



Eurozine Review

Mute bursts the credit bubble; *Transit* takes the sting out of death; *Arena* rails at intelligent design in Swedish schools; *Merkur* asks what's wrong with a bit of decadence; *Multitudes* explores autochthonous networks; *Wespennest* profiles new Turkish writing; *Le Monde diplomatique* (Oslo) remembers Bergman and Antonioni; and *du* turns armchair detective.

Mute 6 (2007)



In *Mute*, editor Josephine Berry Slater describes the global economic boom as a "house of cards that could fall at any time". Writing about the social costs of an era of debt-backed boom, she observes, "The economy is deferring its crisis by a wing, a prayer, and a lot of looting, cheap credit, and new financial instruments. Debt is at an all-time high, with cheap, easily available credit propping up ailing economies, and over-inflated assets, such as housing, postponing any fundamental corrections."

Brett Neilson, a professor of cultural and social analysis, writes that the link between debt and guilt has radically changed: "With the emergence of debt as a structural necessity in the lives of most people around the world, the relation between debt and guilt has been reversed." Paradoxically, it is in many ways better to be in debt than to steer clear of it. One example of this is the credit rating, which "importantly is heightened not through the avoidance or refusal of debt but rather through the faithful repayment of that which will never be repaid. To cross the border established by debt, to bear the unbearability of debt, is to become a full member of the polity. To be in debt is not necessarily to own, but to belong."

Valeria Graziano and Janna Graham of the Committee for Radical Diplomacy write about student debt. "Debt produces in us a strange temporality. It strings us along. Being in debt gives us a sense of linear time, that we are making an investment in our future, that our future will compensate us proportionately."

London 2012 Olympics: "The postwar Olympic games are less sporting events than mega development projects", writes documentary-maker [Mark Saunders](#). "For every host city, the Olympics is an instrument for major urban restructuring on a scale that would otherwise be beyond the planners' wildest hopes and dreams. The glow from the Olympic torch shines so bright it bleaches out the flickering flames of protest." [This is a shortened and updated version of the [article](#) that appears in the Eurozine Focal Point on "[The city as stage for social upheaval](#)".]

The [full table of contents](#) of *Mute* 6 (2007).

Transit 33 (2007)



Death is no longer an everyday experience in western societies but has been removed to special institutions. Since the 1980s, the majority of people in Germany die in hospitals or nursing homes. The old and dying are attended to by specialized staff, with excellent medical care, but they are left alone with their anxieties and fears on this last venture. The new issue of *Transit* -- *Europäische Revue* explores the meaning of death, its changing place in society, its legal aspects, and the idea of conquering death as imagined in post- and trans-humanism.

Alois Hahn and Matthias Hoffmann examine death and dying by interviewing those who deal with death on a professional basis: doctors, nurses, and healthcare workers. At first glance, the data show the familiar picture of a lonely death. But doctors and nurses are well aware of this problem, the authors found, and receive more training. The problem is to find the time to combine the highly specialized technical-medical care with humane support, as is for instance provided for in the hospice movement.

Oliver Krüger introduces a totally different approach to the problem of mortality: "The problem is not death itself but the human being that is connected to its mortal body," he writes, paraphrasing the ideas of post-humanism. "If it were possible to substitute human beings with a more perfect, post-human form of life, if they could be transferred to a virtual form of being via computer technology, not only could they become immortal, but also their assets and affections could be brought to perfection." Also in the focus: Ulrike Brunotte on "Martyrdom, patria, and the cult of dead warriors".

Populism: "Populism is perhaps the greatest test of the EU's much-debated 'absorption capacity'", writes Jacques Rupnik in a focus on populism in eastern central Europe. He finds populist movements not to be anti-democratic, "indeed they claim to be the 'true voice of the people' and keep demanding new elections or referenda", but anti-liberal. However, there are a few reasons why the situation is not hopeless. "One is that there are cycles of populism. They come to power on an anti-corruption drive 'to clean house', but once you become the house you may yourself become identified with the practices you have denounced. They then tend to fall back on clientelism and instrumentalization of the state by the ruling parties (as we see in Poland) rather than remaining true to their radical slogans."

The [full table of contents](#) of *Transit* 33 (2007).

Arena 4/2007



Swedish *Arena* has a new look: sober and appealing. More journal than magazine. In the new issue, jurist and journalist Nadja Hatem writes about the most extensive trial in Swedish history against refugee smugglers, which ended last spring in Stockholm.

Hatem meets the accused after the verdict and asks herself if their activities

were morally wrong or if they in fact did the right thing: help other people to survive. "I would have done the same", says the lawyer of the Iraqi–Swedish smugglers, Leif Ericksson. "I would also have helped friends, family, and neighbours if they had asked me to. One should actually prosecute those who wouldn't. The current system of rules would have put Raoul Wallenberg [who, under diplomatic cover, rescued thousands of Jews from the Holocaust] in the same situation that these men are in now."

Intelligent design taught in Swedish schools: In 1991, the Swedish government launched a reform that made it easier to open private schools with public funding. Last year there were well over a thousand such "free schools" in Sweden. Some of these are explicitly "confessional", most of them Christian. In these schools, the curriculum includes not only morning prayers and Bible studies, but also "intelligent design", the claim that certain features of the universe cannot be explained by evolution and that their existence presupposes an intelligent creator, i.e. God.

How can it be, asks Anna Hellgren, that there is no public debate about the fact that taxpayers' money is used to teach a pseudo–science like intelligent design in Swedish schools? The same Swedish media that never miss a chance to cavil at conservative religious groups in the US and their influence on politics and society are surprisingly quiet when similar tendencies can be seen at home.

Perhaps, writes Hellgren with biting irony, it is the same old story of the Swedes trusting the State to do only good...

The [full table of contents](#) of *Arena* 4/2007.

Merkur 8–9/2007



Merkur's annual themed issue aims to lift the taboo on "decadence" as a critical concept. As Richard Herzinger of *Die Welt am Sonntag* points out, nowhere is the critique of decadence more at home than in anti–capitalism. For anti–capitalists, the hedge fund is "the pure embodiment of an economy devoid of solidarity" — of decadence, in other words. In 2004, then–SPD chairman Franz Münterfering notoriously referred to hedge funds as "grasshoppers", for their tendency to jump from one investment to another, leaving behind a trail of redundancies; since then, hedge funds have come under attack from politicians Heiner Geissler, former CDU general secretary and Attac convert, and Oscar Lafontaine, leader of the *Linkspartei*.

But hedge funds, counters Herzinger, "are an indicator of the democratization of international finance" in that a wider section of society is in a position to profit from international markets. When anti–capitalism leads to improvements in the global economic system then it is to be welcomed, he continues. "One shudders, however, at attempts, from Venezuela to Iran, to form a 'better world' beyond capitalism. What is talked up by anti–capitalist demagogues [...] as an alternative resembles more the last stand against the irresistible force of capitalism."

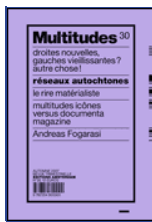
Western decadence? Jörg Lau attacks western liberals who side with Islam's critique of western "decadence" — particularly some feminists who support the veil as a response to the west's "sexualization of the female body". "The

propaganda of the Islamists — Islamic virtue versus western depravity — is adopted as the model of cultural conflict, with the veil as its symbol." Meanwhile, Lau cites cases of Muslim women who have "liberated" themselves: "Things will only improve when Islam recognizes that the fact that Ayaan Hirsi Ali must live under police protection is a symbol of its own decadence."

Also to look out for: [Kathrin Passig](#) describes how modernization tends to be seen by the military as decadent but how the military has always paid a high price in human life for sticking to its ways; and [Karsten Fischer](#) argues that the decadence critique must be recognized as a "rhetorical strategy".

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Multitudes 30 (2007)



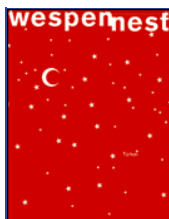
Aboriginal communities in Australia are exiles in their own country, writes Barbara Glowczewski in an issue of *Multitudes* on autochthonous networks and indigenous peoples. Not only are Aborigines subjected to constant harassment not only from governmental organizations, but also from representatives of the global market. Violent events such as the riots on Palm Island in 2004, following the death of an Aborigine held in detention, polarize relations between Aborigines and wider society still further. Why is it, then, that Aborigines who remain with their communities and those who have left experience the same desolation?

The Tuareg: A recurrent image captures the Tuareg's experience of domination and marginalization in the modern nation–state system: that of a mutilated, injured body, deprived of freedom of mobility. Hélène Claudot Hawad describes how Tuaregs are rearticulating this social body via strategies from armed resistance to literature. Authors discuss other autochthonous peoples, including the Polynesians, the Siberian Finno–Ugrics, the Indian Adivasi, the Tundra Nenets...

The laughing philosopher: The figure of the materialist as "laughing philosopher" is a classic. Charles T. Wolfe argues that laughter is the materialist philosopher's "mode of access" to the world of human "values". The equally classic reproach of materialism — that it is cold and unable to grasp the dynamics of human action — only successfully targets materialism when it laughs along.

The [full table of contents](#) of *Multitudes* 30 (2007).

Wespennest 148 (2007)



"In Turkey today, despite recurrent outbreaks of nationalism, the process of opening up to the outside world seems irreversible, and literature appears to be a measure thereof." The process works both ways, adds Börte Sagastar, guest editor of the latest issue of *Wespennest*, profiling new Turkish writing. International readerships are discovering the variety of styles that have developed in the Turkish novel since state–prescribed social realism lost its hold in the 1970s: the historical

novel, the fairy tale, crime fiction, gay lit — all take their place in the Turkish bookshop alongside anti-American conspiracy thrillers.

What modernization and urbanization meant for Turkish women's everyday life is described by Ayfer Tunc in an extract from her book *If you don't mind, our mother and her friends will come and visit*. The title refers to the round of social visits urban middle-class women engaged in during the 1970s: what began as occasions for polite conversation evolved into demonstrations of wealth and finally into stock-brokerage sessions. This development ran parallel with other changes affecting women's domestic life — among them ventilated kitchens, western-style toilets, and easy telephoning.

"Telephone, fax, email... apart from all that," writes [Elif Safak](#), "women in Turkey have one more method with which to communicate with one another: dreams." A new genre of feminist dream interpretation has emerged in the US that challenges this traditionally male preserve, yet Safak prefers the Islamic tradition: How, she asks, can the Turkish woman explain to the American woman that her system of dream interpretation is completely different, one that is not written, that is transmitted entirely by word of mouth?

Orient in the Occident: Bosnian Muslims, Bosniaks, or "Turks", as they are called by non-Muslim Serbs, are, despite their European origins, considered "foreign": how else can one explain their demonization during the last war? asks [Brigitte Döbert](#). Were it not for Yugoslavia's communist past, during which the "-ic" ending was added to Muslim names and the veil was banned, the impression that Bosnian Muslims "belong elsewhere" would probably be more widespread still.

The [full table of contents](#) of *Wespennest148* (2007)

Le Monde diplomatique (Oslo) 9/2007



Over three broad-sheet pages, the Norwegian edition of *Le Monde diplomatique* remembers two of film history's greats that passed away this summer: Ingmar Bergman and Michelangelo Antonioni. The tone, however, is not reverential. Especially not in American film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum's obituary for Bergman, "Scenes from an overrated career", reprinted from the New York Times.

Bergman's films, writes Rosenbaum, are way too narcissistic to say anything in particular about the big world.

Editor [Truls Lie](#) tries to [nuance](#) this verdict somewhat. Both Antonioni and Bergman have taught us to think in pictures, he claims: "When the ambition is for thought to be film's higher goal, it is best to show the functioning of thought. The filmmaker's confusing images can therefore 'stop' the world, tear up the commonplace, and shake up the visible. And I'm not talking here about MTV's two-second image sequences. Rather it happens when filmmakers manage, on a sensory level, to provoke individuals to see something in the world that they regard as intolerable, and which is usually unimaginable. [...] The intolerable is, in Deleuze's words, 'no longer a serious injustice, but the permanent state of the banality of the quotidian', the depiction of which Antonioni truly mastered. To know thought is not to write it off as powerless. This powerlessness is actually a part of thought itself. It is precisely here that thought begins — in the connection between the human being and the world, or with the intellectual, religious problem with which Bergman struggled."

9/11 — six years after: The Norwegian *diplo* continues its focus on the attacks on the Twin Towers. This time with Robert Fisk's column, "Even I question the 'truth' about 9/11" (reprinted from *The Independent*); [Kim Bredeesen](#) on the "War on Terror"; and a survey among Scandinavian conspiracy theorists who are of the opinion that the whole truth about 9/11 has yet to be told.

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du 8/2007



Sunday evening, 8:15 pm in the German-speaking world. You call a friend: "Are you crazy? Do you know what time it is?" The others you try don't even pick up the phone or, maybe worse, answer with an arid politeness worthy of superintendent Borowski: "I'm listening."

Nine million people in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland retreat each week to their sofas to watch the crime series *Tatort* (crime scene). Swiss journal *du* investigates a collective cult phenomenon, "this last collective feeling of community which otherwise can only be experienced during the World Cup".

What is it that lures whole nations Sunday after Sunday, for thirty-seven years now, to watch good chasing evil, to see good win and evil lose? The authors in the issue find in *Tatort* a certain amount of "*Heimatkunde* (local history), social and geographical studies of the authentic German." It is a "Sunday outing to the provinces", or even "social-liberal enlightenment in the manner of the 1980s". *Tatort* as "collective therapy for a whole nation — or just some fun you can share with others: it all comes down to 'family'".

Photographer Hardy Müller was sent to the set and came back with a whole bunch of atmospheric images of *Tatort* at work. Mark Terkessides analyzes the clichés in the heimat-image portrayed in the series. Maxim Biller finds the best lesson in democracy to be an evening watching *Tatort*. Mareike Fuchs speaks with *Tatort*'s inventor, Gunther Witte; the composer of the famous trailer music, Klaus Doldinger; and the actor Horst Lettenmayer, whose running legs and hunted eyes have been in the opening credits of *Tatort* since the beginning. At the time, he received 400 DM for the shoot, and has gotten nothing since.

Also to look out for: Arnaud Cathrine on Edvard Munch's *Self-portrait, 1886*; Matthias Schultz on the German-speaking minority in Hermannstadt (Sibiu), Romania; and photographs by American photographer and photojournalist Weegee — The Famous, who, in New York between 1935 and 1945, was always the first at the scene of the crime.

The [full table of contents](#) of *du* 8/2007.

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Published 2007-09-11
Original in English
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