



Eurozine Review

Sodobnost pinpoints Slovenia's place in Europe; *Samtiden* grabs football by the balls; *Merkur* winds up feminists; *Mittelweg 36* reads Shalamov against Solzhenitsyn; *Gegenworte* brings in the consultants; *Vikerkaar* talks to an anti-anthropologist; and *Passage* reads the dust jacket.

Sodobnost 11–12/2007



Sodobnost's new issue on "Europe and Slovenian culture" could not be more topical. On the 1 January, Slovenia took the helm of the European Union. It is the first post-communist country to chair the EU council.

In the leading article, Tone Persak, president of Slovenian PEN, asks what has changed since Slovenia joined the EU three and a half years ago. Even though works by Slovenian authors such as Drago Jancar, Tomaz Salamun, Boris Pahor, and Evald Flisar are now more widely translated than ever, these authors don't appear to be regarded as representatives of Slovenian literature. Rather, they are seen as individual European writers whose success outside Slovenia is down to the cosmopolitan nature of their writing.

A narrow focus on national identity, challenges of globalization, and bureaucratic funding systems make the position of Slovenian culture increasingly problematic. Andrej Blatnik, fiction editor of Cankarjeva založba, Igor Brlek, director of the increasingly important Student Publishing House, and Ursula Cetinski, director of the Mladinsko Theatre, all seem to agree that Slovenia is yet to take full advantage of the wide multicultural space it has joined.

Inside or outside? In "[Peripheries and borders in a post-western Europe](#)", sociologist Gerard Delanty notes that Europe is taking not just a post-national, but also a post-western shape. The relation between the inside and the outside is complex and ambivalent; while often exclusionary, the periphery can also be viewed as the site of cosmopolitan forms of negotiation. Food for thought for the Slovenian presidency that over the next six months will have to deal with the question of whether the Balkan countries should be given a "European perspective".

Don't miss! On the occasion of Slovenia's EU presidency, Eurozine has [compiled](#) articles offering an often critical insight into Slovenian culture and

politics, including Peter Rak's "Portrait of a moment in the life of a nation", previously published in *Sodobnost*.

The full table of contents of *Sodobnost* 11–12/2007

Samtiden 4/2007



In her article "With the flag on one's chest", Mette Andersson writes about the relationship between sports and race in Norway. "All are white in Norwegian elite sport, but some are whiter than others, and you're never whiter than when you win." As Norway is getting an increasing number of top athletes who do not fall into the visual category of blond and blue-eyed, a foreseeable trend has developed. They are revered and pressed to the collective Norwegian chest whenever medals are won. But when they have poor results, or are on the receiving end of drugs-charges, they could hardly be more foreign, and their country of origin is highlighted as an explanation. Andersson feels that Norwegian sports' relationship to visible minority groups is on par with those of the 1970s in the US. "Norwegian elite sport still has a long way to go before it can live up to its own ideals of being a colour-blind arena".

"You can give the girls a ball to play with, but never BALLS". In quoting a Norwegian blogger, Gerd von der Lippe, in her article "Female football players don't have balls", highlights the still primitive attitudes living and breathing within Norwegian football and its rhetoric. She illustrates how football is the last area where men cling to a primitive, super-macho identity in which the male body is the norm and the female will forever be inadequate.

Kjetil André Aamodt, retired alpine skier with eight Olympic medals and five world championship gold medals, voices his doubts about the nanny-tendency implicit in the new regulations issued by the Norwegian Sports Union (NIF) in May 2007, restricting the participation of children in organized sports. Though intended to protect children from undue pressure at a too-early age, he asks whether it doesn't undermine the children's chances of reaching top-level internationally if the power to make decisions about the level of participation is taken away from parents and children alike.

Also: Kari Steen-Johnsen and Dag Vidar Hanstad look at the power game in organized sports, as headed off by the NIF; Arild Stavrum shares how he gained insight into how to score goals; Arve Hjelseth is dissatisfied with the glorification of Brazilian football; and, to briefly get away from sports, Göran Rosenberg's article "Back in the ghetto" in Norwegian.

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Merkur 704 (2008)



Rainer Paris returns to the pages of *Merkur* with an [article](#) on "craziness", which he defines as "an addiction to moral self-aggrandisement."

Wherever an opportunity arises, outrage cuts in. Although it is difficult to maintain [...] Anyway, sooner or later, opportunities to demonstrate outrage run out [...]. Craziness begins to bore of itself. It only half believes in the ideology to which it prescribes, but also believes that it can't believe in anything else. The top priority becomes to constantly repel doubt via relentless activism.

Paris distinguishes between craziness and bedazzlement (bedazzled people are blinded by their delusions, crazy people are very attuned to their options); between craziness and bloody-mindedness (bloody-minded people can't be brought from their fixations, crazy people take every opportunity to foist their ideas upon others); and between craziness and embitterment (hating everyone and everything, embittered people above all hate themselves, while crazy people hold their craziness for a virtue).

It finally emerges what Paris is really getting at: feminism (perhaps a touch of bloody-mindedness here — Paris wrote on the same subject in *Merkur* 649/2003).

Ultimately, craziness comes up against emotions and the felt sense of reality. Only crazy people have rewired their emotional worlds. Everyone else senses intuitively the price they must pay for ideological conversion. [...] Love, eroticism, sexual tension are, above all, a game [...]. Feminism is the abortion of playfulness. [...] Try to imagine lovers' talk in which the word 'gender mainstreaming' crops up!

Also: [Hubert Markl](#) ponders the evolutionary basis of culture; Roy F. Baumeister reveals why you find more men than women at the very top of societies — and the very bottom; and Gunnar Heinsohn explains why German population policy is absurd.

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Mittelweg 36 6/2007



Michail Ryklin writes on Varlam Shalamov, author of *Kolyma Tales*, the no-frills account of the Gulag and counterpart to Solzhenitsyn's palatable, epic version. The immediate distinction between the two authors, writes Ryklin, is stylistic: Solzhenitsyn called Shalamov's fiction "a world without loneliness, without the expression of authorial subjectivity, without conventional fable, without convincing literary characters". "What Shalamov considered to be his innovation, a fundamentally new way of writing, combined with real experience of the camps, was in Solzhenitsyn's eyes a shortcoming."

Politically, the two authors differed too: Solzhenitsyn's analysis of the Gulag was inseparable from a condemnation of the institutional structure to which it belonged and an idealization of pre-revolutionary Russia. For Shalamov, the Revolution held a messianic promise snuffed out by Stalin. Solzhenitsyn berated Shalamov for never having distanced himself from the Soviet system; important for Shalamov, however, was not "categories under which his heroes were subsumed, but personal existential decisions made in the face an impersonal and inhuman system".

Today, Shalamov is as relevant as ever, writes Ryklin:

Contemporary Russians are the product of the breeding of 'the new human being' that took place during the Soviet period. Having got used to this role [...], they no longer want to think about their ancestry. Shalamov's main theme, however, is precisely the question of [...] what it was that made people 'Soviet beings'. [...] Given that the Soviet model continues to be employed for political and propaganda purposes [...], an unfavourable climate exists for the cultivation of a readership for texts such as *Kolyma Tales*.

Further articles: [Valentin Gröbner](#) points out that, when it comes to the trade in human organs, there is much in the modern world that is pre-modern; and [Jan Philipp Reemtsma](#) on *Echolots*, the final collection of Walter Kempowski (1929–2007).

The [full table of contents](#) of *Mittelweg* 36 6/2007

Gegenworte 18 (2007)



Expert advice or educated guess? The current issue of *Gegenworte* asks many questions and gives many answers to the topic of scientific consultancy, which is increasingly in demand in an ever more complex world, but which, according to Wolfert von Rahden, still needs traditional tools such a "solid analysis and knowledge mediation".

Ortwin Renn takes the example of bird flu and the accompanying horror-stories and re-assurances as an example of politics' use of scientific consultancy to identify and quantify contemporary risks, as well as to come up with effective counter-measures. Attempts at "risk management", in other words. Can science serve this function and will its suggestions be heeded even if they are uncomfortable? According to the author, three factors — till now inadequately fulfilled — are necessary for fruitful scientific consultancy: consensus on competing claims on truth; connectivity (here, the theories of Luhmann or Habermas offer possible explanations for why politics so often ignores what it has itself initiated or financed), and the sanctioning of this alliance between politics and science. What is needed is discourse at the level of knowledge, reflection, and design.

The political use of ethical expertise in the machinery of politics is also dealt with by Alexander Bogner and Wolfgang Merz. They localize this use "between expert disagreement and amateur consensus" — not dishonesty or fraudulence, but fragmentation, recombination, and reconfiguration are the

methods used.

Tim B. Müller turns his gaze westwards and finds that intellectuals in the US have an awkward status, though not as bad as Bourdieu makes out when he accuses them of treacherously exchanging low-ranking positions for "better" roles in politics. Müller sees in scientists' "political self-domestication without loss of radicality" the American intellectual's "high-art of political engagement".

Also: Katja Patzwald's investigation of the former German government's instrumentalization of labour-market tsar Peter Hartz and other experts; and Green Party leader Renate Kunast's admission that consultancy does not always offer answers and that as a politician one must ultimately rely on oneself.

The [full table of contents](#) of *Gegenworte* 18 (2007)

Vikerkaar 12/2007



In *Vikerkaar*, anthropologist Maurice Bloch talks in interview on anthropology's role outside the university. Disinterested in anthropology as such, he advocates anthropologists' public engagement — as mediators between ecologists and local populations, for example. Ecologists "are largely motivated by a general sort of ideology about preserving forests but what they really want is to have large reserves in places like Madagascar [...]. European and North American countries carry out a kind of blackmail, which they call swapping debt for nature."

Anthropologists might also get involved, says Bloch, with "grand theories" à la Richard Dawkins. In recent decades, anthropology has taken a self-reflexive turn — and departments are shrinking as a result. But rather than losing accumulated knowledge, anthropologists could bring it to bear on matters of general interest: "When anthropologists join that debate it may well be that their role is one of caution. Because we have learned that easy answers don't work."

Writing in exile: [Zinovy Zinik traces](#) the history of the shadow as metaphor for exile through Evgeni Shvartz's play *The Shadow* back to earlier fables by Hans Christian Andersen and Adelbert von Chamisso. The sum effect: a web of intermeshed émigré biographies and fictions spanning two centuries of political change.

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Passage 57 (2007)



Normally, dust jackets, paper quality, typography, and blurbs are not considered worthy of the attention of critics and literary scholars. Not so in the new issue of Danish journal *Passage*, which focuses on aspects of books situated outside the text.

Alongside a Danish translation of Robert Darnton's classic 1982 essay "What is the history of books?", *Passage* offers a range of unconventional and refreshing attempts to put the dominating idealistic concept of the "text itself" into perspective.

Jan Bäcklund, one of the most multi-talented and original essayists currently around in the Nordic countries, takes a closer look at some of the intricate mechanisms at play in the relation between collectors and books. His surprising conclusion: all attributes that arouse the collector's desire are already present in the antiquarian book catalogue, which he calls "*the* form of post-authoritarian literature". But is this really the end of traditional, materially-based bibliophilia?

Conducting a close reading of the dust jackets of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* and David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, *Passage* editor Tove Rye Andersen shows how neglected genres such as the blurb and the flap presentation can decide if and how a work of literature is recorded in literary history.

Ole Nyegaard reads the confident prefaces of Vladimir Nabokov, in which the Russian writer persistently created new contexts for his texts while simultaneously admonishing and disarming the reader. As when he ridiculed Freud and discouraged any attempts to put his books on the Viennese couch:

As usual, I wish to observe that, as usual (and as usual several sensitive people I like will look huffy), the Viennese delegation has not been invited. If however, a resolute Freudian manages to slip in, he or she should be warned that a number of cruel traps have been set here and there in the novel.

Also to look out for: Simon Frost on the material circumstances around the publishing of George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch*, and Jacob Stougaard-Nielsen on how Henry James tried to influence his own canonization via the design of the famous New York edition of his collected works.

The [full table of contents](#) of *Passage 57* (2007)

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