

Hypermodernity and the carnivalesque. Reality humour in television of change in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Study proposal

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Paper received 21 June 2010 and accepted 2 November 2010

Abstract

This article deals with the phenomenon of reality humour or realist humour within the framework of television over the last two decades. This humour supposes a basic expression of the carnivalesque in the hypermodernity in which we find ourselves today. To this end, this article first studies a key socio-historical process of modernity, namely dramatisation, which makes identities different to their originals and, from this point onwards, we establish the correlative evolution of carnival and the sense of carnivalesque. Finally, the text focuses on the study of this humour by highlighting the condition of freak.

Key words

Carnival(esque), modernity, late modernity, dramatisation of identity, television, reality humour (realist humour).

Resum

Aquest article aborda el fenomen del reality humour o humor realista en el marc de la televisió de les dues últimes dècades. Aquest humor suposa una expressió bàsica del carnivalesc en la modernitat extrema en què ens situem. Amb aquest fi, l'article repassa primer un procés sociohistòric clau de la modernitat —la teatralització que hom fa d'unes identitats altres que les primordials— i estableix, a partir d'aquí, l'evolució correlativa del carnaval i del sentit del carnivalesc. En acabat, el text se centra en l'estudi d'aquest humor, del qual en destaca —acotant-la conceptualment— la condició de friqui(tzant).

Paraules clau

Carnaval(esc), modernitat, modernitat tardana, teatralització identitària, televisió, reality humour (humor realista).

1. An introductory note

With cultural or social phenomena, we have always believed that, rather than dissecting them formally, what is missing, without minimising this aspect, is an investigation into the causes from which a particular topology originates, and we have likewise believed that, to understand these phenomena better, it's necessary to recompose (pre)history.

2. Modernity and carnival(esque)

2.1. Modernity and *dramatisation* in social relationships. Some new senses of carnival(esque)

In pre-modern societies, prior to the mutations associated with middle-class society and the modern state (and particularly in rural environments), carnival ultimately stems from extreme experiences and the limits of violating what is sacred.¹ This results from perceptions of extreme, imminent risk regarding the tender young shoots of the crop, of nature and, even further, of the cosmic cycle in general. This violation of what is sacred¹ is precisely what generates terrible fears of cosmic

chaos, together with the consequent cataclysms of the self and community, of their meaning, of what they are, founded on the cosmic rhythms and on a cosmos associated mainly with its own immediate context. These are what drive frenetic and crazy rituals (all the rites of purification, fertilisation and regeneration in the cosmic cycle, which is, in essence, the original carnival), characterised by extreme alterations of individual and collective identities, in both ordinary senses, while necessarily leading to the alteration or conversion of identity via a system of ritual, dramatic elements: masks, disguises, imitated or projected voices, shouts, cowbells...

In contrast, from the start of the nineteenth century, and particularly in Europe, carnival underwent some essential transformation and conformed to basic requirements, to modern society, to the bourgeois mould. There are three basic ways of modernising carnival: *a*) by celebrating it within the establishment; *b*) above all by turning it into a "joke" in the popular media or, in other words, turning it into jolly, farcical reversals: jokes and buffoonery; and, most importantly, *c*) its *para-dramatisation*: turning it into an exceptional occasion when the protagonists, thanks to masks, disguises and extras, can

assume other identities, different to their own passively subjacent identity (other identities such as those of “gentlemen”, regional stereotypes and cinematographic figures, among others, to mention some that were common to establishment carnivals of the Catalan Restoration).

But from the middle of the 19th century, and coinciding with the consecration of the modern carnival, some cultural identities emerged and developed in Europe that were markedly modern and visible given their singular nature, representing a clear desire on the part of the people assuming these identities to personalise or individualise them: for example, such prolific and well-known identities as bohemians and dandies, or the most prototypical of the modern woman: the *garçonne*. What do these identities have in common? Well, the desire to transgress and overcome the primordial identities of the subjects in question, their primordial self, their most basic identity, not breaking the link but rather affiliating with it. However, there was also a desire to over-identify with these identities. Or, in other words: agreeing some acts to alter or convert the identity's most primordial version into other, more suggestive identities of a cultural or civic nature, using dramatic fiction for this purpose (clothing, hairstyle, gestures and other ritual aspects, encoded and agreed so that they would represent these identities), but without this *dramatisation* overshadowing the more idiosyncratic identity, as can happen in the theatre or the cinema. And, given these elements, agreeing to establish a fictional pact (Eco 1996) (largely accepting the deception in assuming these super-identities as good and natural), and consequently to assume a certain reservation of role, a certain subjective caesura or discontinuity of the realer self with regard to these other identities; although in this case, contrary to what Goffman pointed out and Berger repeated, this state is not the product of any coercive condition (Berger 1988; Goffman 1981).

These identities, these characteristics have clear concomitants with modern carnival and especially with the aforementioned *para-dramatisation*, of cultural motives or identities. Although it's true that, in carnival, given the festive fictionality reserved for this celebration, the motives are more implausible, the fictional pact is more evident and the role reservation perhaps much less.

What we have already noted about identities such as the bohemian, dandy or *garçonne*, the aforementioned respect of modern carnival and the analogies between both phenomena, lead us to an absolutely central feature of modernity: the *dramatisation* of identities and, by extension, of social interactions, something which is made particularly clear with late modernity as from the middle of the 20th century. And we mean *dramatisation* in the sense of assuming - incorporating - from ritual, symbolic, specific elements, identities of a cultural nature in the broadest sense, which are superimposed onto a person's most primary identities with the desire to highlight them, signify them and, above all, reinforce their personal nature.

Where does this *dramatisation* of identities come from? What conditions it? Well, it comes from what must have surely been (in phenomenological terms and with regard to the sphere of human consciousness) the fundamental realities of modernity from the end of the 18th century onwards: a set of interrelated phenomena that, situated at a person's deepest level of perception and feelings concerning their own existential condition, have operated correlatively at the deepest level of the factors affecting the great changes and dynamics of modernity.

Specifically, we could say that these *dramatisations* of other identities ultimately come from the erosion and substitution of the sacred in modern society, an anthropological religiousness with primitive cultural roots (as the notion of the sacred mentioned above, which could well be assimilated, to a certain extent, with the Freudian Eros), which supposes, in the individual, the strongest principle in structuring one's own existential sense. Thus, while in archaic carnivals, evaluations of extreme violations of sacredness led to people dramatically changing their ordinary identities (an extreme risk is perceived with respect to the cosmic cycle and, further, with respect to a possible cosmic chaos and the symbolic annulment of the individual and the community), in the *dramatisations* we're now seeing, so typical of modernity and especially of its advanced phases, it's the deficits in this sacredness that are highlighted in these representations.

More concretely, and more directly related to what we're concerned with here, namely *dramatisations* capable of individually arousing identities that suggestively enhance the self, there's another specific phenomenon, largely as a consequence of the aforementioned devaluation of what is sacred (or de-veneration) in understanding the world; namely anomie, which could be defined as a crisis of meaning or plausibility of the self in relation to the world, its comprehension and action (Berger and Luckmann 1988, 129, 141, 146, 148-149 and others).

2.2. Late modernity. *Dramatisation* of everyday life and the *complexification* of identity. New carnivalesque manifestations

From the middle of the 1950s, in the United States (and, years later, in western Europe), in the midst of the profound restructuring of capitalist production relations (the genesis of post-industrial capitalism) and economic growth, some first-order structural changes occurred that have essentially influenced, with subsequent evolutions, the definition of late modernity up to today: the formation of a society (and a culture) of mass, democratic consumption; the total hegemony of audiovisual culture; the development of a symbolic economy that suggestively makes the collective semiosphere more dense, as well as some basic qualitative leaps with regard to globalisation (of experience), centred on pop music, cinema and sport idols.

First of all, these factors have had a fundamental impact on western societies in phenomenological terms, an impact that, in turn, feeds back into these factors. More concretely, we can

say that these structural factors provoke and generalise a series of phenomenological experiences in which two characteristic phenomena stand out, and which we have referred to previously: experiences of de-veneration and anomie, which in turn fundamentally affect identities, their nature, and their dynamic (these aspects also essentially define late modernity) and new carnivalesque experiences.

Given the particularly conflictive nature of identity in its most individual and radical sense, with which some groups experience the impact of the structural factors noted at the beginning of this section, the first few decades of late modernity, especially the 1950s and 1960s, provided a very clear example of both the most characteristic phenomenological experiences of the time and their impact on the area of identity, as well as the genesis of some new festive expressions that we might call *carnivalesque*.

During this period, these structural factors, especially within the context of certain groups (young people, university students the most *with-it* bourgeoisie), led to common experiences that resulted in fundamental — and paradoxical — feelings of anomie: of dislocation or existential disengagement. One of the basic consequences of these experiences are the attempts made by men and women to incorporate themselves into new identities and, above all, to dramatise them ritually in everyday life. The aim is to provoke a certain sense of enchantment with the world, with their own existence, and in order to get an identity that confers a markedly personal or individualising character to their own identity. And another consequence of these experiences is the emancipation they encourage, within a *deconflictised* capitalism, of libidinal energies, which makes interpersonal communication more informal and is an aspect that facilitates, in turn, a *do it yourself* identity, as the manifestation of the *dramatisations* of identities as from this stage.

In effect, what we have said implies that, from the 1950s to the 1970s, in western societies, new cultural identities were frequently assumed and, above all, (micro)dramatised in everyday life (thanks to clothing, hairstyles, gestures, etc.), which primarily reinforces the personal nature of personal identity. It must be said, moreover, that without this dramatic fictionality, one cannot understand (it largely comes from this) the great development of *show* as from this time.

2.2. 1. Collective *para-dramatisation* and new expressions of carnivalesque

During the decades we have already mentioned, a series of celebrations arises that could be considered carnivalesque. And they could be seen as such because, within some festive contexts, they are assumed to be dramatically different from primary identities, to those most taken for granted, being identities in which the mark of modern pop culture is already evident. These festivals have clear analogies with the modern *para-dramatised* carnival we referred to in the first section and also, often, with the ritual and cosmic nature of archaic or pre-modern carnival.

Many of these celebrations are strictly or strongly *para-dramatic* in nature. Thus, and merely by way of example, we can cite the *para-dramatised* street parades and entertainment in vogue during the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, and the first performances by La Fura dels Baus or the pieces staged by the Comediants or, by contrast, the large folk rock concerts and festivals of the time, dressed in a powerful liturgical charge. All these manifestations have one fundamental feature in common: the dramatisation — or dramatic fictionalisation — of different identities of the primordial identity, carried out in daily life and with a desire for naturalness. Hence the main feature of carnivalesque expressions of late modernity which we will get back to in the next section. Needless to say, this sense of the carnivalesque cannot be understood in isolation from phenomenological changes and the specific identities which we have previously mentioned.

2.3. Hypermodernity.² Perceptions of social derealisation and *hyper-dramatisation*. The carnivalesque in the hypermodern era

Particularly from the end of the 1980s, another series of far-reaching structural events occurred that significantly modified the more phenomenological area of the sociology of modernity; within, however, the basic logic started in the middle of what we have called *late modernity*. What are these events? Well, the information revolution caused, firstly, by the internet becoming widespread and, hereafter, the outbreak, the hyper-mass consumption and sophistication of other new information and communication technologies; the fall of the Eastern Bloc, the “fall of ideologies”, the fictions of worldwide uni-polarity, and of the triumph and uni-viability of neoliberalism, and the emergence in the opposite direction of anti-globalising movements; the strong globalisation supposed by these events and others, such as environmental awareness, or, finally, the long cycle of economic boom (with a strong educational effect), which ran out three years ago.

Seeing as they inaccurately complicate, and to a great extent, the panoramic imprecision of reality, of the world, of its boundaries and their relationships; of technological hypermediation in human connections, these events, among others, enhance two defining phenomena of modernity that became particularly incisive during late modernity and that have ruled, on the most immediate plane, the logic of identity of men and women during this period: we are, of course, referring to the de-veneration of the perception and evaluation of reality and, as a result of this phenomenon, to anomie, which Berger graphically referred to many years ago as “a homeless world” (Berger 1977).

At the same time, the heightening of these phenomena has brought about another set of basic experiences in today’s sociological phenomenology, which have, amongst many other things, a very direct influence on current expressions of carnivalesque (more specifically on the television expression), which is the most specific aim of this text. But without the extreme

escalations of the de-veneration and anomie of the past decades, we cannot understand phenomena such as perception and evaluation in terms of the *liquidity* of human relationships and institutions, and the different flexibilities and fears that this generates (Bauman 2006, 2010), or understand a phenomenon that underlies this: the perception of de-realisation — a loss of force in reality — of social and human reality, as far as roles, bonds, institutions or identities; its becoming irrelevant in terms of meaning, its ontic erosion, wear and fragmentation (Vattimo 1990, epilogue; Vattimo 1995, 56 and sub.; Jameson 1991; Imbert 2004, 76 and sub.).

On the other hand, these phenomena are essential to capturing sufficiently enhanced sensations during this historical cycle: sensations of little self-presentation in everyday life, of scarce relevance and projection as individuals, especially within the public sphere. This phenomenon, like the de-realisation of the social sphere, essentially facilitates the success of reality TV or extreme realism in today's television (Pross 1983, 93; Lipovetsky 2009, 143-162). The competition between these phenomena has fundamental consequences for identity, communication in the broad sense, for the arts, politics, organisational cultures, etc.

We would like to highlight four basic trends in the field of communication and identity. Firstly, reality TV, which, with early paradigmatic expressions in *The Truman Show* and *Big Brother* (Niccol 1998; Lacalle 2001, 140-153; Cáceres 2001), is characterised by a fictionalisation of the inner and emotional lives of others (*docu-realities* that have a wide range of formats, reality talks, humorous realities, reality shows...). Secondly, the intensification of everyday dramatisations of identities that are different from their primary identities or even a *hyper-dramatisation*, with some traits of generalisation, understatement, hyper-normalisation or greater social reification, highly diversified in terms of expression (closely associated with fashions that are increasingly conditioned by these hyper-dramatic needs and by a strong need to differentiate the underlying identities) and somatised (ritual fixation on their own bodies: tattoos, piercings, etc.), even regarding this phenomenon (Capdevila 2009). Thirdly, performances in the electronic sphere (Facebook and other networks, blogs, etc.) and, fourthly, the emergence and success of a multitude of *para-dramatised* collective performances (lipdubs, flashmobs, various rituals for young people, themed parties around films, comics or novels; dramatised (ethno)historical recreations; etc.) (Capdevila 2010).

What do these expressions have in common? A *dramatised* fictionalisation of everyday life, with everyone wanting to assume super-identities that are attached to the primary, and to be able to essentially benefit from strongly emotive and personalised identifications. This *dramatisation* of daily life is a basic necessity resulting from the experiences of anomie and social de-realisation we have already mentioned.

2.3.1. Carnavalesque and extreme phase of late modernity

In this socio-historic stage (the extreme phase of late modernity), two basic manifestations of the carnivalesque exist, a result

of the phenomenological logic we have just noted. One of these is the mass *para-dramatised* performances we have just referred to. And the other, the commonness of TV comedy programmes and spots from the 1990s up to the present day.

The fact that these programmes are mainly based on supposedly humorous transgressions or reversals, and the fact that the humorous nature of these programmes (the finite world of meaning typical of them and the tacit rules that come from them) makes these transgressions more or less plausible and makes one first assume a clear fictional component, means that these programmes or humorous sections can be placed in the carnivalesque field.

Regarding the features of this transgressing, carnivalesque TV humour, one is clear: this humour is based, primarily, on the breaking of patterns or the most ordinary senses (the most taken as read, the most basic) of our daily life, which leads to characteristic sensations or feelings in terms of absurdity, perplexity, loyalty, morbidity, vulgarity... A universe of features that come to define a distinct, single phenomenon which, in turn, we can call *freakism*. This type of humour has become the face *par excellence* of television humour since the end of the last century, although it goes beyond the field of television and its comedy.

3. Reality humour and carnivalesque in television from the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century. *Freakism* and TV humour

We have said that *freak* or *freakifying* expressions have been clearly dominant in humorous television registers and formats in the last twenty years. But what do we understand by the term *freak*? Let's try to narrow it down to the most comprehensive and essential definition possible. The phenomenon of *freak*, applied to this humour, is based on (plays provocatively with) subverting the most ordinary patterns, principles or feelings, the most taken for granted, the most reified by society, of everyday life in society and therefore related to very basic spheres of common sociability and co-existence, such as propriety or politeness in the most basic sense (corporeal aesthetics and, beyond, the semiosis of the body in terms of individual ethos and attitudes), acts of communication and especially interpersonal, attitudes in general or the patterns of personality.

However, these violations diversely provoke a universe of impressions, sensations or feelings that could be characterised in line with these categories: absurdity, strangeness, anomaly, ugliness and vulgarity, stupidity and debasement, morbidity and repulsiveness, and childishness. Some might say, and not without reason, that some of these categories (such as the taste for ugliness or morbidity, particularly exploited by this humorous *freakism*) are also characteristic features of other ages and cultural expressions: of the Baroque or Romanticism, above all. This is certainly the case; however, with

Romanticism, in which the ugly, deformed or grotesque often appear, the experiences found in the origin of these reflections and their meaning have a basic metaphysical vocation: i.e. they follow experiences and feelings from a world of great metaphysical depth, in which, admittedly, some anomic experiences can already clearly be seen (Bozal (ed) 2000, 202-203, 306).

A good example (out of many possible examples) of this reality humour, which we have characterised as *freakifying*, is this song ("Me he puesto tetas" [I've put on some tits]), which the humorist Berto sings in a clip with the Border Boys, sponsored by the Buenafuente programme: "Hey nena/me rompiste el corazón en mil pedazos/[...]/pero he cambiado/y ya no te echo de menos/porque me he puesto tetas/y puedo tocarlas aunque no estés aquí./ Eran las dos únicas cosas que molaban de tí./Tengo tetas./ Ya no me haces falta para ser feliz/pues tengo tetas/ cómo te quedas/ y ahora es a mí a quien me miran en el metro./ Mi médico nunca me tuvo tasado el pecho..."³

[Hey, girl, you broke my heart into a thousand pieces... but I've changed and I don't miss you anymore because I've had some tits put on and I can touch them even though you're not here. They were the only two things I loved about you. I have tits. I don't need you anymore to be happy, cos I have tits, whaddya think? And now they look at me on the tube. My doctor never rated my chest...]

Much of the subversion in this type of humour (such as those that suppose the breaking of basic, obvious rules of how to behave on a TV set, as has characteristically happened on some humorous late shows) involve the violation of what Berger proposed as the first foundations of the social construction of reality, as the first – and most basic – fundamentals of an agreed and shared social reality: those most basic routines and senses on which, afterwards, roles, institutions and identities are built and developed (Berger 1988, 89). On the other hand, this kind of violation involves radical and definitive overcoming (thereby undermining their most basic social rules, naively assumed by everyone) of good custom, of good form, of elementary urbanity (Elias 1973), of what had been, in short, until the mid-20th century and the great changes that took place, the huge factor in the preservation of a predominantly conflicting capitalist social orders in terms of resources.

It must be said (and this is relevant) that (self-)awareness of this transgression tends to be basically unimportant. One lives this transgression, so to speak, in line with an essential feeling of gratuity or primordial justification in the very act of overturning the most basic fundamentals of ordinary life. That's why this is quite remote from the subverting of the ordinary senses of immediate reality, also characteristic of the carnivalesque of pre-modern societies, in the broad sense. And, in this way, both through the tradition of playful and humorous transgression (the mimes of medieval jesters such as the "Home del Pet" [Fart Man] carved in a corbel in the colonnaded street of Sant Roc de Bellpuig, who opens his bottom with his hands

and blows out of his mouth; some agricultural rites of powerful humoristic paradox; and the whole peasant culture of the 20th century, of mockery and banter) and also through the reversals of strict carnival festivities. In all these cases, transgression does not come, primarily, through the intrinsic pleasure of subverting the elementary logic of the most basic realities. These experiences have basic meanings to structure the cosmos and, related to these meanings, to structure identities themselves as community and individuals, and the function of regulating morals and economics, as well as, of course, an entertaining and performance function, in some cases.

Related to this aspect, it is important to highlight that this broad sense of freak humour is far from developing the most defining features of satirical humour of the pre-modern carnival tradition, such as those that were still abundantly seen in the satirical press at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th: namely, essential, radical, straight reversals (governed by a sense of where it must strike, precise, decisive, sometimes combative) and with a slight dose of malice, of the (apparently) most relevant features of the adversary's psychological idiosyncrasy, together with his actions and of the logic of these actions. These characteristics make powerful instruments of such deforming alternations (these far-reaching parodies) of the identity of the other one, instruments of symbolic annulment or segregation, and actually produce satires with a high Dionysian density. On the other hand, we can see that, in humorous TV programmes or spots since the 1990s, globally dominated by a *freaki(fying)* humour in the aforementioned sense, the transgression, not without a fundamental tendency for theatrical fiction, principally affect very basic, very specific senses, taken for granted and quite invisible, from everyday life and imminent reality, regarding the aesthetic patterns, the patterns of politeness and good taste, *ethos* and corporal attitudes, personality traits, etc., of the characters. This type of transgression results in parodies (or satirical counter-representations) which are not very erosive, which often incur or almost achieve frivolity, and that definitively result in satires of little Dionysian density. However, it should be noted that this kind of humour facilitates, in turn, some humorous (*self-*)*dramatisations* in terms of forms of expression and television formats.

And what we have said applies as much to journalists or humorists that eventually resort to self-parodies (such as those by X. Sardà in *Crónicas Marcianas*) as to those who habitually define themselves as self-parodying characters (Boris Izaguirre, in the same programme) and to fictional parody characters (the prolific saga of El Neng, the Follonero, Chikilicuatre, Berto, etc., from the Buenafuente factory), as well as parodied characters such as the social and political satire programmes themselves; and applies to programmes of this last nature up to humorous meta-television programmes of the *APM* type, of TV3, including late shows of a humorous nature or with a humorous base, such as the aforementioned shows by Buenafuente and Sardà, amongst others.

And what most interests us even more than the 'what' is the

'why' of the phenomena: if we were to ask ourselves about the more latent motivations behind this humour that so defines hyper-modernity, we could find three fundamental, phenomenological reasons. First, a transformation in and relaxation of the Dionysian dimension in humour - of what is, according to Berger, eminently restless and obscure, with a signification of cosmic meaning that we all intuit in the fact of the world, referring to the notion of a counter-world and diversely characterising the different experiences of the humorous fact (Berger 1997), and which cannot be separated, we add, from transformations related to the sacred, in the aforementioned sense of sacred. A second motivation is what we previously pointed out concerning the perceptions and sensations of de-realisation of the social and, therefore, the human, so characteristic of our times (Imbert 2005). If we do not take this phenomenon into account, it's difficult to understand this humour's penchant (the humour we call *freakifying*) for disrupting and turning upside down the most accepted, most ordinary of reality (just as little can be understood without this factor regarding reality TV's dramatic fictionalisation of private and emotional life). And a third factor is a phenomenon that is ultimately as little noticed as it is basic: the *Thanatosisation* of Eros; i.e. an intensification of Freud's 'death drive', those inclinations and tastes that resort, in one way or another, to a greater or lesser extent, to violence or to death, symbolically speaking, also caused by the already mentioned heightening of de-veneration in the world, and assuming, as we have already mentioned, that this sacredness, with its primitive roots, is essentially similar to Freud's Eros (Eliade 1992; Freud 1995; Marcuse 1972). Ugliness, morbidity, the subverting of the most elementary decorum that is so characteristic of *freakism*; can these not, to a great extent, be explained by this phenomenon?

However, let us now try to establish the purposes of this type of comedy. It is possible to distinguish two types; the first relates to psycho-sociological factors and the second to more pragmatic reasons. Starting with the first, this is a desire to subvert, upset the most basic, invisible foundations of common, everyday reality. The second, and from the provocation entailed by these facts, would be to cause strong emotions — it was Dalcroix who warned of today's social hegemony of *emotionalism*, of the taste for strong emotions and sensations (Dalcroix 2005) formulated in the key of humour. And thirdly, based on this strong emotion, we find the primary purposes: the desire of presenters and actors who play comic roles on television to reaffirm the singular nature of their own identities, and their desire (and that of those in charge of programmes in general) to vicariously provide this same experience for the public watching the show.

Moreover, two practical reasons would have to be adduced. One very obvious one is the desire for maximum heteronomy regarding the real tastes of the public and, therefore, for the maximum returns that can be achieved; this is something that, as Bourdieu remarked, has been an essential feature of commercial literature ever since the 19th century (Bourdieu 1994).

And the other, a (certain) resorting to *freakism* — in its more aesthetic sense, above all — with the aim of conveying political and social satire more successfully. We have good, high quality examples of this in the current series *Polònia* or in Palomino's excellent monologues, dramatised by Oriol Grau in *Sense títol* or *La cosa nostra*, or even, apart from TV3's comedy programmes, in the humorous programmes led by Gran Wyoming: *Caiga quien caiga* (Telecinco) or *El intermedio* (laSexta), or also, in another format of satirical *infotainment*, satirical gags with puppets, in *El guiñol* on Canal +.

Now we have proposed a definition of this realist humour and have reviewed the basic logic of its parodic nature, we would now like, however briefly, to address its main manifestations: parodic characters, their types, their main mechanisms of construction or, which is the same, the basic models of (*self-*)*dramatisation* that help to build them. We believe, in this respect, that they can be differentiated into at least six basic models of parodic construction with distinct types of characters.

One clear model is represented by those clearly fictional characters who, at the limit of their acting role, nonetheless act in real/realist television media. They are characters created *ex profeso* as comic characters that serve comedy programmes. Examples of this type of characters are those in Buenafuente's programmes, mentioned above — of Toni Moog in *Boqueria 357* (TV3), or El Reportero Total on the pioneering night show *Esta noche cruzamos el Mississippi* (Telecinco). One related model is *parodic transformism*: the changing representation of new characters, of ephemeral characters, by actors and comedians. The prolixity of characters represented by Carlos Latre in *Crónicas marcianas* is a case in point. Another model — linked to this — is that of real life celebrities with a long or unique parodic history on the screen. The characters in the successful British comedy series *Little Britain* (BBC), *Polònia*, *La escobilla nacional* (Antena 3 TV), *Muchachada Nui* (La 2), or Ricardito Bofill made by Toni Clapés in *Crónicas*, among many other examples: all represent this model. Finally, with this same *para-dramatisation* nature, we should also mention characters that, as a part of the parameters of this realist, *freakifying*, carnivalesque humour, star in fictional TV comedies: Lo Cartanyà - TV3's eponymous series is highly indicative of this possibility.

Other parodic construction mechanisms are those presenters or guests of programmes that occasionally or habitually resort, humorously, to subverting very basic patterns of conduct, very much taken for granted, on television and in the public sphere in general: in cases such as those of Boris Yzaguirre in *Crónicas* or Torito in *Vitamina N* (Citytv) — to give two very well-known and emblematic examples; this behaviour follows a strategy of parodic (*self-*)construction. The new channels of audiovisual mediation associated with the internet — YouTube, social networks, etc. — and mobile telephones have for years supplied many concurrent cases, from *amateurism* to parodic fictional self-construction. There is one last model that must be men-

tioned: that which corresponds to those characters that were initially outside television: Bernardo Cortés, the “real Palomino”, for example, which, given television’s reconstruction of certain features in terms (as, moreover, in all models of parody) of transgression from some highly normalised patterns of immediate reality, they also achieve the level of parodic characters. Additionally in this field one would include the parodic outcomes of comedy meta-television programmes.

Very different models and characters of parody can be found in this type of comedy, characterised by the hybridisation of generations and the proliferation and dominance of formats (Imbert 2005; Gómez Martín 2005), genres and conveyed formats. Thus, and with respect to the latter, it’s worth noting the system, the monologue, the reality talk in the form of chats and interviews, essentially the transmission of sections of programmes (often of reality games), etc.

Up to this point, we have tried to show the defining features of realist humour in today’s television, and we have attempted to point out some of its historical and cultural fundamentals.

Notes

- 1 Here it is helpful to understand *sacred* in the sense of Eliade and other authors, as a dimension of the reality that is essentially different to “our world”, to the “secular world” that, revealed above all within the context of certain ritual moments and experienced as a numinous emotion, is seen as “saturation of being”, as the ultimate in ontological plenitude, while referring to a plane of cosmic signification (Eliade 1992) and assuming, on the other hand, that it is, as Durkheim points out, the original basis of religious experience.
- 2 We adopt this term and its essential conception as per Lipovetsky (Lipovetsky 2006).
- 3 <www.formulatv.com/videos/2227/berto-canta-me-he-puesto-tetas-en-buenafuente>

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