Editorial Introduction

Jonathan Locke Hart

On 12 September 1940, as war was consuming Europe, four teenagers, near Montignac in France, followed their dog down into a cave and stumbled on paintings that turned out to be more than 15,000 years old. Later, Henri-Édouard-Prosper Breuil studied the Lascaux grotto and its more or less 600 painted and drawn animals and symbols and nearly 1,500 engravings, including red deer, stags, cats, cows, horses, and other possibly mythical and mysterious creatures, and a sole human figure, a man with the head of a bird and with an erect phallus. Why did these people paint? To express art or to represent the hunt and religious rites, or both, that is, for artistic and practical purposes? Opened to the public from 1948 to 1963, Lascaux closed as the lighting had faded the colours and allowed for algae to grow and, in 1983, a replica of the cave opened. The reception of art, the archeology, the role of science, all become part of the story of past and present, the delicate vulnerability of the past before the trample of the present.

In artistic mimesis, how much represents or imitates reality and how much, as in the replica, becomes a simulacrum? Art and interpretation prompt us to think and feel. Why did and do people create or record, and what do they mean to those who come after? Can we really know the motives for the making? Is it an early form of recording, of accounting, an attempt at understanding and knowledge? Is it possible that humans create for the sake of creation, their art a kind of play or reproduction, just as humans have reproduced themselves? Is that for practical reasons—that children help—or for the cycle of nature, or both? There are key unanswerable questions in human life, past, present and future, or those unanswered thus far, and these are some of the pressing issues, directly or indirectly, explicitly and implicitly, now and in time that Lascaux represents for those who come after. Humans have faced concerns over time and the works of the contributors to this issue and other issues of *Veritas Review* explore such issues. The past speaks to us as we move into the future, and what it and the world are saying is often difficult to know. And so, we explore, caught between the desire for certainty and the recognition of uncertainty.

Beyond the images of Lascaux, there are the alphabets and words of the earliest literate cultures, those who invented writing. The historical record can be humbling and curb the temptations of presentism and the triumph of time. In Sumer in Mesopotamia, near the Persian Gulf, the earliest known writing was invented about 3,400 B.C.E. Scribes or tablet writers wrote, after the basic records of food rationing, mathematics, laws, literature, and much else. About the same time, the Egyptians invented their own hieroglyphic writing. Cuneiform experts may use machine learning to read the many hundred of thousands of documents in that writing not yet deciphered. Present technologies help to read earlier technologies—writing joins past and present. There are still thousands of short inscriptions in the Indus Valley civilization writing of about 4,000 years ago that need deciphering. Another example is the oracle bones used to record divination in the House of Shang (1400-1200 B.C.E) in what is now China. People have been expressing themselves for so long now and the archive involves loss, traces, undeciphered signs and alphabets, and words we have slowly learnt to read. Even in English, only some of the words and images produced remain. In visual culture, some buildings, drawings, and paintings have also been ruined or lost. We contribute to understanding, knowledge, and the creation of words and images in every generation, past to present to future, and we face some of the same concerns people did long ago despite the changes in language, technology, and much else. In this issue, the contributors explore some elemental themes in our changing world.

The issue includes the work of poets, a scientist, artists, and humanists, and examines poetry, biology, film, portraits, Shakespeare, and the work of the Abigail Adams Institute (AAI) in words and images. This issue begins with Gloria Mindock's poems, which are accomplished in their explorations. In "Requiem," the speak-

er says: "Death confronts me at every turn. / Ignoring it, is what I do." She opens "Good-bye" with the striking lines: "I always liked getting lost in cornfields. / You never could find me." The relation between "I" and "you" is represented directly. In "Living with Ghosts at the Farlow Library and Gray Herbarium at Harvard," Donald H. Pfister, with great clarity, tells the fascinating account of his life at Harvard and explains cryptogamic botany and how, when he started out, he was in charge of three large, complicated and renowned collections, which document biological diversity, and how two key figures helped him. Pfister also recounts the story of lichen and a potato leaf as important and representative examples and notes that at Harvard he has taught many courses, including those about trees, forests, and fungi, emphasizing that behind specimens, there is a story. Part of that tale involves key figures such as Asa Gray and his student, William G. Farlow.

Discussions are part of what the Abigail Adams Institute does. In "AAI Film Night Introduction," Danilo Petranovich says because a good film can elicit important responses in students, the AAI and its students chose some classic movies. He provides three sample reflections. In the first, examining *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Loren Brown sees this film in terms of the Western genre and of a good man and a bad man who are above the law, and discusses the question of the consequences of the dilemma of whether to give up the laws for great individuals. *It's a Wonderful Life* is the film Sarah Gustafson examines; she says that it takes us out of ourselves in the paradox that by sacrificing one's life, one will gain it. Ted Saad discusses *Barabbas*, a tale of a minor biblical character who gets another chance, a film that is rare today, an epic that enriches the soul.

Another important discussion is "Sound & Fury: Shakespeare Reading Group." Emma Towne says that Shakespeare's words were made to be spoken and dramatized, and the reading group had engaging evenings by combining debate and dramatic reading. Jennifer Gao enjoyed reading selections from the plays and the challenge to think about social issues relevant then and now. For Loren Brown, having a reading group that met in person was important, and he says that he enjoyed the discussion, and especially the dramatic reading of scenes from *King Lear, Cymbeline*, and *Macbeth*. The Shakespearean theme continues in "Drawing Hamlet" by Cindy Chopoidalo, a Shakespeare scholar who is also an artist influenced by classic cartoons but who can also use a realistic style. Among other topics, Chopoidalo notes the apparently earliest illustration of the character of Hamlet in 1646.

The issue ends with poetry and images. In "Grandfather's Bookshelf," a sequence of sonnets, Gabrielle Landry explores in words, in tandem with Tiffany Landry's illustrations. Once more the relation between word and image is significant. Gabrielle's words engage the reader from the first lines of the opening poem: "Tatyana, eight, always daydreaming, / Sat gently at the window bay." The beauty and power of books and the bookshelf—of reading—run through the sonnets. The sequence focuses on past and present, there and here—the generations—and ends, in the last of the eleven poems, with: "Well, time for me to say goodbye / Like Tanya's Grandpa's books—I fly!" In the "Afterword," Gabrielle Landry notes that the work is magical and intergenerational, representing connection, love, understanding and storytelling while noting the inspiration of Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*.

Danilo Petranovich discusses the mission of the Abigail Adams Institute (AAI), its fostering of traditional liberal arts education at Harvard and in the wider community in Boston schools and universities in the service of civility, free discourse and intellectual friendship. The Abigail Adams Institute finds a visual and verbal record in James Capuzzi's photographs and the attendant captions, which show the range of activities and intellectual engagement. Here is the interaction of image and text once more. Students, faculty, scientists, artists and others in the academic community and the community at large come together to explore, through pictures, words, and other means, to seek understanding.

Throughout the issue, there are the drawings of Catherine Ezell, which have helped to make *Veritas Review* distinctive, once more showing the allure of images and art, which has been with us from the caves and to the stars we now watch, study, and would wander amongst. In Lascaux, there was a singular human figure, male, mythological and part-animal, part fertility figure, among the many animals, and here, as in previous issues,

are portraits of men and women who work in arts and science, in culture and nature, dwelling in and making sense of the natural cycle, exploring life in the face of death to return to those lines I first quoted from Gloria Mindock, whence I began. We may explore life and death even as we sometimes desire to turn away.

Poems by Gloria Mindock

Requiem

In this city, we all get struck by cars.
Body parts flying unable to reconnect.
No thoughts of tomorrow.

Pardon this Amen
each time you see me.
The color I wear is black—
consequences of embracing life.

My descent into the unknown
is a daily event.
Death confronts me at every turn.
Ignoring it, is what I do.

I try to be normal, but spend my time
hiding in everyone's breath.

SONG

There is a sadness in the air—
heaviness pressing down on bones,
cracking them—
a mourning over the world.

We know what it means
saying good-bye to the ground where
we think you are.

Wounded
We weep silently
hearing machine guns in the distance…
A horizon of blood

Being one with the earth,
when it is our time to be buried,
who will follow when war breaks out?
A never-ending orchard
of flowers.

BULLSEYE

I stand in the middle of town.
A bullseye for the missile.

Let me feel some control.
Give me a gun to hold.

I say good-bye

Farewell, to a life I loved.
Destroyed.

Hope is something I need.

Yellow sunflowers
blow in the dust.

I know it is time.
Waiting…

Exceeding

No one lives like I do
No freedom, just flames
Days of putting defeat in a vase

I am wishing for a miracle
Remember, you always see me falling off ladders
The devil lives in all the wounds

I do not know where my son is buried
Did he die slowly or quickly?
These thoughts are playing endlessly.

Tears fall from eyes in a trance
Sleep is in rations

Give me a shirt with words so
I do not have to speak anymore
There is nothing left to say
The moon still shines

There is no loss of light
Only a dimness attaching itself to me

The Chapel

So many Icons to look at.
Eyes go from one to another.
Latin, ceilings of gold—
so much to take in.

If I can't see everything
is my faith enough?

People are talking in *The Sistine Chapel*!
How could they?
It made me dizzy seeing the painting.

Someone told the people to shut up.
They kept disregarding the sacred.

The two hands did not strike
their mouths.
No wrath from the ceiling.
Some of us cried tears
in our own silence.

The talkers missed a most
important message.
How could they?

Good-bye

I always liked getting lost in cornfields.
You never could find me.
The stalks bothered my skin so stayed
hidden only for a little while.

Miles and miles of corn, sticking up
from flatness, reaching for the sky.
You could never understand my love for this.

So many bad storms.
Lightning scaring the horses.
They break loose and run
in the field.
Appreciating freedom like me
as we swallow the sky.

Clear

There is no fear in not knowing.
Strength comes from moments
here and there.

Ash comes from the results
of an explosion—
pieces of life all over.

It all is thrown away.
You can start over,
build up again as the
sky witnesses your being.

The blue sky clear of any dust.

Belief

Some people believe in Angels,
some don't.
Everyone has to believe in something!
If not this, then what?

Sometimes, there are too many
cracks not fixed.
Even in the deepest part of the heart,
there is beating.
Sometimes just not evident.

It is true, all you have to do is
flood the dark with light.

Living with Ghosts at the Farlow Library and Gray Herbarium at Harvard

Donald H. Pfister

My life at Harvard began officially when I was appointed Assistant Professor in Biology and Assistant Curator of the Farlow Library and Herbarium of Cryptogamic Botany in 1974. The phrase *cryptogamic botany* perhaps requires some explanation. In the world of Carl Linnaeus, the great namer of organisms and inventor of systems for arranging life forms, entities—living and dead—were placed in three Kingdoms. Minerals were non-living, animals moved, and plants were stationary. Plants were divided into two groups the phanerogams—with flowers and cones, etc.—and the cryptogams. Cryptogams are not to be confused with cryptograms. Cryptogams are spore producers with hidden reproductive organs; the group included ferns and fern allies (sometimes referred to as vascular cryptogams because of the internal structures they had to move water and carbohydrates), fungi, lichens, algae, and bryophytes. These days these organisms represent several kingdoms in the hierarchy of life including Plantae, Protista, and Fungi. The Farlow collection holds about 1.5 million specimens of non-vascular cryptogams. These represent the fungi, lichens, algae, mosses, and liverworts; the Farlow Library is equally large and rich. Upon arrival at Harvard I was thrown into this large and complicated collection having previous experience only as an assistant professor at the University of Puerto Rico and as a graduate student at Cornell University. Along with teaching, I was in charge of these world-renowned collections.

Luckily for me, there were two people who helped me at the beginning. Reed Rollins (1911–1998) was director of the Gray Herbarium, part of the Herbaria complex at Harvard, and had been on the search committee that brought me here. He was always available for consultation. At this time the Farlow was in transition and National Science Foundation funding was available to upgrade the collections. In support of this upgrade Rollins had brought to the Farlow Geneva Sayre (1911–1992), a bryologist recently retired from Russell Sage College. Sayre's work centered on collections and their documentation—where specimens came from, who collected them, when their names were published and how and by whom they had been studied. I owe her my ongoing interest in the material culture of museum collections and the people behind these collections.

Specimens in museums, herbaria, and fungaria document the biological diversity of the earth. Each of the 1.5 million specimens in the Farlow comes with a story. One might be looking at a particular lichen collection that was made by lichenologist Edward Tuckerman (1817–1886) on Mount Washington in New Hampshire. This is a large and robust specimen collected in 1848 from near the peak. One might ask: how did he get to

that spot in those early days? Who was with him? Since there was little literature on North American lichens, how did he identify his collection? Can one still find this species today near this sampled location? Why is there a Tuckerman's Ravine on Mt. Washington? This is but one example of questions raised as one works with collections. These are the stories of biology and history. Each specimen whether young or old has a story.

In the collection we have a potato leaf that was gathered in Ireland in 1845. The leaf is in the herbarium of Thomas Taylor (1786–1848) who lived in Ireland. He was a cryptogamic botanist who was particularly interested in bryophytes. The leaf is infected by *Phytophthora infestans* (a downy mildew), the organism that causes late blight of potato. This fungus-like organism (we know now that it belongs not in kingdom Fungi but among the protists) was the cause of the Irish potato famine. The famine not only led to the misery and migration of millions of Irish but also to scientific inquiry into the notion that fungi cause plant diseases. Taylor died in the famine having given up his work as a botanist to return to his earlier practice of medicine in order to aid those suffering during the famine. Each specimen has a story.

I have taught many courses at Harvard including about trees and forests and about fungi. The idea that there is a story behind specimens for me became a way to give students a framework in which to appreciate the topic at hand. When teaching about the organism that cause downy mildew, I often reflect on the work of William G. Farlow (1844–1919) who founded the Farlow Library and Herbarium. He was a student of Asa Gray (1810–1888), premier American botanist of the nineteenth century at Harvard, was trained in medicine at Harvard, but studied cryptogamic botany with Anton deBary (1831–1888), the famed German scientist. DeBary had worked out the biological life history of *Phytophthora infestans*. Farlow learned the techniques of working with these organisms in deBary's lab. Back home here in Boston Farlow began studying the downy mildew of our local grape. He applied the techniques he had learned with deBary but to this heretofore little studied pathogen of grape then known only in the Americas. Although not particularly damaging to the native grape, Farlow ruminated on the possible devastating effect this pathogen could have on European wine grapes. Within a decade the downy mildew had been introduced into Europe with devastating effect. We have the leaves that Farlow studied in the collection. How powerful to think about these events in which plants and pests were transported over the sea in voyages that took many days and contrast such events with the issues of pest introductions today. One can travel to practically any spot on the face of the globe within 24 hours and with that travel organisms can be along for the ride.

Specimens are more than artifacts of the world as it was. With modern technology one can extract DNA and use that DNA to look at taxonomic and phylogenetic placement. It is possible to trace through genetics the particular strain of a fungus that was present at a particular place and at a particular time. One of our lab members has recently done a study and was able to obtain useful genetic information from a specimen from 1807.

I have used several examples to help focus attention on my life as a curator and how deeply one can become involved in the study of specimens. As is often the case we live with those who came before us. Each time I work in the herbarium I am living with my forebears—I live with ghosts.

AAI Film Night

Introduction

Danilo Petranovich ‘00

As part of its broader arts and literature initiative, the Abigail Adams Institute (AAI) launched the *Film Night* in December 2021. Convinced that a good film can awaken and elicit ethical, emotional, and philosophical responses in students, and in partnership with our students who are fellow film *aficionados*, we selected several classic movies to get us started. At each showing, an AAI student fellow or AAI young professional fellow kicked us off with a short introductory lecture about the film—its origins or motivation, some details concerning production and reception, and perhaps a personal connection—and after the film guided the audience in a wide-ranging discussion of the film’s main themes and its broader significance.

Arguably, the late twentieth-century film, that two-hour long narrative best viewed in the cinema or in the family living room, is now past its prime; it is steadily losing its dominant position to innovative formats on various “platforms,” as the kids, and business and tech gurus, would have it. AAI is of the opinion that traditional moving pictures once offered a powerful binding ritual for in-person communities of imagination, and we wanted to make sure that the younger generations had the chance to have this experience while they are still mostly together in school.

Below you will find three sample reflections. These thoughtful commentaries nicely capture some of the spirit of the conversation at the Institute.

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance

Loren Brown '23

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, directed by his eminence John Ford, was released in 1962, featuring the star-studded cast of James Stewart, John Wayne, and Lee Marvin, among others. *Liberty Valance* is one of the greatest movies to emerge from Hollywood, and serves as perhaps the finest film commentary on the American regime this side of the Atlantic.

What is central to the idea of this movie is the idea of the Western genre itself. Considered on its own, the Western movie is truly a historical oddity. Of course, there are the genres that everyone accepts as indisputable parts of the film canon—drama, comedy, science fiction, thriller, noir, and so on. But how is it that the Western, a genre concerned with a period of about sixty years in American history, is a category unto itself? It truly boggles the mind. However, it is important to consider the degree to which the Old West affected the American imagination: it was a unique, convulsive period in a critical part of our history that helped shape our world power and domestic politics. It was a period that defined the American experiment, when men could strike out on their own and build a life for themselves and their families. As such, it makes sense that another quintessential American institution—Hollywood—would create an entire genre out of this encapsulation of the American ethos. Thus, the Western was born.

It must be noted that the Western is significantly different from its subject matter. The idealized movie often featured a sense of order and duty, whereas the actual reality was significantly different. To track the progress of both over time, it is useful to look at the similar progressions of both the genre and the era over time. While the West can be considered as truly opened in the 1830s with the inception of the Oregon Trail, we also see the first major Western in *Stagecoach,* released in 1939. In this Ford and Wayne effort, the ideal of equality amongst men is realized in the frontier, thus projecting an optimistic assessment of both the West and the American project. This idealized version of the West continued with the films of Wayne and others, until the intervention of Sergio Leone.

Leone, an outsider to the American scene, released the groundbreaking *A Fistful of Dollars* in 1964, the first Spaghetti Western. Here, Leone responded to the idealism of Ford & co. with his own vision of a violent, depraved, and often hopeless West. His art reached its culmination in *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, perhaps the greatest Western film, which bluntly portrays a lack of the heroism we wish to seek in old Western tales. The Spaghetti Western was immensely significant, as it introduced an element of realism into the genre, and displayed the ruthlessness of the era.

Thus begins the period in which Westerns become violent and anti-heroic. It is carried on in Eastwood productions such as *High Plains Drifter*, and culminates in what can be regarded as the ultimate completion of the genre, *Unforgiven*. While the West was considered to be closed in the year 1890, we can also point to this 1992 Eastwood film as the final one in the arc of the genre. *Unforgiven* plumbs the depths of nihilism, and with the exception of a thematic friendship, ultimately rejects the thread of hope we first witnessed in 1939.

And so we come to *Liberty Valance*, released at the end of the classical era and on the cusp of Leone's rise; indeed, Leone commented it was the first time John Ford encountered pessimism of any kind. The themes running through this movie are those that plague the American conscience: the choice between the frontier and civilization, the great man versus great laws, the strengths and weaknesses of democracy. In *Valance* we are offered two different character types: James Stewart's Ranse Stoddard, who is an eastern lawyer come west to settle and civilize the new land; and John Wayne's Tom Doniphon, the epitome of the tough cowboy who takes flak from no one.

In the beginning of the movie, we witness Stoddard getting roughed up by Liberty Valance and his gang, who also significantly tear his law books to shreds. Later on, Doniphon comments to him that it will be a gun, and not laws, that preserves his life in this country. The movie examines how paper-thin our laws truly are: when the rubber hits the road, what is to stop a Jackson from telling the Court to enforce its own judgment? Without men to back those laws up, things fall apart.

But therein lies the danger of the movie: though Doniphon is a tough man that keeps his community safe, he is but the other side of the coin of Liberty Valance, the outlaw. Both men—one good, one bad—find themselves above the law. When we give up the laws for a great individual, we also play with the danger of a terrible Caesar. Thus, a choice is presented to us in the movie: will we take the comfort but effeminacy of a poorly run republic, or the greatness and danger of Doniphon's Spartanism?

A similar choice lies in the distinction between the frontier and civilization. Before eastern ways made their path across the Great Divide, the West was governed by a single principle: might makes right. With civilization comes culture, law-abidingness, and tranquility. However, a tamed horse is not always as respectable or awe-inducing as its wild counterpart. At the end of the movie, Stoddard is asked if he is proud of being part of the project to transform the once wild west into a "garden": his face shows his answer.

There are few better movies than *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* through which to observe the progress of the American enterprise. Not only is it intellectually rich, its plot and characters make for a rousing and enjoyable story.

It's a Wonderful Life

Sarah Gustafson

Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* turned seventy-five this past Christmas. Born of a specific American cultural and political context, of a specific collaboration between director and actor, and of a specific Christmas literary tradition, the film's staying power is in large part, I would argue, due to this cocktail's interaction with a fourth ingredient: its ability to call us out of ourselves.

The 1946 film reunited a postwar James—or Jimmy—Stewart with Frank Capra in what was their third picture together after 1938's *You Can't Take it With You* and 1939's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. In the years since, Stewart had received an Oscar for his performance in 1940's *The Philadelphia Story*, an award he felt was an attempt to make up for his being snubbed as Mr. Smith. Originally from a small town near Pittsburgh, he left Hollywood to serve in the United States Air Force during World War II. Eventually Stewart was promoted to the rank of Colonel and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, and the French Croix de Guerre for his missions. It is a testament to his patriotism and his devotion to military service that he remained a member of the Armed Forces until 1968, eventually becoming the highest ranked actor ever in the US military.

Stewart's return to acting, despite his glorious and genuinely heroic time in the Air Force, was an uncertain one. One can speculate whether his turn to suspense, thrillers, and Hitchcock films in the second half of his career was not in some way a result of the darkness he observed in the theater of war. In fact, he considered retiring—leaving Hollywood for a return to small-town life in Indiana, PA, and his father's store. Instead, fate and Frank Capra luckily intervened to convince Stewart to play George Bailey, the hero of a small town who always dreamed of the Big City.

After a long casting process, the role of Mary went to Donna Reed, the role of Mr. Potter to veteran actor Lionel Barrymore, and that of Uncle Billy to Thomas Mitchell, recognizable from *Gone With the Wind, Stagecoach*, and *High Noon*.

The film was intended for release in January 1947 and did go into general release on January 7, 1947, but premiered in December 1946 in order to be eligible for the March 1947 Oscars. But it initially received middling reviews and netted a loss for its studio. It was nominated for five Academy Awards, including Best Picture, but won none. George Bailey and Bedford Falls unfortunately had to contend with the 1946 juggernaut, *The*

Best Years of Our Lives, which was a box office smash and scooped up seven Oscars.

It tells us, with seventy-five years of distance, something profound, however, about this postwar moment that these two films, so similar in title, were released in the same year. *The Best Years of Our Lives* meditates on post-war America by examining the lives of three veterans upon their return home, and the effects of their return home on wives, family members, and sweethearts. It is not a film for the faint of heart. It is not particularly cozy. It is blunt and discomforting in its honest portrayal of the difficulty of returning to civilian life. This is, of course, a theme tackled by another Christmas movie, "White Christmas," with song, dance, comedy and pathos as it asks "What can you do with a general / When he stops being a general? / Oh, what can you do with a general who retires?" Of course, Jimmy Stewart was one such soldier returning home to civilian life, like the characters of *The Best Years* and like George Bailey's kid brother. *It's a Wonderful Life* pays tribute to a different sort of heroism, a heroism as necessary and fundamental as military heroism, and it pays tribute to a spirit of gratitude for ordinary as well as extraordinary opportunities to lead a wonderful life.

With this as context, I'd like to suggest the film ought to be viewed in three compatible but distinct ways: first, as an American movie; second, as a Christmas movie; third, as a coming of age movie.

As to the film's Americanism, there exists—almost since its debut—a veritable cottage industry about what this film says, or promises, or predicts about America. Patrick Deneen has made the case in *Commonweal* (1997) and in *First Things* (2012) that "As the developer of an antiseptic suburban subdivision, George Bailey is saved through the kinds of relationships nourished in his town that will be undermined and even precluded in the atomic community he builds as an adult. It is his world that we inhabit today, and our nostalgia for the film should not blind us to the fact that we are not the better for his actions."

Others have argued that the "humane society of Bedford Falls is built on conservative principles, not contemporary liberal ones." Some use the movie as an opportunity to defend entrepreneurship, though the comparison of entrepreneurs to guardian angels might be a bit overdone. In 2015, in a world on the cusp of intraconservative arguments about integralism, Rod Dreher commented, drawing from Deneen, that "George Bailey is Dead." One might add that he is dead after successfully avoiding suicide by "dying" and coming back to life in the film. "What conservatives like me long for is the emergence of political leaders among Democrats and Republicans who stand for an updated version of the virtues of the George Bailey world," Dreher writes. On it goes, every year, as people offer their takes on the politics, historical and contemporary, nostalgic and/or progressive, of the film.

Thus while we can agree that it is an American film, in what ways it is American or what makes it American remain unresolved. We know it when we see it, but what is *it*? What is its *Americanness*? We ought to watch it, here in 2022, considering what it says to us now about America and paths taken and not taken.

Second, it is a Christmas film. Obviously it is set at Christmas, though by virtue of the most basic plot points, it could easily be set at any time of the year. The Christmas setting certainly dramatizes the situation in which George finds himself, but one could imagine a guardian angel coming down to help George at any old time of the year. So, we should ask, what precisely is added or enriched by its Christmas setting?

The film clearly is in a literary and theatrical tradition which uses the Christmas season broadly understood —think Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*—to explore the experience seeing the world from alternative points of view, with some ensuing mix of comedy, chaos, or horror, and an ensuing resolution and happy ending. *It's a Wonderful Life* is akin to Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, except now the alternative visions of reality are presented not to Scrooge (Mr. Potter) by an old business partner, but to a character with echoes of Bob Crachit by his guardian angel. Tiny Tim's "God bless us, everyone!" finds an echo in Zuzu's "Every time a bell wings, an angel gets his wings." Neither phrase contains the word *Christmas*, yet each is synonymous with Christmas.

But in what way is it Christian? Though it is not overtly Christian, it is more so than most films. From the very opening, it takes heaven and divine intervention seriously. George Bailey is a man who carries the weight of the world, of a town, on his shoulders. He is tempted, and when he has seen what life would be without him, when he has died, he prays, "Please, I want to live again. I want to live again. I want to live again. Please,

God, let me live again." George comes back to life and, in his renaissance, sees things visible in light of newly appreciated invisible realities.

In addition, as the film critic William Park has observed, Frank Capra was a practicing Catholic, as were John Ford and Alfred Hitchcock. George is shown helping recent Italian Catholic immigrants through the provision of affordable and dignified housing, and in the alternative reality, we see the effects of the absence of his charitable spirit. Bing Crosby's *The Bells of St. Mary's* is playing at the Bedford Falls cinema when George comes back to life and runs triumphantly through the town square, and there is a brief shot of churchgoers and a Latin mass.

One might criticize it for being a Christmassy movie that, despite the above elements, does not put faith more directly at the center. Where is the church in Bedford Falls? Despite the brief appearance of a Protestant congregation and of a Latin mass, the church does not seem to figure in the central geography of the town. We do not even see George and Mary married in the church, only their reception. In light of this, one could accuse it of a certain American ambivalence toward religion, a liberalism in which religion has been dissolved into civil religion or religion into mores and "Christian values." This may be a fair criticism. However, it can be argued that if the film had put Christianity more overtly at the center, it would have less purchase. Perhaps it is a better popular vehicle for a certain form of the moral imagination for being less heavy-handed in its Christian themes.

Finally, it is a coming of age film, wherein the protagonist must in some way be called out of himself into a fuller and richer personality and fuller and richer relationship with others.

Surprisingly, perhaps, I never saw the film until five or six years ago, when I was in my mid-twenties – to the chagrin and shock of many friends. On asking my mother why this American classic never made it into our cinephile family's Christmas movie lineup, she answered by affirming her preference for *White Christmas*, adding that the Capra film was rather dark and that George Bailey struck her as whiny.

Let's try to understand my mother's reasoning here, which may cause offense to some but which has a kernel of truth. George, for all his admirable self-sacrifice and all his genuinely virtuous traits, often struggles to accept the constraints set upon his life. He always dreamed of the world beyond Bedford Falls, a world that, time and again, he is prevented from exploring with all the spiritedness proper to young men. This youthful courage is not a fault; it is, after all, one ingredient in a young man's willingness to go abroad and die for his country or to conquer new worlds and build empires. This spirit, however, extended beyond its proper time in a person's life, can register as a kind of ingratitude, absent-mindedness, conscious or unconscious abdication of responsibility, or even resentment in the face of responsibility.

Even though we know George is extremely present, generous, and concerned with his community, he slips into moods that could be characterized positively as wistful and negatively as resentment when thinking of the wonderful life *that was not:* a life where he did not have a bad ear, where his father did not die, where he attended college, where he was a war hero, and so forth.

It takes time for him to learn, to accept, and to love that his life is in Bedford Falls, in that particular place with these particular people—this wife, this mother, these children, these business partners, these neighbors. Life is not out there but here. At the same time, his life *here* is one that makes real demands on him. A life lived with present-ness calls you out of yourself. His irrepressible wife Mary grasps this clearly. Her ambitions are not less than George's; she in fact receives a college education. She knows what she wants and pursues it with gusto, but her ambitions are of a different kind than George's. Several times in the film, it is she who communicates present-ness to him. The scene at Mary's childhood home, when a sullen George comes to court her, leaves in a huff, and returns only to find Mary on the phone with Sam Wainwright, exemplifies this. He is drawn to her and though he begins to protest that he does not want marriage, that he wants to get out of Bedford Falls, he breaks down and embraces her. Throughout the film, it is Mary's spirit, resourcefulness, and dedication to George and to their family—her going out of herself for them—that makes their shared life wonderful. The tragic situation Bailey faces in the film is not just the tragic accident of Uncle Billy losing

$8,000, such that George faces jail. Part of the tragedy is that in his preoccupation over what to do, he withdraws into himself and hurts his family on Christmas Eve. He wounds Mary with distracted comments about their drafty house and upsets his children as they prepare for a Christmas celebration.

In December, fittingly enough, Mary Harrington published a column, "Do Bachelors Need to Grow Up?" She was responding to a column in the *Financial Times* that argued that the childless bachelor life is a choice of a serious life, not of a "man child life". Why? Because it permits childless men to participate in the "meaningful adult conversations" of the world. It is, Harrington claimed, a "bid for a more, not less serious, life." Harrington finds this hard to swallow on several grounds. First, she suggests that this kind of life, with all the usual trappings, is not possible for people lower on the income scale. Second, she adds that when you work towards this smooth, frictionless, childless, unencumbered life, especially if you are lower on the income scale, all you get in the end is shallowness or despair. The spiritual plight of large swathes of America, such as we see testified to in the writings of JD Vance, can be hidden by the rich. They can pursue a Pascalian *divertissement* and try to fill their lives with meaning. But whatever travel, yoga, wine-tastings, or other hobbies the rich might pick up as a means to self-created meaning, these remain only temporary fixes. In this way, the pursuit of happiness does easily become the "joyless quest for joy".

Harrington writes that "growing numbers are struggling, however clumsily, to rebuild all those commitments we were raised to discard. It might not work, but I refuse to be cynical toward anyone who's trying; after all, some loves are worth sacrificing a measure of freedom for; as the world grows stranger and more unstable, perhaps these are all we'll be able to rely on." With the right kind of encumbrances and constraints, some given, some (like your spouse) chosen, not only is a different kind of love possible, but a more mature form of freedom is also gained in the sacrifice of the free and "unencumbered life". Thus, although he has been a devoted son, a husband and father, and a pillar of his town and thus encumbered, all his life, George's journey in this film is one of coming to see how wonderful his richly encumbered life is. That the town to which he has given so much comes to his aid in the end reinforces the lesson that gift—not the absence of freedom—is the other side of givenness.

In other eras, this lesson would perhaps have been one particular to young men, in the form of the *Bildungsroman*. But in our twenty-first-century world, it is a lesson universally applicable.

It's a Wonderful Life, therefore, is a coming-of-age film that powerfully reminds viewers of the iterations the wonderful life can take. Responsibilities, to spouse, to family, to community, whether those responsibilities are given or chosen, can be anchors that form your character and transform you into the best version of your encumbered self. The film testifies to the pursuit of happiness, while reminding us that those who gain their life will lose it, but those who sacrifice their life will gain it. *It's a Wonderful Life* is American; it is fitting to Christmas; and it calls us out of ourselves.

Barabbas and the Fear of Life

Ted Saad

Barabbas is a 1961 film that moves beyond the biblical canon of the Gospels to tell an epic religious story of the minor biblical character Barabbas after he has been given another chance at life. The film picks up at the point in the Gospels where Pontius Pilate, in keeping with a Passover custom, offers to free either Jesus of Nazareth or Barabbas from being crucified. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the name *Barabbas* in Aramaic means "son" (*bar*) of the "Father" (*abba*). According to the Bible, Barabbas committed murder during an insurrection, which led to this conviction. The crowd is now given a choice between to free one of the two *sons of the Father*: one the forgiving non-violent messiah, and the other a more rebellious messianic revolutionary. The crowd goes with the latter, thus sending Barabbas on an unexpected journey that will eventually shape his view on life and freedom.

Barabbas witnesses the crucifixion of Jesus and is shaken when a solar eclipse turns the sky black at the moment of Christ's death. Death becomes a reoccurring theme for Barabbas. He can't accept that Jesus could rise from the dead, or that his lover would allow herself to be stoned to death for preaching about Christ. Feeling guilt-ridden and disillusioned, he returns to his criminal ways. He is captured by Roman soldiers after trying to commit a botched robbery. In an unexpected twist, Barabbas realizes he cannot be executed, since he was previously pardoned by Pilate, and is instead sent to lifelong slavery in the sulfur mines of Sicily. There he is chained to a Christian named Sahak, who is revolted by Barabbas when he hears he was freed instead of Christ. Eventually the two become friends, and Barabbas escapes death again and saves Sahak when the mine is destroyed in an earthquake. In Rome, they are both trained by Torvald, considered the most esteemed gladiator in the empire, to become gladiators themselves. Torvald eventually kills Sahak, who is condemned as a Christian, while Barabbas once again avoids death in an arena battle, taking down Torvald in defeat.

Set free once again and continuing to feel guilt over his ability to evade death, Barabbas takes Sahak's corpse to the catacombs where Christians are praying. Becoming despondent and confused by the worship and setting, he finds his way back to the ground where Rome is burning. Barabbas gets caught up in the frenzy and sets fire to more buildings. When captured, he claims he is a follower of Christ and is then imprisoned with several other Christians. There he is confronted by the apostle Peter, who admonishes him for the arson and false claim. During the mass crucifixion of the convicted Christians, Barabbas finally confronts death–both egoic and bodily—and ultimately true inner freedom.

While throughout the film we find Barabbas escapes bodily death and is often set free in several risky encounters, it becomes apparent that this does not fulfill him. He remains tormented and defiant in his being, and of-

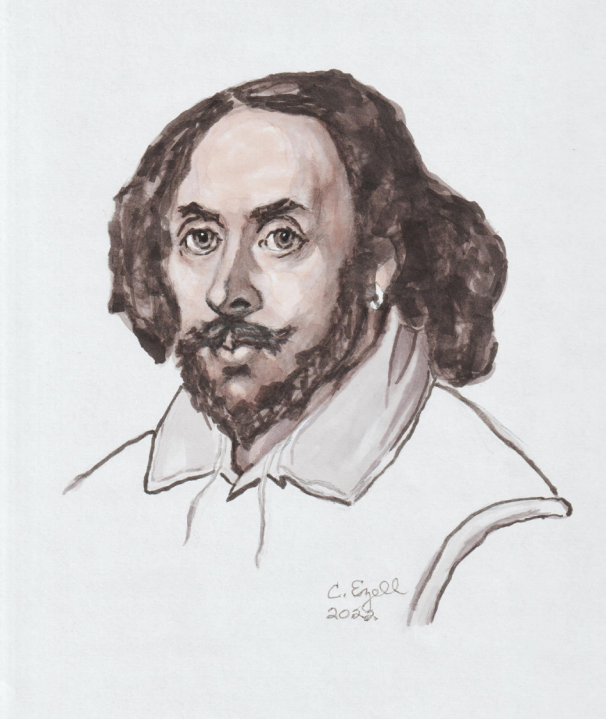
ten feels resistance toward those who seem to have a deeper conviction of faith. It is not coincidental that the gift of life given in these situations feels unearned and lacking for Barabbas. His freedom is directionless—an accumulation of experience and actions for himself that does not add up to anything. There is no subordination and humility to something transcendent beyond himself, unlike the experiences of the Christians he encounters.

The folklore of Barabbas as *the man who could not die* becomes a metaphor for his inability to move beyond his self-centered impulses. Barabbas is trapped by his own ego which he refuses to let go for the sake of his prideful character. He allows his guilt to become a second skin preventing him from giving in to the message of salvation he hears from the Christians. He fears not for his bodily death, which he evades in many ordeals, but instead fears a life that can only be fully embraced once we die to our inner defenses. We are reminded of Matthew 16:25, in which Christ says, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."

Barabbas' journey toward a more fulfilled life takes a great deal of searching, struggle, and patience, and his path of redemption is marked by a series of signposts and guides along the way. It is only toward the end of the film, after losing his friend Sahak and encountering Christians with enduring faith, that he has exhausted all options to evade the grace of Christ. As Barabbas hangs upon a cross, which to many would seem the darkest moment, he finally understands what it truly means to not fear life in God's care and can now let go. He is set free to rest his soul in Christ and become whom he was truly meant to be before he exhales his last breath. The debt that Jesus of Nazareth paid for his time on the cross is finally accepted by Barabbas, guilt-free. This brief lived moment of redemption sets the ground for him in eternal salvation.

Barabbas is a film that took me by surprise. Perhaps I was expecting the sort of hokey slow-paced epic that we typically encounter in Christian-based films from the 1950s and 1960s. Instead, I found a well-performed story with a spiritually rich narrative that did not shy away from dark or challenging themes. For a modern contemporary audience, this film can still entice with well-produced action scenes—the arena gladiator scene is one of film making mastery alone—and dialogue that flows less stiffly than many films from that era. All in all, this 1961 film provides something rare in today's cinema: an epic well-crafted action story combined with thought provoking enrichment for the soul.

Sound & Fury: Shakespeare Reading Group



According to a famous Scottish king, life "is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing." If life meant nothing to this Scottish king, it is only because those words were given to him by a writer for whom words had significance. For William Shakespeare, words were intended to be voiced aloud and dramatized. Through the spoken word, the actions and drama on the written page leap to life, embodied through the voices and actions of the speakers.

This past year, through AAI's *Sound & Fury: Shakespeare Reading Group*, students brought to life Macbeth and King Lear, Cordelia and Desdemona, Prospero and Iago, among many other characters in the bard's plays. In a series of intro sessions, participants received guidance on reading Shakespeare from two members of the Harvard English department, Dr. Leah Whittington and David Nee, who provided a foundation for appreciating the Bard. From there, students launched into dramatic reading of the play, which was conducted with enthusiasm and flair. For the participants, Shakespeare's words meant *something*, even if it was just a pun or period joke (understandable only through footnotes) and the group honed in on the meaning of the words used to describe the dramatic action and the motives of the characters to answer a slew of questions. Did Caliban really deserve Prospero's cruel treatment? Was Macbeth simply a tool of the witches? And how on earth did *everyone* regard Iago as a trustworthy man? No definitive or unanimous conclusions were reached, but the fight to interpret and understand was nearly all the fun. The combination of dramatic reading and spirited debate made for engaging evenings, away from the tumult of papers and exams, and AAI looks forward to many more sessions to come.

Emma Towne

Sound & Fury provides a great way to experience Shakespeare for everyone, whether a beginner or a longtime fan of his works. Spending three weeks on each play, we had a perfect amount of time to discuss each work. Harvard PhD David Nee visited during the start of each play, helping to introduce relevant background and facilitate interesting discussions, which was fantastic.

I really enjoyed seeing the plays come to life as we read select sections from the plays and being challenged to think deeper about the social issues presented, many of which are still quite relevant in today's society. Getting to share this experience with a group bringing their own diverse perspectives was the icing on the cake!

Jennifer Gao

Among the many things I have yearned for during my COVID exile has been a physical reading group—a place where friends can gather and have a fruitful discussion not hampered by a computer screen. The *Sound & Fury* Shakespeare program at AAI has been just that.

The three plays selected for the term—*King Lear, Cymbeline*, and *Macbeth*—gave participants a broad taste of Shakespeare, from his most well-known scenes to his more obscure but highly entertaining work. Each session featured lively, dramatic readings of scenes, which for me constituted the most enjoyable part. Additionally, the analysis conducted amongst peers lent me new insights into scenes I thought I had studied endlessly. The group was a wonderful addition to my weekly routine, and I keenly look forward to its resumption next semester.

Loren Brown

Drawing Hamlet

Cindy Chopoidalo

My earliest influences as an artist were the classic cartoons—Disney, Warners, and numerous others—I grew up watching, many of which I still enjoy to this day. I would trace images from picture books and comics to familiarize myself with the artists' styles, or draw my own interpretations of the characters using illustrations, photographs, and even dolls or stuffed animals as models.

As an undergraduate student I began applying the techniques I had learned from my efforts at producing comic/animation fan art to Shakespearean characters, particularly those of *Hamlet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It,* and the history plays. Approaching the plays and characters in this manner came partly from discovering and appreciating Shakespeare's influence as a storyteller on many of my childhood favourites, and partly from observing that, with their combinations of written text and illustrations, medieval and Renaissance manuscripts can be seen as ancestors of modern-day comics and graphic novels.

The earliest known illustration of Hamlet the character appears in *Icones Regum Daniae* (*Pictures of the Danish Kings,* 1646), and is attributed to the engraver/printmaker Albertus Haelwegh. In *Saxo Grammaticus and the Life of Hamlet* (1983), his translation of the Hamlet story as it appears in Saxo Grammaticus' *Historiae Danicae* into English, William F. Hansen comments on the resemblance of the illustration to common depictions of the Shakespearean Hamlet. Indeed, it was this image that inspired me, on the completion of my PhD thesis on adaptations of *Hamlet* in 2009, to produce two different yet complementary renditions of my envisioning of Hamlet. One is in my usual cartoony style calling back to my formative influences; the other is in a relatively more realistic style that allowed me to experiment with crosshatch shading.

I have continued my experimentation with variations in my art styles in my depictions of two well-known examples of women playing Hamlet that also serve as early examples of *Hamlet* on film. As Tony Howard notes in *Women as Hamlet*, "The first Hamlet on film was … Sarah Bernhardt," in an enactment of Hamlet's final duel with Laertes (V.ii. 224-360) captured on screen from her 1900 production in Paris. My interpretation was inspired by another iconic image from that production: a postcard photograph now in the British Library and viewable on its website. The first film of *Hamlet* to survive in a complete form, Svend Gade's *Hamlet: The Drama of Revenge* (1920), featuring Danish actress Asta Nielsen, goes beyond Bernhardt's production in presenting not only a woman as Hamlet, but Hamlet as a woman disguised as a man, based on Edward Payson Vining's reading of the character in *The Mystery of Hamlet* (1881). The film is available for viewing on the *MIT Global Shakespeares Project* website, and a still from that production inspired my re-creation.

Grandfather's Bookshelf

Gabrielle Landry
Illustrated by Tiffany Landry

Grandfather's Bookshelf

Gabrielle Landry

To Gramps, with love.

1

Tatyana, eight, always daydreaming,
Sat gently at the window bay.
She watched the raindrops outside streaming,
Foreseeing characters at play.
Grandfather sat on the couch reading
Anne of Green Gables, then proceeding
To tell Tatyana, "She's like you!
You have her spirit, red braids too,
You think like her, with such adventure!"
Tatyana, smiling softly, said,
"You're right; dear Anne would be my friend.
Together, outside we would venture."
Then *ding!* The clock struck five-fifteen.
"So soon?" said Grandpa. "Time to clean."

2

Tatyana grabbed the feather duster;
The vacuum was her grandpa's tool.
She left the living room in luster,
Flew to the study with her stool.
The study was in antique fashion,
With things that marked a scholar's passion
A desk beside some books stacked tall,
Tatyana, whistling, dusted all.
"But wait," thought Tanya, slowly peeking
Behind the pile neatly high
"A door I've never seen? Oh my!"
With little feet, Tatyana, sneaking,
Decided: *Not a moment more!*
She turned the knob and pushed the door.

3

Then through the door, a passage, hollow
Was leading to a small round room
(Young Tanya thought it safe to follow
For something shone beyond the gloom)
She found the source: a bookshelf, glowing!
Dark wooden, warm, and proudly showing
A row of books in every hue
Enchanted, Tanya reached for blue.
"*The Velvet Rabbit*," she read sweetly.
As Tanya spoke that final note,
The old blue book began to float!
"'Tis I!"—The flying book buzzed fleetly.
"Now listen closely, little one,
Our story time has just begun."

4

"When your Grandfather was still youthful
Our country saw some bitter storms.
The thunder scared him, to be truthful;
It gave him nightmares in all forms.
His father was a kindly fellow
And fond of reading, his voice mellow,
He'd often take me to his boy
And read my tale: a little toy
Becomes as real as any rabbit
When he's loved by one heartfelt kid.
As you can see, I likewise did—
When thunder came, we resumed habit:
I brought Grandfather peace to feel.
Now, in this room, I, too, am real."

5

Her interest piqued and quickly growing
In this enchanted story set
Tatyana placed the book back, stowing
The text away. "I'm glad we met,"
The Rabbit whispered. Then—a shimmer—
A thin green book began to glimmer!
With laughter, Tanya touched its spine
"*The Nose*," she read across the line.
"What story could this be, I wonder?"
"In Petersburg"—the book arose—
"A man, Kovalyov, lost his nose
And after having run asunder
The nose, respected, grew in rank
Revered in public, church, and bank."

6

"But why does Grandpa love this story?"
Tatyana asked with shining eyes.
"We met when he was set on glory,
A youngblood dressed in soldier's guise,
Filled up with college-age illusion.
I threw his views into confusion.
His takeaway: avoid the vain;
This lesson lives on in his brain.
But now, dear one, it's time we parted.
More stories in these shelves await,
And I believe it's getting late."
"No, wait, we only just got started!"
But swiftly, *Nose* resumed its spot
Beside a crimson volume, hot.

7

Tatyana, with a finger lightly,
Removed the burning crimson text
Three Questions, blazed its title brightly
"I'd like to know your story next,"
Young Tanya curiously uttered.
Like fire, Tolstoy's story fluttered.
"My lessons came to Grandpa's life
The day the bachelor met his wife."
Tatyana knew that her Grandmother
Met Grandpa on a crowded bus:
A meeting, serendipitous
That sparked a passion like no other.
"But where, dear book, were you that day?
Explain the role you had to play."

8

"Well, Grandma on the bus was bearing
Yours truly in her little purse
And soon the couple started sharing
Their thoughts on novels and on verse.
Throughout the years, my simple moral
Kept both from falling into quarrel:
The most important time is now
And to your fellow ones allow
Your full attention when they're present
And absolutely nothing could
Be better than our doing good.
These lessons made their marriage pleasant."
Then suddenly there came a *knock*—
Three Questions flew back to its flock.

9

And Tanya turned to find Grandfather!
"I see you've found my special shelf."
"I'm sorry! I don't mean to bother—"
"No need, my dear, to clear yourself
Of any blame. There's none to shoulder,"
Grandfather, with a smile, told her.
"Come now, Tatyana, back with me.
There's something I'd like you to see."
The duo left to get *Green Gables*.
Reentering the magic room,
They placed it on the shelf. A bloom:
It shimmered pink near *Aesop's Fables*.
"Forever now will Anne convey
The special moments shared today."

10

"Grandfather, I will always treasure
Discovering your history
And learning: books are more than leisure;
In part, they link our family.
But I have countless burning questions!"
"Allow me to make some suggestions,"
Said Grandpa. "See, it's nearly night.
In time, I promise, I'll delight
To have a longer conversation
But soon your parents will be here."
And Tanya, hugging Grandpa near,
Replied, "Next week I'm on vacation!
I'll come back then." Grandfather's face
And laughter brightened their embrace.

11

Dear reader, well, you may be thinking:
What happened in this story next?
Alas, my memory's now shrinking
But I remember tiny specks:
Tatyana to the shelf returning,
And growing up, yet always learning.
To Grandpa's, Tanya came and went
Each afternoon was time well-spent.
So carry closely all your stories
The meaning that they hold for you
Through troubled times and blessings too—
They're more than simple allegories.
Well, time for me to say goodbye
Like Tanya's Grandpa's books—I fly!

Afterword

Grandfather's Bookshelf is a magical tale of intergenerational understanding, love and connection, and the power of storytelling. In crafting this story, I took inspiration primarily from Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*.

First, I followed Pushkin's *Onegin* stanza form, which is written in 14 lines in iambic tetrameter following the rhyme scheme *aBaBccDDeFFeGG*, where lowercase denotes a feminine rhyme (e.g., "bearing" and "sharing") and uppercase denotes a masculine rhyme (e.g., "you" and "too"). The advantages of this form were that 14 lines were enough to tell a good chunk of each section of the story, the meter added a tone of musical whimsy that suited the story's content, and the final couplets offered the chance to end each stanza on a twist or something surprising.

Second, *Eugene Onegin* influenced my decisions about the story's characters and content. My Tatyana is a version of how I imagine Pushkin's Tatyana as a child, albeit a bit less melancholy. For example, in my opening scene (Stanza 1), Tatyana sits at the window bay daydreaming while Grandfather reads. I drew on Pushkin's Chapter 2, stanzas 24-29 to construct this depiction (Stanza 25: "And often times she'd sit all day / In silence at the window bay"; Stanza 26: "But pensiveness, her friend and treasure / Through all her years since cradle days, /Adorned the course of rural leisure / By bringing dreams before her gaze"). Additionally, my narrator character, while not as prominent as Pushkin's narrator, shares similar qualities of "forgetting" bits of the story (as in my Stanza 11), departing suddenly at the story's ending, and suggesting a sense of fondness for Tatyana throughout the text.

I was also inspired by the classic children's story *The Velveteen Rabbit*, which in my book is part of Grandfather's childhood and reveals his connection with his own father. The other two texts that Tatyana discovers—Gogol's *The Nose* and Tolstoy's *Three Questions*—were some of the many excellent works I encountered in Slavic 132. I found them to be most suited for integrating into a children's story because they can be read at several different levels—as fun and simple tales oras layered with more mature complexity.

Finally, I drew inspiration from my own grandparents. My Grandpa loves to read, and I remember feeling small in the face of his large wooden bookshelf as a child. He served in the army as a young man, directly after high school. And he met my Grandma, who passed away in December 2020, on the elevator in the building in which both worked. They shared a beautiful marriage without unhealthy strife and conflict. All of these bits of his biography played into my depiction of Tatyana's Grandfather and my selection of books to feature as prominent in his life.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to my sister Tiffany for offering her artistic talent to complementthe text, and to Professor Julie Buckler and Brett Donohoe in the Harvard College Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures for their helpful feedback and frequent encouragement on this project. Thank you for a wonderful semester in Slavic 132!

About the Abigail Adams Institute

The mission of the Abigail Adams Institute (AAI) is to foster and fortify traditional liberal arts education at Harvard and in the wider community of Boston-area universities, colleges, and secondary schools. In all our programming, we strive to model the virtues of intellectual friendship, civility, and free discourse.

Our approach is designed to open students to the value of deep and broad thinking and to stimulate the spirit of intellectual adventure. Our programs, guides, and recommendations are designed to motivate students to challenge themselves in intellectually ambitious ways: to ask better questions, to spend time with classic works, to explore diverse areas of thought and inquiry, to think and write with more passion and precision, and, above all, to make time for genuinely independent thought despite everyday busyness, conformity, and media-driven distractions.

Toward the end of Fall 2021, AAI published the first issue of its own journal, *The Veritas Review* (*VR*). After several years of wondering why there are so few outlets for creative writing at Harvard, and thanks to a series of fortuitous connections in Kirkland House, we decided to produce a semi-annual literary journal that we hope prompts more students to develop their writing and provide an outlet for other kinds of creative expression.

There were at least three needs we sought to address by launching *VR*. The first was to fill the lacuna alluded to above, since Harvard does not have an extant literary journal, whether faculty-run or student-run, of the sort. *Kirkland Review*, founded in the 1980s, used to play that role in years past, but is no longer in operation. Echoing the editorial statement in Issue I, we would like to address what we see as a kind of poverty of spirit in the students. Whatever is causing this flatness, it is our hunch that it is a function of supply as much as demand. Therefore, we decided that something ought to exist to stimulate creative and thoughtful expression. Our game plan was to raise the standard from the get-go by publishing student contributions alongside established poets, writers, and professors.

The second need, or goal, we wanted to fulfill was to feature some of AAI's live programs in this journal by asking the student participants to record their experiences in the journal. Our third goal was to promote harmony in the community by featuring subject matter that is not perceived as contentious as some of our contemporary political and cultural conversations. We, of course, do not shy away from principled arguments, whether in metaphysics, politics, or economics. Nevertheless, having an outlet featuring drawings, photography, poetry, and art criticism can offer an alternative approach in exploring life's bigger questions.

Danilo Petranovich '00
Director
Abigail Adams Institute

Photos by James Capuzzi

John Aroutiounian Fellows Loren Brown (Harvard College '23), Mathieu Ronayne (Boston College '22), Paige Proctor (Harvard College '23), and Gabby Landry (Harvard College '23) at the AAI 2022 Great Ideas Debate.

John Aroutiounian Fellows and AAI Student Fellows celebrate the launch of the John Aroutiounian Fellowship.

AAI Graduate Student Fellow Sarah Gustafson speaks on John Aroutiounian's legacy.

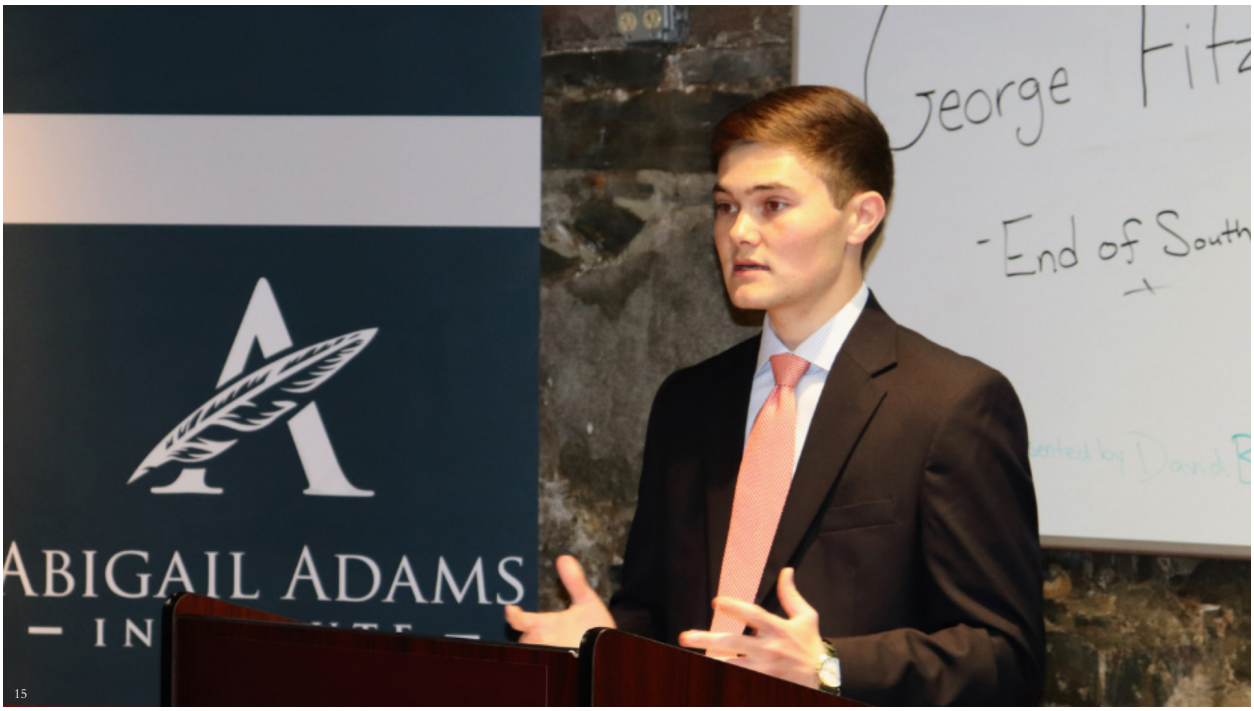
AAI Professional Fellow Alice Wang speaks on John Aroutiounian's legacy.

John Aroutiounian Fellows and AAI Student Fellows celebrate the launch of the John Aroutiounian Fellowship.

Harvard Undergraduate students of Professor Evridiki Georgantelli's Freshman Seminar *Looking for Clues: Ancient & Medieval Art* at Harvard class at a Piatti Dinner.

Harvard Undergraduate students of Professor Sean Kelly's Philosophy 138: *Heidegger's Being and Time* class at a Piatti Dinner.

Harvard Undergraduate students of Professor James Hankins' *Biography and Autobiography in Renaissance Italy* class at a Piatti Dinner.



At the Student Scholars Workshop, David Brannon, Harvard College '22, presents his award-winning senior thesis *George Fitzhugh and the End of Southern Order* at AAI headquarters.

Undergraduate and graduate student attendees at AAI Student Scholars Workshops.

Amy Chandran, PhD Candidate in the Government Department at Harvard University, leads a special seminar *Authority, Resistance, and Revolution in Early Modern Political Thought* (in partnership with Prof. Flynn Cratty's *Early Modern Britain class* at Harvard).

Fr. Maximos Constas, Professor of Patristics at the Hellenic College Holy Cross, lectures for a special six-part course held at AAI headquarters, titled *Solomon's Trilogy: The Stages of Spiritual Progress.*

John Aroutiounian Fellow Loren Brown, Harvard College '23, introduces the film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* for AAI's Film Night.

Students and faculty gather at a reception before the 2022 AAI Great Ideas Debate *Return to the Founders to Save America* between Prof. Patrick Deneen and Prof. Michael Anton.

Dr. Danilo Petranovich, AAI Director, introduces speakers for the special *End of Christendom* Conference, addressing the work of the French philosopher Chantal Delsol.

R.R. Reno, *First Things Magazine*, and Dr. Teresa MacArt, Assistant Professor of Politics and Public Service at Holy Cross College (Notre Dame, IN), speak at January's *End of Christendom* Conference.

Students attending January's *End of Christendom* Conference, co-hosted with *First Things Magazine* and Palo Alto's Zephyr Institute.

Students attending AAI's Spring Party, May 2022.

Students and AAI community attending AAI's Spring Party, May 2022.

Dr. Petranovich moderates the AAI Great Ideas Debate between Prof. Anton and Prof. Deneen.

Biographies

Editors

Cindy Chopoidalo is the Assistant Editor of the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* and a member of Editors Canada. Her publications include *Shakespeare's First Tetralogy, Epic Poetry, and Historiography: How a Dramatist Creates a Fictional World* (2014) and *Shakespeare's Possible Worlds* (2018), and she also contributed to *The Definitive Shakespeare Companion: Overviews, Documents, and Analysis* (2017).

Catherine Ezell has an advanced education in English literature and is a self-taught artist. She has experience in scholarly editing and writing and has devoted her life to drawing and painting. Combining her passion for good writing and art, Catherine creates portraits of authors that are meant to reflect the tone of their works.

Iosif M. Gershteyn is the Chairman of the Ajax Biomedical Foundation, Senior Fellow at the Abigail Adams Institute, Visiting Scholar at the Medical University of South Carolina, and a poet. His work has been published in *International Immunology, the Journal of Translational Autoimmunity, Researchers. One, Quillette*, and other publications. Alongside scientific and business pursuits he dedicates time to theater, philosophy, and literature.

Jonathan Locke Hart (Associate, Harvard University Herbaria) is Chair Professor, School of Translation, Shandong University, has held two Fulbrights at Harvard and visiting appointments in English and in Comparative Literature at Harvard as well as having various affiliations with Kirkland House, Harvard over 35 years, and is a poet, literary scholar, and historian who has published widely and also taught at Toronto, Cambridge, Princeton, the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Peking University, and elsewhere.

Danilo Petranovich '00 is the Director of the Abigail Adams Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Institute provides supplementary humanistic education to the Harvard intellectual community by exploring questions of deep human concern that cut across the boundaries of academic disciplines. Previously, Dr. Petranovich taught political science at Duke University and Yale University. He is frequently seen in Harvard's Kirkland House, where he is a dedicated member of the Senior Common Room.

Henry Stratakis-Allen is a Junior at the College of William & Mary majoring in Medieval & Renaissance Studies and Mathematics. His past work has included research in Byzantine Studies and medieval Middle Eastern art and political history. He is currently conducting pre-research for an Honors thesis focusing on religion and politics in medieval Iraq.

Contributors

Loren Brown '23, originally from southwest Washington, is studying Government and English. His interests range from the philosophical foundations of traditional conservatism to the history of Christian humanism, from St. Augustine to T.S. Eliot.

James Capuzzi graduated from Tulane University, where he concentrated in Classical Studies and Italian Language. He then completed a Master's degree in Sustainable Cultural Heritage from the American University of Rome. This degree focused on the unique business and marketing challenges that heritage sites, museums, and humanities institutions present.

Jennifer Gao is a junior from Clemson, SC studying Mathematics at Harvard. Outside of AAI, she is a staff writer for The Crimson Arts Board and dances for Harvard Expressions.

Sarah Gustafson is a PhD candidate in the Government Department (Harvard University) where she studies Tocqueville and nineteenth century political thought. A native of Connecticut, she graduated from Davidson College with degrees in History and French, before earning her MA in the History of Political Thought at Queen Mary University of London.

Gabrielle Landry '22 is a junior from North Attleboro, MA, studying Philosophy and Education at Harvard College, and has worked as an AAI Student Intern. Outside of AAI, Gabby writes poetry, dances with Candela Dance Troupe at Harvard, and volunteers at the Beacon Leadership Program.

Tiffany Landry is a special education teacher currently teaching art to residential students in Canton, Massachusetts.

Gloria Mindock is editor of Červená Barva Press. She is an award-winning author of 6 poetry collections, 3 chapbooks, and a children's book. Her poems have been published and translated into eleven languages. Her most recent book is *ASH* (Glass Lyre Press, 2021). Gloria was the Poet Laureate of Somerville, MA in 2017 and 2018. For more information about Gloria Mindock, visit her website at: www.gloriamindock.com

Ted Saad is an environmental engineer at the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. He has a master's degree from Tufts University and an undergraduate degree from Northeastern University. His intellectual and spiritual interests are wide-ranging, but his favorite areas of study are philosophy, mysticism, and literature.

Emma Towne graduated from Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts in May 2019 with a BA in Liberal Arts with a major in Politics. She serves AAI through management of the daily operations of the institute and its programs, including finances, bookkeeping, compliance, and program logistics.

Advisors

Tom Conley is the Abbot Lawrence Lowell Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies and of Romance Languages and Literatures in the Romance Languages and Literatures Department at Harvard. He studies relations of space and writing in literature, cartography, and cinema. His work moves to and from early modern France and issues in theory and interpretation in visual media.

Donald Pfister is the Asa Gray Research Professor of Systematic Botany at the Harvard University Herbaria & Libraries. He studies fungi, particularly ascomycetes. In his studies he uses molecular, morphological, and life history information to understand the relationships among these fungi and their activities in nature. He also uses archives and museum specimens to document collections and their origins.