Why is politics so closely tied to death and destruction, and why is religion so often the midwife of sacrifice and ritual murder? This book addresses these questions, relying chiefly on the insights of René Girard’s mimetic theory, Carl Schmitt’s reflections on sovereignty, and Giorgio Agamben’s notion of “homo sacer”. Bringing together a remarkable collection of essays written by leading experts, the book ends appropriately with a chapter devoted to the present time defined as “mimetic post-modernity or “the age of panic”.

— Fred R. Dallmayr, Emeritus Packey J. Dee Professor of Political Theory, University of Notre Dame, USA

In the renewed debate about political theology, René Girard’s mimetic theory holds particular relevance. When the loss of human lives escalates dramatically, the sacrificial paradigm becomes a particularly penetrating interpretative key. The essays collected in this volume, located at the intersection of biopolitics and political theology, capture a decisive aspect of our time.

— Roberto Esposito, Professor of Theoretical Philosophy, Scuola Normale Superiore, Italy

This collection of thought-provoking essays shows what Girard’s mimetic theory can contribute to the Western tradition of political theory from Aristotle to Agamben by illuminating the dark side of politics and sovereignty.

— Wolfgang Palaver, Professor in the Department of Systematic Theology, University of Innsbruck, Austria

It is a rare event for such a startling and original collection of essays to appear. Drawing in various ways on René Girard’s profound meditations on the deeper well-springs of our civilisation, this book reflects not just the work of a man but also the world that he represented and created. The European imagination has always been torn between the sacred and the profane, between the profundity of sacrifice and the violence of victimhood. This is reflected in modern forms of political sovereignty, which imbues both the body and the body politic with a dynamic of repressed and expressed violence, the management of which is the essence of contemporary statecraft. This brilliant collection of articles represent a profound meditation on fundamental questions of our times and therefore illuminates the enduring amalgam of the sacred and the political in all times.

— Richard Sakwa, Professor of Russian and European Politics, University of Kent, UK

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