

Friday, Oct. 30 - Sunday, Nov. 1, 2009

WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE



Beyond the grave

Stories entombed in Europe's grand cemeteries

European eel, slipping away | The Ashmolean's new look

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Staglieno Cemetery, Genoa, Italy

COVER, Monteverde's Oneto tomb at Staglieno Cemetery, Genoa
Photograph: Fabrizio Troiani / Alamy

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WEEKEND JOURNAL

EUROPE

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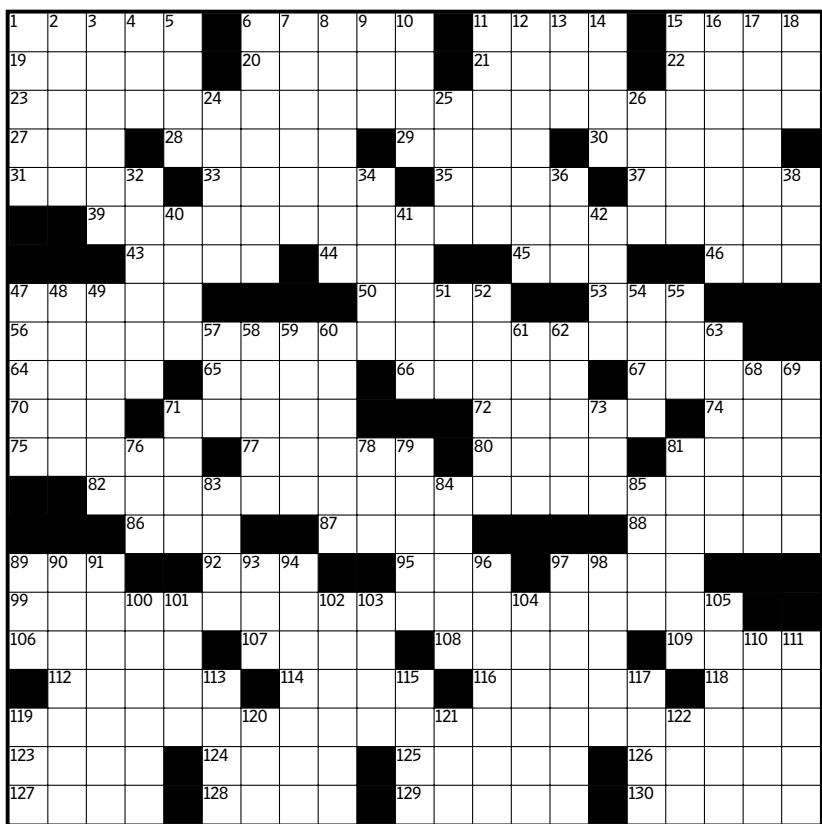
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Last Week's Solution



The relentless rise of power jeans

World leaders and executives wear them; how to get denim right

WHEN DMITRY MEDVEDEV dined with the Obamas in July, the Russian president appeared both relaxed and powerful. He hit that elusive note by pairing his fine blazer, crisp buttoned shirt and expensive-looking leather-soled shoes with dark, straight jeans.

On Style

CHRISTINA BINKLEY

Power jeans are increasingly common in high-ranking business and political circles. Indeed, jeans are now a legitimate part of the global power-dress lexicon, worn to influential confabs where the wearers want to signal they're serious—but not fussy—and innovative.

The look started with the young but has crossed into gray-haired circles. In preparation for a meeting with the U.S. president of Swiss watchmaker IWC, Larry Seiden, a 56-year-old fine-watch collector from San Jose, Calif., bought a pair of black Agave jeans from a high-end boutique. "They tailored them for me and I have to tell you, I really love them," he says. "Now I'm thinking of getting another pair in blue denim."

Jeans are recruiting new fans among even dressy executives. "I'm not really a jeans guy," said Gilles Mendel, chief executive and designer of J. Mendel furs and evening wear, not long ago, sitting in his New York office. Still, he went with a snug set of dark blue Acme jeans under a black Dior blazer.

Chosen well, jeans can suggest the wearer is confident and modern. Traditionally cut blue jeans carry a whiff of the laborer about them, so denim on a leader suggests a willingness to roll up the sleeves and dig in. There's also something of the rebel in a pair of jeans. In the boardroom, that can be read as creative.

But jeans must be carefully paired with a pressed shirt and good shoes to be elevated to business class. And some industries haven't (yet) become open to denim as power wear. Banks and accounting-firm boardrooms, for instance, remain decidedly woolen. New York-based career adviser Jonscott Turco says jeans are generally a "no-brainer" in the media, manufactur-

ing and creative industries, but not in financial services and law firms.

Power jeans may best be left to the executives in mixed-rank groups. Being a junior person wearing jeans in a room full of pinstripes could spell "youthful blunder." Perhaps the best rule is that of the high-priced boutique: If you have to ask, you can't afford to wear them.

It's also possible to go awry with the wrong jeans in the right place. Barack Obama, whose wife and children have been heralded as fashion icons, was ridiculed for wearing dorky "dad jeans" (baggy and high-rise) to pitch at an All-Star game. When Tony Blair wore jeans to meet George Bush two years ago, the British prime minister was criticized for his pants' snug fit.

Few items of clothing speak as loudly, to the positive or negative, as a pair of jeans. As with tuxedos and Hawaiian shirts, wear them right (on the latter, only to a luau if you're a mainlander), or not at all.

To wit, fit is as essential for jeans as for tailored slacks. Eric Jennings, Saks Fifth Avenue men's fashion director, suggests that men keep their executive jeans "dark and straight." And never dress as if the jeans had been switched out from formal suit pants at the last minute: No fancy French-cuffed shirts with jeans, he advises.

In fact, getting power jeans right involves lots of no's. No distressed jeans at work. No metal studs. No acid washes. No lavish embroidery. No boot cut. No skinny. No pedal pushers, shorts or cutoffs. No baggy high-rise. No super-low-rise. No holes. And no fussy ironing.

From their 19th-century origins until the 1950s, jeans were mainly work wear. Levi's historian Lynn Downey says denim was demonized in the '50s with wearers like James Dean and Marlon Brando. Nothing could have been better for sales. "Denim was code for rebellion," she says. "So every young boy wanted to wear it."

We have Steve Jobs to thank for today's power jeans. His uniform of Levi's 501s and a black turtleneck was synonymous with innovation in the '90s; now, in the tech world, dressy pants can be viewed with suspicion. "When someone shows up to an interview or meeting in anything other than jeans, it shows inexperience and a lack of confidence," says

Andrew Dumont, vice president of marketing for text-messaging company Tatango.

No wonder the folks at Levi's are reverential toward Apple's founder. Steve Jobs, says You Nguyen, a Levi's executive in charge of women's merchandising and design, "is the Marlon Brando of his time."

Men in blue: Many leaders wear jeans for a power look including (from left to right)

Nicolas Sarkozy, Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev.



left to right: Agence France-Presse/Getty Images; Associated Press (2)

Arbitrage



Rimowa Topas Titanium suitcase

City	Local currency	€
London	£570	€620
Paris	€645	€645
Frankfurt	€779	€779
Brussels	€795	€795
Rome	€799	€799
New York	\$1,350	€901
Hong Kong	HK\$10,480	€903

Note: Prices of 32" multiwheel model, plus taxes, as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

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A new look for Auntie Ashmolean

BY PAUL LEVY

THE ASHMOLEAN, the oldest museum in Britain, has a claim to being the oldest in the world.

"With the opening of its doors on 24th May 1683," says its Web site, "the Ashmolean Museum provided a setting in which the private collection emerged into the public domain. Even the use of the term 'museum' was a novelty in English."

As the museum of art and archaeology in this formerly industrial city—where the "town" versus "gown" conflict has long been resolved in favor of the academic camp—it is a teaching and research department of the University of Oxford.

To those of us who live near Oxford, the Ashmolean (pronounced Ash-mo'-lee-an), domiciled for the last 164 years in architect and archaeologist Charles Cockerell's handsome 1845 neoclassical edifice, is like the house of a beloved and eccentric old aunt: slightly shabby, but crammed full of treasures, most of which we've never seen. We've missed visiting while it has been closed for 10 months for building work. Next Saturday and Sunday, however, it re-opens to the public. Auntie's gone, the old place is in new hands, and it has had a whole new building added to the back of it by award-winning contemporary architect Rick Mather.

For Ashmolean fans, this means no more hidden gems. Henry VII's finely embroidered funeral pall has been taken down from its spot by a back staircase and now hangs in a prominent position in a new gallery. The gasp-eliciting Marshall porcelain collection is in new vitrines, so that it now looks like a fantasy china shop. Some stunning purple, green and blue floral design Iznik tiles that you couldn't really see on their back corridor wall are spotlighted.

In the old Ashmolean, you were bound to come upon something you'd never seen before if you burrowed long enough in the corridors, but it was a bit of a scandal that many wonderful things couldn't be displayed at all. Now, after a £61 million-funding injection (including a £15 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, support from the Linbury Trust and an awful lot of fundraising), the Ashmolean "has at least doubled its display space," according to Director Christopher Brown. Mr. Mather's new building provides 39 galleries, including four sensational temporary exhibition spaces, an education center, up-to-the-minute conservation studios and a rooftop restaurant.

It all actually started in 1659, when the two famous father and son gardeners, both named John Tradescant (the big genus named after them, *Tradescantia*, has about 50 species), gave their collection of natural-history specimens to the antiquarian, Elias Ashmole, who in turn donated it to the University of Oxford in 1677. The museum then opened in 1683, providing access to the public.

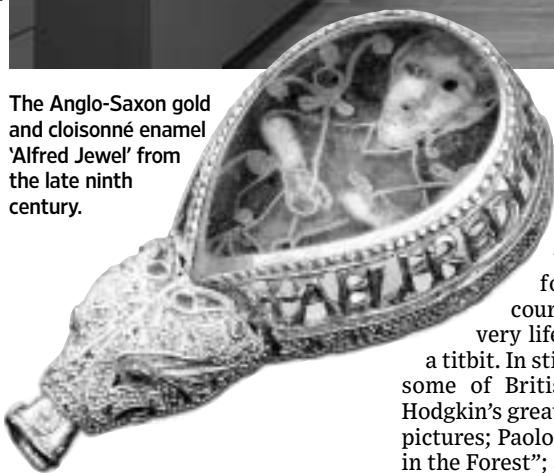
During the 18th century, these collections lost much of their scientific relevance, though there were a couple of big acquisitions, namely the Anglo-Saxon 9th-century gold and cloisonné enamel "Alfred Jewel" and ethnological materials collected on Captain James Cook's 1772-75 Pacific voyage. Big expan-

Oxford



The Islamic art gallery.

The Anglo-Saxon gold and cloisonné enamel 'Alfred Jewel' from the late ninth century.



sion took place during the tenure of Sir Arthur Evans (1851-1941), the excavator of Knossos on the Greek island of Crete who developed the concept of a "Minoan civilization." He persuaded the university to build the neoclassical Cockerell structure, acquired the university's art collections and ceded a lot of ethnological material to the then new Pitt-Rivers Museum. In the 20th century, the Ashmolean absorbed the coins and medals scattered around the university and then swallowed up the Indian Institute's collections of first-rate Islamic, Indian, Chinese and Japanese objects.

It's this higgledy-piggledy, never-say-no to anything good assembly that has made the Ashmolean's holdings so great. Its attention span stretches from the Neolithic era to today, and it boasts such disparate superlatives as the world's largest group of Raphael drawings; Europe's most important collection of pre-Dynastic Egyptian material; the sole great Minoan collection in Britain; and the best collection of modern Chinese art in the West.

Christopher Brown, an Oxford man himself and an expert on 17th-century Dutch and Flemish painting, took me on a whirlwind tour of the new building. We raced through the world-class Japanese collections; the extraordinary Islamic collections; the 300,000-item coin and medal Money Gallery; saw the never-before-exhibited Arabian "carved-wood doors from Jeddah given by Lawrence of Arabia, as well as his own robes," as Mr. Brown pointed

out in the new textile gallery.

In the European ceramics gallery there is a life-size 18th-century table-setting for a formal dessert course, complete with a very lifelike mouse stealing a titbit. In still other galleries are some of British painter Howard Hodgkin's great collection of Indian pictures; Paolo Uccello's "The Hunt in the Forest"; a pair of Titians; the odd picture by Michaelangelo, Piero di Cosimo or Pablo Picasso; and the unsurpassed Hill Collection of Musical Instruments.

Many of the galleries weren't yet fully installed, yet this quick march-through lasted an hour and a half; so you can see why the Ashmolean is something like a smaller New York Metropolitan Museum of Art in the heart of England.

Why, you might ask, should all these glorious things be kept in one place? "We needed a new conceptual frame," Mr. Brown said, "a new display strategy." The collections used to be displayed "with a traditional emphasis on typology and differences." Pots were all together, as

were prints, paintings, coins and so on. The entering visitor still sees Cockerell's grand vista but takes a different route around the building. Called "Crossing Cultures—Crossing Time," the idea, Mr. Brown said, "is that there are many ways to understand any object, from looking at it in its conventional, specific historical context to looking at it across cultures, as an object with functions that are universal, emphasizing connections, contacts and cultural exchanges."

For example, the floor dedicated to the ancient world has artifacts dating from pre-history to 700 A.D., showing the flowering of cultures from Ancient Egypt and the Near East and Greece and Rome, to China and India. With a sweep of his arm, Mr. Brown pointed out a startling material link made by a collection of Gandhar sculptures, including the late 2nd-3rd century A.D. schist standing "Buddha in a toga," the drapery of its robes resembling classical sculptures—a visible, tangible bond between the galleries showing antique art of the West and those of India and China. Auntie's old house looks brand new.

—Paul Levy is a writer based in Oxfordshire.



Carved-wood doors from Jeddah given by Lawrence of Arabia.



'Old Houses' (1948) by L.S. Lowry; estimate: £300,000-£500,000.

Attenborough directs art sale

ADD COLLECTOR TO the multifaceted profile of English actor-producer-director-entrepreneur Richard Attenborough.

Collecting MARGARET STUDER

On Nov. 11, Sotheby's will auction 51 works from a collection of British 20th-century art that Lord and Lady Attenborough assembled over more than 60 years. In the catalog, Lord Attenborough notes their passion for art was such that when they moved to their house in Richmond, southwest of London, in the 1940s, "we could not afford carpets or curtains, but more importantly for us we had pictures on the wall."

The Attenboroughs say they are selling the pieces because they are running out of display space. Most pieces come from the century's middle decades, created by such artists as L.S. Lowry, Christopher Nevins, Graham Sutherland, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore and Christopher Wood.

They are works that have the "ability to kick me in the gut," Lord Attenborough says. He says many of his works influenced him as a film director. Lord Attenborough has won several film awards, including two Academy Awards and three Golden Globes.

"Old Houses" (1948) by Lowry is a top lot. Lowry was the artist of the little man, creating urban, industrial scenes filled with small figures going about their daily lives. In this painting, the area around a group of well-worn houses is busy with life but there is a sense that many of these figures are unemployed, just hanging around in hope of a future wage (estimate: £300,000-£500,000).

"The Battlefields of Britain," a World War II painting by Nevins, shows a beautiful English landscape on a summer day. The scenery is outwardly peaceful but features an almost invisible group of planes in the distance. The picture tells the story of the German Luftwaffe's massive air attack over Britain in 1940 (estimate: £100,000-£150,000). Lord Attenborough served in the Royal Air Force during World War II.

A number of Nevins's famous World War I prints are also in the sale, depicting the daily life of soldiers on the march or in the trenches. Lord Attenborough says these prints particularly influenced his ironic hit musical "Oh! What a Lovely War!" (1969) whose all-star cast included Laurence Olivier and Dirk Bogarde.

"Card Players" (circa 1922), which shows a group of men in a Paris restaurant enjoying a game of cards, by Christopher Wood (1901-1930), was bought by the Attenboroughs in the 1940s. Lord Attenborough was forced to sell it in the late 1970s to help finance the 1982 film "Gandhi," for which he won two Academy Awards. But he says, as soon as "I could afford it, I bought it back" (estimate: £30,000-£50,000).

ROSS ON ROTH

Ross Miller, general editor of Philip Roth's complete work for the Library of America, offers his selection of five indispensable works.

The Ghost Writer (1979)



The first of nine novels featuring the writer Nathan Zuckerman as protagonist. On a visit to one of his literary heroes, E. I. Lonoff, the budding novelist meets and falls in love with a woman he imagines is Anne Frank. In conflict with his well-meaning but controlling father and experiencing the turbulence of his own sexual freedom, Zuckerman seeks validation from Lonoff while he dreams of seducing his hero's lovely house guest. Caught between the purity of his literary ambitions and the reality of his appetites, Nathan does what he does best. He writes his way out.

The Facts (1988)



Philip Roth lays out the unembellished story of his first 36 years in this sober chronicle: The early years in Newark, college, the extraordinary girls he leaves for the horror he marries, the unintended consequences of publishing his first stories and the real price of fame after "Portnoy's Complaint." In a fictional prologue and epilogue written in the form of letters, Roth transforms a pedestrian memoir or autobiography into a brilliantly honest exercise in auto-criticism. The facts and fictions taken together accurately depict the life and mind of a completely original writer.

Sabbath's Theater (1995)



At age 64, Mickey Sabbath finds a new vocation, rejuvenated by the universal antagonist, death. On a valedictory trip to the Jersey shore, he encounters a 100-year-old man who has a box of his brother's things—hairs from his beard, an American flag—all that is left of a young man killed in war. Holding these relics in his hands, Sabbath is overcome. Brother, parents, lover all gone, and he cannot kill himself. The playful exuberance of this mocking, lustful, nasty, relentless wreck of a man is too great to extinguish.

The Counterlife (1986)

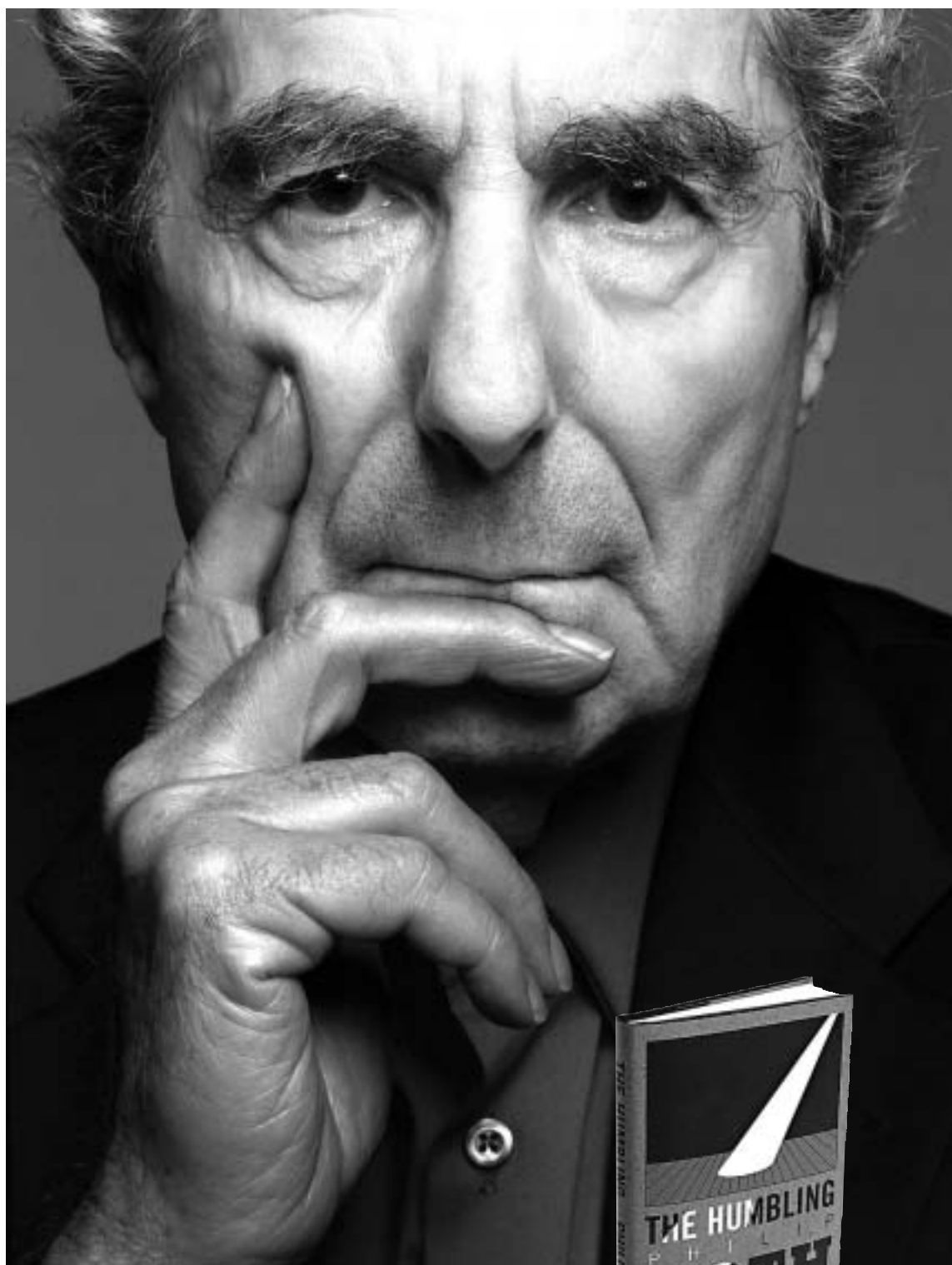


Radical plot twists and multiple points-of-view play out against real history in real places. Nathan's brother, Henry, dies during heart surgery only to be discovered living happily as an Israeli settler. After Nathan dies on the operating table, he finds himself unexpectedly alive in London, married to a refined English woman about to give birth to his first child. These "counterlives" are the enacted versions of alternative endings in fiction—the what-ifs of personal history that, if realized, would utterly transform our lives.

The Human Stain (2000)



Set in 1998, a season of national hysteria when a sitting president was publicly humiliated for a sexual lark with a young woman. Coleman Silk, a distinguished professor at a New England college, is forced to retire when his colleagues denounce him as a racist. Although a slander and a lie, the charge leads to the unraveling of a lifetime's worth of deception that even his most dedicated antagonists could not ever have imagined. Roth interweaves Silk's personal history with the "persecuting spirit" of America right at the end of the 20th century.



Roth on Roth

Philip Roth discusses depression, acting and surprising his readers

By JEFFREY A. TRACHTENBERG

PHILIP ROTH'S 30th book finds him in the middle of an unusual project: a series of four short novels. His new work, "The Humbling," is the third in the quartet, and it's among his darkest yet.

Like his recent two short novels, 2006's "Everyman," and 2008's "Indignation," "The Humbling" is melancholy—a meditation in which all things fade, happiness is a deceit, and health, both mental and physical, is fragile. The book focuses on Simon Axler, a renowned actor who has lost his gifts. His wife leaves him, he is briefly institutionalized, and after he is released, he falls into a spiritless routine. Then he meets a younger woman and is recharged, even hopeful.

At the age of 76, Mr. Roth continues to explore the themes that have defined his work: the eroding of family ties; man's struggle with depression and loneliness as he ages. Although a British gambling company placed him among the favorites for this year's Nobel Prize, he didn't win. "I don't expect anything from them," he says. "And they usually reward my expectation."

In an hour-long interview at the New York office of his literary agent, Andrew Wylie, he talked about great actors, literature and buying old books on the Internet.

Q: What are you reading these days?

Mostly what I'm doing is rereading stuff that I read in my 20s, writers who were big in my reading life who I haven't read in 50 years. I'm talking about Dostoyevsky, Faulkner, Turgenev, Conrad. I'm trying to reread the best before ... I die.

Q: Any new writers that you would recommend?

I don't follow what's going on with modern fiction.

Q: Who do you consider your peers?

I have quite a few peers. Don DeLillo. Ed Doctorow. Reynolds Price. Joyce Carol Oates. Toni Morrison. It's a pretty good generation. We just lost three giants in the last couple of years. Saul Bellow. Norman Mailer. And John Updike. American literature is a powerful literature. These people are all of the first rank.

Q: Are you online, and if so, what sites do you visit?

Yes, but I don't use it except to buy groceries and books. I buy from FreshDirect. I also use Amazon, and I buy a lot of used books from AbeBooks and Alibris. It's wonderful when you want to find something ob-

scure and there it is for \$3.98. It's the greatest book bazaar that has ever existed.

Q: In "The Humbling," Simon, depressed, describes himself as "a loathsome man who was nothing more than the inventory of his defects." What about Camus's suggestion that life's purpose is to keep rolling the rock up the hill?

He's talking about the state of depression. It's not uncommon for people in depression to be the inventory of their deficiencies. You can't tell a person in a depression what they are supposed to do. The point is they can't do anything. They are incapable of mustering their power, as he is.

Q: Did Simon believe that his stay in the mental hospital had value? I couldn't decide if you were mocking therapy or applauding it.

Neither. I'm just recounting what happened to him as best as I can present it. How he doesn't get better, and how he does get better, and the people he meets in the hospital. There is no stance on psychiatric hospitals. Art therapy is child-like, but deliberately so.

Q: Simon's agent, a sympa-

thetic character, visits and encourages Simon to return to the stage. How did you go about understanding the acting experience?

That's called the writer's imagination. I've watched actors for years. I've always been interested in them. I think I know something about how they work. I read a few books. There's one that I mention, Harold Guskin's book ("How to Stop Acting"). But I can't say that I learned much from research. It was mostly intuitive on my part.

Q: What separates great acting from the mediocre?

Instinct, I think, is the difference between the ordinary actor and the great actor. It's another word for magic. The first four words of my book are: "He'd lost his magic." I think what great actors have is instinct that strikes us as magical.

Q: Anybody you'd put in that category?

We have great film actors. Robert DeNiro, Al Pacino, Meryl Streep, to name just a few.

Q: Is it about a deeper understanding of the work?

They instinctively know how to present it. It may not have to do with understanding. It has to do with the gift for presentation. Simon is a thinking man. But it isn't the thinking that makes the actor. You can't be a good actor without the thinking, but paradoxically it isn't the thinking that makes the acting. What makes the acting is the actor, not the thinker, though a stupid good actor is a contradiction in terms. There is no such thing as a stupid good actor. Intelligence plays a part.

Q: What do popular writers such as James Patterson and Nora Roberts have that attracts such huge numbers of readers?

I don't know their books. They are entertainers. They aren't writers. And entertainers have a wide appeal. People love entertainment. They have a different kind of magic.

Q: How does Charles Dickens fit? He wrote for monthly publications.

He's one of those people with great popular appeal ... and is a genius. They are the rarest of all birds. Our great writers didn't have that. Melville died in obscurity. Faulkner wasn't widely read. Bellow wasn't widely read. The best are rarely widely read There's always been a popular novel and every once in a while a genius happens to be a popular novelist. But that's not the rule.

Q: What makes Simon want to become a father? It was surprising.

It was meant to be surprising. One always wants to surprise the reader near the end of a book. He thinks this is a way of completing his rehabilitation and thoroughly domesticating his relationship with Pegen. To rid the relationship of its perverse side, and conventionalize it, domesticate it. So that's why he wants that. He feels himself on the edge of recovery, doesn't he, when he embarks on that. That's going to do it.

Q: Are you working on a new book?

I just finished one. It will be out in a year. It's called "Nemesis," which is the fourth of these short novels that I've written: "Everyman," "Indignation" and "The Humbling." Together the four make a quartet. I take as little time as possible between works. I can't stand not working.

Tomb

Europe's grand cemeteries are a treasure trove of buried history

BY PAUL SONNE

NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV, THE Soviet leader known for his steam-rolling straight-talk, strutted into a modern art show at one of Moscow's famous exhibition halls in 1962 and explained, without mincing words, that the avant-garde art on display looked like dog droppings. "Why do you disfigure the faces of the Soviet people?" the excitable Khrushchev cried, rebuking the artists for their abstractions. He hurled a particularly offensive epithet at sculptor Ernst Neizvestny, who responded—in a perilous display of public candor—that Khrushchev, though he was Soviet premier, didn't know a single thing about art. A heated face-off ensued.

More than a decade later, long after the two men reached a truce, Neizvestny sculpted Khrushchev's tombstone. The monument, commissioned by Khrushchev's family and erected in Moscow's Novodevichy Cemetery, features black granite colliding with white marble in cubist formations that bracket Khrushchev's bronze head. The design represents the conflicted ying-and-yang of Khrushchev's character—the bright, progressive reformer who denounced Josef Stalin and closed the Gulag, intertwined painfully with the dark, shoe-banging man who stuck to retrograde tactics and encouraged building the Berlin Wall. Visitors took to the candid monument, which became, so to speak, dog-doo *de rigueur*. The Soviet authorities closed Novodevichy Cemetery to the public in the 1970s soon after Khrushchev was interred there, only reopening it in 1987 during *Perestroika*.

Standing at Khrushchev's grave, one need only look around the graveyard, in the shadow of the dark salmon cupolas of the 16th-century Novodevichy Convent, to unearth an intriguing, tortured history. There's the grave of Nadezhda Alliluyeva, found dead in an apparent suicide after a spat with her husband, Stalin; there's the tomb of Nikolai Gogol, whose remains arrived at the cemetery from Danilov Monastery, which the secret police converted to a detention center in the 1930s; and there's the grave of Anton Chekhov, whose tubercular body was reportedly transported back to Moscow from Western Europe in 1904 in a railcar reserved for fresh oysters. The Russian cemetery, like its grand European counterparts, is a tapestry of cultural history that brings to bear the idiosyncrasies and paradoxes of individual personalities. But it also illustrates, in shades of stone grey, a vexed social topography of the past.

Across Europe, historically minded tourists are increasingly appreciating the allure of grand cemeteries like Novodevichy. Vienna's Zentralfriedhof, with over three million graves, including those of the twice-exhumed Ludwig van Beethoven and musical modernist Arnold Schönberg, has seen an increase in visitors recently. So has Venice's Isola di San Michele, the crowded, cypress-speckled funerary Isle of the Dead, a former prison island that was transformed into a cemetery at the behest of Napoleon and now houses the graves of Ezra Pound and Sergei Diaghilev. It is easy to understand the appeal. As Mark Twain noted after seeing the eerily expressive funerary sculptures of Genoa's Staglieno Cemetery, "To us these far-reaching ranks of bewitching forms are a hundredfold more lovely than the damaged and dingy statuary they have saved from the wreck of ancient art and set up in the galleries of Paris for the worship of the world." Compared to dingy museums, Europe's landscapes of the dead are infinitely more alive.

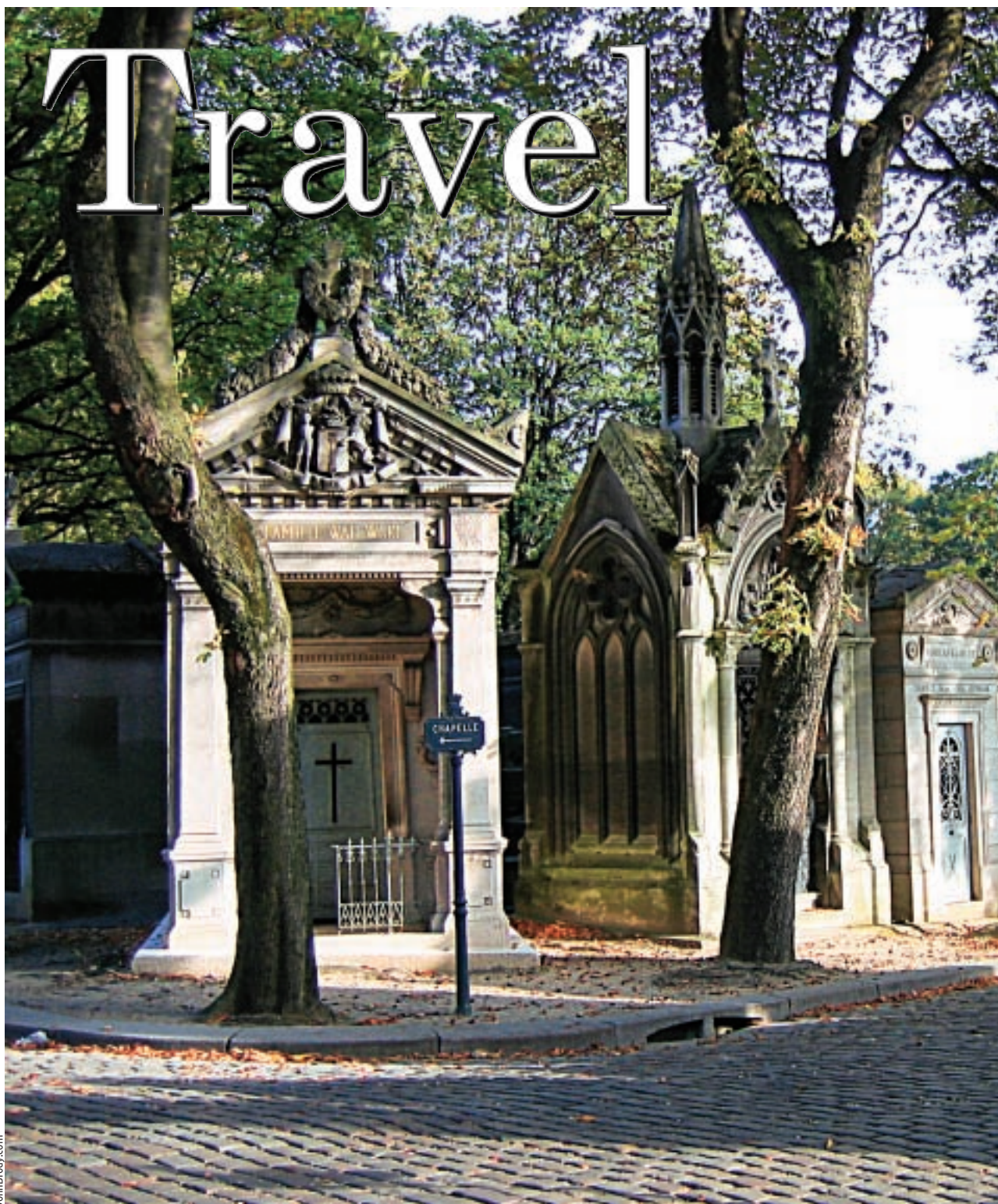
Perhaps nowhere is that more apparent than at Paris's Père Lachaise—the majestic rural burial ground with snaking avenues and hilltop views, which set off the 19th-century drive to fashion suburban neighborhoods for the deceased. Opened in 1804, at the beginning of Napoleon's reign, it was the first of its kind in Europe, the product of a late-1700s French public-health policy of removing the dead from central city graveyards.

Père Lachaise is a dense Riviera of repose. Marcel Proust, Honoré de Balzac and Frédéric Chopin line the meticulously cobbled avenues alongside more flashy residents, whose graves attract cult obsessives. Groupies serenade Jim Morrison's modest memorial, for instance, while the grave of Victor Noir, the French journalist shot dead by Napoleon's nephew Pierre, has become an idol of fertility and love, with women kissing Noir's lips and placing flowers in his hat, not to mention rubbing the oxidized green figure's more intimate parts. Equally defiled is Oscar Wilde's grave, a sculpture by Sir Jacob Epstein based on Wilde's poem "The Sphinx," which has been castrated long since it was unveiled in 1914 and is festooned, on a daily basis, with lipstick kisses.

But despite the attention that such tawdry antics receive, most of the graves in Père Lachaise fit with the cemetery's somber mood. Tucked in the back of the cemetery, for instance, is a poignant memorial on the wall where 147 final combatants of the 1871 Paris Commune died in a fire-squad execution. The rebels, having failed to create a working-class utopia, met their deaths in what Frederick Brown, a professor emeritus at the State University of New York, calls a "bourgeois necropolis."

Indeed, Père Lachaise ascended to prominence in French history alongside the rise of the French bourgeoisie. Whether one could buy a perpetual care or a 10-year lease at Père Lachaise depended entirely on the amount of cash on hand, because otherworldly repose—in an era when the church's power and authority were declining and burial was growing more secular—had become a prize to be won by the highest bidder. The invisible hand, so to speak, had begun burying the dead.

"There's always that profound insecurity that many who rise fall," Dr. Brown says. "It's a solidified place in the afterlife—forever—in a neighborhood where you'll never be evicted." He argues that Père Lachaise is a reflec-



JohnBrody.com

tion of the society that created it, or, as his book reiterates in a line from Proust, "another consequence of the mind's inability, when it ponders death, to picture something other than life."

It is no coincidence that Gérard de Villefort, the public prosecutor from Alexandre Dumas's "Count of Monte Cristo," sees Père Lachaise as the only Parisian cemetery worthy of his family's remains. "The others seemed to him mere country cemeteries, mere lodging-houses for corpses," Dumas writes. "At Père Lachaise alone a corpse of quality could have a home."

In London, the equivalent was Highgate. If Père Lachaise is the polished grand dame of European cemeteries, London's Highgate is the majestically disheveled, long-lost sister—a cemetery constructed in 1839 in part as an answer to Père Lachaise, but then subjected to years of abandonment, particularly in the post-World War II era. By the 1960s and 1970s, Highgate had fallen into a tragic state of disrepair, with monuments falling off their pedestals and vandals breaking into the cemetery to exhume graves. Eventually it was purchased from its private owners and entrusted to a group of neighbors who have been struggling to keep it up since the early 1980s.

Today, it remains an enchanted Victorian jungle of managed neglect—the archetypal haunted cemetery that has captured, by sheer accident, the aesthetic of ruined splendor. The cemetery is divided into two parts. In the west is the most noted recent arrival, poisoned ex-KGB operative Alexander Litvinenko; in the east is, appropriately enough, Karl Marx. Built into a hillside at the top of London, the cemetery slopes blindly around corners into the Egyptian Avenue and Circle of Lebanon—a deep-set street and cul-de-sac of vaults, each of which houses an above-ground family crypt.

"It's a theater of mourning," said Audrey Niffenegger, the author of "The Time Traveler's Wife," who has set her new novel, "Her Fearful Symmetry," in Highgate. "But it's also a place where the past and present get all mingled together." Ms. Niffenegger, who volunteered as a tour-guide at the cemetery to do research for her most recent book, noted that Highgate's Victorian proprietors sold the plots in perpetuity, believing there would always be someone there to clip the grass. But the sense of lost civilization one encounters at Highgate these days is, if anything, a testament to nature's power over any measure of human perpetuity. "I find it incredibly beautiful," Ms. Niffenegger said. "But it's not what they signed up for."

For Ms. Niffenegger and others, the wonder of the cemetery is not only about beauty, but also about witnessing *memento mori* writ large. "The most serious thing is that one of these days that's going to be you and me," she said. "You can't necessarily make the distinction between yourself and those poor folks who are dead, because you, in your turn, will be a body. That's part of the power."

If Père Lachaise is the p
London's Highgate is th



Morgan Silk / Lensmodern



Polished grand dame of Europe's cemeteries, she majestically dishevelled, long-lost sister.



Clockwise from the top: Photo Thomas Schulz, Vienna; Jon Arnold Images Ltd.; Alamy; Brandon Tsai; Maggie Jones.

CHIPPERFIELD REVIVES VENICE'S ISLE OF THE DEAD

The award-winning British architect David Chipperfield began work on the extension of Venice's island cemetery, San Michele, in 1998. The first part of the ambitious project was a burial court called the Court of the Evangelists. Later phases will include another burial building and an ossuary, and eventually the construction of a new neighboring island. The project is set to resume in spring 2010.

Q: Visitors often have a strong response to San Michele. What were your impressions the first time you visited?

From afar, it's a very romantic place. You can see walls that were built in the Napoleonic era, and over the walls you can see wonderful cypress trees. I felt that it was this very romantic island of death, [but] when I actually first went there, I saw there is a huge part, especially the more recent part, which is quite mechanical. There are these burial walls—lots and lots of parallel walls [built], I would have to say, in a nearly industrial manner. I was slightly shocked by that.

Q: Your style of architecture seems to rely on both classicism and modernism, which don't have a very conspicuous place in Venice. How does your approach fit into that larger context?

The purpose [of the project] is the organization of burial walls, and I turn that into a sort of spatial experience [by] making courtyards. When you walk into these courtyards, you find secret and secluded places. The outside of these volumes form small alleys—like in Venice. When we opened the first courtyard, a lot of people from Venice came. The overriding reaction was very positive; everyone commented [that] it seemed very familiar. There was anxiety at one point that this would be "modern" architecture, [but] because it has cloisters, courtyards, and alleys, it's a repertoire of Venice. Everyone wants to talk about architectural style, [but] I don't

Clockwise from top left: A main avenue placed atop Ballets Russes-founder Sergei Diaghilev's grave at Venice's Island of the Dead, San Michele; an off-kilter cube marks composer Arnold Schönberg's tomb at Vienna's Zentralfriedhof, not far from memorials to Ludwig van Beethoven and Franz Schubert; designed by sculptor Sir Jacob Epstein, Oscar Wilde's grave at Père Lachaise is covered in kiss marks; Nikita Khrushchev's tomb, designed by Ernst Neizvestny and located at Moscow's Novodevichy Cemetery; nature overtakes a section of London's Highgate Cemetery.

► See a photo tour of Europe's grand cemeteries and read a longer interview with David Chipperfield at WSJ.com/WeekendJournal

think the fundamental experience of Venice is only based on architectural style. It's also atmosphere.

Q: What were the special challenges of the project?

We had to do an environmental impact study—one of the first ever done in Italy. The part of the island we're building now is made out of material that's been dredged out of the canals, [which] is highly toxic. And you can imagine the issues of burying bodies in an island. I don't want to get too technical, but there are fluids involved, and those fluids should never, ever seep into the lagoon.

Q: What about the pleasures? Has it been fun working in Venice?

Working in Italy is wonderful and terrible. It's a wonderful culture to work in, [but] the public system is terrible. So it's a nightmare and it's a dream.



Isola di San Michele in Venice

2008 Getty Images

Eels slip away from Europe's dishes

BY PAUL AMES

Wintam, Belgium

FOR THREE GENERATIONS, An Pauwels's family restaurant has been dishing up *paling in t'groen*—a much-cherished Belgian specialty that combines thumb-size chunks of eel with an emerald-tinted hodgepodge of herbs. It translates as “eel in the green.”

The flat, damp lands of Flanders—crisscrossed with streams, ditches and canals—are ideal eel territory, making *paling in t'groen* a rival to mussels with fries or beef stewed in beer as the national dish. In the erstwhile fishing village of Mariekerke, a few kilometers upriver from Ms. Pauwels's De Groenendijk restaurant, an annual festival sees aficionados get through 8,000 kilos during a three-day binge of eel eating.

They may be slimy, snakelike and a distinct turn-off for many people, but eels have formed an integral part of European cuisine since the time of the ancient Greeks. Yet without urgent action, scientists fear this mysterious beast could disappear from the continent's waterways and dinner tables for good.

European eel stocks have fallen to below 10% of 1970s levels, according to the International Council for the Exploitation of the Sea in Copenhagen. In parts of the Baltic and Mediterranean 99% of the stocks are believed to have vanished.

The eel's precipitous decline has been blamed on river pollution, hydro-electric dams, global warming, changes in ocean currents and deadly parasitic worms, but many experts say overfishing is the biggest problem.

In Wintam, Belgium, the Groenendijk was built in the 17th century and is one of a string of eel restaurants along the banks of the River Scheldt. The recipes are a closely guarded secret. In one, it's the tang of tarragon that prevails, in the next it could be sorrel, chervil, summer savory or even stinging nettle. According to local lore, the ingredients would depend on whatever herbs fishermen could find on the river banks while waiting for the abundant eels of the Scheldt to swim into their traps.

That was a long time ago. Pollution in the Scheldt means any eels that survive are unfit for human consumption, and commercial fishing has been banned for decades. These days, Belgians are forced to import their eels, mostly from Denmark, Sweden or Ireland.

“The recipe came from our grandmother, and the herbs we grow in the garden, but the eels don't come from the Scheldt,” Ms. Pauwels says. “I think if we got them from there and I put them on a plate, they will be fluorescent.”

The decline in eel is threatening eel dishes across Europe, where they are deeply rooted in traditional cuisine and are consumed in a bewildering manner of styles from the Atlantic coast to the Aegean.

In the *pintxo* (or snack) bars of the Basque country, spaghetti-thin baby eels used to be tossed with garlic, olive oil and guindilla chili and piled high on slices of baguette. Plucked from the lagoons of Portugal's central coast, pencil-size adolescent eels are deep-fried whole in a light batter then crunched as finger food, pointy head, bones and all. At the other end of the continent,



Clockwise from top: Eels are scooped from vats at Borremans in Berlare, Belgium; poster of the 1954 movie 'The Woman of the River'; eel in the green at De Groenendijk restaurant.

ern port of Ribadesella, one restaurant was reported to have paid €2,075 per kilo, although the price later settled down to €450. With the real thing beyond most people's price range, Spanish tapas bars now serve a fishy eel substitute made from surimi fish mush.

To ensure the eel doesn't slip slide away, the EU is introducing a recovery plan to limit catches. Even if they are successful, EU experts acknowledge it could still take more than 20 years before stocks recover.

Failure would threaten such events as the annual feast to honor the garlicky *bourride d'anguille* stew of Port-la-Nouvelle, in the French Languedoc; the vodka-fueled eel parties held through the summer nights on the Skåne coast of southern Sweden; or even the festival of laurel-scented barbecued eels in Comacchio on Italy's Adriatic coast, which was immortalized in the 1954 movie, “La Donna del Fiume” (“The Woman of the River”), starring Sophia Loren as a voluptuous eel-packer in microshorts and rubber boots.

The end of the eel could also deprive us of a valuable source of nutrition. The oily flesh is packed with protein, vitamins and Omega-3 acids believed to protect against cancer, heart disease and arthritis. London jellied eel entrepreneur Jim “the Pieman” Thurston is convinced the dish he retails over the Internet at www.eelhouse.co.uk can bring long life and happiness.

“There are people who order them who'll literally have a portion of jellied eels in the morning, they'll have a portion of jellied eels in the afternoon, and they'll have a portion of jellied eels before they go to bed, and they'll have that all week,” he says. “Some of these old people that do it, they are pushing their 90s and their 100s and they've got more life in them than some 18-year-olds.”

—Paul Ames is a writer based in Brussels.

boned, skewered and glaze-grilled in sweet *kabaraki* sauce.

From 1995 to 2005, the European Union estimates an average of half a billion live baby eels were exported every year to East Asia. As their numbers shrank, the price rose almost tenfold during the decade, reaching over €700 per kilo in 2005, according to EU statistics. In 2007, the European eel was classified as a protected species by Cites, the international convention governing trade in wildlife. Exporters must now apply for government authorization to sell eels abroad. The Dutch government wants to go further, urging the EU to ban exports. But France and Spain especially are unwilling to cut off a trade that was worth around €30 million last year for hard-pressed fishermen around the Bay of Biscay.

“There is very big money in that business, really big money and the French and Spanish just keep selling to the Chinese,” says Belgian eel importer Frans Borremans. “I hope it will change and governments will say it must come to an end and that we keep our eels in Europe.”

There has been a heavy cost for Spanish consumers. The price of baby eels, or *angulas*, there has soared as numbers have fallen, making them a rare luxury nibble in posh restaurants rather than popular tapas fare. At the opening of the season last November in the north-

the Zemaiciai restaurant in Vilnius, Lithuania, promises eels measuring half a meter from tail to toothy grin as part of a muscular appetizer menu that includes smoked pig's ear, snout and tongue. (Chilled vodka and a glass of their homebrewed beer help wash them down.)

Poles take their eels roasted with carrots, parsnips and mustard sauce; smoked eel is a street snack served from pavement fish stalls around the Netherlands.

In Hamburg, *aalsuppe* is a rich, sweet-sour chowder that aligns eel with a bewildering variety of vegetables and dried fruits; Venetians also sweeten eels from the Po delta, adding sultanas and brandy to enrich *anguilla all'uvetta*.

In east London, Duncan's Pie Mash & Eels has been dishing up the Cockney classic of jellied eels to fans heading home from West Ham United's matches for almost 40 years, even though proprietor Joan Holt says demand has gone down. Ms. Holt hopes the Olympic Games, which are mostly held in the East End, in 2012 will give a boost to flagging jellied eel sales. The original Olympians were surely partial to eel meals. Ancient Greek playwright

Aristophanes describes a wedding banquet with, “honey over the tripe ... eels on the gridiron.”

Eels have wriggled their way into the European psyche. Aristotle was perplexed by their sex life, or apparent lack of it. Dante placed Pope Martin IV among the sinners in Purgatory for his gluttonous weakness for eels cooked in Vernaccia wine. England's King John I, of Robin Hood fame, once ordered 1,000 salted eels for a Christmas feast. Celts believed eels would whistle to warn of impending famine.

One major threat to Europe's eels comes from the other side of the world. During the past three decades, a lucrative trade has developed in the tiny offspring known as glass eels that traditionally flood in their billions into Europe's river estuaries on the Atlantic currents after hatching in the warm waters of the Sargasso Sea south of Bermuda.

These infant eels are much sought after by Chinese fish farmers, who raise them to adulthood and sell them on to the Japanese market where freshwater eel, or *unagi*, is a much desired ingredient in sushi, rare treats like *kimoyaki* (grilled eel liver) and most of all

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De Groenendijk, Wintam-Bornem, Belgium
A family restaurant in a 17th-century house beside the River Scheldt that serves eels in the green and grilled eel.
☎ 32-3-889-0655; www.degroenendijk.be.

Tissens, Hoilaart, Belgium
Brussels eel fans make regular pilgrimages to this elegant eatery outside the capital.
☎ 32-2-657-0409; www.tissens.be.

Praia do Turburão, Gafanha da Encarnação, Portugal
Situated between the Atlantic and a vast lagoon, this restaurant is famed for its fried eels and *caldeirada de enguias*—eel stew.
☎ 351-234-369602

Alt Hamburger Aalspeicher, Hamburg
A high-gabled town house in the heart of Hamburg specializing in eels and serving *aalsuppe* as appetizer or main course. ☎ 49-40-362990; www.aalspeicher.de.

Manze's, London
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Nancy Carroll as Viola in 'Twelfth Night'

Gender bending on 'Twelfth Night'

LONDON: Of Shakespeare's gender-bending plays, "Twelfth Night" is the easiest to understand and to play, unless it's done with an all-male cast as was the bard's original, or the magical Propeller 2007 modern-dress production. Though it complicates the play, an all-male cast has the advantage of making the audience concentrate on the central Olivia-Viola and Orsino-Viola love stories. When we don't stop to think whether Olivia would love Sebastian/Viola if she thought the shipwrecked boy was a girl, or whether Orsino would love Viola/Sebastian if he knew he really was a boy, our attention gets deflected by the Malvolio subplot, which, however enjoyable the actor's performance, skews our understanding of the play.

The Royal Shakespeare Company's new production directed by Gregory Doran has put its money on Malvolio. In Stratford until Nov. 21, and at the Duke of York's Theatre, London from Dec. 19-Feb. 27, Malvolio is played by Richard Wilson, loved by British TV audiences for "One Foot in the Grave." In the sometimes surreal suburban sitcom, Mr. Wilson played the irascible, laid-off security guard Victor Meldrew, whose unceasing complaints were mostly about trivial things. In making his Shakespeare debut as Malvolio, the 73-year-old actor is simply exchanging the role of one killjoy fantasist for another.

Up to a point, it works well. However, the best actor in this production is the unlikely Olivia—usually one of the least interesting characters in the play. But here, played by Alexandra Gilbreath, she is a terrifyingly bossy, but comely woman, capable of deep feeling, whose low growl is as sexy as her shouting is scary. You can see what Viola (Nancy Carroll) sees in her, but the converse isn't so obvious. It is more difficult still to imagine that even a half-sympathetic Malvolio like Mr. Wilson could delude himself into thinking this splendid Olivia could fancy a grumpy old man like him.

The comic parts fare better, especially James Fleet's tall, tartan-breeches-wearing Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who will try anything once, and fail. Miltos Yerolemou would be a fine Feste, if only his voice were a little more sweetly suited to the fool's songs. The production is gorgeous to look at. Illyria really existed—more or less where Albania is today—though designer Robert Jones makes it look like a more opulent Morocco.

—Paul Levy

www.rsc.org.uk

A sacred encounter in London

LONDON: The National Gallery's attention-grabbing, even shocking new show, "The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture 1600-1700," sets out to do a couple of things you'd think were interesting chiefly to specialists. Curator Xavier Bray wanted to show important religious paintings of the Spanish Golden Age, including undoubted masterpieces by Diego Velázquez and Francisco de Zurbarán, alongside the painted statues Spanish Catholics still venerate passionately and carry in processions, but which have never been exhibited before as art.

Mr. Bray feels these polychrome wood sculptures deserve our attention as much as do the celebrated paintings in this show. He thinks that the sculptures sometimes have artistic primacy, that the main models for religious imagery were more often these sculptures, popular with the pious masses, rather than the paintings that get the approval of art history.

So what is the reason for the fuss? What one London critic called

"the grisly Roman Catholic dollies now displayed at the National Gallery" are extremely gory. These are not the pretty Baby Jesus and winsome Virgin found in every Christmas crèche, but Juan de Mesa's 1625 severed "Head of Saint John the Baptist" with "the trachea, oesophagus and paraspinal muscles ... accurately depicted," clotted blood and all. Anyone familiar with Holy Week processions in Spain, with self-flagellating *penitentes* parading with floats bearing less artistically meritorious versions of these objects, will understand Mr. Bray's anxiety about how viewers will react to the show: "I hope it will be shock and awe, not shock and revulsion."

The 30 objects in this show include breathtaking sculptures such as Pedro de Mena's 1664 "Mary Magdalene meditating on the Crucifixion" in an extraordinary dynamic pose that is easier to capture on canvas than in wood; and 16 pictures, including four by Velázquez and six or seven by Zurbarán, of a quality seldom seen in a single exhibition. The 14 polychromed statues are not all

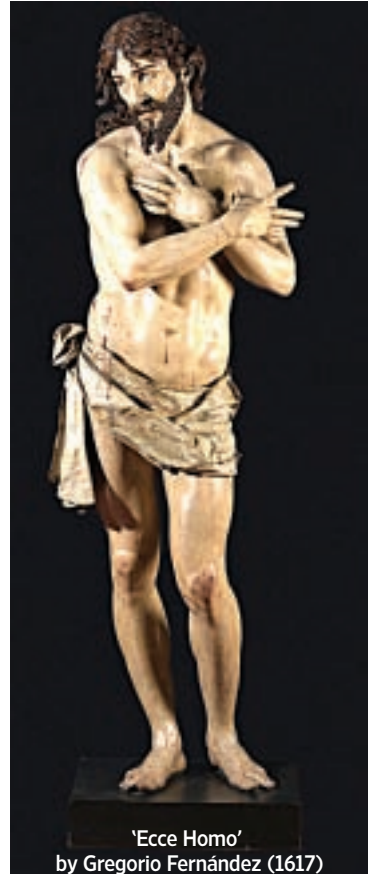
bloody—Alonso Cano's "St. John of God," various Madonnas and a couple of different St. Francises are more notable for their expressions of ecstasy—but the realistic rendering of wounded flesh and gore are clearly the *raison d'être* for most of the statues. You can't help but think that, unless human beings of the 17th century were psychologically and biologically different from people today, they must have been aroused or revolted by these manikins. Unless they in some fashion worshipped them and were able to regard them as not being representations of human beings at all. Reflections of this sort, after all, led to the iconoclastic destruction of Christian imagery during the European Reformation and English Civil War.

It's very puzzling; but this is a great exhibition, and should on no account be missed by anyone interested in art or religion.

—Paul Levy

Until Jan. 24, then at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, Feb. 28-May 31

www.nationalgallery.org.uk



'Ecce Homo' by Gregorio Fernández (1617)

© Fototeca de Obras Restauradas. Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España / Ministerio de Cultura

Polanski's film-school project, 'When Angels Fall,' revived in Istanbul

ISTANBUL: Before Roman Polanski was an Oscar-winning director or a fugitive from justice, he was one of the best student filmmakers of all time. In the 1950s, while attending Poland's film academy in Lodz, he made several experimental short films, and they are all interesting. This fall, after nearly a year in the planning, the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art opened a show that uses Mr. Polanski's final 22-minute film-school project, "When Angels Fall" (1959), as a conceptual reference point. Featuring five additional works of contemporary video art, the installation-like show—also called "When Angels Fall"—addresses the film's twin motifs of in-

nocence lost and redemption found.

Shortly after the show opened, Mr. Polanski, 78 years old, was arrested while trying to enter Switzerland. He is now subject to extradition to the U.S., where he is due for sentencing about 30 years after pleading guilty to unlawful sexual intercourse with a 13-year-old girl. Every other work in the show—especially "Rock My Religion" (1982-84) by American conceptual artist Dan Graham—is also worthy of our attention. However, the timing of the show refocuses our thoughts on the Polanski film, which is not only a prodigious work of filmmaking, but also an eerie forecast of what life would hold for its young director.

Set in the present tense of a black-and-white 1950s Poland, "When Angels Fall" tells the story of an old woman who works as an attendant in a men's basement lavatory; her tragic life, which coincides with the tragedy of Polish history, is recounted in muted, full-color flashbacks. Having lost everything—a lover, a son, her beauty, her country—she is rescued, it seems, by a theatrical-looking angel, who falls through the sidewalk as the film ends. With almost no dialogue, and filled with absurd horrors, the film anticipates much of Mr. Polanski's later career, and now, it seems, his own life.

It is hard for us to imagine Mr. Polanski in his Zurich prison cell with-

out the help of flashback sequences—a technique he otherwise avoided. And like his heroine of half a century ago, he must be looking up, or out, for something like redemption.

Though the show offers a rare chance to catch "When Angels Fall," which runs on a loop in its own small theater, we shouldn't miss Mr. Graham's hour-long "Rock My Religion." Using a range of video footage, the film argues that rock stars are the worthy heirs of home-grown American religious movements like the Shakers.

—J.S. Marcus

Until Jan. 10

www.istanbulmodern.org

London's Hayward Gallery highlights 'Ed Ruscha: Fifty Years of Painting'

LONDON: "Ed Ruscha: Fifty Years of Painting" at the Hayward Gallery is a challenge. I'm never certain whether I "get" these cool paintings of words—the yellow "Noise" (1962) or "OOF" (1962-63) on their midnight blue canvases or the tortured orange word "BOSS" in which the final S is pinched in a C-clamp ("Securing the Last Letter," 1964).

But then there's the big gas station, with its five Chevron pumps and its blazoned "STANDARD" sign in white lettering on its red horizontal signboard ("Standard Station" 1966) and its companion piece, "Burning Gas Station" (1965-66), and the geometric composition makes you realize you're looking, in a completely fresh way, at standard American vernacular architecture.

You're aware, at the same time, that the first image is rendered in black, white and three colors (red, yellow and gray), and the same red and yellow make the orange flames of the second image. The paint is calling attention to itself, reminding you there's no other way to render these images. This holds true for all 50 pictures: These are images that can only exist as paintings.

His first "planned" art school rebellion against the prevailing spontaneous, gestural Abstract Expression-



'Standard Station' (1966) by Edward Ruscha.

© Ed Ruscha 2009

iststyle, shown nicely here in his typographical self-portrait "E.Ruscha" (1959), consists of presenting the letters of his name anagrammatically, though not quite randomly, so "E." "H" and "A" are atop "RUS" and "C" on a background of what could be drip-painting. Daring in its handling of

paint—the black letters make the colors flirt with muddiness—this couldn't be in any other medium than oil on canvas. After this, every work in the show is hard-edged, until the complete departure in the silhouette pictures of the late 1980s, such as "Howl" (1986), an almost monochrome, evoc-

ative blurry shape that looks like the mass of a coyote howling at the sky.

—Paul Levy

Until Jan. 10, then Haus der Kunst, Munich (Feb. 12-May 2) and Moderna Museet, Stockholm (May 29-Sept. 5)

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Through India's Spiritual Landscape

BY AMY YEE

New Delhi

Much has changed since William Dalrymple moved to India in 1989 to write "City of Djinns," his best-selling portrait of Delhi at the dawn of India's economic transformation. For one, travel writing, characterized by the likes of Bruce Chatwin, Eric Newby and Ryszard Kapuscinski, is no longer the fashionable genre it was 20 years ago. "That has ended," Mr. Dalrymple says of the huge advances and hype of times past, while sitting on the patio of his New Delhi farmhouse. For a moment, the sober note disrupts his animated and eloquent—if slightly dramatic—chatter.

An author chronicles belief in a fast-changing land.

But travel writing is still invaluable, he argues, sipping a glass of pastis. "In an age when newspapers are shrinking, when celebrity journalism is taking over the little space that remains, when money to fund foreign bureaus is diminishing; travel writing provides a space to talk about cultural confusion, to negotiate differences in cultures outside the world of academic jargon." His latest book, "Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India," elegantly proves his point. The volume, released earlier this month in India and Britain, and scheduled for release in the United States next year, is a collection of nine true stories of religious devo-

tees, with each life serving as a "keyhole" into how different religious paths have transformed in modern-day India.

The 44-year-old Scottish writer has chronicled India's past and present for more than two decades, and his affection for the country is evident from a glance around his Delhi home. In his cluttered library, artwork ranging from a bust of Buddha to a large demon mask decorates the colorful room. We pass through the dining room and try not to disturb some bauls, or wandering Indian minstrels, who are friends and frequent house guests.

So why has he waited so long to tackle India's questions of faith? "Indian religion is such a perilous minefield of clichés," he laments from his throne-like rattan chair. "Generations of Westerners have imposed themselves on Indian religion and in the end written books that more closely reflect the prejudices or aspirations or frustrations of Western society more so than anything to do with Indian religion."

"Nine Lives" avoids that trap by letting the characters tell their stories in their own words. Mr. Dalrymple explains that the idea for the book sprang from a 1993 encounter with a young sadhu, or holy man, whom he met while hiking to the Himalayan temple of Kedarnath. Mr. Dalrymple was sur-

prised to learn that the naked, ash-smeared man had an MBA and was a former high-flying sales manager with a Bombay consumer electrical company. This sadhu is mentioned in the book to give context to the nine eclectic characters Mr. Dalrymple profiles, which include a Tibetan Buddhist monk who took up arms when the Chinese invaded Tibet, and a devadasi, a woman "dedicated" to prostitution in the name of the Hindu goddess Yellamma.

When asked which story in "Nine Lives" made the deepest impression on him Mr. Dalrymple doesn't hesitate. "The Jain nun," he replies, referring to the story of a young woman who renounced the material world and her wealthy family to follow her faith. Although only in her thirties, she decides to slowly starve herself to death in the ultimate expression of Jain devotion.

"I still don't know how to react to that. Is it heroism? A desperate waste of life? Partly because I haven't worked out my own reaction is why it intrigues me so much," confesses Mr. Dal-

rymple. "That was part of the fascination of this book. Each of these nine worlds contains its own moral universe. It's very difficult to comment on them."

The stories are linked by Mr. Dalrymple's driving question: "How is each specific religious path surviving the changes India is currently undergoing?" he writes in the introduction.

"What changes and what remains the same?" In the case of Rani Bai, a devadasi since the age of six, many of the changes are for the worse. The devadasi today do not enjoy the revered status they had several centuries ago; the lady Mr. Dalrymple profiled watched two daughters die from AIDS. She makes the case for the dignity of her profession—but neglects to tell Mr. Dalrymple that she herself has HIV (he found out from an aid worker).

India's booming materialism, evident from the growing numbers of expensive cars, palatial homes and shopping malls, may seem in conflict with spirituality. But the vacuum of materialism can create the need for spirituality. This has hap-

pened throughout history, notably in the lives of Buddha and Mahavira, the founder of modern Jainism, Mr. Dalrymple observes. In some ways, devout religious piety, is, "a reaction to the markedly unspiritual in every day life."

India is by no means an atheistic country. Yet, contends Mr. Dalrymple, religion does not interfere with the process of government in spite of the influence of religious right political parties such as the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. "There's a proud tradition of secularism here," he says, pointing to the overwhelming victory of the secular Congress party in national elections earlier this year.

If Delhi was on the cusp of change in 1989, it is in the throes of transformation now. New highways and high-rises are sprouting from the landscape; cell phones are de rigueur; big companies, both foreign and domestic, are thriving in India.

But the transformation doesn't bother this chronicler of India's past and observer of its fast-shifting present. "In India the new doesn't displace the old. It's like the rings of a tree. It's all there," says Mr. Dalrymple. "The old colonels in Lodhi Garden [in New Delhi] are still there. The sadhus, Sufis and calligraphers are still there. There is a new generation of techies and more traffic jams, but it's just an extra ring around the tree."

Ms. Yee is a free-lance writer.



Ken Follin

Bookshelf / By Peter Stothard

The School Of Athens

Without Thucydides the war (or wars) fought between the Greek states of Athens and Sparta late in the fifth century B.C. would have been no more significant than many another long war (or wars) whose start dates, end dates, causes and characters might (or might not) have been discussed by future historians.

Thucydides: The Reinvention of History
By Donald Kagan
(Viking, 257 pages)

Only because of Thucydides' "History of the Peloponnesian War"—with his radical claims of exercising a new rationality and, most grandiloquently, of writing a "thing for all time"—did a typically messy military contest based on money, influence, bloody-mindedness and happenstance become interpreted and reinterpreted as though it were a religious revelation. Communists and anticommunists, leftists and neocons, anti-imperialists and empire builders have all fought to recruit the great Athenian as their ally.

Donald Kagan, a veteran Yale professor of classics and ancient history, has himself taken part in these arguments for almost a half-century. His own four-volume history of the Peloponnesian War is a classic of modern scholarship. Now, with "Thucydides: The Rein-

vention of History," Mr. Kagan has produced what reads like the last word on the man, a nuanced and subtle account of a subject that has so often been treated in a spirit of high partisanship.

Mr. Kagan stresses that Thucydides, an Athenian naval commander who was exiled in 424 B.C. for losing an important battle in Thrace, was more than just a participant in the conflict that he described. He was also a player in the domestic politics of the war, the "spin" as well as the strategy. Thus "Thucydides: The Reinvention of History" is a book about a long-ago historian's argument with his contemporaries—the tension between facts and what one would like to be facts. "In the important cases examined here," Mr. Kagan writes, "the contemporary view was closer to the truth than own."

Of what can we be certain? Athens lost the war; Sparta won it. A turning point was Athens's ill-advised invasion of Sicily in 415 B.C. during a lull in the conflict with Sparta. The result was a catastrophic destruction of the vaunted Athenian navy and ultimately a fatal weakening of Athenian power. This, too, we know: When the Spartans finally won victory in 404 B.C., they were aided by a late alliance with Persia, the traditional enemy of all Greece. Beyond that outline, the certainties are scarce.

The origin of the war? Without

doubt, tensions were rising in the mid-fifth century B.C. between the Athenian empire and the Peloponnesian League, with Sparta as its leader. But was Pericles, the aristocratic leader of the Athenian democracy, a key cause of hostilities? Many of his contemporaries thought so, Mr. Kagan says. They blamed Pericles for his influential support of two actions against Spartan allies—restricting the trade of one, aiding the enemy of another—that helped to provoke war.

Thucydides strongly disagreed with Pericles' critics, insisting in his "History of the Peloponnesian War" that the conflict was caused by later demagogues and deeper underlying forces. Thucydides' interpretation would color most later scholarship. Yet Mr. Kagan notes that Thucydides' views were hardly the result of dispassionate analysis and were more likely a reaction to his family's anti-democratic past—he was simply supporting Pericles with a convert's zeal.

If anything could be said to have caused the war, Thucydides maintained, it was fear of the Athenian empire. Mr. Kagan cites for the contrary view a "brilliant

modern historian of the ancient world whose advice influenced me at the very beginning of my studies." This is the Marxist historian G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, the Oxford man who both accepted the sincerity of Thucydides' belief and argued that the evidence of the

Peloponnesian War, in particular the evidence of Spartan society, showed that it was simply wrong to regard fear as the root cause of the war. "The news columns in Thucydides, so to speak, contradict the editorial Thucydides," de Ste. Croix wrote, "and the editor himself does not always speak with the same voice."

Mr. Kagan has no time for worshipping Thucydides' eternal rational purity, as students were once so rigorously taught to do. But he is not the first skeptic on this front: Scholars have insisted for the past quarter-century—most recently in Simon Hornblower's magisterial three-volume "A Commentary on Thucydides," completed earlier this year—that Thucydides was a master of drama as much as of science, a master of stadium rhetoric as much as of empirical reporting. It is dangerous to see him, as Mr. Kagan puts it, as "a disembodied mind." He was "a

passionate individual" writing about "the greatness of his city and its destruction."

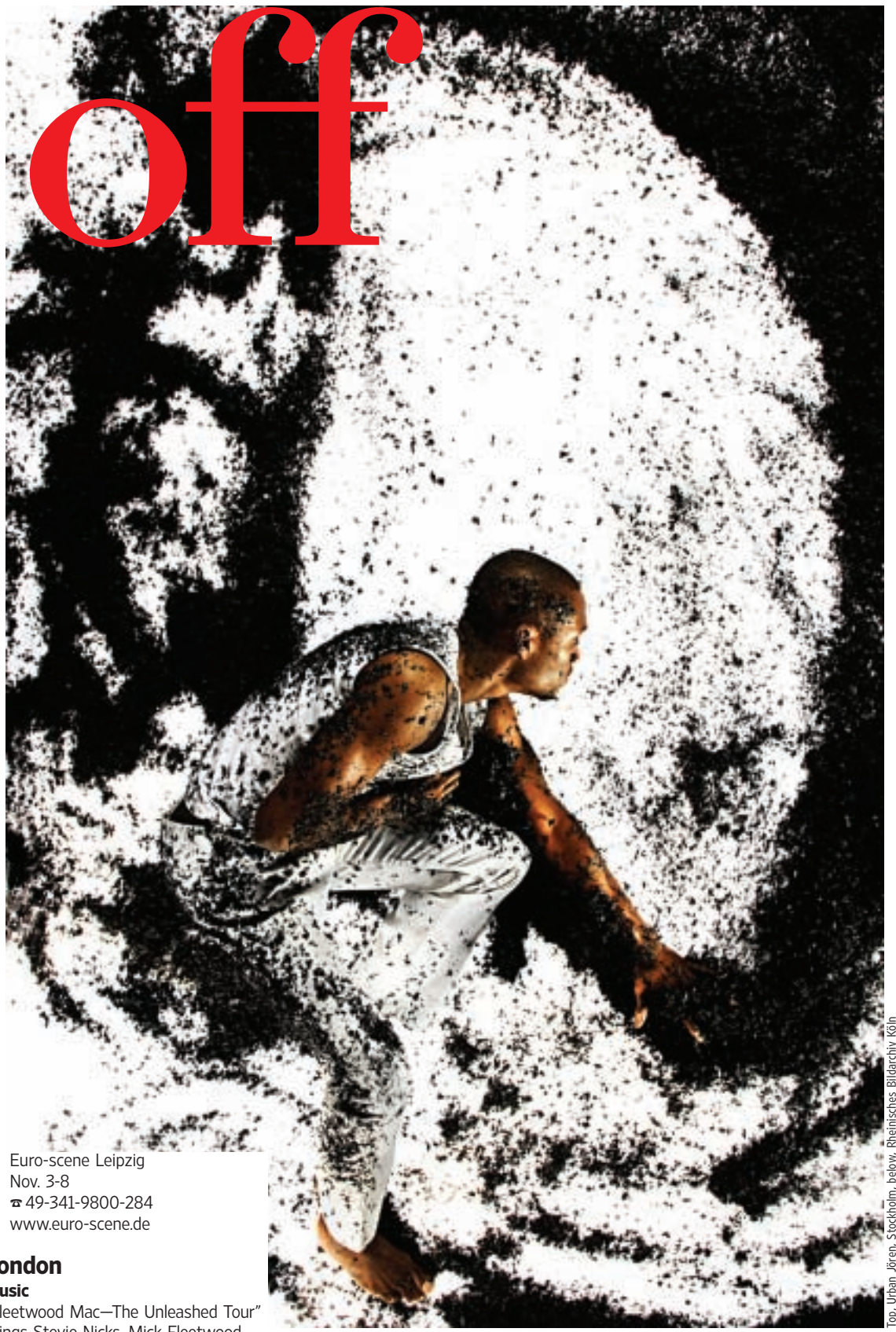
Thucydides died in the early fourth century B.C., having completed eight-and-a-bit books of what was probably going to be a 10-volume work. The unfinished nature of his "History" has been a loss to those who have sought certainties from him. If, however, we possessed his missing conclusions, we would have likely been deprived of insights from those who have reached their own conclusions on his behalf.

Mr. Kagan finishes up with an observation that foreign-policy debaters would do well to keep in mind: "A hegemonic state may gain power by having allies useful in war, but reliance on those states may compel the hegemonic power to go to war against its own interests." The disastrous misadventure of the Athenians in Sicily began, Mr. Kagan writes, with "the entreaties of their small, far-off allies." As he notes, it was Bismarck who once said that in a world of competing alliances it is essential "to be the rider, not the horse."

Thucydides' "History," says Mr. Kagan, shows "how difficult an assignment" the rider faces. His own book is a valuable guide to the ways in which the Peloponnesian War can—and cannot—be used to guide modern thinking.

Mr. Stothard is editor of the Times Literary Supplement.

time off



Top, Urban Jären, Stockholm; below, Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln

Amsterdam

art

"Paris Central: Free City Free Art in the Fifties" showcases 100 works by European artists in post-war Paris, including Jean Dubuffet (1901-85), Jean Fautrier (1898-1964) and Asger Jorn (1914-73).

Cobra Museum
Until Jan. 17
☎ 31-20-5475-050
www.cobra-museum.nl

Barcelona

art

"Secret Images: Picasso and Japanese Erotic Prints" presents a selection of prints from the personal collection of the Spanish artist (1881-1973).

Museu Picasso
Nov. 5-Feb. 14
☎ 34-93-2563-000
www.bcn.cat/museupicasso

Basel

art

"Jenny Holzer" features paintings, sculptures and LED installations by the American artist alongside a selection of her favorite works from the Beyeler Collection.

Fondation Beyeler
Nov. 1-Jan. 24
☎ 41-61-6459-700
www.beyeler.com

art

"Basel Ancient Art Fair (BAAF) 2009" displays highlights from 15 leading specialists dealing in classical, Egyptian and Near Eastern antiquities.

Wenkenhof
Nov. 6-11
☎ 41-61-6011-195
baaf.ch

Berlin

photography

"Nan Goldin: Poste Restante Slide-shows/Grids" stages four slideshows by the American photographer.

C/O Berlin
Until Dec. 6
☎ 49-30-2809-1925
www.co-berlin.info

architecture

"Alfred Messel—Visionary of the City" exhibits 100 works, including drawings, photographs and models by the German architect (1853-1909).

Sonderausstellungshallen
Kulturforum
Nov. 4-Feb. 7
☎ 49-30-2664-2304-0
www.smb.museum

Bern

film

"Deimantas Narkevicius—The Unanimous Life" shows the found-footage projects of the Lithuanian film artist, featuring musings on historical oddities related to the communist experience in Lithuania.

Kunsthalle Bern
Until Dec. 6
☎ 44-31-3500-040
www.kunsthalle-bern.ch

Cologne

design

"Plastic: Revolution for Design + Art" showcases 300 plastic design objects selected from the Winkler Collection.

Museum für Angewandte Kunst
Until Nov. 29
☎ 49-221-221-2673-5
www.museenkoeln.de

Edinburgh

art

"Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain" displays more than 100 works by the English mapmaker (1731-1809).

National Gallery Complex
Nov. 7-Feb. 7
☎ 44-131-6246-200
www.nationalgalleries.org

Geneva

art

"Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966)" is a retrospective exhibition of sculptures, paintings, drawings and documents by the Swiss artist.

Musee Rath
Nov. 5-Feb. 21
☎ 41-22-4182-600
www.ville-ge.ch/mah

Ghent

art

"Europalia—Roar China" examines Western influences on Chinese art during the 1920s and 1930s with woodcuts, caricatures and photomontages from China.

Museum voor Schone Kunsten
Until Feb. 7
☎ 32-9-2400-700
www.mskgent.be

Leipzig

theater

"Euro-scene Leipzig" is a festival of contemporary European theater, offering experimental theater and innovative dance from 10 countries.

Euro-scene Leipzig
Nov. 3-8
☎ 49-341-9800-284
www.euro-scene.de

London

music

"Fleetwood Mac—The Unleashed Tour" brings Stevie Nicks, Mick Fleetwood, John McVie and Lindsey Buckingham to Wembley Arena for three nights of classic rock.

Wembley Arena
Oct. 30, 31 & Nov. 6
☎ 44-161-3853-211
www.livenation.com

photography

"Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize" showcases 60 works considered finalists for the contemporary photography prize.

The National Portrait Gallery
Nov. 5-Feb. 14
☎ 44-20-7306-0055
www.npg.org.uk

travel

"The Luxury Travel Fair" shows international exclusive resorts, five-star hotels and luxury-tour operators.

National Hall, Olympia
Nov. 5-8
☎ 44-870-0606-090
www.luxurytravelfair.com

Madrid

theater festival

"Festival de Otoño 2009" is a performing-arts festival featuring 32 theater, dance, music and circus companies across the city.

Festival de Otoño
Nov. 4-29
☎ 34-91-7200-913
www.madrid.org/fo/2009

Above, Cullberg Ballet's 'Point of eclipse' in Leipzig; below, 'Radiogerät Modell 400 'Patriot' (1940) by Norman Bel Geddes on display in Cologne.

art

"Rodchenko and Popova: Defining Constructivism" displays 350 works created by Lyubov Popova (1889-1924) and Aleksandr Rodchenko (1891-1956) between 1917 and 1929.

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte
Reina Sofia
Until Jan. 11
☎ 34-91-7741-000
www.museoreinasofia.es

art

"Jan van Eyck Grisailles" shows paintings that imitate rock sculptures, known as "grisaille art" by Flemish master Van Eyck (1395-1441).

Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza
Nov. 3-Jan. 31
☎ 34-91-3690-151
www.museothyssen.org

Munich

art

"A Renaissance Master from Augsburg: Daniel Hopfer" presents iron-plate etchings by the German artist (1471-1536), featuring religious, historical and mythological compositions.

Pinakothek der Moderne
Nov. 5-Jan. 31
☎ 49-89-2380-5360
www.pinakothek.de

Paris

art

"James Ensor" is a retrospective of the Belgian artist (1860-1949), highlighting his use of color and satire.

Musee d'Orsay
Until Feb. 4
☎ 33-1-4049-4814
www.musee-orsay.fr

film

"Federico Fellini" presents photographs and drawings by Italian film director Fellini (1920-93), alongside original film posters and film excerpts.

Jeu de Paume—Concorde
Until Jan. 17
☎ 33-1-4703-1250
www.jeudepaume.org

Vienna

art

"Herbert Boeckl: Retrospective" shows oil paintings, watercolors, drawings and collages by the Austrian artist.

Lower Belvedere
Until Jan. 31
☎ 43-179-5570
www.belvedere.at

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.

