



F. IBÁÑEZ. MORTADELO Y FILEMÓ. EL SULFAT ATÓMIC. ED. B. BARCELONA, 1987

THE CARTOON STRIP

THE POSSIBILITIES TODAY FOR THE HUMOROUS COMIC ARE CERTAINLY NOT AS OPEN AS THEY WERE. NEVERTHELESS, THE GENRE HAS MANAGED TO SURVIVE AND HAS ABSORBED ALL THE DIFFERENT VARIETIES OF "COMICNESS", FROM POLITICAL IRONY TO SOCIAL SATIRE.

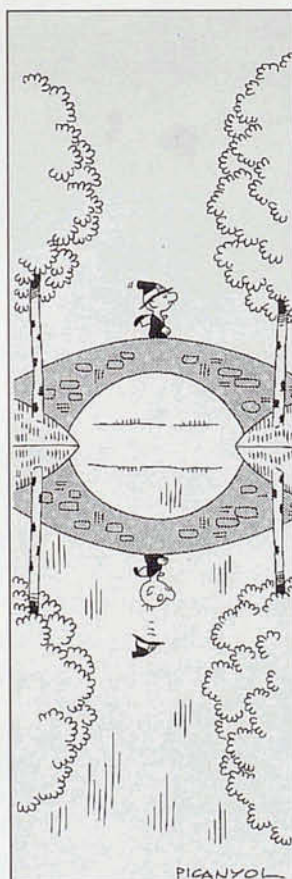
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MIQUE BELTRÁN. LAS AVENTURAS DE MARCO ANTONIO Y CLEOPATRA. ED. GLENAT, BARCELONA, 1993

Since the birth of the comic strip sometime in the eighteen-forties, humorists have taken it over and used it as the ideal medium through which to give graphic expression to their jokes and satires. In fact it was they, the humorists, who created comics and consolidated them in Europe and who also imported them into America to give them their final boost. The English term "comic", now accepted by other languages, is a permanent record of these origins, of the original "comicalness" it has kept up over the years, although its progress has allowed the birth of other less humorous varieties of comic.

In Catalonia, apart from the many comic strips that appeared in old magazines, the first weekly comics—*Dominguín* and *TBO*, both published in Barcelona—were devoted to humour. Since then, a series of publications have appeared that have preserved the comic's humorous approach as an energetic, living genre evolving in step with the changes in social, technical and artistic circumstances. The cartoon

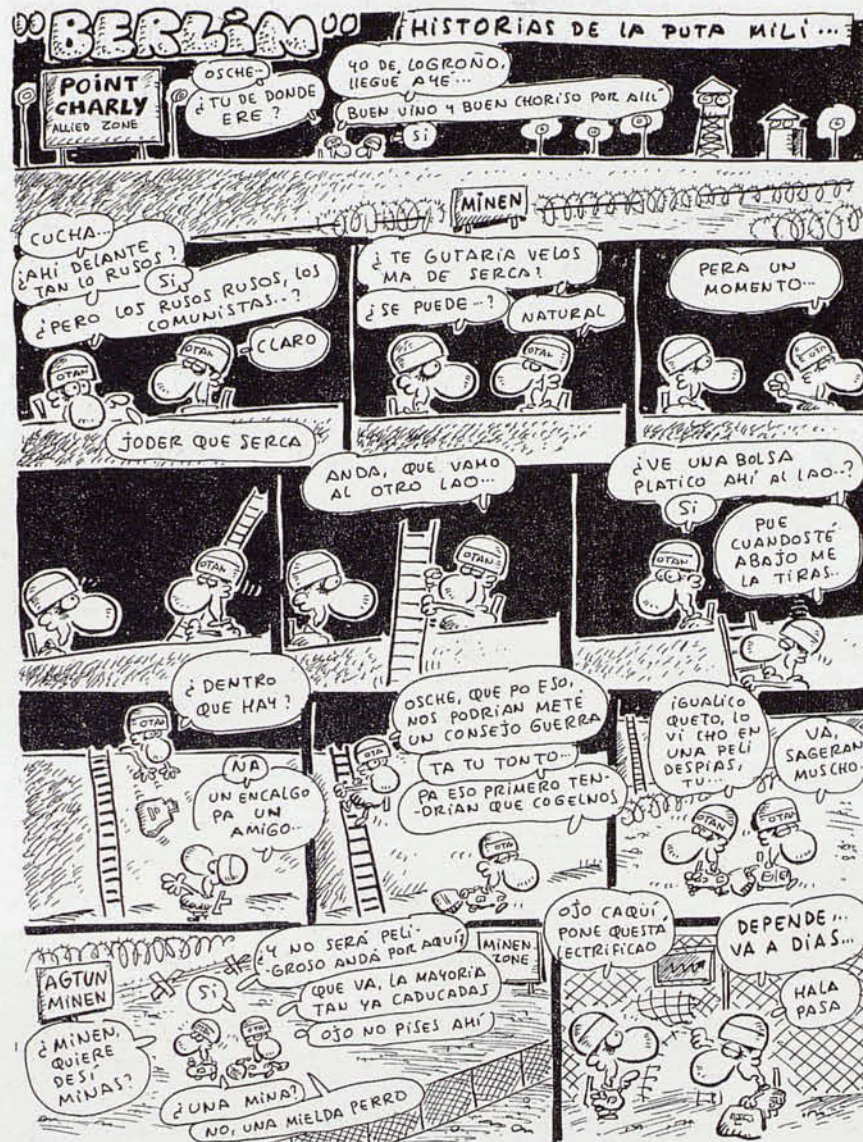


PICANYOL. OT EL BRUIXOT. CAVALL FORT, BARCELONA, 1993

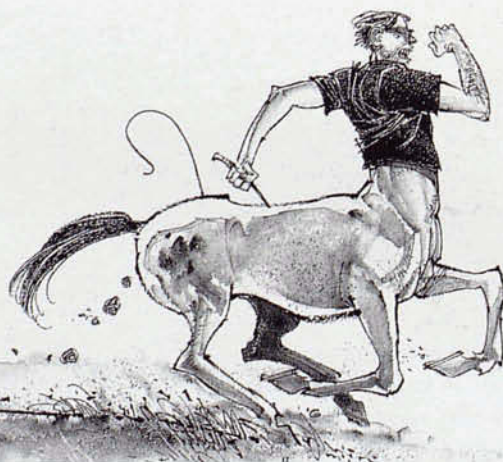
strip has managed to maintain its currency all this time and throughout its history has reflected every variety of humour, from the childish gag to the period caricature, from subtle joke to carefree parody, political irony to social satire.

Today, the world of the humorous comic is definitely smaller than it was. Comics in general have had to compete with other forms of communication and entertainment which have inevitably won over part of their potential audience. Nevertheless, comics today, and especially humorous comics, still occupy an important position amongst forms of leisure, and even of information. The renewed modernity of the contents maintains readers' interest in different ways, providing a light-hearted, witty view of events in the world around us.

At the present moment, there is a two-way trend to be found in this country's humorous comics. On one hand, the prolongation of the old Barcelona school of the post-war period—also known as the Bruguera School—, which, opportunely transformed by the



IVA. BERLÍN, HISTORIAS DE LA PUTA MILI. "PENDONES DEL HUMOR", No. 33. ED. EL JUEVES, BARCELONA, 1988



THA. ABSURDUS DELIRIUM. ED. COMLOT, BARCELONA, 1988

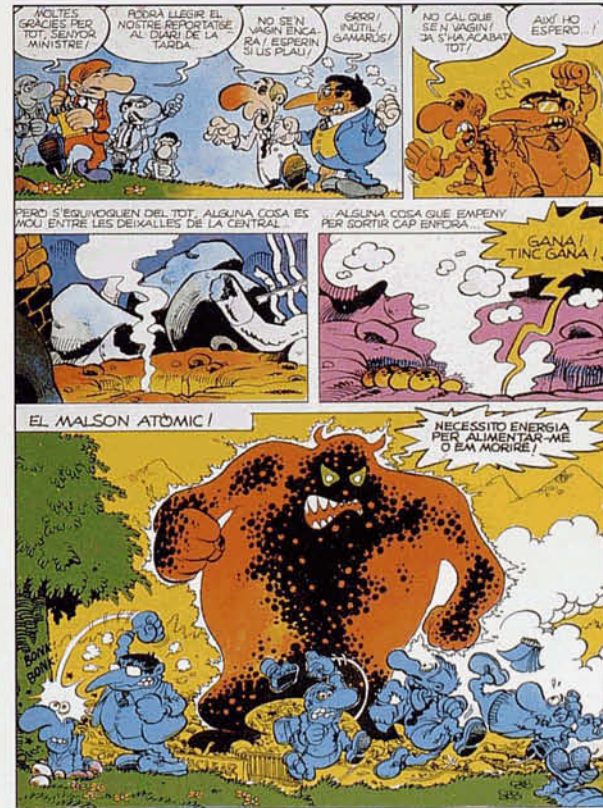
passage of time, the impact of new fashions and the assimilation of new ideas, has today become the classic humorous comic, suitable for all audiences. After thirty-five years, Mortadelo and Filemón are still unrivalled in popular humour in Europe, but lately their creator, Francesc Ibáñez, has become dissatisfied with the conventional colourless joke, the especially childish humour of other times, and relates his heroes to today's situations and problems, such as, for example, the New Catechism, the Barcelona Olympics, racism and ne nazis, the Maastricht Treaty and the five-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America. Jan has also brought *Superlópez* up to date, but without

easing up on his satire of the superheroes, so popular recently in comics of another type. For his part, the veteran Martz Schmidt accentuates his proverbial causticity, now directed at the well-to-do classes, in *Deliranta Rococó*.

New humorists have joined this now renovated tradition, while some masters have left it to devote themselves to other humoristic activities. Manuel Vázquez, a pioneer of surrealist humour in comics and father of the renowned *Hermanas Gilda*, publishes a daily cartoon in the newspaper *El Observador*; Alfons Figueras, who invented the unforgettable *Topolino*, still exercises his ingeniously tender humour in the newspaper *Avui* with *Mister Hyde*; Raf, who



THA. FLUIDE GLACIAL No.203. EDITIONS AUDIE. PARIS, 1993





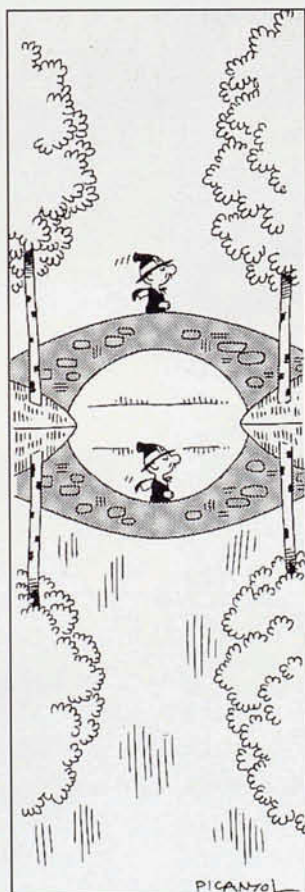
THA. EL JUEVES - EXTRA FUMADORES. ED. EL JUEVES. BARCELONA, 1991

once produced *Sir Tim O'Theo*, parodies the most popular television series in *El Jueves*.

It is in fact the Barcelona weekly *El Jueves* that today personifies the other trend in the humorous comic, begun some twenty years ago by *Barrabás* and *El Papus* and breaking all the taboos of the previous political regime and the right-thinking society that kept it on its feet. This is a different type of humour, unconventional, free and easy, without limits to its subject matter or graphics, which mixes different styles and concepts.

In the beginning there were the grotesque drawings of Jan, Óscar and the late Ivá, with long and difficult to read texts that used a kind of phonetic transcription of the colloquial language of certain sectors of Barcelona society to produce a biting social caricature.

Certainly, the advice of *Profesor Cojonciano*, by the second of the three mentioned above, and the *Historias de la puta mili* or *Makinavaja*, by the third, are examples of this type of humour, but alongside them are other characters and other comic strips that



PICANYOL. OT EL BRUIXOT. CAVALL FORT. BARCELONA, 1992

have come to make up the substantial variety of *El Jueves*. *El Jueves* covers the whole gamut of humour, fluctuating between the marginality of Azagra's *Pedro Pico y Pico Vena* or Vaquer and Bigart's *Johnny Roqueta*, and the symbolic reflection of Ventura and Nieto's *Grouñidos en el desierto*, or of Tha and Bigart in *¡Qué gente!* and *Historias Corrientes*, going on to include criticism of the present in Maikel's *Seguridasociá* and of the past in Kim's *Martínez el facha*, the joke eroticism of Manel's *Manolo*, or else *Orgasmos cotidianos*, by Alfons López and Xavier Roca, and the candid and delicate humour of *El Dios* and *¡Dios mío!*, by José Luís Martín, the author during the eighties of the generational chronicle *Quico el progre*, published every day in *El Periódico de Catalunya*.

The disparity between the two trends outlined is obvious. Two types of humour, two styles, two equally valid comic genres, both arising in Catalonia, which in one way or another draw a smile or a belly-laugh from the also disparate readers of cartoon strips. ■