

# Editorial Introduction

## Jonathan Locke Hart

A human speaking to humans in culture and nature: that is the most elemental aspect of what we have tried to do in *Veritas Review*. We have sought harmony, intellectual and cultural exchange, through words and images. Poetry, prose, photographs, and portraits have worked together toward this end. What divides us gets attention in an age of machine learning or artificial intelligence. Controversy and division create heat, smoke and profit. How do the arts, sciences, humanities, and social sciences create, make, explore, flourish in an age where there can be an illusion of choice when some aspects of advertising, technology, manipulation, and propaganda can work against that very choice? Freedom of thought and expression have been hard won over the course of human history. They are fragile. Here, we try to give contributors and readers scope to explore this space of the human in nature, what freedom the human mind and spirit has had, has or will have. *Veritas Review* has contributors who seek elemental questions of life and death and this issue is no different. Thought, method, creativity, all contribute to the gifts that science, art, and the seven liberal arts have given us.

The issue begins with Anne Elezabeth Pluto's moving poetry about human companionship, deftly using images of a hospice, hush puppies, notes, notebooks, playbook, chess, traces left behind, books, dust, the dead, God, the landscape of Texas, memory, dreams of a bird, and love. Tom Conley's essay on how Rabelais can inspire us does so by remembering when his elder brother was an undergraduate and took a course, *Freshman Studies*, that Nathan Pusey had begun at Lawrence College, a brother who "insisted that that *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* embodied a love of life," indeed something that the younger Conley has embodied in this essay, at Harvard, in the world, and in his own remarkable life.

Like Conley himself in another aspect of his work, our film reviewers understand the power of movies or moving pictures in our culture. Robert Siodmak's *Cross Cross* (1949) is a work that Ross Noble praises as he examines the context and says that this LA Film Noir has the key features of the genre. Constantin Waldschmidt discusses Yukio Mishima, "Japan's last literary genius" who planned his own death and whose art is "a compulsion," and lauds the editing, voice-over, and aesthetic of Paul Schrader's film *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters* (1985). Alexander Hughes considers Kathryn Bigelow's action movie *Point Break* (1991), set in southern California, and reminds us that art is also entertainment, representing "an America whose cracks are starting to show despite its affluence." Moreover, Mathieu Ronayne writes about *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006), ideals and actualities relating to war and fratricide in the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921). Jason O'Dwyer reviews Clint Eastwood's *Gran Torino* (2008), a film without a big budget in which Eastwood directs and performs as the only famous actor, and keeps verbatim Nick Schenk's screenplay about the condition of the United States.

*Veritas Review* has also encouraged contributions reflecting cultural and linguistic diversity, including translation. "Ode to Youth" is a poem by Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855) about freedom in a world without life, a key poet in Poland, translated by Paweł Rybacki, once a student at Harvard and with whom Henry Stratakis-Allen, Danilo Petranovich, and I first discussed the idea of a journal, which, in time, after Paweł had moved to the University of Chicago, became *Veritas Review*. Jacob Conrod examines Jean Calvin (Cauvin) as a subtle mystic and shows a different dimension of the French reformer and those "Calvinists" who came to follow.

Furthermore, *Veritas Review* bridges the historical with the present and the future. Cyberpunk, as Cindy Choidaló notes in her essay, was prominent in the early 1980s, as an alternative to mainstream science fiction and the New Wave of the 1960s. Iosif M. Gershteyn's poems explore "I," "you" and the world—that is self and other in an exploration of nature, human connection, history, and time generally—and represent living

fully in the face of life and death. Catherine Ezell's portraits enrich the words in this issue as they have previous issues and give *Veritas Review* a distinctive style or look. Her images have been and are of some of the contributors and figures that arise from the content of some of the contributions as she sees fit.

And so, *Veritas Review* values conversation, creativity, evidence, explores the importance of science, encourages contributors at various stages of their lives and careers, and embodies civility while people consider tradition, the present, innovation and a possible or imagined future. We thank our advisors, Tom Conley and Donald Pfister, a distinguished humanist and a distinguished scientist, both at Harvard, for their advice, support and contributions. May they continue to inspire students, colleagues, readers, and all of us.