

Drawn to Faces

Catherine Ezell

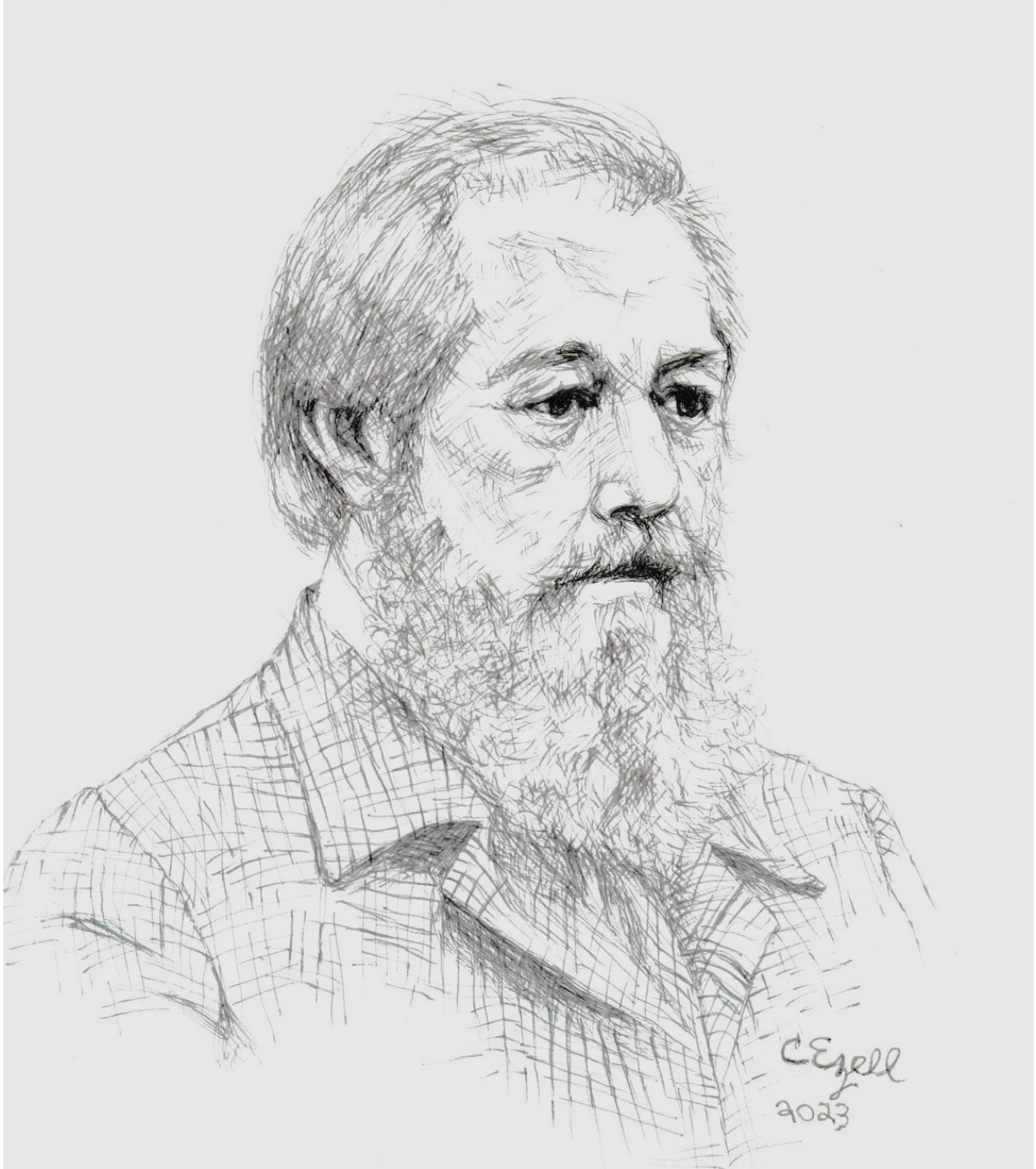
John Singer Sargent defined a portrait as “a likeness of someone with something slightly wrong about the mouth.” Before photography, portraits were important for identification records and displaying one’s class station in life, with jewelry and finery included. Modern artists create portraits in abstraction or as self-expression. Combining my love of literature and a compulsion toward drawing and painting, I find myself challenged to convey the characters and personalities of authors from how I read their works. By studying words on a page, I imagine what an author is thinking in his writing, and attempt to show on his face the motions of the mind as they flow from one emotion or idea to another.

In a museum, the most compelling portraits, those that I want to revisit many times, are the ones that reveal in the expression a momentary thought or emotion and suggest another to follow momentarily. Narrative paintings do this by depicting actions and scenes of a fleeting moment while anticipating the next action to come. Titian’s “Rape of Europa” narrates the terror of abduction, then softens it with humorous hints of imminent sexual pleasure. The enigmatic smile of Leonardo da Vinci’s “Mona Lisa” puzzles and fascinates viewers with its changeable nuances. The penetrating eyes of Edouard Manet’s self-portrait intrigue viewers and pique curiosity about his impressionistic, painterly departure from realism.

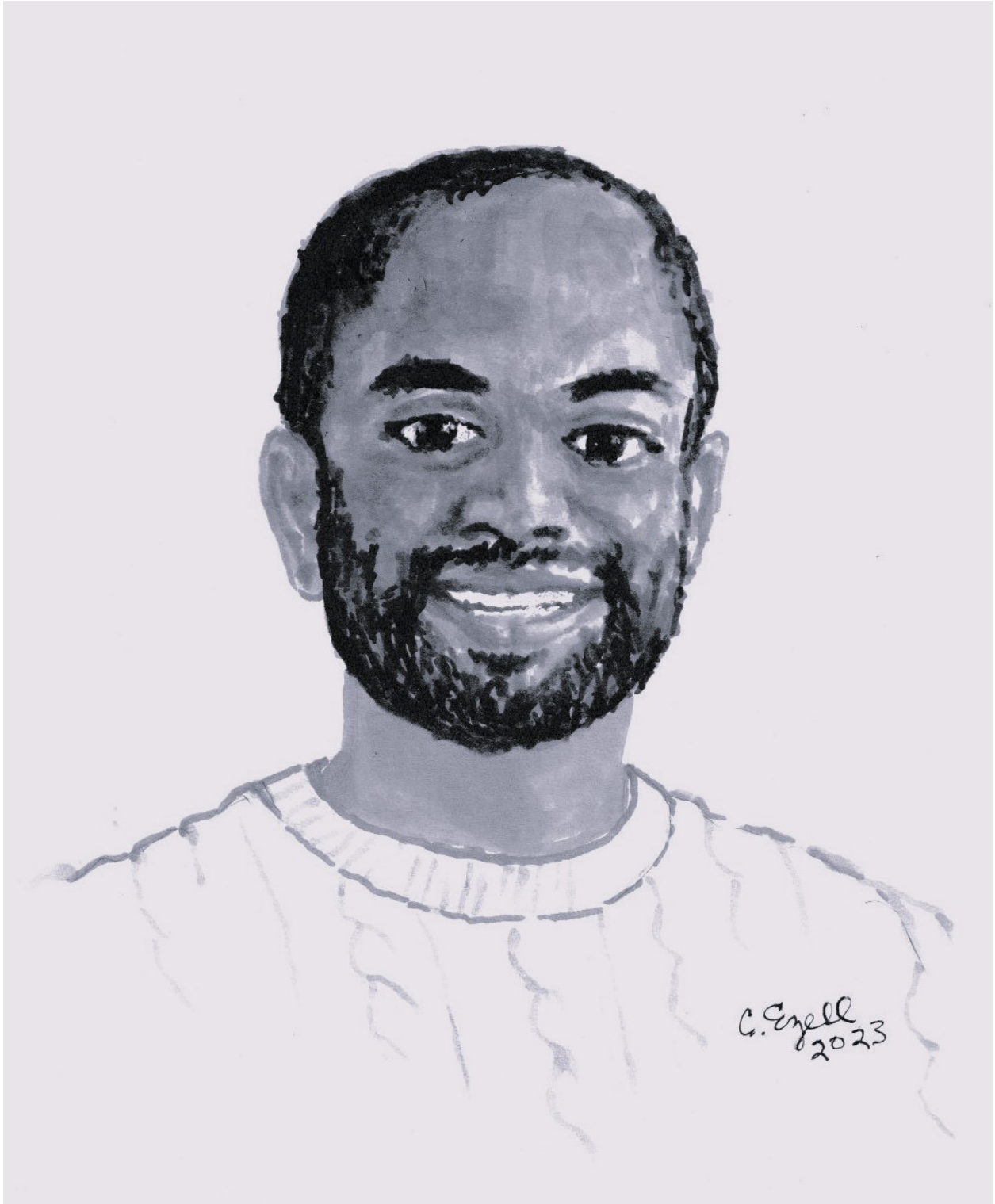
Good writers are contemplative, cerebral, and profound in the pursuit of truth about the human condition. By examining the faces and the writings of a unique, creative intelligence, I endeavor to interpret my perceptions visually. In a triptych drawing, “Southern Writers,” for example, gray graphite seems the appropriate medium to portray the wistful wisdom and genteel endurance prevalent in Eudora Welty’s work. Black charcoal pencil suits the bold, shocking, and confusing narration of William Faulkner’s stories. Softer vine charcoal lends Tennessee Williams a beguiling effect, echoing his romantically gentle plays that hide a disturbing underbelly of sex and violence.



Southern Writers: Eudora Welty, William Faulkner, and Tennessee Williams



Alexander Solzhenitsyn



Darshan Kalola



Mohammed Said Albalimi



Henry Stratakis-Allen



Cindy Chopoidaló