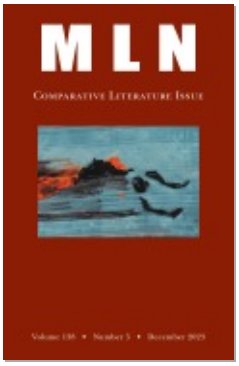
Introducing mimetic studies

Lawtoo, N.

Introducing Mimetic Studies

Nidesh Lawtoo



MLN, Volume 138, Number 5, December 2023, pp. 1379-1391 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/mln.2023.a922029*

Introducing Mimetic Studies

Nidesh Lawtoo

After the linguistic and the affective turn, the new materialist turn and the performative turn, the cognitive turn and the posthuman turn, among other recent theoretical, critical and post-critical turns that are currently transforming what used to be called "the humanities," it is perhaps time to *re*-turn to the ancient, yet also modern and still contemporary realization that humans are mimetic creatures. This also means that they are radically open to a plurality of transformative turns because they, or rather, we are driven by imitative impulses—for good and ill. Mimetic studies is the name of an emerging transdisciplinary field whose primary goal is to keep up with the breathtaking transformations of mimesis in the twenty-first century.[1]

For some time, in fact, a return of attention to a literary and philosophical concept as ancient, resilient, and influential as "mimesis" has been underway in different strands of critical theory, albeit often masked under a plurality of conceptual personae. From mimicry to identification, affective contagion to material influences, mirror neurons to brain plasticity, biomimicry to AI simulations, among other contemporary avatars of what the Greeks called, enigmatically, *mimēsis*, one point at least should be clear: this untranslatable concept can no longer be restricted to the autonomous sphere of realistic representations of nature to be contemplated from a disinterested aesthetic distance—no matter how hyperrealistic digital simulacra have now become in the age of AI revolutions that make computer simulations (almost) indistinguishable from human originality; nor

[1]For general accounts of mimesis that pave the way for mimetic studies see Gebauer and Wulf, and Potolsky. For introductory accounts of mimetic studies see Lawtoo, Homo *Mimeticus* 9-40 and *Violence and the Mimetic Unconscious* 1-34.

MLN 138 (2023): 1379–1391 © 2024 by Johns Hopkins University Press

should mimesis be confined to the familial logic of mimetic desires and the Oedipal rivalries with models that ensue as enemy brothers strive to possess the same romantic object of desire—no matter how diffused scapegoating mechanisms continue to be in periods haunted by (new) fascist and authoritarian leaders that cast a shadow on the present and future. Informed by all that mimetic theories had to offer in the past century, the mimetic turn sails past the Scylla of mimetic realism and the Charybdis mimetic rivalry to account for the realization that imitation is an eminently relational, embodied, and affective force, or *pathos,* that gives birth—paradoxically—to an original, yet still mimetic creature known as *Homo sapiens*. Hence the importance to qualify a protean species that is not only *homo faber* or *homo economicus,* not solely *homo religiosus* or *homo ludens* but also what we propose to call, *homo mimeticus*.

Brief Genealogy of Homo Mimeticus

Born out of an interdisciplinary ERC project called, *Homo Mimeticus: Theory and Criticism* (2016-2022), the essays included in this special issue represent only a small selection of over fifty papers presented at an international conference titled, *The Mimetic Turn,* hosted at KU Leuven, Belgium in 2022.[2] Furthering perspectival approaches to the newly founded transdisciplinary field of mimetic studies, the general goal of the mimetic turn is to operate a paradigm shift in current understandings of mimesis in view of bringing this ancient concept up to speed with the contemporary realization that imitation is rooted in our all too human, and now posthuman condition.[3] Even prior to AI revolutions that made it possible for chatbots (GPT-4 being the latest version as I write) to effectively mimic what used to be considered humans' distinguishing characteristic, namely language, it was clear that different forms of human and nonhuman mimicry were casting a material shadow on the present and future: from identification with (new) fascist leaders to viral contagion, emotional contagion to algorithmic influences, mirroring escalations of nuclear threats to post-truth, conspiracy theories to deepfakes, among other digital manifestations of mimesis currently animating *homo mimeticus 2.0*,

[2]A theory of homo mimeticus is articulated in Lawtoo, *Homo Mimeticus*. Other essays are forthcoming in a volume titled *Homo Mimeticus II: The Re-Turn of Mimesis*. More outputs in mimetic studies can be found at www.homomimeticus.eu

[3]For recent special issues and volumes on the "mimetic condition" in humans and posthumans, see Lawtoo ed. *Mimetic Condition, Posthuman Mimesis*, and *Homo Mimeticus 2.0*. For an informed collection of essays in line with mimetic studies see also Borch ed.

there are numerous signs that an ancient concept predicated on a metaphysics of the same is in need of a radical reframing to account for the proliferation of mimetic differences in the present and future.

The mimetic turn, or *re*-turn, entails among other things a shift of emphasis away from dominant western conceptions of art based on a simple imitation or representation of nature (mimetic realism) toward a relational, affective, and intersubjective conception of mimetic subjectivity open, from birth onward, to imitating other humans and nonhuman figures—including artistic, natural, digitized, or simulated figures (or homo mimeticus). Perhaps the most succinct overturning of perspective that paves the way for mimetic studies finds in Oscar Wilde's paradoxical dictum that "Life imitates Art more than Art imitates Life" (94) its most eloquent expression. Wilde's modernist, but also classical and contemporary realization is that the "imitative instinct" (96) at play in life itself leads humans to imitate artistic models rather than the other way round, thereby opening up the possibility of life imitating nonhuman models as well.

Time and again, and from different perspectives, mimetic studies have been driven by a Janus-faced genealogical imperative: in order to look ahead to the transformations of mimesis in the present century haunted by (new) fascist leaders, the proliferation of AI simulations online, contagious insurrections offline, and rapid climate change in the epoch of the Anthropocene, among other impending threats, contributors repeatedly looked back to the double philosophical and literary origins of mimetic studies that started in classical antiquity and continue to inform the "imitation of the moderns" and the "imitation of the modernists" alike.[4] Furthering Oscar Wilde, but also Friedrich Nietzsche, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, among other precursors of mimetic studies, contributors to this special issue confront the protean manifestations of homo mimeticus that bear the traces of the multiple—pandemic, political, technological, environmental—crises of the 2020s. They also call for a *longue durée* genealogical approach in order to track metamorphoses of mimesis that cast a shadow on the future.

From its theatrical origins in dramatic performance (*mimēsis*, from *mimos*, actor/performance), genealogists of mimesis that paved the way for the mimetic turn, or *re*-turn, made sufficiently clear that the ancient quarrel between philosophy and literature, Plato and Homer, was never simply reduced to metaphysical concerns with (in)adequate

[4]See Lacoue-Labarthe, *L'Imitation*, *Typography*, and Lawtoo, *Phantom*.

representations of ideal forms—though concerns with truth and lies remain central to the vicissitudes of *homo mimeticus* today. Rather, echoing a long chain in mimetic studies attentive to the contagious powers of non-linguistic "communication" (Bataille's term) often located at the juncture of "poetics and politics,"[5] Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen reminds us in his opening essay that this ancient quarrel that pit the father of philosophy (Plato) contra the father of Greece (Homer) was much more concerned with the hypnotic will to power of mythic fictions to form and transform the plastic character of impressionable subjects living a mimetic life or *vita mimetica* in the Greek polis. Furthering his pioneering work on the mimetic foundations of the psychoanalytical subject,[6] Borch-Jacobsen importantly adds that the psychic dispossessions that already preoccupied Plato are now center stage in the age of social media like Facebook and Twitter. New media are generative of alternative facts that do not derive their power from the logic of representation and the phantoms of reality they animate. On the contrary, they cast a magnetic-hypnotic-suggestive shadow on the ego, generating psychic dispossessions that go viral online before retroacting on phantom egos that are increasingly vulnerable to the register of post-truth. An apparently recent phenomenon linked to social media and the emotional contagion they generate, post-truth turns out *not* to be a simple effect of post-structuralism and postmodernism, after all. On the contrary, it is constitutive of the very birth of philosophy itself: out of a patho(-)logical *pharmakon* administered via Platonic dialogues.

As these introductory remarks on mimetic studies are beginning to show, *MLN* provides an ideal home for launching a mimetic turn on the international scene—and for direct genealogical reasons. Published by Johns Hopkins University Press with strong editorial ties to the once named "The Humanities Center," *MLN* played a key role in promoting two competing theories of mimesis linked to scapegoating and writing in the second half of the past century that now require new supplements to go beyond sameness and difference in the present century. Without recapitulating the genealogy of a "mimetic agon" discussed in a previous issue,[7] let us simply recall that on the side of sameness, René Girard, while at Johns Hopkins, contributed to bringing mimesis back in touch with psychological, literary, and anthropological refer-

[5]On contagious communication in Bataille, see Borch-Jacobsen, "Laughter" and Lawtoo, *Phantom* 247-281; on poetics and politics in Lacoue-Labarthe, see Lawtoo, *Poetics* and Bennett, "Mimesis."

[6]See Borch-Jacobsen, *Freudian* and *Emotional*.

[7]Lawtoo, "Shadow"; see also *Homo Mimeticus* 93-125.

ents. He did so by developing a neo-Hegelian theory of mimesis that found in the desire of the desire of the other (or mimetic desire) its genealogical starting point. Inheriting universalist models of the psyche from the dawn of the past century, Girard's mimetic theory was perhaps still too overdetermined by an Oedipal triangular structure that found in *Oedipus Rex* its paradigmatic starting point for a theory of the "scapegoat" or (*pharmakos*) (Girard, *Violence*). On the side of difference, Jacques Derrida in an inaugural speech also hosted at Johns Hopkins, furthered the Nietzschean project of overturning Platonic metaphysics by turning writing (*écriture*) understood as a debased mimesis of speech into what he will later call a re-productive mimetic supplement (or *mimos*) generative of both pathologies and therapies (or *pharmakon*) (Derrida, *Dissemination* 70-191). Dominant in the 1970s and 1980s, this genealogy of a linguistic mime was still in need of a material, immanent and plastic supplement that now informs, via the "plasticity of mimesis," the genealogy of the "*mimetic* turn or better, *re*-turn" as well (Lawtoo, "Plasticity" 1222, 1200). The mimetic turn, in fact, draws selectively from these precursors of mimetic studies—from Plato to Aristotle, Nietzsche to Wilde, Benjamin to Adorno, Girard to Derrida, Luce Irigaray to Lacoue-Labarthe to Borch-Jacobsen, adding more recently, a distinctly feminist perspective on "gendered mimesis" via Adriana Cavarero, Catherine Malabou and Judith Butler,[8] among others. Its ambition is to open up new intellectual space to rethinking mimesis beyond binaries such as sameness and difference, good and evil, the human and the nonhuman, pathologies to be cured and patho-*logies* that provide perspectival discourses (or *logies*) on the dynamic of mimetic affect (*pathos*).

Mimetic studies, then, takes its pluralist orientation literally. In a performative move that is already internal to the genealogy of the concept itself, the relationality of homo mimeticus found in the mimetic genre of the dialogue its privileged medium of theorization. Following up on genealogical precursors of the past century, it promoted a series of dialogic conversations with some of the most influential figures writing across the humanities today. The *logoi* mobilized to account for the multiple facets of homo mimeticus started by including major representative of fields like literary theory and political theory that have had privileged relations with Johns Hopkins in general and the aforementioned Humanities Center in particular: in fact, both literary theorist J. Hillis Miller and political theorists William E. Connolly and

[8]See *Gendered Mimesis* project, https://genderedmimesis.com/contact/

Jane Bennett were the first to join the field of mimetic studies in order to foreground new "possibilities" to account for "affective cultural contagion" (Connolly, "Staying" 762).[9] Subsequent figures include fields such as continental philosophy (Jean-Luc Nancy, Catherine Malabou), sociology (Edgar Morin), anthropology (Christoph Wulf), feminist philosophy (Adriana Cavarero), posthuman studies (Katherine Hayles), neuroscience (Vittorio Gallese), among others.[10] Given the multiple challenges facing *homo mimeticus* in the twenty first century, it seemed wise to join forces with influential representatives mastering different logoi in the human sciences in order to account for mimetic patho(-)logies that are now already under the lens of mimetic studies, yet continue to require new theoretical and critical supplements to keep up with the speedy transformations of homo mimeticus in the age of AI revolutions and environmental catastrophes.

Once the ancient concept of mimesis is subjected to interdisciplinary investigations that wrest it from its narrow framing within the confines of realist aesthetics, from metaphysical concerns with ideal models and debased copies, the original "plasticity of mimesis" (Lawtoo, "Plasticity") and its protean powers of adaptation to different context and backgrounds—be they human or nonhuman, individual or collective, pathological or patho-*logical*—begins to emerge. In the wake of the discovery of mirror neurons and brain plasticity, which provided empirical support to the ancient realization that humans are homo mimeticus, it is becoming increasingly clear that a plurality of current concerns with intersubjectivity, affective contagion, good and bad inclinations, human and nonhuman influences, the precarity of life, the ethics of inclinations and care, among other contemporary perspectives that cast the ideal of an autonomous, sovereign, and fully rational subject in crisis are still in need of a theoretical supplement: namely, a theory of imitation that bridges disciplinary divides to account for the relational, affective, intersubjective, and porous foundations of subjectivity in the first place. The theory of homo mimeticus we propose provides new concepts for the mimetic turn that, in different ways, both inform and are transformed by the essays that follow. They can be schematically summarized via four related concepts already animating mimetic studies.

[9]See Miller and Lawtoo, "Critic;" Connolly and Lawtoo, "Fascism," and Bennett

[10]For a sample of dialogues opening up mimetic studies see, Nancy and Lawtoo, Cavarero and Lawtoo, Hayles and Lawtoo. See also *HOM Videos*, https://www.youtube.com/@homvideosercprojecthomomim971

Concepts for Mimetic Studies

First, once mimesis has been detached from transcendental Forms qua models that oriented idealist philosophers of the past and brought back in touch with immanent transformations affecting homo mimeticus in the present, an overturning of perspectives naturally follows: we are in fact in a position to see and feel, once again, that it is not only art that imitates nature and, at a third remove, ideal Forms; human nature itself imitates artistic and not so artistic models. I say "human nature" rather than "human desire" to foreground an immanent, materialist and a-theological orientation of mimetic studies for which not only desires but *all affects* turn out to be imitative, for both good and ill. Hence the need to expand the concept of mimetic desire still trapped within universalizing triangular Oedipal structures dominant in the past century[11] to the more general concept of *mimetic pathos* that signals an all too human openness in the present century to the contagious affects of others, be they human or nonhuman, embodied or digital. Relational and embodied in disposition, homo mimeticus is, from birth onward (or actually prior to it) radically open to the pathos of significant others—what the French philosopher and psychologist Pierre Janet called "*socius*"—the mother *in primis* and any figure of care in particular (Lawtoo, *Phantom* 266-276). Precarity, vulnerability, inclinations, influence, and dependency on others now central to the ethical turn are thus inscribed in a primary relationality that opens the subject to the other in childhood and continues to form and transform *homo mimeticus* in adulthood as well. Hence the need to supplement the ethical turn with a mimetic turn that is sensitive to intersubjective affective dynamics that can lead to rivalry violence but also to sympathy and communal bonds of solidarity.

Second, homo mimeticus' openness to mimetic pathos does not lead to a deterministic theory driven by automatic mimetic reflexes. On the contrary, most of the theorists internal to a long genealogy of mimetic studies insist that humans, if given the proper training and supporting context (say a caring family, good public schools, and ideally, an affordable university education) are also capable of setting up a critical distance from imitative behavior. There is thus a critical, diagnostic side internal to mimetic studies which is in line with critical theory, as Philipp Wolf's and Sam Durrant's contributions on Benjamin and Adorno make clear. At the same time, and without contradiction, the mimetic critique we propose is not simply external to the pathos

[11]On Freud's influence on Girard's mimetic theory, see Lawtoo, *Violence* 33-80.

it diagnoses. Rather, our claim is that homo mimeticus' experiential exposure to the *pathos* of the other that makes all humans relational creatures can be put to use in order to develop a critical *distance* that remains affectively in touch with the inner experience of pathos, as Georges Bataille would put it. Or, to echo another key precursor of mimetic studies, this "*pathos of distance*" (Nietzsche, *Genealogy* 12) is not generative of a universal structure or transhistorical theoretical model. Instead, it designates a double-movement generative of both mimetic and anti-mimetic tendencies that swing homo mimeticus towards/away from mimetic practices. This tension, oscillation, or pathos of distance provides then the systolic and diastolic double movement, power, or *dunamis* out of which mimetic studies is born.

Third, out of this destabilizing double movement a paradoxical method of reading that turns mimetic pathology into a clinical perspective on the dynamic of mimetic pathos emerges. I call this perspectival approach patho-*logies* to indicate that a plurality of discourses, or *logoi,* should be mobilized to effectively diagnose the protean facets of mimetic pathos, including ontology, psychology, aesthetics, philology, anthropology, neurology, among other discourses. Developed in the context of modernist pathologies emerging from fascist crowds, prestigious leaders, and discoveries of the unconscious that did not have dreams, but rather, psycho-physiological (or as we would now call them, neurological) mirroring reflexes as a via regia, I call this unconscious, the *mimetic unconscious.* I did so not only to signal the centrality of involuntary forms of imitation in the discovery of the unconscious; this denomination also calls attention to the genealogical fact that mirroring reflexes that preoccupied social theorists concerned with the "laws of imitation" (Tarde, *Laws*) in the past century are now *re*-discovered by the neurosciences at the neuronal level (mirror neurons). Hence the importance to further studies attentive to the aesthetic but also psychological, sociological, political, and environmental perspective accounting for the patho(-)logies (now both sickness and diagnostic) of homo mimeticus.

Last but not least, in the digital turn mimesis has been reloaded via hyperreal simulations that, as postmodernist theorists have shown, have nothing to do with the realistic logic of imitation; yet, we should add, they have nonetheless the contagious power to retroact on human and posthuman subjects generating contagious effects that bleed from online simulations to offline realities generating what I call, *hypermimesis.* Radically amplified by recent developments in AI such as ChatGPT that do not make computers intelligent, but allow them to effectively

simulate human intelligence, including what was long considered humans' distinctive characteristic, namely the capacity to generate language, it is clear that we have entered a hypermimetic age where it will become increasingly difficult to distinguish between human imitation and nonhuman simulation. From fake news to deepfakes to chatbots mimicking human language or voice, the AI revolution urgently calls for a theoretical supplement to bring mimesis up-to-speed with a posthuman mimesis already animating *Homo Mimeticus 2.0*. But that is another publication.

New Twists for the Mimetic Turn

The essays assembled in this issue contribute to the growing field of mimetic studies by adding new critical twists and theoretical turns to the widening spiral of mimetic patho(-)logies. This also entails engaging critically and creatively with some of the most influential thinkers of mimesis of the past in order to further the mimetic turn in the present and future. Thus, *The Mimetic Turn* opens with Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen's genealogical *re*-turn to the mimetic preoccupations that already informed his diagnostic of *The Freudian Subject* (1982) and *The Emotional Tie* (1992) at the dawn of his career. He does so to diagnose, with and contra Plato, the "magnetizing" powers of social media to "dispossess" the ego of subjects in the present and future as well. If in the wake of Brexit and Trump, "post-truth" is often traced back to an all-too-human "cognitive bias" revealing that "we are not quite as rational as we think" (McIntyre 35), Borch-Jacobsen's genealogical detour via the dawn of mimetic studies in Plato's *Ion* supplements a *longue durée* historical and philosophical perspective: he reveals that the psycho-*logy* of "mimetic contagion" informing Plato's pharmacology in a predominantly oral culture still has much to teach us about the magnetizing sources of human pathologies that now flow through the channels of "social networks" in a digital culture. Closer to the moderns, but still firmly rooted in an aesthetic sensibility informed by the ancients, Herman Siemens reevaluates the role mimesis plays at the birth of modern aesthetics. Grounding his analysis in two founding texts of aesthetics, Alexander Baumgarten's *Meditationes* (1735) and Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Siemens argues that especially from the perspective of *aesthetische Wissenschaft* mimesis cannot be restricted to an imitation of nature (*natura naturata*) but, rather, entails a more generalized "imitation of the creative principle of nature" (*natura naturans*). Thus reframed, the birth of aesthetic theory is put back in touch with a Dionysian imitation (*Nachahmung*)

qua intoxication that troubles individuation and continues to inform and transform the vicissitudes of homo mimeticus in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The genealogy of mimetic studies can be traced back to Plato, is of direct Nietzschean inspiration, and emerges with full force in modernism's rejection of mimetic realism and affirmation of the patho(-)logies of mimetic subjectivity. And yet, the broad category of "realism" has a complex and heterogeneous genealogy that was not always inimical to imitation on the side of life. Zooming in on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theories of "verisimilitude" which have, since the nineteenth century, become a mere synonym for realism, Matthew Potolsky builds on his book *Mimesis* (2006) to show that verisimilitude should be recognized as a distinct form of realism for it entails a "theory about the superiority of art over life." For Potolsky, then, verisimilitude goes beyond "doctrinaire realism" since it considers that human characters and social life more generally are formed and transformed by artistic models in ways that prefigure the mimetic turn. Once this missing genealogical connection is in place, the step between verisimilitude and modernism is but a short one. Stepping back to one of the most influential precursors of mimetic studies who was severely critical of realism but was also a major proponent of imitation in social life, I situate Oscar Wilde's famous dictum that "Life imitates Art more than Art Imitates Life" in the context of a tradition of minor mimesis sensitive to the performative powers of both linguistic and theatrical acts. Supplementing Austin's speech acts with Wilde's "mime acts" at play in two of his most celebrated texts, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), I recast Wilde's poetics as an exemplary advocate of the power of mime acts to form and transform life in view of affirming not only *l'art pour l'art* but also, and above all, *l'art pour la vie*. As the genealogy of the mimetic turn moves into the twentieth century, Philipp Wolf turns to one of the most influential proponents of the "mimetic faculty," namely Walter Benjamin, to show that despite the "decay" of mimesis in the "age of mechanical reproduction" humans remain under the spell of magical influences that are formative in childhood and continue to orient homo mimeticus in adulthood as well. Focusing on mimesis at play in "language," "memory," and the "body," Wolf inscribes Benjamin as a key precursor of mimetic studies, which had already found in a modernist fascination with phantom egos its most critical and theoretical springboard.

The mimetic turn or re-turn finds in European modernist literary figures from Oscar Wilde to Joseph Conrad major sources of inspiration, which also means that non-European modernist voices are needed to broaden the genealogy of homo mimeticus. Jorge Estrada steps back to Jorge Luis Borges' poetics to further the mimetic turn. While Borges' well-known fascination for maps that replace the territory have served as inspiration for postmodernism, Estrada turns to a lesser-known tale titled, "Emma Zunz," to account for a protagonist qua "mime" that relies on mirroring devices as a strategy of "dis/empowerment" that foreshadows precursors of mimetic studies, such as Gilles Deleuze and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. As we move deeper into the twentieth century it is clear that the mimetic turn is no longer linked to literature alone; it already informs the medium that will amplify the reach of the mimetic faculty via moving images. Furthering a re-turn of attention to the contagious powers of cinema, Nourit Melcer-Padon turns to Gastòn Duprat's and Mariano Cohn's recent film, *Official Competition* (2021) to show that a cinematic account of mimetic rivalry at the level of the message opens up new perspectives for mimetic studies at the level of the cinematic medium. While mimetic desire and rivalry lead to a sacrificial death within the diegesis, the film's deployment of mirroring scenes, dramatic impersonations, and mise-en-abyme, Melcer-Padon argues, puts the viewers in a position to see and feel the double movement of pathos and distance animating homo mimeticus outside the diegesis as well, thereby broadening the reach of mimesis on the side of life. Lastly, given mimetic studies' pioneering role in addressing the contagious powers of nonhuman forces (such as typhoons, ocean currents, and pandemics) at play in catastrophic scenarios that characterize the epoch of the Anthropocene,[12] an environmental perspective could not fail to contribute to the mimetic turn. Sam Durrant adds critical theorists Marx Horkheimer's and Theodor Adorno's seminal account of mimesis in *The Dialectics of Enlightenment* (1944) to a long genealogy in mimetic studies that goes back to Homer while also supplementing a perspective on postcolonial mimesis sensitive to magic and animism internal to Kim Scott's reimagining of First Contact in *That Deadman Dance* (2010). This double theoretical and critical perspective allows Durrant to foreground the positive, patho-*logical* side of homo mimeticus that has been negated by the dominance of *homo economicus* in

[12]See Lawtoo, *Conrad* and Connolly, *Facing*.

the past century, but needs to be affirmed in order to promote the rise of *homo ecologicus* in the present century.

Together, these transdisciplinary essays not only extend the genealogy of mimetic studies by adding new solid rings to a long chain of thinkers of mimesis that reaches from antiquity to modernity; they also contribute original perspectives to keep up with fast-changing mimetic, or rather, hypermimetic patho(-)logies in the present. Their goal, or *telos*, is to give momentum to a mimetic turn or *re*-turn that is already well underway in view of promoting life-affirmative metamorphoses vital to the becoming (other) of homo mimeticus in the future.

Acknowledgments

The birth of mimetic studies was made possible thanks to all the participants to *The Mimetic Turn* conference, the rich contribution to this and other special issues and volumes, and the generous support of the ERC which I acknowledge via the appropriate formula: this project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement n°716181; *Homo Mimeticus*).

WORKS CITED

Bennett, Jane. "Mimesis: Paradox or Encounter." *MLN* vol. 132, no. 5, 2017, pp. 1186-1200.

Borch, Christian (ed.). *Imitation, Contagion, Suggestion: On Mimesis and Society*. Routledge, 2019.

Borch-Jacobsen. *The Emotional Tie: Psychoanalysis, Mimesis, and Affect*. Translated by Douglas Brick and others. Stanford University Press, 1992.

———. *The Freudian Subject*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Stanford University Press, 1988.

———. "The Laughter of Being." *MLN* vol. 102, no. 4, 1987, pp. 737-760.

Cavarero, Adriana and Nidesh Lawtoo. "Mimetic Inclinations: A Dialogue with Adriana Cavarero." *Contemporary Italian Women Philosophers: Stretching the Art of Thinking*, edited by Silvia Benso and Elvira Roncalli. SUNY Press, 2021, pp. 183-199.

Connolly, William E. *Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming*. Duke University Press, 2017.

———. "Staying with the Possibilities." *Theory & Event* vol. 22, no.3, 2019, pp. 759-768.

Connolly, William E. and Nidesh Lawtoo. "Fascism Now and Then." *(New) Fascism: Contagion, Community, Myth*. Michigan State University Press, 2019, pp. 179-241.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Double Session*. Translated by Barbara Johnsen. The University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Gebauer, Gunter and Christoph Wulf. *Mimesis: Culture-Art-Society*. Translated by Don Reneau. University of California Press, 1995.

Girard, René. *Violence and the Sacred*. Translated by Patrick Gregory. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

Hayles, Katherine N., and Nidesh Lawtoo. "Posthuman Mimesis II—Connections: A Dialogue between Nidesh Lawtoo and Katherine Hayles." *Journal of Posthumanism* vol. 2, no. 2, 2022, pp. 181-191.

Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. *L'Imitation des modernes*. Galilée, 1986.

———. *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, and Politics*, edited by Christopher Fynsk. Stanford University Press, 1989.

Lawtoo, Nidesh. *Conrad's Shadow: Catastrophe, Mimesis, Theory*. Michigan State University Press, 2016.

———. *Homo Mimeticus: A New Theory of Imitation*. Leuven University Press, 2022.

———. *The Phantom of the Ego: Modernism and the Mimetic Unconscious*. Michigan State University Press, 2013.

———. "The Plasticity of Mimesis." *MLN* vol. 132, no. 5, 2017, pp. 1221-1224.

———. "The Shadow of the Symposium: Sameness and Difference Replayed," *MLN* vol. 134, no, 5, 2019, pp. 898-909.

———. *Violence and the Oedipal Unconscious: vol. 1 The Catharsis Hypothesis*. Michigan State University Press, 2023.

———. *Violence and the Mimetic Unconscious: vol. 2 The Affective Hypothesis*. Michigan State University Press, 2023.

Lawtoo, Nidesh (ed.). *Homo Mimeticus 2.0: Posthuman Mimesis in Art, Philosophy and Technics*. Brill, 2024.

———. *The Mimetic Condition. CounterText* vol. 8, no.1, 2022.

———. *Posthuman Mimesis. Journal of Posthumanism* vol.2, no.2, 2022.

———. *Poetics and Politics: with Lacoue-Labarthe. MLN* vol. 132, no. 5, 2017.

McIntyre, Lee. *Post-Truth*. The MIT Press, 2018.

Miller, Hillis J., and Nidesh Lawtoo. "The Critic and the Mime: J. Hillis Miller in Dialogue with Nidesh Lawtoo. *Minnesota Review*, vol. 95, 2020, pp. 93-119.

Nancy, Jean-Luc, and Nidesh Lawtoo. "The CounterText Interview: Jean-Luc Nancy. Mimesis: A Singular Plural Concept." *CounterText* vol. 8, no. 1, 2022, pp. 23-45.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Douglas Smith. Oxford University Press, 1996.

Potolsky, Matthew. *Mimesis*. Routledge, 2009.

Tarde, Gabriel. *Les Lois de l'imitation*. Seuil, 2001.

Wilde, Oscar. "The Decay of Lying." *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, edited by Ian Small. Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 72-103.