Liquid racism in Greek online satirical news

Villy Tsakona

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece
vtsakona@ecd.uoa.gr, villytsa@otenet.gr

Abstract

The present study explores the infiltration of racism in humorous texts which at first sight appear to have antiracist intentions, in particular in satirical news coming from popular Greek websites and targeting majority people for their racist practices towards migrants. The analysis reveals that distinguishing between antiracist and racist interpretations is not an easy or straightforward matter: humour seems to blur the boundary between racism and antiracism. In this context, the concept of liquid racism *(Weaver, 2016) is exploited to account for the ambiguities of humorous discourse when it involves racist and antiracist meanings. Furthermore, given that this paper is part of a special issue on "Humour and the public sphere", the latter understood in Habermas's (1989/1962) sense, I will venture some observations concerning the (in)compatibility between Habermas's conceptualisation of the public sphere and humour/satire. Perhaps a broader and more inclusive definition of the public sphere than the one initially proposed by Habermas is called for, which will allow for the ambiguities of satirical humour.*

Keywords: *(anti)racism, liquid racism, satirical news, migrants, public sphere*.

1. Introduction

> As for Habermas's attitude towards humour, well, there is something pleasantly mischievous about applying to humour a model designed by a scholar who actively thinks humour a waste of time (Simpson, 2003, p. 214).

When discussing the relationship between humour and racism, research usually concentrates on ethnic or racist jokes or other humorous texts which expressly target migrants[1] or other minorities. Relevant studies more or less explicitly ascribe to *critical humour studies* investigating topics such as how and why humour targeting the linguistic, cultural, or religious Other reproduces and maintains social discrimination and inequality; how and why the generic conventions of humorous genres do not incite the audience to think critically of their content but instead enhance their tolerance for discriminatory and racist standpoints; what kind of

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[1] The term *migrant* is here used as a hypernym of *immigrants*, *refugees*, and *asylum seekers*, unless the Greek equivalent of one of the hyponyms is attested in the data under scrutiny.

rhetorical strategies (e.g. disclaimers, denials) are employed by the (re)producers of racist jokes to mitigate their hostility and to exonerate themselves from the accusation of being racists; and how discriminatory humour may force the targeted groups to assimilate to prevalent social norms so as to avoid being ridiculed due to their differences (see among others Billig, 2005; Hill, 2008; Lockyer & Pickering, 2008; Santa Ana, 2009; Weaver, 2016; Malmquist, 2015; Archakis et al., 2018; Archakis & Tsakona, 2019, 2021; Ervine, 2019; Pérez, 2022; Pérez & Kuipers, 2024).

Given the above, the present study attempts a different approach: it explores humorous texts that at first sight appear to have antiracist intentions. More specifically, I analyse satirical news coming from popular Greek websites and targeting majority people for their racist practices towards migrants. My analysis will reveal that distinguishing between antiracist and racist interpretations is not an easy or straightforward matter: humour seems to blur the boundary between racism and antiracism. In this context, I exploit the concept of *liquid racism* put forward by Weaver (2016) to account for the ambiguities of humorous discourse when it involves racist and antiracist meanings. Furthermore, given that this paper is part of a special issue on "Humour and the public sphere", the latter understood in Habermas's (1989/1962) sense, I will venture some observations on the (in)compatibility between Habermas's conceptualisation of the public sphere and humour/satire. Taking into consideration already existing literature on the subject, I will argue that the ambiguities emerging in satirical news and produced through satirical humour call for a broader and more inclusive definition of the public sphere than the one initially proposed by Habermas (1989/1962).

So, in what follows, I first discuss the concepts of *racism*, *new racism* (van Dijk, 2000), and *liquid racism* (Section 2) and then I provide a brief overview of the literature concerning satirical news as a humorous genre (Section 3). In Section (4), I refer to previous studies on the concept of the public sphere and the criticism this concept received in relation to humour and satire. The description of the corpus examined and the analytical methodology are included in Section (5). Indicative examples of the data are analysed in Section (6) so as to illustrate that humour in seemingly antiracist satirical news may reproduce racist perspectives even when explicitly defending migrants, may trivialise migrant affairs and lives, and may recycle negative stereotypes against them. Finally, Section (7) contains the discussion of the findings and the conclusions of the study.

2. From new racism to liquid racism[2]

Modern nation-states, at least in the western world, are based on the "one state-one nation norm" (Irvin & Gal, 2000, p. 63): monoculturalism and monolingualism constitute dominant values within them. Nation-states are more often than not perceived and represented as pure entities with internal linguistic and cultural coherence and well-defined geographical borders. Such coherence, however, is never easy or even feasible, because it is met with resistance by people who may not align with the dominant sociocultural ideals. In such contexts, the local majorities include those who abide by the dominant sociocultural and linguistic ideals, while minorities (whether endogenous and exogenous ones) include

> peoples with distinctive identities in terms of language, culture or religion who have settled in these countries, with varying degrees of permanence, partly for political and humanitarian reasons, partly as a result of differing economic situations as well as the freedom of movement entailed by the growing economic integration. (Medda-Windischer, 2015, p. 2)

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[2] This Section draws on extracts from Archakis & Tsakona (2022; 2024a) with appropriate modifications so as to suit the purposes of the present paper.

Nationalism as the founding ideology of nation-states takes the form of racism exercising pressure on resisting minorities and forcing them either to align with national ideals or to abandon the nation-state (see Archakis, 2018, p. 35; 2022, pp. 1262-1263, and references therein). Racism thus becomes the most efficient means for achieving homogeneity within nation-state borders and is "constituted by social practices of discrimination [...] and relationships of power abuse by dominant groups, organisations, and institutions" (van Dijk, 2008, p. 103; see also van Dijk, 1991; 1992). Such discriminatory practices and relations of power abuse are premised on "socially shared and negatively oriented mental representations of Us about Them" (van Dijk, 2008, p. 103), that is, on negative stereotypes and prejudice which "result in the problematisation, marginalisation and exclusion" of the Others (van Dijk, 2005, pp. 3, 7; see also Trepagnier, 2010, p. 1).

Despite this oppressive and discriminatory function of racio-national discourse, we should not overlook the fact that humanitarian and antiracist values promoting the acceptance of the Others are also in wide circulation, especially after the racist crimes of World War II (van Dijk, 1992, pp. 95-97). Many liberal democracies in the Western world adopt laws promoting -more or less hypocritically- tolerance, the acceptance of the Others, and equality between majority and minority populations (van Dijk, 1992, pp. 95-96; see also van Dijk, 2021).

Given that racism in its violent and explicit versions is denounced in the western world, a more recent and subtle form of racism emerges, that is, *new racism*, which "wants to be democratic and respectable, and hence *first off denies that it is racism*" (van Dijk, 2000, p. 34, my emphasis). In order to highlight the pervasiveness of new racism, van Dijk (2000, p. 34) observes that

> [e]specially because of their often subtle and symbolic nature, many forms of the 'new' racism are discursive: they are expressed, enacted and confirmed by text and talk, such as everyday conversations, board meetings, job interviews, policies, laws, parliamentary debates, political propaganda, textbooks, scholarly articles, movies, TV programmes and news reports in the press, among hundreds of other genres. They appear mere talk, and far removed from the open violence and forceful segregation of the old racism. Yet, they may be just as effective to marginalise and exclude minorities.

This discursive nature of new racism is nowadays attested in mitigated verbal racist attacks, since national majority speakers attempt to denounce racism, to engage in charity actions (i.e. through offering occasional help to migrants with the expectation of their assimilation), and to use ambiguous disclaimers such as *I'm not a racist, but...*, *I have nothing against blacks, but...*, *not all migrants are criminals, but...* (see among others van Dijk, 1992; Walton et al., 2013; Archakis, 2014; Goodman & Rowe, 2014; Gavins & Simpson, 2015). All these contribute to covering up and (unwillingly) perpetuating racist stereotypes and to covertly but effectively (re)producing inequality between minority and majority members (van Dijk, 1992, pp. 88, 95, 96; 2000, p. 49; Trepagnier, 2010; Pérez, 2022).

This oscillation between antiracist claims and racist views, practices, or attacks results in what Weaver (2016) calls *liquid racism* (see also Weaver, 2010b; Weaver & Bradley, 2016). Through the concept of liquid racism, Weaver attempts to capture the emergence of both racist and antiracist/non-racist meanings from texts or extracts which are usually intended as non-racist, subversive of racism, or even clearly antiracist, but turn out to be polysemous and potentially racist (see also Pérez & Kuipers, 2024). More specifically, liquid racism

> does not produce a monolithic reading as racism but is experienced as racism in particular circumstances […]. It has a structure that is constructed with far more potential for ambivalence. […] [L]iquid racism should not be seen as a weakened or challenged residue of racism but rather as

an ambiguous form that is *encouraged* nowadays and one that weakens various defences against claims of racism. […] [L]iquid racism […] is promoted and encouraged by the mass media.

(Weaver, 2016, pp. 63-64, emphasis in the original)

As a result, the boundaries between racist and antiracist discourse are often blurred and multiple interpretations emerge from the same utterance or text. Such liquid meanings and ambiguities lead to "immunity to criticism" (Weaver, 2016, p. 63) and further solidify racist values and views. This renders liquid racism an equally if not perhaps more serious and dangerous form of racism than the 'old', 'easily recognisable' racism.

To the best of our knowledge, Weaver's work on liquid racism concentrates on humorous texts such as online racist jokes (Weaver, 2010a; 2011; 2013; 2016), comedy (Weaver, 2010c; 2016; Weaver & Bradley, 2016), and cartoons (Weaver, 2010b). Follow-up research by other scholars so far tends to follow Weaver's steps: liquid racism is investigated in humorous online videos (Leppänen & Häkkinen, 2012; Leppänen & Elo, 2016), cartoons (Haupt, 2019; Piata & Assimakopoulos, 2023; Assimakopoulos & Piata, 2024), comic strips (Otterbeck, 2019; Tsakona, 2019), and jokes (Archakis & Tsakona, 2021; Tsami et al., 2024).[3]

It is exactly in this context that the present study sets out to investigate how liquid racism emerges from satirical news referring to migrants and targeting majority people for the racist ways they treat or perceive migrants. The texts examined here could be described not only as intended to produce humour but also as antiracist in the sense that they attempt to defend migrants and to denigrate racist values and practices prevailing among majority members (see among others van Dijk, 2021; Archakis & Tsakona, 2024a). Simultaneously, it will be demonstrated that humour resulting in or constituting liquid racism functions as a means of *trivialising* migrants and migrant-related affairs: it may create fictionalised contexts or represent social events in such a way that the humorous fictionalisation or representation ends up not only satirising racist majority members but also trivialising migrants' lives. In such cases, trivialisation

pushes […] away from cognitive engagement and reflection, from asking difficult questions or going beyond the comfortable, if superficial, world of ideas as expressed by sound bites, myths, or stereotypes. […] Capturing both intent and ignorance, trivialisation can thus be seen as an individual or collective miscalculation of severity of issues, inattention to detail and complexity, or an outright dismissiveness of alternatives.

(Bubak & Jacek, 2019, pp. 11, 27)[4]

In sum, the present study focuses on the interplay among (anti)racism, humour, and trivialisation as attested in seemingly antiracist satirical news from the Greek online sphere, which are intended to humorously denigrate majority members for their racist attitudes and acts. The following Section is dedicated to a brief overview of the generic particularities of satirical news and of the main topics of relevant research.

3. Satirical news as a humorous genre

Satirical news constitutes a prototypical humorous genre, namely a genre which cannot exist without the presence of some kind of humour or related phenomena such as parody, irony, exaggeration, and the absurd (see Tsakona 2017, pp. 494-495; on satirical news as a genre, see

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[3] Research on liquid racism has recently expanded to include non-humorous texts such as newspaper articles, political discourse, and various online genres (Archakis & Tsakona, 2022; 2024b).

[4] On humour and trivialisation, see also Lindsay (2014), Gutsche et al. (2022), Koivukoski (2022, p. 62).

among others Ermida, 2012; Anderson & Kincaid, 2013; Holbert & Tchernev, 2014; Frank, 2015; Berkowitz & Schwartz, 2016; Rubin et al., 2016; Shilikhina, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Two main forms of satirical news are usually investigated in the relevant literature: TV shows mimicking 'serious' TV news and written articles mimicking 'serious' newspaper articles and usually published in specialised websites. In both cases, satirical news parody 'serious' journalistic discourse and mock its (alleged) objectivity, factuality, and professionalism. Satirical news is more often than not perceived as a hybrid genre combining comedy and political opinion (Droog et al., 2020) or news discourse and fiction (Brugman et al., 2022). Through establishing intertextual links to a variety of genres, satirical news aims to criticise sociopolitical affairs, politicians' statements and actions, journalists' ways of representing current events, celebrities' public speech and life-style, as well as citizens' views and practices concerning sociopolitical issues. It therefore seems that intertextuality and mimicry play a significant role in the creation of satirical news: its authors are often inspired and motivated by real-life events reported by mainstream media to create exaggerated, parodying, or fictionalised versions of them in an effort to entertain the audience (Ermida, 2012; Schwartz, 2014; Droog et al., 2020; Shilikhina, 2020; Brugman et al., 2022; Koivukoski, 2022, p. 24).

Some terminological issues should be clarified at this point. Satirical news, especially in its written form, which is the focus of the present study, is often investigated in parallel with (and/or in comparison with) *fake news* not only due to their common fictional core, but also because the audience may at times mistake satirical news for fake news; in other words, they may interpret the former as accurate reports of real-life events and thus they may be deceived by their content (see among others Frank, 2015; Yang et al., 2017, p. 1; Bedard & Schoenthaler, 2018, pp. 613-614; Wasserman, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). This confusion is reflected and reproduced in the relevant literature, where the term *fake news* is sometimes employed to refer to both satirical pieces of fictional events meant to entertain the audience (i.e. *satirical news*) and reports of fictional events deliberately created to deceive the audience into believing that the reported events are real ones, in order to distract public attention from serious sociopolitical problems or to serve specific political interests (i.e. *fake news*; see Balmas, 2014; Frank, 2015; Berkowitz & Schwartz, 2016; Wasserman, 2020). De Sarkar et al. (2018, p. 3371) provide a definition of *satirical news* clearly distinguishing it from *fake news*:

> News satire is a genre of deceptive news that is found on the web, with the intent of dispensing satire in the form of legitimate news articles. These articles differ from 'fake' news, in the sense that fake news intends to mislead people by providing untrue facts, while satirical news intends to ridicule and criticise something by providing satirical comments or through fictionalised stories. Satire is the intention of the author to be discovered as 'fake', unlike fake news, in which the intention is to make […] the readers believe in the news as true.[5]

Research on satirical news has so far concentrated on various aspects of the genre (see the references above) and its sociopolitical effects. For example, a number of studies look into the influence satirical news may have on public opinion. It appears that several people prefer watching or reading satirical news to watching or reading 'serious' news programmes or articles respectively, so for them satirical news becomes an important source of information on current sociopolitical affairs. This seems to be the case especially with the younger generations who are not particularly attracted by traditional media (see Guggenheim et al., 2011; Balmas, 2014;

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[5] On the distinction between satirical news and fake news, see also Rubin et al. (2016, p. 9); Rucynski & Prichard (2020, pp. 244-245); Shilikhina (2020, pp. 84-85); Zhang et al. (2020); Brugman et al. (2022, pp. 1637-1638). The term *spoof news* is less often used for satirical news (Ermida, 2012; Shilikhina, 2020; Wasserman, 2020, p. 12).

Knoblock-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017; Bedard & Shoenthaler, 2018, pp. 615-618; Feldman & Borum Chattoo, 2019; Doona, 2021, and references therein).

However, critical analyses of satirical news appear to be less common. In their critical analysis of satirical news, Anderson & Kincaid (2013, pp. 174-178) claim that the humorous representations of sociopolitical affairs offered in such texts exhibit a rather conservative orientation through

- supporting militarised world views;
- frequently displaying ethnocentrism and Orientalist tropes and promoting nationalist/patriotic propaganda;
- drawing on a fund of ethnic and national stereotypes to elicit automatic laughter from the audience;
- frequently using demeaning stereotypes to legitimise 'normativity';
- offering instances of ideological Othering;
- promoting feelings of political inefficacy, alienation, and cynicism;
- only partially deconstructing hegemonic discourses;
- reaffirming authority, power structures, neo-conservative orthodoxies, and conformism discourses among viewers;
- diverting audience attention from legitimate grievances at democracy's expense.

Anderson & Kincaid (2013, pp. 178, 177) summarise their findings by stating that "the mere repetition of hegemonic discourses, even in humorous contexts, can reinforce ideologies with insidious implications for normalising structures of domination and control", and eventually that "to contend that comedic criticisms constitute acts of subversive dissidence […] would be the real joke". In other words, they argue that satirical news cannot be considered threatening for the political status quo, as its criticism usually stays within "the implicit institutional bounds" (Anderson & Kincaid, 2013, p. 183; see also Khan et al., 2021).

To the best of my knowledge, studies of satirical news specifically referring to sociopolitical aspects of migration are scarce. Feldman & Borum Chattoo (2019) examine satirical news as a means for increasing audience engagement with the Syrian refugees issue and for changing the former's negative views and attitudes towards Syrian refugees. Even though these authors acknowledge the possibility that the use of humour may lead the audience to discard or ignore the content of satirical news as non-serious or trivial, they underline the potential of satire for social change through critique, for sensitising the audience to specific sociopolitical issues, and for inciting them to reflect on such issues. When it comes to satirical news referring to refugees, satirical news could, in Feldman & Borum Chattoo's (2019, p. 295) view, "humanise refugees and challenge fear-laden assertions that connect them with terrorism" and perhaps other racist stereotypes.

Contrary to Anderson & Kincaid's (2013) critical views concerning the sociopolitical effects and functions of satirical news (see above), Feldman & Borum Chattoo's (2019) study offers a positive/positivist[6] look on the potential of satirical news and antiracist humour by highlighting the persuasive function of humour: satirical news could, in their view, reduce the impact of negative stereotypes and promote antiracist values. It is exactly at this point where their study meets the present one: the authors of the satirical news examined here seem to attempt to defend migrants and, in general, adopt an antiracist perspective as they humorously

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[6] On a critique of positive/positivist approaches to humour which place emphasis on its positive effects and functions and deliberately overlook its negative ones (e.g. hostility, denigration), see Billig (2005, pp. 10-33), Weaver (2016, pp. 8-12), and Pérez (2022, pp. 10-12, 18-19, 21, 27-29, 33-41, 75-82, 102, 169, 171).

attack those politicians, celebrities, citizens, etc. who support racist views and perform racist acts.

Nevertheless, in what follows, I intend to show that, despite their antiracist intentions, the authors of satirical news do not manage to avoid reproducing racist values and stereotypes. In this sense, the critical approach adopted here (see Section 1) will eventually demonstrate that satirical news (unwillingly) supports conservative and racist standpoints, a point also made by Anderson & Kincaid (2013; see also Koivukoski 2022, pp. 42-43). In addition, I will argue that this kind of contrast between (antiracist) intentions and (racist) means/effects becomes an important reason for the incompatibility between how satire and humour work and how political issues are supposed to be deliberated in the public sphere (after Habermas, 1989/1962).

4. Humour, satire, and the public sphere

In Habermas's seminal work (1989/1962), the public sphere is conceptualised as a bourgeois social space separate from the state, where participants can exchange ideas and arguments. Rational and critical thinking and equally accessible information constitute dominant discursive norms therein, while the agenda of the debate is set by the participants themselves and includes matters of general social interest and respective decisions. Habermas locates such an ideal community in early modern England and perhaps in other western European countries in the 18th-19th centuries.

This concept has received harsh criticism for several reasons, two of which are relevant to the present study. First, Habermas (1989/1962) seems to have come up with a theoretical construct that most probably never existed. His critics talk about a *mythologised* (Condren, 2002, p. 79; Rolfe, 2017, p. 41), *nonexistent* (Rodriguez, 2020, p. 282), *unrealistic* (Bouvier & Rosenbaum, 2020, p. 6; Rodriguez, 2020, p. 269), and *too limited* (Warner, 2007, p. 19; see also Kuipers, 2011, p. 64) concept. Others frame it as "a normative construct rather than empirical reality" (Warner, 2007, p. 18; see also Susen, 2011; Allen, 2015; Koivukoski, 2022, p. 26; Seeliger & Sevignani, 2022), *idealistic* (Susen, 2011, p. 53; see also Torgerson, 2010), and eventually as "a relatively common utopian yearning for rational consensus" (Hutcheon, 1994, p. 89; see also Gardiner, 2004, p. 38).

The second reason for criticism (directly related to the first one) involves the fact that, in his idealised conceptualisation of the public sphere, Habermas (1989/1962) seems to have totally ignored the sociopolitical function of satire and humour in the public debates about political issues (see Allen, 2015, pp. 181-182). Especially in England in the 18th-19th centuries, political satire played a significant role in public discussions about political affairs and often satirists put their lives at risk by voicing their criticism (Condren, 2002, pp. 80, 93-94; Phiddian & Noonan, 2014, pp. 296-297; Rolfe, 2017, p. 41). Condren (2002, pp. 93, 94) accounts for such an omission as follows:

> A proper public sphere requires that its participants engage irrespective of status in rational debate on salient issues that they themselves have established. Such a situation is predicated on trust and assumes a free flow of all relevant information and an unconstrained equality of participation. […] [S]atirists trade not in the free flow of information and level-headed and rational debate of any set of objectively determined salient issues, but in exaggeration, ridicule, insinuation and the devices of humiliation.

Therefore, the ostracism of satire and humour from the public sphere and political deliberation does not seems to be accidental. Furthermore, what Habermas (1989/1962) envisions as the public sphere is not at all unrelated to what later on he calls the *ideal speech situation* (see Habermas, 1987, pp. 206, 322, 346; 1992a, p. 251, as cited in Basu, 1999, p. 380,

footnote 5), where interlocutors "are free from the distortions that might result from limitations on access, the suppression of particular opinions, asymmetries in power, deception (including repressed motives and self-deception), or inappropriate language" (Basu 1999: 380). Such views are further specified in Habermas (1982, p. 271, as cited in Basu, 1999, p. 398, footnote 86), where he considers humour and related phenomena as problematic and hence insignificant:

> jokes, fictional representations, irony, games, and so on, rest on intentionality using categorical confusions which, in the wake of differentiation of validity-claims and corresponding modes (being/illusion, is/ought, essence/appearance), are seen through as category mistakes.

Consequently, Basu (1999, p. 380) aptly characterises Habermas as "the apogee of interlocutory humourlessness", while Simpson (2003) and Gardiner (2004) comment in a similar vein:

> Habermas himself has rejected the concept of humorous discourse, seeing it simply as distorted communication which interferes with the drive to consensual intelligibility embodied by the ideal speech situation. In his highly normative model, ideal interaction should be free from the distortions of inappropriate language which tamper with form and which thereby potentially pervert the outcome of dialogue (Habermas, 1990, pp. 58, 106). […] Habermas has no time for humour.
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> (Simpson, 2003, p. 213)

> Habermas [1979] regards other forms of language-use (including humour, irony, and parody) as secondary and 'parasitic', presumably because they compromise the lucidity and openness that ideally marks the communicative process, or introduce elements of strategic action.
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> (Gardiner, 2004, p. 35)

Despite such criticism, scholars working on humour and satire still feel the need to refer to Habermas's work. However, taking into consideration contemporary economic, political, and technological conditions, which are obviously different from those of early modern times in western Europe, it is often suggested, even by Habermas (1992b) himself, that the conceptualization of the public sphere needs to be revised if we continue to consider it a usable analytical tool for public discourse produced in the modern (social) media (see also Calhoun, 1992, pp. 21-29; Torgerson, 2010; Susen, 2011; Allen, 2015; Seeliger & Sevignani, 2022). Among others, Kuipers (2011), Susen (2011, pp. 51-56), Bouko & Garcia (2020), and Koivukoski (2022, pp. 25-26) suggest that, alongside rational argumentation, the analysis of the discourse produced in the public sphere should take into serious consideration power relations and struggles as well as the emotional, cultural, and humorous aspects of such discourse. In particular, Koivukoski (2022, pp. 25, 26) proposes a *hybrid public sphere* which

> brings together both the rational deliberative function of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989/1962) and the affective and cultural dimensions of democratic engagement and power struggles […]. Mediated humour participates both in the deliberative formation of public opinion […] and the affectual construction of political identities […]. [T]he notion of the hybrid public sphere is developed as an analytical concept to refer to the constellation of various public spheres and their interactions.

In such a broadened, more inclusive public sphere, humour and satire may exhibit a wide range of functions: setting a public agenda, disseminating societal information, facilitating public debate and opinion formation, shaping political identities, critiquing elites and political opponents, promoting equality, maintaining and/or reinforcing stereotypes, etc. (see

Koivukoski, 2022, p. 26, and references therein). Interestingly, such functions are strongly reminiscent of the functions ascribed to, and fulfilled by, satirical news (see Section 3).

5. The data of the study and its analytical methodology

The data under scrutiny come from two popular Greek websites, namely *Το Κουλούρι/To Koulouri* ('the bagel') and *Το Βατράχι/To Vatrahi* ('the frog'), which publish exclusively pieces of satirical news. Both include extensive disclaimers reminding the readers of the fictional quality of their articles, since many articles draw on real-life events reported in the media and fictionalise or parody them. Moreover, in both cases, the authors of satirical news maintain their anonymity. For the purposes of the present study, the keywords *μετανάστης/τρια* '(im)migrant', *πρόσφυγας* 'refugee', and related terms were used in the search engines of the two satirical news websites. The search provided us with 63 texts referring to migrants and published from September 2012 until September 2021.[7]

The data were analysed with the *General Theory of Verbal Humour* (Attardo, 2001; 2020), in particular with the knowledge resources of *script opposition* and *target*. Script opposition refers to the incongruity emerging from two incompatible scripts evoked within a single text and causing a violation of readers' expectations and hence humour. The target involves the person, group, idea, institution, etc. responsible for the violated expectations; in other words, the entity ridiculed through the humorous incongruity/script opposition.[8] From the *General Theory of Verbal Humour* I also employ the analytical tools called *punch lines* and *jab lines*, which involve text extracts including a script opposition: punch lines are identified at the end of a text, while jab lines before the end of a text (see Attardo, 2001, pp. 82-83; 2020, p. 144; Tsakona, 2007).

The analysis of the data reveals that all the texts seem to be pro-migrant and antiracist, in the sense that they target majority members for their racist views and/or practices. None of the articles examined employs humour to denigrate migrants. More specifically, the articles ridicule various Greek governments (both Left and Right), Prime Ministers, politicians, the Greek media, journalists, celebrities, and Greek citizens. Less often, international institutions supporting migrants, foreign politicians, and tourists visiting Greece are also targeted for the same reasons.

It is interesting to note here that the fact that these texts aim at humorously targeting majority members renders the latter protagonists of the humorous fictional stories in most (if not all) cases. Migrants are more often than not assigned secondary roles or are very briefly mentioned. This could be interpreted as a first indication of the racist values and views reproduced in the data: majority members and their fictional stories are tellable, while migrant voices are relatively less significant. So, the antiracist intentions of the authors coexist with and are juxtaposed to the racist values framing majority members and their stories as more important than migrants' ones. In this sense, the pieces of satirical news examined here are instances of liquid racism. This initial observation will be further corroborated through the analysis of humour in the data.

The data were categorised on the basis of what seems to be the *overarching* sociopragmatic function of humour in these texts *besides denigrating racist majority members* (which is the common antiracist sociopragmatic function of all the texts examined here). In particular, three different categories were identified:

1. Satirical news explicitly defending migrants
2. Satirical news trivialising migration affairs and lives

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[7] Part of this corpus is included in the *Wiki–TRACE* (2021); see Archakis & Tsakona (2024b).
[8] The terms *incongruity* and *script opposition* are used interchangeably.

3. Satirical news reproducing well known negative stereotypes against migrants

Even though these categories may at first appear overlapping and based on subtle differences, I have attempted a quantitative analysis of my sample (see Table 1):

Table 1: The quantitative analysis of the sample

	Explicitly defending migrants	Trivialising migrant affairs and lives	Reproducing well known negative stereotypes against migrants	Total
To Koulouri	5 (7.93%)	13 (20.63%)	31 (49.2%)	49 (77.77%)
To Vatrahi	4 (6.34%)	1 (1.58%)	9 (14.28%)	14 (22.22%)
Total	9 (14.28%)	14 (22.22%)	40 (63.49%)	63 (100%)

The antiracist humour attempted by the authors of these texts does not manage to avoid stereotyping at migrants' expense or trivialising their lives and living conditions. Even in articles expressly defending migrants, the authors have not managed to refrain from evoking racist discourse, even in an indirect or superficially subversive manner. In this sense, the data examined here constitute instances of liquid racism. The following Section is dedicated to the analysis of indicative examples of each of these categories.

6. Data analysis

6.1. Explicitly defending migrants

On January 13th, 2020, 12 refugees were reported drowned when their boat sank close to the Greek island of Paxi in the Ionian Sea. Unfortunately, such events have not been uncommon in the Greek seas since 2015. The author working for the satirical website *To Koulouri* used this event as a pretext to attack Greek racists including the parliamentarian of the Greek conservative party New Democracy and then Minister for Development and Investment Adonis Georgiadis. Georgiadis is well-known for his nationalist views as well as for his knowledge of and admiration for Ancient Greek civilization and history.[9]

(1) *Αναλλοίωτος για ακόμη ένα σαββατοκύριακο ο ρατσισμός μεγάλου ποσοστού των Ελλήνων, ήσυχος κοιμήθηκε ο Άδωνις Γεωργιάδης*
13 Ιανουαριου 2020
Σαν πουλάκι κοιμήθηκε χθες το βράδυ ο Άδωνις Γεωργιάδης, αφού για ακόμη ένα σαββατοκύριακο, ο ρατσισμός και η ξενοφοβία μεγάλης μερίδας Ελλήνων πολιτών παρέμειναν αναλλοίωτα, παρά το γεγονός πως δεκάδες πρόσφυγες έχασαν τη ζωή τους στην προσπάθειά τους να προσεγγίσουν τη χώρα μας.
Οι παραπάνω συμπολίτες μας, όχι μόνο δεν συγκινήθηκαν από τον χαμό των συνανθρώπων τους, αλλά δεν δίστασαν να κάνουν και χιούμορ με τον θάνατό τους, με τον Υπουργό Ανάπτυξης να διαπιστώνει ικανοποιημένος πως ο αρχαιοελληνικός πολιτισμός είναι ακόμη εδώ, αναλλοίωτος και δυνατός.
«Η Νέα Δημοκρατία στήριξε μεγάλο ποσοστό των ψήφων της σε ρατσιστές και μισαλλόδοξους πολίτες. Με χαρά βλέπω ότι η συγκεκριμένη μερίδα παραμένει αναλλοίωτη. Τους χαιρετίζω και τους

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[9] The articles were translated into English by the author for the purposes of the present study. Punch and jab lines are marked in italics. The original spelling of the Greek texts is maintained. Due to copyright restrictions the photos accompanying these texts are omitted and will not be analysed here.

περιμένω στις επόμενες συγκεντρώσεις μου», σχολίασε ο βουλευτής, *λίγο πριν προχωρήσει σε ένα ανέκδοτο με αφορμή το θλιβερό περιστατικό που έλαβε χώρα στους Παξούς.*
Το «Κουλούρι» παρακολουθεί το συγκεκριμένο ζήτημα και θα επανέλθει για οτιδήποτε νεότερο.

(Anonymous, 2020)

Many Greek people's racism [remained] unchanged for one more weekend; Adonis Georgiadis slept peacefully
13 January 2020
Adonis Georgiadis slept like a baby last night, since for one more weekend racism and xenophobia remained unchanged for a significant number of Greek citizens, despite the fact that dozens of refugees lost their lives in their attempt to reach our country.
Not only were our above-mentioned fellow citizens not moved by the loss of our fellow persons [i.e. the refugees], but they also did not hesitate to make fun of their death, while the Minister for Development was satisfied to confirm that the Ancient Greek civilization is still here, unchanged and powerful.
"*New Democracy was voted by a large number of racist and biased citizens. I am happy to see that this group [of citizens] remains the same. I send them my regards and I expect to see them in my future rallies*", the parliamentarian commented *shortly before telling a joke about the sad event that took place at Paxi.*
"To Koulouri" will follow up on the issue and provide updates about any new development.

The antiracist humour attested in this piece of satirical news evolves around the fact that a significant number of (racist) Greek citizens (including Adonis Georgiadis) remain untouched by the increasing number of refugees drowning in the Greek seas. One would expect that they would feel some kind of sympathy or pity, which would mitigate their racist feelings. According to the fictional story examined here, Greek racists even joke at the expense of drowning refugees (*they also did not hesitate to make fun of their death*, *telling a joke about the sad event that took place at Paxi*). Among them, Adonis Georgiadis *sleeps like a baby* and is *satisfied* with the fact that such news reports have no effect at all on Greek racists: their racism remains *unchanged*. These humorous incongruities could be formulated as follows:

- Greek racists show sympathy or pity for the refugees drowning in the Greek seas/remain xenophobic and make racist jokes at the expense of refugees drowning in the Greek seas
- The Greek Minister Adonis Georgiadis is not satisfied/is most satisfied with the fact that racism remains strong among Greeks
- The persistence of Greek civilisation is most important for Adonis Georgiadis/Refugees' lives are not important for Adonis Georgiadis

It therefore seems that humour here is antiracist, since it targets Greek racists including the Greek Minister for Development and Investment. However, we cannot help but notice that the article includes representations of refugees exclusively as victims of neglect or humorous denigration and eventually as deserving the pity of the Greek majority. Such representations recycle racist values and practices putting majority people in powerful positions (here as powerful and merciless humourists) and refugees in powerless ones (here as worthy of pity; see also Hovden et al., 2018; Panagaki et al., 2023, and references therein). In addition, the brief mention of the *unchanged and powerful* Ancient Greek civilization also carries nationalist -and hence racist- connotations: this civilization is framed as superior and worth-preserving, while no mention is made of drowning refugees' cultures, which are implicitly framed as worthless – and the same is supposed to hold for their lives. In this sense, even if the main humorous point of the article is intended to be an antiracist one, the author resorts to, and recontextualises, racist

perspectives and values. The co-occurrence of racist and antiracist views renders this text an instance of liquid racism.

6.2. Trivialising migrant affairs and lives

This category involves satirical news articles where humour ridicules Greek majority members but at the same time trivialises migrants' lives, namely it represents migrants as people with unimportant and eventually absurd or incongruous needs and habits. Moreover, it trivialises migrant affairs by representing them as simpler and easier to handle than they actually are. In the following example, tattooing is represented as migrants' essential need, which the Municipality of Thessaloniki supposedly attempts to satisfy through a fictional public event:

(2) *Δωρεάν τατουάζ σε πρόσφυγες προσφέρει ο δήμος Θεσσαλονίκης*
6 Σεπτεμβρίου 2018
Νέες δράσεις για την καλύτερη ενσωμάτωση των προσφύγων στην τοπική κοινωνία ανακοίνωσε ο δήμος Θεσσαλονίκης, *με κυριότερο το πρόγραμμα δερματοστιξίας για πρόσφυγες που θα λαμβάνει χώρα κάθε Κυριακή του Οκτωβρίου στην πλατεία Αριστοτέλους.*
Όπως ανακοινώθηκε, *όποιος πρόσφυγας το επιθυμεί θα μπορεί να προσέρχεται για να «χτυπήσει» δωρεάν το πρώτο του τατουάζ, επιλέγοντας μεταξύ εκατοντάδων ευφάνταστων σχεδίων από διεθνούς φήμης tattoo artists.*
Άλλωστε, αναμένεται να δώσει το «παρών» η ελίτ των καλλιτεχνών του είδους, Έλληνες και ξένοι από όλες τις ηπείρους (ΗΠΑ, Ευρώπη, Ιαπωνία, Νέα Ζηλανδία, Πολυνησία, Νησιά Φερόε) που θα μεταβούν στη χώρα μας για να επιδείξουν τα skills τους στην πανάρχαια τέχνη της δερματοστιξίας.
Στον χώρο θα λειτουργεί επίσης coffee bar που θα σερβίρει μονοποικιλιακό καφέ Γουατεμάλας, προσφορά της εταιρίας «Γρηγόρης Μικρογεύματα» ενώ ακόμα θα υπάρχουν cocktail bars, VIP area και περίπτερα με ρουχισμό, αξεσουάρ και gadgets σχετικά με τη δερματοστιξία.
Την παρουσίαση της διοργάνωσης έχει αναλάβει ο tattoo artist Γιώργος Μαυρίδης, γνωστός στο ευρύ κοινό από την εκπομπή «World Party», *ο οποίος καθόλη τη διάρκεια της εκδήλωσης θα συνομιλεί με το κοινό για τα καινούρια τους τατουάζ.*
«Η δημοτική αρχή έχει κάνει σημαντικές προσπάθειες για την αντιμετώπιση του προσφυγικού ζητήματος και τη στήριξη των προσφύγων. Πολλές από τις δράσεις μας στέφθηκαν με επιτυχία, είμαστε ικανοποιημένοι, *όμως ακόμη η ένταξη των προσφύγων στη ζωή της πόλης συναντά εμπόδια. Θεωρούμε ότι τα τατουάζ θα βοηθήσουν»* τόνισε για το θέμα ο δήμαρχος Θεσσαλονίκης, Γιάννης Μπουτάρης.

(Anonymous, 2018)

The Municipality of Thessaloniki offers free tattoos to refugees
September 6th, 2018
The Municipality of Thessaloniki [i.e. the second largest city in Greece] announced new actions for integrating refugees more effectively into the local community. *The most important one involves a tattooing project for refugees* which will take place this October every Sunday on Aristotelous Square [i.e. a central square of the city].
It was announced that *every refugee wishing [to get a tattoo] can go to get his first tattoo for free, choosing among thousands of fantastic designs [created] by tattoo artists of international reputation.*
Besides, *the elite of tattoo artists is expected to be there, both Greeks and foreigners from all the continents (USA, Europe, Japan, New Zealand, Polynesia, Faroe Islands), who will come to our country to demonstrate their skills in the ancient art of tattooing.*
A coffee bar will also be open in the same area, which will offer single varietal coffee from Guatemala, sponsored by the company "Gregory's Snacks", while there will also be cocktail bars, a VIP area, and kiosks with clothes, accessories, and gadgets related to tattooing.

The event will be hosted by the tattoo artist George Mavridis, well known to the wider audience from the TV show "World Party", *who will discuss with the audience about their new tattoos during the event.*
"The Municipality has put significant effort into dealing with the refugee issue and supporting refugees. Many of our actions were successful; we are satisfied [with them]; however, *refugees' integration into the city life is still difficult to achieve. We think that tattoos will help*", the Mayor of Thessaloniki Yiannis Boutaris underlined on this topic.

Tattooing has become particularly popular among Greeks the past few years. The humorous exploitation of tattooing may also be related to the fact that the then 77-year-old Mayor of Thessaloniki Yiannis Boutaris was famous, among other things, for his tattoos. It is in this context that the author of this piece of satirical news ridicules the Municipality of Thessaloniki for supposedly offering free tattoos to migrants as a means for their effective integration into the local community. Local authorities are humorously criticised for not offering appropriate and effective support to migrants. The jab lines attested in the text are based on the following script oppositions:

- A project offering free tattoos to migrants is not/is what migrants need in order to integrate into the local community
- Migrants' needs do not involve/involve tattoos by acclaimed tattoo artists and specialised events

Such humour targets the local authorities and the Mayor himself for their inadequate and incongruous policies and for treating migrants and their problems in a superficial, light-hearted manner. This humorous narrative suggests that migrants' everyday problems and difficult living conditions could be overcome with life-style-related activities designed for leisure and fun. Humour is not only used to ridicule Greek majority members, but also ends up trivialising migrants' lives by portraying them as people with trivial and superficial needs who would be willing to participate in such events. The text can be perceived as an instance of liquid racism, as it both denigrates the Greek majority's superficial treatment of migrants and trivialises the latter's lives, needs, and problems.
The same effect (i.e. liquid racism) could be achieved if readers ignore or miss the humorous framing of this piece of satirical news and interpret it literally, as a real event. Racism could be reinforced if readers become frustrated because they may think that the Municipality of Thessaloniki spend so much money on migrants that they even provide free tattoos to them.

6.3. Reproducing well-known negative stereotypes about migrants

The majority of the texts included in the corpus examined here reproduces well known negative stereotypes about migrants: for example, migrants are dirty, dark-skinned people, they speak in 'inferior' languages and 'bad' Greek, they are hostile, illegal criminals, and (hence) unwanted individuals (see also Archakis & Tsakona, 2019; 2021, and references therein). Even though these texts do not seem to intend to ridicule migrants (in fact, their humour targets majority members), they end up denigrating migrants and representing them in a stereotypical manner. Example (3), published in 2012, refers to a fictional initiative by the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn, whose members were later on (in 2020) convicted for a number of crimes against migrants and antiracists.

(3) *'Golden Shower', η νέα πρωτοποριακή υπηρεσία της Χρυσής Αυγής*
19 Νοεμβρίου 2012
Μια πρωτοποριακή υπηρεσία σκοπεύει να υιοθετήσει η Χρυσή Αυγή στα πλαίσια της γενικότερης πολιτικής της στα θέματα που άπτονται του μεταναστευτικού ζητήματος.
Οι ιθύνοντες της ακροδεξιάς παράταξης εμφανίζονται ιδιαίτερα προβληματισμένοι το τελευταίο χρονικό διάστημα από το γεγονός πως το κέντρο της Αθήνας είναι όπως χαρακτηριστικά λένε οι ίδιοι «μια υγειονομική βόμβα», λόγω της παρουσίας μεταναστών από διάφορες χώρες οι οποίοι δεν κάνουν μπάνιο τακτικά με αποτέλεσμα να αποτελούν κίνδυνο για τη δημόσια υγεία. *Έτσι, σκοπεύουν να εγκαταστήσουν σε διάφορα σημεία της πόλης δημόσιες ντουζιέρες στις οποίες τα μέλη της Χρυσής Αυγής θα οδηγούν με το ζόρι τους μετανάστες προκειμένου αυτοί να παραμένουν καθαροί. Το νέο αυτό μέτρο θα έχει την κωδική ονομασία 'Golden Shower'* και αναμένεται να εφαρμοστεί με την έναρξη του νέου έτους.
Σε επίσημη τοποθέτησή του ο κοινοβουλευτικός εκπρόσωπος της Χρυσής Αυγής, Χρήστος Παππάς, δήλωσε: «Πρέπει επιτέλους κάποιος να αναλάβει μια πρωτοβουλία προκειμένου να καθαρίσει το κέντρο της πόλης μας. *Αφού δεν μπορούμε να διώξουμε ακόμα όλους τους μετανάστες τουλάχιστον ας τους καθαρίσουμε. Η Χρυσή Αυγή με το 'Golden Shower' θα δώσει και πάλι τη λύση. Μπορεί τώρα κάποιοι να το ακούνε και να γελάνε αλλά μια μέρα θα μας ευχαριστούνε. Καλώ όλους τους μετανάστες να προσέλθουν αυτοβούλως για ένα 'Golden Shower'. Άλλωστε γι' αυτό το λόγο επιλέξαμε αγγλική ονομασία, έτσι ώστε να γίνεται εύκολα κατανοητό στους ξένους. Αν δεν έρθουν από μόνοι τους θα τους πάμε εμείς με το ζόρι».*
Θέση για το ζήτημα πήρε και ο γενικός γραμματέας της παράταξης, Νίκος Μιχαλολιάκος δηλώνοντας πως «ένα 'Golden Shower' είναι ο ιδανικός τρόπος να κλείσεις μια κουραστική ημέρα. Καλώ όλους τους μετανάστες να το υιοθετήσουν».

(Anonymous, 2012)

'Golden Shower', the new pioneering service by Golden Dawn
November 19th, 2012
Golden Dawn intends to adopt a pioneering service in the framework of their general policies concerning the migration issue.
The officials of the extreme-right party are particularly puzzled recently because the centre of Athens is, in their own words, "a health hazard", due to the presence of immigrants from various countries who do not take baths often, so they are dangerous for public health. *So, they* [i.e. Golden Dawn officials] *plan to install public showers at various points around the city* [of Athens]*, where Golden Dawn members will force immigrants to go, so that they stay clean. The code-name of this new measure will be "Golden Shower"* and is expected to work from the beginning of the new year onwards.
In his official announcement, the Golden Dawn parliamentary spokesperson Christos Pappas stated: "At last someone should take an initiative to clean the centre of our city. *Since we cannot expel all immigrants yet, at least let's clean them. With 'Golden Shower' Golden Dawn will once again provide the solution* [to the problem of migrants' alleged dirtiness]. Now some people may hear about our initiative and laugh, but one day they will be grateful. *I invite all immigrants to come on their own free will for a 'Golden Shower'. Besides, that's why we chose an English name, so that it is easy for foreigners to understand. If they do not come by themselves, we will force them to go".*
The General Secretary of the party [i.e. Golden Dawn] *Nikos Michaloliakos also commented on the issue by stating that "a 'Golden Shower' is the ideal way to close a tiring day. I invite all immigrants to endorse it".*

Golden Dawn members have for many years been notorious for their racist views and practices ranging from chasing after and beating up migrants to killing migrants and their antiracist defenders. Their explicit aim has been to 'clean the place' from migrants, antiracists, but also corrupt politicians, communists, supporters of the Left, and Jews. The incongruity emerging from this text involves their unexpected change of mind: they appear to care for migrants, install public showers especially for them, and not only invite migrants to use them,

but are determined to force migrants to take 'golden showers'. The utterance *If they do not come by themselves, we will force them to go* could also evoke WWII concentration camps where inmates were forced to go for a shower, when in reality they were pushed to death in gas chambers as part of Nazi's extermination plan. So, the script oppositions on which humour is based could be formulated as follows:

- Golden Dawn members wish to exclude or even eliminate migrants/to take care of migrants and improve their living conditions
- Nazis forced people to 'take showers' in gas chambers to kill them/Neo-Nazis force migrants to take showers to clean them

The script oppositions appear to be intended as antiracist: humour is created at the expense of Golden Dawn members who are ridiculed for their practices and, most importantly, for unexpectedly changing their attitudes and behaviours towards migrants from hostile to generous and caring. However, in order to produce such humour, the author reproduces a racist stereotype and attributes it to Golden Dawn members: migrants are supposed to be dirty and thus dangerous for public health, because they (allegedly) do not shower frequently enough or do not wish to shower at all. So, Golden Dawn members seem to be willing to drag them to the showers by force. Consequently, liquid racism is attested in this ambiguous text. Furthermore, readers may tend to focus on the fact that, as a piece of satirical news, the article ridicules Golden Dawn members, and may eventually (more or less) overlook the racist stereotype humour is premised on. In other words, humour overshadows the racist values and views reproduced in the article by drawing readers' attention to the antiracist script oppositions.

Furthermore,[10] liquid racism could be produced by alternative readings of this piece of satirical news relating 'golden showers' to a sexual act involving urinating on a sexual partner for pleasure or degradation. The alleged dirtiness of migrants becomes even worse, disgusting, or more dangerous for public health, if one interprets 'golden showers' as urinating on migrants. In this sense, more script oppositions can be identified:

- 'Golden showers' involve cleaning/urinating on migrants
- Golden Dawn members wish to take care of migrants/make migrants dirty and degrade them

Such humour targets Golden Dawn members for their racist practices (i.e. antiracist humour)[11] and simultaneously humiliates and offends migrants by reinforcing racist stereotypes (i.e. racist humour).

7. Conclusion

"This is a confusing time to be a news consumer", as Frank (2015, p. 328) claims, when referring to the difficulty of distinguishing "between fact and humour, between fact and opinion, and between fact and fiction". The present study has tried to demonstrate that the difficulty extends to distinguishing between racism and antiracism in written satirical news. The data examined here appear to have antiracist intentions since they ridicule Greek majority members for their racist perspectives and practices; yet they do not refrain from reproducing racist values and

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[10] I am grateful to both reviewers of this paper for pointing out these interpretations.

[11] Golden Dawn members could also be targeted for proposing 'golden showers' without being aware that the term refers to a sexual practice, hence the incongruity is the following:

- Golden Dawn members wish to poor urine on migrants/to clean migrants with water

views. The proposed analysis (Section 6) suggests that this may be achieved in various ways: by evoking racist values and views even when expressly defending migrants; by trivialising migrant affairs and migrants' lives; and by recycling negative racist stereotypes against migrants. It is also achieved through creating fictional stories where majority members are protagonists and migrants are ascribed secondary roles and/or are briefly mentioned (Section 5). Humour plays a central role in achieving all this, as it is produced through the creation of fictional stories and the parody of news style and not through the humorous subversion and/or mocking of racist stereotypes.

It therefore seems that it is indeed "a confusing time to be a *satirical* news consumer", to recontextualise Frank's (2015, p. 328) quotation above. Both racist and antiracist meanings and interpretations can emerge from satirical news articles, thus rendering them instances of liquid racism. In this sense, new racism is reinforced and further disseminated (see van Dijk, 2000 in Section 2): mitigated forms of racism denying their racist quality through seemingly antiracist humour may eventually pass as antiracism. Humour thus becomes a means of perpetuating liquid and new racism. At the same time, humour may distract readers from concentrating on the reproduction of racist values and views and, consequently, they may perceive these texts as exclusively antiracist ones. When racism is missed or overlooked, it becomes normalised and the distinction between racism and antiracism becomes blurred (see among others Trepagnier, 2010; Archakis et al., 2018; Pérez, 2022).

The present findings confirm Weaver's ones (see the relevant references in Section 3) and further expand the analytical scope of the concept of liquid racism: to the best of my knowledge, this is the first study examining liquid racism in satirical news. Needless to say, more research is required to further scrutinise the subtle but effective workings of racism in satirical news coming from other linguocultural settings or from satirical news broadcast on TV. As already mentioned (in Section 3), critical approaches to such texts so far appear to be scarce. This sounds like a research gap to fill in "[i]n this world of fast moving sharing and likes, [where] most social media users do not take time to critically analyse articles before reacting and moving on" (Bedard & Schoenthaler, 2018, p. 614).

By adopting a critical perspective on humour and not perceiving it as 'mere fun' or 'just joking', the present study has also brought to the surface trivialisation as a means of denigrating migrants and their lives. I have tried to demonstrate that humour may be a socially acceptable and superficially innocuous way of representing minority lives and living conditions as unimportant affairs, which can be dealt with light-heartedly or can even be disregarded (see Sections 6.2-6.3). Undervaluing the presence of Others in our communities and neglecting their needs constitute forms of racism and, as such, reproduce social inequality and injustice. In this sense, trivialisation through humour may be perceived as related to both 'old' and new racism (see also Lindsay, 2014; Gutsche et al., 2022; Koivukoski, 2022, p. 62).

Last but not least, what about satirical news and humour in the public sphere after Habermas (1989/1962)? Could the former be part of the latter? If not, why? If yes, under which conditions? Do we need to redefine the public sphere? The critical analysis of written satirical news from Greek has underlined their ambiguous meanings and the multiple interpretations potentially emerging from them. Despite their initial or superficial antiracist intentions, they do not manage to refrain from more or less latent racist values and views. Such latent meanings, contradictions, and ambiguities typical of humour and satire are incompatible with the rational and unambiguous argumentation required in the public sphere – and maybe this is the main reason Habermas ignored (political) humour and satire from his original description of it (see Section 4).

Humorous and satirical texts convey ideological meanings and hence are produced not only for entertainment but also for argumentation. However, their rhetorical and argumentative

dimensions may not always be straightforward and clear enough for the idealtypical public sphere. As Basu (1999, p. 398) puts it,

> [h]umour, preying as it does upon "unstable meanings, irrational logics, and indistinct beings", to adopt Davis' [1993, p. 60] categorisation, presumes the existence of precisely what communicative rationality and argumentation denies, namely, the clumsiness of everyday language.

The question therefore is: Do we really need to return to Habermas's (1989/1962) work to account for contemporary public spaces where socio-political issues are deliberated (e.g. for the modern [social] media)? The case of written satirical news from the Greek sociocultural context shows that we would rather opt for broader and more inclusive public spheres, where ambiguities are not tolerated but *sought for*, since they emerge from interlocutors' diverse sociopolitical positionings and interpretations of discourse. In other words, we would rather go for public spheres where people from various sociopolitical groups will participate and offer their perspectives on topics of common interest. In this sense, Koivukoski's (2022) description of hybrid public spheres may be closer to what we are looking for. On the other hand, we always have the option of distancing ourselves from *mythologised*, *utopian*, *unrealistic*, *non-existent*, *idealistic*, *too limited*, and *normative* theoretical constructs (see Section 4) and account for contemporary public spaces of deliberation in their own terms and through new lenses.

Acknowledgements

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