

ON SIDECAR

This issue of New Left Review follows the launch of Sidecar, a short-form online companion to the journal. ‘Don’t tell me NLR has reinvented the blog, twenty years on’, remarked a wag on Twitter. The form, in fact, is so protean and amoebic that each iteration has a character of its own. For the left, the heroic age of the blog lies in the darkest years of the Bush–Blair era, when isolated figures like Mark Fisher typed their thoughts by plasma light—a genre continued in high style in France today by Frédéric Lordon at La pompe à phynance. As soon as print magazines began to publish new material on their websites, each took on its own style. At the London Review of Books, Thomas Jones has run a carefully curated chamber version of the paper from deepest Umbria since 2009; contributions are quizzical, ruminative, often autobiographical. At the other end of the spectrum, journals like Jacobin and n+1 make a categorical distinction between ‘magazine’ and ‘online’. At Jacobin, there is a sharp contrast between the thematically structured quarterly magazine, with its high-gloss aesthetic, and the pell-mell publishing of its online section which turns out over thirty items a week, of varying though often impressive quality, mainly focused on the immediate concerns of the American left. At n+1, coverage is again largely domestic, but here the conventional relation of paper to pixel has been upended; in recent years, the most arresting and original work is often to be found online. At the New York Review of Books, the NYR Daily blog took on a life of its own, making a virtue of qualities—above all, lively intellectual curiosity—discarded by the increasingly bland and toneless bi-weekly. The Daily’s editors crafted their weekly email round-up into a novel genre, quizzing authors on the motives and experience behind their published piece. Perhaps the contrast with the rest of the paper was too glaring for the NYRB’s proprietor. A website re-design put paid to the distinctive character of the Daily, standardizing all the texts on offer like so many readymade meals. This is a version of platformization, the oncoming trend in digital publishing: applying the business-school lessons of the supermarket aisle to the life of the mind. The ideal is to reduce every reader to a customer, filling her basket with a book review here, a tote bag there, in a seamless flow of data-rich consumption.

Sidecar has a different aim in mind. Its outlook is critical, in the broadest sense. Coverage of politics and culture takes the world, not the Anglosphere, as its arena. A criterion for publication is saying something—about persons, processes, structures, events—that is not being said elsewhere, but deserves to be. Kicking off with Tariq Ali’s acid portrait of Keir Starmer and Mike Davis’s sharp deflation of Democratic hysteria over the scrimmage in the

Capitol, it has criss-crossed world politics from Germany to Brazil, Cuba to Myanmar, Lebanon, Vietnam and Mexico. Interwoven are world literature and world cinema—novels and films from France, Zimbabwe, the US, Russia, Angola, Morocco.

Sidecar's relation to NLR? The title—half motorcycle, half cocktail bar—suggests it: adjacent; convivial; interconnected; travelling the same road. Sidecar's editors are also on the Review, and vice versa. Strategically and intellectually, the animating spirit flows from the Review, while Sidecar entries offer invitations to read further in the archive of NLR, one of the great international libraries of the left. On the website, blog, journal and archive are but a click away from each other. The Review, meanwhile, retains its own character. Operating across a range of terrain, from politics to economics, aesthetics, social investigation and critical theory, and a variety of registers, it aims to provide an intelligible landscape, in which different modes of inquiry on the left can be read in relation to each other. As Gramsci noted: however accessible its daily or weekly press, the left also needed more rigorous and demanding venues—a space where ideas can be evaluated in fine detail, powers probed, dynamics conceptualized. This number of NLR opens with Dylan Riley's meditative notes on social distancing, commodified healthcare and money politics in the Land of the Free. Nancy Fraser offers perhaps the most systematic theoretical statement to date of the case for eco-socialism. As the Biden Administration revs up the US alliance system, Cihan Tuğal examines the shocks and shifts in Turkey, the easternmost bulwark of the Atlantic order. Alexander Zevin considers Thomas Piketty's explanation of the 'inequality regimes' that have generated today's towering concentrations of wealth, pumped up by tidal surges of public credit that lap around slow-growth real economies. More to come.

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Riot on the Hill

MIKE DAVIS

Calm down, Democrats.

World Letters

KRISTIN SURAK

Transnational cultures
in an unequal world.

Starmer's War

TARIQ ALI

Purging the Labour left.

Nigeria's Revolt

CAMILLA HOUELAND

The #EndSARS
movement in context.

Funeral Rites

SOPHIE PINKHAM

Documenting
Stalin's exit.

Winners All

WOLFGANG STREECK

Small print of the EU
Covid relief fund.

A New Voice

EMILIE BICKERTON

Minimalist autofiction
of Fatima Daas.

Tram-Spotting

OWEN HATHERLEY

For a socialized
transport system.

Negative Capability

NATASHA PINNINGTON

French and English
readings of
Annie Ernaux.

War Zones

PATRICK COCKBURN

Survey of the new
Middle East.

Lusophonia

PERSIS LOVE

Angola's history in
Agualusa's fiction.

Vietnam's Pandemic

JOE BUCKLEY

Surprising reasons for
good results to date.

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Myanmar Days

THOMAS MEANEY

Rationales behind
the coup.

Profit over People

MARINA FORTI

Industrial pollution
in the Veneto.

AMLO's Austerity

TONY WOOD

Politics of Mexico's
pink tide.

Fabricated Crisis

DANIEL FINN

Anathematizing Corbyn.

Gorgeous Parade

ERIKA BALSOM

A masterwork of
political cinema.

Day Zero in Cuba

HELEN YAFFE

Shock therapy,
Havana style.

Writing Zimbabwe

JEANNE-MARIE JACKSON

Dangarembga's fictions
of development.

Thrill Rides

LESLIE DICK

Lockdown Los Angeles.

Crooked Lebanon

SULEIMAN MOURAD

Corruption as
survival mechanism.

Nursing Homes

MARCO D'ERAMO

How eldercare
underpins production.

Swimming in It

JOANNA BIGGS

Money and feelings.

Ireland's Left Tide

UNA MULLALLY

The new Sinn Féin.