

I W C Newsletter



Spiritual Symbolism in Alice in Wonderland

“Metaphorically, Carroll positioned Alice as the Sacred Pilgrim. He cast her, in some sense, as Persephone, goddess of the underworld. Like his literary ancestors, Carroll utilized skillful applications of allegory in order to create adventures that paralleled Persephone’s quest and pointed to the central theme around which the Eleusian initiations were organized. The symbolism implicit in Alice and Looking Glass suggest that Carroll, like so many other writers of his period, used allegory as a delivery mechanism for higher spiritual teachings.”

*Sherry L Ackerman
Behind the Looking Glass*

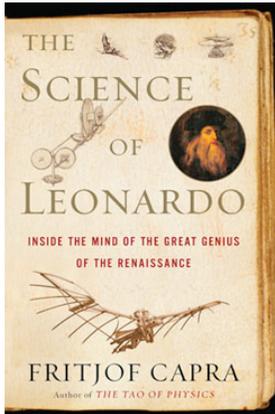
Lewis Carroll on Inspiration and Originality

Editor’s Note: On March 21st at the Institute of World Culture, Dr. Sherry Ackerman will share her insights on the philosophical and allegorical sources of Lewis Carroll’s writings. Drawing upon the research for her recently published book *Behind the Looking Glass*, Dr. Ackerman will explore the depth and meaning of Carroll’s stories and indicate why his stories were not intended by Carroll to be “merely” fantasy tales for children. The following comments by Lewis Carroll taken from his Preface to *Sylvie and Bruno* indicate how Carroll explained his creative process.

It was in 1874, I believe, that the idea first occurred to me of making [it] the nucleus of a longer story. As the years went on, I jotted down, at odd moments, all sorts of odd ideas, and fragments of dialogue, that occurred to me--who knows how?--with a transitory suddenness that left me no choice but either to record them then and there, or to abandon them to oblivion. Sometimes one could trace to their source these random flashes of thought--as being suggested by the book one was reading, or struck out from the 'flint' of one's own mind by the 'steel' of a friend's chance remark but they had also a way of their own, of occurring, a propos of nothing--specimens of that hopelessly illogical phenomenon, 'an effect without a cause.' Such, for example, was the last line of *The Hunting of the Snark*, which came into my head (as I have already related in 'The Theatre' for April, 1887) quite suddenly, during a solitary walk: and such, again, have been passages which occurred in dreams, and which I cannot trace to any antecedent cause whatever.

(Continued on page 3)

UPCOMING EVENTS



The Science of Leonardo da Vinci

**Forum: Saturday, March 7
4:00 - 6:00 pm**

**Concord House, 1407 Chapala St.
Santa Barbara**

Discussion Leader: Joseph Miller

Fritjof Capra's new book *The Science of Leonardo* offers fresh perspectives on this Renaissance giant. Our forum will explore the author's suggestion that careful study of da Vinci's notebooks reveals a holistic and ecological worldview consistent with recent scientific theories and contrasting with the mechanistic assumptions that dominated scientific thinking until the 20th century. For more information, please call (805) 967-7263



The Institute of World Culture's 2009 Program Brochure is coming soon.



Behind the Looking Glass

**Seminar: Saturday, March 21
2:00 - 5:00 pm**

Presenter: Sherry L. Ackerman

Drawing from her recently published book, *Behind the Looking Glass*, the speaker will offer an interpretation of Lewis Carroll's personal journey from the world of theological belief into a wonderland created by imaginative fiction, yet filled with philosophical signposts. The Orphic, Eleusian and neo-Platonic symbolism that influenced Carroll's stories will be explained.

Dr. Sherry Ackerman is Professor of Philosophy at College of the Siskiyous in Northern California. She holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy, with specialization in Ancient Greek Philosophy. She studied under the renowned classics and Plato scholar, Dr. Rosamund Kent Sprague. Dr. Ackerman also has a graduate degree in Psychology, and brings a decidedly psychological flavor to philosophical inquiry. In addition to *Behind the Looking Glass*, she published a second book in 2008, *Dressage in the Fourth Dimension*.

Visit the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Gardens

Excursion: Saturday, March 28

9:00 am - 6:00 pm

Visit the Huntington Library to see the Lincoln Exhibit, "The Last Full Measure of Devotion," presented in honor of the 200th anniversary of his birth. Explore the "Beautiful Science" exhibit, highlighting light, medicine, natural history and astronomical discoveries. Walk through Liu Fang Yuan, Garden of Flowing Fragrance, the new Chinese Garden. Enjoy the blossoming flowers, jewels of



Spring, in the themed gardens.

Admission: Adults \$20; Seniors \$15

Please call Carolyn Dorrance at 967-1055, or email carolyn@worldculture.org, for details and to arrange carpooling.

Lewis Carroll

And thus it came to pass that I found myself at last in possession of a huge unwieldy mass of literature--if the reader will kindly excuse the spelling--which only needed stringing together, upon the thread of a consecutive story, to constitute the book I hoped to write. Only! The task, at first, seemed absolutely hopeless, and gave me a far clearer idea, than I ever had before, of the meaning of the word 'chaos'.

And I think it must have been ten years, or more, before I had succeeded in classifying these odds-and-ends sufficiently to see what sort of a story they indicated: for the story had to grow out of the incidents, not the incidents out of the story. I am telling all this, in no spirit of egoism, but because I really believe that some of my readers will be interested in these details of the 'genesis' of a book, which looks so simple and straight-forward a matter, when completed, that they might suppose it to have been written straight

In March

Anniversaries

- 3rd Georg Cantor b. 1845
- 3rd Alexander Graham Bell b. 1847
- 4th Antonio Vivaldi b. 1678
- 6th Michelangelo Buonarroti b. 1475
- 6th Elizabeth Barrett Browning b. 1806
- 7th Piet Mondrian b. 1872
- 7th Maurice Ravel b. 1875
- 8th Oliver Wendell Holmes b. 1841
- 12th George Berkeley b. 1684
- 14th Johann Strauss b. 1804
- 14th Albert Einstein b. 1879
- 15th Julius Caesar d. 44 B.C.E.
- 18th Stéphane Mallarmé b. 1842
- 18th Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov b. 1844
- 19th David Livingstone b. 1813
- 20th Ovid b. 43 B.C.E.
- 20th Henrik Ibsen b. 1828
- 21st Pocahontas d. 1617
- 21st Johann Sebastian Bach b. 1685
- 23rd Pierre-Simon de Laplace b. 1749
- 24th William Morris b. 1834
- 26th Edward Bellamy b. 1850
- 26th Robert Frost b. 1875
- 27th Wilhelm Konrad Rontgen b. 1845
- 28th Teresa of Avila b. 1515
- 30th Maimonides b. 1135
- 30th Francisco de Goya b. 1746
- 30th Vincent van Gogh b. 1853
- 31st René Descartes b. 1596
- 31st Franz Joseph Haydn b. 1732
- 31st César Chávez b. 1927

Observances

- 8th International Women's Day
- 9th Commonwealth Day (2009)
- 10th Tibet Uprising Day
- 10th Purim (Jewish) (2009)
- 11th Holi, Hindu Spring Festival (2009)
- 20th Vernal Equinox GMT (2009)
- 21st Norouz, Persian/Zoroastrian New Year (2009)
- 27th Hindu New Year (2009) 1927

Lewis Carroll

off, page by page, as one would write a letter, beginning at the beginning; and ending at the end.

It is, no doubt, possible to write a story in that way: and, if it be not vanity to say so, I believe that I could, myself,—if I were in the unfortunate position (for I do hold it to be a real misfortune) of being obliged to produce a given amount of fiction in a given time,—that I could 'fulfill my task,' and produce my 'tale of bricks,' as other slaves have done. One thing, at any rate, I could guarantee as to the story so produced—that it should be utterly commonplace, should contain no new ideas whatever, and should be very very weary reading!

This species of literature has received the very appropriate name of 'padding' which might fitly be defined as 'that which all can write and none can read.' That the present volume contains no such writing I dare not avow: sometimes, in order to bring a picture into its proper place, it has been necessary to eke out a page with two or three extra lines: but I can honestly say I have put in no more than I was absolutely compelled to do.

Perhaps the hardest thing in all literature—at least I have found it so: by no voluntary effort can I accomplish it: I have to take it as it comes—is to write anything original. And perhaps the easiest is, when once an original line has been struck out, to follow it up, and to write any amount more to the same tune.

I do not know if 'Alice in Wonderland' was an original story—I was, at least, no conscious imitator in writing it—but I do know that, since it came out, something like a dozen story-books have appeared, on identically the same pattern. The path I timidly explored believing myself to be 'the first that ever burst into that silent sea'— is now a beaten high-road: all the way-side flowers have long ago been trampled into the dust: and it would be courting disaster for me to attempt that style again.

Hence it is that, in *Sylvie and Bruno*, I have striven with I know not what success to strike out yet

another new path: be it bad or good, it is the best I can do. It is written, not for money, and not for fame, but in the hope of supplying, for the children whom I love, some thoughts that may suit those hours of innocent merriment which are the very life of Childhood; and also in the hope of suggesting, to them and to others, some thoughts that may prove, I would fain hope, not wholly out of harmony with the graver cadences of Life.

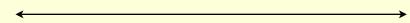
Lewis Carroll

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**PRISM ONLINE
COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

PRISM lists member-recommended community events of interest on the IWC website. Please e-mail suggestions to donna@worldculture.org.



Looking Forward
**Exploring the Culture of
Bhutan**

Forum: Saturday, April 4, 2009
4:00 – 6:00 pm
1407 Chapala St., Santa Barbara
Speaker: Kathy Stiles