Three beautiful sisters, dangerous arrows, a trip to the underworld; these are only a few components that make up the myth of Cupid and Psyche from Apuleius’ second century AD Latin novel *The Golden Ass*. The classic comedy ends with the marriage of characters Psyche, who embodies the Greek word for “Soul,” and Cupid, whose name translates into the Greek “Eros,” or “Love.” While the myth primarily tells of obstacles the two must overcome, including Psyche’s sisters’ jealousy, Cupid’s vain and vengeful mother Venus, and several life-threatening wounds, the story has also been interpreted as a Christian allegory. Following Martianus Capella’s interpretation of the story as an allegory for the fall of the human soul, Christian scholars have adapted the myth to convey theological themes echoed in the Christian tradition.

Another Christian interpretation has been offered by C.S. Lewis, highly regarded scholar, novelist, and Christian apologist. In his 1956 novel *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*, Lewis rewrites the tale of Cupid and Psyche from Psyche’s older sister Orual’s perspective. Lewis’s retelling provides an alternate explanation for each of the characters’ motives for their action: though the step-sister in the story is not wicked, Lewis shows how her possessive love of Psyche is just as
harmful as actions motivated by hate or envy. The novel is compelling for other reasons as well; interestingly, elements of Lewis's writing—particularly his interpretations of human spirituality and violence—share similarities with literary critic Rene Girard’s analysis of humanity’s brokenness. Essentially, Girard views every individual’s actions as motivated by mimetic desire, or by desiring according to one’s neighbor’s desires. In fact, Girard’s works can be used as a tool for understanding many aspects of Lewis’s novel. At the same time, Lewis’s novel can illustrates and even anticipates Girard’s explanations for human relationships, thus lending credibility to the latter’s ideas.

For my project, I will be doing just that: using Girard as a lens through which I will analyze *Till We Have Faces*. First of all, I will use Girard’s works *The Scapegoat* and *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, as well as scholarly sources pertaining to these works, to compare and contrast his view of myths to Lewis’s take on myths. In order to formulate a thorough analysis of Lewis’s attitude toward myths, I will compare the author's retelling to the original myth as found in *The Golden Ass*. Secondly, I will carefully study the interactions between characters in *Faces* according to Girard’s analysis of mimetic desire. In order to do so, I will use Girard’s first book, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, as well as some of his later works, such as *The Violence and the Sacred* and *Theater of Envy* which explain the concept of mimetic desire by using well-known works such as *Don Quixote* and the plays of Shakespeare. Ultimately, I am interested in ultimately analyzing a problem explored by Lewis, but not Girard: how does one imitate God if God is also one’s mimetic rival?
In addition to using the aforementioned primary sources, I anticipate using information I collected from attending a conference on Rene Girard that was held in St. Louis this past summer. I will also use scholarly critiques on both Girard and Lewis's works, including Curtis Gruenler's article “C.S. Lewis and Rene Girard on Desire, Conversation, and Myth: The Case of Till We Have Faces” and Rebecca Adams's article “Loving Mimesis and Girard's 'Scapegoat of the Text': A Creative Reassessment of Mimetic Desire.” All of this intensive research and analysis will be a beneficial way for me to practice the skills that I have developed over the past three years as an English major. Specifically, I will be applying different approaches to my sources, including historical and theoretical. In addition to improving my own abilities, I will also be contributing to ongoing critical conversations regarding C.S. Lewis, Rene Girard, and human relationships with one another and with God. My project will challenge and stretch skills in order to prepare me for future upper-level research and writing.