

VISUAL INTERTEXTUALITY AS A BACKBONE OF POLITICAL CARTOONING: HOMOGENOUS AND HETEROGENEOUS VISUAL JUXTAPOSITION

LA INTERTEXTUALIDAD VISUAL COMO EJE VERTEBRADOR DE LA CARICATURA POLÍTICA: YUXTAPOSICIÓN VISUAL HOMOGÉNEA Y HETEROGÉNEA

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Abstract

This paper delves into the intricate realm of the communicative role of intertextuality within political discourse, examining the humorous and ironic effect of visual intertextuality, termed here as *Intervisuality*, in political cartoons. The study discerns two contrasting categories: homogeneous, which is marked by the ‘supportive and co-thematic’ relations between Source Character (SC) and Target Character (TC), and heterogeneous, distinguished as ‘ironic and contrastive’ relation between SC and TC. For examining these categories within the cartooning discourse, a sample of UK cartoons related to the former British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, was selected particularly those visually inspired by historical characters. The results reveal that these intervisual references are either identified overtly when both characters are visually present or covertly when the SC is visually unobservable but inferred from related events or paintings. Moreover, the results highlight that UK cartoonists prefer direct heterogeneous

intervisuality in their works to highlight elements of hypocrisy and deception during Johnson's tenure.

Keywords: Intervisuality; cartooning; homogeneous; heterogeneous; Boris Johnson.

Resumen

Este artículo profundiza en el intrincado ámbito del papel comunicativo de la intertextualidad dentro del discurso político, examinando el efecto humorístico e irónico de la intertextualidad visual, denominada aquí como Intervisualidad, en caricaturas políticas. El estudio distingue dos categorías contrastantes: homogénea, marcada por las relaciones "solidarias y temáticas" entre el dominio fuente y el dominio objetivo, y el heterogéneo, que se distingue como relación "irónica y contrastante" entre la fuente y el objetivo. Para examinar estas categorías dentro del discurso de las caricaturas, se seleccionó una muestra de caricaturas del Reino Unido relacionadas con el ex primer ministro británico, Boris Johnson, particularmente aquellas visualmente inspiradas por personajes históricos. Los resultados del estudio revelan que la intertextualidad directa, basada en la diferencia entre la fuente y el objetivo, es más utilizada por los caricaturistas británicos que otros tipos, como los enfoques indirectos o coherentes, que son más complejos y requieren un conocimiento histórico y contextual de los personajes utilizados para representar a Boris Johnson y asuntos relacionados.

Palabras clave: Intervisualidad; caricatura; homogéneo; heterogéneo; Boris Johnson.

1. Introduction

Intertextuality as a rhetoric device is entrenched in the fabric of literary discourse, representing the intricate net of relationships among texts, shaping their meanings and imbuing them with various layers of complexity (Worton and Still 23-59). This suggests that texts are not original by themselves but somehow rely on other texts. This perspective led researchers from various fields, among others literature (Juvan 1-7; Zengin 300-325), translation (Abu Dayyeh 79-88; Long and Gaofeng 1108-1110), media and advertising (Hartley 14, 126-128; Cook 193-195; Panigrahi and Chandra 254-259) and education (Lemke 260-266; Bloome and Egan-Robertson 304-330). Intertextuality, as Cook (193-195) suggests, is a textual interconnection and allusion which are regarded as common practice that exists in most discourses where previous texts are

incorporated into a new text and the discursal process requires a kind of mutual knowledge between the producers of these intertexts and the receivers (Norrick, 227-229). Moreover, it turns out that intertextuality not only interweaves texts with each other but also formulates a kind of cognitive memory retrieval and interpretative knowledge to examine the text and find out its background. Fairclough further affirms that the analysis of intertextuality is an elucidative endeavor that relies extensively on the researcher's individual discernment and expertise. Thus, it falls upon the reader to connect these texts, as Pinar-Sanz (Humour and intertextuality 19) urged that the "failure to recognize the intertextual reference as such may dilute the text's meaning or compromise its intelligibility altogether." This view is attached to Riffaterre's (625-630) previous proposition regarding the readers' shared background knowledge and collective experiences.

In visual discourse, intertextuality has also paved its route. It is identified through its function to reshape the stereotyped image, which can be done through passing references with(out) explicit identification of (i) literary or historical characters, events, places, or other literary works or passages and (ii) current popular culture, comprising contemporary films, television series, national sports events and diverse elements representative of the present-day societal landscape (Caple 127-135; Moya-Guijarro 33-40).

This study is structurally organized as follows: sections 2 and 3 provide detailed definitions and classifications of intertextuality, exploring its relevance across scholarly perspectives and its interaction with metaphor in visual discourse. Subsequent sections distinguish between two suggested types of intervisuality in political cartoons-direct and indirect-emphasizing their contextual and functional roles as supportive or contrasting elements. The methodological section establishes the process of identifying how intervisuality has been deliberately and metaphorically employed in visual discourse (cartoons), along with the procedure followed by the researcher. Then, the analysis focuses on a set of cartoons from '*The Times*,' '*The Guardian*,' and '*The Independent*,' depicting former Prime Minister Boris Johnson from 2019 to 2021. Cartoons with historical characters- allusions or ancient politicians were exclusively selected to assess the impact of these references on contextual understanding. After presenting the data and outlining the analytical procedures, the findings are interpreted in relation to these observed forms of intervisuality. The study concludes with insightful reflections.

2. Intertextuality: Classifications and Contextual Significance

Challenging the foundational principle of textual autonomy maintained by New Criticism, which assumes that “a text is an isolated entity that can be understood through the tools and techniques of close reading, maintains that each text has unique texture, and asserts that what a text says and how it says it are inseparable” (Mamboral), intertextuality asserts that a text cannot exist in isolation as a self-contained entity. Consequently, it rejects the notion of a text operating as a closed system, independent of external influences or references.

To begin with the origin of intertextuality as a rhetorical and literary tool, it is essential to refer to its developer, Julia Kristeva. In her work “Word, Dialogue and Novel”, Kristeva intended to specify that intertextuality as a concept shows that texts are not static structures or frozen frameworks. Rather, they are dynamic bodies in which elements have been intersected with each other to create an interwoven montage. According to Kristeva’s perspective, “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of inter-subjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double” (37). To put it simply, Barthes (146) further adds that:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. [...] [T]he writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His (*sic*) only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them.

Lemke (4) further adds in this domain, noting that “[w]hen texts are the same in all three of these respects—talking about the same things, from the same point of view, in the same genre—we have the strongest basis for considering them potentially relevant for one another’s interpretation, that is, as intertexts of one another.” According to Lemke, these structures are used to derive meaning and interpretation. Within this frame, there exists a subset of intertexts known as ‘co-thematic texts’, which exhibit thematic congruity or share similar attributes with the focal text. They contribute to a deeper comprehension of the original text by offering related insights, perspectives and thematic connections. Consequently, intertexts play an essential role in shaping our understanding and interpretation of a given text. On the

other hand, other texts can also serve as examples of a shared perspective on interpersonal relationships or values, making them co-orienting texts.

To gain a deeper understanding of the intertextuality theory, it is evident that its significance lies in its ability to exert interpretative influence on the texts it encompasses. In line with this perspective, Miola (14-23) structurally identifies seven types of intertextuality: Revision, Translation, Quotation, Conventions, Configurations, Genres, and Paralogues. Each of these types has its additive value to the text. Xie (1010-1014) further adds another classification of intertextuality relying on its generality and nature, specifying them as general and specific, particularly in news headlines. With all the above-mentioned types, intertextuality operates in both explicit and implicit ways of presence, openly and subtly impacting the meaning and reception of the texts involved.

On the other hand, implicit intertextuality operates in more subtle ways, without explicit markers or direct references. It involves the borrowing, transformation or adaptation of ideas, themes, or stylistic elements from other texts. Implicit intertextuality can manifest as shared cultural references, common tropes, or even the use of established literary conventions. It operates at a deeper level, shaping the discourse and resonating with readers or audiences who are familiar with the intertextual sources. As such, Bazerman (85-88) confirmed that intertextuality's interpretative influence stems from its ability to enrich and shape the meanings and reception of texts. By drawing on other texts, intertextuality allows for layered and nuanced interpretations, creating connections and associations that enhance the depth and complexity of the work. From an alternative perspective, the objectives behind the use of intertextuality were encapsulated by Bazerman (86-88) as employed in texts for (i) utilizing authoritative sources, (ii) depicting social dramas, (iii) providing background, support, and contrast, (iv) drawing on shared beliefs and ideas, and (v) ultimately evoking specific social worlds.

3. The Integration of Visual Intertextuality and Metaphor in Political Cartoons

A political cartoon is commonly seen as a visual form or a pictorial representation of editorial expression, utilizing a conventional repertoire of images that frequently incorporates elements of caricature and humor. This implies that cartooning as a reality-addressing medium is constructed to tell a story or convey information through a series of drawings or computer-generated images (Seymour-Ure 333). Edwards (8) further reinforces

this premise by regarding political cartoons “as a bridge between fact and fiction”, which is in compliance with El Refaie’s (175) view that cartoons are representative means to illustrate “social, cultural or political life in a way that condenses reality and transforms it in a striking, original and/or humorous way.” This reality-based portrayal is merged with humor and satire to reshape reality and highlight what lies behind it. Accordingly, readers need to decode that message through their background knowledge and experiential potential. Greenberg (194) consequently asserts that “while cartoons are normally understood by readers to be satirical depictions of real events, they nevertheless draw from an available stock of public knowledge and reproduce a common sense view of the world.”

Concerning the cartoons’ structural categorization, Agüero Guerra (59) identifies two distinct types, namely monomodal and multimodal cartoons. The first category exclusively relies on their pictorial components to convey humor and intentions, with no real inclusion of verbal mode, whilst the multimodal ones employ a combination of visual elements and accompanying verbal texts to convey a cohesive and integrated message. The functions of political cartoons are typically determined by their authors’ intentions and the rhetorical devices and techniques they use; for instance, cartoonists portray various political events and characters to persuade, satirize, inform, entertain, or engage the readers in their work. These functions are successfully achieved through various rhetorical devices such as metaphor, allusion, visual analogies, intertextuality, hyperbole, parody, irony, among others. Cartoonists often apply a blend of caricature, metaphor, distortion, surrealism, deliberate misunderstanding and mockery to colorize vague issues that need clarification. Scholars such as Schilperoord, et al. (214-215), for instance, emphasize the metaphor-rich nature of editorial cartoons, making them a fertile ground for metaphorical expression. Accordingly, metaphors assume a central role as a defining characteristic within political cartoons, attracting the attention of numerous researchers and scholars in the field. El Refaie (173-196), Pinar-Sanz (Ethnic humour 211-230 & Offence strategies 127-150), Yus (267-298) and Forceville and van de Laar (292-307), among others, have explored the intricate relationship between metaphor and cartooning, shedding light on the profound influence and significance of metaphor.

Drawing upon Lakoff and Johnson’s work, metaphors in political cartoons encapsulate the understanding, experience and shaping of one concept through the lens of another. Metaphors serve as powerful vehicles

for comprehending our world (Lakoff and Johnson, 159). Thus, interpreting metaphors in political cartoons involves mapping attitudes, attributes and actions from the source domain onto the target domain (Lakoff, *The contemporary theory* 202-251). Simply put, metaphors play a crucial role in political cartoons by condensing complex political ideas or situations into visually impactful and easily understandable imagery. Ungerer and Schmid (149) contend that political discourse, including cartoons, extensively employs metaphorical expressions.

4. Intervisual References in Political Cartoons (Types and Functions)

Aligned with Bazerman's theory on intertextuality within textual compositions, this study, as already stated, extends the textual types of visual intertextuality to cover the intervisual references incorporated in political cartoons. Werner (3) outlines the sources of intertextuality in political cartoons and regarded "Historical events and characters (e.g., from the Roman Empire through to World War II)" as the sources that create the suitable atmosphere of analogizing between interconnected visuals. Thus, the term 'intertextuality' has been extended to cover visual discourses and other semiotic resources to address the potentiality of differentiating various levels of connectedness at which an image overtly references another image and the author consciously utilizes it as a valuable resource for their target work. Unlike intertextuality within textual discourse, visual discourses offer two types of intervisuality. The first one is the overt level of connectedness (Direct reference), which partially aligns with Bazerman's intertextuality theory and Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory. Direct references employ explicit references either by using direct quotations, italics and block indentation. Within visual discourses, as in cartoons or advertisements, the direct reference can perform imitation; that is, the direct depiction of famous individuals with their common physical visage, conventional gestures, or uniform. The overt level mostly maintains the original character's stylistic, compositional, and referential meaning with a reference that paves the way for the audience to catch the message. Moreover, some cartoonists let their audience know about the embedded intervisuals through the use of self-conscious captions such as "With apologies to ..." or "After ..." which are regarded as a form of direct quotation or overt reference.

The second type of intervisuality is the covert level of comparison (indirect reference), commonly referred to in textual discourses as 'allusion', wherein

political cartoons may involve implicit visual hints, symbolic representations, or visual allusions that evoke associations with other visuals, historical events, famous personages, or cultural symbols. In line with this aspect, Pinar-Sanz (Humour and intertextuality 20) points out that “cartoonists tend to consciously use implicit references, double meanings and allusions in order to create a reaction on the readers, which has implications for the potential that intertextual strategies have in creating a bond between the producer and the receiver of texts”. Within the realm of covert intervisualities, cartoons may incorporate iconic symbols that indirectly relate to the reference being made. This could incorporate referencing artworks, songs or lyrics associated with the politician’s tenure, related events, policies, or stances without explicit verbal cues pointing to the specific reference. Such covert structures require the audience to rely on their historical background to decode the hidden connections.

To get the crux of this section, visual intertextuality (*intervisuality*) can be observed in political cartoons as with the communicative functions of what is called *Iconic References* (Gimson 36-45), which incorporate iconic images or symbols that are associated with certain politicians or historical events. For instance, depicting Winston Churchill with a cigar, Margaret Thatcher with her handbag and distinctive dress, or Theresa May with her leopard high heels are all forms of iconic reference to those characters. Similarly, Boris Johnson is often portrayed with his characteristic disheveled hair, which has become an iconic representation of him in political cartoons. He is seen as a gold icon for cartoonists; he is “a punk, a toddler, a narcissistic sociopath” (‘Boris was cartoon gold’: the UK’s top cartoonists on drawing Boris Johnson).¹

The functional purposes of employing intervisuality in political cartoons is close to what has been already suggested by Bazerman (87-90):

4.1. Contrastive or Ironic Function: Heterogeneous Comparison (Contrastive Mocking Juxtaposition)

This subtype refers to the juxtaposition of politicians with contrastive reputations or attributes. This means metaphorically depicting politicians, as in the case of Boris Johnson, with negative reputations or connotations, at

1 “Boris was cartoon gold’: the UK’s top cartoonists on drawing Boris Johnson.” *The Guardian*. from 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/jul/31/boris-cartoon-gold-cartoonists-drawing-boris-johnson-best-chris-riddell-martin-rowson-ralph-steadman> Retrieved on September 21, 2023

least in his country, as opposed to historical leaders with positive reputations and associations, such as Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt. By employing heterogeneous comparison, cartoonists attempt to emphasize the perceived disparity or contrast between the qualities, actions, or character of the politicians being depicted and those historically regarded as characteristic leaders; this is functionally labeled as Contrastive Mocking Juxtaposition. This means that the cartoonists depict Johnson as one of those remarkable leaders, but implicitly, they highlight the opposite.

This visual depiction essentially relies on the utilization of irony and hypocrisy to transfer the attributes and features of interconnectedness and serves several purposes: creating a comprehensive ridiculous contradiction. This purpose generally highlights the TCs perceived inadequacies, incompetence, or unethical behavior by contrasting them with respected historical figures; the comparison is a kind of general contrastive juxtaposition between the two political figures under analysis. Second, presenting irony and hypocrisy means underscore these rhetorical devices in the actions or statements of the (TCs) politicians being presented. It exposes the gap between their announced values or goals and the actions they actually undertake, in contrast to the historically revered leaders who are marked as embodying more desirable attributes. This purpose aligns with what is termed 'Ironic Metaphor,' exemplified when portraying Boris Johnson as Winston Churchill, creating an ironic reference and contrastive juxtaposition (Popa, 1-16).

Moreover, placing contemporary politicians with negative associations alongside esteemed historical icons helps situate their actions or policies within a broader historical context. It suggests a comparison of the challenges faced, the responses given, and the consequences of their respective leadership, potentially highlighting perceived deficiencies in the politicians being depicted. This can be referred to as Historical Contextualization of the heterogeneous comparison. For instance, in most of the UK cartoons during Boris Johnson's tenure (July 24th, 2019 –September 6th, 2022), the cartoonists tend to make a ridiculous reference of Johnson in comparison to Winston Churchill, one of the most iconic figures in British history, who was often characterized as a resolute and determined leader who led his country through the tumultuous years of World War II. Churchill was historically and culturally seen as:

One of Britain's greatest ever leaders. Sir Winston Churchill was a giant of a man, an imposing figure who dominated every room he was in thanks to his wit, intelligence and dogged determination. Of

course, he will always be remembered for leading Britain through the Second World War, trumping Nazi Germany and destroying the twisted visions of Adolph Hitler in the process (Thomas).

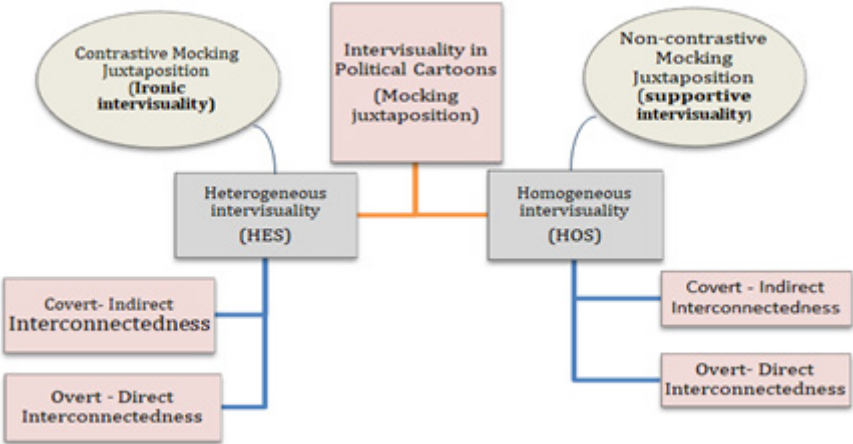
Furthermore, it is relevant to add that this type may be presented either as an overt/direct heterogeneous comparison or a covert/indirect heterogeneous comparison. In the first subtype, the criticism and ridicule are conveyed through a direct and explicit visual comparison between the SC and the TC. The cartoonist probably employs visual cues and explicit references to highlight the negative attributes or shortcomings of the TC, as will be seen in the analysis of the corpus below.

4.2. Supportive or Exaggerative Function: Homogeneous Comparison (Non-Contrastive Mocking juxtaposition)

This function is the opposite of the previous one; it aims to examine the shared or similar attributes, whether positive or negative, between politicians. The similarity is usually based on negative qualities between the two characters and specifically on transmitting such attributes from SC into TC. In political cartoons, cartoonists often employ homogeneous comparisons by juxtaposing contemporary politicians with historically renowned figures known for their negative reputation or adverse stances to reinforce the critical review of the contemporary politician's persona, tenure, actions, or policies. This subtype is referred to as Non-Contrastive Mocking Juxtaposition, which makes use of metaphorization, and visual allegory. Thus, by associating the TC with a historically discredited SC, the cartoonist seeks to amplify/exaggerate the criticism and render it more impactful. The purposes behind this type of comparison are as follows: first, it is employed to highlight shared negative traits.

Secondly, the homogenous comparison seeks to amplify/exaggerate the negative attributes. This comparison heightens the critical stance by associating the depicted character with another individual or entity known for their negative perception. This technique aims to strengthen the negative portrayal and draw attention to the perceived negative aspects of the depicted figure. In the realm of political cartooning discourse, just as with heterogeneous comparison, this particular subcategory can manifest itself through explicit or implicit comparisons, delineated by the presence or absence of visual elements transferred from the (SC) into the (TC) within the image. Diagram 1 summarizes the types and functions of intervisuality in political cartoons:

Diagram 1. Intervisuality (Types and Functions) in Political Cartoons
(Mocking Juxtaposition).



5. Data and Methodology

As already stated, this study examines the various functions of visual intertextuality in political cartoons, specifically focusing on the use of historical figures to represent contemporary characters. The data comprises political cartoons that include references to historical figures, with Boris Johnson as the contemporary figure of interest due to his controversial role during his tenure. The cartoons selected span from 2019 to 2021, covering Johnson’s time in office, and were sourced from prestigious UK newspapers, including *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Independent*.

The methodology involves identifying these historical references in the cartoons and analyzing their multifunctional roles and social impact, based on Bazerman’s intertextual analysis (88). The analysis looks at how these figures are used to support or contrast contemporary issues, and how they serve as tools for irony, exaggeration, and emphasis. The data is representative of the employment of the mocking symbolic juxtaposition and its subtypes and formation in the media. The process of selecting a set of cartoons that represents the essence of the study; how intervisual references of historical figures have been artfully and purposefully utilized in political cartoons as means of exposing metaphorical images and satirical effect. The sample of the cartoons has been collected from some well-known cartoonists as Steve Bell, Peter Brookes, and Dave Brown. Steve Bell from *The Guardian* is known for his impactful rhetorical portraits, exemplified by his depictions of political

figures with ridiculous flavor such as Boris Johnson has been usually portrayed as “a pair of buttocks topped with a mop of blonde hair”², David Cameron with a condom over his face, and Donald Trump with a toilet bowl. Bell articulates that he utilizes art as a confrontational mechanism to reveal the true personas of politicians, describing his approach as “initially praising them for their idealism and subsequently delivering a metaphorical blow” (Bell, 2011).

Peter Brookes, on another hand, is renowned for his dedication to editorial expression and his fidelity to representing reality through his art. His artistic methodology aligns closely with that of David Low³, adhering to the belief that cartoonists should persistently oppose and criticize established norms.

6. The Analysis of Mocking Juxtaposition in Boris Johnson-Related Cartoons in British Media

This section examines the use of the two distinct types of intervisual comparisons-heterogeneous and homogeneous-in cartoons related to Boris Johnson. It analyzes how these intervisual allusions are employed, both directly and indirectly, within the images, and elucidates the contextual purposes behind their utilization.

6.1. Overt/ Direct Heterogeneous Juxtaposition in Boris Johnson-Related Cartoons

The explicit heterogeneous comparison is usually identified by referencing the name of the SC directly, his physical features, style, or any explicit reference to their personality. In the sample, for instance, Boris Johnson compared the £5 billion of his economic leveling up plan, ‘Build Back Better’⁴ to Roosevelt’s New Deal of 1933-1939 (the new deal encompassed a series of programs, public works projects, financial reforms and regulations aimed at mitigating the effects of the Great Depression in the United States).⁵ Some of the UK cartoonists aimed to expose the perceived duplicity of Boris Johnson’s

2 <https://www.theheartnewspaper.com/2020/07/20/influential-political-cartoonist-steve-bell-dropped-by-the-guardian-newspaper-after-40-years>

3 David Low (1891-1963) is a New-Zealand British Born journalist who was well known for his spirit and ethics in political cartooning and caricatures. Available: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/David-Alexander-Cecil-Low>

4 <https://www.theguardian.com/global/video/2020/jun/30/boris-johnson-sets-out-plan-to-build-back-better-and-bolder-after-covid-19-crisis-video>

5 <https://www.britannica.com/money/topic/New-Deal>

government by juxtaposing his £5 billion economic plan during the COVID-19 crisis with Roosevelt's New Deal. In doing so, Peter Brookes' cartoon in figure (2) on July 1st 2020, published for *The Times*, emphasizes the disparity between the significant impact of Roosevelt's economic plan in addressing the Great Depression in the US and the portrayal of Johnson's plan during the COVID-19 pandemic as ineffective and resulting in excessive government expenses. Thus, this reference activates a metaphor BORIS JOHNSON'S BUILD BACK BETTER PLAN IS ROOSEVELT'S 1930'S NEW DEAL.

Furthermore, the explicit and direct inclusion of Roosevelt's image behind Johnson, along with the caption A BIG DEAL, establishes a deliberate and contrasting mockery between the two figures. Brookes seeks to underscore Roosevelt's positive attributes, such as resilience, determination and the ability to inspire the nation, as exemplified by his famous New Deal, while simultaneously downplaying Johnson's ineffective economic plan to boost the economy during the pandemic. This comparison is skillfully executed through the use of irony, with the cartoonist's message aimed at rendering Johnson's plan as lacking substance or significance when compared to Roosevelt's substantial achievements with the New Deal.



Figure 1. Peter Brookes' cartoon of Boris Johnson July 1st, 2020, *The Times*. New Deal announcement.⁶



Figure 2. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in Warm Springs, Georgia, in 1939.⁷

6 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/imageserver/image/method%2Ftimes%2Fprod%2Fweb%2Fbin%2F151a2128-bb03-11ea-82eb-1588bf47a52f.jpg?crop=2711%2C1807%2C609%2C195>

7 <https://www.thebalancemoney.com/fdr-economic-policies-and-accomplishments-3305557>

In contrast, some cartoonists decide to encode Johnson in a manner reminiscent of Roosevelt's visage and physical outfit, as observed in Figure 3 by Dave Brown. The cartoon highlights Roosevelt's characteristic physical attributes, such as his cigarette holder, bow tie, hat and distinctive body gestures. Cartoonists deliberately highlight this direct intervisual reference to Roosevelt to let the audience recognize the relation between Roosevelt's historically renowned New Deal and Johnson's controversial policy. This intervisual analysis reveals the hypocrisy of Johnson's claims that his deal is as important as Roosevelt's was. About this, Stewart and Larry stated that:

The prime minister claims his ambitions echo the achievements of US president Franklin D. Roosevelt... "The notion that he's going to turn himself into FDR seems absolutely fanciful," said professor Anand Menon, of the UK in a Changing Europe think tank. "FDR surrounded himself with experts, and drew on what they had to say, in a way that Boris Johnson so far has not."

In Figure 3, a deliberate intervisual reference to Roosevelt's New Deal, humorously retitled by Brown as 'NUDE DEAL'. In the cartoon, Johnson is depicted as a poker player, equipped with only peanuts and clothes for betting, while facing off against a COVID-19 skeleton. The visual metaphor, BORIS JOHNSON'S NEW ECONOMIC DEAL IS STRIPPING AWAY CLOTHES, is rooted in the conceptual metaphor ECONOMY IS CLOTHES. The image implies the negative consequences of the British government's incompetent economic planning and the metaphorical representation of "Taking off clothes" underscores austerity and the exposure to economic risks. In line with this metaphorical conceptualization, economy, in its struggling state, resembles torn clothes, and trying to mend it with inadequate plans is like attempting to patch up those worn garments.

In this cartoon, Johnson is featured as Roosevelt with a cigarette holder, bow tie, hat, and eyeglasses, establishing a deliberate and contrasting comparison between the two characters. They do not have much in common for direct mapping; instead, Brown used ironical intertextuality to highlight the disparities between Johnson's assertions and the actual effectiveness or substance of his economic plan. This portrayal underscores the hypocrisy in the comparison drawn between Johnson's new deal and Roosevelt's economic plan.



Figure 3. Dave Brown's opinion on the New Deal for Britain by Boris Johnson.⁸

Another instance of direct heterogeneous comparison is Figure 4, a cartoon by Steve Bell for *The Guardian*, on June 30th, 2020. In this image, Bell portrays Johnson as Roosevelt's outfit through the integration of visual and textual references to shape the leader's visage. In Bell's cartoon, the inspiration of Roosevelt's intervisuality was accompanied by an ironic variation of his first inaugural address,⁹ "Only Thing We Have to Fear Is Fear Itself", which ridiculously and ironically employed to mock down Johnson's leadership by suggesting that he lacks substantial solutions, in stark contrast to Roosevelt, who was commonly known for his altruistic approach.

Peter Brookes' cartoon in Figure 5 applies a direct heterogeneous comparison that revolves around the contrasting themes of genuine celebration and unrealistic claims. Matt Hancock, the former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care from 2018 to 2021, is presented in the cartoon holding a portrait of Johnson, who is ironically featured as Queen Elizabeth II. This depiction activates the metaphor "BORIS JOHNSON IS THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II", but in what manner Johnson resembles the Queen? The investigation here pertains to Brookes' attempts to highlight the genuine celebration of Queen Elizabeth II's birthday on the one hand and to mock down the unrealistic goal set by Johnson to achieve 100,000

8 The Independent, June 30th, 2020 <https://twitter.com/Cartoon4sale/status/1278031641957617666/photo/1>

9 <https://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5057/>

COVID-19 tests per day¹⁰ on the other hand. This unrealistic goal is visually highlighted through the utilization of a flock of flying pigs. The use of the old adage which says ‘When pigs fly’¹¹ accurately captures the implausibility of Johnson’s ambitious claim to achieve the specified number of tests. By employing visual cues, symbolism, and the caption “on reaching an incredible round figure,” Brookes creates an ironic juxtaposition. He contrasts the Queen’s centennial birthday-a widely recognized and celebrated milestone-with Johnson’s centennial testing target, which he portrays as equally significant yet impractical.



Figure 4. Steve Bell’s opinion on Boris Johnson’s ‘new deal’ announcement, *The Guardian*, June 30th, 2020.¹²

This comparison underscores the absurdity of Johnson’s goal by aligning it with the gravity of a royal milestone, highlighting its improbability and the unrealistic expectations associated with it. Consequently, the comparison here has no co-thematic relation between the characters because of the diversity of their characters.

10 Operation Moonshot. Available: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK592727/> and <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/06/boris-johnson-misses-coronavirus-testing-target-for-fourth-day-in-a-row>

11 The adage “When Pigs Fly” refers to something that is highly unlikely to ever happen. Available: https://www.theidioms.com/search/?q=when+pigs+fly#google_vignette

12 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/picture/2020/jun/30/steve-bell-boris-johnson-new-deal-cartoon#img-51>



Figure 5. Peter Brookes' opinion on the government's missing target of 100,000 tests per day for COVID-19, on May 2nd, 2020, *The Times*.¹³

Another example of direct heterogeneous comparison is the direct reference of *The Times'* cartoonist, Peter Brookes, to one of the iconic figures of independence struggle in Africa. In Figure 6, Johnson was metaphorically rendered as Robert Mugabe, a Zimbabwean politician and revolutionist who was the President of Zimbabwe from 1987 until his resignation in 2017. The intervisual comparison is formed through Mugabe's visage and gestures, which are visually transferred onto Johnson in Brooke's cartoon. The intention of this intervisuality is to ironically criticize Johnson's government's approach to Brexit, particularly the attempts to undermine democratic principles and suppress opposition voices in the pursuit of independence from the European Union.¹⁴

Moreover, the statement in the bubble attributed to Johnson "TO FREE OUR GREAT COUNTRY FROM THE SHACKLES OF COLONIALISM, I WILL SUSPEND THE CONSTITUTION AND SILENCE MY OPPONENTS," draws a parallel between the European Union and colonialism, positioning Brexit as an anti-colonial liberation movement. Depicting Johnson as Mugabe suggests that he perceives his Brexit efforts similar to Mugabe's quest for equal electoral rights amidst British colonial rule in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Also, this verbal bubble underscores Johnson's portrayal of Brexit as a struggle against opposition,

13 <https://theprint.in/last-laughs/roadmap-to-exiting-the-lockdown-and-boris-johnson-learns-the-importance-of-face-masks/413598/>

14 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/sep/07/boris-johnson-could-trigger-constitutional-crisis-over-brexit-law>

comparable with Mugabe’s great resistance against colonial powers. The comparison does not revolve around any similarity in Johnson’s stance on Brexit and Mugabe’s struggle against British colonialism. Rather, it is dedicated to revealing the contrast of leadership styles.



Figure 6. Peter Brookes’ depiction of Johnson’s Brexit Chaos. September 7th, 2019, *The Times*.¹⁵



Figure 7. The President of Zimbabwe from 1987 to 2017, Robert Mugabe.¹⁶

6.2. Covert/Indirect Heterogeneous Juxtaposition in Cartoons

In this type, cartoonists almost utilize allegorical or symbolic elements to allude to certain political situations, policies, or ideologies. These comparisons do not rely on a direct visual connectedness between the two characters, SC and TC, but rather aim to evoke associations and emotions related to the subject matter. This subtype, as already mentioned, is based on the audience’s historical background and contextual knowledge to decode the interconnectedness, offering deeper layers of meaning and stimulating critical thinking among viewers, as the SC is not explicitly referenced.

For instance, the cartoon in Figure 8 depicted by Steve Bell provides an example of this type by drawing an implicit comparison between the economic policies of Roosevelt (SC) during the Great Depression,¹⁷ as

15 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/peter-brookes-times-cartoon-september-7-2019-ptm3576hj>

16 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Robert-Mugabe>

17 The Great Depression, triggered by the 1929 Stock Market crash, led to widespread economic devastation in the United States, with massive unemployment, banking system collapse, and a relentless cycle of declining incomes and spending.. For more

already explained in Figure 3, and Johnson's handling of the economic recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. While there is no direct reference (visual or textual) to Roosevelt's personality in the cartoon, the cartoonist employs a covert satirical technique by altering the lyrics of the song "Happy Days Are Here Again,"¹⁸ which is vigorously associated with Roosevelt and his presidency during the Great Depression. This indirect intervisuality requires the audience to possess a foundational understanding or background knowledge in order to decode and interpret the subtle connections between the intertwined themes presented, that is, to interpret the revised song HARDER DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN, YOUR JOBS ARE GONE, YOU ARE IN FEAR AGAIN, WHY NOT BUY A SNACK AND A BEER AGAIN? Indeed, employing this reference serves as a criticism of the UK government's handling of the economic recession led by Johnson while accentuating the great disparity between Roosevelt's effective economic recovery measures and the perceived inadequacies of Johnson's administration in dealing with the economic challenges brought about by the pandemic.



Figure 8. Steve Bell's opinion on the UK deep economic recession.¹⁹

information, the following website is helpful: <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/great-depression-facts>

- 18 This became the campaign song for Roosevelt's successful presidential bid in 1932, symbolizing his promise to bring economic relief and restore hope to the American people. The song, with its message of overcoming adversity and anticipating better times ahead, became closely linked to Roosevelt's efforts to pull the country out of the depths of the Depression. Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Happy_Days_Are_Here_Again

- 19 *The Guardian*, 13 August, 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/picture/2020/aug/12/steve-bell-on-the-uk-economy-plunging-into-deep-recession-cartoon>

Another example of indirect heterogeneous juxtaposition is the use of a symbolic icon associated with historical figures. The cartoon in Figure 9, by Steve Bell, published on July 29th, 2020, in *The Guardian*, was designed to ironically criticize Johnson's approach to the 14-day quarantine imposed on British travelers coming back from Spain. Through symbolic representation, Johnson is portrayed as a British bulldog, invoking the cultural connotations of courage and tenacity associated with this national icon. Additionally, Bell reinforces this image by referencing Winston Churchill's iconic WWII speech, "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender..."²⁰ thus, in the cartoon, Churchill's original speech is modified to become NO SPIKES ON THE BLIGHTY BEACHES, NO SPIKES ON THE BLIGHTY CLIFFS AND FIELDS... WE SHALL NEVER LET THEM IN. The cartoon compares the British tourists coming back from Spain with the Nazis and implicitly references to Churchill through the bulldog depiction.

In line with indirect heterogeneous intervisuality, Bell subtly establishes a non-thematic comparison between Johnson and Churchill, the latter being implied through the iconic symbol of the bulldog. Consequently, understanding this image requires the viewer to possess a well-informed background recognizing that Churchill is historically associated with the bulldog symbol. Through all elements, Bell disregards Johnson's quarantine rules, considering them as severe and inhumane.



Figure 9. Steve Bell's opinion on Boris Johnson's defense of the UK quarantine rules, July 29th, 2020, *The Guardian*.²¹

20 <https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1940-the-finest-hour/we-shall-fight-on-the-beaches/>

21 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/picture/2020/jul/28/steve->

6.3. Overt/ Direct Homogeneous Juxtaposition in Cartoons

Direct homogeneous juxtaposition is well depicted in Figure 11, which employs intervisuality to juxtapose two characters or figures, typically emphasizing their negative traits, actions, or policies. The comparison is regarded as non-contrastive (supportive), as it emphasizes specific ideas through metaphor and analogy. Within this realm, for instance, the SC 'Joseph Stalin' and the TC 'Boris Johnson' exhibit shared attributes, which the cartoonist, Dave Brown, exploits to satirically mock, that is, Boris Johnson's leadership of the UK during critical periods. In Figure 10, Brown appears to be using satire and visual symbolism to place critical emphasis on the issue of Scottish independence and the stance of Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Incumbent, on that matter, as declared by Gove in an interview with *The Telegraph* on 22nd June, 2021, whose headline is "Boris Johnson will not grant new Scottish referendum before next election".²²

The portrayal of Johnson as Stalin, a prominent historical figure associated with authoritarianism and *dictatorship* and known for his characteristic pose of raising his hand in a particular way, as in Figure 11, emphasizes a noticeable feature, namely *dictatorship* and *authoritarianism*. The cartoon may be using the visual comparison to Stalin and the altered anthem lyrics (WE ARE BOZONAS,²³ AND WE HAVE ONE DREAM, TO WASH ALL BRAINS A BLUE WHITE GLEAM) TO COMMENT ON THE PERCEPTION THAT JOHNSON'S GOVERNMENT MAY BE ADOPTING A RIGID AND CONTROLLING APPROACH, SIMILAR TO HOW SOME VIEW AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES. THIS SUGGESTS THE NOTION OF DICTATORSHIP, AS ALL CITIZENS ARE BOZONAS. THE REFERENCE TO "ONE BOZONIA, ONE NATION" MAY BE HIGHLIGHTING THE IDEA THAT THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT SUFFICIENTLY CONSIDER THE DIVERSE INTERESTS OF DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE UK, INCLUDING SCOTLAND.

[bell-on-boris-johnson-defending-the-uks-quarantine-rules-cartoon](#)

22 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2021/06/22/michael-gove-boris-johnson-will-not-grant-new-scottish-referendum/>

23 The nickname or pejorative variation of BoJo, Boris Johnson https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_nicknames_of_prime_ministers_of_the_United_Kingdom and <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk-politics/2022/03/commons-confidential-zelensky-prepares-to-snub-johnson>



Figure 10. Dave Brown’s ‘one Britain one nation’.



Figure 11. Joseph Stalin’s original poster (1952)²⁴ depiction, June 23rd, 2021. *The Independent*.²⁵

6.4. Covert/ Indirect Homogeneous Juxtaposition in Cartoons

In indirect homogeneous comparisons, cartoonists juxtapose two characters or elements that have clear and evident similarities, particularly those connected with negative historical events. This means that the juxtaposition is indirectly or covertly done through using visual allusion and allegoric clues, symbolic icons associated with the SC. In Figure 12 by Dave Brown, Boris Johnson was metaphorically depicted as Adolf Hitler. The image was inspired by John Heartfield’s poster, a very popular image in the 1930s.²⁶ Functionally, the cartoon can be categorized as an indirect homogeneous comparison, with Johnson indirectly metaphorized as Adolf Hitler. The audience requires contextual knowledge to grasp the reference since the cartoon does not explicitly mention or depict Hitler. Instead, it draws upon the poster created by Heartfield as its source of inspiration. The comparison seeks to highlight shared attitudes between the two figures. The visual elements in both images create a metaphor: BORIS JOHNSON IS ADOLF HITLER.

Thus, portraying Johnson alongside a large cat symbolizing private consultants in the ‘Test and Trace system’ resembles Heartfield’s original image of Hitler taking money from a man symbolizing big business; both share a common feature of *corruption* and *favoritism*. The indirect homogeneous intervisuality in this image emphasizes Johnson’s government corruption comparing it with Hitler’s.

24 <https://press.files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n2129/html/ch04.xhtml>
25 <https://twitter.com/DaveBrownToons/status/1407751253761871873/photo/1>
26 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Heartfield>



Figure 12. Dave Brown's opinion on the British Government's corruption and the test.



Figure 13. John Heartfield's poster 'DER SINN DES HITLERGRUSSES' (October, 1932)²⁷ and trace system. October 15th, 2020, *The Independent*.²⁸

7. Discussion and Conclusions

Despite the extensive research on intertextuality in verbal and visual discourse types by scholars such as Martínez Alfaro (268-285), Bazerman (83-95), Allen (2011), Panigrahi and Chandra (251-264), Hodges (1-16) and Zannini (1-18), this study pursues an alternative path, particularly that related to the context of political cartoons. It aims to explore how visual intertextuality, the 'intervisuality' of political or historical characters, adds a lot to the communicative value of the cartoons. Visual allusions or intertextuality can be employed to create humor in cartoons (Alsadi and Howard 45).

By referencing historical figures, cartoonists can subtly critique and mock contemporary politicians without overt transgression. Tsakona (2) discusses the significant role of intervisuality in interpreting cartoons, noting that it can create a communication gap and power imbalance between those who can and cannot decipher the references. Kuipers (226-227) further emphasizes that humor often relies on implicit references and double meanings, which are integral to political cartoons featuring visual intertextuality. The analysis of cartoons with historical figure references demonstrates how cartoonists avoid direct criticism by using contrasting

27 <https://www.everypicture.org/the-meaning-of-the-hilter-salute->

28 <https://twitter.com/DaveBrownToons/status/1316788825365118976>

or supportive juxtapositions. The preference for the former is driven by two main reasons: first, to highlight the contributions of historical figures, and second, to undermine contemporary politicians and their actions. This approach, thus, allows British cartoonists to convey their ideology and highlight the power of images in exposing the hypocrisy and duplicity of contemporary politicians (e.g., Boris Johnson) compared to their predecessors. This method goes beyond mere metaphor.

Although direct and straightforward criticism is sometimes necessary to assess government shortcomings and inefficiencies, the satirical use of visual intertexts allows cartoonists to address these flaws more subtly. The effectiveness of indirectness of specific historical references requires sophisticated knowledge and effort to decode the underlying messages. This communicative function aims to provide direct accessibility to a broad readership, including those who may lack cultural familiarity with the character or associated cultural symbols, such as songs, illustrations, and culturally significant icons, as well as tangible representations like animals and related elements.

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