

# T O M L U T Z

Author • Professor • Editor • Humanist • Gadabout



Hello and Welcome to my website!

I'm Tom Lutz, the author of *And The Monkey Learned Nothing*, *Drinking Mare's Milk on the Roof of the World*, *Doing Nothing: A History of Loafers, Loungers, Slackers, and Bums*, *Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value*, *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears*, and *American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History*.

I'm a professor of Creative Writing at the University of California, Riverside, the founder and editor in chief of the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, among other endeavors. I live in Los Angeles, California.

Look around and please get in touch if you think we should talk.

Cheers,

Tom



## BOOKS

**And the Monkey Learned Nothing: Dispatches from a Life in Transit**



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## About Tom



written on the road).

When I'm not reading or writing, I listen to music: The Budo Band — solid, updated funk. Latimore and Syl Johnson sound the way Blaxploitation films look. And Portugal. The Man. Most of my life I've been in a band. (Please, add more info, Tom!)

I have a baby grand I bought 20 years ago in a junk shop out in the desert, in Joshua Tree. Somebody had spray-painted it gold so it wasn't selling particularly well. I can sit down at that piano, play Ray Charles's "Drown in My Own Tears," sing it at the top of my lungs, occasionally on pitch, and do it over and over and over again, day after day, year after year. Makes me feel like a million bucks. My neighbors, I assume, hate me for it, but they are too nice to say so.

I also appreciate quirky films, great little indie films like "Map of the Human Heart," "12:08 East of Bucharest," "George Washington," "Onegin." And in a bout of mental illness a while ago I watched the entirety of "24," which I had never seen. Made me want to secure the perimeter.

What else? I am addicted to the Google Analytics for our website. I can get lost in there for hours — seeing when we get a little action from the Democratic Republic of Congo or Myanmar and watching the Chinese shut us down and let us back in. It's endless entertainment. And I am starting to do my quadrennial Nate Silver impression, gobbling up political polls, putting them through my completely unscientific matrix of second-guessing, and then making pronouncements about who is going to win the presidency and the Senate. I've always followed politics. My mother was a Eugene McCarthy delegate at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

For more about the various titles I've held in the past few decades, click below:

### — AUTHOR

I'm the author of six books:

*And the Monkey Learned Nothing: Dispatches from a Life in Transit*

*Drinking Mare's Milk on the Roof of the World: Wandering the Globe from Azerbaijan to Zanzibar*

*Doing Nothing: A History of Loafers, Loungers, Slackers, and Bums*

*Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value*

*Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears*

*American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History*

My books have been translated into 12 languages and have appeared on NYT and LAT bestseller lists.

*Doing Nothing: A History of Loafers, Loungers, Slackers, and Bums in America* received the National Book Award in 2008.

You can read more about each of my books here: [My Books](#).

My fiction and nonfiction have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New Republic*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Die Zeit*, *ZYZZYVA*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *Salon.com*, *Black Clock*, and other newspapers and literary venues, as well as in dozens of books and academic journals.

You can find a selection of my shorter form works on the following pages: [Criticism](#), [Op-eds](#), and [Scholarly writings](#).

### + PROFESSOR

### + EDITOR

### + HUMANIST

### + GADABOUT

I suppose this is where I give you some details about who I am, where I summarize the gist of my endeavors.

Let's see... I read a lot (everything from Geoff Dyer to Jane Smiley, Philip Roth to Viet Than Nguyen, Karolina Waclawiak to Walter Mosley, and more) and I travel a lot (from Azerbaijan to Zanzibar, as you can read in my essays

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## And the Monkey Learned Nothing: Dispatches from a Life in Transit

**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** Nonfiction  
**Genre:** Travel Writing

Tom Lutz is an obsession to visit every county in each. *And the Monkey Learned Nothing* contains reports from fifty of them, most describing personal encounters in rarely visited spots, anecdotes from way off the beaten path. Traveling without an itinerary and without a goal, Lutz explores...

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## Drinking Mare's Milk on the Roof of the World: Wandering the Globe from Azerbaijan to Zanzibar

**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** Nonfiction  
**Genre:** Travel Writing

In this richly packed portfolio of traveler's tales, we accompany him as he drives beyond the backstop in Morocco, to the Saharan dunes in the Algerian border, and east of Ankara into the Hittite ruins of Dogubozasi. We ride alongside as he hitchhikes across Uzbekistan and the high mountain passes of Kyrgyzstan into western China. We catch up with him as he traverses the shores of a lake in Malawi, and disappear with him into the disputed areas of the Ukraine and Moldova. We follow his footsteps through the swamps of Sri Lanka, the wilds of Azerbaijan, the plains of Tibet, the canyons of Tanzania, the peasant hamlets of Romania and Albania, and the coast of Swaziland, where we join him in watching the king pick his next wife. All along the way, we witness his perplexity in trying to understand a compulsion to keep moving, ever onward, to the ends of the earth.

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## Doing Nothing: A History of Loafers, Loungers, Slackers, and Bums in America

**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** Nonfiction  
**Genre:** Politics & Social Sciences

Coats potatoes, goof-offs, free-loaders, good-for-nothings, loafers, and loungers: ever since the Industrial Revolution, when the work ethic, as we know it was formed, there has been a chorus of slackers ridiculing and lampooning the pretensions of hardworking respectability. Ravaged by many, heroes to others, these layabouts stretch and yawn while the rest of society wretches and sweats.

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## Cosmopolitan Vistas: American Regionalism and Literary Value

**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** Nonfiction  
**Genre:** History & Criticism

In a major statement on the relation of art and politics in America, Tom Lutz identifies a consistent ethos at the heart of American literary culture for the past 150 years. Through readings of Sherwood Anderson, Willa Cather, Harriet Caswell, Ellen Glasgow, Ivanhoe Jewett, Sinclair Lewis, Edgar Lee Masters, Claude McKay, Edith Wharton, Anna Yezzerka, and others, Lutz identifies what he calls literary cosmopolitanism: an ethos of representational inclusiveness, of the widest possible affiliation, and at the same time one of aesthetic discrimination, and therefore exclusivity.

At the same time that it embraces the entire world, in Lutz's view, literary cosmopolitanism necessitates an evaluative stance, and it is this *Andersens*, the combination of ngjattarantian and elitism, that animates American literature since the Civil War. The nineteenth-century's realists and sentimentalists, the writers of the Harlem Renaissance and of the Southern Renaissance, the footsore who brought in the new canon and the traditionalists who struggled to save the old all ascribe, Lutz argues, to the same cosmopolitan values, however much they disagree on what these values demand of those who hold them.

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## Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears

**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** Nonfiction  
**Genre:** Psychology & Counseling

A natural and cultural history of crying probes this phenomenon from every angle, using the work of philosophers, poets, scholars, scientists, anthropologists, and sociologists to trace the changing meaning of tears throughout the years.

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## American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History

**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** Nonfiction  
**Genre:** Politics & Social Sciences

Hysteria, insomnia, hypochondria, asthma, skin rashes, hay fever, premature baldness, inability, nervous exhaustion, brain-collapse—all were symptoms of neurosthenia, the bizarre psychophysiological illness that plagued America's intellectual and economic elite around the turn of the century.

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## LARB Quarterly Journal No. 20: Childhood Issue

**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** LARB Quarterly Journal

Dear Reader,

I have no nostalgia for my childhood. I don't remember it well — maybe less than I should — and I don't miss it or long for it. I am in fact, grateful it was over, as I don't recall it being particularly fun or easy. As far as I can tell, childhood is a pretty scary time, with little control over your life, little understanding of what's happening and why, and much to be afraid of (both war and unreal horrors).

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## LARB Quarterly Journal No. 19: Romance Issue

**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** LARB Quarterly Journal

Dear Reader,

Let's start with a love story. A few years ago, Rose, my father's 97-year-old grandmother, met a man named Hardy in her retirement home. This may be apocryphal, but I heard that Hardy saw Rose walking in the courtyard and thought, "That's a nice lady." This is the part I've always loved because Rose walks very slowly and with difficulty, usually with a walker. He was completely right — she is a very nice lady — and they have been inseparable ever since. Rose and Hardy exercise together in the mornings; they watch movies in the evenings. Hardy has proposed to Rose though she doesn't want to get married because of the hassle. Hardy is in his early 90's, which makes him a younger man. The last time I saw Rose, she said to me incredulously, "I never thought I would meet the love of my life in my 90's!" (Never mind that Rose had three children with her late husband — he was obviously not the one.) Hardy and Rose have been the King and Queen of their local Mardi-Gras celebration for three years in a row.

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## LARB Quarterly Journal No. 18: Genius Issue

**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** LARB Quarterly Journal

Dear Reader,

I sometimes imagine genius as a very fast moving body of water. People naturally slip in and out but it's impossible to jump in. Or it's like living in a house, where I'm generally free to wander at will, but the upper floors are boarded up. I know there are people up there, I can hear them, but who knows how they got upstairs, it looks pretty locked to me. This isn't something to take personally — you either have access or you don't. And besides, I can't think of a more appropriate application for that Grosche Marx quote: genius is exactly the kind of club I would resign from if it ever accepted a person like me as a member.

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## LARB Quarterly Journal No. 17: Comedy Issue

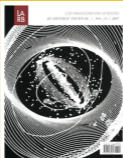
**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** LARB Quarterly Journal

Dear Reader,

We went back and forth about whether this should be the "Comedy" or the "Humor" issue and eventually, as you can see, landed on the former. Comedy, after all, has connotations that humor doesn't have. It implies a certain professionalism — it can of course, be a job and a big job at that, it also has an angrier goal. Comedy is meant to be funny or entertaining. Comedy also evokes its opposite — tragedy — and, in that evasion, lets its audience hope for a happy ending. It gets beyond something as atrocious as a seizure. A sense of humor is certainly a good thing to have, even people should consider acquiring one, but right now the concrete seems more interesting. If humor is tragedy plus time, then comedy is humor plus politics, plus current events, plus social and economic circumstances. Comedy is humor plus the business of the world.

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## LARB Quarterly Journal No. 16 Art Issue

**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** LARB Quarterly Journal

Dear Reader,

The worlds of art and writing have always been close — trendy at some moments, suspicious and distrustful at others. They have met and interacted for many years, mostly through the work of the stylistic seers who have in between, spending time in both places, trying to describe and explain one to the other. This is a difficult task, as ongoing works usually is. They've been traveling for many years, since Samuel Richardson and Thomas Stoney, Gustavere and Picasso, and yet, despite the years, the task remains just as difficult as it always was.

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## LARB Quarterly Journal Summer 2017 No. 15: Revolution Issue

**Author:** Tom Lutz  
**Series:** LARB Quarterly Journal

Dear Reader,

Perhaps we are in a revolution and perhaps we are not. It is sometimes hard to tell. Of course, that can't always be the case, especially in revolutions that are full of violence or bloodshed, but there must be revolutions that we don't see or don't notice or don't totally acknowledge. Or on the flip side, there are events that we see too quick to call by that name, when actually they aren't really anything at all, except steps in a long and drawn out series of accidents.

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## SHORTER WORKS

Please find links to my shorter pieces below.

Tom, it would be a good idea to link to anthologies and other books too, right here.

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