



## Eurozine Review

### Delaying the nemesis

*Esprit* ponders German contradictions; *Polar* cautions against playing safe; *Lettera internazionale* obtains Adriatic equilibrium; *dérive* enjoys urban pleasures; *Vikerkaar* theorizes cultural explosions; *Akadeemia* disregards the perennially contrary; *Dialogi* revisits the classic avant-garde; and *Springerin* reappraises the art of diplomacy.

### Esprit 11/2011



Does Germany still see its future in Europe? Talking to *Esprit*, Jan-Werner Müller ponders the contradictions in the country's attitude to Europe. While Germany's politicians lack the European convictions of their predecessors and seek merely to preserve past gains, calls for a more strident European role could become attractive — "especially if the current approach of muddling through makes neither Germans nor other Europeans really happy". And while the German mainstream is unlikely to want to abandon the anti-Keynesianism it sees as part of the recipe for German success, deeply rooted "constitutional patriotism" opens up a possibility for the Europeanization of Germany's Basic Law.

And then, says Müller, there is the "ultimate peculiarity" of Germany today: "a real disjunction between a neoliberal economy, an increasingly left-leaning party spectrum and, lastly, published — not public — opinion which, if anything, is much more right-leaning than in the old Federal Republic. A very strange combination, but not so obviously a structural contradiction."

**German hesitance?** Over the question of bailing out Greece, Sarkozy has appeared precipitate whilst Merkel has hung back, apparently to ensure that Germany's elected bodies were onside and that the strict letter of the law was being observed, observes Marc-Olivier Padis. German disenchantment with the recent high-level intergovernmental action favoured by France is based on the fundamental importance of Germany's constitutional court, and the consequent expectation that problems will be resolved by the Commission and the Parliament. "This shift in political direction is not without its problems: the Franco-German tandem has turned out to be both essential and rickety, struggling, after discordant proclamations, to conclude lasting agreements."

**Greece:** Ever since Greece's entry into the EU in 1981, it has been a major recipient of EU grants which, instead of modernizing and consolidating political and economic structures, have financed the growth of corruption and racketeering. Compounding this, writes Georges Prévélakis, has been a fundamental lack of understanding between an essentially eastern Mediterranean culture and western Europe's overestimate of the efficacy of the

Greek state. But this is not to deny Greek responsibility for the situation: "The ruthless ambitions of several political and intellectual leaders, combined with the electorate's political immaturity, created a landscape characterized by *Hubris*. By delaying the *Nemesis*, European influence unwittingly led to an intensification of both elements of the tragic formula."

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### Polar 11 (2011)



"Live dangerously" — those were the days. In the contemporary, crisis-ridden world, security is not an exclusively conservative concern, write the editors of *Polar*. What, they ask, happens to our desire for self-determination and emancipation under the new *dispositif* of security?

According to [Ulrich Bröckling](#), it is deformed: after 9/11, the ecological principle of preventative abstinence became the premise for unbounded precautionary action. Bröckling divides prevention into three "elementary regimes" — hygiene (identify the germ and eradicate it), immunization (build up resistance, manage risk) and precaution (avoid risk by eliminating its cause) — and writes: "Prevention understands health only as non-illness, security only as non-occurrence of crime and violence; however this absence of positive goals means preventative efforts tend to expand unlimitedly."

The catastrophic imagination that motivates the precautionary principle is associated with panic and shock — phenomena of radical dissociation," Bröckling continues. "Under panic and shock, reflection shuts down, and the only way to break out is for someone to act. That is why policies of emergency find spontaneous resonance. The more decisively its protagonists demonstrate their will to act [...], the greater the approval they can count on. Profiting from this are populist politicians as well as the security and health industries. The fear they evoke is the source of their power.

**Work:** The term "Me plc" (*Ich AG*) was coined by the authors of Germany's 2003 labour reforms in connection with a scheme (no longer operating) to fund benefits claimants to become self-employed. But if individuals are to act as corporations, they should at least receive the protection conferred by the concept of limited liability (GmbH), [argue Thomas Biebricher](#) and [Frieder Vogelmann](#). The Danish "flexicurity" model that encourages risk-taking while assuring generous welfare payments offers an alternative to a German system in which professional failure is effectively punished by social exclusion and stigmatization.

**Too much of a good thing:** Hobbes justified state authority through the individual desire for security; at the same time he advocated a state form that jeopardizes security through vulnerability to tyranny, [writes Achim Vesper](#). From the correct insight that without security there can be no good life, Hobbes arrived at a concept of security that endangers the good life.

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### Lettera internazionale 109 (2011)



The growing importance of cultural dialogue between the western founders of the European Union and the newcomers from the East sparks renewed interest in the narrow Adriatic strip at the threshold between the two historical blocs, writes Franco Botta in *Lettera internazionale* (Italy). Political vicissitudes have shaped the Adriatic into a multicultural space constantly fed from the East. But will this trend continue as free market pressures cause the global economic centre of gravity to shift eastwards?

Botta shows how unsuitable the national barriers of the twentieth century are in the light of global economic reversal. As the myth of the western coast wanes, cross-cultural exchange must work in both directions: "In Europe, we should be ready to change direction, since travelling east is not just a possibility, but a necessity."

The Adriatic, having witnessed the clash between East and West, is representative and emblematic of such an exchange and may now become the starting point for a new equilibrium. "It is a space", writes Botta, "where Orient and Europe meet and clash, marked by paths, roads and seas that — unless obstacles and barriers are raised, as they often have been — can easily be sailed. Maritime routes connecting cities and territories can run both ways and with various purposes. The Adriatic has played a particular role as a place of contact and exchange between Europe and Orient."

**European memory:** Recalling the life of the Russian writer Irene Nemirovsky, who died in a Nazi concentration camp, Slovenian playwright [Drago Jancar](#) enters the debate between Europe's western centre and its eastern European peripheries. Nemirovsky had almost been forgotten when, in 2004, the publication of her *Suite Française* earned her international recognition. This prompts Jancar to question Europe's ability to remember its human past in its anxiety to meet present economic demands:

Today, eastern Europeans generally know what they want: wellbeing and high standards of living. So do western Europeans: eastern markets, a boundless Europe and a conflict-free area from the Adriatic to the Baltic. Yet this is not enough. It is necessary that they comprehend each other in a human and historical context.

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### dérive 45 (2011)



*dérive* publishes an issue on "Urban Pleasures": "Spatially fixed urban entertainment (leisure park, entertainment park, amusement park, Luna Park) has always been described as an alternative world to the urban everyday, yet is an immanent part of it", writes editor Erik Meinharter.

Historically, urban entertainment areas mediate between regulated environments for working and living and spaces of anarchy and disorder. Very early on, such places of disorder like Coney Island in New York City, the Prater in Vienna or Tivoli in Copenhagen were transformed into public entertainment areas: "Here one can see the use of organized entertainment as a mechanism of sovereign regulation. An outlet is created that produces order through distraction."

**Low-cost intensity:** At the start of the twentieth century, these areas still celebrated "a deviation from common moral conceptions", writes [André Krammer](#), providing cheap but intense experiences such as horror, fear, curiosity, eroticism and disgust. "The entertainment park is an urban memory that enables elements that have been repressed or thought to have been forgotten to reappear, and at the same time represents an experiment aimed at the future. The collective urban production of desire contains a subcutaneous critique of the status quo of a (city-)world rationalized to the core."

**Economy of fascination:** Today, in the era of the "economy of attention" ([Georg Franck](#)), such effects are much harder to achieve, writes Heiko Schmid: "As more and more areas of daily life are staged and commercialized in the form of geographies of fascination, and as more and more immaterial goods such as emotions and experiences are accessed via attention and fascination, it is nevertheless surprising that particularly the success-factor of fascination always depends both on standing out and on a need for distance from the everyday: perhaps this is an irreducible contradiction with regard to the by now mundane and omnipresent geography of fascination."

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### Vikerkaar 10–11/2011



In *Vikerkaar* (Estonia), Indrek Ibrus discusses the rapid changes that have shaken the creative industries over the last decades, beginning with the metaphor of explosion. Citing the Tartu semiotician Yuri Lotman, Ibrus argues that the explosive in culture is constituted by the interactions that preceded it — to dialogue between previously unconnected areas that may give rise to new synthetic ideas or forms. "An innovation taking place at one level," he says, "will, like the birth of a new movie genre, shake the ecology of meaning all over the world of art. Thus, ultimately, all cultures are creole cultures, all culture is a remix."

Periods of explosive change alternate with longer waves of growth that peter out into depression, Ibrus explains. During periods of economic stagnation, innovations considered too risky at other times get their chance and give rise to new cycles of growth. Institutions also play a part in this process by their desire to survive — and one way of doing so is to reproduce the culture of the preceding period.

Which leads to the question of copyright law following the digital "explosion". Communications scientist Robin Mansell, in conversation with Ibrus, weighs up copyright law vis à vis the continuous expansion of networks enabling digital content-sharing. Although efforts are being made and means devised for restricting access to protected content, it is unlikely, says Mansell, "that the genie can be put back in the box. Digital culture is here to stay and it is

probable that the creative industries will find new ways of generating revenues and profits."

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### Akadeemia 11/2011



Research at the University of Georgia has found that some anti-smoking advertisements actually cause an increase in smoking. One explanation for this, writes Ilmar Raag in *Akadeemia* (Estonia), is that in language each meaning always exists alongside its opposite. This opposite meaning is activated if the target group perceives the sender of the message as a representative of a hostile or unreliable

community.

In present-day, heterogeneous societies, according to Raag, who has analysed voter habits, TV ratings and cinema attendance figures, a message is automatically rejected among at least 10 per cent of the population, while no more than 30 per cent ever agree. This raises an ethical question: "Should one speak about things society wants to get rid of, if merely speaking about them makes people react in the opposite way to that desired?" The pragmatic answer is yes, says Raag, if the social capital of people agreeing is greater than that of those opposing.

**Religion and science:** Religious belief has nothing to do with science, and any suggestion to the contrary is typically strongly refuted by scientists. However Enn Kasak's research finds that confronting the existence of such a phenomenon might in fact constitute one aspect of the development of scientific self-awareness. Perhaps, Kasak suggests, it is time to discard the religious attitude that says there can be no religiosity in science and to treat the phenomenon as another object of scientific research.

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### Dialogi 7–8/2011



"The question of whether a Breivik-type attack could occur in Slovenia has been raised a lot lately. Responses vary, but the most important one is absent: it couldn't happen here because we already have something almost as horrible — a widespread culture of hate, anti-communism and paranoia hammering away in all corners, and killing us slowly." Thus Boris Vezjak's editorial to the new issue of Slovenian journal

*Dialogi* — whose content indeed betrays a certain nostalgia...

**Happenings:** Mateja Palcic surveys avant-garde performances in Slovenia from the 1950s to the 1980s and recent reconstructions of them. In 2007, for example, three artists — Davide Grassi, an intermedia artist, Emil Hrvatin, a performer and columnist, and Ziga Kariz, a visual artist — performed *Triglav on Triglav*. Based on a happening by the legendary OHO group in 1968, the mountaineering event-cum-performance took place on Mt Triglav (literally "three heads"), Slovenia's highest mountain. In it, the trio officially adopted the name and surname of the Slovenian Prime Minister at the time, Janez Jansa.

Their goal, writes Palcic, was to "continue the tradition of conceptual art in Slovenia and to problematize the ideological association of events from past and recent history".

**Theatre:** Primoz Jesenko talks to Vinko Möderndorfer, director of the Glej Experimental Theatre during the 1980s and today one of the most versatile artists in Slovenian culture. Möderndorfer shares his views on non-institutional theatre and explains why the ideological problems raised by the system of socialist self-management are significant for the promotion of young theatre directors today.

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### Springerin 4/2011



Like. "This label, which today is spreading like wildfire, has come to epitomize a new culture of friendship and friendliness", write the editors of *Springerin* in an issue on friendship as a "good" ("Ware Freundschaft").

**Leaking diplomacy:** Cultural scientist Jan Verwoert contrasts friendship à la Facebook and friendship in a traditional, non-virtual sense, and reappraises a much discredited communicative form: diplomacy. "In a way, what is threatened today is less the truth of feelings (such as friendship) than the perpetuation of a kind of lie without which a subtle form of political exchange, one sensitized to the irreducible contradictions of the social, has traditionally been unable to go without: diplomacy! [...] Enlightenment becomes terror when it no longer acknowledges the creative power of the semi-visible, of the indirectly referred to, that which, for good reason, serves as a pretext; when, convinced it is doing the one and only correct thing, it tries to put an end to the whole business, violently forcing into the open that which was able to develop its socially-transformative potential only when half-concealed."

In other words: "If everything is to be turned into re-formattable information, into ones and zeros, then diplomacy opposes that process, because its creative power (the art of preventing war) is based on talking to enemies as with friends, on expressing what is highly significant through the apparently insignificant, on hiding ones behind zeros, or dissolving ones into zeros, in order to avoid worse things."

**Political critique:** Herwig G. Höller presents *Krytyka Polityczna*, the "magazine, publisher, intellectual and artistic circle, cultural producer, organizer of events in Poland's most important cities, informal educational institution, and probably the leading leftwing intellectual think-tank in the country," now also with a magazine in Ukraine.

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