



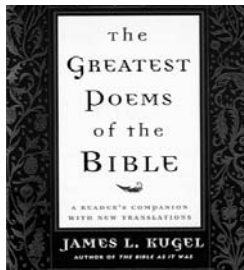
# LIBRARY NOTES

THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY NEWSLETTER  
PAGE 3 VOLUME 6, NUMBER 3, SEPTEMBER 1999

## THE 1999-2000 AUTHOR SERIES POETRY OF THE BIBLE

James Kugel

Tuesday, October 19 at 6:30 P.M. Temple Israel



James Kugel is Starr Professor of Hebrew Literature at Harvard University and Professor of Bible Studies at Bar-Ilan University in Israel. A poet in his own right, Dr. Kugel was the former poetry editor of *Harper's* magazine. He lives in Jerusalem, Israel, and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

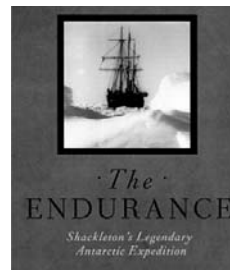
In this selection of psalms, songs, prophecies, and proverbs, Dr. Kugel interprets such topics as the nature of the soul and the development of the belief in one God. "I want to offer a kind of *obiter dictum*," writes Dr. Kugel by way of introduction, "a speculative engagement with a group of biblical texts in an attempt to reveal something new about the roots of our postbiblical faith. Perhaps I can say something as well about a moment, or series of moments, in the history of our apprehension of God, moments whose reality can sometimes slip away now that we are safely on the other side of them."



## SHACKLETON'S LEGENDARY ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION

Caroline Alexander

Tuesday, November 16 at 6:30 P.M. Temple Israel



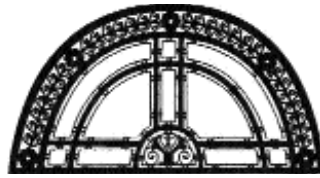
Caroline Alexander has written for such magazines as *The New Yorker*, *Natural History*, and *National Geographic* and is the author of four previous books. She is curator of the exhibition about the *Endurance* expedition at the American Museum of Natural History. She lives on a farm in New Hampshire.

Dr. Alexander gives us a riveting account of Sir Ernest Shackleton's expedition that set out in August, 1914, to make the first crossing of the Antarctic continent. When their ship, *Endurance*, was trapped fast in the ice pack and crushed, twenty-eight men were left stranded on the floes. "Antarctic exploration of the early twentieth century was unlike exploration anywhere else on earth," writes Dr. Alexander. "Here, with wind speeds up to nearly 200 miles an hour and temperatures as extreme as -100 degrees Fahrenheit, the essential competitions were pure and uncomplicated, being between man and the unfettered force of raw Nature, and man and the limits of his own endurance."



*The Author Series, held annually since 1994, is sponsored in 1999/2000 by Thirteen/WNET and The New York Society Library. The programs are held at Temple Israel, 112 East 75th Street, at 6:30 P.M. and are free for members and guests of the Library and Thirteen/WNET Patrons and Associates. 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. The last two talks will be Shirley Hazzard on Greene of Capri: A Memoir, February 15, and Harold Evans on The American Century, March 14.*

C A L E N D A R	<b>New York Is Book Country</b> Sunday September 26 Library authors Fifth Avenue between 54 & 55 St.	<b>Fiction Reading Group</b> Tuesdays, October 5, Nov. 2 & Dec. 7 with Ellen Feldman 11:00 A.M. Whitridge Room	<b>Biography Reading Group</b> Wednesdays, October 6, Nov. 3 & Dec. 8 with Hope Cooke 11:00 A.M. Whitridge Room	<b>Storytelling</b> Saturdays, October 16, 23 & 30 November 6 & 13 10:30 A.M. Children's Library	<b>Author Series</b> Tuesday, October 19 James Kugel "Poetry of the Bible" 6:30 P.M. Temple Israel 112 East 75th	<b>Conversations</b> Wednesday, October 27 Nov. 3 & 10 The Odyssey with Charles Rowan Beye 5:30 P.M. Members' Room	<b>Author Series</b> Tuesday, November 16 Caroline Alexander "Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition" 6:30 P.M. Temple Israel 112 East 75th



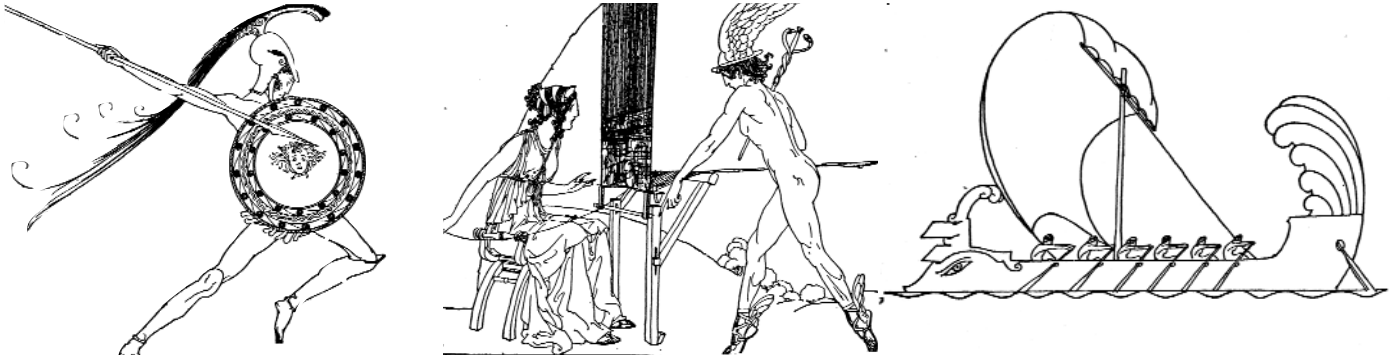
## CONVERSATIONS ON GREAT BOOKS

### THE ODYSSEY

Charles Rowan Beye

Wednesday, October 27, November 3, and 10 from 5:30-7:00 P.M. in the Members' Room

Distinguished Professor of Classics Emeritus at Lehman College and the Graduate School of the City University of New York, Charles Rowan Beye is the author of several critical studies of Greek epic poetry and tragic drama, including *Ancient Epic Poetry: Homer, Apollonius, Virgil* (1993), *Ancient Greek Literature and Society* (1987), and *The Iliad, the Odyssey and the Epic Tradition* (1976). The Conversations will be held at the Library. Early registration is recommended as enrollment is limited to 50 people. To register, send your check for \$60 to the Library, attention Programs.



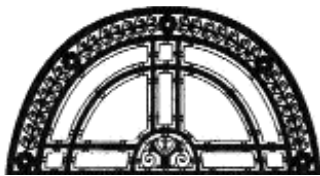
Charles Rowan Beye will once again play midwife to three evenings of discussion, this time on the subject of Homer's epic poem *Odyssey*. He has suggested, for those who wish to participate, that they acquire Robert Fagles' superb new translation of this poem, which is also available on tape--spoken by the celebrated English actor Ian McKellen. It is Professor Beye's hope that readers of the *Odyssey* will come to some understanding of the nature of oral poetry and the critical demands that it makes upon modern-day *readers* rather than *listeners*. He envisions that his audience will also note distinctions between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. For instance, it is often argued that one can imagine a comic sensibility in the poem, as opposed to the tragic sensibility of the *Iliad*. Others have pointed to the unheroic qualities of the poem's hero as well as of the circumstances described in the narrative. Then there are the numerous women portrayed in the *Odyssey* unlike what is to be found in the more male-centered *Iliad*. Different religious and moral ideas seem to define the two poems, and yet there is the abiding sameness that caused the ancients to ascribe both poems to the same author. As with any text that has so little context or firm history, the *Odyssey* allows its contemporary reader ample scope for ambivalences and varieties in interpretation. The *Odyssey* has been identified as a feminist narrative, as a prototypical novel (or, as the ancients referred to that art form, a romance), as the narrative structure which informs all quest stories, ideally suited to Christian poetry; Odysseus has been described as the Western world's first intellectual, as a prototypical Christ (his crew as Christ's disciples), as a corrupt liar, and as the first great creator of fiction. Dante places him in Hell; Tennyson ennobles him. Whatever one thinks of the poem, he or she cannot escape the continual fascination that this text has exercised upon the mind and imagination of two thousand years of audiences.

### FOR CHILDREN—Twice Upon a Time



Storyteller Eleni Constantelos returns to The New York Society Library on Saturdays for a five-week series, "Twice Upon a Time," with more entrancing tales from around the world. Journey to places long ago and far away, meeting cats and kings, hares and heroines, as we span the globe on wings of words. The programs, beginning on Saturday, October 16, at 10:30 A.M. in the Children's Room, are free for children of Library members. The dates thereafter are: October 23 and 30; and November 6 and 13.





## A TRIBUTE TO HELEN RUSKELL

by Rita Atterton

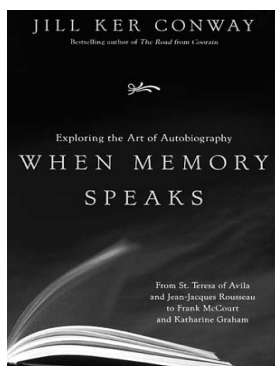
*Rita Atterton served with our Circulation Department from 1968 to 1995.*

Many Library members and staff will remember Helen Ruskell with fondness and appreciation. She joined the Library staff on July 1, 1920. The Library's location then was at 13th Street and University Place. This was her first and only job. She remained at the Library for the next 57 years. As Marion King writes in her book about the Library, *Books and People*, "She was pretty, tall and dark and she at once belonged." In 1937, the Library moved uptown to its present location at 53 East 79th Street, where Helen presided with charm, grace, and patience for the next 40 years. She was still working full-time shortly before her death in August 1977. The Library continues a memorial in her name through flowers for the Circulation Desk, a fitting tribute to a remarkable woman.



### THE LIBRARY READING GROUP—In Current Fiction

This fall, the Library will continue the reading group in contemporary fiction. Led by novelist and reviewer Ellen Feldman, whose most recent book is *God Bless the Child*, the discussion will focus on a different novel each month. The book scheduled to be discussed at the first meeting is *The Hours*, by Michael Cunningham, a work inspired by the life and works of Virginia Woolf. Novels for subsequent gatherings will be chosen by the group, which will be limited to twenty members. Participants meet at 11:00 A.M. on the first Tuesday of each month: October 5, November 2 (the Library is open on Election Day), and December 7. Please phone (212) 717-0357 for reservations. There is no fee, but space is limited.



### THE LIBRARY READING GROUP—In Current Biography

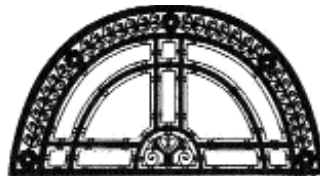
This fall, the Library will continue the reading group in current biography. Led by Hope Cooke, author of *Time Change: An Autobiography* and *Seeing New York: History Walks for Armchair and Footloose Travelers*, the discussion will focus on a different biography each month. The book scheduled to be discussed at the first meeting is Jill Ker Conway's *When Memory Speaks: Reflections on Autobiography*. Biographies for subsequent gatherings will be chosen by the group, which will be limited to twenty members. Participants will meet at 11:00 A.M. on the first Wednesday of each month: October 6, November 3, and December 8. Please phone (212) 717-0357 for reservations. There is no fee, but space is limited.



### EXTENDED LIBRARY HOURS ON MONDAYS

Beginning September 20, the doors to the Library will be open and full service will be offered throughout the year on Mondays from 9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. The weekly schedule for mid-September to mid-June will be:

Monday:	9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M.	Thursday:	9:00 A.M. until 7:00 P.M.
Tuesday:	9:00 A.M. until 7:00 P.M.	Friday:	9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M.
Wednesday:	9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M.	Saturday:	9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M.



**Edwin Burrows**



**Mike Wallace**

## NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY

### NEW YORK IS BOOK COUNTRY

**Sunday, September 26**

From noon at the Library's kiosk at Fifth Avenue between 54th and 55th Street, several authors who are members of the Library will be available to talk with you and sign your copies of their books. (No books will be sold).



**Jules Feiffer**

**12:00-1:00 P.M.**

**Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, authors of *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898***

**1:00-2:00 P.M.**

**Jules Feiffer, cartoonist, novelist, playwright, and author most recently of *Bark, George***

**2:00-3:00 P.M.**

**Benita Eisler, author of *Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Fame***

**3:00-4:00 P.M.**

**Lynne Tillman and Jeannette Watson, authors of *Bookstore: The Life and Times of Jeannette Watson and Books & Co.***



**Benita Eisler**



**Lynne Tillman**



**Jeannette Watson**

During these hours, the Library's bookbinder, Howard Stein, will be demonstrating his craft.

### A NOTE ON LIBRARY NOTES

From its first issue in June 1994 until now, *Library Notes* has been the brainchild of Jenny Lawrence, a Library trustee and editor who volunteers her time and expertise to produce our newsletter. Without it, members could not have learned about the Library's programs, history, and plans. We all owe Jenny a great debt of gratitude for her five years of unflinching good humor, patience, and grace.

Now that the library is equipped to produce *Library Notes* in-house, Jenny will no longer be concerned with the technical production but will remain a valuable contributor and editor.

Please write to Ingrid Richter, care of the Library (or at: [webmaster@nysoclib.org](mailto:webmaster@nysoclib.org)), with any comments or suggestions.

**THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY**  
53 East 79th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10021