

LIBRARY NOTES

THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 4, NUMBER 4, OCTOBER 1997



***THE PARTY* with Kathleen Chalfant**

**A Play Based on Three Short Stories by Virginia Woolf
Adapted by Ellen McLaughlin**

Monday, November 10

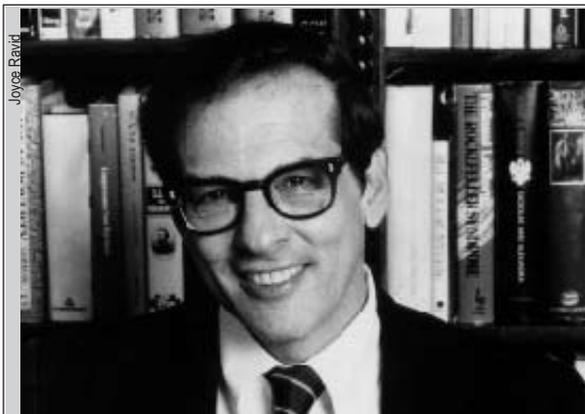
**6:00 P.M., Union Club
101 East 69th Street**

The Party is an adaptation of three Virginia Woolf stories ("The New Dress," "Together and Apart," and "A Summing Up") by playwright Ellen McLaughlin. Actress Kathleen Chalfant plays three different women at one of Mrs. Dalloway's parties, moving back and forth from one to another and illuminating Woolf's characters with insight, irony, and quiet amusement. As one critic said, "Ms. Chalfant bears more than a passing physical resemblance to Woolf, and one feels this is very close to what we might see if the author could come back and tell the stories herself." Ms. Chalfant met Ms. McLaughlin when they each played multiple roles in *Angels in America*. The discovery that they both loved the writings of Virginia Woolf set in motion their collaboration, together with director David Esbjornson to make, *The Party*.

Perhaps best known for her Tony-nominated performance as Hannah Pitt in the Broadway production of *Angels in America*, Ms. Chalfant has also had numerous Off-Broadway credits. She is appearing, currently through November 30 at New Haven's Long Wharf Theatre, in Margaret Edson's *Wit*, a play about a woman with ovarian cancer. Originally from San Francisco and having lived in Tallahassee, Sacramento, Barcelona, Rome, and Woodstock, Ms. Chalfant now calls New York home. Her husband is a documentary film maker, and they have two grown children.

The Party will begin at 6:00 P.M. at the Union Club, 101 East 69th Street. Seats are \$15. For reservations, please call Nancy McCartney at (212) 717-0357 at the Library.

C A L E N D A R	For Children ages 4 to 8 "American Tales" Saturdays at the Library October 25 November 1, 8, 15, and 22 10:30 A.M.	Excursion Princeton University Library and Art Museum Tuesday November 4 8:45 A.M.-6:00 P.M.	<i>The Party</i> with Kathleen Chalfant Monday November 10 Union Club 101 East 69th 6:00 P.M.	Author Series "Robert Moses and the Making of New York" Robert A. Caro Tuesday November 18 Temple Israel 112 East 75 6:30 P.M.	Conversations "The Fiction of Henry James" R. W. B. Lewis Wednesdays Members' Room December 3, 10, and 17 5:30 P.M.
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AUTHOR SERIES

“Robert Moses and the Making of New York”

Robert A. Caro

November 18, 6:30 P.M.

Temple Israel, 112 East 75th Street

Robert A. Caro, a Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer, specializes in writing about powerful political figures. *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (1974) won several awards in addition to the Pulitzer, including the Francis Parkman Prize of the Society of American Historians and the Washington Monthly Political Book Award. Both volumes of Mr. Caro's definitive biography, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (1982) and *Means of Ascent* (1990), also have won many awards. Currently he is writing the third volume of his Johnson opus, which has been hailed as the “summit of American historical writing.” Mr. Caro's talk will explore the timely topic of New York City, in honor of the centennial anniversary of its consolidation in 1898 and the upcoming WNET documentary *New York*. Mr. Caro serves as a trustee of The New York Society Library.

The 1997-1998 Author Series is sponsored by Thirteen/WNET and the Library with the generous underwriting support of The Chase Manhattan Bank. All lectures will be held at Temple Israel, 112 East 75th Street, at 6:30 P.M. Tickets are free to Library members and their guests, and are available at the Library's circulation desk and at the door.

EXCURSION Princeton University's Library and Art Museum Tuesday, November 4

The excursion will leave for Princeton University by bus at 8:45 A.M. from The New York Society Library and return by 6:00 P.M. The first visit will be to the Rare Books and Special Collections Department at Firestone Library. On display will be a variety of books, pamphlets, illustrations, games, toys, and other materials relating to children's literature and amusements for the “young at heart.” The impetus for the exhibition is a recent gift from Lloyd Cotsen (class of 1950), whose collection comprises 25,000 illustrated children's books. He has also provided funds for the creation of an interactive children's library, part of the exhibition, which will serve as an ongoing center for innovative research on how children learn. Lunch will be at Prospect House, the residence of Princeton's presidents, including Woodrow Wilson during his tenure from 1902 until 1910, and now a social center for the University.

In the afternoon, the tour will continue on to the Art Museum where the current exhibition features post-World War II prints and photographs from the collection of James Kraft (class of 1957). The other exhibition galleries will include highlights from the permanent collections: Greek and Roman antiquities; Medieval European sculpture, metalwork, and stained glass; Western European paintings from the Renaissance to the 20th century; pre-Columbian art; and Chinese bronzes, tomb figures, paintings, and calligraphy. The excursion costs \$35 per person (lunch included) and is limited to 40 people. For reservations, please call Nancy McCartney at (212) 717-0357 at the Library.

This frontispiece by John Tenniel is from the suppressed edition of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (London, 1865). It will be on display in Firestone Library's exhibition. Carroll was dissatisfied with Tenniel's illustrations. Most of the copies were destroyed, but this rare copy is in the Morris L. Parrish Collection of Victorian Novelists of the Rare Books and Special Collections Department.





Portrait of Henry James, by John Singer Sargent, 1913



Mr. Henry James, by Max Beerbohm, c.1904

I think that the whole of our literature
 is a sort of a very long, very long
 and the American part of it is a very
 long and very long and very long
 and very long and very long and very long
 and very long and very long and very long
 and very long and very long and very long

From James's Notebooks, February, 1895

CONVERSATIONS ON GREAT BOOKS

“The Fiction of Henry James”

R. W. B. Lewis

December 3, 10, and 17, Members' Room

Professor Emeritus of English and American Studies at Yale, R. W. B. Lewis is the author of *The American Adam (on 19th century literature)*, *Edith Wharton: A Biography*, and *The Jameses: A Family Narrative*. His most recent book (1995) is *The City of Florence: Historical Vistas and Personal Sightings*.

The status of most American fiction writers tends to change radically from age to age, and never more visibly so than in our own time of canon-smashing and canon-making. But the status of Henry James, on the whole, has stood singularly firm, and as we read and discuss some of his key writings, we might ask ourselves why.

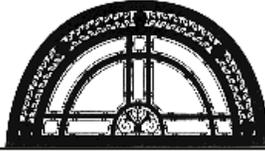
We will consider Jamesian works written over about twenty years. On December 3, we will talk about *The Portrait of a Lady* of 1881, James's first full-scale artistic and critical success; a novel of richly textured social reality, and one written in a relatively straightforward way. Henry James was also a genuine master of the shorter fictional form, and on December 10, we will look at two of his finest novellas: *The Aspern Papers* of 1887, among other things a narrative expression of James's deepening concern with the nature and role of the literary artist; and *The Turn of the Screw* of 1899, the classic tale of demonic possession or of sexual hysteria--we will try to determine which. In the early 1900s, James, approaching sixty, entered what later critics have called his "major phase." Of the three works that constitute this phase, on December 17 we will be discussing *The Wings of the Dove* of 1902--quite frankly my own favorite in the James oeuvre, and a novel that moves with extraordinary grace from the realistic towards the mythic; from the here-and-now of erotic intrigue and material ambition to fleeting glimpses of the terrible drift of modern history.

Henry James will grow and change and develop over these two decades, but a constant Jamesian presence will be palpable throughout, and one of our tasks will be to identify it.

The series costs \$60. Each of the "Conversations" begins at 5:30 P.M. in the Members' Room. Early registration is recommended as enrollment is limited to 50 people. For registration, please call Nancy McCartney at (212) 717-0357 at the Library.

FOR CHILDREN: Saturdays at 10:30 A.M., the Library

Storyteller Eleni Constantelos returns to The New York Society Library on Saturdays for a five-week series that illustrates the rich diversity and robust vigor of America's stories. Join us as we crisscross the land, from the Bowery to the Bayou to Bristol Bay. Come listen to folktales and tall tales, myths and legends from different regions of the country, starting with a program of ghostly stories on Saturday, October 25. From Paul Bunyan to the Queen of Quok, Br'er Rabbit to the Trickster Coyote, we will hear the voices of all of America's peoples. The programs, at 10:30 A.M. in the Children's Room, are free for children of Library members. The dates are: October 25 and November, 1, 8, 15, and 22.



A LIBRARY TALE

Alice Gore King

Alice Gore King was the founder

and Executive Director for thirty years of the Alumnae Advisory Center, an association that advised college women in getting jobs.



In 1937, the year I graduated from college, my family moved from 11th Street to 86th Street, and the Library moved from University Place to 79th Street—in that order in my mind. My concerns of that summer were centered on myself and fun-filled days in Woods Hole. It was only years later that I realized and appreciated the enormous work my mother, Marion King, was doing as assistant librarian at the Library. In *Books and People*, she tells about unwrapping bundles and the thrill she had making order out of the old papers:



Alice Gore King and her mother, Marion King

The trustees' Minute Books started with the record of the first official meeting on May 7, 1754. Who managed to guard and preserve these, which covered the period from 1754 to 1832, and included the years of the Revolution when most of the Library's books were scattered and lost in the pillaging and destruction? There were papers and the deed of the merger of the New York Athenaeum with the Library in 1839. One item was the first sample I found of the different methods of cataloguing. This, undated but probably of the 1760s, consisted of handwritten folio sheets fastened together with a pale blue ribbon. I made the happy discovery that not only did we have the first charging ledger of 1789 but a complete file, with one small break, of these great volumes containing the book borrowings down to the year 1908, when ledgers were replaced by cards. How many libraries have such a record? So the old records emerged, heart-warming evidence of continuity--two hundred years of readers, eight generations out of three centuries, coming in, as now, for books or a quiet hour, to find solace, information, or diversion at this enduring source.

My mother saw every book into its new setting. That done she gave her attention to our own move. The company that handled the Library's generously offered to do ours free of charge. She settled our possessions in the new apartment and then came to Woods Hole for a much-needed vacation. I look back now and marvel.

Thanks to those who have sent in a "Library Tale." Please write to Jenny Lawrence, editor of *Library Notes*, care of the Library, with any comments, suggestions, or additional Library Tales.

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

