

10-15-2012

Well met: Renaissance Faires and the American counterculture, Rachel Lee Rubin (book review)

Kathleen McCallister

William & Mary, krmccallister@wm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/librariespubs>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McCallister, Kathleen, Well met: Renaissance Faires and the American counterculture, Rachel Lee Rubin (book review) (2012). *Library Journal*, 137(17), 120.

<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/librariespubs/41>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the William & Mary Libraries at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in W&M Libraries Publications by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.

work will enjoy Flynn's further exploration into the subject.—Lisa M. Jordan, Spring Hill Lib., Gardner, KS

Klam, Julie. *Friendkeeping: A Field Guide to the People You Love, Hate, and Can't Live Without*. Riverhead: Penguin Group (USA). Oct. 2012. c.224p. ISBN 9781594488061. \$25.95. PSYCH

Klam (*Love at First Bark*) calls friends the "comfort food" of life. With her characteristic self-deprecating wit, she shares stories of her own attempts at befriending, from the insecurity-driven missteps of childhood to the competition-based conflicts in early adulthood and the satisfying long-distance relationships of midlife. Klam has an admitted affinity for eccentric types, and her anecdotes are as amusing as they are insightful. In recounting her own experiences, she demonstrates the importance of overcoming such common friendship hurdles as time constraints, envy, illness, and "unfortunate" partners. She explains how and when to let go with grace. Klam, like Ellen Goodman (*I Know Just What You Mean: The Power of Friendship in Women's Lives*), sends a poignant and powerful message to women: don't take your friends for granted, and nurture and preserve the friendships you treasure. **VERDICT** Friendship is a universally appealing theme for women, and this entertaining book will strike responsive chords with women of all ages. Recommended.—Linda F. Petty, Wimberley, TX

SOCIAL SCIENCE

Nelson, Jennifer. *Airbrushed Nation: The Lure & Loathing of Women's Magazines*. Seal: Perseus. Oct. 2012. c.251p. ISBN 9781580054133. pap. \$16. soc sci

Freelance journalist Nelson presents an insider's account of the "chick slick" business, leaving no page unturned in this consideration of the focus, articles, advertising, and other editorial and business facets of women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Vogue*, among others. At first glance, the topic may not seem to warrant a book-length treatment, but Nelson, a veteran contributor to the magazines she is examining, does a laudable job of relating these magazines' histories, as well as investigating their different target audiences, story construction, advertising strategies, and how the magazines deal with such hot-button issues as health, sexuality, and social issues. Throughout the lively text are numerous sidebars containing little-known facts, quotes from other insiders, and comments from the magazines' readers. Nelson is clearly a reader of these magazines, but makes a strong case for their need to add

more substance to their "fluff." **VERDICT** Although the book is meaty enough for both feminist and communications scholars, it is also an eye-opening read that could be enjoyed by general fans of these magazines.—Sarah Statz Cords, The Reader's Advisor Online, Middleton, WI

★Rubin, Rachel Lee. *Well Met: Renaissance Faires and the American Counterculture*. New York Univ. Nov. 2012. c.352p. illus. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780814771389. \$35. soc sci

Begun by schoolteacher Phyllis Patterson as a class activity in her backyard and fueled by a perfect storm of location, talent, and the free-spirited atmosphere in 1960s California, the Renaissance faire concept weathered initial struggles and became a wide-ranging series of gatherings and events that now draw in more than a million visitors each year. Rubin (*American Studies*, Univ. of Massachusetts, Boston; *Immigration and Popular Culture*) focuses on the faire as phenomenon, and while the book presents an in-depth look at its 50-year existence, it's with an eye toward exploring its continued place in the counterculture and its significant effects on subcultural movements in music, crafts, and theater. Quotes from lifelong crafters, performers, and attendees give a candid look at the faire's history, its increasing corporatization, and the attraction of its non-mainstream views of community, the arts, self-image, and sexuality. Rubin also devotes two chapters to exploring the faire's detractors and its portrayals in fiction to give the fullest possible view of this institution's place in American culture. **VERDICT** The results are a must read for anyone interested in a nonstereotypical view of the faire, its adherents, and why it retains its appeal decades after its inception.—Kathleen McCallister, Univ. of South Carolina, Columbia, Lib.

TRAVEL & GEOGRAPHY

Honton, Joseph. *There's a God for That: Optimism in the Face of Earthquakes, Tsunamis, and Meltdowns*. Frankalmoigne. Oct. 2012. c.168p. illus. ISBN 9780985642303. \$28; pap. ISBN 9780985642310. \$16. TRAV

Geographer and lifelong traveler Honton's 2011 journey through Japan's Shimane prefecture was interrupted by the great Tōhoku earthquake, tsunami, and subsequent meltdown of Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Here, he preserves that feeling of sudden disruption, as early, unhurried chapters in which he discusses local delicacies and museums are suddenly replaced by a stark timeline tracking events from the first signs of earthquake activity.

Rather than focus entirely on the unfolding disaster at this point, Honton tries to document both the progression of the crisis and his simultaneous travels through Shimane, to jarring effect. The focus swings wildly from hot springs bathing etiquette to antinuclear arguments. In particular, the exploration of optimism mentioned in the subtitle seems to be completely absent. Leaving aside more detailed studies of the earthquake and meltdown, of which there are several, a more thorough and satisfying treatments of the human experience of the disaster can be found in the anthology *March Was Made of Yarn: Reflections on the Japanese Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Meltdown*, edited by Elmer Luke and David Karashima. **VERDICT** What could have been a light, entertaining travelog attempts to cover far too much ground in far too few pages, leading to an overall feeling of glibness and superficiality. Not recommended.—Neil Derksen, Huntington, IN

Millman, Lawrence. *Hiking to Siberia: Curious Tales of Travel and Travelers*. Sunnyoutside, dist. by SPD. Oct. 2012. c.120p. ISBN 9781934513378. \$16. TRAV

Millman (*Our Like Will Not Be There Again: Notes from the West of Ireland*) has focused primarily on remote places in his travel writing. Of his many sharp, amusing essays, these are among his best. The 22 very short pieces, the majority of which appeared originally in such publications as *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Los Angeles Times*, have no geographic or even thematic thread in common, though he tends to favor cold, seldom-visited places where ice cream cones and souvenir T-shirts are nowhere to be seen. The title essay is about an eccentric, homesick Russian immigrant (who was probably mentally ill), Lillian Alling, who walked from New York to the Bering Strait and tried to continue on to Siberia around 1930. (Unsuccessfully, as one might guess.) The book's appeal lies in offbeat stories like this. **VERDICT** Quick and easy to read in a small, portable format, this title is perfect for in-flight diversion. However, because these pieces have already appeared elsewhere and are not enhanced with illustrations or maps, it is not a high-priority acquisition.—Harold M. Otness, formerly with Southern Oregon Univ. Lib., Ashland

CORRECTION Akashic Books is the correct publisher of Lowell Hawthorne & Michael A. Grant's *The Baker's Son: My Life in Business: The Story of How the Golden Krust Empire Was Built, from a Village Shop in Jamaica to the Heights of American Enterprise*, reviewed in the September 15 issue.

Copyright of Library Journal is the property of Media Source, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.