

Contents

Foreword to the English edition — VII

Preface — IX

Chapter 1

Law, comedy, justice — 1

Law and comedy: an unnatural combination or an unavoidable pair? — 1

The third element: the phantom of justice — 7

The upside-down world: laughter as a sanction of the injustice of law — 10

Incongruity: who is “good”? — 16

Another incongruity: the “just” law in the books and the “unjust” law in action — 21

Another incongruity: the ridiculousness of serious law — 24

Another incongruity. The ridiculousness of law without communication.

Rabelais — 28

Disappointment — 30

Relief: the blessed wandering nature of law — 35

Chapter 2

How and why we laugh at law — 40

Law and the elusive nature of humor — 40

Law and comedy — 42

Law and the grotesque (Georges Brassens, Victor Hugo) — 44

Law and slapstick (Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy) — 47

The whims of law, or the trial as sport (Conan Doyle and Aristophanes) — 49

Chapter 3

Law vs. Comedy — 64

Leopardi: law and the ambivalent force of laughter — 64

Leopardi's thought and the problem of *eutrapelia* — 71

Nietzsche, Don Quixote and *eutrapelia* — 72

The return of law to the becoming and the revenge of the phantom of justice — 79

The force of laughter versus the force of law: satire — 85

Law, fear, and laughter: satire and dictatorships — 89

- Satire and the liberal position of US case law — **92**
- The middle way: satire and the European legal systems — **94**
- The maieutic capacity of laughter and its limits: laughing is not always “just” — **96**

Chapter 4

In the Vortex of Evil — 100

- Comedy and subversion — **100**
- Sergej Dovlatov: the rebellious laugh — **100**
- Rob Marshall’s *Chicago*: when what is right is relative — **106**

Chapter 5

The “ridiculous claims” of law — 118

- The claim to define subjectivity — **118**
- The claim to shape society — **124**
- The claim to define ethics / morality — **131**
- Institutions and laughter: the emperor’s new clothes — **135**
- Justice is not of this world (jurisdiction is ...) — **139**
- Auto da fé*: a law without a world / a world without a law — **146**

Chapter 6

Who am I and where do I live? Persona, law and laughter — 150

- Italian by law: Totò and Fernandel — **150**
- Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, or an innocent gaze on the law — **162**

A final paragraph in the guise of a conclusion — 175

Appendixes by Giuseppe Rossi

Appendix 1

The Good Lawyer and *Bardell v. Pickwick* — 181

Appendix 2

The Law and the Masochist’s Contract: Notes on Gilles Deleuze’s *Coldness and Cruelty* — 196

Bibliography — 211

Index — 219