THE PROBLEM OF MODERNITY IN RENÉ GIRARD'S THEORY:

A study in pathology and perspective

by

Marta Meana

A thesis submitted in partial requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, Department of English, McGill University, Montreal, August 18, 1986.

ABSTRACT

The work of theorist René Girard on the origins of religion and on the ways in which religion has been responsible for the cohesiveness of groups leads him to conclude that Society without religion is not viable. Given the secularism that characterizes the modern Western world, Girard's theory constitutes, in part, a significant critique of modernity. By first isolating his treatment of modernity from the rest of his theory, this thesis then applies his critique of modernity as a heuristic device to demystify the disguised transcendence of the existential motif in three modern works of literature. However, when Girard's treatment of modernity is then evaluated outside the context of pure existentialism, it is found to be lacking in historical perspective. Modernity is examined from a static perspective in which only its pathological manifestations come to light. Finally, Girard's idealistic treatment of modernity and his Christian solution to its problems are found to have the intent of foreclosing the continuing discourse on literary theory.

RÉSUMÉ

Les travaux du théoricien René Girard sur les origines de la religion ainsi que sur l'importance de la religion dans la cohésion des groupes l'ont amené à conclure à la non-viabilité d'une société sans religion. Étant donné le caractère laïque de l'Occident moderne, la théorie de Girard constitue, dans une certaine mesure, une critique importante de la modernité. La présente thèse commence par isoler de l'ensemble de sa théorie la façon dont Girard traite de la modernité, et utilise ensuite cette critique de la modernité comme un dispositif heuristique permettant de démystifier la transcendance masquée du motif existentiel dans ~~trois~~ oeuvres littéraires modernes. Toutefois, l'étude de la conception de la modernité selon Girard, en dehors du contexte de l'existentialisme pur, révèle les faiblesses de cette conception du point de vue de la perspective historique. La modernité y est en effet étudiée dans une perspective statique qui n'en fait ressortir que les manifestations pathologiques. Enfin, la façon idéaliste dont Girard traite de la modernité, ainsi que sa solution chrétienne aux problèmes posés, finissent par constituer une tentative dont le résultat serait de mettre fin au dialogue permanent sur la théorie littéraire.

Para mis padres

PREFACE

To confront René Girard's theory is to confront an imposing body of work. The initial resistance lies in the insecurity of any critic who happens not to think himself an expert in anthropology, ethnology, theology, psychoanalysis and literature. The astoundingly comprehensive demands of his theory are quite simply intimidating. However, these demands should not have the effect of sealing his theory off from analysis. Firstly, findings in the human, as in all, sciences are surely open to question. Secondly, demonstrated expertise in one field does not ensure synthesis and the making of appropriate associations between one area and another. When Man is the subject of discussion we are all just as knowledgeable and all just as ignorant. The critic should not be intimidated by what failed to intimidate the theorist.

Any project of this type is defined not only by what it does, but by what it does not do. The reader will no doubt be aware of my failure to address one of the central issues of modernism: The rise of the feminist movement, and its place in Girard's theory. It was no accident. My awareness of the centrality of feminism is strong, and the qualified optimism of my conclusion can no doubt be attributed to a woman's sense of the benefits as well as the disastrous consequences of modernism. However, I felt that because of the enormity of the subject I had to limit myself to issues that Girard himself addresses. Thus, the absence of a discussion of feminism stands here as a conspicuous absence.

I would like to thank my advisor Professor Michael Bristol for rescuing an idea from the clutches of circumstance and Linda Rozmovits, my friend and my critic, for being both so incredibly well.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

"The ultimate meaning to which all stories refer has two faces: The continuity of life, the inevitability of death."[1] So proclaims the seventh reader in Italo Calvino's If on a Winter's Night a Traveller... . Theorist René Girard, were he the eighth, would likely add, "and the ultimate function of literature is to expose the range of potential perversions in the all-too-human attempt at the resolution of this double-faced mystery."[2] The function relegated to great literature emanates directly from the heart of Girard's multidisciplinary investigation into the ways in which Man has dealt with the mysteries of human existence in the past and in the present. He surfaces from his ventures into literature, anthropology, ethnology, psychoanalysis, and theology with a two-part conclusion. The antithetic part is the perversion and ultimate destructiveness of secular attempts at transcendence. The synthetic part of his theory is the necessity of religious beliefs for individual and social health.

In the predominantly secular context of Western civilization in the twentieth century, any reproach on secularism amounts to a critique of modernity. When accompanied by an attempt to recuperate the working propositions of the past, it is a critique of modernity from a conservative viewpoint. The tradition of critiques of modernity dates back, most notably, to the French Revolution and the incumbent political rise of the status of the individual in society. It is a tradition that suspects that spiritual authority in the hands of the individual leads to an enslavement far more restrictive than that of the State or the Church. Critics of modernity sharing this common concern for freedom and fulfillment are split into two camps with different approaches toward resolution. On the one hand, there are

critics such as Edmund Burke who rally for a quick return to the values and norms of traditional society by exposing the follies of individualism.

> We are afraid to put men to live and trade each his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages.[3]

This recommendation is similar, in more than spirit, to T.S. Eliot's guidelines for the ideal society. However, with the possibility of a return to traditional society much less likely in the 1920's than a few years after the French Revolution, Eliot, unlike Burke, tempers his conservatism with 'new' approaches to traditional ideas in his formulation of a 'new' Christian Society.[4] It is an attempt to conserve what once functioned through interpretive remodelling.

Alexis de Tocqueville and Emile Durkheim (to choose another two critics from centuries respectively corresponding to Burke and Eliot), are critics of modernity who, from the same founding impulse, emerge with very different suggestions from those of their more conservative counterparts. Alexis de Tocqueville eloquently warns of the despotism inherent in democracy. However, perceiving it to be a tide that could not be stopped, he concentrates on ways in which to stem its dangers.[5] Emile Durkheim unequivocally attributes anomie to a range of factors, most of them emanating from the lack of social integration of the individual in modern society. However, he is emphatic about the fact that a return to traditional methods of integration that have stopped functioning is not possible.[6] De Tocqueville and Durkheim are critics of modernity who believe that revolutions on a grand scale, political or sociological, spring from irresitible need and not from the machinations of a group of people.

René Girard's deliberations on the destructiveness of secular and thus individual attempts at transcendence place him comfortably within the tradition of critiques of modernity. His orthodox religious solution to the ills of modern society place him more specifically in a conservative tradition much akin to that of Eliot. Like Eliot, he re-interprets the basic tenets of Christianity in the hope that the application of twentieth century modifications to essentially traditional ideas will render them the functionality they have appeared to have lost.

With the Holocaust a recent memory and the ominous threat of nuclear destruction everpresent, attempts to understand what happened to traditional society and the use of this understanding toward the formulation of blueprints for a more palatable future are, at the very least, pertinent. René Girard's theory is an ambitious attempt, as all such attempts necessarily are, to come to terms with the spiralling problem of modernity. It is the intention of this thesis to evaluate Girard's critique of modernity as it is reflected in a selection of modern literature and as it affects literary theory. The strategy is to outline his critique, make heuristic use of it, examine his interpretation of the modern condition, and, most importantly, evaluate its practical significance to the continuing discourse on literary theory. Is his diagnosis adequate? Are his recommendations practicable? Their founding impulse is not in question.

INTRODUCTION NOTES

[1] Italo Calvino, If on a Winter's Night a Traveller, trans. by William Weaver. (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1979), p. 259.

[2] These words are mine although Girard uses others to say the same throughout his works. In "An Interview with René Girard", Denver Quarterly, No. 13, ii (1978), p. 29, he states, "I really feel that great literary works, and in particular the novel, mirror this adventure of the modern subject, or, if you prefer, this 'destination', to use a Heideggerian word, and they alone mirror it truthfully because they always show us the would-be god turning into a non-entity and a victim in all his encounters with other human beings..."

[3] Edmund Burke, Reflections on the French Revolution, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1951), p. 84.

[4] See T.S. Eliot's The Ideal of a Christian Society and Notes Toward a Definition of Culture.

[5] See Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America.

[6] See Emile Durkheim, Suicide and The Elementary Forms of Religious Life.

CHAPTER ONE:

ONTOLOGICAL SICKNESS AND ITS CURE

One characterizing feature of the critiques of modernity within the tradition of the past two hundred years is the idea of their being a Great Divide between the past and the present. The general feeling is that the transition between traditional society and modernity was less evolutionary and occurred over a shorter period of time than that of other historical upheavals of culture. The concern is that, having leapt over the conceptual chasms of State/Church authority and individualism, religion and secularism, Man is not yet secure in this new territory and is in danger of slipping back into the nothingness in between. Martin Buber actually speaks of modernity as the "crisis of the in between".[1] The propositions of the past are no longer functioning and the new ones not yet firmly established. Thus, with very few exceptions, discussions about modernity, from whatever ideological standpoint, are more often than not discussions about the problem of modernity.

To René Girard the problem of modernity is the problem of unfulfilled desire. His critique revolves faithfully around his theory of the nature of desire and his observations about the different ways in which Man goes about attempting to fulfill it. He bridges past and present with the constant that Man is born desiring transcendence and with the elaboration of this desire as mimetic in nature. He demonstrates how this desire was fulfilled with varying degrees of success in the past and how the conditions of the present inhibit its fulfillment and lead to violence. Girard attempts to rescue the present with the proposition of an all-encompassing ontology that allegedly understands the true nature of desire and provides the conditions for its consummation. Thus the key elements from which his critique of modernity

emerges are 1) the universal desire for transcendence, 2) the mimetic nature of desire, 3) how it potentially leads to sacrificial violence, and 4) the provision of a curative ontology. His argument is reconstructed here as follows.

Girard's central thesis is that Man is born with an undeniable desire to transcend the physical reality of his existence. Consciousness, together with being an awareness of one's existence, is also the realization of one's inevitable death. Man's first moment of existential awareness coincides with the birth of a desire to transcend the perishable. Girard terms it metaphysical desire.[2] The centrality of this idea of transcendence emanates from the core of Emile Durkheim's study, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, where it is established that "So far as we are able to judge from the data of ethnology, the idea of the soul seems to have been contemporaneous with humanity itself."[3] Durkheim further clarifies that, historically, this desire for transcendence has not been grounded in the belief that the indiviual could escape his down death but rather that he would contribute to the continuing life of a larger entity.

> ... the belief in the immortality of the soul is the only way in which men were able to explain the fact which could not fail to attract their attention; this fact is the perpetuity of the life of the group. Individuals die, but the clan survives. So the forces which give it life must have some perpetuity.[4]

Man's attempts to ally himself with the forces that contribute to the continuity of life were historically attempted within the realm of religion. Girard's argument is that in order to satisfy a desire to transcend himself, Man looks outward in his search for fulfillment. He refers to sources other than his finite and unfulfilled self. He imitates the directives of another

source which he perceives to be endowed with knowledge about the attainment of fulfillment. "We must understand that desire itself is essentially mimetic."[5] Girard further tells us that, in the past, the fulfilling source was without exception religion. Man's outward route to transcendence was a vertical one toward the heavens and a god.

With the advent of secularism, the traditionally vertical route toward the satisfaction of metaphysical desire was blocked. Secularism either denied the desire for transcendence or proposed that the individual was indeed capable of fulfilling it without outside references. According to Girard however, the constants remained - Man desires transcendence, Man seeks fulfillment outside of himself. The search, however, had been misplaced.

> "Denial of God does not eliminate transcendency, but it diverts it from the au-delá to the en-decá"(DD. 59).

According to Girard, secularism understands neither the undeniability and force of metaphysical desire nor the mimetic nature of desire itself. In Deceit, Desire and the Novel, he explores literary manifestations of the nature and effect of a thwarted desire for transcendence. He terms the condition that develops from this unrequited desire ontological sickness.

Presenting them as examples of modern Man, Girard examines the various manifestations of ontological sickness befalling the heroes of Proust, Flaubert, Dostoievski, Stendhal, and Cervantes. They are all unhappy. Despite the different circumstances of these heroes' respective discontents, Girard sees a common source - the failure to fulfill the desire for transcendence. He also sees a common manifestation of their discontent - the proliferation of mimetic desire. Mimetic desire is desire invoked by something or someone other than the alleged object of desire. It is the imitation of someone else's desire and its perpetuation depends wholly on the

hero's ignorance of the mechanism and its hold on him. The hero is unhappy because he has not satisfied his need for transcendence. Not recognizing the source of his unhappiness and the fact that every other human being is in search of the same goal, he imagines Others to have attained it and imitates them in order to share in their imagined happiness. The systematic metaphor that Girard uses to illustrate the dynamics of mimetic desire is the triangle. The three points of the triangle are the hero, a model, and an object. The hero essentially is not satisfied with himself. He wants to achieve what he perceives to be the perfection embodied in someone else - a chosen model. As he cannot metamorphose himself into this "perfect" being, he subconsciously does the next best thing. He starts actually desiring what he thinks his model desires and consequently, attempts to appropriate his model's objects of desire with the incognizant hope that fulfillment will ensue.

The route to transcendence followed by these secular heroes is a horizontal one. No longer able or willing to seek fulfillment via the vertical route of religion, happiness is sought horizontally in the image of a perceived-to-be fulfilled Other. According to Girard the search is doomed by two basic misconceptions at the metacenter of a secular ontology. The first of these is the belief that Man can transcend the human reality of his existence without going beyond himself or his neighbour. It is the attempt to satisfy metaphysical demands in a human context, in the belief that Man is metaphysically autonomous. The second misconception is the absolute separation of Self and Other. The modern hero operates from an imagined underground in constant fear of either being trampled by an indifferent mass of Others or denounced as a threat to the common well-being of this mass.

> The romantic[6] is a prisoner of the Manichean opposition between the Self and Others and thus always works on one plane only. Opposite the empty and faceless hero who says "I" is the grinning mask of the Other. Absolute interiority is opposed to absolute interiority. (DD., 146)

This opposition of Self and Other is most evident in the inability of the hero to universalize the experience of his discontented ego. He does not conceive of the possibility that the Other may suffer from the same malaise as him. He cannot imagine that the promise of metaphysical autonomy may have failed anyone else.

> Each individual discovers in the solitude of his consciousness that the promise is false but no one is able to universalize his experience. The promise remains true for Others. Each one believes that he alone is excluded from the divine inheritance and takes pains to hide this misfortune. Original sin is no longer the truth about all men as in a religious universe but rather each individual's secret. (DD., 57)

Thus, Girard argues that although the secularism typifying modernity departed from religion on the grounds that the latter did not adhere to new demands for verifiable experience, secularism has proven to be no harbinger of truth. On the contrary, it has deluded Man into believing that he can find fulfillment where it is not to be found. It has also engulfed him in an interminable round of mimetic desire that consistently separates one man from another and inhibits a constructive sense of community.

At first consideration, the impulse toward mimetic desire appears to be a highly unattractive attribute but a relatively innocuous one - like the affliction of many a Restoration Comedy character. However, Girard sees in mimetic desire and the ontological base from which it springs the seed for potentially apocalyptic violence. Through the novels in question in Deceit, Desire and the Novel, Girard demonstrates how the debilitating effects of the

ontological falsehoods on the hero's sense of judgment and reality lead to a psychic violence that threatens the hero, his peers, and the likelihood of harmonious interaction between them. In a world of deviated transcendence, men become gods either in their own eyes or in the eyes of each other. Their inability to fulfill the exacting role turns into a frustration and resentment that is more often than not projected onto Others.

> God is dead, man must take his place... The more deeply it is engraved in our hearts the more violent is the contrast between this marvelous promise and the brutal disappointment inflicted by experience. (DD., 56)

Instead of confronting his inability to fulfill his own metaphysical needs, the hero develops an underground mentality in which he perceives Others as the shackles of an otherwise metaphysical autonomy. It is the unenlightened mass that prevents him from fulfilling his metaphysical potential. In order to fully internalize this belief the hero proceeds to openly alienate an otherwise indifferent mass through blatant acts of provocation. Society's condemnation of these and of their perpetrator in turn reinforces the romantic hero's self image of victim-at-large. However, his sense of identity is chained to the perceptions and reactions of others and thus he remains entangled in the web of mimetic desire, although the imitation is a negative one.

> The romantic is always falling on his knees before the wrong altar; he thinks he is sacrificing the world on the altar of the Self, whereas the real object of his worship is the Other. (DD., 87)

Making an altar out of the Self or the Other is, for Girard, a perversion of transcendence that leads to an ultimately catastrophic cultivation of differences. In a primitive society an epidemic of ontological sickness would

lead to physical violence and the eventual annihilation of the group. In the modern world where force has lost its previous prestige on the personal level, the result of ontological sickness manifests itself in the open combat of a multitude of consciousness's in the forms of dishonesty, hypocrisy, vanity, lack of empathy, and hatred. As evidence of this modern warfare Girard offers, among others, Flaubert's and Stendhal's vaniteux, Proust's snobs and Dostoievski's paranoiacs. By way of induction, Girard also exposes what he believes to be the dangers in the institutional manifestations of ontological sickness - individualism, equality, democracy, and all ideology. In individualism he sees the potential for the alienation of every Man from his fellow. "Hatred is individualistic - it nourishes fiercely the illusion of an absolute difference between Self and Other from which nothing separates it." (DD., 73). In equality he sees petty competition and pretention. "Snobbism begins with equality" (DD., 70). In democracy he sees lack of law. "Democracy is one vast middle-class court where the courtiers are everywhere and the king is nowhere" (DD., 119). All ideologies are interpreted to be a series of negative imitations that are merely different manifestations of one and the same metaphysical desire. "Ideology is merely a pretext for ferocious oppositions which are secretly in agreement" (DD., 225).

When Girard writes that, "Modern society is no longer anything but a negative imitation and the effort to leave the beaten path forces everyone inevitably into the same ditch" (DD., 100), he is not merely expressing an aesthetic dislike of modernity. Unlike T.S. Eliot, mediocrity is not this critic of modernity's main concern. Girard's concern is the potential for violence inherent in a society that has institutionalized conceptual roads blocks toward the fulfillment of Man's innate and powerful desire for

transcendence. The blocks do not eliminate the desire but rather enforce its mimetic manifestations. And Girard assures us that mimesis in a world without a god leads unequivocally to violence.

Girard charts the progression from desire to violence as such: Once Man's basic needs are met, he desires, and since desire is intrinsically mimetic and mimetic desire pits one man against another, then Man, in a godless world, is intrinsically violent. Paradigmatically, there is a 'first' conflict resulting from mimetic desire - the convergence of the respective desires of a model and a subject on the same object. This conflict leads to the 'first' or 'original' murder which, in turn, leads to a second retaliatory murder potentially leading to infinitely repetitive vengeance and the ultimate annihiliation of the group. Girard's prime object of study in Violence and the Sacred is the prevention of the always imminent possibility of rampant reciprocal violence. The assumption is that as long as Man desires, Man will be involved in potentially violent conflict. The only recourse is the prevention of its natural gravitation toward total destruction.

> If primitive societies have no tried and true remedies for dealing with an outbreak of violence, no certain cure once the social equilibrium has been upset, we can assume that preventive measures will play an essential role (VS., 17).

Girard groups the various methods that have been employed by man to circumvent an interminable round of revenge into three general categories: 1) sacrificial rites in which the spirit of revenge is diverted into other channels; 2) the harnessing of vengeance through trials of combat; 3) the establishment of a judicial system. Although he claims that his list is organized in ascending order of effectiveness, he is most interested in the least effective method - sacrificial ritual (VS., 20-21). The implicit reason for this choice is that the most primitive and least sophisticated preventive

measure will best reveal the role common to his three categories. "In the final analysis, then, the judicial system and the institution of sacrifice share the same function..." (V.S., 23).

In sacrificial ritual, the function is revealed through the mechanism of the surrogate victim. A return to the paradigm of the 'first murder' is helpful here to investigate the functioning of the mechanism. If that first murder is retaliated by the reciprocal murder of the first murderer, an endless chain of revenge is induced. However, if the retaliation for that first murder is performed on a victim who is not guilty of the crime, the next link in the chain of revenge is cut and the violence stops with the death of the victim. In order for the victim to successfully serve this purpose the victim has to resemble the guilty party on some level, although not too closely, so that the connection between the ritual and the crime is not completely lost. The victim also has to be a social outcast of sorts so that no one seriously cares about his death. In addition, in order to disperse the guilt over the murder of the victim, the act has to be performed, if only metaphorically, unanimously by the entire group. Lastly, but most importantly, the group has to be completely ignorant of the real function of the mechanism. They have to believe that the ritual is an offering to a higher deity that will thus be appeased and withdraw the scourge of violence. There are then four elements key to the success of the surrogate victim mechanism in putting an end to repetitive violence: 1) there must be a social link missing between the victim and society; 2) the victim must resemble the guilty party; 3) the sacrificial act must be unanimously performed and; 4) the group must remain ignorant of how and why the mechanism works (VS., 1-38).

And so, the surrogate victim mechanism attempts to terminate endless reciprocal violence with the elimination of guilt in a single sanctified act of violence, although violence nonetheless. According to Girard, there is no other way. "Only violence can put an end to violence, and that is why violence is self-propagating." (VS., 26). The paradox of violence as the only antidote to violence can only be truly understood and expediently used when a distinction is made between the right type of violence and the wrong type of violence. Whether the preventive method in question is sacrificial ritual or the judicial system, there has to be an underlying agreed-upon or enforced distinction between 'good violence' and 'bad violence' - between good and evil. Enter religion.

> As soon as the essential quality of transcendence - religious, humanistic, or whatever - is lost, there are no longer any terms by which to define the legitimate form of violence and to recognize it among the multitude of illicit forms. The definition of legitimate and illegitimate forms then becomes a matter of mere opinion with each man free to reach his own decision... Only the introduction of some transcendental quality that will persuade me of the fundamental difference between sacrifice and revenge, between a judicial system and vengeance can succeed in bypassing violence (VS., 24).

Although Girard here makes a passing mention of humanism 'or whatever', it is clear that his critique of modernity is largely a denunciation of humanist-based attempts at transcendence. The major point reiterated therein is that religion is the only known successful deterrent of violence and the potential annihiliation of the entire human race.

> It should now become apparent that humanity's very existence is due primarily to the operation of the surrogate victim... There is no society without religion because without religion society cannot exist (VS., 221).

Girard's unequivocal statement about the viability of society without religion clearly indicates that he does not view modernity to be a working proposition. Having elaborated on the reasons why this is so, Girard then offers a solution, at which point his theory moves from the observation of phenomena to the defence of an ontology. The ontology is an old one that Girard argues has been grossly misinterpreted thus attributing its previous failure to human error and not to the ontology itself. The ontology is Christianity. In his last two works, Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde and Le bouc emmissaire, Girard explains why Christianity, properly understood, provides the egress from the quagmire of mimesis and violence that characterizes modernity.

In Deceit, Desire and the Novel, Girard expresses frustration with the novel's ultimate cowardice in unequivocally exposing the mimetic nature of human desire. Violence and the Sacred faults ancient Greek drama from acknowledging the true function of the surrogate victim mechanism. Finally, in Des choses cachées and Le bouc emmissaire, Girard engages in a detailed re-interpretation of the Bible as the only text that confronts and reveals the function of the surrogate victim and thus the truth about Man's inherent violence. Furthermore, and most importantly, it offers the solution to violence once and for all.

The finite world of the Bible lends itself perfectly to the illustration of Girard's theory of rampant reciprocal violence emanating from a 'first murder'. Within a Biblical context, Girard's first murder is no longer a conceptual springboard but an identifiable event in which the murderer and the murdered have names - Cain and Abel. According to Girard, the Bible raises above all other literature in its treatment of this murder and the others that follow by consistently siding with the victim.

> ...si le mythe, en somme, est la vision rétrospective des persécuteurs sur leur propre persécution, nous ne pouvons pas traiter comme insignifiant un changement de perspective qui consiste à se ranger au côté de la victime, à proclamer son innocence à elle et la culpabilité de ses meurtriers.[7]

To side with the murdered is to realize that the murdered is a victim and not the guilty party. To acknowledge that the murdered is a victim is to acknowledge that his death is the result of human error or deceit and not an act of wrath of a bloodthirsty deity. To side with the victim is thus to understand and reveal the true function of the surrogate victim mechanism. Because of this revelation, Girard attributes to the Gospel a conceptual revolution that has never been clearly understood or appreciated. He explains how no previous literature had dared to reveal the fact that the surrogate victim was innocent for fear of unleashing the violence that ignorance confined to one unhappy soul. Oedipus, unknowing of his crimes as he is when he commits them, is still believed responsible for society's ills. The survival of the city of Thebes is contingent on the collective belief of its citizens, and even its forlorn king, in his guilt. The Gospel is proclaimed by Girard to be the first text to absolve the Oedipus's by revealing the arbitrary nature of their selection as alleged harbingers of evil.

> Une fois repérés ces mécanismes ne jouent plus; nous croyons de moins en moins la culpabilité des victimes qu'ils exigent, et privées de la nourriture qui les sustente, les institutions dérivées de ces mecanismes s'effondrent une a une autour de nous. Que nous le sachions ou non, ce sont les Evangiles qui sont responsable de cet effondrement.[8]

Once the Gospel has revealed the surrogate victim mechanism, thereby halting its functioning, the question remains, 'with what is this admittedly imperfect antidote to rampant reciprocal violence replaced?' Girard's answer

is that the death of Jesus Christ and the philosophy on which this death is founded is the radical and lasting violence-free solution.

In Violence and the Sacred, Girard states that "the aim is to achieve a radically new type of violence, truly decisive and self-contained, a form of violence that will put an end once and for all to violence itself" (VS., 27). In Des choses cachées, Girard argues that the death of Christ is the violent act designed to end all violent acts.

> Il faut d'abord insister sur le caractère non sacrificiel de la mort du Christ. Dire que Jésus meurt, non pas dans un sacrifice, mais contre tous les sacrifices, pour qu'il n'y ait plus de sacrifices, c'est la même chose que de reconnaitre en lui la Parole de Dieu elle-même: "C'est la misericorde que je veux et non les sacrifices" (DC., 234).

He maintains that Christ's death is revolutionary because it is not a sacrifice. It is not a sacrifice because, being divine, Christ is not tainted with the human violence which even the least guilty of sacrificial victims is tainted. He is so innocent that he cannot serve a sacrificial mechanism that has to believe at least in a certain amount of guilt.

> C'est a dire que Jésus va fournir à la violence la victime la plus parfaite qu'on puisse concevoir, la victime que pour toutes les raisons concevables la violence a le plus de raisons de choisir; et cette victime, em même temps, est la plus innocente (DC., 232).

It is not a sacrifice because Christ is the son of an unvengeful god who does not require blood to ensure a plentiful harvest.

> Pour lui (Jésus), la parole qui suggère de n'imiter nul autre que ce Dieu, ce Dieu qui abstient de toutes représailles et qui fait briller son soleil ou tomber sa pluie indifféremment sur les 'bons' et sur les 'mechants', cette parole pour lui, reste absolument valable, elle reste jusqu'à la mort, et c'est de toute évidence ce qui fait de lui l'Incarnation de cette Parole (DC., 230).

It is not a sacrifice because the Gospel says it is not a sacrifice.

> Il n'y a rien, dans les Evangiles, pour suggérer que la mort de Jésus est un sacrifice, quelle que soit la definition qu'on donne... Jamais dans les Evangiles, la morte de Jésus n'est definié comme un sacrifice (DC., 203-204).

Thus, through Christ's perfect suitability to the role of the last victim, Christianity reveals the surrogate victim mechanism and Man can no longer kill with the intention of attaining peace. In terms more directly relevant to modernity, Christianity provides Man with a model (Christ) in whom the search for transcendence is satisfied, thus precluding the violence endemic to failed attempts. The model of Christ can be imitated without the fear of violence and the moral bankruptcy to which all other types of mimesis lead. "Suivre le Christ, c'est renoncer au desir mimetique..." (DC., 453). Furthermore, Christianity replaces sacrificial ritual with Christ's philosophy of love. It is through a strict adherence to the Christian maxim of 'love your enemy' made possible by a new understanding of the Gospel, more faithful to its intent, that modernity can escape the violence that plagues it.

> Pour détruire toute violence, il suffirait que tous les hommes décident d'adopter cette regle (la regle du Royaume). Si tous les hommes tendaient l'autre joue, aucune joue ne serait frapper. Mais pour cela, il faut que chacun, séparement, et tous, tous ensemblent, se donnent sans retour à l'entreprise commune (DC., 234-235).

Barring a new and large-scale adherence to the teachings of the Gospel, Girard believes modernity to be headed toward an escalation of violence possibly leading to world destruction. He argues that if two thousand years of Christianity have not brought about the peace promised, it is only because Christianity has been misinterpreted. Christ's death has been historically viewed as a sacrifice and its intended effect annulled. The apocalypse that

potentially awaits is not divine vengence but the result of man's refusal to understand and adopt the word of the Gospel.

> Nous voulions que notre demeure nous soit laissée, eh bien, elle nous est laissée (DC., 284).

This short review of René Girard's theory limits itself to those basic aspects of his theory from which he launches his critique of modernity, together with his conclusion as to how the modern condition can be improved. The movement of his theory and of his critique of modernity is from a human sciences-based observation of Man to the development of an ontological synthesis. His observations of human behaviour lead him to state that, once Man's basic needs are met, he is subject to an intense desire which is metaphysical in nature. It is essentially a desire for transcendence. Furthermore, Girard gathers from his investigations that all desire is mimetic, the desire for transcendence being no exception. This means that when Man experiences desires, he turns to external referents in the hope of fulfillment. If these external referents happen to be other men, then Man competes with others for fulfillment as if the search for transcendence were a zero-sum game in which the other's loss is your gain and vice versa. The result is violence.

Girard demonstrates how, historically, the violence inherent in the mimetic nature of the desire for transcendence was curbed by religion. Religion offered divine external referents for Man's desire which kept men more or less from killing each other. When an outbreak of violence in fact occurred, Man thought it to be the wrath of a divinity and offered the occasional surrogate victim to appease it. Violence remained but it was contained. Man's desire for transcendence was met to a degree which ensured the continuity of society.

Enter modernity and, more specifically, a century that begins with Nietzsche's epitaph for God. According to Girard the epitaph would have been more suitably written for modern society. Girard attempts to demonstrate how Man, without religion, is doomed to a life of vain attempts at fulfilling his desire for transcendence. His failure turns into resentment and hatred, in turn leading to violence. In modernity, Man decided to fulfill his desires without divine reference and the evidence of his failure is littered around him in the global form of two world wars, the Holocaust, urban violence, and the threat of nuclear destruction. Girard maintains that, despite the great changes that modernity has experienced, religion remains the only way to fulfill Man's desire for transcendence while curbing its violent impulses. Furthermore, only Christianity can end violence once and for all through its philosophy of love and through the direction of the mimetic impulse toward the imitation of the only personage whose imitation does not lead to conflict - Jesus Christ.

René Girard develops his critique of modernity primarily with reference to observations made of primitive societies, ancient Greek tragedy, the Bible, and the nineteenth century novel. With the intention of testing the functionality of Girard's theory about areligious attempts at transcendence, this thesis will next make heuristic use of Girardian precepts in the literature most closely fitting Girard's perception of modernity - existential literature.

CHAPTER ONE NOTES

[1] Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1965), p. 37.

[2] René Girard, Deceit, Desire and the Novel, trans. by Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1965), p. .

*All further references to this text in this thesis will be annotated within the text by the initials 'DD' plus the page number within brackets, following the reference.

[3] Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. by Joseph Ward Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1964), p. 240.

[4] Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, p. 268.

[5] René Girard, Violence and the Sacred, trans. by Gregory Patrick (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1972), p. 146.

*All further references to this text in this thesis will be annotated within the text by the initials 'VS' plus the page number within brackets, following the reference.

[6] Throughout Deceit, Desire and the Novel, Girard uses the term 'romantic' interchangeably with the term 'modern.'

[7] René Girard, Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde, (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1978), p. 171.

*All further references to this text in this thesis will be annotated within the text by the initials 'DC' plus the page number within brackets, following the reference.

[8] René Girard, Le bouc emmissaire, (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1982), p. 149.

*All further references to this text in this thesis will be annotated within the text by the initials 'BE' plus the page number within brackets, following the reference.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE EXISTENTIAL SACRIFICE

The analysis of the heroes of Cervantes, Stendhal, Proust, Flaubert and Dostoievski in Deceit, Desire and the Novel is informed by two postulates at the metacenter of René Girard's theory of Man: The first is that religious patterns of behaviour outlive doctrinal religious belief and subsequently, that religious patterns of behaviour in a secular schema result in violence. The resistance of religious behaviour long after a specific orthodoxy has been discarded is attributable to what Girard believes to be Man's innate need for transcendence. The rejection of religion is an intellectual decision that does not eliminate transcendency: it merely diverts its focus from things divine to things human. It redirects its momentum from the centrifugal tendency of religion toward the heavens to the centripetal tendency of the secular toward the Self. Thus, since religious behaviour is born of an innate impetus towards transcendence, religious behaviour persists no matter how intellectually coherent and virulent the rejection of religion happens to be. However, Girard considers the introversion of the transcendent impulse in a secular schema to be a dangerous and potentially violent phenomenon. He does not believe the Self and Others able to fulfill the desire for transcendence. The impotence turns to frustration and resentment, in turn leading to violence, both psychic and physical.

The heroes of the nineteenth century novel certainly give credence to Girard's postulates about religious behaviour in a secular world, but a significant volume of the literature of the holistically atheistic twentieth century provides even more fertile ground for Girard's theory of the effect of secular mimesis. His theory proves perhaps nowhere as accurate as in the

literature emanating from the philosophical movement which positions itself at the diametrical pole of religion - existentialism. A Girardian analysis of the literature representative of an ontological system which professes nothing if not atheism and individualism reveals that the existential reality is fraught with manifestations of religious behaviour provoked by purely mimetic impulses. The "anti" in the anti-hero of existential works simply represents the negatively imitative nature of an essentially common attempt to fulfill a purely conventional and universal desire for transcendence. The impotence experienced by the anti-hero reveals the chasm between the existential promise of metaphysical autonomy and its practical reality, and leads him to behave in ways indicative of a strong desire for transcendence despite his assertions to the contrary. According to Girard, the result is the substitution of one religious system by another which denies its own religiosity.

Using Girard's paradigm of mimetic desire and its metaphysical manifestations, this chapter will focus on three literary works at the vanguard of existentialism, Albert Camus's The Outsider, Edward Albee's The Zoo Story, and Jean Anouilh's Antigone. The intent is to demonstrate the religious and even sacrificial nature of Camus's and Albee's works and to discuss Anouilh's exposition of the sacrificial tendencies of the existential anti-hero by way of Antigone.[1]

The three works in question feature heroes who perceive themselves or are perceived by the author to be outside the mainstream of society and who claim at best indifference to this mainstream and at worst contempt. Camus's Meursault is a young clerk in Algiers who lives a largely uneventful and conventional life cooking his evening meal in his small flat after a day's work, having sex with his girlfriend on weekends, going to the beach on Sunday

and so on. What separates Meursault from those around him is the fact that he lives as Cyril Connolly states "without anxiety in a continuous present, and has no need to think or express himself."[2] To live in a continuous present is to live without the emotions provoked by the past such as regret, guilt, mournfulness, nostalgia and without the emotions invoked by the future - ambition, fear, anticipation. Meursault is painfully honest about his lack of emotion and clearly indifferent about its effect on those around him. He is the outsider.

Albee's Jerry is more tangibly a character on the fringe of society. In his own words, "I am a permanent transient and my home is the sickening roomhouses on the West Side of New York City."[3] In his encounter with Peter, a middle class publishing executive reading on a park bench, Jerry uses the ugliness from whence he comes as a podium from which to lecture those who have found comfort in conventionality. His tone is contemptuous and condescending. Unhappy as Jerry is, it is Peter's life which is under attack throughout the play.

Anouilh's Antigone is a princess who has contracted Sartre's 'La nausée' and turned it into a hatred of Others. She perceives the trials and tribulations of her uncle, Creon, her sister, Ismene and her lover, Haemon, as petty and "spits" on their version of happiness. She is convinced that, unlike them, she wants everything of life and the thought that they should settle for anything less sickens her.

And so, Meursault's lack of emotion, Jerry's cult of ugliness and Antigone's ideal of uncompromised life are what allegedly set these characters apart from the mainstream of Society. The three are committed to their image of the difference between themselves and Others; the three are secure in their

belief that they do not desire what Others desire. However, The Outsider, The Zoo Story and Antigone all end in a violent confrontation between the hero and Others entirely provoked by the supposedly desire-less hero. Meursault pumps four bullets into an Arab on a beach for no admitted reason other than the sharp discomfort caused by the scorching Algerian sun; Jerry impales himself on a knife he has forced a confused Peter to hold; and Antigone trangresses an edict carrying the death penalty in order to give a burial to a brother she never knew nor cared about.

But how does a desire-less individual get himself in so much trouble with the collectivity? The meta-argument in these works is Girardian. The argument is that the desirelessness of these heroes poses a threat to a generally mimetically desirous society. By virtue of their desirelessness they expose the mimetic nature of society's desire and thus its metaphysical bankruptcy. This leads to a violent confrontation in which the hero is sacrificed for the purpose of maintaining the uneasy peace that relies on an ignorance of mimesis.

> The historical mutilation of mimesis, the suppression of its conflictual dimension was no error. Real awareness of mimetic desire threatens the flattering delusion we entertain about ourselves as individuals and the nature and origin of the collective.[4]

The hero is thus positioned as surrogate victim and the surrogate victim is elevated to the status of a purveyor of moral values passing elaborate judgments on his executioners all the way to the sacrificial altar.

Something, however, is wrong. The meta-argument underlying these works neglects the literal reality that each of the heroes imposes himself on the consciousness of Others by committing an unprovoked crime. There is no textual evidence in either The Outsider, The Zoo Story or Antigone that these

heroes pose any threat to society until they either murder, trick someone to murder them or break a law which does not affect them but has some concrete purpose in their society. In short, the discrepancy between the meta-argument of these works and their textual reality puts into question the validity of this type of existential work and argument. Are these heroes truly different from Others? Do they really not desire in a mimetic fashion? And furthermore is the final confrontation really the act of an ignorant collectivity threatened by the dangerous truth of one individual?

The Outsider begins with the death of Meursault's mother. It has been some years since he sent her to a senior citizens' home either because he could not afford to keep her or because they were not good companions for each other - this point is never clarified. Upon receiving the telegram from the Home announcing his mother's death, Meursault is unequivocally unmoved. The only emotion that surfaces during the course of the vigil and funeral is one of mild aggravation at the inconvenience of his final obligations as a son. He has not visited his mother for a year because it "meant losing my Sunday - not to mention the fact of going to the bus, getting my ticket, and spending two hours on the journey each way."[5] While walking to the burial site he catches himself thinking, "what an agreeable walk I might have had, if it hadn't been for Mother."[6] In the absence of any details about his mother's character or behaviour one has to assume that Meursault has no feeling whatsoever for his mother simply because he does not. As he himself mentions repeatedly, it is not his fault.

Meursault's lack of emotion for his mother may or may not differentiate him from Others. It would be pointless to speculate as to how much true feeling most people have for their mothers. More importantly, however, there

is no evidence in the text to indicate that his demonstrated lack of emotion threatens anyone. When Meursault tries to make excuses to the Warden for having sent his mother to a home, the Warden replies, "There's no need to excuse yourself, my boy. I've looked up the record and obviously you weren't in a position to see that she was properly cared for."[7] When Meursault asks the Warden not to open the coffin, he gently says, "I understand."[8] In essence no one cares that Meursault does not care for his mother. It is only made an issue of by a clever prosecutor after Meursault has killed a man.

When Meursault is offered a promotion and an accompanying move to Paris, he turns it down because it makes no difference to him either way and inertia wins out. His confused superior asks if a change of life does not appeal to him and Meursault narrates his reply as follows: "I answered that one never changed one's real life; anyhow, one life was as good as another and my present one suited me quite well."[9] Meursault then facetiously informs the reader that this lack of ambition is perceived as a grave defect by Others. Perhaps. But a threat? Not at all. Meursault does not lose his job and his superior's surprise at his refusal is inconsequential.

In another of the few instances worthy of note in Meursault's static existence, his girlfriend asks him if he would marry her. With as much disinterest as he can muster he says that he would not mind. A little confused by his lackadaisical attitude to what she considers an important matter, she then asks him if he loves her.

> I replied, much as before, that her question meant nothing or next to nothing - but I suppose I didn't.
>
> 'If that's how you feel,' she said, 'Why marry me?'
>
> I explained that it had no importance really but, if it would give her pleasure, we could get married right away.[10]

Again Meursault manifests a lack of emotion over questions that Others find important such as love and marriage. However, his refusal to acknowledge the value of feelings Others lay claim to, either sincerely or hypocritically, is of little consequence in terms of the effect it has on Others. Marie hardly makes an issue of his disinterest and ends their discussion by murmuring that he is "a queer fellow" and by adding, "And I dare say that's why I love you."[11] They will continue to have sex on weekends and if one day she insists on marriage she will tilt his indifference toward her desire and they will marry.

The other person in Meursault's life is Raymond Sintés, a seedy neighbour who is thought to be a pimp although he claims to be a warehouse man. His particular predicament is that a woman he has been keeping has supposedly cheated on him. "He'd beaten her till the blood came," but he does not feel that he has punished her enough.[12] He asks Meursault for advice on how to further avenge her deception. It occurs to Raymond that Meursault should write her a letter on his behalf - "a real stinker, that'll get her on the raw, and at the same time make her repent of what she'd done."[13] Then when she goes back to him he would go to bed with her and at the height of their sexual activity, he would spit in her face and throw her out of the room. Meursault's response: "I agreed it wasn't a bad plan; it would punish her all right."[14] And so Meursault writes an offensive letter on behalf of a sordid and violent character and later testifies for him after another brutal beating, all out of sheer indifference. Furthermore, when Raymond, Masson and Meursault see the woman's brother and his two friends approaching them on the beach, Meursault makes no attempt to diffuse the situation. Instead he passively accepts Raymond's orders as to who is going to fight each Arab.

Meursault puts his life in danger for people he does not care about simply because their desire is more powerful a force than his lack of desire.

With the exception of a deep appreciation of the little sensual pleasures of life, Meursault is essentially a character who feels no strong emotion about anything and refuses to pretend he does. But what makes him different from Others? The fact that he does not feel anything or the fact that he does not fake it? Clearly if he is positioned as a threat to society it is because, unlike Others, he is not a hypocrite about what Camus obviously believes to be a general lack of feeling in everyone. The man without desire, other than the odd spontaneous urge for a smoke and a café au lait, puts into question the sincerity or spontaneity of the desire of an institutionalized society of Others. However, Meursault's supposed lack of desire clearly fails to threaten the Warden of the Home, Marie or Raymond. It does not even lead them toward reflection of any issue. The difference between Meursault and Others, whatever that may be, is unimportant. He is neither a philosopher nor a revolutionary. He is a little Algerian bureaucrat whose life affects no one until he kills someone. In a 1964 essay entitled "Camus' Stranger Retried" René Girard states,

> Let a million devotees of l'absurde copy Meursault's way of life down to the last dregs of his café au lait; let them bury their entire families without shedding a single tear and not one of them will ever die on the guillotine for the simple reason that their imitatio absurdio will not and should not include the accidental murder of an Arab.[15]

An analysis of how Jerry in The Zoo Story perceives himself and is perceived by Albee to be different from Others requires little effort. The entire play is a dramatization of what James Allen Sloan labels "the modernist self-consciousness's quest for personality through public performance"[16] - or

in more Girardian terms, the quest for differentiation through negative imitation. Jerry is described by Albee in the directions for the players as,

> A man in his late thirties, not poorly dressed but carelessly. What was once a trim and lightly muscled body has begun to go to fat; and while he is no longer handsome, it is evident that he once was. His fall from physical grace should not suggest debauchery; he has, to come closest to it, a great weariness.[17]

He is clearly not intended to come across as a vagrant but rather as a man whose descent into the underground of New York life was, if not a moral decision, a natural development in the life of a man who sees through the hypocrisy of society. Peter, on the other hand, is described as "a man in his early forties, neither fat nor gaunt, neither handsome nor homely."[18] In other words he is bland and colourless - the everyman of unquestioned and unreflected-upon middle class existence.

Jerry starts a dialogue with a stranger by yelling, "MISTER, I'VE BEEN TO THE ZOO."[19] He could just as well have started by yelling "MISTER, I AM DIFFERENT." From those first words on, Jerry delineates the difference between himself and Peter firstly by describing in detail the sordidness of his run-down tenament existence, deriving a perverse pleasure from its shock value, and secondly, by constantly mocking Peter's suburban set-up. Jerry's descriptions of his own neighbours - the coloured queen with rotten teeth, the lady on the third floor who cries incessantly, his landlady, "a fat, ugly, mean, stupid, unwashed, misanthropic heap of garbage"[20] and her infected dog with the perpetual erection - are chilling portrayals of destitute lives. They shock Peter. They shock the reader. That one should not be complacent in one's privilege and that one should be sensitive to the plight of those less fortunate is worthy enough a point to make, but Jerry actually manages to make Peter's life sound as undesirable as his own. Peter's suburban life with

a wife, a job, two daughters, a parakeet for each, and a cat for each parakeet is portrayed by Jerry as a cross between a lifeless, mechanized tableau and a variation of the Mad Hatter's tea party. If Jerry's own life is unpleasant, he certainly sees more meaning in it than in Peter's when he proudly exclaims,

> I don't live on your block; I'm not married to two parakeets, or whatever your setup is. I am a permanent transient, and my home is the sickening roomhouses on the West Side of New York City, which is the greatest city in the world. Amen.[21]

Whether or not Jerry's miserable existence, the highlight of which is communicating with a near rabid dog, is imbued with more meaning than Peter's quarantined split-level life is a question that is debatable, but the important fact is that it is Jerry who is overwhelmingly unhappy in this play. It is Jerry who accosts a stranger on a park bench, scares him, makes fun of him, and then frames him into killing him. If in fact Peter is so incredibly meaningless why does Jerry even want to communicate with him? If Jerry or Albee or both believe that a truly sincere existence without the hypocrisies of status, worldly goods and fake emotions leads to a decision that life is just not worth it, then suicide seems the reasonable thing to do. But Jerry does not kill himself. He forces his way into an indifferent and unaware Other's life and makes him 'murder' him. Perhaps it is because Jerry could not bear the fact that unless he provokes them, Others would never know or care about the philosophical nuggets of wisdom he has found in the sewers of New York. Despite his apparent disregard for the opinions of the 'Peters' of life, Jerry needs to make them an audience for what Girard calls, "an abstract protest of a discontented ego."[22]

Anouilh's Antigone is a very unhappy princess. She is described by the Chorus as a "tense, sallow, willful girl whose family would never take her

seriously."[23] She is always alone, taking walks at the break of day, sitting outside the dance hall with her arms clasped around her knees. Although her solemn demeanour in the play can be partly attributed to the fact that she has just decided to bury her slain brother against strict orders from the King, her uncle Creon, it is obvious that Antigone has been unhappy for some time. She is not as beautiful as her sister Ismene and she has doubts about her attractiveness as a woman. On one occasion she puts on one of Ismene's dresses and uncharacteristically makes her face up with rouge in order to appeal to her fiancée Haemon.

> I wasn't very sure that you loved me as a woman; and I did it - because I wanted you to want me. I was trying to be more like other girls.[24]

Not accustomed to seeing Antigone in such feminine attire, Haemon laughs and hurts her terribly. In a conversation with her sister she exclaims, "How easy it must be never to be unreasonable with all that smooth silken hair so beautifully set around your head."[25] Later, when Ismene tries to talk Antigone out of her plans to bury Polynices, her general feeling of impotence is clearly expressed: "Haven't I spent my life cursing the fact that I was a girl."[26]

In essence, Antigone was been cursing all the realities of her existence. She "does not want to understand" and she "does not want to be right" - she wants to be different, she wants to do whatever she feels like doing without giving any weight to even the most sensible considerations. When Creon forbids anyone to bury her slain brother, Polynices, for sound political reasons, Antigone latches on to the cause and decides to bury him despite Creon's warning of death to anyone who tries. She defies his order with the full expectation of being executed for it. When she is caught and

brought before the King, Creon tells her the ugly truth about this corpse she is willing to die for. Polynices was a debauched traitor who made various attempts on her father's life, cared for no one and most assuredly did not care for her. Creon then asks her to go back to her room and promises that the matter will be forgotten. No longer able to deceive herself or Creon about the worth of her cause, Antigone starts expressing the real cause of her unhappiness and her death wish.

> I spit on your happiness! I spit on your idea of life - that life must go on, come what may. You are all like dogs that lick everything they smell. You with your promise of a humdrum happiness - provided a person doesn't ask too much of life. I want everything of life, I do; and I want it now. I want it total and complete: otherwise I reject it. I will not be moderate. I will not be satisfied with the bit of cake you offer me if I promise to be a good little girl. I want to be sure of everything this very day; sure that everything will be as beautiful as when I was a little girl! If not, I want to die![27]

Antigone obviously thinks that she is the only one who wants an uncompromised life: Others are quite satisfied with the obstacles. In her doomed ultimatum between death and the impossible, death wins out and she hangs herself in her mortared cell. But why does she hang herself in jail? If the real cause of her unhappiness is life itself and not Polynices's rotting corpse, why does she not hang herself in her bedroom before committing a crime and attempting to attribute a more public purpose to what is clearly a suicide? Despite her supposed hatred of Others, she dies in order to evoke a reaction from them. Her actions are perhaps best expressed by Eliot's Beckett in Murder in the Cathedral, who is blessed with more self-awareness than Antigone despite the similarity of their motives, when he postulates,

> The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right thing for the wrong reason.[28]

Essentially then, Meursault, Jerry and Antigone are three heroes unable to universalize the experience of their discontented egos. At the metacenter of their common ontological system lies the illusion of an absolute separation between Self and Others. Their concept of Self becomes a parody of individualism wherein not one redeeming quality is attributed to the notion of community and wherein even the slightest influence of Others on the Self's patterns of desire are entirely unacknowledged. Others are perceived as a faceless and ignorant mass teeming with mimetic desire and simultaneously threatening our spontaneous heroes with their imposition of a compromised existence and being threatened by their 'desirelessness.' In short, the Self is good - Others are evil. The world of The Outsider, The Zoo Story and Antigone is a world where guilt and innocence are fixed essences despite evidence to the contrary in the textual reality of the works. Meursault is a spokesman for values despite having murdered a man; Jerry is the truly sensitive individual in the play despite showing no consideration for the specific, although different, problems of a fellow man and furthermore forcing the latter to kill him; and Antigone dies for what Thebes will believe to be her righteousness when in fact it is clearly her hatred for Creon and her own life that takes her to her death. The self-absorption of these heroes is so intense that they are blinded to the fact that they live among human beings and not symbols of conflicting ontological systems. In Being and Nothingness, Jean Paul Sartre specifically warns against the existential tendency of "congealing other men into things."[29] The heroes in question have clearly done just that.

However, in order for the contrast between the good individual and the bad Others to surface, a confrontation is necessary. The textual reality of these works attests to the fact that, prior to the confrontation, the heroes go entirely unnoticed by Others. The contrast between themselves and Others is promoted to the status of a serious metaphysical problem wholly within their own psyches. Before the confrontation, it is difficult for the reader to consider Meursault, Jerry or Antigone legitimate spokespeople for a philosophical cause. In a discussion of Sartre's heroes, all very similar to those under review here, critic Philip Thody states,

> ... the trouble (with Sartre's heroes) is that they are depicted as being so inadequate in their lifestyles and personal relationships that it is often very difficult to take the philosophical attitude which they represent with the seriousness Sartre intends.[30]

James Allen Sloan speaks of their anxiety manifesting itself in "ill-ease, affectation, self-contempt, resentment, etc. - none of them the signs of a willed and exploring self-awareness but of a self-awareness that has impaired the will, the ego and the Self."[31] Clearly these largely incompetent heroes pose a threat only to themselves until they commit a crime which has no direct relation to their real conflict with society. To perceive them as a threat to anyone but their own person is to fall prey to the illusion of a collectivity intensely concerned with the individual and an individual indifferent to the collectivity. In his discussion of The Outsider, Girard emphasizes the falsehood of this perception.

> A lonely individual is presented as completely indifferent to the collectivity whereas the collectivity is supposed to be intensely concerned with his daily routine. This picture is false, we all know it. Indifference belongs to the collectivity and intense concern is the lot of the lonely and miserable hero.[32]

In order to bring the falsehood of the intensely concerned collectivity to life and then form a philosophical argument around it, the heroes force Others to notice them through unadulterated provocation. They simply do the prohibited - not the threatening and ontologically subversive but the prohibited. Meursault murders. Jerry frames someone to murder him and Antigone breaks a law that has no bearing on her beliefs but a great deal of importance to the harmony of the collectivity. It is quite simply a case of negative imitation. If these heroes are truly indifferent to the behaviour of Others, why is it that their behaviour is a mirror image of the behaviour of Others? Their beliefs are not complex or sophisticated constructs consisting of a wide range of considerations; they are simply the opposite of what they believe to be wrong. These heroes exist in a Manichean world of people that cry at their mothers' funerals versus people that do not, people who successfully hide from life in the comfort of conventionality versus people that confront injustice and ugliness with religious fervour, people that compromise entirely versus people that never do. The behaviour of Meursault, Jerry and Antigone is thus, despite their intense assertions to the contrary, dictated by Others. 'What they do, we will not' is their battle cry and it is as mimetic a phenomenon as straight imitation. The motivation of the existential hero is a triangular sentiment nourished by hatred of Others who are perceived to be obstacles to his happiness.

The tautological trick of The Outsider, The Zoo Story and Antigone occurs once the heroes have trespassed sound societal conventions, such as the prohibition against murder, armed with their personal angst. At that moment, the collectivity reacts strongly to the threat of a serious breach in the norms of communal life, but the hero and/or author actually believe that the

collectivity is reacting to the ontological difference and not to the crime. The meta-argument of The Outsider is that the judge and jury in the trial of Meursault condemn him because he did not cry at his mother's funeral. Likewise in The Zoo Story, Peter's entirely natural confusion and fear at being accosted by a hysterical stranger in Central Park is conveyed as complacency and stupidity. Finally, Antigone is convinced she is being put to death because she has a more passionate love of an uncompromised life than Others and not because she has broken the law. The warped perspective of The Outsider and The Zoo Story and of the heroine in Antigone consists of the fact that the provocative nature of the final confrontation between the hero and Society is never truly acknowledged by the authors in the first two works and by the heroine in Antigone. The reprisals of Society against Meursault are presented as unprovoked aggression, Peter's reaction as representative of a soulless collectivity and Antigone clearly believes Creon to be a murderer. So despite the fact that these heroes murder and trespass, the supposed villains are Meursault's judges, middle-class publishing executives and Creon for daring to condemn them. However, it is only when then the heroes are condemned that they shed their previous impotence and, before death, pour their resentment, hatred and judgment on their judges. They hate their judges for condemning them and yet only when condemned are they free to do what they have been trying to do all along without success - to be noticed and to shed the blame for their unhappiness unto Others. As Girard clearly states, the heroes's argument suffers from a serious case of solipsism.

> Si les juges sont coupables de tuer et de juger, il en va du même du "bon criminel," coupable lui aussi, de meurtre et de jugement puisqu'il a tué et puisqu'il n'a tué que pour donner aux juges une bonne occasion de le condamner, pour se mettre en posture de juger ses propres juges.[33]

Meursault, Jerry and Antigone seek their own deaths because the promise of metaphysical autonomy has failed them and rather than confront the failure as either an ontological falsehood or a personal inability to cope with it they blame it on Others. It is insincere and it is vengeful. They turn their unhappiness into an ontological crusade in the hope of finding in death the meaning they could not find in life. It is an unacknowledged last attempt at transcendence through a negative manifestation of mimetic desire. In Durkheimian terms, it is an egoistic suicide trying to pass for an altruistic suicide.[34] It is a suicide under the guise of martyrdom.

The secular belief system of a Meursault, a Jerry or an Antigone functions in a way very similar to that of religion. The existential hero's belief in metaphysical autonomy, his particular 'engagement', is intended to serve the same purpose as religion is intended to serve in the life of the collectivity - it is supposed to protect him from the potentially destructive knowledge of his own impotence and mimetically desirous nature. Despite the fact that existentialism purports to look the meaninglessness of life in the face, its literature is fraught with instances in which heroes find meaning in their life only by attempting to force everyone else to see how meaningless life is. The absurdity of existence becomes a banner under which religious behaviour flourishes. The literature that emanates from a burning passion to spread the word of absurdity is full of unquestioned mystery (Meursault's murder of the Arab), sacrifices (Jerry impaled on the sword of conventionality), and would-be-martyrs (Antigone dying in an attempt to save her brother's soul).

The 'engagement' of the existential hero transports the previously social need for an acceptable ontology into the private realm of the individual.

However, the religious behaviour of the individual implicates a host of unknowing others into a private ritual with no public purpose. It amounts to a modern sacrifice consisting of a willing victim performing a personal ritual which necessarily demands the participation of unwilling or indifferent executioners who are framed into their roles only to be condemned for their participation. As in primitive ritual, the existential hero in the role of victim is sacred because it is criminal to kill him but he is sacred also because he is to be killed. He is sacred because he is different. Given this perception, all events that occur to him are immediately imbued with extraordinary significance. There are no accidents. A curt response from a cashier at a grocery is a reproach from society and not just an insignificant encounter with either an unfriendly person or someone with problems of his own. If the existential hero is not killed, he remains an unnoticed Algerian bureaucrat or New York vagrant. It is their deaths that lend them purpose and meaning. But unlike in primitive ritual, the purpose is in no way public and the sacredness of the existential victim is something only the victim perceives.

Sacrificial ritual in primitive society serves the smooth functioning of society. Destruction is used to constructive ends. In its existential mutations, its only purpose is the attempt to communicate the idea that confronting the absurdity of existence is a good and sincere thing to do. The only person who cares about the idea is a person who has decided to die - a dead person. Furthermore, the motivation for communicating the idea is not an altruistic one but one filled with hatred for Others. It serves a purely personal purpose and it is offensive toward a group who has been cast in the role of villain either without knowing it, like Meursault's jury, or knowing

it all too well, like a distraught Creon forced to kill a niece he loves. It is a ritual whose destructive means are used purely for destructive ends. Existential literature is determined to highlight the social basis of the act, but this determination is manipulative and filled with self-deception. It blinds, at times author and at times hero, to a circular line of reasoning which defeats their own argument of metaphysical autonomy. There is no social basis for the existential sacrifice.

In a 1945 essay entitled Pessimism and Courage, Albert Camus writes,

> For the co-existence in certain minds, of a philosophy of negation and a positive morality illustrates, in fact, the great problem that is painfully disturbing our epoch.[35]

Being a proponent of existentialism and a thinker intensely concerned with moral issues, Camus clearly hoped that this co-existence was indeed achievable. However, his novel, The Outsider, is no testament to its achievability. Along with The Zoo Story and Antigone, it is a work about values, and a work about values that manifests an indifference to human life and the feelings of Others has be to proclaimed a failure. But does that necessarily mean that there is no hope for the co-existence of a philosophy of negation, or even a secular philosophy, and a positive morality? René Girard clearly believes it is so. To Girard, whose paradigm of mimetic desire is instrumental in revealing the incompatibility of existentialism and morality in these works, the failure of existential literature is just one easily analyzable segment of the larger and, according to him, more destructive failure of an entire century of thought. That brings us to the question of Girard's perception of the twentieth century. Is the existential argument manifested in these works really representative of modern Western civilization? Is Girard's treatment of modernity adequate?

CHAPTER TWO NOTES

[1] A distinction is here made between The Outsider and The Zoo Story on the one hand and Antigone on the other because in the first two works the authors very clearly side with the hero while Anouilh rewrites the ancient Greek classic precisely with the intention of revealing the flawed argument of his existential heroine. In Critique dans un souterrain, Girard distinguishes between two types of works; those in which "l'obsession maîtrise l'oeuvre" and those in which "l'oeuvre maîtrise l'obsession" (p. 23). Antigone is l'ouevre qui maîtrise l'obsession" while The Outsider and The Zoo Story are the inverse.

[2] Cyril Connolly, "Introduction to The Outsider" in A. Camus, The Outsider, trans. by Stuart Gilbert. (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 8.

[3] Edward Albee, The Zoo Story, (New York: Signet Books, 1960), p. 37.

[4] René Girard, "Introduction", in To Double Business Bound, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. xii.

[5] Albert Camus, The Outsider, trans. by Stuart Gilbert. (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 15.

[6] Camus, The Outsider, p. 21.

[7] Camus, The Outsider, p. 14.

[8] Camus, The Outsider, p. 16.

[9] Camus, The Outsider, p. 48.

[10] Camus, The Outsider, p. 48.

[11] Camus, The Outsider, p. 49.

[12] Camus, The Outsider, p. 38.

[13] Camus, The Outsider, p. 39.

[14] Camus, The Outsider, p. 40.

[15] René Girard, "Camus' Stranger Retried," in To Double Business Bound, p. 14.

[16] James Allen Sloan, "Self-Consciousness and the Modernist Temper," Georgia Review 33 (1979) p. 619.

[17] Albee, The Zoo Story, p. 11.

[18] Albee, The Zoo Story, p. 11.

[19] Albee, The Zoo Story, p. 12.

[20] Albee, The Zoo Story, p. 27.

[21] Albee, The Zoo Story, p. 37.

[22] Girard, "Camus' Stranger Retried," p. 20.

[23] Jean Anouilh, Antigone, trans. by Lewis Galantiere (London: Methuen & Co., 1960), p. 9.

[24] Anouihl, Antigone, p. 28.

[25] Anouihl, Antigone, p. 18.

[26] Anouihl, Antigone, p. 21.

[27] Anouihl, Antigone, p. 58.

[28] T.S. Eliot, Murder in the Cathedral, (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), p. 47.

[29] Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), p. 302.

[30] Philip Thody, "The Anti-heroes of Sartre and Camus: Some Problems and Definitions," Studies in the Literary Imagination 9 (1976) p. 111.

[31] Allen, "Self-Consciousness and the Modernist Temper," p. 606.

[32] Girard, "Camus' Stranger Retried," p. 31.

[33] René Girard, Critique dans un souterrain, (Lausanne: Editions l'age d'homme, 1976), p. 14.

[34] Emile Durkheim, Suicide, trans. by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1951), p. 12. Therein Durkheim describes three types of suicide, two of which are egoistic and altruistic. Egoistic suicide results from lack of integration of the individual into society. Altruistic suicide is when the individual takes his own life because of higher commandments (religious sacrifice or unthinking political allegiance).

[35] Albert Camus, "Pessimism and Courage," in Resistance, Rebellion and Death, trans. by Justin O'Brien (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 58.

CHAPTER THREE:

AN IN VITRO ACCOUNT OF MODERNITY

Critics of modernity who approach the present with a firm notion of how things should be as per the proverbial lessons of history invariably view the present in terms of the medical use of the word 'crisis,' as elaborated by Jurgen Habermas.[1] The problem with modernity becomes a problem of life and death. Modern Society (the organism) is diseased. The Critic (the doctor) observes and measures the deviations experienced by the organism from its normal, healthy state. He then prescribes a cure which he tells us, if unheeded, could result in the death of the organism.

Over Girard's unequivocal "man cannot exist without religion" looms the growing shadow of an irreverent twentieth century. If Man cannot exist without religion, then what is Man doing now? Dying is inevitably Girard's response. By binding life to religion he has suspended the present somewhere outside his theory's perceived chain of reality. The suspension, however, cannot be sustained as the present fast becomes the past and directly confronts the theory. The critic then inevitably finds himself in a race against time, concentrating on the pathological aspects of the present's divergence from reality and forced to predict destruction, barring a change in direction.

Girard's treatment of the modern condition is characterized most predominantly by a concentration on extreme definitions and applications of secular ideas - on a type of pure and applied secularism. An evaluation of the accuracy of his attacks on individualism, autonomy and scientism as the evils of modernity is contingent on how these concepts are defined. It is here posited that Girard's definitions are stilted. In discussing these

concepts he addresses himself exclusively to pathological manifestations of individualism and extreme scientific viewpoints. Therein his critique is accurate and insightful. But the question remains 'Is Girard presenting an adequate version of modernity by concentrating solely on its pathology?' Is Camus's Meursault really the modern man or just a caricature? The argument against a concentration on the pathology of a movement is that it provides at best only half the picture. The other half may contain the elements necessary to the confinement of the pathology and the general prevention of its contagion.

Philosopher Martin Buber claims that "criticism of the individualistic method starts usually from the standpoint of the collectivist tendency."[2] Girard's insistence on the necessity of religion places him firmly within a collectivist framework, as he clearly believes that the collectivity cannot function without religion. But Girard believes that the individual is also incapable of functioning without reference to a religious system. As testaments to his theory about the perils of individualism, he offers, among others, Stendhal's vaniteux and Dostoievski's paranoiacs. A considerable number of heroes from the canon of existential literature also provide examples of the destructiveness of individualism. Girard's definition and criticism of individualism emanate from his examination of these literary characters. But are these heroes exemplary of the destructiveness of individualism or rather exemplary of a destructive type of individualism?

Girard's definition of individualism appears to be more in line with that of an older term - 'egoisme.' With the term 'individualisme' having been in rare usage in France only since the early 1820's, in 1840 de Tocqueville clarifies, "Individualisme is a word recently coined to express a new idea. Our fathers only knew about egoisme."[4] Despite his reservations about

individualism, de Tocqueville emphasizes that it is something more prudent and reflective than 'egoisme' which he describes as, "A passionate and exaggerated love of self which leads a man to think of all things in terms of himself."[5] Girard's exposition of the self-obsessed antics of a desperate group of characters is clearly more an exposition of 'egoisme' than of individualism. There is no existing political or philosophical treatise on individualism which condones an absolute separation of Self and Others. Rousseau himself would join Girard in condemning this extreme manifestation of individualism. But is individualism not more than the free expression of the Id? Emile Durkheim complains that the condemnation of individualism is always facilitated by narrow definitions and sees little value in the attempt.

> It is not hard, in effect, to denounce as an ideal without grandeur that narrow commercialism which reduces society to nothing more than a vast apparatus of production and exchange, and it is only too clear that all social life would be impossible if there did not exist interests superior to the interest of the individuals.[6]

Without foolishly attempting to here provide a definition of individualism, let it just be stated, again in Durkheim's words, that, "In truth, if individualism had no other representatives, it would be quite pointless to move heaven and earth in this way to combat an enemy that is in the process of quietly dying a natural death."[7]

Within the perceived-to-be highly individualistic modern world, Girard claims evidence to the growth of a neo-primitivism that establishes a new set of gods and an inverted religion. Although the religious nature of the new beliefs temporarily fulfills Man's need for transcendence, Girard argues that the inversion is dangerous.

> Men boast of having discarded their old superstitions but they are gradually sinking into a underworld ruled by illusions which become increasingly obvious. But as the gods are pulled down from heaven the sacred flows over the earth; it separates the individual from all earthly goods; it creates a gulf between him and the world of ici-bas far greater than that which used to separate him from the au-dela. The earth's surface where Others live becomes an inaccessible paradise (DD., 62).

The 'new religion' that Girard believes is transforming our world into an inaccessible paradise is described as scientism. He claims that the antithetic part of this new ontology consists of a lack of respect for the mechanisms which previously ensured the smooth functioning of society, and a negation of the arbitrary or random aspects of existence. The synthetic part is characterized by a belief that verifiable knowledge will better solve the problems of the human condition and in less violent ways that those characterizing religious attempts at resolution. Girard insists on calling this intellectual movement a religion because it is also based on an ignorance of Man's innate violence. It is a much more dangerous religion, though, because rather than acknowledge the threatening omniscience of violence, even if it is attributed to a higher deity as in primitive religions, it pays no heed to its existence at all. Girard's argument is that it is thus much more vulnerable to its destructive proliferation.

> In the realm of religion, to be sure, error prevails. But even here we are not dealing with anything imaginary or gratuitous, as the modern rationalists arrogantly assume. Primitive religion is not given over to the phantoms, fantasies, and aberrant impulses that modern man thinks he alone has discarded. Rather and quite simply, religion fails to grasp the mechanism of the surrogate victim, just as we still fail to grasp it. This perpetuation of the same error is what links our own thought to primitive thought, and what, paradoxically, compels us to regard the latter as very different from our own, even though the two modes of thought are very similar. This condescending attitude toward the primitive is nothing more than an extension of a primitive attitude... it is this same primitivism that prevents us from recognizing that

> falsehood in religious thought is something quite different from mere error; that falsehood has protected mankind from self-destruction (VS., 236-237).

Girard appears to be assuming that not being able to believe in religious ritual or dogma due to the natural and unavoidable process of psychic evolution implies condescencion or a lack of respect. This is clearly not a fact. It may be true that the first zealous Darwinists laughed derisively at the Biblicial version of creation, but is has been a long time since religion was laughed at by thinkers of any repute. Close to a century ago, Herbert Spencer wrote, "We too often forget that not only is there a 'soul of goodness in things evil', but generally also a 'soul of truth in things erroneous'."[8] From this belief grew his examination of religious ideas with the intention of discovering that element of truth that has given religion its persistence as a major force in the development of history. The virulence of Nietzsche's attacks on religion are approximated only by that of his denunciations of the falsifications of science.

> There may even exist puritanical fanatics of conscience who would rather lie down on a sure nothing than on an uncertain something. But this is nihilism and the sign of a despairing mortally wounded soul, however brave the bearing of such a virtue may appear.[9]

George Santayana scorns "the enlightenment common to young wits and worm-eaten satirists, who plume themselves on detecting the scientific ineptitude of religion - something which the blindest half see - but leave unexplored the habits of thought from which those tenets sprang, their original meaning and their true function."[10] The list of thinkers who express this type of impatience with scientifically simplistic approaches to religion grows long as the twentieth century matures. In short, it seems somewhat anachronistic for Girard to complain of scientific arrogance on questions of religion when

perhaps that last traces of that intellectual tendency disappeared with some of the early writings of Bertrand Russell some forty years ago. Few scholars of the 1980's will argue with Girard that religion was far more than a fanciful tale of phantasms, however, Girard continues to fight the battle not having realized that on this particular point, he no longer has any significant enemies.

Out of the depths of science, Girard claims that another disturbing tendency has developed - a negation of the arbitrary aspects of existence. "This scientific angelism springs from a deep-rooted reluctance, philosophical and even religious in origin, to admit that truth can co-exist with the arbitrary and perhaps even derive from it" (VS., 233). That religion functioned largely to help Man cope with indeterminancy, there is no question. That early scientists attempted to ignore the possibility of meaning in what was arbitrary and beyond their explanations is also a fact. But again, it has been many years since disorder has not been confronted directly by science. The death of classical physics happened at the turn of the century and since then disorder has been a fundamental component of science.[11] Edgar Morin, Past Director of the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris writes,

> The development of all the natural sciences was achieved since the middle of the last century, through the destruction of the old determinism and by facing the difficult relationship between order and disorder. The natural sciences are discovering and trying to integrate randomness and disorder although they were deterministic at first and by postulation, whereas the human sciences, more complex by virtue of their objects, but behind the times by virtue of their conception of scientificity, are trying to expel disorder.[12]

Edgar Morin expressed this thought at the 1981 Stanford International Symposium on Disorder and Order. Girard, another contributor to the

conference, was there surrounded by a number of scholars from disciplines within both the hard sciences and the human sciences. There is not one paper in the proceedings of the symposium that manifests the scientific angelism that so concerns Girard. In the introduction to the text, Paisley Livingston writes,

> What becomes of knowledge and its relation to certainty when the classical methods and disciplines are challenged or "metamorphosed"? Is the discovery of "disorder" to be added to the explanations of order already achieved, or does fully confronting such a concept lead, on the contrary, to a more profound reconsideration of the status of our knowledge? It is in regard to these basic problems that there exists a great deal of uncertainty and contention.[13]

These problems are clearly being seriously investigated by every branch of learning in the 1980's, so to whom exactly is Girard attributing scientific angelism? Perhaps what is more disturbing to Girard is the "uncertainty and contention" of the solutions, solutions which by the very nature of the subject to be resolved (disorder) will necessarily be perpetually changeable. It is possible that the monism of Girard's theory is more uncomfortable with the concept of indeterminancy that the hard sciences which at one point had as their aim its elimination. Girard does not negate the element of arbitrariness but he believes that violence is waiting in the wings, ready to enter when a moment of weakness prevails. To Girard this moment of weakness is uncertainty. Ideally, the knowledge that brought religion down should have been synthetic - along with its realization of the error of religion should have resulted solutions to replace the religious ones. It is a great deal to expect of the speed of intellectual development, but Girard clearly thinks that critique without immediate restoration is a luxury man cannot afford.

> The act of demystification retains a sacrificial quality and remains essentially religious in character for at least as long as it fails to come to a conclusion - as long, that is as the process purports to be a non-violent one or less violent that the system itself. In fact, demystification leads to constantly increasing violence, a violence less hypocritical than the violence it seeks to expose, but more energetic, more virulent and the harbinger of something far worse - a violence that knows no bounds (VS., 24).

Girard treats the demystification of religion as if it had been a conscious choice made at a specific point in history (and a bad one at that), rather than one of the results of our intellectual and social evolution. This brings into question Girard's depiction of generative structures and the origin of social phenomena. What is the cause and what is the effect? To Girard the cause is inquiry, the effect violence. Emile Durkheim, despite attributing one third of all suicides to lack of religious integration, has a very different perception of the causal relationship between inquiry and the problems of modernity.

> Let us understand this relationship correctly. Free inquiry itself is only the effect of another cause. When it appears, when men, after having long received their ready made faith from tradition, claim the right to shape it for themselves, this is not because of the intrinsic desirability of free inquiry, for the latter involves as much sorrow as unhappiness. But it is because men henceforth need this liberty. This very need can only have one cause: the overthrow of traditional beliefs. If they still asserted themselves with equal energy, it would never occur to men to criticize them. If they still had the same authority, men would not demand the right to verify the source of this authority. Reflection develops only if its development becomes imperative, that is, if certain ideas and instinctive sentiments which have hitherto adequately guided conduct are found to have lost their efficacy. Then reflection intervenes to fill the gap that has appeared, but which it has not created.[14]

Girard's approach to the origins of modernity is clearly not an evolutionary one, but upon closer inspection neither is his approach to the

origins of religion. In any discussion of origins, there are three possible approaches. One approach is the evolutionary one taken by Durkheim in which a development is traced literally or chronologically from its embryological manifestations to its maturation. A second, more idealistic, approach is that which claims everpresent causes with no evident starting point and no foreseeable end. The third and most idealistic approach is mythical. That is, the origin of a specific phenomenon is attributed to a specific event. Girard's approach to the nature of origins appears to be a combination of everpresent causes and mythical perceptions of events. The everpresent cause is the mimetic nature of desire. Although manifestations of mimetic desire certainly abound, the overall mimetic nature of desire is not a verifiable phenomenon. The comprehensiveness that Girard claims regarding the nature of desire remains an ideal. According to Durkheim, to position mimesis as a scientific principle is to fall back on metaphysical explanations of social phenomena.

> ... it has never been shown that imitation can amount for a definite order of social facts, and, even less, that it alone can account for them. The proposition has merely been stated as an aphorism, resting on vaguely metaphysical considerations.[15]

The mythical event in Girard's study of origins is his depiction of the origin of religion as an actual first attempt to arrest the reciprocal violence originated by a first murder. According to Girard, religion originates in the first conflict resulting from the convergence of the respective desires of a model and a subject on the same object. He, of course, does not date or localize the first conflict which allegedly gave rise to religion but he very clearly speaks of a starting point.

Although he does not specify the origin of modernity within one event, he does not attempt to account for what happened between traditional society and modernity. Modernity is consistently portrayed as a binary opposite of the past. He applies the laws of the purpose and effect of ritual and religion in primitive societies to the twentieth century with hardly sufficient consideration of the movement of ideas that has separated one group from another. The fact that the ontological problem of Man's existence is the same for primitive man as it is for modern man is no reason to neglect the effect of their very different ways of thinking about it. That the death of religion spelt the extinction of the Kaingang culture is little proof that it will spell the death of ours. The use of sacrificial ritual as a root metaphor representing a repertoire of ideas by analogic means of which we can better understand the present situation is no doubt useful, but Girard's direct application of primitive phenomena to the modern world falls prey to that dangerous area of which Max Black warns, where "the more persuasive the root metaphor, the more chance it has of becoming a self-certifying myth, sealed off from empirical disproof."[16] Victor Turner, another anthropologist with a specific interest in ritual, also uses rites of passage and liminality as root metaphors for understanding the present, but unlike Girard's, his use of the metaphor is active.[17] Its interaction, and not static comparison, with the present gives rise to a new terminology that combines valid points of comparison with the past with the necessary points of departure specific to the present. He claims that the modern manifestations of tribal ritual are optional and much more within the domain of the individual than that of the community. In order to formalize the distinction he introduces the term 'liminoid' - the equivalent of liminal in a twentieth century context. Turner concludes that the social criticisms of the pre-industrial liminal have become situationally central and holistically developmental.[18]

Girard not only portrays modernity as a binary opposite of the past but always as the darker side. Because he does not perceive the secularism of modernity to have grown out of the evolution of an irresistible need, he feels free to judge the development as if he were judging an actual choice between alternatives.

> Because modern man clings to the belief that knowledge is in itself a "good thing", he grants little or no importance to a procedure, such as the one involving the surrogate victim that only serves to conceal the existence of man's violent impulses ... it is possible that the survival of all human societies of the past were dependent on this lack of understanding (VS., 82).

Judgments as to the worth of this evolution, positive or negative, are at best irrelevant and at worst defeatist. Even if we accept Girard's precept that the knowledge that incapacitated religion is not going to make Man's existence any easier; even if we accept that despite this knowledge, Man remains ignorant of other more important facts, to speak of knowledge in Manichean terms - good knowledge versus bad knowledge - is to engage in a distinction that, unlike ritualistic ones, serves no purpose whatsoever in the past, the present or the future. To say as Vladimir does in Beckett's Waiting for Godot, "It is too much for one man... We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties,"[19] can only be a wishful afterthought, the quiet aching of lost innocence. Girard, however, clearly speaks of "subversive knowledge," and Vladimir's pining becomes Girard's reproach to a century that has dared to learn enough to discard religion but not enough to solve the problems that religion solved (VS., 318). He pits intellectual inquiry against man's survival and negates the possibility of positive change growing out of what he perceives to be disorder.

> A partir du moment ou la connaissance du mécanisme se répand, il n'y a pas de retour en arrière... Il s'agira toujours d'une tentative pour etouffer ce savoir par la violence (DC., 151).

Girard clearly portrays the twentieth century as a modern inferno in which men compete against each other in an endless battle for nothingness. He claims that envy and jealousy flourish because of increased internal mediation (the imitation of the desire of someone close to the subject) and actually terms these emotions, 'modern emotions' (DD., 14). But how does Girard know that there is more envy and jealousy in the modern world than in any 'ocher' world? What is his basis of comparison? Perhaps it is an imagined atemporal structure of Girard's, a utopia that he has envisioned. Surely there are pathological manifestations of individualism and equality in our world, but if individualism and equality are investigated from a static world view in which they have been proclaimed harmful, it is only their pathological manifestations that will come to light. As Raymond Williams states in Culture and Society, "... if, in fear or vision, we are now all determined to lay our hands on life and force it into our own image... it is then no good to dispute on the merits of rival images."[20] Even T.S. Eliot, who has as little faith in Man as Girard and a similar vision of the ideal society, warns against defeatism.

> Any human scheme for society is realized only when the great mass of humanity has become adapted to it; but this adaptation becomes also, insensibly, an adaptation of the scheme itself to the mass on which it operates. The overwhelming pressure of mediocrity, sluggish and indomitable as a glacier, will mitigate the most violent and depress the most exalted revolution, and what is realized is so unlike the end that enthusiasm conceived, that foresight would weaken the effort.[21]

Even if we are to accept Girard's dismal opinion of the potential of mankind, what is the purpose of 'foresight that weakens the effort'? It

negates the possibility of change for change cannot occur without a belief in autonomy, be it illusion or fact. Autonomy is the realization that there are at least some choices to be made in life - that the way one lives is not as predetermined as the fact that one is going to die. Without a belief in autonomy change is not possible.

The question that looms over Girard's theory at this point is how then, if Man's very survival is dependent on uninterrupted structure, does change occur, even if change is change into another structure? It cannot happen without the element of disorder or as Turner phrases it, "Man grows through anti-structure and conserves through structure."[22] No one is significantly putting into question the need for structure, but Girard defends it as if the prevalent ontology were that of Dadaism. In his recommendations to man, the likes of which fill the pages of Des Choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde, it is his choice to advise that it is wise to forfeit change for fear of unleashing the violent monster within Man, but when doing research he fails to demonstrate how positive change has come about and the role of disorder in the process. Turner reminds us that,

> When ideas move from one level to another there has to be an interfacial region - an interval or limen when the past is suspended and the future has not begun - an instant of pure potentiality when everything trembles in the balance.[23]

It is the movement of ideas that Girard consistently ignores. The fact that violence has not yet destroyed modernity is a fact that even he expresses confusion about. He speaks of the modern world's 'mysterious immunity' to violence (VS., 33), and writes, "If we are still strangers to this law (the law of retribution), it is not because we have managed to transcend it, but because the application to the modern world has been indefinitely postponed,

for reasons unknown to us." (VS., 260). If the main difference between primitive societies and our own is the fact that the law of retribution is not dominating our society, then any study of the modern world should be a study of why this is so - a study of these 'reasons unknown to us." It is not acceptable to say 'this is the way things were, indicating, without a shadow of a doubt, that this is the way things should be now, even though they are not and I do not know why.' If the present is not adhering to the rules that governed the past and still surviving, perhaps they no longer apply. Perhaps there are new outlets of violence and desire. Critic Eric Gans suggests that maybe consumerism, unattractive as it may be, is one of these outlets. And what about the positive discoveries of the twentieth century? As Gans again writes, "Ainsi il voit la bombe H mais non l'informatique."[24] In short, the factors that are delaying and hopefully negating Girard's vision of the future are not given one page's worth of consideration in the body of his work. Eric Gans is one of the few critics who finds this unacceptable.[25]

> La creation du système signifiant moderne mérite une attention plus sérieuse. Qu'il nous suffise ici d'affirmer que seule un théorie originaire de la representation peut définir le choix de l'homme moderne, qui n'est pas un simple alternative, mais une voie à tracer dans un vaste réseau d'interactions significantes.[26]

Because of Girard's lack of attention to the process that became modernity, it is no surprise that he views the present in terms of crisis. "Indeed the phrase 'modern world' seems almost like a synonym for sacrificial crisis" (VS., 188). However, his idealistic portrayal of both traditional society and modernity bring into question the validity of his application of the word 'crisis.' It is indisputable that in a post-Edenic world man has to organize structurally to exist materially at all. This fact being a given,

there have always been two temptations; a total subordination to structure or an opting out of structure altogether. The dialectic between these two temptations is the heart of philosophical inquiry from Aristotle to Neitzsche and beyond. It has many names; Turner defines it as communitas versus structure, Northrop Frye speaks of the myth of concern versus the myth of freedom.[27] The perennial human social problem is to discover the right relation, the appropriate tension, between these extremities at a specific time and place. That the pursuit of this balance in modern society is a much more complex affair that in an isolated village with a population of five hundred, there is no question, but our resources, intellectual and otherwise, are also more developed. If searching for the right combination of order and disorder constitutes a crisis, then it is best to state as John O'Malley does in his Sociology of Meaning that "dialectic is a perpetual but habitually resolved crisis."[28] Other uses of the word 'crisis' when applied to the human condition tend to instill the research with an urgency that easily lends itself to both formulaeic solutions and distorted perceptions of time.

The 'other' sacrificial crises that Girard investigates happen within primitive societies, mythology, ancient Greek drama and the Bible. The length of the crises in primitive societies is not discussed and the crises within literature happen outside time, but they all have one characteristic in common - they have all ended. With the completed story-boards of these crises in hand, Girard draws the conclusion that sacrificial crises can end in only one of three ways - a return to order through the re-energization of the sacred, a wholehearted adoption of Christianity or annihilation. Instead of concluding that all sacrificial crises end in this fashion, is it possible that Girard is addressing himself exclusively to 'failed' crises, to crises in which the issue that gave rise to them is not resolved? If a situation reaches a climax

the type of which a crisis by definition consists, there must have been something wrong with the previous status quo. If crises never produce any change but rather result in a return to an obviously faulty system could one not safely say that the crisis will perpetually resurface? If so, this alternative is only superficially less nihilist than the idea of total destruction. And total destruction is what Girard foresees barring a radical change.

> We have managed to extricate ourselves from the sacred... but we are now about to rediscover it. The essential violence returns to use in a spectacular manner - not only in the form of a violent history but in the form of subversive knowledge (VS., 318).

And so, Girard's diagnosis of modernity is that it is ontologically ill. It is ontologically ill because it is based on the illusion of Man's autonomy. To believe that Man is capable of attaining metaphysical fulfillment without the aid of a model is to believe in the existence of spontaneous desire, a desire independent of the desires of others, be these others divine entities or one's neighbours. A society that believes in the spontaneous desire of its members is a society that believes its own smooth functioning relies, in principle, on the free interplay of these desires. This type of society thus believes that all men are different from each other and, by virtue of the universality of this difference, that all men are equal. The belief in spontaneous desire thus becomes an inalienable right institutionalized as democracy and manifested in the allegedly free expression of the different visions of different spontaneous desires - ideologies. According to Girard, autonomy and spontaneous desire and the 'di minores' of individualism, egalitarianism, and freedom are the illusions of the modern day 'religion."

> Subjectivisms and objectivisms, romanticisms and realisms, individualisms and positivisms appear to be in opposition but are secretly in agreement to conceal the presence of the mediator. All these dogmas are the aesthetic or philosophic translation of a world view peculiar to internal mediation. They all depend directly or indirectly on the lie of spontaneous desire. They all depend on the same illusion of autonomy to which modern man is passionately devoted (DD., 16).

Because Girard believes that desire is without exception mimetic, he consequently sees only destruction in the modern institutionalization and even enshrinement of ideas that negate what he believes to be the essence of human nature - mimetic desire. In individualism he sees resentment and hatred; the absolute separation of Self and Other. The individualist fails to universalize the experience of his discontented ego and blames the perceived blissful ignorance of Others for his malaise (DD., 146). Equality is seen as the dangerous approach of the mediator, giving rise to a keen rivalry previously kept in check by concrete although arbitrary distinctions made between one group of men and another (DD., 136). The more equal men are perceived to be, the more snobs that appear, employing every psychic guerilla tactic at their disposal to delineate their superiority over others. Democracy is 'one vast middle class court where the courtiers are everywhere and the king is nowhere," (DD., 119) implying unbridled pretension and lack of law, a lack of law which is "responsible for the tensions and alienations besetting modern man" (VS., 188). Girard's final claim in regard to modern beliefs is that by leading man to search for meaning in the Self where it is not to be found, the modern 'religion' has completely stripped human existence of meaning.

> On ne se défait d'un puritanisme, dans le monde moderne, que pour tomber dans un autre. Ce n'est plus de sexualité qu'on veut priver les hommes, mais de quelque chose dont ils ont plus besoin encore, le sens... La pensée actuelle c'est la castration supreme, puisque c'est la castration du signifié (DC., 463-464).

And so, what is the prognosis for a world that has lost its grasp on meaning? Girard couples a prophecy of doom with a very optimistic and even naive solution. The prognosis is apocalyptic. For the first time in history it is wholly within our power to ensure that the human race continues to exist and hopefully prosper or to ensure that it reach an untimely and violent end.

> Dire que nous sommes en situation d'apocalypse objective, ce n'est nullement 'prêcher la fin du monde', c'est dire que les hommes, pour la première fois, sont vraiment les maîtres de leur destin. La planète entière se retrouve, face à la violence, dans une situation comparable à celle des groupes humains les plus primitifs, à ceci près, cette fois, que c'est en connaissance de cause; nous n'avons plus de ressources sacrificielles et de malentendus sacrés pour détourner de nous cette violence. Nous accédons à un degré de conscience et de responsibilité jamais encore atteint par les hommes qui nous ont précédés (DC., 284).

So this is our moment of 'pure potentiality when everything trembles in the balance.' However, Girard clearly believes that we are leaning toward destruction.

> Ce qui est effrayant, aujourd'hui, ce n'est pas le sens nouveau qui nous appelle, c'est l'évitement kafkaesque de tout sens. C'est le nihilisme cognitif auquel aboutissent toutes les pensées actuelles. C'est le refus panique de jeter le moindre coup d'oeil dans la seule direction d'où le sens pourrait encore venir (DC., 284).

The direction in which this 'coup d'oeil' should go is Christianity. Despite his dismal portrayal of the modern capability for cooperation and understanding, Girard's solution is the Gospel. The salvation of modern society consists in finally understanding the non-sacrificial nature of Christ's death and in adopting the Christian maxim of 'reconciliez-vous.' It is a solution that is difficult to reconcile with Girard's observations about human nature, and even more problematic from the point of view of collective action.

First of all, if desire is intrinsically mimetic, the only way to avert violence is to channel all our desires toward the imitation of Jesus Christ. The problem involved in this suggestion is that Jesus Christ, as we know him through the Bible, is hardly representative of the average man. He by no means embodies the entire range of desire in a person's life. What about physical desires, what about romantic desire, what about hunger? As Dostoievski's Grand Inquisitor angrily tells Jesus,

> "Feed them first and then demand virtue of them" - that is what they will inscribe on their banner which they will raise against you and which will destroy your temple.[29]

Secondly, how can Girard be so confident in the fact that everyone will interpret the Gospel in the same way? If, as he claims, it has been misinterpreted for two thousand years, then interpretation is obviously a tenuous matter. Finally, what is the practical significance of Girard's solution? How is an entire civilization suddenly going to adopt and internalize Christianity? Mass conversions? Education? Girard's failure to elaborate on how his solution translates into collective action is characteristic of his ideal and even mythical perception of how social phenomena originate. Perhaps it is only normal that, given his Christian perspective, he is neglectful of the concept of evolution.

It is in his neglect of the processes that lead to massive upheavals of culture that this critique finds the root weakness in René Girard's critique of modernity. When causes are neglected, effects can very easily be interpreted to be pathologies. And when causes are neglected, the solutions found are at best temporary and at worst impracticable. In order to ensure that modern thought does not in fact lead to a dead-end, it is important that we understand where it came from and why it has evolved as it has. Ignorance may have kept us from destruction in the past but in modernity its role has

been reversed. Emile Durkheim's recommendations to a then young century remain our only real choice.—

> Once established beliefs have been carried away by the current of affairs, they cannot be artificially established; only reflection can guide us in life after this. Once the social instinct is blunted, intelligence is the only guide left us and we have to reconstruct a conscience by its means. Dangerous as the undertaking is, there can be no hesitation, for we have no choice.[30]

CHAPTER THREE NOTES

[1] Jurgen Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 1.

[2] Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1965), p. 200.

[3] Albert Schatz, L'individualisme économique et social: ses origines - son évolution - ses formes contemporaines, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1907), p. 31.

[4] Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. by George Lawrence and ed. by J.P. Mayer and Max Lorner, (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 506.

[5] Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, p. 507.

[6] Emile Durkheim, "Individualism and the Intellectuals," trans. by S. and J. Lukes, in Durkheim and Religion, ed. by W.S.F. Pickering, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 60.

[7] Emile Durkheim, "Individualism and the Intellectuals," p. 60.

[8] Herbert Spencer, First Principles, (New York: A.L. Burt Co., 1880), p. 1.

[9] Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale, (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 22.

[10] George Santayana, The Life of Reason, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 179.

[11] With physicist Max Planck's discovery of the quantum and later with Einstein's first and second theories of relativity, science could know longer lay claim to the potential of knowing and measuring the physical world. To the dismay of even the discoverers themselves, disorder became firmly implanted in science. For an interesting literary account of the psychological effect of this development see Russell McCormmach, Night Thoughts of a Classical Physicist, (New York: Avon Books, 1983).

[12] Edgar Morin, "The Fourth Vision: On the Place of the Observer," in Disorder and Order: Proceedings of the Stanford International Symposium, ed. by Paisley Livingston, (Saratoga: Anma Libri, 1984), p. 99.

[13] Paisley Livingston, "Introduction" in Disorder and Order: Proceedings of the Stanford International Symposium, p. 15.

[14] Emile Durkheim, Suicide, trans. by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson, (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1951), p. 158.

[15] Emile Durkheim, Suicide, p. 142.

[16] Victor Turner, Process, Performance and Pilgrimage, (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979), p. 42.

[17] Second only to Von Gennep in the thoroughness of his study of the primitive rites of passage, Turner concentrates on the purpose and effect of the subversive elements within these rites. He divides the rite of passage into three phases: separation, limen (transition), and incorporation. The separation phase is the demarcation of a sacred space and time in which the novice enters into a different period of his life; the limen phase is a period and area of ambiguity where novices are permitted and encouraged to engage in the blurring and merging of distinctions which habitually characterize the order and culture from whence the novice comes; in the incorporation phase, the novice returns from the liminal period of rampant disorder to his new, well-defined position in society and resumes a structured existence. It is the liminal period of structural undifferentiation on which Turner chooses to focus. His conclusion is that, although the purpose of this staged disorder is one of catharsis and thus the maintenance of structure, it does on occasion give birth to new forms, developed within the chaos of the limen, that become integrated into the prevalent structure. Turner clearly believes that liminality is the source of new culture. See Process, Performance and Pilgrimage.

18 Turner, Process, Performance and Pilgrimage, p. 42.

19 Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot, (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1954), p. 8.

20 Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1950, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 321.

21 T.S. Eliot, Christianity and Culture, (London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968), p. 47.

22 Victor Turner, Dramas, Fields and Metaphors, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 298.

23 Turner, Process, Performance and Pilgrimage, p. 41.

24 Eric Gans, "Le Logos de René Girard," in René Girard et le problème du Mal, ed. by Michel Deguy and J.P. Dupuy, (Paris: Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1982), p. 212.

25 The volume of criticism of Girardian theory is relatively small and outside of two texts devoted to a collection of critical essays, it is characterised mostly by interviews and book reviews (see Aubral, Bessoff, Jeffers, White) which necessarily cannot give his theory comprehensive treatment. The two texts consisting of Girardian critical essays are René Girard et le problème du Mal (eds. Michel Deguy and Jean-Pierre Dupuis) and the proceedings of the Colloque de Cerisy: Violence et Verité (ed., Paul Dumouchel). These texts consist mostly of heuristic applications of Girard's theory. Substantive criticism of his theory is found in a surprisingly small number of essays. In the Deguy/Dupuis text see essays by Eric Gans and Lucien Scubla. In the Dumouchel volume see the essay by Pierre Pachet. Henri-Jacques Stiker also offers important criticism in an Esprit article.

26 Eric Gans, "Le Logos de René Girard," p. 212.

[27] Northrop Frye, The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), p. 161.

[28] John O'Malley, The Sociology of Meaning, (London: Chaucer Publishing Co. Ltd., 1978), p. 108.

[29] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, trans. by David Magarshack, (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 296.

[30] Durkheim, Suicide, p. 169.

CHAPTER FOUR:

IN DEFENSE OF DISCOURSE

In a 1973 interview François Aubral says to René Girard, "On doit être integralement avec vous, on ne peut pas l'être à moitié." Girard responds, "Il y a peut-être des moyens termes, mais il est impossible pour moi des les penser."[1] Although a theorist's directives, pronounced outside his works, regarding the use of his theory are subject to the same critical apprehension as an author's expressed intentions of his novel, it is no surprise that Girard is unable to imagine partial applications of his theory. There is little equivocation to be found in his entire body of work. His critique of modernity is informed by his beliefs about the perennial in Man and, in that sense, is neither situational nor historical. In Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde, Jean-Michel Oughourlian addresses Girard with, "Si l'on suit votre raisonnement, le veritable sujet humain ne peut émerger que de la règle du Royaume; en dehors de cette règle il n'y a jamais que du mimetisme et de l'interdividuel." Girard's response: "C'est exact."[2]

The application of a certain aspect of Girard's theory, such as the principle of mimetic desire, with the aim of enlightening a specific subject or situation is no doubt useful. Girard does it himself constructively in his essay "Camus's Stranger Retried" and in Deceit, Desire and the Novel, and Girardian criticism is full of examples of successful partial applications of his theory to specific topics. However, the principle of mimetic desire is therein used as a model by metaphoric means of which the actions of specific heroes are shown to be metaphysically motivated. Yet, Girard believes the principle of mimetic desire to be neither a model nor a metaphor but rather an inalienable truth about human nature. Thus, if the critic using Girardian

theory to explain a particular phenomenon does not espouse the view that the theory applies just as accurately to all human endeavours, as Girard clearly believes it does, the responsible critic need clarify that he is using Girard's 'truth' as a model in partial defiance to the theory's objective. The critic must specify that he is conserving the value of Girard's theory as a heuristic device while disassociating himself with the ontology. Otherwise, the theorist's application of Girardian theory will run a double risk. It will risk either being interpreted as an induction that since, for example, existential heroes are mimetically motivated then there is only mimesis outside 'la regle du Royaume,' or it will risk mis-representing Girard's theory as a model for use toward the understanding of some phenomena and not as critic Eric Gans emphasizes, an all-comprehensive philosophy.

> ... à force de vouloir présenter son hypothèse comme expression partielle d'une vérité absolue plutot que comme pur modèle phénoménologique, Girard pouvait encourir le reproche ... d'avoir voulu fonder un logos là ou il ne pouvait exister qu'une structure... Dans Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde, le titre affirme déjà l'existence d'une vérité autre que celle d'un "modele." Vérité qui implique existence d'un logos...[3]

Despite serious doubts about the usefulness of a 'logos' in the study of the human sciences, this thesis maintains that the partial and qualified application of Girard's theory of mimetic desire to specific phenomena remains a worthwhile heuristic exercise. More significantly, however, this thesis posits that the phenomena within which Girard's theory of mimetic desire is most useful heuristically tend to have one characteristic in common - they represent pure antitheses to his thesis, or more simply, they are complete inversion of his truths. In Deceit, Desire and the Novel, Girard himself states,

> The impulse of the soul toward God is inseparable from a retreat into the Self. Inversely, the turning in on itself of pride is inseparable from a movement of panic toward the Other (DD., 58).

Opposite the Christian model of total reconciliation with Others is the self-obsessed existential hero full of hatred for his fellow man. Opposite a respect for the function and incognizant wisdom of religion is the arrogant and deluded cynicism of scientism. Although it is not the position of this thesis that modernity consists of a series of binary oppositions, Girard is particularly useful in exposing the destructiveness of views at the diametrical pole of his. Neither Jerry, Meursault or Antigone are here considered representative of modern individualism nor scientism as the prevalent ontology. These existential heroes approximate a destructive parody of individualism and scientism represents the ignorance of those unaware that science is no longer as secure in facticity as it once thought itself to be. That is not to say that these phenomena do not exist and do not deserve investigation, but obsessive individualism and scientism are pathological aspects of world views that are not otherwise necessarily fanatical or destructive. It is thus in the study of the pathology of modernity that Girardian theory and critique is most useful.

However, if one stands back, away from the 'by-products' of the principle of mimetic desire and sacrificial ritual, and looks at the macrocosmic schema of Girard's theory and its implications to the continuing study of the human sciences, and more specifically to literary theory, its usefulness is more problematic. The sine qua non of the antithetic part of Girardian theory is presented as a series of absolute truths about human nature: Man is born with a desire for transcendence; all desire is mimetic; mimesis leads to violence; any ontological system which does not take into account these three 'truths'

condemns mankind to a proliferation of this violence and, in a twentieth century context, to the potential annihilation of the human race. Thus far, Girard's theory has offered some absolute 'truths' that aim to seal the discussion of what Man is and is not, and has left open to discussion only the ways in which Man can cope with these 'truths' - that is, which ontology is most effective in escaping violence. Girard has thus defined the search for an acceptable ontology as the investigation of preventive measures against the everpresent threat of conflict between one man and another. It is a definition that grows out of a perceived potential for destruction and no consideration for the possibility of growth. At this stage in the development of his theory, it is a survivalist definition of human inquiry.

The synthetic part of Girard's theory essentially consists of his conclusion as to which ontology is most effective in the perennial struggle with violence. Through his study of ritual, he attempts to demonstrate how, historically, it has been religion that has stemmed the tide of violence by means of carefully controlled cathartic releases of the violent impulse on surrogate victims in sacrificial rites or exercises. However, the preventive measures of primitive religions, although generally successful in avoiding epidemic outbreaks of violence, nonetheless continued to use violence as its own antidote. Girard, admirably in search of a completely violence-free world, then turns to a non-sacrificial interpretation of Jesus Christ and the Gospel for what he believes to be the only non-violent way of combatting violence once and for all. Christianity is proclaimed to be the only religion that sides with the surrogate victim and directs the mimetic impulses of Man toward the imitation of the only personage whose imitation does not lead to conflict - Jesus Christ. In a truly Christian world, there are no more surrogate victims and there is no more mimesis-induced violence among men.

> Toute violence désormais révèle ce que révèle la passion du Christ, la genèse imbécile des idoles sanglantes, de tous les faux dieux des religions, des politiques et des idéologies. Les meurtriers n'ent pensent pas moins que leurs sacrifices sont méritoires. Eux non plus ne savent pas ce qu'ils font et nous devons leur pardonner. L'heure est venue de nous pardonner les uns les autres. Si nous attendons encore, nous n'aurons plus le temps (BE., 295).

Girard's theory thus swings from a pessimism about the potentiality of Man that draws its intensity from allegedly absolute and undeniable truths about human nature to an equally intense optimism about Man's ability to start suddenly loving his fellow men in the ideal of Christ. Girard thus locates the problem of the human condition in very specific shortcomings of human nature and its solution in a benign divinity. Within the on-going study of the human sciences, any claim to uncontestable knowledge either about human nature or a divinity is indicative of an idealism that excludes from further discourse or investigation anyone who does not espouse the ideals of the theory. The option of contesting the scientific validity of the ideals in question is equally problematic as it will no more be able to substantiate its claims than Girard does his. The option is not to contest Girard's ideals with mirror-image ideals but to question the extent to which idealistic approaches to theory are useful - to question the function of the fatalism to which Girard condemns all for whom Christianity is no longer a matter of choice, no matter how effective an ontology it happens to be. In a discussion regarding the validity of judgments in general, Nietszche positions the problem as such,

> The question is to what extent it (the judgment) is life-advancing, life-preserving, species-preserving perhaps even species breeding.[4]

Girard himself uses this argument in defense of religion against the attacks of scientism. The question applies as well to Girardian theory. To what extent is it life-advancing, or more precisely in the context of scholarly investigation, to what extent is it discourse-advancing?

The purpose of this thesis's investigation of Girardian theory's treatment of modernity was not intended to be an evaluation of Girard's facts about human nature but rather an evaluation of his approach. That is, it does not seek to dispute whether or not all desire is mimetic or whether or not society can exist peacefully without religion. The question this study poses is whether or not it is useful to approach human endeavour with Girard's givens. The aim of this study is thus admittedly utilitarian - what is the practical significance of his theory? Is his theory useful? This question, in turn, begs yet another. Useful in what sense, useful toward what end? The answer has to be "useful in ensuring that twentieth century thought does not lead to the blind alley toward which Girard fears it may be headed." It is perhaps appropriate at this point to further elaborate on the concept of practical significance as a guiding principle both in the evaluation and formulation of theories within the human sciences.

An evaluation of 'facts' or 'knowledge' in the nebulous area of the human sciences is highly problematic. It is here avoided in the belief that it would inevitably lead to a circular pattern of argumentation or to a collision of interpretations. This belief is informed by two assumptions drawn from the on-going development of a theory of knowledge. The first, flogged by Marxism if not first generated therein, is that knowledge is inherently and inescapably subjective. It is the product of an investigation made by one human being in a specific, historical and situational time and place into the behaviour of other human beings with different histories and situations. The

investigation is inevitably affected and at times even determined by the historicism of the investigator as is his conclusion and claim to knowledge. Critic David Bleich writes, "Received knowledge can only come from authoritarian sources; revealed knowledge comes from mystics, seers and gods. Negotiated knowledge is created by us ordinary people when we decide to reduce our common ignorance."[5] In the human sciences there can be no 'received' or 'revealed' knowledge as the term 'human sciences' denotes investigation and research. Thus, knowledge that is neither received nor revealed but negotiated or active, in the sense that it puts on exhibit its methodology and data toward the aim of convincing others of its validity as knowledge, cannot escape its own historicity and subjectivity. And so, the 'knowledge', with which Girard emerges from his explorations into anthropology, history and literature is that, for example, all desire is mimetic. He is no more able to prove that point beyond the limitations of his bias than a disputing reader would be able to prove the contrary beyond the limitations of the reader's bias. Furthermore, since Girard does not once acknowledge his bias, it would seem rather pointless to argue about 'facts' when the parties involved do not share the same apprehension about claims to objectivity.

The second assumption responsible for this study's clear evasion of fact-finding exercises is drawn from British philosopher, A.J. Ayer's discussion of knowledge.[6] The assumption is that within one's own subjective formulation of knowledge, one cannot be asked to do what is not in one's power to do - one cannot be asked to know what one cannot know. For example, before encountering René Girard's work, a hypothetical reader has no knowledge of the principle of mimetic desire. He reads Deceit, Desire and the Novel and Violence and the Sacred and is convinced through Girard's exposition of other people's behaviour that, in fact, desire does for the most part tend to be

mimetic. The reader now 'knows' about mimetic desire. It is a concept that is either complementary with the reader's subjective formulation of reality or it has successfully challenged and changed his formulation. However, Girard's theory then asks this reader to 'know' that Christianity is the solution to the violence that mimesis breeds. Let it be supposed that, no matter how convincing the argument for the effectiveness of Christianity in ensuring peace is, the reader simply cannot integrate it into his formulation of reality, be the reasons what they may. What would be the point for this particular reader of discussing the merits of a 'knowledge' that, though it can be rhetorically spoken about, cannot become part of his perception of reality? To a reader for whom Girard's Christian solution is not a matter of choice, a discussion of why it should be would be a meaningless game of words.

Any area within the human sciences which is attempting to develop systems for accumulating knowledge with the aim of attaining some measure of scientificity need be committed to continuing investigation, as omniscience is not within the realm of human possibility. On-going investigation in turn requires communication - a discourse in which the investigators can share findings in the belief that numbers enrich the effort. Thus, it was here not considered useful to dispute about 'facts' and 'knowledge' because, under the circumstances of unacknowledged subjectivity, it would have led to an impasse, it would have cut short the discourse, it would have put an end to this investigation of Girardian theory. And so, the guiding principle of usefulness or practical significance is here defined as "conducive to discourse and further investigation in the belief that discourse is a good thing and that investigation is infinite and thus necessarily an end in itself". The question put to Girard's theory is "is it conducive to discourse and further investigation?"

René Girard's theory is not alone in failing to acknowledge its own subjectivity. The very problem of subjectivity in approaches to literature has recently been a subject of much debate. In the last few decades, significant efforts have been made in the field of language and literature to formulate empirically based methods of inquiry. A number of these efforts have been informed by a perceived need to give language-based knowledge authority comparable to that characteristic of mathematically-based knowledge. Other efforts have been animated by a perceived need to place literature and its study within the realm of material practice. However, these efforts have been complicated by what David Bleich views as 1) "a widespread belief that binding authority and absolute truth shall never be a feature of linguistically articulated knowledge" and by 2) "the fact that when any linguistically formulated proposal of knowledge is scrutinized long enough and thoroughly enough, even the most familiar and reliable knowledge can come to seem like a superstition."[7] The complications of the impulse toward scientificity within the amorphous area of language has led professionals in the study of literature to some very basic questions about self-definition. What is this phenomenon we call literature and thus what is literary theory?

These basic questions have in fact been found to be very complex. The received notions of literature and literary theory are being fundamentally challenged with questions such as 'why is one text worthier or more important than another?' Critic Peter Widdowson responds,

> Any answer to such questions based exclusively on formalistic criteria is no answer at all. And any critic who acknowledges the force of these questions must begin to suspect and analyse the received tradition of 'great' literary works...[8]

Terry Eagleton concludes,

> What we have uncovered so far, then, is not only that literature does not exist in the sense that insects do, and that the value-judgments by which it is constituted are historically variable, but that these value-judgements themselves have a close relation to social ideologies.[9]

And so, with T.S. Eliot's 'Tradition' scrutinized to the point of rendering it an illusion, the next question has to be "if the received body of works that has been labelled 'Literature' is an illusion, then what is literary theory?" Eagleton believes it is also an illusion:

> It is an illusion first in the sense that literary theory ... is really no more than a branch of social ideologies, utterly without unity or identity which would adequately distinguish it from philosophy, linguistics, psychology, cultural and sociological thought; and secondly in the sense that the one hope it has of distinguishing itself - clinging to an object named literature - is misplaced.[10]

These questions and answers have already had a significant impact on the ways in which we study literature and, more immediately, on the ways in which professionals teach it. They are questions that challenge the authority of university curricula and the ways in which these curricula are presented. However, even if the canon of literature that has been passed down to us is indeed ideologically selective, having excluded works which we will now never know, there is little we can do about the past except learn from it. We cannot resurrect literary works of whose existence we are not aware. We can only study and teach existing works with a communicated awareness of the ideological selectivity responsible for the work's endurance, the work's own historicity, and ours in examining it. As to the present and future, the hope is that this new awareness will not only work toward a more historically based comprehension of old works but a more pluralistic approach to new ones. Perhaps this hope is vainly optimistic but it is necessarily posited in the belief that the acknowledgement of subjectivity cannot spell the end of human

inquiry. No matter how much of an illusion literature and literary theory are proclaimed to be, it is an activity we continue to be engaged in. To question the usefulness of the activity itself is to be engaged in the activity and thus a solipsism. The remaining relevant question is directed toward the ways in which we engage in the activity - our methodology. An acknowledgement of the subjectivity inherent in our participation in the activity of studying literature should not be the death-knoll of literary theory, as some Marxists and most post-structuralists proclaim, but rather a new and enlightened phase of inquiry.

René Girard's indirect response to the recent focus on the question of subjectivity in the human sciences is formulated within Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde:

> Je crois que la verité n'est pas un vain mot, ou un simple "effet" comme on dit aujourd'hui. Je pense que tout ce qui peut nous détourner de la folie et de la mort, dèsormais, a partie liée avec cette verité.[11]

Acknowledging the power of subjectivity is not necessarily proclaiming that truth is "un vain mot." It simply questions the strength of any one person's claim to it. But the questioning itself is based on the belief that truth is not quite an empty concept but rather one that can never be quite full. To be concerned with the subjectivity of claims to truth reveals a greater respect for the concept than approaches which take the definition of truth for granted. However, it is not here considered a useful concept because its connotations of finality and objectivity are incompatible with investigation and discourse. To speak of absolute truth is to ascribe to an idealism that lays claim to a position completely devoid of the effects of history and situation. In essence, it claims the ability to stand outside of human history and look down upon it. It is necessarily solipsistic because it

cannot include itself in its own theorizing, much like Gans's analogy of "la theorie d'un physicien nucleaire qui ne pourrait pas etre formulée par les atomes eux-mêmes."[12] In other words, how does Girard reasonably account for the fact that only he has been privy to 'des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde?' This type of solipsistic idealism summarily performs a double act of exclusion incompatible with discourse. It excludes Girard from the forces of historicity and subjectivity that affect the people he speaks about and it excludes the people he speaks about from further discourse if they happen not to think him an ahistorical observer. Idealism thus presents itself as revealed knowledge - a knowledge not open to inquiry as it comes to us from an allegedly ahistorical and objective source. In a 1979 article in which David Bleich analyzes a printed discussion among six literary theorists, he reports, "The more subjective sense of truth yields more negotiation, the more objective sense, more argumentation and personal defensiveness."[13]

Girard, however, maintains,

> Toute pensée vigoureuse doit parvenir un jour ou l'autre, a ses propres fondements: elle finira donc par le reductionnisme... La phobie de la reduction risque d'emasculer toute pensee critique.[14]

His insistence on singularity is a partly justified reaction to the twin theoretical impulse at the diametrical pole of idealism - pure relativism. He is not alone. The impulse behind much of contemporary litery theory is a reaction against the fragmentary approaches of relativism. Pure theoretical relativism, manifested in some aspects of hermeneutics and reception theory, maintains that there is nothing at all determinate about literature, that a literary text is no more than one or all interpretations of it. Any interpretation is just as valid as any other. This theoretical perspective is

no more conducive to discourse than idealism. Firstly, it does away entirely with the literary text as a point of reference and if there is no point of reference in a discourse, no matter how loosely defined it is, the result is a theoretical Tower of Babel. Although there is literally no end to the number of interpretations of words with which one can come up, the text remains a point of reference. Shakespeare's MacBeth is not Heinrich Boll's Group Portrait with Lady. As Eagleton points out, no matter how nebulous language is, the literary text has a definite range of possibilities.

> For such texts belong to a language as a whole, have intricate relations to other linguistic practices, however much they might also subvert and violate them; and language is not in fact something we are free to do what we like with. If I cannot read the word 'nightingale' without imagining how blissful it would be to retreat from urban society to the solace of Nature, then the word has a certain power for me, or over me, which does not magically evaporate when I encounter it in a poem. This is part of what is meant by saying that the literary work constrains our interpretations of it, or that its meaning is to some extent 'immanent' in it.[15]

Another reason why pure relativism is not conducive to discourse lies in the fact that relativism is as solipsistic as idealism. If I read MacBeth and it means X to me, on what grounds should it matter to me that it means Y to you? Your interpretation supposedly arises from your own specific set of circumstances and MacBeth is anything you or I choose it to be. Comparing notes about different interpretations would be akin to showing each other our respective birth marks - interesting but irrelevant. If anything is meaningful then nothing is and if nothing is there is no point to discourse and investigation. Moreover, why do pure relativists continue writing and engaging in a discourse they have deemed pointless?

Thus, both idealism and pure relativism act to put an end to the very discourse in which they are engaging. Idealism is characterised by

unacknowledged subjectivity and historicity which excludes from the discourse all those who cannot conceive of the possibility of objectivity. Furthermore, by virtue of its insistence on the attainability of absolute, timeless truths, it views discourse and investigation as means to a definite end or series of ends and not as an end in itself. Every idealistic position is thus, in this sense, an attempt to foreclose investigation into whatever particular area the position is addressing. So that when Girard proclaims that all desire is mimetic, the aim is to close the discourse on the nature of desire and open a sub-discourse that is confined to investigation into the variety of mimetic manifestations of desire. On the other hand, pure relativism essentially posits that there is really nothing over which to have a discourse since a literary text is whatever you happen to interpret it to be. Both idealism and pure relativism are solipsistic by virtue of the fact that the very existence of the theories poses a serious question to their own internal logic. In the case of Girard the question is, "if all desire is mimetic, why should his theory be considered the truth and not just another attempt to appropriate the object of someone else's desire?" In the case of the relativists, the question is "if there is indeed nothing to talk about, why are you still talking?" Given the definition of usefulness to which this study adheres, neither idealism nor pure relativism are thus considered useful approaches to the study of literature.

So what is in fact here considered a useful approach to the study of literature? It essentially consists of the formulation of a direction which attempts to avoid the twin paralyses of deterministic constraints and boundless liberalism in the hope of animating discourse.

First and foremost, theorists must agree to acknowledge their subjectivity to the best of their abilities. The acknowledgement should

furthermore be maintained as a holistic part of their findings at every stage of their investigations and not as a short qualifier to be quickly dismissed once the discourse is in full progress. Having admitted their respective biases, the theorists must agree that, despite subjectivity, there is something to talk about, no matter how loosely defined this something happens to be. Then, individually, each theorist has a responsibility to state his goals, as there are many different goals in the study of literature. That is, the theorist should be explicit about what is being studied, why, and to what end. If this is not explicitly stated, the theorist is in danger of creating the illusion that his findings were stumbled upon in an idealistic search for Truth. Finally, theorists should strive for what Keats termed "Negative Capability" and defined as that state of mind in which "Man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason."[16] Negative capability is a realization that infinite investigation is the fate of humankind and an end in itself. It is thus posited that these four conditions are the minimal requirements for discourse.

The failure of René Girard's theory to meet three of them leads to the conclusion that Girardian theory is not discourse-advancing if considered in its entirety as it is clearly intended to be considered. A profile of modernity that emanates from a theory that is not discourse-advancing is consequently prophetic. The past is recounted, the present called attention to, the future foretold. However, the present is never as subservient to a theorist's designs as the past - the future, rebellious.

CHAPTER FOUR NOTES

1 François Aubral, "Discussion avec René Girard," Esprit 429 (1973) p. 560.

2 René Girard, Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde, (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1978), p. 223.

3 Eric Gans, "Le logos de René Girard," in René Girard et le probleme du Mal, ed. by Michel Deguy and J.P. Dupuy, (Paris: Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1982), p. 185.

4 Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale, (New York: Penquin Books, 1973), p. 16.

5 David Bleich, "Negotiated Knowledge of Language and Literature," Studies in the Literary Imagination, 12, No. 1 (spring) 1979, p. 92.

6 A.J. Ayer, Philosophy in the Twentieth Century, (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), p. 54.

7 Bleich, "Negotiated Knowledge of Language and Literature," p. 73.

8 Peter Widdowson, "The Crisis in English Studies," in Re-Reading English, ed. by Peter Widdowson, (London: Methuen & Co., 1982), p. 2.

9 Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 16.

10 Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction, p. 204.

11 Girard, Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde, p. 467.,

12 Gans, "Le logos de René Girard," p. 185.

13 Bleich, "Negotiated Knowledge of Language and Literature," p. 81.

14 René Girard, "Reflexions critiques sur les recherches litteraires, Modern Language Notes, 81 (1966), p. 313.

15 Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction, p. 87.

[16] John Keats, "letter to George and Thomas Keats, December 1817," in Selected Poems and Letters, ed. by Douglas Bush (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959), p. 261.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albee, Edward. The Zoo Story. New York: Signet Books, 1960.

Allen, James Sloan. "Self-Consciousness and the Modernist Temper." The Georgia Review, 33 (1979), 601-620.

----------. "Modernity and the Evil of Banality." Centennial Review, No. 23 (1979), pp. 20-39.

Anouilh, Jean. Antigone. Trans. by Lewis Galantiere. London: Methuen & Co., 1960.

Aubral, Francis. "Discussion avec René Girard." Esprit 429 (1973), pp. 556-562.

Ayer, A.J. Philosophy in the Twentieth Century. New York: Vintage Books, 1984.

Babcock, Barbara, ed. The Reversible World. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Bassoff, Bruce. "An Interview with René Girard." Denver Quarterly, No. 13, ii (1978), pp. 28-40.

Beckett, Samuel. Waiting for Godot. New York: Grove Press Inc., 1954.

Belsey, Catherine. Critical Practice. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1980.

Bennett, Robert B. "Tragic Vision in the Zoo Story." Modern Drama, 20 (1977), 55-66.

Bleith, David. "Negoiated Knowledge of Language and Literature." Studies in the Literary Imagination. 12, No. 1 (Spring) 1979, pp. 78-92.

Bradbury, Malcolm and James McFarlane, ed. Modernism. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985.

Buber, Martin. Between Man and Man. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1965.

Burke, Edmund. Reflections on the French Revolution. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1951.

Caillois, Roger. Man and the Sacred. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959.

Calvino, Italo. If on a Winter's Night a Traveller. Trans. by William Weaver. Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1979.

Camus, Albert. The Myth of Sisyphus. Trans. by Justin O'Brien. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955.

----------. Neither Victims nor Executioners. Trans. by Dwight MacDonald. New York: Liberation Press, 1960.

----------. The Outsider, trans. by Stuart Gilbert. New York: Penguin Books, 1974.

----------. The Rebel. Trans. by Anthony Bower. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1956.

----------. Resistance, Rebellion and Death. Trans. by Justin O'Brien. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961.

Connolly, Cyril, "Introduction to The Outsider." In Albert Camus, The Outsider. Trans. by Stuart Gilbert. New York: Penguin Books, 1974.

Deguy, Michel and Jean-Pierre Dupuy, eds. René Girard et le problème du Mal. Paris: Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1982.

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. The Brothers Karamazov. Trans. by David Magarshack. London: Penguin Books, 1985.

Dumouchel, Paul, ed. Colloque de Cerisy: Violence et verité autour de René Girard. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1985.

Durkheim, Emile. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. Trans. by Joseph Ward Swain. London: George Allen & Univin Ltd., 1964.

----------. "Individualism and the Intellectuals." Trans. by S. and J. Lukes. In Durkheim and Religion. Ed. by W.S.F. Pickering. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.

----------. Suicide. Trans. by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1951.

Eagleton, Terry. Literary Theory: An Introduction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.

Eliot, T.S. Christianity and Culture. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968.

----------. Murder in the Cathedral. London: Faber and Faber, 1968.

Fish, Stanley. Is there a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities. Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1980.

Frazer, Sir James G. The Golden Bough. New York: McMillan Company, 1951.

Frye, Northrop. The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971.

Gans, E.L. Essais d'esthétique paradoxale. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1977.

----------. "Le logos de René Girard." In René Girard et le problème du Mal. Ed. Michel Deguy and Jean-Pierre Dupuy. Paris: Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1982, pp. 179-214.

---------. "Pour une esthétique triangulaire." Esprit, November (1973), pp. 564-581.

Girard, René. Le bouc emmissaire. Paris: Bertrand Grasset, 1982.

----------. Critique dans un souterrain. Lausanne: Editions l'age d'homme, 1976.

----------. Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure. Trans. by Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1965.

----------. Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1978.

----------. "French Theories of Fiction: 1947-1974." Bucknell Review, No. 22, 1 (1976), pp. 117-126.

----------. "Interdividual Psychology." Denver Quarterly, 14, iii, (1979), 3-19.

----------. To Double Business Bound. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1978.

----------. "Violence and Representation in the Mythical Text." Modern Language Notes, 92 (1977), 922-944.

----------. Violence and the Sacred. Trans by Gregory Patrick. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press Ltd., 1972.

Glicksberg, Charles I. The Literature of Nihilism. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1975.

----------. The Literature of Commitment. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1975.

Goody, Jack, "Against Ritual: Loosely Structured Thoughts on a Loosely Defined Topic." In Secular Ritual. Ed. Sally F. Moore and Barbara Myerhoff. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977, pp. 25-35.

Guillet, Jacques. "René Girard et le sacrifice." Etudes, July, (1979), 91-102.

Habermas, Jurgen. Legitimation Crisis. Trans. by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1975.

Harries, Karsten. "Metaphor and Transcendence." Critical Inquiry, 5 (1978), 73-90.

Harrison, Jane. Themis. London: Merlin Press, 1963.

Hassan, Ihab. "Culture, Indeterminacy and Immanence: Margins of the Post-Modern Age." Humanities in Society, No. 1, 1 (1978), pp. 51-85.

Hewitson, Richard. "Anouilh's Antigone: A Coherent Structure." Australian Journal of French Studies, No. 17 (2) (1980), 167-180.

Hirsch, E.D. Validity in Interpretation. New Haven: U. of Conn. Press, 1976.

Howells, Christina. Sartre's Theory of Literature. London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1979.

Jackson, Bruce. "Deviance as Success: The Double Inversion of Stigmatized Roles." In The Reversible World. Ed. Barbara Babcock. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978, pp. 258-275.

Jeffers, Thomas L. "Violence is our Property: The New Work of René Girard." Michigan Quarterly Review, No. 19 (3) (1980), pp. 421-426.

Johnsen, William A. "René Girard and the Boundaries of Modern Literature." Boundary, No. 9 (2) (1981), pp. 277-293.

Jolivet, Régis. Sartre: The Theology of the Absurd. Trans. by Wesley Piersol. Westminster: NewmanPress, 1967.

Keats, John. Selected Poems and Lettrs. Ed. by Douglas Bush. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959.

King, Thomas M. Sartre and the Sacred. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. "Mimesis and Truth." Diacritics, 8, 1, 10-13.

Livingston, Paisley, ed. Disorder and Order: Proceedings of the Stanford International Symposium. Saratoga: Anma Libri, 1984.

Magnus, Bernd. Nietzsche's Existential Imperative. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.

Malone, David H. "Literary Periods and the Process of Theistic Decay." In Proceedings of the Seventh Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association II. Ed. Eva Kuschner and Roman Struc. Stuttgart: Bieber, 1979, pp. 113-116.

Maranda, Pierre. "The Dialectic of Metaphor: An Anthropological Essay on Hermeneutics." In The Reader in Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation. Ed. Susan R. Sulerman and Inge Crosman. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 183-204.

McCormmach, Russell. Night Thoughts of a Classical Physicist. New York: Avon Books, 1983.

McCune, Marjorie W., Tucker Orbison and Philip M. Withim, eds. The Binding of Proteus: Perspectives on Myth and the Literary Process. New York: Knopf, 1980.

Moore, Sally F. and Barbara Myerhoff, eds. Secular Ritual. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977.

Muray, Philippe. "La résurrection Girard." Art Press International, 21 (October) 1978, 8-9.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Birth of Tragedy. Trans. by Francis Golffing. New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1956.

----------. Beyond Good and Evil. Trans. by R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Penguin Books, 1973.

----------. The Geneology of Morals. Trans. by Horace Samuel. New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1956.

Nelson, Robert J. "Ritual Reality, Tragic Imitation, Mythic Projection." Diacritics (1976), 41-48.

Noon, Georgia. "On Suicide." Journal of the History of Ideas, 39 (1978), 371-386.

O'Malley, John. The Sociology of Meaning. London: Chaucer Publishing Co. Ltd., 1978.

Poirier, Richard. "The Difficulties of Modernism and the Modernism of Difficulty." Humanities in Society, 1 (1978), 271-282.

Rasche, Carl A. "Common Sense and the Language of Transcendence: Four Models." Bucknell Review, 23, 1 (1977), 41-61.

Righter, William. Myth and Literature. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1975.

Sandars, N.K. "A Prehistorian's Look at the Literary Abuses of Myth and Ritual." Agenda, 15, ii-iii (1977), 22-25.

Santayana, George. The Life of Reason. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954.

Sartre, Jean Paul. The Age of Reason. Trans. by Eric Sutton. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1947.

----------. Being and Nothingness. Trans. by Hazel Barnes. New York: Citadel Press, 1966.

----------. The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness. Trans. by F. Williams. New York: Octagon Books, 1972.

----------. What is Literature? Trans. by B. Frechtman. London: Metheun and Co. Ltd., 1950.

Schatz, Albert. L'individualisme économique et social: ses origins - son evolution - ses formes contemporaines. Paris: Armand Colin, 1907.

Scubla, Lucien. "Contribution à la theorie du sacrifice." In René Girard et le problème du Mal. Ed. Michel Deguy and Jean Pierre Dupuy. Paris: Grasset, 1982, pp. 103-168.

"Special Issue on the Works of René Girard." Diacritics, 8, 1 (1978).

Spencer, Herbert. First Principles. New York: A.L. Burt Co., 1880.

Stiker, Henri-Jacques. Culture brisée, culture a naitre. Paris: Hubier Montaigne, 1979.

----------. "Sur le mode de penser de René Girard." Esprit, 28 (April 1979), 46-55.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. Democracy in America. Trans. by George Lawrence and Ed. by J.P. Mayer and Max Lerner. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

Thody, Philip. "The Anti-heroes of Sartre and Camus: Some Problems and Definitions." Studies in the Literary Imagination. 9 (1976) p. 107-117.

Troisfontaines, Claude. "L'identité du social et du religieux selon René Girard." Revue philosophique de Louvain, 78 (February 1980).

Turner, Victor. Dramas, Fields and Metaphors. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974.

----------. Process, Performance and Pilgrimage. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979.

----------. The Ritual Process. Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1969.

----------. "Social Dramas and Stories About Them." Critical Inquiry, 7 (1978), 141-168.

Urla, Jacqueline. "New Perspectives in Anthropology and Modern Literature." Sub-stance, 22 (1979), 97-106.

Van Gennep, Arnold. The Rites of Passage. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.

Vernant, Jean Pierre. Myth and Society in Ancient Greece. Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980.

Vickery, John B. "The Scapegoat in Literature: Some Kinds and Uses." In The Binding of Proteus: Perspectives on Myth and the Literary Process. Ed. Marjorie W. McCune, Tucker Orbison and Philip M. Withim. New York: Knopf, 1980, pp. 264-278.

Weir, Robert F., ed. Death in Literature. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

White, Hayden, "Ethnological Lie and Mythical Truth." Diacritics, 8, i (1978) p. 2-6.

Widdowson, Peter, ed. Re-Reading English. London: Methuen & Co., 1982.

Wilde, Alan. "Modernism and the Aesthetics of Crisis." Convorbiri Literature, 20 (1979), 13-50.

Williams, Raymond. Culture and Society. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961.