

## **Thesis abstract**

Using Aristotelian notion of imitative behaviour and René Girard's theory of mimetic desire, several stories by Katherine Mansfield are analysed in order to demonstrate the development of mimetic desire together with its implications. The analysis follows the negative aspects of mimesis: the problems it causes in relationships, as well as the positive aspects including the self-knowledge. Since Mansfield's stories do not correspond fully to Girard's theory, the analysis explores a specific way of dealing with mimetic desire: keeping the conflict latent.

At first, the stories about childhood offer an insight into Aristotelian concept of mimesis – imitative behaviour being a natural and pleasing human activity that is best observed in children's plays. The stories show how children choose their models, how they comprehend the world that surrounds them, especially the interpersonal and social codes, and how important is imagination in their mimetic activities. The analysis proceeds from natural imitation to the origins of mimetic desire, focusing on two modes of mediation and on the process of realization of one's own self-authenticity.

The search for self-authenticity is possible due to external or internal mediation of desire. The transition from one type to the other is explained by the analyses of the stories with adults who are mostly married. The shift goes often unnoticed and results in an unpleasant surprise for the subjects. These stories reveal the human propensity to eliminate the rivalry, to avoid conflicts and to keep them latent despite the tension. What is more, the latent conflict that is procrastinated on purpose can become pathological.

The last part of the analysis, which employs stories about elderly people, is about losing models or appearing to be one. The difference from the previous mimesis is that the definite model is supplanted by an indefinite model of the fullness of being. Some of the characters believe in reaching the fullness, but are disillusioned; some are chained by routine; some understand that it is unattainable; and one, a narcissist, deceives himself by pretending to achieve the fullness of being.

The above mentioned stages in the development of mimetic desire prove that the representation of the unity of the particular and the universal is possible into a certain extent. The extent is limited by the possibility to articulate the attitude to the ontological element of mimesis, which is not easy. Katherine Mansfield nevertheless achieves to capture the ways of people whose aim is to reach it, the frustrations that accompany such attempts and the failures that are inevitable when searching for the ontological fullness.