

Mapping and Mocking: Spanish Cuisine and Ramón Gómez de la Serna's “El primer mapa gastronómico de España”

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Abstract:

In July of 1924 Spanish vanguardist Ramón Gómez de la Serna published “El primer mapa gastronómico de España” in the humor weekly *Buen humor* (1921-1931). Although Ramón’s map locates and catalogues Spain’s alimentary wealth and diversity, his accompanying vignette mockingly deconstructs the supposed objectivity of the map and the cartographic authority of its creator, the “cartógrafo gastronómico.” This study places Ramón’s commentary and map in the historical and social context of 1920s Spain, a period during which two very different lifestyles co-existed in the same Spanish “nation.” Ramón’s *cartógrafo* exists at the margins of both versions of Spain. Ramón’s mocking of the *cartógrafo* to provoke the laughter of his readership serves as a social critique of the Spanish nation-building project as it ultimately subverts and undermines the Spanishness of Spanish cuisine and gastronomy. In his description of the *cartógrafo*’s mission, Ramón demonstrates the failure of a singular Spanish identity based on “liberal national” citizenship (Álvarez Junco 83).

Keywords:

Gastronomy – Map – Ramón Gómez de la Serna – Spain – 1920s – Nation.

In July 1924, Ramón Gómez de la Serna published in the humor weekly *Buen humor* “El primer mapa gastronómico de España.” The focus of Ramón’s vignette and the “author” of the map is a “cartógrafo gastronómico” who grows fat while traveling throughout Spain in trains, by coach, and by donkey to create his “primer mapa gastronómico,” which locates and catalogues Spain’s alimentary wealth and diversity.¹ As a comment on Spanish cuisine and gastronomy,

¹ Though the title of Ramón’s article attributes to the “cartógrafo gastronómico” the creation of Spain’s “primer mapa gastronómico,” Maria Paz Moreno has identified a gastronomic map of Spain that predates Ramón’s, by Melquiades Brizuela, published in his *Obra culinaria nacional* (1917).

Ramón's text both subverts and undermines the Spanishness of those categories. The resistance he presents to the notion of a Spanish gastronomy dwells in the tension between the order imposed by the map—the central visual focus of the text—and the disorder created through humor, in this case a mocking satire of nation-builders and their projects.²

Ramón's mocking of the *cartógrafo* to provoke the laughter of his readership serves as a social critique of the nation-building project. In this article, I examine the function of the map as a modern text that represents Spain and its national gastronomy and demonstrate how the accompanying vignette deconstructs the supposed objectivity of the map and the authority of its creator, the "cartógrafo gastronómico." In the second section, I explore the meaning of gastronomy for Spain in the early twentieth century to provide the social and economic context for Ramón's mocking of the *cartógrafo's* gastronomical expertise. My analysis of the text places Ramón's commentary in the historical and social context of 1920s Spain, a period during which two very different lifestyles co-existed in the same Spanish "nation." The figure of Ramón's *cartógrafo* exists at the margins of both versions of Spain and demonstrates in his gastronomic mission how a singular Spanish identity based on "liberal national" citizenship fails (Álvarez Junco 83).

Ramón's map and its accompanying text are one example of a style of gastronomical writing that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and focused on Spanish cuisine.³ Other examples include, but are not limited to, the epistolary series *La mesa moderna* (1888) by Mariano Pardo de Figueroa (Dr. Thebussem) and José de Castro y Serrano (Un Cocinero de su Majestad), Ángel Muro's *Conferencias culinarias* (1890), Julio Camba's *La casa de Lázulo* (1929), and Dionisio Pérez's *Guía del buen comer español* (1929). In *La mesa moderna*, "Thebussem" and "Un Cocinero," in an exchange of twelve letters and an appendix, debate issues such as culinary identity, the language politics of cuisine, and royal menus. Muro's *Conferencias culinarias* (1890)

² The year after its appearance in *Buen humor*, Carmen de Burgos included Ramón's map and the vignette that accompanied it, re-titled "Mapa Gastronómico-Humorístico," in the prologue to her cookbook *Nueva cocina práctica*. Burgos presents the text as one that demonstrates the variety of "productos culinarios" incorporated into Spain's "cocina nacional," which "no tiene nada [. . .] que envidiar a ninguna" (65). She does not comment on Ramón's vignette, though the title she gives it, "Mapa gastronómico-humorístico," demonstrates that she participates to some degree in the laughter generated by the project, even if her response to that laughter is limited and blunt. The title is one of approximately five differences between the two versions of the text. Perhaps the most meaningful variance comes at the conclusion of the article; where the *Buen Humor* text specifies that "la solemne entrega de la papeleta" is a "preciosa ceremonia" (13), Burgos describes the "entrega" as merely "muy original" (Burgos 69). It seems likely that the *Buen Humor* version reflects another round of editing, while the version that Burgos included in her cookbook is an earlier draft that Ramón shared with her.

³ Ramón treats gastronomical themes in a number of his *greguerías*, many of them collected in *Greguerías gastronómicas* (1989), edited by Rafael Flórez and José Esteban. In several *caprichos* and *disparates*, he also alludes comically to culinary or gastronomical themes, for example in "Caldos de microbios" (*Obras completas* 872) or "El hambriento" (847).



(Image courtesy of the Hemeroteca Municipal de Madrid)

consists of a series of *folletines*, each containing four articles, published monthly and sold for one *peseta*. Each article is followed by a number of recipes; article topics range from women's general incompetence in matters relating to "el trabajo de la cocina"—since it is "tan delicado y exquisito, que la mujer, por su organización, no puede hacerlo de continuo, lo mismo un día que otro" (17–18)—to commentary about menus and the animal composition of *embutido* produced in Madrid.

Ramón's map and vignette precedes by five years the work of humorist Julio Camba and gastronomer Dionisio Pérez. In *La casa de Lúculo o el arte de comer*, Camba identifies garlic and "preocupaciones religiosas" as the defining characteristics of Spanish cuisine (30), and he advocates that gastronomy should be a topic of interest for middle-class readers and eaters despite being "esas clases alternas que pasan meses de privación y semanas o días de opulencia" (11). Produced at the request of the Patronato Nacional de Turismo (who retained the book's copyright), Pérez's book documents the author's observations as he invites readers to travel with him in a "viaje gastronómico" (40) through "las gloriosas cocinas de las regiones españolas" (39). Pérez writes from a position meant to vindicate Spain's national cuisine:

"hay una cocina clásica española, histórica, tradicional, enriquecida con la aportación de los diversos modos regionales de guisar [. . .]. Esta cocina nacional ha sido desconocida y calumniada. Luego ha sido olvidada y suplantada por la propaganda y la puesta en moda de la cocina llamada francesa" (9).

Formally, these works are not cookbooks. Their focus is primarily gastronomical, as they consider what people eat in Spain and what is Spanish about what they eat. These texts and others like them attempt to create a "taste community" for Spanish cuisine (Parkhurst Ferguson 17). Jo Labanyi has argued that laws, literature, and history wrote the Spanish nation into existence and provided spaces for debate and negotiation about the complexity of social, political, and economic modernization in Spain; in these gastronomical texts we find a parallel forum that addresses what might constitute the Spanish culinary and gastronomical nation. But of the writers and intellectuals who write about Spanish cuisine and gastronomy, this text by Ramón Gómez de la Serna is singular in its resistance to the project of Spanish nationalism.

While Ramón's text shares characteristics with the work of these literary gastronomers, it also corresponds to the aesthetic and humoristic style of *Buen Humor*, the weekly satire magazine where it was published. Edited by Pedro Antonio Villahermosa y Borao (Sileno), *Buen Humor* (1921–1931) was part and parcel of the broader cultural shift known as the "felices años veinte" with its epicenter in Spain's cities (Serrano and Salaün). Guided by the ideas of French philosopher Henri Bergson, "Sileno" conceived the publication as a "laboratorio de experimentos" (Ciberniz). As such, it broke with the practices of traditional satirical publications in Spain; its articles

and illustrations focused on psychological portraits of people on the streets and it featured sketches of daily life that highlighted absurd or unexpected elements. Its most frequent contributors included, in addition to Ramón, Julio Camba, Luis de Tapia, Pérez Zúñiga, and Fernández Flórez, and it paved the way for the work of the “generación inverosímil” whose contributions influenced satire publications *Gutiérrez* (1927-1935) and *La Codorniz* (1941-1978) (Ciberniz).

Mapping and Mocking

Both the title of Ramón’s article and its positioning on the pages of *Buen Humor* emphasize the map that Ramón drew to accompany the written text. The map itself is centered on the fold between the two pages and flanked on both sides by two columns of text, which extend down two thirds of each page. The map aligns objects (dishes) with locations along coordinates that facilitate their identification with the different regions and cities of Spain.⁴ The things that populate this space—in this case, dishes, beverages, and produce—are inscribed over and around urban locations. By identifying principal cities and populating their surroundings with the names and drawings of the dishes to be found there, the map communicates that the viewer may find the dishes portrayed and sample them on his or her travels. Further, he or she may associate it with an abstract experience of that space or a lived experience of a particular location.

The abstract space represented by the map generates meaning for those who can imagine that space—those who participate in modernity and are capable of seeing themselves as the inhabitants of the abstract representation of a map of Spain. In 1924, this group of citizens resided primarily in cities. They were among the approximately fifty-seven percent of the population that was literate (Viñao Frago 584), and they had enough disposable income to participate in the expanding consumer culture of the 1920s.⁵ The readers of this article in *Buen Humor* are members of a society who understand that the rectangular shape on the page represents Spain; they are also members of a class who move about the geographic space of Spain. In fact, the map’s appearance in this particular number of *Buen Humor* indicates that readers might find the map useful for their summer vacations. The covers of the issue are decorated with a cartoon of a compressed Spanish landscape, showing a train and its tracks, a *fonda*, and individuals enjoying the beach, lazing under a tree in the countryside, flying a kite, and picnicking on the mountainside. Other articles in the issue refer to summer vacations, offering “Consejos veraniegos” (8) and a “Guía del veraneante: Lista de playas, balnearios, localidades montañosas y pueblos sanos y pintorescos que recomienda BUEN HUMOR a sus lectores” (14).

⁴ The map includes Portugal, as well, but the author does not comment on the *cartógrafo’s* excursions beyond the political boundaries of Spain.

⁵ See Serrano and Salaün’s *Los felices años veinte: España, crisis y modernidad* (2006) for an analysis of the expanding consumer culture of the 1920s.

Nonetheless, there is a tension between what Ramón's map communicates and what the map and vignette together communicate. According to Ricardo Padrón, "Modernity naturalizes geometric, optical, isotropic space as a fundamental epistemologic category [. . .]" (28). A modern map not only facilitates an understanding of the abstract representation of Spain, it also serves as an "objective tool" for transmitting collected information (data) to be interpreted by map-readers who participate in modernity and its epistemology (Pickles 33). The collected information, in the case of Ramón's text, are the dishes, beverages, and produce that populate his map, which together become "amenable to systemic understanding [. . .]" (Padrón 28). The systemic understanding generated by Ramón's map is that of Spain's national gastronomy.

Yet, even as the map promotes a systemic understanding of Spain's gastronomy, its cartographer gains authority, an "undue authority," according to Padrón (28). John Pickles notes the multiple sources that inform the creation of modern maps. In many cases, he says, they are "more or less copied from nature" (36), but they are also generated from documentary sources, including other maps, government surveys, surveyors' notes, photographs, and traveler accounts (36). In Spain, many of the detailed and accurate modern maps created as early as the first part of the sixteenth century relied on data provided by local leaders in response to government questionnaires (Padrón 32). These modes of compilation attest to the fragility of any understanding of a map as an authoritative, objective document. A map is not a singular authority, but a synthesis of several possible sources, some of them more subjective than others. Though the abstract appearance of the modern map may lead its users to assume its "scientific authenticity" or to understand it as the equivalent of a photograph of the space it represents (Wright in Pickles 36), an understanding of the sources used to produce maps underscores their inherent subjectivity. This subjectivity is also due to the cartographer's decisions to include things considered important and to leave out things deemed unimportant.⁶

As Padrón points out, Spanish government officials and leaders understood "the cartographic rationalization of space to be a crucial component of the exercise of power," but this understanding did not extend to the population at large (32). Few maps made it into print; they persisted as rare objects, so rare that the modern, abstract definition of "space" only took hold in the popular consciousness in the eighteenth century (Padrón 32–33). Previous uses of maps were limited to "the work of technically minded professionals actively involved in either theoretical or applied cosmography" (33). The relative rarity of print maps, in addition to their limited circulation among the population, underscores the gulf between official knowledge, or what those with power

⁶ The foundational essay on this topic is J.B. Harley's "Deconstructing the Map" (*Cartographica* 26.2 (1989): 1-20). Harley calls for an epistemological shift in the nature of cartographic interpretation, challenging the supposed objectivity and scientific nature of cartographers' work and the "assumed link between reality and representation" dominant in cartographic thinking.

or proximity to power could understand about representations of Spain's cartography, and the understanding available to those who lived far from those centers.

These two issues—the “undue” authority of the cartographer and his interlocutors’ capacity to understand the nature of his map-making work—Ramón exploits for humor in his vignette. For example, even though the cartographic profession requires close attention to the technical considerations of mapmaking (Pickles 34), Ramón’s “cartógrafo gastronómico” allows his enthusiasm to affect his technique and distort his map. He includes dishes from *pueblos* that general maps ignore: “El cartógrafo gastronómico se va convenciendo de que no hay profesión parecida a la suya y alarga el emplanamiento de sus pueblecitos y hasta apunta las sopas rojas de Corcoleros, pueblecito insignificante que no figura ni en los mapas generales” (13). The map he elaborates, “atributivo y optimista,” reflects the inebriated efforts of one who “sigue tomando las medidas de su mapa y probando los vinos de todas las regiones” (13). The consequence of his excess is a map in which elements like scale and distance are arbitrary and improvised: “las escalas de las distancias de este mapa y de sus productos son un poco arbitrarias, pero se debe a como [*sic*] ha sido improvisado” (13). And the *cartógrafo* defends the nature of his map to the detriment of its reality/accuracy, pronouncing “Ni la escala de uno por diez mil ni veinte mil son escalas serias para mí. ¡Tiene tan diferentes medidas las cosas de la imaginación!” (13). This portrayal of the construction of the map highlights the subjectivity at the heart of such documents, which are supposed to mirror with as much scientific and technical accuracy as possible the reality of the Spanish territory. The “cartógrafo gastronómico,” with his deliberate exaggerations and imaginations, generates a document that functions to aggrandize the gastronomical offerings of Spain, what Pickles would describe as a propaganda map elaborated “to distort information, and display it in ways that seek to persuade the map-reader of a particular viewpoint” (37).

Ramón’s vignette also frames cartography as a technology of representation that some Spaniards fail to understand, with humorous effect. The imagined readers of the vignette are supposed to understand its humorous function. By contrast, the individuals the *cartógrafo* encounters in his journeys have little understanding of a cartographer’s work. Despite the *cartógrafo*’s explanation that his profession traces its history back to the Greeks when “el ateniense Arcestrato recorrió todas las regiones de su país para estudiar los productos de su suelo y componer un mapa gastronómico” (13), the people he encounters in Spain’s *pueblos* misunderstand both what cartographers do and what gastronomy is. Ramón writes:

Los de los pueblos dicen equivocadamente al señalar al cada vez más recio cartógrafo:
 – Ese es el del mapa *astronómico*.
 – ¿Y qué es eso? – inquiera alguno más preguntón y menos conformadizo que los demás.

- Pues que se le convida a comer y cuenta a todo el mundo lo que le has dado.
- ¡Cualquier día le convidaba yo! – exclama el preguntón (13)

The first speaker mistakes gastronomy for astronomy, generating confusion with the idea that the cartographer would be creating an astronomical map by traveling throughout Spain. Yet the respondent, one Ramón distinguishes for his precocity by describing him as “preguntón and menos conformadizo,” divulges his ignorance of astronomy. Most curious about this exchange is the explanation given to the *preguntón* about the *cartógrafo*'s map: “Pues que se le convida a comer y cuenta a todo el mundo lo que le has dado” (13).

Not only do the speakers demonstrate their ignorance of gastronomy and astronomy, but they show no understanding of what a map really communicates. For the respondent, the encounter with the *cartógrafo* and his map does have a communication function: the *cartógrafo* tells everybody else what he was fed. Yet, neither the respondent nor the *preguntón* can conceive of a community in which information about what they ate or offered to a visitor would be relevant or important to anyone outside of their locality. The *cartógrafo* “*cuenta lo que le has dado*” (emphasis mine, 13) as if it were town gossip. The town-dwellers do not understand why such information would be important in any way other than as gossip.

But maps represent in geometric and isotropic form the elements of the social world that a society considers important, while ignoring those considered unimportant or undesirable (Pickles 20). Thus, the generation of a map of Spain's gastronomical resources would seem to indicate that these dishes are important elements in Spanish society. In being represented on the map, the dishes of Spain's regions, cities, and *pueblos* acquire the status of codified objects that, like other objects of Spain's infrastructure that populate modern Spanish maps, communicate to users of the map something of the space represented. If the act of placing on a map the “pote gallego” enjoyed in Galicia, the “pimentón de Raya” produced in Almería, and the “salchichón de Vic” offered in Catalonia makes these objects amenable to a systemic understanding of Spanish gastronomy, whose interests does that understanding serve? To answer this question, we must first understand what is communicated by the term “gastronomy” and for whom the notion is relevant.

Is there a basis for a Spanish gastronomy?

By placing Spain's gastronomic offerings on a map, Ramón indicates its importance to the social world of Spain, a social world limited to those who read *Buen Humor* and participate in modernity. Yet, the reactions of those who encounter the *cartógrafo* indicate the fundamental lack of relevance of the *cartógrafo*'s mission, as the notion of gastronomy has no relevance to the daily lives of the great majority of people

in Spain, especially those who live outside of its urban centers.

The term *gastronomía* was first defined by the *Real Academia* in 1852 as “el arte de preparar una buena mesa, y la afición a comer regaladamente” (RAE 345). The concept first came into general use in France when J. Berchoux published *La Gastronomie ou l’Homme des champs à table* in 1801. Berchoux’s book was translated to Spanish in 1818, but only toward the end of the nineteenth century did writers in Spain begin to refer to a Spanish gastronomy, defined in contrast to its French counterpart.⁷

The *Larousse Gastronomique* defines gastronomy as “the art of good eating” (547); the Spanish definition—“el arte de preparar una buena mesa”—implies that there’s more at stake than simply the act of eating well. Gastronomy involves preparing or presenting a good table, ostensibly for the enjoyment of discerning eaters. Gastronomy is not limited to consuming; it encompasses something of a meal’s presentation, too. This distinction mirrors in interesting ways the behavior of the characters Ramón sketches in his vignette. Although the inhabitants of the *pueblos* the *cartógrafo* visits have no conception of what gastronomy is, their role in this externally generated construct is to present an appealing meal, a meal to be enjoyed by a discerning, joyous, and gluttonous eater from outside. Ramón reports, when describing the locations the *cartógrafo* visits, “Cada región guarda un guiso o un producto para sus huéspedes” (66). This offering of a special product, or *guiso*, may imply the participation of the *pueblo* dwellers in one part of gastronomy, but since they do not understand the significance of what the *cartógrafo* seeks in eating the offered meal, those who prepare it do not participate in the gastronomic project.

Gastronomy’s analogue, cuisine, only became relevant to people’s lives in Spain in the late nineteenth century, when culinary preparations underwent a systematic transformation and codification, from the gestures or traces that result in a prepared dish into the words in recipes that are archived in books. Cuisine, the codified, archived culinary knowledge presented in cookbooks or other culinary texts, became relevant as a category of knowledge only when people were able to read and when writing about food began to be published in widely circulating popular media—cookbooks and magazines.⁸ The case is parallel for gastronomy. In order to recognize particular dishes consumed in Spain as significant or important to the society and accord them a greater importance, people in Spain needed to be able to participate in gastronomy, not just as naive preparers of rustic dishes for an outside visitor, but as participants in a socially relevant practice.⁹ And yet, to eat well or to eat “regaladamente,” Spanish people must

⁷ See Ignacio Domènech’s *La gastronomía: libro de suma utilidad en el arte culinario* (1899). In 1906, Domènech also founded the magazine *El gorro blanco: Revista Española del Arte de la Gastronomía en general. Cocina elegante y económica* (1906–1918, 1919, 1945–1946). Richard Ford wrote of “Spanish gastronomy” as early as 1845 in his text *Handbook for Travellers in Spain* (OED).

⁸ See Ingram. “Spain on the Table: Cookbooks, Women, and Modernization, 1905-1933.” Duke University, 2009.

have the means to do so. This was not the case in 1920s Spain.

Though contemporary historians eschew the conventional trope of Spain's backwardness in favor of viewing the economic growth, social diversification, and urban expansion in the 1920s as in line with other radical changes happening in the rest of Europe, Spain's modernization was unequivocally uneven (Mangien 140). Spain's principal cities embraced a consumer culture on par with those in the rest of Western Europe. And even provincial cities left behind traditional models of urban life in favor of the "modelo urbano capitalista" (Mangien 137-138). Nonetheless, a city like Cáceres, with a population of 27,000 inhabitants in 1927, did not have running water until 1931 (Mangien 137-138). The national spectacle of Las Hurdes resulted in the construction of a highway where none had existed before, but urban citizens' worries about what it symbolized centered on fears of disease rather than the misery of the region's inhabitants (Mangien 138). This unevenness is reflected in Ramón's vignette, in the way the *cartógrafo* travels. The *cartógrafo* "toma trenes, diligencias, boriquillos. Necesita llegar a lo más profundo de las estribaciones de la sierra" (12). Mentioning the modes of transportation that the *cartógrafo* uses is meant to make readers understand the rigor and diligence with which the *cartógrafo* carries out his mission. To reach all points of Spain, trains do not suffice. The *cartógrafo* must travel on coach routes and even by donkey to reach certain *pueblos*, perhaps especially those that do not figure in the "mapas generales" that the *cartógrafo* uses to organize his travels. Understanding these modes of transport in relation to the incipient development of a modern transportation network in the 1920s underscores the vastly different levels of development and infrastructure present in Spain. Though the monumental expansion of a roads network under Primo de Rivera's economic development programs resulted in "linking town and country as never before" (Martin 275), these improvements did not serve to correct the gross inequities between many rural dwellers and those who lived in cities.¹⁰ Paul Aubert notes that despite substantial improvement in birth rates and life expectancy during the first decades of the twentieth century, the living conditions of the population as a whole did not improve (34-37). Citing statistics from the 1926 report from the *Anuario estadístico de España*, "Talla de los mozos útiles del reemplazo de 1925," Aubert links growth statistics to insufficient nutrition: "en 1925, un 45,2 por 100 de los quintos españoles miden menos de 1.63 metros" (37). Percentages of young men measuring less than 1.63 meters were greater in rural regions far removed from cities like Barcelona where, for example, a greater percentage of youths grew to heights over 1.70 meters (37).

These differing levels of development also determined how people ate. Isabel

⁹ The appreciation of the supposed simplicity of a rustic dish "served unpretentiously" by skilled cooks is another characteristic of the gastronome, according to the *Larousse Gastronomique*, as is the appreciation of regional specialties (547).

¹⁰ According to Martin, "from 1923 to 1929 9,455 kilometers of new highways were constructed compared to 2,796 over the preceding five years. Railway lines were extended a modest 800 kilometers, but extensive modernization of equipment took place" (503).

González Turmo identifies three different strata of eating and alimentary acquisitive power in her study of rural Andalucía beginning in the 1920s: the lower classes; the middle classes, who eat more or less the same kind of food as the lower classes but in greater quantities; and the upper classes, whose food tastes and menus reflect not only greater wealth, but also the ability to eat produce and meat cultivated on their own land (42). Even in cities, where living conditions were marginally better, the urban proletariat subsisted on mostly carbohydrates, eating little protein and only “symbolic” quantities of vegetables, fruit, meat, or fish (Carasa 251). Even if Spain produced what the “mapa gastronómico” suggests in the dishes the *cartógrafo* tastes in the course of his mission, the people working in the fields to cultivate the “*uvas de Totana*” or *tomates* and *pimientos* in Murcia would not have conceived of these foods as something they had a choice to consume.¹¹ For a population that eats a subsistence diet, there is no such thing as food choice, and thus no gastronomy—the definition of gastronomy implies a skill and knowledge in eating well, which is contingent on choice.

However, the reading public for Ramón’s article is a group that does have choice about food, choices that make a national gastronomy meaningful, even if the social and economic conditions of Spain render gastronomy a senseless concept for the majority of its inhabitants. By mocking the actions of the *cartógrafo*, Ramón’s text asks these readers to consider what motivates projects like the *cartógrafo*’s. Following Henri Bergson’s theory of laughter and the meaning of the comic, readers’ amusement at the images Ramón creates of the *cartógrafo* must have a social function.

In *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1900), Bergson, the philosopher whose theory of humor serves as the guiding philosophy of *Buen Humor*, proposes that laughter’s social function is to “humiliate” its object (48); he writes, “Laughter is, above all, a corrective” (60). In the map and its accompanying text, Ramón undertakes a critique of gastronomy by inciting the laughter of readers at the exploits of the practitioner of gastronomy. Ramón belittles the *cartógrafo*’s efforts, and by extension any practice of gastronomy, by framing them as ridiculous or discordant with the context he encounters.

First, Ramón begins the vignette by describing the inflated sense of importance of “los que hacen los mapas gastronómicos” (12). Their mapmaking is a mission of supreme importance: “tienen un cometido supremo, optimista, rumboso, trotón” (12). Their pompous sense of authority causes these mapmakers to behave “como unos corredores de comercio sin comercio que se hospedan en las mejores pensiones y piden

¹¹ See Montanari’s chapter in *The Culture of Food*, “The Century of Hunger,” for a discussion of two historical paradoxes: first, that populations undergoing high levels of demographic changes experience increased food insecurity; and second, food security increases for the poor when their communities are more isolated from urban or even agricultural development. Spain experienced a marked demographic shift in the first decades of the twentieth century as peasants migrated to urban centers like Barcelona and Bilbao for factory jobs. This shift also coincides with Primo’s wide-reaching infrastructure and transportation improvements.

a la patrona ‘el plato del país’” (12). Like those who travel as emissaries of trade and capitalism, the mapmaker installs himself into luxury accommodations and feigns a jaded travel-weariness by requesting the nondescript “plato del país” (12). And yet, this behavior is pure affectation since the *cartógrafo* has no *comercio*, and, furthermore, he begins his mission essentially malnourished: “el cartógrafo gastronómico comenzó su viaje flaco, debilucho” (12).

Second, Ramón converts the ersatz professional skills of the *cartógrafo*—not as a mapmaker, but as a gastronomer—into an object of ridicule. For example:

El que prepara el mapa gastronómico del país es como un astrónomo de las cazuelas y su nariz se entera en seguida del perfume de cada guiso.
 – No necesito levantar la tapadera para saber lo que hay en cada cazuela, y hasta si pasa o no del kilo y hay más patatas que borrego—dice el cartógrafo gastronómico. (12)

On the one hand, this man’s professional work is eating, an action that requires no special skill, but rather relies on the basic instincts of the human organism to feed itself. On the other, as a “cartógrafo gastronómico,” he must have special skills. In this case, those skills allow him to sniff the contents of the cooking pot and estimate the quantity of its ingredients.

Further distinguishing the *cartógrafo*’s skills, Ramón writes, “lo que el cartógrafo ingiere no pasa al olvido con esta ingratitud con que todo se pierde en cualquier otro comensal. El cartógrafo toma nota en el fondo del estómago de todo lo que prueba [. . .]” (12). The *cartógrafo*’s attention to the food’s passage through his digestive system indicates that his skills as an eater surpass those of smelling and tasting; the *cartógrafo* is in possession of an additional sensory organ, his stomach. Continuing the description with this simile, “como si fuese un vtriloco de la escritura en vez de la palabra” (66), Ramón suggests that the *cartógrafo*’s stomach writes a chronicle of the dishes he consumes. He furthers this estimation of the *cartógrafo*’s skills by describing his stomach as a “*bloc-notes* estomacal de nutridas hojas. Estrecha cuenta de cada cosa lleva el cartógrafo” (12). In addition to maintaining close count of all that he consumes, the *cartógrafo*’s stomach works as a recipe distiller, deducing ingredients and quantities like a machine:

Su estómago tiene tipo de formulario. Todo lo resuelve en la lista de su composición:
 Estragón, 2 gramos
 Alcaravea, 3 gramos
 Carne de cerdo magra
 Vino de Madera
 Mejorana

Un puerro (12)

Ramón bestows upon the digestive system of the human, subjective *cartógrafo* the skills and techniques of a modern machine, rendering the stomach as an organ with the capability to identify and measure ingredients. The machine's memory is the mass-produced *bloc-notes* that maintains in the tidy stack of its pages all the information the *cartógrafo* gathers while digesting. Robert Davidson, in his article "Animate Objects: Being, Obsolescence and the Limits of Citizenship in Gómez de la Serna," describes how Ramón animates the objects and items of modern life, granting them a sort of citizenship. In this case, Ramón animates the *bloc-notes* by converting it into the *cartógrafo's* stomach.

In another example, Ramón notes the skill of the *cartógrafo* in identifying wealthy tables in the regions he visits:

El cartógrafo de lo apetitoso conoce en seguida a los mejores banqueteadores de la región, esos que son tan sibaritas que tienen una vajilla con sus iniciales entrelazadas en el fondo de los platos, iniciales cuyo sabor se pega al plato que sirve. (12)

Playing with the double meaning of the word *plato*, Ramón's description of the china of wealthy banqueters echoes his description of "el hambriento" in his 1923 *Capricho* of the same title. The *hambriento* devours completely the dish served to him: "daba gusto ver comer a un hambriento" (848). And yet, "la preciosa vajilla de Etrétat, con florecitas y guirnaldas, les quedó descabalada, porque al rebañar los platos con fuerza los había dejado sin sus estampaciones" (848). In the case of the *hambriento*, the hunger Ramón profiles is so acute that the symbols of wealth or well-being indicated by the "florecitas y guirnaldas" stamped on the china are no match. They are sopped away in the *hambriento's* consuming vigor. In the case of the *cartógrafo*, the initials stamped on the *banqueteadores's* china have their own flavor, which communicates itself to the perceiving machine of the *cartógrafo's* stomach. These two descriptions "decenter" readers' ideas of the function of everyday items like plates/china and subjects' use of them, a characteristic Davidson identifies as part of Ramón's "vanguard sympathies" and his focus on the objects that populate modernity (276). Ramón bestows upon the china the animate power to impart its flavor to the foods it holds. He incites readers' laughter by endowing the *cartógrafo* with machine-like faculties.

The *cartógrafo gastronómico* is presented in a context in which some individuals, like the audience for this article, can choose the foods they consume. Yet, due to the social and economic conditions of Spain, food choice is limited to a select few. Ramón's *cartógrafo* lives at the margins of these two worlds. He begins his trip near starvation, and the vigor of his hunger, though attributed to his practice of gastronomy, reveals some inherent food insecurity. Yet, his behavior and interactions with the objects of

gastronomy and the fact that he is mapping this adventure indicate that the project itself is imagined for those who participate in gastronomy and, by extension, in Spain's developing modernity. Ramón frames the *cartógrafo's* mission as one with Spain's national interests at its heart. These national interests are the target of Ramón's mocking humor.

The comic "cartógrafo nacional"

A map makes possible a systemic understanding of the information represented. It also facilitates that information's involvement with ideological projects like nationalism and nation building. This is the case with Ramón's map, which offers a systemic presentation of Spain's gastronomy. But where fellow gastronomical writers discuss Spanish cuisine and Spanish gastronomy in terms that take for granted that Spain has a gastronomy and a cuisine, we see in the text accompanying Ramón's map an attempt to resist the nation-building project, by undermining the figures of those who participate in it, representing them as the comic "cartógrafo gastronómico."

Ramón describes the *cartógrafo* as a person who imagines himself a hero due to the nature of his task: "El cartógrafo nacional tiene algo de héroe [. . .]" (12). Though this is Ramón's first mention of the nation in any form, his description in the first lines of "los que hacen los mapas gastronómicos" mentions the *cartógrafo's* "cometido supremo, optimista, rumboso, trotón" (12). The *cartógrafo's* work serves a higher purpose than merely the objective relay of information; he himself connects it to an ancient past: "En la antigüedad—suele decir el cartógrafo—ya un hombre ilustre, el ateniense Arcestrato, recorrió todas las regiones de su país para estudiar los productos de su suelo y componer un mapa gastronómico." (13)¹² By connecting his work to that of this classical figure, the *cartógrafo* "invents the tradition" of the *cartógrafo gastronómico* (Hobsbawm). The irony is that even as the *cartógrafo* connects his mission to the practices of antiquity, the notion that such work is a Spanish tradition is immediately revealed to be false—the title of the vignette and map is "El *primer* mapa gastronómico de España" (my emphasis).

As a national hero, the *cartógrafo* "va descubriendo y fijando su territorio, que lo descubre de nuevo en el fondo" (12). The discovery and scrutiny, even re-discovery, as Ramón writes, of the national territory at the heart of the *cartógrafo's* mission are nation-building practices, precisely the type of "native cultural discovery and rediscovery" that Regina Bendix identifies as the role of folklore in *In Search of Authenticity: the Formation of Folklore Studies* (1997) (7). The *cartógrafo* ventures far from the spaces of Spain's modernity in its cities. In so doing, he uncovers or rediscovers the alimentary authenticity of Spain in its "Queso de Cabrales excelente" or in "los mejores perdigones

¹² Arcestratus of Gela was a Greek-Sicilian poet whose poem *Hedypatheia*, or "Life of Luxury," advises readers of the best foods in the Mediterranean world.

del mundo,” which “en el mapa general que lleva[,] dibuja con cuidado el nombre del pueblo y pinta el seno de su demarcación” (12). The expression “seno de demarcación” calls to mind a nurturing relationship between the land and the items it produces, which the *cartógrafo* reproduces in the plane of the map. Furthermore, if nationalism depends on the authentic, built on essentialist notions of identity, then nothing is more essential than a geographic catalogue of the foods people take into their bodies.

Ramón frames the *cartógrafo* as another figure among several generations of nation builders, among them folklorists, philologists, and historians. Beginning in the 1870s with the father of Spanish folklore, Antonio Machado y Álvarez, and continuing under the institutional auspices of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza and the Centro de Estudios Históricos, these historians and philologists worked to catalogue historic traditions under threat of extinction (Machado y Álvarez XII), rescue Spanish culture from foreign hands, and “descubrir España” through mostly literary texts (López Sánchez 294). The *cartógrafo*’s gastronomical mission to discover and rescue from foreign hands the food of Spain echoes these nation builders’ literary work in his effort to locate “unas toronjas en salsa negra”—a dish unaccounted for in any Spanish gastronomical survey, but mentioned by “un viajero alemán que estuvo en España en el siglo XVI” (12).¹³

The *cartógrafo*’s work is not just a heroic effort on behalf of the nation to rescue Spain’s national gastronomic patrimony and save it from oblivion or foreign poaching; it also serves a surveillance function. In the way that they lay out information and link it to geographic space, maps give the impression of communicating systemic knowledge. They also function as tools of control and surveillance for those who create, read, and possess them. Not for nothing did Phillip II invest so heavily in map-making technology in the early sixteenth century, only to have modern maps become rare, closely guarded objects of value. Ramón’s map reflects this surveillance function; in the vignette, he describes the *cartógrafo* as “un empleado del Catastro que sólo necesita la comilona para irse enterando” (12). A census of private property, this state institution required individuals to contribute a percentage of the value of their property’s production. The *comilona* is the *cartógrafo*’s method of gathering information about the production of people throughout Spain. The use of the term *comilona*, and the implication of gluttony it carries, applies not only to the *cartógrafo* in his work, but also to the state, the institution on whose behalf the *cartógrafo* works. He is, as Ramón reminds readers in describing the *oposiciones* he sits for, an employee of the state (13).

Additionally, Ramón shows how the work of the *cartógrafo* on behalf of the

¹³ In *Heterodoxos Españoles: El Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1910–1936* (2006), José María López Sánchez writes that Spanish citizens’ national consciousness was not the only issue at stake; nation builders had as their goal to place Spain among a cohort of other modern European nation-states. If nation builders want Spain to belong to a cohort of other European nation-states, those perceived as further along in their own modernization, that desire could be manifest in Spanish gastronomy, a category of meaning inherited from the French.

Spanish nation morphs into a decadent practice. In contrast to his malnourished state at the beginning of his trip, “a medida que avanza en un viaje se siente más fuerte y dispuesto. Se va redondeando, su mofletes parecen chupar caramelos constantemente, en su nariz brota la albahaca de la felicidad asomando por los poros de su cachipunta” (12–13). The image of the *cartógrafo*'s expanding girth and the material that flows from the pores of his nose combines with that of his sartorial condition to indicate a general deterioration. That the *cartógrafo*'s *plumas* “despuntáronse todas” and “la tinta china embebióse toda y volvió a ser el resto de una barra en el fondo del frasco” suggests a state of complete depletion, both of his energy and of his tools (13).

The exaggeration that characterizes the *cartógrafo*'s mapmaking, in that he allows his imagination to eclipse the scientific rigor of scale and the objectivity of distance, is another marker of the decadence of his project (13). In addition, convinced of his own self-importance, he prolongs unnecessarily the extent of his trip: “El *cartógrafo* gastronómico se va convenciendo de que no hay profesión parecida a la suya y alarga el emplaneamiento de sus pueblecitos [. . .]” (13). Read as comments about the *cartógrafo*'s nation-building activities, these descriptions of the end of his mission emphasize the exaggeration and aggrandizement of this project; these descriptions also function to comment on all nation-building activities. Ramón highlights the invented nature at the heart of collections of “national” traditions by showing readers how the national gastronomy of Spain is collected. Readers see a bumbling national *cartógrafo* who invents characteristics to his liking and prolongs his trip, all the while inventing a map according to his own gluttonous desires. In a bit of circular irony, Ramón shows in this vignette that a nation-building project—even one, like those of the Regenerationists, based in part on an attempt to correct Spain's post-imperial decadence—easily falls into its own sort of decadence.

In the final paragraph of his vignette, Ramón writes in the voice of the *cartógrafo*:

La importancia de ese primer mapa gastronómico de España no se me oculta ni a mí mismo. Bien podía el gobierno, en atención al esfuerzo que eso representa concederme una crucecita con distintivo azul o verde, que eso lo mismo me da, y a ser posible de oro y, desde luego, sin gastos y no sólo regalada sino ya empeñada por lo más que den, siendo una preciosa ceremonia la solemne entrega de la papeleta de empeño de la cruz recién concedida. (13)

This final thrust of satire centers on the *cartógrafo*'s desire for what Hobsbawm calls a “ritual occasion” or the “emotionally and symbolically charged sign of [. . .] membership,” the significance of which resides in its “undefined universality” (11). The medal, “una crucecita con distintivo azul o verde,” creates continuity between the *cartógrafo* and the heroes of Spain's national past. Though the *cartógrafo* wishes to signal his accommodating nature by specifying about the color that “eso lo mismo me da,” he

is very direct about the material value of the medal, specifying “a ser posible de oro” (13). That the relic of his exploits should be not merely this symbolic *crucecita*, but “la papeleta de empeño” for that medal signals three things (13). First, that the symbolic value of the relic itself is worthless to the *cartógrafo*. Second, more vital to him, given the destitution of his condition, is the exchange value of the item, which is why he specifies that it be pawned “por lo más que den” (12). Yet, the *cartógrafo* wants to maintain some sort of claim to the item and to the exploits for which he earned the cross, thus the paper that stands in for and records the existence of the artifact to be awarded during the requested “preciosa ceremonia” (12). With this final paragraph, Ramón empties of meaning national relics like the *cartógrafo*'s *crucecita*. He also reveals as unspecific the content of the ritual event and renders ridiculous the idea of those who would participate out of patriotism or national duty, since the only thing being awarded is a vulgar “papeleta de empeño” (12).

Conclusion

Ramón's map and vignette generate two understandings of Spanish gastronomy that are fundamentally at odds with one another even as they co-exist in the social reality of 1920s Spain. The map itself communicates to his informed readership the diversity of alimentary offerings available in Spain, which would seem to speak to the nation's wealth and to the value of the project itself. Its very existence identifies gastronomy as a category of meaning that should be important for the Spanish nation; mapping Spain's gastronomical offerings would seem to promote gastronomy as a modern practice by which citizens could come to know the authenticity of their nation. Its offering of tempting morsels and tasty dishes communicates that a Spanish gastronomy is important to the Spanish nation. Yet, that Ramón includes Portugal as part of this map should be readers' first clue that all is not what it seems.

According to Henri Bergson, “Any image, then, suggestive of a society disguising itself, or of a social masquerade, so to speak, will be laughable” (14). This is what Ramón reveals in his vignette. The map offers an image of Spain that the vignette reveals to be a disguise. Spain's attempt to disguise itself as a nation sufficiently modernized that a national gastronomy can be meaningful is unmasked by Ramón's description of the bumbling *cartógrafo*'s “cometido supremo” (12). During his mission, the *cartógrafo* imagines himself a *heroe* who rediscovers and documents the national culinary patrimony. Yet, he encounters fellow “citizens” who have no concept of either gastronomy or cartography. His travels take him beyond the borders of modernizing Spain to those places where people have so little to eat that the concept of gastronomy and the choice it implies become grotesque. Though the *cartógrafo* works to create a map that will demonstrate how his informants belong to the Spanish nation and how their dishes and products help create the national gastronomy, these rural dwellers are not citizens of modern Spain. They may inform, but they cannot participate in, any “liberal-

national” Spanish identity (Álvarez Junco 83).

Nonetheless, Ramón’s writing about the *cartógrafo* is meant to provoke laughter. His humor serves to mock the role of Spain’s national myths and to question their relevance to Spain’s modernization. If nationalisms depend in part on a nostalgic longing for the past, laughter—the domain of the intellect, according to Bergson—thwarts that longing. As a social corrective, laughter inspires a “slight revolt” against Spanish nationalism in favor of Ramón’s version of modernity (Bergson 61). In that version, objects become animate things, humans become machinelike, and the value of relic-like objects is based on material worth rather than symbolic meaning.

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