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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

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