

# EUROZINE

## The 20th European Meeting of Cultural Journals

### *Changing places (What's normal, anyway?)*

Sibiu, 21–24 September 2007

#### THEMATIC OUTLINE

Under the heading "Changing places (What's normal anyway?)", this year's Eurozine conference will address the challenges facing cities and states as well as art, literature, and the media as the need for change meets the urge for normality.

The phrase *changing places* can refer to the act of moving to another (geographical and/or symbolic) location, but also to the act of altering a specific (geographical and/or mental) space. In the major conference sessions, featuring intellectuals, writers, and scholars from different fields, with different geographical and cultural backgrounds, two aspects of the main theme will be addressed separately.

#### **Normality: the obscure object of desire?**

The point of departure of the first session is the **concept of normality**. All over central Europe, new stability, freedom, and security seem to be accompanied not only by a hope for prosperity but also by a longing for "normality". Not only as something to be experienced, but as something to be recovered. The hope that the "new Europe" can endure obviously goes with a certain longing for myths of the past and for visible, reassuring symbols. But what is this precious normality? Is it simply to be like everyone else? If so, "everyone else" probably refers to western Europe rather than to the eastern neighbours. Is it to leave concepts like "transition" and "change" behind? But is normality today not constant change (flexibility) rather than stability and "ordered states"? Not limiting the discussion to a post-communist context, this panel will address questions ranging from politics to culture.

#### **Writing in exile**

The second session focuses on **literature in exile**. Writers fleeing from fascist or communist dictatorships in the twentieth century have come to form our concept of the experience of writing in exile. However, authors have been forced or have chosen to go into exile throughout literary history, from Ovid, Tu Fu, and Dante to James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and Orhan Pamuk. Furthermore, political oppression is not the only reason for an author to go into exile; aesthetic and social considerations are often important when decisions are made about leaving a certain cultural context – or staying. This panel provides an opportunity to historicize and contextualize the diverse experiences of writing "out of place".