

Proposal  
Introducing Rene Girard to Young People  
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What might Rene Girard have to say to secondary school or college undergraduate students? Quite a bit. As Girard is most well known for his theories about the violent origins of culture, to make his thought more accessible, it might be worthwhile to relate his ideas to popular culture in the West.

For anyone observing popular culture, one high (low?) point in popular culture was the summer of 2003's hyper-exposed and oft-reproduced kiss between Madonna and Britney Spears. The ubiquitous nature of the reporting mirrors the scandalous nature of the kiss. From a Girardian perspective, the scandal of the kiss has less to do with the pseudo-lesbian desire of the singers than the frustrated desires of the fans who make the scandal possible.

To help interpret the public's fascination with this kiss as well as to understand the violent undercurrents lurking beneath the surface of popular culture, the text of one of Britney Spears' biggest hit songs, "Oops, I Did It Again," is particularly useful. If one song, like one picture, is worth a thousand words, then Ms. Spears condenses a number of Girard's books into a few snappy lyrics.

My talk introduces Girard's thought, using the lyrics for "Oops" in five sections:

1. Satan
2. Seduction
3. Scapegoating
4. Scandal
5. Spirit

I have delivered this talk to many undergraduate classes and it has always been well received. The talk was accepted at the Girard conference in Riverside a couple years ago, but I had a work conflict and was not able to attend. This talk might be delivered as a paper or as part of a panel discussion.

I have delivered papers at three other COV&R conferences in the past (at Emory, at Purdue, and at Innsbruck) and have published seven articles on Girard (one in *Contagion*) as well as one book, *Clever as Serpents: Business Ethics and Office Politics*, applying Girardian theory to the business world (co-authored with a Notre Dame Law graduate, John McGeeney).