

## From Head to Tale: Understanding Yugoslav Socialism through Zoomorphism in Contemporary Satire

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Existing histories of socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1992) rarely address the contemporary experience of the regime.<sup>1</sup> Party-institutional organs privileged economic data and elite administration above citizens' thoughts, values, and emotions in defining state histories (Patterson, 2011: 14). Furthermore, traditional political analysis often disregards contemporary art as subjective, context-specific, or emotionally-determined (Nussbaum, 1983: 23-50; Davies, 2001: 347-348; Mrovlje, 2019: 164). Yet, unlike state-driven narratives, contemporary art and literature can articulate a plurality of situated perspectives and lived experiences of the historical past (Barthes, 1977: 79; Schiff, 2014: 1-2). Art thus contributes to understanding and constructing meaning in immediate and distant communities.

Drawing from Yugoslavia's traditions of critical art, dark humour, and the short story form, I study how contemporary satirists used zoomorphism to publicly grapple with Yugoslav socialism. Zoomorphism here refers to the portrayal of humans as non-human animals; this broad understanding subsumes animalisation, as the description of human characteristics in animal terms (Garrard, 2012: 153-155; Parry, 2017: 41-44). I select four Yugoslav satires first published in the 1950s-1960s, and later in translation: Vladimir 'Vlada' Bulatović-Vib's 'The Shark and the Bureaucrat' and 'The Municipal Whale' (both 1950s-1960s, trans. 1966); Erih Koš' novella *The Strange Story of the Great Whale, Also Known as Big Mac (Big Mac)* (1956, trans. 1962), and; Josip 'Joža' Horvat's 'Mousehole' (1962, trans. 1979). There is almost no (English) critical scholarship about these satirists and texts, nor have they ever been used in comparative research about Yugoslav socialism. Zoomorphism thus offers one lens through which to understand these authors' perspectives and lived experiences of Yugoslav socialism, focussing on: how human nature reveals itself within the regime, the party bureaucracy, and individual and mass behaviour.

Using critically marginalised sources, this research analyses Yugoslavia's academically marginalised history. Yugoslav socialism was distinct from its 'revisionist' Soviet and Eastern European communist counterparts (Dedijer, 1953: 432; Jović, 2006: 280-281, 286). More autocratic than totalitarian,

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<sup>1</sup> Beronja and Vervae (2016) consider post-Yugoslav experiences and collective memory.

Yugoslav Communist Party leader Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980) was no 'Balkan Stalin'; 'Titoism' and 'socialism' were secondary (necessary) vehicles for the overarching ideology of 'Yugoslavism', based on national self-determination and multi-ethnic identity (Pavlowitch, 1992: 75-76, 95; Bing, 2016: 73-74, 91). Party control was further decentralised after the Tito-Stalin split (1948), with cultural and economic modes liberated to the extent to which they did not threaten the system or immediate instruments of power (Pavlowitch, 1992: 51, 55, 67, 75-76, 99-100). Self-managed socialism (Lampe, [1996] 2000: 355-365), the (vener) of domestic economic prosperity and consumerism (Luthar, 2006; 235; Patterson, 2011: xvii, 17, 26, 47-48), and the international Non-Aligned Movement (Rubinstein, [1970] 2015: xi-xii, 72), all represent the regime's unique, precarious balance of socialism and consumerist capitalism.

I first explore the historical development of Yugoslavia's cultural industries. Then, I outline the critical discourse analysis methodology and theoretical framework. I argue that these satirists primarily used zoomorphism to criticise human nature, by exposing human-animal proximity within the regime. From this foundation, zoomorphism targets the party bureaucracy, by representing the scale, alien nature, and aggrandising practices of the political system. Finally, zoomorphism exposes and problematises the spectrum of individual and mass behaviour, whilst highlighting the expedient nature of popular support. Further research areas and limitations are suggested in the conclusion.

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