

## The Commodification of Women in a Comparative Study of Pinter's *Betrayal* and Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia*

Hossein Alikhan Pour Shah Abadi <sup>1</sup>

PhD Candidate of English Literature, Faculty of Literature and Foreign Languages, Karaj Branch,  
Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

Javad Yaghoobi Derabi (Corresponding Author) <sup>2</sup>

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Literature and Foreign Languages, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad  
University, Karaj, Iran

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.34785/J014.2021.934>

Article Type: Original Article

Page Numbers: 55-75

Received: 5 December 2020

Accepted: 23 June 2021

### Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to discuss Girard's imitative desire in Pinter's *Betrayal*, and Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia*. René Noël Théophile Girard (1923-2015), a French literary critic and philosopher, has elaborated on the idea of imitative desire. He discusses that our desires are not autonomous, but we borrow our desires from others. Since human beings think their drives do belong to them, the object of desire or the desired love becomes an issue of rivalry among the rivals. If such a dissension is not resolved, chaos will result. To solve it, an object, namely a human being is to be sacrificed to restore the unity of a nation. Since women characters are marginalized in patriarchal societies, they are mostly sacrificed in the selected plays. Sometimes, double mediation occurs for those who imitate others' desires. That is, their desires are copied by others at the same time. In other words, man sacrifices out of his imitative desire to engender power and attraction. Therefore, the male characters in the selected plays covet objects/other human beings belonging to others. This act might cost other people's lives and metamorphosing female characters to mere objects prone to sacrifice and commodification.

### Keywords

Imitative Desire; Mediator; Double Mediation; Commodities; Sacrifice.

### 1. Introduction

What the researchers are to demonstrate in this paper is to analyze Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* (1978) and Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia* (2002) in the light of René Girard's philosophical and psychological approach. By borrowing Girard's idea on the imitative desire, the researchers are intent to demonstrate how it leads the characters of the play to downfall. The two sides of this innate inclination in man can either lead to destruction or perfection. The characters follow their imitative desire to acquire what they have been withheld from in life. Heedless of the consequences of the imitative desire, they are unaware of the

---

<sup>1</sup> alikhanhossein@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> yaghoobi.kiau@gmail.com

uncertain and hazardous directions they might be led by such a desire. The characters who are prone to the destructive imitative desire will suffer the pain of catatonia. When such a catatonic mood overwhelms one's life, the characters do not feel they are alive, but dead and overcome by the destructive imitative desire. Most importantly, Girard argues that upon some rivalrous acts in the society, people will face a chaos and what can resolve the society from such chaos is to sacrifice somebody in order to guarantee the well-being of a definite number of people. The researchers are inclined to show that the commodification of women seems to be the only solution for this chaos in the selected plays.

Harold Pinter (1930-2008) wrote his plays to be performed on the stage for theatrical purposes, radio, television and the film scripts. Anyhow, he had a financial and commercial intention behind writing his plays. *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter* and *The Birthday Party* were Pinter's plays written in 1957 and 1958. Pinter's plays were overwhelmed with the sense of nothingness and the futility in life. In this regard, Katherine H. Burkman argues that "the critic Martin Esslin who coined the term 'theater of the absurd' saw in Pinter's work as absurdist strain, especially in the nihilism -the belief in nothing- that sometimes shows up in his work" (1338). In most of the plays, Pinter has portrayed characters who are cruel in their relations with one another and there is no sign of sympathy among them. An example is *Caretaker* (1960) in which the main character Aston shows no mercy and understanding towards Davies, the guest he has invited to the house.

*Betrayal* (1978) concerns the relations among husbands and wives in an adulterous way. It is also a play about power relations and the male friends' relationships. Unlike other plays which revolve around the themes of nothingness and the lack of communication among the characters, *Betrayal* portrays some sexual relations after marriage which are extended for seven years between Emma and Jerry though Jerry is Robert's best friend. On one hand, he cuckolds Robert and on the other hand, he betrays Judith, his own wife. After Emma and Robert divorce, she visits Jerry telling him that she is over with Robert. In addition, she tells Jerry that she has recently told Robert about their relation though Robert knew that in the past four years.

Tom Stoppard (1937- ) is a playwright, born in Czechoslovakia. After immigrating to England via Singapore, he completed his education at Pocklington School. Ian Ousby in *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* asserts that he had worked as a journalist in Bristol and then in London. He had achieved fame and success after some radio and television pieces. *A Walk on the Water* was a TV piece shown in 1963. He wrote *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* in 1966, *The Real Inspector Hound* in 1968, the short farce *After*

*Magritte* in 1970, and *Jumpers* in 1972. His later works suggested social and political engagements, including *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* in 1977, *Cahoot's Macbeth* in 1979, *Night and Day* in 1979 about freedom and totalitarianism. Some of Stoppard's works concerned farcical aspects of espionage like *The Neutral Ground* in 1968, and *Professional Foul* in 1977 (Both were TV pieces), *The Dog It was That Died*, a radio piece in 1982, *The Real Thing* in 1982 *Hapgood* in 1988, and finally, *The Artist Descending a Staircase* in 1988 as a comic homage to surrealists (908).

Sexual problems are the main issues discussed in Stoppard's works. Anthony Jenkins in *The Theatre of Tom Stoppard* writes about the nature of sexual fidelity in Stoppard's works. He writes about love in his plays. For example, in *The Real Thing* love is untidy, irrational and undefinable, so he orders a rationalized, ordered and definable limits through the structure of the play. Stoppard argues how the middle classes enshroud love and sex. For the Middle class sex means fidelity. He also questions the issue of forbidden sex, mostly experienced by the female characters in school. Stoppard puts words in the female characters' mouths that even commitment is an on-going bargain. He also calls that commitment, a private knowledge between two people. The male characters are very concerned about their relationship making, and at the same time they are heedless of the consequences of their actions, and so do the female characters. What they die for is to something that inflames the passion in them (169). In *The Coast of Utopia*, the Bakunins are involved in many love entanglements at family relations, which needs to be clarified in detail to show the relationship between the negative side of mimetic desire and alienation ending in doom and catastrophe.

## 2. Literature Review

Carey Perloff, and Heather Kitchen write that Stoppard's plays are about himself though he himself claims they are not autobiographical. At the time Stoppard was writing *The Real Thing*, he was living with Felicity Kendal, a character who was given the role of Annie in the play. It is said that the play is dedicated to his first wife, Miriam and the mother of his two sons. He was very close to Miriam at that time. Certainly, one of the important issues of the play is about love (7). However, there can be found some other ideas on Stoppard's writing. In this way, Johanna Alida Kruger in *The Actual versus the Fictional in Betrayal, The Real Thing and Closer* mentions that Stoppard's plays are mostly about a marriage between farce and ideas. Johanna Alida Kruger continues his judgement stating that the aforementioned playwright uses the polyphonic openness to literature by combining character, dialogue, ambivalent situations,

intertextuality and logical paradoxes. For him, he adds, there is no separation between literature and philosophy (104).

Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia*, a play in three parts including many love triangles. Christopher Shonka discusses that this is the most realistic play among Stoppard's plays because it relies more on psychological conflicts and the motivations of the characters. Stoppard delivers his intellectual engine to express his complex ideas in this play. The intricate love affair among the male and female characters of the play shows some issues, such as hatred, jealousy and love at first sight. Sometimes, one might feel that there is a latent triangular love relationship that the characters are trying to hide from one another, but at last they reveal their real intentions through their speeches (75).

Harold Pinter's plays have always been criticized by many critics ever since. Scholars have also analyzed the play from various perspectives: Johanna Alida Kruger has compared Pinter's *Betrayal*, Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* (1982) and Patrick Marber's *Closer* (1997). He has argued the concept of authenticity of the works of art. In this regard, Johanna Alida Kruger by referring to Nietzsche's idea attests that "there are no such things as facts, but only interpretations. Even the concept of the subject (in popular psychology often referred to as the 'authentic self') is for Nietzsche something added and invented and projected" (12). Therefore, he questions the reliability and falsity behind the works of art. Another scholar has referred to the uncertainty and absurdist aspect of Pinter's plays. In this respect, Andrew David Clarke borrows words from Esslin and argues that like many Greek tragedies, religious mystery plays and baroque allegories, the Absurdist work and playwright are mostly concerned with revealing to the audience the futility of their lives and their useless attempts to avoid that universal truth (11).

Patriarchal legacy of the west colors *Betrayal* as any other contemporary play. The two main and male characters of the play steer the play up to the end. The intimacy one witnesses among the male characters is really shocking. They never let the women run their lives. They share private conversations with one another not allowing women to take part in any of them. John Stokes expresses a common statement in this regard and argues, the actors performing roles in the play whose names are Sam West, Toby Stephens, and Dervla Kirwan the males lead as members of some wealthy families acting dynasty copying their parents on the issue of sexuality (297). That is, the male characters are chosen from some families who have practised sexuality without any attention to the moral

standards one should observe in life, therefore the play emphasizes a different outlook towards women in a secular society.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Rene Noel Theophile Girard (1923-2015) was a French historian, literary critic and philosopher of social science whose work belongs to the anthropological philosophy. He has written more than thirty books. Once Freud mentioned that the source of our desires is the sexual desire which drives man to do a certain action, but Girard had a different perspective regarding the motivation one needs for his actions. Thus he introduced the term mimetic desire. That is to say, there is not a linear relationship between subject and object. In between, he asserts, there is always a mediator. The mediator ignites a flame in the subject to desire the object. Without mediators, the subjects are not motivated to desire something or somebody. By mimetic desire, he means our desires are not autonomous, but that we borrow our desires from others. He argued that social constraints, including religion are instruments through which the mimetic rivalry is controlled; otherwise, the human beings would harm one another. What Girard wanted to mention is that there is not a direct relationship between the subject and object. There is always a triangular relationship among the subject, model and the object. By model he means the desire for another person. In this regard, Per Bjournner Grande in "The Mimetic Nature of Desire" argues that "Girard propagates an understanding of desire as evoked by other people's desires. In this way desire in mimetic theory is seen as something distinct from instincts" (2).

Girard seems to violate all the old psychological learnings the scholars used to make use of. He seems to take a look back at history and has borrowed his mimetic theory from different literary works he has studied with great care. There is an example in Girard's theory which shows his insistence on the very value of mimetic desire: he questions Freud's idea on the nature of Oedipus complex. While Freud thought that sexual drive is the source of our desire, Girard related desire to mimetic desire. In this way, Girard in *Evolution and Conversion* gives some examples, such as man or animal's appetite for food, shelter, etc., which are all biologically based; and he states that they are necessarily connected with desire, but we should not forget that they can be contaminated with mimetic desire when there exists a model. The presence of the model is very influential in his theory without which he cannot prove his claim on mimetic desire. He continues his argument that if desire is mimetic, then the same object is possessed by someone else, namely a mediator, here. Both the subject and the mediator are then in the same relational domain to the object of

desire or he can be in a different model. If the subject is in a different domain, he cannot have the mediator's object and what happens in the external mediation (56). Also Chris Fleming argues Freud's mistaken belief that libido is the sole motor and basis for the psychic processes. He adds that Girard argues the relationship between father and son can be constructed like any form of conflictual mimesis. It is, for Girard, the imitated desire or the model-obstacle relationship between father and son (32-3).

Human desire is a concept which is only attributed to human beings and there is a clear-cut dichotomy between human interests and desires and that of the animals. Man desires because others desire and animals like to possess things because they need them. For this a model is also required. Rene Girard in *Resurrection from the Underground* seems to certify by giving an example. For this he refers to the youngsters, and he states that when they grow up, they imitate the best possible models. These also happen for the elder people in the society. If they imitate the models which are good and acceptable, they will not go astray (76). Jernej Pisk asserts that things human beings desire have to be a non-natural object of desire. He also quotes from Hegel stating that he refers to that as the only possible candidate for such an object of desire. It is human to desire what others desire because they just desire it, therefore a useless biological entity, such as an enemy's flag or a medal becomes important for man because it is the object of others' desire. It is not only a human desire, but it can also be conceived of as human reality which is different from animal reality. The action that satisfies such desires becomes meaningful for man. Man feeds on desire as animal feeds on real things, therefore if one wants to become a human being in fullness, one must risk his life to satisfy human desire (10).

Girard begins his theory with mimetic desire and he dichotomizes between appetite and desire to develop his theory on mimetic desire. Girard in *Evolution and Conversion* gives some examples, such as man or animal's appetite for food, shelter, etc., which are all biologically based; and he states that they are necessarily connected with desire, but we should not forget that they can be contaminated with mimetic desire when there exists a model. The presence of the model is very influential in his theory without which he cannot prove his claim on mimetic desire. He continues his argument that if desire is mimetic, then the same object is possessed by someone else, namely a mediator, here. Both the subject and the mediator are then in the same relational domain to the object of desire or he can be in a different model. If the subject is in a different domain, he cannot have the mediator's object and what happens in the external mediation (56).

Human beings have a personality trait very similar to animal behavior. They imitate each other enviously in order to show their ability in different things and fields of knowledge. They also compete for the possession of the objects. Scott Cowdell attests that it seems Rene Girard has made the term 'mimesis' very close to the concept of envy. Out of envious acts, the subject and mediator become rivals who would like to foil each other to prove their superiority. This act has two sides: external and internal mediation. What goes between an adult and a child is external mediation, but the conflict among children is internal mediation which is equal to rivalry and envy. Internal mediation with its rivalrous act can engender itself as double mediation. Imitative desire as an envious act can have its negative consequences as thwarting the rival and forgetting the original object of rivalry (23).

Competing with the rivals is a psychological issue which will either lead man to his downfall or prevents his/her going astray. Man is instinctively inclined to imitate others, especially the models in each aspect of the life. Human beings imitate the models to climb the ladders of success. Rene Girard in *Resurrection from the Underground Feodor Dostoevsky* seems to certify my words by declaring his idea on man's role models in the society. For this he refers to the youngsters, and he states that when they grow up, they imitate the best possible models. These also happen for the elder people in the society. If they imitate the models which are good and acceptable, they will not go astray (76). Consequently, imitating others can have some acceptable and significant influence on the imitators, and it cannot be taken as something superficial, but it is something special in human psyche which can lead to his success.

Individual rivalries are all caused by the mimesis and the imitative desire individuals experience in the society. As certified by Wolfgang Palaver, in so far as mimesis unites all members of the community against a single enemy, a feeling of collective reconciliation is engendered throughout the society. Subsequently, all violence and hatred are directed towards a single person or a victim. The mob, in fact, knows the victim for the crisis happened, and the emergence of all evil in the society. There is, then, a monster the mob has to face. Rene Girard refers to this phenomenon as the mechanism of the surrogate victim. The modern understanding of the scapegoat (victim) here is the spontaneous psychological mechanism, and the victim is going to be blamed for the mistakes and sins of the others (151).

Despite the fact that Jung attributed the scapegoat archetype to our forefathers and thought of it as atavistic and universal on which the normality and abnormality of an individual and a tribe were quite dependent, Rene Girard analytically looks at the irrationality of those who carry out their sacrificial rites.

There is an example which certifies the irrationality of what Jung has ever mentioned on the issue of sacrifice. It tells us how people are sometimes being irrational when they want to guarantee the well-being of their nation. Wolfgang Palaver in *Rene Girard's Mimetic Theory* refers to Heinrich Von Kleist's 'Earthquake in Chile' (1807), in which Josephe after being rescued by the earthquake, she functions as the community's quasi-divine mother. She also symbolizes a rebirth of culture. She offers her breast to a foreign child, so she symbolizes the source of life and nourishment for the community. After a church service devoted to the prevention of future earthquakes, the divine and quasi-divine figures Jeronimo, Josephe and their followers are lynched being accused of causing the original earthquake. Finally, Kleist ends the story by referring to the vicious mob who murdered these characters. Kleist's description of the persecutory justice uncovers the logic of scapegoating (157). Subsequently, the characters victimized by the male persecutors are to be questioned and blamed for their treatments of women in the modern time. Female domestication is a persecutory act of a male dominated society.

If mimetic desire necessarily leads to human rivalry and its subsequent violence, then there must be a breakthrough to man's downfall. The stories from Oedipus and Bacchae to the modern dramas, such as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* are all catastrophic because they have not been able to control the violence. One solution through which the human behavior can be controlled is religion. It bans the violence to a great deal. Rene Girard in *Violence and the Sacred* asserts that in *Bacchae* a sudden outbreak of violence is so extreme that it threatens the very existence of the community. The violence on one hand reconciles all members of the community because they all participate in it. The peaceful citizens change into terrifying beasts, then calmness is restored and all think that violence has happened because of the intervention of the divinity (134).

In this paper, besides the imitative nature of our desires, the researchers are intent to show that the female characters in both Pinter's *Betrayal* and Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia* are considered some commodities in the western society. Out of the rivalrous acts among the male characters of the selected plays, dissensions and chaos are resulted, and there seems to be no solution to such a chaotic world created among men except for some sacrificial acts that terminate all the dissensions. The researchers are going to demonstrate that these female characters are subject to sacrifice themselves for the sake of men; otherwise, there would be a situation of dog eating dog among men. The male members will be shown to change into terrifying beasts if there is no real ban to control them in the society. Imitative desire on the verge of negative will end in some



catastrophic consequences, such as the total disintegration and destruction of family, commodification of women and catatonia in the lives of the characters.

#### 4. Practical Reading and Discussion

Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* at many levels well portrays the imitative desire. Jerry is shown to be imitating a desire which is not instinctively his, but a desire borrowed from his friend, Robert. Robert and Emma are husband and wife. Once they were passionate in their love affair and Robert has witnessed this. There is a conversation between Emma and Jerry at the beginning of the play suggesting not only that Jerry has had a longstanding relationship with Emma, but it also shows that Robert is an intimate friend of Jerry, who is betrayed by his close friend. Scene 2 begins in Jerry's house and in his study with Jerry welcoming Robert on coming to his house, and he talks about the kids and his family which shows that they know each other well, while in the first scene one is going to witness the private conversation between Jerry and Emma and their conversation about betrayal which shows that Jerry is desiring an object his friend possesses.

In fact, desire is related to the other, and self per se cannot desire something. It can only gratify its basic instinct, therefore desire is related to the Other. By going beyond the instinctual self, Jerry is willing to touch Emma who seems to be out of his reach belonging to and married to Robert. He uses his yardstick of mimetic desire to taste what his friend has tested. Per Bjourner Grande asserts that "Desire can be described as the drives which emerge from a non-biological source, the victimage mechanism, and is, according to its nature, interdividual" (2). Jerry does not want to eliminate Robert as one of his best friends. Rather, he wants to see him all the time because Robert ignites his desire for Emma all the time, so he needs him. Moreover, he supports him and this can be seen in the following lines as explained by Harold Pinter in *Betrayal*:

Emma: I've changed. Or his work has changed. Are you jealous?

Jerry: Of what?

(Pause.)

I couldn't be jealous of Casey. I am his agent. I advised him about his divorce. I read all his drafts. I persuaded your husband to publish his first novel. I escort him to Oxford to speak at the union. He's my...he's my boy. I discovered him when he was a poet, and that's bloody long time ago. (16)

*Betrayal* is replete with scenes in which Jerry never ceases his attempts to seduce Emma, and this is because of Robert's close interaction with his wife in front of him. That is, voyeurism has enticed Jerry to have a secret relationship with Emma. That voyeuristic attitude starts from Robert's party held in his own house. Farah Hasan Ali argues that Emma and Jerry first met in winter of 1968 at a party in Emma and Robert's house, where Jerry hid in Emma's bedroom to

confess his love. This encounter is seen as an oedipal competition in which Robert is the father publisher, Jerry the son agent and Emma the mother. Jerry does not need a woman to complete him since he is married to Judith, therefore Emma's wooing is another psychological game that underpins many human encounters (243). The above statement is an indirect reference to mimetic desire. The aforementioned critic is not fully aware of the hidden mimetic desire in man, but he indirectly refers to this issue because Jerry's encounter with Emma is not an ordinary one to be mitigated by his own wife.

In *Betrayal*, there is a sudden desire toward the object which is also a sudden whim toward the mediator. In this play, one man, namely Jerry desires another woman or Robert's wife. It is not because of the fact that Emma incites Jerry, but it is because Jerry desires what Robert desires. Jerry imitates his friend's desire for Emma. Robert's desire arouses Jerry's envious nature to desire the impossible and the inaccessible. Katherine H. Burkman states that "the play is about a nine-year relationship between two men who are best friends. The nature of that friendship would seem to be a classical example of what Rene Girard calls triangular desire, a situation in which two men, through the mechanism of imitative desire, wish to possess the same woman" (1362), but we should say that the researchers of this article go beyond this by showing the catastrophe of such a love affair and the sacrifice which should happen for at least one of the characters. Consequently, the desire is created in Jerry because Robert's longstanding relationship with him has created such desire. This is really the mediator who kindles the desire.

In spite of the fact that the majority of the readers would assume that Robert is the only mediator who arouses an impulse in Jerry internally, there exists a double mediation. That is, Robert who acts as a mediator for Jerry copies Jerry's desire for Emma himself. Therefore, Robert is a mediator for Jerry acting as an impulse to arouse desire in Jerry. Jerry is simultaneously a mediator for Robert. Such a mutual relationship is called double mediation, but first this is Robert who creates the impulse in Jerry's unconscious, and at the second level Jerry's attraction towards Emma creates the same desire for Robert, while he himself is unaware of this impulse and the mechanism through which this impulse is initiated. During scene 5 when Robert and Emma are talking to each other about the first time she met Jerry in the wedding and that he was the best man in the wedding, Robert is drawn to Emma by referring to Jerry's handwriting on the letter, and he is more excited on impulse. In Harold Pinter's *Betrayal* our attention is drawn to this double mediation in the following lines:

Emma: When did you think?  
 Robert: Yesterday. Only yesterday. When I saw his handwriting on the letter. Before yesterday I was quite ignorant.  
 Emma: Ah.  
 (Pause.)  
 I'm sorry.  
 Robert: Sorry?  
 (Silence.)  
 Where does it ... take place? Must be a bit awkward. I mean we have got two kids, he's got two kids, not to mention a wife...  
 Emma: We've got a flat. (35)

The unconscious sense of imitative desire is so strong that the two best friends, Robert and Jerry are converted to two enemies who are ready to combat unconsciously. The two friends are ready to victimize Emma for their manly battle. In the same way that there is not a true love bond between Robert and Emma, Jerry does not love Emma. His desire for her is only a passion, and he wants her out of her unconscious drives. When he meets her for the first time in her wedding, he tells her that he wished to blacken her whiteness. That is, he intends to desecrate her virtuosity and virginity before he presents her to Robert. He does not want the best woman to be his friend's wife. Rather he wants to give him a desecrated woman who has lost her virginity and has no reputation. Jerry wants to prove himself stronger and better by his first wooing Emma and then delivering his friend a second-hand object. Robert realizes that Jerry has had an affair with his wife, so the two best friends will later be the two latent enemies.

The sense of loss and emptiness is destroying Jerry's life as the negative consequences of the imitative desire. During another conversation between Emma and Jerry when Emma informs Jerry of her pregnancy, the sense of loss and emptiness overwhelms him. Jerry repeatedly tells Emma that he is mad about her, and that he is not able to sleep and that he will diminish himself into a useless creature without Emma. He mentions that he is in the state of catatonia where emptiness rules human beings. Fully under the control of the imitative desire, he has destroyed both Emma-Robert's marital life and his own life with Judith. The only one who can share a life with him is Emma who is about to separate from her husband. Jerry's state of catatonia is seen in the following lines of Harold Pinter's *Betrayal*:

Emma: My husband is at the other side of that door.  
 Jerry: Everyone knows. The world knows. It knows. But they'll never know, they'll never know, they're in a different world. I adore you. I'm madly in love with you. I can't believe that what anyone is at this moment saying has ever happened. Nothing has ever happened. Nothing. This is the only thing that has ever happened. Your eyes kill me. I'm lost. You are wonderful.  
 Emma: No  
 Jerry: Yes. (51)

In Harold Pinter's *Betrayal*, the two men, Robert and Jerry, tend to fight one another, but they are already friends, and the debate is to be solved at any cost. In order to avoid any physical struggle or any internal conflict, Robert decides to sacrifice his wife, Emma. Robert is ready to sacrifice his family at the expense of stabilizing his friendship with Jerry. Although Jerry had had a longstanding secret relationship with his wife, he never tells Jerry that it is unfair to have a liaison like this with his wife. In addition, Jerry allows himself to be called a bastard. Robert tells him that his marriage is finished, and they have done the arrangements for their children. Leena Nanda argues that the play begins in the year 1977 when Robert and Emma who have been married for fifteen years are about to get a divorce. Some incidents are traced back, and a rift is created and this makes them to make such a decision (92). Robert is indifferent to Emma and Jerry's relationship, and in the following excerpt from *Betrayal* Harold Pinter shows how Robert is willing to make such a decision in sacrificing Emma:

Jerry: You haven't thought of telling Judith?

Robert: Telling Judith what? Oh, about you and Emma. You mean she never knew? Are you quite sure? (Pause.)

No, I hadn't thought of telling Judith, actually. You don't seem to understand. You don't seem to understand. You don't seem to understand that I don't give a shit about any of this. It's true I have hit Emma once or twice. But that wasn't to defend a principle. I wasn't inspired to do it from any kind of moral standpoint. I just felt like giving her a good bashing. The old itch ... you understand. (1345)

Sacrificing women in Pinter's *Betrayal* has become a habitual act among the characters. When Emma tells her husband that it is five years she has had a number of liaisons with Jerry, Robert is not infuriated and tells her that he has always liked Jerry, and that he has always liked him more than Emma. Moreover, he shows his taste for Jerry himself. That is, Emma is only a victim to be sacrificed in the world of men. Both Jerry and Robert betray their wives because they are the weaker sex and expose themselves to the cruel world of men. The women like Emma have lost their value to the extent that she discloses her secret affair to her own husband. In the same way objects are worth until they are useful, Emma has no value when Jerry feels obsessed with her. They have rented an apartment to enjoy themselves, but they want to give it back because the course of their love has gone tasteless. Harold Pinter shows the belittlement of Emma in Robert's eyes in the following excerpt in *Betrayal*:

Robert: Did he write to you from America?

Emma: Of course. And I wrote to him.

Robert: Did you tell him that Ned was conceived?

Emma: Not by letter.

Robert: But when you did tell him, was he happy to know I was to be a father? (Pause.) I have always liked Jerry. To be honest, I've always liked him rather more than I've liked you. Maybe I should have had an affair with him myself. (1352)

There must be a union and intimacy among the male members of the community. Women as the seemingly assumed weaker sex are subject and more prone to be sacrificed; otherwise, dissolutions would not be resolved. Both Robert and Jerry are good friends in the play. Jerry says that he's always supported Robert, and when Robert is informed of the affair, he only states he is sorry for that. Robert easily states that he knew about their affair four years ago. Apparently, this is quite usual for the men to betray their wives because they do act as objects. It is easier for them to sacrifice their wives, and they can finally live in comfort by victimizing a human object among them. That is, the relationship between men and women is not based on intimate familial bonds, but it is directed more towards abusing each other. Both Jerry and Robert take Emma as an object, and she is taken as a victim who has no will and she is to be exchanged in the world governed by men. Emma is just like an enquiry in the hands of some merchants. In this regard, Austin Quigley argues this materialistic outlook towards Emma by stating that "Emma, Jerry and Robert, in *Betrayal*, are trying to evaluate their rights and responsibilities in the context of competing bonds as spouses, friends, colleagues and lovers; and, illuminatingly for this line of enquiry" (16).

The worst thing in *Betrayal* is that women have internalized their victimization. As a case in point, when Jerry and Emma talk to each other in scene 6 of the play about a dingy place, namely an apartment, Emma herself tells him that she will cook and slave for him. This is an example of the internalization of women's victimization as sacrifices to the male dominated society. Women characters of the novel never feel their validity, and that they are ready to sacrifice their reputation and honor by having multiple affair with different men. They are doomed to be sacrificed and the worst thing about it is that they are unaware of their victimization. Ronald Knowles argues that in scene one of the play when Emma and Jerry meet in a pub, Emma reveals that she is going to be separated from Robert, and also she states that she has also had another affair with one of his oldest friends (84).

The similarities one can find between Pinter's *Betrayal* and Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia* have enticed the researchers into writing such an article in comparative form. In both of these plays one can see the negative consequence of imitative desire. In each play, one can see the victimization and commodification of women. Mediators also act as motivators for the main male characters of the plays. In the same way that voyeurism destroys the lives of the characters in *Betrayal*, the characters in *The Coast of Utopia* are not immune from

such an immoral act. Imitative desire on the side of the negative is very close to the issue of jealousy which can be found frequently in both of these plays. Hence the researchers are willing to compare Pinter to Stoppard in their dealing with such comparative terms.

Tom Stoppard's tripartite play, *The Coast of Utopia*, including the voyage, shipwreck and the salvage is replete with characters who directly or indirectly imitate each other in their love affairs and show their destructive rivalries. The first part opens in an aristocratic family called Bakunin in the rural states of Russia in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The family is ruled by Alexander Bakunin who is sixty five. His wife is Varvara who is forty two. Liubov, Varenka, Tatiana and Alexandra are their daughters. They also have one son by the name of Michael who becomes the central focus of attention in the family and promotes the development of the plot. The family is a set of multiple unions among the so called brothers and sisters: Liubov is engaged to a cavalry officer, named Baron Renne. Varenka is married to Dyakov, another officer in the army. Also there is an understanding between Michael and Natalie Beyer, Mrs. Beyer's daughter.

There is an autonomous desire among the family members, and they frequently join each other out of their imitative desire. They try their best to prevent from any real contact between their family members and others. In fact, they desire what belongs to others. In act one of the play when the family are talking about literacy, their philosophy about the worms, etc.; Baron Renne visits Michael for the first time. They order champagne for Michael's arrival. Suddenly, Michael, Varenka and Tatiana are left alone. The first thing Michael states is that Liubov does not love Renne. They all agree, but they try to keep silent for what their father regards as an acceptable union between these two. In the same way that there is a rivalry of love between Renne and Michael for Liubov, Tatiana and Varenka do love to own Renne which is an impossibility already fixated by both their sister and the officer. Tom Stoppard shows their feelings towards Liubov's marriage in *The Coast of Utopia*:

Alexander: Family on parade! ... Handkerchiefs for waving and weeping—(to Renne)  
My wife was eighteen and I was forty-two. See my point?—just when the wife starts getting a mind to kick over the traces, she realizes she only has to show a little patience  
Michael, Varenka and Tatiana are left alone.

Michael: Well! He won't do! Liubov doesn't love him, that's obvious.

Varenka: We know that.

Tatiana: She won't go against Papa, and the Baron is a good match, isn't he? (15)

Mimetic desire mostly demonstrates itself in the form of jealousy. Michael and Belinsky talk about the ideal woman in the perfect society in which the women are considered objects of exalted feelings, like the time of the troubadours who were filled with the pure love of spirituality. After Natalie burst into tears and

hopes to be a French woman or something, Michael gives her a letter expressing his pure love for his sister, but she tells him that it is more like a letter of a jealous lover, and she flings the letter at him. Here there is an absent lover whom Michael is jealous of, and he writes a letter to his own sister in order to keep her home by some philosophical words and the idea of the real woman who sits down all day, just like a writer devoting herself to the public. Michael wants to have his sister by his side, but he knows that it is illogical to desire the impossible.

The triangular love affair among Herzen, Natalie and George Herwegh is also represented in another part of the play, *Shipwreck*. First the love between Herzen and his wife, Natalie, is so strong, but when she deciphers her husband has had an affair with another woman, she grows a little cold and she is inclined toward a poet, George Herwegh. The loose relationship between Herzen and Natalie opens ways to a third person though one might assume that the love is a platonic love, it is, in fact, a love which is ignited by Natalie's husband for George. Wohl highlights this point by stating that "Natalie's professed love for George is based on a pure (i.e. platonic) love and nearly destroys the lives of all three, as well as George's wife, Emma. Natalie explains to her husband that, "all my actions spring from the divine spirit of love" (350). The researcher believes that the life of four people, including Herzen, Natalie, George and his wife, Emma are all destroyed and it cannot be thought of as a spiritual love as Tom Stoppard has shown that in the Shipwreck of his *The Coast of Utopia*:

Natalie: You haven't understood anything. All my actions spring from the divine spirit of love, which I feel for all creation. Your logical way of looking at things just shows that you have grown apart from Nature. George is not the way you talk about him. He understands. He loves you. He loves Alexander. He loves your children and mine. Together, our love will be strong enough for all of us.

George enters, in travelling clothes. He takes one look at his wife, baby and pregnant mistress, and turns about.

Natalie: George!

Emma: George!

Natalie, with a glad cry, runs after him, followed by Emma (62-63).

The dysfunctionality of love in *Shipwreck* is only because of the negative consequences of the mimetic desire. It seems that Herzen is suffering more of personal jealousy than his being liberal in his marital relationship with Natalie. When he notes that his wife is attracted to George who is now a monster to him, his masculine jealousy is ignited by George. This is mimetic desire which is directing their lives which is very close to jealousy as misdemeanor. This pervades their life to the extent that he is accused of being an egoist. Herzen confesses that self-esteem and egoism keep them warm and vital. He states that it comes from human nature, and it is not always a virtue for man. Tom Stoppard

in *Shipwreck* puts words in Herzen's mouth that "It's just part of what comes with being human, to keep us free, to create our own destiny, and our values. It's not the enemy of love! It's what love feeds on. That's why without you I'd be destroyed" (66). Subsequently, he knows that he is destroying his own life because of the flame of love, but simultaneously there is no way out of it. He has to keep his monstrous rival, George, by his side to let the flame of his love be ignited as long as he is alive.

Since all men are subject to competition and winning a woman's favour, the male characters of Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia* are not exceptions in this regard. Jean Bethke Elshtain argues that this process where men devour and dominate women is called 'metaphysical cannibalism'. In this nightmarish scenario, men invade and take over women. Hence they create a sex-class system. (151). Women are enslaved and victimized in *The Coast of Utopia*. It is because of the fact that their wills never triumph in patriarchal societies. The idea of sacrifice is very much related to the idea of 'servitude to others', and the duties assigned by others. The reason for the women's enslavement is their obedience to the more powerful doctrines of thought. Women cannot stand the analogies and laws imposed upon them by men. Jean Bethke Elshtain argues that "Herzen is finally seduced by philosophers of absolute will: it is my will against your will, and if your will triumphs, I am cast into servitude. There is, it seems, no middle ground here." (149). Women's innocence paves the way for men to sacrifice women. Elsewhere Jean Bethke Elshtain asserts that there is a baby-step from the presuppositions of innocence to the concept of pure victim. That is, the victim is pure by a contrast to an oppressor. This also emphasizes 'Rousseauian innocence'

Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia* is replete with scenes of unfaithfulness which portrays the victimization and commodification of women in the play. In *Shipwreck* act two of the play, Nicholas Ogarey, a radical poet, is living with his wife Maria who is ill. He also has a parallel relationship with Natasha Tuchnov, Natalie Herzen's close friend. She later becomes Natasha Ogarey. The characters of this play, especially the male characters seem not to be satisfied with their legal partners, and they look for some incentives to continue their marital life. Natasha knows that Maria is still married to Nickolas, but she agrees to be with him, and Nickolas irrespective of the any respect for his wife dates Natasha. He only wants to feed his passions even at the cost of destroying his own marital life and losing his wife. He is ready to sacrifice Maria only for his own self-satisfaction. Maria seems to be worried when she talks to Natalie about her future with Nickolas. Tom Stoppard shows how Nickolas victimizes his wife in the following excerpt from *The Coast of Utopia*:



Maria: That's a large exception, and while it's so, there's three hundred thousand roubles in the six-per-cents, secured against his property. Where would it leave me if I were divorced? Worse still when there's a new wife with her own ideas about her position. You know what a child Nicholas is about money. Anyone can get round him. He had four thousand souls when his father died, and almost the first thing he did was hand over the largest property to his serfs. He's simply not someone you can depend on. And now he sends you to plead for him and his eager bride. Do you know her? (50-51)

Since the world is run by men, victimization and commodification are necessities to be performed in order to create equilibrium in the world of men. Another character who appears in *Shipwreck* in the Paris scenes is George Herwegh, a German man married to Emma. He was once expelled from Saxony for his political affairs. These two meet the Herzen family frequently. Still married to Emma after the country is involved in a series of political turmoil, George cheats on his wife and he has an affair with Natalie Herzen, the mother of Tata, Sasha, Kolya and Olga.

Later, Emma Herwegh and Natalie's husband, Herzen learn about the affair and this upsets them more than ever. George's habit is to seduce ladies, and he is called a serial seducer. His only aim is to sacrifice ladies at any cost. After that he is seen to be seducing Natasha Ogarev. George's world is to get its equilibrium by sacrificing different women, and transform them into some commodities. George's lack of respect can be seen in the following passage on the conversation between Natalie and Herzen in Stoppard's Play.

Natalie (privately to Herzen): You're being unkind.

Herzen: I like George, but I'd feel ridiculous.

Natalie: (angrily) Idealised love doesn't mean a lack of ... or perhaps you think it does?

Herzen: What's this?

Natalie: It's despicable to imply George doesn't ... satisfy a woman ...

Herzen: (stung) I'm sure he does—I'm told she's a countess.

Natalie: I see. Well, if it's only a countess ... (33)

The commodification of women is a never ending process which continues throughout the life of Emma and Natalie. Both of them were victims to the whims and desires of George Herwegh. Emma has a strong financial background and she supports George in time of trouble, but surprisingly, George has an affair with Natalie, and worse than that is the time that she understands this liaison when she is expecting a child. She is upset because of an ongoing understanding between her husband and Natalie who is her best friend. Once Emma's father was very rich because he sold some furnishings to the Prussian court, but the revolution made him poor. He resents George for she has devoted all his life to him in order that he would not be in trouble, while he has not been faithful with

her. Tom Stoppard shows the sacrificial agony Emma suffers from in *Shipwreck, The Coast of Utopia*:

Emma: On our honeymoon in Italy, George didn't like the cologne they had there, so I sent to Paris for his special cologne, .... That's how I've always been with George. Nothing was too good or too much. Daddy used to be rich, he supplied all the silk furnishings to the Prussian court, but somehow the revolution made him quite poor, and he resents George, it's so unfair. I've borrowed and sold everything I can so that George isn't troubled, and now I don't know where else to turn. (63-64)

The sacrifice and commodification of women in the trilogy of *The Coast of Utopia* have taken different forms. The worst thing for women characters in this play is that they cannot experience romantic love in the real sense of the word. They do have some social encounters with men in order to find solace and intimacy with men. They hate dealing with men socially, but they are forced to. David Wohl argues that "Women in the trilogy use social activism as a means to achieve romantic love while the men immerse themselves in politics to avoid the terror of the opposite sex" (351). The women characters of *The Coast of Utopia* are more or less involved in social activities. As a case in point, Katya who is Belinsky's mistress in act II of *Voyage* supports him and stays with him when he is in trouble. There seems to be no future for her, but she sleeps with him and she even allows him to use her jewelry in time of trouble.

## 5. Conclusion

It is concluded that women are considered commodities because in patriarchal societies men run the system, and since the abuse of men is difficult, and that it may end in disputes unresolved, the easiest way is to sacrifice women and marginalize them. The answer to the question of whether the imitative desire can have some destructive effects, such as the downfall of the characters is to be discussed by the similar consequences of the final acts of the two plays. On one hand, imitative desire powerfully shows itself in *Betrayal* where the male imitate love at any cost irrespective of the destructive consequences. Robert betrays Emma and cheats on her. In addition, Jerry cheats on his wife, Judith. On the other hand, the male characters in *The Coast of Utopia* are no exceptions. Michael is heedless of the consequences of his actions which are all rooted in his imitative desire on the side of the negative. The negative side of the imitative desire disintegrates the family union. Michael's father, Alexander Bakunin, is not on speaking terms with him because he interferes into his sisters' affairs. His imitative desire enliven an incestuous desire in him which destroys the family union.

The researchers have come to this idea that in both of the plays, women are no more than the commodities. In the same way Emma and Judith, Robert's and

Jerry's wives respectively, are nothing but commodities exchanged between the two men. Michael's sisters are also commodities exchanged between the suiters or the husbands and their brother. Everyone likes to keep them in reserve for their own benefit. The imitative desire on the side of the negative is very close to the idea of jealousy in both of the plays. Jealousy is what makes Jerry love his best friend's wife, consequently he not only destroys Emma's life, but he does that to his own life with Judith. Michael destroys his sister's lives because he is not free to get rid of the negative side of his imitative desire. Thus if the imitative desire is not directed towards the right path, it would lead one to astray and guarantees one's downfall.

## References

- Burkman, Katherine H. "Harold Pinter's Betrayal: Life Before Death and After." *The Bedford Introduction to Drama*. edited by Lee A. Jacobus. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005. pp. 1358-1364.
- Clarke, Andrew David. *The Absurd Representations of Pinter's Women: A Study into The Representation of Female Characters in The Plays of Harold Pinter*. Thesis. Victoria University of Wellington, 2019.
- Cowdell, Scott. *Rene Girard and Secular Modernity, Christ, Culture and Crisis*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013.
- Elshtain, Jean Bethke. "On Never Reaching the Coast of Utopia." *International Relations*. Vol. 22, No. 2, 2008. pp. 147-172.
- Fleming, Chris. *Rene Girard, Violence and Mimesis*. Malden: Polity Press Ltd., 2004.
- Girard, Rene. *Evolution and Conversion*. New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2008.
- Girard, Rene. *Violence and the Sacred*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972.
- Girard, Rene. *Resurrection from the Underground Feodor Dostoevsky*. edited by James G. Williams. Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2012.
- Grande, Per Bjourner. "The Mimetic Nature of Desire." *LAP*. Lambert Academic Publishing, 2009.
- Knowles, Ronald. "Pinter and Twentieth Century Drama." *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*. edited by Peter Raby, Cambridge University Press, 2009. pp. 74-87.
- Jenkins, Anthony. *The Theatre of Tom Stoppard*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Hasan Ali, Farah. *Eroding the Language of Freedom: Identity Predicament in Selected Works of Harold Pinter*. Diss. University of Baghdad, 2015.
- Krüger, Johanna Alida. *The Actual versus the Fictional in Betrayal, The Real Thing and Closer*. Diss. The Unisa Institutional Repository, 2018
- Nanda, Leena. *An Analysis of the Unsatisfactory Male-Female Relationship in the Plays of Harold Pinter*. Diss. Iowa State University Capstones, 2018.

- Ousby, Ian. *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Palaver, Wolfgang. *Rene Girard's Mimetic Theory*. Translated by Gabriel Borrud. Michigan: Michigan UP. 2013.
- Perloff, Carey, and Heather kitchen. *Words on Plays, The Real Thing*. San Francisco. American Conservatory Theater, 2004.
- Pinter, Harold. *Betrayal*. New York: Grove Press, 2013.
- Pisk, Jernej. "Mimetic Desire and Scapegoat Mechanism in Sport." *Acta University Palacki Olomuc Gym Journal*. Vol. 42, No. 4, 2011, pp. 9-17.
- Quigley, Austin. "Pinter, Politics and Postmodernism." *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*. edited by Peter Raby, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 7-26.
- Shonka, Christopher. *Biography Cast in Irony: Caveats, Stylization, And Indeterminacy in The Biographical History Plays of Tom Stoppard and Michael Frayn*. Diss. Web. Spring, 2010.
- Stokes, John. "Pinter and the 1950s." *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*. edited by Peter Raby. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 297.
- Stoppard, Tom. *The Coast of Utopia*. London: Faber and Faber Publications, 2002.
- Wohl, David. "The Coast of Utopia by Tom Stoppard." *The Johns Hopkins University Press*, Vol. 55, No. 2, 2014, pp. 348-352.