

# The History of the Twentieth Century

## Episode 67

### “Twilight of the Belle Époque”

#### Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

As the sun set upon the Belle Époque, the men and women of the time went about their business. Bakers baked. Housekeepers kept house. Carpenters pounded nails.

The remarkable ferment of the period also continued. New art, new science, new industry, blooming in the shadow of the coming night that none could see.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 67. The Twilight of the Belle Époque.

I want to spend today’s episode talking about a few final glimmers of light in science, the arts, and culture before the darkness arrives. I have a few stories I’d like to tell, odds and ends, as it were, that didn’t fit into any of the other episodes, but which touch on topics I think are important and I want to cover before the approaching war closes the door on this era.

We’ve already seen many examples of how breathtakingly racist Western cultures were at the beginning of the century. Among the peoples we might call “white” or “Caucasian,” especially in Europe and North America, it was taken as a given that white or Caucasian peoples of Europe and North America were physically, intellectually, and morally superior to other peoples from other parts of the planet.

Now, racism itself is as old as human culture. But as what we today call “science” and “scientific research” only developed in the latter part of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. Scientific principles—I should say, “pseudoscientific principles”—were employed to demonstrate the superiority of Europeans. After the publication and acceptance of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, a focus developed on the presumed evolutionary distance between different kinds of humans versus other primates. Measurements were made of features like facial angle to demonstrate that flatter-faced Europeans were further removed from apes than were the peoples of Asia or Africa.

Needless to say, there was a certain circularity to these studies. Flatness of face is presumed to be evidence of evolutionary superiority because Europeans have flat faces. Studies then show that non-Europeans have faces that are less flat than European faces, and somehow this proves something because reasons. One could just as easily argue that having less body hair is evidence of a greater genetic distance from apes, but since Europeans have more body hair than peoples of Africa or Asia, somehow that study never got done.

One tempting way to measure intellectual capacity is by cranial capacity. Measurement of skull capacity, or craniometry, was accepted science at the beginning of the twentieth century, despite a dearth of evidence of a correlation between cranium size and intelligence. That Europeans had larger brains than Asians, who in turn had larger brains than Africans was generally accepted, not to mention that Northern Europeans, or Teutons, or Nordics, or Aryans, as they were variously called, had larger brains than other Europeans. Also, the fact that men had larger brains than women was used to support cultural norms that gave men superior status. Therefore, the overall superiority of Nordic males to all other types of human being was generally accepted as an established scientific fact. And when I say, “generally accepted as an established scientific fact,” I mean, “generally accepted as an established scientific fact by Nordic males.”

Into this mess enters Alfred Binet. Binet was a French researcher, born in 1857, who took an interest in intelligence and in what today we would call developmental psychology. From 1894 until his death in 1911, Binet was director of the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology at the Sorbonne in Paris.

It was when Binet had children of his own that he began to focus his work on the intellectual development of young people. At first, Binet accepted the conventional views of craniometry. By 1900, however, he was becoming a dissenter. It is actually a very difficult thing to measure the size of the cranium of a live human being. Binet began testing the reproducibility of his own measurements and those of his colleagues, and concluded that the measuring error in the circumference of a human head could be as large as four millimeters, which was a large enough error to swamp any proposed innate differences in head size between, say, a child of above average intelligence and a child of below average intelligence.

It's not an easy thing for a scientist to admit, but Binet came out and said it. He couldn't trust his laboratory's own measurements, and this persuaded him to question the very basis of craniometry. Perhaps there *were* no meaningful differences in skull size. And even if such differences did exist, they were perhaps too subtle to measure, and therefore still meaningless for practical purposes. And perhaps they were just an artifact, evidence of unconscious bias on the parts of the researchers who made the measurements and found exactly what they were expecting to find.

Because of Binet and other researchers like him, craniometry would gradually fall out of favor during the first half of the twentieth century. In our time, it is generally accepted that there is

significant variation in cranial size among individual human beings of all races, as well as gender variations, but a dearth of evidence of any correlation with intelligence or ability.

But speaking of intelligence, in 1904, the French ministry of education commissioned Binet to create a test for identifying students in need of an alternate education. The need for such a test is clear enough: some students have what we today would call learning disabilities or developmental disabilities that impair their ability to learn in a general classroom setting. The sooner such students can be identified, and their educational programs adapted to suit their special needs, the greater the educational benefit.

Binet developed a test based on a large number of simple tasks, things like counting, sorting, placing things in order, remembering and repeating strings of numbers, finding errors, and so on. Binet was not aiming to test any particular skill, but a range of skills. “It matters very little what the tests are,” he said, “so long as they are numerous.”

These test problems were then given to a number of children of different ages deemed to be of average ability, and from these empirical results, Binet created a developmental scale, so that from a set of test results, he could say that a given student had a certain quote-unquote “mental age.” Students whose mental age lagged behind their chronological age by more than a certain amount were therefore candidates for some form of educational intervention.

After Binet’s death in 1911, a German psychologist argued that the test result should be expressed as a ratio of mental age divided by chronological age and then multiplied by one hundred, so you don’t have to deal with decimal points. And thus was born the “intelligence quotient,” or IQ.

A few years after that, an American psychologist at Stanford University named Lewis Terman revised Binet’s tests and created what is still known to this day as the Stanford-Binet test, although it has been through several additional revisions since Terman’s day. Educators quickly embraced the new test for pedagogical purposes, as Binet intended, but over the course of the twentieth century, the test would sometimes be applied in situations that were never envisioned, such as ranking individuals or groups by intelligence. So although the IQ test developed into a useful tool, advancing understanding in the fields of education and psychology, it also had a dark side as the successor to the now-abandoned field of craniometry.

During his lifetime, Binet, perhaps recalling his discoveries of how cranial measurement could be influenced by unconscious bias, warned that IQ tests could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and that educators might be tempted to use IQ test scores as a way of ridding themselves of students who were uncooperative or disinterested in education. Recalling the Dreyfus Affair (episode 8), Binet wrote, “It is really too easy to discover signs of backwardness in an individual when one is forewarned. This would be to operate as the graphologists did who, when Dreyfus was believed to be guilty, discovered in his handwriting signs of a traitor or spy.”

[music: *Pavane pour une infante défunte*]

When we last checked in with Pablo Picasso, back in episode 25, he was in his Blue Period, following the suicide of his best friend. Picasso's Blue Period paintings depicted people who didn't look very happy, in scenes painted mostly in dark blues. You will not be surprised to learn that these didn't sell very well. In 1904, Picasso got himself a new model/girlfriend, 22-year old Fernande Olivier, a young woman who had changed her name and fled to Paris to escape an abusive husband. Pablo and Fernande would be involved in a passionate, tempestuous relationship that would last eight years, until 1912, when Picasso would achieve commercial success and then dump his now 31-year old girlfriend, who would have no legal recourse, inasmuch as she was still legally married to someone else.

Anyway, the beginning of the relationship also marks the beginning of Picasso's Rose Period, a cheerier period that his new relationship likely has something to do with. "Rose" in French means "pink," so you might think of it as his Pink Period, with canvases as full of reds and pinks and flesh tones—well, what we white people call flesh tones, anyway—and brighter subjects, too. Clowns, acrobats, children and young people. In 1907, he created a key painting of the Rose Period, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.K. Version)*, or *The Young Ladies of Avignon*. Picasso had wanted to call it *The Brothel of Avignon*, but it was plenty scandalous enough even with the less provocative title when it was first exhibited to the public in 1916. It depicts five nude women, albeit in a most unconventional way, with angular bodies and a complete absence of a traditional sense of perspective. Also, two of the five women have faces inspired by African masks. Traditional African art was attracting the notice of European artists during this time, not least the wooden masks of the Congo, which were being introduced to Europe as a by-product of King Leopold's little Congo rubber project, which we discussed in episodes 19 and 20. You can already see in *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.K. Version)* signs of Cubism, perhaps Picasso's best known form.

But in 1907, Picasso was not yet famous or successful. The biggest name in art in Paris at that time was Henri Matisse. Matisse was born in 1869, so he was eleven years older than Picasso and better established. The two had met a year earlier, in 1906, at the home of Gertrude and Leo Stein. The Steins were a brother and sister from a Jewish American family, originally from Pittsburgh, and later Oakland. Gertrude Stein had attended Radcliffe College and went on to medical school at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore. But she did not fit in at the overwhelmingly male institution, especially since she refused to conform to the era's ideas of what a young woman should look like. She refused to wear corsets, for one thing, and was described as "big and floppy and sandaled and not caring a damn." It also seems that it was at Johns Hopkins that she came to understand that she was a lesbian.

In 1902, Gertrude's brother Leo, a Harvard dropout, moved to London, and she followed him. The next year, they relocated to Paris, where they took an apartment together in a low rent district. They would share this apartment for ten years before Leo moved away. Gertrude would spend the rest of her life in Paris. Together, the Stein siblings, living off the income from their

share of the family business that was managed by their indulgent older brother Michael, would become involved in the Paris art scene, and become buyers and collectors of modern French paintings, and urge their friends and relatives to do likewise. The Steins particularly became patrons of Matisse and Picasso, and introduced them to one another, as I said.

Matisse was more likely to paint from life than was Picasso, but during this time he developed a style that featured the eccentric use of bright colors in a non-realistic way. Gertrude Stein snapped up his 1905 painting, *Woman with a Hat* and hung it in her apartment, a move that boosted Matisse's career. In 1906, Picasso painted his famous *Portrait of Gertrude Stein*, a painting done up in shades of brown. Picasso agonized over this painting, knowing it was destined to be hung on a wall next to *Woman with a Hat*. This was the beginning of a relationship between Matisse and Picasso as friendly rivals of longstanding. Picasso would say later in his life that no one ever looked at a Matisse painting more carefully than he, and no one had ever looked at his paintings as carefully as Matisse.

When the two artists met in the Stein apartment, Picasso said little, because his French was still a bit shaky. Later he would say of the meeting that Matisse talks and talks, and he, Picasso, just says, *oui, oui, oui*. It was Matisse who first took an interest in sculpture from the Congo, although it would ultimately be Picasso, perhaps inspired by Matisse, who would more forcefully incorporate African styles into his paintings. Even his portrait of Gertrude Stein may betray just a touch of Congolese influence.

In 1907, Gertrude Stein would be introduced by her brother Michael to another Jewish American, Alice Babette Toklas, of San Francisco. It was on Toklas's first day in Paris. They would begin a love affair, and Toklas would move in with Stein in 1910, and they would remain a couple until Stein's death in 1946. Stein would begin to write in Paris, and would become a minor literary celebrity later in her life. But she is perhaps more influential in the world of arts and letters for the painters whose works she championed and whose careers she boosted, like Matisse and Picasso. After the Great War, her apartment in Paris would also become a meeting ground for some of the greatest English-language writers of the time, but that is a story for another episode. But Gertrude Stein, like Sergei Diaghilev, would be an influential figure in the arts in the twentieth century, less for her own creative work than for her skill in recognizing and cultivating great art in others.

[music: *Pavane pour une infante défunte*]

One of the most notable events in the Parisian art world during this time was the disappearance of what is in our day is the most famous painting in the world: the Leonardo da Vinci masterpiece that in English we call *Mona Lisa*.

*Mona Lisa* then, as now, hung in the Louvre, in Paris. On the morning of Tuesday, August 22, 1911, an artist named Louis Bérourd came to the Louvre. Bérourd was working on a painting of the painting, as it were, a work that he would eventually complete and title, logically enough,

*Mona Lisa au Louvre*. But when Bérour arrived that morning to continue his sketch work, he saw at once that the painting was missing. The wall was bare, apart from the iron pegs on which it usually hung. An alarmed Bérour mentioned it to one of the guards, who told him that the painting had probably been removed temporarily to be photographed. So Bérour left. He returned to the Louvre a few hours later to try again, only to find that the painting was still missing. So he asked the guard again. This time, the guard checked with the photographers, who informed him that they did not have the painting, and had no knowledge of any plan to photograph it.

Incredibly, the *Mona Lisa* had been stolen. Now, I should emphasize here that although this painting was highly regarded at the time by artists and art historians, it was not nearly so well known to the general public as it is today. Still, it was considered one of the most important paintings in the collection. The Louvre was closed, and remained closed for a week while the theft was investigated. Everyone who worked at the museum, who had shown any particular interest in the painting, or who was known to hold a grudge against the museum was investigated. Even Pablo Picasso was caught up in the dragnet, and brought in for questioning.

But the police found nothing. Whoever had stolen the painting had gotten away clean. Stealing a work of art is a unique sort of crime, because each work of art is a unique item. Even lesser known works of art, like *Mona Lisa*, are well enough known in the art community that the fact of the theft can be publicized. And this theft was heavily publicized, partly because the painting was highly regarded, partly because of the scandal of a painting being snatched from one of the world's most prestigious museums.

It's always possible that a stolen work might be sold in secret to a private collector, someone willing to take the risk of being caught in possession of stolen property for the sake of owning a great work of art, even if ownership has to be kept a close secret. And indeed, there were reports, during the period of the painting's disappearance, of several wealthy Americans receiving discreet inquiries about whether they would be interested in owning *Mona Lisa*. Whether these inquiries had anything to do with the actual theft, or whether they merely represent freelance con artists taking advantage of the publicity, that remains unclear to this day.

The world would eventually discover that the thief was a man of humble origins, a 29-year old Italian laborer living in Paris named Vincenzo Peruggia, a former employee of the Louvre, who had entered the building on Monday, the day the museum was closed, dressed in a white smock like the other employees. He had simply taken the painting off the wall when no one was looking, wrapped it in his smock, and walked out the door.

Peruggia had been questioned as part of the investigation, but had had a convincing alibi and escaped closer scrutiny. He hid the painting in a trunk in his apartment in Paris for the next two years. In 1913, with the disappearance of the painting still an unsolved mystery to the rest of the world, he returned to Florence, in his native country. Two years and four months after stealing

the painting, in December 1913, Peruggia would attempt to sell it to a gallery in Florence, and the gallery would promptly contact the police. *Mona Lisa* would remain on display at the gallery for two weeks, and would be returned to the Louvre in January 1914.

After his arrest, Peruggia would claim that his motive was patriotic. *Mona Lisa* was an Italian masterpiece, stolen by Napoleon, he claimed, and Peruggia had stolen it back in order to return it to its homeland. Actually, it was da Vinci himself who brought *Mona Lisa* to France when he moved there in 1516, and the French King, François I, had purchased the painting after da Vinci's death. So Peruggia was either badly misinformed about the painting, or crazy, or lying, perhaps to cover up a more mercenary motive, but this explanation was enough to gain him sympathy, even support, from nationalistically-minded Italians. He received a surprisingly light sentence of seven months in prison. Afterward, Peruggia would change his name, fight in the Italian Army during the Great War, then move back to France and live out the rest of his life there, in obscurity, dying in 1925 at the age of 44.

[music: *Pavane pour une infante défunte*]

I should say a few words about the 1912 Olympics, which is now the fifth of the modern Olympic games. They were held in Stockholm, and well generally well run, because, you know, Swedes. Imperial Germany had also been interested in hosting an Olympics, and a deal was struck whereby Sweden would host the 1912 Olympics, while Germany was promised the 1916 Olympics in Berlin. We'll have to see how that works out.

Swedish athletes won the most medals overall, although the United States edged out Sweden by one in gold medals. Boxing was dropped from the Olympics that year, because the Swedes didn't like it, and an art competition was added, along with the pentathlon and decathlon.

We've already seen problems with marathons run in earlier Olympic games. This year's Olympic marathon was held on a hot summer day with a temperature of 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and a Portuguese marathon runner actually died of heat exhaustion during the race—thankfully, the only Olympic marathon fatality in history. 1912 was the first time Japanese athletes competed in the Olympics. There were two of them, both runners, one of them, Kanakuri Shizo, was a marathoner, who had racked up impressive times during trials in Japan.

But Kanakuri had to travel to Sweden via the Trans-Siberian Railroad, eighteen days on ships and trains, which is not a great way to prepare for a marathon. Kanakuri reportedly ran in circles around train stations during the stops as a way of staying in condition, but the combination of the rigors of the trip and the strange food in Sweden and the heat on the day of the race were too much for him. He passed out in the middle of the race and was taken to a local farmhouse to recover.

Now, as we've seen, it was not unusual in those early days for even Olympic marathon runners to be unable to finish the race. Indeed, in the 1912 marathon, only half of the 68 starters finished

the race. But Kanakuri, apparently felt ashamed and never returned to the stadium. He just packed his bags and headed home to Japan, without notifying any of the Olympic officials, leaving behind something of a mystery in Sweden. He would compete again in the 1920 and 1924 Olympics, although he would not win any medals. But in an amusing footnote to this story, in 1967, the Swedish Olympic Committee would invite the now 75-year old Kanakuri to return to Stockholm and complete the race. He did so, and he now holds the unofficial record for the longest marathon ever: 54 years, eight months, six days, five hours, 32 minutes, and 20.3 seconds. When his time was read out to him at the stadium, Kanakuri was reported to have said, “It was a long trip. Along the way, I got married, had six children, and ten grandchildren.” Well, better late than never.

And speaking of better late than never, the 1912 Olympics is probably best known to Americans as the one where the Native American athlete Jim Thorpe took the gold medals in both the pentathlon and decathlon.

Wa-Tho-Huk, which means “Bright Path,” was born on May 22, 1887 in the Indian Territory. He was one of a pair of twin boys, though his brother would die at the age of nine. He was baptized Jacobus Franciscus Thorpe in the Roman Catholic Church, and would practice Catholicism all of his life, although he would come to be known as Jim Thorpe. He lost his twin brother and his mother in childhood. At the age of 16, in 1904, he moved to Carlisle, Pennsylvania to attend the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, but dropped out after the death of his father left him orphaned. But he returned to Carlisle in 1907. The story goes that his athletic career began when he was walking past Carlisle’s track team while they were practicing high jumps. Thorpe took a try at it himself, still wearing his street clothes, jumped higher than anyone else, and got invited onto the team. He would eventually compete in track and field, baseball, football, lacrosse, and ballroom dancing—he was the 1912 intercollegiate ballroom dancing champion, as a matter of fact, and was a track-and-field All-American in 1911 and 1912.

But football was his favorite sport, and the sport in which he gained national prominence in the United States in 1911 when he led the Carlisle Indians to an 18-15 upset over top-ranked Harvard University. Thorpe personally scored all 18 points: one touchdown and four field goals. The Indians finished the season 11-1. The summer of 1912 was the Stockholm Olympics, where Thorpe won the gold in the pentathlon and decathlon, as I said, becoming the first Native American to win Olympic gold. It’s worth noting that at this time, Native Americans born within the boundaries of the United States did not automatically gain US citizenship—that didn’t become the law until 1924—so Thorpe was arguably not a US citizen in 1912, though of course, he did compete in the Olympics on behalf of the United States.

The King of Sweden, Gustav V, reportedly said to Thorpe, “You, sir, are the greatest athlete in the world,” and Thorpe is said to have replied, “Thanks, King.”

He returned to the US, earned his 1912 All-America honors in track and field, and then led the Carlisle Indians to a 1912 national collegiate championship. The highlight of that season was Carlisle's 27-6 victory over Army. During that game, Thorpe ran the ball 92 yards for a touchdown, only to have the touchdown disallowed because of a five-yard penalty against another Carlisle player. On the very next play, Thorpe ran the ball 97 yards for a touchdown.

But shortly after the end of the football season, several American newspapers reported that Jim Thorpe had played baseball professionally in the summers of 1909 and 1910 for minor league teams. This meant he was technically ineligible to compete as an amateur in collegiate athletics and in the Olympics. In fact, many other collegiate baseball players at that time played for money in the summer, but the others were savvy enough to use fake names in professional play. Jim Thorpe had played under his own name.

The case went to the Amateur Athletic Union, whose secretary was James Sullivan. You may remember James Sullivan from episode 26; he was the guy who organized the disgraceful "Anthropology Days" during the 1904 Olympics in St. Louis, when representatives of various native peoples were made to compete against each other so Sullivan could prove white people were superior athletes. Now, in 1913, the fate of the USA's greatest athlete, a Native American, a man who was living, breathing proof that everything Sullivan claimed about the superiority of white athletes was codswallop, was in the hands of Sullivan himself, American athletics' greatest racist.

You will not be surprised when I tell you that Sullivan came down on Thorpe like a ton of bricks, revoking his amateur status retroactive to 1909, and petitioning the International Olympic Committee to do the same. The IOC did so, voting unanimously to strip him of his two gold medals, the sort of behavior that some people describe as "Indian giving." Huh.

Was this racism? Absolutely. While it was true that Thorpe had played professionally, he was far from the only collegiate player who had ever done so. As far as the Olympics were concerned, the rules in force at the time said that any protests against a medal winner had to be lodged within 30 days of the close of the Olympics, and this was months past that deadline.

The loss of the gold medals was surely a blow to Jim Thorpe, but he was still a sports hero to the American public, and the publicity around this controversy made him more famous than ever, making him the world's first celebrity athlete. James Sullivan, meanwhile, passed away in 1914.

The flip side of Thorpe losing his amateur status was that it announced to the whole sports world that Jim Thorpe was now available to be signed professionally. He was, in fact, not only famous, but a free agent, in a world where athlete free agents were all but unknown. He played in major league baseball for a few years, sporadically, with the New York Giants, the Cincinnati Reds and the Boston Braves. Afterward, he would play minor league baseball and football, and even a bit of basketball.

Thorpe married three times and divorced twice. He had eight children altogether, four with his first wife, and four with his second. After retiring from sports in 1928, he returned to Oklahoma, and later moved to California. Thorpe had difficulty finding and keeping a job, partly because of the Great Depression. He got small parts in a few Hollywood movies of the time, usually playing an Indian in a Western. His life story was made into a film by Warner Brothers in 1951, *Jim Thorpe—All-American*, with Burt Lancaster in the title role.

Jim Thorpe struggled with alcoholism in the latter years of his life, and was destitute at the time of his death in 1953, at the age of 65.

Following his death, his family transported his remains to Shawnee, Oklahoma and supporters appealed to the Oklahoma legislature to build a suitable monument and tomb. The legislature declined and attempts to raise money for the project privately failed. At last, Thorpe's widow, perhaps out of frustration with Oklahoma's failure to properly honor her native son, perhaps for more mercenary reasons, transported his remains to Pennsylvania, without the knowledge or consent of the rest of the Thorpe family.

In Pennsylvania, there were two boroughs, Mauch Chunk and East Mauch Chunk, that were in the process of merging and seeking a new identity, and were looking for a suitable way to publicize themselves. They struck a deal with Jim Thorpe's widow to build a monument and tomb in their newly created borough, and to name it after him. It is known as Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania to this day. This is in spite of the fact that Jim Thorpe had no connection with the town and had never set foot there in life. Jim Thorpe's descendants opposed this at the time, and have advocated ever since for the return of Jim Thorpe's remains to Oklahoma. They continue to do so to this day.

In 1982, 29 years after his death, the International Olympic Committee reinstated Jim Thorpe's two Olympic victories and presented his children with replacement gold medals.

Jim Thorpe would be remembered with fondness by American sports fans for the rest of the twentieth century. In 1950, the Associated Press polled sportswriters in the United States, who named Jim Thorpe the greatest American athlete of the first half of the twentieth century. In 1999, an Associated Press poll ranked Jim Thorpe the third greatest American athlete of the twentieth century, after Babe Ruth and Michael Jordan. In 2000, a poll of sports fans by ABC Sports voted Jim Thorpe the greatest American athlete of the twentieth century.

We'll have to stop there for today. Thanks for listening. The title of this week's episode is also the title of a book, *Twilight of the Belle Époque*, by Mary McAuliffe. McAuliffe also wrote its companion volume, *Dawn of the Belle Époque*, and the two books together give a history of the city of Paris from the Franco-Prussian War to the end of the Great War. I've found them useful in creating this podcast and fun to read. McAuliffe intertwines stories about figures in politics, science, business, and the arts in Paris during this period, and I think that if you like *The History*

*of the Twentieth Century*, you'll probably enjoy these books, too. Look for them under "Further Reading" at the website, [historyofthetwentiethcentury.com](http://historyofthetwentiethcentury.com).

And while you're there, don't forget the Box of Sand sweepstakes, open to residents of the US 18 and older. The prize is a Kindle copy of *A Box of Sand*, the story of the Italo-Ottoman War, and the deadline is March 15. For further information or to enter the sweepstakes, go to the website, [historyofthetwentiethcentury.com](http://historyofthetwentiethcentury.com).

I'm going to be attending the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America Nebula Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania the weekend of May 18, and Mythmoot IV in Leesburg, Virginia the weekend of June 1. If any of my listeners are planning to attend either conference, please look me up while you're there. And if you're interested in coming, both are open to the general public and you can learn more at the website, [historyofthetwentiethcentury.com](http://historyofthetwentiethcentury.com), under "Events."

And I hope you'll join me next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we return to the United States to take a look at her newly elected President, Woodrow Wilson, and the early days of his administration. It's "The New Freedom," next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. The theft of the *Mona Lisa* garnered a lot of publicity, as I said, which helped recover the painting. It also helped to bring the work to the attention of the general public. The subject's reserved and dignified posture contrasts with her sideways glance and sly smile, as if she is sharing a secret. Her complex expression and body language, along with da Vinci's breakthrough technique combine to create an unforgettable image, making *Mona Lisa* today the best known and most recognizable painting in the world.

Its popularity and familiarity have tempted many artists of the past century to copy, or parody, the image, including Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí, and Banksy. *Mona Lisa* decorates every kind of knick knack imaginable, and her image is frequently used in advertising, on magazine covers, for political commentary and for comedy. She has been reproduced in every medium imaginable, from gemstones to Rubik's cubes, typewriting to slices of toast, ball point pens to seaweed, cups of coffee to PC motherboards, and of course, Legos.

In 1950, Jay Livingston and Ray Evans wrote the music and words for a song entitled "Mona Lisa," for the motion picture *Captain Carey, U.S.A.* It won the Academy Award for Best Original Song that year, and the best-known version is the one recorded by the African-American jazz pianist and singer Nat King Cole, also released in 1950. That recording would be number one on the *Billboard* singles chart for eight weeks.

[music: Closing Theme]

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