

# Benchmarks

In this first issue of *Anthropoetics*' tenth year we are honored to offer an English translation of **René Girard**'s analysis of Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ*, which first appeared in *Le Figaro magazine* in March of this year; our thanks to his translator **Robert Doran**, who helped bring this article to us. The other articles in this issue cover a wide spectrum of cultural genres, from film and the novel to ancient thought and the philosophy of science. **Lahoucine Ouzgane**'s article on Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, his second for *Anthropoetics*, extends the interrogation of mimetic desire in the early 20th century American novel begun in his [article on Wharton's \*House of Mirth\*](#) in *Anthropoetics* 3, 2. **Tom Bertonneau**, whose eighth *Anthropoetics* article deals with Gnosticism in Julian the Apostate and elsewhere, returns to the subject of early (anti-) Christianity that he dealt with in his often-cited [article on Celsus](#), "the first Nietzsche," in *Anthropoetics* 3, 1. **Andrew Bartlett** and **Marina Ludwigs**, who are making their debuts in our journal, illustrate two opposite poles of interaction of cultural analysis with science. Andrew's article is a nuanced analysis of the filmic rendering of nuclear war in the framework of mimetic theory; Marina's is an informed discussion of the conundrum of "explanation" in the philosophy of science that makes a case for humanistic discourse as an opening to human possibility beyond the closure of scientific models.

## About Our Contributors

**René Girard** is the Andrew B. Hammond Professor Emeritus of French language, literature, and civilization at Stanford University. Early in his career, Girard developed his theory of "mimetic desire," which he later developed into a full-blown theory of religion and culture. From the early sixties to the present, his many books have had a profound influence on literary theory, social anthropology, religious studies, political science, economic theory, and cultural studies. Girard's principal works are: *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1961, trans. 1966), *Violence and the Sacred* (1972, trans. 1977), *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (1978, trans. 1987), *The Scapegoat* (1982, trans. 1986), *A Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare* (1991, reedition, 2004), *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (1999, trans. 2001). In 1990, friends and colleagues of Girard's established the "Colloquium on Violence and Religion (COV&R)," which meets annually to further research and discussion about the themes of Girard's work. Though Professor Girard officially retired in 1995, he has returned to teach at Stanford on several occasions. Most recently, he has taught such courses as "Literature and Modernity: Proust, Woolf, Dostoevsky, Shakespeare" (2003); and "Violence and Culture: Sophocles, Shakespeare, Racine, Christ" (2004).

[Andrew Bartlett](#) grew up in eastern Canada and studied at the University of New Brunswick (Fredericton) and Dalhousie University (Halifax), earning his Ph.D. from York

University (Toronto) in 1994, with a specialization in eighteenth-century British fiction and narrative theory. He has worked as sessional lecturer in English at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University. Since 1998, he has taught composition and literary analysis in the English Department at Kwantlen University College in Surrey, just outside Vancouver. He is an active member of COV&R. Previous publications include scholarly work on Cormac McCarthy and Joseph Conrad, and several reviews of Canadian fiction.

[\*\*Thomas F. Bertonneau\*\*](#), author of over fifty published articles and of the 1996 study *Declining Standards*, is a long-time student of Generative Anthropology who has contributed on many occasions to *Anthropoetics*. Bertonneau teaches in the English Department and in the Honors Program at SUNY Oswego. His current projects include a book on *The Gospels according to Science Fiction*, coauthored with Kim Paffenroth and due out from Brazos Press in 2005. He has articles forthcoming on Karen Blixen, Ayn Rand, and V. S. Naipaul.

[\*\*Marina Ludwigs\*\*](#) holds a BS in Computer Science from the University of California, Irvine and an MA in English from Stockholm University. She is currently working toward the PhD in Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine. Her academic interests include GA, prosodic theory, and phenomenology. She is writing a doctoral dissertation on epiphanies in 19th- early 20th-century novels.

[\*\*Lahoucine Ouzgane\*\*](#) is associate professor of English at the University of Alberta. His teaching and research interests include American literature, North African and Middle Eastern literature, and composition and rhetoric. His recent publications include *Crossing Borderlands: Composition and Postcolonial Studies* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), co-edited with Andrea Lunsford, and *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the late 19th century to the present* (Palgrave Macmillan and the University of Natal Press, 2005), co-edited with Robert Morrell. He lives in Edmonton with his wife, Joni, and their children, Ben and Ryan.