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Bet You Missed It: What Do Spies and Dinosaurs 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**

THE JOY OF TREACHERY by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Let's read about the Cambridge Spies. (1) **Kim Philby**, *My Silent War* (1968); (2) **Yuri Modin**, *My Five Cambridge Friends* (1994) (He was their handler); (3) **Miranda Carter**, *Anthony Blunt: His Lives* (2001); (4) **Phillip Knightley**, *The Master Spy* (1988) (Six days of interviews with a dying Philby where he opened up and told much. Bedrock on which every study of the five has been built.); (5) **Eleanor Philby**, *The Spy I Loved* (1968) (This deluded fool left her husband for Philby when he was out of MI6 and a news correspondent in Beirut. He ditched her when he defected to Moscow).

See — **Ben Macintyre**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 16-17, 2014, p.C10.

BOOZING WITH FAULKNER by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Author **Ace Atkins** lives, writes and drinks in Oxford, Miss. (15 novels. *The Lost Ones*. *Broken Places*. *The Forsaken*. *G.P. Putnam's Sons*. He learned much about **Faulkner** from his niece the late **Dean Faulkner Wells**.)

He says **Faulkner** had strict rules about his drinking. Vodka indoors; gin outdoors. No beer after sundown. Smoke with a fine wine and he'd turn over your glass. The first day of fall he'd take his first sip of straight bourbon. Between scotch and nothing, he'd take scotch.

Faulkner was mainly civil in his drinking. The binges were a reward for finishing a book and signing off on a galley proof.

In a review of *Four Roses Single Barrel*, **Ace** sits at the Rowan Oak Plantation table where the great man sat reviewing the galley pages of *Absalom! Absalom!* while answering the phone to condolence calls for the death of his brother in a plane crash. **Dean** was a barnstormer and the inspiration for *Pylon*. And on the 15th anniversary to the day of **Dean's** death in 1935, **Faulkner** took the call announcing he had won the Nobel Prize.

See — **Ace Atkins**, "A Whiskey Worthy of William Faulkner," *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 9-10, 2014, p.D6.



WELL, IT IS CALLED PERFORMANCE ART by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

In La Jolla, CA, **Tim Youd** is typing *The Long Goodbye* on a typewriter brand that **Raymond Chandler** used and in a locale of the book. Over five years he intends to retype one hundred classic novels. Sponsored by the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. Public invited.

See — "The March of Civilization," *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 12, 2014, p.D5.

LIVING LARGE THRU LIT by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

The weekly real estate porn section of the *WSJ* features **Dean Koontz's** 7,000 book-lined mansion in Newport Beach, CA. Gravity pool. Ocean views. **Frank Lloyd Wright** vibe plus Art Deco. 22-seat home theater based on **Wright's** Unity Temple.

See — "House Call/Dean Koontz," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 11, 2014, p.M7.

DEATH OF DINOSAURS by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Steve Cohen was threatened by his agent with never getting published again if he didn't join the 600 authors backing **Hachette** against **Amazon**.

He goes on to lambast a backward industry that last innovated with the mass-market paperback in the 1930s. Asks what other industry responds to declining sales by raising the price? Hardcover fiction is now selling for \$26.63.

The returns system dates to the Great Depression. Price-testing and cover-testing are nonexistent.

Independent bookstores could stock 35,000 titles max. **Borders** 150,000. **Amazon** can reach for the sky. Yes, your chance of self-publishing success are slim, but a typical book by a "real" publisher sells less than 1,000 copies.

See — **Steve Cohen**, "I'm Backing Amazon and Authors Should Too," *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 20, 2014, p.A13.

DOOM & GLOOM IN AUTHOR LAND by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

While on the other side of the pond, we find British authors' incomes have fallen off a cliff and the number able to scratch a living drastically declined.

Median income for the professional author in UK is £11,000, a drop of 29 percent. Put in all writers, it drops to £4,000. **Will Self** says it's the result of "an active resistance to difficulty in all its aesthetic manifestations. You've always been able to comfortably house the British literary writers who can earn all their living from books in a single room — that room used to be a reception one, now it's a back bedroom."

See — **Alison Flood**, "Authors' incomes collapse to 'abject' levels," *The Guardian.com*, July 8, 2014.

BLEAK BRITAIN by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Let's read some thoroughly depressing novels about angry young working class Brits. Many of these were movies in the '60s. (1) **Walter Greenwood**, *Love on the Dole* (1933) (grinding poverty of the Great Depression; hunger marches); (2) **John Braine**, *Room at the Top* (1957) (Demobbed soldier claws his way up in a vicious world); (3) **Alan Sillitoe**, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1959) (petty crime leads to stint in Borstal); (4) **Stan Barstow**, *A Kind of Loving* (1960) (bitterness, knocked up girlfriend of higher social rank, miserable marriage); (5) **Barry Hines**, *A Kestrel for a Knave* (1968) (bullied and miserable teen finds solace in a kestrel, support from a kindly teacher, but still turns out a nobody).

See — **Jacqueline Winspear**, "On Angry Young Men," *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 30-31, p.C10.