

Balkan Immigrant Workers as Slovenian Victimized Heroes

ANDREJA VEZOVIK

This article sheds light on recent discursive shifts in representations of the “Balkan” in the Slovenian press. I focus on the strategies that the media, and the left-wing press in particular, uses to construct the identities of immigrant workers in Slovenia. I use critical discourse analysis to show how the media has recently attempted to avoid Balkanism and tried to create a more inclusive, democratic rhetoric on these workers and how they become a legitimate “other” in Slovenian society only when constructed as helpless victims. I analyze the role of the victim in the Slovenian imaginary, its disillusioned hero a cogent signifier for collective national identification, and how this figure’s characteristics are transposed to ex-Yugoslav immigrants to Slovenia, placing them within a rhetoric of victimization that is framed within a broader humanitarian discourse in order to interrogate what Maria Todorova has defined as *Balkanism*. I conclude by exploring victimization as the process of desubjectivation and point out aspects of victimization that reaffirm long-standing power relations between Europe and the Balkans.

Nation, Gender, Class: Celebrity Culture and the Performance of Identity in the Balkans

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In this article, we explore performance and the “dramatic realization” of local female social elites in popular mass-market magazines in Slovenia and Croatia between 2008 and 2011. We argue that popular culture—and, more specifically, celebrity discourse—is one of the central locations for analyzing cultural shifts in gender, nationality, and class in postsocialist society. At the center of the discussion is the argument that ethnicity should not be seen as an independent social process; the rise of national distinctions in the Balkans and the reframing of the nation need to be examined by stressing the rearticulations of class, ethnicity, and gender as they are experienced as organizing categories of social differences. We focus on two genres: social chronicles, or “society pages,” and photo interviews with elite professionals. We investigate the key intersections of gender, class, and nationality and, more generally, reflect on the transformations in discourses of Balkan identity.

Serbia in the Mirror: Parodying Political and Media Discourses

TANJA PETROVIĆ

This article analyzes the Serbian fake news site Njuz.net, exploring the dynamics of its production, consumption, and appropriation in Serbian post-socialist, pre-EU-accession society. The increasing presence and importance of parodic media genres and the embrace of satire as a viable way to interpret and deal with social and political reality are explained in terms of both Serbia’s historical trajectory and its media landscape as well as the global neo-

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liberal condition. Njuz.net's parody sheds critical light on various political, public, and social subjects simultaneously. Its satire communicates with multiple audiences and enables identification and detachment on several levels, a fact that makes the effects of this parody difficult to judge. The dilemmas that its writers face regarding their social activism are, I argue, a symptom of wider social anxieties and structural adversities caused by the difficulty of clearly identifying and detaching from "the enemy." Because of how labor, consumption, and everyday practices are organized, we all inevitably contribute to the maintenance of that enemy's well-being. Seen in this light, parody is not only a form of social criticism but also a self-reflective practice.

Abram Room, *A Strict Young Man*, and the 1936 Campaign against Formalism in Soviet Cinema

MARIA BELODUBROVSKAYA

This article addresses the aesthetic history and banning of Abram Room's *Strogii iunoshka* (*A strict young man*, 1936) in the context of the 1936 campaign against formalism and naturalism in Soviet art. I show that the film's experimental style was not the cause of its banning and argue that the antiformalism campaign was a political rather than aesthetic event. What the campaign demanded was a shift in mode, from form centered to theme centered, and it was this disruptive shift that rendered Soviet cinema unproductive after 1936.

Books of Laughter and Forgetting: Satire and Trauma in the Novels of Il'f and Petrov

MAYA VINOKOUR

The Soviet 1920s and '30s saw heated debate around the issue of laughter, with writers and political actors alike asking, should the Soviet person laugh at all, and if so, how? This article considers the birth of Soviet laughter as reflected in Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov's popular satirical novels, *The Twelve Chairs* (1928) and *The Golden Calf* (1931). I argue that Il'f and Petrov's relatively consistent critical unassailability throughout the Soviet period rests on two techniques. First, they acknowledge trauma without dwelling on it—it is always already in the past, with dramatic focus placed instead on the socialist future. Second, they encourage collective, outward-oriented laughter, stimulating Soviet citizens to unite themselves against the possible enemies of socialism. Thus, despite its inclusion of some subversive elements (like the ideologically volatile trickster Ostap Bender), Il'f and Petrov's satire was at the vanguard of what became official literary ideology.