



Eurozine Review

Le Monde diplomatique (Berlin) points the way for a free press; *Esprit* is all about Sarkozyism; *New Humanist* asks what Dawkins and Hitchens mean for humanism; *Critique & Humanism* busts the populist spectre; *Edinburgh Review* airs the Scottish–Polish spirit of exchange; *Arche* deconstructs the myths of Belarusian history; *Kulturos barai* plots the future of Lithuanian music; and *Wespennest* brings out the hidden affirmation of negation.

Le Monde diplomatique (Berlin) 11/2007



In a media world with one eye on the bottom line and the other on the official line, it's getting harder to publish or broadcast anything that doesn't promise huge sales and attendant profits, and that doesn't say or show what is approved. But it's still possible. In a [compelling article](#) (originally published in the English language edition of *Le Monde diplomatique*), legendary American publisher [André Schiffrin](#) points the way for a free press.

"Newspapers and book publishers that belong to independent, not-for-profit foundations or cooperatives may be the best way to preserve political and cultural autonomy. This solution might have saved such major publishers as Le Seuil (Paris) and Einaudi (Milan) from being sold to conglomerates whose primary objective is profitability. For centuries publishing averaged an annual profit of 3–4 per cent; the conglomerates want at least 10 per cent, if not 15 per cent, which changes the nature of what can be published."

While acknowledging that Jürgen Habermas' recent call for governmental intervention to guarantee a plurality of views to the public has not been widely accepted in Germany ("which has unhappy memories of government control"), Schiffrin is convinced by the principal idea.

"Many small publishers and magazines are struggling bravely against difficult economic situations, and may in the end lose. There is no reason why their limited resources should not be helped by legislative action. [...] Conglomerate control has dangerous political and intellectual consequences for media. There is still time to control and reverse this global threat."

Turkey: In a "Letter from Istanbul", staff writer [Niels Kadritzke](#) reveals some highly interesting facts and figures about Turkish society; for instance that the number of Turkish women wearing the headscarf has gone down in the last few years, from 72,7 per cent in 1999 to 63,5 per cent in 2006.

This, however, does not seem to reduce the fears of many critics of the Erdogan government's plans to lift the ban on the headscarf in universities. The "group pressure" coming from a traditional Islamic environment could, the critics claim, impel young women to adopt religious clothing against their will.

The [full table of contents](#) of *Le Monde diplomatique* 11/2007.

Esprit 11/2007



What does Sarkozy stand for? ask the editors of *Esprit*. They respond with a whole issue devoted to the French president, his appearance in the media, his promises, his strategies and tactical moves, and his politics.

"First and foremost", the editors write, "Sarkozy, an unequalled political entrepreneur, is less of a neo-liberal ideologist than a two-sided personality, juggling between the State and the enterprise, and in business he values the virtues of work and of profit. Second, Sarkozy is a child of television. He has learned to organize his political life in a way a show master orchestrates his talk shows."

"Most importantly, however, is that Sarkozyism is reversing the classical models of the elites. Excellence is no longer modelled on those literary figures from the École Normale Supérieure, nor on the engineers of the big administration, let alone on the "ENArques" [those famous graduates of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration]. Rather, excellence is modelled on the executives and managers that come from the business schools, dealing with the realities of the world and of money."

In "A runner's world", Georges Vigarello looks at Sarkozy's physique: "The physical body keeps moving, it can't help running forward with a cell-phone to one ear. But then the president's official body, which is supposed to evince the perennial nature of the country's institutions, is well short of convincing. For good reason: for all the control he may wield over the political and media agendas, finding his own place in history is a challenge for Nicolas Sarkozy."

[Michael Foessel](#) and [Olivier Mongin](#) find Sarkozy's politics rooted more in his stage managing success than in any specific strategy. "His own personal success comes with a rejection of failure and of anyone unable to succeed." And [Marc-Olivier Padis](#) shows how — next to potential government pressure on the agendas of French journalists — it is also the president's ubiquity that challenges their professional standards.

The [full table of contents](#) of *Esprit* 11/2007.

New Humanist 11–12/2007



New Humanist magazine, published by the London-based Rationalist Association, undertakes "to support and promote humanism and rational inquiry and oppose religious dogma, irrationalism and bunkum wherever it is found". In its latest issue, Eurozine's new partner fulfils its intentions robustly and self-critically, offering interpretations of the public debates on religion and freedom of speech from the humanist and atheist standpoint.

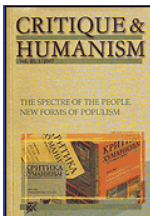
In the lead article, philosopher [Richard Norman](#) discusses what Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*) and Christopher Hitchens (*God is Not Great*) mean for humanism. The two leading voices in the "new atheism" are not coy about their desire to generalize about religion, Dawkins arguing that moderate religion is the breeding ground for extremism and Hitchens claiming that "religion poisons everything". Norman is uneasy with this generalization and distinguishes between blind, irrational faith and the readiness to believe on grounds that are not yet conclusive.

If it is a generalization to argue, as Dawkins does, that all religious people are irrationalists, then it is circular to argue, as Hitchens does, that religious people who campaign for peace and justice are misguided humanists and that secular dictatorships are de facto theocracies. "Humanism is more than atheism", writes Norman, "it is about putting humanist beliefs and values into practice. [...] And that's impossible unless we're prepared to cooperate with [...] those for whom the values are inseparable from a religious commitment".

Free speech: The publishers of the Danish cartoons, writes [Tzvetan Todorov](#), were either naïve in failing to understand the consequences of acts in an age of instantaneous communication, or provocative in delivering a pretext for the further exclusion of Muslims in Europe. "The media today wield enormous power which, unlike other forms of power, does not originate in the will of the people. [...] To put it in the terms of Max Weber, it is not enough to act in the name of an ethics of conviction; it is an ethics of responsibility that is needed, one that considers the probable consequences of acts."

The [full table of contents](#) of *New Humanist* 11–12/2007.

Critique & Humanism 23 (1/2007)



Bulgarian journal *Critique & Humanism* brings out a new issue entitled "The spectre of the people. The new forms of populism". Articles deal with the historical dimensions of Bulgarian populism and its contemporary forms, alongside populism in Europe as a whole.

Antony Todorov begins his analysis with a caveat: that "accusations of populism have become the new populism". Moreover, the argument that populism implies a failure to understand the true interests of the electorate "posits the existence of an insurmountable gap between elites and the people". This management view of government assumes that competent elites have an automatic mandate to decide on behalf of an incompetent electorate.

Yet, writes Todorov, "the politically effective strives for social harmony" and "is not necessarily economically effective." Todorov's critique can be read in the light of post-socialist governments' preference for free-market policies over those of the welfare state. "The labelling of leftist projects as populist simply because they succeed in mobilizing public energy is common practice. [...] Without utopias, however, politics would probably turn into a simple management technique in which the political is reduced to the technical."

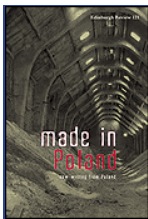
Populism old and new: Svetoslav Malinov brings the history of populism to bear on the situation in Bulgaria. The first victory of populism in Bulgaria, he argues, was the rejection of the conservative constitution by liberals shortly after independence in 1879. In the contemporary period, it has been the rhetoric of former tsar Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, who became Bulgarian prime minister in 2001, that set the precedent for the rightwing populism currently purveyed by Volen Siderov, leader of the Atka party.

Despite Siderov, xenophobia is not, historically speaking, a dominant feature of Bulgarian populism. Instead, populism in Bulgaria feeds off two phenomena: "a pure hatred of political parties" and the constant emphasis in Bulgarian public discourse on an alleged contrast between ordinary people and the political elite. This goes so far as to make the elite subservient to the people, an attitude for which Malinov coins the term "radical demophilia".

Also to look out for: [Ivan Krastev](#) on the rise of [democratic illiberalism](#); Jacek Kochanowicz on the [Right Turn in Polish politics](#) since 2002; and [Jacques Rupnik](#) on [how](#) the current climate of populism in central Europe affects the region's relationship with the EU.

The [full table of contents](#) of *Critique & Humanism* 23 (1/2007).

Edinburgh Review 121 (2007)



In light of the "Polish invasion" into the UK since the EU expansion, the Edinburgh Review is focusing on the already well established tradition of exchange between the UK and Poland.

Hannah Adcock's starting point is the establishment of the Polish School of Medicine in Edinburgh in the dark days of 1941. But long before this "the spirit of mutual respect and co-operation was well established. Adventurous Scots had been arriving in Poland since at least the fifteenth century." The exchange did not just consist of Scots peddlars to Poland. Higher up in society the bonds were strengthened by marriage between the two countries' nobility.

Between 1466 and 1684, Poland offered an ideal of religious tolerance. Later, Daniel Davison, who was born in Poland, endowed a stipend for scholars to go abroad and study divinity. This was expanded upon through Robert Brown who stipulated in his will a fund allowing one Polish and one Scottish student, each a Protestant, to study at Edinburgh University.

The Polish students to follow at the end of the eighteenth century studied the arts or medicine rather than divinity, taking the focus away from the Protestant

cause and paving a natural way for the establishment of the Polish School of Medicine during the war. Today the Scottish–Polish heritage at the university is furthered through a fundraising project to establish a school of emergency medicine; particularly fitting in light of the way many medical students utilized their skills on the front line during the war.

Also to look out for: Pawel Huelle's moving story *The Bicycle Express* centred around the days of the shipyard demonstrations in 1980 in Gdansk; Agata Maslowska's story *Twiddling*, about the disabled Lucy who has taken refuge in a world of silence and writing; and pictures of 1960s neon signs in Warsaw, photographed in stark b/w by Ella Chmielewska.

The [full table of contents](#) of *Edinburgh Review* 121 (2007).

Arche 9/2007



Arche editor Valer Bulhakau deconstructs myths of Belarusian historiography, among them that the Lithuanian Grand Duchy was the forerunner of the Belarusian state; that the Belarusian language was the official language of the Grand Duchy; and that Belarus was the first of the eastern Slavic states to commence upon the process of nation–building. The "demonization" of the Russian impact upon Belarusian nationalism is unjustified, says Bulhakau; he also challenges the assumption that eighteenth century Polish nationalism serves as the role model for contemporary Belarusian nation–building.

EU trade sanctions on Belarus: "Will the EU trade sanctions help the Belarusian trade unions?" asks Jaraslau Kryvoj. There must be a better understanding of the differences between economically–motivated labour rights violations and those that are politically–motivated, writes Kryvoj, and compares the effectiveness of the EU trade sanctions on Belarus with sanctions on other countries.

The destruction of Hrodna: Hrodna in western Belarus, near the borders with Poland and Lithuania, was the least damaged of Belarusian cities during WWII. Yet now the authorities are "reconstructing" the city to make it more "attractive" to foreign (Russian) investors. The historic centre, home to a number of medieval and baroque churches, has already suffered structural damage in the course of a makeover. Next in line is the so–called "new world", where a number of early twentieth century constructivist buildings are earmarked for demolition and a new sports centre is planned for the site.

Given its heritage, Hrodna is a centre for the national conservative opposition in Belarus, which is comparing the "reconstruction" to the communists' destruction of Minsk, Vitebsk, and Brest. Sciapan Sturejka, in his article "Boorishness in stone. Hrodna under attack by Soviet identity", views the reconstruction through the prism of cultural globalization and the correlation between legacy and identity. Though his main conclusions are pessimistic, Sturejka argues that Hrodna's identity cannot be erased, and only through dialogue with Soviet–minded authorities can civil society save the city.

The [full table of contents](#) of *Arche* 9/2007.

Kultūros barai 10/2007



Ten years ago, composer and critic Sarunas Nakas noted that "Lithuanian musical consciousness seems to lack memory". This analysis is still valid, writes Daiva Tamosaityte in Vilnius-based journal *Kultūros barai*, as she tries to describe the position of contemporary Lithuanian music.

In the last two decades, since Lithuanian independence, there have been many attempts to break free of routine academic orthodoxy and to gain a foothold on the world music market. In the course of this development, the Lithuanian musical identity that was shaped in the twentieth century threatens to get lost.

Transition or transitions? "Incomplete regime change", "interrupted revolution", "geo-political paradigm shift" ... Accounts of the transition in eastern central Europe have tended to be fragmentary, with particular features emphasized to the exclusion of others. In an [encyclopaedic essay](#) (first published in the Hungarian journal *2000*), political scientist [Elemér Hankiss](#) pieces together a mosaic of interpretations of transition.

What's normal, anyway? Editor [Almantas Samalavicius](#) reports from the [20th European Meeting of Cultural Journals](#) (another summary [here](#)). *Kultūros barai* also publishes [Slavenka Drakulic's](#) closing speech from the Eurozine conference. In [Drakulic's text](#), the most intimate of spaces — the bathroom — is turned into a stage for a tragic mix-up comedy in which normality is mistaken for paradise.

Also to look out for: Art critic Kestutis Sapoka poses the somewhat enigmatic question: "Will contemporary art disappear?" His polemical answer: Yes, hopefully! — at least "the notion of contemporary art as modified modernistic vanguard or post-modern reduction".

The [full table of contents](#) of *Kultūros barai* 10/2007.

Wespennest 149 (2007)



"When radicalness becomes nothing but a mere pose, and resistance is instrumentalized to legitimate the system, then the meaning of critical negation is lost", writes Walter Famlar, editor of the Austrian journal *Wespennest*, in an issue on the ambivalence of affirmation. This is especially so, if critique has lost its ambition to provoke change.

In "The world needs bad kids", Isolde Charim traces the changing meaning of the notions "consent" and "affirmation" which, for a long time, were considered to be the prerequisites for a functioning society. Only with the 68-movement a paradigm-change took place, she writes. Negation was transformed into a privileged mode of resistance.

Charim shows how this can lead to very paradoxical phenomena. In 2002, for instance, the proposal to allow cheating in Austrian schools was debated publicly. Good cheating, thus the official line of argument, is hard work. Why

not use the productivity of rule-breaking as a resource?

"Today, we do not need a mass of people taking orders, but first and foremost 'entrepreneurs of their own self', she writes, "autonomous subjects who organize their lives responsibly, self-dependently, and efficiently. Today, this rebellious act becomes extremely important. Society, economy; they don't need simple affirmation to function. Rather, they need negating energies which at the same time threaten them." Resistance, she concludes, is integrated into the system as independence, as is cheating as the acquisition of competence and problem solving ability.

Also in the issue: Parallel to Hitchcock's idea of the perfect crime, [Ilija Trojanow](#) looks into a question which should bother all authors: how to plan the perfect plot. And [Will Barnes](#)'s article "[Capital climes](#)" in translation.

The [full table of contents](#) of *Wespennest* 149 (2007).

This is just a selection of the more than 60 Eurozine partners published in 33 countries. For current tables of contents, self-descriptions, and subscription and contact details of all Eurozine partners, please see the [partner section](#).

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