Bet You Missed It--What do eating disorders and strong women have in common?

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Recommended Citation

Strauch, Bruce (2018) "Bet You Missed It--What do eating disorders and strong women have in common?," Against the Grain: Vol. 28: Iss. 3, Article 34.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7380

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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.

YUM! EATING DISORDERS
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)


PADDYWHACKERY
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Her detractors call it Celtic Disneyland and the garden equivalent of Lucky Charms. But Mary Reynolds has multiple fans and is famous for upending the garden establishment with subversive designs evoking mystical Irish landscapes.

Her new book The Garden Awakening is a hot seller on Amazon and her biopic Dare to be Wild won an audience prize at the Dublin International Film Festival.

Her first creation was inspired by the W.B. Yeats poem “The Stolen Child.” A path led to a moss-covered island in the shape of a sleeping fairy woman.

“Faries, to me, embody the spirit of the land. I wanted to lead people back to that place.”


THE RETURN OF BRITISH FOR-PAY LIBRARIES
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Bromley House Library is a quiet haven in a Grade II-listed Georgian house in the center of Nottingham, England. It's having its 200th anniversary as a subscription library. The cost is £96/year. You can drink coffee and read in a quiet corner rather like a club.

The Public Libraries Act of 1850 (yes, it’s that old) largely replaced the subscription ones with local government free libraries. But now they’re back in popularity.

The first one was the Leadhill Miners Library in Lanarkshire founded in 1741 by 21 miners, a minister and a schoolmaster. Other famous ones are the Portico Library in Manchester, the Leeds Library, and the Birmingham and Midlands Institute. The Liverpool Athenaeum is the priciest at £795/year.

Heritage and history value is a huge draw.

Plus, I would imagine, no derelicts, Internet smut and noisy children doesn’t hurt.

See — Standish Shoker, “The fall and rise of subscription libraries,” BBC News, April, 10, 2016

FIRST NOVEL AND THE BACK END
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

No doubt you learned in high school that Pamela was both the first novel and epistolary. Samuel Richardson was highly puritanical and sought to impart a lesson in just and prudent actions “in the common concerns of life.”

While Pamela’s letters are lively and conversational, they are consumed with issues of virtue and honesty. Alexander Pope said the novel would do more good than volumes of sermons.

It was wildly popular and inspired merchandise from tea cups to fans, spurious sequels, a theatrical version plus a comic opera. Henry Fielding, a failed playwright studying to be a lawyer found it so unbearable he wrote a spoof called Shamela with the girl a slattern. And Joseph Andrews about her brother.

And of course he later gave us the rambler Tom Jones.


OH JOY! LET’S READ ABOUT BAD MARRIAGES
by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Richard Yates, Revolutionary Road (1961) (Madame Bovary set in 1950s Connecticut suburbs); (2) Paula Fox, Desperate Characters (1970) (anguish in Brooklyn before it was gentrified); (3) Saul Bellow, Humboldt’s Gift (1975) (divorcing man told by judge you can’t dabble at marriage); (4) Sinclair Lewis, Main Street (1920) (feminism encounters American boosterism); (5) Evan S. Connell, Mrs. Bridge & Mr. Bridge (1959, 1969) (You read it right. Companion novels about emptiness within a marriage.)