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***Can the 'Art' of Peace become a Work of Violence? Explorations
of Religious 'Works of Peace' in Willa Cather's 'Death
Comes for the Archbishop'***

Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* tells the story of the Catholic Church's re-entrance, in the 19th century, into the American Southwest. Here, Cather explores the different relationships between priests, Mexicans and Indians and looks at the ways in which these different cultures intersect both spiritually and geographically. The movement of the archbishop, as well as the other priests who follow him to the Southwest, is a story of colonization even though their actions are conducted with religious aspirations. Cather takes into account the movement of an institution like a church, into a foreign land, thereby unfolding the multiple implications of the bishop's actions. No matter how one perceives what is defined as "good" or perhaps desires to "help" another, even if it is with a desire for peace, there is always an impact, on both parties involved, and the violence undertaken ultimately has to be gauged. Cather's tale, then, of religious and cultural norms coming into contact with each other, depicts how these interactions reshape new norms of peace, while simultaneously creating newly understood and necessary forms of violence. In this paper, I will use Girard's understanding of the relationship between peace and violence to explore the interactions between the priests and local people within Cather's novel. I will look at the ways in which Cather contrasts the differing notions of the 'art' of peace, that is, between what the priests desire to produce and the already existing ways of peace, created and lived out by the local people. Likewise, I will examine the priest's communications and actions with the Mexican and Indian people and the way the priests might have perceived an action as a 'peaceful act' while they were in fact simply reformulating a violence that was already present.