

# Monarchy, jesters, politicians and audiences

## Comparison of TV satire in UK and Spain

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**Abstract:** Satire programmes have become a frequent form of political communication on TV. After the liberalisation of media and the globalization of formats, countries like Spain have adopted satirical formats derived from earlier ones, which relied on old traditions from nearly the inception of television similar to the United Kingdom. The goal of this article is to build a definition of the genre, taking into account the examples of the two mentioned countries and, also, referring to both periods, before and after liberalisation. We will use a comparative methodology relative to the profile of the audiences, of the buffoons of satire and the role played by the politicians through the short history of television satire. The results point to an evolution. During the sixties in the past century, the genre targeted the middle classes, writers tried to popularize politics for a society respectful to the Establishment and politicians censored the program in case it created an imbalance between ideological options during elections. In the nineties, satire jesters acquired the main role in the show and the politicians not only immunized themselves against satire but seemed to take advantage of it.

**Keywords:** Satire; television; liberalisation; segmentation of audiences; political communication.

**Summary:** 1. Introduction. 2. The methodology of the comparative analysis. 3. Satire before television. 4. Monarchist sanction of the satire and general profile of the potential public of the sixties television satire. 4.1. The profile of the buffoons of the sixties television satire. 4.2. Audiences and profile of the spectators of the sixties television satire. 5. A fragmented public for a postmodern satire. 5.1. Audiences and politicians in the television satire after liberalisation. 5.2. Profile of the satire buffoons after liberalisation. 6. Conclusions.

### 1. Introduction

In this article we try to clarify the concept of television satire and prove that common aspects exist between concrete examples in this genre, as well as different geographical and historical moments in television. Rick Altman (2000) upholds the idea that genre is a battleground, that's to say, a meeting place of meanings and structures that are constantly modified thus implying changes to

text structures, associated meanings, the role of the producers and the public, etc.

In order to reach the proposal mentioned above, we will concentrate on the writers of these satires, their audiences and the role played by the political classes, which have been the target of their criticism, leaving aside questions related to production models for other publications.

When trying to define satire, we come across the problem of research which lies in the fact that there are many forms of satire, as far as programmes are concerned and related to time, although many formats are globalised. We can distinguish, in great detail, satire produced before the liberalisation of the media in the sixties in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and satire after it in the nineties. With regards to the geographical question we would have a multitude of examples but to simplify matters we have studied the British and the Spanish systems. The first, because it established the origin of television satire. The second, because it could represent a series of countries that adopted the genre after liberalisation, above all in Southern Europe and Latin America.

The importance of this problem is noticeable within the field of political communication. These programmes tend to feed news to audience segments which consume less traditional news formats; in other words, for specific audiences, television satire constitutes an essential mediator of their participation in the public sphere. In general, they are programmes that function like editorials creating public opinion. For some writers, this created opinion is weakly maintained in rational arguments. Meanwhile, other writers defend it by saying that satire allows audiences, which are traditionally less attentive, to have a link to a public issue.

Nowadays, the phenomenon of television satire has not been deeply or extensively studied in Spain. The scarcity of research is due to a lack of satirical tradition in the media and in concrete, television, where satire arrived in the middle of the nineties. Nevertheless, we can count on research centered on the democratization of public space on behalf of Spanish satire (Valhondo, 2008). In that study, we concluded that television satire worked as a brand image for television channels without probably having a positive effect on the participation of civil society in the public sphere.

There also exists a magnificent and exhaustive study by José Ángel Carpio (2008) on *El Guiñol* (similar to Spitting Image) which analyses audience profiles, the direct effects of this programme on its audience, the effects on the public and the content of its message. His research determined that there were no direct effects on its audience, its audience was mainly formed by young adults under the age of 34, which formed part of an attentive public that consumes news through other forms, and are interested in political matters (basically, the less informed were less interested in the programme). The viewers of *El Guiñol* were not only looking to be entertained but also have their ideology and identity confirmed. Carpio also found another sector of the public that watched the programme because they were disenchanted with politics and wanted to confirm their cynical views of politics.

The research by Salomé Berrocal et al. (2003) mainly centred on the contents of *El Guiñol*, *Caiga Quien Caiga* and *El Informal* and concretely on biased news through the image of the candidates and the division of time for each political option.

Therefore, the question we ask ourselves is up to what point can we find common elements in the definition of satire regarding the public, writers and the political class to which its criticism is directed?

## 2. The methodology of the comparative analysis

As Hallin and Mancini (2004) point out, the role of comparative analysis is understood on the basis of its two functions: on the one hand, its role in forming and clarifying concepts, and on the other hand, its role on causal inference. In using the comparative analysis, we hope to shed some light on the concept of television satire and moreover, point out the role of satire in the configuration of political communication in the public sphere. As Blumler and Gurevitch (1975), and Hallin and Mancini, (2004) highlighted, this method has the ability to show what we think to be natural, and make unnatural what seems innate from our point of view, which ends up being unnoticed. In other words, television satire in Spain does not cease to be an alternative among others until we compare it with other examples distanced in space and/or time.

Therefore, to characterize genre in satire we have chosen a corpus of recognised texts among the theoretical, which are relevant in each time and in both countries [1]. In the following table, we offer this selection.

	United Kingdom	Spain
1960	<i>That Was The Week That Was (TW3)</i>	-
1990	<i>Have I Got News For You (HIGNFY)</i>	<i>Caiga Quien Caiga (CQC)</i> <i>Las Noticias del Guiñol (El Guiñol)</i>

In the United Kingdom, *TW3* (BBC, 1962-1964) started from an attempt to adapt satirical discourse from clubs like the Establishment or magazines like *Private Eye* to television. *TW3* can be considered as the first programme of television satire in the world and one of the few which has been made for a mass audience since then. The programme was a parody of traditional news about current topics broadcast on Saturday. It worked as a news summary and mixed musical performances with comedy sections.

Three decades later, another British programme, *Have I Got News For You* (BBC, 1990- present), created as a hybrid between quiz show and news to discuss, in a satirical way, about weekly topics in the media. It was the mould for many programmes and it was exported to many television channels around

the world. Celebrities and politicians formed the teams which argued with inventiveness and knowledge about political topics and society.

It was not until the nineties that political satire on television appeared in Spain. *Caiga Quien Caiga* (TeleCinco, 1996-2002; La Sexta 2004-2008) was one of the first satirical programmes in this medium. The programme parodied classical news adding to its repertoire reporters, which covered the events on the political agenda with an unbelieving and ironical tone. Since the appearance of *CQC*, politicians have found themselves at a crossroads of negotiation proposed by satire. They could gain symbolic capital, but they could also be ridiculed before an unexpected question.

2005 marked the tenth anniversary of the first broadcast of *Las noticias del Guiñol* on Canal Plus. This programme approached the daily news through representations of the protagonists who were different puppets of popular public figures. Instead of proposing a standard news item, this satire amused audiences by employing caricatures of famous politicians. Its promoters assured that *El Guiñol* expressed what ordinary forums were impeded visually through political correctness.

As we have pointed out before, we have compared two periods (pre and post liberalisation) and two countries (United Kingdom and Spain), also with regards to the context in which the public socialized, audiences, buffoons and the target of satire (political class, with special mention to the relation between monarchs and buffoons). We will employ quantitative measures (audience figures, appreciation figures, audience share, socioeconomic data) and qualitative measures (opinions of social actors related to the genre production).

In this study, the application of this methodology has its limits and should be informed. The audience figures for social classes that we have compared are not homogeneous. With regards to the United Kingdom, the categories used in the sixties and the present have changed. In the Spanish case, the data that we have collected on audience class does not use the same categories as the United Kingdom. On the profile of buffoons and those of the political class, we must point out that they were not extracted first hand from a content analysis, but from the basis of opinions from experts in satire and writers from said genre.

In order to contribute meaning to the comparative results, we will firstly describe, succinctly, the background to television satire. Then, we will deal with the question of consensus in the fifties and the progressive disintegration of that consensus in satire in the following decade. Finally, we will discuss the type of satire that re-emerged after liberalisation.

### 3. A background to television satire

When dealing with the matter of creating a general public in the United Kingdom, to which the satirical discourse did not leave indifferent, it is interesting to point out a brief historical note on satire before television.

The first aspect that we highlight, with regards to forming a receptive public to satire, is related to the special way that democracy took place during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Eric Hobsbawn, the influential social historian of the 20th century points out in his brilliant work *The Age of Empire* (1989) that around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the United Kingdom saw how the appearance of mass democracy, the serious political analyses and debates stopped being made in public and left for a new stage in which the politicians wrapped themselves in rhetoric to protect themselves from the citizens:

“When the men who governed really wanted to say what they meant, they had henceforth to do so in the obscurity of the corridors of power, the clubs, the private social evenings, the shooting parties or country-house weekends where the members of the elite met each other in a very different atmosphere from that of the gladiatorial comedies of parliamentary debates or public meetings. The age of democratization thus turned into the era of public hypocrisy, or rather duplicity, and hence also into that of political satire” (Hobsbawn, 1989).

In this quote, Hobsbawn underlined how mass democracy brought with itself two communicative phenomena on a great scale: on the one hand, the strategy of political demagoguery, and on the other hand, the satire attributed to this demagoguery as an element of resistance and suspicion with regards to hegemonic discourse. From this point of view, satire tried to provide an alternative to representation, to the lack of visibility provoked by demagogic discourse; a kind of back to front of elitist public rhetoric.

Demagoguery, as much as satire, was possible thanks to the popularisation of the press at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This discursive resistance has existed before, as these expressions are constant throughout history, as the work of the theorist Mijail Batjin (1987) proves on the carnivalesque expression of literature and life in the communities. Nevertheless, it is without doubt that during the 20<sup>th</sup> century that expression was institutionalised periodically and in multiple places for more people, on the contrary to the carnivalesque expression fitted to a specific time and space. Moreover, satire was converted to an actual expression of popular press, differing from the performance aspect of carnival.

In the United Kingdom, the contents of television satire preceded the tradition that existed in Oxford and Cambridge University theatre clubs, radio programmes such as the *The Goon Show* (BBC, 1951-1960) [2], in comedy routines acted out in London clubs like Peter Cook's *The Establishment* or the creativity coming from magazines like *Private Eye* (Wilmot, 1980).

#### **4. Monarchist sanction of satire and general profile of the public**

After the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, television has served both to consolidate values and consensus identities, above all national ones, and to be a source of potential cultural dissidence. (Barker, 2003). The broadcast of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II is an example of the first, while the appearance on television of the first satire programme, *TW3*, is an example of the second. In favour of consensus after the fifties, we can highlight a Welfare state. Whilst in favour of dissent, the generational post-war change with its implications in new social demands. (Ibarra, 2005). Anyway, this dissent via television was abruptly cut with the cancellation of *TW3* in 1963. All these questions will be dealt with in more detail.

At the beginning of the fifties the broadcast of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II marked the start of popularized television in Great Britain. It also supposed a television approval by the crown as a unifying element in the post-war national identity of Britain. The BBC designed a media event to gather viewers and renew a feeling of national community (Dayan and Katz, 1998). This consensus was strengthened when the Queen went to see the nation's most famous comedian, Peter Cook, to enjoy the impersonation he did of the actual Conservative British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan (Marr 2007:222). In this way, she sanctioned the dissident public face of national community, signaling the limit of criticism within itself. As emphasized by Balandier (1994), the buffoon "breaks with discipline, but at the same time contributing to restoring it".

The media event of the coronation was a reflection of the post-war consensus in the United Kingdom which obeyed the social pacts based on the social Welfare state. After the Second World War, western powers introduced a new world economic policy which affected the political and sociological profile of the Europeans and Americans. Social capitalism was introduced to try and avoid accumulation crisis like the one experienced in the 1930's and, at the same time trying to procure a middle class.

Actually, the formation of the middle class in history was a direct consequence of the need for a counterrevolutionary move sustained by a majority against the communist 'threat' (Gaggi y Narduzzi, 2008). The Bretton Woods' pact constituted the first global governance with fixed exchange rates and institutions in charge of looking after economic and political stability, like the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund (Curran, 2002). Within the actual countries, policies were developed to redistribute the wealth, pacts between capital and labour were made which culminated in the Welfare state model.

Democratic ideals were reinforced thanks to the popular perception that democracy had defeated fascist authoritarian regimes (Marr, 2007). The solidarity effort of war had also provided the population with a more equal and de-classed society. These ideas survived during two decades thanks to the above mentioned economic policy adopted by Europe, which in a short time generated a homogeneous and inclusive middle class with great economic and

political cohesion. (Alonso, 2006). It seems logical to think that these changes allowed the public, and above all the new generations to gain receptivity, both with regards to consensus discourse like demagogy and political satire; this probably contributed to the fact that these audiences played the role of the modern public which still believed in the learned project although at the same time they saw glimpses of its possible faults.

As explained by Robert Putnam (2002), greater economic equality leads to higher rates of social cohesion and in this age salaries are more equal than at any other time in the century within developed countries. Thanks to the Labour party, which won the 1946 elections, the creation of the National Health Service and nationalization of industry was undertaken.

The 1950's were characterized by consensus, the following decade saw the generation of the baby boomers, to which Peter Cook and his contemporaries belonged, and started to question the hierarchy of British Society.

How can you explain the change in this generation compared to the established consensus? How do you understand the will of this generation to clarify the political hypocrisy that permeated not only in British democracy but also all the western democracies since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? We will now describe factors of social dissent associated to the general public and later we will discuss satirical writers.

According to Humphrey Carpenter (2000), a historian of British satire, as you were obliged to do your National Service in territories of the Empire this influenced a different conscience to the previous generation. Even though the Empire had practically disappeared after the war, the United Kingdom still intervened militarily in different places around the world, for instance, The Suez Canal [3]. With this international incident British society realised that the invasion of Egypt on behalf of the British only housed an imperialist desire. Something similar happened in many countries with the American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

On the one hand, the National Service forged an experience of a community without classes; and on the other hand, a sense of injustice and offense towards citizens from the places that the United Kingdom was invading. Moreover, the post-war decolonization of the Empire, and the subsequent mass immigration also contributed to a new feeling of distress among the British public to those who, for so long, had been subjects of the British Empire and now were equal citizens in their own right.

According to Carpenter, another social factor greatly influenced British satire for an emerging public, the application of the new law on education, The Butler Law (1944), which promoted the working class and women to access higher education. In the sixties, these cultural identities became a reality and the appearance of social movements which promoted new political demands (Maverick, 1998; Ibarra, 2005). In the UK, the CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) combined a counterculture that was against nuclear proliferation and against the promises of consumer capitalism. (Hewison, 1986).

Therefore, after an age of social consensus which the recently inaugurated television had highlighted with media events, the British public started to disintegrate with the appearance of a new generation. The buffoons of this new satire were at the vanguard of this segmentation.

#### **4.1. The profile of the buffoons of the sixties television satire.**

In order to speak about writers of British satire at the time, we should remember that before they produced anything, they had grown up with satire. The first satirical writers, like Peter Cook and members of Monty Python, had listened to radio shows like *The Goon Show* (BBC, 1951-1960). They were mainly middle-upper class individuals who had assisted private schools and enjoyed elitist education. Thanks to this, they had lived with future politicians. This fact is fundamental in the history of British satire because the buffoons knew the elite well, in fact, they were part of it.

Therefore they did not have that social respect that the rest of the population had, a type of reverence to remote power, which to them was a power they felt close to.

In the first, modern satire club in London, started by Peter Cook (The Establishment), the Oxford and Cambridge buffoons would laugh at their old colleagues (now powerful politicians), exhibiting a conscience contrary to authoritarianism which was in vogue in those colleges and universities.

Andrew Marr (2007) supports the idea that these satirical writers, who started in amateur clubs, had no radical political conscience but they did coincide with each other in a clear feeling of negative identity with regards to the previous generation and all kinds of authoritarianism. This feeling was mainly channeled through satirical expression in the student clubs at university that they attended. In the sixties this would also be reflected on television as well.

#### **4.2. Audiences and profile of the spectators of the sixties television satire.**

In contrast with the fifties, the sixties served to discover that the post-war, monolithic, British society had started to disintegrate. Under a superficial cloak of consensus, a polarized society lived, which was awakened or reflected by satire.

Peter Cook respected the image of the Queen when she came to visit the show *Beyond the Fringe*, but he did not do the same with the Prime Minister who he ridiculed in public. Harold MacMillan had come to the show with the intention to publicly express his tolerance towards criticism and gain advantage for his own benefit from the buffoons discourse. Once Peter Cook found out that the Prime Minister was attending the show, he improvised a cruel and biting monologue, halfway through his performance, directed at MacMillan, making sure that respect was limited to royalty.



*Beyond the Fringe*, became the direct predecessor of the first satirical show in the history of television: *That Was The Week That Was*. This show became the contrary to the media event that was the coronation of the Queen. If the coronation wanted to celebrate national identity and political consensus, *TW3* publicly institutionalized the buffoon as a figure which questioned the monolithic public sphere. *TW3* never attacked the monarchy (because of this, the title of buffoon is appropriate), nevertheless its schedule insisted on religious and political topics, which polarized comments sent by the public to the channel (Wilmot, 1980), and that according to its producers obliged the BBC to suspend broadcasts before the 1964 elections, arguing that the programme could destabilize the vote. Clearly, this was a type of censorship which impeded political debate from a satirical perspective. The conservatives feared the influence that the programme had over the electorate, because during the two years that *TW3* was broadcast audience figures were high.

*TW3* started by gathering around 4 million viewers in front of the television (1962), this soon doubled. In April, 1963, it reached an audience of 12 million (Briggs, 1995). They were a generalist public that went through the political and economic structure of the population and converted satire as part of popular culture (Andrew Crisell, 1997:119). The audience share for the first season that the programme was broadcast, underlined not only the great share of audience but also its extension through social classes. More than 60% were working class and that remained constant during the first ten programmes of the first season although with regards to its social group the percentage constituted less than 20%. The middle-upper class grouped the highest audience segment to its social group, over 25% (Briggs, 1995:363)

Unlike classical BBC news, the show tried to establish a more democratic relationship with its audience. According to its producers, *TW3* tried to address its audience as adults, that is, levelling power in the public sphere and contradicting the stereotype from the BBC, a channel which was condescending and paternalistic.

To begin with, it rejected the label of satire whose tradition did not have to be humoristic. Furthermore, classical satire was instructive and predicated to its viewers about morality from a higher and somewhat melancholic position. (Keighron, 1998).

The *mise en scène* of *TW3* tried to reflect a more equalitarian relationship. The viewer could observe the stage machinery of the show: the lights, cameras, microphones... The entrails of the device were shown in a *mise en abyme*, as an indication that television would not have an advantage. In this way they paid homage to the German cabaret tradition where proposals arose, like those of Bertolt Brecht.

Regarding the relation between presenter and public, *TW3* contracted David Frost to play the role of buffoon. Frost was a journalist forged in the satirical clubs of Ox-bridge. He knew the political class because he lived with them at university. He was at a position where he could speak to them directly and formed part of the opposite to the Establishment. He fitted the burlesque role

perfectly within the classical couple of King and buffoon (Balandier, 1994). Frost's style was warm, colloquial, humoristic, close and transparent to the viewer.

The writers of TW3 wanted to visualize the traditional opacity of politicians, as inheritors of the traditional humoristic satire of newspaper cartoons. As David Frost explained, the idea was to break the seal that wrapped up politicians at the time, in other words, to reduce the politicians and level their power with audiences in the social field.

After the cancellation of TW3, satire survived on television but with a low profile, appropriate with the possibility of censorship. It was not until the nineties that the genre rose again after liberalisation.

## **5. A fragmented public for a postmodern satire.**

In the seventies, an accumulation crisis was produced with visible symptoms, such as an increase in unemployment and inflation. The Keynesian pact between capital and labour fell to pieces giving way to a consensus on neoliberalist dogmas, which reached its height at the end of the eighties and beginning of the nineties with the fall of the communist bloc. If the middle class had entered history as an antidote against the class revolution without an alternative policy at the time, it would have become dispensable.

In the United Kingdom, the economic crisis produced a progressive tension between the Miner's Union and the Government which reached to a point with the 'winter of discontent' at the end of the seventies, when the British perceived how the Welfare system had weakened. This disenchantment ended in effect when the Labour party won the elections in 1996. It was not the same Labour Party which had previously governed, as Tony Blair managed to eliminate 'clause 4' from the party [4].

This, and other changes, led the governing party to lean more to the right than any other Labour party in the history of the United Kingdom, with the pressure of a neoliberal consensus. In Spain, this point of ideological inflection would be related to the increase and disenchantment of hopes placed upon the left-wing party, The Socialists, and in its decision to promote a favourable posture on the permanence of NATO. The left-wing political parties had their own transition during the Transition in the late seventies. In just five years, from 1977 to 1982, the PSOE (The Socialist Worker's party) moved from explaining Marxist ideals and advocating a nationalist bank to follow, unconditionally, the recommended privatizations of neoliberalist theorists [5]. Martín Seco (2009) has named this rebellion of the wealthy. The idea of a Welfare state turned into a system with higher social and economic inequality.

Generally, the homogeneous middle class after the seventies, which followed generalized social welfare began to fragment into market niches, looking for their own fulfillment through attractive lifestyle choices, with the alibi of freedom at the forefront (Harvey, 2001). Without a doubt, this influenced the production

model with a supply that now determined demand. In order to be profitable, a model needed to focus on people with different economic possibilities.

As any other product, television also suffered from the changes of liberalisation and stopped chasing 'correctness' and started to look for qualitatively, lucrative, client segments. In fact, the appearance of satire in different geographical channels could be contemplated as one of the motors which favoured this public segmentation.

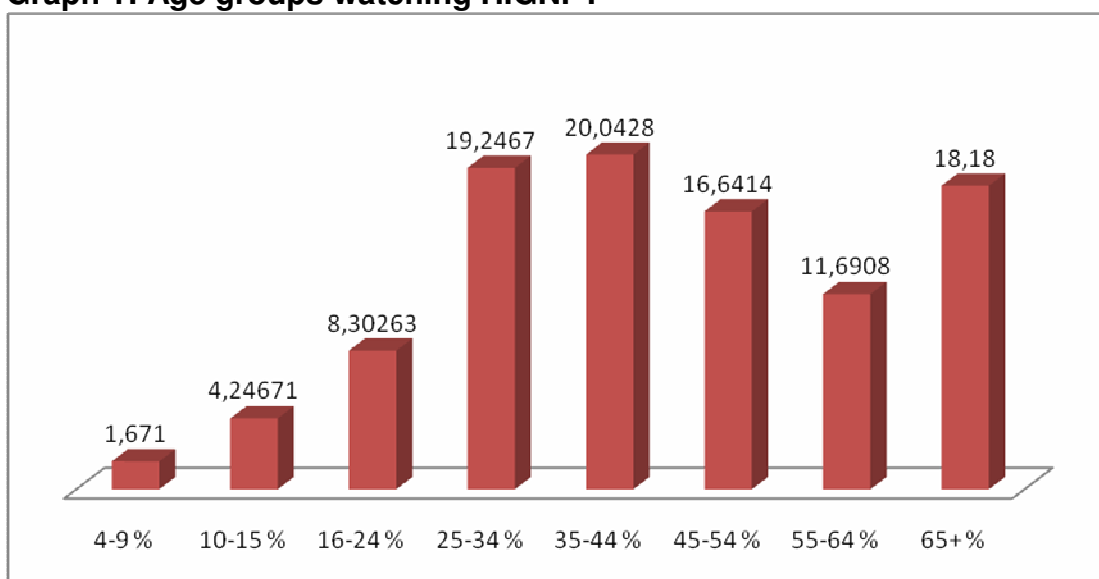
### 5.1. Audiences and politicians in the television satire after liberalisation.

The data we have collected suggests that the public that watches satire tends to be young adults, middle-class and middle-upper class, urban, with a higher education background, and in some cases a marked sense of cynicism directed to politics. This is seen in countries with traditional satire and a liberal model of journalism (UK) as well as others (Spain), whose journalistic model is different and satire came later.

In the case of the United Kingdom, *Have I Got News For You* has been broadcast without interruption since 1991. It is a pioneer of British satire panel shows. (Newcombe, 2004). During the nineties the BBC showed this programme on its second channel which is in tune with the idea that satire worked better with niche audiences than a generalist audience [6].

The audience figures for the first phase of HIGNFY in the nineties nearly reached 3.5 million viewers, with an audience share of just over 15%. During this time, we have to note the high appreciation that the public awarded the programme. Between the years 1992 and 1999, the average appreciation value given by the public was at eight out of ten. Regarding age groups we present the following graph.

**Graph 1: Age groups watching HIGNFY**

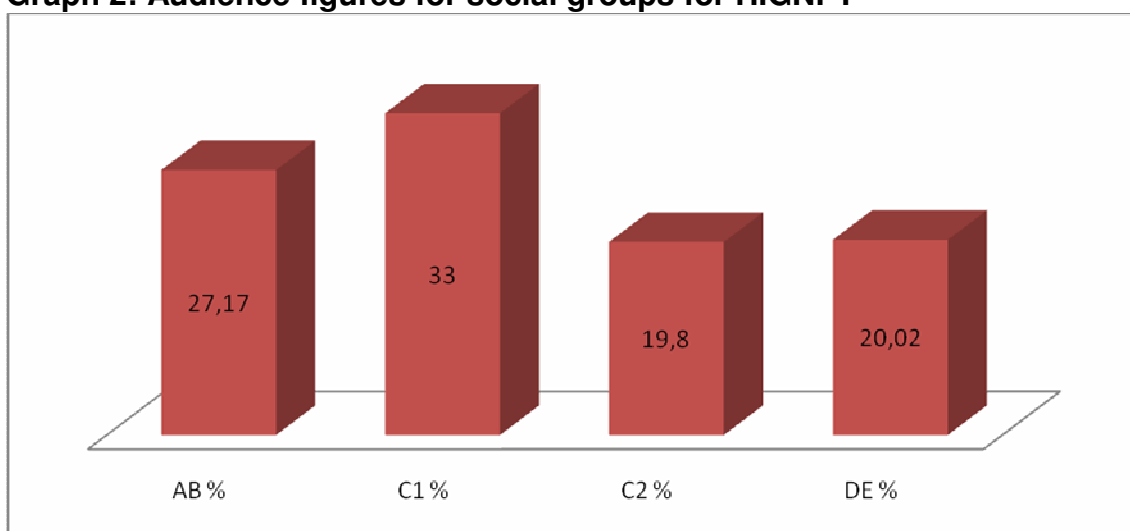


Made from BBC figures

The X axis represents age groups while the Y axis we have percentages. We can see that the age group 25 to 44 includes the highest number of viewers at nearly 40%. On the adjoining intervals, above and below, the audience share descends although it is higher above and even gets close to the older age group segment of 65 plus, than the young segment, at just over 18%. We could understand this upturn by saying that the 35 to 44 year olds, who used to watch *TW3* in the sixties, knew satirical codes well and decided to reconnect with satire in the nineties. Instead of following the tendency to decrease as age increases, which is a constant in a country like Spain (who copied the format and does not have a tradition in satire) is that there is a clear rise in an older age group.

We now demonstrate a graph with audience figures according to social group:

**Graph 2: Audience figures for social groups for HIGNFY**



Made from BBC figures

In the graph, the AB group represents, the middle-upper class, with high or intermediate ranking jobs and professionals. C1 consists of the middle class with owners of small businesses. C2 is made up of qualified workers while group DE is composed of the working class with or without qualification, the unemployed, pensioners and shop assistants. As we can observe, those with a middle or higher social status are the ones who tend to watch the programme capturing over 60 % of the audience.

Although we have not dealt with the original format of *El Guiñol*, *Spitting Image*, we have to point out that this programme was the most significant of how politicians protected themselves from satire and even took advantage of it in the post-neoliberalist phase. The programme was accused of raising the tendency of personalizing politics in detriment of tackling topics in the public agenda (Keighron, 1999). This personalization was produced through converting politicians into familiar and funny puppets that mixed with celebrities from other fields, making themselves celebrities in the process.

In fact, a politician at the time, who had a puppet of himself, declared in 1998 that nowadays no one needed a spitting image puppet due to the fact that many politicians had become puppets themselves and whose strings were manipulated by advisors and spin doctors [7], according to the interests of the predominant institution at the time, i.e. the Market. Unlike the seventies, satire from Spitting Image started to criticize the Crown and increased its aggressiveness with regards to politicians while it allowed the Market to act as the real invisible hand for society.

In a certain way the road taken by satire in Spain parallels the one in Britain, albeit 30 years later. This parallel makes sense with the role played by the Monarchy in the production of one of the first satirical programmes: *Caiga Quien Caiga*. We will explain why.

*Caiga Quien Caiga* started its journey disastrously as the Spanish political class was not accustomed to being ridiculed, and politicians did not play along with the reporters who interviewed them. *CQC* was about to be cancelled. Everything changed after a fortuitous episode where the King intervened thus sanctioning the work of the new buffoons.

“There is a revealing date when one day Aznar was in front of the Royal Theatre. Pablo [Pablo Carbonell, one of the reporters] was calling him and Aznar pretended not to take notice. The King comes out, goes to Pablo, and after the King... goes Aznar. It is a very funny anecdote but an interesting point because it defines the importance of the King to our programme” (Arroyo, 2001:181).

After that moment, politicians from right and left offered themselves to be part of the farce. As what happened in Britain, Spanish politicians wanted to co-opt this new television practice which seemed to have glimpses of producing symbolic capitalism. The President of the Government at the time, José María Aznar, invited *CQC* to his presidential home. *CQC* mocked this intention of co-option just like Peter Cook did with Harold MacMillan three decades earlier. However, as we have shown in another work (Valhondo, 2008), the presence of politicians in this arena soon surpassed those of traditional news formats. Politicians welcomed satirical programmes with open arms. As a prominent example, we can point to Esperanza Aguirre (a Government minister at the time), who thanks to *CQC* became a popular figure and not only became immune to criticism but also took advantage of the show and gained charisma.

In the case of *El Guiñol*, after the initial threat that seemed to hover over politicians, above all the right (Carpio, 2008), the programme became a showcase for the public image of principle leaders. It became so important that politicians considered it essential to have their own puppet on the programme, all the politicians wanted one (*El Guiñol*, 2001).

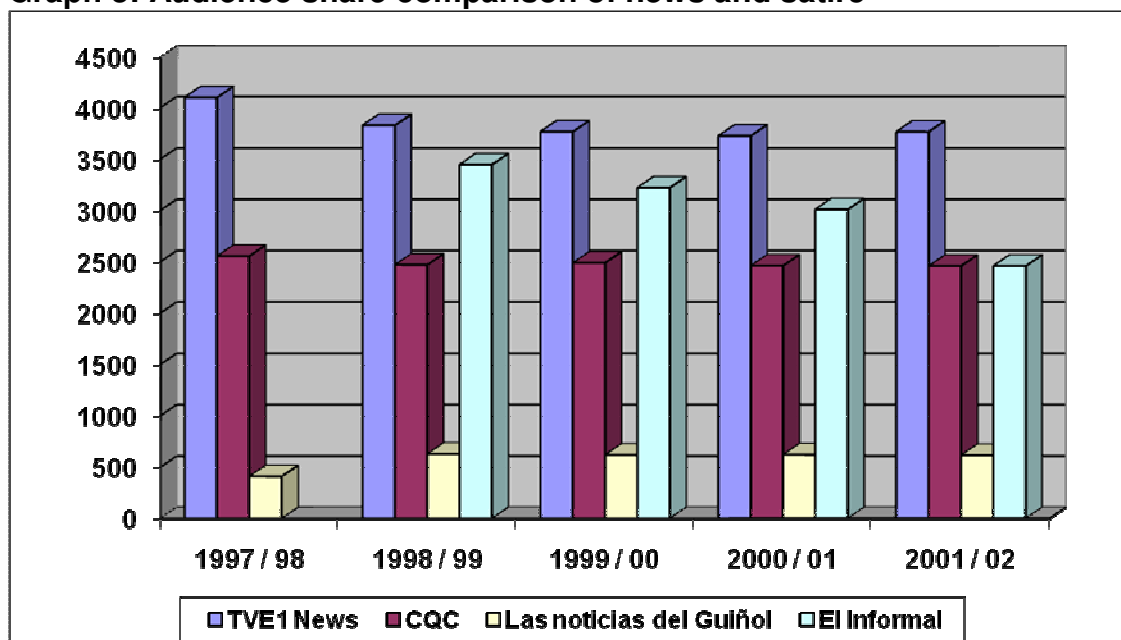
Unlike spitting Image, *El Guiñol* never dared to represent the figure of the monarchy. The King was never a puppet among puppets, but he was a King among buffoons in *Caiga Quien Caiga*. As explained by George Carlin, the day

in which television can laugh at its King, only then you can consider it a true democracy [8].

Like British satire the Spanish public possessed a similar profile. The increase of these programmes at the end of the nineties on Spanish television can be countersigned by the figures of registered audiences. The sum of the audience share of the programmes *Caiga Quien Caiga*, *El Guiñol* and *el Informal* exceeded the total viewers who watched the most popular news programme at the time (TVE1).

In the graph that we offer below we compare the average figures for viewers during five consecutive seasons (1997-2002). The audience data on the vertical axis has to be multiplied by a thousand. Apart from *CQC* and *El Guiñol*, we include another satirical programme, *El Informal*.

**Graph 3: Audience share comparison of news and satire**



Data elaborated from GECA

The *CQC* audience was stable during five years (around 2.5 million viewers), while *El Guiñol* bordered half a million and *El Informal* around 3 million with a progressive descent since the first season that it began to be broadcast. The average viewers for the news during each season were around 3.75 million.

The 13 – 44 year old segment constitutes the target audience for these satirical programmes (*Guiñol*, *Caiga Quien Caiga*, *el Informal* and *Pecado Original*). This affirmation is not only deduced from the audience share but also the perseverance that the actual producers had in designing the genre to reach audience niches, for example, *CQC* changed its time slot looking for a place where the programme would be more successful [9].

Moreover, programmers counted with the fact that traditional news did not have much success with younger groups, meaning that satire could compete with news programmes in their time slot [10]. *CQC* disappeared from television and returned in 2004 but its target audience continued to be the same [11]. In the case of *El Informal*, the data about audience profile also reflected an audience under 44 years and a feminine majority (GECA, 2002:191). These figures coincided with Tele5's target, which meant the first option for the public aged between 25 and 44. *El Informal* was substituted for another programme, *Pecado Original*, with similar characteristics but a higher quantity of recycled material and one part to gossip, without the target changing from its predecessor [12].

The public valued these programmes with a 7 (from a scale from 1 to 10). Among more than 200 television programmes, satire found itself in the top 30 of television rankings. *El Guiñol* enjoyed tenth position (7.11), *CQC* occupied nineteenth position (6.64) and *El Informal* came in 28<sup>th</sup> (6.47). According to age groups, the viewers who appreciated *El Guiñol* were composed of the 24 to 44 year-olds. 14 to 24 year-olds constituted the group that preferred *CQC* and *El Informal*. If we focus on social class, the higher classes watched *El Guiñol* and *CQC*, while the middle class preferred *El Informal*.

## **5.2. Profile of the satire buffoons after liberalisation**

Regarding the writers, we cannot focus on one only profile, but it is certain that they contain common characteristics. For example, the fact that they personalized their own news (Bennet, 2000), but with the exception that the protagonist is centred on the presenter or conductor, even before the political class. Different British experts support this idea (Carpenter, 2001; Keighron, 1998). Research in Spain also confirms the same and even points to satire promoting the brand image of the channel through its satirical presenters. However, the role of the comedian has become contradictory.

These conductors hide from moral positions that they consider to be paternalistic and do not want to be passed off as satirical literati of the classical, British tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but comedians who want to make people laugh.

There are also exceptions, like Rory Bremner, who focuses on socially responsible satire which does not only try to get attention. On the other hand, buffoons who exacerbate their individualism, becoming the stars of the programme and demanding exorbitant wages, contrasts with their roles of critics. These contradictions also reflect whether we are in front of a comedian or a journalist, or even both. In this respect, Jeremy Hardy, as member of the new alternative comedy, complained when he was invited on a programme as he was not sure whether they wanted him to act as a journalist or a comedian.

Jon Stewart did confess that he is a comedian without any pretentiousness; he only wanted to make people laugh. At the same time, he denied this role when he went to the news programme *Crossfire* (CNN...) and showed up the programme, by criticizing what these 'serious' presenters practiced on this

show. He defined himself as a comedian in front of them, but made it very clear that presenters had a great responsibility to inform the public correctly.

In Spain, satirical programmes have also been accused of an intense personalization, as presenting political life (the case of *El Guiño*) as focusing the programme on the conductor, that fills the role of telecomediant (the case of *CQC*). The buffoons on these programmes tend to find the identity of their targets by trying to play the role that the segment projects. Even the original *CQC* from Argentina, simulated in some of their sections the living room, in which the presenters watched television and commented, playing the vicarious role of a young person distanced from politics and an habitual consumer of television (Gándara, Mangone y Warley, 1997).

## 6. Conclusions

When the first satirical programme was broadcast in the UK, the political and economic institutions had contributed, over the previous decade, to creating a large middle class within the paradigm of the Welfare state. According to the data collected on audience share and figures about *TW3*, it seems that this satire was created thinking on a middle class public.

In every public sphere, institutions try to model minimum levels of consensus and maximum of criticism. If the ritual of British consensus was constructed around the Monarch and through media events on public television, the ritual of dissent and mess was established, a decade later, around the figure of the buffoon and the programme *TW3*, which parodied and satirized the Establishment although it respected the limits of social welfare. In other words, the limits reached the boundaries of the capital-labour pact, that's to say, it did not want a social revolution, or an agreement on exploitation.

This satire was respectful with the Monarchy but not with the Government, although the criticism had to be balanced and equidistant between the ideological options which capital and labour represented. In fact, to prescribe to this equidistance, the Government censored *TW3* on the eve of the elections because it could have been a potential force to destabilize the votes. Basically, you could maintain criticism within the limits of the State, satirizing politicians that occupied the position in turns, but dividing criticism equally on either side of the political spectrum.

The court buffoons, or at least those that appeared on television, shared their social origin with the elite forming part of the power reverse, they were proposing the possibility of change precisely to re-establish the legitimacy of the institutionalized power. We cannot affirm that these buffoons developed a radical, political conscience but they did feel animadversion on the hierarchy of established power. Actually, they were part of a new generation which altered the post-war consensus and started to break away with new social demands.

As satire targeted the middle class, this meant that satire also equalized and consolidated itself as a type of 'popular taste' and often worked as a public arena for the majority of the population which crossed age groups and social



classes. Even the working class watched this satire, because it believed that through this Welfare State the movement through class was possible, and that either them or their children would be integrated into the middle class.

After liberalisation, the equality of power between institutions changed and also the configuration of social classes and the type of satire that began to be produced, this reflected the limits of the new consensus.

The market displaced the Welfare State and the capital-labour pact leaned towards the market, thus creating economic inequalities and fragmenting the social classes in the seventies. Although *Spitting Image* criticized the Monarchy and ridiculed the politicians with greater sarcasm, the Market was not on the scene as a social actor despite being the dominant institution in politics and economics.

The British case of *HIGNFY* shows that satire in the nineties was directed to a specific age group and class: young adults, middle and middle-upper class. Writers of this new satire in the nineties adopted a postmodern attitude to the content that they exhibited in many cases. They are conscience of their important role in public opinion, above all in the mentioned segments, but refuse the responsibility to do the work that the serious press is leaving behind. There are exceptions like Mark Thomas in the UK but there is no equivalent in Spain. In general, satirical writers seem to be closer to using politics to provoke laughter than using laughter to provoke people.

In Spain, we find the example of globalisation of satire which points to the same audience segment as its British counterpart. Post-liberalisation satire is quite similar when you take into account the profile of its public and writers, even in countries like Spain that did not have a satirical tradition. However, there are local aspects that differentiate it for the British one. In Spain, which has a more fragile democracy, the Monarchy has never been questioned and attacks on politicians have not been left without censorship (as in the case of *CQC*).

It is a debatable matter that this new satire has provoked a more cynical view on politics on the audience. What has been proven is that politicians, in the nineties, have adopted the medium and converted satire into a form so that they can practice pop-politics, basically, a type of populist discourse using these programmes as a vehicle. Satire has become an important showcase for a politician who wants to win elections. We have not found any differences between the Spanish or British case.

According to the genre study we decided to employ, and analyzing the data, it seems that satire started as a British, public service from television to lower the level of politics for viewers, to finish with the protective bubble around political leaders and the excessive respect that official instances had among the public. A diverse, abundant public participated in this proposal, during an age, when social and economic equality had been at its greatest. In essence, we could say that it was an attempt to expand the public sphere to those who normally viewed politics from a reverential perspective. This attempt was limited in the

UK during the sixties with the censorship of the first satirical programme on television.

When satire recovered its previous splendor in the nineties it was already a genre with different characteristics. The public sphere that buffoons tried to expand in the sixties, divided and was now reduced to specific public segments. Liberalisation created a new social and economic panorama with greater inequality and wealth distribution. Satire was converted into a genre for young people from the middle to upper classes and with university studies, it not only co-opted in the majority of cases with the market but politicians survived and appropriated satire for their needs. Although it seems that the real beneficiaries of this new satire were the actual buffoons, who had been converted into ensconced characters that criticized the state of things, but in many occasions contradicted what they preached.

## Notes

[1] The criteria, for selecting programmes, has been based on audience indexes and rankings from institutions like the British Film Institute, the Museum of Broadcast Communications or the TV Guide.

[2] For example, Monty Python admitted being the last generation of comedians associated with the radio and admired the legendary British radio programme called *The Goon Show*.

[3] United Kingdom, France and Israel tried a military move to avoid the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egypt. The operation did not have the backing of the United States and the coalition was forced to abandon this military skirmish.

[4] According to this clause, one of the Labour rules was to nationalize means of production.

[5] *Público* (Spanish Newspaper), 5th May 2010.

[6] At the start of the 21st century the programme leaned towards the *reality show* option to increase its audience. This point of inflection was produced with the sacking of Angus Deayton and was the catalyst to include personal elements about celebrities in its agenda. The programme moved to BBC 1, the presenters changed every week and audience figures rose. It became a showcase for celebrities and politicians. The most prominent case was Boris Johnson, a conservative backbencher, who later became the Mayor of London

[7] <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-557953/Who-needs-new-Spitting-Image-These-days-ALL-politicians-puppets-says-Lord-Tebbit.html>, consulted on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2010

[8] <http://www.elpais.com/especiales/2000/rej/rej18a.htm>, consulted on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2010

[9] “CQC started in May 1996 with eight programmes on Friday evenings which gave it an 18% of audience share. Telecinco and Globo Media then changed it to Sunday nights to capture a higher quota of young adults, as they usually tend to be at home at these times than on a Friday night” (GECA, 1998:159).

[10] “After a short and discrete slot in prime time, this informative satire (CQC) finds its ideal slot on Sunday afternoons in direct competition with rival news programmes. It establishes an average quota of 21.7% of audience share in this slot. It manages to bring the young sector but also receives a notable response from an adult public” (GECA, 1998:99). “The profile of this public oscillates between 13 and 44 years of age and of a high social class” (GECA, 2002:191).

[11] “The programme obtains an average audience of 3,197,000 and a share of 21.4%, 27.8% of the share rests between 13 to 24 year-olds and 28.9% between the ages of 25 y 34. Regarding the commercial target, audience share increases by 4.2 points on the national average and reaches 25.6%” (<http://www.CQC.telecinco.es>, 23/05/05).

[12] “In the named commercial target (Young and urban public), ‘Pecado original’ reaches an average share of 25.2%” (<http://www.FormulaTV.com>, consulted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2004).

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