



Eurozine Review

"If you can't look them in the eye..."

Blätter proves the relevance of newspapers; *Magyar Lettre* looks India in the eye; *Merkur* answers the propagandists of equality; *Osteuropa* remembers the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact; *Kulturos barai* relocates Europe's centre of mass killings; *Revista Critica de Ciencias Sociais* reads survivor literature; *Akadeemia* sees the funny side to Marxist–Leninism; *Springerin* interviews Roberto Esposito; and *Artistas Unidos Revista* talks to European theatre critics.

Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik 8/2009



Are newspapers relevant to the system? "Yes", replies Heribert Prantl, political editor of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, "and I can prove it". "The system to which they are relevant is not called the market economy, not the financial system, not capitalism, but democracy." But this is no plea for a publicly financed media: "I don't want a solidarity tax for the press, no state loan guarantee, no assistance package, no emergency pennies.

Really not."

The freedom of the press, writes Prantl, is not threatened by the Internet ("good journalism is good whether in print or online") or by the market ("it's not the case that newspapers in Germany are making losses"). Rather, the threat comes from within: from publishers who value profit over content, from journalists who — like in the US under Bush — turn themselves into the handmaidens of a reactionary government, from legislation that abridges press freedom for security reasons, from editors who consider "political stance" outdated. There is no newspaper crisis as long as newspapers do what they are supposed to do: provide proper journalism.

Good, even great times lie ahead for quality journalism. Never have journalists had such wide readerships as after the digital revolution. There has never been a greater need for reliable journalism than today. That's the way it is: the Internet generates an increase in the breadth of knowable knowledge at the cost of depth. The amount of data increases, but the processing of the data is missing. This is the new task facing journalism: the only remedy for data trash is reflection and background knowledge.

Anti–politics: The velvet revolutions of 1989 brought the chance to finally overcome a two hundred–year era of "anti–politics", writes Dick Howard. Yet "the West didn't learn from the East, and therefore it is responsible (at least in part) for the failure to realize the political revolution that had become possible

in 1989/90. The reason for this failure on the part of the West was its own complacent anti-political mode of life."

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Magyar Lettre Internationale 73 (2009)



"If you always want to end up the winner, if you don't know that being in India already means that you are a winner, you lose". Travelling between Delhi, Jajpur, Kerala and Varanasi, [János Háy oscillates](#) between fascination and irritation in a country where, "if you can't look them in the eye, if you can't lean close to them, if you can't see the authenticity in the penury [...] you will remain a stranger in a strange land."

Indian culture is not reflective, like ours. [...] Communication is guided by honest and direct talk about the world. There is no time for pretence and guile. Joy is joy and pain is pain and ten rupees are ten rupees. Life is experienced directly. It is the curse of European culture that it has made the immediate experience of the world impossible. [...] In India if you don't know the simple structures of everyday life, you die of starvation, you're dead, and in a non-reflective culture, a dead man is just a lifeless corpse that's of no use for anything.

"Lesson of the void": In 2004, Esther Kinsky bought a house in the borderland between Hungary and Romania, a region "on the edge of the present":

"For the first time, I'm living among poor people, people who don't know how they are supposed to warm their houses in temperatures of -25°C , whose children go to school on rotation because they don't have shoes, who at the end of the month probably starve. They stare at me, failing to comprehend why a woman has wound up here, and I can't blame them. Not because I'm someone who has something among those who have nothing, but because I can afford to look to the horizon, knowing that I can set off in any direction, whenever I want."

Four years later, Kinsky leaves, "tired and infected" by the "desire for what isn't there".

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Merkur 8/2009



Is it fair to reward unequal effort equally? "Whoever wishes to delude themselves that they are fighting for a more just world does well [...] not to think too much about such things," writes [Rainer Paris](#). To avoid any misunderstandings, Paris distinguishes between "binary" and "gradual" inequality, the former referring to the absence of basic rights in which "there is no leeway for interpretation". Paris dislikes this type of inequality as much as the next citizen.

The problem begins when binary inequality is equated with "gradual inequality": "The contrastive identification of differing life circumstances, marked by a greater or lesser discrepancy between quality of life and satisfaction of needs as a consequence of the unequal distribution of resources." "Propagandists" of equality claim that, "the struggle for equal distribution of resources and costs is essentially [...] the same as the struggle for elementary rights and opportunities".

Why is that bad? Because, "from now on, distrust and suspicion rules in all directions: those who are above me might distance themselves even further, those who are below me might contest my wealth, even the equals from next door might overtake." This type of thinking is particularly destructive of friendships, which rely on "implicit equality": "If equality as such is questioned, then it is already in danger." This sets Paris up for his parting shot: the discourse of sexual equality, he writes, "has transformed lovers into calculators".

Also: Matthias Messmer finds an ominous calm hanging over Xinjiang: "Might it be conceivable that propaganda and one-party rule is indeed the only way China can hold together this territory in the far west of its huge realm? Xinjiang is a test region for Tibet. Much more difficult to pacify than Tibet, which has no support to speak of in any neighbouring country. In Xinjiang that's not the case."

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Osteuropa 7–8/2009



To define the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact, which was signed seventy years ago this month, as "the division of Soviet and Nazi spheres of influence" is euphemistic, writes *Osteuropa*: "The treaty paved the way for the destruction of Poland, for the occupation of the Baltics, northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, for terror and deportations, for genocide and class murder." Moreover, "The secret protocol that accompanied the

Hitler–Stalin pact to a large extent prefigured the territorial policy in eastern Europe decided on at Yalta, which became the basis for the division of Europe."

Nevertheless, writes [Stefan Troebst](#), 23 August 1939 is by no means a European *lieu de mémoire*. In eastern central Europe, and above all in Poland and the Baltics, the pact is remembered as the beginning of the end of a short "golden age" of national independence: the famous "human chain" from Tallinn to Vilnius was formed on the fiftieth anniversary of the pact in 1989. The date also awakens in nations directly affected by the pact the memory of powerlessness at the hands of a conspiring enemy, and of being left in the lurch

by allies — a trauma expressed, as Marcin Miodek discusses, in recent Polish rhetoric about the North Stream pipeline.

In western Europe, however, the memory of 23 August is largely absent. For the former Allies, the "phoney war" that began with the German invasion of Poland "is but a footnote in history"; in Germany, the memory of the occupation of central and eastern Europe from 1939 to 1941 is overshadowed by Auschwitz, the bombing of German cities and expulsion. In Russia, as Tatiana Timofeeva describes, it is not so much ignorance as repression that surrounds the date: despite Gorbachev's condemnation of the pact in 1989, the Soviet interpretation of it as a tactical manoeuvre made necessary by Allied appeasement policy is back in circulation.

Also: Mikhail Ryklin discusses how for Walter Benjamin, the Hitler–Stalin pact brought final disillusionment with communism; nevertheless, it was not so much the cause as the occasion for the composition of his *On the Concept of History*.

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Kultūros barai 7/2009



In the penultimate instalment of texts resulting from the Eurozine conference "European histories", *Kultūros barai* publishes Timothy Snyder's groundbreaking essay "Holocaust: The ignored reality". Snyder argues that if we concentrate on Auschwitz and the Gulag — generally taken to be adequate or even final symbols of the evil of mass slaughter — we fail to notice that over a period of twelve years, between 1933 and 1944, some 12 million victims of Nazi and Soviet mass killing policies perished in a particular region of Europe, one defined more or less by today's Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

Also: In interview, Snyder talks about the disintegration of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the geopolitical backdrop to the mass killings of civilians in the twentieth century. Setting forth the theme, Jonas Mikelinškas criticizes the double standards applied when dealing with past atrocities: while Holocaust denial is punishable by law, the repressions of Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot continue to be mythologized.

Theatre in crisis: Theatre is one of the most sensitive instruments for registering changes in society and detecting new ethical dilemmas. However, writes Andrius Jevsejevas, recent Lithuanian theatre has failed to grasp the full breadth and depth of the current socio–cultural upheaval. Ramune Marcinkevičiute, meanwhile, notes that in Lithuania too, female theatre directors are judged on a different scale to their male colleagues.

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Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais 83 (2009)



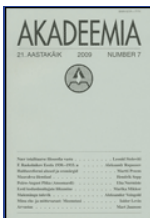
Does camp literature historicize fiction or fictionalize history? In three survivors' accounts of the Holocaust — *A Long Voyage* by Jorge Semprun, *Unsentimental Journey* by Albert Drach, and *The Journey* by H.G. Adler — the fine line between fiction and documentary is definitively blurred, writes [António Sousa Ribeiro](#). Yet the question is less whether reality can be rendered by the written word, than whether literature can give voice to survivors' experiences.

In one sense it is impossible for literature to communicate the camp adequately, writes Ribeiro. The key is to find a "discursive strategy that is able to broach the topic without misrepresenting it". Drawing on Adorno's often misinterpreted dictum that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric", Ribeiro illustrates how, in fact, these three writers communicate their experiences via the concept of the journey. Going beyond the bounds of time and space, they create "an invisible space of exclusion and imprisonment".

A new morphology of work: Ricardo Antunes surveys work in the new era of digitalization, mechanization and modernization. The downside to an ever-increasing number of employee categories is child labour and rising adult unemployment. Another factor in the new morphology of work is the increase in xenophobic undercurrents in the workplace in connection to labour migration — as witnessed at the demonstrations at the Lyndsey Oil Refinery early in 2009, and elsewhere in Europe, Japan and the US.

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Akadeemia 7/2009



Why did the seemingly unshakeable Soviet ideology collapse so suddenly? A significant reason, writes Leonid Stolovich, was that those tasked with applying it began to see its absurdity. Nevertheless, ridicule of totalitarian ideology had been around as long as communism itself. Although the 1930s were no laughing matter, people told jokes to relieve psychological tension, even if it could cost them their lives.

By 1947, when Stolovich became a student, Marxist–Leninist philosophers and the editors of their works were the preferred butt of jokes. Parodies of the "scriptures" — though they were self-parodying already — added to the history of Soviet philosophy a level of humour that "ensured the priority of the individual over collective idiocy".

Also: Alexander Rupassov on the political circumstances that brought Fyodor Ilyin Raskolnikov, a leading figure of the October Revolution, to work as a Soviet diplomat in the early 1930s; Marika Mikkor on the homebirthers' movement in Estonia and its treatment in the media; Aleksander Veingold on chess as a philosophical and practical preparation for life.

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Springerin 3/2009



In interview with [Krystian Woznicki](#), Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito expounds his concept of "immunity":

"There is a moment when the instruments of social protection, which are based on the reduction and sometimes the exclusion of a certain area of life, turn in upon themselves and towards the society they constitute. We have experienced countless moments of this kind in the modern world, all accompanied by an unknown number of sacrifices."

The possibility of a global crisis of immunity is obvious, says Esposito: "It's as if the immune system created after WWII, based on the equilibrium of atomic terror, has been destroyed; as if the world is in a giant turmoil of auto-immunity from which it cannot free itself."

The limits of "sharity": Curators and artists placing the debate on alternative economics in museum and gallery contexts forget that they are not engaged in concrete political action, writes [Beti Zerovc](#). Behind concepts and movements such as last year's "sharity" and this year's "freeware" are "principles of calculus, opportunism, egotism". Curators adopt habits from other areas of work, acting more and more like managers. Referring to Boltanski and Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Zerovc sees "networking as management's central principle of existence and work [...] Instead of continuous and lifelong engagement there is project work."

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Artistas Unidos Revista 23 (2009)



In *Artistas Unidos Revista*, Portuguese director and critic [Jorge Silva Melo](#) talks to long-serving *Guardian* theatre critic and Pinter biographer [Michael Billington](#). In what reads as a who's who of British theatre since 1960, the two connoisseurs discuss just what it is that makes a successful production. For Billington, the task of the director depends on whether the play is a classic or a new work. With classics, a director ought to break the mould, give the play new resonances with modern audiences, "imaginatively recreate" it. For new plays, a director must be prepared "to subordinate his or her ego to the vision of the writer".

Playwrights, meanwhile, must not simply imitate predecessors, but offer something new. Herein lies the success of the latest play by upcoming Portuguese writer and director Luis Mestre. His *Num Certa Noite* ("On a certain night"), published in this issue, portrays a family that falls apart when an estranged father suddenly arrives on the doorstep for dinner — and never leaves.

Interviews with Portuguese art critic Rui-Mário Gonçalves and Italian theatre critic Franco Quadri shed some more light on reviewing theatre. Held in similarly high esteem in Italy's theatre circles, Quadri founded the publishing house *Ubulibri* in 1971 and *L'École des Maîtres* in 1990. Quadri says that he

tries to give "great importance to personal emotions and to the context in which the performance takes place".

The Internet and the subsequent rise of theatre blogs has led to a shift in theatre criticism in recent years. Both Billington and Quadri agree that blogs provide a different forum for critics and theatre fans, whereas the traditional platform for theatre criticism is the arts section of newspapers and magazines. "There will still be room for the printed review in the newspaper", says Billington, "because you'll always need someone who has got more inside knowledge, who has seen more or knows more than the reader."

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