants. However, from the IRA's point of view, to issue an apology is an act of surrender. This disjunction in the political meaning of apology between loyalist and republicans locates precisely the intractable aspects of the conflict that plague the All-Party Talks.

[26] For other examples, see Johnston and Sampson, 1994.

[27] Bill Hutchenson, member of the Progressive Unionist Party and onetime Officer Commanding (OC) for UVF prisoners, has been the most outspoken proponent of conflict transformation in Northern Ireland. (The PUP is a party lead by ex-loyalists, mainly former prisoners, that has close associations with the Ulster Volunteer Force.) He has repeatedly called for moving the conflict off a plane of violence and onto one of negotiation. Billy Mitchell, a cohort of Hutchenson's and former UVF education officer in the Maze, writes: "I'm not asking republicans to give up their aspirations. All I am saying is that we don't believe in conflict resolution. We don't believe you can resolve this polarity of republicanism and unionism, but we do believe you can transform conflict from violence to dialogue" (Stevenson, 1996, p157)

Jonathan Stevenson believes that, for the idiom of the conflict to move from coercion to negotiation, the border issue must assume a lower profile. In the realm of the practical, it means that republicans embrace social justice, rather than nationalist ideology, as the driving force of its politics and that loyalists make impartiality the centerpiece of a devolved government. These undertakings would, in his opinion, seriously reduce the importance of the constitutional question in both communities (Stevenson, 1996, p181). Each of these developments would reflect a commitment to see the other side as *part of us*.

Jean Hampton makes this dimension of forgiveness more explicit (Murphy & Hampton, 1988, pp36-43). She maintains that, in a religious (Christian) sense, forgiveness is never forgetting. Instead it is setting aside, displacing from the center of the relationship the act of violation. In this way, the forgiver responds to a transgressor as someone other than a person who has hurt me. Nothing is forgotten, the wrongful deed is simply moved to the sidelines.

The reconciliation sought by the truth commissions in El Salvador and South Africa takes on a new light when viewed from this perspective. It is unfair and inaccurate to charge them with papering over nefarious crimes by excusing those responsible for committing unspeakable atrocities. Clearly, both societies have a history of human rights abuses that cannot and should not be ignored. Nevertheless, while the future depends upon an honest reckoning with these reprehensible acts, the path of retributive justice presents serious economic and political difficulties. From a practical point of view, neither society can afford to dwell upon the prosecution of previous crimes—no matter how morally and legally justified their indictment may be—because a better future requires the participation and cooperation of the old guard elite. Consequently, the only really viable—and therefore moral option—is to identify, thereby remembering, the villainy of the past, but then to displace this legacy of inhumanity to the margins of societal concern.[28] In this way, the relationships that are needed to create a prosperous future have a better chance of being built. The morality of the truth commissions rests with the increased welfare that they can provide to the old regime's victims.

This political view of apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation has special significance for Northern Ireland. People often look nostalgically at the decade before the Troubles as a time of peace. However, it was a period when violent street confrontations, arson, and intimidation were frequent occurrences (Purdie, 1990, pp9-37). In fact, the disturbances of the past summer would not have seemed extraordinary—although they would have been at the extreme end of what was considered typical. The tensions and discord that Northern Ireland is currently experiencing appear more ominous because they are happening against the backdrop of a twenty-five year civil war. People now fear a return of the cycles of retribution and bloodshed even more than when the horror of the last quarter century seemed unthinkable.

The central task before Northern Ireland is to discover ways to move the legacy of avenging carnage to the side—to find the psychologically thin line between remembrance and obsession. The search is for collaborators more than friends. Certainly, the people of Northern Ireland must work for more than mere peaceful coexistence, but they can begin only when they have this. Perhaps then, they can again accomplish the unimaginable: that a society torn asunder by twenty-five years of violence can put itself back together again.

Northern Ireland has too long succumbed to a senseless violence offering fresh quotas of dead and wounded in commemoration of previous violence. If the present framework can provide a vision of an inclusive peace that transcends the sacred violence that scapegoats Protestant and Catholic, it will have performed a monumental task. Perhaps Anwar Sadat captured best the dimensions to this undertaking when he stated: *Peace is not a mere endorsement of written lines. Rather it is the rewriting of history … .*[29]

APPENDIX

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[28] The Truth Commission in El Salvador, as well as the Rettig Commission in Chile, achieved the rather vague objective of "truth and reconciliation" in very concrete ways. Both commissions recommended the payment of reparations and the undertaking of symbolic actions to commemorate victims. Both meted out punishment in the form of dismissals, forced resignations, and stigmatization. In particular, the Salvadoran Commission was an integral part of an overall attempt to transform the society, overseen by the UN Observer Mission (ONUSAL). In the end, both increased the protection of human rights by strengthening its normative and institutional foundation. (Ensalaco, 1994)

[29] Speech to the Israeli Knesset. (November 8, 1977)

GIRARDIAN THEORY: A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Girardian (or mimetic) theory presents an account of human relationships based upon the imitative nature of desire. From this initial insight, it goes on to offer an explanation of how violence generates the structures of human community. Finally, it examines how myth, ritual, and prohibition function to conceal and control violence. Under the present constraints, no more than the briefest outline is possible.

1. Girard maintains that human desire is mimetic—that is, we learn what to desire by copying the desires of others. These desires we mimic can take many forms, but the most immediately apparent example is the acquisitive desire generated by the advertising industry. When we watch advertising, we discover that craving wells up inside us. It seems that our seeing others enjoy things creates an acquisitive longing for the same things. However, serious conflicts begin to arise when desire takes this acquisitive form. We start seeking the same, identical goods and commodities as people around us. If supply becomes limited, mimetic rivals find their craving focused upon a single object and their relationship becomes conflictual.

The real issue at stake in mimetic rivalry is never simply the possession of any particular article or commodity. Instead, a conflictful mimesis soon replaces an acquisitive desire for coveted things. This shift occurs because the rivals become acutely aware at a fundamental level that they lack a clear and firm sense of *what a human being actually is*. They experience personally and intimately their own deficiencies while, at the same time, they see other human beings around them who appear to be whole and complete. As a representative of genuine personhood, the *other*—the *model*—identifies the desires, possessions, and goals that constitute authentic humanity. In other words, the *other* gives shape to our *life-project* as a human being. Fundamentally, rivals covet not a common object but each other's *being*, the other's *essence* as a human being.

In a mimetic framework, the *other* exists simultaneously as both *model* and *obstacle*. These dual roles are inseparably joined since we must compete to fulfill the very desires we have inspired. It is this coupling of model and obstacle that leads acquisitive mimesis toward violence. The critical moment occurs when rivals form *doubles*. By simultaneously taking each other as a model, they also serve as mutual obstacles for each other. Doubles invariably lock into a reciprocity of escalating frustration and antagonism, and this mimetic exchange eventually becomes violent.

2. According to Girardian theory, a mimetic contagion leads to a sacrificial crisis as people begin to search for the cause of violent chaos that has descended upon them. Of course, no person or group is solely responsible because the violence and disorder are beyond what anyone could possibly do. The responsibility for a sacrificial crisis is inevitably varied, complex, and gradated and, from a Girardian perspective, always mutual since the dynamics of violence and disorder are mimetic. The crisis will continue to mount until a scapegoat is killed—sacrificed.

An act of *sacred violence—sacrifice*—discharges mimetically generated violence onto an arbitrary and innocent victim. Once this occurs, rampant disorder subsides, and peace returns to the community. Because this dynamic works completely at an unconscious level, the group is able to transfer responsibility for violence to the victim, even to the point of attributing to him/her the violence they have just committed against him/her. The crucial Girardian insight is that a murder—a killing, a sacrifice—lies behind every peaceful order.

Girard calls this channeling of violence away from the community and towards a surrogate victim the *scapegoat mechanism*. The surrogate victim (*the other*) becomes associated with the violent chaos that threatens to destroy the community. The peace that comes about stands in stark opposition to the savagery of the epidemic violence that was discharged in the sacrifice. This act of sacrificial expulsion establishes the fundamental differentiation upon which social order is built and maintained.

The scapegoat mechanism establishes key in-group/out-group differentiations that maintain the community's structure and cohesion. Long after the sacrificial crisis subsides, these inside/outside group perceptions perpetuate divisions that fortify the in-group solidarity and encourage out-group enmity. The scapegoat mechanism laces these in-group/out- group divisions with revenge as antagonists identify themselves principally through their hostility to their enemies.

3. Girard maintains that myths are stories of sacrifice told from the perspective of the sacrificers. They recount the transgressions of the scapegoated *other*. They celebrate the virtues and courage of the killing mob. They extol the benefits of the social order that arose from their founding violence. They proclaim the values that created their amicable rapport. They promise the arrival of an everlasting *peace*.

Myths disguise and erase sacrificial violence. The murder of the scapegoat becomes an act of self-defense. The injustices done to him/her are remade to appear as our victimization. Myths convert the insults arbitrarily heaped upon the head of the scapegoat into courageous acts on our part. They transvalue everything: innocence becomes guilt; reckless parades as responsibility; deceit substitutes for trustworthiness; hate claims to be love. Myths are the lies we tell ourselves about our own violence.

Girard contends that prohibition and ritual also arise from sacrificial crises. They are generated by the scapegoat mechanism as the means by which communities gain control over their violence. Societies prohibit things that are so mimetically charged that intense rivalries develop when they become available. Should someone try to obtain possession of such an object, a mimetic contagion would likely ensue. On the other hand, a ritual reenacts a sacrificial crisis in a very carefully prescribed manner. The purpose is to increase artificially mimetic antagonisms and then to discharge them in a safe fashion. Both these devices seek to lessen violence. Prohibitions forestall sacrificial crises, thereby suppressing violence, and rituals speed up sacrificial crises so that violence will be discharged before it explodes.

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