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## Bet You Missed It--What do eating disorders and strong women 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**

## YUM! EATING DISORDERS by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

**Molly Keane**, *Good Behaviour* (1981) (Catch that 'u'? Anglo-Irish aristocrat with anorexic mum who eats in rebellion. And roast woodcock with blood leaking onto the toast.); (2) **Hilary Mantel**, *An Experiment in Love* (1995) (anorexia at the University of London); (3) **Caroline Blackwood**, *The Stepdaughter* (1976) (mean stepmother with daughter who eats cake-mix cakes); (4) **Junot Diaz**, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) (horny, binge-eating college boy from the Dominican diaspora); (5) **Doris Lessing**, *The Grass is Singing* (1950) (Southern Rhodesia, anorexia, and sexual tension).

See — **Bee Wilson**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 13-14, 2016, p. C10 (Wilson is the author of *First Bite: How We Learn to Eat*)

## 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

## LET'S READ ABOUT STRONG WOMEN by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

**Stacy Schiff**, *Cleopatra: A Life* (no beauty [they say] but irresistible sex appeal) (2010); (2) **Cokie Roberts**, *Capital Dames* (19th century; women with strong lungs and whalebone corsets hectoring Lincoln et al) (2015); (3) **Jane Godall**, *In the Shadow of Man* (Jane and the apes of course) (1971); (4) **Linda Fairstein**, *Devil's Bridge* (fiction: feisty prosecutor Alexandra Cooper) (2015); (5) **Jim Benton**, *The Frandidate* (humorous fiction: Franny is a kid and a mad scientist) (2008).

See — **Lesley Stahl**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 8-9, 2016, p.C16. (Lesley is correspondent for "60 Minutes" and author of *Becoming Grandma: The Joys and Science of the New Grandparenting*.)

## 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.

"Fairies, to me, embody the spirit of the land. I wanted to lead people back to that place."

See — **Jennie Rothenberg Gritz**, "Wild Irish Sage," *Smithsonian*, June, 2016, p.18.

## 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 ribald *Tom Jones*.

See — **Adelle Waldman**, "The Man Who Made the Novel," *The New Yorker*, May 16, 2016, p.84.



## 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.)

See — **Douglas Kennedy**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 23-24, 2016, p.C10. (Kennedy's most recent novel is *The Blue Hour*.)