Literature and Culture in Rene Girard's Mimetic Theory

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Abstract

Great novels are always born out of an obsession that has been overcome. This is René Girard's summary of what he considers the most important project in all the fiction. Scientific novelty of this study is determined by the fact that Girard not only follows his early observation but also has been supporting and developing it for fifty years. This observation made in his first book, "Deception, Desire, and Novel", lays the foundation for a theoretical background for his further work. This structure is mimetic theory. It deals with the phenomenon of mimetic desire in both literal and non-literal ways. The practical relevance of the study is determined by the fact that, according to Girard's work, there is no more suitable tool for overcoming mimetic obsession than fiction. Girard referred to his collection of favorite novels and dramas while insisting that literature is no longer that significant for him as it has been before.

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1. Introduction

This study attempts to rethink and, thus, reinforce the connection between literature in particular and culture in general in Girard's mimetic theory, bringing it into a more systematic dialogue with literary studies, especially storytelling theory (Astell, 2017; Spirchagova et al., 2021). There is a question if Girard's theory is a timely and appropriate approach to the analysis of contemporary Anglophone fiction, considering that his own readings focused exclusively on canonized texts such as the Bible, ancient Greek tragedy, Renaissance writers such as Cervantes and Shakespeare, and novels of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (most of them in French). The next thesis is about Girard's mimetic theory through all its major developments when reading five novels, starting with British and American literary works written between 1961 and 2003 (Bubbio, 2018). The hypothesis is that while these modern texts are less likely to avoid mimetic resentment and conflict in their stories, they nonetheless recommend such a solution at the level of implied authorship (Harding, 2019).

During a brilliant theoretician career (culminating in his admission to the French Academy in 2005), his mimetic theory hardly went unnoticed in the humanities (Petkovšek, 2020). However, literary scholars have shown little interest in applying the main part of his theory to reading narrative fiction, especially contemporary English narrative fiction, while books, which have a purpose to reintroduce mimetic theory entirely to a new audience, mostly dealt with literature only when they mentioned Girard's approach, the usual suspects always surfaced. These include the five novelists analyzed in "Deception, Desire, and the Novel", Greek tragedy, Shakespeare, and the Bible. Girard's mimetic theory can serve as a valuable tool for literary studies since it encompasses other humanitarian disciplines while at the same time viewing literature as an important tool in itself (Sprinzak, 1992). While the few literary scholars who show any interest in Girard tend to focus on certain aspects of his theory (usually either the triangular relationships of the characters, the scapegoat motive, or, in some rarer cases, the implementation of the transformation characters), the authors tend to focus on

Girard's great theoretical arc and his three-stage (or, according to Hamerton-Kelly, four-stage) pattern as a legitimate theory of storytelling (Bendyk, 2020).

The mimetic theory of storytelling looks for a triune event in this text. First, there is a problem of mimetic rivalry. Secondly, there is the emergence of a scapegoat and its possible disappointment due to sacrificial disintegration. Finally, there is the exposure of mimetic violence, leading to a certain transformation either at the level of the literary world, narrative, or the implied author (Fernández, 2019). Needless to say, mimetic text analysis is never strictly a zero-sum game, and there are many levels where transformation can occur. It can happen even at an implicit author's level, which is not necessarily an omnipotent realm of enlightenment, which, even if capable of idealism, often eludes the narrative and character levels (Leyva, 2019).

After "Deception, Desire and The Novel", Girard expanded the scope of mimetic theory to culture in general. This extension had already begun in his literary debut since the purely poetic field was never Girard's top priority. The novels he analyzed in "Deception, Desire and The Novel" were seen as outlooks into history, society, culture, and psyche (Riordan, 2017). Still, Girard's early structuralist influences (after all, he was a French humanities scholar who began his career in the 1950s and was played an important role in introducing French theory to the American academia in the 1960s) drove him to study structures but in a much more anti-dualistic way than a structuralist fascination with binary opposites would suggest (Fernández, 2019). Girard is also no stranger to poststructuralism, his primary conflict with it is in his tendency to ignore the actual reality of the anthropological laws, which are the background for literary texts, in favor of the Text. However, Girard appreciates the early works of Derrida, with whom he shares an aversion to binary opposites (Aguilar Ramírez & De Beer, 2020).

2. Theoretical Framework

According to Girard, the desire experienced by characters of the novel, as well as by real people, includes not only subject and object but also the subject desired by object and by others at the same time (Horujy, 2018). This other is

seen as a mediator or model of desire and, ultimately, as a rival for the object or objects in question. Thus, desire initially has a triangular structure since it revolves around three points: the desiring subject, the object of desire, and the model that evoked the desire in the object for the first time (Pavešković, 2017). However, as soon as the rivalry between the imitator and his model intensifies, the object becomes secondary to the act of persecution, and the rival's "I" becomes the only focus of attention (Petkovšek, 2018). The desire to possess is replaced by the desire to be. The imitator wants to become like one's model while retaining a substantial part of one's original self. What began as a triangular dynamic has turned into a dyadic, but not in the Cartesian subject-object mode but in the doubly subjective mode of the imitator-model.

Girard calls the model a mediator since it mediates the desire of the imitating subject. When this mediation is external, the transferring of the desire is relatively straightforward, as the model's status as a model is openly recognized (Diazzi, 2019). External mediation prevailed in the old class society, where life was hierarchical and unfairly rigid, but at least direct conflict was avoided. However, social equality in modern Western society has provoked a conflict where everyone wants to be not only equal, but also highly autonomous as in romantic and post-Nietzschean individualism. This desire to be incomparable among peers led to the internalization of mimetic mediation and the subject's unwillingness to disclose or acknowledge one's imitative desire (Airaksinen, 2020). They were driven into what Dostoevsky called the Underground, into the realm of existence, where the "I" is constantly and secretly compared with the deified and demonized Other. For Girard, there is only one way out of this existential and spiritual impasse, which is to recognize that the underground mentality is a universal phenomenon that affects all of humanity (Ayaydin Cebe & Akbaş Arslanoğlu, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to cancel the desperate self-justification of the Underground: "I am alone, and they are together" (Girard, 2001, p. 40). Recognizing the universal nature of mimetic desire is not tantamount to giving up mimesis but just understanding its hidden schemes and all common dangers and double connections.

3. Methodology

Girard's theoretical system consists of three or four stages, depending on how to view it (Antonello & Diazzi, 2019). Girard's "Battling to the End" (originally published in French in 2007 and translated into English in 2010) is leading to a different phase in his academic career. Robert Hamerton-Kelly, who advocates for the four-stage model, defined the stages as follows: (1) literary, (2) anthropological, (3) theological, and (4) historical. These stages should be considered as part of the continuum in which they must exist (Kalveks, 2018). The first stage of the mimetic theory is called literary for a reason since Girard first developed his concept of mimetic desire in the book "Deception, Desire and The Novel", which is a study of five great novelists who succeeded not only in describing this desire but also in overcoming their romantic lies and achieving what Girard calls novelistic truth (Sherry, 2020).

The second stage of mimetic theory was developed by Girard in a deliberate departure from the specifically literary sphere of "Deception, Desire and The Novel". The result of this anthropological step was his understanding of the mechanism of surrogate sacrifice in "Violence and the Sacred" (published in French in 1972, translated into English in 1977). In this book, Girard developed his theory of the relationship between human violence and the birth of religion based on the need to limit this violence. The sacrifice of a surrogate victim, or scapegoat, by society, is a ritual re-creation of the scene of the initial murder, an accidental direction of the collective struggle in itself, born of the escalation of mimetic rivalry, into one individual or group. Thus, Girard puts forward Durkheim's hypothesis of religion as social cohesion as opposed to Fraser's more agriculturally motivated fertility cults. In addition, there is nothing theological or contemplative about archaic religion, but it is the pragmatic background of all aspects of culture, from reign to the system of justice, from marriage laws to hunting customs, etc.

However, in order for religiously sanctioned sacrificial violence could influence society with its cathartic magic, it is necessary to maintain the belief in the guilt of the surrogate victim. According to Girard, mythology is a narrative justification for ritual sacrifice, and myths must

always insist that the original victim, worshiped as a god due to saving the community from its violence, received just punishment for a very real offense. The question of the victim's guilt or innocence is what connects Girard's second anthropological stage to the third theological stage, defined by the publication of "Things Hidden since the Founding of the World" in 1978 (English translation 1987). Here, Girard proposes his most controversial hypothesis, namely, about the uniqueness of Judaism and Christianity in recognizing what the archaic religion supplanted: the innocence of the surrogate victim and its fundamental similarity with the community of sacrifices. While the archaic myth repeats the purposeful lie that the sacrifice gets what is due, the Gospel reveals this lie for what is. While in the archaic religion, the founding victims were simultaneously revered as gods and cursed as demons, Christian God is incarnated as a sacrifice whose innocence is loudly proclaimed, thereby forever tarnishing the fertility of sacrificial mythology and ritual practice.

In reality, Christian ecclesiastical institutions did not correspond to the essentially nonviolent message that Girard claims to find in the biblical essence of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. In contrast, throughout history, Christianity often continued the archaic status quo of the tribal religion it replaced, and there are also numerous archaic remnants in the biblical texts. But institutional Christianity could not ignore the innocence of the victim and slow down the sacrificial meltdown. It was this crisis that led to the collapse of the old hierarchies and allowed not only equality but also rivalry to flourish. Ironically, the gospel message inadvertently increased mutual violence between all while it reduced the sacrificial violence of all against one.

The fourth historical stage of mimetic theory takes back to the beginning, to the Tocqueville democracy, which is rampant in the novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Girard reads in "Deception, Desire and The Novel". However, Girard has recently developed the fascination with history, which was a field where his academic career started before him gaining a reputation in literary criticism and philosophical anthropology, in "Battling to the End", Clausewitz's reading of war, which renews the Prussian strategist's preoccupation

with the Napoleonic apocalypse in terms of the current wars on terror. The abolition of the sacrificial scapegoat process has deprived humanity of the ability to manage violence and presented it with a radical choice: either to abandon violence or to be absorbed in it. Thus, the novelistic conclusion of the early Girard is complemented by his growing appreciation of specifically Christian conversion, since for him only Christianity is capable of overcoming the mimetic rivalry through the *imitatio Christi*. This does not mean that one has to be a devoted Christian to appreciate the Christian anthropology of the innocent victim. The mimetic theory is Christian only in the sense that it views Christianity (and Judaism as its vital predecessor) as radically different religion from others since for Girard, in the sense of its archaic origins, religion is synonymous with the backbone of all culture and should not be understood as a multitude of doctrinal denominations. Hence, Christianity is a certain anti-religion, and in relation to its sacrificial traditions adopted by historical church institutions as well.

4. Results and Discussion

The contrast between romantic lies and novelistic truths in the late Girard's works gave way to a similar contrast between myth (an archaic commitment to sacrificial violence) and the Gospel (a Judeo-Christian revelation of the innocence of a sacrificial victim). The only difference is that, unlike the archaic myth, the romantic lie is a post-sacrificial syndrome in terms of the delusion of discrete individualism that can only be tolerated in a world that has lost its archaic conformity. The novelistic truth as a cure for romantic lies is, thus, double rooted in Judeo-Christian anthropology: first, it exerts its influence in a world in which romantic individualism became possible due to the melting down of the scapegoat that itself was Judeo-Christian exposure of the innocent victim; second, the same concern for victims now dilutes individualistic extremism that would like to trample the mass of inferior others.

Literature's privileged status in mimetic theory is at least what Girard announces in his first book. When starting his academic career as a historian and paleographer and having gained a reputation as a literary critic, Girard defined himself primarily as an anthropologist and got engaged in the general development of the

humanities. Considering this broad definition, as well as his speculative methods and his admitted lack of fieldwork, it is evident that he adheres to the discipline known as philosophical anthropology. However, Girard does not want to be called a philosopher, and in "Things Hidden from the Foundation of the World" he even claims that philosophy has depleted its resources and entered a crisis. This is partly due to the fact that postmodernism and post-structuralism, with their nihilism towards knowledge, shy away from concrete discoveries in the real world. Chris Fleming suggests that Girard does not seek to construct a self-contained theory of culture but rather expects culture to provide data for theories that can be derived (Lynch, 2020; Rezaei & Bahrami, 2019).

The abstract movement of his thought cannot be appreciated considering the absence of the extremely dense evidence which he invokes to support his claims. In other words, Girard does not represent a theoretical framework that somehow stands on its own. Regarding Girard's particular theoretical project in the study of literature, Fleming argues that Girard seeks to reverse the conventional roles of literary creation and literary criticism and use the former to interpret the latter rather than vice versa. Instead of studying the epistemology of literature, Fleming argues that Girard views literature as epistemology. The same conclusion about Girard, who prefers literature over literary theory, is drawn by Robert Doran as he argues that "what Girard offers us is not a theory of literature or a theory that uses literature for some other goals, but literature as theory" (Girard, 2001, p. 180) (Figure 1). These interpretations of literary epistemology as something more solid than mainstream philosophy are repeated by Paisley Livingston. According to Eric Hans, for Girard, the novel not only asserts morality but also puts it into action.
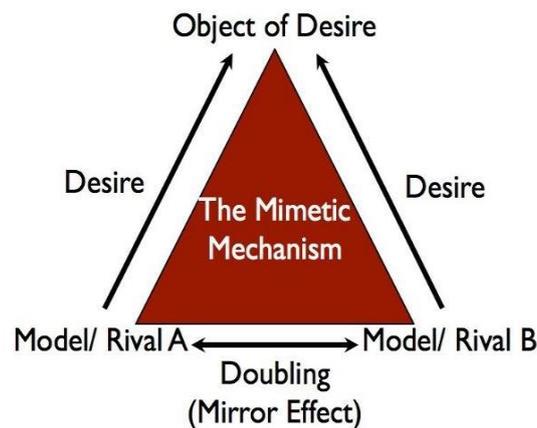

Figure 1
Interpreting Girard's Mimetic Theory

However, Girard's realization is not strictly empiricism since he does not deal with statistics or measurements. In fact, Girard is fond of Darwin, whose evolutionary hypothesis cannot be rejected by the standard falsification procedure but which is, nevertheless, can astound with its explanatory power. Despite the analysis of Girard's theory by Eric Hans, who claims that it is essentially metaphorical, Girard strives for a level of scientific precision that distinguishes him from his post-structuralist contemporaries. Bruce Hamill agrees that Girard criticizes the post-structuralist side of the humanities' depletion of their scientific spirit. Girard is dissatisfied with postmodernism as it has returned to a new kind of puritanism in its fanatical quest to alienate epistemological desire instead of sexual: "Modern thought is the worst form of castration since it is the castration of the signified. People are always on the lookout to catch their neighbors in the act of believing in this or that" (Girard, 2001, p. 108). In this context, it should be added that faith is not necessarily synonymous with Christianity or any other faith but with any epistemological belief in general, including an expressed lack of faith. Girard is in some way a believer, not because he speaks of transcendence as such but

because he finds the absolute truth of an innocent sacrifice in Christianity; he is also a nonbeliever because he has the audacity to suggest that Christianity, in this case, differs from other systems of faith (or rather other anthropologies).

Regarding this discovery of violent origins, Girard fears that philosophy is part of the problem and not the solution. Since philosophy by definition, from Platonism to postmodernism, is tantamount to a certain economy of violence. Socratic and Platonic philosophy is both poison and medicine. Derrida hides the real problem behind the pharmacon (the pharmacos), the human sacrifice, where society is the scapegoat, as writing-speech, poison and medicine. As Andrew McKenna says: "philosophy is complicit [of sacrificial mechanisms] when it thematises the pharmacon while remaining silent about the pharmacos" (Girard, 2001, p. 23). Paul Nuchterlein is even more explicit about his complicity with deconstructionist philosophy when he writes that "Girard is interested in dead human bodies, while Derrida seems to be more interested in dead letters" (Girard, 2001, p. 17). From this realistic concern stems Girard's frequently repeated accusations of epistemological and ontological naivety. Girard gladly admits that he has a penchant for reduction in dealing with texts since his methodical reduction is suitable for capturing the narrative reduction evident in the analysed works, the psychological straitjacket where the heroes find themselves as in "Notes from the Underground" by Dostoevsky (1864).

The word straitjacket is well-suited to delineate not what someone does to the undergrounder but what one does oneself. One is in a straitjacket, but it is not of anyone else's making. One has got into it oneself and made it oneself, or rather, Dostoevsky made it for them. Here, Dostoevsky does not yearn for some inexpressible and inexhaustible *je ne sais quoi*. It seeks to convey a much brighter reality, a psychological life so impoverished that it engenders an incredible amount of repetitive and mechanical behavior.

Throughout his career, Girard has faced accusations of straitjacket reductionism to which he refers in his book about Dostoevsky. For example, it seems that Toril Moi's venomous criticism of what she perceives as Girard's male chauvinism sometimes has more

to do with the reduction of the mimetic theory itself than with the content of that theory. She was not alone in reproaching Girard for his views on gender. Similar accusations were made by at least Sarah Kofman and Mary Jacobus. William Johnsen sarcastically objected to Mua, Kofman, and Jacobus, stating that "the reading of Girard in these essays is sacrificial: Girard is personally accused of excluding women, rather than being credited with analyzing a system that excludes women" (Girard, 2001, p. 41). The author agrees with Johnsen's opinion that Girard not only understands the sacrificial dynamics of patriarchy but also "denies both patriarchal and matriarchal essentialism" (Girard, 2001, p. 42). Girard takes ontological equality between the sexes for granted, which, as feminism rightly notes, is not something the patriarchal system does. Far from undermining feminism, mimetic theory could be considered one of its greatest allies if only feminism was understood in an essentially egalitarian way, with similarities rather than differences in the foreground. The fact that his literary and mythological examples are mostly related to the male rivalry is only a response to the prevalence of male rivalry that has been produced by patriarchal history.

However, to read later works by both male and female authors is to come into more than brief contact with the rivalry between women themselves and between women and men. Equality is the result of the triumph of Judeo-Christian thought over archaic (and nominally Christian) hierarchies, allowing mimetic desire to spread where it has not always been predominant now. As this study partly proves, contemporary literature is rife with both feminine and, perhaps more important, gender-neutral rivalries between characters coupled with the possibility of redemption. Perhaps the most life-affirming quality of Girard's mimetic pattern is his rejection of violence in all possible forms, whether generated by oppressive status quo hierarchies or any militant rebellion against the establishment, and his identification with victims of all backgrounds, not just certain designated groups, or their individual representatives.

This advocacy for nonviolence (rather than the peace that is opposed to chaos, but not always opposed to violence) actually constitutes a great arc of Girard's narrative system that can be

analyzed through narratological means, which this study attempts to disclose. Although Girard calls his way of thinking theory, one might as well speak of the narrative pattern of literary (as well as broader cultural) analysis. Spark's novel, published in the early 1960s and, thus, somewhat stretching the modern outline of the title of the dissertation, is an example of the immediacy of the post-war need to address the root causes of mimetic conflict, both at the macro level of international politics (the rise of fascism leading to the Holocaust in Europe) and at the micro level of individual interactions (classroom rivalry). The "Blossom of Miss Jean Brody" is also interesting from the perspective of Girard's theory as it reveals the anatomy of the relationship between teacher and student, complemented by an ironic parody of imitatio Christi.

"Sula" by Toni Morrison, published some ten years after Spark's novel, demonstrates a similar mixture of the individual and collective dimensions of mimetic rivalry and the psychocultural need to contain it, which is scrutinized and ultimately debunked by the purported author. The historical background this time is the slow erosion of racism in a small rural community, viewed from the perspective of its African American population and with a special, even though not exclusive, emphasis on women's experiences. The individual analogue of the collective anthropology of the novel is a first sacrificial and then conflicting friendship between two girls and the final redemption of this friendship by mutual recognition of mimetic laws. As well as in "Miss Jean Brodie's Blossom", "Sula" traces the development of the protagonists from childhood to adulthood, revealing what Girard would regard as particularly Shakespearean roots of mimetic desire. This time continuum in "Sula" probably marks the novel as particularly fruitful for mimetic.

More famous works by Morrison, which also deal with her favorite scapegoat theme. At first glance, "The Secret History" may seem relatively easy to understand. However, despite its bestseller status in the media, Tartt's novel has proven its longevity as a modern American classic, surpassing its typical college thriller qualifications with an insightful and careful exposure of the violence at the heart of the academic elite. Using Euripides' "Bacchanalia",

which is a tragedy that reveals Girard's mimetic conflict and sacrificial mechanics in "Violence and the Sacred" the best, "The Secret History" draws insightful comparisons between archaic and modern sources of violence as it sharply addresses the romantic quest of the modern intellectual to contain the cathartic bloodshed.

"Amsterdam", published in the 1990s as well as Tartt's novel already anticipating the millennial ethos at the end of this decade, and probably has no analogies in contemporary English fiction when it comes to renewing the mutually destructive logic of rivalry most widely described in the Greek myth about Eteocles and Polineys. Blamed for its implacable gloom of vision and satirical extremes, McEwan's novel captures the apocalyptic consequences of sacrificial decay like few works do. Published after 9/11, but spanning the time period immediately preceding it, Hastvedt's novel juxtaposes pathologies in family structure and largely dormant envy between two friends in contrast to an art world where nihilistic cultural politics engenders murder by posing as a highly creative example, individual talent. Particularly, the separation of mimetic desire from the concrete reality of material objects is pertinent in its description along with loving human relationships and, thus, highly metaphysical in nature. Moreover, Hastvedt's novel shares a preoccupation with the theme of transgressive desire and the motive of Nietzsche's "Ubermensch" with the previously mentioned works.

For Girard, the idea of mediated desire "encourages literary comparisons at a level that is no longer the level of genre or thematic criticism. He can discuss works through each other; he can unite them without destroying their irreducible singularity" (Girard, 2001, p. 155). Unfortunately, Girard's neglect of many of the foundations of modern cultural theory created a serious barrier for his mimetic hypothesis to be accepted by the literary community, which cannot afford to stand aside in the face of the textuality of texts and, therefore, feels more comfortable with more linguistically oriented thinkers such as Lacan and Derrida. Unlike these poststructuralists, Girard asserts the dominance of mimesis over language. Girard is also not interested in the purely representative aspect of mimesis as Plato or Auerbach did; on the contrary, he accuses the

Platonic tradition of a lingering archaic superstition inherent in its reluctance to recognize the all-encompassing sociocultural character of imitation, especially when it comes to imitating the wishes of others. While Girard speaks of modern thought as a particularly hostile idea of influence and interdependence, the philosophical fear of mimesis can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle. Platonic examples of mimesis are limited to representation, manners, habits, phrases, etc., and, according to Girard, he ignores the question of how imitative behavior relates to appropriation. Girard is dissatisfied that "it was Plato who once and for all defined the cultural meaning of imitation, but this meaning is truncated, separated from the essential dimension of acquisitive behavior, which is also a dimension of conflict" (Girard, 2001, p. 157). In contrast, for Girard, imitation is a much more fundamental and universal issue since mimetic desire separates humans from animals more than anything else.

Girard also criticises his French contemporaries, who, in his opinion, view cultural phenomena through the superficial level of simple expression: "The flickering and play of mimesis are not interesting in themselves. The only challenging task is to integrate it all into a rational structure and transform it into real knowledge" (Girard, 2001, p. 190). Girard's call for epistemological realism sounds as far removed from the relativistic tendencies of modern humanitarian knowledge today as it did in the late 1970s. His academic alienation is no less substantial in connection with the Anglo-American scholarly community. If those areas of literary criticism that relied mainly on continental philosophy, such as phenomenology and psychoanalysis, tend to push Girard's mimetic theory to the background, then the more positivist and analytical school of narratology almost completely ignore him. However, if Girard can be integrated into the field of modern literary criticism, then the last school would be a more suitable place for him than the first. Thus, the mimetic theory does not directly conflict with narratological methodology in any ideological sense; even the narratological debt to French structuralism, despised by Girard, is not as great as it might seem at first glance, at least if one considers narratology as a methodology and not as a philosophy. This study plans to use narratology, when necessary, as a translation tool to demonstrate the value of Girard's theory for the systematic study of narratives.

Although Girard is not interested in the literary of literature and does not even find opportunities for new anthropological insights in post-Proustian fiction, he, nevertheless, considers the novel to be a privileged medium of knowledge, even if only through the example of "some exceptional works as agents of a very special demystification that is relevant to the hidden role of mimetic effects in human interaction" (Girard, 2001, p. 111). Therefore, for scholars more interested in demonstrating the continuity of mimetic insights in the novel, it remains to bring the mimetic theory into dialogue with more modern works of fiction. Needless to say, Girard's work of uncovering romantic lies and novelistic truths remains valuable for this ongoing study.

For Girard, liberation from romantic lies (*mensonge romantique*) entails romantic truth (*vérité romanesque*) inherent in the greatest novels such as those of Cervantes, Dostoevsky, and Proust, since these writers were systematically interested in human relations. Novelistic truth allows the imitator to see the fact of one's imitation and to recognize a similar imitative tendency in one's model, with which one shares a common humanity. This entails a better knowledge of others as well as oneself. The fact that Girard always deals with real human relations is a given for his anthropological project, but in the structural context of narratology, this realism needs to be emphasized, even at the risk of provoking the wrath of those critics who consider this anthropomorphism to be the most naive primitivism. However, a similar tendency to think outside the text as an artifact can be found in the most modern narratology. For example, Ansgar Nunning points out that even at the risk of annoying those who immediately suspect mimetic and referential errors, there is no reason why narratology should not use empirical theories of personality in the study of character. It can be said that literary characters are endowed with perspectives comparable to those of real human beings.

5. Concluding Remarks

The reason that conversion has become such a rarity in the plots of modern novels may be that Christianity, inherent in the moral structure of

secular Western texts, is also recognized as a politically incorrect embarrassment since it does not respect the pluralistic dogma that all truths are true at the same time, whereas the Christian (and Jewish) trait of adherence to victims is instinctively and even unconsciously admired. This double-edged quality of Judeo-Christianity in the modern world does not detract from Girard's emphasis on the importance of conversion but rather reflects its continuing vitality, even if this vitality has become somewhat latent under pressure.

This study allows rethinking and reinforcing the connection between literature in particular and culture in general in Girard's mimetic theory, bringing it more into a systematic dialogue with literary criticism, especially storytelling theory. Girard's theory is a timely and appropriate approach to the analysis of contemporary Anglophone fiction. Girard's mimetic theory used in all its major developments when reading five novelistic examples, starting with British or American works written between 1961 and 2003, proves that, while these modern texts are less likely to avoid mimetic resentment and conflict in their plot worlds, they nevertheless recommend such a solution at the level of implied authorship.

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