

# Benchmarks

This is largely a **French** issue; three of our four articles deal with French subjects. **Jeffrey Spisak's** article on mimetic desire in **Rousseau** was revised from a graduate paper; **Scott Sprenger's** study of **Balzac's** anthropology is part of his book project on Balzac; and **Eric Gans's** text on **Durkheim** was his contribution to a recent colloquium on "**Transfiguring the Sacred**," sponsored by the **UCLA Humanities Consortium** (under whose auspices **Scott Sprenger** was chosen last year from over a hundred candidates to spend two years at UCLA on a **Mellon Fellowship**). For a little extra-terrestrial variety, we also include **Tom Bertonneau's** article on the anti-sacrificial in science fiction, our first article in a field which is one of Tom's many specialties.

## About our Contributors

**Tom Bertonneau**, an original member of the GA seminar, received his Ph.D. from UCLA in Comparative Literature in 1990. His dissertation applied GA to the study of the modern epic: William Carlos Williams' Paterson and Stéphane Mallarmé's "Un coup de dés..." Since then he has published and presented papers on Williams, Wallace Stevens, Charles Olson, and other American authors, as well as on theoretical topics (and science fiction). Tom has also written for *Heterodoxy*, *Chronicles*, *Academic Questions*, and *National Review*, and is well known in Michigan for his controversial writings on college English teaching.

**Jeffrey Spisak** is a doctoral student at UCLA whose research interests include theatricality and patterns of mimetic identification in Early Modern French literature, Rousseau, and French Canadian literature. He presented a paper entitled "Québécois Nationalism and Ethnic Unease: the 1995 Sovereignty Debate" at the 1997 Chimera Conference at the University of Washington.

**Scott Sprenger** is Assistant Professor of French at Brigham Young University; he is currently an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities Consortium at UCLA. He has published several articles on 19th- and 20th-century French literature and is currently completing a book on Balzac titled *The Scandal of Balzac's Realism*.

**Eric Gans** is Editor of *Anthropoetics* and Professor of French at UCLA. His CV is accessible by clicking on his name below.