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

**SCI-FI AND ROMANCE**

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

H.G. Wells published more than 100 books, but his best writing was all before 1920: The Time Machine, The Invisible Man, War of the Worlds and on up through The Outline of History, which sold millions of copies throughout the world. Then by his own admission he began to squander his talents up until his death in 1946. David Lodge’s A Man of Parts (Random House) is a lightly fictionalized account of an aged Wells looking back.

Wells was a Fabian socialist who, like so many, was suckered by the fantasy of an enlightened Soviet state and thought Stalin an honest and likeable chap. A frequent theme in his novels was a dictatorship of enlightened technocrats. Such as himself of course.

Seeing himself as a representative of a freer, more rational future, he was more than ready to indulge in free love. His life was virtually a sex comedy with over a hundred women including two wives, four or five long-term mistresses, and two teenage daughters of fellow Fabians. Rebecca West, Elizabeth von Arnim, Margaret Sanger, Martha Gelhorn and probable Soviet spy Moura Budberg are on the list.

He wrote in detail about his affairs and this was published in 1984 as H.G. Wells in Love (Faber & Faber). Lodge draws on this for material and his cover is decorated with cavorting naked women.


**LITERARY MASH-UP**

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Little Brown jerked Assassin of Secrets from the shelves when the author, pen-named Q.R. Markham, was found to have plagiarized the book nearly in its entirety from a slew of novels and nonfiction, a complete cut and paste job.

It started out as a spy spoof called Spy Safari, so he lifted from 1970s Bond knock-offs, the Nick Carter “Killmaster” series, Warren Murphy and Richard Sapir’s the “Destroyer” series, and Don Pendleton’s “The Executioner.” Then he got an interested editor and of course they always want to change the book. They wanted a real thriller. So he spliced from Robert Ludlum, the Bond continuation authors. For meditative passages, he took from O’Brien’s Dreamtime and McCarey’s Second Sight.

The lifting seemed far more arduous than just writing the book and many felt it was a hipster prank or some sort of art gesture. Literary theorist Avital Ronell said he “could have used a dream team of literary theorists to get him out of trouble.”

As they say, “all art exists on a continuum of borrowing.” And when the news broke, the Amazon ranking jumped from 62,924 to 174.


**MAGIC OF BOOKSELLING**

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Insisting print is not dead, Ann Patchett, author of the best-seller Bel Canto, has opened a book store in the Green Hills neighborhood of Nashville. Folks are thrilled about the possibilities. Then got distracted by reporting the Spanish Civil War.


**FOUND AMONG DUSTY PAPERS**

by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

In 1935, C.S. Forester went to Hollywood to write a film script. On the trip back to England he read some late-18th century volumes of The Naval Chronicle and the idea for Hornblower was born in its many volumes. In the middle, he wrote The Pursued, a classic 1930s London thriller of murder, sex and revenge. Not wanting to interrupt the Hornblower flow, he put it on the shelf. Then got distracted by reporting the Spanish Civil War.

In 1999, the CS Forester Society was founded at Oxford and members learned of the lost novel from Forester’s autobiography Long Before Forty: An alert member spotted Forester papers at an auction in Knightsbridge and found the novel among them. They owned the paper copy, but copyright lay with some Swiss folks who held his estate.

Eventually the society got the right to publish and found that Forester’s old publisher Michael Joseph is now owned by Penguin Books but they were excited about the possibilities.

Publication will be celebrated at a meeting of the society at Oriel College, Oxford on Sept. 29, 2012.


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