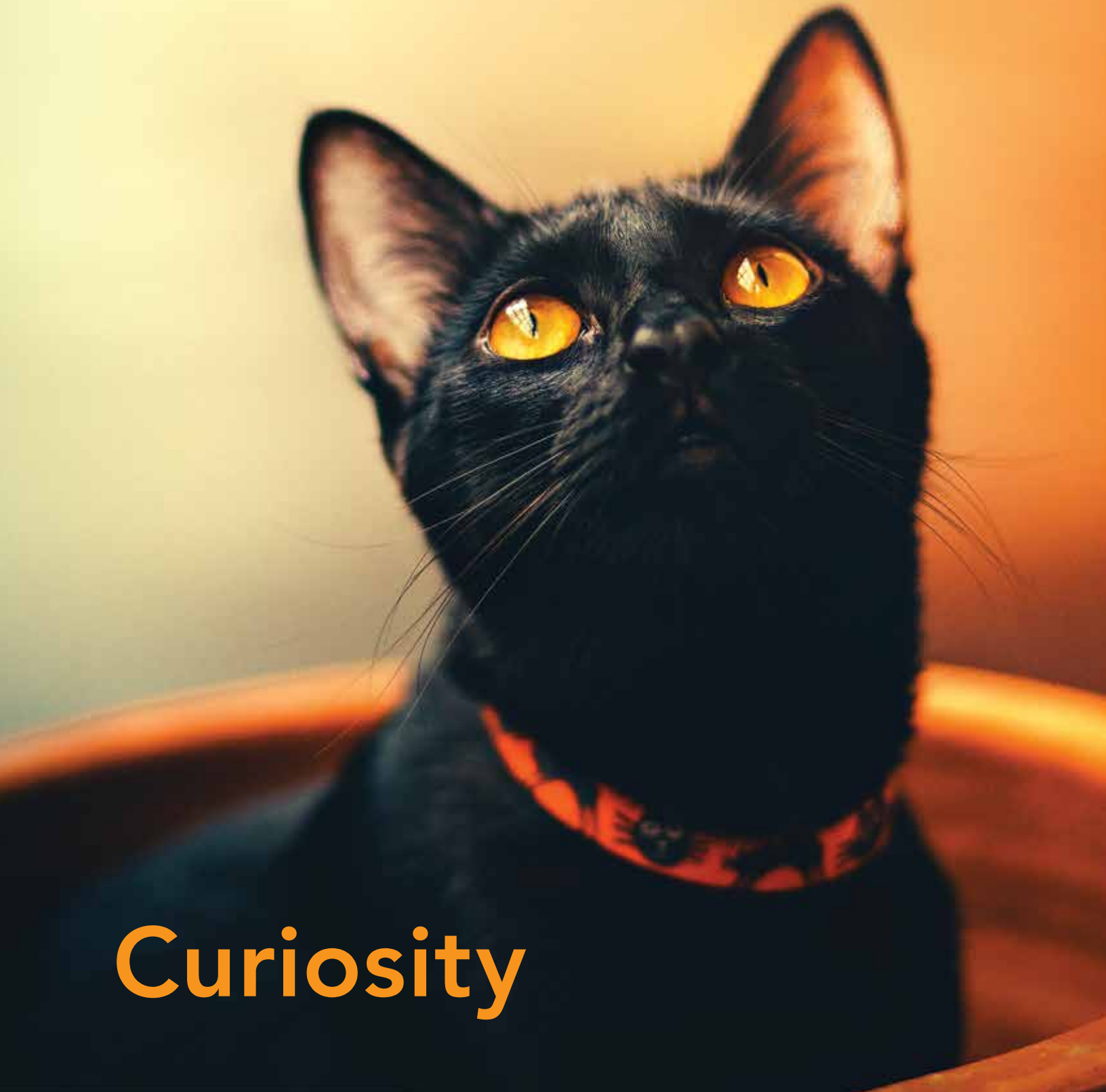




Fall | Winter 2018

OKLAHOMA  
**HUMANITIES**

Culture | Issues | Ideas



**Curiosity**



**ANN THOMPSON**  
Executive Director

## The Case for Curiosity

“Curiosity” is a word that is central to our council’s work. We inspire curiosity and promote understanding because information, knowledge, and wisdom are critical to our personal lives and to our roles as engaged citizens. This defines Oklahoma Humanities’ mission.

An ongoing challenge for us as a state humanities council (there are 56 of us nationwide) is explaining that word “humanities.” We’re sometimes confused with humane societies and humanitarian causes; but even when we are recognized as the cultural organization that we are, the separation between the arts and humanities is blurred.

We are first cousins to the arts. We love our colleagues at the Oklahoma Arts Council. We sometimes fund arts programs that have interpretive content. But because we are mandated by our affiliate, the National Endowment for the Humanities, to provide public programming based in the humanities disciplines, we need to make that gray

area between the arts and humanities a bright line.

This is where “curiosity” helps illuminate our mission. Curiosity is the basis of intellectual pursuit and understanding. Our upcoming “Curiosity Fest” in Oklahoma City on October 20<sup>th</sup> [see p. 5] recognizes the scholarship of the humanities with topics and formats that are engaging, fun, and sometimes offbeat.

One of the sessions is “Harry Potter, Fantastic Beasts, and the Meaning of Life.” Other topics include memes, Bob Dylan, *Game of Thrones*, comic books, and what it’s like to live to be 100. Civics lessons, Oklahoma’s shameful lynching heritage, and the Cherokee language are also among the twenty-four sessions. Our featured speaker for the festival is Jad Abumrad, founder of NPR’s *Radiolab*.

Join us October 20<sup>th</sup> for Curiosity Fest—and bring your inquiring mind! I know you will enjoy this magazine issue, a companion to our festival dedicated to curiosity.



*Curiosity is the very basis of education and if you tell me that curiosity killed the cat, I say only the cat died nobly. —Arnold Edinborough*





# OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES

Culture | Issues | Ideas

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### CURIOSITY

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Reader Feedback



Thank you for the Spring/Summer 2018 issue entitled TRUTH. The current assault on journalism is an assault on democracy and is misunderstood by far too many. For those who are serious about learning the facts and finding truth, this issue provides a good start—practical help to sort out the real news from the not real news in today's noisy markets. The work of professional journalists is not without risk. When they stand up for themselves, they stand up for all of us. –Marilyn Barton, Edmond

I've been enjoying the current TRUTH issue of Oklahoma Humanities, as I always do. When I congratulated [Shad Satterthwaite] on his article, he said that you'd had lots of polar opposite responses to the issue. I guess that's a good thing if it gets people talking! –Preston Draper, Ada

If you've angered folks on both sides of the aisle, you've probably done your job. –Philip Patterson, Distinguished Professor of Mass Communication, Oklahoma Christian University

Oklahoma Humanities [TRUTH, Spring/Summer 2018] arrived the other day—what a timely issue. –Tom Averill, Topeka, KS

Congratulations on the latest issue of Oklahoma Humanities [TRUTH, Spring/Summer 2018]. I thought the VIETNAM cover was splendid, but the Vanitas cover article about the press and ethical journalism is even more meaningful. –Lou Moore Hale, Spring, TX

I love your magazine—read it cover to cover and then never throw it away. –Joel "Jody" DeFehr, Oklahoma City

Several months ago, Jolene Poore, Director of Ada Public Library, invited me to join a "wonderful book club and discussion series," Let's Talk About It, Oklahoma. The experience has been wonderful. Good books, good company . . . what more could a person hope for? Thank you for such a positive enterprise. –Preston Draper, Ada

2017 Readers' Survey Results

Readers tell us they appreciate the varied content and viewpoints presented in Oklahoma Humanities magazine. An overwhelming number of those surveyed (98%) say the magazine increases their awareness and understanding of topics. Readers share content with others (87%) and feel they are more open-minded about diverse people and perspectives (99%). Following are just a few of the written comments that positively inspire us. Read what others are saying about Oklahoma Humanities, then give us your feedback [info below]. –Carla Walker, Editor

- From beautiful cover art to extraordinary editing and style, Oklahoma Humanities is a class act—delightful and important.
• In a state where cultural aspects are served poorly by most media, Oklahoma Humanities magazine is a bright spot of enlightenment.
• The VIETNAM issue is something I will pass down to my grandchildren.
• The magazine is one of the best published. It takes a subject and thoroughly represents the points and counterpoints.

- I am a retired senior citizen and activities are somewhat limited, but my brain certainly isn't, so I appreciate the varied content. It gives me food for thought and conversation with friends and family.
• Covers issues that no other publication does in an objective way.
• Always on the cutting edge.
• The magazine makes Oklahoma a better place to live!

2018 Magazine Awards



2018 Great Plains Journalism Awards Finalist | Magazine Feature Writing "On True War Stories" By Viet Thanh Nguyen

Finalist | Column Writing The Editor's Desk By Carla Walker

2018 Society of Professional Journalists Awards Oklahoma Pro Chapter

Third Place | Best PR Publication

First Place | Best PR Publication Cover VIETNAM | Fall/Winter 2017

Third Place | Best PR Publication Cover POETRY | Spring/Summer 2017

Second Place | General Writing "On True War Stories" By Viet Thanh Nguyen

Third Place | General Writing "Documenting the Vietnam War" Interview with Lynn Novick By Carla Walker

SEND YOUR IDEAS, opinions, and suggestions. Email the editor, carla@okhumanities.org, or comment via Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.

TAKE OUR READERS' SURVEY! The 2018 magazine survey will be open October 1-31. Your feedback helps us evaluate the impact of the publication and shape content for future issues. Let us hear from you—and thanks for your participation. I okhumanities.org



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*Oklahoma Humanities* magazine is published biannually (March and September) by Oklahoma Humanities (OH), 424 Colcord Dr., Suite E, Oklahoma City, OK 73102, (405) 235-0280, ohc@okhumanities.org. See pages 46-48 for information on the OH organization, board of trustees, grants, and programs. Our privacy policy is posted on our website.

*Oklahoma Humanities* magazine is an award-winning collection of culture, issues, and ideas—a rich mix of humanities scholarship, insightful narratives, informed opinions, and beautiful images, for a read that is smart, balanced, educational, and entertaining. Subscribe online: okhumanities.org or call (405) 235-0280.

*Oklahoma Humanities* magazine is free of advocacy and advertising. It is supported by donors (like you) and distributed as educational programming, free of charge via two-year subscriptions rotated annually to serve as many Oklahomans as possible. To continue your print subscription, make a gift of support (use enclosed envelope or visit okhumanities.org/donate) or contact us and request continued mailings. Back issues of *Oklahoma Humanities* are archived on our website. Reading group and classroom use are encouraged. Other reproduction requires written permission. Contact: ohc@okhumanities.org.

*Oklahoma Humanities* awards include thirty-one Oklahoma Society of Professional Journalists awards, including multiple first place honors for Best Writing, Best Cover, and Best PR Publication; eight Great Plains Journalism awards, including firsts for Best Magazine Feature Writing and Best Magazine Page Design, and as a finalist for the 2017 Great Plains Magazine of the Year; three Central Oklahoma IABC Bronze Quill Awards; the State Historic Preservation Officer's Citation of Merit; and an Oklahoma Heritage Distinguished Editorial Award.

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## OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES PRESENTS



# SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20

CIVIC CENTER MUSIC HALL  
OKLAHOMA CITY

**CURIOSITY FEST** is a one-day festival of 24 fun, interactive, fast-paced, and sometimes offbeat sessions presented by Oklahoma's top humanities scholars. Attendees can expect to have their curiosity piqued, learn something unexpected, and leave with a greater understanding of the importance of the humanities in our daily lives.

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 11 AM **Box Office opens**, food samples, vendor booths
- 12 PM **Festival opener**, music by Adam and Kizzie
- 1 PM-5:45 PM **Smörgåsbord of sessions**
- 6 PM **Food, music, beer tasting**
- 7 PM **Doors open**, Jad Abumrad, founder of *Radiolab*

### TICKETS

- \$30 **General Admission**
- \$20 **Students** 18 and under or with a current student ID
- \$100 **VIP** includes General Admission and reception with Jad Abumrad, 6:30-7:30 (Reserved seating in auditorium for Abumrad's presentation)

### FEATURING

# JAD ABUMRAD

FOUNDER, NPR'S RADIOLAB



OKLAHOMA  
HUMANITIES



EVENT AND TICKET INFORMATION: [okhumanities.org/curiosityfest](http://okhumanities.org/curiosityfest)

Major Sponsors: NBC Oklahoma, The Chickasaw Nation, Full Circle Bookstore, KGOU, KOSU, KWGS

# The Editor's Desk

CARLA WALKER

carla@okhumanities.org

For as long as we have roamed the earth and wondered at the universe, curiosity has shaped human experience. Even before the development of language, it is not a stretch to imagine that among the first thoughts of human beings was, "That's curious . . ." We were and are by nature inquisitive.

Finding answers was not enough; curiosity propelled us from one question to the next, a driving force leading to ever greater discoveries and knowledge. At some point in our evolutionary development, we began framing the unknown as "curiosities," entities unto themselves—marvels, wonders, the objects of our inquisitiveness. By the time of the Renaissance, collecting these wonders became the vogue, a kind of status symbol touting an owner's intelligence and appreciation for the bizarre and mysterious: sea coral, minerals specimens, anatomical drawings, carvings of mythical beasts, miniature artworks, dried exotic plants from far off lands.

The Renaissance was marked by curiosity and by discovery: of new continents and new ideas that advanced cartography, navigation, astronomy, and anatomy. "A compilation of remarkable things was attempted as a mirror of contemporary knowledge," notes Wolfram Koeppel of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. "The rarer an item, the more attractive it appeared. . . . The *Kunstkammer* [cabinet of art and marvels] was undoubtedly a typical product of its time, a manifestation of the thirst for humanist learning."

Collections were often assembled in specially-made cases with drawers and shelves that allowed organization of objects according to genre or aesthetics, a further expression of the owner's sensibilities. "The objects were often grouped by similarity and likeness," Sarah Suzuki of The Museum of Modern Art explains,



"as their owners tried to rationalize and organize a diversity of information." These Cabinets of Curiosities, as depicted in the painting above by Domenico Remps, became not only collections of objects but also collections of ideas, organized in an attempt to find and communicate *meaning*. In a precursor to modern museums, the well-to-do expanded their collections from cabinets to small libraries, suites of rooms, gardens, and, for the most wealthy, separate structures which might be visited with special permission.

One of the greatest minds of the period, perhaps of any age, was Leonardo da Vinci. His notebooks are the epitome of curiosity: Drawings of art and architecture. Notations on wave patterns and weaponry. Even reminders to ask various tinkerers how things work. His drawing of Vitruvian Man, pictured opposite, has become a symbol of knowledge at the crossroads of art and science. But biographer Walter Isaacson cautions us against labeling the man as "genius," making it easy to overlook that Leonardo was a man, just a man, and what set him apart was an unquenchable pursuit of curiosity.

Little did Leonardo know that his Vitruvian Man would one day rocket to space. Vitruvian Man was adopted as the central symbol in the official patch for

Expedition 37 to the International Space Station. In a description of the patch, designers note:



Da Vinci's drawing . . . is often used as a symbol of symmetry of the human body and the universe as a whole. Almost perfect in symmetry as well, the International Space Station, with its solar wings spread out and illuminated by the first rays of dawn, is pictured as a mighty beacon arcing upwards across our night skies, the ultimate symbol of science and technology of our age. (nasa.gov)

Curiosity is within all of us. Curiosity can build nations and bridge cultures. And so we bring you this Cabinet of Curiosities, an issue filled with the musings of poets, writers, and humanities scholars who answered the challenge: "Tell us. What makes you curious?"



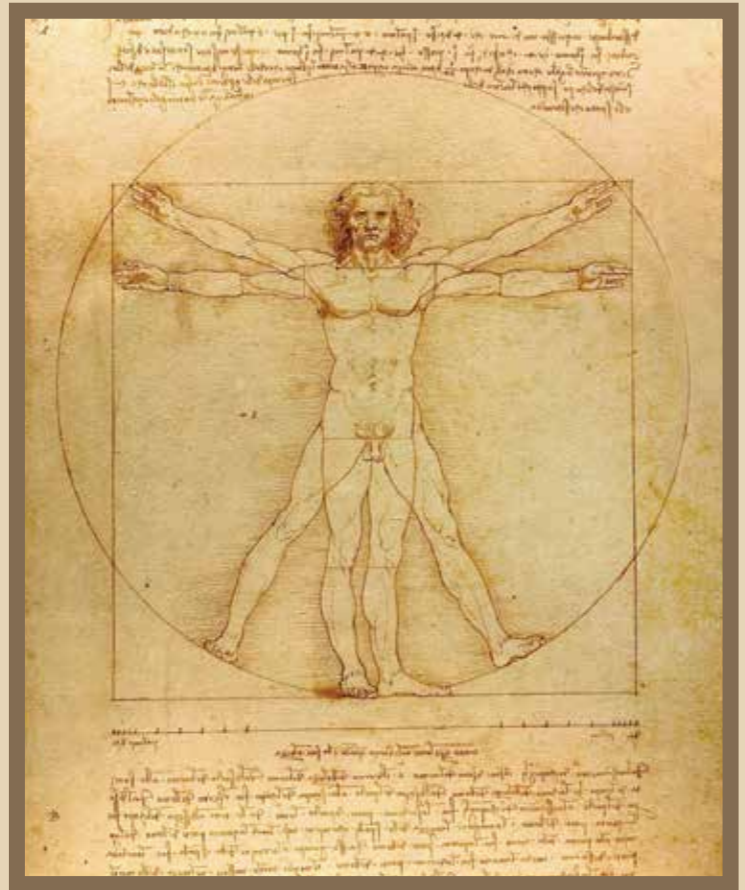
*The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity. —Dorothy Parker*

Editor's note: We defy the adage that "curiosity killed the cat." He is alive and well, pattering through our pages, drawing attention to thoughts on curiosity. Long live the cat!



Excerpt from  
**LEONARDO  
DA VINCI**

WALTER ISAACSON



Vitruvian Man, Leonardo da Vinci. Gallerie dell'Accademia [PD] Wikimedia Commons

*I can*  
**ALSO  
PAINT**

Around the time that he reached the unnerving milestone of turning thirty, Leonardo da Vinci wrote a letter to the ruler of Milan listing the reasons he should be given a job. He had been moderately successful as a painter in Florence, but he had trouble finishing his commissions and was searching for new horizons. In the first ten paragraphs, he touted his engineering skills, including his ability to design bridges, waterways, cannons, armored vehicles, and public buildings. Only in the eleventh paragraph, at the end, did he add that he was also an artist. “Likewise in painting, I can do everything possible,” he wrote.

Yes, he could. He would go on to create the two most famous paintings in history, *The Last Supper* and the *Mona Lisa*. But in his own mind, he was just as much a man of science and engineering. With a passion that was both playful and obsessive, he pursued innovative studies of anatomy, fossils, birds, the heart, flying machines, optics, botany, geology, water flows, and weaponry. Thus he became the archetype of the Renaissance Man, an inspiration to all who believe that the “infinite works of nature,” as he put it, are woven together in a unity filled with marvelous patterns. His ability to combine art and science, made iconic by his drawing of a perfectly proportioned man spread-eagle inside a circle and square, known as *Vitruvian Man*, made him history’s most creative genius.

His scientific explorations informed his art. He peeled flesh off the faces of cadavers, delineated the muscles that move the lips, and then painted the world’s most memorable smile. He studied human skulls,

made layered drawings of the bones and teeth, and conveyed the skeletal agony of *Saint Jerome in the Wilderness*. He explored the mathematics of optics, showed how light rays strike the cornea, and produced magical illusions of changing visual perspectives in *The Last Supper*.

By connecting his studies of light and optics to his art, he mastered the use of shading and perspective to model objects on a two-dimensional surface so they look three-dimensional. This ability to “make a flat surface display a body as if modeled and separated from this plane,” Leonardo said, was “the first intention of the painter.” Largely due to his work, dimensionality became the supreme innovation of Renaissance art.

As he aged, he pursued his scientific inquiries not just to serve his art but out of a joyful instinct to fathom the profound beauties of creation. When he groped for a theory of why the sky appears blue, it was not simply to inform his paintings. His curiosity was pure, personal, and delightfully obsessive.

But even when he was engaged in blue-sky thinking, his science was not a separate endeavor from his art. Together they served his driving passion, which was nothing less than knowing everything there was to know about the world, including how we fit into it. He had a reverence for the wholeness of nature and a feel for the harmony of its patterns, which he saw replicated in phenomena large and small. In his notebooks he would record curls of hair, eddies of water, and whirls of air, along with some stabs at the math that might underlie such spirals. While at Windsor Castle looking at the swirling power of the “Deluge drawings” that he made near the end of his life, I asked the curator, Martin Clayton, whether he thought Leonardo had done them as works of art or of science. Even as I spoke, I realized it was a dumb question. “I do not think that Leonardo would have made that distinction,” he replied.

I embarked on this book because Leonardo da Vinci is the ultimate example of the main theme of my previous biographies: how the ability to make connections across disciplines—arts and sciences, humanities and technology—is a key to innovation, imagination, and genius. Benjamin Franklin, a previous subject of mine, was a Leonardo of his era: with no formal education, he taught himself to become an imaginative polymath who was Enlightenment America’s best scientist, inventor, diplomat, writer, and business strategist. He proved by flying a kite that lightning is electricity, and he invented a rod to tame it. He devised

bifocal glasses, enchanting musical instruments, clean-burning stoves, charts of the Gulf Stream, and America’s unique style of homespun humor. Albert Einstein, when he was stymied in his pursuit of his theory of relativity, would pull out his violin and play Mozart, which helped him reconnect with the harmonies of the cosmos. Ada Lovelace, whom I profiled in a book on innovators, combined the poetic sensibility of her father, Lord Byron, with

her mother’s love of the beauty of math to envision a general-purpose computer. And Steve Jobs climaxed his product launches with an image of street signs showing the intersection of the liberal arts and technology. Leonardo was his hero. “He saw beauty in both art and engineering,” Jobs said, “and his ability to combine them was what made him a genius.”

Yes, he was a genius: wildly imaginative, passionately curious, and creative across multiple disciplines. But we should be wary of that word. Slapping the “genius” label on Leonardo oddly minimizes him by making it seem as if he were touched by lightning. His early biographer, Giorgio Vasari, a sixteenth-century artist, made this mistake: “Sometimes, in supernatural fashion, a single person is marvelously endowed

by heaven with beauty, grace, and talent in such abundance that his every act is divine and everything he does clearly comes from God rather than from human art.” In fact, Leonardo’s genius was a human one, wrought by his own will and ambition. It did not come from being the divine recipient, like Newton or Einstein, of a mind with so much processing power that we mere mortals cannot fathom it. Leonardo had almost no schooling and could barely read Latin or do long division. His genius was of the type we can understand, even take lessons from. It was based on skills we can aspire to improve in ourselves, such as curiosity and intense observation. He had an imagination so excitable that it flirted with the edges of fantasy, which is also something we can try to preserve in ourselves and indulge in our children.

*My* starting point for this book was not Leonardo’s art masterpieces but his notebooks. His mind, I think, is best revealed in the more than 7,200 pages of his notes and scribbles that, miraculously, survive to this day. Paper turns out to be a superb information-storage technology, still readable after five hundred years, which our own tweets likely won’t be.

Fortunately, Leonardo could not afford to waste paper, so he crammed every inch of his pages with miscellaneous drawings and looking-glass jottings that seem random but provide



Mona Lisa, Leonardo da Vinci, ca. 1503-1516. Louvre Museum [PD] Wikimedia Commons





*His notebooks are the greatest record of curiosity ever created, a wondrous guide to the person whom the eminent art historian Kenneth Clark called “the most relentlessly curious man in history.”*

Detail, sketch from Leonardo's notebook. Library of Congress

intimations of his mental leaps. Scribbled alongside each other, with rhyme if not reason, are math calculations, sketches of his devilish young boyfriend, birds, flying machines, theater props, eddies of water, blood valves, grotesque heads, angels, siphons, plant stems, sawed-apart skulls, tips for painters, notes on the eye and optics, weapons of war, fables, riddles, and studies for paintings. The cross-disciplinary brilliance whirls across every page, providing a delightful display of a mind dancing with nature. His notebooks are the greatest record of curiosity ever created, a wondrous guide to the person whom the eminent art historian Kenneth Clark called “the most relentlessly curious man in history.”

My favorite gems in his notebooks are his to-do lists, which sparkle with his curiosity. One of them, dating from the 1490s in Milan, is that day's list of things he wants to learn. “The measurement of Milan and its suburbs,” is the first entry. This has a practical purpose, as revealed by an item later in the list: “Draw Milan.” Others show him relentlessly seeking out people whose brains he could pick: “Get the master of arithmetic to show you how to square a triangle. . . . Ask Giannino the Bombardier about how the tower of Ferrara is walled. . . . Ask Benedetto Protinari by what means they walk on ice in Flanders. . . . Get a master of hydraulics to tell you how to repair a lock, canal and mill in the Lombard manner. . . . Get

the measurement of the sun promised me by Maestro Giovanni Francese, the Frenchman.” He is insatiable.

Over and over again, year after year, Leonardo lists things he must do and learn. Some involve the type of close observation most of us rarely pause to do. “Observe the goose's foot: if it were always open or always closed the creature would not be able to make any kind of movement.” Others involve why-is-the-sky-blue questions about phenomena so commonplace that we rarely pause to wonder about them. “Why is the fish in the water swifter than the bird in the air when it ought to be the contrary since the water is heavier and thicker than the air?”

Best of all are the questions that seem completely random. “Describe the tongue of the woodpecker,” he instructs himself. Who on earth would decide one day, for no apparent reason, that he wanted to know what the tongue of a woodpecker looks like? How would you even find out? It's not information Leonardo needed to paint a picture or even to understand the flight of birds.

The reason he wanted to know was because he was Leonardo: curious, passionate, and always filled with wonder.

I had to push myself to be truly curious about the tongue of the woodpecker. But I did learn from Leonardo how a desire to marvel about the world that we encounter each day can make each moment of our lives richer.

I also discovered, at first to my consternation and then to my pleasure,

ISAACSON | cont. p. 44



Giant crossbow, *Codice Atlantico*, Leonardo da Vinci, ca. 1478-1519. Biblioteca Ambrosiana [PD] Wikimedia Commons



## Questions and answers

PETER A. GILBERT

With all the talk in the news today about alternative facts and untrue statements, I've been reminded that before Google and Wikipedia, the best source of accurate information was usually the local reference librarian. And I've been wondering what librarians might say was the oddest question they'd ever been asked.

One told me somebody once asked him, "Why do chickens walk like this?"—then proceeded to repeatedly jerk his head forward and back as far and as fast as he could. Another librarian told me that when a high school student asked, "Do you have any books about sex?" she was proud to think she'd handled the question ever so professionally and sensitively, until the young man interrupted, "No, not sex! Sects! S-E-C-T-S!" He wanted to learn about religious groups that had separated from the main body of believers.

My favorite question may be, "Do you have any books about horses' dreams?" "Well," the librarian said carefully, "we have books about horses, and we have books about dreams." "No!" the person interrupted, "Horses' dreams!" I mean, how could anyone know enough about that to write a book?

Then I hit the mother lode with an online story about a recently discovered box of questions that people had asked the New York Public Library, by phone or in person, between the 1940s and the 1980s. The article had photos of file cards with questions either hand-written or typed on a manual

typewriter. Questions like: "Are Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates the same person?" "Are black widow spiders more harmful dead or alive?" "Can the [New York Public Library] recommend a good forger?" "Has the gun with which Oswald shot President Kennedy been returned to the family?" "Does the Bible have a copyright?"

There was actually an answer to the question "What is the life span of an eyebrow hair?" that went like this: "Based on the book *Your Hair and Its Care*, it's one hundred and fifty days." Maybe the questioner had dyed their eyebrows and was wondering how long the new look would last.

And in 1946, a person asked, "I just saw a mouse in the kitchen. Is DDT OK to use?" It was 1962 before Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, a seminal book written for the general public, answered that question definitively, with an emphatic "NO!"—an answer that improved the world immeasurably.

PETER A. GILBERT recently retired from Vermont Humanities, where he served as Executive Director, 2002-2018. A graduate of Dartmouth College, Georgetown University Law Center, and the University of Virginia, he was previously Senior Assistant to the President and Associate Provost at Dartmouth College, a litigator at the Boston law firm of Hale and Dorr, and a faculty member at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. He is a frequent commentator on Vermont Public Radio and his book, *I Was Thinking...: Travels in the World of Ideas* (Wind Ridge Books 2012), includes more than sixty essays adapted from his commentaries. This article first aired as a commentary on Vermont Public Radio.

RABBIT HOLES...

REVOLUTION...

REDEMPTION...

REPEAT



"M.I. Stokes, McAlester, directed bloodhound search." C.J. Kaho, photographer, *Oklahoma Times*, July 21, 1937. Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society.

## TIME TRAVEL AMONG THE ARCHIVES

LARRY JOHNSON

Historians are fascinated by the unending comedy and tragedy of human folly: The general who drags elephants across the Alps. The empire that fights a land war in Asia. The assassination of an insignificant archduke. Even the everyman-turned-YouTube-celebrity and the Trump Administration's Twitter feed. All are *schadenfreude* for the historian. The excitement isn't a pathological desire to see civilization fail, but rather an unquenchable curiosity to discover if we have always been so stupid and, looking forward, if we as a species will ever ascend Maslow's hierarchy.

An archive of fragile documents and durable vellum ignites the curiosity of the historian, just as a lost desert city captivates the archaeologist. Somewhere among the

files and artifacts is a rich trove chronicling all the ways humans have made a mess of things. The historian knows the tale will end badly for someone—but there is hope. Hope that *this* time the human race will be victorious. That curiosity is something I know firsthand, for I am just such a historian.

I slide open a box, unscroll the cellulose film, thread it into the reader feeder hoping to find just the right quote from a long-forgotten newspaper article. And it happens. Some rip-roarin' yellow-journalism typesetter crafted a headline that is just as sexy now as it was to readers over a hundred years ago—clickbait the kids call it today. The article details just enough to make me want to know more. Channeling my inner Alice, I fall headlong down the hole.



NAME AND NUMBER OF CONVICT	NATIVITY	CRIME	WHEN RECEIVED			SENTENCE	
			MONTH	DAY	YEAR	Yrs.	Mos.
Claud Ray Kohl, #12931	Minnesota	Robbery 1st Degree	January	18	1924	5	Life



Prisoners breaking up rocks at a prison camp or road construction site, ca. 1934-1950. Lomax collection, Library of Congress

## FOLSOM PRISON

CALIFORNIA STATE PRISON AT FOLSOM FOLSOM PRISON

Name: Claud Ray Kohl. Register No. 12931

Alias: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: White.

County: Fresno. Received: JAN 18 1924

Crime: Robbery 1st. Sentence: 5-life.

Occupation: Cook. Term dates from 1/18/24.

Criminal Record: AS #304 Mo. State Pen. Oklahoma State Pen.

MARKS, SCARS AND HOLES

Round indented sc. bk of rt. shldr.

Elo. sc above lft breast.

sc blo sc lft check-bone.



No. 12931

Name Claud Ray Kohl

County Fresno

Crime Robbery 1st

Term 5-life Years

Received 1-18-24

Discharged \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks: \_\_\_\_\_

ABOVE: Mugshot and ID records. Folsom Prison Registers, Secretary of State, California State Archives, Sacramento, California

## CONVICT IN ATTEMPT TO FLEE KILLED

Slayer Plunges 100 Feet Off Cable Tram to Death Into Stone Quarry

(BY A. P. NIGHT WIRE)  
 SACRAMENTO, Nov. 10.—In a daring daylight attempt to escape from Folsom prison, near here, by crossing the American River on a cable tram, Claud Ray Kohl, paroled Oklahoma slayer, convicted in Fresno in 1923, was killed today when he plunged more than 100 feet into the prison stone quarry.

Robert York, convicted in Santa Barbara of second-degree burglary, with whom Kohl attempted his escape, is being held in solitary confinement at the prison.

The pair attempted to cross the river on a cable with the aid of a home-made pulley device. The pulley, which had been secretly made by the pair in their cells, failed to work, and Kohl fell to the ground, landing on his head.

This isn't Wikipedia—no quick links to a biography or chronology of events. Wikipedia is a gleaming metropolis compared to the subterranean rabbit hole I'm facing, a rabbit hole that will likely take days if not weeks to explore, requiring all the tools at a historian's disposal and the experience gained from endless searching to quench curiosity.

One of my favorite rabbit holes began with reading microfilm of *The Daily Oklahoman*, looking for a 1906 obituary I was pretty sure I wouldn't find. There on the front page was the dangling Thanksgiving carrot:

## ATTEMPTED HOLDUP AND SHOOTING IN DAYLIGHT

Will M'Donald, Found Hiding Under Bridge, Arrested and Now in Jail

My curiosity slipped into high gear: What business was open on Thanksgiving Day, just begging to be held up? Weren't people more reverent about holidays in 1906? Who was Will McDonald and why did he think hiding under a bridge would shield him from discovery? (And yet, haven't we all experienced family Thanksgivings when we'd rather be strung out under a bridge?)

My curiosity was inflamed, not quenched, when the article reported that Will McDonald was a junkie easily rounded up by the sheriff's posse. This was the guy who coolly shot a man in broad daylight? I wasn't buying it.

My suspicions were correct: McDonald was later deemed too incapacitated by drugs to commit the crime. It took a total of fourteen days to locate, apprehend, try, and sentence the actual perpetrator. Details emerged during the trial: On Thanksgiving Day 1906, Claude Kohl strode into William P. Dilworth's sporting goods store to steal a pistol. Though only twenty years old, Kohl had already spent time behind bars and fancied himself an anarchist. His grand plan was to foment revolution by robbing every company

that had “extracted a dollar here and there from the poor.” The ranks of his revolution would be filled by convicts he freed from prison. Kohl intended to spark chaos by robbing the Western National Bank in Oklahoma City—and to do that he needed a gun. According to the testimony of store employees, Kohl asked to see a pistol and escalation led to Dilworth’s death. After deliberating only fifteen minutes, a jury sentenced Kohl to life in prison, which he first served in Leavenworth Federal Prison and, later, at the newly constructed state prison in McAlester.

Ordinarily, the hour or so it takes to locate and read through the local news accounts would be enough to satisfy my curiosity. This seemed like a fairly standard crime-and-punishment story. But there was so much still unanswered about Kohl. What was behind his anarchy? Was it simply a fad? Was he an Emma Goldman fanboy? (Goldman, 1869-1940, was the founder of *Mother Earth* and a champion of free speech, gender equality, unions, and other anarchic ideas.) I was also dying to know if he continued his revolutionist ways or redeemed himself.

More film was in my future.

Kansas and McAlester newspapers revealed that Kohl made several attempts to escape from prison early in his captivity, but later became a model prisoner. Illiterate at the time of his apprehension, he educated himself and became a prolific writer and inventor. Prison officials dubbed him “Edison” and said he “could do anything with electricity.” By 1923 Kohl had served sixteen years with good behavior and had improved himself. He was lucky

that Governor John Callaway “Our Jack” Walton was in office when his case came up for review. Walton was a well-known soft touch when it came to society’s unfortunates, and he granted Kohl a six-month probation to travel to California to find buyers for his inventions.

That would be a great place to lay down the quest, to accept that I had discovered the tale of a man who had misspent his youth and redeemed himself. But I couldn’t let it go. For days I was consumed by theorizing what happened to Kohl. Did he become a multi-millionaire from his inventions? Or, more likely, did he slip into obscurity never to be heard from again? Kohl’s story ended as I expected. And it was a lot of fun to discover.

I jumped to the end of his life and searched Findagrave.com to sketch in the where and when of his death: California. 1925. Just two years after his release. It wouldn’t take long to end *this* tale. I picked up the trail in a 1923 Sacramento newspaper just days after Kohl’s probation began. He was in Fresno, presumably scarce of funds, and approached the home of the Sheppard family as they ate dinner. When Mr. Sheppard answered the door, Kohl shoved a gun in his face, entered the home and demanded all the cash in the house. He ran but was immediately apprehended and sentenced to five years to life in California’s Folsom State Prison. The armed robbery that sent him down netted Kohl a grand total of 76 cents.

A search of California penal records didn’t reveal any particularly bad behavior and Kohl apparently continued to feed his ingenuity. He

spent many hours in the prison quarry breaking rocks with hammer and sledge—plotting his escape. A November 1925 news item disclosed his plans.

High above the quarry, a sort of cable car system carried stone from the pits, outside the walls, across the American River to a distribution point on the other side. Kohl devised an ingenious pulley-like device (something akin to a zip line) which used the overhead cables as a guide wire by which he and a cellmate could slide to freedom outside the prison walls. Kohl perfected the device as they secretly tested it before the day of their escape.

The engineering was good. The execution was not.

The mechanism required the escapees to hold opposite ends of a rope on either side of the pulley as they zipped across in tandem. Kohl was substantially heavier than his co-conspirator and as they set out over the quarry, in a scene foreshadowing Wile E. Coyote’s best work, the balance shifted to Kohl’s side. His companion was sent upward, whereupon he grabbed the overhead cable to save himself. Without a counterweight, Kohl lost his grip and fell into the quarry, broken like so many rocks.

Yep. That’s about how I figured this would end.

LARRY JOHNSON has been telling Oklahoma City’s story for over 20 years as a published author, researcher, and Special Collections Manager for the Metropolitan Library System. His bedtime ritual includes listening to shortwave radio numbers stations for a full hour before retiring.

*Curiosity inspires the most exciting things in our lives, from conversation to reading books to seeing films. It drives all scientific research, and education. Other species are curious, but they don't have the ability to ask why. This is uniquely human. —Mario Levio*







# ARROWS TO ATOMS

CURIOSITY IN THE AGE OF THE INTERNET

KATHERINE PANDORA

**IN OCTOBER 2002**, a worldwide television audience heard the word “google” used as a verb for the first time on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (season 7, episode 4). Ten years before, questions such as “I wonder . . .” would quickly evaporate, too ephemeral to pursue. The internet, in combination with algorithm-savvy search engines, transformed the act of satisfying human curiosity. In a matter of seconds, a search could open secret doors to hyperlinked passageways that answered the slightest of questions.

Curiosity was a new scheherazadian playground. A search was more than a quick way to find an answer; it was an exploration of *multiple* answers that led to questions I wouldn’t otherwise ask. Without this change in information terrain, I never would have researched a fifty-year-old postage stamp that was neither rare nor colorful nor difficult to place—and I might never have encountered an exquisite example of brash, utopian, carnivalesque Cold War culture found right here in Oklahoma.

## OKLAHOMARAMA

What piqued my interest was the official Oklahoma semicentennial stamp (above)

featuring an arrow shot through the nucleus of an atom. I’m a historian of science and technology, but the “arrows to atoms” motif came as a surprise, especially as a marker of state identity. Not having considered my adopted home state as especially nuclear (unlike, say, New Mexico), I wondered at what the symbolism might mean: The advance of weaponry, from indigenous offensive to modern technology? A shout-out to fifties rocker Wanda Jackson, whose rendition of “Fujiyama Mama” was a cultural moment? (“Well you can say I’m crazy, so deaf and dumb! / But I can cause destruction just like the atom bomb!”)

The March 24, 1957, issue of *The New York Times* offered a more expansive interpretation of the stamp, noting that it depicted “crossing the threshold of two frontiers.” The arrow suggested the state’s origin as Indian Territory, frontier of the Old West; the atom suggested new frontiers. “Atomic energy” was shorthand for American progress—and it was touted across American culture. Walt Disney’s television series, an unassailable marker of mainstream norms, featured an episode on “Our Friend, the Atom.” The semicentennial stamp was a statement: Oklahoma was on the verge of something big.





According to *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, “Arrows to Atoms” was a promotional theme for the Semi-Centennial Exposition, Oklahomarama, a three-week event at the state fairgrounds filled with a plethora of ‘ramas: Foodarama, Motorama, International Photorama, and Soonerama Land. The Semi-Centennial Souvenir Edition of *Oklahoma Today* (May-June 1957) reported that innovation was commanding attention for the Sooner state. As evidence, Oklahoma A&M and The University of Oklahoma were “installing the Southwest’s first atomic reactors for teaching purposes.” A special exhibit, The World of Tomorrow, would feature atomic power. And the

corporate and civic leaders who were certain that Oklahoma could capitalize on the changing scientific landscape, get in on the ground floor of a new energy technology guaranteed to bring wealth and prosperity to an undercapitalized state. The Frontiers of Science Foundation (FSF), chartered in 1955, was the brainchild of four Oklahomans uniquely positioned to carry off a grand idea: Dean A. McGee, geologist and CEO of energy giant Kerr-McGee, led innovations to pioneer deep-sea oil exploration, the first commercial offshore oil well, and Oklahoma’s nuclear power industry with Kerr-McGee as the first oil company to mine uranium. E.K. Gaylord, publisher of the *Daily Oklahoman*, built a media

largesse from stints as U.S. Director of the Bureau of the Budget and Under Secretary of State under President Harry Truman, influence he later used as Administrator for NASA in the years leading up to the Apollo moon landing.

In a glowing article about the accomplishments of the Foundation (Spring 1958), *Oklahoma Today* Editor Dave Loye declared the group was driven by a “strange, new, fascinating vision of a New West and the New Frontier of the Mind.” FSF members crisscrossed the country making contacts, soliciting advice, and visiting research centers, nuclear plants, and government policy groups. They set out, Loye continued, “to ask the questions the scientists have been



atomic spirit would light up the night with “a towering arrow-shaped structure, reaching 200 feet into the sky, where it pierces a silhouetted map of Oklahoma and an orbit of golden atoms.”

## FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE

Arrows to atoms imagery was more than clever marketing. It symbolized activities well underway, driven by

empire by establishing the state’s first major radio station and its first television station. Stanley Draper, Managing Director of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, was instrumental in positioning Tinker Air Force Base, the FAA Administration Center, and Lake Hefner in Oklahoma City. James E. Webb, Chairman of the Board of Republic Supply Company, retained ties to federal

so eager—and fighting so much public apathy elsewhere—to answer.”

Given their mission—to improve science education and cultivate research labs for location in Oklahoma—FSF members were pleased to have attention from the Semi-Centennial Exposition focus on their immediate aims: hosting an International Science Symposium and the Foundation’s own Frontiers of

OPPOSITE PAGE: Arrows to Atoms Tower at the Oklahoma State Fair Grounds in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, built in celebration of the state’s 50th statehood anniversary. By Meyers Photo Shop, 1957. Z.P. Meyers/Barney Hillerman Photographic Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society. STAMP BORDER ABOVE: Commemorative stamp (1957) for 50th Anniversary of Oklahoma Statehood, “Arrows to Atoms,” Wm. K. Schrage, designer, M.D. Fenton, engraver, Bureau of Engraving and Printing. U.S. Post Office [PD] Wikimedia Commons. PHOTO ABOVE: “City Postmaster Fred Shaw turned stamp salesman Friday to let Gov. Gary, center, buy the first stamp and Stanley Draper, managing secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, buy the second three-cent stamp commemorating Oklahoma’s Semi-Centennial of statehood.” John Gumm, photographer, June 13, 1957. Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society.



ABOVE: "Gayle Tiernan, a bushel of light." Richard Cobb, photographer, *Daily Oklahoman*, June 6, 1957. BELOW: The Sunmobile, featured in the General Motors Previews of Progress exhibit, "a miniature car that operates from the light of a 150-watt bulb when held above the eight photovoltaic cells on its hood." *Daily Oklahoman*, June 6, 1957. IMAGES: Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society



Science exhibit. On view was a model of the Vanguard rocket that would launch the first U.S. satellite into Earth's orbit. Vanguard 1 would be the world's first solar-powered satellite, and Exposition visitors could observe an operating solar battery.

I assumed that it must have been an incredible letdown a few months later when the U.S. space race was preempted by the Soviet Union's launch of the Sputnik satellite. The chagrin was surely exacerbated by Sputnik 2 as Vanguard rocket attempts suffered multiple delays and, embarrassingly, an explosion on the launch pad prompting jeers from the media of "Kaputnik" and "Flopnik." Even so, Loye argued that Sputnik, "the greatest challenge facing Western Civilization," was not to be feared, due in part to the boosterism and foresight of FSF founders:

Some have wondered why, after Sputnik went up, President Eisenhower happened to select Oklahoma as the site for his sole major address away from Washington to reassure a worried nation. It was no accident. It was basically a tribute to a small group of Oklahomans who had quietly started three years previous, well in advance of any other state, to fuel up a rocket-powered wagon train out of the New West.

I hadn't expected a tentatively-atomic Oklahoma to host the U.S. President as he delivered remarks on Cold War nuclear politics. But, to observers like Loye, it was a natural outcome given that FSF efforts prompted visits by hundreds of scientists from around the world, including the brightest scientific minds of the day: Vannevar Bush, James R. Killian, Jerrold Zacharius, Alan T. Waterman, Haakan Sterky, Sir Henry Tizard, and Gordon Dean. Scientific activity had become so common for Oklahomans that even a visit by imminent scientist Niels Bohr, who "once might have been classed in the same category with a man from Mars," Loye quipped, "was now viewed simply, with respect, as one of the 'home folks.'"

#### FRONTIERS OF THE MIND

In a comparison of the 1957 semicentennial to the 2007 centennial, would our aspirations differ? This question of past and present had me googling the 1957 national security speech that President Eisenhower, former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, delivered



in Oklahoma City. He called on the nation to close the education gap with the Soviets:

Young people now in college must be equipped to live in the age of intercontinental ballistic missiles. What will then be needed is not just engineers and scientists, but a people who will keep their heads and, in every field, leaders who can meet *intricate human problems* with wisdom and courage. In short, we will need not only Einsteins and Steinmetzes, but Washingtons, and Emersons. [Emphasis added.]

Embodied so succinctly in the semicentennial stamp's arrows to atoms motif, the subsequent fifty years was a time that most would call an age of science and technology. It would likely be impossible to count the number of times that national leaders have voiced the need for better science education in pursuit of economic competitiveness and national security.

But why have we not heard as much intensity about the need for the humanities, what Eisenhower referred to as the "Washingtons and Emersons"? In "Science the Endless Frontier," a 1945 report to President Truman, scientist Vannevar Bush warned against sidelining the humanities: "It would be folly to set up a program under which research in the natural sciences and medicine was expanded at the cost of the social sciences, humanities, and other studies so essential to national well-being."

By 2007, what was being called Web 2.0, the interactive "participatory web," was well underway. Ideas about the past, present, and future were being created, commented upon, debated, remixed, and disseminated on the open web. Consideration of "intricate human problems," as Eisenhower called them, was a shared enterprise. Call it "Project Emerson 2.0." The internet has become a place where public humanities flourish, a platform for everyday humanists whose curiosity can be consequential in ways that were unimaginable in the semicentennial past of arrows to atoms.

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

In 1957, cities and townships across the state participated in semicentennial celebrations, hosting local rodeos, reenactments, rattlesnake roundups, and more. Tulsa's iteration, Tulsarama!, included a time capsule containing a 1957 Plymouth Belvedere and assorted memorabilia buried in an atomic-attack-proof vault to be dug up for the 2007 Oklahoma Centennial. The vault opening drew a sold-out audience and international media attention. What did they find? The contents were highly unlikely to have survived a nuclear explosion as promised. Four feet of standing water encrusted the car in rust. Among the relics that *did* survive intact was a reel of the American Petroleum Institute promotional film *Destination Earth*.

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### EXTRA! READ | THINK | TALK | LINK

- "Oklahoma Semi-Centennial Celebration, 1957," Oklahoma Historical Society Film Archives. A 1957 film on the semicentennial, touting a theme of "progress, a preview of tomorrow." youtube.com
- "Semicentennial of Statehood," Linda D. Wilson, *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*. Overview of the Exposition and events marking the semicentennial. okhistory.org
- "Frontiers of Science Foundation of Oklahoma, Inc.," Dianna Everett, *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*. History of FSF efforts to improve science education and develop research labs. okhistory.org
- "50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Oklahoma Statehood Issue," Smithsonian National Postage Museum. Images and info on the semicentennial stamp and its symbolism. arago.si.edu
- *Destination Earth*, promotional cartoon sponsored by the American Petroleum Institute. archive.org



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**AFTER 110 YEARS OF STATEHOOD,** most Oklahomans would be surprised to learn that our well-known, well-loved state flag, with its blue field and Osage shield, is *not* the first state flag. Oklahoma's first flag had a red field and a blue "46" centered inside a white star, indicating Oklahoma's status as the 46<sup>th</sup> state. The red flag flew as the official state flag from 1911 to 1925.

I grew up in Oklahoma, attending school from kindergarten through a Ph.D. Even so, I became aware of the red flag only through a brief reference in an academic source on Socialism in Oklahoma during early statehood. It was one of those meta-moments I learned to pay attention to as a researcher: Oklahoma's red flag "raised a red flag" and quickly became a symbol of everything I didn't know but wanted to find out about the political landscape of my home. Could it be that Oklahoma's red flag reflected the ill-fated Socialism present early in our state history? Incessant curiosity, endless questions, and hopeful hunches propelled me down a long, revelatory road to learn more about that first flag. The journey has given me a new relationship with Oklahoma history and politics, as an Oklahoman and as a scholar. The flag, like any historical object, tells a story—and I want to know it.

I dug into the state's historical archives and spent hours searching for obscure, partial clues regarding the red flag's meaning. I was eager to find any hint regarding its inexplicable demise and

## RAISING THE

utter erasure from public knowledge. I combed through newspaper articles, legislative documents, archival photographs, and more. The record was scant, but I pieced together an intriguing tale.

As an official state symbol, the red flag—rightly or wrongly—connected the new state of Oklahoma to the political tensions of the World War I era. Across the globe, red flags had become a symbol of leftist political activism during the first wave of the Red Scare, a widespread fear of communism. I found a 1917 state statute, adopted only six years after the flag became official, that made it a felony to fly a red flag in Oklahoma, punishable by up to ten years in prison. Across the U.S., red flags were synonymous with Socialism and organized labor. Internationally, red flags were associated with revolution and Bolshevism, the newly adopted communist government in Russia.

Next, I tracked down all I could find about the flag's designer, Mrs. W.R. Clement of Stillwater, Oklahoma, whose name appeared in brief newspaper accounts of the flag's adoption. To truly connect the flag with the Socialist Party of Oklahoma, I needed to know more about her political identity—next to impossible, considering women were almost a decade away from the vote in 1911. Payne County voter records indicated her husband was a registered Democrat. At the time, Oklahoma Democrats were largely "Dixiecrats." In other



*I cannot help fearing that men may reach a point where they look on every new theory as a danger, every innovation as a toilsome trouble, every social advance as a first step toward revolution, and that they may absolutely refuse to move at all. —Alexis de Tocqueville, 1840*

words, Mr. Clement's status as a Democrat likely indicated he strongly opposed the contemporary Socialist platform advocating for civil rights, social equality, and fair election laws. What political influence he had over his wife was impossible to substantiate.

I took a detour, looking for prosecutions using the state statute entitled "Display of Red Flag or Emblem of Disloyalty or Anarchy." It has been used only once, in the Vietnam era, when a University of Oklahoma student was arrested for waving a homemade Viet Cong flag (also red) to protest an ROTC march on the Norman campus the day after the Kent State massacre in 1970.

These bizarre connections confounded me, and my curiosity gave way to obsession. I wanted other Oklahomans to know the flag's history, so I made and sold t-shirts depicting the first flag to spread the word. In the years since, the red flag has slowly reappeared in Oklahoma's public iconography, as a symbol of determined resistance to the "red state" status quo and an expression of progressive values. Just two years ago, it was adopted as one of the many optional state license plate designs.

In 2013, the Oklahoma Historical Society unearthed the Century Chest, buried in 1913 by members of First English Lutheran Church in downtown Oklahoma City. Inside they found the only existent red flag from the era during which it flew over the state. It was interred by none other than the designer herself, who we now know as Ruth D. Clement. Other documents found in the Century Chest make her political affiliations more clear, revealing that she served as the 1912-1913 President of



Rachel Jackson views a vintage "46" state flag from the Century Chest archives at the Oklahoma History Center.

# RED FLAG

RACHEL C. JACKSON

the Oklahoma City Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. This connection suggests a different shade of red—that the flag wasn't designed as a Socialist symbol at all. Rather, the flag was likely designed as a confederate emblem, which, for me as a scholar of rhetoric, is a far more troublesome but no less curious turn. How fascinating that a confederate symbol could so quickly become associated with the radical left, crossing in a matter of a few years what, in our current political climate, seems like an immense divide between two ideological camps, only to be criminalized and almost forgotten by history entirely.

What might the ideologies of Oklahoma Socialists and Confederate sympathizers in our past have in common? What can the red flag tell us about how political symbols identify, categorize, and divide us?

Even after a decade and a half of curiosity and investigation, the red flag continues to call me to look for deeper meaning. And I am only just beginning to understand.

RACHEL JACKSON holds a Ph.D. in Composition, Rhetoric, and Literacy from the University of Oklahoma. Her research focuses on cultural literacy activism, primarily in Native communities. She is a Ford Foundation Fellow and a Research Fellow with the Newberry Consortium in American Indian Studies. She is enrolled with the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and will begin a Diversity Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Oklahoma State University in Fall 2018.



OKLAHOMA  
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# HIDDEN HATRED

Why do today's neo-Nazis use coded language and symbols?

MARK ALEXANDER

On a November afternoon in the days following the 2016 presidential election, I discovered hateful graffiti in a bathroom at the university I attend in Washington, D.C. The words *White Power* had been scrawled in thick, black permanent marker near a crudely drawn swastika and the numbers *14/88*. I spoke with the university's maintenance staff and they painted over the swastika and the words *White Power* the next day. The numbers *14/88*, however, remained on the wall for weeks.

I remember looking at those numbers and at the fresh paint, wondering why they hadn't simply painted the entire wall. I suppose that *14/88* must have seemed harmless next to the obvious hate speech and swastika, but I knew it was no less hateful. The numbers scribbled on the wall in black marker are common neo-Nazi codes: *14* represents the fourteen words of a popular American white supremacist slogan; *88* stands for *Heil Hitler* (*H* being the eighth letter of the alphabet).

On the wall of a college bathroom a half mile from the White House, I saw clearly how the use of such codes had been effective. The swastika and words were gone, but the use of a simple code allowed the hateful messages contained in the numbers to stay. Coded words, numbers, and symbols like these are often used by hatemongers to associate themselves with Nazi Germany as they camouflage their agendas just enough to keep them from being removed or condemned.

Soon after I noticed the graffiti, I read that white supremacist propaganda posters had begun appearing on university campuses all around the greater D.C. area. One morning on my way to class, I realized that I had been passing one of these posters for days. It was an unremarkable paper photocopy pasted near the university library, displaying silhouettes of strong-jawed men, soaring eagles, and military hardware. At first I hardly noticed the thing, but I was startled

one morning to see a small detail at the bottom of the poster: the words *blood and soil*. To those familiar with the history of the Third Reich, these words immediately identify the legacy of Nazi Germany. I had been walking by a neo-Nazi recruiting poster without even knowing it. If I had not studied the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust for years, I doubt I would ever have noticed this detail.

*Blood and soil* is a translation of the German words *Blut und Boden*, originally used in the Third Reich as a shorthand slogan to describe the Nazis' obsession with securing living space (soil) for the expansion of their mythical Aryan race (blood). The practices implemented to pursue this belief included the persecution, starvation, and mass murder of millions upon millions of Jews, Roma, Slavs, and other targeted groups. Nazism was an authoritarian system based on the murderously racist conviction that the exploitation and destruction of entire peoples is justifiable and right.



William Fears holds the Vanguard America-Texas flag at the southwest stairs to Emancipation Park. Photo: Anthony Crider, Aug. 12, 2017, Charlottesville, VA



This is what *Blut und Boden* described. The words *blood and soil* directly echo the genocidal practices of Nazi Germany, but are obscure enough to be meaningless to most people.

The group that put up these posters uses this Nazi phrase as its official slogan. As if to dispel any doubts surrounding their sympathies, the posters contained a link to a website that advocates for “a National Socialist solution” to the problems of the world (the word *Nazi* itself is simply the diminutive German form of the words *National Socialist*). This group openly calls for the implementation of a Nazi agenda and intentionally identifies itself with the Third Reich, but they avoid *calling* themselves Nazis or using swastikas on their recruiting posters. As with the graffiti, posters displaying swastikas would be identified and removed far more quickly. Instead, they applied an obscure slogan like *blood and soil* to veil their hateful agenda, while still clearly identifying themselves with the Nazis’ murderous policies.

Months later, I heard this same Nazi slogan chanted by torch-wielding demonstrators supposedly protesting the removal of a Confederate monument in Charlottesville. Neither the slogans nor the torches appeared to have anything to do with the statue in question; rather, they seemed to have been chosen to evoke the torchlit rallies of the Third Reich. [See text below on the Olympics ritual that has roots in Nazi symbolism.] Again, as if to dispel any doubts surrounding their sympathies, the disciplined, torch-bearing marchers chanted “Jews will not replace us” and “blood and soil.” Many participants wore matching uniforms and shouted Nazi slogans, but they insisted on identifying themselves as “white nationalists” or “alt-right” members of “a legitimate movement” instead of rightwing extremists, fascists, or Nazis. “It’s not like this is a fringe thing,” insisted one torch-wielding participant whom I knew personally.

Several leaders of this loose conglomeration of the far right have revealed that they intentionally cloak their hateful and violent beliefs to make their views seem more mainstream and to avoid scaring off potential recruits. For example, leaked guidelines from a popular American neo-Nazi website explain the importance of shrouding their contributors’ murderous philosophies: “The unindoctrinated should not be able to tell if we are joking or not. . . . Packing our message inside of existing cultural memes and humor can be viewed as a delivery method. Something like adding cherry flavor to children’s medicine.”

ALEXANDER | cont. p. 44



White supremacists clash with police. Photo: Evan Nesterak, Aug. 12, 2017, Charlottesville, VA



The last of the 3,000 runners that carried the Olympic torch from Olympia, Greece, lights the Olympic Flame in Berlin to start the 11<sup>th</sup> Summer Olympic Games; photo by Heinrich Hoffman, Aug. 1, 1936. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy National Archives and Records Administration. ushmm.org

For two weeks in August 1936, Adolf Hitler’s Nazi dictatorship camouflaged its racist, militaristic character while hosting the Summer Olympics. Soft-pedaling its antisemitic agenda and plans for territorial expansion, the regime exploited the Games to bedazzle many foreign spectators and journalists with an image of a peaceful, tolerant Germany.

Inaugurating a new Olympic ritual, a lone runner arrived bearing a torch carried by relay from the site of the ancient Games in Olympia, Greece. Athletic imagery drew a link between Nazi Germany and ancient Greece, symbolizing the Nazi racial myth that a superior German civilization was the rightful heir of an “Aryan” culture of classical antiquity. —“The Nazi Olympics Berlin 1936,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*.

# The Stenographer's BRAIN

DOROTHY ALEXANDER | SKETCH BY ART LIEN

*In each of us  
there is another  
whom we do not  
know.—Carl Jung*



Did you know that a stenographer records words at the same speed they are spoken—an incredible 200 to 300 words per minute—without listening to the context or meaning of what is being said?

When I enrolled in a shorthand class at Draughon's Business College in Amarillo, Texas, in 1956, all I knew was that I needed a marketable skill and a good paying job. Quickly.

As a single mother with a three-year-old child, stenography seemed like the answer since the nearby U.S. Air Force Base was hiring "qualified court reporters" at a salary that would support us. I had already studied shorthand and typing in high school, mostly because that's what girls did before the second wave of feminism hit rural America.

## QWERTY

In that little WPA country school they told us a typing machine was the only road out for country girls who did not fancy staying in the country or marrying one of those hapless country boys.

They showed us how it was done by covering the letters on the keys. We had to learn them by heart before we could make the magic letters appear black and stark on paper.

My blind fingers followed the path out of that place by remembering, by seeing them in my sleep as I dreamed of the road I would take when the time came.

I learned to trust the blank keys until I shook off the dirt clinging to my roots.

At Draughon's, I learned to operate a stenotype machine with a specialized keyboard of twenty-two keys that writes in shorthand. Multiple keys are pressed simultaneously (known as "chording" or "stroking") to spell out syllables, words, and phrases with a single hand motion. The keyboard has two halves. The left-hand side contains beginning consonants. The right-hand side contains final consonants. In the middle is a second level for thumbs to rest on four vowel keys. All of the vowel sounds in the English language are represented using various combinations of keys. This streamlined device makes breathtaking typing speeds possible.

The average person types about 40 words per minute (wpm) on a standard QWERTY keyboard. A proficient reporter writes 180, 200, and 225 wpm at very high accuracy, even when more than one person speaks at once. The official record for American English is 375 wpm.

People talk at different speeds depending on occupation, subject matter, and geographic area, most at 110 to 200 wpm, with 150-160 the highest rate for conversation. The speaker's emotional state can bring it near 200 wpm. Only auctioneers are in the 250 to 400 wpm range.

My court reporting teacher, Mrs. Barnett—a forthright 75-year-old with a tremor from an advanced case of palsy and a bad wig on her all-but-bald head—once said in her quavering voice, "I have no idea why you are required to write at the speed of 200 words per minute when there's never been a man in Texas who could talk that fast!"

Even though I studied vigilantly and passed the exams, I struggled mightily the first year I recorded military court-martials. Fortunately, I had a good memory and the proceedings

were usually “cookie-cutter” affairs: stock questions, stock answers, as well as stock instructions and judicial decisions. Even so, I had to be constantly vigilant for the non-stock occurrences.

In time it became easier. Strangely so. I began to notice my mind wandering (*What the hell is going on?*) and yet I was still writing it all down. I experienced moments of panic, thinking that I had stopped recording. But the paper still streamed from my stenotype, it was all there. I recorded longer and longer periods of speaking by multiple persons without awareness of content.

## STENOGRAPHY

The words entered my ears like bees buzzing on a lazy afternoon. They flowed down my arms, through my blind fingers, and spilled onto the snowy paper moving delicately like a spider traversing a gossamer web. I could swear that the wrinkled fabric of my brain took no notice whatsoever of these mundane activities.

Meanwhile, imagination filled the walls of my skull with my own thoughts locked in their bone prison like dangling threads that memory latched onto when everything else went blank.

So, how is it possible for a person to record words verbatim so accurately in real time? According to Dr. David Eagleman, a neuroscientist at Stanford University, it doesn't matter whether consciousness is involved in the brain's action—and, “Most of the time, it's not.” After one has mastered motor skills sufficiently (like learning to ride a bicycle), the act becomes part of what brain scientists call “procedural memory” or “implicit memory,” meaning that your brain holds knowledge of something that your “mind” cannot directly access. Sports players call this “being in the zone.”

The real secret to the reporter's speed is that she learns to not listen or even care about context, meaning, or spelling; she allows herself to enter an almost trance-like state where phonemic awareness becomes acute. Through long and concentrated practice, the sounds that make words translate into finger movements on the keys. She learns *not* to think, lets her fingers do the walking and gets consciousness out of the way. It works much the same way as implicit memory—we know things that we don't know we know, do things we don't know we can do. Nor can we explain how we acquired such skill.

I have experienced other phenomena I believe comes from the same place. As a trial lawyer, I once had a case involving a large number of business documents. I spent hours examining contracts, correspondence, cancelled checks. The day before trial, I assembled all the materials, placed them in my briefcase, and consciously turned my thoughts to other things. I went to bed, but about 3:00 a.m. awoke suddenly from a dream in which I saw one

particular cancelled check. I knew it had significance. It was so vivid and so disturbing that I left my bed and drove to my office. I re-examined the check I had seen in my dream and realized that the signature was that of my client; the other handwritten information on the check was that of a witness who had denied being present at the meeting where that check was presented. I recognized the witness' handwriting from other documents in my possession. It proved to be the lynchpin of my case.

Such moments have occurred often enough in my long life that I have come to expect and rely on this strange kind of “knowing.” It permeates all my pursuits: drafting legal arguments, advocating for causes, composing poetry, hospice counseling, discussing literature with prison inmates, making judicial decisions, conducting personal relationships, and, perhaps most significantly, alleviating intense grief upon the death of my son.

I don't know where it comes from. I suspect there is a rational answer, which scientists will eventually articulate. I do know that it can be aroused by curiosity and the accompanying intense mental activity when nurtured by constant intellectual exercise, reading broadly, exploring all the humanities disciplines, travel and exposure to varied cultures, and an ever increasing store of knowledge.

I am convinced that the impulse traveling the neural pathways of the stenographer's brain is the same that raced through folds inside Shakespeare's cranium when he wrote, “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars / But in ourselves.” The same impulse that stirred the ancient admonition to “Know thyself.” The one that prompted Pink Floyd: “There's someone in my head but it's not me.”

DOROTHY ALEXANDER is the author of five poetry collections, two multi-genre memoirs, and two volumes of oral history; a founder and curator of poetry for the Woody Guthrie Folk Festival in Okemah, Oklahoma; as well as a lawyer and municipal judge. She was the 2013 recipient of the Carlile Award for Distinguished Service to the Oklahoma Literary Community from the Oklahoma Center for the Book.

ART LIEN has sketched in courtroom proceedings since 1976. His regular beat is the U.S. Supreme Court. See his work on NBCNews.com, SCOTUSblog, and courtartist.com, where he archives drawings and links to news about cases and opinions. SKETCH OPPOSITE: John Kiriakou, standing, is sentenced by Judge Leonie M. Brinkema. Court stenographer seated at right.

## EXTRA! READ | THINK | TALK | LINK

- “Fact of Fiction? The Legend of the QWERTY Keyboard.” Jimmy Stamp, *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 3, 2013. *Which came first: the typist or the keyboard?* smithsonian.com
- “Stan's Quick and Dirty: How Stenography Works.” Stanley Sakai's 3-minute illustration of how stenography and steno keyboards record speech at high speeds. youtube.com



# ALICE UNDERGROUND

A frabjous collpendium on a girl and her curiosity



## The Alice Playlist

- **Jefferson Airplane (1967):** "White Rabbit." Drug references in songwriter Grace Slick's lyrics popularized "psychedelic" interpretations of Alice.
- **The Beatles (1967):** "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" and "I Am the Walrus" (which John Lennon based on "The Walrus and the Carpenter" from *Through the Looking-Glass*). Though it was popular speculation, Lennon denied that his lyrics were about 1960s drug culture.
- **Aerosmith (2001):** "Sunshine." Imagery and characters from Alice appear in the lyrics and music video. Common interpretations conclude the song title refers to the street name for the drug LSD.
- **Avril Lavigne (2010):** "Alice." Lavigne's song, written for the 2010 Tim Burton film, recasts Alice as a misunderstood, feminist adolescent.

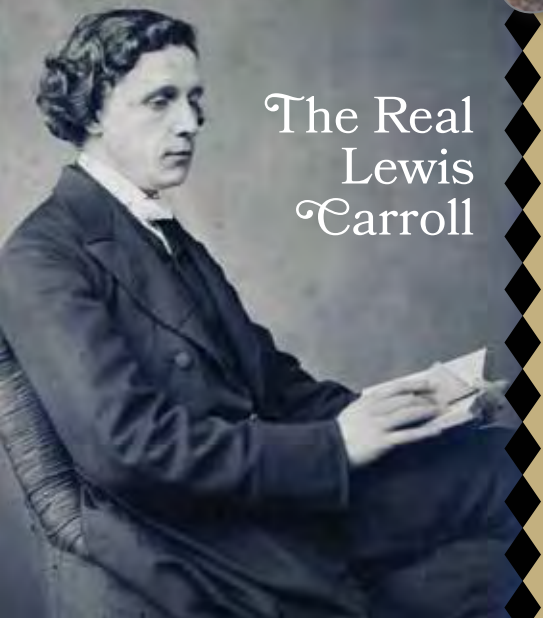
Source: [bit.ly/2C5ckeN](http://bit.ly/2C5ckeN)



## Symphony and Science: The Myriad Influences of Alice

- **Movie:** "Walt Disney's Alice in Wonderland the Suite." Audio of songs from the animated film. [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)
- **Television:** Alice at the Palace. Meryl Streep performs the title role in Elizabeth Swados' musical-comedy adaptation staged for TV. [youtube.com](http://youtube.com) (search: Alice at the Palace 1982)
- **Symphony Hall:** "The Alice Pieces of David Del Tredici." Essay on the composer's Alice symphonies, written over a 25-year period, for which he received a Pulitzer Prize (1980). [daviddeltredici.com/alice](http://daviddeltredici.com/alice)
- **Opera:** Alice (1992). Conceived by Tom Waits and collaborator Kathleen Brennan, the avant-garde production, using an electric orchestra designed by Waits, ran for eighteen months at the Thalia Theatre in Hamburg. [tomwaits.com](http://tomwaits.com)
- **Museum:** "Alice 150 Years and Counting—The Legacy of Lewis Carroll." One of many worldwide exhibitions celebrating the Alice sesquicentennial. [lib.umd.edu/alice150](http://lib.umd.edu/alice150)
- **Medicine:** "Alice in Wonderland Syndrome," Jan Dirk Blom, *Neurology Clinical Practice*, June 2016. Described by psychiatrist John Todd (1914–1987), Alice in Wonderland Syndrome (AIWS) refers to Alice's sense that her body is growing larger and smaller. AIWS symptoms, associated with migraine and epilepsy, include visual distortions of objects, feelings of levitation, and alterations in the sense of time. [nih.gov](http://nih.gov)

## The Real Lewis Carroll



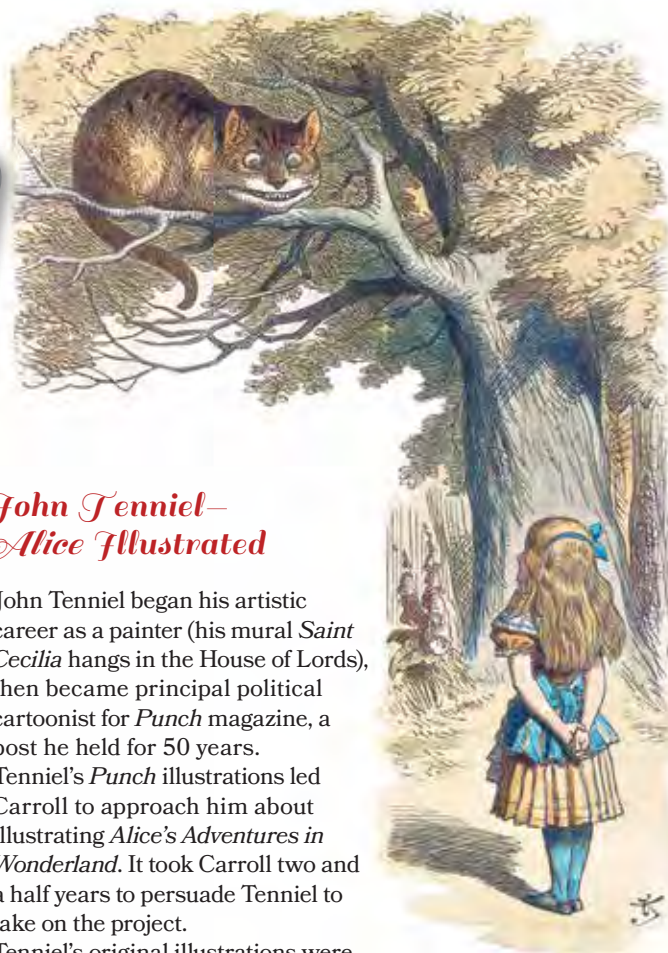
- Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), a.k.a. Lewis Carroll, received first-class honors in mathematics and a master of arts from Christ Church College, Oxford University.
- As Lecturer in Mathematics at Oxford, Dodgson published work in multiple areas of math, theory, and logic, some of which are referenced today. His Alice books are filled with elements of math and logic.
- Dodgson was ordained a deacon in the Church of England, but did not proceed to priesthood, preferring the life of an unmarried university don among Oxford's book-filled rooms.
- Dodgson's literary output included poetry, parody, satire, fiction, and nonfiction, widely published in journals, newspapers, and magazines.
- The worldwide success of Alice allowed the author to retire early, yet he refused to publicly acknowledge he was "Lewis Carroll."
- The meticulous Dodgson kept a register of all his written correspondence from 1861 to his death in 1898. The total: 98,721 letters.
- Intrigued with the development of photography, Dodgson purchased a camera in 1856 and pursued the art form for 25 years, leading to his recognition as one of the most important photographers of the era.



## Trivia: From Carroll to Disney

- Alice was an immediate success with a quick sellout to avid readers such as Queen Victoria and Oscar Wilde.
- The book has never been out of print and has been translated into at least 176 languages.
- Though popularly referred to as "The Mad Hatter" and called mad by the Cheshire Cat, Carroll's character is named simply "The Hatter." Associations may have begun in Carroll's day due to poisoning from the use of liquid mercury in the hat industry. Brain damage in workers included slurred speech, memory loss, and tremors, seen at the time as "madness."
- The iconic Walt Disney film *Alice in Wonderland* comprises more than 350,000 drawings and paintings, created by more than 750 artists from 1949 to 1951.
- Disney animation frames used eight hundred gallons of special paint, weighing nearly five tons, and more than 1,000 shades of watercolor.
- Voice actress Kathryn Beaumont dressed as Alice during movie recordings to "get into character."
- The movie was in development for over ten years before it entered active production and took five more years to complete.
- A Google search for "Alice in Wonderland" (as of August 2018) returns approximately 222 million internet results.

Sources: [aliceinwonderland150.com](http://aliceinwonderland150.com) | [alice-in-wonderland.net](http://alice-in-wonderland.net) | [imdb.com](http://imdb.com)



## John Tenniel—*Alice Illustrated*

- John Tenniel began his artistic career as a painter (his mural *Saint Cecilia* hangs in the House of Lords), then became principal political cartoonist for *Punch* magazine, a post he held for 50 years.
- Tenniel's *Punch* illustrations led Carroll to approach him about illustrating *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. It took Carroll two and a half years to persuade Tenniel to take on the project.
- Tenniel's original illustrations were black and white. Over 40 years passed before books included eight hand-colored prints.
- Tenniel's paper drawings had to be carved into woodblocks for printing. Famed engravers The Brothers Dalziel created the woodblock masters used to make the printer's metal electrotype.
- The 1865 print run of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was recalled when Tenniel balked at the poor appearance of his images. The second printing was the first for public circulation and carried a publish date of 1866.

Sources: [aliceinwonderland150.com](http://aliceinwonderland150.com) | [alice-in-wonderland.net](http://alice-in-wonderland.net)

## Carrollese

- burble (bleat + murmur + warble)
- chortle (chuckle + snort)
- frabjous (fabulous + joyous)
- frumious (fuming + furious)
- mimsy (flimsy + miserable)
- galumph (gallop + triumphant)

In the mid-1800s, a portmanteau was a piece of luggage with two compartments. Fascinated by wordplay and linguistics, Carroll is credited with adding a new definition for portmanteau: his inventive use of sounds and meaning from two or more words, blending them into new words with combined meanings. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice inquires about nonsense words in the poem "Jabberwocky." Humpty Dumpty explains:

Well, "slithy" means "lithe and slimy." "Lithe" is the same as "active." You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word.


Carroll's creativity continues to influence language with a myriad of contemporary portmanteaus—Brexiteer, brunch, bromance, chocoholic, smog, and spork, to name just a few. Did you catch the one we coined for our title? Collpendium (collection + compendium).

Sources: [blog.oxforddictionaries.com](http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com) | [macmillandictionaryblog.com](http://macmillandictionaryblog.com)



Illustrations by John Tenniel for *The Nursery "Alice"* (Macmillan, 1890), The Morgan Library & Museum. Self-portrait photograph by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, ca. 1872, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

# John, WILLIAM, and ALICE IN WONDERLAND



*Children's literature that  
inspired John Lennon*

KEVIN SHORTSLEEVE



Inside vinyl LP cover,  
*Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*

John Lennon received a copy of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a birthday present when he was eleven years old. The surreal, nonsensical volume left a lasting impression. "I was passionate about *Alice in Wonderland* and drew all the characters," Lennon told biographer Hunter Davies. "I did poems in the style of 'Jabberwocky.' I used to *live Alice*" (*The Beatles*, McGraw-Hill, 1968).

## ALICE—"LUCY IN THE SKY WITH DIAMONDS"

By the time he was fifteen, Lennon was wishing he could write something like *Alice in Wonderland*. He collected his boyhood writing in a mock newspaper he called *The Daily Howl* and shared it with friends. On one page he might reproduce one of Carroll's poems, such as "Jabberwocky" or "The Walrus and the Carpenter"; on the next would be an original poem in the same style. Reminiscing about the friends who would become The Beatles, Lennon said:

When they met me I was already [writing nonsense]. After a week of friendship with them or after a couple of weeks, I probably brought out things and said, "Read this." So this came before the other: the guitars came second (*The Beatles Anthology*, Chronicle Books, 2000).

Lennon admitted that his fascination with *Alice* had been lifelong: "I always wanted to write *Alice in Wonderland*. I think I still have that as a secret ambition." In the 1960s, Lennon published several volumes of nonsense poems in the style of Lewis Carroll, but his connection to *Alice* was also apparent in his songwriting for The Beatles. He remarked that Carroll's

writing directly influenced some of his most famous songs, such as "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds."

There has been a popular theory since the 1960s that "Lucy" was about LSD. Lennon—notoriously forthcoming about controversial matters—always denied this rumor. He explained that his son Julian presented him with a drawing of a fantastic flying character and had dreamt up the phrase "Lucy in the sky with diamonds." Lennon insisted it was Carroll's *Alice*, not drugs, that inspired a song based on the character his son had invented:

The images were from *Alice in Wonderland*. It was Alice in the boat. She is buying an egg and it turns into Humpty Dumpty. The woman serving in the shop turns into a sheep, and the next minute they're rowing in a rowing boat somewhere—and I was visualizing that (*Anthology*).

"Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" appeared on the album *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967). The cover featured notable figures chosen by The Beatles as having influenced them—icons such as writer Oscar Wilde, poet Dylan Thomas, and singer-songwriter Bob Dylan—and, of course, Lewis Carroll. Later that year, Lennon wrote the song "I Am the Walrus," one of his most intriguing and ominous compositions, for the film *Magical Mystery Tour*. Lennon commented that "I Am the Walrus" was one of his favorite Beatles tracks and that it was based in part on Carroll's poem "The Walrus and the Carpenter" from *Through the Looking-Glass*.

Popular culture critic Michael E. Roos theorizes that the influence of *Alice* on Lennon went beyond the lyrics and



influenced the musical production itself. Roos contends that Lennon's famous experiments with music recorded backwards on the *Revolver* album were inspired by the reverse looking-glass used in the *Alice* books, as when Alice must hold the poem "Jabberwocky" up to a mirror to read it properly. To contend that Carroll inspired Lennon this way is to claim that Carroll had an indirect, but profound effect on sixties popular culture. This innovation in Lennon's music marked a pivotal swing, representing nothing less than the birth of psychedelic rock.

### WILLIAM—"ONE OF THE BOYS"

Another significant early inspiration for Lennon was *Just William*, Richmal Crompton's children's book series about a comical gang of English schoolboy hooligans. Lennon said, "I wrote my own William stories, with me doing all the things. After I'd read a book, I'd relive it all. That was one reason why I wanted to be the gang leader at school" (*Anthology*).

As Jonathan Gould asserts in *Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America* (Harmony Books, 2007), from the time Lennon was a very young boy, his imagination was captured by the *Just William* books:

Anyone who doubts the capacity of life to imitate art would do well to consider John Lennon's identification with the young hero of *Just William* . . . an incorrigible eleven-year-old who lives with his family in a quiet English village (not so different from [Lennon's] Woolton) whose peace is shattered regularly by William and his gang, the Outlaws. . . . By the time John himself attained the age of eleven, he had thoroughly assimilated William's incredulous disdain for the ways of the adult world. He had also assembled his own band of Outlaws, made up of three boys from his neighborhood named Pete Shotton, Nigel Walley and Ivan Vaughn.



Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, recorded by The Beatles, 1967. Science Museum Group, London

While the character William and his gang wreaked comical havoc wherever they went, so young John's gang caused trouble, from petty thievery to elaborate pranks. Numerous stories exist of the antics they cooked up, including rigging the chalkboard in a classroom so that it would detach off the wall the moment the teacher touched it—or, more creatively, filling the school's communal bicycle air pump with ink.

It is easy to see the affinity Lennon found in these books. Abandoned by both parents at an early age, Lennon's youth was fraught with emotional pain. William likes a particular book because it features "a small boy misunderstood and ill-treated by everyone around him." The character also claims to be a writer ("I—wrote a tale once. . . . It began on a pirate raft."), describing a story strikingly similar to Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*—another book Lennon owned and loved as a child.

The members of Lennon's William-inspired gang later formed the nucleus of his first group, The Quarry Men, the band that would evolve into The Beatles. Those childhood friends confirm his obsession with the *William* books. Pete Shotton, who played the washboard in The Quarry Men, recalls that early in their friendship they swore to become blood brothers—a rite Shotton asserts was in line with the strong communal identity of the Outlaws in the *Just William* stories. Len Garry,

who played tea chest bass for The Quarry Men, recalls Lennon cuddled up with the *Just William* books as late as age seventeen.

### WILLIAM AND ALICE—"STAND BY ME"

As a young boy, Lennon turned to literature to change and shape his life. With *Just William*, Lennon found a depiction of a young English lad who conceived of himself as isolated and misunderstood, who had an interest in creative writing, and who formed a gang to act out his bold, sensational schemes. It was Lennon's template for the ideal childhood. He used *Just William* to build a surrogate family, a gang of comrades who would become his gang in music. As he began to write, Lennon emulated Lewis Carroll, drifting through the alternate universe of *Alice*. Wonderland was a place Lennon regularly escaped to in his youth, often returned to as an adult, and, through his music, is a place where he will reside forever.

KEVIN K. SHORTSLEEVE is Associate Professor of English at Christopher Newport University. He did his D.Phil degree at Oxford University and has published academic work on Edward Gorey, Walt Disney, Dr. Seuss, and literary nonsense, among other subjects. He is the author of several books of verse for children, including *13 Monsters Who Should Be Avoided*.

#### EXTRA! READ | THINK | TALK | LINK

- "John Lennon Talks About *In His Own Write* at The National Theatre, 1968." Interview with Lennon on the stage adaptation of his books, his childhood, his nonsense writing style, and how ideas become poems and songs. [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beatlesbible.com) (Interview transcript: [beatlesbible.com](https://www.beatlesbible.com))
- "John and Yoko." David Sheff's essay about his interview with the couple. Includes transcript of the interview as published in *Playboy*, Jan. 1981. [davidsheff.com](https://www.davidsheff.com)
- *Just William*, LibriVox. Free audio recordings of the books. [librivox.com](https://www.librivox.com) or [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)
- *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, LibriVox. Free audio recordings of the books. [librivox.com](https://www.librivox.com) or [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)



*Jungle Tales*, James Jebusa Shannon, 1895.  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

# CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER!

## Inquisitive minds abound in children's literature

KEVIN SHORTSLEEVE



In Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1866), the heroine declares her circumstances are becoming "curiouser and curiouser!" But curiosity is what got Alice into this wondrous land. Alice sees a white rabbit duck into a hole and, like a typically inquisitive child, follows to find out where it could be going. As Alice falls down the rabbit hole—a scene that marks the birth of modern children's literature—she echoes the fates of other heroes, many from ancient Celtic mythology, who are drawn by curiosity to follow odd white creatures into thick woods and uncharted otherworlds.

Curiosity motivates characters—for good or ill—in many children's books. The eponymous Curious George, adventurous protagonist of the 1941-1966 stories written by H.A. and Margret Rey, would be nothing, after all, were it not for his craving to explore and discover. Very like a human toddler (which explains his enduring popularity), Curious George opens every cabinet, wiggles every handle, climbs every fence, and twists every faucet—that he should not—just to see what happens.

Picture books like *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats (1962) or *Windows* by Julia Denos (2017) reframe the everyday as



*Around here . . . we keep moving forward, opening up new doors and doing new things, because we're curious . . . and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths. —Walt Disney*



space for wonder. While Keats's character experiences the disorienting and delightful surprise of new fallen snow, the little boy in *Windows* enjoys walking in his neighborhood when lights come on in nearby homes at dusk, allowing him to peek in and ponder the different ways of living all around him.

Lucy in the C.S. Lewis fantasy novel *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950) explores a freestanding wardrobe that magically leads to the land of Narnia. The Narnia series, which features a retelling of The Fall from Genesis, demonstrates a link between themes of curiosity and temptation. Many myths paint curiosity in negative terms, particularly in women: from the biblical Eve (who seeks knowledge and is banished from Eden) to Pandora of Greek mythology (who opens a forbidden jar and releases the evils of humanity) to the fairytale Blue Beard's wife (who enters a forbidden room in her husband's castle and is condemned to death). Such epic tales conjure a familiar saying: "Curiosity killed the cat."

Reacting against this stereotype, author Philip Pullman created the trilogy *His Dark Materials*. In the first book, *The Golden Compass* (1995), which won nearly every literary award it was eligible for, Pullman introduces Lyra, a rebellious young girl whom we first meet, as with Lucy in the C.S. Lewis tale, hiding in a wardrobe. Pullman's series basically upends the story of Eve. Lyra isn't content to pick apples, open boxes, or peek in forbidden rooms. Because she seeks knowledge, she comes of age and saves her world.

Other recent children's books paint inquisitive girls in a similarly positive light. "Boundless imagination" fuels the inquiries of the young detective Ada in Andrea Beaty's *Ada Twist, Scientist* (2016). Ada is on a mission, using the scientific method to understand her world. The book suggests that curiosity can lead to answers, and it can lead to important new questions.

Markus Motum's picture book *Curiosity: The Story of a Mars Rover* (2017) uses fascinating detail and design to recount the 2012 rover landing on the red planet.



OPPOSITE: White rabbit illustration by John Tenniel for *The Nursery "Alice,"* (Macmillan, 1890), British Library [PD] Wikimedia Commons. LEFT: *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe,* Walt Disney Pictures and Walden Media, 2005

Interestingly, the book details the naming of the rover by Clara Ma, a sixth-grader at Sunflower Elementary School in Lanexa, Kansas. Ma was one of more than 9,000 students who submitted possible names in a national contest. Her essay, "Curiosity," brought her the prize.

KEVIN K. SHORTSLEEVE is Associate Professor of English at Christopher Newport University. He did his D.Phil degree at Oxford University and has published academic work on Edward Gorey, Walt Disney, Dr. Seuss, and literary nonsense, among other subjects. He is the author of several books of verse for children, including *13 Monsters Who Should Be Avoided*.

**EXTRA!** READ | THINK | TALK | LINK

- Animated read-alouds of books by Ezra Jack Keats. [ezra-jack-keats.org](http://ezra-jack-keats.org) and [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)
- *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, & The Wardrobe*, dramatized by Alan Seymour, 1988 BBC adaptation of the C.S. Lewis book. [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)
- "Move Over, Harry Potter—Just William is the Best," Alison Flood, April 2009, *The Guardian*. Five children's laureates recommend favorites for best children's stories of all time. [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)
- Philip Pullman site includes essays, newspaper commentaries, and interviews about his books. [philip-pullman.com](http://philip-pullman.com)
- "NASA Selects Student's Entry as New Mars Rover Name." Press release quotes Clara Ma's winning essay, "Curiosity." [nasa.gov](http://nasa.gov)



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# RIVER OF DOUBT

PETER A. GILBERT

On April 4, 1914, deep in the Amazon rain forest, former president Theodore Roosevelt lay delirious with a temperature of 105, too weak to lift his head. In just three months he had lost fifty-five pounds, a fourth of his original weight. His twenty-three-year-old son, Kermit, and the others didn't think he'd survive the night.

Roosevelt had gone to Brazil for a lucrative speaking engagement; while there, he wanted to get out into the wilderness. A challenging but not life-threatening expedition was planned. Then, it was suggested to him that, instead, he descend a river that no Westerner had ever traveled, let alone mapped. With little consideration, Roosevelt agreed.

The river had a daunting name: the River of Doubt. Its rapids, whirlpools, and waterfalls were unknown to outsiders, as was the surrounding, virtually impenetrable jungle. The president of the American Museum of Natural History considered Roosevelt's decision "insane if not suicidal." He was right.

Candice Millard tells this remarkable story in her terrific book *The River of Doubt, Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey* (Doubleday, 2005). By far the most competent, if reluctant, member of the ill-conceived and ill-prepared expedition was the head naturalist, George Cherrie, a distinguished, forty-seven-year-old ornithologist from Newfane who

had spent twenty-five years exploring and collecting birds in South America.

It took weeks just to get to the remote river. They were ill-equipped, with tons of the wrong gear, no boats, and not nearly enough food. They faced countless rapids and portages that took days; their dugout canoes couldn't be carried, but had to be dragged through the jungle on log rollers. The rapids and the terrain made turning back impossible.

They faced alligators, piranha, snakes, parasites, tiny black flies, and malaria-carrying mosquitoes. Roosevelt cut his leg, it became badly infected, and without proper treatment the wound became life-threatening. Late in the trip, when they reached a rapids that looked both impassable and impossible to portage around, Roosevelt, feverish and unable even to sit up, resolved to take his own life if need be lest he stop others from going on by foot. But they found a way through the rapids and the expedition continued.

Mapping the twisting river required sightings and measurements at every turn. Even when their very survival depended on speed, that work continued because that was why they were there. Both Roosevelt and the cartographer considered mapping the river a cause worth dying for. One expedition member drowned in rapids, one murdered another and fled into the jungle and was not seen again.

Theodore Roosevelt seated in boat during the Roosevelt-Rondon Scientific Expedition. The purpose of the trip to the Amazon Valley of Brazil was to collect zoological specimens and explore the uncharted Rio da Dúvida, the River of Doubt. Photo by Kermit Roosevelt, 1913. Library of Congress



Theodore Roosevelt in his library at Oyster Bay, ca. Sept. 1912. Library of Congress

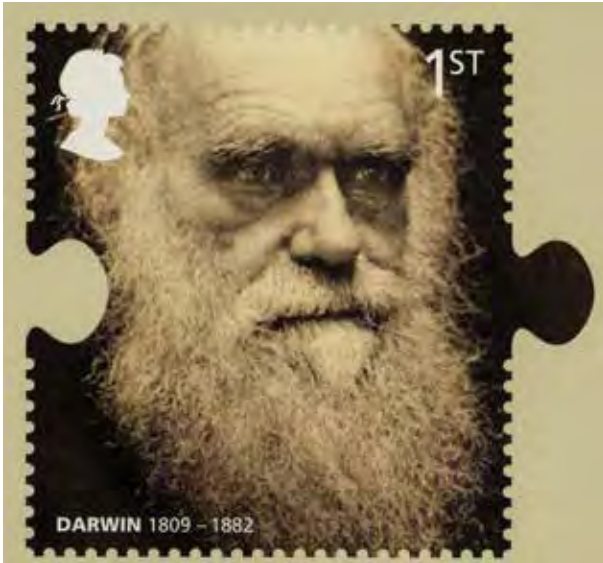
The river turned out to be nearly a thousand miles long. It took them two months. They succeeded only because the local, unseen Indians let them. Roosevelt's achievement was so great that many in the U.S. and Great Britain initially refused to believe it. He survived, but he was never again the energetic, vital figure he had been. He died less than five years later at the age of sixty.

PETER A. GILBERT recently retired from Vermont Humanities, where he served as Executive Director, 2002-2018. A graduate of Dartmouth College, Georgetown University Law Center, and the University of Virginia, he was previously Senior Assistant to the President and Associate Provost at Dartmouth College, a litigator at the Boston law firm of Hale and Dorr, and a faculty member at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. He is a frequent commentator on Vermont Public Radio and his book, *I Was Thinking...: Travels in the World of Ideas* (Wind Ridge Books 2012), includes more than sixty essays adapted from his commentaries. This article first aired as a commentary on Vermont Public Radio.

## EXTRA! READ | THINK | TALK | LINK

- "The River of Doubt," assembled by Roosevelt Memorial Association. Film footage, photos, and newspaper accounts of Theodore Roosevelt's expedition to the uncharted Rio da Dúvida, the River of Doubt. [loc.gov](http://loc.gov) (search: The River of Doubt)
- "Tracing Roosevelt's Path Down the 'River of Doubt,'" Nov. 3, 2005, NPR. Includes interview audio, transcript, and book excerpt from Candice Millard's book on Roosevelt's expedition. [npr.org](http://npr.org)





From stamp series celebrating 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth, Royal Mail Group, 2009. The National History Museum, London

## LESSONS FROM UNDER THE WORM STONE

Through long labor and much watching,  
Darwin posited that the earthworm's  
favorite food was carrots. Not only  
*was*, but surely *is*, since Darwin's studies  
dealt in eons, not days or years.  
That final book he pushed to complete,  
seeing the end of his hours  
on our human scale turning stark  
and short before him, was his best seller.  
He placed a stone over his field  
and for 30 years watched  
the work of worms beneath it.  
He produced similar conditions  
for study indoors as well,  
determined that worms do not seem  
to care much for art or music.  
These small wrigglers, he wrote,  
live only to devour and digest,  
and in their tiny ways thus they create  
the conditions for our human survival,  
leave us soil to sustain us as planters.  
Adam and Eve, remembering and  
striving to recreate that first garden,  
set us up at the beginning.  
But how long did the worms work  
preparing for that moment?

—CAROL HAMILTON

Carol Hamilton is a former Oklahoma State Poet Laureate, teacher, and storyteller. She has published seventeen books of poetry, youth novels, and legends, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize six times. This poem was first published in *Cold Mountain Review*.

## DARWIN'S CONJECTURE

Darwin  
was desperate  
for proof  
that animals wept.  
It wasn't enough  
that houseflies hum  
in the key of F  
or that Dall sheep keep  
lifelong their horns,  
adding like trees  
a ring each year.  
Darwin wanted tears.

Being the only  
species that weeps  
was lonely,  
thought Darwin,  
dreaming  
of manic animals.  
No, it wasn't enough  
that honey bees  
can count to four.  
Darwin wanted more.

Or less.  
Confess it—  
the reason why  
humans cry  
is the mess  
they fashion  
in comparison to  
the paradise  
they can imagine.  
Animals, *if*  
they imagine,  
must be less  
distressed  
by the severity  
of the disparity.  
Or maybe they have  
less disparity.  
Or less mess.

As to why  
Darwin hoped  
that animals cry  
we can only guess—  
which is a form  
of imagining,  
and could lead  
to the emergence  
of tears. Instead  
let us hum  
in the key of F  
and count to four  
or more.  
Or less,  
and know  
the aurora borealis  
as glimpsed through  
the fretwork of  
a construction crane  
is a metaphor  
for our brain  
and also an analogy  
for why we cry,  
all the while—  
like Darwin—  
humming against  
the immensity.

—JESSICA GOODFELLOW



Charles Darwin (copy of 1881 work), John Collier, 1883. National Portrait Gallery [PD] Wikimedia Commons

Jessica Goodfellow lives and works in Japan. Her recent book is *Whiteout* (University of Alaska Press, 2017). This poem was first published by *The Threepenny Review*, Summer 2017.



## WHAT DO BASEBALL, THE SUPREME COURT, AND SHAKESPEARE HAVE IN COMMON?

ELAINE WARNER

**B**lame it on baseball. It was the 1986 World Series—the Boston Red Sox versus the New York Mets. Despite several opportunities at the championship, the Sox hadn't tasted World Series victory since 1918. Boston had the Series all but won in Game 6, when an error led to a loss described as the second-worst day in Boston baseball history. (The single-worst day? When the Sox traded Babe Ruth to the Yankees in 1920.) Game 7 was delayed a day because of rain, a soggy omen for the Sox, and the Mets carried the Series win.

For dyed-in-the-wool Beantown fan Barry Levenson, it was a dark night of the soul when the Sox were crushed. Unable to sleep, he went for a walk, considering the deep questions of life: *Should I have a hobby? Maybe I should start collecting something.* The epiphany came while combing the aisles of an all-night grocery. As Levenson tells it, "I was passing the mustard section when I seemed to hear this voice saying, 'If you collect us, they will come.'"

And so began a condiment compulsion. In novice fashion, Levenson started collecting with the easy and the obvious: French's® Classic Yellow Mustard, Plochman's Mild Yellow Mustard, and other brands common on grocery store shelves. Six months later, he picked up a history-making find.

As Assistant Attorney General for the State of Wisconsin, Levenson was in Washington, D.C., to argue a case before the United States Supreme Court. As he left his hotel room, he spotted a sealed jar of mustard on a used room service tray. He scooped up the tiny

container of Dickinson's Stone Ground Mustard and slipped it into his left pocket, where it rested as he presented his case to the Justices. He won the case and that jar of mustard remains a "Supremely" special memento.

"By 1991 my collection was growing and becoming more and more interesting," Levenson says. "I thought, *I ought to open a museum.* Some of my colleagues encouraged me. Most thought I was crazy. By that time I had seven or eight hundred mustards."

Levenson opened his museum in 1992 in the small town of Mount Horeb, a half-hour's drive west of Madison, Wisconsin, and expanded to more things mustardy. From the common "moist" mustard, which he labels "prepared," his fascination turned to tins of dry, ground mustard. In 2000, he moved the growing enterprise to a larger building and added a collection of mustard pots. In 2009, the facility moved to its present location in Middleton, where Levenson dubbed it the National Mustard Museum (NMM).

Today, the museum houses over 6,000 mustards representing all 50 states and over 70 countries. There are more than 450 tins and dozens of mustard pots, including vintage and antique finds, and examples of old classic advertising.

Barry Levenson, founder and curator of the National Mustard Museum, eats the classic hot-dog-bun-mustard combo. "Do not, under any circumstances, ask for ketchup!" National Mustard Museum





TOP: National Mustard Museum, Middleton, Wisconsin. Photo, Elaine Warner. MIDDLE: Oklahoma City Thunder fans enjoy National Mustard Day, which brings thousands to the museum. Photo, Tim Chatman. BOTTOM: An international assortment of a beloved condiment. Photo, Elaine Warner

Even the infamous Colonel Mustard of the *Clue* board game fame adds to the fun. *Mustardpiece Theatre* is a highlight, featuring such titles as *Annie Get Your Bun; Hello, Dollop!*; and *Les Mustardes*.

Humor liberally salts exhibit displays, and trivia abounds in esoteric mustard facts. (Did you know mustard is mentioned in four Shakespeare plays?) Levenson is a master, combining education with sharp wit. No groan-inducing pun is skipped, including his book title *Habeas Codfish: Reflections on Food & The Law*. When not acting as NMM curator in chief, he teaches Food Law at the University of Wisconsin Law School.

Gift shop shelves are lined with domestic and international mustards in varieties from mild to “scary hot” that will clear your sinuses all the way to your toes. You can sample mustards with fruit, with wine, with curry or horseradish, and mustards with chocolate.

For those, like me, whose humor arrested at pre-adolescence, a favorite section is America’s Mustard College, POUPON U. Visitors receive song sheets with school fight songs and the Alma Mater, which begins with the stirring words, “O Alma Mater POUPON U, brown and yellow through and through.” Keg parties would surely resound to the rollicking “Roll out the Mustard.” The Campus Bookstore outfits potential alumni with swag, from pennants to playing cards, and offers the ultimate in décor, a POUPON U toilet seat. You can also pick up a personalized diploma in advanced mustard studies. I now hold a D.D.S. degree: Doctor of Diddley Squat.

The National Mustard Museum is the official sponsor of National Mustard Day, celebrated annually on the first Saturday in August, drawing thousands for food,

mustard tasting, music, and games. NMM also conducts an annual World-Wide Mustard Competition with entries from Asia to North America all vying to be crowned the Grand Poobah of Moutarde.

From compulsive collection to popular Wisconsin attraction, the National Mustard Museum, in the words of its founder, is “a shining temple to the King of Condiments.”

(P.S. Lest you lie awake pondering Shakespeare’s taste for the condiment, Mustardseed is a fairy in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Grumio tempts Katherina with beef and warns, “The mustard is too hot a little.” In *Henry IV (Part 2)*, Sir John Falstaff says of Poins, “His wit’s as thick as Tewkesbury mustard.” And Touchstone, the court jester in *As You Like It*, regales Celia and Rosalind with a story about a knight who swore “they were good pancakes” but “the mustard was naught.”)

ELAINE WARNER’s adventures include riding in hot air balloons, helicopters, a glider, and a NASCAR race car, and zip-lining over Palo Duro Canyon. In 25 years of travel writing, she’s eaten her way through more cities than she can count and will continue traveling and writing as long as she can schlep a suitcase.

**EXTRA!** READ | THINK | TALK | LINK

- National Mustard Museum. Fun facts, POUPON U’s Mustard 101 Quiz, and Mrs. Mustard’s recipes. [mustardmuseum.com](http://mustardmuseum.com)
- “1986 World Series,” *Baseball Almanac*. A rundown of individual 1986 Series games, fast facts (such as who delivered the opening pitch and who sang the National Anthem at each game), box scores, and statistics. [baseball-almanac.com](http://baseball-almanac.com)
- *Griffin v. Wisconsin* (1987). Facts of the case argued by Barry Levenson and the decision by U.S. Supreme Court Justices on its relevance to the Fourth Amendment. [oyez.org](http://oyez.org)



# Tasting the WORLD

*In praise of culinary curiosity*

PAMELA CHEW

**T**here were few people of Chinese descent living in Missouri in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Finding a Cantonese restaurant serving homemade tofu required an extensive search by car. I loved venturing out on Sundays with my dad, happy to be included in the daylong hunt. Only now, reminiscing about two-hour weekend drives sitting shotgun next to my professor father, do I truly understand the significance of genuine cuisine at that time to a first-generation Asian.

My dad was looking for a Chinese kitchen commanded by a Chinese cook. To my recollection, only two existed: House of Toy in Kansas City and Leong's in Springfield. No all-you-can-eat buffet could substitute. The exquisite texture of freshly pressed soybean cake was the prized reward of the distance traveled.

Thinking back to my childhood in the tiny college town of Nevada, Missouri, I realize that lifelong residents probably viewed the few international faculty at Cottey College and their ethnic customs with a great deal of tolerant curiosity. When the Puerto Rican Spanish professor, Arsenio, and his wife, Isolina, special-ordered pigs' feet from the A&P supermarket, my father enthusiastically chipped in to share in the monthly treat. On preparation day, he would walk to pick up his own small covered dish which Isolina set aside in the humid kitchen. Upon returning home, he sat at the dining table alone, slowly and

audibly enjoying this rare dish with a cloth napkin tied around his neck to protect his tie from the slurps.

The husband-and-wife French professors, another novelty, walked hand-in-hand to the only bakery in town, near the beautiful square where the Vernon County courthouse rose. They purchased a daily loaf of French bread as if they were still in Aix-en-Provence.

I have realized there is a lack of inquisitiveness, an unquestioning acceptance by Americans of so-called "genuine" foreign dishes served in chain restaurants in this country. Perhaps the reason is we have moved from being a "melting pot" nation to a "melted pot" in which there are no longer defined lines of culinary authenticity as we move from coast to coast, state to state, or intermarry between cultures. Perhaps it is because we never have the opportunity to sample the "real deal."

Living and teaching abroad as a language educator, I quickly learned about cultural authenticity—in particular culinary authenticity. I have dined at many a Roman café as fellow tourists berated the barista's inability to reproduce a caramel-topped cappuccino, whose origin is actually Seattle. I have watched guests at a Sorrentine trattoria ask for Parmigiano cheese for spaghetti with clams—only to be refused. The Italian chef emerged from the kitchen and politely but sternly informed the foreign diners that sea and dairy should never be mixed.

During a brief stay in Rome, my daughter and I passed a Korean restaurant twice a day on our routine walks. We had never tried Korean cuisine and decided to go to the dinner-only restaurant. The tiny dishes of freshly shredded or pickled vegetables were beautiful miniatures. The spare ribs sizzling on the tabletop grill were succulent. But most interesting was seeing a bus full of Korean tourists empty into the restaurant (*not* adhering to the maxim "when in Rome") to have authentic *bulgogi*. People from cultures with a rich history and ritual around eating can be picky, even reluctant to dine on the foods of their vacation host country.

In 2004 I was invited to teach at The University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. As I made final travel plans, my Aussie director advised me to fly from the arrival point, Nadi, to Suva, the capital. I politely protested, insisting this might be my only chance to observe country life. I landed in Nadi, found the bus, and hurried to get a window seat. I now understand my







director's apprehension, as horses ran alongside and cars passed on both sides of the conveyance. All one could do was maintain a strong grip (thus, the finger-nail marks in the seat upholstery).

I was also forewarned that faculty housing in Suva was a studio apartment with only an electric fry pan and a small microwave oven. A Tulsa colleague gifted me with a microwaveable rice cooker. I felt totally confident in my culinary skills and set out to find ingredients for my first home-cooked meal. I was familiar with lamb preparation, so I bought a cut of meat, some rice, and onions to sauté. I couldn't wait to try the failsafe rice cooker and, by now, I was famished. I set the tiny table for one and plated my dinner.

It was putrid.

The taste was rank, far stronger than any offal offering I had ever sampled in my travels. The next day I met my director, Bernadette, and her husband, Peter, for lunch. I relayed my disappointment and the disgusting flavor of my dish. Peter laughed and said I had cooked mutton flaps. Historically, he explained, the finest lamb stayed in Australia and New Zealand and the scraps were exported. In Fiji, a taste for these cuts became a part of food traditions. I hesitantly asked, "What is a flap and where is this piece located?" I learned it is the low-quality, high-fat end of sheep ribs discarded by more affluent countries.

Adjusting to life in Fiji included becoming familiar with the importance of bones in Indo-Fijian foodways. In some societies, a restaurant manager could be called to a diner's table to apologize if an unintended bone was in the presented entrée. But many cultures rely on animal bone marrow to create stock, to add richness and thickness to soups, and, most importantly, to provide nutrition. On my first night out in Suva, I was curious yet delighted when my Fijian colleagues complained about not being served enough bones to suck on in their main course.

I remain confident of one truth: Communication opens among the world's citizens when sharing a meal in a host's home. Food preparation comes from the heart and soul, and often from one's personal history. Through food, we learn each other's cultures and discover new perspectives of the world.

Returning to Tulsa from Italy in the early 1990s, I picked up a travel magazine which contained a black and white photo that I am guilty of tearing out. Now laminated, the picture has hung in my classroom ever since—a snapshot of four Native Americans, two in full ceremonial headdress, sitting in a gondola in a Venice canal while traveling as part of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in 1890. That Paolo Salvati photo from the Denver Public Library transported me back to my first weeks in Florence, Italy, as a post-graduate student.

I chose to walk miles from home to school each day so I could eat my fill of Italian cuisine. Once a week I passed a white delivery truck with a giant water buffalo on its side panel parked in the street blocking traffic. Only with time did I learn that *mozzarella di bufala* was made with water buffalo milk, a delicacy from Campania, where this sought-after cheese is made exclusively and transported to other peninsular regions where it is quickly snapped up.

I will always wonder about the caption underneath the floating gondola in my prized photograph: "They stopped off to see Venice on their way and to introduce the Italians to buffalo mozzarella."

PAMELA CHEW is Associate Professor of World Languages and ESL at Tulsa Community College. Her fascination for languages, food, and illustrating began at age five when she and her parents moved to Stockholm and Copenhagen on sabbatical. The deep affection for her hometown of Nevada, Missouri, and its residents endures.

**EXTRA!** READ | THINK | TALK | LINK

- "A Brief History of Bulgogi, Korea's Most Delicious Export," Rachel Tepper Paley, *Smithsonian* magazine, Feb. 12, 2018. Global popularity of the dish and a recipe from James-Beard-award-winning chef Peter Serpico. [smithsonianmag.com](http://smithsonianmag.com)
- "I Got Schooled by Mozzarella Masters." Alexis Gabriel, a.k.a. Alex French Guy Cooking, travels to Southern Italy to learn the secrets of authentic *mozzarella di bufala*. [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)





Preparing the Nets, Lance Hunter

# A FISHERMAN'S *Tale*

DIANE BOZE

One of my favorite memories of Spain evokes a cool, windy beach in Galicia where I struggled to understand an old fisherman's tale in a language I had hardly heard spoken. The wizened storyteller and idyllic setting kindled my fascination and curiosity and coincided with explorations that essentially set my direction in life.

I am far from a skilled linguist. I've joked that I am a Henry Kissinger-type speaker: my heavy accent

screams my origins. Nevertheless, I have been drawn to study languages—Spanish, French, Russian, German—not so much for the ability to communicate, but for what these languages communicate to me. A language can reveal the construction of thoughts, beliefs, ideas, and structures of a culture.

My three months as a high school exchange student in Chile, over a year as a Fulbright researcher in Ecuador, a study-year abroad in Madrid, and my

second stay in Spain researching my dissertation all contributed to a key personal revelation: I am not the same when speaking Spanish. The words available to me and the depth of my understanding of those words invariably influence my persona. My superficial grasp on Spanish translates into less constricted thoughts, more unguarded reactions.

In Spanish, I am different.

I've always considered myself a square peg; yet, when I speak Spanish, I somehow feel freer to express myself since no one expects me to fit in completely (recall my Henry Kissinger accent). This recognition of the power of foreign languages and foreign locales has effectively shaped my studies, my experiences, my credos—even, I believe, my current occupation as an art history professor.

I took my first trip to Spain thanks to a yearlong scholarship to begin art history studies. At *La Universidad Complutense* in Madrid, I had the great fortune of a classmate “adopting” me and inviting me to accompany him and his friends on frequent weekend excursions. I had the happy experience of learning about Spain with Spaniards. We drove to sites around Madrid and outlying regions in Andalusia, Asturias, Catalonia, Valencia, and even Portugal.

I discovered the amazing richness of Spanish art, architecture, and culture, and the great diversity within Spain, including Spanish languages. What Americans call “Spanish” is recognized as Spain’s official language, yet there it is referred to as “*castellano*” (Castilian). The Spanish government also (confusingly) recognizes four other co-official languages, as well as a variety of unofficial languages and dialects associated with various regions. Although most Spaniards can speak *castellano*, more than a quarter list a regional language as their first language. Many more switch between Castilian and a second language. Castilian may be the most prevalent language spoken, but it is not “Spanish” (“the language of Spaniards”) for everyone.

My Castilian-speaking travel partners assured me that they would be able to understand Catalán, Asturian, and Portuguese. I quickly learned that they understood no more of these languages than I. When asked something in *castellano*, many locals only respond in their regional language, a mild rebuke to the Castilian-speakers who make no effort to communicate in regional languages. When my travel group discovered that regional speakers were more forgiving of true foreigners, like me, speaking in *castellano*, I was quickly designated “Requester of Directions.”

Such experiences molded my perceptions of Spain and, even later, my research. If the language I spoke could influence so vividly my own sense of identity, how much greater the influence on the identities of the various language groups and regions within Spain. I spent years trying to decipher Spain’s efforts at establishing a united national identity. I explored the oddities and rationales of how nineteenth-century Andalusia—the regional power center of Spain during centuries of *Islamic* rule—had been

manipulated, exploited, converted, and homogenized to become the most widely-accepted visual image of this very *Catholic* country, internationally and, surprisingly, tenaciously within Spain itself.

The day of my storybook encounter with the old Galician fisherman, I had been in Spain over a year researching my dissertation. I had not traveled much during my second stay, spending almost all my time in libraries in Madrid and Sevilla; so I very much welcomed a vacation to A Coruña, Galicia, one of the regions I had never visited during my first trip to Spain a decade earlier.

Even now, so many years later, I remember foggy grey skies, breezes saturated with sea mist, silver waves rushing toward my toes, the smell of seaweed and fish. As I stood looking at the overcast sea, I decided the panorama was as much an archetypal image of Spain as the exotic Andalusian scenes I had been studying. The contour of that peninsular country underscores the great expanse of coast. How could the sea *not* play an essential role in the character and image of this land?

I was engrossed in these reflections, walking the small stretch of beach. A group of elderly men sat on a long bench in front of a tavern, beer bottles in hand, conversing in loud shouts to each other. When I passed them, they became almost silent, watching me. To them, I was a stranger. To me, they were boisterous ambience, along with the wind whipping my hair and the wet, cold sand beneath my feet. We had captured each other’s attention. So I wasn’t too surprised when one of them, a cane in one hand and a pipe in the other, approached me.

“*Inglesa?*” he asked. You’re English?

“I speak English, but I’m not English,” I replied.

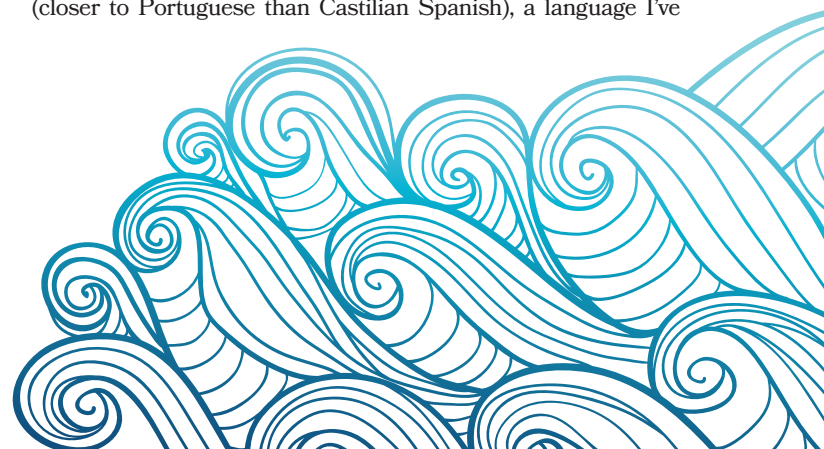
He guessed German next. “No, the United States,” I answered in Castilian Spanish. He was also speaking *castillano*, but I knew Castilian wasn’t his first language; he, like me, had an accent. “Ah! New York? California?”

“Oklahoma.”

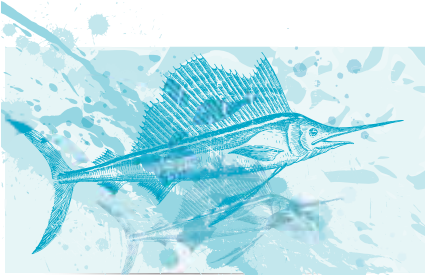
He grinned, pleased, and patted his lips as he uttered “ah, ah, ah, ah.” It is amazing how people around the world recognize the name Oklahoma as the land of Indians. “Why are you here?” His gesture indicated the beach.

I briefly mentioned my dissertation, my interest in the regions of Spain, and ended simply, “*También, amo el mar.*” Also, I love the sea. I used the verb that suggests a love of the soul.

“Ah,” he repeated. He broke into *galego*, the Galician language (closer to Portuguese than Castilian Spanish), a language I’ve







never studied. “Me too. *Amo a mar.* It is my lover.” He had referred to the sea, which generally is masculine, with a feminine article. And he had used the word “*amante*,” the same word in *castellano*. Not love, but lover. “Have you heard about the sea as lover?” He was looking out towards the horizon of the ocean.

The topic, although unexpected, piqued curiosity, fascination. “No. Oklahoma is far from the sea.”

“This is my truth, but it is many men’s truth.” He paused, because he was still speaking in *galego*. “*Entendes? A verdade?*” You understand? The truth?

Living abroad had given me much practice in listening intently to understand. I was engrossed and determined. I nodded, gesturing him to go on.

After several puffs on his pipe, he continued, still speaking *galego* but occasionally repeating a few words in *castellano*.

“Many, many years ago there was a man. A man like me, but not me. He loved walking along the beach and hearing the waves. One day the sea spoke a language he understood. The voice was female and beautiful. The sea flirted and laughed and seduced the man. He fell deeply, deeply in love. And the sea loved him back. She told him that if he dedicated his life to her, became her mate, she would give him all that he could ever want. He would be prosperous, well fed, and happy. *Entendes?*”

“I think so,” I replied in *castellano*. “They were like husband and wife.”

“They were husband and wife. And the man traveled with her to many places, enjoying the riches she provided. Occasionally, though, he told her he needed to go ashore. ‘I am a creature of the land; I must sometimes feel firm soil beneath my feet.’ And because she loved him so much, she allowed it, saying, ‘Return to me as soon as you can, husband. I will miss you.’ He agreed. He loved her passionately. But he was a man, so on the land he found a human female and he loved her, too. With this human woman he created a family and he loved this family. *Entendes?*”

I nodded. Somehow, I was understanding.

“Of course the sea discovered the man’s deception. She was hurt, angry. Although she loved the man, she wanted vengeance. She swelled and crashed and swirled, seething. She tossed the man from his fishing boat and he drowned beneath her waves. However, she could not stand being without him, so she seduced another of his kind—but this time she was the good wife only sometimes, because she knew this man also

would take another wife. The story would repeat. So now, all of us men who dedicate ourselves to the sea can have wonderful lives with food aplenty and rich careers. But when the sea remembers our treacheries, we can suffer the fate of her first human lover. It is the gamble all men of the sea must take.”

“What a powerful story. *Gracias.*”

“Not a story,” he corrected quickly. “*A verdade.*”

“It’s a powerful truth,” I said. “But a sad truth.”

We continued to stare out toward the horizon of the ocean. Just visible on the curve of beach to my right was the Tower of Hercules, the oldest Roman lighthouse still in use. Many locals believe the legend that a Celtic king erected it even earlier. Whatever its origins, it stood as an ancient recognition of the dangers of the sea.

I held out my hand and he took it. “It is the truth of *meu país.*” My country. (Galicia? Spain? Both, I decided.) He bowed his head slightly over our grasp. “I wish you good fortune.”

As we parted, I felt as if I had been gifted my personal moment of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Just a few days earlier, I had visited the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, a major Christian pilgrimage route since the ninth century, less than fifty miles from A Coruña. With the power of wordplay, *that* Santiago called to mind Hemingway’s Santiago.

I was wrapping up my research of Spanish identity as an Andalusian cityscape: Islamic architecture, blistering sun, and parched sandy terrain. My aged mariner had persuasively introduced a different structure: ocean panoramas, cold wet sand, a lighthouse pre-dating Islamic influence, and a Christian pilgrimage site.

This enchanted interlude and my determined curiosity to understand a strange language and a different culture remains a cherished postscript to my studies.

DIANE BOZE, Ph.D., is a Professor of Art History and humanities at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Publications targeting the education of students and non-expert instructors include “Lessons from the Non-Hermit: Valuing Korea” in *Interdisciplinary Humanities* and “Creating History by Re-creating the Minoan Snake Goddess” in *The Journal of Art Historiography*. She has been awarded the Circle of Excellence in Teaching, the highest teaching honor at her university.

LANCE HUNTER has received twenty awards in national and international watercolor exhibitions in the last four years. His art has been published in five books and several art magazines, including the cover of *Watercolor Artist*. He is a Professor of Art at Northeastern State University in Oklahoma. Lancehunter.com



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Testa anatomica (anatomical head), 1854, Filippo Balbi. Wellcome Library Collection

# THE ENCHANTED LOOM

## ON MAN, MIND, MEMORY, AND MACHINES

LEWIS H. LAPHAM

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*The light of the sun and moon cannot be outdistanced, yet mind reaches beyond them. Galaxies are as infinite as grains of sand, yet mind spreads outside them.—Eisai*

All brains gather intelligence; to lesser or greater extents, some brains acquire a state of mind. How and where they find the means to do so is the question raised by poets and philosophers, doctors of divinity and medicine who have been fooling around with it for the past five thousand years. About the metaphysical composition of the human mind, all we can say for certain is that something unknown is doing we don't know what.

The brain is the most complicated object in the known universe, housing 86 billion neurons, no two alike and each connected to thousands of other neurons, passing signals to one another across as many as 100 trillion synaptic checkpoints. Rational study of the organism (its chemistries, mechanics, and cellular structure) has led to the development of the Human Genome Project, yielded astonishing discoveries in medicine and biotechnology—the





“AN ENCHANTED LOOM WHERE MILLIONS OF FLASHING SHUTTLES WEAVE A DISSOLVING PATTERN, ALWAYS A MEANINGFUL PATTERN THOUGH NEVER AN ABIDING ONE.  
—CHARLES SCOTT SHERRINGTON”

LEFT: “*I am half sick with shadows,*” said the Lady of Shalott, 1915, John William Waterhouse, Art Gallery of Ontario [PD] Wikimedia Commons. OPPOSITE: (Left) *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*, 1801–1803, Jacques-Louis David, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere [PD] Wikimedia Commons. (Center) Queen Victoria, ca. 1870, after Franz Xaver Winterhalter, Royal Collection [PD] Wikimedia Commons. (Right) “A Mughal empress or member of a royal family holding a spear and turban ornament,” Wellcome Library Collection.

CT scan and the MRI, gene editing and therapy, advanced diagnostics, surgical and drug treatment of neurological disorder and disease. All triumphs of the intellect but none of them answering the question as to whether the human mind is flesh giving birth to spirit or spirit giving birth to flesh.

Mind is consciousness and although a fundamental fact of human existence, consciousness is subjective experience as opposed to objective reality and therefore outdistances not only the light of the sun and the moon but also the reach of the scientific method. It doesn't lend itself to trial by numbers. Nor does it attract the major funding (public and private, civilian and military) that in China, Europe, and the Americas expects the brain sciences to produce prompt and palpable reward and relief.

The scientific-industrial complex focuses its efforts on the creation of artificial intelligence—computer software equipped with functions of human cognition giving birth to machines capable of visual perception, speech and pattern recognition, decision making and data management. Global funding for AI amounted to roughly \$30 billion in 2016. America's military commands test drones that decide for themselves which targets to destroy; Google assembles algorithms that monetize online embodiments of human credulity and desire, ignorance and fear.

We live in an age convinced that technology is the salvation of the human race, and over the past fifty years, we've learned to inhabit a world in which it is increasingly the thing that thinks and the man reduced to the state of a thing. We have machines to scan the flesh and track the blood, game the stock market,

manufacture our news and social media, tell us where to go, what to do, how to point a cruise missile or a toe shoe; they connect the dots to nobody but themselves, neither know or care to know who or what or where is the human race, whether it is to be deleted, sodomized or saved. Watson and Alexa can access the libraries of Harvard, Yale, and Congress, but they can't read the books. They process words as objects, not as subjects. Not knowing what the words mean, they don't hack into the vast cloud of human consciousness (art, literature, religion, philosophy, poetry, and myth) that is the making of once and future human beings.

The all but infinite extent of human ignorance—about the nature of our own minds, as about most everything else in the universe—is the provocation that rouses out the love of learning, kindles the signal fires of memory and the imagination, turns to the humanities and the lessons of history. We have no other light with which to see and maybe recognize ourselves as human beings.

History is not what happened two hundred or two thousand years ago. It is a *story* about what happened two hundred or two thousand years ago. The stories change, as do the sight lines available to the tellers of the tales. To read three histories of the British Empire, one published in 1800, the others in 1900 and 2000, is to discover three different British Empires on which the sun eventually sets. Napoleon still on his horse at Waterloo, Queen Victoria enthroned in Buckingham Palace, the subcontinent fixed to its mooring in the Indian Ocean—but as to the light in which Napoleon, the queen, or India are to be seen, accounts differ.

To consult the record in books both ancient and modern is to come across every vice, virtue, motive, behavior, obsession, joy, and sorrow to be met with on the roads across the frontiers of the millennia. What survives the wreck of empires and the



sack of cities is the sound of the human voice confronting its own mortality, points of light flashing in the gulf of time on scraps of papyrus and scratchings on stone, on ship's logs and totem poles, on bronze coins and painted ceilings, in confessions voluntary and coerced, in five-act plays and three-part songs. The story painted on the old walls and printed in the old books is our own.

It doesn't occur to Marilynne Robinson, twenty-first-century essayist and novelist, to look the gift horse in the mouth. "We all live in a great reef of collective experience, past and present, that we receive and preserve and modify. William James says data should be thought of not as givens but as gifts . . . History and civilization are an authoritative record the mind has left, is leaving, and will leave."

The work of the brain is receiving the presents; the art of the mind is unwrapping them. Playing with them on what the French eighteenth-century philosophe Denis Diderot likens to a clavichord fitted with "sensitive vibrating strings" of memory. Raveling and unraveling them on what Charles Scott Sherrington, twentieth-century English neurophysiologist and Nobel laureate, likens to "an enchanted loom where millions of flashing shuttles weave a dissolving pattern, always a meaningful pattern though never an abiding one."

Diderot and Sherrington go and catch the falling stars in the net of metaphor, metaphor as described by Albert Einstein in 1918 as "intuition resting on sympathetic understanding of experience." He backed up his observation with a variation on the general theory of relativity:

Man tries to make for himself in the fashion that suits him best a simplified and intelligible picture of the world; he then tries to some extent to substitute this cosmos of his for the world of experience, and thus to overcome it. This is what the painter, the poet, the speculative philosopher, and the natural scientist do.

So does the historian. So do we all, to greater or lesser extents settling the wilderness of our experience with a story staking claim to new worlds both inside and outside our heads. Evan S. Connell, American novelist, essayist, and poet, framed Einstein's assumption as the question asked in his *Notes from a Bottle Found on the Beach at Carmel*:

Each life is a myth, a song given out  
of darkness, a tale for children, the legend we create.  
Are we not heroes, each of us  
in one fashion or another,  
wandering through mysterious labyrinths?

The answer is yes, we are heroes, lighting our way through labyrinths with symbols and signs made from the shaping and reshaping of a once-upon-a-time, finding the past in the present, the present in the past. The talent is uniquely human. To the best of our knowledge, the human being is the only one of God's or Charles Darwin's creatures capable of seeing the similar in the dissimilar, who can say what it's like to be what it is.

The losing track of our own stories (where we've been, who we are, and where we might be going) is the destruction of what goes by the name of civilization. The consequence of the twentieth-century information revolution is the same one the poet William Wordsworth ascribed in 1807 to the nineteenth-century industrial revolution:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
Little we see in nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

In digitally enhanced America these days, the sordid boon is the consummation devoutly to be wished—to be minted into the



coin of celebrity, become a corporation, a best-selling logo or brand, a product in place of a person. For the past forty-odd years, persuaded that technology is the means of our deliverance and money the hero with a thousand faces, we've been burying the life of a weakened but still operational democracy in the tomb of a stupefied, dysfunctional plutocracy. America's heart and mind atrophy within the gilded housings of five-star vanity and greed, the voicing of its political thought indistinguishable from celebrity self-promotion.

Our world grows increasingly crowded with machines of whom we ask what the rich ask of their servants (comfort us, tell us what to do) and on whom we depend to so arrange the world that we can avoid the trouble of having to experience it. The little we see in nature that is ours we look to replace with material things, with smartphones and bots to feed, water, drive, milk, and round up the herd of our still mortal needs and desires. Runway models at New York fashion shows ape the appearance of automata. Our comic book heroes in movies and video games, bionic men and metallic women, come dressed in the uniforms of invincible weapons; the villains show up as zombies, cyborgs, replicants, and droids roaming landscapes as dehumanized and desolate

as the dark side of the moon. Whether billed as utopia or dystopia, the future proposed by our popular fortune-tellers is made by and for machines.

Ray Kurzweil, oracle in residence at Google, published *The Singularity Is Near* in 2005, announcing the dawn of a new day in which the human species breaks the shackles of its genetic legacy, soars to inconceivable heights of nonbiological intelligence, achieves evolutionary union with things, eliminates the distinction between real reality and virtual reality. Selected sensory functions of the human brain attach to immortal computer systems, suspending them forever in a virtual state of perpetual bliss.

The great good news lately has come to be seen as a cause for alarm. The wired-in congregation of the California faithful doesn't doubt the prospect of AI superintelligence. But the programmers worry that it will create a world in its own image, leaving little or no room at the inn for human beings. Computer processing power doubles every two years, a rate well beyond the evolutionary gathering of human brain cells. A quorum of prophetic opinion now holds that before the end of this century, computer software will learn how to build its own infrastructure, set its own political agenda, develop self-replicating nanotechnology that eludes the understanding and control of

its sponsors. Max Tegmark, professor of physics at MIT, published *Life 3.0* in 2017, listing the ways in which superintelligence might take over the world—as “benevolent dictator,” owning and operating society with freedom, justice, and guaranteed income for all; as “protective god,” preserving an illusion of control of one's own destiny; as “conquerors,” ridding the planet of human beings because machines perceive them as threat, nuisance, or waste of resources.

Silicon Valley sells the prospect of omniscient, omnipotent intelligence to customers wishing to turn it instantly to gold, to frightened children of the bourgeois rich who either don't know, have forgotten, or don't take the trouble to learn that it isn't with machines that men make their immortality. They do so with the powers of mind acquired on the immense journey up and out of the prehistoric mud, drawing on the immense wealth of subjective human consciousness.

Understood as means instead of end, the past is the inexhaustible fund of energy and mind that makes possible the revolt against what G.K. Chesterton once called “the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about.” To free themselves from the arrogant oligarchy in charge of the eighteenth-century British crown,



FAR LEFT: "Ancient of Days Setting a Compass to the Earth," 1794, *Europe: A Prophecy* by William Blake [PD] rawpixel.com. CENTER: *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851, Emanuel Leutze, Metropolitan Museum of Art. RIGHT: *The Orrery*, ca. 1766, Joseph Wright, Derby Museum and Art Gallery [PD] Wikimedia Commons.



American revolutionaries framed their envisionings of a republic (Jefferson's and Paine's as well as those of Hamilton and Adams) on their study of Cicero and Plutarch as well as their readings of the King James Bible. So in its turn the Italian Renaissance derived from the rediscovery of classical antiquity. The latter progression supplied the scholar Stephen Greenblatt with the premise for *The Swerve* (2011), accounting for the death and resurrection of 7,400 lines of lyric but unrhymed verse, *On the Nature of Things*, composed by the Roman poet Titus Lucretius Carus in the first century BC. Greenblatt subtitled his book *How the World Became Modern*, attributing the metamorphosis in large part to the discovery of Lucretius' poem in a German monastery in 1417.

Lucretius had infused his poem with the thought of Epicurus, the Greek philosopher teaching his students in Athens in the fourth century BC that the elementary particles of matter ("the seeds of things") are eternal, and that the purpose of life is the embrace of beauty and pleasure. Everything that exists—the sun and the moon, water flies, ziggurats, mother and the flag—is made of atoms in motion (among them the 86 billion neurons in a human brain) ceaselessly combining and recombining in a bewildering variety of substance and form. The universe

consists of "atoms and void and nothing else." Nothing other than a vast turmoil of creation and destruction, a constant making and remaking of despots and matinee idols, of books and avatars and states of mind.

Late in the season of the Roman Empire, the bringers of the light of Christianity, Saint Augustine prominent among them, dispatched to hell the Stoic and Epicurean schools of thought, reconfigured the pursuit of pleasure as sin, the meaning of life as pain. The fifteenth-century resurrection of *On the Nature of Things* in concert with the reappearance of Ovid, Seneca, and Aristotle prompted the Renaissance embrace of truth as beauty and beauty as truth made manifest in the glory of its painting, sculpture, music, architecture, and literature. Over the course of the next six centuries, Lucretius' poem finds further unraveling and unraveling in Machiavelli's political thought, Montaigne's essays, Shakespeare's plays, Newton's mathematics, and what we now know as the wonder of free-market capitalism.

Our technologies produce wonder-working weapons and information systems, but they don't know at whom or at what they point the digital enhancements. Unless we find words with which to place them in the protective custody

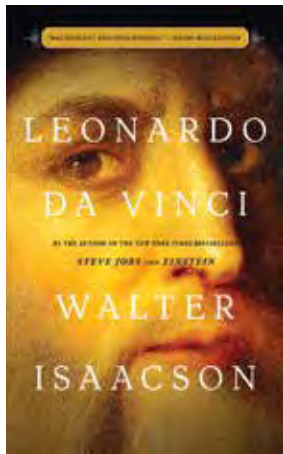
of the humanities—languages that hold a common store of human value and therefore the hope of a future fit for human beings—we surely will succeed in murdering ourselves with our shiny new windup toys.

Where else does one live if not in a house of straw made from the shaping and reshaping of a once-upon-a-time? What is it possible to change if not the past? And how else do we escape the prison of a gold-plated self if not with the joy of learning, in the words of Virginia Woolf, that "any live mind today is of the very same stuff as Plato's," and that "it is this common mind that binds the whole world together; and all the world is mind."

LEWIS H. LAPHAM is editor and founder of *Lapham's Quarterly* and a member of the American Society of Magazine Editors Hall of Fame. He was editor of *Harper's Magazine* from 1975 to 2006. He is the author of fourteen books, among them *Money and Class in America*, *The Wish for Kings*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Theater of War*, and *Age of Folly*. His documentary film *The American Ruling Class* is part of curricula in many of the nation's schools and colleges. A member of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, Lapham has lectured at Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, Stanford, the University of Michigan, and the University of Minnesota. This essay is adapted from the *Lapham's Quarterly* "States of Mind" issue, Winter 2018.

*Every question we answer leads on to another question. This has become the greatest survival trick of our species. —Desmond Morris*





that Leonardo was not always a giant. He made mistakes. He went off on tangents, literally, pursuing math problems that became time-sucking diversions. Notoriously, he left many of his paintings unfinished, most notably the *Adoration of the Magi*, *Saint Jerome in the Wilderness*, and the *Battle of Anghiari*. As a result, there exist now at most fifteen paintings fully or mainly attributable to him.

I believe he is, in fact, not diminished by being discovered to be human. Both his shadow and his reality deserve to loom large. His lapses and oddities allow us to relate to him, to feel that we might emulate him, and to appreciate his moments of triumph even more.

The fifteenth century of Leonardo and Columbus and Gutenberg was a time of invention, exploration, and the spread of knowledge by new technologies. In short, it was a time like our own. That is why we have much to learn from Leonardo. His ability to combine art, science, technology, the humanities, and imagination remains an enduring recipe for creativity. So, too, was his ease at being a bit of a misfit: illegitimate, gay, vegetarian, left-handed, easily distracted, and at times heretical. Florence flourished in the fifteenth century because it was comfortable with such people. Above all, Leonardo's relentless curiosity and experimentation should remind us of the importance of instilling, in both ourselves and our children, not just received knowledge but a willingness to question it—to be imaginative and, like talented misfits and rebels in any era, to think different.

WALTER ISAACSON, University Professor of History at Tulane, has been CEO of the Aspen Institute, chairman of CNN, and editor of TIME magazine. He is the author of *Steve Jobs*; *Einstein: His Life and Universe*; *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*; and *Kissinger: A Biography*. He is also the coauthor of *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*. The excerpt printed here is from *Leonardo da Vinci* by Walter Isaacson. Copyright ©2017 by Walter Isaacson. Reprinted by permission of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

About the book cover: The cover is a detail of an oil painting in Florence's Gallery that was once thought to be a self-portrait painted by Leonardo. Based on recent X-ray analysis, it is now considered to be a portrait of Leonardo by an unknown artist done in the 1600s. It is based on, or is the basis for, a similar portrait rediscovered in Italy in 2008, called the Lucan portrait of Leonardo da Vinci. Image courtesy Simon & Schuster, Inc.



Alt-right members preparing to enter Emancipation Park holding Nazi, Confederate, and Gadsden "Don't Tread on Me" flags. Photo: Anthony Crider, Aug. 12, 2017, Charlottesville, VA

Following the Nazi Party's own historical blueprint, modern American hatemongers try to make their views seem less extreme and more acceptable by using coded references and veiled rhetoric. They may shroud their beliefs so that they can deny the explicitly racist nature of their worldviews, but recognizing these codes and the historical foundations of these euphemisms can reveal the hateful agendas they try to obscure.

Eventually, the coded numbers on the bathroom wall were removed and the posters were torn down, but they stayed in plain sight for several weeks. Overt and recognizable symbols of hatred may have the power to intimidate and terrorize, but they are also more likely to be condemned and removed quickly. On the other hand, if hateful messages are hidden behind thin camouflage like *14/88* or *blood and soil*, their true meaning may be obscured sufficiently to permeate mainstream society long enough to reach "the unindoctrinated" people they hope to recruit. This is the reason today's neo-Nazis try sugarcoating their murderous ideas.

MARK ALEXANDER is an emerging scholar of the history of the Holocaust. He currently conducts research for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and trains educators who teach material related to the history of the Holocaust and National Socialism. His research interests include neo-Nazi slogans, symbols, and recruiting methods in our own society.

**EXTRA!** READ | THINK | TALK | LINK

- "Origins of Neo-Nazi and White Supremacist Terms and Symbols," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Images of Nazi propaganda and discussion of Nazi ideology, symbols, and rituals used to justify and spread hate. [ushmm.org](http://ushmm.org)
- "Why They Parade by Torchlight," Edna Friedberg, *The Atlantic*, Aug. 21, 2017. How fire has been used to invoke racism, violence, and destruction. [theatlantic.com](http://theatlantic.com)
- "Recounting a Day of Rage, Hate, Violence, and Death," Joe Heim, *The Washington Post*, Aug. 14, 2017. Timeline of the Unite the Right march and rally in Charlottesville, VA. [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com)



# CODA

—WALTER ISAACSON, LEONARDO DA VINCI

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*Describe the tongue  
of the woodpecker* —From Da Vinci's to do list

The tongue of a woodpecker can extend more than three times the length of its bill. When not in use, it retracts into the skull and its cartilage-like structure continues past the jaw to wrap around the bird's head and then curve down to its nostril. In addition to digging out grubs from a tree, the long tongue protects the woodpecker's brain. When the bird smashes its beak repeatedly into tree bark, the force exerted on its head is ten times what would kill a human. But its bizarre tongue and supporting structure act as a cushion, shielding the brain from shock.

There is no reason you actually need to know any of this. It is information that has no real utility for your life, just as it had none for Leonardo. But I thought maybe, after reading this [excerpt], that you, like Leonardo, who one day put "Describe the tongue of the woodpecker" on one of his eclectic and oddly inspiring to-do lists, would want to know. Just out of curiosity. Pure curiosity.



*The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. —Albert Einstein*



"Downy Woodpecker," *The Birds of Ohio*, 1903, William Leon Dawson. Internet Archive Book Images [PD] Wikimedia Commons



# NOTEWORTHY 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

## FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Ken Ferguson, Chair



Strategic planning. How many of us shudder when we hear those words? Every organization needs to undergo this process and Oklahoma Humanities is no exception. Last fall, our board and staff met to ponder who we are as an organization and how we can best carry out our mission to share humanities scholarship with the general public.

In the process of our planning, we had some heartfelt conversations that resulted in the following values statement: We believe that the study and expression of the humanities fosters positive civic engagement, that every person matters, that different cultures weave a richer state, that understanding and respecting the values of others creates stronger communities, and that access to humanities scholarship adds meaning and vibrancy to the lives of Oklahomans.

You can tell from the language that we believe in the power of the work we do. And it is with great appreciation that we recognize our donors from this last year who also see the importance of knowledge and understanding for all Oklahomans. Thank you so much to our donors and to our board members for their contributions and valuable input. It is critical to Oklahoma Humanities and greatly appreciated!

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## 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Financial Summary for the year ending October 31, 2017

### REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT

National Endowment for the Humanities	\$ 763,822
Contributions	\$ 60,586
Other Income	\$ 728
Investment Income	\$ 146,975
<b>Total Revenues and Other Support</b>	<b>\$ 972,111</b>

### EXPENSES

Administrative and General	\$ 200,066
Council Grants (Regnants)	\$ 148,918
Fund Development	\$ 116,622
Programs Expenses	\$ 372,030
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 837,636</b>

## OH BOARD OF TRUSTEES NOMINATIONS

Oklahoma Humanities is always looking for talented, dedicated individuals to serve on our volunteer board of twenty-four members, who serve terms of three years. We seek enthusiastic individuals who are active in their communities, have a passion for the humanities, and can dedicate time to attend board meetings three times per year.

Board members govern our organization; participate in strategic planning; attend OH-sponsored programs; serve on committees; advocate on behalf of the National Endowment for the Humanities, our largest funder; and help identify additional funding sources for our programs. They also approve grant applications from other nonprofits to support humanities programs in communities across the state. Read more on our website ([okhumanities.org](http://okhumanities.org)) and consider submitting a nomination. We'd love to have you join us!



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## ABOUT OKLAHOMA HUMANITIES

Oklahoma Humanities (OH) strengthens communities by helping Oklahomans learn about the human experience, understand new perspectives, and participate knowledgeably in civic life. As the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, OH provides and supports programming for the general public that uses humanities disciplines (such as history, literature, ethics, and philosophy) to deeply explore what it means to be human.

OH accepts grant applications from nonprofits across the state for programs that may take the form of museum exhibits, film festivals, teacher institutes, oral

history projects, or other formats that best serve local communities. OH also administers programs that provide free access to cultural humanities content, including: *Oklahoma Humanities* magazine; *Let's Talk About It, Oklahoma*, a reading and discussion series; the *BrainBox* podcast; and *Museum on Main Street*, a collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution to provide traveling exhibits in small rural communities.

Visit our website to find an event near you, read archived issues of this magazine, or explore grant and program opportunities. We look forward to hearing from you. (405) 235-0280 | okhumanities.org | ohc@okhumanities.org



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- Major and Challenge Grant applications are considered twice per year
- Spring: Draft Mar. 1 | Final: April 1
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### NEXT UP: JUSTICE | Spring/Summer 2019

The pursuit of justice in America is complicated. Persistent racial inequality, mass incarceration, religious interpretation, and disparities written in the letter of law are just a few of the complexities we must navigate. Globally, unprosecuted war crimes—and perpetrators who escape justice—contribute to a sense of powerlessness. We'll explore these issues and how literature and poetry shape our perspectives of freedom and fairness.



*We believe that awe deprivation has had a hand in a broad societal shift that has been widely observed over the past 50 years: People have become more individualistic, more self-focused, more materialistic and less connected to others. To reverse this trend, we suggest that people insist on experiencing more everyday awe. . . . All of us will be better off for it.*  
—Paul Piff and Dacher Keltner, *The New York Times*, May 22, 2015