FEDERAL STATE AUTONOMOUS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION PEOPLES' FRIENDSHIP UNIVERSITY OF RUSSIA NAMED AFTER PATRICE LUMUMBA

As a manuscript

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DIGITAL POLITICAL CARTOONS: WHERE ART, RHETORIC, AND SEMIOTICS MEET IN IRAN'S MEDIA SYSTEM

Thesis for a Candidate Degree in Philological Sciences

Specialty 5.9.9. Media Communications and Journalism

Research supervisor:
Doctor of Philology
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Moscow – 2025

ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОЕ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ АВТОНОМНОЕ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЕ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЕ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ РОССИЙСКИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ДРУЖБЫ НАРОДОВ ИМЕНИ ПАТРИСА ЛУМУМБЫ

ЗАРИФИАН МОХСЕН

СЕМИОТИКА И КОММУНИКАТИВНЫЕ СТРАТЕГИИ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ КАРИКАТУР: ИРАНСКИЙ КЕЙС

5.9.9 «Медиакоммуникации и журналистика»

ДИССЕРТАЦИЯ
на соискание учёной степени
кандидата филологических наук

Научный руководитель:
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Москва – 2025

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INTRODUCTION

Choosing the theme. The thoughtfulness of the dissertation is the result of many years of professional practice by the author, an Iranian artist and cartoonist with extensive experience in both traditional and digital media. The author's immediate political environment and the broad context of the Iranian media, communications and journalism, as well as his long-term professional interest in studying the expressive possibilities of graphics and comics, all influenced the choice of the research topic.

The relevance of the study. The study of political cartoons, organically integrated into the global media space, is crucial today for a number of reasons. The formation of modern public opinion takes place during the period of mediatization of significant processes. At the same time, media texts belonging to the category of verbal and visual are necessary for society as accessible intermediary messages for understanding and interpreting complex political events, ambiguous issues of history, and social and cultural dynamics: the pictorial component of a cartoon, due to its communicative features, is perceived easier and faster than a verbal message and provides an emotionally visual view of the world around it. Almost a century ago, M. Gorky, in the article "Kukryniksy" (Pravda newspaper, 01/31/1932), defined cartoons as "*a socially significant and most useful art to depict various distortions in the venerable face of modern heroes or hero candidates that are not always visible to the naked eye.*" This figurative definition remains relevant during the period of the theoretically and practically reflected "iconic turn" (Boehm & Mitchell, 2009). The modern scientific understanding of cartoons is as follows: "*a unique author's product, which is a multimodal text with a pronounced comic effect, based on exaggeration due to verbal and visual metaphors and the "recognition" of the image*" (Balakina, 2021, p. 97).

In an era of global bifurcation (Elchaninov, 2022), political and economic instability, and rapidly developing technologies, the importance of analyzing political cartoons lies in their ability to simplify complex ideas, offer social commentary, and promote critical thinking. Cartoons reflect the contradictions of

existence, suggesting prevailing moods and revealing complexities and problems: peculiar visual comments give an effective idea of society, culture, and politics.

Political cartoons reflect the ideologies, beliefs, and concerns of a specific era and location and also attitudes, and changing societal norms which serve as historical objects that offer insight about the prevailing political, social, and cultural contexts. They function as a means of social criticism and expressing critical opinions, and meantime also providing an opportunity to systematically address contemporary issues in light of historical experiences.

Cartoons use means of humor and satire, symbolism, and metaphors to concisely and succinctly convey those messages that would be difficult to express in words and, accordingly, adequately understand. The visual storytelling format allows artists to reach a wide audience and attract people who, for various reasons, find it difficult to read written articles or essays.

At the same time, the authors of visual messages are charged with high ethical requirements and special responsibility. Political cartoons, as a rule, are provocative, influence public opinion, form narratives, and initiate political decisions. They serve as agents of change by identifying inequalities and injustices, analyzing government policies, and advocating alternative points of view. Consequently, they function as a public model of journalism and as a form of visual activism, encouraging people to critically analyze their surroundings and participate in democratic events. It should also be noted that the cartoonists in their works offer the audience their own emotional perspective.

Thus, the relevance of the research topic is determined by a combination of factors. Firstly, the need to identify and systematize a means of visual and verbal communication, namely cartoons, in the context of modern socio-political transformations, when effective work with public opinion is especially necessary. Secondly, it requires the conceptualization of digital political cartoons as a political discourse embedded in the digital media sphere, with a shortage of theoretical and empirical work in this area. Thirdly, there is an increasing interest in Iran and the Iranian media system in the context of globalization, when the informational and

psychological impact increases in the context of the social significance of the content represented by the studied units.

Overall, the following points underscore the importance of studying and analyzing political cartoons. **Reflection of Societal Issues, Visual Representation of News and Events, Historical Insights, Impact on Public Opinion, Satire and Social Criticism, Interdisciplinary Research, Cultural and Artistic Expression, Media Literacy.**

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research was made up of the works of mainly English-speaking scientists, compiled into several blocks. They reflect the interdisciplinarity of the research, where political cartoons are presented from various positions of philosophy, semiotics, and the theory of media communications. We are talking about works on the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes[1], Immanuel Kant[2], and semiotions like Ferdinand de Saussure[3], Charles Sanders Peirce[4], Daniel Chandler[5], Roland Barth[6], Roman Jakobson[7], Lakoff and Johnson[8]; literary criticism: Mikhail Bakhtin[9], Graham Allen[10], Julia Kristeva[11]; on the theory of communication by Irving Fung[12], F. D'Angelo[13], the general theory of

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[1] Hobbes, T. (2024, reprinted from the edition of 1651). *Leviathan.* London: Nelson and Sons Ltd.

[2] Kant, I. (1983, reprinted from the edition of 1790). *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Editor Paul Guyer. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers; Kant, I. (1952, reprinted from the edition of 1790). *The Critique of Judgment.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[3] Saussure, F. de (1974, reprinted from the edition of 1916). *Course in General Linguistics*. Transl. W. Baskin. London: Fontana/Collins; Saussure, F. de (1983, reprinted from the edition of 1916). *Course in General Linguistics.* Transl. R. Harris. London: Duckworth.

[4] Peirce, C.S. (1931-1958). *Collected Writings* (8 Vols.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[5] Chandler, D. (2007). *Semiotics: The Basics.* London: Routledge.

[6] Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, Music, Text.* London: Fontana Press Publ.

[7] Jakobson, R. (1971). Language in Relation to Other Communication Systems. In Jakobson, R. *Volume II Word and Language* (697-708 pp.). Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton.

[8] Lakoff, G, & Johnson M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

[9] Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* / Translat. C. Emerson and M. Holquist. London: University of Texas Press.

[10] Graham, A. (2000). *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge.

[11] Kristeva, J. (1967, 1989). Word, Dialogue and Novel. In Moi. T. *The Kristeva Reader*, 34–61. Oxford: Blackwell.; Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[12] Fang, I. (1997). *A History of Mass Communication; Six Information Revolutions*. Focal Press.

[13] D'Angelo, F. (2010). The Rhetoric of Intertextuality. *Rhetoric Review, 29*(1), 31–47.

humor by Victor Raskin[14], S. Attardo[15]; theories of political humor by M. Medhurst and M. DeSousa[16] and others.

Level of prior studies of the topic (Literature review). The literature review has been categorized into three fields, as this thesis, being an interdisciplinary study, examines political cartoons as a semiotic phenomenon, media content, and a communication phenomenon.

The first chapter delves into the fundamentals, terminologies, and principles of semiotics and introduces Saussure's dyadic (1916/1974) (1916/1983) and Peircean triadic models of the sign (1931-58). This chapter seeks to break down the complex semiotic concepts and theories into understandable terms, making the field accessible to a wider audience.

Moreover, Daniel Chandler's book "Semiotics: The Basics" (2007) deepened the theoretical base of this chapter by providing a clear, solid foundation and comprehensive introduction to the field of semiotics. Chandler's seminal work bridges various disciplines, including linguistics, cultural, and media studies, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of semiotics and its relevance across different fields. The author of the dissertation discovers in Chandler's work a course on the interdisciplinarity and relevance of semiotics: linguistics, cultural studies, and media studies are strongly connected, so to speak, "semiotically." Echoing Chandler's point of view, the dissertation research highlights the importance of cultural context in interpreting signs. It explores the problem of stability and instability: why meaning is variable rather than fixed but can vary depending on social and cultural factors, which is important for understanding communication in different contexts.

The study also draws upon the ideas of Roland Barthes, who was emphatic that images in a communication process possess a tridimensional structure when conveying meaning, which harmonize with Peirce's triadic model of the sign

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[14] Raskin, V. (1985). *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor.* Boston: Reidel.
[15] Attardo, S. (1994). *Linguistic Theories of Humor.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
[16] Medhurst, M.J, & DeSousa, M.A. (1981). Political Cartoons as Rhetorical Forms: A Taxonomy of Graphic Discourse. *Journal of Communication Monographs, 48*(3), 197–236.

(1977). It will be addressed that political cartoons, through the word-image fusion, rather than simply reiterating information already found in texts, generate additional insights and meanings—as Barthes argues (1977, p. 38). In line with Roland Barthes, this thesis discusses the idea that denotative (the literal and explicit meaning of a sign) elements of a text or image generate less information than connotative (pertaining to the associations, implications, or indirect meanings that extend beyond the fundamental definition) elements (Barthes, 1977). It is asserted that connotative elements yield greater informational value as they explore the cultural, historical, and contextual dimensions of a sign, thereby uncovering more profound meanings and interpretations. These connotations are influenced by the audience's experiences, knowledge, and societal context, rendering them more intricate and multifaceted than denotative interpretations.

Additionally, the foundational academic principles of this chapter are grounded in Roman Jakobson's notions concerning the "functions of language," which position semiotics as the all-encompassing science of signs. He maintained that language constitutes a system of signs, with linguistics being an essential component of the broader science of semiotics, asserting that language is the central and most important among all human semiotic systems (Jakobson, 1963, p. 289) (1949a, p. 50) (1970, p. 454).

The second chapter introduces the topic of "Six Information Revolutions" based on Communication scholar Irving Fang's views in the book "A History of Mass Communications" (1997). Fang presented a comprehensive approach to media history, dividing it into six distinct periods, each of which revolutionized the methods of communication, namely: the Writing Revolution, the Printing Revolution, the Mass Media Revolution, the Entertainment Revolution, the Toolshed (home) Revolution, and finally, the Information Highway Revolution. It will be argued that in the period of the second information revolution (Printing), with the advancement and development of the printing industry, and afterward in the third revolution (Mass Media), publishing newspapers in high circulation, cartoons became available to the public as an important part of the traditional print

media, quickly gained popularity and profound influence on public opinion. It also provided a new outlet for information and became a new way of launching socio-political debates.

In the third chapter, parallel to introducing rhetorical devices for conveying messages in communication through cartoons, various theories and studies in this regard are discussed in this field. Regarding humor, three different aspects of humor, namely superiority, incongruity, and relief are scrutinized. The study examines the idea of superiority proposed by Thomas Hobbes, the English philosopher, in his book "Leviathan." He highlights the egoistic nature of humans incessantly competing and pursuing dominance over others, mockery, and contempt. Hobbes argued that humor allows individuals to feel superior to others, which can be a source of amusement. He posited that life in a state of nature, without government or law, would be "solitary, poor, nasty, and short" due to the constant struggle for survival and dominance among individuals. In this context, humor, particularly in its superiority aspect, can be seen as a means for individuals to assert their dominance and establish their position within the social hierarchy (Hobbes, 1651).

This thesis touched upon the concept of incongruity exploring the Immanuel Kant study, which stated that humor arises from the "spontaneous combination of a serious thought with an absurd one," which can be seen as a foundation to the Incongruity Theory. The philosophical groundworks of this specific dimension of humor can be linked to Kant's interpretation of laughter as a phenomenon stemming from the sudden shift of an anticipated tension into nothing (Kant, [1790] 1983).

Medhurst and DeSousa (1981) and Morris (1993) are recognized as pioneers in the field of incorporating humor in political cartoons due to their groundbreaking study, providing a framework for future scholars and researchers to study and analyze the impact of humor on political discourse.

In the field of humor studies, to establish an analytical framework for contextualizing stylistic and artistic techniques of humor in political cartoons, the

General Theory of Verbal Humor is addressed, which was primarily introduced by Victor Raskin (1985). GTVH expanded and refined in the collaboration with Salvatore Attardo (1991) (1996), which developed it as a widely accepted model for understanding verbal humor. Their combined efforts have significantly contributed to the field of linguistics and humor studies, providing a systematic approach to analyzing and interpreting humor (Attardo, 1994) (2000) (2001) (Attardo, Eisterhold, Hay, & Poggi, 2003).

The concept of GTVH, which emanates as an extension of Victor Raskin's (1985) Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH). Raskin's SSTH laid the groundwork for understanding humor by focusing on the role of semantic scripts, which are mental representations of situations or events, and the violation of these scripts as a source of humor (Ulubeyli, Arslan, & Kivrak, 2015). Moreover, according to Attardo and Raskin's Incongruity-Resolution Theory, humor arises from the cognitive processing of an incongruous (unexpected or contradictory) situation, which eventually leads to a resolution (Attardo & Raskin, 1996, pp. 293-347).

By incorporating the principles of GTVH along with the core concepts proposed by Medhurst and DeSousa (1981) and Morris (1993) this thesis aims to develop a conceptual schema that recognizes the fundamental role of humor in political cartoons.

Given that one focus of this thesis pertains to the extraction and then interpretation of meanings derived from political cartoons, it is imperative to explore the rhetorical concept of "intertextuality." The term was first proposed by the Bulgarian-French philosopher and literary critic Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, in her essay "Word, Dialogue, and Novel" ([1967] 1989), but the term became more widely known through her book "Desire in Language" (1980). She highlights the dynamic and complex relationship between texts in a network of references and influences. Kristeva's work is built on the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin, particularly his notions of dialogism and the interaction of voices in literature (Bakhtin, 1981). This concept aligns with the idea of Roland Barthes, who described in his 1967

essay "The Death of the Author" that the text is not the product of a single authorial voice but rather a "tissue of quotations," characterized by its fluidity and multiple layers of meaning (1977). Moreover, Graham Allen's concept of the twin processes of reading and interpreting textual material, along with the idea that texts continuously engage in dialogue, can serve as valuable tools for analyzing political cartoons (2000). Frank D'Angelo proposes a comprehensive analysis of six distinct modes of intertextuality that provide a framework for analyzing how texts and images interact, reference, and influence each other. These six modes comprising: Adaptation, Retro, Appropriation, Parody, Pastiche, and Simulation (D'Angelo, 2010).

To determine an appropriate theoretical framework for investigating visual metaphors in political cartoons, this thesis will delve into the impact of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) on the field of metaphorical research. This theory has led to a shift in focus from verbal to conceptual aspects of analysis. Within the framework of the CMT metaphor has been extensively studied in the past several decades by other academics like Charles Forceville (1996) (2006), Urios-Aparisi (2009), Foss (2004), Elisabeth El Refaie (2009), Crisp (1996), Gleason (2009), Turner (1991), Gibbs (2011), Kövecses and Benczes (2010). Dominguez (2015, p. 435) asserts that metaphors deployed in political cartoons are multi-modal, as they may simultaneously combine both aphoristic and evaluative text and images. Bounegru and Forceville (2011) divide the form into varieties that are mono and multimodal according to the topic's relationship to the linked communicative vehicle.

Joost Schilperoord and Alfons Maes following Forceville (1996), Philips and McQuarrie (2004), and Teng and Sun (2002) outline the way in which the target and source domains are realized. To classify visual metaphors in cartoons, the authors distinguish various methods of presenting target and source domains, namely "replacements," "juxtapositions," and "fusions." (Schilperoord & Maes, 2009, p. 222) From another perspective, Benjamin Barker (2016, p. 148), in accordance with Lucas Reehorst (2014), outlines five types of metaphors that are

triggered through specific aspects of news discourse, including: topic-driven; topical; language-triggered; pictorially-triggered; and ascribed, which will be meticulously described in this thesis.

Research hypotheses. The visual ambiguity of the cartoon is perceived by the audience according to a set of key features associated with mental images, archetypes, and narratives stored in the minds of the observer-communicator (community of communicators). Cartoonists, using professional techniques, limit the range of possible interpretations of images and guide viewers to their preferred understanding while encouraging them to create their own version of reality in the context of the globalization of media processes.

The research hypothesis is that in logocentric[17] societies that prioritize written language, visual texts are considered to be equally significant as verbal texts. Logocentrism refers to the belief that language and logical reasoning are the primary ways to understand reality. Within the logocentric concept, there tends to be a pronounced focus on the written word, rational thought, analytical reasoning, and the idea that meaning is derived only from language.

In such societies, visual texts, such as cartoons, are often regarded as subordinate to verbal texts, like written or spoken language. The analysis presented in this dissertation challenges the traditional logocentric view, positing that visual representations should be considered equally important as verbal representations in conveying meaning and understanding. From this perspective, images can be described as **"polysemous"** because they possess a core sign that is connected to a range of ideas stored within the audience's knowledge.

The Purpose of the Study. The thesis aims to identify the genesis, communicative, and rhetorical effectiveness of political cartoons in the era of mediatization and digitalization of the media space. Through a case study methodology, this research will analyze a corpus of Iranian digital political cartoons (IDPC) related to a specific socio-political event in Iran to understand the

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[17] **Logocentric**: Regarding words and language as a fundamental expression of an external reality (especially applied as a negative term to traditional Western thought by postmodernist critics).

techniques utilized by Iranian cartoonists in developing visual storytelling as a unique form of digital activism—a tool of "soft resistance."

To achieve this goal, the following main **tasks (*objectives)*** were formulated:

1) Studying the art of cartoons first as a semiotic phenomenon, secondly as media content, and lastly as a communication phenomenon.

2) Clarifying the typology and classification of digital media with the inclusion of the following components: "Mainstream Editorial Cartoonists" and "Independent Political Cartoonists."

3) To implement a multimodal and semiotic analysis of the artistic techniques of Iranian cartoonists, including the author's own work, using the example of an actual political case.

4) Analyzing the lexical and rhetorical techniques (metaphor, irony, intertextuality, parody) used by political cartoonists in the context of their influence on the audience.

5) To develop a conceptual framework that represents the fundamental role of humor in political cartoons.

6) To conceptualize a set of Iranian digital political cartoons as a political communicative phenomenon in Iran's media system, particularly in a situation of socio-political instability.

7) To substantiate the introduction of the concept of **IDPC** (Iranian Digital Political Cartoons) into international scientific circulation.

The object of the study is political cartoons as a single semiotic, media, and communication phenomenon.

The subject of the study is Iranian digital political cartoons.

Methodology and Research Methods. The author shares a methodological approach according to which a cartoon is both a cast of the addressee's mental world and a channel for dialogue with the outside world (including the addressees). Thus, the visual-verbal text of a cartoon as a process of communication, the exchange of ideas against the background of emotional expression and manipulation, has the status of a discourse text combined with extralinguistic,

pragmatic, socio-cultural, and psychological factors. A cartoon is 1) a text in the event aspect, 2) speech as a purposeful social action and a component involved in communication, and 3) a mechanism of consciousness of the participants in the interaction.[18]

The study begins by using a qualitative methodology to identify themes and patterns in empirical data, followed by a quantitative analysis to measure the frequency of occurrence of these themes in various sources or time frames. The research includes critical, transdisciplinary, and interpretive approaches within the framework of social semiotics, as well as critical discursive analysis, which focus on the meaning and impact of a message by analyzing artistic and visual rhetorical techniques. Social semiotics, as a sub-branch of semiotics, deals with the understanding of signs and the study of how the interpretation of symbols is influenced by a specific social and cultural context, in our case, the historical background, general experience, and power dynamics in Iran. Critical discursive analysis is used to study the functioning of cartoons in the Iranian media system to identify how they reflect, strengthen, or challenge power structures and dominant ideologies.

Accordingly, to achieve the goal set in the dissertation, mainly qualitative methods were used, as well as quantitative research methods: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), historical analysis, socio-semiotic, content analysis, and case analysis. Such an in-depth examination allows for a deeper understanding of how cartoons have both influenced and been influenced by the societies in which they emerged, specifically Iranian society in this case.

Furthermore, audience reception considerations are taken into account, which investigate how different audiences perceive and interpret cartoons. This approach delves deep into the myriads of perspectives through which cartoons are

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[18] See: Ainutdinov A.S. Caricature as a type of depiction of comic intention in modern Russian print media: Abstract of Cand. Sci. (Philology). Yekaterinburg, 2010. 21 p.; Chaplygina Yu.S. Caricature as one of the specific forms of creolized discourse // Bulletin of Moscow State Linguistic University. 2007. No. 522. pp. 217–220; Zheltukhina M.R. Comic in political discourse: based on the German and Russian languages: Abstract of Cand. Sci. (Philology). Volgograd, 2000. 28 p.; Kubryakova E.S. On the concepts of discourse and discourse analysis in modern linguistics (Review) // Discourse, speech, speech activity: functional and structural aspects. M.: RAS INION, 2000. P. 7–25.

absorbed, interpreted, and debated by a wide range of audience segments, encompassing distinctions stemming from cultural heritage, ideological beliefs, and demographic traits, leading to a rich tapestry of interactions and reactions.

Since the author of the refereed dissertation is both a cartoonist and a friend of fellow cartoonists, he used the interview method. In-depth and semi-structured interviews helped to identify and systematize the creative process of creating, perceiving, and understanding cartoons. These discussions provided important qualitative information about the driving motivations, intentions, and points of view of the Iranian cartoonists and their audience.

The empirical object comprises **337** political cartoons, created by Iranian cartoonists, integrated into the media space of Iran's digital media, websites, and social networks within the framework of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement (the Iranian political case of Mahsa Amini).

During this period, a significant number of cartoons addressing the anti-hijab and anti-regime protests were disseminated in the media space. This surge in publications occurred alongside a dramatic increase in the number of protesters who were arrested, injured, and, unfortunately, killed during that time.

To conduct a rigorous analysis of the data, a set of criteria was established that an artwork must satisfy to be considered. Accordingly, a deliberate effort was made to identify works that, at the very least, incorporated the element of exaggeration. Then, the sampling was based on a preliminary author's examination aimed at detecting a visual metaphor or a combination of visual and verbal metaphors. In each cartoon analyzed, there are at least two areas, X and Y, which are metaphorically connected instead of a literal analogy.

The chronological framework of the study spans 12 months, from September 16, 2022, the day Mahsa Amini passed away at Kasra Hospital in Tehran while in police custody (three days after being arrested by the so-called morality police for allegedly wearing her hijab improperly), to September 16, 2023, the anniversary of her tragic death.

Scientific Novelty of the study lies in the fact that

1) For the first time, the following have been identified and characterized:

- Mechanisms of transmission of meanings in the format of political cartoons in relation to the works of Iranian artists;

- Conceptual structures based on the metaphorical nature of Iranian cartoons as a special phenomenon;

- Algorithms for the impact of media messages of Iranian cartoonists on the audience of digital media in the context of subject-to-subject network communications.

2) For the first time, the following has been tested and systematized:

- a model of self-reflection and introspection of a professional cartoonist working in the digital media space;

- information obtained by the author from primary sources about the motivations, intentions and points of view of Iranian cartoonists in the context of mediatized international processes;

3) For the first time, the study of political cartoons created by independent Iranian cartoonists during the 2022 "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement was formalized as a case study (methodology for studying the real scenario). This distinctive approach enables an exploration of the role and impact of these cartoons as a medium for political commentary and opposition within a specific and highly charged anti-government moment.

This focus on a specific period within Iranian media history and a specific social movement offers valuable contributions to the field. It contributes to exploring how art, semiotics, and visual rhetoric intersect to create powerful tools for commenting on the world around them and expressing opposition in a time of significant socio-political upheaval.

4) The emphasis on the digital landscape adds another layer of novelty, which enables scholars to explore the reach, impact, and current state of political cartoons in the digital era and the digital model of communication in political cartoons. This research introduces the new term IDPC, which stands for Iranian digital political cartoons. Analyzing "Digital Media Typology" in two major

classifications, including "Mainstream: Editorial Cartoonists" and "Independent Political Cartoonists," is a scientific novelty of this study.

The interdisciplinary nature of the research expands the scope of the results obtained in the context of humanities. It is about philosophy, semiotics, theory of media communications, psychology, sociology, and cultural studies.

The theoretical significance of this research lies in clarifying and expanding the conceptual approach to the analysis of verbal and visual media communication in the format of political cartoons. This research goes beyond the traditional theoretical approach, which focuses on either artistic or political aspects, and delves into the artistic mechanics by which political cartoons convey complex ideas and engage audiences. The author, relying on fundamental works in the field of semiotics, philosophy, and media theory, using new empirical material that had not been studied before, introduces a new theoretical concept of IDPC (Iranian digital political cartoons) into scientific use. This opens up a new layer of theoretical research (specialty 5.9.9) related to the peculiarities of the development of the Iranian media system in a changing world. In the context of an interdisciplinary approach, the author proposed a new paradigm in the study of cartoons, considering it as a fusion of art, semiotics, and visual rhetoric, actualizing new research perspectives.

The practical significance of the study lies in the fact that the provisions of the dissertation will become valuable material for new academic courses in university master's degree programs (journalists and specialists in public relations and advertising), including using the latest technologies. For example, "Fundamentals of Cartoon Creation in Digital Media" and "World Media Cartoonists: The Specifics of Editorial Collaboration." The author of the dissertation contributes to the development of media education by showing in a specific media case how to interpret symbols, understand cultural references, and take into account different points of view when analyzing cartoons. The results of the study, related to the concretization of the potential of Iranian political cartoons in reflecting and criticizing socio-political issues through satire and humor, serve

as the basis for the creation of the international media education program "The Intersection of Art and Political Commentary: How to Understand a Cartoon" for the Moscow State Linguistic University. Analytical information about how cartoons are created and distributed in Iran and how semiotic tools and visual rhetoric are used within the specific limitations and capabilities of the media system, taking into account the cultural and political context, can be used when studying the Modern Media Systems program at specialized universities.

The **provisions** to be defended are

1) The art of political cartoon, progressing in the course of historical evolution, functions in conjunction with the communication technologies of print media (subject-object model). While maintaining itself as a visual form of political satire, modern Iranian cartoon acquires digital independence and becomes a self-sufficient means of shaping public opinion (subject-subject model).

2) A cartoon is a complex semiotic system where visual and verbal components do not duplicate but complement each other, creating multi-layered meanings that are decoded taking into account both the intention of the creator, the idea of the work (narrowing possible interpretations), and the cultural level of the audience (expanding the semantic field).

3) With the improvement of alternative digital media, Iran's political cartoon, responding to public demands, is developing as a creative and innovative format of life attitudes (characteristics of life). At the same time, the traditional editorial model of cartoons, determined and shaped by editorial policy, retains the features of archaism and limited rationality.

4) In the digital age, cartoons retain the status of a unique tool of social criticism, combining traditional techniques of visual rhetoric with the latest formats for the dissemination of political narratives through the grotesque and metaphor.

5) The analysis of political cartoons requires the audience to be able to interpret symbols, understand cultural references, and form the skill of considering different points of view. This process ensures an increase in media literacy among

the population: it develops empathy, creativity, and intellectual curiosity necessary for the perception of different opinions and the formation of a tolerant society.

Approbation of the work. The materials of the refereed dissertation are presented by the author in the format of reports at five international scientific and practical conferences (Lomonosov Moscow State University (МГУ), RUDN University, Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, and Russian State University named after A.N. Kosygin), as well as in the format of master classes at Moscow State Linguistic University (МГЛУ). The preliminary conclusions and main results of the study are reflected in 9 scientific papers; 5 articles have been published in publications included in the list of journals recommended by the Higher Attestation Commission and indexed by Scopus. The results are used in the development of the author's training course "Political Cartoons, as a Means of Communication." Some of its provisions were presented in the format of a master class for students of the English-speaking Master's degree in Global and Digital Media in Journalism at the RUDN University, Faculty of Philology.

Dissertation structure. The dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters (three theoretical chapters and one empirical case study) with concluding remarks at the end of the first three chapters, conclusions, a list of references, and appendixes. Interim conclusions conclude each chapter. The study is presented in two volumes, 290 pages in volume I and 43 pages in volume II, including 78 figures (47 figures in Chapter One, 3 figures in Chapter Two, and 28 figures in Chapter Four), 10 tables, and appendixes.

Outline of Chapters. The first three chapters lay the theoretical groundwork for the next explorations of the empirical study in the fourth chapter. **The first chapter** ("Semiotic Fundamentals of the Research of Digital Political Cartoons") forms the theoretical foundation of the work through the synthesis of classical and modern semiotic concepts. The author translates complex semiotic concepts and theories into instrumental concepts, simplifies terms, and adapts them in a peculiar way for media educational cases. The author introduces and rethinks the Saussure's dyadic and Peircean triadic models of the sign. Saussure characterized a sign as the

integration of two necessary parts, namely "signifier" and "signified." The relationship between the signifier and the signified is entirely arbitrary, a manifestation of customary cultural practices, and is derived from communal consensus. Peirce's triangle encompasses the representamen or sign vehicle (the form of the sign: how the sign is represented), the interpretant (the sense: how it is interpreted), and the object (what is represented, what the sign 'stands for'). A significant notion that will be utilized in empirical analysis is sign types. Peirce, based on how a sign is related to an object (modes of relationships), classified signs into three categories, including Symbol, Icon, and Index. This classification helps readers understand the various ways in which signs can represent meaning. Iconicity is founded on a degree of "resemblance" between signifier and signified, whereas indexicality is based on, or at least perceived, "direct connection." The symbolic category, which holds significant relevance in studying cartoons, outlines a mode in which the signifier and signified are fundamentally distinct from one another. The connection between them is predominantly arbitrary or entirely conventional, necessitating that this relationship be acquired through cultural learning.

The novelty of the reasoning lies in the fact that, as a result of a comparative analysis of classical models and interaction parameters, it is proved that "*a sign can be interpreted in different ways ... as symbolic, iconic, or indexical, that is, signs cannot be classified according to the canons of classical semiology, but only taking into account the goals of their users and a certain context*" (Shilina & Zarifian, 2023). This brings classical semiotics closer to the theory of media communications.

The chapter traces the leading idea of the need to interpret signs and symbols in everyday mediatized life, developing critical thinking and a deep understanding of cultural significance. Following the object of research, the author applies semiotic theory to various media formats, including visual representations and, in particular, cartoons. Such use helps to realize the importance and relevance of semiotics in the analysis of modern media and communication practices.

After introducing the core principles of semiotics, we will focus on "Semiotics of Cartoons: Visualizing the Verbal" for analyzing stylistic and artistic techniques at cartoonists' disposal to uncover the deeper messages embedded in cartoons. In this vein, these techniques will be scrutinized: Exaggeration for amplifying meaning in two manners: first, by distorting facial features in caricatures and second, exerting exaggeration in concepts and situations; Protagonist and Antagonist: constructing narrative and evoking emotion; Personification: attribution of human qualities to abstract concepts in a metaphorical way; Anthropomorphism: giving human qualities such as walking, talking, thinking, eating, and drinking to animals or objects; Zoomorphism, which is the antithesis of anthropomorphism, involves ascribing animalistic traits and psychological states to humans in order to undermine and degrade the depicted person; Composition and Positioning: strategic placement for impact, Stereotypes and clichés: navigating cultural references and shortcuts; Colors and Pictograms: symbolic meanings and emotional associations.

The word-image fusions in political cartoons are the final scope of research in this chapter. By exploring the interplay of language and imagery, language and speech as integral and inseparable components of political cartoons, and examining various written elements such as title, speech bubble, caption, and label, this thesis aims to cultivate a deeper appreciation for the influence of political cartoons as a distinctive semiotic system.

The key conclusion is that cartoon is a complex semiotic system where visual and verbal components do not just duplicate but complement each other, creating multi-layered meanings. The author substantiates the need to take into account both the intentions of the creator (narrowing of possible interpretations) and the cultural background of the audience (expanding the semantic field).

The **second chapter** explores cartoons as a type of media content, which develops academic discourse for the subsequent practical interpretation of the phenomenon of cartoon. It consists of three sections: "The Genesis and Evolution

of Cartoon," "Cartoons in Editorial and Political Context," and "Typology of Digital Media."

Offering a historical perspective, the author analyzes the dynamics of changes in media communications up to digital media. The chapter traces the genesis and evolution of cartoon art, starting from their early forms and ending with the present, where it has advanced to a deeper visual language, gained importance, and performs special functions in modern editorial, media, and political contexts. The main thesis is that the historical evolution of cartoons, starting from primitive art based on the grotesque and deformity, brought cartoons into journalism. And now, in special cases, this type of media message sets the social agenda, as well as reflects the state of political freedom in various societies, and plays a key role in maintaining a system of checks and balances.

In a holistic approach, the evolution of cartooning is examined from three perspectives: the Renaissance, which emphasized the importance of the individual; the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in 1455; and the influence of Martin Luther's Reformation ideas on the Protestant movement, which commissioned various artists to create illustrations that challenged the hegemony of religion and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, a practice that is reminiscent of newspaper publishers employing full-time cartoonists. It is posited that Luther may be considered the pioneer in editorial cartooning, and cartoons have historically served as a potent medium for capturing and critiquing societal and political issues. In this way, cartoonists, under the influence of these factors, contributed to the development of the concepts of "public viewing," "public consciousness," and visual protest," thereby serving as a catalyst for social activism.

The following section of this chapter covers the politicized role and function of cartoons, such as shaping public opinion, setting social agendas, providing a window into history that illuminates problematic and tumultuous moments, and serving as barometers of political freedom. Analyzing "Digital Media Typology"

in two major classifications, including "Mainstream: Editorial Cartoonists" and "Independent Political Cartoonists," is one of the main research objectives.

Therefore, cartoons that can transform news and commentary into a drawing provide an easily accessible and instant interpretation of contemporary issues. This is a special form of journalism that sometimes contrasts with traditional forms of communication. Cartoonists express information in such a way as to visualize imitative human nature; they humanize the subject they portray. This is often more effective than writing or video.

Scientific insights of the chapter: The historical continuity between religious graphics of the 16th century and modern political cartoons has been revealed, the role of cartoons as a "visual barometer" of freedom of speech has been proved, and an original typology of digital cartoons has been developed (based on the material of the Iranian media).

The key conclusion is that in the digital age, cartoons retain the status of a powerful tool of social criticism, combining traditional techniques of visual rhetoric with new distribution formats. The uniqueness lies in its ability to "humanize" complex political narratives through the grotesque (through exaggeration) and metaphor.

The **third chapter** The third chapter ("Cartoon as a Communication Phenomenon") examines the mechanisms of the communicative impact of political cartoons through the prism of modern theories of media communication. The chapter includes three sections: "The communication model in political cartoons (author, message, target audience)", "The communicative power of cartooning", and "Rhetorical techniques for communicating messages through cartoons."

The chapter delves into the digital model of communication in political cartoons and its status in the digital sphere. Echoing the views of Irving Fang's six distinct periods of mass communications, the thesis observes how the information revolution has impacted the way political cartoons are disseminated and received. Subsequently, attention shifts towards the digital era, analyzing the impact of the emergence of new media platforms on the field of political cartooning. Eventually,

with examining the rise of new media alternatives, it will be argued whether political cartoons are a dying form of art. In the following, the study investigates the communicative power of cartooning. The author examines how cartoonists make complicated and boring messages more tangible and understandable. They simply come to the main point and remove all the trivial information, bravely encourage people to participate in political discourse, and make scary topics less threatening.

As a significant part of the thesis, this chapter will thoroughly examine the various rhetorical devices employed to convey message, persuasion, and audience mobilization. These devices include metaphor (the comparison of two unlike things, seeing one through the lens of the other), parody (playfully or critically mocking those in power, celebrities, and genres while challenging societal norms), irony (the incongruity between what is stated or depicted and what is implied; the use of layered meanings and subversive messaging), intertextuality (the creation of meaning through cultural references by manipulating pre-existing artworks, symbols, and themes), and, notably, humor.

Regarding humor, three aspects of humor—superiority, incongruity, and relief—will be discussed, along with the comparison between "political humor" and "political satire," and lastly, the distinction between supportive and subversive humor. Based on his own artistic experience in creating cartoons, the author of the dissertation systematizes such stylistic elements, or "tools of the trade," as contrast, commentary, contradiction, line and form, exaggeration or amplification, placement, carnivalization, and hypercarnivalization. Using the principles of the general theory of verbal humor, the author develops a conceptual scheme that recognizes the fundamental role of humor in political cartoons.

In order to determine an appropriate theoretical framework for investigating visual metaphors in political cartoons, the thesis will attempt to outline how the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and later developed by Forceville (1996) (2006), revolutionized the metaphoric field of study by shifting the focus of analysis from verbal to conceptual phenomena. The

third chapter also highlights the intertextuality of political cartoons. This research perspective opens up opportunities for a deeper analysis of visual texts in a cultural context.

It is important to conclude that the interpretation of metaphorical and ironic messages in cartoons requires a lot of cognitive effort from the audience compared to explicit forms of communication. Consequently, such increased cognitive activity can enhance the enjoyment of perceiving and remembering the message conveyed in the cartoon. In any case, the reader should identify the problem (contradiction) of the topic and then, perhaps, understand the techniques used to create irony and convey social criticism.

Thus, the key conclusion is that cartoon, as a complex semiotic-rhetorical message, where humor serves as a key tool of social criticism, achieves effectiveness through cognitive involvement of the audience, emotional impact, and cultural codes.

Chapter four, "Iranian Political Cartoons: A Case Study," brings the developed theoretical framework to real life (narrative history) by focusing on the socio-political context of Iran. Moving beyond theory, it demonstrates the author's method of decoding an array of cartoons related by a single theme. The chapter systematically investigates the functionality and communicative peculiarities of IDPC based on themes, styles, and distribution platforms, as well as its specifics, typology, and semiotics. Semiotics assumes a decisive role in this chapter as it analyzes the universal and social symbols and meaning-making strategies employed by Iranian cartoonists.

An empirical analysis of the IDPC during the 2022 "Woman, Life, Freedom" Movement in Iran will be conducted. This feminist and anti-regime protest was sparked by the tragic death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish girl, in police custody after being arrested in Tehran by "morality police" for allegedly wearing her headscarf inappropriately and not following the country's mandatory hijab rules.

Through an empirical analysis of a specific corpus of cartoons, focusing on a particular theme or event within the Sep. 2020–Sep. 2023 timeframe, the thesis provides concrete insights into how Iranian cartoonists operate in practice and analyzes which techniques introduced in the theoretical parts are utilized by cartoonists in developing visual storytelling. By analyzing the semiotic and visual rhetoric employed, the study will uncover how Iranian independent cartoonists captured the essence of the movement's demands for human rights and gender equality. The analysis can reveal how cartoonists served as a depicted calendar and tried to be the voice of the people, expressing solidarity with Iranian women and men fighting for their rights. By examining the artistic and rhetorical strategies used, this study can shed light on how IDPC documented the movement's dynamics, in which ways depicted bravery as well as the brutal crackdown of the government. The Iranian cartoonists contextualized the current topics and visualized the events from the perspective of specific political messages.

In the fourth chapter, with a project-based research approach, the dissertation proposes its own research algorithm based on design, and strategies for measuring and analyzing the effectiveness of Iranian political cartoons in achieving their communication goals have been developed. Thus, this chapter is a methodological embodiment of the scientific results of the previous three chapters.

The results of the research in this chapter demonstrate: new forms of visual resistance in authoritarian contexts, the transformation of traditional art into the digital age, and the potential of cartoon as a historical source.

Of particular importance is the concept of IDPC introduced into scientific use, which opens up new perspectives for research on digital activism and visual political communication. Theoretical insights: conceptualization of IDPC as a special form of digital activism, a tool of "soft resistance", a platform for an alternative historical narrative; development of a model of "digital carnivalization" of protest (hyperbolization, inversion, layering).

Thus, the key conclusion is that IDPC has formed a unique visual language of protest, has shown the effectiveness of visual metaphors as a means of

circumventing censorship, and has become an important tool for constructing collective memory.

General conclusion summarizes the key ideas discussed throughout the study. It presents the main conclusions derived from the intermediate findings of the four chapters, highlighting how visual and digital modalities shape meaning-making and resistance practices.

Furthermore, it suggests several prospects for further research: (1) adapting and testing Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual grammar ([1996] 2006) for reading political cartoons by integrating representational, interactive, and compositional metafunctions (2) conducting focused historical and empirical investigations to gain deeper insights into the women's rights movement in Iran and the role of digital political cartoons in mobilizing gendered claims; and (3) conceptualizing IDPC as a distinct form of digital activism—a tool of "soft resistance" and an alternative historical narrative—and finally, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of carnivalization, developing and testing a model of "digital carnivalization" of protest (including hyperbolization, inversion, and layering) to examine its mechanisms, reception, and effects.

The list of references includes **274** titles: directories and regulatory documents, dissertations, articles, abstracts, and books in Russian and English, online and offline resources.

CHAPTER 1 - SEMIOTIC FUNDAMENTALS OF THE RESEARCH OF DIGITAL POLITICAL CARTOONS

CARTOON as a SEMIOTIC PHENOMENON

1.1. Semiotics Basics

The study and theory of signs and symbols is known as semiotics, particularly as parts of language or other communication systems. Semiotics could be considered the study of anything that "stands for" another item, in addition to what we in general refer to as "signs" in everyday conversation. Semiotics is a broad field of study, and no treatment of it can be asserted to be fully comprehensive (Chandler, 2007, p. xiv). But beyond that, the significance of studying semiotics lies in its theoretical discipline, which allows for flexibility in accommodating various perspectives, and in providing individuals with a toolkit of practical abilities to identify and cultivate communication-related patterns that contribute to the construction of meaning.

Signs can appear in the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, and other things in a semiotic sense. In the realm of semiotics, a sign is defined as any entity that conveys meaning and represents another concept. It encompasses anything that can be employed to substitute for something else, with individuals interpreting it as representing meanings other than themselves. After all, signs have been around for as long as humans have, so they are not novel things. Some symbols resemble the objects they stand for, for example, the print icon seen in most mobile applications, which resembles a printer or an image of a photograph, artwork, or painting of a car. While some signs, like the sign for radioactive, don't resemble what they signify, nothing about the image would make sense to someone who didn't know what the sign stood for. The underlying argument in this article is that signs aren't the things they signify. What semiotics is all about is all this discussion of signs not being the same as what they represent.

Contemporary semioticians analyze signs as integral elements of semiotic "SIGN-SYSTEMS," such as mediums or genres. They research the construction of

meanings and the representation of reality. Modern semioticians examine the full network of signs and symbols around us that imply different things in different circumstances, including signs and symbols that are sounds. Beyond the most basic description of semiotics as "the study of signs," there is much disagreement among notable semioticians about what semiotics actually entails. Umberto Eco provided a comprehensive definition of "semiotics" as the study of signs, asserting that it encompasses all entities that could be recognized as sign (Eco, 1976, p. 7).

Theories of signs and symbols have been discussed throughout philosophy's history, with the Essay of English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) Concerning Human Understanding in 1690 being the first direct mention of semiotics as a subfield of philosophy. Locke's contribution was to emphasize the necessity for a method of really studying these signs. He got the bright thought that it would be beneficial to devise a method of examining signals. In light of this, semiotics is a crucial field of research into the evolution of human consciousness. The three phases that he related to the development of intelligence are: realizing the essence of things; knowing what to do to achieve whatever you desire to achieve; and having the ability to communicate this knowledge to others. Signs are dyadic in Locke's concept, which means that they are associated with a particular meaning, and signs were always the beginning point for language.

However, within modern semiotics, the majority of the terminology and principles, as well as the primary models defining the nature of a sign, are derived from the investigations and scholarly work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914). This assertion is generally agreed upon that semiotics has been co-founded by two significant theoretical traditions, which have been independently established by Peirce and Saussure. Their interest and focus were on the sign's basic definition and have had the most impact on the field.

Any movement, pattern, gesture, image, or event that carries meaning would be considered as a sign, according to Saussure. He determined 'langue' as a language's structure or grammar and 'parole' as the decisions the speaker makes to

transmit that information. The dyadic model consisting of signifier and signified proposed by Saussure continues to be at the core of semiotics and has impacted a huge number of academics. Saussure emphasized the concept of "***structure***," whereas Peirce's model shifted the focus to "**process**," implying that our cognitive processes are inherently influenced by social factors. (Shilina & Zarifian, 2023, p. 307). Peirce's perception of semiotics, offering that there are other ways in which we can theorize signification, was threefold: sign, meaning, and interpretation. In other words, in Peirce's basic claim, signs consist of three inter-related parts: a sign, an object, and an interpretant. He pointed out that signs only function when there is intelligence able to learn from experience.

According to Saussure, the term of "semiology," originating from a manuscript in 1894 and posthumously published in the initial edition of his Course in General Linguistics in 1916, refers to a science that examines the significance of signs within the context of societal life. Peirce gave adequate attention to developing logical taxonomies of different types of signs. On the other hand, Charles Peirce's term "semeiotic" or "semiotic", derived from John Locke, refers to the formal doctrine of signs, closely associated with the field of logic (Peirce 1931–58, 2.227).

Semiotics is, for most intents and purposes, a theoretical discipline, with numerous scholars in this field striving to define its boundaries and core principles. Numerous subsequent scholars in the field of semiotics have attempted to compartmentalize and analyze the systems or principles that govern the organization of signs. However, the use of the term "science" in conjunction with semiotics can be deceptive. It is important to recognize that semiotics lacks widely accepted theoretical frameworks, models, or empirical approaches. But Certain critics agree with Charles W. Morris' interpretation of semiotics as "the science of signs," a condensed rendition of Saussure's concept (Morris C. W., 1938, pp. 1-2). Semiotics, according to linguist and semiotician Roman Jakobson, Semiotics focuses on the fundamental principles that regulate the structure of signs and their utilization within messages. Furthermore, semiotics investigates the distinct

attributes of diverse sign systems and the range of messages that incorporate these varying sign types (Jakobson, 1968, p. 698).

Two Models of the Sign

"*We think only in signs*", Declared Peirce (1931-58, p. 2.302). In a more precise manner, human beings derive significance through the generation and interpretation of "signs," a process that arises from our innate inclination to attribute meaning and sets us apart from other species. Anything can function as a sign, provided that an individual perceives it as representing or symbolizing something distinct from its intrinsic nature. Words, visuals, sounds, scents, flavours, behaviours, or physical items are all potential signs. However, they do not possess inherent meaning; they acquire signifying properties and become signs solely through the assignment of specific meaning. Peirce posited that anything can only be considered a sign when it is perceived and understood as such (Peirce, 1931-58, p. 172) In general, individuals tend to interpret things as signs by associating them with established systems of norms, often in an automatic manner. Consequently, the core focus of semiotics revolves around the examination of this meaningful utilization of signs.

As previously indicated, Ferdinand de Saussure, a linguist, and Charles Sanders Peirce, a philosopher, are recognized for developing the two predominant models that delineate the characteristics of a sign. Saussure introduced the concept of "semiology" as a scientific discipline that examines the function of signs within the context of social life. Conversely, Peirce approached semiotics from a logical perspective with the objective of developing a "formal doctrine of signs." (Shilina & Zarifian, 2023, p. 307) The way that Peirce and Saussure model the sign is one area where they diverge. Saussure's model has two components instead of three, making it dyadic as opposed to the triadic model of Peirce.

Saussure's Model of the Sign

Saussure's dyadic model of the sign is a division of the sign into two necessary constituent elements (see Figure 1.1), which are:

- 'Signifier' (signifiant) - the form which the sign takes.

- 'Signified' (signifié) - the concept it represents.

He articulated a sign as consisting of the two above-mentioned components, with a sign being the entirety that emerges from the association between the signifier and the signified (Saussure, 1916/1974, p. 67) (1916/1983). It must be emphasized that both a signifier and a signified are necessary for a sign. It is unattainable to possess a completely devoid or structureless signifier. Consequently, the sign comprises a distinct amalgamation of the signifier with a particular signified. Altering either component results in the transformation of the entire sign. Saussure presented these elements as wholly interdependent, with neither pre-existing the other. Furthermore, these two components were depicted in this model as being completely interdependent, with neither component pre-existing the other.

In the realm of linguistics, the word 'Open' displayed on a shop entrance serves as an illustrative example of a sign comprising a signifier, denoted by the word 'open', and a signified concept, which may be construed as indicating that the store is accessible for shopping. The interpretation of the same signifier, such as the word 'open', can vary depending on the context, thereby resulting in a distinct sign. For instance, if this signifier were situated on a button within an elevator, the signified concept would likely be 'press to open door'. Consequently, numerous signifiers have the capacity to represent the concept of 'open'. For instance, a small depiction of a box with an open flap placed on the top of a packing carton signifies the instruction to open that particular end. Likewise, the utilization of the "Enter" key to indicate the conclusion of a text line represents one symbol, while its function to confirm a dialog serves as another distinct sign. Therefore, it is worth recalling that each distinctive combination represents a different sign.

The connection between the signifier and the signified is denoted as 'signification,' as illustrated in Saussure's diagram featuring an arrow. The horizontal line that delineates the two components of the sign is known as a 'bar.'

There is an intention among contemporary commentators to explain the signifier as the form that the sign takes and the signified as the concept to which it refers.

Saussure's perspective on the signifier and the signified was centred on their psychological nature (1916/1974, pp. 12, 14-15). He emphasized that the sign is entirely immaterial, although he did not explicitly use the term "abstract." Consequently, any associations with the external world are likely established through the interpreter's sensorimotor system (1916/1974, pp. 12, 65-66). In Saussure's conceptualization of the signifier (the 'sound pattern') and the signified (the concept), both constituents were regarded primarily in terms of their form rather than their substance. Saussure's approach is valuable in emphasizing the notion that the process of signification ultimately depends on perceptions rather than solely on the physical characteristics of the sign. This feature of Saussure's original model may indeed be better understood by the diagram in Figure 1.2.

Saussure emphasized the inseparability and integral relationship between the signifier and the signified, comparing them to the two facets of a single sheet of paper (1916/1983, p. 111). He argued that these two components, which could be considered sound and thought, are intimately connected in the mind through an associative link, where each component triggers the other (ibid., p. 66). Saussure's examination centers on linguistic signs, such as words, with a particular emphasis on the phonocentric aspect, which prioritizes the spoken word. He discusses the concept of the sound-image, also known as the image acoustique. Saussure considers writing as a distinct system of signs that is subordinate and reliant on, yet comparable to, spoken language. For example, a written letter like 'M' represents a sound within the fundamental language sign system. Therefore, in the distinct system of written symbols, a written word also represents a sound rather than a concept. Saussure posits that writing functions in relation to speech as the signifier to the signified, or as Derrida articulates, writing is perceived by Saussure as. 'a sign of a sign' (Derrida, 1967/1978, p. 43).

In the realm of linguistics, a linguistic sign establishes a relationship between a concept and a pattern of sounds, as opposed to linking an object with a

specific name. Since sound is a tangible physical occurrence, the sound pattern should not be equated with the sound itself. A sound pattern is indeed the listener's psychological interpretation of a sound based on the information his senses provide. Only because this sound pattern represents our sensory experiences could it be referred to as a "material" element. Therefore, the sound pattern can be distinguished from other associated components of a linguistic sign. The 'concept' is the other part, which is typically of a more abstract nature.

Despite the continued prevalence and utilization of the fundamental "Saussurean" model in contemporary discourse, it is often characterized by a greater emphasis on materiality compared to Saussure's original conceptualization. Presently, the signifier is commonly interpreted as the tangible or physical manifestation of the sign. It is something that can be perceived through sight, sound, touch, smell, or taste. Later theorists have also used the term "signifier" to denote a sign's physical manifestation, such as Peirce's representamen, which we will examine in detail later.

The Peircean Model of the Sign

Around the same period and in conjunction with Saussure's work on semiotics and structuralism, Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher and logician associated with pragmatism, introduced a triadic interpretation of the sign model. Peirce's concept of 'semeiotic' and his classification of signs were developed independently and presented as a self-contained dyad comprising three distinct components.

1. The **representamen** denotes the tangible manifestation of a sign, which may not always be physical in nature but is commonly perceived as such. Certain scholars may also describe this manifestation as a "sign vehicle."

2. An **interpretant** refers to the sense derived from a sign, representing the meaning interpreted by an interpreter.

3. An **object** is the referent beyond the sign, representing what the sign represents.

The interpretant does not refer to the audience but rather to the sense that the audience derives from the sign. It is important to distinguish between an interpretant and an interpreter. For instance, in Pierce's sign model, the "stop" traffic light sign comprises three components: a red-light facing vehicles at a junction, serving as the 'representamen'; vehicles coming to a halt, the 'object'; and the concept that a red traffic light signifies that vehicles are required to come to a stop, referred to as the interpretant.

Peirce proposed a phenomenological differentiation among the sign, its object, and the interpretant, categorizing them as manifestations of "Firstness," "Secondness," and "Thirdness," respectively, reflecting his inclination towards triadic frameworks. According to this perspective, the presence of all three components is necessary for the recognition of something as a sign. The representamen (how the sign is represented), the interpretant (how it is interpreted), and the object (what is represented) collectively contribute significantly to the establishment of a sign.

Different versions of Peirce's triad are commonly referred to as 'the semiotic triangle'. Figure 1.3 below displays a typical representation of the Peircean model, often used to simplify the complex terminology associated with Peirce's original concept (Nöth, 1990, p. 89).

Peirce's concept of representamen and Saussure's signifier share a similar connotation, with the interpretant closely resembling the signified. However, in contrast to the signified, the interpretant possesses the characteristic of functioning as a sign within the interpreter's consciousness. Peirce noted that a sign engages with an individual, thereby generating within their mind a corresponding sign or potentially a more developed sign. This resultant sign is referred to as the interpretant of the initial sign (Peirce, 1931-58, p. 2. 228)

Taking into consideration that Peirce did not himself offer a visualization of his model (Eco, 1976, p. 59), Floyd Merrell contends that the triangular structure, which he refers to as a 'tripod' with a central node, does not truly exhibit triadic characteristics but rather demonstrates a form of three-way dyadic relationships

(Merrell, 1997, p. 133). The semiotic triangle proposed by Ogden and Richards (Figure 1.4), in which the phrases "symbol," "thought or reference," and "referent" are utilized, is one that is fairly well-known (Ogden & Richards, 1923, p. 14).

Sign vehicle: the form of the sign.

Sense: the sense made of the sign.

Referent: what the sign 'stands for'.

The dashed line found at the base of the triangle suggests the absence of a straightforward and direct connection between the sign vehicle and the referent. In contrast to the abstract concept of the signified in the Saussurean model, the referent is recognized as an 'object'. While Peirce's model acknowledges the role of signs in mediating all experiences and allocates a space for an objective reality that Saussure's model did not explicitly address, it does not necessarily surpass Saussure's model simply because it incorporates a referent (object). According to Lyons, there is considerable debate even among proponents of the idea that all three elements - A, B, and C - must be considered regarding the specifics of the triadic analysis (Lyons, 1977).

It should be noted that the sign is a broader concept than just a 'sign vehicle'. Accordingly, semioticians distinguish between a sign and a "sign vehicle"; the latter is referred to as a "signifier" in the Saussurean model and a "representamen" in the Peircean framework. However, this distinction is not always maintained because the term "sign" is frequently wielded in an ambiguous manner. Peirce himself regularly mentions 'the sign' when, strictly speaking, he is referring to the representamen, and in the same way, in the Saussurean model, some references to 'the sign' should be to the signifier. Apparently, since we are so accustomed to "seeing beyond" the form that the sign occurs to take, the distinction between 'sign' and 'sign vehicle' is not always preserved. Nevertheless, it bears repeating that the sign is an overall meaningful combination, whilst the signifier or representamen, such as the spoken or written form of a word, is the form in which the sign takes.

Peirce's version of the sign contains an object or referent, which in Saussure's model this part does not exist. The meaning and function of representamen could be compared with Saussure's signifier, and the interpretant is similar to the Saussure's signified (Silverman, 1983, p. 15). The interpretant, in contrast to the signified, is perceived by the interpreter as a sign. According to Peirce, a sign engages an individual by eliciting a corresponding sign or a more intricate sign in their mind. The resultant sign is termed as the interpretant of the first sign (Peirce, 1931-58, p. 2. 228). To put it bluntly, Peirce employed the term 'semiosis,' which is also spelled 'semiosis,' to delineate the process of interaction among the representamen, the object, and the interpretant (ibid. 5.484).

Roman Jakobson stated that Peirce believed that the meaning of a sign lies in its ability to be translated into another sign (Jakobson, 1952b, p. 566). Peirce acknowledged the potential for a series of subsequent interpretations, which could continue indefinitely, as noted by Umberto Eco, who introduces the concept of "unlimited semiosis" to characterize this phenomenon (Eco, 1976, pp. 68–9) (ibid. 1.339, 2.303). Any preliminary interpretation may be revised and re-interpreted. Peirce remarked that "the meaning of a representation can be nothing but a representation," in the first volume of his Collected Writings (ibid. 1.339).

While Peirce did not explicitly include the concept of an 'interpreter' within his triad model, scholars in the field of media and communication have underscored the necessity of sense-making, which inherently requires an interpreter. These theorists highlight the critical role of the active process of interpretation. The interpreter or so-called 'user' of the sign, is clearly mentioned in several of these theorists' references to semiotic triangles, replacing 'sense' or 'interpretant' with the word 'user.' Whether a dyadic or triadic model is adopted, the role of the interpreter must be accounted for. A sign's meaning is not inherent in it; rather, it is determined by how it is interpreted (Shilina & Zarifian, 2023, p. 310). In view of this, David Sless explains that any statement regarding users, signs, or referents cannot be considered independently, as each statement about one element inherently implies connections to the other two elements" (Sless, 1986, p.

6). Even Paul Thibault believes that Saussure's seemingly dyadic model includes the interpreter implicitly (Thibault, 1997, p. 184).

Relativity (Modes of Relationships)

The relatively arbitrary "symbolism" of verbal language, as proposed by Saussure, represents just one type of relationship between the signifier and the signified. While Peirce acknowledged the connection between the sign and the object, his distinctions are typically utilized within a broader Saussurean context. Saussure emphasized the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign, but many semioticians have highlighted that signs differ in their level of arbitrariness or conventionality, or conversely, in their 'transparency'. Unlike Saussure, who did not suggest a typology of signs, Charles Peirce was a meticulous classifier who introduced numerous logical typologies (Peirce, 1931-58, pp. 1.291, 2.243).

Peirce's primary categorization, which he regarded as the most fundamental division of signs, pertains to the connections and associations between a representamen and its object or interpretant. This classification is valuable for categorizing various modes of relationship between sign vehicles and their referents (Hawkes, 1977, p. 129). Within the Saussurean model, such inclusion tends to stress (though indirectly) the signified's referential potential.

As previously indicated, Charles Sanders Peirce, one of the pioneers of semiotics, based on how the sign related to the object, classified signs into the following three types (Figure 1.5), along with brief definitions and illustrative examples:

Symbol/symbolic: a mode in which the signifier and signified are essentially different from one another. There is no similarity between the signifier and the signified in a symbol. The relationship between them is basically arbitrary or entirely conventional, so this relationship must be culturally discovered.

Icon/iconic: In this mode of relationship, the signifier directly resembles, shares, or simulates (imitates) some characteristic of the signified and is recognizably similar to it by looking, hearing, feeling, tasting, or smelling. In terms

of appearance, an icon resembles and shares tangible qualities with the signified. An enlightening example is a picture, since it unambiguously shows what it is supposed to.

Index/indexical: a mode in which the signifier is not arbitrary but is physically or causally tied to the signified. Index has an implied association with the object. This association can be observed, deduced, or concluded. Evidence of what is being represented is displayed in an index. An excellent illustration of this is utilizing smoke to represent fire.

Various forms of signs such as numbers, Morse code, traffic lights, alphabetical letters, words, punctuation marks, phrases, and sentences, along with language as a whole (encompassing specific languages, alphabetical letters, punctuation marks, words, phrases, and sentences), serve as instances of symbolic modes of relationships. The connection between the signifier and the signified must be learned.

In the realm of iconic relationships, various forms of visual and auditory representations can be observed. These encompass cartoons or caricatures, portraits, metaphors, scale models, onomatopoeia, "realistic" music within "programme music," sound effects in radio drama, soundtracks from dubbed films, and imitative gestures. These manifestations are classified within the second group of iconic relationships.

Various examples of indexical relationships include "natural indicators" such as smoke, thunder, footprints, echoes, and non-artificial odors and flavors, as well as medical signals like pain, rash, and pulse rate. Additionally, measuring tools like weathercocks, thermometers, clocks, and spirit levels, along with signals such as a knock on the door or a ringing phone, pointers like a pointing finger or directional signpost, recordings such as pictures, movies, videos, television clips, and audio recordings of voices, and individual trademarks like catchphrases or a person's handwriting, all serve as instances of indexical relationships (Chandler, 2007, pp. 36-37).

The following discussion in this chapter will look at how cartoonists use pictographs, which are symbols that represent an arbitrarily designated entity, to represent concepts, as well as delving into the cartoon vocabulary of symbols, icons, and other pictorial representations that challenge audiences' perceptions.

As we've already mentioned, rather than specific "types of signs," we're talking about symbolic, iconic, and indexical forms of relationships. Peirce's three categories of "sign types" may appear to be distinct, but they are not mutually exclusive. A sign can be perceived or analyzed as a symbol, an icon, an index, or a combination thereof. Peirce demonstrated a thorough understanding of this topic, as indicated by his assertion that it would be challenging, if not unattainable, to identify a completely pure index or a sign entirely lacking in indexical quality (Peirce, 1931-58, p. 2.306) Accordingly, Jakobson observes that the primary distinction lies more in the hierarchy of the properties of the entities in question rather than in the properties (Jakobson, 1963d, p. 335) (Jakobson 1963d, 335; cf. 1968, p. 700) As an example, a map is symbolic in that it uses recognizable symbols and could be included in the iconic mode group to describe distances and directional relationships between landmarks, as well as indexical in that it indicates where items are located.

These three modes emerged inside and as a result of the triadic model of Peirce, and from a Peircean standpoint, transforming a triadic connection into a dyadic one is reductive (Bruss, 1978). In decreasing order of conventionality, the three above-mentioned modes are presented here. Language and other symbolic signs are largely conventional; iconic signs generally entail some degree of conventionality; and indexical signs guide "the attention to their objects by blind compulsion." Iconity is founded on or at least perceived, "resemblance," whereas indexicality is based on, or at least perceived, "direct connection." (Peirce, 1931-58, p. 2.306)

Peirce and Saussure utilized the term "symbol" in differing manners. Contemporary scholars typically view language as a symbolic system of signs; however, Saussure diverged from this perspective by refusing to classify linguistic

signs as 'symbols'. He argued that these signs are not entirely arbitrary and do not merely consist of random configurations. Saussure contended that there exists a certain degree of inherent connection between the signifier and the signified, which he termed as 'rational' (1916/1983, pp. 68, 73).

Peirce defines a symbol as a sign that refers to an object through a law, typically an association of general ideas, which causes the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that object. Symbols are perceived based on a rule or habitual connection, and their connection to the object is established through the concept of the 'symbol-using animal.' The use and perception of a symbol are essential for it to function as a sign, as it would lose its signifying character without an interpretant. Therefore, a symbol is considered a conventional sign that relies on acquired or innate habits. In essence, all words, sentences, books, and other conventional signs can be categorized as symbols (Peirce, 1931-58, pp. 1.369, 2.249, 2.292, 2.297, 2.29).

Peirce posited that an iconic sign represents its object primarily through its resemblance. A sign may be considered iconic when it bears similarity to the object it signifies and is employed as a symbol of it (Peirce, 1931-58, p. 2.276) (ibid. 2.247). [19] What is noteworthy in this regard is that a signifier is not always totally iconic just because it resembles the thing it represents. "The picture is primarily a symbol, not a replica, of what it symbolizes," asserts philosopher Susanne Langer (1951, p. 67). Only in certain ways do pictures resemble the things they depict. The similar relationships between pieces and a whole are what we frequently notice in a picture (ibid. 67-70).

Turning to icons, Semioticians often argue that there are no "pure" icons since cultural conventions are constantly having influence. Although "any material image" (such as a painting) may be viewed as resembling the thing it depicts,

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[19] In fact, he initially called such representations "likenesses" (e.g., ibid. 1.558). In the Peircean sense, every picture is an icon, he continued, "however conventional its model." (ibid. 2.279) Icons "excite similar sensations in the mind" and have attributes that "resemble" those of the items they symbolize (ibid. 2.299; see also 3.362). "*The icon has no dynamical connection with the object it represents,*" in contrast to the index (ibid.).

Peirce claimed that this is only because the technique of representation is "essentially conventional." (Peirce, 1931-58, p. 2.276)

Guy Cook comes up with this question of whether the distinct sign displayed on the entrance of a restroom designated for males bears a stronger resemblance to a male figure than a female one. The effectiveness of an iconic sign is contingent upon its ability to convey its intended meaning to individuals unfamiliar with it, a quality that may not always be as evident as commonly assumed. Recognition of the sign's resemblance is typically facilitated by prior knowledge of its significance (Cook, 1992, p. 70). To recapitulate, even a picture that appears to be "realistic" is as symbolic as it is iconic.

It is better that iconic and indexical signs be recognized as 'natural' than symbolic ones, especially when making the relationship between signifier and signified has become customary. Iconic signifiers can be highly evocative. [20] Signs like this, which appear to reflect reality more immediately than symbolic signs, do not bring our attention to their mediation.[21]

Umberto Eco extensively examines and critiques the iconic mode of relationships between signifier and signified (Eco, 1976, p. 191ff). Iconicity, as defined by linguist John Lyons, relies on the characteristics of the medium in which the form is expressed (Lyons, 1977, p. 105).

Though its associations with common applications of the word "index" should be less confusing than the terminology for the other two modes, indexicality is arguably the most unknown idea. The term "indexicality" refers to the manner in which an "index" finger or the index of a book immediately points to the item being referred to. [22]

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[20] According to Kent Grayson, "*Because we can see the object in the sign, we are often left with a sense that the icon has brought us closer to the truth than if we had instead seen an index or a symbol.*" (Grayson, 1998, p. 36) Iconic signifiers may be extremely evocative.

[21] Considering this, he emphasizes that "*instead of drawing our attention to the gaps that always exist in representation, iconic experiences encourage us subconsciously to fill in these gaps and then to believe that there were no gaps in the first place... This is the paradox of representation: it may deceive most when we think it works best*" (ibid. 41).

[22] Peirce provides several standards for what an index is. For instance, a sundial or clock that denotes the time of day is an example of how an index "indicates" something (Peirce, 1931-58, p. 2.285). He speaks of a "genuine relation" between the 'sign' and the 'object' that is independent of only "the interpreting mind." (ibid. 2.92, 298) The object is

One individual may regard a sign as symbolic, another as iconic, and a third as indexical. "*When we speak of an icon, an index or a symbol, we are not referring to objective qualities of the sign itself,*" argues Kent Grayson. "*But to a viewer's experience of the sign.*" (Grayson, 1998, p. 35) While Saussure acknowledged the dynamic quality of the relationship between the signifier and the signified in language, his primary focus was not on this particular topic (Saussure 1983, 74ff; Saussure 1974, 74ff). A transition between Peirce's three modes often occurs throughout history, suggesting that the sign modes themselves can evolve over time. For instance, while a Rolls-Royce may initially serve as an index of wealth due to its association with affluence, societal conventions have transformed it into a conventional symbol of wealth, pinpoints Jonathan Culler (1975, p. 17). The connection between the signifier and the signified is in a state of constant flux, change, and evolution, as posited by structuralist scholars. Rosalind Coward and John Ellis suggest that any attempt to stabilize the sequence of signifiers is only provisional and influenced by societal factors (Coward & Ellis, 1977, pp. 6, 8, 13).

To bring the subject of "three modes of relationships" to a close, it should be emphasized that the manner in which a sign is employed essentially determines whether it is symbolic, iconic, or indexical (Shilina & Zarifian, 2023, p. 312). In different contexts and in certain circumstances, the same signifier may be used both iconically and symbolically. Signs cannot be categorized in terms of the three modes without considering the objectives of their users in particular settings and contexts. Consequently, a sign may be interpreted in different ways depending on who observes it: as symbolic, iconic, or indexical.

"necessarily existent." (ibid. 2.310) The index is really associated with its item. (ibid. 4.447) There is 'a real connection' (ibid. 5.75). There might be a "*direct physical connection*" (ibid. 1.372, 2.281, 2.299). "*a fragment torn away from the object*" is how an indexical sign is like that. (ibid. 2.231) An index, as opposed to an icon (whose subject may be fictitious), stands "unequivocally for this or that existing thing." (ibid. 4.531) The signifier is "*actually modification*" by the signified, even though "it inevitably has some characteristic in common" with it; there is an "*actual affected*" involved. (ibid. 2.248). There is more to the relationship than "*mere resemblance*" (ibid.): "*indices... have no significant resemblance to their objects.*" (ibid. 2.306) It is not "similarity or analogy" that characterizes the index. (ibid. 2.305). "*Anything which focuses the attention is an index. Anything which startles us is an index.*" (ibid. 2.285; see also 3.434) By using blind compulsion, indexical signs "guide the attention to their objects." (ibid. 2.306; see also 2.191, 2.428) "*Psychologically, the action of indices depends upon association by contiguity and not upon association by resemblance or upon intellectual operations*" (ibid.).

Why do we need Semiotic for cartoon research?

The advantages of employing semiotic approaches to examine political cartoons from an impartial standpoint are unquestionable and beyond doubt. The application of semiotics assists in the process of deciphering numerous aspects such as visual scanning, textual interpretation, and intonation evaluation, according to Ulubeyli, Arslan, and Kivrak (2015, p. 471). This enables cartoons to be perceived as snapshots that reflect the societal framework and historical backdrop in which they exist.

Cartoons encompass a diverse range of signs and symbols, which are employed by cartoon artists to convey meaning through verbal, non-verbal, or a combination of both modes of expression (see Section 1.3). This meaning can be either **explicit** or **implicit**. The explicit meaning, referred to as "denotation," is readily apparent, while the implicit meaning, known as "connotation," requires interpretation.

This thesis holds that implicit meanings in cartoons are conveyed through two rhetorical devices, metaphor, and irony, which will be introduced in the 3rd Chapter (Sections 3.3.4- Metaphor and 3.3.5- Irony). The analysis of irony in political cartoons and the role of metaphor in constructing ideology involve the integration of semiotics and critical discourse analysis. What is noteworthy in this interim is that the interpretation of ironic and metaphorical messages in cartoons demands greater cognitive effort from audiences compared to explicit forms of communication. Consequently, this heightened cognitive engagement may enhance the enjoyment and retention of the message conveyed by the cartoon. In either case, readers must first identify the conflicting narratives before attempting to comprehend the techniques employed to create irony and convey social criticism. Scholars specializing in the cartoon genre emphasize the significance of understanding the contextual backdrop against which a cartoon is presented in order to grasp the intended message of the cartoon artist. The semiotic resources utilized in the cartoon will lose their significance without this background knowledge.

Communication has become an inextricable aspect of our existence, and the visual mode of communication has been exploited in the print media and during past decades in digital sphere as a genuine way of expressing extremely important matters symbolically. To this end, Semiotic study and approach constitutes a form of discourse which requires visual representation of knowledge to comprehend and interpret any certain text. In this vein, there have been numerous endeavors to examine political cartoons through the canonical taxonomies of Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) speech acts, implicature, contextual variables, and Pragmatic Acts theory.

The discussion in this thesis is anchored in the hypothesis proposed by Sipe (1998, p. 107) that in Westernized logocentric societies that prioritize written language, visual texts are considered to be equally significant as verbal texts. [23] From this perspective, images can be described as "polysemous" because they possess a core sign that is connected to a range of ideas stored within the audience's knowledge. Image creators guide viewers towards a preferred understanding by encouraging them to construct their own version of reality. This is achieved using specific signifiers that limit and bound the range of possible interpretations. Rather than categorizing visuals as purely decorative and informative, it is necessary to heed and examine the extent of interdependence and mutual influence between these two modes (see Section 1.3: Word-Image fusions in Political Cartoons).

On another level, in the examination of humor's nature and its process of interpretation, the attention is directed towards theories that explain the influence factors on individuals' interpretations of humor in symbols, events, or texts. Attardo (1994) and Chandler (2007) jointly assert that theories seeking to measure humor are grounded in the domain of interpretive science, commonly known as semiotics.

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[23] **Logocentrism** refers to the tradition of Western science and philosophy that regards words and language as a fundamental expression of an external reality.

As discussed earlier, semiotics, as a field of study initially co-founded by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), explores how signs and symbols convey meaning and how this meaning is interpreted within cultural contexts. This process involves the creation of meaning through the interaction between signs and the individuals or communities that interpret them. The generation of meaning through the utilization of a system of signs derived from subjective interpretations and individual experiences is a fundamental aspect of semiotics. This study believes that meaning is not fixed or predetermined but fluid, dynamic and context-dependent phenomenon, shaped by the complex interplay of individual lived experiences, societal norms, and cultural practices through ongoing processes of communication and interpretation. Individuals bring their own subjective experiences, cultural backgrounds, and social contexts to the interpretation of signs. Chandler (2007) emphasizes that the analysis of humor serves to reveal the presence of cultural codes that individuals draw upon to validate their own meanings and interpretations.

Nevertheless, the challenges that will subsequently be mentioned in establishing a universally accepted definition of humor (see Section 3.3.1- Humor) indicate that it is more appropriate to analyze theories of humor on an individual basis, evaluating each theory based on its own strengths and weaknesses. This approach will enhance audiences' understanding and experience of the various forms of humor and their societal function while also reducing any potential bias towards the specific types of humor utilized in the subsequent analysis of editorial cartoons.

Symbolism in Cartoons

Symbolism is the connotative representation of an abstract concept through an emblematic system, in which an object is used to signify a certain idea. Symbols are widely recognized visual representations or images that conventionally signify alternative meanings, wider concepts, or emotive constructs. A symbol can be

characterized as a physical or abstract representation that bears an inherent meaning and possess the ability to elicit a predetermined response or phenomenon. It is acknowledged that phenomena whose nature and characteristics are not yet discernible through observation or analysis cannot be subjected to definition or representation through symbols. A phenomenon manifests itself for the audience due to its complete repetition. In this case, there exists an unconscious urge that impels us to focus on the most conspicuous characteristic of the subject matter.

This thesis divides symbols in cartoons into **"Universal Symbols"** and **"Social Symbols"** as later will be expounded in empirical analysis of an array of cartoons in Chapter 4 (See Table 4.8). The first category posits that specific symbols are affiliated with a geopolitical domain, a distinct ethnic group, or a nation and bear connotations that reflect their legacy and way of life. Another category encompasses symbols that hold universal significance and are readily comprehensible to a broad audience across nations.

Furthermore, in situations where censorship or cognitive barriers hinder the dissemination of a message, cartoonists employ symbols or icons to both conceal and convey the targeted meaning. This is the juncture at which the incorporation of symbols serves to imbue cartoons with added depth and historical and cultural significance.

Flags, signs, icons, and logos are prolifically employed to distinguish an individual, personification, establishment, or corporation. Symbols are employed to emphasize political affiliation, organizational membership, commercial interests, and similar facets. Cartoonists frequently employ universally acknowledged symbols of peace, such as the white dove, as well as symbols of justice, such as Lady Justice, depicted as a blindfolded figure holding a sword in one hand and scales in the other (Figures 1.29 and 1.30).

Symbolism takes on multiple forms in the field of cartooning. The implementation of symbolism within cartoons lends itself to the establishment of a vocabulary that surpasses the limitations of linguistic expression. Rather, this form of communication is reliant upon visual depictions, with the assumption that

readers adeptly comprehend their meaning. Audiences easily understand certain universal symbols, such as Lady Justice and the white dove of peace, inherently, while various other symbols, such as the elephant symbol of the Republican Party or Donkey, which symbolizes the Democratic Party, require learning or background knowledge. Although inherent (universal) symbols remain constant, learned symbols possess more flexibility. They are employed temporarily until a superior alternative is discovered, and given that cartoonists frequently alter their symbolic vocabulary, it becomes imperative for audiences to adapt their cognitive interpretations accordingly. This section delves into the analysis of the vocabulary utilized in cartoons, which includes symbols, icons, and various visual representations, which present a cognitive hurdle for individuals who skim through the material hastily.

Sandra Braun (2014) revisited and updated Hall's (1973) established theorems on encoding and decoding. Her research primarily focused on the evolution of media and communication technologies and their impact on the processes of encoding and decoding messages. The main factors discussed in the research include "expansion of communication channels," "shifts in audience participation," "cultural and societal changes," and lastly, "technological determinism." Specifically, Braun's work involved a critical examination of how changes in media technologies, audience participation, and cultural dynamics have transformed the processes of encoding and decoding messages in contemporary society (Braun, 2014, pp. 53-54). The author expounds upon symbols, which can take on various forms, and advocates for symbolic interactionism as a foundational theoretical framework for understanding public relations practices. Symbolic interactionism is a sociological perspective that emphasizes the importance of symbols, meanings, and interactions in shaping human behavior and social structures.

The assertion that an individual's subsequent response to a given symbol is a deliberate, conscious decision stemming from interpretive procedures aligns with the principles of symbolic interactionism. Braun postulates the development of the

concept of 'self', according to which, this theoretical perspective, individuals actively interpret symbols based on their subjective understanding, social context, and previous experiences. Symbolic interactionism highlights the agency of individuals in the interpretation of symbols and emphasizes that meaning is not inherent in symbols themselves but is constructed through social interactions. Therefore, when individuals encounter symbols, they engage in interpretive procedures that involve consciously assigning meaning to those symbols based on their cultural background, personal beliefs, and social interactions. This perspective suggests that their responses are deliberate and conscious acts influenced by their interpretive frameworks. It acknowledges that interpretation is not a passive process but rather an active engagement with symbols, where individuals draw upon their cognitive abilities and cultural knowledge to make sense of the world around them.

Semiotics and Symbolism in Cartoons

As expounded in Section 1.1, Ferdinand Saussure postulated a linguistic semiotics theory that has been subsequently classified as structuralism. The concept of a "signifier" and its corresponding "signified" represent integral components of a "sign." Collectively, these linguistic elements contribute to the construction of meaning within language. As earlier discussed in the topic of "Relativity (Modes of Relationships)," the connection between signifier and signified is entirely arbitrary. For instance, the term "cat" does not possess the inherent characteristics of a cat, indicating that there is no inherent link between the signifier "cat" and its associated signified, which is a four-legged animal. This arbitrary connection between signifier and signified reflects traditional cultural norms originating from collective consensus within the community[24].

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[24] John Storey, in this regard, asserts that "collective consensus" is a construct reflecting the dominant ideologies and values upheld by society at a given time. It encompasses shared beliefs, norms, and meanings that influence cultural practices and shape interpretations of popular culture within a community or society. Storey explores the intersection of cultural theory and popular culture, examining how dominant ideologies shape and are reflected in everyday cultural practices. It offers a comprehensive overview of key theoretical approaches to understanding popular culture in contemporary society (Storey, 2006, p. 87).

In a similar manner, cartoonists employ symbolic imagery to portray concepts by way of arbitrary designations for entities. As an illustration, owing to a longstanding convention established in the 19th century[25] by Thomas Nast, who is known as the "Father of the American Cartoon" (Vinson, 1967), it has been widely recognized among cartoonists and audiences that the elephant symbolizes the Republican Party and the donkey the Democratic Party of the United States. Republicans and Democrats are not inherently characterized by elephantine or donkey traits, yet a convention has been established and mutually recognized by artists and their audiences (Figures 1.6 and 1.7).

Similar to structuralism with regards to language, the employment of symbols is not necessarily an orderly and unambiguous approach. The term "present" serves as a signifier, whose meaning can be perceived in varied ways by a reader. Depending on the grammatical context, it can represent a noun, indicating a gift; or an adjective, signifying one's attendance; or a verb, referring to the act of giving. Indeed, the pronunciation of the signifier diverges depending on its usage as a verb or a noun. The determination of the intended meaning of the signifier is contingent upon the contextual cues comprehended by the reader.

Similarly, as per the paraphrase of Sigmund Freud[26], there are instances where an elephant should be regarded only as an elephant. The analogy serves as a tool to augment the understanding that symbols are to be comprehended within their contextual framework (Keyes, 1992, p. 173). Inquiries about the cognitive processes involved in recognizing symbols and interpreting their meanings have prompted discussion on how a viewer can differentiate between a cartoon depiction of an elephant as a representation of the Republican Party or merely as a

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[25] The Republican elephant was first used during Abraham Lincoln's 1860 election campaign as a symbol of strength. It was then made popular when German-born Thomas Nast, who is known as the "Father of the American Cartoon," drew it in a cartoon in 1874.

For the Democratic Party, the donkey was first used during a presidential campaign in 1828, after candidate Andrew Jackson used it on his posters because of a nickname his opponents gave him.

Again, Thomas Nast later used a donkey to represent the Democrats, and it became a popular symbol for the party by the end of the 19th century (Thomas Nast: American Political Caricaturist, 1998).
https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/37848449

[26] The saying, "*Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar*" is attributed to Sigmund Freud.

pachyderm. This dilemma requires the viewer to discern the contextual aspects present in the tableau and then deduce the accurate signification intended for the elephant symbol.

Saussure's theoretical framework provides an illustrative example with respect to the chess piece of the knight, wherein he asserts that its representation is subject to the discretion of the designer, as long as such representation effectively distinguishes it from other chess pieces (Storey, 2006, p. 89). The utilization of this principle in political cartoons allows for a high level of creative and artistic flexibility among cartoonists, influenced by diverse political contexts. Regarding the use of the elephant as a symbol for the Republican Party, Lawrence Bush (2012) emphasizes the importance of artists being mindful in their portrayal of elephants. They should avoid any resemblance to other animal species, such as vultures or snakes, unless the intention is to imply that the Republican Party embodies traits associated with those creatures. The elephant is chosen for its unique characteristics, such as its size, strength, and intelligence. These qualities are seen as symbolic of the Republican Party's values, such as power, strength, and determination. The elephant's unique characteristics make it a fitting signifier for the party, and its continued use in political cartoons and other media demonstrates its enduring symbolic power. Nevertheless, artists have the freedom to artistically depict the elephant in numerous ways, while viewers will still recognize it as a symbol representing the Republican Party (Bush, 2012, p. 8).

Two Types of Symbols

Austrian art historian and psychologist Ernst Gombrich delineates two distinct categories of symbols, namely the natural symbols, which have inherent meanings derived from nature and the conventional symbols known as ad hoc symbol, which are assigned meanings by societies or cultural groups (Gombrich E. H., Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation, 1960). Natural symbols are employed to provide a symbolic representation that is inherently understandable to humans, derived from natural occurrences or

phenomena that have inherent symbolic meanings. They are often associated with certain universal meanings and are recognized across cultures and time. For example, the sun can symbolize warmth, energy, or power; water can symbolize life, purity, or cleansing. Natural symbols have a direct connection to the physical world and their meanings are often grounded in our experiences and observations of nature. As such, these associations can be used for both constructive and destructive purposes, such as the spread of false information. Gombrich declares, "*Racial propaganda has at all times exploited this unthinking fusion.*" ([1963] 1994, p. 139).

Additional examples of natural metaphors encompass the juxtaposition between notions of aesthetics, such as attractiveness and repulsiveness, as well as distinctions in size, such as that between largeness and smallness. These devices are particularly advantageous for artists who specialize in cartooning, as they facilitate the streamlining of the communication process.

It is widely observed that attractive character depictions tend to be perceived as heroic in nature, whereas unattractive character depictions tend to be identified as villains by viewers. Similarly, a hegemonic entity is portrayed as significantly larger than its counterpart in a comparative analysis. The purposeful representation of the protagonist is an artistic device that will be discussed later in this chapter (1.2.2). Frequently, such comparisons are framed as a metaphorical reference to the biblical story of David and Goliath. To amplify the opposition, cartoonists tend to amplify binaries by means of exaggeration. The juxtaposition of one element against another in order to show a contrast, as well as the representation of subjects in duality and linked to preconceived, familiar oppositions, are the techniques for weaving humor in cartoons that will be examined in Chapter 3 (3.3.1- Humor).

The second category of symbols introduced by Gombrich is conventional symbols or "Ad hoc symbols," which refer to those symbols that are created and assigned meanings by societies or specific cultural groups such as artists and utilized frequently enough to allow readers to comprehend the symbol's intended meaning upon seeing them.

The term "ad hoc" denotes an improvised nature[27], thus suggesting an arbitrary production, like the discussion per Saussure's argument on the origins of "dog" that the word is arbitrarily made up. From a semiotic point of view, according to Saussure's theory of structuralism, ad hoc symbols become signifiers for viewers in a similar way that words become signifiers for readers of text. Nevertheless, the symbol in question strikes a chord with its audience, contributing to its continued resilience. The meanings within conventional symbols are not inherent in the symbols themselves but are agreed upon by the people who use them. Conventional symbols can be found in various aspects of human culture, such as language, art, religion, and social customs. For example, the cross is a conventional symbol representing Christianity, and the red rose often symbolizes love or passion. Conventional symbols are subject to change over time and may vary across different cultures or contexts. The recurrent use of a given symbol transforms it from a provisional sign, known as an "ad hoc symbol," which requires written explanation such as a label or caption, into a symbol that is as widely recognized by readers as a common word, thereby eliminating the need for explicit elucidation.

Citing Albert Shaw's examples (1929, p. 187), Lawrence Bush (2012, p. 12) discusses that not all conventional symbols exhibit sustained longevity and brings an instance of an ad hoc symbol that was found in many cartoons during the 19th century in the United States. At the time, "Salt River" was an ad hoc symbol standing for "failure and defeat," which may not be readily comprehensible to today's audiences (Figure 1.8). [28] Another conventional symbol that has lost usage and popularity is Miss Columbia, which was utilized during the 19th century as the

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[27] According to The Britannica Dictionary, **Ad hoc** is a word that originally comes from Latin and means "for this" or "for this situation." In current American English, it is used to describe something that has been formed or used for a special and immediate purpose without previous planning.
Ad hoc can be used as an adjective or an adverb. It is used more often as an adjective, especially in these expressions: ad hoc committee, ad hoc group, and ad hoc basis.
For example: "The mayor appointed an ad hoc committee to study the project."
https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/eb/qa/what-does-ad-hoc-mean
[28] According to Shaw, "Salt River, found in many cartoons in subsequent chapters [of *Abraham Lincoln: His Path to the Presidency*], conveys the idea that the Fremont expedition of 1856 isheaded toward defeat." Albert Shaw, Abraham Lincoln: His Path to the Presidency, a Cartoon History, (New York: The Review of Reviews Corporation, 1929), 187 (interpolation added).

female national personification of the United States and was once a prominent symbol in American political art with a high degree of prevalence (Figure 1.9). However, during the 20th century, this representation was superseded by Lady Liberty, which symbolizes and represents freedom, democracy, human rights, immigration, and opportunity, as well as being a significant part of the American identity. It is noteworthy that Columbia has almost been removed from contemporary political cartoons. The decline of Columbia in contemporary political cartoons can be attributed to various factors, including changing symbolism, cultural shifts, outdated imagery, and a focus on specific issues.

The Relationship between Image and Word

Since the distant past, visual artists have intentionally integrated words and images to communicate ideas, perspectives, and messages. However, as noted by Caple, these easy and seemingly straightforward combination of text and visuals does not establish a direct and unequivocal correspondence and does not guarantee a clear and unambiguous relationship between the two elements. This emphasizes the complexity involved in interpreting and understanding the messages conveyed in photojournalism, as multiple layers of meaning can be derived from the combination of text and images (Caple, 2013, p. 122) W. J. T. Mitchell states that there are differences of opinion among researchers as to whether the word or the image dominates in this association and how such relationships should be measured (Mitchell, 1994, p. 47).

From an extensive perspective, images are often analyzed as standalone entities for their compositional, interactional, and representational significance and meanings, with minimal consideration given to their dependence on words. In contrast, focusing solely on analyzing a word's rhetorical value downplays how an image might radically extend, diverge, or distort its meaning to aid the reader grasp deeper concepts. In view of this, the interplay between images and words has become a shorthand for the distinctions or divisions in human experiences, encompassing various forms of representation, presentation, and symbolism. This

highlights the significance of understanding the diverse ways we perceive and interpret these elements (Mitchell, 1994). Bateman states that images and words are always competing for supremacy and dominance in a dynamic interaction that shows their strengths and weaknesses in transmitting meaning (2014, p. 5).

Despite these competitive struggles, like editorial and political cartoons, a fruitful coexistence between images and words can be found. Both verbal elements such as titles, labels, captions and speech bubbles (refer to Section 1.3.1) and visual elements have their own strengths that can mutually enhance each other if they integrated well. Cartoonists can make more interesting and powerful material if they know how words can add to and explain images and how images can be given context and depth through words.

Such coexistence is advantageous because they have the potential to multiply planned meaning, and through purposeful pairing and intelligent placement of words and images, they can provide greater insight for addressees than that accrued if observed separately. In this vein, Bateman asserts images can "multiply" the power of words (2014, p. 6). He explains that when images are combined with words, they create a synergy that amplifies the impact of both elements. Images can provide additional information, context, or emotions that words alone might struggle to convey. This visual-verbal collaboration can lead to a more profound understanding and a richer interpretation of the message being communicated. By leveraging the strengths of both text and images, Bateman highlights the potential for a more immersive and memorable experience for the audience. Such relationships will be noticeable in the next analytical chapters that follow, where editorial cartoons that recount specific news and events combine words and visuals to produce new, multi-semiotic texts.

Asmadi Noer (2015, p. 1197) contends that audiences do not interact solely through words but rather rely on a variety of dialogic forms to help them generate extra meanings. The relationship between words and images is crucial in effectively teaching any science. He emphasizes the importance of using both elements in a complementary manner to create a more comprehensive and

engaging learning experience. By combining words with visual representations, Noer argues that students can grasp complex concepts more easily, leading to better understanding and retention of the material (Piaget & Inhalder, 1971).

When examined in a scholarly context, the term "images" as stated in the Oxford English Dictionary, refers to depictions or similarities that mirror the cognitive perception of an object or concept that is not currently within sensory reach, frequently entailing recollection. (OED, The Oxford English Dictionary, 2011). This statement implies that images possess the ability to stimulate and engage dormant sensory responses within the subconscious minds of viewers, leading to the formation of mental representations associated with inferred meanings.

In his Peter Sheehan proposes three categories of images: visual images, motor images, and sensory imagery (1990). Visual images involve mental representations of visual scenes or objects. Motor images, on the other hand, relate to mental rehearsal of physical movements or actions. Sensory imagery encompasses a range of mental experiences that involve other senses, such as touch, taste, and smell. Sheehan's categorization highlights the diverse ways our minds can create and process mental images, contributing to various cognitive processes and learning experiences.

The concept of visual imagery—observing an artifact and creating a mental image—is pertinent to our discussion. As has been scrutinized in the primary discussion of this chapter, signs are dyadic in Locke's concept, which means that they are associated with a particular meaning. Similar to the above, Saussure's (1916/1983, p. 67), dyadic model of visual signing is composed of two necessary elements, including signifier (the form the sign takes), signified (the concept represented), and the sign resulting from their association and coexistence. The stimulation of subconscious processes in this model is illustrated in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 when audiences encounter an image, in this case a tree. In Saussure's notion, the sign is completely immaterial and the relationship between the signifier and the signified is called the "signification."

From other perspective, Roland Barthes' (1977) persistent theory, that images in a communication process are tridimensional in structure when expressing meaning, is reiterated by White (2012, pp. 147-162). Such ideas harmonize with triadic model of the sign proposed by Peirce (1931-58), consisting of three parts as representamen (sign vehicle), interpretant (sense) and object (a referent; what the sign stands for).

In Chandler's (2007) opinion, the representamen, which is the signifier in Saussure's model, is indeed often perceived as a physical representation of the sign. This interpretation emphasizes the tangible aspects of language, such as written or spoken words, as they visually or audibly manifest the meaning they convey. This perspective highlights the significance of the material form of language in the process of communication and understanding. Chandler's (2007) view on the representamen as a physical representation of the sign aligns with Sheehan's sensory presumptions (1990) in that it emphasizes the material aspects of mental processes and experiences. In Sheehan's categories of images, sensory imagery involves mental experiences related to various senses, including touch, taste, and smell. Similarly, Chandler's perspective on the signifier in Saussure's model highlights the physical nature of language, which can be seen as an extension of sensory experiences.

By connecting Chandler's opinion to Sheehan's sensory-based categorization, we can argue that this visual signing model becomes more materialistic than Saussure's psychological conception. It does so by emphasizing the tangible aspects of language and mental imagery, drawing attention to the physicality of signs and their role in shaping our understanding and perception of the world. Later in the empirical analysis chapter, the ways will be demonstrated in which political cartoonists frequently utilize the aforementioned structures to create cartoons that incorporate a diverse range of symbols, some of which have been redefined to encompass political concepts.

1.2. Semiotics of Cartoons: Visualizing the Verbal

Words and pictures have been purposefully combined in cartoons for thousands of years to express politicized statements and ideological messages, as evidenced by the Pompeian graffiti in Figure 1.10. The Pompeian caricature of a Peregrinus (non-citizen), which was a form of ancient Roman street, was found in the city of Pompeii, buried under the volcanic ash from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. This graffiti is a satirical depiction found in the ruins of Pompeii, showcasing a humorous, exaggerated portrayal of a non-Roman citizen (undesirable centaurs). It likely reflects social commentary on foreigners or outsiders, possibly highlighting stereotypes or cultural tensions within Pompeian society and acknowledging the long-standing tradition of using funny and distorted representations to express feelings.

After reviewing the fundamentals of semiotics, further discussion will move on to examine the reciprocal points of reference that words and images share, as well as the stylistic devices and artistic techniques that cartoonists use to create their commentary. The following debate provides a comprehensive analysis of the mutual referencing between verbal and visual expressions, along with a description of several graphic techniques implemented by cartoonists to elaborate their commentary in a nuanced and impactful manner. Consideration is also given towards identifying whether political cartoons, as Barthes (1977, p. 38) contends, generate more information through the purposeful combination of words and visuals or, alternatively, they merely repeat information already present in texts.

Roland Barthes discusses the idea that denotative elements of a text or image provide less information than connotative elements. Denotation refers to the literal, straightforward meaning of a sign, while connotation refers to the associated, implied, or indirect meanings that go beyond the basic definition. Barthes contends that connotative elements generate more information because they delve into the cultural, historical, and contextual layers of a sign, revealing deeper meanings and interpretations. These connotations are shaped by the audience's experiences,

knowledge, and societal context, making them more complex and multifaceted than denotative meanings (Barthes, 1977).

The stylistic techniques they use to construct complex word-image fusions that further develop the material properties of words are also taken into account. As will be observed in the forthcoming Chapter 3, cartoonists can leverage both artistic style and rhetorical techniques to persuade and influence audiences. They can also communicate creative, intricate, and multi-faceted narratives that may be challenging to express solely through written text. Some of these visualizing techniques are listed below and will be explained further. The integration of word-image fusion involves a sophisticated arrangement of symbols, images, and text, designed to convey artistic and semantic meaning. This Fusion enables viewers to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter being addressed by the cartoonist and allow political cartoons to articulate viewpoints that may be deemed overly critical, excessively intense, politically inappropriate, or illogical if conveyed orally or through written means of communication.

Deconstructing meanings from images or any mode of visual communication is very different from textual discourse analysis. The act of verbal or visual expression has a different impact. For instance, the selection of word classes and clause structures in language serves as expressive media, and similarly, in visual communication, the selection of color implementation and compositional arrangements serves as expressive media, which will have a significant impact on the intended connotation.

In a broad sense, the interpretation of visual representations typically adheres to logic of association, as opposed to the reliance on reasoning and persuasive argumentation that is characteristic of academic and journalistic text. Visuals operate by connecting and synthesizing disparate meanings and concepts through associative pathways, which may not be immediately apparent or meaningful to the observer through either written or spoken communication (Müller & Özcan, 2007, p. 287).

In order to promote the desired results, John Berger (2006, p. 681) argued that individuals suspend the use of logical argumentation in favor of an associative strategy when attempting to comprehend visual images. This cognitive approach is thought to have developed during early childhood to aid in linguistic comprehension.

Political cartoons are a form of expressive art, which means they typically convey a particular political stance while allowing the artist, in the sense of design, to prioritize the medium of expression. The selection of particular artistic devices, such as personification, colors, exaggeration or angling, lighting, composition, and alike, is contingent upon the subject matter of the cartoon to a certain extent. Moreover, to communicate a meaning to the readers, cartoon artists combine these stylistic devices with rhetorical devices, such as puns, metaphor, irony, and parody which will be scrutinized in the next chapters. Generally, political cartoons encompass word-image or visualization devices with a multi-layered narrative, and the audience must decipher the implicit allusions and wordplay in order to comprehend the intended overarching message. Therefore, it is advantageous to examine the stylistic devices that can be regarded as "instruments of the profession" available to cartoonists. These devices enable them to extract meaningfully significant information from imagery that is abstract, absurd, harsh, and shocking, as will be explored in the subsequent chapters of empirical analysis.

In the following, this thesis shall meticulously examine prominent visualizing techniques and strategies, encompassing exaggeration, protagonist depiction, personification, compositional arrangement, stereotypical representations and clichés, as well as color theory and pictographic elements. Moreover, in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.1: Humor), the taxonomies of various methods will be introduced, which constitute the manifestation of humor in cartoons.

It is imperative to note that, firstly, the usage of these tools and instruments often overlaps, and secondly, the present discourse does not furnish a conclusive list of visualizing techniques at the cartoonists' disposal. Rather, it endeavors to illustrate those devices that are relevant to the research corpus and, when employed

in conjunction with each other, facilitate the production of more comprehensive visual texts.

Exaggeration

Essentially, this study argues that cartoons cannot be imagined without exaggeration, as most of their visualizations transpire within the realm of the absurd and surreal. Exaggeration is a key stylistic element in political cartoons that contributes to the manifestation of humor. It involves amplifying or distorting certain aspects of a situation, person, or event to create an exaggerated or absurd representation. Cartoonists not only utilize an exaggerated portrayal of facial features to ridicule and emphasize the behavior of their subjects, but they also tend to situate their depicted characters in highly unlikely positions and unconventional scenarios. In the words of Bounegru and Forceville (2011, p. 213), "*the cartoon amplifies and exaggerates the negative impact... through satirical effects.*"

According to Medhurst and DeSousa (1981, p. 212), as will be stated in the forthcoming chapter (3.3.1: Humor), exaggeration serves as a key stylistic device in political cartoons; it enhances the humor and effectiveness of the message being conveyed, plays a significant role in the creation of comedic effects, highlights a point, conveys complex ideas, and encourages critical thinking. The exaggerative nature of cartoons, in fact, provides cartoonists with the freedom to convey ideas that may be regarded as excessively harsh, markedly radical, or socially and politically unacceptable to be included in editorial content; such opinions are often omitted from conventional textual discourse analysis but could be represented in political cartoons.

The deliberate manipulation of relative proportionality, known in cartoons as exaggeration or amplification, serves the purpose of directing the observer's attention towards specific visual elements or a certain topic. This technique is commonly employed in physiognomic exaggeration as well as through the intentional distortion of the face of famous people with the aim of providing critical commentary, which we in this thesis define as caricature.

Cartoons heavily rely on the deployment of exaggeration; the discussion here *pivots around* the fact that cartoonists typically synthesize exaggeration in two directions, which are in concepts and in faces, in order to question authority and draw attention to corruption and other social ills in society. The presentation of political cartoons in this manner is an avenue for them to effectively express their thoughts about any event in society in a comical manner.

Caricature: Distorting Face

As it is evident in Figure 1.10, Pompeian soldiers created exaggerated portraits of undesirable centaurs that were drawn on the walls of their barracks. These methods emphasize and acknowledge that human beings have historically used funny and distorted representations to express their feelings. Caricature is the art of drawing the face of a real person in which certain parts of the face or body, features, and forms have been exaggerated and distorted, which normally makes them look funny or ridicule them by making part of their appearance or character more noticeable than it really is but still retains a likeness. In other words, it is considered an exaggerated piece of portrait art.

The first true caricature, according to Victor Navasky (2013, p. xix), was created as late as 1676. He bases this claim on Bernini's depiction of Pope Innocent XI and the artists' assertion that "*no one is above ridicule*" (Figure 2.2). Werner Hoffman makes several astounding claims, including that the origins of caricature as a kind of fine art in the Western tradition may be found in Leonardo da Vinci's groundbreaking studies of grotesque art. In order to better comprehend the idea of perfect beauty, Da Vinci aimed to identify an "ideal type of deformity" (Hoffman, 1957, p. 16).

Da Vinci expertly captures his subject's deformities while including crucial caricatural aspects in Figure 2.1, which is an example of the grotesque. This technical skill in producing a portrait that emphasizes and celebrates the subject's distinctive physical attributes is consistent with caricature conventions. In the next

chapter (Section 2.1), consideration will be given towards the genesis and evolution of caricature.

Political cartoons usually portray politicians and public figures in a way that represents a particular political stance. Since position holders and the upper classes of society are the constant subjects of political cartoons, this type of cartoon always carries with it an exaggerated and distorted representation of these famous people in the form of a caricature as a permanent and necessary element. Just as caricature is for the viewer who is familiar with the person who has been ridiculed, cartoons are also grounded in a broad familiarity with the subject.

One key aspect of the communicative skills of caricature lies in the practice of exaggerating subjects that the artist wishes to emphasize. Cartoonists do not shy away from addressing any subject or individual, utilizing exaggeration as a tool to enable critique, whether it pertains to physical attributes or the misconduct and malpractices of figures in positions of political or religious authority. These methods of caricaturing can be viewed as 'political' action because they aim to shape public perception by employing a range of innovative tactics, imaginative approaches, cultural references, and psychological strategies to simplify events for easier understanding from a particular perspective. Among them, in innovative strategies, caricaturists often use unique and creative techniques to emphasize specific aspects of a political situation or individual, making their representation memorable and thought-provoking.

The latter analytical chapters focus on the efforts political cartoonists make to provide a consistent representation of politicians. Cartoonists' conceptions of politicians' facial features display how they progress from a generalized appearance to an angular caricature that may be superimposed over their chosen humor vehicle.

Exaggeration in Concept

In order to apprehend the functionality of political cartoons as a genre, it is imperative to highlight the composite nature of said form, which is essentially

comprised of two distinct constituents. The initial element comprises caricature, while the subsequent element entails the employment of allusion in reference to the situation or context in which the individual is situated. The basic assumption is that the subject of the cartoon and the background under discussion are widely known to the audience[29]. In an alternate expression, the individuals portrayed in the cartoons are situated within a discernible political or social circumstance. The caricature will parody the public figures, and the allusion refers the viewer to the context. As a result, political cartoons exaggerate the characteristics of particular persons and demonstrate that their inner nature, along with their behaviors, makes satire.

In doing so, cartoonists commonly and constantly overdo, overstate, or distort objects' sizes, dimensions, perspectives, and positions in cartoons, which often results in a humorous situation and, ultimately, conveys a message. In caricature, as mentioned before, utilizing exaggeration on the parts of the face or body of the subject makes a point, but inside the cartoon, this technique is employed in the concepts (Figures 1.11 and 1.12). Exaggeration in the way of thinking and mental nature of the subject is known and emphasized as a permanent part of the cartoon. By overstating something, the cartoonist reveals to the reader how ridiculous it is. It is important to know that the issue is deeper and more profound than physical and apparent exaggerations, and that this artistic technique is a way to attain a greater objective and convey a rich concept and idea.

In her study, Andrea Greenbaum (2015) explores the role of visual exaggerations in representing and shaping perceptions of war and conflict. She argues that visual exaggerations, such as those found in political cartoons and media imagery, can be a powerful tool in shaping and manipulation public discourse and serve several purposes, comprising firstly simplification, in which exaggerations help simplify complex situations, making them more understandable and relatable for the general public, secondly emotional appeal: by amplifying

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[29] Some editorial (political) cartoons have local and domestic functionality because they use phrases, idioms, or technical or legal terms that might not be understandable for readers from other countries.

certain aspects, visual exaggerations evoke strong emotions, such as fear, anger, or sympathy, which can influence public opinion and support for specific political positions or actions. The next aspect is normalization, meaning that over time, the repetition of visual hyperboles can lead to their acceptance as a norm, shaping how people perceive and respond to war and conflict. Lastly, "reinforcing cultural narratives": Visual exaggerations often align with and reinforce existing cultural narratives and beliefs about war, further shaping public perception and understanding (Greenbaum, 2015, p. 9).

In the 2001 study titled "Hyperbole," Plett highlights the notion that this rhetorical device involves semantic figures of exaggeration or overstatement. These figures of speech intentionally surpass the truth and reality of things, serving to amplify the impact of the message being conveyed, evoking emotions, or create a more vivid image in the audience's mind. The study emphasizes that hyperbole goes beyond the literal truth to make a more compelling and memorable statement (2001, p. 364). The inclusion of hyperbole within the realm of verbal irony and humor is a result of its conceptual intersections with metonyms and metaphors, complicating its categorization as a separate entity. The research conducted by El Refaie (2005) provides valuable insight into the subject matter at hand and, agreeing with the aforementioned approach, asserts that hyperbole serves as a rare and "universal [visual marker]" that warrants examination across various modes of humor (p. 788).

According to inquiry conducted by Kennedy, Green, and Vervaeke (1993), a significant level of "distortion of proportion" is essential for exaggeration, as noted on page 253 of their research. However, the hyperbolic characteristics observed in political cartoons are not solely a result of distortion. Additionally, the alignment of these cartoons with visual representations is not driven by political necessity or a sense of public duty. The present thesis aligns with Greenbaum's proposition that the hyperbolic characteristics of the images result from their reproduction as facsimiles, "semantically shifting events from public spaces of documentation towards humor" (Greenbaum, 2015). The analysis of political cartoons in future

case studies in this study seeks to reveal how these cartoons utilize hyperbole as a means to minimize the significance of events within a broader context that encompasses global and economic realities.

Protagonist

The choice of protagonist is a crucial word-image device in narrative construction within visual imagery, as it provides the audience with a clear understanding of the central characters and main actors involved in a specific issue or depicted situation. By carefully selecting the protagonist, the creator establishes a connection between the audience and the story's core figures, guiding their emotional response and shaping their perception of the narrative. This essential device helps to convey the story's essence and engage the viewers, making the narrative more impactful and memorable. In their artworks, cartoonists define prominent figures with a certain look based on appearance and features. Once assigned, this manifestation tends to endure, necessitating further elaboration and qualification. The protagonist should be highlighted in comparison with other visual elements in the frame.

When a protagonist needs to be associated with extra interests or organizations, incorporating universally recognizable symbols like logos, flags, or signs close to or on their persona can effectively convey these affiliations. This integration helps the audience quickly understand the character's connections and allegiances, enhancing their perception of the character and story. By visually representing these associations, the narrative becomes more engaging and easier to follow. By using or emphasizing physical and behavioral characteristics, contemporary cartoonists strive to create a stable protagonist visage of politicians in the media. Their struggle is to progress from showing a merely distorted appearance to an angular caricature through their chosen humor vehicle.

The research conducted by Forceville, El Refaie, and Meesters (2014, pp. 491-492) delves into the employment of framing and angling techniques in visual creation as a viable means for image makers to prompt audience alignment and

allegiance towards a particular protagonist when pitting characters against one another. In Murray Smith's study (1995), the concept of "spatial attachment" refers to the emotional connection and identification that viewers develop with a character based on their physical presence and movement within the film's space. This concept highlights how the audience perceives and interacts with the characters' spatial relationships in the narrative, which can influence their emotional engagement and empathy. Spatial attachment helps to understand how the visual aspects of cinema, such as camera angles, framing, and character placement, contribute to the audience's emotional involvement and understanding of the story (Smith, 1995, p. 142).

The factor of distance, as discussed by scholars like Kress and van Leeuwen ([1996] 2006), plays a significant role in analyzing the relationships between protagonists depicted in visual representations. The depiction of emotional bonds between protagonists can be effectively conveyed using close-up camera angles, while positioning characters in the middle of the frame may arise a sense of detachment, separation, and connote lack of relationships between protagonists. Images that incorporate broader perspectives beyond the mid-ground postulate impersonal or nonexistent associations among the individuals who are identifiable within them. Subsequent examination in the next chapters will **explicate** the manner in which editorial cartoonists wield a combination of varying distance parameters to effectively demonstrate a diverse assortment of protagonist relationships.

The deployment of eye contact is a noticeable technique used by cartoonists to establish a visual mode of communication with audiences, resulting in a wide range of verbal connotations and meanings. Forceville, El Refaie and Meesters (2014, ibid.) profile how protagonists who are shown gazing directly at the audience can be interpreted as seeking a response from them. Conversely, the absence of eye contact encourages a more in-depth examination and an objective evaluation. The authors propose a hypothesis that perspective can institutionalize

power relations between the protagonist and the audience. The specific viewpoint angle determines the extent of control exerted by each party.

In accordance with the ideas put forward by Cumming (2009, pp. 26, 29), it can be inferred that there are certain factors that influence the outcome of protagonist-audience power relations. He provides an account of the various types of polarized visuals that may manifest, spanning from the full frontal, which signals the most unequivocal form of reciprocity, analogous to a protagonist delivering a direct message, to the profile, which entirely severs the detachment of the subject from the viewers, necessitating them to engage in an analysis from a third-person perspective.

Size represents a crucial determinant of the protagonist's potential dominance within a given environment. Employing the exaggeration technique, a discernible difference in size, such as height or weight, amongst two or more actors could be indicative of an unequal power dynamic, wherein the larger (or bigger) of the parties typically assumes a dominant role over the smaller. The power dynamic can extend beyond an interpersonal relationship involving only two people.   It can also be conceptualized within two distinct groups or amidst varying social strata.   As mentioned before, exaggeration in the size of objects is another tool at cartoonists' disposal.

Age is also regarded as a pivotal indicator of the protagonist's qualities. The representation of advanced age is commonly associated with the attributes of fragility, debility, and cognitive decline among depicted characters. Stating an individual's age as being too young denotes a lack of maturity, an absence of prior exposure, and an inclination towards relying on parental figures for nourishment and attention. The concept of age is not limited to individuals; it extends to architectural structures as well. New and impeccably crafted buildings commonly code for pioneering technologies and advancements, while worn-out, dilapidated ruins signify antiquated and defective entities or organizations.

Personification

The present discourse surrounding political cartoon narratives identifies various visual and rhetorical tools employed to elicit communicative engagement. In this vein, cartoonists employ personification techniques to bridge communicative gaps and actualize abstract concepts with humoristic and metaphoric touch. Personification is the attribution of anthropomorphic form, traits, and characteristics to inanimate objects and intangible entities, whereby abstract concepts, including nations, emotions, and natural phenomena such as weather and seasons, are endowed with human-like attributes.

Personification is frequently employed in both poetry and prose to elicit emotional reactions or to construct vivid visual representations. "*The clouds weep*," "*The wind howled*," "*Justice is blind*" are literary examples of personification. Describing the wind as "whispering through the trees" or "angry waves" give a human-like action or emotion to natural forces. In a poem, one may encounter a phrase such as "*The night wrapped its arms around the city*," wherein "night" is attributed with the human action of "wrapping," yet this does not suggest that night possesses human intentions or awareness. Cartoonists by giving non-human things or inanimate items human traits can create interesting characters and convey critical ideas in an engaging and entertaining manner that resonates with a wider audience.

Attardo and Raskin (1996), two prominent scholars in the field of humor studies, have provided insights into the roots of the success of personification as a technique. The success of this technique is rooted in the use of displacement to create the desired level of incongruity. According to Attardo and Raskin's Incongruity-Resolution Theory (refer to Section 3.3.1: Humor, General Theory of Verbal Humor), humor arises from the cognitive processing of an incongruous (unexpected or contradictory) situation, which eventually leads to a resolution. Personification, as a technique, creates incongruity by attributing human qualities to non-human objects or abstract concepts. This unexpected juxtaposition can be

amusing or thought-provoking, engaging the audience and making the content more memorable (Attardo & Raskin, 1996, pp. 293-347).

On a global scale, Russia is commonly depicted as a huge brown bear, symbolizing its power, dominant geopolitical position, and potential for menace (Figure 1.13). Personification may involve the ascription of personality traits or even a persona to non-living or abstract entities, including states and institutions. An illustrative example can be seen in the representation of the United States of America as Uncle Sam, which is abundantly used in political cartoons in the United States (Figure 1.14). Additionally, Columbia, the female personification of the United States portrayed in Figure 1.9 was utilized as a symbol of the burgeoning nation during the 19th century. This idealized depiction, which was common and popular before Lady Liberty and Uncle Sam, served as a feminine embodiment of the United States.

Personifications frequently derive from the folklore or mythology surrounding a particular subject, such as the Chinese dragon. However, some may simply be unambiguous personifications of modern origin, such as a depiction of a drowning euro symbol equipped with a swim belt. This observation implies that personification can either draw upon classic cultural depictions or emerge from contemporary contexts.

Benjamin Barker (2016, p. 159) articulates that personification can be understood as serving various communicative purposes. These include clarifying certain imagery to enhance the persuasive efficacy of a given argument; enriching visual representations by illustrating potential conceptualizations; and introducing fictional characters whose prominent presence serves to communicate a message with greater impact or emphasis. Personification is evident in various perceptual domains, encompassing sensory and spiritual, physical and non-physical, as well as tangible and intangible aspects. Furthermore, this artistic and literary device adeptly manages the multitude of information, viewpoints, and convictions associated with a specific subject. Another example of personification is

represented in Figure 1.41, where an inanimate object (TV) is attributed with the human behavior of talking.

The utilization of personification in political cartoons endows the cartoonists with the ability to influence and convince their viewers that the central character depicted in the visual is making a direct address or engaged in conversational discourse with other figures within the frame. This technique not only facilitates the process of documenting events and situations through illustrations but also allows for the objectification of social groups and institutions as well as the visualization of their underlying motivating factors. Personification, when used to objectify social groups or institutions, involves attributing human characteristics to these entities in a way that reinforces negative stereotypes, reduces them to simplistic representations, or diminishes their complexity.

Personification can facilitate the objectification of social groups and institutions by simplifying complex issues, reinforcing negative stereotypes, and dehumanizing the entities involved. It is crucial to be aware of these potential consequences and use personification responsibly to avoid perpetuating negative attitudes and injustices.

According to Groensteen (2001), personification represents a fleeting channel for the revision and assimilation of constantly evolving ideas, achieved through the mechanism of visual "braiding" [30]. He argued that braiding is a structural technique used by comic artists to interweave multiple visual and narrative threads into a coherent and complex whole. According to Groensteen, this technique creates a network of relationships and connections between different elements within the comic, enhancing the storytelling and visual experience for the reader. As a demonstrative instance of the visual "braiding" as explored in Barker's research (2016, p. 161), it is observed that the representation of Britain's financial deficit is skillfully interwoven with various visual images by political cartoonists.

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[30] The main assertion of his research was that visual braiding could potentially enhance human perception and cognition by integrating multiple visual streams into a unified representation. This idea suggests that our brain processes and interprets visual information more effectively when it's presented in a braided or interwoven manner, leading to improved understanding and problem-solving abilities.

Some of them portrayed this deficit as an elephant and as a dragon. Notably, in the two cartoons on the right, the transitory nature of personification is exemplified by a rapid shapeshifting from a meteor to a sea monster within a short period of time (Figure 1.15).

Anthropomorphism

As defined personification is the related attribution of human qualities to abstract concepts in a metaphorical[31] and representative way. On the other hand, anthropomorphism is an innate tendency of human psychology in which non-human things such as deities, inanimate objects, and especially animals, display literal human traits, emotions, or intentions and are capable of human behaviors such as thinking, talking, walking, eating, and drinking.

But what is the difference between these two practices? Anthropomorphism and personification are both literary devices that involve attributing human characteristics to non-human entities, but they are used in slightly different contexts and serve different purposes. Anthropomorphism often involves ascribing full human characteristics, behaviors, or motivations to these entities, making them act as if they are human. Personification is a broader literary device that gives human qualities to abstract concepts or non-human entities. It generally involves describing non-human entities in human terms. However, the key distinction is that personification does not necessarily imply that these entities are behaving as if they were humans. In the phrase "*The night wrapped its arms around the city*," night is given the human action of "wrapping" but does not imply that night has human motivations or consciousness. Moreover, anthropomorphism is commonly found in fables, fairy tales, and children's literature, used to create relatable characters or to convey moral lessons, while personification is often used in poetry and prose to evoke emotional responses or create vivid imagery. Also, anthropomorphism and personification differ in scope. Anthropomorphism often suggests a more comprehensive integration of human characteristics into the non-human entity,

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[31] For example, we could make a metaphoric conceptualization phrase "Russia is a bear". It will be scrutinized as a rhetorical device in Chapter 3.

sometimes creating characters as complex as humans. Personification typically involves a more limited attribution of human traits, often for rhetorical or descriptive effect.

Overall, while both anthropomorphism and personification involve giving human qualities to non-human entities, anthropomorphism implies a fuller human-like behavior and personality, whereas personification is more about descriptive representation. Both possess origins dating back to ancient times as storytelling and aesthetic instruments. Numerous cultures possess customary fables that feature characters depicted as anthropomorphized animals. It is commonplace for individuals to regularly impute human emotions and behavioral characteristics to both domesticated and untamed animals.

The most tangible example of anthropomorphism is in animated movies, where animals talk, eat, and generally behave like humans. The objective of this approach is to facilitate the development of richly drawn, imaginative characters that resonate with readers by imbuing them with a greater sense of humanity. One illustrative instance comprises the objects in the classic animated movie" Beauty and the Beast", such as the teapot and candelabra.

The deployment of anthropomorphic objects or animals enhances the aesthetic appeal of the narrative while also alleviating any potential apprehension or unease among the audience. As an example, related to the theme of this thesis, in the U.S. and British editorial contexts, people working in the banking industry are portrayed like fat cats and pigs (Figures 1.16 and 1.17).

Anthropomorphism, as opposed to personification, has been identified as a purposeful distortion of reality to serve the narrative demands of a story. This thesis delves into the intricacies of how illustrators use creative mechanisms to convey meaningful ideas through their protagonists, going beyond superficial human aesthetics. In furtherance of this objective, the Oxford English Dictionary's (2016) definition of anthropomorphism as the ascription of human form or character to a god, animal, or inanimate object serves as a means to center the concept on its typical application in the context of editorial cartoons.

In his work, Herzog (2011) expounds on the inherent tendency of humans to anthropomorphize, thereby attributing human characteristics to non-human entities. This tendency is deeply rooted in the human mind and shows up in many ways, such as through language, art, and writing. Humanity is influenced by cultural conditioning with respect to adopting anthropomorphic attributes. The above-mentioned processes manifest as a result of our inherent anthropocentric tendencies regarding the natural world, which are propelled by the utilization of literary and visual mechanisms from a young age. Collectively, these phenomena result in the construction of cognitive frameworks that facilitate the human capacity to infer the mental states and emotions of other organisms through the observation of their actions. The practice of individual **"preloading"** traits has been widely adopted by both illustrators and writers as a time-saving technique. This allows viewers to quickly grasp a character's personality without the need for extensive textual descriptions. In the context of political cartoons, it eliminates the necessity for additional space within the frame or supplementary graphical elements to elucidate their motivations, emotions, or characteristics.

Anthropomorphic motifs have been common in fables (e.g., talking animals in Aesop's Fables), fairy tales, and children's literature from the earliest ancient examples set in a mythological context to modern literature as well as in visual genres like comic books, animation movies, and editorial cartoons. Prominent works in the genre of children's literature utilize anthropomorphic characters as substitutes for human beings, thereby facilitating the concealment of educative messages through the veneer of humor and amusement. Prominent illustrations encompass characters dwelling in a human environment or engaging in interpersonal exchanges imbued with humanistic qualities such as cultural, political, or religious inclinations.

The emergence of children's literature was consolidated through works that capitalized on the widespread popularity of fables and fairy tales. Examples of such works include Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) (Figure 1.18), authored by Lewis Carroll, and The Adventures of Pinocchio (1883), by Carlo

Collodi. A notable example in the political context is 1945's George Orwell's "Animal Farm," in which the animals are granted with anthropomorphic characteristics, including the capacity for verbal communication, cognitive reasoning, and plotting, which functions as a critique of human societal structures.

"The Battle of the Moneybags and the Strongboxes, or The Fight Over Money" (Figure 1.19), is a painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, created around 1570. This artwork depicts an anthropomorphic chaotic scene where people are engaged in a fierce battle over money and strongboxes, symbolizing the greed and conflicts that arise from the pursuit of wealth. In this painting, the moneybags and strongboxes are depicted as human-like characters engaged in a battle, which is an anthropomorphic representation. The painting showcases a blend of humor and social commentary, reflecting the societal issues of the time. Bruegel's mastery in capturing the human condition and his unique storytelling through visual elements make this artwork a significant piece in the history of art.

In the realm of editorial and political cartooning, a prevalent technique involves utilizing non-human entities, such as animals and objects, as substitutes for human subjects in the conveyance of visual commentaries. The analysis of surrealist cartoons featured in Gary Larson's Far Side series[32] is a subject exemplified by Minahen (1998, pp. 233-235).

Zoomorphism

When discussing anthropomorphism, scholars face particular challenges. If human characteristics can be attributed to objects and animals, the logical presumption that humans also have the ability to exhibit animalistic physical or mental states must be established. In such an understanding, the anthropomorphic form, in addition to the generalized application discussed in the previous section, could be utilized in a more intricate and profound manner that addresses "how something or someone deals with, or is represented in, animal forms" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016), which is alluded to as zoomorphism.

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[32] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Far_Side

An outstanding example within the domain of literature is the character Sirius, manifested in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, who transforms from a human to a dog. The concept of zoomorphism is conspicuously present in contemporary pop culture. This phenomenon is perhaps exemplified most notably by the prevalence of anthropomorphic characters in recent box office hits. Indeed, individuals with extraordinary abilities are often regarded as superheroes. Comic book authors derive immense joy from the task of creatively developing human characters that possess attributes that are associated with animals. The titles, such as "Spiderman" and "CAT woman," are clearly indicative of the technique.

In the work of Carrera (2015, p. 100), the author posits that the technique of anthropomorphism as a means of evincing the illustrator's intention to elicit empathy from the audience towards the object of his representation. On the other hand, it is contended by the author that the employment of zoomorphism has the potential to cultivate a perspective of superiority through the degradation of the depicted person. She demonstrates a marked contrast between the positioning cues employed by each tec hnique. The application of generic anthropomorphism tends to cause cognitive disorientation among audiences as it prompts them to adopt an unfamiliar mindset, while zoomorphism, being a more targeted approach, aims to undermine the integrity of a central character, thus enabling viewers to experience a sense of superiority. Within the same line of thought, the utilization of zoomorphic form allows for a more comprehensive examination of the complexities involved in the existence of animals and their relevance to human experience, as opposed to the rudimentary identification provided by anthropomorphic objects. This approach allows for the recognition of the pervasiveness of animality in the human condition and its surroundings.

In the context of political cartoons, zoomorphism can be regarded as a common practical mechanism whereby animalistic qualities are attributed to political figures, which, in addition to enhancing the form's aesthetic appeal and

comprehensibility, grants cartoonists a superiority stance and the power to harshly criticize (Figure 1.45).

One of the most excellent examples of the deployment of animals in political cartoons belongs to John Samuel Pughe (1870–1909), a prominent American political cartoonist, best known for his illustrations for Puck magazine, who frequently attributed politicians and *Greek gods* the characteristics of animals (Figures 1.20- 1.22).

Figure 1.23 demonstrates a controversial cartoon employing zoomorphism, depicting Donald Trump, who appeared to be visually impaired, and wearing a traditional Jewish kippah, while being guided by the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, as a guide dog and wearing a Star of David around his neck. After the publication of this cartoon in April 2019 in the international editions of the New York Times, rendered by António Moreira Antunes, a Portuguese cartoonist, the image was met with widespread outrage and denunciation for its allegedly perceived anti-Semitic undertones. The New York Times subsequently issued a comprehensive expression of contrition and declared its intention to discontinue the publication of all political cartoons (Lohr, 2019).

It is important to acknowledge the impact of various degrees of visual modulation employed by cartoonists on the audience's perception of a zoomorphic representation. Carrera (2015, p. 83) explores the use of transmorphic techniques in humor, which involves transforming or blending human and non-human characteristics to create humorous effects. Her statement[33] highlights the subjective nature of transmorphic humor and how different individuals may perceive the same image or character in different ways. Transmorphic techniques can be applied in various forms of art, literature, and popular culture, such as cartoons, comics, and satirical illustrations. These techniques often rely on the audience's ability to recognize the blending of human and non-human features, which can lead to amusement, laughter, or even a sense of familiarity.

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[33] "What one reader sees as a deformed human, another may see as a humanized animal." (2015, p. 83)

For example, a character with a human body and an animal head might be seen as humorous or amusing by some people, while others might perceive it as a deformed human. The humor in such cases often stems from the unexpected or unusual combination of features, which challenges the viewer's perception and expectations. Carrera's study emphasizes that transmorphic techniques can be effective humor devices when they successfully create a sense of ambiguity or uncertainty in the audience's mind. This ambiguity can lead to laughter, as the viewer tries to make sense of the unusual combination of human and non-human traits (Carrera, 2015, p. 83).

At long last, to avoid confusion, recapitulate, and bring this section to a close, personification gives inanimate objects (mostly abstract concepts) human characteristics — having human emotions or feelings; anthropomorphism is a technique that includes giving human qualities to animals or objects — talking, thinking, or behaving like humans. Zoomorphism constitutes the antithesis of anthropomorphism by ascribing animalistic traits and psychological states to the human psyche.

Composition - Positioning

Another creative technique wielded by cartoonists pertains to composition and positioning in the creation of imagery, which functions within the artistic and formatting spheres. Owing to the fact that the cartoonist works with a multiplicity of images and texts, it is incumbent upon the cartoonist to effectively arrange these elements in order to effectively communicate their intended message to the reader.

The positioning and posturing of protagonists in relation to one another, as well as their level of participation (or lack of involvement) in shared activities, offer insights into the nature of their interpersonal relationship. Placing a subject (or person) at the focal point of an image or within the 'thirds'[34] of the frame, which is called 'sweet spots' by Daniela Chalaniova (2011, p. 7), connotes an eye-catching quality of the subject as well as its heightened significance in relation to

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[34] A golden rule of photography composition adapted from classic art is to divide the image into thirds and compose along these imaginary lines. Placing a person on the imagined line marking a 'third' would make the composition easier on the eyes than if the subject is placed directly in the center.

the other individuals who do not occupy the strategic and aesthetically appealing locations within the composition. The presence of a physical barrier, such as a fence, a significant distance, or a highly contrasting backdrop in terms of tones, is indicative of a sense of competition and disharmony. Conversely, the sharing of a common space signifies the companionship and interdependence of individuals within a given social or cultural context.

In their 1996 study, Kress and van Leeuwen aim to categorize the composition in visual design into a set of interconnected systems. They believe that visual images, like language, follow a specific structure or grammar that allows us to understand and interpret them effectively. To achieve this categorization, Kress and van Leeuwen identify several interconnected systems within visual design, including the elaborated vs. reduced system, the filtered vs. the framed system, the centered vs. the marginalized system, the balanced vs. the asymmetrical system, the closed vs. the open system, and the unified vs. the segmented system (Kress & Leeuwen, [1996] 2006).

As earlier discussed about "Protagonist," framing and angling techniques are a feasible means for image makers to prompt audience alignment and allegiance towards the protagonist when pitting characters against one another. The concept of "spatial attachment," introduced by Murray Smith (1995), refers to the emotional connection viewers form with characters based on their spatial relationship within the film's setting. This concept explores how the physical proximity of characters in relation to each other and their environment can influence viewers' emotional engagement with the narrative. By studying how characters interact and inhabit the film's space, Smith delves into how spatial arrangements can evoke specific emotions and shape viewers' perceptions of the story and characters.

The research conducted by Forceville, El Refaie, and Meesters (2014, pp. 491-492) delves into the employment of framing and angling techniques in visual creation as a viable means for image makers to prompt audience alignment and

allegiance towards a particular protagonist when pitting characters against one another.

Forceville, El Refaie, and Meesters (2014, pp. 487-489) declare that the techniques of composing and positioning content within the formatting field may bear similarities to those employed in constructing a paragraph or sentence in prose. The authors emphasize the customary means of displaying visuals through the use of panels that are quadrilateral in shape, the dimensions of which are at the discretion of the editors, accompanied with captions, and encircled by linear, black boundaries. A variance observed in one or more of the above-mentioned parameters may indicate a potential alteration in the intended interpretations of meaning. This assertion has been articulated by Eisner (1985, pp. 44-50). There has been a suggestion that the incorporation of cloud-like or wavy lines in a visual representation can serve as an indication of a dream sequence or flashback within the narrative.

Stereotype and Cliché

Stereotypes are oversimplified and predictable characteristics that are commonly associated with a particular subject within prevailing cultural beliefs. Stereotypes persist as contemporary myths within a population despite their lack of factual basis and could stick like glue to the mental mindset.

In other words, stereotypes and clichés are conventional, formulaic image, opinion or conception (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2000)— a possibly misrepresented or prejudiced representation of a person or group. Moreover, may be characterized as styles of picturing a person or a group of people that call to minds of audiences, who generally hold ideas or prejudices about the type of person pictured. Without easy-to-interpret clichés, cartoons require much more exact paragraphs of text and additional drawings to express information. Stereotypes, taking into consideration racial, ethnic or religious affiliations, physical characteristics, social class, profession, and also economic status such as clothing, represent nations or specific groups of people.

A widely recognized and accepted example of a stereotype pertains to females with blonde hair, positing that those with platinum blonde hair are physically attractive but lack high intelligence and harbor a tendency toward absurd and materialistic aspirations (Chalaniova, 2011, p. 6). It is a widely practiced convention among cartoonists to employ stereotypes as a means of portraying particular bunches of individuals in a recognizable manner, thereby facilitating the audience's quick comprehension of the cartoon's desired message.

As mentioned before, the artistic tools and visualizing strategies at the cartoonists' disposal often overlap. To clarify, figures 1.3–1.17, which demonstrate the technique of personification, could also be considered an act of visual stereotyping. A big angry bear is a cliché of Russia (Figure 1.13), and fat cats and pigs are clichés depicting corrupt bankers (Figures 1.16 and 1.17). Uncle Sam, personifying the United States of America (Figure 1.14), could be considered a cliché of the U.S.

Figure 1.23, employing zoomorphism to attribute animal quality to a politician (Netanyahu), could be considered as a cliché that asserts that Jews control global politics. The clarity of the underlying theory is epitomized through the conspicuous display of the Star of David on Netanyahu's neck, coupled with the subservient attitude demonstrated by Trump. President Trump, despite not being of Jewish descent, is depicted in the aforementioned image as a Jewish individual, thereby alluding to the notion that Jews surreptitiously manipulate the world through their exertion of political control. Furthermore, Netanyahu is depicted in the context of derogatory anti-Semitic imagery as a dog, an insensitive portrayal of the Jewish community as subhuman and inferior.

The depicted images in Figure 1.24 embody a stereotypical portrayal of a wealthy and powerful individual, often considered "undeserved" for possessing a political or economic position. It features a rotund, mature man dressed in a pinstriped suit holding or puffing on a thick cigar, commonly correlated with bankers, high-earning executives, or "captains of industry." Figure 1.25, illustrated by the author, is a visual stereotyping of teachers and professors: clothing in an

old-fashioned style, wearing glasses, carrying books, and often having a hunchback.

Here are some specific examples of how clichés can be wielded in political cartoons: "Politician as Villain," "Fat Cat (pig) Banker," "a political system as spinning out of control," "Conglomerate as a greedy giant," "Media as Manipulator," "Bureaucracy as Inefficient," "Dangerous Foreign Threat (cold war mentality)," "Environmentalism as Hippie." For example, a political cartoon may employ the "snake oil salesman" trope, and instead of depicting an individual as someone who connives to obtain money from people, it illustrates a politician as a polished, unreliable vendor disseminating illusory promises or ineffectual solutions. This cliché can be adapted as the "contemporary snake oil salesman" subsequent to the exploitation of thousands of online consumers.

Moreover, in the third chapter, as the parody is addressed, a list of stereotypical personas is presented. These personas can be utilized to depict a character archetype or situation that is exaggerated or satirized for humorous purposes. By creatively incorporating clichés with parody, political cartoonists can transcend traditional boundaries and challenge the audience's expectations and preconceived notions (Section 3.3.3: Secondary Parody). Herein are several examples whereby clichés may be combined with parody and employed within the realm of political cartoons:

For example, depicting a politician, parodying a superhero's actions but in a clumsy and incompetent manner, will highlight the flaws of political leadership. In this way, a cartoon may portray a controversial governor as a confused puppy, a corrupt politician as a foolish clown, or a tyrannical leader as an illiterate and unaware kid. Following the "Celebrity as Savior" cliché, portraying a celebrity as an egocentric, privileged individual, thereby critiquing the cult of celebrity and questioning the notion that all celebrities possess the capacity to solve societal issues.

In a cartoon that aims to parody the "Technology as Solution" cliché, it might be shown as a destructive, detrimental, or even worthless phenomenon. This

would undermine the notion that technical advancement is always beneficial and mock the notion that technology can fix any issue. The parodic interpretation of the "Consumerism as Happiness" cliché suggests that consumerism is portrayed as a catalyst for unhappiness, discontent, or even detrimental effects, thereby satirizing the prevailing consumer culture and contesting the notion that material acquisitions serve as the fundamental pathway to achieving happiness.

Another example would be a cartoon that portrays members of the younger generation as entitled, indifferent, or even dangerous; examples include a young activist shown as a self-centered influencer or a student leader as an ignorant politician. This is a spoof of the cliché surrounding "Young People as Future Leaders." Or consider another cartoon that shows a news anchor as an unskilled presenter, a journalist as an idealistic naivete, or a news network as a brave defender of the truth, all parodying the cliché of the "Influential Media." It challenges the notion that all media outlets are equally biased and parodies the function of the media in society by portraying it as a naive or even heroic force. Overall, by creatively combining these clichés with irony and other satirical elements, cartoonists can successfully convey their ideas and encourage critical thinking among their audience.

It is important to stress that, owing to the fact that stereotypes are based on a set of assumptions and preconceived notions and attribute certain characteristics to a group of people, the cartoonist must be careful when using them so as not to fall prey to racist prejudices. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, ethnic humiliation was a persistent and frequently depicted subject in editorial cartoons within the United States (The Opper Project). Certain despising images depicted in historical editorial cartoons are deemed offensive and unseemly. The historical existence of racial and ethnic stereotypes is a topic that lacks any sense of pride, and this era of prejudice is well documented by editorial cartoons.

Steven Heller outlines that racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes propagated by designers and illustrators are visual expressions that are condensed, tweet-like image shorthand. Upon an examination of the historical context surrounding

Jewish ethno-stereotypes, he posited that the Jewish community has been subject to a persistent portrayal as the "Victims of the Image" (Figures 1.26 and 1.27).

Expressions of crude humor that target specific ethnicities and immigrants are deemed unacceptable and incomprehensible, as perceived by contemporary readers. Fortunately, most of these **misrepresentations** have evaporated but some, such as Jewish ethno-stereotypes, continue to persist. In the modern media space, there exists a growing expectation amongst audiences for cartoonists to undertake a more salient role in the cultivation of public awareness surrounding the virtues of religious tolerance, respect for divergent ethnicities and races, and opposition to all forms of discrimination on account of gender, race, complexion, and socioeconomic standing.

Cartoonists should utilize their credit and influence, not to reinforce racial stereotypes or inflame passions, but to promote reconciliation, compromise, and peace. They are supposed to use stereotypes as part of visual shorthand to communicate complicated ideas, show conflicts, mock intended subjects, and transmit the desired message quickly and effectively. Moreover, they should employ clichés but make people think beyond the clichés that the system has instilled in their minds.

Colors and Pictograms

The ultimate device examined in detail in this part is relevant to the artistic techniques utilized by image producers in order to portray widely accepted meanings. Cartoons in traditional print media are being sketched in monochrome form, with the utilization of solely black and white hues. However, in the present era, with the advent of digital tools with extensive coloring facilities, ease of editing, and color correction, the employment of color has flourished as a dominant feature in this medium.

Sonnier and Dow (2001) explore how incorporating the use of color can serve as a catalyst for evoking visual associations with sensory experiences, thereby propelling audiences towards idealized reactions to specific images[35].

The emotional and psychological attributes inherent in each color have been observed through long-term social practice, leading individuals to develop an intuitive sense of color. Although colors lack inherent emotions, they can evoke specific moods or sublimate particular emotions in various contexts, consequently affording them emotional associations over time. Specific colors evoke a wide range of emotional associations. So called 'warm' colors such as red and orange are associated with home and comfort, whereas others, such as blue, suggest detachment and loneliness. Green is renowned for being the most calming hue found in nature, imparting a feeling of liveliness, juvenescence, and serenity. Black, on the other hand, is associated with night, death, and things sinister. White could be evoking a feeling of innocence. Red color exhibits both an inviting and cozy ambiance; however, in other depicted situations, it may also incite feelings of aggression or anger, as demonstrated in bullfighting.

Cartoonists skillfully employ a combination of cool and warm colors to suggest the underlying psychology of characters and advance the plot, with these factors invariably exerting a latent impact on our emotional disposition. The utilization of a diverse array of colors by political cartoonists is indicative of their aptitude to inject greater subtlety into the conveyed messages, thereby inviting the audience to form their opinions based on fleeting glances in the shortest possible time. Though an evaluation of color utilization will be conducted on the research corpus, it is imperative to take into consideration the admonitions imparted by Chalaniova (2011, p. 8) Opposing the adoption of a fixed understanding of colors, such observations demonstrate the potential for diverse reactions among audiences based on cultural, gender, and age-related factors.

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[35] Palmer and Schloss's (2010) research highlights that during cognitive development, individuals' color preferences are standardized, instinctive, and "hardwired." This means that individuals tend to have inherent, natural inclinations towards specific colors as they grow and develop cognitively. These preferences are thought to be an integral part of human perception and may influence how viewers respond to visual content.

The expressive function of color within visual media has a profound impact on the shaping of character development, including the hinting of the character's psychology, the expression of emotional states, the creation of scenes and situations, and the establishment of atmosphere across various angles and shots. Color serves as a means to convey the emotional state of characters and effectively describe the atmosphere of a given situation. The sorrowful and miserable ambiance is commonly engendered by the frigid, colorless, and gloomy tonality, whereas the sprightly and lively scenery is frequently accentuated by the fresh tone of green, symbolizing vitality, and the azure hue of blue, alluding to the expansive sky.

When talking about how a character's emotions change, it is very important to change how color schemes are used to match those changes. This can be done by changing the way colors are put together, the strength and contrast of the colors, or the way the colors are arranged within the frame. These changes make it easier to understand how the character is feeling and how their emotions are changing. A change in color can indicate that the main character's mood has shifted. For example, a cartoonist might use red to color a character's face to show him getting angry.

Forceville, El Refaie, and Meesters (2014, pp. 492-493) give an interesting example in their analysis of Asterix comics, where they observe that alterations in colors within speech bubbles can signify changes in the main character's emotional state. In this case, they point out that the transition from angry to remorseful emotions is indicated by the color shifts in the speech bubbles, showcasing the role of colors in conveying emotional nuances in the comic series (Figure 1.28).

The purposeful utilization of color, NOT within the entire space of the frame but coloring only a distinct section, particular person, or certain object among the existing different characters and objects in the tableau, can effectively focus the attention of viewers on the central subject matter (Figures 1.29 and 1.30).

Although cartoonists utilize an arsenal of colors to enhance the clarity and depth of their messages by employing contrast and emphasis, setting mood and

atmosphere, and characterizing, it is crucial to consider the acceptance of a fixed interpretation of colors. The audience reactions can differ significantly depending on cultural backgrounds, gender, and age groups. This highlights the importance of being aware of and sensitive to these variations when communicating through colors or visual elements.

Emanata

In contrast, while cartoonists use a diverse range of colors for nuanced messaging, pictograms offer a more stable and universally understood visual language. Emanata (only in plural form), also known as Emanations, are unrealistic pictorial elements as a form of visual communication that uses symbols, signs, and other graphical elements to convey emotions, ideas, sounds, or concepts like smells. Emanata often emanate from a character that represents what's going on in the character's head or from an object like heat rays from a hot cup of tea, dish food, or the sun. They are simplified and easily recognizable, making them effective tools for expressing complex ideas or feelings concisely.

Emanata can be found in various forms of art, design, and communication, such as pictograms, ideograms, emojis, and even some aspects of body language. Emanata can be creatively deployed to clarify something about that character and depict the psychological condition of the protagonists in various ways. For instance, the depiction of sweat drops emerging from a character's head is often employed to convey feelings of anxiety, heat (Figure 1.31), fatigue or exhaustion (Figure 1.32), or to suggest that the character is exerting physical effort. Pictograms can represent emotions, moods, or character traits such as motion or speed lines, which indicate that a character is moving. The question mark indicates confusion; 'ZZZ' is used for sleeping, while stars can symbolize hope, ambition, or optimism. Musical notes can convey feelings of joy, sadness, or tension, depending on their arrangement and context. Lightbulbs, above the head of a character, can imply new ideas, inspiration, or moments of realization, which reflects a mental growth or change in perspective.

As shown in Figure 1.33, Charles Forceville (2011) developed a complete catalog of visual symbols, a universal inventory of pictorial runes. This standardized system of Emanata could effectively communicate across different cultures and languages. Forceville's goal in cataloging these pictorial runes was to give a systematic knowledge of how these symbols work in different contexts, such as advertising, movies, and other forms of visual communication. His work contributes to the field of visual semiotics, which studies the meaning behind visual signs and symbols, and helps researchers, designers, and artists to better comprehend and utilize these elements in their work (Forceville, 2011, p. 377).

1.3. Word-Image Fusions in Political Cartoons

The semiotics of political cartoons encompasses a multifaceted arrangement of *signs, symbols, images*, and **words** strategically wielded by cartoonists to convey their intended message. Engaging with cartoons in an effective manner involves the process of visually analyzing images, comprehending textual elements, interpreting visual representations, and staying informed about contemporary affairs. In optimal scenarios, the comprehension of a cartoon should not rely solely on the textual or visual elements in isolation. Rather, a holistic understanding can be achieved by analyzing both the accompanying words and images in conjunction. This approach is essential for grasping the intended message conveyed by the cartoon. Readers who possess an understanding of the cartoonist's intended meaning through this word-image fusion are more likely to grasp the underlying issue being addressed.

With a synergy of verbal and visual signs, cartoons serve as efficacious communication instruments, whereby cartoonists facilitate comprehension of complicated and boring messages by means of visual storytelling. In contemporary public discourse, cartoons are employed as a didactic tool to augment the efficacy of written communication by emphasizing the salient content of messages. This deliberate application of imagery serves the purpose of ensuring that individuals lacking literary proficiency, or non-native speakers are able to comprehend the

fundamental concepts communicated. The intended concept can be expeditiously communicated in a matter of mere moments, obviating the requirement for extensive elucidation.

Reciprocally, communication necessitates the conveyance of information through language and the utilization of visual aids, such as cartoons, to reinforce and emphasize the intended message. The combination of textual and visual elements has been demonstrated to augment conceptual comprehension and heighten memorability, all while being an exhilarating and engaging approach that aptly conforms to diverse genres. The unambiguous nature of language allows for effective message transmission and argumentation. However, when combined with the demonstrated communicative capabilities of visual aids, language possesses an amplified capacity to elicit emotional responses.

Political cartoons are renowned (for their predominantly visual nature, featuring engaging and thought-provoking imagery. Undoubtedly, visual elements constitute an indispensable aspect of political cartoons. This is due to the fact that, at times, they stand alone without any textual accompaniments but are still able to convey coherent and understandable messages to the audience. In these cases, it is even possible that text could be completely omitted, as the communicator may effectively transmit the message to the intended audience without reliance on textual means.

Paralinguistic features, namely non-verbal cues such as body language, gestures, and facial expressions, in many circumstances have the potential to serve as the only formidable device for leading and orienting the audience towards comprehending the overarching connotation conveyed by editorial cartoons. Even in the case of integrating textual content with visual elements, the text may be regarded as a subordinate component, as evidenced by scientific examination, which asserts that during the initial exposure to cartoons, viewers tend to grasp the implications of the visual cues, relegating the textual material to a secondary position.

Nevertheless, non-verbal cues, visual constituents, and artistic techniques, which have been introduced in previous parts, sometimes fail to effectively describe the situation, moods, emotions, and actions. The absence of linguistic features in editorial cartoons may result in a lack of transparency with regard to emotional expressions such as *anger, sadness, dissatisfaction, anxiety, uncertainty, interest, or lack thereof, disagreement, criticism, or urgency*, thus leading to ambiguous and indistinct meanings for the viewer.

Word-image fusions in political cartoons enable sensory engagement of the reader. Consequently, they extend an invitation for enhanced involvement by presenting a 'paradigmatic framework' that should be comprehended as a whole, as opposed to an 'informative discourse' that necessitates comprehension "one step at a time". The latent message has the potential to circumvent the filters utilized by readers to shield themselves from notions that diverge from their interests, thereby achieving a greater degree of efficacy than that of an editorial (Morris R. N., 1989, p. 80).

Consequently, editorial cartoons are typically accompanied by captions and other written explanations, which aid in the precise comprehension of the desired ideas by readers. Whenever text is employed, it is oftentimes so simple yet so smart and effective that the targeted audience quickly receives and understands it with the least effort. The fusion of visual and textual elements in this thesis is deemed essential in the realm of editorial and political cartooning in order to communicate the author's intended message and emotional expression.

With the goal of understanding how this fusion helps readers recognize the societal, technological, and linguistic influences that changed cartoons from being purely aesthetic to becoming a form of attack art that is considered significant enough to be included in the political sections and opinion pages of newspapers and concurrently in digital media platforms, this study aims to analyze the verbal and visual components present in political cartoons.

Language and Speech; Inseparable Components of Political Cartoons

As discussed above, language and speech are pivotal components of editorial cartoons, as they function as textual aids and complement the visual components to engender significance. The communication process entails a composite of visual and written components with the purpose of effectively conveying a message.

Therefore, it can be contended that editorial cartoonists must possess not only adept drawing abilities but also exhibit a discerning approach in selecting their written content to ensure that its textual significance is readily comprehensible and relevant within the current discourse. Furthermore, the emotional impact of the cartoon's message should be thoughtfully evaluated. The textual content per se may not constitute a work of art, yet the meticulous arrangement of wordiness, implementation of rhetorical devices, and intentional selection of lexicon necessitate a substantial amount of creativity.

Within the domain of linguistic communication, it is imperative to acknowledge the existence of two distinct perceptions of text, namely the ***primary*** or ***central meaning*** and the ***secondary meaning***. The central meaning of a text refers to its explicit or literal definition, analogous to that found in a dictionary. The connotative meaning, the form of secondary meaning, is intricately tied to culture and refers to the specific lexical meaning associated with a particular object or concept. The dynamism of language parallels that of culture as it evolves and progresses within particular geographic territories, leading to interpretations that are uniquely applicable to the local population.

Stylistic meaning, as a variant of associative meaning, pertains to the discourse's implicit connotations with regards to the SOCIETAL CONDITIONS SURROUNDING its application. Certain linguistic expressions and terminologies that may typically denote ordinary connotations can alternatively take on a politically charged connotation when utilized within a specific geographic area, wherein they are regarded as slogans that are indicative of a particular political party's ideology, whose social significance is devoid of any direct equivalents in other languages.

Cartoonists, in this vein, must be fully acquainted with popular culture, idioms, slang, colloquialisms, and how people talk to each other. Furthermore, individuals should possess a comprehensive comprehension of the political culture engrained within their society as well as adeptness in recognizing the manners and forms of verbal communication between individuals and governmental entities. On the other hand, through their art, cartoonists are obliged to take part in social debate with the aim of promoting societal responsibilities among individuals. The assertion being posited is that cartoonists are expected to possess a political opinion and are required to put it across.

Lack of linguistic characteristics may dampen the intended connotations in an editorial cartoon, thereby limiting the genuine emotional impact of the text on the creator's cognition. The text, on the contrary, implies the presence of paralinguistic characteristics via the use of punctuation marks. In the realm of language use and discourse analysis, it is commonly understood that various punctuation marks, such as the question mark, comma, exclamation point, and hyphen, serve as significant cues relating to the speaker's intended tone and delivery. The exclamation mark is arguably the most revealing punctuation mark, as it signifies a notable deviation from the normal state of communication through the use of heightened vocalization.

The interpretation of text also depends on the channels by which they are propagated. In this sense, the term "president" is employed solely to denote the individual responsible for leading a state, institution, or community being referenced. The portrayal of the term 'President' through a cartoon printed in official channels inherently alludes to the person holding the office of Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the country's armed forces. However, the connotation conveyed by such a reference may differ when presented in a cartoon within a social media platform.

The utilization of language and speech within editorial cartoons is multifaceted, but their intended meanings can be discerned through various layers. The text may encompass varied interpretations, such as those pertaining to

conceptual, indicative, stylistic, and affective implications. The conceptual meaning or sense pertains to the logical or connotative content present within a message. Textual content per se may play a limiting role in communication. Numerous editorial cartoonists have attained global recognition for their pieces; however, the interpretative variations of visual and textual cues within many cartoons limit their comprehensibility to the local media audience.

The establishment of an appropriate positioning of the text is a crucial aspect of the present study. The textual component of a cartoon can be situated in three distinct locations: <u>above</u>, <u>within</u>, or <u>below</u> the frame. The segment positioned above the cartoon frame denotes the title and could be either descriptive or dialogue. The main part of the text is frequently posited inside the tableau. The textual description located directly beneath the visual frame is commonly referred to as a caption. The content that has been composed predominantly comprises descriptive or dialogic discourse. In literary analysis, it is recognized that a work of literature, here the written elements in a cartoon, may comprise two distinct types of language: the object language, which characterizes the voices of depicted characters that do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the writer, and the authorial voice, which is directly reflective of the artist's stance or commentary on the subject matter portrayed in the cartoon.

In the context of a cartoon, "**object language**" and "**authorial voice**" are terms related to semiotics and literary analysis. In semiotics, the term "object language" refers to the text, images, or signs being analyzed or studied. In analyzing and studying cartoon art, the object language would be the visual and textual elements present in the cartoon, such as the characters, backgrounds, speech bubbles, and any written or drawn content[36].

To effectively communicate the intended message and create an engaging artwork, when positioning written elements in a cartoon, cartoonists use both the

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[36] The "authorial voice" in literature refers to the distinctive style, tone, and perspective through which an author communicates their ideas and messages. In the context of a cartoon, the author's voice can be understood as the creator's unique style, the way they convey ideas and emotions through the cartoon's visual and textual elements. This includes the artist's drawing style, the choice of colors, the humor or seriousness of the content, and any underlying messages or themes.

object language (the cartoon's visual and textual components) and their authorial voice (their unique style and perspective). It is imperative for the cartoonist to append his authorial voice, stance, or commentary on the subject matter and ensure that the purpose of the text is sufficiently explicit, such that the reader who merely glances over the material can determine its underlying message.

If the continuity of the narrative in a cartoon is disrupted, it could potentially diminish the reader's engagement with the cartoonist's approach to the subject matter. In this vein, the sequential arrangement of visual elements plays a pivotal role in capturing and maintaining the audience's attention. Wolfgang Iser draws a parallel between a cartoon and a statement, emphasizing the significance of how textual components are structured within the cartoon. This deliberate arrangement initiates a cognitive process that ultimately shapes the essence of the cartoon (1972, p. 214). Any disturbance in this flow could limit the reader's engagement with the cartoonist's desired message, resulting in a loss of interest in the subject matter at hand.

Given that individuals from Western societies are familiar with reading cartoons in a left-to-right and top-to-bottom manner, it is recommended that the artist's voice be positioned on the far right of the composition to serve as a punchline, or alternatively, placed near the bottom as a caption. On the other hand, in the context of this study focusing on Iranian political cartoons, since readers are accustomed to reading text from right to left in Persian, it is advisable to position the punchline towards the far left of the frame. That should be the last thing the viewer notices. But occasionally it's necessary to add some text at the top of a cartoon panel, which plays the role of the 'title' of the cartoon and will be discussed in the succeeding section.

In terms of visualizing the verbal, putting the punch line in speech balloons on the right of the frame is a technique to design the flow of visuals and guide the viewer to the final sentence that delivers the humorous effect. The punch line could be an ironic paraphrase of a slogan, which serves the same purpose as the verbal

joke by tying everything together and underlining the joke's main point (Figure 1.40).

To recapitulate, text in cartoons could be used in four different ways: ***title, speech bubbles, captions, and labels.*** Cartoonists frequently employ a variety of textual techniques to effectively introduce the focal theme that will be illustrated in their work. The function of these introductory statements is to serve as a topic sentence within a paragraph of text. At times, the authors explicate the matter under consideration or assign a nomenclature to a specific topic. The integration of word and image puts the viewer on the same page with the cartoonist and consequently allows the reader to peruse the panel and more clearly comprehend the main idea.

Title

One prominent method for introducing a depicted situation involves utilizing a title or headline. Since conciseness and subtlety are imperative characteristics of a great cartoon, cartoonists typically situate titles at the top of the composition; this heading may serve as the title of a news story or event that succinctly describes the overall introduction to the subject matter at hand. The title serves as a compass for the subject matter alluded to in the editorial cartoon. The title facilitates the comprehension of the cartoon for the audience by referring to information that is already widely accessible to the public (Figure 1.35).

Titles have additionally been employed as a means of *conveying dialogue*. From the onset of the 20th century until the commencement of the 1960s, a substantial proportion of the dialogue portrayed within editorial cartoons was positioned in the title section situated above the panel (Figure 1.36). Typically, this constitutes the initial segment of the cartoon as perceived by the viewer. Upon perusing the title, the viewer scrutinizes the cartoon and identifies the speaker, subsequently deducing the subject matter being discussed. If the quote or title contains the authorial voice, the artist has relinquished the final say to the object language, thereby reducing the level of affective engagement experienced by the

reader. The alteration in protocol among cartoonists with respect to refraining from including quotations in titles can be attributed to their realization that such a practice compromised their authorial voice (Bush, 2012, p. 56).

Cartoonists who compose text positioned above the panel or at the upper portion of the panel essentially provide descriptive accounts of the subject matter depicted within the panel. The provision of a descriptive title served as a vital element in the strategic framework employed by the artist, aimed at engaging the viewer and immersing them in the narrative being conveyed. Upon perusing the descriptor, the observer shall proceed to examine the image and peruse any accompanying textual content within the panel that expounds on the aforementioned descriptor. The area situated beneath the panel would typically encompass a caption consisting of either text or dialogue, with the primary purpose of solidifying the artist's desired message within the reader's mindset (Bush, 2012, p. 56).

The utilization of the "News Item" technique was prevalent until the mid-twentieth century as a means of conferring credence to editorial cartoons. However, it gradually lost popularity amongst cartoonists, presumably due to its overt natu*re*. Albeit infrequently employed in contemporary usage, it could still be a matter of debate. "News Item" is commonly employed to describe news stories that are not widely known yet pique the cartoonist's interest. After the term "News Item," a colon symbol appears. Subsequently, the artist composes a concise elucidation pertaining to the subject matter. The subject matter will subsequently be satirized through the employment of cartoonish visual motifs. The utilization of the "News Item" introduction is governed by two distinct criteria. In instances where the artist's explanation is excessively intricate to be summed up in a few words as the title or where the image is not suitable for placing a newspaper headline, the artist may elect to utilize this method (Figure 1.37).

In response to the need for enhanced extra credibility, the cartoon in Figure 1.38 has advanced the "News Item" approach. Although the phrase "ripped from

the headlines" may be perceived as cliché by a significant portion of news consumers, the cartoonist in question specifically drew inspiration from this technique for his editorial cartoon. The specific title is ripped out of a newspaper and superimposed on the upper left corner of the frame. Instead of using "News Item" in the title or placing a newspaper someplace within the scene, the actual headline gives this cartoon additional credibility against those who might disagree with the claim made by the cartoonist [37].

Moreover, without the qualifying statement in the title, the cartoon's representation of the trees climbing the hill would be considered absurd. Therefore, this cartoon complies with Wolfgang Iser's (1972) theory of qualification that focuses on the reader's active role in creating meaning from a literary text. The theory emphasizes the dynamic, interactive process between the reader and the literary text, highlighting the reader's role in constructing meaning by filling in the gaps and indeterminacies left by the author.

Speech Bubble (Balloon)

In the next two methods, text is used to display the speech, monologue, and dialogue between the people inside the picture. This kind of text could be put inside the speech bubbles, or in the other technique, spoken words are located underneath the composition, namely captions. Conveying conversations that could take place between the protagonist and other characters is of the utmost importance in political cartoons. Serafini and Moses (2015, p. 309) believe that the basic device in single-panel or multi-panel cartoons that can be used to convey meaning is speech bubbles. Cartoonists can use a variety of different types of balloons to show what characters are saying or thinking. The limit of them is the limit of the imagination of artists, as long as they can come up with creative ideas. These

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[37] The headline ripped from a newspaper reads, "Plants, animals seeking higher, cooler climes as globe grows warmer." The cartoon illustrates wild animals and trees running uphill. Texas Governor and presidential candidate Rick Perry says, "*You've all fallen for the hoax*!" In this case, the cartoonist was careful to provide evidence of climate change to convey the essential nugget of truth that is crucial for a successful cartoon. Due to the controversy surrounding climate change, cartoonist opted to incorporate elements of real news stories instead of creating the main highlights themselves. If the cartoonist had drawn the cartoon without the headline, skeptics would have claimed that he is a left-wing eco-nut, and the cartoon would have elicited complaints of bias towards those who believe in the existence of global warming.

balloons, along with captions, are the most common ways of communicating text and telling stories in cartoons.

In the past, various writing styles were employed, including upside-down and vertical orientations. One of the most prominent methods of conveying dialogue is through speech bubbles in the form of talk ribbons, a communication device that can be traced back to at least 1753 as depicted in a cartoon by William Hogarth (Figure 1.39). An advantage of the "talk ribbons" is their flexibility in character positioning, as the top ribbon signifies the first speaker regardless of their left or right placement. Moreover, Figure 1.8 depicts another classic form of conveying discourse. The text within the cartoon is presented in elongated ribbons as opposed to the traditional "egg-shaped" speech balloons typically employed by cartoonists (Jarrett, 1974, p. 220). By the nineteenth century, a shift occurred towards more condensed oval shapes, supplanting the previous ribbon style.

Speech bubbles (balloons) have developed since their early days as a viable means of expressing dialogue. In any case, since precision is required, they must be more specialized than the line from the speaker's mouth, which opens into a for the most part ovate shape that's huge enough to contain the dialogue of the speaker. Over time, they have become an essential part of the visual narrative, not only as visual indicators of who is speaking but also as tools for conveying the nature and emotions of the language used in cartoons, comics, or graphic novels, while providing context and depth to the dialogue. This evolution enhances the reader's understanding and engagement with the story, adding depth to the characters and their interactions.

In addition to showing who is speaking, balloons often convey the tone, mood, or intensity of the conversation. Forceville, Veale, and Feyaerts (2010) identify five factors linked to this visual convention: the shape of the speech bubble and its tail (form) can convey the tone or mood of the conversation; the use or lack of color can help differentiate between characters, convey emotions or mental states, or highlight specific aspects of the dialogue. Positioning: The placement of a speech balloon on the page can influence how the reader interprets

the dialogue. For example, a balloon positioned close to a character's mouth may suggest a direct quote or immediate response, while a balloon placed further away might indicate a flashback, inner monologue, or a delayed reaction. The use of different fonts to highlight or modify the message; and the inclusion of non-verbal elements such as punctuation, mathematical symbols, or computerized stylistic features. Any change in these elements leads to an alteration in the conveyed message.

In a similar vein, a larger speech balloon may signify a more passionate or lengthy speech, while a smaller one might indicate a brief or casual remark. The shape or style of the balloon can also contribute to the overall mood, with rounded or bubbly balloons suggesting a light-hearted or playful tone, and angular or jagged balloons indicating tension, anger, or aggression[38]. On the other hand, a borderless balloon may suggest a character's thoughts or internal dialogue, or it could be used to indicate a whisper or a soft-spoken remark. Figure 1.40 shows the four most common speech balloons, left to right: speech, whisper, thought, and scream. Bubbles with thick, jagged outlines and big, bold fonts can signify a protagonist's anger and represent the textual message as a scream.

Colors and patterns within the balloons can also be used to emphasize emotions or to differentiate between characters' thoughts or internal dialogues. In some cases, the absence of a speech balloon can be just as meaningful, as it may signify that a character is holding back their thoughts or feelings. Similar examples are given by Forceville, El Refaie, and Meesters (2014, pp. 492-493), who show how colored speech bubbles might indicate shifts in the mental state of a given protagonist to the viewers (Figure 1.28). However, it should be noted that the number of such factors may be indefinitely expanded if an artist designs his own unique speech bubble "norm". Likewise, the meaning of the content displayed in the bubbles can be decoded. Chalaniova (2011) examines the ways in which image

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[38] The shape can also provide context to the content of the dialogue, such as a teardrop-shaped balloon for sadness or a cloud-like balloon for a dreamy or surreal conversation. The presence or absence of a border around the speech balloon can also impact its meaning. A solid border can create a clear separation between the dialogue and the surrounding artwork, emphasizing the importance of the conversation.

creators communicate ideas and themes through visual content. She observes that a common strategy employed by these creators is to equip their protagonists with a strapline or a particle of dialogue. This practice serves to establish a meaningful connection, helps reinforce the message or theme being conveyed in the artwork, making it more memorable and impactful for the audience. These types of dialogues usually result in the generation of a punch line that fills the humorous component with intended meaning (2011, p. 7) [39].

Broadcast bubbles, commonly referred to as "AT&T" balloons (Figure 1.41), can feature either a squared-off or jagged outline, as well as a jagged tail that resembles the traditional drawing of a lightning flash. Sometimes letters are italicized but not always bolded. Broadcast bubbles suggest that the source of written elements is an electronic device, such as a phone, cell phone, radio, television, or computer. A cumulus (Figure 1.42) is a balloon that denotes the text is *not dialogue* but just a thought and wasn't really meant for another character to hear, but the viewer still could comprehend the idea. From the balloon to the speaker, there are tiny bubbles extending from the cumulus (Walker M. , 1975, p. 28).

The cartoonist must be aware of the viewer's natural eye movement. In modern cartoon protocol, the first speaker in a panel is usually placed on the left, so that the viewers peruse the balloon for that speaker first. The speech bubbles should be posited such that whatever is presented on the extreme right of the panel finishes, summarizes, or provides context for the scenario, as the human eye is accustomed to reading from left to right. Principally, the "punch line" of the cartoon is revealed in the text to the right, which also indicates if the cartoon is meant to be humorous, serious, thought-provoking, or merely a joke (Figure 1.43). As a result, the cartoonist must arrange the argument so that the "set-up" is displayed to the viewer first, and the punch line is then presented or read last.

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[39] Chalaniova's study underscores the importance of understanding how creators utilize language and visual elements to influence public opinion and shape the narrative surrounding European identity in political contexts. By analyzing these techniques, researchers and practitioners can gain valuable insights into the ways in which people perceive and engage with complex political issues.

Caption

Like speech bubbles, captions as parts of an artistic style are regularly being used by cartoonists and have historically carried the dialogue of political cartoons as well, which are an easy way to understand for the audience, as cartoonists ensure the images are cleverly arranged to identify the speaker and the effect of the text to other components of the composition.

Captions are regularly utilized in combination with speech bubbles. Unlike speech balloons that facilitate dialogue among multiple characters, captions are predominantly utilized in single-panel cartoons to convey monologues. Captions serve as a valuable tool in instances where a single character is speaking within a visual composition, typically indicated by the sole figure depicted with an open mouth. An example of putting the sole speakers' monologue as a caption is shown in Figure 1.12.

Including speech or dialogue in the caption of a cartoon can indeed provide the cartoonist with an opportunity to strategically place the "authorial voice" at the end. By doing so, the artist can ensure that the viewer's attention is drawn to the voice and opinion of the author, after they have processed the visual content and any other dialogue present in the cartoon. This approach allows the cartoonist to create a lasting impression on the audience by having their thoughts or opinion be the last thing the viewer encounters. It enables the artist to emphasize their stance on the subject matter, leaving a more profound impact on the audience and potentially sparking further discussion or reflection.

Technically, captions should only contain the voice of one speaker. However, it is essential to observe that placing dialogue in the caption beneath a cartoon can lead to confusion about which text belongs to which character. This issue arises when inside the frame depicted several characters and the conversation is not clearly associated with the respective characters, making it difficult for the viewer to understand the intended meaning and context.

To reduce this confusion and enhance the clarity of their work, cartoonists can implement several strategies. They can firstly use distinct speech bubbles or

balloons. By assigning unique shapes or designs to each character's speech, it becomes easier for the viewer to differentiate between the conversations (see Figure 1.44). Also, adding character names or identifiers within the speech bubbles can help the audience connect the dialogue with the correct person. Moreover, employing different font styles or colors for each dialogue can make it simpler for the viewer to distinguish between the conversations. Besides if the speech bubbles are placed close to the characters they represent, makes it clear which dialogue belongs to whom. Also, cartoonist can include body language or facial expressions that align with the characters' dialogue.

Unlike balloons, where the speaker is clearly identifiable by the tail near the speaker's mouth, there is rarely a graphical indicator to identify the speaker in captions. But sometimes, artists define the speaker in an artistic way when using captions. Figure 1.44 illustrates a notable example of the creative use of a caption in a cartoon, where the cartoonist integrates the dialogue from a radio into a caption. The caption contains the announcer's dialogue, with a small AT&T graphical element extending from the center of the caption to a radio, indicating the radio as the origin of the caption. Given that the figures depicted in the scene lack open mouths, the absence of a bolt reaching the radio may hinder the viewer's ability to attribute speech to the radio. Additionally, the presence of other visual elements on the panel could potentially lead to ambiguity and confusion. This serves as an additional illustration of the word-image fusion in the medium of cartooning, where visual elements and textual components are strategically positioned to successfully construct a compelling cartoon.

Label

In the fourth and last technique, cartoonists include text as labels and tags inside a cartoon to provide the recipients with a better introduction and clearer comprehension of the subject, objects, signs, and symbols being depicted. This approach is particularly vital when attempting metaphorical representations. Labels can be used to ensure that the figures and objects portrayed or the intended

message in an editorial cartoon are obvious and recognizable when used in an obscure, complex, or abstract manner.

Cartoonists of the 19th century labeled their subjects in a variety of ways. In Figure 1.45, a case of labeling can be observed. At the same time as the zoomorphism technique was used, any individual was given a forehead label with their last name to use as identification. The conventional practice of physically altering the caricatures didn't last long. It was not visually acceptable to ruin a caricature, so new inventions emerged. That labeling system rapidly *fell out of use.*

To identify their subjects, cartoonists have employed a variety of techniques. They could stick the labels on the objects in an appropriate place (Figure 1.46). But "tagging" the subjects is the most common method to introduce the protagonist and other people. The tag can take on several kinds of forms, such as something like a price tag with a name that hangs from clothing in a store (Figure 1.47) or a name tag resembling one carried by a conference attendee. Labeling has evolved recently as cartoonists employ name tags or sashes with the subject's last name on them.

In his work, Gombrich (1960) posits that audiences possess an inherent capacity to adeptly discern and grasp the symbolic representations contained within a cartoon, rendering the inclusion of labels and other written elements unnecessary in determining the targeted message. Nevertheless, the artist employs these labels to fortify the natural metaphors and promote the underlying message embedded within the artwork.

Concluding Remarks

The scientific reasoning in this chapter pivoted around the hypothesis that visual texts hold the same level of importance as their verbal counterparts. In consideration of this, visuals can be described as "polysemous" due to their ability to convey multiple meanings. They possess a core sign that is associated with a diverse array of concepts that are already present in the audience's existing knowledge base. Cartoonists purposefully lead audiences towards a desired

understanding by inviting and encouraging them to construct a version of "reality" that coincides with their own through the use of certain signifiers that narrow the range of possible interpretations. There is a need to examine the levels of mutuality prevailing between the two modes rather than categorizing visuals into decorative and informative subgroups.

The key conclusion is that cartoon is a complex semiotic system where visual and verbal components do not just duplicate but complement each other, creating multi-layered meanings. The author substantiates the need to take into account both the intentions of the creator (narrowing of possible interpretations) and the cultural background of the audience (expanding the semantic field).

CHAPTER 2 - CARTOONS AS A TYPE OF MEDIA CONTENT

CARTOONS AS A MEDIA PHENOMENON - TYPOLOGY

After examining cartoons as a semiotic phenomenon, the focus turns towards the topic of the genesis and evolution of cartoons in editorial and political context. The underlying argument in this chapter is that the historical evolution of cartoon art from primitive art based on deformity has been advanced to AS A TYPE OF MEDIA CONTENT, functioning as an important form of journalism and assumes a pivotal role in maintaining a system of checks and balances.

In line with the evolution of various art forms, the political cartoon has undergone substantial changes to cater to the preferences of its audience. Originating from classical art traditions, cartooning has progressed by incorporating more sophisticated visual techniques. Departing from religious and mythological themes, cartooning has expanded its scope to encompass current affairs, thereby integrating itself into the realm of journalism (Bush, 2012).

Although cartoonists are occasionally marginalized as mere jesters (humorist) within the realm of art, they persistently tweak (improve, refine) their artistic practice with the aim of becoming the most adept at capturing the prevailing sentiments of the time. Furthermore, there exists significant evidence that their humorous approach exerts influence on public opinions and has tangible effects on policy-making. Consequently, the approaches and methods employed by cartoonists warrant closer examination. The subsequent section will examine how the politicization of these art forms within an editorial and political context has influenced and shaped the visual medium of political satire.

2.1. Cartoon Genesis and Evolution

The art of cartooning has a long history that spans centuries. Recent discoveries have revealed that cartoons have been a part of human culture since ancient times. The oldest known caricature, dating back to around 1360 BC, was found in Egypt by anonymous artists who skewered Queen Cleopatra's husband,

Akhenaton (Moyle, 2004). Some scholars, such as Neighbor, Karaca, and Lang (2013, p. 14), have gone even further and argue that the practice of creating cartoon paintings can be traced back even further to the Stone Age, where early humans would create crude and distorted depictions of unpopular leaders. Gombrich (1978, p. 129) favors the form as based in the Olympians of ancient Greece. His claims anchored on discovered evidence from Pompeian soldiers in 79 A.D. This Graffiti art, which has been discussed in the 1st Chapter (Figure 1.10), suggests that exaggerated portraits of undesirable centaurs were drawn on the walls of their barracks. These examples highlight the long-standing tradition of using funny and distorted representations by Olympian and Roman citizens to convey emotions and make politicized statements.

The term "caricature" has its origins in the Italian words "CARICO" and "CARICARE", which denote the actions of 'loading' or 'exaggerating'. It was around the year 1600 that the term "caricature" emerged in the realm of Italian art. However, there is a lack of consensus among different sources regarding the first artist to employ this term in their artworks. In some sources, it is mentioned (TATE fine and modern art, UK) and (Modern art and popular culture: readings in high & low, 1990) that in the 1590s, the Italian "Annibale Carracci" and also his brother "Agostino" applied these words to some exaggerated portrait drawings they created.

Werner Hoffman (1957) floats some remarkable propositions that caricature, as a form of fine art in the Western tradition, can be traced back to the pioneering explorations of Leonardo da Vinci in the field of grotesque art. Da Vinci sought to uncover an "**ideal type of deformity**" that would enhance the understanding of the concept of ideal beauty (p. 16). Da Vinci's exploration of exaggerated physiognomic features in his drawings can be likened to the caricatures found in modern political cartoons (Barker, 2016, p. 49). Figure 2.1 exemplifies several elements associated with the grotesque, as Da Vinci skillfully portrays his subject's deformities while incorporating essential caricatural elements. This technical

prowess in creating a portrait that highlights and celebrates the subject's unique physical characteristics aligns with the traditions of caricature.

As stated in Encyclopedia Britannica, the term "caricature" first appears and is used in English in 1748. It seems to have been used first by "Mosini" in Diverse Figure in 1646. Bernini created the first caricatures of people whose names continue to be known today. (Ames, 2017). Victor Navasky (2013, p. xix) contends that the first real caricature was developed as late as 1676, citing Bernini's drawing of Pope Innocent XI and the artists' declaration that "no one is above ridicule." (Figure 2.2)

The etymology of the word cartoon is the Italian word "CARTONE," which refers to a finalized preparatory sketch executed on a large piece of cardboard. The term "Cartoon" was initially employed to describe preliminary designs, as documented in the Oxford English Dictionary (1989). Cartoon began in Italian late 16th century as the word for the material on which a sketch is made, and then itself became the word for the drawing. The earliest recorded instance of the term "cartoon" being used in print media can be traced back to the mid-19th century, in the British Punch magazine[40] in 1843. Punch satirically attributed this term to its political cartoons, and the widespread popularity of Punch's cartoons subsequently led to the extensive adoption of the term (Spinozzi, 2010, p. 261).

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the art of caricature emerged during the **Renaissance** and **Reformation** period, which placed significant emphasis on the importance of the individual. Whilst caricature focuses on portraying individuals in a manner that exaggerates and distorts their distinctive features, cartoon, on the other hand, can be seen as depicting groups of individuals and their collective characteristics. Both forms of art are closely associated with the Renaissance's inclination towards classification and categorization (ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA, Caricature and cartoon).

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[40] Punch or The London Charivari was a British weekly magazine of humor and satire established in 1841. Historically, it was most influential in the 1840s and 1850s, when it helped to coin the term "cartoon" in its modern sense as a humorous illustration. After the 1940s, when its circulation peaked, it went into a long decline, closing in 1992. It was revived in 1996 but closed again in 2002.
(https://www.punch.co.uk/index)

The evolution of cartooning from the Renaissance to the invention of the printing machine by Gutenberg in 1455 entered a vital and decisive phase. In the early stages, the initial cartoons and caricatures were not created with the intention of promoting public awareness. Rather, they served as an artistic endeavor aimed at exploring a novel and more profound visual form of expression (Zarifian, 2022, p. 61).

The concepts of "public viewing" and "public consciousness" emerged during the Protestant Reforms in Germany, which had a significant impact on Europe during the early 16th century. This religious reform movement employed "visual propaganda" as a means of visually expressing opposition to the dominant religious authority (Zarifian, Volkova, & Lazutova, 2022, p. 632). The historical backdrop of religious reform was a subject that was widely recognized and understood by individuals from various backgrounds. Consequently, these early cartoons served as an exceptional means of raising public awareness.

The synthesis of cartoon and caricature with the grotesque as a means of political impact was initially witnessed during Martin Luther's campaign against the hegemony of religion and hierarchy in Church leadership (Barker, 2016, p. 52). In recognizing Luther's contribution to the emergence of editorial cartooning, Navasky emphasizes the deliberate elevation of Luther's influence through the widespread use of cartoons throughout Northern Europe (2013, p. 29). Martin Luther recognized the necessity of engaging the lower social strata, specifically the peasantry, in order to effectively lead a widespread movement. Concurrently, the prevalence of illiteracy played a considerable role in shaping the development of cartoons, surpassing other cultural factors (Shikes, 1969, pp. 13-17).

Luther commissioned various artists to create illustrations that would effectively convey his Reformist ideas to the largely illiterate population, a practice reminiscent of newspaper publishers employing in-house cartoonists. While Luther may not have invented the concept of editorial cartooning per se, he did utilize visual imagery to simplify complex ideas and make them more accessible, challenge the status quo, and involve the general public. This thesis believes that

this approach has had a lasting impact on the development of editorial cartooning as well as other forms of visual communication.

The widespread dissemination of broadsheet posters and illustrated booklets to the general population, including those who were often illiterate, proved to be an effective strategy in ensuring that ideas reached as many individuals as possible and were easily understood. Zarifian, Volkova, and Lazutova note that as the reform movement sought to expand its influence across Europe, the use of cartoons, which condensed complex ideas into visually striking and memorable images, emerged as a highly valuable tool for swiftly conveying messages (2022, p. 632). The continuous development of cartoons as a form of visual protest, from the onset of the Protestant Reformation in 1517 to the present day, attests to their privileged status and significant role within social movements. The enduring ability of cartoons to convey meaning and invite interpretation is a testament to the enduring legacy of satire (Shikes, 1969, p. 10).

Western society shifted from religious to intellectual tendencies, opening up new avenues for debate and criticism. Cartoons, based on human rights, became an entertaining and efficient way to convey points. The increased media literacy led to a greater appeal and impact of cartoons on public opinion, addressing serious issues in a socially acceptable manner. The socio-religious reform movement and Renaissance emphasis on individual importance fueled political satire and cartooning in the West.

The Printing Revolution extended into the 17th century due to the enduring popularity of written communication. The success of cartoons in provoking thought and motivating action among people throughout the late 17th and early 18th centuries, which corresponded with the Age of Enlightenment, contributed to the establishment of cartooning as a means of communication. Cartoons transcended their traditional role as sources of comedy and humor, adopting a more serious and satirical tone. They effectively addressed important issues in a manner that was both entertaining and persuasive, with the specific aim of influencing public opinion and effecting change within the church. As political cartooning

gained traction, the use of "graphic satire" became prevalent in Western culture. This provided a platform for talented cartoonists to thrive as they fearlessly critiqued arbitrary authority, corruption, and misconduct in positions of power that had previously been immune to criticism.

During the 19th century, with advancements in the printing industry, the prosperity of faster printing machines, and the distribution of newspapers with high circulation, the information revolution called 'mass media' emerged and the age of mass communication arrived (Fang, 1997). This big step in technology led to the accessibility of cartoons as a significant component of print media. The development of printing technology increased print runs and image quality at the same time as reducing production costs (Press, 1981, p. 49). These Technological innovations resulted in economies of scale that eventually led to the proliferation of visual satire and the birth of modern political cartoons. Consequently, cartoons quickly gained popularity among the public and exerted a substantial influence (Zarifian, Volkova, & Lazutova, 2022).

In any case, from the 16th through the 19th centuries, cartooning practice soon emerged as a popular genre of fine art subgenre with a relatively broad definition and obvious definition. Political cartooning for social and political purposes became significant at this time and genuinely emerged. The enduring popularity and significant impact on public sentiment persist in contemporary times, with an escalating utilization of political satire in print media such as magazines and newspapers and nowadays in online platforms, to express political commentary and criticize public figures and politicians.

Few forms of art possess such a unique ability to endure and maintain a significant influence over an extended period of time. This enduring impact can be attributed to their ability to effectively bridge the perceived gap between fact and fiction (Edwards, 1997).

To sum up, it can be inferred that political cartoons emerged and gained significant prominence during the second Information Revolution, identified as the **"Printing Revolution"** by Irving Fang (1997) (see Section 3.1). Subsequently,

during the "**Mass Media Revolution**" in the mid-19th century, political cartoons flourished and became well-integrated into the communication context, a trend that persisted in subsequent periods. Today's pluralized media landscape and political cartoons in the digital sphere will be analyzed in the next Chapter.

2.2. Cartoons in Editorial and Political Context

Humor, along with visual satire, provides citizens with a direct means to question the political system and its leaders. Government and organized religion are arguably the most powerful institutions in society. The actions taken by a government can have a profound impact on the lives of its citizens. The impact of religion on beliefs and freedoms is enormous, often greatly affecting the outcome of democratic elections. Owing to the fact that there are no perfect institutions or leaders, critiquing politicians is a crucial, fair, and equal practice. Furthermore, when aiming for lofty ideals, it becomes even more essential to take note of any form of mockery, even if it comes in the form of low-grade movies or satirical illustrations.

Cartoons possess the ability to serve as playful judgments that tap into the inner child of both the cartoonist and their audience. However, they can also serve as vehicles for conveying harsh realities, exposing the unsightly aspects of life, and evoking emotions such as guilt, remorse, or anger within the viewers. Nevertheless, if we consider art, as Freud (1990) suggested, as a means to reconcile the pleasure-seeking aspect of the ego with the reality-seeking ego, then cartoons can be seen as serving a more profound purpose.

Taking into consideration the philosophical aspect of cartooning, this art is the product of meticulous (careful) scrutiny of human beings, an examination of their experiences, and ultimately, it entails a direct depiction of the dissonances inherent in human existence, the present-day human condition, or the distressing state of society in the modern era (Göpfert, 2020, p. 156).

Bohl asserts that political cartoons are, for all intents and purposes, negative, critical, and cynical (Bohl, 1997). In the 3rd Section, through introducing metaphor

as a rhetorical device for conveying the message in communication with cartoons, it will be discussed that political cartoons frequently portray the topic in a negative light and convey a negative evaluation of politicians or political issues (see Section 3.3.4: Metaphor). Bohl, in the following, argues that the purpose of political cartoons is to provoke thought and motivate action among the audience. The primary commitment of a political cartoonist is to provide accurate criticism of those in power. In order to fulfill this role, the cartoonist must have a clear political stance and the courage to express it. Political cartoons serve as a tool to uphold the viewpoint of an individual or a collective and persuade others to adopt that perspective. Unlike objective journalistic writing, they are not obliged to present factual information [41] and are not bound to maintain impartiality, even though they operate in a similar domain and fulfill similar purposes.

According to Feldman (2005), satirizing political figures and events serves to attain two key objectives: **One**, political cartoons illustrate the core concerns around conditions, topics, or persons and reflect the local political realities and **two**; they influence the political attitudes and tendency of the public towards the political process. Hereupon, they function within a culture-specific environment where the audience needs to correctly interpret the different political issues and circumstances being mocked in order to discover the hidden messages.

The Politicized Role and Function of Cartoons

It is widely acknowledged that politics can be characterized as a complex simplicity, as proposed by Oliver Marchart in his book "Conflictual Aesthetics," where he describes it as a network of distinct boundaries intersecting one another (Marchart, 2019, p. 19). Such a notion synchronizes with Göpfert's characterization of cartooning as a genuine political action due to its capacity for simplification and binary opposition (Göpfert, 2020, p. 148).

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[41] It is important to stress that, in accordance with the notions discussed in Section 2.2.3, depicted situations and arguments put forward in political cartoons should be based on real events. The cartoonist must establish a foundation of credibility within the cartoon to ensure that the casual observer can fully comprehend and appreciate the intended message. What is intended here is the difference between the style of a journalistic article and a political cartoon, which, unlike the former, does not require the cartoonist to rely on statistics to express the point of view.

The political cartoon serves as a visual and satirical representation of the creator's ideas and opinions, often drawing inspiration from current news and events. Typically published in mass media, these cartoons may or may not align with the publication's perspective (Caswell, Hobbs, & Robb) A well-executed political cartoon effectively articulates a distinct point of view or opinion through a combination of skillful drawing and compelling writing. It bears acknowledging that the socio-cultural background and political tendency, orientation, or bias of cartoonists can influence the development and dissemination of their messages.

DeSousa and Medhurst (1982) made significant strides to outline the four major fundamental roles and functions of cartoons in a political context (Figure 2.3).

As demonstrated in Figure 2.3, political cartoons possess the ability to elicit laughter from recipients through their humorous and meanwhile critical portrayal of narratives, events, and individuals, thus serving as a form of entertainment. Additionally, they serve as a means of reducing aggression by allowing audiences to release their frustration at specific incidents (refer to Section 3.2.4 the topic "Relief by humor"). Furthermore, political cartoons function as a tool for agenda setting, presenting a particular perspective in a humorous manner. According to Greenberg they also frame events, issues, and values, and offer a distinct framework for understanding a given event within a specific social or political context (2002).

Building Public Opinion

Political cartoons significantly impact public opinion by presenting ideas, critiques, and perspectives in an engaging visual format. They simplify complex issues, making them accessible to a diverse audience, thereby fostering discussions and debates around political matters. By employing satire, humor, and symbolism, these cartoons can challenge the status quo, hold powerful figures accountable, and reflect societal values. In this way, political cartoons contribute to shaping and building public opinion, fostering critical thinking, and promoting a more informed

and engaged citizenry. Numerous scholars have conducted analyses on political cartoons as a form of discourse, recognizing them as a noteworthy tool for shaping and influencing public opinion on prominent political and social matters (Everette, 1974) (Vinson, 1967) (Abraham, 2009).

The conventional viewpoint held by media historians, which dismissed the effectiveness and competence of cartoons, has been replaced by the understanding that cartoons are utilized to convey ideologies in government propaganda, as publicity stunts, for public catharsis, or for educational purposes. Consequently, media researchers have begun to acknowledge the value of cartoons as a potent means of communication. Caswell (2004) refers to the dual role of political cartoons in shaping and reflecting public opinion as "both opinion-molding and opinion-reflecting," meaning they not only influence people's thoughts and attitudes towards political issues but also mirror the prevailing sentiments and beliefs among the public. This duality highlights the significant impact that political cartoons have on the formation and expression of public opinion, especially regarding war and other significant political events (p. 14).

Setting Social Agenda

Political cartoons allow readers to discuss social order by providing meta language for discourse, generating IDEALIZED VERSIONS of the world, placing them in discursive contexts of meaning construction, and providing them with a tool for thinking about the state of society. In his analysis, Greenberg posits that cartoons possess the ability to succinctly encapsulate assertions or construct abbreviated storylines pertaining to presumed issues, thereby functioning to reinforce commonly accepted interpretations of the world. In order to get their audience to identify with a visual and the message it is trying to convey, cartoons frame events by recreating the issue at hand within the framework of everyday life (Greenberg, 2002, p. 182).

Barometers of Political Freedom

Political cartoons serve as potent tools of perpetual opposition within the political landscape by offering a unique blend of visual impact, simplification, satire, emotional appeal, and timeliness and by swiftly conveying criticisms and exposing the flaws of their subjects. Their visual nature enables them to succinctly communicate complex ideas, often surpassing the impact of news articles expressing similar viewpoints. Through satire and caricature, political cartoons challenge authority and provoke critical reflection on societal issues (Zarifian, 2020).

In combination with political commentary, political cartoons serve additional discourse functions. One such function, as mentioned by Greenberg (2002, p. 181), is contextualizing timely topics. This means that cartoons help provide context and clarify the significance of current events or issues, making them more accessible and understandable for the audience. By visually representing complex situations and ideas, political cartoons can effectively place these topics within a broader social, cultural, or political framework. This contextualization allows readers to better grasp the relevance and implications of the issue at hand, fostering a deeper understanding and engagement with the subject matter. In essence, political cartoons, when used alongside commentary, enhance the communication of ideas and perspectives by providing an additional layer of meaning and interpretation.

Detailed describing and commenting upon present events, or "*articulating specific political messages from an ideological perspective*," as mentioned by Steuter and Wills, refers to the practice of using political cartoons to convey precise information about current events while also expressing the cartoonist's perspective on those events (2008, p. 11).

As Edy (1999, p. 73) states, political cartoons let us look at different versions of past events and compare them to how things are now. This creates media narratives that look at the way social phenomena affect the growth of society. Therefore, political cartoons can serve as valuable tools for researchers in gaining insight into the ways in which visual communication conveys social

experiences, as well as the subjective perspectives and identities of political actors, their interactions, and the broader context in which they operate.

To accomplish the objective of communication and make messages more vivid and dramatic, cartoonists rely on artistic techniques such as caricature to depict public figures in an exaggerated and humorous style. Parallel to this is the range of rhetorical devices such as irony, metaphor, symbols, captions, and parody employed to persuade readers to embrace specific viewpoints. These rhetorical devices will be scrutinized in Chapter 3.

Political cartoons have the power to function as barometers of "political freedom" in societies (Sandbrook, 2010, p. 26) by reflecting the level of openness and tolerance for diverse viewpoints and criticism. In societies with high levels of political freedom, cartoonists can create and publish works that challenge the status quo and criticize government policies, politicians, and institutions without fear of censorship or reprisals. Because of this freedom of speech, political cartoons can be used as a measure of how healthy a democracy is by showing different points of view and encouraging people (cartoonists) to freely express their opinions.

In contrast, in societies with limited political freedom, cartoonists may encounter restrictions, censorship, or even persecution for their critical artworks, as will be discussed in the case study of the Iranian media system in the empirical analysis (Chapter 4). In such cases, the absence or suppression of political cartoons can indicate a lack of freedom and suppressed public discourse[42].

Another challenge faced by cartoonists in non-democratic societies is the fear of reprisals. They may worry about persecution, arbitrary arrests and detentions, unjust trials, extrajudicial reaction from the authorities or powerful individuals if their work is deemed critical or offensive. This fear can lead to self-

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[42] Thus, the presence and nature of political cartoons in a society can provide a valuable measure of the state of political freedom within that society. In non-democratic societies, political cartoonists often face several challenges that can hinder their work and limit their ability to function as a barometer of political freedom. One of the primary issues they confront is censorship. Governments or authorities in non-democratic countries may impose strict censorship rules on the media, including political cartoons. This can lead to self-censorship among cartoonists who may choose to avoid sensitive topics or tone down their criticism to avoid legal or physical repercussions.

censorship and a reluctance to create politically charged cartoons, limiting the ability of cartoons to reflect the state of political freedom in society.

In non-democratic countries, cartoonists may also face difficulties in accessing platforms to publish their work. The media landscape in such societies is often controlled by the government or a small group of individuals, making it difficult for cartoonists to reach a wider audience and contribute to public discourse. Weak protections for freedom of speech and expression in non-democratic societies can make cartoonists more vulnerable to legal action, harassment, or even physical harm for their work. This can create an environment of fear and self-censorship, limiting the potential of political cartoons to serve as a barometer of political freedom.

Lastly, in societies where political freedom is limited, the public may become apathetic or desensitized to the lack of freedom. This can make it difficult for cartoonists to engage them in discussions about political issues through their work, further hindering the effectiveness of political cartoons as a barometer of political freedom. Summarizing all these factors, political cartoons in non-democratic societies are subject to censorship and self-censorship. As a result, they tend to become more ambiguous and symbolic to evade repercussions, ultimately imposing limitations on civic progress, which could undermine democracy. Later empirical analysis in Chapter 4 will expound on the challenges that Iranian independent political cartoonists face that can hinder their work and limit their ability to function as a barometer of political freedom.

The publication of 12 cartoons depicting different interpretations of the prophet Muhammad by the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten in 2005 [43] has been widely recognized as a significant event that sparked renewed interest in the study of political cartoons as effective tools of political communication. Irrespective of

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[43] The Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons controversy (or Muhammad cartoons crisis) began after the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published 12 editorial cartoons on September 30, 2005, most of which depicted Muhammad, a principal figure of the religion of Islam. The newspaper announced that this was an attempt to contribute to the debate about criticism of Islam and self-censorship. Muslim groups in Denmark complained, and the issue eventually led to protests around the world, including violence and riots in some Muslim countries. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jyllands-Posten_Muhammad_cartoons_controversy

agreeing or disagreeing with this kind of depiction, the fury, boycotts, riots, and death threats that followed the publication of these controversial cartoons demonstrated the relevance and importance attributed to the cartoonist's pen (Danjoux, 2007). This event has been extensively discussed and analyzed by scholars such as Campbell and Shapiro (2007), Mazid (2008), Muller and Özcan (2007), Klausen (2009), and Hansen (2011).

The absence of a comprehensive contextual explanation for the utilization of the 12 controversy cartoons depicting different interpretations of the Prophet Muhammad led to international outrage. This is because the cartoons were published without proper understanding and respect for the religious sensitivities of the Muslim community. Although the above-mentioned aggregated research suggests that these cartoons served as a catalyst for other editorial teams to delve deeper into the topic of Islam. However, the lack of context made it seem as though the newspaper was intentionally trying to provoke controversy and offend the followers of Islam.

The publication of these cartoons sparked widespread protests across the world, particularly in Muslim-majority countries. The absence of a clear explanation for the cartoons' purpose and the lack of sensitivity towards the religious beliefs of others fueled the anger and frustration of those who felt disrespected and targeted. This incident highlighted the importance of considering cultural and religious contexts when publishing content that may be perceived as provocative or insensitive.

Taking into consideration the context and reason behind the choice to print these cartoons, it can be understood why they were published. The primary context was to uphold the principle of freedom of speech and expression, as the newspaper aimed to demonstrate that satirical and provocative content should be allowed, even when it involves religious figures, as a part of democratic values and the right to free expression.

Another reason was that at the time, there was also growing concern in Europe about the media self-censoring because they didn't want to offend religious

people. The publication of these cartoons was an attempt to challenge this self-censorship and encourage open debate on the topic. Initially, the cartoons were part of a debate among Danish cartoonists about self-censorship, and their circulation was limited. However, when other European newspapers later reprinted them, they gained wider attention and sparked international outrage.

Unfortunately, the lack of context and sensitivity towards the religious beliefs of Muslims led to widespread misunderstandings and offenses. A more comprehensive contextual explanation could have helped in better understanding the newspaper's intentions and minimized the backlash. In conclusion, the contextual explanation for the publication of the cartoons revolves around defending freedom of speech and expression, challenging self-censorship, and promoting open debate.

Over the course of the subsequent three years, these images were replicated by print and digital media in fifty countries, while the concepts they conveyed were subsequently examined in greater depth by the French satirical publication Charlie Hebdo in 2011. However, it's very sad that what happened to editorial staff of the publication[44] in January 2015 is so disappointingly different from what Lawate asserted about how the form creates a "safe space." (2012)

Window into History

As mentioned above, political cartoons are substantial in the political discourse of democratic societies. They are extremely valuable as historical resources, providing a unique perspective on the past by reflecting the prevailing sentiments, attitudes and preserving the political, social, and cultural climates of various times. Analyzing the topics, symbols, issues, and portrayals of fashion, clothing and way of life helps historians to better grasp the historical background and the mental processes of the people in that age.

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[44] Charlie Hebdo shooting, Paris, January 7th, 2015: Two brothers, "Saïd" and "Chérif Kouachi", forced their way into the offices of the French satirical weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris. Armed with rifles and other weapons, they killed 12 people and injured 11 others. The gunmen identified themselves as belonging to the Islamic terrorist group "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula", which took responsibility for the attack. 4 Top Cartoonists, Including Editor, Killed, Some of the best-known cartoonists in France were among the 12 killed when gunmen stormed the office of satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo.
https://theconversation.com/five-years-on-from-the-charlie-hebdo-attack-je-suis-charlie-rings-hollow-129151

Editorial and political cartoons serve as a valuable historical resource, providing a window into history and a visual representation of the political climate, offering insights into the prevailing thoughts and discussions of a specific era and location. They not only capture the prevailing sentiments of a given moment but also provide valuable insights into the historical trajectory of a nation (Oliphant & Katz, 1998, p. 5). In a similar vein, contemporary editorial cartoons will undoubtedly serve as a testament to the zeitgeist (routine, mood) of our present time, revealing societal concerns, debates, and the evolution of political systems, reflecting "*cultural attitudes and values, and record and perpetuate many commonly held beliefs*" (Mazid, 2008, p. 443).

An Important Form of Journalism

Cartoons, which originated in Italy as a manifestation of the fine arts incorporating a novel visual language, experienced resurgence through their integration into the realm of journalism. In the execution of their professional responsibilities, political cartoonists diligently engage with current events to identify pertinent social and political matters. Subsequently, they employ visuals, which sum up those thousand words into a single picture, offering critique on the policies and conduct of political figures in instances where their leadership is deemed inappropriate or flawed. Conforming to Bounegru and Forceville (2011, p. 213), "*the cartoon amplifies and exaggerates the negative impact... through satirical effects.*" By adopting a negative tone, these commentators aim to provide commentary on ongoing events and exert influence on the political trajectory.

Political cartoonists are supposed to be smart, fast, and dedicated.

Cartoonists working in the editorial field face time constraints due to the dynamic nature of news and events. The critical nature of editorial cartooning is similar to engaging in political commentary, and it allows cartoonists to express their opinions and take a stance on various social and political matters. Political cartoonists, like other journalists, should highlight societal injustices, political misconduct, and instances of power abuse and systemic corruption. They

continuously monitor the actions and decisions of the government to reminder those in power that they are under scrutiny. Consequently, cartoonists should be smart, possess astute awareness of current significant issues, be swift (fast) and efficient in their responses to events, analogous to social activists, and promptly create and disseminate cartoons in appropriate periods of time.

Political cartoons, similar to the lead editorial, can fulfill any of the three basic functions of the news press: informing, influencing, and entertaining. As previously stated, political cartoons are grounded in contemporary news and events, thereby serving the purpose of informing audiences about these occurrences.

Political cartoonists play a fundamental role in stimulating critical thinking within society by presenting diverse viewpoints. Moreover, they consistently endeavor to enhance public consciousness and foster a dynamic public discourse. Through the utilization of satire and irony, political cartoons can broaden individuals' perspectives and encourage them to consider alternative viewpoints. The next discussion on "the communicative power of cartooning" (Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3) will delve deeper into the influential role of political cartoons, specifically focusing on their ability to encourage people to participate.

For an extended period, newspaper cartooning has served as a vehicle for the humorous and witty expression of political events. This genre provides a source of entertainment at the expense of politicians for readers of print media (see Figure 2.3). While some argue that life is too serious for laughter, it is important to recognize that laughter serves as an antidote and medicine for stress and a therapeutic outlet for those who are feeling down (refer to section 3.2.4). Through their art, cartoonists uplift individuals during moments of low spirits. Hence, political cartoons can be regarded as a **safety valve** and bring alleviating from tension and stress. This topic will be expounded in the 3rd Chapter (3.3.1 Humor).

Nonetheless, political cartoons provide critical analysis of current events, delivering more than just entertainment by exposing frauds or gaffes made by politicians. While only a minority may fully understand these cartoons, they

provide valuable insights for issues that may have been overlooked by casual observers. Similar to opinion pieces in newspapers, political cartoonists impact to a deeper understanding of political matters.

With the advent and widespread availability of print media, the art of cartooning emerged as a prominent form of journalism, serving as a means to convey social and political commentary. Political cartoons can be regarded as a visual manifestation of news discourse that effectively capture and reinforce prevailing societal beliefs.

With the ability to distill news and opinions into a visual form, political cartoons present intelligent, power-packed, and self-contained commentary and analysis of current events. Packed with a multitude of servings of creative satire, terse wit, and a vivid imagination, cartoons offer an open insight and interpretation of current affairs in a very modest space. Political cartoons are a unique form of political journalism system and contrasts with frequent forms of communication. They should be considered an anthology of journalistic that could be regarded as a factor in building, forming, and shaping public opinion (Ashfaq & Bin Hussein, 2013).

With this in mind, the significance of **quality journalism** in safeguarding democratic societies cannot be overstated. Within this framework, political cartoonists, functioning as journalists, assume a pivotal role in maintaining a system of checks and balances. Their artistic endeavors contribute to the overall quality of a democratic system, as they possess the ability to succinctly capture and expose societal injustices through a single cartoon, thereby stimulating public consciousness and fostering debate. Consequently, these cartoons have the potential to instigate positive societal changes and advancements. In societies that uphold freedom of speech and press, political cartoons hold a critical position within political discourse (Knieper, 2013).

This capability of undermining the legitimacy of absolute rulers, signifying the meanings and susceptibility to interpretation, addressing taboo subjects, and ability capturing the attention of a wide audience within print or modern digital

media enables them to become "powerful public opinion stirrers." (Chalaniova, 2011, pp. 7-8) She argues that political cartoons play a significant role in influencing the way people perceive various political issues and identities. Daniela Chalaniova's study focuses on how European identity is portrayed in British and Slovak political discourse, and she highlights the role of cartoons in shaping these perceptions. By analyzing the content and context of political cartoons from both countries, she aims to understand the underlying attitudes, stereotypes, and assumptions that influence public opinion on European identity (Chalaniova, 2011).

Ultimately, political cartoons' significance goes beyond their ability to be critical. Scholars emphasize the unique ability of political cartoons to quantify events and construct classification systems based on common cultural reference points. They argue that these cartoons can describe reader reactions across a broad range of values and beliefs. Medhurst and DeSousa (1981) discuss how political cartoons can effectively communicate complex ideas and emotions to a wide audience[45].

2.3. Digital Media Typology:

Mainstream: Editorial Cartoonists

The evolution process of cartooning from the Renaissance, the invention of the printing machine by Gutenberg in 1455, and the proliferation of cartoons across Northern Europe during Martin Luther's socio-religious Protestant reform entered a vital and decisive phase. During the late 19th century, with the prosperity of mass newspapers, and consequently in the 20th century, editorial cartoons flourished, achieved proper framing into communication context, and found their tribune in

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[45] They highlight the importance of cultural references in cartoons, which help create shared meanings and understanding among readers. Seymour-Ure (2001) also emphasizes the capacity of political cartoons to combine cultural references and construct classification systems. He believes that these systems can describe reader reactions to political events and issues, reflecting a wide range of values and beliefs. Finally, Morris (1993) further explores the role of cultural references in political cartoons. He explains how these references can be used to create classification systems that help readers identify and understand various political issues and values.

newspapers and magazines. As a general observation, most daily newspapers and weekly magazines started publishing various forms of cartoons.

Martin Luther is credited as the "creator" of editorial cartooning, according to Navasky (2013, p. 29). This distinction is attributed to Luther's work, specifically his use of woodcuts to spread his ideas and criticize the Catholic Church during the Reformation. Luther commissioned illustrations from a myriad of artists to convey his Reformist messages against the doctrines of the Catholic Church to the illiterate masses. This assertion highlights the historical significance of editorial cartoons in shaping public opinion and their enduring power to influence various social and political discourses. By tracing the origins of editorial cartooning to Martin Luther, Navasky emphasizes the long-standing impact of visual communication in conveying messages and challenging established norms and beliefs.

As to print media, "Editorial cartoon" and "Newspaper cartoon" could be applied with the same meaning, sense, and purpose. Newspaper cartoons refer to visuals specifically designed and created for publication in newspapers. These cartoons are characterized by their medium of distribution, which mirrors the publication's viewpoint. These cartoons are characterized not only by their publication format but also by embodying the perspective of the newspaper in which they appear. As visual representations in print media, newspaper cartoons can effectively convey the editorial stance or the general outlook of the publication they are part of.

As will be articulated later, print media have moved online to blogs and websites because of the development of electronic communication, making the term "newspaper cartoon" nearly obsolete (see Section 3-1). Editorial cartoons are based on current affairs and could thus be denoted as visual representations of news and events. They are graphic expressions of their creator's recognizable ideas and opinions, which are situated within the publication's framework of policies and viewpoints and are always controlled and filtered before publication. In the interim, Benjamin Barker (2016, p. 2) argues that the term "editorial" should be

understood as a descriptor of the cartoon's content rather than its medium of publication.

The illustrative space of cartoons provides an opportunity for **exaggeration** and **distortion** to be represented in publications that typically prioritize accuracy and order. These cartoons are disseminated through mass media platforms, including newspapers, news magazines, and the internet. Editorial cartoons serve as a valuable historical resource, providing a **window into history** and a visual representation of the political climate, offering insights into the prevailing thoughts and discussions of a specific era and location. In a similar vein, contemporary editorial cartoons will undoubtedly serve as a testament to the zeitgeist (routine, mood) of our present time.

Chris Lamb (2004) explores the similarities and differences between editorial cartoons and investigative journalism in terms of their roles in society[46]. Both forms of journalism serve as critical tools for informing the public, fostering debate, and promoting accountability in various aspects of society. Lamb argues that editorial cartoons, like investigative journalism, holds power structures accountable by shedding light on issues that might otherwise remain hidden or unaddressed (Lamb, 2004, p. 238)[47].

Lamb's viewpoint allows for defining the societal role of editorial cartooning as that of presenting argumentative critiques that expose the wrongdoings of people in power. In his study (2007) Chris Lamb explains the societal role of editorial cartooning as a form of political communication and

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[46] Editorial cartoonists, according to Lamb, critique politicians and celebrities more effectively than any other kind of political communication, comparing their role to investigative journalism in "*afflicting the comfortable and soothing the afflicted.*" (2004, p. 238). They provide alternative perspectives and challenge the status quo, encouraging the public to think critically about the world around them.

[47] However, there are some key differences between the two forms of journalism. Editorial cartoons primarily rely on visual storytelling and symbolism to convey their messages, whereas investigative journalism typically employs more traditional narrative and expository techniques. This difference in approach allows editorial cartoons to engage audiences in a more immediate and emotionally charged manner, often by tapping into shared cultural references and values. Additionally, Lamb highlights that editorial cartoons are more subjective in nature, as they reflect the personal opinions and artistic styles of their creators. This subjectivity allows cartoonists to express their unique perspectives and engage audiences in a more emotionally charged manner, often by tapping into shared cultural references and values. In contrast, investigative journalism strives for objectivity and adheres to strict journalistic standards to ensure accuracy and fairness. Despite these differences, both editorial cartoons and investigative journalism serve as vital components of a healthy democracy by fostering public discourse, promoting transparency, and encouraging citizens to actively engage with the issues that shape their society.

cultural expression. She highlights how cartoons offer social commentary on current events and issues and influence public opinion by presenting various viewpoints and perspectives. Also, they reflect cultural values by drawing from shared references and beliefs. Encourage critical thinking through satire, irony, and visual metaphors. In addition, editorial cartoons can serve as a form of resistance, challenging the status quo and giving voice to marginalized groups and perspectives (Lamb, 2007, p. 718).

When looking at the world through the eyes of an outsider who observes reality as unfair, immoral, and in need of correction, editorial cartoons serve as a catalyst for generating arguments and discussions in several ways, such as provoking thought, highlighting injustices, stimulating empathy, bridging gaps, facilitating critical analysis.

It is important to distinguish editorial cartoons from comic strips, as they serve distinct purposes within the realm of newspaper content. Unlike comic strips, which typically appear in dedicated comic sections or books, editorial cartoons are prominently featured on the newspaper's editorial or front page. They typically adopt a single-panel format and do not feature recurring characters as seen in comic strips.

It bears acknowledging that one of the key functions of editorial cartoons is to convey arguments or opinions, and they achieve this using humorous conventions. By employing humor, editorial cartoons reinforce shared beliefs and values within a community. They enhance the capacity of audiences to classify, systematize, and evaluate their observations, perceptions, and experiences regarding the world with greater efficacy. The perception of the editorial cartoon as a safe space for expressing ideas that may be avoided in the newspaper's comment section can be seen as a justification for attempting to depict such content (Lawate, 2012).

This assertion has already been borne out that editorial cartoons are considered essential for any newspaper, as demonstrated in this chapter's discussion about the genesis and evolution of cartoons. Print media, on the other

hand, is an emerging medium for political cartoons that makes them prominent and effective (Guild, 1979). For this very reason, editorial cartoons are a classic form of journalism and an essential one at that, and this is a fundamental fact.

Independent Political Cartoonists

It bears reiterating that in the classic form of journalism, editorial cartoons have become an essential component of print media over the past two centuries. Consequently, cartoonists may be limited to publishing their work solely in daily newspapers and weekly magazines. In such a workspace, numerous weaknesses and constraints were present. Print media were appropriating limited columns for cartoons; therefore, it resulted in limited professional vacancies for cartoonists. Meanwhile, people from all walks of life could not buy printed versions or did not have access to them; therefore, the number of addressees was limited.

But nowadays, as electronic communication has become more prevalent, newspapers have migrated to websites and blogs. Also, with the rapid development of information technology and the prosperity of social media, cartoons are experiencing substantial changes in both their content and methods of distribution. With access to new communication channels, every cartoonist with a pencil in his hand and a computer in his house can be an independent journalist and an effective communicator. They could publish their cartoons independently, indefinitely, anywhere, anytime, and reach unlimited audiences. Every cartoonist, adapting to the rapid rhythm of changes, could have a personal website and social media pages. They may now easily stay up to date, catch the latest news around the world, create political cartoons to convey their thoughts, and post them on private or public social networks. This facility for quick reaction and publication appears ideally appropriate for the age of instant messaging and will aid political cartoonists in surviving within the digital revolution.

Digital image productions, with the ability of rapid distribution and ability of "going viral" in social media, are, in a way, becoming a political statement. A notable surge is evident in the proliferation of websites that are dedicated to the dissemination of political expression, humorous commentary, and visual puns.

These websites have witnessed a steady rise in both visitor numbers and overall popularity, akin to the influence exerted by political cartoons in conventional media. Thus, this phenomenon represents the convergence of the digital age with the realm of political cartoons (Benson, 2015).

The **control** and **filter** exerted by the editorial team imposes constraints on the artist, resulting in self-censorship and violation of free speech. The emergence of social networks has provided new channels of communication, which presents momentous opportunities for political cartoonists. They offer extensive access to a broad audience without the constraints and controls imposed by the editorial team and media owners. While the decline of print media has undermined job security for cartoonists and they are no longer the best channel of distribution, cartoonists can utilize digital media to bypass this "bottleneck" and deliver their sensitive and controversial topics, which previously had to be approved by newspaper editors before publication (Zarifian, Volkova, & Lazutova, 2022, p. 637).

Furthermore, it could be contended that independent digital political cartoonists have broken free from the systematic censorship that, over the years, has been traditionally enforced by governments and media organizations. Political satire in this sense will not suffer from self-censorship, becoming clearer, distinct, and even harsh, leading to an embrace of civic achievements more than ever and defending the democracy that relies on the free competition of ideas, even controversial ones.

Independent political cartoonists have unbounded their fate from print media. While the future of traditional editorial cartoons in newspapers seems uncertain, the prospects for digital political cartoons appear bright and promising and will remain as an everlasting form of political satire despite fierce competitors such as **photomontages,** online **memes**, and recently popular AI-generated images.

With all these benefits and opportunities in mind, political cartoonists may have their own dedicated personal websites, social media pages, or alternative online platforms to keep up with their work, and thereby digital political cartoons are reaching a broader range of audiences than ever before. However, it is

imperative to stress that the artists themselves are often not paid for the widespread publication of their works, and even when they are, the payment is next to nothing. In contemporary times, a significant proportion of cartoonists operate as independent contractors or have their cartoons overseen and disseminated by syndicates. This shift in the industry landscape has presented considerable challenges for these artists in terms of financial remuneration, rendering their ability to generate income through this avenue considerably more arduous compared to the situation prevailing several decades ago.

Ultimately, it could be concluded that in the digital era of the media, political cartoons are undergoing significant changes in both their content and the method by which they are distributed and accessed. It can be definitively claimed that digital political cartoons will continue to serve as a medium for political commentary and exert influence over public opinion and societal culture.

Concluding Remarks

The historical and scientific reasoning presented in this chapter highlights the evolution of cartoons from low art to high art, transitioning from mere decorative and illustrative purposes to cultural artifacts deserving of critical analysis. The historical continuity between religious graphics of the 16th century and modern political cartoons has been revealed, the role of cartoons as a "visual barometer" of freedom of speech has been proved, and an original typology of digital cartoons has been developed.

Cartoons that can transform news and commentary into a drawing provide an easily accessible and instant interpretation of contemporary issues. To recapitulate, political cartoons could be denoted as visual representation of the news and events, operate as a kind of visual ***news discourse*** and have a unique interpretive position on the news agenda. Political cartoonists employ various illustrative and rhetorical techniques (as will be discussed in the 3rd Chapter) to offer valuable perspectives on current news and events. Beyond simply depicting

the core elements of these issues or occurrences, their visual representations serve as a structure for organizing societal understanding.

Apart from encapsulating the crux of various issues, the visual aspect of these images serves as a structure for organizing social understanding. This framework offers recipients a set of "condensing symbols" (Gamson & Stuart, 1992, p. 60) that help identify the main theme or core idea behind the depicted issue, thereby facilitating the processing and interpretation of social knowledge. In their 1992 study, William Gamson and David Stuart discuss political cartoonists' role in shaping public discourse. They highlight how cartoonists create symbolic representations that engage audiences in discussions around relevant issues, often by using humor and visual metaphors. These cartoonists function as influential participants in the symbolic contest of media discourse, contributing to the formation and interpretation of shared beliefs and values within a community (Gamson & Stuart, 1992). For this very reason, it is a fundamental fact that political cartoons are a form of journalism and an important digital form of that (Zarifian, 2020).

It is worth mentioning that political cartoons are an integral, impartible part of political journalism. They provide a clear and distinguished alternative to official news reporting and get rid of the political discourse that is always increasingly obscure and ambiguous. Cartoons with the capability to distill news and comments into a drawing provide easily reachable and instant interpretation of contemporary issues. This unique form of journalism is in contrast with conventional forms of communication, which can provide a useful interpretation of the current news and events. They express stories in a way that articles could not explain. They capture the imitable human nature of their intended subjects in order to humanize the topic they depict, more effective than writing or video. In this form of journalism, its satirical character enhances its appeal. By combining humor with the prevalent political news, cartoonists can buttress their ideas, focusing on the frequently ridiculous nature of stories. However, rather than despise this cross-

examination, politicians regularly defend them, using their depictions as indications of their quality or state of being closely connected or appropriate.

The key conclusion is that in the digital age, cartoons retain the status of a powerful tool of social criticism, combining traditional techniques of visual rhetoric with new distribution formats. The uniqueness lies in its ability to "humanize" complex political narratives through the grotesque (through exaggeration) and metaphor.

CHAPTER 3 - CARTOON AS COMMUNICATION PHENOMENON

The preceding chapter has emphasized the evolution of caricature and cartoon as they have progressed from being considered primitive art based on deformity to being recognized as deeper visual language. The historical trajectory of cartoon art has been characterized by an ongoing process of artistic innovation and evolution. This artistic and semantic evolution has involved a shift from their initial role as purely decorative and illustrative elements to being regarded as complex means of communication deserving of critical evaluation. The discussion in this chapter pivots around the topic "Cartoon as Communication Phenomenon".

Communication has become Inseparable part of human lives, and the visual modes of communication has been utilized in traditional print media and recently in digital media as a genuine means of communicating very serious subjects metaphorically and symbolically.

Communication, whether through verbal or visual means, serves a dual purpose of indicating the presence or absence of a subject as well as encompassing a normative assessment of the spoken subject or event, thereby defining its essence, characteristics, and relationships. In this vein, Daniela Chalaniova asserts that communication "*gives the subject its content, its meaning within a wider social context*." (2011, p. 5) Therefore, in addition to determining the existence of a communicative community or shared identity, it is imperative to scrutinize the conveyed meanings pertaining to both the subject and the community itself.

Visual communications rely on the personal experiences of individuals with visual motifs as well as on the principles of visual conformity and similarity. While journalistic or academic texts are based on argumentation and advocacy to support a particular cause, pictorial and graphical representations ***employ logical associations to connect disparate*** concepts that may not be easily comprehensible through written or oral communication.

It does not sound far-fetched that visual messages are one of the simple but most effective means of communication. Human beings possess the remarkable ability to rapidly process visual information, granting them a significant advantage

over alternative modes of communication. It goes without saying that in the process of communication, it is commonly observed that the recipient tends to disregard lengthy texts that provide extensive information, and instead, favors a concise and easily comprehensible visual representation that can be assimilated within a brief moment.

The efficacy and communication abilities of political cartoons were jointly disregarded by historians and researchers on the basis of merely aesthetic considerations, as Gombrich ([1963] 1994, p. 127) demonstrates. According to Peter Burke (2010, p. 436), an image's aesthetic quality should not detract from its importance as a communication medium. Instead, he argues that they allow scholars, much like the study of textual sources, to reaffirm ideas about historical politics in a particular era. By accepting this assumption, it may be stated that a cartoon's most important communication aspect is how it is represented rather than what it conveys (Duus, 2001, p. 966).

In this sense, the art of cartooning can be regarded as a quick means of communication because cartoonists can grab the attention of their audiences and provide them with a full perception of the issue in a single glance. Cartoons and caricatures are usually much faster, cheaper, more flexible, and editable than video or other visual productions. The peculiarity of a cartoon allows it to serve as an extraordinarily versatile form of communication, capable of amplifying, emphasizing, and distorting the traits of individuals or prominent aspects of a situation. By creating a semblance of the original subject, cartoons effectively convey the intended message.

All communication experts concurred that visuals significantly assist in stimulating the interests of recipients. In mass media, political cartoons are being embraced as a powerful communicative weapon (Mateus, 2016) and are equally recognized for their ability to facilitate comprehension by creating vivid mental images, expediting understanding, enhancing memory retention, and fostering a sense of collective experience. The incorporation of satirical and ironic elements in cartoons can serve as a catalyst for expanding individuals' perspectives. With this

in mind, cartoonists adeptly employ clichés but prompt critical thinking and encourage audiences to think beyond the clichés instilled by political and societal systems.

The subsequent passage highlights the model of communication and communicative abilities of political cartoons, underscoring that viewers possess an innate capacity to decipher symbolic representations within cartoons and inclined to promptly comprehend the intended messages conveyed through cartoons in comparison to other modes of communication. The aforementioned suggests that through a comprehensive comprehension of individuals and their needs, cartoons are conducive to contribute to an expansive and dynamic communication endeavor. Drawing from the following arguments, it can be inferred that cartoons within the contemporary media landscape possess a remarkable efficacy in conveying information, thereby aiding in our comprehension of the world in a positive manner.

3.1. Model of Communication in Political Cartoons
(the Author, the Message, the Target Audience)

In the context of communicative performances, Yakobson (1996) outlines a model of communication that encompasses several key elements. These elements include the communicator, the communicative purpose, the approach taken by the communicator towards both the purpose and the receiver, the body of the message (including its subject and topic), the form in which the message is presented, the function of the message, and the receiver. Based on this model, in a political cartoon, a communicator is the cartoonist or editorial staff of the publication. For that reason, the study of the uniqueness of a political cartoon as a particular kind of **creolized text**, which is characterized by the fusion of two constituents, verbal and non-verbal, shows a prominent principle of individual authorship, from the idea to its embodiment.

The primary purpose and objective of a political cartoon is to employ satire as a means of critiquing specific political events, behaviors, or policies associated with political figures. The approach of the communicator to the communicative

purpose, as an essential rule, is ironic and, in tandem, critical; the message is regularly dedicated to a recent event at the present time. It bears acknowledging that in this model of communication, the instant reaction and response of the recipient are crucial factors. Consequently, political cartoons pertaining to events that occurred in the distant past are relatively infrequent (Vinson, 1967).

Echoing the views of Lamb (2007), Zarifian pinpoints that political cartoons constitute forms of perpetual opposition within the political landscape and communicate quick ideas of criticism that expose the wrongdoings of their chosen subjects (Zarifian, Political cartoons in strategic communication, 2023). These images provide argumentative criticism by observing the world through the perspective of a cartoonist who perceives the status quo as unjust, immoral, and desperately in need of correction (Lamb, 2007, p. 718).

The significance of political cartoons extends beyond their capacity for criticism. Their ability to challenge the legitimacy of those politicians in positions of power, propagate ideological and political messages, and be susceptible to interpretation, as well as their keenness to address sensitive, controversial, and taboo topics within print or digital media, position them as powerful public opinion provocateurs. Consequently, political parties recognize their potential as strategic communication tools in political campaigns.

Synthesizing written and visual constituents, cartoonists, as highly skilled in communication, consistently choose the last two modes from the four fundamental modes of communication: verbal, nonverbal, written, and visual. Their objective is to visualize the verbal and, accordingly, convey rich concepts and ideas in an effective manner. They enhance their impact by utilizing artistic and a variety of rhetorical devices such as irony, metaphor, symbols, captions, and parody to persuade readers to adopt specific viewpoints. These functionalities adhere to the core ideas of strategic communication, which include identifying the purpose and audiences, establishing appropriate channels, and employing effective message structure strategies such as engagement and persuasion (Zarifian, 2023).

Each cartoon narrates a story, depicting an event or a situation. Cartoon is in an attempt to create a new method of storytelling. It has always been considered as a direct and fast method of communication, because of its compressed form and aiming to narrate big messages with less material. Extrapolating this point further, political cartoons are very subjective. In the opinion of Hess and Northrop, good cartoons and cartoonists should be "unabashedly subjective" (2011). The proficiency of a prosperous cartoonist extends beyond mere artistic talent and the ability to draw well. A political cartoonist deploys his/her drawing and communicative skills alongside a sense of humor to illustrate an event, personage, an ideology, or an opinion. This skill encompasses the capacity to condense intricate concepts into concise verbal and visual representations. It is through this expedited mode of communication that cartoons effectively convey their intended messages. Political cartoons are a form of communication that could be used to illustrate the narrative of a talk or lecture. When this sort of approach is used well, the audience will really look forward to the next stage of the communication as they wait to see the subsequent picture in the narrative. Addressees are so anxious for linear narrative storytelling that this can often be the most memorable form of presentation that can be performed.

Digital Model of Communication in Political Cartoons

The core idea of this section posits that the development of cartoon art throughout history has progressed from primitive depictions of deformity to more sophisticated artistic endeavors, ultimately culminating in a multifaceted medium capable of conveying complex messages. The main topic of discussion is the rise and decline of the political cartoon during the Irving Fang-described "Information Revolutions".

In this analysis, we will explore the current state of political cartoonists in today's diverse media space and the challanges they encounter. By investigating the rise of alternative media platforms, the study assess how they might relate to

the future of political cartoons and the fate of print media. Additionally, the question of whether "political cartoons are <u>a dying form of art</u>" will be addressed.

Information Revolutions

In 1997, Irving Fang, a prominent communication researcher, proposed a comprehensive framework for understanding the history of mass communication. Fang delineated the intricate and long-lasting history of mass communication into six distinct periods, commonly referred to as "Information Revolutions." [48] (1997)

In the late nineteenth century, the advent and widespread use of recording equipment facilitated the dissemination of films, music, and printed materials, leading to a significant shift in the way information was consumed. This transformative period, as coined by Irving Fang, has been referred to as the "Entertainment Revolution". The introduction of communication devices such as telephones, broadcasting systems, and modern printers further revolutionized information access within the confines of one's home. Finally, the last Information Revolution, which emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, ushered in the era of the "information highway", representing the culmination of these advancements (Fang, 1997).

In each neighborhood of the "Information Revolution", from the Printing press to the World Wide Web and eventually, to the sixth stage, the "information highway," or with the turn of each century, media has been dramatically changed. It is no surprise that the media's content also inevitably evolves. The predominant perception of the Six Information Revolutions centers on the notable surge in the pace of transformation. However, a substantial obstacle lies in the fact that our progress has not kept up with the rapid advancements in technology. Consequently,

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[48] This chronological evolution of mass communication includes the Writing Revolution, which began in the eighth century B.C.; the Printing Revolution, which began in the fifteenth century; the Mass Media Revolution, which began in the middle of the 19th century and coincided with the prosperity of mass newspapers, the telegraph, and photography; the Entertainment Revolution, which began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and encompassing recorded sound and images; the 'Toolshed' Revolution, which nowadays, the term 'Toolshed' could be considered as 'home' and began in the mid-twentieth century, considering the home as the particular position of entertainment communication; and ultimately the Information Highway Revolution.

numerous individuals may perceive incessant change as unsettling rather than stimulating.

Today's Media Landscape

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the practice of political cartooning emerged as a means of propagating ideological and sensational material. This medium was employed by both the Central and Allied Powers throughout World War I and II to commission cartoonists to depict the enemy as evil and to exalt the conflict, thereby bolstering public backing on the home front (Göçek, 1998, p. 5).

After the turn of the 20th century, there was a notable transformation in editorial cartooning, whereby it transitioned from being predominantly associated with partisan newspapers to adopting a more impartial approach in the 1920s, which was referred to as objective journalism[49]. This shift is substantiated by the observed reduction in the dimensions of printed editorial cartoons, indicating a change in their influence and purpose (Zarifian, Volkova, & Lazutova, 2022, p. 633). Moreover, for the duration of the era, spanning from the aftermath of the American Civil War to the First World War, political cartoons began to be incorporated into the field of yellow journalism. However, with the conclusion of World War I, the prominence of yellow journalism waned as the increasingly educated middle class developed a greater preference for objective and unbiased media content. This trend gave rise to the emergence of contemporary critical political cartooning (p. ibid.).

Political cartoons were in their heyday during the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s, especially Herbert Block's depictions of an ominous-looking Richard Nixon in The Washington Post, which is frequently referred to as the golden age of

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[49] Objective journalism developed as the consumer marketplace expanded. Facts and news could be sold to consumers. Objective journalism distinguishes factual reports from opinion columns, modern reporters strive to maintain a neutral attitude toward the issue or story they cover, and gain more readers.

The term "Objective journalism" began to appear as part of journalism after the turn of the 20th century, particularly in the 1920s, out of a growing recognition that journalists were full of bias, often unconsciously.

The shift from print-based journalism to electronic media began in the 1920s. Competition between newspapers and radio was minimal, because the latter was not yet effective news medium. People listened to radio bulletins, but to "read all about it" they picked up a tabloid or a broadsheet.

this genre. However, the emergence of alternative weekly publications during the 1980s and 1990s has led to a substantial decline in the production of political cartoons. This decline can primarily be attributed to the consolidation of the newspaper industry under large conglomerates and the increasing prevalence of online distribution platforms.

Political Cartoons in the Digital Sphere

It is no surprise that with the turn of each century, the changes during each "Information Revolution" have been inevitable and dramatic. In recent times, the rapid advancement of social media has given rise to novel manifestations of media culture, political satire, and societal involvement (Semotiuk & Shevchenko, 2022). Thereby, the media's content also evolves; these manifestations are predominantly exemplified by Internet memes, and political cartoons follow the same rule. In the contemporary era of the internet, cartoons are undergoing substantial changes in both their content and the manner in which they are disseminated and accessed. It is evident that the World Wide Web and social media platforms, as new communication channels, hold immense potential for the future evolution of political cartoons.

The Contemporary Status, Decline, or Viability of Political Cartooning

This section explores the question, "Political Cartoons, are a Dying Form of Art?" The answer may take on an ironic quality, as the decline of political cartoons can be traced back to the same factors that initially drove their evolution in the 19th century: technological innovations and the organizational and economic advantages offered by media institutions. It is worth considering whether the rise of the Internet in the digital age will eventually render print media obsolete and consequently eliminate political cartoons. Anticipating the future, particularly in terms of technological progress, is a daunting task. However, it can be argued that the advent of digital media has dramatically altered the significance and role of political cartoons. Nevertheless, it is indispensable to admit the unfortunate reality that political cartoons may be in the final stages of decline.

In the past few years, the print media, which has traditionally been the primary mainstay for cartoonists, has encountered significant obstacles and difficulties. They are grappling with a steep decline in sales, increasing costs, a decrease in readership, and a decline in advertising revenue. Extensive statistical surveys conducted on the US press by Watson (2019) reveal that the total earnings of publishers based in the United States have experienced a substantial decline over the past decade, dropping from 46 billion US dollars in 2007 to approximately 28 billion in 2017. In the face of such wide-reaching financial burdens and costs, many publications were compelled to discontinue their print editions. in the interim, media owners have been searching for intermediate solutions to counter declining sales over the years. Reducing the size of the conventional broadsheets to tabloid format has been one of these strategies (Benson, 2015). Meanwhile, editors are switching out cartoons for advertisements and photo montages to cut expenses.

In numerous instances, political cartoons are frequently published in tiny dimensions, with little room to show off. This phenomenon clarifies another factor that influence the waning prominence of political cartoons in digital era. Political cartoonists find themselves in unfair competition with less specialized forms of visual satire. As a result, political cartoons struggle to assert their influence and differentiate themselves amidst the flood of information, online memes, manipulated images, and photomontage. This vulnerability undermines the importance of political cartoons, rendering them obsolete in the competitive landscape.

In some conflict-prescribed societies, fortifications are built to prevent public outrage over sensitive issues like religion and race. Modern political cartoons were initially created to attract readership, but the shift to media empires and corporate conglomerates has made editors responsible for a diverse consumer base. This pressure to avoid insulting larger segments of the community has unconstructive economic impacts (Lamb, 2004, p. 40). Political cartoons in this condition are subject to self-censorship. As a result, they tend to become more ambiguous and symbolic to evade repercussions, ultimately imposing limitations

on civic progress, which could undermine the democracy that relies on the free competition of ideas, even offensive ones.

Unhappily, within a generation that has been exposed to mostly banal content on social media, there is a noticeable lack of interest among audiences for satirical and critical commentary. This, coupled with staff cuts and shrinking budgets for freelance work, has pushed political cartooning into a tight spot. In today's climate of information overload, political cartoons have shrunk to an undersized space of a loud, congested information highway. The government, financial constraints, and media interests are infringing upon the freedom of journalists. Considering these factors, it becomes evident that political cartoons, although still pleasant, engaging, and memorable in storytelling, are experiencing a significant decline and are losing much of their centrality and former impact.

In contemporary internet culture, the emergence of new behavioral patterns, the proliferation of banal content, the blending of disparate ideas, and the vast array of social media platforms have rendered it exceedingly difficult to provide a straightforward yet comprehensive analysis of political satire, as was previously achieved through political cartoons. Rather than attempting to discern the underlying meanings and captions crafted by skilled editorial commentators, public opinion is increasingly being influenced by **photomontages** and online **memes** (Benson, 2015). Consequently, newspaper cartoons no longer hold the same level of significance as they did during the third phase of the Information Revolution, referred to by Irving Fang (1997) as the 'Mass Media' era, or in the subsequent 'Entertainment' era.

Political cartoonists are endangered due to the abovementioned reasons coupled with new business models in digital media. As print media transition to online versions, it could be expected that the need for political cartoonists may fully diminish. Zarifian, Volkova, and Lazutova (2022, p. 635) warn that the next generation of professional political cartoonists may be few and of low quality due to reduced wages and job opportunities. The emergence of electronic communication has granted editors with a wide array of syndicated cartoons,

thereby thinning their reliance on in-house cartoonists. Consequently, the economic rationale for maintaining a consistently employed team of cartoonists has become less compelling (Danjoux, 2007, p. 247).

In contrast to the 1980s, a panoramic examination would demonstrate a substantial decline in the employment of full-time cartoonists within American newspapers. During that era, approximately 300 cartoonists enjoyed stable, esteemed, and financially rewarding positions. However, at present, only a small number of cartoonists are consistently employed, primarily due to the decrease in newspaper circulation and the fall in advertising income (Marlette, 2004, p. 21).

The majority of cartoonists are now operating as freelancers or having their cartoons managed and distributed by syndicates. This transition has presented considerable challenges for them in terms of financial remuneration as compared to the situation two decades ago. Some political cartoonists have taken the initiative to establish their own dedicated personal websites or send their works to online platforms. Although the advent of digital media has facilitated the dissemination of political cartoons to a broader audience, it is disheartening that artists receive little money for the extensive publication of their works.

Digital media also cause new technical challenges for political cartoonists, as it is not compatible with traditional illustrated forms. Unlike in print editions, where cartoons have a regular and constant daily position, digital political cartoons do not reach the same level of exposure and may be invisible to viewers. In print newspapers, cartoons have a eye-catching manifestation that cannot be easily ignored by readers, even if they have no particular interest in cartoons. The contrast between the font and the image, as well as the power of visual language, naturally draws the reader's eyes to the cartoon. However, on a website, visitors have to actively search for cartoons, whereas in a print newspaper, they will come across them whether they intend to or not.

Digital image creations are, in some ways, evolving into political statements as a result of the influence of computer software, the recent prosperity of AI, and the potential for picture manipulation with the end purpose of satirical critique. The

use of image-distorting software for the purpose of intentional deception has become a popular pastime among graphic enthusiasts and designers. These manipulated images, often accompanied by political cartoons and humorous texts, have become ingrained in the collective consciousness of the public. The proliferation of websites dedicated to political expression, humorous commentary, and visual puns is evidence of the growing popularity and widespread appeal of this phenomenon. These websites are experiencing a steady increase in visitor numbers and overall popularity. It could be compared to the long-time role and functions of political cartoons in traditional media. This is where the digital age meets political cartoons.

AI-generated images have gained significant influence in today's society, particularly through their rapid dissemination and potential to go viral on social media platforms. This has led to their emergence as the modern-day equivalent of political cartoons. In particular, memes and photo montages have gained popularity as a cost-effective alternative to traditional cartoons[50].

The profession may die, but the genre lives on!

Unfortunately, in today's media environment, political cartoons are becoming increasingly marginalized. However, their capacity to illuminate the truth expose the wrongdoings of those in power, and aware the public hasn't reduced. Taking an optimistic perspective and considering the rise of new media alternatives, there is hope that cartoonists will be able to adapt to the rapid pace of change. Over time, quality journalism and credible voices may be more appreciated by the audience. Political cartoons, as punctual and meaningful images, serve as a versatile form of communication that can swiftly and responsibly respond to events and be easily updated. Their ability to react and update quickly, as well as convey complex messages succinctly, makes them well-

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[50] While the extent to which photo montages are replacing cartoons remains a topic of debate, it is worth considering the potential shift in effectiveness when newspapers transition from print to online platforms due to financial constraints. In this scenario, the question arises as to whether photo montages or memes will prove to be more impactful online media compared to static cartoons.

suited for the age of instant messaging and positions them favorably to endure the digital revolution.

Although, upon realistic observation, it is evident that political cartoons are no longer the primary focus of the Central Tribune and are gradually losing their prominence and centrality, the assertion that visual satire in the form of political cartoons is becoming fully obsolete in the digital age seems pessimistic (Zarifian, Volkova, & Lazutova, 2022, p. 637) Needless to say, as political cartoons lose their central role, newspapers will lose the "Opinion Pages" and journalism will be deprived of one of its most powerful tools for promoting democracy. Until two decades ago, cartoons in traditional media were considered barometers of political freedom and reliable indicators of satirical commentary on social and political matters. Certainly, the decline in power and influence of political cartoons is not a result of their satirical potency diminishing. Rather, it is a striking consequence of the changing tastes of audiences and economic models within the media industry. As scholars specializing in cartoons, we perceive this unhappy situation as a significant loss. Nevertheless, it is evident that the spirit of cartoons and satirical commentary in the modern media landscape remains robust and vibrant and will undoubtedly *discover new avenues for expression* in the future.

In tandem with media advancements, political cartoons have undergone substantial transformations in terms of their **content, presentation, distribution, and access**. It is difficult to predict with certainty how these cartoons will continue to evolve in the future. However, one thing that can be stated definitively is that they will continue to serve as a platform for political expression and exert influence over public opinion and societal culture. The emergence of social networks has presented both opportunities and challenges for political cartoonists. On the flip side, it offers extensive access to a wider audience without the constraints of editorial control. This could potentially create a more optimistic outlook for the future of political cartoons. On the other hand, the decline of newspapers as the primary means of distribution has undermined job security for cartoonists. Nevertheless, social media provide a platform to bypass traditional

gatekeepers and freely address sensitive topics that would have previously required approval from newspaper editors. As independent commentators, they now have the ability to adress to a mass audience and benefit their artistic freedoms without the control and restrictions imposed by editorial teams.

In light of the emergence of new digital media alternatives, it can be predicted that the future of political cartoons will no longer be tied exclusively to print media. While the future of traditional editorial cartoons in newspapers remains uncertain, the prospects for political cartoons in digital format appear promising and optimistic. However, to reiterate, this article employs the terms "editorial cartoon" and "political cartoon" interchangeably, as they share the same meaning, function, and purpose. Ultimately, in conclusion, it is possible to distinguish these two terms based on their future outlook. Rather than lamenting the decline of print media, it may be opportune to embrace the rise of digital alternatives for editorial cartoons.

To recapitulate, from the discussions and findings in this section regarding Evolution of Cartoons throughout the History of Mass Communication, I may draw the following conclusion: the profession may die, but the genre still stays!

3.2. The Communicative Power of Cartooning

In general, cartoons are defined as illustrations that use an exaggerated, stylized approach to create critical and mostly humorous effects (OED, Oxford English Dictionary, 2016). The utilization of cartoons possesses the ability to entertain, convey sharp criticism, or concurrently offer social commentary. Nevertheless, it is the brevity with which these messages are conveyed that solidifies the medium as an essential tool within the domain of communication.

The examination of cartooning within a communicative context gained credibility through the efforts of artists who used their sketched lines to succinctly depict complex events, effectively conveying messages that condense a multitude of ideas into a single image (Davies, 2004, p. 6). As discussed in the 2nd Chapter (Section 2.2.1), the ability of cartoons to serve as indicators of political freedom in

societies is underscored by the humorous, cultural, and societal uproar that these forms often provoke. Mazid's analysis demonstrates that cartoons efficiently reflect and sustain prevalent beliefs, simultaneously capturing and echoing cultural mindsets and values (2008, p. 443).

It is crucial to acknowledge the communicative values of cartoons, which, devoid of textual or explanatory elements, are considered a kind of fine art and also have a universality property like music. In encountering these types of cartoons, the viewer does not need to read captions to understand humor or underlying meanings. In this vein, cartoons could transcend language and time barriers. Stemming from the point that understanding the language and linguistic intricacies does not pose a hindrance for the audience, they are able to grasp the intended messages conveyed by the cartoonist through careful analysis of the signs and visual components. This genre of cartoon, characterized by its susceptibility to interpretation, does not pertain to a specific temporal context or particular event. Rather, the messages and ideas conveyed through these cartoons possess a timeless quality and can be relevant and applicable in any era or location. Moreover, these cartoons serve to facilitate the formation of vivid mental images, enhance comprehension speed, aid in memory retention, and foster a sense of shared experience among viewers. Visual icons have been proven to strengthen concepts and make them more memorable. Visually compelling and aesthetically pleasing graphics have the potential to sustain interest and promote active participation even after the initial purpose for their creation has elapsed. Communicating "take-home" messages, Cartoons make them suitable for dissemination through contemporary mass media platforms. The utilization of metaphors, humor, irony, and allusions in cartoons is renowned for its capacity to convey prominent ideas. Cartoons are primarily well-suited for disseminating ideas and conveying messages due to their ability to captivate audiences. It is widely believed that visual imagery has a more lasting impact on viewers' minds compared to words that are read or heard.

Cartoonists make complicated and boring messages more understandable

Cartoons serve as an ideal medium for effectively reaching a broad audience. They are commonly employed in public service communications to visually depict and reinforce the written content of the message. This approach ensures that individuals who may be illiterate or non-native speakers can comprehend the central concept being conveyed. The idea can be quickly understood within a matter of seconds, eliminating the need for a lengthy explanation. Reciprocally, when one needs to convey a message, which must be done through verbal communication, cartoons serve to enhance the message. As a result, they are becoming more prevalent in scientific textbooks.

According to Wylie (2012), illustrated communication is a dynamic and captivating method that can be applied across various genres. Utilizing mediums such as comic strips, cartoons, and other forms of graphic storytelling can effectively stimulate individuals to engage with, comprehend, and retain the conveyed messages. The cartoon possesses a remarkable capacity to transform intricate and complicated ideas into a straightforward, lively, and evident form of communication. Cartoonists possess the skill to take a complex strategic transformation process and, through their artistic talent, create a visually captivating "rich picture" that encapsulates its essence. When presented with a skillfully crafted illustration, viewers do not struggle to comprehend intricate concepts, as the cartoon has already anticipated and depicted them for immediate understanding.

Humorous images have a captivating effect on individuals, as they possess the ability to arouse positivity, entertain, engage, and inspire. It is widely acknowledged that people are drawn to amusement, and this approach becomes particularly effective when it is unexpected. There's a good reason why audiences enjoy seeing cartoons alongside boring text. This mix helps lighten the mood, makes people laugh, and keeps them interested. Creating illustrations that show what's happening in a presentation can break down communication barriers and help build a real emotional connection between the audience, the presenter, and the

topic. As a result, this gives organizations a powerful way to share their ideas and goals in a way that's engaging and inspiring for their audience

The utilization of cartoons can be advantageous in fostering a *sense of positivity* towards a particular concept due to their precision, immediacy, and simplicity. This is particularly valuable when attempting to effectively convey a message. Despite the potential apprehension associated with implementing changes in communication methods, the inherent charm, positive energy, and liveliness of the communicator can aid in overcoming resistance and facilitating the mediation of negative thoughts and emotions. Additionally, cartoons are often associated with humor, joyfulness, and entertainment from childhood experiences, making them a suitable tool for alleviating boredom or tension during a session. By serving as icebreakers, cartoons have the power to unite an audience through shared communication and a sense of humor. This is particularly advantageous when engaging with a group of individuals who are unfamiliar with each other.

Cartoonists cut through the clutter

In the realm of cartoons, the adage "*A picture is worth a thousand words*" is upheld. Artists emphasize the effectiveness and value of cartoons in conveying messages by employing simplistic drawings that succinctly capture intricate events and articulate ideas that condense a multitude of words into a single image (Davies, 2004, p. 6). Cartoons are frequently characterized by their concise and impactful nature. Brevity and artistic singularity all serve in a fast and effective method of communication. While they may not rely heavily on dialogue, they possess a unique ability to address the audience **sarcastically** and sometimes **directly**. This straightforward approach allows cartoons to effectively communicate their intended point, while their simplicity and sharpness facilitate a swift reception and retention of the message within the minds of viewers. Feldman (2005) contends that language is undeniably effective in conveying messages and putting arguments together. However, it lacks the demonstrated capacity of visual images to evoke emotions.

In addition, political cartoonists persistently engage in their professional responsibilities by regularly monitoring current events to identify pertinent social and political matters. They then create visual representations that capture the heart of these complex issues, and skillfully critiquing the policies and actions of politicians when their leadership is seen as inappropriate or flawed.

They bravely encourage people to participate

In social and political discourse, cartoons function as a compelling medium to engage and encourage public participation. Using satire, irony, and symbolism, cartoons make complex ideas easier to understand taht helps a wider audience grasp the issues and motivates them to join in discussions and debates about what's being shown. As it will be observed in selected cartoons in Chapter four, the relatability and emotional resonance fostered by cartoons (see for example Figure 4.22), often grounded in shared cultural experiences, create a sense of connection and belonging among viewers. For example as discussed in Figure 4.25, this emotional connection inspires people to share their thoughts, leading to more active participation in exchanging ideas and opinions.

Visual media, such as political cartoons, have the power to influence public discourse and shape societal values. These visual representations function as a form of "public rhetoric" that can either reinforce or challenge existing social norms and beliefs, and they can also engage the public in discussions about critical social issues and contribute to the formation of a more informed, responsible, and engaged citizenry.

Political cartoonists bear a significant obligation to facilitate individuals in cultivating a more discerning perspective towards their work and our responses to it. As discussed in the prior discussion in Section 1.2.5, "Stereotype and cliché", rather than perpetuating gender clichés, anti-ethnic and anti-racial stereotypes, or inflame passions, they possess the power to advocate for peace and consensus. The crux of the matter is that cartoonists need to participate in social debate to encourage people to fulfill their social responsibilities. The purpose of cartoons is not to bring about change, but rather to reflect and reinforce societal norms and

values. They serve as a means for individuals to recall and engage with cultural beliefs, ultimately contributing to their preservation. Coupe asserts that cartoonists, like journalists, are invested in creating, manipulating, and shaping public opinion (1969, p. 82).

They make scary topics less threatening

As has been discussed in the 2nd Chapter, political cartoons as <u>aggression reduction</u> functions provide audiences with occasions of purgation to reduce their disappointment and annoyance regarding certain conditions (Figure 2.3). The utilization of cartoons and humorous language in tandem possesses the capacity and influence to transform disturbing, unsettling, delicate, and suspicious topics into something that can be easily controlled and handled. The notable efficacy of this combination lies in its ability to condense confusing and complicated concepts into a straightforward, all-encompassing, and obvious form of communication.

It is crucial to consider the manner in which one communicates and conveys a message that may be perceived as frightening or unpleasant. But by using humor in cartoons, communicators can make sure their message gets through. Political cartoons often use humor to tell stories, but they don't just say things directly. Instead, they hide their messages under layers of irony, satire, and parody.

Relief (by humor)

In the next section (3.3.1: Humor), by introducing 'humor' as a rhetorical device for conveying the message in communication with cartoons, among three different aspects of humor, namely <u>superiority</u>, <u>incongruity</u>, and <u>relief</u>, the first two aspects will be expounded. In this part, the consideration turns towards the therapeutic function of laughter in alleviating stress and tension through physical jettisoning. In contrast with subversive humor, it will be posited that relief Humor is a kind of supportive humor that can alleviate tension using punch lines, reassuring and comforting conclusions, and, most frequently, by making addressees laugh.

Among the three aspects presented, relief humor is the kind that relies the least on the capacity for rational thinking. This allows for the occurrence of laughter that is joyful in nature, even in the absence of a discernible stimulus, and promotes a tendency towards enjoying wordplay and also embracing comedy centered on purposefully clumsy actions and entertainingly uncomfortable situations known as slapstick comedy.

In his research (2015), Nick Butler delves into the concept of Relief Humor, which seeks to comprehend the intriguing tendency of individuals to find amusement in topics considered taboo or dark. This theory builds upon existing humor frameworks and acknowledges the role of laughter in organizational contexts[51]. Relief Humor posits that humor, particularly when it involves taboo subjects, offers temporary relief from the stress and tension associated with such topics. By laughing at these subjects, individuals can momentarily suspend their inhibitions and anxieties, allowing them to process and cope with the underlying emotions. This form of humor acts as a psychological release valve, enabling individuals to re-engage with their environment in a more relaxed and less burdened manner. In essence, Nick Butler's Relief Humor theory highlights the significance of laughter in organizations as a means of coping with stress and addressing sensitive or taboo subjects, ultimately fostering a healthier and more resilient work environment (Butler, 2015).

Herbert Spencer explores the fundamental principles of laughter and humor, including the concept of Relief Humor. Spencer's theory suggests that when individuals suppress unpleasant or entertaining emotions, they accumulate physical energy. This energy buildup can lead to a sense of tension and discomfort. Laughter, as a form of release, helps to discharge this accumulated energy, providing relief from the emotional burden and tension associated with the suppressed emotions (Spencer, 1860).

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[51] Relief Humor, as laid out by Nick Butler, "*takes into account the darker side of [the form] and tries to explain why we laugh so readily at taboo subjects.*" Butler illustrates this concept by using the example of a flatulent vicar delivering a sermon, emphasizing the juxtaposition between the situation and the observer's reaction. This interplay between the context and the observer's response determines the level of laughter. Additionally, the use of taboo or base topics can intensify the comedic effect (2015, p. 48)

John Meyer's perspective (2015) on relief humor emphasizes the importance of tension-building (the boost) and tension-releasing (the jag) components in creating humor. The "boost" refers to the process of increasing tension or anxiety within a situation or context. This can be achieved through various means, such as introducing a taboo topic, creating an unexpected twist, or emphasizing a sensitive issue. The boost serves to heighten the emotional intensity of the moment, setting the stage for the release of tension. The "jag," on the other hand, represents the moment of release from the accumulated tension. This is achieved through laughter or humor, which functions as a psychological release valve. The jag allows individuals to discharge the built-up emotional energy and tension, providing relief and a temporary escape from the stress associated with the boosted situation (Meyer, 2015, p. 13).

Sigmund Freud believed that tendentious jokes, also known as "safety-valve jokes," serve as a way for individuals to express forbidden desires or thoughts while circumventing societal restrictions (Wild Analysis, 2002)[52]. These jokes often contain latent meanings or double entendre[53] that allow the audience to appreciate the humor while maintaining a facade of politeness or decorum.

Relief humor, as Freud saw it, offers a similar function. By providing a means to release pent-up emotional energy and tension, relief humor allows individuals to Save the mental effort required in restraining or hiding prohibited desires[54]. In other words, laughter and humor act as a coping mechanism, enabling people to deal with the psychological stress and effort involved in suppressing their desires or thoughts that may be deemed unacceptable by society (Freud, 2002, pp. 116-117, 133).

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[52] While Freud's "Wild Analysis" was published in 2002, it is essential to note that his original theories on humor and laughter were introduced much earlier in his work, such as "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious" (1905 [1963]).

[53] A double entendre is a figure of speech that has two possible meanings, one explicit and the other implicit or suggestive, often with a humorous or provocative effect. It is a form of wordplay that can be understood in two different ways, usually involving a clever combination of words or phrases. One meaning is obvious and straightforward, while the other is more subtle and can be interpreted in a more risqué or amusing manner. This ambiguity allows the audience to appreciate the humor while maintaining a facade of politeness or decorum.

[54] Freud exemplifies how relief Humor supplies the ability to "*economize the expenditure of psychical energy used in suppressing forbidden desires.*" (2002, pp. 116-117, 133)

3.3. Rhetorical Devices for Conveying Messages in Communication through Cartoons

In the realm of political cartoons, a variety of artistic and linguistic techniques are employed to convey messages. In our analysis of the semiotics of cartoons in Chapter 1, we examined CARTOON AS A SEMIOTIC PHENOMENON and introduced a compilation of graphic tools utilized by cartoonists to perform the task of "**visualizing the verbal**", which, when employed collectively, enhance the overall meaning of a particular political cartoon. The focus in the second chapter turned towards the fact that the development of cartoon art throughout history has progressed from primitive depictions of deformity to sophisticated explorations aimed at achieving a more profound visual language. This evolution has ultimately resulted in a complex means of communication wherein art, symbols, metaphors, and rhetorical devices cross paths with reality.

It is essential to observe that cartoons should not be solely considered a form of art appreciated for their aesthetic qualities. Considering cartoons as a **type of media content**, as explained in the second chapter, they serve a more profound purpose in an editorial and political context. They function as a medium for social critique, a mirror to society, an instrument of satire and wit, and a catalyst for change. These various roles highlight the significance of political and editorial cartoons beyond their aesthetic value, making them a unique and influential form of communication. But beyond that, visual rhetoric in political and editorial cartoons assumes a decisive role in eliciting audience reactions and contributing to the evolution of cartoon language. By employing various rhetorical devices, these cartoons effectively communicate complex ideas and evoke specific emotional or intellectual responses from their viewers. This combination of artistic techniques and strategic communication allows cartoonists to effectively convey their messages and engage their audiences in meaningful discussions about politics, society, and current events. Accepting this point of view, several rhetorical devices that political cartoonists frequently use to convey messages will now be discussed.

In his study (1993), Morris provides a more in-depth analysis of the visual rhetoric used in political cartoons. He applies a structuralist approach to understand the underlying patterns and meanings in these cartoons. Morris argues that political cartoons employ a combination of visual and verbal elements to create a powerful form of communication. He believes that the visual aspect of cartoons plays a crucial role in conveying messages and influencing public opinion. By analyzing the structure and composition of political cartoons, Morris aims to uncover the rhetorical strategies used by cartoonists to persuade and engage their audience.

Morris also discusses the role of cultural references in political cartoons, as mentioned earlier (refer to Section 2.2.2). Morris highlights how these references help create shared meanings among readers, allowing them to understand and react to the cartoons' messages. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of context in interpreting political cartoons, as the meanings and effects of these cartoons can vary depending on the historical, social, and political circumstances in which they are created and consumed (Morris R. , 1993).

This chapter will analyze the artistic and semantic techniques employed by cartoonists working in both traditional and digital media landscapes. All these techniques will be empirically scrutinized in the research corpus of the 4th chapter. It will assess the extent to which these cartoonists draw inspiration from previous artists when creating specific characters. Furthermore, the chapter will explore how contemporary cartoonists adeptly highlight the vulnerabilities and imperfections of both well-established and up-and-coming political figures.

Although this thesis does not contend that it is an exhaustive list, in the following, five specific devices that are relevant to the topic will be expounded, namely: humor, intertextuality, parody, metaphor, and irony.

Humor

While humor per se may not be classified as a specific rhetorical tool, it plays a vital role in rhetoric by offering a versatile means of captivating audiences and enhancing the effectiveness of communication. Humor, as a concept, is

broader in scope compared to rhetoric, as it includes a range of comedic styles, wit, and lightheartedness. Although humor may be employed in rhetoric to captivate an audience, amuse, or render a point more digestible, it does not represent a singular device that can be employed in a specific linguistic feature. Rhetorical devices like metaphor and irony are precise methods utilized to communicate meaning, convince, or captivate an audience. These techniques are commonly utilized in oral or written communication to produce a particular impact, such as emphasis, contrast, or connection.

The deploying of humor, satirical distortions, and comic metaphors and analogies can be traced back to ancient times, as evidenced in various artistic mediums such as sculpture, dramaturgy, and vase painting. These forms of expression predate the popularization of caricature and cartooning, which emerged in the 18th century. In ancient Egyptian art, men were often depicted as animals (zoomorphism). Similarly, in archaic Greek comedies, one could observe exaggerated figures on vases and terracotta statuettes. During the Romanesque and Gothic periods, sculptors mocked human imperfections through stone capitals and wood carvings on Miserere seats, a practice that continued throughout the 'Middle Ages' (2017).

In line with the concept of metaphorical thinking, which will be subsequently followed in this chapter, humor can be regarded as an inherent aspect of human existence. Martin (2007, p. 3) postulates that humor is a fundamental component of the human experience. Humor frequently serves as a communicative tool to enhance the impact of statements that may be less persuasive if conveyed solely through verbal means. Meyer (2015, p. 1) asserts that humor is deeply ingrained and pervades in everyday activities, interpersonal dialogues, and mediated forms of communication. According to the author, the absence of humor would result in a

dry, monotonous, and sorrowful existence for individuals engaged in communication[55].

According to Ross (1998, p. 7), a similar observation can be made regarding the way in which the form effectively mitigates hostility and <u>skepticism</u> among the intended audience by skillfully appealing to both their emotional and logical faculties. Extrapolating upon this notion, it can be supposed that humor serves as a valuable tool in mitigating feelings of ennui, thereby rendering audiences more amenable to the desired messages through eliciting smiles. According to Friedman (2001, p. 73), it is important to delve deeper into the mechanisms that improve our lives and interactions. This is especially relevant when considering subsequent chapters that showcase the diverse humorous techniques employed by political cartoonists. These techniques, which were examined in the first chapter, include a wide range, from protagonists to the provision of text to condense comic conceptions.

In accordance with the earlier discussion about the game-changer and decisive role of cultural references in political cartoons (Morris R. , 1993), humor can be comprehended as a psychological response characterized by positive emotions that are influenced by the cultural milieu in which it originates. These contexts can be observed in the geographical, systemic, and technical divisions within the realm of communication. This highlights the notion that what one individual find humorous may not be perceived as such by another.

The assertion that three aspects of humor are SUPERIORITY, INCONGRUITY, and RELIEF is indeed a widely accepted view in the field of humor studies. This perspective has been attributed to several scholars, including Thomas Hobbes, Henri Bergson, and Arthur Koestler, who have contributed significantly to the understanding of humor and its mechanisms. Their seminal work has shaped our grasp of the complex nature of humor and its role in political

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[55] Nevertheless, a thorough analysis of the more comprehensive interpretations of humor as proposed by John Meyer suggests that it also encompasses "*the capacity to perceive actions as funny, responding to an amusing stimulus, or creating something that elicits amusement.*" (2015, ibid.)

and editorial cartoons. Among the three aspects of humor, relief was introduced in Section 3.2.4. In the following, two other aspects will be explored in detail.

Superiority

There is a prevailing perception that the analysis of humor is commonly associated with the concept of superiority. However, philosophers and scholars have consistently emphasized the need for caution when employing humor, as it has the potential to be used for mockery and contempt. Thomas Hobbes was one of the first to propose the idea of superiority as a fundamental aspect of humor in his seminal work "Leviathan" (Hobbes, 1651). He argued that humor allows individuals to feel superior to others, which can be a source of amusement. In Lippitt's (1995) analysis, he situates the modern conception of mankind within the framework of Thomas Hobbes' ideas, characterizing human beings as egoistic "social creatures ceaselessly competing for power, self-preservation, and superiority over others." (1995, pp. 54-61) This perspective highlights the fundamental role of competition and the pursuit of dominance in human nature, as described by Hobbes in Leviathan (1651).

Hobbes posited that life in a state of nature, without government or law, would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" due to the constant struggle for survival and dominance among individuals. In this context, humor, particularly in its superiority aspect, can be seen as a means for individuals to assert their dominance and establish their position within the social hierarchy. Lippitt's characterization of mankind also ties into the concept of humor as a way to establish social bonds and create a sense of belonging. By laughing at jokes or cartoons that highlight the shortcomings of others, individuals can feel a sense of camaraderie and shared understanding with their peers. This, in turn, reinforces the social structure and helps maintain group cohesion (1995).

In summary, Lippitt positions the modern conception of mankind within Hobbesian concepts, emphasizing the competitive nature of human beings and their pursuit of power, self-preservation, and superiority over others. This perspective highlights the role of humor, particularly in its superiority aspect, in

reflecting and reinforcing the social dynamics and hierarchies that govern human interactions.

In Lynch's analysis (2002), the mode of superior adaptation in humor is described as a deliberate application that provides individuals with a sense of awareness and enjoyment when they successfully conform to societal norms. This process often involves ridiculing or making light of an individual who is not as adept at conforming to these norms. By engaging in humor that highlights the shortcomings of others, individuals can feel a sense of accomplishment and belonging within their social group. This, in turn, reinforces the group's shared understanding of the norms and values that define their identity and strengthens the social bonds among its members (Lynch, 2002, p. 426).

The phenomenon, where humor is derived from the misfortune or failure of others, is commonly referred to as schadenfreude. This concept often appears in political cartoons, which are known for their satirical and critical commentary on current events, politics, and societal issues. Political cartoons frequently employ humor and visual storytelling to highlight the shortcomings or mistakes of individuals, organizations, or governments. By doing so, they aim to provoke thought, criticism, and sometimes even laughter from their audience. This approach often taps into the human tendency to experience schadenfreude, as viewers may enjoy the humor derived from the misfortune or embarrassment of the subject depicted in the cartoon[56].

On the other hand, Thomas Ford (2015) indeed presents a counterpoint to the idea that superiority humor is solely a negative and hostile form of communication. According to Ford, perceiving it in this narrow manner would be shortsighted perspective. He argues that engaging in such humor in a lighthearted manner can serve several positive functions, including reinforcing social connections and strengthening the social identity of group members. Ford's perspective highlights

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[56] According to Meyer (2015, p. 9), "*joyful emotions which closely parallel the [humorous] experience*", can be seen as a form of superiority humor that evokes feelings of triumph over a competitor, adversary, or various circumstances. In this context, the form can be interpreted as maintaining an inherent quality, possessing the ability to exhibit a sense of triumph and satisfaction over a defeated adversary.

that humor can be a tool for fostering social cohesion and group unity. By poking fun at shared societal norms or the shortcomings of others, individuals can bond over their shared understanding of these norms and create a sense of belonging. This lighthearted approach to superiority humor allows group members to maintain a sense of camaraderie while still acknowledging and laughing at the flaws or missteps of others (Ford, 2015, p. 164) [57].

Incongruity

Henri Bergson, a French philosopher and writer, suggested that humor arises from the incongruity between what is expected and what actually occurs (1899). This discrepancy can be found in various forms, such as physical, verbal, or situational, and it triggers laughter as our minds struggle to reconcile the mismatch. The Incongruity Theory of humor, also known as the Incongruity-Resolution Theory (refer to next discussion in this section: **GTVH**, General Theory of Verbal Humor), was proposed by the German psychologist and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher in the early 19th century. Later, it was further developed and popularized by Henri Bergson in his book "Laughter" (1899).

While it is true that Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher, touched upon the concept of incongruity in relation to humor in his work (Kant, Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, [1790] 1983), it is not accurate to say that he proposed the Incongruity Theory of humor. Kant mentioned that humor arises from the "spontaneous combination of a serious thought with an absurd one," which can be seen as a precursor to the Incongruity Theory. The philosophical underpinnings of this specific dimension of humor can be linked to Kant's interpretation of laughter as a phenomenon stemming from the abrupt shift of an anticipated tension into emptiness[58]. However, it was Schleiermacher and Bergson who more explicitly developed and popularized the theory. According to Rod Martin (2007,

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[57] The ability of political cartoons to question or condemn the actions of a particular subject aligns with this framework, as the cartoonist conveys to readers that their assessments should be regarded as harmless playful banter, aptly summarized by the phrase "it's only a joke" (2015, p. 163).

[58] Kant's conceptualization of laughter stated as "*affectations arising from [the] sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing.*" ([1790] 1952, p. 223)

p. 6), the incongruity feature of humor involves the introduction of ideas or events that possess qualities of being peculiar, unexpected, surprising, or deviating from the ordinary.

In the context of incongruity and humor, it is indeed evident that laughter often arises when something unusual or unexpected transgresses or violates a commonly accepted norm without posing a threat. This violation of expectations creates a sense of cognitive dissonance, which our minds try to resolve. When we successfully reconcile the contradiction, we experience the release of tension, often in the form of laughter. This process highlights the role of our cognitive abilities in perceiving and processing humor, as well as the importance of context and social norms in determining what is considered humorous.

Meyer's perspective (2015, p. 17) emphasizes that for something to be considered humorous through incongruity, it must maintain a balance between being close enough to the norm to avoid potential harm or discomfort, yet different enough to be noticeable and remarkable. This balance helps make sure that breaking expectations doesn't confuse or upset people; instead, it adds to the fun and enjoyable experience of laughter.

Incongruity Theory, which explores the humor derived from unexpected or contradictory situations, is deeply rooted in Suslov's (1992) conceptualization of unconscious computational processes. These processes are responsible for our ability to reason, forecast, and prepare ourselves for upcoming events. The connection between the two lies in the way our unconscious mind handles and interprets information. Incongruity Theory posits that humor arises when there is a violation of our expectations or when we encounter something that is unexpected or contradictory. This violation triggers a cognitive process in our unconscious mind, which tries to reconcile the discrepancy between what we anticipate and what we experience.

Suslov's conceptualization of unconscious computational processes (1992) highlights that our minds are constantly working behind the scenes, reasoning, forecasting, and preparing us for future events. These processes help us understand

the world and anticipate future events. When we come across something unexpected or incongruous, our unconscious mind jumps in to figure out and resolve the difference. The humor we feel in these moments comes from the mental effort it takes to make sense of the conflicting elements. When our unconscious mind successfully resolves the incongruity, it often results in laughter or amusement. This process demonstrates how Incongruity Theory is predicated on Suslov's conceptualization of unconscious computational processes, which play a crucial role in our reasoning, forecasting, and adaptation to new or unexpected situations (Suslov, 1992).

Lynch's (2002) ideas emphasize the importance of consistency within both internal frames (our thoughts, beliefs, and values) and external environments (the world around us). According to Lynch, our psychological inclination towards consistency drives our perception and appreciation of humor. When we encounter meaningless information that contradicts our established mental frameworks, our minds strive to maintain consistency by reconciling the contradiction (2002, p. 428).

In such situations, when the inconsistency cannot be resolved easily or logically, our unconscious mind might resort to humor as a coping mechanism. This is because laughter serves as a way to release tension and acknowledge the discrepancy without needing to address it directly. In other words, laughter allows us to momentarily suspend our need for consistency and accept the absurdity of the situation. When audiences encounter meaningless information that contradicts their established mental frameworks, their only viable reaction, as suggested by Lynch (2002), is to respond with laughter. This reaction helps them maintain psychological consistency by acknowledging the contradiction in a light-hearted manner, without the need for immediate resolution or adjustment of their mental frameworks. Humor, in this context, acts as a bridge between the contradictory elements, enabling the audience to process and accept the incongruity without experiencing discomfort or cognitive strain.

As discussed in Section 1.2.3 on Personification, the roots of the success of this technique, according to Attardo and Raskin (1996), lie in its ability to create incongruity, which in turn leads to a more engaging and memorable experience for the audience. In Attardo and Raskin's investigations on Incongruity-Resolution Theory (see the next discussion in this section: GTVH, General Theory of Verbal Humor), humor arises from the cognitive processing of an incongruous (unexpected or contradictory) situation, which eventually leads to a resolution (Attardo & Raskin, 1996, pp. 293-347).

"Amusing", "Funny" or "Humorous"

Humor is a broad concept that includes many adaptive and expansive features in communication. It's often mixed up with similar terms like **amusement**, **funny**, or **mirth**. This confusion arises because these terms have some characteristics in common, but they are not synonymous. Each of these ideas relates to the enjoyable feelings we get when we come across unexpected connections, combinations, or comparisons of symbols, objects, or events that either fit with or break from what we expect.

'Amusement' is subjective and depends on an individual's personal perception, while 'funny' is more related to the specific event or stimulus being observed. Amusement is the feeling someone gets when they find something entertaining or engaging. This feeling can differ a lot from person to person, depending on their individual tastes and experiences. On the other hand, 'funny' is a descriptive term used to characterize a situation, object, or content that is intended to be humorous or amusing. It is more focused on the inherent qualities of the stimulus rather than the individual's emotional response. The term 'funny' can be applied universally, but the degree of amusement it generates may differ among individuals.

Consequently, while both 'amusement' and 'funny' are related to humor, they have distinct aspects. Amusement is an individual's perception, whereas 'funny' refers to the nature of the stimulus itself. Mirth, in contrast, is an emotional

response to humor, characterized by laughter or light-heartedness, but due to its transient and emotional characteristics, the term 'mirth' should be disregarded. Moreover, amusement is a subjective experience that depends on an individual's personal perception. It can be triggered by various aspects of reality, such as situations, events, or even abstract concepts. Amusement can be found in the way we perceive and interpret these aspects, making it a unique and personal experience.

On the other hand, humor "encompasses aspects of reality," (Glasbergen, 1996, p. 74) which implies that humor often draws from the world around us, including our experiences, observations, and interpretations of reality. These aspects can be serious, absurd, or even mundane, but they are presented in a way that elicits humor and amusement. Humor helps us find the funny or entertaining side of reality, making it more digestible and enjoyable.

In essence, while amusement is the personal perception and emotional response to these aspects of reality, humor itself encompasses those aspects and presents them in a way that can be universally appreciated and understood. By doing so, humor allows us to connect with others and find common ground in our shared experiences of reality. In conclusion, understanding these differences helps in better understanding and appreciating humor and related emotions.

"Political Humor" or "Political Satire"

The umbrella term "political humor" is a broad category that includes any form of humorous content that addresses political topics, individuals, events, processes, or institutions. The extensive body of academic research on political humor can be compartmentalized into two main perspectives: one that highlights the restricted nature of corrections and another that emphasizes its playful potential. Scholars who adopt the <u>first conservative perspective</u> argue that political humor often redoubles established norms and targets those who deviate from them, thus maintaining the status quo. On the other hand, scholars who adopt the <u>second radical perspective</u> argue that political humor has the capacity to challenge existing

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beliefs and promote cognitive transformations, ultimately releasing human energy in this way.

Taking into consideration the definition of humor based on ᵢₙcₒₙgᵣᵤᵢₜy and serving as a form of criticism, political humor can be characterized as a communicative tool that identifies, emphasizes, critiques, and attacks incongruities that arise from political discourse and actions. The concept of political humor is closely associated with the concept of "political satire." Satire is a genre that encompasses various forms of artistic expression, including the visual, literary, and performing arts. It predominantly takes the form of fiction, although non-fiction examples are less common. The primary purpose of satire is to critique and mock vices, foolishness, abuses, and shortcomings with the aim of shaming or exposing perceived flaws in individuals, enterprises, governments, or society as a whole, ultimately encouraging improvement (Semotiuk & Shevchenko, 2022, p. 83). Moreover, the convergence of politics and humor raises questions about the nature of their relationship: political matters can be portrayed in a humorous way, while humor can convey profound and serious messages (Holm, 2007).

Satire, while primarily intended to be humorous, serves a broader objective of constructive social critique, employing wit to highlight specific as well as broader societal concerns. Political satire is characterized by its playful nature and its intention to provoke laughter, while also serving the purpose of passing judgment. This aspect of "casting judgment" distinguishes satire from other forms of political humor. Jokes and texts that approach political subjects in a lighthearted manner without offering any critique of institutions, policies, or societal norms cannot be considered as satire (Test, 1991). Political satire challenges the established political or social structure and offers alternative perspectives on what is desirable or ideal.

Political satire, as a pre-generic form of political discourse (Jones, 2010), employs a variety of humor elements to attack and judge the imperfect character of human political actions. As proposed by Test, this attack comprises four components, including aggression, play, laughter, and judgment, but the

proportions of these components will fluctuate according to the various satirical forms (Test, 1991). Political satire allows for any existing format or genre within which political discourse can be offered. It is characterized by its ability to convey humorous messages and serve as a means of expressing political judgment, whether explicitly or implicitly.

Supportive / Subversive Humor

Political satire serves as a unique type of political discourse that questions the existing political or social structure. This is achieved by juxtaposing imperfect reality with idealized reality. According to Semotiuk and Shevchenko (2022, p. 84), the effectiveness of political satire is determined by four key elements: the target of the satire, the specific focus of the critique, the level of social acceptability, and the manner in which it is presented. These elements collectively shape the range of political satire, ranging from supportive to subversive in nature. Humor that aligns with and supports existing authority figures can relieve tension through the use of punch lines, reassuring and comforting endings and, most frequently, by making audiences laugh. Contrarily, subversive humor typically ends with a conclusion that is deemed unwanted and uncomfortable, which is unsettling for the audience and his/her psychological security (Paletz, 1990).

It can be observed that authority becomes increasingly fundamental as the target and level of satire rise; consequently, the potential for subversive humor also intensifies. Conversely, when humor is directed towards the political system as a whole, it tends to encompass lower levels of authority. The specific aspect of authority that humor emphasizes is referred to as its focus, such as the exposure of hollow rhetoric, crass pieties, crude platitudes, or the violation of principles. A humorous text becomes less subversive the more widely and socially accepted it is. And vice versa, outrageous, bold, and daring humor is frequently dismissed or just disregarded. Paletz (1990) explains that the concept of presentation refers to the context in which humor is expressed. When considering the societal function of political humor, it is important to view it not as a substitute for political

information but rather as a distinct form of political information. This alternative form of political information, according to Hill (2013), often referred to as a "counter-narrative," aims to challenge the singular and narrow perspective that is shaped by the acceptance of dominant discourse. By doing so, it offers citizens alternative and equally legitimate ways of interpreting their experiences. Political satire, in particular, assumes a pivotal role in providing a diverse range of perspectives by disrupting and questioning the widely accepted consensus, or as floated by Hill, the mythical consensus, established by dominant narratives (Hill, 2013).

When examining the correlation between political humor and political power, it is imperative to conceptualize politics not solely in terms of **hierarchical power** exhibited through formal institutions and the vertical distribution of membership but also as the horizontal power of discursive domains in which these institutions and members are constructed. The contemporary prevalence of political humor can largely be attributed to the media, as the majority of political humor genres such as political jokes, memes[59], and cartoons, satirical shows and websites, and political advertisements are created and/or disseminated through media platforms. In the words of Tsakona and Popa (2013), even in situations where humor emerges in atypical humorous settings, such as political or parliamentary debates, political interviews, news reports, slogans, or graffiti, it is frequently reframed and reinterpreted by the media.

In this vein, humor ought to be comprehended not solely as a tool employed by individuals of lower or higher social standing but rather as a mode of interaction and, according to Zekavat (2017), a "**relational modality**" that is intertwined with authority and discourse. It is a means by which both individuals and groups can establish and express identities that challenge prevailing norms and power structures. Extrapolating this point further, Petrovic (2018) proposed that

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[59] Internet memes can be categorized as non-traditional forms of political humor, as it seems that ordinary citizens are the primary producers and consumers of these types of content, with minimal influence or oversight from governmental or media entities. Political Internet memes represent a phenomenon located at the crossroads of digital and political communication, which is garnering growing interest as a subject of research.

contemporary political humor encompasses three distinct forms of parody, including firstly, carnivalesque politics, secondly, parodic reinterpretations and reconstruction of political discourses, and lastly, political protests through **satirical activism**[60].

It could be argued that focusing on potential rivalries within the context of competition is misdirected. Norrick (1989, p. 118) definitively states that humor does not rely solely on funny stimuli but instead requires association with mechanisms that deliver them to viewers. This involves a combination, accumulation, and aggregation of all the factors that induce laughter, as previously discussed. In a similar spirit, Ermida (2012, p. 188) postulates that Humor plays a broader role, embracing goals to simultaneously amuse and stimulate audiences while also prompting them to critically judge society and the status quo. Considering this perspective, it would be beneficial to develop an integrative framework that incorporates the positive elements of various viewpoints to analyze political cartoons from a thoughtful standpoint.

Incorporating Humor in Political Cartoons

Humor, summarizing all previous discussions in a very brief manner, is a violation of patterns and expectations that excites laughter. It is a major device wielded by political cartoonists and serves as a potent tool for eliciting laughter and conveying amusement, often through the depiction of exaggerated scenarios and satirical elements. Cartoons, characterized by their humorous and satirical nature, are visual representations that employ an exaggerated style to portray various situations. Due to their ability to entertain and amuse, cartoons hold appeal for individuals of all age groups.

It is important to acknowledge that not all political cartoons are intended to be humorous. In certain instances, it may be challenging to incorporate humor into

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[60] The inherent ambiguity of political parody, its self-reflective nature, and its ability to foster the formation or transformation of emotional communities are key aspects of political humor. These dynamics allow individuals to embrace their own participation and vulnerability while also helping them to comprehend the morally complex implications of their engagement as an authentic and constructive mode of political expression.

even the most captivating editorial cartoons. In the realm of visual communication, cartoons possess a deeper significance beyond their comedic nature. They serve as a vehicle for conveying specific messages, showcasing the exceptional skill of the cartoonist. It is crucial to recognize that cartoons predominantly carry a serious message that warrants our earnest attention. These illustrations effectively communicate an underlying philosophy, significant points, or messages, all while employing humor as a potent tool to accurately convey the intended meaning. In the face of challenging circumstances, cartoon artists adeptly infuse a touch of sweetness into life's hardships and bitterness. The findings further in the empirical analysis chapter will confirm that cartoons in the corpus cannot be considered explicitly humorous, but exhibit a serious, often negative, critical, and cynical tone.

Aladró's (2002) perspective on humor as a cognitive medium highlights the importance of abandoning and deviating initial conventions and creating a separation that enables comic decoding. This process is essential in political and editorial cartoons, as it allows the cartoonist to challenge the audience's preconceived notions and present alternative perspectives in a memorable and engaging manner. When humor disrupts conventional meanings, it forces the audience to reevaluate their understanding of the subject matter. This cognitive shift can lead to a deeper engagement with the content and foster critical thinking, as the viewers are encouraged to question their beliefs and assumptions.

Furthermore, the separation created by humor can trigger various emotional responses from the audience like laughter, surprise, or even frustration. These reactions help viewers connect with the cartoon personally, making the message stick in their minds and increasing the chances that they'll share it with others.

This thesis believes that the heart and success of humor, particularly in political and editorial cartoons, comes from **surprise**. This surprise is key to grabbing the audience's attention and making the content stick in their minds. This unexpected twist or revelation captivates the viewer's attention, encourages deeper engagement with the material, and creates a sense of novelty that can be both entertaining and thought-provoking.

The element of surprise serves multiple purposes in humor and visual rhetoric. Firstly, it helps break down preconceived notions and stereotypes by presenting an unanticipated perspective, leading to a reevaluation of the audience's beliefs, and fostering critical thinking. Secondly, it evokes various emotional responses, such as laughter, shock, or anger, which enable the audience to connect with the cartoon on a personal level and heighten the impact of the message.

Also, surprise makes complicated ideas easier to understand for the audience. It helps break down barriers and makes the content feel more relatable. Additionally, surprise can reinforce the intended message by leaving a strong impression on viewers, making them more likely to share the cartoon with others.

The ability of political cartoons to question or condemn the actions of a particular subject aligns with the framework described by Thomas Ford (2015), which introduced in previous topic of 'superiority.' In this context, the cartoonist presents their assessments as harmless and playful banter, which helps to create a sense of camaraderie and shared understanding among the readers. By engaging in superiority humor, political cartoonists can challenge the actions or beliefs of a subject in a way that encourages readers to reflect on the issue at hand. This approach allows for critical commentary on politics, societal norms, and other topics without necessarily causing offense or alienating the audience. Instead, it fosters a sense of connection and shared perspective among those who appreciate the humor and recognize the underlying message.

Medhurst and DeSousa are recognized as pioneers in the field of incorporating humor in political cartoons due to their groundbreaking study (1981). In this study, they analyzed the role of humor in political cartoons and developed a comprehensive classification system to better understand how humor functions within this unique form of communication. Their research not only highlighted the significance of humor in political cartoons but also provided a framework for future scholars and researchers to study and analyze the impact of humor on political discourse. By identifying different types of humor used in political cartoons and examining their rhetorical functions, Medhurst and DeSousa paved

the way for further exploration of the complex relationship between humor, politics, and visual communication.

In tandem with Medhurst and DeSousa, Ray Morris is acknowledged as a pioneer in bringing humor into political cartoons. His study (1993) further expanded the understanding of the role of humor in this unique form of communication. Morris focused on the structure of political cartoons and how they create meaning using both visual and verbal elements. By looking at how these elements work together, Morris gave us a better understanding of how humor adds to the overall impact of these cartoons.

Both Medhurst and DeSousa (1981) and Morris (1993) study have significantly contributed to the development of the field, highlighting the importance of humor in political cartoons and shedding light on the complex interplay between visual and verbal elements in this form of communication. Their work has been influential in shaping the understanding of political cartoons as a form of persuasive, rhetorical communication, where humor plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and engaging audiences in political discussions.

Sonia Foss (2004) uses the term "conceptual lenses" to describe the application of different perspectives, theories, or frameworks in the analysis of visual symbols and communication. These lenses serve as tools that help researchers and critics to better understand the complexities of visual rhetoric by providing multiple viewpoints and interpretations (2004, p. 306).

Although the stylistic elements found in political cartoons are not inherently connected to these categories of humor, one could contend that they play a role in holistic arguments that are both amusing and deserving of viewer engagement and response. In the forthcoming analysis, a combination of Medhurst and DeSousa's as well as Morris' perspectives will be integrated to explore the portrayal of themes, events, actors, and opinions within a specific timeframe.

The stylistic elements available to cartoonists to perform the task of "visualizing the verbal," such as exaggeration, protagonist vs. antagonist, personification (anthropomorphism and zoomorphism), composition, positioning,

stereotypes, colors, and pictograms, have been exhaustively examined in the first chapter. Attention now turns towards the stylistic elements of graphic and linguistic organization that form the expression of humor in political cartoons. The taxonomies of disparate methods, based on Medhurst and DeSousa's study (1981, p. 212) are categorized into the following:

Attribution: This focuses on identifying the characters involved in the cartoon and their roles. **Depiction**: This involves analyzing the visual representation of characters, objects, and settings within the cartoon. **Argument**: This category examines the central message or claim being made by the cartoonist. **Strategy**: This taxonomy looks at the techniques used by the cartoonist to convey their argument, such as humor, exaggeration, or symbolism. **Relevance**: This focuses on the connection between the cartoon's content and the broader political, social, or cultural context. Intent: **This** taxonomy explores the purpose behind the creation of the political cartoon, such as persuasion, criticism, or satire.

On another level, Morris (1993, pp. 196, 202-203) floats another category of artistic devices. These categories are different from the ones mentioned in Medhurst and DeSousa's study but are still essential aspects of political cartoons. These devices contribute to the overall message and impact of the cartoon, which encompass:

- **Condensation** refers to the capacity of political cartoons to distill news and opinions as intricate phenomena into a visual form condensed in a single panel. The acknowledgement of the inherent characteristics of single-panel political cartoons is the underlying factor contributing to their blatant bias. This further supports the theories proposed by Gombrich ([1963] 1994) and Raymond N. Morris (1989) regarding the binary characteristics of political cartoons. These cartoons portray characters in a dichotomous manner, *protagonist vs. antagonist*, either as aesthetically pleasing or unattractive, as heroes or villains.
- **Domestication:** Cartoons often portray individuals and situations that are distant from the viewer's everyday experience. This is particularly evident when they address international events and portray foreign political leaders, who the viewer

may have limited knowledge about and limited access to independent sources of information. Domestication refers to the transformative process through which abstract concepts and individuals or occurrences that are distant and unfamiliar are rendered into something that is more proximate, familiar, and tangible. It achieves this by emphasizing shared elements while downplaying distinctive ones, and by prioritizing repetitive patterns to reduce the need for cognitive adaptation.

Morris mentions that the domestication of Saddam Hussein's image as the modern-day Hitler was a joint effort between the government and the media in order to justify the United States and its allies declaration of war on his regime during the 1990–1991 Gulf War (1993, p. 200).

• **Opposition:** In the context of this analysis, the term "opposition" refers to the portrayal of subjects in a binary framework, often associated with preconceived and familiar oppositions. To amplify the opposition, cartoonists tend to amplify binaries by means of exaggeration. When considering a collection of cartoons by the same artist on a common theme, it becomes apparent that even though individual cartoons may depict only one person, they are actually structured around a sequence of opposing elements.

• **Carnivalization: Mikhail Bakhtin** explores the idea of carnival as a social phenomenon that subverts normal order and hierarchies. In a carnivalesque environment, traditional structures are temporarily overturned, allowing for freedom of expression, humor, and creativity (Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, 1984 [1965]) [61]. In contrast to advertisements that '*__hyperritualize__*' reality and present an idealized version of how rituals should be conducted, the concept of carnivalization in cartoons pertains to an artistic approach that depicts spontaneous behavior in a stylized manner. This technique is characterized by the

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[61] Mikhail Bakhtin discusses the concept of the "carnivalesque" primarily in his book "Rabelais and His World," published in 1965. In this work, he analyzes the writings of François Rabelais and explores the social and cultural context of the carnival in medieval and Renaissance Europe.
In "Rabelais and His World," Bakhtin elaborates on how carnival festivities serve as a space for social inversion, laughter, and subversion of authority, illustrating how these elements contribute to a collective sense of community and liberation from established norms. He connects the carnivalesque to larger themes of humor, the grotesque, and the fluidity of identity, showcasing how these aspects can challenge societal structures and hierarchies (Bakhtin, 1984 [1965]).

incorporation of discordant voices and perspectives, which satirically challenge and ridicule social hierarchies.

Carnivalization refers to the use of elements associated with carnivals, such as humor, playfulness, and the inversion of social norms, in political cartoons. This approach can help cartoonists critique or challenge societal expectations and power structures.

• **Hyper-Carnivalization**: This category builds upon carnivalization, takes a step further by amplifying and intensifying the playful, subversive, or satirical elements in a political cartoon. Hyper-carnivalization can create a stronger critique or challenge to the status quo, engaging the audience more effectively.

• **Combination:** The last stylistic element for composing humor in political cartoons expounded by Ray Morris (1993) is combination, which refers to the rhetorical technique employed to integrate ideas from various sources into a distinct and recognizable amalgamation. Combination refers to the blending of various artistic devices and techniques to create a more powerful or nuanced message in a political cartoon. By combining different elements, cartoonists can create a more engaging and impactful critique or commentary on political issues.

These categories help in understanding and analyzing the complex nature of political cartoons as a form of rhetorical communication. They are essential elements in the creation and interpretation of political cartoons, contributing to their humor, critique, and overall impact.

General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH)

When considered together, these above-mentioned stylistic elements will be emphasized as the means through which political cartoonists employ artistic, metaphorical, and linguistic techniques to construct their arguments. However, it is necessary for a comprehensive analytical framework to also contextualize these humorous elements within the broader societal structure and political era in which they function. In order to achieve this objective, an evaluation is conducted on the suitability and applicability of the General Theory of Verbal Humor (**GTVH**) in elucidating the wider processes of humor that impact political cartoons.

The General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) was initially introduced by Victor Raskin, a linguist and psychologist, and later expanded upon in collaboration with Salvatore Attardo, an Italian semanticist, and another prominent scholar in the field of humor studies. Their seminal paper (1991) indeed built upon Raskin's earlier work (1985), further developing and refining the GTVH framework. The collaboration between Raskin and Attardo has been instrumental in shaping GTVH into a comprehensive and widely accepted model for understanding verbal humor. Their combined efforts have significantly contributed to the field of linguistics and humor studies, providing a systematic approach to analyzing and interpreting humor (Attardo & Raskin, 1996) (Attardo, 2001).

GTVH posits that the essential components of humor analysis consist of the punch line, which serves as the concluding comment intended to elicit a surprise reaction, and the jab line, which incorporates humorous elements deemed crucial to the narrative and facilitates the progression leading up to the punch line (Attardo, 2001, pp. 82-83). Both the punch line and jab line play significant roles in creating and contributing to the five main categories of the GTVH framework. They work together to form a humorous effect, which can be explained as follows: The punch line and jab line contribute to the overall humoristic potential (HP) of a text or situation, making it more amusing. They create a humorous effect by setting up a context and resolving the humoristic potential, respectively. The punch line often surprises the audience by opposing the expected script or outcome, while jab lines introduce humorous elements that create tension or contradict the expected script.

To bring this topic to a close and conclusion, GTVH provides a systematic approach to understanding and analyzing verbal humor, offering insights into the factors that contribute to humor and the processes that underlie its perception and appreciation. While Raskin's work is the foundation of GTVH, it has been further developed and expanded upon by other researchers, including Attardo, who has collaborated with Raskin and has been instrumental in refining and expanding GTVH, which aids in analyzing humor in language (Attardo, 2001).

The General Theory of Verbal Humor primarily focuses on understanding and analyzing verbal humor. It is designed to explain the nature and structure of humor in language and communication, taking into account the linguistic and cognitive aspects of humor. However, some of the concepts and principles in GTVH can be applied to visual humor as well, particularly when visuals are combined with language or when the visuals evoke verbal humor. For instance, the concept of Script Opposition and Incongruity Resolution can be applied to visual humor, as they involve the violation of expectations and the resolution of mismatches. Similarly, the Seven Types of Humor can also be extended to visual humor when the humor relies on the violation of cultural norms, ambiguity, or other types of incongruity.

Ultimately, by incorporating the principles of GTVH along with the core concepts proposed by Medhurst and DeSousa (1981) and Morris (1993) this thesis aims to develop a conceptual schema that recognizes the fundamental role of humor in political cartoons.

Intertextuality

In the modern digital media space, there has been a marked escalation in the importance of visual experiences and their depiction. This has led to a visually saturated environment where individuals are constantly bombarded with a multitude of images. As a result, audiences encounter a heightened volume of images reflecting reality and events, exceeding those that just illustrate landscapes, individuals, or instances of aggression. Given that one focus of this thesis pertains to the <u>extraction</u> and then <u>interpretation</u> of meanings derived from political cartoons, it is imperative to explore the rhetorical concept of "intertextuality" and its broader societal implications.

In a nutshell, intertextuality underlines that a text is not an isolated work; rather, it is interconnected with other texts, which shape its meaning through these relationships. It refers to the process by which the meaning of a text is influenced

by other texts. This can occur through intentional compositional techniques such as quotation, allusion, calque, plagiarism, translation, pastiche, or parody. Additionally, intertextuality can also arise from the connections and similarities perceived by the audience or reader between different works. This practice has become more prominent in post-modernist research as it is recognized for its ability to be applied in a wide range of contexts and disciplines. Intertextuality has become increasingly recognized as a broad and fuzzy theoretical term for understanding the complex relationships between texts and the ways in which they influence and interact with each other (Kunz, 2014, p. 15).

Building on the linguistic theories of Saussure (1916/1983) and Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and the polyphonic nature of texts (1981), Julia Kristeva is commonly recognized as the pioneering philosopher who introduced the term "intertextuality." (1980) ([1967] 1989).

In Kristeva's formulation, any given text can be understood as an "intertext," representing the convergence and intersection of numerous texts and deriving its existence solely from its connection with other texts. Intertextuality, according to Kristeva, emphasizes the idea that all texts are interconnected and influenced by a network of other texts, shaping their meaning and significance. This concept highlights the dynamic and complex relationship between texts and the ways in which they relate to and interact with each other (Kristeva, 1980).

This concept aligns with the notion of the French literary critic and theorist Roland Barthes, who described the text as a "**tissue of quotations**," characterized by its fluidity and multiple layers of meaning (1977). Both Kristeva and Barthes emphasize the interconnectedness of texts and the ways in which meaning is constructed through the relationships between different texts. They both argue that texts are not isolated entities but rather exist in a network of references and influences, shaping and being shaped by other texts. In the 1967 essay "The Death of the Author" by Roland Barthes (1977), he discusses the idea that a text is not the product of a single authorial voice but rather a "tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture." He argues that a text is a collaborative,

intertextual creation that is influenced by a multitude of external sources and references, rather than being the sole creation of the author. This concept emphasizes the fluidity and complexity of meaning-making in literature[62] and suggests that a text is made up of a multitude of references, citations, and allusions to other texts, forming a complex and layered structure of meaning (Barthes, 1977). Similarly, Kristeva's idea of intertextuality highlights the ways in which texts are interconnected and influenced by a web of other texts, shaping their significance and interpretation.

Graham Allen's research (2000) provides a comprehensive analysis of the concept of intertextuality and its significance in literary analysis. In his discussion, Allen explores how readers extract meaning from texts through the twin processes of reading and interpreting textual material. By engaging with the interconnected web of references, allusions, and influences within a text, readers can uncover deeper layers of meaning and connections to other texts [63]. Through the act of reading and interpretation, readers participate in the construction of meaning and contribute to the ongoing dialogue between texts. Allen's analysis highlights the dynamic and interactive nature of literary interpretation, emphasizing the role of the reader in co-creating meaning through engagement with intertextual references and relationships (Allen, 2000, p. 1).

Nevertheless, it bears acknowledging that the concept of intertextuality should not be confined to the domain of literature alone. The argument strives to broaden intertextuality beyond literature, highlighting its relevance across various cultural and artistic domains. By digging deep into Saussure's semiotics, which asserts that "*the life of signs within [wider] society*" (1916/1983, p. 16), we can emphasize the significance of understanding signs and symbols within a broader

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[62] Barthes asserted that text can also be conceptualized as "a multidimensional space in which a variety of [ideas], none of [which] original, blend and clash", resulting in the creation of images that encompass complex coding systems (The Death of the Author, 1977, pp. 146-147).
[63] The extraction processes resulting from twin processes of reading and interpreting indicate the presence of fundamental frameworks within textual material that are anchored on linguistic codes, cultural modes, and relationships (Kunz, 2014, p. ibid.). The subsequent interpretation of messages takes place because of these texts drawing upon established traditions of prior knowledge, whether in the realm of literature or beyond.

societal context. This understanding is essential for interpreting political cartoons and other forms of visual media.

Expanding on Allen's perspective that that elucidates the pervasive nature of intertextuality within nearly all forms of cultural and artistic expression (2000, p. 169), it's interesting to consider how political cartoons not only engage with other texts but also reflect and respond to the socio-political climate in which they are created. Thanks to this dynamic interplay, cartoons function as a critique of current events, drawing connections to historical precedents, cultural references, and even other artistic mediums. As well, the idea that political cartoons "constantly talk to each other" (Allen, 2000, p. 170) suggests a dialogue not only among different cartoons but also between the creators and their audience. This interaction can foster shared cultural knowledge, where audiences are encouraged to recognize and interpret the intertextual references embedded within the cartoons. This engagement can lead to a more informed and critical public capable of navigating complex political landscapes.

This thesis buttresses this point that visual images assume a pivotal role in the formation of individual and collective identities, the promotion of commercial activities, and, in extreme cases, the creation of alternative realities for individuals. In a similar spirit, political cartoons serve a variety of purposes in shaping public opinion and framing events, issues, and values that are significant to the readership of a particular media. As addressed in Chapter 2, these visual representations not only provide entertainment, information, and provoke thought or persuasion among audiences but also situate the protagonists and antagonists within a specific context in a single frame. The emphasis on intertextuality is particularly insightful; as will be discussed, it underscores how cartoons draw on cultural references, historical events, societal norms, reveal political commentary, and play with and blend different genres to create meaning and enhance interpretation. This interconnectedness allows readers to engage with the content on a deeper level, fostering a more nuanced understanding of the issues at hand.

In political cartoons, intertextuality means directly referencing, subtly hinting at, reusing, or changing other texts, like books, movies, TV shows, famous artworks, or comic books, whether they're from the same genre or different ones. Furthermore, cartoonists employ intertextuality to create meaning and engage their audience in several ways. They might play with genre, blending different genres to create a unique narrative that combines elements from multiple sources[64].

Evans and Hall (1999, p. 11) suggest that understanding images involves considering various sources of context, similar to discursive interactions in which nuances are derived from specific conversations, focusing on elements like who is speaking, the situation, the reaction, and the mood. John Berger (2008, p. 29), on the other hand, proposes that the meaning of images can change based on what is seen nearby or what follows next. This implies that the authority and interpretation of images are influenced by the context in which they are presented [65].

The examination of intertextuality in political cartoons opens avenues for deeper analysis of how these visual texts function within a broader cultural context. Like in literary texts, political cartoons may also contain intertextual references to other events, figures, or cultural symbols. By analyzing these intertextual connections, readers can gain insights into the broader cultural and political context in which the cartoon is situated. These references can provide additional layers of meaning and help readers understand the cartoonist's influences and intentions (Evans & Hall, 1999).

Six Modes of Intertextuality

Seeking to expand the definition of intertextuality beyond the mere relationship between literary texts to encompass other fields like rhetoric and composition, Frank D'Angelo broadens these categories by exploring how each

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[64] Additionally, cartoonists might use intertextuality to create humor by exaggerating or subverting familiar elements, or to create irony by juxtaposing serious themes with lighthearted references. Finally, cartoonists may pay tribute and acknowledge their obligation to previous creators while acknowledging their influences and inspirations by incorporating intertextuality into their cartoons and modifying the original work.

[65] These concepts align with Kristeva's (1984, p. 37) foundational analysis of intertextuality "as a mosaic of quotations" that assimilate and modify as they interact with one another.

serves a rhetorical function to advance the purpose of a text. D'Angelo (2010) focuses on the strategies employed by intertextuality and proposes a comprehensive analysis of six distinct modes of intertextuality that are relevant in elucidating the intricate relationship between text and image. These six modes of intertextuality identified by D'Angelo provide a framework for analyzing how texts and images interact, reference, and influence each other within the broader context of cultural and artistic production. These six modes comprising: <u>Adaptation; Retro; Appropriation; Parody</u> (refer to Section 3.3.3); <u>Pastiche</u>; and <u>Simulation</u>.

Adaptation involves the transformation of one text or image into another form, considering the differences in genre, medium and context (Hoesterey, 2001, p. 10). Adaptation involves taking a source material, such as a book, play, or other artwork, and transforming it into a new form, such as a film, television show, or stage production. This process often involves making changes to fit the new medium or audience while retaining the core elements of the original work. Adaptation is a common practice in the arts and entertainment industry, allowing stories and ideas to be reimagined and presented in different ways.

The concept of adaptation pertains to the process of transferring content and can also include other forms of media conversion such as adapting Broadway musicals and comic books into movies, and transforming board games into video formats, among other examples. Video games have recently become a source for creating movies and TV series. American superhero films produced by Marvel Studios, based on characters from Marvel Comics, are a clear example of how literary works are adapted and transmitted into the film industry (D'Angelo, 2010, p. 34).

Linda Hutcheon (2006) argues that a simple link between the original source material and the adapted work is often enough for audiences to make connections and understand how they relate. Audiences can take one medium and apply it to another, which helps them recognize and interpret the adaptation in relation to the original. This view suggests that adaptations don't have to be exact copies of the source material; they can depend on the audience's understanding and

interpretation to create meaning. Hutcheon's theory of adaptation shows how complex and dynamic the adaptation process is, highlighting how important audiences are in connecting different artistic forms (Hutcheon, 2006, pp. 21, 33) . On the other hand, (2006) asserts that adaptation necessitates a relationship to the source text or original material that provides information.

The primary factor determining the effectiveness of adaptation is the discernment of the most suitable medium for achieving the intended reconfiguration by the adaptor. This entails recognizing that certain mediums excel in conveying information, while others excel in visually representing concepts, and specific formats are more conducive to interactive experiences (Hutcheon, 2006, pp. 24-26, 35). In view of this, the adaptive potential of political cartooning lies in the ability to simplify complex theoretical concepts, which can be effectively communicated through visual representation (Barker, 2016, p. 90).

The mode of "**retro**" falls under the category of nostalgic intertextuality as defined by Julia Kristeva in her essay "Word, Dialogue, and Novel" ([1967] 1989). The nostalgic intertextuality, or "retro" mode, involves the deliberate referencing or imitation of past texts, styles, or cultural references in a contemporary work. This mode of intertextuality, or in D'Angelo's words, "*idealized longings for the past*" (2010, p. 35), often "pre-packaged" and marketed as consumer goods (Wison, 2005, pp. 21, 30), seeks to evoke nostalgia or a sense of longing for the past by immersing the audience in a familiar aesthetic or cultural milieu.

By invoking elements from the past, the retro mode allows creators to tap into the emotional resonance and cultural significance of earlier texts, while also imbuing their work with layers of meaning and reference[66]. By engaging in this process, retro exemplifies the manner in which visual and textual elements can be deliberately crafted as narratives rather than being perceived as inherently objective accounts or unfiltered realities. Retro intertextuality can take many

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[66] Such nostalgic approaches, according to Hutcheon (2003, pp. 180–181) (1989, quoted in Brooker 2003, pgs. 180–181), are re-presentations of the past "*in a self-conscious, parodic and critical way*" rather than merely yearnings for bygone idylls.

forms, such as direct quotations, pastiche, parody, or homage, and can be found in literature, film, music, fashion, and other artistic mediums.

The form's "re-appropriation and re-contextualization" process, according to Stuart Sim (2005, p. 297), can lead to ironic attitudes toward the previous forms that the emergent output highlights. These arguments buttress and support Grainge's (2002, p. 56) assertion that retro is a highly marketed cultural activity that "*borrows from the past without sentimentality, quotes without longing, and parodies without loss.*" Hence, retro serves as a valuable tool for facilitating ideological and cultural mediation between the past and the present, thereby benefiting both audiences and researchers.

The backward-looking retro mode of intertextuality reflects a desire to connect with and celebrate the cultural heritage and history of a particular time period or aesthetic sensibility. By drawing on the past in a self-conscious and referential way, creators can create complex layers of meaning, nostalgia, irony, and commentary on contemporary culture. This mode of intertextuality invites audiences to engage with texts on multiple levels, inviting them to consider the ways in which the past continues to shape and influence the present.

The third mode can be identified as **appropriation**, which involves the direct borrowing or reuse of texts or images for the creation of new works, often with a critical or transformative purpose.

Adaptation or Appropriation?

Julie Sanders (2016) suggests that appropriation and adaptation share some theoretical ground due to their common "*senses of mutually informing play.*" In both practices, creators engage in a dialogue with existing texts or cultural material, either by directly incorporating elements from these sources (appropriation) or by reworking them into a new form (adaptation). This process of engaging with preexisting texts allows for a dynamic interplay between the original

source material and the new work, stimulating audience perceptions of textual similarity or difference[67].

Both appropriation and adaptation involve a transformative approach to existing texts or cultural material, but they differ in the extent and nature of the transformation. In appropriation, creators have the flexibility to make more definitive departures from the original text compared to adaptation. Appropriation involves borrowing elements from existing texts or cultural materials and using them in a new context or for a new purpose. As stated by Marsden (1991), the concept of appropriation in art is characterized by the artists' DESIRE for POSSESSION. This desire allows creators to manipulate, remix, or reinterpret the original material in ways that can result in a significant departure from the source. This transformation is often achieved through the incorporation of interpolation and critique, as well as the transition from one genre to another.

In summary, while both forms of creative practice involve transforming existing material, adaptation tends to focus on reinterpreting or recontextualizing the source material in a way that maintains some connection to the original work, whereas appropriation offers more freedom to depart from the original text and create something entirely new by remixing or repurposing existing elements. This desire for possession drives the act of appropriating these coveted materials, which are then commandeered or taken over by the artists to be personalized and transformed through their own creative control and ownership.

By appropriating images and texts that hold meaning or value for them, artists can assert their control over these materials and reinterpret them in ways that reflect their artistic vision or intentions. Through this process of appropriation and personalization, artists can create new works that not only pay homage to the original sources but also allow them to assert their creative authority over the borrowed elements. In this vein, appropriation could be conceived as acts of

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[67] Sanders highlights how appropriation and adaptation can generate a creative tension between expectation and surprise, as audiences navigate the familiar elements of the source material alongside the innovative twists introduced by the creator. This interplay between the old and the new can lead to a deeper understanding of the original text, as well as a fresh interpretation or recontextualization of its themes, characters, or aesthetic patterns (Sanders, 2016, p. 34).

borrowing, stealing, or taking over others' meanings which facilitate one's own ends.

Political Cartoonists' Desire for Possession

The desire for possession in the context of appropriation in art can also be relevant to political cartoonists. Political cartoonists often use appropriation as a tool to engage with current events, social issues, and political commentary in their work. In the case of political cartoonists, the desire for possession can manifest in their choice of imagery, symbols, and text that they appropriate for their cartoons.

It can be argued that political cartoonists often start their image creation process by appropriating existing imagery, symbols, and texts from previous sources rather than creating entirely new visuals from scratch. This approach aligns with D'Angelo's (2010, p. 37) characterization of visual appropriators as "*image scavengers*." Later in the next analytical chapter, through case studies, it will examine instances of appropriated works that have been re-edited, resituated, altered, and modified as political cartoons within a socio-political context.

The ultimate mode of intertextuality is **simulation**, which involves the adoption of the external attributes of an image or text by another entity in order to deceive a broader audience. In this context, the purpose of the form is not to replicate, imitate, or parody original sources or reality. Rather, simulation involves the act of replacing "*signs of the real for the real itself*", resulting in superficial resemblances known as **simulacra**, which lack an authentic source. In McDowell's (2006) analysis, the author examines the various methods utilized in reality TV programs to create a sense of simulation. By manipulating visual elements, such as editing images and narratives, the creators of these shows are able to fake or contrive scenarios in order to elicit desired responses from participants. This deliberate manipulation serves to amplify the overall impact of the visual medium. This approach is commonly employed by political cartoonists, who compel their subjects or protagonists to act, behave, or speak in a manner that aligns with the artist's desires and priorities.

Conventions in Visual Images

After discussing the various modes in which intertextuality can be manifested, the focus now shifts towards the analysis of images and how they are dissected to generate intertextual readings. As outlined by Werner (2004, p. 65), there are three distinct forms of organization that pertain to intertextual elements in visual images as follows:

1. Organization **within images**: This involves the internal arrangement and composition of visual elements within a single image, including the use of symbols, metaphors, and visual cues to convey a particular message or meaning.

2. Organization **across images:** This form of organization refers to how visual elements and themes are interconnected and communicated <u>across a series of images</u>, creating a coherent narrative or visual argument that builds upon previous images.

3. Organization involving the exchange **between image and word** (word-image intertextuality): This form focuses on the interaction between visual and textual elements in conveying a message or meaning, where images and words work together to enhance and complement each other in communicating a particular idea or perspective.

By utilizing these tools, this study can critically analyze visual images in political cartoons. Therefore, can dig into the layers of intertextuality that add depth and meaning to these cultural pieces. This way of analyzing helps provide a clearer and deeper understanding of how these images influence cultural discussions and how society sees things. In the following, the first convention will be thoroughly introduced.

Within Images

The first form of organization refers to the internal arrangement and composition of visual elements within a single image. This aspect of visual analysis focuses on how different elements such as symbols, metaphors, colors, shapes, and visual cues are structured and combined to convey a specific message or meaning to the audience. Analyzing organization within images involves

breaking down the visual composition into its constituent parts and examining how these elements interact with each other to create a cohesive and impactful visual statement. This analysis may involve identifying recurring motifs or themes, exploring the use of symbolism and metaphor, and considering the relationship between different visual elements in terms of hierarchy, balance, contrast, and spatial relationships.

By studying the organization within images, current study can uncover the underlying messages, themes, and narratives found in a single visual image. This way of analyzing helps understand better how visual communication works at a deeper level, influencing how viewers interpret and connect with visual pieces.

Looking at how images are organized gives us a glimpse into the creative and communication strategies that visual artists use to shape visual elements and express specific ideas, feelings, and viewpoints. This kind of study helps this thesis recognize the complexity and richness of visual communication and the strong impact that visual imagery has on cultural discussions and how society sees things.

In accordance with Werner's analysis in 2004, he mentions two key conventions that play a crucial role in facilitating the basic intertextual form of organization within images: **binary juxtaposing** and **visual quoting** (p. 66).

1. **Binary Juxtaposing**: This convention involves the deliberate pairing or contrasting of two visual elements within an image to create a sense of opposition, tension, or comparison. Regarding the former discussion (Section 3.3.1: Humor), the placing and consequently the confronting of two contrasting objects, symbols, concepts, principles, circumstances, or events within the provided visual representation, which leads to the manifestation of humor in political cartoons.

By juxtaposing two contrasting elements, such as light and dark, large and small, or positive and negative space, artists can highlight differences, draw attention to specific aspects of the image, or convey a complex relationship between two concepts or ideas. This technique boosts the visual impact and invites viewers to interpret the underlying message or narrative in the visual composition. While

using these contrasting elements can be visually exciting and engaging, it can also lead to negative interpretations that highlight the ambiguity of the image or reinforce stereotypes on a broader scale (Werner, 2004, p. 65).

Because of this discomfort and unease, viewers are pushed to engage with the image more deeply and question the meanings and associations found in the mixed elements. This increased cognitive engagement leads to judgments and interpretations, which is evaluative and as viewers try to make sense of the complex relationships and connections shown in the visual composition. The discomfort created by these blends in images sparks critical thinking, inviting viewers to explore and unpack the layers of meaning and visual hints present in the image.

2. **Visual Quoting**: Visual quoting refers to the practice of referencing or incorporating existing visual motifs, symbols, or cultural references within a new visual context. Artists may borrow imagery from historical artworks, popular culture, or iconic symbols to evoke specific associations or meanings in their own creations. Furthermore, Walker and Chaplin underscore the proficiency of political cartoonists in the convention of visual quotation, "borrowing themes, symbols, or compositional elements from famous images" (1997, p. ibid.). These sentiments chime with D'Angelo's previous portrayal of cartoonists as individuals who scavenge for images.

Through visual quoting, artists can establish connections with the viewer's prior knowledge or cultural background, tapping into shared cultural symbols and narratives to enhance the communicative power of the image. This technique of visual quoting adds layers of meaning and depth to the visual composition, inviting viewers to engage with the image on multiple levels and interpret the intertextual references embedded within the visual text. In Werner's (2004, p. 67) study, it is asserted that the skill of paraphrasing in the realm of art serves to generate **visual metaphors** that facilitate the emergence of novel, layered, or multifaceted

interpretations, thus allowing for the exploration of innovative modes of aesthetic imitation.

It is important to acknowledge that the effectiveness of this technique is contingent upon the audience possessing the necessary cultural knowledge to fully comprehend the intended message. Any lack of cultural capital can hinder the evaluation process and subsequently diminish the nuanced elements incorporated into the visual representation. In the next Chapter, the methodological discussion will address the challenges that arise in the analysis of the corpus. It will be acknowledged that the analysis is based on the author's background knowledge rather than the cultural capital of the audience.

Ultimately, by utilizing these conventions of binary juxtaposing and visual quoting, artists and designers can effectively structure visual elements within an image to communicate complex ideas, provoke thought, and engage viewers in a dialogue with the cultural context and intertextual references present in the visual composition. These conventions enrich the organization within images and provide a framework for analyzing the intricate interplay of visual elements and meanings within visual artifacts.

Parody

Parody is a form of artistic expression that mimics the style of another work or genre for comedic effect or criticism. It often involves exaggerating or distorting elements of the original style of a specific artist, author, or genre to create a humorous or satirical effect. Parody can be used to challenge and subvert dominant narratives, critique societal norms, or simply entertain audiences. This section will examine the concept of parody in more detail, with a focus and emphasis placed on the structural modeling procedures that are integrated within the artistic process, which encompass the revision, replay, invention, and trans-contextualization of preceding artworks (Hutcheon, 1985, p. 11).

In a communicative context, one method of undermining prominent individuals involves the creation of distorted imitations or parodies of their personas, writings, or speeches. These imitations are designed to diminish any perceived threat and instead elicit amusement from the audience. However, it bears reiterating that one of the profound ways, thoroughly examined in Section 1.2.3, is the technique of zoomorphism, which degrades and undermines a protagonist's character and affords the viewer a sense of superiority.

Aristotle is recognized as the initial proponent of the term 'parodia' when naming his brief, mock-heroic verses. Given the literary sensibilities of Greek philosophers, it was primarily employed for comedic purposes rather than denigration. In Valeria Saloman's work (2006), she discusses how parody was utilized in the pre-twentieth century period, which she refers to as "the Age of Parody." Saloman holds that, in this earlier historical era, notable individuals frequently used parody to support and advance conventional and conservative values instead of questioning or undermining the prevailing standards (2006, pp. 69-70). This traditional usage of parody differed from its postmodern manifestation in the twentieth century, where parody became more closely associated with critical engagement, deconstruction, and subversion of dominant cultural narratives[68]. Within the postmodern context, parody is not merely perceived as a humorous imitation or ridicule of a specific genre or style; rather, it is regarded as a sophisticated, multi-layered, and multifaceted mode of critique that questions and undermines existing norms and conventions. It could be argued that parody is an evolving aspect of art and literature that was previously used as a tool for conservative promotion but has now become a radical or critical way of studying political cartoons, it is possible to argue. The growing significance of parody in post-modernist times replicates the current cultural trend towards self-reflection,

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[68] A post-modernist perspective by Linda Hutcheon (1989) expresses the form as a mode of critical author commentary towards prior artworks, achieved through "[dual] processes of installing and ironizing." Furthermore, she outlines how parodic representations can emanate from past iterations, illuminating the ideological consequences that are derived from such continuity and/or difference (Barker, 2016, p. 102).

self-awareness, and a critical interaction with the media-laden nature of today's society.

Reflecting the ideas put forth by Chambers (2012, p. 3), who suggests that parody is a fundamental tool innate to every person, Lachman's examination of the relationship between <u>parody</u> and <u>grotesque</u> art underscores the adaptability of these forms in critiquing political discourses (2004, p. 61). Artists can use parody in parallel with grotesque elements to instill irony as well as sense of detachment in political themes, resulting in more complex and thought-provoking perspectives on social issues [69]. This approach not only challenges traditional narratives and standards but also encourages viewers to critically interact with the underlying messages and beliefs that are conveyed through political discussions. When skillfully utilized, parody and grotesque art have the power to serve as tools for creators to defy dominant narratives, scrutinize existing power structures, and spark discussions on the complexities of society and politics. This approach concurs with the critical discourse analysis employed as a research method in this study.

Despite being extensively examined in the domains of cognition, communication, and humor, the parodic form continues to possess a certain level of ambiguity. On one level, political humor functions through the ambiguity of political parody, its reflexivity, and its ability to create or rearrange affective communities. As previously mentioned in the section Humor (Section 3.3.1), political humor in modern media space entails three forms of parody: carnivalesque politics, parodic reworking of political discourses, and political protests through satirical activism (Petrovic, 2018) (Semotiuk & Shevchenko, 2022). The inherent ambiguity of political parody, its self-reflective nature, and its ability to foster the formation or transformation of emotional communities are key

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[69] Lachman's study, titled "From Both Sides of the Irish Sea: The Grotesque, Parody, and Satire in Martin McDonagh's the Leenane Trilogy" (2004), delves into the interconnectedness of parody and grotesque art in the context of McDonagh's work. In this study, Lachman emphasizes how these artistic techniques can be manipulated to create a sense of parodic and ironic detachment towards political discourses within the plays. Through the exploration of parody and grotesque elements, Lachman sheds light on the ways in which McDonagh uses these tools to offer a critical perspective on societal norms and political ideologies.

aspects of political humor. These revisions allow individuals to embrace their own engagement and vulnerability, while also helping them understand the problematic moral ramifications of their nuanced posture as a genuine and fruitful kind of political involvement.

Discussions will attempt to demonstrate parody as playing a complex role within the parallel spheres of humor and communication by laying out its roles. To put it plainly, this thesis holds that parody is a rhetorical technique that broadens the scope of a targeted media text's examination and critique by emphasizing certain elements to an extreme extent and giving a critical comment from its author to an earlier work of art. As a result, the debate will yield complex, specialized knowledge of the political cartoon as well as a tactile understanding of how the image's inner workings are managed, particularly in terms of its grammar and ideology.

Studies have suggested that the utilization of political cartoons has the potential to challenge traditional authorship norms and, as stated by Howard, possesses "potentially transgressive authorships" (Howard, 1999, p. 117). However, given its ongoing prevalence among cartoonists, it is necessary to engage in further discourse regarding the inherent characteristics and constraints of this medium.

Mere 'Imitation' or 'Conflicting Voices'?

Parody has undergone constant transformation to incorporate new artistic and discursive ideas. Attempts to confine parody to a mere "literary mimicry" overlook its ability to be interchangeable and its presence in various other art forms. Mikhail Bakhtin examines the concept of parody within the framework of **dialogism** and the <u>interaction</u> of voices in literature. Bakhtin argues that parody involves a conflict between two disparate and opposite voices, each representing contrasting perspectives or ideologies. One voice is semantic authority and anticipates agreement from audiences with its own point of view, while the other

voice challenges or parodies this authority through satire, mockery, or subversion (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 76).

This dynamic of <u>conflicting voices</u> in parody reflects a broader dialogic tension in literature and culture, wherein multiple viewpoints and discourses interact and contend with one another. Bakhtin's analysis emphasizes the polyphonic nature of language and discourse, highlighting how parody can serve as a site of contestation and negotiation between different ideological positions or worldviews. By situating parody within this dialogic framework, Bakhtin underscores its role in disrupting established narratives, exposing power dynamics, and fostering critical engagement with dominant discourses.

In a separate body of research, parody has been characterized as a knowledgeable form of imitation that necessitates a thorough understanding of the source material. This perspective emphasizes that the effectiveness of parody lies in its ability to convincingly replicate and "sound true" to the original (Falk, 1995).

Parody, as a form of artistic expression, goes beyond mere imitation of an original source. It operates by presenting subjects in a contradictory manner, wherein the lowly are elevated and the elevated are defiled. Chambers (2012, p. 2) defines parody as "art that plays with art", thereby stimulating artistic innovation and facilitating transformative change. Soarez ([1565] 1591, pp. 117-118) explicates the manner in which these forms exert their influence not through verbal expression but rather by shedding light on thoughts, thereby elucidating a significant portion, if not all, of the thoughts through the utilization of mimetic imagery.

Playful nature of parody

Gross (2010, pp. xi-xv) describes parody's joyful and lighthearted character as "*cheerfully scurrilous to bittersweet, with room in its world for both anger and pathos*." Robert Chambers asserts that cartoonists can be likened to **visual parodists** because they possess the ability to draw upon and manipulate various

artistic components to create contrasts and convey meaning in their work (Chambers, 2010, p. 19). By likening cartoonists to visual parodists, Chambers emphasizes the transformative and critical potential of cartooning as a form of artistic expression that engages with and subverts established visual conventions and narratives. Just as literary parodists manipulate language and textual conventions to create humorous or critical effects, visual parodists such as cartoonists utilize play with visual tropes, symbols, stereotypes, and genres, distorting and exaggerating familiar visual elements to critique or subvert cultural referents.

The empirical study on selected cartoons later reveals that, by borrowing and manipulating diverse artistic elements, cartoonists can construct visually engaging and satirical compositions that critique and subvert established cultural norms and conventions, societal values, and political issues in a persuasive and tangible manner.

Chambers' assertion underscores the creative and inventive nature of cartooning as a form of visual parody, highlighting how cartoonists skillfully blend different artistic elements to craft compelling, meaningful, and thought-provoking visual narratives. By actively engaging with and repurposing various artistic components, cartoonists can construct powerful contrasts that invite viewers to reflect on the complexities of contemporary society and culture. In view of this, this thesis introduces two main typologies of parody in the context of political cartooning:

1. Critical Parody: This type of parody aims to critique and subvert the original work by exaggerating its flaws, ridiculing its conventions, and challenging its assumptions. Critical parody often uses irony, satire, and absurdity to make a point about the original work or the cultural context in which it exists.

2. Playful Parody: Using humor, exaggeration, and artistic manipulation to create an adaptation that is a memorial to and a divergence from the original, this kind of parody is more playful and sarcastic and often rude or even obscene. To

convey a feeling of humor and lightheartedness, playful parodies frequently make use of witty wordplay, visual puns, and allusions.

Both categories of parody can be used by cartoonists to make political commentary, question established conventions and push the boundaries of what is acceptable in terms of humor and creativity. But beyond that, in outlining the functions of parody, according to Robert Chambers' study "Parody: The Art that Plays with Art" (2010), there are two main broad conventions of parody:

Primary Conventions: These are the basic artistic elements that are inherent in the <u>mechanical core of the medium,</u> commonly used in parody, such as character types, settings, and plot structures. Primary conventions are the fundamental building blocks of parody, and they provide a foundation for creating new and humorous works.

Secondary Conventions: These are the more specific and nuanced elements that are used in parody to create humor, irony, and other effects. Secondary conventions can include things like genre tropes, cultural references, and narrative structures.

These categories of primary and secondary conventions are not the same as the critical and playful parody categories, which mentioned earlier. Instead, they provide a framework for understanding how cartoonists use and manipulate various elements to create parodies. In parody, both primary and secondary conventions are manipulated and subverted to create a humorous or ironic commentary on the original work or genre. By playing with these conventions, parodists can create a sense of familiarity and recognition, while also highlighting the absurdity or contradictions of the original work. The subsequent sections will delve into the two overarching categories of primary and secondary parody.

Primary Parody

The primary conventions in political cartooning refer to the fundamental elements that are <u>inherent to the medium itself</u> and are utilized to create and convey parody. These conventions, classified by Barker (2016, p. 106), cover a

wide range of aspects that provide a foundation for creating engaging, effective, and humorous yet critical cartoons. They form the backbone of cartooning and provide a way for artists to manipulate and play with these basic elements.

These basic artistic elements include Materials employed for the creation of the cartoon (Ink, Paper, Digital tools); the simplifications, exaggerations and distortions in the images (Abstractions), how the materials and ideas are put together (like composition and layout), the size and proportions of the cartoon (like panel size and captions), and how cartoonists communicate with their audience (through tone, humor, and emotional connection).

These fundamental conventions are not fixed and set in stone, which gives cartoonists the chance to customize and express their own interpretations in their unique style Through the manipulation of intrinsic conventions that exist at the intersection of art and life, cartoonists can construct a parodic dilemma that subverts the reader's anticipations and obscures the distinctions between reality and cartoon representations. The alterations in the demarcations between art and life not only yield innovative and groundbreaking viewpoints but also create opportunities for novel modes of expression within the domain of political cartooning. These parodic interruptions, despite their primary intent to entertain, possess the capacity to establish new standards and integrate previously marginalized taboo subjects into the artistic discourse.

By playing with the tension between artistic conventions and real-world references, the cartoonist can make the reader feel disoriented or uneasy, which is a key part of parody. This tension can highlight the absurdity, hypocrisy, or contradictions of the real issues being shown. In other words, by stretching the limits of what's seen as "normal" or "acceptable" in cartooning, the cartoonist can create a sense of confusion (cognitive dissonance) in the viewer. It might lead to a deeper understanding of the issues being addressed.

The parodic puzzle created by cartoonist can be seen as a form of "**meta-commentary**" that points out the artificial nature of the cartooning medium while also addressing real-world issues. This self-aware quality can be especially

powerful in creating irony or satire that challenges the reader's assumptions and biases.

Therefore, to give a synopsis of this discussion, the adept manipulation of fundamental conventions illustrates how political cartoons can employ parody to produce a nuanced and intellectually stimulating critique of contemporary society.

Secondary Parody

To recap, primary conventions refer to the fundamental elements or structures that are typical of a particular genre, medium, or art form. These are the basic building blocks that define the art form or genre. For example, in cartooning, primary conventions might include the use of visual metaphors, exaggeration, and caricature. Secondary conventions, on the other hand, are the specific ways in which these primary conventions are used to create meaning or convey a particular message. These are the nuances and details that add depth and complexity to the work[70]. Should the fundamental conventions of parody function as its foundation, it is the secondary conventions that illustrators consistently utilize to embellish and enhance the medium.

In parody, both primary and secondary conventions are manipulated and subverted to create a humorous or ironic commentary on the original work or genre. The structure and design of the political cartoon, which serves as a unique medium for artistic expression and social commentary, is particularly favorable and well-suited for the integration and incorporation of various **recyclable** concepts, symbols, patterns, and themes. It allows for the depiction of familiar character types to highlight common idiosyncrasies or expose shortcomings.

This thesis suggests that these conventions are not just a binary opposition between original and derivative; instead they show a dynamic interplay between innovation and tradition. This idea is especially relevant in parody, where cartoonists often employ familiar tropes and conventions to create a sense of

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[70] These elements are derived from the imaginative repertoire (collection) of cartoonists, repurposed to include intertextual elements such as discourse and genre. According to Chambers, such forms encompass the "fresh and the stale, the archetype and the stereotype, and everything that falls in between" (2010, p. 22). The phrase aptly captures the complexity and diversity of secondary conventions in parody.

shared cultural or comment on how different texts relate to each other. By blending both "fresh" and "old" elements, parodists can create a sense of tension or irony between what is new and what is familiar, which can be a strong tool for humor, satire, or social commentary.

In addition, the study points out that secondary conventions in parody are not just for decoration; they help build the narrative and the way the message is presented. By using these conventions, cartoonists can create a rich mix of meaning and reference that engages their audience on multiple levels.

Metaphor

The metaphor suggests a likeness between two unlike things (Zarifian, 2025), which makes comparisons intended to highlight a similarity. By comparing a complex issue or situation with a more familiar one, artists can unleash their creativity, expose their inner worlds, and encourage audiences to see it in a different light. It might be considered whether this comparison makes the artist's argument more obvious and apparent to the receivers after assessing the conditions being compared.

Metaphors are utilized across disciplines and genres, in order to achieve a variety of communication objectives, such as explaining objects to others ("*the heart is a motor*"), ascribing abstract concepts or intangible phenomenon to physical objects ("*Life is a highway*"), influencing individuals ("*this automobile is as quick as a leopard*"), or getting readers a bit carried away ("*Her tears were a river flowing down her cheeks*"). Metaphoric cognition is a fundamental aspect of human experience and nature and plays a crucial role in discourse. It can be used as the foundation for innovative theoretical ideas or as artistic and creative tools with a purposeful and communicative role (Downing & Mujic, 2009, p. 61) and Reeves (2005).

According to Sara Tabatabaei and Elena Anatolievna, metaphor is a highly potent linguistic device that enhances language by generating impactful and attention-grabbing effects on the audience. Through the creation of "shocks" and

unexpected associations, metaphor effectively amplifies the expressive capacity of language, thereby facilitating the conveyance of emotions (Tabatabaei & Anatolievna, 2022). [71]

There is widespread agreement on the fundamental structure of metaphor, notwithstanding the wide variety of theoretical viewpoints and assertions with regard to metaphor interpretation. It's regarded as a rhetorical device when one specific entity, which is called the target, is conceived in terms of another entity, which is known as the source. Therefore, processing a metaphor entails comprehending or experiencing the target from the perspective of the source. Accordingly, the structure refers to at least two domains, X and Y that share a metaphorical association (as opposed to a literal analogy): **X IS Y**, where one domain (X) functions as the target and the other (Y) is the source domain and serves as the vehicle. This comprehension and experience is the result of two processes: firstly, the source and target of the two entities must be respectively distinguished, and secondly, in order to determine whether characteristics of the source are intended or designed to map onto the target, correspondences between the entities that originate from two diverse domains must be identified. The second process is typically referred to as cross-domain mapping.

Supplementing these ideas further, when illustrating the various types of metaphor, it becomes apparent how each variant depends on the unlikeness between entities, as opposed to their similarities. Hence, the most impactful metaphors are the ones that transfer a visual representation from one set of ideas and map it to an unrelated entity. Metaphors assist in elucidating the essence of creativity by facilitating the audience's ability to integrate logic and communication with various cognitive realms, including message substance, recollection of previous experiences, and cultivation of empathic reactions.

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[71] In her study of how scientific language continues to evolve, Carol Reeves illustrates how:
"Metaphors are inescapable in visuals, just as they are in everyday language. As human beings who must often draw from various domains of experience to make sense of new domains of experience, [cartoonists] is no different from the rest of us" (Reeves, 2005, p. 3).

With the pioneering research of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors have been considered a conceptual phenomenon rather than a language one. But, up until now, the preferred input method for exploring metaphorical conceptualization has been language. Kenneth Burke ([1945] 1969, p. 503) articulates metaphors as "*devices for seeing something in terms of something else.*" The simple framework of perceiving one entity through the lens of another, allowed researchers, notably in Lakoff and Johnson's studies, to advance metaphor terminology towards the "understanding and experiencing" processes (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5).

The significance of metaphor lies not only in its ability to generate novel linguistic structures, but also in its capacity to generate mental models that facilitate the organization and expeditious transmission of concepts and emotions within a text message (Tabatabaei & Anatolievna, 2022). Johnathan Charteris-Black presents two concurrent descriptions of the structure of metaphor, focusing on its practical role in discourse. The initial variant characterizes a metaphor as a discordant linguistic expression designed to sway opinions and assessments through persuasion, often subtly reflecting the speaker's motives within a particular setting. The subsequent interpretation defines a metaphor as a linguistic expression that originates from the alteration in the application of a word or phrase from its anticipated context or field to an alternative, unforeseen context or field, causing a conflict in meaning (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 19).

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

To determine an appropriate theoretical framework for investigating visual metaphors in political cartoons, this thesis will delve into the impact of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) on the field of metaphorical research. This theory has led to a shift in focus from verbal to conceptual aspects of analysis [72]. Within the framework of the CMT metaphor has been extensively

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[72] The idea that "the mind is intrinsically embodied [with] reasoning formed by the body" is at the heart of it (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). Considering this, it is feasible to assert that CMT condenses metaphoric interpretation into a series of dialogues that take place between conceptual domains known as mappings. Consequently, the words and phrases used to represent these dialogues are seen as being only a surface-level reflection of the underlying links between the domains.

studied in the past several decades by other academics like Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009, p. 9).

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory is based on several key principles. Metaphor is primarily viewed as a cognitive mechanism that involves understanding a domain of experience, known as the target domain, in terms of a more concrete domain, referred to as the source domain. A metaphor is essentially a mapping, or a fixed set of conceptual correspondences, between the source and target domains, where one or more features of the source are projected onto the target. As Lakoff notes, a metaphor is "an ontological mapping across conceptual domains" that allows us to understand and experience one thing in terms of another. Furthermore, any linguistic metaphor or metaphoric expression is considered to be an example of a conceptual metaphor.

The fields of corpus-linguistics, applied linguistics, and discourse analysis regularly adopt the innovative notions of Lakoff and Johnson, asserting that metaphors systematically structure concepts, not just language. This exploration allows for a deeper understanding of how human cognition operates in relation to the processing and categorization of information. It is through the perceptibility of our senses that abstract metaphors have the ability to transform into tangible concepts, while those without these sensory impulses may find such metaphors to be perplexing and incomprehensible, thus resulting in a lack of clarity and understanding amongst the audience.

Crisp (1996, p. 79) suggests that the utilization of CMT in the analysis of editorial and political cartoons becomes more complex due to the presence of visual metaphors. These forms present theoretical challenges for scholars who argue that metaphors are purely conceptual in essence, as highlighted by Gleason (2009, p. 438). The author emphasizes how the unique and spontaneous nature of visual metaphors gives them a foundation that is inherently uncertain. Turner (1991, p. 14) addresses this by advocating a reading of visual metaphors in accordance with classic literary theories of metaphor by claiming that their ownership of distinct languages leverages regular linguistic similarities, resulting

in unique mental processes. Although the CMT framework will be employed later in the next analysis, the author agrees with Gibbs' (2011, p. 543) argument that "*conceptual metaphors alone do not create the fullest interpretations of all metaphors*," partly due to the lexical, grammatical, socio-cultural, and visual restrictions that dictate in metaphorical discourse.

To recapitulate, according to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, metaphor assumes a decisive role in cognition and language by shaping human experiences through cognitive mechanisms, organizing our thoughts and knowledge. Consequently, metaphors not only shape the way we think but also possess the ability to influence our perception of reality, impacting how individuals approach and understand specific topics.

Visual Metaphors in Cartoons

A significant aspect of Conceptual Metaphor Theory that enriches analytical endeavors is the notion of metaphoric domains. These domains can be characterized as structured mappings between two conceptual domains: the source domain and the target domain. This concept extends beyond the individual to a collective level, and it finds application in communication at both individual and collective levels. This section delineates the manifestations of such domains to underscore the commonalities, idiosyncrasies, and preferences observable in a corpus of political cartoons.

The source domain constitutes a conceptual realm that is both familiar and comprehensible to the audience. Kövecses and Benczes (2010, p. 18) contend that the optimal source domains are those that are distinctly defined and readily recognizable to audiences. Typically, it encompasses a concrete, tangible notion derived from quotidian experiences. In political cartoons, prevalent source domains comprise physical entities (e.g., tools, vehicles, human body; plants, buildings); environment and natural disasters (e.g., storms, earthquakes, fires, flood, iceberg); games and sports (e.g., football, chess, boxing); human experiences (e.g., disease, interpersonal relationships, travels).

In the following, this thesis provides several examples to demonstrate how the metaphoric structure **"X is Y"** is utilized in political cartoons to create vivid comparisons that convey deeper meanings or critiques. In this structure, "X" represents the target domain, while "Y" represents the source domain. This metaphoric conceptualization enables cartoonists to depict complex issues in a simplified manner, making them more accessible and engaging for the audience.

The target domain refers to the conceptual realm that the cartoonist intends to analyze or critique. This domain is frequently characterized by its abstraction or complexity, rendering it less accessible to the audience. In the realm of political cartoons, prevalent target domains encompass political and governmental matters, social challenges (e.g., poverty, inequality, liberty, freedom of speech), economic frameworks, and global relations. Some similar patterns and themes arise, even if the exact target domains might vary greatly depending on political, historical, and cultural contexts.

The metaphorical link that the cartoonist establishes to communicate a certain concept or message is known as the mapping between the source and target domains. By referencing the features and organization of the source domain, this mapping emphasizes certain features of the destination domain in a metaphorical manner rather than a literal or direct one. Domain definition gives researchers credible details, concrete sources and targets to examine, frequently in conjunction with certain visual aspects deemed interesting for investigation. For instance, in a cartoon representation of a politician as a juggler, the source domain is identified as juggling, which is a well-known and tangible concept, while the target domain pertains to politics, a more abstract notion. The idea that the politician is attempting to balance several conflicting interests or obligations, much like a juggling artist who balances several balls, is highlighted by the mapping between the two domains.

According to Elisabeth El Refaie (2015, p. 9) (2003), people rely on their personal experiences of physical sensations and interactions to understand abstract and intangible concepts. This process of "embodiment" is crucial in creating

meaning and is even fundamental to the way we use linguistic metaphors. In other words, our bodily experiences and sensory perceptions serve as a foundation for making sense of complex and abstract ideas. But beyond that, Lakoff and Johnson's warnings against a fixed concept of embodiment must be considered. The authors of CMT appropriately assert that metaphors are not exclusively dependent on possessing a specific type of physical body (1980, p. 57). Kövecses and Benczes (2010) suggest that by using such domains, image creators help viewers come close to the reality their metaphors are meant to represent. The simplistic depictions of this universe allow audiences to access areas of relevance when creating more abstract and sophisticated concepts, although it may seem naive. Nevertheless, the extent of synthesis achieved by the two domains may constrain the ultimate visual representation, referencing Laura Downing and Blanca Mujic's hypothesis that partial correspondences accentuate particular attributes of the source domain while obscuring those that do not align with the creator's focus and interest (2009, p. 63).

The conceptual nature of metaphor indicates that, in addition to language, images, sounds, and gestures may all trigger metaphors and serve as starting points for metaphoric conceptualization. The concept of the form is extended to "the *mechanism or lens through which the topic is perceived*" by Foss (2004, p. 299) in order to explain how visual metaphors are able to produce semantic links between topic and communicative vehicle. Dominguez (2015, p. 435) asserts that metaphors deployed in political cartoons are multi-modal, as they may simultaneously combine both aphoristic and evaluative text and images. Modern methods are more radical; Bounegru and Forceville (2011) divide the form into varieties that are mono and multimodal according to the topic's relationship to the linked communicative vehicle. In this vein, metaphors can be conceptualized as mono-modal, with the topic and vehicle both primarily identified visually, by projecting their concepts into the cartoon's visuals (2011, p. 212). Bounegru and Forceville's sub-division of metaphor will boost reader comprehension of the form's informative capacity in reinforcing knowledge and opinion, in tandem with its

ability to engage uninformed audiences through creative expressions delivered via covert, persuasive methods.

At this juncture, the discussion focuses on laying the cognitive and linguistic groundwork for understanding the use of metaphors in editorial cartoons. Echoing the views of Feldman and Narayanan (2004) and Forceville (2006), this approach considers form a rhetorical, flexible force that is beneficial to imagery and larger society. To characterize the predominant generic structure of metaphoric conceptualizations in cartoons, examine how visual metaphors are used to make a point stance or convey a point of view, and adopt a discourse pragmatic approach that emphasizes the communication objectives of cartoonists when choosing various metaphoric expressions, efforts will be made in these directions. By doing this, the forthcoming study and subsequent empirical analysis aim to elucidate how cartoons fulfill distinct communicative functions and to exhibit the application of specific metaphors that facilitate the mapping of complex political events into more familiar contexts. This process enables creators to depict the unfamiliar or concealed (target domains) through familiar and observable concepts as source domains (Reeves, 2005, pp. 23-30).

As noted above, metaphors in the advertising industry contribute to promoting a product by highlighting its positive attributes, either by emphasizing its features or by presenting it as a necessity for consumers. In contrast, visual metaphors used in political cartoons can convey a negative evaluation and critical viewpoint of politicians or political and social issues through various means, such as (A): employing source domains with negative associations, (B): challenging commonly held positive perceptions through the use of particular source objects, (C): establishing a semantic connection between seemingly unrelated domains, (D): integrating negative intertextuality elements as the source object, or (E): incorporating verbal elements with negative connotations. These techniques can trigger a strong semantic dissonance; the assessment and criticism get deeper, the more significant this confrontation.

Metaphor Interpretation

A metaphor's efficacy is frequently determined by its cultural relevance and capacity for association with the intended audience. In certain cultures, a metaphor that is commonly understood and accepted may be misunderstood, misinterpreted or insufficiently helpful. According to Elisabeth El Refaie (2009) there is increasing evidence that the interpretation of metaphors is partly dependent upon people's socio-cultural background, as well as on the contexts in which the metaphors are used. To some extent, pragmatic, genre-related considerations influence how metaphors in cartoons should be interpreted. For instance, viewers will typically expect cartoons to criticize or make fun of particular events or people, and as a result, they will most likely perceive a cartoon in that way.

Also, it is believed that a reader's level of inference affects a metaphor's impact, highlighting the significance of the audience's prior knowledge. The ability of viewers to identify individuals, situations, and objects as well as their familiarity with the political context of society and pertinent information, such as current news and events, historical details, cultural customs, and the like, are indispensable to the full interpretation of cartoons. This background knowledge is necessary for a thorough analysis of the hidden meanings associated with metaphors in cartoons (Schilperoord & Maes, 2009).

Classification of Visual Metaphors in Cartoons

The emphasis of the discussion now shifts towards the delineation of specific categories of metaphors utilized by cartoonists in analyzing diverse source domains to articulate a particular perspective. By underscoring politically significant messages to the audience, such an examination will facilitate the illustration of some of the most contemporary or unconventional source domains investigated by cartoonists.

Joost Schilperoord and Alfons Maes (2009), following Forceville (1996), Philips and McQuarrie (2004), and Teng and Sun (2002) detail the way in which the target and source domains are realized. In their methodology, after defining the

conceptual content of a cartoon by paraphrasing the metaphor, which employs the X IS Y template, target and source domains as well as aspects to be mapped will be determined. Consequently, they attempt to reconstruct the viewpoint expressed by cartoonists as objectively as possible by using the method of assessing the argumentative structure of editorial cartoons.

The authors distinguish various cases in which only one domain is visually expressed, which are referred to as "**replacements**," cases in which the target and source domains are depicted separately, called "**juxtapositions**," and cases in which the two domains are visually merged, known as "**fusions**." (Schilperoord & Maes, 2009, p. 222) This categorization will be used in our next analysis.

From another perspective, barker (2016, p. 148), in accordance with Lucas Reehorst's articulation in his research of editorial cartoon metaphors utilized in us presidential elections (2014, pp. 14-27), outlines five types of metaphors that are triggered through specific aspects of news discourse, including: topic-driven; topical; language-triggered; pictorially-triggered; and ascribed.

Irony

To engage in the discourse, it is imperative to recognize that scholarly perspectives on irony are fundamentally anchored in the domain of linguistic study, which frequently employs a widely accepted definition of irony ascribed to Doctor Johnson—which Colebrook (2004, p. 1) summarizes as "**saying what is contrary to what is meant**." Based on this conceptualization of irony as "articulating what is opposite to what is intended," the following serves as an illustration of an ironic statement: "*What a splendid day!*" remarked a driver stuck in a traffic jam on a rainy day. This statement embodies irony, as the speaker articulates the contrary of his true sentiment. He manifests a sense of joy regarding the weather, yet the prevailing context (being stuck in traffic) denotes that he is likely grappling with emotions of irritation or frustration.

According to Paul Simpson (2011, pp. 34-35), the simplicity of relying solely on verbal discourse has led to the concept of irony being reduced to a theoretical assumption. Considering this perspective, Biljana Scott (2004, p. 35) challenges the traditional understanding of irony and proposes a more nuanced and comprehensive definition that can better account for the complexities of visual irony, particularly in the context of political cartoons and other forms of photographic expression. This thesis concedes with her critiques regarding the classical definition of irony that "saying what is contrary to what is meant" is too narrow and doesn't fully capture the complexity of ironic expression, especially in visual forms.

By delineating "*the discrepancy between what is said and what is meant (or shown)*," Scott argues that the concept should be reconsidered as encompassing two potential yet opposing realities (Scott, 2004, ibid.). This reevaluation would elucidate the manner in which ironic contrasts function at an ideological level, engaging with differing worldviews and corresponding belief systems. This implies that irony can be a powerful tool for challenging dominant narratives or exposing social injustices. Furthermore, Scott posits that any definition should be enriched with aspects of pretense or varying levels of awareness between the victim and the ironist/audience. This emphasizes the power dynamics that ironic statements frequently include.

Elisabeth El Refaie's echoes Biljana Scott's call for a revised understanding of irony. Refaie argues that irony has the power to both transcend and concurrently subvert dominant beliefs and opinions (El Refaie E. , 2005, p. 785). She supports an approach to research that looks at how irony may both challenge and undermine the very concepts it references. Through an analysis of irony's subversive potential, Refaie proposes that audiences might become more cognizant of the prevailing reactions to certain occurrences. This knowledge can lead to a critical assessment of things that are typically taken for granted. In the end, she holds that irony may

subvert prevailing narratives without necessitating the creation of whole new dissenting linguistic forms (El Refaie, 2005, ibid.) [73].

Visual Irony

The discussion of this part will answer the question, "Can a political cartoon be considered ironic? Irony in political cartoons falls under the category of graphic irony as a specific type of irony that relies on visual elements. Graphic irony fulfills numerous functions within storytelling; it enhances narratives, subvert presuppositions, or clarifies perspectives. In the context of cartoons, it involves a stark contrast between what is observed, expected, or implied in real-word and what is ultimately represented within the frame. This contrast can be humorous, thought-provoking, or even tragic. By understanding the principles of visual irony, audiences can gain a better appreciation for the subtle details and powerful messages that these cartoons often deliver. Such viewpoints chime with Salvatore Attardo's notions (2000) on the "*form's relativity and inappropriateness*" or its capacity for indirect negation.

The effectiveness of ironic sentiment in a political cartoon depends on the degree of contrast between the observed and the depicted situation [74]. The greater the gap, the more impactful the irony can be. This is owed to the fact that an unexpected contrast has the power to shock and attract an audience, pushing them to consider the underlying message more carefully and analytically. Biljana Scott (2004, p. 31) emphasizes the primary objective of graphic irony, which is to subvert and undermine prevailing assumptions and portrayals. Given this perspective, the focus turns towards comprehending the mechanisms of irony with adequate concentration on the visual medium of political cartoons. Simultaneously, there is a need to explore why irony should be regarded as a complementary component of humor analysis rather than a mere tangential point of interest.

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[73] Consequently, this would stimulate a critical assessment, both visually and verbally, of what would typically be unquestionably accepted, thereby obviating the need to create "*completely new languages of dissent.*"

[74] According to Sudesh Mishra, the flourish of political cartoons is predicated upon the represented distinctions between verisimilitude and equivalence (2016, p. 97).

In the study on the role of visuals in conveying ironic sentiments, Burgers, Van Mulken, and Schellens propose three potential approaches in which images can be analyzed in relation to irony (2013, p. 298). The study suggests that images can play a significant role in conveying irony, particularly in political cartoons, where visual elements can be used to mock or critique a subject. The three approaches are **Unhelpful Images**, **Highlighting Literal Meaning** and **Showing Incongruence**.

Incorporating Irony in Political Cartoons

Irony can be effectively incorporated into political cartoons through various visual techniques, including the characters' exaggerated expressions or lack of expressions, improper facial reactions, deadpan expressions, responses to absurdity, and the overall composition of the image. These elements can convey irony through contrast, exaggeration, or unexpected juxtapositions.

The interaction between visual codes within the cartoon frame can be understood within the context of Attardo's theoretical framework (2001). As previously mentioned, Attardo's theory of humor highlights the role of script opposition, incongruity, humoristic sequences, and various other mechanisms in the creation of humor (refer to the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) in Section 3.3.1-Humor). Explicitly, the concept relevant to irony indicates that cartoons frequently utilize multiple sources of humor simultaneously or apply a single source of humor in different contexts. The latter suggests that a single humorous element might be used in multiple ways within a cartoon, resulting in a layered or cumulative humorous effect (Attardo, 2001, pp. 100-101).

For example, consider a cartoon where a politician is trying to impress people with his/her cooking skills, but ultimately the dish has turned out to be a complete disaster. The metaphoric conceptualization can be expressed as "*politician is chef*" and "*politician's promise is meal*." Various sources of humor, such as exaggerated cooking mishaps that lead to chaos or messy clothing, as well as the amplification of people's reactions, contribute to the comedic effect. On

another level, visual irony emerges from the contrast between the character's intended outcome and the actual result. This could be seen as a case of script opposition within GTVH framework, as the protagonist's script (aspiration to be a great cook) is opposed to the reality of their culinary failure.

Such a wide range of diversity in visual representations has prompted researchers to focus on specific visual elements that can be utilized for the detection of irony rather than attempting to distinguish visual markers from incongruous images. This paper will now discuss two visual codes that have been emphasized through the analysis of cartoon examples in the next chapters.

Ironic Facial Expression

In cartoons, facial expressions are an effective means of expressing a broad spectrum of ironic emotions, which can enhance the overall message and bring humor, surprise, or even discomfort, thereby adding new levels of depth and nuance to the artwork. In her work, Patricia Rockwell (2001) examines the differentiation of irony, or the absence thereof, in the lower region of the face, specifically focusing on the mouth area. Characters may respond with heightened disbelief or confusion to nonsensical and absurd assertions or scenarios, thereby underscoring the ironic nature of the situations in which they are situated. In this regard, Caucci and Kreuz (2012) propose that specific bodily movements, such as the act of tightening one's lips and simultaneously nodding the head slowly, can be indicative of ironic intention.

Visual Hyperbole

In the sense of the design of political cartoons, in Section 1.2.1, Exaggeration, thoroughly discussed that visual exaggerations can be a powerful tool in shaping and manipulating public discourse. Visual hyperbole denotes the intentional employment of semantic figures characterized by exaggeration or amplification that transgress the limits of factual precision and empirical reality, consequently elevating the referential entities to a magnitude that eclipses what is considered plausible.

The visual exaggeration of pictures in news media, which results from their appropriation by these venues, is examined by Greenbaum (2015, p. 9). This phenomenon is exemplified by the recurring occurrence and amplification of these visual representations, thereby elevating them to the domain of mythical and exaggerated discourse within the media [75].

The study conducted by El Refaie (2005) offers significant insights into the topic under consideration and, in alignment with the aforementioned perspective, argues that hyperbole functions as an exceptional and "universal [visual marker]" that merits investigation across diverse forms of humor (p. 788). Severe **"distortion of proportion"** is the primary condition for exaggeration, according to study by Kennedy, Green, and Vervaeke (1993, p. 253). But simple distortion cannot account for all the political cartoons' exaggerations. Furthermore, their agreement with visual representations is neither a need for politics nor a public good.

This dissertation supports Greenbaum's assertion (2015, p. ibid.). that hyperbolic qualities reproduce visuals into stereotypes or exact copies of the original source[76], thereby shifting the semantic interpretation of events from mere documentation into humor. The examination of political cartoons in forthcoming case studies within this research aims to uncover the manner in which these cartoons employ hyperbole as a strategy to downplay the importance of events within a larger framework that encompasses global and economic factors.

Now focus shifts on a more practical approach, analyzing common techniques used in political cartoons to create irony. By exaggerating non-verbal cues of a situation or the characteristics, idiosyncrasies, and emotions of individuals, cartoonists can underline the absurdity or hypocrisy of political events or figures and accordingly add to the overall impact of the cartoon.

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[75] Greenbaum (2015, ibid.) demonstrates how images become visually hyperbolic through their appropriation by news outlets, "repeating and expanding them so that the narrative becomes part of the mythic, disproportionate domain of hyperbolic discourse".

[76] It could be identified as a facsimile.

As discussed in ironic facial expressions, cartoonists often emphasize emotions by exaggerating facial features. In overly dramatic expressions, when the situation implies the opposite, can be utilized to express irony, as it subverts our anticipations of typical human emotional responses. Political cartoonists frequently distort the physical characteristics of political leaders to underscore their perceived attributes or shortcomings (see Section 1.2.1, Caricature: Distorting Face). Likewise, characters can exhibit excessively exaggerated expressions with abnormally distorted facial features—like mouths that are opened considerably wider than usual—that are physically impossible.

The exaggerated representation of ideas or qualities (see Section 1.2.1, Exaggeration in Concept), situation and actions also could be powerful ironic tool. Political cartoonists often represent political figures participating in hyperbolic or Over-the-Top actions to highlight the absurd nature of their conduct or policies. For instance, a politician who promises economic prosperity may be illustrated as he is tossing currency into the air, implying a lack of concern for the tangible consequences of his policy decisions. Alternatively, by applying the technique of exaggeration to the size of the belly of a politician and juxtaposing him next to a skinny and poor citizen, ironically it highlights the inequity and injustice of the situation.

A satirical illustration portraying a political figure charged with corrupt practices, standing behind a podium with a nose that has absurdly elongated, metaphorically like Pinocchio. The politician decisively denies any allegations of misconduct while launching a campaign titled "Honesty." The hyperbolic representation of the nose effectively underscores the irony and contradiction in his obvious dishonesty.

In a cartoon, a governmental representative, whose environmental policies have faced substantial criticism, is situated amidst an expanse of pollution full of oil spills, plastic garbage, toxic waste, and dead animals, while he holds a placard inscribed with the phrase *I am an advocate for the Earth*." The exaggeration of pollution serves to underscore the irony inherent in this assertion.

In another example, the economic reform policy of a political candidate can be personified (refer to Section 1.2.3- Personification) as a greedy giant with an enormous mouth that devours the public's money and capital. A speech bubble features the candidate's declaration, "This is economic growth!" pretending himself as a reformist and a responsible business leader. The hyperbole of the giant's insatiable appetite emphasizes the irony of these claims.

Ultimately, to bring the discussion regarding irony to a close, it bears acknowledging that the preceding section of research offers valuable insights into the role of two visual codes (facial expression and visual hyperbole) in incorporating irony into political cartoons. Moreover, Burgers, Van Mulken, and Schellens (2013, p. 300), in a comprehensive "bottom-up approach," scrutinize two techniques that may play significant roles in the processing of meaning in the visual domains of static imagery, namely **mise en scène** and **cinematography**.

Mise en scène refers to the subjects and objects depicted within a scene, or as Verstraten articulates, "**who and/or what is shown**" (2006, p. 59). It includes five pictorial elements: <u>first</u>, the choice of protagonist (Section 1.2.2); <u>second</u>, position, body language, or expressiveness of protagonist; <u>third</u>, clothing, <u>forth</u>, visible objects; and <u>lastly</u>, setting of the scene (see Section 1.2.4: Composition - Positioning).

cinematography addresses the question of "**how**" an image or issue is portrayed (Verstraten, 2006, p. 59), including fundamental techniques such as color manipulation and framing and also cinematic techniques such as depth and sharpness, camera angle orientation, and focalization (Burgers, C. Van Mulken, M. and Schellens. P. J., 2013, p. 301).

Following the objective of this thesis to provide an exhaustive analysis of the efficacy of irony in visual representations, this study aims to examine the manner in which events incorporating ironic elements are conveyed within the context of digital political cartoons. Consequently, it is the tangible presence of recognizable characters or events in conjunction with discernible locations or visual objects that renders the mise en scène and cinematography approach

particularly appropriate for subsequent examination. These strategies prove particularly valuable in the analysis of political cartoons. In the following empirical analysis in Chapter 4, we will delve into a detailed examination of these techniques.

Concluding Remarks

The discussions in this chapter first and foremost revolved around the subject of "Cartoon as a Communication Phenomenon." Various rhetorical devices such as humor, intertextuality, parody, metaphor and irony have been completely discussed in this chapter. The study of intertextuality in this thesis allows for a deeper analysis of how these visual texts work within an Iranian socio-cultural context in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, this thesis contends that the ironic sentiment and sarcastic tone, in addition to exaggeration, is an essential aspect of political cartoons. It is implied that a political cartoon might not be humorous in the way that our corpus of cartoons for the case study will demonstrate, or that they might not parody, modify, or reuse preexisting material in a different way (intertextuality). In essence, cartoonists typically utilize irony as a clever way to convey complex ideas and provoke thought through combining with exaggeration.

By exploring the evolution of metaphor, this chapter demonstrated how the form has evolved from a simplistic comparison presupposition into an intensive, modern language that can be effectively used in both verbal and visual contexts. In outlining the functions and rationale of metaphor as observing a concept or an object in perspective with something else, the discussions aimed to establish that the basic principles and framework of metaphor can be comprehended as the mechanism of juxtaposing, replacing, or fusing one entity in relation to another (Schilperoord & Maes, 2009, p. 222), thereby facilitating a novel viewpoint on each. Such objectives are accomplished via conceptual mappings of the source and target domains, and the resulting object, which in this study is the focus of the

cartoon, signifies a variety of cognitive pathways carried within each domain in conjunction with the metaphorical orientation supported by the metaphor builder.

The chapter also illustrated how a framework driven by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) can enhance our understanding of the various conceptual pathways wielded by cartoonists. The explanatory power of this framework enables a closer examination of the unconscious and non-verbal factors that shape cartoon metaphors. As laid out by Benjamin Barker (2016, p. 167) by employing CMT, empirical analysis can assess the extent to which editorial cartoons align with other components of the news publication. Such examination should illustrate the degree to which cartoons depend on dynamic textual inference systems as well as the autonomy obtained from the cartoonists' own creative thought processes.

As mentioned before, cartoons include a diverse range of signs and symbols, which are employed by cartoon artists to convey meaning through verbal, non-verbal, or a combination of both modes of expression. This meaning can be either explicit or implicit. The explicit meaning, referred to as "denotation," is readily apparent, while the implicit meaning, known as "connotation," requires interpretation. This thesis asserts that implicit meanings in cartoons are conveyed through two rhetorical devices: metaphor and irony. The analysis of metaphor and irony in political cartoons involves the integration of semiotics and critical discourse analysis. In the interim, the interpretation of metaphorical and ironic messages in cartoons demands greater cognitive effort from audiences compared to explicit forms of communication. Consequently, this heightened cognitive engagement may intensify the enjoyment and recall of the message conveyed by the cartoon. In either case, readers must first identify the conflicting narratives before attempting to comprehend the techniques employed to create irony and convey social criticism. To recapitulate, it bears acknowledging the significance of understanding the contextual backdrop against which a cartoon is presented in order to grasp the proposed message of the cartoonist. The semiotic resources used in the cartoon may lose their significance without this contextual and background knowledge.

CHAPTER 4 - IRANIAN DIGITAL POLITICAL CARTOONS: A CASE STUDY

4.1. Case Study Approach

This thesis characterizes the method as an empirical investigation into a current phenomenon situated within its real-world context, particularly when the distinctions between the phenomenon and its context are ambiguous. Since this thesis focuses on analyzing both the form and content of political cartoons, it deems a case study approach as the most optimal and suitable research methodology to employ. The primary objective of case studies is to enable in-depth examination of a specific study, leading to insights that can be applied to a broader set of cases related to the same topic.

This method promotes the development of analyses of cartoons from multiple perspectives, taking into consideration not only the viewpoint and expression of the cartoonist but also that of the wider news context within each respective publication. The inclusion of case studies further illustrates the various levels of interaction between the cartoon and the news component, showcasing how their sentiments may align or differ in relation to the utilization of specific actors, subjects, themes, or viewpoints.

Alan Bryman (2004, pp. 49, 452-464) suggests that case studies have the potential to establish "academic realms" that can harmonize incompatible or divergent research paradigms to achieve the objectives of a specific project. In cultivating these realms, this thesis, in a complementarity process within a multifaceted framework, will strive to answer the research questions put forward in the introduction section, facilitating a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

4.2. Case Study: Woman, Life, Freedom Movement in Iran (Sep. 2022- Sep. 2023)

Before entering the discussion, it is disheartening to observe that in Iran, since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979, in accordance with the country's dress code, forced by the theocratic regime, all females, contrary to the wishes and preferences of the majority, are mandated to cover their hair with a headscarf and wear loose-fitting trousers beneath their coats when in public. This regulation is one component of a broader array of laws and practices that exhibit gender discrimination against women in various aspects such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody, nationality, travel, and clothing.

On Sept. 13, 2022, Mahsa (Zhina) Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish girl on a visit to Tehran, the Iranian capital, with her brother, to see their relatives, was detained in Tehran by Iran's so-called morality police (Guidance Patrol, or in Persian, Gasht-e Ershaad) for allegedly wearing her hijab headscarf improperly and not complying with the country's dress code.

As stated by individuals present at the location, observers reported to the journalists that Mahsa seemed to have sustained physical assault and had been beaten inside the morality police van, though she was conscious while being transported to the detention center. Hours later, she was taken to Kasra Hospital in northern Tehran, while she was not responsive and brain dead (Figure 4.1). Three days later, on Friday, September 16, doctors at Kasra Hospital in Tehran declared Amini dead. Some sources from the hospital stated that Mahsa died of brain trauma and that her brain tissue was crushed after "multiple blows" to the head. Multiple medical professionals, such as Mahdiar Saeedian, who serves as the editor of a health publication, highlighted on social networking platforms that the presence of otorrhagia (bleeding from the ears) indicates that her coma was likely induced by head trauma[77]. These allegations were later confirmed[78] by the March

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[77] https://www.iranintl.com/en/202209172983

[78] The Islamic regime in Iran is to blame for the "physical violence" that killed Mahsa Amini, whose death in custody in 2022 triggered massive peaceful protests led by women and girls against the country's theocratic regime, a United Nations fact-finding mission said Friday.

8, 2024, report from the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran to the U.N. Human Rights Council (Sara Hossain, Shaheen Sardar Ali, and Viviana Krsticevic, 2024).

Shortly after the announcement of Amini's passing, protesters gathered outside Kasra Hospital in Tehran. Subsequently, a large crowd of mourners congregated in Mahsa's hometown of Saqqez, in Kurdistan of Iran, for her funeral procession the following day. The tragic death of Mahsa Amini in police custody sparked widespread international condemnation, triggered a wave of sorrow and anger across the country, and in cyberspace led to Iran's longest anti-government protests since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. In successive future days, there have been demonstrations in Tehran, as well as in at least 10 cities in Kurdistan province, Isfahan, and Mashhad (Figure 4.2). These street protests have drawn participants from a cross-section of society, spanning across age, gender, ethnicity, and social class. Among them are courageous women and girls who are defying the oppressive social norms of the theocratic state by publicly discarding and burning their hijabs.

The death of Mahsa was, in public opinion, considered a result of police brutality; it was titled by independent Iranian journalists as "murder by the state" or democide. Mahsa became a symbol of innocence, ongoing resistance, and long-simmering anger over religious laws and the state's misogynistic social prescriptions. This feminist movement, soon to be branded as "Woman, Life, Freedom," was led by courageous women and men inside Iran following the sorrowful death of a young innocent girl for allegedly being "inappropriately dressed." It was built upon decades of opposition to tyranny and patriarchy, collectively expressing anger and impatience, shaking the legitimacy of the regime,

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The fact-finding mission" *established the existence of evidence of trauma to Ms. Amini's body, inflicted while in the custody of the morality police*," the report said.

"Based on the evidence and patterns of violence by the morality police in the enforcement of the mandatory hijab on women, the mission is satisfied that Ms. Amini was subjected to physical violence that led to her death. On that basis, the state bears responsibility for her unlawful death," it said.

https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/iran-blame-violence-killed-mahsa-amini-un-finds-rcna142504 (2024)

and demanding dignity and basic rights, including freedom of religion, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and the right to choose attire.

Iranian officials denied responsibility for Amini's death and maintained that Mahsa Amini died due to underlying health conditions, specifically a pre-existing heart arrhythmia, and she suffered no physical harm while being held in detention. Medical reports were made available by the officials to substantiate this assertion; however, the credibility of these reports was met with skepticism by certain experts. Concerns were raised about the inconsistencies in the official story and the lack of transparency. Independent human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, criticized the government's handling of the situation and called for an impartial investigation for her death.

Mahsa Amini's family challenged the official account surrounding her demise, asserting that the government's explanation was not sufficiently convincing. They referenced eyewitness testimonies[79] and leaked medical scans, indicating that Mahsa sustained significant head trauma while detained. Consequently, they contend that her death was a consequence of police brutality. Instead of conducting an exhaustive, objective, and unbiased inquiry into her death, the authorities obfuscated the facts and attempted to intimidate and harass Mahsa's family with the aim of silencing and preempting them from pursuing legal redress.

The authorities stopped at nothing in their efforts to prevent the outbreak of the unrest. Protests met with a violent crackdown, in which hundreds of protesters were massacred. A minimum of 58 Iranian minors have been reported as deceased only two months after the commencement of demonstrations against compulsory hijab and the ruling regime[80]. According to the March 8, 2024, report from the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran to the U.N. Human Rights Council (Sara Hossain, Shaheen Sardar Ali, and Viviana Krsticevic, 2024), the

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[79] A woman who was arrested with Amini later confirmed this to the British daily newspaper "The Times". https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/iran-protests-masha-amini-death-timeline-782kvxxwh

[80] https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/nov/20/iran-protests-children-killed-reports-mahsa-amini

violent response by Iranian security forces to demonstrations led to injuries and fatalities that amount to crimes against humanity. As outlined in the report, "as of September 2023, a credible figure was of 551 people killed, among them as many as 49 women and 68 children." [81]

The killing of young protesters, even children under 18 years old, added new fuel to the Iran uprising and loud chants for "Woman, Life, Freedom" shook Iran's streets. Despite the unnecessary and disproportionate response and ferocious repression of the security guards, anti-hijab protests intensified and spread across the country, and at least six months later, the streets of most Iranian cities witnessed clashes between protesters and security forces. However, the ongoing persecution of women and girls, reprisals against demonstrators, arbitrary arrests and detentions, unjust trials, extrajudicial executions, and harassment of victims' families are deeply troubling, which persist to the present day.

Despite the pre-existing severe constraints on freedom of information, including the arrest, interrogation, imprisonment, surveillance, harassment, and threats faced by journalists, the situation escalated considerably following the onset of a surge of unrest sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini. Dozens of journalists, many of them women, among the estimated 14,000 Iranian citizens[82], were arrested during this crackdown. It means that Iran's government became the 2022 gold medalist[83] in terms of detaining journalists and solidified its status as one of the most restrictive countries in terms of press freedom.

Niloofar Hamedi and Elaheh Mohammadi, two journalists from the reform-oriented daily newspaper "Shargh", who first covered the story of Mahsa, were detained for over a year and charged with offenses including "conspiracy and rebellion against national security" and "anti-state propaganda." Niloofar Hamedi's

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[81] https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/03/iran-institutional-discrimination-against-women-and-girls-enabled-human

[82] https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/14-000-arrested-in-iran-over-anti-hijab-protests-in-last-6-weeks-un-3489108. This statistic is related to the first six weeks of protest. According to Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRANA), 19,262 Iranians across at least 134 cities and towns and 132 universities were arrested as of January 6, 2023.

[83] https://cpj.org/reports/2022/12/number-of-jailed-journalists-spikes-to-new-global-record/

photographs (Figure 4.3) provided conclusive evidence that Mahsa Amini had been killed while in police custody in Tehran on September 16, 2022. Hamedi shared this photo on her social media account, which along with the photo of Mahsa in a hospital bed (Figure 4.1), rapidly circulated across various social networks and is believed to have served as the catalyst for the subsequent demonstrations.

4.3. Selecting Cartoons for Empirical Study

The data for this study comprises political cartoons created by Iranian cartoonists, whether those living within or outside the country. As "Iranian digital political cartoons," marked as IDPC is the main topic of the case study, empirical investigation centers on the corpus, which only includes cartoons created by Iranian cartoonists, whether inside of Iran or abroad, both domestically and internationally.

The time frame for this research is one year, covering a period of 12 months from September 16, 2022, which coincides with Mahsa Amini's death in the custody of the morality police in Tehran, until September 16, 2023, marking the anniversary of her murder by the state.

The main character depicted as the protagonist in all materials of the research is Mahsa Amini. In many other cartoons, brave Iranian women who were at the forefront of the demonstrations were portrayed as central figures in the narratives. The main antagonists are clerical leaders and riot police, who are represented in a stereotypical way (see Table 4.6). This study methodically controlled cartoons based on time period, genre, medium of publishing, and the sort of public event they mirror, as they reflect certain historical moments or events.

A total of **337** political cartoons from **34** Iranian cartoonists are collected in the corpus. The research material was sourced from Iranian and international, freely accessible sources, including traditional print media, along with online sources like websites and social media. Majority of cartoons primarily were selected from cartoonists' personal pages on social media platforms. The second

source consisted of pro-reform and anti-government websites. Table 4.1 enumerates the several sources from which cartoons are derived.

Materials for research were mostly observed in digital media rather than in traditional print formats. The notable difference in the quantity of cartoons obtained from digital sources, coupled with the decrease in printed media (Zarifian, Volkova, & Lazutova, 2022), underscores the enduring relevance of political cartoons in the digital realm. This finding reinforces the idea that although the profession of the editorial cartoonist has declined, the genre will persist in the form of digital political cartoons. The significant difference, which is noticeable in the number of cartoons obtained from digital sources, concurs with the discussion in Chapter 3, such as "Today's Media Landscape," "Political Cartoons in the Digital Sphere," and "Political Cartoons: A Dying Form of Art?".

The thesis made an effort to ensure that ideological alignment would not affect the selection process in order to minimize the possibility of presenting a biased narrative. All cartoons that featured a variety of political viewpoints, including anti-regime, conservative criticisms, or state-aligned cartoons, were chosen. Table 4.2 presents a breakdown of political affiliations in selected cartoons, categorized into three major groups, showing that there is a notable difference between cartoons from different political alignment [84]. During the one-year period of this empirical analysis, as Table 4.2 indicates, a significant number of cartoons with the anti-hijab and anti-government themes were published, which, according to Table 4.1, were mostly in the digital media space.

The first category represents the largest portion of the cartoons analyzed, indicating a strong inclination toward anti-regime sentiment and dissenting views

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[84] In order to avoid the risk of presenting a biased and skewed narrative, the study aimed to ensure that ideological alignment did not influence the selection process. It examined all cartoons that included a range of political perspectives, even state-aligned cartoons and conservative critiques. For instance, "Massoud Shojai Tabatabai" and "Maziar Bizhani" two prominent and professional cartoonists who are aligned with the state, were asked to send their works and help in collecting anti-movement cartoons. Massoud Shojai Tabatabai is the former director of the "Iranian House of Cartoon" for 13 years and the secretary of the 2006 controversy Holocaust international Cartoon Contest.
https://irancartoon.ir/news/archives/2006/02/post_109.php
Maziar Bizhani (Bijani), as an editorial cartoonist for years, has collaborated with "Keyhan," the most conservative and hard-liner Iranian newspaper. He is known for his bitter criticism of reformers and pro-Western capitalists and for promoting Palestinian resistance.

regarding hijab enforcement among Iranian cartoonists. The high percentage suggests that a substantial number of cartoons are focused on criticizing theocratic policies and misogynistic practices of the regime.

The presence of "Conservative Criticism" provides another layer of complexity, indicating differing viewpoints within Iranian society. The conservative criticism (19.88%) accounts for nearly one-fifth of the cartoons. It suggests that there is a notable, though much smaller, presence of cartoons with nuanced ways. This could indicate a more moderate or balanced approach in some cartoons, where ideologies are challenged, but not to the extent seen in the anti-regime category. As will be analyzed later in Tables 4.7 and 4.8, leveraging the subtlety and ambiguity of universal symbols, along with layered meanings and the possibility of multiple interpretations, allows Iranian cartoonists to evade the scrutiny of security forces. This conservative approach enables artists to express dissent while minimizing the risks of retaliation associated with authoritarian media systems.

State-aligned cartoons, the smallest category, comprising little less than 12%, includes cartoons that align with state perspectives. This suggests that there is limited representation of pro-regime or state-supportive views in the corpus. This low percentage reflects a lack of support for the regime among IDPC or a preference for more critical or independent expressions.

On the other hand, Chart 4.1 offers a visual representation of the dynamic nature of IDPC publication during the research period, highlighting the close correlation between socio-political events and the production of satirical commentary. As is evident in the chart, the surge in publication coincided with a dramatic increase in the number of demonstrators who were detained, injured, and, regrettably, blinded or murdered during that period.

It is crucial to note that "Anti-Regime & Anti-Hijab Cartoons" (blue bars) consistently represent the largest category throughout the entire period. Chart 4.1 clearly shows a strong correlation between the number of anti-regime and anti-Hijab cartoons and the intensity of protests. This highlights how IDPC serves as a

real-time reflection and visual activism, showcasing the artists' responsiveness to current events and sustained focus on criticism. In contrast, the number of state-aligned cartoons and conservative critiques remains consistently low, illustrating the overwhelming prevalence of pro-movement artistic response.

The significant output in September 2022, the first month of the protests, with 24 cartoons, reflects the immediate shock, grief, and anger following the deaths of Mahsa Amini and other underage protesters like Saina Esmailzadeh and Hadis Najafi. This period marked the immediate and strong visual response to the events that triggered the protests and onset of widespread mobilization.

The peak in cartoon production occurred in October, with 33 cartoons created. This surge corresponded with a series of critical events that heightened the protests, subsequently inspiring a great creative output from artists. This month included the 40-day memorial for Mahsa Amini, an increase in schoolgirl protests, the shocking shooting at Sharif University, and a wave of global solidarity actions. The symbolic killing of Khodanur Lajai (Lojei) further stirred public sentiment. Notably, spreading the news of the death of 16-year-old protester Nika Shakarami, who had gone missing ten days prior and was found in a morgue by her family, and the state's denial of any involvement added another layer of outrage and sorrow. This tragic incident, along with the regime's unashamed attempts to obscure the truth, including creating a false documentary about her suicide and forced interviews with Nika's relatives, fueled the artists' resolve to expose the regime's brutality and deceit. The distinguished rise in cartoons during October not only reflects a response to accelerating violence and global support but also a direct reaction to the injustice surrounding Nika's death and the state's efforts to suppress information.

The sustained high output in November, with 27 cartoons, and in December, with 24 entries, reflects an escalation in the wave of sorrow and anger across the country. This increase in participation encompasses a diverse cross-section of society, spanning various ages, genders, ethnicities, and social classes, particularly in response to the funeral of nine-year-old Kian Pirfalak, who was tragically killed.

The visual activity continued in December which aligns with continuity of mass protests especially in universities, spreading strikes, actions, and regrettably the execution of protesters. It is obvious that IDPC document the movement's persistence and the escalating brutality of regime.

The sharp decline in cartoon production observed from February 2022 to July 2023. A meaningful increase in the number of cartoons supporting the regime (May and June), can likely be attributed to several factors like intensified threats and pressure from security forces on cartoonists (As they mentioned in interviews with the author). Also, the government's efforts to control the narrative and build its own version of the happenings, and a natural decrease in protest activity as the regime tightened its backlash decreased artistic expression. Still, those artists who kept on creating throughout this period—albeit at a slowed rate—show their dedication to preserving the revolutionary spirit. As noticed a resurgence in August with 17 items, IDPC reminds the movement's lasting legacy, and also in September 22 cartoons were published that coincides with the anniversary of Mahsa's death. It is signaling a restored wave of remembrance and resistance.

In the following, Chart 4.2 helps us understand the political leanings of the cartoonists and ensures that the selection process and analysis are informed and representative of the complex political landscape within the movement. It also aids minimize potential bias in the analysis and justifies the focus on pro-movement cartoons.

Totally, cartoons from 34 Iranian cartoonists were collected[85]. Chart 4.2 illustrates a strong pro-movement sentiment and suggests a dominant narrative of opposition. With all 14 cartoonists living outside of Iran and 17 pro-movement cartoonists inside, compared to only 3 who are anti-movement, the vast majority of cartoonists support the movement. The bravery of the pro-movement cartoonists operating in Iran is especially remarkable since they put their own safety at danger to fulfill their social duty.

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[85] The corpus comprises cartoons from 34 Iranian cartoonists; however, it is essential to acknowledge that this selection is not exhaustive. The study does not claim to include every Iranian cartoonist, and therefore, some Iranian cartoonists' works may not be selected in this corpus.

The presence of 14 cartoonists in exile that all of them support the movement results in amplifying message of movement to a global audience. Their freedom from state censorship enables more overt and critical depictions. The substantial number of pro-movement cartoonists—17 within the country and 14 abroad—justifies the focus of this analysis on cartoons that advocate for the protests. Conversely, the minimal presence of anti-movement cartoonists indicates a lack of support for the regime from the artistic community, further underscoring the impact of political cartoons in visual and digital activism.

Since the author is a cartoonist and is considered a friend and colleague of other cartoonists, and because some cartoonists, under the threat and pressure of security forces, were compelled to remove their anti-government and protest-related cartoons from their personal social media pages, cartoonists were asked to send their high-quality cartoons directly to the author. The study ensures ethical considerations, particularly given the risks faced by Iranian artists. In case some cartoonists inside the country have removed their work due to security concerns, to follow the ethical safeguards during data collection, their artworks were selected by their consent to use in this study, and moreover, they were assured that during informing about the article, the name of the cartoonist would not be published in social media as the creator.

In selecting examples, particular attention was paid to the concepts outlined in the second chapter regarding the "digital media typology." Owing to the anti-government nature of the event, it was expected that the majority of selected cartoons would be created by independent political cartoonists, as discussed in Section 2.3.2. Cartoons crafted by mainstream cartoonists (Section 2.3.1) naturally couldn't be included in the selected cartoons unless they expressed a viewpoint against the protesters, which means some cartoonists affiliated with the pro-government mainstream attempted to critique the movement. This assumption presents a topic for discussion that will be further examined during the data analysis.

In the process of searching and selecting cartoons, numerous artworks were observed that were closer to illustration or graphic art than cartoons. Among the defining attributes and features of cartoon art that have been discussed in detail, the present thesis has singled out humor and exaggeration as pivotal and definitive elements during the exploration of cartoons. Given the tragic nature of the event, it was not anticipated to find merely humorous cartoons. The findings further support the discussion in the 3.3.1 section, indicating that not all political cartoons are intended to be humorous. Therefore, a deliberate effort was made to identify works that, at the very least, incorporated the element of exaggeration.

4.4. Research Methods

This thesis employs both **Qualitative** and **Quantitative** typologies of research and leverages a mixed research method, combining content analysis, which falls into the realm of quantitative typology, and, on the other hand, two inherently qualitative research methods, including <u>social semiotics</u> and <u>critical discourse analysis (CDA)</u>, which both focus on understanding symbols, the meaning and impact of the message, analyzing visual rhetorical techniques, and critically interpreting visuals.

Content analysis centers on what, concentrates on the identification and measurement of the elements in selected cartoons. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focuses on the why and how, delves into the reasons and layers of meanings, and analyzes the utilization of language in shaping meaning and power dynamics. In addition, social semiotics proves to be a potent instrument in decoding the intricate realm of IDPC (Iranian digital political cartoons), offering insights into the cultural references and covert messages interwoven within the artworks.

The research commences by utilizing a qualitative methodology to recognize themes, patterns, and techniques within the data, followed by a shift towards quantitative analysis to measure the frequency of these themes across various sources or time periods.

Qualitative Typology

In the qualitative typology, the focus lies on comprehending the underlying meanings, themes, and contexts present in the material. The qualitative analysis conducted in this research entails a subjective interpretation of specific cartoons and utilizes methodologies like thematic analysis or narrative analysis. It will be focused on the recognition of artistic, rhetorical, and metaphorical devices used by Iranian cartoonists to expose layered and hidden meanings

In qualitative analysis, two research methodologies will be employed, namely **Critical Discourse Analysis** (CDA) and **Social Semiotics**. CDA is used to explore the power dynamics and ideologies present in the selected array of cartoons. After that, we'll apply semiotics to analyze the symbols and visual elements that convey these messages. The empirical study will start by looking at two approaches. First, it will examine semiotics as a broad area of study in Chapter One, with focus on social semiotics as a specific subcategory within this field. This will be followed by an exploration of the Critical Discourse Analysis method.

Visual Semiotics:

Applying semiotic principles, which have been completely introduced in the first chapter, to examine the visual language and communication of cartoons, encompassing the utilization of symbols, icons, colors, and other techniques for visualizing the verbal. This approach entails deciphering the ways in which visual components communicate ideas and enhance the overarching message or narrative of cartoons.

Social Semiotics

The social semiotic approach is a theoretical framework utilized to examine the utilization of signs and symbols by individuals in generating meaning within a social context. This method concentrates on the processes through which meaning is created and conveyed via signs and symbols within a distinct social setting. It extends beyond the surface-level meanings of language and visuals, exploring the cultural allusions and collective understandings that influence individuals' comprehension of messages. By integrating Social Semiotics and Critical

Discourse Analysis (CDA), will be comprehended that how cartoons operate as tools for creating meaning within Iran's social context. The study contends that applying Social Semiotics to Political Cartoons involves **Analyzing Symbols, Understanding Cultural Context** and **Deconstructing Power Dynamics**.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis is an <u>interdisciplinary approach</u> that involves the examination of written, spoken, or visual materials, emphasizing power relationships and societal frameworks. This approach scrutinizes the ways in which language is utilized to mirror power structures, ideologies, discourses, and social inequalities. CDA attempts to answer the questions with '**Why**' and '**How**,' endeavors to address inquiries pertaining to the reasons behind and the methods by which phenomena occur, looks beyond the surface meaning, delving deeper into the interpretation of texts to reveal hidden assumptions, dynamics of power, and the influence of language on our perception of reality.

CDA asks the question of whose interests are being served by the message and involves analyzing verbal and visual text, to uncover underlying meanings, assumptions, and power dynamics. Using critical discourse analysis, one aims to expose latent meanings, underlying implications, challenge accepted narratives and promote social changes. This method requires a deep comprehension of critical theory and the dynamics of power.

Applying CDA to Political Cartoons

Critical discourse analysis can be applied to political cartoons to examine how language and images are used to construct meaning and reinforce dominant ideologies. Through the application of the method to political cartoons, the study aims to reveal the implicit discourses, ideologies, and power dynamics present in both the visual and textual elements of the cartoon corpus. Utilizing CD Analysis in the examination of Iranian digital political cartoons offers significant opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of how visual and textual elements

intersect to shape and influence the formation and negotiation of political interpretations, identities, and power structures within Iran's media system.

Qualitative Analysis of Selected Political Cartoons

The focus now shifts to the qualitative representation of significant themes, events, individuals, viewpoints, and hidden meanings in selected cartoons. The qualitative analysis provides concrete insights into how Iranian independent cartoonists operated within the Iranian media system and how they captured the essence of the movement's demands for human rights and gender equality.

By analyzing the communicative, artistic, and rhetorical techniques discussed in Chapters 1–3, this study will examine how IDPC served as a visual chronological calendar and portrayed the "Woman, Life, Freedom" 2022 Movement through visual choices, assessment, and interpretation.

Moreover, we will scrutinize what has been the focus of their attention from September 16, 2022, until next year's "Mahsa Amini's death anniversary." The analysis will further reveal how cartoonists tried to be the voice of the people, expressing solidarity with Iranian women and men fighting for their rights. By examining the artistic and rhetorical strategies used, this study can shed light on how IDPC documented the movement's dynamics, in which ways depicted bravery as well as the brutal crackdown of the government.

In analyzing and interpreting cartoons, the author, who is a cartoonist and is considered a friend and colleague of other Iranian cartoonists, consulted with them and discussed their intended message and ideas. Conducting Semi-Structured interviews as a supplementary method contributed to gathering more qualitative information on the driving motivations, objectives, and viewpoints of Iranian cartoonists.

Each qualitative sample showcases the utilization of aesthetic, communicative, metaphoric, and rhetorical techniques in each cartoon, in relation to the research questions introduced in the initial chapter concerning the cartoon medium. This examination is conducted by drawing upon the theoretical frameworks expounded in Chapters 1-3, culminating in the development of a

methodology that identifies and evaluates the techniques employed to depict news themes, events, and individuals. This orientation aligns with Robert Yin's (2003, 2009) suggestion of utilizing a descriptive approach in conducting case study analysis, which involves documenting phenomena in conjunction with their respective real-world contexts.

Example 1 – Iranian Women "Can Do It!"

The poster "We Can Do It!" (Figure 4.5) was created by J. Howard Miller in 1943 for Westinghouse Electric during World War II as a motivational tool to uplift the morale of female workers. This image features an iconic depiction of Rosie, a symbol of a strong and self-assured female worker showcasing her strength by flexing her muscles, accompanied by the empowering slogan "We Can Do It." After its creation, this poster was repetitively used to promote feminism, since Rosies represented a group of courageous women who defied societal norms, shattered barriers, and demonstrated unequivocally that they were capable of performing tasks traditionally assigned to men.

Scrutinizing the visual intertextuality behind the narrative (Figure 4.4), borrowing "themes, symbols, or compositional elements from famous images" (Walker & Chaplin, 1997, p. 142), Mana's employment of **visual quotation** (expanded in Section 3.3.2: Within Images) could be identified. This practice synchronizes with D'Angelo's description of the proficiency of political cartoonists as visual appropriators as "image scavengers." (2010, p. 37)

The question arises that among the six modes of intertextuality proposed by Frank D'Angelo (2010), whether adaptation or appropriation is employed by the cartoonist. In addition to the replacement of the protagonist, which borrows the concepts of feminism and power from the original source, it's notable that Mana depicts that his new hero has removed her scarf, which parodies the demonstrative gesture of Iranian women during the street protests by removing and burning their hijab. Therefore, in this cartoon, **appropriation** can be distinguished from adaptation by its ability to facilitate a more definitive departure from the original

text, resulting in the creation of an entirely new cultural product and domain (Sanders, 2016, p. 35).

As we introduced parody as a rhetorical device in the 3rd Chapter (Section 3.3.3), political cartoonists can be compared to visual parodists as they skillfully borrow and manipulate various elements of art, whether preexisting or newly devised, to construct visually engaging and satirical compositions that critique and subvert established cultural norms and conventions, societal values, and political issues. This approach seeks to defy dominant narratives, scrutinize existing power structures, and spark discussions on the complexities of society and politics. This approach concurs with the critical discourse analysis employed as a research method in this study.

Mana Neyestani modified "We Can Do It!" poster as pre-existing materials to create his cartoon, which indicate employing the primary parody. But artist skillfully replace the Rosie by an Iranian woman and therefore he changed the protagonist to convey his intended message.

In tandem with Chambers definition of parody as "**art that plays with art**" (2012, p. 2), Mana Neyestani offers alternative perspectives on a cultural phenomenon and parodically binds Iranian women to the concepts of feminism and bravery behind the legendary Rosie poster. With the movement slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom" emblazoned prominently above, the artist executed another replacement by replacing the well-known slogan "We Can Do It!"

These two replacements imbue the image with a sense of domestication, as Mana transforms the potentially distant and unfamiliar icon of Rosie from the original poster into more recognizable local representations. This artistic device outlined by Ray Morris (1993, pp. 196, 202-203) is expounded further in Section 3.3.1.

Also, Mana added a new actor to his frame, using the technique of stereotype to depict a stereotypical representation of clergymen[86], symbolizing the

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[86] Special religious social class in Iran, which after 1979 Islamic revolution they have political authority. Other terms like 'akhoond', 'Molla', 'Sheik' and 'Roohani' are common in Iranian political culture.

religious authority of the regime. The confrontation between the powerful woman and the newly inserted character indicates the latter as the antagonist. The most successful achievement of the artist in communicating the idea is that the new protagonist iterates the action of Rosie (parody) by flexing her muscles, which will crunch the antagonist, which serves to convey the cartoonist's idea that people will finally overcome the state.

Further scrutiny of the image reveals how the cartoonist employed physiognomic exaggeration and amplification, as one of the techniques for manifesting humor in political cartoons. As expanded in Section 1.2.1, severe "distortion of proportion" is the major prerequisite for exaggeration (Kennedy, Green, & Vervaeke, 1993, p. 253). In so doing, the cartoonist distorts the objects' body size of the clergyman, and this relative proportionality of objects concentrates viewers' attention towards particular visual depictions and consequently the contrast between the size of the protagonist and antagonist, which results in a humorous situation and evokes a sense of humor.

The process of borrowing and paraphrasing motives, themes, symbols, or visual cues from a well-known image (Walker & Chaplin, 1997), which facilitates the emergence of new meanings, commentary, and novel and multi-layered interpretations, resonates with the previous discussion on metaphor in Chapter Three.

The Mana's cartoon illustrates mapping of the characteristics of feminism as the source domain onto the target domain of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement. Using **CMT** to establish the master metaphor, the visual can map the strongness and self-assurance of Rosie onto the Iranian women. Consequently, it relates the conceptual relationships between the protest against compulsory hijab and feminism, summarized as "Iranian woman is Rosie."

The cartoonist's deliberate insertion of the antagonist and its visual combination with the protagonist signal to readers that "the brave Iranian women can do it!"

Example 2 – Self-Liberated Women

The mise-en-scène (explained in Section 3.3.5) of Figure 4.6 exemplifies another utilization of the **appropriation** technique by Mana Neyestani. The initial depiction on the left side originates from an 1863 illustration by Henry Louis Stephens, featured in the book "Journey of a Slave from the Plantation to the Battlefield."[87] This illustration portrays the transformation of a black man from a life of enslavement to a Union soldier who ultimately sacrifices his life in the pursuit of liberty. Stephens' portrayal emphasizes the former slave as the "primary agent of his own emancipation," envisioning him not only as a self-liberated black soldier fighting for his nation but also as an American citizen (Stebbins & Renn, 2008, p. 444).

In the right panel, a depiction of the new antagonist and protagonist being substituted can be identified, along with the insertion of a flag bearing the movement's slogan, which serves the technique of <u>domestication</u>. Through the **binary juxtaposition** (refer to 3.3.2- Intertextuality: Within Images) of both the pre-existing and appropriated image, the cartoonist establishes connections between past and present events and draws analogies between distinct contexts of the Civil War in the U.S. and anti-hijab protests in Iran, and ultimately prompts viewers to draw comparisons between the cruelty of slaveholders in the origin illustration and the brutal crackdown executed by the authorities in Iran. Consequently, this cartoon by Mana Neyestani portrays the deeply ingrained misogynistic attitudes and reveals the underlying hatred, brutality, and violence that characterize the current regime in Iran.

This cartoon portrays characters in a dichotomous manner, ***protagonist vs. antagonist***, either as aesthetically pleasing or unattractive, as heroes or villains. This further supports the assertions proposed by Gombrich ([1963] 1994) and Morris (1989) regarding the binary attribute of political cartoons.

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[87] The Harvard Art Museums encourage the use of images found on this website for personal, noncommercial use, including educational and scholarly purposes.
https://hvrd.art/o/19833

Among the three categories of metaphors proposed by Schilperoord and Maes (2009, p. 222), namely **"replacements**," **juxtapositions**," and **"fusions"** (see Section 3.3.4—Metaphor: Classification of Metaphors in Cartoons), Mana employs the second category by juxtaposing two panels that project the source domain of slavery to the target domain of a theocratic regime. This juxtaposition evokes the conceptual relationship between them, which invites readers to solve the <u>cognitive dissonance</u> arising from the apparent differences between the objects and to seek out pertinent associations between them (Teng & Sun, 2002). The metaphorical structure can be rephrased as "*Iranian women are slaves*" and "*the theocratic regime is slaveholder*." Layering these concepts signals viewers to grasp the idea that Iranian people, especially women, are "<u>primary agents of their own liberation</u>."

Example 3 – Iranian Van Woman Copies Chinese Tank Man

The Tank Man (Figure 4.8), an unidentified lone individual believed to be of Chinese descent, rose to prominence for his act of standing in front of a line of tanks departing Tiananmen Square in Beijing on June 5, 1989. This event followed the Chinese government's harsh suppression on demonstrators the day before. The photo of Tank Man confronting the military tanks became one of the most iconic photos in history, a recognized symbol of defiance against oppressive authoritarian regimes.

Analyzing the visual intertextuality within the narrative (Figure 4.7), Ali Miraee's utilization of visual direct references to another famous image can be observed. This practice is further elaborated as a visual quotation in Section 3.3.2: Within Images. In accordance with Frank D'Angelo's classification of six modes of intertextuality (2010), the artist employs the **appropriation** mode by substituting a woman lacking a compulsory hijab with the iconic tank man and placing police vans instead of the tanks. Marsden (1991) defines appropriation in art as the artist's inclination towards possessing desired images and texts. This process entails the

artist appropriating sought-after visuals and texts, which are then appropriated and <u>personalized</u> through the artist's ownership and manipulation.

The police van played a significant role in the movement, as Mahsa Amini was reportedly assaulted inside the vehicle while resisting detainment, leading to brain trauma and her tragic demise. The so-called morality police van, or "Guidance Patrol," known as Gasht-e Ershaad in Persian, not only marked the beginning of widespread protests the mandatory hijab and government policies across the country, but also in Iranian collective memory symbolized the oppression of a religious regime and violations of the fundamental right to dress as one chooses.

Numerous Iranian females have distressing recollections of being arrested by morality enforcement officers and transported to detention centers by these vans. Several videos depicting girls resisting arrest for not properly adhering to veiling regulations and being subjected to insults and physical assault have gone viral in cyberspace. Consequently, there has been a growing public outcry and demand for the removal of these patrol vehicles.

The collective interpretation of these elements characterizes the cartoon as <u>primary parodies,</u> a rhetorical device examined in Chapter 3. Cartoonist depicts an Iranian woman blocking the morality vans, which replicates the civil act of the unknown Chinese man blocking the tanks, presumably in opposition to the actions of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) towards demonstrators on Tiananmen Square in June 1989. The cartoon reveals that the structure and design of the political cartoon, which serves as a unique medium for artistic expression and social commentary, is particularly favorable and well-suited for the incorporation of various reusable and recyclable concepts, symbols, patterns, and themes. Critical discourse analysis contributes to finding out how cartoonist, through this visual parody, succeeded in engaging audiences with contemporary issue, challenging power structures, advocating for societal change, and offering alternative perspectives on cultural phenomena.

Metaphor: According to Schilperoord and Maes (2009, p. 222), in an attempt to elucidate how the target and source domains are realized and to reconstruct the viewpoint expressed by cartoonists as objectively as possible, the thesis employs a method that assesses the argumentative structure of political cartoons. In this case, the technique of **"replacements,"** in which only one domain (the target domain) is visually represented, is identified. Furthermore, this carton falls within the category of <u>Pictorially-Triggered</u> metaphors when one closely examines how the motives, themes, and symbols derived from this iconic photo have been appropriated, altered, and paraphrased (Barker, 2016, p. 148). Using the CMT framework (discussed in Chapter Three: Metaphor) to establish the presence of master metaphors, the image relates the conceptual relationship between Iranian female protesters and the unknown Chinese man, summarized as "Iranian woman is Tank man" or "Van is Tank."

Despite the different stylistic elements such as contrast, contradiction, and placement proposed by Medhurst and DeSousa's study (1981, p. 212) to wave humor in political cartoons, the Miraee's cartoon cannot be regarded as being explicitly humorous due to the brutal crackdown and massacre by the authorities.

Example 4 – Authoritarian Version of Titanic's Jack and Rose

As discussed around the theme "Visual Metaphors in Cartoons "in the 3rd Chapter: Metaphor), the conceptual nature of metaphor suggests that in addition to language, images, visual representations, sounds, and gestures can also evoke metaphors and act as initial stimuli for metaphorical conceptualization. The concept of form is extended to "*the mechanism or lens through which the topic is perceived*" by Foss (2004, p. 299) to explain how visual metaphors are able to produce **semantic links** between topic and communicative vehicle. According to the research conducted by Bounegru and Forceville (2011) on political cartoons depicting the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, the most frequently recurring source domain was natural disaster. This theme was used to convey a sense of

forthcoming disaster, impending doom, and a real crisis by illustrating the target domain in different scenarios, such as a tsunami, ice cracking, and a sinking boat.

Following the discussion in Section " Language and Speech; Inseparable Components of Political Cartoons," Mohsen Izadi employed the technique of sticking the labels in an appropriate place to prepare general information (Figure 4.9). By the strategic placement of the label 'dictatorship' on a sinking ship, Izadi also utilized a wordplay technique, prompting viewers to draw a comparison between the term 'ship' and the concept of dictatorship. This approach culminated in the establishment of a metaphorical expression, encapsulated by the phrase "*dictatorship is a sinking ship*."

What is not depicted by the cartoonist but can be inferred from the underlying layers of conceptualization, is that "*mass protest is iceberg*" which caused the sinking of the ship, the two depicted individuals lack awareness of the ship colliding with the iceberg and exhibit disbelief towards the upcoming event of the regime's collapse.

The positioning of the clergyman highlights the cartoon as being protagonist-driven (Chalaniova, 2011, pp. 6-8), and the riot police established as deuteragonists through his role as a beloved person. Moreover, by parodically portraying the two main characters in a close and romantic relationship as defined in the Titanic scenario, the cartoonist not only predicts the imminent downfall of a totalitarian regime but also propagates the idea that a totalitarian religious government is intricately linked and dependent on repressive forces that advocate violence.

By replacing and introducing the clergyman as new Jack and the riot police as new Rose, the artist demonstrates how forms of parody can be "flexibly manipulated to construct ironic and parodic distance" towards political discourses (Lachman, 2004, p. 61), emphasizing the "potentially transgressive authorships" as the characteristic of political cartoons (Howard, 1999, p. 117). With regards to critical and playful, the two primary typologies of parody in political cartooning that this thesis introduces, Mohsen Izadi skillfully employs the playful nature of

parody, which, according to Gross (2010, pp. xi-xv), spans a range from joyfully to obscene, with space within its realm for both anger and pathos. By assembly these additions, Figure 4.9 can be regarded as being explicitly humorous due to the incongruous and unexpected presence of clergyman and riot police.

Example 5 – Analogy of Bravery and Weakness

Placing protagonist vs. antagonist at the **focal point** of the frame, which is called 'sweet spots' by Chalaniova (2011, p. 7), connotes an eye-catching quality of the subject (refer to 1.2.4: Composition – Positioning). This strategic placement of visual elements in a composition to attract audience attention by positioning them in the foreground highlights the concept of salience, which is outlined earlier by Kress and van Leeuwen ([1996] 2006, p. 177) to categorize the composition in its artistic form into a set of interconnected systems.

The red color symbolizing blood signifies the concept of injury, thereby prompting reflections on the courage of Iranian women, as well as the themes of everyday injustice, oppression and duress they face. In contrast, the blunt yellow color positioned on the right side of the composition encourages viewers to infer the fear, weakness, and vulnerability of riot police, despite their outward display of strength.

By positioning the protagonist and antagonist in the foreground, using contrasting warm tones, and purposefully utilizing color, NOT within the entire space of the frame but coloring only a distinct part, the cartoonist encourages viewers to make analogies in conveying denotation. Exerting the expressive function of color (see 1.2.6: Colors and Pictograms), Ali Miraee have demonstrated how incorporating the use of color can serve as a catalyst for evoking visual associations with sensory experiences, thereby directing audiences towards idealized reactions to specific images (Sonnier & Dow, 2001).

Example 6 – Grotesque Art: Ideal Form of Deformity

On October 16, 2022, the Iranian climber Elnaz Rekabi took part in the Asian climbing championships in Seoul, South Korea, wearing a black headband

rather than the obligatory hijab required for Iranian sportswomen in national competitions and abroad. This was interpreted as a sign of solidarity with the nationwide demonstrations sparked in Iran by the death of Mahsa Amini after her arrest by the morality police for allegedly not adhering to the government's mandatory rules on headscarves for women and clothing restrictions.

Rekabi was declared missing following the last day of the competition in South Korea. Concerns regarding her well-being escalated when, three days later, she reappeared at Tehran's Imam Khomeini airport and issued an apology to state journalists. However, her return to Tehran on Wednesday, October 19, was met with a welcoming reception by dozens of people. In the days following the competition, she expressed gratitude to the people of Iran for their support via social media. Rekabi also informed Iranian state media that her participation without wearing a hijab was "inadvertent." Nevertheless, given Iran's track record of penalizing dissenters, there is widespread belief that her statements were made under duress.

In reaction to the above-mentioned event, Shahrokh Heidari as an "Independent Political Cartoonist", portrays the supreme leader as an immovable force, while Elnaz Rekabi attempts to climb it (Figure 4.11). The exaggerative quality of cartoons, in fact, provides cartoonist with the freedom to convey ideas that may be regarded as excessively harsh, markedly radical, or socially and politically unacceptable to be included in editorial content (see Chapter One: Exaggeration). The cartoonist synthesizes exaggeration in two directions: in concepts as well as in physiognomic features and size.

Echoing the views of Bounegru and Forceville that the cartoon amplifies and exaggerates the negative impact, through satirical effects (2011, p. 213) and reiterating the declaration of Lorenzo Bernini that "no one is above ridicule" (Navasky, 2013, p. xix), Shahrokh Heidari portrays the political leader. The quality of over-exaggeration and distortion wielded by the artist exemplifies several elements associated with the grotesque, aligns with Leonardo da Vinci's innovational studies of grotesque art (Hoffman, 1957), and reveals how Heidari

skillfully portrays his subject's deformities while incorporating essential caricatural elements (see Section 2.1: Cartoon Genesis and Evolution).

In accordance with the ideas put forward by Schilperoord and Maes (2009, p. 222), to categorize certain sorts of metaphors employed by cartoon artists, which include "replacements," "juxtapositions," and "fusions", Heidari utilizes the first category, in which <u>only one domain</u> is visually expressed. In this example, the cartoonist depicts rocks, who has superseded the Supreme Leader. Upon closer examination of the image, it becomes apparent that rock is the source domain, and the Supreme Leader is the target domain. The characteristics of rock, such as toughness and height, will map onto the target domain. This substitution could be interpreted by viewers as conceptualizing the tough barrier, a challenging obstacle faced by Iranian sportswomen that necessitates being climbed, crossed, and overcome, leading to the creation of a metaphorical expression such as "*the supreme leader is the barrier*."

Example 7 – Are you convinced that we didn't kill Mahsa?!

Following the massive peaceful protests led by women and girls against the country's theocratic regime, erupted by Mahsa Amini's death in police custody, officials denied responsibility, refuted any involvement in her death, and rejected allegations from various sources, including human rights organizations, witnesses, and foreign governments, that it used force to suppress peaceful demonstrations. They stated that Mahsa Amini died due to underlying health conditions, and she wasn't beaten or injured physically while being detained.

But as was undoubtedly observable in Iran's streets across the country from the beginning days of civil unrest and declared and confirmed in a March 8, 2024, report from the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran to the U.N. Human Rights Council (Sara Hossain, Shaheen Sardar Ali, and Viviana Krsticevic, 2024), the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran engaged in acts that can be classified as crimes against humanity during its forceful suppression of the street protests that occurred in 2022 and 2023, including "murder, imprisonment, torture,

rape, and other forms of sexual violence, persecution, enforced disappearance, and other inhumane acts." [88]

Three cartoons in this example (Figure 4.12, 13 and 14) show that through the **synergy** of verbal and visual elements, cartoons serve as efficacious communication instruments, whereby cartoonists facilitate comprehension of complicated messages by means of visual storytelling (refer to Section 1.3: Word-Image Fusions in Political Cartoons). Here, Mana Neyestani and Hadi Heidari used speech balloons (introduced in Figure 1.40) with crooked tails, as the most common and straightforward ways of communicating text and telling stories in cartoons (Serafini & Moses, 2015, p. 309).

Mana and Hadi purposefully utilize the color red, signifying the hue of blood. Additionally, Hadi incorporates a red tint for a specific portion of the text enclosed within the speech balloon. The red-colored word in Persian represents the personal pronoun denoting 'She or he', specifically referring to Mahsa in this context. To order the narrative, Hadi in his cartoon (Figure 4.13), further combines a variety of visual stylistic elements, such as bold capital letters, which convey the tone, mood, and intensity of the conversation (Forceville, Veale, & Feyaerts, 2010); exaggeration in the size of two depicted persons, which results in contrast between them and imbalance within the frame, as well as the utilization of Forceville's pictographic runes (2011, p. 377), notably spittle droplets and spike lines (Figure 1.33) projected from the head of the person on the left side, serve to highlight the Baton's smash intensity and brutality of the riot police.

Mana's mise-en-scène in Figure 4.12 depicts a riot police officer drowning in the 'sea of blood', caused by his violent crackdown on street protests, which resembles the scenario illustrated by Mohsen Izadi in Figure 4.9. By exaggerating the volume of the sea (a technique described in Chapter One: Exaggeration in Concept), the cartoonist conveys the idea that the regime is deteriorating despite its

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[88] https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/03/iran-institutional-discrimination-against-women-and-girls-enabled-human
More information is available at https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ffm-iran/index

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ferocious response and bloody repression. By identifying a verbal element in the form of a label, declaring the "Woman, Life, Freedom" slogan, accentuated in a soft yellow hue, the spectators will comprehend that the protester who has the placard in his or her hand is sinking in blood. Such composition concurs with the studies of Salvatore Attardo (2000) on the "form's relativity and inappropriateness" or its capacity for indirect negation.

Plenty of visual evidence clearly demonstrates the collaboration between Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), riot police, and plainclothes agents in forcefully quelling protests across the country. This collaboration involves arbitrary detentions, indiscriminate physical assaults, and, in certain instances, opening fire on unarmed civilians with war bullets. Having all in visual memory of Iranian's people, audiences can relate the conceptual relationships between the street as the major place in which the anti-government protests occurred and the bloody battlefield. The metaphoric structure is summarized as "*street is sea of blood.*"

Upon a thorough examination of the scenarios illustrated in figures 4.12 –14, the question arises: "Can a political cartoon be considered **ironic**?" It is worth revisiting the discussion pivoting around irony, which noted that irony involves the coexistence of two potentially contradictory realities. Irony should be understood as "*the discrepancy between what is said and what is meant (or shown)*" (Scott 2004, p. 35). Furthermore, the flourish of political cartoons is predicated upon the represented distinctions between verisimilitude and equivalence (Mishra, 2016, p. 97). At the core of this presumption resides the concept of graphic irony, an intricate and multifaceted humorous phenomenon that manifests within the split, discrepancy, and dissonance between the observed reality and the depicted situation. The greater and more profound this disparity, the more likely it is that an ironic sentiment will emerge and resonate.

In these three cartoons, the discrepancy between written and visual elements is recognizable, which evokes an ironic sentiment. Written elements reiterate the official narrative that deny any responsibility or involvement in Mahsa's death, and

from the opposite side, the visual elements represent brutal suppression of the uprising.

Example 8 – You are NOT welcome in Tehran!

As mentioned before, Mahsa (Jina) Amini, on Sept. 13, 2022, on a trip to Tehran to visit her relatives, was arrested in Tehran by Iran's so-called morality police for allegedly flouting the government's mandatory rules on headscarves for women and clothing restrictions. Her dreadful death in a hospital after her arrest three days later, while in police custody, fueled anti-government sentiment and unleashed months of unrest that became the most significant challenge to the clerical leaders of the Islamic Republic.

In this cartoon (Figure 4.15), Javad Alizade [89], a prominent award-winning Iranian cartoonist, has depicted Mahsa's face and published it on his personal page. Upon entering in the capital, instead of being greeted with the phrase "Welcome to Tehran," she is faced with a billboard displaying the phrase "Be Tehran na-khosh aamadid," (Persian: به تهران ناخوش آمدید) which translates to "You are NOT welcome in Tehran." In Persian, there is a similarity between the word 'khosh' (Persian: خوش) in the compound verb 'khosh amadan' (Persian: خوش آمدن, meaning welcome in English) and the word 'na-khosh,' (Persian: ناخوش) which signifies an unhealthy and unsound condition.

By this replacing, the cartoonist's critical stance is expressed through a verbal element that complements the visual metaphor. Javad, with a deep understanding of Iranian society's political and pop culture, employs this lexical contrast metaphorically and in an ironic way to illustrate how Mahsa was **'NOT'**

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[89] Javad Alizadeh is an old-school cartoonist and the founder of the oldest Iranian independent and private satirical monthly "Satire and Caricature" magazine, which has been published since December 1990. In recent years, with the decline of printed media (Zarifian, 2022), the magazine has experienced financial problems, which have disrupted its regular publication. Over the years, "Satire and Caricature" became an ideal place for newcomers, and many Iranian cartoonists, including myself, have started their careers by collaborating with this magazine (Kowsar, 2012). He has significantly contributed to supporting, educating, and directing the new generation of Iranian cartoonists.

For the author personally, he has played the role of mentor and counselor in helping me find my artistic way in life and realizing the socio-political responsibility of the cartoonist.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Javad_Alizadeh

welcomed in Tehran. The artist utilized a wordplay technique and invites the audience to make a judgment about the contrast between the way she was treated on her trip to the capital and the hospitality that is one of the main characteristics of Iranian culture. However, the cartoonist's message was not conveyed in a straightforward manner. Instead, it was cleverly concealed beneath layers of irony, satire, and parody.

The cartoonist employs language-triggered metaphors, which fall under the third type of metaphors (Barker, 2016, p. 148). These metaphors are based on linguistic expressions that have the potential to be visually conveyed. Javad utilizes **"resemblances"**—a technique characteristic of this type of metaphor. By emphasizing the pronunciations and spellings that are similar across the two domains, the artist evokes the metaphor "death is journey" and remarks on Mahsa's unfortunate journey to Tehran.

The presence of two potentially contradictory realities (Scott, 2004, p. 35) directs us to the discussion (3.3.5: Irony) revolved around the academic viewpoints on irony, which are nominally rooted within linguistic study, such as the work by Colebrook (2004, p. 1) encapsulated in a phrase "saying what is contrary to what is meant." In a similar spirit, the depicted ironic contrast resonates with El Refaie's recognition of the irony's subversive potential, acknowledging its capacity to simultaneously "**go beyond**" and challenge the attitudes and opinions it addresses (El Refaie E. , 2005, p. 785).

The positioning of Mahsa at the forefront of the frame underscores the cartoon as being protagonist-driven (Chalaniova, 2011, pp. 6-8). The remarkable aspect of Mahsa's facial design is the cartoonist's avoidance of typical exaggerations in facial proportions and features. This point is also evident in other cartoons in our corpus and deserves further discussion. As previously examined, caricaturing the faces of political leaders is primarily used to criticize their behavior and occasionally to make jokes about famous individuals. Especially in the context of Iran's socio-cultural communication, this thesis believes that the wrongdoings or corruptions of those in religious power are the focus of Iranian

digital political cartoonists. Here, considering the unsettling background of the subject and the lack of need for humor directed at the protagonist, the cartoonist has chosen to depict Mahsa's face in a subtle manner to highlight her innocence, evoking a sense of reverence and respect in the viewers.

Example 9 – The Passion of the Dictator

Through using a famous scenario, the mise-en-scène of Figure 4.16 exemplifies another utilization of intertextuality by Shahrokh Heidari. This scenario is a widely recognized situation (captured in Figure 4.17) from "The Adventures of Gulliver," a television animated series produced by Hanna-Barbera Productions in 1968. It enjoyed significant popularity among Iranian children during the 1970s and 1980s. The series is loosely inspired by the satirical novel Gulliver's Travels, written by Jonathan Swift in 1726. In this episode, Gary Gulliver and his dog end up on an island while on a quest for treasure with his father. This island is home to the miniature kingdom of Lilliput, whose inhabitants are only a few centimeters tall. Following their shipwreck, Gary and the dog are captured by the Lilliputians, but they eventually team up and form a strong friendship with the tiny inhabitants in the search for his missing father.

The cartoon demonstrates that the format of political cartoons is well-suited for the integration and incorporation of recyclable themes, symbols, and motifs. It enables the parody of familiar character types to highlight common idiosyncrasies and expose shortcomings. The use of "pre-packaged" and marketed material (Wison, 2005, pp. 21, 30), which was popular in the past, imbues the cartoon with visual **retro-intertextuality** (Chapter 3), <u>evoking a sense of nostalgia</u> for the past, or, in D'Angelo's words, "*idealized longings for the past*" (2010, p. 35). Such nostalgic approaches, according to Hutcheon (Hutcheon, Irony, 2003, pp. 180–181), are re-presentations of the past "in a self-conscious, parodic and critical way" rather than merely yearnings for bygone idylls. By engaging in this process, Retro exemplifies how visual and textual elements can be deliberately crafted as narratives rather than being perceived as inherently objective accounts or unfiltered

realities. The process of "re-appropriation and re-contextualization" of forms, as described by Stuart Sim (2005, p. 297), can result in ironic attitudes towards the original forms emphasized by the emerging output. These arguments buttress Grainge's (2002, p. 56) assertation that retro is a heavily marketed cultural activity that "borrows from the past without sentimentality, quotes without longing, and parodies without loss." Hence, retro serves as a valuable tool for facilitating ideological and cultural mediation between the past and the present.

Although the cartoonist substituted Gulliver with a clergyman and the Lilliputians with Iranian schoolgirls, it is imperative to note that Shahrokh did not intend to directly map the traits and characteristics of Gulliver to Iranian officials or draw parallels between the diminutive island inhabitants and Iranian little girls. Scrutinizing the visual will reveal that the artist intended to **appropriate** the original material, suggesting a degree of similarity between the emphasized components, as John Walker and Sarah Chaplin (1997, p. 142) point out, which causes audience discomfort, agitation, and a directing response into evaluative judgments and interpretations.

The placement of both heroes and a villain within a given frame is synchronous with Daniela Chalaniova's notion of a visual, which is driven by the protagonist (2011, p. 7). In structuring the narrative, the cartoonist employs visual stylistic techniques. This includes selectively coloring certain objects in the frame with vibrant and luminous hues, directing the viewer's focus towards the scarves worn by the girls. Additionally, the antagonist's exaggerated facial expressions and the incorporation of Forceville's pictographic runes, such as spittle droplets and emanating lines from the antagonist's mouth (2011, p. 377), are utilized to emphasize his unease and the challenges caused by the courageous young schoolgirls. Ultimately, the artist indicates to the audience that the upcoming generation will no longer obey the draconian laws imposed by the dictator, which severely limit the rights of women.

Example 10 – "Girls of Revolution Street": Decades of Protesting Forced Veiling

While the initial reason for the protests following the tragic death of Mahsa was rooted in advocating for women's freedom in attire, the movement has transcended boundaries of age, gender and ethnicity. It reflects a collective sentiment of anger and discontent to the theocratic regime. It is crucial to underscore that the ongoing protests against gender-based discrimination and compulsory veiling are deeply rooted in a historical context. Over time, Iranian women's rights movements have consistently called for equal participation in public life.

Shortly after the establishment of Iran's Islamic regime, women in Tehran protested, on March 8, 1979, the rumored enforcement of compulsory veiling. The regime gradually implemented hijab requirements and did not achieve full compliance until 1981. Iranian women have then been actively developing plans to fight gender inequality inside government systems as well as outside of them. Women have been dedicated promotes of gender equality and greater public life engagement outside of formal state organizations for many years. Initially, individuals involved in women's rights activism and self-identified feminists were at the forefront of pushing for reform of discriminatory laws, particularly those related to forced hijab. Particularly within the past decade, there has been a noticeable increase in the participation of young women without formal affiliations to feminist movements in activism, feeling empowered to engage in non-violent protests gender-based limitations (Tajali, 2022).

For instance, the "Girls of Revolution Street" protests began on a wintry day in December 2017, when Vida Movahed, a 31-year-old mother, stood defiantly on a utility box at a busy crossroad on Enghelab Street in central Tehran. She removed her headscarf, which she had taken off, placed it on a stick, and waved it in the air. Ironically, the term 'Enghelab' in Persian (originally Arabic term) means revolution. In Iranian political culture, the movement is known as the "Girls of Enghelab Street." This courageous action, which was accompanied by her arrest, was a plea for greater freedom on behalf of tens of millions of women in Iran who

seek the right to choose what they wear. Despite facing extensive harassment and multiple legal challenges for allegedly 'encouraging public corruption,' Vida Movahed's bold action garnered global attention and made headlines internationally due to its disobedience in the heart of a repressive system.

However, to the dislike of the regime, individuals of various genders, ages, and social classes in Iran took to the streets in defiance by removing their headscarves as a peaceful demonstration against repressive laws that infringe upon women's fundamental rights as citizens. The dissemination of their images and videos through social media platforms rapidly amplified their message. In a show of solidarity, many men expressed support by sharing selfies wearing hijabs or publicly endorsing their unveiled family members. Vida Movahed's simple but courageous act has significantly challenged the legitimacy of a regime whose laws and practices do not align with the desires of its populace.

Following this, the utility box that Vida initially stood on served as a symbol of civil protest and disobedience against the imposition of a forced hijab. Subsequently, numerous young women who seek freedom and the ideal of equality between men and women, inspired by Vida's actions, despite the potential for state's ill-treatment and the risk of long jail terms, began to stand on utility boxes in urban areas or benches in parks as a means of emulating Vida's initial protest (Figure 4.20). The original utility box that Vida Movahed and other demonstrators had stood on was modified by the government to prevent further protests of this nature. In response to the unrest sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, many brave young women replicated this act by standing on various elevated structures such as utility poles, cars, and dumpsters to express their long-standing anger and loss of patience over the regime's misogynistic and restrictive practices that do not respect the will of citizens (Figure 4.21).

In the cartoon by Mojtaba Heidar-Panah (Figure 4.18), the artist adeptly merges the ongoing "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement and the "Girls of Revolution Street" protests. The artwork depicts a scene in which riot police officers are trying to vandalize a utility box. In contrast, a brave girl, symbolizing

defiance by not wearing a mandatory hijab, defiantly raises her clenched fist and punches the air. Despite the police's efforts, the girl's demonstrative gesture remains stable and unchanged, suggesting that her act of resistance transcends the need for physical support.

After thoroughly examining the socio-political background, the focus turns towards the quality analysis of the cartoon in Figure 4.18. As expounded in the 1st Chapter (Section 1.1: Semiotics Basics), Ferdinand Saussure postulated a linguistic semiotics theory that has been subsequently classified as structuralism. He defined a sign as being composed of the two parts, and a sign is the whole that results from the association of the signifier with the signified (Saussure, 1916/1974, p. 67) (1916/1983). The concept of a "signifier" and its corresponding "signified" represent integral components of a "sign." Collectively, these linguistic elements contribute to the construction of meaning within language. As asserted by John Storey, the relationship between signifier and signified is entirely **arbitrary**. The relationship existing between the two is a mere manifestation of customary-cultural practice, derived from communal consensus (Storey, 2006, p. 87).

The relatively arbitrary "symbolism" of verbal language, as proposed by Saussure, represents just one type of relationship between the signifier and the signified. While Peirce acknowledged the connection between the sign and the object, his distinctions are typically utilized within a broader Saussurean context. Saussure emphasized the **arbitrary nature** of the linguistic sign, but many semioticians have highlighted that signs differ in their level of arbitrariness or conventionality, or conversely, in their 'transparency'. Unlike Saussure, who did not suggest a typology of signs, Charles Peirce was a meticulous classifier who introduced numerous logical typologies (Peirce, 1931-58, pp. 1.291, 2.243).

Charles Sanders Peirce, based on how the sign related to the object, classified signs into three categories, including **Symbol**, **Icon**, and **Index** (see Section 1.1: RELATIVITY - Modes of Relationships) (Figure 1.5). The symbolic category outlines a mode in which the signifier and signified are essentially different from each other. There is no similarity between the signifier and the

signified in a symbol. The connection between them is essentially arbitrary or entirely conventional, so this relationship must be culturally learned.

To recapitulate the discussion, in the cartoon depicted by Mojtaba (Figure 4.18), the connection between the signifier—the form that the sign takes (in this case, a utility box)—and the signified—the concept and meaning it represents—should be perceived by the viewer. The combination of a signifier and signified results in the creation of a symbol, which is evident in the cartoon being observed. The Iranian viewers, who possess knowledge of the political context mentioned above, can readily grasp the implied meaning of the utility box illustrated by the cartoonist. They will recall Vida and the other "Girls of Revolution Street" and infer that the gesture of the youthful demonstrator signifies a persistent resistance and struggle for decades against the mandatory wearing of the hijab.

Example 11 – Women at the Forefront of Protests

In conjunction with the feminist aspects of the movement, which is marked by female-led protests where women manifested greater audacity, boldness, and recklessness, often taking the lead in protests, Iranian female cartoonists created cartoons supporting the movement and shared them on their personal online platforms. In the mise-en-scène depicted in Figure 4.22, Marzieh Khani Zade, a young Iranian female cartoonist [90], portrays a person who is identified as a young girl based on her ponytail hair. The visual composition suggests that she is wearing an army boot, tying the shoelaces, while she has thrown away her red high-heeled footwear.

Army boots can symbolize a variety of things, depending on the context. They are often associated with strength, resilience, discipline, and readiness for battle. In military settings, they can represent duty, service, and sacrifice. In fashion or popular culture, they can symbolize rebellion, toughness, empowerment, or a sense of adventure. Wearing army boots might also convey a message of self-assurance, confidence, and readiness to face challenges. The symbolism of army

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[90] https://www.cartoonmovement.com/cartoonist/15701?page=1

boots can vary depending on the context and personal interpretation. The employment of visual stylistic techniques such as red color providing a contrast between the high-heeled footwear and the army boot is notable. Red high-heeled footwear, especially when associated with women, can symbolize femininity, style, and fashion. Red may also signify passion, power, or even seduction. High heels, on the other hand, can symbolize elegance, confidence, or a certain level of formality in dressing. However, these symbols can vary across cultures and personal interpretations.

As it was discussed in Chapter 1 on Colors and Pictograms, the expressive function of color within visual media has a profound impact on the shaping of character development, including the hinting of the character's psychology, the expression of emotional states, the creation of scenes and situations, and the establishment of atmosphere across various angles and shots. Color is utilized to communicate the <u>emotional condition of characters</u> and aptly depict the ambiance of a specific scenario. Sonnier and Dow (2001) have demonstrated how incorporating the use of color can serve as a catalyst for evoking visual associations with sensory experiences, thereby directing audiences towards idealized reactions to specific images. According to Palmer and Schloss (2010), during cognitive development, viewers' color preferences are standard and instinctive.

It bears reiterating the discussion on RELATIVITY - Modes of Relationships (see Section 1.1), in which it was outlined that Charles Sanders Peirce, a prominent American philosopher and scientist, developed the theory of semiotics, which includes the classification of signs. Peirce compartmentalized signs into three main types: **icon**, **index**, and **symbol** (Figure 1.5). <u>Icons represent their objects through similarity or resemblance,</u> such as a picture of a tree. Indexes have a <u>*direct connection or **causal link** to their objects,*</u> like smoke being an index of fire. Symbols rely on **conventions** or **agreements** to represent their objects, such as words or traffic signs (Peirce, 1931-58, pp. 1.291, 2.243). Peirce's work laid the foundation for the study of signs and their meanings in various fields,

including linguistics, philosophy, and communication theory.

According to the comprehensive theoretical framework introduced above, the context of female-led protests in Iran suggests that the protagonist's act of discarding her red footwear and donning an army boot can be interpreted by viewers as a symbol of readiness for battle, rebellion, audacity, and other positive qualities exhibited by young girls at the forefront of the protests that commenced in September 2022. This bravery and pioneering occurred despite the potential risks of injury, arrest, persecution, and extrajudicial trials.

The cartoon created by Marzieh (Figure 4.22) gone viral and gained widespread popularity after being shared on her personal social media platform, leading to an online campaign where young women who seek freedom and gender equality, inspired by this cartoon, discarded their feminine footwear in favor of military-style boots as a symbol of their preparedness to engage in protests. These demonstrations aimed to advocate for dignity and fundamental rights, such as the freedom to choose one's attire, and resulted in significant public mobilization against misogynistic laws and demands for societal change.

The influence of this cartoon supports the topics outlined by this thesis, pivoting around the "Politicized Role and Function of the Cartoons" in shaping public opinion and setting social agenda. As stated by Caswell (2004), political cartoons are regarded as "both opinion-molding and opinion-reflecting" (p. 14). Here, Marzieh Khani Zadeh reflects the socio-political mood of society as well as its success in building public opinion. Moreover, the impact of her cartoon confirms the "Communicative Power of Cartooning" (refer to Section 3.2) that cartoonists courageously inspire people to participate and engage.

Example 12 – Zoomorphism of Plainclothes Agent

As indicated by reports from human rights organizations and governmental sources, between November 2022 and March 2023, up to 7,000 schoolgirls were

reportedly subjected to poisoning incidents across multiple schools in 28 provinces[91].

On March 1, 2023, a video surfaced depicting an assault on a mother outside a school that was one of the locations affected by a poison gas attack. The video, which was gone viral on social media, captures a man in casual attire aggressively pulling a mother's hair outside a girls' school in Tehran (Figure 4.24). The mother had arrived at the scene after receiving information that students at the school had been affected by gas fumes, similar to incidents reported in various schools across the country in the preceding weeks. The extent and dispersion of mysterious mass poisonings, which were accompanied by numerous cases of respiratory distress among schoolgirls, had raised public concern. The release of this video comes nearly six months after the death of Mahsa Amini, erupted a new wave of anger and hatred across the country.

In the cartoon depicted in Figure 4.23, Jamal Rahmati responds to the brutal assault on a mother by a pro-government plainclothes agent. He expresses his anger, using a transmorphic technique, by replacing the head of the attacker with the head of a pig. It is noteworthy to recall the discussion in the 1st Chapter (1.2.3: Personification), in which it was examined in detail that the technique of **personification** involves attributing human characteristics, such as emotions or feelings, to inanimate objects or abstract concepts. **Anthropomorphism**, on the other hand, is a technique that involves attributing human qualities to animals or objects, such as the ability to talk, think, or behave like humans. **Zoomorphism** constitutes the antithesis of anthropomorphism by ascribing animalistic traits and psychological states to the human psyche.

According to this classification, purposeful distortion of reality and attribution of human characteristics to a non-human entity is observable within the

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[91] Numerous schoolgirls were hospitalized, exhibiting various symptoms such as difficulty breathing, numbness in limbs, irregular heartbeats, migraines, nausea, and vomiting. The mysterious poisoning at schools for girls, first reported in the religious city of Qom on November 30, generated new protests against the government. Initially, the government disregarded the reported illnesses as mere "rumors" and attributed them to the students' pre-existing health conditions and anxiety. Fresh demonstrations against the government regarding the mysterious mass poisonings began in mid-February 2023. Subsequently, by early March, protests were coordinated in various provincial capitals, including Tehran, around the Ministry of Education premises.

frame, which initially identifies an example of anthropomorphism. Upon closer examination of the image and the news context, it becomes evident that the technique of anthropomorphism has not been utilized to evoke empathy from the audience towards the object of the cartoonist's representation, as suggested by Carrera (2015, p. 100). On the contrary, Jamal Rahmati depicted a human, here a violent plainclothes agent as shown in figure 4.24, exhibiting animalistic physical and mental traits. Using zoomorphism, Jamal has benefited from its potential to cultivate a sense of **superiority** by degrading the person depicted.

Zoomorphism, being a more targeted approach, aims to undermine the integrity of a central character, thus enabling viewers to experience a sense of superiority. In the context of political cartoons, zoomorphism can be regarded as a common practical mechanism whereby animalistic qualities are attributed to political figures, which, in addition to enhancing the form's aesthetic appeal and comprehensibility, grants cartoonists a superiority stance and the power to <u>harshly criticize</u> (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016).

As previously outlined, zoomorphism involves the assignment of animal characteristics to humans in a metaphorical manner. By juxtaposing a pig's head onto a human body, the negative attributes associated with this animal in Iranian culture serve as the source domain, which then transfers to the target domain, resulting in the creation of a metaphorical expression exemplified by the phrase "*plainclothes agent is pig.*"

The success of cartoonist is rooted in the use of displacement to create the desired level of discordance and incongruity that can trigger a humorous response among their intended audience; creating cognitive frameworks that activate reader expectations regarding the identification of topics, communicative purposes, and the inherent structure of cartoons (Attardo & Raskin, 1996, pp. 293-347).

As it has been discussed in the 2nd Chapter, political cartoons as <u>aggression reduction</u> functions provide audiences with occasions of purgation to reduce their disappointment and annoyance regarding certain conditions (refer to Figure 2.3). After providing a shocking placement, he ultimately brings a sense of relief to his

viewers. The cartoonist, by depicting a real picture of the government's violence and presenting frank criticism, elicited the people's anger and disgust, which finally calmed down the viewers. Finally, it could be deduced that Jamal, through **subversive humor**, successfully utilized the therapeutic function of laughter to alleviate stress and tension by physically releasing it, transforming a frightening topic into a less threatening form.

Example 13 – The whole country is bleeding.

The mise-en-scène of Figure 4.25 exemplifies another instance of the bravery and intelligence of Iranian female cartoonists. Mansoure Dehghani, in her artwork, depicts a human ear that, based on the hair's form, could be inferred to be female. The auricle, the outer and visible part of the ear, is depicted as a map of Iran, which appears to be bleeding. As previously mentioned, in the case of Mahsa Amini's death, a photo shared by her family (Figure 4.1) shows their hospitalized young girl lying unconscious and intubated, with evident signs of bleeding from her right ear. Some sources from Kasra Hospital stated that Mahsa died on September 16 due to brain trauma, and her brain tissue was crushed after receiving "multiple blows" to the head. Multiple medical professionals asserted that the presence of otorrhagia (bleeding from the ears) indicates that her coma was likely induced by head trauma.

Mahsa was called Zhina at home, which in Kurdish means "life." It is interesting that on her tombstone in Saqqez, the city where she was born, it is written: "***Zhina, you won't die; your name becomes a code***." (Figure 4.26) 92 Zhina's death has opened the doors of popular outrage. Individuals experienced a sense of bereavement akin to the loss of a family member. Her name was repeatedly chanted in protests, and Mahsa has emerged as a symbol of innocence, enduring resistance, and the fight against the state's misogynistic laws and practices.

By transforming the ear into the map of Iran, Mansoure Dehghani symbolically

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[92] In Kurdish: ”ژینا گیان تو نامری، ناوت ئەبێتە ڕەمز“

In Persian: ”ژینا جان تو نمی‌میری، نامت یک رمز می‌شود“

conveys the solidarity of Iranians from all walks of life and ethnicities in response to the tragic death of Mahsa. Moreover, the bleeding of the country is an example of *personification*, which is the attribution of anthropomorphic form, traits, and characteristics to **inanimate objects** and **intangible entities**. This literary and artistic device, which is exhaustively described in the first Chapter on "Personification," involves assigning human-like qualities to abstract concepts, including nations, emotions, and natural phenomena. The artist also portrays a collective sense of mourning and solidarity, suggesting that the entire nation is affected by the repercussions of violent suppression. Through the metaphorical representation of "*Iran is Mahsa (Zhina)*," the artist emphasizes the broader societal impact of the event beyond the immediate family, highlighting a shared sense of loss and grief among the populace.

Quantitative Typology

Quantitative research involves collecting and analyzing numerical data using statistical methods, emphasizes the use of statistical analysis, and measurement to test hypotheses and draw conclusions. In the realm of quantitative content analysis, the primary emphasis lies in the methodical classification and enumeration of precise attributes or elements present in the data. Statistical methodologies are utilized in quantitative content analysis to scrutinize the information, which may involve computations of frequencies, correlations, or various forms of relationships.

Content Analysis

Content analysis within quantitative typology encompasses the identification and quantification of words' frequency, dominant themes, patterns, repetitive symbols, positive or negative sentiments, narratives, artistic techniques, and stylistic elements, including personages, compositions, coloring, and actions. As mentioned before, this approach seeks to answer the question of **what** and centers

on the goal of providing an impartial, unbiased, and objective representation of the cartoons being studied in empirical analysis.

It also involves systematic classification and examination of certain topics depicted in the chosen cartoons, scrutinizing both visual and written components to infer cultural, political, or social implications conveyed through the cartoons. However, it bears acknowledging that content analysis doesn't delve into the deeper level of meaning or interpretation of the cartoons and might miss the nuances and subtleties of the message.

Quantitative Analysis of the Corpus

After fully qualitatively analyzing the corpus, the focus now shifts to the quantitative analysis of data, focusing on quantifying the recurring themes and frequency elements, such as the rhetorical techniques of selected cartoons. This approach will provide a quantitative picture of how often these techniques are employed by Iranian cartoonists.

Coding

In the discourse surrounding analytical practice, corpuses necessitate several means of categorization to organize data and recognize common concepts, themes, and ideas. The first type of grounded theory coding, which has been applied to coding verbal and visual objects in this study, is the re-reading of each selected news element, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990), with a view to "breaking down, examining, comparing, or conceptualizing data" (p. 61).

This form of coding gives prominence to the wide range of topics, themes, and individuals that arise from each information source, allowing for their quantitative catalog and cross-analysis with other news elements. This approach promotes a mindset of receptivity (open-minded) among researchers towards the numerous potentialities inherent in research materials, thereby facilitating the comprehensive extraction of data.

In cases where specific subjects, themes, and individuals were considered significant but unique, efforts were undertaken to integrate them into broader generic categories by employing the axial coding method, which enables the restructuring of data fragments by establishing theoretical linkages among them. One of the primary advantages of axial coding is its ability to facilitate iterative processes of inductive and deductive reasoning, establishing connections between subcategories and overarching categories in a reciprocal manner. This approach is further aligned with the initial open coding technique outlined earlier, as it involves the removal of unclear or redundant concepts during the analysis process. Axial coding additionally enables quantitative research to focus on broader categories that are pertinent to the research context and selected event, rather than getting bogged down in the complexities of specific topic details.

Discussion, Analysis of the Data

To analyze cartoons, the author of this dissertation adopted the perspective of an entirely informed observer, who is properly familiar with the conventions inherent to the genre. This viewer is able to recognize contexts, objects, depicted persons, and situations and has enough factual information to comprehend the gist of the cartoon and the cartoonist's main idea.

Main topics in the corpus

Table 4.3 and Figure 4.27 describe the main topics in the collection of empirical instances, encapsulating the multifaceted nature of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement, providing a compelling outline of the major themes and concerns addressed by Iranian Cartoonists during the movement.

The 70 times observing the topic "**Death of Mahsa Amini in Police Custody**" answers the one of research question that how IDPC act as a means of political communication in a situation of socio-political instability. It emphasizes the governmental tyranny and injustice and the deep sorrow and indignation that her death evoked.

The large number of cartoons that address "**Martyrs of the Movement** (which appears in 26 cartoons) and 30 cartoons referring «**Riot Police Brutality, Massacre of Protesters**", highlights the artists' will to document and condemn the government's harsh crackdown. These works remind the human cost of the movement and highlight the bravery of people who risked their lives. In parallel, the collection of 15 items titled "**Bravery and Power of Women vs. Security Forces' Fear**" shows the cartoonists' respect for women's courage and resilience, while also recognizing their pivotal role as the protesters' main motivator.

Notably, "**No to Compulsory Hijab**" with its 10 entries showcases a powerful rejection of the systematic control over women's bodies. The cartoons also tried to dispute the government's narrative in addition to capturing the essence of uprising and documenting events. While more general socio-political demands, such as "**No to Dictatorship and Theocratic Regime** (6)" and "**Gender Equality** (7)," show how the movement has developed into a larger fight for human rights and political change, categories like "**State's Denial of Involvement in Mahsa's Death**" (4) directly challenge official attempts to shift blame. These cartoons transform the hijab into a potent symbol of oppression, linking personal freedom to broader political liberation. Further, the cartoonists' focus on the topic "**No to Arbitrary Arrests, Unjust Trials, Extrajudicial Executions**" indicates their dedication to drawing attention to the regime's abuses of human rights. The inclusion of "**Dictatorship Is Collapsing**" (appearing in only 4 cartoons), though numerically smaller, carries significant symbolic weight. It demonstrates the movement's transformational aims and is a powerful expression of optimism and challenge to the regime's perceived stability. This array of cartoons acts as a vehicle for social criticism and political resistance while also providing a potent visual record of the movement, encapsulating its major themes, emotional resonance, and pivotal events (Zarifian, 2022).

Subcategories of Topics

In the following, the study analyzes Table 4.4, which offers an extra perspective on the thematic subcategories interwoven throughout the movement, as

documented by IDPC. It underscores the movement's youthful vitality, highlighting the active participation of young girls and schoolgirls, both as leaders and also victims of official repression. This focus highlights the movement's cross-generational appeal as well as the regime's targeting of young people.

In Table 4.4 a potent blend of solidarity, resistance, and grief is evident. The strong current of solidarity is evident in the "Support of Women by Men" and the symbolic acts of "Cutting off Hairs and Burning Headscarves," signifying a united front against oppression. The "Police Van," as illustrated in Figure 4.7, emerges as a powerful symbol of state repression, representing not only the enforcement of the mandatory hijab but also the violation of fundamental personal freedoms deeply etched in Iranian cultural memory.

The table paints a stark picture of the harsh realities of state violence and its deep-seated effects. This is highlighted by incidents like the "Mysterious Mass Poisoning in Girl Schools" (appearing in Figure 4.23), the tragic "Zahedan Massacre (Bloody Friday)," and the heart-wrenching theme of "Bereaved Mothers" who lost their loved ones during the harsh crackdown. These elements emphasize the movement's commitment to confronting the trauma inflicted by the state and demanding accountability for these injustices.

The movement's critique also reached into cultural and sports arenas, exemplified by the public boycott of the national team during the World Cup. This act symbolized a clear rejection of state-associated symbols. At the same time, the movement celebrated individual heroes and symbols of resistance. Supportive figures like celebrities Shervin Hajipour and Toomaj Salehi, as well as athletes such as Ali Karimi and Elnaz Rekabi (Figure 4.11), emerged as symbol of hope. The strategic use of national symbols (see Table 4.8) and traditions further helped to cultivate a sense of unity and shared identity among the people.

Rhetorical Devices

In accordance with theoretical frameworks grounded in Chapter 3, the study analyzes Table 4.5, which outlines the rhetorical devices employed in the set of cartoons. The overall high percentages, which exceed 100% because multiple

techniques are often used in each cartoon, showcase the cartoonists' complex and nuanced communication strategies. This suggests that these rhetorical devices successfully express the artists' critical viewpoints and connect with the audience both intellectually and emotionally.

While cartoonists apply both superior and relief aspects of humor, along with the therapeutic function of laughter, in 91% of cartoons subversive humor is utilized to challenge power structures and social injustices. As Bohl (1997) points out, the conventional definition of funny representations, aside from those that come at the cost of men in authority, is comparatively low at 35%, suggesting a preponderance of critical and pessimistic, which is to be anticipated given the tragic circumstances of the context.

81% of cartoons employ visual metaphor, the mechanism of perceiving one entity or concept through the lens of another apparently distinct one (Burke K. , [1945] 1969, p. 503) (Foss, 2004, p. 299), or as Zarifian described as "The Likeness of Unlike Things" (2025), to produce semantic links between the topic and the communicative vehicle. Another common rhetorical device is intertextuality, with frequency of 73%, which refers to cartoonists' use of references to established cultural or political narratives. They frequently draw on topics and symbols, as well as famous paintings and photos (Walker & Chaplin, 1997, p. 142) to enhance the effectiveness of their work. Analyzing the visual intertextuality in these narratives uncovers many examples of visual quotation. Furthermore, many cartoons apply appropriation, allowing for a more significant departure from the original material and resulting in the creation of an entirely new cultural artwork (Sanders, 2016, p. 35).

In line with Chambers' notion on parody as "art that plays with art" (2012, p. 2), it is present in 47% of the cartoons, indicating a more moderate role and the tendency to mock or satirize the actions and words of the men in power. Analyzing the set of cartoons (for example, see Figure 4.9) reveals a range of emotions, from joyfully outrageous to bitter yet sweet, capturing both anger and sadness. This aligns with Gross's description of the playful nature of parody (2010, pp. xi-xv).

In this vein, cartoonists can be characterized as visual parodists (Chambers, 2010, p. 19), because they skillfully borrow and reshape different artistic elements to craft eye-catching and satirical pieces that critique and undermine established cultural norms, and societal values. This method seeks to challenge dominant narratives, examine existing power structures, and spark debates about the complexities of society and politics, which fits well with the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach used in this thesis.

Irony, defined by Scott as expressing what is opposed to what is intended (2004, p. 35), this technique is used quite often (69%). Notably, based on an analysis of a collection of cartoons in this empirical study, this dissertation argues that the presence of irony, a sarcastic tone, and elements of exaggeration <u>are key features of political cartoons</u>.

Stylistic Devices

Reiterating the discussions in Section 1.2, Table 4.6 reveals a tactical application of various persuasive techniques and stylistic devices wielded by IDPC to convey their critical ideas. The immense prevalence of "Protagonist vs. Antagonist" (95%) highlights a clear and unwavering framework, demonstrating a turbulent socio-political landscape as a readily understandable conflict between opposing forces. This technique serves to position the Iranian regime firmly as the antagonist, while framing the protesters and the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement as the protagonists in a struggle for justice and liberation.

The public's demands are constructively reflected in these sharp binary oppositions, which reinforce one-dimensional narratives of resistance that emphasize the shrinking space and hope for any reforms, ultimately calling for the overthrow of the dictatorship. However, these stark binary oppositions can also be perceived as an approach of oversimplifying a complicated struggle. Furthermore, this remarkable contrast resonates with Mirco Göpfert's perspective on cartooning as an authentic means of political action, owing to its capacity to simplify intricate concepts and convey them through dichotomous oppositions (Göpfert, 2020, p. 148).

Furthermore, "Exaggeration" (88%) emerges as a powerful tool for amplifying the impact of cartoons. By exaggerating physical features, actions, situations, or concepts, cartoonists intensify the portrayal of both the brutality of the authorities and the suffering endured by the people. This technique is instrumental in evoking strong emotional responses from the audience, thereby reinforcing the urgency and significance of the movement's cause. It serves as a primary method for highlighting specific aspects of a situation, such as the state's brutality and the people's suffering. Caricatures of political leaders often exaggerate and distort certain features, making them appear funny and ridiculous, which is primarily used to criticize their behavior and sometimes to create humor that offers relief (also see Table 4.9). However, it is important to note that cartoonists show respect by avoiding typical exaggerations in facial proportions and characteristics when depicting Mahsa or other victims, as evident in Figure 4.15.

The frequent use of "Stereotype and Cliché" (56%) to portray clerical leaders, riot police, plainclothesmen, and female morality police officers highlights a reliance on easily recognizable visual shortcuts to convey complex ideas swiftly. For instance, clerical leaders are often depicted in traditional attire, such as long robes (thobes or dishdashas) (Figures 4.6, 4.16), complemented by head coverings like turbans or kufis (Figure 4.11) and characterized by long beards (Figure 4.9). Similarly, riot police and security forces are illustrated with uniforms, helmets, batons, shields, and body armor, often accompanied by crowd control equipment like tear gas canisters. While this approach may risk oversimplification, it allows cartoonists to draw on shared cultural understandings and assumptions, facilitating immediate comprehension and resonance with a broad audience.

"Composition - Positioning" (63%) demonstrates a conscious awareness of the power of visual arrangement. Cartoonists strategically position elements, such as placing protagonist vs. antagonist at the focal point of the frame, called 'sweet spots' by Chalaniova (2011, p. 7), to direct the viewer's gaze, establish relationships between characters or objects, and underscore the central message of

the cartoon. This technique guides the viewer's interpretation and reinforces the intended narrative (Figures 4.9, 4.10, and 4.15).

The 24.2% use of "Colors and Pictograms", while less frequent than other techniques, adds crucial layers of meaning and emotional resonance to the cartoons. Colors can be employed to evoke specific emotions, symbolize particular concepts, or clarifying mental state of the protagonist and antagonist, while Emanata and pictorial elements, such as droplets, stars, motion, and speed lines can illustrate the situation and actions within the frame (Figures 1.31-34).

The expressive function of color, as illustrated in red high-heeled in Figure 4.22, plays a meaningful role in character development within political cartoons. It can suggest a character's psychology, convey emotional states, create scenes and situations, and establish atmosphere from different perspectives. Color is employed to reflect the emotional state of characters and effectively portray the mood of a particular scene, for instance, the bravery of women against the fear and weakness of riot police in Figure 4.10. The frequent use of red not only emphasizes the regime's violence ('sea of blood' in Figure 4.12 and) but also evokes a culturally specific meaning, such as martyrdom, which holds great respect in the Iranian context (Figure 4.25).

Finally, although "Personification," particularly zoomorphism, gives cartoonists a stronger position and the capacity to harshly critique and discredit the antagonists (see Figure 4.23), Iranian cartoonists are not much fond of this technique. It is rare, occurring only twice, suggesting a preference for layered forms over depicting antagonists in straightforward likening to animals. Self-censorship in a repressed system may be involved in this choice.

Signs: Iconic, Symbolic, and Indexical Modes of Relationships

In accordance with the ideas presented in Section 1.1: "Relativity - Modes of Relationships," table 4.7 categorizes signs found in the cartoon collection based on Peirce's (1931-58, pp. 1.291, 2.243) semiotic classification of icon, symbol, and index (Figure 1.5). The table demonstrates the diverse semiotic strategies employed in the cartoons to convey complex narratives and perspectives on the

"Woman, Life, Freedom" movement. It should be noted that the total number of used signs in this table exceeds the total number of cartoons because cartoonists may utilize numerous signs in each cartoon.

The "Icon" category reveals a strong emphasis on visual representation, featuring direct resemblances of objects and people. Prominently, there's a high frequency of caricatures of the Supreme Leader, with 38 cartoons, and stereotypical depictions of clergymen (see also Table 4.6), with 41 entries, indicating a focus on visually portraying key figures and forces within the Iranian context.

A substantial quantity of cartoons featuring "Riot Police Forces" (42 cartoons) may also be found in the "Icon" category. The noticeably ruthless presence of these security forces in the oppression of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" demonstrations is prominently reflected in the array of cartoons. Cartoonists use these iconic representations to directly portray the state's repressive apparatus, emphasizing the use of force and violence against protesters. The high frequency of these depictions underscores the conflict's nature and highlights the power dynamics between the protesters and the Iranian government.

Symbols display a reliance on culturally and universally constructed meanings. Within this category, the high number of cartoons depicting "Unveiled Women's Hair" reflects the centrality of women's rights and freedom over their bodies in the movement. The collective act of taking off hijabs and burning headscarves becomes a potent emblem of defiance against the enforcement of restrictive rules on their lifestyles and the broad control exerted over women's lives. In Iranian society, where the hijab is a highly visible and politically charged symbol, the removal or absence of it carries a powerful message. It directly challenges the authority of the regime and its interpretation of religious law. Iranian cartoonists effectively use this symbol to communicate complex ideas about resistance, agency, and the desire for social change. It's a visually striking way to represent women's struggle and their demands for autonomy. The

frequency of the symbol of unveiled hair in cartoons highlights the active role of women in the protests and their courage in challenging deeply entrenched norms.

Table 4.7 also indicates a significant presence of "Execution by Hanging" symbols, appearing in 32 cartoons within the "Symbol" category. This high frequency can be attributed the ominous symbolism of the noose or gallows is a potent and universally recognized symbol of state-sanctioned death and violence. Its use in the cartoons serves as a direct condemnation of the regime's brutal tactics and its use of capital punishment as a tool of oppression. It was noticed a rise in the use of this symbol is in tandem with the spreading of the news of the execution of jailed protesters. It serves as a reminder of the grave consequences faced by protesters and their relatives. Also, the combining this symbol with the caricature of the supreme leader also carries a strong emotional charge pointing out that who is responsible for this injustice. It evokes feelings of anger mobilize support for the movement.

A gesture of clenched fist is a symbol associated with strength, solidarity, and resistance. It is repeated 12 times within the corpus and signify defiance against oppression and the pursuit for social justice, along with sending message of togetherness and determination among those want for reformations.

Universal and Social Symbols

Table 4.8 divides symbols found in the corpus into "Universal Symbols" and "Social Symbols" based on the provided text's framework of semiotics in 1st Chapter and also social semiotics in Qualitative Typology. The first category highlights how cartoonists offer recipients a set of "condensing symbols" (Gamson & Stuart, 1992, p. 60) that create symbolic representations that stimulate discussions about surrounding issues, thereby contributing to the formation and interpretation of shared beliefs and values within a community (Zarifian, 2020).

The classification of symbols into "Universal" and "Social" categories aligns with the core principles of social semiotics, which emphasizes that meaning is not inherent in a sign but arises from its use within a specific socio-cultural context.

The table provides a practical illustration of how social semiotics helps us analyze the deep and context-specific meanings embedded in visual communication.

Social semiotics examines how societies choose signs that are significant in their everyday lives (Kress & Leeuwen, [1996] 2006). In this sense, the "Universal Symbols" in Table 4.8 generally rely less on specific Iranian cultural contexts and more on widely understood visual language. Universal Symbols tend to have relatively consistent meanings across different cultures. While their usage can still be nuanced, their core symbolic function is broadly recognizable. For example, "Scaffold, Noose or Gallows," "Baton," "Ball and Chain," and "Handcuff" are included in this category as they represent universally understood concepts of punishment, violence, and oppression.

Symbols that are culturally significant can evoke strong emotions and shared experiences among the public. It advances a sense of solidarity and community among Iranian people that experience common sufferings and frustrations and also arise discussion about oppression, civil rights and encourage reaction among those who recognize the underlying message.

The second category strongly reflects the core of social semiotics, emphasizing that meaning is culturally constructed and tied to specific social contexts (Hall, 1997). "Unveiled and Unbound Women's Hair" and "Compulsory Hijab" are powerful examples. Their meaning is deeply embedded in the Iranian socio-political context, where the hijab is a contested site of identity and control. Cartoons using these two symbols contribute to the ongoing social discourse about women's rights in Iran, potentially influencing public opinion and social change. The interpretation of these symbols ("semiosis") is a social practice that shapes people and societies. The "Utility Box as a Symbol of Protest" directly references the "Girls of Revolution Street movement," initiated by Vida Movahed (Figure 4.19), demonstrating how an everyday object becomes a potent symbol of resistance within a particular social context.

Symbols like "Police Van" and "Palestinian Keffiyeh" derive their specific meaning from the Iranian protest movement and political landscape. The police

van, known as "Guidance Patrol" (Figure 4.7), against the mandatory hijab and government policies across the country but also, in the collective memory of Iranians, symbolizing the decades of tyranny and patriarchal oppression of a religious regime and the violation of the fundamental right to choose one's attire. Moreover, In Iranian socio-political context Keffiyeh represents a part of Supreme Leader's clothing and symbolizes loyalty to the Islamic Republic. The Discussion in Section 4.4 explains that social semiotics explores how cartoonists code signs to reflect and comment on social and political realities (Van Leeuwen, 2005) (Bains, 2006), and these symbols are clear examples of that.

Objects like "Army Boot" and "High-heeled Shoes" in a cartoon by Marzieh Khani Zade (Figure 4.22), as well as "Prayer Beads," "Waste Container," "Pressure Cooker," and "Grape," become "Social Symbols" because their interpretation is heavily influenced by their use within Iranian society and the cartoons' narratives. As Rose suggests, understanding visual materials requires understanding their social contexts (2001).

The categorization effectively distinguishes between symbols with broader, more stable meanings and those whose meanings are highly contingent on the specific socio-cultural context of the Iranian "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement. This distinction is precisely what social semiotics emphasizes: the importance of context in interpreting visual signs.

From another point of view, the use of universal symbols becomes particularly significant for several reasons. In Iran's repressive media system, cartoonists, residing within the country can use them as a subtle form of dissent and **conservative criticism** (see also Table 4.2), allowing them to critique authority while minimizing the risk of direct repercussions and prosecution from security forces.

In environments where open criticism can lead to severe consequences, cartoonists often rely on universal symbols that can be interpreted in multiple ways. This ambiguity allows them to convey dissenting messages without explicitly naming individuals or policies, making it harder for authorities to target

them. If a cartoon can be interpreted in multiple ways, it becomes more challenging for authorities to justify punitive actions against the artist, as the message may not be clear-cut.

Universal symbols can carry layered meanings that resonate with the audience while remaining opaque to those in power. For example, a cartoon depicting a dove with an olive branch, as the universal symbol of peace, in a cage might symbolize freedom and oppression, allowing viewers to understand the critique of the regime without it being overtly stated.

Synergy of Verbal & Visual Elements

Table 4.9 presents a breakdown of the frequency of different types of cartoons within the corpus. The vast majority (73%) of the corpus tells a significant preference for "Cartoons without Text" that rely on visual elements to convey their message. If a cartoon relies less on text and more on images, it needs to use visual symbols that are widely understood, not just within a specific culture that allow to transcend language barriers and cultural differences. It making the message accessible to a broader audience and increases the chance of the message being understood by diverse audiences.

The use of visual elements, especially universal symbols (see Table 4.8) shows a very important point about the planned use of symbols in media systems where direct expression is dangerous.

In repressive contexts with the threat of persecution from authorities, symbols allow for obscured and indirect criticism and is a way to circumvent censorship. Cartoonists may transmit critical ideas without expressing them clearly, which makes it more difficult for censors to find and block them. Therefore, universal symbols can offer a level of protection for the cartoonist as they can express disagreement while minimizing the risks. As revealed in the author's interviews with Iranian cartoonists, the strategic use of symbols in the corpus is not just an artistic choice but a tool for subversion and protection. It is a necessity for survival in challenging political climates. Additionally, as the

movement gained international attention, Iranian cartoonists have intentionally used more universally understood visuals to get global support.

However, it is not a perfect equation. As stated previously, social symbols—which are ingrained in Iranian culture—are also essential to IDPCs. They offer layers of meaning and have a strong impact on the local audience. Cartoonists frequently strike a balance between social and universal symbolism (refer to Table 4.8).

In contrast, cartoons that combine text and images ("Word-image fusions") are used much less frequently (12%). This suggests that while text can add another layer of meaning (see Section 1.3), cartoonists often prioritize the visual impact of their work. Nevertheless, the wordplay in Figures 4.9 and 4.15 and cartoons in Figures 4.12-14 are prominent instances of using verbal elements like titles and speech bubbles (balloons) to convey clear messages and evoke ironic sentiment.

In the third category, the "Caricature" of clerical leaders, political figures, and the practice of shaming certain celebrities who did not remain loyal to the people represents the smallest portion of the corpus at just 5%. While depicting certain features of the face or body in an exaggerated and distorted manner is a common feature in political cartoons, this statistic indicates that they typically appear within the broader context of cartoons, whether accompanied by text or not, rather than as standalone pieces.

Text Containers

Recalling the discussion revolving around "Language and Speech; Inseparable Components of Political Cartoons" (Section 1.3), Table 4.10 exhibits how textual elements can be strategically employed to boost the IDPC's ability to communicate, especially when delivering intricate political and social messages.

Labels and tags inside cartoons clarify figures, objects, symbols, and metaphors, ensuring clear understanding, especially in abstract or complex visuals. The overwhelmingly high number of labels, with 55 cartoons, indicates a strong reliance on specific terms and names to convey meaning. The frequently used labels, such as "IRAN" and "Mahsa," as the first victim of the event, as well as the

slogan and brand of the movement in English, French, and Kurdish, point to specific political and social themes, indicating that these cartoons are deeply engaged with contemporary issues.

Direct monologue or dialogue serves as the basic method (Serafini & Moses, 2015, p. 309) for driving the narrative, clarifying characters' interactions and relations, and expressing instantaneous messages or ironic messages as discussed in Figures 4.12-14. This technique is used in 16 cartoons, making speech bubbles the second most frequently used textual component. Their right-to-left arrangement in Persian dialogues and vice versa, left-to-right in English versions, guides the reader's eye, culminating in a punchline on the opposite side. The relatively high frequency of speech bubbles underscores the importance of direct communication between protagonist and antagonist in cartoons.

Titles act as a compass, orienting the reader to the cartoon's subject. They leverage existing public knowledge, making the cartoon more accessible. The fact that only 5 cartoons use titles suggests this classic way is not so popular among IDPC and many cartoons rely on visual cues and other textual elements to convey their message. This could indicate a preference for direct visual impact or a reliance on widely understood cultural references.

Similar to speech bubbles, the thought balloon (1 cartoon) that conveys the internal thoughts of the character, along with "Dialogue Without Balloon," appears less frequently—only in two cartoons—and lacks a visual container yet still represents spoken words (see Figure 1.40). It is interesting that the thought balloon itself is used as a symbol of thinking in a cartoon (Figure 4.28).

Captions provide contextual information or summarize the cartoon's message, often placed below the frame. Notably, the low frequency of traditional captions within the cartoon frame suggests a potential preference for utilizing caption facilities provided by social media platforms, where additional textual context can be added outside the image itself.

Hashtags connect the cartoon to online discourse, amplifying its reach and engagement. The use of hashtags within the frame indicates a recognition of the

cartoon's role in digital media. The specific hashtags (#MahsaAmini, #Woman_Life_Freedom) reflect the IDPC's engagement with the movement, celebrating acts of solidarity and resistance.

The analysis of Table 4.10 reveals several key takeaways, most notably the dominance of labels, underscoring the necessity for precise and unambiguous communication within these cartoons, while the strategic use of titles and speech bubbles provides essential context, guiding the reader's interpretation. Furthermore, the incorporation of hashtags demonstrates the IDPC's active role in online discourse and their connection to the socio-political movement, reflecting a cultural specificity through multilingual labels and a focus on Iranian political and social issues. This collective evidence, in conjunction with the supporting textual explanations in the 1st chapter, ultimately emphasizes the paramount importance of textual components in political and editorial cartoons for effectively conveying complex messages.

Concluding Remarks

Of particular importance is the concept of IDPC introduced into scientific use, which opens up new perspectives for research on digital activism and visual political communication. Theoretical insights: conceptualization of IDPC as a special form of digital activism, a tool of "soft resistance," a platform for an alternative historical narrative; development of a model of "digital carnivalization" of protest (hyperbolization, inversion, layering).

Thus, the key conclusion is that IDPC has formed a unique visual language of protest, has shown the effectiveness of visual metaphors as a means of circumventing censorship, and has become an important tool for constructing collective memory.

CONCLUSION

The discussion and findings underscore the validity of the main hypothesis of this study proposed by Sipe (1998, p. 107), which posits that in Westernized logocentric societies that prioritize written language, visual texts hold significance comparable to that of verbal texts. The qualitative and quantitative analysis confirms that this hypothesis is particularly relevant within the Iranian media system, where visual communication plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and discourse. From this perspective, images can be characterized as 'polysemous,' as they contain a core sign that resonates with a diverse array of ideas embedded within the audience's collective knowledge. Image creators—Iranian digital political cartoonists in our case—guide viewers towards a preferred understanding by encouraging them to construct their own version of reality. This is accomplished through the strategic use of specific signifiers that effectively limit and delineate the spectrum of possible interpretations, ultimately enriching the communicative power of visual texts.

As observed in empirical analysis, the innocence and the iconic pictures of Mahsa (see Figure 4.15) and other young victims during crackdown of the protests led to a markedly strong artistic response compared to past protests. Findings of this thesis reveal that Iran is a country bristling with courageous cartoonists, who, despite the regime's long-standing determination to persecute and silence them, are struggling to be the voice of Iranian people under the oppressive system.

Parallel to the feminist aspects of the movement, wherein women exhibited increased boldness, reckless, and audacity, often being prominently featured at the forefront of protests, Iranian female cartoonists demonstrated bravery and conscientiousness by creating and disseminating cartoons. These cartoons were frequently characterized by their courageousness and social responsibility of their creators. In interviews, these artists revealed that some of them encountered pressure and constraints from security forces. Consequently, due to threats, certain

individuals were compelled to remove protest-themed cartoons from their personal pages.

In the analysis of the data, the notions in the second Chapter around the "Digital media typology" were carefully noticed. Due to the anti-government nature of the event, it was anticipated that most selected cartoons belong to the category of Independent political cartoonists (Section 2.3). Cartoonists of the mainstream were not able to publish obvious anti-regime cartoons due to solid limitations established in the Iranian media system. Analyzing data confirmed the discussion in the section 2.2.1 on "The Politicized Role and Function of the Cartoons," which political cartoons, constitute forms of perpetual opposition within the political landscape, communicate quick ideas of criticism that highlight the shortcomings of their chosen subjects, frequently outperforming news articles that express the same viewpoint.

Some working in traditional print media were forced to adhere to the realm of illustration and ambiguity of symbolism rather than using critical features of cartoons.

These cartoons, which were fewer in number compared to those that gained viral attention in the digital space, often adopted a more conservative tone. They were restricted in their exploration of the reasons behind the deaths of Mahsa and other protesters, as well as the violent measures exerted by the riot police.

On the other hand, cartoonists living abroad, who were more outspoken in their criticisms, took a stronger and more aggressive attitude towards the entire system. Certainly, the distinct difference can be attributed to the prevailing constraints within the media system, alongside the various challenges, pressures, and risks faced by journalists, including those specializing in cartooning. In many cases, these pressures and threats have been directed at independent cartoonists who have published their works in the digital space without receiving payment, solely driven by their sense of social responsibility. As a result of intimidation, several cartoonists were obligated to remove protest-related cartoons from their

personal online platforms. Unless they had a stance against the protesters, that means some cartoonists that working in Pro-government mainstream tried to criticize the movement.

As noted in "Section 2.2.1. The Politicized Role and Function of Cartoons," Political cartoons open a window into history and insights on the dominant ideas and debates of a certain age and area, thereby acting as a useful historical and graphic depiction of the political environment. In this vein, political cartoons disseminated through digital mass media platforms by independent Iranian political cartoonists from the early days of the uprising will undoubtedly serve as a "visual chronological calendar," or as this thesis suggests, a "depicted calendar" of events. They also stand as a testament to the zeitgeist—the prevailing mood and political atmosphere in Iran during the "Woman, Life, Freedom" Movement in 2022.

The findings further support the discussion in Section 3.3, with the title "Incorporating Humor in Political Cartoons" indicating that NOT all political cartoons are intended to be humorous. Owing to the tragic nature of the event, cartoons cannot be considered explicitly humorous. Instead, the majority of cartoons exhibited a negative, critical, and cynical tone (Bohl, 1997). In the interim, drawing upon an analysis of a corpus of cartoons within the empirical study, this dissertation asserts that the presence of ironic sentiment and a sarcastic tone, along with elements of exaggeration, constitutes the fundamental characteristics of political cartoons.

The findings confirm the Göpfert's notion on characterization of political cartooning as a genuine political action due to its capacity for simplification and binary opposition (2020, p. 148). The contradiction and binary opposition between protesters on one side and riot police and clerical leaders on the other side was evident in most of the cartoons.

The remarkable aspect of cartoons in corpus that deserves further discussion is the cartoonists' avoidance of employing typical exaggerations in physiognomic proportions and features in Mahsa's facial design. Through a comprehensive

analysis of the corpus, it was determined that the cartoonists, out of respect for Mahsa, refrained from creating caricatures of her face and instead focused on creating more illustrations of her. As previously discussed in Section 1.2 on Exaggeration, caricaturing the faces of political leaders is primarily used to criticize their behavior and occasionally to make jokes about famous individuals. Especially in the context of Iran's socio-cultural communication, this thesis argues that Iranian digital political cartoonists focus on the wrongdoings or corruptions of religious figures in power. Here, considering the unsettling background of the event and the lack of need for humor directed at the protagonist, cartoonists have chosen to depict Mahsa's face subtly to highlight her innocence, evoking a sense of reverence and respect in the viewers.

To bring this study to a conclusion, from the discussions and findings in all chapters, particularly regarding the evolution of cartoons throughout the history of mass communication, exploring today's media landscape, scrutinizing political cartoons in the digital sphere, and empirical analysis, this thesis may draw the following conclusion: the profession may die, but the genre will stay on!

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FEDERAL STATE AUTONOMOUS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION PEOPLES' FRIENDSHIP UNIVERSITY OF RUSSIA NAMED AFTER PATRICE LUMUMBA

As a manuscript

ZARIFIAN MOHSEN

DIGITAL POLITICAL CARTOONS: WHERE ART, RHETORIC, AND SEMIOTICS MEET IN IRAN'S MEDIA SYSTEM

Thesis for a Candidate Degree in Philological Sciences

Specialty 5.9.9. Media Communications and Journalism

Research supervisor:
Doctor of Philology
Professor I.I. Volkova

Moscow – 2025

ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОЕ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ АВТОНОМНОЕ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЕ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЕ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ РОССИЙСКИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ДРУЖБЫ НАРОДОВ ИМЕНИ ПАТРИСА ЛУМУМБЫ

На правах рукописи

ЗАРИФИАН МОХСЕН

СЕМИОТИКА И КОММУНИКАТИВНЫЕ СТРАТЕГИИ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ КАРИКАТУР: ИРАНСКИЙ КЕЙС

5.9.9 «Медиакоммуникации и журналистика»

ДИССЕРТАЦИЯ
на соискание учёной степени
кандидата филологических наук

Научный руководитель:
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Москва – 2025

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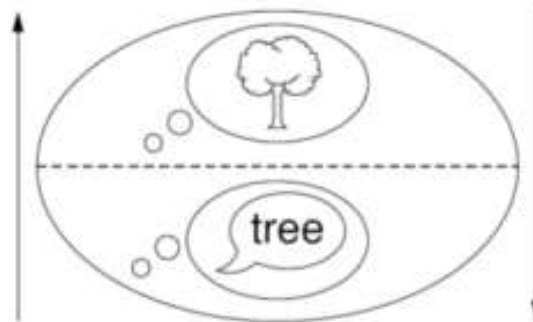
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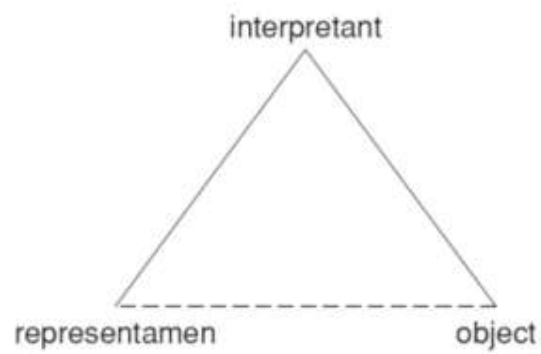
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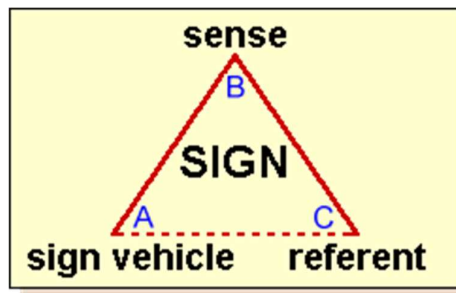
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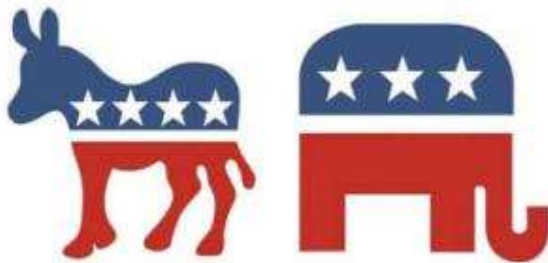
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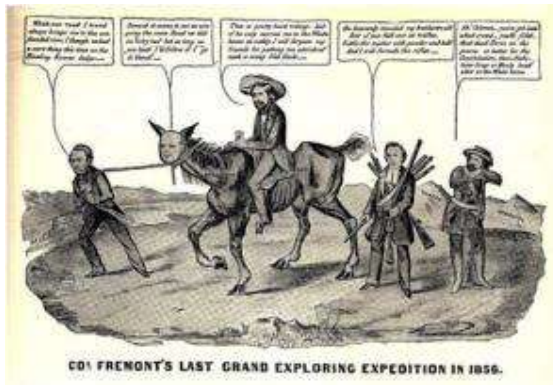
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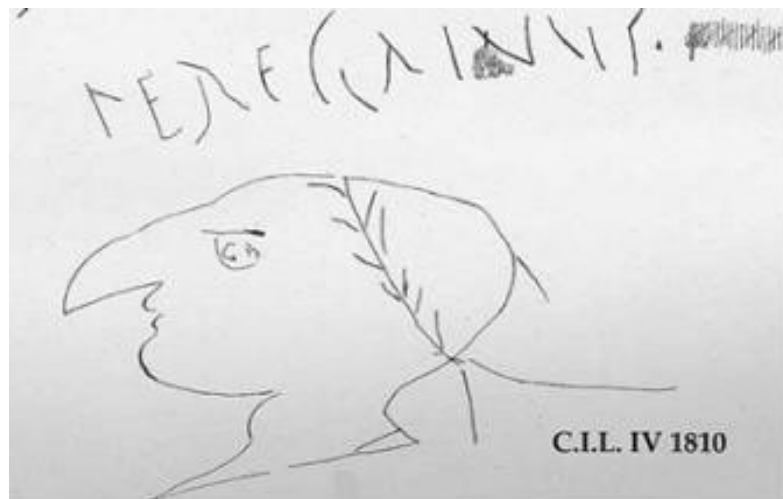
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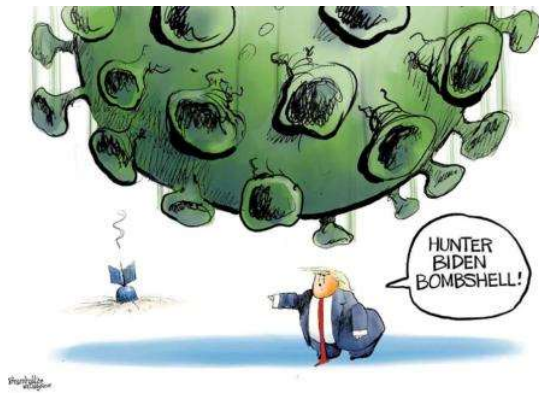
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Bill Bramhall | Copyright 2021 Tribune Content Agency

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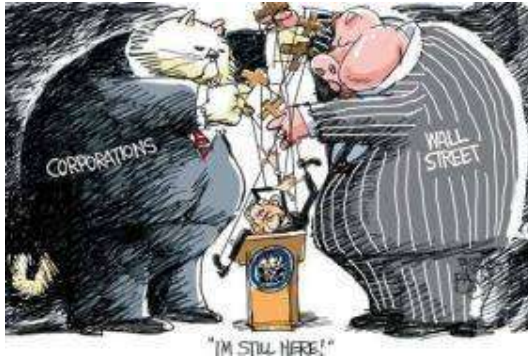
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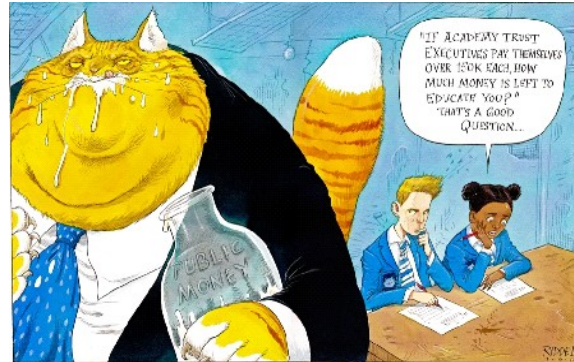
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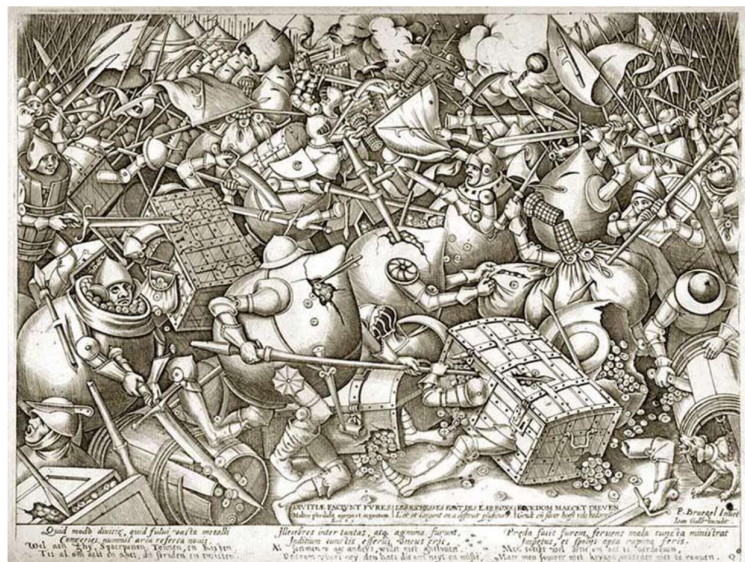
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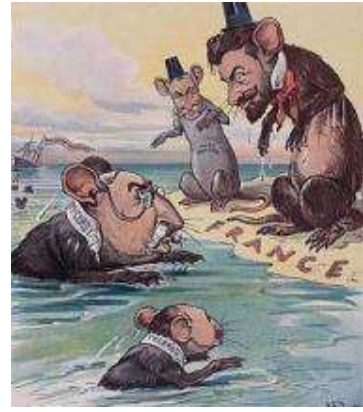
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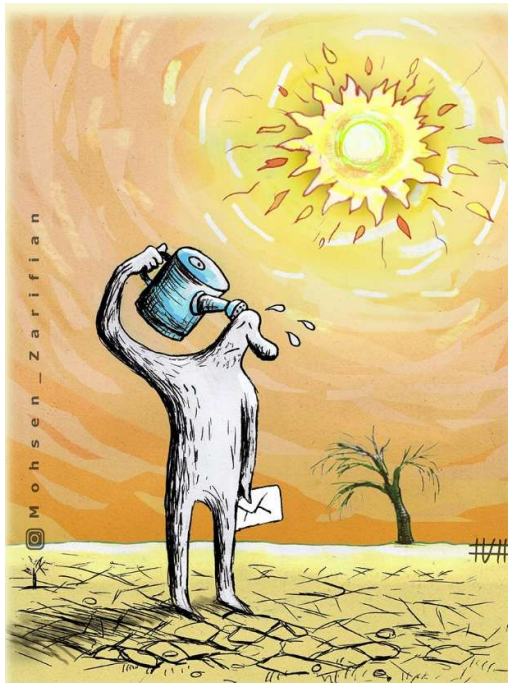
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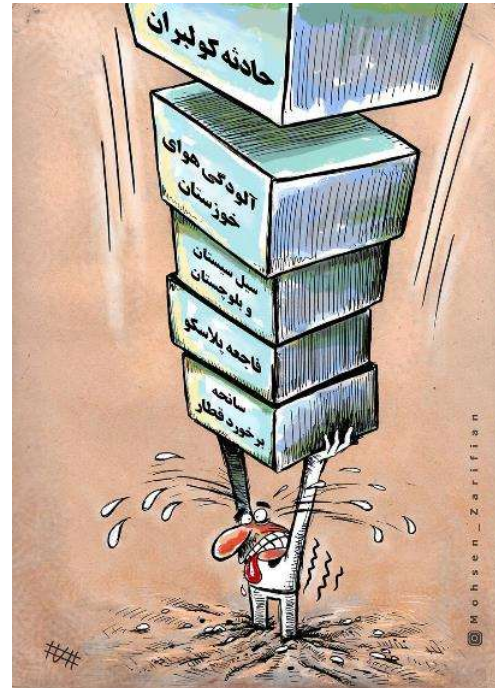
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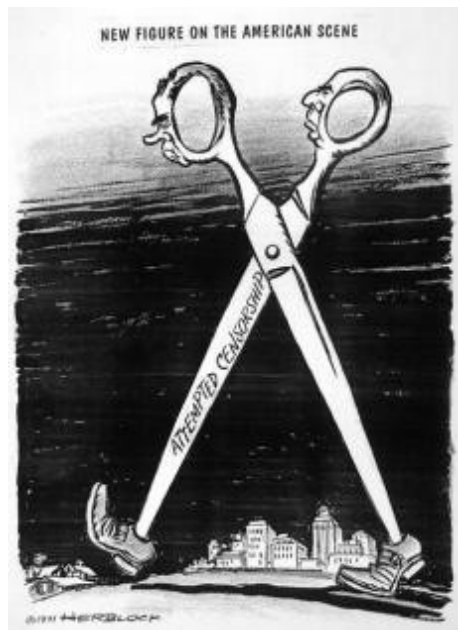
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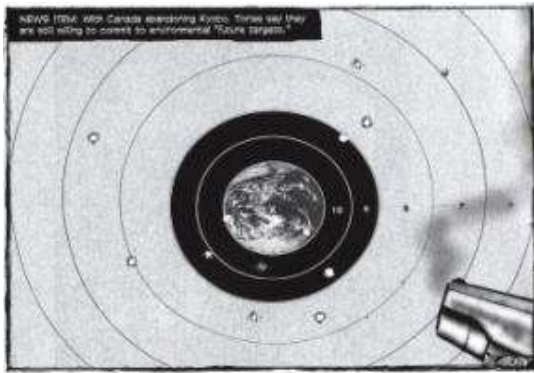
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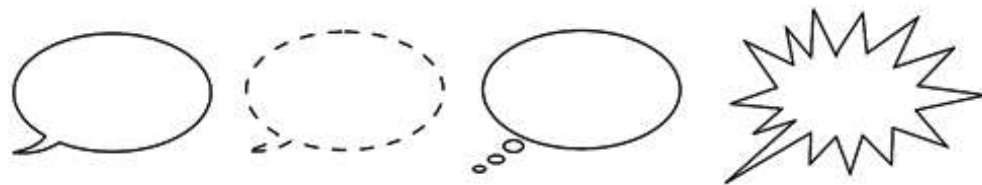
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'STAY TUNED FOR THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN TARGETING PEACE IN IRELAND AND BOSNIA'.
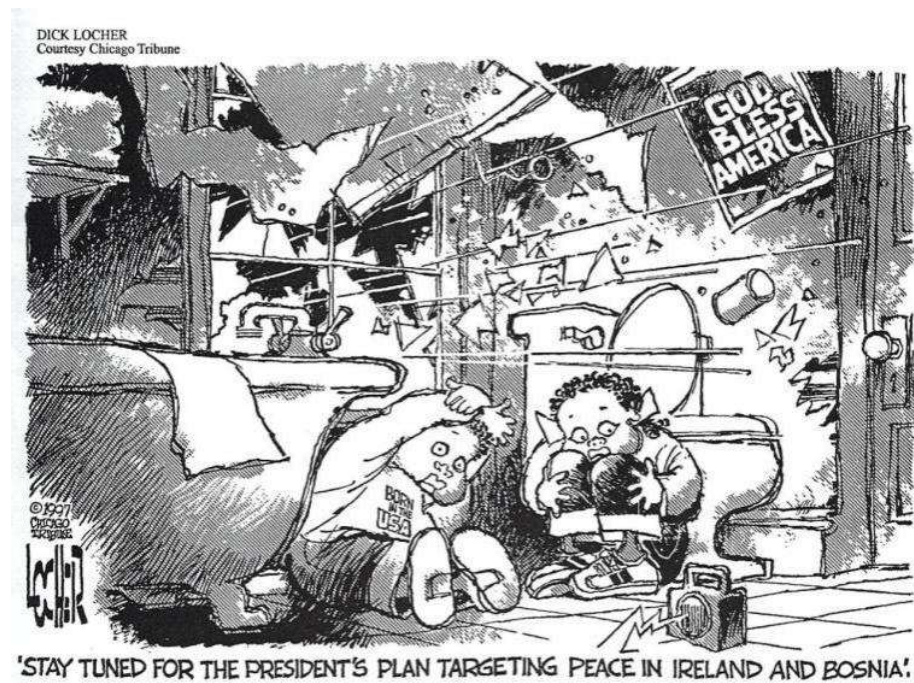
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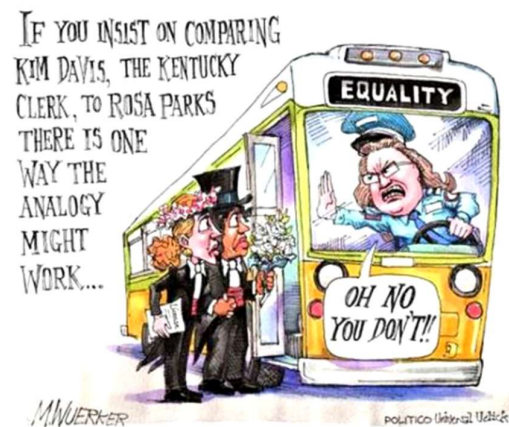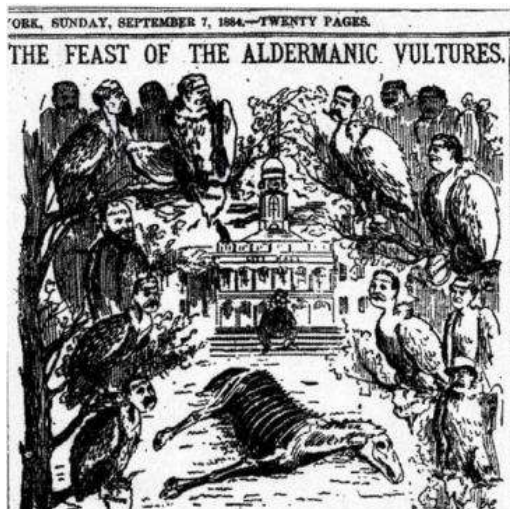
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Figure 1.45 – A classic case of labeling: the names of characters are written on the forehead. Also, the technique of Zoomorphism has been employed to satirize New York City aldermen by depicting them as vultures.

Cartoon by: Walt MacDougall, "The Feast of the Aldermanic Vultures," *The World New York*, Sep. 7, 1884
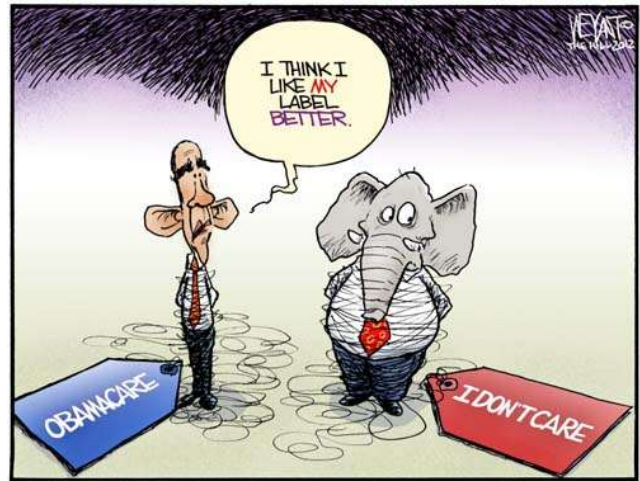
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CHAPTER 2

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Figure 2.2 (right) – The first true caricature, Pope Innocent XI, By Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1676)
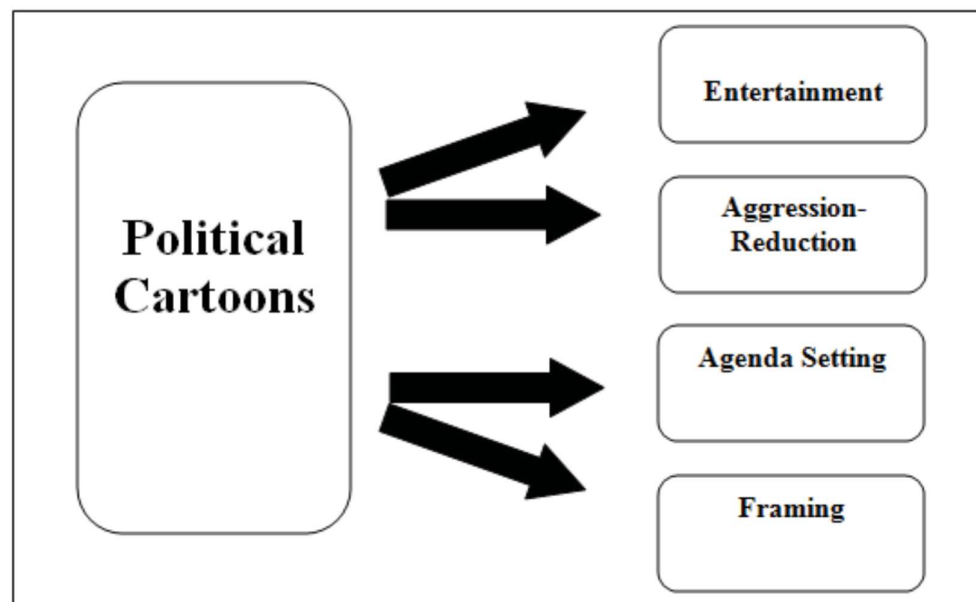
Figure 2.3 – Roles and functions of political cartoons (DeSousa & Medhurst, 1982)

CHAPTER 4

Figure 4.1 – In this photo shared by Mahsa Amini's family, the hospitalized young girl can be seen lying unconscious and intubated, with very clear signs of bleeding from her right ear.

Figure 4.2 – Mahsa Amini's tragic death became a rallying call for thousands of Iranians nationwide and abroad, unleashing months of unrest and posing the biggest challenge to the clerical leaders of the Islamic Republic.

Figure 4.3 – This photograph by Niloofar Hamedi's showed Mahsa Amini's parents, a clearly grieving couple hugging each other in a deserted hospital corridor.

4.3. Selecting Cartoons for Empirical Study
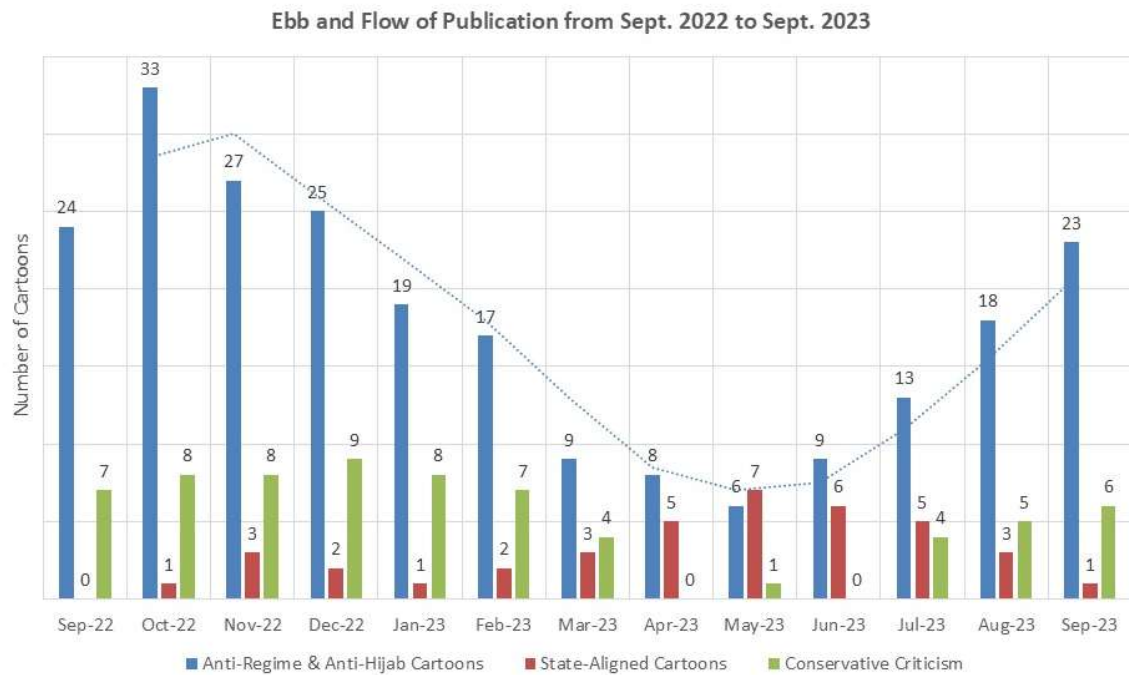
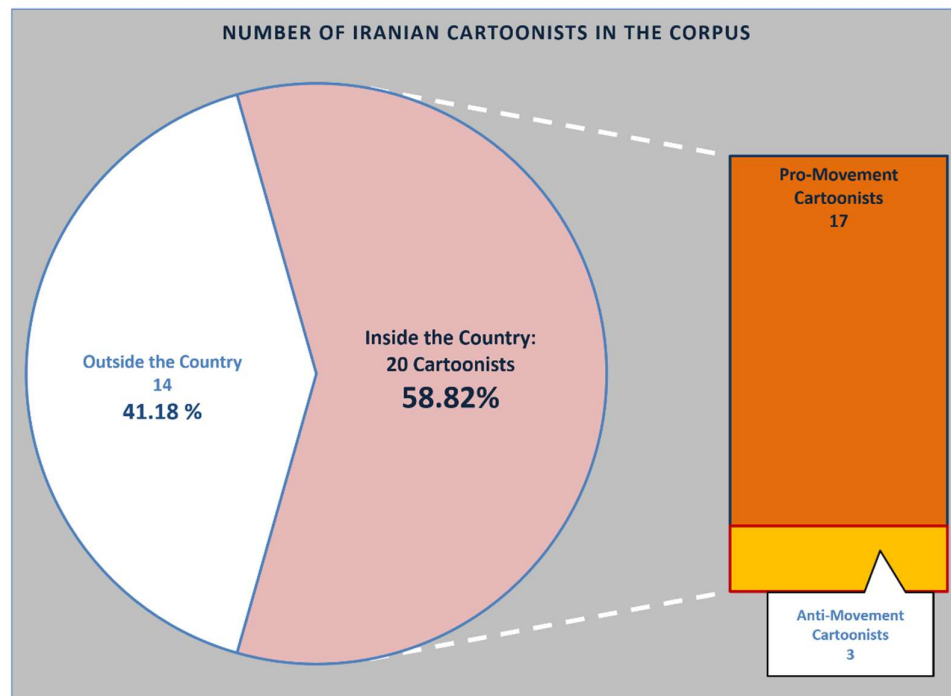Chart 4.1 – Shifts in cartoon publications throughout the peak days of the protest.

Chart 4.2 – Number of cartoonists, residing in or outside of Iran with their stance towards the movement.

4.4.2. Qualitative Analysis of Selected Political Cartoons
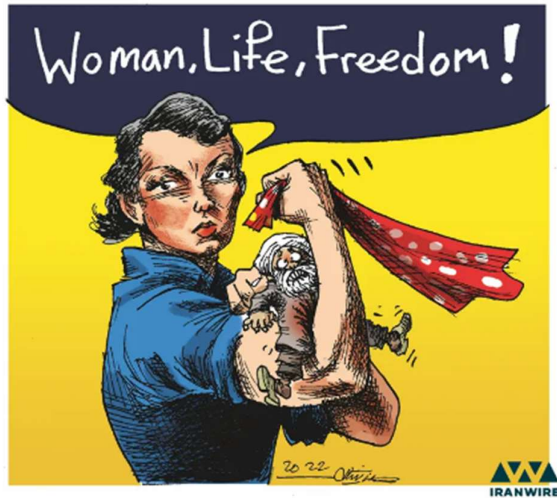
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Figure 4.4 – Mana Neyestani's Parodic cartoon of "We Can Do It!"

Figure 4.5 – J. Howard Miller's "We Can Do It!" poster from 1943

Example 2 – Self-Liberated Women

Figure 4.6 – Mana Neyestani's appropriation of "The Lash"

Example 3 – Iranian Van Woman Copies Chinese Tank Man

Figure 4.7 – Ali Miraee's replication of iconic 'Tank Man' photo

Figure 4.8 – Tank Man (Tiananmen Square protester), Published by The Associated Press, originally photographed by Jeff Widener

Example 4 – Authoritarian Version of Titanic's Jack and Rose

Figure 4.9 – Mohsen Izadi's parody of Titanic

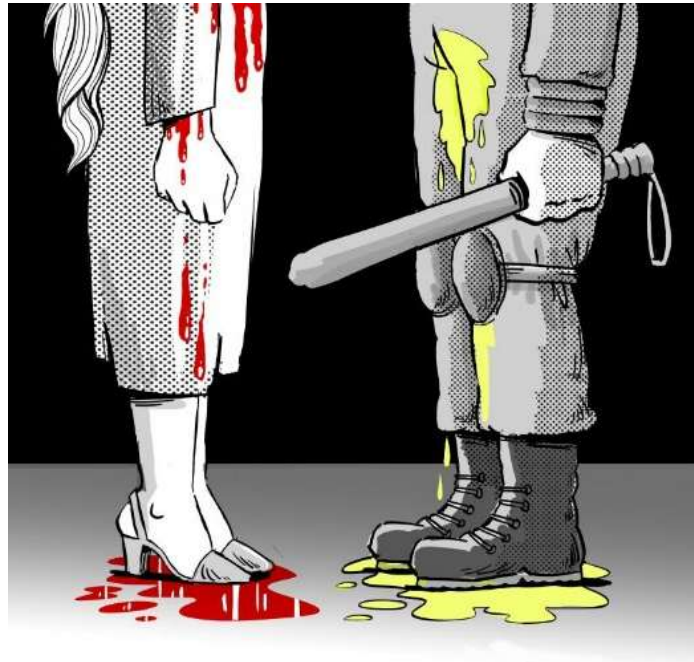## Example 5 – Analogy of Bravery and Weakness

Figure 4.10 – Analogy of bravery and weakness. Cartoon by Ali Miraee

Example 6 – Grotesque Art: Ideal Form of Deformity

Figure 4.11 – Crossing the Barriers of Dictatorship.
Grotesque depiction of political leader in a cartoon by Shahrokh Heidari.

Example 7 – Are you convinced that we didn't kill Mahsa?!

Figure 4.12 – "*Are you convinced that we didn't kill Mahsa, or shall I continue*?"
Ironic cartoon by Mana Neyestani

Figure 4.13 – "*We didn't beat her!*"
indirect negation in a cartoon by Hadi Heidari

Figure 4.14 – "It's your fault that you didn't believe that we didn't kill Mahsa!"

Graphic irony: the **gap** between the observed reality and the depicted situation in a cartoon by Mana Neyestani.

Example 8 – You are NOT welcome in Tehran!

Figure 4.15 – "You are not welcome in Tehran." Ironic wordplay in a cartoon by Javad Alizadeh.
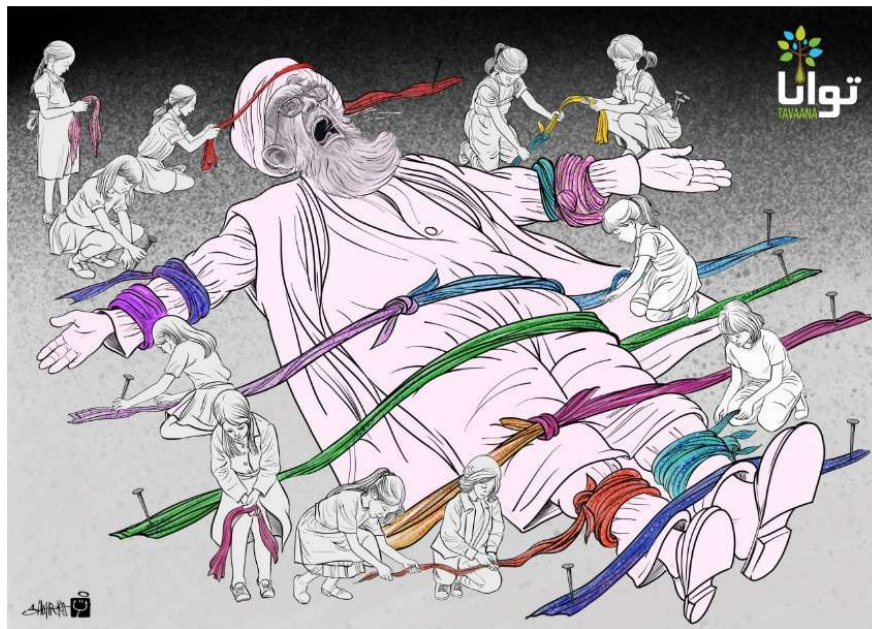
Example 9 – The Passion of the Dictator

Figure 4.16 – The cleric leader is captured by little schoolgirls.
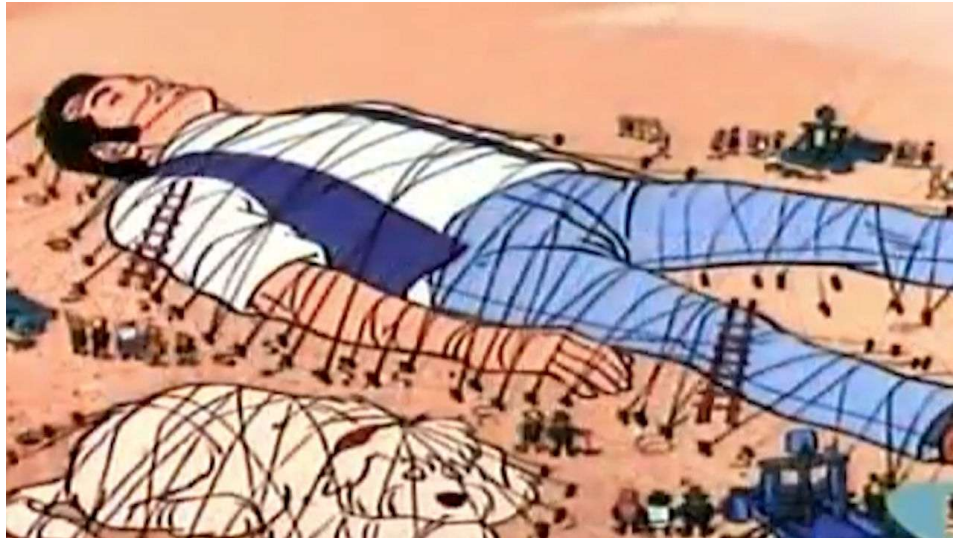**Retro-Intertextuality** in a cartoon by Shahrokh Heidari.

Figure 4.17 – Gulliver and his dog are caught by the Lilliputians while they are recovering from the shipwreck; a well-known situation in "***The Adventures of Gulliver***" television animated series.

Example 10 – "Girls of Revolution Street": Decades of Protesting Forced Veiling

Figure 4.18 – Utility box as a symbol of protest. The **arbitrary connection** between signifier and signified in a cartoon by Mojtaba Heidar-Panah

Figure 4.19 – On December 27, 2017, in an act of civil disobedience against forced veiling, Vida Movahedi stood defiantly on a utility box on a busy street in Tehran, waving her white headscarf, which she had taken off, on a stick.

Figure 4.20 –Young women, inspired by Vida's action, despite the potential for state's ill-treatment and the risk of long jail terms, began to stand on utility boxes in urban areas.
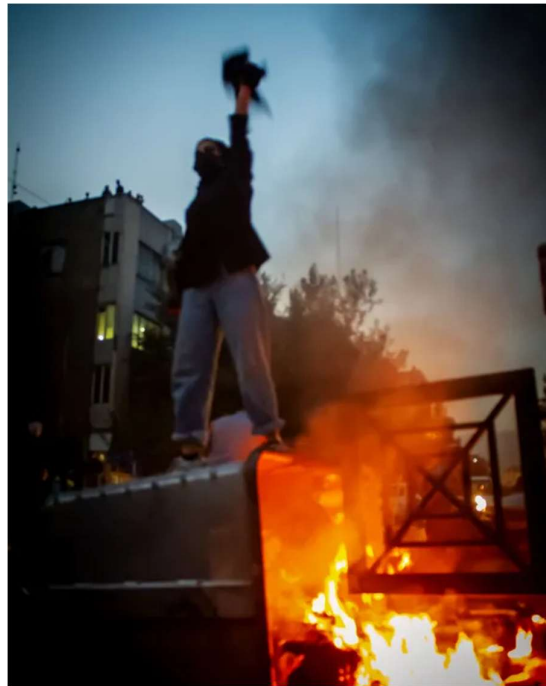

Figure 4.21 – A young girl protester stands on the top of a burning dumpster in Tehran, holding up her hijab.

Example 11 – Women at the Forefront of Protests

Figure 4.22 – It's time to protest.
Cartoon by Marzieh Khani Zade.

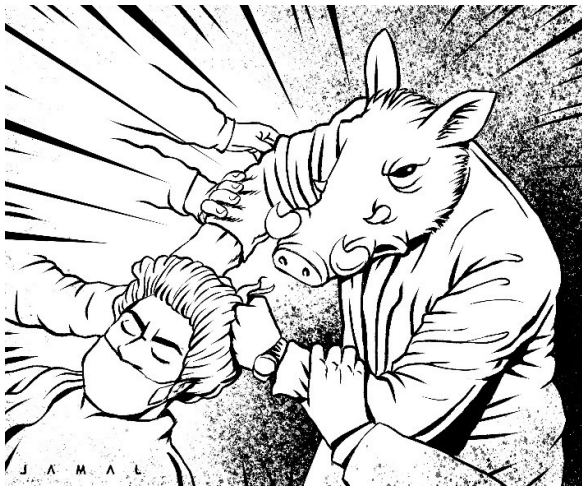**Example 12 – Zoomorphism of Plainclothes Agent**

Figure 4.23 – **Zoomorphism** in a cartoon by Jamal Rahmati, in reaction to mass poisoning of schoolgirls in Iran

Figure 4.24 – On March 1, 2023, Plainclothes agent brutally attacking a female parent, grabbing her hair, outside a school where schoolgirls were exposed to a toxic gas of unknown origin.

Example 13 – The whole country is bleeding.

Figure 4.25 – The whole country is bleeding.
Cartoon by Mansoure Dehghani.

Figure 4.26 – "*Zhina, you won't die; your name becomes a code.*" Mahsa (Zhina) Amini's in her hometown tombstone in Saqqez, Iran.

4.4.3. Quantitative Typology

Discussion, Analysis of the Data

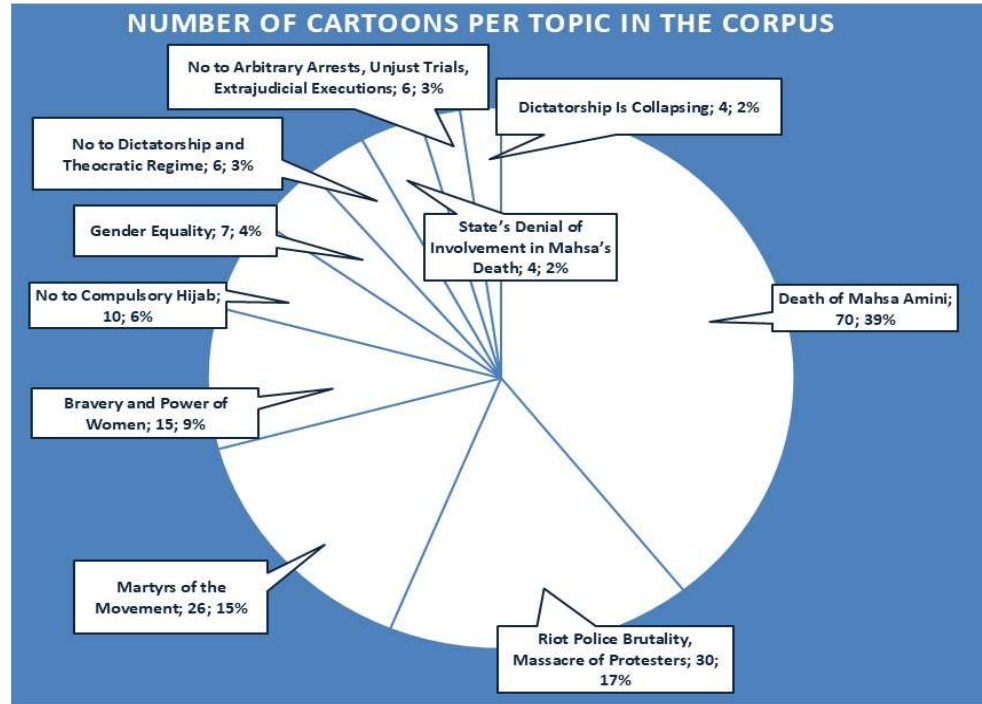*Main topics in the corpus*

Figure 4.27 – Thematic Focus of Cartoonists

Subcategories of Topics

Figure 4.28 – Using a Text Container as a Symbol in a Cartoon by Assad Bina Khahi.

List of Tables Presented in Text

Social Media Platforms	79.3%	Cartoonists' Personal Pages
Pro-Reform and Anti-Government Websites	12.7%	**"IranWire"** https://iranwire.com/en/
		"Tavaana" https://tavaana.org/category/cartoon/ https://en.tavaana.org/
		Zamaneh Media (Radio Zamaneh) https://en.radiozamaneh.com/
International Digital Platforms	7.8%	**Cartoon Movement (Netherlands)** https://www.cartoonmovement.com/
		Cartooning for Peace (France) https://www.cartooningforpeace.org/en/
Traditional Print Media (Inside Iran)	0.2%	**Ham-Mihan Newspaper** https://hammihanonline.ir
		Agahi-now Magazine

Table 4.1 – Sources of Research Material

Anti-regime & Anti-Hijab Cartoons	68.55 %
Conservative Criticism	19.88 %
State-aligned Cartoons	11.57 %

Table 4.2 – Three major categories of political affiliations in cartoons.

Main topics in the corpus

Death of Mahsa Amini	
Riot Police Brutality, Massacre of Protesters	
Martyrs of the Movement	1. Nika Shakarami[i]
	2. Sarina Esmailzadeh[ii]
	3. Kian Pirfalak[iii]
	4. Khoda Noor Lajai[iv]
Bravery and Power of Women	
No to Compulsory Hijab	
Gender Equality	
No to Dictatorship and Theocratic Regime	
No to Arbitrary Arrests, Unjust Trials, Extrajudicial Executions	
State's Denial of Involvement in Mahsa's Death	
Dictatorship Is Collapsing	

Table 4.3 – Main Topics Found in the Corpus

Subcategories of Topics

Young Girls at the Forefront of Movement	1. Support of Women by Men
Cutting off Hairs and Burning Headscarves	
Police Van: Symbol of Oppression	
Mysterious Mass Poisoning in Girl Schools	
Zahedan Massacre (Bloody Friday) [v]	
Bereaved Mothers	

World Cup 2022	1. Mullah' teams instead of 'Melli' team (National team)
	2. Regime sent some of its agents as spectators to avoid supporters of the movement expressing their protest in stadiums.
	3. Mehran Samak [vi]
Celebrities who stood by the people:	1. Ali Karimi
	2. Shervin Hajipour [vii]
	3. Toomaj Salehi
	4. Elnaz Rekabi (Figure 4.11)
Shaming the Political, Clerical Leaders, and some Celebrities	
National Symbols & Traditions (Flag, Persian New Year, Yalda, …)	

Table 4.4 – Subcategories of topics in the corpus

Rhetorical Devices

	Subversive Humor	91%
Humor	Superiority, Surprise, Relief Aspects of Humour	87%
	Funny Representation	35%
Intertextuality (Appropriation, Visual Quotation)	73%	
Metaphor	81%	
Parody	47%	
Irony	69%	
* Since each cartoon employs more than one rhetorical device, the sum of the percentages is higher than 100%.		

Table 4.5 – Rhetorical devices

Stylistic Devices

Protagonist vs. Antagonist		95%
Exaggeration		88%
Personification		2 Cartoons
Composition - Positioning		63%
Stereotype and Cliche	Clerical Leaders: **Attire**: long robe (thobe or dishdasha) (Figures 4.6, 4.16) **Head covering** such as turban or kufi (Figure 4.11) **Long Beard** (Figure 4.9)	56%
	Riot Police, Security Forces: - Uniforms, Helmets, Batons, Shields, Body Armor - Crowd Control Equipment: tear gas canisters	
	Female Morality Police Officers	
Colors and Pictograms		24.2%
* Since many cartoons are employing more than one persuasive technique, the sum of the percentages is higher than 100%.		

Table 4.6 – Semiotics of Cartoons: Visualizing the Verbal
Persuasive techniques (stylistic devices) *

Signs: Iconic, Symbolic, and Indexical Modes of Relationships

Icon	Country Outline of Iran (Country Silhouette)		8
	Caricatures	Supreme Leader	38
		Political Figures	7
		Celebrities (who didn't stay with people)	5

	Illustrations (Drawing) of Mahsa, other Victims of the Movement, and Celebrities who supported the Movement	21
	Clergyman ('Akhund', 'Molla', 'Sheik', 'Rohani')	41
	Turban of Clergyman	2
	Riot Police, Security Forces	42
	IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps)	5
	Plainclothesmen (Paramilitary Basij Forces)	9
	Female Morality Police Officers	6
Symbol	Unveiled and Unbound Women's Hair: Symbols of Liberation, Rebellion, and Disobedience	30
	Gender symbol (male ♂, female ♀)	5
	Mandatory Hijab (Headscarf, Chador)	11
	Police Van (Guidance Patrol)	13
	Execution by Hanging (noose or gallows**)**	32
	Baton (Symbol of Violence)	19
	Prayer Beads (Symbol Hypocrisy and Religious People); Social Semiotics	6
	Clenched Fist	12
	Persian Cat	1
	Emblem of the Islamic Republic (Figure 4.28)	5
	Utility Box as a Symbol of Protest; Social Semiotics (Figures 4.18-20)	2
	Pressure Cooker: Exploding Iranian Society;	1
	Ball and Chain, Shackle, Handcuff	8

	Palestinian Keffiyeh	6
	Waste Container (Social Semiotics)	3
	Crocodile (Symbolizes Ferocity, Deception, Aggression, Danger, and Coldness and Indifference in Iranian Context)	1
	Grape (Iranian Tradition of Yalda Night)	4
	Scythe: Symbol of Death	4
	Grim Reaper: Symbol of Death	2
	Army Boot	3
	High-heeled Shoes	4
	Dove Carrying an Olive Branch: Universal Emblem of Peace	3
	Lady Justice	3
	Statue of Liberty	1
	Cross of Jesus Christ	1
	V Sign (Victory)	5
	Question Mark	2
	Crow (Bad Omens, Death and Misfortune)	2
	Angel (Symbol of Innocence)	1
Index	Wi-Fi Signal	2
	Skull	6

Table 4.7 – Three Categories of Signs, according to Charles Sanders Peirce (1931-58)

Universal and Social Symbols

Universal Symbols	Gender symbol (male ♂, female ♀), Scaffold, Noose or Gallows (for the execution of the death penalty), Baton, Clenched Fist, Ball and Chain, Shackle, Handcuff, Crocodile, Scythe, Grim Reaper, Dove Carrying an Olive Branch, V Sign (Victory), Lady Justice, Statue of Liberty, Cross of Jesus Christ, Question Mark, Angel.
Social Symbols	Unveiled and Unbound Women's Hair, Compulsory Hijab (Headscarf, Chador), Police Van (Guidance Patrol), Utility Box as a Symbol of Protest (**Girls of Revolution Street movement)**, Palestinian Keffiyeh**,** Prayer Beads, Waste Container, Army Boot, High-heeled Shoes, Pressure Cooker, Grape, Persian Cat, Crow.

Table 4.8 – Categorization of Symbols according to Social Semiotics

Synergy of Verbal & Visual Elements

Cartoon without Text	73%
Cartoon with Text (Word-image fusions)	12%
Caricature (individual cartoon)	5%

Table 4.9 – Frequency of Word-Image Fusions

Text Containers

Title	5 Cartoons
Speech Bubble (Balloon)	16 Cartoons
Dialogue Without Ballon	2 Cartoons
Thought Balloon	1 Cartoon
Caption	2 Cartoons
Label	55 Cartoons	IRAN, Mahsa, « Woman, Life, Freedom » « Zan, Zendegi, Azadi » « Femme, Vie, Liberté » « Jin, Jîyan, Azadî » Morality Police, Human Rights, Freedom, Equality, Feminism No! (No to Dictatorship), Islamic Republic, International Women's Day, March 8, Referendum ACID
Onomatopoeia (Sound effect, Emanata)	1 Cartoon
Literary Devices	2 Cartoons
Hashtag	8 Cartoon	#MahsaAmini #Woman_Life_Freedom # Zan_Zendegi_Azadi #زن_زندگی_آزادی #اعدام_نکنید (Don't execute) #خودبراندازی (self-overthrowing)

Note: the "Label" and "Hashtag" rows span an extra right-hand column in the original table.

Table 4.10 – Text Containers

APPENDIX

No. 1: Number of cartoons in the corpus per creation in/outside of Iran and distribution of main and second topics addressed by IDPC during the movement (according to Table 4.3 and Table 4.4).

	Number of **cartoons**
Outside the country	145
Inside the Country	192
	337
Main topics	178
Sub-Topics	159
	337

No. 2: Percentages of published cartoons in three major categories of political affiliations during the 12-month chronological framework of the study.

According to Table 4.2 and Chart 4.1.

	Anti-Regime & Anti-Hijab Cartoons	State-Aligned Cartoons	Conservative Criticism	Sum
Sep-22	24	0	7	31
Oct-22	33	1	8	42
Nov-22	27	3	8	38
Dec-22	25	2	9	36
Jan-23	19	1	8	28
Feb-23	17	2	7	26
Mar-23	9	3	4	16
Apr-23	8	5	0	13
May-23	6	7	1	14
Jun-23	9	6	0	15
Jul-23	13	5	4	22
Aug-23	18	3	5	26
Sep-23	23	1	6	30
Sum	**231**	**39**	**67**	**337**
Percentage	68.54599407	11.5727003	19.88130564	
	68.55	**11.57**	**19.88**	100

No. 3: Number of all Iranian cartoonists in the corpus (34)

Residing in or outside of Iran with their stance towards the movement.

(Inside) ProMovement Cartoonists	17			
(Inside) Anti-Movement Cartoonists	3			
Inside the Country	20	58.82352941	**58.82**	% Percentage
Outside the country	14	41.17647059	**41.18**	% Percentage
	34	100	All Cartoonists	

No. 4: List of Iranian cartoonists – outside of the country.

| Cartoonists Outside of the country	Number of cartoons
Assad Bina Khahi	30
Shahrokh Heidari	28
Mana Neysetani	24
Mohsen Zarifian	23
Reza Aghili	13
Behnam Mohammadi	10
SanazBagheri	5
Kianoush Ramazani	3
Mohsen Izadi	3
Ali Jamshidifar (JAM)	2
Iman Rezaee	1
Taravat Niki	1
Nasrin Sheykhi	1
Marjane Satrapi	1
	145

No. 5: List of Iranian cartoonists – inside the country.

| Cartoonists Inside the country	Number of cartoons
Zeynab Nikche	58
Firooze Mozafari	27
Jamal Rahmati	21
Arvin	20
Hosein Safi	17
Mansoure Dehghani	11
Marzieh Khani Zade	9
Mojtaba Heydarpanah	6
Annahita Bani Asadi	5
Ali Miraee	3
Hadi Heidari	3
Mahnaaz Yazdaani	3
Nahid Zamani	3
Javad Takjoo	3
Javad Alizade	1
Bahram Arjmandnia	1
Saman Torabi	1
	192

No. 6: Digital political cartoons created by the author (Mohsen Zarifian) and published on his social media accounts during the "Woman, Life, Freedom" 2022 movement, in solidarity with Iranian women and men, and attempting to reflect their voices.
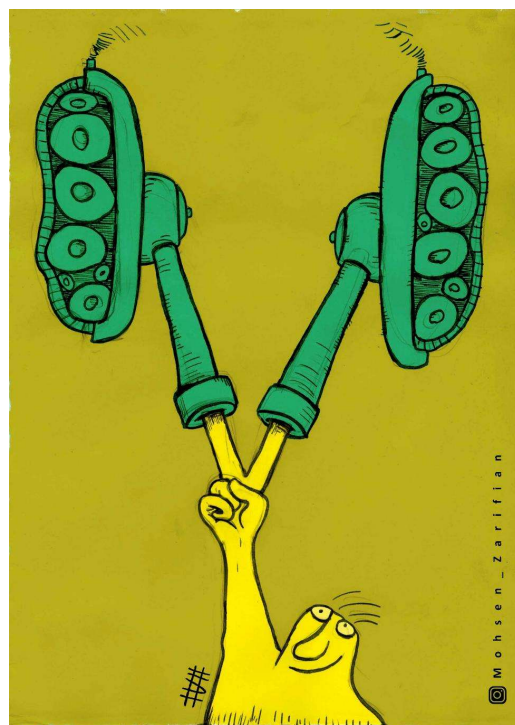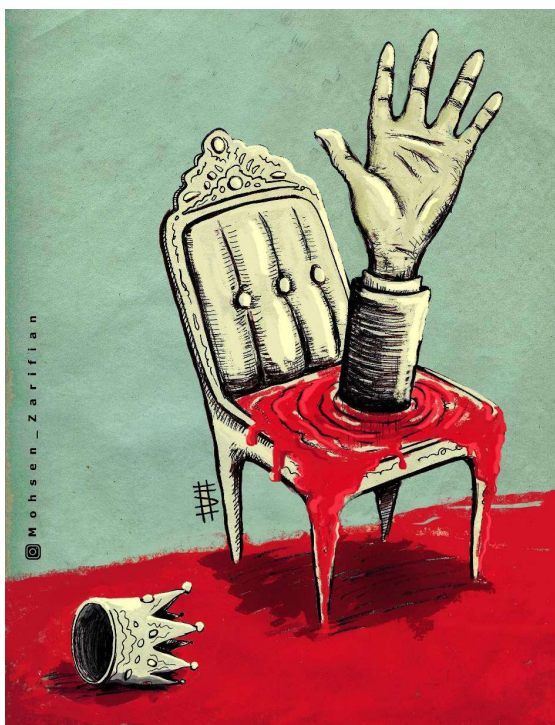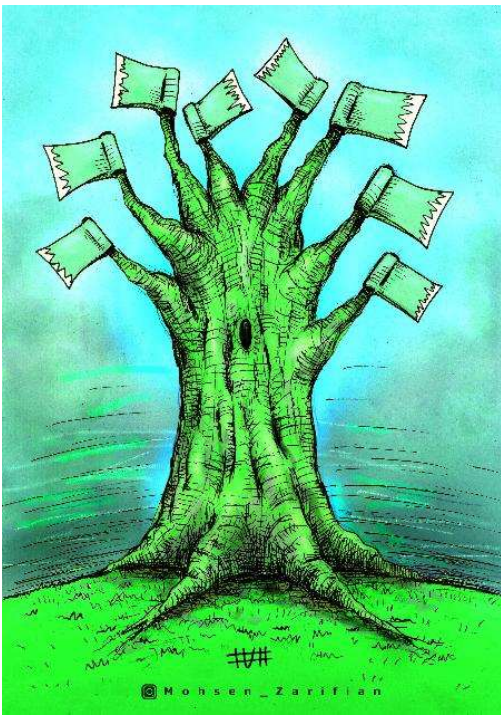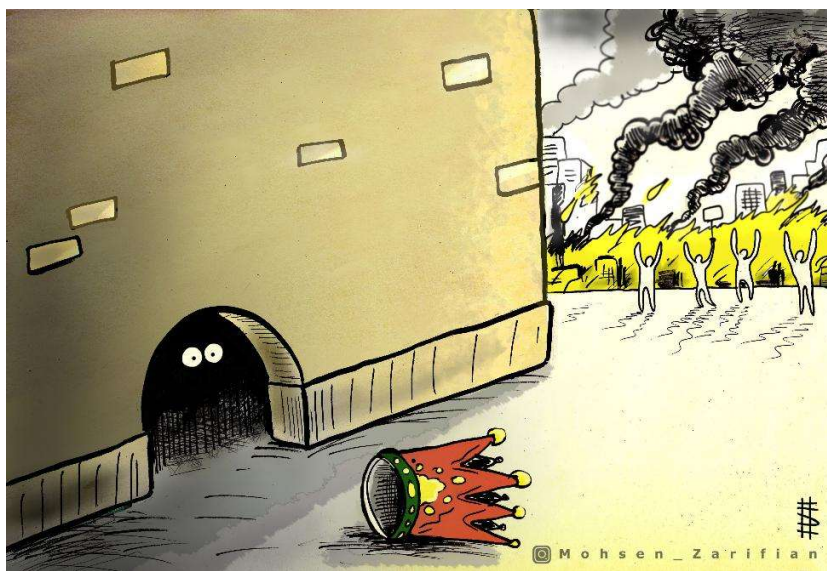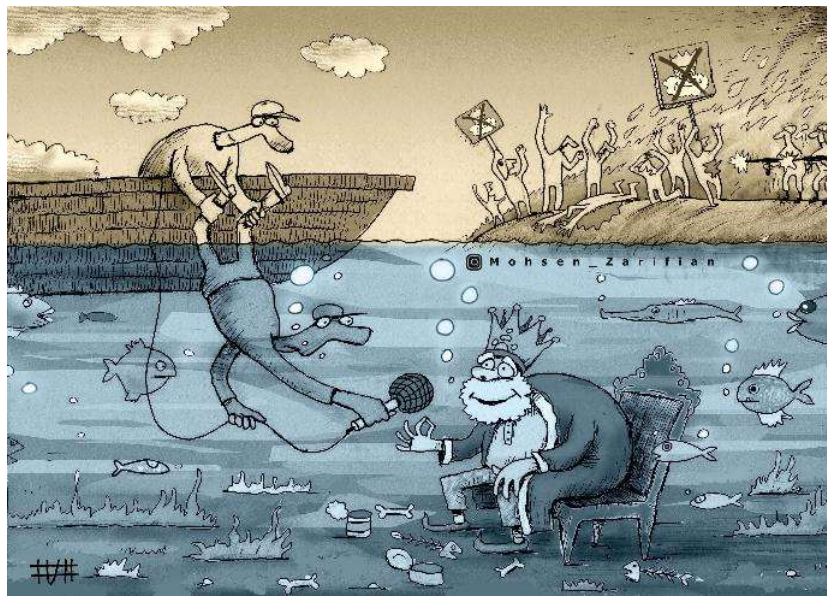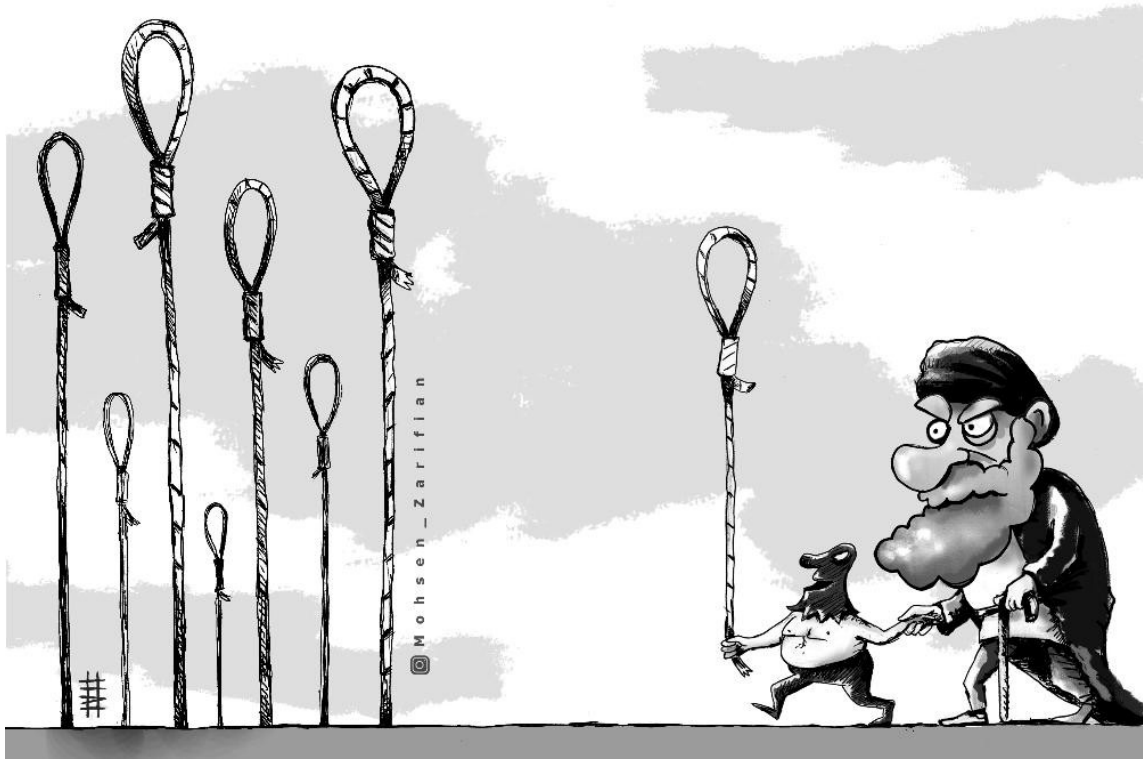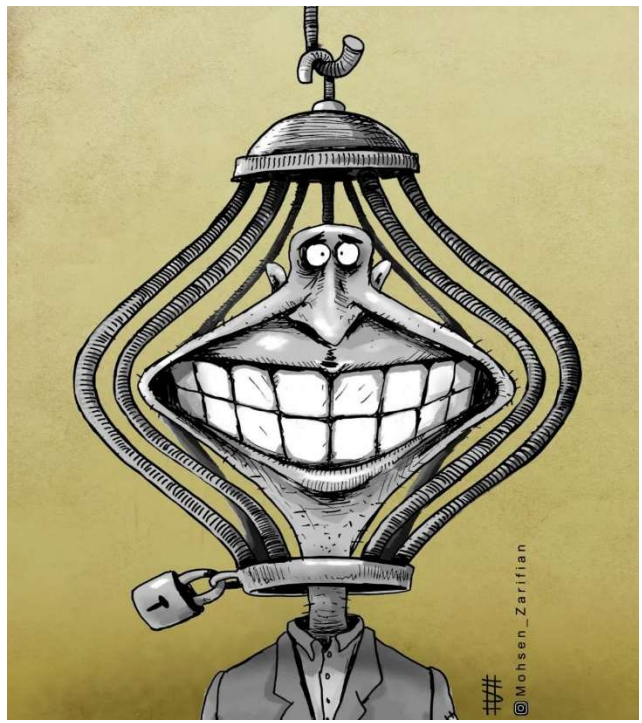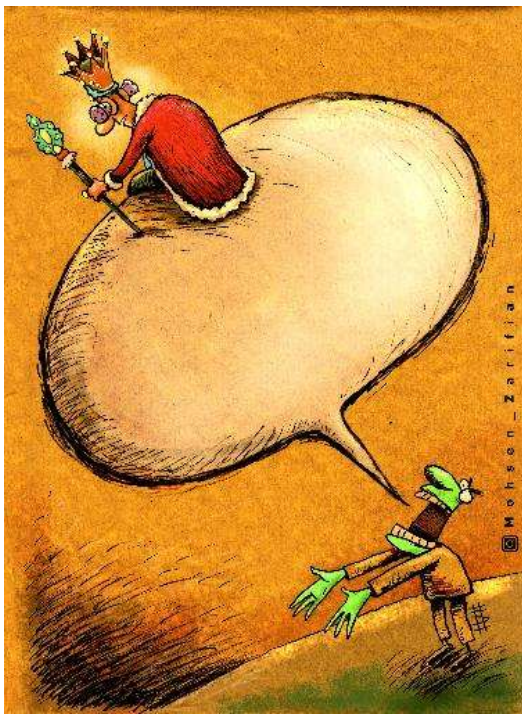
No. 7: Victims of the Movement

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[i] **Nika Shakarami** was a young Iranian woman whose tragic death in September 2022 became a significant symbol in the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement in Iran. Nika, aged 16, was reported missing during protests against the government following the death of Mahsa Amini, who died after being detained by the morality police for allegedly violating Iran's strict dress code.

Her body was later found, and reports suggested that she had been killed while participating in the protests. The circumstances surrounding her death, including allegations of police violence, sparked outrage and intensified calls for justice and reform. Nika's story resonated deeply with many Iranians, particularly women, and became a rallying point for the movement advocating for women's rights, personal freedoms, and an end to oppressive government practices. Her death highlighted the broader struggles faced by women in Iran and galvanized further activism against systemic injustices.

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68840881
https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63128510

[ii] **Sarina Esmailzadeh** was a young Iranian girl whose death in September 2022 became a significant and tragic emblem of the protests in Iran, particularly within the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement. Sarina, aged 16, was reportedly killed during protests following the death of Mahsa Amini. Eyewitness accounts and reports suggested that she died as a result of police violence while participating in demonstrations against the government.

Her death sparked widespread outrage and mourning, particularly among young people and activists advocating for women's rights and social justice in Iran. Sarina's story highlighted the brutal repression faced by protesters and the risks that young people, especially women, encounter in their fight for freedom and equality. Her name became a rallying cry for those demanding accountability and reform, further energizing the movement and drawing attention to the urgent need for change in the country.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Sarina_Esmailzadeh

Amnesty International has verified that Sarina was beaten on the head by heavy batons by security forces and taken to the hospital by her friends, but she died before any medical help was administered.

https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/09/iran-leaked-documents-reveal-top-level-orders-to-armed-forces-to-mercilessly-confront-protesters/

[iii] **Kian Pirfalak** was a young Iranian boy whose death in November 2022 became a poignant symbol of the violence faced by civilians during the protests in Iran. Kian, aged 9, was reportedly shot while traveling in a car with his family during a protest in the city of Izeh. His tragic death sparked widespread outrage and grief, particularly among the youth and families affected by the ongoing unrest.

Kian's story resonated deeply within the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement, as it underscored the indiscriminate nature of state violence and the impact of the government's deadly crackdown on dissent. His death, alongside that of other young victims, galvanized further protests and calls for justice, highlighting the urgent need for change in Iran. Kian's name became emblematic of the innocent lives lost in the struggle for freedom and human rights, reinforcing the movement's demands for accountability and reform.

https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iran-protests-escalate-amid-funerals-for-children-reportedly-killed-by-regime/

[iv] **Khoda Noor Lojei**, or **Lajai**, was a Baluch Iranian youth who became a symbol of hope, passion for life, and the struggle for human rights and freedom during the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement in 2022, particularly in Baluchistan. He gained recognition for a video that showed him dancing joyfully (long before his death), which went viral and resonated with many, symbolizing the spirit of resistance and the desire for freedom among Iranian youth. His famous dance was not performed at a protest but rather in a celebratory context, showcasing his joy and spirit. It was seen as an expression of hope and defiance against oppression. Tragically, he was later killed during the protests that erupted following the death of Mahsa Amini. The circumstances surrounding his death have made him a poignant figure in the movement, representing both the joy of life and the fight against oppression. His legacy continues to inspire many in the ongoing struggle for freedom and human rights in Iran.

In addition to his dance, there is a viral photo of him tied to a flagpole, being tortured by the Islamic Republic because the water bottle is out of reach. This image, which became an iconic representation of the suppression exerted by the regime, was taken before the protests of 2022. It, along with others depicting the brutality faced by individuals at the hands of security forces, symbolizes the ongoing human rights violations in Iran. While Khoda Noor Lajai's joyful dance became a symbol of hope and resilience, the viral photo serves as a stark reminder of the harsh realities and violence that many face under the regime. Together, these contrasting images highlight the struggle for freedom and the resilience of the Iranian people in the face of oppression.

[v] "**Bloody Friday in Baluchistan**," also known as "**Zahedan Massacre**," refers to the violent events and repression that occurred on September 25, 2022, in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan and Baluchistan province in Iran. This event took place following widespread protests that erupted after the death of Mahsa Amini and the subsequent increase in discontent in Iran. On this day, gatherings were held in Zahedan to protest human rights conditions and the repression of minorities, particularly the Sunni population. Reports indicate that security forces opened fire on the protesters, resulting in casualties and injuries among the crowd. During the events of "Black Friday" in Baluchistan, reports indicate that at least 66 people were killed, with many others injured. However, the exact number of casualties can vary depending on the source, and some reports suggest that the actual figures may be higher. This tragic incident is recognized as a significant turning point in the nationwide protests in Iran and drew considerable attention both domestically and internationally, highlighting the ongoing issues of human rights and repression in Iran. "Black Friday in Baluchistan" symbolizes the deep social and political grievances in Iran, as well as the severe repression of protesters.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_Zahedan_massacre

[vi] **Mehran Samak** was reported to have been killed in the city of Bandar Anzali in northwest Iran. by security forces in Iran after he honked his car horn in celebration of Iran's defeat to the United States in the World Cup match on November 29, 2022.
This incident underscored the tense atmosphere in the country, where even seemingly innocuous acts of celebration could lead to violent repercussions from security forces.
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/30/iranian-man-27-shot-dead-while-celebrating-teams-world-cup-exit
https://www.fox4news.com/news/iranian-man-shot-killed-celebrating-us-victory-in-world-cup

[vii] **Shervin Hajipour** is an Iranian singer-songwriter who gained international recognition for his song "Baraye," which became an anthem for the protests in Iran following the death of Mahsa Amini in 2022. The song, which expresses the hopes and struggles of the Iranian people, went viral on social media and resonated with many who were advocating for change and human rights in Iran. Shervin Hajipour received the Special Merit Award for Best Song for Social Change for "Baraye" at the 2023 GRAMMYs.
https://www.rferl.org/a/32059684.html