Bet You Missed It-What do mobile phones and vengeful women have in common?

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MOBILE PHONE LITRA’CHER
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Margaret Atwood (The Handmaid’s Tale), at age 74, is still in the literary action. Fascinated by Wattpad and adolescents who read stories on their iPhones, she tried — you guessed it — a Zombie story — The Happy Zombie Sunrise Home. So far, she has gotten a mere 80,000 reads, which is nothing next to Abigail Gibbs’s vampire saga The Dark Heroine, with 4.8 million. And Abigail got a six-figure contract with HarperCollins.


JULIA CHILD OF MEXICO
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

89-year-old British-born Diana Kennedy has passed the last 55 years in Mexico collecting recipes from cooks across the country. She lives in an adobe house with an outdoor kitchen, wood-fired grills, and adobe beehive ovens. A rainwater tank is the only water source.

With the eye of an anthropologist and the hand of a home cook, she has learned it all and put it down in nine books. See e.g., Nothing Fancy (Dial Press, 1984), My Mexico (Clarkson Potter, 1998).

See — Beth Kracklauer, “The Expat,” Saveur (Special Issue Mexico), p.56.

WOMAN’S WRATH
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

And if you’re in the mood for novels about vengeful women: Helen Zahavi, Dirty Weekend (1991); Anita Shreve, The Weight of Water (1997); Helen Dunmore, Your Blue-Eyed Boy (1998); Charles Dickens, Great Expectations (1861); Kate Pullinger, Weird Sister (1999).


UPENDING HIGHER ED
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

2U got its start offering master’s degrees from USC and Georgetown. Now it’s got $96,000,000(!) in venture capital for online under-grad courses from a consortium of Duke, Northwestern, and Vandy. Who’s behind this? Jeremy Johnson (age 28), Princeton Review founder John Katzman, and former Hooked on Phonics CEO Chip Paucek.


DREISER AND DESIRE
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Theodore Dreiser was fascinated by tycoon-level wealth. Probably everyone read An American Tragedy (1925) in high school about a poor boy yearning for more and murdering his girlfriend after knocking her up. But Dreiser spent most of his writing career on his “Trilogy of Desire” (The Financier, The Titan, The Stoic) based on the life of Charles Tyson Yerkes, stock speculator and cable car magnate. Dreiser was still laboring over The Stoic when he died in 1945, and it was published posthumously in 1947. But the really good one was The Financier with its examination of money, art, glory, and yes, sex — a lot of sex — in the Gilded Age. It included intricate details of 19th-century finance which were cut from the novel when released in 1927.

Now the University of Illinois Press has restored the finance stuff. Who says University presses don’t serve a useful purpose? For those interested in stock prices and the Panic of 1873, this is for you.