

Some obscure fact

by [Megan McDermott](#) in the [January 15, 2020](#) issue

At some medieval point, unicorns signaled incarnation, making whatever virgin lured one to her lap some sort of Mary. I had never heard of that, not through all of undergrad or three years of divinity school. I'd never witnessed a preacher employ unicorns as sermon metaphor or heard such a simile in prayer, embedded in some liturgy striving towards freshness. Instead I learned it in a café, from a book bought on vacation: *Hieronymus Bosch: Between Heaven and Hell*. Art reminds me: we lose symbols all the time. At a museum in Madrid, I stared at an infant Jesus squeezing Mary's breasts, her milk sprinkling onto purgatory's sinners—faith same in name encoded in images strange and unrelated to any belief I've ever had. Which of my meanings will expire without some obscure fact of history as frame? Is it only the name that lasts, pushing beyond all paradigms past and present? Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.