



DISCOVER SDIS
san diego independent scholars

SCHOLARS NOTEBOOK

January 2020

Kafka Project Update:

The Search for Literary Treasure -
Missing Notebooks & Love Letters

Kathi Diamant



1:30pm, Saturday, Jan. 18

Chancellor's Complex 111A
UCSD Campus
Map at www.sdscholars.org

Open to the Public

Important Announcements

Inside Political IssuesPg. 2

Reading ExperiencePg. 3

Just Lunch (resuming!) . . . Pg. 4

Hawkins Grant Application. . . Pg. 7

Ever since the literary giant Franz Kafka's last writings were confiscated by the Gestapo in Berlin in 1933, Kafka scholars have speculated that the missing 20 notebooks and 35 love letters could someday be found. Early searches in the 1930s and 1950s were stymied by first the Nazis and then the Iron Curtain. It wasn't until the fall of the Berlin Wall that the research into Holocaust-era assets, including the Kafka papers, could be conducted. In 1997, Kathi Diamant petitioned the German government for the return of Kafka's property, on behalf of the Kafka Estate of London, England.

Kathi Diamant, an adjunct professor at San Diego State University, initiated and directs the Kafka Project, the official international search to recover the missing writings of Franz Kafka. Her studies have uncovered original materials and new information about the writer and those closest to him, leading to a biography, *KAFKA'S LAST LOVE*. This book, published in the US, UK, Spain, France, Russia, China, Brazil, Turkey, Albania and Germany, has been reviewed in more than 60 publications and internet sites. It received critical acclaim for original research and won both "Best Biography" and the Theodore Geisel Award, the "Best of the Best" in San Diego Book Awards.

NEW GROUP

Inside Political Issues

10 am, February 1, 2020 (Saturday)
North University Community Branch Library
8820 Judicial Drive, UTC area

We are pleased to announce a new SDIS discussion group called **Inside Political Issues**. Each monthly meeting will focus on a list of hot political topics of the day. We will cover the President, Senators, members of Congress, governors, mayors, and state and local issues. We will consider foreign policy, domestic policy, the media, and the gridlock in Washington. We will also cover the 2020 Presidential and Congressional Elections, as well as the 2020 California and San Diego local elections.

All opinions are welcome and encouraged. We will attempt to learn from each other, rather than change anyone's opinions. If you have any interest in politics or societal problems, you will enjoy this new program. You can just come to listen and learn, or you can share your opinions as we attempt to cover the new topics set forth in the Agenda for each class.

The facilitator for this discussion group will be SDIS member Al Korobkin, who is a retired California Assistant Attorney General. Al has been leading a similar non-partisan political discussion class at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UCSD for the last fifteen years and is currently conducting a total of five such groups each month in the San Diego area.

"Inside Political Issues" will commence on Saturday, February 1, 2020, meeting from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. Thereafter, it will be held on the first Saturday of every month. The group will convene at the North University Community Branch Library at 8820 Judicial Drive in San Diego. The library is part of the Nobel Athletic Fields and Recreation Center off Nobel Drive in the UTC area. The phone number of the library is (858) 581-9637.

Inside Political Issues is open to the public, although SDIS membership is encouraged for frequent attendees.

Al Korobkin

Reading Experience

Next meeting: 10 am, January 13, 2020 (Monday)

Pacific Beach Public Library

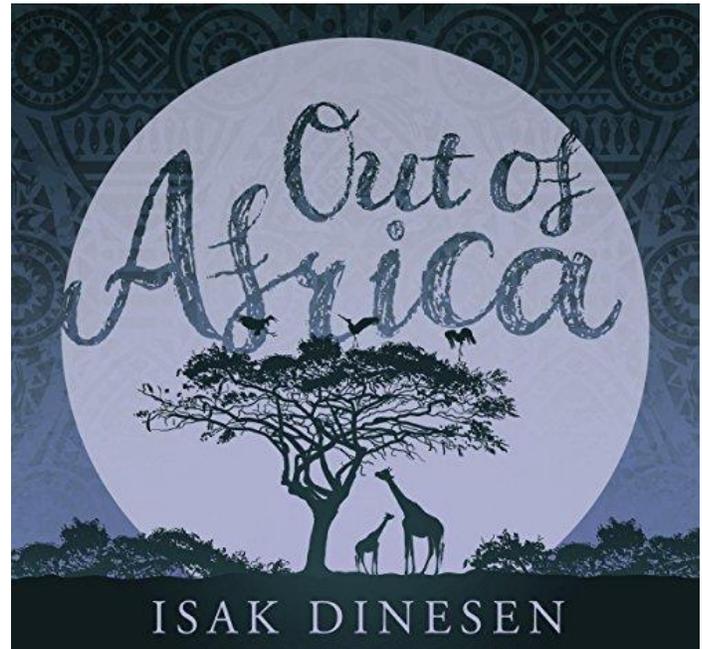
4275 Cass Street, Pacific Beach

Reading Experience is an unusual book group because we read and compare several books representing a specific theme, before we move to another theme. In autumn 2019 we considered three very different memoirs: (1) *SPEAK, MEMORY* by Vladimir Nabokov, (2) *WHERE I WAS FROM* by Joan Didion and (3) *THE HARE WITH AMBER EYES* by Edmund De Waal. We found many interesting differences in style, warmth of characterizations and central focus. A group favorite was De Waal because of his many-layered style and beautiful language as he discovered his ancestors via their relationships with art works, especially his great-great uncle's collection of Japanese netsuke (intricate ornaments that attach a carrying pouch to a kimono).

On Monday, January 13, 2020 we focus on a book that is both a memoir and at the same time a segue into our next theme:

Where and When

That book is Isak Dinesen's *OUT OF AFRICA*, written in the 1930s, which is the author's recollection of her life on her farm in Kenya over 100 years ago.



On Monday, Feb. 10, the subject will be Peter Carey's *TRUE HISTORY OF THE KELLY GANG*, a novel published in 2000 about Ned Kelly, who was an outlaw in southeastern Australia in the 1870s and has become a folk hero in that country. Carey uses Kelly's own words as a basis for his story.

Monday March 16 is the day we will discuss James Joyce's *DUBLINERS*, the author's short story collection published in 1914 and set in the early 20th century. We will emphasize two stories, "The Sisters" and "The Dead."

Reading Experience is open to the public. SDIS membership is encouraged for frequent attendees.

JOIN US!

Gerry Horwitz

Colloquy Cafe

In November, Colloquy Cafe focused on “**doubt**”, both noun and verb, and participants expressed many degrees of uncertainty. Most thought of “doubt” in the context of religion. One person told of her disillusion with a certain church whose doctrine was the Search for Truth, when she began to wonder “Whose truth?”

Another participant responded by quoting French novelist and winner of the '47 Nobel Prize in Literature, Andre Gide: "Believe those who are seeking truth. Doubt those who find it."

Doubt is the other side of faith, said another contributor to the discussion. Did Adam and Eve doubt God when they were placed in the Garden of Eden and yet were challenged by the existence of the apple? the snake?

Contemporary psychologist and linguist Stephen Pinker addressed the search for truth in our own lives, that we all deal with it and are never certain. We wondered if re-examining one's decisions is not inborn. Is it good to doubt? Doubt is as normal as belief, claim some.

Can doubt be partial? asked another. An unanswered question.”

One colloquy member told of her doubt about sharing an original and very intimate poem with a poetry-writing group. She was encouraged to do so. Self-doubt can be destructive, but it can also be constructive, claimed another, who called it “the ants-in-the-pants of faith which keeps it moving.”

The next meeting of Colloquy will occur Wednesday Jan. 15 when the subject under consideration will be “**quid pro quo**.”

MARK THIS DATE!

“JUST LUNCH” January 31, 2020

Members, friends and potential members are invited!

A January tradition of Just Lunch is to share China Max's Peking duck along with several other dishes.

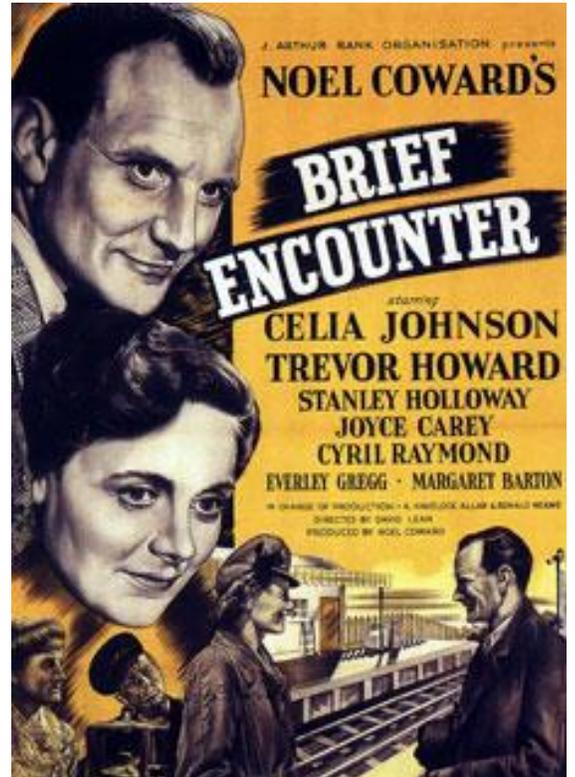


We order as a group and divide the cost of the total bill. We'll meet on Friday, January 31 at 11:45 am at China Max, 4698 Convoy St. You can make reservations now to bheckler@san.rr.com. A reservation deadline and reminder will be sent in mid-January. The parking lot gets very full at noon, so allow plenty of time to park. Barbara Heckler

SDIS FILM GROUP

The film group will meet Monday, January 6 at 10 am (instead of Wednesday for this month only) to view David Lean's 1945 British film *Brief Encounter*. A Noel Coward one-act play is the basis for *Brief Encounter*'s screenplay. It is considered one of the best British films ever produced.

We watched Woody Allen's 1987 film *Radio Days* in November. It uses music and memories to depict one Rockaway Beach family's life in The Golden Age of Radio, contrasting vignettes about ordinary (though sometimes zany) day-to-day existence with the dramatic events depicted over the radio and the actual lives of those who created them. Discussion of the film included consideration of its autobiographical bases in the director-screenwriter-narrator's past and whether the artist's current reputation could or should be reconciled with the work itself, the profuse use of music, the New-York style of humor, and the structure of the loose narrative, along with other topics. The audience seemed to have appreciated the screening.



In December we followed a long December tradition of a choosing a music-related film. All of us were introduced to famed singer Chavela Vargas in a 2017 Mexican Spanish documentary which depicts her life (1919-2012). Chavela Vargas was unconventional in many ways. Her refusal to bow to tradition earned her a place as a LGTB idol, and her passionate renditions of traditional ranchera music gained her world fame and a comeback in later life. It was hard not to be moved by this documentary.

Barbara Heckler

GENERAL RELATIVITY GROUP

The General Relativity group met on Wed. December 18, at John Alexander's home. All were in attendance. We continued our discussion of Chapter 20 (Home Work section) and the first four sections of Chapter 21 in Hartle, *Gravity*.

The main topic was defining the Riemann Curvature Tensor using a strictly metric space approach. This 4th rank tensor devolves into the 2nd ranked Ricci Curvature Tensor and the Ricci Scalar, from which we construct Einstein's equations in free space. The solutions include the Schwarzschild solution (outside a spherical mass), and gravitational waves in free space. which we previously had assumed and analyzed. We also discussed the deeper mathematical underpinning of Curvature via Manifolds and Riemann Geometry.

Next time we plan to discuss the Manifold approach more deeply. and finish Chapter 21. The next meeting is on January 29 same time same place. Alvin Halpern

SUPPER WITH SCHOLARS

Dinner discussion

6:00 p.m., January 2

(1st Thursday of month)

At Humphreys Grill in La Jolla near UCSD
3299 Holiday Court, La Jolla, CA.

Meals from the menu are Dutch Treat.

(See www.humphreyslajolla.com)

Because restaurant reservations are needed, please RSVP 4 days in advance to:
parkerd1954@gmail.com

Group discussion is based on suggested topics that have particularly interested the attendees in the last month. The subject is selected each meeting by vote of those present. We try to select a question that can be addressed from the differing viewpoints of the various areas of expertise of the participants, which are ordinarily quite diverse, ranging from the humanities to natural sciences to social sciences to various professions.

Open to all SDIS members and persons considering SDIS membership.

Dave Parker

NEUROSCIENCE GROUP

In November and December, the Neuroscience Group discussed a series of questions relating to artificial intelligence (AI). Most issues concerned the different types of AI and what we would like AI to do for humanity, as compared to what we might not want it to do.

Several group members have accumulated references on artificial intelligence, our next topic. We are currently considering several approaches, including: (a) a historical framework following the development of different types of AI or (b) a comparison involving differences between artificial intelligence and the embodied intelligence characteristic of humans and other living beings, which is subject to selective pressures favoring survival and reproduction.

Helen Hawkins Grant, 2020

SDIS ordinarily offers one Helen Hawkins Grant annually, on a competitive basis. Grants can be awarded for either: (a) research expenses or (b) travel to collect data or present research results. The granted sums are usually \$2000 or less. A detailed list of covered activities and award criteria is available from the SDIS president on request.

Persons who have belonged to SDIS for at least one year are eligible, except for SDIS Board Members or members of the Hawkins Grant Review Committee. Full-time post-secondary teaching faculty are also excluded.

An application form is available from the SDIS president in January and must be submitted by the last day of February. Awards are announced in April.

Applications are evaluated by a 3-person committee. Approval is based on the quality of the applicant's idea, its originality, merit, credibility, feasibility, and potential for solving or giving a new perspective on a significant problem or illuminating a social, literary or scientific phenomenon.

At the May SDIS general meeting, the winner will briefly describe the work and how the Hawkins Award is to be used. Upon completion of work, the awardee will give a presentation to a future SDIS general meeting.