Julia Secklehner
Courtauld Institute, London

Frontiers of Identity. Austrian and Czechoslovak Satirical Magazines between Tradition and Modernity 1918-1939

Satirical magazines and their caricatures long had the potential to provoke strong reactions and to mobilise aggression within the popular sphere. Caricature's significance within this context has long been established with Kris and Gombrich's analysis of caricature as a weapon, and has frequently been revisited in more recent scholarship (Pachmanová 2003). Satirical magazines have been used through time to either criticize existing socio-political norms, or to confirm them, for instance in anti-Semitic caricatures of the Third Reich. In their negotiation between popular entertainment and aggression, they have come to be seen as defenders of counter-cultures, markers of social protest, and perpetrators of stereotypes alike, confirming opinions of particular social or political groups, and developing these ideas further in the 'safe' environment of humour in the public sphere (t'Hart & Bos, 2008).

Despite the charged political environments of interwar Austria and Czechoslovakia, the function of satirical magazines as mobilisers of identity in these contentious contexts have yet to be investigated: publications dealing with this period largely use caricature to illustrate historical accounts without assessing the drawings, nor satirical publications on the whole (Peterová 2001, Malina 1988). One reason why critical analyses of satirical magazines are underdeveloped is a disregard for their links to a wider artistic context and their presentation as harmless, low-humour magazines without much political weight (Hoffmann, 1985).

In response, my project offers a reconsideration of satirical magazines that addresses the complexities inherent in the visualisation of manifold social and political identities. It asks: How did satirical magazines in interwar Austria and Czechoslovakia mediate between socio-political formations and artistic development? Importantly, satirical magazines are not only considered as popular perpetrators of fragmented histories, but also as artistic contributions. For example, the Czechoslovak satirical paper *Trn* (1924-1931) started as a

student publication, but soon moved into the public sphere with contributions by the Czech avant-garde group Devětsil and George Grosz. Using these elements as catalysts, *Trn* represented both an internationally-oriented, leftist youth magazine that criticised the government, while also stylising itself as 'typically Czech' by idolising the writer Jaroslav Hašek. Thus, the purpose of examining satirical magazines like *Trn* is to uncover connections between identity politics and art-historical developments as they were disseminated in the popular culture of the day.

At the Forum, I would like to present part of my third chapter, titled 'Challenging Devětsil? *Trn*, Jaroslav Hašek and his Legacy,' which deals with the extraordinary position of *Trn* between a tradition of Czech humour and the avant-garde in Czechoslovakia at the time. These links enabled the publication not only to voice a playful, anarchistic criticism of the government, but also to assert strong links with the international avant-garde, while maintaining a particularly 'Czech', left-wing identity.