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## Review Of "Violence Unveiled: Humanity At The Crossroads" By G. Bailie

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## The Journal of Religion

imperialistic grounds” (p. 230). As such, the work of these scholars serves to broaden the field as a whole and illustrates the nature of religious studies as an inclusive academic program of discovery and dialogue. This approach, however, may be overly simplistic insofar as it ignores the particular ideological agendas that may underlie these scholars’ works (see, e.g., Robert Sharf’s study of D. T. Suzuki and the Kyoto School in “The Zen of Japanese Nationalism,” *History of Religions*, vol. 33, no. 1 [1993]). That is, whereas the contributions of these scholars may suggest that the dialogue within religious studies as a discipline is not univocally western, this hardly means that it is ideologically neutral. Moreover, the simple existence of nonwestern contributions to religious studies does not mitigate against the role of parochial agendas in their reception by the western academy (it is interesting to note, e.g., that these nonwestern scholars are discussed specifically in their capacity as nonwesterners and not in the context of any particular methodological issue or debate). Clearly, the ideological and culturally partisan underpinnings of religious studies remains a complex issue, one which demands detailed study and discussion of the sort this work otherwise demonstrates admirably.

It is inevitable that a work of this size must be selective in its coverage. In reprinting the original two-volume collection within a single volume, the editor chose to reduce the total number of articles rather than condense any given work. The resulting volume consequently sacrifices some of the scope of the original, including articles treating social anthropology (including structuralism), comparative method, and the study of myths. More important, however, the articles that are included remain fundamentally unchanged from their first publication in 1984 and 1985; most of the scholarship cited in these articles dates from the sixties and seventies. As a result, more recent developments are not discussed, including contributions from postmodern, poststructuralist, and critical theory. The collection should thus be seen less as a review of the state of the art than as a detailed depiction of the discipline as it existed fifteen to twenty years ago. Insofar as this period represents a watershed for the study of religion, however, upon which current scholars still rely heavily and to which new developments must respond, this collection of articles remains a valuable resource, as an excellent and admirably nonpartisan description of many of the debates that shaped—and continue to shape—the study of religion.

MICHAEL BATHGATE, *Chicago, Illinois*.

BAILIE, GIL. *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1995. xvi+293 pp. \$24.95 (cloth).

This excellent book offers a profound analysis of the origin and growth of violence in Western culture. Mining the scholarship of René Girard, Bailie argues that ritualized official violence holds societies together. But when the moral legitimation for such violence has eroded—when, for example, it is proven that capital punishment is disproportionately directed against poor defendants who cannot afford adequate legal representation—then members of the society question the ethical basis of their common life together. Well-established acts of sanctioned violence in the West no longer provide the moral legitimacy and cathartic release for the body politic they once did. As a consequence, we turn to more elaborate and destructive forms of violence in order to achieve the same results once promised by previous forms of official violence. Bailie questions our nostalgia for a

time when the “good” violence undertaken by legitimate leaders against proven lawbreakers could be separated from the “bad” violence unleashed against innocents by evildoers. In the post-Vietnam era we now realize that policymakers and security personnel can be just as corrupt as the persons we supposedly need protection from. Western society is mired in a miasmatic confusion where the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate violence have hopelessly blurred. Thus we hunger for more powerful and spectacular forms of sanctioned violence that can provide the emotional and moral satisfaction that older forms of official violence once promised.

The irony in this situation is that at precisely the point in history when the collective appetite for violence has increased, the awareness of the pernicious effects of growing violence has also increased. Bailie argues that this heightened awareness is a result of the still powerful vestigial influence of biblical religion in Western culture. Through wonderfully nuanced readings of the Hebrew Bible and Christian scriptures Bailie demonstrates that the Bible is centrally concerned with the plight of victims of unjust social systems. Bailie acknowledges that the biblical texts are “in travail” and not always consistent in their denunciation of social injustice. But the prophets’ championing of the cause of the poor and Jesus’ message of compassion for the disenfranchised is a red thread that runs throughout the texts in general.

As an apology for Christianity this book’s strength is also its weakness. Bailie’s Girardian reading of the current crisis is powerfully illuminating, but the sometimes triumphalist and dismissive tone of the argument detracts from its overall appeal. Using the “epistemological superiority of the cross” (p. 236) as his point of departure, he criticizes modern philosophy for its moral bankruptcy and cultural irrelevance. But what Bailie fails to recognize is that many contemporary theorists have made a similar turn to a religious (even biblical) ethic that is very similar to his and Girard’s. Derrida’s recent work on justice and the gift, for example, signals a restored interest in the responsibility of each person to his or her neighbor: to be fully human is to allow God to rouse us to our responsibilities for the welfare of the other. In spite of his interpretation of contemporary philosophy, Bailie’s *Violence Unveiled* offers a compelling theological analysis of the origin and character of violence in our time.

MARK I. WALLACE, *Swarthmore College*.

ELDER, CHARLES R. *The Grammar of the Unconscious: The Conceptual Foundations of Psychoanalysis*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994. xiii+254 pp. \$35.00 (cloth); \$16.95 (paper).

In this engaged book, Charles Elder uses the methods of a Viennese philosophic genius, Ludwig Wittgenstein, to interrogate key texts by another Viennese genius, Sigmund Freud. Since its origins in Freud’s medical practice the academic and scientific standing of psychoanalysis has fluctuated. While it dominated American psychiatry from the late 1940s to the early 1980s and retained the honorific “science,” few practitioners claim that psychoanalysis is a “normal” science in the terms of the late Thomas Kuhn’s masterpiece, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). Believing psychoanalysis had no genuine puzzles to solve, Kuhn declared it did not merit discussion. In contrast, Elder spends considerable intellectual capital examining Freudian texts published from 1900 to 1938, especially Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).