

WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE



“ONE OF THE GHASTLIEST HOLLYWOOD MISFIRES OF RECENT MEMORY”

...DERIVATIVE, CONVOLUTED NONSENSE...

“AN EPIC EXAMPLE OF MUDDLED STORYTELLING, CHINTZY EXCITEMENT AND SCATTER-BRAINED EXECUTION”

“WITLESS, CHAOTIC MESS OF A MOVIE”

NOTHING MAKES SENSE...

... SAD FIASCO

“TRIES TO DO SO LITTLE, AND YET FALLS SO SHORT”

“PHENOMENALLY MONOTONOUS”

“A CROWDED CAST OF SOME OF THE FINEST ACTORS IN THE CINEMA ACT THE HELL OUT OF A GIMMICKY, EPISODIC, HIT-OR-MISS SCRIPT”

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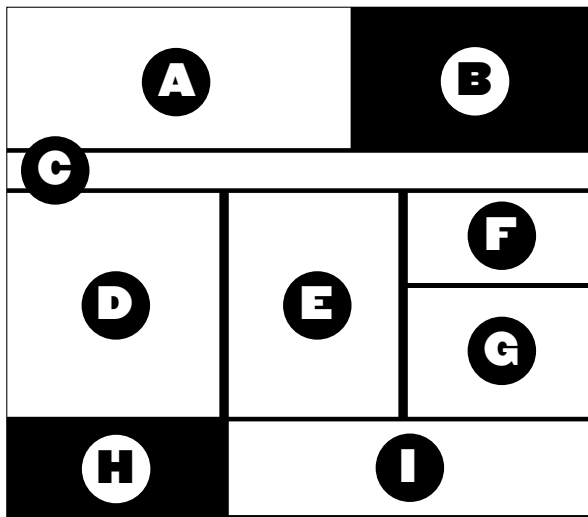
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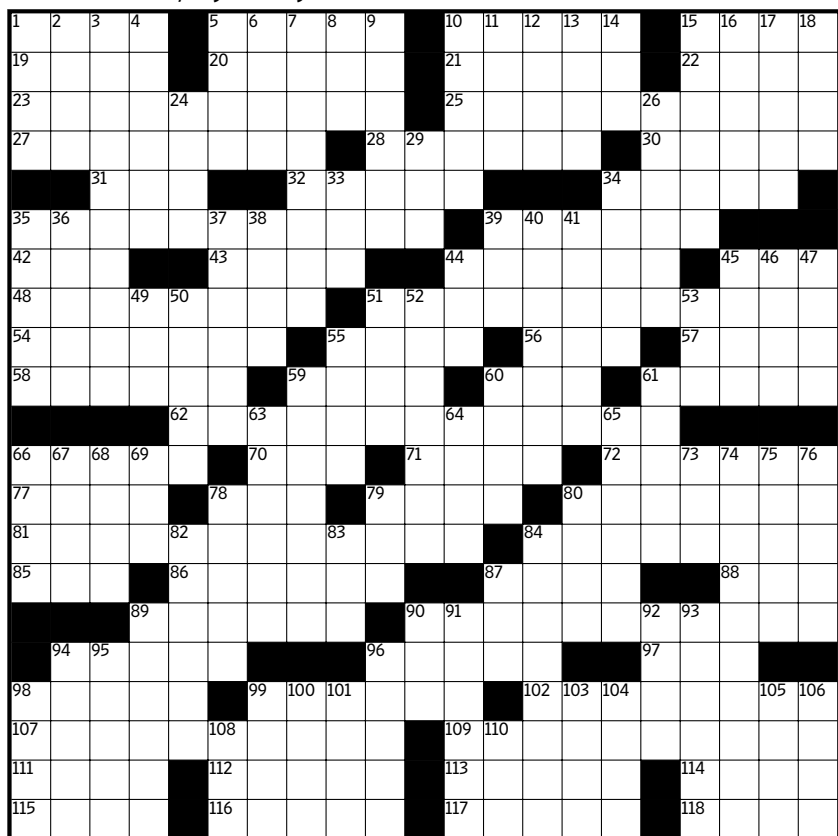
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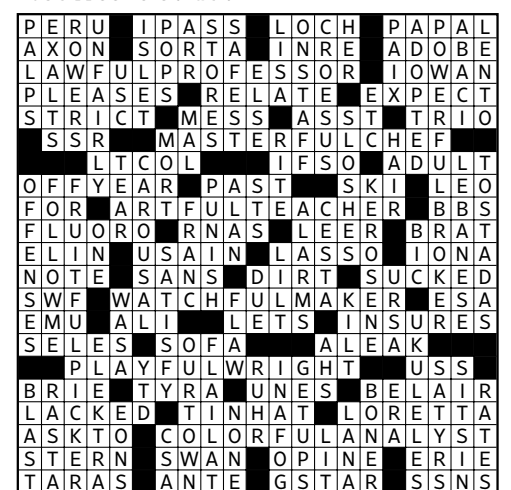
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Last Week's Solution



Selling simplicity at Loewe

Spanish brand focuses on functionality as it re-enters the U.S.

BY RAY A. SMITH

AND CHRISTINA PASSARIELLO

FROM 2005 TO 2007, Stuart Vevers was known for creating showy studded and tasseled "it" handbags, transforming staid British brand Mulberry into a hot contemporary label.

Now he's headed in the opposite direction.

The 36-year-old Mr. Vevers is trying to dust off Loewe, a Spanish leather-goods brand owned by LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton. To do that, he's been leaning toward simplicity over bling, functionality over flash. One of his newest creations: a leather version of an ordinary brown paper grocery bag for about \$1,045 or about €790. He's making a point of using the same bag shapes season after season—the opposite of "it" bags' short fashion cycle. And he's made sure that Loewe bags are light-weight, under a kilo. "It's kind of taking the bag back to its purest functionality," Mr. Vevers says.

For a decade, nailing the "it" bag was the holy grail for luxury brands because of insatiable consumer demand and hefty profit margins. Back then, more was more. Chloé's Paddington, designed in 2005 and weighed down by a metal padlock and a \$1,380 price tag, boasted waiting lists. Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Prada splashed their logos on their purses.

Then came the 2008 economic crisis.

Handbag sales world-wide fell 0.5% to €18.4 billion in 2009, according to Bain & Co. In the U.S., sales of handbags fell 3.3% to \$6.97 billion in the same year, according to market researcher NPD Group. Restraint and classicism returned. Gucci and Coach toned down their logo looks. Meanwhile, Bottega Veneta—known for its iconic plain woven leather bags—enjoys increasing popularity.

Mr. Vevers's challenges: sell the simplicity and re-establish Loewe's presence in the U.S., one of the most cutthroat consumer markets in the world. The 164-year-old Spanish brand generates about a third of its sales in Spain and the other two-thirds in the Asian-Pacific region, according to Loewe Chief Executive Lisa Montague. World-wide sales are below €100 million, estimates Luca Solca, a luxury-goods analyst with Sanford C. Bernstein—"very small in the context of LVMH." Since being purchased in 1996, Loewe has lingered in LVMH's closet—despite the efforts of such designers as Narciso Rodriguez, who left the brand after five years to focus uniquely on his own label. Loewe has its own stores throughout Europe and Asia, and is sold at department stores including Harrods and Selfridges in London, and Takashimaya in Tokyo. But the brand wasn't sold in U.S. stores for at least 10 years.

Mr. Vevers, who was recruited to become Loewe's creative director in 2007, has plenty of experience. After designing in 1998 for Bottega Veneta, Mr. Vevers joined



"It's kind of taking the bag back to its purest functionality." Designer Stuart Vevers

LVMH's star Louis Vuitton brand. He also worked at its smaller Givenchy fashion house before leaving in 2005 to take the reins of Mulberry, a British brand that specializes in accessories, and giving his over-the-top mode free rein. Besides adding studs, tassels and spikes to the brand's line of classic aged-leather bags, he designed an evening bag shaped like a medieval mace ball and a metal and leather clutch.

"He has worked for iconic brands, and he always respects its heritage while giving it an edge," says Floriane de Saint Pierre, a luxury-goods consultant and recruiter.

But for Loewe, Mr. Vevers decided he wanted to strip the bag down. "Luxury was becoming a word that was so overused," says the boyish-looking designer, noting the economic crisis merely accelerated his transformation. It was a concept he says Loewe executives initially struggled to grasp. "I think there was some confusion as I was explaining that it was time to

move on," recalls Mr. Vevers. (Ms. Montague says Loewe "strongly believes in Stuart's ability and his sensitivity to understand the evolution of the market.")

Lacking a big ad budget (LVMH is proceeding cautiously with the revival effort), Mr. Vevers is banking on word of mouth. Tapping stylists he knows from his Mulberry days, he's gotten Loewe's 35-year-old Amazona bag—a classically rectangular bag with two handles that costs between \$1,800 and \$1,950—into the hands of Angelina Jolie, Jennifer Lopez and Madonna. So far, three stores in the U.S. sell Loewe's bags—Bergdorf Goodman, Jeffrey and Hirshleifer's on New York's Long Island.

"The time is right for this kind of new classicism," says Linda Fargo, Bergdorf's fashion director.

Mr. Vevers appears to have no regrets about his style change, saying that he has grown up: "I don't think I could ever design the way I did then now. It just wouldn't feel right."



Left, a model displays a creation by Stuart Vevers for Loewe's Ready to Wear Spring/Summer 2010 fashion collection in Paris; above, Fashion designer Stuart Vevers; below, Angelina Jolie carries a bag by Loewe.



Stclair/Winslow/Splash News, Associated Press (top left), Loewe



How to be a Paris department-store gourmet

The city's grand emporiums offer champagne, goose eggs, macaroons and sumptuous scenery

BY PETER HELLMAN

A creamy, crunchy, chivey butcher's salad enlivened by Granny Smith apples. For dessert, a rich-textured semolina pudding electrified by an intense fresh raspberry topping. The chef is Michel Guérard, who's earned three Michelin stars for his famed inn and spa in Les Landes, France.

The place: Galeries Lafayette,

the Paris department store.

Many visitors prowl the three big department stores of Paris—which also include Printemps and Le Bon Marché—for the fashion labels and tourist-friendly services. But few realize what a spectrum of dining options—perhaps three dozen, from snacking to sumptuous, from delightful to disastrous—exist in these vast stores, pillars of Parisian life for more than a century.

A few months ago, I decided to find out what the fare's like. Mr. Guérard was doing a stint as guest chef when I went to Galeries Lafayette, a complex of buildings on the right bank, north of the famed Opéra Garnier, alleged lair of "The Phantom of the Opera." My first restaurant was hidden away behind what seemed like acres of lingerie on the main store's third floor. Crisply designed, modest Le Galfa offered a rare chance to taste Mr. Guérard's cuisine, which he usually practices at Les Prés d'Eugénie, for all of €29. (This summer, Fumiko Kono, formerly of the three-star L'Arpège, is cooking "French with a Japanese touch" at La Terrasse, a temporary restaurant on Galeries Lafayette's top floor, with desserts by the Parisian sultan of sweet, Pierre Hermé.)

So began a tour that included—amid the shopping—a smoothies-and-soup break, a giant stained-glass dome (plus mouse) and Eiffel Tower views. Or, a visitor can stop for Champagne. Bar à Bulles, on Galeries Lafayette's first floor, features 22 producers, such as a flute of Mercier Brut (€10.50) or the sublime Krug Grand Cuvée (€45.50), accompanied by savory munchies.

Here are the places I tried:

Le Barrouge, Galeries Lafayette

Hidden away in the huge wine shop of Lafayette Gourmet, the store's food hall—a cross between supermarket and food court—I found a classic bistro lunch. Good as it was, my entrecôte took second place to some flavorful fries with the mush-free texture of never-frozen potatoes. "I'm obsessed by fries," said Philippe Thomas, head of food operations for Galeries Lafayette. "We start with the best potatoes and peel them every morning."

To order: Entrecôte of Charolais beef with maître d'hôtel butter, recipe Auguste Escoffier.

Galeries Lafayette's Lafayette Gourmet

The food hall includes **Malongo Coffee Bar**: The baristas, wearing T-shirts emblazoned in pink with "Small Producers Make the Greatest Coffee," turn out my favorite cup in tout Paris. Order the earthy Nicaraguan Fair Trade blend. At **L'Écailler du Cap**, a seafood bar attached to the retail fish counter, agleam with sea creatures on ice, six Creuse de Bretagne oysters smelled most vividly of a sea wind and came with a single Cape gooseberry (a refreshing palate cleanser) in its wrinkly tan wrapper. A glass of Château La Noë 2007 Muscadet counterpointed the meaty oysters. Zinc bar **Bellota-Bellota** is devoted to cured ham from acorn-fattened Iberian pigs. Gossamer slices, hand-cut on the spot, are lain on a cone-shaped porcelain dish called the "volcano" and accompanied by roughly mashed potatoes nugged with earthy wild mushrooms and yellow tomatoes chopped into a peppery olive oil. At the **fruit counter**, the clerk urged me to switch from a peach to nectarines and touch-

tested several before presenting me with the best one.

Brasserie Printemps Printemps

Of all Paris's department-store restaurants, this is the grandest. Its enormously intricate, stained-glass Art Nouveau dome was built in 1923 and spent World War II disassembled in safe storage. Just don't look at the food below. Of "turban de macaroni gratiné," alias mac and cheese, one of my guests said, "Very few things this rich are this tasteless." My brochette of scallops lay on a giant raviolo, soggy in a seasick green sauce. Apologizing for the food, our waiter said, "We don't get many people at dinner." No wonder. Throughout the meal, a mouse scooted under the vacant tables. (A spokeswoman for Printemps said she had never heard of such a thing happening at the brasserie.) "Just like Remy in 'Ratatouille,'" my wife said when I called her. But Remy, the rat aspiring to be a great chef in that animated film, would have nibbled elsewhere.

Les Deli-cieux Printemps

It was 9 p.m. at this rooftop aerie, the evening light was golden, and a lively jazz-rock duo was playing. Drinks are available but the main draw is a set of sweeping vistas, north to the domes of Montmartre, south to Les Invalides (Napoleon's tomb) and the Eiffel Tower. Open until 10 p.m. on Thursdays, it's a great place to watch the tower's lights snap on at dusk.

Ladurée, Printemps

Hidden away on the second floor, this is a formal but not fussy out-

post of a traditional tea room famed for its macaroons. But there are plenty of inventive dessert and lunch-entrée options as well. Ladurée's impeccably suited captain, watchful as a hawk, set an example for an alert staff.

To order: Half a hollowed-out goose egg, mounded with a fresh mimosagarnished crab salad crisscrossed with bread batons crisply grilled on one side, soft on the other—a textural touch that the French excel at. A just barely sweet "caramel garden infusion" sauced a silky codfish fillet accompanied by a pair of whole poached, jade-toned baby bok choy. Tarte tatin, its swirling pattern of tiny apple crescents perfectly golden, delivered the requisite caramelized kick, softened by ivory-hued crème fraîche.

Miyou Bon Marché

At the oldest of the department-store trio, this no-frills place is from Guy Martin, chef of two-star Le Grand Véfour. Premade sandwiches or salads. If you order from the menu, be patient: It's made to order. **To order:** Pear, zucchini and gorgonzola risotto (25 minutes)

Café de la Grande Épicerie Bon Marché

Past the book department, this minimalist restaurant overlooks a serene park, complete with carousel—a good picnic spot if you buy takeout in La Grande Épicerie, the store's handsome food hall.

To order: Grilled breast of fattened duck with pepper sauce was earthy and intense; the flavorful accompanying vegetables were colorful but overcooked.

Arbitrage A Häagen-Dazs ice-cream cone

Note: Prices of a single scoop from a Häagen-Dazs outlet, plus taxes as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.



City	Local currency	€
Frankfurt	€2.80	€2.80
New York	\$3.79	€2.89
London	£2.70	€3.25
Singapore	S\$6.70	€3.75
Paris	€3.90	€3.90
Brussels	€4.20	€4.20



Finding Viognier's appeal

VIOGNIER ISN'T a grape variety with immediate appeal. Indeed, it wasn't long ago that its presence was limited to the odd row of vines planted amid the fruit trees of Condrieu, the northern Rhône village that is perhaps its most famous appellation. There, growers such as André Perret produce plump and fat examples bursting with flavors of ripe apricots, peaches and sum-

Wine WILL LYONS

mer flowers.

But scarcity isn't the only factor in its limited appeal. Its taste profile, while on the one hand able to offer excitement and intrigue for the connoisseur wishing to broaden his palate, can on the other hand provide something of a shock for the uninitiated used to the familiar flavors of Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

Pale-gold colored in the glass, it provides a chewy, mouth-filling texture low in acidity, combined with a heady, floral aroma. The nose, often exhibiting notes of apricots, peaches, honeysuckle, blossom and rose petals, can deceive as being that of a sweet wine. Yet Viognier is dry and once swallowed, leaves the palate refreshed with a long, savory, mineral aftertaste.

In Condrieu, the Viogniers enjoy a long aging potential and I have always thought they provide a useful, and, in the case of growers such as Paul Jaboulet, good-value addition to a cellar. Outside of Condrieu, they don't tend to age as well and, as a rule of thumb, it's advisable to drink them when young, before their distinctive aroma loses some of its punch.

The grape, as well as being an acquired taste, also is quite tricky to grow, winemakers say. It needs plenty of sun and is also susceptible to the fungal disease powdery mildew that can destroy the aroma compounds in grapes and leave them smelling slightly of mould.

Despite this, the grape variety has been undergoing something of a resurgence in recent years. I was reminded of this during a recent lunch with Chris Bonsall, current chairman of The International Wine and Food Society, the august institution founded in 1933 by the great gourmet and historian André Simon. Mr. Bonsall informed me that he had recently been enjoying

Australian Viognier. His recommendation was Haan Prestige Viognier 2005 from Tanunda in South Australia. Moreover, he added that the grape variety was experiencing something of a revival in Australia, where the wines didn't have the aging potential of Condrieu but more than made up for it in fruit and character. Intrigued, I made a note to unearth some Australian Viognier, only to find out that it wasn't just Australia that is planting Viognier. A quick search led me to examples in South Africa, the Mendoza valley in Argentina and throughout Chile. In California, Bob Lindquist at Qupé blends it with Chardonnay to some effect. I have also tasted it blended with Riesling, which gives it a zesty kick. So I organized a mini tasting to see how it compares with those grown in the northern Rhône.

What immediately struck me was the overwhelming distinctiveness of these wines. Rather like Riesling or, indeed, Muscat they provide a unique taste. Undoubtedly summer wines, given the floral notes I have described earlier, they are perhaps best paired with lighter salads, cold, lightly flavored seafood or dishes with an Asian influence. My personal favorite would be Viognier paired with lightly flavored curries, sushi and certain cheeses such as warmed Camembert spread on a hunk of bread.

One Viognier that stood out for its immediate, fruit-forward appeal was Anakena's Viognier from the Rapel Valley in Chile. Anakena is a relative newcomer to the international wine scene. The winery is the brainchild of Chilean entrepreneur Felipe Ibáñez and former Wines of Chile President Jorge Gutiérrez. Its first vintage was in 2001 after the vines were planted in 1999. I visited the winery, which sits in the foothills of the Andes in 2005 and found it to be winemaking on a very modern scale. Not only was it kitted out with everything one would expect in a brand new winery such as stainless fermentation tanks, but back then winemaker Gonzalo Pérez also was analyzing soil types and climatic readings obtained from satellites. They used this information to decide which vines were best matched to which soil types. It seemed a long way from the villages of the northern Rhône, where white grape varieties such as Grenache Blanc, Marsanne and Rolle have been cultivated for centuries.

DRINKING NOW

Viognier Anakena Rapel Valley, Chile

Vintage: **2009**

Price: **about £8 or €10**

Alcohol content: **13.5%**

This wine impresses with its immediate, mouth-filling and pungent flavor. It sits in the glass with a pale hue, and there is a very strong, almost overpowering smell of apricots with notes of ginger and rose petals.





Let's not go to the movies

Why Hollywood keeps trying to sell us on pointless sequels, lame remakes—and Shia LaBeouf

BY JOE QUEENAN

IN THE NEW movie "Inception," Leonardo DiCaprio burrows deep into the subconscious of a self-absorbed plutocrat to plant a powerful idea that will change the world. If the technology used in "Inception" were available in real life, Mr. DiCaprio might burrow into the subconscious of Hollywood plutocrats and plant these paradigm-altering ideas: Stop making movies like "Sex and the City 2," "Prince of Persia," "Grown Ups" and anything that positions Jennifer Aniston or John C. Reilly at the top of the marquee. Stop trying to pass off Shia LaBeouf—who looks a bit like the young George W. Bush—as the second coming of Tom Cruise. Stop casting Gerard Butler

in roles where he is called upon to emote. And if "Legion" and "Edge of Darkness" and "The Back-up Plan" and "Hot Tub Time Machine" are the best you can do, stop making movies, period. Humanity will thank you for it.

In a millennium that has thus far produced precious few motion pictures in the same class as "The Godfather," "Jurassic Park," "Casablanca," "Gone with the Wind," "My Fair Lady" and "The Matrix," there is a knee-jerk tendency to throw up one's hands and moan that the current year is the worst in the history of motion pictures. But 2010 very possibly is the worst year in the history of motion pictures. Where once there was "Robin Hood: Prince of

Thieves," there is now "Robin Hood," prince of duds. Where once we could look forward to "Breakfast at Tiffany's" and "The Last of the Mohicans," we can now look forward to "Dinner for Schmucks" and "The Last Airbender." This time two years ago we were treated to the ingenious, subversive "Iron Man"; this year we have the insipid, uninspired "Iron Man 2." What does it say about the current season that the third installation of "Toy Story" is better than the first installation of anything else? Or that people are actually looking forward to a sequel to the 1982 flop "Tron"? Does this mean that a sequel to "The Rocketeer" will soon be on the way? Quick, Leonardo: Penetrate some-

body's subconscious. Fast.

Hollywood's historical mission is not merely to provide a steady stream of engaging movies. It is also to generate a continuous sense of excitement about movies themselves. It's not just that people like to watch movies; they like to anticipate movies, to talk them up long before their release. Sometimes this is because of the epic scale of the undertaking ("Titanic," "Avatar," "Cleopatra," "Gone With the Wind"), sometimes because of dark rumblings about serious problems with the film ("Ish-tar," "Vanilla Sky," "The Passion of the Christ," "Waterworld"), and sometimes because of an entirely unforeseen event, like Madonna's decision to invade an industry that was getting along just fine without her ("Desperately Seeking Susan") or Heath Ledger's untimely death scant months before the public got to see his amazing turn as the Joker in "The Dark Knight." And sometimes it's simply because, as in the case of "Avatar," "Braveheart" and "Apocalypto," everyone in the film has his face painted blue.

Traditionally, the public gets all revved up for films during the winter and spring, imagining how much fun the summer is going to be once Neo or Darth Vader or the Terminator gets here. Or, barring that, when those great white sharks, pesky gremlins or designer brontosaurus blow through town. No such excitement exists this year. Go into a movie theater any day of the week and watch as the audience sits listlessly through a series of lame, mechanical trailers for upcoming films that look exactly like the D.O.A. movies audiences avoided last week. More films about misunderstood mercenaries. More films about rogue cops. More films about the pivotal role of choreography in rescuing the underclass from its own worst instincts. More films about boys who don't want to grow up, ever, ever, ever.



More movies about cats.

Admittedly, Hollywood is fighting a war on numerous fronts, and losing all of them. Revenues may be holding up but that is only because ticket prices keep rising; overall ticket sales are down. And because of the enormous cost of marketing a film—even a low-budget film—Hollywood likes to play it safe. This is why it's a whole lot easier to get a sequel to "Shrek" or "Tron" or "Predator" produced these days. This is an industry that actually makes sequels to bombs—"The Incredible Hulk" is a case in point—simply because the subject matter of the film is at least familiar to audiences. And because the public will have seen so many bad films between the original and the sequel, it may forget how bad the original "Hulk" was. "The Four Amigos" could soon be on its way.

It's not just a case of cowardice; the industry is legitimately confused. The age of the bankable, sure-fire matinee idol seems to be over, as the industry has discovered with Tom Cruise and Julia Roberts' most recent films. Freshly minted stars like Clive Owen and Daniel Craig sometimes open big, and some-





Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.; Paramount/Courtesy Everett Collection; Disney Enterprises; DW Studios L.L.C.; MMIX New Line Productions; Universal Studios

Clockwise from top left, Leonardo DiCaprio in 'Inception'; Mickey Rourke in 'Iron Man 2'; Jake Gyllenhaal in 'Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time'; Russell Crowe and Cate Blanchett in 'Robin Hood'; Sarah Jessica Parker, Kristin Davis, Cynthia Nixon and Kim Cattrall in 'Sex and the City 2'; Steve Carell in 'Dinner for Schmucks.' Bottom, 'The A-Team' cast, from left, Bradley Cooper, Sharlto Copley, Quinton 'Rampage' Jackson and Liam Neeson.



times do not open at all. With *The Rock* unconscionably defecting to the world of kiddie comedies, Hollywood is still casting about for a bona fide action star. This year it has auditioned Jake Gyllenhaal ("Prince of Persia"), Adrien Brody ("Predators") and even the game but superannuated Liam Neeson ("The A-Team"). None of these are logical heirs to the throne abandoned by Arnold Schwarzenegger and Harrison Ford and Sylvester Stallone. They are certainly not heirs to the throne vacated by Jet Li and Jackie Chan. They may not even be legitimate heirs to the throne vacated by Steven Seagal and Jean-Claude Van Damme. Vin Diesel, come home, all is forgiven. Well, maybe not "The Pacifier." Or "Babylon A.D." On second thought, Vin, stay away.

Every year, by tacit agreement with the public, Hollywood is expected to produce at least one surprise hit, one out-of-nowhere dark horse or, in a pinch, one cunningly hyped movie that either exhumes a noted actor from the grave or greases the skids so some solid journeyman can ascend to the ranks of the Oscar Winners of yore. The

movie doesn't have to be especially good—"Crazy Heart" and "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" certainly weren't—nor does it have to be a homegrown Hollywood product—"La Vita è Bella," "Slumdog Millionaire" and "Amélie" were all imports—nor does it even have to be a financial bonanza—neither "The Wrestler" nor "The Hurt Locker" broke any box-office records. But it has to be the sort of sleeper hit that people start talking about, the kind of movie that leads to an unexpected comeback or spirited blog postings.

This year doesn't have one of these movies. "The Kids Are All Right," arguably the most heartwarming lesbian romantic comedy ever, is trying to fill that slot, but whatever its merits, it's no "Sideways," no "March of the Penguins." The only other candidates for this role would seem to be Robert Duvall's upcoming turn as a crusty old varmint in "Get Low" and Ben Affleck's big-screen comeback in "The Town." Critics also might start banging the drum for the latest film showcasing the ethereal Tilda Swinton or some heartwarming motion picture about lachrymose camels or motorcycling proto-totalitarians or

English spinsters who inexplicably decide to become crack dealers, but so far nothing truly phenomenal like "Slumdog Millionaire" seems to be on the horizon.

If movies have a somewhat moldy feel this year, this should come as no surprise. Atom Egoy-

What does it say about the current season that the third installation of 'Toy Story' is better than the first installation of anything else?

an's dud "Chloe" was a remake of "Nathalie," a so-so French melodrama about a woman who hires a call girl to seduce her husband, with unsatisfactory results. "Dinner for Schmucks," which promises to be the worst film of the year, is a remake of the brilliant 1998 French comedy "Le Dîner de Cons." Judging from the previews, it is a clump of spittle aimed directly at Lafayette's face. "Predators" is nothing more than "Predator" in Outer Space, with the action taking place on a planet that appears to be

Parallel Guatemala. "Piranha 3D" sounds an awful lot like "Piranha," "Repo Men" sounds just a wee bit like "Repo Man," and "Death at a Funeral" is a nearly-all-African-American remake of an English comedy that itself was only intermittently amusing. That film, by

the way, was called "Death at a Funeral." Leonardo, burrow deeper.

For similar reasons, one could certainly be forgiven for confusing "A Single Man" with "Solitary Man," and for that matter, "A Serious Man." "Solitary Man," for the record, is the film where Michael Douglas plays an evil businessman whose family despises him. This isn't to be confused with the upcoming "Wall Street" sequel where Michael Douglas plays an evil businessman whose family despises him, but who gets along like a house

on fire with protégé and apprentice numskull Shia LaBeouf.

It says an awful lot about the industry that the most intelligent movies being released today are animated films like "Alice in Wonderland" and "Toy Story 3." (The best films of the year have a "3" in their titles; the films with a "2" are horrible.) Even the animated duds—standard-issue fare like "Despicable Me" and "Shrek Forever After"—display more overall intelligence and panache than "The Back-up Plan" or "Green Zone."

If the technology Leonardo DiCaprio uses in "Inception" were available in real life, he could burrow deep into the subconscious of the stars and directors and producers of the film and plant this idea, for which humanity would be eternally grateful: "Please just go away. Please."

In the case of the subconscious of those responsible for "Grown Ups," Leonardo might not have to burrow that deep.

► Vote on the best and worst movies of the summer and see the Journal's summer movie guide at WSJ.com/Lifestyle.

Whirling into the wild

Heli-hiking in the Canadian Rockies is a quick route to spectacular vistas

BY STAN SESSER

Revelstoke, British Columbia

THIS MONTH, NANCY Chapman will spend \$5,000 (€3,812), plus transcontinental air fare, for 5 1/2 days of hiking in the Canadian Rockies. If her children knew the cost, she says, "they'd think I was off my rocker to do it."

For Ms. Chapman, a 76-year-old nuclear-power researcher for Bechtel Corp. who lives near Washington, D.C., the trip is worth every penny. She'll be taken every morning by helicopter with a group of hikers and a guide to a remote mountain spot, spend a day hiking and return by helicopter at night to an isolated lodge. "You don't have cars, you don't have people, you don't even have trails," says Ms. Chapman. She's going for the sixth time.

In the spectrum of adventure travel, heli-hiking—an offshoot of heli-skiing, which preceded it—occupies one of the smallest niches. "If you walk up to someone and talk about heli-hiking, they'll give you a funny look. Saying 'mountain adventure' works better," says David Barry, chief executive officer of Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH), the largest heli-hiking operator.

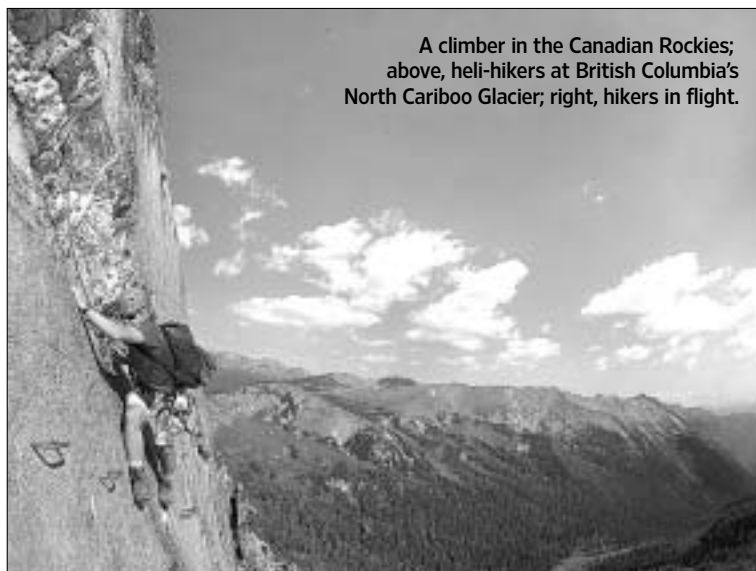
While many small heli-hiking ventures, in places like Alaska and New Zealand, last only for a day, southern British Columbia, a center of the sport—with vast areas of Canadian Rockies wilderness that would take days to penetrate with a backpack—offers several-day packages, including nights at a lodge and a variety of hikes.

Hiking without trails far from civilization, in mountains full of grizzly bears and subject to sudden storms and an occasional August snowfall, might give the most ardent outdoors enthusiast pause. But the heli-hiking organizers say they've got all contingencies covered, from warm clothing and other hiking gear to certified guides with years of training and expertise in first aid, to two-way radios that can call for a helicopter pickup in minutes if a storm looks threatening.

"You can go to places almost no one has seen," says Bob Shafto, who owns Heli Canada Adventures, located in this tiny, historic railroad town surrounded by mountains and glaciers. CMH's Rob Rohn, director of mountain operations, says there's never been a bear attack, and a hiking season often goes by without an injury more serious than a twisted ankle.

The Canadian Rockies are magnets for snow—so much so that the hiking season this year got started only early in July, lasting through September, and wildflowers will be at their peak in early August. The Canadian mountains are old geologic formations, worn down by time and glaciers. In many American mountain ranges, ridge lines are jagged spires difficult to traverse, but in the Canadian Rockies, "if you can walk along a sidewalk, you can walk along some of these ridges," says Sarah Pearson, CMH's manager of media relations.

The hikers don't have to be particularly fit—Mr. Shafto's customers have ranged from a four-year-old to people in wheelchairs to a Frenchman in 2003 who was 97 and brought along his 93-year-old



A climber in the Canadian Rockies; above, heli-hikers at British Columbia's North Cariboo Glacier; right, hikers in flight.



wife. The companies divide the hikers into groups—some for leisurely days of as little as half a mile (800 meters) of walking, some for vigorous ones of as much as eight miles (13 kilometers) in a day.

In mid-June, the high mountains had only a few patches of bare ground. That didn't stop the helicopter pilot from landing on one of them. The view, at 2,165 meters, extended for at least 160 kilometers. The 2,743-meter Mount Begbie and the glacier covering its north face towered above. All around were mountains and glaciers, and views extending down the valley into Revelstoke, which lies at 460 meters. On the way up, Mr. Shafto had the pilot fly over some hiking routes. It was a breathtaking feeling of floating in a bubble around walls of rock and above mountain lakes that were melting just enough to give a hint of their turquoise waters.

After landing on a ridge line, it

was possible to walk far enough on bare ground to see that in fact it did resemble a sidewalk—a smooth mixture of lichen, moss and finely crushed rock. Hiking in the Canadian Rockies, even at lower levels without the aid of a helicopter, is a thrilling experience: thick forests, spectacular waterfalls and wildflowers everywhere. But the bonus of heli-hiking is the unparalleled views, which otherwise would take many hours or in some cases a couple of days slogging up the sides of mountains to get to.

Some environmentalists question whether such helicopter trips disrupt the area's thriving animal life. "There's a suite of impacts associated with low-flying aircraft, everything from disrupting calving to eagles abandoning their nests," says Mitch Friedman, executive director of Conservation Northwest, based in Bellingham, Wash., adding that the people's presence could change the behavior of some animals, like

grizzlies and wolverines. But he notes that "British Columbia is huge," and it should be feasible to designate reasonable access areas. For their part, the heli-hiking operators say they avoid any areas commonly used by herds of animals.

Mr. Shafto puts up his guests in the Coast Hillcrest Resort, pleasant and friendly in the hills above Revelstoke, where he contracts with the hotel for rooms and meals. His heli-hiking packages are for two, three or four days and cost, including accommodations and food, about C\$1,000 (€744) per person per day. If the weather is so bad that helicopters can't fly, he or his guides will take guests hiking in nearby national parks, and he'll subtract that day's cost of helicopter transport. It's the high cost of running a helicopter that makes heli-hiking such an expensive proposition. This summer he's also offering three six-day heli-backpacking trips for

C\$3,951 a person; the helicopters drop the food and cooking utensils at each day's campsite, lightening the load in the backpacks.

Mr. Shafto takes 40 to 60 guests in a typical summer, while CMH has about 1,000 heli-hiking participants a year. CMH, controlled by the publicly held Fortress Investment Group, has two wilderness lodges supplied by logging roads; guests fly in by helicopter and fly out daily for their hiking jaunts, returning to the lodge by helicopter in the afternoon. The most popular package offers three nights of lodging and 2 1/2 days of hiking for C\$2,490, but Ms. Chapman, the Bechtel researcher, chose a longer package with three nights at each lodge.

Mr. Barry also promotes heli-hiking as one of the few activities left where addicts can get a respite from their mobile phones: "You're not on your BlackBerry because your BlackBerry doesn't work."

Clockwise from top, CMH, Tophir Donahue for The Wall Street Journal (2)



Getty Images

When the greens go yellow

Hot, humid weather is wreaking havoc on golf courses' delicate turf

JUNE, WORLD-WIDE, was the hottest month ever recorded, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Russia's staggering heat continues—who would have imagined Moscow temperatures approaching 40 degrees Celsius? Historic low rainfall levels accompanying the heat have hurt crops throughout Europe.

Golf
JOHN PAUL NEWPORT

It's also been hot in the U.S. Temperature averages for June and July were at or near record-high levels across the eastern seaboard and in the Midwest. U.S. farmers haven't suffered as much as those in Europe because rain has been plentiful, but for many golf courses that combination of heat, rain and humidity has been disastrous.

Several high-profile courses have had to close entirely because of stressed-out and dying greens. Huntingdon Valley Country Club outside Philadelphia, which dates from 1897, shut two of its three nines indefinitely two weeks ago because of a serious turf disease caused by the torrid wet weather. Members at The Golf Club at Cuscowilla, east of Atlanta, received letters this week that the club's highly-ranked Ben Crenshaw-Bill Coore course would be closed for eight to 10 weeks so that the greens can be resurfaced.

Ansley Golf Club in Atlanta broke similar news to its members. "The continued, excessive heat and humidity have put our greens into a critical situation and the possibility of saving many of them is remote," said a letter from the grounds committee chairman. Even Winged Foot in Westchester County, New York, the site of five U.S. Opens, is having serious weather-related problems with its two courses.

The U.S. Golf Association last month issued a special "turf loss advisory" to courses in the Mid-Atlantic states, urgently advising greenkeepers to institute "defensive maintenance and management pro-

grams" until the weather crisis ends. Most of the danger is to the greens, particularly those planted in creeping bentgrass and annual bluegrass (also known as poa annua).

"Physiologically, these are cool season grasses that do very well when the air temperature is 60 to 75 degrees [Fahrenheit]," said Clark Throssell, director of research for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. "They can cope with a few days of 90-degree weather every summer, but when that kind of heat lasts for weeks at a time, they have extreme difficulty."

Philadelphia had 17 days of 90-degree weather in July alone, far more than average. Washington D.C. had 20 days. As of Thursday, Atlanta had had more than that many consecutive days of 90 degree-plus, and that's measured in the shade. Greens that bake in the midday sun can quickly get far hotter than that. After several days, the grass thins out, becomes less dense and turns yellow. When the soil gets too hot for too long in the root zone—106 degrees Fahrenheit in the case of many bentgrass strains—the grass collapses. It doesn't go dormant, it dies.

Grasses have a mechanism to help themselves cool off in the heat. It's called evapotranspiration and is analogous to perspiration in people. Water from the soil is drawn up by the roots and evaporates through the plant's leaves. It works best when the grass is tall. But on golf greens, mown as low as 1/4 inch or even 1/8 inch to be as fast as possible, the area of leaf surface through which the water evaporates is limited.

Heat waves cause other problems. One is that root systems shrink, which reduces the amount of water drawn up to the surface. High humidity and heavy rainfall makes things worse. Humidity retards evaporation, while soggy soil stays hotter longer than dry soil does. Water in the soil also creates a barrier that prevents needed oxygen from getting to the roots.

All of this weakens grass. Even when summer weather doesn't kill, it makes the turf more susceptible to disease and fungus.

Course superintendents can do

only so much to help. Mowing the greens even slightly higher during periods of high heat yields significantly more leaf surface, which improves evapotranspiration. But it can easily slow down putting speeds by a foot or more on the Stimpmeter. "Better slow grass than no grass," is a mantra among greenkeepers, but golfers aren't always understanding.

During the hot summer of 2007, ground crews at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, home of the PGA Tour's Tour Championship, hand-watered every green on the course every 30 minutes during the hottest days, just enough to cool off the grass blades but not enough to add moisture to the soil. They also set up fans to keep the air moving over the green surfaces and cut them with walk-behind mowers rather than the heavy triplex riding machines, to reduce overall stress.

But it didn't do much good. "It's such a helpless feeling. You watch the greens turn yellow and you know they're going to collapse but there's just nothing more you can do," said Ralph Kepple, the superintendent at East Lake.

For the 2008 season, East Lake converted its greens from bentgrass to Bermuda grass, which is much more heat tolerant. Bermuda thrives in temperatures in the 80s and 90s.

The knock on Bermuda turf, however, is that until the mid-1990s it wasn't as smooth as bentgrass for putting, and its coarser, more bristly leaves usually grew in one dominant direction (typically toward the setting sun), which misdirected putts. But since then "ultra dwarf" strains, with names like TifEagle, Champions and MiniVerde, have been introduced. These grasses are denser, more compact and grow more vertically than old Bermuda strains and for most golfers are almost indistinguishable from bentgrass.

East Lake chose the MiniVerde strain and has been pleased with the decision—especially this summer, Mr. Kepple said. Many other courses in the so-called "transition zone" between the southern and northern states also converted to Bermuda.

But Bermuda has its limitations. For one thing, it cannot survive cold

winters. Even some courses in the hills just north of Atlanta feel they cannot risk planting in Bermuda for fear of winterkill. Bermuda needs at least eight hours of direct sunlight a day, which is a problem for courses lined with tall trees, as are many in the Atlanta area.

Augusta National, the home of the Masters 90 miles east of Atlanta, is in an area that is often 10 degrees hotter in the summer. But Augusta is able to maintain luscious bentgrass greens because the course is closed for play all summer.

During heat waves crews erect little tents over the greens, to block some of the sunlight and keep them cooler. The greens are mowed regularly, but at higher heights than they are for regular play.

"Every course in every part of the country has different conditions, different microclimates and different member expectations," said Mr. Throssell of the GCSAA. That's why, at this time of year, course superintendents are usually just as stressed out as the grasses they are pledged to maintain.

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Imaginative staging of a reactionary drama



Jessica Raine as Jasmine.

Marnel Harlan

LONDON: Mike Bartlett's new play for the Headlong theater company, "Earthquakes in London," which premiered at the Cottesloe this week, has profited from the considerable resources of the National Theatre. Designer Miriam Bueher's radically reconfigured auditorium transforms the ground floor into a cherry red serpentine bar-cum-stage, with swiveling bar stools for some of the audience, and ramps at either end from which characters emerge. More of the audience is seated above, in rows facing each other, with two curtained stages at right angles on the other two walls. All four walls have panels, where landscapes or maps are projected.

When it comes to production values, director Rupert Goold has almost surpassed his own eye-popping production of "Enron." Working with Scott Ambler, the same choreographer, he has again given us a serious play with loads of singing and dancing—a hybrid musical. Katrina Lindsay indicates the play's shifting time frames by using historically precise costume designs. The performances are uniformly polished: the singing (of recent pop songs) is credible, and the dancing, especially break-dancing on the curvy bar, is breathtaking. The production crackles with energy.

So much for the almost excessive means. What about the message? The program makes it clear that the

theme of the play is the coming apocalypse. Its burden is that climate-change denial is no longer an intellectually respectable position, and the play embraces and illustrates James Lovelock's conclusion that "it is probably too late for sustainable development" so "enjoy life while you can." The London earthquake expected "the day after tomorrow" is simply the first sounding of the last trump.

Robert, the scientist who has been a rotten father to the play's three sisters (and central characters), asks his son-in-law, Steve, if he wants to know the "best way to reduce the carbon footprint?" and specifies: "No foot. And the planet knows this so in the next hundred years it will balance the books. Five billion people wiped from the face of the earth in a single lifetime." He wants his pregnant daughter to abort Steve's girl baby.

But after Act Three, which ends with the fetus screaming "Mummy, help me!" Mr. Bartlett's craft and imagination wanes. The play turns into a clunky rewrite of Luke (especially 21:20-33) and Revelations—the baby's the new Messiah, and you can guess the rest. I did. For all its up-to-date politics and imaginative staging, this is a deeply reactionary drama.

—Paul Levy
Until Sept. 22
www.nationaltheatre.org.uk



Courtesy of Sotheby's

A dining table from the State Dining Room at Chatsworth (estimate £150,000-£250,000).

Devonshire family items at auction

AT CHATSWORTH, THE stately Derbyshire, England, home of the Duke of Devonshire, Sotheby's will hold a three-day auction Oct. 5-7 of some 20,000 objects accumulated by the Devonshire family over the centuries. Items include furniture, ceramics, glass, silver, lighting, architectural fittings and fixtures and textiles.

Collecting MARGARET STUDER

In sifting through the thousands of objects in the family's attics, the Duke of Devonshire says "treasures" were found. Among them were magnificently-carved chimney pieces designed by William Kent, the 18th-century British architect and designer.

Among the family's colorful members was the beautiful and charismatic Georgiana Cavendish, 5th Duchess of Devonshire (1757-1806), a fashion icon with political influence. Her dramatic life inspired "The Duchess" (2008), a British drama partly filmed at Chatsworth, which won an Academy Award for best costume design.

The duchess, who was well known as a passionate gambler and an extravagant shopper, bought a considerable amount of expensive furniture by French maker Francois Hervé. At the sale will be a pair of her rosewood and caned settees by Hervé (estimate: £8,000-£12,000).

Her son, the 6th Duke of Devonshire, known as the "Bachelor Duke" (1790-1858), showed his love for the exotic in sumptuous refurbishing of the family's houses. His set of six Louis XV carved fauteuils in their original blue and gold silk by the Royal decorators J.G. Grace is estimated at £18,000-£25,000. The duke held splendid parties during which lamps transformed Chatsworth's gardens into a magical fairyland (estimate for a group of lamps: £400-£600).

Illustrating the power of this family, a vast regency mahogany extending dining table from the State Dining Room at Chatsworth, is expected to fetch £150,000-£250,000. An impressive, 220 centimeter-high, gilt-bronze candelabrum with nine lights (circa 1820) is estimated at £30,000-£50,000; and an elaborately-carved, Italian 18th-century giltwood table with an alabaster veneered top, at £40,000-£70,000.

An engaging and energetic 'The Master and Margarita'

OXFORD/EDINBURGH: Mikhail Bulgakov's (1891-1940) Faustian novel, "The Master and Margarita," was published in a first version in 1966. The central tale involves a disruptive visit by the Devil and his diabolical entourage to the passionately atheistic literary clique of post-Revolutionary, Stalinist Moscow. Its obvious satiric intent, directed against stifling Soviet bureaucracy, made it unpublishable in Bulgakov's lifetime.

Controversy about establishing the correct text and about the value of competing translations (in a pre-performance talk, Oxford Russianist Julie Curtis urged the audience to shun more recent ones in favor of Michael Glenny's 1967 effort) compounds the complexity of the nov-

el's themes and plots. Characters include Pontius Pilate, Yeshua, who is crucified with Pilate's agreement, and a giant, vodka-swilling cat called Behemoth. So the Edinburgh Fringe stage adaptation by the Oxford University Dramatic Society, or OUDS, which uses live music, dance and ingenious pantomime, seems fitting and right.

The pre-Fringe performance I saw at Modern Art Oxford had a few kinks to iron out, but this 125th-anniversary tour of OUDS has a talented young cast, ranging from Cassie Barraclough as Margarita (convincingly moody as she sings "Gloomy Sunday"), Matt Monaghan as the accomplished keyboard-playing pussycat and Jonnie McAloon as a compellingly sweet Yeshua to Ollo Clark as

the Master, the novelist sometimes confined to a mental asylum. Max Hoehn as Woland, the Devil in disguise, is also the director, as well as co-adaptor of the piece with Raymond Blankenhorn—who plays three roles and does an engagingly balletic dance.

The rapid changes of costume, props and the business of entrances and exits will work better at Edinburgh's "C soco" venue (Chambers Street and Cowgate), where it is being billed as "site-specific drama." It helps a great deal to have some familiarity with Bulgakov's novel for the fullest enjoyment of this hugely energetic spectacle.

—Paul Levy
Until Aug. 30
www.oudsbulgakov.com



Amelia Peterson, 2010

Joe Bayley as Pontius Pilate.

Artful, sacred impressions from Bhutan

ZURICH: Bhutan is one of the world's most reclusive and remote countries, but the Museum Rietberg in Zurich is offering an entertaining shortcut to the Himalayan kingdom, giving a lively impression of its rich and active Buddhist culture.

The show, "Bhutan—Sacred art from the Himalayas," exhibits more than 100 religious artefacts such as statues, musical instruments and silk paintings that help deepen the understanding of a secretive country, where, according to the philosophy of its former king, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Gross National Happiness is more important than the economic advancement of its 700,000 inhabitants.

Since most of the exhibited items are still used in some of the country's more than 2,000 monasteries, two young monks from Bhu-

tan hold a ceremony twice a day to ward off bad spirits. Art lovers are invited to participate or simply watch the ritual. This heightens the impression that the show is in fact a short trip to the Himalayas. Several films on large-scale screens about Bhutan's ritual dances and two cinematic portraits about the lives of a postman and a schoolboy round off this impression.

Among the show's most interesting exhibits are the richly decorated *thangkas*, silk paintings that depict the life of the Buddha, gods and saints. They all require a close look since many of these wall tapestries are laden with intricate detail, reminding European viewers of the curious paintings of Dutch medieval artist Hieronymus Bosch.

A 19th-century *thangka*, which shows the meditational deities Chakrasamvara and Vajravahari making love, is almost exploding

with idiosyncratic detail. Encircled by an orange flame, the deep blue figure of Chakrasamvara rests his feet on two naked human figures and wears a garland of skulls. The two gods, whose embrace represents enlightenment, are encircled by a group of angry looking deities, whose garlands and spears are also equipped with human skulls, representing suffering.

Equally fascinating is a 19th-century *thangka* showing a mandala that looks like a Greek labyrinth. The picture, with its more than one hundred gods and demigods that are often depicted with various animal heads, works like a pathway into meditation. Viewers may become so absorbed in its colorful detail that they lose themselves in it.

—Goran Mijuk
Until Oct. 17
www.rietberg.ch



Shuzo Uemoto

'Buddha Akshobhya' (18th century), Bhutan.

Coming of Age in Hell

By Toby Lichtig

Nicolai Lilin's "Siberian Education" depicts the author's early life growing up in Transnistria, a breakaway enclave of the Soviet Union, on the border of Ukraine and Moldova.

This "memoir" has been causing quite a storm, and not just because of its outlandish brutality. For some, it is a too violent, a terrifying account of a lawless and neglected corner of the Soviet Union as the fracturing empire struggles to emerge from communism; for others it hints at the continued legacy of Russian gangsterism and corruption.

And then there are its critics: The book has been accused of outright mendacity. In the "Literary Review," Professor Donald Rayfield described its contents as "a fantasist's ravings" and mocked its "gullible" admirers.

"Siberian Education" should not be taken at face value. Nicolai Lilin's tale of life is filled with historical implausibility and statistical impossibility. But rethought as a piece of semi-fictional anthropology and the story springs to life. Even if only one-tenth of it is true, the book remains a chilling portrait of the viciousness that comes from political disenfranchisement.

Mr. Lilin, who now lives in Italy, brilliantly depicts a criminal underworld of strict mores, arcane logic and brutal justice. Politicians are natural enemies; policemen their servile dogs. Jail is a rite of passage; criminality an

ethos. But the community is not without its morality. Above all, Mr. Lilin's Urkas venerate humility, freedom and anti-materialism (a strange feature given all the thieving). They revel in their ethnic solidarity: "How wonderful it is to be Siberian."

The Urka community in Bender was supposedly deported there from Siberia by Stalin in the 1930s (another questionable piece of history). As such, it is bound up in the myths of the old

SIBERIAN EDUCATION

By Nicolai Lilin

Translated by Jonathan Hunt
(Canongate, 447 pages, £12.99)

country. Russian Orthodoxy is central but mingled with derivatives of Shamanism and cult symbols of the outlaw. Guns are placed next to Orthodox icons and ritualistically blessed; weapons exist in a complex taxonomy and can be used for deeds both "good" and "evil."

As a toddler, Mr. Lilin "didn't care about toys." His main fascination was with the "pike," a traditional knife. When he is given his own by an aging godfather, he becomes a kindergarten celebrity. As he grows into a delinquent, he learns how to slice the knee ligaments of his enemies. He drinks hard, fights harder and is tried for attempted murder. He isn't yet 13.

But young Lilin is also polite to his mother, a gifted raconteur

and trainee body artist. The depictions of the "codes of tattoos" are fascinating. Tattoos chart the trajectory of a criminal's life; those who know how to decipher them can tell the life story of their bearer by a glance. The oral folk tradition is also fundamental. With so much time spent in prison, storytelling is a precious entertainment.

And so Mr. Lilin recounts various episodes of the bizarre and the grotesque. An abused dog gets his own back; a neglected TB victim gains a minor victory; a Rasputin-esque robber survives an execution.

Mr. Lilin delights in the argot of the underworld (adeptly rendered in English translation by Jonathan Hunt). His upbringing is replete with sardonic maxims and wry imprecations: "Death and damnation to all cops and informers"; "The only thing a worthy criminal takes from the cops is a beating, and even that he gives back." "Writing" is slang for a knife wound; a good thrashing will make an adversary's "shadow bleed."

Mr. Lilin also narrates with his tongue firmly in cheek. Describing a terrifying ex-con "completely covered in tattoos, and with iron teeth," he concludes: "he seemed a normal kind of guy."

Ever open to distraction, "Siberian Education" meanders like a shaggy dog story. We are told Mr. Lilin enjoys Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle; there are Pushkin-esque moments of ribald

monstrosity. But the literary forebear that best comes to mind is Maxim Gorky in "My Childhood." It is through a child's eyes that we view this fiendish adult world; and it is through a child's eyes that we accept it.

Mr. Lilin's Urkas are always in the right, whether wreaking awesome vengeance for a rape in the community or opining on the perfidy of other criminal communities. Even when he dismisses the idea of human "justice," Mr. Lilin can never quite condemn his own. This is a life of us and them—to see nuance would mean weakness.

When Mr. Lilin goes to juvenile prison, he forms bonds with the Armenians, Belorussians and Cossacks; the Ukrainians and Georgians are despised. A hideous story of gang violence unfolds, of rapes and routine tortures. Worst of all are the prison guards. The pack mentality is vital. Stray from the flock and you risk being picked off.

Mr. Lilin delights in the "egali-

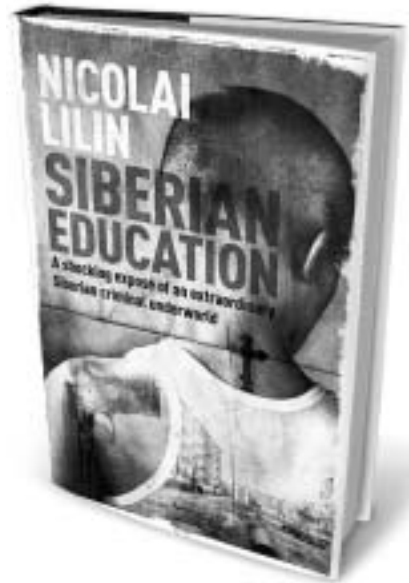
tarian" nature of his criminal world, where valor and loyalty count for more than wealth or family connection. However "violent and brutal" his mentors, there is "no place for lies and pre-

tence, cant and dissembling."

This is the Russian gangland recast as a medieval Romance. Now, we are told, things have changed: Post-Soviet materialism and treachery have infected the integrity of the neighborhood. Once again, we should take this with a large dose of Siberian salt.

But Mr. Lilin still achieves something impressive. Amid the depravity of its anti-heroes, "Siberian Education" paints a memorable world of anarchism, devotion, humor and respect. It is not one in which any sane-minded person would choose to live; but it is one that we could learn from.

Mr. Lichtig is a freelance writer, editor and producer. His criticism regularly appears in the Times Literary Supplement, among other places.



In the Realm of Peers

By Ferdinand Mount

"You should study the peerage," says a character in Oscar Wilde's play "A Woman of No Importance," "it is the best thing in fiction the English have ever done." Lawrence James is a kinder soul than Oscar. Mr. James's great, sweeping survey of the ups and downs of the British aristocracy, now out in paperback, begins by taking seriously the myth of chivalry that underpins it.

Aristocrats

By Lawrence James

(Abacus, 448 pages, £12.99)

"Chivalry," he tells us, "explains the mind of the medieval aristocrat." Chivalry's blend of morality, theology and romance constituted an ideal to which all knights aspired. Every self-respecting nobleman saw himself as fit for King Arthur's Round Table. Reared in a tradition of service from his teens, usually as a servant in some other noble household, the young squire graduated to a place of honor in society, loyally serving his king on the one hand and deserving the loyalty of his tenants and serfs on the other.

Alas, the evidence suggests that the picture is at best incomplete. For greed, brutality, quarrelsomeness and shameless treachery, the nobility of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland

could, at least until the 19th century, offers strong competition to its noxious European cousins.

In the 15th century alone, aristocratic coalitions deposed no fewer than eight monarchs and engaged in civil conflict in the War of the Roses (that fragrant misnomer), which created more human misery on English soil than any affliction apart from the Black Death. The aristocracy deposed two out of four of the Stuart monarchs, in the process engaging in a further civil war.

In the accumulation of acres, British aristos were near-geniuses. By the 1870s, no fewer than 180 peers each owned estates of more than 10,000 acres. Far from being stuck in the past during the Industrial Revolution, the aristocrats had been swift to develop the coal and iron ore and building stones on their estates and to invest in the canals, harbors and railways being built across their land. The magnificent castles and palaces of Lord Londonderry, Lord Durham and Lord Fitzwilliam were paid for out of the pitheads they could see from their attic windows.

Mr. James reminds us several times that England's elite had an openness to incomers that gave them a readiness to adapt that the French and the Germans fatally lacked. But as Mr. James admits: "As ever, old money resented new." To keep William Pitt the Younger in high office, George III created peerages for his supporters in such numbers

that the Duchess of Queensberry was moved to exclaim: "There are so many lords made that I can hardly spit out of my coach without spitting on a lord."

The fastest way to the top was undoubtedly to be born one of Charles II's bastards: The Dukes of Richmond, St. Albans and Grafton all owe their lift-off to this happy accident. In the modern era, so many brewers were ennobled that the social register became known as Burke's Beerage.

In their heyday aristocrats consolidated their hold on power by putting their sons into the House of Commons while they themselves controlled the House of Lords. In the period 1660-90, more than 200 sons of peers sat in the Commons. Maintaining this grip on power was an expensive business. Huge sums were paid for control of a constituency. Lord Egremont paid £40,000 in 1787 for the Sussex seat of Midhurst—in real terms as much

as you might need to pay to run for governor of California today.

All in all, it is scarcely surprising that the one thing the American colonists were resolved on was that there should be no hereditary titles in their domains. The U.S. Constitution outlawed

titles, and the Continental Congress had already abolished primogeniture and entail—the practices ensuring that a first-born son inherited his father's estate and that the estate remain in the hands of one male heir—which were the crucial mechanisms for perpetuating a hereditary nobility. Mr. James might have told us more about the enclosure of common land and the clearances in the Scottish highlands, which helped to aggrandize aristocratic landholdings while creating a landless proletariat.

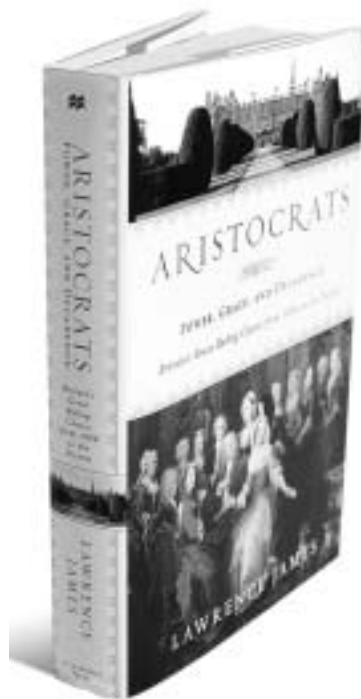
Mr. James finds plenty of counterexamples of aristocrats who were kindly landlords and merciful magistrates as well as dutiful citizens ready to lay down their

lives for their country. More than 200 heirs to titles or large estates were killed in World War I. Mr. James also notes that the selfishness and idleness of so many noblemen tended to be forgiven because the aristocracy's sporting diversions and colorful eccentricities brightened the national scene.

At Welbeck Abbey, the 6th Duke of Portland had several tennis courts dispersed about the grounds so that he could play at any time of day without having the sun in his eyes. The 5th Duke had built a network of tunnels under the Abbey so that he could live completely unobserved by his servants or anyone else. We shall not see their like again, and, though Mr. James emphasizes the selfless sense of public duty that the aristocracy often showed, I'm not sure we would want to.

One of the few enduring acts of the most recent Labour government was to turf out the vast bulk of hereditary peers, leaving the House of Lords dominated by the appointed life peers. Schemes for an entirely elected senate to replace the House of Lords continue to be debated, as they have been for a century. But guess what: It is now the life peers who are stubbornly resisting their own removal.

Mr. Mount, a former editor of the Times Literary Supplement, is the author of "Full Circle: How the Classical World Came Back to Us" (Simon & Schuster).



time off

Amsterdam

music

"Grachtenfestival 2010" stages 90 classical-music concerts at canals and other venues, featuring music by Mahler, Beethoven, Mozart and others.

Grachtenfestival
Aug. 14-22
☎ 31-20-4214-542
www.grachtenfestival.nl

Antwerp

music

"Jazz Middelheim 2010" is an open air jazz festival at the Den Brandt Park, featuring Cassandra Wilson, the Archie Shepp Quartet, Leon Parker, Toots Thielemans and others.

Jazz Middelheim Festival
Aug. 14-17
☎ 32-2-7415-042
www.jazzmiddelheim.be

Berlin

art

"The Esprit of Gestures—Hans Hartung, Informel and Its Impact" presents lithographs, etchings and woodcuts by the German artist, alongside work by Jackson Pollock, Salvador Dalí, Cy Twombly and others.

Kupferstichkabinett
Until Oct. 10
☎ 49-30-2662-951
www.smb.spk-berlin.de

music

"Young Euro Classic" is a festival presenting young musicians and youth orchestras from across Europe, performing works by Strauss, Brahms, Schubert, de Falla and others.

Concert House
Until Aug. 22
☎ 49-3020-3092-101
www.young-euro-classic.de

Brussels

"Brussels's Flower Carpet" is a decoration of the Grande Place with a carpet design of 18th-century French patterns made of more than 700,000 begonias.

Grande Place
Aug. 13-15
☎ 32-2513-8940
www.flowercarpet.be

Edinburgh

festival

"Edinburgh International Festival 2010" presents visual arts, music, theater and dance, including the opera "Idomeneo" by Mozart and "Porgy and Bess" by Gershwin.

Edinburgh International Festival
Aug. 13-Sept. 5
☎ 44-131-4732-099
www.eif.co.uk

Hamburg

music

"Dockville" is a music and art festival



David O'Mer performing as part of La Clique at the Stockholm Culture Festival; below, 'A small rain dampens a big storm' (2010) by the Institut für wahre Kunst at the 'Dockville' festival in Hamburg; bottom, 'Blue towel' (2005) by Veronika Veit, in Munich.

on a river island, featuring Klaxons, Wir Sind Helden, Shantel and Bucovina Club Orkestar and others.

Wilhelmsburg
Aug. 13-15
☎ 49-40-4143-12189
msdockville.de

art

"White Bouncy Castle" is an oversized, 30-meter-long bouncy-castle installation, conceptualized by choreographer William Forsythe, inviting visitors to join in and jump to their hearts' content.

Deichtorhallen Hamburg
Aug. 12-Sept. 12
☎ 49-40-3210-30
www.deichtorhallen.de

London

art

"Jess Flood-Paddock: Gangsta's Paradise" is the first solo exhibition of the British artist, featuring sculptural installations and photography.

Hayward Gallery Project Space
Until Sept. 19
☎ 44-844-8750-073
www.southbankcentre.co.uk

theater

"Into the Woods" features Hannah Waddingham, Billy Boyle, Beverly Rudd and others, under the direction of Timothy Sheader and Liam Steel in Stephen Sondheim's popular musical inspired by the Brothers Grimm.

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre
Until Sept. 11



☎ 44-20-7907-7071
www.openairtheatre.org

☎ 33-1-4543-8118
www.classiqueauvert.fr

Munich

art

"The Great Art Exhibition" showcases avant-garde works by young contemporary artists, exploring the medium of drawing, including caricatures.

Haus der Kunst
Aug 11-Oct. 3
☎ 49-89-2112-7113
www.grossekunstausstellungmuenchen.de

Paris

music

"Classique au Vert" is a classical-music festival paying tribute to the Romantic era, with music by Mozart, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt and Mendelssohn.

Parc Floral de Paris
Aug. 7-Sept. 26

film

"Cinéma au Clair de Lune" screens films at outdoor locations throughout the city, including classic works by Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, Jean Renoir and Michel Gondry.

Various venues
Until Aug. 22
☎ 33-1-4476-6300
www.forumdesimages.fr

Rotterdam

music

"Day of Romantic Music" is a summer festival held at several stages offering classical and popular music by the Philharmonic Choir Toonkunst Rotterdam, Hiroto Yamaya and others.

Euromast Park
Aug. 8
☎ 31-10-4364-811
www.dagvanderomantischemuziek.nl

Stockholm

art

"Stockholm Culture Festival" offers 500 shows featuring 250 artists, including music, comedy, art and dance, with performances by the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Frédéric Galliano and Simone Moreno.

Various venues
Aug. 10-15
☎ 46-8-5083-1900
kulturfestivalen.stockholm.se

Vienna

art

"Zuzanna Janin: Majka from the Movie" presents a new video installation by the Polish visual artist and former actress.

Kunsthalle Wien
Aug. 18-31
☎ 43-1-5218-90
www.kunsthallewien.at



Haus der Kunst München