



Events...



...poetry...

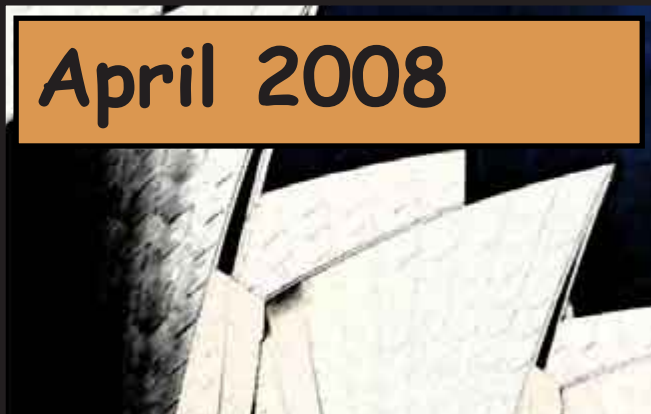


...opinions...



a full issue for...

April 2008





the emagazine 1st January 2008



Events...



...opinions...



...personas...



a full issue for...



January 2008



Events...



...opinions...



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a full issue for...



February 2008



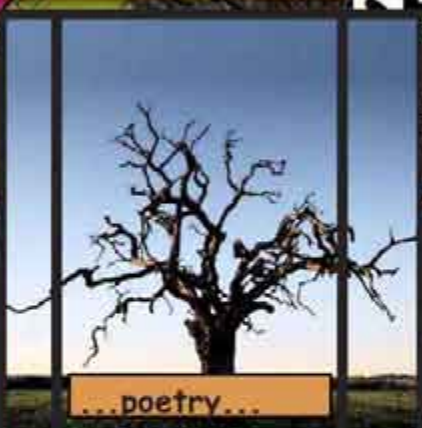
Events...



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a full issue for...



March 2008





We cover every issue

And that was April.....

The fluffy lambs are leaping about in the meadows, the flowers are blooming and the sun has gained some self-confidence, if I was a betting man I'd wager that spring had arrived in the Northern Hemisphere - apologies to the winter-bound antipodes!

Here we all are for another Ovi front covers monthly issue, but brace your self because there has been a re-design of the pages. We'd appreciate any feedback on the new layout - both positive and negative, but always constructive!

The new issue welcomes four new contributors to Ovi beginning with Vesa Kuosmanen's "Twins, Not Clones" in which he interviews Tegan Quin, Tegan and Sara. Binoy Kampmark made his debut with an article on religion in America, Jarkko Vaheristo inspired us to read Terry Pratchett and we welcome Dimitra Karantzeni, a young Greek girl writing in her native language.

This month Valerie Sartor and Akli Hadid managed to collect a hat-trick of covers, while nine other Ovi team members each picked up a single each. Emanuel L. Paparella wrote about Carl Gustav Jung, Clint Wayne celebrated the birthday of the Sydney Opera House designer, Linda

Lane asked us to free Tibet by standing up, Juliette Roques returned with a new instalment of Coffee and Cigarettes in Helsinki, Tahir Khan returned to the Ovi fold after a long absence with an article on Dr. Ambedkar and Leah Sellers tackled the question 'What does it mean to be an American?.'

Jari Martikainen and Nunobark both returned with follow-up exhibitions, one offering more illustrations and the other sharing his photography, both of which impressed our readers, plus the Ovi Team promoted a stand-up comedy show entitled 'Jesus in Guantanamo'.

Asa picked up covers for his "Hollywood OAPs" article, as well as "Disabling the disabled", "Betting on addiction" and "Killing the death penalty". Thanos wrote for International Children's Day, Earth Day and Panathinaios' 100th birthday, plus articles on Iraq, doping in sport and the US Elections.

April was a great month for articles in general, so, after you have browsed through the PDF, why not take a look back on our pages and read all the other submissions that sadly didn't receive a cover?

Roll on May!



AKLI HADID



BINOY KAMPMARK



TAHIR KHAN



VESA KUOSMANEN



LINDA LANE



JARI MARTIKAINEN



NUNOBARK



EMANUEL L. PAPARELLA



CLINT WAYNE



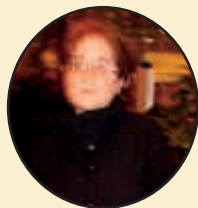
JARKKO VAHERISTO



LEAH SELLERS



VALERIE SARTOR



JULIETTE ROQUES



It's not all Harry Potter

By Thanos Kalamidas

I'm going to borrow an intro Asa has used because I feel like it works perfectly with what I want to write. Did I like the Harry Potter series? Yes! Do I believe Harry Potter series helped children's literature? No! Actually, regarding the Harry Potter books, after having read all seven of them, I agree with Asa, who never read any, but watched and enjoyed all the films so far.

I've read often that Harry Potter books helped kids to return to reading and I was amazed to read this from experts, teachers and children's psychologists and in numbers it is true, thousands of kids who found reading a book difficult started reading Harry Potter adventures and teachers started giving homework inspired from Harry Potter, but I have the feeling that,

yes millions of books were sold all around the world, but they were just Harry Potter books - kids didn't return to books, but stuck to reading Harry Potter. So the next question is if Joanne Rowling contributed anything to children's literature and, in my opinion, no!

Joanne K. Rowling is a good writer and is one of the best writers of 2000, who knew very well that fame brings money and, in her case, she was lucky to bring a lot of money. She had a good concept, she sold it well, franchised it perfectly and now she's happy. She said that she was inspired from a story she was telling as a bedtime story to her kid while penniless and unemployed. I do admire her and envy her inspiration but she's not a children's book author. She wrote a fantasy story, very contemporary in the sense that everything is

fast food, ready chewed food that doesn't leave anything for the children's imagination.

Children's literature is very sensitive and very unique, many authors, illustrators and novelists have written books for kids, and very few have succeeded. Oddly, many wrote books for adults but had a tremendous success with kids; Jules Verne is the best example of this. A children's book must be very realistic inside its surrealism just like Alice in Wonderland. A children's book must be very clear in its meaning and very honest, kids understand dishonesty more and better than adults. But the most important element is that a children's book must leave the imagination free.

Imagination is the most beautiful talent kids have, in their quiet moments they create words and characters, they become part of the book and they take it one step further. I often read bedtime stories to my daughter and she really enjoys the one with a naughty rabbit. I must have read the same exact story tens of times and we must have seen the picture that illustrates the story dozens of times. Every time when we finish the very same story, she asks me, can the rabbit do this or that? Can the rabbit fly or can the rabbit drive? In the story the rabbit just ate a lot of carrots and got a stomach ache, so simple. Still the way the story is written and the way it is illustrated has made her imagination gallop. For every time I've read the same story she has created tens of more stories with the same hero.

After listening to my daughter creating stories starring the little rabbit I thought of Harry Potter and suddenly he looked handicapped. He has a magic broom and an invisible cape, he has a magic hat and he knows all these spells and conjuration actually there is a dictionary and an encyclopedia for Harry Potter, what there is not is imagination from the reader's side. The reader stays still reading page after page and that's all and when it finishes the reader wants more ... Harry Potter!

The kids don't buy books, adults buy books. So if the kids are reading or not it has to do with the parents and all the adults that surrounding the kid. My daughter cannot read yet but she's trying hard, she pretends and she wants to learn and that's because both me and my wife read a lot. We much rather read a book than watch

television, so don't expect Rowling to teach your kids read. You must teach the kids to read and there are books, thousand, millions of wonderful books, full of adventure ready for the kids to read, they just need somebody to show them where to find them.

Jules Verne doesn't have any magicians or magic hats, but his books are full of adventure and drama. Rowling's book is part of a gigantic franchise that lacks imagination and is full of constant consuming, that's why all the shops are full of Harry Potter products. The International Day for Children's Books is a good chance to think all that and do something, get a book for your child or for a kid you know.

A FROZEN MACKEREL



MAGICIAN DOWNTOWN
BY STEVE CARTWRIGHT



Missing the forest

By Thanos Kalamidas

I never pretended to be an expert on US politics and embarrassingly I have to admit that I learn a big deal on what's going on in the White House and Capitol Hill from a television series called the "West Wing". But I have to admit things with the Democratic Party and what's going on between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton have totally confused me, especially when all these calls came last week to Hillary to pull out of the race.

The very same week top officials of the Democratic Party were calling Hillary Clinton to resign from the race, polls between voters were showing her leading by even 15% to Obama whilst coming to party members and delegates Obama was far ahead. And that to my simple calculations means that, despite the

fact the actual voters want Hillary for the next president of the United States, there is a big possibility that the Democratic Party will vote Obama to lead them, leaving her aside. Now even compared to cricket, the game seems easy to understand.

Over the last few weeks, the two opponents have been acting like worst enemies - something that is quickly escalating - and they are often attacking each other on very personal issues or using the dirtiest methods. In a way I can understand that doesn't matter if I like it or not. The Democratic Party, just like the Republicans, is a collective party with many sides and many perspectives. In Europe you go to vote and sometimes you have to deal with twenty and thirty different parties and sometimes the differences between those parties are so

small it makes you wonder why they don't unite to increase their chances. However, this is a different reality in US politics and I can understand that inside the Democratic Party there is a left side, a socialist side, a liberal and even a conservative part. And I suppose there are representatives of all these parts of the party.

I presume Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama represent exactly these different sides of the same party and it is like in Europe, it is easier for the Social-Democrats to communicate, negotiate, even cooperate, with the conservatives than they can even stand in the same room with the socialists. I can understand that and this is the beauty of democracy, these arguments are creative and informative for the voters. You see, again I returned to the voters, not representatives of the voters.

Oddly, as it might sound, the delegates, the members of the parties that have been voting for the last few months, are representatives of the voters and they should represent exactly that. But here we have a missing element: the voters themselves. The party members have their interests and their agendas; agenda is a magic word in politics and with all the lobbies ruling US politics it seems agendas are the most important thing in US politics. However, all these delegates seem to forget one thing that the simple voters might have an agenda and if what the delegates decide the voters don't find it to their likeness they might do exactly what they did before, ignore the elections and suddenly the Democrats will find a very united Republican party replacing George W. Bush with the worst possible clone, McCain!

As I said in the beginning, most of the time I try hard to understand US politics but I do understand that lobbies have taken gigantic

dimensions, especially since these lobbies often represent funding lobbies and also the expenses of each candidate represent the whole budget of some African countries. I don't expect either of them to pull out, this would be unfair first of all for their supporters and in this case we are talking about millions of active supporters who voluntarily have worked hard for their candidates.

What I do expect from both of them is to listen to the voters, listen to what they want and how they want it. The voters are not sheep and they are not brainless, most of all they have instinct; if you have any doubts just ask John Kerry. George W. Bush's failure was proven and fact, still nobody trusted that Kerry could be the solution. People voted George W. Bush.

As things have come - this is something we know well in Europe - party members don't elect governments, usually it is this small percent of the undecided standing in the middle and the last minute deciding. The role of these undecided voters is critical and that should be the target for the Democratic Party and both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama with all the things going on lately are losing them. McCain from the other side is no good but at least is the evil ...we know!

I imagine that the best thing Hillary and Barack can do is to meet; meet with all these people, the brains of the Democratic Party and see, analyze the forest. I know what I'm writing because I have the feeling that the last few months they see the tree and they miss the forest and then act, act according to voters' wishes and wants, act now before it is too late because this world will be better without another five years of George W. Bush - it doesn't matter the name!





Paper Tiger

By Valerie Sartor

I am a woman who is easily duped. Moving to Beijing drilled this character defect into me after months of being tricked, cheated and laughed at by my Chinese landlord. It all started when I came to Beijing, China's capital city, late last summer in order to take a post as an English editor. The company driver and a co-worker met me at the airport, deftly stuffed my bags into a van and sped me off to my new digs. "You have a luxury apartment," my new colleague Lee He told me primly. "You'll be living in a place I can only dream about. You're very lucky to be here."

The van pulled up to a large group of high-rise apartments. An old man wearing a shabby military jacket swept open the lobby door and nodded, then spit. Nobody said anything; we

filed into the hallway, which looked pretty normal, and pressed the button for the elevator. When the bell dinged I got in, shoving my way through a mass of residents. Somebody had evidently been eating garlic. I wondered what kind of jobs they did to live in the lap of luxury but decided not to ask Lee He about that just yet.

At the sixth floor we got out, and Lee He flourished a key to unlock the door. "Here you are," he announced, "Luxury!"

I wandered in, looked around and shrugged. My new domicile was a one bedroom flat, smelling of mildew, with cheap linoleum and cracked caulking around a greasy looking tub. "Hmnn," I responded diplomatically. "I guess it will do."

Within a week I learned that I had roommates:

thousands of little roaches, who seemed to wait for me every night as they congregated by the microwave. The bathtub leaked and the toilet had an ominous sound upon flushing, which I did protractedly in order to make sure everything went down and away. But it was livable; the neighbors seemed quiet enough and I only knew I had neighbors by the greasy cooking smell that wafted regularly from floors above and below. Besides, it was just for a year.

Imagine my surprise when seven weeks in acclimation a la Chine Lee He told me that I had to move. "The owner sold your place, so he broke the lease and you have to get out. You have about a week to find another place and you're lucky: the Golden Week holidays are coming so you can use that time to look for another place." It didn't seem to matter to anyone that I'd hoped to go on vacation during that time.

"Can you please help me?" I asked him timidly.

"No, I'm busy," he replied. "With your income you can manage to find a place, and I could never afford to live where you live. Good luck," he replied, turning his blank face back to the computer screen.

At that time I did not realize that Lee He had been assigned to help me, nor did I know that his resentment might be impersonally directed at "rich" foreigners in general, despite the fact that Beijing has more millionaires than any other city in the world – and they're all Chinese. Crestfallen, I decided to house hunt on my own; I knew that realty agencies existed. That seemed smart and efficient, after all, that's how we do it in the US. So I asked a foreign friend to recommend an agent. She did, and even went with me to shop around. We spent a frenzied weekend; I was tired and frustrated. "Every price they quote is way beyond the standard," my friend quipped, "You should have had a Chinese do this and paid him, because, as it is, you're going to get cheated. It's part of the game here because Chinese feel that all foreigners are rich and deserve to be milked."

"I'm too tired to argue anymore," I replied. "This place looks ok, it's small but not far from my work." And so I signed the contract that I came to regret with all my heart and soul. The

real estate agent took as his cut the amount of the first month's rent and then he made a lease stating that I had to pay 3 months at a time. As everything was in Chinese I could not see that I was liable for everything; if anything broke after one month they would do absolutely nothing.

"You used an agent?" Lee He said. "So expensive!" He declined at that time to tell me that real estate agents were notorious for dishonest practices and that most Chinese sought to rent from people they knew.

The first thing I discovered was the broken washing machine. Three times the real estate agent said he'd fix it; three times he stood me up. The month of liability lapsed. "Sorry, no fix, your duty," he said curtly when I called the fourth time.

Angry, I complained to my colleague, "You know I'm having some trust issues here, Chinese businessmen are not very reliable."

"How can you insult my country?" he retorted. I'm Chinese; it doesn't mean all Chinese are like your landlord. By the way my landlord threw me out of my apartment too, you're not the only one to suffer being kicked out."

"But what about renter's rights?" I responded.

"This is China, the real estate men have your money and the power. Don't pay them, they'll change the lock and throw you out. We are still a developing country. Please allow me to continue my work."

To live in a foreign country one must be stoic. I've lived in primitive conditions in Africa and in Korea but that was thirty years ago. China is booming and rich, progressive enough to hold the Olympics? So when my electricity went off I decided to go to the boss. "They never gave you an electric card, how odd," she murmured. "I'll check into it."

After three nights of living by tallow candles another real estate agent came to restore electricity: in China you buy electricity from the power company. They load your wattage in a credit card and you put it in the electric meter designed to read the card. "I'll just keep that card," the new agent told me. "You give me 200 RMB, now."

I did, he imperceptibly smiled and walked

away whistling. At least I had power again. When I came to my desk the next morning my boss walked over and said, "So how much power did you get?" I told her 200 RMB and she asked me for the receipt.

"He didn't give me one," I answered. She looked grim. Later she called the agent repeatedly; he had "lost" the electric receipt.

"Please don't pay him anymore for electricity until he gives you a receipt," my boss said quietly.

Winter arrived. Spring Festival approached. It was cold but my fridge was not. Lee He called the realtor. "Sorry, no one can fix this for ten days, we're all going on holiday," he said and hung up. Patiently I waited; after all, it's China's biggest holiday. On the eleventh day I called and he promised to send someone out. Again no one came. I called a second time the following day. This time a young boy, pedaling a rusty bicycle and smoking a filter-less cigarette, showed up.

"This fridge is junk, not worth fixing," he said, "but I can fix the washing machine, 80 RMB." I agreed; he fixed that.

Now my next rent installment was coming due. "I'm telling them you're not paying unless they replace the fridge," Lee He said. He'd been ordered again by the boss to "help the foreigner" because they evidently wanted me to extend my contract.

Incredibly, another used fridge arrived soon after this conversation. "We will walk you to the bank to be safe since you are paying three months rent again," said the real estate agent's assistant, another strange, scruffy looking young man. I nodded happily. As soon as I handed over the money the young man blinked. "Bye," he said, reaching for his cigarettes.

The second fridge did not work.

"You paid him without checking?" Lee He said to me, rising out of his chair.

"I trusted him," I replied, feeling angry and foolish. "I guess I'll never trust a Chinese businessman again."

"How dare you insult my country," Lee He replied. "I will tell the boss you are a racist."

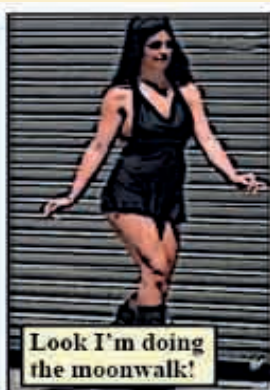
"And I'll write up the story," I retorted, just as angry.

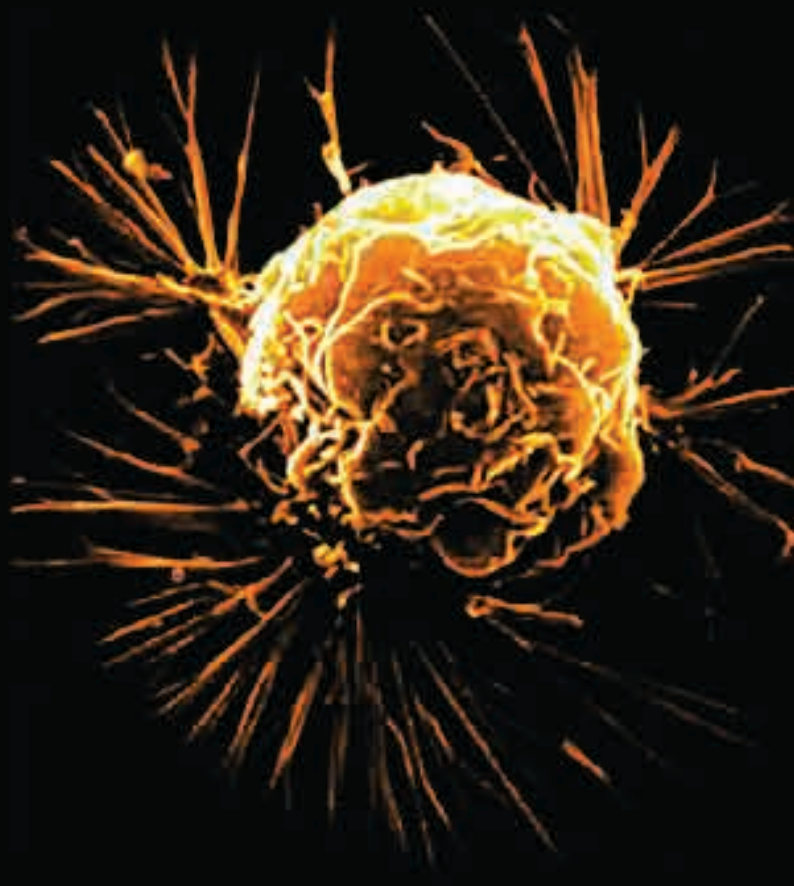
"You cannot criticize China, this is only one small incident. We are a developing country. Every developing country needs time to make adjustments to the new reform and opening up. It is a rude move on your part to write anything."

"Every day after editing stories about China becoming a democracy and a people's paradise I go home to a shoddy, incredibly overpriced Chinese apartment. Every day I understand that I have no rights: as a renter, as a worker, as a foreigner: the real estate guys have screwed me, your company could fire me, the government could even tell me to leave in 12 hours. You call me a racist for losing my trust; at least I do have the right to report the facts," I answered him curtly.

"But you are racist. These kinds of things happen all the time to many, many Chinese; it's not because you are a foreigner, it's just the way things work here," he responded. "Maybe it's just easier to fool you than to fool a fellow Chinese."

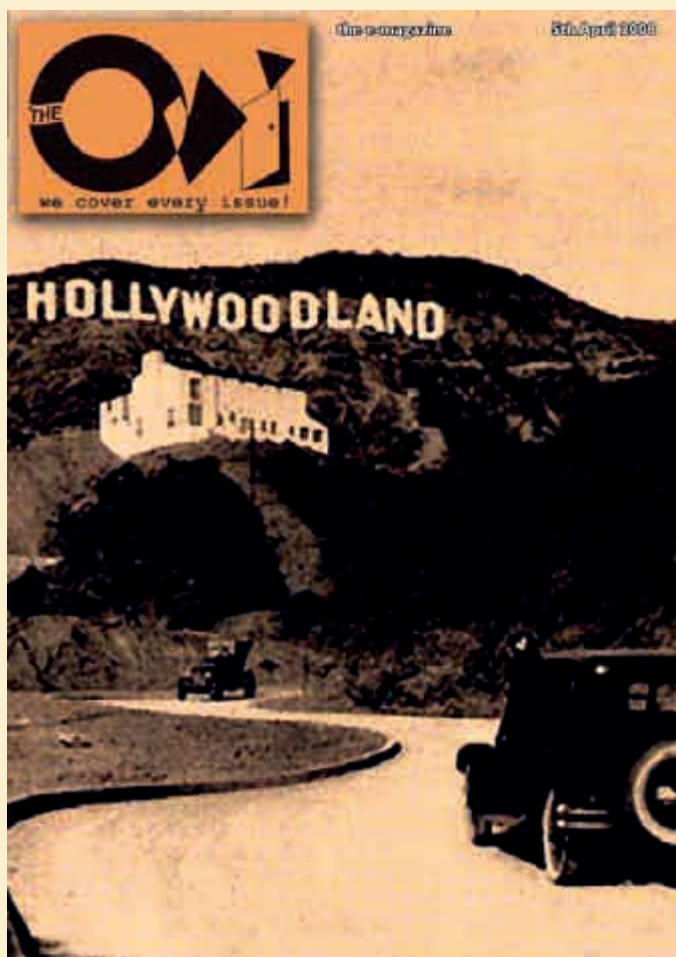
"You're exactly right," I agreed sadly. "Ordinary Chinese people: migrants and poor, and patsy foreigners, who you perceive as rich, we have no rights at all, reforms or no reforms." Lee He stared at me; baffled by the way we had closed our discussion.





I wear my
badge of courage
on my chest
where cancer
was diagnosed.





Hollywood OAPs

By Asa Butcher

Following the death of actor Richard Widmark (b. December 26 1914) last week at the age of 93, I began thinking about how many actors and actresses are still alive from the Golden Era of Hollywood. Some of these actors have long since retired from the silver screen, others are still working and some are suffering from the onslaught of old age that has left them unable to remember their own name.

The timing of this article is also to commemorate the actress Bette Davis, who would have celebrated her 100th birthday today (April 5 2008) if she hadn't sadly died from metastasized breast cancer in October 1989. Last April I wrote a review of *All About Eve*, one of the many films for which Bette Davis

was nominated for Best Actress, but the reason for that review was the landmark birthday of another of the nominated actresses: Celeste Holm.

Celeste Holm (b. April 29 1917) is now approaching her 91st birthday, but she is a spring chicken compared to many others still alive. The oldest living actor that my research could uncover is a Dutchman named Johannes Heesters, who was born on December 5 1903 and currently holds the record of being the oldest performer worldwide who is still active, both on the stage and on television, plus had the dubious distinction of being Adolf Hitler's favourite actor.

I must admit that his name is not one known to me, as is the second oldest actor I could find, an Englishman named John Kidd, who celebrated

his 100th birthday last July. John Kidd primarily had a career in television and notched up almost 60 different shows and the same number of parts, yet, like Heesters, he is relatively unknown.

Gloria Stuart (b. July 4 1910), the oldest living actress, is definitely well-known, although it was mainly as her part as Old Rose in James Cameron's Best Picture winner Titanic, rather than any of her work over the past eight decades. In 1932 Gloria Stuart was one of the 15 WAMPAS Baby Stars (a promotional campaign that chose young women believed to be on the threshold of movie stardom) and she is now one of the three surviving actresses along with Mary Carlisle (b. February 3 1912) and Dorothy Layton (b. August 13 1912) – neither has worked since the 1940s though.

The second oldest working actress is Anita Page (b. August 4 1910), who was once the focus of Benito Mussolini's obsessive affections and actually retired for 60 years before coming back to films as an 80-year-old lady. Our French readers should recognise the name Paulette Goddard (b. October 8 1910), who has been constantly making films ever since 1931, and Batman fans will know the actor Michael Gough (b. November 23 1913), who portrayed Bruce Wayne's butler Alfred in the first four films.

Kevin McCarthy (b. February 15 1914) was nominated for Best Actor in a Supporting Role for his role as Biff Loman in the 1951 version of Death of a Salesman and he is still working, with his last role being in John Jackman's 2008 Wesley. Anna Wing (b. October 30 1914) appears as Grandma in the recently released Son of Rambow, and fans of the TV series "St. Elsewhere" should remember Norman Lloyd (b. November 8 1914) in his role as Dr. Daniel Auschlander.

How many of the names have you recognised so far? It is surprising the number of actors and actresses that are still employed, plus it is even more inspiring when you realise the list has only reached those born before 1914. My own research stopped at people born in 1925, which means there are many more names to list and that includes many more famous names.

Norman Wisdom and Eli Wallach were both

born in 1915, Kirk Douglas in 1916, Ernest Borgnine, Herbert Lom and Joan Fontaine were all born in 1917, while Fontaine's older sister Olivia de Havilland is also still alive aged 92. Ingmar Bergman turns 90 in July and Richard Todd hits 90 next year, while Ian Carmichael and Mickey Rooney are still two years off their ninth decade.

We can only hope that these actors and actresses notch up many more years before they appear in the Academy Award Obituary montage, plus I haven't even mentioned the directors that are still with us.

Johannes Heesters - 5 December 1903
 John Kidd - 4 July 1907
 Luise Rainer - 12 January 1910
 Gloria Stuart - 4 July 1910
 Anita Page - 4 August 1910
 Paulette Goddard - 8 October 1910
 Mary Carlisle - 3 February 1912
 Dorothy Layton - 13 August 1912
 Johnny Holiday - 28 October 1912
 Michael Gough - 23 November 1913
 Kevin McCarthy - 15 February 1914
 Anna Wing - 30 October 1914
 Norman Lloyd - 8 November 1914
 Norman Wisdom - 4 February 1915
 Peter Copley - 20 May 1915
 Eli Wallach - 7 December 1915
 Olivia de Havilland - 1 July 1916
 Kirk Douglas - 9 December 1916
 Ernest Borgnine - 24 January 1917
 Celeste Holm - 29 April 1917
 Earl Cameron - 8 August 1917
 Mel Ferrer - 25 August 1917
 Herbert Lom - 11 September 1917
 Joan Fontaine - 22 October 1917 (sister to Olivia)
 Maxine Marx - January 1918
 Alfred Burke - 28 February 1918
 Ingmar Bergman - 14 July 1918
 Helen Wagner - 3 September 1918
 Baby Peggy - 26 October 1918
 Virginia Davis - 31 December 1918
 Richard Todd - 11 June 1919
 Betty Driver - 20 May 1920
 Ian Carmichael - 18 June 1920
 Mickey Rooney - 23 September 1920
 Peter Sallis - 1 February 1921
 Betty White - 17 January 1922
 Christopher Lee - 27 May 1922
 Bill Kerr - 1922
 Jean Stapleton - 19 January 1923
 Diana Douglas - 22 January 1923
 Anne Jeffreys - 26 January 1923
 Richard Attenborough - 29 August 1923
 Betsy Blair - 11 December 1923
 Dora Bryan - 7 February 1924
 Eva Marie Saint - 4 July 1924
 Lauren Bacall - 16 September 1924
 Paul Newman - 26 January 1925
 Hal Holbrook - 17 February 1925



Twins, Not Clones:

Interview with Tegan Quin, Tegan & Sara

By Vesa Kuosmanen

When meeting with Tegan Quin, the other half of Canadian Tegan & Sara twin duo, who have just released their excellent fifth album

The Con in the UK, you realise what amazing energy this 27-year old, young woman has. Even if she is apparently tired, she talks with incredible speed and her every word seems to make perfect sense. It's easy to see where their catchy songs get the energy, but what inspires Tegan to write these sad but so danceable pop tunes?

"It's mainly the daily lives" she replies, "and of course the relationships". For her the songs are an emotional journey through your feelings. When writing **The Con** it was an interesting

situation for Tegan; it was the first time she wrote as a single. "We recorded **The Con** with this whole different energy, we got very involved. When we took the year off to write **The Con** we were coming off from the two years of touring and writing. We started from the scratch, we didn't bring in any songs from that two year period of the touring but I think we had loads of experiences and obviously our abilities had been cultivated during that time. **The Con** was very much a separate journey. Sara was writing more about being in the relationship and having love in long term. I was writing more about being single, dating, insecurity, how you feel for somebody and that stuff." The diversity and different approach can surely be heard in their songs and is one of the reasons **The Con** is so enjoyable.

Even if the Quin sisters live separately, Sara in Montreal and Tegan in Vancouver, and write separately, the connection between them is strong - they vibe on the same level and together make a good energy. However, they live their separate lives and contribute towards the music in different ways. "We always joke that we are twins, not clones," Tegan says. They are two strong individuals and want to do different things, but manage to work together extremely well. "Partnerships work like that way, you mix things. Sara and I mix blue and brown and I think we make a good colour together out of our mixtures." Obviously you need to know yourself before you can really be on the same level with somebody, and Tegan feels that the last ten years and five albums has been extremely important to them to build up that level of understanding.

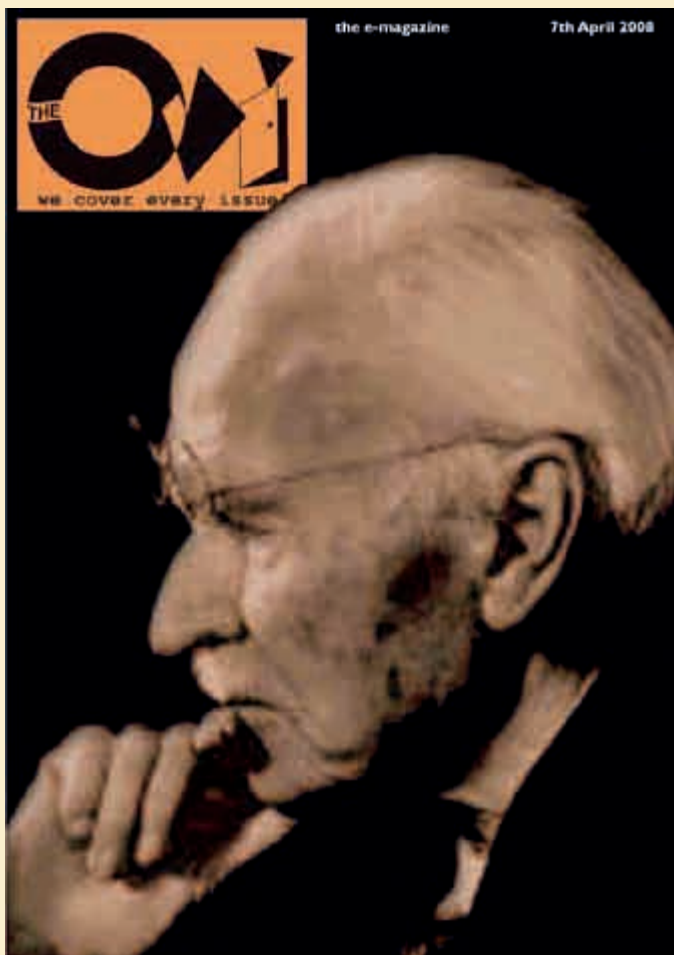
Despite their young age, Tegan & Sara have a long career, their first album *Under Feet Like Ours* was released in 1999. What keeps them doing the music and what they want to say with it? Even if song writing is a personal experience for Tegan, there is a strong urge to make people think. "I have to feel when I am writing a song that it's not only for myself but will be heard of by loads of people. I absolutely think about other people. We definitely want to get people to think but the writing is still very selfish and very much for me." She wants to share her own personal experiences with the audience and that way makes a connection with them and gets people to think. When you hear their catchy tunes it's easy to agree that they have found themes that touch everybody who has loved or been loved.

The Con was released three years after Tegan & Sara's previous album *So Jealous*. It feels very accomplished record and even if it has 14 tracks it's very compact listening experience. As a producer they had Chris Walla, from Portland band *Death Cab for Cutie*, and the collaboration seem to be working fine. Tegan admits that the Quin sisters are completely control freaks and Chris was a perfect producer, allowing them certain freedom. She adds that *Death Cab for Cutie* shares a similar background to Tegan & Sara, so having Chris as producer made perfect sense. "With Chris it was fun. He understood what we are and he could compromise. I'm old now, I don't want to compromise, I want it done my way." Seems that it worked with *The Con*

and we all are waiting for to hear more of this collaboration.

"Tegan & Sara write incredibly sad and introspective songs but kind of poppy way", Tegan concludes their music. She says that they are happy doing what they are doing at the moment and they keep on doing music as long as it feels like a right thing to do. There is always a chance for some musical side adventures she adds before she needs to bust a groove and get ready for one more sold out gig.





Carl Gustav Jung and “Modern Man in Search of a Soul”

By Emanuel L. Paparella

Freud’s materialistic psychoanalysis divided the self into the id, the ego and the super-ego. Jung (1875-1961), who was his disciple for a while, would depart from its materialism and without wholly abandoning Freud’s theory of dreams would synthesize it with mysticism and religion thus giving us Westerners the first serious scholarly attempt to bring Eastern philosophical principle into the arena of modern Western thought. On the other hand, Jung’s is a return to the origins of philosophy in ancient Greece, to the kind of mysticism found in Pythagoras, overlooked by a civilization bent on materialism and rationalism and technological gadgets.

Jung’s original insight lies in a profound

awareness of the powerful influence of myths and symbols on the human psyche; that while it is true that man makes symbols, it is also equally true that symbols make man. His works are too numerous to mention here. Suffice to mention here the most popular and accessible *Symbols of Transformation* (1911) which marks his split with his mentor and where he introduces his concept of the collective unconscious; *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* where he explores the spiritual-psychological destitution of modern man deprived of those symbols that give meaning to life; *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961), his autobiography which he began in 1957 and finished shortly before his death, a very personal account of his formative experiences, ideas and beliefs; *Man and his Symbols* (1964), which was published

posthumously and is an attempt to explain his theory of dream symbolism to the layperson.

Jung divides the psyche into the ego, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. He uses the concept of the symbolism of dream which Freud advanced but he combines it with mythology, religion and philosophy which allows him to posit a universal unconscious that reveals itself in symbolic form via dreams, mysticism and religion. He discovered this universalism even in civilizations and communities which had had no contact with each other.

The key to Jung's idea of a collective unconscious is found in the notion of "archetype." Let us attempt a schematic exploration of this notion. Jung contends that the collective unconscious determines that our experience is conceived according to certain organizing principles which he calls "the archetypes." There are many archetypes, too many, in fact, to be fully classified but there are some that affect the human psyche and our lives and destinies most powerfully. Jung outlines those. He notices that many appear in the context of religion which is fertile ground for the rise of symbols a basic underpinning in the rise and development of any civilization.

One powerful archetype is that of the journey. We are all on a journey from cradle to tomb. That may explain why Homer's and Dante's journeys still attract readers after many centuries. They have the nature of archetypes of the human condition. Another powerful archetype is that of the mother. For Jung this archetype is much more than a necessary biological relationship. It reflects a psychological need. Its significance, Jung tells us, lies in the fact that we all expect someone in our lives to fulfill the role of nurturing us and providing us with comfort in times of stress or crisis. What Jung is saying is that, within an evolutionary context, we all come into the world ready for a mother, to recognize and seek her. This need is projected on our biological mother. This in itself is no great surprise. It is observable even in the animal world. The uniqueness of Jung's theory in psychotherapy lies in revealing the patterns of behavior people will exhibit when the biological mother has not fulfilled her

archetypal role. One of the effects is that those individuals find themselves attracted to "mother-substitutes," such as the army, the nation, the church, etc.

Jung invented the terms "introvert" and "extrovert" to distinguish basic personality types. People think of this as obvious: some are shy and some are exhibitionists. But Jung's explanation is much more complex. For one thing, it is not judgmental: he does not declare one better than the other. He declares the introvert personality as that whose ego is turned more toward the internal and unconscious, whereas extroverts are orientated towards outer reality and external activity.

The above distinction is crucial for understanding Jung's notion of the self. The self is the master archetype; the principle by which we structure our lives. According to Jung, the self is in a constant process of development and is fully realized when all the aspects of our personalities are equally expressed. Thus for Jung, to be overly introvert or overly extrovert is a sign of a basic developmental immaturity. As we develop and get older there is a tendency to balance out the different aspects of our personality. Jung also claims that only in death the self is most fully realized.

Jungian psychology has led to the development of highly accurate personality profiling, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and has contributed to the development of psychometric testing widely used nowadays in human resources departments for the assessment of the suitability of candidates.

However what remains most fascinating about Jung is his study of religion and the idea of God as being an integral part of being human even when the existence of God is denied. Amid all the talk about the "Collective Unconscious" most readers are likely to miss the fact that Jung was a good Kantian. His famous theory of Synchronicity, "an acausal connecting principle," is based on Kant's distinction between phenomena and things-in-themselves and on Kant's theory that causality will not operate among things-in-themselves the way it does in phenomena. Thus, Kant could allow for free will (unconditioned causes) among things-

in-themselves, as Jung allows for synchronicity ("meaningful coincidences").

Indeed, Jung's great Answer to Job, represents an approach to religion that is all but unique. Placing God in the Unconscious might strike most people as reducing him to a mere psychological object; but that is to overlook Jung's Kantianism. The Unconscious, and especially the Collective Unconscious, belongs to Kantian things-in-themselves, or to the transcendent Will of Schopenhauer. Jung was often at pains not to complicate his theory of the Archetypes by committing himself to a metaphysical theory -- he wanted the theory to work whether he was talking about the brain or about the Transcendent -- but that was merely a concession to the materialistic bias of contemporary science. He had no materialistic commitment himself and, when it came down to it, was not going to accept such naive reductionism. Instead, he was willing to rethink how the Transcendent might operate. Thus, he says about Schopenhauer: "I felt sure that by 'Will' he really meant God, the Creator, and that he was saying that God was blind. Since I knew from experience that God was not offended by any blasphemy, that on the contrary He could even encourage it because He wished to evoke not only man's bright and positive side but also his darkness and ungodliness, Schopenhauer's view did not distress me."

The Problem of Evil, which for so many people simply denuminizes religion, and which Schopenhauer used to reject the value of the world, became a challenge for Jung in the psychoanalysis of God. The God of the Bible is indeed a personality, and seemingly not always the same one. God as a morally evolving personality is the extraordinary conception of Answer to Job. What Otto saw as the evolution of human moral consciousness, Jung turns right around on the basis of the principle that the human unconscious, expressed spontaneously in religious practice and literature, transcends mere human subjectivity. But the transcendent reality in the unconscious is different in kind from consciousness.

As Jung said in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*: "If the Creator were conscious of Himself, He would not need conscious creatures;

nor is it probable that the extremely indirect methods of creation, which squander millions of years upon the development of countless species and creatures, are the outcome of purposeful intention." Natural history tells us of a haphazard and casual transformation of species over hundreds of millions of years of devouring and being devoured. The biological and political history of man is an elaborate repetition of the same thing. But the history of the mind offers a different picture. Here the miracle of reflecting consciousness intervenes -- the second cosmogony [what Teilhard de Chardin called the origin of the "noosphere," the layer of "mind"].

The importance of consciousness is so great that one cannot help suspecting the element of meaning to be concealed somewhere within all the monstrous, apparently senseless biological turmoil, and that the road to its manifestation was ultimately found on the level of warm-blooded vertebrates possessed of a differentiated brain -- found as if by chance, unintended and unforeseen, and yet somehow sensed, felt and groped for out of some dark urge." In other words, a "meaningful coincidence" or synchronicity. Jung also says that "As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being. It may even be assumed that just as the unconscious affects us, so the increase in our consciousness affects the unconscious.

While Otto could understand Job's reaction to God, as the incomprehensible Numen, Jung thinks of God's reaction to Job, as an innocent and righteous man jerked around by God's unconsciousness. Jung's idea that the Incarnation then is the means by which God redeems Himself from His morally false position in Job is an extraordinary reversal (a "deconstruction") of the consciously expressed dogma that the Incarnation is to redeem humanity. It is not too difficult to see this turn in other religions. The compassion of the Buddhas in Mahâyâna Buddhism, especially when the Buddha Shakyamuni comes to be seen as the expression of a cosmic and eternal Dharma Body, is a hand of salvation stretched out from the Transcendent, without, however, the complication that the Buddha is ever thought responsible for the nature of the world and its evils as their Creator. That complication,

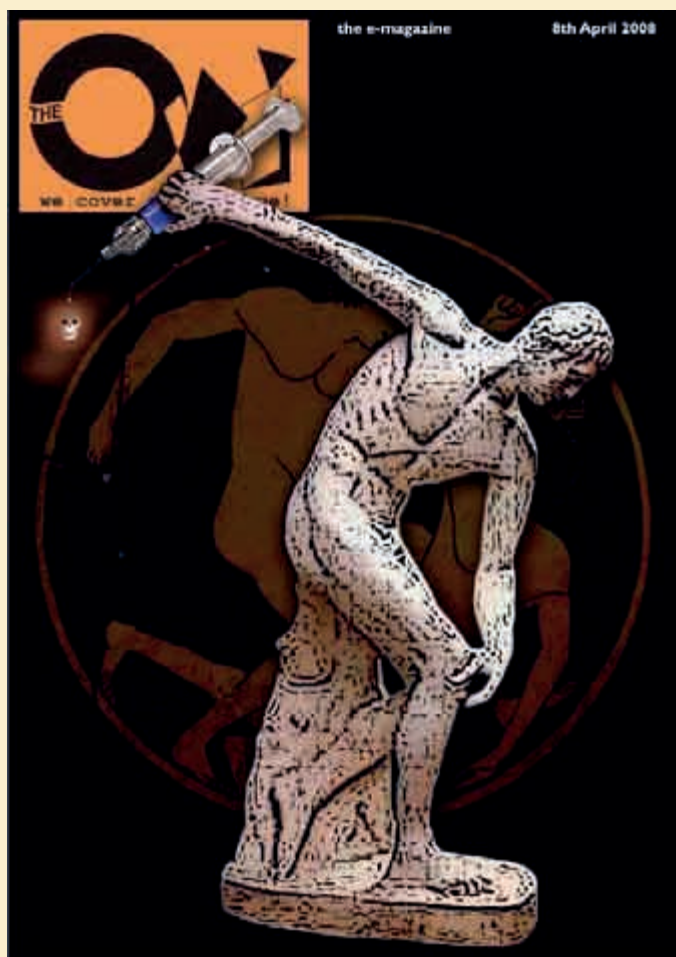
however, does occur with Hindu views of the divine Incarnations of Vishnu.

Closer to a Jungian synthesis, on the other hand, is the Bahá'í theory that divine contact is through "Manifestations," which are neither wholly human nor wholly divine: merely human in relation to God, but entirely divine in relation to other humans. Such a theory must appear Christianizing in comparison to Islam, but it avoids the uniqueness of Christ as the only Incarnation in Christianity itself. This is conformable to the Jungian proposition that the unconscious is both a side of the human mind and a door into the Transcendent. When that door opens, the expression of the Transcendent is then conditioned by the person through whom it is expressed, possessing that person, but it is also genuinely Transcendent and reflecting the

ongoing interaction that the person historically embodies. The possible "mere being" even of consciousness then becomes the place of meaning and value.

Whether "psychoanalysis" as practiced by Jung is to be taken seriously anymore is a good question; but he will surely survive as philosopher long after his claims to science or medicine may be discounted. Jung's Kantianism enables him to avoid the materialism and reductionism of Freud ("all of civilization is a substitute for incest") and, with a great breadth of learning, employ principles from Kant, Schopenhauer, and Otto. The Answer to Job, indeed, represents a considerable advance beyond Otto, into the real paradoxes that are the only way we can conceive transcendent reality.





Doping kills sport

By Thanos Kalamidas

What happened these days in Greek sport is not new, it is not that it never happened before and it is not that it will never happen again.

Unfortunately, it will happen again in Greece, it will happen again everywhere in the world and the responsibility doesn't stand only on the athletes, if you could call them like that, but on all of us, from the governments to the people who watch sport events on television.

Eleven weightlifters from the Greek national and Olympic team were caught by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and we must realize that this is not a dark moment for the Greek weightlifters but a dark era for the international sports that started in 1952 in Helsinki. Of course there is no proof but

everybody involved knows that in Helsinki this embarrassing moment for international sport began and it went on becoming darker and darker.

And now we are months before the Beijing Olympics and apart from all the other issues that kill the Olympic values, doping is the one that will kill the Olympic Games if nobody does something and the Olympic Ccommittee has proved that they are the less abled to do anything about it. They are the ones who have turned the Olympic Games into gigantic money machine. And the athletes? To my opinion they are the victims and they are victims that endanger their lives, most of them have a dramatic end, young and embarrassed regretting their ten minutes in glory and missing the real life.

But let's start first with the athletes. Just like the Canadian Ben Johnson – does anybody still remember him? – they are young kids with poor backgrounds and no future opportunities; their only chance is either to become rock stars or successful athletes. In the beginning it is just vitamins that help and then it is 'don't ask, just swallow!' Yes these kids are responsible but their responsibility is the smallest in the pyramid. The worst part of it is that these kids pay the outcome; all these medicines and steroids kill! It's not just a word, they literally kill these people, they die from cancer, they die young and suffering till the last moment. Regrets? Of course, too many but when it is too late!

Then it comes to the trainers and the coaches. They are not into sports; they are businessmen, drug dealers. Very few of them are the innocent and the innocent ones are poor, you can see them. The others know! And don't stop to the classic athletes. What makes you think that football, basketball, rugby, baseball makes any difference? How it happens the last few years to have so many incidents of heart attacks inside the sports fields? Because they dope them like horses and their hearts cannot stand it.

The states. Of course the states are part of it, they give the money to all the national teams and they are after the metals. Does anybody remember the East German national teams? Women that looked like men from the steroids. It was important the bloody – literally bloody – gold medal for the state. It is important the bloody gold medal for Mugabe's Zimbabwe, it is important for the Turkish politician. And yes, they know and they don't care as long many medals will come. Even the most democratic governments are able to give a blind eye and accept any kind of excuses just to turn their back to reality. The Greek government did so a few years ago with Thanou and Kenderis with the result nobody to know the truth. The state made them heroes and they didn't dare say the truth. Didn't the Americans do the same with Marion Jones?

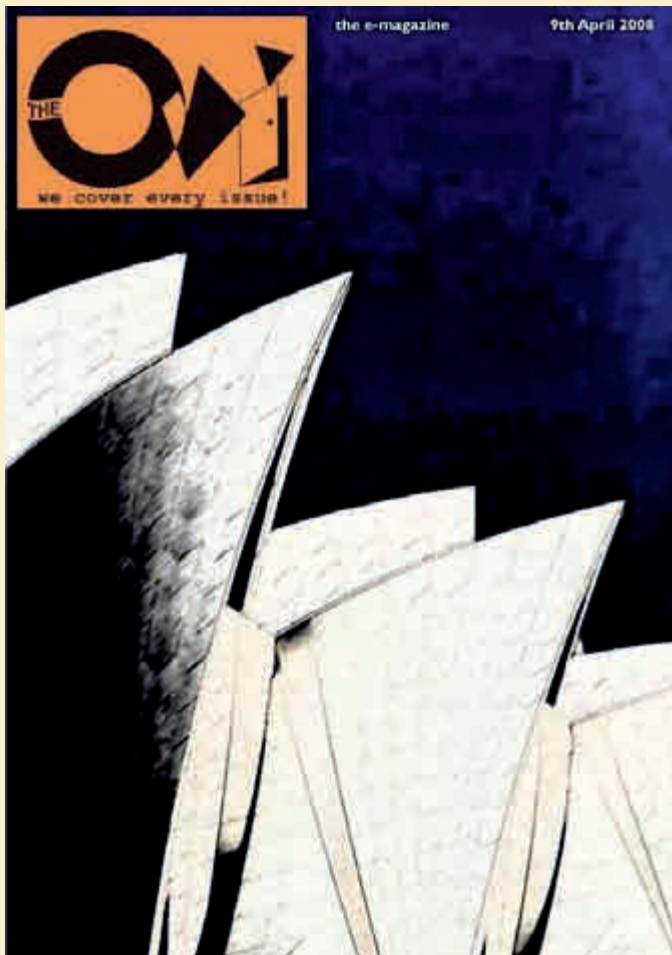
The Olympic Committee, this is a laughable topic. The Olympic committee and especially their directors live the high life for life. Royal treatment, private planes and luxurious holidays.

The Olympic spirit for them starts and ends with the money they get from the adverts and the money are billions of dollars. They don't give a damn if China is using like slavery child labor, their problem is how many are going to watch the Olympic Games on television and how many adverts they are going to have. And they know, the president of the Olympic Committee Mr. Rogge despite all the things he says he knows and he is equally guilty.

And then it comes to us, to all of us who just watch the games, all the games without any profit just for the fun of it. They trained us to watch them and expect the records without thinking. Without thinking that 100 meters in less than eight seconds is not normal, is not even logical. They trained us to believe that we watch all these events for the records and not for the joy of it.

Do you know what the major Olympic value is? To participate not to win! That's why in the ancient times the winner just got a laurel. A wreath made from an olive branch that symbolized in ancient times peace. Is the record going to replace the excitement of the healthy competition? Does it mean anything for us if the athlete makes ten, or eleven even fifteen seconds? We are not chronometers, we just see men and women compete, time is for the chronometers.

All the athletes take drugs and I'm sorry to say it but this is my strong believe. I cannot accept anymore all these records, are not logical. There are two reasons we don't know and we cannot prove that they all take drugs, either these drugs are 'legal' or they are not traceable yet! Nothing else. And they are two solutions, either the drugs any kind of drugs are forbidden or everybody can get them for free, it doesn't matter anyway. In the first case we all must work together; the second case means the end of sports but it goes there anyway if we continue like we are now.



Danish Design Down Under

By Clint Wayne

As a fervent lover of travel I was fortunate enough back in 2000 to visit one of my most anticipated destinations and to view a structure that entered my life during my student days. The destination was Sydney, Australia, and the structure was the unique Sydney Opera House.

In 1955 a worldwide competition was launched by New South Wales Premier Joseph Cahill for a new performing arts centre to be constructed on the prominent Bennelong Point. 233 entries from 32 countries were received with great excitement but the design by Danish architect Jorn Utzon caught the judges imagination with his design of sails which were such a compliment to the sailing fraternity that use the stunning Sydney Harbour, so as today is his 90th

birthday it gives me a great excuse to pen a few lines on my favourite building.

Utzon unexpectedly won the competition with his first non-domestic design, even though he had not fulfilled the contest's criteria, and Finnish judge Eero Saarinen described his design as 'genius' declaring that he could not endorse any other choice. The submitted design was little more than preliminary drawings which brought about the huge engineering headache of how to set about constructing his complex concept.

With no repetition of any of the roof forms the use of in-situ concrete using formwork was deemed too expensive as was the use of factory manufactured pre-cast concrete sections. Over six frustrating years the design team went through 12 methods before a workable

solution was found using the earliest computers to calculate the complex forces. Eventually the perfect remedy was deemed to be that the 14 shells of the building if combined would form the perfect sphere. There is still much conjecture as to whom the 'eureka' moment should be credited to but the most important result was that construction of phase 2 commenced in 1963.

Utzon had overseen all the construction work and had commenced the interior design until a change of government and policy in 1965 led to huge controversy and ultimately to his resignation the following year.

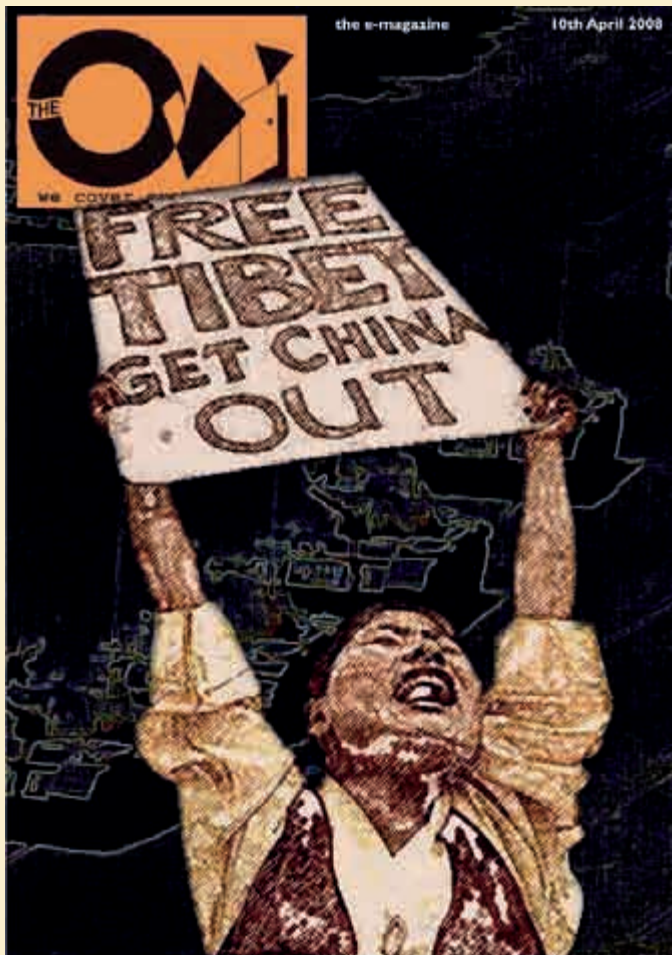
Its distinctive white roofs which glisten in the sunlight are due to the 1.056 million glossy white ceramic tiles manufactured in Sweden and, although they are basically self-cleaning,

they are still subject to periodic maintenance.

The Opera House was finally completed and opened in 1973 by Queen Elizabeth II and remains one of the world's most recognisable buildings. Along with the Harbour Bridge it has been a famous backdrop to the tremendous firework displays of the Olympics and the Millennium celebration yet to this day Utzon has never returned to Australia and has never set eyes on his masterpiece.

For me I am just happy to recall the construction film I watched as a young eager student and the first time I wandered down in the Australian sunshine to the Harbour with my special lady and was overwhelmed by the spectacle that lay before us.





Free Tibet by Standing Up for Tibet

By Linda Lane

Somehow, this series of images reminded me of what Tibet would feel like as a free place, with freedom of speech and religion, sort of floating up into the blue like a sky flower.

Do you know why His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama calls for peace? He understands cause and effect. When you can recall your last 13 lifetimes it will change your perspective too. That alone would give one a broad view.

The foolish attempt at control continues in Tibet, and it's just painful, in the face of the world's honor of H.H. the Dalai Lama.

You may ask - why don't the Tibetans still in Tibet just leave their ancient homeland, leave their farms and houses, and friends? They can

not do so under fear of death. This fall far fewer Tibetans snuck across their southern borders to nations such as Nepal. There is real fear ... and as we now see with the deaths in Lhasa it is justified.

Why don't the Tibetans come here? Why when they do come here posing as non-resident workers at factories why do they 'defect' en masse? The US does not recognize them as refugees, and therefore they can not obtain passports or visas in most cases except illegally, purchasing phony documents in the 3rd world; it is easy but expensive.

China is trying to paint her face like an old lady to appear young, or in this case from brutal ruler to a forward thinking host of the Olympics. It appears the effort has backfired.

From the Tibetans living in Nepal, and foreign business people on my last trip there in Oct-Nov, if you travel just 30 KM outside of the Olympic Games area, you will find extreme poverty exists and is easy to see. One Tibetan refugee, a woman whose husband works as a trader, told me "In the Himalayan borders the soldiers shoot first, never ask questions."

What is less obvious is how China's invasion of Tibet has colored my life for good and bad. 29 years of studying the extraordinary lamas' revered methods, seeing our world through their eyes, a long term patient global view, within a completely universal framework. They love ruthlessly.

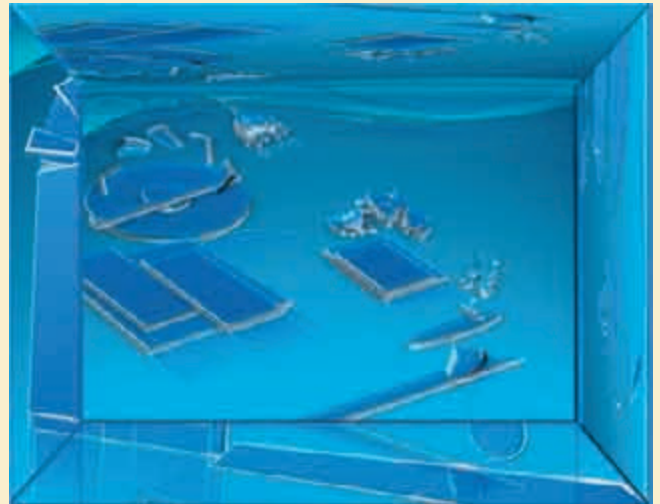
But I lucked out because the Chinese invaded Tibet. I benefited because China was power hungry. I am better off because of the highly placed Tibetans who landed here.

Among other things I was warned not to discuss religion - one lama told me that Americans have freedom of religion, but we don't believe in freedom of religion.

Long live HH The Dalai Lama, and anyone else who is a member of his "clique" hen hen he. I am completely in awe of him, I humbly and respectfully bow as an American with a million billion visualized unique bodies to him.

How I made this image = a couple of weeks I've been waiting for my software to arrive. So I made this, in stages as I learned another graphics package. Easy when you take an evil mad scientist approach to learning graphics tools. They almost always have something hidden. Prepared to be amazed - it was created entirely in Microsoft Powerpoint.

Tibetan freedom can not be eradicated, it is not possible.



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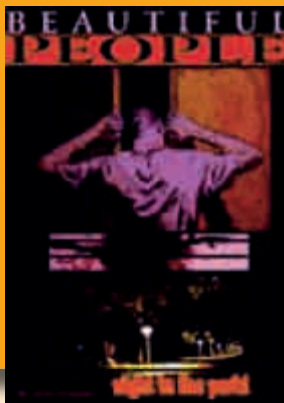
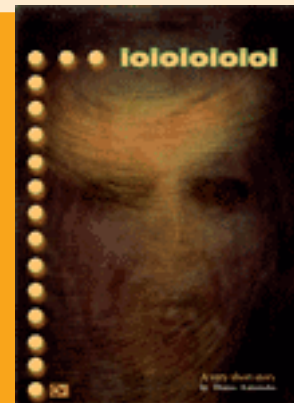


Victims by Bohdan Yuri

Keep the change, he motioned with his hand, then got out and stared at the space he'd occupied. Damn, he admitted to himself as the yellow taxi sped off to pick up another fare, there goes another story and its inherited victims.

ioioioioioi by Thanos Kalamidas

"My dear mother and father," Enter. He remembered when he used to write a letter, how many centuries was that before?



Beautiful People #3 by Thanos Kalamidas

The Extraordinary Beautiful People is Thanos Kalamidas' graphic novel series and it is unlike anything you have ever seen before. Dark, surreal, stylish and thought provoking are just four adjectives that come to mind, but feel free to choose some of your own.

War on Terror by Thanos K & Asa B

Every day we all fight a war against terror, but do not be mistaken into thinking that terror merely comes from terrorists. Oh no, you will find it in the most unlikely of places.



Just One Target by Thanos Kalamidas

“Please, please sit down. I will start in a minute when you are all quiet.”



Lonely & Herbert the Hare by Asa Butcher

Two short stories from the mind of Asa Butcher.

Missing by Mark Hayton

“Aaaaarrggghh!!” a war cry, quickly followed by the thump of hand on plastic. The alarm clock silences. This is the Dawn of Man. I lift up my head open my bleary eyes and cough deeply.



Pins & Needles by Andrew Farley

Even before I opened my eyes, I could feel the warm midday sun splashed across my face. As the room came into focus and my eyes adjusted to the light, a familiar sense of disappointment washed over me.



Coffee and Cigarettes in Helsinki #4: The Real Voice of Helsinki

By Juliette Roques

Listening to the melody gently drawing you in, on such songs as “Stars and Just for Tonight”, a hauntingly beautiful song, for which Manna wrote the lyrics, the allure of her music is easy to understand. Both songs, taken from her latest album *Sister*, evoke a longing and yet at the same time a certain serenity, making you want to hear it again and again, recreating that magical feeling of being gently carried away by the melody to a place that speaks neither of fear nor disappointment, reminiscent perhaps of a time and space far away that is safe and private.

It is music that recalls the ‘60s with a modern twist, a fact Manna brings back to her love for the old and appreciation for the new. ‘I actually

should be more efficient in finding new music because it’s more like I’m happy with my old friends,’ she states laughingly as somewhere in the café a chair scrapes across the floor.

‘Sometimes I bump into new music and I love it and I start listening to it but if I would have to generalize, I would say that the most interesting music for me has been done already, the roots of it. Obviously people have new ideas, fresh points of view and creativity and that’s the whole point of making new stuff but those are the artists I grew up with and which obviously are my influences because that’s how I build my whole ideas.’

Manna has chosen Café Kafka, as our meeting point, considering that it is quiet, ‘a good place to talk’ and frequently interviews are done there.

Entering, I can immediately see why. Efficient use of space, which in one way or another always seems to be associated with Scandinavian (dare I say Swedish) design in what could easily pass for a 1930's setting, allowing customers to sit and relax, have a tea, sandwich or coffee while someone else is standing in line, enquiring about shows or getting tickets.

It's a throwback to other times when the country was still young, finding its footsteps, shaping its newfound identity against two neighboring countries it probably didn't always like and trying to figure out what was becoming of it; an oasis of time travel in an otherwise modern environment. Small signs on street corners, point to the way most tourist attractions can be found but there is nothing ostentatious, the sites are imbedded into the scenery, a mixture of old and of new, not screaming 'look at me' but blending in, a bit like the music, softly calling out, enticing you gently.

Inside it is cozy and warm. If I would be here on my own, I'd most likely be dozing off. Sitting inside, drinking coffee, it is possible – if one ignores all the cell phones and imagines a slightly different fashion – if one closes one's eyes, to imagine this in a 1930s setting.

The German writer Klaus Mann, exiled a year after his visit to Finland, was toying around with making this country his home. Or so legend says. In the end he became a vagabond, roaming the earth with alternate bases set up in Paris - Amsterdam, New York and intermittently Pacific Palisades when visiting his parents.

It is perhaps hard to imagine his summer road trip through Finland and the rest of Scandinavia on this winter afternoon, sitting inside watching people as they hurry by, passing deftly through the snow. Even the sounds in the café seem to be muffled, as if somehow, this place had decided to throw a cocoon over its people, those who come regularly and those, who like I, just happen to drop by, on a visit perhaps or hoping to find more.

In a way this is like being in a song, The Velvet Underground's "After Hours" despite or perhaps precisely because of a certain wholesomeness about this January afternoon; the innocence and purity of the composition being Lou Reed's reason for giving the vocals to his drummer Moe Tucker.

Much like Manna's music, "After Hours" evokes the desire to be in another world, promising that despite logical perception, this very wish might just happen, if you listen some more. And when you do heed its call everything will be fine. Despite naming this as her favorite, when asked which three songs to her define the '60s, Manna is quick to stress that it is an impossible task, as 'there are at least 38 of them.'

* * *

They say opulence creates snobbism, that Venice, a city so beautiful it pierces your heart with its beauty, has the worst inhabitants on the planet and let's not even speak about Paris, city of dreams, place that you either fall head over heels in love with or hate with a passion for the rest of your life after merely one visit. As Manna puts it, 'it's as if the cultural pride and the self-esteem of loving their language is often misinterpreted as arrogance, not wanting to speak other languages so it's the perspective from where you look at it . . . it's not the easiest town for tourists.'

'No,' I agree and immediately rise to the city's defense, betraying with words more than by manner, my Parisian roots. 'But it's always worth a visit I tell them.' And Manna agrees with me straight away. 'Oh definitely.'

Taking a sip of my coffee, I think about this common ground that we have, Manna having left the French capital when she was four but still visiting her family and the scenario being more or less the same for me. It is true that there is a certain self-assuredness in the Parisian mentality that translates into day-to-day action that is – perhaps refreshingly – lacking in the every day interaction in Helsinki. 'I can really enjoy the self-respect and the knowledge of self-worth you can get over there,' Manna remarks remembering Paris.

Of course this isn't to make a comparison between Paris and Helsinki, that wouldn't be fair, a teenager against an established older, much wiser person, whose wrinkles show up in the fading facades of its most famous buildings, other edifices mercilessly torn down.

'For me it's more about the whole vibe and the feeling,' Manna says still speaking of Paris. 'I love the feeling over there. I love this certain confidence that can be misunderstood as

Imagine

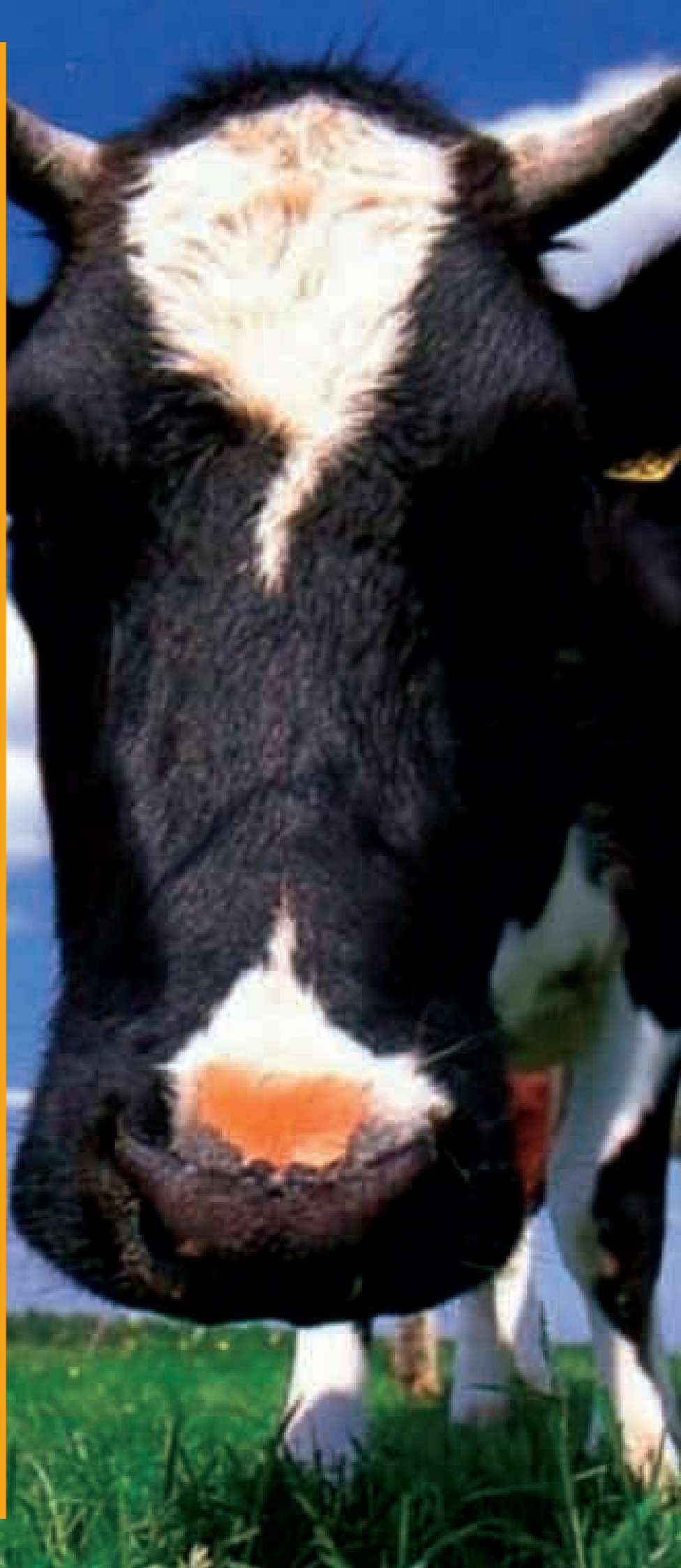
a future in
which cows are
extinct.

Imagine your
children can
only see them in
books.

Imagine you
could have
done something
to save them.
Don't wait
until it is too
late.

Act now

and protect our
planet.



arrogance. For me it's something so Parisian and French, it makes me feel all warm and nice and cozy when I go there. I love the fact . . . obviously this is a generalization and not everyone is like this . . . but I love the fact that the lady who sells your baguette is like Coco Chanel . . . you know the attitude, you know what I'm talking about,' she adds as I nod lost for a moment in my own recollections.

'Here in Finland we tend to be more apologetic about ourselves, the general self-esteem is perhaps lower. That's perhaps not Helsinki,' she adds. 'Finnish culture is a bit more introverted but like I said I hate generalizations, people are unique, obviously, . . . and it's a question of individual personality. But on the whole I guess we are learning all the time, there is a lot of culture, a lot has changed in the past 10 years. We have a lot of good theatre for example,' she adds citing Ylioppilasteatteri and Kellariteatteri as two worth visiting. The first, especially, founded in 1926, is known for its experimental performances and quality amateur theatre.

There is scope for the new generation in all manners of creativity. Manna goes on to say that things are developing at rapid speed in all fields. 'Good music and art in general, clothes designers, young, new, talented. Everything is growing. Before you used to go away to shop and now I'm really happy about what's on offer here.' She cites Paola Suhonen, the real name behind Ivana Helsinki, as one of the brand new designers making it big throughout Europe, mentioning the designer's show in Paris as an example of Finnish ideas spreading abroad.

There are things in Helsinki that will, forever remain timeless. The islands around the city, such as Uunisaari, most of which 'are only five minutes away by boat, but make you feel like you are somewhere else'; Seurasaari, with its old buildings reminiscent of a small town somewhere in New England; even the old market hall in Hakaniemi, with its variety of foods, souvenirs and various items of design, so perfect for people watching on a lazy morning or afternoon, all of which Manna suggests, are worth seeing.

'It's brilliant,' Manna enthuses when the old market hall is mentioned seeing perhaps pictures of little old ladies with bread baskets making their way through the aisles. There is of course

also the new, Kallio with its famously vibrant nightlife and alternative culture, which as Manna points out, is, 'for younger culture,' describing the district as 'vivid and alive.'

And mixing the old with the new are of course Esplanadi and Bulevardi, which Manna suggests are 'great for walking around.' Not forgetting the museums and art galleries, Kiasma and Krista Mikkola's art gallery being just two examples amidst a choice of many. A special treat in the summer, Manna suggests, is Café Engel with its open-air cinema, where drinks and blankets are on offer during various movie screenings.

There are plenty of things that among the recent design and overall modernity bring back the 1920s and 30s. Like Café Kafka and Helsinki Cathedral, the harbor and its market, both of which Manna also suggests, these are sites mentioned during Klaus Mann's travels, a cultural more than an intellectual expedition, though what wasn't in the days when youth culture had just come into being and those who had money and just finished school, were free to roam the earth, alternating between staying with friends and spending some time in inns and hotels.

A little like now, a lot like now in fact. And it is this, perhaps more than anything else, connecting with people who discovered the city shortly after the country declared independence, knowing that these discoveries were considerable recent facts, that help shape the city of Helsinki, its hidden charms and gems.

A discovery to which Manna's music provides the perfect soundtrack, though she herself would choose 'old punk rock from the 80s because that kind of shows the whole beginning of music, the punk culture. And rap music, Finnish rap music because I do believe, urban culture is very important, kind of like the real voice.'

Folk / Alternative / Rock artist Manna, whose music has been described as 'beautiful and yet not kitschy at all' acts as guide on a tour of Helsinki that guarantees a full program for your entire stay. Get your ideas here, click on to Manna's website for more information and let the music inspire you as you walk around town.

See Manna's website at: www.myspace.com/mannamariam



Jesus in Guantanamo

By The Ovi Team

If Jesus Christ returned to Earth today, would He get through US immigration? After all, Jesus is a bearded, Middle-Eastern man, who wants to die as a religious martyr. And he has just walked out of a cave.

This is the premise behind Jesus: The Guantanamo Years – a one-man comedy show – which entered the iTunes Top 10 Comedy Chart * in Italy, Sweden, Holland, Ireland, Finland, Belgium, Denmark and Japan.

The debut from Dublin comedian Abie Philbin Bowman, the live version of Jesus: The Guantanamo Years proved a sell-out hit at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Helped by an iconic poster (featuring Jesus in an orange jumpsuit), the show's overnight success was reported by over 20 media outlets, with The

Scotsman dubbing Abie “the face of this years’ [Edinburgh] Fringe”.

Following its triumph at Edinburgh, Jesus: The Guantanamo Years sold-out throughout Ireland and travelled to London’s West End. The show’s American debut was delayed, ironically, because of a hold-up at US immigration. When it finally arrived, the show played to rapturous audiences. “One evening, we had seven Protestant ministers laughing in the front row,” Abie recalls. “I’m glad they enjoyed the show. It would have been pretty ironic if they crucified me.”

In November 2007, Jesus: The Guantanamo Years represented Ireland at the World Performing Arts Festival in Pakistan. The script was changed to include references to the country’s unfolding political crisis, making Abie the only Irish comedian “stupid enough” to

perform a religious, political satire in a Muslim nation, under a state of emergency.

Abie attributes the show's success to its irreverent take on an important subject. "Guantanamo Bay is like a maximum security prison designed by Kentucky Fried Chicken: it has tiny wiremesh cages, soulless uniforms and teenage staff with no other career options." The Irishman is eager to dismiss charges of blasphemy: "Guantanamo Bay is totally unchristian. I'm not a religious expert, but I'm pretty sure that telling jokes about God is not as blasphemous as torturing His children."

"Way beyond superficial religious satire...

Absorbing, intricately woven, challenging and highly entertaining." - TimeOut

"The greatest stand-up story ever told... Funny, thoughtful, impassioned... Abie Philbin Bowman deserves a comic sainthood." - The Stage

"A rising star on the Irish stand-up scene"
- Time

www.MySpace.com/AbieLaughs

** N.B. This chart is updated in real time and is subject to change. As of April 8th, 2008, Jesus: The Guantanamo Years was in the Top 10 Comedy Albums in all the countries listed above.)*



EVERY YEAR WE FIGHT TO
END RACISM

And we will keep on fighting until we do.



100 history and one misery that must go!

By Thanos Kalamidas

Too many times over the last few years I have written articles about the lethal responsibility of the billionaire owners of football teams and their potential to destroy the world's most popular sport. Without any real sense of their actions and no understanding of what the teams mean to their fans, they have turned historic football clubs into products, products they commerce and profit from. Unfortunately for them the only clients of their product are the very same fans they ignore or they think they can manipulate.

I have often added that these people cannot ignore and mistreat the fans for long because the fans are the only ones who can actually

hurt them exactly where it bothers them, their pockets! The phenomenon is not new, we have seen it in Brazil, and we've seen it in Argentina, in Germany, in Italy, and even in England. In Greece we have the worst possible example because the owner of the team didn't only see the team as a product, didn't only ignore the fans, not only has he gone against them blaming for his failure, but he has been proven incompetent to handle the task of directing.

The man hired the management of the team and handled it like he had to do with insurance salesmen. The man hired as the team's manager a person who, after ending his playing career, decided to invest his future as an agent that represents football players. Naturally he found this a good field in which to practice his new

trade and make his first money from the team with the incapable owner. He hired a series of coaches who had no idea where they had come – ones that used to coach teams of second and third division in their countries and never worked abroad - before turning the Greek team into a circus.

Instead of investing in players that could offer long-term solutions, he rented monthly mercenaries who came to Greece for the soft weather and the good food while waiting for an offer to play in any of the English, German, Italian or Spanish premier leagues and ignoring the fact that they played with the most historic team of Greece.

The people who solicited him were often fans of other teams and failures in their fields and obviously, thinking as a salesman, he added to them some so-called 'journalists' with an extra fee - that turned out to be his nemesis. These people gradually became his royal court, spending more time licking his ass instead of telling him the truth, so they turned the naked and incapable prince into the stupid jester of the court! The prince of the Vardinoyiannis family has become the jester of Greek football.

Unfortunately the team is Panathinaikos, the historic Greek team which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. Panathinaikos is not just the Athenian team, it is the Greek team and it is the team everybody knows all around the world. It was the first ambassador of Greek football internationally and it is the team with so many trophies that other teams can only dream of. Most of all, Panathinaikos is the heart and soul of millions of Greeks all around the world, and these millions are the real owners of the team; everybody else is just a temporary director and nothing more.

Today, 13 April these millions are going to remind not only to him but to every owner of any football team that the real owners of the teams are the people who support the teams under any circumstances, even if that demand going against the owner to protect the history of the team. Panathinaikos fans are going to stand united against the worst enemy they had

to deal out of the field all through their hundred year history and they are going to stand united for all the fans around the world which see owners treating them and their team as a product without a heart and soul.

Yiannis Vardinoyiannis must go now, not tomorrow, not in a year not in two years, just now. Every second he stays he is destroying Panathinaikos' dreams and every second is another black mark on Panathinaikos' history. If he wants to stay he must stand aside and let the ones who really know take over - when I say stand aside, I mean as far away as possible.

In our 100 years of history the man gave the fans the one worst possible misery and now it is time for him to give them the best 100th anniversary present by resigning and going back to his sport cars, at least there he can demolish everything he likes without hurting anybody else!





What are all those inventions for?

By Akli Hadid

Everyday, several inventions are made that promise to put an end to many of the world's problems. However, they all go through a process of being slowly commercialized if commercialized or used at all.

I stood with amazement when I heard of a water purifier being invented that filters water from all its bacteria and everything. That means you could have undrinkable water become drinkable. That invention should help provide water to people who are short in supply of water.

However, no news this invention has been commercialized, and it might not be commercialized before several years. Why all that waste of time? Indeed, inventors often lack funds to commercialize their product, and once

commercialized, the idea lacks entrepreneurship.

What surprises me is that inventions that can save lives are often abandoned due to lack of entrepreneurship. It's as if people didn't care that much about their or other people's lives. I know people who spend hours internet shopping for the most ridiculous products that will not help them with anything, except that the product was catchy. But when it comes to products that can be useful to millions of people for the sake of their own basic human needs, governments and local entrepreneurs often turn them down because they see no use in saving lives.

A striking example was the air bag. The air bag was invented in the 1960s, when thousands of people died each year in car accidents. The air bag was only briefly introduced in the United States and Japan in the mid-1970s, and was back

then very rare. No one thought such an invention could have saved lives. It was only in the 1980s that some cars, mostly luxurious ones, starting using air bags as an option. Indeed, life comes as a priority for rich people. Only in the 1990s did most cars starting using them, it therefore took 20 years for people to start using airbags, mostly in western countries. Still today, some cheap cars don't have airbags integrated in them.

Another invention was one I saw on American inventor. Two years ago, Janusz Liberkowski won the contest by introducing a safety seat for children he called the Anecia Safety Capsule. That sort of invention should not only save lives, but also be an alternative for safety seats for children since it has the advantage of protecting them. Yet up until today, it has not been commercialized.

What is it with inventions taking so much time before being implemented and sold? When it comes to safety or fulfilling people's basic human needs, inventions should quickly reach the public because one life that could have been saved by one of those inventions is one life too much.

However, people don't seem to care about the ability to save lives, but about how much income the invention would generate. Research and development should not only focus on how much money a new product will make but also on how useful it should be. Should it be useful, governments and companies should

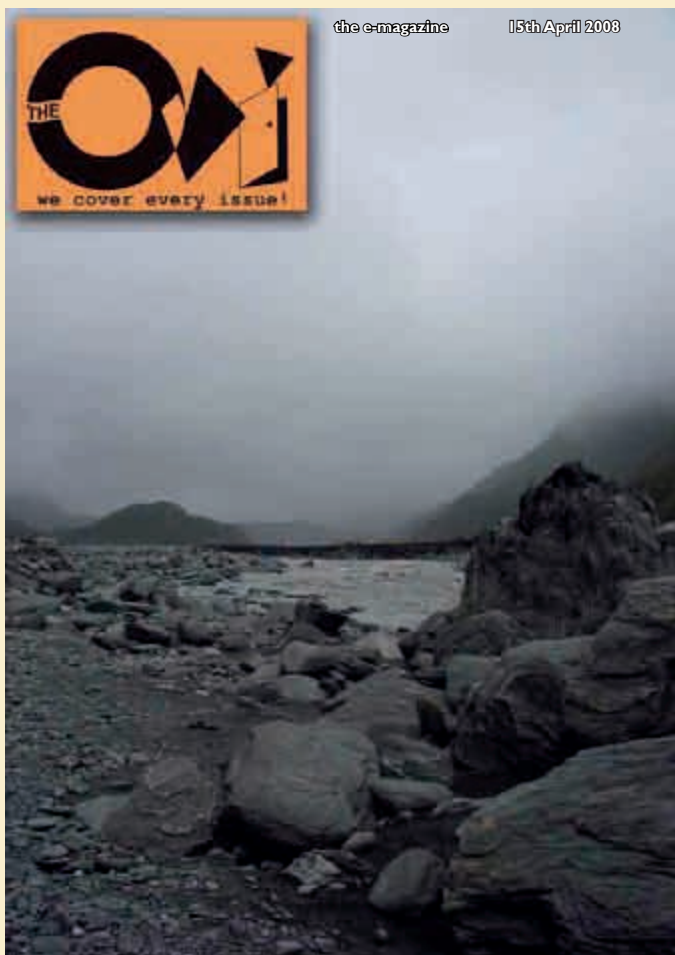
do everything possible to make such products available on the market, and available to people who can not afford them.





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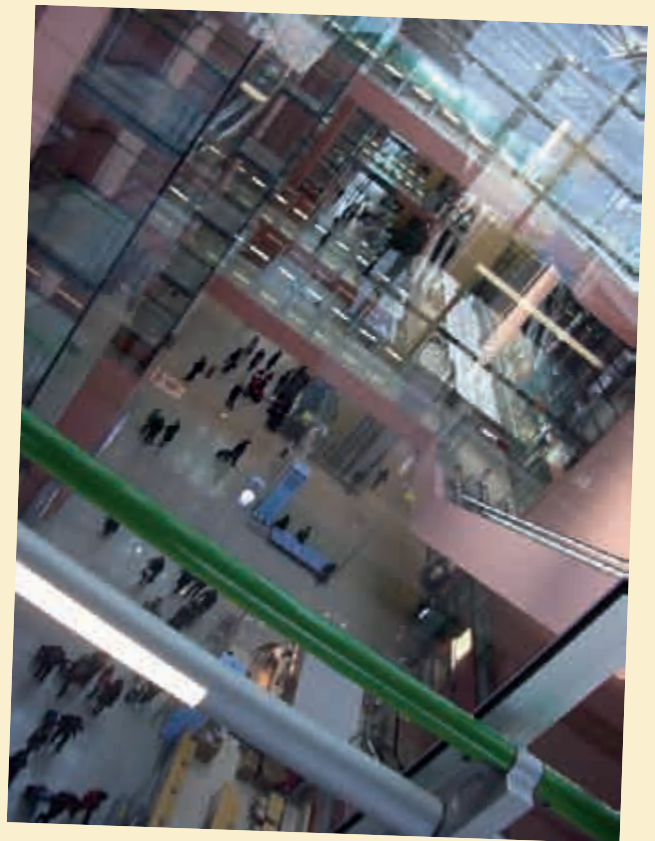
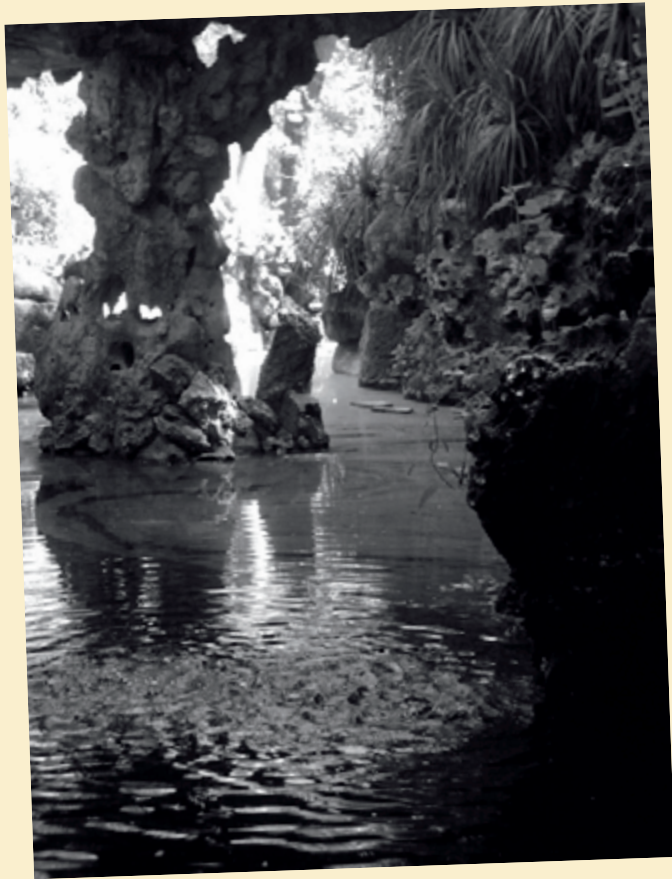
Jari Martikainen: Vol. 2

By Jari Martikainen

Jari Martikainen (31) is a Finnish aircraft mechanic who enjoys travelling and has photography as a preferred hobby... though I don't think it should be just that for him! See for yourself.

Note - photos taken with small simple digital cam only.







Disabling the disabled

By Asa Butcher

For some years now I have had a pet hate simmering just within my capacity to control its imminent explosion. I have taken deep breaths, counted to ten and projected my mind to a calming 'safe place', but breaking point was reached this week after another bloody mobility scooter whizzed across my path. Usually I fall back upon my relaxation methods, but this week it happened while holding my young daughter's hand and my imagination let loose its worst case scenarios.

I have no problem with elderly, disabled or lazy individuals utilising this piece of technology to manoeuvre around town, but what I despise is the ignorance many drivers display to the remainder of the two-legged public. I would

hazard a guess that the mobility scooter that flashed past us inside the shopping centre this week was travelling at 16km/h (10mph) and weighed over 70kg (150lbs), including driver and shopping. It has been many years since my physics lessons, but my paternal instinct told me that force of impact on my two-year-old would cause severe damage.

Let's flip this round. If a teenage boy began riding his bike through the shopping centre at 16km/h he wouldn't travel very far before somebody told him to stop. There are signs on the wall telling him no cycling, signs warning against rollerblading and signs declaring children on wheels will be clamped. However, an elderly man, whose reflexes, sight, hearing and manners are as sharp as a plate full of jelly, can drive a machine indoors at the same speed.

How ridiculous does that sound?

Imagine that this elderly mobility scooter driver does hit somebody one day, then what happens? Is he insured? Will he pay for medical costs? Would he be imprisoned for manslaughter if he kills a child through careless driving? How much responsibility do these drivers carry? I have seen mobility scooters driving on the roads, which boggles the mind further! They don't need a licence, the vehicle doesn't need to be taxed, it doesn't need insurance and it doesn't need a certificate to prove it is roadworthy, so what the hell are they doing on a public highway?

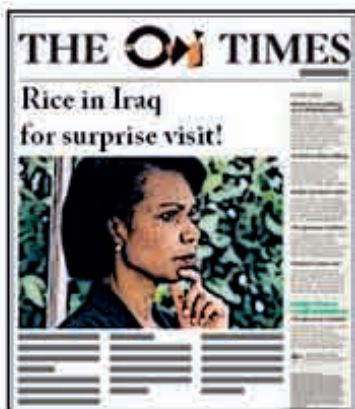
This year marks the 40th anniversary of Allan R. Thieme's first mobility scooter that he built in Bridgeport, Michigan. According to research, Thieme's motivation to create this product was to help a family member diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. A noble invention and a worthy that I do believe does help millions across the world, but it is the minority that use it safely. Yes, the majority are crazy once they strap themselves into that machine and they are crazy because they are no longer allowed or able to drive a car for which there is a reason!

Usually you can't drive an automobile anymore is because of severe health problems, which

would place the public in peril if you fired up the ignition of your Honda Civic. However, any Tom, Dick or Harry can find a second-hand mobility scooter from the classified ads, stick a Werther's Original in their mouth and begin terrorising suburbia. Second-hand machines are death traps without any guarantees of the safety features working... safety features like the brakes.

It is somewhat ironic that last week I happened to hear a few minutes of "The Jeremy Vine Show" on BBC Radio 2 (listen here) discussing mobility scooters and the dangers many members of the public have encountered. The proposal was to impose a 4mph speed limit on the machines, which would certainly be a start. We can only hope that the police also begin prosecuting those scooter drivers that insist on using the roads.

Before I end this rant on the curse of mobility scooters, I must narrate a news story I heard a few years ago. An elderly man in a scooter was frustrated at being stuck behind a woman walking slowly, so he simply ran her over. However, he then tried to reverse back over the prostrate woman before trying to getaway. Passers-by had to lift up his back wheels to stop him... amazing!





The Heavenly Stone

By Valerie Sartor

Why are the Chinese putting jade onto the Olympic medals?" I asked my colleague Wu Nanlan as we sat in a weekly planning meeting.

Raising her elegant eyebrows she gaped at me in surprise. "Haven't you ever heard the Chinese saying, 'Gold is valuable but jade is priceless'?" she replied. "China is the place where jade is the most respected. Even today what we call jade - 'yu' is known as the royal gem. The character for yu is only one stroke different for the Chinese character wang, or emperor. And originally the small stroke at the bottom, differentiating jade from emperor, was simply a pronunciation mark as opposed to a semantic difference."

"Sure, it's beautiful, but I don't wear it,"

interrupted Wang Wei Wei. "It breaks; I prefer silver, and of course, diamonds." She stretched out her slender hand, exposing a beautiful diamond ring.

"Maybe because you are engaged to that rich foreign boyfriend your traditional way of thinking has altered," retorted Wu Nanlan. "But jade is actually the toughest natural stone in the world, although it is not the hardest. And the Chinese were carving sophisticated instruments using jade long before they developed writing or cultivated silk."

"Yeah, many ancient stories and myths exist in our history concerning jade," said Dickie Wang, "but I like it because the stone is cool and soft, like a woman's skin. It's very sensual." He sighed dramatically, adding softly, "My wife's skin is like jade."

"My mother told me that she wears jade for her health," Wang Wei Wei said, looking round the table at us. "She said that jade imparts good health: if worn a long time it increases vitality and promotes long life, and controls her hypertension. It's even supposed to cure VD!"

"Well," I answered, "The English word 'jade' derives from the Spanish phrase 'piedra de ijada' – loincloth. Ancient Meso-Americans, just like the Chinese, recognized long ago that wearing jade around the lower torso helped cure kidney troubles. The other word for jade – nephrite – comes from the Greek word nephros – kidney. So maybe your mom's correct."

Dickie Wang nodded. "Jade is also supposed to have supernatural powers. Touching jade and wearing made a person safe, blessed with the power to resist evil influences and avoid evil ghosts and spirits. Ancient Taoists even believed that jade was edible and could keep one immortal. In fact, during earlier dynasties emperors and royalty were buried in complete suits of jade that looked like those suits of armor medieval European knights wore. Moreover, all their orifices were plugged up with jade to protect their qi, or body energy."

"Pretty wild funeral clothes," quipped Wang Wei Wei, grinning.

"My family is from Yunnan; we are jade traders, so I respect this stone very much," began Wu Nanlan. "But all Chinese revere jade, in the past and in the present. It symbolizes imperial power as well as beauty and longevity. A famous piece of jade is part of Chinese legend: Long ago, a courageous common man named Bian He found a marvelous piece of jade, a priceless treasure. But it was hidden under a layer of worthless stones in the mountain. He was afraid that he might ruin it; he dared not remove it. But this loyal citizen dedicated the jade to the King of the State of Chu, naming it after him. The king could not discern the wondrous stone; he was furious with Bian He for using his imperial name in vain. He ordered Bian He's legs cut off. Poor Bian He cried for three days and three nights! Later a new king took power and the jade was cut and delivered to him. This king was awed by the beauty and delicacy of the stone. It became a national treasure by the name of 'Heshi Bi.'"

"That's fact, not legend," Wang Wei Wei stated. "That stone is part of Chinese history: it was so precious that it became a source of conflict for about five hundred years, with kings fighting over it during China's Spring and Autumn Period, the Warring States Period."

"Now, with the upcoming Olympics, jade will once again become famous because athletes will compete for medals made with gold and precious Qinghai jade," I said.

"Very apropos," Wu Nanlan asserted. "In China jade is the standard by which great men, governments and beautiful women are judged. The stone is lovely, tough and unique; it truly reflects China and our respect for the Olympic spirit."

"Indeed," said Dickie Wang. "Understanding jade's symbolism can assist foreigners in understanding China's history and values. We have a proverb: turn weapons into peace with gifts of jade. The Olympic jade represents China's peaceful intentions toward the entire world. That's very important in this nuclear age, don't you think?"

But the Chinese have no monopoly on this remarkable stone. All over the world, for thousands of years, mankind has felt attracted to jade. Many myths from all parts of the planet encompass jade. During the pre-Columbian period, the Mayas, Aztecs and Toltecs of Central America revered jade more than gold. And for thousands of years the Maoris in New Zealand prized jade, using it to carve weapons and religious instruments. Even in ancient Egypt jade was admired as the stone symbolizing love, inner peace, balance and harmony. In fact, many cultures outside of China throughout the ages have regarded jade as a lucky or protective stone.

Chinese creation myths say the Storm God had his hand on a rainbow and another hand on a jade axe. He gave the axe to humans as a survival gift. Thus, the Chinese received jade in many colors due to the rainbow and learned how to carve it into tools to defend themselves against wild animals. Other myths say that when the Mongolians invaded ancient China the people cried out for help and dragons came to their rescue by crying and spitting out jade.



Nuclear fusion TEARS the world apart
SAY YES TO PEACE

In China jade has been associated with culture, religion and civilization. Known as the jewel that grants all desires in this world and in the next jade has been closely associated with religion and religious rites. It plays a part as a symbol in all kinds of social organizations and it is philosophically, for the Chinese and other Asian peoples today, a special kind of medium through which the forces of nature may exercise influence in all kinds of human activities.

Unsurprisingly, jade still reflects Chinese culture – both the past and the present, the good and the bad. Xinjiang, China's remote northwestern province, is noted for the very finest type of jade, called "He tian yu". Hetian (or Hotan or Khotan) was once an ancient, strategically important city along the Silk Road and the Jade Road, as well as the name for a nearby river.

In ancient times and to some extent today people simply go to the Hetian River to look for jade and picked up what is called "seed jade" – small rocks that have been polished smooth by the river water. The Chinese have a myth about this type of jade - it embodies the essence of yang, or masculine force. These stones attracts yin, or feminine force, so legends assert that the best way to find jade in the Hetian River is to set loose a bunch of naked young girls to wade in the water under the full moon.

When I was in Hetian in 2007 many little Muslim boys had pockets full of good quality stones ranging from red bloodstones to yellowish and green jade to the trademark white lustrous mutton fat jade. They were more than willing to sell me a handful of my choice very cheaply. A trip to Hetian will provide not just jade but also their famed carpets and wonderful Uighur lamb dishes.

Minority people along this ancient route are unlike any others you'll find in China. Uighur, Khazakh and other Muslim ethnic minority folks are lively, passionate and friendly; as China modernizes these people, their culture, especially those who are still semi-nomadic, are fast disappearing.

And, along with other parts of China, the He Tian region is experiencing acute environmental distress. Hetian City actually has several nearby

ivers where jade is found. Tourists can go jade hunting for themselves. Traditionally the Chinese feel that jade which comes out of a river is more valuable than jade that comes out of the mountainside – but this is not always technically true. Hetian nephrite is also mined in the nearby Kunlun Mountains located close to the Mongolian and Russian borders. Currently all kinds of Hetian jade, which boasts as the most plentiful in China, is being fast depleted.

According to an August 2006 article in the Asia Pacific News the environs around Hetian city has been seriously damaged from jade mining efforts. The article stated that 2,000 mechanical diggers working around the clock along a hundred kilometer stretch of the upper Yurungkax River that flows into the Kun Lun Mountains is being damaged. In 2006 alone authorities estimated that over 200,00 people flocked to the region seeking jade but other government bureaucrats have contested this figure, citing only 40,000 miners, with most of them being seasonal migrants. But an expert from Beijing University, Wang Shiqi, was quoted in the article. He said: "If the mass hunting continues like this, the river's Hotan Jade resources will disappear in five to six years. The river bed, which is hundreds of millions of years old, is undergoing unprecedented destruction." Xinjiang produces from 250-300 tons of Hetian jade each year. In 2006 the price per kilogram of the best white Hetian jade was 12,500 US dollars. Like many other parts of China that have opened to capitalism Hetian is also booming and suffering. Heavy machinery and uncontrolled jade fever is destroying the environment and the ruins of an ancient civilization that dates back 2,000 years along the river, the article stated.

What more can be said? China's reforms have brought jade mining to new levels of prosperity and environmental degradation. The strip mining of this wondrous stone, like the cancerous economic growth throughout China, mirrors the horrible imbalance of an outdated authoritarian regime claiming to be a socialist paradise.



How many?

By Thanos Kalamidas

In the beginning it was people with names, then it became numbers, ten then twenty and then fifty; nowadays it is tens or dozens without specifying how many tens or dozens and they are always innocent and it is people, women and many, too many, kids. I'm talking about the victims in Iraq, a place that has turned into the death land for thousands of innocents. How many? Nobody seems to be able to count, tens or dozens of thousands!

You must have noticed in the news if you read about Iraq anymore and you don't just go for the next, that when it comes to victims in Iraq the reports start with something like "at least thirty people..." and they have no idea, it's just burnt bodies. And this 'burnt bodies' has some lack of dignity itself. But the whole Iraq issue lacks

dignity. The Americans lack dignity to admit that they failed and the people of Iraq are the ones to suffer from their egocentrism. The warlords lack of dignity, the patriots, the liberators, the religious, all of them lack dignity. The civilians? Well, all the above stole their dignity!

But let's start from the American's lack of dignity, the invasion didn't fail, neither their target to finish once and for all with Saddam. No, they were 100% successful there. Where they failed came after that, they never considered the consequences of their acts. Saddam and the previous equally brutal regime had established a bureaucracy, a freaky and brutal one but it was there for thirty years controlling every single aspect of Iraqi life. Then the Americans come and they demolish literally everything. What was left was so minor that

made impossible for anybody to govern even the simplest administrations like a hospital or a school.

Security became the next big issue, I'm sure nobody from the American leadership, including all the army experts, thought about it, here you must admit that the British proved to have a bit more brain. Of course there was no place in the new situation for Saddam's police and security forces but there was no place created for any new forces either. What new forces? The poor ones who voluntarily joined the new security forces and the Iraqi police did it only for the money, the Americans were paying in dollars the first few months and a dollar in the Iraqi black market could buy a life; or opportunists who thought that this was a good chance to make a career without any credentials. None good for real police work so the Americans did the next mistake, hiring people from the former regime and excuse their decision with one and only argument ...they are the only ones who know the job. That provoked of course all the other sides, the ones who considered the Americans invaders and not liberators as they would like to be.

This is where the lethal mistakes start. I never understood the surprise many have shown when the Shia and the other groups started attacking the Americans and consider them invaders and conquerors instead of liberators. Leave aside that the Americans invaded Iraq with the most stupid excuses and ignoring most of the world, leave aside that they ignored even their closest allies and if you can leave aside that they ignored the United Nations in a way nobody really knows what the sequences will be in the near future. They, and by this I mean the George W. Bush administration invaded Iraq without having any idea for the day after; but the worst was that they didn't even followed the simple logic but they handled the problem with arrogance and inexcusable confidence while they had solution, I can see two myself.

The first solution was to admit their mistake

publicly and ask from the UN and their NATO allies for help for the sake of the Iraqi people and be sure if George W. Bush had followed this way all the nations of the EU voluntarily would have offered every kind of help, and it all demanded from the American president to admit that they made a mistake. The other would have been to retrieve all the army after a couple of months and let security forces and specialists from all around the world take over. The army by staying there for longer became from a liberation army into an occupation army and with a little help from the American soldiers and their daily crimes including torturing, raping and killing made it even worst. These people didn't need another brutal father figure to show them by force what discipline means, they had the taste and the feeling. What they needed was a brother to hold their hand and lead them into freedom, unfortunately that's the only thing they didn't get. And even worst, the Americans push them to the other side, after all they had nothing to lose anymore, and they had lost everything!

And the other side is the Iranian style religious freaks, another cast with lack of dignity because how else you can call somebody who in the name of freedom and against the occupation army kills his very own people. Because Iraqis are the victims of all these bombs. The Americans are well protected behind all these concrete barracks in the middle of Baghdad, the boys and girls who are looking for some food in the middle of the city are the defenseless ones. What dignity there is to kill kids, your own kids, your future?

The people of Iraq had lost their dignity long time ago, they were forced to cheer a ruler and a regime they hated, they were forced to kill and be killed for this regime and now they are forced in the name of freedom to look for food in the rubbish. These people live where dignity doesn't exist and hope was killed somewhere between Saddam's reality and the American dream. So how many more are going to get killed before somebody will do something?



Betting on addiction

By Asa Butcher

There is rarely a news story that jumps out and waves its arms for attention, but this week I couldn't fail to overlook YLE Online News' headline "Finns Lose Millions in Online Poker to Foreign Firms Yearly". Look again at the headline and see if something is slightly amiss... surely the headline should only read "Finns Lose Millions in Online Poker" with the story focusing on the gambling addiction, yet it actually is a complaint that income from domestic gambling could stay within the country.

The report, originally from the Finnish newspaper Keski-Uusimaa, states that Finns spend as much as 50 million euros annually on foreign online poker games and the newspaper has determined that if there were some tweaks

to the betting law then domestic online poker would bring in several million euros in additional income, which could be used for public projects. Ahh yes, public projects, such as Gamblers Anonymous and the Samaritans, which rather flies in the face of rationality.

Why doesn't the Finnish government just legalise prostitution and drugs if they want some extra cash to throw at health and education? Where's the harm? Think of the huge influx of extra tax they could throw at public services and public projects with a decent percentage rate on top of a blow job or a six ounce bag of "pre-cut" black tar heroin. Finland really could then have the best education system in the world and a health system to rival even Cuba, if Michael Moore's Sicko is any guide.

In a recent telephone survey of 5,008 Finns

conducted last spring, approximately 41% of the population gamble at least once a week, and approximately every tenth person participates in gambling activities several times a week. Approximately 1% of respondents estimated that they gambled to an extent which constituted a problem, which in proportion to the entire population is around 38,000 Finns.

There is further irony. Two-thirds of the respondents believed the Finland's betting monopoly is a sound method of limiting the adverse effects of gambling and Finland's government even justified the monopoly to the European Commission by saying it keeps gambling under control. Not only is the betting monopoly illegal according to European Commission laws, but the Finnish state also encourages gambling with plenty of advertising on television, radio and in the press.

According to the telephone survey, approximately 125,000 people had played

online poker, which is 45,000 players more than indicated by a 2006 estimate commissioned by RAY (Finland's Slot Machine Association), one of the three state-owned betting monopolies, so whose figures are we to believe? Currently RAY is the only one legally permitted to offer online poker, but thankfully they have yet to pursue this source of income. Note that word 'income' because it is the underlying objective of all casinos, bookmakers and gaming sites, and they wouldn't be in business if it wasn't profitable for them.

In the article Ilkka Juva, the communication director of the Finnish lottery company Veikkaus, states that up to two-thirds of the money spent on foreign online poker could be redirected to Finns, if Finland provided domestic online poker. I only hope that Finland's Ministry of Social Affairs and Health discusses the potential damage to the population with the Ministry of Culture before any bill on betting law reform is passed, but I wouldn't bet on it.



New ways to make a living

By Akli Hadid

Yuwie.com is a networking website that pays its members for various contributions. In the meantime, businessmen are coming up with new ways to promote their products: pay people to advertise.

The global landscape is not what it used to look like 30 years ago, advertisement has overtaken it. Everywhere we go, from subway stations to taxis and buses to advertisement boards displayed on streets and highways, one can not escape seeing the promotion of a product. Now, promoters have come to think about paying regular citizens to advertise on their cars, and why not, advertise wearing t-shirts, in their homes, offices, on their backpacks or suitcases, basically anywhere there is space to advertise.

That would mean that we could make a reasonable income without having much to do. All it takes to make money from Yuwie.com is make its webpage as attractive as possible for others to view as often as possible. The more people accept view your invitation to join the website, the more money you make. And one can make up to 800 USD a month just through doing that. How much money would one make from putting a Coca-Cola t-shirt or a Starbucks sign on his t-shirt?

The idea might sound crazy at first, but when people will realize that it's easy money, they will quickly accept the idea. And this alternative source of income might mean that, one day, people will no longer have to work, as they will make a reasonable amount of money out of advertising.

That's right. There will be no more weekends, no more office hours, no more having to wake up early in the morning to go to work. But in that case, who will take care of the means of production? Of course, the most ambitious people will still work, but by then, most means of production will have been outsourced to poorer, Third World countries, which means that Third World countries will work for richer countries in exchange for an income and a better life.

And who will take care of the few jobs that are necessary to keep a country running? Garbage men, handymen, waiters, receptionists, security guards, firemen, policemen, military officials will all be "imported people", or immigrants. The new social hierarchy that will then be observed in advanced countries will be that of:

1. Entrepreneurs
2. Advertisers
3. Immigrants

It will then be clear that immigrants will have a certain role to play, otherwise the plan would be impossible. That is, only a citizen from a certain country will be allowed to make money advertising, leaving foreigners with no other choice than doing "old-fashioned" jobs.

People will soon get their income from alternative ways, leaving studies and traditional ways of making a living useless. Soon, the exploitation of developing countries by advanced countries will become more visible, yet more accepted by people from advanced countries, who see that exploitation as a blessing, since that's where all their money and goods come from.



Killing the death penalty

By Asa Butcher

The death penalty has been a regular issue discussed among the Ovi team and there is never any harm in broaching the subject again, especially after this week's news that an innocent man spent 26 years in prison because an attorney could not break the rules of attorney-client privilege. Alton Logan was imprisoned in 1982 for killing a guard in Chicago and has spent almost three decades protesting his innocence.

Whether you would describe it as luck, the jury at Alton Logan's trial gave him life in prison without parole as punishment, yet it could so easily have been the death penalty. Illinois is among the 34 American States that permit execution and since 1976 the state has executed a total of 12 individuals convicted of murder to

be killed by lethal injection, one of which was the serial killer John Wayne Gacy in 1994.

Earlier this year there was another acquittal and this time the man was on Death Row and in 1994 had been within an hour of death before a stay of execution was issued. This man is Kenny Richey, born in Holland to an American father and Scottish mother, and he was released from prison in January after a number of dramatic twists, including his conviction being overturned twice, the prospect of retrials and an eventual plea bargain that secured his release.

Richey was sentenced to death after his conviction for killing a two-year-old child in Ohio in 1986 and he joined 191 other Death Row inmates in the State of Ohio, which has executed 26 people by lethal injection since February 1999. There are approximately 3,300

people currently on Death Row in the U.S. and since the reinstatement of the death penalty in 1976 there have been 1,099 executions (as of October 2007). However, with improvements in forensic science and revelatory statements, as shown in Alton Logan's case, begin to cast doubt over some convictions.

Can you believe that over the past ten years almost 60 wrongfully-convicted people have won release because of DNA testing, ten of which were on Death Row? According to Northwestern University School of Law Center on Wrongful Convictions, almost 40 executions have been carried out in the U.S. in the face of compelling evidence of innocence or serious doubt about guilt. These may be a small percentage of the overall figures and the majority are probably guilty but how can the death penalty be justified?

Some may claim that no system is perfect, but at least legal systems that don't execute people may finally uncover the truth and release the falsely accused. Posthumous free pardons may help the families, but they don't really help the individual injected, gassed, electrocuted or hanged wrongly. Did you know that the case of Timothy Evans, who was executed for murder and later found innocent, was partly responsible

for the United Kingdom abolishing the death penalty for murder in 1965?

In the UK there have been a number of posthumous pardons for individuals executed, with one of the most famous being Derek "Let him have it" Bentley who had to wait almost 45 years to have his original conviction quashed. When the appeal trial judge overturned the original conviction he stated that the original trial judge had denied the defendant "the fair trial which is the birthright of every British citizen." We can only be thankful that the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six were not executed...

Gandhi's famous 'eye for an eye will make the whole world blind' may now be classed as cliché, but there is so much truth in his observation. How can lowering ourselves to the same level as a murderer permit us the moral high ground? I believe that capital punishment cheapens human life and certainly isn't a deterrent, as if somebody will stop in the heat of the moment and muse, "Hmm, I won't pull the trigger because I might receive the death penalty..." However, the way these things turn out somebody else may get the blame and take the punishment instead.



1969: Earth's Epic Year

By Thanos Kalamidas

You could say that 1969 was an epic year for modern human history. By July humanity had conquered space with man landing on the Moon and the Soviet Union sent a space probe to Venus; back on Earth John Lennon, with Yoko Ono, sang "Give peace a chance", while the first American soldiers withdrew from Vietnam. Woodstock, a small agricultural area in upstate New York, became synonymous with Rock & Roll, hippies and the sex revolution, and the Brazilian Pele scored his 1,000 goal.

In September 1969, US Senator Mr. Gaylord Nelson announced that in spring 1970 there will be a nationwide grassroots demonstration for the environment. However, before 1970 even began, a series of reports about the environment

appeared that led to the birth of the modern environmental movement. As promised, in April 1970 the first demonstration for a healthy and sustainable environment marked what has now been recognized by the United Nations as Earth Day!

I suppose with demonstrations and announcements on a daily basis we can forget how much environmental issues have changed over the last three decades. Global warming was not an issue, even for science fiction novels, the environment was not a scary subject and that is exactly what makes it scarier. Back then the atom bomb was the fear and a nuclear WWII the nightmare.

I remember as a kid practising what we would do in case of a nuclear war, naively hiding behind concrete walls. However, that had built

gradually and the fear had already left behind some thousands of victims in Hiroshima. The environment was not an issue; it was only the hippies that loved the flowers.

It took 30 years for the environment to become the main issue, but the question should be how much has really changed in these thirty years for the environment. It took millions of years of evolution to reach the level we are today and only thirty years to drive it to destruction and gradually in evanesce? This is the big question, it is what we must remember and find out now.

Earth Day is not just a remembrance, but a chance to take our responsibilities seriously and do something about it. In the case of Earth the responsibility doesn't lay only on the states' shoulders, but on all of us collectively. Airplanes and cars are responsible for the majority of the environmental destruction, yet the simple hairspray we have at home can make the difference as long as we become environmentally aware.

Recycling is not just a good thing to do, it is an obligation; saving energy is not only good for our wallet but also prevents waste of something necessary and in danger of running out in the next few decades. Energy is the biggest culprit for the damage to the environment, with our homes and, to an extent, our lives have become a constant waste of energy. Think of it, all of us have lived through electricity cuts for many reasons: how did we feel during one of those power cuts? Suddenly we found ourselves without television, computers, electric knives and toothbrushes.

Think of this, when was the last time you went to the local shop to buy milk by foot? A shop that is most likely just 300 meters away

from your house; you use your car for the most ridiculous distances and that means use of oil. Imagine now how many people do exactly the same thing and add to that the fact that oil is not something endless.

Countries have already started talking about the end of oil resources. The US administration has been arguing for years for the necessity to start drilling Alaska, one of the last virgin areas on earth, and the damage will be permanent if something like that happens. The Arctic countries have already started arguing with Canada, Russia and Denmark over who owns the Arctic and who has the drilling rights to the land under the ice.

In a consuming and productive world there was no room to waste time; time is money, after all, so everybody turned to nuclear power forgetting what we are going to do with the nuclear waste. Feloniously for years nuclear states dumped their nuclear waste in countries of the Third World bribing local dictators and destroying nature, not only for years, but for thousands of years. Now these countries dump their waste either in their countries or in the oceans.

If the Earth was like the human body then the rainforests are her lungs and speedily the rainforests in the Amazon are meeting their end. Asthma cases increase in the industrial west, nearly 40% a year due to a polluted environment, cancer is coming in new forms all the time and the following question should be: what will happen in the next thirty years?

Earth Day is a time to raise all these questions and motivate us all to recognise our collective responsibility and do something to change the situation starting with our own home and lives.





Faith Swapping: Religion in America

By Binoy Kampmark

Americans are not only changing jobs, changing locations, changing spouses, but they're also changing religions on a regular basis.

Luis E. Figo, Director of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 26 February 2008.

An online Library of Congress exhibition makes the observation that 'a religious people rose in rebellion against Great Britain in 1776'. Religion, a section of that same exhibition continues, offered 'a moral sanction for opposition to the British – an assurance to the average American that revolution was justified in the sight of God.'

In more recent years, the intensity of the debate on religion in American life has hardly diminished. To an incoming board member of the conservative Heritage Foundation, William E Simon Jr., the United States of 2000 was confused about answering a key question: 'Does America really need religion?' (26 September 2000).

Intoning in that familiar doomsday vein of moral atrophy, Simon suggested that America's religious centre was not holding. The nation was prospering, but it was also in spiritual decline. The concerns of the Heritage Foundation were answered by a barely victorious George W. Bush, Jr., who won (some claim stole) the Presidential elections that year on the back of strong evangelical support.

What are we to make then of the findings in the recent survey of religious orientation in the US conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public life? The survey (out 25 February), comprising 35,000 respondents, aged 18 and upwards, has thrown up a few surprises on this assemblage of religious peoples. Some of them will provide scant comfort for commentators.

For one thing, the U.S. finds itself on the verge of becoming a minority Protestant country, with current numbers hovering around 51.3 percent. A column from the Boston Globe (26 February 2008) by Michael Paulson does little to hide the shock. 'The United States, founded by dissident Protestants seeking religious freedom, is on the verge of becoming a nation in which Protestants are only a minority.'

This may bear out an old argument suggested by some religious scholars (Steve Bruce, for one, in *A House Divided* (1990)): that Protestantism's democratic pluralism has tended to undermine its influence. Some groups try to resist the trend - the strong-faith base of the evangelical churches continues to hold strong at 26.3 percent. The evangelicals may be losing political influence, but they are not necessarily losing numbers.

Just to add more confusion to the debate and muddle the argument as to why Protestantism might be its own worse enemy is the recent changes in America's Catholic following. The Catholic base, ostensibly less pluralistic, has also been far from immune. Its losses have been made up in part by immigration - the growth of America's Hispanic population has seen to that.

Christian followers need have no worry as to rise of rival religions. Amongst non-Christian religions (numbering 4.7 percent of the sample), Jewry accounts for 1.7 percent, Buddhists come in at 0.7 percent, and Muslims register a negligible 0.6 percent.

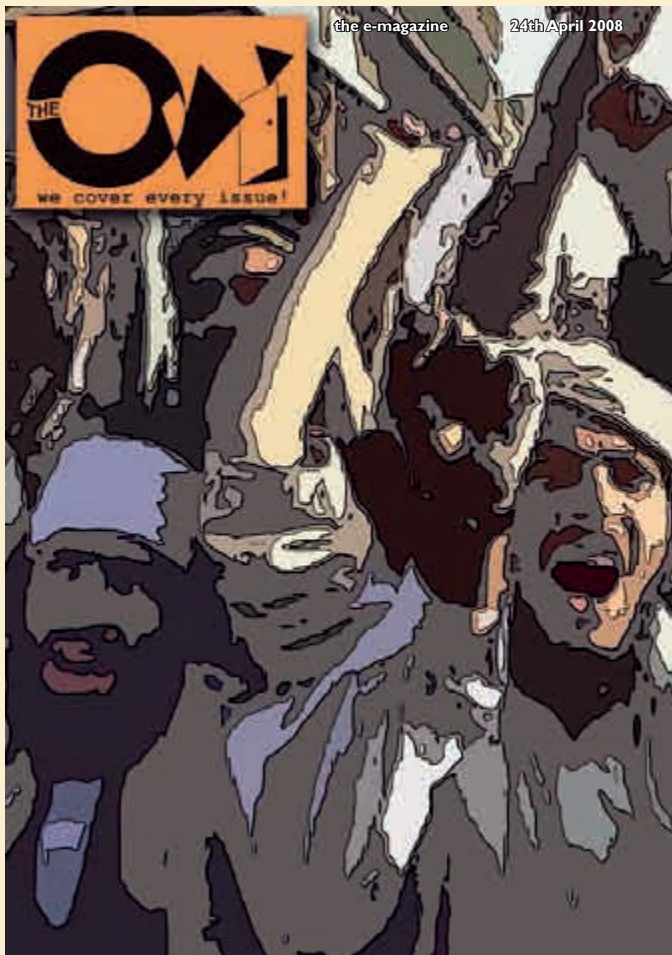
These figures from the Pew Forum do little

to suggest an overall flight from religious persuasion. They rather suggest a flight between religions. 44 percent of adults have switched religious affiliation, moved from having no affiliation with any religion to having some affiliation with a particular faith, 'or dropped any connection to a specific religious tradition altogether.' 28 percent of respondents left the faith in which they were raised in favour a different belief system. Such mobility has prompted Louis E. Lugo, director of the Pew Forum, to call American religion a thriving 'marketplace', both 'dynamic' and 'competitive.' In this movement, institutional religion, rather than religion per se, is the notable casualty.

The loss of interest in institutional religion fits well with the initial Christianizing of North America by English settlers. The Puritan Separatists in New Plymouth called for a de-centering of religious authority. A key reason why religious migrants found a home in the Americas was no less than to flee the idea of institutionalized faith and governance. Institutions had, after all, been responsible for their persecution.

Another change the survey reveals is the increased number of individuals not affiliated with any particular faith (something in the order of 16.1 percent), though such a figure is deceptive. Of these, 1.6 percent of the sample describe themselves as atheist, while the group 'nothing in particular' comes in at 12.1 percent. Such a figure is hardly a sign of rampant secularization - America remains *sui generis* for being both highly industrialized and deeply religious.

The truth borne out in the Pew survey is that religion, notably those of Christian faith, is alive and well in America. It may be a 'marketplace', but its hold is no less convincing. The furniture may have changed places, but the house of religion appears immovable.



2008 Terrorism World Championship: Winter

By Akli Hadid

Spring has just started, and though this winter was cold on most of the northern hemisphere, terrorists were on fire.

This year has similar contestants as last year though thus far Colombia seems to have dropped out of the race and Turkey, Somalia and Lebanon seem to have entered the race. The qualified teams for the winter session were: Turkey, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Israel and The Magherb.

Turkish citizens barely had time to celebrate the New Year as on January 3rd a car bomb in the Southeastern city of Diyarbakir left seven dead and around 60 injured. A few days later, defending champions Iraq scored with

six bombing leaving 19 dead on January 7th. However Pakistan, last year's runner ups, quickly took the lead, with two attacks within four days causing 34 victims. In the meantime, a bomb exploded in Myanmar leaving two people dead.

During the month of January, Iraq had a rather quiet month compared with the actions it used to produce last year. We had to wait until January 16th for an attack to kill nine then January 21st for a suicide bomber to finally kill 18 during a... funeral! In Sri Lanka, a civilian bus was bombed and passengers who fled were gunned down in an attack causing the death of 28 people.

Elsewhere during the month of January, Palestinians killed an Israeli police officer in Israeli territory in the West Bank, three people

were killed in a bomb targeting the US embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, and four people were killed by a suicide bomber in Thenia, Algeria.

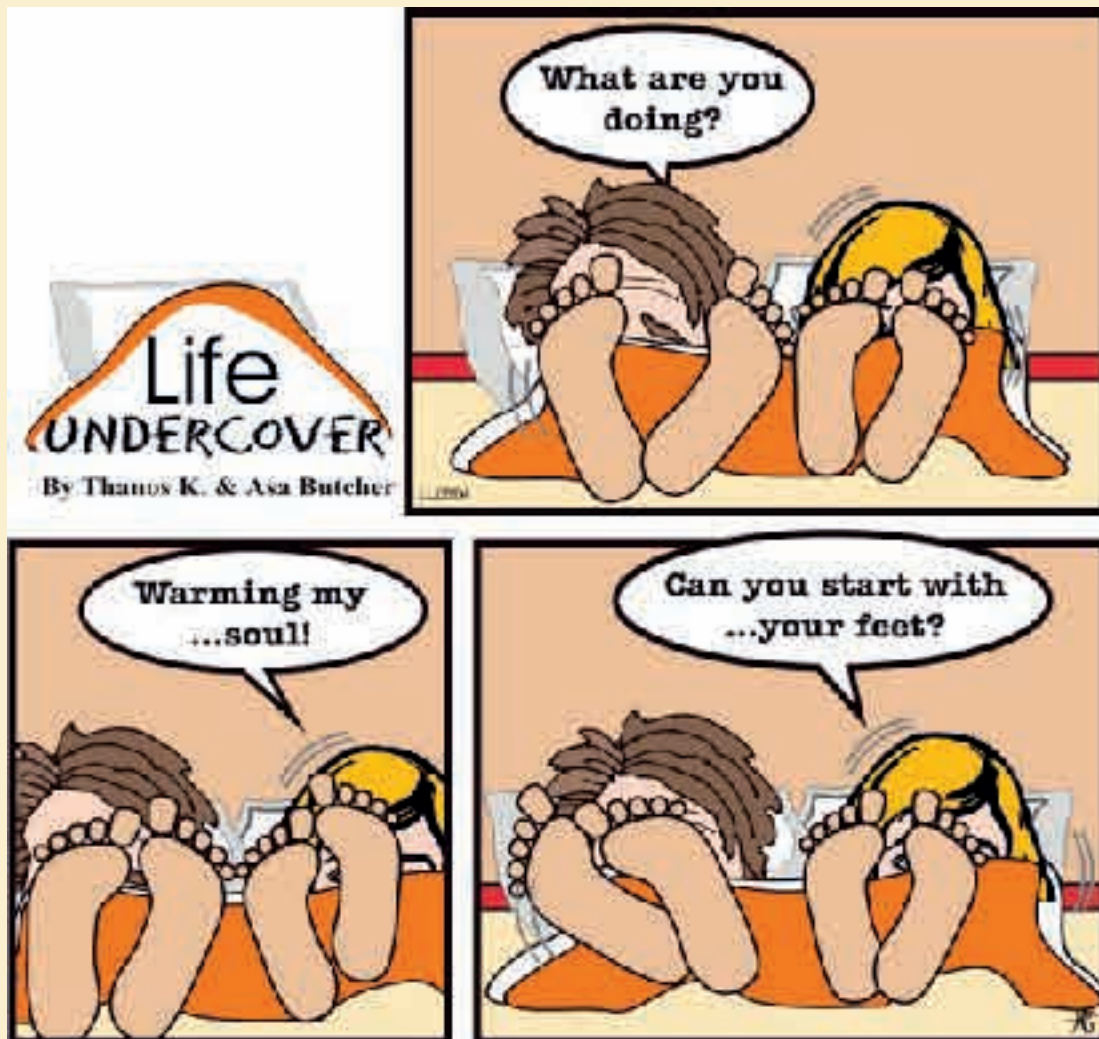
February gave all the action terrorism promised to give, enough for the US to invade 16 more countries, enough for airports to make x-ray checks of passengers and for European countries to make DNA tests for immigrants who wish to come, oh wait, that's already been done.

On the first day of February, two mentally disabled women blew themselves up in a market killing 98. The same day a suicide bomber killed six in Pakistan. The next day, a bus was bombed in Sri Lanka killing 20. Still in Sri Lanka, the next day an attack killed 12 in Colombo, and then the next day 13 in Weli Oya and Colombo. Looks like those Sri Lankans are trying to catch up with Iraqis. In Somalia, a landmine killed eight on February 3rd and two bombs killed 25 on February 5th.

Pakistan and Afghanistan made terrorism headlines for the remainder of the month. In Pakistan, bombings and suicide bombings killed 103 and injured 200, while in Afghanistan roadside bombings, suicide bombings and other bombs killed 108. It promises to be a very close race to the championship this year, as this time there are no clear favorites. As a reminder, the country with most victims of terrorism will win the race at the end of the year.

March saw spring come. Before spring came, the weather was warming up and so were terrorist attacks. Palestinians, in an attack praised by Hamas, killed eight innocent Israelis whose only sin according to terrorists was to study in a Yeshiva. Before spring came, a total of 58 Iraqis were killed in terrorist attacks.

All this should show a tight race between Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq, though India, last year's fourth place finisher, still hasn't entered the race.





Fall of “Ambedkar” father of Indian constitution

By Tahir Khan

In India, April 14th is celebrated as the birthday of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the father of the Indian Constitution, also known as Babasaheb. Dr. Ambedkar wrote the Indian Constitution in 1950 but the core issue, still after 58 years, is still on a dilemma regarding social economical issues. Thousands of violent acts have occurred in India during the last 50 years among different castes and people are still divided, plus around 70% of the population still lives under poverty.

The root cause of the problem is the Hindu faith of punarjeevana (birth again) that says an individual is born into a higher or lower caste as a result of acts performed in a previous life.

There are 3,000 castes and 25,000 sub-castes, and these different castes fall under four basic categories:

Brahmin priests

Shatriya Warriors

Vashiya traders

Shudras Labores and sweepers

These caste divisions create imbalance in society, contradiction and division.

Social injustice, which itself is a product of the Hindu religion - these are the teachings of Hindu sacred books.

Unequal treatment:

“Brahmin take food from another Brahmin but not from lower caste.”

“Lower caste cannot be allowed to listen to sacred books of Hindus.”

Due to this teaching of the Hindu religion, the high class exploits lower castes. Status quo, education, and economic activities are restricted for a certain class only. Lower castes are exploited in all forms, including insults and harassment.

Ambedkar himself belonged to the lower caste and suffered many problems in his young age. He said for many hundred years untouchability had been forbidden to drink public water, so he would break the rule and drink water from the municipality tap and be an example for others. He said, “I was born as Hindu, but I will not die as Hindu... Untouchability is a product only of Hinduism.”

He introduced article 16(4), 335, 320(4) for reservation for backward classes. Now the total reservation quota stands at 45% in many states of India for SC, ST and OBC.

Ambedkar Solution for sectarian and economic problems

Increased percent of lower caste in government jobs and reserved seats in education institutes, giving scholarships and other type of benefits or can say give dominance lower caste to the upper caste.

Present reality due to the reservation policy lower caste increase tenfold in 60 years in India. But still 5% in I-class job in comparison of 90% upper caste. Atrocity against SCST After 60 years of untouchability it is still practiced in many forms. Statistics of 2001 show there were 24,792 registered criminal cases against backward classes.

Practice of manual cleaner of sewer is still common in which is performed by the lower caste persons only.

The Silicon Valley of India has 10,000-15,000

scavengers after 1970. The manual scavenger lives isolated from other Hindus and even they not allow to share water.

Due to the atrocities against the lower castes conversation rate is very high in lower caste to Buddha, Christian or Islam.

Ambedkar tried to solve the Indian caste problem by their own mind by reservation policy but after 60 years the problem is on same stage and society is being divided into lower and upper castes, and right now India is on the mouth of a volcano. Due to a Ambedkar-type of solution, at present, upper castes feel threatened and that's why they are not allowing lower castes to gain any room of dominance on them.

Caste-related problems need more comprehensive solutions, which is not achieved by giving dominance to one caste over another like Ambedkar did.





What does it mean to be an American?

By Leah Sellers

I am an American - a teacher - an artist. So, why am I living in a tent in the woods? As a teacher, an idealist, I have struggled for many causes during my lifetime. I believe in standing up for and struggling for principals or situations I hold to be “right”, “just” or “meaningful” for all humankind.

The struggle I find myself involved in with the Workman’s Compensation system and the insurance companies, insurance lobbyists and insurance lawyers who made it the dysfunctional entity (for the patients) it is today, is not one I would have chosen. In fact, I never thought much about the Workman’s Comp system at all, until I was injured by one of my high school student’s during gym class last year.

Since then, instead of receiving proper and expedient medical care so that I can return to work and my active life, I have been greatly disillusioned and negatively impacted by my employer’s WC insurance company’s endless litany of delays, denials and litigious hearings in which I find myself having to argue for and justify every treatment and procedure ordered by my doctors.

Doctors have admitted to me that they are no longer able to diagnose; they can only recommend. Insurance companies hire their own medical team to decide who does or does not get the “recommended” treatments, procedures and surgeries. The medical team never meets the patients in question. The patients are merely a paper chase. Of course, if, as in my case, for months the paper work is inaccurate and

misleading the omniscient insurance medical team can wind up making poor judgments and “bad calls”, which ultimately hurt the patient. The longer a patient, needing surgery, is delayed and denied, the worse their physical condition becomes.

Also, doctors tire of the copious amounts of paper work created by the WC’s system, and begin to see their WC patient as nothing but trouble. The doctors want to help, but their hands are tied by WC’s endless barrage of denials, delayed non-payments, and the time and paperwork required by WC’s innumerable hearings arguing over the necessity of each procedure and treatment.

The doctors begin to balk against the recalcitrant insurance company at the expense of the patient. The real loser in this litigious game created by the WC’s insurance companies, who are fully aware that Texas has set a two year treatment limit on all WC claimants, is the patient. When the doctors and the insurance companies walk away, the patient is still broken down - still “damaged goods”.

Adding to this climate of cruel dysfunction is the WC’s claims adjustors, who are paid to and given bonuses for disallowing payments on as many treatments, procedures and surgeries as possible. My heart goes out to them. It must be uncomfortable to depend upon a job for your bread and butter, whose sole purpose is stalling, and ultimately stopping, patient care until the mandated two years is up and the WC system can kiss their injured patients good-bye. Out of sight, out of mind. They become someone else’s problem. But who hires cripples and what insurance company in its right mind covers cripples?

You’re probably wondering how all of this led to my living in a tent and questioning what it is to be an American.

Due to the fact that I am a teacher, the State of Texas and its legislators view me as a “seasonal worker”. Because I am a “seasonal worker”, I received no income benefits for a total of four months (summer and winter breaks) last year. It took all of my savings to stay afloat while struggling with the WC system last year for proper medical care. As a result, I have no monies to fall back upon this year when they stop payment of my income benefits from the end of May to the first week of September (and winter break).

Last month, I moved out of my precious little cabin in the woods and into a tent. I moved into a tent for numerous reasons. Hopefully, I will be able to stretch my last two months income benefits throughout the next five months, while continuing to struggle for the surgery (possible surgeries) I need to fully recover and return to work and my active life. I do not want to be an imposition on my family or friends by moving into a room within their homes. I do not want to move into a human zoo such as the Salvation Army or other welfare institutions. I prefer the beauty and peace of the woods.

Do I want to live in a tent? I have always enjoyed hiking and camping out at various state and national parks, but, no, I do not want to live in a tent for five (or more) months. However, I will not give up the fight with the WC system for what I need to recover fully from the injury brought about by my student over a year ago at school. I have been crippled physically and now fiscally while attending to my student’s needs. I deserve better than what I have received. And so, I find myself upon this unnatural and unusual course in my life.

As an American citizen, I am deeply offended and appalled by the WC system’s calloused and counter-productive disregard for my overall well being. A system, whose original intent, was to help get injured workers back on their feet, and back to work, has become a litigious and greed driven bully capable of knocking people to their knees and keeping them there as long as the insurance companies (that I, and many others have paid into for years) can save a buck - save a buck at the expense of crippling a life.

What does it mean to be an American?

In some ways, as a crippled woman living in a tent in the woods, I have become a living metaphor for the cruel dysfunction and failure of our American WC system - of our American medical system as a whole.

What is the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness, when we are denied our health and gradually drained of our material assets while seeking proper medical care? How do these events serve the “common good”? Perhaps the answers lie within my tent in the woods - perhaps not.

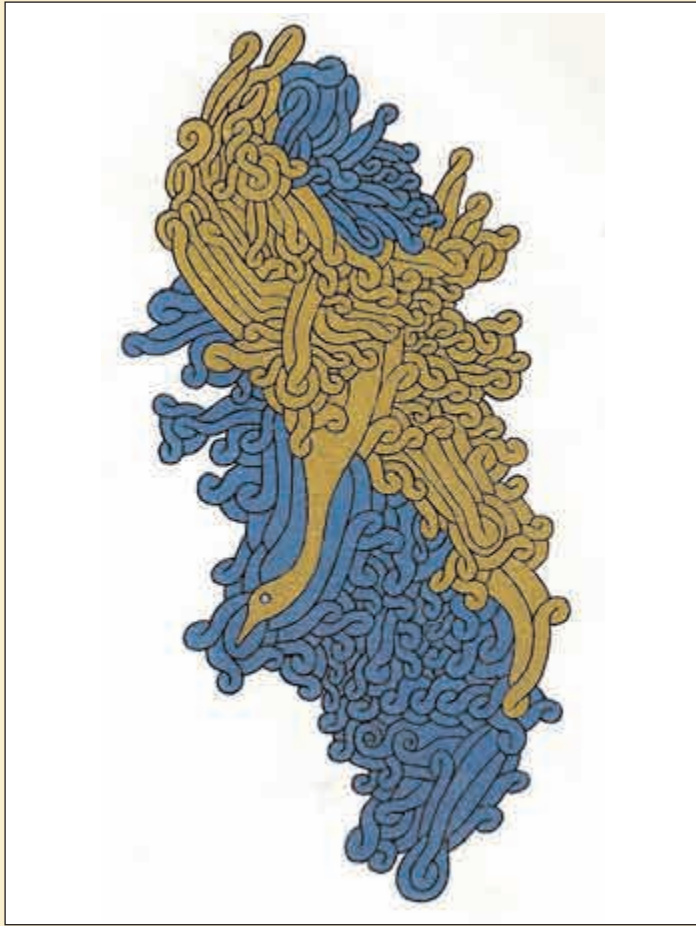
What does it mean to be an American?



Nunobark #2

By Nunobark







The Man and the hat, a.k.a. Terry Pratchett

By Jarkko Vaheristo

My first encounter with Terry Pratchett's literature was in 1997. At the time I was in England as an exchange student, and walked into a Barnes and Noble bookstore. I was looking for a book, any book, not anything in particular. Somehow my feet carried me to the fantasy department, and there I was, like Alice in Wonderland or, to be honest, more like a kid in a candy store.

But anyhow, as I said, I was in the fantasy department browsing through the covers of the books. And then, it hit me! It shone like a beacon in the night, very colourful covers among the other dull black and black and still black covers. I picked it up, and it was *Light Fantastic* by Terry Pratchett. I'd never heard

of him, but the cover was so intriguing with a picture of the strangest luggage I'd ever seen. The luggage had dozens of tiny feet and next to the luggage was a wizard wearing a tall pointy hat, and he looked kind of lost. Not a normal cover for a fantasy novel, I thought, and decided to give this guy a chance and I bought the book. The next day I came back and bought another, and the day after that, I was in a very bad mood - couldn't really tell why - until I went and bought a third book. I was hooked.

Who is Terry Pratchett?

Terry Pratchett is a British fantasy writer and he is most well-known for his Discworld fantasy series. He was born on April 28th 1948 in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, UK. Terry lives in Wiltshire, in his own words, 'behind

the keyboard' and he has said that his education was Beaconsfield Public Library. As a child he didn't know what he wanted to do with his life, so he read everything he could get his hands on. He wanted to be an astronomer, but he was no good in mathematics, but this led to an interest in British and American science-fiction and nowadays his work includes some science fiction books, as well as fantasy.

His first book, *The Carpet People*, was published in 1971, and after that he has written numerous novels, short stories, fantasy books, science-fiction, and young adult books. However, he is most famous for his *Discworld* series. At this time the series contains 36 novels, and more are coming. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the series, the first book, *Colour of Magic*, was published in 1983. In 25 years the series has become a brand of its own, with miniature characters, stage adaptations, companions, maps and far more.

His style of writing is unique, mixing fantasy with humour; it could be described best as *Tolkien meets Monty Python*. His characters are unique, funny and sometimes a bit on the stupid side. Somewhere around 45 million of his books have been printed worldwide and have been published in 35 languages. That really makes him one of Britain's best-loved writers. He also holds the record for the most shoplifted author in Britain.

Discworld - A short introduction

Discworld, in short, is a world in a bowl carried on the backs of four elephants (named *Berilia*, *Tubul*, *Great T'Phon*, and *Jerakeen*), who stand on the back of a giant turtle named *Great A'Tuin* that is swimming through space. The disc itself is very flat geographically, but in the exact centre of the disc stands *Cori Celeste*, a 10-mile high spire of rock. *Cori Celeste* is also the location of the many, many gods of *Discworld*. The *Discworld* mythology consist of gods for everything; a god for wine, who is always drunk, and then of course the counter-god, *Oh my god of hangovers*. And he obviously has to suffer the consequences for the wine - he has a terrible hangover all the time. But back to the geography.

The Disc consists of four continents, which

resemble our different continents, like Africa, Asia, Europe, and there has to be the odd one out, which resembles our loner e.g. Australia. There is also a few major political regions on the disc, the major one being *Ankh-Morpork*, the capital of the disc. *Ankh-Morpork* is also the scene for many of Terry's books, it includes the disc in miniature size, so you can find anything in the city, and I mean anything! There are bars for dwarfs, who like to sing about gold, and it seems, are incapable to sing about anything else but gold. You can also find bars for trolls, where the drinks are a bit on the exotic side, as well as the customers.

Introduction to some of the Discworld characters:

Librarian: Librarian used to be a wizard in the *Unseen University*, but a spell gone wrong turned him into an orang-utan. Nobody remembers what his name was or what he looked like, and nobody even cares. He is a great Librarian, since he can climb the shelves so fast, but never ever call him a monkey. It really makes him mad. (*Terry himself is very concerned about the orang-utan's future and he is a trustee in the Orang-utan Foundation UK.*)

Death: Obviously people die, in *Discworld* too. And then comes the Grim Reaper, the man in the black robes, the one, the final call, Death. Riding a white horse, carrying a scythe, Death is a skeleton, dressed in black, speaking in capital letters. You can almost hear his hollow voice in your head when you read the books. But Terry has made death a very humanistic character, he tries to be more and more human, and live a normal life, but he doesn't quite get it. He does have a house, all black, a garden, filled with black roses, but still he doesn't quite get the hang of it, while being dead and Death doesn't help too much either. (*One of the funniest books, in my opinion, of the Discworld series is, Mort, where Death decides to take a vacation and gives the job to Mort. This leads to many amusing situations, since Mort doesn't really know how to handle the job.*)

Rincewind: is a wizard, and he spells it with two z's, has no skills, has no interest in anything, and is a very unlikely hero. But still he just stumbles across adventures which lead him to many, any and all different locations on

Discworld. A major spell, supposedly left by the creator, is lodged in his mind and this makes it impossible for him to learn any other new spells. Since Rincewind is dressed as a wizard, everybody thinks he must be really dangerous. But he is mostly dangerous to himself. He usually just turns minor problems into major disasters. But, if he may not be dangerous, his travelling companion *Luggage* is.

Luggage: Luggage is a luggage, with hundreds of little legs, and it follows Rincewind everywhere. It is built from a magical wood, and this makes it 'alive'. It is Rincewind's bodyguard, and luggage, and it could also be described as a butler. It protects Rincewind fiercely, and attacks anyone and everyone who it thinks might be a threat to its owner. And everything and everyone IS a threat to Rincewind. Luggage can attack a monster, eat it and the next time it opens, it hands you a nice pair of clean underwear. Luggage can follow Rincewind everywhere; it is not restricted by the normal laws of physics or even laws of being. On several occasions it has followed Rincewind into his mind.

Town watch: also known as Night Watch. *The Town Watch of Ankh-Morpork* is a fictional city police in Terry's books. It was supposed to have a minor role in the books, but has grown into a larger 'character'. It consists of many unordinary characters, such as one undead

constable, one constable who is a werewolf, one troll and a six-foot-two-inch dwarf. They keep the city safe, and mostly they keep themselves safe, and out of trouble. The watch has grown into a major influence in the city, and they have become targets of the parties they annoy.

Claude Maximillian Overton Transpire Dibbler, usually known as *Cut-Me-Own-Throat-Dibbler*: where-ever there is a gathering of more than two people CMOT Dibbler is there, selling food, or something that distinctly looks like food and he calls it food, but is mostly inedible, and might be of very questionable origins. He always sells so cheap that it's 'cutting his own throat'.

The Discworld style

Terry's writing style has many layers; it seems to be just light and humoristic storytelling about the characters in Discworld and the funny things happening to them. But it is not just about the witty use of words and funny characters and laughter. The reader can find so many references to real life, movies, music, other books, TV and so on. It is really nice to find those little things in his books and it is even nicer when you realize it.

He takes a topic like rock and roll and twists it in a very Terry Pratchettian way, and transforms it into a Discworld story. Rock and roll becomes *The Music With Rocks On*. The drummer is a



troll who beats larger rocks with smaller rocks, and the singer who looks a bit like *Elvish*, but he is not elvish, he just looks like it.

The other layer and topics in his books are more of about human nature, problems and how to deal with them; death and loss, and even political issues, and the philosophical issues are very common in his works. But it is best to read about them in his books. It's all there, you just have to look.

Terry's life at the present

Terry has still a few years to write, no, he doesn't know his time of death, even though he created Death in his books, he was diagnosed with *Alzheimer's Disease*, a very rare form of it, called *Posterior Cortical Atrophy*, but since I'm not a doctor and this is not about the disease, I'll leave it at that. Terry himself is taking the situation with mild optimism, and says that he does have time for a few more books. He has also donated money to the research of Alzheimer's, so a cure could be found some day, or a drug to slow the disease. Let's just hope something can be done, since it would be a huge loss if he couldn't write anymore.

Final words

I love Pratchett. I love his style and the topics he writes about. I strongly and fondly and warmly recommend his books to anybody who has an interest in fantasy. But don't take his books too seriously, since I don't think it is his point. It's comedic fantasy, and it is fun. Be careful where you read the books though, you might get a few suspicious looks if you read him on a full Underground train or in a public place. People tend to be careful about you if you laugh out loud with no apparent reason, I know I've had those looks, but I don't care, I just laugh harder and smile to people looking at me. You'll

also love Pratchett, if you don't take fantasy or yourself too seriously. Check him out.

The web and libraries are filled with articles and pages and books about Terry Pratchett and Discworld. Here is just a few of those, I'm sure that you can find a page for any character or place in Discworld. The Discworld is so rich and full of details, so you can spend, and I hope you will spend, aeons of time getting to know it. Happy journey to you, my friend, and may your life be filled with tears of joy and laughter.

Oh, why the headline 'The Man and the hat?' Well, it's for me to know and for you to find out. Just pick up one of his books and look at Terry's picture. There's the answer for you.

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Some thoughts on the Greek fires (In Greek)

By Dimitra Karantzeni

Το περυσινό καλοκαίρι, χιλιάδες συμπολίτες μας έζησαν εφιαλτικές στιγμές. Είδαν το βίός τους να τυλίγεται στις φλόγες, πολλοί από αυτούς έχασαν και την ίδια τους τη ζωή, εκατοντάδες οικογένειες ξεκληρίστηκαν. Ο κρατικός μηχανισμός για άλλη μία φορά επιβεβαίωσε την ανικανότητά του. Κι αφού η Ελλάδα μετρούσε τους νεκρούς της, ο Πρωθυπουργός της χώρας, φόρεσε τα καλά του, και με τις κάμερες να εστιάζουν στα σχεδόν δακρυσμένα μάτια του, κήρυξε όλους τους νομούς της χώρας σε κατάσταση εκτάκτου ανάγκης, προσφέροντας άμεση και μη γραφειοκρατική απονομή 3.000 ευρώ ανά οικογένεια. Το υπουργείο ΠΕΧΩΔΕ ανακοίνωσε με τη σειρά του μια ατέλειωτη λίστα από μέτρα που θα απάλυναν με κάθε τρόπο τον πόνο των πυροπαθών.

Τι συνέβη όμως στην πράξη, στους 7 μήνες που μεσολάβησαν από το σβήσιμο και της τελευταίας εστίας φωτιάς; Όλα βαίνουν καλώς, σύμφωνα με τις πομπώδεις και γενναιόδωρες ανακοινώσεις των ιθυνόντων;

ΟΧΙ. Από τα τελικά στοιχεία που ανακοίνωσε στις 09/04/08 το ΥΠΕΧΩΔΕ, προκύπτει ότι στο νομό Ηλείας, μία από τις περιοχές που καταστράφηκαν στο μέγιστο βαθμό, έχουν υποστεί ολική καταστροφή 199 κατοικίες και άλλες 266 χρειάζονται επισκευές.. Το ίδιο το υπουργείο όμως αποκαλύπτει ότι ως τώρα έχουν υποβάλει μελέτες για την έκδοση νέας οικοδομικής άδειας μόνον 93, ποσοστό 46% αλλά έχουν εγκριθεί οι 49, που σημαίνει ότι σε δρόμο αποκατάστασης βρίσκεται το 24,6% των πληγέντων. Για τις επισκευές κατοικιών έχουν υποβληθεί 83 φάκελοι, το 31% του συνόλου, από τους οποίους έχουν εγκριθεί οι 38,

που αντιστοιχεί στο 14% των δικαιούχων. Το υπουργείο ΠΕΧΩΔΕ αποδίδει την καθυστέρηση στο γεγονός ότι το 70% των δικαιούχων δεν είναι μόνιμοι κάτοικοι των πυρόπληκτων περιοχών.

Οργισμένοι και αγανακτισμένοι είναι από την άλλη, οι κάτοικοι του νομού Ηλείας και των γύρω περιοχών. Μεγάλο μέρος των κονδυλίων δεν έχει εκταμιευτεί, οι περιοχές αφέθηκαν στο έλεός τους, η αγροτική παραγωγή πάσχει, και ο κίνδυνος ερήμωσης του τόπου να είναι πλέον ορατός.

«Το τριχίλιαιο εξανεμίστηκε, δεν έφθασε σχεδόν για τίποτα» λένε χαρακτηριστικά.

«Η Πολιτεία έχει ακολουθήσει την οδό της λήθης για τις πυρόπληκτες περιοχές της Ηλείας, τέσσερις μήνες μετά την ολοκληρωτική καταστροφή... Αδιαφορία απέναντι στα αιτήματα των αρχών, εγκατάλειψη των υπεσχημένων προς τους κατοίκους, και αποσπασματικότητα στις όποιες πρωτοβουλίες αναπτύσσονται χαρακτηρίζουν την πολιτική και οργανωτική στάση της κεντρικής διοίκησης».

«Η πολιτεία κωφεύει στις εκκλήσεις μας για ταχύτερη εκταμίευση και παροχή των απαραίτητων οικονομικών μέσων» τονίζει ο νομάρχης Ηλείας κ. Χαράλαμπος Καφύρας.

«Απλώς ικανοποιητική και στη λογική της άμεσης ανακούφισης» χαρακτήρισε τη πολιτική παροχών προς τους πυροπαθείς και ο δήμαρχος Ζαχάρως κ. Πανταζής Χρονόπουλος.

ΣΥΝΤΟΜΗ ΣΥΝΕΝΤΕΥΞΗ ΣΤΟΝ
ΕΚΠΡΟΣΩΠΟ ΤΗΣ GREENPEACE, κύριο
Κρίτωνα Γούζιο

Από την Δήμητρα Καραντζένη

Οι πυρκαγιές του 2007 άφησαν πίσω τους τεράστιες καταστροφές, πολλές από τις οποίες θεωρούνται μη αναστρέψιμες, τουλάχιστον στο άμεσο μέλλον. Ποια είναι η αποτίμησή ως προς το εύρος της φυσικής αυτής καταστροφής;

Το δάσος της Πάρνηθας αποτελούσε ένα από τους κύριους μηχανισμούς μείωσης της θερμοκρασίας του αέρα που έρεε από τον Βορρά προς την Αθήνα. Ο ψυχρός αέρας δρόσιζε τα βόρεια και βορειοανατολικά τμήματα της πόλης που πάντα ήταν πιο δροσερά από το κέντρο ή

τα δυτικά προάστια. Ο αέρας πια δεν θα περνά πάνω από το δάσος αλλά από μια καμένη μαύρη έκταση. Δεν θα ψύχεται αλλά αντίθετα θα θερμαίνεται και πολύ μάλιστα. Η Αθήνα πέρα από την θαλάσσια αύρα δεν θα έχει άλλους μηχανισμούς μείωσης της θερμοκρασίας της. Το πρόσθετο θερμικό φορτίο που θα δεχτεί η πόλη θα είναι παραπλήσιο με αυτό που δημιουργεί η κίνηση των αυτοκινήτων. Απλά, είναι σαν να διπλασιάσαμε τα αυτοκίνητα στο λεκανοπέδιο.

Πώς εξελίσσεται σήμερα η επιχείρηση αποκατάστασης των καμμένων εκτάσεων, οικισμών, εγκαταστάσεων, η αναδάσωση; Τι προβλήματα προκύπτουν; Πώς κρίνετε το μέχρι τώρα έργο της κυβέρνησης;

Σε αυτή την ερώτηση δεν έχω κάποια απάντηση γιατί το θέμα δεν αφορά άμεσα τις εκστρατείες μας και δε διαθέτουμε την κατάλληλη τεχνογνωσία.

Η συμβολή της Greenpeace σε όλα τα περιβαλλοντικά ζητήματα είναι αξιοσημείωτη. Ωστόσο, υπάρχει στήριξη από τους κρατικούς φορείς, κίνητρα, παροχές, που να διευκολύνουν το έργο σας;

Για να είμαστε πραγματικά ανεξάρτητοι, έχουμε κάνει μια συνειδητή επιλογή: δε δεχόμαστε χρήματα από διεθνείς οργανισμούς, κυβερνήσεις, πολιτικά κόμματα ή εταιρίες. Μοναδική πηγή εσόδων μας είναι οι ενεργοί πολίτες που αγωνιούν και αγωνίζονται για το περιβάλλον, υποστηρίζοντας το έργο μας.

Η απώλεια πολύ μεγάλων δασικών εκτάσεων, σε συνδυασμό με την κλιματική αλλαγή και την αναθέρμανση του πλανήτη, κρίνονται από πολλούς μελετητές και ειδικούς επιστήμονες ανησυχητικά για το φετινό καλοκαίρι. Ποια είναι τα μέτρα πρόληψης που προτείνετε ώστε να μην επαναλειφθεί κάτι αντίστοιχο με τις περυσινές πυρκαγιές στο μέλλον;

Αν αντιμετωπίσουμε την κατάσταση με τους συνήθεις τρόπους τότε θα ενισχύσουμε τον ήδη υπάρχοντα φαύλο κύκλο

ζέστη-->περισσότερα κλιματιστικά-->περισσότερη ζέστη. Συνεπώς είναι άμεση πλέον η ανάγκη να μειώσουμε το θερμικό ισοζύγιο της πόλης. Τα πιο βασικά μέτρα είναι απλά :

-Μετατροπή των ελευθέρων και αδόμητων

χώρων της Αθήνας σε ψυχρές οάσεις.

-Προώθηση των Μέσων Συλλογικής Μεταφοράς

-Περιορισμός στο μέγιστο δυνατόν της οικοδόμησης, κυρίως στην βόρεια και ανατολική Αττική και θέσπιση προδιαγραφών ώστε τα νέα κτίρια να παρουσιάζουν βιοκλιματικά χαρακτηριστικά.

-Μείωση της θερμοκρασίας της επιφάνειας της πόλης με χρήση φυτεμένων στεγών και ψυχρών χρωμάτων στις οροφές των κτιρίων. Έχει αποδειχθεί ότι ένα τέτοιο μέτρο μπορεί να μειώσει την θερμοκρασία της πόλης έως και 3oC.

-Χρήση ψυχρών υλικών στους δρόμους, πεζοδρόμια, και κοινόχρηστους χώρους.

-Μια τέτοια δέσμη μέτρων θα μπορούσε να ανακουφίσει αισθητά το θερμικό καθεστώς της πόλης. Αρκεί οι αποφάσεις και η υλοποίηση να γίνει τάχιστα. Η Αθήνα είναι πλέον σε κατάσταση έκτακτης ανάγκης.

Πώς σχολιάζετε το γεγονός ότι πέρα από τα στελέχη του Πυροσβεστικού Σώματος, χιλιάδες εθελοντές, με κίνδυνο της ίδιας τους της ζωής, προσεφέρθησαν να παράγουν έργο, σώζοντας ανθρώπινες ζωές και περιουσίες;

Ήταν πάρα πολύ ενθαρρυντικό αλλά θα ήταν καλύτερα να υπήρχε πρόληψη παρά να χαθούν ανθρώπινες ζωές.

Αναδείξετε μας επιγραμματικά, ένα ακόμη ζήτημα περιβαλλοντικής φύσεως, που δεν έχει δει ακόμη το φως της δημοσιότητας, και θεωρείτε πως θα έπρεπε να κοινοποιηθεί με στόχο μία ενδεχόμενη κινητοποίηση μετά από τη δική σας ενημέρωση και παρότρυνση.

Ένα θέμα που είναι πολύ σοβαρό είναι η παραγωγή, εμπορία, χρήση και τελικά η απόρριψη πολλών χημικών ουσιών. Αναγνωρίζεται πλέον σαν μια παγκόσμια απειλή

για τη δημόσια υγεία και το περιβάλλον.

Παρ' όλα αυτά πάνω από 100.000 διαφορετικές χημικές ενώσεις βρίσκονται σε χρήση παγκοσμίως και ο αριθμός τους αυξάνει συνεχώς. Είναι εξαιρετικά επικίνδυνες και μπορούν να έχουν δυσμενείς επιπτώσεις στο περιβάλλον και τη δημόσια υγεία. Τόσο ο άνθρωπος όσο και οι υπόλοιποι ζωντανοί οργανισμοί έρχονται σε επαφή με αυτές, είτε με την άμεση χρήση διαφόρων προϊόντων, π.χ. καλλυντικά, είτε με την τροφή, την εισπνοή και το νερό. Αν και υπάρχουν διαθέσιμες εναλλακτικές λύσεις, πολλές από τις ουσίες αυτές συνεχίζουν να απειλούν την υγεία και το περιβάλλον. Χάρη στις δράσεις της Greenpeace, οι τοξικές αυτές ενώσεις απαγορεύτηκαν, με την υπογραφή της Συνθήκης της Στοκχόλμης, το 2001.

Τέλος, θεωρείτε ότι ο Έλληνας πολίτης είναι αρκετά συνειδητοποιημένος όσον αφορά στα περιβαλλοντικά προβλήματα; Προς ποια κατεύθυνση θεωρείτε ότι πρέπει να κινηθούν οι αρμόδιοι φορείς, ώστε να ευαισθητοποιήσουν το κοινό; Ποια είναι η δική σας δραστηριοποίηση επί του συγκεκριμένου ζητήματος;

Ο Έλληνας πολίτης δεν έχει καθόλου περιβαλλοντική παιδεία και ενημέρωση και εκεί πρέπει να εστιαστούν οι προσπάθειες των αρμόδιων φορέων. Εκεί εστιάζονται πολλές από τις προσπάθειες μας όπως για παράδειγμα η εκστρατεία μας για το κλίμα και την εξοικονόμηση ενέργειας www.stopclimatechange.gr.

Πολύ ωραία, σας ευχαριστώ θερμά για τη σύντομη αυτή κουβέντα. Εύχομαι το έργο σας να συνεχιστεί ακάθεκτα, προσφέροντας στον άνθρωπο και στο περιβάλλον. Η παρουσία σας είναι πολύτιμη.

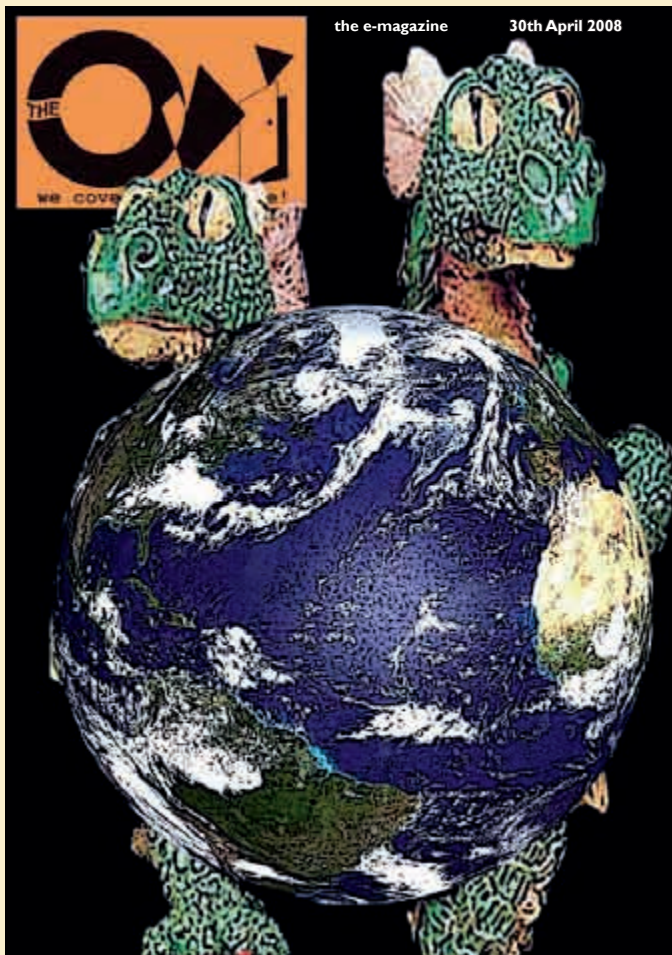
Σας ευχαριστώ πολύ.



**“Only takes one tree to
make 1,000 matches
Only takes one match to
burn a thousand trees”**

- ‘A Thousand Trees’ by the Stereophonics





Diametrically Different: Dragons East & West

By Valerie Sartor

To begin to grasp the extreme differences in culture and thought between China and the western world one of the most startling distinctions can be found by examining the universal dragon motif. This ancient symbol has no single point of origin, having entered spontaneously into human consciousness, perhaps when early man observed large snakes and/or fossilized dinosaur remains.

In any case dragons have appeared in diverse forms since the beginning of man's recorded history. Often they were winged beings associated with gods who came from the heavens to either create or help mankind. For all peoples the earliest dragons were either associated with the Great Mother, the Sun and/or water gods. Archeologists note that ancient

Egyptians had a serpent and dragon-worshipping cult, which spread throughout Babylon, India, the Orient, the Pacific Islands and finally even to North America. This religion peaked during the Roman Empire but Christianity gradually replaced it, along with other pagan cults and superstition. Today some psychologists assert that dragons are part of our primal consciousness, while others state that dragons, along with snakes and pearls, are archetypes symbolizing human DNA.

Significantly, the western world decisively adopted dragon imagery as a negative symbol: dragons represented evil enemies of mankind, horrible beasts that created chaos and destruction. Over time, as Christianity became more and more powerful, dragons evolved into a kind of intermediary between a

demon and the devil for western cultures. But for Asian cultures, especially the Chinese, a dragon is essentially benevolent, symbolizing a son or daughter from heaven, who benignly controls the earth, especially the waters on earth. In contrast Western people traditionally view a dragon as the natural enemy of man. In Occidental dragon lore endless battles are fought between gods and dragons, saints and dragons. In the medieval world knights courageously faced and slayed dragons, rescuing beautiful princesses and gaining great treasures. Renaissance stories even portrayed misers after death as dragons because they were selfish and constantly gloated over their treasure.

But in China the dragon has always been revered as a blessed, even considered as a royal creature. Ancient Taoists in China believed in four magical animals that were said to guard the four corners of the world: the Green Dragon, The Red Phoenix, the White Tiger and the Black Tortoise. Of these four creatures the dragon was the most revered. In fact, the Chinese people still call themselves “Descendents of the Dragon: - *“long de chuan ren”*. The original Han Emperor worshiped the dragon; over time he was said to be the son of the dragon, causing the symbol to link with imperial power. Specific dragon designs and motifs were designated for the emperor’s use only, with violators put to death. In old China staircases carved with dragons were meant only for the Emperor’s feet and dragon emblems were embroidered or woven solely for the emperor’s clothes. Moreover, the Chinese Imperial Dragon was special – he had five toes, while other ordinary dragons only had three or four. This imperial creature still symbolizes excellence, heroism, perseverance and divinity and the royal dragon is often cited for his optimism, energy, intelligence and ambition.

Actually, Chinese lore has many dragons; some schools claim five, while others claim nine. Most of them are beautiful, friendly and wise; a few, mostly younger and smaller, are capricious, fickle and irresponsible.

The five categories of Chinese dragons are: dragons guarding gods and emperors; dragons controlling the wind and rain; dragons on earth living in rivers and seas; dragons who guard hidden treasure hoards; and the first dragon,

who helped create the world, who is also the Emperor’s divine ancestor.

Additionally, Chinese folklore catalogues nine dragons with distinct personalities: #1 is Hao Xian, a reckless adventure lover who often decorates the roofs of palaces; #2 is Yazi, he’s brave and warlike and often carved on knives and weapons; #3 is Chiwen, who is a dreamy fellow who loves Buddha so he is carved high up on buildings and temples; #4 is Baxia, a great swimmer so he’s found on bridges and boats; #5 is Pulao, he likes to roar and make noise so he’s on bells; #6 is Bixi, is homeless and carries things so he’s on panniers and packs; #7 is Qiuniu, he loves to sing so he’s on musical instruments; #8 is Suanmi, he likes smoke and fire so he’s often found on incense burners; and finally, #9, Jiaotu, who is known to be as tightlipped as a snail so his image is often carved on doorways to maintain privacy.

These nine types of dragons all have different appearances but each signifies abundance and good fortune. Confusion reigns in their exact form, as dragons can change their size and shape in the blink of an eye. The horned dragon is said to be deaf and perhaps the most powerful; a winged dragon, the celestial dragon – evolved from Taoist *feng shui* precepts and he protects homes; the spiritual dragon – he gives farmers rain and wind; the hidden dragon – he guards treasures underground; the coiled dragon – he’s very old and lives in the water; the yellow dragon – who gave the Chinese emperor the gift of writing; and finally, the dragon king – who really is four in one dragons because he guards the four seas and the four directions. But in all his manifestations the dragon is seen as a symbol of heavenly protection and for ancient Chinese the Dragon served as the kindly King of the Beasts. As a shape-shifter he could fly up in the air or frolic in the sea or reside deep inside a mountain. Dragons ward away evil influences, protect the innocent and provide safety to all that ask for help.

In color dragons vary: some are striped green and yellow with crimson bellies, other are dark as night or red as blood. Some have whiskers, even manes; a few have spines and terribly sharp teeth, while others have wings and lizard tails. Generally speaking a dragon is a composite of

nine different animals: the head of a camel, the red eyes of a demon (or rabbit), the ears of a cow, a snake's or lizard's neck, the horns of a stag, the belly of a clam or frog (very soft and vulnerable), the claws of an eagle, the soles of his feet are like a tiger's and the dragon's body is covered with 117 scales that resemble the carp's. Some legends state that dragons have the canine teeth of large, fierce dogs and a few that live in the water have shaggy whiskers like a catfish to help them feel their way through muddy waters.

Chinese dragons are divine but vain. Like the Greek and Roman gods they can also be capricious. Some are easily insulted and they get angry when emperors and farmers fail to follow their advice. In displeasure they cause a ruckus, making rain and storms, or causing fires. Since ancient times the Chinese have set off firecrackers in the belief that these loud noises will drive away mischief making dragons along with any other evil doers. Long ago in south China farmers designed large papier mâché dragons, which they paraded around to solicit rain when needed. The Dragon Boat Festival, held on the fifth day of the fifth month, also commemorates the dragon's divine affiliation with water.

Indeed, Chinese dragons represent the essence of life. In Taoist *feng shui* the dragon's breath, or "sheng qi" – translates as the breath of life because he wields the power of life by controlling the four seasons, the weather: rain and wind, and the seas, sunshine and soils. Omnipotent, he embodies Mother Nature, the supreme force on earth.

Dragons are also the most ubiquitous symbol in Oriental art. For thousands of years dragons have lived in Chinese consciousness. These ancient emblems are carved, painted, sewn,

drawn, and made, they are found in literature, architecture, songs and the fine arts. Unlike Western images that denote dragons as destructive Chinese dragons are benevolent, friendly and wise. In China they are still loved and respected. Temples and shrines have been built to revere them, incense burned for them, and boat races and parades are held to honor them. Indeed, to understand China one must first get acquainted with Chinese dragons.

Everything connected with China's dragons is positive, a concept diametrically opposed to the western thinking, another reason to strive for objectivity when trying to understand China and her people.





How can I play
hide & seek
when
21 children die
every minute?

Who'll play football
with me when
21 friends die
every minute?

If I close my
eyes and
count to
a 100.
35 children
are dead.





we believe there is nothing
more disabling
than pity.

Every month over 2,000 people are killed or
mained by mine explosions.