LIISI LAINESTE

Post-socialist jokes in Estonia: continuity and change

FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation represents a stage in the journey that I began in the year 1998, after discovering a weighty red volume of published papers presented at the first international conference of humour studies in Cardiff, Wales, 1976 (Chapmann & Foot 1977). This helped me to choose the direction for my first attempt at academic writing, and has not failed to inspire me ever since. Humour as a research topic is far from what one can call fun in an emotional sense, but its complexity and interdisciplinarity is compelling on an intellectual level. My field of research has caused perplexed looks, but at the same time earned me new friends by introducing me to a supporting society – the ISHS, International Society of Humour Studies – to which I am proud to belong.

After doing a course work and writing a bachelor's thesis about humour at the Department of Psychology of the University of Tartu, a fortuitous occasion relocated me to the Chair of Estonian and Comparative Folklore that has remained my academic home since then. That move also lead to several changes in the way I looked at my subject – I acknowledged its interdisciplinary nature, finally managed to get a firmer grip on my research material, and came to terms with the inner life of the genre of jokes that for me had been just a means to acquire quantitative results.

During this journey, I have been blessed with a supervisor who is interested in and inspired by the subject of humour as much as I am. In addition to his other numerous areas of expertise, he has invested his time into studying humour to support my strivings in this field of research. In him I found the mentor who gave the necessary motivation towards pursuing an academic career above other possible choices, which was further supported by the fact that for the first years of our cooperation, we shared an office at the Estonian Literary Museum. That period was filled with long discussions about humour.

The research would have been restricted solely to Estonian material and a narrower selection of problems and literature, if there had not been substantial support from Estonian Science Foundation, grants No 4935 and 6759, starting from the year 2001. The grants provided substantial support for the designing and compilation of the primary resource for the following research, the database of Estonian contemporary humour (*http://www.folklore.ee/~liisi/o2*). The second term of the grant project also represented the start of the endeavour to perform comparative studies. Discussions with fellow researchers at the symposium of Post-Socialist Humour (organized by Arvo Krikmann and myself) gave me confidence that this is an under-studied but versatile branch of research, and the published compendium of the papers presented at the symposium offer evidence of the richness of the topic. I would like to thank all of the authors of this volume for taking the challenge and contributing to the overview of post-socialist humour, especially Dorota Brzozowska, Władisław Chłopicki, Christie Davies, and Jurate Kavaliauskaite for the well-orchestrated cooperation we developed along the way.

I am most grateful to all of my colleagues in Estonia and elsewhere for their assurance and advice, and for not thinking – or at least not showing publicly – that humour is a lighthearted and unscientific matter. Thought-provoking responses from audience members during seminars and other public presentations about parts of this dissertation have played a share in shaping this work. I have encountered only sincere interest and good ideas. Different people have advised me on various parts of my articles. I would like to thank Tiiu Jaago for her profound comments on the article about post-socialist political jokes, Elliott Oring for looking through the article about ethnic jokes and their targets in Estonia, Ülo Valk for commenting on the final version of the thesis, and of course Arvo Krikmann for commenting on all my articles. It nevertheless goes without saying that all ideas in the articles are mine, and so are the (potential) faults in form and content, as well as the responsibility for these. From the practical side of academic writing, I was inspired by Tiina-Ann Kirss' lectures on how to strike a balance between being precise yet captivating in scientific articles, and although I am only just beginning to discover the tools to achieve that, I hope my readers will bear with me and give me time to develop. All of these articles have been proofread by native speakers of English Alexander Harding and Casey Collins, who corrected my numerous mistakes. They offered (modest, but still encouraging) positive feedback about my command of the English language and consolation despite the heavy mark-up on each page.

Humour was indeed always present in my childhood home, but I must say that jokes as a genre remained an unfamiliar terrain for me for a long time. Nobody really told me jokes at home, and school was also a serious matter. This may also be the reason why I have for now dealt only with the text and its broader context, but not the performance itself.

This work would not have been possible without the support of my family and friends, who have kept company to my children Pipi-Lotta and Kataleena while I was writing articles, and of course Jaak who has accepted my non-profit occupation without any objections. My first steps in writing, drawing and other fields of self-discovery were faithfully supported by my grandmother Asta-Evi Reilent, who set an example for me by also pursuing an academic career in her youth. I hope this dissertation will partly also fulfil her dreams.

Tartu, October 2008

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INTRODUCTION

1. Structure and objectives of the research

This dissertation consists of an introductory chapter and five articles (four published and one in press, see publication data). The included articles represent a substantial section of the research I have done on the subject of humour over the past 5 years, from 2003–2008. The thematic approaches are mostly limited to contemporary jokelore, focusing on the characteristic developments of post-socialist topical, ethnic and political jokes. Post-socialism is an important keyword that leads the discussion in four articles (articles II, III, IV and V). It denotes a specific transitional period in the history of the former Soviet states, but this context also proposes that there are fundamental similarities in contemporary, post-socialist Eastern European jokelore. When studied in depth, these similarities will offer insights into and comparisons to previous findings about jokes from different societal contexts. By considering both the context and content of jokes, the research will help to clarify the relationship between folklore and its surroundings – the social reality. The main objectives of the dissertation are to:

1. Provide different angles of research for insights into the interactions between folklore (topical / ethnic / political jokes) and its surroundings (political, economic, cultural and other contexts);
2. Give an overview of the database of Estonian contemporary humour that has supported this research;
3. Outline the research that has been done so far on Estonian contemporary jokes;
4. Analyse the past and present developments of the categories of Estonian topical, ethnic and political jokes in order to define the continuities and changes;
5. Provide a more universal model to describe and predict target choice in ethnic jokes.

My path through this most interesting, yet far too serious subject has continuously encouraged me to continue searching answers to new questions that have arisen along the way. The articles in the dissertation reflect the different paths I have followed (not in a chronological but in a thematic order), though the direction has long been the same. My research interests have developed in a coherent manner, starting from more specific problems encountered in the Estonian material (articles I, II, III and IV), and gradually growing into a more broad-based investigation of post-socialist humour (article V). This logical development is guided by the discoveries I have made on this path: during my

initial research into Estonian ethnic jokes[1], I encountered several puzzling and discontinuous facts that lead me to think that there exists a powerful factor that interferes with culturally "logical" preferences in the choice of targets and other aspects of ethnic humour – the political context. The essential discrepancies between jokes from different countries, the local peculiarities, could be swept aside by the influence of the totalitarian system that injected a strong political dimension to nearly all categories of jokes. This in turn has motivated me to obtain further evidence from other countries with similar histories in order to prove the hypothesis of the influence of political context on ethnic jokes. For that purpose, A. Krikmann and I have made efforts to gather a body of experts from former Soviet republics and perform initial research on some aspects of post-socialist humour. The cooperation project between the post-socialist Eastern European countries[2] that should fulfil this aim is only in its first phase. An article outlining the main research issues is also included in this dissertation (article V).

The theoretical grounds that have informed my investigations into humour will be presented in a separate section of the introduction. I will provide a historical overview of the main theoretical frameworks in the sociological branch of humour studies, positioning my research in the field, and I will also define some significant terms in my research. Throughout nearly all of the articles, I am in a dialogue with several established humour researchers and their theories, primarily the theory of ethnic humour formulated by Christie Davies (e.g. in 1990 book "Ethnic Humor Around the World").

The next chapter outlines the threads of discussion that will be followed in the articles. The intertwined issues include the relationship of folklore and its surrounding reality on various levels, the specificity of the post-socialist features in Eastern European jokelore, the developments of joke categories (ethnic and political) over the past decades, and trends of globalization and sub-culturalization in humour.

The following section of the introductory chapter deals with methodological issues. This presents more thorough information and related polemics than the articles themselves would reveal. An understanding of the issues imposed by jokes as a research topic as well as the assets and drawbacks of researching jokes on the Internet is vital to be able to interpret the articles in the dissertation. This section will first present an overview of jokes as a research subject in humour studies. This in turn brings the discussion to the more specific object of this study: jokes circulating on the Internet.

A significant part of my research is based upon the material organised in an electronic database (the Database of Estonian Contemporary Jokes and

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[1] A bachelor's thesis on mutual joking between the Finnish and the Estonian, 2000; and a master's thesis on the history and development of Estonian ethnic jokes from 1880s onwards, Laineste 2005.
[2] Russia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Estonia

Anecdotes, electronically available at *http://folklore.ee/~liisi/o2*). The development and future prospects of the database are outlined in article I of this dissertation. One of the focuses of the subsection will be the context of the specific medium that interacts with both the form and content of the jokes. I will highlight the profound influence of the medium, the Internet, on the nature and volume of the material.

Although the immediate communicative context of the material used in the studies remains in the background, and the wider social and political contexts dominate the discussion, I have always been aware of the limitations and values of the chosen material. I believe that jokes on the Internet offer deeply meaningful issues for the future researcher of both folklore in general and humour in particular, especially as it is precisely the comic "infotainment" mode that draws the Internet-user – many people use the net with the aim of finding and communicating humour (e.g. Dutton et al 2005).

Even if there is no standard methodology that governs all of the articles, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology is the principle that guides the research. The process will be outlined in general terms in the methodology section.

All five articles included in the thesis will be briefly summarised, and their main aims and results will be discussed in the fourth chapter of the thesis. The four articles that are in English (II, III, IV and V) are motivated by the intention to find a broader international audience and contacts, primarily from relatively fragmented world of Eastern European humour studies, and develop subsequent cooperation that would make the work and future results in the area of ethnic and political jokes more meaningful and significant. To bring together two worlds of research that have for quite a long time existed separately – i.e. the whole versatile realm of Russian humour research on the one hand, and the ideas concerning the sociology and folkloristics of jokes in Western scholarship on the other – is also the aim of the compendium on post-socialist humour (edited by Krikmann & Laineste 2008). The only article in Estonian (article I) is added to the dissertation to balance the investigative approaches and provide background information about the Estonian empirical material under observation. In addition, there has been growing interest from folklorists and other colleagues from various countries in the structure of the Estonian joke database. In aspiring to form a body of material that would also be suitable for cross-cultural comparison, there is a need for a unified system of joke categorisation using a common meta-language (English). I encountered this problem at the beginning of my path, and the solution I reached will be described in article I. The article will soon also be translated into English (a brief English article on a similar subject (Laineste 2003d) concentrates on general issues about folkloristic research on the Internet).

In the closing chapter, I will present the main conclusions of the articles published in the thesis. Future directions will be outlined, as I consider the subject of my research to point at several issues that are still to be discussed.

Emotions, hostility, the interactions of ethnic jokes and ethnic identity, jokes used in relation with politics, globalization and Internet humour – all of these topics are brought together under the general title of folklore and its environment, a subject that is already present in the thesis.

The dissertation concludes with a summary of the introduction in Estonian.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND MAIN CONCEPTS

This chapter deals with the general background of the dissertation, offering an historical overview of some of the most relevant and influential approaches in humour research. It will also provide definitions of the main concepts applied in the articles.

2.1. Interdisciplinarity

Humour is increasingly viewed as an interdisciplinary subject (for an overview, see Laineste 2003c). The beginning of the scientific investigation of humour begins with the works of philosophers, with Henri Bergson opening the discussion in the 20th century (Le Rire, 1901). Another important contribution and great influence on the following approaches was presented in the works of the psychologist Sigmund Freud (Der Witz und Seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten1905). In folklore studies, the first to address the subject was the Finnish school, laying down the principles for classifying folktales, including comic tales, and describing some joke tale types (e.g. Aarne 1914 and 1915). Early folkloristic research was partly influenced by anthropological studies through the theories of functionalists and structuralists including Radcliffe Brown (with his 1940 monograph discussing the function of joking relationships). Also Freudian interpretations of jokes have been frequent in folkloristics (most explicit in the works of Alan Dundes, e.g. 1987, 1971). It was only in the mid-1970s when the field was re-discovered by psychologists, literary scholars, and others. Since then, the ambition to outline an overarching theory for all of the disciplines dealing with humour has grown, though there has been little success in formulating it (e.g. as concluded by Morreall 1983). The aim of the International Journal for Humour Research has been to prioritise studies that offer interdisciplinary accounts of the subject[3]. There have, however, been some issues that penetrate many or even all of the disciplines in humour research.

Patricia Keith Spiegel brought order to the great diversity of humour theories, placing all in "one tidy theoretical household" (1972: 15). More recently, the main directions in research have been reduced to three: psycho-analytic, sociological and cognitive theories[4] (Attardo 1994: 47). In the context of this research, the sociological models (dealing with concepts such as superiority, aggression, derision, disparagement, hostility and conflict) are those that should be considered in greater detail. I will describe how the sociological

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[3] In the notes to contributors, the editors suggest 20% of the references to be outside the authors' discipline.

[4] These essentialist theories are not mutually exclusive, but address different aspects of humour.

approach has evolved and developed. This will in turn provide the key to understanding the origins of the issues I tackle in my research. Although the subject is folkloristic, my advances to explaining of ethnic and political jokes are borrowed from various disciplines, including sociology.

2.2. Sociological theories of humour

2.2.1. Influential sociological approaches to humour in the 20th century

Sociological approaches to the study of humour concern themselves with the social functions and, even more importantly, with the social shaping of humour. Some of the more influential sociological perspectives in the course of the 20th century will be subsequently outlined in a roughly chronological order (influenced by Kuipers' overview of the sociology of humour, 2008b): functional, conflict, and comparative-historical approach.

The functionalist approach concerns itself with the purpose of humour, which is to maintain order in society. Even though humour does not have the same function for everyone, and may in some cases even be dysfunctional, the theory is still – quite fruitfully – applied in research. Addressing the function of jokes directly requires one to focus on the performance rather than the text (i.e. on how the text is used in interaction), and that is why an analysis concentrating only on a large corpus of jokes is not directly suitable for the discussion of the functions of humour. This does not mean, however, that it is unable to provide any insights on that matter that could be applicable in future research. The functions emphasised so far are positive social (control, relief, cohesion), negative social (resistance, exclusion), and psychological (coping).

Another very influential approach maintained that humour is a tool that can be used in conflict, as a weapon for attack and defence. This has not been a particularly well-supported line of argument – even if conflict is embedded in a joke, it is of marginal use in explaining its existence in a particular place and time (Davies 2002: 128), and will not be used in interpreting the data in this context (for reasons also elucidated by myself in Joon 2003a). It is, however, significant, as it draws attention to the possible interpretations and the pretext of a joke (evident in the utterance "just joking!"), which is unavoidable in the light of the latest controversies in the field of humour.

The historical-comparative line of thinking offers a methodology for describing variations and continuities of humour in different contexts. Although studies based on this approach often deal solely with the comparison and description of the popularity of topics (e.g. Apte 1985), techniques of humour production and functions of humour, it can also be used to decide which contextual cues produce which jokes, how traditions are created and spread, and – even more broadly – what can be said about the societies using this kind of

humour (e.g. in Davies 1990, 1998, 2002 and elsewhere). This is also one of the intentions of this study: to show the relations between jokes and the society in which the jokes are told, contrasting different periods and different political contexts. As one of the main aims was to provide additional support or offer alternative solutions for Davies' theory of ethnic humour, more precisely to the rules of target choice (outlined by Davies 1990), a short overview of this theory is in order.

Christie Davies has described his theory of ethnic humour in three books (1990, 1998 and 2002) and several articles (e.g. 1982, 1987, 1999a). This predominant theory of ethnic humour attempts to discover societal regularities in different joke traditions (above all in the wide-spread scripts of stupidity and canniness) through the comparative sociological analysis of jokes. He claims that stupidity and canniness, but also other more specific ethnic scripts (e.g. promiscuity, cowardliness), are applied under particular circumstances in the social reality of the ethnic groups concerned. Regarding the most universal category of stupidity jokes, he states that the targets of these jokes are usually people who (1) are close neighbours and are or have been citizens of the same country, (2) dwell on the periphery of that cultural area and are perceived as culturally ambiguous by the dominant people of the centre, and (3) share the same cultural background or even speak a similar or identical language. They are usually rural people or immigrants in search of unskilled and low-prestige manual work (1990: 41).

Although not a widely renowned theory, the hypotheses posed by Alexander Rose (2002) in a comparative and relatively theoretical overview of political jokes under democratic and totalitarian regimes encouraged to search for similar patterns in Estonian jokelore, taking the two periods (pre- and post-1991) as examples (article IV). Rose states that the most significant difference between jokes in totalitarian and democratic regimes is that the former primarily mocked the system, whereas the latter concentrate on the pitfalls and personal deficits of the leaders. He develops his argument further by stating that because democratic leaders emerge from the ranks of the people, they are seen as "one of us" and thus open to criticism, but under totalitarian regimes the system is imposed on the people and becomes the primary target of fear and jokes. As jokes about totalitarian regimes criticise the absurdity of the system, the only exceptions to that rule are the purely military regimes which foster political jokes about their leaders.

2.2.2. Humour as aggression versus humour as mirth

The birth of sociological theories of humour took place in a context in which theories that linked humour with aggression flourished. The aggressive side of humour was already mentioned in the earliest works of Western philosophers[5]. The seventeenth-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes noted the "sudden glory" based on one's perceived superiority over others that humour should provide, while Henri Bergson viewed it as a social corrective, and Sigmund Freud saw aggression as a central aspect in jokes. The most recent elaboration of this line of reasoning comes from Charles Gruner (1997), who defines humour as "playful aggression".

Interpreting humour in terms of aggression has greatly affected the development of the sociological approach of humour (although its early validation is limited to Freud's seminal work, as aptly noted by Oring 1992: 1). Jokes often attracted the attention of researchers when they had become problematic in the society or when they concerned some important social issues (race, gender equality, social class etc, Kuipers 2008b: 365). Inspired by the theory of humour as disparagement, psychologists have, in the second half of the 20th century, conducted numerous studies (resulting in quite contradictory and ambiguous results) linking the amount of hostility to the perception of funniness in a joke (e.g. McCauley et al 1983, Graesser et al. 1989, Mio & Graesser 1991, cf Ruch & Hehl 1998), and describing how the intensity of this correlation is influenced by the social relationships and the self-identification of the joke-teller and the audience (La Fave 1972, Zillmann & Cantor 1976).

The extremely positive way that humour is perceived today has greatly contested these views based on hostility and derision[6]. Mirth is a term to describe an emotion, the positive reaction to humour (not just the facial and vocal expressions of the positive emotion). It has also been used in sociological studies as a term referring to the basically non-aggressive quality of humour (Davies 2002). Davies emphasises that when uttering an ethnic joke, the joke-

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[5] Plato stated that laughter originates in malice (Plato in *Philebus*, cited by Morreall 1987). Aristotle's account of wit (in *The Poetics*, cited by Keith-Spiegel 1972: 7) holds that ludicrous means a defect, deformity, or ugliness that is not painful or destructive. This has also had a significant influence on how the Western world perceives humour in general (Attardo 1994: 49). At the same time, sense of humour has long been perceived as an essentially positive characteristic (for an overview of how this perception developed, see Martin 2007: 24, 192, also Wickberg 1998: 121). Lack of a sense of humour can cause anything from mild surprise to severe exclusion from the community (as seen in some late humour controversies: the Muhammad cartoons, Borat movie, etc, (Lewis et al 2008)).

[6] Focusing on positive emotions rather than negative ones in sociological but more increasingly in psychological research is a growing trend in humour research (Martin 2007: 16)

teller primarily intends to amuse, and not anger the audience[7]. Besides, Davies argues, aggressiveness is not a heuristically productive tool to approach the subject of humour, as theories based on aggression are difficult to falsify (e.g. Gruner's theory of humour, the drawback also highlighted by Martin 2007: 54).

Evolutionary studies of humour tend rather to support the fundamental mirthfulness in humour, which states that laughter originates in social play (Gervais & Wilson 2005). Nevertheless, most of the studies of ethnic humour have been influenced by the premises of functionalist and conflict approaches (see also above, section 2.2.1.). As recent studies in psychology devote more attention to the role of humour in well-being (e.g. Ruch 1997), the investigation on ethnic humour is dominated by a heated discussion of the pre-eminence of its conflict- versus mirth-evoking potential (see discussion in Lewis 1997).

To explain the background of the choices I have made regarding the frame-works of my research, I must be clear in pointing out the early influence of functionalist and conflict theories of humour on my academic thinking and writing, and at the attempt I have made to dispute them along the way. Talking only about the purpose of jokes (something that is popular in the functionalist approach) has often become a speculative contemplation on the release of tension (joking under totalitarian rule, e.g. in Speier 1998 about *Flüsterwitze*, whispered jokes) or sublimed aggression (jokes about immigrants, Dundes 1971). These insights do have their appeal, but tend to result in circular argu-mentation, and lack sufficient potential for falsification. In order to avoid this, the researcher should become aware of comparative data and use it respectively, or conduct historically and culturally embedded longitudinal research that will, in the course of analysis, reveal patterns of popularity and other features that are also informative concerning the function of humour, among other things. It was my aim to approach these matters through a more indirect angle (by describing the choice of targets, the interaction of jokes with society, etc).

2.2.3. Humour research in Estonia

Up to the present, the field of humour research has remained relatively neg-lected in Estonia, at least on a more organized level, though some preliminary research has been performed in various disciplines: primarily folkloristics (most notably Krikmann 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b, 2006a, 2008 etc), but also psychology (Suits et al 2005, Kindlam 2005, Suits 2007), Estonian lan-guage and literature (Anupõld 1960, Kuus 1961, Hein 1936), and a number of

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[7] The intention to amuse is usually manifested through the choice of appropriate audience. This may certainly be true in face-to-face communication, but in the (global Internet-based) audience in which the ethnic, ideological and other charactersitics of the audience members are inexpicit and vary greatly, the author is less able to control the reach of his / her message.

undergraduate theses under the supervision of Juhan Peegel, Marju Lauristin, and later Halliki Harro, Tiit Hennoste and others (Škuubel 1967, Napa 1975, Lättemäe 1979, Juur 1986, Pullerits 1990, Jahilo 1994, Normet 2001, Tamm 2001). In other fields, humour has not been paid much academic attention.

This section will offer a brief overview of folkloristic humour research focusing on Estonian material. Old folk jokes in the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu were compiled in an organized archive, first by Rudolf Põldmäe in the late 1930s (now being revised by Rein Saukas), and as he had several academic interests, humour was not among his primary subjects. Two decades later, the pioneer of Estonian humour studies Loreida Raudsep chose the quite narrow field of jokes about clerics as her topic, and produced several meticulous overviews: an index of anti-clerical jokes (1969), and some articles written as an outcome of the research project depicting class struggle in folklore, led by Eduard Laugaste (e.g. Raudsep 1976, 1983). This initial research was supplemented in the 1990s, when several researchers touched upon the subject of contemporary jokes (as opposed to old joke tales), addressing political jokes (Sarv 1995, 1996, 1997a – c, 1998), sexual jokes told by schoolchildren (Kalda 1995) and ethnic jokes (Tuisk 1997). An even more active period in the research began in 2001, when a work group at the Estonian Literary Museum (Arvo Krikmann, Peeter Tulviste, Rein Saukas and Liisi Joon) began to make organized efforts to gather the contemporary material in an extensive database and publish substantial studies on that basis (funded by the Estonian Science Foundation, grants No. 4935 and 6759). The grant project acquired cross-cultural ambitions by the end of the first term (grant No 4935). The Estonian Literary Museum hosted an international conference on humour in 2007 and published a volume of articles on post-socialist humour (Krikmann & Laineste 2008). Over the last seven years, our work group has published over 20 articles and two monographs on Estonian jokelore, many of which can be found in the references to this dissertation. Hopefully the increasing interest in humour studies will grow in the coming years, acquiring new contributions from the students as well as established researchers, in order to activate the field of Estonian humour studies.

2.3. Definitions

2.3.1. Jokes

Jokes (in Estonian: *anekdoot*) form a genre that is quite familiar to the folklorists, and it may be a useful introductory material for bringing the subject closer to students and explaining to them what folklore is about (Dorst 1990). It is also a research tool (in addition to being a research topic) for linguists, psychologists, sociologists, etc. The genre can be seen as lying at the crossroads of different disciplines.

A joke (sometimes referred to also as a "canned joke") is a text that starts with a *setup* and ends with an unexpected *punch-line*, and is usually intended to be funny. It can be understood without the conversational context (e.g. Attardo 1994: 296). Jokes are informative of the societal environment in which they were created / told (or reproduced in another way). Following the turn towards concentrating on performance rather than text in folkloristics, the interest in collecting and analysing jokes as text diminished, and jokes were considered to be essentially contextual. This, in turn, led researchers to study humour in conversation (e.g. Bauman 1986), and the study of large joke corpora was neglected.

The eventual dominance of the contemporary short form of the joke has generally been located in the second half of the 19th century[8]. Before the emergence of the canned joke, the primary defining aspect of comic joke tales was their embeddedness in social relations (Knuuttila 1992, chapter 4). Humour did not exist outside a particular social situation. In the joke collections of M.J. Eisen, who was a diligent folklore collector and publisher, both types – old joke tales and contemporary punch-lined jokes – exist side by side, which makes this an interesting transitional period to study.

After folklorists began to collect and archive joke texts, the genre started to lead two separate lives (a trend also described in other folklore genres, see Honko 1991). This change reflects the polemics of orality and literacy (Ong 1982), especially as this was followed by another turn, which was evident in the hybrid quality of jokes increasingly transmitted on the Internet. Besides being constantly re-performed and changed in the course of that, Internet jokes often combine the features of oral and written speech. The first thing to transform was the form of the jokes, and it is again the form that changes in Internet jokes – they may once more be longer than oral punch-lined jokes (in that way, bringing them closer to old folk jokes), they are sometimes visual, and the punch-line can be built on both a visual and verbal pun / unexpected solution (e.g. in jokes that prolong the punch line through the scrolling down function).

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[8]   As Wickberg 1998: 124 argues, it coincided with the increasing evaluation of the sense of humour as a personality trait and the subsequent need to answer to the demand of the audience and publish more – and shorter – jokes in newspapers, journals and other readily accessible publications. Wickberg also argues that the public "mania for jokes" began in the 1860s (concluded from American jokelore, Wickberg 1998: 123). The expansion and rationalization of a market for humorous productions resulted in the spread of short and self-containing jokes (ibid. 134). The drawback of this argumentation is that it is based purely on the American example and is largely theoretical, but it is acceptable, as the shift towards preferring short punch-lines to long comic tales did occur around that time in other places as well, including Estonia (even to the extent of reducing comic utterances to two- or one-liners).

2.3.2. Ethnic jokes

Extending the discussion that concerns the humour derived from and inherent in the opposition of "us" and "others", the basic tendency of humans to perceive social groups in these two categories is a well-covered topic in social psychology. The construction of an ethnic group (or a group based on other criteria) begins from this distinction, as it is central to the issue of self-identification.

Ethnic jokes are viewed here in the context of the developments in the field. This is a category of (canned) joke that targets one or more ethnic groups, naming these by nationalities or other specific markers such as typical first names (Fritz, Ole etc). Without the conversational context, the issue of ethnic jokes being either hostile or mirthful may well be left aside. Instead, jokes as texts can be informative of the social reality of the target and the teller of the joke, their relations and the context where the joke was created in.

In the 1970s, the "new wave" of humour research began precisely by examining ethnic jokes, both in mutual interaction and as self-containing texts. The conference volume from 1977 (edited by Chapman & Foot) lists this as the primary issue in humour research and urges humour scholars to describe the aggressiveness and superiority embedded in these jokes (1977: xxvii). This is an evident outcome of the problems that the society (primarily the United States) faced concerning growing interethnic violence – there was a social demand for this discussion. The direction of the first investigations has put a stigma on the phenomena, and due to the pervading atmosphere of political correctness, is pushing the subject away from the focus of researchers (for scathing criticism on publishing or citing ethnic jokes in the context of scholarly investigation, see Billig 2005: 27).

2.3.5. Ethnic identity

Ethnic identity is a term that constantly lingers in the background of studies of ethnic humour, but is rarely discussed directly. In general, the recent views (stemming from Anderson 1983, stating that any national or ethnic groups are imagined communities) examining ethnicity in terms of culture transmitted from one generation to another see it as one of the many, rather flexible, constantly re-constructed ways of self-identification, describing the relationship between a person and an ethnic group (Verkuyten 2004: 80). It is about performing an identity and becoming ethnic than having these qualities ready. Ethnic (self)identifications cannot only be explained by psychological tendencies and dispositions, because ethnic identity is partly also socially constructed and contingent (political and cultural discourses and local discursive practices must be considered as well).

Ethnic identity was important in the studies of the functional paradigm of superiority theories (see references above in section 2.2.2 on humour and

aggression), as the degree of perceived hostility was presumed to be based on one's ethnic identity, and the sense of belonging to this ethnic group.

In spite of the scientific need to deal with clear-cut categories, there are plenty of in-betweeners, who are neither "us" nor "them" (well-integrated ethnic Russians in Estonia, for example). This shows vividly the fluidity of the borders of categories, which are constantly re-constructed according to the situation. Nevertheless, the categories are required because of a basic need to mark the boundaries of one's existence. The boundaries are maintained through basic oppositions. Also in jokes, the primary mechanism is the creation of a strategic opposition between "good" and "bad", and everything that falls under that division (see Raskin 1985: 113–114, 127, for the five main most common oppositions in jokes). In this way, jokes re-construct the basic oppositions between groups: by telling a stupidity joke about another ethnic group, the teller reinforces the essential, though often fabricated difference between "us" and "them", labelling the "other" as strange, non-conformant to the norms, deviant, abnormal, briefly: bad (the same process is at work in contemporary legend construction, see Kalmre 2007). These oppositions may be seen as an articulation of aggression and racist stereotypes, which was the case with the functionalist and conflict-based approaches of the 1970s.

That brings us to the question of real attitudes compared to those used in jokes. As Christie Davies argues (and I agree with him), we cannot decide the motives and attitudes of those who share the jokes on the basis of content alone (1990: 3), and even when analysed in a conversational context, the shared joke scripts (e.g. of stingy Scots or stupid Latvians) are only conventional and mythological texts, and not seriously held stereotypes (ibid, 6). In some cases these mythological qualities (or common-sense beliefs – to put it more broadly) may have a priming effect on opinions and actions (e.g. Ford, Wentzel & Lorion 2001: experiments on the effects of exposure to humour displaying hostile stereotypes). What we can conclude from researching stereotypes is, however, why certain targets arise at certain times, and what the change of a joke's target tell us about the perception of the groups featured in that joke.

Recently, the radical notions of xenophobia and racism have also entered the field of humour studies (Billig 2001, 2005; Pickering 2004, Pickering & Lockyer 2005, Laineste forthcoming). Whereas the carnival described by Bakhtin was an official permission to parody in a certain time and place (for summary see 1984: 129–130), there is no parallel match to that in contemporary society, with its international media channels that transcend the limits of time and space. Following the misleading permission to carnivalise anything, a joke may travel to places with different norms and agreements about the limits of what is ethical and aesthetical. Even in our close geographical proximity, a group of people with different cultural values may withdraw their consent to take a joke as a joke and accuse the joke-teller of disrespect. The terms racism and xenophobia are often used by the opposing group (also in politics) to limit

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the "carnival", and the defining of the limits of humour plays an important role in this argument.

2.3.4. Post-socialism

Post-socialism (term coined by Hann, 1994) is essentially seen as a transitional stadium, something that follows socialism and precedes some other, yet nameless (or perhaps called post-post- socialist, see Sampson 2002: 298), stage of development in the Eastern European region (including the countries participating in the humour project; see article V and the conclusion to the compendium on post-socialist humour, Krikmann & Laineste 2008). In this context, I will not go into the details of the profound economic influences it had on the former Soviet bloc, and even leave the elaborate background of the political transformations unaccounted for. I will borrow the term simply to outline a specific period in the history of Eastern European countries that is very useful in comparative humour research: the different periods saw the effects of different political regimes, the re-establishment of nation states increased interest in ethnic identities (and, to some extent, ethnic and especially political jokes), and all of this happened in a relatively short period of time. Issues concerning the appropriateness of the term are discussed in greater detail in the concluding chapter of the compendium on post-socialist humour (Krikmann & Laineste 2008).

3. DISCUSSION

The articles included in the dissertation approach the subject of humour (more precisely, jokes) from different angles and focus on different sets of material, but they also share some assumptions that should be explained in greater detail. The leading threads of issues embedded in the articles are outlined in the following subsections.

3.1. Folklore and social reality

The main assumption of my research is the recognition of strong ties between folklore and its surroundings. The two terms (folklore and reality), here used as two interdependent concepts, have in some contexts been addressed as opposite entities, much to the dismay of folkloristics as a scholarly discourse. In the context of this research, I would rather view them as parallel worlds, the traceable interactions of which offer the opportunity to study the mind, social perceptions, and cultural differences in general by describing the way in which humans react and adapt to their environment by using folklore in addition to other creative means. In a slightly different context, V. Propp (1984: 10–11) describes this complex relationship, stating that "... we look in vain for an existential reality behind a folkloric reality". Besides the claim about the way all realities are constructed, this approach maintains that folklore reflects life only through a thick lens: it follows the interests of its creators, the demands of the audience, and in the case of jokes, the criteria for "good" entertainment. Jokes are filled with assumptions that are considered unreal, implying a suspension of disbelief in the listener (see e.g. Attardo, Hempelmann & Di Maio 2002). This essential feature does not, however, make the contribution of the teller and audience less significant – their lore is motivated by certain existing basic needs.

Folklore is (as is social reality) an interpretation of an array of the economic, social and ideological contexts that make up a society. The context forms an outline for the object of study, without which the analysis of the text would be much less informative. At the same time, placing the focus mainly on the interaction and interdependence of a text (joke) and its context enables to avoid the pitfalls that may be brought about by the use of the term "reality". This study does not imply the existence of an objective reality behind the multiple subjective ones, but instead examines the folkloric reality side-by-side with the social reality. The interaction between jokes and reality is evident through research into political jokes and their context (article III), but even more so in the analysis of topical jokes (article II). Topical jokes reflect their surroundings to a great degree, which makes the nature of the interaction most easily accessible to the researcher. This subgenre performs as a comic kaleidoscope, not only for the events that have a comic potential, but also for the genre that

presents the daily events. Topical jokes offer a reaction to the events in the surrounding reality, which is visible in the intensity at which the jokes are sent over the Internet joke portal (Figure 5 and 6 article II). Article II offers evidence of the behaviour and habits of Internet users while they are engaged in sending jokes (Figures 2, 3 and 4 article II). In the case of political jokes, the relationship is not that obvious. Measuring the intensity of joking on a web site over a six-year period was concluded in the statement that jokes are inspired by daily events, but the relationship cannot be seen as direct and straightforward (Figure 5 article IV and the following discussion). The way that folklore depends on the inspiration it receives from daily life is evident in their relevancy to the context in which they are found. Old folk jokes, Soviet and post-socialist ethnic jokes all refer to the most important issues that a person living in their contemporary society had to face (discussion in article III).

Topical humour is a subject for many studies on how humour interacts with its surroundings (Oring 1987, Davies 1999b, Kuipers 2002, Csaszi 2003). These compose a subtype that is obviously dependent on the "hot" issues: political, social, or other public scandals will be referred to in topical jokes (if the requirements for comic potential are met, see article IV). The tradition of topical jokes was not alien to Soviet jokelore either (as evidence of joke cycles on the death of Soviet leaders, some environmental catastrophes, etc has shown, see Krikmann 2006b). Jokes about topical issues (also referred to as topical joke cycles, see Ellis 2001 and 2003, Dorst 1990) often lend motifs to political humour, which causes overlap in the two subcategories (article IV). This is also a factor that makes some political jokes (that I would call contemporary or democratic political jokes) short-lived, but at the same time is evidence and a cause of the tradition to be stronger and more vibrant than many other joke categories (see Figure 3, article IV, Figure 1 article II). Although Abrahams (1976) maintains that jokes only deal with superficial issues instead of ontological and existential ones, I believe that the way jokes lay down the social limits and borders between groups (while simultaneously playing with them, as the central claims in jokes can usually be interpreted ambiguously) is significant for its creators and thus also ontologically motivated (described in the conclusion of articles III and IV). The relationship between humour and the social reality is a complicated question with various aspects that must be tackled, and a number of instigating and obscuring factors, but this research as a whole (primarily through articles II, III and IV) has contributed to elucidating the matter.

3.2. The political situation as an environment for jokes

Humour research offers a means not only to peek into the ways in which the mind interacts with the "real world" and re-constructs it for several purposes (be it a release of tension, coping with problems, inducing acceptance, processing information, out of enjoyment of play or for other reason)[9]. The specific period and material of this study also allow the researcher to track the changes that jokelore undergoes when society makes a transition from one political system to another (in this case from totalitarian to democratic). Nearly all of the articles in the thesis investigate how the political system changes jokes (articles III, IV and V). The change, both in terms of form and content, is characteristic not only of the Estonian tradition, but of the whole Eastern European region. Describing this will help to add relevant aspects to the known and accepted theories of humour.

The analysis in the articles helps to describe and explain the different status of humour in its political contexts, which is another underlying thread of thought in the articles included in this dissertation.

Humour (political and ethnic jokes) varies in different political contexts. The comparison of totalitarian joke traditions with democratic ones and also the description of the transitional stage represented by post-socialist jokelore could result in significant insights about the interactions of folklore and social reality. The best opportunity for this kind of research presents itself in the post-socialist region (as proposed in article V). This is also one of the aims of the compendium of post-socialist jokelore (Krikmann & Laineste 2008), which is compiled in order to complement the established humour research in democratic Western countries mainly based on jokes from their near vicinity. It provides a reference point that helps to redefine some of the most influential aspects that shape jokelore. Evidence of variations of humour in different political systems is presented in article IV, though the results do not support the theory that the fundamental difference lies in the choice and nature of the target (Figure 8, article IV). Instead, the most significant difference lies in how most jokes attained a political allusion in the totalitarian period, so that in addition to many jokes on leaders (see also article V), there were many jokes on the absurdities of daily life, which are not so frequent in post-socialist or "never-socialist" humour.

The next question is how this relationship (between the jokes and the political system, together with its specific conditions in all fields of life) works, and whether there are any rules, local or universal, behind the ties. This will add

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[9] From a more psychological approach, humour as acceptance (coping, trying to understand) versus denial (escaping, distancing oneself) of the surrounding reality has been one of the central issues in many studies on humour (see Keith-Spiegel 1972: 26 for a brief overview).

a (post)socialist measure to the leading theory of ethnic humour (Davies 1990, 1998, 2002 and elsewhere), which is among the primary tasks of this dissertation. Moderate amount of existing research shows that the general rules described by Christie Davies largely hold true (e.g. Cui 2006 about German vs. Chinese ethnic jokes, Efharis 2004 about the universals described by Davies 1990). In trying to describe contemporary Estonian ethnic jokes, however, the concessions were too great to comply with the current model[10]. This encouraged me to attempt to construct a more efficient one that would account for not only Western ethnic and political jokes, but for the choice of ethnic targets in post-socialist Eastern Europe too. The main problem is that in Soviet times, the range of targets in Estonian ethnic jokes increased, embracing new nationalities that had had no relation to the nation telling the jokes (article III). This can be explained by emphasising the influence of the Soviet regime in all walks of life, including jokes (article III and IV). It also brought about a more global outlook on the world (e.g. including the USA or coloured people, see also article III). A specific feature is the existence of ethnic-political jokes from Soviet times, which also interfered with the more "natural" choices in target selection (article III). In post-socialist times, the range of targets has increased once again (Figure 2, article III), and there is a simultaneous strive to relocate the old targets – the closest neighbours and kinsfolk (in Estonian material, article III). The appearance of this tendency should be studied in other post-socialist countries as well, in order to draw more substantial conclusions. Thorough research into this matter will result in a model (hopefully *one* coherent and substantial one) that will explain the presence of certain types of jokes and targets in certain environments (cultural, social, political etc conditions).

3.3. The transformation of category boundaries: ethnic and political jokes

The categories of ethnic and political jokes form the primary material under examination in the dissertation. The obvious change in the category limits forces the researcher to look into the social settings that have given rise to the categories throughout the periods under observation. The object of study presents an interesting case for the analysis of category formation and its dependence on the social reality (discussed in detail in article III). I will refer to the development of the category of ethnic jokes: in Eisens's collection, most jokes mentioned an ethnic marker (article III, see also Figure 1 in article V), the category was very broad. After the Soviet occupation, the pan-Soviet ethnic targets largely carried a mixed ethno-political meaning (article III). Another shift took place in the 1990s, when the diminishing ethnic category (Figure 5,

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[10] Even if there was distinct concurrency to Davies' theory in the case of ethnic joke targets from 1900 and earlier, see Figure 6 article V.

article V) obtained more rigid boundaries, as did the political joke (Figure 8 article IV, and the following discussion). The amount of ethnic jokes has diminished, but the amount of targets has increased (Figure 1 in article V and Figure 2 in article III), creating a situation in which every joke carrying only an ethnic marker to define the target is categorized as ethnic. In the case of political jokes, the category is now relatively well defined and in the Delfi joke page[11], a joke is registered as political when it mentions the names of politicians or comments on a topical issue (article IV).

A significant part of my contribution to the investigation of contemporary Estonian jokelore is the compilation of a digital database of jokes, initiated in 1996 by A. Krikmann in order to collect and categorise at least some of the immense material that is "out there". The completed categorization of ethnic and political jokes therein follows flexible tagging principles (see article I for details), which is specifically useful with respect to changing category boundaries.

3.4. Identity

From the equally important socio-psychological point of view, the reframing of experiences in a comic mode helps to redefine, understand and organize daily matters. This can be seen in the way jokes constantly adapt to the everyday issues of their users (article II, but also article III in the discussion about the relevant targets in ethnic jokes). It also facilitates the formation of and participation in groups, fostering affinity (this tendency can also be seen in the sub-culturalization of jokelore, article V). Simultaneously, and quite controversially, this feeling of togetherness that is created by sharing in-group lore that will automatically be coupled with identifying the out-group, the "other" (although results are received by just studying the joke texts, there are patterns of the comic other: see article III for the changes in joke targets and article V for the problematic relationship between the joke-teller and the "other"). This relation-ship between real attitudes, actions and the perceptions of international relations on the one hand, and jokes on the other, present patterns of interaction that vary from fairly direct on the one hand and very implicit/ indirect on the other.

The changes in the popularity of different targets leads us to a discussion of ethnic jokes and their relation to identity, but also to the attitudes and per-ceptions of a nation, both about themselves and their "others". The co-existence of "old" Soviet and "new" translated / created / modified jokes is not a static state but a process in which the latter seems to get the upper hand (Figure 7 in

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[11] Delfi joke site is an interactive "humour hub", a popular site with an option to read, send and evaluate jokes on that page. It is connected to the wide (pan-Baltic) website *www.delfi.ee/lt/lv* and is by now the most active site in the Estonian internet for reading the news, exchanging comments, and for other types of infotainment, includig joking.

article IV). Following the discussion in article IV, the old Soviet jokes form an important part of the social memory and bring a specific "flavour" into our otherwise rapidly globalizing tradition; at the same time, most of the tellers (senders) of the old jokes are not even familiar with the Soviet atmosphere. Evidence that the category of old Soviet jokes is quite isolated comes from article IV and V, which point to the fact that there are not many modifications of these jokes in circulation. In addition, old Soviet jokes tend to be constant repetitions of the same popular plots rather than single appearances of more rare plots (Figure 4, article V). Relevant results pertaining to the issue of identity are also presented in article III, in which the contemporary choice of targets is stressed to signify their relevance in a particular societal context as well as their dissociation from the outdated targets and a quest for a new "comic identity".

3.5. Globalization

With globalization, humour and its targets are prone to change. Globalization as a process in contemporary folklore is intricately entwined with the subject of my research. Any material on the Internet must acknowledge its global reach, but also its influence on other (local) texts in terms of form and content. Whereas the generally neutral definitions of globalization emphasise rapidly developing interconnections and mutual influence (e.g. Tomlinson 1991: 170), this has been highly contested on ideological grounds, as it primarily strengthens Western hegemony (e.g. Liebes & Katz 1993, cf. Storey 2003 with a discussion of the process in terms of hybridization and "glocalization" re-ferring to a global melange instead of an unidirectional hegemony). Translated jokes in Estonia seem to originate from the resourceful English-speaking Internet (article IV). In humour research, the global spread of some joke cycles (about WTC, or example: Ellis 2001, Csazsi 2003, Kuipers 2005 and others) and targets (such as Scots or Jews) offers evidence of these processes. Even in 1960s, the Sovietization of Estonian jokelore was accompanied with an influx of foreign (Soviet) jokes. Soviet Estonian ethnic jokes targeted the stingy Scots (Laineste 2005c), and also the Chukchis, a faraway nation imported by Russian jokelore, and several other targets that were quite irrelevant in the cultural and historical context. Soviet joke tradition may be viewed as a wave of globalization in Estonian (or the whole Soviet Eastern European) jokelore, because of the increase in new (and in Estonia's sense foreign) targets (Figure 2, article III; Figure 7, article V).

  A tendency towards a global variety of targets has been noticed in post-socialist countries (e.g. Brzozowska 2007, Stanoev 2008). In the contemporary world, jokes could be made about all kinds of ethnic groups, although some are more popular than others. They are borrowed and travel in untraceable ways. Jokes (and people who tell the jokes) are no longer focused on their moderately strange, less-well-off neighbours, and instead look for greater contrasts, and

their horizons are also respectively wider. There are many new targets in Estonian post-socialist jokelore (Figure 2, article III), and many political jokes are translated from foreign languages, mostly English (article V). At the same time, the same new media, the Internet, has been applied to preserve and reproduce locality (Robertson 1995), and the increasing trends of globalization have become balanced by social subculturalization (which may simultaneously be global in essence, as the members of these groups form an international community linked by the Internet), as argued in article V.

The emotional aspects of the interethnic conflicts that are bound to arise due to increased immigration can be approached through the investigation of ethnic humour and attitudes towards it. If ethnic jokes act as a thermometer of opinions (Davies 1990: 9), we should be able to point to the possible sources of actual conflicts. At present, there is no evidence in the Estonian material that the increase in ethnic jokes could coincide with the perception of an acute conflict situation involving real aggression (e.g. Figure 2 article V, and the discussion about the recent Estonian jokes about Russians). Globalization in the joke market is also a steaming source of conflicts. Jokes that are incidentally drawn into the international arena will trigger unexpected reactions, and there are few opportunities for moderation or instances to turn to (Kuipers 2008a: 8–9).

The rise of a joke tradition of international reach also has its role in shaping the genre. It is both the structure and content that has changed. Even though Wickberg (1998) sees continuity in the content of comic folk tales and jokes, I will argue in article III for some certain changes in the choice of targets and topics embedded in social reality. Having studied both the form and content of Estonian ethnic jokes throughout the 20th century, I conclude that even if it is mostly the form that has changed, there are also many topics that are not considered funny, and if, then belonging primarily to the category of the absurd. The topics of old comic tales were mostly tied to a specific locality, personal experience or context (even if the globalization of topics and plots was common, the targets became local, "customised"), but the aspiration towards universality has placed the simple stupidity script with interchangeable targets above all others (article III). Globalization is also an important feature and motivator of topical jokes. The reflection of daily global events in a manner that does not discriminate between that which is essentially important and secondary causes alienation from and sarcasm towards media coverage (article II, also argued by Davies 1999b: 265–266). The nature of the media brings about a specific blended form and content of humour, in which local and global catastrophes, but also serious and comic modes, meet and mix.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Jokes as a research topic

Jokes present a simple yet elegant and informative research material for the humour scholar. They have been called the fruit flies of humour research[12] for obvious reasons: they are abundant, easy to approach, and have a long history in humour research, just as these insects have in genetics. In addition to this, there are other reasons for picking jokes as a primary target for research. The genre is popular, and exceedingly so on the Internet. Jokes are also a relatively stereo-typical and standardised form of communication, which makes them greatly similar in both speech and writing (even if some aspects go missing in the latter). In addition, everyone agrees that jokes are (or intend to be) humorous, which leaves a lot of complex issues aside (e.g. when presenting a paper on irony, the most usual question from the audience will probably be "is this really humour?"). And last but not least, jokes are global, but culturally specific social phenomena, and are representative of their surroundings, which makes their investigation informative about the people who tell the jokes.

A joke is generally perceived as having been created by the people and not belonging to any single author (this is also emphasised as an important feature in sociological research in Davies 2008, Kuipers 2006: 6). The genre is quite volatile in face-to-face communication, and collecting an ample body of material for research can be a painstaking enterprise. "Joke-telling sessions" are rare, and even if the intention of telling a joke is usually marked with a cue like "Do you know that one about..." or "There was a Russian, a German and an Estonian..." it would be difficult instantly to record the event together with the meta-data.

The solution to this problem would be concentrating on jokes that are offered "on a plate": jokes sent to and collected on the Internet by Internet-users. These jokes come with a contextual set of information that can be of great importance in processing the data: the type of the site (dynamic or passive), the date, the sender (frequent or accidental), and sometimes its placement in a category and other additional knowledge about the joke is openly accessible (see also Oring 2003: 139–140).

A topic that only briefly appears in my previous research is the transformation of the formal aspects of the genre. In some approaches labelled the commodification of the joke form (Wickberg 1998), the long humorous tale has turned into a short fixed and standardized text, with the punch-line being its quintessential component[13]. In the Estonian material, the shift is probably most

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[12] Not knowing the exact origin of the metaphor in humour research, I will attribute it to Giselinde Kuipers (Galati, Romania, June 2008).
[13] Even though the evidence of a punch-line as such can be traced further back, see Krikmann 2008.

visible in jokes dating to the turn of the 19th century, and the collections published by M. J. Eisen display both of these formats side by side.

4.2. The Internet as an environment and as a source for folkloristic research

The loss of quality of information has always been an issue in Internet studies (the gold standard being face-to-face interaction / fieldwork, Hine 2005: 5, romanticized and sought for also in folkloristics, e.g. Bendix 2000: 34), but when it comes to research into jokes, the quantitative abundance and ready availability of a metatext (the time of sending the joke, the user name, user profile, etc) justify the use of this source.

Collecting jokes on the Internet is becoming more common and useful, and even unavoidable, as a large proportion of oral joke-telling has shifted to that media. The media in turn has had a profound influence on the genre. The renewed nature of jokes (short, electronically distributed in addition to oral circulation, specific jokes created only for the electronic media – for example lists and video / picture jokes (see Ellis 2001) etc) requires renewed methods for collecting and processing of data, and researchers are now also becoming more aware of that need. The density of jokes on websites (a function of the intensity of sending, in the case of an active, portal-type joke site) depends on the time of day, the day of the week, and the season (see also Aikat 1998 on the general patterns of Internet use). Accessibility is an issue frequently mentioned in earlier articles about Internet research, but concerns about the representativeness of Internet users are now largely neglected as non-relevant. A few scholars have begun to focus on the subject of Internet jokes, drawing our attention to the fact that when Internet-based humour is studied, it usually focuses on specific topics or cases, and does not attempt to provide an overview of valid methodologies, nor to formulate unified methodological principles for future studies (Shifman 2007: 188).

The functions of the joke in a virtual environment are not directly addressed as an independent topic of the articles included in the dissertation, but it is a significant issue with respect to why people choose to share jokes on the Internet, resulting in an abundant body of material that humour researchers can benefit from in their studies. The abundance of jokes on the Internet shows that these are in a close relationship with the social reality – as a tool for processing information, discussing issues, expressing the otherwise inexpressible or unpermitted, etc. It is also useful to point out the other things that jokes can be used to inform us about (e.g. forwarding jokes in e-mail as a form of bonding, Shifman 2007, Aro 2003, Salo, Zimmerbauer & Suutari 2005)

4.3. Mixing quantitative and qualitative methods

There have been discussions about the appropriateness of traditional socio-logical methods in Internet research (e.g. Hine 2005, Joinson 2005, Schneider & Foot 2005). Humour research offers the researcher a range of possibilities as the phenomenon is not tied only to performance, nor is it merely a subject for textual analysis. The researcher is free to choose either of these approaches, though most revealing results would present themselves through the combination of both.

In interdisciplinary research, combining different methodologies is more an aim than a sub-product. All research in Internet studies (Consalvo et al 2004, Kiesler 1996, Hine 2005) accentuates the importance of trying out different conventional methodologies while doing research on the Internet. As a result of the specific features of the Internet (i.e. the abundance of material in which the researcher must extract meaning from chaos), combined quantitative and quali-tative analysis has been the choice in many studies (e.g. Jankowski & van Selm 2005; an alternative would be to do qualitative face-to-face or virtual inter-views, observations, case studies, versus quantitative surveys). There are diffe-rent options and levels for both modes of analysis, and in this research, the quantitative approach usually gives an overview of the subject and offers directions for the more descriptive, comparative or contextual analysis. A methodology that combines the two is content analysis (see Shifman 2007 on an option to use content analysis in Internet humour research), but for more than categorization purposes this method is not informative enough. Quantitative analysis combined with qualitative analysis is especially suitable for the large corpuses that are common in folkloristic research (also used in Estonian compa-rative folkloristics, e.g. Anderson 1935, Laugaste 1969, but also Järv 2005, Saarlo 2005, Sarv 2008).

My aim has also been to combine quantitative methods with qualitative analy-sis, the first to describe and filter the material, and the second to analyse it in greater depth. What has been done in most of the articles (articles II, III, IV and V) is first to pinpoint the tendencies in the material by presenting all of the ma-terial (by categories) on a chronological graph, and identifying the density of existing material over the years. As the next step, the category under exami-nation is investigated in greater detail, calculating its relative share (e.g. of eth-nic jokes) among the entire body of material. In the case of ethnic jokes, the corpus is also broken down in the lines of targets, mechanically counting their occurrence in joke texts and calculating their share in the category of ethnic jokes. Throughout the analysis, the temporal scale is maintained for the compa-rison of the results of the changes and continuities in their societal context. In-depth qualitative analysis includes analysis of the jokes of a particular subcate-gory (e.g. Russians in Estonian ethnic humour) – their topics and types, the re-petitions or modifications of jokes, allusions to politics and other relevant topics, etc. The methods of each article are described in greater detail in the articles.

The described method, supported by a sociological overview of the context, has proved itself to be the most useful means to tackle for example the question of target choice or other changes in jokes throughout the examined period. The comparative sociological approach also offers a valuable addition to the research toolkit: looking further from the specific subject and its surroundings to other examples where similar humour arises in different surroundings, and vice versa – where a similar context causes different jokes – will lead to significant insights (this will also be attempted in my next article about the ethical dimensions of ethnic jokes). Straying aside from the main methodological choices, I have occasionally also made use of discourse analysis (Laineste 2003a and 2003b: article II).

The main source of the research has been the Database of Estonian Contemporary Jokes and Anecdotes[14], covering the period of 1950s – present day. This includes jokes from Delfi Joke site[15], a "humour hub" that represents the most active and versatile joke site on Estonian Internet at the moment.

4.4. Assets and limitations

Throughout my research, I was aware of the assets and limitations of researching humour on the Internet. Article IV refers to this in opening the discussion as "we can give full account [about Estonian political jokes] only when considering both the specific, contemporary background and the historic perspective, and in addition to this, the media where the material appears" (p. 40).

In addition to digitalization, archiving and categorization, one must also discuss the matters of access and ethics. I must admit I was oblivious to these issues until they were brought to my attention by the public debate about (allegedly distasteful and potentially dangerous) ethnic jokes being collected and displayed, using the state funds in the Estonian Literary Museum (that is, the Database of Estonian Contemporary Jokes and Anecdotes). The issue of sensitive data has also been brought up in academic writing, although the type of data has been different, extending mostly to personal data about the informants (Corti, Day & Backhouse 2000). This controversy will be discussed in a forthcoming article by the author.

This brings us to another possible function of a database, namely as a tool to foster dialogue between joke-tellers and targets, or merely people interested in the subject (preferably moderated by professionals, described also in article V). In addition to holding a role of mediator, the portal would offer new humour resources, added by its visitors.

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[14] *http://folklore.ee/~liisi/o2*
[15] *http://publik.delfi.ee/jokes/.* In the articles, the Delfi joke site is referred to with its previous address, *http://www.delfi.ee/jokes*.

5. THE ARTICLES IN BRIEF AND THE MAIN IDEAS DESCRIBED THEREIN

The dissertation includes 5 articles published between the years 2003 and 2009. The first article (article I) is published in a volume of articles by the Estonian Literary Museum and the Centre of Cultural History and Folkloristics. Articles II and III are published in the electronic journal Folklore (Estonian Literary Museum), made available to an international audience on the Internet. Article V is directed towards Eastern European humour scholars (published in Acta Ethnographica Hungarica (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, Hungary), and so is article IV (published in the compendium of articles on post-socialist jokelore at the Estonian Literary Museum, including articles by Western and several Eastern European humour scholars). All of these publications have an international advisory board, and have been chosen through a conscious effort to find a well-chosen arena for the dissemination of the results and discussion of the issues raised in my research.

The article-based dissertation format inevitably means that there is a certain amount of overlap between the articles. The divergence of audiences has elicited some continuously revisited topics, for example the overview of Davies' theory of ethnic humour. As the nature of the present and future research is (or at least strives to be) cross-cultural, the language of the dissertation is English. Nevertheless, some of these articles have been published in both, Estonian and English (parts of article I have appeared in English, with a focus on Internet research in general (Laineste 2003d); article IV appeared first in Estonian, Laineste 2007). Article III is based on the several studies about ethnic humour in Estonia, which were launched in 2004 (Laineste 2005a, 2005b and 2005c). Article III was written in order to rephrase and concentrate the results of the previous research on the same subject.

The references to joke sources use the address of the web page from which the joke was archived, and not the archival identity code in the joke database, as the first type of data is more informative for the reader.

In the next sections, I will give a general overview of the aims and results of each article, and describe the theoretical background and assumptions. In many ways, going through the articles over and over again is an enlightening experience, as it points out all of the shortcomings and constantly tempts one to re-write alongside re-reading. In the following overviews of the published articles, I have added a new aspect of discussion to the articles when necessary.

5.1. Article I

Laineste, Liisi (2006). Eesti anekdootide andmebaas. [Database of Estonian contemporary jokes] Kõiva, M. (Ed) *Võim ja kultuur II*. Tartu: Eesti Kultuuriloo ja Folkloristika tippkeskus, Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, pp. 103–124 (for an English overview with a slightly different focus, see Laineste, L. (2003d). Researching Humour on the Internet. Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore, Vol 25, pp. 93–97.)

The first of the articles included in the dissertation provides a key to understand the underlying assumptions about the material used in the studies, as all the following papers are based on jokes found on the Internet. For this reason, I will herein provide an overview of both the issues described in the paper as well as the implications connecting this with the rest of the articles. A discussion of connected issues can also be found under the section about methodology (see above, section 4.2).

The digital database described in the article was designed to simplify the synchronic study of a genre – the joke. Estonian contemporary, punch-lined jokes (from the 1960s to the present day) form a 50,000-strong database with various archived joke collections and the Internet as its source. This has been both a body of material and a technical aid in conducting the research.

The article was motivated by the desire to (1) advocate the merits of combining qualitative case-analysis with a broader view of the subject by describing the material using the toolbox of elementary statistics, and (2) receiving feedback on and disseminating the categorization system used in the database in order to facilitate the cross-cultural, comparative studies of jokes. It looks through the material, its categorization, and the possibilities of the search engine (that were available in the year 2006). It acknowledges the possible problems in completing, organising and using any folkloristic / ethnographic or other qualitative database, and recognises the biases of the present one. The chapter concerning categorization presents a system based on tagging the texts (jokes) from various aspects (9 different properties for one text), thus resulting in a semantically organised database that is easy to access. The system may be described as "relational" (as opposed to "unidimensional / linear" and "hierarchical"). Attention is also devoted to the semantic collocation of variants of the same joke, which display only minor differences in wording, performed using a specifically designed programme that calculates the index of similarity of the texts. The merits and drawbacks of a digital database (as opposed to a traditional non-digital archive) are analysed. The overview of the search engine names the available options and also outlines some future functions that the interface should possess (e.g. a thematic catalogue). Some of these options have already been introduced (e.g. categorization almost completed and similar jokes tagged), but some tasks still remain.

The assumption is that Internet jokes and the patterns of their popularity offer insights into the way their senders, the inhabitants of a particular social

reality, think. In my research, I have implicitly followed this, nevertheless being also aware of the limitations ascribed to the media I use: it is but one of the many media in which humour is published, it overlooks the communicative aspect of humour, it may include the abundant jokes that are created and shared by just a small group of people, which may yield misleading results, etc. However, jokes on the internet account for a big part of humorous communication, and have taken over many of the functions that face-to-face interaction has performed. In order to minimise the problem of representativeness, validity is provided by a quantitative joke database, including static and dynamic, personal and communal sites in the material, and focusing (e.g. in articles II and III) on something that can be called a "humour hub" (Shifman 2007: 188) – a large, active and dynamic repository of visual and verbal humour on various topics, often linked to a commercial mass media website (in this case, the Delfi news portal). The communicative aspects of humour are deliberately overlooked in my articles, as my focus has been the macro-sociological relationship between humour and society. As for the variety of media that publish humour, the Internet (competing with printed sources) presents the most versatile source of the specific object of my study, the joke.

The main conclusions of the article can be summarized in the following points:

1. A textual database of jokes (but also almost any other folkloristic material) assists not only in archiving the material, but also in analysing it with the help of the user interface of large databases.
2. Much of the work with material in digital databases can be computerised, but there is still a considerable amount of qualitative work that can only be done by an expert (or preferably by finding a consensus in a group of experts).
3. There is a need for a cross-culturally applicable system fot the categorization of jokes, in order to facilitate comparative studies of humour.
4. Semantic search engines and specifically designed computer programmes (for the clustering of similar types, but also different jokes with similar punch-lines, or similar jokes with different punch-lines, etc) are of great assistance in the categorization process and should accordingly be paid more attention to.

5.2. Article II

Laineste, Liisi (2003). Take it with a Grain of Salt: The Kernel of Truth in Topical Jokes. *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*, Vol. 21, pp. 7–25.

Article II is based on a presentation held at the conference of the International Society for Humour Studies in Bertinoro, Italy (2002). Its main aim was to (1) outline the general patterns of joke-sending on the Internet and (2) describe the form, content and function of topical jokes.

This study reinforces that jokes can serve other aims than receiving an immediate communicative reward – they fulfil a cognitive task by commenting on the daily events and their reflection in the media. The approach uses general quantitative analysis to reveal patterns in joke-sending, and combines this with qualitative methodology borrowed from discourse analysis. The article also presents a study of the media in which the jokes are published, following the interactions of time of day / week and the identity of contributors in order to outline the increasing practice of sending jokes to Internet joke portals. It is already evident in this paper (and further supported by article IV) that the comic potential of the real-life event decides whether the topic will appear in subsequent jokes, and so does the nature of the media coverage of that issue. The analysis identifies three types of topical jokes: jokes that comment on only one event, jokes combine the commentary of several (local and global) events, and jokes on relevant topics from already circulating jokelore (e.g. airplane jokes in the case of 9/11 catastrophe), and analyses four examples that use discourse analysis. During times of catastrophes and other events that receive extensive media coverage, the amount of topical jokes also rises, which points to the need to comment on these issues. The way these jokes often make use of inter-textuality, e.g. by borrowing the form of a regular news text, offers evidence of information overload that people have to deal with, and how they manage this with healthy humour.

The main results include:
1. Sending jokes over the Internet is an activity that coincides with the general patterns of Internet usage.
2. Topical jokes are directly and without much delay influenced by every-day issues, depending on their comic potential and the nature of the news coverage.
3. Through a play with both form and topics, topical jokes bring forth the absurdity of the social reality, and thus function as a means to cope with the events themselves as well as the information overload that accompanies them.

5.3. Article III

Estonian ethnic jokes and the transformations inside the category was the main subject of my master's thesis ("Characters in Estonian Ethnic Jokes", supervisor prof. A. Krikmann, 2004). The aim of this article was to rephrase the main results and put them in context. The choice of ethnic targets in jokes is emphasised here as a conscious choice dictated by the relevant societal issues (relations with closest neighbours, the absurdity of Soviet politics, and the quest

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for a new national identity (including a new "comic identity"), respectively). The focus is on ethnic jokes about stupidity, overlooking other joke scripts. The transition from the joke tale into the punch-lined joke is also described.

The article is divided into three subsections, each dealing with different periods (1890s–1909; 1960s–1990; 1991–2007). The changes that the jokes have undergone are ascribed to the general attitudes of Estonians towards themselves as a nation, and the opposition to a relevant "other".

The analysis of old joke tales forms the largest and most substantial part of the article. The reason for this is to bring the subject closer to the reader, as there are more overviews of the contemporary (including Soviet) jokelore than the jokes that were known in the 1900s. It is informative to show the perceptions of the world and neighbours shared by the people who lived then, and to contrast this with the following periods, in order to highlight the continuities and change in the tradition. The other periods are analysed in the light of the first period which provides a context for the insights formulated in the following results:

1. The political system may influence the content of ethnic jokes, downplaying the importance of social, cultural or economic contexts.
2. In old ethnic joke tales, the targets were close neighbours, immigrants or kinsfolk.
3. The heroes of Soviet ethnic jokes were mostly pan-Soviet characters: Chukchis, Russians, Armenians and other ethno-political targets.
4. The present trends in choosing targets for ethnic jokes are dominated by an unconscious attempt to mock others instead of the nations that were popular during the totalitarian regime (there are many "new" nations among the targets, both European and even further away, but there is also an increasingly large amount of jokes about close neighbours and Estonians themselves).
5. The theory of ethnic humour (Ch. Davies) does not apply fully – through all of the analysed periods – to Estonian jokelore. The discrepancy is mainly due to the strong influence of Soviet jokes.

5.4. Article IV

Laineste, Liisi (2008). Political Jokes in Post-Socialist Estonia (2000–2007). In Arvo Krikmann & Liisi Laineste (Eds). *Permitted Laughter: Socialist, Post-socialist and Never-socialist Humour*. Tartu: EKM Teaduskirjastus, pp. 39–68.

The article surveys Estonian political jokes on the Estonian Internet (*www.delfi.ee/jokes*) in the period 2000–2007. The analysis concerns the nearly 800-strong collection of political jokes that is accessible on this popular and active humour site. The content of Estonian contemporary political jokes is discussed, in order to offer new evidence about the interdependence of jokes and social reality. The article was written to (1) give a thorough overview of the

primary features of contemporary Estonian political jokes, against the pervasive background of Soviet political jokes as the relevant context and (2) confront A. Rose's (2002) theory of jokes in totalitarian and democratic countries (which has also found falsification in other post-socialist countries, see Brzozowska 2007, Stanoev 2008).

The article is built on three hypotheses that govern the structure and results. The first hypothesis deals with the reaction of political jokes to both global and local politics-related events (although in some cases the combination of different topics results in a type of topical jokes that approaches the absurd rather than political humour). I presumed that a more politically active period (elections, political scandal, etc) will result in a heightened interest in jokes. Studying the popularity of political jokes in comparison to the background trends in the media, there was a significant difference in the patterns – the number of news items, and also ethnic, vocational and animal jokes are falling, whereas the number of daily comments on the news and the proportion of political jokes is rising (out of the total number of jokes). These fluctuations in the popularity of political jokes were not, however, directly influenced by events in daily politics. Nevertheless, even if there was insufficient evidence to state that jokes are a truthful mirror of social reality, the topicality of political jokes is more the rule than the exception.

The second hypothesis concerns more formal issues, observing the categories of political and ethnic jokes and their boundaries. The development of these categories is followed by the examination of some examples of contemporary jokes that demonstrate continuity in terms of the script (sometimes also the target), but simultaneously display discontinuity in their possible categorisation. A typical change is represented by examples, where a joke with originally political allusions is transferred into other joke categories (absurd, ethnic etc), and if it remains in the political category, it receives a new relevant target (e.g. a contemporary politician instead of a militia (civilian police in Soviet Russia)). The analysis showed that old Soviet political jokes that are still in circulation have a second, absurd / ethnic / scatological / sexual / etc allusion that makes them relevant to the contemporary audience. Formerly political jokes can be found in these categories (absurd, ethnic or other), unless the targets are well-known Russian Soviet leaders.

The third line of reasoning in this paper has arisen from a presentation at the congress of the International Society of Folklore Narrative Research (ISFNR), titled "Political Jokes Under Different Regimes" (Tartu, July 2005). This is an issue that relates to the first point but approaches it more broadly, by posing the question of jokes and the social reality in a general political context instead of the immediate political surroundings. The dependence of jokes on the political regime into which they are born has also been discussed by other humour scholars, and this article verifies a hypothesis presented by Alexander Rose (2002). This states that political jokes from democratic countries target politicians, while totalitarian jokes are more about the system itself. The hypo-

thesis was falsified on the basis of the Estonian material: contemporary political jokes are indeed interested more in our own and foreign politicians, but in the case of Soviet jokes, the absurdities of Soviet daily life on the one hand and of its leaders on the other were both targeted with equal intensity.

The main results can be summarized in the following points:

1. The immediate political reality influences political jokes in an indirect way, resulting in a cycle of jokes only when several factors (the importance of the issue, the existence of potential comic qualities in the issue or its presentation in the media, persons involved and the popularity of their "comic persona", etc) coincide.

2. The large proportion (1/4 of all the political jokes) of old Soviet jokes in the material can be explained in several ways: the nature of the Internet as a limitless external memory, the lingering meaning of the ingenious tradition of Soviet jokes, a tendency towards nostalgia, and as evidence of the slowness of folkloric processes. The proportion of old Soviet jokes is falling.

3. The limits of the categories of ethnic and political jokes have changed, becoming better delineated and leaving aside the typical Soviet ethno-political category.

4. Contemporary jokelore shows a clear inclination to choose a target from among domestic or foreign politicians. Soviet jokes mainly made fun of the system itself, but also (to an almost equal extent) the leaders.

5. The difference between totalitarian and democratic political jokes should be explained through other terms than target choice because this is not a feature that would set these two types apart in a significant way.

5.5. Article V

Laineste, Liisi (2009). Post-Socialist Jokelore: Preliminary Findings and Further Research Suggestions. *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, Vol. 53, forthcoming.

This article will propose a model for a post-socialist humour research project, identifying areas that are worth studying. It will also repeat some findings from Estonian humour research (causing some overlap with articles II and III). The article is based on a plenary lecture at the International Symposium "Humor and Linguistics/Folklore", at the University of Pécs (Szekszárd), Hungary, September 2007, presented to attract interest from the Eastern European humour scholars present at the event. Publishing the article in a special volume of the Acta Ethnographica Hungarica will also support the idea of disseminating the vision of the project among scholars of humour and the intersecting disciplines in the region.

The project's main aims were first to create a pan-Eastern European database and a portal of contemporary jokelore, and secondly, to conduct research using this new database, in order to point out the interconnections between the jokes

and their cultural, political, demographic and economic contexts. The article will give a brief overview of the design of the database, and three sets of problems (intolerance, globalization and the comparison of socialist, post-socialist and non-socialist jokelore) that could be addressed with its assistance.

Jokes have long escaped any attempts to censor them. This makes it a worthwhile subject while studying the otherwise hidden aspects of a culture: interethnic conflict, intolerance, etc. This is especially relevant in post-socialist Eastern Europe, where feelings of nationalism have flourished. The findings in the Estonian material show that (1) the proportion of ethnic jokes is constantly falling, (2) ethnic labels are being replaced by more general ones, and (3) even if the Russian is a major figure in Internet hate speech in Estonia's news portals and discussion boards, it is not a noteworthy target of Estonian ethnic jokes.

The second chapter deals with the effects of globalization on the so far relatively secluded and long-standing tradition of Soviet jokelore. The results show that Soviet jokes are still around, but the amount of jokes about local and foreign politicians (other than Russian) is constantly increasing. Many new jokes are being translated from English.

The last chapter concentrates on spotting the specific features of post-socialist jokelore. It dwells upon the proclaimed shortage of jokes (but finds no proof for that), although it admits that the status of joke-telling in the last 15 years might have decreased. The previous research suggests that Eastern European jokelore diverges namely because of the strong intervention of the Communist regime with the local tradition. The most recent trend is to try out new targets (including local kinsfolk) in order to reconstruct more "natural" choices for joke targets.

The main points are summarized below:
1. Eastern European humour research would benefit from an international database, also functioning as a medium for discussion and dialogue between conflicting parties.
2. Ethnic jokes are diminishing, but the genre of jokes is not disappearing, instead it is moving to the Internet and its status is changing.
3. Globalization is an important trend in post-socialist jokelore, which introduces new targets and translated jokes. At the same time, the tradition of the old Soviet joke is still existent and lives side-by-side with the new jokes.
4. Post-socialist jokelore as a whole does differ from socialist and non-socialist (democratic) joke traditions, but more precise and substantial conclusions could only be made in a comprehensive comparative study.

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6. MAIN RESULTS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The dissertation fulfils all of the proposed aims (see above, chapter 1).

The study has provided different angles of research, covering the area of topical, ethnic and political jokes. This has given several insights about the interaction of folklore and its surroundings (the political, economic, cultural and other contexts), claiming that the features and coverage of events in the social reality have a slightly varying, but established influence on jokes. The introductory and concluding articles display a wider approach to the subject, with article I underlying the methodological background and describing the material, article V summing up the results of several years of research and raising questions and hypotheses for further research on jokes and humour.

The introduction gives an overview of humour research in Estonia, and articles of this dissertation include references to other relevant studies carried out on Estonian contemporary jokes throughout the two grant periods (2001–2005 and 2006–2009). In this way, the dissertation offers a concise shortcut into the ideas, questions and results of the research on Estonian jokelore performed in the last decade.

As an indicator of an interaction between a genre and its surroundings, the continuities and change in some subcategories (most of all, political and ethnic jokes) were described. This has made it possible to conclude that the history and development of the two subcategories mainly display change and only moderate continuity, both in terms of content and category boundaries. This in turn is in accordance with the constant transformations in the social reality of the country as opposed to long-standing democracies with much more firmly established choices of joke targets.

The aim to provide a more universal model for the description and prediction of target choice in ethnic jokes was only partly fulfilled, as the targets and content of ethnic (and, in comparison, old Soviet ethno-political) jokes from other Eastern European countries should first be studied in greater detail. Nevertheless, there is a need to stress the influence of the political context on ethnic jokes. In addition to this, the relative nature of centre and periphery, better and worse off, etc should be kept in mind. Another important feature is the influence of more powerful cultural, economic and political hegemonies on peripheral countries that easily adapt and "domesticate" the characters and other features of jokes told by this mainstream.

6.1. Main conclusions

6.1.1. Material

Researching jokes on the Internet has become unavoidable because of the popularity of the genre in this environment. Humour is one of the main pastimes of people using the Internet and its entertainment value is frequently exploited to make web sites more attractive. Even if the popularity of joke-telling in everyday interaction may be diminishing, the same does not account for jokes found in the Internet. This may mean that joke as a genre is once again undergoing a change, and our task will be to document this change, partly with the help of the database of contemporary jokes.

Despite the critique that the investigation of jokes on the Internet is too far from the life of the genre in face-to-face conversations, I believe that the material has a lot to offer on the none the less important life the genre leads in the Internet. In addition to immediate social embeddedness, there is the wider societal context to jokes. If the researcher treats the subject as text in a significant context rather than as a pure text, the approach will offer a key to understanding social and cultural processes.

There is a need for a cross-culturally applicable categorization system of jokes, in order to facilitate comparative studies of humour – first of all in Eastern Europe, and then broadening the area in order to compare the results to jokes that have been told in Western Europe (e.g. Scandinavia).

6.1.2. General

Jokes react to events in the social reality, but not in a direct and uncontested way. Generalising the results, we can state that the influence of social reality on jokes is visible in the way jokes adapt to different social, economical, cultural and other contexts, displaying motivated transformations of targets and even form. Topical jokes present a more direct relationship with daily events and news texts.

6.1.3. Categories of jokes: topical, ethnic and political

The limits of the categories of ethnic and political jokes have changed, becoming better delineated and leaving aside the typical Soviet ethno-political category.

Topical jokes form a category that presents a stable commentary on social reality. Significant in both form and content, these jokes play with the absurdity of media coverage and the absurdity of the events alike. They rarely exit their

virtual life, and circulate only as long as the event is still remembered, and in a few cases form joke cycles.

Ethnic jokes is a diminishing category among the Estonian contemporary material, but the changes in the choice of targets offer evidence of the sub-genre's relevance to the main problems and issues that people face in their social reality. The political system may influence the content of ethnic jokes, downplaying the importance of social, cultural or economic contexts.

Political jokes form a distinct and (relatively) growing category in the contemporary material. The immediate political reality influences political jokes in an indirect manner, resulting in a cycle of jokes only when several factors (the importance of the issue, the existence of potential comic qualities in the issue or its presentation in the media, the persons involved and the popularity of their "comic persona", etc) coincide.

6.1.4. Comparative

Post-socialism is a distinct period in the political, economic and cultural past of Eastern Europe. In Estonia, Soviet jokelore imposed new jokes just as the Western world is influencing the post-socialist jokelore. Despite the obvious differences the Eastern European countries display after regaining their independence, we can still assume that there are some overall tendencies in post-socialist humour as a whole (which differ from socialist and non-socialist (democratic) joke traditions). Of all phenomena and traditions in culture, jokes and other forms of humour may offer a unique topical prism for a broader discussion of post-socialist culture by examining its main processes, features and functions in the society. More precise and substantial conclusions could only be drawn from a comprehensive comparative study (see Krikmann & Laineste 2008).

6.2. Future directions

During the last years, my interest has turned to the social problems that transitional (or, to some, post-transitional) societies are facing, and their interaction with / manifestation in jokes and humour in general. Eastern Europe is expected to be a place where future problems of interethnic violence can arise as the area is, according to many studies and surveys, a cradle of nationalism (comparative study in Mudde 2005, for more specific overview of individual post-socialist countries see e.g. Nyiri 2003, Žagar 2002). These tendencies are fostered by the totalitarian history that recognized Soviet nationalism and suppressed the local one.

Even though the theories of humour as mirth prevail, the common sense belief that dictates the attitudes towards jokes favours the view of humour as

aggression. Ethnic jokes are often taken to be straightforward proof of racism and xenophobia. The distinction between "us" and "them" that has always been present in all folklore, including jokes, also often leads to the issue of humour and hostility in public discussions on taste, censorship and other related issues. Moira Smith (2007) states that the Western ideal of everyone having – and, indeed, valuing – a sense of humour does not necessarily apply to other nations / cultures living side by side with "us", which will in turn be a source for innumerable misunderstandings on the basis of humour. The manifold relationship of jokes and their surroundings was already discussed above, but more detailed research must be performed on the emotions and attitudes in the society combined with an analysis of reactions to jokes, or to issues such as censorship. Again, this should not be done in isolation from the broader societal context, as this would lead to results that would not help to understand the local situation. Research like this will only benefit from comparative cross-cultural studies that would take into account similar situations with different jokes, and cases of the same jokes under different societal conditions, which would lead to the naming of some basic features that will be effective in describing the primarily large-scale contextual qualities of potentially harmful jokes.

One of my future areas of study should be the relationship of written jokes on the Internet and oral jokes. In order to describe the degree of their inter-action, in-depth qualitative methods should be used.

The third direction of future research concerns the way in which jokes merge into different modes and forms of communication through citations and references to punch-lines or (sub)culturally known joke characters. The emergence of new forms of parody and mockery (e.g. in television shows) and their intertextuality should be studied, paying special attention to the occasional emergence of traditional (perhaps even old Soviet) punch-lined joke formats. This would clarify the issues of globalization in humour, and jokes as an active commentary not only on the content of the surrounding social reality but also the way in which it is presented.

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ARTICLES

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Muutumine ja järjepidevus Eesti postsotsialistlikus naljatraditsioonis

Doktoritöö teemaks on Eesti kaasaegsed anekdoodid ja nende seotus sotsiaalse reaalsusega. Anekdoote on vaadeldud nende esinemisaja laiemas sotsiaalses, poliitlises ja kultuurilises kontekstis; kitsam kommunikatiivne kontekst pole uurimisfookuses. Kuigi kommunikatiivsus on anekdoodi kui žanri oluline koostisosa, on siinse, peamiselt folkloristliku ja sotsioloogilise huumorikäsitluse põhirõhk just naljade sisu, vormi ja muude aspektide sõltuvus laiemast ühiskondlikust taustast.

Väitekiri koosneb katuspeatükist ja viiest artiklist, mis annavad läbilõike minu teadustegevuse peasuundadest viimase viie aasta jooksul (2003–2008). Töö põhieemärgid olid:

1. Pakkuda erinevaid nurki sissevaateks folkloorsete (eelkõige päeva-kajaliste, etniliste ja poliitiliste) naljade interaktsioonidesse nende poliitilise, majandusliku, kultuurilise jm ümbrusega ning tutvustada empiirikat ja internetinaljade kui allika omapära.
2. Koondada osa eesti kaasaegsete anekdootide kohta tehtud teadustööst (ja pakkuda viiteid enamikule neist), luua sobiv raamistik edasiseks uurimistööks nii teooria kui materjali osas.
3. Analüüsida eesti päevakajaliste, etniliste ja poliitiliste naljade arenguid minevikus ja tänapäeval, osutamaks aineses nähtuvale järjepidevusele ja muutustele.
4. Kirjeldada etniliste tegelaste valikut erinevatest ühiskonnakorraldustest võrsunud anekdootides ning täiendada seeläbi põhiliselt Lääne empiirikal rajanevaid uurimusi, et ehitada seniseist universaalsem mudel etniliste naljade "sihtmärkide" kirjeldamiseks ja prognoosimiseks.

Artiklid on järjestatud sisuliselt, mitte kronoloogiliselt, kajastades küll ka mu huvide üldist suundumust eesti materjalilt postsotsialistlike anekdootide laiaskaalalisemale vaatlusele: alul tutvustatakse enamiku analüüside empiiriliseks aluseks olevat andmebaasi, seejärel esitatakse päevakajaliste, etniliste ja poliitiliste naljade analüüsid, lõpuks visandatakse vajadused ja kavatsused nende ainete edasiste uurimissuundade kohta.

Esimene artikkel, mis kirjeldab ja põhjendab anekdootide andmebaasi ülesehitust, tutvustab lugejale materjali ja manipulatsioone, mis eelnesid analüüsidele. Siin osutatakse ka rohketele eelistele ja võimalikele puudujäkidele, mis peaasjalikult digitaalse materjaliga töötades ette tulevad. Teine, kolmas ja neljas artikkel tegelevad vastavalt trendidega päevakajalistes, etnilistes ja poliitilistes anekdootides. Viimane artikkel võtab ühtlasi kokku lähimate aastate edasised uurimisplaanid.

Dissertatsiooni katuspeatükk koosneb kuuest osast:

1. Töö ülesehituse tutvustus.
2. Ülevaade põhilistest huumoriteooriatest, nende üldistest arengutest ning kaalust autori kui uurija positsioneerimisel. Enamus mind inspireerinud teooriatest pärineb just sotsioloogilisest paradigmast, mida on käsitletud muudest detailsemalt. Ühtlasi defineeritakse uurimuses kasutatud põhiterminid ning tehakse põgus ülevaade eesti vanema ja uuema folkloorse nalja senisest uurimisest
3. Sissevaade komponentartikleis käsitletud võtmemõistetesse ja -probleemidesse, milleks on: folkloori ja reaalsuse suhted; poliitiline situatsioon kui naljade levikukeskkond ja selle mõju anekdootidele; identiteet, globaalsus vs lokaalne spetsiifika. Viidatakse samateemalistele varasematele aruteludele ja tuuakse sisse tõestusmaterjali ja ümberlükkavaid fakte käesolevast tööst.
4. Naljade kui uurimisaine eripära, kvantitatiivsete ja kvalitatiivsete meetodite ühitamine nende uurimisel; internet kui kaasaegsete naljade peamine allikas ja levikukeskkond.
5. Lähem sissevaade viide koponentartiklisse: nende saamislugu, eesmärgid, põhitulemused.
6. Kokkuvõte töö üldteoreetilistest tulemustest, tähelepanekuist üksikute naljakategooriate kohta, senistes käsitlustes vastamata jäänud küsimustest, neile vastamise ning uute uurimisprobleemide püstitamise võimalustest.

Kuigi huumor on interdistsiplinaarne uurimisobjekt, pole siiani veel suudetud rajada kõikehaaravat huumoriteooriat, mis võtaks võrdselt arvesse huumori psühholoogilisi, kognitiivseid, sotsiaalseid jm omadusi. Seda mitmete autorite poolt võimatuks peetud eesmärki ei taotle ka käesolev uurimistöö, mille fookuseks on pigem eelkõige huumor kui sotsiaalne fenomen, mille põhitunnusteks on anonüümsus (siit järeldus, et huumor väljendab üldtrende arvamustes ja hoiakutes) ja kommunikatiivsus (st eeldus, et inimesed on motiveeritud anekdoote (ja huumorit tervikuna) kuulama, rääkima, edasi saatma jne). See tähendab ühtlasi, et populaarsus / esinemissagedus on anekdootide ja sotsiaalse reaalsuse seoste uurimisel oluline näitaja, osutades eelistatud valikutele anekdootitegelaste, süžeede ja muude parameetrite osas. Käesolev uurimus eeldab, et anekdoodid on tihedalt seotud neid ümbritseva reaalsusega, ja see avaldub mõõdetavate näitajate kaudu. Analüüsides anekdootide esinemissagedust, selle muutumist ajas jms, saame informatsiooni selle kohta, millised on anekdootide tunnused (süžee, tegelased, vorm) erinevates ühiskonnakordades, ning mille poolest on need võrreldavad. Samas väljendavad muutused ja jätkuvused anekdoodi välistes parameetrites ka raskemini tabatavaid aspekte, näiteks funktsiooni ühiskonnas. Siiski, võrdev analüüs ajendab tihti küsima, miks on mingi näitaja just selline just sellisel perioodil, ning siis on tulemuslikem ajaloolist, kultuurilist jm konteksti arvestav uurimus. Teooriad, mis käesoleva uurimuse

kujunemisel on olulist rolli mänginud, kuuluvad sotsioloogia valdkonda. Funkt-sionalistlik lähenemine oli paljude esimeste süstemaatiliste teaduslike eksperimentidele toetuvate analüüside aluseks, sidudes anekdoodi naljakuse tajumist hoiakute ja sotsiaalse identiteediga. Huumorit kui konflikti käsitlev vaatepunkt rõhutas eelkõige nalja agressiivset olemust, mitte aga ta siduvat, kommunikatsiooni hõlbustavat rolli. Minu töödes leidub viiteid ka neile vastandlikule lähenemisele, kuid need pole siin kesksteks argumentideks. Veendununa mõlema liigsest fokusseeritusest konkreetsetele, kuid žanri seisukohast mitte kesksetele aspektidele, jõudsin viimaks kolmanda ja hiliseima käsitusviisi – võrdlev-ajaloolise analüüsi – juurde, mille plussiks on laiem ja üldistavam vaatenurk. Selle lõppeesmärgiks on leida mustreid just suurema hulga erinevate (ja mõnes aspektis samaste) keskkondade võrdluses.

Arutelus esilekerkivad põhimõisted on *anekdoot*, *etniline anekdoot*, *etniline identiteet* ning *postsotsialistlik ühiskond* kui põhiline vaatlusalune keskkond, milles aimub nii varasema poliitilise konteksti järelmeid kui ka püüdlust tuua sisse uusi trende poole ja mis ühtaegu ilmutab erilisi, vaid sellele perioodile iseloomulikke üleminekutunnuseid. Käesolev uurimus eeldab, et anekdootide ja etnilise identiteedi vahel on teatud seos, mis pole aga kindlasti ühene ega otseselt funktsionaalne, ja väljendub pigem üldises tõdemuses, et naljades konstrueeritakse "oma" ja "võõra" kategooriaid samamoodi nagu muudeski kommunikatiivsetes (folkloori) nähtustes. Ühtlasi usun, et üleminekuühiskonnas on sellised vastandused kiiremad tekkima. Kuigi anekdoodid kätkevad eelkõige mütoloogilisi stereotüüpe, millele leitakse harva tõendust tegelikes hoiakutes ja arvamustes, peegeldab nt tegelastevalik kaudselt soovi vastanduda "võõrale" (siin mängivad küll kaasa ka teised faktorid, mis valikut mõjutavad: etnilise (siht)grupi olulisus antud ajahetkel, selle koomiline potentsiaal, ajalooliselt väljakujunenud stereotüüpide olemasolu, poliitiline kontekst jms). "Oma" ja "võõra" vastandumissuhted ja väljakujunenud mustrid saavad aga hoopis uue sisu kaasaegses maailmas, kus internet soodustab kogu folkloori, sh anekdootide, globaliseerumist. Selle mõju post-sotsialistlikele anekdooditegelastele tuleks lähemalt uurida, et mõista seda samaaegset ja vastassuunalist tendentsi, so globaliseerumist vs subkultuuride teket. Esiteks, etniliste tegelaste hulk naljades, tõlgitud naljade osakaal jne ilmselt suureneb, kuigi samal ajal on see globalisatsioon "subkultuurne", kuna tähendab ameerika ja euro-konstituentide (nagu varem ka vene omade) invasiooni oma algkodust väljapoole. Teiseks, samas paneb internet aluse kitsamate huvidega gruppide tekkele, mis suhtlevad neti kaudu globaalselt, sh kujundades oma subkultuurseid huumorivorme

Kasutatud meetod kombineerib kvantitatiivset ja kvalitatiivset lähenemist, mis leitud sagedusmustrite kirjeldamise ja sisuanalüüsi kaudu üritab ainese süvaolemusele võimalikult lähedale pääseda. Tähelepanu on pööratud ka internetimaterjali omapärale. Sageli on erialakirjanduses täheldatud, et see materjal esitab vaid osakest käibehuumorist, pealegi konserveeritud, st kunstlikult pikendatud elueaga osa. Lisaks pole teada sageli midagi saatja kohta, ning pole võimalik kummutada oletust, et suur hulk naljadest on samade aktiivsete saidi-

külastajate saadetud ning väljendab seega ainult väikse hulga inimeste eelistusi. Kolmandaks puudub võimalus arvestada naljade kommunikatiivset aspekti. Nende väidete ümberlükkamiseks on aga piisavalt põhjendusi: esiteks on internet olemuselt ühtaegu informeeriv kui ka meelelahutuslik, ja need funktsioonid on paljudel saitidel tihedalt põimunud. Aina suurem osa internetikommunikatsioonist koosnebki naljadest (vt ka viiteid). See teeb interneti representatiivseks ja aina olulisemaks huumoriallikaks, mida uurijad ei tohiks ignoreerida. Representatiivsust nii naljade kui nende saatjate osas aitab suurendada fakt, et uurimuses kasutatud eesti materjali hulk on suur (kuni ca 50 000 teksti), ning suurem osa minu uurimustest keskendub "virtuaalsetele huumorikeskustele" (*humour hub*, koht, mis on inimeste seas tuntud kui populaarne ja pidevalt täienev naljasait). Kommunikatiivse faktori kõrvalejätmine on teadlik valik, sest uurimuse fookus oli makro-sotsioloogilisel kontekstil.

Edasi refereerin põgusalt väitekirja komponentartiklite sisu ja põhitulemusi:

I Laineste, Liisi (2006). Eesti anekdootide andmebaas. (Datbase of Estonian jokes] Kõiva, M. (Ed.) Võim ja kultuur II. Tartu: Eesti Kultuuriloo ja Folkloristika tippkeskus, Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, pp. 103–124.

Esimese artikli põhiülesandeks on pakkuda ülevaadet eesti kaasaegsete anekdootide andmebaasi rajamisel ja arendamisel tehtud tööst (asub aadressil *http://folklore.ee/~liisi/o2*), tutvustada selle ülesehitust, anda näpuniteid kasutamiseks, tuua välja selle mõned puudujäägid ning mitmed eelised traditsioonilise arhiivikataloogi ees. Lisaks lihtsustab see artikkel järgnevate analüüside eelduste mõistmist ning põhjendab internetis leiduvate aneldootide uurimise vajadust.
Põhitulemused:
1. Elektrooniline andmebaas on heaks abiliseks mitte ainult materjali organiseerimisel ja koondamisel, vaid pakub pärast kategoriseerimist palju võimalusi andmete automaatseks (sh kvantitatiivseks) analüüsiks.
2. Naljade kategoriseerimine ja suur osa sisulisest tööst jääb teksti töötlemise ja analüüsi praeguste vahendite juures kummati ekspertide tööks (sh tuleks saavutada arvestatav kategoriseerijatevaheline reliaablus).
3. Tulevikus muutub üha teravamaks vajadus rahvusvahelise kategoriseerimissüsteemi järele, et võimaldada kultuuride/ maade/ regioonide vahelisi võrdlusi.
4. Semantilised otsimoorid ja (semantilist) sarnasust tuvastavad arvutiprogrammid on ka folkloristikas vajalikud ja ootavad edasiarendamist.

II Laineste, Liisi (2003b). Take It with a Grain of Salt: The Kernel of Truth in Topical Jokes. Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore, Vol. 21, pp. 7–25.

Artikkel käsitleb päevakajalisi nalju ning nende seoseid ümbritseva reaalsusega. Lähema vaatluse on ka all naljade kognitiivne funktsionaalsus, mis väljendub nii selles, kuidas uudiseid ja katastroofe kommenteeritakse, kui nende naljade sisus ning saatmissageduses. Artikkel valmis 2002.a ISHS konverentsil (Bertinoros, Itaalias) esitatud ettekande baasil. Eesmärkideks oli tuvastada peamised mustrid internetikäitumises, mis puudutab naljade saatmist ja avada päevakajaliste naljade vormi, sisu ja funktsiooni kaudu naljade seoseid sotsiaalse reaalsusega.
Põhitulemused:
1. Naljade intensiivsem saatmine internetis langeb kokku üldiste aktiivsemate internetikasutuse perioodidega (vahetult pärast tööle tulekut ja enne sealt minekut, rohkem nädala lõpus ja alguses, vähem nädalavahetusel).
2. Päevakajalised naljad saavad inspiratsiooni päevasündmustest, kajastades neid vaid väikese hilinemisega, sageli laenavad naljad ka uudiste kui ajakirjandusžanri vormitunnuseid.
3. Päevakajaliste naljade põhifunktsiooniks on vajadus toime tulla ülevoolava infoküllusega, mis meedias valitseb.

III Laineste, Liisi (2008). The Politics of Joking: Ethnic Jokes and Their Targets in Estonia (1880s–2007). Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore, Vol. 40, pp. 109–138.

Artikkel kirjeldab etniliste anekdootide arengut ja tegelastevalikut Eestis läbi viimase sajandi. Töö baseerub mitmel samateemalisel kirjutisel ning ISHS 2008 aasta suvekooli ettekandel (toimus Galatis, Rumeenias). Kirjutamise motiiviks oli seik, et tegelaste valik eesti etnilistes naljades sattus selgesse vastuollu Daviese etnilise huumori universaalide teooriaga. Seetõttu järgitakse käesolevas artiklis eesti etniliste naljade tegelastevahtust alates 1890ndatest, mil esmajoones pilgati naabrid ja perifeerlasi (ning mis sobib ka Daviese teooriaga), kuid hiljem, Nõukogude Eesti etnilistes naljades näeme suurt hulka uusi ja üsna "võõraid" tegelasi, kes pole ei meie naabrid ega muulgi moel meile lähedased. Ka viimasel (sotsialismijärgsel) perioodil on tegelaste hulgas palju uusi rahvuseid, ning samaaegselt on nähtav püüd taaselustada kohalikke naljategelasi (hiidlased, setud jm). Need kaks katkestust loogilises (või pigem: teooriale vastavas) tegelastevalikus on kahe (kuigi erineva mõjuala ja suunaga) "globaliseeriva" jõu, Nõukogude korra ja peamiselt läänesuunalise üleilmastumise, tulemiks.

Põhitulemused:
1. Poliitilisel kontekstil on etniliste naljade sisule suur mõju: selle tulemusel võivad muutuda kategooriapiirid (nt tekkis sotsialistlik etno-poliitiline / poliitilis-etniline anekdoot), tegelaste karakterile lisanduvad uued aktsendid, anekdoodiobjektide populaarsus muutub, jne.
2. Vanemate etniliste naljade tegelasteks on naaberrahvad ja perifeerlased.
3. Nõukogue ajal domineerisid üleliidulised etnilised universaalid: tšuktšid, grusiinid, ukrainlased, armeenased.
4. Kaasaegsete anekdootide "programmi" näib kuuluvat soov taassleida kohalikud naljaobjektid ning vastanduda eelmisele, nõukogude perioodile.
5. Christie Daviese teooria satub eesti empiirikaga vastuollu, ning ilmselt oleks asjakohane täiendada seda poliitilise aspekti suurema rõhutamise ning postsotsialistliku mudeli eraldi väljajoonistamisega.

IV Laineste, Liisi (2008). Political Jokes in Post-Socialist Estonia (2000–2007). In Arvo Krikmann & Liisi Laineste (Eds). Permitted Laughter: Socialist, Post-socialist and Never-socialist Humour. Tartu: EKM Teaduskirjastus, pp. 39–68.

Artikkel räägib poliitilistest naljadest taasiseseisvumisjärgses Eestis. Artikli aluseks on kirjutis ajakirjas Keel ja Kirjandus (Laineste 2007) ning selles taotletakse eelkõige analüüsida eesti kaasaegset poliitilist anekdooditraditsiooni, kõrvutades seda varasema, nõukogudeaegse materjaliga, täpsustada etniliste ja päevakajaliste anekdootide vaatlusel tekkinud kujutelmi naljade ja sotsiaalse reaalsuse seose kohta, ning kirjeldada eesti poliitilisi nalju Alexander Rose'i (2002) teooria valguses. See teooria väidab, et poliitilised naljad sõltuvad suuresti režiimist, milles neid räägitakse: totalitaarsed ühiskonnad räägivad nalju süsteemist, kuid demokraatlikes keskendutakse juhtide personaalsetele puudujääkidele. Artikkel on jagatud kolmeks suuremaks uurimisprobleemiks: (1) naljateemade ja -tegelaste reaktsioon päevauudistele, (2) etniliste ja poliitiliste anekdootide kategooriapiiride hägusus / selgus; (3) ning poliitiliste naljade põhiobjektid Eestis enne ja pärast iseseisvumist.
Põhitulemused:
1. Vahetu poliitiline kontekst küll mõjutab nalju, kuid mitte otseselt ja selgelt. Mõned teemad jäävad naljades kajastamata (kui liiga keerulised, liiga läbi seletatud, lihtsalt igavad), teised aga võetakse anekdootides kiiresti omaks.
2. Neljandik kaasaegsetest poliitilistest anekdootidest on vanad nõukogudeaegsed naljad, mis elavad muutumatuna edasi internetis ja inimeste teadvuses, kuid nende osakaal langeb.
3. Etnilise ja poliitilise anekdoodi piirid on selgemad kui varem.

4. Kaasaegsetes poliitilistes naljades eelistatakse teemana poliitikuid (nii kohalikke kui välispoliitikast tuntud figuure). Nõukogude anekdootides naeruvääristati nii süsteemi kui ka juhte.
5. See näitab Rose'i teooria ebaadekvaatsust ja osutab sellele, et parem identifikaator nende kahe ühiskonnatüübi poliitiliste anekdootide eristamiseks kui anekdooditegelased on pigem nõukogudeaegsete naljade läbiv politiseeritus, mis kaasaegses demokraatias on kadunud.

V Laineste, Liisi (2009). Post-Socialist Jokelore: Preliminary Findings and Further Research Suggestions. Acta Ethnographica Hungarica, Vol. 53, forthcoming.

Viimane artikkel võtab kokku varasemad uuringud ja pakub välja edasisi sõlmküsimusi, millele peaks edaspidi keskenduma. Artikkel põhineb Szekszardis, Ungaris 2007. a. sügisel toimunud rahvusvahelise konverentsi "Humour and Linguistics/Folklore" plenaarsessioonil peetud ettekandel, mille eesmärgiks oli köita tulevasi koostööpartnereid. Artikli põhilisteks teemadeks on anekdootide andmebaasi koostamise põhimõtted ning postsotsialistlike ühiskondade huumoriga seotud küsimused: anekdoodid ja ksenofoobia, globaliseerumine, postsotsialistliku naljakultuuri võimalikud erijooned.
Põhitulemused:
1. Ida-Euroopa huumoriuurimuse arendamise seisukohalt oleks vägagi vajalik luua ühtsete põhimõtete järgi ehitatud andmebaas, mis võimaldaks uurida erinevaid naljakategooriad, nende siseliigendusi, tegelastevalikut jms.
2. Etniliste naljade hulk Eestis väheneb, kuid seda tendentsi oleks huvitav võrrelda ka teistes endistes idabloki-riikides toimuvaga.
3. Kuigi globaliseeruv anekdooditraditsioon toob pidevalt sisse uusi tegelasi, on praegu selge roll ka vanadel Nõukogude naljadel.
4. Postsotsialistlik anekdooditraditsioon erineb sotsialistlikust ja ka demokraatlikust, kuid selle põhilaadi peaks selgitama ekstensiivsete ja süstemaatiliste võrdevate uuringute abil.

Edasised uurimissuunad on kõige selgemalt piiritletud viimases artiklis, ning lähiaastate uurimisprogrammi kuulub esmajoones postsotsialistlike ühiskondade anekdootide võrdlev analüüs, uurijatevõrgustiku laiendamine ning tihe koostöö erinevate maade huumoriuuriijate vahel.

Anekdoodid nagu teisedki folkloorižanrid on tihedalt seotud ühiskonnaga, milles neid luuakse ja levitatakse. Nad on avatud muutustele ja käsitlevad olukordi, mis inimestele sel hetkel kõige relevantsemad tunduvad, ning teevad seda kõige tabavamal moel. Sellele pakub kinnitust ka käesolev artiklite kogumik.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Liisi Laineste

Date and place of birth: January 27, 1978, Tallinn
Citizenship: Estonian
E-mail: liisi@folklore.ee

Education

1996   Tallinn English College
2000   Tartu University, BSc in psychology. "Verbaalne agressiivsus" [Verbal Aggression] (supervisor prof A. Pulver), "Etniline huumor sotsiaalses kontekstis" [Ethnic Humour and its Social Context] (supervisor prof. P. Tulviste)
2000 – ... Tartu Art College, department of photography
2004   Tartu University, MA in Estonian and comparative folklore "Tegelased eesti etnilises huumoris" [Characters in Estonian Ethnic Humour] (supervisor prof. A. Krikmann)
2005–2008   Tartu University, postgraduate student in Estonian and comparative folklore

Employment

2000   Tartu Art College, lecturer of psychology
2001–2005   research team member, Estonian Science Foundation grant No 4935 (Eesti kaasaegne rahvahuumor [Estonian Contemporary Folk Humour])
2005 –   researcher, Estonian Literary Museum, department of folklore
2006 –   research team member at Estonian Science Foundation grant No 6759 (Folkloorne anekdoot tänapäeval: postsotsialism – internet – kognitiivsus [Contemporary Jokelore: Post-socialism – Internet – cognitivity])

CURRICULUM VITAE

Liisi Laineste

Sünniaeg- ja koht: 27. jaanuar 1978, Tallinn
Kodakondsus: Eesti
E-post: liisi@folklore.ee

Haridus

1996	Tallinna Inglise Kolledž
2000	Tartu Ülikool, BSc psühholoogias. "Verbaalne agressiivsus" (juhendaja prof A. Pulver), "Etniline huumor sotsiaalses kontekstis" (juhendaja prof P. Tulviste)
2000 – ...	Tartu Kõrgem Kunstikool, fotograafia
2004	Tartu Ülikool, MA eesti ja võrdleva rahvaluule erialal. "Tegelased eesti etnilises huumoris" (juhendaja prof A. Krikmann)
2005–2008	Tartu Ülikool, eesti ja võrdleva rahvaluule doktorantuur

Teenistuskäik

2000	Tartu Kõrgem Kunstikool, loengukursus psühholoogiast
2001–2005	granditäitja, Eesti Kirjandusmuusem, ETF grant nr 4935 (Eesti kaasaegne rahvahuumor)
2005 – ...	teadur, Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, folkloristika osakond
2006 – ...	granditäitja, Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, ETF grant nr 6759 (Folkloorne anekdoot tänapäeval: postsotsialism – internet – kognitiivsus)

DISSERTATIONES FOLKLORISTICAE
UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

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2. **Татьяна Миннияхметова.** Традиционные обряды закамских удмуртов: Структура. Семантика. Фольклор. Tartu, 2003. 258 p.
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