

Poignant Past. How Interwar Satirical Magazines in Germany, France and Spain Used History to Criticise Their Times

LOUISA REICHSTETTER

INTRODUCTION

In June 1932 *El Be Negre*, a Barcelona-based satirical magazine, published an unusual edition: only 50 percent was written in Catalan, while the other half was Spanish. The Catalan content harshly criticised the democratic government for reforming the country too slowly and thus delaying the promised regional autonomy for Catalonia; the Spanish counterpart ironically tried to flatter the very same politicians. The last two articles, however, reveal that both positions were subject to an intrinsically different conception of history: a progressive and a passive one. The Catalan paragraph on the one hand presents history in a way that emphasises flow and change (cf. anonymous, »Amadeu Huriado atacant Miguel Maura«, *El Be Negre*, 2.53, 4). On the other hand, the Spanish version apathetically approves political gridlock, stating: »*La historia es pasar el rato*« – »History is just killing time« (cf. anonymous, »D. Amadeo Huriado adula a D. Miguel Maura«, *El Be Negre*, 2.53, 4).

Without repeating famous phrases by famous thinkers: the years between 1918 and 1939 were as thrilling as they were tense. Rival concepts and ideologies manifested themselves in multinational conferences and regional Catalonian policy. Differing views on history, however, were only one aspect of the controversy.

El Be Negre – The Black Sheep – belongs to a genre ranging between journalism and arts, politics and provocation: political satire published in particular satirical magazines. Either black and white or coloured, definitely sharp-tongued, their existence since the second half of the 19th century was

intrinsically linked to the freedom of press.¹ However, forms of print media that combined entertainment with a witty criticism of their times prospered between 1919 and 1939 in Western Europe like never before – and never again thereafter. This article tries to analyse how the authors and caricaturists wittily defended their liberty, as well as liberty and peace on a social level. This, to the left-wing and liberal satirical media, meant defending the republican cause, whose politics enabled their publication. Taking a look at three interwar democracies – Germany’s first (1919-1933), Spain’s Second (1931-1936) and France’s – late – Third Republic (1919-1940) – this article assesses the use of history as metaphor and symbol in each country’s humorous media. To put it more precisely, this paper does not examine when satirical magazines hooked onto the differing concepts of history in order to describe their times, but asks: how did satirical magazines use actual examples of history for their argumentation?

As roughly outlined above, the publications that form the basis of this short comparative analysis all have one aspect in common: their political tone has been described as »left-wing«, »left-liberal« or »liberal«. It is easier, however, to tell what they were not: their reasoning was neither profascist nor pro-monarchal.² Satirical magazines arguing in a rather right-wing political direction are only quoted if necessary to underline a development among pro-republican media.

The editorial offices of all these publications were situated in major cities, namely Berlin (*Ulk*), Munich (*Simplicissimus*), Paris (*Le Canard Enchaîné*, *Le Merle Blanc*), Barcelona (*La Esquella de la Torratxa*, *El Be Negre*) and Madrid (*Buen Humor*), thus intensively commenting on politics but also on social issues such as industrialisation, arts, fashion and female empowerment. The staff working for those magazines were rarely employed full-time. Hence, many freelance writers and artists published in several papers at the same time.³

1 An article this short cannot provide a history of the genre itself. For an overview of its development during the 19th century in Germany cf. Koch 1991; for France: Ridiculous, No. 18, Brest 2011; for Spain: Sánchez Aranda/Barrera del Barrio 1992.

2 The German *Simplicissimus* did not oppose its own »Gleichschaltung«, i.e. the replacement of Jewish editorial staff and an altering of the satirical tone, adapted to Nazi requirements.

3 Cf. the journal Ridiculous No. 18, published in 2011 for short portraits on any French satiric newspaper, for instance the entries of *Le Canard Enchaîné* and *Le Merle Blanc* by Stéphanie Krapoth. The Spanish and German secondary literature

This article attempts to compare satiric strategies on different levels of reference⁴: Firstly it deals with three interwar democracies. Secondly it looks at both an affirmative and a negative use of history as metaphor. In other words, it detects when history had either a legitimizing or a delegitimizing function. Finally, it takes into account visual and written sources alike because the weekly papers provided a mixture of caricatures, articles, columns and poems in a gradually changing composition.

Even though metaphorology has been focussing on the semantic and therefore word-based use of allegories, this study uses »metaphor« as an umbrella term to analyse the figurative aspects of both images and texts.⁵ That way it is possible to explore the journalistic concept of the media in which they were jointly published. And this, of course, leads to the integration of different theoretical approaches such as poetics and semiotics, metaphorology and iconography, history of arts and literature.

Furthermore, investigating humour confronts historians with a problem that cannot be solved following one orthodox methodological concept: how can we contextualise sources that are inherently ambivalent? Hence, deciphering satire in three different societies and four different languages requires a truly interdisciplinary approach which also engages the perspectives of political, cultural, intellectual and conceptual history.

is well advanced in years. Details on the respective Spanish media have been collected rather than thoroughly researched (i.e. López Ruiz 1995), the Catalan satiric press was mainly discussed by Lluís Sola i Dachs (Sola i Dachs 1978). For Germany cf. for instance an essay on the transformation of the German humour magazine during and after World War I (Simmons 1993).

4 Aiming at a contrasting comparison, this comparative study reflects both similarities and differences. In addition, it dares to be asymmetrical, i.e. not necessarily choosing the same amount of examples from every country. For the latest discussions on the methodological aspects of comparative historiography cf. Arndt et al. 2011.

5 Other young researchers have lately been advocating a similar approach, arguing on a much more theoretical level than this paper does. I would therefore like to recommend reading Rieke Schäfer and Imke Rajamani, whose instructive thoughts on the historicity of metaphors (Schäfer) and on how to extend the methods of conceptual history beyond word-based analysis to also visual or in her case audio-visual media (Rajamani) have been recently published in the »Contributions to the History of Concepts« (cf. Schäfer 2012: 28-51; Rajamani 2012: 52-77).

AFFIRMATIVE USE OF HISTORY AS METAPHOR

One of the most prominent authors of conceptual history – »Begriffsgeschichte« in German – was Reinhart Koselleck. He once stated that if he had not become a historian, he would have been a caricaturist (cf. Raphael 2006: 167). Although he drew remarkably funny caricatures of his colleagues and academic life, his professional research focussed on words, not on images.⁶ He opened historians' minds to the semantic change that words – or concepts – undergo in the course of time. A pivotal point of his work was reflecting on the French Revolution and the decades before and after 1789. The semantic field »revolution«, used both as term and metaphor, is, according to Koselleck, the topos par excellence for modern times, indicating uprising and political change as well as, in a broader sense, the structural change of society, science, culture and therefore comprising basically all areas of life (cf. Koselleck 2006: 240).

Koselleck's thesis can be applied to interwar satire: no matter whether German, French or Spanish, metaphors and symbols revolving around the topos »revolution« emerged constantly both in written and visual forms. Unsurprisingly, the French Revolution was *the* event of choice when satirical media referred to something historic in an affirmative way.

A telling example of this is a small caricature that can be found in *Le Canard Enchaîné*'s last January edition in 1924 showing some sort of penguin or snowman.

Figure 1: Anonymous: »Pour les elections«



Source: *Le Canard Enchaîné*, 9.396, 1

6 For a selection of his caricatures cf. Koselleck 1983.

Later that year, parliamentary elections took place in France. Whilst *Le Merle Blanc* strongly argued in favour of the left-wing alliance »Cartel des Gauches«, *Le Canard Enchaîné* was more impartial and also took a critical view at the possible governmental change in its satiric elements. No matter how the elections turn out, they argued, it would not mean profound change, but only »un brin de toilette« – an act of redressing and grooming the Republic. By labelling the snowman or penguin with key words such as »liberté, égalité, fraternité« and a Phrygian cap, the magazine warned that the actual core of democracy was fading away by degrading the Republic's symbols that had developed over the course of time to mere accessories.

In other cases, younger European Republics of the interwar period also used historic symbols as an allegory of democracy. Here again the Phrygian cap might serve as the most telling example. *El Gorro Frigio*, a vociferously anticlerical Spanish magazine published for a short period of time in 1931, was even directly named after the cap that had become a symbol of »Liberté« in revolutionary France.⁷ Spanish and German satire did not ridicule the Phrygian cap but kept on using it as an icon of freedom and liberty, emphasising the role of visual satire in Germany and Spain as a trademark for true Republicans and as a symbol of hope, especially during the initial stage of the respective Republics.

In November 1918 events began to move fast in Germany: marines neglected to set sail and fight a final, yet unpromising battle of the First World War. An air of revolution led Max von Baden to announce the Kaiser's abdication against his will and to transmit the power to social democrat Friedrich Ebert. On 9 November the Republic was proclaimed – twice, in fact, as Karl Liebknecht wanted to proclaim the so-called »Räterepublik«, a government based on councils according to the Soviet model. However, Philipp Scheidemann, a leading social democrat like Ebert, proclaimed a parliamentary Republic only two hours before Liebknecht.⁸ Scheidemann's concept prevailed. It was

7 Its characteristic form with top curling forward derives from a bull's testicles which the people of Phrygia, a state in Asia Minor from 8 BC on, used to wear as a head-piece. Later in Roman antiquity, emancipated slaves wore a cap with the same design to indicate their freedom. In the late Middle Ages it was again frequently used, before the French Revolution coined its meaning as a symbol of liberty (cf. Eberle 1966: 281-283).

8 For one of the most concise narrations of this transition from a monarchy at war to a parliamentary republic in English language cf. Fulbrook 2011: 21-27.

the parliamentary model which Thomas Theodor Heine, founder and leading caricaturist of the German *Simplicissimus*, also favoured. Sympathising with what would become the Weimar Republic, he greeted it with a pompous and fairly humourless caricature.

Figure 2: Thomas Theodor Heine: »Hoffnung«



Source: *Simplicissimus*, 23.33, 1

The drawing on the front page of the edition published on 12 November 1918 shows a friendly looking eagle – the German heraldic animal. It drinks from a bowl handed to it by a kneeling young man. The man is barely dressed, resembling an antique statue and hence intensifying the connection between the young Republic and Greece as the homeland of democracy. The scene also makes references to Greek Mythology and the Fountain of Youth that was already mentioned as the source of all life by Herodotus and the Alexander Romance. In this caricature almost overloaded with symbols and allegories, it is the young man's Phrygian cap that is the most eye-catching element: Heine chose to paint it bright red, emphasizing the expectations that were placed on the Republic as the fundamental renewal and cure of Germany.⁹

9 This interpretation was, of course, even more emphasized by the caption which said: »Hoffnung. Aus dem Jungbrunnen der Freiheit wird der deutsche Adler neue

Yet by October 1931 these hopes seemed to be literally dead, which a *Simplicissimus* cover page underlined.

Figure 3: Karl Arnold: »Der letzte Demokrat«



Source: *Simplicissimus*, 36.27, 1

Sitting next to the grave of »democracy« and »parliamentarianism«, »the last democrat« – as the headline said – mourns the loss. According to their gravestone they were killed by »Article 48« of the Weimar constitution – the famous, or rather infamous, paragraph enabling the president to declare a State of Emergency which gave him authoritarian power. The gravestone shown in the caricature is a pale, thin stone figure of Lady Justice wearing a rather plain Phrygian cap: hope, along with the cap's brilliance, has faded.

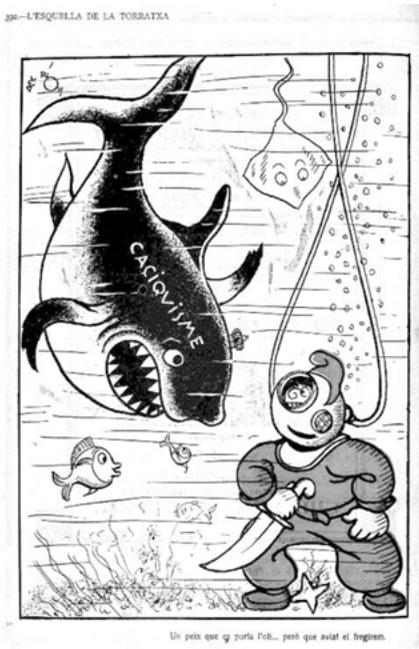
The Second Republic in Spain, however, was also linked to great hopes for basic democratic values. Concerning the satiric media scene, it expressed the concrete expectation not to be censored any more – which might explain the high number of new, especially anticlerical releases. Freedom of speech and therefore freedom of press came into force from December 1931, when the new constitution was approved. By this time, it had already been almost a

Kräfte trinken.« (Hope. The German eagle shall gain new strength by drinking from the Fountain of Youth and Freedom).

year since Primo de Rivera had given up on being the leader of a military dictatorship. The government of his successor, Damaso Berenguer, was no more successful and was ironically called »dictablanda« by contemporaries.¹⁰ Historians have stressed many reasons for the end of Bourbon monarchy and military government in spring 1931. Yet the most immediate cause were the results of local elections in early April: republican parties won a landslide victory, especially in urbanised parts of the country, and hence one city after another pushed for political change and turned their backs on the old elites. Among all Spanish cities advocating democratic change, Barcelona has been rightly described as one of the most progressive. Furthermore, it had a tradition of publishing political and satirical magazines that can be traced back to the 18th century (cf. Sánchez Aranda/Barrera del Barrio 1992: 299). In the early stage of the Second Republic, publications such as *L'Esquella de la Torratxa* or *El Be Negre* tried to deprive the old elites of any sort of credibility, which the following caricature points out exemplarily. Two weeks before the first parliamentary elections were to take place, the back page of *L'Esquella de la Torratxa* featured a shark and a deep-sea diver who was trying to massacre the predator with a sword.

10 The term is a wordplay as the female form of the adjective »duro«, Spanish for »hard«, is part of the Spanish word for dictatorship »dictadura«. »Blando« however is the antonym – soft – suggesting therefore that the Berenguer government might have been a dictatorship concerning its structure, but not necessarily concerning its brutality or assertiveness. The term has been adopted by political science to describe similar developments of the late Franco dictatorship or in South America. For a detailed and pleasantly condensed insight into the history of early 20th century Spain cf. Casanova 2010: 7-150; Vincent 2007: 117-159.

Figure 4: *Del Río, untitled caricature*



Source: *L'Esquella de la Torratxa*, 55.2710, 15

To avoid any confusion, the diver wore a Phrygian cap even above his helmet. The shark in contrast wore a little bourbon crown and was tagged with the word «caciquismo», indicating only two out of the many trouble spots that Spain was confronted with at the time. Since the restoration period and the so called «Sexenio Revolucionario» 1868 to 1874, the «caciques» played an important role in Spain as chiefs of the rather oligarchic and clientelistic rural areas.¹¹ In the caricature, he is not only threatened by the sword but also by the legend saying:

«Un peix que es porta l'oli... pero que aviat el fregirem.»¹²

Like the tagging of enemies, it was also quite common for contemporary satirical magazines in Spain to address their readers directly. This served the

11 The definition of the term «cacique» follows Bernecker 1990: 51.

12 «A fish getting the oil... but we're going to fry it soon.»

purpose of winning him or her to the Republican cause. Yet this practice changed after conservative parties won the 1934 elections, a development which will be looked at more closely later on. During the so-called »bienio negro«, the conservative and right-wing coalition from 1934 to early 1936, the legends in left-wing caricatures changed from the first person plural to imperatives. From then on, the satirical magazines were increasingly used as a platform to agitate and call the readers to direct action. This was also apparent in the caricature's aesthetics, reflecting the labour movement and incorporating elements of Soviet design.¹³ In other words: drawings that had been overtly infantile and friendly in their appearance with rather peaceful historic symbols referring to the French Revolution, became more explicit and inclement, no longer solely using the Phrygian cap, but also armed men as a symbol of the Republic. Each day, satire and propaganda became increasingly intermixed as the nation drifted towards civil war.

All examples cited so far have been taken from visual satire samples. Exploring historical metaphors in written satire is difficult in an article this short, as satirical texts took multiple forms in those magazines, ranging from headlines over poems to fragments and more extensive articles of very different styles and tones.

A general observation on the issue is therefore, that if European satiric media of the interwar period applied historical allegories to texts, they did so in a more subtle way than their graphic companions. In addition, metaphors of different categories – like animals, diseases or literary allusions – were intertwined. Nonetheless innumerable historical references can be found. Many, if not most of them, also pointed to the potential of the French Revolution.

In early 1924 for example, *Le Canard Enchaîné* criticised the politics of the then French prime minister Raymond Poincaré by satirically quoting him: »Les taxes c'est moi.«¹⁴ The line was printed as a subtitle on the magazine's front page and was therefore highly visible to everyone, even to those who just passed a bookstall but did not necessarily buy a copy. By altering one of

13 For Stalinist Propaganda and poster art cf. for instance Czech/Doll 2007: 200-247.

The front page of the edition published on 14 February 1936 underlines this point:

L'Esquella de la Torratxa, 60.2954, 1.

14 *Le Canard Enchaîné*, No. 399, 20 February 1924, 1.

the most famous quotes in history, Louis XIV's »L'état c'est moi«, the satirical magazine put Poincaré on a level with the Sun King. The headline referred to Poincaré gaining »pleins pouvoirs financiers« on 8 February 1924 (cf. Winock 2007: 644). Yet a prime minister holding the monopoly on public expenditure, however explicable by financial crisis following the Ruhr occupation, must have severely threatened the editors so committed to democracy. By ironically fearing the reestablishment of absolutism, *Le Canard Enchaîné* altered its call for political change, for a government that would respect democratic values more than the »Bloc National« did at the time. No matter how legal Poincaré's manoeuvres might have been, *Le Canard Enchaîné* warned the French about him misusing the constitution and the possibilities it contained in order to concentrate his power. A historical metaphor – condensed, plain and in prominent layout position – seemed just the suitable means.

It is about time to also take a look at German magazines. One of the most prominent figures of German interwar journalism, the literary and satirical scene was Kurt Tucholsky. He published thousands of articles, reviews and poems in daily newspapers such as the *Vossische Zeitung* or illustrated magazines like the Berlin-based, satirical *Ulk*, the social democratic *Wahre Jakob* or the less political but rather entertaining *Uhu* to name but a few.¹⁵ In addition to that, he was the most productive contributor to the weekly magazine *Die Weltbühne*. The following examples are taken from this publication because they provide the most telling evidence for the point I am trying to make. Yet as it was neither an illustrated nor a solely satirical magazine like most of the media analysed in this study, a few extra words on this source seem indispensable at this point. The *Weltbühne: Wochenschrift für Politik, Kunst & Wirtschaft* had an overtly serious tone and it was taken seriously. It sought to provide profound analysis of artistic, political and economic topics and it uncovered scandals that led to several trials.¹⁶ Even though the print

15 For more details cf. Tucholsky's catalogue raisonnée (Bonitz/Wirtz 1991).

16 The so called »Weltbühne-Prozess« in 1929 was certainly one of the most discussed trials of the interwar period in and outside Germany. The trial accused and sentenced chief editor Carl von Ossietzky of treason and espionage after having printed a critical report on secret air force activities (cf. Suhr 1997: 54-69). Furthermore, *Le Canard Enchaîné* kept showing that investigative journalism and satire do not contradict each other, uncovering for instance the Stavisky affair in 1934 (cf. Martin 2005: 155-158).

run of around 15,000 copies per week was comparably low, reader circles all over the world guaranteed quite a wide reception.¹⁷ Not following any specific programme, the *Weltbühne* remained critical – especially in its political satire – of all parties. This hints at the most relevant of *Weltbühne*'s characteristics for the purposes of this study: in addition to its serious content, the weekly magazine was a forum for contemporary satire. Satirical poems – most of them signed with one of Tucholsky's *noms de plume* like Ignaz Wrobel or Theobald Tiger – and other rather funny but anonymously published elements were interspersed between longer articles in order to separate the different editorial sections. However, satirical components criticising events of the day increased in volume the longer the Weimar Republic endured, even though freedom of press was concurrently threatened by certain modifications of the law which concerned the *Weltbühne* in several ways.¹⁸

Historical allegories appeared infrequently in Tucholsky's work, but he did metaphorically refer to the French Revolution when emphasizing the lack of revolutionary quality in November 1918. In fact, he repeatedly pointed to this diagnosis, and in one of his ironic poems he stated that the »November-Revolution« was a true »German revolution« – well organized and bureaucratic but uninspired and gutless. He argued that the Germans were denying the guillotine not because they were an intrinsically peaceful folk but because putting it up was against the law – laws shaped by a government that revolutionary impulses would actually seek to overcome:

»Das war eine deutsche Revolution:
Eine mit Organisation,
eine mit Stempeln und Kompetenzen –
beileibe nicht mit wilden Tänzen
um Guillotinen –
Nee, über Ihnen
aber auch! Das ist des Landes nicht der Brauch!
Denn ›das Aufstellen solcher Maschinen ist allen Roten

17 The existence of these circles was regularly mentioned in the *Weltbühne* itself, where addresses of readers who organised the meetings were displayed. Reader's circles in Sao Paulo and Montevideo were mentioned, for instance, on the last page of the April 12th edition (cf. *Weltbühne*, 28.15).

18 The editorial strategy behind this interspersed satire as well as the proportions of satirical and serious elements in the *Weltbühne* has not been examined and will be an integral part of my yet unfinished and unpublished dissertation.

auf öffentlichen Plätzen bei Strafe verboten!
(gez.) Piesecke Kommissar.«¹⁹

Even though Tucholsky became especially famous for his satirical poetry, he also invented another format of textual satire which is worth being considered here: the so called »Schnipsel« – short, ironic notes bundled in a column.²⁰ Especially in the late Weimar Republic almost every edition of the *Weltbühne* published a number of them, but »Schnipsel«-like satire, i.e. short aphoristic sentences, can also be found in Spanish and French media, the more the magazines were threatened by censorship. In other words: »Schnipsel« become of interest when taking a look at the editorial level of satirical journalism and how it dealt with censorship, because if the respective authority found them unsuitable, these loose sentences could easily be removed from the layout.

Again, Tucholsky incessantly pointed to Germany missing a real revolution. One of these condensed comparisons has nowadays become a much-quoted aphorism.²¹ Yet its first publication dates back to the »Schnipsel«-section of the *Weltbühne*. Tucholsky wrote (cf. *Weltbühne* 26.53, 32):

»Wegen ungünstiger Witterung fand die deutsche Revolution in der Musik statt.«²²

In this very last »Schnipsel« of the year 1930, Tucholsky chose a metaphor that combined conclusions from musical history and political history – developments in music being catalysed by German composers such as Bach or, around 1800, Beethoven, set against the profound political and social transformations simultaneously emanating from the French Revolution, and finishing with the most down-to-earth German archetype: bad weather.

Up to this point, all cited examples used history as an *affirmative* reference. To swiftly review this strategy, it must be underlined that the historical metaphors used served as an identifying feature for something pure and true.

19 The poem was first published in 1920, it was here quoted after a re-edition (cf. Tucholsky 1985: 112).

20 The most suitable translation seems to be »snippet«.

21 It is, for instance, one of several literary quotes written on façades in Weimar city centre, erected to brighten up the city when it became European Capital of Culture in 1999.

22 »Due to bad weather conditions, the German Revolution took place in music.«

As a result, the phenomenon or person that was linked to it was meant to evoke positive associations, i.e. people wearing Phrygian caps being easily identifiable as republicans. Beyond identification, affirmative historical metaphors also intended to judge the present by a distinguished perception of the past. When referring to the French Revolution as *the change par excellence*, caricatures and satirical texts set the bar high for contemporary events and their appraisal.

NEGATIVE USE OF HISTORY AS METAPHOR

This leads to the question of whether satirical media also used historical metaphors in a *negative* way. To provide a brief conclusion to this question, the answer is yes. Even though sources prove this strategy was altogether applied less frequently, it had interesting effects.

The German satirical press used negative historical metaphors more often than Spanish or French media. The first example is again taken from the Weimar Republic:

The *Ulk* used this strategy of referring to the past negatively when bringing up the issue of Germany's recent past – the Kaiserreich. This period from 1871 to 1914 had not only shaped Germany's recent past, but also the Weimar present and, eventually, also the country's future, something that became more than clear in the 1925 presidential elections. They were won by Paul von Hindenburg, 77 years old at the time. With him, the Germans voted for the geriatric incarnation of the Wilhelmine past, for one of the most ardent propagandists of the stab-in-the-back-legend and, as Robert Gerwarth and Anna von der Goltz have so elegantly shown in their books on the Bismarck and Hindenburg myth, for a symbolic leader of anti-republican forces rather than a vital and capable politician whose aura was quite present in German society.²³

23 »The mythological connection between Bismarck and his ›successor‹ Hindenburg was thus already established and the election campaigners of 1925 were well aware of its political appeal.« (Gerwarth 2005: 88).

24 »In 1925, therefore, [Hindenburg's] myth did not have to be revived. It had been firmly established as a vital component and political weapon in the right-wing struggle against the Weimar ›system‹ and the Treaty of Versailles. The announcement of his candidacy for the presidency in April 1925 was thus the logi-

Yet first things first: After the initial round of the presidential elections had ended in March 1925 without any of the many candidates reaching an absolute majority, the parties formed blocks and nominated only two candidates for a second round. The parties of the governing democratic Weimar coalition agreed upon Wilhelm Marx from the moderate and catholic »Zentrums-partei« as their candidate and his election seemed almost sure, until right wing forces sought and found a rival candidate of extreme popularity – Junker Field Marshal Hindenburg who had not even participated in the first round. The nomination of the war hero and committed protestant not only appealed to monarchist voters who identified him with a glorious German past, but also to non-Catholic moderate parties such as the BVP (Bayerische Volkspartei) that turned to him instead of Marx (cf. Kolb 2000: 81). Support from these groups decisively contributed to Hindenburg’s victory on 26 April – a victory that many historians have pointed out as characteristic of how paradoxically Germany’s first republic developed.²⁴

Like any other left-wing press, the *Ulk* was not really alarmed by Hindenburg’s candidature. In fact, the opposite was the case: it pretended to already know the result of the elections, despite the old warhorse’s reappearance on the political stage. To them, Marx was the only possible successor to Ebert. By presenting him a priori as the winner, they renounced one of satire’s most substantial qualities: subtlety. Hindenburg was considered to be too absurd to ridicule, and thus the danger for a Weimar Republic whose Head of State was identical to the ›Victor of Tannenberg‹ was underestimated dramatically. In fact, both the *Ulk* and the *SimPLICISSIMUS* tried to combat German lack of democratic values looming in the enthusiasm that accompanied Hindenburg’s candidature with the very same symbols that right-wing press and propaganda simultaneously used to push him: comparing his

cal outcome of a right-wing strategy rehearsed since 1919.« (von der Golz 2009: 83).

24 »Hindenburg’s election was symptomatic of wider trends. As far as the actual functioning of parliamentary democracy was concerned, all was far from well even before the onset of the recession. Under an electoral system of proportional representation, in which the relatively numerous parties held radically different opinions on a range of domestic and foreign affairs, it was extremely difficult to form any sort of stable coalition government with majority support in Parliament, even in the ›good years‹.« (Fulbrook 2011: 39).

comeback to the historic figure of Bismarck and to the foundation of the Kaiserreich in 1871.

Thus this paper takes a closer look at a conservative and monarchist satirical magazine before going into details on the *Ulk* and *Simplicissimus*: the *Kladderadatsch*, a magazine that underwent considerable political change in its long existence. It used to be a rather democratic, revolutionary publication when founded in 1848, but stayed loyal to the Kaiserreich after the First World War.²⁵ In 1925, the *Kladderadatsch* accompanied Hindenburg's candidature and subsequent victory with sustained applause.

Figure 5: Arthur Johnson: »Der Lotse besteigt das Schiff«



Source: Kladderadatsch, 78.19, 1

Concerning the use of history, Johnson's caricature involved two historical components: on the one hand, the drawing incorporated historic personalities and on the other hand it referred to the iconographic history of the satirical genre itself. That is to say the drawing was almost a copy of Sir John Tenniel's famous caricature »Dropping the pilot«, published in 1890 by the British satirical magazine *Punch*, shortly after Bismarck had been dismissed by Kaiser Wilhelm II.

²⁵ Analysing the conservative *Kladderadatsch* would actually be worthy of new research. Meanwhile cf. Allen 1984; Heinrich-Jost (ed.) 1982; Koch 1991.

Figure 6: John Tenniel: »Dropping the pilot«

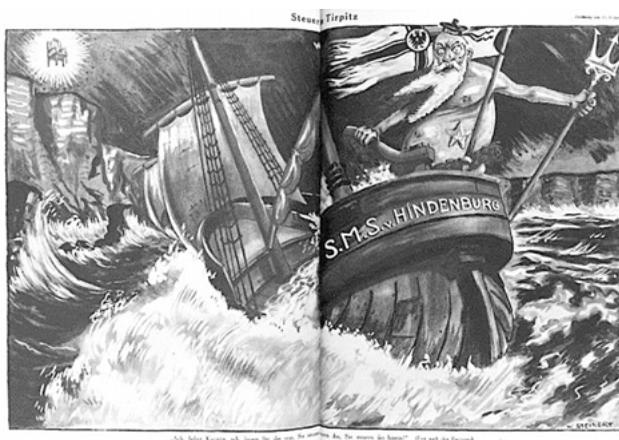


Source: Punch, 98.29, 32

In his engraving, Tenniel compared the German Reich to a ship losing its pilotage – a caricature that had gained enormous fame in Germany, where the translated title »Der Lotse geht von Bord« became almost idiomatic. Tenniel captured what historians have been analysing since Bismarck's dismissal: without him, the Kaiserreich seemed to have lost its compass and the failure of the premiers who came after Bismarck played a role in the gradual emergence of a Bismarck myth before, during and after the First World War. At any rate, the scene shown in the *Kladderadatsch* in 1925 suggests a reversion of history: Kaiser or not, a pilot was finally on board again – and wasn't a good steersman just the man to manoeuvre a ship through a dangerous current?

As mentioned above, the *Ulk* frequently tried to refer negatively to Bismarck and the Kaiserreich when countering the menace of Hindenburg's possible presidency.

Figure 7: Willi Steinert: »Steuermann Tirpitz«



Source: *Ulk*, 54.17, 4-5

Here »*your majesty Hindenburg*« refers to the ship, as indicated by the title »*Seine Majestät Hindenburg*«. The ship, Hindenburg, is being steered by old general Tirpitz with his characteristic beard: it had indeed been his old comrade Tirpitz who travelled to Hindenburg's retirement home in Hannover and persuaded him to run for office (cf. Pyta 2007: 161-174). The whole scene – night, the cliffs of Helgoland and quite a rough sea – suggests the threat of capsizing. The opulent, two-page caricature is complimented by a little rhyme which pretended the *Ulk* even felt sorry for Hindenburg being wrecked by Tirpitz:

»Ach, lieber Kapitän, ach lassen Sie das sein, Sie steuern ihn, steuern ihn hinein!«²⁶

26 »Oh, dear captain, just let it be, you're getting him into trouble.«

The *Simplicissimus* also connected Bismarck and Hindenburg.

Figure 8: Thomas Theodor Heine: »Das Katastrophenjahr«



Source: *Simplicissimus*, 30.5, 1

The illustration suggests a swirl of chaos and violence if Hindenburg were to be elected. Yet the very centre of the caricature forms the most explicit symbol of Bismarck: a spiked helmet. In addition to that, the laconic line somehow invidiously commemorates the unification of Germany, when the Kaiserreich was proclaimed in Versailles 1871:

»Das einige Deutschland seinem Präsidenten.«²⁷

Both examples taken from *Ulk* and *Simplicissimus* point to one central aspect of why the negative use of a historical metaphor did not work out the way the authors would have liked it to: an analysis of the double use of historical allegories in the 1925 elections reveals that left-wing humour lacked positive symbols and catchwords in favour of democracy. Their strategy to vilify Hindenburg by comparing him to the Kaiserreich failed, as both the

27 »The unified Germany to its president.«

Bismarck and Hindenburg myths were already deep-seated in German interwar society.

A similar example of how the lack of positive symbols in left-wing satire played into the hands of non-republican forces can be isolated for the Spanish case. However, as this did not involve historical metaphors but concerned the labelling of beasts as »cacique« or »falange«, as already mentioned above, I will try to only give a brief synthesis of the development. In 1933 the tags that used to distinguish between the enemies somehow fused into one word: »dretes« meaning »right-wing« in Catalan. This practice involuntarily reflected and emphasized a formation that was simultaneously taking place in Spanish politics: right-wing forces formed the CEDA (Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas), an electoral alliance that actually won the majority in November 1933, successively calling off some of the reforms the previous government had at least tried to implement.

The history of French left-wing interwar satire does not know such a crux, yet negative references to history can indeed be found. The media also chose to focus their attention on a highly prominent figure: Napoleon Bonaparte. He served as the most telling example of an individual's insatiable thirst for power; one example leads back to the aforementioned governance of the »Cartel des Gauches«, or more precisely: to its end.

In July 1926 *Le Canard Enchaîné* compared André Tardieu to Napoleon, insinuating that the rather conservative politician strove for another office, no matter the cost.²⁸

Only two weeks later the left-wing alliance broke down due to the ongoing financial crisis.²⁹ To solve it, someone quite familiar was asked to form a new government: Raymond Poincaré, who had not only been Prime and Financial minister of the »Bloc National« but also one of the politicians who most ardently advocated for the »Union Sacrée« during the First World War

28 The article and comic depicting Tardieu's life not only compared him to Napoleon, but also to Mussolini, thus warning the readers of him as a possible dictator (cf. Épinal, »Tardieu-le-dictateur«, *Le Canard Enchaîné*, 11.523, 4).

29 Financial Minister Eduard Herriot had unavailingly tried to reform French tax politics in order to solve the country's financial problems. His plans failed because they ran against both the economy and the »Banque de France«. He resigned, yet his successors were also unable to overcome this opposition, meaning the end of the »Cartel des Gauches« by July 1926 (cf. Martens 2005: 382).

– a political agreement in which all parties joined, thereby pausing political dispute for the length of the war. His new 1926 government was, however, named after both – »Union Nationale«. It united politicians from quite a broad political spectrum. And among them was the ambitious André Tardieu who became the new Minister of Transportation.

History, of all things, is past time. Yet what gives time having irrevocably passed its meaning is documentation and narration. The satiric potential of history thus lies in its truth-building process through narration, in its function as a link between past, present and future in order to help »human beings [to] live in the tense intersection of remembered past and expected future« (Rüsen 2005: 2).

This article illustrated how pro-republican interwar satire in Germany, France and Spain knew basically two sorts of satiric strategy: an affirmative and a negating use of history as an allegory to criticise the present and therefore somehow try to affect the future.

Satire mostly referred to the French Revolution as a synonym of profound yet positive change when arguing affirmatively. Nonetheless the magazines' satiric strategies differed gradually: in Spain's Second Republic the Phrygian cap served as an indication of democracy, i.e. as something indisputably pure, true and good. German satire however used the French Revolution as a metaphoric standard to compare the recent change from Kaiserreich to Weimar Republic. By doing so, readers were invited to realise that the events of November 1918 did not deserve to be called a revolution. For French satirical media, these apparently affirmative references were eventually more ambivalent: they extended their implication and employed them as warnings, indicating that it took more than symbols for a sound democracy.

When referring to history in a negative way, the satirical magazines examined in this article mainly chose historic figures or the recent past as their point of reference. The French had Napoleon Bonaparte as an example of man's unconditional drive to power. German interwar satire resurrected Bismarck when Hindenburg became presidential candidate in 1925 and thus provided an interesting case of how and why left-liberal satiric strategy did not work out in quite the way their authors would have liked it to. By trying to give a negative connotation to the same historic persons that right-wing press and propaganda simultaneously used to showcase Hindenburg, the satirical magazines involuntarily helped to spread the Bismarck and Hindenburg myth. Instead, they could have substantially countered the emerging historical master narrative with their own, positive counter-arguments.

Furthermore, compared to allegories connected to »real« people of a recent, yet to be interpreted past, the antique, impersonal and symbolic references used to defend democracy were too abstract and ineffectual in the lead-up to 1933, 1936 or 1939.

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