

Iranzo-Cabrera, María (2023). *El Papis (1973-1987): Contrapoder Informativo en la Transición Española*. Aldea Global, València. 211 pp. ISBN: 9788419333735.

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The media often serves as a reflection of the present, evolving to become a key archaeological element in the history of human communication. Over its fourteen-year existence (1973-1987), *El Papis* released 584 issues, and each number distinguished itself with a subversive and provocative approach to contemporary issues. Unfortunately, the magazine is also remembered as the first publication to fall victim to a deadly attack orchestrated by the extreme right amid the Transition. María Iranzo-Cabrera delves into the significance of these events in her work *El Papis (1973-1987): Contrapoder Informativo en la Transición Española*. She enriches the history of the press during the Spanish transition period with a monographic book dedicated to this countercultural weekly newspaper originating in Catalonia. Drawing from a prolific field study, she intricately analyzes administrative, judicial, and personal documents, intertwining the history of *El Papis* into the political and social context of that specific period in Spanish history.

The publication's initial achievement, a result of profound engagement with *El Papis*'s milieu, is encapsulated in the eloquent prologue by Antonio Franco Estadella, a frequent contributor to *El Papis*. He offers a critical yet nostalgic recollection of a magazine that vehemently criticized the Franco regime and the shortcomings of the Transition while simultaneously extolling the democratic value of such publications. Following this idea, María Iranzo-Cabrera establishes a theoretical and historical foundation to comprehensively understand the relevance of satire in journalism and political systems. The book's first part adeptly amalgamates literature from diverse disciplines such as history, psychology, and media studies to elucidate the social function of humor and its communicative use since ancient times. Drawing on influential references like Hazlitt (2002), the author posits that "the essence of the laughable is thus the incongruous. Detecting and exposing difference is an essential part of reason and judgment, a voluntary act of the mind" (p. 20). Additionally, Tubau (1973) is invoked to underscore that it is precisely critical humor capable of subjectively radiographing the world.

This definition of critical humor becomes pivotal in the book, in which the author ponders whether the Transition ushered in new perspectives on reality in the media and, if so, whether satirical media contributed to reshaping citizen mentalities. Thus, from a holistic viewpoint, the author considers the communicative ecosystem (Gómez Mompert, 2009) to comprehend that political and social issues were fundamental to understanding *El Papis*'s evolution. The author emphasizes the Transition from dictatorial control to a liberal system being in the hands of immense communicative power inherited from the dictatorship. Consequently, the strengthening of movements against the regime led to an increasingly defensive stance by press authorities. This context undeniably impacted *El Papis*. In the second, more extensive part of the book, the author presents a nuanced account of the magazine's evolution through its various stages: its inception, its interest in the model's full-frontal, the suspensions of its activities, the terrorist attack, and the eventual decline leading to its disappearance. The book serves as a valuable document, shedding light on *El Papis*'s history, marked by attempts at censorship, a complex political evolution, and the involvement of multiple contributors shaping the project over its active years. The section on the 1977 exhibition is particularly illustrative of the author's ability to cleverly combine documentary and testimonial work, delving into the causes of extreme right violence and its repercussions on freedom of expression during the Transition.

In the book's final part, the author completes her analysis by employing the survey method with *El Papis*'s readers and conducting a content analysis of the newspaper's front pages. Through these approaches, she argues that the magazine's attraction lies in its ability to reflect on well-known facts with popular sarcasm. *El Papis* addressed matters such as the monarchy, the army, religion, politicians of all kinds, and sexism, the latter with an androcentric vision that the author does not overlook. For Iranzo-Cabrera, *El Papis* "was a

libertarian medium. It defended absolute freedom above all government and all law” (p. 170). In doing so, it succeeded in lightening and simultaneously stirring consciences about the complex situation of the Spanish Transition. Herein lies the value of satirical journalism, related to its capacity to respond critically to the imposition of traditional values and promote negotiation of civil liberties, particularly freedom of expression. This value was particularly significant during political change, making this research a definite contribution to the completion of Spanish political and media history.

References

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