



Eurozine Review

L'Homme calls the religious Right "the bastard offspring of the sexual revolution"; *Osteuropa* asks why Russians long for the stability of the Brezhnev era; *The Hungarian Quarterly* pictures Hungary's historical role in Europe; *Index on Censorship* speaks freely about cyberspeech; *dérive* follows the urban filmscript; *Host* points out the gaps in young Czechs' reading lists; and *Merkur* sees religion pitted against the religion of art.

L'Homme 2/2007



In the last fifteen years, the American religious Right has turned sexual politics on its head, writes Dagmar Herzog in *L'Homme*. Liberal politicians and the media are now on the defensive: they have lost all conviction in the face of anti-abortionist arguments and are paralysed by the knowledge that opposition to same-sex marriage was *the* mobilizing factor for Evangelists in the re-election of George W. Bush in 2004. It is not only the Democrats' shared responsibility in the Iraq war that has disoriented them, writes Herzog, but also their ineptness in matters of sexuality.

Her thesis: the religious Right can be understood as the bastard offspring of the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. In order to have a *raison d'être*, they need a hyper-sexualized culture and a decrease in homophobia. Despite the shrillness of its condemnation of these trends, the Right has learned much more from the sexual revolution than the liberal centre and, in fact, is far from prude:

"The concrete advice for increasing sexual pleasure in the Christian sex-handbooks are in no respect lagging behind their secular equivalents. A central message of the religious Right to their supporters is 'Evangelicals have more fun' [...] A bumper sticker popular in the South in the early 1980s saying 'Real men love Jesus' expressed a sense of defensive self-assertion. Now that the Republicans have attained power on so many levels, such a slogan is superfluous. These days it is liberals who are considered pathetic weeds."

Also: Andrea Ellmeier reviews literature on gender and the formation of the "citizen consumer"; Daniela Koleva examines conventions governing how Bulgarian women tell their life stories; Christina Lutner takes a medievalist approach to demonstrate the interaction of biology and culture.

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Osteuropa 12/2007



"Do you take yourself for something better?" In an article exploring the relevance of the Brezhnev era for an understanding of contemporary Russia, sociologist [Boris Dubin](#) recalls how conformity and habit were the defining features of everyday life in the latter years of the Soviet Union.

Admonishments such as the above were typical in a society in which, to avoid losing everything, people lowered the standards that they expected of themselves and others. This so-called "prison syndrome", along with a two-tiered system of public facilities and a thriving shadow economy, created an all-pervasive atmosphere of ambiguity and distrust.

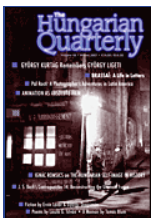
Social fragmentation was the price Soviet citizens paid for the thaw during the Brezhnev era. Functionaries, weary of Stalinist purges, held a live-and-let-live attitude and tolerated a degree of national, cultural, and intellectual leeway. People welcomed the newfound stability and forgot how they used to live in fear of their lives and those of their relatives.

In contemporary Russia, "stability" has made a comeback. "Political technology" produces a supposed continuity between the present system and the "golden age" of the Brezhnev era. "The fragmentation of social forms", writes Dubin, "sets in motion mechanisms that periodically create mythologized images of the whole [...]. Whereby the 'whole', as an original and complete entity, is always already lost."

Heroes: historian [Heiko Haumann](#) describes how "heroes" are associated in national memory with freedom and hope. Haumann studies artistic representations of the Polish rebel leader Tadeusz Kosciuszko (1746–1817) and the Russian general Aleksandre Suvorov (1729–1800) to understand eastern Europe's predilection for failed, longsuffering, yet proud heroes.

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The Hungarian Quarterly 188 (2007)



New Eurozine partner, *The Hungarian Quarterly*, analyzes the four main periods of Hungarian history. Hungary's role in Europe has been coloured by its geographical position at the heart of the continent. Having been a guardian of the Christian faith, warred with Turkey, unified several peoples in the Austro-Hungarian empire, seen the end of said empire, and coped with Soviet rule, it is now defining its place within the

EU. Ignac Romsics aims to "characterize the political thinking that attended each of these four major historical epochs; the place that the country's political and intellectual elites envisioned for the Hungarian people among the other nations of Europe".

Photography: One of Hungary's legacies is its contribution to photography, producing such names as Brassai, Moholy-Nagy, Kertész, Capa, Kepes, Munkacsy, and Hervé, who largely left Hungary to find fame abroad. With the

collection, re-discovery, and purchase of letters and photographs from various sources, Károly Kincses has put together a detailed and colourful picture of the life and career of Brassai (1899–1984). Júlia Papp covers early Hungarian photography with her article about Pál Rosti (1830–1874).

In memoriam: "Obituary, speech of mourning? For me he's more alive than ever." György Kurtág writes about his lifelong friend, the composer György Ligeti, who died on 12 June 2006. In this moving speech he goes back to their first meeting, and outlines the composer's musical development as well as giving anecdotes from a life well lived.

Also: Poems by László G. István. "They are not thinking of women or of heaven, / but banging open greased-up wrappers / with mayo weeping through white napkins; / they bite off more than they can chew / while food-gauze comes like Velcro from its wounds. (From the poem *Burger King*.)

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Index on Censorship 4/2007



In a themed issue on "Cyberspeech — free expression online", [Gus Hosein](#) worries about the technological changes that are currently turning the Internet into a data goldmine for governments that want to keep track of their citizens: "It is almost as though freedom and flexibility is being designed out of the Internet, where previously they were essential. It is being built in a way that enhances opportunities to identify and profile, which are the key ingredients of censorship."

"While 1990s' censorship laws tried and often failed to compel service providers to differentiate between users and block access to specific resources, companies have since then created the very same techniques for their own benefit. So when governments return with a new censorship initiative, it won't be so easy for us all to argue that the Internet just isn't built that way."

And this is not just about the Internet. As digital devices become more and more integrated in people's lives, the footprints left behind lead straight into the "real world", notes Hosein:

"Under despotic regimes, journalists and dissidents would have to report on every individual he or she spoke to on any given day; wireless logs will now also disclose locations and times of arrival and departure of everyone everywhere. This is not your parents' version of censorship."

Trading free speech: Journalist and former Google employee Jon Garvie is not convinced by the new approach, advocated by both business and government, that sees censorship as a fair trade barrier. To remove free speech from the realm of human rights and instead make it subject to the shifting motivations of international trade negotiators could lead to a dangerous process of depoliticization. "If the debate on censorship is allowed to begin with trade interests and then works outwards, material prosperity will come at the price of political repression and a forsaking of moral responsibilities."

Also: Bloggers and activists write on cybercensorship in Belarus, Iran, China, Ghana and Ethiopia.

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dérive 30 (2008)



Film is unthinkable without cities, point out the guest editors of an issue of Austrian journal *dérive* dedicated to "cinematic cities". Film theorist David B. Clarke has commented that in American or European cities one gets the feeling that what one is seeing has come straight from the screen. The difference is that the screen of the European city is the canvas of a painting, while the screen of the American city is that of the cinema.

While beating reality has always been Hollywood's great aim, German or Austrian filmmakers prefer urban peripheries, social margins, and the everyday as tableaux for "real life". Examples for this thesis are provided by Kathrin Kuna in her analysis of the "Berlin School" of filmmaking, including Christian Petzold's highly acclaimed *Yella*. She finds a bleak postmodern urbanism that provides a perfect backdrop for social portraits and coming-of-age dramas.

Vienna noir: Filmmakers in postwar Europe were already using the city as an allegory for threat, immorality, and deviance, [writes Karin Moser](#). In postwar Austrian cinema, bombed-out Vienna provided the backdrop for films portraying returning soldiers as victims. International productions such as *The Third Man* and *The Red Danube* upset this myth and made Vienna the location for a new drama: the Cold War.

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Host 01/2008



In an interview with Jaroslava Janáčkova, professor emeritus at the Faculty of Philosophy at the Charles University in Prague, *Host* asks why young people are so reluctant to read nineteenth century literature despite their teachers' encouragement. The fact that only two authors have reached the top ten in the 2007 reading surveys is puzzling considering the influence of the nineteenth century on our

own times and how the literature of the period forms the basis of modern Czech literature.

The miracle of poetry: Belarusian poetry is experiencing an upswing. Aljaksandr Fyaduta considers how the role of contemporary poetry in Belarus is reflected by the way poetry printed in the country's first national weekly, *Nasha Niva*, was experienced at the turn of the twentieth century. That there was any poetry at all in Belarusian was seen as a miracle and as evidence of the strength of a language with no deep literary tradition.

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Merkur 2/2008



Last year's debate in the cultural pages of the German press over Gerhard Richter's new stained-glass window for Cologne cathedral was all about one religion's critique of another, writes [Wolfgang Ullrich](#) in *Merkur*. When the bishop of Cologne, Cardinal Joachim Meisner, cast doubt on the suitability of Richter's artwork for an ecclesiastical space, long-serving critic Werner Spies decried Meisner's "denial of artistic freedom" and "contempt for the modern".

Meisner had said that: "The visionary, the prophet, the artist requires illumination in order to perceive the inner light of things, to hit the right note, to make mute things sing." Yet Spies's own interpretation of Richter's window bore all the hallmarks of a "secular metaphysics", one that can be traced in modernity's promotion of abstract art to the status of "pure transcendence".

"The Cardinal was opposing the presence of another God in his church. His critique of Richter derives [...] from the first commandment, which defined Christianity as monotheism. It is precisely *because* the Cardinal believes in the transcendent dimension of art that he has to take it seriously as an opponent and a competitor — and has to reject it as soon as it purports to be divine, or even when it is only interpreted as such."

The limits of artistic freedom? The German supreme court has recently decided in favour of the two women who brought a lawsuit against the novelist Maxim Biller, in whose novel *Esra*, they say, they are all-too recognisably portrayed. Predictably, critics say the embargo of the novel is an infringement of artistic freedom based on a crass confusion about the nature of fiction.

"However, to attribute such an extraordinary status to art is too easy", writes Remigius Bunia. "To call for an absolute realm of exemption is even totalitarian, for the reason that it privileges those who live within it — in the case of literature, the mass media. This totalitarian danger, this risk of Western fundamentalism, exists not despite but because of the fact that free speech, a free press, and artistic freedom are the highest good in our society."

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