"Air Time!": *Balconing Simulator 2020* and criticism of junk tourism in Spain

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"Junk tourism", or drunken tourism, has been a problem in Spain for the last decades (Ferrer 2016). This type of tourism is strongly linked to what has been called "balconing", a term coined in 2010 by the newspaper *El País* to indicate the practice of jumping from a balcony or from the roof of a hotel onto the pool or onto another balcony (Pérez-Bovet et al. 2015, in La Rocca and Miraglia 2018). This practice has been the subject of criticism and satire in numerous spaces, such as the Twitter account @botquebota Federació Balear de Balconing, created in May 2022 and with more than 20,000 followers on the social network. In this communication, we analyse the video game *Balconing Simulator 2020* (Fancy+Punk 2020), a supposedly Spanish game (not much is known about the studio, which has only two games and little or no online activity), as a fumblecore comedic video game and its satirical potential within the context of junk tourism in Spain.

Balcony Simulator 2020 makes players control a 3D stick figure and places us in his hotel room. The objective is to run towards the balcony and jump while completing tricks in the air that will give us points. A successful landing will score more points, but falling out of the pool carries, in addition to death, extra points for an achievement called the "Darwin Award," a reference to the humorous annual awards that have been given since 1985 for the most stupid deaths. The key to the game is that all these

objectives must be accomplished using clumsy controls in which each key controls a foot of the character, with ragdoll physics, which has been identified as part of fumblecore (Bryce Jones 2016, Terrasa Torres 2022). This imprecise control system fits the playful representation of the drunkenness of its protagonists. In addition, the avatar's swimsuit, which is his only outfit, can be decorated with different national flags, including the English and the French, which reinforces the ties with the sporty character and the tourist nature of the balconing fallen in Spanish territory.

Charles A. Knight (2004, 4) reminds us that satire is often deeply concerned with historical issues and, as Simon Critchley explains, "resolutely opposed to the images of the time" (2002, 36). Although it need not be moral, satire often "takes the form of a specific attack" and can function as a kind of punishment that reveals qualities such as "ugliness […], foolishness, bad taste, or stupidity" (Knight 2004, 5). The tone of the game is openly satirical and, although there are hardly any paratexts from the creators, they maintain a humorous and ridiculous spirit. The game's description on Steam, for example, talks about "stupid decisions." Compared to @botquebota, *Balconing Simulator 2020* offers a less obvious and indirect criticism, as it does not document real cases or offer paratextual comments on balconing, but the use of fumblecore, the scoring system and the "Simulator" tag (associated in the recent years to humorous games) construct an obviously critical representation of the phenomenon.

This type of satire can also be seen as a form of media protest. Participation in the media linked to the protest can take many forms, including the creation of critical or demanding content (Venegas and Cantano Moreno 2021; Bergillos 2020). For Carpentier (2011), these processes can be differentiated between those that occur in the media (through the co-creation or joint development of a medium) or through the media (in which participation is sought in debates or initiatives through specific media . *Balconing Simulator 2020* would be a case of satire in the media that allows, thanks to a mechanism to share the results of each jump on Twitter in the form of a Polaroid (with the hashtag #BalconingSimulator2020), to extend participation through the media.

Balconing Simulator 2020 also underlines the competitive and exhibitionist nature of balconing. Studies from medicine, such as that of Verano Zapatel et al. (2012), directly relate balcony to the consumption of alcohol and drugs: "The imprudence of balcony, therefore, would only be a concrete expression of the general imprudence that the disinhibition of the effect of alcohol intake and other substances entails" (2012, 49). This lack of inhibition leads to exhibitionist and risky behaviour. La Rocca and Miraglia frame balconing in the broader group of risk as a game, which would also include practices such as the choking game or car surfing, all of them with a strong exhibitionist component, since they are aimed at an audience (2018). The authors study footage shared on YouTube and their comments, where the stupidity of its protagonists and the dimension of performance are usually highlighted, in some cases, the least, with praise for courage (2018, 336), in a mockery of the strong sporting nature of the practice that *Balconing Simulator 2020* or the Balearic Balearic Federation exploit as a central element of their criticism.

In conclusion, *Balconing Simulator 2020* builds on an existing tradition, that of "Simulator" games and fumblecore, to present a series of markers recognizable by an audience that knows the phenomenon of balconing and views it with a critical eye. The ridicule of the practice fits with that of other satires and other media participation, such as the aforementioned comments on YouTube, and the use of Twitter posts with a common hashtag are, in addition to being a promotional tool, an extension of satire that allows the players participate in it through the media, sharing and collaboratively building a caricature strongly associated with drunken tourism.

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