



Eurozine Review

Who bagged the common deckchair?

L'Espill says gender tests don't do justice; *Transit* debates the politics of diversity; *Wespennest* sets the record straight about '89; *Varlik* questions writers about the Ergenekon case; *RiLi* calls walls the last crutch of declining states; *Le Monde diplomatique* (Berlin) asks what remains of the commons; *Le Monde diplomatique* (Oslo) considers the termination of growth; *Reset* sees culture challenged in the new economic climate; and *Vikerkaar* explains Estonian history's wider significance.

L'Espill 31 (2009)



In a timely article given the furore surrounding the gender of South African 800-metre runner Caster Semenya, social psychologist Silvia Garcia Dauder and social anthropologist Nuria Gregori write in Catalan journal *L'Espill* that gender verification tests fail to acknowledge the intersex category.

Piloted in the 1960s and now commonplace for female athletes, the black and white nature of such tests has ruined a number of careers. Two notorious cases saw Indian steeplechaser Santhi Soundajaran and Spanish hurdler María José Martínez Patiño stripped of their medals for failing to have the required XX chromosomes.

Some athletes have even undergone sex-change operations to conform to the physical requirements stipulated by sporting authorities: the Brazilian-born hermaphrodite Edinanci Silva underwent clitoral reconstruction surgery to make her eligible to compete as a judoka. Whether in the sporting arena or in general life, gender reassignment surgery is often considered a means to medically "cure" what is perceived as a "social problem", write Dauder and Gregori. There is still much stigma surrounding the "psychological need" for sex-change operations, which are often derided as an "aesthetic whim".

The privatization of science: Technological and scientific advancement has given rise to "new opportunities to combine different expertise and diverse areas of scientific knowledge", writes [Josep Lluís Barona](#). However, the "privatization of knowledge" by the trademarking and patenting of products under industrial and intellectual property law means that much of the new information gained from scientific research is largely inaccessible to the general public.

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Transit 37 (2009)



Racial classification in the US has become the site for political struggle between equality paradigms, writes Kenneth Prewitt in an issue of *Transit* on "the politics of diversity". The former director of the United States Census Bureau describes how the introduction to the 2000 census of the multi-racial category "one or more" put an end to rule that "had worked so hard to preserve the myth of racial purity". Yet the change was also seen to undermine the redistributive function of racial classification, since it disaggregated members of distinct minority groups.

Liberals whose roots lie in the civil rights movement of the 1960s fear that expressing identity has taken precedence over enforcing rights — misgivings that are compounded by the corporate appropriation of the diversity discourse. "The diversity agenda's purpose is narrowly focused on market share, but defined broadly to include any group that can help achieve business goals," writes Prewitt. "This is not about undoing the legacy of slavery. It is not about the broadened minority rights agenda, with its focus on all groups historically discriminated against. It is not really about racial justice at all."

The limits of welfare? Social redistribution can do little to reintegrate the "excluded", who "no longer have anything to offer, not even their exploitability", writes [Heinz Bude](#). "They are not even useful as a reserve, since there is no recognizable supply from their side that could generate demand. [...] Perversely, a welfare policy that shifts from post- to pre-employment support runs up against its limits with a superfluous population that reproduces itself."

The last orphans of Bush and Cheney: Even as the state took over large portions of the private banking sector in the US and UK, central European politicians continued to sing the praises of market liberalism. Mirek Topolánek's description of Obama's financial stimulus packages in March 2009 as "the road to hell" was the expression of disappointment, [writes Jacques Rupnik](#): "Obama symbolizes the end of the myth of a state-free economy and a unipolar world. [...] The vehemence of the Czech media's reaction to Obama's nuclear disarmament speech reveals the confusion and stubbornness of the political elites in central Europe, the last orphans of Bush and Cheney."

Also: An historian can define European identity in a descriptive sense, as [Krzysztof Pomian demonstrates](#). But the real controversy lies elsewhere, in the political question: what of the European past is worth preserving?

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Wespennest 156 (2009)



In an issue of *Wespennest* on "Dilemma '89", German journalist Daniela Dahn delivers a retort to the "two dictatorships" thesis that posits equivalence between Nazi Germany and the GDR. Immediately after 1989, there was great will in the GDR to uncover collaborators with the regime, writes Dahn. "Yet when eastern Germans noticed that the victors were reducing the image of the GDR to terms

such as 'criminal state' and 'totalitarian dictatorship' [...] few still wanted to take part in the debate."

As a journalist in the 1980s, Dahn belonged to a semi-official, regime-critical subculture and in 1989 led a committee to develop a new press law in the GDR. "However, the western media deprived us of the fun of 'ridiculing half-truths with ruthless rigour'. [...] Overnight we felt challenged to point out nuances. However revolutions, even peaceful ones, aren't the time for balanced arguments. [...] The privatization of an east German media in the process of liberating itself is one reason why startlingly simplistic notions of history have become ingrained today."

A dog's life: The oldest dog in Bucharest tells [Slavenka Drakulic](#) how little has improved since Ceausescu: "I happen to believe that dogs are considered to be victims both of communism and of democracy (or the transition period, as they call it) as much as your own kind. I observe that an individual in this society feels pretty lost and helpless, he does not know how to take responsibility for his own life, much less for that of poor dogs in his neighbourhood."

An East-West dialogue? Obsessed with their eastern neighbours' nuclear power stations, the Austrian Left has failed to engage with those active in bringing about the collapse of communism, writes [Wolfgang Müller-Funk](#). "This intellectual dividing line can only disappear when the common crisis establishes a dialogue that transcends national boundaries. This has already begun in some places, for example the network of cultural journals Eurozine."

Also: The dissident generation of the 1970s and 1980s produced a body of work unprecedented in Czech history, [says Martin M. Simecka](#). Yet it is precisely the monumentality of this generation's legacy that prevents the interpretation of the communist past going beyond self-diagnosis. And [Martin Hala writes](#) that in the twenty years since Tiananmen, China has risen from the ashes by engaging with the West economically and by manufacturing "patriotic" consent. But as the economic crisis deepens, will the "rising dragon" continue to be immune to history?

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Varlik 8/2009



Intellectuals in Turkey have been at the forefront of social and constitutional change since the Ottoman Reform, and as such, have always had a complicated relationship with the military, write the editors of *Varlik*. After the trial in July 2009 of two retired generals accused of being members of Ergenekon (the clandestine ultra-nationalist organization with ties to the country's military) and of plotting a coup, *Varlik* asks poets and writers for their opinions on the legality of military intervention in civilian affairs.

Most respondents are categorically against. "Kemalism is the historical name of the alliance between intellectuals and the military", argues Roni Margulies. "It is a philosophy that is entirely irreverent of the people, views them as a herd of sheep that requires shepherding." Sabit Kemal Bayildiran concurs: "The 'leftists' who defended the accused in the Ergenekon case are actually nationalists. Instead of mobilizing society, they seek to bring down the bourgeoisie with the support of the military, which is already guzzling the riches of the country."

However there are shades of opinion. According to Tahsin Yücel, the military coup of 27 May 1960 "ended a terrible oppression" and ushered in "a constitution that was appropriate for a civilized and free nation, a university law that even western professors coveted. As for the other military interventions, they were in no way defensible for anyone who believes in democracy." Erendiz Atasü is more ambivalent still:

"Had civilian administrations not persisted in making grave mistakes prior to the coups of 12 September 1980, 12 March 1970 and 27 May 1960, these interventions would not have occurred, nor would they have been met with the support of society. On the morning of 13 September, the majority of society, including those who later would come to harm, hoped that law and order would finally be established; they took a deep breath of relief in their homes, to which they were confined by the curfew, and silently applauded the military."

Also: The posthumous publication of an interview with the poet, writer and former *Varlık* editor Kemal Özer; and Mehmet Rifat on rhythm and pace of narrative in Güven Turan's latest short story collection *Zemberek*.

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Revue Internationale des Livres et des Idées 12 (2009)



In *RiLi*, Wendy Brown sees the global surge in wall-building as a window onto the tensions within globalization — between opening and barricading, fusion and partition. Border fortifications are being erected on national boundaries at a rate that has increased rather than decreased since the end of Apartheid and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The most prominent examples, the security walls on the borders of Israel and the US, are joined by less well-known projects in South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan and India.

Walls are built despite widespread commitment to a world without borders and to democracy as a universal political order. They are the state's response to its declining power — barricades erected not against foreign armies, but against transnational movements of people, weapons or drugs. Their physical bulk is itself a matter of image; walls are often strongest where they are most visible, and fragile in less populated areas. Walls as theatre are the last crutch for declining states.

Animal spirits: The last two decades have seen the steady development of behavioural economics, a field that attempts to replace assumptions of "rational behaviour" with models based on psychology and empirical evidence. With the current shake-up of economics in the wake of the crisis, it is a field ready to enter the mainstream. *Animal Spirits* by George A. Akerlof and Robert J. Shiller is an accessible introduction to behavioural economics written by two of its most distinguished practitioners, writes Yves Citton.

The book examines how economic behaviour is affected by biases towards corruption, overconfidence and fairness, by imagining the world as a consistent story, and by illusions about money. Citton welcomes the book as evidence of the shifting intellectual landscape of economics, but finds that although the

title *Animal Spirits* is taken from Keynes, the current generation have ignored his subtle appreciation of the interconnections between personality, society and economics. He wonders if more attention to the liberal arts might help economists develop a less caricatured image of human motivations.

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Le Monde diplomatique (Berlin) 8/2009



In time of economic crisis and climate change, asks *Le Monde diplomatique* (Berlin), what remains of that which belongs to us all: the commons? In a grumpy summer polemic, [Bruno Preisendörfer](#) wonders who — whether in the public swimming pool, the luxury cruiser or the beach — bagged the general deckchair with their bath towel, thus privatizing a piece of furniture until then considered common property.

[Bernhard Pötter](#) takes a more global — and more nuanced — [approach](#): "At the start of the twenty-first century, new heights were reached in the debate about which goods were public and which private, about who profited from them and who was barred", writes Pötter. "Since then, a détente has taken place between civil society and business, both at a national level and in global negotiations: Which goods will be submitted to the capitalist logic of profit, which not? To what is the individual entitled, to what the community?"

There is no simple answer as to how common goods should be controlled, writes Pötter, since "each is subject to different requirements: the state monopoly on force is to be seen differently from free software on the Internet, or the right to pump poisonous gases into the atmosphere." A panoply of theories of the commons sees in the current economic and ecological crisis a chance for change: "The management of common property is a social process with a different set of standards to that of the buyer-seller relationship in the capitalist concept of the distribution of goods. Yet both have one idea in common: the necessity of trust." These theories have yet to prove that they can work, however: worldwide emissions-trading is little more than a licence to pollute, writes Pötter.

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Le Monde diplomatique (Oslo) 8/2009



Economic crisis and climate change have increased the following of growth-critical movements, some supporting a total end to growth, writes editor [Remi Nilsen](#) in *Le Monde diplomatique* (Oslo). Yet proponents of growth termination differ, as Erik Dupin shows. One of the more radical, the French Green Party politician Yves Cochet, suggested to the French parliament that "today growth is uneconomical, anti-social and environmentally harmful". But he lacks full support from those within his own party afraid his stance will cost them votes.

There are problems in defining what the termination of growth is and how it should be achieved. Moreover, no clear picture exists as to what a financially

and environmentally balanced society should look like. If production is to be reduced without any accompanying measures, the difference between rich and poor will merely increase. If only, wishes Dupin, material wealth could be eliminated from the debate: "A dizzyingly large room for political change would open up".

European histories: In Norwegian translation, [Timothy Snyder's](#) groundbreaking essay "[Holocaust: The ignored reality](#)". Snyder argues that if we concentrate on Auschwitz and the Gulag, 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 region of Europe defined more or less by today's Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

Also: [Alain Gresh](#) on the ties between the South African Apartheid regime and Israel, first formed as early as 1948; and [Truls Lie](#) on the possibility of bringing Norwegian documentary films to a wider international audience.

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Reset 114 (2009)



Classical institutions such as museums and galleries have been rendered useless and are unable to address a new kind of public, writes Pasquale Chessa in *Reset*. Is there a way out of this crisis? Can art and culture be transformed into a "productive" power in a contemporary society based on communication and knowledge?

Responses from round-table participants range from the pessimistic — Francesco Micheli sees "lack of knowledge" as a central problem — to the "democratic": according to Michele Trimarchi, people today have an "urgent need for values and identity to which there is no response from an institutional perspective". However all agree that prioritizing economic values perverts the economy of cultural assets. Cultural funds have been pillaged in the name of economic shortage, causing cuts in the cultural budget.

Autonomy v. solidarity: The liberal Left, in Italy as in other European countries, has placed individual autonomy over community and gradually distanced itself from its former emphasis on solidarity, writes [Giancarlo Bosetti](#). While this process was inevitable and necessary, individual rights have become such a strong theme on the Left that reference to society threatens to be obscured entirely. A liberalism based on autonomy and the right to choose in moral questions is indispensable, yet offers no adequate answer to the problem of social cohesion and respect.

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Vikerkaar 7–8/2009



Does Estonian history have broader significance outside Estonia? Yes, say eight non-Estonian historians — but with one qualification. As Jürgen Beyer puts it: "Since one cannot reasonably hope to awaken broader international interest in Estonian history as such, one must, if one wishes to write for an international audience, be able to demonstrate that Estonian history may add something valuable to the history of the

centre."

In his discussion of Estonian Lutheranism in the context of European cultural history, Beyer argues that "although most of the treatments of Lutheranism are interested only in the author's own country, early modern Lutheranism deserves to be considered as a whole, since the development of Lutheran countries took place, for the main part, along parallel lines." For example, the Reformation brought widespread literacy, and soon major parts of populations were able to read. Writing, however, remained a rarer skill, and only very few people published vernacular texts in print. Whereas in western Europe it is hard to find out who actually read such books, in Estonia, where social segregation ran along language boundaries, it is much easier: whenever a book was published in Estonian, it will certainly have been meant for the lower classes.

Also: [Jean-Pierre Minaudier](#) compares the nineteenth century national awakening in Estonia with those of other western European minorities (the Catalans, Basques, Bretons and Occitanians), finding intriguing parallels as well as differences between them; Guntis Smidchens analyses the possibility of a "disarmed, desacralized Kalevipoeg" (the Estonian national hero) enjoying a renaissance in the twenty-first century; and Karsten Brüggemann examines Russification as the representation of imperial power in late Tsarist Russia.

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