



Eurozine Review

Arche looks warily at the Belarusian thaw; *Magyar Lettre* gets to the heart of the central European city; *Kulturos barai* criticizes the culture of groceries; *Fronesis* takes counsel on the "unhappy marriage" between feminism and the Left; *A Prior* looks at monuments that won't melt into air; *Revista Critica* sees the political potential of bio-art; *Critique & Humanism* analyzes neophilia and neophobia; *Dialogi* lashes out at the Slovenian press; and *Glänta* is missing links.

Arche 3/2008



Reverberations from the [Danish Cartoon Crisis](#) also reached Belarus, where, in the context of the Lukashenko regime's assault on press freedom, the controversy took on another meaning altogether. In November 2007, Alyaksandr Zdzivizhkou, head of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party, was sentenced for inciting racial and religious enmity after reprinting the Mohammed cartoons in the newspaper *Zhoda* (see Rashed Chowdhury in [Arche 1–2/2008](#)). Then, in February this year, Zdzivizhkou and four other prisoners were freed after the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on the Belarusian authorities to release political prisoners. Is this indicative of a European–Belarusian rapprochement?

George Dura, of the Centre for European Policy Studies, puts these developments into the perspective of Belarusian foreign policy following the country's fallout with Russia over energy supplies at the end of 2006. Rising gas prices have opened a major hole in the country's budget, prompting Lukashenko to announce a "new foreign policy" that involves exploring options for trade with the EU.

Yet the recent resumption of "business as usual" between Russia and Belarus (not least, Belarus's agreement to host Russian nuclear weapons in response to the US missile defence shield in eastern Europe) suggests that Lukashenko is playing Europe off against Russia. Despite the apparent thaw, the EU's impact on freedom of speech in Belarus remains limited, reports Dura. Only a small fraction of the Belarusian population has watched the EU-backed independent television station RTVI or listens to European Radio for Belarus, broadcasted from Poland. Inside Belarus, the EU has been unable to provide substantial support to the independent press, which has no assured access to the state-run distribution service.

Also: Uladzimir Mackievic criticizes the "education reform" outlined by the deputy head of the Lukashenko government in the state newspaper *Sovyetskaya Byelorussiya*; and Andrej Vaskievic and Andrej Carniakievic

trace how 25 March, the anniversary of the proclamation of Belarusian People's Republic (BPR), came to be the national holiday of Belarusians in interwar Poland.

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Magyar Lettre 68 (2008)



Magyar Lettre features a selection of essays on the central European city today, the highlights of the essay competition "Essay-it" held in 2007. Be it in the bars of Budapest, struggling for existence in semi-derelict buildings (Márk Áron Éber, Dóra Szegő); on Szmulki Square in Warsaw, where the downwardly- and upwardly-mobile rub shoulders (Maria Lipnicka); or in a gallery beside a Tesco on the outskirts of Bratislava (Levente Polyák) — all authors attempt in various ways to define the experience of the central European city in transition.

The highlight of the selection, however, is Jan Stolba's rueful elegy to a Prague that he never had a chance to get to know:

"Restaurants are lit up, theatres are playing, travel agencies offer escape, bookshops are overflowing with books. But it still seems that we have somehow missed the time [...] when the city would really begin to belong to us and we in return would confidently be willing to belong to it. We are still just a little absent, just as our city is absent. The centre filled up in promising fashion — and then with a silly apologetic smile, it tottered and spilled the contents to the sides; suddenly, the centre is everywhere, the centre, the prayed-for centre will not let us breathe. The centre: a half-litre bottle of water for a whole CZK 60. We leave, ashamed, to thirst elsewhere."

Also to look out for: N. Kovács Tímea on the Ujmecsekajja district of Pécs, a housing project including the seventeen-storey "pocket skyscraper", constructed in 1955 to house the families of the thousands of workers at the local uranium mine; Drago Jancar on James Joyce's venture with Slovenian and Romanian partners to set up a cinema in Dublin based on the Volta Cinema in Trieste; [Brigitte Döbert](#) on "[Sarajevo Retro](#)"; and [Ivaylo Ditchev](#) on the [fluid city](#) of Sofia.

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Kultūros barai 4/2008



Who has the power to shape urban space in Vilnius? Apparently, owners of shopping malls and supermarkets, writes editor [Almantas Samalavicius](#) in a harsh critique of Lithuanian urban planning policies. During "the period of dependence", Lithuanian urban space was largely affected by Soviet policies of urbanisation and industrialization. Today, writes Samalavicius, nihilism and ignorance makes enormous damage to both Lithuania's capital and those provincial towns that until recently had managed to maintain their original historical structure: "Through fifty years of dependence we obviously missed some important social lessons."

Literary perspectives: Eurozine's [series of essays](#) providing an overview of diverse literary landscapes is currently being published in several countries all over Europe. *Kulturos barai* presents it as a contribution to the ongoing Lithuanian "Reading year". In the first instalment, Eurozine's editor-in-chief [Carl Henrik Fredriksson](#) outlines the thoughts behind the series: "Critical and public discussion of foreign literature in newspapers and magazines has traditionally served as a source of information and guidance not only for a broad readership, but also for "people in the business", for publishers and authors. When that discussion disappears, or loses its perspectives and becomes one-sided, this has consequences for the literary institution as a whole", writes Fredriksson.

The first essay published by *Kulturos barai* focuses on Estonia. While the Great Estonian Novel has yet to be written, [writes](#) poet and critic [Märt Väljataga](#), the range of fiction in Estonian is sufficiently wide to serve as an indicator of the hopes and fears, anxieties and obsessions, of post-communist Estonia. From the autobiographical to the historical realist and allegorical, Estonian novelists have successfully developed a variety of styles to respond to post-Cold War experience.

Bronys Savukynas in memoriam: On Saturday 20 April, just as this issue was published, Bronys Savukynas, renowned Lithuanian linguist, translator, and long-standing editor-in-chief of *Kulturos barai*, [died in Vilnius](#). Savukynas's contribution to Lithuanian intellectual culture was considerable.

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Fronesis 25–26 (2008)



Has feminism today been kidnapped by the Left? Or, on the contrary, has it turned its back on questions of capitalism and class struggle? Swedish *Fronesis* looks at the tendency of the Left in the twentieth century to prioritize class over gender; the Swedish Social Democrats' opposition to abortion in the 1930s; the politics of identity in the 1990s; and the significance of class and socialism for today's multifaceted feminism and queer theory.

In an [interview](#) about "the economy of moralism and working class properness", British sociologist [Beverly Skeggs](#) points to the importance placed on "respectability" as a common aim: "Respectability can be regarded as the ordering of society through the proper, which is a legal organization, giving an incredible foundation to respectability. Who can become a proper person? Who can be a legitimate subject of the state? Respectability isn't only about cleaning your house but also, literally, about existing as a citizen." Wanting to be respectable doesn't mean that working-class women want to become middle class, says Skeggs. They want value.

The portrayal of working-class women in TV reality shows as disrespectful, indecent, and wayward mirror the moralizing middle-class view of the working class, argues Skeggs. There's a positive side to the "whatever" attitude some working class women have towards these TV images: "It's a refusal of authority and a refusal of being recognized, or rather misrecognized, as bad or improper."

Also: Gender theorist Robyn Wiegman criticizes the claim that feminism has lost its political direction and thereby risks self-destructing. Such doomsday scenarios are painted by those who see feminism solely as a progressive movement. And political theorist Wendy Brown analyses feminism's and socialism's lost faith in emancipation, and discusses what possible future a feminism without or beyond revolution can have.

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A Prior 17 (2008)



A Prior features artists whose works are based around the "manifestation of thingness" with particular attention to the monument. "Solid and built to last for posterity, often outlasting the ideologies that they were meant to embody", monuments mark the landscapes of the former Soviet territories, write the editors.

Three artists featured, David Maljkovic, Kristina Norman, and Daniel Knorr — all participants in the present Berlin Biennial — share an enthusiasm for things, from small scraps of paper to giant monuments left to rust in the post-political wilderness.

A fourth artist, Alexander Vaindorf, confronts the rampant materialism "that engulfs the hearts and minds of so many of his compatriots, revealing the alienating, noxious effects it has had on the very structure of public space as a physical phenomenon", write the editors.

Boris Buden sums up Vaindorf's project: "The motives of authenticity and alienation in Vaindorf's work never occur as simple opposites that necessarily exclude each other. In fact, they are rather mutually determined. Why? Alexander Vaindorf is fully aware of the intrinsic impossibility of an authentically totalising social experience. In his work, civic experience always appears as broken, fragmented, displaced, culturally divided, politically hegemonized, alienated, etc. In other words, if there is such a thing as an 'authentic' social experience, it can emerge only in the process of social and cultural displacement and disjunction. It is authentic not because it keeps society together, but rather because it bears witness to its dissolution and its groundlessness."

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Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais 79 (2007)



Luís Quintais comments critically on Paul Virilio's thesis that so-called "bio-art" — taking place on the border between art and techno-science — epitomizes today's nihilistic radicalism. Quintais shows how the artistic practices of for example Brazilian-born US artist Eduardo Kac — who was the first person to have a microchip implanted in his body — become meaningful only when placed in an ethical and political context. As the social significance of bio-techno-sciences rapidly increases there is no way around such a political commitment. That's very far from

"radical nihilism".

Networking: "What makes social networks move?", asks Sílvia Portugal in an analysis of norms and ties that keep social communities together. "Social

networks follow the general principles of the gift system", she says. "The triple obligation of giving, receiving, and reciprocating" seems to govern peoples behavior and guide their perceptions. But even though the rules are clear, they are not without problems. What happens when principles such as autonomy and equality contradict each other?

Also to look out for: Luiz Inácio Gaiger on alternative solidary economy in Brazil; Helena Serra on the construction and reproduction of medical knowledge; and Maria Paula Nascimento Araújo and Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos on the politics of memory — and forgetting.

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Critique & Humanism 25 (2008)



In interview with Milla Mineva, British sociologist David Morely, makes a point that anyone without a roaming mobile network connection will appreciate:

"'one size fits all' models of globalization, which presume that the same things are happening in the same way everywhere, in our supposedly borderless world, are of absolutely no use to us whatsoever. If anything, the world is becoming more, rather than less regionalized. Rather than technology having the principal role of eliminating regions, what we have to understand is the way in which technology is now all the more implicated in the reconstruction of the divisions which are continually being 'reformatted' between the different parts of the globe."

A chapter from Morely's book, *The new, the shiny, and the symbolic*, is published in Bulgarian translation in a section headed "Inventing authenticity", which includes Richard Wilk's analysis of "neophilia and neophobia". Wilk argues that, as societies become ever more enmeshed in global media and trade systems, the attraction of foreign products (food is his example) is offset by a feeling of loss of authenticity. In a related article, Milla Mineva interprets the "de-dramatization" and "localization" of the Bulgarian national image in commercial advertising.

Migrating cultures: Mila Mancheva looks at employment conditions and socialization practices of Bulgarian Turks residing as "irregular migrants" in Berlin. Mancheva pays particular attention to social networks established between "new" Bulgarian Turkish migrants and "old" German Turkish migrants and to contestations between the two groups over gender and religious-cultural practices.

Also to look out for: Bela Egyed on "Nietzsche's anti-democratic liberalism" and a roundtable discussion with contemporary philosophers in "What does Nietzsche mean to philosophers today?"

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Dialogi 3–4 (2008)



Slovenian press coverage of culture mirrors the general world-wide trend of pandering to numbers; numbers of viewers, numbers of readers, numbers of listeners, writes Primoz Jesenko in a scathing attack on the press:

"The media hides behind the alibi of getting closer to the audience and its imaginary taste. One of the principal actors in this situation is exactly that public service television which has, for the past few years, achieved such extreme balance and profit that many of the best employees have left. A show called Piramida keeps presenting familiar next-door faces who are supposed to increase the number of viewers. As they struggle to reach the end of the time for debate, often without content with which to fill those minutes, we suddenly go from a clash of arguments to exhibitionism. In an endless effort to be cute and ingratiating, the content of utterances is no longer important, only the fact that something is being said."

Artistic achievements: Elsewhere *Dialogi* talks to Branko Potochan and Mojca Kasjak about contemporary dance; looks at the post-dramatic politicality of dramatic texts by PreGlej; and takes a particularly critical view of Lars von Trier's portrayal of the heroines in his *Golden Heart* film trilogy.

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Glänta 1–2/2008



The cover of the recent issue of *Glänta* is baffling and highly disturbing; the solution to this "missing square puzzle" a great relief to anyone who started doubting his or her sanity.

Glänta is out to find various missing links, seeking them in short prose, long poems, and essays, treating subjects and objects such as archaeopteryxes, the Higgs particle, borderlands, the physiology of giraffes, Tiktaaliks, the cypher nought and its role in roulette, and colleagues at work.

Conceptualist writer Pär Thörn picked quotes from the blog of a Swedish website for employers and managers, using them as material for a prose-collage with a wailing tone, lamenting over the entire scale of any imaginable misbehaviour on the job and revealing a desperate forlornness: "Could someone please give me a tip on what to 'do'?"

In an article on intelligent design and its critics, Ann-Marie Ljungberg writes about the origins of the current upswing of creationist ideas, their attempts to bring to proof the improvable, and finds, that the "answer to all intelligent design adherents is God, but he is never mentioned. All questions point in one direction, but the answer is never spelled out. The inexplicable. All that is NOT. Is God." She closes with the consensual presumption, that "the

unknown, or say the godly, and science are not opposed to each other. That both these missing links must exist."

Also to look out for: British writer Zadie Smith on how to "fail better" as a writer (originally published in *The Guardian*).

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