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Critical Comedy: Satire, Absurdity and Ireland's Economic Crash

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Abstract

Satirical humour increasingly plays a part in the public sphere, particularly in anglophone countries, and quite remarkably so during Ireland's economic crash. While this satirical humour is often seen as a form of protest, it is also a form of authority and hegemony. This article explores the role of critical comedy in the public sphere, and how it has been used to challenge the authority of the state and the media. It argues that critical comedy is a form of resistance that is essential to the functioning of a democratic society. The article also discusses the role of satire in the Irish political and cultural landscape, and how it has been used to challenge the authority of the state and the media. The article concludes by arguing that critical comedy is a form of resistance that is essential to the functioning of a democratic society.

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Show Purpose



Notes

This sketch and all others discussed herein are available on 'YouTube': Late Late Show, Après Match Bailout Sketch, 3 December 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1E5eg6cwo4U>; Nineteenth Minute DAA Parody, 15 February 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JPT3feipj8>; and The Savage Eye - 'Politicians', 6 December 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-23L4NMKjM>

My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this point, and later concerning Ross O'Carroll-Kelly and Constantin Gurdgiev.

Although Heath and Potter's work is a good analysis of the self-defeating and consumerist logics of what they term 'counter-cultural critique', they also tend to reduce most of the phenomena they discuss to the working of cultural capital, which verges on a critique of critique, unmasking a plethora of different cultural phenomena as status-seeking strategies.

A genealogy of modern satire would be beyond the bounds of this paper. However, important elements can be seen in the Pulcinella figure (Horvath, [2010](#)) and the Comedia d'ella Arte (Szakolczai, [2012](#)).

David McSavage is the alias of David Andrews, brother of Barry Andrews and son of David Andrews, both former Fianna Fail TDs and ministers. His show, funded and

broadcast on RTÉ, is a satirical take on Irish politics. It is a good example of how satire can be used to critique the political establishment. The show is a weekly political programme on RTÉ.

Running since 2007, the show is a satirical take on Irish politics. It is a good example of how satire can be used to critique the political establishment. The show is a weekly political programme on RTÉ.

The social and political context of the show is characterised by both an increasing reliance on television for news and information, and immigration

and globalisation (Keohane & Kuhling, [2007](#)).

The argument here is that critical discourse can produce critical subjects and by extension satire can produce satirists. It is through the constitution of the critic that others – real and imaginary – become figured as pawns or dupes, and through the constitution of the satirist these others appear as absurd and gullible (see Boland, [2007](#)).

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference of the Sociological Association of Ireland; after screening the parody of the DAA ad, I presented these comments, which produced knowing laughter from the audience. The intended meaning of the comments cannot be ascertained, but their ironic resonances demonstrate my point about satirical subjectivity.

http://www.youtube.com/all_comments?v=8JPT3feipJ8

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