A blank screen, a flashing cursor, a looming deadline and writer’s block…thankfully, I have not been afflicted with this nightmare while producing the fourth edition of Ovi Magazine. Strangely, the opposite has happened and, at times, I think somebody has been spiking my coffee with a literary laxative.

The momentum of Ovi has triggered some dormant feelings inside Thanos and I; we understand that the everyday folk call it hope, motivation and enthusiasm. I don’t care what it is called; just tell us how to get it on repeat prescription.

Our Inbox is no longer purely receiving offers of Viagra, University degrees and cheap OCM software, we are now getting reactions from you gals and guys. We are being added to blogs and our traffic is steadily increasing, like rush hour on the M25.

Part of my day job is to promote Ovi, so I trawl through the web searching for blogs and contacting the writers. On my eternal quest, I have seen hundreds and hundreds of these blogs, many blend into one, others catch my eye, a couple make me smile and too many have been dormant since 2001. Ovi is still eager to cooperate with blogs of all shapes and sizes, so don’t hesitate to contact us.

In answer to some of your emails: we are considering adding a blog to Ovi, we will be removing the frames layout soon, we will create a searchable archive, we are interested in new writers, we won’t tone down our ‘EUrabian’ outlook and no my wife is never angry about anything I write.

My day job consists of more than just blog hunting. I have to feed my cats and keep Thanos’ stress levels just below that of a disgruntled US postal worker. I don’t know if it is his Greek temperament or ‘artistic’ passion for Ovi that makes him torture a cup of coffee for an hour, while taking three drags of a cigarette before stubbing it out. Whatever it is, it has resulted in a third different photo of him for the editorial page!

This month, John has elevated Thanos’ status to a mysterious all-knowing yogi, sat cross-legged on Mount Kalamidas, offering words of wisdom to those starting out on life’s twisting road. I will always remember the words he once uttered to me, “Lad,” he began, “I really need a coffee and a cigarette.” Such insight...

Back to Ovi, we have gone for a ‘crime’ theme in issue four. However, when I say ‘we’ it should be Thanos, Juliana and John because I decided to break our own rules and commit a minor crime by not writing about the theme. I am a law-abiding citizen, the only time I have been handcuffed was a kinky night with my wife and the cuffs were covered with a pink fluffy material, so this minor misdemeanour was a temporary lapse.

Tomorrow we all begin working for issue five, we have more ideas and the motivation will stave off any writer’s block. The traffic will continue to build, our fan club will soon be printing t-shirts and Thanos’s nicotine and caffeine addiction will still be here. We hope you appreciate this issue and will help us in our promotion.

It took The Beatles six albums and 13 UK number ones before John Lennon could make his off-the-cuff observation that, “We’re more popular than Jesus now!” How many issues until Ovi could make the claim?
One night, pretty late, a couple of months ago I heard some news that totally shocked me. “They tried to rape me; I am in the police station!” It was a really surreal moment because at the same time the television was playing a message from U2’s Bono pleading for the life of Burma activist, Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi.

Two months later, I haven’t really recovered from that telephone call and sometimes I blame myself for that night. Actually, I blame all of us for that night that positioned a woman in that situation. I got angry at our society that allows crimes like that to happen in the 21st century.

After that, I started talking often with Asa about crimes and we started finding other shapes of crimes. There are crimes of passion, crimes of stupidity, political crimes, financial crimes and the list became endless. There are even crimes with a cause. A year before, a group of people demonstrating their determination for their country’s independence occupied a school resulting in children being killed. The same group was responsible for another attack a couple of years before in a full theatre. These people call themselves revolutionaries, but in my opinion are criminals.

What happened in N.Y. on 9/11 is crime, a horrible crime but didn’t the revenge on innocent people again become a crime? Or what the Chechens extremists did in that school is a crime but does that mean that keeping a nation occupied is not a crime? And then you have criminals who became heroes and legends.

Still, two men tried to rape a young woman on a busy road in one of the European capitals and nobody ran to help. Scary, she wasn’t the only one who lived this nightmare, probably similar things were happening at the same time in other places in our civilized world.

So here it is, a ‘crime’ issue, the second thematic after our women’s issue. Sadly, our earth is a prisoner of our own passions and that inspired me to create the cover page on our PDF. The cell is Nelson Mandela’s from Robben Island and it seems that we are responsible to change the situation.

Here I want to thank everybody who’s been reading our e-magazine and especially all the bloggers around the world for the unbelievable help and good critics for our efforts. I’m impress of how democracy works on the internet and how open and friendly everybody has been. Perhaps we should be an example for the mainstream media.

Asa has the biggest responsibility for all this traffic and he has amazed me with his will to write hundreds of individual e-mails. I have to admit that at one point I became a bit worried that he would lose his humour but.... he’s here spying on the letter Z!

I was most fascinated with Asa’s portrait of Eva Baudet, the presidential candidate in Finland for the Swedish People’s Party. We met her together and I have to admit that she made me feel sad because, without really meaning it, I started comparing her with other politicians I had met over the last 24 years. She was so energetic, a real believer in her cause that made me consider that this woman was a real Utopian. I wish her good luck but most of all I wish her never to change.

John is back; our cowboy is performing a strong comeback, sometimes making rhymes and still missing the good old Europe. I hope in the future he will send us more news from the US and John…please, you got a bit confused, you were supposed to write Dear Thanos, not Dear God.

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Juliana is here; our Brazilian surprised us with an article about football!!! And she’s raising an issue very important in my opinion, biopiracy - that will give us the chance to talk about in the forum.

By the way, we need you to get more involved in the forum. We need you to tell us your opinion about the magazine, about our articles, express your ideas and, as we emphasise, any language is welcome. Just remember that if we don’t speak the language we might not answer what you say or ask.

From this issue we have two visitors, we hope they will stay with us and share their opinions and ideas. Tony Butcher, who with very few words, managed to make me think, “Wow!” It is funny when you read something you feel and say, “Wow!” And Carlos Ely takes us for a walk around Helsinki.

Hopefully, in the near future, we will have more visitors and we still try to persuade a talented Finn to write for us. I think for the three of us living in Finland this is what is missing.

You can always download the PDF version of the magazine if you want to print it and enjoy the feeling of the paper and colour.

So, please enjoy our new issue, number four, and please do send us your feedback.

P.S. I keep reminding that anybody is welcome to join with an article from wherever and about whatever, since we have learnt that people read Ovi all around the world.
After five months in Finland, I still had much to learn about this country and its people. But my time there taught me at least one thing: Finland is brutally honest. This is not another article endorsing the stereotype of Finns as reserved introverts incapable of small talk. Although, in my experience, this is partially true.

Finland’s brutal honesty functions at a much deeper level than superficial stereotypes. The honesty I refer to is the self-reflection and introspection known only to those who have weathered a Finnish winter to see its spring.

I arrived January 2004, from my home in Minnesota, where small talk is an art. We pass idle moments in queues and awkward introductions at bars by chatting about the weather, sports, anything that doesn’t require too much attention or soul-searching. You would be absolutely amazed at how long we can talk about nothing at all. But this skill is of little use in the throes of a Finnish winter. There I grocery shop in silence. I can’t even get an “excuse me” out of a little old lady who checks me into the tomato stand with her shopping cart.

The first time I complained about the weather and the frigidly imposed isolation, I was told that I should be happy that I had missed the worst of it in November and December. As an exchange student with spare time on my hands, diversions were few: skiing, saunas, nights at Kurki Klubi, studying (yeah right), watching the BBC and Millionaire Jussi (which I couldn’t understand a word of, but making up the dialogue in my head provided hours of entertainment).

I’ve spent time alone before. But never had I been so comfortable and all by myself. I mean Finland is a cozy place, very comfortable. My room came fully furnished. In fact it’s the nicest place I’ve ever lived since leaving home three years ago. It’s easy to get around Helsinki with its amazing public transportation system. Everything I could possibly need can be found a short walk away under Stockman’s green roof, but there was no pain, struggle or strife to distract me.

I was left to ponder solitude in a comfy urban setting, completely separated from the static that often drives this little busy body, the frantic academic pace and the pressures from a myopic career-centered culture. You see these things become you. You start gauging yourself exclusively in relation to goals and objectives. I can’t generalize for all my contemporaries, but I think many American college students could identify.

Those that criticize Finland, those that interpret its silence as sorrow are likely hearing the voice of their own soul for the first time. This revelation can be the most liberating struggle or depressing defeat. This brutal honesty crushes many souls unable to sustain their own momentum and life force in a frozen land. Those who can face themselves remain; these are the survivors of their own soul… also known also known as Finns.
So Ovi took its fourth step. The guys are amazed. I understand, but when I came in, Ovi was walking already. I’m not surprised. Sure, it’s going forward, Ovi is good! This is just the second issue I’m in and I still keep an outsider’s look. Unlike the rest of the team, I can tell it’s good! I’m not boasting, I’m proud to be part of it. We are doing our best; Ovi will keep walking, naturally.

In this issue, our subject is crime. Writing about crime was harder than I thought. I’m afraid I’m talking too much about Brazil, but, unfortunately, that’s a subject in which Brazil is really rich. I know other Brazilians will criticize me, but I deeply believe that writing about it is the way I have to help my country because there’s nothing that matters more to the justice system in Brazil than pride.

My favourite writer, Luís Fernando Veríssimo, wrote great chronicles involving a character called ‘A velhinha de Taubaté’. She is the last of a group of old ladies from São Paulo’s countryside, who follow everything that happens in the National Congress from her TV. She is the only one who believes in their promises, and if the congress still works, it is just because this old lady is watching. Lately, I heard she “died”: Veríssimo killed her (“You, bastard!”).

This very interesting character tells a big truth about Brazilian mentality. On one hand, you have the optimistic people, who believe and love their country. While on the other hand, there are the powerful ones, who love nothing but themselves, they are above the law and the only thing that can stop them is a scandal. Thank God, at least one chance is left. Making these crimes public is the one chance journalism has to stop them.

To illustrate this subject, I’ll tell you about a personal experience. Talking to my mom on Mothers’ Day, she told me that two young men had badly beaten one of my brother’s friends, Vinícius Grassi, who was an exchange student here in Finland. Grassi was alone when these two macho-men attacked him like beasts, even his piercing was violently torn away. The violence took part because Ruy Marcondes Netto had heard gossip that his ex-girlfriend was dating José Ricardo Maciel, whom they couldn’t find. Full of testosterone and no ability to please a woman, they didn’t have anything else to do that night, so they beat the first person they found.

The first reaction of anybody living in a country where there is justice is to ask, “Did he go to the police?” After two years in Finland, I already believe in the police! My mom’s answer pulled me back down to Brazilian reality. Yes, they went to the police, both of them, my brother and his friend. They lodged information against Ruy Marcondes Netto and his brother, who’s underage. This case ended once it’s registered. Now it’s just one more paper among others. Nothing will happen; the aggressors are the children of the chief officer in the police station, so these young men can go around beating whomever they want because daddy is the law.

This is not new in Brazil.

In 1997 in Brasilia, Brazil’s capital, four bored young men – Eron, Tomás de Oliveira, Antônio Novély Vilanova and Max Rogério Alves - without anything smarter to do, threw alcohol onto a Native-American and set him on fire. Why did they do it? In their words: They didn’t know the man was an Indian, they thought he was just a beggar – Oh, they were just burning another beggar, why don’t we let the boys go? Even with this kind of argument, they were about to escape condemnation because these criminals were a judge’s children.

Fortunately, the case became too public to be hushed up. It happened the day after the Indian Day and the victim, Gaudino Jesus dos Santos, from the tribe Pataxó, had gone to Brasilia for the celebration of his people’s rights. The crime disgusted the whole country. The young criminals were condemned to 14 years in prison, but they wouldn’t have been if the crime hadn’t have become a scandal.

When justice doesn’t work, we have to fight with our own weapons, and the only legal one is the word. Paraphrasing Shakespeare, “The pen is mightier than the sword” and I believe it.

Screaming and shouting,

Juliana Elo
Underage crimes

By Thanos Kalamidas

Since the ‘60s and now, the group The Boomtown Rats recorded I Don’t Like Mondays and Aerosmith recorded Janie’s Got a Gun, both songs were inspired by kids who didn’t stop at drinking alcohol and driving.

Every year a sudden news story breaks and then shocks us with kids running and screaming, pictures of a school and the reporter finally informs us that the age of the gunman was aged 12, aged 13, aged 14... An American criminologist talks about “A Teenage Time Bomb”, blaming the demographic rise in urban areas.

One was a group of teenage boys who killed an elderly couple and hid the bodies in a forest and the second was a suicidal young man who travelled around Helsinki with a bomb inside his rucksack before it finally accidentally detonated inside a shopping mall killing innocent people and himself.

I’m not going to blame television, cartoons or heavy metal music for these underage crimes, and I’m definitely not going to say that ‘back then it was much better’. Actually, I think it is just the same on a different level.

When I was a teenager in ’70s, it was just a case of semantics the distance of having fun and committing a crime. It was very naïve and stupid blaming everything on rock and roll in the early ’50s and ’60s, just as it is the same blaming Marilyn Manson today.

Before the 20th century, you could really talk about underage crime because you could identify what you meant by ‘underage’. Even more, you have to identify what you mean by ‘kids’, when 14 and 16 year olds were part of the productive society working in mines and factories, drinking in pubs with the adults and taking part in adult social life.

Nowadays, underage is under-16 and that’s why the crime is punished in juvenile courts with very few exceptions; from my side I can only compare what happened in my time with what’s happening now.

Firstly, in my opinion this is good that an underage crime is getting more coverage. Of course, the media are not all naïve and helpful, they try to sell more but still it helps people’s awareness of the problem. They are overdoping it by interviewing terrified young kids but it makes you think what’s going on around you. Back in the ’60s and ’70s, this was very rare and I think the society then, including the media, was too eager to cover a crime story when a kid had committed the crime. The underage crime was a taboo and, a familiar reaction, society preferred to ignore the problem than talk about it.

Secondly, it is the overpopulated urban area. This comes because of unemployment in the countryside and the poor level of life, since everything happens in the big cities including a chance of a job. As a result, people live in overcrowded apartment blocks with the kids spending most of their free time in front of artificial screen games. Again, I don’t blame the computers and the game consoles for that; on the contrary, I have enjoyed some of these games myself.

Third is that society used to have the rich and the poor, or if you prefer the proletariat and, in the middle, a middle-class representing mainly the strong civil servants and the small business owners. After the ’70s, we have the distance between rich and poor becoming huge, an indebted middle-class transforming into a hopeless middle-class depending upon banks and plastic money, plus a homeless and hopeless working class. Finally, the distance of becoming middle-class to homeless is very short and is up to the bank manager.

Parts of this last category are the parents and the teachers, if you are ready to blame them. The teachers are miserable underpaid lumpen middle-class workers with huge loans and worries for an unknown future.

Fourth is the future, and the future looks very dark for young people. From their teenage years, they know that money brings money and the honest working way exists only in the novels. They have seen parents and surrounding losing everything, including dignity most of all, especially on a Friday night when they try to forget their misery with alcohol. If you don’t have the right connections, the best you can get with a PhD in the best university is the position of an office clerk in the private sector. They know that the old motto ‘money doesn’t bring happiness’ doesn’t really work without the addition, ‘but it bloody helps!’

Fifth are immigration and race problems. The black and Hispanic community in the USA, plus the Arab and African community in Europe, suffer more from unemployment and isolation, while the kids have to do something different most of the time, maybe even bully if they want to survive in a suspicious and often hostile society that they more often don’t understand.

There are far more excuses and differences but there is one main reason, at least in my opinion: Boredom. Marlon Brando and James Dean were bored in these films and they wanted to attract a suicidal and stupid blaming everything and blaming the demographic rise in urban areas.

I use as a reference the United States, since it seems, from what I have been reading, that scientists, police and institutions are taking the problem more seriously. I don’t want to say that these things only happen in the USA. I have lived for the last three years in a country that boasts of being the most secure country in the world, already I’ve heard about two incidents.

In 1987, California’s Office of Traffic Safety warned that an “alarming population trend”- meaning more teenagers - would increase highway deaths and drunk-driving accidents. From the early ‘60s, Marlon Brando and James Dean starred in films that were about the rebellion of youth and how it wasn’t far from committing serious crimes.

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By Thanos Kalamidas
All about

By Asa Butcher

“I claim that there is a political wisdom, which should be used not only for you but also for others. That is my political banner!” exclaims an enthusiastic Eva Biaudet, Parliamentarian, member of the Swedish People’s Party, mother of four and a President of Finland candidate.

Politicians have come to symbolise distrust. They offer empty promises, little change and guarded comments, passion is sadly absent from their politics and the result has been a disillusionment and cynicism of government. Ovi Magazine believed that, until we had the pleasure of a meeting with an energetic, outspoken and zealous Eva Biaudet, in her remarkable new office inside the new Parliament Building.

“I have been a member of Parliament for 14 years, which is why I have one of these few beautiful corner offices; there’s no argument with those who are oldest by Parliamentarian age,” jokes Eva. In the last Parliament, she was Minister of Health and Social Services, but, now, how she finds time for her family is a mystery. She is on committees, in delegations and Parliamentary groups, active in the Arctic Parliament, Swedish People’s Party and in different kinds of NGOs, plus she manages to do the shopping on her way home.

Finland is a country with two official languages, Finnish and Swedish, which has created a situation of a de factum minority of six percent, “I am a Swedish-speaking Finn, but Swedish-speaking tells that about language and that it is not about nationality. By law, we are an equal part of Finland, even though we are very small. If you look at the figures, it tells that it is not about how many you, but what kind of opportunities you have on the individual level; you are not a six percent person, you are a 100% person.”

“We want to keep Finland bilingual and we want to keep the Swedish part alive. We don’t want it to vanish,” stresses Eva. Since Swedish is an official language, everybody has the right to be served, educated, prosecuted or treated in either language, but society does not work like that. “This equality doesn’t exist by itself; we really are taking care of it; it is a great pressure.”

The ‘we’ that Eva refers to is the Swedish People’s Party, who are a part of Finland’s Coalition Government. In fact, it seems that without this party there would not be enough votes to make a government, which is evidenced by the fact that they have been a part of 43 out of 60 governments. Despite the party’s name suggesting that they focus upon Swedish-speakers, the party actually has an interest in minority politics in general.

“It is very natural for us to look at minorities because we feel that society can be built for different kinds of people, it doesn’t have to be one system for all and that you cannot really count democracy and equity in mathematical terms. You have to count to what it gives to you, which means that if a person is handicapped, then that person has a right in the budget as another poor person, so we are very much against dividing by per capita.”

The Swedish-speaking minority are a strong minority but that does not equate to equality. “The Finns say, ‘we cost a lot, you are only six percent, if you divide that per capita...’ These relations aren’t always good, but mostly they are very understanding, especially the people in high political positions who say that it is a good thing for Finland, it is something that makes us richer, we have an ‘inside multiculturalism’ that is good for us.”

“There are people, the uneducated or not very familiar, as always with a lot of prejudice, that proclaim, ‘You should go to Sweden!’, even in Parliament you hear that from time to time,” reveals Eva. An outburst like that anywhere, especially in a legislative assembly, is bordering on racism and highlights the difficulties Swedish-speaking Finns can face. If a comment like that was made in Britain’s House of Commons, then that MP’s career would come to a rapid end.

“Sometimes you can’t just quieten it down, sometimes it will get worse if just ignore it, but, for a while, this means we know, on a different level, what a Somali, for example, can probably experience. I think that all Swedish-speaking Finns know what it is when someone treats you badly; you get hit in the street because you talk wrong or people shout at you,” expounds Eva.

Just as Eva suggests, prejudice can stem from the unknown or unfamiliar, but Ovi Magazine believes that there could also be an element of envy. Dr. Markku T Hyyppä carried out research on Swedish-speaking Finns and discovered that they live longer, are healthier, are less absent from work and proved that the Finns’ belief that Swedish-speaking Finns are all rich was not true at all.

One aspect that Eva actively expressed (for a full ten-minutes) was the issue of education. The Finnish Constitution gives the right to live your life in either language, and this wouldn’t be a problem if every judge, for example, could speak both Finnish and Swedish properly. “You need to have a system that provides enough judges, so there is a system in the Helsinki University you can become a student with less points than a Finnish-speaking Finn, then everybody says, ‘Oh, you stupid people!’”

One aspect that Finns forget is that there are many Finnish-speaking universities for Finns to study law, but there is only one place for Swedish-speakers. “There is a lot of practical stuff that you have to keep telling people from other parties, it doesn’t come by itself, even if the right is there. It is the same with immigrants or foreigners, women’s rights or children’s rights, even if people agree in principle, you have to be constantly reminding; you have to be the one to seize the whole thing, or it doesn’t function.”

Seizing everything is certainly one of Eva’s capabilities, but what is more impressive is her determination to hold on and see it to the end. She has doggedly worked for the Sámi minority in the last budget, she was the one fighting for special resources for Sámi social and health services, such as nurseries and elderly people homes, in addition, she was the one who fought for the Arctic University. “Other politicians said, ‘Are you crazy? You don’t have any voters there!’ Yeah, but I don’t only work for my voters, I also work for what is right, which for a classical political player is not very familiar.”

“We would like to be a minority party, we also think we are the best party for immigrants, the problem is that there is a language barrier, very few speak Swedish and it is a little bit wrong because I feel we are the only ones really there fighting in the end, plus Swedish is easier to learn. I have started a multicultural Finland organisation within the party because I felt that it is important that parties do have ‘new’ Finns, not only showing off in elections and so forth; they should participate.”

After 14 years in politics, you would think that the disappointment, repetitiveness and attacks would have jaded some of the passion, but Eva is still going strong. Ovi Magazine begins to fear that her children may not get that bedtime story, but we have a feeling that they won’t suffer either. “I have been in Parliament for a long time, but I still get excited - I guess that is why I am here,” she says before dashing off to meet the German president.
By Thanos Kalamidas

Two events triggered me to write about the death sentence. The first was the report of the U.N. about the death sentence internationally, with the USA on the list, and the second was President Bush’s strong reaction to the Terry Schiavo case, the woman in a coma that led to euthanasia from her husband. Bush emphasised that ‘human life is holy’, but at the same time he sends people to the electric chair and here I’m not including the victims of war all around the world.

The list is long, but every similar list with more than two countries is long, and includes countries like record-breaking China in first position, followed by North Korea and Iran. These countries have something in common and their state can be compared only with Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia when even to think against the state was enough reason to be sentenced to death. For the United States, the situation is different and that is what makes it more villainous.

The Sixth Commandment: Death sentence

It gets worse when you notice that the highest number of death sentences on US soil occur in the South, with all its racist reputation and nine out of ten members of the black or the Mexican community.

This is a President that pleaded in the name of God to spare a comatose woman’s life, who had no chance of a normal life, but as the Governor of the State of Texas never heard the pleas of hundreds when they were being led to the electric chair.

I presume that the argument will be about serial killers but American society, instead of preventing the crime in the early stages, leaves the psychotic parts of its industrial and urban society suffering from the jostling, negligence and lack of every kind of medical care.

What there is for them is crime and punishment. The United States constitution, an example for every constitution, forbids hard and inhuman punishment and, at the same time, the courts send people to the electric chair in a ‘fiesta’ for exemplification which definitely doesn’t work with psychotic characters.

Coming back to the rest of the countries like China and Iran, there is no control about their death sentences. They kill (with these proceedings) their political opponents or prisoners without any kind of defense or criminal record. However, none of these countries has adopted the United Nations’ Charter of Human Rights.

USA’s attitude is an embarrassment to western civilization. The religion morale is high in the USA and raises the question to the ones who believe in the Ten Commandments, why do you choose to ignore the Sixth Commandment; Verse 13: “Thou shall not kill.”

The evening started as most Friday nights in Helsinki. I put on some tunes after dinner, hopped in the shower and cleaned up for a night on the town. But the night broke sharply with routine as soon as I locked my apartment door behind me. I was in search of a Church. It was Good Friday 2004.

I headed down to the Catholic Church by the harbor, two modest steeples rising above the shops marked the spot. Dressed in my black suit I entered through a side door, late as usual. I took a seat in the back and lost myself in the comfort and nostalgia of familiar rituals. I remembered sweaty palms and Our Fathers, babies staring wildly from their mothers’ shoulders, shooting my brother and sister mischievous winks. It all came rushing back, and for this I thanked the lord… for this I have faith.

I sang loud and stood tall in my fine black suit. The mass ended and I left feeling good, much calmer than I was an hour earlier. But I had no where to go, no dinner or friends waiting, nothing to sustain God’s good vibes. I started walking home and passed the Lutheran church, a much larger and grandiose building. I thought I’d do the fair thing and give a shout out to my daddy’s Father, as I had the suit on and all.

I entered the building only to find myself in one of the most ornate worship spaces I could imagine. Paintings and mural’s laid in golden frames, candles surrounding a number of oddly placed statues, no chairs or pews. The women stood with headscarves, the children milled around at their feet and the men stood somberly listening to the priest chanting in an ancient Bulgarian dialect. The church was a Russian Orthodox. I had attended a similar one while I was in St. Petersburg.

Despite the grandeur of the interior design and decoration, the service was rather informal. People came and went throughout the ceremony. They talked in the corners. The priests, dressed to match the formal and elaborate interior, often broke during their chant to whisper to one another or an usher, kids wandered around the alter to light candles and look at me suspiciously.

What conclusions can I draw from my ecumenical evening? Despite the ostensible differences of decor, language and dress, the general trajectory of my experience was basically the same. I felt more at home at the Catholic Church, more in tune with the ritual. It was easier to search myself without noticing or thinking about my surroundings. But in the second two churches...
How many frogs have you kissed TODAY?

Check our inside magazine

Le Métèque

SHOW BIZZ!
By Théme
Art: Balthazar

We need to start casting for our production.

Oh, I’ll play the cat. Pig plays the pig. Cow is the...

No, no, no. Careful and thorough thought is required.

Ohhh.

We shall hold extensive auditions. We’ll contact all the casting agencies. Are you writing this down?

Sure.

Mmm-hmm.

You can start now.

Oh, I’ll play the cat. Turtle plays the turtle. Cow is the...

Sounds fine.

Sounds fine.

Sounds fine.
Over the last few years a word has been added to the rich dictionary of crimes and is being used more and more often: the word is genocide. Fortunately, international courts after World War II started punishing those responsible for these crimes against humanity, the first being the genocide of the Jews by the Nazis.

Unfortunately, the idea of an international court and the experience of Auschwitz and the horrific photos wasn’t enough to stop more death camps and genocides. We saw more death camps in Sudan, Croatia, Rwanda, Cambodia and the list is getting depressingly longer every day, and since some of these genocides have been happening for the last two decades it is shockingly longer.

Mentioning events of the 20th century doesn’t mean that nothing happened before then. The Jews suffered at the hands of the Egyptians and that’s written in the Bible. Importantly, history has concealed the reality of these genocides and has condemned them, until the 20th century that is.

There are two genocides, one is covered from what happened at the time in the world or for political reasons they have disappeared, but are now under question. In the first category, the genocide in Jasenovac, Croatia, with victims being Orthodox Christians and in the second is the Armenians in Turkey.

In April 1945, when the partisans were closing in to Jasenovac, the Ustaša, a paramilitary organization supporting the Nazis, blew up a whole camp killing the few remaining prisoners. The horror of that camp was great enough to shock even the masters of the game, the Nazis. One of the soldiers’ favourite games was ‘who will kill most in a day’, or putting them through the fires alive. From the thousands of prisoners only a few escaped death, with stories that should make every human ashamed for what another human can do.

The territory of Croatia used to include two constituent units of former Yugoslavia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a total population of about 6.3 million. More than half of the population, or 3.3 million, were ethnic Croats, most of them Catholic. The 1.9 million Serbs were the largest ethnic minority and most of them were Serbian Orthodox, while some were of the Uniate faith (Catholic priests who dress like Orthodox and use Orthodox rituals for their services). Other minorities included approximately 700,000 Muslims, 40,000 Jews and 30,000 Roma.

During the spring and summer of 1941, the Ustaša regime enacted racial laws aimed at Jews and Roma, and launched a brutal campaign to dispossess, persecute and murder large numbers of Serbs. Ustaša units, often encouraged by Catholic clergy, carried out a programme of compulsory conversion of Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism; resistance often resulted in murder. Some Serbs, particularly members of the elite, were not even offered the option of conversion to avoid being killed.

Even though a huge monument marks the location of the death camp, General Tito stopped any further investigation feared of the later problem that it would cause. Still, the Orthodox population declined dramatically to nearly disappear later.

Due to death camps, such as Auschwitz, receiving more coverage everybody seemed to forget what happened in Jasenovac. The other case is Turkey, a full member of the democratic NATO and a candidate member of the E.U.

The purpose of the death marches led across Anatolia was clear. The Armenians were raped, starved, dehydrated, murdered and kidnapped along the way. The Turkish Gendarmes either led these atrocities or turned a blind eye. Their eventual destination for resettlement was just as telling in revealing the Turkish government’s goal: the Syrian Desert, Der Zor.

The remarkable thing about the following events is the virtually complete cooperation of the Armenians. For a number of reasons they did not know what was planned for them and went along with “their” government’s plan to “relocate them for their own good”. First, the Armenians were asked to turn over their belongings, then they were told to gather for a temporary relocation and to only bring what they could carry. The Armenians again obediently followed instructions and were “escorted” by Turkish Gendarmes in death marches.

Those who miraculously survived this bleak desert only to be killed upon arrival or to somehow survive until a way to escape the Empire was found. Usually, those that survived and escaped received assistance from those who have come to be known as “good Turks”, from foreign missionaries who recorded much of these events and from Arabs.

The ‘modern’ and ‘democratic’ Turkey does not recognize the event, probably because, under the democratic cover, the real rulers of the country are the very same cast of ‘progressive’ Young Turks wearing army uniforms. Unfortunately, the same cast had again the chance to practice the well-learned lesson with the Greeks in the early-20s and the next genocide we will probably hear is the Kurds.

Most of the countries around the world have recognized the Armenian genocide from the Turks with Poland as the latest, except some bright examples such as the USA, UK and Germany, which don’t for obvious political reasons. The weird thing is that Turkey has repeatedly betrayed its allies from World War II until lately in the last Gulf War, where their biggest worry was to kill the Kurds instead of liberating fellow humans from an inhumane dictator.

The able-bodied men were then “drafted” to help in the wartime effort. These men were either immediately killed or were worked to death. Now the villages and towns, with only women, children and the elderly were systematically emptied. The remaining residents would be told to gather for a temporary relocation and to only bring what they could carry. The Armenians again obediently followed instructions and were “escorted” by Turkish Gendarmes in death marches.

Towards the end of World War One gave the Young Turk government the cover and the excuse to carry out their plan. The plan was simple and its goal was clear. On April 24th 1915, commemorated worldwide by Armenians as Genocide Memorial Day, hundreds of Armenian leaders were murdered in Istanbul after being summoned and gathered. The now leaderless Armenian people were to follow. Across the Ottoman Empire (with the exception of Constantinople, presumably due to a large foreign presence), the same events transpired from village to village, from province to province.
Last year, two Brazilian surfers went to jail in the USA because of a joke during an inspection at Miami airport. They had in their luggage a pump that is used to make surfboards. The word in Portuguese for pump also means bomb. Advised to admit being guilty by the police, department of homeland security, FBI and CIA arrived at the old man’s house. They dug the whole garden, but didn’t find anything unusual.

The following day, the man received an answer from his son by e-mail at 15:54. “Dear Dad, don’t touch the garden. I hid THAT there.”

At 16:02, the army, marines, patrols, police, department of homeland security, FBI and CIA arrived at the old man’s house. They dug the whole garden, but they didn’t find anything unusual.

The day after, the man received a new e-mail from his son: “Dear dad, the garden might be ready to plant the potatoes now. There’s nothing else I can do from here.”

With love, Ahmed.”

By Thanos Kalamidas

Israel in 500-words

Writing about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 500-words is naïve, if not stupid, but here goes. The conflict began with the Old Testament when Moses escaped from Egypt and has escalated to Palestinian suicide bombers. Throughout the centuries, the area has been the homeland for both Palestinian and Jews.

During the last century, the Germans, and later the Nazis, financially helped the Arabs and the Ottoman Empire during both World Wars to continue the genocide of the Jewish people. Often, we blindly miss what happened to them during WWI.

Turkey’s officers organised an Arab army and Palestinian peasants into death troops killing every minority in the Ottoman Empire. They committed genocide in the north with the Armenians and in the south with the Jews, who had emigrated from Russia trying to escape... genocide; they were also massacring the Greeks.

In 1936, another Arab revolt broke again supported and financed by the German Nazis, again led by a Turkish officer and the Husseini family causing the deaths of Jewish and Palestinian opposition of them. This caused the British to react by putting restrictions on the immigration of Jews, since they were also trying to escape from Hitler and Stalin.

One memorable event from that period is the Arabs blackmailing the Brits, the rulers of Palestine during that period. King Saud (the Saud family still rules Saudi Arabia) stated that if they don’t stop Jews immigrating to Palestine, then the Arabs would change sides and help Germany, which is unbelievable in the face of another world war.

The Jews declared the independent Israeli state in 1948 and the British withdrew from Palestine. Arab nations, including Egypt and Syria, invaded the newborn country and when Israel moved the war to Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula it ended in 1949. A new war with Egypt began in 1956 and another in 1967, which became known as the Six-Day War against Nasser and his pan-Arab plans.

During these wars, even though Israel was always defending it managed to be victorious in the end and expand to the Sinai desert, the Golan Heights and the West Bank; land several times larger than the original 1948 borders and created a new situation with over a million Palestinians in the occupied lands.

Still, there was a short conflict in 1982 after the assassination of a Lebanese president Bashir Gemayel, an Israeli ally and a real supporter of the peace in the Middle East. It was at this time a new player arrived on the stage, the Egyptian Palestinian Yasser Arafat, who grew up on the Gaza Strip, and came to lead the Palestinian Liberation Army.

Yasser Arafat cleverly managed to turn western public opinion. At first, he used all the natural sensitivity of the powerful Goliath over poor small David, while distributing pictures of dead or wounded kids to the international media. What we failed to see were the dead mothers of suicide bombers or the bodies in bomb-damaged Jerusalem malls.

What we see now is the Israeli helicopters and we never wonder how all these sophisticated weapons and rockets found their way into Palestinian hands. The Saudi Arabian royal family and their ramifications have always been behind this endless funding and remember that Bin Laden is part of that.

Today Israelis are building a wall similar to the one that divided Europe for half a century and we often forget to think what would have happened if the pan-Arabs had won any of the wars. With all the hate for the Jews, would the Jews have survived or would they have finished what the Turks and later Hitler started?
The British Election: the returning officer announces the total number of votes of each candidate before declaring the overall winner. The MP takes the applause and walks to the microphone to deliver an acceptance speech, but who is that stood behind him? It appears to be somebody dressed like a clown, covered in badges and holding a huge inflatable hammer—it is one of the other candidates.

The Official Monster Raving Loony Party is a registered political party in the UK, whose slogan is: Vote for insanity, you know it makes sense! The party was founded in 1983 by the enigmatic Screaming Lord Sutch, who unfortunately died in 1999, but his legacy continues to live on, with nearly 20 candidates in the recent UK elections.

Nobody lost more British elections than Lord Sutch did and he holds the honour of being the longest-serving party leader ever. Lord Sutch is now considered the Spiritual Leader of the party that, for years, was the only legal method of registering a protest vote, other than not turning up on Polling Day. The OMRLP may seem like a joke party, with many of their bizarre 2005 manifesto policies:

- We intend to make free university tuition available to all students named Grant.
- We will replace the House of Lords with the House of Cards, to make it easier for the Government to deal with.
- The Official Monster Raving Loony Party will not join the single European currency. We will invite all Europeans to JOIN THE POUND.
- Our team of experts has decided that lowering of the voting age to 18 from 21 - the party are now trying to lower it to 16 and allow candidates to stand for election at 18, at present it is 21.
- The party has had some policies that seemed surreal, stupid or silly at the time, but the idea of devolution and pets’ passports were originally suggested by Lord Sutch. He was also the first candidate to campaign for the lot on it,” states their manifesto.

Their official website feels that is only a matter of time before more OMRLP policies become law, “It’s just that it takes “normal” politicians a while to catch up with us.” Lord Sutch always campaigned for fairness in British Politics and believed that democracy is intended to be more than just a 2½ Party system. One interesting aspect of the party is their request for members to try to be as outrageous as possible, but to remember that they are loonies, not nutters; the party will not permit any kind of extremism, unless it takes the form of Extreme Broccoli Racing.

Today, Alan Howling Lord Hope is the leader of the Official Monster Raving Loony Party and he is leading the fight against the “serious” politicians and “laugh at the people who look at you disdainfully because they haven’t got a sense of humour”. In the 2005 British Election, the 19 candidates managed to amass over 6,000, each carrying on the tradition of the great Lord Sutch, though it seems the party has its sights set on the future, with their website carrying the 2525 Manifesto.

While May is approaching, it is not the time of year to start getting bullish (a belief that markets will rise) about the stock markets. A few factors are bringing economic uncertainty to the markets. With the French referendum on the EU constitution less than a month away, Chancellor Schroeder of Germany has been over to France to help Pres Chirac swing the voters back towards a Yes vote.

At the time of writing No were still the majority at around 51/49. This is creating a lot of economic uncertainty as the rhetoric starts to build. European Central Bank leader Jean Claude Trichet has said a NO vote from France would be damaging to the EU and many other have said the EU would become unworkable as a result.

There has been a Stock market saying: “Sell in May and go away”. Historically the period from November to April has been the most profitable for stock market investors. In the US, for example, over the last fifty years the Dow Jones Industrial Average has added over nine times more points to the index in this period of the year than the summer months.

The Nov – Apr period this year had seen some very strong gains, around 9% at one point, but that has disappeared during April a month which ironically is historically a very good month for stock markets. The trend has started to take on a bearish (a belief that markets will fall) stance. When this is put in the context of Stock market sayings and coupled with the uncertainty of the French referendum, May could prove tough going for investors.

American Jobs data due in early May could provide the markets with some direction. However, inflation is still seen as the primary danger for the Federal Reserve and are likely to continue their policy of steadily raising interest rates. German ministers are claiming their unemployment reforms could start seeing benefits in the summer months, but the economic problems in Germany will not be solved by September. So the outlook seems to suggest that you should let the trend be your friend and Sell in May and enjoy your Holidays.
In every generation, there are crimes that somehow scar our memories, knowledge and awareness. Human history is full of them. There are crimes against humans and crimes against humanity. Crimes that made you feel sorry and sad; crimes that made you cry and scream.

My generation in Europe felt the results of one crime against humanity, through the memories either of our parents or, in a more global way, the changes happening in our social and environmental system.

Simultaneously, a number of petit or bigger criminals acted all around Europe and a new term was added to criminology: serial killers. One man during the last century managed to combine all the criminal virtues, Adolf Hitler. I think only his name has become the namesake of the monster.

For various reasons, each of us in our lifetime have heard or read about a crime that made us want to investigate, research and follow the true scale of it further. Even though I am in my mid-forties and I presume that more are to come for the next….hmmm, twenty years, two very different crimes left their scars on me and changed the way I see things.

The first crime I had to face was something like 20 years ago. During my first days in one of the most beautiful cities in the world, somebody directed me towards the sea and said, “This is where they kept Nelson Mandela.” The city was Cape Town and the spot by the sea was Robben Island. At this time, Nelson Mandela was still imprisoned at Victor Verster Prison, near Paarl.

Having been over a century since the American Civil War, the globe had condemned any idea of slavery and only 40 years after the time, when people had condemned and convicted for crimes that had to do with racism, the public toilets in this beautiful country still had signs like ‘men, women and colour’. During the months I stayed in South Africa, I saw how ugly people can get, where people were committing murder, finding excuses for it and escaping unpunished.

What I lived and how heavy I felt what was going on can only be described the day Nelson Mandela walked out of prison. I was watching the event on television, seeing the man walking out on to the earthen road and, without realising, there were tears rolling down my cheeks. Soon the tears had become sobs and I couldn’t stop myself.

What made me worse were the first words the man said when he came out of the prison: “I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But, if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.” That moment I felt so embarrassed to be white, to be part of these people who had committed a crime so big, for being ignorant for so many years.

The second crime, or perhaps criminal, was in my college years, during the late ‘70s early-80s in England. I was studying and trying to find out what I wanted for my future when I signed myself on a criminal psychology course. Living in England in that period meant you had heard of the Yorkshire Ripper. Going through the testimonies of Peter Sutcliffe there was a point I just couldn’t go any further. While he was confessing to his crimes, he said: “They were asking for it, too much make-up and their clothes… too flashy!”

This sentence was the end of my career. How he judged that a woman was asking to be killed by wearing a bit more make-up or too flashy clothes was beyond me. Some of his victims were prostitutes but this is a very poor excuse since their profession was not an excuse for murder. Others were housewives, students and, unfortunately, Scotland Yard suspect him for more crimes that he never admitted.

When a man goes out on a date, he has a clean shave, nice clothes and shining shoes, the best shining smile and bright white teeth. When a woman goes out, she has exactly the same thing, except the clean shave, which is replaced by good make-up. So, at what point does she start ‘asking for it’?

Both crimes left deep scars on my conscious. When the civil war and the genocide happened in Rwanda the only thing I thought to say was, god, not again! Then there was Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma, another prisoner of her ideas for equality and freedom.

The second crime left worse scars, since the phrase, “They were asking for it, too much make-up and their clothes… too flashy!” is repeatedly reprinted in newspapers all around the world. The phrase is still heard in court rooms, police departments and, much worse, I’ve read it lately in an article by an ‘intellectual environmental liberal’. He wrote an article using the phrase when blaming pornography in kiosks for the reason young girls put on make-up and become prostitutes. Perhaps the psyche of this man is not far away from the Yorkshire Ripper and that is scary!
It has happened to all of us. The eyes of a uniformed officer burning deep into your conscience transforming your angelic innocence into guilt that would make the Devil squirm. Is the power to destroy self-confidence with a mere glance taught or does it stem from a primeval fear of authority?

Pushing a baggage trolley through the ‘Nothing to Declare’ Customs’ tunnel is akin to walking into the valley of the shadow of death, but I do fear evil. The feelings of elation at having arrived at your destination are momentarily replaced by a heightened sense of danger; your pupils widen, your pulse quickens and beads of sweat form upon your brow. Scenes from Midnight Express flash across your mind, but you remind yourself that this is London Heathrow and you are innocent.

Innocence matters not. The situation is worse when Customs is deserted of officers, they are either feasting upon another innocent traveller’s suitcase or they are training their security cameras upon your leaking pores. Then one day it happens, the inevitable invite to join them at their desk, which is a table in full view of your fellow passengers who are breathing a sigh of relief at their own escape.

Airports, border controls, anywhere there are officers of the law comparing your twitching face against your photo ID, are moments of terror. In an attempt to release the tension you try to make jokes, but you realise that saying, “Yeah, I made it myself this morning!” is not a clever witticism and can result in the coach being held up for a few more hours.

My experience had been primarily in European airports and they had been fearsome enough for my anxious tendencies, although nothing prepared me for the border crossing from Mexico back into the United States. They had machine guns and dogs and, it might have been my imagination, dogs with machine guns. The atmosphere was making me worry again and humour was my escape, “Hey Dad! How can you walk with that much heroin up your…” If looks could kill…

Despite this phobia of Customs and passport control, I continue to travel and pray that my mouth doesn’t make ill-timed attempts at comedy. One last question: do you think that holidaying Customs’ Officials feel guilty when walking through customs?

Soldiers in Operation Iraqi Freedom know how to make difficult decisions. Whether it’s calling for backup or choosing to push ahead, these troops make life-altering judgments on a daily basis, but many soldiers face the most difficult choice of their military career far away from the battlefield.

These troops must decide whether to pursue treatment for psychological trauma or remain undiagnosed. Many feel the military’s ‘medical hold’ policy makes this choice particularly difficult for returning soldiers. “Soldiers are being punished,” says Eric Gustuvson, the Director of the Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC), “The first thing they want to do when they get home is reconnect with family and friends. But if they admit they’re having problems, they can be flagged as a ‘medical hold’ and will be unable to go on leave.”

‘Medical hold’ patients must remain at a military hospital or in special barracks while receiving treatment and waiting for a medical board to determine their status, a process that takes several months in some cases, according to Veterans Affairs Executive Anthony Hardie.

Most soldiers keep this in mind as they go through the medical screening process at the end of their tour, according to one Iraqi Veteran, “You have the opportunity to talk to someone about your problems,” said the 22-year old reserve soldier, “But there’s the feeling you just want to get out of there. If you do say anything, you might have to stay for a month.”

Not all psychological cases receive ‘medical hold’ status. The military can release soldiers on ‘Temporary Disability or Retirement Leave’ (TDRL) to receive care at a Veterans Hospital near their home. However, neither option presents a smooth transition back to civilian life, since TDRL patients also face a cumbersome discharge process.

“Either way, you’re in limbo,” Hardie said. “You’re not fit to go back on duty, but you’re also not discharged from the military, so it’s pretty difficult getting your life back together.”

Most soldiers decide to forgo the whole affair by concealing their symptoms. One in seven returning soldiers suffers from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or other serious mental health issues, according to the New England Journal of Medicine, but only one quarter of this group seeks treatment.

According to Gustuvson, the number of undiagnosed cases will increase as soldiers serve longer terms of duty fighting urban warfare in Iraq. “There is no frontline in this war, every time you step out there you feel like there’s a target on your back. This sort of stress over a prolonged period of time can lead to a variety health problems.”

This issue does not just affect individual soldiers. Before the end of the war, more than 800,000 Iraqi Vets will complete the medical screening process. Gustuvson fears the social implications of thousands of undiagnosed soldiers, “The worse thing is to have undiagnosed mental problems; it leads to increased rates of homelessness, unemployment and suicide.”

The military is taking steps to prevent these issues. All returning soldiers must see a medical doctor and complete a written questionnaire to identify health problems. The form asks specific questions about psychological stress. One question reads: Are you currently interested in receiving help for a stress, emotional, alcohol, or family problem? This is a significant step considering the military’s record on psychological treatment.

The armed forces first recognized its responsibility to monitor mental health before, during and after combat in 1997 with the ratification of Public Law 105-85, although, according to Hardie, “There’s still a huge stigma against psychological disorders in the military that keeps soldiers from seeking the care they need.”

Hardie fought this stigma by preparing the Veterans Enhanced Transition Services Act of 2004 with Senator Russ Feingold, requiring military officials to provide more information and psychological counseling services to all soldiers - the Bill is currently in committee.

Whether returning soldiers will take advantage of these benefits remains uncertain, legislators have done little to address the influence of the ‘medical hold’ policy during the screening process. Last year, the Pentagon investigated the conditions at one ‘holding facility’ at Fort Stewart, Georgia, but policymakers did not discuss the facility’s impact on a soldier’s decision to seek treatment in the first place.

It’s not just the government and the military ignoring this issue. According to Gustuvson, the media shares the responsibility, “You only hear about the worst case scenarios while thousands of people go undiagnosed,” Gustuvson said.
Disrespecting a treaty

By Thanos Kalamidas

Last month, Jimmy Carter, the former President of the United States and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, wrote an article about the Treaty against the expansion of nuclear weapons. In his article, the former president shows his displeasure in the negligence of the U.S. Government and the other nuclear powers.

Iran and North Korea are the latest members of nuclear power club, whether we like it or not, admit it or not. The situation is irreversible. There is no control, especially with new smaller countries joining or wanting to join, and others that already have nuclear power but hide it, such as Israel.

Last year at a meeting of the countries with nuclear weapons a number of them, including Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, South Africa, Sweden and eight members of NATO, asked the meeting to do something about the Treaty. They wanted action against the expansion of nuclear weapons and those refusing to do so, or to use Mr. Carter’s words, “The tragic refusal of the USA, UK and France.”

It was so strong that the refusal of these three countries that even the preliminary negotiations failed. The amazing thing is that they refused to implement a treaty that they have signed and supported during the period of the Cold War. Another problem these countries and the treaty are facing is the recognition of nuclear power club, whether we like it or not; admit it or not. The situation is irreversible. There is no control, especially with new smaller countries joining or wanting to join, and others that already have nuclear power but hide it, such as Israel.

The United States have the biggest responsibility on what happens, since they were the first to torpedo the treaty by using ‘clever nuclear weapons’ in the former Yugoslavia and expanding their research with new weapons like the ‘bunker busters’ or the ‘small bombs’.

What will stop smaller countries ‘exploring’ if they haven’t already started the idea of a nuclear armoury? When India announced they have nuclear weapons, Pakistan invested everything to come up with their own nuclear missile after a few months. Most of all, with all the tension building up in the Middle East, what will stop an Arab country with all the financial resources to follow Israel’s example and build a nuclear armoury in secret?

The idea is not to have nuclear weapons at all and to go even further by not having weapons at all. I have lived the last forty years on the same earth like everybody else and I don’t have these Utopian illusions anymore. The threat of a nuclear accident is what terrifies me and, although it sounds naïve, it scares me that a few people know what all this energy can do. The only thing we have the ultimate power over this huge amount of energy they cannot simply control. The lack of control is the problem for its use even for peaceful reasons. Nobody knows what all this energy can do. The only thing we know is that it destroys the earth in every form, either as a weapon or as a nuclear waste.

It is more than obvious that realistically it has to be the United States to make the first big step and the difference by obeying the treaty they signed. The second step should be the USA, in cooperation with the UN, stopping the expansion of nuclear weapons, especially in the Arab world and forcing the rest of the countries to respect the certain treaty. Invest in alternative energy power research and they must do it here and now, if we want out kids to have some future on this poor planet.

Much is told in the European media about crimes in Brazil, but biopiracy is a crime that developed countries prefer to ignore. When it comes to the rainforest, the news is about its destruction, but nobody hears how hard Brazil has been fighting for its natural patrimony conservation.

On account of the Amazon’s rich biodiversity, smuggling birds and beautiful animals has been good business for the black market ever since the first Europeans invaded Brazil. The Indigo Macaw (Anodorhynchus leari) is under the threat of extinction; on the international market it can cost around $60,000. All this greed has been extinguishing some animals, such as the Little Blue Macaw (Cyanopitita spixii) that cannot be found in nature anymore.

The Brazilian government estimates that 38 million animals are captured every year in the country, from which just 10% are commercialized and the remaining 90% are left to die due to their poor transport conditions. Dealers do the cruelest things, anything to escape from the Brazilian police. Tamarins were once found being transported in thermos flasks and birds are transported in PVC tubes. To make the bigger ones fit, their chest bones are broken, which usually keeps them quiet during the trip, once the pain has paralysed them; monkeys are normally sedated with alcohol shots.

Biopiracy is not only the smuggling of flora and fauna, but it’s mainly the arrogation and monopolisation of the traditional population’s knowledge and resources. It’s stealing the rights from traditional populations over their resources. Many foreigners visiting Amazon count on native people’s courtesy and hospitality to learn their knowledge and then betray them - that’s what happened with Cupuacu (Theobroma Grandiforum), a fruit belonging to the Cacau family.

Cupuacu has been cultivated by natives as a primary food source for generations; it was used to produce a chocolate-like foodstuff known in Brazil as Capulate. Therefore, the trademark “Capulate” was registered in Japan. Mr. Nagasawa Makoto, who claimed to be the “inventor” of Capulate, was taken to court by a Brazilian non-governmental organisation not long ago. There are still companies in the E.U. and U.S.A. on the way, the English Body Shop is one of them.

Medicine created by Indians from frog’s skin and plants are registered by U.S. Universities, Canadians and Germans industries without permission, and without any benefit to the real inventors is biopiracy, it’s a crime. Why aren’t these crimes reported in European and North American newspapers?
By Asa Butcher

May 11th 1985 was the day football changed. Twenty years ago marks the first of three major disasters at football grounds that would result in double-figure death tolls. The fire at Bradford City’s Valley Parade resulted in the deaths of 52 people, while 211 supporters and police were injured and more than 70 were taken to hospital suffering from burns.

The accidental dropping of a cigarette in a polystyrene cup was thought to have caused the blaze, while the antiquated timber stand helped the fire spread quickly. Many fans died needlessly after it was discovered that the exits had been locked shut and, ironically, work to replace the old wooden building with steel cladding was due to start two days later.

Due to the coverage of the fire, events at Birmingham v Leeds on the same day received little column space. At that game, it was described as the worst public disorder in 27 years and the longest riot in soccer history. 125 were arrested, 200 injured, half being police officers, and one 15-year old boy died after a wall collapsed on him.

In the days that followed English football grounds were placed under the microscope. It emerged that Bradford’s main stand had never been fully inspected for fire safety and the fire service were powerless to insist on this, despite a wall at one end of it. Football grounds were placed under fire service scrutiny after the tragedy.

Football had barely recovered from the shock of Bradford when 18 days later another 39 were to die at Heysel. 45 minutes before Liverpool and Juventus were to kick-off the European Cup final in Brussels, a 6ft wall at one end of the stadium gave way during a stampede by Italian spectators after they were charged by a section of the Liverpool crowd.

In the aftermath of May 29th, fourteen Liverpool fans were found guilty of involuntary manslaughter and given three-year sentences, all English clubs were banned from playing in Europe for five years, but for Liverpool it was ten.

U.E.F.A. president Jacques Georges escaped criticism for allowing his organisation to select a, “Rotting, ramshackle stadium to stage their most prestigious event of the season” as one fan described it, although a U.E.F.A. official and senior policeman did stand trial for negligence, and Belgium’s Home Affairs minister was forced to resign.

One of the long-running problems was hooliganism, which had first come to prominence during the late 1970s and continued well into the 80s. A small percentage of disorder on the terraces was impulsive, while rival gangs, known as firms, prearranged most of the fighting. Politicians and journalists labelled football supporters with the same ‘hooligan’ reputation, even though a minority caused trouble. Primarily it was through tabloid representation and the sensationalist coverage that the so-called ‘English disease’ was believed to be so widespread. Headlines fuelled the moral outrage, creating unnecessary panic and prompted tougher controls, while this exaggerated portrayal of hooliganism only made things worse.

While the media was enflaming the moral panic, hooligans began to get organised by forming firms, such as West Ham’s Intercity Firm, Chelsea Headhunters and NUFC’s Toon Army, violence had stopped being mindless - it now had a plan. Being a member of a firm provided a status beyond their means and empowered them with a tribal mentality. Newspapers developed a hypocritical relationship with this new breed of hooligan that had emerged; one day they would condemn it and the next would publish league tables of who was worst, thereby encouraging firms to aim for the top position.

Columnists of the late Eighties, such as the Sunday Telegraph’s Auberon Waugh and Frank Johnson, were writing about an imagined nostalgia of how the game used to be much bigger but everybody was good humored, ‘life was hard but fair’. Crowd problems were all to prevalent during the ‘Golden Age of football’ but a small fraction of the press viewed conditions, which were part of growing up in their day, with terror.

Throughout 1984, fans from all divisions were becoming disillusioned and disheartened with the game as a whole. They decided to produce alternatives to the tedious matchday programme in an attempt to get their voice heard and prove their active participation in the club. By November of that year, journals and zines such as City Gent (Bradford City), The Pie (Notts County), Terrace Talk (York City) and Fingerpost (West Bromwich Albion) were being released each trying to restore their dignity and instigate change.

Within six months, football would be contemplating the true changes drastically needed to all aspects of the game.

By John Pederson

At my university, it’s literally a crime to not follow what’s happening in the athletic arena. If someone asks you what you thought of the game, and you can’t fire back, “Man, did you see the QB blitz in the third quarter—sick!” you better be ready for your own heckling section.

During my four years here at this Big-10 university, a title referring to our prestigious athletic conference, I’ve developed a habit of checking the sports headlines as soon as I pick up the paper. It’s not that I’m dying to find out what happened in last night’s match-up between Bucky (our fearless badger mascot) and the Wolverines from the University of Michigan, it’s just that I’m scared what might happen to me if I didn’t.

I used to resent this peer pressure. However, after four years of contrived athletic conversations, I’ve actually grown to appreciate the function of sports-jive as a pretext for more profound dialogue and interaction.

Now, don’t get me wrong, I enjoy watching athletic events (though no where near as much as I enjoy playing them), especially college basketball and professional soccer (that’s football to you Europeans). I just can’t seem to carry on about these events to the same extent as most of my peers. I didn’t realize the importance of small talk such as sports scores, until I spent a semester in Finland, where I found myself completely devoid of conversations regarding, sports scores, the weather, and the myriad of other trivial issues us Midwesterners use to fill any awkward silence.

At first, I was overjoyed. After years of pretending to care about pre-season camps, knee injuries and tournament match-ups, I could finally enjoy a conversation-break without frantically trying to remember the score of last night’s football game. However, these conversation breaks soon turned into silent stares and eventually public isolation in my new Nordic home. And public isolation got me thinking about the power of a pretext.

No matter how trivial, how mundane, or how contrived, a pretext (such as a sport score) can open up doors and opportunities far beyond learning the batting average of the top five all-time homerun hitters. But it is not until we genuflect to this threshold of humanity, offer a platitude to the universal quest of self improvement, that many of us feel comfortable to move onto other, possibly more profound, topics.

Yet, how much more profound can you get than using something as trivial as a sports score as a pretext to ignore differences of color, creed, sex, and religion to simply agree and connect on some level, no matter how contrived it may be. In this respect, I think sports-small talk represents the best of a human desire, that of connection. It has taken four years for me to realize this. But I’ll now be the first one to say, “Go Bucky!”
Greek football tragedy

By Thanos Kalamidas

A few months ago I wrote a small article about a Greek sports reporter who was attacked and nearly killed in Athens from ‘fans’ who didn’t like his reports. What I did emphasise then was that the reporters are out there to find the truth about everything, especially in sports where, over the last few years, there are many things going on, from fixed games to money laundering; every crime you can imagine.

The embarrassing thing about sports is that all the crimes found their way to be covered all the time. In other areas of life if somebody bribes, steals, sells or takes drugs they go to prison. In sports, the worst thing that can happen is two years out of every sports event.

It seems that there is a conspiracy with governments, institutions, media, supporters and fans. The only exceptions are some reporters who feeling the importance of their job, so they continue criticising and finding the truth in this swamp called the world of sports.

Talking about that will probably make everybody think that these things happen only in Greece. You mean nobody ever heard about fixed games? Doping in sports? When you fix a football game with all these people taking part in the popular football pools don’t you commit a robbery? What about all these tens of thousands who filled out their coupon? Didn’t they rob them? What about the latest scandals in Germany, Italy and South America? But again, we know about all these thanks to the reporters.

Violence in football. Who’s really behind it? The fans are just a manipulated group that builds empires. These fanatics are behind the big sales of the teams’ franchise and tickets. Push them more and you buy the scarves and t-shirts, the sponsor’s jerseys and the plastic flags. Everybody is happy. The fans fill the stadiums, wearing their team’s colours, waving the plastic flags and viewing the opposition team as the enemy, blaming the referees for everything...then some of them lose control and become criminals.

To scream is not enough; the next step is to punch. To be punched by ten maniacs is a crime - murder is not far behind. A Turk stubbed an English man a few years ago just because they were both supporting their national teams. The only ones who have a real motive behind all these are the people who control football, the owners and managements of the teams.

Filippos Sirigos, the Greek reporter who was stabbed a few months ago, was, according the police, a victim of these fanatics. Mr. Sirigos was a victim of the president of a team who uses mafia methods to dominate national football. The man gave those criminals the knife the same time he gave them the jersey with the team’s logo, the plastic flags and a private channel to ‘express’ their opinions.

The same man’s dislike of reporters doing their job indirectly armed a group of ‘fans’ with iron bars and chains, who then went to attack Kostas Nicolacopoulos, another reporter, in front of his wife and two children. Nicolacopoulos was the second victim in only a few months and the police is once again looking for the guilty from among the fans.

After the initial shock while reading the news, my next reaction was to laugh! They will probably find the guilty fans but the club in question is proud to have nearly a million members, so plenty more to replace them. The tragic thing about all of this is that there are certain fans are innocent; they really love their team and they thought that they were helping.

In my article in the last month’s Ovi, I wrote that there is only one solution for all this violence. Negate the teams who are behind this. It is not enough to abolish the fan’s clubs. Destroy the teams; eliminate them from the sporting map. It doesn’t matter about the history - my team is older than countries like Finland. It doesn’t matter. Something must happen here and now!
I am one of these people who like reading. I never pretended to be the ‘intellectual’ type reading only the cool and classics! On the list of my ten best books, there is Robert Ludlum with his bestselling *The Bourne Identity* and Colin Dexter with his *Last Bus to Woodstock* featuring an incredible Chief Inspector Morse.

Coming to my films’ list of the top ten, *The Godfather* is in one of the top positions, closely followed by the film *Heat*, with Al Pacino and Robert de Niro, and not to forget a fantastic Poirot in *Murder on the Orient Express* starring a unique Peter Ustinov. What so these books and films have in common? Crime, murder, mystery, agony and…and…

What’s wrong with us? Do you want me to expand my lists further? *The Name of the Rose* is in lists of books and films, philosophical, intellectual and murderous! After every analysis of the Bible, Umberto Eco has placed a dead body. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* starts with a framed crime and every part of my favourite Roman history ends with a murder. Actually looking at the list of my favourite films, the only film that doesn't have a crime is *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and that’s only because Liz Taylor talks all the time. Probably at some point, Richard Barton is thinking to commit a crime.

Every time I attend one of these ‘intellectual’ dinners there is somebody who gives a full analysis on one of the best books or films he or she has watched. However, in the end we all end up debating who was a better James Bond, Sean Connery or Roger Moore, while Pierce Brosnan has freshened up the competition lately.

Have you seen any of these paperback books lately? The back cover is covered by quotes: ‘The bestseller of the year!’; ‘The top crime thriller!’ ‘A master thriller!’ Do you see anybody signing these quotes? No! You see just the name of a newspaper or magazine, or a whole list of book critics and celebrities signing their names under all these ‘magnificent’ critics. Check any ‘serious’ book, do you see any quotes on the back of *Moby Dick*?

Why did bother to write all that? Because…oh let’s put it in a different way, come on guys, you can talk about Umberto Eco and Emile Zola’s books, Kaurismäki and Kurosawa’s films as much you want but, for god’s sake, come out of your bookcase. Bring out your hidden mystery and crime collection of paperbacks. Watch *Never Say Never Again* with friends and enjoy it.

By Thanos Kalamidas

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Come out of your…bookcase

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By Juliana Elo

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Anti-heroes 4ever

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In the beginning, there was the hero, the bad guy and the woman. The bandit was bad to the bone, dirty, with teeth missing. The hero was the nice guy, waxed hair, always ready to give his life to save a cat from the top of the tree, the one who came to save the woman. The woman, well nobody really cared about that poor creature’s feelings; she had to fall in love with the nice guy, marry him and live happily ever after. One day they realized that life wasn’t so black and white and, to the joy of the womankind, they created the anti-hero.

A good anti-hero is not there to save anybody they are “to die for”, but, still, they save the whole movie. *The Pirates of Caribbean* would easily have been forgotten if there hadn’t been Johnny Depp as Capitan Jack Sparrow. I can tell from all the writing on the wall in the women’s bathroom in the movies that anti-heroes are the most written about.

It doesn’t matter the age, gender or religion, everybody loves anti-heroes. Ask your grandma whom was she cheering to be with Scarlett O’Hara, in *Gone with the Wind*: Rhett Butler or…who was the other guy? Never mind, she will say Rhett anyway.

Tell me if your dad doesn’t think Clint Eastwood is “the guy”. He immortalised movies, such as *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, *A Fistful of Dollars*, *For a Few Dollars More*, while anti-hero characters immortalised him. Whom do you think your niece prefers: Prince Charming or Shrek?

Anti-heroes don’t want to put down roots anywhere, but we refuse to let them go. It’s been 43 years since Bond, James Bond, has kept coming back and is always warmly received by the public. The very first one, *Dr. No*, immediately gave Sean Connery’s career acclaim, and who among us isn’t waiting for the fourth Indiana Jones movie? We all want to believe when Lucasfilm say they are working on the next movie. We’ve been listening to that for 15 years now, but we still have hope.

What about Mr. Anti-hero himself, Mel Gibson? Three-times Mad Max, four times a Lethal Weapon, with a bonus like *What Women Want* and *Maverick*, he pleases both Greeks and Trojans.

We don’t need another hero, but anti-heroes are always welcome.

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Mummy for nothing

By Asa Butcher

The Mummy (1932)
Directed by Karl Freund
Universal Pictures

“Death, eternal punishment, for anyone who opens this casket,” declares the curse. One minute later the Oxford educated brain is acting like a child on Christmas morning and has ripped it open. Cue: death, eternal punishment and another great Universal Pictures’ horror movie… well, sadly no.

The Mummy was disappointing and so slow that you could see the actors decomposing on screen. My criticism does not stem from watching the hi-octane contemporary blockbusters, but experience with other great horror flicks from the same studio, such as The Invisible Man.

The title “It comes to life!” doesn’t quite go far enough. Yes, it comes to life but then disappears somewhere, never explained, for ten years. The anecdotes of Boris Karloff, star of Frankenstein, undergoing make-up for eight hours under the expertise of make-up artist Jack Pierce are well known, but the Mummy is only on screen for about three minutes at the start of the film; even then, you see parts of him.

If understatement and subtlety were the director’s intention then Karl Freund achieved this. I guess too much of the monster would resemble Invisible Man.

The tagline “It comes to life!” doesn’t quite go far enough. Yes, it comes to life but then disappears somewhere, never explained, for ten years. The anecdotes of Boris Karloff, star of Frankenstein, undergoing make-up for eight hours under the expertise of make-up artist Jack Pierce are well known, but the Mummy is only on screen for about three minutes at the start of the film; even then, you see parts of him.

My assumption that she has this inner-strength is due to the hero being named Frank, a name that doesn’t generate images of action hero. Frank Whemple (David Manners), son of the original archaeologist Sir Joseph Whemple (Arthur Byron), hours after his father dies he is chasing the girl again, he says dumb things, such as “Stuck in the desert for two months, and was it hot!” and at the finale he almost stops for a cup of tea before rescuing Helen.

One other redeeming feature of The Mummy is the amazing art direction. The sets are very authentic and the scene with the mysterious pool bubbling with dry ice is very realistic, especially in Black and White. The score can be irritating on occasion, although the refrain of Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake is particularly appropriate for the love scenes.

According to the documentary Mummy Dearest, many scenes were eventually cut from the final release and it seems the story was not really based on Egyptian mummies anyway. Forget the title and prepare yourself for a ‘love through the ages’ romance – just don’t miss the great moment Ardath Bey explains to Helen that, “She must be ready to face moments of horror for an eternity of love.” – You just want her to reply, “Hmm, maybe I’ll stick with Frank.”

Time travelling mummy

By Thanos Kalamidas

Watching a film made in 1932 in 2005 is like being in a time machine and that’s exactly how you should watch it. This film has nothing to do with Indiana Jones, MacGyver or the rest of the artificial heroes the TV era brought in the ‘80s and ‘90s.

Boris Karloff is an actor who came from the period of silent movies; he was one of the ones who survived the change when the speech became equally important to the theatrical movement. Still, in the same acting school the body language was important, which is why his movements are so slow.

The professors are rich. They wear safari suits in the morning, while the poor workers dig the ancient Egyptian graves, and they smoke cigars, wearing tuxedos in the evening, while they analyze the discoveries of the day.

In the first scene, three professors are arguing in front the box whether they should open it or not is a classic example. The director and the actors come straight from the silent movie era, they have no special effects and computers creating thousands of 3D tricks, they have no tens of stuntmen ready to catch the snake or the evil spiders. They have to build the horror and transmit it to the audience.

The scene is slow and might look childish, but Indy looks the same when he’s constantly escaping to the unknown or using dramatic laser tricks to build up the horror. Boris Karloff had to wear all the make-up himself, not a stuntman, and, with all the heat, he had to move carefully, since even make-up at that time was powder and would have easily been damaged with the first blow or sudden move.

The film had to be short. The only film from that period that wasn’t long was Napoleon lasting nearly one and a half hours; that’s why it failed. The director had one hour to build the horror and a romance. Horror was not enough to bring the audience into the cinemas. Why watch a scary movie, but people would watch a romantic story with scary parts. No complaint about that, even Indy has a girl in every one of his three movies.

When you watch this movie, watch it as a time traveller. Watch it the same way you read a classic. You don’t expect David Copperfield, after meeting Uriah Heep, to drive away in his Porsche.

If you are not happy with The Mummy, you can always watch the 1999 remake, directed by Stephen Sommers. However, 70 years later people are still watching Boris Karloff’s master class in acting, while Arnold Vosloo’s mummy failed at the box office despite using all the tricks they learnt from Indiana Jones.
Dear God,

There has been a question bugging me for a number of years now and it is obvious to ask you for the answer: Is there a heaven and hell?

The reason I ask is because I was once told by a Christian that it does not matter how pure your soul is, no matter how good you are to people, no matter how many little old ladies you help across the road, what it boils down to is the fact that you must believe that Jesus was your son – if you do then it is angels, clouds and harps, if not then don’t forget your sunglasses.

I have never understood the concept of heaven and hell; actually, a month on Earth is long enough for a free sample of each, but my reasoning is that mankind just cannot deal with a guilt-free existence, or is it just certain individuals who want feel the rest of us to join them in their fear of the fiery depths of Satan’s abode?

In one of those countless email forwards I receive, there was a philosophical statement: A conscience is what hurts when all of your other parts feel so good. Damn, that is so right, yet so wrong. Here you have a situation where you are participating in an action, or inaction, that is bringing euphoria, tingles of cheeriness and a smile wider than a mile, then, suddenly your conscience comes into play, as Eminem and Dr Dre once sang.

Almighty One, you presented mankind with the greatest gift of freewill, but you failed to mention it came with a catch the size of Venus – nice work by the way. Depending on your upbringing, your religion, your schooling, even the era you were raised in, will depend on how much sin you commit in the eyes of the Lord, ok, in the eyes of your priest, teachers, parents, local law enforcement officer, because that is what it comes down to.

Being caught is the greatest sin because that makes it real: the aspect that religions love to…hold on, back up a bit. It is a sin because religion says so, well what if you are atheist, no humanist, no just a regular guy doing what he feels is right everyday.

He loves his wife, his family, friends, does the best he can, tells strangers that they dropped money, holds doors open, is just nice, not because of a fear of going straight to hell, but because he has been raised to respect the world and those on it. Sure, he slips up sometimes, he doesn’t like everybody and there are individuals who he considers human scum, but what is anybody going to do about it?

I am not going to go on a rampage; I just talk shit behind their back and put my faith (religious word) in the probability that their comeuppance will be so huge that the media will cover it.

Christianity is the one that irritates me the most, perhaps because it is the religion that I come into contact the most. Christians are hypocritical, they preach forgiveness but can’t do it themselves. Calm down, I know, this isn’t a theological analysis, just a letter.

Right, Mr L.G. Almighty, you don’t need to affirm my faith in my personal beliefs by answering my begging, err sorry, prayers. I am content with my life. I know that heaven is right now, my daily life because those that I want to be with are with me.

Hell, well, I hope that is what some of those so-called Christians feel when they look in the mirror or are alone in the dark because the emotional damage they have personally caused is not humane in the slightest.

Asa Butcher