





# Einsteinium

## #099

Einstein understood  
that everything was relative...

Why did he have to worry  
about brushing his hair  
or changing out of his pajamas  
when he was busy grappling  
with the foundations of physics?

And once he fathomed  
the relationship  
between matter and energy,  
once he understood  
the interconnectivity  
between matter and energy —

he suddenly understood,  
after this Jewish physicist  
left his home in Germany,  
that Hitler and the Third Reich  
could be working on an atomic bomb,  
converting so little matter  
into so much devastating energy.

At this time, he understood  
the need for Roosevelt  
to create this weapon  
so the Germans wouldn't destroy us.

The gravity of this discovery  
in the hands of evil men  
weighed him down,  
and even months  
before he died,  
Einstein wrote  
that although the devastation  
in Hiroshima and Nagasaki  
seemed unfathomably horrific  
and he regretted writing  
that letter to Roosevelt,  
his justification  
was the threat of Germany.  
When he wrote that letter,  
he still had to appeal to Roosevelt,  
that yes, to save us from Germany,  
this weapon needed to be created.

Knowing about his torment  
in making this decision  
to *ask* for the creation  
of the atomic bomb,  
makes it so ironically beautiful  
that after scientists  
discovered an element  
after the first explosion  
of the hydrogen bomb,  
they named the element Einsteinium  
after the physicist.

How  
ironically  
beautiful.

Einsteinium is a silvery-white,  
radioactive, synthetic element  
with a high *fission* rate,  
like the atomic bombs  
Einstein first knew of  
when fearing his homeland enemy.  
But because of the short half-life  
of all isotopes of Einsteinium,  
all primordial Einsteinium  
has decayed by now,  
and beyond it's nuclear creation,  
there is almost no use  
for any isotope of Einsteinium  
outside of basic scientific research...

Which makes me think of the  
life of Albert Einstein, I suppose,  
for although Einstein worked  
at odd jobs for years  
until he was a patent examiner,  
his mind was only good at one thing:  
doing not-so-basic scientific research,  
solving scientific fundamental puzzles,  
if only he had the time  
to study the puzzle long enough.

# Germanium

## #032

Because the planet Neptune was recently discovered,  
Winkler in the late 1800s decided to name  
the element he discovered "Neptunium,"  
but another element already  
tried to lay claim to that name  
(and still a different element  
got the name "Neptunium")...  
So Winkler decided to name  
his newfound element Germanium,  
from Latin Germania,  
in honor of his homeland.

Germania is known for its high refraction  
(along with its low optical dispersion),  
making it perfect for things like  
wide-angle camera lenses,  
but is also used for microscopy  
and the core part of optical fibers.  
And yeah, I could go on about silicon-Germanium  
alloys used for semiconductors  
in new circuitry, fiber optics, infrared optics,  
electronics, metallurgy and chemotherapy,  
but when I heard chemotherapy  
I started looking into it, because  
when it comes to chemotherapy,  
Germanium's role in cancer  
treatments has been widely debated —  
the American Cancer Society found no evidence  
that Germanium helps fight cancer, and the  
U.S. Food and Drug Administration found  
that when Germanium was a nutritional supplement,  
Germanium even actually "presents  
potential human health hazard".

And I'm sorry, when I hear "Germanium",  
I think "Germania", and I know that  
Germania was the Greek and Roman  
geographic term for the region,  
but it still makes me think  
of the "World Capital Germania", with  
Adolf Hitler's vision for the future  
of Germany, with the projected renewal  
of the German capital Berlin  
during the Nazi reign. And Albert Speer,  
the "first architect of the Third Reich"  
(and probably the *only* architect)  
produced many of the plans  
for the rebuilt city, but only a fraction  
was realized. The Berlin Olympic Stadium  
for the 1936 Summer Olympics was built.  
Speer also designed a new Chancellery,  
with a hall twice as long as the Hall  
of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles,  
but the second Chancellery  
was destroyed by the Soviet army  
in 1945, and almost no other buildings  
planned for Berlin (and Hitler's  
"Germania") were ever built.

#

Some compounds of Germanium  
are highly reactive and very dangerous  
to humans even on exposure.  
I mean, Germanium had similarities  
with the elements arsenic (used for  
chemical weapons) and antimony  
(another toxic chemical element),  
so maybe it makes sense that I can't help  
but equate it with Hitler's plans  
that followed mass genocide.  
So I have to keep reminding myself  
of the uses for Germanium in electronics,  
and remind myself that the most notable  
physical characteristics of Germania  
make it perfect for optics, and things  
like wide-angle camera lenses (which the  
photographer in me can't help but love).  
Because although Germanium can have  
some very bad connections,  
it can also do things to help us out  
so much in our lives as well.



# Americium

## #095

When I heard there was an element  
called Americium,  
I thought,  
what scientist felt possessed  
to name an element  
after the United States of America?  
I mean,  
was it discovered during a war effort  
when everyone rallied with national spirit?  
Was it a World War Two effort  
against the element Germanium  
named after Germania  
(even though that element was not named  
for Hitler's desire to create  
the perfect thousand year empire)?  
I can't believe the decision  
to name an element Americium  
was based on the boo-rah mentality,  
go fight win, U.S.A., U.S.A....  
I mean, is the actual element  
somehow explicitly related to America?



Okay, fine, I will look on line for information.  
Let me first check dictionary dot com  
before Google or Wikipedia  
for information about Americium...  
But before I scrolled down to the definition  
I saw the speaker icon,  
so I could hear the computer-generated voice  
say Americium for me...  
Oh, Ah-mer-EE-cee-um.  
Not Uh-MARE-ick-ee-um. Oops.  
But the definition says Americium  
is the products of high-energy helium bombardment  
of uranium and plutonium.  
Wow. I'm really going to have to research this,  
and maybe I can dispel the World War Two links  
I was apparently making up for this element.

Wait a minute, Americium was discovered  
in 1944, but the discovery was kept secret  
and only released to the public in November 1945.  
(Okay, this doesn't help my anti-Hitler case...)  
Let's see... Americium was first identified  
at the University of California, Berkeley,  
and it was chemically identified in Argonne Lab  
at the University of Chicago. Okay,  
so it was discovered in America, but  
in the Periodic Table, Americium falls  
right next to it's twin lanthanide element europium;  
so thus by analogy, they named this element  
after another continent, America.

Hmmm, fun little story. But Americium  
was primarily used in nuclear tests  
conducted between 1945 and 1980,  
as well as at sites like the Chernobyl disaster.  
(Oh, so we go from Germany as our enemy  
to the Soviet Union as our enemy,  
because the enemy of your enemy  
is not necessarily your friend.)  
And elevated levels of Americium  
were also at the crash site of a US B-52 bomber  
which carried four hydrogen bombs  
in 1968 in Greenland.

But us Americans have to come up  
with more practical applications  
for Americium than nuclear testing...  
And that's when I learned  
that the silvery-white element  
(which is soft and malleable,  
and tarnishes in the air)  
has isotopes that are used in  
smoke detectors.  
So an element that can help kill  
can also help save people's lives.  
Well, I guess in a way  
*that* sounds like America, too.



# about the author

Janet Kuypers has a Communications degree in News/Editorial Journalism (starting in computer science engineering studies) from the UIUC. She had the equivalent of a minor in photography and specialized in creative writing. A portrait photographer for years in the early 1990s, she was also an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator, and she started her publishing career as an editor of two literary magazines. Later she was an art director, webmaster and photographer for a few magazines for a publishing company in Chicago, and this Journalism major was even the final featured poetry performer of 15 poets with a 10 minute feature at the 2006 Society of Professional Journalism Expo's Chicago Poetry Showcase

She sang with acoustic bands Mom's Favorite Vase, Weeds and Flowers and the Second Axing, and does music sampling. Kuypers is published in books, magazines and on the internet around 6,300 times for writing, and over 2,000 times for art work in her professional career, and has been profiled in such magazines as Nation and Discover U, and was nominated as Poet of the Year for 2006 by the International Society of Poets. She has also been highlighted on radio stations, including WEFT (90.1FM), WZRD (88.3FM), WSUM (91.7FM), WLS (8900AM), Q101 (101.9FM), the internet radio stations ArtistFirst.com, chicagopoetry.com's Poetry World Radio and Scars Internet Radio (SIR). She has also appeared on television for poetry in Nashville and Chicago, and was interviewed on her art work on Urban's CBS station, WCIA, channel 3 10 o'clock news.

Inducted as a Poetry Ambassador during Poetry Month in 2006 & 2007, and nominated to be Poet of the Year in 2007, Kuypers turned her writing into performance art on her own and with musical groups like *Pointless Orchestra*, *5D/5D*, *Order From Chaos* and *The Bastard Trio*, and starting in 2005 Kuypers ran a monthly iPodCast of her work, as well as an Internet radio station (JK Radio), which later became a part of Scars Internet Radio. She ran the Chaotic Radio show (an hour long Internet radio show 1.5 years, 2006-2007) through BZoO.org and chaoticarts.org. She has performed spoken word and music across the country — in the spring of 1998 she embarked on her first national poetry tour, with featured performances, among other venues, at the Albuquerque Spoken Word Festival during the National Poetry Slam; her bands have had concerts in Chicago and in Alaska; in 2003 she hosted and performed at a weekly poetry and music open mike (called "Sing Your Life"), and from 2002 through 2005 was a featured performance artist, doing quarterly performance art shows with readings, music and images. Starting in 2010 Kuypers also began hosting the Chicago weekly poetry open mic at "the Café Gallery" (<http://www.chaoticarts.org/thecafe>).



# Poetry

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Janet Kuypers  
<http://www.janetkuypers.com>

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