

**We've built it;
now come live in it.**

*Help secure the future of
the European Review of Books*



The EUROPEAN REVIEW of Books



The *European Review of Books* is a magazine of culture and ideas, in print and online, in English and in a writer's own tongue. We publish book-length issues three times a year, next to digital-only and newsletter-only pieces.

In our pages, you'll find many kinds of writing: travelogue, fiction, profile, parody, poem, come what may. But we champion the essay, because a good essay is the enemy of the airy platitude, the antidote to the measly « opinion ». We're tired of *opinion*; Our mission is to thicken the European intellectual atmosphere.

Culture in Europe currently filters through national, metropolitan and British-American sieves; we want to write, and to edit, beyond these sieves. The ERB brings European writers – undiscovered, rediscovered, untranslated, untranslatable – to a new international audience. Thickening the atmosphere means cultivating more intelligent dissent: the good kind of disharmony, a lively cacophony. « Europe » deserves better critique. We aim to create, in short, a multilingual *République des Lettres* for our moment.

WHY WE WRITE

*ALI
SMITH*

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Dear George Orwell,

Why do we write? Given that words and reality, as you once put it, are so often 'no liker' to each other 'than chessmen to living beings.' Because I'm writing to you now from a future no-one could have seen coming — except maybe yourself, and H G Wells, and J G Ballard and the furthest-seeing writers over the centuries from Sophocles to Margaret Atwood.

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WHY WE WRITE

Because everything you wrote gifts us with the knowledge that words are the chesspieces by which the powers that be will play their games with our lives. You know, as the current UK Prime Minister puts it, that 'human beings are creatures of the imagination,' that 'people live by narrative.'

I've been reading your 1946 essay *Why I Write*, with its portrait of yourself as a child who already understood our natural attraction to narrative, our need of it to make sense of, mark and question who we think we are, and above all to let us be conscious of and about what it is we're doing, both in reality and when we narrate ourselves via our fantasies of self and reality:

I used to imagine that I was, say, Robin Hood, and picture myself as the hero of thrilling adventures, but quite soon my 'story' ceased to be narcissistic in a crude way and became more and more a mere description of what I was doing ... For minutes at a time this kind of thing would be running through my head: 'He pushed the door open and entered the room. A yellow beam of sunlight, filtering through the muslin curtains, slanted on to the table, where a matchbox, half open, lay beside the inkpot. With his right hand in his pocket he moved across to the window.'

What a double-strength consciousness in you at this early stage, of how our versions of reality will involve not just a form of narration but also to some extent a crucial consciousness of that narration as construct. Look at the way that making a version of reality also involves a transformation into past tense. Why is that? Is the past tense more ceremonious? More handle-able?

'Who controls the past controls the future, and who controls the present controls the past.' This is one of your most famous examples of sloganeering, straight out of the totalitarian state, Oceania, in your great novel *1984*. I was a latecomer to reading *1984*, and when I found out that some of its original possible titles were *The Last Man in Europe* and *The Last European*

I shook my head at the sight of the first initial shock of the EU referendum, proffering what looked like a return to the country back into its past.

I was a much earlier reader of your *1946* 40 years earlier, in a class at the Highlands School in the Highlands of Scotland. I was on the excellent school list, and now how it equipped me with a way to register not just the world but how it will. It also gave me a consciousness of the working

TWO LEGS
FOUR LEGS

Such small words. More powerful when they're put together.

Though some are more powerful than others, all slogans are powerful. One derives from Scottish Gaelic, *ghaigh* and *ghairm*, meaning 'I will fight', slogan's a war cry, whether it be 'Make America great again' or 'Make the Jews great again'. It's the real thing, I think.

Because of you we all have our eyes open. Take the case of *Woke* or *virtue signalling*, the constant missal and patrolling of politeness easily unmasked as tricks in the book, as blatant attempts to press the sleep of activism but on any article of consciousness. Or the word *antifa*, version of the word *antifascist* to cloak then remove the threat, and the real history of the word and replace it with a coinage that acts of opposing fascism in a sound a bit foreign, a word



Our story

In the spring of 2021, we launched a crowdfunding campaign with future contributors like Ali Smith, David Mitchell, Adania Shibli and Rem Koolhaas helping to spread the word. We raised a spectacular €94.000 from 852 supporters. With those funds, we commissioned early contributors, created our first issue and built our online platform. Issue One appeared in June 2022, and the print edition (3800 copies) soon sold out.

Meanwhile, Studio Europa Maastricht became our founding partner, supporting us with a total of €120.000 paid out over three years. This allowed us to start thinking properly about a future for our endeavor. In December of 2022, funding partner Stichting Democratie en Media made a donation of €90.000, and offers continuing organizational support.

Issue Two launched in early January of 2023, Issue Three in late April of that same year – which we celebrated with a packed launch event in Berlin. ERBs are sold in more than 250 shops in 19 different countries around the world, and in our webshop.



Working on Europe



Democracy & Media
Foundation **Stichting
Democratie & Media**

Contributors

In our first year alone, we've featured work from 80+ contributors with ties to 20+ different countries. We published their work in English, but also in Ukrainian, Valencian, Korean, German, Danish, Arabic, Russian, Spanish and Chinese. The ERB has one foot in the academy and one foot out; essayistic scholarship can breathe alongside new fiction. Some examples from our first year:



Beyond thalassophobia

by *Walter Grünzweig*

On the literary corpus of Robert Habeck, German vice-chancellor and novelist-statesman. How experimental can a literary politician be?

Tragedy & farce in climate commentary

by *Ingo Venzke*

« We are fucked » vs. « It's not too late ». The Club of Rome's *Earth for All* offers a burst of stubborn optimism. But when does stubborn optimism become cruel optimism?

Why we write

by *Ali Smith*

A letter to George Orwell. « All narrative is hypnotic. Some narratives are more hypnotic than others. Because of you, we can be conscious of the kinds and the workings of narratives that set out to deaden us, lessen us, make us lie, make us part of the lie. »

On learning to write again

by *Adania Shibli*

Ramallah, downtown, fifth floor. The phone rings and the caller's number appears on the screen. It's an unknown number. And yet a call that comes at this hour must be answered.

Flags & bones

by *Mathieu Segers*

On Curzio Malaparte's Europe — and ours. The midcentury novelist read anew, on war's aftermath and transatlantic romance.

Ukraine yesterday & tomorrow

by *Oksana Forostyna*

Ukraine didn't become an epicenter of world history all of a sudden; it became an epicenter again.

Optimize this headline for Google

by *Alexander Fanta*

Google's rise to dominance can seem inevitable, and its power over publishers monolithic. Yet Google's wanton disruption of publishing resembles evolution more than intelligent design. Journalists, publishers, regulators and scholars are left grappling with our new, random god.

An axe to grid should make you sharper

by *Fernanda Eberstadt*

Eyal Weizman's research agency Forensic Architecture charts state-organized crimes, genocide and other disasters in three dimensions. « Flat maps can't convey the politics of water and shit. »

Coverage

Our venture was covered in Italy (*Il Foglio*, *Corriere della Sera*), in Belgium (*De Standaard*), in Spain (*El Confidencial*), in the Netherlands (*NRC*, *Trouw*), in Ireland (*Irish Times*), in the UK (*Financial Times*), in Germany (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Die Welt*), in France (*Le Monde*, *Le Grand Continent*), in Austria (*Die Presse*), in the US (*n+1*) and more.

We've won three awards so far – two for our design, and one for our writing:

Best Dutch Book Designs of 2022

Silver in the European Design Awards, category: Magazine

The Issue One essay *Optimize this headline for Google* by Alexander Fanta won a prize for Pressefreiheit from the Bayerischer Journalisten-Verband

LE **Grand Continent**

Qu'est-ce que la *European Review of Books*?

CORRIERE DELLA SERA

A seguire, Roberta Scorrane presenta una nuova iniziativa culturale che intende aiutare il Vecchio Continente a risolvere un antico problema, quello dell'assenza di un'identità comune. Per questo è nata la [European Review of Books](#).



2023
EDAWARDS
SILVER Winner

nrc Een nieuw, tegendraads tijdschrift over duizenden Europa's

Die Presse

Eine Revue, um die EU besser zu kritisieren

Frankfurter Allgemeine
Was in Europa fehlt

Süddeutsche Zeitung
Die Idealisten

DE BEST
VERZORGE
BOEKEN

WELT

„Es ist eher der Kosmopolitismus als der Provinzialismus, der hinterfragt werden muss“

Le Monde

« The European Review of Books » ausculte une Europe en redéfinition

IL FOGLIO
quotidiano

La doppia lingua dei libri europei

Whatever expectations we had for this first year of the European Review of Books were spectacularly exceeded. We've produced important, path-breaking work and begun building a robust international network of writers, translators, thinkers and readers. With the ERB, we want to create an enduring institution for the European cultural and intellectual sphere – there is a need for it, and an audience.

In order to reach that audience and spread the word further, however, we need financial backing for the short term. Our daily costs are low, and our operation in its current form should be able to sustain itself with around 3500 annual subscribers, combined with revenue from single issue sales and other subscription forms. Currently, in summer 2023, we're at 650+ paying subscribers — and we've achieved this with little to no marketing efforts. (So far, we've been too busy making the most brilliant European magazine to really promote the most brilliant European magazine!) Single issues of the ERB sell out in many shops around the world, but we need to convert those readers into loyal subscribers. And we need to broaden our base of institutional subscribers. Currently, ten important universities in Europe and the US subscribe to the ERB; that number should grow, since the ERB can be a site of inspiration for students and an essential resource for scholars.

We expect to reach a sustainable number of subscribers within four years, but to tide us over until that point, we need financial help — to keep paying our contributors reasonable fees and to launch serious marketing efforts to reach a bigger audience. But also to explore ways to make our content more accessible (through audio, for example) and to diversify our revenue streams (by publishing books, selling exclusive merchandise, expanding our writing programs for universities) that would secure our sustainability in the future.



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if you'd like more information, or if you'd like to help.**

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