Humour and intertextuality in Steve Bell's political cartoons

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse 12 political cartoons published by Steve Bell in the left-wing oriented newspaper The Guardian *to show how visual metaphors and metonymies and intertextual references are powerful strategies to present potent rhetorical depictions of political candidates and political issues. These devices are used to establish intertextual links across political cartoons and historical events, contemporary culture, paintings, literary works and illustrations. The themes that appear regularly in political cartoons have been identified, as well as a number of categories of source domains in visual metaphors. The analysis of the cartoons reveals that the interpretation of the cartoon and the appreciation of humour depend on the audience's access to background knowledge, both of the political situation described in the cartoon and the intertextual references presented, on the audience's ideology and on the decoding of the characteristics mapped onto the target of the metaphor.* [1]

Keywords: political cartoon, intertextuality, visual metaphor, background knowledge.

1. Introduction

The interface between humour and intertextuality is one of the defining features of political cartoons. Cartoons exhibit a variety of purposes (see among others El Refaie 2009; Agüero Guerra 2016; Yus 2016), have a clear ideological function and their purpose is to comment on or satirise a social issue or political event. Cartoonists use different strategies to present potent rhetorical depictions of political candidates and an alternative vision of reality. These strategies include visual metaphors and intertextuality, used either in monomodal or multimodal formats. In a monomodal format, the message is transmitted by the visual components of the cartoon, whereas in a multimodal format, there is a combination of text and images.

The aim of this paper is to analyse visual metaphors and connections in a number of multimodal political cartoons published by Steve Bell in the left-wing oriented British newspaper *The Guardian* to show how these devices can be strategically used to establish

intertextual links across political cartoons and historical events, contemporary popular culture, paintings, literary works and illustrations. Visual metaphors and intertextual references or allusions are used to introduce offensive comments or attributes and, in this way, to reinforce the critical messages transmitted in the cartoons. The analysis reveals that cartoons offer a negative portrayal of the characters depicted: the characteristics mapped from the source to the target in the visual metaphors are used as a means of attacking and criticizing the politicians represented in the images. This study also demonstrates that cartoon interpretation depends on reader's access to background knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions forming a context in which new incoming information is processed. Thus, reader's ability to recover contextual information is essential as the creator of the cartoon normally leaves implicit as much information as s/he thinks can be extracted by the reader in the course of interpretation.

2. Definition of political cartoons, allusions and visual metaphors

A political cartoon is "an illustration, usually in a single panel, published in the editorial or comments page of a newspaper" whose purpose is "to represent an aspect of social, cultural or political life in a way that condenses reality and transforms it in a striking, original and/or humorous way" (El Refaie 2009: 175). As Agüero Guerra (2016: 59) points out, cartoons are different from other graphic formats in the medium of comics such as comic strips, comic books, or graphic novels, in that they do not consist of a sequence of juxtaposed panels, but are a narrative on their own. Political cartoons have a clear ideological function. Their purpose is to comment on or satirise a social issue or political event, and usually they have as the target of their criticism specific politicians or political leaders. It could be said that a political cartoon is an editorial in pictures, working with a traditional armoury of images and often including caricature and humour (Gombrich 1963; Seymour-Ure 2001: 333).

Seymour-Ure (2001: 333) describes some of the main characteristics of political cartoons published in newspapers: 1) they are graphic in a largely verbal medium; 2) they exaggerate and distort in a type of publication that values factual accuracy and objectivity; 3) they offer a type of comment – assertive, emotional, and often with several layers of meaning- alongside editorial articles that use the conventions of evidence and reasoned argument. The cartoonists' advantage is that their visual vocabulary enables them to convey opinions and feelings that, at the extreme, could not be expressed in words, as the visual mode is more permissive when it comes to satirise politicians. In addition, cartoonists do not necessarily have to support the line of the newspaper.[2]

Political cartoons can be very diverse, but there is a certain established style among most of them. They have been located as a subcategory of political humour or political satire. As a matter of fact, Tsakona (2009: 1172) argues that humour is considered to be the *sine qua non* for cartoons. This is not always the case, however, since political cartoons can be unfunny or non-satirical when dealing with tragic political events (see Diamond 2002; Ridanpää 2009). Whether the public laughs or not will depend on the seriousness of the topic, how ideologically close/distant the reader is from the cartoonist or, most importantly, it will depend on the correct decoding of the incongruity typically present in a political cartoon. I consider, together with Diamond (2002: 252), that cartoons should be located as a subclass of political symbols which work by imagery. Political cartoons rely on irony, double meanings, allusions, and nuances, so they are constantly in danger of being misunderstood (Seymour-Ure 2001: 335). Visual analogies (Burack 1994; El Refaie 2003), intertextuality, including cultural

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[2] In this respect, Harvey (1994) points out that, at *The Guardian*, "Steve Bell and Martin Rowson work pretty constantly at the fringes of what is acceptable, except from caution about the law".

memory (DeSousa & Medhurst 1982: 49) and the sociopolitical context (El Refaie 2003), are other important aspects of political cartoons.

Visual analogies are often the heart of cartoons and what animates thought and emotion (Burack 1994: 19). They consist of characters, objects, or simplified situations that represent more complex issues. The artist does not make a literal statement about the issue; he likens it to something else and, by means of this comparison, calls upon interpretation.

Cartoon meaning is produced either via two semiotic modes, the verbal and the visual, or solely via the visual mode (Tsakona 2009). Agüero Guerra (2016: 59) distinguishes between monomodal cartoons, in which the humorous message is rendered exclusively by their pictorial components, and multimodal cartoons, in which the visual elements are intertwined with verbal texts to communicate a joint message. The cartoons under analysis in this study belong to the multimodal category. Both images and texts in the cartoon have to be decoded and inferred. There are also several themes that appear regularly in political cartoons: (i) *political commonplaces*, which can contain themes such as foreign relations, the state of the economy, the electoral framework, or political processes; (ii) *literary or cultural allusions*, which are references that stand for "any fictive or mythical character, any narrative or form, whether drawn from folklore, literature or the electronic media" (DeSousa & Medhurst 1981); (iii) *popular perception of personal character traits*, including age, charisma, and morality; and (iv) *idiosyncratic and transient situations*, which contain unexpected events with a timely message and an immediate impact (DeSousa & Medhurst 1981).

In regard to allusions, Lennon (2004: 1) states that they are characterised as containing a short stretch of discourse that is recognised by the reader as "a deliberate play on a piece of well-known composed language or name so as to convey implicit meaning". While Lennon's definition refers to verbal language, the interesting part of this research is that allusions may occur across semiotic resources, spanning both words and images (Caple 2010: 112) creating a sort of intersemiotic word-image play (Caple 2008; Moya-Guijarro 2016). Allusions are generally described as "a passing reference without explicit identification to (i) a literary or historical person place or event, or to another literary work or passage" (Abrams 2009 in Caple 2010: 111); and also to (ii) contemporary popular culture – such as current movies, TV shows, or national sports events, among others.

Visual metaphors are also a defining characteristic of political cartoons (see among others Pinar-Sanz 2008, 2012, 2018; El Refaie 2009; Agüero-Guerra 2016; Yus 2016; Forceville & van Laar 2019). Lakoff & Johnson (1980) suggest that "the essence of the metaphor is understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another". As Forceville & van de Laar (2019) point out, any metaphor should be rephrasable in terms of *A is B*, as the interpretation of the metaphor "boils down to the mapping of typical attributes, actions and attitudes associated with B upon attributes, actions and attitudes associated with A". According to Forceville & van Laar (2019), in a visual metaphor both the target and the source are depicted or visually suggested. For something to be identifiable and interpretable as a visual or multimodal metaphor, the following criteria must be met (Forceville 2013: 59, adapted in Forceville & van de Laar 2019):

a) an identity relation has been created between two phenomena (Lakoff & Johnson's "things") that, in the given context, belong to different categories;
b) the phenomena are to be understood as *target* (domain) and *source* (domain), respectively;
c) target and source are not, in the given context, reversible; at least one characteristic/connotation/emotion/attitude associated with the source domain can be pertinently "mapped" onto the target domain; often a cluster of internally related

connotations is to be so mapped. It is this mapping of (clusters of) features that constitutes the interpretation of the metaphor.

In addition to visual metaphors, *contextual metaphors* are also discussed here. In contextual metaphors, either the target or the source is not visually represented and has to be derived from context (Genova 2018a, 2018b). Schilperoord & Maes (2009: 220) determined the way in which two domains are realised in editorial cartoons: (i) only one domain is expressed visually, (ii) two domains are expressed separately and (iii) the two domains are visually integrated (*fusion*).

Closely related to visual metaphors are visual metonymies, which involve a set of conceptual correspondence or mappings between two images within a single domain (Moya-Guijarro 2019a: 196, 2019b).

As stated in the introduction, the aim of this paper is to show how visual metaphors, allusions and visual analogies can be strategically used to establish intertextual links across political cartoons and historical events, contemporary popular culture, paintings, literary works and illustrations. Therefore, the following Section deals with intertextuality and humour.

3. Intertextuality and humour

Utterly related to visual analogies, visual metaphors, and allusions mentioned in the previous Section is the term *intertextuality* (Bakhtin 1973, 1981, 1986). Bakhtin insists upon the intertextual nature of all texts, observing that all texts necessarily reference, respond to, and to greater or lesser extent incorporate other texts both actual and prospective, and sees audiences entering into complex dialogues with these texts rather than passively receiving their meaning. The term *intertextuality* implies that the author's intentions are irrelevant and only other texts can supply meaning. However, I consider that the person who makes or interprets a sign is important and his/her interpretation is shaped by his/her social, cultural, political, and technological environments (Jewitt et al. 2016). In line with Jewitt et al. (2016: 68), who argue that recognising the agency of the sign maker and their (implicit or explicit) intentionality is crucial, I propose that in the case of political cartoons the author's intentions must necessarily be taken into account. In fact, Conradie (2012: 296) mentions the importance of informative and communicative intentions as defined by Wilson & Sperber (2004: 613) and Crook (2004: 717). In Conradie's words (Conradie 2012: 296), the *informative* is the intention to affect one's target audience in some way, while the *communicative* refers to the intention to inform the intended audience of one's informative intention.

The meaning of most political cartoons is largely dependent on reader's knowledge of the original referenced texts. According to Hitchon & Hura (1997: 146), the result is that failure to recognise the intertextual reference as such may dilute the text's meaning or compromise its intelligibility altogether. As Fairclough (1992: 102-103) points out, intertextual allusions and links may render texts opaque and inaccessible to certain addressees, thus establishing relations of power among interlocutors. In line with Tsakona (2018: 2), I consider that intertextuality is important for interpreting cartoons because it may create a communication gap and power imbalance between the interlocutors who can interpret the cartoons and those who cannot. This interpretation also includes the appreciation of humour. As Kuipers (2009: 225) points out, "humour marks symbolic boundaries: its appreciation relies on knowledge that some people have, and others do not". I agree with Kuipers (2009: 225) when she mentions that only people familiar with a specific culture, code language, group, field or social setting may be able to decode, in the present case, the humour in a political cartoon. As Kuipers (2009: 226-227) mentions, humour often relies on implicit references, double

meanings and allusions. In fact, perception is not automatic, but mediated by a person's background knowledge, expectations, and assumptions about the world within which images are processed (Yus 2003). It is reader's responsibility to decipher the hidden meaning in the cartoon. 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. The cartoons under analysis in this paper are an example. Only when the reader is able to get what the author intended to mean, the intertextual reference is truly successful.

4. Analysis

This paper analyses 12 political cartoons published by Steve Bell in *The Guardian* between 2012 and 2018. The cartoons include both British and international political leaders and deal with issues relevant mainly to the UK, even though there are also references to European and world affairs.

In order to carry out the analysis, the targets and sources of the visual metaphors included in the cartoons have been identified. The study reveals that the targets of the metaphors attested are the political leaders in power during the time the cartoons were published, even though references are also made to relevant politicians in the past. Thus, some of the targets are David Cameron (Leader of the Conservative Party from 2005 to 2016, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 2010 to 2016), Theresa May (Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Leader of the Conservative Party from 2016 to 2019), Jeremy Corbyn (Leader of the Labour Party since 2015), Boris Johnson (Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from 2016 to 2018, Conservative Party and Prime Minister from July 2019) or Margaret Thatcher (Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990 and Leader of the Conservative Party from 1975 to 1990).

Even though the cartoons focus mainly on British political affairs and politicians, references are also made to politicians from other countries, such as Angela Merkel (Chancellor of Germany since 2005), Donald Trump (President of the United States since 2017), Vladimir Putin (President of Russia since 2012) or Emmanuel Macron (President of the French Republic since 2017), as long as the topic of the cartoon deals with British politics.

Steve Bell usually depicts each leader with characteristic traits that are easily recognised by his audience. Cameron is ridiculously depicted with a condom on his head,[3] Theresa May as a kitten-heel leopard-skin shoe-wearing harlequin, Angela Merkel as a sadistic dominatrix, Trump as toilet bowl,[4] and Putin is usually depicted with a red star on his forehead. Jeremy Corbyn does not seem to have any specific traits, probably because of ideological reasons (Steve Bell works for a left-wing newspaper, and Corbyn is the leader of the Labour Party).

Two different types of sources have been identified, and therefore two levels of analysis will be carried out. In the first level a fixed characteristic is mapped onto the target, as explained above. Once this has been done, there is another level in which other characteristics

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[3] In Slattery (2010), Bell explains the reasons that led him to draw Cameron with a condom on his head. He mentions his smoothness, plumpness and watery eyes and a baby-bottom complexion. In Steve Bell's words, "total moral opportunism combined with a complete, engorged and erectile sense of his own [i.e. Cameron's] responsibility. Thus, it was that the condom unrolled over his smooth head. It seemed so perfect and so apt, to me at least, and so after some initial opposition, I elected to run with it".

[4] Bell (2017) describes the way he imagined Trump after being elected President of the United States: "On the morning waking up to the news that he's actually come to power and I just despairingly did him as a toilet bowl. His hair is a kind of golden toilet seat, but it kind of works, there is something utterly disgusting about Trump".

are mapped from the source to the 'new' target. The analysis reveals a number of categories of source domain:

1) Contemporary popular culture
2) Classical sculpture
3) Literature and illustrations of literary works
4) Paintings

The following Sections describe different cartoons under the abovementioned categories, analysing the visual metaphors and intertextual references found therein.

4.1. Contemporary popular culture

Popular culture consists of the aspects of attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, customs, and tastes that define the people of any society. Popular culture is, in the historic use of the term, the culture of the people (Browne 1972). As Delaney (2007) points out, examples of popular culture come from a wide array of genres, including popular music, print, cyber culture, sports, entertainment, leisure, fads, advertising and television. Some examples of popular culture are shown in Figures (1) and (2), even though to some extent popular culture seems to pervade the cartoons analysed to a greater or lesser extent.

In Figure (1), Cameron is depicted as an action man, that is, an action figure toy in combat clothes launched in Britain in 1966 and still produced nowadays. Taking into account the two levels of analysis mentioned before, the first visual metaphor is CAMERON IS A CONDOM, where there is a fusion of target and source. Once this has been identified, he gets other attributes, those of action man: CAMERON IS ACTION MAN. The cartoon was published in 2013 after Cameron was criticised for 'defending' the big six energy companies. The Labour party claimed that Cameron had once spoken of tough action to make sure household bills fell when wholesale prices dropped. However, the image on the left-hand side of the cartoon seems to depict that he has not fulfilled his promise and is in the hands of the Labour Party. In addition, in colloquial language, action man is (i) a man of action, a man who prefers to do things rather than think about and discuss them, and (ii) a dynamic, macho type of man. The verbal part of the cartoon says "he talks". The criticism of Cameron's lack of "action" is conveyed through the intertextual references to action man as a toy but also through both meanings of "man of action".
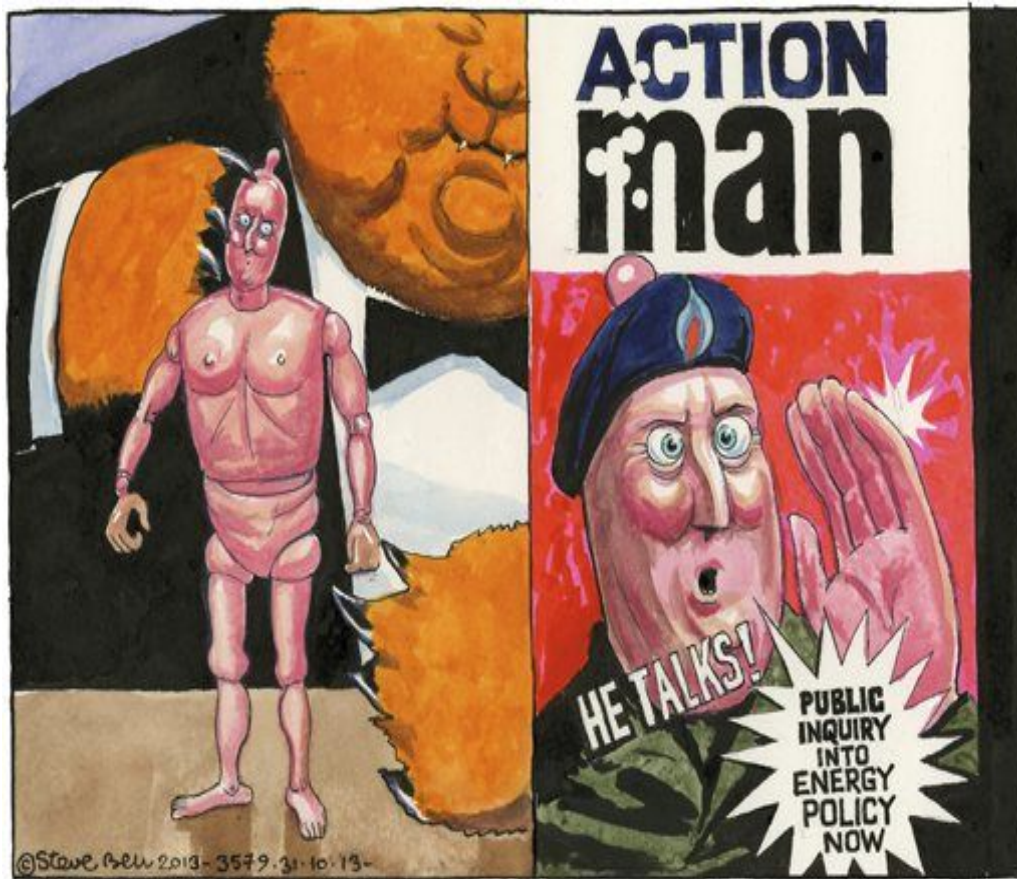
Figure 1. Steve Bell on energy policy and David Cameron. The Guardian, 31 October 2013. Copyright © Steve Bell 2013 – All Rights Reserved, http://www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse

In Figure (2), the metaphor is JEREMY CORBYN IS POOPDECK, in which there is a fusion of target and source. The first impression is that Corbyn is depicted as Popeye. However, the beard gives the reader the clue that it is Poopdeck Pappy, Popeye's father. It must be noted that in the first level of analysis, Bell depicts Corbyn as Poopdeck speaking non-standard English. There is a metonymy: PARTY LEADER IS PARTY, triggered by Corbyn's image.

In regard to the second level of analysis, the metonymy RED ROSE FOR LABOUR PARTY ALSO needs to be mentioned. Labour's logo is drawn on his right arm in place of Popeye's anchor and there is a red star on his cap. The attributes typically associated with Popeye are mapped onto Jeremy Corbyn: his superhuman strength after eating an always-handy can of spinach. Steve Bell signs it and writes "Apologies to Elzie Segar", Popeye's author. In addition to this signature, the caption "I yam what I yam" represents Popeye's uneducated way of speaking.

This cartoon was published after Prime Minister Theresa May announced that there was going to be a snap general election in 2017, even though it was not due until May 2020. May explained that she hoped to secure a larger majority in order to "strengthen her hand" in the forthcoming Brexit negotiations. Opinion polls had consistently shown strong leads for the Conservatives over Labour. Even though poll ratings were not favorable, Jeremy Corbyn embarked on an energetic program of public meetings and rallies up and down the country (Bell 2017) in an attempt to get good results for his party. The intertextual references to Popeye and spinach are open to interpretation: Corbyn needs to make a superhuman effort in order to get good results for his party or because he is like Popeye, he will definitely get a good outcome in the snap election, which in fact he did.
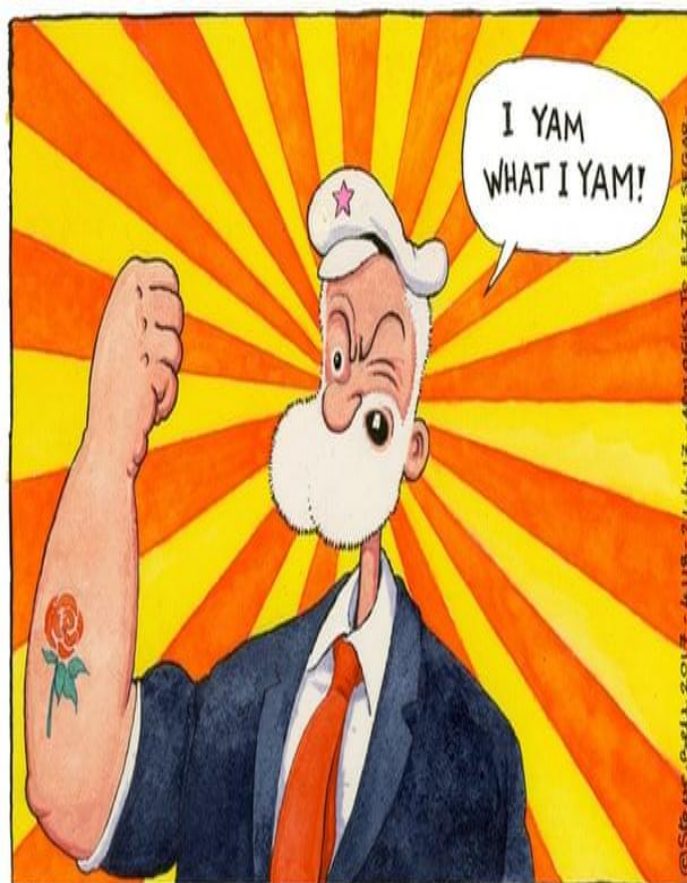
Figure 2. Jeremy Corbyn as Poopdeck Pappy. The Guardian, 21 April 2017. Copyright © Steve Bell 2017 – All Rights Reserved, http://www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse

4.2. Classical sculpture

Classical sculpture is another potent source for visual metaphors in Steve Bell's satirical cartoons. Figure (3) was published in 2018 when the Football World Cup took place in Russia and Boris Johnson compared the event to the 1936 Olympic Games under Hitler[5] amid escalating tensions over the poisoning of the former Russian spy Sergei Skripal in the UK.[6] In the first level of analysis, Putin is depicted with the red star on his forehead and instead of the discus he is holding a world cup ball. Once the main character has been identified, one metonymy and one visual metaphor emerge: the metonymy PUTIN IS RUSSIAN FEDERATION and the visual metaphor PUTIN IS DISCOBOLUS. Discobolus is one of the most iconic artworks of classical antiquity, figuring a youthful ancient Greek athlete throwing discus (Figure 4). This artwork has traditionally represented the values of the Olympic Games.[7] On the left-hand side Theresa May and Boris Johnson are depicted with a fish on their mouths, which could be an intertextual reference to the idiom "to smell fishy". Does Bell imply that Boris Johnson and Theresa May are being dishonest in the Skripal affair?

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[5] As Cody (2016: 2) points out, "The Nazi party saw the Games as an opportunity to display Aryan superiority on the international stage". According to this author, the Games were also marred by antisemitism and discrimination.

[6] The BBC reported that, on 4 March, a former Russian spy and his daughter were found seriously ill on a bench in Salisbury. They had been poisoned by a nerve agent, in an attack "almost certainly" approved by the Russian state.

[7] The core values of the Olympic Games are excellence, friendship and respect.

The second level of interpretation is more difficult to understand, as it is not so well-known that in 1938 Hitler bought a copy of *The Discobolus*. As Sook (2015) points out, the Nazis drew much aesthetic inspiration from the art of the ancient Greek and the *Discobolus* in particular.[8] Thus, even though the original sculpture represents positive values and attitudes, the fact that Hitler bought a copy and served as inspiration to the Nazi regime brings to mind other not so positive values. The decoding of the cartoon is then open to different interpretations: (i) Putin represents Russia and the values transmitted by the Discobolus applied to the World Cup. (ii) Putin represents, among other controversial issues, "the level of racism in Russian football and the discrimination against LGBT people in wider Russian society" (Wikipedia), in the same way as Hitler promoted his ideals of racial supremacy and antisemitism.
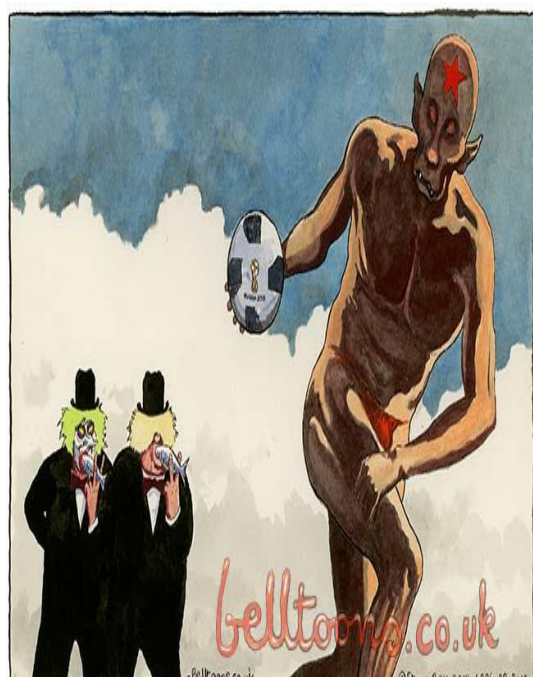

Figure 3. Steve Bell on the Football World Cup. The Guardian, 22 March 2018. Copyright © Steve Bell 2018 – All Rights Reserved, www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse

Figure 4. The Discobolus Lancellotti, Roman copy of a 5th century BC Greek original by Myron, Hadrianic period, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Photography by Carole Raddato from FRANKFURT, Germany / CC BY-SA (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0). Retrieved from https://commons.-wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Discobolus_La ncellotti,_Roman_copy_of_a_5th_century_B C_Greek_original_by_Myron,_Hadrianic_per iod,_Palazzo_Massimo_alle_Terme_(113981 29933).jpg

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[8] The film *Olympia* (1938) documented the Berlin Olympics, known as the Nazi Olympics, held in 1936. The opening sequence of this film shows the ruins of the Acropolis and several ancient sculptures, one of which is the *Discobolus*. Sook (2015) describes this sequence as follows: "Its surface glistening with oil, as though ready for competition, the sculpture suddenly fades away. In its place appears a living athlete adopting the same pose. Slowly he starts to swivel back and forth, before hurling his discus with all his might. The chilling message is presented with stark, poetic efficiency: the glories of Classical Greece are reborn in Nazi Germany."

4.3. Literature

Literature has proven to be a powerful resource for the creation of political cartoons. Several researchers, such as Taylor (2018) and Werner (2004) have investigated in depth the use of literary works for the creation of political cartoons. Taylor (2018) explores how the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Swift, and others were taken up by caricaturists as a means of helping the eighteenth-century British public make sense of political issues, outrages, and personalities. On his part, Werner (2004) mentions intertextual references to British literature from about 1700 to 1950. This paper contributes to such studies and identifies intertextual references to specific literary works: Alexander Dumas' famous novel *The Three Musketeers*, Beatrix Potter's tales, and an illustration of *The Divine Comedy*.

The first cartoon chosen to illustrate the intertextual use of literary works is *One for all and all f*** Greece*, referring to Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* (Figure 5). It was published in June, 2015 after Greece closed their banks and severely limited cash withdrawal ahead of a referendum on July 5. ANGELA MERKEL, CHRISTINE LAGARDE, JEAN-CLAUDE JUNKER AND MARIO DRAGHI ARE D'ARTAGNAN AND THE THREE MUSKETEERS, united against Greece on the latter's financial crisis. Once again, there is a visual fusion of target and source in this metaphor. The caption reads: "one for all and all f*** Greece" instead of "one for all and all for one", which is the Musketeers' motto. They are depicted with the Euro symbol and their pants down. The characteristics typically associated with the Three Musketeers are mapped onto the political leaders, but the result is not a positive one, rather it is a criticism of the way the Greek financial crisis is being dealt with. The text in the balloon (one for all… and all f*** Greece) is essential for the interpretation of the cartoon. The intertextual references here are relatively easy to grasp and the cognitive effort needed to decode the cartoon is relatively low, if one is familiar with the motto from Dumas' work.

Figure 5. One for all… and all f… Greece. The Guardian, 30 June 2015. Copyright © Steve Bell 2015 – All Rights Reserved, http://www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse

Karl Marx meets Beatrix Potter (Figure 6) was published after Jeremy Corbyn's first leader's conference speech held in Brighton. Bell himself explains that he was inspired by Michael White, who mentioned Beatrix Potter in the conference held after Corbyn's speech. The intertextual references in this cartoon need a significant cognitive effort to be decoded. The cartoon caption gives important information, as it refers to Karl Marx who published *The Communist Manifesto* together with Marx Engels, which has become the most celebrated pamphlet in the socialist movement- and Beatrix Potter, a well-known English writer and illustrator best known for her children's books featuring animals, such as those in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit.* Jeremy Corbyn is depicted both as Karl Marx and Mr Tod, a character from Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Mr Tod.* In this tale, Tommy Brocks kidnaps a sackful of baby rabbits, breaks into Mr Tod's house, a fox and his archenemy, and plans to cook them in his oven. Benjamin Bunny and his cousin Peter Rabbit set out to rescue them, but when Mr. Tod arrives home to find Tommy asleep in his bed, a fight ensues.

Thus, two levels of analysis have also been identified. In the first one, CORBYN IS KARL MARX. In this case, the metaphor is multimodal, as the source of the metaphor (Karl Marx) is found in the cartoon caption and thus the reader is guided when it comes to decode the full meaning of the cartoon. In the second level, CORBYN IS MR TOD, where there is a fusion of target and source. Even though Mr Tod is not a nice character in the tale, foxes are considered to be cunning and loyal. These characteristics are then mapped onto the target. Cameron is depicted as Pigling, a character from Potter's *The Tale of Pigling Bland*. This story describes the adventures of the pig of the title and how his life changes upon meeting a soul mate. The implications here might be that David Cameron's political life is to change with Corbyn as leader of the opposition party. The intertextual references to both Potter's tales and Karl Mark have an unlimited number of interpretations if the reader is familiar with them.
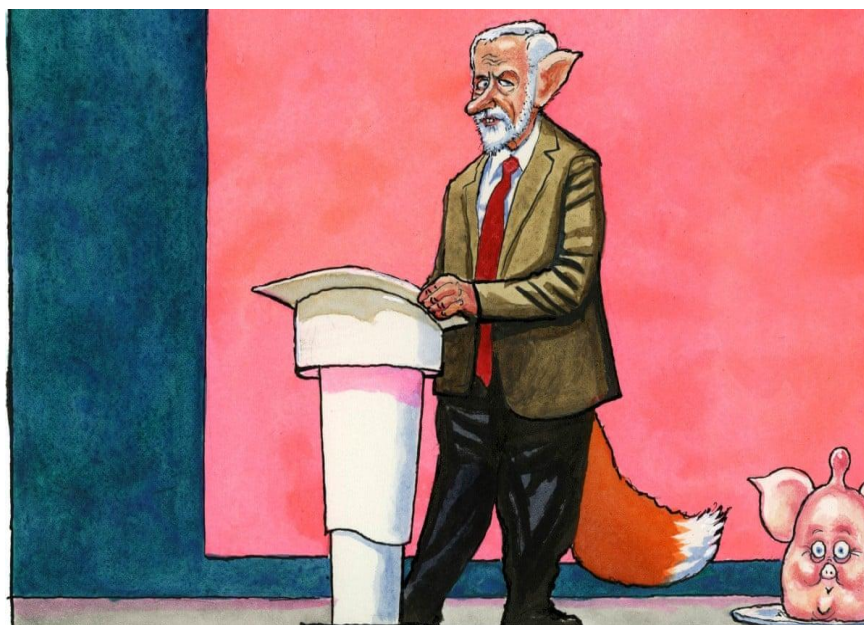

Figure 6. Karl Marx meets Beatrix Potter. The Guardian, 30 September 2015. Copyright © Steve Bell 2015 – All Rights Reserved, http://www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse

Why is this pit still open?[9] (Figure 7) was published on 9 April, 2013 when Margaret Thatcher passed away at the age of 87. By his signature on the cartoon, Bell wrote "After Gustave

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[9] For a full description of the cartoon in terms of Relevance Theory, see Pinar-Sanz (2018).

Doré" – the 19th-century French artist who illustrated Dante's masterpiece of the Middle Ages, *The Divine Comedy*, which begins with the Inferno, a description of his journey through Hell. In the Sixth Circle of Hell, Dante and Virgil walk between the burning tombs of the Heretics. The lids of the tombs are open. As they approach the group of the Epicureans, who denied the survival of the soul and believed that the body did not contain a soul and that everything dies with the body, a voice from one of the tombs calls Dante because the sinner has noticed his Tuscan accent (Roberts & Moustaki (2001: 44). The voice belongs to Farinata, a powerful political figure of Dante's time. Farinata was a leader of the Ghibelline party, the sworn enemy of Dante's Guelph party (Roberts & Moustaki 2001: 43-35). In the illustration, Farinata is sitting up with flames all around him but still fierce and terrifying as he was on Earth (Tusiani 2001: 29). Dante created an image of Farinata as a very proud person, powerful, and with a strong character. Dante described Farinata "as raising himself erect so that he could only be seen from the waist up, as though his upper body represents his total personality". This posture suggests that, spiritually, "he towers above all of Hell and creates an image of infinite strength and grandeur" (Roberts & Moustaki 2001: 5).

The cartoon depicts Margaret Thatcher in her tomb surrounded by David Cameron (Prime Minister at the time), George Osborne (Chancellor of the Exchequer) and Oliver Letwin (Cabinet Minister). She is depicted with her blonde hair, always fixed in place, and her pearl earrings and necklace, which could be considered as the epitome of traditionalism, and her trademark blue suit. Thus, Margaret Thatcher is represented as the important and influential political representative she was, with the same majestic figure she had when she ruled the country with her rough political style. Thatcher's image then triggers the metonymies PARTY LEADER IS PARTY, MARGARETH THATCHER IS CONSERVATIVE PARTY.

The other depicted characters (Cameron, Osborne, and Letwin) are weeping in front of the tomb, kneeling. They are represented with the traits Bell assigns them and represent the first level of analysis: Cameron with a condom on his head and Osborne in bondage gear. A third wailing figure resembles Cabinet Minister Oliver Letwin and his facial expression could be an allusion to Munch's *The Scream.*

There is an important element in the cartoon which deserves some attention: "Why is this pit still open?" Thatcher's words, constituting a pun which makes reference to the coal mines which closed in the 1980s, but also to her grave, are enclosed in a jagged contour balloon with sharp edged protrusions and are delivered to a weeping David Cameron and George Osborne. Capital bold letters are used, indicating that Thatcher is shouting. The visual elements relate "pit" to Thatcher's grave as the most accessible interpretation. However, background knowledge gives readers the clue to the other interpretation, namely the miner's strike, which was the biggest confrontation between Thatcher's government and trade unions and lasted over a year. In this way, Bell's jocular approach to death, a source of offence and disrespect towards the former British Prime Minister, is not used at random: it serves the cartoonist's purpose to criticise the demise of coal mining in Britain.

Once the reader has identified the characters in the cartoon, decoded the meaning transmitted in the verbal part, and activated the background knowledge on Gustave Doré's illustration in the first level of analysis (Figure 8), in the second level a contextual metaphor is identified: MARGARET THATCHER IS FARINATA. The characteristics of Farinata, as the source domain, are mapped onto the target domain, MARGARET THATCHER, but have to be derived from background knowledge as it is not visually represented. Dante created an image of Farinata as a very proud person, powerful, and with a strong character, features which are transferred to Thatcher. In this way, by analogy with Farinata, the cartoonist chose to draw an offensive portrait of Thatcher.

Figure 7. Why is this pit still open? The Guardian, 9 April 2013. Copyright © Steve Bell 2013 – All Rights Reserved, http://www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse

Figure 8. Illustration by Gustave Doré. Inferno Canto 10 verses 40-42. Reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution Share-alike. Retrieved from https://commons.wiki-media.org/wiki/File:Inferno_Canto_10_v erses_40-42.jpg.

The analysis of the intertextual references in these three cartoons reveals that they can be a potent rhetorical device which make people in or out. As Kuipers (2009: 228) points out, it can be considered as a high cultural genre with an intellectual style. The allusions and intertextual references in this Section are not easy to decode as knowledge of the political situation and also knowledge of classical literary works are needed in order to fully understand the cartoons.

4.4. Paintings

Cartoonists in general, and Steve Bell in particular, turn to paintings as a source of the metaphors in their cartoons. Some of the paintings are well known, so the meaning of the cartoon is easily decoded. However, some other paintings are not so well-known and the intertextual references and allusions may not be accessible to every reader. The cognitive effort needed to understand the cartoon might be great if the target audience is not sophisticated enough. It must be born in mind, however, that Bell provides clear textual clues (*After XY*), so the audience knows that some high art allusion is intended and can then act accordingly. In the examples chosen in this paper, two of them are very famous (*La Gioconda* by Leonardo Da Vinci and *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo). The others may be known in certain spheres, but not to the big public (*Liberty Leading the People* by Delacroix, *Napoleon across the Alps* by Jacques Louis David and *The Nightmare* by Fuseli).

In this Section, there is a variety of targets, ranging from Jeremy Corbyn to Donald Trump, Angela Merkel, Boris Johnson, Macron and Putin. They are always depicted with the characteristic traits Bell assign them, normally in a metaphorical way. As in previous Sections,

the metaphor is found in the second level of analysis and the characteristics of the source are mapped onto the target, that is, the political leaders.

The cartoon *Low level, proven liar, excellent guy* was published by Steve Bell on November 1st, 2017 in *The Guardian* (Figure 9), inspired by the fresco painting *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo (1475-1564) located in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. This fresco illustrates the Biblical creation narrative from the Book of Genesis in which God gives life to Adam, the first man. The cartoon refers to Papadopoulos' dismissal as Trump's foreign relations advisor. In 2016 Trump praised him as "an excellent guy". However, in 2017, Papadopoulos pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about being offered 'dirt' from the Russian government regarding Trump's 2016 opponent Hillary Clinton, and Trump dismissed him saying that he was a low-level volunteer and proven liar. The cartoon makes reference to the fact that Papadopoulos had Trump's campaign blessing to fix a meeting between the Trump campaign and Russian officials.

Two levels of analysis are present in the cartoon. In the first level, Trump and Putin are depicted following Bell's style. In regard to Trump, the contextual metaphor TRUMP'S HEAD IS TOILET BOWL has been identified, in which the source is visually represented but the target is derived from the placement of the toilet bowl.

After these characteristics have been grasped, others are mapped from the source domain of the second contextual metaphor identified: TRUMP IS GOD, PUTIN IS ADAM and PAPADOPOULOS IS THE LINK BETWEEN TRUMP AND PUTIN. In the original painting, God's right arm is outstretched to impart the spark of life from his own finger into that of Adam, whose left arm is extended in a pose mirroring God's, a reminder that man is created in the image and likeness of God. The intertextual references to the fresco are clear and, if the audience is familiar with politics, it is easy to establish the links between the characters represented in the fresco and the political leaders represented in the cartoon. Both political leaders are powerful and influential and have created controversy in regard to, as Wikipedia claims, "links between Russian government officials or their affiliates and individuals associated with Donald Trump, since he was a candidate for the office as part of their investigations of Russian interference in the 2016 United States elections". The link is clearly depicted in the cartoon and Papadopoulos, in the middle, is represented smaller than the other two and about to fall. Thus, Putin's and Trump's superiority is clearly signalled.

Figure 9. Low level, proven liar, excellent guy! The Guardian, 1 November 2017. Copyright © Steve Bell 2017 – All Rights Reserved, http://www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse

Figure (10) was published on September 27th, 2017, in relation to Jeremy Corbyn's conference speech and all the controversial issues with Theresa May regarding Brexit. Jeremy Corbyn is depicted as *Mona Lisa,* the Italian Renaissance painting by Leonardo Da Vinci. Thus, the metaphor to be decoded is JEREMY CORBYN IS THE MONA LISA, in which target and source have been fused. Does Bell imply that there is a new "Renaissance" for the Labour Party with Corbyn as a leader? The enigmatic character and smile of *La Gioconda* is mapped onto Jeremy Corbyn, who is also considered an enigmatic political person. There are other elements that need to be taken into account. Corbyn's head is covered with what might be considered a burkha, especially if the landscape on the left hand side of the picture is believed to be a mosque. However, on the right hand side of the cartoon, the verbal element "Brighton Pier" gives the audience a hint. Since the conference speech was held in Brighton, the landscape depicted is Brighton Royal Pavilion, an exotic palace in the centre of Brighton built as a seaside pleasure palace for King George IV and not a mosque. The interesting aspect in this cartoon is that the allusion to a mosque seems evident, especially if the Brexit controversy regarding immigrants is taken into account. If Corbyn's head is covered with a veil, rather than a burkha, one possible interpretation is that he is a saint… and Bell reminds his audience of Corbyn's initials, JC, Jesus Christ.
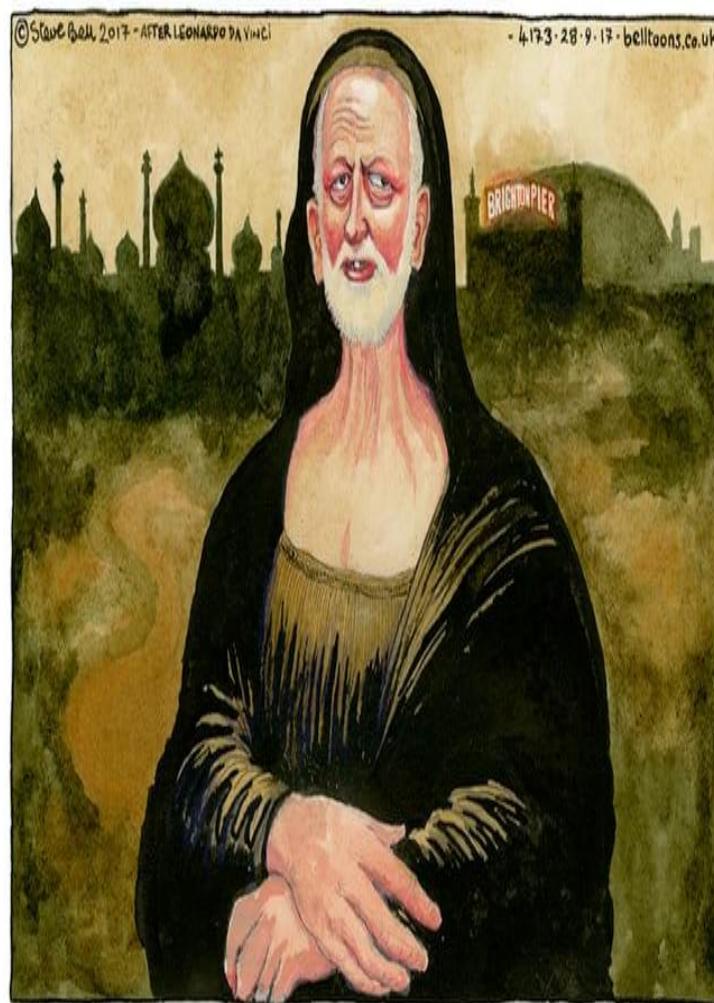
Figure 10. Steve Bell on Jeremy's Corbyn conference speech. The Guardian, 28 September 2017. Copyright © Steve Bell 2017 – All Rights Reserved, http://www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse

French painters are also a source of inspiration for Bell, as the following paragraphs show. *Austerity electing a new Greek people*[10] (Figure 11) was published by Steve Bell on May 15th, 2012 in a period of political instability in Greece. It is an allusion to the Greek crisis and to the problem of the Euro and free trade in general. In the cartoon, Bell explicitly writes "After Delacroix", informing the viewers of visual intertextuality, namely his inspiration by the painting *Liberty leading the people* by Delacroix (Figure 12), painted after the July Revolution of 1830, when Charles X was overthrown as the head of monarchy in France.

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[10] For a full analysis of this cartoon in terms of Relevance Theory, see Pinar-Sanz (2018). Some of the paragraphs included in this section are taken from Pinar-Sanz (2018).

Figure 11. Austerity electing a new Greek people. The Guardian, 15 June 2012. Copyright © Steve Bell 2012 – All Rights Reserved, http://www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse.
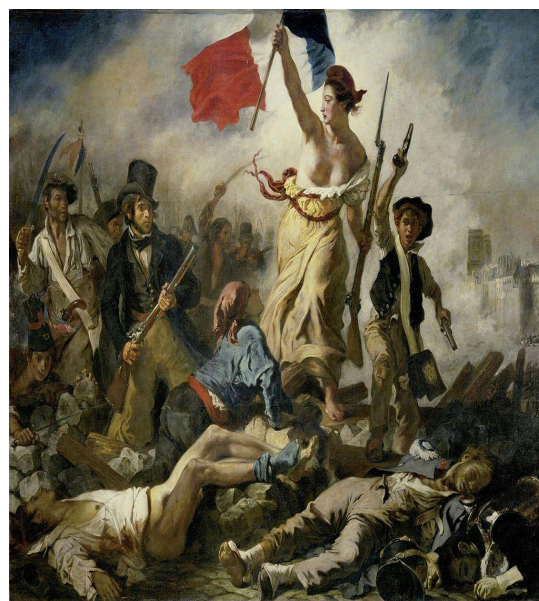
Figure 12. Liberty leading the people. Delacroix, E. (1830). Reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution Share-alike license. Retrieved from https://commons-.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:La_Libert%C3%A9_guidant_le_peuple_(RF_129)_by_Eug%C3%A8ne_Delacroix#/media/File:Eug%C3%A8ne_Delacroix_-_Le_28_Juillet._La-_Libert%C3%A9_guidant_le_peuple.jpg

The interplay between one visual element (European Flag), which is a metonymy (FLAG FOR EUROPEAN UNION) and the text ("Austerity electing a new Greek people") anchors the background. But there are some other salient iconic signs in the cartoon that the reader perceives by analogy with previously stored visual referents of the items depicted. The cartoon involves four recognisable politicians: Angela Merkel (the German Chancellor), Christine Lagarde (Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund), Herman van Rompuy (President of the European Council between 2009 and 2014), and Mario Draghi (President of the European Central Bank). The Parthenon in Athens is also identified in the background, and a war scene, where dead bodies and ruins are shown, is also depicted. Both Angela Merkel, on the one hand, and Lagarde, Rompuy and Draghi, on the other, are depicted in offensive terms: a sadistic dominatrix, in the case of Merkel, and Smurfs in the case of Lagarde, van Rompuy and Draghi. This cartoon then has intertextual references both to popular culture and classical paintings. Therefore, several visual metaphors need to be decoded: MERKEL IS EURO ZONE'S SADISTIC DOMINATRIX, MERKEL IS AUSTERITY and CHRISTINE LAGARDE, HERMAN VON RUMPUY AND MARIO DRAGHI ARE THE SMURFS. In the first two metaphors, Merkel is the target and AUSTERITY and EURO ZONE'S SADISTIC DOMINATRIX are the sources, the first one is textual, the second one is visual. The features of both source terms (AUSTERITY and DOMINATRIX) are mapped onto the target domain MERKEL to portray her in negative terms. Indeed, these source domains project an image of the German Prime Minister as an inflexible ruler, as someone who imposes her will upon the people around her at any cost. Merkel urged Greek voters to elect leaders who would stick to austerity measures and she in fact is considered as a firm defender of austerity measures, in Europe to solve the Greek and Spanish crises, among others. Merkel's plain, classic and formal clothing style that she always sports as a politician contrasts

with the dominatrix attire in the cartoon. The metonymy WHIP FOR TORTURE represents the way she is ruling Europe. Again, the idea that comes to mind is that of a woman who takes the dominant role, who subjects people to punishment. The sexual reference implied here to the world of sadomasochism serves to reinforce the offence intended: Merkel is someone who inflicts pain for pleasure and believes herself to be invincible. The offence towards Merkel which is present in Figure (11) can be best understood if we consider Schubart's (2007: 24) view of the archetype of the dominatrix: a product of capitalism and prostitution. From this viewpoint, the image of Merkel portrayed by Bell as someone fighting for austerity measures is in close connection with domination, pain, prostitution, even perversion.

The other metaphor to be decoded is CHRISTINE LAGARDE, HERMAN VAN ROMPUY AND MARIO DRAGHI ARE THE SMURFS. The new leaders who accompany Merkel in the Greek 'invasion' are portrayed as three smurfs wearing white Phrygian hats (a symbol for the new regime-or just the hats Smurfs wear), in juxtaposition to the Greek people who wear red ones (representing the old regime, or just being part of the Greek traditional attire). The image that comes to mind here is that of little blue creatures, half human and half demon, who obey and follow the dominatrix. Intertextual references to the Smurfs do not end here. Gargamel and Azrael the cat are also depicted in the cartoon, next to Christine Lagarde. Again, these characters, sworn enemies of the Smurfs, serve the cartoonist's offensive purpose: Gargamel is an evil and cruel wizard and his cat, Azrael, is also a malignant creature.[11] Then, it is not only intertextual references that can be found in this cartoon, but also references to popular culture and more specifically to *The Smurfs*. These references and allusions must be interpreted in two ways. First of all, as references to the painting *Liberty Leading the People* (Figure 12) and secondly, as intertextual references to popular culture, the current political situation and background knowledge.

Bell also finds inspiration in the French painter Jacques-Louis David, who depicted Napoleon Bonaparte crossing the Alps (Figure 14). Jacques-Louis David completed a series of paintings on the same topic between 1801 and 1805 and are considered to be the most iconic representations of Bonaparte: David's portrait captures the young Bonaparte pointing the way into European Modernity (O'Brien 2018). As O'Brien (2018) points out, the billowing cloak echoes the curtains in David's sketch of the Tennis Court Oath of 1789, symbolising the wind of revolution sweeping through France. Napoleon is represented as part of a much longer lineage of European leaders (the names of Hannnibal and Charlemagne are also carved in the rocks). Bell published the cartoon in June 2018, when Emmanuel Macron visited Britain (Figure 13). In the cartoon, Bell represents Macron and May with two visual metaphors in which there is a fusion of target and source domains: MACRON IS BONAPARTE and MAY IS HORSE. Bell has replaced the golden cloak with the flag of the European Union (FLAG IS CLOAK), maybe implying that Macron wants to be the European leader. The horse is Theresa May with the traits Bell typically depicts her (kitten-heel leopard-skin shoe-wearing harlequin: THERESA MAY IS HARLEQUIN). The metaphor TAIL IS FLAG, with a fusion of target and source has also been identified. In addition, some other conclusions can be drawn from this cartoon, such as the way the meeting went (probably Macron is 'saddling' the British PM, or feeling sympathy for Theresa May, a dead horse being ridden by a cynical Macron; see O'Brien 2018).

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[11] The physical characteristics and profile of Gargamel – with his hook nose and unquenchable lust for gold– might as well have been lifted from anti-Semitic literature. The name of the evil wizard's cat is Azrael, which is the name of the angel of death in some Hebrew tales.

Figure 13. Theresa May meets Macron. The Guardian, 19 January 2018. Copyright © Steve Bell 2018 – All Rights Reserved, http://www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse

Figure 14. Napoleon across the Alps. Jacques-Louis David. Reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution Share-alike license. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Le _Premier_Consul_franchissant_les_Alpe s_au_col_du_Grand-Saint-Bernard#/media/File:Jacques-Louis_David_007.jpg

This painting has been repeatedly used by the cartoonist to depict not only French politicians (Le Pen, Macron or Sarkozy to name only a few), but also British (David Cameron, Theresa May or Tony Blair, among others), American Prime Ministers (Donald Trump, Barack Obama, George Bush) or Canadian and Italian politicians, among other nationalities (Vetustideces 2017), which implies that it has also become part of popular culture in political backgrounds, and a conventional visual trope for Bell.

A similar cartoon was published in 2018 depicting Boris Johnson crossing the Alps on the way to the Football Cup held in Moscow (Figure 15). On this occasion Bell refers both to the French painter Meissonier and his painting *Campagne de France* (Figure 16), and to David (Figure 14). The cartoon intertextually refers to the military campaigns of Napoleon in Russia. In the first level of analysis, Boris Johnson is depicted with his hair covering all his head, the way Bell always does, and with his pants slightly down on a saggy style, riding a horse on his way to the Football World Cup and holding a ball under his arm (see Figure 15). On this occasion, Bozzoleon (a portmanteau for Boris and Napoleon as the title of the cartoon and a clear reference to Bozo the clown) is on his way to Moscow amid all the controversy surrounding the Skripal affair (see also examples 15 and 17 in Section 4.4) and the comment Boris Johnson made on the World Cup being held in Russia (also discussed in Section 4.4).

Figure 15. Bozzoleon's advance on Moscow. The Guardian, 7 March 2018. Copyright © Steve Bell 2018 – All Rights Reserved, http://www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse

Figure 16. Napoleon and his staff returning from Soisson after the Battle of Laon. Meissonier, E. Campagne de France (1864). Musée D'Orsay. Reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution Share-alike license. Retrieved from https://commons-.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=meisson ier+campagne+de+France&title=Special%3 ASearch&profile=advanced&fulltext=1&adv ancedSearch-current=%7B%7D&ns0=1&ns-6=1&ns12=1&ns14=1&ns100=1&ns106=1#/ media/File:Meissonier_-_1814,_Campagne_-de_France.jpg

The last cartoon analysed in this Section is inspired by *The Nightmare* by Anglo-Swiss painter Henry Fuseli (Figure 17). As in the rest of the cartoons, Bell guides his audience and writes after Fuseli. The painting shows a woman in deep sleep with her arms thrown below her, and with a demonic and apelike incubus[12] crouched on her chest (Figure 18). Bell published the cartoon in 2018, in the middle of the Russian crisis regarding the poisoning of Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter. In the first level of analysis, the reader identifies May in the way Bell typically depicts her: MAY IS HARLEQUIN. In the second level of analysis, the reader identifies Theresa May having a nightmare: Williamson and Putin are represented metonymically (HEAD FOR PERSON). The incubus is Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson, who told Putin in a speech "to go away and shut up". The contextual metaphor WILLIAMSON IS AN INSECT also needs to be mentioned. Putin is depicted behind the curtains, with gas surrounding his head, instead of the horsehead that appears in the painting.

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[12] An incubus is a demon in male form who, according to mythological and legendary traditions, lies upon sleeping women in order to engage in sexual activity with them.
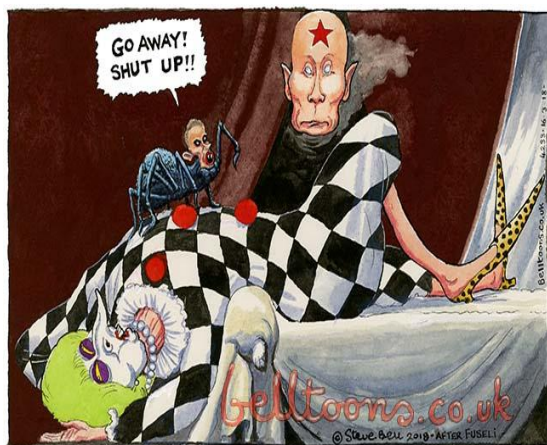
Figure 17. The Skripal affair. The Guardian, 16 March 2018. Copyright © Steve Bell 2018 – All Rights Reserved, http://www.belltoons.co.uk/reuse

Figure 18. Fuseli, J. H. *The Nightmare* (1781) Reproduced under the Creative Commons Attribution Share-alike license. Retrieved from https://commons.wiki-media.org/wiki/File:John_Henry_Fuseli_-_The_Nightmare.JPG

5. Discussion and conclusion

The introduction of this paper stated that the aim was to analyse visual metaphors and and metonymies as well as intertextual elements in a number of political cartoons to show how these devices could be strategically used to establish intertextual links across political cartoons and historical events, contemporary popular culture, paintings, literary works and illustrations. The analysis has shown that this in fact is the case and that the interpretation of the cartoon depends on the reader's access to background knowledge both of the political situation described in the cartoon and the characteristics mapped onto the target of the visual metaphor. The source of the metaphor may be a painting, a literary work or an illustration to name only a few.

The analysis shows that not every reader may have access to this background knowledge and not every reader may find the cartoons humorous. As Kuipers (2009: 228) points out, the fact that humour is appreciated by some people, but not by others means that specific knowledge is needed to understand humour. Only readers familiar with the political situation the cartoons refer to and able to decode the two metaphorical levels included in them can appreciate the humorous aspect of the cartoons. In addition, the ideological component needs to be highlighted, as those who disagree with the views and criticism expressed in the cartoons may not identify and/or appreciate the humour of such cartoons. As Forceville (1996) suggests, the non co-presence in time of political cartoons is also to be taken into account, as cartoons will be better and more quickly understood if they are seen when they are published, as belonging to a collective cognitive environment and part of a sociopolitical context.

As Tsakona (2018: 3) claims, this may contribute to creating symbolic boundaries between those who are 'in the know' and those who are not, those who have access to specific areas of knowledge and those who do not. I consider, in line with Kuipers (2009: 229), that the humour transmitted in Bell's cartoons does so by transgression, in the specific form of mockery of things that are considered too important to laugh about, such as people in power (Kuipers

2009: 230). This is clearly seen in the way the main political leaders are depicted by Bell and in the way he intertextually adds other traits.

This opens possibilities for further research, which would identify the type of audience that is able to decode the full meaning and would also measure the response to these cartoons including variables such as ideology and background knowledge.

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