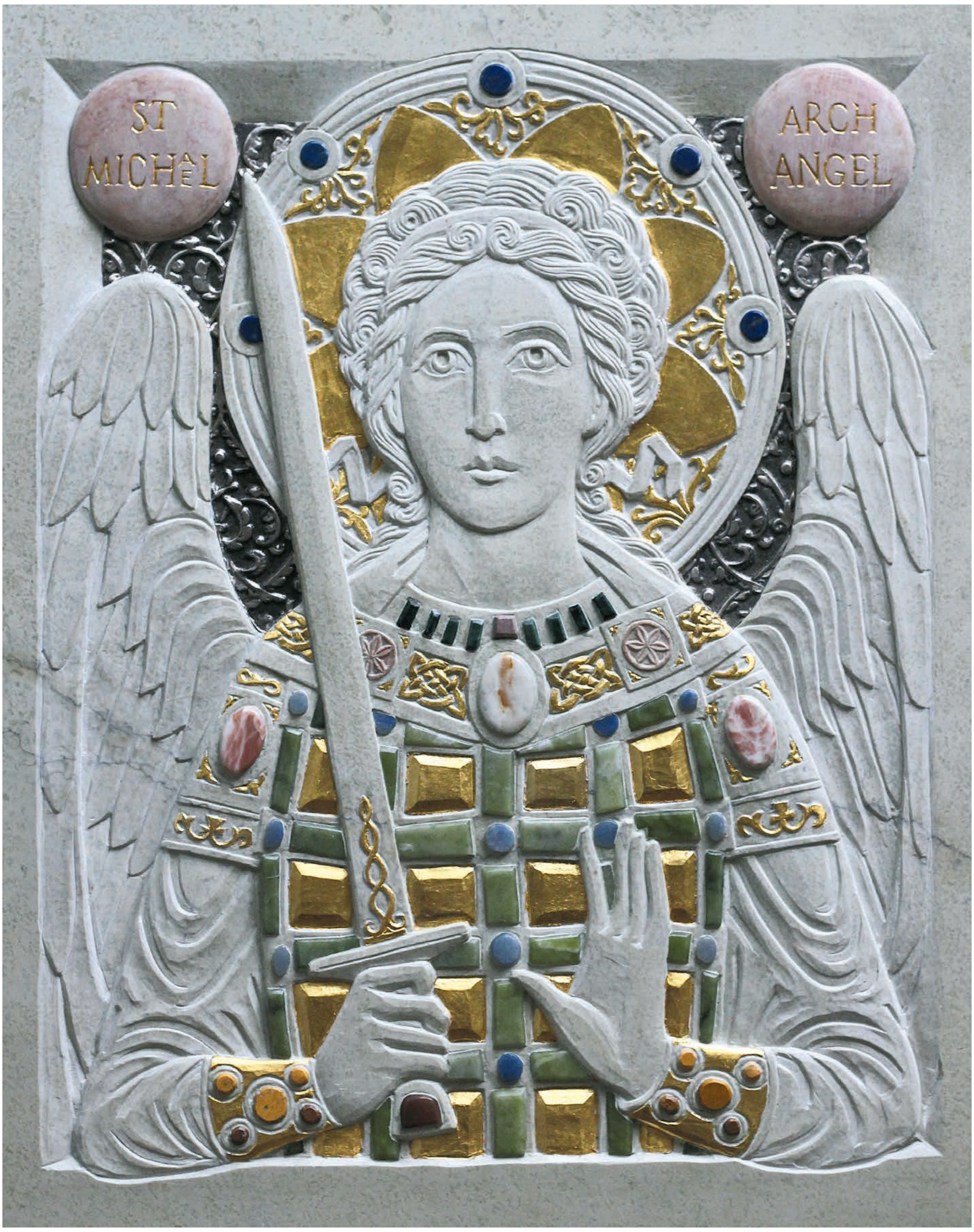
WEEK 20, 2022

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS& CULTURE

JONATHAN PAGEAU



"St. Michael and the Sword," 2020, by Jonathan Pageau. Soapstone, gold leaf, basma (metalwork), serpentine, onyx, and lapis lazuli; 9 inches by 12 inches.

SACRED ART

How Icons and Symbols Create HOPE and PURPOSE

Icon carver Jonathan Pageau and the power of symbolism

LORRAINE FERRIER

Canadian icon carver Jonathan Pageau is bringing symbolism back to life. His brilliant icon carvings hark back to a bygone world that seems relevant only to Christians, yet the icon represents the pinnacle of a symbolic world we're all immersed in.

Pageau sees symbolism as an antidote to the nihilism that pervades our world.

Just as icons guide Christians in their spiritual life, so secular symbols throughout our traditional culture—as in our songs, stories, and images—can guide us, giving us hope and purpose each and every day.

Pageau is doing his utmost to spread the word that symbols are alive, well, and all around us. Primarily, he carves icons for liturgical purposes and private devotion.

But he's also created a thriving online community where he teaches iconography, restores the symbolic worldview, and talks with thinkers such as Jordan Peterson who, Pageau says, are trying to "restore a sense of meaning and to help heal the deep nihilism that is infusing our culture right now."

The Traditional Art of the Church

"Iconography really is a deep well of wisdom and of insight that Christianity developed in its burgeoning state," he said by telephone.

*Continued on **Page 4***

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THE EPOCH TIMES

LITERATURE

An Exultation of Eloquence:
Essays and Elegance

JEFF MINICK

Suppose we took a spectrum of essays and decked them out in clothing that matched their style.

Those pieces that deliver information—an advance in science, an event in history, a critique of some author or a piece of literature—might wear, if personified, a modest coat, slacks, a solidly colored shirt, and tie. If the writer were female, we might expect her prose to appear in a skirt, a matching blouse, and a simple pendant for a necklace. These essays would dress like bankers, doctors, and lawyers.

Opposite these genteel excursions in print are those diatribes that appear frequently online, leaving aside all semblance of civility and screeching one way or the other about politics and the culture. Were we to rig out these rants with appropriate clothing, T-shirts imprinted with slogans or raised fists, frayed jeans, combat boots, and studded leather bracelets would be de rigueur. These pieces are street fighters run riot.

Tell-all personal essays would surely appear garbed (or not so garbed) in beachwear: Speedos for male writers and string bikinis for the females. Like those who appear in these skimpy outfits on the sand at the seashore, the writers of these "let it all hang out" essays, sometimes to their credit (more often to their shame), leave little to the imagination.

Columns offering encouragement might don the clothing that our coaches in high school wore: a polo shirt, lightweight slacks, running shoes, and a whistle about the neck. Those pitching advice and counseling about healthy lifestyle choices would put on casual attire so as to gain our trust: collars open at the throat, discreet shirts or blouses, khaki slacks, and loafers or slightly scuffed shoes.

Which brings us next to the ballroom and the cocktail lounge of the eloquent essay.

Bluestockings

In this rarified category, classic black tie accompanied by a martini glass would suit the disquisitions composed by gentlemen. An evening gown or a "little black dress" enhanced by some glittering jewelry and even a tiara would adorn the treatises put together by the ladies. Think Cary Grant in "Notorious" or Audrey Hepburn in "Breakfast at Tiffany's."

In this case, eloquent equals elegant.

These essays belong to that subset of culture once called "highbrow." They are intelligent, scintillating in their word choices and the employment of literary devices, pointed as a rapier in their wit, and often droll but never dull.

Let's meet three female writers who belong to the Audrey Hepburn school of design and discover how their prose shines and sparkles. Someday we may look at the men who fit this category, but for now, and given the milieu of gentility, it's ladies first.

The Queen of Etiquette

Years ago, when I was writing occasional pieces for a conservative magazine and wanted to adopt an acerbic but a sort of High Church tone in my style, I often turned for inspiration to one of Judith Martin's books on manners. Better known as Miss Manners, Ms. Martin (1938–the present) provided the necessary spice and hot sauce my prose required. Ms. Martin's books, a score or more of them, derive from her years of writing advice columns for newspapers. Here's just one sample from these compilations, lifted from "Miss Manners' Guide for the Turn-of-the-Millennium":

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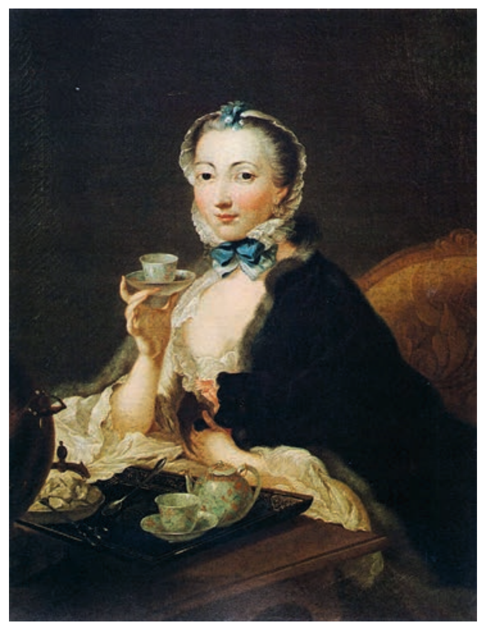
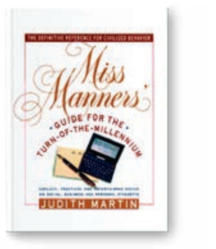


"Woman Drinking Coffee," 18th century, by Nicolas Henri Joseph de Facin. Van Zuylen collection in Liège, Belgium.

"Even among acquaintances, the deterioration of the dignified and friendly American handshake into promiscuous social kissing annoys Miss Manners for its patently phony show of intimacy. However, being one to yield to acknowledged conventions, rather than to make scenes about abstaining, she did, on later occasions, suffer without protest a public hugging from this gentleman, erroneously implying to onlookers that they were old friends, although they had in fact been introduced only a few minutes previously."



The queen of etiquette has a prim yet eloquent style, displayed in her book for current times.

Note the carefully selected words, the precise punctuation, and the formality. Observe, too, the somewhat old-fashioned rhythm of that second sentence, in which several clauses break the standard rules on brevity taught by journalism and writing manuals.

In short, Miss Martin's prose is as prim and high-class as her advice on behavior and etiquette.

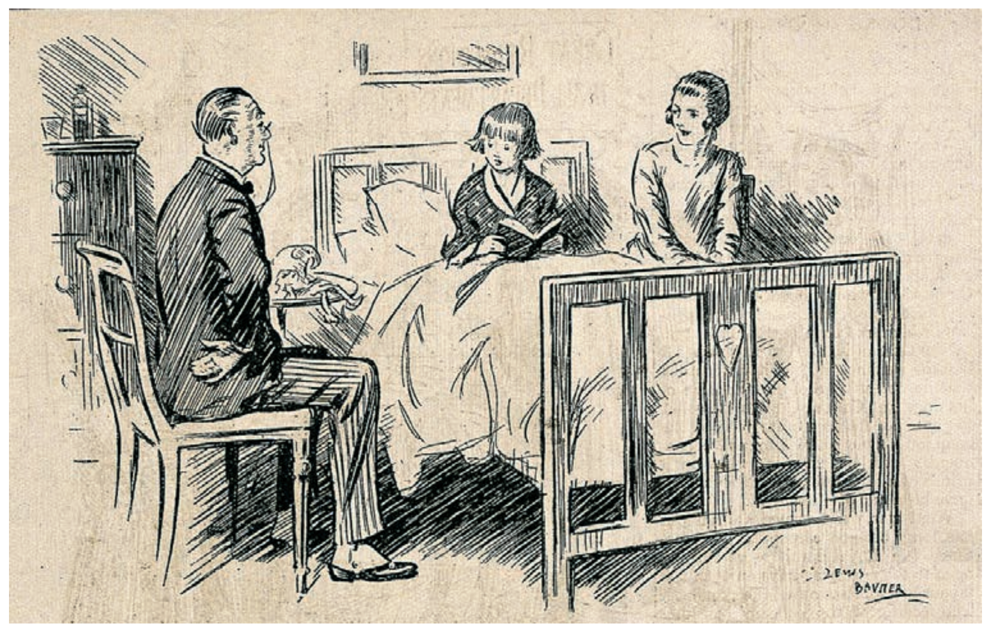
Reticence

British writer Alice Thomas Ellis (1932–2005) wrote several novels that were well-received both by the public and by critics, and these are still read today. The columns that she also wrote for "The Spectator," called "Home Life," were later collected into four volumes (three of which I own), but unfortunately these are no longer in print.

As the title implies, these short compositions dealt with her life and her home. Though uneven in their subject matter—some of her observations seem trivial, others profound—Ms. Ellis's prose style offers readers flute after flute of fine champagne. Stiff-lipped, quirky, and with humor as dry as sand, these literary excursions frequently bring both a smile and a nod of recognition to her audience.

In her essay "Drink Up," for instance, she reports taking one of her children to the doctor about a "verruca," a malady unknown to me. Although the doctor is treating the child, he senses that Ms. Ellis is unhappy, discovers that she has "sustained a bereavement," and kindly prescribes some pills for her, which she takes.

WELLCOME IMAGES/CC BY 4.0



A doctor attempting to talk to an ill child and being completely misunderstood. Reproduction of a drawing after Lewis Baumer, 1926.

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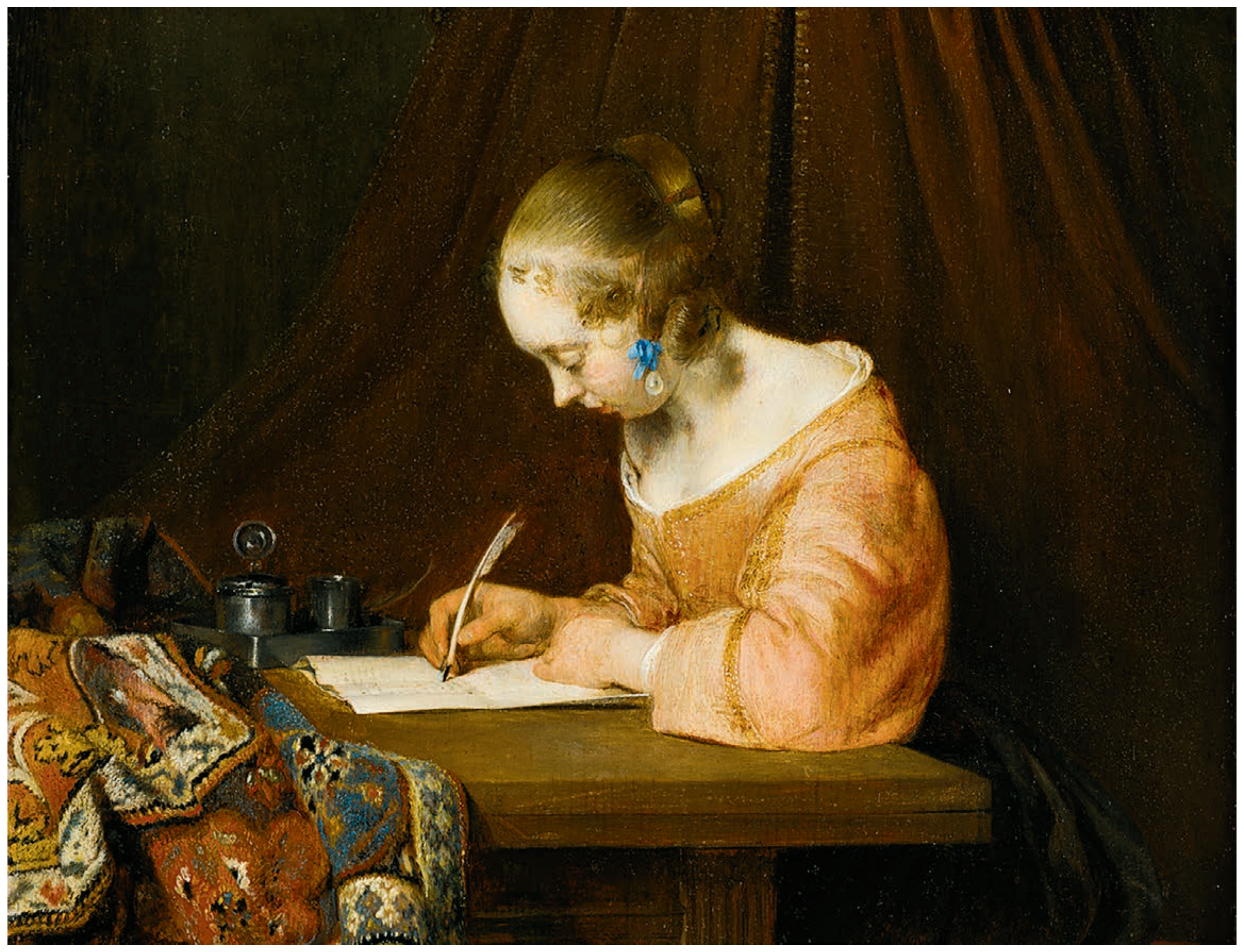

Cropped view of "Woman Writing a Letter," 1655, by Gerard ter Borch. Oil on panel; 15 inches by 10.9 inches. Mauritshuis, The Hague.

"After a week of this I found I could no longer read newsprint, my mouth was as dry as a dog biscuit and every time I stood up I fell over. Vodka never did that to me."

Note here that Ms. Ellis offers no explanation for "verruca," which is a plantar's wart, while her "sustained bereavement" may refer to the death of one of her sons, who at age 19 fell from a roof. In all these essays, she holds her cards close to her chest, sharing as she wishes with the reader but never giving away painful details or sinking into the maudlin.

Ms. Ellis's restraint is one more mark of an elegant essayist.

The High Road to the Familiar

In her introduction to "At Large and At Small," Anne Fadiman expresses her hope that she may help revive the familiar essay. "Today's readers encounter plenty of critical essays (more brain than heart) and plenty of personal—very personal—essays (more heart than brain), but not many familiar essays (equal measures of both)."

And in this book, Ms. Fadiman offers readers 12 compositions that walk hand in hand with this genre under titles like "Mail," "Procrustes and the Culture Wars," and "Ice Cream." To these subjects, she brings erudition by drawing from her vast knowledge of classical literature. From a palette of bold colors, she also paints her prose with wit, personal experience, and examples from history.

Consider this sentence in the first paragraph of "Coffee." After telling us of sharing coffee with friends as a sophomore in college, she follows with this exquisite sentence, which despite its length deserves inclusion here in full:

"Even though the coffee was canned; even though the milk was stolen from the dining hall and refrigerated on the windowsill of my friends' dormitory room, where it was diluted by snow and adulterated by soot; even though Alex's scuzzy one-burner hot plate looked as if it might electrocute us at any moment; and even though we washed our "batterie de cuisine" in the bathroom sink and let it air-dry on a pile of paper towels next to the toilet—even though Dunster F-13 was, in short, not exactly Escoffier's kitchen, we considered our nightly coffee ritual the very acme and pitch of elegance."

Once again, we have a writer who assumes that the reader is intelligent to figure out the French and to realize that Dunster F-13 is a dorm room, a woman whose sense of beat and rhythm in her sentences is impeccable, who amuses with high wit rather than low, and who in the remainder of this essay combines such details as a brief history of London's early coffeehouses and the chemical effects of caffeine with her personal encounters with coffee.

Like the nightly coffee ritual from her college days, Ms. Fadiman's essay is "the very acme and pitch of elegance."

These essays belong to that subset of culture once called 'highbrow.'

High Praise

Though I take enormous pleasure in reading all sorts of essays, these doyens of the written word hold me, I must confess, in thrall to their talents. If I return to the similes and metaphors introduced in the beginning of my essay, and were my own writing to become so clothed—an outfit consisting of a sweater stretched by usage and peppered with a few moth holes, wrinkled khaki trousers, and canvas shoes—I might kneel in homage to these majesties and pledge my fealty to them as a loyal reader.

Elegance seems to have retired in our time—a casualty, perhaps, of the casual now so much a part of our culture. Yet in their prose, Mses. Martin, Ellis, and Fadiman remind us of its beauty and grace. Subtly, they also whisper to us that this elegance, this beauty and grace, can be ours for the asking.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust on Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning as I Go" and "Movies Make the Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

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SACRED ART

How Icons and Symbols Create
HOPE and PURPOSE

Icon carver Jonathan Pageau and the power of symbolism

Continued from ***Page 1***

He explained that in the first millennium of Christianity, the church developed a sacred visual language that, although not mandated, spread throughout the Christian world.

Christians visiting churches, from England to Syria, could understand the sacred art they saw even when local styles differed, as there was a clear iconographical language that crossed cultures.

Pageau believes that iconography could be called the traditional art of the Christian church.

During the Renaissance, the Western church slowly moved away from that transcendent medieval visual language and began making realistic art full of gestures and emotions.

Purposeful Art

Pageau nearly stopped making art. Growing up, he became interested in visual art. After graduating from art school, he began creating modern art but found it unfulfilling.

> **Iconography really is a deep well of wisdom and of insight.**
>
> *Jonathan Pageau, icon carver*

He faced two problems. First, he grew up Protestant and image-making was taboo. Secondly, he found postmodern art to be cynical and ironic. All he wanted to create was something real and tangible but, in the postmodern art world, that was impossible.

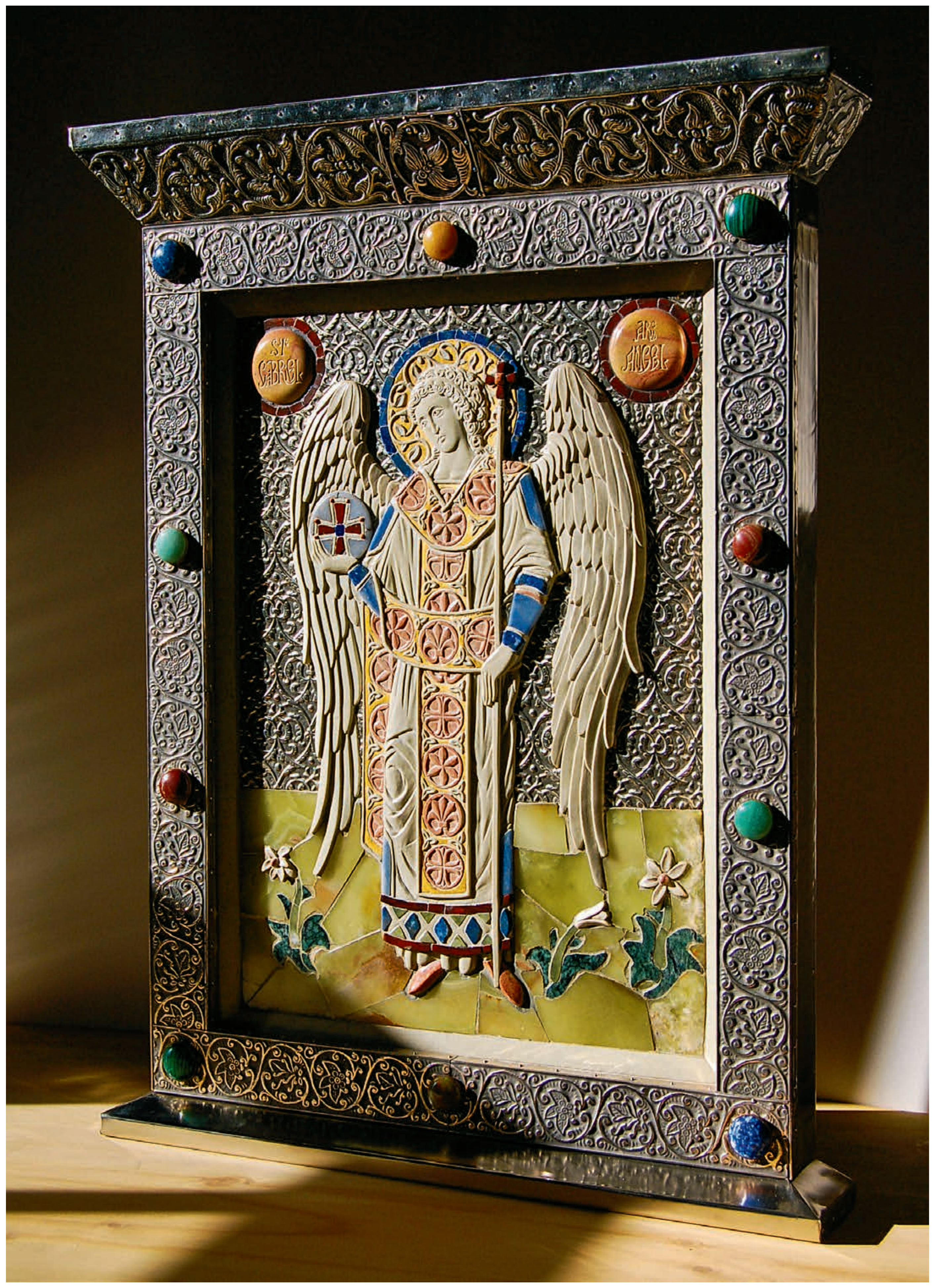
One day he took all his art and threw it away, saying to his wife that he'd never make art again. She laughed, and told him that was not quite true, for she felt sure he would.

Then he discovered medieval art. "I really fell in love with the [visual] language; I thought it was amazing." He could see the Bible stories in the art. And he noticed how the artists created patterns of meaning that he likens to a sacred algebra, where they took elements from one image and then transposed them in another.

Pageau became disappointed that this type of art no longer existed. Then he found that in Eastern Orthodoxy, the tradition had been preserved and developed.

Researching Eastern Orthodoxy, Pageau resonated with its theology and practices, particularly its more mystical approach to Christianity—so much so that he eventually converted to Eastern Orthodoxy.

ANDREW GOULD



"St. Gabriel," 2016, by Jonathan Pageau. Soapstone, gold leaf, basma (metalwork), serpentine, onyx, lapis lazuli, blue quartzite, red jasper, jade, with basma stand and frame by Andrew Gould; about 14 inches tall.

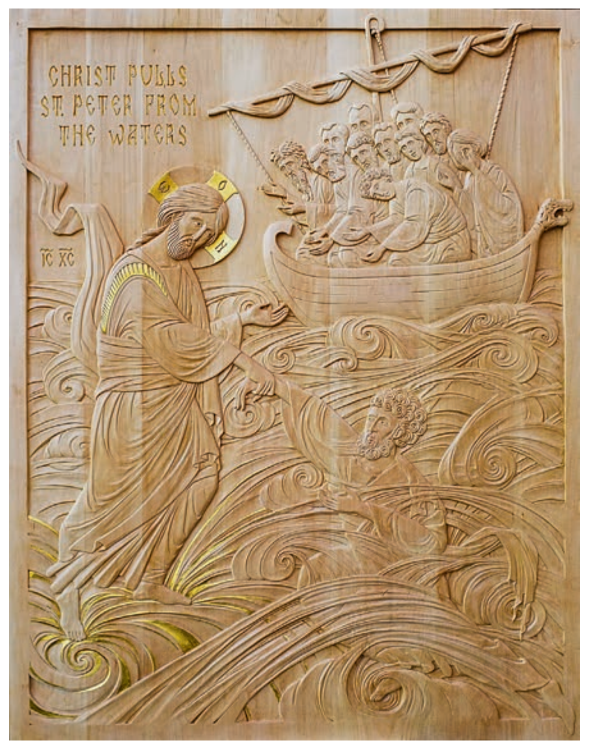
Making art in the Eastern Orthodox tradition solved both his problems. "This type of art was completely integrated into the social fabric. It wasn't just arbitrary images," he said. He found that Eastern Orthodoxy had a well-developed theological explanation of why icons existed, and he was now making objects for a sacred purpose: to be used in the church or in private devotion.

Pageau took a university-level course in Eastern Orthodox theology with iconography expert Father Stephen Bigham, who mentored him in the language of iconography.

Transcendent Carving

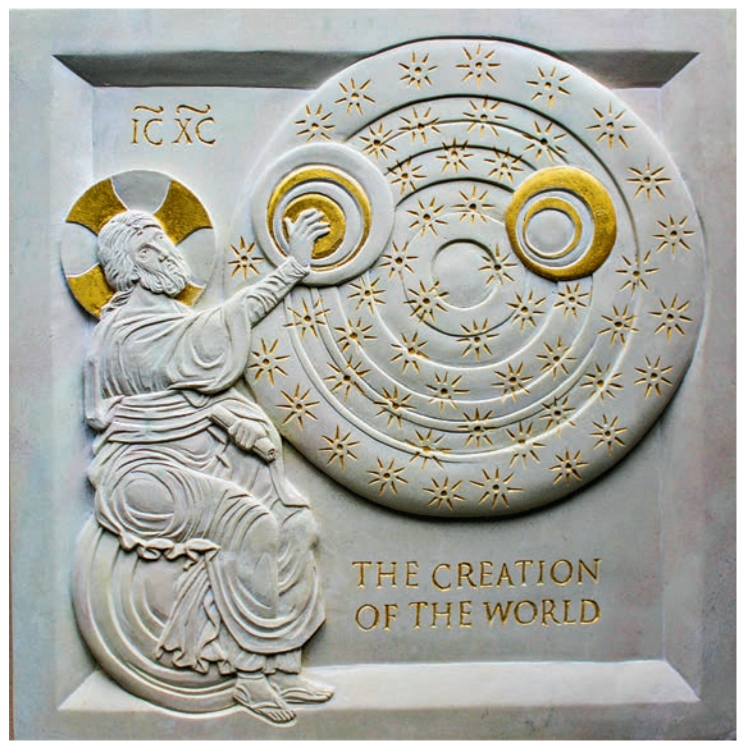
Pageau first started carving in his spare time because it was something he loved doing. When his bishop saw him carving, he asked Pageau to make him a panagia, the pendant featuring the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child that Eastern Orthodox bishops wear when giving Divine Liturgy.

He'd never made a miniature before, so he contacted a Serbian carver who guided him through the process, which took several days. Pageau laughed when he said, "He was ruthless with me. It was wonderful." His mentor's feedback helped him improve.



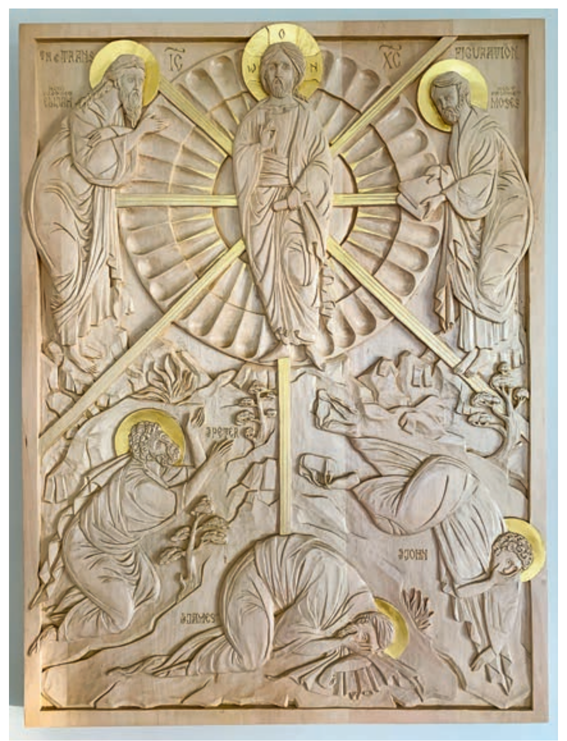
JONATHAN PAGEAU

"Christ Pulls St. Peter From the Waters," 2022, by Jonathan Pageau. Linden wood with gold leaf; 4 inches by 5 inches.



JONATHAN PAGEAU

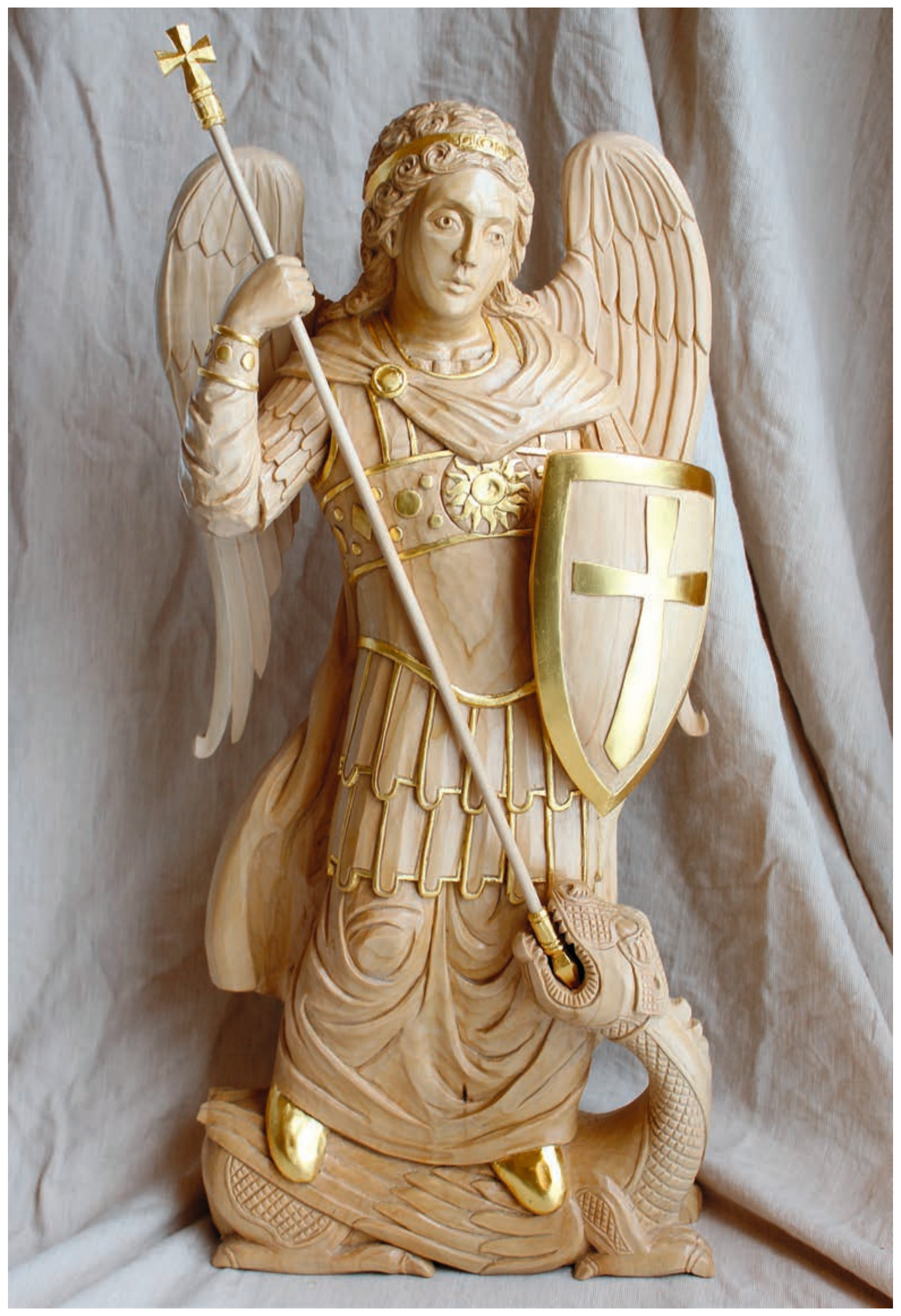
"The Creation of the World," 2018, by Jonathan Pageau. Soapstone and gold leaf; 10 inches by 10 inches.



JONATHAN PAGEAU

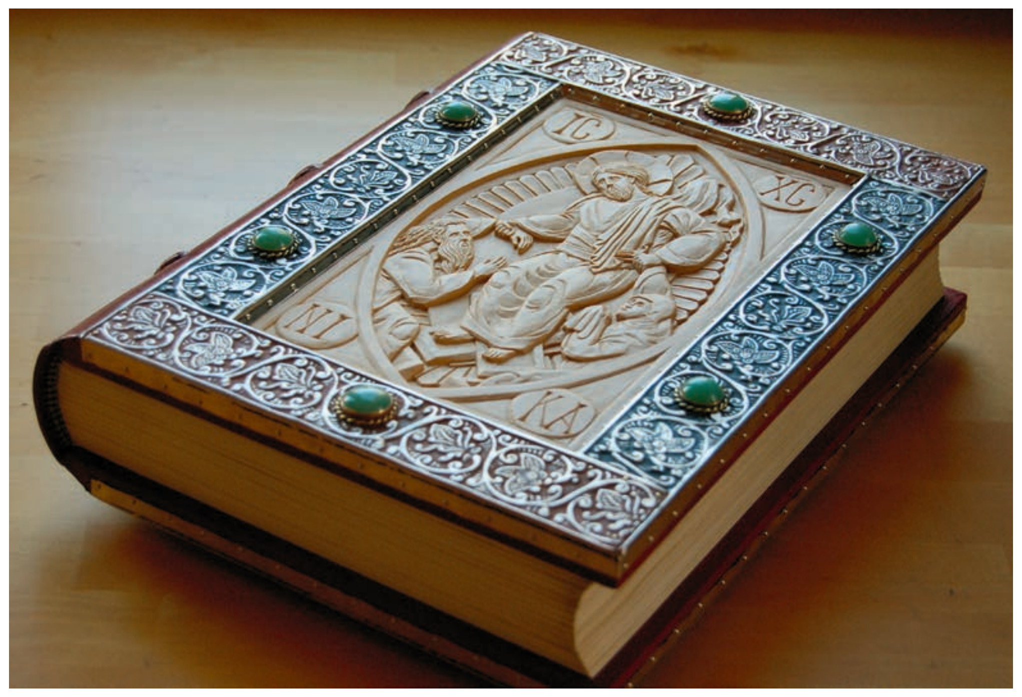
"Transfiguration," 2015, by Jonathan Pageau. Linden wood and gold leaf; 3 inches by 4 inches.

JONATHAN PAGEAU



"St. Michael," 2018, by Jonathan Pageau. Linden wood with gold leaf; 22 inches tall.

ANDREW GOULD



Gospel cover, 2017, by Jonathan Pageau. Boxwood and leather, with basma (metalwork) by Andrew Gould.

ham, who mentored him in the language of iconography.

Transcendent Carving

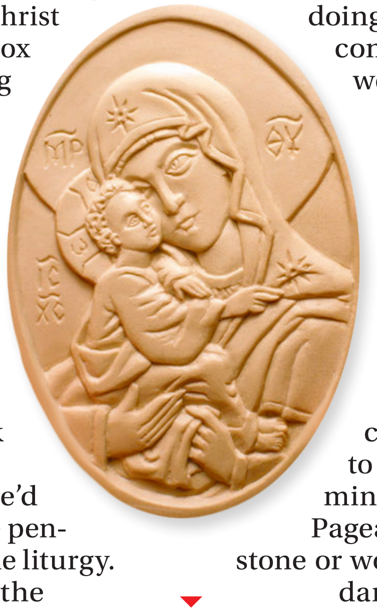
Pageau first started carving in his spare time because it was something he loved doing. When his bishop saw him carving, he asked Pageau to make him a panagia, the pendant featuring the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child that Eastern Orthodox bishops wear when giving Divine Liturgy.

He'd never made a miniature before, so he contacted a Serbian carver who guided him through the process, which took several days. Pageau laughed when he said, "He was ruthless with me. It was wonderful." His mentor's feedback helped him improve.

Finally, when he felt he'd done his best, he gave the pendant to his bishop after the liturgy. He'd become so lost in the process of making the best carving he could, but his bishop's reaction woke him up. As his bishop unwrapped the pendant he made a gesture of reverence, crossing himself and bowing slightly. Pageau was taken aback. "My bishop wasn't seeing my artwork at that moment. … He was seeing the Virgin." he said.

It was all Pageau had hoped for. He realized that his bishop would wear the object he'd made and that it would follow the bishop through his spiritual life, including his church services.

He also realized the price of such reverence. "No one will have a gesture of reverence in front of a Picasso painting," he said. To access that reverence, he had to let go of his pride and his desire to own the language in the image, to let go of any notion that he was the one doing the work rather than its coming from the divine. He welcomed the trade-off.



Panagia carving, 2012, by Jonathan Pageau. Soapstone; 2.5 inches by 1.5 inches.

JONATHAN PAGEAU

Carving Icons

Paintings are the main type of church iconography, but carved icons are often used for their durability, especially for objects that need regular handling or for furniture. Christians use small carved icons in the home to help them pray and to remind them of a saint.

Pageau makes icons mostly in stone or wood—from personal pendants and jewelry to Gospel covers, reliquaries, and devotional statues, to furniture and architectural church carvings. For his stonework, he carves into a light-colored soapstone he imports from Kenya.

Pageau's work tends to be most influenced by Byzantine art, similar to those works that would have existed in 11th- and 12th-century Constantinople. The Byzantine style is steeped in theological meaning. One only has to look in Byzantine churches to see the golden mosaics full of Christian symbols and stylized figures that look out at worshipers, to inspire and deepen their faith. Byzantine artists often decorated their works with jewels, enamels, metalwork, and carved ivories, to name a few.

But Pageau is not a purist. He's inspired by the different threads of the Christian tradition, and he makes art that shines with the best of what Christianity has to offer. For example, his work may be influenced by early Gothic art, Romanesque art, or Coptic, Byzantine, Russian, Serbian, or even Armenian images, depending on what combines to create something that is both beautiful and recognizable.

In one icon, for instance, he may use decorative elements such as a basma (a thin sheet of metal, often tin or sometimes silver), which is embossed or engraved with patterns. Russian iconographers nailed the basma directly onto the icon as a frame or as a background for the icon itself. And in another, he may look to the early Gothic style of Christian art, which originated in Île-de-France (the region around Paris), that is generally characterized by graceful figures with elongated limbs and expressions that were more human than previous styles. Again, each figure or image was made to bring the viewer closer to God.

Pageau is not making carbon copies of the past; there's flexibility in the icon tradition. He likens making icons to writing traditional poetry. "You can recognize a sonnet by its form. It's the same with an icon. You can recognize an icon of the 'Transfiguration of Christ' by certain elements, but then there's some play in how that comes together," he explained.

Pageau knows what elements should be used in an image to convey its inner language so he can change the style and harmoniously include some surprising elements. For example, two traditional symbols of the transfiguration of Christ–rays of divine light that emanate from him and a vertical ellipse called a mandorla, which surrounds Christ much like a halo—both indicate that he is an enlightened being.

Pageau decides the iconography of each image he makes after understanding his patron's needs. The complexity of the design is directly related to the cost. Pageau draws the icon, and the design is agreed to with the patron. Pageau's assistant then traces the design onto the wood or stone and carves out the background by hand. Pageau hand carves the details and then embellishes the icon with mosaics, metalwork, or collages of semiprecious stones, such as lapis lazuli or serpentine, depending on the carving's complexity.

Sometimes when Pageau works, he'll find that all of a sudden certain things start happening in his life that are related to the saint whose image he's carving, as if the saint is somehow reaching out to him. In those moments, he feels that he's being pushed forward, closer to the mystery and a deepening of his faith.

A priest may bless the finished icon, depending on the patron's request.

The Nihilism Cure

Pageau believes that nothing exists for its own sake; everything in the world exists for a reason, and each thing forms a giant web of meaning. Symbolism can be seen as the fabric of reality, and when we see that, it can inform our worldview.

Symbolism is "the very structure of our experience," Pageau said, and the pattern by which we are able to attend to things. When symbolism is woven into songs, stories, and images, and the more it's condensed, we're even more able to perceive the pattern.

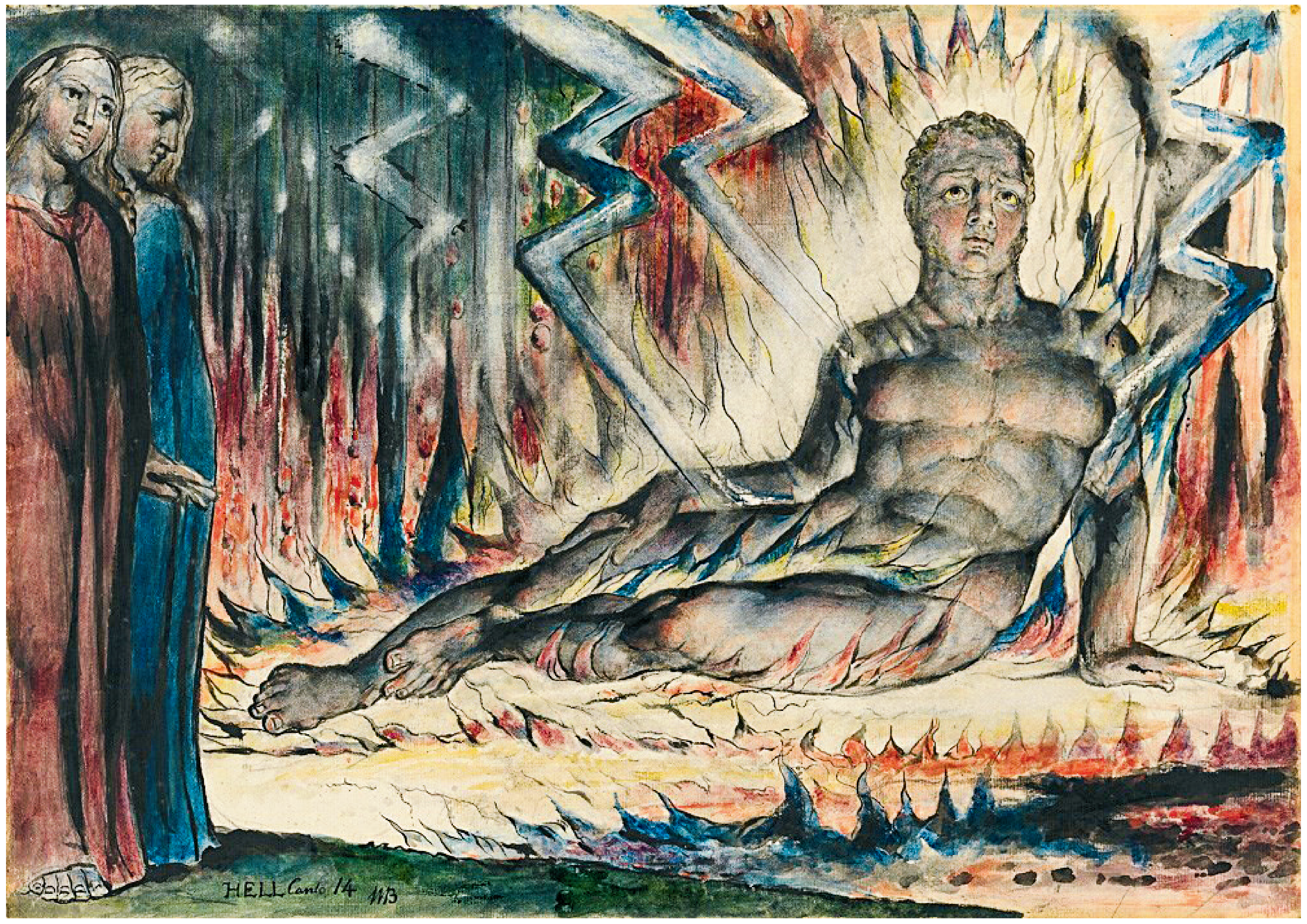
Pageau explained that when we understand that we have daily rituals (we move with purpose every day, from putting on our socks to having a family meal), then we can see that religion ultimately takes us to our higher purpose by helping us participate in the patterns of reality. "And so symbolism is inevitable in your life," he said.

He understands that when we are guided by the purity of religious images, biblical stories, and the morals in myths and fairy tales—which all contain condensed symbols—they can help us make sense of the more messy parts of our everyday life and help us discern truth from ornament.

"Symbolism is really a way out of the morass of our contemporary world," he said.

To find out more about Jonathan Pageau's art, visit PageauCarvings.com

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA, MELBOURNE



In Canto 14 of Dante's "Inferno," Capaneus says without the slightest remorse: "What I was once, alive, I still am, dead." "Capaneus the Blasphemer" by William Blake. Felton Bequest, 1920; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

Myths for Our Times, Part 2:
Capaneus and the Age of Hubris

JAMES SALE

What does the story of the great ancient warrior Capaneus have to do with technology today? Or with the myth of Frankenstein, for that matter?

In our first article in this two-part series, we looked at how the myth of Frankenstein (and its Greek-related story of Prometheus) was a warning to us about the dangers of the technological age we live in. Two aspects of the danger were, on the one hand, the scale of the monstrosities that humans might "create" (for example, atomic weaponry), and on the other, the fact that technology might get out of hand and become not only uncontrollable but also the master who dictates to and controls human beings (such as Artificial Intelligence). But I indicated at the end of the article that another Greek myth, much less well-known, speaks potently to our condition today.

This myth is the relatively brief narrative of Capaneus, one of the Seven Against Thebes.

Capaneus? What did he do? He was one of the seven great warriors who went to sack Thebes in support of Polynices against his brother, Eteocles. The warriors aimed to restore the kingship to Polynices, as recorded by the Roman poet Statius in his epic, "The Thebaid." All but one of the heroes was killed in the attempt to take Thebes, and the attempt itself, on this occasion, failed.

Capaneus was noted for his giant size and strength, and also for his astonishing arrogance. This character flaw was so striking that Dante, centuries after the end of the Greek and Roman civilizations, included Capaneus as one of the damned in Canto 14 of his "Inferno."

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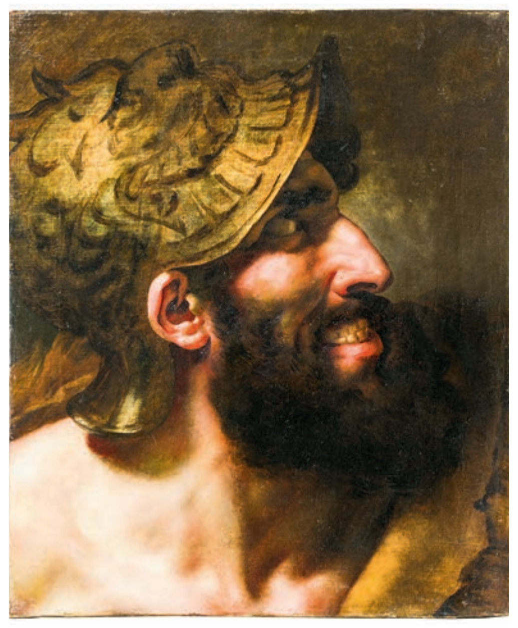


A study of Capaneus called "The Blasphemic" by Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Capaneus was included as the representative of a certain sin: blasphemy. This is surprising since he was a pagan! We might think that Dante could have found someone within Christendom to exemplify this transgression, but no: Capaneus is the model.

Capaneus, Challenger of Heaven

What, then, did Capaneus do? In book 10 of "Thebaid," we see that as he stormed the Theban wall and was about to go over the top and sack the city, he cried out, "Are there no gods among you, who stand for panic-stricken Thebes?"

"Where are the sluggard sons of this accursed land, Bacchus and Alcides? Any of lesser name I am ashamed to challenge. Rather come thou—what worthier antagonist? For lo! Semele's ashes and her tomb are in my power!—come thou, and strive with all thy flames against me, thou, Jupiter [Zeus]! Or art thou braver at frightening timid maidens with thy thunder, and razing the towers of thy father-in-law Cadmus?"

Or put more bluntly, Capaneus taunted: I challenge you, Zeus, for not even you can stop me now!

Zeus's response to this challenge is direct and immediate. There is a brilliant ending to book 10 with these words:

"Even as he spoke, the thunderbolt struck him, hurled with the whole might of Jove: his crest first vanished into the clouds, the blackened shield-boss dripped, and all the hero's limbs are now illumined. The armies both give way, in terror where he may fall, what squadrons he may strike with his burning body. He feels the flame hissing within him and his helmet and hair afire, and trying to push away the galling cuirass with his hand, touches the scorched steel beneath his breast. He stands nevertheless, and turning towards heaven pants out his life and leans his smoking breast on the hated battlements, lest he should fall; but his earthly frame deserts the hero, and his spirit is released; yet had his limbs been consumed a whit more slowly, he might have expected a second thunderbolt."

I quote the whole passage so that we can feel the total devastation from the god, Zeus: "helmet and hair afire," the "scorched steel," and even the sense of its decisive speed, for if it had taken a moment longer, Zeus would have sent a second bolt. Notice, too, the effect it has on all those around: both armies give way "in terror."

The Sin of Pride

What has Capaneus and his death to do with us today? Isn't Capaneus just some egotistical, misguided individual who got his just desserts? Hardly, which is why Dante included him as a representative type in his "Inferno." While we might call Capaneus's sin blasphemy as Dante does, there is also another root sin here with which we are all too familiar: hubris.

Hubris is the ultimate sin for the ancient Greeks; it might be translated into Christian terminology as pride—the primal sin that caused Satan to fall from heaven.

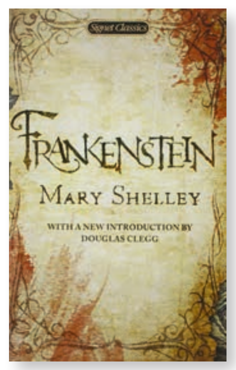
In the dictionary, hubris is said to be "excessive pride." And in Greek tragedy, it is defined as excessive pride toward or defiance of the gods, leading to nemesis. There are many, many examples of this pride toward the gods in Greek mythology and history. To name just three famous ones: Marsyas boasted he could out-perform the god of music, Apollo; Arachne boasted she could weave better than the goddess Athena; and in actual Greek history, we find the Persian king Xerxes in Herodotus's history of the Persian Wars (fifth century B.C.), who tried to punish the sea by whipping it for destroying his bridge over the Hellespont (the ancient name of the narrow passage between the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmara, now known as Dardanelles).

Capaneus's sin does not die with him.

The point is that hubris leads to nemesis, which in everyday terms can be described as one's comeuppance. This fate is not surprising since the individual has resisted or gone against the nature of reality. He has defied the cosmos and its internal laws—what holds it together, in fact—and for this there are consequences. As Russian-American novelist Ayn Rand so beautifully put it, "We can ignore reality, but we cannot ignore the consequences of ignoring reality."

Today we live in a world brimming with hubris. We live in a world with the hubris of technology and its persistent vaunting to change the nature of human reality, to enable us to live for hundreds of years, even to prevent dying. As John Gray in his book "Heresies" observed, "At that point [in the future], equipped with the new powers conferred by biotechnology, we will be what Lenin could only dream of becoming—engineers of souls."

But hubris extends further. There is also the everyday hubris of sports teams, media personalities, politicians, and especially world leaders. One could easily list 50 such people from the European Union, North Korea, China, even the United States, but let's just consider one: President Putin from Russia.



Through the hubris of the scientist Frankenstein, a monstrosity is created.

Russian TV (clearly with his approval) casually entertained the idea of letting off nuclear weapons in the Atlantic in order to create a tsunami that would literally drown the United Kingdom—not to mention the effect on other European countries. (And let's not forget the aquatic environment.) This proposal is simply mad in the sense that it undoes all life, and potentially Russia's as well. And that is why it is a Capaneus-the-Proud moment: It stands against the cosmos, against law, against order, against creation, in order to indulge self-importance.

It is interesting to note that Capaneus's sin does not die with him. In Canto 14 when Dante meets Capaneus, we learn that the "mighty one seems unbothered by burning"! He affects to be unaffected by the judgment of Zeus: "What I was once, alive, I still am, dead." Nothing changes him; nothing will change. There is no discussion, debate, or argument: Every Capaneus is fixed, not just by the hand of death but also after death.

One last point to make about this myth, though, is the irony. When we think about it, it is Frankenstein in reverse. In the Frankenstein myth, the inventor uses technology to piece together the monster with some elemental life principle, which isn't clarified, but which has entered the popular imagination as electricity or lightning. But Capaneus, standing in a full thunderstorm at the top of a wall in metallic armor with a metal sword upraised, is brought down by lightning, electricity—the touch of the god.

Then, if we harness these enormous powers and think that we can control the outcomes—and thereby defy the cosmos, the Tao, the gods—in these hubristic ways, we can only lead ourselves to disaster or what is called nemesis. Sadly, the myths inform us that many also have to perish in the wake of this kind of hubris.

In Part 1, of this two-part series, "Myths for Our Times," we discussed the myth of Frankenstein and technology today.

James Sale has had over 50 books published, most recently, "Mapping Motivation for Top Performing Teams" (Routledge, 2021). He has been nominated for the 2022 poetry Pushcart Prize, won first prize in The Society of Classical Poets 2017 annual competition, performing in New York in 2019. His most recent poetry collection is "HellWard." For more information about the author, and about his Dante project, visit EnglishCantos.home.blog

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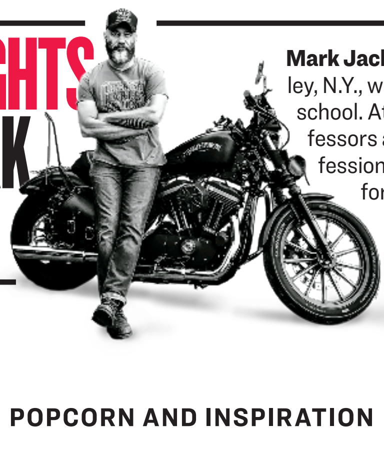
ALL PHOTOS BY SONY PICTURES RELEASING

Bethany Hamilton (AnnaSophia Robb) in her glory days as a top surfing competitor, in "Soul Surfer."

FILM INSIGHTS WITH MARK JACKSON



Mark Jackson grew up in Spring Valley, N.Y., where he attended a Waldorf school. At Williams College, his professors all suggested he write professionally. He acted professionally for 20 years instead. Now he writes professionally about acting. In the movies.

Bethany Hamilton (AnnaSophia Robb) discovering that nothing can hold her back.

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

'Soul Surfer': Girl Loses Arm to Shark, Surfs Even Better

MARK JACKSON

True story: When a 14-foot tiger shark explodes out of the blue depths and shears 13-year-old world-class surfer Bethany Hamilton's left arm off at the shoulder, it's the end of her world as she knew it.

Now, I tend to talk a lot about Joseph Campbell's explanation of the Hero's Journey, since it's the basis for so many inspirational stories. "Soul Surfer" (2011) is a perfect, real-life example of it, and as such, a must-see for anyone feeling down on their luck or wondering what they should do with their lives.

In the classic telling, the hero heeds a call from the wilderness and willingly leaves the village compound where he or she grew up, to go on a dangerous adventure to discover his "gold." The "Soul Surfer" variation is the true story of an already-golden girl and top competitor, whose village compound was a cozy surf culture. The film demonstrates how sometimes, in order to make huge gains, one must first (often unwillingly) incur massive loss. Contrary to how that sounds, this is a feel-good movie in the best sense of the word.

Visually, it's a stunning film (produced by Doug Schwartz, known for "Baywatch"): turquoise water, white-sand beaches, electric-blue waves, and tanned skin. Dennis Quaid is Bethany's dad, Helen Hunt's the mom, up-and-comer AnnaSophia Robb ("Charlie and the Chocolate Factory") plays Bethany, and Jack Nicholson's daughter Lorraine plays Alana, her best friend.

The Journey Begins

The Hamilton family is the classic sport-as-religion family—surfer version. In the United States, we're all familiar with football families; granddad and dad were all-pro, the sons are named, say, Eli and Peyton, broken bones are proud rites of passage, and crutches and casts are as common as couches. Surfing is truly the Hamilton's collective raison d'être, second only to their strong Christian faith.

One understands quickly that in the same way that death-by-avalanche is a looming risk in a mountaineering family, and getting stuck under a submerged rock a risk in whitewater kayacking families, so also is death-by-shark an accepted occupational hazard in a surfing family. The all-consuming passion and addiction to the religion-sport utterly squelches the fear of violent death that terrifies non-disciples.

The story begins with Bethany and her bestie Alana landing their first endorsements and winning a berth in the National Scholastic Surfing Association's regional event, to the extreme annoyance of their surly rival Malina Birch (Sonya Balmores Chung).

Their church youth minister, Sarah Hill ("American Idol" Carrie Underwood in her acting debut), worries that the teens need to rethink their priorities when Bethany cancels a mission trip to Mexico in order to continue her training.

Director Sean McNamara slowly winds up the sense of incoming danger with underwater shots of surfers paddling on the ocean's surface. While with Alana, Alana's dad Holt (Kevin Sorbo) and her brother Byron (Jeremy Sumpter), Bethany is lying on her board after a surf session off the north shore of Kauai when a real life "Jaws" event occurs. Tiger sharks, being apex predators, can efficiently snip your arm off like pruning shears snipping a rose, and so the actual event is surprisingly lacking in drama.

However, following on its heels is a riveting, almost 10-minute sequence chronicling the Blanchards' efforts to get the bleeding Bethany to shore and then to the hospital, where the resident surgeon (Craig T. Nelson) is preparing to operate on Bethany's dad's knee (Dennis Quaid) but quickly shifts his priorities to saving Bethany's life.

Hero's Journey

On the Hero's Journey, one must lose one's way in the dark forest and fall off a cliff into a ravine. Bethany tries to stage a competition comeback, but it's too soon. She hasn't yet accepted her tribulation and loses a few competitions. Now she's hit bottom and gives away her board collection.

In the ravine, one meets The Ally. Bethany's perennial ally is her family, but Sarah Hill also steps up. Bethany had previously put the church group on the back burner behind her surfing, but now she embraces the opportunity.

With Sarah's encouragement, Bethany goes to Phuket, Thailand, to help out in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami and discovers that, arm or no arm, she can put her skills to use by helping the disenfranchised natives have some fun surfing. This is known as "Bringing one's gold back to the village compound," or using one's talents to serve a cause greater than oneself.

A new sense of purpose dawns on her, and with this renewed hope, she again reenters the world of surfing competition. This is where we finally see just how awesome she is—a better literal example of "I'll beat you with one arm tied behind my back" you will not find. These competitions are real, jump-up/fist-pump/holler-"Yeah!" scenes.

Throughout the film, Bethany is a preternatural emotional Rock of Gibraltar, but we see her transformation expand when she genuinely even thanks her arch-rival Malina—a supreme mean-girl who shows no compassion for Bethany's handicap—for not easing up on her, thereby upping Bethany's game. You can tell it's an authentic giving of thanks, and this display of how not to harbor resentment is so powerful that it drains all the gloat out of Malina's face. The movie boils down to a duel between these two gifted girls.

More Gold

With Bethany's having been forced into the wilderness to find her true "gold" and endure her "dark night of the soul," the fruits of her Heroine's Journey now begin to ripen, as the fan mail begins to pour in. Bethany lost her perfect, predictable, unbeatable physical specimen self, but gained the ability to continue to compete with the best while carrying an enormous handicap.

In addition to the turquoise waters, she now surfs the waves of hope and happiness that she's generated in the souls of those around the globe who've suffered great loss and follow her lead by not giving up.

The film's only slight downer is the lukewarm soundtrack, which brings in a faint element of cheese. Luckily "Soul Surfer" is a powerful archetypal story first, a surfing movie second, a Christian movie third, and all-in-all an inspirational film you should have a family couch viewing with, along with some homemade popcorn.

'Soul Surfer' is a powerful archetypal story.

'Soul Surfer'

Director:
Sean McNamara

Starring:
AnnaSophia Robb, Dennis Quaid, Helen Hunt, Kevin Sorbo, Carrie Underwood, Lorraine Nicolson, Sonya Balmores Chung, Jeremy Sumpter, Ross Thomas, Chris Brochu

MPAA Rating:
PG-13

Running Time:
1 hour, 26 minutes

Release Date:
April 8, 2011

★★★⯪☆

ripcurlgirl

Bethany Hamilton (AnnaSophia Robb), a headlining name in competitive surfing.

(L–R) Chris Brochu, Ross Thomas, Dennis Quaid, AnnaSophia Robb, and Helen Hunt appear in the hospital scene.

FINE ARTS

Albrecht Dürer
Impresses Venetian Artists of the Renaissance

Giovanni Bellini and his star students welcome the innovative artist from the North

JAMES BARESEL

On Feb. 7, 1506, Albrecht Dürer wrote to tell his friend Willibald Pirckheimer that Giovanni Bellini, then Venice's leading artist, had not only praised Dürer's paintings but, amazingly, announced his intention to buy one.

Dürer traveled to Venice twice. On the second visit, he was determined to demonstrate his abilities and those of other artists of the Northern European Renaissance to Venetians. Bellini's endorsement was enough to convince all but the most biased.

The bias that Dürer sought to counter, and that the great Bellini rejected, has been all too enduring, leading some to see Dürer's relationship to the Venetian art world as that of a student to a teacher. That was true of his first visit, from 1494 to 1495, when he completed his training as a painter there after an apprenticeship in his native Nuremberg and advanced studies in northeastern France and the Netherlands.

But when he returned as an internationally famous artist 10 years later, the teaching and learning were much more reciprocal. Dürer and the Northern European school he represented had become a key influence on the style of the Venetian High Renaissance.

Dürer's friend Bellini laid important foundations for this to happen. Bellini's work respected the artistic advances of the early Venetian Renaissance and took them to greater heights. His innovations set the stage for even more dramatic innovation by his two greatest students and the leading lights of Venice's next generation of artists: Giorgione and Titian.

Venice's Artistic Innovators

Bellini honored his city's artistic tradition while encouraging innovation in his students. Giorgione perfected Bellini's naturalistic depiction of the human form, and Titian added a sense of drama into the style first developed by Giorgione.

The ability to learn from Dürer, among others, and an art market open to a degree of innovation would have been unprofitable for Bellini during his career; as times changed, his greatest students were able to surpass their teacher.

The fact that it was Bellini's students who made such advances is often cited by those who exaggerate Bellini's deference to his city's earlier artistic conventions. The truth is that while Bellini was a fairly moderate stylistic innovator in his own work, he had the highest regard for artists such as Giorgione and Titian, who were able to produce more dramatically innovative and unique works of true beauty.

Such an attitude toward innovation also certified Dürer as an artist of the first rank and assured that his work would influence the younger generation.

Dürer undoubtedly met Giorgione and Titian, whose transitions into independent masters overlapped with the German's 1505–07 visit to Venice and his friendship with Bellini.

At this time, Titian and Giorgione would assuredly have discussed an artist as famous as Dürer with each other and with their former master. Unfortunately, Dürer's extensive and usually informative correspondence makes no reference to his influence on these newly independent painters, his interest being in artists who had already attained prominence, like Bellini.

Dürer's Impact

But Dürer did influence these artists, as can be seen by comparing Dürer's work and theirs. His influence over Titian can be seen by looking at Dürer's "Portrait of Maximilian I" and Titian's "Portrait of a Man in a Red Cap." While the styles are too different for them to be mistaken as two works by a single painter, the similarities alone would suggest that they were familiar with each other's work. Both worked from similar color palettes that are remarkably deep and realistic. Both depicted human features with almost photographic accuracy.

Historical context within the Renaissance reveals just how significant such similarities are. Until then, deep, realistic color had been a Northern European specialty while Italian artists, particularly those in Florence, focused on perfecting depiction of the human shape.

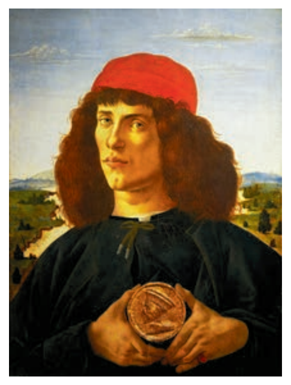
For example, the early- to mid-15th-century Flemish painter Jan van Eyck's "Arnolfini Portrait" combines deep and realistic color with underdeveloped facial features, while the mid- to late-15th-century Florentine Sandro Botticelli's "Portrait of a Man With a Medal of Cosimo the Elder" has almost photographic facial details but colors that are more painterly.

Dürer's work surpassed both of those predecessors. He combined a more brilliant use of color than van Eyck with a greater perfection of naturalistic form than Botticelli to create more realistic paintings than any previous artists. Yet not even that exhausts the importance of an artist whose achievements were held in high regard by Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci. Dürer's work later influenced the Baroque style, and his technical writings on perspective (creating the impression of distance in painting) were among the finest of his age.

Such high accomplishments puts Dürer in the first rank of Renaissance masters and, at the time of his second visit, became an important influence on the greatest geniuses of 16th-century Venice.

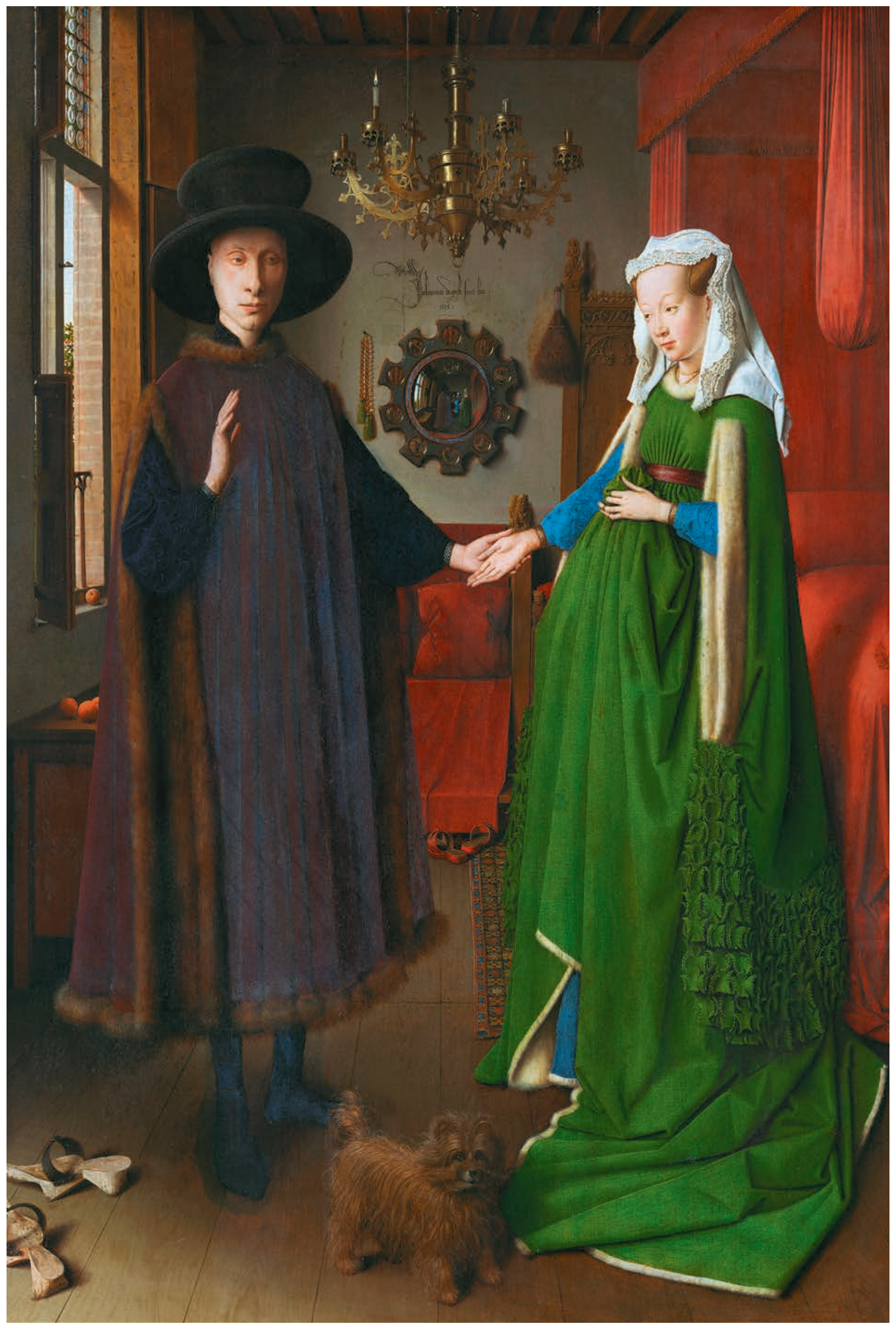
James Baresel is a freelance writer who has contributed to periodicals as varied as Fine Art Connoisseur, Military History, Claremont Review of Books, and New Eastern Europe.

Albrecht Dürer's achievements were held in high regard by Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci.



"Portrait of a Man With a Medal of Cosimo the Elder," 1474, by Sandro Botticelli. Tempera on panel, 22.4 inches by 17.3 inches. Uffizi Museum, Florence, Italy.

ALL PHOTOS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN



"Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife," 1434, by Jan van Eyck. Oil on panel; 32.4 inches by 23.6 inches. National Gallery, London.

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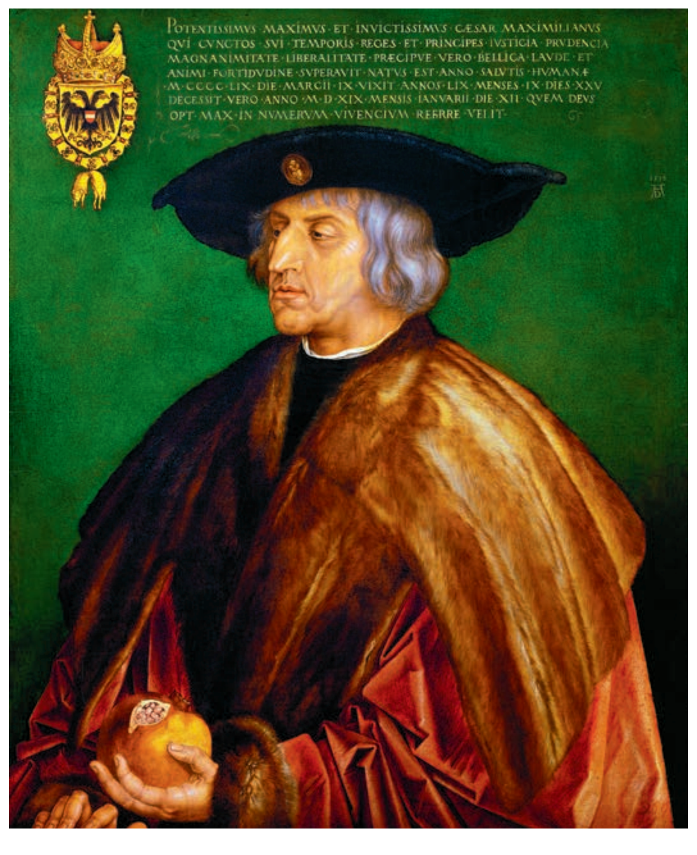
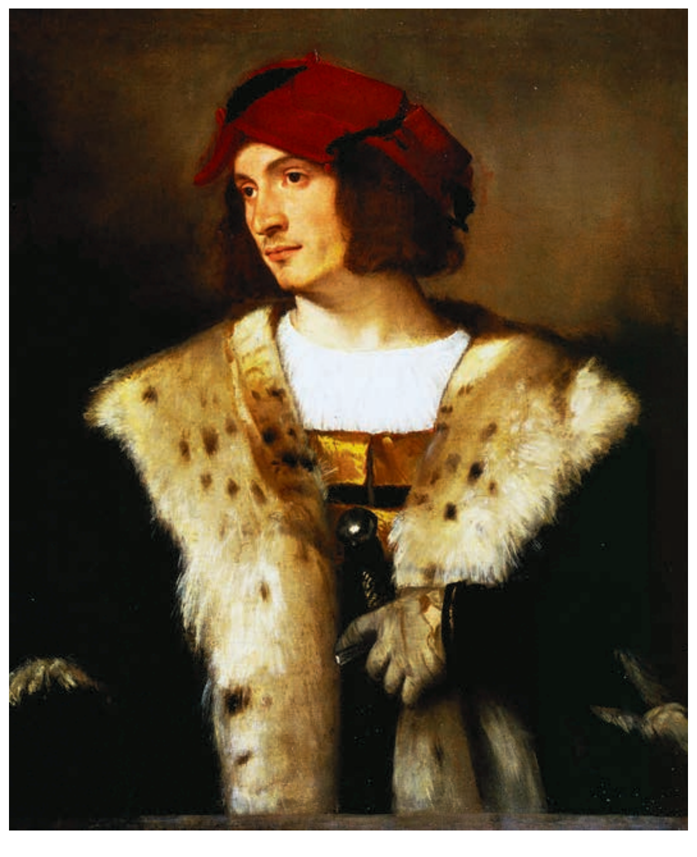


"Portrait of Emperor Maximilian I," 1519, by Albrecht Dürer. Oil on panel; Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, Germany.



"Portrait of a Man in a Red Cap," circa 1510, by Titian. Oil on canvas; 32 3/8 inches by 28 inches. Frick Collection.

BOOK REVIEW

'Gettysburg: Three Days That Saved the United States'

An engaging, informative look at America's most famous battle

DUSTIN BASS

A small college town in southern Pennsylvania is the home of the most famous, the most bloody, and the most decisive battle of the Civil War. It is also home to one of the most famous speeches in American history.

The town of Gettysburg has a population of less than 8,000. In July of 1863, more than six times that number became casualties of war. Fox Chapel Publishing is commemorating the epic battle with a 96-page book full of timelines, historic photos, and wonderfully written articles.

A Treasure for Civil War Enthusiasts

The book, titled "Gettysburg: Three Days That Saved the United States," which will be available in May, is a great collection of in-depth pieces providing insight into not just the battle overall but also specific parts of the battle, including the actions of specific generals, the hospital wards created on location and during the battle, and the religious aspects of the men who fought.

Historians and the editors of Fox Chapel Publishing have come together to assemble a memorable book for readers of all ages. The timelines of the start and end of the Civil War, which include landmark moments as well as the timeline of the three-day battle in Gettysburg itself, make for enjoyable reading and learning.

Confederate and Union Representation

The book provides an equal representation of both the North and the South. It may be one of the most fair works of modern creation. The work does not saddle up to any particular subject, such as slavery, Lincoln, Robert E. Lee, or even the preservation of the Union. So there does not appear to be any modern agenda tied to the articles, photos, or graphics. The only subject that plays a central role in every story is the location of the battle.

It is a nice reprieve from works that seem to reiterate that which we already know: The Civil War was an American tragedy and slavery was an evil. There are, however, articles that touch on slavery, as one would expect, and one, in particular, seen through the eyes of a free black, Alexander Newton. Newton's perspective on the reasons for his involvement in the war and how one should view the enemy pulls strongly at the heartstrings. The article exemplifies a man whose spiritual and emotional stature is towering.

"His return to the South opened old wounds as he was reminded of injustices committed against him and others. 'I confess that I had a burning desire to eke out some vengeance which for years had been pent up in my nature,' he admitted. His better angels prevailed. 'But of course, from the Christian standpoint, this was all wrong. I was all wrong. I was then on a higher mission than trying to get personal vengeance on those who had mistreated me and mine. I was fighting for the liberty of my people and the righting of many wrongs that belonged to their social and religious warfare.'"

Other Towering Figures

Of course, Lincoln is written about in this collection. The Great Liberator, however, is written about through the eyes of Gettysburg more broadly, and his "Gettysburg Address" specifically. The article titled "Lincoln's Gettysburg" addresses the search for the right man to lead the Union Army. The article discusses how Gen. George McClellan proved to not be that man, nor Ambrose Burnside or Joseph Hooker. The call to duty to lead the Union Army of the Potomac during the Battle of Gettysburg fell to Gen. George Gordon Meade, though noted in his unsent letter to Meade, Lincoln was frustrated with the general for not following up the Gettysburg victory to vanquish Lee and the Confederate Army. (The eventual selection of Ulysses S. Grant, who was in Vicksburg at the time, is mentioned.)

Among other figures discussed in the book is Confederate Gen. Jubal Early (a most interesting individual); Union Maj. Jonathan Letterman, surgeon director for the Army of the Potomac (a gritty and haunting article); and Reverend William Corby, the Irish Catholic clergyman. The story of Corby is especially moving in its "unusual event" of conducting absolution on the battlefield as soldiers prepared to enter the fight.

Among the figures written about is the most important of all: the fallen soldier. The subject of "The Unidentified Father" was initially unknown. All that was available to identify him was what he was holding: an ambrotype (an early type of photograph) of three children. The soldier proved to be Amos Humiston, a young, married father of three from New York. The emotionally captivating story is written by historian Mark H. Dunkelman, who has written a book on the young soldier titled "Gettysburg's Unknown Soldier."

Remembering and Preserving Gettysburg

The book comes to a close with focus pieces on remembering the great battle and preserving the land on which the battle took place. One piece, "The Art of War," is taken from perspectives of Civil War reenactors who dedicate themselves to not only reliving the moments of the Union and Confederate soldiers during the battle but also trying to honor those soldiers by replicating their personas.

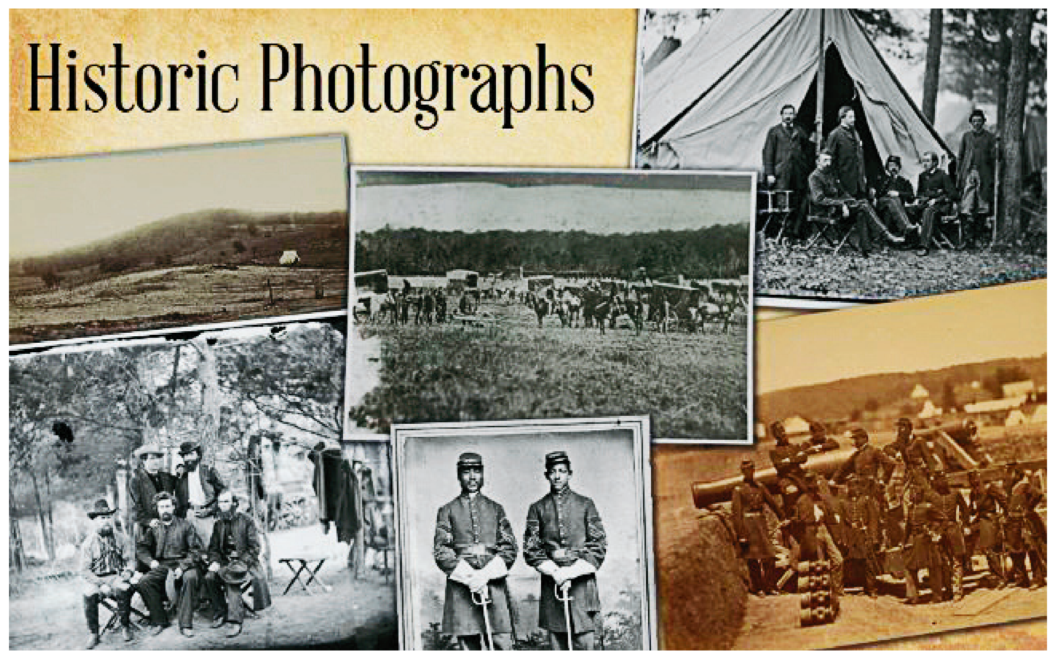
Lastly, and fittingly, the editors of Fox Chapel Publishing focus on the importance of Gettysburg then and now. The articles "Saving the Battlefield," "Monumental Fields," and "Going to Gettysburg," discuss how the battlefield has been preserved over time (and in different ways) and how to visit the battlefield.

A Short Book Worth Owning

Not only is "Gettysburg: Three Days That Saved the United States" a beautiful collection of articles, graphics, and photos of artifacts, soldiers, and leading members of both sides, but it is also an important book to own. One aspect of the book that I think important is how it can be used for educational purposes for children and teenagers. This book would provide the information necessary for understanding the battle, its many moving parts, the great speech from Lincoln, and the importance of knowing about the battle and preserving its place in American history and American geography.

As its release is near the end of the school year, it may just prompt families to visit the home of arguably the country's most important battle.

Dustin Bass is the host of Epoch TV's "About the Book: A Show about New Books With the Authors Who Wrote Them." He is an author and co-host of The Sons of History podcast.



Historic photos from "Gettysburg: Three Days That Saved the United States."

The book provides an equal representation of both the North and the South.

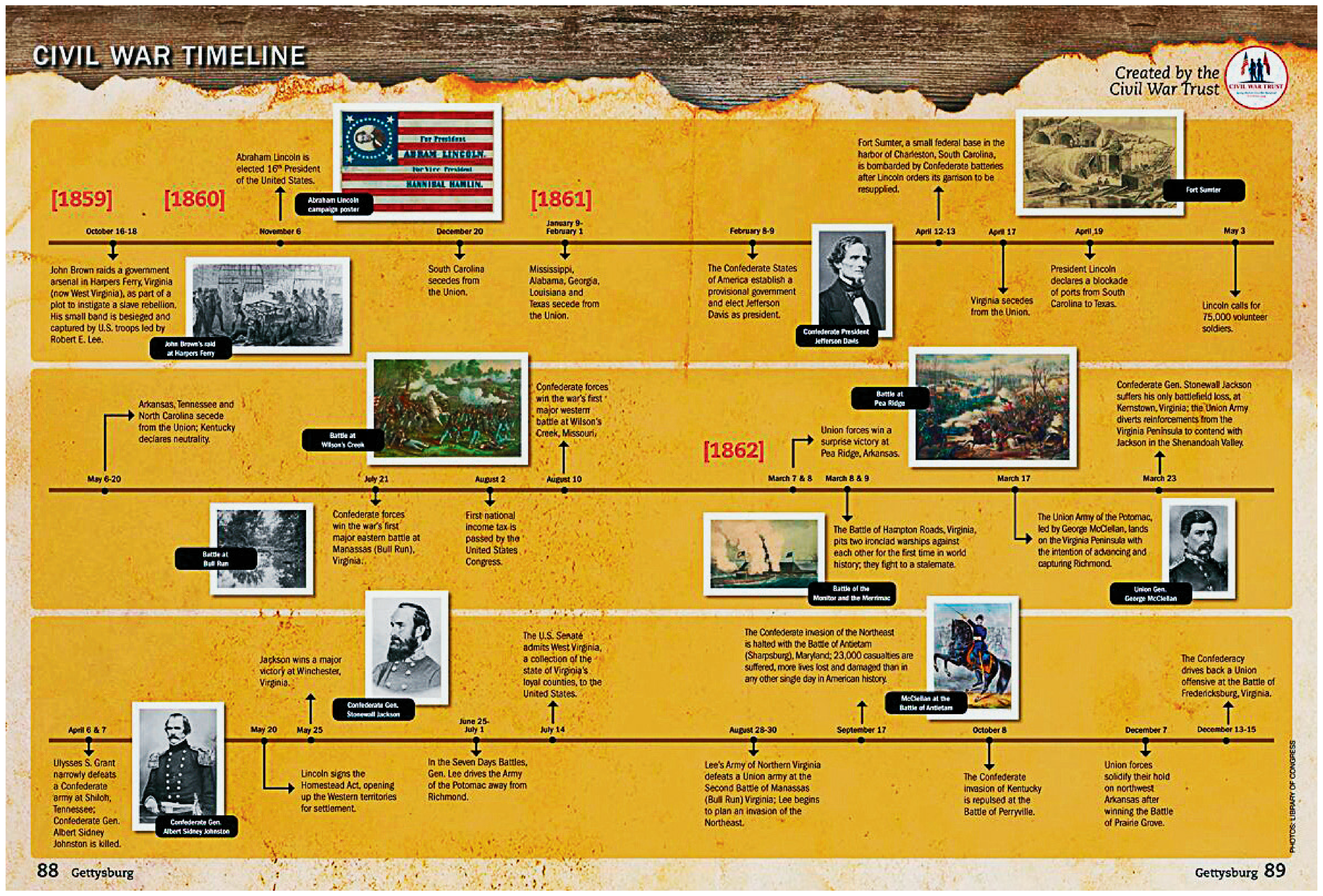
'Gettysburg: Three Days That Saved the United States'

Author
Ben Nussbaum

Publisher
Fox Chapel Publishing

Date
May 24, 2022

Paperback
96 pages



CIVIL WAR TIMELINE

Created by the Civil War Trust

[1859]

October 16-18: John Brown raids a government arsenal in Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia), as part of a plot to instigate a slave rebellion. His small band is besieged and captured by U.S. troops led by Robert E. Lee.

John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry

[1860]

November 6: Abraham Lincoln is elected 16th President of the United States.

Abraham Lincoln campaign poster

December 20: South Carolina secedes from the Union.

[1861]

January 9-February 1: Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas secede from the Union.

February 8-9: The Confederate States of America establish a provisional government and elect Jefferson Davis as president.

Confederate President Jefferson Davis

April 12-13: Fort Sumter, a small federal base in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, is bombarded by Confederate batteries after Lincoln orders its garrison to be resupplied.

Fort Sumter

April 17: Virginia secedes from the Union.

April 19: President Lincoln declares a blockade of ports from South Carolina to Texas.

May 3: Lincoln calls for 75,000 volunteer soldiers.

May 6-20: Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina secede from the Union; Kentucky declares neutrality.

July 21: Confederate forces win the war's first major eastern battle at Manassas (Bull Run), Virginia.

Battle at Bull Run

August 2: First national income tax is passed by the United States Congress.

August 10: Confederate forces win the war's first major western battle at Wilson's Creek, Missouri.

Battle at Wilson's Creek

[1862]

March 7 & 8: Union forces win a surprise victory at Pea Ridge, Arkansas.

Battle at Pea Ridge

March 8 & 9: The Battle of Hampton Roads, Virginia, pits two ironclad warships against each other for the first time in world history; they fight to a stalemate.

Battle of the Monitor and the Merrimac

March 17: The Union Army of the Potomac, led by George McClellan, lands on the Virginia Peninsula with the intention of advancing and capturing Richmond.

March 23: Confederate Gen. Stonewall Jackson suffers his only battlefield loss, at Kernstown, Virginia; the Union Army diverts reinforcements from the Virginia Peninsula to contend with Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley.

Union Gen. George McClellan

April 6 & 7: Ulysses S. Grant narrowly defeats a Confederate army at Shiloh, Tennessee; Confederate Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston is killed.

Confederate Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston

May 20: Lincoln signs the Homestead Act, opening up the Western territories for settlement.

May 25: Jackson wins a major victory at Winchester, Virginia.

Confederate Gen. Stonewall Jackson

June 25-July 1: In the Seven Days Battles, Gen. Lee drives the Army of the Potomac away from Richmond.

July 14: The U.S. Senate admits West Virginia, a collection of the state of Virginia's loyal counties, to the United States.

August 28-30: Lee's Army of Northern Virginia defeats a Union army at the Second Battle of Manassas (Bull Run) Virginia; Lee begins to plan an invasion of the Northeast.

September 17: The Confederate invasion of the Northeast is halted with the Battle of Antietam (Sharpsburg), Maryland; 23,000 casualties are suffered, more lives lost and damaged than in any other single day in American history.

McClellan at the Battle of Antietam

October 8: The Confederate invasion of Kentucky is repulsed at the Battle of Perryville.

December 7: Union forces solidify their hold on northwest Arkansas after winning the Battle of Prairie Grove.

December 13-15: The Confederacy drives back a Union offensive at the Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia.

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Timeline from "Gettysburg: Three Days That Saved the United States."

REWIND, REVIEW, AND RE-RATE

A Fascinating Espionage Film Based on Real Events

IAN KANE

ALL PHOTOS BY TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

Royal Navy Lt. Cmdr. Ewan Montagu (Clifton Webb, L) and Lt. George Acres (Robert Flemyng) receive advice from a scientist (Miles Malleson) in "The Man Who Never Was."

If you're in the mood for a little wartime espionage cinema, there's an excellent film that just might fit the bill. Based on a real-life grand deception that was developed during World War II, 1956's "The Man Who Never Was" is entertaining throughout its one-hour, 43-minute running time. It is based on a book of the same name authored by former British navy officer Ewen Montagu and adapted for the silver screen by screenwriter Nigel Balchin.

The film begins in London during the spring of 1943. The British high command has eliminated the German presence from many regions, including all of North Africa, but the Germans are making a stand on the beautiful island of Sicily. The Nazis are so well dug in that the Brits estimate that a landing on Sicilian shores would result in at least a 30-percent casualty rate.

So, navy chiefs task their Naval Intelligence Division with devising a plan that will make the Germans think the Brits are attacking somewhere else in the hopes that the Nazis will divert some of their forces.

Royal Navy Lt. Cmdr. Ewan Montagu (Clifton Webb) concocts an unusual plan: securing a corpse, dressing it up as if it belonged to a British officer who drowned at sea, and having it drift ashore in Spain. Fake, supposedly secret documents that outline an Allied invasion of Greece, rather than the more obvious target of Sicily, would be stashed on the body.

A particular coastal town in Spain is chosen as the target for the body because a known master German spy resides there, and the local medical facilities aren't ideal for performing thorough autopsies.

The only problem that Montagu can't quite figure out is how to make the body seem as if it had died by drowning, since the Germans might be able to perform a decent enough autopsy to discover that the man had died long before going into the water.

Montagu consults a medical expert and peppers him with questions regarding this conundrum of faking a corpse's death by drowning. After receiving some helpful advice, which involves securing a cadaver that has died of pneumonia (since moisture would be present in the lungs at death—similar to drowning), he consults his superiors, who give him the green light.

Lt. George Acres (Robert Flemyng) is Montagu's right-hand man, who helps him mastermind the unique, brilliant scheme. Together, they secure the body of a man who recently died from pneumonia and dress it up as if it were a fake officer named Maj. William Martin, with documents that portray him as a special intelligence operative. But will their unorthodox plan be able to fool the best of German intelligence?

Lucy (Gloria Grahame) agrees to pretend to be the fiancée of the man who never was.

Will their unorthodox plan be able to fool German intelligence?

The recently released 'Operation Mincemeat' explores the same true story.

'The Man Who Never Was'

Director:
Ronald Neame

Starring:
Clifton Webb, Gloria Grahame, Robert Flemyng, Stephen Boyd

Not Rated

Running Time:
1 hour, 43 minutes

Release Date:
Feb. 23, 1956

★★★★☆

A War Film With No Action

Warning: There isn't a lot of action to be seen in this film, but there is tension and nail-biting scenes as the Brits and Germans try to outwit each other. There's also some sublime acting to soak in—with mostly convincing performances by the stellar cast.

An interesting subplot involves a young lady named Pam (Josephine Griffin), who works in Montagu's office and is secretly enamored of him. Although she is tasked with writing a fictitious love letter that is to be stashed on the corpse, her roommate Lucy (Gloria Grahame) is much more advanced in that department, and she's the one who actually ends up writing the letter—posing as the dead officer's fiancée (a decision she might regret later).

The film is thoroughly entertaining as long as one doesn't expect to see the World War II equivalent of James Bond running around or anything. This is a real-life tale of intrigue and espionage, and it's worth watching to see how the British concocted and carried out their plan (and if it succeeded) on that basis alone.

Ian Kane is an U.S. Army veteran, author, filmmaker, and actor. He is dedicated to the development and production of innovative, thought-provoking, character-driven films and books of the highest quality.

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