Values Across Cultures and Times

Values Across Cultures and Times

Edited by

Vesna Lopičić and Biljana Mišić Ilić

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part Three:
Contrasting Values and Languages: South Balkan Perspective

INTRODUCTION

VALUES ACROSS CULTURES AND TIMES

VESNA LOPIČIĆ AND BILJANA MIŠIĆ ILIĆ

Why values? Or, to put the question more precisely, why focus on values as the unifying keystone for a volume of literary and linguistic essays? In our cynical and sceptical times of pervasive relativisms, when personal and national identities undergo numerous changes due to globalization and global/local politics, which were the topics addressed in our two previous collections published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing (*Identity Issues*, 2010, and *Challenging Change*, 2012), it seemed wholly appropriate to provide the floor for focusing on values. Not only does this topic relate and unify so many important themes, but now seems to be an ideal moment for the critical examination of what we stand for, as individuals, nations and, in the widest sense, citizens of the world. In poetic terms, values are like the air around us, imperceptible though we are more than steeped in them, and necessary just like the air that we breathe. What is more, true values have never been less heeded, even though never more talked about.

The idea behind this publication is to examine the construction, dissemination, deconstruction and/or questioning of personal, familial, national, class, social, institutional, political, cultural, aesthetic and ethical values from the perspectives of literary and linguistic studies, as well as the multidisciplinary inspection of the relationship between language, literature and values.

The present book, *Values Across Cultures and Times*, is a collection of sixteen articles, grouped into three thematic subsections, which examine the concept of values understood in the broadest sense as the need of the modern man to examine, redefine, and reconstruct previous theories, histories, moralities and social relationships against current practices and various forms of discourses.

The first section, *Values and Socio-historical Context*, brings four articles that deal with the notion of values as reflected in various discourses in a socio-historical context. Tracing certain historical developments as well as

examining particular genre, cognitive and sociolinguistic, and discourse changes, the authors also investigate the complexity of linguistic and non-linguistic interrelationships affecting and being affected by a particular value system. More specifically, Dafina Genova in her article *Underground Political Jokes as an Indicator of Individual and Social Values* explores the distinctive features of underground political jokes under communism, and compares them to political jokes in a democracy. The jokes were arguably the only "discursive outlet" for the discouragement, disillusionment and bitterness of the individual. They targeted the political, economic and social incongruities of the regime more drastically than those in a democratic society, indirectly speaking the truth that could not be directly stated. The most probable creator of political jokes was the intelligentsia, the social group most alienated from the political system, which also appreciated them most, although they were also greatly valued by the joke tellers who disseminated them, and all the citizens who as recipients of the jokes criticized and disapproved of the regime. Underground jokes were an indicator of the pursuit of freedom as an individual and social value. The author concludes that jokes of this kind were valued by the powerless as much as they were banned by the powerful.

From the socio-historical stratum, the next article plunges into the mythical depths of fairy tales which are deeply interwoven into the fabric of numerous cultures around the world. Just as jokes, political or otherwise, underground or not, affect the adult members of a community so do fairy tales influence the development and education of a child. When a personality is still in formation, and is most pliable and easily 'moulded', messages and values embedded in tales can imperceptibly seep through and settle permanently, participating in the formation of the traits of individuals, and thus vicariously affecting the society as well. With these insights in mind, Danijela Prošić-Santovac contributed the article *Happily Ever After: (De)Constructing The Cultural Values Across Centuries* whose aim was to establish how influential fairy tales are in the process of the formation of cultural values. Since they contain cultural values as a cumulative product of different ages incorporated into their content, fairy tales may promote some outdated pedagogical messages and help preserve the status quo in society. The author analysed five well-known fairy tales (*Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *The Little Mermaid*), and identified gender stereotypes that are detrimental to any egalitarian society. The most popular variants of the tales promote the patriarchal worldview through male and female stereotypes: strong, wealthy and athletic heroes, and passive, submissive, docile heroines. Further, Walt Disney's fairy tale films as versions of the original tales greatly inflate the patriarchal and capitalist system of ideas that dominates the modern world. The values

of physical beauty, expensive clothes, high social status, and romantic relationships are exaggerated at the expense of friendship, benevolence, kindness, etc. A change in the discourse seems to be necessary, observes the author, or at least wariness regarding the choice of fairy tales to be presented to children.

The following two articles deal with the current political reality in two different parts of the world, the Balkans and the North American Continent. Nadežda Silaški and Tatjana Đurović explore how conceptual metaphors are systematically used to shape political reality based on a particular set of values. Drawing on the wider theoretical framework of Cognitive Theory of Metaphor applied to the data collection gathered from various media sources and published during the period 2002-2007, and against the backdrop of the dissolution of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006, the authors examine the topic of MARRIAGE and DIVORCE metaphors. They contend that these metaphors structure the relations between the two constituent parts of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro that in 2006 terminated a "marriage of convenience" established in 2002. The use of these metaphors is part of political discourse, both primary or secondary, where speeches made by politicians and state officials, politicians' statements for the printed and electronic media and political parties' press releases belong in the first group, while political comments written by journalists and newspaper reporters as well as political analysts and commentators fall in the second group. The aim of their article *And now - a velvet divorce! or, how metaphors communicate values* is to point out how *the MARRIAGE metaphor, realised either as A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE or A FORCED MARRIAGE, and the DIVORCE metaphor, realised as a VELVET DIVORCE,* is used in political discourse to simplify and understand the tangled world of politics, uncovering the values the metaphor creators strive to impart.

Earl H. Fry, likewise, tackles current political issues in his article *The evolution of Canada-U.S. Economic relations in the post-9/11 era*. His starting point is that no major nation in the world is as dependent for its economic well-being on another nation as Canada is dependent on open access to the U.S. marketplace. Over one-third of Canada's total GDP and more than two million Canadian jobs resulting from the links with the US are a good illustration of this contention. However, the tragic event of 9/11 represented a watershed in the bilateral relationship, and the thickening of the border between these two countries. Post-9/11 U.S. policies have heavily affected Canada's exports to the United States and the overall US expansion in economic and commercial ties with Canada. The author advocates the promotion of continental economic cooperation in order to enhance North American competitiveness in a rapidly changing global environment to the benefit of both Canada and the United States.

The second section of the book, entitled *Literature in Search of Values*, contains eight articles focused on the problem of values represented through the genres of poetry and prose spanning from 19th to 21st century literature. Value systems as represented in works of literature are examined in different cultures: Italian, Serbian, Macedonian, American, and British. This section introduces other themes: gender issues, narrative uncertainties, travel writing, revisions of history and post-modern poetry dilemmas.

The section opens with the article *The Truth-Value Difference: The Dissociated Narrator of "The Prague Cemetery"* contributed by Sergej Macura. The author's intention in presenting Umberto Eco's 2011 novel *The Prague Cemetery* was to give the most striking examples of the main narrator's unreliability, and to shed some light on the etiology of the disorders and complexes which he exhibits. Using his well-known retrieved text technique, Eco this time introduced a drastic truth-value difference in the discourse of the main character, who is additionally the main narrator as well, and most likely afflicted with multiple personality disorder (MPD) or dissociative identity disorder (DID). In his quest for the integration of the self, this deeply disturbed murderer who took the narcotic of unquenchable hatred as his panacea resorts to a diary narrative which tackles the deepest issues of a human being, in essence, tragically distorted by his surroundings, and infinitely bigoted in his lack of sublimation and his hostile recognition of the Other, even when the Other indirectly serves as the architect of his autobiographic emergence and survival.

The next article moves away from the field of psychoanalysis (a literary case-study of a pathological mind) to the field of memetics and sociology (an essayistic cultural analysis of Serbia). In her article *"East, West, Home is Best:" Momo Kapor and the Units of Serbian Culture* Vesna Lopičić researches certain cultural traits that Kapor is constantly drawn to as elements for ethnic identification of the Serbian nation. The theoretical framework for this approach to Kapor's *A Guide to the Serbian Mentality* is the interpretation of the meme as a unit of culture offered by O'Brian et all (2010) following Dawkins who originally proposed the idea of the meme as the unit of cultural transmission in his *The Selfish Gene* (1976). The ideational cultural, as opposed to empirical, replicators discussed in the article are 'Belgrade stands for Serbia,' 'This cannot be found anywhere else' referring to food, cheek-kissing where the three kisses symbolise the Holy Trinity, and the custom of 'slava,' i.e. the celebration of the family patron saint. These memes share the properties common for all cultural replicators, concludes the author: they are culturally transmitted, they replicate by communication, they propagate, mutate and evolve in their struggle to survive in the mental environment that exerts selective pressure.

In a similar manner of cultural analysis through literary works, Tatjana Panova-Ignjatović offers a comparative analysis of different images of Macedonia, focusing on the travel writings of British authors such as G.F. Abbot, H.N. Brailsford, W. Miller, A. Upward, E.P. Stebbing and I.E. Hutton. As the author explained in her article *The Macedonian Cultural Identity in The Works of the British Travel Writers (From the beginning of the 20th century until the end of the First World War*, they were direct witnesses of the events that took place in Macedonia in the period before and after the Ilinden uprising and in the course of the First World War, an exceptionally critical period for the future of the Macedonian people. Their observations have contributed to the clarification of certain problems relating to the predominantly subjective representation of travel writers regarding Macedonian cultural identity and traditions, by recognizing the specifics and the values of the Macedonian cultural uniqueness, thus providing substantial evidence that confirms the distinctiveness of the Macedonian ethnicity.

A specifically Spanish cultural unit, bullfighting, is the topic of Aleksandra Žeželj Kocić's contribution *Bullfighting in the System of Values of Ernest Hemingway*. She explores the specific value of bullfighting in Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), a non-fiction masterpiece much more neglected than his fictional works that also deal with the art of *toreo*. The first of his "desperation books" primarily tackles the difference between American and Spanish values of his time. Hemingway assumes the role of a mediator who projects his somewhat utopian mapping onto the Spanish cultural landscape giving a subjective version of reality. Thus, bullfighting becomes an art in its own right, while the romantic theatre of the *plaza de toros* presupposes the moral, spiritual and, even, ecstatic dimensions. The synecdoche of a bullring is therefore Hemingway's *axis mundi* accentuating the full tragedy of man's condition. The preoccupation with death paradoxically transforms itself into the belief-optimistic in the perfectibility of man. The author claims that *Death in the Afternoon* is a super *iceberg*-text, a cubist-like synthesis, where the matador's dramatic command of the arena comes to be Hemingway's own arena of writing with all its rich possibilities of signification. Furthermore, both arts in question are always staged before a watching eye. The real value of manhood needs to be perceived as a distinct metaphor in Hemingway's aesthetics of a multitude of meanings, contributing to a definite value system of bullfighting where truth, honour and honesty reign.

Men, Principles and Values of Human Behaviour in Arthur Miller's Plays is the article by Georgiana-Elena Dilă in which she analyses some of the playwright's work in relation to character building and human principles and values by showing the way in which the author uses his plays for a social as well as an educational impact. Using contemporary psychoanalytic tools, the author relies on theories about family relations, which can help

readers and audience alike search for deeper meaning against the faulty understanding of development and modernity, just like Miller's characters who follow the pattern of idolization, rejection, and finally understanding in their relationship with their parents or children.

Tracing the trajectory of values back through time, we get to the Victorian period in three articles. Milan Damjanoski in his *Metafiction as a Model for Re-evaluating the Victorian Period and its Values in "Possession" by A.S. Byatt* shows how this A.S. Byatt novel offers a model for a new reading of the Victorian period, including its social, cultural, gender and literary values. He analyses metafiction in *Possession* as a model for establishing a dialogue between two historical periods and their specific values. Metafiction is analysed as a metatext, a strategy and process of reinterpreting and re-evaluating the Victorian period from the point of view of late 20th century Great Britain. The main focus is placed on the manner in which this dialogue between the periods is conducted and reflected through the use of metatextuality as a very effective and productive model for appropriation and reinterpretation of the past, a model which can be utilised for a new reading and writing of historical narratives in accordance with the system of values of the new time. In the second article, *Subversion of the Victorian Values: The Female Characters in Dickens's "Great Expectations"* Sonja Vitanova-Strezova undertakes to investigate how the female characters in the novel undermine the Victorian value system and deviate from the Victorian stereotypes. The first part of the article addresses the system of values embodied in the Victorian ideal of womanhood and the woman's position and roles in the strict Victorian patriarchal order. The article then turns to the question of why the female characters in *Great Expectations* are incompatible with the Victorian female stereotypes. Mrs. Joe, Miss Havisham, Estella and Biddy have unconventional roles in the conventionally female spheres of domesticity that they occupy. The major female characters in the novel exist in the Victorian patriarchal society but they defy the patriarchal order. Some of them, like Mrs. Joe Gargery and even Miss Havisham, are the established matriarchs of their respective domestic spheres. Others are morally strong and make their own decisions like Biddy, or are unconventionally powerful and superior to men like Estella. Drawing on feminism and deconstruction, the author identifies those traits and actions of the major female characters that subvert the Victorian value system which is a product of the patriarchal society. The last contribution in this section, by Zornitsa Nikolova, also deals with the Victorian values, this time as represented by the two bards of Victorian poetry, Tennyson and Browning. The article is focused on the similarities and differences between Browning's and Tennyson's ways of representing their poetic personae against the background of Victorian society and

morals. These individuals are imbued with an air of independence but they are still part of a society which is free to judge them. They live in their own psychological worlds and challenge reality with their subversive, dark actions and desires: thus, traditional values are questioned and they become a subject for reconsideration: the reader is left to ponder about the reasonableness or possible emptiness of such common social values, about the reasons for their existence and the necessity for compliance with them. Such clashes between personality and common thought are viewed through the thoughtful eyes of the two poets exposed to the harsh reality of the new industrial society, which is constantly changing, along with its values.

The third, final section of the book, *Contrasting Values and Languages: A South Balkan Perspective*, brings four contrastive studies focusing on language forms and language uses that express different cultural and social values in Serbian and Macedonian and compare them to the corresponding ones in some other languages and cultures. To start with, Ana Jovanović brings together two cultures, Serbian and Chinese, remote in all senses of the word, by studying one particular word. Her article *Contrastive Study of the Value of "Face" in Chinese and Serbian Culture* presents a contrastive analysis of the ways body part words denoting "face" in Chinese and "cheek" in Serbian extended their meanings towards abstract notions of "dignity", "pride", "sense of shame" and the like; it also introduces the main cognitive mechanisms that lie behind such extensions as well as their cultural and social repercussions. Therefore, the primary aim of the author is to determine the ways this abstract notion is conceptualized and to reveal the value of this metaphoric concept by conveying a contrastive analysis of the compounds, phrases and idioms composed with the Chinese words *liǎn*/*miànzi* and Serbian *obraz*. It is also shown how, depending on the value that is given to it, this concept influences the way members of these two cultures communicate and function in society.

The next two articles in this section deal with two types of public and professional discourse, investigating the ways language reflects and affects particular value systems and value judgments. Biljana Mišić Ilić, in the article *Commercialization of Academic Values: The Discourse of University Mission Statements* examines university mission statements as quite a recent phenomenon in Serbian public and academic discourse. Comparing them to a sample of representative Anglo-Saxon university mission statements, in terms of their form and function, and drawing on the analysis of language devices (lexical, grammatical and pragmatic) as well as the social context, in the theoretical model of Critical Discourse Analysis, the author concludes that mission statements are a specific discourse form indicative of the trends both in the Serbian academic system and the academic

value system. They are also the evidence of the commercialization of academic values, in the process where universities try to adapt to the commercial work model and adopt market ideology.

In the other article, *The Persuasive Power of Closing Arguments*, Zorica Trajkova examines an example of court discourse, seeking to explore the persuasive power of closing arguments through the use and pragmatic function of interpersonal metadiscourse markers such as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mention and engagement markers. The corpus-based study of Macedonian and American closing arguments, accompanied by the analysis of native speakers' assessment of perceived persuasiveness resulted in numerous findings, which suggest that the noted variations in the distribution and pragmatic functions of metadiscourse pragmatic markers are based mostly on cultural differences and the different format of this genre in the two societies.

Concluding the last section, the article *Morphological Means of Expressing Value Judgment in English and Serbian* by Vladimir Ž. Jovanović takes the strictest linguistic approach, in the domain of evaluative morphology, focusing on a particular set of linguistic forms, elements of language structure by which the speakers may communicate their personal attitude, subjective feelings or value judgment. The morphological elements considered in this study are classified into two larger segments for each language, the first including free elements, while the second segment involves bound morphemes, such as evaluative affixes and certain combining forms. The article investigates their lexical category preserving potential, the relation they have with other derivational elements and inflectional morphemes, as well as the question of whether they allow any consecutive application of more than one evaluative rule of the same type. Moreover, the author argues in favour of the idea that English is more susceptible to using independent morphological elements for statements of value judgment than Serbian which tends to rely on dependent elements.

The book is aimed at a broad academic audience who are interested in various ways in the notions of values and the ways they are preserved or compromised are depicted and examined in literary works and manifested in language. Being wide in scope, both regarding the covered topics and the theoretical approaches, the book can be relevant for academics, undergraduate and graduate students interested in postmodern theoretical discourse, narrative theory, multiculturalism, as well as discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and contrastive linguistic studies. The popular style of most articles makes the volume also appealing to the widest audience interested in different aspects of values.

The authors of the articles come from Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, and the United States.

PART ONE:

VALUES AND SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

CHAPTER ONE

UNDERGROUND POLITICAL JOKES
AS AN INDICATOR OF INDIVIDUAL
AND SOCIAL VALUES

DAFINA GENOVA

1. Introduction

In humour research the term "humour" is an umbrella term for both its positive and negative manifestations. Humour in underground totalitarian jokes consists mostly of ridicule and sarcasm which frequently targets party ideology and the incompetence and privileges of the party members. Humour in totalitarian jokes has an exclusive function, since a sharp distinction is made between "us" and "them". Simultaneously the underground joke performs an inclusive function as well – the joke teller and the recipient/s of the joke form mini-coalitions against "them" (more about humour in jokes from a linguistic, cognitive and social perspective in Genova 2010a; 2010b; 2010c; Genova 2011a; 2011b; Genova 2012). The aim of the paper is to show how the powerless valued underground political jokes as the only discursive outlet of their disillusionment and bitterness with the communist regime.

2. Specific Features of Underground Totalitarian Jokes

According to anthropologist Elliott Oring, all jokes, including underground political jokes under totalitarian and other repressive regimes, are a form of "artistic manipulation of the content of everyday life" (Oring 2004, 215) and in this respect they are similar to songs and dances. Indeed, the three share this most general function, yet the joke is markedly different from the other two in its functions. The joke, as a verbal form of communication, is open to multilevel interpretations and the direct and indirect messages inferred from the joke text are socially significant. Underground political

jokes under totalitarian regimes, in their turn, are markedly different from other types of jokes and from political jokes in a democratic society as well. Most of all, they are a convenient form of indirect reference to political, economic and social facts that cannot be directly stated: the gap between official ideology and reality, the repressiveness of the regime, constant shortages of goods of necessity, the privileges and incompetence of the party members, etc. – well-known facts from the time of the so-called 'developed socialism' in Bulgaria and the other former socialist countries before 1989.

Humour researchers agree that humour belongs to the humorous mode of communication that stands in opposition to the serious mode. The Semantic Script Theory of Humor (Raskin 1985) goes even further: it claims that the switch from one mode of communication to the other is not gradual but abrupt. A distinction has to be made here between the switch from a telic (goal-directed) mental state to a playful or paratelic (non-goal-directed) state and the way we classify what is serious and what is humorous. The switch from one state to the other might be abrupt, i.e. automatic, indeed, but the boundary between the serious and the humorous is fuzzy, since all categories have fuzzy boundaries according to the prototype theory (Rosch 1973; 1975). In addition, the humorous mode is grounded in the serious, constantly making explicit and implicit references to the latter and in this respect the serious mode is relatively more autonomous compared to the humorous mode. The totalitarian joke, because of its specific function to speak the politically unspeakable, lies closest to the serious mode of communication compared to other joke types while absurd jokes are maximally distanced from it (good examples and bad examples of a category following the prototype theory). Paradoxically, there is a grain of truth even in a prototypical joke.

Underground political jokes in the former socialist countries not only formulated, verbally and implicitly, the political, economic and social flaws of the regime: they were also used as a form of disapproval, criticism and protest against it. Even if we take it for granted that the joke, as a discursive type, does not have such functions, the party members, being the target and the recipient of political jokes, attributed such functions to them by outlawing them, Bulgaria included. The fact that the totalitarian joke was not institutionalized (compared with carnivals which were) is in favour of the claim that it was used as a form of criticism and protest. Because only when humour is "incorporated into existing social structures…it comes to maintain those structures" (Mulkay 1988, 211). According to Davies, the totalitarian joke was a form of "quiet protest, an indication that the political system lacked stability and could collapse quickly" (Davies 2007, 291). At

the same time the communist party promoted the release of six editions of Gabrovian jokes between 1965 and 1985, which were harmless regional self-reflexive jokes about the thriftiness of Gabrovians, most of which date back to the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

Nevertheless underground political jokes appeared in printed form in Western Europe and in the USA collected by Soviet immigrants in English, French and German. I will mention only some of the ones published in English. Beckmann is the compiler of *Whispered Anecdotes: Humor from Behind the Iron Curtain* (1969) and *Hammer and Tickle: Clandestine Laughter in the Soviet Union* (1980), Dolgopolova is the compiler of *Russia Dies Laughing: Jokes from Soviet Russia* (1983), Kolasky is the compiler of *Look Comrade – The people are laughing: Underground wit, satire and humour from behind the Iron Curtain* (1972) and Draitser is the compiler of *Forbidden Laughter: Soviet underground jokes* (1980). In 1987 *Советский Союз в зеркале политичесого анекдота* was published in Israel, whose compilers are Shturman and Tiktin.

About the political ideology of the former Soviet Union, valid for the other former socialist countries, Oring says: "[it] was regarded as false but it was not contested because no other public representations of reality were possible– even for those in power" (Oring 2004, 224). It is a well-known fact that few citizens dared to protest openly against the regime. Most of the ones that disapproved of it ignored it, as far as it was possible, and lived in the parallel discursive world of underground jokes.

3. Underground Political Jokes and the Powerful

Indeed, the prosecution and penalization for telling political jokes and other forms of "antisocialist propaganda", such as epigrams, caricatures, pamphlets, etc. were not frequent, yet they existed in Bulgaria. Raiko Alexiev was accused of being an "enemy of the people" for his caricatures of Stalin and was beaten to death in November 1944. In 1961 Alexander Nikolov, a violin player, was sent to a labour camp for telling political jokes and was murdered ten days later. Boyan Chinkov, an architect, was imprisoned from September 20 to November 10, 1964 for telling political jokes under article 108 of the Penal Code which passed for "slanderous allegations against the state or the social system". One of the jokes the architect was sent to prison is cited in (1). It targets the fact that in 1964 Nikita Khrushchev imported wheat from the USA and Canada, since the local produce was not enough:

(1) - Коя е най-развитата страна в света?
      - Съветският съюз. Там вече сеят в Украйна, а жънат в Канада.

      Which is the most developed country in the world?
      The Soviet Union. They sow wheat in Ukraine and harvest in Canada.

20 000 copies of *Hot Peppers*, a book of epigrams by Radoi Ralin, were banned and burnt in 1968 in Sofia. In March 1978 the State Security Police confiscated approximately 500 caricatures of communist party officials drawn by artist Todor Tsonev, detained by the 'people's militia' for about three months.

Prosecution for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" in the former Soviet Union was much more drastic. After Stalin's death in 1953, among the first to be released from labour camps were those who were imprisoned for telling political jokes – about 200 000 in number (Lewis 2008, 74). They were penalized under article 58, par. 10 of the Penal Code. Ivan Burylov, a beekeeper from Perm, spent 8 years in a labour camp for writing "comedy" on his voting ballot (archive document, ibid., 71). After 1958, under Khrushchev, from 200 to 300 people were sent to labour camps per year (ibid., 150). The official party policy in relation to telling political jokes became preventive – you are not arrested right away, you are only intimidated. Because citing Prelin, a former KGB colonel, "[t]hey had to stop arresting people for telling jokes about Khrushchev…otherwise they would have had to lock up the whole country" (ibid., 155). Under Brezhnev – 18 years in total – 3000 had been arrested for "anti-Soviet propaganda" most of them for publishing underground pamphlets (ibid., 217). In the 70s and 80s of the last century the party members in most former socialist countries no longer considered telling political jokes a threat to communism: they were seen as a safety valve letting off social tension and discontent. Then, and especially in the 80s, the biggest problem for the KGB and its Bulgarian equivalent – the State Security Police – were decedents and samizdat literature.

4. Significance of Underground Political Jokes for the Powerless

There is no doubt that collectors of underground political jokes that never defected to the West valued them more and assigned greater social significance to them compared to other citizens. They wrote them down probably hoping the day would come when the jokes would be printed. In Bulgaria, due to the dedication of two university professors, Prof. Kiril Vassilev and Prof. Ivan Slavov – and the political changes after 1989 – the publication of two joke books of underground political jokes became

possible: *45 Years of Jokes: Laughter against Violence* (Vassilev 1990) and *The Golden Bars* (Slavov 1991). In Hungary, writer Gyorgy Dalos did the same. Interviewed after the democratic changes, Dalos says: "The jokes were a kind of counter-propaganda. They were a way to undermine the enormity and uniformity of Soviet propaganda. Told over decades, they gradually broke down the prestige and moral authority of the regime. In a sense you could say that Communism was laughed out of existence" (Lewis 2006, 115−116). In Romania another enthusiast, Calin Bogdan Stefanesku, collected over 950 jokes between 1979 and 1989. He wrote down the name of the joke tellers, their age group and social background. The collected jokes were printed in 1990 under the title *Ten Years of Black Humor in Romania* (ibid., 267). Most of the joke tellers Stefanesku interviewed, 67% according to his statistical data, were intellectuals in their thirties and forties (ibid., 270). Estonia is the only former socialist country in which secretly, yet institutionally, underground political jokes were collected. Juri Viikberg, a well-known dialectologist, collected about 4000 jokes from 1960 to 1986 that were kept secretly in the archives of the now Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu. They were published in 1997 under the title *A Book of Anecdotes: Laughter from Yesterday: Estonian Anecdotes from 1960-1990* (Krikmann 2009, 43).

Undoubtedly, joke collectors and joke tellers valued underground political jokes more than did other citizens as their recipients. According to Janos Szabo, a Hungarian who told political jokes as a student in the '50s, jokes "were our way of standing up for ourselves" (Lewis 2008, 131). Here is what two very good Bulgarian joke tellers, underground jokes included, say about the latter: they were "a social and political outlet, a manifestation of some social position, a form of rejection of the totalitarian timelessness" (I. L., university professor, age 58); they were "an outlet of suppressed dissatisfaction", as well as "a pleasure in the demolishment of authorities" (K. P., university professor, age 60).

5. Family Values and Jokes in the Totalitarian State

Family values such as love, honesty, morality, industriousness, etc. are most cherished in a democracy. Yet under communism, such values often clashed with the official propaganda that demanded unconditioned loyalty to the political system. The ones unable to conform to it vainly sought refuge in their family, since the party controlled not only public but private life as well. Party members formed comrades' courts and often men and women were asked, on the complaint of one of the spouses, to explain their 'deviant sexual behaviour' – an extramarital affair – that was in dissonance with

the comrades' love and socialist morality. The totalitarian state prioritized duty – not to dissolve the family for the sake of the child/children – over personal happiness. It also prioritized public pursuits to individual ones. Because of this, totalitarian jokes about family and marriage as an institution seem to be more cynical – cynical meaning here 'humourless' – compared to totalitarian jokes targeting the repressiveness of the state, as in (2) and (3):

(2) Що е семейство?
    Обществено благоприличие, вечно безпаричие, сексуално безразличие (Slavov 1991, 307).

    "What is marriage?"
    "Social decorum, constant money shortages and sexual indifference."

(3) Съпруг – спътник на вечно лаеща кучка.
    Съпруга – зло, доведено с музика (Slavov 1991, 307).

    "What is a husband?"
    "The companion of an incessantly barking bitch."
    "What is a wife?"
    "Evil brought with music."

According to the forced reinterpretation model of humour in jokes (Ritchie 2004, 59), **a joke text has two parts: the set-up or the main body of the joke and the punch line**. The set-up has two different interpretations – a more likely one that is accessible to the listener, and a less likely interpretation that is non-accessible to her/him. The punch line evokes the less likely interpretation that **conflicts with** the obvious one, but is, nevertheless, **compatible with** it. In addition, the meaning of the punch line is **consistent with** the less likely interpretation of the set-up. In this sense the two marriage and family jokes above are not a typical joke with a set up part and a punch line that results in the reinterpretation of the set up part. The verbal context in the two jokes plays the role of a punch line describing what a family is not expected to be, leading to an implicit comparison with an ideal family playing the role of an implicit set up part.

In (4), family relations are presented from the wife's point of view. The joke is less nihilistic than the ones in (2) and (3) – the husband's point of view – and structurally (4) ranks close to the prototypical joke with its incongruous comparison between a husband and a suitcase without a handle:

(4) – Как изглежда мъжът в очите на собствената си жена?
– Като куфар без дръжка – да го носиш е неудобно, да го хвърлиш ти е жал. (Slavov 1991, 196)

"How does a husband look in the eyes of his wife?"
"Like a suitcase without a handle – cumbersome to carry, yet piteous to throw away."

So what was it like for women to experience formal equality without democracy? Indeed, under communism both sexes had equal job opportunities and women got equal pay for equal work – work was regarded as a core value constructing the individual's social position and identity – but they were poorly represented at higher and better paid jobs and were often discriminated in terms of career advancement. Emancipation of women in communist Bulgaria was, in fact, pseudo-emancipation. They were entrapped in the so-called 'double shift': in addition to their traditional roles as mothers and wives – childrearing, cooking, washing and cleaning – women had new roles as workers and professionals. Women had the right to work yet at the beginning of the '70s even unmarried women did not have the right to abort an undesirable pregnancy. Married women without children or having one child could not have an abortion not only in the '70s but in the '80s as well. At the same time, like most goods of necessity, contraceptives were hard to find. Bans on abortion and the ban on contraceptives were undertaken as measures to resolve a demographic crisis. The one-party state went one step further: to encourage childbearing, in 1951 it introduced the so-called 'bachelor's tax' for men and women without children: age 21 to 50 for men and age 21 to 45 for women. The tax was repealed in 1990.

The joke in (5) illustrates the social roles of women under communism in Bulgaria very neatly:

(5) *Англичанката*. Зад себе си има благородно потекло, отляво – добри деца, отдясно – верен съпруг, на главата си – малка шапка, напред – светло бъдеще.
Французойката. Зад себе си има бурно минало, отляво – съпруг, отдясно – любовник, на главата – голяма шапка, напред – безкрайни приключения.
Българката. Зад себе си има антифашистка борба, отляво – обществени задължения, отдясно домакинска работа, на главата – съпруг и деца, отпред – насрещен план. (Vassilev 1990, 72)

The English woman. She has her noble origin behind her, on her left –
good children, on her right – a devoted husband, on her head – a small
hat, before her – a bright future.
The French woman. She has her wild past behind her, on her left – her
husband, on her right – her lover, on her head – a large hat, before her
– endless adventures.
The Bulgarian woman. She has the anti-fascist struggle behind her, on
her left – social duties, on her right – housework, on her head – her
children and husband, before her – a five-year plan to fulfil.

As is often the case with jokes, the unsaid is more important than what
is verbally stated. In (6) the husband poisons his first wife and batters to
death his second one. And although the poisoning and the battering are
only symbolic, they are an indication that not all was well with the nuclear
socialist family. One can hardly expect it to be. In a one-party state, where
there is no political and religious freedom and where the individual is
perceived predominantly as a collective being, family problems are
multiplied by societal problems.

(6) Разговор между приятели:
– Кого жалееш?
– Жена си.
– От какво почина?
– Яде гъби.
След година, две същите приятели:
– Кого жалееш пак?
– Втората си жена.
– От какво почина?
– От удар с чук по главата.
– И как стана?
– Не искаше да яде гъби (Slavov 1991, 305).

A conversation between two friends:
"Who are you mourning?"
"My wife."
"What did she die of?"
"She ate mushrooms."
The same friends after two years:
"Who are you mourning again?"
"My second wife."
"What did she die of?"
"A hammer on her head."
"Why?"
"She didn't want to eat mushrooms."

6. Official Humour in Bulgaria before 1989

How was it with the official humorous print media? And, most of all, did the official humour perform its function of a social corrective? Indeed, under communism in Bulgaria there was no official censorship, yet the executive editors of all print media, the executive editor of Стършел (*The Hornet*), including the official humour weekly paper, invariably followed the instructions of the communist party and never let anything appear in print that might compromise the political system. In reality the state party censored and thus controlled all public media. According to Michael Veshim, the present executive editor of *The Hornet*, "under communism this paper was one of the few instances of public media in which some sort of criticism was tolerated. Certainly, the criticism was in small doses and was controlled by the executive editor and the respective department of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party. Nevertheless every now and then reading matter and caricatures appeared which, using Aesop language, could hint something about the regime" (www.club50plusbg, accessed on 24.01.2012).The situation in the former German Democratic Republic was similar. About what might and what might not appear in Eulenspiegel, Gerd Nagel, a former editor, says: "[w]e could not criticize the shortcomings of Socialism, and the criticism we made had to be concrete criticism that could be substantiated… you could write about individual cases but not give the impression that everything is rubbish in the DDR" (Lewis 2008, 191). In other words, when shortcomings are criticized, they are the doings of separate individuals misusing the political system and not of the system itself. The only common topic of underground jokes and humour in the official media was that of bureaucracy.

The House of Humour and Satire in the town of Gabrovo, opened in 1972, is evidence for what kind of humour the party tolerated and promoted. There are a lot of cartoons and humorous novels in it by humorists from many countries and a lot of marble as well, some of which, by the way, has fallen off the outer walls of the building. A biennial festival of humour and satire was organized before the democratic changes in 1989 and humorists and satirists from many countries were invited to it ('invited' means all the expenses of those invited were paid by the state). The English writer and humorist Allen Saddler was one of them. Here is what he says about the humorous exhibits he saw in the House: "I wandered around the exhibits. There were plenty of visitors from overseas. From all the Eastern bloc countries, but also from Australia, Canada, France, Italy and America, and I could see that nobody, absolutely nobody, was laughing. Not a chuckle, not a snigger. This was serious funny business. It showed the gap between West and Eastern concepts of humour. I took some books

of cartoons home with me and only the ones from Italy and France raised a flicker of a smile" (www.tuxdeluxe.org/node/281, accessed on 30.01.1012). Burton Bernstein, from *The New Yorker*, was one of the invited at the festival in 1987. He wrote a feature article about it in *The New Yorker* called *Laughter in the Balkans*. Don Lee Fred Nilsen, the author of Encyclopaedia of 20th-Century American Humor*, was invited to another festival (personal communication). Editors of the English humorous magazine Punch* and the American *The National Lampoon* had also been invited. Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut were awarded literary prizes at The House of Humour. All in all, the communist party tried hard (and with a lot of money) to turn Gabrovo into an international capital of humour and satire. However, today The House of Humour and Satire is nothing but a monument of a past era, a museum of the communist party's peculiar understanding of humour. It is like a suitcase without a handle – as in the punch line of the totalitarian joke above – cumbersome to carry, yet piteous to throw away. Perhaps the time has come to look at it with the eyes of those English and American writers and journalists who wrote about the humour festival – meaning well, yet confused about what humour is and political humour especially. On the other hand, if they had listened to underground political jokes, they would have, no doubt, thought differently.

7. Conclusion

It is a well-known fact that there is a marked contrast between official humour and underground political jokes in the totalitarian state. The official humour failed to play the role of a social corrective because it was controlled by the one-party state and served the ideology of the regime. Underground political jokes had more than one social function. Minimally, they spoke the politically unspeakable, were an indicator of public opinion and a substitute for freedom of speech. Maximally, they were a form of criticism and indirect protest against the oppressiveness of the one-party state. They were valued by the powerless and banned by the powerful.

Bibliography

Beckmann, Petr. 1969. *Whispered Anecdotes: Humor from Behind the Iron Curtain.* Boulder, Colorado: Golem Press.
—. 1980. *Hammer and Tickle: Clandestine Laughter in the Soviet Union*. Boulder, Colorado: Golem Press.
Davies, Christie. 2007. Humour and Protest: Jokes under Communism. *International Review of Social History* 52: 291–305.

Dolgopolova, Zhanna. 1983. *Russia Dies Laughing: Jokes from Soviet Russia*. London: Unwin Publishers.

Draitser, Emil A. 1980. *Forbidden Laughter: Soviet underground jokes*. Los Angeles: Almanac Press.

—. 1998. *Taking penguins to the movies: ethnic humor in Russia*. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press.

Genova, Dafina. 2010a. Humor in Jokes and its Interpretation. *Contrastive Linguistics* 35(1): 24–42.

—. 2010b. The world has survived because it has laughed: on Bulgarian regional humor. *Contrtastive Linguistics* 35(3): 73–85.

—. 2010c. Дафина Генова. Смешното и сериозното въввица. *Проглас* 19(2): 5–19.

—. 2011a. Humor and Gender. In *Паисий Христов – една кариера в служба на словото*, Кр. Петров, Вл. Сабоурин, ред., 66–82. Велико Търново: Faber.

—. 2011b. *Studying Humor Seriously*. Veliko Turnovo: Faber.

—. 2012. Дафина Генова. Преводът на вицове – шега работа ли е? In: *Теория и практика на превода. Сборник в памет на Даниела Петрова от Международната научна конференция* (*24-25 ноември 2011г.*). Велико Търново: Faber, 155–169.

Kolasky, John. 1972. *Look Comrade – the people are laughing: Underground wit, satire and humour from behind the Iron Curtain*. Toronto: Peter Martin.

Krikmann, Arvo. 2009. Jokes in Soviet Estonia. *Folklore* 43: 43–66.

Lewis, Ben. 2008. *Hammer and Tickle: The History of Communism Told through Communist Jokes*. Phoenix: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Mulkay, Michael. 1988. *On Humour: Its Nature and Place in Modern Society*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Oring, Elliott. 2004. Risky Business: Political Jokes under Repressive Regimes. *Western Folklore* 63(3): 209–236.

Raskin, Victor. 1985. *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Ritchie, Graham D. 2004. *The Linguistic Analysis of Jokes*. London: Routledge.

Rosch, Elenor H. 1973. Natural Categories. *Cognitive Psychology* 4(3): 328–350.

—. 1975. Cognitive reference points. *Cognitive Psychology* 7(4): 532–547.

Slavov, Ivan. 1991. Иван Славов (съст.). *Златната решетка*. София: УИ "Св. Климент Охридски".

Shturman, Dora and Sergei Tiktin. 1987. Дора Щурман и Сергей Титкин. *Советский Союз в зеркале политичесого анекдота*. Jerusalem: Express.

Vassilev, Kiril. 1990. Кирил Василев (съст.). *45 години вицове: Смехът срещу насилието*. София, УИ "Климент Охридски".

Internet references

www.club50plusbg
www.tuxdeluxe.org/node/281