



## Eurozine News Item

### The republic of letters? Cultural journals in a European public space

*The 17th European meeting of cultural journals  
Tallinn, May 14–17 2004*

The 17<sup>th</sup> European Meeting of Cultural Journals, will be held in Tallinn, May 14–17. The meeting is organized by Eurozine and its Estonian partner *Vikerkaar*. More than 60 editors and intellectuals from Europe's leading cultural journals will participate in this event and the programme includes seminars and debates as well as an exhibition displaying journals from more than 30 countries.

The theme of this year's meeting is *The Republic of Letters? Cultural Journals in a European Public Space*. Cultural journals as we know them are the children of the Age of Reason. The 18<sup>th</sup> century was the period when the ideal of an international public sphere or the Republic of Letters took shape among intellectuals – a notion of an imaginary space where free thinking men and women could exchange ideas. In reality the Republic of Letters functioned primarily as a network of private correspondence, but was soon developed into the institution of public journals. Recent decades have witnessed heated discussions about the crisis of intellectuals, the colonization of the public sphere by corporate interests, and even the end of the Enlightenment project. At the same time new cultural trends have emerged which seem to revive the notion of the Republic of Letters. For example, the new technology of the Internet has appeared, enabling even more rapid forms of communication and discussion networks that function without the intermediary figure of the editor. Despite the technical differences, there is a sense of familiarity across the centuries.

The conference *The Republic of Letters? Cultural Journals in a European Public Space* will check the relevance of the Enlightenment vision of the Republic of Letters. We hope to make visible the historic roots of both pan-European intellectual networks and cultural journals, and at the same time connect past, present and future. It is our working hypothesis that the current position of the cultural journals could be taken as a telling indicator of the present state of the Enlightenment project: the ideals of free circulation of ideas, tolerance, openness to differences and the education of a wider public.

Today, the European integration project has made the discussion about transnational spaces for cultural and political debate acute. Can there at all be a common Europe without a pan-European public sphere, where potentially common values and ideas can be formed and transnational political institutions can find their legitimacy? The public space or sphere, *die Öffentlichkeit*, is by no means constituted by media alone, but newspapers, journals, television and

radio (digital or not) are among its most important mani-festations. In this context, the lack of a European public space is manifest. Not so long ago, Timothy Garton Ash confessed that if he wants to reach "the widest European intellectual audience, the best way is to write an essay in the *New York Review of Books*." Is this the only option?

The ideal of a "transgressive", intellectual media space is clearly visible in the everyday practice of today's cultural journals. Here, political, philosophical and aesthetic ideas are spread from language to language, within and without transnational publicistic networks. However, their insight might be great and their outlook wide, yet cultural journals are small. They constitute an important (counter)part of the public sphere, but they are too limited in outreach to form the broad and solid basis of a discursive space in which a European identity can emerge or be constructed. Or are they not? Is there really an in-built conflict between the main-stream media and the cultural journals or are there opportunities for co-operation? How can transnational media contribute to the construction of a public space that crosses national borders, and more specifically, what role do the cultural journals have in this context? What role could or should they play? Do we need new forms of internationally launched media or is it rather the established national ones that are best suited to build the basis for a transnational space for aesthetic, cultural and political debate? Finally, what can we learn from historic and contemporary attempts to create transnational cultural forums?

The theme of the 17<sup>th</sup> *European Meeting of Cultural Journals* provides an opportunity to discuss such questions on historical, theoretical and practical levels. Taking place in Tallinn, two weeks after Estonia and nine other countries have joined the EU, it will contextualize both the European debate and the debate about Europe.

## PROGRAMME

### Friday May 14

Afternoon: Arrival and registration  
*Reval Park Hotel, Kreutzwaldi 23, Tallinn*

19.30 Grand Opening, reception with refreshments  
*Reval Park Hotel*  
Welcome address by Carl Henrik Fredriksson (*Eurozine*)  
Inaugural speech by Märt Väljataga (*Vikerkaar*)  
Presentation of conference participants

### Saturday May 15

11.00–13.00 Conference session 1  
*Poska Villa, J. Poska 15, Tallinn*  
**The Republic of Letters**  
Moderator: Marek Tamm (Editor, *Vikerkaar*)

*Speakers and panellists:*  
Pietro Corsi (Editor in Chief, *Revista dei Libri*, Italy; Professor at Paris I and the EHESS, France)  
"The Rise and Fall of Cultural Magazines"

Bernhard Peters (Professor at the University of Bremen, Germany)  
"Ach Europa – Features of the European Public Space and Ambiguities of the European Project"

13.15 Lunch at *Poska Villa*

14.00–15.30 Eurozine internal session

*Poska Villa*

**Eurozine – past, present and future**, network discussion  
Eurozine Partners

16.00–18.00 Conference session 2

*Poska Villa*

**Cultural Journals in a European Public Space 1**

Moderator: Märt Väljataga (Editor in Chief, *Vikerkaar*)

*Speakers:*

Carl Henrik Fredriksson (Editor in Chief, *Eurozine*)

"Europe Talks to Europe? – a Short Introduction"

Jacqueline Hénard (Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris; producer at *Radio France*)

"European Public Space – the Hard Core of a Wobbly Concept?"

Thierry Chervel (Editor, *Perlentaucher*, Germany)

"Europe Loses Ground – Cultural Media from the Perspective of the Internet"

19.30 Dinner at *Karika Restaurant, Kuninga tn 3*

## Sunday May 16

11.00–13.00 Conference session 3

**Cultural Journals in a European Public Space 2**

*Poska Villa*

Moderator: Carl Henrik Fredriksson (Editor in Chief, *Eurozine*)

*Speakers:*

Andrzej Rapaczynski (*Project Syndicate*; Professor at Columbia Law School, USA)

"Can Cultural Journalism Cross National Borders?"

Marju Lauristin (Professor at the Department of Media and Journalism, Tartu University, Estonia)

"Changing Relationships – Cultural and Political Public Spheres during Transition"

Marie Luise Knott (Editor in Chief, *Le Monde diplomatique*, Germany)

"That was my Beresina – Producing an International Monthly of French Origin in German"

13.15 Lunch at *Poska Villa*

14.30–17.00 Conference session 4

**Cultural Journals in a European Public Space 3**

Discussion

Moderator: Carl Henrik Fredriksson (Editor in Chief, *Eurozine*)

20.00 Closing dinner at *Reval Park Hotel*

**Monday May 17**

Morning: Departure

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