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Quarantine humour as a coping mechanism. A centennial "dialogue"

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Quarantine humour functions as a coping mechanism transcending a time lapse of one century between the 1918-1919 Spanish influenza pandemics and the 2020 Covid-19 ongoing crisis. The study aims at observing the main concerns related to the infections and their consequences for both the individuals and the societies. The paper focuses on the analysis of fifteen cartoons, six of them published in a newspaper in 1918-1919 and the rest in 2020 online media and social networks. The findings support the idea that pandemic humour is used not only for coping with the fear of death or illness, but also with coping with more mundane issues such as lack of commodities, losing one's job, beauty concerns, online schooling or the lack of implication in solving the crisis on behalf of the authorities.

Key-words: *quarantine humour, coping mechanism, cartoons, Spanish flu, Covid-19*

1. Introductory notes

If there ever was a time in our lives that we could use a smile, it is probably now when thousands of people have died or are still in a critical condition, and each day, the headlines grow bleaker as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses. 2020 caused a lot of fear and anxiety worldwide, and the fact that it appears to be a prolonged crisis rather than a short one increases the distress.

In the setting of this unfolding pandemic we propose a topic that might be easily overlooked, namely the current role of humour as coping mechanism, which is employed in their professional and personal lives not only by the physicians, but also by regular people. Given the potential for humour to relieve tension and clear fears and anxieties, is now a better time than any to offer a witty comment to a colleague, your team or even your family?

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Doosje (2014, 179) defines coping as "an effort by the individual to adapt to threatening or difficult situations called stressors". "The stress response is an adaptive response aimed at the survival of the individual, which is especially useful when quick action as a response to possibly life-threatening or injuring stressors is required" Doosje (2014, 179), and humorous coping is just one type of coping responses that try to take an active part in the process of emotion regulation, by means of avoiding or reducing the unpleasant states or emotion accompanying the stressors. Freud (1928) considered humour as one of the most mature defence mechanisms of which humans are capable, being aimed not only "at stress prevention and reduction, but also at the induction of a pleasant state involving mirth and laughter" (Doosje 2014, 179). The reductive way of humour application is called response-focused humorous coping such as making a joke after one has lost face in a meeting. The preventive way of humour application is called antecedent-focused humorous coping such as when a car driver takes an illegal shortcut, blocking your way temporarily and winks at you to soften your angry response. While the second type of humorous coping is applied at an earlier stage, the first one is used at a later phase of the stress response. In either case, the humorous response to stressors determine a certain comforting effect on our psychological, social and physical well-being (Doosje 2014). The creativity involved in humorous coping tries to transcend everyday reality and offer oneself and others an alternative view on it.

The present study aims at observing the media representations of pandemic humour used as a coping mechanism in the case of Spanish flu (1918-1919) and Covid-19 health crises, as they appear in an imaginary centennial dialogue, with the purpose of finding what are the psychological and social roles of humour in fighting against fear of death, illness or lack of commodities.

2. Review of literature on coping humour

In the history of humanity, humour was often used to release tensions and fears and better cope with stressful situations. Several studies offer deeper understanding on this topic, described from different perspectives and in a variety of contexts.

The coping function of humour is identified by a number of researchers, including Pogrebin and Poole (1988), Fink and Walker (1977) and Ziv (1984, 1988). Hay (2000) has divided humour which is used as a coping device into two further categories: coping with a contextual problem and coping with a non-contextual problem. Coping with a contextual problem includes any humour which is used to

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cope with a problem arising in the course of the conversation, while coping with a non-contextual problem covers humour used to cope with more general problems we need to get through to survive in life, or a period of our life, such as sickness or death. Joking about something gory, scary or depressing is often an example of coping humour.

A number of studies present humour used when coping with life stress (Overholser 1992), with changes in the working communities (Mak, Liu and Deneen 2012), or with physical discomfort (Zillmann, Rockwell, Schweitzer, and Sundar 1993).

For the purpose of the present research on quarantine humour, a more thorough review of the studies regarding humour used for maintaining mental health in various contexts seems appropriate.

In their research on comparing humour styles, coping humour and mental health between Chinese and Canadian university students, Chen and Martin (2007) reported that mental health is more strongly related to self-enhancing, self-defeating and coping humour than affiliative and aggressive humour.

In another study on measuring the role of humour in people's social lives based on the Coping with Humour Scale (Lefcourt and Martin 1986, Ruch 1998) in situation of moderate potential stress (in relation to depression, loneliness, social anxiety), Nezlek and Derks (2002, 406) reported that

> Compared to those who do not, people who use humor to cope may make light of their own problems, easing the burden experienced by others, and they may provide others with more palatable (more humorous and less serious) forms of support, particularly appropriate for minor day-to-day problems.

The relationship between humour and coping with stress was also investigated for trainees in a course for combat non-commissioned officers in the Israel Defense Forces. Measures of humour through self-report and peer-ratings were administered to 159 soldiers. Coping with stress was assessed through ratings by commanders and peers, and through final course grades. The findings of the study showed that humour as rated by peers (but not by self-report) was positively related to performance under stress. This was especially true for active humour (self-produced as opposed to reactive humour) (Bizi, Keinan and Beit-Hallahmi 1988).

The positive relationship between productive humour and quality of functioning under stress can be explained by understanding the use of humour as an active cognitive coping device (Shanan 1967), which creates a certain feeling of

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controlling the situation. This feeling reduces anxiety and stress and improves the functioning and performance against various threats.

The literature by and about prisoners of war from several recent wars indicates prisoners often found humour to be an effective coping mechanism, a way of fighting back and taking control. Henman (2001) reported that the repatriated Vietnam prisoners of war are suffering almost no mental illness, and the effective use of humour seems to be one of the reasons for their health. Through the creation of humour in a well-defined system of social support, these fiercely independent men learned to rely on their own power and to draw a sense of mastery from each other.

Another research (Wanzer, Booth-Butterfield, and Booth-Butterfield 2005) focusing on Humorous Coping Communication in Health Care Settings offers insights on how humour influences job satisfaction among health care providers. One hundred forty-two nurses completed measures of humour orientation (HO), coping efficacy, job satisfaction, and open-ended questions about their use of humour to relieve job tensions. This produced nine categories of strategies of producing humour and eight types of work situations identified in which humour was used to cope. Nurses (21.4%) reported using humour the most often during "patient care" situations (e.g., providing medicines, moving patients, physical therapy, and so on). More than one third (38.66%) of the nurses reported using "word-play/language" as a humorous coping strategy. Higher HO was associated with higher ratings of humour effectiveness, greater self-perceived coping efficacy, and higher emotional expressivity. Path analysis demonstrated that, as the transactional theory would predict, trait HO influences job satisfaction through its effect on heightened coping efficacy.

In their study, Outley, Bowen and Pinckney (2020) approached resistance, coping and the use of humour as a pandemic pastime among Black people. For centuries Africans were captured and brought to America in bondage and forced to forge a new culture. The development of a Black culture gave rise to humour as a coping mechanism against the oppressive state they found themselves in. For centuries, humour became a way to protest their conditions by creating various humorous styles that infused social political commentary on oppression as a sign of defiance, while also providing hope for the hopeless. This commentary seeks to introduce leisure scholars to how Black Twitter (Sharma 2013) users' expressions of humour during the COVID-19 pandemic serve as a form of resistance to injustices and inequalities, while simultaneously adopting coping strategies to reclaim power and control in order to speak their truth all while cultivating individual and collective identity in/through leisure. (Outley, Bowen, and Pinckney 2020)

Severe health crises have been previously known in the history, in 1918, a flu virus spread around the world in a matter of months and killed an estimated 50

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million people before fizzling out in 1919. The few surviving photographs of the 1918-1919 pandemic primarily feature rows of beds in makeshift hospitals and the masked faces of doctors, nurses, barbers and other workers. Documentaries, fictional films, stories, and images paint the Spanish Flu as a solemn crisis. But this collective memory of the Spanish Flu offers little insight into everyday life - how people lived through the 1918 pandemic: through isolation, the temporary closure of schools and businesses, the proliferation of illness and death, the cancellation of sports.

Looking back in time at the Spanish influenza pandemic in Japan, that had many victims between 1918-1919, Palmer and Rice (1992) reported in their research some very interesting facts. Japan had a low death rate (30%) in the great Spanish Influenza pandemic, contrasting with 50% in some European countries, and as much as 60 or 70% in some worst-hit localities. An unusual report in the Osaka Mainichi newspaper of 8 November 1918 affords a rare insight into one group of Japanese attitudes and responses to the influenza epidemic. This report is headlined 'Superstition abounds on prevention of contagion', and expresses surprise that old superstitions of all kinds have surfaced during the influenza epidemic. Without giving examples, the writer claims that people are eating “unusual foods” which they believe will keep the illness at bay, and are even resorting to “stupid methods” such as jokey stickers, prayers and charms. The main theme of the article concerns harigami, or paper stickers with written messages, which people were placing on the doorways and eaves of houses, all over the Keihanshin-Kinki region. The messages included a cryptological charm meaning “Go away, flu!”.

Personification of the influenza, its identification with characters in Noh theatre, and simple entreaties to the flu to go away, all indicate attempts by ordinary people to come to terms with an invisible threat and to exert some sort of psychological control over their world at a time of unusual crisis. (Palmer and Rice 1992)

Newspapers did frequently publish poetry, providing an outlet for regular people to submit their work and vent their frustrations. Some papers contained specific pages for humorous pieces, “odd” facts, and anecdotes. Others placed poems amid local or national news. During that pandemic, as today, health authorities asked people to combat the spread of the virus by wearing masks and avoiding crowds. And then, as now, people did not much like it.

Early in the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, as society shut down and social distancing became the new norm, user-created media content about life during the pandemic exploded (Brig 2020, Chiodo 2020). Today’s technology makes it easy to produce and share such messages with the world. However, expressing what life is

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like in a pandemic through available media is nothing new. Writings about disease—poems, prose, songs, and quips—have long flourished during epidemics, as people have struggled to emotionally and physically adjust to isolation, sickness, and death. Sometimes such writings have been serious; just as often they reflect a darkly hopeful sense of humour. In the past this content was more difficult to distribute than uploading to Instagram or TikTok, but it too made its way into the media of its day—and the feelings it conveyed seem remarkably familiar (Foss 2020, 1).

3. Methodological notes

The study comprises an analysis of cartoons published in printed and online media during the 1918-1919 Spanish flu and 2020 Coronavirus pandemics. As a humour species, cartoons belong to standard humour. They are highly intentional and are usually produced by an author and further reproduced by a performer (a sender, in the case of social media). It also involves agency, because the performance is meant to produce a certain effect on others and the society (to entertain, to bond, to share, to criticize, to tease, to control social behaviours and build stronger relationships, to defend, to create solidarity, group cohesion and a friendly atmosphere).

Cartoons represent a combination of visual and verbal techniques (e.g. caricature, symbolism, analogy and juxtaposition, captioning and labelling, irony, parody, and sarcasm) aimed at influencing the public perception of social, economic, or political issues. Our analysis focuses on the visual humour used for coping with stressful situations arising during the 1918 and 2020 pandemic crises in the USA and across Europe, with a view to identify its main psychological and social roles.

Considering the variety of issues tackled by the creators of pandemic humour, the analysis is mainly a thematic one. When possible, the comments will also trigger the agency of quarantine humour, especially the one produced during Covid-19 pandemics.

4. Thematic analysis of quarantine cartoons

There are six influenza cartoons from 1918-1919, originally published in the *Syracuse Herald,* that were extracted from the newspapers' archive in order to prove that many of the 1918 themes were relatable to today's coronavirus pandemic – social distancing, the spread of germs, and good hygiene being the

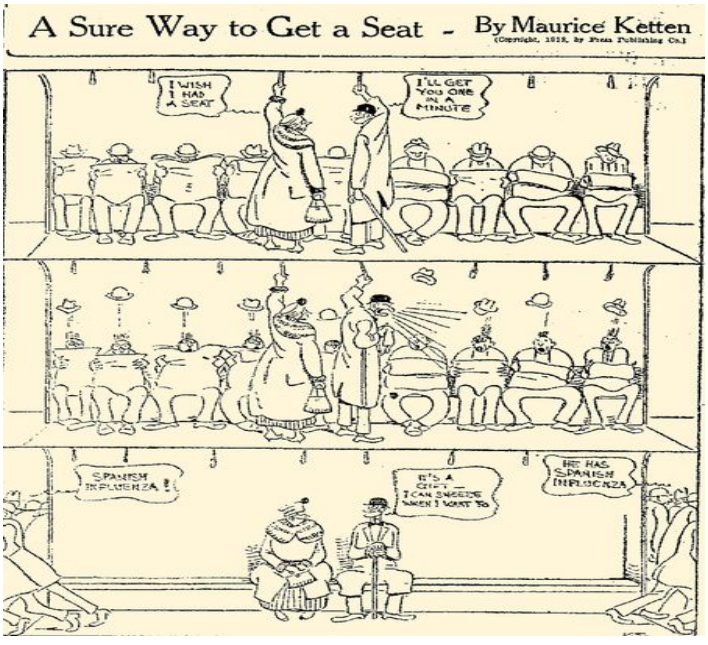
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most obvious. (Croyle 2020) The American 1918 themes will be mirrored with nine samples of visual humour extracted from 2020 online newspapers and social network pages, in an attempt to seize the temporal and geographical universality of humour employed as a coping mechanism in similar historical situations.

4.1. Coping with social distancing and the fear of germs

Social distancing is one of the most powerful psycho-social themes of pandemic humour. It comes mostly from the fear of infection with germs that can be transmitted through air at close distances. Social distancing affects the human relationships and the previously normal responses in socially determined environments.

(1)



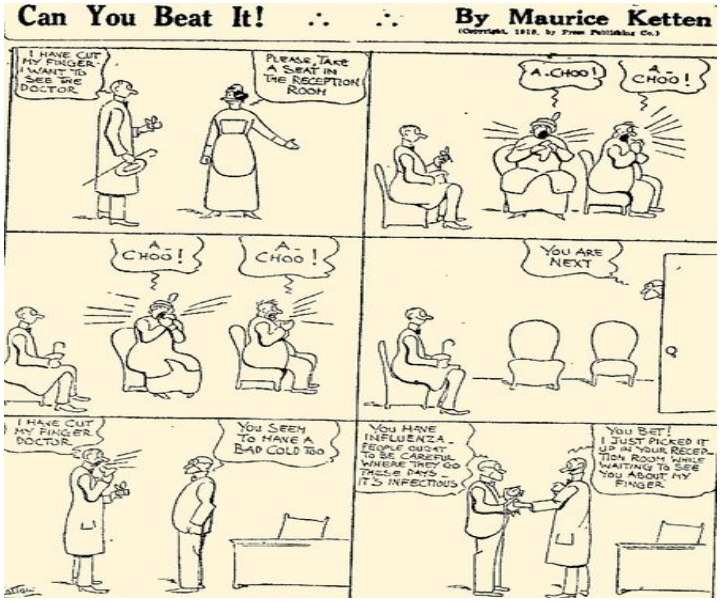
SURE WAY TO GET A SEAT by Maurice Ketten (Croyle 2020)

This cartoon was published on October 21, 1918 when the influenza epidemic was reaching its peak in Central New York. It shows a busy streetcar, filled with passengers reading their newspapers. When a woman tells a man that she wishes she had a seat, he comes up with a quick solution. He sneezes towards the other

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passengers. The totally rational fear of a disease which would kill an estimated 50 million people worldwide was symbolized by the passenger's hats jumping off their heads and running away from the couple. "He has Spanish influenza!" they yell. The humour resides in the final comment: "It's a gift," the man said. "I can sneeze when I want to". As it appears in this cartoon, social distancing originates in the fear of germs.

(2)



CAN YOU BEAT IT! by Maurice Ketten (Croyle 2020)

This cartoon was published on October 26, 1918. It highlights the importance of "social distancing" over 100 years before that phrase would become popular. In the cartoon, a man has cut his finger and goes to the doctor's office to have it fixed. In the waiting room, he is surrounded by ill patients who are sneezing loudly all around him. He finally sees his doctor, who tells him that he has come down with influenza: "People ought to be careful where they go these days," the physician says. "It's infectious!" "You bet!" the man replies. "I just picked it up in your reception room while waiting to see you about my finger." Waiting in the reception rooms of a doctor's office is portrayed as a sure means to catch the flu.

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(3)



OLYMPIC GAMES TOKYO 2020

The cartoon was published in 2020 on www.reddit.com and highlights the importance of "safety distance" in international sports events, such as the Olympic Games that should have taken place in Tokyo in 2020. The cartoon mocks the official logo of the Olympic movement with the interlocking rings, coloured blue, yellow, black, green and red, symbolizing the five continents, laying on a white field. In the cartoon, the rings are separated, alluding not only to the mandatory safety distance, but also to the social distance that separated people from various parts of the world during the 2020 lockdown.

(4)



"WAIT – DID YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?" by Lily Ash (2020)

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The cartoon shows an acrobatic number - the leap flight – with two flying trapeze performers. The flier is performing probably the first of many aerial tricks and needs to be caught by the catcher, who is swinging from a separate catch bar. It is not very clear who utters the question from the title of the cartoon - the flyer or the catcher. In either case, the "waiting" might lead to the death of one of the performers. Still, the fear of germs seems to overcome the fear of death.

(5)



DISTANCING by Costel Pătrășcan (2020a)

This cartoon was published on August 27th, 2020. A reporter asks a citizen: "Do they comply to distancing?" The man answers: "Especially between the political class and the constituency!" In the socio-political context of the elections during the Covid-19 pandemics, people feel that distancing should be maintained towards the political class rather than towards the virus.

The 1918 cartoons (examples 1 and 2) set the scene for understanding the social distancing imposed for safety reasons in 2020 (examples 3, 4, and 5). At the same time, all the cartoons contradict certain stereotypes – sneezing means 'you have the flu' (in 1); you go to see a doctor to get better (in 2); the Olympic movement is about bringing the world together (in 3); fear of death is the greatest of all (in 4); the politicians work for the welfare of the constituency (in 5).

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4.2. Human nature in coping with the flu

Human nature is what makes people authentic. We are bewildered by our own reactions of fear not only when facing death, but also when facing social encounters, some distress caused by thinning hair or the search for a new job. At the same time, the entire world may collapse around us and we still feel that the flu deserves more attention.

(6)



HUMAN NATURE AND THE FLU (Croyle 2020)

This cartoon was published on January 16th, 1919. When a person is sick, it is advised that they stay home and away from their office. That is what the subject of this cartoon did, remaining home from work for a week while telling everyone he had only a bad cold and not influenza.

> "Flu your grandmother!" the man says when another says he hopes he does not have the flu. "It's nothing but a bad cold." This continues for three more panels. "What a terrible scourge this influenza is! My! My!" a doctor says.
> When he finally returns to his office, one of his coworkers asks how he managed to get a week off if all he had was a cold… "Cold!!!?" he replied. "I had the FLU! A darn close call, too!"

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Faced with the possibility of having the flu, the man acted bravely as the one having "nothing but a bad cold". But when facing the need to return to his workplace, the terrible flu was reason enough to elicit the sympathy of his colleagues.

(7)



HUNKS AND GOBS (Croyle 2020)

On March 23, 1919, the Syracuse Herald reported that one of the side effects of the flu was that people began losing their hair, often in "hunks and gobs." This cartoon was meant to illustrate the news. The Herald wrote:

"Boils and sleeping sickness, both concededly aftermaths of influenza, are bad enough, goodness knows, but now comes forward medical authority which declares that the reason hairdressers are doing a land office business these days is because of what the "flu" has done to women's hair."

The extremely unsympathetic cartoon, certainly drawn and written by a man, illustrates the story.

In the final panel, a woman's "steady" cruelly "finds he has business elsewhere" when he sees his sweetheart's thinning hair. "I must visit my sick aunt," he said.

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Such reports were proof of the fact that fake news were also as old as time. Courage may fail people, but never their human nature.

(8)



THE BROWN SCENARIO by Costel Pătrășcan (2020b)

This cartoon was published on September 13th, 2020.

During the 2020 Covid-19 pandemics in Romania, school started according to three different scenarios, depending on the rate of infections in certain areas: the green one, with everybody in the classroom; the yellow one, with half of the class in face-to-face learning format and the other half staying home and watching the lesson behind a screen; and the red one, involving only online learning. The reporter asks a parent holding a schoolboy's hand: "What kind of scenario are you in: green, yellow, red?" "The brown one!...", he said.

The allusion to a "shitty" scenario could have been a comment raised by the fear of the virus or by the quality of the teaching act performed in such circumstances.

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(9)



CORONA SAVINGS OPPORTUNITY by Feicke (2020)

This cartoon was published on February 29th, 2020. It portrays a tourist agent sitting behind his office desk and smoking, while getting himself busy with writing travel offers. Next to him there is a placard with the following text: "Corona Travel Opportunity – Book 3 Days in Tenerife and you will stay there for 14 days!"

Many travel agencies faced losses because of the fact that international travels were banned for several weeks during the 2020 lockdown. The announcement of the travel agent is a bitter piece of humour, in an attempt to help this industry to cope with the situation. The fear of losing money as well as their jobs might determine them to do incredible offers no one would believe to have been possible before.

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(10)



A GAP IN YOUR RESUME by Lo Graf von Blickensdorf (2020)

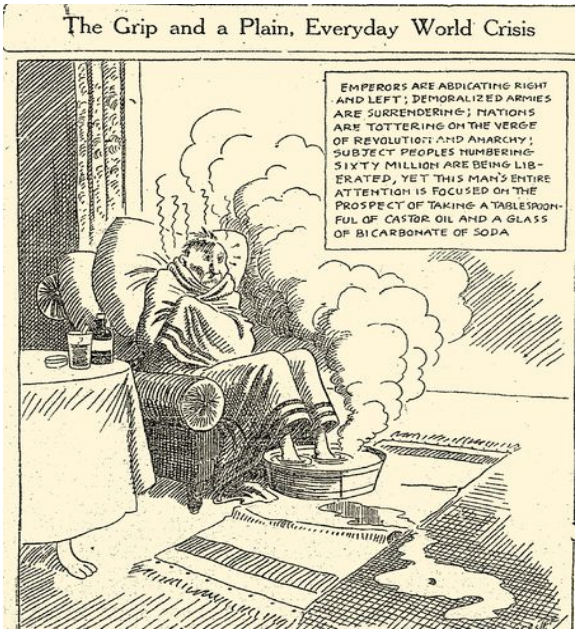
This cartoon was published on March 10th, 2020. A man is sitting in the office of a human resources specialist who seems to be reading the man's resume. "In 2020 I can see a gap in your resume. Where were you?", the specialist asks. The man answers: "Washing my hands."

The cartoon mocks one of the fears of the civilized world – that of losing one's job – and offers a humorous answer to the absurdity of the situation.

Missing a year from one's life or filling in the time lost not doing more significant activities seems to be the leitmotif of the year 2020.

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(11)



THE GRIP AND A PLAIN, EVERYDAY WORLD CRISIS (Croyle 2020)

This cartoon was published on November 23rd, 1918. There is nothing worse than being sick. A person's illness will make him and her forget for a moment all about the troubles in the world. The last few months of 1918 saw the end of the First World War and worries about the spread of communism.

In this cartoon, an ill man, wrapped tightly in a blanket, is not at all worried about the fact that "emperors are abdicating right and left, demoralized armies are surrendering, nations are tottering on the verge of revolution and anarchy and subject peoples numbering sixty million are being liberated."

All he cares about is the "prospect of taking a tablespoonful of castor oil and a glass of bicarbonate of soda" to, hopefully, feel better.

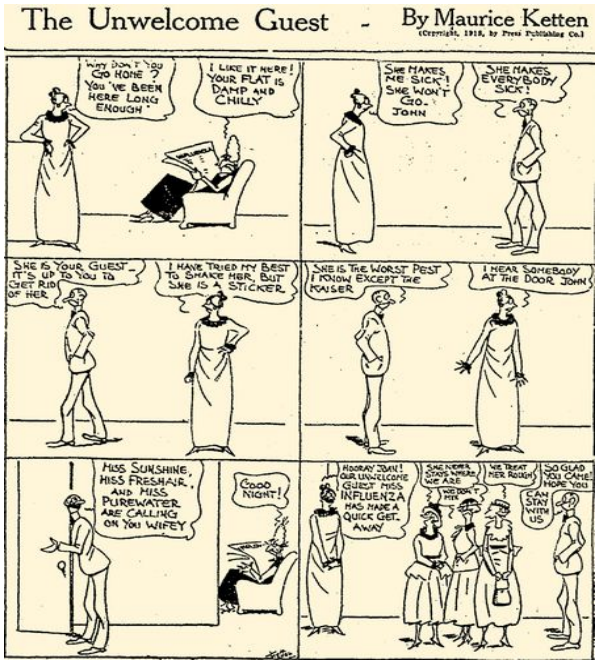
The 1918 cartoons (examples 6, 7 and 11) mirror, at different levels, the human reaction when faced with a virus: in (6), the absence from work is motivated differently by the protagonist, during the crisis and after it; in (7), the protagonist is concerned about the fading beauty and loss of social appeal as a result of the virus; while in (11), the world crisis is minimized by the individual human suffering. The 2020 cartoons illustrate themes like the state of the schooling system (8), the concerns for international travels (9) or for finding a new job after the crisis (10).

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4.3. Complying with the medical rules

Medical rules, especially those regarding the hygiene, are reinforced during the pandemics on all channels available. At first, such messages are welcome and obeyed with religiosity, until the rules become an almost instinctive routine. The obsessive repetition often results in a reaction of rejection and bravado.

(12)



AN UNWELCOME GUEST by Maurice Ketten (Croyle 2020)

This cartoon was published on October 25, 1918. In this cartoon, influenza is symbolized by an annoying houseguest who would not take the hint and leave. It also includes some household tips that would help make "Miss Influenza" get the message and leave.

"Why don't you go home?" the homeowner tells Miss Influenza. "You've been here long enough." "I like it here! Your flat is damp and chilly," the disease says.

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The married couple discusses: “She makes me sick! She won’t go, John.” The man answers: “She makes everybody sick.” It is the worst pest they both agree, except for the Kaiser, a little World War I humour for everybody.

Finally, the appearance of “Miss Sunshine,” “Miss FreshAir,” and “Miss PureWater,” chase off the “Unwelcome Houseguest.”

During the flu pandemics, people needed to wash their hands often and thoroughly.

(13)



BRAINWASHING by Costel Pătrășcan (2020c)

This cartoon was published on March 17th, 2020.The parent watches his child washing his hands in the family bathroom. In the next room, a TV set is broadcasting. While pointing to the other room, the father says: “After that, go wash your brains, too!”

The constant pressure of the governments is exercised through the media and people feel unable to escape this pressure, although they are aware of it.

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(14)



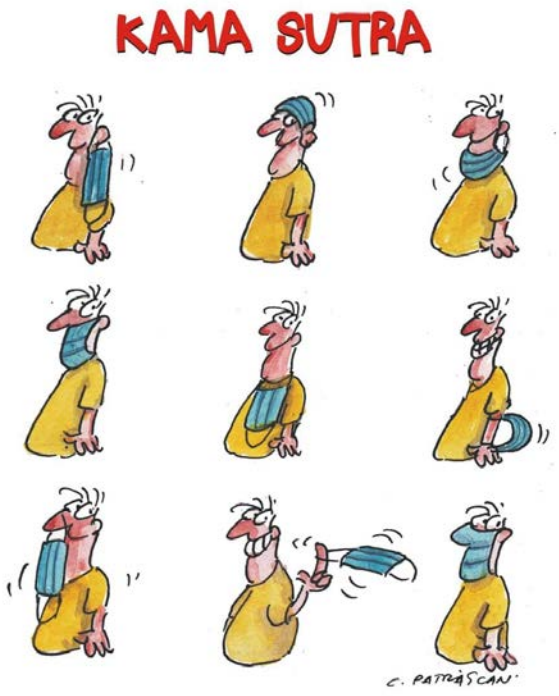
PROMISES by Costel Pătrășcan (2020d)

This cartoon was published on March 13th, 2020. The cartoon shows a man standing outside an impressive looking office building. He shouts towards the building: "What about the promises you've made?". A voice from a window answers: "We've washed our hands." In Romanian, *to wash one's hands about something* has the meaning *to assume no responsibility for a fact*.

The cartoon displays the lack of interest on behalf of the authorities regarding the needs of people. *Washing hands* has a different meaning than the one usually taken during a medical crisis, but reflects the lack of a meaningful dialogue between the authorities and the people.

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(15)



KAMA SUTRA by Costel Pătrășcan (2020e)

This cartoon was published on August 13th, 2020. The cartoon shows various positions in which someone may wear a sanitary mask: hanging from an ear, as a cap, as a collar, covering only the mouth, as a baby bib, as a bracelet on the wrist, hanging from the nose, swirling around the index finger, and finally, the correct way, covering both the nose and the mouth.

The cartoon mocks at the bravado of people fighting against the rules that force them to wear the masks both inside and outside public spaces in Romania.

Complying with the medical advice appeared as an easy task in 1918. The rules against the flu seem to guarantee the eviction of the unwelcome guest (12). In 2020, complying with the regulations takes some uprising notes - it appears as resembling brainwashing (13), while the authorities seem to have ceased to care about the individuals (14) and eight out of nine regular people wonder why should they wear the sanitary masks as required (15).

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5. Conclusions

As we see with Covid-19, the darkest periods in history expose the best — and worst — of humanity. Some people become virulently racist. Others spend hours caring for the most afflicted.

Still more look for safe outlets to vent their fear and anger, often fleeing to laughter to do so. As a number of scholars have noted, humour alleviates tensions around uncertain situations while creating a common language for people to use.

Quarantine is still used in today’s satire, often adjacent to social distancing. Authors of humoristic comments have changed famous quotes (symbols, people) to reflect social distancing and self-quarantine at an intersection of humour, epidemic disease, and intellectualism. While some people use these jokes to argue against Covid-19’s virulence, those who practice social distancing can participate in the humorous conversation about it. Only until you self-isolate or social distance from other people can you truly understand the jokes’ intent. That is the reason why coping is something you should experience in order to get its mechanism.

The media’s wide public reach was particularly useful in making jokes available and relatable to local, national, and sometimes international audiences.

The purpose of this study was to identify the main subthemes employed by pandemic humour both during the Spanish flu and the Covid-19 crises, with an aim to grasp the coping mechanisms behind them.

Though separated by a temporal arch, the cartoons from both periods represent similar individual and psychological responses to universal problems, such as the fear of death, illness or lack of commodities. Humour informs and protects, giving readers valuable information on diagnosis and prophylaxis as they chuckle.

At a social level (more obvious in today’s media), cartoonists criticize politicians’ lack of reaction to the economic, political and social crisis raised by such pandemics. Thus, humour gives the public a way to share and diminish their anxieties, giving individuals a sense of control over an otherwise uncontrollable situation.

While some people may find joking about pandemics tactless behaviour, it serves a purpose. Coping with the fear caused by possibly dramatic consequences of the viral infections by means of pandemic humour is something we should all employ. The cartoons about the pandemic lightened the mood in 1918, much like today’s cartoons. Through the words influenza survivors left behind, we can relate our own conflicting feelings to theirs—demonstrating the transcending need for creative expression and taking permission to find the light during a dark time.

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Sources

Examples 1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 12 are taken from Jonathan Croyle (2020) "1918 Flu Pandemic: How Syracuse editorial cartoons gave readers a unique perspective" – Syracuse.com, available at https://www.syracuse.com/living/2020/07/1918-flu-pandemic-how-syracuse-editorial-cartoons-gave-readers-a-unique-perspective.html, retrieved on October 24, 2020.

Example 3 - Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, available at https://www.reddit.com/r/funny/comments/fhxqg2/updated_tokyo_olympic_games_logo/, accessed on November 15, 2020.

Example 4 – Lily Ash (2020) "Wait – did you wash your hands?", available at https://www.newyorker.com/cartoon/a22852, retrieved on November 15, 2020.

Examples 5, 8, 13, 14, 15 are selected from the author's personal FB page as follows:

Pătrășcan 2020a: Costel Pătrășcan. *Se respectă distanțarea?,* available at https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10224176696150176&set=a.436315864219 (Obiectiv Vocea Brăilei) , retrieved on November 15, 2020.

Pătrășcan 2020b: Costel Pătrășcan *Scenariul maro!,* available at https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10224309706315347&set=a.4363158642194, retrieved on November 15, 2020.

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Pătrășcan 2020e: Costel Pătrășcan, *Kama Sutra*, available at https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10224047172832174&set=a.4363158642194, retrieved on November 15, 2020.

Example 9 - Lo Graf von Blickensdorf (2020) *Eine Lücke in Ihrem Lebenslauf*, available at https://www.facebook.com/93772436449/photos/a.120095466449/10158102845646450/, retrieved on November 15, 2020.

Example 10 – Feicke (2020) Corona Sparfuchs Reisen, available at https://www.facebook. com/feickecartoons/photos/oder-ne-sch%C3%B6ne-kreuzfahrt/1474375199397796/, retrieved on November 15, 2020.

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