

report: February 2008

## **“The mood is still very optimistic”**

**Katarina Marini is a member of the young generation of Slovene novelists born around 1970. Literature critics have praised her "Proustian sensibility". This author from Ljubljana, who studied Romance languages and English language and literature, also lectures on French literature. A German translation of her novel "Die verborgene Harmonie" has recently appeared in Kitab Verlag.**

**Our Slovene feeling for life is extremely unexotic. We like precisely what is known in Austria as Gemütlichkeit (cosiness). What I personally like about my own people is a kind of egalitarianism that also allows enough room for individualism. At present we have a number of problems, including a rather high inflation rate. But in general the mood is still very optimistic.**

**The political situation has normalised surprisingly quickly. We prefer moderate politicians. But we have not got used to calculating the taxes that every government imposes on us. In this respect our political decisions are still greatly influenced by the power of speeches. For most Slovenes the EU is still, to use Voltaire's phrase, le meilleur des mondes possibles, the best of all possible worlds. Voltaire also meant this seriously but perhaps not entirely seriously. If there is a nation in Central Europe of just two million people that has preserved its culture and language throughout the centuries then it seems obvious that such a nation must have a certain national consciousness. The young Slovenes – for example my students – take Slovenia's independence for granted. This apparent indifference can ultimately be regarded as a sign of their self-confidence.**

**For artists the situation in recent years has not exactly improved. One could say that the newly attained freedom – which naturally is beyond price – has been costly for artists and in particular for writers. Previously the state, which wanted to have everything under its control, paid for almost everything. Nevertheless in this respect too I am a cautious optimist. Firstly because art always wins through. Secondly, books in the Slovene language are still subsidised and this will remain the case as long as there are books in Slovene at all. Furthermore, even if one Slovene in three were to buy a copy of my book that still would not make it a bestseller. Under these circumstances it is almost impossible for art to become commercialised.**