



Eurozine Review

Trials of weakness

Esprit draws imperial parallels; *Mute* revives Yugoslav Black Wave cinema; *Le Monde diplomatique* (Berlin) disputes the myth of a white World War Two; *Fronesis* feels the cultural squeeze; *Multitudes* explains the nanny's dilemma; *Le Monde diplomatique* (Oslo) says fewer G's, more action; *Akadeemia* urges Europe to go with the flow; *Varlik* greets the return of the "Saturday Mothers"; and *Glänta* does sports.

Esprit 10/2009



The events of 1989 were trials not of strength but of weakness, between exhausted regimes and a mass movement that was only partially mobilized, writes Pierre Hassner in *Esprit*. Nonetheless, international politics was thrown into turmoil. Cold War became Hot Peace as nationalist battles were unleashed in Yugoslavia. With further conflict in Iraq and Rwanda, the next decade would see small and unpredictable conflicts replacing the danger of nuclear annihilation.

Meanwhile, the European project was at risk. How could integration proceed in the presence of these new states with their own claims to be part of Europe? In the former satellite states, the political legacy of these times includes a hawkish Atlanticism that endures to the present, writes [Christian Lequesne](#). Former dissidents, their political views shaped by their battles against communism, were among the few supporters of George Bush's muscular foreign policy. An example of this is an open letter to President Obama, signed by Lech Walesa, Václav Havel and other luminaries. Its contents speak of a fading relationship, in which the US no longer relies on eastern Europe for support in Nato and the EU.

Imperial parallels: 1989 was not the first collapse of a multinational empire in central and eastern Europe. In a transcript of a radio programme on France Culture recorded in 1988, historians [François Fejtö](#) and [Jacques Rupnik](#) discuss the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1914, no European state envisaged, or desired, the annihilation of this dual monarchy. Yet a few years later, it had ceased to exist. After a brief outburst of nationalism, the region would be submerged first under German and then Soviet domination, whose killing and expulsion of Jews and Germans would destroy the earlier cosmopolitan diversity.

Why did this happen? Fejtö challenges the view that the empire ended because it was an anachronism, a multinational state in the era of nations. Instead, it was brought on by a political movement driven by Freemasons and republican

émigré politicians such as Tomáš Masaryk, which gathered strength in France and elsewhere during the First World War.

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Mute 13 (2009)



In *Mute*, London-based multimedia artist [Nada Prlja](#) tells [Stefan Szczelkun](#) how the Yugoslav "Black Wave" (what censors called the *Novi film* movement of the 1960s) points the way to a "critical communism" for the present day. The dissident symbolism of film directors Dusan Makavejev, Lazar Stojanovic and Zelimir Zilnik is a feature of Prlja's work, too: be it the neon sign with her own initials placed on the roof of the National Gallery of Macedonia in Skopje, the staging of a Turbo Folk song contest before a jury of art historians, or the erasure of the face of the miner from old Yugoslav 10 *dinar* banknote.

"During socialist times, images of the working class were integrated into all aspects of society", says Prlja. "In the encyclopaedia at the time, a triple-volume, burgundy, hardbound publication, there are more than forty pages on factories and industrial workers. Socialism was a system based on ideology and idealization — and one of the driving forces of this code of belief was imagery glorifying the working class. Most of this was achieved through banal propaganda — like the banknote — but it worked. Now we live in an alienated world where we are not really aware of who makes the products we consume."

Usury: Current talk of the sin of usury (lending at exorbitant rates) marks the re-invigoration of certain conservative agendas, write Melinda Cooper and Angela Mitropoulos. "Denunciations of the corruptive influence of money on the poor, on women and the otherly-complexioned [...] are a moral campaign against the spread of inflated desires as much as inflationary prospects and their deflationary comedowns."

"We would argue that the financial crisis is an effect of usury from below, a consequence of speculative household consumption that extended beyond the limits which were tolerable to capital. And so, while it is a commonplace to speak of predatory lending, it is too easy, we think, to assume that those who took out the loans had no sense of risk or, rather, did not strategize within the cramped conditions of what was a monetized, racialized and gendered housing regime well before the advent of subprime loans."

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Le Monde diplomatique (Berlin) 10/2009



"The Second World War was quite literally a global event", writes [Charlotte Wiedemann](#) in *Le Monde diplomatique* (Berlin). "From Maghreb to Polynesia, it dragged in many millions of people. The price the Third World paid for it has never been calculated or acknowledged." After more than sixty years, the war is still perceived as being primarily European, as a "white" war. The eurocentric and ultimately racist perspective

of western historians is to blame, according to Wiedemann.

Every second British soldier, a total of 6 million people, came from the colonies; another million soldiers from North and West Africa fought in the French Army. Although their contribution to the Allied victory was decisive, they are the actual losers; in the words of the Cameroonian historian Kum'a Ndumbe, their "deeds have disappeared from history without a trace".

Not only have these facts been lost from a western perspective, they are also part of the colonial experience of "extinguished memory". "Young migrants often know just a single image of themselves, in which they are imposters, useless, unwanted in Europe. For those that descend from the countries that fought against Germany in the war, the recognition that their grandparents' generation helped to liberate Europe can be identity-forming."

Wiedemann therefore calls for a new perspective on WWII: "To avoid the Eurocentric point of view without relativizing the Holocaust — that is the difficult but correct task. Can there be a multi-polar understanding of history to go with a multipolar world? The work has just begun."

Paying for a civilized society: Nicola Liebert provides a critical assessment of the promises of Germany's new liberal-conservative government to reduce taxes and calls for progressive taxation.

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Fronesis 31 (2009)



A governmental report on cultural policy has triggered a lively debate in Sweden (see the [last Eurozine Review](#)). *Fronesis* adds an international perspective: the reorientation of cultural policy must be understood against the backdrop of changes in its relation to other policy areas such as employment and industry. Throughout the western hemisphere, the cultural sector has been characterized by increasing market orientation, note the editors. This fact has hardly been touched upon in the Swedish debate.

Taking artists and fashion designers in London as an example, Angela McRobbie shows how conditions for cultural workers has been far more affected by gentrification and cuts in unemployment benefits than by changes in cultural policy. In the 1990s, good educational possibilities, low living-costs and generous income support created the basis for a renewal of the British cultural sector. This belongs to the past, writes McRobbie. "There is increasingly a sense that London is too hard to live in, with well known artists like Tacita Dean, whose work has been shown at Tate Modern and Tate Britain, moving permanently to Berlin."

Commenting on McRobbie's observation, in the light of the Swedish report's proposal that culture be treated as an aspect of more important political areas, *Fronesis* editor Ylva Gislén writes: "It is often demanded that culture should interact more with other sectors in society. This means there is a risk that it will be subsumed under the headings of regional and economic policy, which in turn means that those forms of culture that cannot find a place in these structures get even less attention. Surely, the question should be how to shape the policies of other political fields so that they have a positive effect on — or at least do not harm — other forms of culture and the possibility to make a

living from them, either directly or indirectly."

Also: Via a series of historical snapshots — from eighteenth century street musicians to twentieth century jazz — historian Rasmus Fleischer (founder of Piratbyrå, "The Pirate Bureau") discusses conflicts of payment between professional musicians and amateurs.

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Multitudes 37–38 (2009)



In an issue of *Multitudes* featuring the politics of care, Caroline Ibos considers the triangular relationship between mother, father and nanny. "The success and social status of the father [...] rely on the labour of two women. The mother relies on the presence and the work of the nanny in order to reconcile her personal and professional life. The nanny is economically dependent on her employers."

The nanny is caught between two moral systems. Under an ethic of rights she is an employee like any other, working for money and equal to others around her. But according to an ethic of care she is expected to have limitless devotion to the children. This requirement is insatiable, and leaves the nanny subject to suspicion from her employer that, regardless of the quality of her work, she is "insufficiently loving".

A new kind of migrant workforce: The Fordist economy was suspicious of nomads, dismissing them as criminal or counter-cultural vagrants. The emergent information economy, writes Arnaud Le Marchand, is creating its own class of rootless workers. They are the business consultants, maintenance workers and employees of transnational firms living temporarily in hostels, hotels, even trailer parks.

Official statistics overlook these people, often categorizing them as "tourists". Many maintain the fiction of a permanent address to avoid the stigma and the bureaucratic difficulty associated with rootlessness. This hides the extent of the phenomenon from view, and the opportunity to use temporary homes as a tool of urban regeneration is wasted.

Also: Eurosceptic nations have been confronted with the impossibility of benefiting from the existence of Europe while retaining the independence of their national industries, writes [Yann Moulier Boutang](#). Parties talking of Europe and the environment have succeeded in elections. Now, there is a need to re-emphasize the European Parliament, as the only training-ground for European democracy.

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Le Monde diplomatique (Oslo) 10/2009



"Is not the growth of G's an indication of the attempt to evade direct confrontation with the numerous crises in today's economic system?" asks Bernard Cassen in *Le Monde diplomatique* (Oslo). The G20 summit in September concluded with "long declarations about what means were necessary to solve the crises, but was accompanied by no binding course of action."

When the UN general assembly held a conference on the world economic crisis in June, it was to all effects boycotted: "Despite the conference having been postponed by three months to ensure the presence of the leaders [of the G20], none found the time to attend [...] Mainstream media also took part in this 'conspiracy of silence'. It was as if the conference never took place."

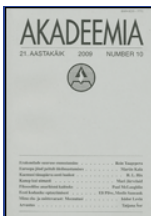
Flexicurity: In Denmark, the crisis is threatening the welfare state and the famous "flexicurity" system, writes Jean-Pierre Séréni. The system allows employers to dismiss an employee without warning, while the employee is assured decent unemployment benefit for at least four years. From its implementation in 1994 until just before the crisis reached Denmark, unemployment decreased from 300 000 to below 47 000.

But now "flexicurity" has turned into "more flexibility and less security", and predictably unemployment has increased again. Benefits requirements have become more complex: claimants must go to at least four job interviews a week, receive further training, attend meetings with their case worker and accept a change both in job-type and location. "Is *workfare* about to replace *welfare* in tomorrow's Denmark?" asks Séréni.

Also: Philippe Rekacewicz and Ieva Rucevska describe how Latvians take the crisis at face value. As Janis Tutins, a local politician, notes: "The standard of living was bad before, and it is bad now."

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Akadeemia 10/2009



"'Globalization' is a word that does not go down well with most Europeans," writes Martin Kala in *Akadeemia*. Yet with the economic domination of the world about to shift to Asia, globalizing is what Europe has to do:

"The keyword for globalization is international cooperation. But there is still no global unity concerning even the most urgent problems. The modernization of international organizations is extremely urgent and requires the understanding that 'Old World methods' cannot be applied to the emerging world. [...] One of the challenges is abandoning the misconception that the West still sets the norms that the rest of the world has to follow."

But Europe is not entirely irrelevant, according to Kala. It has "established an ensemble of international relations that differs absolutely from the global treatment of things. This means that Europe has been flexible, achieving economic and political results that no one has been able to achieve before or

since." Today's challenge, however, is "not only being flexible ourselves, but also being flexible in relation to the rest of the world".

Size matters: Rein Taagepera has discovered and tested laws that predict the size of national assembly for a given population, the mean duration of governmental cabinets for a given number of parties, and the degree of attrition of minority representation when the number of positions decreases.

Also: Mari Järvelaid busts the myth of the beneficial effects of cannabis and outlines its effect on the human organism; Eli Pilve and Meelis Saueauk detail the repatriation of Estonian citizens after the Tartu Peace Treaty in 1920; and Paul McLaughlin bridges the gap between the anarchism of intellectuals and the anarchism of activists.

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Varlik 10/2009



In *Varlik*, contributors share their thoughts on the "Saturday Mothers" — a movement protesting about the "disappearance" of relatives while in state custody. The movement began in 1995 after police violently dispersed a demonstration of the mothers, and continued for another 170 weeks. Then, on 15 August 1998, the police moved in again. For the remaining 30 weeks, the mothers were either kept in custody or dispelled with pepper gas. On 13 March 1999, they stopped their protests altogether.

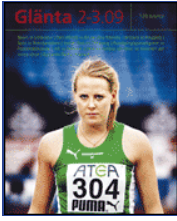
At the beginning of this year, the "Saturday Mothers" resumed their protest. According to the Turkish Human Rights Association, 1251 people have "disappeared", most of them during the Turkish state's war on the PKK between 1993 and 1998. According to the *Varlik* editors, the mothers want to let the abductors know that they are still looking for their children, and to refresh the collective memory of their fate.

Poetry: A dossier on poet Cahit Külebi (1917–1997), celebrated for his attachment to poetic folk traditions and simple, ironic use of language. According to Roni Margulies, there are two "homelands" in Külebi: the first the real land, inspiring his best work, the second a "conceptual" land imagined through official Enlightenment opinion. The new ideals of the Republic of Turkey forced a break with the past, writes Ismail Mert Basat; Külebi's poem *Tokat'a Dogru* ("Towards Tokat") is marked by these new forms of estrangement. And Tahir Abaci argues that intellectuals "aping" folk poetry violate its principle of individuality.

Also: In the regular section on translated literature, a discussion of acts of censorship in the history of journal publishing in Turkey.

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Glänta 2–3/2009



What is it that makes sport such an attractive topic for writers and critics? "The hope that one can put the silent flesh of sport into words", answers editor and literary critic Anders Johansson in the new issue of *Glänta*. For Johansson, sport and literature have the same symbiotic character that Adorno saw between literature and philosophy: "Sport has the presence that literature seeks, but cannot handle it; literature can express the presence of sport, but only by betraying it. To find the expression of sport - that's what all sports journalism is about and what all sports journalism fails to do."

Alongside translations of classics of contemporary sports-writing by David Foster Wallace (Roger Federer) and Joyce Carol Oates (Muhammad Ali), *Glänta* publishes a multitude of original attempts in the genre. Old and established sports such as show jumping, football and miniature golf mix with new and unknown ones: backbending, shedding and billiards (a complex combination of applied philosophy and classical billiards).

A new sport: Asked to invent a sport for this issue, poet Anna Hallberg came up with "raising", based on the principle of acceleration: "To move as far as possible, continuously accelerating in intervals of one second. The runner is attached to a speedometer that will signal as soon as the speed no longer increases relative to the previous second." Hallberg is convinced that raising will be a "fantastic sport to watch, but probably terribly boring for the 'raisers'"...

Also: Karl Palmås writes a philosophy of surfing -- with a little help of not only from Slavoj Žižek and Gilles Deleuze but also Patrick Swayze. In the Hollywood blockbuster *Point Break*, Swayze played the dedicated surfer Bodhi, seeking not only the ultimate adrenaline rush but also his own spiritual essence. However, writes Palmås with a decidedly Deleuzian turn of phrase, "Bodhi's outerworldliness is a chimera; adequate knowledge emerges from conceptualizing surfing in terms of bodies. Through the surfer's manoeuvring of the intensive, we can see how the virtual does not rob us of our agency. [...] An abundance of differences in intensities are waiting to be exploited, and unimagined capacities of assemblages-to-be are waiting to be explored: pursue difference; produce difference!"

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