



Literary Aesthetics and Knowledge in Girard's Mimetic Theory

Diego Bubbio

RENÉ Girard's mimetic theory has significantly influenced the fields of comparative literature and cultural studies, as well as sociological anthropology and philosophy. Nevertheless, I would argue that a somewhat different line of interpretation, an interdisciplinary one, has not been sufficiently investigated. This involves an interpretation which focuses on the vicissitudes of the mimetic and "victimage"¹ circle not (or not only) in sociological terms, but by analysing their articulation on the level of knowledge.

The sociological and epistemological perspectives do not exclude each other, but can be integrated. The main aim of this paper is to clarify this articulation, and to show that integration between these two perspectives is possible only by bringing into play a real 'literary aesthetics'. The notion of literary aesthetics needs to be considered in both the common and the etymological sense, as a theory of feeling and of experiencing. In doing so, I will firstly cover in brief the main stages of Girard's thought in the light of this perspective, to then focus on the relationship between literary aesthetics and knowledge. Finally I will argue that this picture, if seriously considered, could lead to a mystical outcome, and will discuss the possible alternatives to that outcome.²

Man is, according to Girard, naturally disposed to imitation. The primary model proposed to every human being is his own father: the child wants to be what the father is, and thus wants to have what the father has and desires what the father desires.³ All this is felt by the child as a commandment: "Imitate me!" The child is completely unconscious of the direction in which



he is developing; but the father is not-the father feels this move as treason and usurpation of his role. Thus, the father will deny to the child the access to what he possesses – first of all the mother. Therefore, the child becomes aware of a contradictory and contrasting commandment: “Do not imitate me!” This dynamic is called by Girard “double bind”:⁴ (In passing, it should be noted that this conception of Girard’s has been considered and criticized by feminists as “androcentric”:⁵ On the one hand it has to be said that “Girard is adamant that desire is mimetic for both sexes”, but on the other that, “the specific charges they make against Girard, that he universalises conceptions of humanity, violence and religion which are Eurocentric and androcentric, may well have some degree of truth – though Girard would be prepared to defend this universalisation”).

If it is the experience and (possible) solution of the “double bind” that is the psychological and existential origin of man, it follows that the “socially adjusted” human being is one who succeeds in assigning two different areas of application to the two contradictory commandments of the ‘double bind’, whereas the ‘maladjusted’ human being is one who rebels and seeks the truth. We begin to see that mimetic theory changes radically the way in which we usually consider human structures.

In addition, this dynamic is not limited to family relationship. The desire of every human being always derives from the imitation of a model, but desiring what the model desires means wanting to possess what he possesses: mimetic rivalry thus comes into play, and with it violence increases. Inevitably, since they serve as models for each other, rivals tend increasingly to resemble each other, and mutual violence grows proportionately: this is the critical moment of the birth of every culture. The event which results from this is the choice – a substantially arbitrary choice – of a scapegoat: the victim is expelled and so the community finds itself united.

The miracle of rediscovered peace is then attributed to the scapegoat, which is therefore worshipped and deified. Two processes are then necessary in order that the miracle can happen again and the community can avoid collapsing into the chaos of violence: the first is the process of conceptualising the victimage expulsion so as to be able to repeat it; the second is the process of expressing the expulsion in such a way



that other community members to agree to it. Reason is a faculty born to conceptualise victimage expulsion, and language is a tool created to express it.

The expulsion is then constantly repeated, replacing the original victim with newer and newer scapegoats: and thus rites come into being, and in myths the memory of this experience is preserved and at the same time distorted. The distortion is necessary because men could not expel the victim if they were aware of the arbitrariness of this act (the victimization has a beneficial effect only if everybody believes that the scapegoat is really guilty). Thus mystification constitutes a fundamental feature of the mechanism – in a certain sense, it is the driver of the whole mechanism.

At this point the question is: if human reason is, from its origins and also in its fundamental practices, a sacrificial tool, and thus cannot show the truth about the mimetic and victimage mechanism, how can the conditions for overcoming this mystification occur?

The victimage circle perpetuates itself through ritualizations of the primary sacrifice, but, as time goes by from the founding event (i.e., the primary, spontaneous sacrifice), they gradually become less effective. A new sacrificial crisis therefore occurs: mimetism and associated undifferentiated violence increases, generating a situation which can only be resolved through a new sacrifice – not a ritualized one, but a real one. During this unfolding process, a partial knowledge of the mechanism inevitably appears (This is what happens, according to Girard, with Greek tragedy and, as we will see, with the great novels of the Nineteenth Century). This emerging knowledge is a consequence of the reduced effectiveness of the rites, but at the same time it contributes to the crisis, because every revelation, even partial, of the mechanism is an obstacle to its effective functioning. Girard writes:

“In so far as light is shed on the victimage mechanism, concepts like violence and unjust persecution become thinkable and begin to play a larger role in cultural institutions. The production of myth and ritual simultaneously declines and eventually disappears entirely”

There is, in Girard's thought, a dialectic between the mimetic-victimage circle and the demystification of this circle. Girard himself uses a more



philosophical terminology to discuss this dialectic. He identifies the mimetic-victimage circle, and reason which animates it, with Heraclitus' Logos; on the other hand he identifies the demystifying knowledge with the Logos which appears in the Gospel according to St. John.

"The Johannine Logos is foreign to any kind of violence; it is therefore forever expelled, an absent Logos that never has had any direct, determining influence over human cultures. These cultures are based on the Heraclitean Logos, the Logos of expulsion, the Logos of violence, which, if it is not recognized, can provide the foundation of a culture"

Leaving aside the philosophical and religious implications of this affirmation, Girard suggests that two different forms of knowledge clash: a knowledge which is violently logical opposes a knowledge which is not animated by reason (considered as a sacrificial tool) and which we can thus define as "alogical". Properly speaking, only the latter of these is a knowledge, because the former is also a mystification of the truth. The Johannine logos reads the Heraclitean logos, but the Heraclitean logos cannot read the Johannine logos. Therefore, if the Johannine Logos is literally the "logic" of the non-violence of Christ, and if this "logic" has an epistemological priority over every violence and every knowledge related to violence, this means that this "point of view" will necessarily reveal the original lie, and will constitute the criterion for understanding every mythical text.

For this reason I define as "alogical knowledge" the pars construens of the "critical" principle of demystification: it consists in a recapitulation which contains the stages of the violent Logos, yet read from the point of view of the Johannine Logos. This dynamic is at the basis of the theory of knowledge in Girard's thought.

The paradox of this theory is that it is based on facts that cannot be empirically verified. It is possible, however, to reach these facts through a correct interpretation of the mythical texts, even though they provide only indirect, maimed, deformed testimonies. Moreover, even all the philosophies and sciences are in this perspective mystifications of the founding event or, at most, still partial intuitions of the mechanism.

If even philosophy is a mystification, real knowledge can very rarely



emerge in a philosophical form. Girard's problematic affirmation on the alleged death of philosophy derives from this argumentation.

"I do believe that philosophy has used up its resources. [...] I believe [...] that the end of philosophy brings with it a new possibility of scientific thinking within the human domain; at the same time, however strange this may seem, it brings with it a return to religious faith".⁹

As a mystification, philosophy will never show the truth about the scapegoat, exactly as a ritual ceremony, whose only purpose is to perpetuate the original victimage expulsion, will never be able to reveal the mechanisms which produce it.

"Ritual thinking can never turn back to its own origin. It perpetuates itself in philosophical thinking and, in our time, in the modern human sciences. These are inheritors as much of the powers of rite as of its fundamental impotence".¹⁰

This does not mean recourse to silence, as some rays of truth sometimes emerge. This can happen in two different ways: the first one is negative, the second is positive.

We could define the first as "textual archaeology": a clumsy lie unintentionally points out the truth that it wants to hide. For instance, the reports of the Medieval Inquisition appear to our eyes as narratives of sacrificial persecutions, but while these reports consider the scapegoats guilty, we understand that they were innocent. In the same way a philosophical system can unintentionally show as a photographic "negative", so to speak, the workings of a mechanism precisely as it seeks to conceal it. A demystifying knowledge can show these clumsy philosophical lies. However, these dynamics are possible only if the textual analyst holds at least a nucleus of truth, as it will only be if his analysis is based on the "truth of the victim" that he will uncover the traces of mystification. It is evident to us today that witches were not responsible for the plague epidemics, but this was not so evident for a man living in the eleventh century.

Secondly, the demystifying truth can appear, as a "positive" image, if the point of view of the victim rather than that of persecutors, is assumed. This happens, according to Girard, in two types of texts. Let us consider these two text-types, paying attention to how they might contribute to a



theory of knowledge.

The first is made up of the great novels of the Western tradition. For instance, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* reveal in narrative form, and each according to a different perspective, the deception involved in the mimetic circle. It is interesting to note that, for Girard, aesthetics really is a theory of knowledge, since what emerges from an aesthetic analysis of these novels is an initial understanding of the circle in which the contemporary man is trapped.¹¹

We have seen that, according to Girard, every human being desires by imitating the desires of a model. The model is therefore also called by Girard the "mediator".¹² The mediator can remain outside the universe of the subject, as it happens for the knights who constitute the models of *Don Quixote*, or it can be inside that universe, as it happens in Dostoevsky. In the first case we speak of external mediation, in the second case we speak of internal mediation.¹³

In Girard's opinion, the difference between the "romance" and the "novel" lies in the fact that only the latter's creator, the novelist, make clear the imitative essence of desire:

"Thus it should not surprise us that the term romanesque still reflects, in its ambiguity, our unawareness of all mediation. The term denotes the chivalric romances and it denotes Don Quixote, it can be synonymous with romantic and it can indicate the destruction of romantic pretensions. In the future we shall use the term romantic for the works which reflect the presence of a mediator without ever revealing it and the term novelistic for the works which reveal this presence".¹⁴

The object is desired by the subject because it is possessed by the mediator. Thus, it has no value beyond the relationship with the mediator. When mimetism becomes internal mediation, we can speak of a "metaphysical desire". This desire is "metaphysical" in the etymological sense of the word, as it has no longer an object – or the object subsists solely as the sign which refers to the mediator. The desire no longer aspires to anything specific, as it transcends the object and refers instead exclusively to the model.¹⁵

Subjects who are prisoners of desire are unable to grasp the importance of the mechanism, so if the novelist can reveal it this means that he



has succeeded in overcoming the metaphysical desire. The undeniable differences between great novelists in terms of the different ways in which they deal with the mechanism derive from the evolution of the metaphysical desire: every novelist faces a unique moment in the metaphysical structure. The novels of Stendhal and Flaubert make obvious two aspects of the underlying mechanism: the permanence of the desire and the gradual move from external mediation to internal mediation. In Dostoevsky, a third aspect becomes central: the real mimetic crisis.¹⁶ Girard identifies in Dostoevsky's novels what he calls "metaphysics of Underground": an investigation that aims to unmask the nothingness which grounds the metaphysical desire.

All the protagonists of the great novels finally experience a catharsis from metaphysical desire. At the end of *Don Quixote*, chivalrous passion is presented as a state of possession from which the dying protagonist is happily but tardily liberated. Similarly *Le Rouge et le Noir* concludes with a conversion at the point of death, as Julien repudiates his own will for power. In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov renounces his theory of the superman. In each case the hero disowns the chimera previously suggested by his own pride:

"The unity of novelistic conclusions consists in the renunciation of metaphysical desire. [...] Repudiation of the mediator implies renunciation of divinity, and this means renouncing pride. [...] In renouncing divinity the hero renounces slavery. Every level of his existence is inverted, all the effects of metaphysical desire are replaced by contrary effects. Deception gives way to the truth, anguish to remembrance, agitation to repose, hatred to love, humiliation to humility, mediated desire to autonomy, deviated transcendency to vertical transcendency".¹⁷

By renouncing the deceptive divinity of pride, the hero frees himself from slavery and finally grasps the truth of his own unhappiness. The renunciation of the hero is also the renunciation of the novel's author, and it is this victory over the metaphysical desire that makes the writer a real novelist.

Disowning the deviated transcendence of the metaphysical desire means, at the same time, contributing to the demystifying knowledge, and this is the reason why the aesthetics of novel is, according to Girard,





the first stage of “aesthetics” in the original sense of the term, i.e., a theory of knowledge.

The second type of texts, those which take the point of view of the victim instead of the persecutors, is constituted by some books of the Old Testament and above all by the New Testament. According to Girard, it is only in the Gospels that the truth of the victim is entirely revealed. This is the reason why Girard's thought leads to a possible mystical outcome: if the truth is given in the Christian faith, the only reasonable choice is to give oneself up to that message, renouncing any form of rational speculation. This opens a contradiction within Girard's thought itself: why does he not think that he too is subject to the impotence of thought?¹⁶ Why should Girard's hypothesis itself be an exception to the sentence that it passes, for structural reasons, on every form of philosophy? Even his thought is grounded in the exercise of reason, and makes use of logic and of the social sciences which have their basis in reason. Moreover, Girard uses language to communicate his theory to the readers – and, as we have seen, language is a sacrificial tool. Even granted that what is revealing in Girard's work exclusively derives from the gospel message, what can be said about the other component, incontestably present: reason?

In fact, it seems that the mimetic circle and the victimage circle are expressions of a more fundamental circle: the circle of reason. When reason, an intellectual form of sacrificial origin and born to repeat the sacrifice, turns back and tries to clarify its origin and to demystify everything sacrificial, the outcome is a paradox, which Jean-Pierre Dupuy has connoted as ‘self-referential’.¹⁷ It is a form of double bind: on the one hand reason cannot avoid investigating reality in order to grasp its essence; on the other hand reason, having been generated to perpetuate a mystification, cannot fully explain that essence. This perspective is shared by Michel Serres, who recognizes the violent logos as the basis of every institution (political, social, scientific, philosophical, etc.). This logos aims to confer a status of natural necessity on the arbitrariness of a power grounded in the sacred, i.e., in the logos itself. To be capable of demystifying action, reason needs to be more than what it seeks to demystify; but this is not the case, because both the subject and object of demystification is pure





reason (reason without outside help).²⁰

Therefore every attempt made by the reason to arrive at the centre of the circle is destined to failure: thought can trace circles which are closer and closer to the centre (thus moving more and more quickly), yet it can never grasp the centre: all efforts to be freed “only repeat and bind more tightly the original cycle”.²¹

This peremptory affirmation seems to exclude the possibility of a rational non-sacrificial knowledge. Once again, the question arises: why should Girard's theory be considered as an exception? Does Girard really think that his hypothesis can be immune from this paradox?

In fact, he does not. Girard admits the limits of his own (and of every) theory. The first consideration is that even the concepts which we use to explain the mimetic theory (desire, sacrifice, scapegoat, etc.), have no real consistence: they are only conventional expressions. Moreover, they are produced by a sacrificial form, i.e., reason. In other words, the concepts are the tools, not devoid of sacrificial violence, which we use in order to grasp the phenomenal aspects of a reality that remains “*noumenal*”, beyond the borders of our rational understanding.²²

There is something more. It is not only that every thought and theory is incapable of grasping the ultimate reality of the logic dominating the world. We can, and thus we must, also consider the possibility that even theories which aim to understand the “logic of the world”, far from constituting a real victory over this logic, are nothing more than cunning strategies that our mind, guided by sacrificial reason, employs to delay and belittle the effectiveness of the demystification. At worst, every rational evaluation of the problem could be considered as an obstacle to the only true demystification: the evangelic.

These considerations seem to confirm rather than avoid the inevitability of the mystical outcome. The question I wish to now examine is whether from the ashes of the sacrificial reason a new reason—that which I have referred to above as “logical knowledge”, can arise.

First of all, we have to note that what we are looking for is not a form of knowledge capable of completely overcoming the circular logos of the self-referential reason, because that is impossible. Rather, we have to start





from the possibility of “reading” the origin of that logos thoroughly. Girard repeatedly warns of the extremely ambiguous nature of every attempt to place oneself beyond the logos: beyond what represented it once, i.e., the religious element, and beyond what it better represents nowadays, i.e., the scientific element. If, in fact, by “circle of logos” we mean the process that aims to expel demystifying knowledge in order to build around itself an equilibrium, then there is no form of rational opposition to the circular logos which is not a circular “logic”. The knowledge of violence does not eliminate the violence of knowledge.

“Alogical knowledge” is not a particular philosophy or a set of notions, the possession of which can automatically assure salvation. First of all, this knowledge must be enlightened by an alogical principle (the noumenal place mentioned above). And the guarantee of this principle is not any particular orthodoxy (every orthodoxy always need heretics, that is scapegoats), but a work of interpretative and symbolic research.

“Novelistic truth” (opposed to the “romantic lie”) constitutes the prologue of this alogical symbolism. We have seen that the protagonists of the great novels experience a catharsis from metaphysical desire. In fact, if what has been said about reason is true, then all really fruitful experiences, all the greatest discoveries in whatever fields (natural sciences, literature, human and social sciences) have always been and will always be radical mutations. They always have as a fundamental pre-condition freedom from metaphysical desire and from the illusions imposed by it: they are, in other words, “ruptures” with the self-reference of reason. Within the non-sacrificial knowledge that is born from this freedom, every radically anti-mythical representation will find its model in narrative symbolism, which is one of the main means that thought can employ so as to be connoted as alogical.

This is exactly what, according to Girard, Western culture has not been able to accomplish. Whether it defines itself as Christian, or raises the flag of antichristianity and atheism, the common ground remains basically bound (even when it expresses itself in science) to the mechanism of the religious primitive, of the violent logos.

What might be the features of this alogical knowledge? First of all, it





will not be an exclusively philosophical knowledge, but it will absorb the results obtained by all the natural and human sciences and particularly by literature. Alogical knowledge and the aesthetics of novel are one and the same thing. They constitute "victimage knowledge", as they come from a point of view that is not that of mystification. Therefore, it will be an interdisciplinary knowledge.

Secondly, alogical knowledge will not be violent, that is it will not claim to exhaustively explain the world (an attitude which is peculiar to what we have called the "logic of the world") and it will not organize its results into rational structures, since if it did this it would fall again into the violence of the logos. Rather, it will present itself as a narrative.²³ In fact narrative can by its nature highlight the glimmer of violence that is present even in itself. What we are aiming at is the pure negation of the logos, but we are still working under the guidance of reason. Narrative can grasp truth better than can rational thought: the latter blindly trusts its power of understanding, and thus suddenly finds itself trapped again in the circle, whereas the former does not claim to understand everything. Therefore the second feature of alogical knowledge will be its renunciation of the pretention to a complete (and violent) understanding of the world. The truth of the origin manifests itself not in that alleged "understanding" that the logos exerts on myth (in the Greek sense of the term, *mythos*, i.e., "tale") but once again in a "myth" which is able to preserve the truth as well as the lie; and able at the same time to reveal the mythical content that the logos of understanding still contains within itself.

Girard proclaims the "death of philosophy"; but this death is first of all the death of metaphysics, the end of the violent logos that, as we have seen, does not instantaneously disappear with the emergence of an alogical knowledge. For alogical knowledge to really appear, philosophy has to renounce its unilateral pretention of understanding the world, and the violence which is expressed by this position. The essence of knowledge which rises from the ashes of the logos must be unconnected to violence, and it will be so only if it refuses the totalization of its "point of view" and if it includes all points of view.

It might seem that the alternative to mysticism is an absolute relativism:





if allogical knowledge must be interdisciplinary, anti-metaphysical, and refer mainly to the literature, it might be seen as a form of Deconstruction. Nevertheless, Girard is very critical of Deconstruction in general, and particularly of the thought of Jacques Derrida, and his criticism has increased over time. Deconstruction appears to Girard as a refined and dangerous form of “cognitive nihilism”:

*“What is really frightening today is not the challenge of this new meaning, but the Kafkaesque rejection to all meaning. What is frightening is the conjunction of massive technical power and the spiritual surrender of nihilism. A panic-stricken refusal to glance, even furtively, in the only direction where meaning could still be found dominates our intellectual life”.*²⁴

I believe this is the most ambiguous and at the same time most stimulating point of Girard's approach. He is very far from Deconstruction and from every thought that would assert the equivalence of all possible interpretations. Beyond every deconstruction, Girard affirms, there is the undemystified sacred. Deconstruction is indeed an unveiling of the sacred (and of the mimetic and victimage circles that rotate around it), since it unveils the violent claims of metaphysics, but-as is the case with tragedy in ancient Greece-it is both a partial revelation of the circle and a rite that reproduces that circle. The rite of Deconstruction is called “interpretation”. The sacred is proposed again, on an interpretative level, in its lie. The closed circle of mimesis determines the form of interpretative ritual thought: moving from the origin, it widens to embrace more and more diversified cultural forms: the sacred does not disappear; it is indeed at the heart of the “interpretative rite.”

Therefore what is needed is a non-relativistic hermeneutics, a hermeneutics that is truly interdisciplinary, without turning the relationship among the different disciplines in a game. It must be a hermeneutics that takes seriously the possibility of conceiving aesthetics and gnoseology as one thing, and that goes beyond metaphysics, without renouncing the use of reason – as long as, according to Girard, reason makes use of the demystifying principles provided by the Gospels.²⁵

This position of Girard's derives from the observation that the sacrificial crisis we are living can no longer be solved by a new victimage expulsion:





civilization is by now too self-transparent to itself. When the circle comes to an end with a new explosion of undifferentiated violence, the logos will not be able to rebuild a new order.

James Alison, who is a discerning Girard scholar, has pointed out the very real danger of Ground Zero and the events of 11 September 2001, which have become respectively a “sacred space” and a “sacred event”.²⁶ Reviewing his book, another Girard scholar, Michael Kirwan, explains: “he soberly reminds us of what we experienced [...]: a “satanic” whirlpool of heightened emotion, a frenzied search for “meaning”, and social mobilisation towards intense and of course militaristic solidarity, which for mimetic theory can only mean one thing: the beginnings of the search for a scapegoat”.²⁷ Words written by Girard in 1978 now assume a new sense: “Either we are moving ineluctably toward non-violence, or we are about to disappear completely. [...] The genuinely new element is that violence can no longer be relied upon to resolve the crisis”.²⁸

It is important to note that the renunciation of violence is not reduced to an “instinctive” act: it needs to be prepared for by the unveiling of the lie of the sacred. The renunciation of violence is indeed an ethical turning point, but this is inseparable from a gnoseological dimension, i.e., from a form of knowledge that refuses all violence and all sacrifice: a knowledge that certainly includes an ethical component and that cannot do without it, but that is not merely ethical in dimensions.

There is no doubt that Girard's mimetic theory leads to the “death of philosophy”. However, what dies is the sacrificial and violent logos, what arises is the renunciation of this logos. This renunciation is the beginning of what we have called alogical knowledge. Setting out the boundary markers of this knowledge, questioning what exactly it must be, is something that requires more systematic treatment than I have been able to provide here. Moreover, such a programme, in order that to be significant, requires also ethical and social engagement, and this is something that cannot be done from an armchair. Nevertheless, without the renunciation of the violence, thought will keep moving inside the circle, a circle which is becoming smaller and smaller, and which is turning ever faster. Alogical knowledge confronts man, for the first time, with a



radical choice between total destruction and an equally total renunciation of violence. "The more one approaches madness, the more one equally approaches the truth, and if one does not fall into the former, one must end up necessarily in the latter".²⁹

Notes

- 1 "Victimage" is the term Girard uses to denote the process of scapegoating, the purging of guilt through a scapegoat that symbolizes society's guilt.
- 2 Helpful comments from Paolo Bartoloni and Tim Fitzpatrick are gratefully acknowledged.
- 3 This position derives from a criticism of Freud: the mimesis is not the centre of Freud's thought, as he prefers to insist on a rigidly object desire, that is, the libidinal inclination for the mother. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp. 169 – 192.
- 4 René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the Word* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), pp. 291-294. The notion of "double bind" is derived from the theory of schizophrenia developed by Gregory Bateson (see "Toward a Theory ad Schizophrenia", in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, W. G. Bennis, ed., *Interpersonal Dynamics* (Homewood: Dorsey Press, 1964), pp. 141-161.
- 5 For an overview of Girard's reception by feminist critics, see Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004), pp. 110-111 and Susan Nowak, "The Girardian Theory and Feminism: Critique and Appropriation", in *Contagion*, 1 (Spring 1994), pp. 19-29.
- 6 Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, pp. 110-111.
- 7 Girard, *Things Hidden*, p. 127.
- 8 Girard, *Things Hidden*, p. 271.
- 9 Girard, *Things Hidden*, p. 438.
- 10 René Girard, *Job the Victim of his People* (Stanford: Stanford U. P., 1997), p. 124.
- 11 See Eric Gans, "Pour une esthétique triangulaire", in *Esprit*, 429 (November 1973), pp. 564-581 (p. 150); Piero Burzio, "Mito, tragedia, romanzo in René Girard", in *Rivista di estetica* (July 1994), pp. 41-68.
- 12 See René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 2.
- 13 Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, p. 9.
- 14 Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, p. 17.
- 15 Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, p. 53-54.
- 16 Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, p. 247-248.
- 17 Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, p. 294.
- 18 See Paul Valadier, "Bouc émissaire et révélation chrétienne selon René Girard", in *Etudes*, 357 (August – September 1982), pp. 251-260 (p. 255).
- 19 Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Ordres et desordres* (Paris: Seuil, 1982).
- 20 See M. Serres, *Hermès V: Le passage du Nord-Ouest*, (Paris: Minuit, 1980).
- 21 René Girard, *Resurrection from the Underground: Feodor Dostoevsky* (New York: Cross Road, 1997), p. 111-112.
- 22 René Girard, *Job: the Victim of his People* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 122.
- 23 It is what Michel Serres tried to do with his discussed and interesting book *Hermès V*.
- 24 Girard, *Things Hidden*, p. 261. About Girard's thought on Derrida, see Girard, *Things Hidden*, p. 64, and Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, p. 296. See also B. Bassoff, ed., "Interview with René Girard", in *Denver Quarterly*, 13 (1978), pp. 28-40. Similarities and differences between Girard and Derrida are explored by Andrew McKenna, *Violence and Difference: Girard, Derrida and Deconstruction*



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(Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

- 25 An example of this kind of hermeneutics is, according to Girard, the thought of Paul Ricoeur. See Girard, *Things Hidden*, p. 445. For a deeper analysis of the difference between Derrida's and Ricoeur's hermeneutical approaches according to the mimetic theory, see Paolo Diego Bubbio, "Mimetic Theory and Hermeneutics", in *Colloquy – Text Theory Critique*, 9 (2005).
- 26 James Allison, *On being Liked* (London: DLT, 2003)
- 27 Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, p. 119.
- 28 Girard, *Things Hidden*, p. 258.

