Bet You Missed It: Press Clippings -- In the News -- Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

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Column Editor: Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Editor’s Note: Hey, are y’all reading this? If you know of an article that should be called to Against the Grain’s attention ... send an email to <kstrauch@comcast.net>. We’re listening! — KS

REVISIONIST SAUMELSON
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Household-name economist Paul Samuelson died at 94.

His famed economics text was first published in 1946. Now that’s a professorial racket. Updating it annually, pausing for a Nobel in 1970, raking in the royalties of one of the few texts to make any money for the author.

Now two Middlebury College economists are convinced his legacy “has paralyzed the best brains in the Anglo-Saxon branch of the profession for the last three decades.”

At heart a believer in Classical Economics, Samuelson thought models were only useful as aids, certainly not as any guide to policy. It was his followers who were convinced everything could be reduced to math and failed to see the current debacle.

See — Ideas, “Did Samuelson’s Followers Go Astray?” Business Week, Dec./Jan., 2009-10, p.10; reviewing David Colander and Casey Rothschild, Sins of the Sons of Samuelson.

YARDLEY ENGLISH LAVENDER
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Fatigued with searching for her favorite authors in secondhand-book shops, Nicola Beauman launched Persephone Books in a former grocery store in London’s Lamb’s Conduit Street. Her 86 titles are by neglected British women authors from the inter-war years and evoke memories of when England was England. Covers are all dove gray with colorful floral endpapers.


TESLA ROCKS
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

The nearly forgotten Nikola Tesla got alternating current to work on a grand scale, created the Niagara Falls hydroelectric dam, and beat Thomas Edison in developing the preferred electric chair.

Now he is sexy among the techno-cognoscenti. The $100,000 electric sports car is named for him. Capcom Entertainment uses his name in their Dark Void saga. David Bowie played him in “The Prestige.” Google co-founder Larry Page cites him as early inspiration.

And his rival Thomas Edison? Much less au courant. Indeed, the EU is banning the incandescent light bulb.


DIALECTICAL QUICKIE
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Actors are terrible at affecting foreign accents. Angelina Jolie’s Greek in “Alexander?” Ick. Brad Pitt’s Austrian in “Seven Years in Tibet?” Puh-leeze.

To the rescue comes Odile Rault with UseMyAccent.com where for a fee of $10 — avoiding expensive dialect coaches — you can get ordinary folk from foreign climes to read your script to you in the proper voice. And that includes a New York accent which is certainly foreign enough.


BRAVE NEW DATA WORLD
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Now here’s a thought. Could an internet giant — a Yahoo or Google or Amazon or Facebook — be annihilated because the public suddenly lost trust in the safety of its consumer data? Hence Google’s need to respond forcefully to Chinese (government?) hackers trying to ransack its servers.

But of course pulling down its China server won’t make Google any more safe from hackers. And anxiety lurks. What does Google do with all that information? What will become of it tomorrow? What if it leaks to outsiders?

You make a minor query about hemorrhoids, and suddenly as your car passes an electronic billboard an ad flashes for hemorrhoid creams?


THE NOISY DEATH OF QUIET
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

“Anonymous librarian” wrote our columnist Florence King despairing that the people she used to feel safe from in the library’s quiet atmosphere are now there: “foul-mouthed teenagers, loud adults, musical concerts, screaming children, and a thousand-and-one cell phones a-ringing.

“What little intellectualism America ever had is extinct, and I fear that the library as I remember it is soon to follow.” Silence is now elitist and authoritarian. The library is both a homeless shelter and a free day-care center as parents just dump kids there and pick them up at the end of the day.

And her local government is musing turning the library into a community center called “Realia” where the library can lend out anything from books to lawnmowers and barbecue grills.


Florence is of course the famous wit and author of Southern Ladies & Gentlemen.

ONLINE INDISCRETIONS LIVE FOREVER
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg has decided that privacy is “no longer a social norm.” And in keeping with that Facebook has made “public” the default setting for text, photo and video updates.

Marshall Kirkpatrick in his blog ReadWriteWeb replies that although we are a growing nation of exhibitionists, we still expect our communications to be in an appropriate context.

Is that why beauty queens never imagine their nude photos will come to light? Or our drunken carousing to become a photo fest at work?

At any rate, France is debating a bill to give Internet users the right to have old online data on themselves deleted. But the technology to do this is not yet available.


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