



Eurozine Review

Le Monde diplomatique (Berlin) warns against Kosovan independence; *New Humanist* wishes all a happy Darwin Day; *Glänta* goes underground; *Multitudes* discusses soft and hard activism with Toni Negri; *Esprit* bids farewell to democracy as we know it; *Kulturos barai* says sustainability must come first in Vilnius; *Le Monde diplomatique* (Oslo) asks what Norway should do with all its oil; *Revolver Revue* considers engaged filmmaking; *Ord&Bild* anthologizes Russian short stories.

Le Monde diplomatique (Berlin) 1/2008



It is only a matter of time before the US and most European countries recognize Kosovan independence. Writing in *Le Monde diplomatique*, Jean–Arnault Dérens asks what such a move would achieve. In Vojvodina, the autonomous region in the north of Serbia that represents almost half the country's population, the majority is Hungarian–speaking. Should it therefore become part of Hungary? Dérens warns that the endeavour to regulate problems in the Balkans by introducing new territorial divisions would be dangerous for the whole of Europe. Other solutions need to be sought that meet the requirements of the ethnic groups involved.

India: Palagummi Sainatr explains how a switch from sustenance farming to growing cash crops for the world market is not as attractive as it seems: the market price for Indian vanilla has fallen from around 80 euros to 1.50. Price–distorting agricultural subsidies in the US and Europe, writes Sainatr, have a direct bearing on suicide rates among India's agricultural population: up to 130 000 suicides are committed in rural India annually. For most Indians, globalization means no more than globalized living costs. Income remains Indian.

"Trickle–up journalism": Danielle Follett on the impact of a small radio station in the US and its daily one hour–programme, *Democracy Now!* Soon after its foundation in 1996 it gained its reputation as a critical and independent programme with serious debates; parts are translated into Spanish and acquired by 150 radio stations, most of them in Latin America.

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New Humanist 1/2008



Darwin Day, on 12 February, celebrates the 199th birthday of the father of evolution theory, whose *The Origin of Species* is still the focus of controversy between science and religion. Everyone agrees that Darwin didn't get everything right, writes Caspar Melville in *New Humanist*:

"But what he was most mistaken about was just how right he was. The recent discovery of the fossil of *Indohyus* — a small deer-like creature which is an ancestor of the modern whale — provides the 'missing link' between whales and their distant land-dwelling ancestors, rebutting the claim of creationists that it is simply too far-fetched to imagine that a creature which started life hairy on land could end up smooth-bodied in the oceans. This is just one of the recent discoveries that serve to confirm Darwin's grand theory rather than to undermine it."

To commemorate Darwin, *New Humanist* has brought him back to life and invited four leading scientific commentators to join him for dinner, discussing developments in the study of biology since Darwin's death 125 years ago.

Watching Attenborough: Historian John Van Whye decided to bring a copy of the TV series *Life on Earth* to this fictional dinner date. David Attenborough's wildlife documentaries have attracted massive audiences around the world, but they have sometimes failed to endear themselves to academics and intellectuals. In [interview](#), [Laurie Taylor](#) discusses evolution and intelligent design with the man who has brought us life on earth, in the freezer, under the oceans, and in the undergrowth.

Defending Slavoj Zizek: [John Clark](#) reads Slavoj [Zizek](#) as a moral philosopher, concentrating on the concept of "the Act". When "stand-up philosopher" Zizek calls for "repeating Lenin" or, as in his recent book, praises Robespierre's defence of terror, some observers might be tempted to ask whether his entire intellectual oeuvre is not just some kind of act. No, says Clark. "It's not just a pose; it's a position."

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Glänta 4/2007



Did life really originate in the warm puddle imagined by Darwin? Or rather in deep-sea hydrothermal vents? Writing in Swedish *Glänta*, microbiologist Karsten Pedersen presents another theory: life emerged underground.

The underworld of microbes is largely unexplored and will remain so for a long time to come. But why should we care about what goes on way down below our feet? It's not just about the origin of life on earth or whether life is possible on Mars, says Pedersen. Underground microbes also have a bearing on such topical issues as atomic waste and climate change.

Glänta's focus on the underground originates in part in an interdisciplinary research project at Gothenburg University and the articles published cover a

wide ground. While editor Göran Dahlberg visits cities below the surface and other places where people actually live underground, Anders Johansson goes to Kiruna, where the people living on the surface are having to adapt to what happens down below. Kiruna — the northernmost city of Sweden and once listed as the largest city in the world by area (it has only 20,000 inhabitants) — must be relocated to counter mining related subsidence.

Also: Ana Valdés remember stories and dreams about escape tunnels from her time as a political prisoner in Uruguay; Mats Rosengren juxtaposes contradictory interpretations of Palaeolithic cave art; Lis Raskin sees the New York subway as a gigantic Panopticon; Dariush Moaven Dust uses Hegel, Sophocles, and German terrorism to get to the logic behind the political underground of modern societies; Stellan Vinthagen on file sharing and the future of underground resistance; and Sanjin Pejkovic takes on nationalist ideologies via two films from the former Yugoslavia in which the underground plays a major role — Emir Kusturica's *Underground* and Srdjan Dragojevic's *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*.

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Multitudes 31 (2008)



Toni Negri, in [conversation](#) with the editors of an issue of *Multitudes* devoted to "The micro-politics of the city", discusses the significance of urban space for new forms of opposition: "Something has shifted and organised itself in the city — this was evident in what happened in the Parisian *banlieues* — and this is something fundamental." The city, he says, is where the "political diagonal" intersects the "biopolitical diagram" — where people's relation to power is most pronounced.

Negri's interlocutors are involved in exploring "soft" forms of activism, urban projects that bring together people on micro, neighbourhood levels. "Since the workspace is no longer an entrance into politics, the neighbourhood provides access to another form of political practice," says [Constantin Petcou](#), co-founder of the "atelier d'architecture autogérée". The interdisciplinary network for urban research and intervention runs the ECObox in La Chapelle, Paris. In a separate article, Petcou and his collaborator Doina Petrescu explain how the project, in which eighty local families have access to a 2000 metre square plot given over to allotments and workshops, represents an appeal for the "political recognition of social priorities in the management of metropolitan space."

"Everywhere, artists of a new genre are making use of this opportunity spaces provide to enter into dialogue, to experience the possibility of democracy," writes [Anne Querrien](#). "Not a 'representative democracy', as there is no election of a representative of any sort, nor 'participative', as it is not about participating in a decision to be taken by a superior, but a democracy in which one encounters the other in their sameness and difference. The garden is made for this new urban game: a material pleasure, circumscribed, tangible."

"All of what you are telling me is a fascinating field of experimentation," says Negri in the [interview](#). However he is critical of "soft" forms of activism and prefers rupture and revolution over accumulation and gradual change:

"I don't believe that we must limit resistance to small, micro–units. Moreover, I have an understanding of history that is full of leaps, discontinuities, ruptures, an accumulation of these 'soft' things of which you speak, but which, for me, absolutely does not exclude that these may lead to a threshold from where one must break harshly to create an event, something new."

The [full table of contents](#) of *Multitudes* 31 (2008)

Esprit 1/2008



In *Esprit*, Pierre Rosanvallon gives a brief history of democracy in Europe, the US, and the non–occidental world since the Enlightenment. Democracy, as we understand it now, has undergone several transformations. The transition of the term from its antique meaning of anarchy and utopia, through to being a practical complement to the more theoretical sovereignty of citizens, to a synonym for equality, freedom, and participative citizenship, took about two centuries.

Now that the delusions of "exporting democracy" have become self–evident, it is time to look beyond the naive assumptions on which military occupation has been established and instead focus on the very notion of a democratic "model", writes Rosanvallon. Admitting that we are apprentices in democracy would supply the potential for a more open political dialogue. As yet, we are still far from having constituted equality — we don't yet possess the good called "democracy".

Pilgrims' progress: Luc Chantre compares three tales of *Hajj*, dating from the Middle Ages through the colonial era to the present day, showing the historicity of the ways in which pilgrimages were made, perceived, described, and valued. He points out the endurance of the bazaar economy and the importance of trading among Muslims from all over the world, along with the enduring function of the mosque in regulating life inside the *ummah*.

Albert Camus: Benjamin Stora describes Camus's struggle to maintain a balance between Nobel glory and his stance on the Algerian war of independence; and Guy Samama pits Sartrean engagement against Camus's "art of depiction".

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Kultūros barai 12/2007



Vilnius — European cultural capital in 2009 — should, like all European cities, cultivate principles of sustainability writes Algimantas Grazulis in *Kultūros barai*. Improvements in Vilnius's communications system are badly needed, especially in the city's historical heart. Yet they should strictly adhere to the demands of ecology, architectural conservation, and other considerations regarding life–quality.

Will the government do the right thing and pass legislation stopping underground garages being built in Vilnius's old quarter?

Populism: "One does not necessarily have to believe in communism and 'the withering away of the state' (Engels) to be cynical about representative democracy and disgusted with politicians, political parties, and everybody in power". Thus writes [Svetoslav Malinov](#) in an [article](#) on populist politics in Bulgaria first published in Bulgarian journal *Critique & Humanism*. It is one in a series of texts translated with the support of the Next Page Foundation (Sofia) in a project aiming to promote translation between eastern European languages. All translations will be published in Eurozine.

And finally: Vladimiras Laucius recommends a democracy driven by an elite "ready to sacrifice themselves for a noble goal"; and Mikas Vaicekauskas on an eighteenth century Lithuanian bestseller by the monk Mykolas Olsevskis.

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Le Monde diplomatique (Oslo) 1/2008



Truls Lie, Editor in Chief of *Le Monde diplomatique* (Oslo), has sold the paper to publishing chain Vårt Land. In his farewell editorial he outlines the background and establishment of the Norwegian version of *Le Monde diplomatique*, especially focusing on its watchdog role and critical analysis of the political situation, not just in Norway but in Europe and the world. And he emphasizes the

importance of bringing a French perspective into an otherwise English based media-world.

The paper will continue in the same vein under the leadership of Magne Lærø and Remi Nilsen. Truls Lie will remain with the paper as a film critic and journalist.

As for the Norwegian voice, Lie's front-page article, "Cosmopolitan choices", the question of Norway's global role is posed. In a conversation with the Norwegian minister of foreign affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre, he discusses how Norwegian oil-resources could be used to influence totalitarian regimes. But, says Støre, "a reputation as a stable and predictable supplier is what we should aim for, it gives more political credibility over time, and a stronger political footprint."

The US war on terror: [Kim Bredesen](#) discusses the circumstances around the ratification and implementation of HR1955 — "Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act". Ratified without debate in the House of Representatives in Washington DC, it is likely to go through in the Senate as well. "Civilian disobedience and other political expressions can now be punished as terrorism in the US", writes Bredesen

Film: Stephane Delorme writes about Paul Verhoeven's new film *Black Book*, which for some reason will not be screened in Norway, while Emmanuel Burdeau and Antoine Thirion talks to the filmmaker about his career; Morten Harper looks at the influence of climate change on animated films; and Arnstein Bjørkly makes a detailed reading of Ian McEwan's *Atonement*. He recommends: see the film first, then read the book!

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Revolver Revue 69 (2007)



The new issue of *Revolver Revue* (Prague) features an interview with filmmaker and activist Martin Maracek. Among his most acclaimed films are *Hry prachu* (2001), which captures the events surrounding the meeting of the IMF and the World Bank in Prague in 2000, and *Zdroj* ("Source", 2005), about the broader context of oil extraction in Azerbaijan. Asked whether film can induce social change, Maracek points out that *Zdroj* succeeded in winning compensation for villagers through whose fields an oil pipeline had been laid. Nevertheless, Maracek is measured about film's transformative potential:

"I tried to make *Zdroj* very simple, so that it would be understandable even outside of a festival environment, so that it could return to the places in which it was filmed. Hopefully, we have succeeded in this to some extent; but, in any event, the real social consequences are hard to measure. Society changes without films, as well as with them."

Also: Viktor Karlik remembers the late poet and critic Andrej Stankovic; Bettina Kaibach documents Isaac Babel's little-known play *Maria*; and John Crowe Ransom, in a essay written seventy years ago, warns of proprietary interests in literature departments.

The [full table of contents](#) *Revolver Revue* 69 (2007)

Ord&Bild 5/2007



Guest editor and translator Kajsa Öberg Lindsten has turned *Ord&Bild* into a 200-page anthology of contemporary Russian prose that should be obligatory reading for all Swedish publishers.

More than fifteen years after the fall of the Soviet empire, Russia is still looking for its identity. Traditional phenomena such as orthodox religion and proclaimed patriotism clashes with western consumerism and longing for true democracy. The resulting confusion is clearly visible in many of the short stories in Kajsa Öberg Lindsten's selection, comprising a dozen writers.

When the protagonist of Roman Sentjin's "The stranger", an emerging writer, returns from Moscow to the rural village where he grew up, this perplexity takes the form of biting cold alienation: he is no longer at home anywhere.

Born in 1947, Nina Gorlanova is not a young debutant. In her "Letter to Putin" the clash and the continuity between old and new Russia are put against a background of a long life in both worlds. This is a story that contains just about everything: centralism and Putin cult, regional and social conflict, the continual terror of the security police and intellectuals' engagement for political prisoners, media critique and religion, past and present: "During communist times the stars were red. Now they're light blue — just as before the revolution..."

Arkady Babchenko was probably the first one to turn the experiences as a soldier in the Chechen war into literature when he in 2001 published his first short story, "Ten chapters on the war". His literary snapshots of the chaos of a war lacking both meaning and aim are still absolutely essential to anyone who wishes to understand today's Russia.

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