



LIBRARY NOTES

THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 5, NUMBER 4, SEPTEMBER 1998



Milton at 62, by
William Faithorne

PARADISE LOST--John Milton's Epic Tradition

Friday, October 30 and November 6

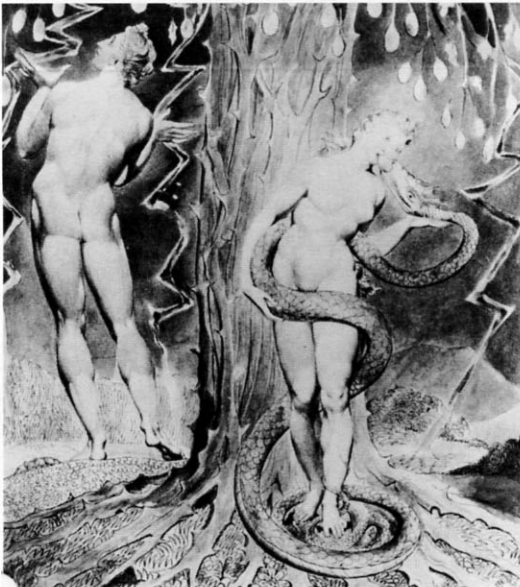
5:30 P.M., Members' Room, The Library

Abbe Blum

Dr. Blum is an associate professor of English literature at Swarthmore College, where she teaches courses in Shakespeare, Milton, Renaissance literature, and contemporary women writers. Her book, Ordinary and Extraordinary Agency: Milton, the Powell Women, and Critical Investments, will be published by Stanford University Press this year. She will devote two evenings to discussion of John Milton and his great epic, Paradise Lost. Passages from the poem will be dramatized by actors.

In the first evening, John Milton and his time will be introduced briefly through his poetry and notable prose. Milton participates in and challenges the epic tradition in rewriting the Bible to "justify the ways of God to man." How does his narrator articulate options and dilemmas of a sacred—and blind—poet? We will introduce God and Satan and investigate why Milton began first with Satan, leaving God for Book III. We'll look at Adam and Eve. Why is Adam more upright and Eve set up for a narcissistic fall? Finally, we'll explore some of the major characteristics and dilemmas of Milton's morality as charted in part through portrayals of Hell and through Satanic logic of "freedom," paradise, perfect couples, and overgrown gardens, including the rules of the first dinner party in which Adam and Eve host the angel Raphael.

The second program will center on how Milton builds up to the Fall, the "fortunate" aspect of the Fall, the insistence on free will, and the aftermath. Here we have a new series of "firsts": first indigestion, first sinful yet seemingly exciting sex, first blame, and first apologies. Throughout this epic, Milton gets to reimagine the meaning of "firstness"—even from the very first line:



Adam and Eve, from Paradise Lost, 1808;
watercolor by William Blake

*Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe*

Seats are \$40 for both evenings. If interested, please send a check to the attention of Nancy McCartney at the Library. Because we cannot accommodate everyone, Ms. McCartney will confirm each reservation.

CALENDAR

Storytelling
for Children

Saturdays, 10:30 A.M.

September 26

October 3, 17, 24,
and 31

Children's Library

Author Series

Tuesday, October 20

Amanda Vaill

"Gerald and Sara Murphy"

Wednesday, November 11

Jane Scovell

"Oona O'Neill Chaplin"

6:30 P.M.

Temple Israel

112 East 75th Street

Paradise Lost
Milton's Epic Tradition

Abbe Blum

Friday October 30

and November 6

5:30 P.M.

Members' Room

The Library

A James Joyce Evening

The Honorable

David Norris

Thursday, November 12

6:00 P.M.

Members' Room

The Library

Poetry

J. D. McClatchy

Wednesday, December 2

6:00 P.M.

Members' Room

The Library

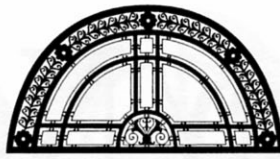
Literary New York
Professor Mike Wallace

Tuesday, December 8

6:00 P.M.

Members' Room

The Library



1998-1999 AUTHOR SERIES

Amanda Vaill

INVENTING A LIFE: GERALD AND SARA MURPHY, A BIOGRAPHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Tuesday, October 20

6:30 P.M., Temple Israel, 112 East 75th Street

With a circle that included Ernest Hemingway, Pablo Picasso, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Dorothy Parker, and Cole Porter, Gerald and Sara Murphy lived at the white-hot center of Jazz Age creativity. Amanda Vaill's recent biography, *Everybody Was So Young*, delves into the story of the couple perhaps best remembered as the models for Dick and Nicole Diver in Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* and hailed as the "toast of the Lost Generation." Ms. Vaill, who has worked as an editor at McGraw Hill, Macmillan, and Viking Penguin, has worked since 1991 as a full-time writer and critic for publications including *GQ*, *Mirabella*, *Esquire*, *Allure*, and *New York* magazine.



Jane Scovell

OONA O'NEILL CHAPLIN: LIVING IN THE SHADOWS

Wednesday, November 11

6:30 P.M., Temple Israel, 112 East 75th Street

Oona O'Neill Chaplin was the only daughter of the only American playwright to receive a Nobel Prize. Eugene O'Neill disinherited her when she was 18, the same year she married Hollywood's first superstar, the 54-year-old Charlie Chaplin. Against all odds, their marriage lasted 34 years, and they had eight children. Ms. Scovell, who has collaborated on many bestselling biographies, including *Ginger* (Ginger Rogers),

Elizabeth Takes Off (Elizabeth Taylor), and *Now You Know* (Kitty Dukakis), explores the story of the woman who lived in the shadows of America's spotlight.

February 10, Deborah Grace Winer

Broadway's Broadway: The Comeback of the American Musical

Deborah Grace Winer's books on musical theater and cabaret include the recently published *On the Sunny Side of the Street: The Life and Lyrics of Dorothy Fields*, and *Sing Out, Louise!: 150 Broadway Musical Stars Remember 50 Years!*

April 14, Benita Eisler

Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Fame

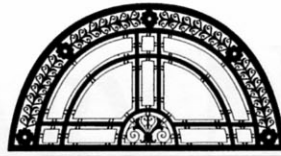
Benita Eisler, Library Trustee, has served as arts producer at WNET/13 and taught the European novel at Princeton. She has contributed to *The New Yorker*. Her previous biography, *O'Keefe and Stieglitz: The American Romance*, was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Biography Award. *Byron*, to be published in early April 1999 by Alfred A. Knopf, is a Book-of-the-Month Alternate Selection.

The 1998/1999 Author Series, held annually since 1994, is sponsored by Thirteen/WNET and The New York Society Library, with the generous underwriting support of The Chase Manhattan Bank. The program is free for members and guests of the Library, Thirteen/WNET Patrons and Associates, and guests of The Chase Manhattan Bank. Tickets can be picked up at the Library's circulation desk or at the door. For the general public, tickets are \$10 and can be purchased at the door.

AROUND THE WORLD WITH WORDS

Storyteller Eleni Constantelos returns to the Library with more folktales and fairy tales from around the world to delight younger members and their adult friends. Through the magic of stories, we will travel from the scorching desert to the frozen tundra, meeting princely peasants, glorious goddesses, clever creatures, and mythical monsters. The series begins on Saturday, September 26, at 10:30 A.M. in the Children's Library, and continues on subsequent Saturdays, October 3, 17, 24, and 31. Come join us as we go from "once upon a time" to "happily ever after." *Free for members and their guests.*





The Honorable David Norris A JAMES JOYCE EVENING

Thursday, November 12

6:00 P.M., Members' Room, The Library



David Norris, noted literary scholar and Irish parliamentarian, returns to the Library to repeat the Joycean program, "Do You Hear What I'm Seeing?", that met with great acclaim last year. This one-man show of readings and commentary about James Joyce has delighted audiences the world over. Senator Norris, professor of English studies at Trinity College Dublin and a member of the upper house of the Irish Parliament, has given this program--described variously as "hilarious," "blasphemous," "exuberant," and "lyrical"--in London, Paris, Jerusalem, and Toronto, among other places.

The evening is sponsored by the James Joyce Centre in Dublin, which promotes interest in the writer's life and work and has become a vital setting for readings, films, musical events, and other activities relating to Irish and European writers. *Seats are \$20. If interested, please send a check to the attention of Nancy McCartney at the Library. Because we cannot accommodate everyone, Ms. McCartney will confirm each reservation.*

Professor Mike Wallace LITERARY NEW YORK

Tuesday, December 8

6:00 P.M., Members' Room, The Library



To European explorers, Gotham was Eden, a paradise of waist-high grasses and forests. Today, it is the site of Broadway and Wall Street, the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty, the home of millions of people who have come from every corner of the nation and the globe to live in New York City. Drawing upon his new book, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, written with Edwin G. Burrows, Professor Wallace will explore the city's history but concentrate on such literary people as Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and Horace Greeley. New York is a city that remains a literary center. *The talk is free. If interested, please notify Nancy McCartney at the Library. Because we cannot accommodate everyone, Ms. McCartney will confirm each reservation.*

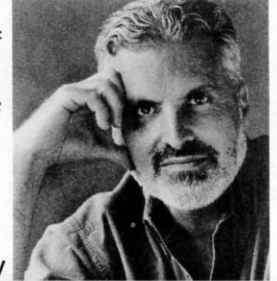


J. D. McClatchy THE QUESTION OF POETRY

Wednesday, December 2

6:00 P.M., Members' Room, The Library

J. D. McClatchy, editor of *The Yale Review*, is the author of five collections of poems: *Scenes from Another Life*, *Stars Principal*, *The Rest of the Way*, *Ten Commandments*, and his most recent collection, *Twenty Questions*. One of America's finest poet-critics, Mr. McClatchy will discuss the mysteries of poetry--how poetry draws on our lives and how it illuminates the mind. *Seats are \$10. If interested, please send a check to the attention of Nancy McCartney at the Library. Because we cannot accommodate everyone, Ms. McCartney will confirm each reservation.*

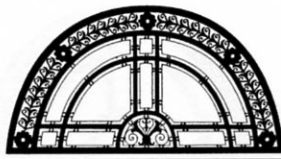


HELPING THE VISITORS COMMITTEE

Readers of the last issue of *Library Notes* may have spotted a call for help in assessing the Library's holdings in history. The Visitors' Committee would like to expand this request for assistance in evaluating these collections in the following areas: religion (Western, Eastern, Islamic, other); politics (political science); education; life sciences; medicine (excluding psychology); evolutionary biology and history; social problems and services; engineering and applied sciences; computers; photography; European literature (excluding French); classical literature and culture; British literature; Spanish and South American literature and culture; travel (excluding Italy); poetry; biography; and fiction (separate reports: American, European, South American, etc.)

Members who are willing to visit and report on the Library's collections in the field(s) in which they have some expertise perform an invaluable service. The Visitors' reports are an important part of our acquisition program, as they help to ensure the breadth and pertinence of the Library's holdings for its present and future users. The reports can be simple and concise, and doing them is easier now that the card catalog is on line. We hope to hear from any and all members who can give us a hand with these much-needed reports, or reports in areas we have not listed above. *Please contact Nancy McCartney at (212) 717-0357.*





RENOVATIONS

This summer, the renovations of the Children's Library on the third floor and of the staff Catalog Room on the fourth floor were completed.

In the Children's Library, sections of the old bookcases were removed to increase the sense of openness, and new bookcases and a second window seat were constructed.



Children's Library



Catalog Room

The card catalog has been supplanted by a computer terminal, and shelves for the reference books have been added. A fresh coat of paint, carpet and light fixtures have brightened the whole room. Four existing work stations have become six. Each staff member now enjoys access to the Library's computer system as well as to the Internet. Catalogers can now go through the Internet to use OCLC, the international bibliographic database providing most of our catalog records. Each work station is wired for electricity, telephone, and data connections, and each staff member has more individual shelf space and desk drawers.

Construction of both of these projects was capably overseen by our building superintendent, John McKeown. The Building Committee was assisted in planning and executing the projects by the architectural firm, Allanbrook Benic Czajka.

STAFF CHANGES

After twenty-one years of devoted service to the Library, Sharon Brown decided to leave to take a position with HealthCare Chaplaincy. Sharon came here in 1977 and in the early eighties, her superb organizational skills were invaluable in guiding the Library through three years of pervasive disruptions, brought on by the building renovation of that period. During her long tenure she contributed to the improvement of many Library functions: preparing for new circulation systems, creating new stack arrangements, systematizing archives, and much more. Throughout she maintained the highest standards of performance for herself and others. In recognition of her years of accomplishment, the Library has awarded her an honorary certificate of membership. Sharon, best wishes for your new career.



Our new Head of Circulation is Mrs. Jane Goldstein, a graduate of the Columbia University School of Library Service. Actually, Mrs. Goldstein is not new to the Library, having worked here on and off for more than twenty years. Having seen her two daughters safely off to college, she is "delighted to be back full-time in the nicest of all libraries." Welcome back, Jane.



Please write to Jenny Lawrence, editor of *Library Notes*, care of the Library, with any comments and suggestions.

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