Bet You Missed It: What do hamburgers and gimlets have in common?

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Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

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

RED MEAT FOR THE LITERATE
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Well, if you’re like me, you’ve always wondered how Ernest Hemingway composed a hamburger. And the recipe’s a doozy: capers; then minced ham, cheddar, tart apple, parsley, garlic, scallion, carrot, onion; Beau Monde seasoning; egg: India relish; soy sauce. All kneaded directly into the fat meat patties.


CROWDSOURCING THE ARCHIVES
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Libraries, universities, museums are eager to preserve fragile, dusty files by scanning them and putting them online. And they’re using crowdsourcing technology to get them transcribed.

The University of Iowa created “DIY History” to let people transcribe pioneer letters. 42,000 pages have been done.

The Smithsonian, sitting on 20 million documents, has created a new Transcription Center. Anyone with a yen for the subject matter can go through scanned, handwritten documents and submit a transcription online.

Irv Cantor, a retired pharmaceutical scientist, has devoted six months to transcribing a 641-page field book written by an archaeologist traveling in 1920s China.

Two twin sisters in New Zealand love the Smithsonian’s eclectic collection. One is working on bumblebee specimens collected in the 1800s; the other a field book of a scientific couple who criss-crossed the West in the early 1900s.


VESTIGES OF PRUFROCK
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

The T.S. Eliot family home is preserved in St. Louis. And he has a star on the St. Louis Walk of Fame along with William S. Burroughs and the Rockeletes.

He came from distinguished line, one Eliot founding Washington University, and another, Charles William Eliot, a longtime president of Harvard who tried to abolish football. Daddy Eliot founded a chemical-manufacturing company, married a poet and social reformer who published two books on medieval religious figures.

They had five sons. One took over the family biz and was a research fellow in Mesopotamian archaeology for the Peabody Museum, published a novel. Another became the “most consequential poet and critic in the English language of his time.”

Present is the Prufrock Litton Furniture Company whose seven-story commanding presence once occupied an entire block. But T.S. did preserve the name in poetry.


TOUGH GUY NOVELS
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Let’s read about hard men. (1) Frank Norris, McTeague (1899) (dim-witted dentist and depraved miser wife; became 1924 silent classic “Greed” done by Erich Von Stroheim). (2) Abraham Cahan, The Rise of David Levinsky (1917) (Jewish immigrant takes to unscrupulous capitalism with a vengeance); (3) Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Huntly (1799) (Note the date. Bizarre psychological novel in which man searching for a murderer slays a cougar and a passel of Indians. Wakes to find he’s sleepwalking in pursuit of his own fears. Influenced Poe, Hawthorne, Melville); (4) Raymond Chandler, The Long Goodbye (1953) (Philip Marlowe, P.I. Probably the weakest of Chandler’s, in my opinion, other than the last lines: “So they went away and I never saw any of them again. Except for the cops. Nobody’s figured out how to say good-bye to them.”); (5) Dashiell Hammett, The Glass Key (1931) (Personally, I prefer The Thin Man).


BENDING AN ELBOW WITH MARLOWE
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

And speaking of Raymond Chandler, in The Long Goodbye, Marlowe is introduced to the gimlet by a drinking buddy, Terry Lennox, who in the first scene falls out of his Rolls blind drunk.

“Gimlet” is sweet and “infused with melancholy.”

Novelist Megan Abbott (The Fever is latest) reviews small-batch gin Langley’s No. 8. She says the Langley’s gimlet is sweet and “infused with melancholy.”


SONG OF LOVE AND BETRAYAL
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Author James Ellroy (The Black Dahlia, L.A. Confidential, Perfidia [Knopf]) was devastated as a boy by the unsolved murder of his mother. His father gave him The Badge by actor Jack Webb (Dragnet. Dum-da-dum-dum.) about L.A. crime cases too gruesome for his show. He read about the Black Dahlia murder and made it part of literary history.

His latest is inspired by “Perfidia” by Alberto Domínguez. He says the Glenn Miller version knocked him out. It “always takes me back to a time I never experienced — when L.A. had big gleaming cars and there wasn’t a particle of smog in the sky.”


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