

# NOTES



VOLUME 12, NUMBER 1, WINTER 2005

## CHARLES CRONIN TO BE 17<sup>TH</sup> HEAD LIBRARIAN

### BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION



Several weeks ago, after a dutiful discussion among members of the staff of my practical attributes, one of the librarians asked me what books were on my bedside table. I had recently taken a long flight and had armed myself with *Girl in Blue*, the only P.G. Wodehouse novel in the Barnard College Library. Beneath it lay a collection by Washington Irving that I had borrowed when thinking of organizing a Halloween party. I considered, but ultimately declined, mentioning the recent issue of *Vanity Fair* perched seductively alongside the Irving and Wodehouse. Even had I mentioned it, given that it included “Dominick Dunne’s Diary,” I would still be batting 1.000 in a truthful recitation of bedtime reading whose authors have or had a direct affiliation with the New York Society Library. Moreover, the forgiving staff members might have assumed I was referring not to the magazine, but to Thackeray’s marvelous novel—in which case there would still be a connection, since Thackeray visited the Library in the Victorian era.

When becoming familiar with previously unknown libraries and museums, I am often disappointed to find, beneath grandiose claims of cultural importance, an unexpected shallowness of history, mission, or collections. My acquaintance with the New York Society Library has provided the inverse of such experiences, as I discover, beneath a sober and unpretentious public image, a treasure-trove of superb individuals, collections, and programs, and a history reflecting the teeming literary life of Walt Whitman’s Mannahatta and beyond. I am wreathed in smiles and honored to be appointed to lead an institution to which the word ‘august’ can be applied without a trace of exaggeration or irony.

I will be leaving Columbia Law School, where I have worked as a librarian for the past five years, and I take glee in informing my colleagues that I am going to head Columbia’s *original* library. Although I am a lawyer and briefly practiced law, my heart and mind are firmly lodged in the humanities, music in particular. I completed a PhD in musicology in the early 1990s and taught opera history at Stanford while earning an additional degree in computer and information systems. I look forward to drawing upon this eclectic background as I approach the diverse responsibilities of my new position. Apart from day-to-day managerial tasks, I hope to work closely with members, staff, and trustees to ensure fiscal stability and guarantee the Library’s ongoing and vital role in the intellectual life of New York City.

On a personal note, I currently live at Columbia with my wife, Mary Shallman, who is a lawyer at a midtown firm. We have an eleven-year-old Lakeland terrier who endures our besotted affection. I am thrilled to be your new Head Librarian, and I look forward to meeting all of you at the NYSL.

## CALENDAR

January 20 6:30 P.M. SUSAN VREELAND ON <i>LIFE</i> STUDIES	January 23 3:00 P.M. OPEN HOUSE FOR MARK PIEL	February 3 6:00 P.M. RICHARD PECK ON <i>THE</i> <i>TEACHER’S</i> <i>FUNERAL</i>	February 10 6:00 P.M. CAROLINE ALEXANDER ON <i>THE BOUNTY</i>	February 16 6:30 P.M. TOM WOLFE ON <i>I AM</i> CHARLOTTE SIMMONS	March 2 6:00 P.M. SUKETU MEHTA ON <i>MAXIMUM</i> <i>CITY</i>	March 8 6:00 P.M. DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN ON <i>LINCOLN AND</i> <i>WHITMAN</i>	March 9 4:30 P.M. MO WILLEMS PICTURE THIS
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- ❖ Registration is required for all events. To register, contact the Events Office at 212-288-6900 x230 or [events@nysoclib.org](mailto:events@nysoclib.org). Listed fees may be paid at the door.
- ❖ Children’s events are listed on page 5. To receive the monthly preschool program calendar, contact the Events Office. To receive technology news and articles electronically, send an e-mail to [webmaster@nysoclib.org](mailto:webmaster@nysoclib.org).

**THE 2004-2005 AUTHOR SERIES**

- ❖ *Author Series lectures are free for members and their guests, but registration is required.*
- ❖ *To register, contact the Events Office at 212-288-6900 x230 or events@nysoclib.org.*

**SUSAN VREELAND**

**LIFE STUDIES: STORIES**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 6:30 P.M., TEMPLE ISRAEL, 112 EAST 75TH STREET**

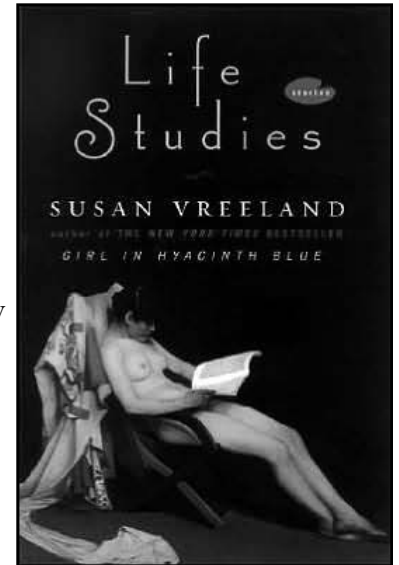


Converse College

*“Monsieur’s brother, Édouard Manet, is a famous painter. On Tuesday nights, Madame and Monsieur go to soirées at Édouard’s house to talk about painting with other artists...Once they had an argument over using black and white in paintings. He said, ‘My blacks are not pure black any more than your whites are pure white.’...I don’t understand. Black is black and white is white.”*

Susan Vreeland, author of *Girl in Hyacinth Blue*, *The Passion of Artemesia*, and *The Forest Lover*, has written best-sellers about the relationship of ordinary people to great art. In *Life Studies*, she covers this compelling topic in stories based on such historical figures as Renoir, Van Gogh, Cezanne, and other

famous painters, focusing less on the artists themselves than on their effect on the people around them. Other stories consider 17th-century peasants on an art tour and a neglected wife freed by modeling for a sculpture class—each exploring the intersection of art and the everyday.



**TOM WOLFE**

**I AM CHARLOTTE SIMMONS**

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 6:30 P.M., TEMPLE ISRAEL, 112 EAST 75TH STREET**

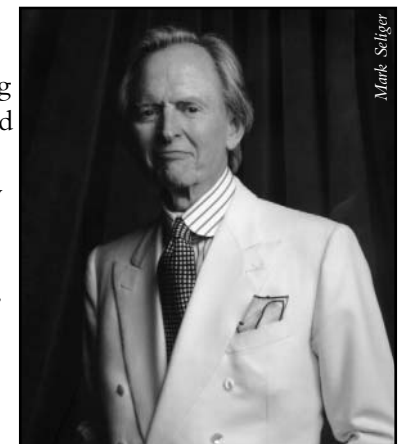


*“So Charlotte stood by the picnic table and looked at the TV...That wasn’t the local news, that was the national network news, and that wasn’t just any commencement speaker, it was a famous politician the whole country was talking about, and he was a Dupont alumnus speaking there, in the Great Yard!—robed in Dupont mauve!—calling for a new moral order to be created by this generation of college students—her generation!”*

When Charlotte Simmons, a sheltered star student, arrives at Dupont University, she discovers a corrupt world of easy morals and hypocrisy. In telling her story, Tom Wolfe turns the keen eye that observed hippie culture in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* and real estate developers in *A Man in Full* to the equally fruitful subculture of the American college campus.

Tom Wolfe is also the author of the National Book Award-winning *The Right Stuff* and *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. He is considered one of the founders of the New Journalism movement, combining the

storytelling techniques of fiction and nonfiction. This third monumental novel is certain to become another contemporary classic.



Mark Seliger

**LIBRARY LECTURES**

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**CAROLINE ALEXANDER**

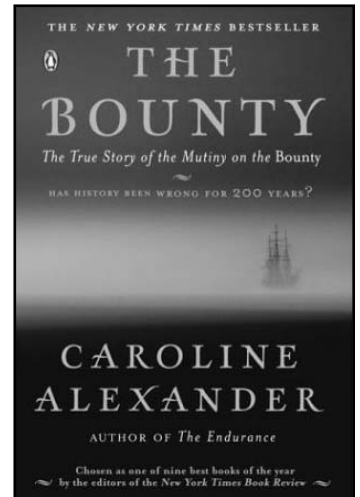
***THE TRUE STORY OF THE MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY***

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 6:00 P.M., MEMBERS' ROOM**

*"I am most happy and satisfied in my little Ship and we are now fit to go round half a score of worlds...both Men & Officers tractable and well disposed & cheerfulness & content in the countenance of every one. I am sure nothing is even more conducive to health.—I have no cause to inflict punishments for I have no offenders and every thing turns out to my most sanguine expectations."*  
 —a letter from William Bligh aboard the Bount



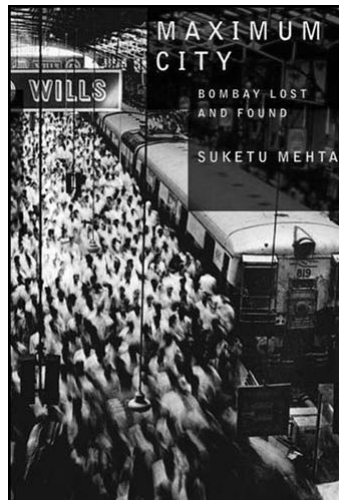
The story of Captain Bligh, Fletcher Christian, and the most famous mutiny in maritime history has been told in books, plays, and movies, but, says *Publishers Weekly*, Caroline Alexander's *The Bounty* "is destined to become the definitive, enthralling history." Returning to original documents, including naval reports, contemporary newspapers, correspondence, and evidence on Pitcairn Island itself, Alexander establishes the facts behind the dramatic events and reclaims Bligh as an extraordinary navigator and leader. Alexander is also the author of *The Endurance*, a best-selling account of Ernest Shackleton in Antarctica. She is a frequent contributor to the *New Yorker*, *Granta*, and *National Geographic*. This event is \$10 for Library members and their guests.



**SUKETU MEHTA**  
***MAXIMUM CITY***

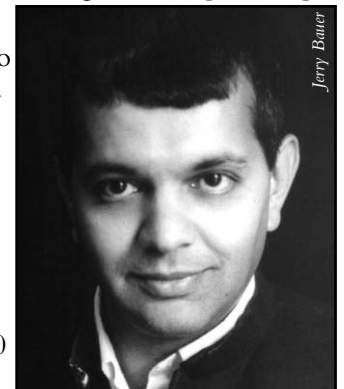
**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 6:00 P.M., MEMBERS' ROOM**

*"Somewhere, buried beneath the wreck of its current condition—one of urban catastrophe—is the city that has a tight claim on my heart, a beautiful city by the sea, an island-state of hope in a very old country. I went back to look for that city with a simple question: Can you go home again? In the looking, I found the cities within me."*



Suketu Mehta returned to his native Bombay after twenty-one years in New York, discovering a vast city of 18 million in the grip of poverty, organized crime, and religious intolerance. He documents his urban explorations in *Maximum City*, a brilliant and intimate portrait of an exciting and frightening place. *Publishers Weekly* writes, "[Mehta's] sophisticated voice conveys postmodern Bombay with a carefully calibrated balance of wit and outrage, harking back to such great Victorian urban chroniclers as Dickens while introducing the reader to much that is truly new and strange." Salman Rushdie agrees: "It's the best book yet written about that great, ruined metropolis."

Mehta is the winner of the Whiting Writers Award, the O. Henry Prize, and a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship. His work has appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*, *Harper's*, *Time*, and the *Village Voice*. This event is \$10 for Library members and their guests.



**LIBRARY LECTURES** *continued*

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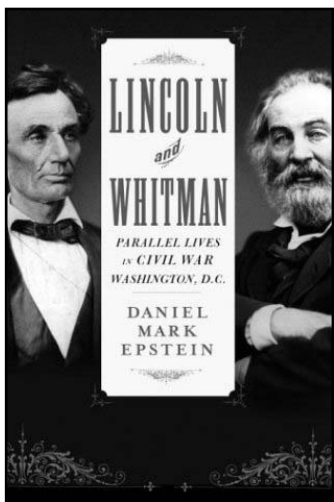
**DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN**

**LINCOLN AND WHITMAN: PARALLEL LIVES IN CIVIL WAR WASHINGTON**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 6:00 P.M., MEMBERS' ROOM**

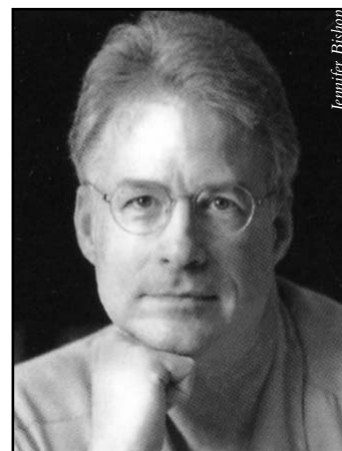
*“Two or three shabby hack barouches made their way with some difficulty through the crowd, and drew up at the Astor House entrance. A tall figure stepp’d out of the center of these barouches, paus’d leisurely on the sidewalk, look’d up at the granite walls and looming architecture of the grand old hotel—then, after a relieving stretch of arms and legs, turn’d around for over a minute to slowly and good-humoredly scan the appearance of the vast and silent crowds.”*

—Abraham Lincoln’s arrival in New York, 1861, as described by Walt Whitman



Although Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman probably never met, each loomed large in the other’s mental landscape, and each lived a life emblematic of his era in American history. In a new double biography, *Lincoln and Whitman*, Daniel Mark Epstein gives an in-depth character study of both men and shows how they made history in separate but parallel ways. *Booklist* calls *Lincoln and Whitman* an “intriguing and thoroughly enjoyable portrait.” The *New York Sun* says, “Mr. Epstein’s new book shows that poetry is at the heart of what made both Lincoln and the country great.”

Epstein is the author of highly acclaimed biographies of Aimee Semple McPherson, Nat King Cole, and Edna St. Vincent Millay. His own poetry has appeared in the *Atlantic*, the *New Yorker*, and the *Paris Review*. This event is \$10 for members and their guests.



Jennifer Bishop

**OUTREACH**

**YOUNG WRITERS AWARDS 2005**

The New York Society Library Young Writers Awards honor excellent writing by young Library members. Writers in grades 3 through 12 are invited to submit a short story, essay, or poem. Prizes will be presented in four age categories in both prose and poetry, with the winning entries chosen by authors Dave Johnson, Robert Quackenbush, Carol Weston, and Edra Ziesk.

All submissions are subject to the competition rules, which are available at the circulation desk, on the web at [www.nysoclib.org](http://www.nysoclib.org), or by mail by calling 212-288-6900 x230. Entrants must be children or grandchildren of Library members, or students at a member school. Entries must be postmarked no later than April 8 or hand-delivered to the Library by April 11. Watch this space for announcements of the awards ceremony and the winning entries.

**PROJECT CICERO® 2005**

**COLLECTION AT THE LIBRARY: FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 10**

In 2004, Project Cicero distributed over 200,000 books to more than 1,000 teachers in under-served New York City schools. To help Project Cicero continue this success in its fifth year, bring new or gently used children’s and young adult books to the Project Cicero boxes in the Library entry hall, February 28-March 10. For more details, see [www.nysoclib.org/kids/cicero.html](http://www.nysoclib.org/kids/cicero.html) or leave a message at 212-288-6900 x511.

Project Cicero is a partnership of more than sixty-five New York City independent, parochial, and public schools, The New York Society Library, Children for Children Foundation, Vornado Realty Trust, The New York Teaching Fellows, Teach for America New York, and *The New York Post*.

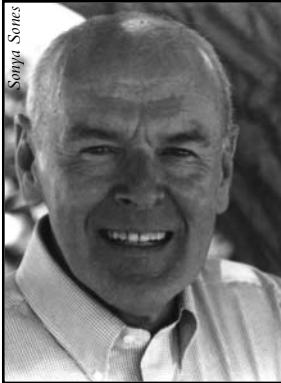
## CHILDREN'S LIBRARY AND EVENTS

- ❖ Registration is required for all events. Listed fees may be paid at the door. To register for children's programs, contact the Children's Library at 212-288-6900 x234 or [carrie@nysoclib.org](mailto:carrie@nysoclib.org).
- ❖ To receive the monthly preschool program calendar, call the Events Office at 212-288-6900 x230.

### RICHARD PECK

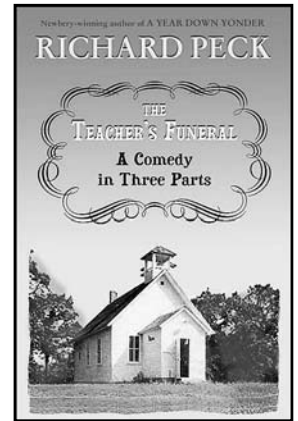
#### THE TEACHER'S FUNERAL AND OTHER STORIES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 6:00 P.M., MEMBERS' ROOM  
FIFTH GRADE AND OLDER



The Library is honored to welcome back longtime member Richard Peck, speaking about his new tale of old times, *The Teacher's Funeral*. Peck is the author of more than thirty children's and young adult books, including the Newbery Honor book *A Long Way From Chicago* and the Newbery Medalist *A Year Down Yonder*. He is also the first young adult author to receive a National Humanities Medal and has twice been a finalist for the National Book Award.

*The Teacher's Funeral* tells the witty story of fifteen-year-old Russell Culver, who hopes his school days are over when his turn-of-the-century Indiana farm town is suddenly left without a teacher. When his older sister takes the job, however, hilarious and enlightening adventures follow. "Another gem from Peck," writes *School Library Journal*. This event is \$5 per person for members and guests.



### PICTURE THIS: ART AND LAUGHTER WITH MO WILLEMS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 4:30 P.M., MEMBERS' ROOM  
KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THIRD GRADE



One of the funniest and most creative writer-artists working today, Mo Willems is the author of the award-winning bestsellers *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*, *The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog*, and *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*. His other credits include nine years as a writer for *Sesame Street* and the creation of Cartoon Network's series *Sheep in the Big City* and *Codename: Kids Next Door*. He has received six Emmy Awards for his *Sesame Street* work and a Caldecott Honor for *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*.

In this event Willems will read from his laugh-out-loud tales and guide participants in learning to draw his characters. There is a \$5 per-person fee.



### YOUNG WRITERS' WORKSHOP: POETRY WITH ELLEN HAGAN

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 4:30 P.M., WHITRIDGE ROOM  
THIRD THROUGH FIFTH GRADES

In this ongoing series, young writers are invited to join notable writers in exploring different genres. There is a \$10 fee.

In this workshop, poet, performer and educator Ellen Hagan will discuss poetry and lead participants in writing their own poems. Her poems, nominated for a Pushcart Prize, have appeared in many publications, and she has given workshops with the Community~Word Project and the Governor's School for the Arts.



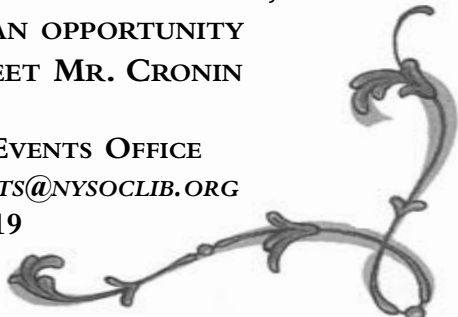



**YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED**

**TO AN OPEN HOUSE HONORING MARK PIEL  
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT  
FOLLOWING TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS  
OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE  
AS HEAD LIBRARIAN**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 23  
3:00-5:00 P.M.**

**LIGHT REFRESHMENTS AND WINE WILL BE SERVED,  
AND ATTENDEES WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY  
TO THANK MR. PIEL AND MEET MR. CRONIN**



**PLEASE RESPOND TO THE EVENTS OFFICE  
212-288-6900 x230 OR [EVENTS@NYSOCLIB.ORG](mailto:EVENTS@NYSOCLIB.ORG)  
BY JANUARY 19**

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❖ *Please write or telephone the Library with any comments or suggestions. Visit our website at [www.nysoclib.org](http://www.nysoclib.org).*

**THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY**

53 East 79th Street  
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