

In Search of Nedra Tyre

Michael Gorman

It was one of those names, like Fredegond Shove and Lascelles Abercrombie, that once seen are never forgotten. –Evelyn Waugh

The life and times of Nedra Tyre

I have traced only a few pictures of Nedra Tyre. They come from the dust-jackets of her novels and are very similar, probably taken during the same photo session. A woman in her 30s (the age at which her first novels were published) looks off to the side. She has fine delicate features. Her hair is long and gathered at the back and she has rather severe looking bangs. She is wearing a modest white-collared blouse done up at the neck. The pictures convey the reserve and the apartness characteristic of one who keeps her own counsel. Her eyes are striking and belie the rest of her features. They are pale and intense, almost steely, as if looking into a complicated future or seeing the meaning of what it is to be human. Celestine Sibley, a columnist for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, tells of meeting Nedra Tyre, then in her 30s, for the first time. She was "... a slim little woman with her red-gold hair in a ponytail and flat Mary Jane slippers" and, in another column "... a tiny pixie-like creature ... dressed like Alice in Wonderland in full-skirted childlike frocks... She had a soft high voice and she was a shy little girl." Seldom can an author's appearance have been so at variance with her inner being and her novels and stories. As Sibley wrote, "... she was no child. She was fully grown-up and very knowledgeable about the human race."

Despite reading thousands of books of detective/mystery fiction over many decades, I had never heard of Nedra Tyre until, late last year, I came across a brief laudatory mention of her mystery novels and stories. Nedra Tyre is a name not easily passed over nor easily forgotten. Impelled not least by the fact that

her first name, mysteriously and possibly coincidentally, is "Arden" backwards, I decided to see if she were mentioned in the several books about mystery stories that I own. There was no mention in Julian Symons' *Bloody Murder* (1972), my favorite of those books, or in *Detective* (1977), compiled by Otto Penzler and others. There is a brief paragraph in the *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection* (1976), edited by Chris Steinbrunner and Otto Penzler, from which I learned that Tyre was born in 1912 in Georgia (in a town called Offerman, as I found out later); that she had worked in a number of occupations (in a library, as a typist, in a bookstore, in an advertising agency, and principally as a social worker and sociology teacher); that she had published a number of novels, at least one of which made the Mystery Writers of America list of the best crime novels of the year, and short stories published in the then-flourishing mystery/detection story magazines.

Nedra Tyre was educated at Emory University in Atlanta and at the School of Social Work at William & Mary in Richmond, Virginia. She received an MA from Emory in 1938, writing a thesis on the works of Mrs Gaskell (1810-1865; the author of, among other novels *Mary Barton*, 1848, and *North and South*, 1855). She worked as a social worker in Atlanta, Georgia, at what was then the Fulton County Department of Public Welfare. During World War II, she worked in Alabama as a social worker for the Red Cross. When she moved to Richmond, Virginia, in the



mid-1950s after her mother's death, she taught literature at the Richmond Professional Institute (now Virginia Commonwealth University) and worked for a long time for a charitable foundation called Children, Inc. Also for many years, she returned to Atlanta each summer to write. She never married and, according to her friend Celestine Sibley, was "unfailingly generous ... [and] lived simply, almost austere, so she could share what

money she had with people she considered in more pressing circumstances." Tyre died in Richmond, Virginia, in 1990 at the age of 77. At her request, no funeral or memorial service was held, and her ashes were spread on her mother's grave in Westview Cemetery in Atlanta.

The novels and stories

The Library of Congress catalog lists seven of her novels published between 1947 and 1971: *Red Wine First*; *Mouse in Eternity*; *Death of an Intruder*; *Journey to Nowhere*; *Hall of Death*; *Everyone Suspect*; and, *Twice So Fair*. They are all out of print, as is *Reformatory Girls* (Ace Books, 1960), a paperback with a lurid cover that turns out to be a reprint of *Hall of Death* for the pulp market. Its deliberately provocative cover, like those of its many stable mates such as *The Duchess of Skid Row* by Louis Trimble and *The Girl in the Death Seat* (*Be Silent, Love*) by Fan Nichols, provides much more titillation than the text inside delivers. Such are the vagaries of collecting

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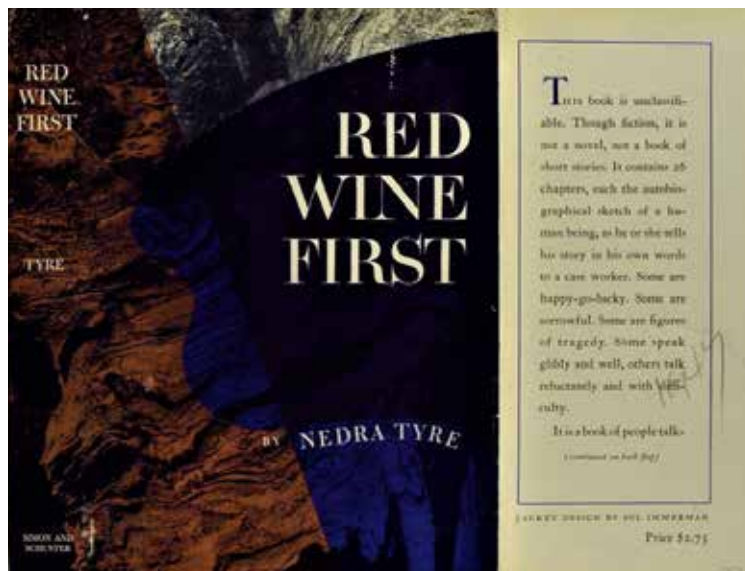
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NEDRA TYRE, from page 1

that a decent hardback copy of *Hall of Death* can be obtained for \$10 or so, while a paperback of *Reformatory Girls* in good condition can be three or four times that price.

Tyre published more than 40 stories in the mystery/crime magazines of her time, notably the *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine* (founded 1941) and the *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine* (founded 1955). Many of her stories can be found in out-of-print anthologies of mystery/crime stories. A prime example of the latter is the *Mystery Writers of America* collection called *Lethal Sex*

(Dell, 1959), edited, with a magnificently patronizing introduction, by John D. Macdonald. It contains 14 stories by “lady authors” (the exception seems to be one “Anthony Gilbert,” but that was the pseudonym of Lucy Malleson), including *What Is Going to Happen?* by Nedra Tyre. These days, libraries that still catalog books include detailed contents lists in the catalog entries. That was not the practice in Nedra Tyre’s heyday, a time when catalog cards (which were 5”x 3”) imposed limits on the amount of information given. Though the data on those cards have since been digitized, the lack of contents information in online catalogs makes it difficult to trace all Tyre’s anthologized stories. Some that I know of are “Murder Between Friends” that appeared in the *Hitchcock Best of Mystery* (Galahad Books, 1980); “Laughter Between Friends” in *Ellery Queen’s Searches and Seizures* (Dial, 1977); “A Nice Place to Stay” in Sarah Weinman’s *Troubled Daughters, Twisted Wives* (Penguin, 2013); “Recipe for a Happy Marriage” in Martin Greenberg’s compilation *Murder Most Delectable: Savory Tales of Culinary Crimes* (Gramercy Books, 2004) and in *Murder on the Menu* (Avon, 1984). There was a booming market for such anthologies in the mid- to late 20th century. They repackaged and resold the stories that appeared in the detective/crime magazines of the time, and a story could have a second, third, or even fourth life in different anthologies. I have counted no fewer than 19 Hitchcock anthologies (1968-1989) in which Tyre’s stories appeared. Her most anthologized was “Killed by Kindness,” which appeared in *Alfred Hitchcock’s Games Killers Play* (Dell, 1968); in *Alfred Hitchcock’s Tales to Keep You Spellbound* (Davis, 1975); in *Tales of Terror: 58 Short Stories Chosen by the Master of Suspense* (Galahad Books, 1986); and in *Alfred Hitchcock’s Book of Horror Stories, Book 9* (London: Coronet,



Red Wine First appeared in 1947.

1989). Tyre’s “Daisies Deceive” appeared in only two of the 19 anthologies.

The estimable IMDb (the only online “wiki” source in which I have any trust) told me that two of Tyre’s works were the basis of television plays. Her story “To Love and to Cherish” was the basis of episode 14 of season one of TV’s *Philip Morris Playhouse* in 1953; and her novel *Death of an Intruder* was the basis of episode 19 (called “The Dispossessed”) of season 1 of TV’s *Matinee Theatre* in 1955.

Neither the recounting of the scant known details of Tyre’s life nor a listing of her writings convey the extraordinary atmosphere and psychological tension of her novels and stories, set in some of the most mundane circumstances of her time but with an almost hallucinatory effect. Their visual counterpart is the heightened realism characterizing the paintings of Edward Hopper and the lives of the lonely people who inhabit them. The protagonist of a Nedra Tyre mystery novel is almost invariably a solitary person (usually a woman) with a humdrum life and occupation who is caught in circumstances that sweep her up, spiral ever farther out of control, and almost always, to use one of my late mother’s favorite expressions, end in tears.

Nedra Tyre’s first novel

Red Wine First (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1947).

Tyre had a gift for titles and for often-obscure literary references. This title is taken from *The Silver Tassie* by Sean O’Casey – “Red wine first, Jessie, to the passion and the power and the pain of life; and then a drink of white wine to the melody that is in them all.”

Nedra Tyre’s first published novel is not a detective

story and, some would say, not even a novel. She had taken to heart the old injunction to write about what you know. *Red Wine First* consists of the case histories of 25 people “on relief” as told to a sympathetic social worker. They are carefully edited revelations of people’s inner thoughts and histories. These are people in the South but “they might have lived anywhere for they speak as all men and women do, of love and hate and human dignity and of the anguish caused when minds and hearts and bodies go unfed.” In the words of the *New York Times* reviewer (Charles Poore) in November 1947, the 25 stories “...show human nature at its best and at its worst; its capacity for unselfishness and fortitude and its failings of meanness and uncharitableness. And the language is set down as it was spoken ranging from the vigorously profane to the last ragged adornments of gentility.” I doubt very much that the language was recorded “as it was spoken”; there is literary craft in *Red Wine First* that is absent from straightforward recording. The language is, however, dialectal and sometimes borders on the patronizing. The opening words of the first story are: “Settin’ on yore butt all day long the way I do you git to thinkin’. You wonder what the hell and why the hell.” The recorded speech may have the ring of authenticity but why spell “your” as “yore”? Is there some immensely subtle difference in pronunciation that eludes me? On the other hand, I would guess we have all wondered what the hell and why the hell from time to time. The dialect can pose some difficulty to those who, like me, have a low tolerance for that sort of thing, but it is not insuperable and there is truth and a terrible beauty in these interlocking stories. As another reviewer put it they are “...by turns, harrowing, tender, violent, grotesque, humorous.” It is evident, for all the author’s elfin and child-like appearance, that here was someone who has seen most of what humans can rise and sink to, someone with both a realistic view of human nature and deep reservoirs of sympathy for unfed minds and hearts and bodies, someone who can take the stories of the passion and the power and the pain in ordinary lives and turn them into art.

Nedra Tyre’s mystery novels

After *Red Wine First*, Nedra Tyre turned to the writing of mysteries. I do not know why she abandoned “serious” fiction after a well-received first novel. It could be argued that her subsequent novels are also fiction of a high order, but it is the fate of

genre fiction to be belittled. Some say, for example, that John Le Carré writes spy novels; I would say that he writes novels that are the match of any “serious” novels

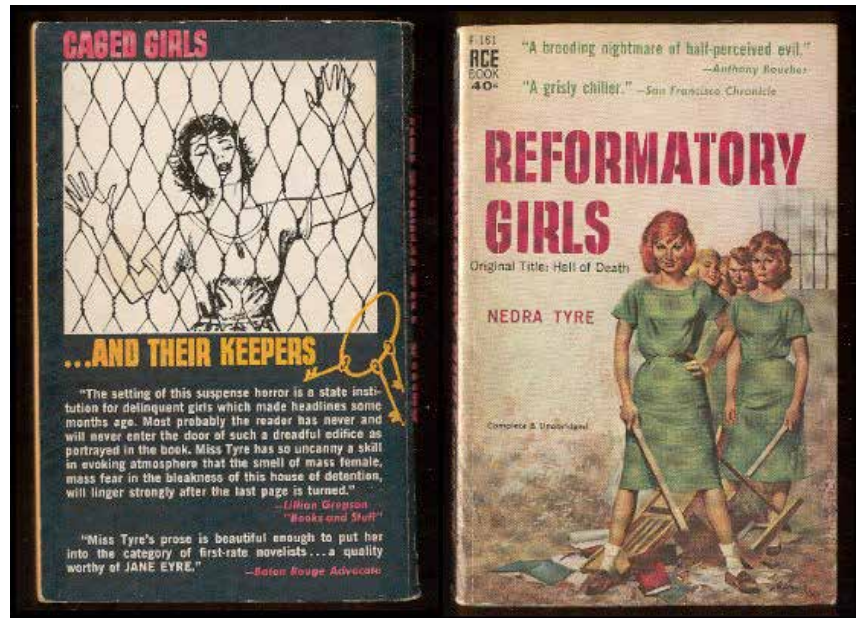
being published today. Tyre herself wrote “There is no claim that it [the detective novel] is literature of the first rank, but neither the avid reader nor the persistent performer need apologize for a form that within its prescribed limits offers pleasure in its telling, pace, interest and wit in its unfolding, and variety in its background and characterizations ... it is entitled to a position of literary respect.”

Mouse in Eternity (New York: Knopf, 1952).

The title is from a verse in a poem by Paula Lecler that reads:

It is very, very curious
How one may either be
A cat that nibbles at a moment,
Or a mouse in eternity.

The opening words of the novel are “The cold winter rain hit hard against the windows.” The windows are those of a social service bureau in Atlanta. The action takes place during World War II. The narrator, Jane Wallace, herself a social worker, imagines that she is writing stage directions and introduces the women who work in the bureau in order of appearance. She names and describes each – Peg, the calm one, equal to any situation, good-looking; Bea, “the girl to whom everything happened”; Miss Mary, a recent war widow; Miss Reeves, “the girl without a first name,” who signed herself “M. Reeves”; Elspeth Smith, “Smitty,” the ambitious career girl whose arms were heavy with editions of Menninger, Horney, and Adler; Margy, who was perpetually late; and Gwen, who made a prodigious amount of money writing “con-



Reformatory Girls turns out to be a reprint of *Hall of Death* for an even pulpier market.

fession stories” and who said her house, “furnished like every woman’s dream,” had been paid for by illicit love, juvenile delinquency, and illegitimate births. Enter the villain – Mrs. Patch, their supervisor, “whose neck was Modigliani and the rest of her pure Neanderthal.” The politest words they had for her were hag, harpy, and vixen. We read about the work of the office, their clients, and the bitter resentment induced by Mrs. Patch’s nagging and perpetual pettiness. With the people who work in the bureau and their interpersonal relationships established, Jane Wallace makes her professional rounds and describes the follies and miseries of those seeking or begrudgingly accepting her help. Among these are her favorites – a 78-year-old man called Mr. Lawrence and his friend and servant Andrew. Mr Lawrence is impoverished, wise, and almost saintly and shares a passion for detective stories with his visitor. When the inevitable happens and Mrs. Patch is murdered – bludgeoned to death in her office by an unknown who cannot be other than one of Jane Wallace’s colleagues – it is Mr. Lawrence who advises Jan’s amateur investigation of the crime and who is there with wisdom and comfort after the murderer is discovered.

Death of an Intruder (New York: Knopf, 1953).

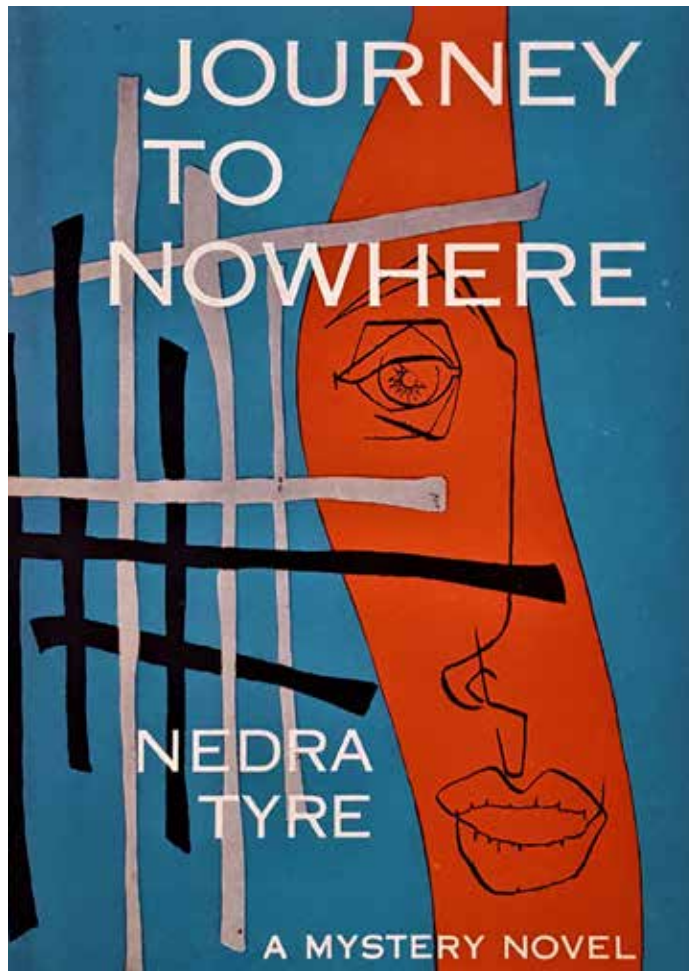
“Miss Allison looked across the dining table at Miss Withers, whom she was to murder at eight forty-five that night, and said: ‘Won’t you have some salt?’” These are the opening words of *Death of an Intruder*, a

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work of sustained psychological tension. Though all her novels after *Red Wine First* can be described as mysteries, they are individually very different examples of the genre.

Death of an Intruder is certainly not a whodunit. There is a mystery, but it is mostly a mystery of the human heart and motivation. It tells of the events leading up to Miss Allison's murderous impulses. She was a single woman, a secretary, and had inherited from an aunt. She used the money to buy and furnish her dream house, a Regency building at the end of a lane of fir trees, "prim but rather saucy, and altogether pleasing." Miss Allison has been living there happily with her dog Dora, dreaming of love with a Mr. Gray, a married man she has met in a grocery store and whom she entertained for a dinner or two. Then came the intrusion of Miss Withers. Miss Allison had just purchased and hung a Matisse print. "How perfect everything was. How really charming the room was. How fortunate beyond imagination she was to have the house, to have Dora, to be at last on the threshold of happiness. The knock at the door sounded again. It did not sound ominous, but it did sound very determined. It was both; very definitely it turned out to be both." Enter Miss Withers, a woman with "absolutely nothing about her to distinguish her, at least not in appearance." She persuades Miss Allison to let her spend the night and then, through a combination of guile, obstinacy, and bullying, becomes a permanent houseguest. As if this were not bad enough, Miss Withers gradually takes over the house, gets rid of Dora, breaks Miss Allison's incipient romance with Mr. Gray, replaces all the pretty decorative touches in the house with things to her own ghastly taste, and generally makes the rightful occupant's life a living hell. Nothing Miss Allison tries rids her of this obnoxious presence. She is driven half-mad and, tension mounting, the story moves inexorably to its unexpected climax. Tyre herself may have been a pixelike person, but this novel is as hard-boiled and unsentimental as they come. It fully justifies a *Boston Globe* reviewer's contemporary description of it as "a small masterpiece of real horror, guaranteed to wring the heart and linger in the memory."



Nothing is what it seems to be in the 1954 *Journey to Nowhere*.

Journey to Nowhere (New York: Knopf, 1954).

The opening words are: "Dr. Watkins, the charming and irascible head of the English Department, Wellington College, Richmond, Virginia, glanced into the shallow liquid of his third martini." The novel begins with a faculty party to wish our central character – Mary Wilson – well as she embarks on a journey to Europe for the first time. Professor Watkins is fond of quotations, though as the narrator notes, "By the time he had drunk his sixth or seventh martini they knew his proclivity to quote would show an appreciable decline." (It seems that mid-century academics were even harder drinkers than those of today.) He quotes Hazlitt. "One of the pleasantest things in the world is going on a journey; but I like to go by myself." Mary Wilson is in a bad way. Orphaned and traumatized at the age of eight after the car crash that killed her parents, she had found love and someone whom she thought could lead her out of her loneliness, but Alan, her rich and handsome fiancé, had killed himself. She is being urged to take her trip by her psychiatrist, Dr. Wolff, and by a colleague who asks her to take a

manuscript (on Victorian novels) to a publisher in London. Mary is deeply depressed and fearful but has decided to take the journey to a place in England called "Erewhon" (named after Samuel Butler's fictional country and approximately "nowhere" backwards) at the invitation of her late fiancé's mother – Mrs. Peters. From the beginning, things are odd. Mary thinks that her belongings have been tampered with, but she, and the reader, are unsure if that is true or just the result of her psychological state. Her journey becomes nightmarish – an affair of terror, abduction, suspense, and thrills that is often reminiscent of the classic film *The Lady Vanishes* as well as the mystery novels of the farceurs (Julian Symons's term) Michael Innes and Edmund Crispin, but with much darker overtones. Nothing is what it seems, traitors are involved, and the manuscript Mary is carrying turns out to be central to the mystery. *Journey to Nowhere* is quite different from its predecessors and more evidence that Tyre was consciously trying her hand at the many sub-genres of the mystery novel – in this case a psychological thriller. In August

1954, the *New York Times* announced that the renowned Fritz Lang was to direct a movie version of *Journey to Nowhere*, but the film was never made.

Hall of Death (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960).

The title is taken from Matthew Arnold's "Requiescat":

Her cabin'd, ample Spirit
It flutter'd, and fail'd for breath
Tonight it doth inherit
The vasty Hall of Death.

The novel's first words are "My first night at the Training School for Girls was three deaths and as many years ago." Though none of Tyre's novels can be described as lighthearted, *Hall of Death* stands out for its grimness and the very few flickers of light and hope it contains. The narrator, Miss Michael, remembers her first days at a girls' reformatory, a place of surpassing misery, suppression, and repression to which she came for reasons that remain obscure. "I was a fool to have let myself come to this place of desolation and misery, a dolt

to have allowed the State Welfare Department to snare me as an assistant to the superintendent." That superintendent, Mrs. Spinks, is "tall, commanding, and crisp." The rest of the staff are a sad crew of lonely women who hate the institution and fear the inmates. Let us miss the literary parallel, the narrator tells us that "Even the spindly children at Lowood in *Jane Eyre* would have found the huge dining room bleak." One of the inmates, a girl called Johnny, is a violent bully and even attacks the narrator in her first days. She escapes, is punished by having her head shaved and

being put into solitary confinement but is eventually released. One of many Kafkaesque notes is that releases are seemingly random and never explained. Lucy, an inmate whom Miss Michael attempts to befriend, commits suicide. The narrator's hunt for Lucy's family is intertwined with the murders (of the superintendent and of another staff member). There is a long police investigation and a riot that causes the institution to be shut down. The murderer is discovered and the novel ends with just the faintest hope that the narrator may find a future with a man she has met during her investigations. Purchasers of the pulp *Reformatory Girls* edition of *Hall of Death* who hoped for lesbian prison specificities would have been disappointed in the lack of overt sexual content but, as with all our pixie-like author's books, repressed sexual tension suffuses this story.

Everyone Suspect (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

The novel has a curious structure. The opening words of the first part (labeled "Running with the Hare") are "Martin Newcombe wanted his wife to die." Unlike Miss Allison in *Death of an Intruder*, Newcombe is not meditating murder. His wife Janice is mortally ill and has been for a very long time.

Newcombe has given up everything to care for her, selling his business, losing his friends, and becoming completely isolated in their increasingly run-down house. He longs to be free but hates himself for that longing. He has come to believe "they would live on, as they had lived for years, their days ravaged by Janice's helplessness." His wife does die but Newcombe finds himself at a loss after living so long in his emotional prison. Worse, he cannot sell his house, cannot find a job, and lives in desperate poverty in seedy rooms. He develops an addiction to the cinema and forms a habit of writing summaries of each film. He is rescued from his miserable life by the intervention of a refund and rich friend and a job (albeit poorly paid) that he obtains supervising typists at a charity called Brothers Keepers, Inc. (surely based on Tyre's work at Children, Inc.). He finds a better place to live and falls in love with the youngest typist, Marianna Wells, who is studying at a local night school. She, 30 years younger than him, lovely, slender, and blond, asks if she can study in the quiet of his room in the evenings when he is at the cinema. This odd arrangement seems to be working, until he returns late one evening to find her dead. That is the end of the first part of the novel (which occupies less than a third of its pages). The second part ("Hunting

with the Hound") concerns the efforts of a 79-year-old man called Horne Browning, who is taken away from his comfortable living at an exclusive club to investigate the murder with the aim of exonerating Newcombe. He undertakes the task reluctantly and with little to show for his efforts. The reader is in doubt as to who is responsible for the woman's death until near the end, but the whodunit aspect is not the real point. Much more important are the character and psychological states of the loner Newcombe and of Browning as he engages in his dogged and seemingly quixotic enquiries.

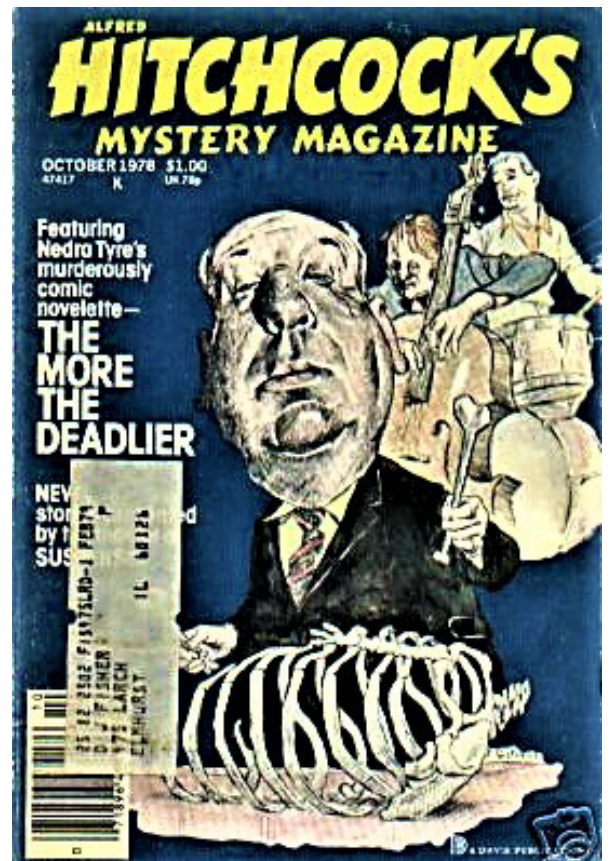
Twice So Fair (New York: Random House, 1971).

The title (again we see the author's love for obscure quotations) is from 16th century poet George Peele's *Arraignment of Paris*:

Oenone. Fair and fair, and twice so fair,
As fair as any may be;
The fairest shepherd on our green,
A love for any lady.

Paris. Fair and fair, and twice so fair,
As fair as any may be;
Thy love is fair for thee alone
And for no other lady.

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Ms. Tyre's wide publication of short stories keeps the completist collector on his toes.

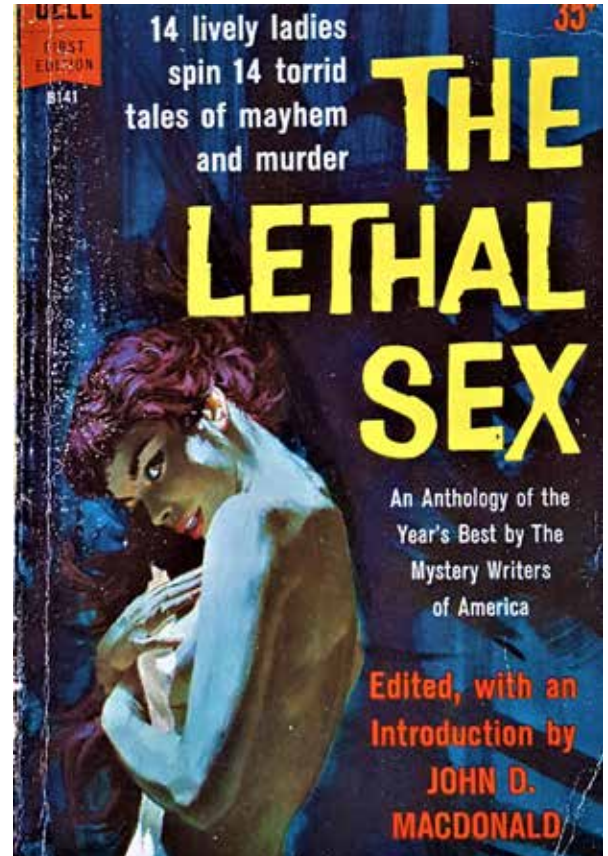
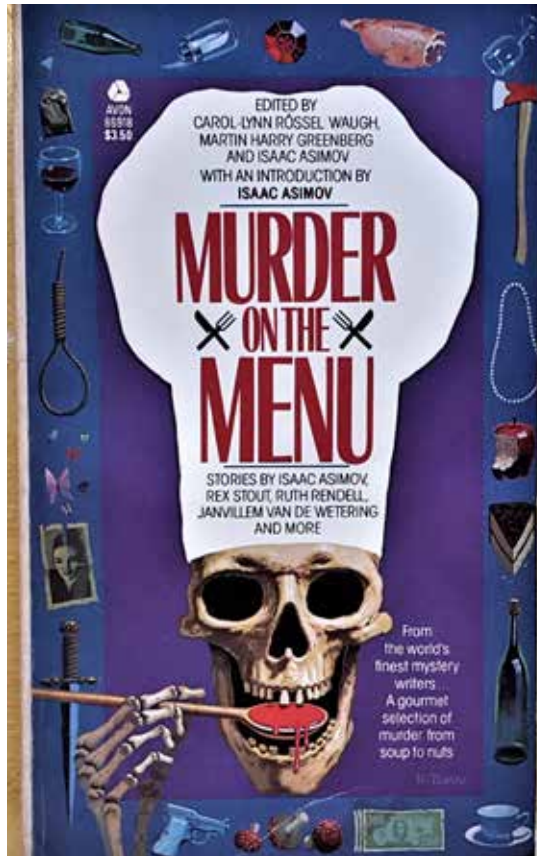
NEDRA TYRE, from page 5

The first words are: "The knocking startled her out of sleep and she grabbed at her pillow, then forced herself to sit up." Rosalind Wells is woken by a student with the news that her English-professor husband, Matthew, and a young female student, Jeanette Sloan, had been found dead in the student's studio apartment, overcome by gas fumes from a faulty heater. Was their death accidental? Were Matthew and Jeanette having an affair? Who was Jeanette, a person of whom Rosalind had never heard? Who is the man Rosalind sees hanging around her house after the deaths? Rosalind was a nineteen-year-old student when she fell for her professor and married him and wonders if history were repeating itself. This thought drives her to pursue an inquiry into those questions. She discovers that Jeanette was an orphan and that a mysterious man – Carl Middleton – who emerges from the shadows, also an orphan, had been obsessed with Jeanette. Her search for information leads her to political intrigue involving Carl's racist father and the murder (of the woman who cared for the orphan Jeanette). The murky plot is not the strong point of this novel. Its strength, which lies in claustrophobic intensity and the striking characters and events, is characteristic of the author's best work.

Nedra Tyre was only 59 when her last novel was published and would live for another 18 years. I can find very few stories by her published after 1971, though the *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine's* October 1978 issue featured "Nedra Tyre's murderously comic novelette" *The More the Deadlier*. Perhaps she grew bored with the genre and had tried all the sub-genres that she cared to try. Who knows? Another mystery.

The excellence of Nedra Tyre

Had the reference that led me to read and inquire into the life of Nedra Tyre been to the mysteries of, say, a "Mary Brown," I doubt I would have pursued the matter. The happy



Additional anthology appearances.

accident of an unusual name has led me to the discovery of an interesting life story and personality and to stories and novels that I have read with great pleasure. The events and characters of her writings are well described; the sense of (Southern) place that they convey is strong and memorable; and the almost inde-

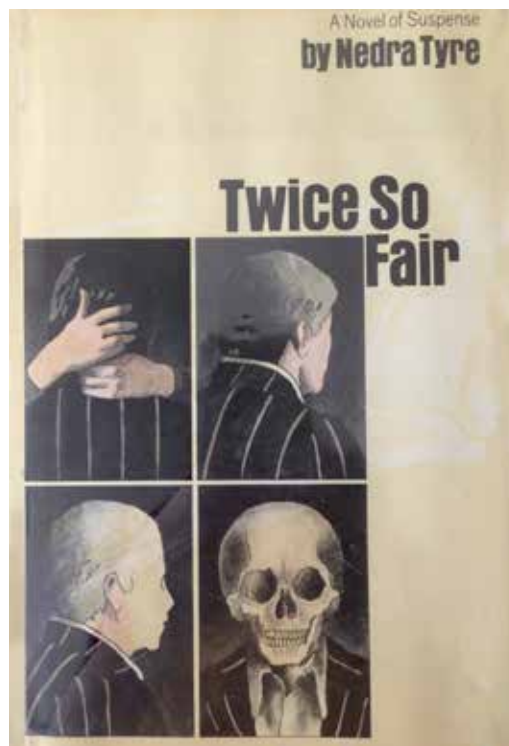
finable psychological atmosphere and tensions they conjure up have the singularity of all good mystery writers. Novels by Simenon could be by no one other than Georges Simenon. In her more modest and much less prolific way, Nedra Tyre's novels and stories have a certain touch and atmosphere that tell the reader they are by her and no one else.

A note for book collectors

Good hardback first editions of Nedra Tyre's novels can be bought for between \$10 and \$30. Good copies of the pulp paperbacks of *Reformatory Girls* (*Hall of Death*) and *Death is a Love* (*Mouse in Eternity*) can be had for \$30-\$50. The numerous anthologies that contain her stories are available quite cheaply. A Nedra Tyre completist would run into more trouble and expense purchasing good copies of the original magazines (*Ellery Queen's* and *Alfred Hitchcock's*) in which her stories first appeared. For example, the *Hitchcock* magazine of October 1978 that contained her *The More the Deadlier* is quite hard to find and would cost \$50 or more.

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All photographs by the author of books in the author's collection, except *Twice So Far*, which appears at <https://www.amazon.com/Twice-so-fair-Nedra-Tyre/dp/0394471865>



A Message from the President

Dear Caxtonians,

Now that the summer has raced past with its usual, but always surprising, alacrity, the time to begin what will be an unusually eventful Caxton Club year has arrived. The coming year will owe its excitement in no small part to the publication of our latest book, *Chicago by the Book: 101 Publications That Shaped the City and Its Image*, and to the extraordinary efforts of our Vice President and Program Chair, Jackie Vossler.

The centerpiece of our activities during the fall will be the gala book launch of “Chicago 101” (as we have nicknamed it) in the Crystal Ballroom at the Union League Club on October 17. Invitations for this event should already be in your mailboxes, and I encourage all of you to respond promptly. Reservations for this lavish event are absolutely necessary; no late reservations can be accepted and no one without reservations can be accommodated. This is one you will not want to miss.

Even before the book launch, our first dinner meeting of the year will be held September 12 (one week early so as not to conflict with Yom Kippur), at which Caxtonian Joan Friedman will discuss “Owen Jones, Architect of Book Design.” At our first luncheon meeting on September 21 (one week late because of Yom Kippur) we can listen, laugh, and learn as Phil Brown offers a humorous insider’s view of direct mail entitled “Mailbox Secrets: An Insider’s View.” At an On the Move event September 25, our members will be treated to a guided “Art Crawl” at the Union League Club, focusing on the art of the Columbian Exposition, a theme pursued later in the fall at the Newberry Library.

At our luncheon meeting on October 12, Amy Brent (Stuart Brent’s daughter) will speak on “Growing Up in a Bookstore.” On October 22, Leslie Hindman will host a joint event of the Chicago Art Deco Society and



the Caxton Club celebrating the launch of new books by both clubs and previewing the “Chicago Collects” auction to be held October 23 at 10:00 am. One of the books in that auction will be the elephant folio volume memorializing the newspaper accounts of the Cubs’ World Series victory season, created, compiled, and bound by Bob Karrow and generously donated by him to the Club. The next day, October 24, Club member Celia Hilliard will participate in a panel at the Newberry Library on the history and impact of clubs in Chicago, including, among others, the Caxton Club (6-7 pm in Ruggles Hall, free and open to the public, but registration required).

The Club will co-sponsor an On the Move event with the Newberry Library November 6. A behind-the-scenes tour of the Newberry’s Century of Progress exhibition at 5 pm will be followed by a lecture by Dr. Ruth Slatter focusing on the Columbian Exposition, entitled “Eye of the Beholder: Visitor Experience at 19th-Century World Fairs” (6-7 pm in Ruggles Hall). Dr. Slatter is a lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Hull (UK). She is a historical and cultural geographer, primarily interested in individuals’ experiences of 19th-century institutional spaces. A dinner for Caxton members with Dr. Slatter will follow. On November 9 we will have our November luncheon meeting where Scott Schwartz, curator of the John Philip Sousa Archive at the University of

Illinois, will speak. Our November dinner meeting will be one week late, November 28, so as not to conflict with Thanksgiving. Our speaker that evening will be the Club’s Michelle Cloonan, who will discuss “The Role of the Collector in Conservation.”

At our luncheon meeting December 7, Karen Christianson will speak to us on “A Manuscript Sandwich: Medieval Bookmaking” with a Christmas theme. Our annual Revels will be held in Ruggles Hall at the Newberry on December 12. We will have a silent auction and can guarantee you that your evening will be magical.

After all that excitement we will then have a short break until January, when a new round of events, speakers, and celebrations will be held at venues throughout Chicago, including the Art Institute, the Chicago History Museum, the Chicago Public Library, the American Writers Museum, Cliff Dwellers, the Union League Club, Ryerson Library, Northwestern University, and others.

We’ll do our best to get a comprehensive calendar for the entire year out to all of our members as soon as possible. I look forward to seeing you all during what promises to be an exciting and stimulating year.

— Arthur Frank

Caxton on the Move... To the Union League Club's Art and Archives of the Columbian Exposition



In Chicago, the Union League Club's remarkable art collection is second only to that of the Art Institute, and in no area can that be seen more clearly than in the collection of paintings from artists of the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

Caxtonians will have the opportunity to enjoy presentations by Union League Club docents led by Dr. Sally Metzler, director of the art collection. Details of the club's Columbian Exposition art holdings will be revealed and captivating stories of the paintings and the painters from the fair of 1893 will be told.

Following the art tour we will have the opportunity to join Union League Club librarian and Caxtonian Cheryl Ziegler as she takes us through portions of the Union League Club's Columbian Exposition archives.

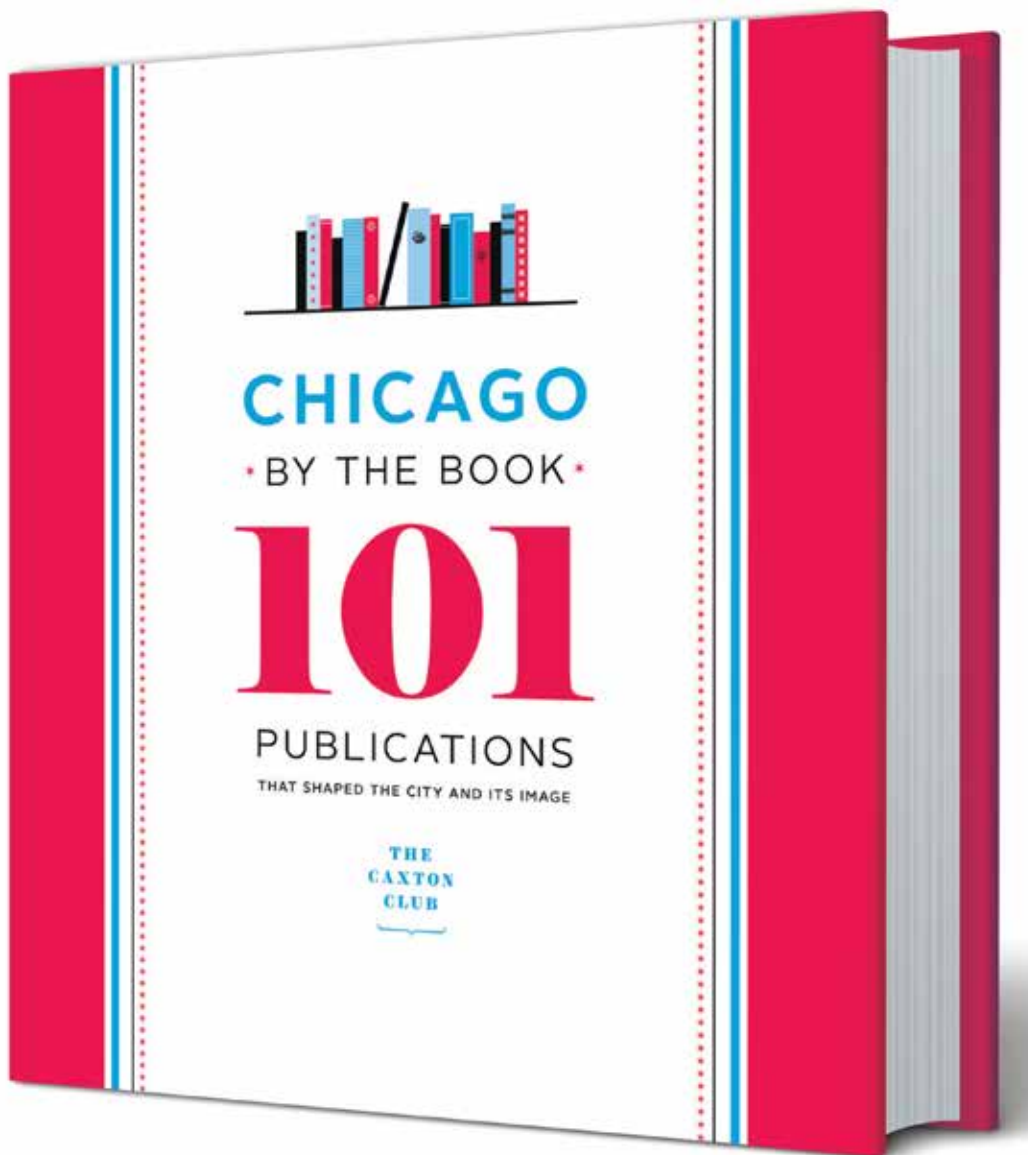
When: September 25

Where: Union League Club

Time: 5:30 pm with assembly in the library on the fourth floor

Cost: \$45. Heavy appetizers and a glass of wine are included in the cost. Additional beverages will be available.

Reservations required no later than September 20. Space is limited so reserve early. Reserve by e-mail at jv.everydaydesign@rcn.com or by phone at 312-266-8825.



The Caxton Club event of the decade: launching Chicago By the Book on October 17!

If you have not received your invitation, you should soon. If you don't have one by September 15, get in touch with Jackie Vossler immediately at 312-266-8825 to have another one sent. You must use the reply card in the invitation in order to attend.

Our Caxton Chicago By the Book Launch at the October Dinner will be a special event.

- 1) In the Crystal Ball Room of the Union League Club to accommodate a large gathering.
- 2) A later start time – 6 PM to accommodate our many guests.
- 3) A reception with appetizers and beverage included.
- 4) A revised format – No “program only” option.

- 5) An elegant individually-selected menu.
- 6) The opportunity to join all the essayists accepting our invitation.

7) A celebration of the launch of *Chicago By the Book*.

There are several options for attending this event, and you will receive a printed invitation and reply card in the mail in the next few weeks. You **MUST RETURN THE REPLY CARD TO ATTEND**. We will not accept reservations by phone or email.

For questions or assistance, email our special address for Caxton 101 events, caxtonclub1895@gmail.com.

Chicago By the Book will be available at the event or after for \$27, which includes tax. Shipping and freight will be additional. Books are not available prior to the launch.

Book- and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Lisa Pevtzow

(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit.)

American Writers Museum, 180 N. Michigan Avenue, second floor, Chicago, 312-374-8790: **“Frederick Douglass, Agitator”** (exploring the life and work of the activist, orator, and author), Roberta Rubin Writer’s Room, through December 31.

Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: **“The Yoshida Family: Three Generations of Japanese Print Artists”** (woodblock artists, many of them central to the major 20th-century Japanese print movements), Gallery 107, through September 30.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: **“Farmers’ Market: Bountiful Harvest”** (illustrations of fruits and vegetables from the rare book collection), through October 14.

Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago, 312-744-6630: **“Keith Haring: The Chicago Mural”** (36 original panels of the mural created in 1989), Sidney Yates Gallery, fourth floor, ongoing. **“Alexis Rockman: The Great Lakes Cycle”** (five mural-sized oil paintings exploring themes emerging from field research and consultation), fourth floor north, through October 1.

Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077: **“Chicago and the Great War”** (Gold Star memorial portraits, collected 1919-21), through November 12.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: **“Pictures from an Exhibition: Visualizing the 1893 World’s Fair”** (art and ephemera from the fair, including photographs, paintings, illustrated albums, souvenirs and guidebooks)

Northwestern University Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: **“On Board with Design: Passenger Transportation and Graphic Design in the Mid-20th Century,”** ongoing. **“African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean: Culture, Resistance, and Survival”** (aspects of the history, culture, and religion of people of African ancestry in the subject areas), Herskovits Library of African Studies, ongoing.

Pritzker Military Museum and Library, 104 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-374-9333: **“Lest We Forget: Sailors, Sammies, and Doughboys Over There in World War I”** (explores the experiences of those who served in the war), ongoing.

Stony Island Arts Bank, 6760 S. Stony Island Avenue, Chicago, 312-857-5561: **“A Johnson Publishing Story”** (explores the enduring role of John H. Johnson, founder of *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines, and the Johnson Publishing Company in defining and popularizing a black aesthetic and identity), through September 30.

University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: **“Censorship and Information Control, Antiquity to the Internet”** (examines how censorship has worked, thrived, or failed in different times and places), September 17 to December 14

Send your listings to Lisa Pevtzow at lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net



Newberry Library / Pictures from an Exhibition

HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT, “A SUMMER DAY AT THE EXPOSITION,” FROM THE BOOK OF THE FAIR, 1893

American Writers Museum / Frederick Douglass, Agitator
BOSTON: THE COLUMBIAN ORATOR, SIXTH EDITION



Caxtonians Collect: Catherine Uecker

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Catherine Uecker joined the Caxton Club in 2011. Then, as now, she was working in the Special Collections Research Center at the University of Chicago Library. She was nominated by Margaret Oellrich and seconded by Stuart Miller. She has done yeoman service for the club, serving on the Council and working on committees, including the one that put together the 2015 Symposium (“Preserving the Evidence”), and the committee that made the transition from recording talks on tape and distributing DVDs to recording them digitally and putting them on the Internet.

She loves her job at the university’s library. Much of what she does is outreach: helping faculty involve their students in research using primary materials, helping students with problems to solve, even working with elementary-school classes as young as second graders. “Actually, the second graders we get are so much in awe that they’re very gentle with the materials and pleasant to have in the library,” she says.

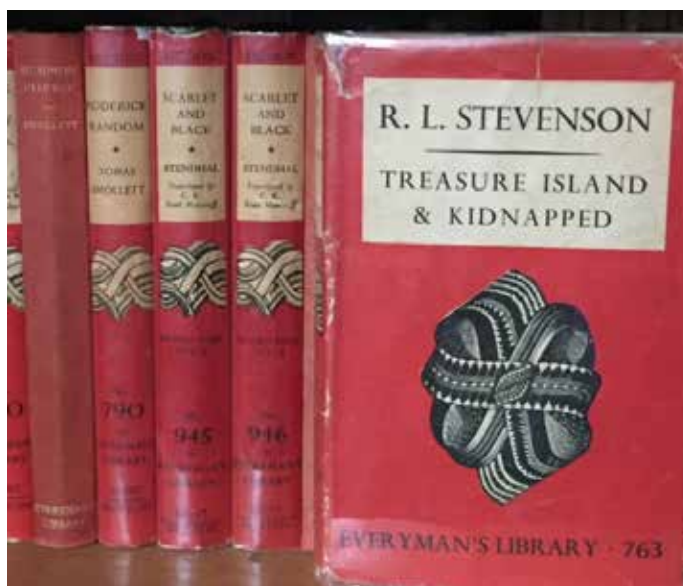
She grew up in Ann Arbor, but attended Michigan State University, graduating in 1989. A mentor there thought she would do well in museum curatorship, and urged her to attend University College London for a master’s in museum studies. “It was an excellent program! We spent a lot of time working in various museums across London.” Not to mention the students bonded by hiking all over England and Wales on weekends and staying at youth hostels.

But when she returned to the States to look for a job, the economy had just tanked, and museums weren’t hiring. But some libraries were, and many of the issues were similar in the special collections department of libraries to those in museums, so it was a natural fit. “Both are in the business of preserving, cataloging, and sharing. Of course you have to take care of the materials, but there is no use in preserving if you don’t have some customers looking at the materials. So the challenge is to find ways to reach out to find an audience which can benefit from making careful use of the materials.”

Her first job was at the University of Michigan Library, but in 1994 she came to the Art Institute of Chicago, where she worked in the

Ryerson and Burnham Libraries from 1994 to 2000. She moved on to the University of Chicago Library in 2001, where she has been rare books manager and librarian, and is now head of research and instruction.

Her trips to England over the years also advanced her personal collecting area, which is of the British series called Everyman’s Library. She was introduced to it when she



received a series copy from her grandmother’s estate while she was a child. It’s much like the Modern Library on this side of the Atlantic: editions of classics (old and new) we’d all benefit from reading. “I hope to get a copy of every edition which came out in the 1930s through the 1950s,” she says. “I’m not anywhere

near there yet, but when I retire I’ll have more time and it will be an excellent hobby.” And unlike many of our collections, hers is finite: they only published just over 1,100 works in those years, so she should be able to get a copy of each. “And because the edition is uniform – every book is the same height – my father built for me custom bookcases in which the books fit perfectly.” Her library training also

assures that she has excellent records of her purchases.

Uecker lives in Homewood with her husband and son. “My son is in high school, so we’ll soon be empty nesters,” she says. That will mean more opportunities for travel (although she has already managed to fit in quite a bit). “It’s great to be able to travel for work and see other parts of the country.” The only pure vacation in 2018 has been a family gathering in Nova Scotia.

She attended her second Rare Book School course, “Special Collections Leadership Seminar” in Charlottesville this past June and found it very useful. The instructor, Naomi Nelson from Duke University, specifically constructed it to “build a cohort” for the class members, so that each will have a group of friends and colleagues to talk through issues with.

While her first mandate as a University of Chicago librarian is to help with instruction for both undergraduate and graduate students of the university, I was interested to hear that they are also specifically told to reach out to faculty from other schools – such as DePaul, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the School of the Art

Institute – to draw their attention to subject matter available in the library. The second graders mentioned earlier were studying the Columbian Exposition, and the U. of C. has an abundance of material.

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**Luncheon: Friday, September 21, Union League Club
Phil Brown on "Mailbox Secrets: An Insider's View"**

It may be the greatest challenge to writer and designer. It hides in plain sight. It has only a fleeting moment to catch your attention. You answer it when it calls to you and despise it when it misses the mark. It's direct mail and you'll never look at it the same way again after author and RR Donnelley veteran Phil Brown shares his wonderfully engaging presentation. Brown brings decades of experience in the direct mail trenches and a lively presentation style to a topic about the printing everyone loves to hate – except when it raises money for one's favorite cause, inspires one to join a cultural institution, or brings one a can't-miss-it deal. Why did a printer intentionally ruin a typeface for a client? When did copperplate knock it out of the park? What's a control? What makes an envelope leap out of the mailbox while others languish in the recycle bin? Sharing secrets from his book *Rules, Reckonings, and Tales Told from the Mailbox*, Phil Brown may just convince you never to use the "j words" again. (That's "junk mail.") It's so easy to make your reservation. Why not do it right now?

September luncheon: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Buffet in room 820 opens at 11:30 am; program (in a different room, to be announced) 12:30-1:30. Luncheon is \$35. Program free but please let us know you're coming. Reservations or cancellations by noon Wednesday for Friday lunch. Call 312-255-3710 or e-mail caxtonclub@newberry.org.

Beyond September...

OCTOBER LUNCHEON
When she called her father to ask if she should spend a year abroad in college, he responded, "Ask him," and handed the phone to Gore Vidal. The father was Stuart Brent; Amy Brent is his daughter. She'll share behind-the-scenes stories about one of Chicago's legendary bookstores
October 12 at Union League.

OCTOBER DINNER
See page 9.

**Dinner: Wednesday, September 12, Union League Club
Joan Friedman on "Owen Jones, Architect of Book Design"**

Owen Jones (1809-1874) was a significant British architect and designer. Joan Friedman will explore how Jones's career and training as an architect permeated his approach to book design. From his publications on the architectural monuments of the Middle East and the Alhambra to his liturgical works and poetry, his ornament was applied to books in much the same way as to buildings. Jones's great work, *The Grammar of Ornament* codified not just a gorgeous array of colorful exempla but also the principles he strove for in design writ large or small. Joan Friedman graduated with honors from Harvard and has degrees in art history from the University of London, library service from Columbia, and accounting from the University of Illinois. Among her many achievements, she is an expert on English color printing, curating the Yale exhibit "Color Printing in England, 1486 to 1870" and writing its accompanying book. Joan is a scholar, collector, and member of numerous organizations including the Caxton Club, the Grolier Club, and the Bibliographic Society of America.

September dinner: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Social gathering 5-6 pm; program 6 pm; dinner to follow. Program is free and open to the public. Beverages available for \$6-\$12. Three-course dinner: \$63. Reservations are required for either the program only or the dinner/program combination. Reservations must be received by NOON, Monday, September 10. Dinner cancellations made after the deadline and no-shows will require payment. To reserve call 312-255-3710 or e-mail caxtonclub@newberry.org.

NOVEMBER LUNCHEON
November 9 at Union League, strike up the band as Scott Schwartz, director of the Sousa Archive at the U of Illinois, tells the tale of one of America's best-known composers ... and least-known sports enthusiasts. What game did he love so much that he recruited musicians who could double as athletes?

NOVEMBER DINNER
One week late (November 28, at the Union League Club), our annual grants recipients' dinner will feature Caxtonian Michele Cloonan discussing "The Role of the Collector in Conservation."