



Leading the Way to Lifelong Learning

Conductor

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March/April 2021

President's Corner

Mary Alice Rennick, President



Let me begin by apologizing for the confusion surrounding registration for the Spring semester of the Gentrain course. For unknown reasons, MPC's system capped the enrollment at 50 students, instead of the usual 200. That is what led to the "add

code" messages. It was all straightened out, but not soon enough to allow everyone to register. The deadline is now past, but you can still register for the remaining three segments of the class GENT 405, GENT 406, and GENT 407. The last day to register for each segment is the first day of classes.

The real topic for this column is my appreciation of the amazing people of Gentrain. I never cease to be amazed by the depth and breadth of talent, interest, and experience among Gentrainers. Although our demographics are skewed toward "mature individuals," we come in all ages, shapes, sizes, and backgrounds. We are students, paid workers, entrepreneurs, retirees, and many combinations of all of these. Our members include free thinkers, organizers, inventors, and managers. Our expertise covers a wide range of arts, literature, philosophy, history (sound like familiar topics, classmates?), sciences, technology, law, and more.

Our diversity is impressive. But I am even more impressed by the depth of our collective knowledge, particularly about topics no more than tangentially related to our formal training. I have indulged in fascinating conversations about topics I never would have imagined. Individually and as a group, Gentrainers always seem ready to share their unique knowledge and skills, as well as more mundane ones, with each other and the larger community. I think our common bond is our curiosity about the world we live in, how it got this way, and how it will develop in the future.

Get to know your fellow members. This will be a bit of a challenge until COVID concerns are mitigated, but you can start with the "Meet the Gentrainer" columns in *The Conductor*. A good example is the story of Gerry

Kapolka, featured in this issue. In it, he talks about his life experience and how he nurtured his love of literature - a love he freely shares by leading the weekly Book Club sessions.

Do you know someone whose story should be told in these pages? Would you like to share your own? Please send your suggestions to tblumgm@gmail.com or via USPS to Terry Blum at 1114 Lincoln Ave., Pacific Grove, CA 93950.

Gentrain Society Board Meetings

Gentrain Society Board Meetings scheduled for March 3 and April 7 are now being held online as Zoom meetings. If you are a Gentrain Society Member and would like to attend a meeting, you may email Mary Alice Rennick, Gentrain Society President, at president@gentrain.org and request to be sent the Zoom link to the meeting.

Membership Report

Merry Nolte, Membership Chair

A hearty welcome to these new members of the Gentrain Society: Stephen Asher and Andrea McDonald.

Thanks again to our members for renewing their support of the Society. As the vaccination process continues, we hope to return to our regular activities soon. In the meantime, please continue to check out our website, Gentrain.org, and the other online opportunities listed in the *Conductor*

Scholarship Report

Vikki Logan, Scholarship Chair

Annually we receive a generous donation to the Scholarship Fund from Janet Sedan Hoehn given in memory of her parents, Jack and Isaline Sedan. I was privileged to know both of them when I married Tom in 1993. Jack was a set designer in Hollywood and made some great banners and wall hangings for the Society. I especially remember a Gentrain costume party in the early nineties when I came as Cleopatra and Jack came as Mark Antony. We had such fun at the pot-luck. Tom came as a train conductor.

As I have mentioned before, Isaline had been on the committee that started the Scholarship Fund, Kathy Kress was the Chairperson, and it was started with seed money from an anonymous donor. Isaline continued to serve on the committee for many years, and her input was invaluable.

When we received the annual check from Janet this year, she enclosed the following note which I would like to share:

"Dear Gentrain Society Scholarship Committee:

Again this holiday season, and appreciating what a difficult year this has been for so many people, I am happy to have this opportunity to continue my parents' tradition of supporting the continuing education of college students with the enclosed check for \$2,000.00 for the Gentrain Society Jack and Isaline Sedan Memorial Scholarships.

I hope you all are safe and healthy and enjoying the season as much as you are able to during this very unusual time. I send my warmest holiday wishes to all of you whose work makes these scholarships possible.
Happy 2021 to all of you,
Most sincerely,
Janet S. Hoehn"

Recent memorial donations:

In memory of Chuck Kimzey given by Mary Pendlay
In memory of Judith Weintraub given by Grant and Norma Voth
In memory of Anne Flynn given by Janet Bruman

**Meet the Gentrainer - Book Club
Facilitator Gerard Kapolka**

What kind of life experiences would be valuable to prepare a person to lead discussion of a wide variety of written classics? Gerry Kapolka tells about his life:

I grew up in Duquesne, a steel town just outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My father was a steelworker and my mother was a beautician who had a shop in our house. When I was a young teenager, I felt a vocation to become a priest, and I attended the Bishop's Latin School in Pittsburgh, a minor seminary funded by the Diocese and staffed by the Jesuits where we took classes in Latin, Greek, and French in addition to the usual high school subjects. Like most of my fellow students at that time, my desire to become a priest faded at the end of high school.

I became passionately interested in literature on my own while in high school, especially in Russian Literature, but my primary academic strength was in mathematics.



McDowell Hall at St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland. Restored after a 1909 fire; original building from the mid-1700s.

After hearing about the Great Books Program at St. John's College, I decided to attend because of the fixed curriculum that balanced math and the sciences with literature, philosophy, language, etc. The method of discussion at St. John's places the onus of the discussion on the students, and this is a method that I try to emulate in our discussions in the Gentrain Book Club. St. John's has no majors. One graduates with a B.A. in Liberal Arts. When I was about to graduate, I realized that I had a big decision to make about what to do next. I thought about pursuing my passion for Russian Literature, but I did not know the Russian language. I realized that to learn it quickly I would have to live in the Soviet Union. After researching this, however, I found that being accepted to a program was very difficult, and living conditions for foreigners were very restrictive. However, it was relatively easy to study in Poland, especially for those of Polish descent.

I thought I could begin my journey by learning Polish. I married my wife, Daphne a few weeks after graduation in 1974, and we set off a few months later to spend our first year of marriage in Poland, in the "Iron Curtain" era. Life there was arduous, but the rewards were great. As the academic year ended, I decided to pursue my study of Polish Literature, and Daphne decided to pursue the History of Science. We both applied to and were accepted to The University of Chicago. Daphne decided to leave graduate school after earning a Master's degree, but I went on to finish a Ph.D. in Polish Literature with a minor in Russian Literature.

While in graduate school we had our first two children, Andrzej and Basia. The job market was particularly poor at that time, so I decided to teach math in an independent school based on my math background from St. John's, so we lived on campus at Wyoming

Seminary in Kingston, It turned out, not surprisingly, that there was virtually no job market at all for Polish Literature, so I made a stab at becoming a cryptographer for the Navy.



Gerry and Daphne as dinner guests of their friends the Addlemans

However, the Navy was not for me. In a radical shift of roles, my wife decided to join the Navy, and we switched roles for a while as I stayed at home with the children. Eventually I began teaching Western Literature as an adjunct at Rhode Island College. From there, I was hired as a full time administrator at St. Mary's College in Orchard Lake, Michigan. I became a full time assistant professor and was the head of both the Polish Studies and the English Department. My wife arranged to be stationed in Detroit at this time, but she was given the opportunity to study Acoustical Engineering at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. We had just had our last child, Marek, and this was not a reasonable time for her to leave the Navy nor for our family to separate, so I took leave from St. Mary's and accompanied Daphne to Monterey. While here, I began teaching English Composition at MPC but soon moved on to teach General Humanities. After Daphne received her Masters of Acoustical Engineering from NPS, she was stationed on a frigate in Staten Island, so we moved there. I began teaching English and core courses at Wagner College on Staten Island. I also taught a course in Polish Literature at Rutgers University.

After two years in New York, Daphne came back to the Naval Postgraduate School to do a Ph.D. in Applied Physics. At this point I called a friend at York School to see if there were any openings. There was a one semester sabbatical replacement position in the English department, so I was hired to fill this position. I discovered that I really loved high school teaching (now that I was no longer teaching math), but unfortunately there were no full time positions at York. However, my daughter was attending Santa Catalina School, and there were positions open there. I was hired as an English teacher at Santa Catalina, where I stayed for 23 years,

retiring in June 2018 after becoming Chair of the English Department and Dean of Academics. The first semester after retirement I taught in the English Department at the University of Kraków. Daphne was stationed in San Diego after completing her Ph.D. in 1997, but I remained in Monterey with my youngest child while the older two were away at college. Daphne was later stationed back at NPS as an instructor. She retired from the Navy in 2003 and began a fifteen year civilian career as a senior lecturer in Physics at NPS.

One of the most important people in my life was Ludwik Krzyzanowski, an Emeritus Professor at New York University when I first met him while living in Rhode Island. He was the editor of *The Polish Review*, an area studies journal published by the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America. He became my mentor after receiving my Ph.D. and I became the assistant editor of *The Polish Review*. My collaboration with Ludwik inspired me to publish many articles and book reviews in the journal, and to eventually publish three book length translations of Polish literature with notes and introductions.

After our long adventure in Poland 1974-1975 we did not have much opportunity and funds to travel abroad until the children were older. In 1998 I attended an NEH seminar on Dante in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and in 2001 I attended another NEH seminar on the Lives of St. Francis in Siena and Assisi, Italy. This was my first trip abroad since Poland, but after this we traveled often in Europe, visiting Poland, Ireland, the UK, Italy, Russia, and France. It was our goal to travel extensively in retirement, but the pandemic has ruined those plans for now.

The Gentrain Book club was started by Karl Walling, who had come to Monterey to teach at the war college. He also went to St. John's (a few years after me) and, I believe, was a classmate of Alan Haffa. As I was about to retire, he asked me if I would be interested in taking it over, since he no longer had the time to continue it. I was delighted. I had wanted to form a group to study all of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, so this is the first project I took on. We had a nice size group for Dante, but we have been struggling with membership ever since. We began by meeting on the MPC campus, but when the pandemic broke out, we switched to meeting on Zoom. After Dante, we read *Heart of Darkness*, *The Aeneid*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Aristotle's *Poetics*, Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, Mann's *Death in Venice*, Gibbons *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, volume one, several dramas beginning with the Greeks and continuing with Shakespeare and Racine. We are currently reading *The Canterbury Tales*, and we will go

on to do Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

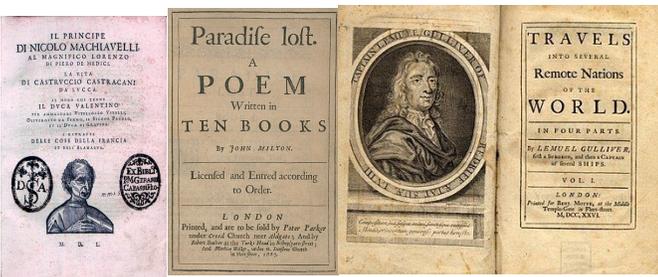
I choose the reading in consultation with the members who attend. *The Canterbury Tales* and the three works we will be reading next are specific requests from members of the group who have been with me since I began.

I try to be open during our discussions to any aspects of the work that the members want to discuss. I try not to over-orchestrate the discussion so that it is free to be formed by the interests of the others in the group. I encourage participation from all members, but there have always been a few who prefer just to sit and listen, though I do think one gets more out of these discussions when one participates. There is no requirement for joining the group other than reading the texts ahead of time. We have participants with a broad range of backgrounds and prior reading. I have tried to the best of my ability to do all my teaching, whether at the college level, the high school level, or here in continuing education, by discussion with students contributing as much as possible. It is my firm belief that what one comes up with on one's own is much more valuable than what someone else tells you. In this, I have taken the St. John's method as my model, but it generally has to be modified a bit to suit the students. I lecture very rarely, but there are times when I must provide necessary background information pertinent to the texts we study.

The Gentrain Book Club

Gerard Kapolka

Beginning on March 3 and continuing each Wednesday evening at 7:00 pm, the Gentrain Book Club will discuss Machiavelli's *The Prince*, then move on to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. To join the mailing list to receive Zoom invitations and specific reading assignments, please contact Gerry Kapolka at gtkapolka@gmail.com.



MPC Spring Gentrain Program (Virtual)

February 23, 25 - March 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, 18

GENT 405: THE MEDIEVAL WORLD: PART I (400-1100 CE)

The course begins with a look at the Western world after the collapse of Rome. It then traces the incursion of the Germanic tribes into the West and the culture which was produced by the combination of Roman, Christian, and Germanic elements: its theology, art and architecture, and literature. A brief excursion into the Byzantine world relieves the gloom of the darkest ages in Western history.

March 30 - April 1, 6, 8, 13, 15, 20, 22

GENT 406: THE MEDIEVAL WORLD: PART II (1100-1350)

The course studies the period sometimes called 'the first Renaissance' in Europe: the great Christian Age in Europe - the age of Thomas Aquinas, cathedrals, the Crusades, courtly love and Dante. It is also an age of economic recovery, the growth of towns and cities and the establishment of the great universities of Europe.

April 27, 29 - May 4, 6, 11, 13, 18, 20

GENT 407: THE EARLY RENAISSANCE (1350-1520)

The course examines the changes in Western life and thought that resulted from the rediscovery of the classical ages of Greece and Rome. It features many of the places, figures and events that define the Renaissance, including Florence, the Medici, the growth of trade and cities, new music, literature, art and philosophy, Machiavelli, the Hundred Years War, Chaucer and the beginnings of the great art of the Renaissance: Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael.

SPECIAL EVENTS - VIRTUAL

In person Special Events are limited because of Covid-19, and many organizations are filling in the gap locally and at a distance with an amazing array of creative online presentations, both live and recorded. **We will be using the Special Events space to share some "events" we have found that will be available in March and/or April, 2021 and after. We encourage Gentrain Society Members to submit suggestions for our next (May/June 2021) newsletter to Terry Blum/Conductor Co-Editor at tblumgm@gmail.com or mail to Terry Blum, 1114 Lincoln Ave., Pacific Grove, CA 93950.**

Carl Cherry Center for the Arts

Since 1948, the Carl Cherry Center for the Arts has sought to enhance the quality and diversity of artistic, educational and cultural programs in Monterey County by encouraging interaction between artists and the



community. **Art Sparks**, their weekly newsletter, was created during the COVID-19 pandemic to inspire and uplift the community with works by local artists and writers. **To receive a copy directly in your inbox**, please sign-up at <https://carlcherrycenter.org/art-sparks/>

Monterey County Theatre Alliance (MCTA)

The Monterey County Theatre Alliance website: **Regularly updated on local live theatre events**, primarily virtual events: theatremonterey.org



MCTA Virtual Live Theatre presentations scheduled for March and/or April 2021

You may register to attend any or all of these presentations at theatremonterey.org. Once registered you will be sent a Zoom link to a live webinar of the presentation. **No fee for the performance, but a link to an optional shared donation** to the presenter and the MCTA (to help pay for tech costs) will be available at the conclusion of each presentation. At this point, there are **four presentations by Howard Burnham scheduled for March and April 2021:**



March 6 *Pshaw!* - George Bernard Shaw at ninety, Howard Burnham & MCTA Virtual Theatre, free with registration at TheatreMonterey.org

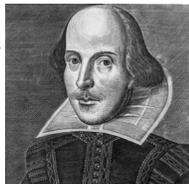


March 27 *First Knight* - the life and theatrical achievements of Sir Henry Irving. Howard Burnham & MCTA Virtual Theatre, free with registration at TheatreMonterey.org



April 10 *Smith of the Titanic* (109th anniversary of the April 15 sinking) , Howard Burnham & MCTA Virtual Theatre, free with registration at TheatreMonterey.org

April 24 *In Love with Shakespeare* - a celebration of the celebrations of Shakespeare (Shakespeare's birthday is April 23) TheatreMonterey.org



Howard Burnham & MCTA Virtual Theatre, free with registration at TheatreMonterey.org For more information call (831)915-1968 or email admin@theatremonterey.org

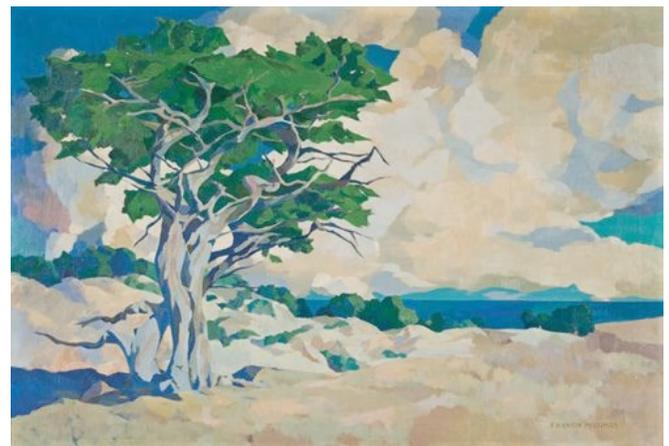
Monterey Museum of Art

Welcome to Monterey Museum of Art's Virtual Exhibitions:

Francis McComas: Rediscovering California's First Modernist

On view January 21 - April 4, 2021 at Montereyart.org/mccomas/info@montereyart.org

Announcing the virtual premier today of *Francis McComas: Rediscovering California's First Modernist* (January 21 - April 4, 2021), guest curated by Robert J. Pierce for the Monterey Museum of Art. This exhibition is the artist's first retrospective since his 1939 memorial exhibition at San Francisco's Legion of Honor. With an emphasis on his larger, later, most modern works, the exhibition tells McComas's story through an examination of his strongest paintings and a selection of never seen-before personal photos. The show explores his ever-changing style, told against the backdrop of California's evolving art world. It presents a twenty-first century look at this historic artist, corrects errors and omissions in the historical record, and helps to return him to his place as one of America's most significant painters. Eighty years after his death, McComas's story has languished for too long. Truly, now is the time to tell it, or risk losing it forever.



Cypress, Monterey

Marc Trujillo: Fast - Monterey Museum of Art
January 28 - April 18, 2021 - <https://montereyart.org/upcoming-exhibitions/marc-trujillo-fast-food/>

In his brilliant and eye opening series *Fast*, artist Marc Trujillo looks at one of America's most ubiquitous urban environments, the take-out franchise and its drive up windows. A Los Angeles resident, he resides in the

heart of fast food culture, where grabbing a quick burger or taco to go is a universal habit. Both intrigued and a little repelled, Trujillo decided to move in for a closer look. With a keen eye, he brings the allure and meticulous observation of a 17th century Dutch still life and a touch of ambivalent commentary to his paintings of this ordinarily mundane experience.



Fast

National Theatre of London - at Home

<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/ntathome>

The all-new National Theatre at Home is a streaming service offering unforgettable British theatre available to watch any time, anywhere. You can choose to subscribe, or pay for a single play. Watch National Theatre Live recordings, filmed in high definition for cinema to capture all the twists and turns, laughter and heartbreak. Plus, for the first time ever, they are releasing a treasure trove of plays from the National Theatre Archive.



National Theatre of London

Monterey Public Library

Custom Book Bundle

<https://www.monterey.org/library/Check-out/Custom-Book-Bundles>

Request form:

Would you like a librarian to put together a stack of books for you to check out? We'd be delighted to! We know it's hard to pick out books when you can't come in to browse, so we're here to help. Please fill out the form, give us a day or two, and we'll put the books on hold for you to pick up during sidewalk pickup hours. When the items are ready for pickup, you will receive an email or notice in the mail.



My Modern Met

MyModern Met.com is an online city celebrating creative ideas. Its mission is to promote a positive culture by spotlighting the best sides of humanity. Link MyModernMet.com. . - We share here some favorite postings:



Antoni Gaudí: The Creative Madman Behind La Sagrada Família - My Modern Met

<https://mymodernmet.com/antoni-gaudi-la-sagrada-familia/>

Van Gogh Museum Puts Nearly 1,000 Paintings and Drawings Online - My Modern Met
<https://mymodernmet.com/van-gogh-worldwide/>



Check out some of the best Milky Way photos of 2020. - My Modern Met

<https://mymodernmet.com/best-milky-way-photos/>
Travel and photography blog. *Capture the Atlas* is known for its spectacular imagery, and it particularly loves to share how amazing the cosmos are through breathtaking Milky Way photos. In fact, the site even published a calendar charting the best days and times to photograph the Milky Way to make it easier for photographers to take more stunning photos of our galaxy. Now, editor Dan Zafra has sifted through an incredible amount of photos to find the 25 best Milky Way photographers of the year.

This list has become an annual tradition at *Capture the Atlas*, with Zafra not only featuring well-known astrophotographers, but also spotlighting new talent. This year's list features photographers from 14 different countries, as well as images of the Milky Way in remote locations like Antarctica.

The photographs also highlight the adventurous spirit of these travelers and photographers. Whether its climbers scaling a glacier in the Dolomites under the glow of the Milky Way or a solitary traveler standing alone in the Sahara, each photographer has a special story to tell. In fact, these stories prove that what we're looking at is more than a simple photograph, it's a special memory that can't be replicated.

If anything, these pictures will certainly be an inspiration to get out in the open and try to get your own glimpse of the Milky Way. Coincidentally, June is the perfect time to view the Milky Way, as its Galactic Core is most visible for the longest amount of hours during this month.



**The Gentrain Society of MPC
2020 - 2021
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