

December 2014

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

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Recommended Citation

Strauch, Bruce (2011) "Bet You Missed It: Press Clippings -- In the News -- Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 23: Iss. 1, Article 35.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5758>

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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*

ARCHITECTURE THAT LEAKS by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

If you want a splashy architectural statement for your museum or library, expect millions in fixes during construction and after. The traditional pitched roofs and molding shed water like they're supposed to. Showboat award-winners are built in shapes that direct water into the building, making them leaky, moldy, and prone to dangerous avalanches of ice from the roof.

Frank Lloyd Wright got it all started with his utter lack of concern for dreary practicalities. When **Seagram** was selecting an architect for its landmark New York skyscraper, a company exec raved that **Wright** would design something so unique it would have advertising value. But it would be the skyscraper equivalent of a British roadster. Nothing would work.

See — **Eric Felten**, "Pardon Us, But Our Museum Is Falling Apart," *The Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 24, 2010, p.W11.

POST-MORTEM UBER-SUCCESS by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Stieg Larsson, Trotskyite and author of "The Girl Who ..." series offered the grisly manuscripts first to Piratforlag, a big mystery publisher, but the editors didn't read first-time authors. He sold them to **Norstedts Forlag** but couldn't be bothered to meet with his editor. Seven months later he went to his day job, found the elevator broken, climbed seven flights of stairs, and croaked of a heart attack.

Fourteen million copies have been sold plus two movie versions of each. All that moolah passes intestate to his relatives, cutting out his live-in girlfriend. The author notes this is strange in a country "where unregistered unions are almost the rule."

See — **Joan Acocella**, "Man of Mystery," *The New Yorker*, Jan. 10, 2011, p. 70-74

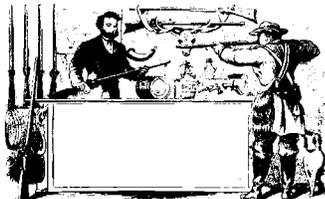
COLLEGE FOLLY by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

As Americans face the college debt bubble, they are not alone in wondering about the point of all those kids in college and where it's all heading. The French ramped up their higher ed student numbers post-WW II allowing anyone with a high school degree to attend. Best selling French author **Michel Houellebeck** has a professor character say he teaches "des absurdités contradictoires à des crétiens arrivistes."

"In Britain, it was typical of the Bambi-Leninism of **Tony Blair**" that he set a goal of 50 percent of the kids in college, and of necessity all learning was dumbed down. "But the economic necessity of a university degree increased *pari passu* with its intellectual uselessness, the absence of a degree being virtually an open confession of deficient intelligence. A degree was therefore both vital and redundant."

Tuition riots in Britain and guerilla movements started by college students in Latin America prove, "hell hath no fury like a thwarted lumpenintelligentsia."

See — **Anthony Daniels**, "Requiem for A Scheme," *National Review*, December 31, 2010, pp. 18-19.



DEATH OF THE BIG BOX BOOKSTORE by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

A recent history book club meeting in **Borders** bookstore in **White Flint Mall** was device-free. No **Kindles**, **iPads**, or **Nooks**. Not even a cell phone. Indeed the club was so geriatric they were "challenged by email."

Although the Wapo didn't come out and say it, I think this was meant to represent their core customers.

Meanwhile, **Borders** is stiffing publishers and may soon go the way of record stores. And you know the history of creative destruction. Quaint independent bookstores gave way to **B. Dalton** and **Waldenbooks** in the malls offering mostly bestsellers. **Borders** and **Barnes & Noble** squashed them. Now **Amazon** is the Godzilla stomping around.

Indeed, who wants to drive in hideous traffic to a de-humanizing mall when you can browse online and find out-of-print books the big stores would never have carried? And in the big box there were all those daunting rows upon rows of titles. At home, you find all those nifty links to similar books. An international book town of quaint, independent bookstores on your computer.

See — **Michael Rosenwald**, "Borders struggles amid rapid changes in book sales," www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/20/AR2011012006347.

BUILD A BETTER METAPHOR AND THE WORLD ... by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Are global warming skeptics growing in numbers? Perhaps **Al Gore** just needs to use a better metaphor. "Greenhouse gas" reminds us of a nice place where plants are grown. So not scary. How about "searing carbon dioxide blanket"?

Aristotle felt a command of metaphor was "the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances." **James Geary** in his book *I Is an Other* (Harper, 296 pages, \$19.99) believes that metaphors are a key to how we think and subconsciously influence our thinking. Bad metaphors lead to bad behavior.

See — **James Geary**, "Beyond Compare," *The Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 7, 2011, p.A17.

FOX ROILS THE HENHOUSE by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Cold Spring, NY is a **Currier & Ives** picturesque town on the Hudson River right across from West Point largely known for an environmental fight to keep a Con Ed power plant off Storm King Mountain. Wealthy bourgeois bohemians moved there from the Big Apple due to a nifty train connection of only one hour and the copacetic company of their own ilk. Then **Roger Ailes** of **Fox News** moved to town and bought the weekly newspaper as a hobby for his wife.

The outrage was immediate, and it got worse when he began editorializing against public school policy. **Roger** didn't care for the environmental obsession or the lack of the Pledge of Allegiance. But what really got his dander up was discovering that property taxes were the tenth highest in the nation due to the cost of the schools and were poised to rise 40%. And he printed the salaries.

A one-school, 260-student school district had a superintendent earning \$164,000 and a principal at \$123,745. A middle-school teacher got \$104,000.

See — **Peter Boyer**, "Fox Among the Chickens," *The New Yorker*, Jan. 31, 2011, p.52.