In and around the Department of Comparative Literature several journals are housed, and members of the department are active in editorial work. This issue of *Arbejdspapirer* gathers some papers from conferences where members of the department reflect on the role of cultural journals.

Marianne Ping Huang's paper was first given at a conference on cultural journals in Madrid, Spain, in 1995. Peter Nielsen's and Søren Pold's papers were both given at the conference "Cultures of the Culture" in Copenhagen, October, 1996.

Cultural Journals and Cultural Debate:
Focusing Cultural Diffusion?

- *a case-study in cultural journals and their impact on cultural debate*

Marianne Ping Huang

What I have to say concerning the impact of today's cultural journals on the cultural debate, might boil down to a question of intellectual climate by the mid-nineties and to an old question of the role and responsibility of the intellectuel.

I shall start, however, by delimiting the subject: I am an editor and co-editor of two literary journals and an occasional writer of essays, reviews and editorials. I might add that the two literary journals are of very different kinds. One, *Passage,* is a scholarly journal, and the other, *Standart,* is a literary magazine containing reviews, interviews, short essays etcetera. I shall make a point of the distinction between scholarly journals and broader cultural journals at the end of my paper, so I might as well point to the fact, that I am involved on both sides.

Given the fact that literary journals are more or less a part of my daily work I shall stick to them and make them a case study in cultural journals and their part in cultural debate - knowing very well, that the impact of such a case as to a general outline, which I shall also try to draw at the end of my paper, may prove distorting.

As an editor I have for some time felt an urge to put a number of question concerning the impact of cultural journals and concerning ethics and motivations of publishing.Ten years ago, when I started my work in cultural journals, the very circulation of information on cultural matters seemed reason enough. The reasons why this is not the case today are various. Most important of all I have the notion that being an editor of a cultural journal today you have to reconsider not only what you are doing (the professionalism of it all), but first and foremost why you are doing it. The qualitative impact of cultural journals on cultural debate calls for a general reconsideration of it being a privilege - and a responsibility - to write and to edit, to get on print and to be voiced.

After giving this paper at a conference on cultural journals in Madrid, Spring 1995, I got into conversation over lunch with an elderly, Spanish editor of a renowned art magazine. The *caballero* had lived most of his adult life in Paris, exiled during the era of fascism. Having returned to Spain by the end of the seventies and being all of a sudden confronted with the openness of post-francism he decided to edit and publish this magazine, a fact that did not only imply freedom, but also sacrifice. In order to uphold his editorial task and his daily life he worked as a hotel porter during nights.

My point is not a banal glorification of hardship and sacrifice as formative for intellectual responsibility, the point is rather my own

astonishment that a debate on the role of the intellectual, in the climate of the Spanish *movida* during the eighties and into the nineties—in some matters very similar to the cultural climate in Denmark during the same period—seemed to be of substance and importance, of consequence.

What we have to consider for the present is the seemingly obvious fact, that no matter how well you may tune your voice you must have something of importance to say—or else the mass of cultural journals will be just another piece of therapy and our prime concerns may be reduced to sheer 'culturnomics', to schemes and plans for expansion and management of 'market', the label 'culturnomics' being recently put on the politics of cultural affairs in Denmark at the beginning of the nineties by Peter Duelund in his evaluation for the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.

• The title of my paper, »Cultural Journals and Cultural Debate: Focusing Cultural Diffusion?«, should be read from its closing question mark and with a focus on the concept of diffusion. And I might as well make my point from a start - *diffusion* should be understood as opposed to *diversity*, diffusion not being a multiplicity of voices, but a lack of responsibility when it comes to one's own voicing.

My above mentioned questions are as follows:
- What are the outlines of our cultural debate?
- Do cultural journals take part in the debate?
- Are the journals left any part?
- Have they disowned it?
- Or do they really want it, at all?
- If they have it or want it - is or could their role in cultural debate be a focusing of cultural diffusion?

These questions might seem if not rhetorical then at least polemic— they are, however, of substance, too. To me, they outline a discrepancy between an illusion of an overall culture—be it national or global—and a diffusion of culture into cultures.

• It is a fact that the Danish cultural journals, taken as a whole, represent many cultures, the question is whether they, given this diversity, may partake in one and the same culture. Only a few years ago we used the term 'culture' in its definite, The Culture, implying a recognisable structure into which different levels and concepts of culture would fit. When cultural journals today is met by the challenge of partaking in cultural debate—a challenge often put explicitly by newspaper critics—the debate is assumed, I think, to take place within this illusionary, overall culture.

As opposed to the overall structure of a Culture we must at the present recognise a variety of cultures, without a common and recognisable frame or structure. This particularity is not only to be found in domains of ethnic or regional or national cultures as opposed to overall or 'trans-'structures, but also in the more peaceful domains of genres and rhetorics of debate, as these become obvious in a variety of cultural journals in the years following the mid-eighties. Concepts of minority- and professional cultures have partly taken over traditional divisions of The Culture into High-, Popular- and Sub-cultures. The

individual is no longer representing one culture or a commonly recognisable cultural level, but partake, simultaneously, in several cultures.

I propose that there are two forms of cultural diversity, which in their extremes result in the end of any debate in *muteness* or *mumbling.* The first kind of extreme diversity is defined by non-negotiability in-between cultures—the kind of conflictual diversity we find at the roots of ethnic conflict, but which might be found elsewhere, too, as a matter of rhetorics. The second kind of extreme diversity is diffusion—as could be detected in the climate of cultural debate from the mid-eighties and onwards in Denmark.

In the first case, debate is *muted* due to the—often deliberate— cancelling of any mutual references, you might find argument and as we all know hostility, but no debate. In the second case, on which I am going to concentrate, debate is reduced to a *murmur,* either because discussions take place inside specialised cultures and is left at this, or because—and this is the crux—one does not feel at all committed to debate, one is satisfied *mumbling* to oneself.

• To clarify my point I will give a short account of the historical role played by the literary journal in cultural debate in Denmark, followed by a mapping of what you might call the culture-scape of the late eighties and early nineties, when the number of, at least, literary journals boomed and when cultural debate took place elsewhere, in the newspapers.

Literary journals, in a broad sense, have had great impact on cultural debate in Denmark since at least romanticism. In an outlet of German romanticism and Schlegel's *Athenaeum,* we have Christian Molbech's *Athene* (1809-1817). Ten years later we get *Månedskrift for Litteratur* (Literature Monthly, 1829-1838), one of the first literary journals, which was not only reviewing literature but also introduced *scholarly criticism* in a monthly form. At the same time we get Johan Ludvig Heiberg's *Kjøbenhavns Flyvende Post* (The Flying Post of Copenhagen, 1827-28 / 1834-37) which caused a shift in *generations* following Goethe's aesthetics, and displayed this shift in a polemic form. Following Heiberg's aesthetic crusade we find a great number of literary journals, the 1840'es being years of revolution and opposition in Denmark, too— these literary journals combine *defined views* on aesthetics, philosophy and politics in essays as well as in reviews.

The literary journals of this period are interesting, because their part in cultural debate is defined by their very clear cut points of view. The literary journals launch new and critical ideas, they voice the views of generations in cultural combat and debate; they are defined at the same time by friends and enemies.

The tradition of literary journals taking an active part in debates and even constituting debates by introducing international culture in Denmark continues during most of the 20th century—related to various movements and phases of the avant-garde and modernist literature. Cultural debate is, no doubt, part of educated culture, but still plays an important part in public debate. This characterisation goes for journals like *Heretica* (1948-53) and *Dialog* (1950-61) in the post-war period and in the sixties and seventies for *Politisk Revy* (1963-87) and *Fælleden* (1975-78). Still existing and going strong from the latter period is *Kritik* (1967-)—perhaps the widest known of current literary journals in Denmark. *Kritik* is interesting, because the journal has managed to change its

editorial perspective for a number of times, always causing a debate and managing to uphold a position as a publication of substance and opinion.

The journals mentioned gained access to a relatively public and broad debate, not because they were marketing themselves as journals of broad interest, but because they raised well defined debates from within a relatively defined culture. Until the mid-eighties the definition of culture and the outlines of cultural debate were set in terms of the above mentioned levelling of cultural circulation: High-culture—Popular-culture—Sub-culture. These boundaries were very much discussed, of course, but the various circulations of cultural phenomenons and the debates concerning them could still be seen as forces within one culture.

One last literary journal of this kind may be mentioned, because for a long time it has been the last at all: *Sidegaden* (The Side Street) from the early eighties. *Sidegaden* launched punk-culture and punk-poetry, generally labelled as 'poetry of the eighties'— another literary journal, another shift in generations. But from *Sidegaden,* the mid-eighties and onwards the outline set by literary generations and movements dissolves. The Danish critic and writer, Lars Bukdahl, describes the situation in an essay from 1993, »Hverken venner eller fjender« (Neither Friends nor Enemies):

> "Before you can write about the journals of the new generation, you must ask if it is at all meaningful to use the concept of a new generation and if so, whether this new generation is publishing journals.
>
> Generations, who have considered and launched themselves as generations, are manifold in the history of literature - and for each of these there was a journal to keep the banner flying. [...]
>
> In order to constitute a generation and voice this in a journal, you have to be young and you have to be a modernist. Today we have lots of young modernists, as many as in former generations, if not more, but we don't have a generation and not one journal to voice it; we have a lot of different journals edited by a lot of different young modernists, who have nothing in common besides being young, being modernists and wanting to edit a literary journal, because that is what you do when you are a young modernist.
> [...]
> The literary journals no longer represent differentiated literary positions and groups. [...] What is common to the journals is their openness: criterias of quality may vary, but it is unusual that an essay in one journal could not as well have been published in another journal, the number of writers writing everywhere is increasing, you do not have to declare your loyalty."

Bukdahl's characterisation of the climate for literary journals by the early nineties is in fact ambivalent. You might consider it either fruitful or disintegrating. If we interpret Bukdahl's characterisation as fruitful we get the picture of peaceful co-existence, of a multi-voiced culture, where debate is not at all muted, but consists in very separate and often very specified discussions. From the distance, however, you only hear the slight murmurs.

• As a correction to what I have proposed about the diffused multiplicity of cultures replacing The Culture, one do actually detect the outlines of another overall structure during the eighties: Culture as life-style, defined by marketing and circulation of information, by a certain kind of professional levelling of cultural phenomenons in the mall of appetising *events.* Simultaneously we get the concept of The Cultural Cambium [Det Kulturelle Vækstlag], covering e.g. the booming literary journals in this period.

  The relation between Life-Style Culture and The Cultural Cambium has, paradoxically, turned out to be an endangering force to the growth of culture. The boom of culture as mere growth and as professionalised event-products has disrupted a growth in quality—partly due to the increased and intoxicating speediness of culture. Whatever vague outlines of cultural debate, we might detect, are reset as events, cultural fast-food and the newest of news; debatable today, forgotten tomorrow, but made fetish in the sphere of culturnomics.

  The notion of The Cultural Cambium is defined by cultures upheld *con amore:* out of love, lovingly—amateuristically. It has been said of the booming of journals during the eighties, that during this period no one ever read a literary journal because everyone were busy making their own journal. Today you might ask—as does in fact Lars Bukdahl in his essay—why did all these journals flourish? What was the urges, the motivations, the commitments?

  Seen from the outside, from e.g. newspaper criticism, the various *con amore* cultures were news, they produced events for the mall of Cultural Life Style. Seen from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs they proved to be useful cosmetics to the increasing unemployment rate, among the youth: Cambium, Culture Management and Culturnomics. Seen from the inside we were and might still be partly blinded by our speed, what we did not consider was the fact that growth and debate requires time to ripen and qualify itself.

  I do not at all propose to cut into the cambium and reduce growth, but I think it is a fact that the booming numbers of literary journals during the eighties and early nineties partly caused the very vague part, these journals had and has in cultural debate.

• Another cause for lack of cultural debate in and in-between cultural journals is found in the general acceleration of media. This acceleration actually made it possible to publish journals, in a seemingly professional manner. The speediness of the business, however, had a timing out of pace with the timing of intellectual focusing and with the timing of the cultural journal—this is what we have to consider, too, as the question of critique. We are not, I claim, confronted by an absolute disintegration of critique. For a time it seemed as if critique dissolved into speedy genres of commentary—what I propose is, however, that critique may reappear, exactly as diversity and critiques, the reappearance being conditioned by a reconsideration of intellectualism and of the timing of reflection.

Caught in a fireline between electronic and printed news, the cultural journals might for a period have chosen the wrong turn, from qualified debate, towards featuring of culture. This turn is partly caused by mimicry. When asked once, why Danish cultural journals are printed in relatively small numbers, the Danish critic Poul Borum replied: »Due to the daily edition of the largest cultural journal in Denmark, the newspaper Information«.

As a result of life-style culture in the eighties and early nineties and as a result of the increased amount of news in the electronic medias, most of the Danish newspapers developed what is called sectioning [sektionering], resulting in large culture sections, containing features (interviews, forecasts of coming events etcetera) and reviews. It has been said lately by the critic John Chr. Jørgensen that presently the newspaper is edited as a cultural journal and the cultural journal mimics the newspaper, but is still recognisable—by its lack of professionalism and rhetorical standards.

So here one detects the murmuring diffusion of culture—in the genres and rhetorics of writing and editing. There has by tradition been a close relation between Danish newspapers and cultural journals, some newspapers has actually developed from journals as in the case of *Berlingske Tidende.* The relation is however only fruitful when differences are upheld, newspapers are into news (that goes for cultural journalism, too), and journals are into reflection and analysis (that goes for journalistic genres in journals, too).

• Concluding these maybe dysphoric reflections on the part played by cultural journals in cultural debate, I would like to propose the following: That in order to focus the cultural diffusion, in order to turn from murmuring to voicing and actually displaying the diversity of cultures, that the journals may represent and might represent in very qualified ways—be it as in my case-study literary journals or the broader amount of cultural journals—one has to reflect the media and timing of the journal.

Cultural journals are either scholarly, i.e. highly specialised, and these are the journals that from time to time strike a string of substance in a broader public debate—as by a sudden magic of timing. The murmur heard from a distance seems, in these cases, appetising enough to attract listeners. As to the broader cultural journal one has to consider the advantage of slowing down, of being late or delayed—measured by the standards of the newspaper. Most of the broader journals are actually edited and written in delay, what lacks in order to stop murmuring and mumbling to oneself is not mainly professionalisation as to the craft of writing and editing, but more as to a will to be late, to be slow, to take pride and responsibility in being *periodical.*

In Scandinavia a journal or periodical is called 'Tidsskrift', similar to the German 'Zeitschrift': My point is, that in order to regain a focusing part in cultural debate, one must reinterpret the relation between Tid / Time and Skrift / Writing at the root of the name. Focusing the diffused is a matter of timing, not in the sense of speeding, but in the sense of taking one's time in order to write timely.

• I shall conclude by quoting the Danish critic, Erik Skyum-Nielsen, who has given the following ironic description of the odd timing of cultural journals:

"Seven arguments against cultural journals

You cannot count on them. They change editors and names and lay-out, they dissolve and reappear.

They always pop up with the oddest timing. Before you have finished an issue, another has appeared, and you will not have time to read that one, either.

They are utterly undependable. You cannot predict what they will contain; half of it will be rubbish and the other half postponed to the following issue.

They are so strange, you cannot at all feel at home in them. The writers are not really known, and if they are—which happens very rarely—they always write on something else than what they are known for.

They are so different from issue to issue. You may skim your newspaper (without reading it) and you may watch television (without seeing what is going on), but the journals demand concentration. They rob you of your time. And they never give it back.

They seem so particular. Publishing whatever they feel like, instead of giving the readers what they want. They may even look down on people with regular working hours, you get the impression that they do. And on top of it all you have to pay for them.

They are far to difficult to get hold on. The newspaper stands are not allowed to sell them, and you can never find them at your bookseller's. You may end up subscribing.

The paper has been published in an extended and revised version in the Swedish journal, Ppb! (5, 95). In the Swedish version I focus on the ethics of rhetorics and professionalism in the publishing of cultural journals.

Peter Duelund og Trine Bille Hansen: *Hvor står vi nu?, Kulturens Politik,* Bd. 1, Århus 1994.
Lars Bukdahl: »Hverken venner eller fjender«, in: *Tecken i tiden,* Uddevalla 1994. (1993, in *Danske Noter)*
Erik Skyum-Nielsen: »Syv argumenter imod kulturtidsskrifter«,
in: *HS Dansk* 45/46, 1991

Halluci*nation*

The Phantoms of Identity and the Role of Cultural Journals

Peter Nielsen

First I will present some reflections on the notion of the nation in the context of cultural identity and in respect to an essay by Robert Musil. After that there will follow a small portrait of a cultural magazine, "Lettre International", which in its subtitle calls itself "The cultural magazine of Europe".

I

The people, for whom the nation do not exist, are making it too easy for themselves. These people, who declare themselves to be exterritorial and over-national spirits, are only turning their backs on the reality of the world, denying to confront themselves with the unpleasant. But also the people, for whom the idea of the over-national or the global do not exist, are making it too easy and too comfortable for themselves. Do I need to stress that?

Both attitudes, the over-national and the national, are different forms of the same chauvinism, of the same animosity against the world and the refusal to take part in it.

I think that both attitudes originate in the fact that they deal with the national as an *answer*. Either as a passionate affirmation, disregarding the concequences, or as a denial. Perhaps instead of focusing on the national as an answer we should start to deal with it as a *question*, and that is, as a question without any simple answer.

Of course something like a nation exists; only it is hard to define what it is. Something complex, indefinable, a mysterious unity, which because of its vague nature is impossible to catch hold of. Like a hallucination or a ghost.

Even if the nation is a hallucination, it has a meaning. It represents value. The nation integrates a common cultural tradition. The nation is culturally formative and stabilizes identity, as it gives you a feeling of home, of belonging to a certain culture and of feeling at home in that culture. The nation, I think, is to be understood as something that endows you with identity. It gives you a body and perhaps also a soul, a history, and makes it possible for you to meet and exchange with the Other.

The nation is the starting point with no final destination or answer. Never the point of no return, as with all the wars and cruelties, all the outbursts of the irrational, of the non-sense and of the monstrous, which have been commited in the name of nation and in the name of cultural identity throughout the whole of the twentieth century.

In these intoxicating moments of war, where man is part of and dissolved in an over-personal occurance, the nation is felt almost incarnate. It seems as if people is often unconsciously attracted by this hallucinatory 'manifestation' of the nation. At the same time, as the nation is culturally formative, it seems that you may also find a monstrous hysteria in the soul of it: that which prepares people to sacrifice themselves, their existence, their nearest, the whole meaning of their lives to a phantom, as the Austrian writer

and essayist Robert Musil expressed it in his essay "The Nation as Ideal and as Reality" ("Die Nation als Ideal und als Wirklichkeit", 1921). In this essay, after trying to define and describe the nation, Musil came to the conclusion that it was an imagination; a phantom, which does not correspond to something real. (A fact that does not necessarily imply that this phantom has no basis in reality. Of course it has).

Nationalism is still something you have to take into consideration. Something deeply connected with (the search of) identity. It seems again - in Europe after the breakdown of the Soviet Empire and the fall of the Iron Curtain - to be an answer to a feeling of loss or lack of identity, which often causes a panic reaction. Musil expressed this wonderfully in his novel *The Man without Qualities*, when he portrayed the inhabitants and the different nationalities of the Habsburg Monarchy, "die Kakanier" as follows:

"Man stelle sich ein Eichhörnchen vor, das nicht weiß, ob es ein Eichhorn oder eine Eichkatze ist, ein Wesen, das keinen Begriff von sich hat, so wird man verstehn, daß es unter Umständen vor seinem eigenen Schwanz eine heillose Angst bekommen kann; in solchem Verhältnis zu einander befanden sich aber die Kakanier und betrachteten sich mit dem panischen Schreck von Gliedern, die einander mit vereinten Kräften hindern, etwas zu sein." (Robert Musil. *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Reinbek 1978, p. 451).

This feeling of a lack of unity resulted, according to Musil, in the destruction of the Habsburg Dual Monarchy because of its inexpressability, because it had no notion of itself as a nation. Or in other words: the different powers of the state could no longer be integrated into the same notion of the nation.

In the search of national identity people often look for an origin far back in history. And from this point they create and (to some extent) invent history, although nation as a political and social formation is of recent origin. The invention of traditions makes national symbols and rituals come alive at the same time as they are being endowed with meaning and value.

This process creates a value system, a possibility for a person to find himself within a system, and to distinguish between good and evil. Simultaneously this process paradoxically prepares the same person to take part in the over-personal hysteria of the nation.

In his essay, Musil tells us, that "nation" is an imaginary collective notion. The only thing real are the individuals. The individuals form the nation. Ideology arises from the distortion of this relation, when it says that the nation forms the individual. This fatal distortion is the basis of the evil, the basis of what the Germans call *Schein* instead of *Sein*. The basis of the phantoms of identity. The consequences of this distortion are obvious. If in the matters of good and evil the individual is no longer made responsible, but only the nation (the race, the state...), ethics will degenerate. As we have seen plenty of examples of...

The true national identity, the true "we", is not based upon single principles, upon identity understood as something *identical with itself*. The true identity is a non-identical identity in the same way as the nation (the culture or the individual) is never just identical with itself. To claim their identity is to produce a phantom.

I think that this idea of a non-identical identity, or of a movable, flexible identity, is fundamental not only from the point of view of the cultural vitality of a single nation, but also from the point of view of the over-national or the global. It only makes sense to speak of the national and the global as something that depend on each other. The global perspective only makes sense as an exchange, as something that throws a certain light on the national identity, debates it etc. An universal, open exchange with the world in all areas and through all media is a universal ethical claim for cultures in order not to decay. And to participate in this process is, in my oppinion, the most import role to play for cultural journals.

II

In the following I shall leave these abstract considerations and try to be more concrete, in the sense that I will speak of a cultural journal or magazine, which in my opinion has succeeded firstly in combining a national and a global perspective and secondly in insisting on a necessary dialogue between small and big cultures.

The name of the magazine is "Lettre International", founded 1984 by Antonin Liehm in Paris, followed by national editions of Lettre in Madrid, Rom, Berlin, Budapest, Bucharest, Prag, Sofia, Belgrad, Zagreb and St Petersburg. It is not possible for me here to present the whole "Project Lettre". I can only concentrate on a few characteristics of the German edition.

The founding of the German "Lettre International" was caused by the need in Germany of a cultural journal to create a more open cultural and intellectual situation or horizon, which had bad conditions in postwar West Germany, characterized by a spiritual narrow-mindedness and ignorance of different important cultural and philosophical currents. Caused by a need to create a more open flow of thoughts, which could provoke or untie a horizon limited by the limits of convictions. This corresponds to the idea of a movable or flexible identity, of which I spoke before. The opening, or the discussion, of a specific German national cultural identity in the light of international or global aspects.

"Lettre" has become an important forum for the discussion of an European cultural identity. One of the important aims of Lettre is in a way to mediate between the small and big cultures, and to challenge what the main editor of Lettre in Paris, Antonin Liehm, once called the "cultural provincialism of the big cultures". With that he meant the tendency of the big cultures to think that they are independent and indispensable. It leads to provincialism, when the big cultures do not worry about what is going on in the world. It causes too little curiosity towards the Other, towards the Non-Affirmative, towards the things that differ. In a way this confrontation with the small cultures forces the big culture to see itself with the eyes of the small cultures. Adversary the small cultures cannot, if they do not want to decay, allow themselves the same ignorance.They cannot allow themselves to live in the illusion of self-sufficiency, but must be open to the world and adopt all impulses from the outside, since it is this process only that clarifies the particular and authentic identity of a specific culture.

Before the fall of the Soviet Empire and the Berlin-Wall, another important aim of "Lettre" was to promote a political, cultural and intellectual

discussion across the East/West-partition. This bipolar situation has of course been succeeded by a much more complex situation. Behind the bipolar structure other structures have appeared and left behind a plural situation.

It is the ambition of "Lettre" to reflect this new situation in Europe. One of the consequences of the fall of the former Soviet Union is the repeated mobilization of the national culture, of nationalism. Whereas Western Europe is characterized by a forced process of integration, by a highly developed economical and technical level, by high speed and by the production of services and virtual products, we face in Eastern Europe quite the opposite development. Instead of a movement towards a more universal or trans-national society, we witness here a particularisation and a re-nationalization. Instead of the idea of as high a level of mobility and flexibility as possible, we see here the idea of searching and defining an own, closed identity.

This is an important, but also a very dangerous non-simultaneousness of the European culture, which needs to be reflected. It is an important challenge to all cultural journals.

The third important aim of "Lettre" is taking into consideration other, foreign and strange, cultural horizons, letting them interfere with and disturb the European horizon. This is the global perspective or the international intention, which is also implied in the title of the magazine: "Lettre *International*".

This aim of cultural openness and of plurality is first of all realized by virtue of the good essays, which I think is the "trademark" of "Lettre". The essay is the genre of plural purposes, the genre of connecting the heterogeneous and the constant variation of perspective - and variation of identity. In a way the essay represents the genre of the non-identical identity.

The word 'Essay' is a large definition of the plurality of texts in the magazine. In short, the very characteristic about "Lettre" is the three dimensions of texts presented in each issue of the magazine. These three dimensions are: *descriptive* texts, which visualize world and matters without any moral engagement; *analytical* texts, which make structures of thoughts visible in their potentiality, and more philosophical texts, which analyse and describe human existence and culture; and finally the *imaginary* texts, which refer to what we might call the lyrical forms of life, the micro-consciousness or the human projections, in which we all live in opposition to the cold macro-consciousness of daily life. The imaginary is the smallest "motor" of life, but not the least important. It is important, that the boundaries of these three kinds of texts in "Lettre" are fluid, and that a really good essay is able to mix these three dimensions in one.

For a cultural jounal that wants to meet the challenge of our European cultural identity, I find it important, and this is a kind of conclusion, to think in these three dimensions of texts. So I think the cultural journals have an important role to play in the discussions and shapings of our cultural identities. It is not so much a question, if we *have* a role to play as a question of *how* we play this role.

From the Attic to the Airport

Spatial changes in the critical forums of the cultural journal at the end of the Gutenberg Galaxy[1]

Søren Pold

> "Print technology created the public. Electric technology created the mass."
> Marshall McLuhan, 1967[2]

Is criticism and the critical approach in a state of crisis? At the "Cultures of the Culture" conference for cultural journals in Copenhagen, October 18-20, 1996, the notion of the crisis of criticism was often mentioned and repeated as almost a (critical?) fact. The German media theorist, Norbert Bolz, for example stated that "the last hour of criticism has come, because criticism presupposes perspective and distance. The critic had a point of view and he enjoyed his freedom from bias. In the world of New Media, this is no longer possible."[3]

This notion of the crisis of criticism surely has some sense to it, especially when seen in the light of the global and European political situation after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the following collapse of communism as a trustworthy alternative to Western liberal democracy and capitalism. It is also obvious that the new electronic media challenge the concept of criticism. But on the other hand, I think that the traditional idea of criticism, put forward by Norbert Bolz, as situated in a static, perspective space with the possibility of a distanced general view, is much too narrow, at least when seen in connection with the cultural journals. The cultural journals have to a large extend left that notion of criticism behind and have entered a much more dynamic critical space.

In order to discuss this, I will provide three short case studies of cultural journals and their forums or critical spaces. Also, this will hopefully provide a more visionary context for a discussion of the possible electronic future of the cultural journal, than the often discussed issues of copyright and economy. Not that economy, copyright etcetera are not important and problematic issues in connection with the new electronic media, but such issues are conservative in the sense that they deal with the loss of the features of an old medium such as the materiality of the book. Instead I would like to focus on the new

possibilities for cultural journals, and on how cultural journals might use the new media to extend or at least maintain their range of criticism. How can the cultural journal use the Internet to illustrate or model the space formed by the journal and its readers and thereby support the critical dialogue between it and its readers? Or to put it as a question which is simultaneously simple and complex; how will the new media technologies transform the critical reading and writing space of the cultural journal, and how can the space of the journal, its forum, be informed and transmitted by it? - What kinds of space will we enter as publishers and readers of journals in an electronic age?

I. Passage

Before throwing myself into the unsecure realm of cyberspace, I am going to examine something more traditional and well known, at least to myself, namely a journal of which I am co-editor; *Passage*. However, instead of the long story about how we edit our issues I will focus on how a literary journal like *Passage* presents and pictures itself in spatial terms, and how this corresponds to the environment of which *Passage* is part.

Passage is a small academic journal printed in book format. We have made 23 issues the past 10 years. All members of the editorial board are connected to the Department of Comparative Literature, University of Aarhus, where the journal is housed. *Passage* is consequently part of the environment around the Department of Comparative Literature; an environment which is a local environment, which at the same time is connected to national and international networks as part of the global literary academic society.

It might be said of both *Passage* and the department as well as of literature in general, that it is provincial in the sense of being somewhat displaced from the main discourses. Both Aarhus as a town, which in one of our issues is characterised as an a-metropolis, and literature as a discourse are displaced from the pomp and prestige connected to the more central discourses of the capital and the more powerful discourses of for instance law and natural science.

Passage reflects and takes part in this special mixture between the national/international and the local. On the one hand our subject is world literature and not specifically Danish or Scandinavian literature; on the other hand our approach is rooted in the local university environment. In this way,

we fit neither the group of scandinavistic journals, nor are we visible as an international comparative literature journal because of our Danish language.

In all *Passage* is a rather informal and independent academic journal in the sense that articles for the journal are not refereed by anybody outside of the editorial board. Being independent makes us on the one hand free to compose issues that matter to us in our local environment, and it liberates us in some senses from the pressure of larger institutionalisations.[4] At least the articles in *Passage* do not have to submit to international standards for academic writing; they can be both literary and essayistic as well as academic, a mixture we support as we believe that the style of writing is not innocent. - On the other hand, this independence and sometimes wilfulness has the disadvantage that the journal is difficult to categorise and risks being overlooked.

So far so good concerning the environment of which *Passage* is part. Next question is what kind of critical space it constitutes in itself?

Being a book, one is tempted to think that *Passage* is linear and reads from beginning to end, but nobody reads an academic journal from cover to cover. Instead the readers pick out single articles and read them for pleasure or more often to gain inspiration and knowledge. Many of the articles in *Passage* are rather long with footnotes and references that tie the articles to a larger context of texts and incidents; or to put it plainly, to the library and to the world. In this way, one could say that not only the articles but also their references are written and read in the journal. This is especially the case of a literary journal, in which a lot of the articles are readings of other books. Consequently the reading of *Passage* already forms a much more complex network than is suggested by the linear book. Although a literary journal like *Passage* is physically a book, the reading of it transforms the physical, linear book space into a vast network of other books, read and written about in each article. Books pointed at in allusions, references and footnotes.[5]

What is a journal then, if it is not read from one end to the other, and how does the journal distinguish itself from the articles it consists of? In order to come up with an answer to this, I will take a brief look at how the journal envisions its own space in relation to its writers and readers.

Passage started in 1986 with an editorial that pointed out that the editorial board did not want to survey the space of the journal totally. Instead of a journal that "Critically, powerfully, passionately fortifies a small watchtower" and "charts *its* special field in the total field," *Passage* is more envisioned as an attic filled with old things and curiosities in opposition to the, at that time, more common journals that were defined by specific political and theoretical

perspectives. *Passage* has given up the general view for the overlooked perspective where men of letters (already a curiosity) can carry out their reflection from their relaxed position, while having a smoke. (The editorial actually ends by saying: "We're smoking.")[6] –

Almost twenty issues later another editorial writes that "Passage demands a space which is not closed," and with "passage" we are referring both to the act of passing through, the name of our journal, and to our concept of literature which is "not a closed space but rather itself a passage through which the reality and its different discourses passes."[7] Here again, the journal is envisioned as a space, but as a space with traffic; a space which is not totally closed but through which things pass but still in a slow and somewhat displaced mode. *Passage* has come out of the attic, but we still insist on the displaced perspective a bit removed from the street.

Besides, *Passage* is probably not innocently named after that withdrawn urban space that Walter Benjamin made the object of his great study of the disappearing nineteenth century Paris, *Das Passagen-Werk*. The *passage* or the arcade was an urban space made for pedestrians where traffic was slow, and where the dandies and flaneurs would strut about with their favourite tortoise in a lead in order to set the slow speed. In this way, the *passage* has after Benjamin developed into a topos for the study of the emerging urban reality, and it is by Benjamin, and others such as Siegfried Kracauer,[8] seen as the last trace of the disappearing 19. century. In one of our recent issues,[9] we chose the modern city as topic, and it resulted in an issue that travels from the nineteenth century passages/arcades with their panoramas to the mediated global village and the Internet; a movement that is made in both the issue as a whole, in several of the critical articles, and in the collection of literary cities, which bind the issue together, written by the Danish author, Merethe Pryds Helle.

While *Passage* has moved metaphorically from the attic through the *passage* and into the global village and the Internet, it still physically resides in the book, though the books we make today, using electronic desktop publishing, look somewhat different from the first issues made on an electric typewriter. We have started discussing how to begin moving on to the Internet's World Wide Web, and we have in fact recently published our first homepage,[10] though we will probably rely on the book for some years still. But others have made the move, and it is interesting to see how several on-line journals tend to use space as a more or less direct concept for their journals.

Most on-line journals consist of a homepage with links to thematic issues, articles, reviews and a possibility for submitting feedback from the reader.

Normally it is possible to view the articles of the journal ordered in different ways, for instance ordered thematically or alphabetically by author, or it is even possible to search the articles for a particular key-word or concept. Often the individual articles have also links to other places, both within the journal and on the Internet. Some journals and magazines even carry different forms of on-line events. It is possible to join on-line discussions about topics related to the journal, or maybe one can meet some of the writers of the articles.[11]

Two of the journals that I have found on-line, also tend to use spaces as concepts for the journal, and these spaces are characterised by being spaces of traffic; spaces that something or someone passes through. What one with could call vectorised, dynamic or heterogeneous spaces or spaces in transit.

II. Telepolis

The German *Telepolis*[12] is an ambitious attempt to see both how modern city architecture is changed under the influence of telematic technology, and how new computerised media are urbanised and integrated in a new environment.[13] Or in other words, its aim is to show and explore how the city is getting deterritorialised through the Internet; how the city and urbanisation, so to say, is getting less dependent on physical and geographical location, transforming into a widespread 'global village' or 'telepolis'. The *Telepolis* website was made in connection with an exhibition in November 1995. It is beautifully constructed containing a lot of interesting information and ways of using the current state-of-the-art Internet technology. Among other things, one has the opportunity to enter a three dimensional model of the exhibition, taking advantage of the Virtual Reality Modelling Language (VRML), which allows the user to navigate in a still rather primitive 3D model; a sort of low resolution virtual reality, which is rather impressing, at least for netizens like me, though there is absolutely no risk of mistaking the virtual reality for the real.

The *Telepolis* website also contains a journal with an archive containing a lot of interesting articles and a forum in which it is possible to explore links, to take part in interviews and discussions as well as contribute to a hypertext "den das Netz über sich selbst generieren soll."[14] - Unfortunately there is hardly any interaction and instead of giving the impression of the throbbing life of a great new metropolis, this forum looks more like a deserted suburb, or rather a shiny new one where people have not moved in yet. In fact strolling through the *Telepolis*, I did not find any traces of interaction the last eight months, and

though this would surely not be a problem for a printed publication, where one of course does not expect any changes to take place after the book or the journal has left the printer, it tends to become critical for an on-line publication, especially one that tries to involve the reader in close interaction.

This could point to the fact that it demands a lot of resources from the editors and writers to keep such an ambitious project on the Internet alive. An Internet publication ages much quicker than a printed publication; in fact the possibility of change and interaction also sets up a demand for change and interaction, otherwise the publication will seem deserted and quickly begin to crumble or seem outdated. An ambitious web publication like *Telepolis* simply needs constant renovation and re-furnishing, or maybe it is just too early to build such telepolises in Europe in a non-English language? At least it takes time to get people to move into the new surroundings. – Hopefully the builders of *Telepolis* will not give up and demolish their very impressive site.[15]

III. Speed

Speed is the name of an electronic journal housed on a server at University of California, Santa Barbara, which is hardly relevant since it is accessible from all over the world as long as you have an up-to-date computer with an Internet connection. As *Telepolis*, *Speed* is using the latest Internet technology in order to bring forward a rich multimedia environment consisting of moving images, 360° panorama images, three dimensional VRML spaces, stereo sound, and of course text. *Speed* is, as many ordinary journals, divided into issues that are organised around a theme. However the themes as well as the general concept of the journal seem well adjusted to the digital, mediated reality of the Internet, since aspects of the technological mediated society are the key interests of the journal. I will quote from the "General Information" in the currently latest issue:

> "_SPEED_ provides a forum for the critical investigation of technology, media, and society. Our intention is to contribute toward a democratic discourse of technology and media, one that is always focused upon the material conditions of life that technologies and media constitute and demand, and yet does not lose sight of the power of ideas to change those conditions. We feel that as media of various kinds become more ubiquitous, what it means to live with and talk about a "medium"

changes and expands, and so do the critical vocabularies of interpreting what those transformations indicate. Our primary goal in that effort is to foster a cross-fertilization of ideas between communities of people in the "academy" and "industry" too often separated, not by interest or common concern, but by artificially imposed disciplinary and organizational boundaries."[16]

Speed is thus aiming at creating a new space for a new critical dialogue about the mediated realities. Both the form and the content are constructed in new ways emphasising the importance of re-thinking both the space and what is in it in order to provide a critical dialogue between groups otherwise separated; an aim which has more or less always been an important goal of cultural journals. But what is new in *Speed* is that they have understood the importance of modelling new critical spaces or forums in order to discuss the new mediated realities.

There is a lot to be said in support of this attitude; it is definitely necessary and fruitful somehow to involve and use the new media in order to provide a both visionary and critical understanding of it. One needs only to look at all the dystopian and even apocalyptic books that accompany every new media evolution, from the advent of photography to television and the Internet, in order to recognise the more or less anachronistic absurdity in using the printed book medium to totally denounce a newer medium. A use of the book medium which is often, in a non-reflected way, seeing features of the book medium, such as the authority of the author as natural, ontological or even metaphysical to some extent.[17] The new media indeed reflect changes in the perception of reality and in the society in general, and to totally denounce the new media would only result in disconnecting oneself from the debate. On the other hand, it is possibly a disadvantage for a journal that wants "to contribute toward a democratic discourse of technology and media" to use technology that leaves many potential readers clueless and with insufficient computers.

The latest issue of *Speed* is currently the "Airports and Malls" issue. If you have a powerful, up-to-date computer and a good Internet connection, and once you have configured and downloaded all the relevant software and plug-ins, you are in for a beautifully designed experience which might point to a possible future for the cultural journal. The "Airports and Malls" issue "is about the transformation of social space by information technologies." Furthermore, it is itself modelled by use of the airport as a spatial metaphor in order to simulate and reflect upon features of our global media society:

> "Perhaps no social space serves to exemplify this development more so than the airport. It stands for the globalization of participant space under the sign of hegemonic capital circulation, and of the standardization of capital and circulation under the sign of information."[18]

The content of the issue is organised via information "kiosks", there are flights, a gallery containing hyperlinked artworks and panorama photos which all work figuratively with travelling and transportation terminals, and there are of course essays (some of which are relying on multimedia and hypertext links).

The "flights" section of the journal is constructed with a lot of links or departures, as they are called, out into cyberspace or the rest of the WWW. In this way, the airport metaphor is explicitly connected with the Internet's WWW interface:

> "Before you is a visual metaphor, an interface, or perhaps a pun. Nevertheless, it is a real space; a place you go in order to go somewhere else. (...) You enter the mechanism of trans-portation, an airplane, a bus, a train, a ship; and after a few hours or so, the world outside has been re-arranged to look exactly like your destination. The links sections that follow (or lead) work on the same principle."[19]

The "Airports and Malls" issue by *Speed* uses the new possibilities of the Internet to their outmost. It has to a large extent succeeded in integrating media technology and critical thinking in the construction of a new kind of forum, and in this way it has succeeded in making the academy and the industry meet. What is truly creative and new about "Airports and Malls" is the way it is constructed using pictures, stereo sound, and 3D VRML space as an acoustic, visual, and metaphoric airport space; a total multi media space that one can enter in order to experience, move around in, and reflect upon the postmodern condition it outlines. In this way the journal is simultaneously making a simulation of what it is dealing with theoretically, and the reader is drawn into the experience of the simulated reality that he is supposed to reflect upon. The only thing missing is the smell of the tax free shops and the tense, sterile atmosphere combined with the hangovers from yesterday's farewell party.

IV From the attic to the airport

In this paper I have tried to point to some spatial aspects of the cultural journal, and to how these aspects are changing at the end of the Gutenberg Galaxy. From the assumption that the cultural journal is trying to form a forum for critical debate, I have tried to show how three very different journals are using their respective publication technologies in order to form such spaces in interaction with their environments and the possibilities of their respective publication technologies. And I have pointed to two examples of how this can be done using Internet technology.

I hope my case studies has proved that the critical spaces of cultural journals are not necessarily the central perspective space criticised by Norbert Bolz. On the contrary, the critical forums presented by these three examples are all dynamic and have certainly given up the idea of a general view. Many cultural journals are in fact well aware of the problems that Bolz mentions and are working with developping new, dynamic forums towards new ways of understanding the important notion of criticism. Along the way several journals experiment in creative ways with the new possibilities of the Internet. The forum for setting up a critical debate has to a large extent already moved into media space; so of course cultural journals are also considering ways of getting out of the attic.

[1] This paper was first held at the "Cultures of the Culture" conference for cultural journals in Copenhagen, October 18-20, 1996. It has been sligthly edited immediately after the conference.

[2] Marshall McLuhan: *The Medium is the Massage,* Bantam Books 1967

[3] This opinion is also expressed in his paper "The Deluge of Sense" (http://www.design-inst.nl/doors/doors1/transcripts/bolz/bolz.html) from which I quote.

[4] About how indexes and standardizations threaten academic freedom, see Johan Fjord Jensen's "De fire kulturer" in *Passage* 20/21

[5] Here I cannot help but insert a footnote with a reference to the American author Nicholson Baker, who in his wonderful debute novel, *The Mezzanine,* among other things reflects upon the role of the footnote in texts of knowledge – a reflection which is of course carried out in a footnote: "it doesn't end with the book; restatement and self-disagreement and the enveloping sea of referenced authorities all continue. Footnotes are the finer-suckered surfaces that allow tentacular paragraphs to hold fast to the wider reality of the library." (p. 123)

[6] *Passage*, 1, 1986, p. 5

[7] *Passage*, 20/21, 1995, pp. 5-6 - I should insert that this editorial is mainly written by myself.

[8] See for instance Siegfred Kracauer's "Abschied von der Lindenpassage" (in Das *Ornament der Masse,* (Frankfurt/M, 1977)

[9] *Passage*, 22, 1996

[10] http://www.hum.aau.dk/Institut/litthist/Publika.Passage.html

[11] See for example Post Modern Culture (http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc/contents.all.html), CTHEORY (http://www.ctheory.com/), or Hotwired, Wired Magazine's on-line edition (http://www.hotwired.com)

[12] http://www.lrz-muenchen.de/MLM/telepolis/deutsch/teleplaza.html

[13] Cf. Norbert Bolz: "Tele! Polis! - Das Designprobles des 21.Jahrhunderts" (http://www.lrz-muenchen.de/MLM/telepolis/deutsch/thinktank/bolz.htm)

[14] http://www.lrz-muenchen.de/cgi-bin/htimage/MLM/telepolis/deutsch/ejournal/forum.cnf?262,165

[15] What in fact has happened is that the *Telepolis* that I describe above has been deserted and the inhabitants has moved to another location under the wings of the German Heinz Heise Verlag (http://www.heise.de/tp). At the time of writing the paper, I was unfortunately not aware of this, since there were no links to the new URL address from the old site, and the new site has been and still is difficult to find through search engines on the Internet. This is definitely a pity since the new web site is filled with the same kind of interesting technological criticism as constituted the old. In fact it looks as if the editors, Armin Medosch and Florian Rötzer, has succeeded in creating a lively critical space with debate forums such as "Terminal", "Container", "Salon", and the cyberfeministic highly interactive forum "PopTarts". The interface is much more simple than the old *Telepolis,* though still with frames and some Java script. However Armin Medosch revealed at 6Cyberconf in Oslo (5-8 June,

1997) that they are working on an even more simple and clear interface in order to make it easier to navigate and interact with.

[16] http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/~speed/airmall/kiosk/info3.html

[17] About the metaphysics of the book cf. Espen J. Aarseth: "Nonlinearity and Literary Theory" in *Hyper/Text/Theory* (George P. Landow ed.), J. Hopkins UP 1994

[18] http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/~speed/airmall/

[19] http://www.arts.ucsb.edu:80/~speed/airmall/flights/frameLinks.html