The satirical cinema of journalists. Mass media characters and stories by the Hollywood industry (1970-2020)

El cine satírico de periodistas. Personajes y relato de los mass media por la industria de Hollywood (1970-2020)

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Abstract:

Journalism is a historic profession. A target of criticism and the result of technological adaptations, it is used by the film industry to create characters who use journalistic skills, verify sources or create exclusives, to therefore promote a democratic society with truth

Resumen:

El periodismo es una profesión histórica. Diana de críticas y resultado de adaptaciones tecnológicas, sirve a la industria cinematográfica para crear personajes que, tras las destrezas periodísticas, contraste de fuentes o creación de exclusivas, promueven una sociedad democrática

and independence, as part of their plots. To do this, a quantitative and qualitative content analysis is carried out on six representative American comedies in the last half century –Network (Sidney Lumet, 1976), Broadcast News (James L. Brooks, 1987), The Paper (Ron Howard, 1994), Chicago (Rob Marshall, 2002), Morning Glory (Roger Michell, 2010), and Don't Look Up (Adam McKay, 2021)– based on humor theories and agenda setting theory. By using humorous resources and journalistic praxis, an overview is made of how journalism is portrayed on the big screen through satire, which results in an image rooted in frivolous stereotypes, jokes and sharp responses denouncing sensationalism and infotainment. It is a debate that makes viewers aware of the importance of journalism and that, though laughter, a critical vision fluctuates by satirizing their skills under the deconstructive capacity of humor that reflects American society.

Keywords:

Cinema; journalists; satire; film studies; mass media.

desde la verdad y la independencia, en virtud de sus tramas. Para ello, se efectúa un análisis de contenido, cuantitativo y cualitativo, de seis comedias estadounidenses representativas en el último medio siglo –Network (Sidney Lumet, 1976), Broadcast News (James L. Brooks, 1987), The Paper (Ron Howard, 1994), Chicago (Rob Marshall, 2002), Morning Glory (Roger Michell, 2010) y Don't Look Up (Adam McKay, 2021)–, basado en las teorías del humor y la teoría de la agenda setting. Al atender a los recursos humorísticos y las praxis periodísticas, se desarrolla una panorámica de cómo se retrata el periodismo en la gran pantalla a través de la sátira, de la que resulta una imagen arraigada en estereotipos frívolos, chistes y réplicas agudas de denuncia del amarillismo y la espectacularización del entretenimiento. Un debate que conciencia a los espectadores de la importancia del periodismo y que, desde la risa, fluctúa una visión crítica al satirizar sus habilidades bajo la capacidad deconstructiva del humor que refleja la sociedad americana.

Palabras clave:

Cine; periodistas; sátira; estudios cinematográficos; medios de comunicación.

1. Introduction

Cinema is an art that amuses, seeks to entertain the viewer, and, to do so, captures reality, whether fictional, documented, or even satirized, through a large volume of narrative and aesthetic resources. Among them, satire is characterized by its intention to censor or ridicule someone or something. A literary resource that has been projected as a counterweight going back to Greece, when the playwright Aristophanes (444 B.C.-385 B.C.) ridiculed his leaders, or as the heritage of social elites, in Rome, where the satirical poet Horace (65 B.C. - 8 B.C.) snubbed the way of life of his time by showing indignation with a desire to denounce and change (Hutcheon, 1985).

For Bergson (2016), irony and humor are forms of satire, an effect that has been reflected in news satire and in mass media humor from an alternative journalism that uses it to interrogate power (Baym, 2005) comprehensively (Baym and Jones, 2013) and with creativity (Valhondo-Crego, 2011). A humorous technique that is reflected in comedy (Sareil, 1984; Mauron, 1964), which differs from insult and is characterized by the emphasis (Llanos, 2002) to seek laughter as a goal. Satire has been studied differently in diverse territories. In France, as its origin, Jean-Paul Simon (1979) indicates that the comic film is essentially transgressive and, by virtue of social satire, Lanzoni (2014: 70) asserts that it is one of the most demanding genres in promoting significant reflection of the content of the text and the technique, as well as the reception and intention of the author (Van de Gejuchte, 1999) that fluctuates with "various entanglements and conflicts, unique characters, ingenious dialogues and complacent endings" (Sánchez-Noriega, 2022: 694) that satire exaggerates, which makes them recognizable in reality (Griffin, 1994).

Before comedy, there was satire and before cinema, there was journalism. With reference to the United States, journalism is rooted in the first colonial settlements whose activity flourished in the 18th century with figures such as Benjamin Franklin, responsible for humorous writings that satirized political problems in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* (Smith, 2012). Journalism is rooted in these origins and has played a crucial role in society and politics (Casero-Ripollés, 2012), not in vain, the First Amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and independent journalism, exercised by a wide range of media with new uses and professional practices (Jódar-Marín, 2010), about which only 26% of Americans have a favorable opinion (Gallup/Knight Foundation, 2023).

Therefore, this article carries out a temporal review of how satirical cinema has portrayed the journalistic profession, starting from the role of the media, when deciding which issues are of public importance. According to McCombs & Shaw's (1972) agenda setting theory, the media express what people experience as real (Lippmann, 1922). Therefore, satire needs reality to be understood and created, as a result of a media agenda and humorous creativity that is supported by the three fundamental theories of philosophy on the phenomenon of humor: superiority, incongruity and liberation (Attardo, 1994). Therefore, to resolve the stereotypes that define the journalist in satirical films, more than forty variables are analyzed, in six comedies representative of journalism in order to distinguish the evolutionary features of a profession linked to reality.

2. Theoretical framework. First cinematographic satires and their reflection of Journalism

Since the beginning cinema has used humor as a central axis for media and genres (Zillmann and Bryant, 1994); The first short films already used the "gag" profusely to connect with the audience (Carroll, 1991: 25), while the arrival of feature films consolidated an "unusual interest" in comedians, and not only among the popular masses, but also among intellectuals (Arconada, 2007: 25). A reference for this is Max Linder, a French comedian who made a recurring satire of the social condition.

Firstly as a resource or later as a structure in itself, satires departed from the first classifications as slapstick comedy, which is characterized by chases, falls and blows. It is a physical humor determined by "a role of excess" (Peacock, 2014: 17) where a first example of American journalistic satire is found in the productions led by producer Mack Sennett and starring the Tramp character, for his Keystone Studios. Specifically, from the character of a reporter who stole the authorship in *Making a Living* (Henry Lehrman, 1914) and his later *The Great Dictator* (1940), where Chaplin reflects the media power against war (Villegas-López, 2003) from a "narrative sophistication and its visual codes" (Paulus & King, 2010: 57).

As a satirical example of the journalistic world, the play *The Front Page*, written by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur and its first filmed version (Lewis Milestone, 1931), showed an egocentric sensationalist journalist from the 1920s. Humorous sound resources were refined in this period thanks to filmmakers such as Buster Keaton or the Marx brothers, with quick dialogues and word games (Duck Soup, Leo McCarey, 1933). American cinema varied from burlesque comedy to traditional comedy with two subgenres (Huerta-Floriano, 2005: 57). Screwball, in the early 1930s, crazy, complex (Marshall, 2009), with love as the central focus (Brunovska & Jenkins, 1994) and a strong female main character (Shumway, 2012). And, on the other hand, a more sophisticated one, which maintained the pantomime with intricate dialogues and ridiculous situations in which Ernst Lubitsch also excelled by creating social satire from irony with *To Be or Not to Be* (1943).

Journalistic figures fluctuate through these cinematic currents. Thus, after the Second World War, Frank Capra, in 1946, in *It's a Wonderful Life*, creates a character of a disillusioned journalist who joins other reporters and columnists reflected by his "interest in addressing the world of Journalism" (Durán, 2020: 164), in *It Happened One Night* (1934) or *Meet John Doe* (1941) he satirizes society. In the same way, Billy Wilder transferred the traits of this profession to his film journalists (Peña-Fernández, 2014). In particular, *Ace in the Hole* (1951) reflected the manipulation to obtain an exclusive, a sensationalist exponent that was recovered in the comedy *The Front Page* (1974), a theatrical adaptation referred to above, and in which there was a moral code that showed a corrupt world. (Ehrlich, 2004). In order to address authority satirical cinema stopped at the fourth estate, given that the media became champions of social freedoms (Galán-Gamero, 2014).

Therefore, cinema has satirized the journalistic profession with the mockery of media manipulation in *Network* (1976, Sidney Lumet), a direction also taken by *Zelig* (1983) directed by Woody Allen. In the current century there are multiple productions as in director Adam McKay's *Anchorman*: *The Legend of Ron Burgundy* (2004), which poked fun at 1970s journalism with an arrogant, self-absorbed TV host. These examples visualize two contrasting ways of representing journalism: "the sensational and brutal, and the one that goes after the truth and public service" (Castro-Carpintero, 1995: 109).

The journalistic profession and its media outlets' integration in cinema has been widely analyzed (Barris, 1976; Ghiglione, 1990; Langman, 1996; Ness, 1997) to the degree that "cinema and journalism have always gone hand in hand" (Tosantos, 2004: 12). It is considered a film plot, a subgenre (De Felipe and Sánchez-Navarro, 2000) that, like the rest of the options, conditions the perception of public opinion (Requeijo, 2013) by reflecting the changes and identities of the society in which it is elaborated (Sorlin, 1991). It facilitates a counteranalysis (Ferro, 1988) and serves as an echo of the collective imagination (Imbert, 2010), under diverse and varied contributions (Lagny, 1997) that are compiled in databases and classifications (Sierra-Sánchez, 2012; Mínguez-Santos, 2012). Thus, they represent didactic solutions for journalism students, such as that of Santillán (2018), for whom it is not possible to "show in detail what daily work is and means" due to the many realities of this profession (Narvaiza, 2022) that, when simplified, remains buried under stereotypes or idealism.

In this way, American journalism is represented in "honest citizens", heroes at the service of truth and democracy (Ehrlich, 2004), and by a portrait of the "bad journalist", who acts as a control mechanism over those who deviate from of the function that society entrusts to them (Ehrlich, 2006). These are disruptive myths in American films that Quirós-Fernández (2015) shows how the journalist and the media outlet are portrayed as villains (Picos, 2002; Ortega and Humanes, 2000; Ortega, 2006) and not as social heroes that are praised (Bezunartea et al., 2007a; Mera, 2008). This continued antithesis (Ghiglione and Saltzman, 2002; McNair, 2010) has helped to portray a combative image (Steinle, 2000), but a defender of citizens' rights as well (San José de la Rosa et al, 2021).

Despite the essential actions that journalism undertakes to keep society informed, a negative representation is portrayed, which resorts to excessive consumption of alcohol and cigarettes by rude journalists (Gersh, 2011) and gambling addicts. Peña-Fernández (2011) analyzes Billy Wilder's characters and adds aggressiveness, precariousness and choice between personal promotion or the audience, due to their social function. The contempt for university education and renouncing family life over professional life is also referred to (Saltzman, 2003) as topics that establish an obsession with work, which undermines non-existent or stormy personal relationships (Vega-Álvarez, 2003: 36). Therefore, the inability to have a family life is reflected

in "out of the ordinary" stories in which "features are magnified" (Bezunartea et al., 2010: 149) that are analyzed from satire due to ethical dilemmas (Bezunartea et al., 2007b) and by the challenges of a profession in which a pessimistic vision prevails (Fahy, 2022), which Osorio (2009: 430) links to "lighter" film genres such as comedy, her favorite genre. In this regard, she emphasizes that the mass media have become consolidated as an "inseparable part of people's lives," which is why journalists appear "everywhere" (Osorio, 2014: 792) in the films of the last decade of the 20th century.

Consequently, this professional facet is represented in the literary world and in its own media environment, which suffers from works dealing with journalistic specialization, which is why the novelty of the satirical vision of Hollywood, an industry that acts as "a gigantic projector that expands throughout the world" (Arconada, 2007: 67) is integrated.

3. Objectives, hypotheses and methodology

An analysis is developed on how the journalistic profession has been satirized in films that are icons of popular culture, objects of entertainment and study (De la Vega, 2019) from film theory, with a narratological aspect and film aesthetics, in particular. Thus, the importance is established of the cinematographic representation of journalists and the world in which they develop their profession. Thus, the research objectives are laid out to resolve this premise:

To verify what the main central narratives of satirical cinema about journalists are and how the economic, political and social reality of their time are included.

To identify the main stereotypes (representation of the journalistic figure, qualities, professional practices and defects) that define the journalist in films that use satire as the main storyline.

To specify the satirical features that allow for defining the aforementioned stereotypes, and classify them according to the object of the film: representing the sensationalist and brute journalist or the one who pursues truth and public service.

To determine if there is an evolution over time of the aforementioned themes, stereotypes and satirical features.

The choice of the sample was made chronologically, choosing one film per decade, not to generalize, but as a specific evolutionary sample. American cinema was chosen for being the pioneer in representing this profession through the potential production and distribution of the Hollywood industry. The US is a country that has implemented its democracy through freedom of the press and whose values are reflected in its film creations, which not only reflect its clichés and stereotypes but also those of other cultures. This global reach is expressed in reviews and awards achieved from "the physical and social characterization of the settings and characters" (Mandujano-Salazar and Ramírez-Sánchez, 2020: 125) of the six selected titles.

Network (Sidney Lumet, 1976) presents veteran television host Howard Beale faced with his potential dismissal due to low ratings. In an unexpected reaction, Beale announces live on air that he will commit suicide in seven days so that the network can prepare "in a big way" for his farewell. The shows of support from viewers turn the television program into a success and Beale into a role model who will have to deal with the ambitious journalist Diana Christensen or the chairman of the company that owns the television, Arthur Jensen. It is the portrait of television controlled by financial powers and journalists relegated to entertaining the audience and not making them think.

Broadcast News (James L. Brooks, 1987) is a comedy that presents the daily lives of television news journalists at an American network. The portrait shows us classic journalistic stereotypes: Tom, as the friendly, modern and superficial anchor, Jane as the brilliant producer who is in the shadows and who truly creates the program or Aaron as the veteran and charismatic journalist who is somewhat behind in modern television. All his virtues and defects are reflected from a satirical vision of information on television.

The Paper (Ron Howard, 1994) immerses us in the world of the American tabloid, New York Sun, for 24 hours. There we see, again, the classic stereotypical journalists of the tabloid press: Henry, as the classic workaholic with a low salary; Bernie, as the gloomy boss, who chose the newspaper over his family; Graham, as a newspaper owner with financial problems; Alicia, as the ruthless managing editor who is forced to layoff staff in order to achieve maximum profits; and Martha, Henry's wife, a journalist from the newspaper, who is on leave due to pregnancy, which makes her question her profession and her marriage. A murder in the city will serve as a backdrop to show all the conflicts, desires and obsessions of all of these journalists.

Chicago (Rob Marshall, 2002) is a musical comedy centered on Velma Kelly and Roxie Hart, two criminals arrested for a crime of passion in the 1920s in Chicago and who are awaiting their sentence. The journalistic coverage of this case, thanks to the action of lawyer Billy Flynn and reporter Mary Sunshine, creates a climate of commotion in the city, where corruption, crime and fame come together while public opinion is influenced by the message of the press and, especially, the radio.

Morning Glory (Roger Michell, 2010) introduces us to Becky Fuller, a hard-working, efficient and responsible television producer, who, after being fired, receives the opportunity to produce a program in New York at the worst news program in the city. She will have to deal with some eccentric presenters, Mike Pomeroy and Colleen Park, and other histrionic journalists, who will make her life miserable. However, Becky will try to succeed and establish journalistic values in an attempt to make the program successful.

Don't Look Up (Adam McKay, 2021) tells the story of Kate Dibiasky, a doctor in astronomy who discovers, with the help of her professor, Dr. Randall Mindy, that a comet will hit Earth in six months. Alarmed, they will present their discovery to NASA and the main political establishments, who don't pay attention to their warning. Therefore, they go to the media where the news will become a phenomenon thanks to television focused on sensationalism, with presenters like Brie Evantee or Jack Bremmer, and journalists like Adul Grelio, who will echo the news and try to find out the reality of discovery. The entire plot is a satirical perspective in what seems like something so surreal that it will end up seeming real.

With this content, approach and objectives, the aim is to answer the research questions: ¿What are the issues that the film industry considers crucial to report journalism from satire? What criticism is articulated about journalists and/or the power of the media and how are they represented in the characters? And what humorous resources does satirical cinema use to show journalistic work? Likewise, based on these concerns and in order to offer a critical analysis and understanding of how the world of journalism is portrayed and reflected on on the big screen, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1. The plots of satirical films about journalists include the economic, political and social news story of the moment.

H2. The media and the daily life of the profession are exaggerated and ridiculed.

H3. The journalist characters oscillate around antagonistic stereotypes.

H4. Satirical humor in comedies about journalists is achieved through parody and irony, as opposed to jokes and physical humor.

Methodologically, these objectives are obtained through quantitative and qualitative content analysis (Casetti & Di Chio, 1994) of a descriptive-comparative nature that uses four categories, through 45 variables, which have been analyzed by descriptive statistics with the SPSS program. For its elaboration, studies of comic fictions have been compiled (Gascón-Vera, 2022; Bonaut and Grandío, 2009) with special relevance to the analysis of the main characters, understanding that they are the ones who exert influence on the story with their physical, social and psychological dimension, together with the categories of Lacalle (2014) and the "adaptable" model of Galán (2006: 77) on the plot, conflicts and environment (Pérez-Rufí, 2005; Seger, 2000).

This study is complemented by the journalistic professional subdivision of Laviana (1996) and with the stereotypes of the journalist from fiction and cinema compiled by Narvaiza (2022) on Osorio (2009) and Peña-Fernández (2011). Serrano Martín's (2022) considerations are also taken into account regarding the time used by the main characters of the serrand footage to finish the news product, the use of information sources, their development and their section (Bezunartea et al., 2010) that are complemented with the values and ethical counter values of Quirós-Fernández (2015).

Subsequently, the news values of Schulz (1982) and Harcup and O'Neill (2001) are used, which join the glossary of humorous techniques of Berger (1993/2017), while, finally, the scenes (Gascón- Vera and Marta-Lazo, 2020) and the visual story are analyzed: movements, shots, light and color (Cortés-Selva, 2016; Casetti, and Di Chio, 1994).

Table 1: Categories to analyze each satirical film

1. THEME AND NARRATIVE			
Main subject:		Current news story line:	
MEDIA OUTLET ANALYSIS ➜ agenda setting			
Current news, number and detail	X	Elements of production and distribution:	
Number of media outlets mentioned	X	Journalistic tendencies:	
Qualifying adjectives of media outlets:		Skill development:	
ANALYSIS OF JOURNALISTIC VALUES			
Impact:	Relevance, consequences, vital implication, global power, international influence		
Coverage:	Identification, geographical or cultural proximity and media agenda		
Curiosity:	Dynamism, uncertainty, emotion, drama, surprise, sex, scandal, crime and tragedies. Novelty and surprise, unforeseen newsworthy events		

Entertainment:	Kind, humorous or funny stories, human interest, controversy
Main characters:	Power elite and/or relevant celebrities subject to journalistic coverage
Ethics:	Ethical transgression, punishable conduct, controversy or conflict

ETHICAL VALUES:	ETHICAL COUNTER VALUES:
Professional integrity, defense of freedom of expression, social and professional responsibility	Disloyalty, lack of professional and personal dignity, lying/manipulation and sensationalism

2. CHARACTERS AND STEREOTYPES			
Number of main and secondary characters	X	Number of journalist characters	X

ANALYSIS OF JOURNALIST CHARACTERS		
Physical size	Age	1) Young, 2) adult 3) elderly
	Physical appearance:	Hair, clothes, wardrobe, makeup, hight, complexion, race
	Characterization:	Voice/tone, props, gestures
	Social class	1) Low 2) medium 3) high
	Sex	1) Man 2) woman 3) other
	Feelings	1) Single 2) couple 3) married 4) other
	Sexuality	1) Heterosexual 2) homosexual 3) bisexual 4) unknown
Psychological dimension	Temperament	1) Sensitive 2) cerebral 3) sentimental 4) intuitive
	Motivation	1) Overcoming 2) survival 3) learning 4) teaching 5) care-giver 6) fun-loving
Social dimension	Family role	1) Mother or father 2) brother/sister 3) son/daughter 4) miscellaneous 5) without family
	Main framework	1) Work 2) housing 3) entertainment 4) all 5) other
	Role	1) Narrator 2) actant 3) observer 4) opponent 5) vain 6) hero 7) villain 8) assistant 9) professional 10) comedian
Social dimension	Stereotype	1) Ambitious y frivolous 2) freak 3) tyrant boss 4) implicated boss 5) evil tycoon 6) disgraceful journalist 7) workaholic 8) unethical cynic 9) arrogant 10) cool journalist 11) police beat journalist 12) sob sister 13) fool 14) rookie 15) veteran loser 16) other

Action dimension	1)Generates- creates 2) Suffers-receives 3) both 4) no	Friendship, love, abuse of power, family or work confrontation, illness or addictions, danger, change of ideals, culture shock, freedom	
Journalistic dimension	Professional dedication	1) Tycoon 2) director 3) chief editor 4) political journalist 5) special correspondent 6) tabloid reporter 7) implicated journalist 8) critic and columnist 9) hard news reporter 10) society journalist 11) sportswriter 12) photographer and other	
	Section	1) Politics 2) economy 3) sports 4) international 5) local 6) research 7) culture/society 8) miscellaneous 9) other	
	Praxis	Source checking	1) Nothing 2) little 3) enough 4) a lot 5) no
		Preparation time	
		Education	

3. HUMORISTIC RESOURCES → superioridad, incongruencia y liberación			
Language	1) Allusion 2) ranting 3) definition 4) exaggeration 5) joke 6) insults 7) childishness 8) irony 9) voice imitation 10) literality 11) puns 12) sharp retorts 13) ridicule 14) sarcasm 15) satire		1) Yes 2) No
Logic	1) Absurd 2) accident 3) analogy 4) comparison 5) catalog-numbering 6) coincidence 7) deception 8) ignorance 9) errors 10) errors 11) investment 12) repetition 13) inflexibility 14) subject - variation		
Identity	1) Before and after 2) burlesque 3) caricature 4) eccentricity 5) shame 6) exhibition - allegation 7) grotesque 8) imitation 9) interpretation 10) mimicry 11) parody 12) scale 13) stereotype 14) unmasking		
Action	1) Chase 2) antics 3) speed 4) time		

| **4. VISUAL ANALYSIS**			
Set design	Scenes	Description:	
		1) More than 10 2) between 20 and 50 3) more than 50	
		1) Outside 2) inside	1) Repetitive 2) innovative
	Camera	Shots and/or details:	
	Light design	1) High 2) medium 3) low	
	Colorimetry	Tone 1) warm 2) cold	Saturation 1) yes 2) no
Visual	Graphics and post-production:		
Sound	Music and effects:		

Source: prepared by the authors. Note* qualitative variables: quantitative X

4. Results

The analysis conducted on Hollywood film satires focuses on the media and political manipulation of the great communication empires, as well as the damage of pretentious news that prosecutes cases of corruption, sexual matters, political changes and economic aspects. Media representation is constant. It shows the work frenzy of newsrooms that go from typing and printing on rotary presses to digital media that operate based on "clickbait." They focus their attention on the newsrooms, the place where the action occurs 57% of the time, followed by the parameter of all, which links it to housing and entertainment. "Old-fashioned facilities, lack of resources and a disgusting salary," sums up the chief producer of *Morning Glory,* while at the same time exposing, among others, the complications of local stations, correspondents and the need to measure social success. in millions of followers and/or hashtags: #DONTLOOKUP.

Another relevant issue is the contrast between the media and its reliability: "Newspapers are in business to make money – why not us? They criticize us for supposedly pandering while they run WINGO Games" (*Broadcast News*) Therefore, an exacerbated story of entertainment television and its lack of credibility is intertwined with the relevance of social networks, believing what is important when it really isn't and turning the main characters, even television celebrities, into memes. Journalists are essential here. A total of 87 characters appear in the analyzed satirical films with 51 journalists, 40% are main characters, with an uneven distribution (Graphic 1).

Graphic 1. Distribution of characters and number of journalists
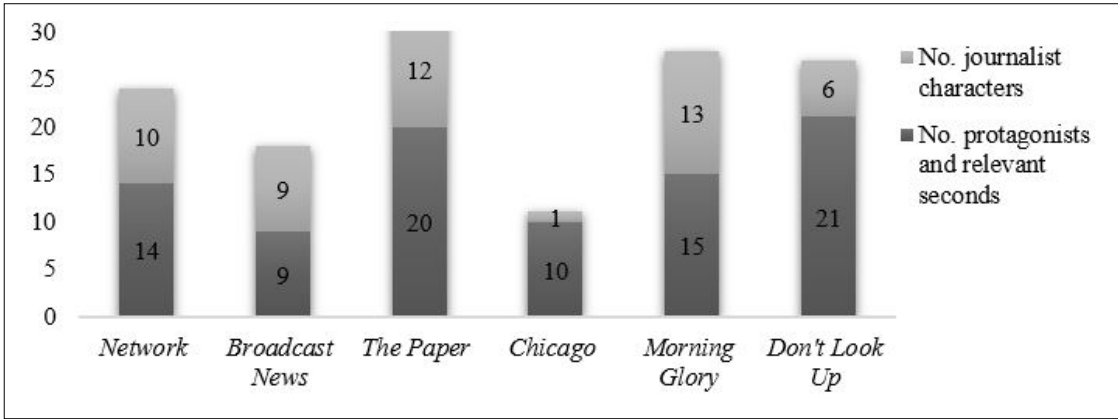
Source: prepared by the authors

Likewise, the audience and sensationalism mark the news of these films that have a high satirical component in their representation (Table 2).

Table 2. News and news outlets represented in the journalist satire

Film	Nº	Specific news	Media outlets referred to
Network	9	Deportation, opinion, shooting, attack, gun control, murder, attack against the president, Marxism and communism politics, robberies	*CBS, ABC, NBC, UVS, The New York Times*
Broadcast News	7	Armed situation in Latin America, gay presence in institutions, rape, sexual scandal, fighter jet accident in Syria, bombing, dead bodies, rescue on ice in Alaska	Newspaper boxes and television competition
The Paper	12	Murders, subway accident, bank robbery, interview with a teenage murderer, who sleeps with whom in Hollywood, penis implants, international news, Stock Market	*Radio WINS, Daily News, News Days, The New York Sun, The New York Sentinel*
Chicago	3	Murders committed by different women	*Reed Book, Chicago Evening Star, Chicago Courier, Chicago Observer, Revista News*
Morning Glory	24	Floods in Iowa, miniskirts, pumpkin and juice diet, psychic animals, interview with Eva Longoria, Asian baby of lesbian mothers, transvestite, diarrhea, pap smear, armed conflict in Bosnia, exclusive on the arrest of the Governor	*Today Show-NBC, Good Morning America-CBS, Day Break-IBS*
Don't Look Up	3	Riley Bina and DJ Chello breakup, sheriff's sex scandal and sexual images sent by the US president, destructive comet	*The New York Herald, The Daily Rip - NBS, CNV, Autopsy, Patriot News, World, CVN Business, MeTube, PBN Kids, Science News*

Source: prepared by the authors

The aforementioned competition is a fundamental part of the story and is used to justify sensationalism, the central theme of most of the sample. Phrases like "*Good Morning America* has the arsonist's mother, we have to get his wife" legitimize the competition to achieve a successful program, an editorial comment or better interviewees make the difference: "that's bullshit, I'm not going to lower myself to that" or underestimating themselves "they beat us again." Furthermore, they invoke disqualifying adjectives towards journalism such as "garbage" or "little circus," they ironically say "nice program" or admire the "sacred" *New York Times*.

Accordingly, the importance of likes, clicks and audience curves thanks to "happy news programs" is made explicit. "Don't we have anything fun today?" asks the editor-in-chief of *The Sun* (*The Paper*) at the staff meeting, where someone says they have "nice spaghetti (bloody) shots." This media outlet also shows other forms of sensationalism that limit the ethical code, such as putting photos of massacres on the front page because it helps sales and blaming today and exonerating tomorrow, although, finally, after materializing in a physical conflict, the truth ends up imposing itself when they stop the printing press. Likewise, the way of writing headlines is one of the distinctive characteristics of serious press like *The Washington Post*, while the tabloid press abuse question marks in "stupid" headlines, they say.

"People are smart. They want information. Not junk, which is all you are willing to give them. Junk, sugar, sugar, sugar." These are the complaints of the veteran *Morning Glory* journalist about the morning news and their "news nonsense" in which, for example, they put their weatherman on a roller coaster or make the co-anchor kiss a frog or play some bagpipes. "Jack and Brie love doing science segments. Just remember keep it light, fun. Jack and Brie love to have a good time." These are the instructions they give the scientists of *Don't Look Up* before explaining the end of the world, a "terrifying" fact "that isn't supposed to be fun," but that, as the journalist says: "It's something we do around here to keep the bad news light." The other news anchor adds that it "Helps the medicine go down." Therefore, the essence of journalism as a sweetener is visible in these satires, which we formulate as a paradox: people do not want to consume horror, for example, the end of the world has a similar impact to basic weather and traffic news; nevertheless, the news is based on that pain.

The reaction is the key that sensationalism seeks, taken to the extreme by *Network*, where the protagonist announces his suicide to promote the show: "It will be exciting and fun," without knowing that he will be murdered live for this very purpose. A consequence of the impact on the audience through exaggeration: "An editorial denouncing me in "Redbook" magazine. 'Not in memory do we recall a more satanic double homicide,'" Velma Kelly says in *Chicago*. Likewise, the media seeks to exaggerate the news, so much so as to announce a message on a battleship with fireworks.

On the other hand, the broad impact of the journalistic message is key and its absence, a problem. The *Network* format reaches 50 million Americans, while the city of Chicago is united by the voice of the journalist who says what is happening on the radio, which is related to a recurring vital implication. "Can you believe it? I just risked my life for a network that tests my face with focus groups," says a *Broadcast News* character. It is also the characters themselves who make fun of their small audience: "Half the people that watch your show have lost their remote. The other half are waiting for their nurse to turn them over," they say in *Morning Glory*. To achieve this, half a century ago, the protagonists of *Network* thought trends were strong programs, counterculture, dramatic shows and "political terrorism news." Thus, as an example of its acid satire, the rundown of the successful news program includes the sections of a fortune teller, the department of truth, dirty laundry and interviews with the general public, after the editorial cry of the "angry prophet of the antennas."

Figure 1. Examples of sensationalism in the satirical films that were studied

Sources: frames from *Morning Glory*, *Network*, *Chicago* and *Don´t Look Up*

"Our profession is at risk," is the threat that is exposed at the beginning of *Broadcast News*, a conference where entertainment films generate more interest than news, which its production company differentiates from news as a business, as in *The Paper* where the competition wants to sign the main character to reinforce proximity, not quality. In that debate, *Morning Glory*'s review defines it as "an incongruous but somehow perfect mix that defends the versatility of the treatment of serious news and entertainment." Big and small stories are produced with traits of big surprise, since the audience is governed by emotional and morbid peaks like sentimental news ridiculed in *Don't Look Up*. These situations are similar to the effect that the lawyer in *Chicago* looks for, when fabricating a story so that the press shows and portrays a fragile character in each of its headlines.

The commercialization of life leads to the extreme of lies and manipulation. "Who knows what shit will be peddled for truth on this tube," "television is not the truth (…) We're in the boredom-killing business," and "we are not a respectable network, we are a whorehouse network." With these exemplary phrases, they use satire to demand journalistic ethics and proclaim the right to freedom of speech. In *Network* the first amendment is mentioned, *The Paper* avoids publishing something wrong and changes the headline "Gotcha" to "They didn't do it," although they say in the newsroom: "You're accurate and ethical. I want you out of this building."

Likewise, the *Don't Look Up* scientists face a crime against national security for telling the truth. In *Network* they say "the only truth you know is what you get over this tube," which is why it is so important to listen to the ethical position in professional representations as exemplified by *Broadcast News*, which unmasks a journalist who manipulates images to achieve an emotional shot. It is an unethical offense that could get him fired, to which the person involved responds that he was promoted for it. Therefore, the characters are the result of this complex ecosystem of competitiveness, sensationalism and commercialization, an aspect that is reflected in their temperament. In the analyzed sample, seven are cerebral, five are

sensitive, the same number as intuitive, and four are sentimental. According to the films, *Network* and *The Paper* have the same distribution with a character of each of these four temperaments, however, in *Morning Glory* and *Don't Look Up* the cerebral ones predominate (Graphic 2).
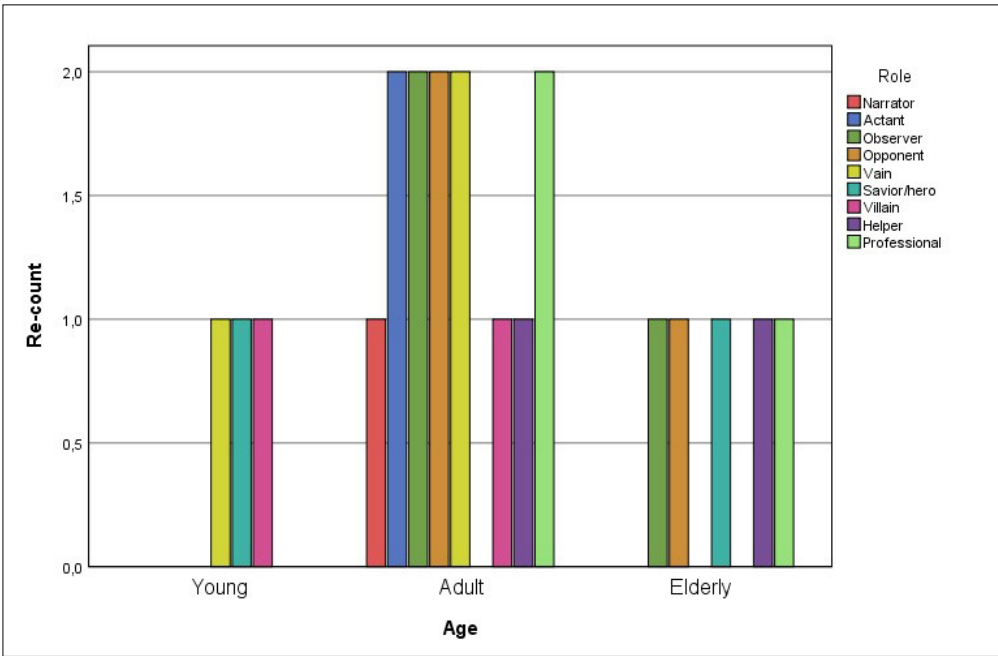
Graphic 2. Distribution of the main journalists' temperaments according to their sex
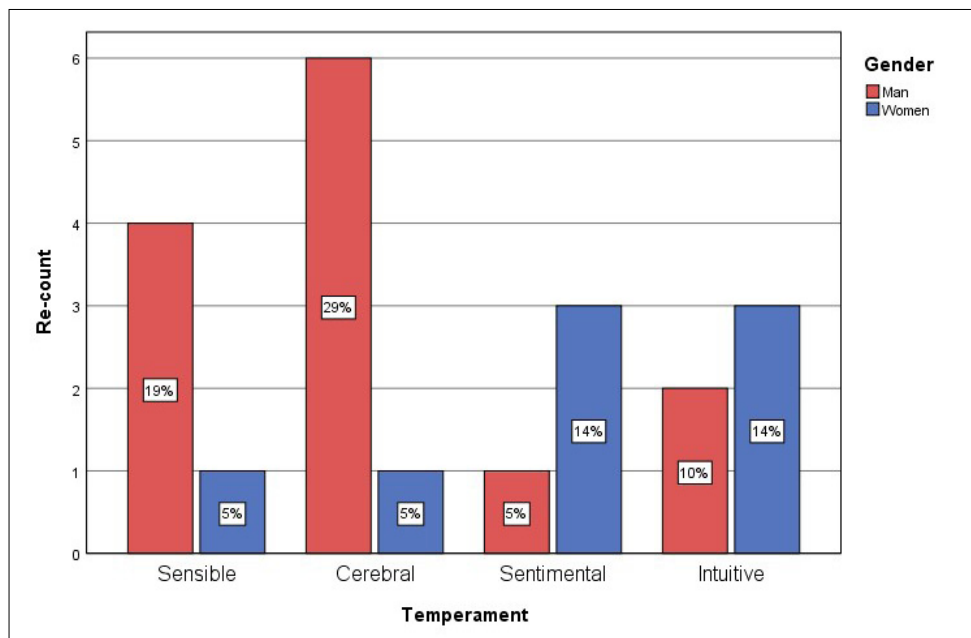
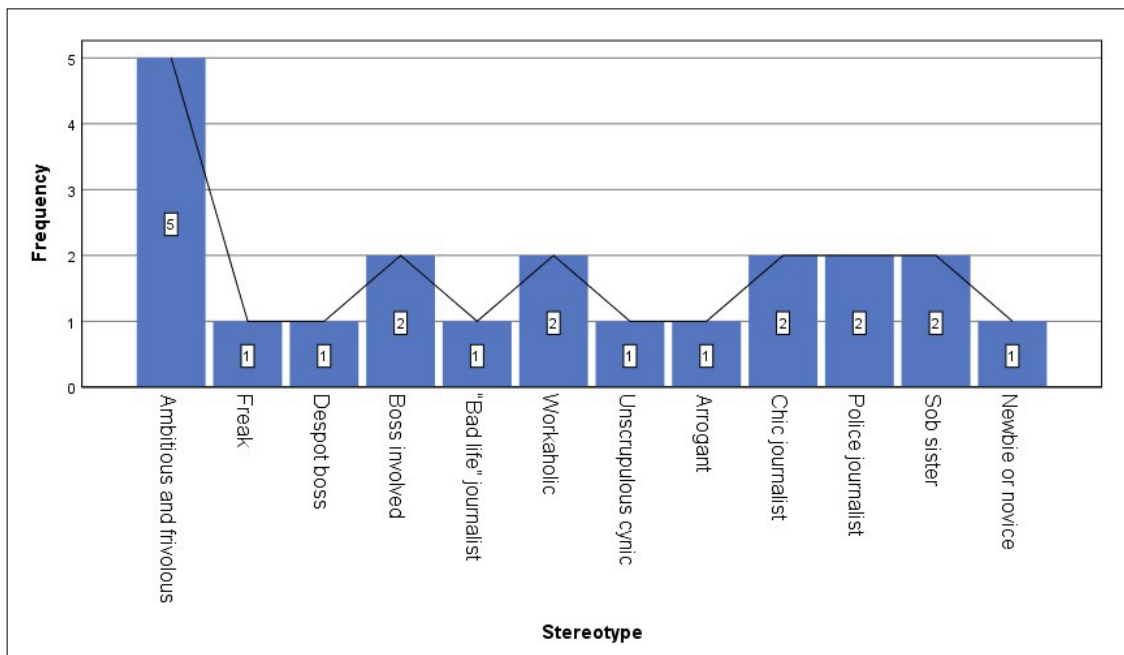**Source: prepared by the authors with SPSS**

In this calculation, the majority roles are those of observer, opponent, vain and professional, with three cases of each of them, and only hero and professional coincide in both sexes, while villains are concentrated in two journalists, young and adult in *Don't Look Up*, by promoting a bad outcome for the news and its protagonists. Likewise, the vain character corresponds to young characters who want to climb positions of responsibility, while the helper and professional profiles are related to older ones. The age of the protagonists is adult in six out of ten cases analyzed, the rest are half young and half old, so 20% of the characters suffer a cultural clash with what is established, largely due to the generational contrasts of the profession and the way they understand the world (Graphic 3).

Graphic 3. Roles of the main journalists according to their age

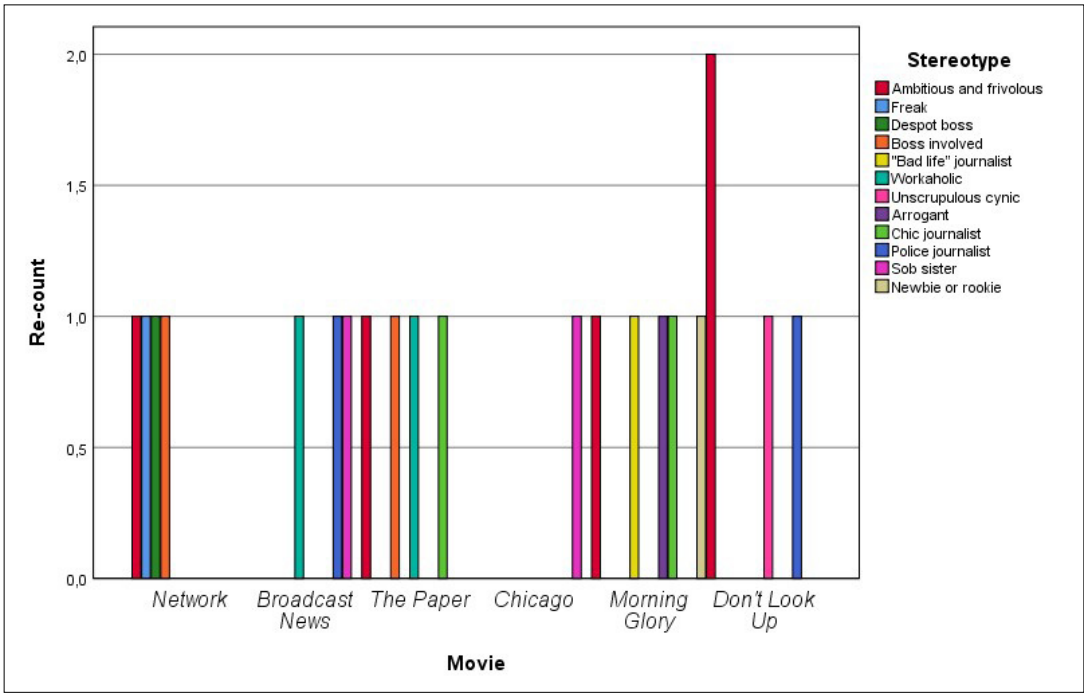**Source: prepared by the authors with SPSS**

Graphic 4. Distribution of stereotypes in the main journalist characters

The main stereotype (Graphic 4), with 24%, is ambitious and then there is a large distribution of the rest of the options, showing a wide variety of acting roles among the twenty characters that portray the satire of journalism. Likewise, their distribution by film is very uneven, drawing a wide spectrum of stereotypes, generally negative, where the bosses involved are in the first films, as well as the workaholics who give way to sentimentalists and cynics (Graphic 5).

Graphic 5. Visibility of journalistic stereotypes according to each of the satirical films

Source: prepared by the authors with SPSS

In the qualitative category, a profile of attractive journalists who dress formally with a suit, elegant clothing and even sexy, in the case of females, is considered. All of the journalistic profiles that are part of the action demonstrate great gestures, power of conviction and striking tone of voice with which to express their information, while the most observant reproduce temperance and abuses of authority. Likewise, except for the most novice profiles who expose their mediocre salaries, journalists present themselves as powerful profiles with a high economic position, contradicting the usual nature of a profession in which instability is observed in layoffs and resignations.

Morning Glory's producer is fired by a more educated producer, and she fires the host for unethical behavior. Also in *Broadcast News* they readjust their staff with a contrast, the reporter resigns due to a decrease in the quality of the work, while the rich news anchor refuses to give up $1 million of his salary to save the network. Likewise, resignations due to ethical principles are represented in *Network*.

In the analyzed films there is no parity, there are 13 men compared to 8 women. The majority are single, so the family environment is poorly represented; although there is a couple and two married couples, a widower and several romances. In them, sexuality is limited to heterosexuality, although sex has been captured in these satirical films both explicitly (*Network,*

Broadcast News, Chicago, Don't Look Up) and implicitly (*The Paper, Morning Glory*). At the same time, there have been examples of sexual scandals such as in *Don't Look Up* when the president of the United States sends intimate photos, a plot that, together with *Network* and *The Paper*, shows disloyalty. In the first two, their protagonists break up their marriage for an unscrupulous female journalist, although they are later forgiven by their wives, and the last exposes professional disloyalty by stealing news in a new job interview: "I couldn't resist. They are so smug over there".

The results demonstrate the volatility of emotional relationships and that infidelities and disrespectful behavior are shown in the satirical films, where the vision of murders (*Network, The Paper* and *Chicago*) and shootings is also urgent. Abuses of power are one of the most repeated dimensions of action along with confrontations, which gives an idea of the high operability of conflicts to guide journalistic plots with satire. Love is evident in 70% of the protagonists and friendship drops to 57%. Furthermore, *Broadcast News* is the film with the most changes in the story arcs of the three protagonists, changing their responsibility, work and romantic situation. *The Paper* journalist is the only pregnant one and goes so far as to say that "once you have kids, a man's best work can still be ahead of him. But a woman's is very definitely in the past," attributing the difficulty of being a mother and combining this profession. The rest of the female faces are presented as empowered figures without family, since being a journalist requires their full occupation.

Thus, the idea of "slavery" of journalism is perpetuated with scenes where the cell phone does not stop ringing or they arrive home at three o'clock in the morning. Therefore, his profession is above his family and his romantic relationships due to two visions: to be the best producer, the best journalist or to continue being a renowned veteran journalist. The latter carry together the double stereotype of addictions to alcohol and tobacco, which is combined in *The Paper* with that of Coca-Cola. In such a way, seven characters suffer from health or addiction problems and three create this type of problem, while only six have no relationship with the danger. Therefore, family, friendship and emotional relationships are ignored by the demands of journalism with health consequences that reflect male fragility, with prostate problems in two veterans, while this is switched with the recurrent crying of female profiles. Likewise, continuing with the depiction of traits, 48% of these journalist characters have the motivation of self-improvement, followed by survival and fun (Graphic 6).

Graphic 6. Distribution of journalists' motivation in the satirical films
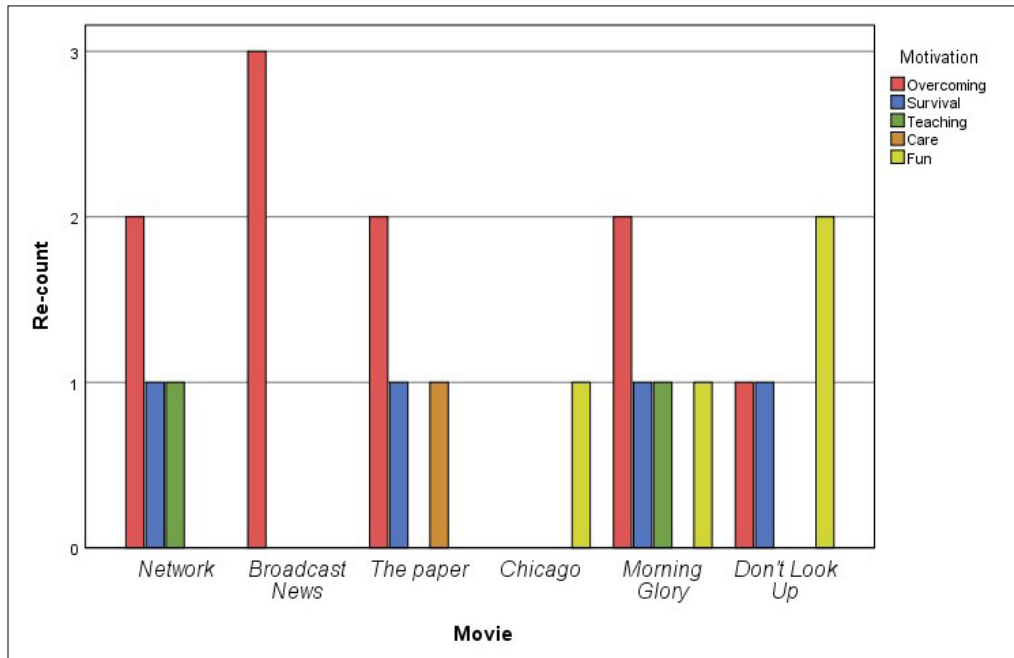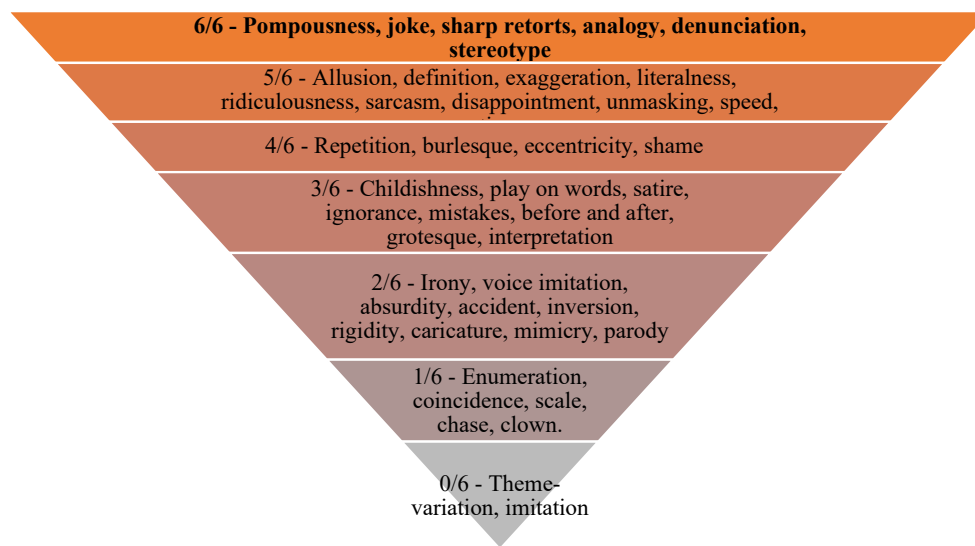
Source: prepared by the authors with SPSS

Which leads to the variable that nine characters have generated a change in ideals, six of them undergoing modifications; and generating freedom in seven. To do this, as in the stereotypes, a wide range of dedications and sections are shown, the most frequent being the director and editor-in-chief model, followed by the tabloid reporter and the society columnist. Therefore, regarding variety, the boss who wants his reporters to cover sensationalist topics prevails. However, there is a wide contrast of sources and a better elaboration time: eight characters have a lot of time and four have none at all. It is also verified that training is not an essential element, although it is true that, from the satire, eight characters are identified as having extensive journalistic training.

The thematic and protagonist analysis fluctuates over a multitude of humor techniques where sharp replies to insults are related to conflicts and pomposity with the ambitious or frivolous stereotype. (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Appearance of humorous resources in the analyzed sample

6/6 - Pompousness, joke, sharp retorts, analogy, denunciation, stereotype

5/6 - Allusion, definition, exaggeration, literalness, ridiculousness, sarcasm, disappointment, unmasking, speed,

4/6 - Repetition, burlesque, eccentricity, shame

3/6 - Childishness, play on words, satire, ignorance, mistakes, before and after, grotesque, interpretation

2/6 - Irony, voice imitation, absurdity, accident, inversion, rigidity, caricature, mimicry, parody

1/6 - Enumeration, coincidence, scale, chase, clown.

0/6 - Theme-variation, imitation

Source: prepared by the authors

Figure 3. Examples of humorous devices: error in *Morning Glory* and parody in *Chicago*
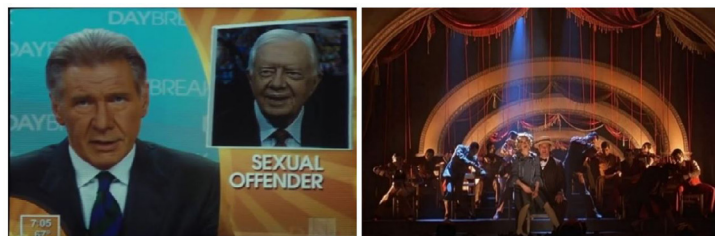
Source: Frames from the analyzed films

In the *Chicago* parody, the journalists are treated like puppets by the lawyer, who manipulates the main character by performing as a ventriloquist. They present journalists as manipulable puppets exploited by power who are played as pawns to help convince people to buy dolls from a murderer. The circus analogy is used in *Network* and in *Morning Glory* exaggerated by embarrassment and mistakes made with a sexual offender banner labeling a former president. Consequently, other forms of expression are ridicule or caricature (Figure 3). Another parody, in this case cinematographic, and included in *Don't Look Up,* is the film *Total Devastation*, which will be released the day the comet hits. Coupled with sarcasm, in the presentation, the

reporter responds: "That is so refreshing. I think we are all tired of politics." On the other hand, a banner is used to reaffirm the existence of an organization (Figure 4), while this resource appears in *Broadcast News* to present the protagonists as a sign of childishness and their aspiration in the world of television, thus presenting an idea of a vocational profession, also evident in *Morning Glory*.

Figure 4. Images of banners with the humorous resource of literality

Source: Frames from *Don´t Look Up*

Dramatic and emotional music is used as a satirical resource to add false sentimentality to an epic story (*Don't Look Up*) also captured in a romantic way (*Morning Glory*). Examples of the first aspect are the rain and storm effect when people go out to their windows to shout the slogan on *Network* and the second is the jingle in *Broadcast News*. All with the exception of the musical comedy *Chicago*, with highly intense dance scenes under lighting effects, mirrors and shadows that are only comparable to the high post-production of *Don't Look Up*, which uses a documentary tone. The wide and medium-long shots are the most recurrent, along with the reverse shot and close-up from different perspectives, where the camera uses viewers or logos to place emphasis on journalistic activities (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Frames with media outlets, optics and logos

Source: Frames from *Network, Broadcast News, Morning Glory* and *Don't Look Up*

Extreme close-up shots are common to show the protagonists' misconduct, as well as the details of the printing plates or production control room. Likewise, from a cinematographic analysis, the vast majority of films make unforgettable shots using a pattern of vanishing points relating to what is happening in the television news, which is complemented by showing headlines in *Chicago* or in *The Paper*. Resources are used to gather emotions, dramatize and create humor, while continuing to narrate through the aesthetic beauty of cinema (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Eye-catching shots with vanishing points
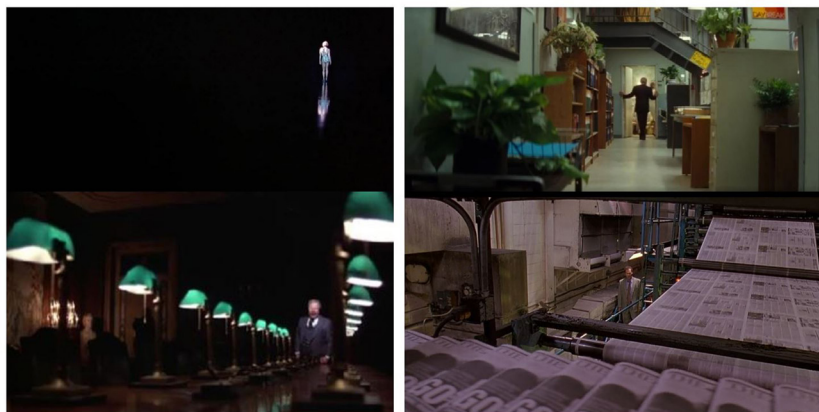
Source: Frames from *Chicago, Morning Glory, Network* and *The Paper*

Finally, the mise-en-scène of the analyzed films affects the repetition of the staging, from different points of view, with a satirical interest. Interiors prevail, as in *Network* and *The Paper*, the use of recognizable spaces such as the White House, as well as the use of means of transportation such as planes, cars and even boats. Nevertheless, offices and workplaces are the main settings in these films characterized by medium and low lighting *(Network, Don't Look Up)*, saturated, as in *Chicago*, and with a cold tone in the most satirical narratives. Therefore, the visual proposal is conditioned by the subgenres of the stories and the critical range of their journalistic purpose.

5. Discussion

Following the discussed results, it can be stated that Hollywood cinema satirizes the behavior of journalists, contributing to the social image of the media and shaping future citizen beliefs. The profession accounts for citizen reality through the filter of allegations and mockery of agenda setting, led by frivolous and morbid topics such as sex and violence, satirized with comic effects of surprise -getting the best retired presenter-, incongruity -murder as an image of tenderness- and superiority -position of power-. Thus, from the theories of humor (Attardo, 1994), journalism offers a counterpoint that confronts abuses of authority and danger, with multiple points of local, international and global news that are simplified due to their great

complexity (Narvaiza, 2022) which are told with American commercial satire and a broad staging of roles, motivations, traits, professional performances, sections and levels of professionalism.

Broadcasting News and *The Paper* leave the viewer with an image of journalistic commitment to the truth, by momentarily refusing sensationalism and lies. Two satires that, according to Serrano Martín (2022), present to the public a combative vision (Steinle, 2000) for the truth as a citizen's right (San José de la Rosa et al., 2020), which is evident in the media critique in *Network*, the sentimental and professional entanglements of *Morning Glory* or the mockery of *Don't Look Up*, which also reflects the excesses and permissiveness of the profession, just like *Chicago*. A contrast to the professional work of journalists, which jumps from the plot to the characters whose cinematographic stereotype continues to fluctuate between villains and heroes, presented as "rogues" and "guard dogs" (San José de la Rosa, 2021). A distinction between "good guys and bad guys" (McNair, 2010) that synthesizes (Mollejo-Pérez, 2016), but motivates diverse conflicts and singular characters (Sánchez-Noriega, 2022) that satire exaggerates with multiple temperaments.

The journalist protagonists are rich in nuances, while sharing with other genres: selfish motives, power struggle, disloyal feelings or aggressiveness (Peña-Fernández, 2011). Likewise, there is a division of profiles according to their age. The precariousness of young profiles materializes from a need for improvement only achieved by obsessive dedication (Bezunartea et al., 2010) that contrasts with the lack of importance of training. In these decades, it has not been possible to break the stigma that journalism is a profession that can be accessed without specific training (Ortega and Humanes, 2000) and in which continuous improvement and spurning the family are necessary (Saltzman, 2003), as well as the appearance of stormy relationships (Vega-Álvarez, 2003) with colleagues (Laviana, 1996). Another script resource is used to establish profiles with shared addictions (Gersh, 2011; Bezunartea et al., 2010) from two points of view: rude people who abuse power or those who are committed and helpful.

In the first decades of the analysis, the journalistic routines of analog media (*Broadcast News*) were maintained until the nineties. This is the moment when Osorio's considerations (2014) are shared in satirical cinema (*The Paper*) with a vision of a "disorganized, compact and noisy group that runs madly" towards its source of information as in subsequent decades, where it seeks to persuade their audience that journalists are reprehensible (*Chicago*) and their media system ridiculous (*Morning Glory*). Those who go so far as to ignore relevant issues such as climate change and ideas of climate catastrophe on the public agenda (*Don't Look Up*) (Fahy, 2022), thus refuting the democratic obligation to inform citizens truthfully about the events that affect their lives (*Network*).

Therefore, satirical stories (Griffin, 1994) assume, like the ideas of Santillán (2018), the responsibility of disseminating the relationship between society and power and reject the errors and miseries of sensationalism to achieve justice, because the role of the journalist in society is indispensable. A devastating story a priori, in which ethics and improvement triumph, thanks to the differential position of satire by provoking laughter about practices that it dismantles before viewers, making clear the need to promulgate journalistic deontology with comic stories.

6. Conclusions

This analysis shows how the satirical representation of the journalistic profession magnifies the profession's need to obtain exclusive news in order to beat strong competition. To achieve this, despite the radiating sensationalism as a formula and trend, journalists narrated from cinematographic satire advocate the need for the economic, political and social informative story of the moment (H1). Which is translated into local, national and international news that reveals scandals and is used to put on the pulpit of social judgment what is unknown to the public, whether it be the business ploys of communication groups or the imminent destruction of the world.

Therefore, the relevance of journalism depends on breaking news that is refined as the necessary advantage for global media survival. Despite the satire, vital news is not the most viewed. Humor is used to make the position of fun versus information frivolous through everyday journalistic events such as the need to obtain sources in tough times, which is materialized in races, countdowns and deadlines. These stories are told from a production control room, a television and radio broadcast, production or editorial meetings that show each of the time periods, since, from this progression, a profound technological progress is seen linked to journalism, but not its training. The mass media have varied over these decades from being unknown elements to being loyalty brands to, now, being subject to the demands of online users.

The profession is exposed in an exaggerated and mocking way (H2) to denounce the deficiencies of journalistic praxis, but its contrast with ethical professional traits is noted to show what good journalism is. To do this, journalistic characters use a series of stereotypes and antagonistic traits (H3) that represent ferocity or professional ethics, in the vicissitudes of which everything goes for the audience. Likewise, male models of the committed journalist, bad life, arrogant and workaholic are perpetuated; while the strength of female journalists is reflected, from success after an arduous path of improvement, as frivolous unscrupulous people or future mothers in conflict.

Furthermore, the stereotype is patterned together with exaggeration, jokes, sharp retorts, analogies and critique as a formula for satirical humor, which is different from what was expected, by delimiting the humorous resources with more exaggeration and conflict than parody or irony (H4). Comedies, according to their genre, are finally characterized by a visual treatment with flashback shots and the creative use of the journalistic units themselves such as televisions, headlines or groups of journalists. A self-referentiality that has a different set of lighting, due to its subgenre, while the music and the effects increase the sensationalism.

In short, the portrait provided by American commercial cinema in the last 50 years is more realistic with the journalistic profession than the starting point, but without ceasing to be critical of the media power over media outlets from satire that is sharpened to demonstrate the vanities of sensationalism. Thus, it returns the power of decision to the public, from the remote control to laughter, opposed to gloominess. Thus, the lack of professional ethics is penalized because only the truth fits in the deontological code and humor, as a counterpoint, is used to elevate it. Hollywood satirical cinema dismantles journalistic failures and supports valid ethical practices with few heroes and villains, but with a wide range of stereotypes of satirical critique.

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8. Specific contributions of each author

	Name and surname
Conception and design of the work	Patricia Gascón-Vera and Joseba Bonaut-Iriarte
Methodology	Patricia Gascón-Vera and Joseba Bonaut-Iriarte
Data collection and analysis	Patricia Gascón-Vera
Discussion and conclusions	Patricia Gascón-Vera
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Joseba Bonaut-Iriarte

9. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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