

Chapter 23


Mocking Birds “Tweeting”: The Use of Humor in Political Sharings and Posts on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

The efforts to interpret, share, and keep the current political developments on the agenda constitute important stages in the formation of the political atmosphere. In democratic societies, citizens’ negotiation of ideas in public spaces is considered an important source of legitimacy. The use of humor in negotiating ideas can be identified as an important trend in the recent period. This study is based on the argument that humor has an important role in the evaluation and sharing of current political developments on social media and aims to draw attention to the important role humor play in such processes by exploring the humorous narratives of political developments in different social media environments. In this respect, the relationship between humor and politics will be discussed, democratic negotiation opportunities of social media will be emphasized, and finally, examples of humor-based language and narration of social media will be examined.

INTRODUCTION

Although they may seem like two different concepts, it is possible to discover a connection between politics and humor, and to identify the moments in which these two seemingly different fields are intertwined. Information about the history of the relationship between politics and humor positions these two concepts as elements that came together in a very early period.

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Humor can also be described as an ongoing field embedded in history under many different genres. However, world history is perceived, interpreted and transmitted as if it does not contain any humor. History is an original field, which incorporates the features of informing about past and being made in the present. However, just as in the present, there was humor in the history of texts, visuals and meanings that helped us understand the past. In fact, some of the writings and documents that some researchers have interpreted as serious texts have been written for entertainment and humorous purposes.

However, humor in late-antique Europe has recently become an academic field of study. This can be viewed as showing signs of breaking academic perception that push humor out of history and historical studies (Halsall, 2002: 2).

POLITICS OVER HUMOR

As a unique genre, political satire can be defined as a practical way to point out to the dilemmas or problematic aspects of a political system by avoiding both direct opposition and sanctions that might arise from this opposition. The political aspect of such kind of humor can be seen as a way to express thoughts in a way that “entertains as well as edifies” (Young, 2019: 63). Badarneh (2011) states that humor has become the main form of objection and opposition, especially in oppressive regimes, and that jokes containing humor elements that cannot find a place in mass media in such regimes carry the appearance of authentic folk culture. Thus, like other elements of folk culture, cultural productions that have humor elements come to the forefront in terms of being anonymous. Instead of bearing the signature of any specific producer, they are the collective production of all segments of the people who speak and act in the context to which they belong.

It is pointed out that in strictly controlled regimes or dictatorships, where the suppressed voices cannot be expressed or mediated through the traditional mass media, humor acts as an intermediary for breaking such pressures through some tactics and literary techniques, thus fulfilling an important political function (Bernal, 2013).

Dimitriev, who emphasizes political humor as a form of humor, states that “the art of politics in a democratic society requires much more skill than simply expounding problems and finding solutions. Society does not accept, as it once did, the dry language of politics (Dimitriev, 2008: 86). According to the author, political humor is defined as an important type of expression in terms of its power to influence society among other types of humor. Among the politicians, those who have a high sense of political humor and understanding are more able to effectively make the policies known by the society and render the policies visible so that they can create a strong political agenda.

From this perspective, humor can be considered both as a representation of reality and as a means to achieve perceived reality. Despite the constraints of repressive regimes, humor could pave the way for freedom through a collective move. In this study, such a role is envisaged for humor and the different forms in which humor makes the way for social / collective productions are discussed. In other words, how humor plays a role in constituting and sustaining discourse in the social field is examined.

After establishing a close link between humor and politics, it will be useful to review the main characteristics of social media in order to address the element of humor in social media, which is the main focus of this study.

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