

**The cinematic landscape and characters in tourist comedy:
Narrative, humor, and social identity by Jacques Tati and Paco
Martínez Soria**

**El paisaje cinematográfico y los personajes en la comedia turística.
Narrativa, humor e identidad social de Jacques Tati y Paco Martínez
Soria**

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Abstract:

Film comedy is forged from societal jokes and operates through the parody of popular figures within a geocultural context. Its memorability in the social imagination is embodied through the cinematic landscape, in evocative and transgressive locations such as the beaches and hotels of tourist comedies. This subgenre was used by Jacques Tati in France and Paco Martínez Soria in Spain in the films *Mr. Hulot's holiday* (1953) and *Tourism is a great invention* (1968), in which their narrative models are contrasted through theories of humor and a qualitative content analysis, with some twenty variables, on humorous resources, spaces, and physical, social, and comedic action dimensions. Both tourists reflected the social concerns of the time by criticizing modernity and protecting social values, employing both related techniques, such as exaggeration, and disparate ones, such as mime and the language of two comedic characters who created their own style. Thus, from the representation of the tourist landscape as a catalyst for cultural differences, the conclusion is drawn that humor is capable of creating identity stereotypes motivated by the survival of contrast, the counter-power of comedic critique, and the liberation of the gag.

Resumen:

La comedia cinematográfica se fragua desde el chiste de la sociedad y actúa desde la parodia de personajes populares bajo una representación geocultural. Su memorabilidad en el imaginario social se plasma a través del paisaje cinematográfico, en lugares evocadores y transgresores como las playas y los hoteles de la comedia turística. Un subgénero utilizado por Jacques Tati, en Francia, y Paco Martínez Soria, en España, en los films: *Las vacaciones del Sr. Hulot* (1953) y *El turismo es un gran invento* (1968), en los que se contraponen sus modelos narrativos, a través de las teorías del humor y de un análisis de contenido cualitativo, con una veintena de variables, sobre recursos humorísticos, espacios y dimensiones físicas, sociales y de acción cómica. Ambos turistas sí que reflejaron las inquietudes sociales del momento al criticar la modernidad y proteger los valores sociales, desde el uso de técnicas conectadas, como la exageración, y dispares, como la mímica o el lenguaje de dos personajes cómicos que crean un estilo propio. Así, desde la representatividad del paisaje turístico como potenciador de diferencias culturales, se concluye cómo el humor es capaz de crear estereotipos identitarios motivados por la supervivencia del contraste, el contrapoder de la crítica cómica y la liberación del gag.

Keywords: Film comedy; film landscape; comic characters; Tati, Jacques; Martínez Soria, Paco.

Palabras clave: Comedia cinematográfica; paisaje cinematográfico; personajes cómicos; Tati, Jacques; Martínez Soria, Paco.

1. Introduction

Cinematography is shaped by the characters who bring it to life and by the landscapes that host them. Cinematic comedy, in particular, stands out for its use of setting, as well as for its portrayal of regional culture and customs (Gascón-Vera et al., 2023) and/or of the country in which it is situated, as a fundamental element of the narrative and of the protagonists' authenticity. In this sense, "the effectiveness of fiction in comedy depends on the successful construction of character types" (Gozalbo, 2023, p. 142).

From the moment cinema became capable of filming the gag, parody and satire came to define silent film and later its dialogue-driven forms. Comedy is a transgressive genre (Adell & Sánchez, 2021), deeply engaged with the socio-economic and political realities in which it is created and consumed. It functions as a reflection of the society that gives rise to these productions (Huerta-Floriano & Pérez-Morán, 2012a) and, through its popular dimension, acts as a catalyst for social messages. In this sense, the present contribution is situated within a line of inquiry that understands cinematic comedies as constructors of sociological meaning—an ideological vehicle (Pérez-Morán, 2014) responsible for serving as "a distraction for the masses" (Arango, 2022, p. 254). Historically and in recent times¹, the widespread enthusiasm for cinematic comedy can be explained, to a large extent, by the comedians who have brought its entanglements to life. These figures have connected with audiences through their narrative and humorous skills, with Jacques Tati (Le Pecq, October 9, 1907; Paris, November 4, 1982) and Paco Martínez Soria (Tarazona, December 18, 1902; Madrid, February 26, 1982) standing as two representative examples—both for their significance within film history and for their commercial success and popular support². Building on this premise,

¹ Recent evidence includes the more than \$1.445 billion in global box-office revenue generated by *Barbie* (Greta Gerwig, 2023), as well as the 10 million tickets sold (*La Vanguardia*, 2024) by *Un p'tit truc en plus* (Artus, 2024), the most commercially successful French film of the past decade. Spanish-produced comedies have also generated nearly half of the Spanish film industry's total revenues, with six titles ranking among the top ten Spanish films on Netflix and Amazon (Mayorga & Brunet, 2025).

² According to box-office figures from the Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales (ICAA), *La ciudad no es para mí* attracted more than four million viewers. Films released under the Paco Martínez Soria banner were often the most-watched titles in their

a comparative descriptive content analysis is conducted, using qualitative variables, across two films that share a common theme: tourism.

Consequently, the aim is to examine how comedy cinema has drawn on the comic figures of the tourist and on landscape settings in order—through theories of humor—to articulate social identity and geoculture in the France of Monsieur Hulot and the Spain of Benito Requejo: the protagonists of *Les vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (Jacques Tati, 1953)³ and *El turismo es un gran invento* (Pedro Lazaga, 1968), respectively. These are widely studied works that have rarely been examined in direct comparison. Two specific observations may nonetheless be highlighted that distinguish them—not in form, but in substance.

The first point of distinction concerns authorship. Jacques Tati is not only the lead actor but also the screenwriter and director of *Les vacances de Monsieur Hulot*. By contrast, although Paco Martínez Soria is the creative driving force behind his characters—drawing on his extensive theatrical background—the construction of the fictional archetype is complemented by the contribution of Pedro Massó, a recurrent director and screenwriter throughout his film career. At a second level, it is also pertinent to highlight the markedly different critical reception these films have received, both within and beyond their countries of origin. While they have been framed through disparate labels such as “españolada” or “representative work,” they have likewise attracted positive critical assessments: Martínez Soria’s tourist mayor is described as “a classic of Spanish cinema” by *Cinemanía*⁴, and Tati’s film is considered “essential” by film critic Carlos Losilla⁵.

year of release, a success that has endured in contemporary television broadcasts, reaching a 24.4% audience share, as well as through their availability on platforms such as Amazon Prime Video and Filmin.

³ Nominated for the Palme d’Or for Best Film at the Cannes Film Festival and for the Academy Award for Best Story and Screenplay.

⁴ May be checked in https://www.20minutos.es/cinemanía/noticias/pelicula-invento-verano-moderno-encanto-tus-abuelos-todavía-puedes-verla-streaming_6234336_o.html

⁵ Accessed at <https://www.sensacine.com/peliculas/pelicula-2615/sensacine/>

In this context, this study analyzes two comedies—one Spanish and one French—and two actors who are markedly different from one another, in order to identify points of convergence and divergence through the examination of these intersections (Brémard et al., 2023). The analysis confirms the construction of representative comic tourist characters with distinctive styles and divergent humorous resources, such as mime or farce, whose cultural origins are articulated through the representational use of tourist landscapes. These landscapes make it possible to establish national and cultural identities that operate both as contrast and as stylized stereotypes functioning as forms of liberation and counter-power. From this perspective, the study departs from the premise that comedy and landscape constitute a privileged site from which to stage a clash with—and/or a reflection of—reality in cinema, allowing viewers to “understand the mentality and reality of its time” (Pérez-Morán & Huerta-Florian, 2018, p. 403).

2. Theoretical framework

To examine the convergence of cinema, landscape, and tourism, this study draws on the French tradition of cinematic space (Gardies, 1993) as well as on Spanish scholarship by Moreno (2007), Martínez-Puche et al. (2022), and the body of research produced by the CITUR group—Cinema, Imaginary, and Tourism—led by Antonia del Rey-Reguillo (2013, 2017, 2021). Building on this foundation, the analysis addresses their convergence as screen (Ruíz Fernández, 2018), as an economic driver (Sánchez-Castillo, 2020), as narrative (Nieto et al., 2015), and, more recently, as a focal point of the cinematic landscape (Melbye, 2010; Lefebvre, 2007; Sánchez-Biosca, 2001) and its relationship with comic expression.

On this matter, Blanco (2009, p. 63) argues that “what generates the comic effect in cinema are allusions to the spectator’s real world,” as these allow viewers to extend themselves into an imagined world suggested by the film—one that “appears incongruous and amusing.” This study aligns with the hypothesis proposed by Brotons Capó et al. (2016), according to which artistic

creation, particularly in cinema, plays a central role in the representation of space (Lefebvre, 2013), examined from either a geographical or a visual-plastic perspective. The former refers to “the analysis of the world of filmic representation,” that is, the depiction of a city or a territory’s geography through a specific cinematic genre (Sabina, 2018, p. 216), such as comedy.

In cinema, space is embedded within the narrative itself (Metz, 1981). Indeed, Aumont (1995, p. 136) argues that the temporal forms of the narrative image “do not exist outside of space.” It is therefore through the treatment of reality and its definition in space–time—mediated by emotion, sensation, and, in this case, laughter—that the cinematic gaze is produced (Bonaut-Iriarte, 2022). This gaze, understood as a way of seeing, entails not only surprise but also the capacity to “think and judge, to take into account and to attend” (p. 880); it emerges from prior reflection and enacts reasoning by questioning “the why of things” (p. 881). Films thus achieve a connection with reality as artistic manifestations capable of “generating tourist interest” (Carreras, 2023, p. 11) and of shaping the tourist gaze (Urry, 2009), one that projects narratives together with their social context.

Cinematic territory, in turn, is the result of creative teams acting as “those responsible for a vision of the world” who, poised between “rigor and imagination,” modify or establish the spatial and chronological boundaries from which, according to Rodríguez Barberán (2005, pp. 71–72), it is ultimately “the innumerable gazes of spectators that grant landscape attributes to the spaces that have filled the blank screen.”

2.1 Humorous Devices and Theories of Humour: Tourist Humour

“The media and comedy cinema shape many of the dominant cultural patterns (...) in public opinion” (Nash, 2018, p. 24). Within this communicative cycle, humor has recurrently manifested itself in the audiovisual sphere, operating both as a mechanism of escape from injustice and as an instrument of counter-power. It constitutes a structuring element of entertainment (Zillmann & Bryant, 1994), insofar as it represents a transfer of the classical theories of superiority, incongruity, and relief (Attardo, 1994). Early fictional films were

already comedies and featured in the first commercial screenings, such as *Le puits fantastique* (The Fantastic Well, Georges Méliès, 1903) or *El hotel eléctrico* (The Electric Hotel, Segundo de Chomón, 1908), in which a couple of tourists spend the night in a hotel automated by electricity.

Against this theoretical background and these early beginnings, humour is closely tied to the historical unfolding of a society. Like any other cultural expression, it evolves, reflects, and critiques. To do so, it draws on a repertoire of humorous devices—irony, satire, sarcasm, mockery, and double meanings (Long & Graesser, 1988)—as well as on types of gags, such as those identified by Carroll (1991), or, more broadly within comic cinema, on stubborn attitudes, the breaking of norms, and the inversion of logic toward a new order that is even more absurd and illogical. Blanco links these mechanisms to character clumsiness as a means to “generate the comic effect on the spectator” (2009, p. 56).

From this perspective emerges a form of cultural humor that materializes as tourist humor, compiled by Porres Guerrero (2008, p. 8) following Frew (2006), Pearce (2009), and Pabel (2017), who distinguishes among humour about tourists, humour for tourists, and humour created and perceived by tourists. The first of these—aimed at exploring stereotyped images—constitutes the *leitmotif* of the present analysis.

2.2 Landscape and Tourism: Social Reflection in Cinema

Before the advent of the internet—and long before digitalization—cinema was, in itself, the most powerful vehicle of cultural dissemination “ever developed by humanity” (Pizarroso, 1997, p. 133). Together with tourism, it constitutes one of the two cultural industries that function as both screen and showcase for the exhibition of geography and culture, enabling—through the power of images—the construction of individual and collective imaginaries. By portraying both historical memory and contemporary life, cinema, as Gámir and Valdés argue, “democratizes space and landscape to the point of becoming an object of mass consumption” (2007, p. 160).

Cinematic representations are a cultural phenomenon that has contributed to the global diffusion of national imaginaries and stereotypes. These imaginaries are referred to as mediascapes, insofar as they provide spectators with complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes. In connection with this concept and with the idea of landscape as “an extension of nature” or “a part of land,” Bandirali (2020, p. 240) emphasizes that landscape is the result of a selective process shaped by reality and the media, which act to “intensify the landscape itself.” Within this framework, the opposition between city and countryside has long been a classic motif in comedy.

According to Pizarroso, the city constitutes an “essential” setting (1997, p. 137) for urban comedy and its character-driven narratives, while imaginaries surrounding the rural world reinforce a dichotomous and stereotyped opposition between urban and neo-rural representations (Martínez-Puche et al., 2022). This design of characters, oppositions, and landscapes, Pérez-Morán (2018, p. 95) argues, functioned in late-Francoist cinema as “a veiled denunciation of the new times,” a confrontation that becomes “less relevant” in modern comedy, where “enduring urbanity is revitalized” (p. 113) and the village is associated with an idyllic, natural space.

In Spain, during the 1960s and 1970s, mass tourism brought about economic growth alongside “the reaffirmation of Spanish national identity” (Afinoguénova & Martí-Olivella, 2008, p. 23). This new modernity became visible through “the early icons of sun-and-beach tourism-driven development,” such as Torremolinos, Tossa de Mar, and Benidorm—standing in contrast to processes of depopulation and aging (Fernández del Castro, 2018, p. 137). Fernández del Castro juxtaposes this moment with the fact that “French youth were experiencing their rebellious spring.” These new interpretations are grounded by Jacques Tati in the contradictions between the natural–traditional and the artificial–modern, which he employs to reveal their respective “virtues” (Gorostiza, 1992, p. 48).

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According to Hilliker (2002, p. 318), Tati is “one of the few filmmakers” to investigate the technological–social nexus of French society, which during the 1950s and 1960s experienced “rapid and massive urbanization, changes in work structures, and shifting patterns of leisure” within a cultural context shaped by consumption and development. Through depth, humor, and irony, Tati compellingly exposed the social and cultural transformations taking place in France and across postwar Europe (Arango, 2022, p. 250). Building on these observations, Carreras notes that, at times, “settings transcend their role as mere background to become true protagonists of the creative process, alongside the plot and its characters” (2023, p. 10). Such *mise-en-scène* may also fulfill a formative function, insofar as it influences the construction of characters themselves (Freeburg, 1918).

2.3 Analysis of Comic Characters: Clowns, Mimes, and Quixotic Figures

Gubern (2002), Propp (2006), Casetti and Di Chio (2007), and Lasierra (2017) examine character roles, including recurring figures such as protagonists and antagonists that facilitate audience identification. In this regard, Robert McKee (2002) warns of the risks inherent in stereotypes and argues instead for the use of compelling archetypes set within engaging environments, capable of sustaining conflicts that “can resonate across different cultures,” thereby fostering empathy and connection with viewers (Seger, 2000).

“In cinema, the comic character is often a hero in reverse; at once parodying and reaffirming the model it imitates.” With these words, Torres (1992, p. 6) frames such figures as clowns who struggle against the universe or against injustice. These comedians—whom Zunzunegui (2002) situates within Spanish cinema in terms of originality, modes of representation, and acting technique—are conceived as the “true agents of meaning” within the narrative (p. 186). For Blanco (2009, p. 57), they are caricatures, a “distorted reproduction of a recognizable likeness” that amuses; “singular characters” who move through “varied entanglements and conflicts, witty dialogue, and gratifying endings” (Sánchez-Noriega, 2022, p. 694).

Given the breadth of this tradition, the analysis prioritizes selected cases (F.1, 2, and 3), beginning with Max Linder (1883–1925), the great French buffoon who, through his persona and early film *Les débuts d'un patineur (Max Learns to Skate)*⁶, Louis Gasnier, 1907), confronts the world through slapstick. Linder’s dandy—dressed in tailcoat, white gloves, top hat, and cane—would later influence Charles Chaplin (1889–1977). Dubbed “the genius of cinema” (López Villegas, 2003), Chaplin’s Tramp opposed war and hatred while preserving the iconic costume of his successful pantomime (p. 96): a battered top hat, grey frock coat, oversized trousers, narrow and short tuxedo jacket,

⁶ It can be viewed on <https://youtu.be/YtdNhOoQsv8?si=x-Eh5lL-w4v6ZMAj>

plastron tie, toothbrush moustache, and a nimble cane serving both as gesture and as prop-weapon (Zaera, 2022).



F. 1, 2 y 3. Image of Max Linder in les Tullerías © Agence Rol e ilustración de Charlot © Pierre Payen (1902-1944)⁷. Marceline Orbes en la revista ©*Real Life* (February 27, 1915, p.15)⁸.

For López Villegas, much like Don Quixote of La Mancha, Charlot is “a real man” (p. 209) who seeks to reduce complexity to absurdity—a way of “discrediting reality” (p. 355) through an original, complex icon that has been “globally imitated” (Zaera, 2022, p. 21). This figure has an Aragonese predecessor⁹ in Marcelino Orbés, with whom Chaplin worked and from whom he was influenced by a slapstick humour articulated through chases, falls, and blows. This tradition was consolidated through the work of American producer Mack Sennett, alongside Chaplin himself and other icons such as Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, and Laurel & Hardy (Bonet, 2003). From these foundations would later emerge the Marx Brothers, Bob Hope, Monty Python, Mister Bean, and Woody Allen. Blanco synthesizes these figures as “Chaplin’s romantic tramp, Keaton’s honest man, Peter Sellers’ childlike character,” alongside the defenseless figure and caricatured types (2009, p. 59).

Greek comedy and the Italian origins of Commedia dell’Arte set the foundations of global comedy. In France, Jean-Paul Simon (1979) argues that

⁷ Gallica.bnf.fr. Bibliothèque nationale (France).

⁸ Available at <https://archive.org/details/reellife05unse/page/n820/mode/1up>

⁹ He was born in Jaca (Aragón) and obtained U.S. citizenship in 1922

comic film is essentially transgressive by virtue of its social satire. Lanzoni (2014, p. 70) further asserts that it is among the most demanding genres, as it promotes a meaningful reflection on both textual content and technique from the standpoint of reception and authorial intent. Unsurprisingly, comedy has long functioned as a “palliative for spectators” (del Rey-Reguillo, 2021, p. 144). In postwar Spain, romantic comedies contributed to leisure and escapism during times of hardship. Later, still under dictatorship, films such as *Las chicas de la Cruz Roja* (Rafael J. Salvia, 1958) and *Los tramposos* (Pedro Lazaga, 1959) paved the way for the so-called predestape comedies, associated with the landismo of actor Alfredo Landa. Female performers such as Gracita Morales and Lina Morgan (Gozalbo, 2023) also foregrounded social change, a tendency already evident in *Bienvenido Mr. Marshall* (Luis García Berlanga, 1951).

Thus, for Adell and Sánchez (2021, p. 66), popular Spanish comedy during the developmentalist period and late Francoism constituted a genre codified through archetypes “strongly” identified with specific actors (Pérez Rubio & Hernández Ruiz, 2011, p. 109)—comedians committed to a playful, entertainment-oriented cinema.

2.3.1 Tati’s character and Don Paco’s cinema

Tati constitutes a central object of study, as does his character Monsieur Hulot. Arango (2022) reflects on objects and spaces, while Gorostiza (1992) extends the analysis to architecture, linking the stereotype to its landscape (Hilliker, 2002) and to its cinematic articulation in *Les vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (Kermabon, 2009; Girard, 2019).

For Cuéllar, Tati revives the comic genre within French cinema and “completely renews it” through “a fully modern cinematic aesthetic” (2003, p. 123). He is associated with the *nouvelle vague* (Deleuze, 1987, p. 22), and although his filmography is relatively brief, it has secured his status as a classic. Of his six feature films¹⁰, four star Monsieur Hulot—a tall, awkward

¹⁰ In addition to the film analyzed, Tati directed *Jour de fête* (1949), *Mon oncle* (1958), *PlayTime* (1967), *Trafic* (1971), and *Parade* (1974).

figure left perplexed by everyday life and a privileged observer of French society in his time (Ockman, 2011). Following his earlier character, the postman François, Hulot is “absent-minded and courteous,” dressed in a raincoat, hat, carrying an umbrella and a pipe. Cuéllar distinguishes him from Charlot and from slapstick more broadly: he is not a caricature, and physically “his corporeality seems not to conform to what the world demands of him” (Arango, 2022, p. 256).

Although his actions are well intentioned, they “lead to small disasters that disrupt the calm of a place and bring it back to life” (Sorando, 2010, p. 120). Cuéllar frames this maladjustment to a hostile environment by emphasizing that Hulot is a “natural benefactor” whose behavior spreads happiness to those around him by “inadvertently introducing amusement into boredom” (p. 124), as occurs with the tourists in *Les vacances de Monsieur Hulot*, a coastal holiday resort where urban habits are reproduced within a snobbish atmosphere (Sorando, 2010). Replete with gags, the film under analysis “represents Tati’s love for France—its culture, its traditions, and its people,” which Schulman (2024, p. 349) associates with a “surreal atmosphere,” complemented by an “endearing” musical score (p. 350) that acts as a “catalyst for the smile,” underscoring a sense of “generalized mockery” (Torres, 1992, p. 7):

The humorous gaze cast upon people and situations is neither aggressive nor self-assertive; instead, it drifts through a landscape of meaningful minutiae, minor misunderstandings, and inconsequential mishaps, knowing precisely when to fade into that landscape, discreetly concealing its otherwise unmistakable silhouette.

Paco Martínez Soria¹¹, beyond being commemorated at a comedy festival¹², has been examined in scholarly literature (Lafuente, 2014; Abad García, 2023),

¹¹ In addition to the film discussed, these include: *La ciudad no es para mí* (Pedro Lazaga, 1966), *¿Qué hacemos con los hijos?* (Pedro Lazaga, 1967), *Abuelo Made in Spain* (Pedro Lazaga, 1969), *Se armó el belén* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1970), *Don erre que erre* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1970), *Hay que educar a papá* (Pedro Lazaga, 1971), *El padre de la criatura* (Pedro Lazaga, 1972), *El abuelo tiene un plan* (Pedro Lazaga, 1973), *El calzonazos* (Mariano Ozores, 1974) y *El alegre divorciado* (Pedro Lazaga, 1976).

¹² Accessed at <https://www.cinetarazonaymoncayo.es/>

documentaries¹³, and constitutes the central focus of García-Defez's doctoral dissertation (2019a), which explains how, within his film cycle between 1965 and 1975, rural, urban, and tourist spaces acquire particular narrative and discursive significance.

In *El turismo es un gran invento*, three spatial domains are articulated: first, the fictional Aragonese village of Valdemorillo del Moncayo; second, Madrid, where the protagonists travel to the headquarters of the Ministry of Information and Tourism to secure funding for their conversion project by “using their castle and its produce as collateral” (Fernández del Castro, 2018, p. 139); and finally, the Costa del Sol.

Hotels, lobbies, and swimming pools—so-called “non-places” or “spaces of transit”—are transformed into meaningful “places” through contact “with secondary characters and female tourism” (García-Defez, 2019b, p. 602). The Buby Girls are inscribed within the myth of “the Swedish woman” (Nash, 2018), positioned in opposition to the “normative femininity of chastity associated with the village” (p. 29). These young women—blonde, tall, blue-eyed, and scantily clad in bikinis (Lawrence, 2008)—serve developmentalist comedy as a vehicle for articulating a moral message, while these films simultaneously functioned as political instruments of openness and international projection. This produces a tension between the optimism and uninhibited nature of tourist settings and the everyday reality of “a rural, stagnant, and isolated country” (Arribas, 2020, p. 33). Two geographical spheres with distinct cultural boundaries are thus brought into contrast, which Gómez (2006) approaches through “a humourtinged with parody” in its depiction of social dynamics (Pérez-Morán, 2014, p. 21).

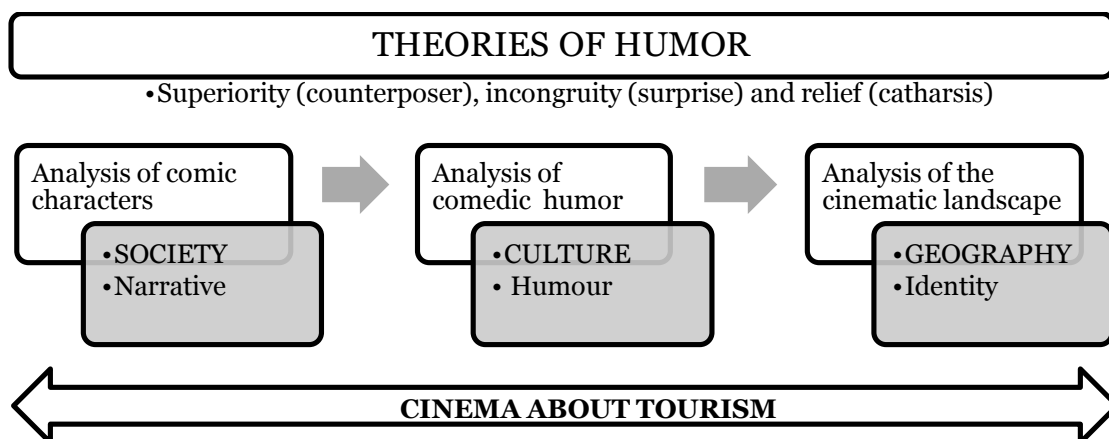
To this end, Don Paco, in his role as Don Benito, retains his emblematic beret, yet appears “disguised” in a patterned shirt and striped trousers (Triguero-Lizana, 2021, p. 12). This iconic image secured his stardom as a popular

¹³ Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jR-hUGkz4S8>

comedian through “his costumbrista vocation” and “the pursuit of strong audience identification” (Huerta-Floriano & Pérez-Morán, 2015, p. 204).

3. Methodology

This study is grounded in the theory of *cinéma dans le cinéma* (Blüher, 1996), approaching the exploration of the cinematic process through scenography, film sets, and the ways in which characters perform in order to establish a comic relationship between the screen and the spectator. It is further supported by theories of humor (Attardo, 1994) to analyze two key figures in French and Spanish comic cinema.



F 4. Scheme of the methodological structure, own elaboration.

The objective is to understand how tourism-oriented cinematic comedies—through the analysis of characters, humorous devices, and the use of space—are able to portray society, culture, and the geography of a given place. Accordingly, the research question seeks to determine how narrative, humor, and identity operate within the landscape and through the comic characters of Hulot and Benito Requejo. To further explore the connections and divergences between these two pivotal figures in film history, the study examines three analytical pathways (F.4) using content analysis techniques, based on qualitative categories related to character dimension and action, humor, and cinematic space.

Based on the preceding literature review, an analytical table is constructed that first addresses the thematic, narrative, and formal aspects surrounding comic figures and their performative resources. This framework draws on studies of satirical journalistic characters in American comedy (Gascón-Vera & Bonaut-Iriarte, 2024), their defining parameters (Galán, 2006; Pérez-Rufí, 2016; Seger, 2000), and tourist stereotypes (Nieto, 2021). Subsequently, humorous devices are categorized (Berger, 2017), and, as a third dimension, the analysis considers the relationship between the character and the environment, as well as the effects of place and setting in shaping cinematic scenes, based on the categories proposed by Lasierra (2017).

1. CHARACTER ANALYSIS		
Physical dimension	Age, social class	1) Young 2) adult 3) elderly 1) Lower 2) middle 3) upper
	Physical appearance	Hair, clothing, costume, make-up, height, build
	Characterization	Voice/tone, props, gesture
Psychological dimension	Temperament	1) Sensible 2) cerebral 3) sentimental 4) intuitive
	Motivation	1) Self-improvement 2) survival 3) learning 4) teaching 5) care-giving 6) leisure
Dimensión social	Mane framework	1) Work 2) home 3) leisure 4) all 5) others
	Role	1) Narrator 2) actant 3) observer 4) opponent 5) vein character 6) heroe 7) villain 8) helper 9) professional 10) comic character
	Stereotype	1) Eccentric and naïve visitor, 2) cunning local 3) exclusive and frivolous character 4) excluded visitor or local 5) upright local or visitor 6) rational visitors 7) folkoric local s 8) The "swedes" 9) Parodic Don Juan
Action dimension	1) Generates-creates 2) Suffers-receives 3) both 4) neither	Friendchip, love, abuse of power, family or work conflict, illness or adictions, danger, change of ideals, cultural clash, feedom
2. HUMOUR ANALYSIS		
Language	1) Allusion 2) bombast 3) definition 4) exaggeration 5) joke 6) insults 7) infantilism 8) irony 9) voice imitation 10) literalism 11) puns 12) sharp replies 13) ridicule 14) sarcasm 15) satire	
Logic	1) Absurdity 2) accident 3) analogy/comparison 4) catalogue-enumeration 5) coincidence 6) dissapointment 7) ignorance 8) errors 9) inversion 10) repetition 11) rigidity 12) theme-variation	

Identity	1) Before and after 2) burlesque 3) caricature 4) eccentricity 5) shame 6) exposure-denunciation 7) grotesque 8) imitation 9) performance 10) mimicry 11) parody 12) scale 13) stereotype 14) unmasking	
Action	1) Chase 2) clowning 3) speed 4) timing	
3. LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS		
Scenography	Number and description	
Settings	Rural/urban	Modernity/tradition
	Exterior/interior	Recurrent/novel
Environment	Characterisation through contrast	Contrasted with other characters Conflict arises from contrast
	Indirect characterisation	Other characters' dialogue
	Type of relationship between character and environment	Identity/one or more shared elements Autonomy/opposition Difference in a defining element Complementarity with another character
Atmosphere	Habitat and natural environment of the character	
	Function of the place in relation to the character	

Table 1: Categories for the analysis of each satirical film

Tourist comedy refers to a form of comedy that draws on the tourism industry—deeply connected to leisure and to countries' external economies—as a privileged means of articulating a critique of progress, the erosion of social values, and the standardization of places. From this perspective emerges the concept of the cinematic landscape, understood as a multifaceted and multidisciplinary spatial object (González Hurtado & Paz-Mackay, 2023) that integrates natural and urban settings, their reconstructions, or studio-built environments to narrate a story—in this case, a comic one—capable of eliciting emotion and reflecting social change.

For Lefebvre (2007), landscape in cinema constitutes the central component of films and determines human representation at both the sensory and aesthetic levels. As Harper and Rayner (2010) note, landscapes are never neutral; they function as cultural referents. On the basis of these variables and from this analytical stance, the study advances a primary hypothesis: that the comic characters and the form of comedy developed by both filmmakers in *Les vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (1953) and *El turismo es un gran invento* (1968)

enable the construction of a costumbrista archetype through the figure of the tourist—its recurrent and marked stereotypes—and through emotional and critical landscapes that operate as sites of conflict. In addition, three subsidiary hypotheses are formulated in line with the three analytical guides:

H.a. Identity and origin are employed by the comic protagonists within the cinematic narrative as a means of engaging with and debating emerging cultural and social values.

H.b. The use of humorous devices is extensive, giving rise to a broad humorous arc that succeeds in shaping a distinctive style.

H.c. Both comedies are structured around the tourist landscape, conceived as an aesthetic and cultural choice through which modernity is critically examined.

Therefore, the central research challenge is to determine whether comedy cinema and its characters are capable of articulating a cultural and geographical analysis, thereby deepening our understanding of comedy as a cinematic genre with the capacity to reflect society and critically expose its shortcomings.

4. Results

Character Analysis. Tati's work is situated within a visual form of comedy grounded in social observation, with landscapes conceived as theatrical scenes and photographic framings in which the beach and urban planning intersect with Monsieur Hulot, an awkward, clumsy, and absent-minded outsider. By contrast, Martínez Soria employs situational and dialogic humour rooted in a traditional figure: the rural grandfather. Age differentiates the two characters, yet only the Aragonese actor mobilizes age as a counterpoint to modernity—as a position from which to long for novelty and for a new social class that finds wealth and a future in tourism.

Both characters originate from a condition of deprivation, albeit of different kinds: a tourist with an old car and a mayor of a village without prospects. They

discover that they have little to offer, from a serious worldview, to new spaces of leisure, etiquette, or excess. The contrast is articulated through social and class struggle, as both figures aspire to adapt to an emerging freedom that defines their archetypal condition.

There is contrast, there is inferiority, and from this—through comic characterization—there is release. This release is further marked by enjoyment and leisure, achieved through the coastal setting as a scenario and through tourism as caricature, following the narrative schema of the “fish out of water.”

Leisure disrupts Benito’s primary framework: agricultural labor. Stubborn and ingratiating, he is a “failure” who seeks the survival of his village in the face of depopulation. His heroic role turns villainous when he succeeds only in squandering his neighbors’ money, although the illusion of change is sustained until the end of the film. He functions as the actant voice; the narrative revolves around him through the stereotype of the *cateto baturro*—not foolish or docile, but patient and cunning, acting with irony and a sense of social justice. He shares similarities with the secondary character who accompanies him, particularly in their perception of tourism and their discordance with luxury or the swimming pool. They complement one another as members of the same habitat, to which they return with broken dreams that, through comedy, are ultimately neutralized by the arrival of the Buby Girls in the village. This is a place of cobblestone streets, old houses, and no theater—only a winery. Ultimately, modernity arrives fleetingly in this resource-poor village. Benito both generates and suffers a cultural and emancipatory clash, provoking and enduring conflicts with fellow villagers (F.5). He engenders love and friendship with female figures, while relationships with male characters are framed from the outset by both camaraderie and conflict.

HumourAnalysis. Exaggeration (“Everything has to change”), literalism (“Don’t emphasize it”), and ridicule (“You are not ready for progress”) converge with Benito’s comic language (“*pior*” for *peor*; “*malacatonos*” for *melocotonos*). His humour is marked by excess and, in terms of comic logic, by

accidents, blows, and slapstick—such as falling into a swimming pool or entering a wardrobe—elements also shared by Hulot.



F. 5 y 6. Frames of Benito in the village and in the tourist landscape of the beaches of Marbella (Málaga). © Juan Mariné. Source: <https://www.movistarplus.es/cine/el-turismo-es-un-gran-invento/ficha?tipo=E&id=13897>

In terms of identity, Benito engages in comparison (“They call bacon eggs with lean meat”) through a before-and-after device, imagining himself a magnate at a large banquet he cannot afford; he displays mimicry and eccentricity

through the exotic songs of the Buby Girls (F.6). Yet the narrative concludes with acceptance of reality (“It’s ours, even if it’s awful”) and the assumption of responsibility (“He who pays gets to rest”). Sound-based comedy and mimetic comedy thus become a form of social commentary—a tableau of customs from two different countries that nonetheless share a common issue: tourism.

The films expose existential crises—nonconformity and loyalty—through social, economic, and even political critique, exemplified by the visit to the Ministry of Tourism and by speeches advocating the need to achieve progress for Europe or asserting that “capitalism talks too much.” These are heard by Hulot, a middle-class adult seeking to integrate into an upper-class coastal resort where he does not belong. His characterization constitutes an internal mockery: his stereotype is not constructed through the character himself, but through those who reject him. It is there that French societal snobbery, antipathy, and avoidance become visible in response to a figure who disrupts the established order—in tennis, card games, dining, and in the lobby of the Hôtel de La Plage—through repetition, chaos, and a refusal to assimilate.





F. 7 y 8. Hulot in the touristic landscape of Saint-Marc-sur-Mer. © 1953 Discina Film.

Source: <https://casa-mediterraneo.es/las-vacaciones-de-mr-hulot-el-origen-de-un-personaje-inolvidable> y <https://www.cinelounge.org/Film/532/Les-Vacances-de-Monsieur-Hulot>

Nor does he rely on verbal discourse, privileging physical expression and mime (F.8). Silent expressions, gesture, and a non-intuitive corporeality allow the viewer to recognize his fractured sensitivity in the face of a survival-driven motivation within a hostile environment. At times, he acts as an observer and ultimately becomes an opponent through actions involving speed (the car) and misunderstandings (a car tire mistaken for a funeral wreath, a boat perceived as a shark). To this end, he draws on slapstick nuances characterized by rapid movement (driving and running), physical gags involving blows (to people or paintings), and falls (into water or through doors).

The breaking of a boat or the lighting of fireworks function as sketches that are occasionally linked by a character oscillating between the search for friendship and an awakening sense of solitude; he becomes a nuisance with a ball, with music, or while reading. His sole moment of celebration occurs during a dance with a young woman, when he is disguised as a pirate. Hulot generates danger understood as disaster or chaos and undergoes a shift in ideals, returning

home as a defeated hero amid bitter farewells that gesture toward a reunion the following summer.

Tati's comedy confronts the social conditions of the hotel, questioning attitudes and values through the gestural language of ridicule and satire—through accident and error—by means of a bodily rigidity that forges an identity marked by embarrassment. He achieves mimicry through imperfection, rendering invisibility as shame or as the mockery of a “good, kind” man who, as a character, does not fit within the collective: “he is a clown, he is clumsy, he is not right in the head.” The contrast between Hulot and both the characters around him and the environment itself constitutes the central conflict.

Landscape Analysis. Comic effect renders him a stranger in a place to which he cannot add his identity. He shares nothing with others beyond his belonging to the group of tourists, which enables a critique of the class-based identity of modernity. In this sense, both characters provoke doubt in others' dialogues, eliciting laughter and estrangement that ultimately result in rejection. It is easier to ignore than to understand, and comedy renders this dynamic visible through tourist settings that are emblematic within the collective imaginary (coves, swimming pools, hotels). Tati's beach is populated by objects (F.9) that function as props. Without the beach, Hulot would not sink his boat, observe tourists, or struggle against a quotidian reality that proves difficult to comprehend.

Settings recur in both films, and the environment's relationship to the character lies at the core of the narrative. The beach dazzles them; in Tati, it is the class-based society, while in Benito it is economic excess, luxury, and sexuality. The sea—tourism as a new form of social connection—disrupts classical culture, and through stereotype, the characters' maladjustment is laid bare, while the lack of empathy of the rigid modern world is critiqued. In Jacques Tati's tourist comedy, space is not merely a backdrop: restaurants, houses, and costumes condition a mechanized bodily language that disrupts

environmental harmony in order to question the absurdity of social norms grounded in repetition.

Resistant corporeality is staged within a space that imposes dehumanized behaviors in which disturbance is prohibited. Likewise, Tati explores a visual poetics through the expressive use of black-and-white cinematography and the emotional ambivalence of comedy, oscillating between nostalgia and critical irony. The landscape thus emerges as a site of symbolic violence and reflective comic effect—yet one that remains popular—much like the cultural register of the other film, where landscape functions as a spatial conflict that reveals an underlying conflict of values.

Landscape is central: the sea belongs to the masses, while everyday places become sites for laughing at what is desired without discarding what is one's own. Laughter emerges from the clash between subject and landscape, from conflict with a hostile or incomprehensible environment. Yet beneath the registers of comic expression flows a melancholic reflection on the loss of earlier ways of life—landscapes that are longed for or presented as more humane and, therefore, more livable. From this perspective, the cinematic landscape, in both universes of tourist comedy, functions as an emotional and cultural archive. It does not respond to naïve nostalgia, but rather to a critical nostalgia that creates tension between the cherished past and the complex present.

Consequently, both characters embody the failure of excess and of the values associated with sun, beach, and new forms of luxury that are not accessible to all. For this reason, they return home after their entanglements and accidents. Their identity takes refuge in a singular, eccentric, and stereotyped persona, giving rise to a form of cinematic humour shaped by a costumbrista and aesthetic cinematic landscape.

5. Discussion and conclusions

From *Les vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (1953) and *El turismo es un gran invento* (1968), national imaginaries are articulated—French snobbery and Spanish humility—as well as cultural traits such as elegance and extroverted character. These films present two facets of the same tourist figure, revealing a clear divergence in its treatment: as a cultural figure in one case, and as an element of contrast in the other. To this end, mid-twentieth-century Spanish and French comedy cinema employs tourism as a recurring structural device (García-Defez, 2008) to oppose the rural and the urban, the familiar and the strange, the endearing and visual hostility, thereby enabling an understanding of a specific time and place. Indeed, the historical context of these films imbues them with an ideological conflict: the tension between the desired European modernity and Francoist modernity, both seeking economic progress through external openness while attempting to preserve traditional cultural and social values.

France and Spain constitute the territories of origin of the two comedians analysed, both of whom link landscape to the narrative of social and identity-based comedy in order to portray the geoculture of the final third of the twentieth century and to offer a cinematic critique of modernity. In doing so, French tourist snobbery is stereotyped, as is the shift in values—lust and greed—triggered by the rise of tourism. A clear opposition emerges in the perception of progress and modernity. For Hulot, modernity is absurd and hyper-functional, whereas for Benito it is aspirational and caricatured. In this early film, Hulot deliberately integrates into the social context he satirically depicts, acting as a counterweight through a character opposed to success, yet functioning as a hero (Simon, 1959). Critical of conventionalism and social change, Tati compels us to laugh at the complicity of our gestures and at the traits of a reality that constrains us (Torres, 1992). He does so through an intelligent form of humour (Sorando, 2010), distant from oratory and close to objects (Arango, 2022), and without a tightly connected plot (Mayer, 1955). Tati and Martínez Soria differ in their use of absurd gags or rustic jokes, yet both mobilise the three classical theories of humour. Hulot and Benito

misperceive reality, much like Don Quixote (Deleuze, 1987), as they fail to control their environment (Blanco, 2009), and through ridicule, contrast and inferiority emerge. They are two eternal misfits (Triguero, 2021), generating amusement through the liberating effect of a simple cinematic comedy that succeeds at the box office and functions socially as a form of counter-power.

Both tourists confirm the pleasure audiences derive from repetition in the popular art of comedy (Gozalbo, 2023), as seen in double meanings, verbosity and exaggeration—hallmarks of Martínez Soria's style. This involves mockery and coarse satire (Deltell Escolar & Fernández-Hoya, 2022), rooted in a caricatural characterisation (Gómez, 2006; Blanco, 2009) of a paternalistic mayor who uses clichés to create easily recognisable situations (Triguero-Lizana, 2021), adopting a naïve gaze toward tourism while maintaining a critical stance that constructs a cinematic gaze—a mediascape. These characters, positioned in opposition to their societies, expand and transcend Hollywood archetypes (Gascón-Vera & Bonaut-Iriarte, 2024; Pérez-Rufí, 2017), acting as catalysts of stereotypes for the spectator's comic enjoyment (Huerta-Floriano & Pérez-Morán, 2015). It is confirmed that humour functions as a narrative mechanism through which cinematic stories enable characters to stereotype, reflect, and/or denounce social realities (Huerta-Floriano & Pérez-Morán, 2012b), thereby deepening the exploration of the sociodemographic profiles of a territory—presented either through the emotional aesthetics of black and white or through the chaotic intensity of saturated Technicolor that shapes the filmic landscape.

Landscape is not a passive backdrop but an active structure that organises and foregrounds the conflict between the individual and modernity (Carreras, 2023). In this way, the comic protagonists collide with Spanish and French modernity—economically beneficial yet morally harmful (García-Defez, 2019b). This confirms the hypothesis that the tourist landscape functions as a critical focus and operates as a modernising agent (Arribas, 2020), critiquing cultural geography and, consequently, society itself through the opposition between wealth and poverty. Indeed, by de-romanticising progress, these films acquire the quality of historical documents, allowing them to function as

testimonies. They are narratives that construct memory and visual stereotypes through nostalgia, a sentiment achieved via their photographic atmospheres (Sánchez-Biosca, 2001), generating impact and recognition by highlighting the distinctive features of each territory.

Contrary to Bandirali (2020), the cinematic landscape here is shown to be decisive for both narrative and character. The beach functions as a “natural” setting (Girard, 2019) in Tati, or as a space of extravagance in Martínez Soria. Both filmmakers deploy landscape through sound—music—or through the silence of mime. Spaces constitute us (Lefebvre, 2013). Accordingly, the landscape enables an analysis of the social profiles that comedy represents through critique, identification and/or amusement, as the comic mode allows for the study of social and anthropological identity markers (Gómez, 2006). A beautiful, narrative landscape that becomes the protagonist of chaos and the universal humour embodied by two archetypal characters, who use identity not as an opportunity (Gascón-Vera et al., 2023), but as representation within a comic cinema that today serves as both an object of study and a site of memory (Rodríguez Barberán, 2005).

Two comedians and two comedies are thus originally juxtaposed in this text, opening avenues for future research through the correlation of their humorous styles and cultural dimensions, ultimately extending to an examination of the differing critical receptions of their cinematic careers.

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Acknowledgments. The idea originated during a research stay at Paris Nanterre University and was revived an hour from the actual Moncayo mountain.

Research Group on Communication and Digital Information (GICID) University of Zaragoza, a reference group, supported by the Government of Aragon S29_23R in the Social Sciences area and funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) “Building Europe from Aragon”. Institute of Heritage and Humanities (IPH) of the University of Zaragoza.

The authors thanks to Eva Bunbury for the English translation of this article.