Dear reader,

The journal Marginalia was born nearly a year ago with the aim of providing a new forum for marginalia in two senses. For one, we wanted to provide an outlet for the ideas left behind in the nooks and crannies of our brains; or more prosaically, a possibility for SSEES students to publish texts that would not have found their way onto paper otherwise. Secondly, these marginal ideas were to be accompanied by marginalia of their own – of the second order, if you're mathematically inclined. Other members of the SSEES community were to be given the opportunity to read the contributions before publication and make comments, which would be published alongside the original text. We hoped that this somewhat Talmudic experiment would open up a lively dialogue in an academic world where ideas that do not meet particular standards at first glance are often left undiscussed, or even unsaid.

I believe we have achieved our aims to some extent: two issues were published last year (available in PDF format at http://journalmarginalia.wordpress.com), accompanied by two popular launch parties. Contributions have included factual and fictional texts, from short stories and translations to more academic pieces, geographically spanning the SSEES area from Germany to Kazakhstan. The present issue again includes a rich mix of texts: an analysis of homophobia in Poland, a critical reappraisal of the film *Good-Bye Lenin*, a political/economic article on Russian and Chinese interests in Africa, a book review-cum-piece of political philosophy on the relevance of Leninism today, and a translation of a short story about Roma in a Czech town by Antonín Bajaja. I hope you will enjoy it!

Of course, there are also problems – the most pressing being the lack of editors, all but one of which have been distributed all over Europe this past summer. On the positive side, we now form a human chain from London via Brussels, Prague, Budapest and Kraków to Moscow, beautifully symbolising the European idea (and postmodern condition, isn't it?). On the downside, Marginalia is left with me, woefully inept at and unwilling to be the organizer-in-chief. So if you're interested in helping with the organizational part of things, get in touch!

It remains for me to wish you an interesting and stimulating read! If you like what you see and have ideas for a contribution of your own, or would like to participate as a commentator, let us know and get writing for the next instalment to be published before Christmas!

Felix Jeschke

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Gay Pride, Teletubbies and an Elephant
Poland’s Incessant Campaign against ‘Homosexual Propaganda’

You may say many things about the transformation in Poland since 1989 from a state socialist régime to democracy, free market economy and European Union membership; one aspect, though, remains strikingly unchanged and is even deteriorating: Poles’ attitudes toward homosexuality. The past few years have seen gay rights legislation proposed, then ignored and eliminated altogether by the far-right government of the Kaczyński brothers. Often considered as sick, deviant or sinful, gays and lesbians in Catholic Poland are dealt with using church-sponsored programmes designed to combat homosexuality, and which do little to eradicate a deep-seated homophobia among the Polish population, 89% of which regard homosexuality as abnormal, according to recent polls. Blocking gay marches, investigation into the psychological character of a Teletubbie and general dissatisfaction with the sexual orientation of a long-anticipated zoo elephant remain only a few, however grotesque, examples of the current government’s overt crusade on, as the Polish minister of education termed it, ‘homosexual propaganda’. It is a sad legacy for a country that legalised homosexuality as early as 1932, years before many of its Western European counterparts, now retreating to religious conservatism and the marginalisation of sexual minority groups.

The campaign against homosexuality was first distinctly pronounced through the banning of a gay rights demonstration in 2006 by the then mayor of Warsaw and current president Lech Kaczyński. This was followed by a vast array of anti-gay programmes. As the former mayor expressed his radical stance to protesters: ‘I respect your right to demonstrate as citizens but not as homosexuals’, it instantly appealed to the devoutly Catholic and traditional rural classes, which constitute a vital political base for the Polish conservative party. The homophobic backlash quickly began to occupy the centre of the political stage, in which gay groups have often been suspected of criminal connections and links to paedophilia, and homosexuality is frequently equated with child abuse. Numerous church-sponsored schemes, such as a recent conference held at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, gather academics and priests to discuss what they perceive as a shorter lifespan of gay people, a prevalence of paedophilia among homosexuals, as well as elaborating the ethical perspective and methods of treatment. The increasingly anti-gay position of the
current government has therefore succeeded in translating sexual diversity into a form of propaganda and threat to the traditional Catholic way of life.

Similarly, when Ewa Sowińska, a children’s rights watchdog in Poland, summoned psychologists to investigate whether the popular BBC TV show *Teletubbies* promoted a homosexual lifestyle, it amounted to yet another aspect of the homophobic backlash. In particular, she singled out Tinky Winky, the purple ‘boy’ character with a triangular aerial on his head, for carrying a red lady’s purse, which could suggest his homosexual preferences. The following psychological evaluation of Tinky Winky intended to decide whether the children’s show should be broadcast on public television. The preposterous case of *Teletubbies* in Poland remains, however, one of a series of moves to outlaw the promotion of homosexuality among the nation’s children. The ban on discussing homosexuality at schools, the planned withdrawal of evolution from the biology curriculum, and limited access to information on HIV and AIDS, aims to, as the Polish government puts it, ‘limit homosexual propaganda so that children won’t have an improper view of the family’.

The relentless anti-gay campaign did not even spare a ‘gay’ elephant in a Polish zoo in Poznań. The acquisition of Nino soon generated anger among the city councillors and politicians in government as he simply refused to mate with his female companions. The exasperation with the elephant, who probably will not procreate, has been clearly expressed by the right-wing local government, which ‘did not just spend 37 million zlotys (£7.3 million) for the largest elephant house in Europe to have a gay elephant live there’. The ‘gay’ animal effectively scuppered plans of the councillors, who were planning to produce a herd of elephants. Now, as the animal prefers male friends over females, new offspring cannot be expected. The absurd concern with the ‘gay’ behaviour of 10-year old Nino, who, in reality, might be too young to exhibit any sexual preference, has yet again invited an unwanted global interest in Poland’s retreat to homophobia and religious conservatism.

As a consequence of the intensifying struggle against ‘homosexual propaganda’ in Poland, the public has notably reacted with a violent hatred towards Gay Pride participants, who, according to the *Campaign Against Homophobia*, were more often than not beaten, harassed and humiliated for their sexual orientation, while members of the League of Polish Families’ youth wing threw stones and bottles. In other words, the obvious repercussions of marginalising the Polish gay community, which accounts for 5% of society, are its invisibility, a growing climate of fear and hatred, as well as increasing instances of verbal and physical attacks. Not surprisingly, thousands
of homosexuals have fled the country, particularly to England, in order to escape the increasing persecution. As the Foundation Against Homophobia confirms, among the approximately two million Poles that left the country seeking work in the past few years, there were thousands of Polish gays, owing to the rise to power of the right-wing government and a growing climate of fear and discrimination.

All in all, Poland’s recent attacks on homosexuality – ranging from blocking gay rights demonstrations and discussing homosexuality at schools to the more absurd cases of the Teletubbies and a gay elephant – drew international attention to the country for all the wrong reasons. While ultra-conservatism has gradually entered into mainstream politics in Poland, it rapidly progressed to official and unabashed expressions of homophobia and prejudice towards homosexuals, something long abandoned even by the staunchest right-wing parties in Western Europe. The Kaczyński government’s crusade on ‘homosexual propaganda’, supported by the aging and devoutly Catholic countryside, sadly promotes intolerance and a rejection of any form of deviation from uniform Catholic traditional family values. As long as the government continues to pursue its current anti-gay stance, as well as supporting programmes assisting the view of homosexuality as a sickness in need of treatment, homophobia, discrimination and repression will remain pervasive in Polish society. The unwillingness to encourage an understanding of sexual minorities, effectively forcing thousands to flee the country in the past few years, seriously questions the state of human rights in Poland, which have grown fundamentally incongruent with one of the core principles of the EU: the tolerance of diversities.

Bogusia Glowacz
Cast in the Past

East German Past-Fixation in Good Bye, Lenin!

The German unification comedy Good Bye, Lenin! is among the best-selling films ever to have come out of Germany. At home it sold an astounding 6.5 million tickets, while the total European admission was almost 11 million. In comparison, other popular movies such as Der Untergang (Downfall, 2004) and Das Leben der Anderen (The Lives of Others, 2006) sold a European total of ten and seven million tickets, respectively. Numerous academic articles have scrutinised the film and its fascinating success since the release in 2003. The film has primarily been praised for its intelligent and critical reassessment of the communist past in the way that it brought East and West Germans closer together. In contrast, this article draws attention to several scenes that do not fit with the consensus reading of the film. It is not my intention to supersede or deny the value of the existing analyses. Rather, this text illuminates precisely the highly polysemic character of Good Bye, Lenin!

It has been argued that post-unification Germany can be fruitfully analysed within the framework of postcolonial theory. The key arguments refer to the destruction of the GDR’s ‘indigenous’ economic structure, the exploitation of its economic resources and the social liquidation of the East German political elite and intellectuals. Furthermore, anthropological micro-studies have shown how the former East Germans came to feel ostracised as second-class Germans by their Western compatriots. East German identity was as much created in the east-west encounter after 1989 as it was a residue of a genuine GDR-mentality. The application of postcolonial theory in this case allows for an analysis of the ways in which East Germany was ‘othered’ after unification.

1 Audience figures are derived from the Lumière database. http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/ Accessed 25 May 2009
3 Cooke, p. 2.
5 Cooke, pp. 11-14.
The painful memories of the Holocaust and the Nazi régime made history a heavy burden in post-war Germany. The imposed division of the nation from 1945 to 1990, however, became a fortunate structural means for suspending profound Vergangenheitsbewältigung. In political discourse both German states often claimed that the “more German Germans” most blemished by the Nazi history and least inclined to critically engage with their contentious past lived on the other side of the Berlin Wall. With the unification, the other German state was lost and new ways of dealing with the past were required. Strong subjective east-west distinctions nevertheless continued to displace the burden of history and were frequently perpetuated in the German media landscape dominated by West Germans. Seen in this light, Good Bye, Lenin! (written and directed by West Germans) appears less reconciliatory than the literature suggests. Its representation of the past as a problem for East Germans only is more patronizing than conciliatory.

In a scene of frustration the protagonist Alex says he feels “like a commander of a submarine of the North Sea Fleet”. That Alex identifies with a person in the Third Reich’s armed forces indicates a link between the upset East German man and the troublesome Prussian militarist proclivities. Later on, Alex’s mother startles at a swastika in the East Berlin elevator. The emergence of Nazi graffiti in the East after 1989 is, of course, grounded in actual developments, but the two scenes nonetheless suggest that Alex harbours the notorious militant German soul and that the legacy of the Third Reich is an East German affair.

The two West German characters that interact with the family support this interpretation. They are hardly affected by the historic changes, but act simply as well-meaning enablers of East German desires. Dennis, the western colleague of Alex is a friendly technician who uses his superior skills to produce artificial newscasts. He is never heard pondering about the rapid changes they experience together and the collaboration with Alex is seamless. The other West German closely related to the family is Rainer, the affluent boyfriend of Alex’s sister. His relation to the sister is barely foregrounded as an encounter between East and West. As with Dennis, Rainer is a superficial character with no history and little awareness of the historical process. His purchasing a Trabant appears more as a friendly gesture necessitated by dramaturgical priorities than an allusion to western predispositions to collect GDR memorabilia. The

Comment: The role of Austria is interesting as well; they also didn’t engage in any profound „Vergangenheitsbewältigung“ before the 1990s, seeing themselves as victims of Nazi aggression instead.

Comment: Interesting.

Comment: Is past fixation necessarily a problem? One could also argue that, if East Germans are indeed past-fixated, it shows a rejection of the illusory redemption offered by liberal democratic politics, market economics, multiculturalism, human rights, etc. and a sustained effort to engage with a problematic past as well as its impact on the present.

Comment: I think that’s too strong a conclusion. Especially in the scene with the swastika, the filmmakers might rather be playing on the Western image that the East is a refuge for Neo-Nazis. Perhaps they are rather perpetuating the idea that the Easterners aren’t dealing properly with the legacy and are thus making the right-wing resurgence possible. ‘You wouldn’t find swastikas in West German lifts!’

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7 Boyer, Ostalgie, pp. 362-263.
Trabant allows the mother and the rest of the family to travel to the family’s dacha and Rainer simply provides it.

A third ‘foreigner’ is linked to the family. Lara is a Russian medical student and Alex’s girlfriend. In their relation, Lara is the sensible and empathetic party whereas Alex has little understanding for her priorities (such as an important exam). In a symbolic scene, Lara practices cast-making on Alex while he moans about the strenuous task of maintaining the mother’s illusions. Tired of his self-pity, Lara leaves Alex in the bathroom helplessly entangled in plaster casts. This can be seen not only as an ironic reference to the Soviet Union’s dominance over East Germany, but also as an image of the East German struggles with the past. The immobile Alex fights to escape his socialization in a criminal regime that never questioned the legacies of the Third Reich in the GDR. While those Germans labelled western seize a future away from the burden of history, the East Germans remain enmeshed in past-fixation.

Good Bye, Lenin! has been lauded for its ludic self-referentiality and complex inter-textual references. The appreciation of these obvious qualities ought nevertheless not to overshadow the coding of personal relations in postcolonial dichotomies such as technological versus backwards and rational versus past-fixated. Instead of reconciliation and overcoming of differences this only sustains the East/West distinction as a powerful binary of social imagination.

Sune Bechmann Pedersen


Clarke, David, ‘Representations of the East German Character since Unification’, Debatte, 10 (2002), 1, 51 - 71


Comment: True, and the lack of historical interaction/interest make these characters appear ‘normal’, in sharp contrast to the weirdness of the Eastern characters, which makes for a good story, but is, as you say, ultimately condescending.

Comment: Not only – also its binding economic, political and social structural legacy, which restricts East Germany even after the departure of Russia from the ‘scene’.

Comment: Interesting. A further question: What is the purpose of this coding? It is as if West Germany must read backwardness into the East so as to reaffirm their own progressive status. The same could be said about the West in general. The legitimacy of our economic and political structures is reinforced as we watch “backward” countries struggle to adopt those structures.

—-FJ—-
China vs Russia

The Game on the African Field

Prologue

February 2009 – The President of China tours countries to the south of the Sahara – Mali, Mauritius, Senegal and Tanzania.

June 2009 – The President of Russia tours countries to the south of the Sahara – Angola, Namibia and Nigeria.

With the exception of the period of the recent financial crisis,¹ the last two decades have a significant increase in foreign direct investment (FDI). Gradually, more and more investment has been directed to the developing countries in the attempt to diversify portfolios and use finance in the most efficient way. However, not all developing regions of the world succeeded in attracting FDI. Considering its large labour force and territory and abundance in natural resources, Sub-Saharan Africa could perform much better in this aspect. This is now being understood not only by African authorities, but by those who make decisions about investment as well. Two heavy-weights, Russia and China, are paying more attention to the continent nowadays. If for African countries the game for investment is not zero-sum, which, hopefully, means that FDI is not attracted at the expense of another country, there is a good chance to get FDI if there is a will to do so. In this case investors would be able to compete for the tastiest morsels.

What are Russia and China looking for in Africa? What motives may companies from these countries have, countries which have recently shown quite a significant interest in coming (or coming back in Russia’s case) to the continent? In both countries, business is closely connected to the government, so political interests seem to be quite important for business decision-makers. This emphasizes specific trends of investment from these countries.

Russia might be inspired:

• To use the capital it acquired during the past ten years or so, diversify the risks and at the same time get maximum profit;
• To export high-tech production (military, medical, or dual-purpose). This may not be so difficult to do considering the solid experience of exporting to this region in the past and

¹ According to the latest UNCTAD Press Release (24 June 2009), global FDI inflows and cross-border M&As – the main mode of FDI – significantly declined in the fourth quarter of 2008, and the decrease has continued in 2009 (by 54% and 77% correspondingly during the first quarter of 2009 as compared to the same period of 2008).

Comment: Is it? It is still far more common to bear about the various exploits of African leaders in the Western press, which are, among much else, probably detrimental to attracting FDI. It would be nice to know which specific countries you’re referring to.

FJ
dealing with those African specialists who were educated in the USSR;

- To get the leadership position in some spheres (for instance, in gas exploitation). There are not so many positions left where Russia can contend for leadership in short- or medium-term perspectives, so Russia would compete for any tiny chance;
- To broaden business (Transnational Corporations);
- To import some natural resources (Manganese, Aluminium, etc.). However, Russia will not be an importer of major natural resources due to the high volume of its own reserves, which it also wishes to export. This should motivate Russia to be interested in assisting African countries to use gas, oil and other natural resources for internal needs (in this context the visit of the Russian president to Angola, Nigeria and Namibia earlier this year is quite telling). If this happens, Russia will have no competitors for export to the European Union, to China and other countries that are increasing their production and therefore require resources. This may mean that Russia is interested in developing infrastructure projects in the region;
- To export knowledge. Even besides the creation of economics of knowledge, African students, who are returning from Russia, may be more willing to use Russian technological resources, as their predecessors did after return from the USSR;

In its turn China is looking for:

- Export of production (usually cheaply manufactured);
- Acquisition of natural resources and raw materials in order to increase production. This is now one of the key issues for China, since natural resources, and particularly energy resources, are the basis for further development and growth of the republic;
- Diversification of the oil and gas supply and securing of agricultural supplies. Following the previous aim, China is committed to finding several sources to ensure a smooth supply of resources;
- Employment for the Chinese labour force (sometimes up to 70% of employees in Chinese-invested projects in Africa are Chinese). Export of labour is one of the essential aims of Chinese authorities in their plans to provide welfare for their citizens;
- Loyalty that would be useful for further global expansion. This forces Chinese leaders to be flexible and prove this to their African partners. [They do not require any political actions in

Comment: What about the long-term perspective then?

Comment: Although this is an interesting point, probably it would have been better to compare China’s African policy with that of Russia: does Russia impose any political/HR requirements to the African governments? If not, what are the differences between the two countries’ approaches?
exchange for their investment or aid, something that differentiates them from their Western counterparts. This definitely lets them win the sympathy of African politicians.

So, who will win this match: an eagle, having already flown over the continent, and having brought up many of the current influential African politicians in its nest, or a panda, who treads carefully without disturbing others, but who is persistently moving towards its goal?

Epilogue

Jiang Zemin became president of the People’s Republic of China in 1993, followed by Hu Jintao in 2003. During this time the two leaders have paid no less than nine visits to Sub-Saharan Africa in total.

Boris Yeltsin became President of the Russian Federation in 1991, followed by Vladimir Putin in 2000 and then by Dmitry Medvedev in 2007. The three of them together have made two visits to Sub-Saharan Africa.

Ignaty Dyakov
Extending Marx’s urge directed at the reader of *Capital*, that he ‘think for himself’, Althusser writes:

The matter was becoming serious: to think for oneself, to think freely, to scoff at ‘the prejudices of public opinion’, did not mean to *think just anything*, but, quite the contrary, to *speak the truth*, in the name of which every ‘scientific’ critique is said to be welcome.\(^2\)

This line of argumentation is, in some senses at least, typically Althusserian in its emphasis on the scientific nature of Marxist theory – the validity of which we can set aside for the moment. What is highlighted here is a portrayal of someone who is willing to engage in and with Marx’s thinking: it is necessarily a form of *heroic* action, the nature of which can be partly explained by engaging in the already oversaturated ghostly metaphor – with an extension. The spectre was not created by Marx and Engels, rather, it emerged, was called out, by and through the Opposition; such is the ironic nature of the metaphor.\(^3\) As such, what is demanded is an engagement, simultaneously, with two different ectoplasms.\(^4\) On the one hand, a practical-theoretical engagement with what Marxism is not – the separation of the ghostly – the prejudices of public opinion, often disseminated from kings and tsars and popes – from the *real* theory, what Marxism *really* is. On the other hand, an engagement that is theoretical-practical, an invited collective investigation that is undertaken alongside Marx into – if we are to believe Althusser – the continent that he opened up\(^5\), in theory, through scientific enquiry: it is a call to examine, rigorously, the cell’s ectoplasm observable beneath and through the membrane, within which the workings of the cell may be deduced. The only condition is that the correct, valid practice of thought is welcomed.

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4 There are two definitions of ‘ectoplasm’: 1) an immaterial or ethereal substance, especially the transparent corporeal presence of a spirit or ghost; and 2) the outer portion of the continuous phase of cytoplasm of a cell, sometimes distinguishable as a somewhat rigid, gelled layer beneath the cell membrane.
established tools for analysis be used: we are not engaged in ‘scandal-mongering’.

It seems contradictory to assert that the tensions and requirements as they are sketched out here apply to Lenin, in this manner, as they did to Marx. The editors, in their introduction to Lenin Reloaded, re-emphasize the manner in which Lenin must be viewed as external to Marx. However, these are precisely the tensions that the essays within Lenin Reloaded navigate. An extensive quotation from Eagleton’s essay does justice to this point:

It is not Leninism that a postmodern age admires. What it values is a truth that is corrigible, provisional, unstable, rather than the inalienable possession of a vanguard perched authoritatively above the people. It is not enthused by the notion that middle-class intellectuals are there to tell the labouring masses what to do, or by the view that knowledge is a matter of eternal scientific verities rather than the fruit of historical practice. It is alarmed by the prospect of culture being obediently harnessed to the ends of the party. It is suspicious of teleologies, of historical epochs laid out end to end like so many dominoes, and it turns instead to time, which is looped and staggered, fractured and multi-layered. It is allergic to political purity and metaphorical breaks, favouring the hybrid and ambiguous over the glare of absolute certainty. It resists the crude reductions of economism. Its preferred model of power is not centralised, but multiple, diffuse, and all-pervasive. It is sceptical of a narrowly class-based politics, hankering instead for one that is alert to ethnic difference and the wretched of the earth.

What a postmodern age admires, in short, is ... Leninism. For all this is true of Leninism too.

Implicit in this quotation is the dual ectoplasmic-assertion which, if we accept the assertion, allows an explication of the apparent contradiction that would exist if we omit all but the first and last sentences.

But apparent contradictions are the precise site of the ‘rallying call by some of the world’s leading Marxist intellectuals for renewed attention to the significance of Vladimir Lenin’. The constitutive essays, assembled according to four themes - ‘Retrieving Lenin’, ‘Lenin in Philosophy’, ‘War in Imperialism’ and ‘Politics and its Subject’ do not focus on biographic historiography, nor on the historical specificity of arguments raised in, say, Materialism and

Comment: Except that the established tool (favouring Althusser (the scientific approach) has been dropped for one which draws on psychoanalysis. Lenin Reloaded is part of the SIC series edited by Slavoj Žižek and claiming an ‘exclusive Lacanian orientation’ (not much Lacan in it actually, but certainly a heavy psychoanalytic influence). The impact of this psychoanalytic orientation is complex. Although it helps us to understand the failure of the left in Central Europe in the early 20th Century (Adorno and Horkheimer’s Dialectic of Enlightenment), it has unveiled a critical impasse at the heart of left-wing politics. Basically, that revolutionary energies unleashed by capitalism are more easily satisfied through populist than revolutionary politics. Does this mean that the proletariat is no longer the key revolutionary protagonist? Deleuzean/Guattarian thinking (which also comes up in the book) argues that in fact this role belongs to the deviant and not the worker. Lazarus seems to be saying a similar thing when he argues about the historicist and statist use of the term ‘revolution’ as opposed to its use to describe changes in subjectivities and consciousness (with the French Revolution as the sole example of such change). The historicist, statist use ties the term to a particular event or moment which challenges state power from within the limits of that power rather than questioning the idea of statehood itself.

Comment: I’m not exactly sure what dual ectoplasmic-assertions you’re referring to, but it seems to me that this passage is just trying to illustrate that “Leninism” has in fact been misunderstood (through its historical conflation with Soviet Socialism) and is indeed in theory fully in line with widely-accepted post-modernist views and aims. Thus trying to unburden and ‘reload’ the theory for contemporary relevance.

Comment: This means Lenin realized that the situation could not have been solved within the given coordinates between the orthodoxy and revisionism in 1914. However he did not resign or capitulate but redefined the very meaning of the prevailing oppositions and provided the ‘true’ revolutionary path. Am I right?
Empirio-Criticism. Rather, the attempt is to reload those arguments in today’s context, to re-read, for example, Lenin reading Hegel, as Stathis Kouvelakis does\textsuperscript{10}, or to re-examine the theory-practice debate through reading both Lenin’s theory and practice, thereby revitalising the debate left for dead since Habermas, as undertaken by Alex Callinicos.\textsuperscript{11} Indeed, a virtue of the reloading mechanism is that it does not entail a simple a-historical transplantation of Leninist principles, thereby disregarding intervening history. Rather, those principles and arguments and tensions and mistakes are read back into history, in order to discover something new: Alain Badiou attempts what can only be described as a Leninist reading of Maoism between ’65 and ’76 in his contribution\textsuperscript{12}. [This mechanism provides a framework for understanding and critiquing, among other things, the recent failures of left-wing politics, evident especially at the recent G20 protests and related events.]

\textit{Lenin Reloaded} represents a sustained, collective effort of engagement from a seemingly rejuvenated Marxist quarter. It is composed of seventeen chapters, most of which were delivered as papers at a conference entitled ‘Towards a Politics of Truth: The Retrieval of Lenin’, held in Essen in 2001. Contributions come from canonical authors, including – in addition to those mentioned above – Fredric Jameson, Etienne Balibar, Slavoj Žižek and Antonio Negri. It is part of the Sic series (No. 7) edited by Žižek, printed in 2007 by Duke University Press. The editors of this volume are Sebastian Budgen, Stathis Kouvelakis and Žižek himself.

Gordon Parris

\textsuperscript{10} In Lenin as a Reader of Hegel: Hypotheses for a Reading of Lenin’s Notebooks on Hegel’s The Science of Logic. In L.R. P164-204.
\textsuperscript{12} In One Divides Itself into Two. In L.R. P7-17.
Translation

**Devla, Devla!**

by Antonín Bajaja

I once had a somewhat insignificant encounter, which I wouldn’t have mentioned if it didn’t later set off a whole chain of associations. It happened in the middle of a noisy market in Zlín, called Pod Kaštany. I’m standing there, feeling up the salad heads to see which one of them has the loveliest bottom hidden under its green skirt, feeling quite elated from it all. Out of nowhere, I hear, “Sir, watch your wallet.” A woman motions to look to the right. I see a Romani woman with three kids. The eldest daughter is about twelve. She has a tropical butterfly on her hair clip. “Ma’am, we don’t steal,” says the mother hoarsely. “No reason to be scared, sir.” We’re looking each other in the eyes. “C’mon, let’s go,” the girl pulls at her sleeve. The boys stick their tongues out at the woman and the family leaves. Everyone’s gaze follows them as they disappeared in the crowd. (The wallet is still there, I think to myself. You chickenshit, rightfully points out my conscience.) “Where did these gypsies come from?” someone asks. Somebody else shakes his head in disapproval: “There’ve never been any in Zlín or anywhere around. Why don’t they just scurry back to Slovakia.” I retreat without the salad.

A few days later I met up with the historian David Valášek. It must have been fate that we decided to go to the café Balkán Express that has the feel of an old train car riding off into the past, somewhere to the southeast. Ordering a carafe of red wine we talked about many things, and got all the way to frenzied Sarajevo. Under the influence of the Balkan grapes (grapes of wrath?), I remembered the incident at the market. David mentioned that before the war there really were only a few Gypsies in Zlín, but in the nearby village Luhačovice there were a few dozen of them at least. “I wrote a paper about them. I’ll give you a copy,” he said and did just that a day later.

The study of D. Valášek retells the life story of only one man. A rarity in an age of cheap jokes and stale ideas. The bare-bones story enthralled me and I read it in five, maybe twenty minutes, I don’t know.

It starts with a song from Auschwitz-Birkenau:
Kon man chala, to man chala, a Sasos ma zamarela.

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Devla, Devla, chasuvava, bo me sfero na dykhava.

The central figure is Jaroslav Herák, born 11 April 1915 in Luhačovice. The address of his parents Václav and Magdalena stated – ‘in the field’. Not very impressive, especially given the fact that they were one of the first to elevate a ‘gypsy shack’ to the status of a little house (the foundation of a settlement), which they even bought insurance for as a sign of their longing to join the ‘normal’ citizens. Jaroslav finished primary school. He was a disciplined boy, had a talent for singing, physical education and writing. He started his first job when he was sixteen. He switched jobs twenty-one times. He usually worked on road repairs, stream regulation and digging sewage systems. To get by while he was unemployed Jaroslav often had to beg for money. But not just for himself. He fell in love with Jaroslava Holomková, married her and had two boys, František and Alois. They moved into the house number 558, which they built in December 1939, and insured it for six thousand crowns. On 15 March 1943 the family was transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau with the rest of the Roma. Their property was confiscated, sold off, stolen. After the ‘extraction’, the small houses and the whole settlement was razed to the ground by ‘normal’ citizens. Jaroslava died with the children in a gas chamber. Jaroslav tried to escape. He was caught and hung on the gallows, his mouth sealed with wire. From the sixty Roma from Luhačovice, three survived the war.

No one knows today where the Romani settlement used to be. That surprised me. I also had a feeling that I know the song ‘Kon man chala’ from somewhere. I’m thinking ... all of a sudden, a memory: it’s after the war, I’m three years old, I got lost, I’m standing in a park near the railroad tracks, I’m looking at a hotchpotch of carts, houses, people and animals. Children are playing, I hear a rooster crowing, a dog barking. A monkey sits on the steps in front of a door. I give it a piece of a bread roll, it sticks it in its mouth, and everyone laughs. A woman in a colourful skirt gives me a plate with tomato sauce and a huge potato. It’s very good. In the shade of the house a man sings a song: Kon man chala... Devla, Devla... bo me sfero na dykhava. (I will not get out of here as long as I live, the Germans will torture me to death. Lord, Lord, I will burn, I won’t see the world again). I know from what my parents have told me that after an hour of searching they found me standing there, full of new impressions, pointing to the clouds and saying: “They’re scared of you, they’re running away.” They disappeared as if the sky had swallowed them.

Translated from the Czech by Masha Volynsky
Translator’s notes:
The above short story, or maybe ‘memory’ is a better word, comes from a small collection of literature by and about Czech Roma. The collection, called Devla, devla! Básně a povídky o Romech (“Poems and Short Stories about the Roma”) was put together in 2008 from texts submitted by professional and amateur writers as a response to the literary theme of the year, Cikáni-Romové (Gypsies-Roma). This particular piece, by Antonín Bajaja, a writer and professor living in the eastern city Zlín, straddles the fine line between empathy and criticism and chooses rather to stay in the realm of unbiased observation and childhood memories. It is an admirable position to maintain, but seems to leave the reader with a slight feeling of coldness or detachment on the part of the author. Bajaja also purposefully interchanges present and past tense, something that cannot always be translated exactly, trying to create a feeling of timelessness, or parallel time and existence.
Commentators for this issue were:

LC – Licia Cianetti
FJ – Felix Jeschke
JR – Jack Reilly
AS – Anna Szász
BDS – Brian Stone

Feel free to write your own comments in the free space and pass them on to us to expand the discussion of these texts online, or simply add your comments directly on our blog: http://journalmarginalia.wordpress.com/
[marginalia] welcomes contributions of 1,000 words or less, preferably relating to the extended regions of Central, East and South-East Europe (but not exclusively) in any of the following forms:

- Academic work (abbreviated or in extract form)
- Journalistic writing
- Reviews of exhibitions, films, plays, etc.
- Short Stories
- Travel writing
- Poetry
- Translations into English

Please contact the editorial board with any questions or submissions: marginalia.ssees@gmail.com

Check out the [marginalia] facebook page for more info and updates, and the [marginalia] blog to add comments and download this and past issues in PDF format.

The next issue is due to come out in December, so start writing and get in touch!

This issue of [marginalia] was edited by:

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