

Editorial: Humour in Eastern Europe 2

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The present issue follows up on some of the problems raised in the special issue 5.2 (2017), which focused on humour in Eastern European countries and was edited by Ksenia Shilikhina of Voronezh University in Russia. Her somewhat rhetorical question could be repeated here: Does geography matter when we talk about humour? I would tend to answer in the affirmative, although, as Shilikhina emphasised too, both culture-specific and universal features of humour could be isolated.

This special issue of the *EJHR*, inspired by the humour session of the 7th Across Borders conference, held in Tartu, Estonia in April 2017, refocuses on Eastern Europe then. While in 5.2 humour from Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Russia and Turkey was represented, here Poland, Hungary, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania add to the picture, while Belarus, Montenegro and Turkey remain within the scope of interest again. The authors discuss both present-day and historical issues, and the political and ethnic humour seems to prevail, although social and family humour is analysed, too, with jokes, memes and cartoons being the main genres under scrutiny. Interestingly, entire Eastern Europe has gone wildly online in recent decades – even more enthusiastically than “old” Europe; one of the reasons of this, which we share with e.g. the Middle East, is that online content is not so easy to control as the press or other traditional media – and attempts at control have proliferated in these states, even where one would not expect them to arise.

And it is exactly the political and social uncertainty and imminent change that are driving forces behind the humour in the region, which is as it was noticed on many occasions before is “value conscious” as well as highly sensitive to any attempts to threaten their complex identities and traditional lifestyles. In order to emphasise that humour is not all about protest, we start from Joanna Szerszunowicz’s analysis of recently popular Polish meme characters of Janusz, Grażyna and others, which verge on the purely comic, although the trend has been motivated by a social trend and the emergence of the largely lower class people (resembling red-necks) who are bad-mannered, use coarse language, wear unfashionable clothes of communist time and wear sandals and white socks. Anastasiya Fiadotava, a Belarusian folklorist based at Tartu University in Estonia, compares the contemporary and Soviet-time collections of adultery jokes and puts them in a socio-political context, drawing interesting conclusions. Ágnes Tamás looks further back into history than the extant Soviet Union and tackles Hungarian political humour in the mid-19th century election cartoons and satirical texts published in humour magazines of the time of the so-called Austro-Hungarian compromise that alienated many and escalated political struggle along the ethnic and political lines. The turbulent politics of Montenegro before its accession into NATO is the subject of the

investigation of Milena Dževerdanović Pejović, who bases her analysis of modern day and historical semantic scripts active in the minds of citizens of that small Balkan nation.

Among the theoretical approaches Aleksandar Takovski's paper stands out with his attempt to reassess the notion of ethnic humour as such, taking joke examples emerging from the political and ethnic turmoil of the southern Balkans as well as administering questionnaires to respondents, in order to claim the existence of "genuine" ethnic jokes that would display a clear relation between ethnic identity and ethnic humour. This is followed by Yavuz Görkem's equally brave analysis of the new wave of Turkish feminist humour, based on a number of issues of one very special female humour magazine that gives readers insight into the nature of women's humour in Turkey – all against the background of the not so open and friendly Turkish politics.

The issue ends with a short description of an interesting conference on historical humour which took place in Warsaw, Poland, in 2017, one of a series of scholarly meetings which deal with that under-researched area of humour studies.

There is a lot more to say about humour in this fascinating region of tradition and transition and many other nations and ethnicities to discuss. Thus, we leave you this issue to enjoy, while already preparing another one. Stay tuned.