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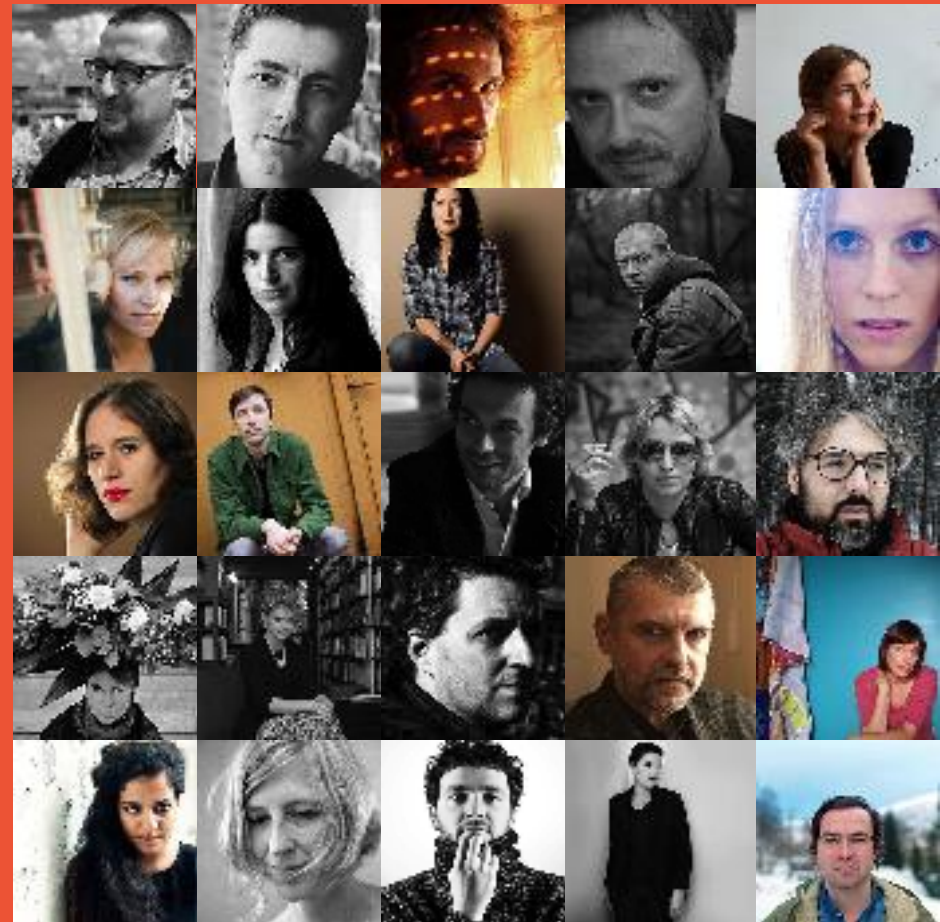


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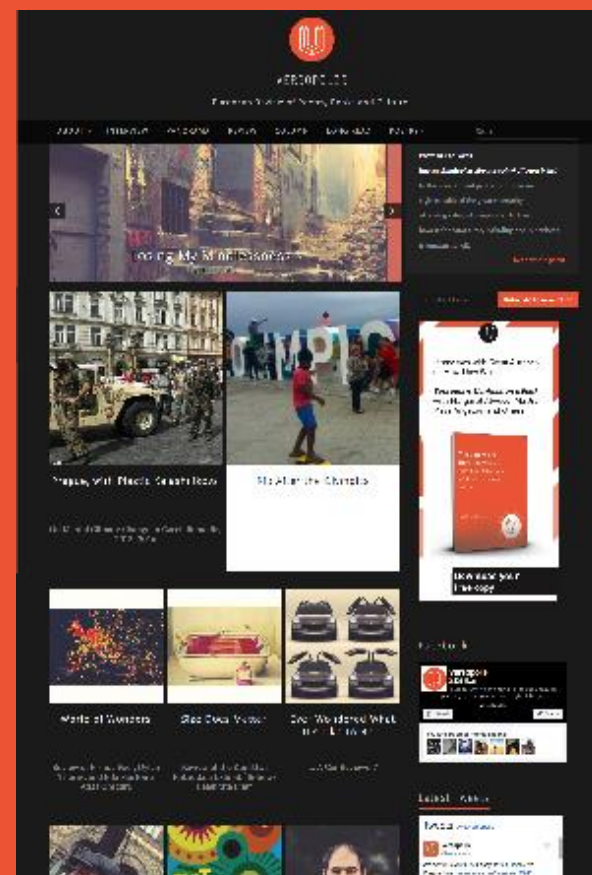




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Barbarians at the door?

From a lecture in Ljubljana

/ by Jean-Claude Milner



Illustrated by Branko Djukić.

Alexandre Koyré noted that some names are only given to others. *Heretics*, for instance. *Barbarians* is such a name. Except for provocative purposes, we do not call ourselves barbarians. Hence the question: Who should we be allowed to call barbarians today? The question is, in fact, double: who are the barbarians? But also, who are we to consider ourselves entitled to use such an appellation? Ancient Greeks gave that name to those who did not speak Greek. The word *barbaros* has been connected to Latin *balbus*, stuttering. In other words, speech is crucial, or rather a defect in speech or even the lack of speech. In the *Meno*, Socrates endeavors to show a slave's ability to discover a mathematical truth through a procedure of questions and answers. The demonstration's relevance relies on an implicit assumption: a slave and a free citizen do not differ in nature. In other words, a slave is a human being. But a crucial matter must be settled

beforehand: is this particular slave a Greek or, at least, does he speak Greek?

Of course, practical reasons are involved, but Plato implies something more: a slave proves himself to be a human being *if*, and only *if*, he speaks Greek. Indeed, a classical Greek would have asked: granted that barbarians talk, but do they speak? And the answer would have been negative. A barbarian is then identical to a human being, in all respects but one: he is not a speaking being.

Un parlêtre, Lacan would say, a *speaking being*. Do we allow ourselves to think along these lines? I am inclined to quote a famous song by Simon and Garfunkel, "The Sound of Silence:" "People talking without speaking / People hearing without listening." *People talking without speaking*," these are the so-called barbarians? But who are the *people hearing without listening*? We are. We hear those who are at our doors, but we do not listen to them. We do not even care to check what language they speak. In that case, we are barbarians, too. Because such is the modern definition of language: speaking and listening are not two faces of the same coin, but their duality is only apparent; they form one continuous surface. A speaking being is also

POET OF THE WEEK

Justyna Bargielska

It's none of these sweet watermelons

That's him. That isn't. Can you see that woman?

I see her, too, but from within. You, Agfa, who loves scarlet,

look with me at that woman whom I see from within

while I slowly get used to the thought that

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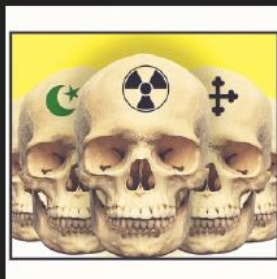
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Words End with Blood or Babbling

Free Flowing Thoughts of Nobel Laureate, Svetlana Alexievich

/ by Svetlana Alexievich

This is an excerpt from a discussion about Srebrenica organized by Heinrich Böll Stiftung (July 15, 2010, at the Center za kulturno dekontaminaciju in Belgrade). You can read the whole conversation at: <http://pescanik.net/razgovor-o-srebrenici/>



Illustrated by Branko Djukic.

Probably I could say that I am - just like everybody in my time, country, even era and culture - fascinated by violent death. I've grown up in a postwar Belarussian village, where death was discussed frequently. The village was inhabited by women mostly, because almost a quarter of the male population was dead, and talking about death was a form of our existence. I believe that was the period when, as a topic, death fascinated me, and has since remained one of the main mysteries. I didn't like to read war novels, because books didn't include what people around me were talking about. People know much more about violent death and the things we can do to each other than books do. I wrote a lot of books about war that are translated into different languages and, in my life, two streams of thought are prevailing.

On the one hand I want to understand death very much. Violent death always connects two worlds, the world of victim and the world of the perpetrator. Even if the murderers who are to blame for it all, disappear without a trace, so we can't really claim that we don't know who they are. These people aren't unusual people, they're human, like everybody else. Killers are humans, as well, but when their moment finishes, they simply disappear. It turns out that what we know about history, we only know through the words of the victims. After 30 or 40 years, even murderers become other people. I remember how, after 40 years, certain people who burned down houses and their inhabitants - it was part of Hitler's plan to destroy all Slavs - were convicted. We all had the impression that some other people were being convicted, that those were not the same people who burned others and deserved a fair punishment. It wasn't clear who we were punishing. It seems that, with time, evil diminishes.

As a writer, and not as a victim, I am a person who writes down victims' testimonies. I am a mediator in that story. But from the very beginning, I lacked the tools to write their stories. I just didn't have the knowledge, the insight into the warfare culture, which worships Mars. I wanted to find the words which would explain the human who engages in evil. In general, how that kind of human can live after what he or she has done.

On the other hand, I wanted to view everything from the perspective of an artist and a historian. From the indifferent viewpoint of art, both the murderer and the victim are equal.



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City Essay Series

One more step to?

London

/ by Alex Preston

It's the way of grand political moments to be experienced intimately and subjectively, before they are perceived as future generations will see them – we sense them as immediate, personal upsets, rather than as cogs in the machine of history, driving us towards as yet unknown destinations. It so happened that the vote to decide Britain's membership of the European Union, which became a referendum about so much more, took place several months after we had moved from our home in Kensal Green, north-west London, to start a new life in an old rectory in the bosky hills of the Weald of Kent, some sixty-five miles to the south.



At times, it felt as if the referendum were a direct rebuke to us – as June 23rd approached, the lanes around our house filled with *Vote Leave* signs in lurid red; on the road into Hawkhurst, the local town, a vast billboard was erected with a poster showing a rather buxom Britannia being molested by an octopus wearing the stars of the EU flag. "One more step and she's free," it read. It was bizarre and unsettlingly redolent of anti-Semitic propaganda from the 1930s. We felt the sudden realization that we were surrounded by people who thought about the world very differently to us.

It shouldn't have been a revelation, but it was. We had lived in a cosmopolitan, metropolitan environment where, even if we didn't all vote for the same political parties, there was a general sense of

the shape we wanted the world to take – globalized, prosperous, liberal. Whilst the government of David Cameron took some reprehensible steps with regard to education and the arts, all part of the great austerity fixation, it was at heart socially progressive, something that will be seen when it is viewed in contrast to the Conservative government that has followed it. When we lived in London, everyone we met, from our Romanian builder to our Nepali Uber driver to our friends in the media, finance, the arts – all were beneficiaries of globalization (although some benefitting more obviously than others). We accepted blindly that others thought as we did, and it wasn't until we found ourselves marooned – the only Remain-voters in the village – that we realized how comforting it was to feel politically connected to those around us. Isolation can be vertiginous when it hits so hard and so suddenly.

In the days and weeks since the vote, though, after the hand-wringing and head-shaking, after my daughter finally took off her *Vote Remain Today* t-shirt, I've had a chance to talk to the locals: the men I play cricket with, the youngsters who work in the village shop, neighbours and tradespeople and the everyday encounters which had previously carried no hint of politics, but which now hummed with subtexts and insinuations. I was known as a vehement Remain voter, and outside my house (until some kindly passer-by chose to liberate it) stood a *Britain Stronger In Europe* sign. I found myself increasingly driven to find out why the country had taken this dramatic step.

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City Essay Series: Tallinn

Stepping Into the Future

/ by Ilmar Taska



Walking along Tallinn's gothic medieval streets, you feel like you are traveling in time. The present is marked only by the occasional modern sign – familiar trademarks of the global world. Tallinn first appeared on maps of Europe in the 11th century. It later became an important Hanseatic town, known as Reval – a sea harbor traversed by the Northern European trade route. Over the ages, Estonia's capital has been conquered by the Danes, the Swedes, the Germans, and the Russians. The European Union has brought to the city a sense of well-being and security, and war has not been waged on its streets for quite a long time, even though Estonia's restored independence has been brief. We have belonged to various unions: those of trade, military, and state. To this day, we are still healing the marks of Soviet neglect upon our façades. By now, most historical buildings have received facelifts and cosmetic

surgery. Yet, in the city center, one can still find a number of structures where ownership disputes arose – structures smelling of decay, where paint peels from rotting boards. They are scars from the war years; from the times when Tallinn was passed from hand to hand, and sovereignty was only a memory or a dream.

Systems came and went. The priorities were borders, place, and belonging; not the people living here and their actual desires. In large families, the very smallest have little say in things. The tiniest have to speak loudest to be heard; to be noticed. So have we Estonians yipped like little dachshunds, only to trot briskly on our little legs at the back of the pack.

The Soviet KGB plotted its relocation policy well. Some were taken away, others were brought to replace them and ensure the "correct" mentality in the buffer zone (i.e. to intermix the populations). After World War II, Estonia's population changed by 1/3, as a result of deportations and immigration. The country had become the western border of the Soviet Union. Now, Europe as a whole has become a western border.

POET OF THE WEEK

Justyna Bargielska
She counts on sex

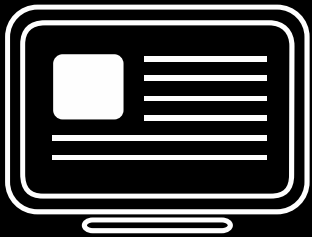
The Church persists that corpses be buried
explaining that Christ himself wanted to be
buried. Sure, I was going to
be resurrected, and not be reborn
from ashes like a phoenix, says Christ,
but it doesn't mean that others can't

In the late 1930s, all of Europe's larger and smaller nations held negotiations with Stalin and Hitler, while peaceful alliances gradually transformed into ones of a military nature. Secret additional protocols of Stalin and Hitler's scheme severely affected the course of Europe, and of Estonia. Amidst the war, in 1944, Churchill visited Stalin in Moscow, to divide up Europe once more. A scrap of paper preserved from their meeting bears the scribbled words "Greece," "Hungary," "Romania..." The parcelling out of Europe was finished after the war ended, which I describe in my novel, *Pobeda 1946 - A Car Called Victory*. Overnight, allies became enemies and the Iron Curtain suddenly divided family and friends

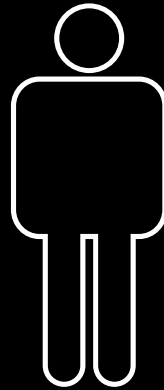
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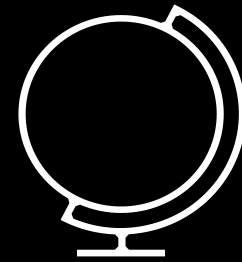
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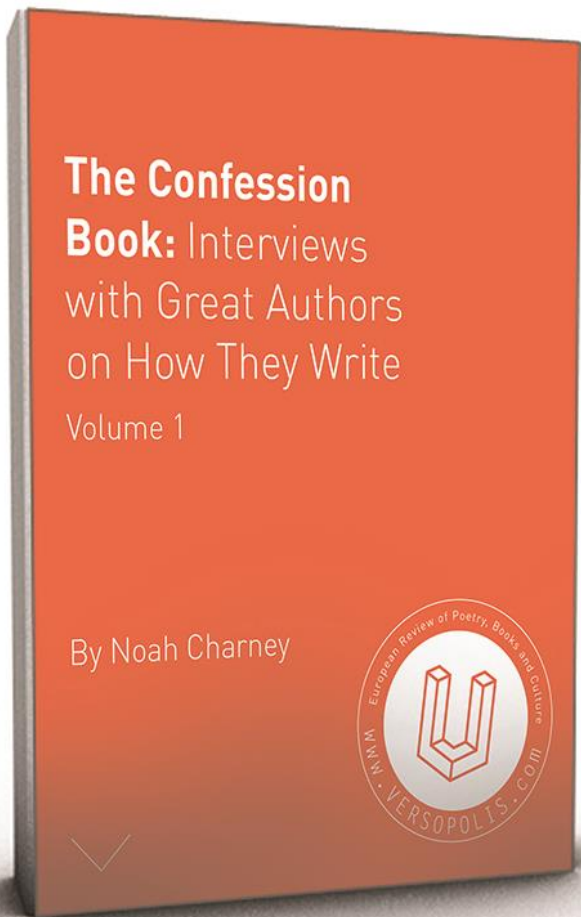
Number of total
articles: **295**



Number of total
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Number of countries of
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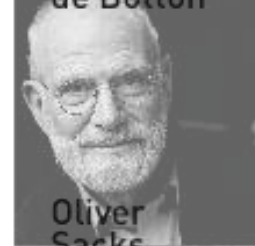
Stephen Greenblatt



Alain de Botton



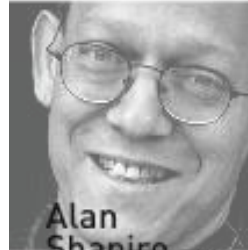
Ma Jian



Oliver Sacks



Margaret Atwood



Alan Shapiro



Maya Angelou



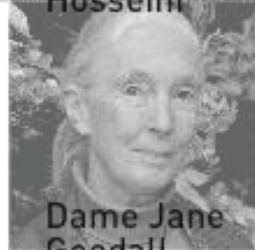
Khaled Hosseini



Gillian Flynn



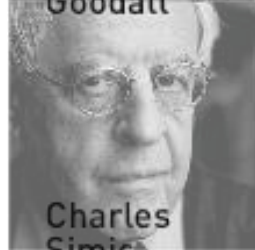
Will Self



Dame Jane Goodall



Vlada Urošević



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