POST-SOCIALIST JOKELORE: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND FURTHER RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

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Abstract
Humour is a cultural phenomenon situated at the juncture of societal changes, being most actively present at the spot where the sharpest transitions in value systems take place. Both universally and in the present context of the expanding European Union, it has functioned as an indicator of conflict, transformation and/or assimilation. Now is the perfect time to analyse post-socialist jokelore in Eastern and Central Europe and to compare the results to the jokes of the well-established democracies of Western Europe. Describing the amount and content of political, ethnic and other jokes, their dynamics through the last decade, and viewing the results in a historical perspective will throw light on the issues of self-identification and -positioning and also complement the best-known theories of ethnic humour with regard to choice of targets, the asymmetricality of joking relationships, etc.

The article will propose a model for a post-socialist humour research project, pointing to areas that need further research, and present some preliminary research findings. In the next step of the research project we will be engaging humour scholars from other post-socialist countries to share ideas and expertise, forming a generalized picture of the features of post-socialist humour.

Keywords
Ethnic humour, political humour, post-socialist studies, ethnic intolerance, hate-speech

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The main goal of this article is to give an account of jokes from socialist and post-socialist periods and eras that are merging into the multicultural context of the European Union – to promote understanding, facilitate dialogue, in order to assess, act in and prevent cultural conflicts. By using humour as a tool for uniting and understanding peoples instead of fostering hostility and aggression amongst them, a dialogue between different (from time to time conflicting) cultures and traditions can be established, and intercultural value conflicts moderated. We possess a great deal of valuable material that will complement previous research on political, ethnic and other humour, which has mostly been performed in the English-speaking world, but claims to be universal. The question remains whether these theories make it possible to account for the choice of targets in socialist and post-socialist periods, and if not, what are the underlying mechanisms specific to the jokelore of Eastern Europe. As this could only be determined through extensive, cross-cultural study, a draft research project entitled „Folk Humour as a Form of Human Creativity Under Socialism, Post-socialism and Non-socialism” was recently completed at the Estonian Literary Museum. It was submitted under the 7th Frame Programme of European Union humanities research in June 2007, with main focus on creating a pan-Eastern European database and portal of contemporary jokelore, and consequently conducting research using the database to point out the interconnections and dependencies between jokelore and its cultural, political, demographic and economic contexts. Countries currently involved in the project include Estonia, Russia, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Germany.

Three sets of problems will be presented as central to the topic of post-socialist jokelore. First, the issue of ethnic intolerance in multicultural societies, closely combined with the occasional perception of jokes as hate speech, which will be tackled within a study on the sociology and psychology of humour. Second, the issue of the globalization and sub-culturalization of jokelore. And, last but not least, the issue of difference between socialist, post-socialist and non-socialist jokes in terms of the theory of ethnic humour formulated by Christie Davies (in DAVIES 1990, 1991, 1998, 2002, 2007 and elsewhere).

There are several reasons why research on post-socialist jokes will now enjoy a good start. Contemporary jokes in Eastern Europe are not yet quite like their western counterparts. Transformations are taking place quite rapidly, and the changing jokelore offers invaluable material for researchers, who must merely seize the opportunity to look into the matter. Thus one point of research is that now is a time of eruption, unease, changes – the most interesting time for a researcher. A stable situation might be easier to understand and describe, but changes are more telling, more informative, and allow comparative research on multiple levels. Eastern European jokelore is losing its specificity, is becoming globalized (or at least more similar to jokes from the English-speaking world). Besides, striving towards a world of politically correct societies is transforming jokes, especially ethnic and political ones. If the stigmatization of potentially hostile jokes continues, the material we are analysing will vanish before the work is done.

Studies of this scope need an extensive database designed for international use. Our first task will be to create an Internet portal of contemporary jokelore (with English as the meta-language) compiled by professional humour scholars. The database will: a) include all relevant publications, archive and internet materials from post-socialist countries on political and ethnic jokelore, and b) provide a platform for a dialogue for the interested public, interdisciplinary
scholars and schoolchildren, concerning the issues of ethnicity, identity, multiculturalism, diversity and conflicts arising from those issues. A preliminary version of a research-oriented database of Estonian contemporary jokes has already been completed, and this is available for searching and browsing at http://www.folklore.ee/~liisi/o2/. The international database will have the capacity for elementary statistical operations (sum, average, regression and correlation between two variables) and their graphic representations, whereas the partial maintenance of natural hierarchic substructures would facilitate statistical calculations and make the results of queries more easily readable. The Database of Eastern European Jokes will be organized as "text-oriented" (vs. "context-oriented"). We can assume by the nature of our material that many recent jokes largely originate from Internet sources. Much of this (though usually context-free) material will include several copy-paste duplicate texts without any context. Beside the factors resulting from difference of contexts, two or more textually identical records will then not have any other differences in terms of content. Furthermore, we will need to make statistics on different levels – for example, to count not only occurrences of plots and concrete records, but also distinct text forms, in order to evaluate the “power” of a certain plot or characteristic motive in our joke material. It therefore seems reasonable to form one more level between the higher (“plot”) and lower (“single record”) levels, i.e. an intermediate “distinct text” level.

**Ethnic intolerance, xenophobia and jokes**

The first set of problems touches upon ethnic intolerance, xenophobia, and jokes as a possible expression of these. There are basically two opposite approaches (or rather two ends of a scale) to ethnic and other potentially harmful humour. We find a tension between two contrastive elements – aggression / conflict on the one hand and mirth / relief on the other. The two intertwined and opposite incentives have long fought to define the nature of humour. Discussions about aggression versus mirth in humour have lasted far more than a few decades, being the subject of a most vigorous exchange of arguments in the field of humour studies. Some research (e.g. INFANTE-RIDDLE-HORWATH-TUMLIN 1992: 116-126, ZILLMANN--CANTOR 1976: 95 – 142; LA FAVE 1977: 237 – 260) views the function of humour as aggressive, pointing to the fact that tendentious humour described already by Sigmund Freud (FREUD 1905 / 1989: ...) is by nature most popular precisely because of its hostile implications.

At the same time, research has also recognized the commonality aspect in humour, stating that by uttering a joke, the teller disclaims any allusions to real hatred or aggression and intends to amuse, not to anger the audience (e.g. in DAVIES 2002: 17; 130 – 131). Despite the heightened scholarly interest, no common view has been reached on the nature of joke texts. Recent investigations (see e.g. KUIPERS 2006) maintain that jokes are an ambivalent form of communication and can be regarded as either aggressive or mirthful, depending on several factors, reaching a compromise with the two conflicting opinions but at the same time ceasing to be heuristically and empirically fertile.

Jokes have a history of being regarded as anti-discourse, “tiny revolutions” (ORWELL 1945). This is also why jokes have been outlawed in some and carefully monitored by all political and ideological systems. The amount and direction of criticism in jokes has even been forced to follow ideological orders. The western world has now claimed ethnic and political jokes to be potentially harmful and banned ethnic jokes as hate speech (e.g. the cartoon controversy that
followed the publication of Mohammad cartoons by a minor Danish newspaper, suits launched in the USA after the screening of the movie „Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan”).

In reality, jokelore as part of the “culture of contestation” is positioned above (or in relation to) official morals and has – over time – remained independent and objective in spite of totalitarian censorship and other factors that affect free speech. This makes the complex phenomena worth studying in order to establish a clear connection between the targets, jokes and the underlying context (e.g. interethnic relations, economic and cultural / historical circumstances etc). Eastern Europe is still struggling to take the official position, which is a good reason to commence research before jokes become stigmatized in the context of political correctness.

Another layer of the aggression-mirthfulness dichotomy is the fact that the appreciation of humour is tied to people’s personality and attitudes, as is also dependent on the social setting and group dynamics. The best predictors of humour appreciation are conservatism-radicalism, sensation seeking, openness to experience, and complexity – simplicity of personality. Thus judgements of humour need to be understood against the background of the individuals in that culture. Our project will assemble the valuable efforts of the experts in the field of humour studies to create a common understanding of the scaleability of the content of (most importantly ethnic and political) jokes. A cross-cultural questionnaire will be selected and adapted to different languages (a personality/ attitude questionnaire, e.g. the Wilson – Patterson Attitude Inventory) and interviews will be designed and carried out in post-socialist countries in order to better assess the interdependencies of ethnic jokes, perceived hostility and intolerance. Representative groups of 150 persons from each country (controlling for age, gender, political orientation, ethnicity, religion) will be selected. Thus we will create a measure for assessing hostility in jokes and its correlation with attitudes and personality attributes as a basis for a culture-specific approach towards initiating a dialogue on joke perception.

In the context of increasing migration and thus closer contacts with a number of nations and groups, conflicts arise more easily. Studies also show that the quest for national identity in Eastern Europe often takes the form of extreme nationalism, bringing about intolerance and interethnic conflicts (ŽAGAR 2002: 37 – 45, GURIN 2004: 1 – 4, KUZMANIC 2002: 17 – 37, ŠKOLKAY 2002, and a project reported at http://xeno.sova-center.ru/213716E). The focus of intolerance research has been on the economic, social and political dimensions of the Eastern European countries in the period of transition, which leaves the issue of the emotional aspects of interethnic relations – and humour as a mirror of these – in the background.

Researchers address the tellers’ stereotypes and audiences’ reactions to racist humour in the context of the society as a whole as negative and stereotype reinforcing (see LOCKYER-PICKERING 2005: 15 – 16), drawing a line between “laughing with” and “laughing at”. We proposed in our project draft that ethnic and political humour could be a barometer, and in a professionally moderated environment also a platform for dialogue. In small communities or groups and in everyday conversation, laughter is viewed as positive. Not only does humour insult at times, its potential for uniting and bonding (e.g. in LOIS 1996: 38 - 52, HARRINGTON – NECK 2000: 606 – 625) is often overlooked.
Preliminary findings on difference and change can be taken from a study on socialist and post-socialist ethnic jokes in Estonia.

In general, when comparing the share of ethnic jokes throughout the second half of the 19th and 20th centuries, ethnic jokes are being replaced by other categories, as the proportion of ethnic jokes is constantly falling. [FIGURE 1]

The image of the joke is becoming diversified (for example including genres that are Internet-specific). A thorough study on Finnish wellerisms (1880 – 1955, JÄRVIÖ-NIEMINEN 1959: 108 - 109) points to the similar development of ethnic labels being replaced by gendered or vocational ones. Nevertheless, several ethnic groups are the target of contemporary Estonian jokelore: until 2004 the jokes primarily mocked Russians, black, Jews, Chukchis, Americans and Estonians (see Fig 2). [FIGURE 2].

The rising proportion of racist jokes points to the underlying emotions (mostly rising national extremism) accompanying societal changes in post-socialism. In recent years, the Russian is actually no longer a regular joke butt – 7 jokes of the roughly 40 ethnic jokes submitted to the joke portal at delfi.ee/jokes mention Russians, which is less than jokes about Jews, Americans and surprisingly even Chukchis. At the same time, the Russian is a major figure in Internet hate speech (targets of hate-speech are listed in Fig. 3), as revealed by my latest study on the biggest Estonian online newspaper and news portal commentaries about objects of hate speech from 2000 – 2007. [FIGURE 3].

In the light of recent societal upheavals and tensions, this may throw some light on the limits of joking – is there an optimal level for a “healthy” joking realtionship? What are the conditions that foster ethnic jokes, and are these observations also valid for the Western world? We can suggest that there may be differences between Western and Soviet/post-socialist humour in this interconnection between the historical, political, economic etc. context and the choice of targets in ethnic jokes. Jokes and the relations between the countries telling the jokes should be studied in greater detail, with special attention on ethnic conflict, the history of aggression between the nations, etc. Another interesting trend evident from Arvo Krikmann’s recent study on Russian jokes about Estonians confirms that while Russians are no longer funny for us, Estonians have suddenly emerged as the top targets of Russian ethnic jokes – Estonians are depicted as stupid, slow, and having a funny accent when they speak Russian. Though the distinct and detailed time-line of the appearance of these jokes is unknown, we know that Russian jokes about Estonians have increased considerably during the last decade (KRIKMANN 2007). We would like to find out how this fits into the general theory of the stupid and the cunning (repostulated and elaborated in DAVIES 2007). It should also be asked how different nations’ perception of the “others” (e.g. Russians’ historic and contemporary perception of Estonians and vice versa) affects the choice of stereotypes mocked in jokes or the popularity of the target, and how this change in perception is reflected in jokes.

Globalization and subculturalization

The second issue deals with the effects of globalizing culture and value systems in a relatively secluded set of joke material from Eastern Europe. It has always been maintained that Soviet
jokes (or other jokelore from totalitarian regimes) are different from those that arise in a democratic society. But different in what way? And what has become of this “difference” now – if it ever existed? We need a comprehensive joke database in order to answer questions concerning the issues of difference and change. This will account for both the socialist and post-socialist period. The proportion of Soviet jokes in the material, new incentives and subjects of jokes will be listed, and the problem will be discussed in relation to oral vs. internet joke-telling in post-socialist countries as well as the intersections and overlaps between these two differentiating traditions.

When we follow a thematic categorization in the Estonian material, namely among political jokes in delfi.ee/jokes, old Soviet jokes appear to form a distinct category besides jokes on local politics, foreign affairs, and general jokes on politics as such (as in “What is democracy? – It’s the demo version of bureaucracy.”). [FIGURE 4]

The category of Soviet jokes consists of jokes known previous to 1991 with unmodified content (eg “At the Olympics in the Soviet Union, Brezhnev started a speech at the opening ceremonies. He began as follows: “Oh....” “Ooooo....” “Oh....” “Ooo.”). Jokes on local politics and foreign affairs depict current political issues either in Estonia or abroad, or in the context of diplomatic relations. As we can see in Fig. 4, there are less Soviet jokes, but more jokes on local politics and foreign affairs throughout the years 2000 – 2006. We can suggest that the overall trend is that old Soviet jokes are finally starting to be forgotten, and people are more interested in commenting on current affairs.

We can also draw a distinction between Soviet jokes and all new jokes. The category of new jokes also encompasses those translated from other languages (primarily English), newly created improvisational jokes, and any old jokes that have been modified to fit the current situation. New jokes should be studied in greater detail to understand the direction and agility of the changes in jokes. The majority of new political jokes are about current affairs. The most numerous of these fall under the category of translated jokes, there are fewer created jokes, and even fewer jokes that use the script or base of an old Soviet joke, replacing the characters with contemporary politicians as new targets. The jokes that make use of joke scripts from Soviet times are an interesting example of how jokelore adapts to transformations in society, e.g. “Prime ministers are flying on a plane. Suddenly the bottom of the plane falls down and in order to land the plane, one passenger must jump. Nobody is willing to do so, until Savisaar finally says: “I will jump.” Tumultuous applause follows…” (delfi.ee/jokes, Sirts, 10.04.2000 20:39) (a loan of the well-known Soviet joke where totalitarian leaders are flying in a plane), hinting at the dislike of the character as well as his totalitarian ambitions. A created joke uses a simple comic technique, as in the case where the weight problem of the same politician is addressed: „Savisaar meets the king of Sweden: I am Karl Gustav XVI. – I am Edgar Savisaar XXXL”. (delfi.ee/jokes, Eero, 22.03.2006 20:43). In the case of Savisaar, the least popular Estonian politician and the most popular joke object in delfi.ee/jokes, only 6 of the 195 jokes are modified old Soviet jokes. This points to the fact that old Soviet jokes remain quite an isolated category and are generally not adapted / adaptable to contemporary political issues. When we compare the share of repetitions among old Soviet jokes and new jokes (visible in a study of Estonian ethnic jokes about Americans), we see that the old jokes seem not only to be disappearing (as seen in Fig 4), but also their variation is declining. [FIGURE 5]
People still know the jokes to a certain extent, but the repertoire is quite limited. Also, these must have another connotation than just being out-datedly political. The sexual or absurd jokes are the most frequent of the old Soviet jokes told nowadays.

A connected topic worth studying in this set of issues is that of globalization and specificity / subculturalization. Globalization is an important area of culture research. Its impact on cultural diversity and national specificity is a question that also needs to be asked in the context of the expanding European Union. Research on jokes shows that post-socialism has allowed an influx of innumerable translations and loans into local jokelore (LAINESTE 2005: 20 – 23, Brzozowska 2007). At the same time, jokes from distinct groups of people (e.g. youth subcultures) are becoming more culture-specific, with citations, untranslatable puns etc. (LURIE 2007, SHMELEV-SHMELEVA 2007). The synchronical and two-directional movement of the simultaneous globalization and differentiation of tradition is a universal trend that needs closer examination, especially in the context of the multicultural European Union. We must clarify the dynamics, intersections and direction of these processes in Eastern European jokelore by analysing the amount of loans, common texts and unique types.

In the present rapidly globalizing world with flexible borders, postsocialist joking is not as region-specific as it used to be. Jokes from the totalitarian period used to be opposed to those from the democratic world, but now the difference is less out-spoken. At the same time, however – and also as a global phenomena – the same flexible borders allow the formation of distinct groups of people not based on an ethnic dimension. Their jokes are becoming more (subculture) specific, with citations, references, etc, that are understandable only to the members of the group based on interests, vocation etc.

We could ask whether and how fast these globalization / subculturalization trends are invading Eastern European jokelore. In the 7th Framework Programme project calls, considerable attention is turned to globalization as one of the major forces in the contemporary world which on one hand fosters dialogue and facilitates better understanding, and on the other hand also endangers local diversities and reshapes / unifies cultural heritage, jeopardizing cultural diversity. We should compare the amount of similarities, one-culture-specific jokes, two-and more-culture specific jokes, to draw thus a folkloristic map of script variation and change. Both the specificity as well as steps towards globalization are still very clearly visible in post-socialist folklore, so we can say without reservation that the post-socialist situation in Eastern Europe offers an excellent platform for analysing the process, steps and speed of globalization.

Another related question of globalization is how scripts from different backgrounds blend (as in some examples where Soviet jokes have new targets from among contemporary politicians, either local or international). Jokes about disasters and other topical humour tend to use a ready set for a new wave of jokes (see e.g. ELLIS 2001, DUNDES 1987, RAHKONEN 2000 and elsewhere).

**Socialist and post-socialist jokes**

The last set of problems involves the specificity of Soviet and post-socialist jokes. The transformation of the political context of jokelore must be studied in terms of inherent features of totalitarian vs. democratic ethnic and political jokes, and changes therein connected with societal
transformation in Eastern Europe. In a study on Estonian political jokes, we have shown that totalitarian ethnic jokes were told about both the politicians and the system, whereas jokes from the last 15 years of independence (and young democracy) mostly mock politicians (LAINESTE 2007: 15 – 34, cf. ROSE 2002: 1 – 9). More cross-cultural research is needed to confirm the rules for the choice of targets under different political systems.

Victor RASKIN (1985: 222 – 229) stresses the difference between political and ethnic jokes. But in the jokelore of the Soviet Estonia (1960 – 1991 in the database of Estonian jokes), this distinction is not evident as ethnic jokes (often about Russians, Chukchis or other groups from among the “great brotherhood of nations” of the USSR) also had a political allusion in every studied case. The interrelation of these categories remains an issue that needs to be studied. In Estonian contemporary joke texts (from delfi.ee/jokes) we see that a clear distinction is kept in categorizing political and, e.g., ethnic jokes: political jokes are those that mention the names of politicians or reflect on some current news, state politics etc. Ethnic jokes, on the other hand, depict the stupidity and other stereotypes of different ethnic groups. Russians as joke targets no longer carry a political connotation and fit under ethnic jokes perfectly well. There is another aspect to this question: Estonian Soviet political-ethnic jokes were mostly directed at Russians, who were both the centre of the Soviet world and the personification of power. Russians rarely mentioned Estonians in jokes – we were altogether insignificant and completely unfunny. How does this fact match the idea (proposed and proved by Christie DAVIES (e.g. 1990) that the direction of ethnic jokes is top-down (i.e. from the centre, better-off, more educated towards the periphery, worse-off, less educated) in most of the countries? In case of Chukchi jokes this was the case, but what about Estonia’s jokes about Russians (or the three-nation Russian, German and Estonian jokes)? Even if the jokes were largely translated from Russian, they were a conscious choice of the Estonian joke-tellers.

Another relevant problem concerning the transformation of folklore alongside changes taking place in society is the popularity of political jokes as such. The general idea is that after the fall of the Soviet bloc, a great boom in jokes took place (books, shows etc.) and after a while a major setback followed, which lasts until now. This question of course has a lot to do with the issue of the Internet as the electronic vernacular and the dichotomy between orality and literacy. In reality, however, there seem to be more political jokes than there were a few years ago – preliminary research on jokes confirms that as other jokes wear out and lose their edge and are not repeatable/modifiable to the same extent, political jokes still remain a focus of growing interest (probably after some decline during the first years of independence). [see FIGURE 6]

Joke-telling as an oral tradition in general should be analysed with special attention to transforming societies. In addition to the Internet, political and other jokes in everyday interaction should also be studied, and the results compared to joke-telling patterns in Western countries. We can hypothesize that oral joking in Eastern Europe is going through more severe changes than in the West, as the in post-socialist situation the status of joke-telling diminishes as well. It was part of the lifestyle and has now been reduced to just a simple entertainment among other fun stuff. BELIN (2002) describes the diminishing tendency of telling jokes compared to Soviet times. Jokes appear to merge into other cultural phenomena, including advertising, in the vacuum that post-socialism has created in joke production.
Another issue of the political and economic context as factors that effectively shape tradition is that of the obvious exceptionality of Eastern European ethnic jokes with regard to Davies’ theory of joke targets (DAVIES 1990, 2002 and 2007). In the predominant and most widely known theory of ethnic humour, Christie Davies attempts to discover universal rules in the choice of joke targets. He looks for the links between main scripts and social facts, such as, for example, modern society’s hesitance in regarding people’s primary actions, such as working, eating and drinking, sexual life and warfare. Jokes in every country (or a reasonably homogenous cultural and linguistic area) have certain targets for stupidity jokes - people who dwell on the edge of that nation or domain and who are perceived as culturally ambiguous by the dominant people of the centre. In addition, they will likely be rustic people or immigrants in search of unskilled and low-prestige manual work. They are to a great extent similar to the joke-tellers themselves, share the same cultural background or even speak a similar or identical language. These universals apply well enough to Estonian jokes from before the Soviet times, when the main joke targets are listed in Fig 7. Here we see that without any exceptions, most of the stupid and cunning characters (respectively e.g. people from Hiiumaa and rich peasants in Mulgimaa) were at that time chosen from among our closest kinsfolk, who spoke the Estonian language with a strong and distinctive dialect, lived in the periphery (Tallinn and its surroundings served as the centre) and were also differentiated on economical grounds (poor on the islands, newly-rich in the south). Estonians also mocked the closest neighbours it had economic and political contacts with. But this situation, described and explained with a number of parallels by DAVIES (elaborated in 2002) goes through a complete change after the onset of totalitarian rule in Estonia. Fig 8 reflects the choice of targets in the two periods, vividly demonstrating that foreigners (many of them not neighbours) are now the prime targets in Estonian ethnic jokes (see also Fig. 2 for more detailed information on the new targets). [FIGURE 8]

The political situation intervened heavily with the „natural” development of jokelore, and caused the jokes and targets to be largely alien to those telling them. In recent years we have witnessed a mild search for the “lost” identity in jokes, and as a result the number of jokes about Estonians has risen – and among them the stupid (but not cunning) local groups are making a comeback.

It can also be noticed that under normal conditions (without political or other intervention) the scope of targets is constantly broadening from the closest groups to more exotic ones. The relationship between geographical location and the chronological development of jokes is, however, by no means uniform. A growing number of jokes about the more distant neighbours in the West (British, Italian, Swedish etc; including some groups that were not present in the Soviet period) and about unfamiliar exotic cultures (coloured people) emerged after 1991 (see also Fig. 2), but most of them were already introduced during the Soviet period. It can be concluded that in the Estonian material, the correspondence between developments in the temporal and spatial dimensions exists until the middle of the 20th century, and from then on no clear synchronism can be detected. This can be accounted for by the influence of the Soviet regime, as the interests and ambitions of the state dictated a more global world-view and thus also a more global choice of targets in ethnic jokes. Nevertheless, the diversification of joke targets is still underway, pointing to the active transformation of the anecdote tradition and its adaptation to the changed circumstances.
So far some of these areas have been examined within the limits of the two grant projects funded by the Estonian Science Foundation since 2001 (grants Nos. 6759 and 4935). Estonian contemporary jokelore is compiled into a research database, parts of the material have been analysed, with special attention to ethnic and political jokes of the period. But what is needed for more insightful results is some comparative and cooperative research which is sketched out in the project proposal to the European Union 7th Framework Programme. The pan-Eastern European research network created in the course of enacting the project will answer research questions on the nature of jokelore in the transitional period, globalization and the localization of joke plots. It will also account for the targets of ethnic and political jokes in socialism, post-socialism and non-socialism, with the aim of clarifying the relationship between the broader societal (political, economic) context and folk creativity.
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