

## *Editor's Introduction*

*Among the alarming but promising changes taking place in academia today is the move toward interdisciplinary and interinstitutional collaboration in the pursuit of knowledge for the betterment of life, of the environment, and of social forms of organization in the global marketplace. A keen sense of social consciousness on the part of academicians and public servants seems, in the best of cases, to inform this move which is increasingly evident in published monographs, regional and international conferences, university job searches, and undergraduate and graduate curricula. The recent surge of scholastic journals dedicated to interdisciplinary concerns is a small but significant manifestation of this trend. Such journals generally strive to have an impact on intellectual life by bringing together traditionally independent areas of study such as religion and literature, philosophy and language, critical theory and politics, art and history, and diverse areas of 'cultural studies'. More often than not, however, the professed goal of collaboration among scholars, disciplines, and institutions is painfully elusive. Indeed, traditional boundaries that separate, 'protect', isolated domains of knowledge and institutions are being redefined in the midst of subtle and not so subtle class, racial, sexual, and gender disputes, PC fights, and intellectual and anti-intellectual wars. The scene is different in substance but not far removed in spirit from the cultural, economic, gender, sexual, racial, ethnic, and religious battles of a global community in which civic restlessness and violence have become epidemic.*

*Contagion is unique in its manner of addressing both these concerns: the purposeful cooperation between isolate disciplines and institutions, and the growing human violence which has become an imminent threat to the continuance of life on our planet. As an interdisciplinary journal, Contagion seeks to promote a dialogue not between two or three distinct areas of scholarship in the humanities, as is customary in interdisciplinary studies today, but between areas of discourse extending from the human*

*and social sciences to the service oriented work of nonacademic professionals. The mediating factor for this endeavor is Girardian theory, a theory of violence which projects the ultimacy of nonviolence. Our interest centers on the work of scholars and practitioners who are discovering at the heart of their object of study the logic of sacrificial and antisacrificial thinking and the negative and positive mimesis which fuels that logic, are questioning its implications, and are exploring explanations and solutions which may impact, ultimately, on intellectual life and the direction of human affairs. The vast scope of the subject is evident in the spectrum of viewpoints expressed in the previous and current issues of Contagion—ethics, mythology, politics, religion, economics, ritual, feminism, biblical studies, literature—as well as in the forthcoming studies on anorexia, psychotherapy, feminist constructions of selfhood, violence reduction workshops, Buddhism, ethnic violence, cinema, the criminal justice system, a Jewish-Christian dialogue.*

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*Judith H. Arias*