

Traces of Humour: From Traditional to Digital, From Literature to Politics

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Preface

Humor is among the oldest forms of human expression in the world. For this reason, irony and critical perspectives have continued to guide people in this way. Humor has always been one of the basic tools of both social and individual communication. For this reason, laughter or laughter is a very old situation, being one of the natural reactions of people. It is a manifestation of the extremely complex structure of the mind. This view was expressed by American writer and thinker Mark Twain as follows: "We have one effective weapon against people, and that is laughter." In reality, laughter, although broken down into pieces as a simple source of entertainment, is a deep intellectual activity. It is always a by-product of social maneuvers. Humor always has many functions related to both societies and personalities. It would be wrong to see humor in interpersonal relationships as a means of only relaxation and entertainment. There is a deeper structure in deeper communication.

There is a structure whose roots spread to intellectual and emotional evolution. Sigmund Freud expressed the roots of humor with a deeper analysis as follows: "Humor acts as a shield that allows us to momentarily release our subconscious fears." In general, fragmented, complex or challenging events encountered in daily life work with the operation of humor. This explanation process does not only contribute to the mental frameworks of the individual. It also forms an important member of social interactions. Humor has a structure that will provide emotional and intellectual relief for individuals. Daily survivors simultaneously endure stressful, conflicting or seemingly insurmountable conditions. You always see a defense fee like a drug. Charlie Chaplin's own films contain humorous aspects as defense options: "It is a course of life from nearby regions, but a comedy in long shots." This perspective allows humor to maintain its power even under difficult conditions. It learns how to succeed with life by making people laugh and maintaining their hopes.

The effect of humor is not limited to the individual level, but has been deeply affected by societies in a global structure. The best

example of this is that what is funny for one society may not be funny for another society. This is because humor is shaped by societies. Throughout history, humor, which has played an important role in social history with external and internal dynamics, has been the most effective work in enrichment. Unlike the rigid rules of societies, humor has been a response to the rigidity of rules. It has developed as a flexible and critical counter-narrative. It is always the duty of humor to question authority and emphasize the social forms, injustices or absurdities of society. Oscar Wilde expresses the answer humor gives to the injustice of the world as follows: "I want to tell people what happened, make them laugh, otherwise they will kill you." In oppressive, monarchic and dictatorial regimes where direct criticism is banned or censored, humor is a "secret" weapon of the opposition.

In the historical process, it has become an important tool for the opposition to convey the criticism it wants to say. Sometimes it is a form of resistance against injustice. Sometimes it is a rebellion against authority. Sometimes it is a distribution of the creation of social problems. Humor has assumed vital roles in various societies and periods due to these problems. In summary of the past, it is clearly seen that humor is much more comprehensive than just a means of entertainment. It is the power that unites societies in one way or another and gathers people around common ideas. George Bernard Shaw expressed this power with a concise saying: "Humor is the mask of all serious events." Humor is one of the most effective tools of social criticism. It sheds light on the social functions of irony and sarcasm and injustices. For example, the plays of Aristophanes in Ancient Greece show how social criticism and humor are intertwined. Ancient storytellers used humor to represent social events and individual parts on stage in towns and villages. Thus, humor enlightened entertainment and encouraged contemplation. It inspired social change and created a unique structure for society. In the internet world, current humor, recorded through social media platforms, has recorded a valuable transformation.

The internet has transformed the heavy and limited structure of traditional media countries into a faster and more democratic structure. It has transformed humor into a global and multi-layered communication tool. Humor used to reach comics magazines, cartoons and newspaper columns as single copies (producer-receiver) up to mass borders. It can now reach millions in seconds on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok. It has determined the nature of humor on digital platforms. Gender It has further strengthened. The internet has further strengthened the universal power of humor. Woody Allen summarizes the universal power of humor with these words: "There are two ways to cope with life: One is to suffer, the other is to laugh. I choose to laugh." In today's world, humor has gone beyond being a sharing or content, a mere personal joke. It has gained the power to trigger conversations on a global scale.

This book, prepared by academics, investigates how humor has shaped societies throughout history, how it has been used in cultural and political contexts, and how it has been shaped through digital platforms in the modern age. The multifaceted structure of humor has been analyzed with many different sources. The book aims to provide a comprehensive perspective by addressing its various dimensions in its sections. The same Albert Einstein once argued that the connection between humor and intelligence is a multifaceted relationship. Based on this idea, the book concludes: "One day, in order to solve serious scientific problems, we will learn to think like a naive child, and perhaps we will realize that humor is the highest form of intelligence." As long as humans exist, humor will continue to be a part of society. It should not be forgotten that it is the court jesters who make fun of kings.

This book delves into how humour has shaped societies throughout history, how it has been employed in cultural and political contexts, and how it has evolved through digital platforms in the modern age. While the multifaceted nature of humour makes it challenging to confine its analysis to a single perspective, this study aims to provide a comprehensive outlook by addressing its

various dimensions. Albert Einstein once highlighted the connection between humour and intelligence: “One day we will learn to think like a pure child to solve serious scientific problems, and perhaps we will realise that humour is the highest form of intelligence.” With its multifaceted nature, humour has persisted throughout history as a cultural bridge, a creative form of social critique, and one of humanity's most powerful tools. As Kurt Vonnegut said, “Without humour, the world would be an unbearable place.”

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Introduction

Humour is one of the oldest and most impactful forms of expression in human history. Beyond being a tool for communication among individuals, it profoundly influences societies (Gervais & Wilson, 2005). Laughter and making others laugh may initially seem like mere forms of entertainment; however, humour transcends this superficial perception, serving as a vital element of social critique, cultural transformation, and political resistance (Collinson, 2002). As Mark Twain famously said, "The only effective weapon of the human race is laughter" (cited in Gervais & Wilson, 2005). Laughter, one of humour's most potent elements, occurs when an individual perceives visual or auditory stimuli as amusing. However, the components of humour—objects, events, and settings used as symbols—do not always evoke feelings of happiness or positivity, contrary to expectations (Öğüt Eker 2014).

Another dimension of humour ties it to an intense process of human communication, particularly in terms of recollection and the emergence of the comic. People engage in the act of laughter even when alone—watching something humorous on television, reading a book, or recalling a funny personal experience. Although this act seems solitary, the individual laughing is responding to television characters or the book's author, or reliving an event involving other people in their memory (Martin, 2007).

One of humour's most significant features is its integration with culture. Humour, always present in societal life, occupies a key position among the intangible values that societies accumulate over time, such as traditions, lifestyles, and histories. It serves as a mirror of lived experiences. Accordingly, humour can belong to a particular culture or be shared among specific subcultures within that society. On a universal scale, humour is not merely the result of psychological processes but is also influenced by shared values and practices within a cultural framework. Humour, shaped by societal

relations, possesses a human identity and involves reciprocal interaction. In other words, humour is directly affected by the culture and social conditions in which it exists (Öngören, 1983: 34).

This book aims to examine how humour operates within social, cultural, and political realms, exploring its multifaceted nature across various chapters.

The **first chapter** begins with the definition and theoretical framework of humour. How has humour been defined and functioned in different cultures and historical periods? In answering this question, this chapter will address humour's etymological and cultural roots. How have cultural differences shaped the understanding of humour? Is humour a universal language, or does it carry meanings unique to each culture? This section will explore how humour impacts individuals' psychological states, its role in reducing stress, and its capacity to strengthen social solidarity. Theories of humour (superiority, relief, and incongruity theories) will clarify how this concept becomes functional. As Sigmund Freud suggested, "Humour is a defence mechanism that allows us to release our unconscious anxieties momentarily." Through humour, individuals find both emotional and mental relief. This chapter will highlight humour's individual and societal functions and its power as a tool for social critique and questioning.

The **second chapter** will delve into the rise of humour as a means of social critique in the Ottoman Empire, particularly during the Tanzimat era, when it gained prominence in the press, with the *Diyojen* magazine playing a pioneering role. In the latter half of the 19th century, as Ottoman society underwent processes of modernisation and Westernisation, the resulting social and political contradictions became central themes of humour. *Diyojen*, published by Teodor Kasap in 1870, holds a unique place in press history as the first Ottoman humour magazine. Taking its name from the ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes, the magazine adopted a sarcastic, critical, and inquisitive approach. Operating within the

press freedom environment fostered by the Tanzimat reforms, *Diyojen* addressed societal issues, bureaucratic inefficiency, social inequalities, and political authority with a humorous lens, capturing public attention. However, its bold stance often clashed with the censorship mechanisms of the time. The magazine reflected the struggles of modernisation and the effects of Westernisation on the public, offering a humorous critique of the Ottoman administration and policies.

The **third chapter** will focus on the role of humour in the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. During the Ottoman period, storytellers (*meddahs*), shadow plays like *Karagöz and Hacivat*, and Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes were pivotal cultural elements that expressed societal concerns humorously. These figures served as the voice of the people, articulating societal and individual criticisms through humour. In the Second Constitutional Era, the liberal atmosphere fostered significant growth in humour magazines, while in the Republic era, humour accompanied modernisation and secularisation efforts. This chapter will provide a detailed analysis of how societal transformations were addressed through humour and how this process resonated in the early years of the Republic, shedding light on both the continuity and evolution of humour from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic.

The **fourth chapter** will examine the place of humour in literature. From the Middle Ages to the Tanzimat period and from Tanzimat to the Republic, humour in Turkish literature has served as a tool for social critique. Humorous stories, anecdotes, and novels have revealed societal contradictions and individual injustices through a comedic lens. Tanzimat-era writers critically examined modernisation and Westernisation efforts, using humour as an effective tool during this process. Republican-era writers addressed the challenges of societal transformation through humour, offering a critical perspective on societal issues. In contemporary Turkish literature, humour continues to act as a critical voice against current

issues, serving not only to entertain but also to provoke thought and reflection.

The **fifth chapter** will focus on humour's role in politics. Political cartoons, satires, and comedy shows are among the most effective means of criticising political figures and events. Humour has served as a tool for critiquing political ideologies and raising social awareness, functioning differently in democratic and oppressive regimes. As Oscar Wilde remarked, "The best way to tell people the truth is to make them laugh; otherwise, they'll kill you." Humour provides a sharp yet indirect way to express political critiques. Today, political humour thrives in new arenas like social media and stand-up comedy, offering a humorous perspective on social and political events.

The **sixth chapter** will explore the historical development of humour in traditional media. Throughout history, caricatures, humorous columns, and radio-television programmes have emerged as responses to social events. Particularly in the early 20th century, humour became one of the most important tools for social critique. As George Bernard Shaw stated, "Humour is a mask of all things serious." This chapter will examine how caricatures wielded power in political criticism and how humour served as a means of resistance against censorship, shedding light on its role in making societal issues visible.

The **seventh chapter** will address the rise of humour in new media. With digitalisation, new forms of humour have emerged, and social media platforms have played a significant role in this evolution. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have created a global humour culture through memes and short comedic videos. While facilitating the globalisation of humour, social media also accelerates the dissemination of social critiques. As Woody Allen said, "There are two ways to cope with life: one is suffering, the other is humour. I choose humour." This chapter will analyse how humour has become a powerful force in social media,

examining the evolution of meme culture and the impact of online humour on social and political events.

In conclusion, this book provides an in-depth examination of how humour functions in historical and contemporary contexts, becoming an integral part of social critique and cultural change. Humour helps individuals cope with challenges while also serving as one of the most effective means of societal expression and inquiry. As Kurt Vonnegut noted, "Without humour, the world would be an unbearable place." This book aims to unveil the multifaceted nature of humour and its social, cultural, and political power.

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CHAPTER I

Muhammet Kemal KARAMAN¹

The Definition and Sociocultural Role of Humour

The Etymological and Cultural Roots of Humour

Humor is a structure as old as the Greek alphabet appearing in literary texts in 700 BC. However, it is a multifaceted and deep concept with roots as old as human history (Deniz, 2020a). Laughter is one of the most basic and natural reactions of humanity. Humor, on the other hand, is not limited to just laughing. Instead, it has social, cultural, psychological and linguistic elements. It arises from a complex interaction in terms of structure (Billig, 2005). Etymologically, the word "humor" is the Latin word humorum, which refers to the four body fluids (blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile) in ancient Greek and Roman times. (Carroll, 2014). The Greeks believed that perception and sense of humor were shaped by the balance of these fluids. Until the Middle Ages, humor was shaped by this theory. This theory, which links humor to human temperament, emphasized its initial relationship with physiological states (Martin and Ford, 2018). With the Renaissance, the term humor expanded beyond its physiological origins to include mood

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and the ability to appreciate humor (Martin, 1998). It would not be wrong to say that humor transformed into the concept we know today in the 16th century. It was defined as a phenomenon associated with fun and laughter (Bremmer & Roodenburg, 1997). This transformation showed that humor was not only related to individual well-being but also to social and cultural structures. It also symbolized an important change (Kuipers, 2008). The cultural roots of humor are even more complex. It has been shaped by the evolving dynamics of societies throughout history. Different cultures have sometimes adapted humor according to their own social norms, sometimes to their religious beliefs and lifestyles. In Western culture, humor is usually satire and irony. In Eastern cultures, humor tends to rely on metaphors and subtle nuances (Attardo, 2014). While these distinctions emphasize the universality of humor, they also reveal diversity across cultures. A joke that is funny in one culture may be misunderstood or even considered offensive in another culture (Yue, Jiang, Lu, & Hiranandani, 2016).

In ancient Greece, humor was a philosophical research topic and a part of everyday life. In his work *Poetics*, Aristotle defined comedy (humor) as an art form that satirized human flaws and weaknesses. (Duskaeva, 2021). According to him, comedy was a philosophical structure that revealed the ridiculous aspects of human behavior, serving both entertaining and educational purposes. Aristotle said that tragedy was related to great and serious events. He also stated that comedy reflected the weaknesses and mistakes of ordinary people and held a mirror up to society (Deniz, 2020b). This perspective argued that humor was not only a source of individual entertainment. According to him, humor underlines its role as an expression of social criticism and intellectual depth (Murdoch, 1959). In ancient Rome, comedy served as a tool that made people forget social hierarchies and made the voice of the lower and the upper voice emerge. For example, in Plautus' plays, slaves and lower-class characters often mock their masters. The best evidence of this is his use of humor to belittle social norms (Moodie, 2007). Humor raises the voices of the oppressed and turns them into a form of resistance within oppressive social structures. Thus, it reveals the

potential of society to see the truth. Humor has always gone beyond laughter or entertainment. It becomes a mirror reflecting social power dynamics and conflicts (Clarke, 2007). During the Middle Ages, when the Roman church was an absolute power, humor also played an important role in religious contexts. In Christianity, seriousness and seriousness were generally seen as virtues. In the European muscle where there were weak kingdoms, humor was sometimes associated with frivolity and sin (Hyers, 2003). However, among the people, humor was at a very different and important point and maintained its vitality. Especially during events such as “Carnival, small theater plays” where social norms were reversed, it allowed individuals to relieve the stress and pressures of daily life through humor (Hart, 2007). These festivals created a social space for relaxation and rebellion against the strict rules imposed by the Church (Meyer, 2000). Martin Luther first stood against the church.

In the Ottoman Empire, which was powerful in the Middle Ages, humor served as a tool for social criticism and the voice of the people (Fenoglio and Georgeon, 2007). Popular folk narratives such as storytelling shows, Karagöz and Hacivat shadow plays, and Nasreddin Hodja's jokes have been part of Turkish-Islamic culture. The contradictions and social injustices of daily life were reflected through humor. For example, Nasreddin Hodja's tales made the Ottoman people laugh and adopt a critical perspective through humor, even under difficult conditions. They found ways to eliminate the idea that the strong should always be right and win (Diramali, 2021). These comedic figures functioned not only as sources of individual entertainment, but also as tools of social criticism.

Although humor has different meanings in Western and Eastern cultures, the aspect of social criticism is dominant in both traditions. He used it as a tool for strong criticism. In the West, humor often targeted individual weaknesses, while the East more commonly criticized social structures and injustices in its cultures (Jiang, Li, & Hou, 2019). Confucian philosophy in China viewed humor as part of the social and moral order. He argued that it could

serve as a critical tool in places where order was disrupted (Harbsmeier, 1989).

Culturally, humor has also become a political force. Under oppressive regimes, humor has been used as a tool of rebellion and resistance. The rise of fascist and totalitarian regimes in the 20th century further increased the importance of humor (Corner, 2009). Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* is a prime example of how humor can be a powerful weapon against political oppression and tyranny. Chaplin emphasized the absurdity and tyranny of dictatorship by satirically mocking Adolf Hitler. This example shows that humor is not only a source of entertainment, but also a tool for resistance and raising social awareness (Sherman, 2002). In the internet age, humor has become a global language facilitated by digital media and social platforms. With the proliferation of social media, humor has transcended geographical and cultural boundaries. Language, religion, race, and regional boundaries have completely disappeared. "Meme culture" is an example of this new form of global humor. Memes respond to social events, political figures, and global crises, reaching large audiences rapidly. For this reason, humor has become not only a national language but also a global language. Enriched by intercultural interactions, this new sense of humor keeps up with the pace of the digital age while critically addressing social problems (De Leon & Ballesteros-Lintao, 2021).

Theories of Humour

Humor is a complex phenomenon in human behavior and social interactions. Throughout history, it has been explained by various theories. Thinkers have proposed different ideas about what makes people laugh and how humor works (Attardo, 2020). The most important theories include the superiority theory, the relief theory, and the incongruity theory. Each focuses on a different aspect of humor to understand why and how laughter occurs (Martin & Ford, 2018).

Superiority Theory:

The superiority theory suggests that people laugh when they feel superior to the weaknesses, mistakes, or misfortunes of others. Therefore, it is one of the oldest theories of humor. In this theory, the essence of humor lies in a sense of dominance or superiority over others in terms of power or intelligence. The roots of this idea can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. Plato argued that people feel better about themselves when they laugh at the mistakes and shortcomings of others. In his work *Poetics*, Aristotle defined comedy as an art that highlights human flaws and absurdities and provokes laughter (Bevis, 2013).

Thomas Hobbes, a modern advocate of this idea, described human nature as competitive and egocentric and argued that laughter stems from a momentary sense of self-satisfaction that individuals feel when they notice the weaknesses or failures of others. He called laughter a "sudden triumph," a reaction that occurs when a person sees himself or herself as superior to others. Forms of humor such as sarcasm and satire fit within the framework of the superiority theory. In such contexts, individuals laugh not only to mock others but also to assert their dominance. This theory suggests that humor often works by exposing or humiliating the flaws of others (Sætra, 2014).

Relief Theory:

Relief theory argues that humor results from the release of stress, tension, or pent-up emotions. This perspective has been put forward especially by thinkers in the fields of psychology and psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud saw humor as a mechanism that helps individuals express their repressed emotions in a safe and socially acceptable way. According to Freud, humor allows people to temporarily escape from social or moral restrictions, bring subconscious conflicts to the surface, and provide a sense of relief. Freud suggested that jokes and funny stories act as a "safe valve" to release internal pressures (Morreall, 2011). From this perspective, humor facilitates both physical and mental relaxation. Through laughter, individuals' anxieties disappear. They can overcome fear or

distress. A sudden laugh in a tense environment relaxes a person. A witty remark following a stressful moment is the best example of this relaxation process. Freud also stated that jokes about taboo subjects or inappropriate topics are individuals' opposition to social pressures. It allows them to confront personal fears in a humorous way and leads to psychological relief and relaxation (Martin and Ford, 2018).

Incongruity Theory:

Incongruity theory states that humor feeds on unexpected, unusual, or illogical situations. The source of this theory is contrast. People laugh when they encounter a surprising incongruity or contradiction in an event, situation, or narrative. The roots of incongruity theory are ancient Greek city-states. However, the original theory was further developed by modern thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer. Kant suggested that humor is linked to surprising incongruity or disappointment of expectations. He suggested that laughter occurs when something initially perceived as serious or reasonable turns out to be unexpectedly absurd (Kulka, 2007). Schopenhauer expanded on the idea of Incongruity Theory to suggest that humor arises from a mismatch between thought and reality (McDonald, 2013). People interpret an event or situation one way, but laughter occurs when reality yields a completely different result. From this perspective, humor emerges from a conflict between two opposing concepts or perceptions. An amusing situation may involve a serious conversation interrupted by someone tripping or a logical expectation being disrupted. This situation may involve an absurdly unexpected outcome. This type of incongruity creates a comic effect by contradicting people's rational expectations. Incongruity theory is particularly important in understanding absurd humor. Absurd humor relies on illogical, absurd, or unexpected elements to surprise and entertain its audience. It creates laughter by presenting scenarios or solutions that deviate from conventional logic. It presents a completely different and often absurd outcome than expected, such as the "ice skating" outcome. Collectively, these theories emphasize

the multifaceted nature of humor. Superiority theory focuses on feelings of dominance, relief theory emphasizes emotional release, and incongruity theory explains the role of unexpected contradictions. They provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of humor and its effects on individuals and societies.

Types of Hmour

Humor evokes different emotional reactions in people. It gains various meanings in different cultural and social contexts. It is a wide form of expression in every society. Various types of humor emerge in different ways by combining elements such as social criticism, personal observation, absurdity, sarcasm and irony. Each type has its own structure and determines how humor makes people laugh and think. The most well-known types are satire, irony, absurd humor and parody, which emphasize the richness and diversity of humor. (Attardo, 2014).

Satire:

Satire is a type of humor that aims at social criticism. It reveals the flaws, contradictions, corruption or mistakes in society by using a sarcastic and critical tone. Satire reveals humor through criticism. Satire usually targets political, cultural or social situations in society. It offers a critical perspective on these issues while making them laugh. It has existed since the ancient Greek and Roman periods. This type, which is in artistic activities, has an important place in both written and oral traditions. Horace and Juvenal are two classic examples of satire. These types are considered basic (Freudenburg, 2001). Horace criticizes society in a more gentle and humorous way. Juvenal's satire attacks social injustices in a harsher and more aggressive tone.

Satire continues to be a powerful tool for criticizing social and political events today. In the modern era, television programs such as "The Daily Show" are good examples of this type. Such examples are important examples of satire by addressing social and political

developments with humor (Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009). The power of satire lies in its ability to make social contradictions visible, raise awareness, and expose wrongdoings in a sarcastic way.

Irony:

Irony is usually saying the exact opposite of what is meant. It is a subtle type of humor that is the exact opposite of what is expressed. In irony, there is a clear difference between what is said and what is meant. When A is said, Z is actually meant. This contradiction is the source of humor (Clift, 1999). Irony is an indirect form of expression. Instead of direct criticism, it criticizes a fact or situation by expressing its opposite. The success of irony begins with the viewer or listener noticing this contrast. The source of laughter is the understanding of the criticism underlying the humor.

Jonathan Swift's famous work *Gulliver's Travels* is a strong example of irony (Rielly, 1992). Although this work is known as an adventure novel, it sarcastically criticizes different segments of society and social norms. In this type of humor, messages are usually conveyed in a subtle way. Their meanings are deepened and the audience is encouraged to think. Irony is more than a simple act of laughter. It is a clever and nuanced form of criticism. Irony, which is frequently encountered in politics and social media, also has an important place as a linguistic tool in daily life.

Absurd Humor:

Absurd humor is a type of humor that emphasizes the illogical, absurd and often incomprehensible aspects of life (Cornwell, 2016). Absurd humor is usually illogical situations. It includes strange characters and meaningless events. Jim Carrey in the USA, Şahan Gökbakan in Turkey. This type of humor is humorous by revealing the absurd aspects of events or people. Thus, it offers the audience a different perspective.

In essence, absurd humor is based on accepting the meaninglessness of life. It presents this absurdity in a funny way. Writers such as Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco developed it

through their works in the theater of the absurd. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* depicts characters who wait meaninglessly and bring the futility of life to the stage. Thus, it has become a classic example of absurd humor (Brater, 1974). Absurd humor confronts the audience with strange and absurd events. Thus, it deals with the absurd and incomprehensible aspects of existence from a humorous perspective. This type of humor often carries existential undertones, suggesting that the complexities of life be approached with laughter.

Parody:

Similar to satire, parody criticizes social wrongs, personal flaws, and political mistakes. The type of criticism used is a harsh and sarcastic type of humor (LeBoeuf, 2007). Parody sharply expresses social criticism with elements of mockery, criticism and mockery. The language used in parody is usually direct and harsh, and the targets of criticism are clearly stated.

The history of parody dates back to ancient times when poets and writers used it to criticize social injustices or corruption. This type of humor has developed throughout history as a form of rebellion against authority. It has served as a tool to raise social consciousness. Parody is considered one of the most effective tools of criticism in humor. The main reason for this is that criticism expressed through humor can often be more effective than direct attacks.

In modern times, political cartoons, television programs and newspapers often use parody to offer quick and critical perspectives on social events. (Freedman, 2008).

Humor types offer a broad perspective for understanding how people are made to laugh and how societies are criticized. Satire uses sarcasm to express political and social criticism, while irony offers subtle and indirect criticism. Absurd humor focuses on the irrational aspects of life, humorously addressing the existential void, while parody offers harsher and more direct criticism. These four types show how diverse and profound humor can be; each goes beyond

laughter to provoke thought, while criticizing society from a different perspective.

The Socio-Psychological Role of Humour

Humor plays an important psychological and social role in both individual and social life. From a socio-psychological perspective, humor reduces emotional stress. It strengthens solidarity within communities. Most importantly, it is a powerful tool that addresses social norms and taboos (Takovski, 2020). It helps individuals cope with difficult situations. It helps people reduce tensions and express themselves. Humor also serves as a way for “societies to live together and face shared problems.”

One of the most obvious socio-psychological roles of humor is its stress-reducing effect (Lindquist, 2000). Individuals are disconnected from life when faced with the difficulties, uncertainties, and challenges of life. They often experience significant tension. This tension negatively affects both physical and mental health. However, humor serves as a mechanism to reduce this tension and relieve stress. Sigmund Freud suggested that humor functions as a “defense mechanism.” According to Freud, humor allows individuals to safely express their subconscious fears, anxieties, and conflicts. This is related to humor's ability to provide mental relief. When a person is in a stressful situation, approaching it from a humorous perspective can reduce tension by a large margin. It can help a person cope with negative emotions. A funny joke or witty comment can ease stress. It can change the atmosphere of a moment and provide relief. In this way, humor becomes a psychological “release valve” (Gutwirth, 1993).

This role of humor in reducing stress is that humor plays an important role not only for individuals but also in social groups. This provides a dual-mechanism of relaxation. Humor creates shared emotional relaxation and collective experiences between people. Humor strengthens emotional bonds between individuals in society. It increases the sense of laughter and solidarity, such as laughing at the same things in the same environments. When people in a group

laugh at a funny event or joke, they share the same things. This shared experience brings them closer together and strengthens harmony within the group. Humor plays a unifying role among people, especially in difficult and crisis periods. Humor is the savior of societies facing difficult social events such as wars, natural disasters or economic crises. It relieves their pain and increases their solidarity through humor. Victor Frankl says that even in concentration camps, people used humor as a coping mechanism. He stated that this increased their chances of psychological survival (Frankl, 2011). Humor is a very powerful tool that can protect the human spirit even under the most difficult conditions. The effect of humor on solidarity is not only in individual relationships. It is also important in the relationship between communities or societies. When communities laugh at the same event or situation, a bond is formed between them. This creates a sense of security and comfort among individuals who gather around the same values and beliefs within communities. Watching a comedy show or sharing a joke increases interaction. It helps people develop empathy for each other and share common feelings. In this sense, humor acts as a social glue that brings communities together. This has become especially evident in the age of social media. In the internet society, memes and viral humor content spread rapidly among large masses, creating a common cultural language (Malodia et al., 2022). Through this humorous language, communities express themselves. In this way, communities share their common experiences and strengthen their sense of solidarity.

Another socio-psychological role of humor is its power to address social norms and taboos. Every society is designed to maintain social order. However, it has certain rules, norms, and taboos that can become oppressive over time. Humor is the most effective way to break and question these taboos. Taboos are considered “untouchable” issues in social life. Humor offers a different perspective on society by addressing these issues. Mikhail Bakhtin emphasized the ability of humor to undermine authority and reverse social hierarchies. Especially in carnivalesque cultures, humor is used to break taboos and mock authority (Bakhtin, 1984).

During medieval carnivals, the authority of the Church and the royal family is temporarily overthrown through humor. It allows the lower classes of society to criticize through humor. This demonstrates the potential of humor to question and transform social order (Good, 2006). Humor also provides social criticism by addressing political and religious taboos. In oppressive regimes, humor provides a safe way to express ideas that would otherwise be dangerous to express directly. Here, humor also laid the foundations of democracy. Societies living under totalitarian rule have used humor as a means of resistance. Sarcasm, satire, and irony have become methods of secretly expressing criticism in such regimes. Charlie Chaplin's criticism of the capitalist structure in the USA is a powerful example of how humor can be used to question political taboos. It serves as a sharp satire on the USA and its capitalism (Stromgren, Dryden, & Satire, 1990). This criticism conveyed through humor allows for the questioning of social norms and taboos. It provides individuals with the opportunity to freely express their thoughts on these issues. By reducing tensions at both individual and societal levels, humor provides psychological relief and strengthens solidarity between people. It contributes to social criticism by addressing social norms and taboos. These multifaceted functions make humor not only a tool for entertainment, but also a powerful tool for social change and resistance. Through humor, societies express themselves, resist oppression, and establish stronger bonds with each other. These socio-psychological effects of humor guarantee its indispensable place in human life.

The Social Functions of Humour

Humor is not a tool used to make people laugh and have fun. Although it seems that way, its main purpose and starting point is to create social criticism and awareness. Here, humor is used as a tool. Throughout history, humor has been used to address injustices, contradictions and problems in societies. The main task of humor is to question the social order, oppose oppressive systems and make society more conscious. Humor has continued to be a powerful tool. Humor confronts serious or dangerous issues. The danger here is the

danger of death. It offers criticism and motivates society to think, which is equivalent to death in authoritarian regimes (Singh, 2024). Therefore, humor plays important social roles as a tool of social criticism and a mechanism for creating awareness. One of the most powerful social functions of humor is its role in social criticism. It works to prevent established injustices in societies. Apart from this, it questions the contradictions of rich-poor, noble-ordinary. It is usually difficult to address these imbalances and mistakes through direct criticism. Instead, humor reveals these problems in an entertaining way. People who are the subject of humor are more accepting of criticism. In addition, it makes it more effective in society (İmamoğlu, 2020). The indirect nature of humor allows it to avoid the harsh reactions that direct criticism can provoke. This actually provides a tool that pushes people to think and criticize. Especially in societies that live under oppressive regimes or censorship, humor always plays the role of a savior. It ensures that thoughts that are forbidden or dangerous to express directly are expressed safely and works for this. In such cases, humor becomes the most reliable tool of social criticism (İmamoğlu, 2018). Works such as George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, which uses humor and allegory to criticize political oppression and totalitarianism, are among the most notable examples of this (Pelissoli, 2008). Such works make social criticism visible through humor. Thus, they create awareness about social problems.

Humor also reveals the mistakes of powerful groups or authorities in society. Leaders who appear flawless and perfect in front of the public are actually not. Humor is often used to reveal the contradictions and flaws of such groups. For example, Jonathan Swift's satire *A Modest Proposal* criticizes the policies of the British government by offering an ironic solution to the famine problem in Ireland (Hess & McGrath, 2020). Swift deepens social criticism by drawing attention to the problems of hunger and colonialism through humor. The best example of this in Turkey is *orta oyunu*. Humor effectively addresses social mistakes, injustices, and contradictions. The power of this criticism increases with the effect of humor on people, and social problems are discussed more broadly through

humor. In addition to its role in social criticism, humor also functions as a tool for raising awareness. It confronts people with the fact that not everyone is the same. Long-standing social problems or ignored problems are made visible through humor. Different lifestyles become visible and accelerate the awareness-raising process. Many social issues, especially complex or disturbing ones, have difficulty gaining public attention. Humor makes such difficult issues more accessible and draws society's attention to them. Today, issues such as gender inequality, racism, environmental issues, or political corruption can be repulsive when addressed directly (Rappoport, 2005). When these issues are addressed with humor, people become more open to them. Humor softens harsh realities and invites society to think about these issues. This is an effective way to raise awareness. Humor is now even more powerful in the internet society. It has become impossible to limit or ban. This can be clearly seen in the "meme" culture that is widespread on social media. "Memes" are used as tools to respond quickly and effectively to social events. "Memes", which spread rapidly through social media platforms, make light of serious issues and help these issues to attract the attention of wider audiences. A viral piece of humorous content about a social event entertains people while also increasing their awareness of the issue (Gal, Shifman, & Kampf, 2016). Serious topics like climate change or environmental destruction are incorporated into broader discussions through humorous content, which shows how effectively humor plays a role in raising awareness.

Humor also questions social taboos and challenges social norms. For it, there are no concepts of tradition and custom. It does its best to make them funny. It acts as a force that forces their re-evaluation. Every society has its own taboo topics and problems that are difficult to discuss. These taboos are considered untouchable areas in the collective consciousness of society (not for humor). However, humor is one of the most effective ways to question these taboos and create social awareness about them. Approaching taboos through humor makes them visible, of course with its negative aspects. It also reduces the pressure surrounding them (Szabó, 2020).

In this context, humor does more than just make people laugh. Apart from that, it also helps society discuss such topics more comfortably. When topics such as sexuality, religion or politics are addressed through humor, it allows society to think more openly about these topics. In Turkey, topics such as bride price and blood feud have always been the subject of humor. Therefore, humor reduces tensions at both individual and societal levels, strengthens solidarity between people, and contributes to social criticism by addressing social norms and taboos. These multifaceted functions make humor not only a tool for entertainment, but also a powerful tool for social change and resistance. Through humor, societies express themselves, resist oppression, and establish stronger bonds with each other. The socio-psychological effects of humor make it an indispensable part of human life.

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CHAPTER II

Diogenes The Birth of Humour in the Ottoman Empire

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Sema Aktaş³

Diogenes A Humour Phenomenon in the Ottoman Press

Diogenes, a significant milestone in Ottoman press history, was first published in 1870 by Teodor Kasap and is recognised as the first political satire magazine in the Ottoman Empire. As part of the modernisation movements brought by the Tanzimat reforms, the magazine reflected the political and social structure of the time by expressing social critiques in a sharp satirical tone. Embracing the bold and straightforward approach of the ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes, from whom it takes its name, *Diogenes* emphasised fundamental values such as equality, justice, and freedom. Frequently subjected to censorship, *Diogenes* shaped not only the

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understanding of satire but also the struggle for freedom of thought in the Ottoman press.

This study will provide a biographical analysis of *Diogenes*, detailing the life of its founder Teodor Kasap, its team of writers, its content, its publication process, and its contributions to the Ottoman understanding of satire. It will also evaluate the magazine's role in the political atmosphere of the time and its resistance to censorship within a historical context. The aim is to emphasise the pioneering role of *Diogenes* and highlight the process of shaping satire in the Ottoman press. Moreover, academic studies on various aspects of the magazine will be reviewed within the scope of a literature evaluation.

To understand the conditions under which *Diogenes* emerged, it is necessary to examine the Tanzimat-era reforms, social transformations, and modernisation efforts. In this framework, two prominent scholars in the context of Turkish modernisation, Niyazi Berkes and Şerif Mardin, are particularly noteworthy. Berkes, in his work *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, devotes considerable attention to the role of the press in the Ottoman modernisation process. Berkes' study considers satire in literature and the press as part of a broader modernisation movement (Berkes, 2003). Accordingly, *Diogenes* can be seen as a product of the social transformation of the Tanzimat period and a result of modernisation. Although Berkes does not discuss Teodor Kasap or *Diogenes* in detail, he includes the statement, "Possibly Teodor Kasap, one of the Greek intellectuals and secretary to Alexandre Dumas, was there," in the section titled *Reactions to Tanzimat* (Berkes, 2003, p. 208). Additionally, Berkes describes the development of satirical language during each period of repression in Ottoman-Turkish literary history as an interesting phenomenon (Berkes, 2003, p. 470). Considering the team behind *Diogenes* and the conditions of the period, Mardin's views on Tanzimat and social change are significant. Mardin, in his analyses, evaluates the efforts of Tanzimat intellectuals to create change in Ottoman society (Mardin, 1991). In this context,

Diogenes' social satire can be interpreted as part of a critical intellectual movement.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, in his assessments of satire in Turkish literature, considers *Diogenes* as part of the transformation in literature and press during the Tanzimat period. He notes that despite being frequently censored, the magazine courageously continued to express its social critiques (Tanpınar, 1988, p. 357). This perspective is significant in demonstrating that humour can be a tool for resistance.

Modern academic studies on *Diogenes* address the magazine's understanding of humour, censorship practices, its place in Ottoman journalism, and the influence of Teodor Kasap. In his work, *The Reactions of Our First Satirical Magazine Diogenes to Censorship Penalties Through Humorous Means*, Hamza Çakır (2006, pp. 161–172) highlights the magazine's humorous responses to closures and its critique of the authoritarian nature of the period. Çakır examines how *Diogenes* displayed creative and humorous resistance to Ottoman censorship policies. Moreover, the study reveals the significance and place of political satire in Ottoman journalism, highlighting *Diogenes'* commitment to fundamental values such as freedom, equality, and justice and its support for constitutionalism.

Hüseyin Doğramacıoğlu, in his work *An Evaluation of Namık Kemal's Satirical Writings in the Diogenes Magazine* (2012, pp. 935–951), explores Namık Kemal's humorous writings in *Diogenes*, shedding light on the lesser-known witty side of Kemal. The study reveals that Kemal was not only a poet of the homeland but also an author who wrote satirical pieces on events and individuals. The article emphasises that many of the humorous anecdotes and writings in *Diogenes* belong to Kemal, providing an opportunity to discover a different dimension of his work.

In his doctoral thesis, *Theodore Kasap in Ottoman Satire (Diogenes, Çingiraklı Tatar, and Hayal Magazine)* (2013, pp. 11–258), Alparslan Oymak examines the satirical publications of Teodor Kasap—*Diogenes*, *Çingiraklı Tatar*, and *Hayal*—through

six different themes (economy, politics, journalism, municipal affairs, art, and humour). Oymak discusses the impact of satire in Ottoman society, particularly within the Tanzimat context.

Gökhan Demirkol, in his article *The First Polemic in Turkish Satirical Press: Terakki and Diogenes* (2017, pp. 157–175), analyses the first major controversy in Turkish satirical journalism. The study focuses on the year-long debate between the satirical supplement of *Terakki* and *Diogenes* in the 1870s, examining the satirical style, press rivalry, and development of satire magazines of the period. The study also emphasises the difficulty of conducting a comprehensive analysis due to the lack of archived French and Greek editions of *Diogenes*.

Emine Şahin, in her study *Satirical Press in the Ottoman Empire from the Tanzimat to the Second Constitutional Era* (2017, pp. 20–43), explores the development and social impact of Ottoman satirical magazines. The study highlights early publications such as Teodor Kasap's *Diogenes* as part of the modernisation process and a voice of opposition. Şahin also examines how press censorship under Sultan Abdülhamid II led to the migration of satirical press abroad and the role of Young Turks in using satire as a tool for critique.

Mustafa Sami Mencet, in *The Tradition of Satirical Publishing in Turkey and Azerbaijan: Similarities and Differences* (2018, pp. 12–24), discusses *Diogenes*' pioneering role in Ottoman satire and its model for later magazines. The study addresses the magazine's humorous responses to censorship policies and its emphasis on values such as freedom and equality through satire. Evaluations based on *Diogenes* in Turkey are compared to magazines like *Molla Nasreddin* in Azerbaijan.

Tahsin Emre Fırat, in his article *The First Soldier of Satirical Journalism in the Ottoman Empire: Teodor Kasap* (2020, pp. 433–450), focuses on the pioneering role of Teodor Kasap and *Diogenes* in Ottoman satirical journalism. The study details Kasap's use of plain language and his resilient stance against censorship, aiming to

reveal the historical relationship between satire and social opposition.

Enes Asıl, in his work *A Bibliographical Essay on Graduate Studies on Satirical Magazines and Newspapers in Turkey* (2024, pp. 240–270), compiles a bibliography of theses on Turkish satirical magazines and newspapers, covering 129 master's theses and 20 doctoral dissertations. As of 2024, four master's theses (Günay, 1990; Şükran, 1998; Özdiş, 2004; Sayım, 2018) and one doctoral dissertation (Oymak, 2013) have been written on *Diogenes*.

Who is Teodor Kasap?

Born on 10 November 1835 in Tavlusun, Kayseri—then known as Aydınlık, now Melikgazi village—Theodor Kasapis was a member of Kayseri's prominent Kasapoğulları family. He was the eldest of fourteen children, including nine sons and five daughters. His father, Serafim (Sefer) Kasapoğlu, was a renowned draper in the region. Teodor Kasap, whose name was recorded as Todori Sakar on his passport dated 3 March 1856, moved to Istanbul at the age of 11 or 13 after the death of his father. He began working as an apprentice in a shop owned by a Greek merchant from Kayseri in the Astarçılar Han near the Grand Bazaar, while also attending the Kuruçeşme Greek National School. During this time, he taught himself French.

He met a French quartermaster officer, a cousin of Alexandre Dumas Père, who was returning from the Crimean War and visited the shop where Kasap worked. Recognising his interest in languages and his studies in French, the officer took him under his wing and, after the war, took him to France. Kasap continued his education in Paris (Kut, 2011, p. 473; Turkish Encyclopedia, 1982, pp. 94–95).

While in Paris, Kasap worked as the private secretary to Alexandre Dumas Père, where he moved within an intellectual circle. He accompanied Dumas on many journeys, including a trip to Sicily in 1860 to observe Giuseppe Garibaldi's "Risorgimento" movement for Italian unification. During his time in Paris, Kasap introduced some Young Turks, including Namık Kemal, to Dumas.

After completing his education and personal development in Paris, Kasap returned to Istanbul in early 1870 and began teaching French at the Kurtuluş Greek School (İmamoğlu, 2018). This opportunity allowed him to meet Istanbul's prominent families. He married a woman named Luliya, whom he met at the school, and later established his own printing house. He first published the humorous Greek magazine *O Diogenis* and the French magazine *Le Diogène*. On 24 November 1870, he launched *Diogenes*, the first Turkish satirical magazine published in French, Greek, Armenian, and Turkish (Kut, 2011, p. 474).

After *Diogenes*, Kasap published *Çingiraklı Tatar* and *Hayal* magazines, continuing his career in publishing and journalism with many ups and downs due to censorship and shutdown penalties. Between August 1875 and September 1876, he established a daily political newspaper called *İstikbal*. In his magazines, he criticised Mahmut Nedim Pasha's pro-Russian policies. When the *Kanun-i Esasi* (Ottoman Constitution) emerged, he published a cartoon in *Hayal* mocking articles that restricted press freedom. As a result, he was sentenced to three years in prison (İz, 1990, p. 681).

Before his imprisonment, an article in the 307th issue of *Hayal* magazine revealed that Kasap aspired to become a member of parliament. However, despite applying formally for candidacy ten days later, he withdrew, citing that he did not consider himself qualified. Nevertheless, *Çaylak*, a publication with which he had a contentious relationship, reported on 19 February 1877 that "Kasap has become an MP" (Kut, 2011, p. 474).

Although fluent in Turkish, Kasap could not write; his nephew, lawyer Lazaridis, and his close friend Fehmi assisted him with his writings and translations. He learned to write while in prison. Released on bail briefly, Sultan Abdülhamid considered providing Kasap with funding and permission to publish a daily newspaper named *Nâşir* to express the Sultan's ideas. However, Kasap disguised himself and fled to France by ship (Kut, 2011, p. 474). In Paris, he continued his journalistic work and political criticism. In his book *Lettres à S. E. Said Pacha* (1879), he criticised Sultan

Abdülhamid and the authoritarian regime. Declared a fugitive and under investigation, he frequently moved between Paris, Geneva, Naples, and London. While in Naples, he collaborated with Young Turk Ali Şefkati to republish *İstikbal* (1879–1881). Both were monitored by Ottoman embassies, and reports about them were regularly sent to the palace (İz, 1990, p. 681).

Kasap was pardoned in 1881 with the efforts of Ebüzziyâ Mehmed Tefvîk (through an undated petition to Sultan Abdülhamid) and returned to Istanbul. He was appointed to the palace library as the "Scribe of His Majesty" and remained in this position until his death. According to the death register of the Fener Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Theodoros Serafim Kasapis died in Istanbul on 5 June 1897. His funeral was held at his home in Beşiktaş, and the ceremony was conducted at the Beşiktaş Virgin Mary (Panagia) Church. His eldest son, Aleko Kasap, born in Beşiktaş on 13 September 1871, graduated from Mekteb-i Sultânî and served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Translation Bureau until the declaration of the Republic (Kut, 2011, p. 475).

In addition to his magazines and newspapers, Teodor Kasap produced numerous adaptations and translations. While working at the palace library, he translated detective novels for Sultan Abdülhamid, including *Sarı Yusuf* (Yellow Yusuf), written in the style of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. His other works include *La question des réformes et des garanties* (Constantinople, 1876) and *Lettres à S. E. Said Pacha* (Paris, 1877). His adaptations and translations include:

- *Monte Kristo* (The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas Père, Istanbul, 1871, Ahmet Mithat Publishing)
- *Pinti Hamit* (The Miser by Molière, Istanbul, 1873)
- *İşkilli Memo*, a one-act play (Sganarelle ou le Cocu imaginaire by Molière, Istanbul, 1874)
- *Para Meselesi*, a five-act comedy (La Question d'argent by Alexandre Dumas Fils, Istanbul, 1875)

- *Lükresya Borciya* (Lucrezia Borgia by Victor Hugo, Istanbul, 1875).

(Oymak, 2013, pp. 9–10).

The Founding and Principles of *Diogenes*

This section examines *Diogenes*, its founder Teodor Kasap, and topics such as the magazine's name, purpose, and publication process. One of the initial questions is: Who named the magazine *Diogenes*? After returning to Istanbul from Paris in early 1870, Teodor Kasap began teaching French at the Kurtuluş Greek School, where he married a woman named Iuliya. Kasap established his own printing press and initially published the Greek satirical magazine *O Diogenis* and the French *Le Diogène*. On 24 November 1870, he launched the Turkish-language *Diogenes* (Kut, 2011, p. 474). This raises the question: Did Teodor Kasap name the magazines after his son, or was the name inspired by the philosophy of Diogenes of Sinope? Perhaps Kasap initially named his son after the philosopher Diogenes.

Moreover, the cover of *Diogenes* depicts Diogenes sitting in his barrel with Alexander the Great standing beside him. Below the illustration is the famous quote, “Do not cast a shadow, I seek no other favour.” This visual and textual reference directly ties the magazine's name to the philosophy of Diogenes. In fact, the cover serves as a summary of the relationship between the magazine and authority, highlighting its oppositional stance. The quote reflects *Diogenes*' assertion that it sought no material support from power and solely wished for its freedom to remain untouched (Firat, 2020, p. 436).

What did Teodor Kasap himself think about the name *Diogenes*? According to Cemal Kutay, Teodor Kasap explained the reasoning behind the name as follows:

“While lamenting how late the Ottoman Turks adopted printing compared to Europe, he said, ‘The real skill is to express tragic matters in a way that makes people

smile. There is an art to this. Let us not deny that we had to import not only the printing machines but also the methods of journalism from the Europeans. Let us not see ourselves in a distorted mirror. When we reach their level, Diogenes will no longer be necessary. Don't we already have our Nasreddin Hoca and Karagöz with Hacivat? But now try to put a European hat on Karagöz, take away his shalwar, dress him in Western clothes, and then convince yourself that his mind has changed too, and we have become Europeans.'"

(<https://www.eskieserler.com/DergiDetay.asp?ID=76>)

As this statement indicates, Teodor Kasap placed great importance on local culture. In an environment where Namık Kemal's *Vatan Yahut Silistre* was performed, and Güllü Agop's theatre troupe was preparing Turkish productions in 1872, *Diogenes* and Teodor Kasap sought to promote the creation of local works. According to *Diogenes*, foreign works did not suit Ottoman customs and traditions (Tanpınar, 1976, p. 358).

Diyojen gazetesinin 25 Mart 1287 ve 14 sayılı nüshasının ilk sayfası (Ebüzziya, 1994, s.479)



The story of *Diogenes'* foundation is best described in a letter by Namık Kemal to Menemenlizade Rifat Bey:

“The commemorative memory of that day was the launch of Diogenes. Diogenes was the first satirical magazine in the Ottoman Empire. That day, we decided to publish a satirical newspaper in a land where there was nothing of value for the eye or mind, apart from the crude jokes and absurdities played on Teodor Kasap. The extraordinary beauty of that spring morning in Kâğıthane not only evoked poetic feelings in us but also inspired us to find the humorous side of every emotion, to ease the burden of harsh truths that would otherwise cause storms when expressed seriously. Like the ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes, who found solace in his loneliness and chose to live alone when he received no remedy for his complaints, no companionship for his

solitude, and no loyalty for his love, we decided to name the satirical newspaper we would publish Diogenes. We also added his famous saying underneath: 'Do not cast a shadow, I seek no other favour.' But alas, they always cast a shadow. The commotion we caused was so great that years later, during discussions of the Press Law in the Ottoman Parliament, some deputies opposed the inclusion of satirical newspapers in the definition of the press. Fortunately, Ahmed Vefik Pasha and Manok Efendi, who translated Molière's works, interceded. Otherwise, poor satirical newspapers would have been excluded from the press. What a pity that even easing the pain by wrapping lamentable circumstances in smiles was not permitted" (Doğramacioğlu, 2012, p. 937).

Historian Cemal Kutay summarises the entire story of *Diogenes*:

"Its name was Diogenes. Its creators were the poet of the homeland, Namık Kemal, and Teodor Kasap, whose name and contributions are sadly forgotten. Fully Ottoman, Teodor Kasap combined his excellent French, sufficient Ottoman Turkish, and adept drawing skills with his intelligence, making him an invaluable figure for a satirical magazine. The name Diogenes was adopted as a legendary symbol of truthfulness, independence, and seeking goodness in people. However, Namık Kemal and Teodor Kasap soon abandoned the foreign name Diogenes in favour of local themes, publishing Hayal, which brought Karagöz and Hacivat face-to-face, followed by Çopur Mehmet Tevfik's Çaylak, Çingiraklı Tatar, Şarivari, and Bebe Ruhi"

(<https://www.eskieserler.com/DergiDetay.asp?ID=76>)

The first issue of *Diogenes* was published on 24 November 1870, but its publication was halted with the revocation of its license

on 10 January 1873, after 183 issues. While supplements were published up to the 147th issue, it is unclear whether these continued throughout the months due to the lack of preserved collections. Bringing his knowledge of humour and journalism acquired in France to *Diogenes*, Teodor Kasap ensured the magazine reached the highest circulation of its time with the help of salaried, prominent writers. Although *Diogenes* was the fourth satirical magazine published in Turkish in the Ottoman press, it was the first political satire magazine of its kind. Earlier publications such as *Terakkî Mizah* (14 May 1870), *Asır Eğlence* (August 1870), and *Terakkî Küçük Mizah* (5 November 1870) were paid supplements to daily newspapers, often perceived as shallow and low-quality (Ebüzziya, 1994, p. 479).

The purpose of *Diogenes* was outlined in the preface of its first issue. It aimed to highlight the public's thoughts and the government's actions and intentions through satire while using simple Turkish reflective of the people's daily language (Diogenes, 1870, p. 1). Deeply loyal to the Ottoman Empire, Kasap fiercely opposed separatist movements and anti-Ottoman sentiments among Greeks and other minorities of his time, advocating that the empire's strength lay in the unity of its diverse elements (Ebüzziya, 1994, p. 479). This perspective is evident in his publications and the critiques that led to censorship.

The launch of *Diogenes* resonated in Istanbul and its surroundings but drew negative reactions, particularly from conservative circles. While humour could be tolerated to a certain extent in social life, political satire and criticism of the ruling powers left *Diogenes* with little room to survive, leading to its premature closure.

Diogenes and Namık Kemal

Although Teodor Kasap could not write in Turkish, he was skilled at attracting prominent and talented writers to his circle. The magazine's articles feature refined Turkish language and a distinctly Turkish sense of humour. Ali Bey played a significant role in this

success. Alongside Ebüzziya Tevfik, one of the leading contributors to *Diogenes* was Namık Kemal. He is particularly renowned for his unsigned satirical articles and verses in *Diogenes*, notably those written after the dismissal of Mahmud Nedim Pasha (Türk Ansiklopedisi 31, 1982, p. 94).

Following Mahmud Nedim Pasha's dismissal in 1872, it is widely accepted that a large portion of the articles and columns in *Diogenes* from its 124th issue onwards were written by Namık Kemal. However, the similarity between the humorous writing styles of Ali Bey and Namık Kemal has made it challenging to determine the authorship of some pieces. Menâpirzâde Nûri Bey and Kayazâde Reşad Bey were also part of the editorial team, but the titles of their works remain unknown (Ebüzziya, 1994, p. 480). Teodor Kasap's founding of *Diogenes* coincided with Namık Kemal's return to Istanbul from Paris in November 1870. Sources agree that Namık Kemal did not contribute to any publications other than *Diogenes* until Ali Pasha's death on 6 September 1871. Ali Pasha had stipulated that Kemal should refrain from writing as a condition for allowing his return to the country (Tanpınar, 1976, pp. 351–352).

In general, the magazine's writers penned their articles and columns within the framework established by Teodor Kasap. With the exception of pieces like Ebüzziyâ Tevfik's article announcing Şinâsi's death, signed as "Tevfik," and notices titled "announcement" and "warning" written by the publisher, all articles were unsigned. The authorship of some pieces has been determined through references made in other publications or by the writers themselves in their memoirs and private letters. This anonymity was undoubtedly related to the political climate and censorship of the period (Ebüzziya, 1994, p. 479).

One of the most famous indicators of the connection between *Diogenes* and Namık Kemal is the *Cat Elegy*. This highly popular elegy led to the 128th issue selling out quickly, even necessitating reprints. The primary source of inspiration for Namık Kemal's satire was the refrain of 16th-century Divan poet Meali: *Nedelüm ah pisi neyleyelüm vah pisi*. Kemal adapted this to "*Yandı yüreğim ah kedi*

vah kedi” (“My heart burns, ah cat, alas cat”). While Meali’s version did not target any particular individual, it is evident that Namık Kemal’s satire was directed at Mahmud Nedim Pasha. The poem was written following Mahmud Nedim Pasha’s dismissal, comparing him to a cat. In the 132nd issue, a response to the *Cat Elegy* was published, replacing the cat with a dog. Following this, *Diogenes* received a warning from the Press Directorate. The poem uses imagery of a dragon and a tiger, likening the cat’s head to a tiger and its tail to a dragon, portraying it as aggressive and belligerent. Additionally, the cat is depicted as comfortable, free of worries about food and drink, and wasteful when in possession of money:

*"Was there a place left on earth that escaped its devastation?
Neither mosque nor kebab shop, neither tavern nor butcher,
While peers stood astonished at its fortune,
Time eventually brought it to ruin and dust."*

This verse reflects how Mahmud Nedim Pasha’s fortunate circumstances eventually turned into ruin, as written by Namık Kemal (Sayım, 2018, pp. 50–51).

During the 1870s, while publishing the *İbret* newspaper and contributing humorous pieces to *Diogenes*, Namık Kemal stood out not just as a loud-voiced patriot poet but also as a witty individual who mocked events and people he encountered. Many anecdotes and humorous writings published in *Diogenes* were authored by Namık Kemal. These anecdotes, often witty and instructive, addressed themes such as the inappropriateness of boasting about good deeds, the struggles of smokers fasting during Ramadan, and doctors writing prescriptions. However, Kemal’s negative view of women is noteworthy; his writings often ridiculed their behaviours and conversations. Satirical writings also touched upon distinguishing characteristics of Turks, French, Germans, and other Ottoman subjects of different ethnicities, as well as serious issues such as cholera outbreaks in Istanbul (Doğramacıoğlu, 2012, p. 950).

Many of the anecdotes popularly attributed to Namık Kemal today likely originated from the stories he published in *Diogenes*, which subsequently entered oral tradition in society.

Diogenes and Censorship: The Boundaries of Humour

A review of Turkey's caricature history reveals that satirical publications, such as magazines, newspapers, books, and films, frequently faced censorship, closures, and various forms of pressure. Temporary or permanent shutdown penalties were notably more prevalent during the Ottoman period. Publications such as *Diogenes*, *Hayal*, *Kalem*, and *Cem* were among those subjected to such measures. Theodor Kasap's three-year prison sentence in 1876 remains the only known imprisonment of a caricaturist during the Ottoman era (Necet, 2018, p. 14).

As previously mentioned, Namık Kemal's satirical *Cat Elegy*, which ridiculed Mahmud Nedim Pasha, resulted in an official warning for *Diogenes*. However, after publishing certain issues featuring strong political critiques, the magazine was forced to suspend publication temporarily. For instance, its fourth issue, which included a humorous article on the Shah of Iran's trip to Baghdad with his entourage, led to the magazine's suspension. Publication was halted for 50 days, resuming with the fifth issue on 4 February 1871 (Çakır, 2006, p. 164).

The second suspension occurred after the 14th issue, published on 6 April 1871, due to an article indirectly addressing the depletion of the state treasury. Similarly, the 15th issue, dated 19 April 1871, resulted in a 12-day suspension following allegations that it contained satirical content perceived to demean the Armenian community (Çakır, 2006, p. 165).

The 121st issue, dated 24 May 1872, featured three anecdotes that allegedly attacked public morality, mocked religious beliefs, and criticised nepotism and favouritism in state institutions, drawing significant attention. However, the tipping point in terms of censorship occurred with the 123rd issue, published on 1 June 1872.

This issue included a caricature criticising Mahmud Nedim Pasha's cabinet while praising Mithat Pasha's cabinet, resulting in a two-month suspension (Çakır, 2006, pp. 167–168). Ultimately, *Diogenes* ceased publication with its 183rd issue on 10 January 1873. Citing its previous issues, authorities alleged that the magazine had insulted the dignity of figures such as Egypt's Khedive Ismail Pasha, the Tsar of Russia, the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs, and various diplomats, prompting the permanent shutdown of *Diogenes* (Çakır, 2006, p. 170).

Diogenes demonstrated its pioneering role in Ottoman satirical tradition through its influence on other Ottoman satirical magazines such as *Hayal* and *Çingiraklı Tatar*. The magazine played a key role in transferring Ottoman satire to modern Turkish media. Its nuanced social satire was later carried on by figures such as Ahmet Midhat, Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem, and Hüseyin Rahmi (İz, 1990, p. 681).

Conclusion

As a pioneer of humour and a voice of social critique in the Ottoman Empire, *Diogenes* stands as the first political satire publication in Ottoman press history. It served as both a mirror and critique of the societal changes brought about by the modernisation process. Teodor Kasap's bold approach enabled the magazine to adopt an innovative line in both content and form, placing it in a unique position within the humour of its time. As a product of the Tanzimat reform era, *Diogenes* not only supported the modernisation movement through critical satire but also highlighted its shortcomings and missteps.

The philosophical foundations of *Diogenes* emphasised values such as equality, justice, and freedom, playing a crucial role not only in humour but also in the broader struggle for freedom of thought. Its battles against censorship demonstrated how satire could serve as a tool of resistance. In this sense, *Diogenes* was not merely a humour magazine but also a platform that represented Ottoman society's desire for change and opposition.

The influence of *Diogenes* on Ottoman satirical journalism was extensive. It paved the way for other satirical publications such as *Hayal* and *Çingiraklı Tatar*, facilitating the transition of this tradition into modern Turkish media. The movement initiated under Teodor Kasap's leadership became intertwined with the societal transformations of the Tanzimat period, elevating humour from a mere form of entertainment to a powerful tool for social critique.

In conclusion, the pioneering role of *Diogenes* in Ottoman satirical journalism significantly shaped not only the understanding of humour but also the development of social opposition through the press. This study positions *Diogenes* as a valuable example for understanding the importance of humour in social and political critique, offering a perspective on the emergence of satire in the Ottoman press.

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CHAPTER III

Humour from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic

Hüseyin Vehbi İMAMOĞLU⁴

Humour Traditions of the Ottoman Period

This study aims to examine the transformation of humour from being a social entertainment tool to a platform for criticism during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic. By presenting a historical analysis of humour, from the folk traditions of the Ottoman period to the critical narratives of the Republic's modernisation era, the study evaluates the role of this narrative form in societal transformation processes. In particular, it explores how humour adapted to and shaped changing societal conditions during periods of reform and crisis. While humour in the Ottoman Empire served as a traditional and indirect tool for criticism, it evolved into a modernised structure during the Republic, reflecting political critique and social changes. In this context, the research aims to analyse how humour has evolved over time, how it has mirrored

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societal transformations, and how it has functioned as a tool of resistance during political crises. The study seeks to highlight the role of humour as a narrative form that entertains and critiques society during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic.

This research is based on a historical and sociological approach. The collection and analysis of data have been carried out through the following methods:

1. Academic studies on traditional forms of humour in the Ottoman Empire (storytelling by *meddahs*, Karagöz-Hacivat shadow plays, Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes) and humour magazines of the Republic era (*Akbaba*, *Girgır*, *Leman*) were examined. These works served as primary sources for analysing the social functions and changing content of humour.
2. Cartoons and humorous writings focusing on humour in the Ottoman and Republic periods were reviewed. Particularly, cartoons in magazines like *Akbaba* and *Girgır* were evaluated as key primary sources for understanding public reactions during periods of political crises.
3. To comprehend the sociological and political functions of humour, concepts such as “resistance” “social critique” and “cultural transformation” from the literature were employed. The study analysed the role of humour as both a means of entertainment and critique based on these concepts.
4. The differences between the traditional humour of the Ottoman period and the humorous productions during the Republic's modernisation and crisis periods were compared. This analysis aimed to understand how humour adapted to the societal structures of the time and reflected changing social norms.

The humour traditions of the Ottoman period encompass a rich narrative world that reflects the social and cultural fabric of society, occupies an important place in daily life, and expresses social critique indirectly. These traditions appear in various forms, including folk tales, the storytelling of *meddahs*, Karagöz-Hacivat shadow plays, and Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes. Ottoman humour was used both in folk culture and around the palace to critique social inequalities and injustices, entertain while provoking thought, and reflect the complexities of social structures (Cevdet Pasha, 2019, p. 45; Korkmaz, 2018, p. 37).

One of the most important elements of Ottoman humour is the anecdotes of Nasreddin Hodja. Nasreddin Hodja is a beloved figure not only in Ottoman lands but also throughout the Islamic world. His anecdotes are short, humorous stories widely told among the public and passed down through generations. Nasreddin Hodja critiques societal issues with wit and often unexpected perspectives, using a simple yet effective style (Şimşek, 2017). His anecdotes address injustices, ignorance, moral weaknesses, and social disorders. For instance, the famous anecdote “He who pays the piper calls the tune” critiques greed and unfairness with a simple humorous narrative (Mardin, 2021). These stories reflect the social and political contradictions of Ottoman society while also mirroring the daily struggles of the people (Aksoy, 2020).

Another important component of Ottoman humour is the Karagöz and Hacivat shadow plays. These plays are traditional Turkish theatre examples popular among the public. Karagöz and Hacivat represent different social classes and cultural structures of Ottoman society. Karagöz is a candid, witty, and straightforward character from the common folk, while Hacivat is an educated, polite, yet somewhat pompous and self-serving figure. The dialogues between these characters humorously address class differences and social tensions in Ottoman society. Karagöz’s blunt and direct speech contrasts with Hacivat’s refined and elaborate expressions. These shadow plays satirised social injustices, societal contradictions, and bureaucratic complexities with a sarcastic tone.

They served as a medium for both entertaining and reflecting on societal flaws (Kudret, 2013).

The *meddah* tradition is another significant form of humorous narrative from the Ottoman period. *Meddahs* were travelling storytellers who performed in public spaces or coffeehouses. A *meddah* would perform solo, portraying multiple characters in the story. These stories were both humorous and moral, containing critiques of societal structures. *Meddahs* addressed the contradictions in Ottoman social structures, individual weaknesses, and the complexities of human relationships. Using mimicry, voice changes, and humorous narrative techniques, a *meddah* would both entertain and provoke thought among the audience. These stories often revolved around the problems of the people, their lifestyles, and the flaws in societal norms. The *meddah* tradition became a vital part of oral culture in Ottoman society, addressing everyday issues through humorous narratives (Cevdet Pasha, 2019).

Another significant aspect of Ottoman humour is the tradition of satire and lampooning (*hiciv* and *taşlama*). In Divan literature, satire (*hiciv*) often appeared as sharp but witty poetry criticising statesmen, bureaucrats, and societal structures. Nef'i, one of the most prominent figures of satire, harshly criticised corruption and injustices within the Ottoman bureaucracy with a biting tone. His satires were nuanced yet severe critiques of societal and political distortions in the Ottoman Empire (Karataş, 2015). Satire became a key form of expression within palace circles and among intellectuals, serving as an effective tool for opposing injustices and corruption (Mardin, 2021).

In folk poetry, critical poems known as *taşlama* held an important place. Folk poets used *taşlama* to critique injustices of the era, governmental mistakes, and individual faults in a humorous tone. *Taşlama* poems were often considered the voice of the lower classes, representing their grievances through poetry (Ergin, 2018). Poets used *taşlama* to criticise both individuals and society, exposing flaws and deficiencies with a humorous perspective (Kudret, 2013).

In the Ottoman period, humour was not just a means of entertainment but also a creative way of expressing social critique and addressing the concerns of the people. Humorous narratives lightly critiqued the challenges of daily life, social classes, and governance in Ottoman society while encouraging reflection among the public. These narratives resonated across all layers of society, from the lower classes to the palace, becoming a rich part of Ottoman culture that has endured to the present day (Cevdet Pasha, 2019).

The Tanzimat Era

The Tanzimat Era symbolises a period in the Ottoman Empire characterised by accelerated Westernisation and modernisation movements, accompanied by profound social, cultural, and political transformations. With the proclamation of the Tanzimat Edict in 1839, modernisation efforts commenced in the Ottoman State, initiating a quest for a new societal order under the influence of Europe (Yazıcı, 2019a). During this period, literature underwent significant changes, with new genres, themes, and narrative styles emerging under Western influence. Humour was also influenced by these changes, gaining importance as both a tool of critique and a means of entertaining the public after the Tanzimat (İnalçık, 1994).

The Tanzimat Era marked a time when Ottoman intellectuals and writers sought to prepare the public for the process of modernisation. Humour was frequently used as a critical style in works aimed at educating and enlightening society during this period. Tanzimat writers employed humorous narratives to convey the changes brought by Westernisation to the public and to criticise the societal contradictions arising during this process. In this context, humour not only served to amuse but also addressed social issues, exposing the shortcomings of the modernisation process (Mardin, 2021).

Humour and Critique in Tanzimat Literature

In Tanzimat literature, humour became a significant tool for social critique. Şinasi, one of the most prominent writers of the era,

introduced one of the first examples of modern comedy in Ottoman literature with his work *Şair Evlenmesi* (*The Poet's Marriage*). This play critiques the traditional marriage system and humorously illustrates the negative effects of arranged marriages on society (Deniz, 2019). The work is considered an important piece that conveys the Tanzimat period's efforts at Westernisation and the significance of individual freedoms in a way the public could comprehend through humour (Karataş, 2015).

Other notable authors of the period, such as Ziya Paşa and Namık Kemal, also utilised humour in their writings as a means of social critique. Ziya Paşa's *Zafernâme* (*The Book of Triumph*), for instance, satirises the government officials and the flaws of the social structure of the time (Ergin, 2018). Humorous works by Tanzimat authors often addressed the inefficiency of the bureaucratic system, public resistance to modernisation, and the contradictions created by traditional structures during the modernisation process. Namık Kemal, especially in his plays, used humour to highlight social injustices and ignorance in Ottoman society, shedding light on the impacts of modernisation on the public (Mardin, 2021).

Humour in Newspapers During the Tanzimat Era

With the development of journalism during the Tanzimat Era, humour gained prominence in the press as well. Newspapers were filled with critiques reflecting the social events, political developments, and daily life of the time. Humorous articles published in newspapers like *Tercüman-ı Ahval* and *Tasvir-i Efkâr* became significant examples of critiques of the socio-political structure of the period. Writers such as Şinasi and Namık Kemal employed a humorous style in their articles in these newspapers to educate the public (Karataş, 2015).

The rise of journalism during the Tanzimat Era also paved the way for humour to become a tool for social interaction. Humorous newspapers and magazines contained writings that satirised public reactions to modernisation, government policies, and social changes. Tanzimat authors used humour to reach broader audiences with their

social critiques. During this period, humour transformed into a tool that made the effects of Westernisation efforts and social changes more understandable and digestible for the public (İnalcık, 1994).

Karagöz and Hacivat Tradition and Humour After Tanzimat

The Tanzimat Era also marked a period when the Ottoman tradition of folk theatre, represented by Karagöz and Hacivat shadow plays, adapted to the modernisation process. These plays reflected the social contradictions and tensions experienced during the Westernisation process. Karagöz, as a candid and witty character from the common folk, humorously criticised Hacivat's politeness and efforts to emulate the West. This dynamic provided valuable insights into public reactions to the Westernisation process (Kudret, 2013; Enginün, 2014). These plays became tools for satirising Westernisation efforts and works reflecting the impacts of modernisation on the public (Işık & Köktürk, 2024).

Humour and Satire in Magazines

Magazines gained significant importance for humour and satire during the Tanzimat Era. *Diyojen*, a magazine published by Teodor Kasap, pioneered the tradition of critique through humour in Ottoman society. This magazine satirised sultans, bureaucrats, and the social structure of the time with its humorous tone. Despite occasional censorship, it strengthened the role of humour as a means of social critique (Koloğlu, 2013; Enginün, 2014). Other humour magazines like *Çaylak* and *Hayal* addressed the effects of modernisation on society with a style accessible to the public and incorporated humour into their critiques (Taşbaş, 2015).

These magazines detailed the contradictions of the Westernisation process and the resistance and adaptation processes of Ottoman society to modernisation (Yavuz, 2013). Humorous writings and cartoons, particularly in the press during the Tanzimat period, revealed the profound influence of Westernisation and its resonance among the public (Şahin, 2017).

The Second Constitutional Era

The Second Constitutional Era began in 1908 with the reinstatement of the constitutional regime during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II and lasted until the opening of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in 1920. This period witnessed significant political and social changes in the Ottoman Empire, marked by accelerated modernisation efforts, increased political activity, and substantial advancements in press and publication freedoms (Tunaya, 1998; Ahmad, 1999).

Political and Social Background

The Second Constitutional Era was proclaimed as a result of long-standing political and social tensions in the Ottoman Empire. The First Constitutional Era, declared in 1876, had been cut short in 1878 when Sultan Abdulhamid II dissolved the *Meclis-i Mebusan* (Ottoman Parliament) (Yazıcı, 2019b). For the following 30 years, the state was governed through modernisation efforts and centralised policies. Sultan Abdulhamid's administration was often characterised as oppressive, with press censorship perceived as a strict policy, requiring newspapers to be supervised by state officials before publication (Yazıcı, 2014).

During this period, discontent with the autocratic regime grew among intellectuals, bureaucrats, and military officers. The Young Turks, in particular, advocated for greater freedoms, constitutional governance, and reforms (Hanioğlu, 1985; Karal, 1996). In 1908, a military action led by the Committee of Union and Progress resulted in the re-establishment of constitutional rule. The same year, the Parliament was reconvened, and press censorship was abolished. This ushered in a period of significant political liberalisation and societal dynamism. Ottoman society took significant steps toward freedom with the emergence of political parties and the publication of numerous newspapers and magazines (Birecikli, 2008; Gülaçar, 2018).

Press and Publication Freedom During the Second Constitutional Era

The proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era brought rapid developments in the press and publishing industry. The removal of censorship allowed newspapers and magazines to express social and political ideas freely. Hundreds of newspapers, magazines, and books were published during this period. Previously constrained by censorship, the press took advantage of the freedom provided by the Second Constitutional Era to voice societal critiques and political ideas openly. The press played a crucial role in criticising, discussing, and disseminating political and social events to the public. Newspapers such as *Tanin*, *İkdam*, *Volkan*, and *Servet-i Fünun* became important platforms for political debate during this period (Tunaya, 2004; Karal, 1996).

Political parties and social groups also used newspapers and magazines to promote their ideologies and reform demands to a broader audience. Writers such as Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, Ahmet Rıza, and Ziya Gökalp articulated political critiques and demands for modernisation in their writings. The press became an effective tool for engaging the public in the modernisation process and fostering political consciousness within society (Ahmad, 1999; Hanioglu, 1985).

Humour in the Press During the Second Constitutional Era

Humorous publications were among the greatest beneficiaries of the liberal atmosphere of the Second Constitutional Era. Satirical magazines such as *Kalem*, *Karagöz*, *Cem*, *El Üfürük*, and *Tokmak* used humour to critique political figures, bureaucratic corruption, and societal contradictions. Cartoons, satirical writings, and humorous anecdotes gained significant popularity among the public and reached a wide audience.

Humour became a vital means of political and social critique during this era, reflecting the freedoms and dynamism of the Second Constitutional Period. Through satirical content, these magazines offered sharp yet entertaining insights into the challenges and

contradictions of Ottoman society as they navigated the complexities of modernisation and political reform.

The Second Constitutional Era: Satirical Press and Intellectual Movements

Satirical Press and Criticism

The Second Constitutional Era marked a new chapter in press freedom in the Ottoman Empire, creating an environment that especially revitalised satirical publications. Humorous articles and cartoons in the press provided sharp critiques of government administration, bureaucracy, and political figures. Magazines such as *Kalem*, *Karagöz*, *Cem*, *Boşboğaz ve Güllabi* tackled issues like governmental corruption and societal contradictions through satire and caricature. These publications employed a simple language accessible to the public, criticising political figures and reaching a wide audience (Demirbacak, 2019; Seyhan, 2013).

After the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) came to power, satirical language was used to critique the government's policies and the mistakes of its leaders while also targeting supporters of the old regime with biting humour (Deniz, 2017).

One prominent satirical magazine of the era, *Kalem*, focused on significant political and social events through satire and humour. The magazine gained attention for Ali Fuat Bey's caricatures, which mockingly depicted politicians and statesmen of the time, highlighting deficiencies in governance and political corruption. Meanwhile, *Karagöz* magazine centred on critiquing the daily lives of the public. These satirical publications criticised both the CUP's policies and the remnants of the old regime, offering the public a chance to view political processes with a more critical eye (Çakmak, 2015; Bozaslan, 2016).

Intellectual Movements and Debates

The Second Constitutional Era was a period when various political and cultural ideologies gained traction and were actively

debated within Ottoman society. Each ideology proposed different solutions to the Empire's decline.

- Ottomanism aimed to preserve the Empire's multi-ethnic structure.
- Turkism advocated for the promotion of Turkish identity and nationalism.
- Islamism sought unity among Islamic nations and communities.
- Westernism promoted adopting Europe's modernisation methods.

These ideologies were disseminated through newspapers and magazines, fostering public debates and criticism among opposing schools of thought (Berkes, 2006; Demirbacak, 2019).

The intellectual clashes among these movements were reflected in the press. With the rise of freedom of expression during the Second Constitutional Era, newspapers and magazines became platforms for these ideological confrontations. Publications such as *Sebilürreşad* and *Türk Yurdu* not only disseminated the ideas of these movements but also provided a solid intellectual foundation for discussing societal issues. For instance, Ziya Gökalp's writings became seminal texts for Turkism, while Westernist writers deepened debates on modernisation (Berkes, 2006; Seyhan, 2013).

Political Conflicts and the 31 March Incident

Although the Second Constitutional Era began with an atmosphere of freedom, it was soon overshadowed by deepening political conflicts and instability. The rise of the Committee of Union and Progress to power enabled it to establish strong dominance in the political arena. However, this period saw increased polarisation in society due to the suppression of differing viewpoints.

One of the most significant turning points of this era was the 31 March Incident in 1909. Initially emerging as a military revolt,

the event escalated into a widespread public uprising supported by reactionary anti-constitutional forces (Aysal, 2006; Aslan, 2010). The *Action Army* was deployed to Istanbul to suppress the rebellion. The incident resulted in the deposition of Sultan Abdulhamid II, who was replaced by Mehmed V Reşad.

However, the aftermath of the 31 March Incident saw the CUP adopting a more authoritarian approach to governance, and the initially liberal atmosphere of the era rapidly transformed into a repressive one (Coşar, 2018; Bozan, 2017).

Effects of World War I

World War I, which began in 1914, plunged the Ottoman Empire into a deep political and economic crisis. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) decided to join the war on the side of the German Empire, leading to the loss of Ottoman territories, depletion of economic resources, and increased burdens on the public (Tursun, 2013; Bukarlı, 2016).

The social and economic hardships caused by the war severely damaged the CUP's reputation among the people. The organisation's authoritarian governance further exacerbated social unrest, and the Ottoman Empire's defeat in the war became a critical turning point that paved the way for its collapse (Ergül, 2019).

Humour During the Republican Era

In the early years of the Republic, humour emerged as an important tool for social and political critique. The transformations experienced during the process of societal modernisation, the reforms of the new regime, and the public's reactions to these changes became the main themes of humour. Humour played an effective role in explaining societal changes and the reforms introduced by the new Republic in ways the public could understand. During this period, humour not only aimed to entertain but also served as a means of raising social awareness and helping the public embrace the new regime's reforms. Cartoons and humorous writings conveyed the social and political developments of the era in a simple

and accessible language (Yetim & Akkoyunlu, 2017; Zamur Tuncer, 2019).

With the liberalisation of the press, satirical magazines and newspapers became significant platforms for communication and critique during the formative years of the Republic of Turkey.

The proclamation of the Republic sparked a revival in publishing, resulting in a substantial increase in the quantity and quality of humorous works. Magazines such as *Akbaba*, *Karikatür*, and *Güldüren*, published during the 1920s and 1930s, became some of the most popular publications of the period. These magazines addressed themes such as the Republic's modernisation efforts, the impact of reforms, the living conditions of the public, and political developments in a humorous tone. For example, *Akbaba*, first published in 1922 by Yusuf Ziya Ortaç and Orhan Seyfi Orhon, became a symbol of Republican-era humour. The magazine's cartoons provided a satirical perspective on social events and the lifestyle of the public, often reflecting the impact of reforms on society with irony.

Akbaba supported the government's reforms while also offering a critical perspective on the era's social and political developments through its cartoons and articles. Figures such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and other leaders often became subjects of humour; however, the critiques were generally supportive in tone (Topuz, 1997).

Reflections of Modernisation and Reforms in Humour

The inability of the public to fully embrace the Republic's modernisation efforts and societal reforms became a frequent subject of critique in satirical magazines. Reforms such as the Alphabet Reform, the Hat Law, and secularisation, introduced as part of modernisation efforts, were often addressed in humour. When these reforms clashed with traditional habits, humour portrayed this tension through irony and critique. Cartoons explored public reactions to reforms and their impact on daily life while also raising

awareness about the process of societal change (Şimşir, 1979; Topuz, 1997).

Humour highlighted the challenges of these reforms and the transformation they brought to society. Cartoons and humorous writings critically examined the effects of reforms on the public and the social changes they triggered, presenting these themes in a comedic yet analytical tone.

In the early years of the Republic, humour became a powerful tool for understanding and explaining the impact of reforms on society. Satirical publications blended social critique with messages of support, strengthening the Republic's communication with the public. During this period, humour became an integral part of modernisation efforts, playing a crucial role in the adaptation process to a changing social structure (Yılmaz, 2016).

Humour in the Early Years of the Republic: Women's Rights and Social Reforms

Women's Rights and Humour

In the early years of the Republic, women's rights and social reforms became prominent themes in humour. The increasing participation of women in public life, their more active roles in education, employment, and public service, and especially their gaining political rights, caught the attention of humour writers (Hişmanoğlu & Ersan, 2016). Women's involvement in municipal elections and their presence in various professions were depicted in cartoons and humorous writings in satirical magazines (Albayrak & Deniz Anamur, 2020). These works reflected society's reactions to women's new roles during this period of adjustment, employing an ironic and entertaining tone (Yılmaz, 2016; Şimşir, 1979).

Humour as Controlled Criticism

During the early years of the Republic, humour also served as a medium for "controlled criticism" of the government. Despite periods of censorship and repression, humour offered indirect

critiques of government policies and societal issues. The impacts of reforms on society and the contradictions brought about by modernisation efforts were addressed through cartoons and humorous writings. This provided a window into public perceptions of the reforms (Yetim & Akkoyunlu, 2017). Rather than openly criticising the government, humour adopted a subtler approach, addressing social problems and political contradictions in an understated manner.

Aziz Nesin and Social Critique

Aziz Nesin emerged as a prominent figure in humour during the early years of the Republic. Although his most renowned works were produced later, his stories and humorous writings from this period offered sharp observations of society's struggles with modernisation and the challenges it faced during this transformative process. Through irony, Aziz Nesin critiqued the difficulties the public experienced in adapting to reforms and highlighted social contradictions, providing a critical perspective (Bozkurt, 2005; Topuz, 1997).

In the early years of the Republic, humour became an essential tool for understanding the societal reflections of modernisation efforts. It addressed major social reforms, such as women's rights, while also offering controlled critiques of government policies, thus reflecting the era's societal transformation. Figures like Aziz Nesin and publications like *Akbaba* stood out as some of the most influential contributors to this process.

Period of Coups

The 1960 Coup and Humour

The 1960 coup, Turkey's first military intervention, took place on May 27 and resulted in the overthrow of the Democrat Party government. Although a new constitution was drafted and democracy was reinstated, this period went down in history as a time marked by political repression, social tensions, and executions. During this era, humour served not only as an outlet for coping with

the difficulties brought by the coup but also as a tool for criticism and social cohesion (Berkes, 2006; Yetim, 2017).

After the coup, satirical magazines reflected Turkey's political changes in a critical tone. *Akbaba*, one of the most prominent satirical publications of the period, tackled power struggles and bureaucratic confusion through its cartoons (Hiřmanođlu, Ersan, & olak, 2017). The end of the Democrat Party era and the establishment of a new order following the coup became central themes in humour. Cartoons critiqued political leaders, reflected the public's post-coup mood, and presented political tensions from a satirical perspective (řenyapılı, 2003).

The 1971 Memorandum and Humour

The memorandum issued on March 12, 1971, was initially a warning to the government but led to a period of severe military rule. Martial law was declared, freedoms were significantly restricted, and opposition groups were subjected to intense pressure. With newspapers shut down and heavy censorship imposed, direct criticism became impossible, making humour an effective tool for indirect critique.

During this time, *Girgir* magazine stood out for its caricatures and satirical writings that criticised the repressive regime. The magazine demonstrated the power of humour in opposing censorship and repression (Koak, 2016; Fırat, 2018).

Girgir gained widespread popularity during this period and developed a distinctly oppositional tone. The magazine addressed military rule, societal traumas, and the authoritarian regime's oppressive aspects through humour. Its satirical approach provided a rare channel for resistance under martial law and censorship, showing the enduring power of humour against oppressive governments (Yıldız, 2015; Yetim, 2017).

The 1980 Coup and Humour

The military coup of September 12, 1980, is regarded as one of the most severe and impactful interventions in Turkey's recent history. The military took control of the government, dissolved political parties, detained hundreds of thousands of people, and committed severe human rights violations. This period saw some of the strictest restrictions on freedom of expression and the most intense repression in Turkey's history.

Amid these circumstances, direct criticism was nearly impossible, but humour persisted as a means of resistance. The satirical magazine *Limon* (later renamed *Leman*) emerged as one of the most notable publications of this era, delivering sharp critiques of the coup and the oppressive regime that followed (Karaman, 2016). Its cartoons addressed the political climate and the actions of the military government with subtle wit, offering a critical yet humorous perspective (Yücel, 2005).

Gırgır magazine also continued publication during the 1980s despite the intense repression. Its satirical approach helped ease societal tensions and offered a critical lens through which the public could evaluate the political atmosphere. Humour provided a refuge from the pervasive fear instilled by the coup and became a tool for coping with its aftermath (Ergin, 2019).

The February 28 Process and Humour

The February 28, 1997 process, often referred to as a "post-modern coup," led to the resignation of the Welfare Party government through military intervention. This period saw significant tensions between the military, media, and civil society, with debates over secularism and the alleged threat of political Islam taking centre stage.

Satirical magazines like *Leman* and *Penguen* engaged with the heated political atmosphere of the time, portraying the period's chaos and societal polarisation with a satirical lens. These magazines critiqued the military's intervention in politics, the government's

resignation, and the secularism-religion debates through humour. Their satirical content provided the public with an alternative perspective on the uncertainties and tensions of the period, highlighting societal divisions in a humorous tone (Tunahan, 2015; Öcal, 2009).

These magazines also focused on the role of the media during the coup and the process leading to the government's downfall, offering biting critiques of authoritarian practices and societal conflicts through irony (Bayramoğlu, 2007; Göle, 2008).

The political and social effects of the February 28 process demonstrated that humour was not merely an entertaining medium but also a vital platform for social critique. Despite the climate of repression and polarisation in the media, humour stood out as a critical voice, helping society evaluate the coup's impacts from a broader perspective. This further underscored the importance of satirical magazines in periods of restricted freedom of expression (Özkaya, 2012).

Conclusion

From the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey, humour has served as a significant medium for reflecting social change and political transformations. In the Ottoman era, traditional elements of humour, such as *meddahs* (storytellers), Karagöz-Hacivat shadow plays, and Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes, were primary platforms for expressing the public's reactions to social and political events in an entertaining manner. During this period, humour was primarily used as a means of entertainment but also indirectly facilitated social critique and criticism of authority (Kudret, 2013; Mardin, 1990).

Following the proclamation of the Republic, with the processes of societal modernisation and reform, humour became a more open platform for criticism. In the early years of the Republic, satirical magazines such as *Akbaba* supported the reforms of the new state while highlighting the challenges faced by the public in adapting to these changes. Reforms such as the Alphabet Reform,

the Hat Law, and secularisation were among the main topics satirised in these magazines, which reflected the public's perspective and the societal impact of these changes through irony (Topuz, 1997; Yılmaz, 2016).

The recent history marked by coups represents periods when humour gained prominence as a tool of resistance. During the military interventions of 1960, 1971, and 1980, despite heavy censorship imposed on the press, satirical magazines like *Gırgır* and *Leman* used subtle satire to voice societal anxieties and reactions. In these periods, humour played a crucial role as a means of fostering social solidarity and expressing criticism indirectly, standing out as an effective tool against authoritarian regimes (Koçak, 2016, p. 130; Fırat, 2018, p. 63).

In conclusion, from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey, humour has emerged as a vital component in understanding and analysing societal transformations in a historical context (Hişmanoğlu, Ersan, & Çolak, 2015). This mode of expression, spanning from traditional folk culture to modern media, has not only articulated the sentiments of the public but also ensured the presence of political and social critique in the public sphere.

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CHAPTER IV

Humour in Literature

Yüksel ERSAN⁵

The Meaning and Function of Humour in Literature

Literature, as a branch of fine arts, serves as a means for humans to express their emotions, thoughts, and societal realities. In a narrower sense, it encompasses works written for artistic purposes, whereas in a broader sense, it includes all written works. It spans various genres such as poetry, novels, short stories, and plays, encompassing artistic expressions in both verse and prose. The discipline that studies these artistic works is known as literary studies. At its core, literature focuses on humanity—its problems, joys, sorrows, emotions, thoughts, past, future, and hopes, expressed either through written or spoken language (Akgün & Deniz, 2020). This has been true throughout history and will likely remain so. The history of literature is also considered a part of the history of civilisation. Literature is the voice, word, and breath of a nation. Turkish poet Namık Kemal aptly expressed this idea with his words:

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"A nation without literature is like a mute person." Seyit Kemal Karaalioğlu elaborates on this in his *Dictionary of Literature*: "Nations without literature cannot make their voice heard in the world, cannot express their existence, cannot advance on the path of civilisation, and cannot compete with civilised nations" (Karaalioğlu, p. 219). Literature, with language as its primary material, is a precursor to life itself, serving as a fundamental tool for shaping and transforming society and for fostering progress. It is well understood that literature is the most effective medium for instilling emotions, ideas, and ideals in the masses.

Having briefly described literature as a branch of fine arts, humour emerges as a significant element within literature. Humour is not just about making people laugh; it also enables them to think critically and view events from a different perspective. Historically, the roots of humour can be traced back to Ancient Greece. Aristotle divided humour into comedy and tragedy, defining comedy as a genre that satirically critiques human flaws. The origins of comedy can even be linked to the 6th-century writer Susarion of Icaria, who is said to have organised comedic performances with a chorus of actors or poets, offering prizes of dried figs and wine to the winners. These performances evolved into collective protests against social injustices and eventually into theatrical displays involving actors with faces painted in wine lees (Yüksel, p. 3).

Humour is often characterised as a tool that not only incorporates comedic elements but also examines, critiques, and, when necessary, opposes injustices within human nature and societal structures. In the Middle Ages, humour intertwined with religious and moral teachings, frequently appearing in folk tales, epic poems, and legends. Moving closer to the modern era, during the Renaissance, humour laid the groundwork for the development of individual freedom and critical thinking. Artists of the period used humour as a tool to question society and art. Contemporary artists and writers, much like their Renaissance predecessors, employ humour in both art and literature as a way to offer new perspectives on reality, provoke thought while entertaining, and highlight

overlooked issues. As Eker notes, "Humour is the silent victory of sharp wit, achieved through an unconventional, unexpected, and sometimes merciless approach that is often entertaining yet probing" (Eker, 2009, p. 54). In essence, humour involves writers reinterpreting events and drawing attention to the extraordinary or comical.

In Western languages and cultures, humour is commonly referred to as "humor." In German, it is defined as: *"Gelassene Heiterkeit, die befähigt eigene und fremde Schwäche (aber auch Stärken) mit Frohsinn anzunehmen und den Mut zu bewahren."*

This translates to "Serene cheerfulness, enabling one to accept their own and others' weaknesses (as well as strengths) with joy and to maintain courage" (Values Academy, 30 November 2024). Swiss-German author Max Frisch poses intriguing questions about humour: "Which is more ridiculous? A) Laughing at a third person? B) Laughing at oneself? C) Making others laugh at oneself?" (Critchley, 2020, p. 81). As this demonstrates, while humour may have universal functions, it remains specific to language and culture, drawing on the collective memory of societies. What is considered funny or laughable in one culture may not evoke the same reaction in another. This is one of the localised characteristics of literature.

The Functions of Humour in Literature

Humour serves five key functions, depending on its perspective:

1. **Entertainment and Emotional Relief:** Laughter reduces stress, improves mood, and provides emotional relief. Works of comedy allow readers to escape the routines of daily life, offering a momentary retreat from reality and a pleasurable reading experience.
2. **A Tool for Critique:** Humour is one of the most effective means of social critique. Writers use humour to offer a tolerant yet critical perspective on societal and individual issues, enabling readers to question societal norms, those in

power, and human behaviours. Elements of humour, such as irony, satire, absurdity, and parody, provoke thought while raising awareness. Satire, in particular, critiques social injustices, moral corruption, and political power in a way that engages readers.

3. **Fostering Empathy and Altruism:** Through humorous characters, authors reveal human flaws, contradictions, and tragicomic situations, fostering empathy between readers and the stories or characters. This aspect of humour is an essential tool for understanding human conditions. For example, Anton Chekhov's short stories use humour to portray both the comic and tragic facets of humanity. In Shakespeare's tragedies, such as *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, humour is interwoven into tense scenes to lighten the emotional weight for the reader.
4. **Richness in Language and Style; Cultural Reflections:** Humour reflects a society's social and cultural structure. Even within the same region, humour styles and perspectives can vary. By offering a critical lens, humour reveals societal values and norms. It encourages creative and flexible use of language, employing metaphors, wordplay, irony, and contrasts frequently found in literary works.
5. **A Medium for Communication:** Writers use humour to convey profound and complex topics in a simple and engaging manner. Humour thus becomes an effective tool for making intricate ideas more comprehensible, especially in fields like sociology and philosophy.

After discussing the meaning and purpose of humour, it is also important to explore its forms and characteristics based on its use and techniques. As indicated in this research, humour has existed since the dawn of humanity and the emergence of language, taking various forms and styles preferred by different writers and thinkers. The types of humour vary depending on their content and

techniques, which will be examined in relation to literature and other art forms in this study.

Types of Humour and Their Characteristics

1. Irony

Irony is a form of expression where the intended meaning is the opposite of what is stated. Often written with a sarcastic tone, this type of humour aims to amuse while provoking thought. It is commonly used in satire and critical texts. For example, commenting to someone speaking loudly, "I can't hear you; perhaps you should shout a bit more," is an instance of irony. In literature, Metin Eloğlu's poem *Boynumun Borcu* from his book *Düdüklü Tencere* serves as a good example of irony:

I OWE IT TO YOU

Mrs Leman

You know I owe you a poem?

That's what I'm paying for.

(Eloğlu, p. 75)

2. Satire

Satire is a type of humour that critiques societal or individual flaws and mistakes through ridicule. It targets people, objects, places, beliefs, or ideologies, aiming to highlight deficiencies and societal issues with a sharp and often mocking tone. In Turkish literature, Nef'i's satirical works provide notable examples:

*"The Mufti called me an infidel.
Let's assume I don't call him Muslim.
When we both face judgment day,
We'll both be revealed as liars."
(Nef'i)*

(Karaalioğlu, p. 692)

3. Comedy

Comedy is a genre of humour written to entertain and make people laugh, often based on absurd situations, misunderstandings, and character flaws. It is one of the oldest forms of humour, tracing back to Aristotle in Ancient Greece. It highlights the humorous aspects of people and events, aiming not only to amuse but also to provoke thought. Molière's *The Miser* is a classic example of this genre.

4. Parody

Parody is a type of humour that imitates a serious text or work in an ironic way, maintaining its structure while adding an entirely new meaning to create a humorous effect through the contrast between form and content. Parody can simultaneously pay homage to the original work and critique its specific aspects. In Turkish literature, Haldun Taner's plays exemplify parody. In cinema, *Turist Ömer Uzey Yolunda* starring Sadri Alışık is a notable Turkish example.

5. Dark Humour

The term "dark humour" was first coined by French surrealist André Breton in his 1940 anthology *Anthologie de l'humour noir*. However, it became widely used in the 1960s. Dark humour addresses tragic or frightening events in a comedic manner, causing readers to laugh while also feeling discomfort. It emphasises the absurdity or emptiness of life, combining macabre or unsettling elements with comic relief.

Examples include: *A priest asks a convict sentenced to death by electric chair if he has any final requests. The convict replies, "Yes, please hold my hand."*

Patient: "Doctor, I'm very nervous; this is my first operation."

Doctor: "Don't worry. It's mine too."

These examples demonstrate how seemingly tragic or unsettling elements are combined to create humour. Dark humour often incorporates elements that might be described as offensive, harsh, or grotesque, which contributes to its unique style. In literature, cinema, and other forms of media, dark humour uses aggressive or shocking content to provoke laughter (*Türk Edebiyatı*, 2024).

6. Absurd Humour

Absurd humour amuses the audience by portraying illogical, surreal, or nonsensical situations. The surreal scenarios created often involve the juxtaposition of unrelated concepts, blatant logical fallacies, or the emphasis on absurdities. This is evident in the *Dede Korkut* stories. In the tale “The Episode of Salur Kazan's Home Raided,” the shepherd defeats the enemy using his flock of sheep and goats, launched with a sling, when stones prove insufficient. By using sheep and goats as substitutes for stones, a surreal and illogical scene is crafted (Kudret, p. 28). In another *Dede Korkut* story, *Duha Koca – Oğlu Deli Dumrul*, Dumrul builds a bridge over a dry riverbed, charging thirty-three coins for those who cross it and forty coins for those who do not (Gökyay, p. 122). The absurdity and illogical nature of charging more for not crossing the bridge highlight the surreal essence of the narrative.

7. Anecdotes and Witticisms

Prof. Dr. Şükrü Elçin defines anecdotes as follows: “An anecdote is an independent literary form with its unique structure and content among oral literature works that rely on language” (Türkmen, p. 423). These humorous tales, often instructive, are particularly prevalent in oral traditions, characterised by their brief and striking narratives.

Witticism, on the other hand, is described by Karaalioğlu as “humorous and clever words, jokes, or amusing anecdotes. *Letaif* refers to a collection of witticisms” (Karaalioğlu, 1983, p. 450). Jean Paul, the oldest of the theorists from the German school of

anecdotes, is primarily known as a novelist. His work *Vorschule der Aesthetik* (1804) is a theoretical study on literature, falling more into the realm of poetics than aesthetics, as it solely addresses the art of literature. He advocates for the German people to embrace a culture of wit (*Witz*) and a Shakespearean style of global humour (*Welthumor*), asserting that wit provides freedom by first ensuring equality (Aytaç, p. 201). In this work, Jean Paul examines anecdotes and humour, considering them interconnected but distinct. He acknowledges the existence of humour without wit and serious anecdotes. For instance, a person tripping on the street may be humorous but cannot be classified as a witticism or anecdote. The anecdotes of Nasreddin Hodja are the most well-known examples of this genre in Turkish literature. Orhan Veli has versified some of these anecdotes. For example:

TIMUR'S PRICE

One day Timur goes to the bathhouse with the Hodja.

They undress, rinse off, and enter.

While washing, Timur suddenly asks:

“Hodja,” he says, “how much would I be worth as a slave?”

Does the Hodja ever hesitate?

Pretending to ponder, he responds:

“If you ask me, I’d say one hundred coins.”

Timur gets angry:

“What nonsense, Hodja!

The loincloth alone is worth one hundred coins.”

The Hodja laughs heartily at this:

He leans in and says quietly to Timur:

“That’s exactly what I had priced!” (Veli, p. 49)

8. Social and Political Humour

Political humour encompasses both the humour produced by politicians and humour targeting political leaders, parties, and groups. This type of humour criticises and amuses by addressing social or political events, aiming to reveal that the thoughts or lifestyles of any political figure are not as they claim or should be. Political humour can take various forms, including jokes, riddles,

irony, and satire. Humour created by politicians is often motivated by a desire to critique and outwit rival politicians. Politicians also use humour to make their statements more memorable and to evade tricky questions. Political humour is frequently encountered in newspaper columns, cartoons, and plays. It is typically the opposition that produces this type of humour. Aziz Nesin's works are regarded as pioneering examples of this genre in Turkish literature.



<https://t24.com.tr/haber/karikaturist-latif-demirci-hayatini-kaybetti,1038586> , 01.12.2024

9. Situation Comedy

Situation comedy (commonly known as sitcom) is a genre that originated from radio and is now widely featured on television.

Sitcoms are typically set in familiar locations, such as homes and workplaces, and revolve around the everyday, humorous events that the characters encounter. They are especially popular in television series and theatrical plays. These productions, lasting approximately half an hour, resemble television theatre and are centred on the comedic aspects of the characters. Viewers often identify with these characters, finding reflections of themselves within them. One notable example of this genre in Turkish television is the series *Avrupa Yakası* (*European Side*):

Avrupa Yakası

This show is arguably one of the most fitting examples of the sitcom format in Turkish television. It follows the life of Aslı, an editor, and is primarily set in her family's home in Nişantaşı and her workplace. Written by Gülse Bırsel, a highly significant figure in Turkish humour, the show is also remembered as a gentle family series. Directed by Sinan Çetin, it aired between 2004 and 2009. With its strong cast of actors, *Avrupa Yakası* is considered an enjoyable and high-quality Turkish sitcom.

Humour adds meaning and depth to the multifaceted nature of literature. Through its functions of critique, entertainment, and fostering empathy, it enhances the reader's engagement with the text. In literature, humour serves as both a style and a genre, offering a rich medium of expression. It also contributes to the enrichment of language and makes social criticism more accessible. Supporting literature's role in understanding and reflecting human experiences, humour is not merely a source of amusement but also a powerful narrative tool. In this sense, humour can undoubtedly be regarded as one of the universal values of literature. Each type of humour explores different aspects of life, offering readers and viewers new perspectives. Humour finds its place in various literary forms, such as stories, novels, plays, poetry, essays, and anecdotes.

Humour in Pre-Islamic Turkish Literature

The period of Turkish literature prior to the adoption of Islam, spanning the "dark ages" of history before the 9th to 11th centuries, is referred to as "Pre-Islamic Turkish Literature." During this era, humour held a deeply rooted presence, shaped predominantly by oral tradition. Humorous elements often served as a reflection of societal life, traditions, beliefs, and social structures. In ancient Turkish societies, humour played both entertaining and educational roles, becoming a vital tool for conveying moral and religious teachings. This made humour a means of direct communication with the people, embedding itself firmly in social life. Influenced by the nomadic lifestyle, the period produced very few written works, with surviving texts bearing traces of religions such as Shamanism, Manichaeism, and Buddhism. Notable written records include the **Orkhon Inscriptions** and **Uyghur texts**.

From the earliest existence of Turks, humour has appeared in both oral and written forms. Before the adoption of Islam, humorous elements were mainly found in oral traditions, with limited written references except for works like **Divan-ı Lügâti't-Türk**. Post-Islam, humour continued to be present in written works such as **Kutadgu Bilig** and **Atabetü'l Hakâyık** (*Taşdemir, p. 63*).

In Pre-Islamic Turkish literature, humour served as a multifaceted element that united, educated, and provoked thought within the community. It featured across a broad spectrum, from shamanistic rituals and heroic epics to proverbs and daily narratives. This tradition of humour persisted into post-Islamic Turkish literature, maintaining its place as a cornerstone of folk culture. Today, references to the heroes of this era are often revived through contemporary cartoons and caricatures, demonstrating the enduring legacy of pre-Islamic humour in Turkish cultural expression.



<https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/473581717066146378/> 02.12.2024

Humour in Ottoman Literature

Humour occupied a significant place in Ottoman literature as a reflection of social life, cultural values, and political events. It served as a medium for expressing the daily lives of the people, their social structures, and their relationships with the state in an ironic and critical tone. The most prominent examples of humour in Ottoman literature can be found in anecdotes, meddah (storyteller) tales, folk stories, satires, and the genre of **hiciv** (satire) in Divan literature. These humorous narratives reveal how the people used humour as a tool of critique and what elements of social and political life they scrutinised.

One of the most iconic figures representing humour in Ottoman literature is **Nasreddin Hodja**, known for his witty and satirical personality. His anecdotes often highlight societal,

economic, and political issues through simple yet profound humorous stories. These stories mock injustices, governance, and social contradictions while also reflecting the challenges of daily life. Nasreddin Hodja's humour, while entertaining, also serves to reveal social realities and provoke thought. His stories frequently targeted the bureaucracy, justice system, and social inequalities. Some of his anecdotes even address linguistic peculiarities, as seen in the following example:

On Farsi Proficiency

"When someone remarked, 'Hodja, you're harmless, but your sermons lack elegance because you don't know Farsi,' Hodja replied, 'How do you know I don't know Farsi?' When asked to recite a Farsi couplet, Hodja improvised:
'The violet bows its head, lying in slumber,
While the wretched onion dons layered robes.'
When people objected, saying, 'Hodja, this isn't Farsi,' he retorted, 'Don't you see the '-est' endings?'" (Arslan & Paçacıoğlu, p. 87-88)

Another well-known story reflects Nasreddin Hodja's wit in answering existential questions:

The Centre of the World

One day, three priests visiting Akşehir decided to test Hodja's knowledge:
"Tell us, Hodja, where is the centre of the world?"
Without hesitation, Hodja pointed to his donkey's front hoof and declared,
"Right where my donkey's hoof is."
One priest protested:
"How can you be sure?"
"Measure it and find out," Hodja replied.
The second priest asked, "How many stars are there in the sky?"
Hodja, again pointing to his donkey, answered,
"As many as there are hairs on my donkey's tail."
When the priest asked for proof, Hodja invited him,
"Feel free to count them."

Such tales highlight Hodja's quick wit and ability to deliver profound lessons through humour. These stories often involve social critique, as in the case of the priests converting to Islam after Hodja's clever answers (*Boratav, p. 158-159*).

Meddah Tradition Humour also played a vital role in the **meddah** tradition of the Ottoman era. Meddahs were itinerant storytellers who performed in public spaces or at the palace, narrating stories often infused with comedic elements. These stories reflected the daily lives, traditions, habits, and social structures of Ottoman society with a satirical perspective. Through their humorous tales, meddahs critiqued social norms, sometimes subtly referencing political figures or events. They bridged the gap between the elite and the masses, exposing societal contradictions and challenges faced by ordinary people.

In Ottoman literature, humour was not only a source of entertainment but also a powerful medium for social commentary. Whether through Nasreddin Hodja's incisive wit, the pointed satires of Divan poets, or the lively performances of meddahs, humour served to engage, educate, and critique the world of its time.

Alaylı Ömer Efendi / Example of a Meddah Story

Ömer Efendi is at a coffeehouse, explaining to a friend how he earned a promotion in the military:

- *They telephoned and told me to go to the headquarters in Urga. I went to the commander bey's tent. I gave my salute.*
- *"What do you want, Ömer Efendi?" he said.*
- *"What do you want, bey?" I said.*
- *"We're going to test you and assign you a rank," he said.*
- *"Go ahead, bey," I said. He unrolled a map hanging on the tent pole and spread it on the table.*
- *"What is this?" he said.*

- *"It's a map, bey," I said.*
- *"What are these long red lines?" he said.*
- *"They're borders, bey," I said.*
- *"Bravo, Ömer Efendi!" he said.*
- *"What is this blue part?" he said.*
- *"It's the sea, bey," I said.*
- *"What are these dotted black lines?" he said.*
- *"They're railroads, bey," I said.*
- *"Bravo, Ömer Efendi!" he said. Then he pointed with his finger and asked, "Where is this?"*
- *"It's Istanbul, bey," I said.*
- *"And where is this?" he said.*
- *"It's Paris, bey," I said.*
- *"How long does it take to get from Istanbul to Paris?" he said.*
- *"Four hours on a donkey, but if a friend offers tea or coffee on the way, it takes five hours," I said.*
- *"Bravo, Ömer Efendi!" he said, got up, and kissed me on the forehead. That's how I got my rank.*

[Source: <http://www.edebiyatforum.com/edebiyatla-ilgili-diger-yazilar/meddah-ornegi.html>, accessed 02.12.2024]

This text, which appears in high school literature textbooks, was originally performed by the famous Meddah Sururi at the start of the 20th century. It dramatizes the conversation between an Anatolian villager, Ömer Efendi, and his commander during a military promotion discussion, which Ömer Efendi recounts proudly to a friend upon returning home.

A key aspect of meddah stories is the use of regional dialects and colloquial expressions, bringing authenticity and humour to the narrative. In this example, phrases like "Neğören" (What are you doing?), "goycan" (will assign), and "harta" (map) reflect the vernacular speech of the protagonist's local community.

Karagöz and Hacivat: Shadow Play on Etiquette: The Karagöz and Hacivat shadow plays also hold a prominent place in Ottoman literature's humour tradition. The interactions between Karagöz, the blunt, naïve everyman, and Hacivat, the more refined and intellectual figure, provide a humorous yet critical reflection of Ottoman society.

Dialogue on Etiquette:

(Hacivat is in front of his shop.)

HACIVAT: My dear Karagöz, it's good that you stopped by!

KARAGÖZ: What's wrong with your eyes?

HACIVAT: Why do you ask?

KARAGÖZ: Didn't you say, "It's good you bought dates!"

HACIVAT: Of course not! I meant, "It's good you came to see me."

KARAGÖZ: Then stop confusing me and get to the point!

HACIVAT: Sit down first!

KARAGÖZ: (Sits.) Are you going to take my photo?

HACIVAT: No, Karagöz. I have good news for you.

KARAGÖZ: Are you going to give me the extra money in your safe?

HACIVAT: Stop joking! You know I'm always looking for work for you.

KARAGÖZ: Amen! Did you find me a job?

HACIVAT: Not exactly, but I found someone who will find you one.

KARAGÖZ: That's better than nothing.

HACIVAT: Yesterday, I ran into an old army friend. He said, "Have him come see me first!"

KARAGÖZ: Before I start seeing double from hunger, I'll go find

this man, Hacı Cavcav!

HACIVAT: Don't rush, I have more to tell you.

KARAGÖZ: Spit it out quickly so I don't lose the job!

HACIVAT: Listen carefully, Karagöz. This man is rich and old...
He's retired.

KARAGÖZ: Let him take me along, and we can both not work together.

HACIVAT: Stop being ridiculous! His servant's name is İbiş. Go see my friend, but remember, he's very proper and particular.

KARAGÖZ: Twin artichokes...

HACIVAT: Once you're in his mansion, be very careful and polite!

KARAGÖZ: Oh, Hacı Cavcav, then help me out!

HACIVAT: That's why I had you sit down. Let me teach you some etiquette rules.

(Hacivat then tries to teach Karagöz proper manners, only for Karagöz to misinterpret everything, creating a comedy of errors.)

[Source: <https://www.masaloku.net/gorgu-kurali/>, accessed 02.12.2024]

In Divan literature, humour often manifests itself in the form of satire. Divan poets used satire as a means to criticise the political and social order of their time, targeting statesmen, rulers, and various segments of society with a mocking tone. The most notable satirist of the period, Nefi, arrived in Istanbul from Erzurum during the reign of Sultan Ahmed I. His father was a prominent figure in Erzurum and an associate of the Crimean khan. Canıberk Giray, the Crimean khan of the time, sent a letter to Grand Vizier Kuyucu Murat Pasha, requesting assistance to ensure the poet would find a supportive environment and avoid hardship in Istanbul.

Nefi's fame grew over time, earning him widespread recognition and respect. He lived during the reigns of Ahmed I, Mustafa I, Osman II, and Murad IV but only composed poetry in praise of Ahmed I and Murad IV. Sultan Murad IV, a poet himself, became his patron and tolerated his satirical works. In his work

Siham-ı Kaza (Arrows of Fate), Nef'i unhesitatingly criticised prominent statesmen, the Sheikh-ul-Islam, viziers, and even Sultan Murad IV. He expressed his dismissal from office three times due to his sharp tongue with the following verse:

*"For the third time, the cursed one receives God's
wrath,
For dismissing me, a praiser of His glory, from office."*

These words, which angered many, were always met with tolerance by Sultan Murad IV. However, one day, as the sultan read *Siham-ı Kaza*, a lightning strike narrowly missed him. Considering this an ill omen, he wrote in the poetry collection:

*"A counterpart descended from the heavens to Siham-ı
Kaza,
Through Nef'i's tongue, he faced God's wrath."*

Sultan Murad IV summoned Nef'i and ordered him to cease writing satire. Despite promising to do so, Nef'i could not resist and wrote a poem satirising Bayram Pasha. He confessed this to the sultan, and according to some literary researchers, he was executed for a caustic ode allegedly targeting the sultan, found in an old manuscript. Alternatively, his enemies may have attributed the poem to him and sent it to the sultan, resulting in his execution.

One of the notable figures of the period, Tahir Efendi, called Nef'i a *kelb* (dog). In response, Nef'i composed this witty retort:

*"Tahir Efendi has called me a dog,
This compliment is clear in his words.
Since I follow the Maliki school of thought,
I believe that dogs are pure."*

Famous Divan poets like Nef'i harshly criticised the statesmen, bureaucrats, and societal injustices of their time in their satires. Nef'i's works are sharp and cutting, mocking corruption, injustice, and the political structure of Ottoman society. Satire became particularly popular in court circles and among the elite, serving as a vehicle for criticism and political opposition. Through humour,

poets aimed to raise awareness by indirectly criticising events and figures they could not openly confront.

Another significant aspect of humour in Ottoman literature is the genre of *taşlama* (lampoon). Defined in the *Türkçe Sözlük* as "a poem written in a folk style, resembling a *koşma* in form, to satirise a person, event, situation, place, etc., with a biting, ironic, or mocking tone" (Püsküllüoğlu, p. 946), *taşlama* was a type of critique and satire used in folk literature. Folk poets approached social events, individual injustices, and political contradictions with a humorous tone through *taşlama*. These poems were typically straightforward, direct, and simple, reflecting the voice of the people. Folk poets used *taşlama* to address state practices, injustices, and societal issues, expressing their critiques with a sharp and mocking style.

In response to the political, economic, and military difficulties faced by the Ottoman Empire, poets directed harsh criticism at the corruption and decay evident in social life. The decline in trust in the justice system was due to the widespread practice of bribery. Seyrani's couplets vividly illustrate this:

Oh Alas, the Poor Man's Back is Bent

*Oh alas, the poor man's back is bent,
Help, we are left to the strength of commerce.
The good have departed, withdrawn from the world,
We are left to the bastards of this era.*

*The judge benefits through bribes,
And takes bribes with the pretext of justice.
The people know neither religion, nor law, nor tradition,
The coin is corrupted; we are left with its bronze.*

*The year twelve sixty-five now complete,
The calls to prayer are recited, the imam waits idle.
Seyrani, the end of this sermon, that is all,
Believe me, we are left to the edge of the world.*

Humour in the Tanzimat and Republican Period Literature

The Tanzimat period marks the beginning of Westernisation and modernisation in the Ottoman Empire, bringing profound political, social, and cultural changes. This transformative process also affected literature, making humour a powerful tool for social critique. Tanzimat writers aimed to educate and raise awareness among the public, encouraging adaptation to the modernisation process through literary forms influenced by the West. During this period, humour was employed by both proponents of Westernisation and conservative groups as a medium of criticism. It became a significant means to address the struggles of modernisation, societal contradictions, and political issues.

Writers such as Namık Kemal, Ziya Paşa, and Şinasi used humour as a vehicle for social criticism. For instance, Şinasi's writings in *Tercüman-ı Ahval* and his play *Şair Evlenmesi* (*The Poet's Marriage*) are notable examples of humour in Tanzimat literature. *Şair Evlenmesi* critiques the traditional marriage system and the practice of arranged marriages, using humour as a tool for social commentary. In this work, Şinasi ridicules the resistance to modernisation in society and delivers critical messages aimed at fostering adaptation to social transformation.

Ziya Paşa, another prominent satirical writer of the Tanzimat era, is renowned for his satirical poems, including *Terkib-i Bend* and *Zafernâme*. In these works, he harshly criticised the Ottoman administration and societal corruption. His satire targeted traditional mindsets resistant to modernisation and reform, as well as the decayed bureaucratic structure of the state. Through humour, Ziya Paşa highlighted social injustices, corruption, and flaws in the education system. Examples from *Terkib-i Bend* include:

*"One's mirror is their deeds, not their words;
The level of one's intellect is reflected in their works."*

*"Those who steal millions strut with pride in high positions,
While petty thieves are sentenced to hard labour for a few coins."*

*"Can a uniform bestow nobility upon the base-born?
An embroidered saddle may adorn an ass, but it remains an ass."*

*"Insulting and rejecting the loyal has become a rule,
Honouring and favouring thieves is a novel practice."*

Namık Kemal also utilised humour, particularly irony and mockery, in his writings and plays. His theatrical works critiqued the backward structures of society, especially ignorance and outdated traditions. As a representative of the Tanzimat intellectuals advocating for Westernisation, Namık Kemal used humour to question traditional systems and promote modernisation.

Ahmet Mithat Efendi, another key figure of the Tanzimat era, frequently employed humour in his novels. His works depicted societal flaws and the peculiar behaviours of individuals with a blend of comedy and irony. While educating the public, he also addressed the conflict between traditional and modern values with a humorous approach. In *Felâtn Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, he critiques shallow Westernisation and mimicry through the character of Felâtn Bey, emphasising the superficiality of those who adopt Western culture without grasping its essence.

In this excerpt from *Felâtn Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, Ahmet Mithat Efendi uses a humorous and ironic tone:

"The elderly lady cannot eat roasted chestnuts or hazelnuts. Her chestnuts must be boiled. However, she loves boza but complains about the bowls and glasses of today, as none fit her mouth. Whenever she drinks boza, her nose inevitably dips into it. But let's keep this between us. She might not like to hear that her mouth and chin have transformed due to her worn-down gums

and lack of teeth, making it difficult for boza to find its way into her throat without detouring through her nose."

Here, Ahmet Mithat Efendi draws on the traditional narrative styles of meddah (storyteller) and ortaoyunu (traditional theatre) to create a humorous narrative, blending self-referential commentary with an ironic tone throughout the text.

Tevfik Fikret, a prominent poet of the late Ottoman and early Republican periods, used satire to critique political oppression and corruption. Beginning with his poem *Sis* (Fog) in 1902, he continued his satirical works with well-known pieces such as *Doksan Beşe Doğru* (Towards Ninety-Five), *Han-ı Yağma* (The Feast of Plunder), *Rübabın Cevabı* (The Response of the Lyre), and *Sancağ-ı Şerif Huzurunda* (In the Presence of the Sacred Banner). As the leader of the Servet-i Fünûn literary movement, Tevfik Fikret's satire often targeted the mismanagement and corruption of the Committee of Union and Progress, reflecting his commitment to social justice and political reform.

Humour in both the Tanzimat and Republican periods served as an essential tool for critiquing societal issues, raising awareness, and fostering change, making it a vital aspect of Turkish literary history.

The Feast of Looting (HAN-I YAĞMA)

*This modest table, gentlemen, lying in wait for plunder,
Shivers before you—it is the very life of this nation;
This nation that suffers, this nation that gasps for breath.
But do not hesitate, eat, devour, gulp down greedily.
Eat, gentlemen, eat; this banquet of desire is yours;
Eat to your fill, till you choke, till you burst!*

*Gentlemen! You are ravenous; it is evident on your faces;
Eat, for who knows if it will remain tomorrow?
This grove of blessings, see, boasts your arrival,
It is your spoils of war, a rightful claim—undeniable!*

*Eat, gentlemen, eat; this joyous banquet is yours;
Eat to your fill, till you choke, till you burst!*

*All the treasures of these dainty gentlemen—count them all:
Ancestry, pedigree, honour, splendour, festivities, mansions,
palaces—
All are yours, gentlemen, mansions, palaces, brides, processions,
All yours, all ready, all easy.*

*Eat, gentlemen, eat; this banquet of desire is yours;
Eat to your fill, till you choke, till you burst!*

*Greatness may be hard to digest, but no matter,
It brings the pride of grandeur, the joy of vengeance.
This table awaits your grace with gleam and shine,
It offers you this head, this brain, these bloody morsels.
Eat, gentlemen, eat; this blood-stained feast is yours;
Eat to your fill, till you choke, till you burst!*

*The poor country offers all it has—its wealth,
Its body, its life, its hope, its dreams,
All its tranquility, all its passion,
Swallow it all; worry not whether it's forbidden or lawful.
Eat, gentlemen, eat; this banquet of desire is yours;
Eat to your fill, till you choke, till you burst!*

*The end of this harvest approaches, scramble while you can;
Tomorrow, the crackling fire may extinguish,
Today's stomachs are strong; today's soups are warm.
Gobble, stuff, grab, snatch plate after plate...
Eat, gentlemen, eat; this resounding feast is yours;
Eat to your fill, till you choke, till you burst!*

<https://www.haberturk.com/yiyin-efendiler-yiyin-siiri-kimin-han-i-yagma-siiri-2910016?page=2> 02.12.2024

Another master of satire from this period is Neyzen Tevfik. With his ney (reed flute) and satire, he left a profound mark on Turkish music and literature. He never refrained from speaking the truths he believed in, satirising politicians, the system, religion—

everything of his time. While captivating hearts with the melodies of his ney, he did not hesitate to wound them with his pen. The targets of his satire transcended boundaries; he even dared to satirise Hitler.

*The satire he wrote for Hitler:
"They said Mr Hitler was wounded.
An ominous star rises fast and fades fast.
Call him a rabid dog and move on—
Someone will find and finish him off eventually."*

<https://www.indyturk.com/node/307426/k%C3%BClt%C3%BCr/sultan-abd%C3%BClhamidin-idama-mahk%C3%BBm-etti%C4%9Fi-%C5%9Fair-neyzen-tevfik> 06.12.2024

The physician Mazhar Osman, who founded the first modern mental and neurological hospital in Turkey, forbade Neyzen Tevfik from drinking alcohol, warning him that it would lead to health problems. In response, Neyzen promised his doctor and even swore an oath to abstain. After some time had passed, Mazhar Osman encountered Neyzen and saw that he was drinking. Reminding him of his promise, he said:

"Didn't you swear to stop drinking alcohol?"

Neyzen replied:

"Master, we are poor men... When we find alcohol, we drink it; when we don't, we swear oaths!"

<https://onedio.com/haber/hiciv-ustadi-neyzen-tevfik-in-anilari-475784> 06.12.2024

Humour in Republican Era Literature

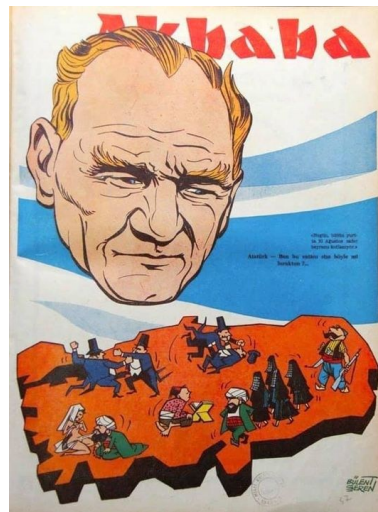
The Republican Era in Turkey marked a period of accelerated modernisation, characterised by significant transformations such as secularisation, educational reforms, and Westernisation. During this time, humour became a vital literary tool for critiquing societal and

political events and voicing the contradictions inherent in the modernisation process. Following the proclamation of the Republic, literature aimed to adapt society to the principles of the modern republic, with humour emerging as both a supportive medium for this endeavour and a means of highlighting the era's various challenges.

In the Republican Era, humour reached broad segments of society through magazines and newspapers. Notable satirical magazines such as *Akbaba*, *Gırgır*, and *Markopaşa* employed a humorous lens to address the political and social events of the time, critically examining the growing pains of modernisation experienced during the early years of the Republic. *Gırgır*, in particular, stood out in the 1970s and 1980s as a significant publication that tackled Turkey's political events and social crises with a satirical approach, reaching a wide audience. The magazine developed a sharp tone in criticising government policies, military coups, and various societal issues.

Akbaba

Akbaba, published between 1922 and 1977, holds the distinction of being the longest-running weekly political humour magazine in Turkish literature. It was founded in 1922 by Yusuf Ziya Ortaç and Orhan Seyfi Orhon, two prominent members of the *Beş Hececiler* literary movement. Despite interruptions, the magazine managed to publish approximately two thousand issues until 1977. Initially established to fill the void left by the closure of the *Aydede* magazine after the Turkish War of Independence, *Akbaba* eventually developed its unique identity, becoming the magazine of the underprivileged and gaining a substantial readership. Beyond its role as a political humour magazine, *Akbaba* also functioned as a literary magazine, featuring works by significant literary figures of the period.



30 March 1966

The cover of the Akbaba political satire magazine, dated 30 August 1962, featured a powerful depiction of Atatürk asking, "Is this how I entrusted this homeland to you?"

<https://www.eylulmezat.com/urun/7660359/inonu-turkes-ve-demirel-kapakli-akbaba-dergisi-30-mart-1966-tarihli-akbaba-miza>
02.12.2024

Gırgır Magazine

First published in 1972, *Gırgır* became Turkey's most-sold cult humour magazine. It initially started as a small quarter-page column in the internal pages of the *Gün* newspaper, prepared by Oğuz Aral. As reader interest and demand grew, it expanded to a half-page, then a full page, and eventually, a double-sided insert included with the newspaper. On 13 August 1972, *Gün* newspaper turned it into a free supplementary magazine, and following this rapid growth, in 1973, at Semavi's request, *Gırgır* became an independent publication.

Under the comedic direction of Oğuz Aral, *Gırgır* broke away from older generations of cartoonists and nurtured its own new generation of artists. Its initial slogan was:

"It instantly cures financial troubles, boredom, heartbreak, and marital quarrels. A remedy for every ailment, it's non-stop Gırgır!"

The magazine abandoned the elitist stance of earlier humour magazines, adopting a style that embraced so-called "lowbrow humour" at the time, featuring slang, sexuality, and neighbourhood life without hesitation. This approach paid off, as *Gırgır* sold 45,000 copies by the end of its first year. By 1978, sales reached 280,000, and during the 1981-1983 period, it achieved an unprecedented circulation of 500,000 copies, making it the best-selling humour magazine in Turkey's history. *Gırgır* became a trendsetter, shaping the style of all subsequent humour magazines.



Humour and politics have always crossed paths, and in this realm, one of the most tolerant political figures was former Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit.

<https://gazeteoksijen.com/yazarlar/zeynep-mirac/her-derde-devaydi-girgir-41958> 02.12.2024

Markopaşa

Markopaşa was a weekly political satire newspaper published in Turkey between 1946 and 1950. As one of the highest-circulating publications in Turkish press history, it was released every Friday. The newspaper's editorial team included prominent writers such as Sabahattin Ali, Aziz Nesin, and Rıfat Ilgaz, who contributed critical essays, while Mustafa Mim Uykusuz drew cartoons. Its chief editor was Sabahattin Ali. The newspaper's name was inspired by the column titled "*Markopaşa'ya Şikâyet*" written by Aziz Nesin for the *Gerçek* newspaper.

Written with a socially conscious and realistic approach to humour, *Markopaşa* often employed memorable slogans. Known for its sharp opposition to the political establishment, the newspaper and

its writers faced numerous lawsuits, and several issues were confiscated. At one point, the use of the word "*Paşa*" (a military title) in its name led to accusations of mocking the then "National Chief," İsmet Paşa, and it was shut down for this reason.

In response to these events, *Markopaşa* was humorously rebranded and published under names like *Merhumpaşa*, *Malumpaşa*, *Yedi-Sekiz Hasan Paşa*, *Hür Marko Paşa*, *Bizim Paşa*, and *Ali Baba ve Kırk Haramiler*. The tagline "*Published when it isn't confiscated*" or "*Published when its writers aren't in prison*" often accompanied its masthead.

Despite these obstacles, the publication reached an impressive circulation of 60,000–70,000 copies, far exceeding the sales of most newspapers of the time, which rarely surpassed 50,000. The story of *Markopaşa's* tumultuous journey, which produced a total of 77 issues, inspired the play *Meçhul Paşa* by Ahmet Sami Özbudak.



([https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Markopa%C5%9Fa_\(dergi\)](https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Markopa%C5%9Fa_(dergi)) 02.12.2024)

One of the prominent writers of this period, Aziz Nesin, is one of the most powerful representatives of humour in Republican-era

Turkish literature. In his works, Nesin portrays the flaws in Turkey's modernisation process, social inequalities, and political issues with a sarcastic and satirical tone. He frequently addresses the public's struggles in areas such as education, bureaucracy, religion, and politics with a humorous style.

Novels such as *Zübük* and *Yaşar Ne Yaşar Ne Yaşamaz* are significant works that satirise societal distortions and the hypocrisy of political figures. Aziz Nesin's humour is notable for its simple language, which can be easily understood by the public, while simultaneously containing profound social critiques. Through humour, he held a mirror to society's shortcomings and encouraged a search for solutions.

Zübük, adapted from Aziz Nesin's novel of the same name, was brought to the cinema in a 1980 film directed by Kartal Tibet and scripted by Atıf Yılmaz. The film satirises corrupt characters within Turkey's political system.



https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Z%C3%BCb%C3%BCk_%28film%29
02.12.2024

Another significant name in humour during the Republican Era is Rifat Ilgaz, best known for his work *Hababam Sinifi* (*The Chaos Class*). This piece humorously critiques the flaws in the education system and social inequalities, providing commentary on the education policies of the Republican Era. *Hababam Sinifi* gained immense popularity both as a novel and as a film, becoming a classic satirical critique of Turkey's education system.

In Ilgaz's humour, social inequalities and injustices are strongly addressed, but his style is one that entertains while also provoking thought in readers. The adaptations of *Hababam Sinifi* have been brought to audiences multiple times with slightly varied casts over different periods. These works vividly and humorously expose the inequalities and shortcomings of the society and education system of the time in which they were written.



<https://muraterdor.com/hababam-sinifi-unutulmaz-filmler/> 02.12.2024

During the Republican Era, humour also became a significant tool for political criticism. Particularly during periods of military coups, humour developed a language that critiqued government policies, oppressive regimes, and social injustices. Political humour, conveyed through magazines, theatre, and films, served as a means

of resistance against the suppression of freedom of thought and expression.

Humour in Modern Turkish Literature

In modern Turkish literature, humour has become an essential literary tradition, serving as a powerful tool to explore the socio-cultural structure of society, political events, and human relationships. With the onset of the modernisation process following the proclamation of the Republic, humour evolved into a potent means of social and political critique in Turkish literature. Modern Turkish humour not only addresses individual and societal contradictions through comedy but also delves into social injustices, cultural conflicts, and political issues with irony and a critical perspective.

One of the most prominent features of humour in the literature of this era is its sensitivity to the political, social, and cultural events of the time. Especially from the 1940s onward, humour writing began to reflect societal and political turmoil, addressing the struggles of daily life, bureaucracy, politics, and class differences in a humorous tone.

Aziz Nesin

One of the key figures of this period is Aziz Nesin, who tackled societal problems, injustices, and political contradictions with a sharp and satirical wit. Nesin's humour was predominantly centred on systemic critique. His works often featured themes such as bureaucratic dysfunction, corrupt politicians, societal inequities, and the absurdities of everyday life, all presented through a humorous lens.

Novels like *Zübük*, *Yaşar Ne Yaşar Ne Yaşamaz*, and *Gol Kralı Sait Hopsait* exemplify his sharp criticism of the bureaucracy, self-serving politicians, and social injustices. Nesin stands out as one of the most influential representatives of humour in modern Turkish literature, using comedy not only to entertain but also to provoke deep reflection among his readers.

In his writing, Nesin also parodies the discourse and style of traditional Ottoman “surnames” (*surnâme*)—texts that traditionally recount weddings or circumcision festivities—turning them into a unique intertextual literary work. For example, in one of his works, he narrates a shocking “execution festivity,” blending the Western novel style with traditional *surnâme* storytelling. This innovative approach explores the theme of “execution” in an unprecedented way in Turkish literature, with a focus on its tragicomic aspects.

The story delves deeply into the concepts of “crime” and “criminals.” Nesin masterfully transforms the last public execution in Sultanahmet Square into a powerful and shocking narrative. Through the eyes of the protagonist, Barber Hayri, the reader experiences the inner workings of a criminal’s mind, from his path to crime to his time in prison, all portrayed through dark humour that blends tragedy and comedy.

Nesin also provides a vivid depiction of prison life, illustrating illegal activities such as the sale and use of narcotics, gambling, carrying weapons, and extortion, all orchestrated by prison gang leaders. These insights stem from Nesin’s own experiences as a political prisoner, which allowed him to observe and reflect these realities in his writing with exceptional detail.

One of the most striking scenes in the novel is the public execution, portrayed as a carnival-like spectacle in Sultanahmet Square. People gather as if to watch a theatrical performance, indulging in food, drink, music, and dance, transforming the square into a festive fairground. The irony is profound: what they are celebrating is the execution of a human being.

In the novel’s conclusion, Nesin delivers a direct message to the reader:

"Since the advent of law, its primary purpose has been to rehabilitate and reform the convicted individual. To execute a criminal, however, is to deny them the natural right to change. Even worse, it is to disregard the eternal law of change, the unchanging constitution

of nature and society. This is to deny not only the earth we live on but also ourselves." (Nesin, p. 164)

Nesin bids farewell to his readers in the style of a traditional storyteller:

"May I write many more and better ones, and may you have the time to read not only these but also the countless works of other authors. Let us live by changing ourselves and our surroundings. Farewell! May my shortcomings be forgiven, and my excesses be overlooked." (Nesin, p. 165)

Rıfat Ilgaz

Another significant figure in modern Turkish humour is Rıfat Ilgaz, renowned for his work *Hababam Sınıfı* (*The Chaos Class*). This novel humorously critiques the education system, teacher-student relationships, and the flaws in societal structures.

Both the novel and its film adaptations have reached a wide audience in Turkey, becoming classics that reflect societal critiques of the education system through humour. Ilgaz uses humour not only as a tool for social criticism but also to highlight the small details of daily life and the comedic and tragic aspects of human relationships.



<https://www.sabah.com.tr/yasam/sener-sen-hakkinda-az-bilinen-gercek-ilk-kez-duyacaginiz-hababam-sinifi-detayi-5650413> 02.12.2024

Hababam Sınıfı gained immense popularity among the Turkish public with its film series produced in the 1970s. Inspired by Rifat Ilgaz's original series, the final film of the spin-off series titled "**Hababam Sınıfı Üçbuçuk**" was released in 2005. Unlike its predecessors, this film was created solely with commercial concerns, featuring actors engaged in random humour, resembling more of a dynamic stand-up show. However, it failed to impress critics and deviated significantly from the traditional **Hababam Sınıfı** culture.

Another significant humour writer of the period was **Muzaffer İzgü**. In his works, İzgü used humour to depict the lives of ordinary people, poverty, deficiencies in the education system, and inefficiencies in bureaucracy. In works such as **Zıkkımın Kökü** and **Donumdaki Para**, he narrates the struggles of common individuals to survive, the tragicomic events they encounter with bureaucracy, and the various challenges posed by social structures, all through the power of humour. İzgü's humour critiques society while offering a close perspective on the public's issues, which made him a beloved author among a wide readership. He authored numerous short story collections. In his collection **Bando Takımı**, the opening story, titled "**Delisiz Bir Kasaba Aranıyor**" ("Looking for a Town Without a

Madman"), is set in a small town. The protagonist encounters a former acquaintance, a madman who turns out to be his former colleague Hilmi. After resigning from his job, the protagonist learns that Hilmi also resigned because his salary was insufficient. Hilmi then searches for and finds a town without a madman, where he earns much more than he did as a civil servant. The townsfolk help and like him. When the protagonist asks Hilmi when he plans to end this peculiar job, Hilmi replies that he has no intention of doing so. The story critiques religious beliefs, socio-economic conditions, and the inadequacy of civil servant salaries. The narrative's humour lies in Hilmi's tragicomic solution to his financial woes, leaving the reader both amused and reflective.

Humour in literature found a significant place not only in novels and short stories but also in theatre and poetry. **Haldun Taner** was one of the prominent representatives of humour in Turkish theatre. In plays like **Keşanlı Ali Destanı** and **Gözlerimi Kapatım Vazifemi Yaparım**, he used humour to explore societal structures and the flaws in the urbanisation and modernisation processes. In his theatrical works, Taner critiques the individual's place in society, societal contradictions, and political issues through humour.

From a socio-cultural perspective, **Keşanlı Ali Destanı** addresses significant issues of Turkey during the time. "By examining phenomena such as class differences, the creation of heroes, and the distorted order through a historicist lens, the play not only portrays the social landscape of the 1960s but also recounts the story of a historical process from past to present" (Firidinoğlu, p. 49). During a period when migration from villages to cities was encouraged, the play critiques the conflicts in values and lifestyles arising from societal change. However, with migration, infrastructure and superstructure failed to develop at the same pace, and the problems of migrants were carried into cities. The rising urban population led to the growth of shantytowns. "For many people who changed their location, their new lives were no better than their previous ones. While in the village, they were oppressed

by landowners, and in the city, they faced urban bandits, shantytown lords, and factory owners. Villagers accustomed to working in fields struggled to find jobs and adapt to urban life" (Karabulut, p. 93). The words of one of the play's characters, İzmarit Nuri, summarise the situation:

*"With ten talents in ten fingers,
I can craft a work,
Wrap it in a newspaper,
Craft another, polish shoes.
When jobless,
I do any work,
Repair taps,
Track sewers,
Wash cars,
Walk dogs,
Look after children..."* (Taner, p. 31).

In *Tutunamayanlar* ("The Disconnected"), Oğuz Atay uses irony and dark humour to narrate the existential crises of individuals, societal alienation, and the problems caused by modernisation in Turkish society. Atay's humour is deeply critical, addressing the dissonance individuals experience with themselves, society, and the modern world through a humorous lens. He combines social critique with personal existential struggles, elevating humour to a profound narrative tool in modern Turkish literature.

In *Tutunamayanlar*, Atay blends satire and humour within a defined framework. In parts where Selim's struggles with self-realisation and alienation are central, the humour stems from "flaws" that are forgivable and fixable, indicating that Atay views Selim and his embodiment of disconnection with a humorous perspective. However, when discussing the social and political phenomena that push characters like Selim, Turgut, Süleyman Kargı, and others mentioned in the "Encyclopaedia of the Disconnected" towards alienation, satire takes precedence (Apaydın, p. 49).

Humour in modern Turkish literature is notable for its critiques of political events and societal structures. Military coups, political crises, and social events feature prominently in humorous works. Humour magazines such as *Girgir*, *Leman*, and *Penguen*, published during this period, became powerful platforms for political satire. These magazines used sharp humour to critique government policies, military regimes, and societal issues, offering a satirical perspective on contemporary events. Political figures, bureaucracy, corruption, and the struggles of various segments of society were among the frequently addressed topics in these publications.



Cumhurbaşkanlığı kabinesi Türkiye'deki şiddet sarmalı gündemiyle toplandı.



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#KatliamYasasınıReddediyoruz



Erdoğan, "Devletle millet arasında duvarlar ören, devletle milleti farklı konumlara yerleştiren elitist zihniyetin ülkemize çok zararları oldu" dedi.



Ö sırada; aylardır çalışma koşullarını protesto eden Fernas Maden işçileri, Ankara'da kendileriyle görüşecek muhatap bulamayınca talepleri karşılanana kadar açık grevi başlattıklarını duyurdu.

https://leman.com.tr/?srsltid=AfmBOoQp6_HlMW7gIqznpaAF1dWlGcj5z2H9iH4W3akGFj2mzbxdx8ic
04.12.2024



<https://karikatur2016.wordpress.com/2016/07/05/penguen-dergisi-7-temmuz-2016-kapagi-mizah-komik-karikatur-httpst-cougx6pflbri/> 4.12.2024

Humour in 21st Century Turkey

Humour has continued to serve as a powerful tool for social critique in Turkey during the early 21st century, much as it did in earlier periods. Previously seen in forms like satire and lampooning, this trend now thrives through mediums such as cartoons, stand-up shows, and digital content. By addressing societal issues in a humorous yet thought-provoking manner, humour remains an influential voice, especially on political and social topics. Following in the footsteps of figures like Aziz Nesin and Muzaffer İzgü, new-generation humourists today convey social messages through political satire and dark humour.

In the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, as television became increasingly central to daily life, humour-centric programmes gained prominence and widespread popularity among the public (Deniz, 2011). Levent Kırca's "**Olacak O Kadar**" became a classic, serving

as the voice of the people and articulating the unspeakable. Additionally, short sketches at the end of news programmes, featuring plastip masks of political party leaders, captured viewers' attention and provided incisive commentary on the day's events.



<https://www.google.com/search?q=04.12.2024>

In the 21st century, as in previous periods, humour has remained a powerful tool for social critique in Turkey. The tendency seen in the past through forms such as satire and lampooning now continues through cartoons, stand-up performances, and digital content. By presenting societal issues in a humorous yet thought-provoking manner, humour serves as an influential voice, particularly on political and social matters. Leaders such as Aziz Nesin and Muzaffer İzgü paved the way for a new generation of humourists who continue to deliver social messages through political satire and dark humour.

In the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, as television became more integral to everyday life, humour-focused programmes gained

prominence and became widely loved by the public. **Levent Kirca's "Olacak O Kadar"** became a classic, acting as the people's voice and expressing the unspoken. Short sketches at the end of news programmes, featuring plastip masks of political leaders, also captured the audience's attention. Political leaders of the time accepted their criticism in these programmes with good humour, even when it became quite bold. They refrained from banning or halting broadcasts and sometimes even supported the critique, offering suggestions like, *"This could have been done better."* This demonstrates their advanced level of tolerance and understanding of humour.

Humour continues to play a significant role in Turkey in the 21st century, particularly in terms of social critique, cultural transformation, and individual expression. Evolving from traditional humour into modern forms shaped by digitalisation and new media platforms, it now attracts attention through both written and visual productions. Visual humour, especially through cartoon magazines, has maintained its influence for many years. Publications such as **Leman**, **Uykusuz**, and **Penguen** stand as prominent platforms for critical humour in Turkey. Written humour continues in literary works and opinion columns, shedding light on societal changes.

Digital platforms have revolutionised the production and consumption of humour in Turkey. Platforms like YouTube and Instagram allow short, creative videos, sketches, and animations to reach wide audiences. Comedians and content creators produce humorous takes on current events, resonating with large groups of people. Additionally, modern humour formats such as meme culture have gained popularity, particularly among younger generations.

The Artistic Value of Humorous Literature

The artistic value of humorous literature extends beyond making people laugh; it should be seen as a branch of art that deeply explores societal, individual, and cultural issues. Humour, as a significant component of literature, facilitates reflection, masterful critique, and the presentation of complex social situations in a simple

and comprehensible manner. Its artistic value lies in the skilful use of language, the critique of societal issues through irony and satire, and the portrayal of human complexity with a humorous perspective. Works that entertain while provoking thought hold great importance both for their literary sophistication and for fostering social awareness.

One of the key artistic aspects of humorous literature is the mastery of language. Humour writers use witty and intelligent expressions to engage both the emotional and intellectual realms of their readers. Wordplay, ironic narratives, and unexpected outcomes are among the compelling elements of humorous literature, showcasing the writer's linguistic talent and narrative finesse. Moreover, the language of humorous literature is often fluent, witty, and sometimes sarcastic. This style not only makes the text enjoyable but also ensures that the critique reaches the reader in a striking way. In this sense, humorous literature becomes a narrative form where language is artistically employed, highlighting the power of words.

The artistic value of humour is also evident in its ability to express human complexity and societal contradictions simply and effectively. A skilled humourist unveils the contradictions within human behaviours, social structures, and political systems with a refined approach. These contradictions are presented to the reader in a manner that is both amusing and thought-provoking. For example, **Oğuz Atay's "Tutunamayanlar"** ("The Disconnected") delves into the pressures of modern society on the individual and the dissonance between the individual and society through ironic and humorous narratives. In this work, humour becomes a profound form of expression for articulating existential struggles. Atay elevates the value of literature by using humour to explore themes of modern loneliness, alienation, and the individual's place in society.

Humorous literature also holds artistic value in its engagement with universal themes. Humour addresses universal aspects of human nature, as it critiques human weaknesses, mistakes, and imperfections(Deniz, 2018). Although societal structures, political

systems, and interpersonal relationships may change, the core themes of humorous works often remain universal. This universality allows humorous literature to remain meaningful across cultures and time periods. For example, **Nasrettin Hoca's anecdotes** have continued to amuse and provoke thought for centuries. The humour in these anecdotes is relevant not only to Ottoman society but also to modern audiences. They are beloved and recognised throughout the Turkish cultural sphere, reinforcing the enduring artistic value of humorous literature.

Finally, the artistic value of humorous literature lies in its ability to provide readers with new perspectives on human relationships. Humorous works encourage readers to view events, people, and society from a different angle. By emphasising the absurdities of situations, humour narrates the complexities of life in a simple yet impactful way. This allows readers to gain a deeper understanding of events and recognise the contradictions in human relationships. In this sense, humorous literature offers not only an entertaining reading experience but also valuable insights into human nature.

Conclusion

Humour serves as an effective tool for addressing human emotional and intellectual needs while also acting as a powerful vehicle for social critique. In literature, humour offers a rich avenue of expression both as a style and a genre. Each form of humour addresses different aspects of life, providing readers and audiences with fresh perspectives.

We have attempted to examine the evolution of humour in literature from its origins to the present. Starting with the oral traditions of pre-Islamic Turkish literature, we have traced its development through various periods. In this time, humour has been used in a wide range of contexts, from shamanic rituals and heroic epics to proverbs and everyday narratives. This tradition continued to influence Turkish literature after the advent of Islam, becoming a core element of folk culture and reflecting the social, cultural, and

religious fabric of each era. The impact of this oral tradition carried on into the post-Islamic period, enriched further through written literature.

In the modern era, humour has evolved into a unique form by blending the legacy of the past with contemporary approaches. Today's humour emphasises social critique and individual freedom while enabling literature to reach readers in innovative ways. In this role, humour continues to act as a bridge that strengthens the connection between literature and society. While exposing the contradictions of individuals and societies, it also provides a space for relief and reflection.

With the tools offered by technology, humour has reached wider audiences, offering a critical perspective while continuing to provoke thought and inspire action. In this context, humour remains a dynamic and socially attuned element of literature. As societal conditions continue to evolve, the place of humour in contemporary literature is likely to adapt and remain an essential force in the literary landscape.

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CHAPTER V

Humour in Politics

Yüksel ERSAN⁶

Political Cartoons and Satire

Political cartoons and satire are historically the most effective means of humorous criticism of political figures and events. This understanding, which began in ancient Greece, has continued to the present day (Coupe, 1969). Cartoonists and satirists reveal the weaknesses of politicians, governments, and social structures. They show that they are not perfect and use the sharp language of humor to reveal their mistakes and contradictions. In times of oppressive regimes and authoritarian leaders, political cartoons and satire have emerged as secret weapons of critical thinking. In fact, even court jesters are a part of this structure. (Gezer & Deniz, 2021). In just a few lines or sentences, complex political events and policies are addressed in an ironic tone. It ensures the formation of effective public opinion in society (Willett, 2008). Political cartoons often exaggerate the physical or personal characteristics of political

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figures. Big noses, buck teeth, and protruding ears are often used when depicting politicians. They criticize social problems through these features. Cartoonists make leaders' flawed policies or stupid contradictions visible to the public with symbolic drawings (Dewey, 2007). An unapproachable politician suddenly becomes the subject of public ridicule. These cartoons, published in newspapers and magazines throughout history, have become a phenomenon. They have become powerful forms of expression that capture the spirit of the times and voice the reactions of the public. Another important feature of political cartoons is that they simplify complex political situations. They can convey them to a wide audience in a simple way that the public can understand. It is a simplicity just like the Pulitzer's Yellow Kids. For this reason, political cartoons are consumed not only by intellectuals but also by wider segments of society. They emphasize a leader's political gaffes, scandals or social injustice events with exaggerated drawings. They use an ironic tone and contribute to public awareness. In this way, political cartoons are a part of collective memory. They are considered permanent works of cultural importance.

Satire, whether in literary or verbal form, expresses social or political criticism in a sharp tone. Satire is a type of humor (Zekavat, 2017). Satirists use exaggerated, ironic, and sometimes harsh language to criticize social events and political figures. The aim is not only to entertain, but also to provoke thought. It is to promote critical awareness. Throughout history, satire has been considered a powerful means of opposition to political authorities. From ancient Greece to modern times, satire has been one of the sharpest and most effective tools of political criticism. For example, Aristophanes' *The Clouds* is one of the most famous examples of ancient satire, criticizing Socrates and Athenian society (Rosen, 1997). More recently, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* stands as a masterpiece that criticizes the social and political structures of English society (Swift & Swift, 1995). Swift exposed the contradictions and flaws within society and its systems of government through satire. Political cartoons and satires often reveal the weaknesses of political figures. This looks very appealing to those elected. Highlighting their

personal flaws or political mistakes provides a great advantage to the voters. Cartoonists symbolically exaggerate the strengths and weaknesses of politicians through their drawings. For example, 19th century American cartoonist Thomas Nast targeted the notorious political figure William Tweed in his cartoons (Jarman, 2010). This was the first time this had happened in the press, and it appealed to the public and increased newspaper sales. Nast's work triggered political transformation by exposing Tweed's corruption to the public. Political cartoons are not limited to personal criticism. They also focus on systemic problems. Leaders' policies, economic collapses, wars or social crises are often criticized through cartoons and satires. For example, during the First and Second World Wars, many cartoonists called for peace by depicting the absurdity and destructiveness of war through their art. It was the first time that drawings showed that politicians and the rich always win in wars. These drawings conveyed their messages in a humorous yet critical tone, emphasizing the coercive nature of authoritarian regimes. Political cartoons and satire played an important role in Turkey, both in the late Ottoman period and in the Republican period. Magazines such as Kalem and Karagöz, published during the Second Constitutional Era, harshly criticized the political atmosphere of the period. They showed Turkish society how effective this art was. They also brought together various segments of society through humor (Seyhan, 2013). In the Ottoman Empire, these publications caricatured sultans and statesmen and subjected them to public scrutiny. During the Republican period, political cartoons and satire continued to provide strong commentary on social events. Especially during the political and social crises of the 1970s and 1980s, cartoonists reflected these issues in their works. Girgir, one of the most important satirical magazines of the period, became a center of political criticism and humor by taking a determined stance against government policies and social injustices (Tural, 2012). This magazine, which was popular with the public, contained political criticism in almost all of its pages. The cartoons published in Girgir mocked the oppressive policies and social contradictions of the military coup periods. Levent Kirca's television program Olacak O

Kadar exemplifies the impact of political satire in Turkish popular culture (Uçak, 2023). This was so effective that it even caused a debate between Levent Kırca and Işıl Saygın, one of the politicians of the period. The program reached a wide audience by harshly criticizing the political leaders and government policies of the period. Kırca brought political criticism to television screens through humor and increased public awareness of political issues. Humorous sketches entertained the audience while encouraging them to think and demonstrated the power of criticism through humor.

Political cartoons and satire play an important role in spreading social criticism and political awareness. These forms of humor do not only make people laugh. Humor is the colorful side of the business. The main purpose is to increase public awareness of political events. They aimed to encourage critical thinking in all segments of society. They challenged the perception of absolute authority by presenting political figures through a humorous lens. Political cartoons and satire are a transformation tool that inspires social change. For this reason, they continue to be powerful tools of criticism that open doors to political transformation and contribute to the protection of freedoms.

The Historical Development of Political Humour

Political humor has played an important role in the historical development of societies. It has assumed different functions in various periods since the beginning of history (Gervais & Wilson, 2005). In both democratic and authoritarian regimes, the critical power of humor has revealed social problems. It has mostly been used to criticize political figures. In democratic societies, humor is a tool for critical thinking and freedom of expression. It is an indirect resistance against oppression and censorship in authoritarian regimes. In fact, it is an indirect form of human freedom of thought in both regimes. In these different political contexts, humor brings public emotions to the forefront as a form of social criticism. It is an

effective way to express opinions. It exists to serve society. (Villavicencio Pérez, 2017).

Political Humor in Ancient Civilizations

Ancient times constitute the beginning of the historical development of political humor. Political leaders, state administrations and social events have been addressed through humor since ancient times. No matter who is in power, its aim is to reveal the truth. In ancient Greece, Aristophanes' plays were a critical look at political and social events. These plays are among the oldest humorous works that have come down to us (Reckford, 2017). Aristophanes' works *Lysistrata* and *The Clouds* satirize political figures and social structures. Although indirect, they reflected public criticism of current events. Thanks to large amphitheatres, theatre and humour became essential tools for political criticism and social influence (Vaio, 1973).

The Middle Ages and the Renaissance

In the Middle Ages, the Reformation and the Renaissance, humour was used as a means of criticising authoritarian regimes and religious institutions. Ignorant princes and kings who thought only of themselves were good material for humour (Halsall, 2002). The absolute power of the Roman Church in Europe saw the spread of works, caricatures and satires that challenged the authority of the pope. During the Renaissance, writers such as François Rabelais and William Shakespeare were important critics of this period. They used humour to criticise authority and social injustices by reflecting the complexities of their societies. Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* exemplify this trend and offer sharp and humorous criticisms of both church and state authorities (Rabelais & France, 2018).

Political Humor in the Age of Enlightenment

Political humor changed shape with the emergence of modern democracies in the 18th and 19th centuries. Political humor took on a more prominent role in defending democratic rights and freedom

of expression. However, the lack of respect for democracy by leaders such as Napoleon further strengthened political humor. (Balkin, 2017). During this period, cartoons and satire were used to criticize political leaders. As a result, they became very effective tools for raising public awareness. During and after the French Revolution, cartoons criticized the monarchy and the aristocracy. This made humor a powerful tool (Moore, 2011). Cartoonists mocked the monarchy and the nobility, instilling in the public the idea that “they rule us?” They stirred revolutionary sentiments among the public. Similarly, in 19th-century England, Punch magazine became famous for its satirical criticisms of political figures that had a wide resonance with the public (Milne, 2016). The Importance of Political Humor in the 20th Century

The 20th century saw the golden age of humor. Humor has gained significant importance in both democratic and authoritarian societies. Between and after the two World Wars, political humor became one of the most effective tools of social criticism. The absurdity of war and the mistakes of political leaders inspired cartoons. Humorous content highlighted leaders who led many people to their deaths. It allowed for public criticism of leaders' wartime decisions. In the United States, Thomas Nast used his art to expose corruption in the American political system. Nast became one of the most famous political cartoonists of our time. (Halloran, 2013). Nast's cartoons specifically targeted the corruption of New York. He played an important role in driving political reform (Szélpál, 2023).

Political Humor in Authoritarian Regimes

In autocracies and oppressive regimes, criticism is completely forbidden. When direct criticism is banned or censored, political humor comes into play. Humor becomes a hidden tool of resistance. In these periods, humor challenges authority. It serves as a hidden path for the opposition. Especially in the fascist regimes of the 20th century, political cartoons became the only salvation for the opposition. They revealed the personal flaws and policy contradictions of the leaders. They presented the truth to the public

in a humorous way. They almost single-handedly continued the opposition against these regimes.

Development of Political Humor in Turkey

The evolution of political humor in Turkey follows a similar trajectory. In the late Ottoman Empire, magazines such as *Kalem* and *Karagöz* became effective tools for political criticism during the Second Constitutional Era. These publications used humor to criticize the sultans, state officials, and the Ottoman administration, and conveyed social criticism to the public.

During the Republican era, especially in the 1960s and 1980s, political humor served as a means of resistance against censorship and political oppression. Many humor magazines offered sharp criticism of political leaders and government policies. Such publications increasingly became an important platform for opposition. Their cartoons satirized the oppressive policies of military regimes and explained their harm to the public. They became the voice of public opposition during these turbulent times.

Political Humor in Modern Turkey

In contemporary Turkey, political humor expanded significantly through television programs and social media platforms. In the 1990s, shows such as *Olacak Okadar*, *Bir Başka Gece*, *Huysuz Virjin Show*, *İner mı Çıkılmış mı?* and *Televizyon Çocukları* criticized political leaders through humor. They offered harsh criticism of social events. These programs allowed large audiences to interact with political humor, making it accessible to the masses. Today, social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and YouTube have facilitated the rapid spread of political humor, allowing it to reach large audiences. Humorous content on these platforms encourages critical thinking and public participation by criticizing political leaders and social events (Vraga, Kim, & Cook, 2019).

Contemporary Political Humour

Today, political humor reaches a wide audience thanks to the internet. Social criticism has reached a wide audience through social media platforms and stand-up shows. Humor has played an important role in shaping political commentary and public opinion. Thanks to the opportunities provided by the digital age, political humor has quickly formed a public opinion. It is not limited to cartoons in newspapers or television shows. Instantly created and shared content on social media has become much more effective. This has caused it to spread quickly and widely. Similarly, stand-up shows have conveyed political criticisms of individual comedians directly to the audience. In this way, the intended message has become more effective (Iloke, Okoro, & Ushie, 2024). Social media has emerged as one of the most dynamic and rapidly spreading forms of political humor. Platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have provided individuals with instant humorous reactions to daily events, political developments, and political figures. These structures have become spaces where humor can be shared (Zulli, Deyoe, Walker, & McKasy, 2024). Twitter is one of the most popular platforms for expressing political satire with short and effective messages. By using hashtags, humorous content about certain political events or figures has quickly become viral. In this way, jokes can reach a wide audience. A political gaffe or scandal can be ridiculed by millions of people within hours. Joe Biden's actions have immediately turned into a collective reaction in the fast-paced digital world. "Memes" are one of the most common forms of political humor on social media. "Memes", which blend popular culture imagery with political commentary, offer a humorous perspective on political events. They go viral quickly because they are easy to share. A political figure's speech or action instantly becomes a meme. It can be ridiculed and widely shared (Deniz, 2018). "Memes" can be created quickly by social media users. They can be reinterpreted in various contexts, making them flexible and effective tools for political criticism. Their ability to spread quickly plays an important role in shaping how politicians and political

events are perceived by the public (de Saint Laurent, Glăveanu, & Literat, 2021).

Another opportunity offered by social media is viral images. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram create good opportunities for these sharing. Individuals express their political criticisms in a humorous way through short videos. These are quite easy for ordinary people. Comedy videos that humorously address political leaders or events have become the most shared and commented platforms by people. During election periods or important political events, comedians' videos become very popular. Content creators carefully follow and use the activities of politicians during the election period to create short videos that reach millions. The most well-known of these comedians are content creators such as John Oliver. His long-form comedy analyses and parodies are widely watched on platforms such as YouTube. They offer a critical and humorous perspective on political events (Krutkowski, 2019).

Stand-up shows are among the most powerful tools of political humor by establishing a direct connection with the audience. Stand-up comedians criticize social and political events through individual performances. They offer viewers thought-provoking and entertaining perspectives on these events. Today's comedians (in countries with freedom of thought) offer sharp criticism of social problems, government policies, and political figures in their performances. They make their audiences laugh and encourage them to think. The most well-known names in this structure are famous comedians such as Hasan Minhaj, Trevor Noah, and Dave Chappelle. This structure brings political criticism directly to the stage with humor, offering its audience insightful perspectives on global and local political events. The format of stand-up shows is based on the comedians' direct relationship with their audiences. It makes it an effective area for political criticism by providing an authentic connection (Hogue, 2023).

Today, the evolution of political humor, especially through social media and digital platforms, creates an environment where democratic debates can spread and take shape rapidly. Political criticism, which was previously limited to traditional media, now reaches wider audiences and generates immediate social reactions through digital platforms. Moreover, social media and stand-up shows provide audiences with the opportunity to question political events through humor and increase political awareness (Rani & Yadav, 2023). This is especially important for the younger generations to develop a critical perspective on political events and developments. Contemporary political humor (internet and social media) has gained greater influence as part of social changes and political transformations. It has allowed individuals to express their reactions to politics through humor by simplifying them. In this way, people look at events from a more critical perspective. This form of humor, which spreads rapidly through content produced on social media platforms, also reflects how people react to political events. As a result, contemporary political humor continues to exist as a fundamental medium that criticizes social events, provokes thought, and fosters political awareness through social media and stand-up shows.

Humour and Political Ideologies

Humor and political ideologies have been intertwined throughout history. Therefore, it would be wrong to separate them from each other., They have mutually influenced and shaped each other. Humor has been both a tool for advancing political ideologies and a powerful tool for criticizing them. Even politicians use humor to gain an advantage over their opponents. In an ideological context, humor allows the questioning of social structures, political systems, and ideological discourses (Deniz, 2017). It is both a propaganda tool for ideologies and effective for challenging them. It has the potential to serve as a medium for politics. The relationship between political ideologies and humor is huge. It understands how ideologies perceive social structures and how they approach freedom

of expression through humor. In democratic systems, humor is often used for political criticism and the expression of various points of view. (Nieuwenhuis & Zijp, 2022). Democratic ideologies often use humor as a tool to encourage critical thinking. It certainly does not limit it. Politicians see it as an integral part of democratic discourse. In this context, humor shapes public opinion by criticizing politicians, government policies, and social contradictions. In liberal democracies, humor promotes awareness in the public sphere. It serves as a solid tool for individuals in society to develop a critical perspective.

Humor, especially in liberal and left-wing ideologies, has been a tool for social injustice, inequality, and authoritarian structures (Burgis, 2021). These ideologies often use humor as a form of resistance against power structures. Especially right-wing and capitalist politics exhibit a structure suitable for this, which suits the left ideology. During the leftist social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, humor was called to oppose state oppression and economic inequality. Cartoons, humorous protest banners, and parodies were creative ways to express opposition. In left-wing ideologies, humor is often seen as the "voice of the people" and a creative response to social injustices (Katja, Frank, & Christine, 2022).

In right-wing ideologies, humor serves a different purpose than the left. Right-wing conservative ideologies often use humor to support social order and traditional values (Chagas, 2024). As a result, in right-wing contexts, humor can be used to marginalize, exclude, or ridicule ideological opponents (Askanius, 2021). Right-wing humor often uses a particular social order to oppress. It aims to strengthen religious beliefs or national identity. Conservative leaders or nationalist ideologies may use humor to discredit political opponents while strengthening their ideological stance. However, right-wing ideologies can sometimes be cautious about critical humor that questions social morality and traditions. Furthermore, right-wing ideologies do not particularly like humor in the social

structure. In authoritarian regimes, the ideological use of humor is highly restricted and tightly controlled (Wedeen, 2013). In countries such as Afghanistan, even those who do not engage in political humor have been murdered by the Taliban. In such systems, where direct criticism is banned or censored, humor becomes a tool for covert resistance, but it is impossible to use it in dictatorial regimes. In such regimes, however, humor functions as an indirect form of criticism. Although political figures and policies cannot be openly criticized, this criticism is subtly conveyed through humor (Karaman and Kurtoglu, 2009). A defining feature of authoritarian regimes is the censorship of humor and criticism. Yet, even in these oppressive times, humor often develops a form of resistance. It has always found ways to survive with limited resources throughout history. In the Ottoman Empire, it offers a means of challenging censorship and authority to the people. In the 20th century, during the fascist regimes or the totalitarian period of the Soviet Union, humor became a silent but powerful tool for mocking the absurdities of daily life and state policies (Johnston, 2011). Humor plays a dual role in relation to ideologies. It is both a means of ideological expression and a focal point of criticism. In periods of intense ideological conflict, humor emerges as a battleground of ideological competition. On the one hand, it serves to spread ideological messages, and on the other hand, it becomes a means of resistance and opposition to these ideologies. During the Cold War, humor was widely used in the West to ridicule socialist and communist ideologies (Shaw & Youngblood, 2014). Cartoons and caricatures that ridiculed communism and socialism were used effectively. They became powerful tools to strengthen ideological conflicts by reaching large audiences in the West. As a result, humor became the influence between political ideologies and social narratives. Its adaptability as a medium for both advocacy and resistance makes it continually relevant in shaping public discourse and navigating ideological landscapes.

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CHAPTER VI

Humour in Traditional Media

Önder DENİZ⁷

Humour in Newspapers and Magazines

Humor in newspapers and magazines began in the 19th century as one of the most powerful tools of social criticism and has played an important role until today (Billig, 2005). Cartoons and written humor critically addressed social problems, political issues, cultural events and daily life (Kuipers, 2011). In this type of written media, humor was not only used to entertain readers. It was also used to encourage them to think critically. Because the reflection of humor in the press achieved significant success by using very simple words. Cartoons and humorous writings became more important than serious writings by drawing attention to social problems, contradictions and injustices. They contributed to raising awareness and creating a sense of change. Cartoons are among the most popular forms of humor in printed media. In the periods when photographs were not included in newspapers, events were told by cartoonists. When this situation turned into exaggerated drawings, cartoons

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emerged. Cartoons presented events or people in exaggerated, striking and sometimes grotesque ways. It offered concise and effective social criticism (Tsakona, 2009). The power of cartoons was in their ability to convey a message with a single glance. Cartoonists would often target politicians, important figures or certain social events and draw social issues for readers. In this way, they would offer the reader a critical perspective. The satire and irony frequently used in cartoons made social criticism easier to digest. It helped them reach wider audiences. Even an illiterate person could understand the cartoon in a newspaper or magazine. For this reason, cartoons became a universal form of criticism. The social impact of cartoons went beyond political criticism and resonated with different segments of society. It addressed cultural values, social norms and daily life from a humorous perspective (Abraham, 2009). From the 19th century onwards, cartoons began to reach wider audiences through newspapers and magazines. Cartoons became more important with the Industrial Revolution, the rise of capitalism and deepening class divisions. This became a powerful medium for criticizing social changes through drawing (Wells, 2008). For example, the famous British magazine *Punch*, first published in 1841, used humorous drawings to address social and political issues. It also reached a wide readership (Miller, 2009). The power of images was understood in the form of cartoons. Cartoons in magazines such as *Punch* exposed social contradictions and injustices and provided readers with a critical perspective on these issues. They encouraged people to approach politics (Lamb, 2004). Similarly, in the early 20th century, in Turkey, during the late Ottoman period and the early Republic, humor magazines played important roles. Cartoonists in this period used cartoons effectively to convey social criticism. Publications such as *Karagöz*, *Kalem* and *Gırgır* addressed the political and cultural aspects of society through a humorous lens. They often targeted political leaders and bureaucrats. These magazines used humor not only as a means of entertainment, but also as a way to highlight social injustices and resist oppressive regimes (Bayram, 2009). One of the main functions of cartoons is that they can act as the "voice of the people" on

political and social issues. Cartoonists often voice criticism that the wider population cannot. They also use a simple but powerful visual language to convey a message to society. This is their greatest weapon. Cartoons work fearlessly under oppressive regimes where direct criticism is often not allowed. In such environments, cartoons appear as a covert way of offering sharp criticism. They function as tools of resistance and defiance.

Written Humor in Printed Media

Written humor also has an important place in newspapers and magazines. Humor columns, anecdotes, short stories and satirical essays are an important aspect of written media. They address social issues and figures with an ironic tone. They offer readers interesting and thought-provoking content. Written humor offers more detailed analysis and criticism than visual cartoons. It allows for more use of wordplay and narrative richness. Thanks to these writings, it allows social events to be evaluated from a humorous perspective. It also reveals injustices and contradictions in society.

The effect of written humor lies in its ability to create awareness among readers and encourage critical thinking. This is especially important for oppressed groups. Humor articles draw attention to social issues and make more in-depth discussions possible. It encourages different thoughts. Columnists generally enjoy using satire and irony to offer readers a critical perspective. Columnists and these writings make it important to increase social awareness. Writers use humor to highlight social injustices, political corruption, and social contradictions. It encourages readers to think about these issues. Written humor often turns readers from passive consumers into active participants. It does a good job of transforming social events through criticism.

The Role of Humor in Social Criticism

Humor in newspapers and magazines not only entertains, but also makes criticism more acceptable. In fact, it creates a direct social impact by making it entertaining. Humorous content spreads social issues to a wider audience. This effectively communicates

them to people and facilitates discussions on these issues. Therefore, cartoons and written humor cease to be entertainment. They also serve as tools for social criticism and awareness. This role increases the transformative effect of printed media content, causing societies to confront their problems. It helps them initiate dialogue. Historically, humor magazines and newspapers have been mirrors of social change. They have offered everyone a critical perspective.

This highlights their enduring role in shaping public discourse and encouraging reflection on social issues. Through humor, societies come to a deeper awareness of their problems, encouraging collective introspection and dialogue for change.

Punch (1841–2002)

The British magazine *Punch* (the oldest and most well-known) was famous for its cartoons and humorous writings. Founded in 1841 by Henry Mayhew and Ebenezer Landells, *Punch* initially adopted a satirical and critical approach to social and political events. It was influential in the corruption and excesses of Victorian society. It addressed the complexities of this society with a humorous tone, mocking political figures, cultural norms and social contradictions. The magazine focused on class divisions during the Industrial Revolution. It reached a wide readership by criticizing workers' rights and government policies (Jones, 2020). *Punch*'s cartoons often satirized political figures, which led to their criticism among the public. It encouraged the public to think about politicians. Although it ceased publication in 2002, *Punch* is a school of social criticism. It remains a classic example of its transmission through humor. It even gave rise to the term "punch humor" (Harder, 2012).

Le Charivari (1832–1937)

Published in France, *Le Charivari* was an important humor magazine founded in Paris in the early 19th century (Bensimon, 2022). Founded in 1832 by Charles Philipon, the magazine was known for its cartoons and satirical articles criticizing French society and politics. The magazine sharply criticized the monarchy, the bourgeoisie, and the Church in particular. This publication was

mostly targeted with satirical drawings (Bensimon, 2022). It made social criticisms during Napoleon's authoritarian rule. Censorship measures implemented in 1835 restricted its content (Wechsler, 2012). The magazine's famous caricaturist, Honoré Daumier, highlighted social injustices with his striking drawings. He revealed poverty and power struggles within France. His work made *Le Charivari* an important platform for social criticism during the political turmoil of 19th-century France (Forbes, 2009).

Karagöz (1908–1955)

One of the most influential humor magazines of the Second Constitutional Era in the Ottoman Empire. *Karagöz* began publication in 1908. It took its name from the traditional shadow play character *Karagöz*. It carried the satirical and critical tone of this character in its pages. The magazine humorously addressed political events, the authoritarian state structure, and social problems (of the importance of the Union and Progress Party) (Öğün, 2015). Frequently covered themes included the political maneuvers of the Union and Progress Society. The modernization efforts and Westernization processes of the Tanzimat period were humorously featured in its pages (Gökmen, 2022). The cartoons frequently emphasized the contradictions between Ottoman modernization efforts and traditional lifestyles. They offered sharp social commentary to their readers. It continued to be published until 1955. *Karagöz* became an important humor magazine that marked the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic (Öztahtalı, 2018).

Kalem (1908–1911)

Published in the last period of the Ottoman Empire, *Kalem* was born during the temporary freedom period of the Second Constitutional Era. It started its publication life in Istanbul in 1908. The magazine critically addressed the political and social events of the period. With the contributions of important cartoonists such as Cemil Cem and Salih Erimez, *Kalem* quickly became the most well-known magazine. It addressed the Westernization efforts, cultural

structures and political corruption in Ottoman society. It criticized the authoritarian tendencies of the Committee of Union and Progress. It encouraged social awareness through humor. Kalem also introduced Western-style humor to Ottoman audiences through means. Although its publication ended in 1911, it is one of the most important publications in Ottoman humor literature (Ardıç, 2009).

Gırgır (1972–1993)

It is one of the most popular humor magazines in Turkey during the Republican period. Gırgır began its publication life in 1972 under the management of Oğuz Aral. The magazine quickly reached a wide readership and became one of Turkey's best-selling publications. It was known for its sharp cartoons criticizing Turkey's political and social structures. Gırgır boldly criticized the political chaos and military coups in the 1970s and 1980s. It addressed almost everything in the social structure with a critical stance. Despite the censorship during the military rule, the magazine continued its criticism. It tried to tell the unwritten through drawings and created significant public awareness. Its cartoons targeted government policies (Anavatan Era) and social corruption. It gained widespread admiration and secured its place in the history of Turkish humor and cartoons.

The New Yorker (1925-Present)

The American magazine The New Yorker, first published in 1925, became a magazine known worldwide for its cartoons and literary content. Its cartoons are known for presenting a sophisticated and humorous perspective on American social and political events. It expanded its readership by emphasizing the ironic and absurd aspects of modern life. The magazine gained a global reputation as a major platform for humor. Its cartoons addressed social, political, and cultural issues. It served as a refined tool of criticism that solidified the magazine's respected position worldwide.

Mad Magazine (1952–Present)

The American humor magazine *Mad* began publication in 1952. It quickly gained popularity for its critical perspective on American culture. It criticized the Vietnam War. It carried its pages known for its comic parodies and satire. *Mad* criticized American society, politics, Hollywood, and the media. The magazine had a significant appeal among young readers and successfully raised social awareness through humor. Its unique style and cultural criticisms have made *Mad* an enduring symbol of humorous social commentary.

Humour in Radio and Television

Radio and television humor served to reach a wide audience and to provide a powerful cultural expression. Because of its visual and auditory nature, it has become a deeply ingrained part of modern societies. With the spread of radio and television technologies, humor opened up an important space. It has gained significant importance, especially as a source of entertainment and social criticism. Sketches, comedy shows and sitcoms stand out as effective tools for criticizing social aspects, re-evaluating cultural values and promoting social solidarity. Humor has become an everyday experience. These programs offer critical perspectives on social events. It has had a lasting cultural impact to this day.

Radio Humor

Radio humor gained global popularity, especially in the 1920s and 1930s. In this way, it heralded a new era in mass communication. Radio brought comedy into people's homes. It entertained large audiences through comedy sketches and shows. In the United States, programs such as *Amos 'n' Andy* (1928), *The Jack Benny Program* (1932), and *The Fred Allen Show* reflected humorous aspects of daily life. They received positive responses from viewers. These programs generally entertained while subtly criticizing social problems. They used witty dialogue and absurd scenarios. *Amos 'n' Andy* covered racial issues in America. However, it was criticized

many times because white actors voiced black characters. In England, radio humor gained great popularity with shows such as ITMA (It's That Man Again, 1939–1949). This program was broadcast during World War II. Its aim was to raise British morale. It also aimed to relieve the hardships of wartime. ITMA used absurd characters. It lightened the tense atmosphere of the war years with humorous dialogue. Such radio sketches played an important role in times of crisis. The sketches united society. They strengthened solidarity. It reduced social tensions through humor.

Television Humor

As television became more widespread, humor moved from radio sketches to screens. This transition allowed humor to reach a wider audience. Television offered new formats. Sketches, comedy shows, and situation comedies were among these. Visual elements enriched the humorous content. Television comedy began to become widespread in the 1950s. During this period, social problems were addressed through humor. Thus, awareness about cultural and social dynamics was created.

In the United States, the 1950s and 1960s are known as the "Golden Age" of television. Humor programs reached their peak during this period. *I Love Lucy* (1951–1957), *The Honeymooners* (1955–1956), and *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1961–1966) are examples of this period. These shows became cultural milestones. Lucille Ball's performance in particular attracted attention. *I Love Lucy* demonstrated the potential of female comedians. The show used comedic misconceptions. It entertained viewers with absurd situations. It also criticized American family life. These programs went beyond entertainment. They became cultural phenomena that shaped American society.

An important form of television humor is sketch programs. These programs consist of short, independent comedy pieces. They usually deal with current events. They deal with political figures or social conflicts. *Saturday Night Live* (SNL) started in the USA in 1975. SNL is one of the longest-running sketch programs in

television history. The program is famous for its political satire. It made significant contributions to American political awareness. For example, Tina Fey's sketches imitating Sarah Palin attracted attention. These sketches became iconic in American political satire. They also shaped public perspectives through humor.

Television humor in the UK entered a new era with Monty Python's Flying Circus (1969–1974). The Monty Python team was known for their absurdist humor. They broke traditional TV formats. They revolutionized British comedy. The sketches included illogical scenarios. They challenged social norms. They transformed British television humor (Karaman, 2010). Monty Python criticized British bureaucracy. He also dealt with social class distinctions. They presented cultural contradictions from a humorous perspective. Their approach made Monty Python a global cultural phenomenon.

Television Humor in Turkey

Television humor became popular in Turkey during the 1970s and 1980s. Sketch programs and comedy shows attracted large audiences. These programs reflect social dynamics through humor. For instance, Mother-in-Laws (1974–2004) critiqued intergenerational conflicts. It also addressed class differences in Turkish families. The series used comedic storytelling to explore these issues. Similarly, Bir Demet Tiyatro (1995–2006) offered sharp cultural commentary. It presented sketches depicting diverse aspects of Turkish society.

The Role and Impact of Television Humor

Television humor critiques society while fostering cultural solidarity. Sketches and comedy shows often address current events. They raise awareness of social issues and encourage critical thinking. By reaching broad audiences, television humor critiques daily life. It contributes to social consciousness. These programs entertain viewers. They also provoke thought. By reflecting on society, they inspire cultural change.

Examples of Humour in Radio and Television in Turkey

Radio Humour Examples

Temel ile Fadime (1950s)

This series revolved around Temel and Fadime, characters from the Black Sea region. It portrayed their humorous adventures. The program blended regional humour with absurd dialogues. It used exaggerated traits to entertain listeners.

Arkası Yarın (1950s–1970s)

This was one of TRT's most renowned radio programs. It featured short dramatic and comedic stories. The program depicted everyday life with humour. Episodes were serialized, creating anticipation among listeners.

Television Humour Examples

Kaynanalar (1974–2004)

This is one of Turkey's longest-running TV series. It depicted intergenerational cultural differences. Class conflicts and family dynamics were central themes. The character Nuri Kantar became iconic. The series both entertained and critically reflected on Turkish society.

Olacak O Kadar (1989–2010)

Directed by Levent Kırca, this sketch program became famous for political satire. It critiqued corruption, bureaucracy, and social issues in the 1990s. Its sharp humour boldly addressed societal challenges.

Bir Demet Tiyatro (1995–2006)

Written by Yılmaz Erdoğan, this sketch comedy portrayed diverse social strata. It addressed themes like urbanization and class conflicts. Memorable characters like Feriştah Ana gained immense popularity.

Avrupa Yakası (2004–2009)

Created by Gülse Birsell, Avrupa Yakası focused on Istanbul's European side. It humorously explored cultural differences and urban challenges. The show became one of Turkey's most-watched comedies.

Cebimdeki Yabancı (2005–2007)

This program starred Şafak Sezer and Mehmet Ali Erbil. It presented the absurdities of daily life with humour. It addressed political and social events in Turkey.

Güldür Güldür Show (2013–present)

This modern comedy show uses sketches to address current issues. It blends relatable characters with satire. The program appeals to a wide audience and represents contemporary Turkish humour.

The Art of Cartoons

Cartoons have existed for centuries as a powerful tool for political and social critique. This form of humorous visual storytelling uses lines, exaggeration, and symbolism. Cartoonists simplify complex issues and convey them succinctly. They critique social events, political figures, and everyday life. Through visual language, they expose injustices and contradictions, often in a comedic or thought-provoking way. Cartoons amuse with their humor but carry profound subtext. In censored societies, they act as a form of rebellion (Morrison & Isaac, 2012).

Cartoons go beyond simple critiques and deliver societal messages. They target political leaders, state policies, and norms. Historically, they have resisted oppressive regimes and political powers. Quick and visually striking, cartoons reach broad audiences. They are one of the most impactful forms of mass communication.

Political cartoons expose contradictions in leaders or events. They mock and diminish the stature of politicians. Cartoonists often exaggerate physical features or behaviors to reveal true identities or strategies. For example, Thomas Nast critiqued 19th-century U.S.

corruption. His depictions of Tammany Hall highlighted political decay. These cartoons captured public attention and unveiled flaws in the American political system.

In Turkey, cartoons have long critiqued social and political issues. Ottoman-era humor magazines used them to indirectly criticize authority. For instance, *Kalem* (1908–1911) humorously portrayed Westernization and modernization efforts. Its exaggerated strokes satirized the political and social challenges of the time.

During the Republican era, cartoons grew stronger as tools of critique. In the 1970s and 1980s, under heavy censorship, cartoonists used indirect social critique. *Girgır* (1972–1993), a prominent humor magazine, reached wide audiences. Led by Oğuz Aral, it criticized government policies and social contradictions. Despite censorship, *Girgır* amplified public awareness and gave voice to societal concerns.

Cartoons also question societal norms. They mock taboos, traditions, and values, encouraging reflection. Figures like Nasreddin Hodja highlight societal flaws. Modern cartoons address issues like gender roles, family dynamics, and class conflicts. Latif Demirci, for instance, explored Turkish family life and urbanization, fostering critical awareness.

Cartoons raise political awareness. They simplify complex events and reach the masses through newspapers, magazines, and social media. With social media, their influence has grown. Viral cartoons quickly spread critical perspectives. In Turkey, many cartoonists now use social media to highlight social issues.

Cartoon art remains a powerful critique tool in Turkey. From *Kalem* to *Karagöz* and *Girgır*, it has shaped public opinion for decades. Many other cartoonists and magazines have also left a lasting impact.

Humour Magazines

Fırt (1976–1994)

Founded as a sister publication to *Gırgır*, *Fırt* appealed more to younger and alternative audiences with its unique sense of humour. Addressing critiques of everyday life, it produced humorous and sometimes provocative content, particularly on themes such as sexuality, gender roles, and youth culture. *Fırt* holds a notable place among Turkish humour magazines and served as a launchpad for many renowned cartoonists' careers (İnceler, Küçük, Tufan, Karakaya, & Sirgeli, n.d.).

Leman (1991–present)

Starting in the 1990s, *Leman* remains one of Turkey's leading humour magazines. The magazine critically examines political and social events, drawing attention to Turkey's societal issues. By using humour to challenge political leaders, bureaucracy, and social injustices, *Leman* has become a key proponent of independent humour in Turkey (Hoşafçi, 2007).

Penguen (2002–2017)

Continuing the tradition of *Gırgır* and *Leman*, *Penguen* became another significant humour magazine. Known for its biting satire of political events and current developments, *Penguen* boldly critiqued political leaders, scandals, and societal problems. Despite ceasing publication in 2017, its cartoons reached a wide readership and left a lasting impact (Okutan, 2013).

Uykusuz (2007–present)

Founded by former *Penguen* cartoonists, *Uykusuz* is one of Turkey's most popular humour magazines today. Known for its sharp and critical stance on political humour and social critiques, *Uykusuz* has garnered a broad readership with its humorous take on Turkey's political and social events (Yumurtacı, 2019).

Prominent Cartoonists and Cartoons

Cemil Cem (1882–1950)

One of the pioneers of modern Turkish cartoon art, Cemil Cem became famous during the Second Constitutional Era for his works. His cartoons, published in *Kalem*, critiqued Westernisation, modernisation, and the political turmoil of the late Ottoman period with exaggeration and satire, making them some of the era's most notable humorous works (Kayış, 2018).

Oğuz Aral (1936–2004)

One of Turkey's most renowned cartoonists, Oğuz Aral, founded *Gırgır* and revolutionised Turkish humour magazines. Known for his bold depictions of Turkish social and political events, Aral created the beloved character *Avanak Avni*, which became a cultural icon. He also mentored many prominent Turkish cartoonists (Atay & Akşit, 2008).

Latif Demirci (1956–2021)

Latif Demirci became a significant figure in Turkish cartoon art, known for his humorous depictions of class differences and social structures. His work in magazines like *Gırgır*, *Fırt*, *Limon*, *Penguen*, and *Uykusuz* gained widespread acclaim, particularly for his contributions to political humour (Keskin, Çalışkan, & Aydoğdu, 2018).

Bedri Koraman (1928–2015)

Bedri Koraman created a lasting impact on Turkish cartoons, especially with his works in *Akbaba* magazine during the 1950s. His cartoons, targeting political figures and social events, combined humour with strong social critique, making them highly influential (Uçan, 2018).

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CHAPTER VII

Humour in New Media

Muhammet Kemal KARAMAN⁸

The Rise of Digital Humour

The digital age has strategically transformed the nature and spread of technological humor. Traditional media (newspapers, magazines, television) have been replaced by social media platforms. This change has enabled humor to reach wider audiences more quickly and effectively. Social media allows users to share their content instantly and globally (Nissenbaum and Shifman, 2022). This has triggered the emergence of digital humor, which responds quickly to current events and reaches wide audiences in a short time.

The impact of social media on humor is especially evident in the rise of meme culture. Memes are visual content, usually separated by short texts. They quickly pass through the internet and often go viral (Ling et al., 2021). These contents, events, or situations

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are presented in a funny way. After being shared, they are consumed by a wide audience in a short time. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and especially Reddit are considered to be among the platforms where meme culture was born and grew (Georgakopoulou et al., 2020). Thanks to these platforms, humor circulates among users in seconds. Despite their simplicity and social criticism, culture has a wide range of humor, from popular commentary to humor.

Twitter is one of the most effective platforms for digital humor. The 280-character limit directs to make summary and effective humor (Basu, 2024). Humorous tweets about political events, current news or cultural issues quickly reach a wide audience. The use of hashtags allows certain topics to be recorded simultaneously around the world. Thus, humor becomes a global language (Sykora et al., 2020). For example, after an important political event, posts shared with humorous hashtags quickly go viral. These shares cause a funny narrative with the surrounding views.

Instagram has turned it into a humor area by integrating visual and textual elements. Content enriched with images, short videos and captions is quickly consumed by a wide audience. Short comedy videos, skits and animations are prominent forms of humor on Instagram. Users make fun shares about social events or personal experiences. This way, they gain large audiences (Leaver et al., 2020). Especially the younger generations reach millions by telling daily life anecdotes with humorous videos (Meng & Literat, 2023).

YouTube is another powerful platform for digital humor (Bernad-Mechó & Girón-García, 2023). Short comedy videos, parodies, animations and vlogs reach large audiences. YouTube allows content creators to present humorous stories enriched with visuals and business processes. Longer humorous content gains popularity here. For example, videos imitating celebrities or parodies

of popular products reach people in the country. These contents provide new perspectives on social relations.

TikTok has recently become a central platform for digital humor. Users produce and share humorous content with short 15-second videos (Bernad-Mechó & Girón-García, 2023). TikTok, which is quite popular among the younger generation, offers storage for preparing short clips with music, voice change, quick editing and filters. These tools allow users to showcase their creativity. Thanks to the short video format, funny moments are transmitted quickly and the emergence of viral humor is facilitated. By joining global trends that include music or jokes, users produce various content on the same theme and humor spreads across the platform.

An important reason for the rapid explosion of digital humor is the interactive nature of social media. The humor of the traditional medium is usually offered to be watched in a one-way way. However, social media allows users to actively communicate with the content. It is possible to choose humorous contributions by sharing a meme, replying to a tweet or commenting on a video. Spreading makes digital humor dynamic and spreadable. With the consumption of users, humor reaches a wider audience and takes a collective form (Hasan et al., 2021).

Another dimension that digital platforms add to humor is global interaction. Thanks to the internet, people from different cultures can be allowed to use the same humorous content. Social media reveals how humorous or critically perceived things are perceived in different parts of the world. This humor that transcends cultural boundaries unites people with comedic moments and creates a global community. For example, a political scandal or a social event, a meme or a short video is simultaneously addressed humorously around the world.

Digital humor is a tool for critical thinking and social dissemination. Humorous posts on social media attract the attention of society and criticize political figures. It increases awareness of the relationships in the daily lives of the public. It encourages humor, thinking and criticism, especially about political events. For example, political humor on social media in Turkey has enabled criticism of government policies to reach a wide audience.

Meme Culture

Meme culture has become a prominent and widespread form of humour in the digital age. Social media platforms have transformed memes into a primary tool for satirical responses to cultural events. Memes typically combine an image, short video, graphic, or gif with concise text. This simple format conveys complex ideas, societal events, or everyday situations quickly and effectively (Molina, 2020).

Mememes enable users to tailor jokes to their cultural contexts (Laineste & Voolaid, 2016). Often humorous, ironic, or critical, these creations quickly go viral, reaching vast audiences. Social media's global nature allows people from different countries to interpret the same meme in diverse ways. This demonstrates how memes have evolved into a medium for expressing and reacting to societal happenings.

Initially, memes were simple and visually straightforward. Early examples like "Bad Luck Brian," "Grumpy Cat," and "Success Kid" illustrate this phase (Luckett & Casey, 2016). These visuals humorously depicted failures, quirky situations, or human reactions to ordinary events. Such memes allowed users to express personal experiences in a comedic way.

Over time, memes have expanded beyond entertainment. They now serve as tools for humorous commentary on societal and political events. For example, during the U.S. presidential elections,

memes about Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton became a widespread way to critique and mock political figures (Birthisel et al., 2024). Some memes, like "Pepe the Frog," were even appropriated by ideological groups, turning them into political symbols (Ristić, 2024). This shows that memes can function as both humour and political tools.

One fascinating aspect of meme culture is its speed and adaptability. Memes are quickly reinterpreted and applied to different contexts. This dynamic nature allows them to respond swiftly to cultural events. For instance, a meme critiquing one event can easily be repurposed for another. This flexibility makes memes powerful tools for instant commentary and humour.

Social media platforms play a key role in spreading memes. Reddit, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook are central venues where memes reach large audiences. Reddit allows users to connect memes with current events and personal experiences. Twitter, with its real-time sharing capabilities, is a leading platform for meme production and distribution. For instance, political scandals or societal events are immediately reflected in memes on Twitter and shared widely (Kamath & Alur, 2024).

Mememes' rapid response to cultural events is driven by digital content creators who provide immediate humorous perspectives. A political scandal, celebrity mishap, or societal development can generate thousands of memes within hours. For example, during the 2015 "The Dress" debate, social media was flooded with memes, transforming the colour discussion into global comedic content (Pham, 2022). This highlights how societal events can quickly gain a humorous dimension.

In Turkey, meme culture is a tool for humorous responses to societal and political events. Political incidents and current developments are swiftly turned into memes by Turkish users and

spread across social media. During elections or major events, memes often serve as popular means of expression (Kakız, 2024). Humorous depictions of everyday life and cultural elements also feature prominently. Turkish memes often incorporate local jokes, wordplay, and cultural references.

Meme culture not only reacts to societal events but also fosters cross-cultural interaction. Memes allow people from different cultures to interpret the same event through various lenses, creating a global humour language. Cultural differences shape meme content, while reinterpretations in different countries provide insights into cultural interactions. For instance, a meme about a political figure in one country might be adapted for another context abroad. This reveals memes' potential to build a universal humour language.

Viral Humour and Its Social Impact

Viral humor stands out as one of the most effective and rapidly spreading forms of communication in the digital age. Online humor stands out with its ability to respond quickly to social events. Such content, which spreads rapidly through social media, shapes individuals' perspectives on events. It also paves the way for political and cultural changes by increasing social awareness. Humor does not only make people laugh; it encourages critical thinking, directs public discourse, and highlights social injustices (Takovski, 2021).

The power of viral humor lies in the fact that digital platforms allow information and jokes to spread quickly. Platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok allow users to share their content with large audiences in minutes. A humorous video, meme, or tweet is shared quickly and can quickly gain global attention. For example, a political scandal or a famous mistake presented in a humorous way can quickly affect public perception and reactions to these events (Takovski, 2021).

Online humor plays an important role in increasing social awareness. Viral content informs large audiences about social issues. For example, the “Ice Bucket Challenge,” which went viral in 2014, managed to raise awareness of ALS. This humorous challenge allowed millions of people to learn about ALS and make donations. This example shows that humor is an effective tool for raising social awareness (Tengiz and Özdemir, 2023).

Viral humor is also a powerful tool for political criticism and social change. Political leaders, government policies, or social events are criticized in a humorous way and spread to large audiences. In oppressive regimes, humor becomes a part of social resistance and provides an opportunity to voice criticism safely. For example, during Donald Trump’s presidency, many memes criticizing Trump went viral. This content presented political criticism in an entertaining format and reached large audiences (Kumari, 2021).

In Turkey, viral humor also has a great impact on social and political discourse. During election periods, humorous content targeting political leaders or campaigns spreads rapidly on social media. This content shapes public opinion and puts pressure on political figures. Platforms such as Ekşi Sözlük, Twitter, and Instagram host content that approaches social problems in a sarcastic way. Daily difficulties, economic crises, or social injustices are addressed through this humor and social awareness is increased.

Viral humor also helps individuals cope with difficult and stressful situations. Humor is a relaxation mechanism that allows people to collectively cope with stressful events. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, humorous content offered people the opportunity to laugh during a difficult time. Comedy videos and memes that went viral during the quarantine period helped individuals cope with the pandemic (Nicholls, 2020).

Viral humor is also an effective tool for questioning cultural norms and values. Gender roles, social class differences, or cultural values are criticized through humorous memes. Feminist movements have raised awareness of issues such as gender equality with humorous content that reaches large audiences. Such content is important for promoting social change and offering alternative perspectives.

However, viral humor also has its disadvantages. Some content can be used to spread misinformation or hate speech. In times of widespread misinformation, humor can become a deceptive tool. Such content can increase social polarization and reinforce misperceptions. Therefore, although viral humor is a powerful tool, it should be handled with caution (Yu et al., 2022).

Global Humour and Cross-Cultural Interaction

Global humor, a product of the digital age, increases intercultural interaction. Humor becomes a universal language. The spread of the internet and social media bring people from different cultures together. People easily share, consume and comment on humorous content. This situation transcends cultural boundaries. Humor develops alternative perspectives on social events. It becomes an important tool in intercultural communication. Despite cultural differences, humor carries universal themes. Absurd situations, misunderstandings or unexpected events are universally funny. They create similar reactions in different cultures. Digital platforms popularize humor through global memes and viral videos. Thus, people unite around common comedic elements.

Memes are a clear example of global humor. They can be shared in many countries at the same time. A political event or a celebrity mistake quickly gains attention. It can be interpreted differently in different cultures. While it may be political satire in one place, it may be perceived as light entertainment in another.

However, the basic joke of memes is generally universal. This allows them to be widely understood.

Humor can have different meanings depending on the cultural context. What is funny in one culture can be offensive in another. For example, American humor is known for its directness and sarcasm. Japanese humor, on the other hand, thrives on absurdity. Dark humor is common in Europe, but it can be resisted in conservative cultures. The success of global humor depends on respecting different styles of humor.

Humor can be a unifying force, especially in social and political events. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic is an example of this. People responded to the global crisis with humor. Experiences such as quarantine and mask mandates turned into memes and funny videos. This created a sense of closeness despite the difficulties. People felt solidarity through humor. Global humor can raise awareness for political criticism and social change. In oppressive regimes, humorous content becomes a tool of resistance. For example, during the Donald Trump era, humorous criticism spread not only in the US but also around the world. This content became part of the global conversation. However, global humor is not always unifying. It can lead to misunderstandings or cultural clashes. Some content may touch on sensitive topics in different countries. This shows the importance of humor boundaries. Global content creators must be mindful of different cultural sensitivities.

Ultimately, global humor is a bridge. It strengthens cross-cultural communication. However, respecting cultural diversity is critical in this process.

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