This text is due to be published in Crack Up, Crack Down, a book edited by the Slavs and Tatars collective for the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Art, 2019. This is the penultimate draft; please only cite the published version. Author contact: v.simoniti@liverpool.ac.uk (29 October 2019)

Low Blows: Martin Krpan, Top Lista Nadrealista, and Equalizing Satire

Vid Simoniti

> *"I meant to take my leave without a word. But since you have delayed my departure yourself, do not now be upset that I've told you a few harsh ones. You surely know what the late Jerry from the village of Golo used to say: 'Should I feed sweetmeats to the man I'm quarrelling with? Whichever spice stings him most, that's what I serve him!' And now good-bye, and stay in good health!"*
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> – Martin Krpan to the Emperor, in Frank Levstik's *Martin Krpan*[1]

I used to have a Swedish dentist. Like all dentists, he relished the pleasure peculiar to their profession—to converse with a person whom they have just rendered incapable of answering back. While thus engaged, this dentist also enjoyed the odd dig at my expense. He once told me of a journey through Yugoslavia, which he took as a younger man. He did not spare me sarcastic comments on the broken-down socialist trains, corrupt policemen, beautiful women keen to marry a Westerner, etc. Of course I had to repay him somehow. So after I was finally allowed to spit out that abominable mixture of mouthwash and blood, I told him the following anecdote:

“You describe my people rather well,” I said, “but, of course, we ex-Yugoslavs have also travelled to Sweden, mostly as immigrants, rather than as tourists. In fact, there was once a famous Yugoslav cigarette smuggler who emigrated to Sweden, and when he returned, everybody asked him what that country was like. ‘Wonderful,’ he said, ‘in Sweden, public transport works flawlessly; people are kind and well-behaved; they have Abba; it is heaven on Earth. But there is one problem.’” I waited for my dentist to raise an eyebrow. “'It is fucking boring.'”

What good can come from such low blows? This is the question of satire. Historically, satire has been a form of humiliation, propelled by humour and redeemed by self-righteousness. But in today’s political climate—where old and new democracies alike are shaken by populist rebellions against consensus politics, by charismatic leaders that stoke xenophobic hatred, by Twitter wars unfolding between polarised factions—satire becomes an increasingly difficult subject. A few years ago, the coarseness of my conversation with the dentist left me feeling that a pleasing equality had been re-established between us. In today’s fraught atmosphere, one is more wary of causing offense, and more suspecting of others’ motives for causing it too. Perhaps, then, if a case is to be made for satirical modes of speech today, this is easier done at some historical remove from the present.

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Though I don't remember who the smuggler was in the anecdote I told the dentist, the story might have had some factual basis: Ratko Đokić, the boss of the Serbian cigarette mafia in Sweden, attained celebrity status in Belgrade, where he ran nightclubs and dated the pop singer Izolda Barudžija. But I begin this analysis of satire with another smuggler from my own corner of ex-Yugoslavia—the Slovenian national hero, Martin Krpan.

Fran Levstik’s short story *Martin Krpan from Vrh* (1858) is a key part of the Slovene national literary canon. Krpan is an extraordinarily strong, good-natured man from the Slovene lands, who illegally trades in English salt. After a chance encounter with the Emperor, Krpan is called to Vienna, where he fights off a terrible giant, Brdavs, who is menacing the city. Published in the time of Bach’s absolutism in the Austrian Empire, *Martin Krpan* is a satire of the Habsburg rule, disguised as a fairy-tale. Levstik lampoons Viennese pretentions by juxtaposing them with Krpan’s

rural authenticity: the sophisticated dishes they serve Krpan at court are no match for his enormous appetite; he causes chaos by pulling imperial horses out of the stables by their tails; he chops down an ornamental tree to make himself a fighting bat. The Emperor himself is shown as kindly, but dithering and uxorious; the Minister of State, Gregor, is a boot-licking conniver.

In short, we have in *Martin Krpan* a classic example of dealing low blows to an opponent; or, to put it more precisely, an example of what Thomas Hobbes, in the 17th century, described as the essence of humour: “The passion of laughter is nothing else but a sudden glory arising from a sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly.”[2] The sturdy Slovene suddenly, surprisingly triumphs over his German masters. Which is funny (to Slovenes).

While the idea of Krpan as a national hero has been the chief interpretation of the story, Krpan has had only a mixed success in this regard since Slovenian independence. For some, Krpan’s glory has not gone far enough: having defeated Brdavs, Krpan declines the honours that the Emperor would heap upon him and returns to his simple village life. In the 1990s, this seemed like slim pickings, and some scholars complained that Krpan’s humbleness only confirmed the Slovenes’ inferiority complex as a small, servile nation.[3]

For the liberal-cosmopolitan readers, on the other hand, Krpan gloats in his sudden glory rather too much. This pertains especially to his victory over Brdavs. Though Levstik never explicitly identified the giant with the Ottoman Turks, the context of an enemy besieging Vienna establishes him as such. The problem for the cosmopolitan reader, then, is that Krpan is an iteration of the 'Christian frontiers' mythos. Slovenes’ attempts at building a national identity, especially in literary works such as *Martin Krpan,* are here seen as predicated on the opposition to an Orientalised image of the Turkish Other. And, from today's (marginally) more tolerant standpoint, one might find such literature worryingly xenophobic.[4]

And so Krpan can hardly satisfy anyone today: he is not quite the nation-building hero, and is even less of a committed multiculturalist. But neither of these complaints quite get the right end of *Martin Krpan,* nor do they capture what is the most curious aspect of this story *as a satire.* What a satire can do, certainly, is

deliver a bout of “sudden glory”, i.e., humiliate the opponent and elevate the protagonist. But it can also satirize *the protagonist*.

The idea of Krpan as a national hero is so well-ingrained in the Slovene literary psyche, that the suggestion that his character is itself the subject of satire may sound like an open heresy. However, it is striking what an uncouth, oddball rustic Levstik portrays him to be. No doubt Krpan is strong and cunning, but he is also ill-mannered and quick to anger. His speeches in Vienna are full of obscure references to village life, which must strike his interlocutors as bordering on insane ramblings. See the epigraph to this essay, for example. Here, having fallen out with the Empress, Krpan is about to leave the court in a huff; in a lengthy tirade, he tells the Emperor he must ‘surely know’ what Jerry (Jernejko) from Golo, a small village near Ljubljana, had to say on such occasions. Who the hell, might the Emperor rightly ask here, is Jerry from Golo? When the Emperor offers Krpan the Princess’ hand in marriage, Krpan’s rejection is also quite strange (queer, even). He decidedly prefers his widowhood, and his long-winded account of his first marriage implies that his wife’s death came as something of a relief. Of course, Krpan *is* the protagonist of the story, but might we not also see in him the image of an eccentric village bachelor, rather than a paragon of nation-building virility?

Among the visual renditions, however, only Hinko Smrekar’s illustrations of 1917 capture Krpan’s parodic character. Unlike in Tone Kralj’s sumptuous watercolour illustrations or in Miki Muster’s comic book, which both show a youthful and strapping Krpan, Smrekar shows Krpan as a middle-aged man, wider at the waist than at the shoulders. When he fights off the toll collectors, his heavy stomach hangs out in front of him. Wrecking the imperial armoury, he stares at the Emperor in dim-witted frustration, as if expressing a big fat “oops”. Riding his trusting mare, his feet are almost dragging on the ground.

While the giant Brdavs is in all visual renditions an unmistakable heir of the *imago Turci*—the images of beturbaned, cruel invaders that proliferated in the European visual culture of the early modern period—we might recognize in Levstik’s and Smrekar’s Krpan an echo of a 'lewd peasant' stereotype, an echo of what we might call *imago rustici*. Consider *Martin Krpan* next to, say, 16th century satirical prints of peasant life, such as this 1527 German woodcut of a peasant wedding:

burly peasants consume inordinate amounts of food, while one of them (at the bottom-right corner of the table) vomits and another (at the bottom-left) defecates. Such images deriding peasants as lewd, voracious, and sexually perverse were common from the early modern era well into the nineteenth century; and, as Umberto Eco notes in his study *On Ugliness*, such prints and literature tended to laugh *at* the peasants, rather than *with* them.[5] Krpan, of course, possesses many redeeming features, but doesn't he also share these peasants' rude appetites? At court he consumes, as Levstik puts it, "two legs of pork, two quarters of a ram, three capons, and, since he would not eat the middle, the crust of four white loaves of bread, smeared with eggs and butter."[6] Does he not share their cunning, coarseness, and even perhaps their strange sexual proclivities? In spite of any admiration Krpan may win, these elements also call forth an almost-contemptuous smile.

If we accept that the protagonist's character in *Martin Krpan* is also itself the target of satire, this suggests a rather surprising literary structure, one that is at odds with traditional views of the genre. Throughout its long history, satire has encompassed many varieties and subcategories—including the Roman genres practised by Horace and Juvenal, or the grotesque Renaissance satire of Rabelais—but the modern European conception of satire can perhaps be traced to the 17th and 18th centuries, to the work of such satirists as Jonathan Swift, John Dryden, or Voltaire.[7] These authors share the view that satire is partial to a given social, religious, or moral position; in John Dryden's formulation, the satirist is obliged "to give his Reader some one Precept of Moral Virtue; and to caution him against some one particular Vice or Folly."[8] In this same vein, *Martin Krpan* has often been understood as a satirical attack on the (vices and follies of) the Hapsburg multinational state. However, insofar as we can also see the character of Krpan himself derided, this rather complicates matters. Here, not only Levstik's *counter-position* (Austrian rule) but also his own *position* (Slovene authenticity) receives satirical treatment. In *Martin Krpan,* there is a strange equality between the three equally-made-fun-of opponents: the bungling Emperor, the bloodthirsty Turk, and the Slovene country bumpkin.

I shall leave aside the question as to what extent Levstik himself consciously intended to satirize the character of Krpan; the satirical potential is made palpable enough by Smrekar's illustrations. The key question is whether a model of satire revealed—an *equalising satire,* which attempts to humiliate *all* the political positions on the table—can play a productive role at the intersection of art and politics today. Before I attempt a more theoretical unpacking of this notion, let me introduce another instance of such equalising satire.

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The wartime episodes of the comedy television show *Top Lista Nadrealista* (1993)*,* filmed during the Siege of Sarajevo, must surely be a case of satirical humour produced under the most extreme circumstances in recent history. *Top Lista Nadrealista* ("Surrealist Top Charts") originally grew out of the New Primitivism music movement in Sarajevo in the late 1980s, and soon came to enjoy a Yugoslavia-wide popularity.[9] The show's creators—the most recognizable onscreen presences were Nele Karajlić, Branko Đurić, and Zenit Đozić—initially modelled themselves on Monty Python, producing absurdist, and mostly politically harmless sketches, interspersed with musical interludes. However, the final two seasons of the show (1989 and 1991) presented openly political material that was darkly prophetic of the calamity about to happen. One sketch imagined a Sarajevo divided between warring garbage collectors; another showed a divorced couple at war in a divided apartment.

As the war broke out and Sarajevo came under siege in 1992, production ceased and several of the *Top Lista* makers left the city (Branko Đurić, for example, escaped to Ljubljana, where he launched a renaissance in Slovenian comedy). Those who stayed behind assembled a new group, continued with the radio show, and even produced a few television episodes. With both Karajlić and Đurić gone, these wartime episodes were a spin-off of the original series, and they are certainly not as well-known today as the sketches of 1989 and 1991, but they do stand as a remarkable document of satire in wartime.

The portrayal of different ethnicities in wartime *Top Lista* is of special interest here: the tenor of the entire show is anti-war, *and yet,* the sketches often base their comedy on satirical ethnic stereotypes.[10] To a harsh critic this might appear to be a paradoxical or even hypocritical position. After all, ethnic jokes—as Simon Critchley

has noted in his book *On Humor*,—always express contempt of the ethnically Other.[11] Eliciting Hobbesian "sudden glory," such jokes seem to reinforce hierarchies of ethnic value, of the sort necessary to undertake nationalist wars. But the wartime *Top Lista Nadrealista* pushes us towards a more complex understanding of such humour.

In one sketch, a Roma (Gypsy) man is digging a tunnel into the ground to escape the war. He declares that he has had "enough of democracy".[12] His wife (a male actor in drag) and his children (who seem to be genuine Roma children co-opted into the sketch) bemoan the man's attempt to leave, but the punchline comes when the man tells us he is planning to dig the tunnel through the Earth's core. In the ensuing scenes he pops up in various parts of the warzone, where he is threatened by everybody from the Russians to the UN troops, before digging his way back home. Another sketch stages a report by the "enemy" TV station from Serbia. The Serbian forces have caught two Czech tourists, who they suspect of being Mujahedin fighters aiding the Muslim Bosnians. Much of the humour derives from a silly confusion between the words "tourist" and "terrorist", and other misunderstandings between the two Slavic languages.

The set-up in these sketches relies on the stock characters from the "Balkan jokes," a near-endless catalogue of ethnic witticisms familiar to all denizens of former Yugoslavia. The Roma are shown as a happy-go-lucky group. They all burst into song in the end; the children are shown with stereotypical Roma moustaches; the husband is briefly shown stealing a car battery. The Serbian reporter has bushy facial hair associated with Serbian Orthodoxy; the Czech tourists have the childlike manners and unfashionable clothes, which they always have in the Yugoslav imaginary. Even today, the word "Czech" remains a Slovenian colloquialism for "outmoded," stemming from the time when Czechoslovakia had less access to Western fashions than Yugoslavia.

To say that these sketches—like most Balkan jokes—employ crude ethnic stereotypes would be entirely correct. It would also be right to say that the sketches, produced in the Bosnian-controlled territory, tended to be told from the perspective of Muslim Bosnians. But these wartime sketches are also self-deprecating to the point of fatalism: showing, for example, a Bosnian commander who accidentally gives

away the co-ordinates of his headquarters and ends up getting bombed as a result.[13] By employing stereotypes, Sarajevo Surrealists keep the animosities of war in view, and yet the effect is not one of jingoist self-aggrandizement. What comes across instead is the sense that all these stock characters from the familiar old Balkan jokes are trapped in the horror and absurdity of war together.

Despite the century-and-a-half time lapse between them, what *Top Lista Nadrealista* and *Martin Krpan* share is the 'equalizing' element in satire. In both cases, mutually opposing political agents are brought into view, and are shown to be humorously, but *equally,* deficient. Hobbes' idea of humour as "sudden glory" does not quite work here, because in this case, a sudden infirmity, or sudden humiliation, applies to all involved. The ideals have tumbled and all that remains to be seen is the grotesque struggle in which human bodies are now entangled.

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Satire may seem cynical. The free reign of oppressive stereotypes in satire appears unconscionable and cruel at a time of crisis. If we accept the 'equalizing' element to satire, then one might also be disappointed that satire does not take sides more clearly, and instead reduces all positions—the 'good' and the 'bad'—to the same mud-slinging level. To return to my micro-political situation in the dentist's office, would it not clearly seem better to rise above petty divisions, to be the better man, to say a word that would inspire tolerance or kindness? Of course, I would like to say "no" here. But it is not theoretically straightforward to show why satire is not cynical, how its subversion of ideals can be politically productive.

To resist the conflation of satire with cynicism, we might begin with a thought by Slavoj Žižek, (admittedly written in a different context), in an essay on the European refugee crisis: "Communitarianism is not enough: a recognition that we are all, each in our own way, strange lunatics provides the only hope for a tolerable co-existence of different ways of life."[14] Equalizing satire may offer a step towards such a realization. Consider, again, the Czech tourists sketch in *Top Lista.* The Czechs keep repeating they are Czechs, the Serbian journalist spouts patriotic platitudes, and the entire segment is framed by a (presumably Bosnian) text crawler suggesting it is "footage taken from the aggressor's television." But the more the seriousness of national divisions is emphasized by all concerned, the more absurd they appear,

especially given the obviously ill-fitting make-up of the "Serbian" journalist and the farcically hysterical "Czechs." We would misunderstand the sketch if we saw it as simply mocking different peoples; it is the idea of belonging to *any* national category that begins to look like a lunacy.

We may further illuminate the mechanism at work here by borrowing from Alenka Zupančič's theory of comedy. Zupančič distinguishes between "false" comedy —which merely tarnishes some ideal type with vulgarity—and "true" comedy—which subverts the ideal type itself. In conservative comedies of baronage, for example, aristocrats are shown to chase after women, fart, and snore: they are shown as "merely human," but the aristocratic order itself is not questioned. "True" comedies, by contrast, show an aristocrat as silly in the very belief that he is an aristocrat; here Zupančič builds on Jacques Lacan's remark that "a lunatic is a king who believes that he really is a king."[15] Perhaps this is the politically productive moment in equalizing satire too; in various sketches of *Top Lista Nadrealista,* (ethnic) ideals are dismantled precisely through such excessive affirmation.[16] Perhaps the best-known example of this is the pre-war "languages" sketch, which mocks the nationalist attempts to recognize Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian as separate languages, when in reality these are mutually intelligible. What makes the sketch so funny is that all the characters play along faithfully with the ideal, and are completely uncomprehending of each another,, until another person's language (Bosnian) is translated into their own (Serbian). What is said, of course, sounds exactly the same. By undermining multiple positions, equalizing satire subverts some overarching "bad" ideal—say, nationalism, as such.

Yet this only partially addresses the trouble with satire. Where satire differs from the "subversive" model of political art (postulated by Zupančič's view of comedy, but of course also espoused in poststructuralist aesthetics more broadly), is that satire does not in fact replace one set of ideals (say, nationalism) with another (say, cosmopolitanism). Indeed, while satire may *mock* any number of ideals, it *leaves them in place* insofar as it fully utilises their oppressive aspects; the taxonomies, the stereotypes, the "otherings" that they produce. For example, while *Martin Krpan* and *Top Lista* both expose the absurdity of their respective political and symbolic orders, they also never abjure the stereotypes, the Orientalisms and divisions, which were

enshrined in those very those orders. In illustrations of *Martin Krpan,* Turks are still murderous and have long moustaches; in wartime *Top Lista,* Serbs are still bloodthirsty and have bushy eyebrows.

This troublesome aspect of satire may be perhaps more fully appreciated if we consider examples closer to us in time: the excessive, neo-Rabelaisian Anglophone satires of the 2000s, such as those of Sacha Baron-Cohen (*Borat,* 2006; *Bruno,* 2009)*,* or of Trey Parker and Matt Stone (*South Park,* since 1997; *Team America,* 2004). These share something of the equalizing structure I described: they not only mock ideals that cosmopolitan-liberal audiences perceive as "bad" (various domestic and imperialist forms of American chauvinism), but also those they perceive as "good" (environmentalism, sexual tolerance, multiculturalism). In the process, such satires mercilessly unleash all kinds of oppressive categories: stereotypes of Islamic terrorists, third world immigrants, homosexuals, rednecks, and so forth. For example, while Sacha Baron Cohen's *Borat* might make conservative American ideals its main target, it also punches down, and punches hard, at the figure of the Third World immigrant. If we were to suggest simply that *Borat* "subverts" xenophobia by over-affirmation, we would not be telling the full story. The satirist leaves the stereotypes of the old order lying around, like so many weapons for its audiences to use.

Such trouble may be inherent to satire. But what *Top Lista* and *Martin Krpan* teach us is that the best satirical positions do not temper their use of oppressive categories with a final "just kidding." Rather, they are those that allow us to see the violence of such categories most clearly. In wartime *Top Lista,* of course, the threat of violence is always literally present, filmed as it was during the siege of Sarajevo. But even *Martin Krpan,* while sometimes billed as a children's story, has violence at its core: Brdavs murders the Emperor's son, and Krpan decapitates Brdavs. Of the illustrators, Smrekar again stands out for capturing this violent aspect. Towering over the unlucky prince, Smrekar's Brdavs is a gaunt, skeletal figure, the mouth grimacing in a deathly grim. Krpan's confrontation with the toll collectors—a colourful dance in Tone Kralj's beautiful illustration—is the work of a scowling, maddened hulk in Smrekar's rendition. While in illustrations of Tone Kralj and Miki Muster, the two combatants appear to be playfighting in a jocular historical re-enactment. Smrekar's

warring giants promise destruction. In other words, while equalizing satire indeed shows that we are *all* lunatics, its position need not be the false hope that we can all just get along, or the cynical assertion that no one position is better than another.

To elaborate on the value of such satirical ruthlessness for political discourse, we might inscribe satire within a realist tradition of political philosophy, the tradition of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Carl Schmitt, or more recently, of Chantal Mouffe's approach to politics as an agonistic struggle between adversaries. Borrowing a term from Mouffe, we might say that satire reveals politics as a form of "agonistic pluralism."[17] For Mouffe, "the political" consists in a confrontation between interests that cannot be aligned. The task of politics, then, is not to reach absolute agreement about our ideals, but to transform *enemies* into *adversaries*; that is, to transform them into opponents, whose aim is *struggle,* but not mutual elimination. This may be just what the equalizing, anti-idealist impulse in satire can reveal. In Smrekar's illustration to *Martin Krpan,* there is no Slovene People pitted against Imperial Authority; instead, a peasant bickers with a pretentious court. In wartime *Top Lista Nadrealista,* mythical struggles between Christianity *versus* Islam are deflated, even if the reality of those ethnic-religious confrontations is acknowledged. Stripped of its ideological pretensions, politics in equalizing satire becomes a lowly, tragicomic, unexceptional confrontation between earthly creatures.[18]

Satirical "low blows" offer no quick ideological solutions, and we would be wrong to ignore the way satire can easily flip into symbolic violence. But if we can understand satire's caustic humour as linked to a realist conception of politics, then it becomes easier to see how satire can rise above cynicism and be politically productive. Staging a confrontation between mere adversaries, satire attempts to stay a worse violence: the struggle to the death, which is predicated on the politics of ideals. The absurd realism of satire, we might say, is opposed to that divinely cruel, uncompromising, dialectical battle in which one form of Being overcomes another—be it democracy wiping out authoritarianism, World Communism triumphing over capitalism, or one ethnic ideal asserting itself over all others. Yes, each real political action ultimately requires ideals, and pure *Realpolitik* is a cynical enterprise. But when a power struggle has already begun, when it has already become bloodshed, a moratorium on ideals may just be the best thing that an artistic protest can offer.

And what of such satire today? The political merits of any artistic strategy must be judged from the specifics of its historical situation. A general analysis of satire cannot issue a blanket 'pro' or 'contra' for an entire genre. But it is hard to imagine, in 2019, a satire like *Team America* or *Borat* enjoying the kind of success that these films had in the mid-2000s. To an extent this is understandable. As hard-won ideals of tolerance today become threatened by populism and xenophobia, we may rightly feel more protective of them. On the other hand, low-attention-span media like Twitter thrive on sanctimony and outrage, and so we may feel it is safer to stay on-message. Either way, the temptation today is to draw clear battle lines and hold tight onto the views we think are right. However, what an analysis of examples like *Martin Krpan* and *Top Lista* offers is the thought that even satire, which attacks 'our own' ideals, need not result in cynicism, but may rather keep the spirit of criticism alive. It is not the job of satire to set our moral compass, or to usher in a better world. Satire can only invite bitter laughter at the realisation that blind faith in abstract ideals exacts a price in all-too-real violence. In a world increasingly brutal and polarised, this is a reminder we would do well to heed.

[1] Fran Levstik, *Martin Krpan z Vrha*. (Ljubljana: Nova Založba, 1917), p. 27, translation V.S.

[2] Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, ed. F. Tönnies. (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1969), p. 42.

[3] For an analysis of Krpan-interpretations, see Bojan Baskar, “Ambivalent Dealings with an Imperial Past: The Habsburg Legacy and New Nationhood in ex-Yugoslavia”, *Working Papers der Kommission für Sozialanthropologie Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 2005, pp. 1-21, here 8-10.

[4] See the analysis in Alenka Bartulović, “‘We have an old debt with the Turk and it best be settled’: Ottoman incursions through the discursive optics of Slovenian historiography and literature and their applicability in the twenty-first century”, in Božidar Jezernik, ed., *Imagining ‘the Turk’* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 111-136.

[5] Umberto Eco, *On Ugliness* (London, MacLehose Press), p. 137.

[6] Levstik, *Martin Krpan,* p. 13, translation V.S.

[7] Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Introduction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994).

[8] Cited in Dustin Griffin, “Dryden and Restoration Satire”, in Ruben Quintero, ed., *A Companion to Satire* (London: Blackwell, 2007), p. 177.

[9] For some sources in English, see: William Hunt, Ferida Durakovic, Zvonimir Radeljkovic, “Bosnia Today: Despair, Hope, and History”, *Dissent* 60.3 (2013), pp. 23-26; Borislava Vučković, “Dr. Nele Karajlić in the Framework of the ‘New Primitives’”, *Muzikologija* 23 (2017), pp. 99-115.

[10] These stereotypes are often based on “nesting Orientalisms”, whereby each ethnicity is differentiated from the others in terms of how “Oriental” or “Balkan” it is. Milica Bakić-Hayden, “Nesting Orientalisms: The case of former Yugoslavia,” *Slavic Review* 54.4 (1995), pp. 917-931.

[11] Simon Critchley, *On Humour* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 68-76.

[12] *Top Lista Nadrealista 4.* Co-production of Radio-Televizija Bosne i Hercegovine i Top-Lista Nadrealista, Sarajevo, 1993-94. Viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=2bh1pjhIAVE&t=418s (accessed 19 December 2018).

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Slavoj Žižek, “Terrorists with a Human Face”, in Jela Krečič, ed., *The Final Countdown: Europe, Refugees and the Left.* (Ljubljana: IRWIN, 2017), pp. 187-201, here 199.

[15] Alenka Zupančič, *The Odd One In: On Comedy.* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), pp. 30-37.

[16] Comparable strategies may be detected in Soviet “stiob” humour as well, as well as in what Slavoj Žižek described as over-identification in the Slovene punk band Laibach. See e.g. Dominic Boyer and Alexei Yurchak, “American Stiob: Or, What Late-Socialist Aesthetics of Parody Reveal About Contemporary Political Culture in the West”, *Cultural Anthropology* 25.2 (2010), pp. 179-221.

[17] Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox.* (London: Verso, 2005), especially pp. 101-105, 116-118.

[18] We might suggest that this form of satire reveals what Emily Apter has analysed as “unexceptional” politics: behind-the-scenes wheeling and dealing, opportunistic politicking, “Machiavellianism in its modern historical mutations”, which traditional political theory has tended to ignore. Emily Apter, *Unexceptional Politics.* (London: Verso, 2018), pp. 1ff.