Humour, Propaganda and Public Space

Eduardo J. M. CAMILO and Catarina RODRIGUES
University of Beira Interior/Labcom, (Portugal)

Humour in Conspiracy Theories: notes about caricatures concerning the "Troika" intervention in Portugal (2011-2014)[1]

Abstract: This article focuses on the status of humour in conspiracy theories (CTs) and it is based on a corpus of analysis composed of a sample of caricatures published in the Portuguese press during the period of intervention of the Troika (2011-2014).
Our aim is to study how caricatures reflect meanings concerning a suspicious and inculpatory thought by which some Portuguese politicians and officials from the Troika (European Community - EC, European Central Bank - ECB and International Monetary Fund - IMF) were accused of being incompetent, conspirators and traitors and ridiculed for this. We also intend to clarify what we understand by 'conspiracy theory' as a pamphleteer practice and to check the status of humoristic expressivity in this type of text. This clarification will be based on several references from semiotics/semiology, philosophy, sociology and communication theory. The scope of the article is explanatory and deductive which means the selected corpus will be conceived as a set of examples to illustrate our thoughts. A more inductive approach will be taken in further studies.

Keywords: humour, humour theories, conspiracy theories, textual semiotics, semiology, semiotics

1. Methodological framework

This study is founded on two main starting questions:

1) To what extent, from a textual semiotics point of view, are CTs founded on a 'negative frame' involving the existence of meaning-

---

making structures of narrative sanction programmes in the domains of denunciation, accusation and stigmatization, in line with the investigations of Algirdas Greimas (Algirdas Greimas 1975, 1983, 1989; Greimas & Courtés 1993; Courtés 1979)?

2) In the context of this 'negativity', what is the status of humour conceived as a symbolic punishment/correction based on the ideas of Henry Bergson (Bergson 1993) and Marc Angenot (Angenot 1982)?

We would like to clarify how these questions will be answered by a review of concepts and studies already developed by other authors in relation to other themes, but who we consider to be relevant for the study of the status of humour in CTs.

It is also worth mentioning how this study will be implemented by reference to humoristic messages (caricatures) published in Portuguese newspapers during the Troika intervention period (2011-2014). By 'caricatures' we mean press drawings whose iconographic and graphic treatment is schematic, deformative, and relatively realistic, but conveying commentary or critical content. Caricatures may be funny, but they do not always have to be. They should not be confused with the humour itself, as this can be conveyed by a modality called 'caricature' but also by other modalities of verbal, visual or audiovisual expression.

Some remarks must be made on the corpus:

1) From a methodological point of view, it is organized to illustrate ideas and concepts that will be developed regarding the semiotic status of humour in the context of caricatures associated with CTs;

2) It presents a historic foundation. Caricatures were selected whose subject matter, directly or indirectly, was related to the presence of the Troika in Portugal. For example, the arrival of IMF representatives, the position of the ECB concerning the Portuguese external debt problem, the approval of the General Portuguese Government Budget according to guidelines established by the Troika, Angela Merkel's positions and especially the positions of the German finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, towards Portuguese debt.

3) Three artists, from the daily newspapers *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* and the weekly newspaper *Expresso* were considered: Luís Afonso, André Carrilho and António. These are the newspapers in which caricatures were published most often. However, only drawings by these artists containing a suspicious/accusatory attitude towards these events were chosen. Figure 1 contains two examples of caricatures by the same artist (Luís Afonso) about the Troika. The first (a) is included in the analysis corpus, but the second (b) was excluded because it was not

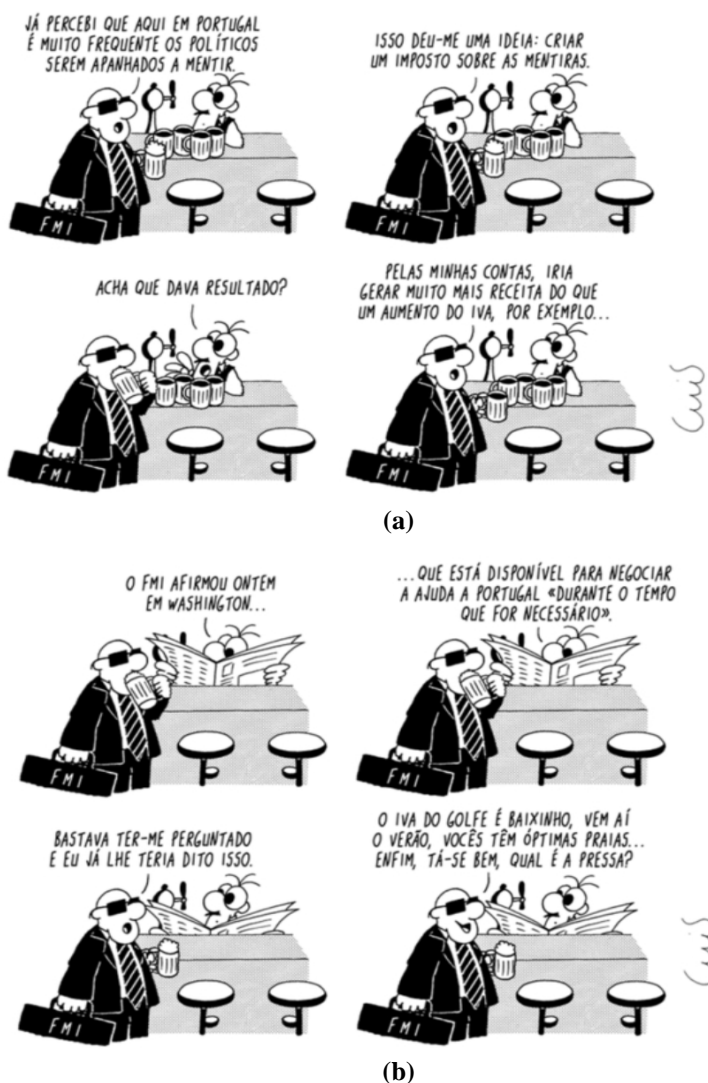significant in terms of meaning concerning suspicion or a reproachful ethos.

(a)

(b)
Figure 1: Luís Afonso[2] (*Público* newspaper)

---

[2] **Press cartoon 1, left to right, top to bottom:**
I have already noticed that here in Portugal politicians are often caught in lying.
This gave me an idea: create a tax on lies.
Do you think it would work?
By my count, it would generate a lot more revenue than an increase in VAT for example ...
Press cartoon 2 from left to right, top to bottom:
The IMF said yesterday in Washington...

Bringing these criteria together, the *corpus* of analysis was formed of 125 caricatures. Table 1 shows how many were analysed by each artist.

Artist/newspaper	*Caricature*
António/*Expresso* (weekly newspaper)	25
André Carrilho/*Diário de Notícias* (daily newspaper)	23
Luís Afonso/*Público* (daily newspaper)	77

Table 1: composition of the analysis corpus by artist

One last remark: there are disparities in the values in Table 1 related to the selected caricatures in the *Público* newspaper compared with those in *Diário de Notícias* and *Expresso*. This difference is due the fact that those in *Público* were published on a daily basis whereas those in *Expresso* and *Diário de Notícias* were published on Saturdays and Sundays respectively.

2. Theoretical framework

In this study we propose to return to and explore theories already developed by other authors in the fields of semiotics, philosophy and sociology, checking their pertinence and consistency concerning the study of humour as a discourse strategy within the CTs.

From a text semiotics point of view, thinking about humour's status in CTs involves understanding what are they as a text genre defined by certain modalities of meaning-making, relating to a semio-narrative and discursive structure. The approach proposed in this study focuses primarily on the semiotics of the French School (Greimas 1975, 1983, 1989; Greimas & Courtés 1983; Courtés 1979) and explores studies already made (AUTHOR, 2018, 111-138).

It should be noted that this framework is also founded on a range of references worthy of note in research on CTs themselves, for example, Richard Hofstadter (1967), but also more contemporary authors, such as Daniel Pipes (1997), Peter Knight (2003), Michael Butter and Peter

---

that it is willing to negotiate aid for Portugal "for as long as is necessary".
All they had to do was ask me, and I would have told them that.
VAT on golf is low, summer is coming, you have the best beaches ... anyway, what's the hurry?

Knight (2015), important for framing CTs in terms of a more conceptual basis; Véronique Campion-Vicent (2013), Leroy G. Dorsey (2002), Mari-Liis Madisson (2014), Andreas Ventsel (2016), Paul Cobley (2004) and Rayco Gonzalez (2014), relevant for the study of their textual invariances/variances; Umberto Eco (1991) and Karl Popper (1945), to understand the conceptual status of 'theory' behind these type of messages concerning the denouncement of conspiracies and how are they distinct from science texts ('scientific theories').

Other complementary contributions are also relevant to an epistemological delimitation of the concept of 'conspiracy theory'. This is the case for Algirdas Greimas again, but now regarding his ideas on how subjects project a positive ethos when they relate to one other (Greimas 1989, 260-261), an idea that we consider to be reversed in CTs' textuality. This ethos projection is usually over-determined by 'good faith', alongside an intersubjective structure of hope and goodwill from the perspective of a set of positive expectations about what to 'do' or what 'should be', while in CTs this is inverted, presenting a contradictory status. The text of CTs is always a negative register in which interpretations of the events or the behaviours of other subjects are symptoms of a disenchanted, anguished or a distrustful attitude towards others and the world. CTs are textual forms of the replacement of hope by anguish, of good will by bad will, a specific feature that is closely coupled with Richard Hofstadter's ideas on CTs' paranoid style and Serge Moscovici's ideas on the existence of a conspiratorial mentality (Moscovici 1987).

Concerning the status of humour in CTs, we posit a thesis about how this negative ethos will overrule the specific nature of humoristic practices. Some authors are summoned to support this idea.

First, there is Marc Angenot, who is very relevant to conceptualizing humour in the scope of CTs' textuality conceived as a form of enthymematic, doxological and agonistic registry. It is enthymematic because it is a textual practice in which the premises are not explained; it is doxological because an ideological point of view is constantly invoked; and it is agonistic because it is a register dominated by a reaction towards a disturbing situation. The author is relevant for his studies on resentment (Angenot 1994) and specially on satire and pamphleteer discourse (Angenot 1995,24-45).

Second, from the perspective of an epistemology of the sociology of humour, we explore the contributions of Giselinde Kuipers, focusing on theories of conflict in which humour is conceived as a symbolic

resource of attack, defence, resistance (Kuipers 2008, 372 -377). Concerning the point of view of communication theories, studies on political communication and citizenship, it is worth noting Martin Victoria Echverría's studies (in press for 2020) on the role of humour for denouncing iniquities and for agenda-setting of political issues considered relevant to civil society.

Third, regarding the humoristic status of press drawings, we focus on the semiological study by Anne-Marie Houdebine-Gravaud and Mae Pozas (2006 43-64) on caricatures about the attacks on the Twin Towers (2001).

Finally, in more philosophical terms, the main reference for the moral foundations of laughter and humour is Henry Bergson (1993).

3. Textuality of CTs and the status of humour

a. *Bad faith as the foundation of moralistic humour*

Mari-Liis Madisson has highlighted how CTs are a type of textuality of interpretation towards complex and/or disturbing events: for example, an unnatural catastrophe, such as a nuclear accident, an airplane disaster or a terrorist attack. For the author, "a CT represents a registry of a kind of a 'meta' level of thinking about certain events" (Madisson 2018, 237). Underlying this interpretation lies a hermeneutic dynamic based on which incidents are conceived as the visible face of conspiracies, lies, impostures, malevolencies or incompetence. Faced with these, it is imperative to denounce or react. Two important parallels can be drawn between CTs and a certain conception about laughter/humour. First, both – CTs and anecdotes, puns, caricatures – are textual practices of interpretation, explanation/comment/criticism, metalanguages that transmit knowledge and stimulate discussion and interpersonal relationships on certain themes. A CT explains and comments; in turn, there are jokes/anecdotes which frame/comment/explain. Second, underlying these metalanguages there is an aim to react by denouncing and incriminating something or someone for the defence or restoration of a certain order. CTs and humour have polemical foundations. Therefore, it is possible to state that CTs, as also happens in some kind of humoristic practices (with a special emphasis on caricature – Bergson 1993, 31), are heuristic and ethical records, from the perspective of affirming resistance, opposition to a status quo interpreted as being under threat. CTs and humour are ways of denouncing and combating decadence, vices, abuses of power and corruption. This position also reveals a conception of

humour closely connected to practices of struggle and resistance. On this particular point, we emphasize studies that conceive it as an expression of social conflict (Kuipers 2008, 372). Humour is a sort of symbolic weapon of attack and defence adjacent to a context of hostility or resistance. This vocation as commentary, and at the same time as criticism/struggle, is shown in Figure 2 referring to a caricature about the way António denounces the real aims of the ECB and IMF.

Figure 2: "Antonio's cartoon - whip and short leash"

Let us deepen this heuristic and metalinguistic dimension of CTs (and of humour), as they are texts of a 'deconfigurative imagination', which is the product of prejudiced thoughts and negative feelings in the form of bad faith and bad will. CTs are texts founded on a pamphleteer register characterized by several particularities. We mainly turn to Marc Angenot (Angenot 1995, 27-45) to define them.

First, they are an enthymematic discourse in which there is a connection between a disturbing, inexplicable, unknown phenomenon and a conceptual frame that allows it to be contextualized and explained. CTs are texts in which there is a correlation between statements and presupposed and subjective regulatory principles;

Second, CTs are persuasive texts. They always respond to a starting point: "What gave rise to X?" They are teleological registers articulated towards a cognitive purpose and a standpoint that it aims to legitimize. The difference between scientific theories and CTs lies in the fact that this type of textuality does not make its topical assumptions explicit;

Third, complementary to this non-explanation, it is important to point out a negative axiological foundation, leading to the classification of these kinds of texts as agonic/polemic. Messages always are connected to an interpretation of events as conspiracies in the form of intrigues and malice perpetrated by enemies, supermen of evil, impostors and traitors. When humour is explored as an expressive device, it is related to irony, sarcasm and cynical derision. Laughter (whether more or less grotesque) is the pragmatic effect of a criticism towards an automatism and misconfiguration (even if this is superficial) (Bergson (b), section II). In short, it is laughter that comes from 'dark humour'. In the context of caricature, this type of humour is based on a purpose of accusation and stigmatization:

> "We shall now understand the comic element in caricature. However regular we may imagine a face to be, however harmonious its lines and supple its movements, their adjustment is never altogether perfect: there will always be discoverable the signs of some impending bias, the vague suggestion of a possible grimace, in short some favourite distortion towards which nature seems to be particularly inclined. The art of the caricaturist consists in detecting this, at times, imperceptible tendency, and in rendering it visible to all eyes by magnifying it. (…) **Beneath the skin-deep harmony of form, he divines the deep-seated recalcitrance of matter**."
>
> Bergson (b), Chapter I, Section III, (our emphasis)

These are texts resulting from a cognitive and affective process of devaluation by which other subjects are considered as anti-subjects and reality (objects) is repudiated as what is most perverse, horrible, hideous (a process that we have classified as an inversion of objects in abject). This particularity is important: as CTs are characterized by a systematic process of devaluation, their meaning is the enshrinement of this deconfiguration. Concerning humoristic practices, this negativism is also evident in some kind of humour. Again, on this aspect, Henri Bergson highlights the devaluation of things and especially subjects in the energy of humuor (and laughter). As happens with CTs, humour is a register of

denunciation and punishment, focusing on unsuitable habits, those which are bogged down in "physical rigidity and vices of character" (Bergson 1993). Therefore, its function – and that of the laughter it raises – is to repress eccentricity by fear of humiliation. Humour constantly keeps

> "awake and in mutual contact certain activities of a secondary order, which might retire into their shell and go to sleep, and, in short, softens down whatever the surface of the social body may retain of mechanical inelasticity"
>
> Bergson (b), Chapter I, Section II

From a complementary perspective to Henry Bergson's ideas, it is also worth noting a conception of humour integrated into conflict and political debate, conceived as a mechanism for ridiculing and confronting opponents, mainly political opponents. Giselinde Kuipers states that it is increasingly important in mediated democracies, and may present different dynamics and configurations (Kuipers 2008, 375).

Let us now delve further into this stigmatizing and aggressive vocation of humour (and laughter) conceived by Henry Bergson as a symbolic device of denunciation and correction:

> "Laughter is, above all, a corrective. Being intended to humiliate, it must make a painful impression on the person against whom it is directed."
>
> Bergson (b), Chapter III, Section V

With such evident parallelism, it is not surprising that there may be some intersections between CTs and humour. In the pamphleteer dimension of CTs, in which they are conceived as a textual form of suspicion, inquisition and stigmatization, humour is related to one of its various expressive modalities. At first glance, it will reflect an aggressive ethos associated with a poetics of invective considered by the ancient Greeks as a minor lyric genre (Marc Angenot 1995, 35). We recall, however, the specificities of CTs, namely their enthymematic nature and persuasive purpose of legitimating a very particular position regarding events classified as disruptive. Thus, more than in the realm of a poetics of invective, what humour consolidates in CTs is a kind of a censuring epidictic elocution for which the grotesque is its most evident register.

CTs' psychological and axiological frames are connected to a kind of 'deconfigurative imagination' because they result from the exercise of bad faith, mistrust, anguish according to which everything tends to be evaluated as negatively grounded. The bad faith underlying CTs is

important because it is within this scope that the basis of paranoia is found towards other subjects and the world. 'Paranoia' is conceived in the framework of this study as a pathological process of disbelief. It reports a type of thinking overdetermined by the emotion of mistrust, a logos at the service of a negative pathos. As a kind of rationalizing madness, CTs share their delusional and paranoid dimension with other registers – such as registers of resentment (Angenot 1994, 155) and jealousy. If the subject projects his anguished, fearful mistrust onto the other and the world, then this will be the basis of a narrative based on a process that is, on the one hand, of "vigilant suspicion" (by means of which there is a systematic doubting of appearances) and, on the other hand, of "recriminatory confirmation" (by which a diverse range of aspects of subjects and the world are explored as evidence of guilty).

Both in the narrative of vigilant suspicion and of recriminatory confirmation, mistrust contributes to the emergence of a style characteristic of this censuring, reproving epideictic. CTs are not discourses of investigation or conjecture (Aristotle's judicial rhetoric), as could be supposed, but are always discourses of denunciation and censure (accusation) of somebody or something worth of guilt. If there are humorous messages in the scope of these registers, they will present this recriminatory base. In this perspective, humour presents a specificity symmetrical to one conceived by Sigmund Freud (Freud 1976). Its status within CTs, although it may take the form of a joke, pun, funny observation, does not derive from a practice of liberation and conciliation of the unconscious tensions that provoke malaise in civilization, but from defensive or offensive tactics by which it is transformed into a symbolic weapon that aims to hurt, to ridicule the people or things that deserve to be denounced and punished. It is not a therapeutic mechanism for balancing socio-psychological tensions, but one for resentment and distress. It is a derisive, biting, sarcastic humour. The caricatures by André Carrilho are an example of this (Figure 3).

We have been emphasizing the existence of a complementarity between the textuality of CTs and some humorous register modalities associated with a moralistic purpose. Although there are some common foundations, an important difference should be recognized. As conceived by Henry Bergson, humour and laughter present a social legitimacy that does not exist in the case of CTs as intimate, subjective records reflecting the imagination of those who "see giants where there are only windmills". This is the reason why we have decided to classify the textuality of CTs as part of the pamphlet genre (Angenot 1995, 37-45).

Figure 3: IMF

The social legitimacy of humour extends to the status of the subjects' utterances. For comedians, it is consensual; but for someone who utters CTs, it is problematic. Encapsulated in a shell of strong convictions (but endowed with great difficulty in communicating and substantiating them), his ideas are usually barely comprehensible and acceptable. He is crying in the wilderness, facing the impostors and traitors alone. Since he possesses a very personal truth, if he makes a joke, if he explores humour in his discourse, it tends to be received as pathetic, meaning an inverted world, at the very best, as a very private joke revealing an ideological erosion, a nostalgia for a comfortable state that is hopelessly lost. Most of the time it is he and his CT that become the subject of biting humour, the grotesque laughter of those around him. Here he is as the personification of the distracted and obstinate person of which Don Quixote de la Mancha is the paradigmatic example.

This situation of marginalization does not happen with respect to the status of the artists of the caricatures. Who are they? Artists integrated into a corporate context. Their caricatures are the product of commentary and evaluating practices (framing and priming) of news already published in other pages of the newspaper they work for or have been broadcast by other mass media (agenda-setting). Their work sets up transtextual relationships with this journalistic material but it is modified by their personal comments, leading to the inclusion of messages of a subjective

register that are negative, suspicious and accusatory. This is the cause of its agonic/polemic dimension. It is correct to say that this "discourse" is related to denunciation and suspicion concerning an unusual or disturbing political situation. However, their ethos, unlike that of those who usually utter CTs, is consensual because it is accepted and recognized by media corporations and society in general.[3] That is why caricatures that convey CTs in connection with the Troika are part of a polemic-satirical register and are no longer exclusively in the realm of pamphlets. This particularity is relevant because it leads to the fact that humour is some contexts is no longer a mere one register among others in the textualities of CTs, but, instead CTs (among other possible topics) may now be unveiled in a humorous register.

b.   *Narrative framing: the inquisitorial register as the basis of caricatures*

Since CTs are meta-texts of interpretation always mediated by a mental frame determined by mistrust and paranoia they find themselves on narrative paths of negative sanctioning, both in their cognitive (suspicion/denunciation) and retributive perspectives (incrimination and doom).

The narrative trajectory of cognitive sanctions is closely connected with a subject's distrustful attitude (bad faith). CTs are a type of text in which there is a record of a 'negative personal feeling', a very subjective suspicion and denunciation of what is believed to be hidden or concealed behind disturbing or mysterious events.

Suspicion and denunciation will be related to demystification practices: reality is conceived as a hoax and the subjects as impostors who must urgently be unmasked. As Rayco Gonzalez writes, "those who suspect do not trust and who trust do not suspect" (Gonzalez 2014, 72), so

---

[3] Nevertheless, there may be interesting exceptions. See, for example, the recent controversy with the publication of a caricature by Antonio in the *New York Times*. It would later be withdrawn because it irritated sectors of American society (namely Donald Trump Jr., son of US President Donald Trump). The controversy led the *New York Times* to apologize and to remove the illustration for allegedly being anti-Semitic. The cartoon shows a blind man, Donald Trump, being led by a guide dog with the face of the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wearing a leash bearing the Star of David.
The caricature may be seen at url (2019):
https://www.dn.pt/cultura/interior/e-uma-critica-a-politica-de-israel-antonio-rejeita-criticas-de-antissemitismo-10845563.html

the subject begins systematically doubt reality, not to understand it better, but simply to deny it, to devalue it in the name of evidence and a personal certainty that only he feels and foresees. In this procedure of suspicion, the textuality of CTs is always that of subjective disenchantment and demystification. They are characterized by an overcoming of appearances (the domain of 'seeming'), to reach a very intimate evidence (the domain of 'being') which the subject already felt to be perverted ('not being'[4]).

Concerning the relevance of these conspiracy 'pre-feelings' and 'pre-concepts' within the humoristic expression of the caricatures, we can highlight the relevance of what the Portuguese newspaper *Diário de Notícias* calls the section where André Carrilho usually publishes: *Dejá vu.* We will return to this subject later. For now, what is relevant is to highlight how humour accompanies this veridictory modality of demystification and how well it is evidenced in the way Henry Bergson conceived the caricature as a means by which the "artist (…) make(s) manifest to our eyes the distortion which he sees in embryo" (Bergson (b), Chapter I, section III). It is in the caricatures that the pencil manifests what is hidden or camouflaged (figure 4).
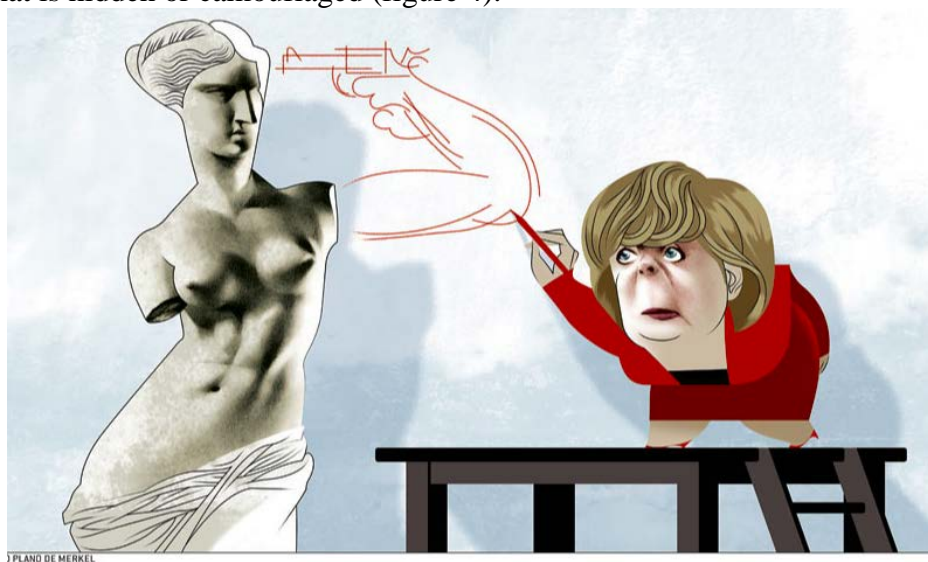
Figure 4: "Merkel's plan"

Here we find the narrative dynamic of humour in CTs: funny records of what constitutes something 'negative' in the perspective of deregulation, the deviant, the evocation of the inflexible, the mechanic,

---

[4] Seeming/being.

From the American translation (Greimas, A; Courtés, P., 1982: 369) of the French terms '*paraître*' and '*être*' (Greimas, A & Courtés, P., 1993, 419).

according to a certain subjective point of view. This exercise of suspicion will transform the caricature into a discourse modality of unmasking and denouncement of what represents a vice, a defect. From the moment they are represented/identified, then the underlying aim is to achieve a symbolic punishment in the form of sarcastic, stigmatizing laughter.

There are several themes of this humour, all in the same category: vices which attack/threat social life. Usually they are slight defects that, in the case of CT textuality, are always very decisive for the future and well-being of the subjects or society. Besides this theme, there is also a theme of denigrating the person's qualities and abilities (when they become rigid and inflexible) and social disintegration, rigidity and social isolation. There is, however, yet another noteworthy theme: the contradiction between what is manifested, claimed, defended and what is actually carried out. Regarding Portuguese caricatures from this period, the themes are symptomatic of a process of national decadence. For example, loss of sovereignty led by IMF inspectors, Angela Merkel and Wolfgang Schäuble; disintegration of national sovereignty led by Eduardo Catroga, the ministers Paulo Portas and Vitor Gaspar, José Socrates and especially by Passos Coelho's cabinet. All of them are represented as protagonists of treason when they advocated draconian austerity measures in 2011 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Antonio's cartoon [:] the fat diet

It should be recognized that caricatures may also cover themes other than those of bad customs. Spaces and times can also be satirized. But in this case, the register becomes more complex from a discourse

perspective. It is not only a representation of immorality and inconsistency, but the setting of a global framework concerning a social denunciation closely linked to a particular negative vision of the world and the universe.

Complementarily to this distrustful attitude of the subject, which from a humoristic point of view favours the emergence of a scathing caricature, the narrative trajectory of sanctioning includes another aspect now specific to a retributive sanction: incrimination. The transition from narrative cognitive sanctioning (in terms of suspicion) to a specific retributive one assigns to the CTs' register a specificity associated with censorship, dismissal and confrontation. These texts are no longer subjective interpretations of disturbing events, but also condemn intrigues and impostures. It is within this narrative that CTs acquire a negative epideictic dimension.

The text is now characterized by a discourse of punishment or doom by means of which subjects and the world are viewed in a grotesque register. Within this narrative, humour presents a complementary functionality. It is no longer an expressive device of demystification and denunciation but a symbolic weapon of humiliation towards somebody or something. It has the strategic purpose of diminishing and degrading. It may be funny but it aims to arouse disdain or indignation concerning specific situations/events (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Magicians

Any CT is characterized by a dichotomy of confrontation which is also presented in the humoristic discourse. In the name of principles, ideals, but also of subjective anxieties and fears, someone denounces and

accuses others of conspiracy. From a narrative point of view, it will invariably elicit an actantial element also revealed in the humorous register: the despised abject, the subject that is incriminated/recriminated, someone who incriminates/recriminates.

The person who incriminates/recriminates is a subject who faces disturbing and problematic realities. Concerning the discourse of caricatures, this subject may be identified by a double perspective. On the one hand we find the citizens Luís (Afonso), António, André (Carrilho), artists who sign the caricatures with reference to specific years (2011-2014). On the other hand, they are recognized as 'graphic opinion makers': designers with sections reserved and enshrined in newspapers. For example, "António's cartoon" in the *Expresso* weekly newspaper. Thanks to the combination of this dual status, caricatures are no longer just intimate, subjective, lonely records as usually happens with CTs' messages. As these press drawings present a corporate framework and social legitimacy, they are seen as a sort of a 'justice made by the force of the pencil or brush' under the best traditions of opinion journalism.

The abject is a despised entity corresponding to a strange, threatening, disturbing world causing the subject to react, suspect, denounce and condemn. It is characterized by a whole universe of anti-values. It presents discursive particularities such as a specific temporality or spatiality. It is focused on the abject – along with the consequent anti-subject actantial category – that a whole process of stigmatization falls through a negative superlative register (from the point of view of the 'very bad').

The anti-subject is the symmetrical projection of the subject himself in all of the opposites relative to his ideological position and thought framing. He is conceived from two possibilities: as 'anti-self' or as 'non-self'. In the first case, he is an alter ego: no more than the symmetrical projection of the subject himself in all his opposites relative to the canonical order of his thought. One is an angel; the other a demon. It corresponds to the status of the enemy as mentioned by Mari-Liis Madisson (Madisson 2014, 284). As 'non-self', this alter ego is now an entity who has no elements in common with the subject, including those of language. It reports what the author has designated as 'alien' (Madisson 2014, 284): a subject who gives rise an irrational anguish and fear. Someone devoid of organization, structure, sense, without explanation, not foreseen nor realized. In short, a monster (Figure 7). We will return later to these matters on the discursive meanings concerning the subject's figurations.

Figure 7: Discontent

Regarding the ethos of these anti-subjects, we emphasize its absolute value. Wrapped up in his shell of convictions and feelings, the subject who denounces conspiracies never doubts his own virtue, for the same reason that he will never call into question the perversity of the anti-subjects or the abjection of the objects. Within this dynamic there is a fundamentalist dichotomy – 'all or nothing' – that does not allow for shades of grey.

Let us now briefly look at the humour register, especially the one related to caricatures, as conceived by Henry Bergson, and how it is explored within the textuality of CTs with regard to retributive narratives. There are points in common but also important disparities.

It is correct to state that both CTs and caricatures are textual practices characterized by a moralistic foundation. We have already mentioned this with regard to caricatures: they are symbolic means of correction by which society reacts to impertinence through laughter. This laughter is scathing, sarcastic, not designed to amuse or pass the time; it is devoid of the playfulness that we usually attribute to humour. This humour also presents a transversal comprehensiveness. The French philosopher considered that it came from the themes themselves, which tended to be generic, omnipresent vices: avarice, distraction, incompetence, corruption, hypocrisy, misanthropy, etc. Afterwards all of these would then be staged in specific situations. The mockery of religious hypocrisy in the Tartufo is an example. However, this perspective of transversally omnipresent human vices is not so visible in

the humorous register of CTs, especially with regard to the narrative of retributive sanction. In the case of caricatures, it is as if through humour the artists wanted to punish someone in particular, in a concrete historical moment and regarding a certain place. The universalism of peccadilloes is now replaced by a socio-historical particularism. Concerning our corpus of analysis, it is the theme of oppression of a particular people (Portuguese, but also Greek people and, indirectly, Spanish and Italian people) in relation to a kind of a 'Troika invasion' which is satirized, and not the subject of the oppression itself which is later applied to a specific locus (which can be everywhere). Therefore, the humour included in CTs presents a contextual (historical) density, a clear particularism. It presents itself as a kind of a 'private joke' which cannot always be understood by everybody. Caricatures within the textuality of CTs do not ridicule political corruption, avarice or lack of patriotism per se, but all in the condition of being related to a specific event carried out by certain subjects at certain times and spaces. In CTs' retributive narratives, humour is included in the scope of a symbolic punishment associated with a stigmatization that has a clearly delimited target.

c.   Discursive framework: the grotesque and sarcastic dimension   of the humorous register

In CTs, the existence of a humour discourse involves framing the disturbing events from a sarcastic and absurd point of view, with the aim of criticizing. The following sections concern these points of view analysed using three semiotic aspects: one related to the dynamics of humoristic expressivity, one referring to the dynamics of humoristic figures and themes, and one related to the effects of meaning or of a pragmatic nature.

c1 - Humoristic expressivity: dependence on the word and the   grotesque register

We have been describing humour's status in CTs' textuality, sharing the position of Henry Bergson that it is a schematic and abstract register. The line and the outline of the stroke, the force of the brushstroke or the precision of the pencil line form a range of register modalities for the purpose of going beyond what is shown to discover what is disguised, camouflaged and it is in the order of a misconfiguration. This schematism is developed by means of a single

vignette (as in António and André Carrilho's caricatures) or several. It is, therefore, an expressivity connected with a narration, as found in Luís Afonso's press drawings (Figure 8).

O LÍDER DO PSD DIZ QUE TEMOS DE REAGIR E VOLTAR A TER VOZ DE COMANDO SOBRE O NOSSO FUTURO.

OUVIU? PORTANTO, EM VEZ DE VOS ESTENDER A MÃO A PEDIR DINHEIRO, VAMOS SER MAIS IMPOSITIVOS.

DÊEM-NOS O DINHEIRO JÁ SENÃO A GENTE ZANGA-SE!

ESTIVE BEM?

GIRÍSSIMO, GIRÍSSIMO...

Figure 8[5]

Words play a decisive role alongside images. They appear as subtitles identifying spaces, times or the artists' signatures. We highlight how the image-word relationship can be symbiotic (*relais*) – the two constituting a semiotic whole – or metalinguistic (*encrage*) – whenever it clarifies the meanings of the image (Barthes 1990). This is what happens with the titles of caricatures by André Carrilho: e.g. "Descontentamento" ("Discontent" – see again Figure 7, bottom left). This relationship is also evident in António's, but it is more informational: e.g. "Previsão de Crescimento" ("Growth forecast" – in relation to the presentation of the General Portuguese Government Budget, conditioned by the Troika's instructions, Figure 9).

---

[5] **Press cartoon from left to right, top to bottom:**
The leader of the PSD claims that we must react and have a voice again about our future.
Did you hear? So, instead of reaching out to you for money, we have to impose ourselves more.
Give us money now, or we'll fall out!
Was that right?
Very good, very good…

Figure 9: António's cartoon [:] growth forecast

From this metalinguistic functionality assured by the words, these meanings become a sort of historic register of events, always settling transtextual connections with a discourse already published in the other pages of the newspaper, giving the caricature an 'informative' dimension. Thanks to them, it is possible to uncover an agenda-setting for the period under analysis composed of (disturbing) events and stressful protagonists from the artists' perspectives. Other titles also exist and are important in any publication. They relate to the artist's signature and the name of the section. In the case of Antonio's caricatures, they are identified as "António's cartoon". These names fall into the category of referential, invariant titles (Rebelo 2000, 46-49), relating each weekly record with a type of opinion journalism.

The *encrage* function of the words plays another complementary role: that of leading the viewer/reader's interpretation into the realm of connotation, for implicit meanings concerning suspicion and stigmatization. Some words guide the viewers/readers' interpretation from denotation to a second level of meanings, emphasizing certain iconographic elements that thus become connotative units. While from a denotative perspective they only help place the caricature within the news agenda-setting, they now play a fundamental role in highlighting certain imagery elements that evoke meanings which express the artist's own ideological positions. They are enrolled in a reading/interpretation

process and evoke a clear subjective cognitive and axiological position (framing and priming).

Within these connotative meanings, both words and images form the basis of a rhetoric discourse characterized by the recurrence of tropes. This is the case for hyperboles, which stem from the schematism of imagery or a discourse which is mainly visual (iconic and graphic). They are relevant because they highlight visual elements transformed into connotative units to evoke deconfigurative meanings. By introducing an unusual and excessive representation, hyperboles point out what in the image is the realm of the evocation of such implicit meanings. Angela Merkel, as a tango dancer (metaphor), is not elegant dancer at all, but rather a very crude one who crushes her partner – José Socrates (hyperbole) (Figure 10).

Figure 10: António's cartoon [:] Last tango in Berlin?

Deconfigurative ideological meanings also depends on other tropes. This is the case of personifications and metaphors of some people transformed into perverted/ferocious beasts, such as foxes in the case of IMF inspectors (a phenomenon of bestiality so typical of the grotesque register – see Figure 2).

It is also worth mentioning the synecdoche and amalgam leading the reader's interpretation from a denotative representation of specific events to a whole set of negative political, religious, aesthetic,

superstitious, etc., immemorial archetypes. In his predictions for 2013, Antonio explores amalgams (and metonymies) to represent this new year as "more of the same": financial perversity (the serpent), lack of sovereignty (stars evocative of the European Union) and starvation (fishbone) (Figure 11).

Figure 11

With amalgams, the heterogeneity of events, persons, spaces, even times (the New Year) is devoid of its contingent singularities for the evocation of paradigmatic and ancestral impostures, betrayals, mischief and evildoers, misfortunes. Within this Manichaeism of evilness, it is also worth mentioning the transtextual expressiveness (Genette 1982), with respect to a divergent (metatextuality concerning imitation/adaptation by ridicule) or convergent stylization (hypertextuality or even architextuality) of other archetypic messages as happens in Figure 17.

The combination of these tropes brings caricatures an expressiveness approaching a rhetorical dynamic which is specific to a negative epidictic register, therefore, referring to censuring and stigma. Through this expressiveness, artists not only express a negative pathos with respect to everything that challenged the coherence of their thought and the solidity of their values, but they also seek to arouse a negative emotion (called bathos) in readers/viewers. It should be effective enough to lead them to reflect on their axiological framework and the way they interpreted the disturbing events.

It is within this censuring and simultaneously appellative dimensions that we find the persuasive foundation of caricatures. Not strictly records of delusions and criticism, but also a symbolic process for

imposing and maintaining values and subjective conceptions about others and life (the priming phenomenon already mentioned) and for implementing a subjective mental framework of principles (framing) always approaching the maintenance of a subjective, social or institutional identity. Thus, this expressivity contributes to playing an important role, already formulated by the Romans and the Ancient Greeks. As a pathetic, maximalist, catastrophic record, it refers to the *to prépon* domain (a form of beauty with practical and persuasive purposes) and especially of Romans' *decorum* (aesthetic practices endowed with political and moral purposes) (Sodré & Paiva 2002, 17-18) (Figure 12).

Figure 12

c2 - The dynamics of meaning: themes and figures

The pragmatic effect of these caricatures is a sarcastic laugh, dark humour, derision connected to demystification and denouncement of a defect, alleged treason, incompetence, impostors and conspiracies. As we have already mentioned, it is the result of a kind of pendulous movement always swinging between denotative to connotative domains of meaning and may be evaluated from two discourse dimensions: themes and figures.

The conspiracy themes in the caricatures present a historic foundation because they report disturbing incidents. From a denotative perspective, it is possible to uncover the chronological succession of these alleged incidents, either from the *encrage* relationships or the transtextual references to news already published on other pages of the newspaper. In Appendix 1, we have identified the main themes and characters explored in our corpus of analysis.

Whenever caricatures are part of a connotative expressiveness, other themes emerge, which are always negative: loss of sovereignty, betrayal and imposture, impoverishment/misery, sadism and punishment, manipulation, obstinacy/obsession, submission, humiliation, anti-patriotism, authoritarianism, sacrifice (Figure 13).

Figure 13: António's cartoon [:] no fat

All of them are themes of deconfiguration closely related to those in the CTs' semiotic and narrative structures. These caricatures are visual records of a disenchanted mood towards an alleged national decadence: usury, corruption, perversion, malice, sabotage, dysfunction.

The discursive domain of figurations also registers the same pendulous movement of connotative-denotative meanings. On the one hand, there are the explicit representations of historical figures, encompassing specific characters, times and places; on the other, implicit and stereotyped but always negative meanings connected with three main

discourse categories: one related to the characters (subjects), one to space and one to time.

The connotative meanings underlying the design of the subjects are integrated into two veridictory modalities: lies and falsehoods (Greimas & Courtés 1993, 419). Under the veridictory modality of the lies (seeming but not being), there is a figurative recurrence of characters as the perpetrators of tricks/stratagems. This representation is connected to Vladimir Propp's functions VI and XXXVII, involving the subjects' connotation as "aggressor(s) who tries(try) to deceive his(their) victim to take possession of him or her assets" and "false hero(es) or aggressor(s), the bad person(people) that is (are) unmasked" (Propp 2003, 70-107). The connotative figuration of the subjects is evocative of traitors or impostors. This particularity is especially evident in António's caricatures (Figure 14).

Figure 14

In the veridictory modality of falsehood (non-seeing and non-being[6]), subjects are represented as perverse antagonists – champions of evil as anti-subjects. In this figuration, they are no longer disguised, represented as traitors or impostors, but hyperbolically and metaphorically identified in their perversity as worthy of ridicule. This figurative modality may be based on an expressive resource already evidenced – the amalgam. Through this trope, a diverse set of aspects and

---

[6] Non seeing/non-being.
From the American translation (Greimas, A. and Courtés, P. 1982, 369) of the French terms *'non paraître'* and *'non-être'* (Greimas, A. and Courtés, P. 1993, 419).

phenomena are signified as products of just a single occurrence and/or the responsibility of one or a restricted set of protagonists (Figure 15).

Figure 15: The good pupils

From Mari-Liis Madisson's studies, we present an additional category of figuration of subjects within the veridictory system of falsehood. As we have already mentioned, the register may also refer to the connotative meaning of the subject as 'non-self'. Caricatures demystify the subject through a clear stigmatization by which they become represented as unusual, surrealistic, strange, bizarre (Madisson, 2014, 284). Unlike the other category (anti-subject/anti-self), by which he is represented as an adversary, in this case he is portrayed as a stranger, an alien, an elephant man, a freak. This subject is from the other universe in which there is nothing in common, comprehensible, explanatory or structured and therefore, only can be relegated to the domain of evil. Some of André Carrilho's caricatures are representative of this connotation.

The representation of space, of the locus where the stressing events occur, is also regulated by the same pendulous movement described. From a denotative point of view, spaces are staged as the sites where the events take place and, simultaneously – in a connotative perspective – where the conspiracies are dissimulated. They are closely connected to a whole iconography of disguise and camouflage. Their

discursive functionality is one of a deceptive scenario, the 'smokescreen' of normality (seeming) that hides or disguises the existence and action of impostors (non-being). This double figuration of space was not represented in the corpus of analysis. Perhaps due to the schematic specificity of the caricatures, the performance of the characters is overvalued with reference to an indefinite scenario. This does not prevent that in some caricatures – especially those by António – space from being evoked as a locus where misfortunes are planned and conspiracies executed with a bizarre configuration. This spatiality is explored as a metaphoric resource to evoke a domain of the unstructured or the unorganized, precisely where the structures of evil are located. Within this connotative meaning, space is represented as a kind of hell, the place where vices and decay are found. Figure 16 is illustrative of this connotation: Portugal, compared to a piece of shredded meat in a run-down butcher's shop.

Figure 16

The CTs' textuality still includes how time is represented, always belonging to transformation processes of subjects into anti-subjects and of objects into abject ones. This meaning also registers the same pendulous dynamics related to the denotation-connotation dynamics already evident in other figuration modalities. From a connotative perspective, time is part of the same procedures of stereotyping by amalgam and transtextuality already described. The historical present of the disturbing events is not valid by itself. On the contrary: they are always the product of a framework in the past, favouring their transformation into exemplary

moments of the most varied timeless vices. It is the past which frames the evil ethos of the present days, imposing an eternal mythological return of perversities and demons. Press caricatures are transtextual records of the evocation of archetypal textualities of original sins. This remission was infrequent in the corpus of analysis but can still be recognized in some caricatures by Antonio. For example, the subordinate way the Portuguese People (Zé Povinho) was represented, as a very grateful subject in António's caricature, makes us remember how Raphael Bordallo Pinheiro originally represented him in the 1875 *Lanterna Mágica*: Zé Povinho, an empty-pocketed man, deceived and depleted by the taxes of Serpa Pimentel. Times have changed, but the iniquities are the same. Zé-Povinho, with an open mouth, remains passive, resigned to the Troika's alleged evildoers (Figure 17). The forced appropriation of the past for suspicions of the present leads to a transformation of the caricature into a sketch in which the viewer/reader rediscovers the same original sins. It is in the light of this context that we interpret the ideological foundation underlying the title of the *Diário de Notícias* section where André Carilho's caricatures are published: *Dejá Vu*. We highlight how this title reinforces the peculiarity of the ethos of someone who suspects that present days are a mere manifestation of the same old, perverse and immemorial vices. In this remembrance, it is possible to recognize similar dynamics existing in the wonderful tales studied by Vladimir Propp (2003), as well in the theatrical text analysed by Etienne Soriau (1950): everything progresses with reference to an archetypal model. A similar position is presented by Maris-Liis Madisson when, based on Iuri Lotman's conceptions of the semiosphere, she states how certain events are evocative of a universal invariant and timeless meta-text with which all occurrences of the present are explained and even acquire cyclical status. Thus, a cosmological and transcendental, trans-historical, temporality of similarities and coincidences is evoked from the present, but always endowed with a negative axiological foundation (Madisson 2014, 287). What the artist represents with a humoristic expressivity is recognized in other, less funny registers: the transformation of events into an extension of negative motives that can always be recognized in this memory.

We propose yet another reason for this recurrent evocation of the past, which presents a strategic foundation. The return to original sins contributes to legitimizing the artist's own suspicious, paranoid, inquisitorial frame of thought. Therefore, this contextualization in a purportedly historical and comprehensive cultural frame allows a very

subjective and marginal interpretation that suddenly becomes part of a much more generic, maximalist and legitimate meaning close to the opposition between good and evil.

Zé-Povinho, Raphael Bordallo Pinheiro, *Lanterna Mágica*, 1875

Zé-Povinho, António, *Expresso*, 2011
Figure 17

d- The effects

The existence of these denotation-connotation pendular dynamics facilitates the emergence of effects resulting from denotative, connotative and persuasive meanings.

Before the description of each one, it is important to emphasize the idea of the existence of a purpose underlying this type of text, an *intentio auctoris* implying a voluntary mobilization of semiotic, narrative and discursive structures. The *intentio auctoris* also presupposes an *intentio operis* connected to the text as a 'semiotic entity'. In turn, both are the object of an *intentio lectoris* connected to modes of reception, and comprehension depending on several contexts and circumstances which may be complementary or even contradictory. This idea is important: as Ivan Preston states, "meaning is in people not in messages" (Preston, 2009, 170). If there are intended effects in CTs expressed by caricatures, they depend on the way they are received, interpreted and accepted.

The effects resulting from denotative meanings concerns the way caricatures report events evaluated by the artists as being stressful or disturbing. They derive from the "literality" of the register, but associated with an unusual, unexpected or creative expressive approach for the production of attention-giving.

In turn, the connotative effects arise from the very schematic register of the caricature to emphasize certain fundamental connotators. Caricatures begin to arouse a double meaning that is always negative and symptomatic of a subjective mood. Some may spark a smile, even a laugh, but they are not connected to a playful humour as seen in entertainment. These effects stem from a personal – always critical and suspicious – view of events. The comical element is founded on sarcasm, irony, cynicism – a dark humour – referring to well-defined themes, situations and characters. Caricature is no longer strictly associated with a record of disturbing events, but evokes a way of thinking and a personal ideological framework. In this dynamic, they are distinguished by how they transmit the double meanings to the reader. There are caricatures that are easy to recognize and interpret. Others are ambiguous, leading to multiple or even contradictory interpretations.

Finally, there is an additional class of effects which we have classified as 'persuasive', due the fact that CTs are records of an anguished and negative view on disturbing events and funny statements but involving the purpose of eliciting adherence to some particular values and thoughts. In this strategic functionality, they are part of a "*littérature*

de combat" to convince and mobilize readers/viewers for a certain reaction. Thus, humoristic caricatures constitute a rhetorical resource inscribed in the field of 'intrinsic proofs': funny ways of dencouning, accusing and, most of all, convincing about a certain perversity/malice.

4. Conclusions

In this study we have studied humour's status in CTs' textuality with reference to a sample of caricatures published in Portuguese newspapers (*Público, Diário de Notícias* and *Expresso*) during the Troika's intervention period in Portugal (2011-2014). This research came to several conclusions from semiotics/semiology, philosophy, sociology and theory of communication studies.

These are the main ideas:

1) The caricatures included in the corpus are illustrative of a suspicious and inculpatory frame concerning Portuguese politicians and the members of the Troika. From a semiotic point of view, they are part of semio-narrative and meaning-making structures concerning practices of suspicion, denunciation, accusation and stigmatization;

2) In CTs, humour has become an expressive device closely connected to a subjective disenchantment towards the world and subjects. On the one hand, it is a register involved in dynamics of demystification. It serves to denounce. On the other, it is an important resource within symbolic practices of blaming/censuring. It serves as an instrument of stigmatization through ridicule. We have also seen how it tended to be explored as a rhetorical resource associated with the domain of a grotesque expressiveness and aiming to legitimize an anguish, paranoid and inquisitorial subjectivity. Therefore, it is a register close to sarcasm, irony, derision;

3) Underlying CTs, there is a frame associated with the systematic disbelief and bad will of the subjects towards others, the world and anything that may be sufficiently threatening of the coherence of their thinking or stability of their identity. This will give rise to a black, biting humour whose function is described in the domain of a 'symbolic punishment'. It is not fun because it aims to confront someone;

4) Some parallelisms between CTs and sarcastic humour were recognized insofar as their foundations are inscribed in the same type of enthymematic, doxologic and agonic discourse. Enthymematic because they are both based on more or less subjective prior assumptions, doxologic because these prior assumptions are not scientifically

demonstrated, and agonic insofar as such prior assumptions reflect a negative context due to the occurrence of disturbing (threatening, inexplicable) or counter discourses to which the subject intends to react;

5) CTs are part of a textual genre in which the subject finds himself in a position of fragility before the audience. Although he considers himself to represent an ethical purism, someone who holds the 'real truth' and virtue, his ethos is precarious, fragile contradicting the one of caricature designers, which is legitimate and framed by a corporate background. We need only see their editorial status as authors of a section and their status as 'journalist commentators' – attributes which are indicative of an 'accommodated' ethos, in the sense of being consensual. This disparity is relevant because it is related to the distinction also made by Marc Angenot between pamphleteer text (where CTs' textuality undoubtedly fits – although with the possibility of including a humoristic expressivity) and satirical text (1982: 34-37).

References

ANGENOT, Marc. 1994. *Les ideologies du ressentiment*. Montreal: Les Éditions XYZ.

ANGENOT, Marc. 1995. *La parole pamphletaire. Typologie des discourse modernes* Paris: Payot.

BARTHES, Roland. 1990. "Retórica da imagem". In Barthes, R. 1990. *O óbvio e o obtuso*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira (Original edition 1982: *L'obvie et l'obtus. Essai critques III*. Paris: Seuil);

BERGSON, Henry. 1993. *O riso*. Lisbon: Guimarães Editores (Original edition: 1924, Paris: Alcan). English translation: BERGSON, Henry (b). *Laughter. Ana essay on the meaning of the comic*. (url, February 2020: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4352/4352-h/4352-h.htm#chap01)

BERTRAND, Denis. 2014. "Los regímines semióticos del secreto". In Lozano J (Ed.). *Secretos en red. Intervenciones semióticas en el tiempo presente*, 127-140. Madrid: Dequitur.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. 1989. *Poder Simbólico*. Lisbon: Difel (original edition: 1983, Paris,

BUTTER, Michael and KNIGHT, Peter. 2015. "Combler le fossé. L'avenir des recherches sur les theories du complot". *Diogène*, Janvier-Juin;

CAMILO, Eduardo. 2016. "Suspicion, Denunciation, revolt. On Textual Particularities of Conspiracy Theories". In Leone, M (Ed.) – *Lexia Journal of Semiotics - Complot/Conspiracy*, 141-156. *Torino*: Circe/Aracne Editrice.

CAMILO, Eduardo. 2018. (Ed.). *Sobre suspeita e culturas da desconfiança. Fundamentos e práticas*. Coimbra: Minerva Coimbra.

CAMILO, Eduardo. 2018. "Eu já sabia!" Configurações da suspeição na textualidade das teorias da conspiração". In CAMILO, Eduardo. 2018. *Sobre suspeita e culturas da desconfiança. Fundamentos e práticas*, 111-138. Coimbra: Minerva Coimbra.

CAMPION-VINCENT, Véronique. 2007. "From evil others to evil elites: A dominant pattern in conspiracy theories today". In Gary Alan Fine, Veronique Campion-Vincent & Chip Heath (eds.). *Rumor mills: The social impact of rumor and legend*, 13–122. New Brunswick: Transaction.

COMBLEY, Paul. 2004. "The Semiotics of Paranoia: The Thriller, Abduction and the Self", *Semiotica: Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies* 148: 317–335.

COURTÉs, Joseph. 1979. *Introdução à Semiótica Narrativa e Discursiva*. Coimbra: Almedina. (Original edition: 1976, Paris, Hachette);

DORSEY, Leroy. 2002. "Re-reading the X-files: The trickster in contemporary conspiracy myth", in: *Western Journal of Communication* 66 (4): 448–468.

ECO, Umberto. 1991. "Chifres, cascos, canelas: algumas hipóteses acerca de três tipos de abdução". In Eco, U; Sebeok, T. A (Ed.). 1991. *O signo dos três*, 219-244. São Paulo: Perspetiva (Original edition: 1983, Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

ECHVERRÍA, M. V. 2020 – in press. "Cuando el humour va en serio. Efectos del humor y la sátira políticas en actitudes ciudadanas". *Estudos em Comunicação* 1 (30).

FREUD, Sigmund. 1976. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious,* Volume 6. London: Pelican Books.

"É uma crítica à política de Israel". António rejeita críticas de antissemitismo". *Diário de Notícias* (url, June 2019: https://www.dn.pt/cultura/interior/e-uma-critica-a-politica-de-israel-antonio-rejeita-criticas-de-antissemitismo-10845563.html)

GENETTE Gérard. 1982. Palimpsestes. Paris: Seuil;

GREIMAS, Algirdas. 1975. *Sobre o sentido. Ensaios semióticos*. Petropólis: Vozes. (Original edition: 1970, Paris Seuil);

GREIMAS, Algirdas. 1983. *La semiótica del texto. Ejercicios prácticos*. Barcelona: Paidós comunicación. (Original edition: 1970, Paris Seuil);

GREIMAS, Algirdas. 1989. *Del sentido II.* Madrid: Gredos. (Original edition: 1983, Paris: Seuil);

GREIMAS, Algirdas & COURTÉS, Joseph. 1993. *Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*. Paris: Hachette (Original edition 1979: Paris, Hachette) [America translation from the 1979 Edition: Greimas, A. & Courtés, J. (1982) *Semiotics and language. Ana analytical dictionary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press);

GONZALEZ, Rayco. 2014. La sospecha. Una historia de las intenciones", in Lozano J (Ed.). *Secretos en red. Intervenciones semióticas en el tiempo presente*, 71-80. Madrid: Dequitur.

KNIGHT, Peter. 2003. *Conspiracy theories in American history*. In Knight Peter (Ed.), California: ABC-Clio, 2003, 15-25.

KUIPERS, Giselinde. 2008." The sociology of humor". In Raskin, V. (ed.) *The Primer of Humor Research,* 365-402. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

HOUBEDINE-GRAVAUD, Anne-Marie.; Pozas, M. 2006. "De l'humour dans les dessins de presse". *Questions de communication* 2006/2 (10);

HOFSTADTER, Richard. 1967. *The paranoid style in American politics and other essays*. New York: Vintage.

LÉVI-STRAUSS, Claude. 1995. *Antropologia Estrutural*. Barcelona, Paidós (Original edition: 1958, Paris, Plon);

MADISSON, Mari-Liis. 2014. "The semiotic logic of signification of conspiracy theories". *Semiotica. Berlim: De Gruyter Mouton* 202: 273 – 300.

MOSCOVICI, Serge. 1987. *The Conspiracy Mentality*. Janeiro de 1987. Online available (April 2017): https://www.researchgate.net/publication/ 279408930_The_Conspiracy_Mentality; PRESTON, Ivan L. (2009). "understanding communication research findings", in: *Journal of consumer affairs*, vol43, (1), 2009.

PIPES, Daniel. 1997. *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From*. NY: Simon&Schuster

PROPP, Vladimir. 2003. *Morfologia do conto*, 3ª ed. Lisbon: Vega (Original edition: 1928, Leningrad, Academia).

REBELO, José. 2000. *O discurso do jornal*. *O como e o porquê?* Lisbon: Editorial Notícias.

SODRÉ, Muniz & PAIVA, Raquel. 2002. *O império do grotesco*. Rio de Janeiro: MAUD

SORIAU, Étienne. 1992. *Les Deux Cent Mille Situations Dramatiques*. Paris: Flammarion (Original edition: 1950, Flammarion).

Appendix 1

Themes (events, countries, protagonists)

Events:
Elections in France; Elections in Portugal; PIGS (Portugal, Ireland Greece, Spain); Troika in Portugal; Euro and Europe; IMF solutions; Troika and the ideals of the April Revolution; IMF and the 25th April festivities; Troika and 13th of May in Fatima; the IMF in Portugal; the Greek crisis; the Greek fiscal efforts; imposition of fiscal discipline on Greece by Merkel; Merkel's attitude towards Greece; "instrumentalization" of Passos Coelho and Paulo Portas; submission to the Troika; rating agencies; rating criteria; the rating agencies dismantling; Fitch & Poor and Portugal's rating as 'trash'; dissatisfaction towards the Troika; submission of Portugal to Germany; Portugal control by EU and Germany; Troika control; austerity policy advocated by the IMF; austerity; Paulo Portas, Passos Coelho and the arrival of the IMF; budget disruptions in Europe; austerity advocated; fiscal dictates imposed by the IMF and Germany on Greece, Portugal, Italy and Spain; summer and holidays in Portugal in 2012; Spain and the light rescue; Angela Merkel's visit to Portugal; 2012: Portuguese Christmas controlled by the EU; 2013, new year with austerity defined by the EU; Germany and the IMF; IMF and Portuguese politicians; crisis and the civilization retrocession; summit of the European leaders; the loan commissions to the Troika; Troika and the 1st of December – Portugal's Independence Day; European Football Championship; the Euro currency; third tranche of the loan; exports from Germany; Vatican decides Portuguese holidays; experiences of the European Commission; Greece's political independence towards Germany; Eurozone; re-establishment of the agreement with the Troika; negotiations with the Troika; social impact of the economic crisis in Spain and Greece; Iberian-American Summit; protests against Merkel in Lisbon; board game "Here comes the Troika"; CGTP leader's racism towards the Head of the IMF Mission; Portugal's return to markets; IMF report on the Portuguese State; Troika exit before 2014; crisis and religion; the flags of Portugal in the European Council; unemployment in Europe; Troika and the agreement between parties; IMF evaluation errors; the new rescue of Greece; Portugal and Ireland memorandum: a copy of Greece's; the failure of European austerity; fiscal consolidation and support measures for growth; to say 'no' to the Troika; future after Troika; interest payments and commissions to Troika; Portugal and Ireland Troika's surveillance after the intervention period; end of international aid to Ireland; time of adjustment needed for Portugal and Greece advocated by the IMF; the economy improvement according the OECD; economy and the countries of the South; Jean-Claude Junker and the comparison of people with goods and capital; Carlos V prize received by Durão Barroso; the miracle of the Portuguese economy; farewell the Troika; Portuguese debt rates; exit of the Financial Aid Program; publication of a book on the three years of the Troika in Portugal; options concerning the Financial Assistance Program; 28 October 2014: Troika return for purposes of financial control.

Institutions: EU, European Commission, European Council, OECD
Financial Institutions: IMF, Banco BBVA, Moody's, Standard & Poor's, Fitch, Commmerz Bank
Countries: Portugal, Ireland, Spain, Italy, France, Vatican, Greece, Southern Countries
Protagonists (international): Angela Merkel, Nicolas Zarkozi, José Luís Zapatero, Georgios Panpadreo, Silvio Berlusconi, Mariano Raroy, Christine Lagarde, Wolfgang Schäuble, Durão Barroso, European leaders, European Commissioner for Justice, Prime

Ministers of Spain and Greece, IMF Head of Mission, Prime Minister of Ireland, Jean-Claude Junker, the Europeans, Troika inspectors.
Protagonists (national): José Sócrates, Passos Coelho, Paulo Portas, Eduardo Catroga, Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, Mário Soares, Government, Prime Minister, Deputy Secretary of the Prime Minister, Leader of the CGTP, political parties, Portuguese politicians, the Portuguese People, Vasco da Gama.
Entities: Euro Currency, Troika