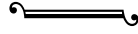


Introduction

Antonio Calvo Maturana



On 31 October 2018, the comedian Dani Mateo scandalized Spanish public opinion by blowing his nose on the country's flag during a sketch on the television programme *El Intermedio*. As Mateo immediately explained on social media, the intention of the gesture had been to reduce the tension created by the Catalan conflict¹ and to demonstrate that 'when spirits are very heated, flags become more important than people, and that is dangerous' (Tweet on November 2018). In other words, he had tried, through humour, to convey a very serious message: flags are just pieces of cloth that do not merit the smothering atmosphere of tension into which nationalisms have plunged Spain in recent years.

In the days that followed, Mateo was subjected to public outcry in the form of calls for boycotts, cancellations of his performances and publicity engagements, attacks on social networks (including a critical tweet from the Civil Guard itself)² and in the media, and even threats against him and those close to him.

Consequently, on the following episode of *El Intermedio* (5 November 2018), the host, El Gran Wyoming, had no choice but to devote his opening words to the subject. After remarking that there was no 'political intention' or 'editorial position' behind the sketch, the motivation for which was 'simply humour', he continued with an even more interesting reflection: 'If the joke didn't work, if instead of provoking laughter it has generated social tension, it is evident that it is a failed gag', for which Wyoming asked for 'sincere forgiveness from all of those who might have been offended'. It is befitting to ask, incidentally, if there is a humour so neutral that it is 'simply humour' and if, in fact, a joke that is not funny but is affecting can be considered to have 'failed'.

The problems would not end there for Mateo, who was charged with publicly committing offences against the symbols of Spain and a hate crime, and was called to testify before the investigative court Number 47 of Madrid, evoking outrage in those who, like the politician Íñigo Errejón, were of the view that 'The insult to Spain is that we are the EU country with the most working poor. We may not like the joke, but this

drift of turning humour and art into crime is very dangerous and a step backwards to the Middle Ages' (*El País*, 23 November 2018).

Errejón was tackling the famous debate about the limits of humour that has been conducted throughout Europe in recent years, especially since the terrible attack on the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* on 7 January 2015. In Spain, this controversy has proven to be particularly intense in the wake of recent charges and even lawsuits against comedians, artists and tweeters who have dared to joke about sensitive topics. In 2007, issue 1573 of the satirical magazine *El Jueves* was legally seized because of a cover that was considered offensive to the Crown; in 2012, the singer-songwriter Javier Krahe was tried (and ultimately acquitted) for 'offending the feelings of the members of a religious community' for a 1977 video in which he taught viewers how to cook a Christ (*El País*, 28 May 2012); in 2017, the Audiencia Nacional (Spanish National Court) sentenced Twitter user Cassandra Vera to one year in prison on charges of humiliating victims of terrorism in a series of jokes about Luis Carrero Blanco, the Francoist minister murdered by the terrorist group ETA in 1973, although she was ultimately acquitted by the Tribunal Supremo (Spanish Supreme Court) (*El País*, 2 March 2018); also in 2017, both the aforementioned Dani Mateo and El Gran Wyoming had to testify after having been reported for a joke about the Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen), the famous Francoist memorial where the dictator was buried.

These and other instances of humour being presented as alleged hate crimes or offences against groups have been generating a public debate about whether a joke or a prank (however offensive or unfortunate it may be) can be legally penalized or whether they are a part of freedom of expression, which is assumed to be one of the foundations of democracy. Achieving a balance between this right to freedom of expression and the one we all have to honour continues to be one of the challenges facing our society today.

There can be little doubt that humour is a very serious subject, with profound cultural and political implications, but it continues, as it has throughout its history, to occupy an undefined place between the real and the fictitious, the serious and the banal, the public and the private, the formal and the informal.

If it had not been necessary to summarize it, Dani Mateo's sketch could have been the subject of an entire chapter. Humour has many aspects and in cases such as that of the sketch, one could examine topics as varied as the Catalan conflict and the resulting rise in nationalism, the quality of Spanish freedom of speech, the crisis of the legitimacy of the

political system derived from the Transition and the judicialization of its defence, the rise of conservatism in the country in recent years, and even the controversial effects (satire or trivialization?) that the use of a humorous tone can have on a current programme like *El Intermedio*. Because humour is context, a joke makes complete sense when we understand the cultural framework in which it is made, but it also helps us to understand that framework better. Text and context interact, making humour a key tool for the cultural historian.

Responding to this reality, this volume is a cultural and interdisciplinary study of humour in Spain from the eighteenth century to the present day. Its authors, who come from the fields of history, art history, philology and communication studies, are members of the research project 'El humor y su sentido: discursos e imágenes de lo risible desde la Ilustración hasta hoy' (Humour and Its Meaning: Discourses and Images of the Laughable from the Enlightenment to Today).³

This team starts from certain fundamental premises. First, we understand 'humour' to mean the capacity of the human being to perceive or posit a message as comical (or laughable). We consider it to be a social act (typically involving an emitter and an interlocutor), but also a cultural one, for it is associated with a shared frame of reference.

Second, we assume, as anthropological, psychological, neurological and historical studies affirm, that it is a universal phenomenon (Sirauna 2015; Weems 2014). Innumerable societies and historical cultures have left evidence of humour in the form of images, texts and traditions. Humour is, consequently, closely associated with humanity. As it is linked to reason, the human being has always employed it and, above all, shared it, since it is an eminently social element. Rationality and sociability are two of the elements that best distinguish us as a species (despite biological studies that are beginning to question *homo ridens* and to affirm that other species laugh as well).

Third, while humour is a constant, its form and background are variable. It is a kind of code, as complex as the human being. Therefore, it is not transcultural or ahistorical (Bremmer and Roodenburg 1997: 3); in other words, 'it is an anthropological constant and is historically relative' (Berger 1998: 11). Although there have been certain connections and common themes (death, sex, the scatological or physical humour),⁴ each culture and society throughout history has had its own types of humour, which makes many of the jokes or pranks that have come to us from Ancient Rome, for example, seem more strange and distant than funny (Beard 2014).

Even among contemporary but almost entirely unrelated civilizations, such as those of the Europeans and Japanese during the time of Christian evangelism in East Asia (in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), one of the markers of alterity was laughter caused by the strange customs of the other, a consequence of the juxtaposition of different cultural frameworks. In the *Treatise on the Contradictions and Differences in Customs between Europeans and Japanese*, written in 1555 by the Portuguese Jesuit Luis Frois with the aim of helping the Ignatian evangelizers to adapt themselves as quickly as possible to the practices and customs of Japan, several passages highlight this, for example, in point 30 of the fourteenth chapter: 'Amongst ourselves we use the embrace to take our leave or to greet someone who comes from elsewhere; the Japanese do not use it at all, and they laugh when they see it done.' This difference in customs also effected the very act of laughing in that eternal battle between laughter and courtesy: 'Amongst us the feigned laugh is taken as fickleness; in Japan, for elegance and class' (Frois 2003: 125).

Humour is so rich and varied that, in a group of three friends, two can share a private joke. Even on an individual level, each person is a dispatcher of different types of humour, since we modify our jokes (and our seriousness) depending on our interlocutor (a friend, an acquaintance, an associate, a child, a boss, an enemy, a woman, a man, etc.) or the situation in which we might find ourselves (a party, at work, a funeral, etc.).

Fourth, humour is rarely an end in itself; rather, apart from being a tool to fashion ourselves as more charismatic and clever, it tends to be a vehicle for the expression of emotions, and also of ideas of any kind (both socially inclusive or exclusive; both ethical and despicable). When exercised by those in power, humour can serve to maintain the status quo (through tradition or the criticism of divergent elements), but it can also be used to reform the practices and customs of a people through their associated intellectuals (pedagogical humour); however, practised by the political opposition or by a marginalized or emergent social group, it can, thanks to its capacity for subverting reality, be eminently critical, if not revolutionary, and jeopardize the prevailing order through its useful ambiguity ('don't be upset, it's just a joke') and its capacity for role reversal; at other times, it is a comfort, a self-referential discourse that helps people to withstand life's harshness, as in the case of the humour that arose in the carnival culture of the *Old Regime* (Bakhtin 1984) or the black, stoic humour developed by Jews in the concentration camps of the Third Reich (Herzog 2011); and, of course, there is a popular,⁵ conservative humour (in the form, for

example, of sexist, xenophobic or homophobic jokes) that reaffirms the prejudices of traditional societies or taps into the taboos of the most progressive ones.

Thus, humour is a discursive form and, as such, has a text, a subtext and a context that allow for historical analysis. Laughter and smiles, communicative and even performative gestures (which are not only the result of humour but are capable of generating it as well), are an almost inseparable part the humorous message. Let us not forget that the interpretation of such expressions are also variable. And not only in regions distant from the Western world; we need only recall, for example, Luther's nervous laughter before Carlos V at Worms in 1521.

In short, a society's humour is a window into its customs, references, desires and concerns, an instrument with which to recognize differentiating factors on small and large scales ('my sense of humour'; 'English humour'), as well as inherited and shared characteristics. Humour has always been there, but its forms have varied according to its context. It is difficult, therefore, to find a better – and less examined – tool for the analysis of both long- and short-term historical time.

The greatest proof that humour has earned a place in the public sphere is that it can now be found in areas that previously seemed too serious to accept it. Today, teachers and politicians feel almost compelled to practise it so as not to appear boring. If we focus on politics, the custom in the United States of having the president deliver a monologue at the annual foreign correspondents' dinner is well known. Obama carried out this tradition in 2016, closing with a famous 'mic drop' (a gesture repeated by the Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, and Prince Harry of England). This tradition, incidentally, has been discontinued by the current president. Trump does not have a good relationship with satire, which is perhaps his main stumbling block. Recent reflections by Sophia McClennen (2017) suggest that satirical television programmes (including *SNL*, on which he is caricatured by Alec Baldwin) have become a much more efficient means of opposing the president than the press, which has no choice but to treat his unorthodox actions seriously and, thus, to give them a certain air of normality. Along these lines, Julie Webber has just published a volume about political humour in neoliberal times (Webber 2019).

Spanish Laughter situates the starting point of this new paradigm (the admittance of humour into the public sphere and its legitimate use to communicate 'serious' ideas) in the Enlightenment. We do not want to fall into restrictive interpretations by limiting the public

sphere to the contemporary world or by pretending that the Middle Ages or the baroque period were devoid of laughter. In all historical periods, there has been humour and people who shared and enjoyed it. Heraclitus ('the weeping philosopher') and Democritus ('the laughing philosopher') have always coexisted in a more or less balanced way. The Smiling Angel (*L'Ange au Sourire*) of Reims Cathedral or the humour of the Archpriest of Hita challenged the seriousness of the medieval Church. Centuries later, amidst the rigour of the baroque and its exaltation of tears (Tausiet and Amelang 2009), the poet Francisco Quevedo would write his satirical verses; despite being a complete stoic, he was one of the greatest humourists in the history of the country (and what about Cervantes and his *Quijote*?).

Yet, we insist, the eighteenth century entails an evident change in the humorous paradigm, as it does in sociability generally. On the one hand, meetings are expanded in the form of salons and gatherings where the starched forms of the court relax. It is what Benedetta Craveri called *la civiltà della conversazione* (the age of conversation), which began in the eighteenth century and spread throughout Europe (including Spain) during the Age of Enlightenment. In these new settings, relationships of trust, such as courtship and friendship, are fostered, with gravity and artificiality being frowned upon (Bolufer 2019). Coarse humour and unrestrained laughter continue to be negatively regarded,⁶ but wit is valued positively in society. There is an intelligent laughter, dissociated from the Hobbesian theory of degradation and the vulgarity of the lower classes.

It is also the enlightened century, that of the exaltation of the senses, the sentimental novel and the *comédie larmoyante* (tearful comedy). The baroque struggle between body and soul gives way to a civility that, instead of creating an artificial second nature, offers the best version of human nature. Voltaire speaks of the 'smile of the soul' of the *honnête homme* (Jones 2017: 62).

Perhaps the century's most fascinating theorist of humour, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, asserted in his *Sensus Communis, an Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* (1709) that humour was a fundamental resource for returning to a natural and harmonious world since it allowed all the contradictions that come between human beings and a tolerant and free world to be challenged.

The Enlightenment recovers the values of classical satire. Laughter acquires great pedagogical value because it identifies the inconsistencies of inherited tradition, the meaninglessness of prejudice, and it ridicules them and renders it laughable. The following passage of the *Cartas Marruecas* (*Moroccan Letters*) by the enlightened Spanish writer

José Cadalso, in which the Moroccan Gazel asks the Spaniard Nuño about nobility, is a good example of this:

Urging my Christian friend to explain to me what hereditary nobility is, after telling me a thousand things I did not understand, showing me pictures that seemed magical to me, and figures that I took for the whim of some demented painter, and after laughing with me about many things that he said were very respectable in the world, he concluded with these words, interrupted by many outbursts of laughter: 'Hereditary nobility is the vanity that I base on the fact that, eight hundred years before my birth, one died who was named as I am named, and was a man of substance, even if I am completely useless.' (Translated from Cadalso 1793, letter XIII)⁷

But the liberal bourgeois culture did not inherit these precepts unconditionally. Antoine de Baecque (2000) has studied how revolutionaries, once in power, adopted a serious attitude, while conservatives would embrace the subversive and delegitimizing power of the humorous.

In the two successive centuries, during which the media was fundamental in shaping public opinion, humour played an important role. In the nineteenth century, the press laws of liberalism (especially the dogmatic ones) faced a veritable explosion of graphic humour; one of its first masters was the Englishman James Gillray. In Louis Philippe's France (1830–48), the famous four-part caricature of the evolution of the king's face into a pear, published by the satirical newspaper *La Caricature*, contributed to ridiculing the king and tested the July Monarchy, which prosecuted the publication and its editor, Charles Philipon (Kerr 2000).

Satire would continue to be a fundamental weapon used both to erode and support the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century. The jokes that coursed through the Germany of the Third Reich (Herzog 2011) and the Soviet Union (Draitser 1978; Kolasky 1985) have been collected and/or studied. Tyranny has never resided comfortably with satire, as shown by the case of a German artillery factory employee accused of publicly promoting defeatism and sentenced to death in 1944 for telling a joke about Hitler (Herzog 2014: 157–59).

In the democratic public sphere, clandestine humour has less of a place since it is assumed that humour is part of freedom of speech in a world where we are all invited, if not compelled, to have a sense of humour. Everyone? Or only half of us? Are women welcome in the realm of humour?

Even at the present time, surveys (Weems 2015: 206–7) reveal a distinctive gender element whereby men expect their ideal woman to

appreciate their humour, while women look for someone who makes them laugh, in what seems like an obvious consequence of the roles (passive and active) that patriarchal society has bestowed upon each sex.

Humour is communication and initiative, and humorous discourse is based on conventions and contradictions, all elements traditionally monopolized by the male gender. Indeed, 'in the past, women were often the objects, but only rarely the subjects of jokes, especially not in public' (Kotthoff 2006: 5). To pull a prank or make a joke requires an audience that wants to listen to you or a conversation in which one feels confident enough to take part; it is also necessary to feel comfortable and legitimized in that space. A real empowerment of women in the public sphere has been necessary for there to be female voices in the world of comedy (Greenbaum 1997), cause and consequence of their greater comfort with humour.

It is important to look for women in recent centuries who were able to use humour outside of private settings, laughing and making others laugh, because even in 1787, a self-portrait of Élisabeth-Louise Vigée Le Brun exhibited at the Louvre that showed a slight smile (agreeable, not humorous) that allowed her teeth to be seen caused a scandal (Jones 2017: 1–2).

On a passive level, in relation to humour about women (typically practised by men), we cannot forget its role in affirming or criticizing stereotypes and feminine archetypes from every age. *Spanish Laughter* will address both aspects of feminine humour.

This book makes historiographic and methodological contributions to the panorama of studies about humour. The first of these has to do with cultural studies in general, since we present the reader with an interdisciplinary work that includes historical, artistic and philological approaches and that undertakes the study of the growing relationship between humour and the public sphere in the last two centuries.

Although humour has concerned intellectuals since the Greco-Roman period, its study remains rare in the humanities. If, in other fields, such as psychology or neurology (Weems 2015), it has been the subject of a great deal of work, history, philology and art history, on the contrary, still do not have the influence they deserve in humour studies. Even the social sciences, such as anthropology and sociology, seem to be more open to this subject.⁸

There are even fewer studies focused on historical periods prior to the twentieth century. It seems that what interests us is, for example,

what our ancestors ate but not what they laughed at or why, as if humour were not a part of their mentality and idiosyncrasies, as if we denied distant societies, prior to the consolidation of public opinion and the media, the capacity for a complex sense of humour, meaningful and worthy of study, or, perhaps, as if we denied the possibility of knowing it with our tools of analysis.

It is true, on the other hand, that studying humour is no longer a rarity or a one-off event, as it was when Mikhail Bakhtin defended his thesis on the carnivalesque or when Franz Rosenthal (1956) set out to study humour in early Islam. Beyond specific initiatives like these and works on political satire⁹ or exceptional artists and writers (such as François Rabelais, Francisco de Quevedo or James Gillray), it was necessary to wait until the nineties to find, in Europe and the United States, historical and artistic-literary studies on humour with an interdisciplinary inclination that would begin to cure historians of their complex about studying something prejudicially considered as frivolous.

We must give due credit to the pioneering studies of the medievalist Jacques Le Goff (1992 and 1997), which focused attention on the rejection of laughter by religious orders and on the debate about whether Jesus Christ had ever laughed. Le Goff himself, along with other authors of the stature of Peter Burke, contributed to the reference work *A Cultural History of Humour*,¹⁰ edited by Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg and published in 1997, an interdisciplinary miscellany that has inspired subsequent works (Classen 2010; Korte and Lechner 2013; Cheauré and Nehejl 2014), including the present volume.

This sociocultural reading was defended by Le Goff in his aforementioned chapter in *A Cultural History of Humour*:

laughter . . . can be studied historically . . . it is a cultural phenomenon. In accordance with the society or period, attitudes toward it, the ways in which it is practised, its objectives and its forms are not constant but changeable. Laughter is also a social phenomenon. It requires at least two or three people, real or imaginary: one who causes the laughter, the other who laughs, and another about whom they are laughing . . . It is a social practice with its own codes, rituals, actors and settings. (Le Goff 1997: 40)

Cultural studies of humour allow us, in the words of Robert Darnton, to 'capture otherness'. From this point of view, we should not look for continuity, humour with which we connect and which is familiar to us, but rather rupture, those jokes and apparently comical situations that

we do not understand at first, that require a profound analysis of their context (Burke 1997: 61). For instance, Darnton tells us, it is essential to understand eighteenth-century French society to comprehend the famous great slaughter of cats, festive and humorous for the cat-killers but macabre and inhumane to us:

When you realize that you are not getting something – a joke, a proverb, a ceremony – that is particularly meaningful to the natives, you can see where to grasp a foreign system of meaning in order to unravel it. By getting the joke of the great cat massacre, it may be possible to ‘get’ a basic ingredient of artisanal culture under the Old Regime. (Darnton 2009: 78)

Since the 1990s, cultural studies about humour in the Western world, although they have lost some of their initial momentum, have given rise to a catalogue of works that examine it from different and valuable perspectives, such as cruel laughter (Dickie 2011), the strengthening of the smile thanks to improvements in the care and preservation of teeth (Jones 2014) or a return to Western roots through the study of humour and laughter in Ancient Rome (Beard 2014).

In our case, as has already been stated, we aim to emphasize the humorous in the public sphere and to review more than two centuries, which will allow us to better understand how and why humour has come to have such specific significance in our contemporary society, an approach we consider both fundamental and novel.

Despite the aforementioned review of the humorous in cultural studies, it seems to us that Spanish historiography (and this is our second contribution) has not been particularly interested in listening to our ancestors’ laughter. It is true that through the Information Sciences (Bordería 2015; Meléndez Malavé 2005, 2006, 2008) and linguistics (as evidenced by the publications of the research team led by Leonor Ruiz Gurillo, who employs the tools of the field to explore texts and contexts), advances have been made on the subject, but cultural studies continue to be scarce in spite of the fact (as we will soon see) that the possible topics are innumerable.¹¹

Finally, we believe that the third major contribution of our work relates to its recognition of the prominence of women, which is contrasted by the scarce attention paid, both within and outside Spain, to this fundamental area, that of gender, within humour studies. This introduction has already mentioned the importance of humour in women’s history¹² and even in its presence now in the public sphere. There are, however, few works devoted to this topic within the humanities. Nevertheless, there are some (Kotthoff 2006), particularly

in the form of collections, such as two works about humour in the work of women writers in the United States (Hanrahan 2011) and Latin America (Niebylski 2004). In Spain, *Género y humor en discursos de mujeres y hombres (Gender and Humour in Female and Male Discourses)*, from the magazine *Feminismo/s*, edited by Ángela Mura and Leonor Ruiz Gurillo in 2014, was a pioneering work. It focused on the fields of education, the media, social networks and conversations on the street. The times are long gone, we read in their introductory discussion of the question, when researchers believed, as they did back in the seventies, that ‘women were not capable of using humour or of interpreting it’ (Mura and Ruiz Gurillo 2004: 10); there are already many authors who ‘show that both genders use humour, although it is true that they use it for different purposes and that the effects and discursive strategies pursued by diverse identities do not coincide’ (ibid. 11).

The trajectory of studies about humour and gender decades and centuries ago is more limited, one of the most honourable exceptions being *Laughter, Humor and the (Un)making of Gender: Historical and Cultural Perspectives* (Foka and Liliequist 2015), which presents a series of studies situated in different historical periods (excluding the contemporary period), with a noteworthy global focus (England, Sweden, Iceland, Greece or the Ottoman and Chinese empires). The perceptive hypothesis of the work is that ‘humour and laughter not only are fundamental to the construction and reproduction of gender norms and identities, but also provide powerful rhetorical tools for subversion and change’ (Foka and Liliequist 2015: 1). We can also point to the interesting work of Nancy Walker (1988), *A Very Serious Thing: Women’s Humor and American Culture*.

In our case, we are pleased to integrate studies about gender in a volume that addresses this as well as many other aspects of humour. Of course, the monographs dedicated to gender have been (and will continue to be) fundamental, since the path to women’s visibility is still long, but we also believe that it is important that women also appear in studies not specifically focused on them, just as men and women have lived together (or at least coexisted) throughout history.

There remains much to do in the field of humour studies. In this volume’s conclusion, we will explore the progress we have made.

In closing this introduction, we cannot help but wonder what the Spanish case can contribute to studies about humour and, in turn, what humour can tell us about the history of Spain (again, humour is both an object and a tool of study).

But why Spain? We do not aspire to fly the flag of 'Spain is different' (that famous tourist slogan from the 1960s) and pretend that everything that has happened in the country is unique. In fact, despite the myth of isolationism, Spain has participated in the political and cultural processes of European modernity. But each country has experienced these shared processes under its own particular circumstances and we believe that examination of the circumstances in Spain can make important contributions to a better understanding of the configuration, at the least, of the Western public sphere.

At present, and partly because of the scant internationalization of Spanish historiography, there are few areas (with the exception of the early Habsburg Empire and the Civil War) in which the Spanish case is central or at least important in comparative and collected studies at the continental level. We must abandon once and for all the model of canonical examples of Enlightenment, Liberalism, Romanticism, Republicanism or access to democracy (generally taken up by France, England and Germany) and understand that their variants are neither minor nor dispensable. Furthermore, a kind of historiographic colonialism is sadly common, taking the form of works written in English about Spanish themes in which the author does not cite a single work in Spanish and ends up reinventing the wheel when he or she does not repeat long-outdated clichés. With *Spanish Laughter*, we intend to combat both problems, decentralizing the history of humour.

Let us consider the case of the eighteenth century. The Spanish Enlightenment is certainly not the French or the British Enlightenment in terms of the names associated with it, which does not mean that (despite international criticism, voiced by Montesquieu among many others, of its inquisitorial obscurantism) it was alien to *Les Lumières*. These were 'lucres' of a Catholic bent, strongly controlled by a paternalistic and censorious monarchy, but focused on applied sciences, the education of the subject and external forms akin to foreign practices and customs, with ample space for the forms of sociability that triumphed in France and England.

In that Hispanic monarchy at the end of the eighteenth century, so concerned with fitting in with enlightened Europe and shedding obscurantist clichés, the seriousness of the Castilian gentleman became a model with which the old school's contemporaries continued to identify, but which for others began to feel uncomfortable (Sánchez Blanco 1991). In the middle of the century, the first great Spanish enlightened man would demystify this dignity of the serious man. Father Feijoo questioned the baroque discrepancy between humour and rigour, vindicating the former as an 'essential part of humane treatment'

(Urzainqui 2002: 487). This change in the perception of humour and laughter in eighteenth-century Spain is dealt with in Antonio Calvo's chapter, which focuses on the intellectuals' struggle against the image of the ridiculously serious people of the Peninsula disseminated by Montesquieu in his *Persian Letters*. Decades later, as renowned a figure as Francisco de Goya would use 'lo terrible and lo burlesco' (the terrible and the mocking) to make his engravings a true reformist lesson, as the work of Manuel Á. Junco explores. This brilliant painter is likewise addressed in the chapter by Javier Moscoso, who studies Goya's representations of the universal theme of the swing, in which women play a leading role.

Nor was the Hispanic world unaware of another European development, the *querelle des femmes*. Sally-Ann Kitts's chapter brings us closer to the Spanish illustrated press, specifically the newspaper *El pensador*, which, through the use of satire, reflected the latent tensions in this new illustrated sociability based on the coexistence of men and women, the so-called *mixité* (Bolufer 2019). For her part, Catherine M. Jaffe studies female quixotes, characters whose reading (in a sort of bovarism *avant la lettre*) made them lose their minds, in what is nonetheless a patriarchal response to women's access to reading and writing. Finally, Elizabeth Franklin Lewis studies the comic voice of the playwright María Rosa Gálvez, the neoclassical author who addressed the great issues of the comedies of the time (such as education and marriage) from a female perspective and in works starring women.

In 1808, the Napoleonic invasion of Spain puts an end to the chimeric of enlightened absolutism. In Cadiz, the only city not taken by the French, the first Spanish liberal constitution is designed and proclaimed in 1812. Political opinions can be expressed freely for the first time in the country and the supporters of absolutism (the so-called 'serviles') do not have the Inquisition to defend them from liberal satire. Then a remarkable incident occurs that is the subject of Gonzalo Butrón Prida's chapter: the reactionaries counterattack the liberals using the same weapon, satire, as happened in revolutionary France two decades before.

With Napoleon's defeat, Fernando VII was restored to the throne and ruled absolutely (1814–20 and 1823–33) without resorting to the mixed model of the *Carta Otorgada* (Constitutional Letter) and maintaining an inquisitorial spirit that resulted in the 1826 execution of schoolteacher Cayetano Ripoll for heresy, giving rise to international scandal.¹³ It was in that antediluvian atmosphere, in which it seemed that Spain was living with its back to Europe, that Mariano José de Larra (author of articles such as 'Vuelva Usted mañana . . .', which are

true classics of Spanish journalism) wrote. José María Ferri's contribution to this volume analyses Larra's humorous resources to better understand the stance of a progressive premise 'a la europea', but adapted to a censorship regime.

The Spanish *Old Regime* would finally fall in 1834, although decades of civil war between liberals and absolutists in the so-called Carlist Wars still lay ahead. New (albeit limited) printing laws allowed publications of varied political tendencies to flourish, using humour to assert themselves in the battle for public opinion. One such publication was the liberal Valencian magazine *El Mole*, studied in this volume by Alejandro Llinares.

Those same printing laws would leave the door open to an anticlericalism that had antecedents in previous centuries but that reached its peak in the period between the establishment of the liberal regime (with the famous massacre of the friars in 1834) and the fall of the Second Republic in 1939. This pronounced anticlerical spirit in a country with such a significant Catholic tradition is widely reflected in the Spanish humour of that century, as the chapter by Gregorio Alonso shows. Founded at the end of the nineteenth century (in 1884), the magazine *La Traca* stood out for its militant anticlericalism.¹⁴

This was a period at the turn of the century when graphic humour was experiencing a major boom in Spain and the surrounding countries. Carlos Reyero analyses Spanish caricature around 1900 through compositions inspired by the parody of artworks that were well known to the public and that give rise to a rich play of meanings and signifiers, the context of which is fundamental for reinterpreting the altered iconography of the original work. Likewise, in the field of art history, Miguel Ángel Gamonal Torres's chapter explores *El Gran Bvfón*, an exquisite magazine containing echoes of Spanish culture during one of its most brilliant periods, the so-called 'Generation of 98',¹⁵ but which was perhaps unable to connect with a public base (that bourgeoisie that demanded leisure) to make the publication profitable.

In the field of literature, one of the great female voices of the Spanish nineteenth century was Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851–1912), an outstanding essayist and novelist, as well as a great defender of women (Burdíel 2019). Her works demonstrate a remarkable sense of humour, which Isabel Burdíel explores in her chapter, analysing the role that the comical side of Pardo Bazán and the pranks targeting her played in the construction of her celebrity and the public impact of her feminism.

In the twentieth century, even in the black-and-white era of the dictatorship, we can find humour as well. During the Civil War, as the chapter by Xosé M. Núñez Seixas shows us, the coup-plotting side and

the Republican side used caricature to represent all the stereotypes associated with the 'other', both fascist and communist.

The Francoist dictatorship coincided, in its early years, with the prominence of the 'other generation of 27'¹⁶ (so named by the essayist Pedro Laín Entralgo), notable members of which included Miguel Mihura, Enrique Jardiel Poncela and Ramón Gómez de la Serna (Ríos Carratalá 2013). This was a generation that was not very rebellious, though not well-off, but that laid the foundations of contemporary Spanish humour through the theatre, the press and graphic humour of the absurd.

Much less avant-garde and openly conservative is that humour aimed at reinforcing the social principles of the regime. Sergio Blanco Fajardo's chapter examines the roles of men and women in radio during the first two decades of the Francoism.

What happens when a fascist dictatorship loses its two main allies (Germany and Italy) after the Second World War? It has no choice (and this is a new distinguishing factor) but to initiate a certain openness towards the winning side. Miguel Mihura was the first director (1942–44) of the legendary graphic humour magazine *La Codorniz* (1941–78), which covered almost the entire Francoist dictatorship. Self-styled as 'The the most daring magazine for the most intelligent reader', it dared to print on its cover (in December 1965, n°1255) a caricature of Manuel Fraga, the regime's Minister of Information and Tourism, explicitly holding his new press law (1966), which signified a certain openness (the previous censorship was over) with regard to the restrictive and interventionist law of 1938. In October 1968, the cover of issue number 1406 bore a caricature of the entire council of ministers, albeit without Francisco Franco (Prieto and Moreira 1998: 31).

Small audacities cannot hide the existence of the aforementioned conservative humour, even when it is camouflaged by a certain progressive varnish that interacts with the public's expectations. Dolores Ramos's chapter investigates these contradictions in the cinema of Francoist developmentalism.

Upon Franco's death, the democratization of the country began, giving rise to a humour with fewer strings attached (to the point that, in conjunction with the recent digital revolution, it seems not to have any limits). Returning to what was stated at the beginning of this introduction, humour is a subject of debate in Spain, which is no stranger to controversies regarding its limits. Public opinion is divided on the legitimacy or otherwise of the persecution of satirical humour while those behind it defend themselves in the press and in texts such

as Dario Adanti's sharp-witted graphic essay *Shoot the Humourist*. These reflections tackle subjects of real importance, such as freedom of expression and the democratic standards of the country.

Humour has been poking its finger into the wound of the latent contradictions between the inviolability of the Crown and the equality of all Spaniards, as well as the difficult reconciliation with a judicially amnestied Francoist past. In the case of the Crown, it was not until the end of the 1990s that a comedian, Manel Fuentes, dared to imitate King Juan Carlos on a prime-time television programme, *Crónicas Marcianas*. However, the protective veil over the institution (a symbol of the political model of the Transition) remains close-woven. The seizure of an issue of *El Jueves* magazine in 2007 has already been mentioned, but there are even more striking cases. On 31 October 2018, the Twitter channel 'Playz', belonging to the public television channel and aimed at a young audience, posted a nine-second video of Princess Leonor at her first public reading. In the clip, the princess stated that 'The political form of the Spanish State is the Parliamentary Monarchy';¹⁷ this was followed by Obama doing his 'mic drop'. Despite the obvious positive intent of the tweet, which made the young woman a defender of the system at a moment of crisis and reinforced this with a joke that was perfectly comprehensible to its intended young audience, part of the public did not seem to have understood the code. The main opposition party called for the resignation of the director of 'Playz'. The director of Radio Televisión Española, Rosa María Mateo, had to apologize, deeming the video 'unacceptable' (*El País*, 2 November 2018).

Considerable progress has been made in introducing women into the world of Spanish humour, reflecting the influence of the third and fourth waves of feminism, which have reframed women's relationship with leisure culture and encouraged people to raise their voices so women can move from being comical objects to being subjects. The debate has been covered by the media¹⁸ and women have taken a step forward in television and social networks, without having to fear a wide range of issues, as examined in the chapter by Natalia Meléndez Malavé, with which this book closes.

Can we speak, then, about 'Spanish humour'? The answer, with qualifiers, is 'sí', although never as something homogeneous as it is influenced by differences of class, gender, political cultures, etc. If Max Weber and Barbara Rosenweim spoke about emotional communities, we too can discuss 'comunidades humorísticas' (humorous communities) with a shared emotional and cultural/referential context, which is worthy of study. That is not to say that we are presenting an isolated

case here. On the contrary. At all times, the authors of *Spanish Laughter* have sought, from this very introduction, to give humour that important context that every joke requires in order to be understood. We have tried to frame the humorous at a national and international level, to situate the incidents in their political framework and to explain who it is that sends and receives the humour. We have tried, in sum, to get everyone (authors, readers and ancestors) to laugh together.

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Notes

Antonio Calvo Maturana is the main researcher for the research project ‘El humor y su sentido: discursos e imágenes de lo risible desde la Ilustración hasta hoy’ (Humour and Its Meaning: Discourses and Images of the Laughable from the Enlightenment to Today; HAR2017-84635-P), financed by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

1. This is the famous ‘procés catalán’ (Catalan process), a sovereigntist movement launched by the autonomous government of this community in 2012 that is still active today, almost monopolizing the country’s political debate.
2. ‘The #Bandera symbolises the union of a people. #Respect it. Not to do so is not humour, it is a gratuitous offence to those who are proud of it and those who have given their lives and effort in pursuit of the values of peace and liberty that it represents. #MiraQueEsBonita’ (tweet from the @guardiacivil, 1 November 2018).
3. R+D Project HAR2017-84635-P, Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. Its members are Gregorio Alonso, Manuel Á. Junco, Sergio Blanco, Gonzalo Butrón, Antonio Calvo, Alba de la Cruz, María del Mar Felices, José María Ferri, Miguel Ángel Gamonal, Catherine M. Jaffe, Sally-Ann Kitts, Elizabeth Franklin Lewis, Alejandro Llinares

Planells, Natalia Meléndez Malavé, Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, Dolores Ramos and Carlos Reyero. In addition, Isabel Burdiel and Javier Moscoso were invited to contribute to the volume. I would like to thank Kathleen Fueger (kmfueger@gmail.com) for translating the chapters originally written in Spanish.

4. Christie Davies studied jokes and their targets, concluding that there have been certain constants in this genre throughout history, such as jokes about ethnic minorities, 'intermediate regions' (Belgium, Freiburg, Bosnia, etc.) and localities that typically bear the stigma of low intelligence. Davies was, however, sceptical about the political or social analysis of jokes and was of the view that they 'are important, not because of their consequences, but rather as a phenomenon in their own right, as a favourite pastime for many people and a great source of amusement and creativity' (Davies 1990: 9).
5. In its common and extended meaning. We must not fall into the outdated Bakhtinian dichotomy between humour of the people and that of the elite, since all of society laughs at and enjoys the less sophisticated forms of humour ('popular' does not mean 'lower class'; Brewer 1997: 99).
6. In 1748, the famous Lord Chesterfield warned his son against laughter and boasted that no one had ever heard him laugh (Heltzel 1928: 74).
7. 'Instando a mi amigo cristiano a que me explicase qué es nobleza hereditaria, después de decirme mil cosas que yo no entendí, mostrarme estampas que me parecieron de mágica, y figuras que tuve por capricho de algún pintor demente, y después de reírse conmigo de muchas cosas que decía ser muy respetables en el mundo, concluyó con estas voces, interrumpidas con otras tantas carcajadas de risa: "Nobleza hereditaria es la vanidad que yo fundo en que, ochocientos años antes de mi nacimiento, muriese uno que se llamó como yo me llamo, y fue hombre de provecho, aunque yo sea inútil para todo."'
8. If we consider, for example, the articles of the international humour studies reference journal (*Humour: International Journal of Humour Research*, published since 1988 by the International Society for Humour Studies), the proportional scarcity of both historical articles and artistic and literary analyses is immediately apparent.
9. For a Spanish example, see Egido 1973.
10. Prior to this 1997 work, there was *Humour and History*, edited by Keith Cameron (1993). In the same period, works on the history of humour were published; for example, works on Christianity and laughter (Screech 1997), subversive humour (Sanders 1995), humour in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (Halshall 2002; Verdon 2001), Renaissance laughter (Ménager 2001), the Enlightenment (Andries 2000; Baecque 2000; Richardot 2002), theories and perceptions of humour and laughter throughout history (Billig 2005) and the ambitious long-term vision of Georges Minois (2001). In 1990, the journal *Humoresques revue de recherche scientifique sur le comique, le rire et l'humour défend la liberté d'expression avec les armes de l'humour* began to be published. This was followed by many others,

such as *Humour: International Journal of Humour Research* and *Studies in American Humour*. In Spain, the Quevedo Institute of Humour publishes *Quevedos*, which is devoted to the study of graphic humour.

11. We can, however, and without claiming to be exhaustive, mention works (mainly philological) about humour and laughter in the Golden Age (Arellano and Roncero 2006; Ferri Coll 2011), in the Enlightenment, especially through satire (Durán 2019; Kitts 2013; Urzainqui 1998, 2002, 2009; Uzcanga 2001, 2005), in the Cadiz Cortes (Calvo Maturana, 2021a), in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Orobon and Lafuente 2021), during Francoism (Ríos Carratalá 2008, 2013; Ferri Coll 2007) and, more broadly, throughout history (Mamolar Sánchez 2014; Perceval 2015). In the field of art history and fine arts, we must highlight works about graphic humour by several of this volume's authors, such as works about the Spanish nineteenth century by Miguel Ángel Gamonal (1983, 2009) and Carlos Reyero (2011, 2015, 2017), works about the theory of graphic humour by Manuel Álvarez Junco (2009, 2016) and concerning this genre in the current Spanish press by Natalia Meléndez (2006, 2008), the last of which are from the field of Information Sciences. Other noteworthy studies of humour and image include those of Fernando Arcas Cubero (1990), Valeriano Bozal (1979) and Luis Conde (2006).
12. Other fields related to gender, such as masculinity studies or queer studies, should also be studied in relation to humour.
13. In 1814, Fernando VII had restored the Inquisition, which had been abolished by the Cortes of Cadiz in 1813. In 1820, the liberals suppressed it again during their three years in power with Fernando as the obligatory constitutional monarch. Restored again to absolutism with French support, the king did not dare to re-establish the Inquisition, but he did allow diocesan boards of faith. It was the Junta of Valencia that executed Ripoll.
14. An anticlericalism that would end up costing the magazine's director, Vicent Miquel Carceller, his life decades later under Franco's repressive regime.
15. Names associated with this generation include Pío Baroja, Antonio Machado, Miguel de Unamuno and Ramón María del Valle Inclán, although the full list of excellent authors is much longer.
16. An allusion to the 'Generation of 27', of which Federico García Lorca, Miguel Hernández and Pedro Salinas, among many others, were part. This generation was interrupted by the Civil War (1936–39) and subjected to repression and exile.
17. 'La forma política del Estado español es la monarquía parlamentaria.'
18. '¿Por qué las mujeres no son graciosas?' (Why Aren't Women Funny?) (*Eldiario.es*, 23 July 2015).

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