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Unmasking the Balkan Wars

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Abstract

This article uses literary analysis to understand the humor in two short pieces of prose published in a special Balkan wars edition of the Slovene newspaper *Dan* in 1913 entitled "Balkanska vojna v karikaturah in pesmih" (The Balkan wars in caricature and poetry). It considers the way that *Dan*'s writers make use of satiric techniques often included in fictional forms such as the short story or novel to call into question the acts of writing and reading the news during a time of political instability in the region. Through humor, the stories, written in Slovene for a Slovene audience, reveal expressions of sympathy and solidarity with those in the Balkans, often against Western European powers (including the Austro-Hungarian Empire, of which Slovenia was then a part). These stories not only use jokes to animate the political proclivities of *Dan*'s authors but also deploy humor as a means of rhetorically registering participation in the Balkan cause in wars to the south.

key words: Balkan wars, humor, *Dan*, caricature, cartoon, twentieth-century newspapers, jokes

In a special insert in the 12 April 1913 issue of the Ljubljana newspaper *Dan*, there appears a sketch of a skull with black sockets for eyes. The skull is rendered frozen, mid-reveal, a mask slipping halfway down its face (fig. 1). The half-masked skull draws the reader into the macabre image—and into commentary on Europe during the Second Balkan War in the seventy-two-page special insert entitled "The Balkan Wars in Caricature and Poetry."[1] The thin line of mouth, barely turned up on one side, forms equal parts grimace and laugh; the teeth of the skull carefully outlined behind it suggest an uncanny smile. The skeleton functions as a harbinger of death, while the mask works in its uncanny way to represent life. The tension between the two comes into clear focus as the reader takes in the caption: "The Balkans and Europe"[2] (1913: 48). "The Balkans," printed on the left side of the image, clearly corresponds to the skull, which occupies the left half of the frame, while "and Europe," printed to the right side of the image, clearly refers to the mask and occupies the right half of the frame. In the satirical register of the image, the façade of European empires lurks behind the skeleton of the Balkans.

1 *Dan* 12 April 1913.
2 "Balkan in Evropa"

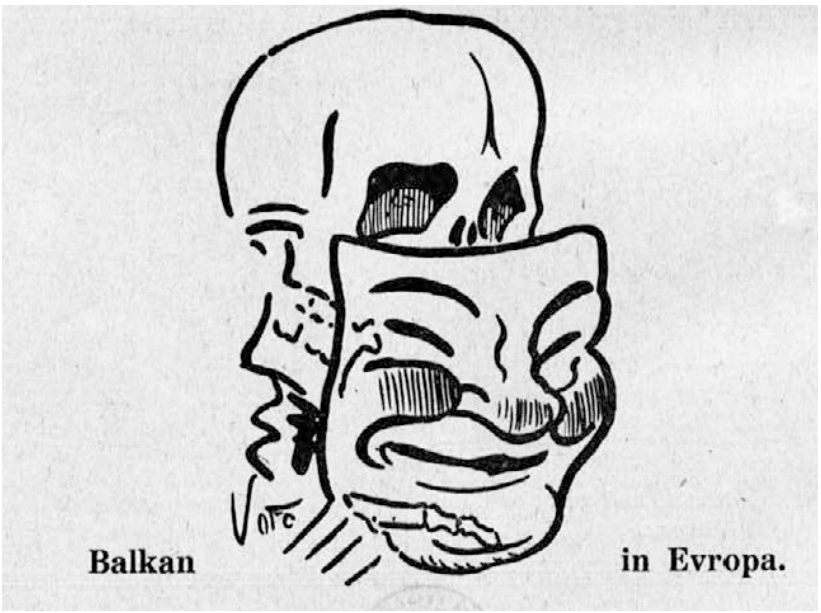

Fig. 1. "The Balkans and Europe." The masked façade represents Europe, while the skeleton lurks in the background of this satirical image of the power relations between the two regions.

The political context of the moment explains the masked aggression of image as well as the *Dan* issue in which it appears. The First Balkan War, begun in October 1912, did not end until May 1913. Then part of Austria-Hungary, Slovenia was not directly implicated in the war; however, writers and caricaturists in Ljubljana found sympathy for their Slavic brethren, and journalists paid close attention to news from the south. The Slovene public was fascinated by the clashes in the Balkans, which were widely reported in a variety of newspapers. At the Učiteljska tiskarna,[3] where *Dan* was published, the Balkan wars featured prominently in the pages throughout the conflicts of 1912 and 1913. In fact, under the editorship of Dr. Ivan Lah, *Dan* printed around two hundred cartoons on the Balkan wars alone, a number which represents a large portion of the total caricatures it printed during the years 1912–14 (Globočnik 2003: 36–37). The 12 April 1913 supplement largely features reprints of popular images from late 1912 and early 1913 issues of *Dan* alongside new notes or explanatory details. While these cartoons range from simple illustrations to grotesque images of the enemy Ottomans, the skull/mask image represents an important theme of Western aggression that arises in the supplement. *Dan*'s publishers, whom Damir Globočnik identifies as young members of

[3] Teacher's Printing Press

the liberal party in Ljubljana, portray Germans and other Western Europeans as sinister, predatory forces to Balkan and other small Central European nations.

In their edited collection *The Wars Before the Great War: Conflict and International Politics before the Outbreak of the First World War*, Dominik Geppert, William Mulligan, and Andreas Rose argue that even before Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on 28 July 1914, "European politics had already been transformed by the three wars over the previous three years" (2015: 1). These wars included the 1911 Italian invasion of present-day Libya, then part of the Ottoman Empire; the First Balkan War in 1912, which saw the Balkan Confederation of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro defeat the Ottoman Empire; and the Second Balkan War in 1913, which saw Serbia, Greece, and Romania defeat Bulgaria. In their introduction, the editors call these wars "a bridge dividing a period of relative peace on the continent from the era of 'total war.'" They argue that the wars "accelerated the collapse of Ottoman power in one of Europe's geopolitical cockpits, the Balkans, and the consequences rippled across the continent, raising questions about the balance of power, the visions of future war and the principles that underpinned political action in Europe" (2015: 1). They note, however, that until Christopher Clark's study *The Sleepwalkers*, the Balkan wars were widely regarded as peripheral to historiography of the wars of the 1910s (2012: 3). While efforts to explore what Clark calls the "cascade of wars" (2012: 3) in a larger context are now beginning to emerge in the field of history (including Leila Tarazi Fawaz's excellent study, *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (2014)), such efforts remain largely absent from literary study.

At the time, however, news of the Balkan wars was splashed across the front pages of papers far from the Balkan peninsula, and war stories that blurred the lines between fiction and non-fiction were featured in mainstream publications, such as *Punch* magazine in England. In fact, the Balkan wars drew an extraordinary number of correspondents from countries across Europe, and most European papers printed daily updates on the wars from October 1912 to August 1913 (Keisinger 2015: 345–46; 348-349).[4] Public interest was stoked by the so-called "Eastern Question," which warned that conflict in the Balkans and the break-up of empire could spread to the rest of Europe and cause the outbreak of an international conflict of catastrophic proportions. While there was some effort in the press to initially praise the way the Balkan nations "fought like heroes," such enthusiasm waned quickly, and reporting focused on atrocities instead

[4] Florian Keisinger observes: "…Conservative English newspapers, as well as the vast majority of the German media, pleaded for the preservation of the Ottoman Empire as a vital pillar of stability and peace in the Balkans and therefore the rest of Europe" (2015: 349–51).

(Keisinger 2015: 353). Even the *Dan* supplement features portrayals of violence, though cartoons depict Turks as the perpetrators and Serbs as the victims in a pointed political message of alliance with southern Slavs.

The role of print culture in communicating news of the Balkan wars proved varied. Coverage of the Balkan wars was not limited to newspapers alone but included a range of humorous magazines which popped up during the first half of the twentieth century.[5] Artists and writers mocked Balkan war news as well as the genre itself, which was still in the beginning stages of a twentieth century move toward professionalization. Kevin G. Barnhurst and John Nerone call the fin de siècle newspaper "multivocal," as front pages—and interior pages—appeared cluttered with stories, reports, editorials, and official documents "all shoved up against each other" (2001: 187).[6] Readers encountered long columns of small print that presented sometimes contradictory information. In the face of the chaos these mainstream papers present, in which the juxtaposition of information sometimes provoked unintended comedy, leading modernist figures and humor artists pounced. Pablo Picasso positioned newspaper clippings about violence in the Balkans from *Le Journal* in his collages of 1912–13 so that they form puns and appear upside down and sideways. Working as a wartime foreign correspondent, Leon Trotsky adopted the biographical sketch as a means of reporting in Serbia and Bulgaria, collecting quotations from local leaders, which he then arranged in his writing as if they were punchlines to a joke. And Filippo Thomaso Marinetti's ear-witness poem *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914) maintains an urgent energy that invites comparisons to both humor and war. In Britain, *Punch* embedded Balkan updates into almost every aspect of the publication, from cartoons to jokes to farcical reports about the way information was gathered. Outside well-known modernist circles, editors and writers in the Balkans grappled with questions of identity which they parsed through caricature, cartoons, and jokes.

The *Dan* supplement is published against the backdrop of this milieu of journalistic humor. Importantly, *Dan* mocked local news coverage and reversed the terms of Western criticism of the Balkans as it satirized the reactions of Western Europeans to the Balkan wars. Damir Globočnik and

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5 In *Modernism's Print Cultures*, Faye Hammill and Mark Hussey contend that the boom in little magazine publication begins in the 1890s. Their citations of periodicals in Britain are remarkable: by 1901, they count five thousand. By 1922, the number swells to fifty thousand. (2016: 3) For his part, Allen Douglas writes in *War, Memory, and the Politics of Humor* that outside Britain, "small nonconformist periodicals were legion before the First World War" (2002: 2).

6 It was not until the 1920s that front pages adopted a more "orderly" approach to presenting reportage, which included front pages with fewer reports with large headlines that emphasized certain stories and "sought to map reality for… readers" (Barnhurst and Nerone 2001: 217).

Bojan Balkovec's scholarship on the *Dan* supplement speaks to the greater historical context into which satire and humor are inscribed. Balkovec writes of the cynical and sarcastic nature of the illustrations, commenting specifically on the way that Turks are depicted as alternatingly hapless and thus blunt threats, or needlessly violent toward Serbs (2013: 194). He focuses on the final line in the introduction of the supplement as the rationale for its publication, which emphasizes the desire of the editors to preserve the history and caricature of the wars (all of which had previously been published in issues of *Dan*) for future generations (2013: 185). Globočnik, meanwhile, provides a detailed analysis of the exact historical figures or events depicted in the many of the supplement's numerous cartoons. He comments on the way that the Slovene public followed the events to the South closely, noting this interest was enhanced by the supplement's confiscation on its second print run (2010: 89–94). To understand caricature and humorous references, it is vitally necessary to establish the rhetorical situation of the moment, including relevant political and cultural history, as Globočnik and Balkovec do. Yet there has been little scholarship which considers the narrative functions of the longer prose pieces, though Globočnik reminds readers that the line between literary and political utterances can be quite thin (1999: 180).

Building on the work of Globočnik and Balkovec, this article considers two exceptional prose pieces from the supplement to uncover the means by which humor functions within them. It investigates the way that writers at *Dan* deploy an array of satiric techniques often used in novels and short stories to call into question the acts of reading and producing news in a complex political climate in Ljubljana. The stories reveal that the Slovene national character becomes implicated in expressions of sympathy and solidarity with other Balkan groups, often against the rest of Europe—something which anticipates deeper tensions in WW I and culminate in the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918. More importantly, however, the very act of constructing and reacting to narratives in print becomes the subject of the most sophisticated jokes, implicating the form of the story as deeply as the political situations to which those same stories respond.

Writing the Balkan Wars

Prior to the Balkan Wars, literary efforts in the regions that would soon form Yugoslavia were beginning to pave the path toward a pan-Slavic vision—using narrative as a vehicle. Andrew Wachtel writes that a minority of Serbian and Croatian writers "attempted to employ traditional themes and images while simultaneously subverting their traditional message," which he notes relied on irony and humor (1998: 60). The Slovene literary canon proves a bit more complicated, since Slovenia, as a part of the

Austro-Hungarian Empire, was not directly involved in the Balkan wars. However, during this period, Slovenes did study Croatian and Serbian, and, though "the movement lacked real organization and direction," some Slovenes were sent as "volunteers, military and medical, to the Balkan wars to help liberate their Yugoslav brethren from Ottoman oppression" (1998: 89). Further, writing from this period in Slovenia directly engages the Balkan wars and their political aftermath. In particular, Slovene author Fran Maselj Podlimbarksi's 1913 novel *Gospodin Franjo* (Mr. Franjo) features a Slovene engineer, Vilar, living in Bosnia who comes to the conclusion that:

> …the Austrian claim to be bringing Bosnia into the modern world (which was the purported justification of their occupation) is nothing more than a sham. Practically without exception the Austrian administrators and military personnel are shown to be rapacious, boorish, and lacking in any morality or culture of their own. Vilar comes to hate almost all of them and spends his time instead with the local population… They provide for him a way to rediscover his own national identity (and, by extension, that of any Slovenian), which he recognizes, has been almost lost under layers of Germanized accretions. (Wachtel 1998: 61–62)

While the register and tone of *Gospodin Franjo* could not be considered humorous, certainly it brings incongruities like those featured in *Dan*'s supplement to the fore. In particular, the *Dan* supplement includes a short story with an accompanying image about Balkan bedbugs—a deeply ironic commentary on the way that the Germans position themselves as superior to the Balkan nations—which resonates with the major themes that Podlimbarski raises about a split between Germanized and Slovene identities.

Caricature proliferated during the Balkan wars; images and texts relied on exaggeration for comic effect, and often courted the grotesque as they debased the most prominent features of a person or group of people. Much of the fiction or short prose in the *Dan* supplement includes corresponding satirical images. In some cases, the short prose in the supplement functions as extended captions for illustrations which borrow from the tradition of the caricature, by then well-established and internationally popular. Igor Despot writes that caricatures were "instrumental in propagating negative images of the enemy, denigrating and deriding some of the qualities and features actually present in some aspects of the hostile nations" (2012: 224). Creating caricatures of the Turks was easy work for Balkan illustrators, since Turks had long been depicted as enemies and aggressors in newspaper cartoons throughout the Balkans, including Slovenia. Despot further notes that during the Second Balkan War, Balkan nations targeted each other with "stereotype based

caricatures," when Bulgarians depicted Serbs as pigs in 1913 (2012: 229). Ottoman cartoons and caricature also thrived at the time of the Balkan wars. Palmira Brummett makes the case that the July 1908 revolution created conditions which led to "an immediate boom in Ottoman serial publication" and the proliferation of satiric image and narrative, which were already "well-established genre[s] in the Ottoman literary tradition" (2000: 3). It is out of this context that *Dan*'s and stories emerge in 1912 and 1913; they not only build on the energy around the conflict in the region in weekly cartoons and satirical dialogues but also through short humorous prose, which, given the paucity of Balkan war fiction in Slovenia, makes pieces included in the insert all the more remarkable and worthy of consideration.

Part of what makes the Slovene stories in the supplement so provocative is the way they not only criticize Western nations and galvanize their Balkan but the way they use humor to signal and anticipate a larger rebellion which links Slovenia to the Balkans states in a pan-Slavic struggle against European oppressors. For their part, the editors of *Dan* prove extremely sympathetic to the Balkan struggle, writing in the overview of the wars included in the humor issue that the year 1912 is the year of "The Liberation of the Yugoslavs" and that 1912 "will be of immense significance in the history of all Slavism, because it will stand as a turning point between two ages: between slavery and freedom. The year 1912 ended with 'The Slavic Victory'"[7] (1913: 1). The editors of *Dan* cast the struggle of the Balkan nations in a heroic light—not just for the nations themselves, but for the whole region, Slovenia included, as indicated by the use of the term "Yugoslavs"[8] as opposed to Serbs or other more regionally specific identifiers. The language of stark contrasts—"between slavery and freedom"[9] celebrates the First Balkan War as release from Ottoman oppression; through caricature, Slovenes stake their claim in the fight. The framing of the supplement provides a counternarrative to Western European accounts that reported the wars as troubling but evidence of the warlike and violent nature of the region. It also introduces narrative themes that are woven into the prose of the stories in the issue.

European perceptions of the Balkans: The tale of the Balkan bedbugs

Dan uses a complex array of corresponding words and images to animate criticism of the Ottoman Empire, often depicting Turks as hapless or greedy. Its writings on Europe, however, prove sharper. These cartoons, like

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7 "…"Osvobojenje Jugoslovanov ...S tem pa bo leto 1912, dobilo velikanski pomen v zgodovini slovanstva sploh, ker bo stalo, kot mejnik med dvema doboma: med suženjstvom in svobodo. Leto 1912 se je končalo z 'Zmago Slovanstva'"

8 "Jugoslovanov"

9 "med suženjstvom in svobodo"

the image of the Balkan skull lurking behind the European mask, are imbued with hostility toward "the rest of Europe,"[10] a phrase which is used in a prose sketch about bedbugs to align Slovenes with other southern Balkan nations, united against Western Europeans. While the poems in *Dan* are playful and the cartoons entertaining, *Dan*'s relatively rare satirical prose sketches stand out. These resemble today's flash fiction or English vignettes, and they fit into the tradition of the *črtica*, or sketch, in Slovenia, something the Dictionary of Slovene Literary Language[11] defines as a "short (lyrical) fiction"[12] in the vein of Ivan Cankar. Yet the pieces in the *Dan* supplement distinguish themselves from a *črtica* because they have pointed messages; clear interactions among characters; and clear beginnings, middles and ends to round out admittedly brief plots. Usually such structures are only suggested in the impressionistic form of the *črtica*, sketch, or vignette. Ultimately, short narratives in the *Dan* supplement raise provocative questions about the different forms into which humor is poured during war. As much as these prose pieces clearly function in the realm of fiction, their rhythm and content resemble the sort of hostile, tendentious jokes of which Freud writes in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1960).

"The Tale of the Balkan Bedbugs,"[13] only 215 words long, originally appeared on the top of the front page of the 29 November 1912 issue of *Dan*, and is reprinted in full in the special issue (1913: 32). It is accompanied by an image of bedbugs marching on a path toward a city in the distance—labelled as Germany (fig. 2).[14] The brief chronicle reverses derogatory terms used to describe those from the Balkans in German-language newspapers as bedbugs, flipping the meaning from insult to threat, and affording the low-status Balkan citizens (from a Western imperial perspective) an opportunity to laugh at high-status Western Europeans in an act of defiance. The unflappably cheerful Balkan folks, depicted in an accompanying illustration as real bugs who dislike disorder, flee riots in the region and head to Austria. After all, they have read a great deal about themselves in *Simplicissimus* and other media, and they can only assume they receive so much attention because they are a novelty. Pests surely do not exist in the rest of Europe, which is, by all newspapers accounts referenced, clearly superior and more peaceful. They appear comically shocked that a special deputy in Vienna greets them by begging them to move on because, he says, everyone knows from reading the news that Vienna is home to the most bedbugs of all. The aside not so subtly points

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10 "ostala Evropa"

11 The definition for the word "črtica: can be found in the *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* (*SSKJ*) here: fran.si/iskanje?View=1&Query=%C4%8Drtica.

12 "kratek (liričen) leposlovni spis"

13 "Povest o balkanskih stenicah"

14 "Nemčija"

out that Eastern and Western Europeans are not so different after all, but the *Dan* writers do not stop with this tongue in cheek rebuke. After remarking on the peculiarity of the comment, the Balkan bedbugs head off, scattering across the continent, singing a jaunty but threatening song: "Oh, we're going now, oh, we're going now, we won't be back again…" The entirety of the story is featured below in my translation:

> Following the riots in the Balkans—because the peace-loving armada had withdrawn and the cultural Albanian nation experienced brutal persecution—bedbugs, fleas, lice and other vermin—who do not love disorder—headed to Europe. Since they had read so much about themselves, particularly in "Simplicissimus," in "Musketa," and in other German papers, they thought their kin did not live in the rest of Europe and so they departed on their journey. But how surprised they were when they crossed the border and arrived in the first Hungarian town and others to find all lodgings so full they had to move on. That is why they passed through German Gradec and Semerink and went toward Vienna. There, a special deputy—who had read about their trek in the German papers—came toward them and begged them in the name of God not to go to Vienna, where it is known that the greatest numbers of their kin live.

Fig. 2. "The tale of the Balkan bedbugs." In this image, Balkan pilgrims—depicted as bedbugs—march toward Germany (Nemčija) in the distance. The image supplements a sketch story comprised of an ironic commentary on the way the German-language press talks about the Balkan nations.

> "This is strange," the Balkan bedbugs said in amazement. "We thought that there were none of our kind here at all because they were always writing only about us. Where to now?"
>
> "Go to Berlin or Monaco," the Viennese sisters advised. "They wrote about you there, too."
>
> The procession of black pilgrims from the Balkans split up and each part went its own way. Alongside one another, they also sang this nice song:
>
> "Oh, we're going now, oh, we're going now,
>
> we won't be back again…"[15]

The final lines of the song ring out with deep hostility disguised as cheerful verse. The bedbugs lean into their alleged low status, laughing at Western Europeans who hold themselves in high regard, particularly those who read German language news accounts of the wars. The superiority theory of comedy holds that mocking at others' misfortunes allows the writer to feel stronger, more intelligent, or wittier than the targets of mockery. In *An Anatomy of Humor,* Arthur Asa Berger argues that "the ability to direct laughter at individuals, groups, institutions, ideals, what you will, is really a form of power, even though we may not generally recognize the coercive nature of this laughter" (1993: 9). He explains how laughter's power is harnessed to resist, control, persuade, and assert equality and reflects on those with low status, who put up acts of resistance when laughing at others but who are subjected to control by others when laughed at (8). Laughter-as-resistance has the function of issuing a social corrective,

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[15] Vsled nemirov na Balkanu—ker se je miroljubna armada umikala in je kulturni albanski narod doživel bridko preganjanje—so se napotile stenice, bolhe, uši in druga golazen—ki ne ljubi nemira –v Evropo. Ker so namreč v "Simplicissimu, " v "Musketi" in drugih nemških listih toliko čitale o sebi—so mislile, da v ostali Evropi ne živi njih rod in so odšle na pot. Toda kako so se začudile, ko so dobile takoj v prvih mažarskih in drugih mestih—ko so prišle čez mejo—vsa bivališča tako napolnjena—da so morale oditi naprej. Zato so šle čez nemški Gradec in Semerink proti Dunaju. Tam pa jim je prišla nasproti posebna deputacija—ki je čitala o njih pohodu v nemških listih—in jih je a božjo voljo prosila, naj ne gredo na Dunaj, ker je znano, da je tam največ te vrste rodu.
"To je čudno, " so se čudile balkanske stenice, me smo mislile, da jih tu sploh ni, ker so vedno samo o nas pisali! Kam bi sedaj? "
"Pojdite v Berlin ali pa Monakovo," o svetovale dunajske sestrice, "tam so tudi pisali o vas."
Procesija črnih romaric z Balkana se je razdelila in je šel vsak del svojo pot. Zraven so pele tisto lepo pesem:
"Oj zdaj gremo, oj zdaj gremo,
nazaj nas več ne bo…"

echoing Henri Bergson's claim humor possesses the "unavowed intention to humiliate, and consequently to correct our neighbour, if not in his will, at least in his deed" (1914: 136). In the case of the Balkan bedbugs, the act of resistance comes in the ironic realizations that they vocalize as a rhetorical rebuttal to printed rumors of Balkan simplicity and crudeness.

By embracing the designation of bedbug, and in effect embracing a negative portrayal in German-language media, the *Dan* writers wring the humor out of the original insults while also belittling anyone who would dare hurl the insult their way. German papers had begun to support their "centuries-old arch enemy," the Ottoman Empire in order to maintain the status quo of empire-based power structures across the continent.[16] In the final presentation of the Balkan bedbugs in the story, they appear not as mere vermin infesting potentially dirty cities but instead as threatening warriors. At the end of the story, the pests are not referred to as "bedbugs"[17] as in the title and the rest of the tale. Instead, they are called "a procession of black pilgrims from the Balkans."[18] The Slovene Dictionary of Literary Language defines the Slovene word *romar* (translated above as pilgrim) in much the same way the word pilgrim is defined in English—as a traveler, or a believer going to a holy place.[19] The bedbugs may be clothed in monastic black, signaling their virtue. Yet the modifier black brings with it some deliberate ambiguity: it can equally invoke death and negativity, recasting the pilgrims' journey as threatening. Whether righteous or deleterious, the black parade suggests a Serbian threat inside the Habsburg Empire is poised to spread. The procession splits up, presumably to divide and conquer, and the group begins to sing as it goes—not unlike soldiers marching off to war. Much of the success of the story's humor and rebelliousness can be credited to the incongruity between gleeful tone and hostile content—all in reaction to news stories about the Balkans.

Without even consulting the original German-language sources, readers of "The Tale of the Balkan Bedbugs" will understand that the editors of *Dan* are responding to scornful portrayals of Balkan citizens in Western European journalism. In his analysis of the story, Globočnik cites Vladimir Knaflič, who complained in 1912 of the treatment of Yugoslav nations in the German press, calling German journalists ignorant scribes whose actions against the Balkans were "biased and evil" (2003: 41).[20] The

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16 As Tamara Scheer argues, diplomats began to "see the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires on comparable terms" because "both faced national movements and similar future threats, notably Serbia and the Serb national movement. Large Serbian minorities lived in both countries" (2015: 306).

17 "stenice"

18 "procesija črnih romaric z Balkana"

19 The definition for *romar* can be found in the *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* here: fran.si/iskanje?View=1&Query=romar.

20 "pristranost in zlobnost"

bedbug functions as a stand in for all any insults that demean the Balkan cause or the Balkan people, playing with the notion that outsiders have reduced inhabitants of the Balkans to unwanted, troublesome vermin. In reference to the negative portrayals of the region in the press, Knaflič directly mentions the use of bedbugs in his complaints several times, ultimately arguing: "Don't say that this is satire or art, it is not artistic production but rather bourgeois savagery"[21] (41). It is also worth noting that the term bedbug as an insult was well developed and regionally known by 1912—particularly in reference to Jews in Slavic countries. Robert Rothstein cites a representative Polish saying published in an 1894 collection of proverbs: "Jews are like bedbugs: they stink like bedbugs, they multiply like bedbugs and they bite like bedbugs" (1985: 183). Slovene journalists would be aware of the negative connotations with the term in the region, and, given suspicion and hostility toward Jews, would likely be resistant to hearing such a term used in reference to their Slavic brethren. The metaphor captures the general tone of journalists in Western Europe writing about Slavs as troublesome, arguing that their fight for independence should be squashed quickly, lest the idea of breaking up empire spread like an infestation of vermin.

Caricature and rhyme in satirical magazines—such as the periodicals with which *Dan* contends—were popular, and Tamara Scheer adds, that "in Serbia it was well known how Austro-Hungarian and especially German-speaking magazines portrayed them" (2015: 305). The sensational and negative tone of most Western newspapers reporting on the Balkans is manifest in a 1913 column from The *Times* of London: "The Balkan states are falling into a barbarism deeper and more shameful than was ever imposed by Turkey!" (quoted in Keisinger 2015: 356). Notably this column and others like it in the German and British press aligns the Balkans with an Eastern-inflected barbarism directly linked to Turkey. The knowledge in Slovenia of such Western headlines makes the case of the Balkan bedbugs ironically poignant. By painting Balkan citizens in a negative light, German-language publications perhaps sought, as Freud suggests, to make the Balkan enemy appear small in order to overcome him. Whether the *Dan* story responds directly to stories of bedbugs in the Balkans or more generally to negative portrayals of people in the Balkans, the message is clear: the editors embrace the designation of bedbug to reverse the terms of the joke and wring the humor from the original insults. The editors repurpose the joke, as the bedbugs become stock characters in a mock moralistic fable with a critical perspective on Europe.

In the first case, the bedbugs maintain a function similar to that of a rabbit or a bear in a fable or folk tale; they anthropomorphize the terms of

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[21] "Ne izgovarjajte se, da je to satira ali pa umetnost, to ni umetniška produktivnost, marveč buržoazna borniranost"

a human conflict, with the express purpose of revealing a hypocrisy in the rest of Europe. In this way, the bedbugs overcome the negative, critical perspective levied by the press in Austria-Hungary and the Habsburg Empire, instead presenting the two empires as despicable or comic. The bedbugs work within the framework for the tendentious joke which Freud develops; the bedbugs help the authors fulfill the obligation "to exploit something ridiculous in our enemy" (1960: 122–23). In an ironic turn, it is the bedbugs, after all, who "do not love disorder"[22] and seek to flee conflict (*Dan* 1913: 32). Through this litote, the story challenges perceptions of Slavs and uncivilized brutes. The story also notes that the bedbugs could only have assumed, based on coverage of their status, such vermin does not exist elsewhere in Europe. Yet the reader knows this is not true. In part, this is because the clause in which the narrator states the bedbugs' intention contains hints of hyperbole: "their kin did not live in the rest of Europe."[23] The use of the word "kin" (the Slovene *rod*) implies more than the bedbugs themselves but their entire genus and species; it is akin to saying that absolutely no vermin live in the rest of Europe, especially since it is not just bedbugs heading Europe, but "bedbugs, fleas, lice and other vermin."[24] This seems illogical, if not impossible; every city contains vermin of some kind. Yet this hint of hyperbole is developed into a key moment in the plot, and the bedbugs draw out a larger Balkan reaction of incredulity and mocking laughter at Western European claims of superiority. Not only are the Balkan bedbugs met with towns so full of their kind that there is no room for them, but a special deputy from Vienna begs them in God's name not to stay—not because they are vermin but because "it is known that the greatest number of their kin live there."[25] In other words, the infestation of vermin is greater in "the rest of Europe," and particularly in the cultured city of Vienna, than it is in the Balkans; the story subtly suggests that it is for this reason, perhaps, that the papers focus so much attention on their Balkan counterparts. Hypocrisy emanates from the exchange.

The bedbugs cue the reader to laugh, as they respond in dialogue for the first of only two times in the story: "This is strange… we thought that there were none of us here at all because they were always writing only about us."[26] The authors use two critical modifiers in the speech of the bedbugs: "at all" (the Slovene *sploh*) and "only" (the Slovene *samo*). The modifiers are placed directly before the words they emphasize. In the case of "at all," the negation of the verb "to be" (the Slovene *ni*) comes directly after "at all" so that it reads "tu sploh ni" (literal translation: here at all there

22 "ne ljubi nemira"
23 "v ostali Evropi ne živi njih rod"
24 "stenice, bolhe, uši in druga golazen"
25 "je znano, da je tam največ te vrste rodu"
26 "To je čudno… me smo mislile, da jih tu sploh ni, ker so vedno samo o nas pisali!"

are none); the emphasis is therefore on the idea that vermin *do not* exist in Vienna. "Only" comes directly before "about us" (the Slovene *o nas*) so that it reads "samo o nas" (literal translation: only about us), emphasizing that the German-language press writes *only* about the Balkan bedbugs, not other bedbugs elsewhere. When the Viennese sisters suggest continuing on to Berlin or Monaco, where they insist that "there they also wrote about you,"[27] the reader assumes not that there will be space in Monaco or Germany for the Balkan bedbugs, as the narrator originally suggests at the beginning of the story, but that instead, the bedbugs may be met with a situation similar to the one they have found in Vienna: vermin likely exist everywhere.

It is at this point in the story that the reader may begin to question if the story is really about an infestation of vermin—that is, that the story is in some way responding to a claim that the Balkans are dirtier or fuller of pests than the rest of Europe. The story does, in fact, seem to suggest this: it acknowledges bedbugs in the Balkans but fails to paint them in a negative light, instead suggesting that all cities—even cities as grand as Vienna—have infestations. If the story ended with the Viennese sisters' suggestion to move onto Monaco and Berlin, then the moral of the story might appear Biblical in nature: do not judge, lest ye be judged. Yet this is only one of the features of the story, and a commentary which concludes that the issue at stake is vermin would provide only a superficial reading and would risk presenting the story as a whimsical exercise in thumbing one's nose at an oppressive Europe.

Thus, the bedbugs—while at first laughably revealing hypocrisy among Austrians and Germans—quickly become aggressive. Freud writes that tendentious jokes are "especially favoured in order to make aggressiveness or criticism possible against person in exalted positions who claim to exercise authority" (1960: 125). In such cases, the joke marks a form of rebellion or of liberation from pressure. The final lines of "The Tale of the Balkan Bedbugs," if we are to consider them in the terms of a joke, work as the punchline and as a clear form of rebellion. If we see the bedbugs as eerily analogous to soldiers marching off to war, the final lines of dialogue, which are sung, take on a particularly menacing zeal: "Oh, we're going now, oh, we're going now / we won't be back again."[28] The song implies that the black pilgrims do not anticipate returning home—in other words, that they will not retreat. When the cartoon which accompanies the story is considered, the sheer volume of different types and sizes of vermin appears that it will overwhelm Germany in particular; while the story mentions Monaco, the image only represents Germany (printed in the Slovene as *Nemčija*). The image, and the final lines of the song, again,

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27 "tam so tudi pisalo o vas"

28 "Oj zdaj gremo, oj zdaj gremo / nazaj nas več ne bo"

reverse the terms of the German-inspired criticism; they recast the initial insult of the bedbug as a strength: the bedbugs, great in number, are moving in on Germany. Whether or not this threat is substantiated matters less than the fact that it is implied; as Freud writes, "we laugh at [caricature] even if they are unsuccessful simply because we count rebellion against authority as a merit" (1960: 125). In this case, the editors of *Dan* present a clear rebellion against the common terms of insult and against the Balkan people as a whole. Most notably, however, the story takes is inspiration from alleged negative news reports and refutes, through what amounts to a joke, perceived inaccuracies.

Censoring humor: Bitter trials

While the authors of the special issue of *Dan* did not hesitate to take on the enemy from without, from the Ottomans to European nations—they also attacked the enemy within. Stories like the "Tale of the Balkan Bedbugs" relies on the readers' understanding of the foreign press; the final story—the longest included in the issue—takes on the most significant journalistic enemy within Slovenia: the censor, who upholds Austro-Hungarian values in the fact of Slavic sympathizing. The 1075-word story "Bridke skušnje" (Bitter trials) narrates the experience of Figi Lipe, the pseudonym of a *Dan* journalist also credited for writing other satiric poems in other editions of the paper, as he is confronted by a censor in the state court. The tale is a story within a story that references still other stories; the hyperbolic loop of stories requires the reader's careful attention and provides fodder for laughter. In the story, a fictional journalist named Pepe Radirka retells Lipe's experience. Lipe explains that someone named Janez from the Učiteljske printing press brought him to the State Court at one in the morning "because all public workers in Ljubljana are under police surveillance, and without the permission of the state attorney, we cannot speak the truth"[29] (1913: 67). Here, Lipe finds the state lawyer snoozing at his desk. Woken from his slumber, the lawyer and his two assistants tackle a recent edition of *Dan* with great enthusiasm. He glances at an article about cholera in Istanbul, and deeming it not dangerous to Slovenes, moves on to the next article, smiling and taking a red pencil into his hands. "'Here is a letter from Belgrade,' he said and drew a line across the whole page"[30] (1913: 67). In this action, the censor confirms Trotsky's well-known complaints about censors in the southern Balkan states during the wars. Trotsky's accounts of the Bulgarian process of censorship in Sofia is

[29] "Ob eni popolnoči me je nesel Janez iz Učiteljske tiskarne na državno pravdništvo, ker smo dandanes vsi javni delavni ljudje v Ljubljani pod policijskim nadzorstvom in brez dovoljenja gospoda državnega pravdnika ne smemo resnice govoriti."

[30] "Tu je pismo iz Belgrada," je rekel in je potegnil črto čez celo stran.

remarkably similar to the Ljubljana example narrated in *Dan*. As in the example above, Trotsky's words were subject to the approval of two to three reserve officers and "youthful civilians" (1912–13: 320). Trotsky ironically praises the censor's concern for fact checking, writing that under censorship, he and other journalists "were relieved of the trouble of personally checking the information we sent off: if the censorship let a telegraph be sent, that meant it was 'the truth and nothing but the truth,' and if a telegram was held back, then the story in it must be a fabrication" (1912–13: 170). Of course, the reader knows from context that the censor is not merely concerned with truth, if at all; the primary concern is protecting military secrets and portraying a cheerful face for local citizens supporting the war effort. *Dan* highlights a mirror image concern in Ljubljana; here the issues of *Dan* are under scrutiny precisely for providing information on the Balkan wars which might encourage Slovenes to sympathize with their Balkan brethren. As previously mentioned, the editors of *Dan* did seek to provide thorough coverage of the wars throughout 1912 and 1913 alongside their humorous cartoons and satirical poems. Such coverage would be seen as dangerous to the local Austro-Hungarian officials, who seek to preserve power in Slovenia and fear losing Slovene loyalty. The censor in Lipe's story stands in for authority figures, both Slovene and Austro-Hungarian, who support European interests rather than pan-Slavic identification.

The censor in Lipe's story is concerned with Lipe's identification with the Balkan cause. The censor notes that while he did not find the story about cholera in Istanbul particularly problematic, he does see that since Lipe "has returned from Istanbul, he has become a full-fledged rebel,"[31] continuing on to say: "Though I do not know which path he took—but it seems to me that he went through Serbia"[32] (1913: 67). The alleged fact that Lipe travelled home through the Balkans and through Serbia in particular makes him dangerous. Lipe may not only be sympathetic personally to the Serbs but his journalism may help the Serbian cause in Slovenia and encourage others to sympathize with the Serbs and pan-Slavic unification. The censor is so concerned that he decides to "investigate"[33] Lipe himself more precisely (1913: 67). The form this investigation takes is at once absurd and humorous. Mr. Censor, as he is called in the story, places Lipe on an operation table, and his two clerics transform into surgical assistants. Lipe protests that he is healthy, but Mr. Censor treats Lipe's Serbian sympathies as a cancer that must be removed. In a line that works in both the surgical and political contexts, Mr. Censor says: "You do not know how much you need surgery to save you from an early death"[34] (1913: 68). Mr. Censor proceeds to attempt to remove the sympathy from Lipe's body by

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31 "Odkar pa se je vrnil iz Carigrada—je postal cel rebelant."

32 "Sicer ne vem, po kateri poti je hodil—ampak zdi se mi, da je šel skozi Srbijo."

33 "Zato ga moramo natančneje preiskati"

34 "Sami ne veste, kako ste potrebni operacije, ki naj vas reši zgodnje smrti."

inflicting physical harm. The metaphor transposes the words of the writer onto his body, and thereby translates the threat of the censor from the ideological realm to physical punishment.

The duality of the threat is cleverly invoked throughout the story with symbols and word play. One of the best examples comes when Lipe indicates that Mr. Censor checked his tongue and did not find any suspicious signs. "'The tongue is Slovene,' he said. 'But it seems to me that it smells a bit Serbian. Let's have a look…'"[35] (1913: 68). As in English, the word tongue has two meanings: it represents a body part and also works as shorthand for language. In other words, *Dan* successfully continues the metaphor of the surgeon Mr. Censor inspecting the physical body of Lipe while simultaneously commenting on the language of Lipe's writings for *Dan*. Mr. Censor suggests that his Slovene reeks of Serbian, the language of the southern Balkans this commentary directly relates to the rhymes Lipe has authored for previous editions of *Dan* which paint the Serbs as sympathetic and the Ottomans and other Europeans as aggressors. When Mr. Censor decides to inspect Lipe's brain next, he comes to a similar conclusion: the brain is free of symptoms, but he appears to be coming down with a Serbian disease (1913: 68). The way in which Mr. Censor inspects Lipe's brain is physically damaging; he not only inspects him but cuts him open and removes body parts to consider them fully. For example, he cuts Lipe's head open and removes his brain to inspect it, having only administered nicotine as an anesthetic—an unsuccessful one at that, as Lipe notes that he can hear every word that Mr. Censor utters as he invades Lipe's body. Of course, Mr. Censor does replace Lipe's brain in his head and even enlists the help of his two assistants to stitch it back up, so Lipe remains intact and able to recount the story to the fictional Pepe Radirka, whose faithful transcription allows *Dan* readers to understand what occurred.

The figure of Pepe Radirka—a reporter who must tell the story of a reporter—draws readers into a confusing loop that unsettles expectations of authorship. It is easy to forget that Radirka intervenes as the alleged true author throughout the story since the story is presented from Lipe's perspective. However, the critical focus on another contributing author, the censor, remains foremost in the reader's mind as the fictional exposé works through Lipe and Pepe's perspectives to shed light on regional events. Mr. Censor confiscates a piece of Lipe's stomach which nonsensically include remnants of Consul Prochaska, as if the Consul were a rich south Balkan dessert gobbled up in secret rather than a reference to the sensationalized Austro-Hungarian news coverage of a conflict between Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the First Balkan War known as the

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[35] "Jezik je slovenski," je rekel. – "Vendar se mi zdi, da nekoliko smrdi po srbskem. Poglejmo dalje—"

Prochaska Affair.[36] When Mr. Censor removes the offending organ, "a leak of red blood poured out of his pencil"[37] (1913: 68). There is an interesting connection between the physicality of the body and the censorship metaphor in this section of the story. Where a proper surgeon might use the word "remove" to describe the extraction of a foreign object from a patient's body, Lipe—or Radirka, telling the story, or the *Dan* editors—chooses the charged verb "confiscate" (the Slovene *konfiscirati*), thus blurring the line between the world of the physical operation that Lipe describes and the act of censorship which it metaphorically represents. *Dan* does not let the reader lose track of the connection between the two. Mr. Censor places the offending part of the stomach on the table and red blood leaks out of the pencil, equating the act of redacting an article with red ink to the violent, bloody removal of a body part.

Later in the story, Mr. Censor removes Lipe's heart, and deems it healthy—though, like the tongue, it bears traces of Serbia. "'The heart is healthy,' [Mr. Censor] said, 'and beats regularly, only it seems to me that he has too much of a southern pulse'"[38] (1913: 68). Mr. Censor reveals that the heart tells him that just yesterday, the songs "There, Over There!" and "The Maritsa River Flows" were sung, which causes suspicion. The former was a popular Montenegrin hymn in the Balkans at the time, while the latter was then the Bulgarian national anthem. Both were sung widely in the Balkans and were directly linked to independence efforts. In his 1915 book *The Spirit of the Serb*, R. W. Seton-Watson noted:

> During the first three weeks of the first Balkan War boundless enthusiasm was displayed by Croats and Serbs of Dalmatia for their victorious Balkan kinsmen, and the national anthems of the Allies were continually sung by crowds in the streets—among others, the Montenegrin hymn, composed by the Serb poet-king Nicholas… […] Its opening words, "Onamo, 'namo" (literally, "thither, thither"), express the writer's belief in the day when his men shall go to deliver the ancient Serb capital of Prizen "out there beyond the mountains." (18–19)

The citation of both songs further links Lipe to the Serbs and causes Mr. Censor to find a name for the disease he finds in Lipe's heart: Slavic fervor.

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36 In *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918*, Manfried Rauchensteiner presents the Prochaska Affair as an event that "shattered the credibility of Austria-Hungary," as "the Austro-Hungarian Press could be accused of boundless exaggeration when depicting incidents surrounding the Imperial and Royal consul in Prizren, Prochaska, in 1912" (2014: 104).

37 "se je vlil rdeč curek krvi—iz njegovega rdečega svinčnika."

38 "Srce je zdravo," je rekel, "in bije redno, samo zdi se mi, da ima preveč južni utrip."

The fictional exposé then turns to more local news practices at *Dan* itself, concluding the story with an editorial intervention rather than with plot-based resolution. After a few more intrusions into Lipe's body, Mr. Censor sews him up. Lipe concludes ironically: "I must admit that Mr. Censor operated on me excellently and from that day on I was completely healthy"[39] (1913: 68). Lipe appears to utter the line to appease Mr. Censor so that he may continue reporting with Slavic fervor, as the very next sentence, the final one in the narrative, reads: "(For readers only: I put in these last words so that I would not be operated on again)"[40] (1913: 68). The mock sincerity of the first of these final lines and the reversal in the second completes the joking conceit of the entire account while scorning the intelligence of the censors. The idea that a parenthetical note "For readers only," set apart physically in the text, would discourage Mr. Censor and his associates from reading on appears unlikely. The ending continues the satire begun in the narrative's first lines by implying that the censors only see the most obvious things and would not notice anything parenthetical. As Berger writes, when those with low status laugh at others, it becomes an act of resistance (1993: 8). *Dan* editors invite readers to laugh at Mr. Censor and all he represents to exert a measure of control in a world where real censors can repress issues of *Dan*.

The story does not truly end with Lipe's parenthetical wink to readers, however. It continues with a lengthy editor's note that Lipe is a permanent *Dan* employee, suggesting that Lipe is a pen name for a real author, or at least an amalgam of authors, and not simply a stock fictional character in a satirical narrative on censorship. The note clarifies the details:

> When the war broke out, [Lipe] went to Istanbul, but he soon returned because he did not find anything special there. He immediately realized that the Turks would not win. Since he told this truth to the world, which has not been fully confirmed, the Ljubljana state attorney resented him. They came to a crossroads several times, especially due to the Consul Prochaska and for the good advice that Figi Lipe gave to the editorial board of "Dan" in those times when we were confiscated almost daily. Thus, Figi Lipe experienced the bitter trials he is referring to here.[41] (1913: 67)

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39 "Priznati moram, da me je gospod cenzor izborno operiral in da sem od onega dne popolnoma zdrav ."

40 (Samo za čitatelje: zadnje besede sem dal zapisati zato, da ne bi zopet operiran.)

41 Ko se je začela vojna, se je odpeljal v Carigrad, pa se je kmalu vrnil, ker tam ni našel nič posebnega. Toliko pa je takoj spoznal, da Turki ne bodo zmagali. Ker je povedal svetu to resnico, ki se je zdaj popolnoma potrdila, se je zelo zameril ljubljanskemu državnemu pravdniku. Prišla sta si večkrat navskriž, posebno

This note adds a layer of reality to the fiction: since it regularly attacked local government officials, *Dan* was frequently confiscated and censored. Editor Dr. Ivan Lah later wrote that the paper was proud of the label "ultra-radical" and of its consistently pro-Yugoslav and anti-Austrian orientation (Globočnik 1999: 180). The bitter trials of Figi Lipe represent the bitter trials of a young group of pro-Serbian liberals who resist and rebel against Austro-Hungarian officials by making their rhetorical case for pan-Slavism through caricature, satirical poems, and short fiction in the special supplement of *Dan* in which "Bitter trials" was printed. The ultimate irony is perhaps the fact that, as Globočnik notes, the satirical insert itself was confiscated on its second print run (1999: 180). Then again, the story all but dares local censors to do so.

It is worth stepping back for a moment to consider the broader creative impact of expurgation on *Dan*. As Matthew J. Kinservik writes, "…what censorship *produces* is often more important than what it prohibits" (2002: 10). Its goal is "not merely to suppress 'objectionable'" texts but "to encourage the production and consumption of 'acceptable' ones" (2002: 10). This is what makes Lipe's story so fascinating—and funny. Censorship marks what is forbidden and appears to energize writers and editors at *Dan* to cross the lines to seize the forbidden as subject matter, even when that becomes the very suppression of ideas. The author of "Bitter trials" hides behind layers of circuitous story-telling. This makes the press itself, and the act of telling one's story, an object of reflection.

Conclusions

As the masked image with which I began this chapter suggests, authors use humor to unmask the concept of Europe as it stood at the end of the nineteenth century. They work to reorganize their sense of the world, as it continues to shift under the impact of World War I and the break-up of empires. In his analysis of modernist conceptions and representations of war, Milton A. Cohen writes of war as "focused energy" (2004: 158).[42] War

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zaradi konzula Prochazke in zaraki dobrih nasvetov, ki jih je dajal Figi Lipe redakciji »Dneva« v onih hudih časih, ko smo bili skoraj vsak dan konfiscirani. Tako je Figi Lipe doživel tudi bridke skušnje, o katerih tu pripoveduje.

42 Considering modernist artists of the 1910s, Milton A. Cohen writes: "…beyond merely anticipating or even welcoming a new war, avant-garde artists across Europe drew upon war in its multiple meanings—war as metaphor, war as language, as visual images, as models of both organizing and destructive power, and most of all, war as focused energy. The modernists' relation to war, however, proved symbiotic: as they drew from these constructions of war, their own energies, in turn, were quickly sucked into the real war's immeasurably larger vortex…" (2004: 158). If war is not just a series of battles on the ground but rather a focused energy—or, better yet, if in writing it is a construction, the

becomes visible even in texts without battles or soldiers, when authors use that focused energy to unsettle the news. Oddly, then, the special issue of *Dan* ends with the image of one Turk sobbing as another hangs dead from a noose in front of a presumably former Ottoman city. The image is more grotesque than humorous, but the caption reads: "Konec komedije" (The end of the comedy) (fig. 3). Perhaps the image is meant to serve as a bookend for the publication, or a perverse version of "The End," so frequently issued on the final page of a narrative. Yet the editors reprint "the end of comedy" image on the front page of the next day's issue of *Dan*. Surely, the end of the Ottoman Empire is nearing. But it far from the end of comedic prose about war.

the College of the Holy Cross

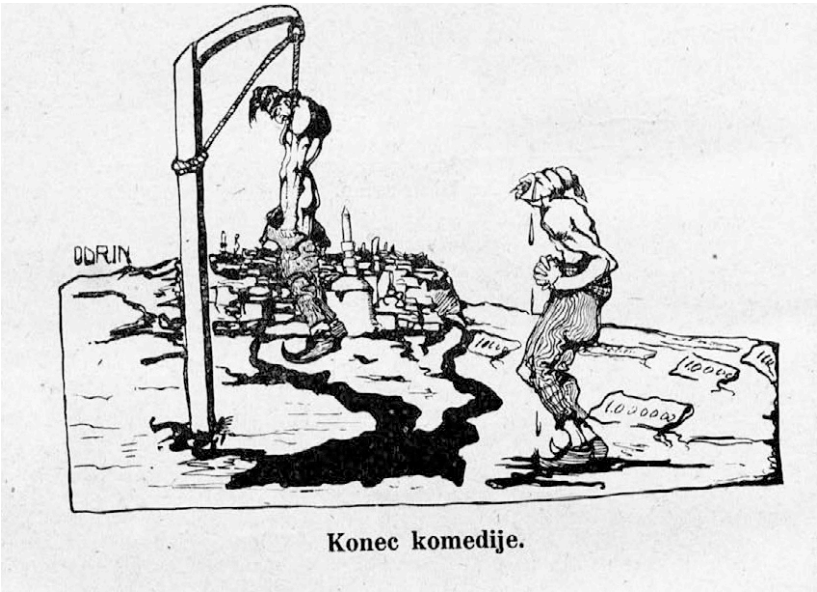

Fig. 3. The end of comedy. The final image in the special issue of *Dan*.

temporality of writers' responses to war perhaps matters less than the idea that war and writing feed one another, build off one another, energize one another. The Futurists' enthusiasm for speed and destruction draws the violence of war into their orbit; the Dadaists' rejection of logic and embrace of nonsense draws the chaos of war into their orbit. The energy of the sort of work included in each movement may not always find comic expression, but its energy creates even more space for the comic than the chaos of war.

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POVZETEK

SATIRA O BALKNSKIH VOJNAH

Esej s pomočjo literarne analize obravnava humor v dveh kratkih proznih delih, ki sta izšli leta 1913 v posebni izdaji slovenskega časopisa Dan o balkanskih vojnah z naslovom "Balkanska vojna v karikaturah in pesmih." Esej se osredotoča tudi na način, kako novinarji uporabljajo satirične tehnike, ki so značilne za leposlovje (npr. za kratke zgodbe ali romane), da postavljajo pod vprašaj pisanje in branje novic v času politične nestabilnosti v regiji. Zgodbi sta napisani v slovenščini za slovensko občinstvo in šaljivo opisujeta izražanje naklonjenosti in solidarnosti do prebivalcev Balkana, pogosto pa sta kritični tudi do zahodnoevropskih sil (vključno z Avstro-Ogrsko, v katero je bilo vključeno območje današnje Slovenije). Zgodbi se ne norčujeta samo iz političnega razvoja avtorjev, temveč tudi iz humorja kot sredstva za retorično izjavo o udeležbi v balkanskih zadevah v vojnah na jugu.