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US PRESIDENT 2.0 OR HOW NETIZENS USE MEMES TO REMIX POLITICS: From pre-election discourse to its critique through textual carnivalesque

Rochat Alesia

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Faculté des lettres

FACULTÉ DES LETTRES

SECTION D'ANGLAIS – UNITÉ DE LINGUISTIQUE ANGLAISE

US PRESIDENT 2.0

OR HOW NETIZENS USE MEMES TO REMIX POLITICS:

From pre-election discourse to its critique through textual carnivalesque

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par

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OR HOW NETIZENS USE MEMES TO REMIX POLITICS:**

From pre-election discourse to its critique through textual carnivalesque

sans se prononcer sur les opinions du candidat / de la candidate.

La Faculté des lettres, conformément à son règlement, ne décerne aucune mention.

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Doyen de la Faculté des lettres

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I imagine a cacophony of ideas swirling as we think about our topics with all we can muster – with words from theorists, participants, conference audiences, friends and lovers, ghosts who haunt our studies, characters in fiction and film and dreams...

St. Pierre (2011: 622)

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CHAPTER ONE

The very power of remix lies on the participation of others as “producers” or collaborative remixers. Producers of any remix understand that once their product leaves their hands and is distributed, others will potentially remix it, again and again. [...] A meme might appear to have a life of its own as it morphs and changes. But it is negotiated, interactive. It is transformed and it transforms its users and creators.

Markham (2013: 70-71)

1 Introduction

1.1 Object of studies

To blend, to mix and to remix are fundamental qualities of a human being. These practices form the basis of unconscious processes of imagination. The development of smart computer technologies assisted human creativity whereas the invention of the internet helped to bring thousands of creative minds together. The technological genius favoured the rise of new forms of communication, fastened their exchange and enlarged the number of people involved in interactions. These characteristics have become crucial for political communication where direct targeting and the engagement of masses have always been vital for the propagation of ideas. Digital textual and visual construals have grown into a powerful tool in the twenty-first century and allowed for the voicing of people's ideas and the promotion of political views in the most creative ways.

Extensive research has been carried out on different ways in which the internet has affected social participation in protest events and how digital media have contributed to the mobilisation and recruitment of people during various movements and beyond (Bennet & Segerberg 2012; Castells 2012; Milner 2013; Huntington 2016; and others). A topic that has still not received much attention to date is the relatively new phenomenon of voicing one's political values and beliefs through the form of an internet meme used in presidential campaigns. Therefore, the object of my research is political discourse with its ideological signs revealed in its concrete digital genre form, i.e. a political internet meme. This thesis adopts a transdisciplinary analytical perspective to examine the features of internet memes in relation to pre-election campaigns. I study this phenomenon in the context of the social media platform Facebook (FB) and explore netizens' remixing practices during the US 2012 and 2016 presidential campaigns. The election cycle is an inspiring time for coining humorous political texts. The last two presidential elections in the USA have proved to be a particularly rich environment for the generation and circulation of internet memes; after all, the endless media coverage of the candidates offered boundless material for political commentary and remix (Highfield 2016; Ross & Rivers 2017; Miltner 2018; Nunes 2018). Throughout the selected period, I have observed that along with already existing pre-election campaign genres like posters, flyers, letters, debates, running lines, badges, stickers, etc. American political activists have explored and enthusiastically used internet memes as more instantaneous and easily consumable digital media forms. In this study, I intend to describe iconographic

memes, commonly known as image macros, taken from FB ideological interest groups who support either Democrats' candidates or Republican representatives. More specifically, this PhD thesis concentrates on scripto-visual remixes, notably on multimodal tactics and strategies planned by cyber activists to involve the American public with issues related to the election of the President. While observing two presidential campaigns, I have witnessed that as soon as a successful meme reaches a social networking platform, it generates countless derivatives by being imitated, revised and remixed. Approaching the Election Day FB turns into a parallel virtual world which replicates politicians, their supporters and adversaries, transforming them into clowns, zombies, boldly odd creatures of irregular proportions. As political remix, an internet meme contributes to the renegotiation of politics during the pre-election period, thereby repurposing pre-existing sources and soliciting critical sensibility of participants. Accordingly, in this thesis, I intend to analyse this carnival of politics online and how counter-discourse is created through internet memes.

After all, as the term already suggests, a vital characteristic of a meme is the imitation of different cultural phenomena. The way some internet memes are fabricated presents a so-called "vampire activity" (Jost 1985: 2). Such textual and visual operations consist of playful imitations of different aspects of political life from politicians' behaviour (in the form of a parody) to reproducing numerous types of discourses, i.e. advertising, scientific, recreational, etc. This thesis will seek to scrutinise a particular mechanism of meme creation which I call typological intertextuality, namely the imitation of various genre forms, including newspaper front pages, scientific definitions, game instructions, debate notes, nursery rhymes, fairy tales, epitaphs and many others. This camouflage practice involves the creative work of reopening textual structures, appropriating contents, sampling texts and images, transforming its fragments, fitting to various generic patterns, commenting on different ideological assumptions and stereotypes with the purpose of criticising and/or highlighting original meanings. In this thesis, an internet meme is therefore regarded as a flexible carnivalesque form of political participation open to other genres, one of the practices best suited to express one's ideology in presidential campaigns.

Media scholars have increasingly emphasised the role of internet memes in propagation of political ideas however, as I will further show, the research to date has tended to focus only on separate aspects of the phenomenon under question (Konstantineas & Vlachos 2012; Coscia 2013; Huntington 2013; Tay 2014; Varis & Blommaert 2015; Highfield & Leaver 2016; Laineste & Voolaid 2016; Katz & Shifman 2017; Ross & Rivers 2017). Few writers have

been able to draw on any systematic research regarding the digital practice of coining internet memes to date (Blackmore 1999; Knobel & Lankshear 2007; Shifman 2014a; Wiggins & Bowers 2015). Furthermore, much of the research up to now has been quantitative in nature (Segev *et al.* 2015; Gal, Shifman & Kampf 2016). So, a long-standing need arises to describe the social context of the reproduction of internet memes, to analyse its graphic and textual features, to reveal genre stratification, as well as to model cognitive processes which lie behind the practice of remixing genres from different discourses. Therefore, in this thesis, I present the global political scene which conditions the creation of memes, I define genre features and describe the core mechanism of the textual constitution of memes.

Since the contemporary digital practice of coining and spreading internet memes involves various social and technological factors, the analysis of these complex forms presents a methodological challenge. Markham (2013: 65) suggests that the study of remix culture in a media-saturated era requires a remix method. The remix method involves an assemblage of theoretical frameworks based on the reconfiguration of pre-existing material for new purposes. As a new form of sense-making, this analytical technique gains more and more attention by qualitative researchers (Kincheloe 2001, 2005; Navas 2009, 2012, 2016, 2018; Markham 2012, 2013, 2017, 2018; Church 2015; Peverini 2015). Accordingly, in this thesis, I experiment with the novel method of remix, integrating several approaches which include interdiscourse analysis, semiotic analysis, genre analysis, multimodal analysis, analysis of memetic derivations, stylistic analysis of carnivalesque humour, intertextual analysis and conceptual blending. Each method provides a different perspective which is believed to shed light on a particular aspect of political internet memes produced during the 2012 and 2016 US presidential campaigns.

1.2 Previous contributions, problem areas and research questions

An internet meme, a hallmark of remix culture, digitalisation of politics, redefinition of its subjects in the most incongruous ways is a relatively new area of human practice. As will be demonstrated below, various aspects of this complex phenomenon were an object of study in different disciplines and diverse ramifications within them but some aspects may still be seen as a *terra incognita* for linguistics.

The phenomenon of digital memetics and general remix culture has already inspired a lot of digital media scholars. It was described in a number of works to name but a few like Blackmore 1999; Deuze 2006; Navas 2009, 2012, 2016, 2018; Valtysson 2010; Borschke 2011; Konstantineas & Vlachos 2012; Castaño Díaz 2013; McKnight 2014; Shifman 2014a; Chasovskiy 2015; Church 2015; Dusenberry, Hutter & Robinson 2015; Irvin 2015; Manovich 2015; Peverini 2015; Varis & Blommaert 2015; Wiggins & Bowers 2015; Pordzik 2017; Nunes 2018. Internet memes have particularly sparked a large scholarly interest in the past decade. A growing body of academic research has aimed at identifying the features and cultural implications of internet memes (Knobel & Lankshear 2007; Milner 2013, 2016; Shifman 2014b; Chasovskiy 2015; Highfield & Leaver 2016; Anikina 2017; Kanashina 2017a). For example, Segev, Nissenbaum, Stolero and Shifman employ a large-scale quantitative analysis to reveal specific qualities or “quiddities” of each meme family and the generic attributes of the broader memetic sphere (Segev *et al.* 2015). Gal, Shifman and Kampf investigate how the array of memetic responses to a founding meme is manifested in the ways participants both imitate and alter previous models, revealing a conformist resemblance and a degree of variability (Gal *et al.* 2016). Other objects of scientific interest are the construction of the (collective) identity of participants (Milner 2014; Gal *et al.* 2016; Milner 2016), semiotic-structural analysis of internet memes (Wiggins & Bowers 2014; Pordzik 2017), memetic derivatives and viral propagation (Castaño Díaz 2013; Shifman 2014a), public mobilisation through memetic activity from multiple participatory media networks (Milner 2013), presentation of memes as speech acts (Grundlingh 2017), textual categories of modality and temporality in internet memes (Kanashina 2016), scripto-visual rhetorical strategies (Huntington 2013, 2016; Wetherbee 2015; Ross & Rivers 2017), violation of language norms, abbreviations and “erratives” in memes (Anikina 2017), description of a playful humorous or subversive tone of internet memes (Konstantineas & Vlachos 2012; Tay 2014; Laineste & Voolaid 2016; Kanashina 2017a) and even “digital memetic nonsense” creation as a social glue that bonds members of phatic, image-oriented communities for the maintenance of social networks (Katz & Shifman 2017).

Most studies of internet memes listed above use one dimension to characterise meme culture. The present research is different from previous studies in the way that it analyses an internet meme in relation to other units of language. The study employs a holistic approach where an internet meme is regarded through the paradigm of discourse-genre-text. The breakdown of the data into various dimensions enabled me to trace digital practices on different levels of

language organisation from abstract discourse to its concrete and unique textual forms. What is more, this study constitutes a novel approach to internet memes as it examines the phenomenon using concepts from various disciplines such as political discourse analysis, genre studies, textual linguistics, remix studies, cognitive linguistics, and semiotics, which have not been included in previous studies.

Researchers on computer-mediated communication (CMC) captivated by smart technologies also tend to give preference to medium factors as crucial ones in the production of media texts (Herring 2007; Beisswenger *et al.* 2012; Herring & Androutsopoulos 2015; Highfield & Leaver 2016). Although I scrutinise memes within a technological context, i.e. a FB platform where it is posted and from where it spreads, this thesis is not limited to the examination of technical possibilities of remix practices; rather, it considers the human factor as decisive in the exploration and manipulation of electronic resources. In line with Locher (2014: 560), I take into consideration the fact that, first of all, “it is human beings who use language in the provided interface [...] by working with a set of situational/social factors”. Of all factors influencing the creation of internet memes during presidential campaigns in the USA, I predominantly focus on the adherence of participants to a particular ideology and view internet memes as a powerful strategy that conveys ideological stance. Situating an internet meme within such a broad frame provides a richer sense of this creative communicative practice.

Another general notion emerging from the existing literature (Shifman 2014a, 2014b; Segev *et al.* 2015; Wetherbee 2015; Gal *et al.* 2016; Milner 2016) is that an internet meme is often viewed in relation to Dawkins’ (1989) original concept of a meme and its opposition to a biological gene. Consequently, scientific papers focusing on structural features of internet memes concentrate on reproduced qualities and then observe the meme’s deviation from the original, its various alternations or mutations. In addition, scientific research mentioned above often tends to focus on a description of the pragmatic, the structural and the ethical sides of internet genres. The current study proposes an alternative way of looking at memes from a theoretical framework that is not memetics, pragmatics and multimodal critical discourse analysis by arguing that memes are in fact speech genres that users are concerned with every day like they deal with letters, telephone conversations, advertising, and so on. Put differently, in this thesis, an internet meme is viewed as a comic speech genre (Schurina 2014), a relatively stable form of communication used in a certain area of human activity, i.e. politics.

This approach adds more value to previous studies and provides a new understanding of the phenomenon.

Traditionally, research on internet memes has tended to focus on the relationship of internet memes to mundane cultural activities and pop culture rather than other spheres (Miltner 2014; Shifman 2014b; Segev *et al.* 2015; Highfield & Leaver 2016). More and more studies appear on internet memes where creators engage in acts of political participation that convey their ideological stance (Knobel & Lankshear 2007; Huntington 2013, 2016; Tay 2014; Wetherbee 2015; Gal *et al.* 2016; Piata 2016; Kanashina 2017b). Although a large body of literature on internet memes both within and outside the realm of politics is emerging, to my knowledge, there exist only few studies to date that focus explicitly on presidential pre-electoral discourse in the American context (Tay 2014; Ross & Rivers 2017; Miltner 2018). For instance, Tay (2014) has studied humour and potential power of internet memes as default ways of responding to the US presidential elections in 2012. An example of a recent study oriented towards the analysis of memes in a presidential campaign was outlined by Ross and Rivers (2017). The scholars have examined the visual-discursive features of internet memes during the 2016 US presidential election, focusing on how memes attempt to delegitimise ideas or individuals, that is, to create a negative view of the candidates and reduce their legitimacy as future presidents. Nevertheless, much uncertainty still exists about the larger context of internet meme production in pre-electoral discourse and its structure as well as relationship with other discourses. In addition, the question of ideology reflected in political memes still remains uninvestigated.

Within theories of political communication, a meme is a new and not yet fully researched form of political participation and activism. Yet, a pivotal role of its creative reproduction and viral spread is undeniable. It reflects the moods of the public during important political events and shows public reactions towards top-down policies. People coin memes to create new meanings of political issues and circulate the ideas on social media. Nowadays, the omnipresence of internet memes is evident as “almost every major public event sprouts a stream of memes” (Shifman 2013: 3). In his book *Social Media and Everyday Politics* (2016), Highfield regards internet memes as mundane expressions of political commentary and engagement which provide alternative framings of political events and public figures. Another media scholar, Miltner (2018: 2), argues that “in the space of a decade, internet memes have gone from quirky, subcultural oddities to a ubiquitous, arguably foundational, digital media practice”. The latter discusses the theoretical origins of internet memes, traces their history

and examines memes as political digital practice in cultures all over the world. But so far only few studies (Wetherbee 2015; Kanashina 2017b; Ross & Rivers 2017) have been carried out that describe the mechanism of creation of these forms and that investigate the effects that memes have on the voters. In this thesis, I attempt to develop this idea further by working within the tradition of critical discourse analysis elaborated by Van Dijk (1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2001, 2006) and semiotics of politics promoted by Shegal (2005), and to observe it in the digital context during the US President 2.0 election. Throughout the entire thesis, I claim that political internet memes prove to be vivid examples of ideological signs of identifying who are 'we' and who are 'they', integrating all who correspond to 'we', and fiercely fighting against the ideology of 'they'. Furthermore, this dissertation studies the digitalisation of politics in relation to various comic forms that range from inoffensive humour to bitter sarcasm, but that all reflect the carnivalesque moods of the American masses in the period of the presidential campaigns.

Through the analysis of internet memes used in presidential campaigns planned by FB activists, my goal is also to demonstrate a particular strategy of intertextual stratification of genres that is used to address the audience in the best way. When fabricating internet memes, political activists do not only borrow themes, quotations, proper names and photos of political subjects, but also the whole generic pattern from other discourse domains in order to add a new sense to political events. One of the most researched areas of intertextuality is the connection of texts on a semantic level, referring to other texts in the form of quotations, allusions, reported speech, references, etc. (Piégay-Gros 1996; Fairclough 2003; Cherniavskaya 2005; Petrova 2005; Hodson Champeon 2010; Austermühl 2014). However, the category of intertextuality which studies the relation of one text with another on the level of a form has still not been sufficiently investigated. Whilst in many works researchers show their vivid interest in the occurrence of genre mixing, they integrate their observations regarding this type of intertextuality into larger studies of discourse and they do not necessarily focus on this phenomenon as a separate object (Beaugrand & Dressler 1981; Broich & Pfister 1985; Cook 1992; Adam & Bonhomme 2009). An exception are detailed studies of typological intertextuality in such genres as advertising, horoscopes, and public announcements (Fix 1997, 2000; Cherniavskaya 2003, 2004, 2005, 2009; Lugin 2006; Sachava 2008, 2009, 2010; Maingueneau 2012). Despite this, as previously pointed out, to date no research has been carried out on the imitation of genres in political discourse in the electronic meme genre. In this thesis, I therefore take a close look at fused generic patterns

that are incorporated into the structure of an internet meme, as well as their communicative purposes. I am going to show that a text can be open to other texts on a structure-compositional level, on the level of textual prototypes or models, and that it can borrow a particular type or genre of texts. In doing so, I treat visual components on the same level as a textual constituent that form a unity and that are both necessary with regard to sense-making.

To sum up, the achievements of the previously outlined studies and research strands give deep insight into the subject matter, but, as it stands, every branch provides only part of the story. By employing different qualitative modes of enquiry, the present thesis seeks to bring the different perspectives together, and to collect various ideas in order to describe the object in the most multifarious way. The challenge of grappling with complexities of the phenomenon through incorporating different methodologies suggests a revision of traditional theoretical frameworks and invites researchers to trail new paths of exploration. Hence, this study is exploratory and interpretative in nature.

Drawing upon various disciplines, this thesis sets out to describe the political internet meme as a genre with remix as its core mechanism through observation of abstract pre-election discourse, specific genre characteristics and its concrete textual organisation. More precisely, this dissertation attempts to answer five central research questions and sub-questions:

1. What are the genre features of a political internet meme?
2. What are the characteristics of the global political scene that condition the creation of memes?
3. How is counter-discourse established through political memes?
 - How does an internet meme exemplify an ideological stance as a reaction to the US parties' official signs?
 - What is the key tone of a political internet meme and what specific humorous strategies are used by the meme?
 - How does a viral become a meme through remixing?
4. What are the specifics of interdiscourse and typological intertextuality as a text-constituting mechanism of political internet memes?
 - How is interdiscourse revealed in internet memes?
 - What are the markers of integration of one genre into the textual structure of another?
 - What are the communicative purposes of these creative memes?

5. What cognitive processes are involved when combining elements from different domains in creating political memes?

By addressing these questions, this study provides a good opportunity to advance our knowledge of internet memes used in politics.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

In the introduction part, I have presented the object of the study, provided a short synopsis of previous works in the field, detected problematic areas, highlighted knowledge gaps and formulated research questions. In what follows, I will outline the organisation of this thesis.

The overall structure of the study takes the form of eight chapters, including this introductory part. Chapter Two *Data, methods and thesis overview* begins by describing the process of data collection and related ethical issues, and then looks at how the data will be approached. This chapter also discusses the complexity of investigating data in social media contexts and proposes a new methodological perspective for the analysis and interpretation, laying out the theoretical dimensions of the research. Chapters Three, Four, Five, Six and Seven address the first, second, third, fourth and fifth research questions respectively and unfold as follows: Theoretical Chapters Three and Four describe the macro-context of internet meme creation. In particular, Chapter Three *Genre of internet meme* is concerned with the observation of genre characteristics of an internet meme in the context of FB. Chapter Four *The political discourse of pre-election campaigns* addresses the question of the global context that conditions the production of memes and describes the pre-electoral subset of political discourse with cultural specifics of the US context. Other parts first synthesise scientific research of particular aspects of the object of study, recapitulate previous findings and gap areas and then proceed with the analysis of data found in social media. Notably, Chapter Five *The engagement in pre-election discourse through political memes* examines public involvement in politics which results in all sorts of collaborative humorous remixes aimed at mocking official electoral discourse. Chapter Six *Remix of discourses and genres* continues the discussion of the topic of remix culture, focusing on interdiscourse and typological intertextuality as particular strategies of text constitution of political memes. Chapter Seven *Remix from a cognitive perspective* eventually seeks to model basic mental processes which underlie remix practices when coining internet memes. Discussions which summarise the results of all research questions are

provided after every themed chapter. Finally, the conclusion in Chapter Eight draws upon the entire thesis, tying up the various theoretical and empirical strands in order to highlight the most important aspects of the object of study revealed in the course of analysis. The part *Reflexions, implications and axes for future research* provides a critique of the findings and identifies areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

To deal with the challenges of conducting qualitative research in mobile, global, and fragmented mediatized and mediated environments, do we cling to tradition, hoping for steady grounding? Or do we continually experiment?

Markham (2013: 68)

2 Data, methods and thesis overview

This chapter provides a description of the data collection and related ethical issues, to highlight the complexity of the object of study and to explain the choice of remixing methods. I also outline the research paradigm where I define the most important key terms. In addition, I explain how different parts of the thesis are related and organised. In other words, this chapter gives a global overview of the present research methodology as a sort of map. Every subsequent chapter will then delineate its own theoretical framework and the set of methods needed in order to analyse the particular aspects of political internet memes.

2.1 Data and ethical considerations

The data consist of a corpus of memes collected randomly during the periods preceding the presidential elections in the USA (March – November in 2012 and in 2016). It was retrieved from FB's publicly open "Like Pages" by means of screen captures and downloading. The programme "Quick Screen Capture" was used to make screenshots of names and avatars of the groups who posted a meme in order to indicate the source. All meme samples were downloaded and saved in GIF format. The social media platform FB was chosen as the source of my data because of the great amount of election-related memes that appeared on its pages in 2012 and 2016. In order to locate groups with a rich concentration of politically oriented memes, I searched in the FB browser for keywords related to the candidates and their parties as well as remakes and parodies of them. I then subscribed to several public groups on the topic of election to follow their daily postings. Once the first data collection period ended in 2012, I examined the corpus and tried to detect commonalities and recurrent patterns. The same procedure was applied in the 2016 pre-electoral period. The data was then stored and classified according to different categories, depending on various phenomena that it illustrated: Imitations of speech genres (letters, recipes, ads, fairy tales, etc.); metaphors which establish parallels of pre-electoral discourse with other discourses (boxing, beauty contest, etc.), comic forms (irony, sarcasm, frozen motion, pun, grotesque, etc.); ideological signs (identification, orientation, delegitimisation symbols); means of memetic reproduction (allusions, parodies, mimics, etc.); relations of image and text (complementary, double coding, contrast, etc.); group of various memetic responses to political events which created a

‘buzz’¹. After reviewing the collection, I removed memes which I considered repetitive. In addition, when discussing US official and non-official ideological signs such as slogans, logos and portraits of presidential candidates, I took data from the resource guide to the US Presidency available online² as well as from politicians’ blogs and Wikipedia pages.

The question of privacy needs to be considered since the source of data is FB “Like Pages” which are various interest-based groups created on the FB platform by political, non-profit organisations, as well as amateurs to provide their subscribers with news feeds, comments and evaluations of political events. These pages count thousands of followers and are open to a worldwide audience. Campaign followers can subscribe to show their support, receive daily updates, and forward information among people who share the same interests.

When FB users create a group, they have a choice between three privacy settings, i.e. public, closed and secret. FB notifies its users that some pages can be public if a person or a group of people deliberately unlock technical limits allowing access to larger audiences. Here is the way in which FB formulates this privacy policy:

Sharing Your Content and Information.

When you publish content or information using the Public setting, it means that you are allowing everyone, including people off of Facebook, to access and use that information, and to associate it with you (i.e., your name and profile picture).

People you share and communicate with.

When you share and communicate using our Services, you choose the audience who can see what you share. For example, when you post on Facebook, you select the audience for the post, such as a customized group of individuals, all of your Friends, or members of a Group. Likewise, when you use Messenger, you also choose the people you send photos to or message.

Public information is any information you share with a public audience, as well as information in your Public Profile, or content you share on a Facebook Page or another public forum. Public information is available to anyone on or off our Services and can be seen or accessed through online search engines, APIs, and offline media, such as on TV.

In some cases, people you share and communicate with may download or re-share this content with others on and off our Services. When you comment on another person’s post or like their content on Facebook, that person decides the audience who can see your comment or like. If their audience is public, your comment will also be public³.

¹ The users’ responses include Eastwooding memes, i.e. reacting to Clint Eastwood talking to an empty chair that represents Barack Obama at the 2012 Republican National Convention; remakes of Mitt Romney’s catch phrases “Binders full of women” and “Big Bird” during the first presidential debates; memes responding to Hillary Clinton’s use of her private server to deal with professional correspondence; memetic reproductions of Donald Trump being caught saying “Grab ’em by the pussy” and others.

² <http://www.presidentsusa.net/>

³ The extracts are taken from *The Facebook Data Policy*. Available at <https://www.facebook.com/policies>

So, the data for the present study is gathered from public FB groups where members are aware of the fact that anyone can see the group's contents. In this case, participants know that their communication is not private since the membership is not restricted. Linked to this, the American Anthropological Association (2013) states the following: "If there are thousands of members and anyone can join the conversation (meaning, you do not have to be invited), then confidentiality is not an issue because the forum is a public arena, open for anyone to read the conversations, connect them to multiple areas of inquiry, and possibly quote them in their research or in other contexts".

Similarly, Nooney and Portwood-Stacer (2014), the authors of the introduction to the special issue on internet memes in *Journal of Visual Culture* have made an interesting remark about the authorship of memetic genres: "In meme culture, flow takes primacy over origin, as the creator of an object and even the conditions in which it was made often remain unknown to the legions of users who remix it and pass it on" (Nooney & Portwood-Stacer 2014: 249). Indeed, since a newly fledged internet meme serves as raw material for its future incarnations and is initially designed as an invitation for further modifications and creative actions, it becomes hardly possible to trace this original meme-source and the author who stands behind it. In this line, the media scholar Lessig claims in his seminal book *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (2008) that a remix production is not only an individual form of expression but also a participatory mode of communication where the authorship belongs to a collective culture which heavily relies on mashing up from several sources, building upon, transforming and passing on to others.

Accordingly, the current study is ethically grounded as, firstly, it respects the guidelines (Ess *et al.* 2002; Markham & Buchanan 2012) established by Association of Internet Researchers (AOIR). In their document entitled *Ethical decision-making and Internet research*, the working committee claim that "the greater the acknowledged publicity of the venue, the less obligation there may be to protect individual privacy, confidentiality, right to informed consent" (Ess *et al.* 2002: 5). Consequently, since the distribution of posts under investigation takes place on FB pages open to the public, the obligation of obtaining written consent is lessened. This argument was supported by several fellow researchers that I consulted during the summer school *Research on computer-mediated communication in linguistics* in Ascona, Switzerland as well as at the PhD workshop *Researching Media Innovations – Approaches to Users, Producers and Texts* in Oslo, Norway. Secondly, the present study is limited to the investigation of internet memes and introduces their peritext without the inclusion of people's

reactions and comments on them. The sender of information is a group and not an individual with his/her personal characteristics. It means that communication remains predominately anonymous and people do not present a group of risk (Ess 2009; Markham & Buchanan 2012). Thirdly, the risk is minimised due to the absence of vulnerable sensitive topics of discussion (such as psychological, medical or sexual) so that their publication would not result in shame or threat of well-being (Markham & Buchanan 2015, 2017). Furthermore, the focus of the study is on *what* is produced and *how*, rather than on *who* produces, since it is the form of communication that is being analysed. As I study a discursive phenomenon, with an emphasis on intertextual references between texts and genres, the attention is given to the verbal and non-verbal means of communication rather than to individuals. Regarding this shift of focus from the content to the form, Herring notices that “discourse analysis does not normally require research ethics approval” since it reduces the risk for participants (*Specialist Research Ethics Guidance*, the University of Sheffield, 2006). Finally and very importantly, the study is oriented toward bringing a social benefit by forwarding remix practices online, putting into the spotlight incredible human capacities to select, sample, appropriate existing sources, and produce something unprecedentedly new. Therefore, the data is exploited to promote a limitless imagination and human potential, to demonstrate remixers’ creativity, to praise their constant search for innovation, originality, and to highlight the ability of ordinary people to generate memes as unique forms of voicing one’s ideas and sense-making of political reality.

To summarise, the context of the present study and the use of data are ethically grounded as the posting of memes takes place on a public page which notifies its users that a “Like Page” is open to the public and offers technical possibilities to eventually limit the access. Communication on such pages is ‘many-to-many’, with membership reaching thousands of subscribers. The material used for analysis is not related to a particular individual and his/her personal characteristics. The level of sensibility of the topic is low, which helps to avoid vulnerability of the subjects of communication. The focus on the form of communication rather than on the contents also lessens the risk for participants.

2.2 Complexity of the digital object and methodological perspectives

The research questions listed above suggest several dimensions and various vectors which the study requires to take in order to answer them. Political discourse analysis and a close

examination of textual and visual aspects of an internet meme genre and its interactions with other genres demand a careful selection of methods to conduct a rigorous study.

To begin with, Sheigal (2005: 18), for example, recommends the use of qualitative descriptive methods in political discourse analysis and underlines their importance when one studies language means and rhetorical devices exploited by people promoting political ideologies. In addition, the need for a qualitative study has become especially important when analysing genres in the era of new communication technologies. Along with textual data, digital genres often involve imagery and visuals that have a crucial impact on the meaning construction; this makes it inevitable to resort to ‘visual grammar’ and semiotics. Furthermore, an ephemeral nature of communication where a digital text is dislocated will inevitably lead the researcher to some other places and other times. In other words, the text acquires ‘volume’ due to intertextual references and hyperlinks and cannot only be read in sequence and linearity any more. Apart from the multimodal nature of the object of analysis, there is also heterogeneity on the level of structure: The superposition of several genres in one textual exemplar makes it hard to quantify the data.

It must be mentioned that many genre studies (Biber, Connor & Upton 2007; Biber & Conrad 2009) are subjected to quantitative methods like, for example, a corpus-based approach. The linguists have made a considerable contribution to the theory of identification of recurrent structures in various genres using quantitative analyses. While corpus linguistics would also have been an option to study a genre of an internet meme, for a number of reasons given earlier, the methodological approach taken in the current study is a mixed methodology based on a qualitative mode of inquiry.

The chosen direction can be also explained by the context of data production which presents a serious challenge. As Markham (2013: 68, 71) notices, “Mobile, global, and fragmented mediatized and mediated environments” where created structures are only “temporary outcomes of interaction, emerging and fading, morphing into something new” reflect the complexity of research in social media settings. Similarly, Falconer (2015: 399) views the complexities in fragmentation of knowledge available online due to mass dissemination of discontinued information in big volumes which “has warped and splintered our worldview into uncollectible and irreconcilable perspectives”. Therefore, large amounts of user-generated contents and its fragmentation in the social media context present difficulties for quantitative research. This is thus in line with Wodak (2008: 3) who claims that quantitative

analyses often lack a detailed description of particular contextualised patterns. In view of the enumerated challenges of analysis of digital contexts where “technologies, and the very nature of their social worlds seem to change, converse, collide, or collapse” (Markham & Baym 2009: ix), Kincheloe encourages to break down transdisciplinary boundaries and to clearly state the philosophical position when one undertakes a study (Kincheloe 2005: 332-333). Accordingly, I have chosen to follow hermeneutics (Creswell 2013: 18) as an epistemological assumption in my study. In other words, in this thesis, I adopt the perspective that science and research are historical, socio-cultural and ideological constructions. Within this paradigm, a researcher is destined to be an interpreter, to be Hermes who interprets the messages of the gods, twists the words, and delivers the truth as well as the falsity. The reason of this falsehood and ambiguity is the researcher him/herself. When interpreting the cosmos, we do it from within our cultural and situational boundaries and blindness. The subjectivity of the research also lies in the process of data selection, of abstracting it, and editing and reimagining it for others. Hence, a researcher and his/her knowledge can be compared to a vessel and liquid: The latter will take the shape of the vessel it is poured into. This idea is in line with Richardson and St. Pierre’s statement that “the researcher – rather than the survey, the questionnaire, or the census tape – is the ‘instrument’” (2005: 960). Kincheloe provides a more extended metaphor of subjectivity and historical-cultural determinism of knowledge when saying the following:

Process-sensitive scholars watch the world flow by like a river, where the exact contents of the water are never the same. Because all observers view an object of inquiry from their own vantage points in the web of reality, no portrait of a social phenomenon is ever exactly the same as another. Because all physical, social, cultural, psychological, and educational dynamics are connected in a larger fabric, researchers will produce different descriptions of an object of inquiry depending on what part of the fabric they have focused – what part of the river they have seen.

Kincheloe (2005: 333)

The challenges listed above inevitably require me to take a step away from traditional methodological frames where the researcher analyses data within evidence-based research models and to then organise his/her findings in neat, clear-cut categories and arrange them into disciplinary drawers. Instead, I deliberately chose to enter the object’s labyrinth of meanings not to simplify but to highlight its complexity. In doing so, I wish to be conversant with several theories and turn to a variety of disciplines and ways of seeing and interpreting

my data. The synthesis of various theories, the polyphony of opinions can help to detect new layers of meaning and therefore to gain unique insight into the object under investigation.

Some linguists (Richardson 2000; Kincheloe 2005; Richardson & St. Pierre 2005; Markham 2012, 2013, 2018) who blend different disciplines in their qualitative inquiry think about research in terms of metaphoric frames. For instance, Richardson, when talking about “bricolage” of methods, compares it with crystal which “expands, mutates, and alters while at the same time reflecting and refracting the ‘light’ of the social world. New patterns emerge and new shapes dance on the pages of the texts produced by the bricoleur” (2000 as quoted in Kincheloe 2005: 347). Kincheloe (2005: 331) draws parallels between the object of study and a model in a fashion shooting where multiple cameras take photographs “from a variety of angles, in numerous contexts and backdrops, and in relation to different moods and affects”. Markham (2013: 65), inspired by digital practices in a media-saturated era, proposes to think about research in similar terms, that is through a lens of remix “using serendipity, playing with different perspectives, generating partial renderings, moving through multiple variations, borrowing from disparate and perhaps disjunctive concepts”, connecting the familiar with the unfamiliar in order to describe a complex phenomenon. All these representations praise eclectics, a fusion of horizons, interpretive collisions, a juxtaposition of divergent ideas in studying and describing the object under investigation. A metaphor, in this case, becomes a generative tool for thinking creatively about methods. It is an attempt to embrace the debris of analysis and to formulate a long, messy and creative process of sense-making in their interpretative reflexive inquiries.

Thinking about the research process through lenses of metaphors offers not only powerful tools for better grappling with the complexity of the digital object and the means of analysing it but also of defining the role of a researcher when constructing knowledge. In this scientific paradigm, a scientist is not an observer or a documentarian who passively applies ‘correct’ universally applicable methodologies, but a maker, who enters the research process as a methodological negotiator and then actively constructs his/her own methods in shaping a research design (Kincheloe 2005: 324). A postmodern qualitative scientist is therefore often compared to a “bricoleur” who re-uses, readjusts the material with the tools at hand to create something new (Lévi-Strauss 1966; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Kincheloe 2001, 2005). Depending on the nature of the phenomenon in question, a researcher-bricoleur is empowered to draw on his/her conceptual and methodological toolkit as is best suitable for the research context (Kincheloe 2005: 340). A researcher-interpreter is also associated with a hip hop

artist, a remixer who borrows, plays and generates novice cultural forms to draw the audience's attention to different aspects of the world (Markham & Stavrova 2016), a jazz musician, a quilt maker, a producer of pictorial montage, and so forth (Kincheloe 2005: 344). Falconer views a scientist working with digital data through the optic of "a DJ of Thought" and compares both with a polymath who navigates through various disciplines and systems of knowledge:

By adopting the everyday tactic of remix, the new polymath hacks the fractured informational terrain, [...] the new polymath must operate within the constantly changing and contingent systems of networked knowledge in order for her voice to be heard. She dons a myriad of hats, employs a transdisciplinary strategy and is nomadic in her trajectory. The new polymath raids the boundaries between disciplines, absorbing and appropriating the cognitive and cultural material at her fingertips [...]. While the specialist delves deeper into a niche, often-isolated subject rabbit hole, the new polymath forms active, free associations within a transdisciplinary knowledge ecology. Much like a DJ referencing and assimilating a myriad of musical styles and beats, the polymath in the digital age is defined by her, "operative" act of remix.

Falconer (2015: 399-400)

Summing up, the complexity of the object of studies in the context of ephemeral and ad hoc ideological FB group formations along with my philosophical position of understanding that knowledge is subjective, socially constructed and historically determined – requires an adaptive mode of inquiry. Interpretative qualitative research which blends several methodological axes becomes an appropriate lens for thinking about digital culture. Furthermore, it gives freedom to illuminate it from multidimensional perspectives, describing its macro and micro patterns in the pursuit of more multilateral knowledge. Adopting the hermeneutical practice of interpretation means for me to recognise ambiguity, denaturalisation, and slipperiness of textual meaning. When analysing data, I pay particular attention to the process of exploration and creativity rather than precision and measurement.

2.3 Research methods

Why do qualitative methods remain conservative while outside the walls of the academy, inventive, creative, and powerful forms of cultural analysis thrive? Are our methods still adequate, in contexts where our conventional norms for research require more and more exceptions and 'work-arounds?'

Markham (2012: 334)

A meta-linguistic reflexion over the methods and the form of research has led the present study to break with conventional frames associated with scientific research and proposes to think about research figuratively and creatively through the framework of remix (Kincheloe 2001, 2005; Markham 2013, 2017).

Remix as a mode of qualitative inquiry and a form of sensemaking, presentation and scholarly writing is a relatively new phenomenon. The method which grew out of marginalised practices of hip hop artists, nowadays gains more and more interest in academic circles due to its appropriateness in researching digital contexts, as I have outlined in previous paragraphs. One of the editors of the book *Keywords in Remix Studies* (2018), Eduardo Navas, describes how the concept of the remix has been repositioned to evolve into a scientific paradigm, a fragmented approach, and a method with a general awareness of the ways humans combine and repurpose all things in life. The idea that this framework offers an alternative way of thinking about methodology and academic writing which is more adaptable to complexities of the twenty-first century technological mediations has been proposed by Annette Markham (2012, 2013, 2017, 2018). Her quote which opens this section suggests that qualitative methods should be in line with the time if one decides to research digital practices. Taking digital remix practice as inspiration, a researcher values the constant shifts in theories and approaches, continually moving across disciplines, borrowing from them, combining previously unlinked concepts and generating new meanings (Markham 2017).

Therefore, I deliberately dismantle the traditional genre of academic writing and its classical division into theory-method-analysis, thus being willing to experiment with remix and to present my work as a process and a product of remix. It does not necessarily mean rejecting a traditional schema, but rather rebuilding it, reworking and presenting it in a new frame where the theory and the analysis are tightly linked and mixed together. As the present study is conceptualised within a remix frame, it should not be read as a linear text which functions in terms of progression of an argument. Rather it is advised to view the study as a circular process made by cuts of knowledge which allows for a thought to be left and picked up again (Navas 2018: 254). To consider the remix practice from a scholarly perspective also means to involve a variety of methodologies without privileging a single method, blending playful experimentation with critical interrogation. Accordingly, I conceptualise the remix framework as a literacy focused on sampling different theories to draw attention to certain aspects as opposed to others, hybridising scientific literature as input for new interpretations in new media contexts, piecing together a fragmented account of the situation and my personal

interpretation of it, arranging selections from analytical findings to present a rendering that would resonate for particular audiences. Exploring data through a remix of methods and viewing the whole research as a product of remix, which is reflected in the thesis structure, can help me to promote this alternative conceptual framework as a viable academic practice.

Following the logic of remix methods, I intend to use conceptual frameworks from various disciplines such as discourse analysis, genre studies, social media studies, political linguistics, cognitive linguistics, American history and cultural studies, semiotics, stylistics, visual rhetoric, theory of humour and carnival, as well as theatrical and dramatic ways of observing and making meaning. Concretely speaking, as the main focus of this thesis is a close analysis of linguistic and graphic patterns of internet memes as well as political and digital contexts that condition their creation, I engage with qualitative research and combine methods from several disciplines.

a) Analysis of genre of internet meme (Chapter Three)

Regarding genres of digital network media in general, three tendencies can be observed. Some scholars (Beacco 2004; Bonhomme 2015) still question the unique typological status, the originality and new character of internet genres, instead claiming that digital forms are a continuity of already existing genres, their reorganisation and hybridisation having developed through a new medium of communication. Such claims are made either on the basis of analyses of digital types of text which resemble already existing familiar genres such as e-mails and discussion forums, or the inclusion into larger organisational structures of genre analysis like blogs, welcome pages which in reality present macro-genres. Researchers like Maingueneau (2013, 2014) express even more radical views on the impossibility of distinguishing internet genres at all. This perspective can be explained when considering a classical scheme of analysis to more complex digital structures. The involvement of multiple semiotic modes, the blurring of clear-cut textual categories, their peppering with hyperlinks and popping up images, the constant changing of a protocol and shifting of time-space relations – all these technical aspects certainly undermine the traditional understanding of a genre and give the impression of a chaotic and anarchic organisation of information. Nevertheless, there are more and more researchers (e.g. Gruber 2008; Herring 2007, 2013; Miltner 2018) who recognise the unique character of some internet genres and defend the idea of “the emergence of new genres as combinations of existing generic conventions, new technological means of communication and new communicative goals of users” (Gruber

2008: 72). Even though selecting, combining and hybridising are central elements of many internet genres, new genres do appear out of these creative processes of remix. Suffice it to name video mashups, music remixes, photo collages, discussion lists, text messages, tweets, spams, scripto-visual memes and many more. In line with the latter group of researchers, this thesis likewise defends the independent status of the internet meme as a genre by ‘conjugating’ it through a number of external situational and internal textual criteria using a genre analysis.

With the help of genre analysis, I analyse specific digital situations of communication, an environment where internet memes circulate. It is social medium with its chronotope features, contents, participants and their set of aims (external criterion). Then I proceed with the analysis of the genre-prototypical pattern, the structure-compositional organisation of an internet meme (internal criterion). This approach is situated within the genre analysis proposed by Maingueneau (2012). Previously, the question of the internet meme has not been treated within the framework of genre studies. Furthermore, the novelty of the present study is that the genre of internet memes is analysed in relation to the more abstract category of discourse and the concrete textual constitution, all presenting a unity and at the same time being different with regard to the basis of level of abstraction.

b) Analysis of a global context: A pre-electoral variety of political discourse (Chapter Four)

Besides genre analysis I aim to describe the macro-context of meme production that is the pre-electoral variety of political discourse. The analysis of political discourse is important in order to observe the content which is taken up by memes. In doing so, I will analyse existing scientific literature and present the main characteristics of pre-electoral discourse and its structure applied to US presidential campaigns, i.e. contents, temporal spatial setting, political actors, participants’ ideological representations and functional blocks.

In light of an interdisciplinary approach linking linguistics with political theory, I am going to study relations of language and ideology by observing various ideological signs and identify how the fundamental political opposition ‘we – they’ is realised in the context of presidential campaigns in the USA. The chosen approach is based on concepts taken from social semiotics developed by Sheigal (2005) and critical discourse analysis of Van Dijk (1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2001, 2006a,b). Applying the mental schema ‘we vs they’ to the digital practices of coining internet memes, I will attempt to identify the signs of orientation (identification of ‘we’) and

the signs of integration (consolidation of ‘us’) in the context of the American presidential campaigns.

c) Analysis of political participation through internet memes (Chapter Five)

While the first two parts mostly involve descriptive frameworks when presenting a macro-context of internet meme creation, the following parts necessitate a ‘microscope’ and more sophisticated lenses since its aim is the close reading and interpretation of textual and pictorial structures.

- Semiotic analysis

The contents of pre-election communication with its orientation and integration signs become a source of inspiration for crafting political memes. ‘Hijacked’, official political discourse is filled into memes and distorted creatively. I will therefore carry out a semiotic analysis with some elements from critical discourse analysis to observe how an internet meme exemplifies an ideological stance as counter-discourse. In doing so, I will attempt to identify delegitimisation signs (fight against ‘them’) in internet memes. A semiotic analysis of memes in social media contributes to political discourse studies as it involves data from digital practices. Although extensive research has been carried out on ideology (Wodak 1994, 1997, 2007, 2008; Parshina 2005; Reisigl & Wodak 2005, 2009; Sheigal 2005; Finlayson 2007; Fairclough & Fairclough 2012), no single study to date exists which covers the area of ideological signs as reflected in political internet memes.

- Stylistic analysis of carnivalesque humour

At this stage of the analysis of internet memes, particular attention will be paid to one of the components of the genre, notably the key tone. Humour during presidential campaigns will be presented resorting to the theory of carnival conceptualised by Bakhtin in his seminal work *Rabelais and his World* (1984). The research of humour in digital settings to date has tended to focus on the frivolous and sophomoric nature of humour (Konstantineas & Vlachos 2012; Tay 2014; Lewin-Jones 2015; Laineste & Voolaid 2016; Kanashina 2017a, 2017b; Katz & Shifman 2017). The present study presents a humorous tone of political internet memes drawing parallels with the medieval carnival laughter which reveals serious issues behind the mask of triviality. The stylistic analysis of data will be applied to distinguish several comic forms and devices of creating humour.

- *Analysis of memetic derivations through the framework of remix*

In order to show that a meme has a specific organisation composed of small units of cultural information mixed and remixed in different ways, I rely on the framework of remix studies developed by Lessig (2008), Navas (2009, 2012, 2016, 2018), Borschke (2011), Markham (2013, 2016, 2017), Shifman (2014a), Manovich (2015), Segev, Nissenbaum, Stolerio & Shifman (2015). Using this approach, I analyse various derivations of memes based on the example of Eastwooding. Previous research on the subject has been mostly restricted to limited comparisons of derived internet memes with a meme-source (Castaño Díaz 2013; Shifman 2014a; Gal *et al.* 2016). The large dataset which I collected during the 2012 presidential campaign allows me to illustrate the phenomenon of remix in a more multifarious way.

d) Analysis of remix of discourses and genres (Chapter Six)

Viewing the multimodal text of an internet meme as an open system, I proceed with an interdiscourse analysis and an analysis of typological intertextuality.

- *Interdiscourse analysis*

Taking into consideration the idea that every discourse is interdiscourse, I will analyse political discourse accordingly. In line with Maingueneau (2014: 111), I have observed the tendency that following the definition of discourse, some scholars start to concentrate on one discourse domain and reveal more or less ‘pure’ characteristics of political, literary, religious, etc. discourses, leaving all ‘alien interventions’ to a large and non-specified category of interdiscourse. Some of the scientists working with pre-electoral discourse are Vorozhtsova (2010); Khalatyan (2011); Popova (2012); Fedoseev (2013); and others. As a result, an endless list of abstract characteristics of only one aspect of a complex object is produced (Maingueneau 2014: 111).

Maingueneau (2014: 81) suggests that “toute énonciation est habitée par d’autres discours, à travers lesquels elle se construit. Les analystes du discours ont ainsi été amenés à développer non seulement des approches qui s’appuient sur des frontières mais aussi des approches qui subvertissent ces frontières” [Every statement consists of other discourses with the help of which it is constructed. Discourse analysts are therefore urged to develop not only approaches which regard discourse within its borders but also approaches which undermine these borders (Maingueneau 2014: 81, translation is mine)].

Consequently, although I situate the internet meme within the borders of political discourse, I will attempt to reveal the links with other discourses. The novelty of the approach to interdiscourse in the present study consists of drawing metaphoric parallels between pre-electoral discourse and other discourses. Furthermore, I will illustrate interdiscourse with examples taken from FB during the 2012/2016 US presidential campaigns.

- *Intertextual analysis of imitations of genres*

Most discourse studies and textual linguistics are “devoted to the investigation of the relationship between form and function in verbal communication” (Renkema 2004: 1 as quoted in Wodak 2008: 1). Research in this area is often unfolded according to a classical schema. Initially, a concrete type of text is analysed in typical repeated situations. Focusing on the characteristics which most accurately represent a particular discourse, researchers establish a list of differential features of textual types. With a set of carefully chosen criteria, genres are then grouped into typologies (Cherniavskaya 2009: 78-82). If we take the example of an internet meme, this would mean the analysis of its prototypical structural features: A photo-manipulated image with a superimposed caption commenting on the image, the layout which is regularly repeated in social media communication. But if we take a meme which looks like a letter, a fairy tale or a *Bingo* game, such memetic forms demonstrate genres used atypically in the situation of communication. These memes break their conventional prototypical form in search for more unusual and expressive means of communicating the message. Internet memes formally resembling other generic models illustrate a problem for linguistic analyses since their contents and structures reveal features of several genres and discourses in one text.

In the same vein, Dementiev (2007: 180) claims that the richness of human communication, the diversity of meanings, the twisting of functions, the speakers’ intentions make it impossible to reach an ideal typology by using only one subsystem of a language, by only one formal textual standard. The problem of heterogeneity, of ‘interactions’ and montage of textual standards is not a well-researched area in modern linguistics to date. This conditioned one of the aims of the thesis, notably the analysis of the fusion of genres in political communication, the functioning of a textual type in atypical communicative situations, the relationship of obligatory genre components and its variable structures, the dialogue of a textual exemplar with its conventional norm, the ‘negotiation’ between a discourse function and a potentially possible form of realisation of this function (Cherniavskaya 2009: 113).

Studying the montage of textual types demands special analysing tools which differ from those which traditional genre analysis can offer. To resolve this problem, I employ methods of *intertextual analysis* based on works by Cherniavskaya (2007, 2009). In particular, I deal with the micro-analysis of genre moves and verbal/non-verbal markers of incorporation of one genre into the structure of another when describing the phenomenon of typological intertextuality or the imitation of genres. I also integrate some elements from a model by Maingueneau (2012) to analyse the fusion of genres through the metaphorical concept of ‘scenography’ which provides a better understanding of the phenomenon in question, showing the discrepancy between the form of a political meme and its function. When speculating about the correlation of the form and the function of political memes that borrow genres from other discourses, I present the results based on the scheme of Fix (1997, 2000). This approach allows me to view an internet meme as a crossing point of several genres rather than a textual form with a list of typical characteristics. The approach differs from other frameworks since it focuses on heterogeneous textual patterns rather than ideal representations of genres and highlights textually flexible, dynamic borders, speakers’ possibilities of breaking a standard and playing with a genre norm. Furthermore, the analysis will show that the participants trespass the semiological sphere of political discourse in that they appeal to more ‘attractive’ ideologies through borrowing different speech genres and therefore appealing to various discourses.

e) Cognitive insight into remix through conceptual blending theory (Chapter Seven)

Textual elements and structures which we witness ‘on the surface’ of genre mixing are only the top of the iceberg. An enormous bulk of mental processes of sense-making is hidden from the researcher. Cherniavskaya (2009: 72) argues that it is possible to overcome this linguistic dilemma through the projection of the cognitive vector onto inner linguistic elements in a genre and typological approaches. Van Dijk (2009: 66) also suggests that an adequate discourse analysis requires a detailed cognitive and social analysis, and that only the integration of these accounts can help to reach both *descriptive* and *explanatory* adequacy in the study. Due to time and resource limits the present study does not pursue the ambitious goal to analyse all instances of data from a cognitive perspective. Nevertheless, I will resort to conceptual blending theory (Grady 2000; Coulson & Oakley 2000, 2006; Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Coulson 2006; Semino 2012) to model basic mental processes involved in the creation and interpretation of political internet memes. In addition, explaining the genre remix practice through a single-scope integrational network can help not only to better understand

cognitive processes behind a visible textual structure but also to ground creativity (Forceville 1996, 2012, 2013).

To sum up, to explore the mechanism of complex interactions between power and language behaviour in social media during presidential campaigns based on the example of internet memes, it would not be enough to use only one method. Only a combination of different approaches, a remix of methods with a resort to multidisciplinary studies can help to bridge socio-cultural, ideological, linguistic and cognitive aspects of political memes. The complex methodological framework including interdiscourse analysis, semiotic analysis of political ideologies, genre analysis, multimodal analysis, stylistic analysis of carnivalesque comic forms, intertextual analysis completed by conceptual integration network modelling can help address the complexity of the digital data underlining webs of relationships, momentary processes and interconnections between phenomena. I believe that input from these different approaches will provide a synergy of multiple perspectives, add polyvocality into text linguistics and contribute to a more rigorous form of knowledge production.

CHAPTER THREE

We speak only in definite speech genres, that is, all our utterances have definite and relatively stable typical *forms of construction of the whole*. [...] If speech genres did not exist and we had to originate them during the speech process and construct each utterance at will for the first time, speech communication would be almost impossible.

Bakhtin (1979, translated by McGee 1986: 78-79)

3 Genre of internet meme

Discourse as a more abstract order of text organisation is never presented as it is but always implemented in a particular speech genre form (Maingueneau 2012: 23). It means that in reality, speakers do not deal with abstract and vague ‘politics’ but are constantly faced with concrete genres, textual models, pre-fabricated through traditions of usage and contacts between different social groups in a concrete historical period. Like other discourses, pre-electoral discourse has a rich repertoire of genres which helps to regulate different socio-discursive practices, i.e. political debates, interviews with presidential candidates in a newspaper article, electoral bulletins, advertising posters, running lines, bumper stickers, and others. The range is constantly amplified in line with the complex nature of the political sphere. The emergence of new genres of communication such as political internet memes is the result of the development of media and the new possibilities of crossing political and personal spheres. This digital genre gains more and more popularity across social media platforms as an effective techno-political tool of voicing one’s opinion and encouraging others to participate. The attractiveness of internet memes in guerrilla presidential campaigns lies in its availability and limited financial resources required. These free genres, alternative to official genres of pre-electoral discourse, help to increase civic engagements in political decisions and reach wide audiences with only one click. Furthermore, the transformative work when using images, news fragments, as well as commenting on them, is a creative and humorous response to ongoing political events. Based on sampling, remixing and reappropriation of pre-existing sources, a political internet meme aims at provoking a reaction while entertaining the audience. With a growing interest in this new form of communication, there is a necessity to conduct a rigorous study which would go beyond euphoria of its charm and appreciation of technical possibilities.

Based on the given background, the purpose of this chapter is to address the first research question: *What are the genre features of a political internet meme?* In order to answer this question, I describe different aspects of an internet meme as a specific genre based on its external situational and on internal prototypical characteristics. In other words, I will present the main components of recurrent situations of communication (the medium of communication, chronotope features) and then focus on its compositional regularity or the most typical multimodal patterns. Regarding the compositional structure of an internet meme, the focus will be put on different relations between words and images.

3.1 Meme: Origins of a term and definitions

Originally, the word ‘meme’ was modelled on the biological term ‘gene’ and a shortened form of the Greek word *mimesis* (imitation). The idea belongs to the British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, who compared the phenomenon to genes and defined it as “a unit of cultural transmission, (...) a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation” (Dawkins 1989: 192). In other words, we can call a meme “an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture” (from *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). Analogous to genes, memes are thus transmitted from mind to mind, replicated and mutated when interpreted. In contrast to biological units, memes are not inherited, but born in “the soup of human culture” (Dawkins 1989: 192). This is how the author puts it himself:

...We need a name for the new replicator, a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*. “Mimeme” comes from a suitable Greek root, but I want a monosyllable that sounds a bit like “gene”. I hope my classicists friends will forgive me if I abbreviate mimeme to *meme*. If it is any consolation, it could alternatively be thought of as being related to “memory”, or to the French word *même*. It should be pronounced to rhyme with “cream”. [...] Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation.

Dawkins (1989: 192)

The scientist gives an example of catch phrases, clothing fashions, styles, ways of making pots or of building arches, in one word, every idea from “dialectical materialism” to “the tune to Happy Birthday” (Dawkins 1989; Mims 2013).

In 1976, when Dawkins coined this term, the computer technologies and internet were barely in their infancy. The researcher would probably not have foreseen that this word would become a barometer of digital participatory culture in the twenty-first century. As he observes himself in 2013, “the very idea of the meme has itself mutated and evolved in a new direction”, becoming an electronic unit leaping from IP address to IP address (Solon 2013).

Dawkins’ original definition of a meme was criticised because he applied the notion of biological replicator to a cultural phenomenon (Castaño Díaz 2013). In contrast to a gene, a unit of cultural transmission replicates itself by means of imitation, but in doing so, it does not rely on high copy fidelity. Even though there is a possibility of mutations in replications of genes, they are rather considered to be mistakes and the copy fidelity remains very high,

whereas longevity of a meme entirely depends on these ‘mutations’ and variations. As Castaño Díaz points out, when a meme copies other memes, it “transforms, invents, interpolates, censors and mixes them up producing different outcomes every time” (Castaño Díaz 2013: 87).

A milestone work on this subject was written by Susan Blackmore (1999). She was the first to move the notion from biology to social sciences, putting an accent on the actor in the meme replication chain. Blackmore claimed that memes are not autonomous entities but require a subject who would interact with the environment. She therefore viewed intentionality as a key element in meme creation. In her book *The Meme Machine* (1999), Blackmore distinguishes three types of replicators, i.e. genes, memes, and internet memes (she calls them “themes”). Under the latter she understands information units which are spread in a virtual environment via technical devices. Internet memes carry an additional property that ordinary cultural memes do not, i.e. “they leave a footprint in the media through which they propagate (for example, social networks) that renders them traceable and analysable” (Coscia 2013). Although her theory is in many ways analogous to that of Dawkins, the originality is in moving the concept from the field of genetics to social sciences and drawing attention to memes that are spread on the internet.

An interesting insight into the question of internet memes was given by Shifman in her book *Memes in Digital Culture* (2014a). Shifman noticed that “memes were not born with the Internet; they were always part of human society. However, [...] the digital era did change some fundamental aspects of memes” (Shifman 2014a: 24). Indeed, nowadays a meme is more and more associated with CMC, meaning a catchphrase, a picture, a sound or video stream, a hyperlink or a hashtag copied and spread via social networks, blogs, emails, news websites, and other channels. An internet meme can be anything from a clumsy phrase of a famous politician to a funny video clip which spontaneously gains popularity online. A great number of memes are produced and reproduced on a daily basis on the internet, social media being the biggest meme generator and sharing platform. In addition, Shifman (2014a) formulates the three main attributes ascribed to memes (in Dawkins’ sense), which are relevant to the analysis of the contemporary digital culture: A gradual propagation from individuals to society; reproduction via copying and imitation and diffusion through competition and selection. It means that a meme created by one person can reach thousands of users in one click and grow into a socio-cultural phenomenon. All memes are grouped into

memetic complexes grouped around the same subject. The ‘survival’ of memes depends on their ability to provoke memetic or imitative behaviour.

The internet meme is part of the web 2.0 culture, which is called visual-kinaesthetic (Markham 2013). In everyday face-to-face communication, beside the verbal language, people transmit their emotions and attitudes by mimics, body language, intonation, volume and pitch of the voice and other forms of self-presentation. The absence of direct physical contact between internet users and consequently the lack of clues which guide the listener/viewer in interpretation of the message lead to discovery and manipulation of graphic resources in order to compensate these lacunas. Chasovski (2015: 124) argues that a poor choice of non-verbal elements of communication (facial expression, gesture, posture, tone, etc.) obliged internet users to search actively for new means to express their emotions, feelings, impressions, attitudes to interlocutors or situations. The scholar claims this is how internet memes were born. Similarly, Thurlow (2018: 4) states that “users overcome apparent semiotic limitations, reworking and combining – often playfully – the resources at their disposal”. However, the researcher claims that new media discourse although hinging on the reworking of material constraints and hybridising speech and writing, it is “seldom just a simulation of speech; it is also an expressive, creative mode in its own right, with its own meaning potentials, its own aesthetic and poetic pleasures” (Thurlow 2012: 181). Although internet memes were originally created out of the absence of direct physical contact between interlocutors and a poor choice of material means of expressing emotions, today, they have grown into a creative means of communication, involving the use of graphic resources and an inventive combination with verbal information.

There is no accurate definition of an internet meme. Jus calls internet memes “replicating pieces of information spread through the net” (Jus 2018: 105). Milner defines internet memes as “amateur media artifacts, extensively remixed and recirculated by different participants on social media networks” (Milner 2012: iii). Wiggins and Bowers similarly call memes “artifacts of participatory digital culture” (Wiggins & Bowers 2015: 1886). In the same vein, Dynel views an internet meme as any artefact which appears on the internet and produces countless derivatives through imitation, remix, and rapid diffusion by participants in technologically mediated environment (Dynel 2016: 662). An internet meme is also broadly described as “a form of digital communication” or “contemporary form of digital political participation” by Ross and Rivers (2017: 1-2). Therefore, an internet meme is regarded, in a broad sense, as any segment of electronic communication created and replicated on the

internet (Chasovski 2015). In other words, internet memes can be remixed images or videos which circulate online and invite others to participate through the creation of derivatives (Huntington 2013). Similarly, Nooney and Portwood-Stacer (2014: 249) argue that “the designation *meme* identifies digital objects that riff on a given visual, textual or auditory form and are then appropriated, re-coded, and slotted back into the internet infrastructures they came from”. Laineste and Voolaid (2016: 27) also give a broad definition of an internet meme, calling it “a relatively complex, multi-layered, and intertextual combination of (moving) image and text that is disseminated by the active agency of internet users, becoming popular among them”. Crucially, Shifman treats internet memes as “groups of items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which were created, transformed, and circulated by many participants through digital participatory platforms” (Gal *et al.* 2016: 1700). Therefore, one of the distinctive features of an internet meme is that it is inevitably ascribed to a family of memes.

Although the term ‘internet meme’ was applied to multiple digital genres from YouTube clips to hashtags, it is most commonly associated with still images with additional textual commentary and it is therefore understood in a narrow sense (Huntington 2016). In this thesis, I adopt this narrow definition of an internet meme as a scripto-visual digital form of communication produced as a result of a deliberate process of copying, transforming and spreading cultural patterns in the world wide web. In these static iconotextual forms verbal and non-verbal components present an integral whole. From this perspective, an internet meme will be regarded as a form of remix which “represents two or more distinctive ideas, such as image macros where a picture [...] is superimposed by some text that adds meaning to the image” (Markham 2017). The emerged meaning is unique as a result of separation, transformation and hybridisation of original elements in a new mix.

Whether the scientists adopt a broad or a narrow definition, an internet meme is often viewed in relation to Dawkins’ original concept of a meme as a cultural replicator (Shifman 2014a, 2014b). Many contemporary studies focusing on internet memes are based on the theoretical framework elaborated by Shifman (2014a). It means that researchers mainly study the propagation of memes (virality), the ‘death’ and ‘survival’ of memes or the analysis of the coexistence of two characteristics – repetition and variation (Knobel & Lankshear 2007; Milner 2012, 2016; Brideau & Berret 2014: 307; Segev *et al.* 2015; Wetherbee 2015; Gal *et al.* 2016). As I have already stated in the introduction, the present study proposes another

perspective of viewing internet memes, not as cultural replicators but as genres of speech with a set of situational features and internal compositional structure.

3.2 Genre and criteria of its distinction

The idea of describing an internet meme through a framework of genre studies comes from fundamental concepts proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin (1979). The genre theoretician claimed that in our everyday speech practices, we deal with ready-made discursive genres, as the process of exchange would otherwise be almost unmanageable.

Accordingly, internet memes can be considered newly emerged ready-made genres of speech characterised by some specific elements.

Different linguists resort to different criteria when defining and describing genres. Genres, according to Bakhtin, are relatively stable types of utterances which reflect specific conditions and goals of different areas of human activity through content, compositional structure and style (1979). Like Bakhtin, Maingueneau (2012: 41-45) also views genres as more or less stabilised routines but at the same time insists on their continuous variation. Some scholars give preference to a linguistic criterion when analysing genres, i.e. a genre composition, its textual organisation (Adam 2011b), a statistical distribution of linguistic markers in corpus linguistics (Biber, Connor & Upton 2007; Biber & Conrad 2009). Genres are also described according to a functional parameter. For instance, Swales (1990: 58) defines them as comprising “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes”. Other descriptions are based on social and situational factors putting an accent on the context, and thus different circumstances of genre production. Fairclough (1992: 126), for example, characterises a speech genre as “a relatively stable set of conventions that is associated with, and partly enacts, a socially ratified type of activity”; in later work, he underlines that “genres are the specifically discursive aspect of ways of acting and interacting in the course of social events” (Fairclough 2003: 65).

The limitation of classical genre approaches is that all of them rely on pre-existing models of communication in customised systems that operate within a restricted domain (in politics, it is electoral, governmental, etc.). Yet, another set of categories is needed that can be applied to online communication analyses. Therefore, in order to describe a genre of a political internet meme, I combine linguistic, situational and functional parameters. In doing so, I will employ

a model by Maingueneau (2012) and extend it by application of several “facets” taken from a scheme of Herring (2007), notably to provide deeper insight into the medium factor. The inclusion of a set of technological factors will not however assume that the computer medium exercises a determining influence on communication. After all, the users of computer technologies are human beings with their social, ideological and individual characteristics.

In the light of the foregoing, I view an internet meme as a genre that is a relatively stable type of text which reflects specific conditions of human activity through its external characteristics such as medium of communication, chronotope setting, participants, and their concrete goals or a set of purposes and internal organisation revealed in contents, compositional structure and the general tone. In what follows, I apply these external and internal criteria to the description of a political meme as a genre, notably by extending certain aspects which are relevant for the purposes of the present study.

3.3 Medium of communication

Medium is the material support of a genre, with the help of which the genre is transmitted or stocked. According to Maingueneau (2012), any modification of the material support will radically modify a speech genre. In contrast to other genres of political communication, internet memes are sensitive to a variety of technical factors. A medium becomes an environment where these genres are created and spread. A cursorial observation of social media platforms with a close look at FB possibilities can give us an idea of how medium plays a crucial role in the development of the participatory political culture and new forms of exchange, notably memes and virals.

3.3.1 Social media and election campaigns

In the USA, ‘a multi-media avalanche’ can be observed during recent presidential campaigns. As Eddins (2016) describes it, “The candidates seem to be everywhere – we see their names emblazoned on brightly colored signs dotting neighborhood lawns and their faces smiling sweetly on the nightly TV news as they exploit free media attention while mingling with voters in coffee shops.” In present-day presidential elections, the candidates are also trying to reach the electorate in the virtual sphere. Jenna Wortham, a journalist from *The NY Times*

notices that nowadays it is not enough for presidential candidates “to kiss babies, shake hands and lunch at small-town diners to win over voters”, but today “they also need to cozy up to citizens online” (Wortham 2012). The popularity of using social media to lure voters online can be explained by possibilities which internet interfaces provide. Disregarding location and distance, the collapse of time (Markham 2017), all this enables the instantaneous and inexpensive transmission of information reaching potential voters quickly and directly.

The presidential campaign of 2008 started to utilise social media with President Obama being the first presidential candidate to successfully leverage online platforms (Batra 2009; Baldwin-Philippi 2018). The virtual sphere was still an obscure zone for non-internet users. In 2012, there were many more versions of social media venues where candidates were taking to fields of online battle, posting funny little animations, blogging, and intruding into conversation threads. According to Baldwin-Philippi (2018: 3), after Obama’s landslide campaign victory in 2012, politicians started to perceive social media as “a driving force of the campaign success”. Besides traditional mobilisation efforts, campaigners began adopting available media platforms widely, opening up campaign content to public feedback, encouraging people to spread persuasive messages in order to get out the vote. The biggest amount of politically oriented user-generated content was produced online during the 2016 US presidential campaigns where the political dialogue intensely took the form of remixed photos and quirky videos.

The choice of social networking sites by a politician and campaigners depends on what minority community they want to target. Harfoush (2012), who studied the role of social media during Obama’s 2012 presidential campaign, claims that the political leaders build their profiles and bring them to a campaign where potential voters already spend time. For instance, the presence of campaigners online can be largely explained by luring young voters who may not watch TV or read newspapers but spend plenty of time on social networking sites (Wortham 2012). Furthermore,

a profile on a particular social network could emphasize content that resonated with that particular audience. For example, in his FaithBase profile, Obama focused on the value he derived from his own faith. On GLEE, an online community for Gays, Lesbians and Everyone Else, Obama highlighted his efforts to promote and support equality. From a more practical perspective, the campaign invited Flickr users to share their images of the campaign, knowing that the pictures would be of higher quality because the community is geared to photography enthusiasts and professionals. [...] The campaign demonstrated a nuanced understanding of almost every social

networking platform. From MySpace's push for unique profile pages, to LinkedIn's network of small business owners, the campaign engaged with these sites accordingly, providing high-value services and features to their supporters.

Harfoush (2012: 138-139)

Accordingly, when politicians enter various social networking sites, they aim at targeting different social groups. In line with this, Baldwin-Philippi (2018: 7) talks about micro-targeting online when campaigners are given "the ability to 'promote' (now 'boost') individual posts to audiences that could be targeted based on user location, age, gender, and interests". Enli and Skogerbø (2013: 757-758) note that due to their affordances, social media provide politicians the opportunities to create intimate relations with voters. Thurlow (2013) points to limitations of these so-called open government performances in social media. In his article "Fakebook. Synthetic media, pseudo-sociality and the rhetorics of Web 2.0" (2003), Thurlow argues that weaving together the public and private, blurring the formal and informal, and synthesising the personal and institutional is a politician's strategy to fabricate a sense of personal concern for intimate interaction with voters. An artificial and feigned character of closeness, stylisation of institutional agents as participatory, interactive and accessible is reflected in the relational options made available to followers:

You cannot "friend" the queen (or Barack Obama, Sara Palin, David Cameron, and Nicolas Sarkozy); you may only like her. Nor, for that matter, can you dislike her. This is still a largely a one-way street, a metasemiotic resource for appearing to talk (with people).

Thurlow (2013: 236)

In other words, politicians enter social media and strive to occupy and command these spaces not to interact and negotiate politics with their voters but to exercise their influence and control through triggering "humble and mundane mechanisms" (Thurlow 2013: 235).

It must be stressed that in contrast to other social media platforms, FB is one of the biggest avenues for online canvassing with its broad demographic reach and user numbers. While FB was originally designed for mundane users to share pictures of cute cats, today it is an extremely powerful tool that is exploited by political activists for their purposes. Digital campaigners can create, post and re-post jokes about politicians, comment on them and spread information to hundreds of users in one click. FB is an important platform of information diffusion where it is extensively used to persuade, organise and mobilise people. The innovative use of this digital media platform was especially exploited by candidates during

presidential campaigns when supporters were galvanised into action in multifaceted and unprecedented ways. FB has become an open scene of multimodal communication between bottom-up mass movements, representing different political views.

3.3.2 FB technical participation toolkit

FB is one of the biggest venues based on the propagation of content, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, “of the users, by the users, and for the users” (Shifman 2014a: 18). Emerged in 2004, this web-based platform incorporates user-generated contents and social interactions in response to multimedia structures provided by the site itself. The website offers its users a range of participation toolkits for mining communication. Among the vibrant universe of FB activities, the spread of memes is especially popular. When analysing memes in the context of FB and its immediate environment, individual to every user, we must also differentiate between the notions of (a) a posting, (b) a thread and (c) a logfile.

In CMC, *a posting* is defined as a basic element of all CMC genres that is being sent to the server “en bloc” to make an individual contribution to the dialogue (Beisswenger *et al.* 2012). They must be distinguished from larger units, i.e. *threads* (they reflect the topical affiliation of one message to a previous message) and *logfiles* (they arrange the sequence of the postings in a linear chronological order based on when they reached the server). Postings reflect the inner structure of the individual user’s contribution (micro-structural level) while the second is the result of an interactional achievement of all participating users (macro-structural level). All these elements are recognisable by their formal structure, even if they have different forms and structures in the different CMC genres.

A macro-structure of a FB context where an internet meme appears includes the following constituent parts:

- Posting Peritext

A posting appears on a FB Wall when a user contributes through choosing an option  figured on a “Liked Page” which is defined by FB. Verbal information can be added through writing inside the window. Through activating icons on the bottom , “Add photos to your post”,  “Tag people in your post” and  “Add a location to your post” users can accordingly attach a picture, indicate people concerned (who will receive a notification that

they were tagged), and pin a location where the action under description takes/took place. An icon on the right bottom  indicates that “Everyone can see posts on this public Page”. Eventually, by pressing the button  a contribution is sent to the server and can be viewed by other users subscribed to this Page.

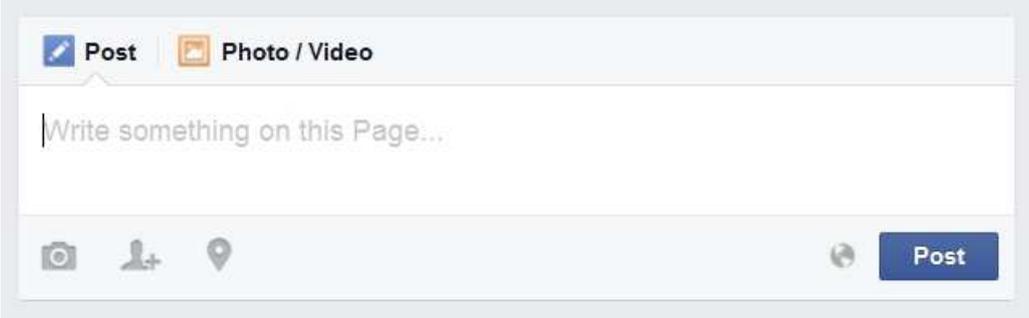


Figure 1. Peritext of a posting

A FB user can also choose the option “Photo/Video” with a slightly different way of structuring information. The difference to the previous order is that moving pictures or videos can be added by activating the option  and then clicking on the cross “Choose a file to upload”.

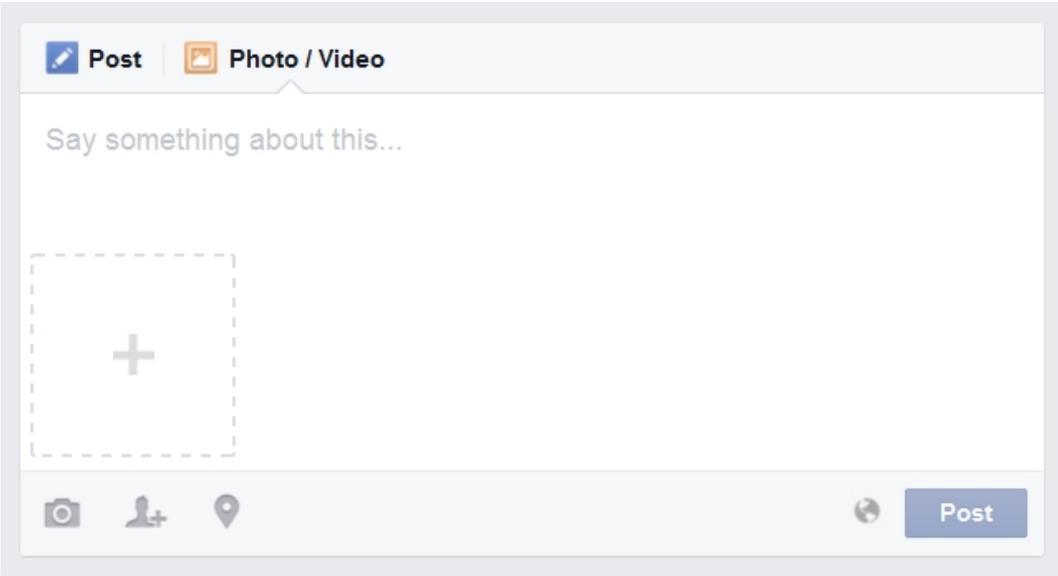


Figure 2. Possibilities of attachments

As a result of these manipulations, the formal structure can look like this:



Being Liberal

(W) They say that babies can sense genuine affection...

Thanks to George Lubitz for sending us this lead



Figure 3. Internet meme in FB context⁴

Considering this FB posting (Figure 3) peritext, we can observe the borders of an individual contribution and its immediate context which can be divided into these parts:

- **The avatar and the name of an initiator of a posting**

It is defined by technical properties of the social networking site and appears automatically when a user posts a contribution. The main function is to answer the question *Who* sends the information; in other words, the avatar and the name are needed to identify the sender. In the case of political communication, the name and the avatar point to ideological adherence. To illustrate this, the post above is sent by the group *Being Liberal* with a photo of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the 32nd President of the USA, a Democrat leader and a defender of American Liberalism. So both the name and the avatar of the posting suggest the adherence of the group to the mentioned values.

⁴ This meme is a part of the FB corpus taken from *Being Liberal* "Like Page". From here onwards, I will only provide the initiator's group name above the meme to indicate the source.

- **An introductory comment**

The posting in the form of a photo can be accompanied by a comment. Like an option defined by FB “Say something about this...” presupposes a sequence which is related to what follows. It can be an introduction, evaluation, expressing the attitude of the sender. Comments of this type are aimed to guide the reader in the interpretation of the posting. To illustrate this, the introductory comment of the posting demonstrates a socio-cultural belief presented as an argument *They say that babies can sense genuine affection...*, with an attached meme framed by this notice as a proof of the point. It differs from a comment which can simply indicate the source of information like *Thanks to George Lubitz for sending us this lead*. Therefore, an introductory comment can have different functions and exercise different textual relations with a meme that follows. This part is optional which means that it is up to the FB user to present a meme as it is or to add clarifications through commenting on it.

- **A posting**

A posting may take the form of a word, a phrase or a text, an image, video, hyperlink, or hashtag. In the posting under analysis, this item presents a photo attached to an introductory comment which in itself is a mix of verbal and non-verbal semiotic signs. An initial posting presents a nuclear part of the whole dialogic chain as it is a starting point of the logfile. It launches a communication process by stating a viewpoint, challenging the viewer to react.

If a posting takes the form of a verbal text, the size of a message buffer in FB is limitless in comparison, for instance, with Twitter. That is the system allows an endless number of characters in a single message entry. Nevertheless, the FB users are often aware of how long people are willing to read news on FB and consequently tend to use shorter messages.

- **Appreciation actions**

A launching post can produce (or not) a series of reactions. FB provides a user with a set of options. By pressing the button **Like**, a reader signals that s/he appreciates a meme. S/he can also leave a personal comment by clicking **Comment**. Unlike the previous option “Like this”, leaving a comment will automatically send a notification to the sender of the post on his/her email. Finally, the option **Share** can send a posting to the friends of the user or pin it to his/her timeline.

- **Time and users' reactions protocol**

All actions related to postings, i.e. creating and reacting are protocolled in the form of numbers. Time appears near a posting, fixing the moment when it was contributed. The time of reacting to comments is indicated next to every comment which follows. The number of people who appreciated the post is fixed under an icon , the number of shares – under an icon  or a more recent version of it . These notifications show the level of interest and acceptance of a posting by a FB user. In the case of the analysed posting, we can state its high level of popularity. At the moment of the screenshot, we can observe that 6,872 people liked it; 574 commented on it, and 1,746 shared or re-posted and therefore spread it further.

For my research purposes, I extracted certain individual contributions from the dialogic chain of FB threads and had a closer look at their internal structure. When presenting memes, I include an enunciator's group name and an introductory comment when the latter guides the reader in the interpretation of the meme.

3.4 Chronotope features

Every genre indicates a place where it is unfolded. An inspector cannot control train tickets at the box-office, in a shop or other places other than a train. Inside, the entrance or the exit of the transport vehicle is the right place where s/he acquires a professional status which allows him/her to exercise control. Like place, time plays a crucial role in genre identification. The time is closely related to the criterion of place. They can be presented together under the term of 'spatial-temporal relations'. A chrono-criterion has several vectors: Periodicity (frequency), appropriate length, continuation (presented entirely or divided into chunks), date of 'experiment' (how long the text is expected to be perceived), whether communication is simultaneous or reported in time and so on. However, since CMC is deprived of physical embodiment, traditional configurations of time and place are shifted and need some precisions. Concepts of space and time become unstable, easily manipulated and more subjective than ever. To better understand chronotope specifics in virtual reality, it is relevant to imagine internet users to be Beckett's characters who, without any preliminary history and pre-established relationships, are thrown into a strange environment, a scene which operates in an endless present and spatial vacuum; whose viewpoints jump from the present to the past

and then back to the present, whose actions move from one place to another without restrictions (Frank 2002).

3.4.1 Malleable time

In the physical world [...] we seem to live from instant to instant sequentially. Yet, as we listen to a melody, we do not hear the individual notes sequentially; the notes we have heard, the notes we hear, even the memory of the notes we anticipate, all give us the sense of melody.

Mentally we somehow experience past, present, and future simultaneously in order to experience the melody.

Rabinovitz (1977)

Being sceptical of human desire to catch time, to mark it, to pin it down, to quantify it, to identify it as a month, a day, an hour, Samuel Beckett constantly tried to liberate his characters from the entrapment of mechanical time, dissolving it into universal temporality. In many ways, the avant-garde playwright foresaw a change in our habitual linear perspective of time. His concepts of time, although linked to an evasive concept of absurd, are to some degree revolutionary in the comprehension of malleable time in the internet era. Beckett noticed essential differences in the perception of time in our physical experience and mental world. Consequently, the self who deals with situations in both physical and virtual environments sways between these two realms. Our idea of time as a continuum, a consistent progression from past to future, its division into chunks marked by temporal indexes is rather typical for physical experience. A rigid sequential effect of time is however revised in our mental world of thought. Deprived of a consistent linear structure, it is rather composed of broken pieces of past events, imaginary anticipations of the future, and a vague and uncertain present.

Similar to our mental processes, our traditional understanding of time as a linear universal flow is disrupted with a new experience online. It is not precisely divided into clear-cut categories but becomes discrete and fragmentary, a sum of innumerable moments. In virtual space, when a person is involved in a “chrono malleable” internet-mediated communication, time becomes more elastic (Markham 2017). For instance, posting memes on the FB Wall is an asynchronous communication which means that a person can have greater control over the communication process. One can stop and start time during the conversation or be involved in several online modalities at once. In doing so, we are able to manipulate time and adapt it to

our purposes (Markham & Stavrova 2016). Asynchronous communication does not require users to be logged on at the same time in order to send and receive memes. They are not subscribed in a chain of an immediate exchange, which means that the users have the possibility to carefully reflect on the message and its form. The time of the posting production on FB is fixed and can be viewed by the users, just as the whole logfile, the frequency and temporal gaps. Memes posted on the Wall can be read any time the user is logged in. It can take a certain time to receive a reaction unless a posting urges an immediate answer. Herring (2007) also talks about such facets as “persistence of transcript”, referring to how long messages remain in the system after they are viewed by the users. Memes are persistent by default, remaining on the Wall until deleted. A scroll back buffer however needs to be activated in order to see older postings on the screen. The researcher claims that “a greater persistence of computer-mediated communication heightens meta-linguistic awareness: It allows users to reflect on their communication – and play with language – in ways that would be difficult in speech” (Herring 2007).

Consequently, the dimension of time in virtual reality has no counterpart in physical experience since communication itself considerably differs. It is not unfolded sequentially from instant to instant but it is split into fragments with missing links and gaps, which radically breaks our perception of time from a mechanical sequence into a mosaic made of innumerable random pieces. Easily manipulated and controlled, time acquires a visual dimension where a string of communication can be perceived in its integrity. This virtual experience resembles our mental experience of a melody illustrated in the epigraph above, where past, present and future are fused in a simultaneous practice.

3.4.2 (Im)mobility and placeness in virtual space

ESTRAGON: Well, shall we go?
VLADIMIR: Yes, let's go.
They do not move.

Beckett (*Waiting for Godot* 2006: 87)

The collapse of the traditional view of time, dislocation and decentralisation of digital communication also challenges standard notions of place. Like Beckett's empty stage, with no visible bars to limit characters' immediate activities, the virtual space of a FB platform is deprived of physical architecture, proper geographical places being a purely social construct.

In this open and loose social galaxy where people freely ‘enter’ and ‘exit’, the use of demonstrative pronouns and words denoting localisation and movements in space become metaphorical. Physically remaining immobile, we travel virtually. This is why movement-oriented metaphors like surfing, navigating, wandering, and rambling have already steadily entered our lexical bulk when we describe our actions online.

Like any social space, FB has no literal physical substance but is nevertheless perceived as a platform, a place where events happen. Being a socio-cultural milieu, it developed its own architecture where boundaries are negotiated. Conceptualised as FB Wall, this virtual space of interactions receives a dimension. However, it is not a well-defined static edifice, but a socially constructed concept, a metaphoric image which denotes an environment where one can read notes ‘pinned’ by others. In this sense, Markham accurately claims that “in many ways [...] to perceive the internet as a place does not only require a sense of architecture, but also requires a sense of presence with others” (Markham 2003: 8). Therefore, although we use the term FB Wall, we do not perceive it as having a shape and borderlines, rather having a feeling of presence, a communal aspect, a relation to others which becomes meaningful in this place-oriented metaphor.

If we adopt the logic of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), a virtual topography of FB can be described as a “smooth” space, predominantly rhizomatic, nomadic and fluid and contrasts with an official “striated” space known to be arbolic, sedentary and hierarchical. If the first one can be considered anarchic in terms of its organisation, the second is regulated by a central body and usually state-oriented. Nevertheless, researchers observe a growing reterritorialisation of the smooth internet space where there are also attempts to convert FB into a striated space and apply a certain code of behaviour and offline copyright laws and control the information flow through surveillance (Falconer 2015: 400). This smooth space may look like a completely free world however individuals’ actions are invisibly restricted. To conceptualise FB as a nomadic space in which lines connect to terminal destinations, a metaphoric image of driving on a highway with its freedom and hidden dangers may be suitable:

If we have driven on freeways, we understand very well the concepts of passing, speeding, staying within one’s own lane, exiting, and merging. We can see—especially if we live in a city—cloverleaf patterns, overpasses, and interwoven networks of highways converging and emerging. If we drive on highways through the countryside, we know what it means to get stuck behind a tractor and can easily visualize what is required to pass slow moving vehicles on the road. We

understand the concept of four-way stops, looking for oncoming traffic before passing, and how to look for cops hidden behind billboards or hillocks.

Markham (2003: 2)

Since the internet is geographically dispersed, the production and reception of messages is de-localised, i.e. memes can be produced and received anywhere. The participants are not challenged to know where an addressor or an addressee can be found. In addition to this, the novel concept of ‘placeness’, simultaneous presence in several situations at the same time is a pivotal characteristic of digital practice. A person can find him/herself saturated in multiple events with various settings being at the same time removed from his/her physical location. With regard to this point, it is relevant to quote Markham and Stavrova (2016: 234) who observe that “the internet extends our senses, allowing us to see, listen, and reach well beyond our local sensory limits”. The blurring of geographical borders becomes crucial for political activism on FB. Partisans easily clone themselves and spread out to various places, bringing political internet memes to the back of beyond. In doing so, they are able to reach the most remote areas of the country and voice their ideology. They can involve other activists and arrange ‘a meeting point’ at FB “Like Pages”.

Consequently, communication involving the internet is characterised by the collapse of time-space distinctions. In the past, Samuel Beckett ironised the metaphysics of presence, the Cartesian concept of the body which occupies space, and the body which is grounded in the physical world. The Irish playwright demonstrated that the world of time and space is less substantial than it seems (Saiu 2007). Today, the internet digital period shows the space-time phenomenon to be in many ways illusory. As an example, FB as a social platform which involves the internet is geographically dispersed where time is a malleable construct. Manovich (2015: 139) compares it to “communication in a cloud”, meaning that the user is free to choose when and where to enter the cloud, a phenomenon which is characterised by ‘timeshifting’ and ‘placeshifting’. Mechanical clock time and physical architectural space become less dominant, giving place to more flexible notions of time and space, fused together into a heterogeneous scene with a miscellany of events unfolding simultaneously.

3.5 Genre composition, a type of textual organisation

Genres of speech show specific conditions and goals of each such area through the speakers’ selection of lexical, phraseological, and grammatical resources of the language, all united in

the compositional structure. Semino (2012: 116), for instance, argues that “differences among different types of activities and communicative purposes are reflected in differences in the structural characteristics of genres”.

Although all linguistic levels are important in creating a genre, structuring elements play a crucial role on this level of abstraction. The knowledge of genre composition shows genre competence both from the point of view of the writer and the reader:

Maîtriser un genre de discours, c'est avoir une conscience plus ou moins nette des modes d'enchaînement de ses constituants sur différents niveaux : de phrase à phrase mais aussi dans ses grandes parties.

Maingueneau (2012: 44)

[To master a speech genre means to clearly realise ways of sequencing of its constituents on different levels: from sentence to sentence as well as its larger parts (Maingueneau 2012: 44, translation is mine).]

Certainly, the level of complexity will vary depending on the genre. Thus, the structure of a proverb which often consists of one line will contrast, for example, with such an elaborated genre as a dissertation. In order to analyse complex genres, the researchers talk about textual “sequences” (Adam 2011b; Maingueneau 2012). Swales (1990: 58) describes them in terms of “moves” consisting of different steps, while Fairclough (2003: 72) employs the notion of “staging” in differentiating genres in terms of their generic structure.

Scientists also talk about a prototype when describing the compositional structure of a genre – an abstract model with a canonical structure, ‘the best example’ which represents a genre. The prototype must be differentiated from an invariant which reflects the minimum of the most general system-constituting and permanent genre features. The invariant characteristics of a genre are central, obligatory and recurrent while other features are only potentially possible, facultative and variable. A genre always exists in a unity of strictly indispensable features as well as changeable attributes, realised only in certain textual exemplars (Cherniavskaya 2009: 37-38). Linguists unite genres in groups depending on what principle – repetition (invariant) or variation – dominates in their structure (Maingueneau 2004: 112-113; Adam 2011a: 13-30).

- *Genres dominated by the principle of repetition.* These genres strictly follow an established structural code and are not or rarely subject to variation. Telephone

directories, itineraries, articles of law, police reports, exchanges with pilots and navigators, etc. do remain very rigid forms since any changes could lead to misinterpretation and possible serious consequences.

- *Genres which follow an obligatory model but are open to variation.* Genres like a journal article, news items, an article in a travel guidebook respect the demanded format but can sometimes resort to more original forms. The individuality of these genres is limited and subject to institutional requirements.
- *Genres constructed according to the principle of variation.* Far from normative obligations, these genres do not really possess a ‘favourite’ compositional structure. Such genres as advertising, songs and others do not allow predicting with certitude what will be the choice of a composition. To experiment, to innovate, to give a text a fresh look, to create its own identity are in harmony with the aim of attracting the reader.

The genre of internet meme is assigned to this innovative group of genres where the leading principle of composition is variation. In the next chapter, I will focus on how concrete textual exemplars reproduce its own textual model, preserving features of a textual invariant (obligatory for recognition by the reader and its decoding in the ‘right’ direction) with a different degree of variation. The focus of the study lies in these variation parts which modify the textual composition, making the text resemble other textual models.

3.5.1 Structure-compositional organisation of an internet meme

There is no known research to date which has described linguistic resources of the genre of meme used in political discourse. Furthermore, if we take a political internet meme which imitates other genres and discourses, it is even harder to detect characteristics of a ‘proper’ political genre. In the previous paragraph, I have defined the structure of an internet meme as being ruled by the principle of variation. It means that it does not fix a dominant compositional type, a permanent and recurrent structure. Rather, it is an open genre which can easily absorb and integrate other compositions in its textual structure (creatively re-edited comic strips, photos, a sequence of images, etc.). A very heterogeneous compositional structure of an internet meme makes it problematic to systematise, categorise and present linguistic and non-linguistic regularities.

According to Maingueneau (2012: 46), not every genre involves specific linguistic resources like, for example, a medical expertise or a weather forecast.

Il existe de nombreuses activités verbales pour lesquelles, au contraire, il n'existe pas de ressources propres: par exemple, les genres publicitaires, qui peuvent adopter les usages de la langue les plus divers, en fonction de leur scénographie. Dans ce cas, c'est l'absence de ressources spécifiques qui est spécifique.

Maingueneau (2012: 44)

[There are numerous verbal activities that, on the contrary, do not possess any proper resources: For example, advertising genres can adopt the most diversified use of a language, depending on their scenography. In this case, it is the absence of specific resources which is specific (Maingueneau 2012: 44, translation is mine).]

The point of view of Maingueneau is that the absence of specific compositional resources gives specificity to some genres with changeable structures. It explains why the categorisation of internet memes is a difficult task. In the context of the social media environment, the text becomes a flexible form in the hands of remixers. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the purpose of the type of text. As I have demonstrated in Chapter Three, many scholars recognise political discourse as fundamentally argumentative (Dryzek 1993: 214; Fairclough & Fairclough 2012: 29). To remix, to experiment and to manipulate the textual structure when crafting an internet meme is subordinated to the aim of attracting the reader's attention and to persuade him/her to accept the message. It means that with the constant change of composition, the function of a political meme remains permanent which helps the reader to position a given text on a global discursive scene.

With all diversity of internet memes, we can however attempt to present its basic prototype, its most regular canonical structure, its 'best' sample. In many ways, it depends on technical characteristics and a multimodal layout that meme generator applications propose to their users.

The typical veteran format of internet memes was accurately described by Shifman (2014a). In her book *Memes in Digital Culture* (2014a), she argues that the classical prototypical structure of a meme usually consists of a rectangular layout with a combination of text and image called *image macro*. Initially, image macros were viewed as memetic units with reusable static images "usually embedded in a frequently repeated background and accompanied with a text" (Laineste & Voolaid 2016: 27). However, nowadays the term is

extended to any scripto-visual combination which respects a prototypical matrix, as shown in Figure 4:

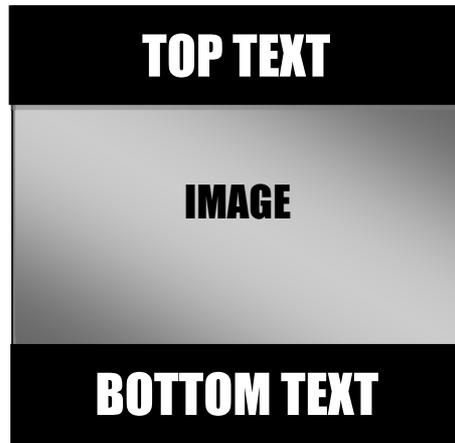


Figure 4. Compositional structure of an internet meme

This very basic model which consists of a photo-manipulated image with a superimposed caption unites the most general features which are regularly repeated in social media communication. Tay (2014: 49) argues that “image macros commonly feature a bold, capitalised font (usually ‘Impact’), so the joke is at the centre of the frame and clearly visible, and the effect is often to an extent emotional”. The design decision of meme generators is therefore white type with a black contour that would appear legible over any colour combinations without obscuring its edges.

As Tay (2014: 49) notes, a typeface extensively used in typical image macros is Impact. Brideau and Berret (2014: 3017) call this bold condensed sans-serif typeface “the meme font”. According to Brideau and Berret (2014: 307), Impact, as the term suggests, is exactly what the face offers to text, notably brief descriptions at the top or the bottom of the meme are “designed to attract attention through the sheer power of its weight”. At the same time, they notice that “Impact became the meme font when it was programmed into meme-generating scripts, perhaps because the programmer was looking for an aesthetic that would be loud or playful, but certainly because Impact was practically guaranteed to be in the font list of most computers” (Brideau & Berret 2014: 309).

The prototypical structure of an internet meme depends to a great extent on the technical format pre-established by the programmers. This is how Brideau and Berret (2014) describe an algorithm of a meme generation:

Image macros are named after macro instructions, scripts that save time and effort for a programmer by replacing a lengthy or repetitive task with a set of defined procedures. [...] Likewise, rather than opening an image and placing text by hand, meme generators take the chosen text and set it automatically. The image itself and the style of text are largely fixed within the code of these meme-generating macro instructions. As a result, untold numbers of memes have originated and proliferated within the confines of a handful of scripts that are responsible for the structure, logic, and visual style of the image macro genre.

Brideau & Berret (2014: 309)

Therefore, the particularity of the compositional structure of an internet meme is that it is programmed and automatically generated, offering users a ready-made canvas. Nevertheless, along with a stable feature of repetition of a form, an extreme regularity of a typeface automatically overlaid on the image, there is still much place for human input, variation and creativity. Meme makers can freely play with the topography of the image and with its different relations with verbal information. As Brideau and Berret (2014: 312) argue, a machine offers the user a structured space, but what the machine cannot do, is to create within that space. It opens it to users, creating a stable ground on which numerous creative proliferations take place. Similarly, Shifman (2014b: 354, italics are mine) calls meme-generators “user-friendly websites, in which image templates awaiting *witty captioning* or *visual manipulation* are presented alongside banks of ‘exemplary’ existing meme versions”.

Different image macros generally contain their own sets of features which result in countless variations. A meme, independent of any linguistic caption, where contents are entirely made up of iconic signs is called *a silent meme* (Pordzik 2017: 6). Grundlingh (2017: 2) calls memes which only contain an image without text *reaction shots*. Nevertheless, the compositional structure presented above is a type of iconotextual format which corresponds to an ideal representation of a meme. This type of structure is not rigidly fixed and not always revealed in each concrete textual exemplar. In practical terms, there is often a gap between the function of a political meme and its realisation on a textual surface.

3.5.2 Multimodality

As described before, the prototypical composition of an internet meme presents a unity consisting of two types of signs, i.e. linguistic and iconic. Sticking to the definition of a meme

in the narrow sense, i.e. being a scripto-visual form of communication, points to the heterogeneous nature of a code and raises the question of how to deal with ‘visual grammar’.

Different terms are given to label a heterogeneous text by different linguists. They are referred to as “iconotextes” by French researchers (Lugrin 2006; Adam & Bonhomme 2009), as mixed, “creolised”, “hybrid” and polycodal texts in Russian scientific literature (Cherniavskaya 2009), “Sprache-Bild-Text”, “Kommunikat” and “Gesamtkommunikat” in German text linguistics (Fix 2001). In English scholarly articles (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996, 2001; Martinec & Salway 2005; Kress 2010; Forceville 2012; Yus 2018), the term “a multimodal text” is in general use, which is also how I am going to refer to it from here onwards. All these terms show that text as a communicative entity is not limited by a verbal constituent but integrates different semiotic systems in bringing a message to its reader/viewer.

Previously, scientists explained a lack of interest towards the analysis of the visual forms and the absence of an established theoretical framework by an egocentric arrogance of linguistics (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996; Stöckl 2004). The German researcher Stöckl (2004) argued that the latter recognised the priority of a verbal code and put it on the pedestal as the only essential achievement of cultural heritage while an image was regarded as a secondary communicative resource. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 16) claimed that “our staggering inability [...] to talk and think in any way seriously about what is actually communicated by means of images and visual design” lies in the values of our Western culture. For centuries now, the dominance of a written language devalued and diminished visual forms of communication, either reducing visual design to the domain of art or treating images as a “childish” stage that one grows out of.

French semiotician Roland Barthes was the first to propose a comprehensive model of analysis of images in his seminal work *Rhetoric of the Image* (1986). This model was further developed by his successor, the semiotician Eco, and described in *The Absent Structure* (1972). Earlier semioticians Barthes and Eco also gave considerable importance to the analysis of a visual code of a message however they also recognised the dominance and power of verbal language in meaning construction. The problem with this semiotic framework consists of importing the theories and methodologies of linguistics into the domain of the visual and analysing images in terms of the paradigm of linguistic codes. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 17) move away from the position of semiotics taking the view that

...the visual component of a text is an independently organized and structured message – connected with the verbal text, but in no way dependent on it: and similarly the other way around. [...] language and visual communication both realize the same more fundamental and far-reaching systems of meaning that constitute our cultures, but that each does so by means of its own specific forms, and independently.

Kress & Van Leeuwen (1996: 17)

Hence, Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996, 2001; Kress 2010) approach treats a text as a combination of not only verbal but also non-verbal signs, where each system has an equal position in communicating the meaning.

Although there is an abound amount of studies on multimodality (Bardin 1975; Barthes 1986; Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996, 2001; Stöckl 2004; Martinec & Salway 2005; Cherniavskaya 2009; Kress 2010; Pordzik 2017; Jus 2018), picture-text combinations are becoming increasingly important nowadays due to the pervasiveness of digital communication which combines both modes. The development of CMC and the emergence of new visual means of communication, which became a part of the public sphere and mass production, made researchers revise the notion of 'literacy' and broaden it. Campanelli (2015: 71) argues that the digital revolution has literally put "the incredible amount of cultural material" into everyone's hands. Access to a huge stock of multimodal information, the creation of new "technocodes" based on "technoimages", their easy combination and editing and then the circulation in a networked society – all this starts to replace our linear code (written texts) as the main model of thought (Campanelli 2015: 71). Visual means have been gradually removed from the domain of art and have become an object of analysis in a whole range of disciplines. There is a growing tendency to view static or moving images as well as sound production not only as accessory which complements verbal information, but as an integral part of text. Scientists have come to the conclusion that people resort to a whole range of modes of representation; each having a different representational potential that are equal in meaning-making (Anisimova 1992; Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996: 17-39; Kress 2010).

In what follows, I will have a close look at the internal structure of an internet meme in order to shed light on different relations between linguistic and iconic signs as well as to observe the practice of participants playing with typography.

3.5.3 Relations between linguistic and iconic signs

The relationship between text and image in a multimodal text resemble co-textual relations with the difference that the elements which interact are from different semiotic systems.

Previously, I have described that in the prototypical internet meme format, the text is placed at the top and/or at the bottom of the meme. Either a white text is written on a black border, any other background colour, or put directly onto the image to the extent that it is still distinctive and readable. The linguistic constituents of internet memes can take various forms. They can be an explicative comment, an argument, a quotation, a reported speech, a slogan, a dialogue or a text imitating other discourses, etc. Quite often (but not always) memes posted by politically oriented groups have their name encrypted on the image or a logo is located at the bottom of the picture, indicating a signature and authorship. Generally, a linguistic component states something about the participants that are represented in the image.

The image is typically centred in the middle, occupying the major part of the format. The iconic status of the picture and its mode of organisation make it different from verbal posts and therefore require another toolkit for analysis. If a language is linear in its production, i.e. the meaning is produced by a chain of phonemes, morphemes, lexical units, syntactic structures, etc., an image has different manners of coding a message. It includes iconic or topographic and plastic properties. Topographic constituents provide the image with a layout open to space. Plastic characteristics are split into chromatic (colours) and geometric (forms) components. All these characteristics can be united under the term *composition* which defines the overall organisation of the image, its perspective, the scene, and the construction of a plastic space. Composition integrates all elements of the image into one unity. Text and image can exercise various relations in a meme.

A complementary relationship has been achieved when it is impossible to separate verbal and visual constituents which complement each other. It means that, if verbal and iconic codes are taken separately, they communicate a different sense or will be deprived of any sense. Barthes (1986) characterises these relations as “anchoring” and “relay”. He observed that the image is in the position of so-called “malaise” or “terror of an uncertain sign”, indecisiveness to give a priority to “the” sense among hundreds of others (Barthes 1986: 21-40). In order to arrive at a definite meaning, according to Barthes (1986), words must come to the rescue. The verbal information fixes an indefinite visual meaning or “anchors” the sense in a “floating chain of signifieds”, orienting the reader of the image into that direction, which is implied by the

creator. Therefore, linguistic signs reduce to a certain extent the polysemy of the image. Barthes distinguishes two types of elaboration of a meaning which depends on the order in which the information is provided. If the verbal text comes first, the image forms an illustration of it; and if the image comes first, the text controls the meaning, forming a more definite and precise restatement. The verbal system can also add a new sense, extending the meaning of the image. The semiotician calls this relationship a “relay”. It gives the reader additional information, identifies places, people, etc. which the image is not always capable to provide.

To illustrate the integrative relation with words anchoring the meaning, I refer to the meme below (Figure 5), which borrows the subject-matter of the panel *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* of Pieter Brueghel the Elder. It depicts the battle between good angels (in white and placed at the top, toward the sky or the paradise) against the evil, the grotesque figures of the fallen angels, shown as half-human, half-animal monsters (in dark colours and located at the bottom, close to the ground, or hell). The central figure of the painting is Archangel Michael who is positioned in the core of smaller figures, which shows his importance in the battle. The painting of Brueghel therefore presents a biblical subject, clearly introducing the passage from the Book of Revelation (12, 2-9). Nevertheless, the primary intention of the artist to depict a scene from the Bible does not prevent the spectators from coming up with other interpretations of the masterpiece, which can certainly evoke numerous associations, not necessarily connected with the sacred writing.



Figure 5. Complementary relation between iconic and linguistic signs

The creators of the meme, having framed the image with linguistic information, not only fixed the meaning of the painting (anchored it) but also created (relayed) a new sense. The name *Politics* established a new frame, i.e. the battle of politicians for power. Responsibility is then given to the reader of the meme to guess other implied meanings, e.g. whether there are ‘good’ and ‘evil’ politicians and whether the central figure alludes to the key political person. In this respect, Pordzik (2017: 6) rightly notes that the meme’s visual form even if presented intact is re-keyed in tonality and attitude, being extracted from its original context and reframed by linguistic captions “that work at it from within, dismissing its immobile presence and spinning forth the web of associations that seek to fix it in the realm of visual perception”.

Barthes’ (1986) perspective on the rhetoric of the image, popular in the 60s, gives an interesting insight into the relationship of image and text, but it is not deprived of a drawback. Later, researchers (cf. Bardin 1975; Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996; Lugrin 2006) who work with a multimodal text criticise Barthes for giving a decisive and primordial role to verbal information in sense-making. Viewing words as units that anchor meaning at the same time reduces the potential of a verbal text to produce several layers of meaning. Bardin (1975: 102) expresses this the following way: “Qu’est-ce qui prouve, dans le rapport texte-image, que c’est toujours le texte qui joue le rôle de mode d’emploi ?” [What proves that it is always a text in the relationship text-image that plays the role of an instruction manual? (Bardin 1975: 102, translation is mine)]. If we change the perspective, these functions of a text and an image can be reversed just because a text can be as polysemantic as an image. Words can convey very ambiguous information, suffice it to give examples of irony and taboos while images can specify information, showing concrete people, places, suggesting proper names and therefore anchor a floating meaning of a text.

The following example (Figure 6) demonstrates the high polysemy of the verbal text. Taken in isolation from an image, the phrase *American heroes tear down walls... the losers build them* infers several meanings since common nouns like *heroes* and *losers* can be cued to concrete people depending on the context. If the combination ‘build a wall’ is more likely to propagate the association with Donald Trump in view of the media buzz created after his proposal to build a wall between the USA and Mexico to stop an illegal immigration, to think of a hero who dismantles the wall would be more problematic. One’s encyclopaedic competence and general collective memory of the notorious line “Tear down this wall!” might evoke the image of US President Ronald Reagan giving a speech in Berlin on 12 June 1987, demanding the Soviet Union to break the barrier which divided Berlin and the whole world

during the cold war. The image showing Ronald Reagan in front of the Brandenburg Gate at the foreground and Donald Trump at the background who literally constructs the wall fixes one of possible meanings that the verbal information provides. Consequently, the functions of anchoring and relay can well circulate in two directions, i.e. from text to image and vice versa (Lugrin 2006: 112).



Figure 6. Functions of anchoring and relay from text to image and vice versa

The two examples described above reflect semiotic complexity; the constituent parts complement each other in the creation of meaning. In this sense, Bardin (1975) claims when describing a connection of the image and verbal signs that the co-presence of visual and verbal information in the same message cannot be understood as the sum (text + image), but as an interrelation (text \leftrightarrow image) and that a new additional sense is born merely out of this interrelation. Therefore, the word can be interpreted only in the light of the image and conversely, the image can be interpreted with the help of the verbal text. Consequently, a scripto-visual text presents a system where no elements are casual or accidental. On the contrary, every component is included in the whole composition and contributes to the understanding of the whole.

Besides complementary relations, Cherniavskaya (2009: 90-97) includes a double coding of different multimodal constituents. She claims that in some cases a verbal text and an image can communicate the same message taken separately. Nevertheless, brought together, they reinforce an informational value.

The example below (Figure 7) shows a double coding of the text-image referring to various stories from Mr Trump's private life when his oppositional camp bombarded the media a few weeks before the Election Day (recordings with offensive comments and sexist remarks in women's address, accusations of Trump for the objectification of women with several women denouncing sexual abuse in national newspapers, etc.). The meme captures it as *Donald is desperately trying to keep the army of skeletons in his closet*, drawing the Republican candidate torn into pieces by personified human carcasses. Together, text and image produce a dramatic effect for the reader/viewer.

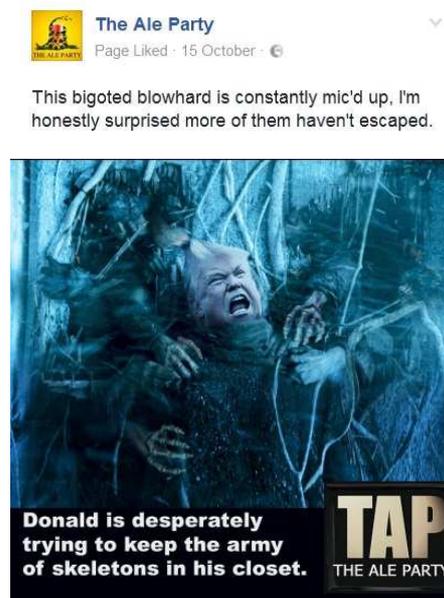


Figure 7. Double coding of iconic and linguistic information

To the flow of visual communication and multimodal character as reasons for the reconsideration of visual information, scientists increasingly add aesthetics to the communicated message (Welsch 1993; Cherniavskaya 2009). Cherniavskaya (2009: 90-91), for example, observes that if before an aesthetic function was associated with arts and literary language as a particular sphere of emotional and sensitive response, today outward 'flowery' appearance, beautiful etiquette, and graphic design characterise almost all domains of communication, notably advertising, mass media, politics, everyday friendly exchange.

I argue that the material organisation of political texts also conveys a considerable aesthetic potential. The form of political texts in CMC becomes a powerful means of its actualisation in the global informational space. A form becomes a marker, an index which renders a meme attractive and searches for captivating the viewer's attention. In this sense, I cannot but agree

with Fix (2001: 39) that aesthetics is the pointing of a text at itself through its highlighting, underlining its own forms. The meme analysed above proves this since its image also serves as a decoration to attract attention. The interpretation of the idiom through playing with different shades of grey, blue and green manages to establish even a science-fiction scenario which grabs the viewer's attention.

Furthermore, the verbal text and image united in one whole can communicate an additional emotionalisation and expressivity of the message, notably for a strong persuasive effect. Resorting to a visual image to create a pathetic tone is not new, it is highly exploited in journalism. Similarly, meme creators intuitively use images to appeal to their peers and raise their feelings.

For instance, the meme below (Figure 8) shows an analogy constructed between the past and the present through verbal means where parallels are drawn between refugees being mistreated and condemned to death on the eve of WWII and today's situation where people flee from wars and famine. The verbal statement that history repeats itself is double-coded by the image. With the help of chromatic means, it blends the black-and-white past and colourful present into one coherent whole. Depicting a concrete scene, the scene helps to visualise the problem and consequently reaches out to viewers and appeals to their emotions. Emotionalisation is encrypted in showing a large number of people placed in small vessels that are crying for help, i.e. the information which the verbal information is deprived of.



Figure 8. Visualisation of verbal information for emotionalisation and expressivity

Sometimes an image and verbal information can exercise a relationship of *contradiction* where the cohesion between linguistic and iconic signs is deliberately ruptured. Lugin (2006: 114) calls this a relation of “invalidation” since one invalids the other by contradicting it. In other words, what is shown by a picture is contradicted by words and vice versa. The following posting (Figure 9) illustrates the tension between various multimodal systems: It presents a group photo with people of different colours in front of the camera and claims *Donald Trump Announces Cabinet Picks. Wants Diversity of Color Noted*. Cohesion is nevertheless broken by the iconic elements since all cabinet picks are pictured to have face features of Donald Trump. This counterpoint relation is established for ironic effect as the verbal information states right the opposite of what is depicted in the image.



Figure 9. Relation of contradiction between text and image

The relationships enumerated above are by no means exhaustive and can be attributed either to linguistic units or iconic signs. In the majority of cases, the relationship of verbal and non-verbal elements in a concrete text combines several aspects.

The meme below (Figure 10) shows this complex nature of text-image integration. The written text of the meme *Ted Cruz has selected a running mate* taken alone provides a statement which hardly suggests any connotations. At the same time, depending on one’s general knowledge, it can spawn numerous possible associations related to the personality of the Republican runner as well as his mate. The image (borrowed from *Titanic* film) placed

below this caption seems to be more revealing as it gives details about who the running mate is, showing the picture of Carly Fiorina behind Ted Cruz.



Figure 10. Combination of relations between iconic and linguistic signs

Furthermore, a crucial role of the image lies in installing the setting. The place of action is shown to be a flooded room with chairs scattered around where the couple is trying to make their way through. The visual information therefore reduces the polysemy of verbal text and complements it. Due to the integration of these multimodal channels, the reader/viewer thinks about something problematic about the statement. The iconotext suggests that the feeling of an approaching fiasco of Ted Cruz in primaries and his announcement of a running mate is associated with an act of desperate agony. Regardless of this track, which a combination of text-image provides, it is still open to multiple interpretations. For instance, a room filled up with water might suggest difficulties which the politicians try to overcome; one can, for instance, think of religious subjects related with the end of the world (the end of Cruz' carrier). In order to reveal *the* meaning to the reader/viewer, the creators can implement more sense-making elements into a spiral of interpretations. In the case of the latter example, it is the comment above the iconotext which throws a 'safety ring' and fixes the floating meaning by providing a proverb. Understanding the meme through the lens of the idiom 'rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic' gives another layer of meaning to the scripto-visual elements, which is the uselessness of choosing a running mate when Cruz's political death is inevitable,

a hopeless and pointless decision which will not contribute to the solution of the problem. This new sense, an irony of situation, emerged through the relationship of image and text, can evoke a range of emotions, not forgetting an aesthetic feeling. And indeed, a photo taken from the film, depicting a sad romantic scene in the middle of a beautiful sinking giant, definitely appeals to the viewer.

A multimodal text is therefore a coherent whole composed of several semiotic codes. Different constituents complement each other and converge into one unity. Heterogeneous elements are brought into a coherent whole, into a multimodal text to present the message in the most effective way.

3.5.4 Typography, stylisation of a letter

It must be mentioned that linguistic signs can also have plastic characteristics. This is known as *typography* which can be defined as the stylisation of a letter. Typography involves typeface (characters which share common design features), font (character set of a single size and style of a particular typeface), weight or bold (thickness of character), italics, underlining, revision, etc. In addition, characters can have different colours or chromatic characteristics.

The elements of graphic means of communicating emotions are not new. Writers have already resorted to graphic stylistic devices known as *graphons* in literary discourse to visualise emotions of characters or their social status (Kukharensko 2009: 13). A graphon in its electronic variety can be stylised with even richer spontaneous paralinguistic resources. Furthermore, a relatively tiny form of a meme urges an ultimate concentration of information and transmission of emotions in the most economically effective way.

The next meme (Figure 11) is a vivid example of exploiting the plastic possibilities of the image and their application to typography. The wall-note contains a quotation, placed directly on the image, taken from the speech of Barnett Frank, the US Representative for Massachusetts's 4th congressional district, member of the Democratic Party. In this quote, Mr Frank uses a rhetorical figure of litotes *We're NOT perfect*, thereby admitting that – like all people – Democrats also have weaknesses. The use of capital letters *NOT* underlines this negative characteristic. And the evaluation of Republican representatives as *NUTS!* portrays their behaviour as extreme.



Figure 11. Play with plastic possibilities of typography

The author of the meme (who is not Barnett Frank) resorts, first of all, to capital letters with an exclamation mark to reinforce the weight of the comment. Secondly, the multicolour presentation of the word alludes to its semantics – in slang, ‘nuts’ means people suffering from insanity. The comment is presented in large quotation marks, notably due to the use of form characteristics of digital typography. Besides, the interplay of linguistic constituents with the graphic, the image shows the picture of Frank gesticulating. All material elements of the meme taken together insist on the implication of a strong emotion of astonishment provoked by the actions of Republican representatives and the subjective evaluation by one of their opponents. Therefore, the stylisation of letters in memes helps the viewer to imagine easily the reported situation. The small slot of space which the creators of memes have at their disposal does not allow them to present the information in long subordinate sentences. Letter typography is the solution for a clear and quick transmission of ideas.

Sometimes, stylised letters in memes become a means of characterisation of the represented people and objects. For instance, the next meme (Figure 12) represents candidate Mitt Romney as a fantastic creature, notably a zombie. The creators of memes reinforce this image with the imitation of zombies’ screams in the comment *Braaaaaiins! Zomney needs braaaaaiins* with prolonged vowels, and on the meme itself, *Zomney ... must ... eat ... brains* which is accentuated with the use of red colour and ‘bleeding’ font. The same style is adopted in the

verbal aggression below the picture, i.e. “Damn”! ... *Fox News Viewers!*, which is also an attack on the named TV programme and Republican supporters who watch it.



Figure 12. Stylisation of letters as a means of characterisation

People can play with the capitalisation of letters and its rotation which sometimes has a crucial role in encrypting an anti-campaign message as shown in Figure 83. The big lettering *ill* in *Hillary* emphasises this new word created inside the name, which refers to her weak health condition in reference to the candidate’s collapse at 9/11 memorial. Likewise, the rotation of capital *T* in Trump allows entering a Nazi twisted cross which cues a strong message aimed against the Republican candidate.

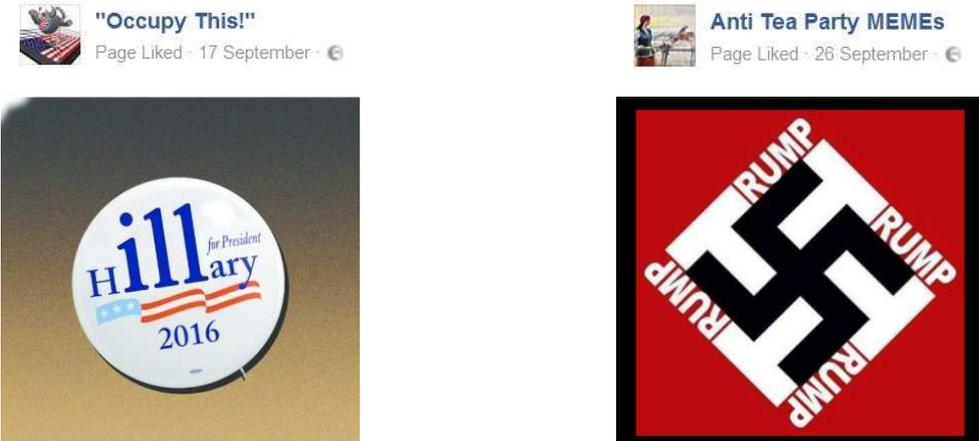


Figure 13. Playing with letters and topography of images

Cherniavskaya (2009: 93-96) gives an interesting insight into the stylisation of letters. The researcher argues that the deliberately chosen style of writing uncovers “an inner alchemy of a word”. That is, a resort to all possible typefaces used in different historical periods is intrinsically a linguistic signal which guides the reader towards various cultural-historic periods. It can be viewed as a means of blurring temporal and space frames as well as the vector showing the way to text interpretation.

To illustrate this, the following meme (Figure 14) brings us back to the eighteenth century when Benjamin Franklin was the President of the United States.

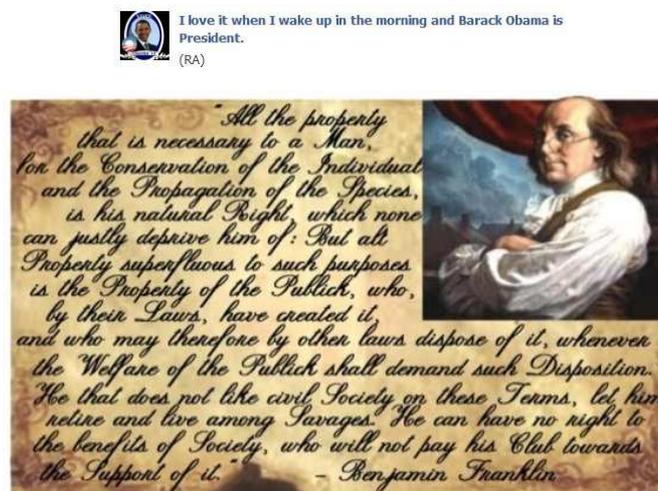


Figure 14. Stylisation of letters to introduce a historical setting

The post takes the form of his hand-written letter as if written with ink on an old, yellowed with age, faded paper. Undoubtedly, the chosen typology has an aesthetic function. Also, the refined calligraphy shows a positive image of the former President as a cultivated, industrious and intelligent man and creates a feeling of confidence in his statements.

This illustrates how meme creators can easily play with graphics of verbal signs. In doing so, they superimpose several semiotic codes in order to present the message in the most original and effective way.

Accordingly, I consider the genre of meme a complex multimodal integration of signs where verbal and visual codes (an image, a letter stylisation, and a general layout) form a single communicative unity. The code is a system of conventional designations, symbols, signs and rules of their combinations for transmitting, processing and storage of information in the most efficient way.

3.6 Discussion

The internet meme, a scripto-visual digital form of communication produced as a result of a deliberate process of copying, transforming and spreading cultural patterns around the web, is traditionally explained within the framework of Dawkins' (1989) memetics (Shifman 2014a, 2014b; Segev *et al.* 2015; Wetherbee 2015; Gal *et al.* 2016; Milner 2016). The present study describes the internet meme from a new angle, namely as a specific genre based on its external situational (medium, chronotope) and internal prototypical multimodal features (compositional structure). Hence, when addressing the research question about the status of the internet meme, I present the meme as a relatively stable type of text which reflects specific conditions of human activity.

The obvious finding to emerge from this study is that a crucial factor of development of an internet meme genre is the medium of communication. The growing interest in using social media by political activists can be explained, on the one hand, by user-friendly possibilities of internet interfaces, and on the other hand, by large free avenues of canvassing of potential voters where the latter already spend time. The simplicity to diffuse memes is complemented by the creative use of information technologies in order to appeal to the target audience.

The chronotope characteristic is another criterion for genre identification since every genre presupposes a place it is unfolded, a particular moment and frequency. Since the internet era has radically altered our traditional perceptions of time and space, enabling the individual to escape the mechanical linear continuum of time and the entrapment of physical place, the more flexible chronotope distinguishes a spatial-temporal environment where internet memes are spread. Malleable time is reflected in asynchronous communication when posting memes, which means that they are not subscribed in a chain of immediate exchange, produced sequence by sequence, but are separated in time, so that users have the possibility to carefully reflect on the message and its form. The time of posting on FB is fixed and can be viewed by the users as well as the whole logfile, the frequency and temporal gaps. Persistent by default, memes remain on the Wall until deleted. All this shows the fragmentation of time and its visualisation and possibility of controlling it when dealing with memes on the FB Wall. The FB Wall itself is a metaphoric conceptualisation of socially constructed space where memes are 'pinned' and viewed by others. The exchange of genres is dislocated and decentralised since their producers find themselves simultaneously at several places at the same time. The

FB social platform is considered to be a 'smooth' space, predominantly a rhizomatic, nomadic and fluid place of communication.

I have shown that the compositional structure of an internet meme is ruled by the principle of variation. It means that it does not fix a dominant compositional type, a permanent and recurrent combination of sequences. Rather, it is an open genre which can easily absorb and integrate other compositions in its textual structure, converge various speech genres when tailoring its own form. Therefore, it is the absence of a specific typical composition which is typical for an internet meme genre. The meme's most regular canonical structure, its basic prototype depends on technical characteristics and a multimodal layout that meme generator applications propose to their users. In the majority of cases, it is a rectangular layout with a combination of text and image called image macro.

The composition of an internet meme presents a scripto-visual unity, a multimodal entity and a coherent whole consisting of linguistic and iconic signs. Along with verbal elements, visual triggers play an important role in the sense-making of memes. The results of the study support the idea of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2001) that every mode has a different representational potential but is equally important in meaning-making. The observation of internet memes showed that the relations between text and image can be complementary if the meaning is the result of interrelation of both codes; double coding appears if each semiotic constituent communicates and reinforces the same message; a code adds an aesthetic touch when it points at itself and underlines the decorative potential; the relation of emotionalisation is exercised to stir up viewers-readers' feelings; a relation of contradiction is created when one code invalids the other and produces an ironic effect. In the crafting process, users can also play with chromatic and topographic characteristics of letters that manipulate their typography. All this signifies that various semiotic codes which make up an internet meme contribute to the transmission of a message in the most efficient way.

CHAPTER FOUR

...a proper understanding of digital discourse requires that we be equally concerned with large-scale discourses (i.e. systems of power / knowledge) as we are with the linguistic specificities of discourse and everyday talk and writing.

Thurlow (2018: 10)

4 The political discourse of pre-election campaigns

...le sens se construit à l'intérieur de frontières mais en mobilisant des éléments qui sont au-delà de ces frontières⁵.

Maingueneau (2014: 81)

According to Maingueneau, even though a linguist chooses an empirical object of study such as genre, the functioning of the latter cannot be understood without considering the units of a larger organisation:

Les unités non topiques sont construites par le chercheur à partir d'unités topiques. Il ne peut y avoir analyse [...] si l'on ne s'appuie pas sur les unités topiques, mais celles-ci ne peuvent à elles seules rendre raison du fonctionnement du discours.

Maingueneau (2014: 81)

[Global abstract units are constructed by a researcher based on concrete local units. We cannot have an analysis without local units, but these units alone cannot explain the functioning of speech. (Maingueneau 2014: 81, translation is mine).]

This means that when studying the texts of internet memes, it is important to observe the discursive formation against which the memes work as a comic genre. In this line, Adam and Herman (2007: 2) claim that any text depends on a genre of discourse as well as on various restraints of socio-discursive interactions (*des contraintes de l'interaction socio-discursive*). And reversly, any discourse is characterised by its textual properties and a concrete situation of communication with its institution, participants, place and time (Adam & Herman 2007: 1-2). Likewise, Thurlow (2018: 3) argues that “it is essential to recognize that digital discourse is interested in language only insofar as it illuminates social and cultural processes”. Accordingly, my analysis of micro-level linguistic details will be conducted by constantly looking back at macro-level social ideological processes which determine these linguistic details. Thurlow (2018) refers to these different research orientations as lower-case d-discourse and upper-case D-discourse studies respectively. A combination of both d-discourse and D-discourse approaches can help to present how micro-level textual practices are structured within larger systems of beliefs.

⁵ the meaning is constructed within borders and by activating elements which lie beyond these borders (Maingueneau 2014: 81, translation is mine).

In this chapter, I focus on political discourse and pre-electoral campaigns. When a recipient receives a text, s/he, first of all, situates it on a global level, which means to identify it as a political, religious, scientific, or other type of discourse. For a common user (not a linguist), the discourse presents a sector of social activity, i.e. a domain that includes the whole network of genres. In other words, a reader, a viewer or a hearer thinks “sur quelle scène englobante il faut se placer pour l’interpréter [le texte], à quel titre (comme citoyen, consommateur, etc.) il interpelle son lecteur” and “en fonction de quelle finalité il est organisé” (Maingueneau 2009: 78) [on what global scene one should position oneself in order to interpret it [the text], what type of reader (as a citizen, a consumer, etc.) it appeals to and in terms of what function it is organised (Maingueneau 2009: 78, translation is mine)]. From the point of view of the global political scene, a text is addressed to a citizen of a country dealing with the topics of common or ‘collective’ interests. During presidential campaigns, a text is focused on the candidates who represent the interests of the citizens; on the policies and solutions which the runners propose in order to tackle the existing problems. When reading a political text, an addressee tries to grasp the aim of the text and to understand whether an encrypted message coincides with his/her own system of values. To understand the essence of political texts, the reader is supposed to have a political consciousness and his/her own position towards the distribution of power in relation to personal interests (Van Dijk 2002; Sheigal 2005; Maingueneau 2009).

It is the aim of this chapter to address my second research question: *What are the characteristics of the global political scene that condition the creation of memes?* In order to answer the question, I am going to observe the global political macro-context against which a reader interprets a concrete genre and a concrete text. Focusing on the variety of political discourse, notably a sub-discourse that covers an area of presidential campaigns in the USA, I will describe the structure which includes the description of the participants, the contents of the discourse, and functional blocks. Then I will present the main characteristics of pre-electoral discourse based on the analysis of existing papers. When discussing the question of ideologies, I will proceed with the presentation of various ideological signs during the 2012/2016 US presidential campaigns.

4.1 The dichotomy of discourse

Although the notion of *discourse* can be understood in a variety of different ways, many linguists agree on its double nature, notably that it is a system of communication which exists

in concrete (real) and in abstract (virtual) dimensions (Sheigal 2005; Lugrin 2006; Wodak 2008; Cherniavskaya 2009; Maingueneau 2014). Depending on the chosen position, linguists focus then on different aspects of the phenomenon.

For instance, Sheigal (2005: 21) understands under the real dimension of discourse a current speech activity in a particular social sphere – continuous, connected to real life and real time – as well as created texts as a result of this activity. Speech productions are viewed in the context of their linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic factors. Cherniavskaya (2009: 147) defines discourse in a similar concrete sense. In her opinion, it is the text that should be regarded inseparably from its situational context as well as social, cultural, historical, ideological, psychological, etc. factors. Discourse in this sense characterises a communicative process that leads to the creation of a particular formal structure.

This approach echoes the Anglo-American tradition and its largely accepted understanding of discourse as ‘language in use’ (see, for instance, Swales 1990; McHoul 1994; Schiffrin 1994; Fairclough 2003). This frequently used phrase has practically become a synonym for discourse with a focus on the immediate situational context. In addition, influenced by the theory of speech acts (Austin 1962; Grice 1967; Searle 1969), discourse in this tradition is often described as a “*linguistic action*, be it written, visual or oral communication, verbal or non-verbal, undertaken by social actors in a specific setting determined by social rules, norms and conventions” (Wodak 2008: 5). McHoul (1994: 940, in *The Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics*) claims that, in this sense, the noun ‘discourse’ is abstract and uncountable while the concrete and countable noun ‘discourse’ means a subset of a language used for specific social and institutional aims (a medical discourse, a didactical discourse, etc.), subsequently used with an indefinite article.

An abstract dimension of discourse, from Sheigal’s point of view (2005), is a semiotic space that includes verbal and non-verbal signs oriented towards the service of a particular communicative sphere along with a thesaurus of utterances and texts related synchronically and diachronically. This dimension incorporates representations of typical models of speech behaviour, a collection of speech acts and genres specific to a particular type of communication. According to Sheigal (2005: 23), previously created texts (whole texts, their fragments) present not only a pool of material for quoting but provide much socio-historical background information of discourse, which is part of its cognitive base. We can also find similar ideas in Foucault’s works (1969, 1984) where he describes discursive formation as a

net of cognitive relations between notions, utterances and all that creates a particular knowledge. This approach shows that discourse is a collective product, its agent is a whole institution, e.g. a political party, an organisation, a movement.

This second understanding of discourse was largely adopted by the German-Austrian tradition of discourse analysis (Habermas 1989; Maas 1989; Link 1990). With a focus on the contents of discourse, these scholars define it as a combination of topically related texts that form a sphere of communication. Maas (1989) argues that any text is part of social practice that defines lots of other possible texts. Accordingly, he views discourse not as a collection of texts objectively defined by time and space but determined by contents (for instance, a fascist discourse). Therefore, discourse analysis reveals the rules which constitute a particular discourse. Linguists therefore agree that ‘contents’ of discourse are revealed not through one separate text but through the whole complex combination of interrelated texts. Based on this idea, different types of discourse can be distinguished. This tradition of discourse analysis concentrates on what elements are general and typical for a particular type of discourse as well as what genres – so-called *Textsorten* in German – represent this particular discourse (Cherniavskaya 2009: 145).

The most obvious finding to emerge from this overview is that the linguistic framework of discourse analysis distinguishes between different schools where scientists either focus on (a) an immediate language context or (b) the broad ideological and socio-historical background in the analysis of factors which determine texts. The term discourse itself has a double meaning: It is referred to as concrete ‘language in use’ or as a more abstract ‘subset of a language’. These two senses of discourse do not contradict but rather complement each other since they describe different sides of one and the same phenomenon. In the first case, discourse is analysed as a communicative process linked to different conditions of its production. In the second one, it is understood as a combination of topically related texts representing a virtual semiotic sphere. In the present study, I implement the use of discourse in the abstract sense of ‘a subset of a language’.

4.2 Pre-election discourse as a variety of political discourse

A specific national and cultural context, the concretisation of the types of activity, the precision of aims and corresponding cognitive schemas divide political discourse as a subset

of a language into units of a smaller rang. A pre-electoral campaign with all its participants, their aims acting in certain circumstances, is an event that specifies political discourse as a pre-electoral subset of a language. The question of pre-electoral discourse as a variety of political discourse is raised in a number of works (Pomper 2001; Amirov 2002; Gaikova 2003; Chudinov 2007; Wodak 2008; Mikhaleva 2009; Stepanova 2009; Vorozhtsova 2010; Khalatyan 2011; Popova 2012; Fedoseev 2013; and others). Having systematised the results of these works, I can highlight the following aspect of pre-electoral discourse.

Elections are an important element in the political system of a country. A general election where a leader is elected helps to balance political forces, to define the level of citizens' trust to programs of parties participating in an election process, and to express attitudes of the electorate towards concrete politicians who ballot to the highest position (Khalatyan 2011: 180). The electorate should take a decision that will determine the direction of the country's development for a legislatively fixed period of time. The lives of the politicians running for the post and those who elect them are drastically conditioned by the results of the election. This is why pre-electoral campaigns gain in importance and receive acute attention by the public. The period during elections is usually characterised by rising tension since the interests of every individual are at stake. The presidential campaign precedes elections calling political subjects (candidates and their parties) to appear in front of the electorate, to attract the voters' attention (the object of influence) and to persuade people to vote for a candidate, a bearer of particular ideological views who promises to his/her electorate certain social and economic profits (Amirov 2002). In seeking power, candidates, parties and their supporters organise a whole range of activities to influence the will of people, to convince them to give their voices for a representative as a single candidate worthy of the highest political chair.

From a linguistic point of view, a pre-electoral campaign is a complex communicative event that takes place between the addressor and the addressee in the process of a communicative action in temporal, spatial, cultural and other contexts (Stepanova 2009: 482). Levshina (2005) presents pre-electoral discourse as a particular type of communication used in a particular social sector which is political election with a number of features which are determined by different factors.

4.3 Structure of pre-election discourse

Having presented a pre-election variety of political discourse in most general terms, I turn to the description of constituent parts of this subset of language. Accordingly, I am going to describe the contents of a pre-electoral discourse, define its spatial and temporal setting, observe actors of pre-electoral communication and group participants' intentions classified into several functional blocks.

4.3.1 Contents

The contents of political communication are oriented towards public discussion of mainly three fundamental questions around the concept of power, that is (1) distribution of societal resources; (2) rights of decision-making process and its control (legislative, executive and judicial); (3) application of sanctions (the right to punish or reward) (Denton & Woodward 1985: 14 as quoted in Sheigal 2005: 34). Political discourse is therefore the instrument which 'serves' to transmit any types of messages determined to influence the distribution and exertion of power in society, especially when these messages come from official government institutions (Schudson 1997: 311).

One of the crucial criteria of a pre-electoral type of political discourse distinction is its specific topic determination. Pre-electoral speech behaviour in the USA is certainly multifarious, related to various socio-economic problems of an American society. However, the contents and quantity of topics discussed during a pre-electoral campaign are limited in comparison with other types of political discourse. The majority of texts produced during a presidential election period are circled around the personalities of candidates which take part in the campaign as well as political parties and movements they represent. The public's close attention focuses on their policies as well as on how they deal with socio-economic challenges and what plan of improvement they propose. According to Fedoseev (2013: 41), content, a theme orientation of texts produced during presidential campaigns is one of the decisive criteria in distinguishing a pre-electoral variety of political discourse. The scholar claims that not all texts of this period can be adhered to pre-electoral discourse. Thus, a discussion which goes beyond the topic of a concrete pre-electoral campaign automatically deprives this type of political discourse its status.

4.3.2 Temporal and spatial setting

Pre-electoral discourse is a speech activity which is localised in time and space in a concrete national and historical context. The results of this activity, developed in a unity of indicated factors, build up a socio-cultural context of communication (Golubeva 2009: 10). Pre-electoral discourse is used on the territory of a state where the governing terms of its head come to its ends and citizens should decide if s/he continues the activity or leaves the cabinet. Every presidential campaign has its time limits with its beginning and end fixed in official documents according to legislative laws of a particular state. Like shifting the theme of discussion can easily change the type of political discourse, going beyond the temporal limits of a pre-electoral presidential campaign can modify the meaning of this discourse variety. If all-encompassing abstract political discourse is a permanent subset of a language, constantly unfolded in time, the development of pre-electoral sub-discourse fits a strict temporal frame (Fedoseev 2013: 40).

Some scholars consider the beginning period of a pre-electoral campaign from the moment a party wins the majority of voices. From this starting point, according to Zheltukhina (2003: 110), every deed, every phrase uttered by a political leader is perceived by the voters as his/her pre-electoral politics. However, in line with with Khalatyan (2011: 182-183), I adhere to a narrow understanding of the setting of pre-electoral discourse, notably one that is attaching it to a concrete place and time of the pre-electoral presidential campaign. According to Khalatyan, an established limit in time of carrying out a pre-electorate campaign inevitably influences rhetorical strategies during this period. Throughout the whole campaign, an abound use of rhetorical and stylistic devices takes place in order to achieve initially established goals (the fight for reaching and/or keeping power).

The chronoscope of pre-electoral discourse in the USA is characterised as a large-scale event with a frequency of four years. The nationwide campaign is launched as soon as presidential candidates officially announce their intentions to run. It usually happens as early as the spring of the previous calendar year and is regulated by strict Federal campaign finance laws. Several candidates from the same party propose their candidature to run for office, each hoping to get the party's nomination. Then from summer to December primaries and caucuses debates take place, i.e. "a lively event at which party leaders and activists debate issues, consider candidates, choose delegates, and discuss the party platform, or statement of principles" (Hartman 2007). From January to June this event is followed by primary elections

when “voters go to the polls to cast their votes for a presidential candidate (or delegates who will represent that candidate at the party convention)” (Hartman 2007). Starting from July up till early September, National Conventions are carried out where the party selects one nominee for President and elaborates the goals platform. Presidential election debates are another crucial stage in presidential pre-electoral campaigns which are planned for the period of late September and October. Finally, the Election Day is held on the Tuesday after the first Monday of November. The explanation for this fixed date of election is rooted in American history:

This was decided long ago, when many voters had to make a long, slow journey to the polling place. By early November crops were in but the weather was usually not too cold for travel. And because Sunday was a day of rest, voters would begin the trip on Monday.

Hartman (2007)

By casting their ballots, Americans do not directly vote for the candidate but select the groups of electors in the Electoral College, whose number is equal to a number of congressmen representing every state. This institution was created as a compromise between two conflicting ideas on the subject of who is to elect the President: Congress or popular vote. By doing it through the Electoral College, the population endorse a slate of members pledged to vote for a particular candidate. The electors chosen by popular vote finally elect the President and Vice President of the country. Therefore, the presidential election in the US is labelled an indirect election.

To sum up, the localisation of the pre-electoral campaign and establishment of strict temporal frames regulate the process of pre-electoral campaigns and consequently define the specifics of related discourse. Taken out of the time and space frame, the latter loses its sense.

4.3.3 Participants as political actors

Social subjects with their intentions and mental representations make up a core component of pre-electoral discourse. Van Dijk (1997) calls them political actors who are individuals (politicians and citizens), political institutions, organisations and movements engaged in political processes and events. In the light of a chosen interpretative socio-cognitive approach, I will view the participants of pre-electorate discourse as ideological actors sharing ideas,

representations, views and values characterising a particular political party, social group and society in general (Khalatyan 2011: 182).

Khalatyan (2011: 182-183) proposes the following classification of the participants of this type of discourse based on the criteria of their communicative roles:

- **Subjects or addressers** of pre-electoral discourse – politicians taking part in a presidential campaign as candidates to the position of a President of a country. The participation of several candidates in the election reveals a ‘multi-subject’ character of pre-electoral discourse which is determined by the essence of the phenomenon of election and the idea of choosing among several runners for the presidential post.

Article Two of the Constitution of the USA specifies that the people who can become the President and Vice President of the country must meet the following requirements: Natural born citizens of at least 35 years old, inhabitants of the United States for at least fourteen years. In the 2012 US presidential elections, the final candidates for the post of the President were Democrat Barak Obama balloting for the second term and Republican envoy Mitt Romney, the Governor of Massachusetts. In the 2016 elections, the Democrat nominee was Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the representative of the Republicans was the businessman Donald Trump. The President and the Vice President are elected together in a presidential election. The Vice President is the person who has the greatest number of votes of the electors. In 2012, the Democrats’ candidate was Joe Biden who was running for the position of Vice President while Paul Ryan was chosen to represent the Republicans. In 2016 Senator Tim Kaine was the candidate for Vice President of the United States under the Democrat banner while the Governor of Indiana Mike Pence was running for Vice President alongside Donald Trump.

- **Direct addressee** – citizens of the country exercising the right to elect. They make an object (a target) of all efforts of the participants-candidates trying to influence their choice.

Eligibility for voting in the USA varied across history and the states. Initially, only white men with a property could vote. Due to the reforms, the circle of people eligible to vote was gradually expanded giving the access to those who lack wealth, women, non-whites, non-Protestants, and naturalised citizens – all reaching 18 years of age. Their rights are fixed in the amendments of the US Constitution and local state laws.

- **Object** of pre-election communication – political rivals of addressers who ballot for the post of a President at the same time; they make an object of constant criticism.

Candidates with their running mates and their parties present two camps with oppositional views and make an object of the pre-electoral discussion.

When comparing the classification of participants of pre-electoral discourse with the large model of political discourse, we can see the difference in the active participation of political actors. Related to this, Mikhaleva (2009: 37) claims that in political discourse, people of the country present an addressee-observant whose attention the addressers-politicians try to draw, on whose interests they try to rest and whose opinion on numerous issues they think they represent. This indirect and passive presence of a mass observer is however constantly taken into consideration by politicians whose speech behaviour is influenced by the observation. There is a wave of increasing social activity during pre-electoral campaigns where every citizen is urged to adopt an ideological position and act accordingly. One can also observe a shift in the number of participants and their communicative roles when limiting the focus within political discourse to pre-electoral sub-discourse. If political discourse focuses on political rivals involved in situations of an open and latent fight for power, pre-electoral sub-discourse presents a more concrete circle of participants, i.e. citizens having the right to participate in presidential elections.

To conclude, the main participants of the pre-electoral discourse are the candidates to the post of the President of the USA from the Democrat and Republican parties and the voters, i.e. a particular category of American citizens who reached their legal age. The opponents and their followers become an object of criticism and constant rhetorical attacks in pre-electoral campaigns.

4.3.4 Functional blocks of pre-election discourse

Of all fundamental functions of the language once defined by Jakobson (1960), i.e. referential, regulative (conative), expressive (emotive), phatic, metalinguistic and poetic, the dominant function of political discourse is a *regulative* one (Mechkovskaya 1996). Also called appellative, incentive or impelling, the dominative function expresses the idea of realisation of will, an addressor's intention to regulate an addressee's behaviour through inspiration for action or interdiction to act in a certain way (Sheigal 2005).

A general aim of pre-election discourse is to (critically) discuss candidates for the position of the President of the country; and the aim of discourse produced by a candidate and his/her supporters is the consolidation and enlargement of an electoral base (Levshina 2005; Khalatyan 2011: 183). Vorozhtsova (2010) claims that through drawing the majority of voters to their side, participants reach the main goal, which is either to obtain the presidential chair for the first time or to continue to stay in power. The success of a candidate will depend on how a candidate manages to regulate and coordinate multidirectional interests of the society. Chudinov (2007: 13) points out the manipulative nature of aims of presidential runners. He is convinced that a candidate seeks to form a necessary representation in the minds of voters, which is in tune with his/her background assumptions and political creed.

From the point of view of intentionality, the main function of pre-electoral discourse is its use as an *instrument* for power control, the fight for it, its preservation, realisation, stabilisation and distribution (Seidel 1985; Wodak 1997; Sheigal 2005: 48). This function in the domain of politics can be compared to the basic function of language, that is a communicative one. Other functions are subordinated to this general instrumental function and show its different aspects.

Scholars point to the controversial character of an instrumental function (Denton & Woodward 1985: 14; Sheigal 2005: 49). Obviously, it brings people with common interests together and unites them in their fight for power. At the same time, it is a language of fraction and division of the society into friends and enemies. Pre-electoral discourse can smooth the differences or, on the contrary, drastically increase them. This type of discourse is therefore many-faceted: It informs, inspires, supports, divides, and sows discord and hostility.

The analysis of works dedicated to this question (Gaikova 2003: 7; Sheigal 2005: 49) allows for a distinction between several functional blocks within an instrumental function:

- orientation of citizens through identification of problems, interpretation of current events, formulation of aims and system of values; it includes informing people about political intentions, organisations of actions and the vector of a candidate's politics;
- integration and harmonisation inside social groups, looking for consensus between its members; strengthening commitment to a group through ritual use of symbols; an emotional pressure upon the voters is aimed at creating a feeling of trust;

- differentiation, detachment from a social group, encouragement of an aloof attitude, evoking negative emotions towards groups with a different ideology, sowing enmity and conflict;
- actionality, carrying out politics through mobilisation – organisation and activation of supporters, inspiring people to act.

As we will see, all these functions of pre-electoral discourse are present in political internet memes. Besides these four main functional blocks of an instrumental function of fight for power, some scholars also recognise the *creative* function (Solomonik 1995; Norman 1997; Sheigal 2005). The creative function of language (Norman 1997: 30), in other sources also called the function of construction of language reality (Sheigal 2005: 54) or the function of creation of illusions (Solomonik 1995), can also be used as an instrument for gaining and preserving power. A plethora of occasionally coined words and names as a means of fight with an adversary shows creative language use in order to accomplish the main function of political discourse, that is the regulation of people's behaviours in the fight for power. An interesting case of a creative use of language is the occasional term *Romnesia*, which is the result of abridging the proper name *Romney* and adding a noun suffix *-sia*. Originally, it was an attempt by Obama's team to capture Romney's shifting positions on a number of issues. This new noun created for the President's speech at George Mason University in Virginia became the third-most discussed Twitter term in the USA (MacAskill & Gabbat 2012). The nonce word also became viral on FB since people quickly embraced the opportunity to come up with their own definitions of what *Romnesia* is. Further on, I will illustrate more examples of the creative function of language when analysing parodies and knock-offs of the politicians' slogans, logos and portraits in internet memes.

Finally, like in religious discourse, language in politics can be used as an attempt to influence phenomena that the words name. In this sense some linguists (Cherepanova 1996; Mechkovskaya 1996; Souproun 1996; Sheigal 2005) distinguish a *magic* or incantatory, exorcising function of a language. Yet, I agree with Jakobson (1960) that this magic function is a variety of the more general regulative or conative function. A belief that words can have 'supernatural' powers on people is rooted in a non-conventional take on a language sign. It is a conviction that an *onoma* does not come from an agreement, a convention, a custom of use, as Plato's Hermogenes claimed when arguing with Cratylus and Socrates about names, but a name becomes an integral part of a referent to which it is attributed (Howatson 2011). Thus, if

a name reveals the essence of an object, its uttering can call for its presence. A pre-historic awe and quiver when articulating certain names is less strong today but can still be found in all sorts of taboo, oath, swear, spell, pray, etc. (Mechkovskaya 1996). The remnants of magic consciousness are also preserved in political discourse and can be revealed in taboo replacements and euphemisms. Barthes (1994: 526), for instance, shows that elimination or exaltation of words has nearly a magical effect, where abolishing a word equals abolishing its referent; this is similar to the taboo factor of the word 'nobility' in Revolutionary Russia, which was perceived as the liquidation of this social class itself. So the difference between instrumental attitude to a word in magical and modern political discourse lies in the ideological control and mass manipulation of the latter.

As far as pre-electoral discourse is concerned, a mind-numbing repetition of slogans and logos becomes a sort of mantra which is to enchant the voters and make them act in unison with the magician's will. A magic word, according to Cassirer (1979), describes neither things, nor the relations between them; it tries to affect and change the march of nature. The same words which were previously used descriptively, logically, semantically, now serve as words-conjurations, magic incantations or spell as if the language performs something supernatural. The aim of such emotionally charged words is to influence and to evoke particular feelings and attitudes.

To summarise, the essence of politics is the fight for power. Pre-electoral discourse is an instrument of reaching and/or keeping power through elections of the head of state. Several functional blocks of the discourse can be distinguished such as formulating and explaining a political position, searching for and rallying supporters, fighting against opponents, and inspiring people to act in the desired way. When implementing these functions, candidates provide maximum information about their platform, create a trustful image and unite the supporters, they evoke positive feelings linked to their ideologies and form negative attitudes and rejections of other values. Having attracted the majority of the electorate to support their party, the candidates and their teams call people to vote and spread the ideology. Language as an instrument of power can also be used creatively by way of coining new notions and terms. Some words are believed to have special 'magic' powers on people from where tabooing or, on the contrary, an intensified use are practiced.

Nevertheless, a leading function in the hierarchy of functions of pre-electoral discourse is regulative since political leaders seek, first of all, to appeal to the voters, to influence their

will and to get a vote. The essence of a political fight is the fight for the appropriation of language signs, for the right to define and control the meanings of these signs. The language becomes an instrument of this fight. All other functions are subordinate to a regulative function since the final goal of a politician is not just to inform people, to elaborate on key terms but rather to provoke a desired reaction among addressees.

4.4 Main characteristics of pre-election discourse

A number of studies concerned with pre-electoral discourse have reported various relevant features (Wodak 1997; Parshina 2005; Reisigl & Wodak 2005, 2009; Sheigal 2005; Finlayson 2007; Fairclough & Fairclough 2012; Cabrejas-Peñuelas & Díez-Prados 2014; and others). In what follows, I will describe some pivotal characteristics of a pre-electoral subset of political discourse by way of synthesising several scientific sources. These characteristics include (a) institutionalisation, (b) informative value and argumentation, (c) phatic communication, (d) interpretation and manipulation, (e) evaluation, (f) inspiration for action and (g) intermediation. As we will witness throughout the thesis, a political meme incorporates all of these features with different degrees of variation.

a) Institutionalisation

As a variety of political discourse, pre-electoral discourse is, first of all, an *institutional* type of communication. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 18) argue that an institutional context makes it possible for political actors “to exert their agency and empower them to act on the world in a way that has an impact on matters of common concern”. The social institution of an election is the total of people, establishments ‘armed’ with special competences in the domain of election, implementing a concrete social function. It is “a socially legitimated expertise together with those persons authorized to implement it” (Agar 1985: 164). Its existence is dictated by the limits of social and material resources and the selection of an eligible leader who would regulate their fair distribution, delineate people’s rights and responsibilities, and establish a balance between ideologies. Like all social institutes, it has a repertoire of typical communicative situations, a restricted subject matter, an expected standardised behaviour reflected in social roles, a set of intentions and language strategies in order to satisfy the needs. Institutional communication presupposes the existence of two sides. On the one hand, it is representative of an institution (political leaders and their parties),

professional and competent people in their sphere. On the other hand, it is the population that needs their service such as guaranteeing security and legitimacy, the rules of society functioning. As Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 18) state, the institutional dimension is evident in such contexts as government or parliament, but it is also present, although weakly, in internet forum discussions where citizens eulogise their political cult-heroes or, vice versa, “avail themselves of their *right* to publicly criticize government policy for failing to meet legitimate *commitments* and *obligations*”. Similarly, communication on FB can be under the auspices of a political institution if FB users discuss political issues, events, and actors, i.e. everything and everyone related to the question of power and its distribution.

b) Informative value and argumentation

Pre-electoral discourse is not deprived of such fundamental characteristics as *informing* the addressee. Throughout the whole pre-electoral period, the campaigners provide the electorate with necessary information about a balloting politician, his/her pre-electoral platform, the programme, and concrete steps of its realisation. Nevertheless, in contrast to scientific discourse, information within political communication is subordinate to the intention of an addressor to create a positive or negative attitude within an addressee towards various ideologies, change his/her outlook on certain social issues, and influence his/her mode of thinking, etc. Parshina (2005: 21) distinguishes between a whole cluster of aims pursued by politicians when they provide new knowledge and inform the public about their position, which are the following:

- to earn great reputation, prestige, win authority, consolidate the image, to be liked by people;
- to create a particular emotional mood;
- to convince the addressee to agree with the speaker on his/her programme, to accept his/her point of view;
- to call the addressee to vote for the candidate under question, his/her party, bloc, movement, etc.

Apart from providing information, the candidates and their teams also try to control the spread of information. Political activists can choose a theme and put it at the centre of public discussion, or vice versa, pull it to the periphery of public attention (Sheigal 2005: 51-52). It goes without saying that politicians attempt to exclude the broadcast of topics from the

agenda which show them in a negative light. The struggle for controlling information is especially acute during the period of pre-electoral campaigns.

The nature of politics includes the uncertainty, the existence of risk, the absence of indisputable truths, given clashes of interests and value pluralism, all of which are characteristics that make scientists think that political discourse is primarily argumentative (Reisigl & Wodak 2005, 2009; Finlayson 2007; Fairclough & Fairclough 2012). Politicians are constantly engaged in “finding arguments that will effectively persuade various groups of people, in order to create a convergence of interests and views in a world of persistent disagreement” (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012: 29). Argumentation, a careful and well-considered presentation of contents, is especially vital in a pre-electoral variety of political discourse. Candidates and their supporters work hard to persuade the public of the correctness of their views and the relevance of their ideas. Rhetoric becomes their main tool “in convincing others to see things in the same light” as they do “so as to produce agreement around a contested claim” (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012: 29). Even though argumentation is used in many discourses, the purpose of political discourse “is ultimately not to describe the world but to underpin decision and action” (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012: 13). In other words, argumentation in pre-electoral discourse is used to influence people regarding their voting decisions and to motivate them to act according to the promoted ideology.

c) Phatic communication

The informative aspect of pre-electoral discourse, as described above, is often diminished during presidential campaigns. Communication becomes *phatic* due to frequently banal content, the absence of novelty, the multiple repetition of already available knowledge with the aim of keeping the contact with voters. A leader’s visits of shops and enterprises, speeches at universities, carrying babies, shaking hands in local restaurants, and other direct interactions with the public are manifestations of political behaviour aimed at establishing and keeping contact with the public. To this, we can add the creation of phatic signs such as slogans, logos and portraits of leaders that are repeatedly used to demonstrate the unification of a group or a nation and the generation of feelings of pride and joy from this alliance. A phatic character of communication transforms pre-electoral discourse into a ritual that is predictable, traditional and programmed communication. The parallels can be drawn to common everyday talk and its contact-establishing function.

d) Interpretation and manipulation

The world is not given to people directly, but they need to interpret it, to create certain representations in their minds. Language is an instrument of interpretation, a mechanism that offers a sign system relating mankind to the world. Politicians and their supporters in their discourses also interpret the reality, providing people with their vision of the world, their interpretation of situations, their definitions of different phenomena. According to Sheigal (2005: 53), definitions form citizens' representations, their attitudes towards problems and towards other actors in politics. Political leaders can personalise abstract notions and turn them into clear and familiar concepts or, on the contrary, de-personalise people, lower their social status, label them, and make them a target of aggression. In line with this, Hahn (1998: 65) compares naming phenomena with blinkers of a horse, i.e. focusing the attention on one thing, it (definition) excludes the others from the field of vision. The power of definition lies thus in its ability to create or destroy. This is especially evident in pre-electoral discourse where naming things can be easily turned into labelling when conflicting forces fight for power.

According to Wodak (1997: 49), the phenomenon of power inevitably includes an irrational level. Therefore, a political interpretation of reality cannot be considered neutral and objective. This is why when suggesting an interpretation of events, people, problems, etc., politicians can easily manipulate the public, that is to intentionally influence people's behaviour through a range of deceptive and underhanded tactics in order to lead them to act in a desired way. In the pre-electoral discourse variety, politicians and their allies attempt to have an impact on the voters' decision-making. To this purpose, various manipulative strategies can be singled out. To name but a few, it is especially the veiling or shading of undesired information, which allows a manipulator to hide controversial facts, to make them less evident; *suppression veri*, the mystification or provision of deliberate false representations, the misinformation, misleading of the public; the depersonalisation and anonymousness as a device of obscuration of responsibility (Sheigal 2005: 70).

e) Evaluation

Many scientists (Lasswell 1950; Edelman 1964; Ealy 1981; Elder & Cobb 1983; Hacker 1996; Mironova 1997; Sheigal 2005; and others) underline the dominance of values over provided facts in political discourse. The evaluative component expresses people's attitudes to the delivered information based on representations of rights and a desired reality. Evaluation

becomes one of the most essential attributes of pre-electoral discourse. Professional and personal qualities of candidates, the benefits and shortcomings of their policies are constantly evaluated with a focus on some and the mitigation of others. Consequently, information circulated during pre-electoral discourse has a biased touch.

The flow of biased information during presidential campaigns, positive self-evaluation and negative other-evaluation is especially vivid in genres such as pre-election debates. For example, Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados (2014) have demonstrated that during public debates, candidates resort to evaluative devices to deprecate the opponent and, in that way, to minimise his/her chances to win the elections. The analysis of internet memes will show that the spread of impartial information, evaluation of presidential candidates in “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (Jowett & O’Donnell 2012: 7) is also a salient feature of digital genres. In contrast to the evaluation of political events by politicians via official media, digital activists use internet memes as a means of evaluating and voicing their opinion from a grassroots level, usually as a response to politicians’ speeches and acts.

f) Inspiration for action

The question of political communication as action-oriented is addressed by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 45) in an interesting way. In their studies of practical reasoning in political discourse, inspiration for action or as they call it, “claim for action”, is placed on top of the structure:

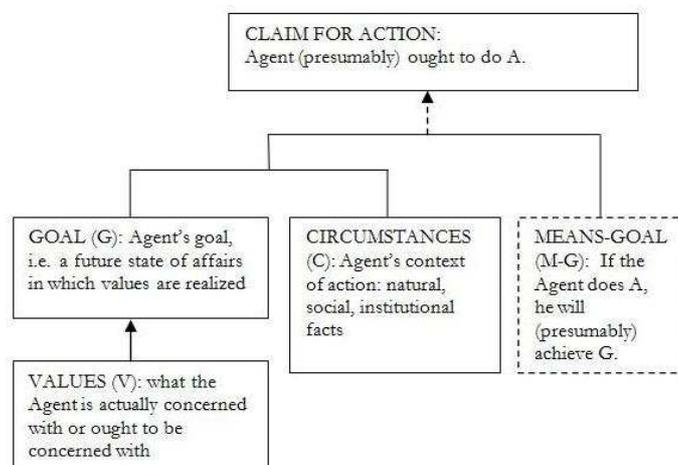


Figure 15. Fairclough & Fairclough’s (2012: 45) structure of practical arguments

The schema shows that citizens' actions are tightly related to such concepts as people's values, circumstances, goals and means in order to achieve these goals. When applying this structure to pre-electoral discourse, the action would stand for voting for a particular candidate and encouraging others to do the same. In acting so, agents (citizens) intend to change a present set of circumstances such as inequality, and absence of rights so that they match their goals, e.g. to get equal treatment, different rights, etc., the goal nourished by the agents' values. Thus, the orientation of pre-electoral discourse towards the action is not only reflected in changing the viewpoints of the electorate but in bringing them to the polls, making them cast their ballots as well as encouraging them to propagate a supported ideology among others. It must also be noted that the emotional factor plays an important role in calling people to action. Thomas (1995: 315) claims that emotions appear when an individual sees a presence or an absence of correspondence between situations/events and his/her desires, interests and needs. Emotionally marked discrepancy charges an individual with energy, mobilising him/her to act in order to reduce this discordance.

g) Intermediation

We have already seen that spreading information about candidates to the presidential chair, as well as their programmes and attitudes towards current affairs, is an important characteristic of pre-electoral discourse. However, in the majority of cases, the information is mediated, which means that the masses are not directly in contact with the world of politics. In other words, the people's knowledge database is more often based on images or verbal "pictures" that are offered by mediators and not via personal experience, a direct participation (Sheigal 2005: 50-51).

Another particularity of pre-electoral discourse is therefore its regular transmission through mass media and the increasing intermediation of electronic discourse. The mediation can be realised through numerous genres such as interviews, press conferences as well as informal internet memes, tweets, and videos. Accordingly, newspapers, television and radio broadcasting, blogs, Twitter, FB, etc. become one of the channels of realisation of pre-electoral communication. This is why scientists point to the relevance of connecting political communication with mass media, thus merging institutional communication with the mass and interpersonal sphere (Sheigal 2005: 40).

During a presidential campaign, by virtue of mass media the citizens acquire the role of witnesses, observers of political events, and are often guided in their interpretation while

journalists and political activists have the role of mediators between politicians and common citizens. In social media, the citizens can also become active participants in spreading information and commenting on it. Taking the role of commentators, the citizens become independent agents of pre-electoral discourse, expressing primarily their personal opinion when quoting or reporting politicians. However, their electronic activity is often a response to information that they get through official media sources and this is why citizens get exposed to analytical pressure.

To sum up, in the discussion of existing literature on the subject of pre-electoral discourse, it was shown that this type of language organisation has a specific character that distinguishes it from other domains of political communication. It is related to the social institution of election that exists in order to implement the process of selection of an eligible leader, as an important event, a historical turn in the country's distribution of material resources. A newly elected President is believed to establish a fair balance between ideologies, enlarging or reducing the rights and responsibilities of certain groups of population. Pre-electoral discourse is used to inform the public about a balloting candidate, to describe his/her electoral programme, to persuade the public of the rightness of the chosen vector, to establish close contact with potential voters and keep that contact during the whole campaign, to guide them in the interpretation of reality, to propagate one ideology, to criticise other philosophies, to shape the public's evaluation of raising the chances of one candidate and minimising the possibilities of another to win the elections. All these dimensions of pre-electoral discourse are dominated by a final goal of the process, i.e. to guide citizens in an important decision-making process, calling them to vote.

All abstract characteristics of pre-electoral discourse are closely intertwined and reflected with a different degree of intensity in different genres of pre-electoral communication, influenced by topics of discussion. On the level of the global political scene, the participants producing texts take into consideration these features. When addressing the recipient, the agents of communication behave as if there existed a third person (Bakhtin 1979), an ideal representative of the institution to which the speaker adheres him/herself (Moirand 1988: 458). Acting on the global scene, the speaker does it in accordance with a conventionally adopted prototypical model of behaviour (Maingueneau 2014: 126).

4.5 Political ideology

*...l'idéologie ne s'argumente pas, elle se livre et elle appelle à s'y reconnaître ou non. L'idéologie, c'est l'indiscuté ou l'indiscutable du discours*⁶.

Herman (2011: 3)

As previously outlined, the study of discourse and the global political scene which condition the creation of memes requires the examination of the concept of ideology. Many studies in the field of social sciences deal with the question of ideologies (Giddens 1993; Van Dijk 1995a, 1995b, 2001; Zelensky 1996; Soloviev 2000; Reshetnikov 2002; Chilton 2004; Sheigal 2005; Rovdo, Tchernov & Kazakevich 2007; Herman 2011). Scholars quite often seek to relate structures of discourse with structures of society, notably class, gender, ethnicity, carriers, income levels, etc., but research to date hardly goes beyond a correlational description (Van Dijk 1995b: 135-136). In this thesis, I adopt a broader perspective in that I present ideology as a notion with a double sense. Then I provide an explicit account of the inner structure of the ideology, thus viewing it from a narrow perspective.

From the Bakhtinian perspective, political consciousness or *ideology in a large sense* refers to any system of signs which reflects the world in a particular manner (Voloshinov 1929, translated by Matejka & Titunik 1973). For instance, a central idea in science requires an objective examination of reality, an unquestionable faith is a central concept for religion, a writer's imaginative world of literature, a norm for justice, and an everyday experience for common thinking. As far as politics is concerned, fundamental concepts for it are *power* and the *fight for power*.

Power and politics are thus inseparable notions in the theory of political communication. Yet, Wilson (2001: 398) warns that the use of such general notions as 'power', 'control' and 'domination' can lead to a situation where all discourses can be called political. Therefore, the researcher proposes to delimit political discourse as being concerned with formal or informal political contexts, political actors, political institutions, governments, political media as well as political supporters and all talks related to politics. Chilton (2004) views politics as an institution to fight for power, and cooperation for solving social conflicts. Chudinov (2007) considers political communication as a speech activity that is oriented towards the propaganda

⁶ ideology does not argue itself, it is given and it calls to be recognised or not. Ideology is the undisputed or the undisputable of discourse (Herman 2011: 3, translation is mine).

of different ideas, that has emotional influence on citizens of the country and inspires them to act. Zelensky (1996: 371 in Sheigal 2005: 33-34) proposes a distinction between two levels of politics. The definition of the first level is the distribution of power and economic resources in a country or among several countries in the world. This official sector includes political institutions, mass media, the system of education and other social institutions that control citizens' social lives. The second level, according to Zelensky (1996), is a reflection of the first one in the individual consciousness or group cognition, both reflected in behaviour and social practices.

In the context of this thesis, I am interested in the second level of politics, i.e. political consciousness or representation of politics in people's minds as well as material results of this representation revealed in texts. Soloviev (2000: 230-235) defines political consciousness as a general category that implies a person's empirical and theoretical, valuable and normative *representations*, mediating his/her relations with political structures. In other words, political consciousness is reflections about politics, thinking of the latter as a complex phenomenon that combines socially recognised knowledge, values, norms, convictions, beliefs and attitudes to it.

Thierry Herman, quoted in the epigraph above however stresses a hidden side of ideology and distinguishes it from the use of discourse which tries *to persuade* appealing to reason (Herman 2011: 3). According to Herman (2011: 4), ideology is not more than a *doxa*, a popular opinion shared by a group of people which presents its values and beliefs as something evident.

Ideology in a narrow sense is defined as a particular system of ideas that reflects the interests of certain groups and is aimed at reinforcing or changing the existing order in social relations (Reshetnikov 2002: 350-354). Ideology used in a narrow sense differs from the Bakhtinian type of ideology in a large sense or any system of signs. In the narrow sense, it is a system of beliefs that defends claims of a certain group of people for power and access to resources in a society. That is, based on a general socio-cultural repertoire, a social group selects and specifies values that are relevant for groups' interests. Guided by the aims to satisfy these interests, reaching and maintaining power, a social group tries to convince the public that promoted ideas are relevant and important and they try to win public opinions in such a way. The interests of one social group can clash with interests of another social group. This is why ideology is often revealed in the positioning of one group towards the other.

In sum, ideology in a narrow sense may be defined as the shared representation of a social group which “organizes its identity, actions, aims, norms and values, and resources as well as its relations to other social groups” (Van Dijk 2006b: 115). The categories given above are fundamental beliefs regarding the essence and the way of existence of a social group.

To conclude, political consciousness is a reflection of politics and its structures in the human mind. Politics is an ideology in a large sense like art, religion, ethics, etc. Talking about ideology in a narrow sense, that is within the context of politics, we talk about the notion of power and means of achieving power or remaining in power, legitimising the difference in its distribution among different groups (Giddens 1993: 742). In other words, it is a system of principles based on a group’s knowledge, opinions and values.

4.5.1 Individual consciousness and socially shared system of beliefs

When discussing the question of ideology, we must bridge the gap between group consciousness and individual political consciousness or, as Van Dijk (1995: 138) puts it, between social cognitions and personal cognitions. It means that, on the one hand, ideology can be viewed as a group phenomenon, as a social representation shared by the minds of several group members. On the other hand, we have an individual language user with his/her own systems of values and beliefs which are based on personal knowledge and gained throughout life. As Van Dijk (1995: 140-142) states, “Language users are not only social members, but also persons with their own personal history (biography), accumulated experiences, personal beliefs and principles, motivations and emotions, as well as a unique ‘personality’ that defines the overall type or orientation of their action”. It means that ideology is not only limited to groups and their fight for dominance, but it can be an individual phenomenon. Furthermore, a person belongs to several ideological groups at the same time and therefore combines different ideological systems (e.g. political views, profession, gender, race).

Hence, in reality, we have two interacting systems of social and individual consciousness that constantly influence and determine each other, i.e. specific socio-cultural knowledge revealed in group ideologies influences specific knowledge found in individual consciousness. Conversely, actual text and talk has an inevitable impact on the personal cognition of a language user.

Relatedly, we should also differentiate between ideology as a doctrine and a mass ideology. In the first case, it is a product of a determined specialised activity of theoreticians (Rovdo, Tchernov & Kazakevich 2007: 11). In the second case, it refers to mass political consciousness that is formed and functions mainly spontaneously, in the process of everyday socio-political practice of the population. Van Dijk (2006b: 119) claims that, on the one hand, “there are experts, teachers, leaders and other ‘ideologues’ who teach, explain, inculcate and explicitly reproduce the group ideologies”; and on the other hand, there are ideological group members who are aware of the ideas they follow and are “able to speak or act on the basis of the acquired ideology, but are not always able to formulate its beliefs explicitly”. Nevertheless, as a number of researchers (Van Dijk 2006b; Rovdo, Tchernov & Kazakevich 2007) suggest, both representations are not separated by ‘the Chinese wall’ but constantly interact. Furthermore, ideology serves as a factor that forms mass consciousness, although the degree of ideological influence and manipulation of mass behaviour is different in different political systems.

4.5.2 Ideology and knowledge

Ideology should not be identified with any type of cultural knowledge. Cultural knowledge, like ideology, is a system of beliefs, but it is spread over larger communities and is often taken for granted. It means that knowledge forms the so-called common ground of a given community. It is acquired and shared by all its members and presupposed (not explicitly expressed) in any discourse practice (Van Dijk 2006b). Ideology is based on a community’s general knowledge and it is nourished by this general knowledge. In a process of text production and perception, various knowledge types are activated as mutual understanding as communication would otherwise not be possible. Unlike generally accepted knowledge, ideology is shared by smaller social groups and rather takes an axiomatic vector, i.e. ideological knowledge specifies values, attitudes, outlook and position of a particular group vis-à-vis other groups.

Interestingly enough, members of one community assume its general knowledge as non-ideological, while members of other communities may describe this as taken for granted knowledge as ideological beliefs. An example on the synchronic scale is communism in the Soviet Union which was believed to be knowledge by its citizens, while it was considered a mere ideology in the USA. The same can be true for the community on the diachronic scale:

While in Medieval Europe the Church was the head of the state, with Christianity taken as general knowledge, nowadays it is thought to be one system of beliefs among others, i.e. with the Church and government separated. Reversely, Van Dijk (2006b: 117) argues that

... ideologies become shared so widely that they seem to have become part of the generally accepted attitudes of an entire community, as obvious beliefs or opinion, or common sense. Thus, much of what today are widely accepted as social or human rights, such as many forms of gender equality, were and are ideological beliefs of the feminist or socialist movements. In that sense, and by definition, these beliefs thus lose their ideological nature as soon as they become part of the Common Ground. It is only in this sense that I would agree to use the phrase “the end of ideology”, since obviously our contemporary world is replete with ideologies, especially so by those who deny they are ideologies.

In other words, an ideology of a group of people can become generally accepted knowledge over time. It means that a system of values of one group is not perceived as ideology any more, having grown into the system of beliefs of the whole society. This suggests that although ideology differs from knowledge, the boundary between the two can be shifted. Ideology becomes cultural knowledge when it is shared by the majority of members of a society and vice versa, knowledge turns into ideology when it is no longer regarded as a general truth.

4.5.3 Ideological groups among other social groups and communities

From the perspective of the social approach, one must be able to identify an ideological group and distinguish it from a community and other social groups.

The researcher chiefly differentiates an ideological group from a community. Previously, it has been observed that a difference between ideology and knowledge exists. I have shown that the social basis of the first one is a social group and a community for the second one. A group that leads an ideological policy is a group which expresses its “goals and interests in relation to other groups” whereas a community has “general beliefs, such as knowledge, norms and values – which not be related to those of other cultural communities” (Van Dijk 2006b: 119-120). People become part of a community by birth or by training throughout the whole life span while an ideological group recruits its members by way of persuasion (Swales 1990: 24). Consequently, an ideological group should also be distinguished from a specific interest group (Swales 1990: 24). Thus, in line with Van Dijk (2006b: 120), in this thesis, I

will consider an ideological group as “a collectivity of people defined primarily by their shared ideology and the social practices based on them, whether or not these are organized or institutionalized”. Language use is then one of the forms of social practice or social behaviour. At the same time, one should bear in mind that an ideological group is “a fuzzy set of social actors” (Van Dijk 2006b: 119). It means that it is not necessary that all members of an ideological group identify themselves in the same way and interpret the group’s principles in the same way.

The definition by Van Dijk (2006b: 120), which I adopt in this thesis, points to another aspect that must be taken into consideration. It is the fact that ideological groups are deeply differentiated depending on their organisation and institutionalisation, permanence and joint action as well the nature of ideologies. The latter “need not be detailed, complex systems, [...]. They may very well be limited to a few basic principles” (Van Dijk 1995b: 140). An analysis of ideology in FB context in the following chapter will show that ideological groups created on pages of the social networking site include such principles as self-identity description, activity-descriptions, goal-descriptions, norm and value descriptions, access to resources (or their absence).

4.5.4 The major US ideologies

The aim of this section is to present two major US ideologies. The idea is not to reduce the diversity of American ideologies into two traditions, but to focus on two sets of conflicting interests, namely liberalism and conservatism and their forms, as well as to describe them in general terms. On the basis of these two ideological traditions in the USA, a two-party system has developed, within which many factions are struggling for power (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). Their core difference lies in the interpretation of natural human rights and political democracy (Hartz 1991).

In the history of ideas, the term ‘liberalism’ (from Latin *libertas* – liberty, freedom) refers to an ideology that stands for natural rights and freedom of people recognised and protected by the state; a situation where a social force is applied in accordance with the law where all are treated equally (Rovdo, Tchernov & Kazakevich 2007: 34). In classical liberalism, the state is supposed to guarantee the largest spectrum of freedom for an individual without causing harm to society. Thus, one of the main principles of liberalism is the domination of an individual

over society (in contrast to Aristotle's principle of priority of the whole over the part). Within this ideological framework, the governing of the state is oriented towards people and the expression of their will. Liberals promote the ideas of restriction of powers of the state and its functions, emancipation of citizens from the state in the area of spiritual life (religious liberty) as well as the material side (economic independence). Originally, liberals defended the idea of a free market without intervention by the state in the economic life of its citizens. So, according to Adams (2001: 32), ideologically, all US parties are liberal. But the social progress of the twentieth century in the USA, the development of monopolistic capitalism, heavy industry, the merging of companies and the rise of corporations along with the economic crisis of the 1930s dramatically raised the question of state regulation of the economy. According to Adams (2001: 32-33), the point of difference is in "How far should the free market be left alone; how far should the state regulate or manage; and how far should government at federal or local level provide social security and welfare services?" These questions were a bone of contention that divided and still divides the big liberal American family.

Focusing on the importance of intellectual, spiritual and political freedom, one liberal wing was sceptical about the unlimited accumulation and distribution of private property, thinking of it as a reason for the existence of social classes and inequality. This ideology was supported by political leaders such as B. Franklin (1785-1788 in office), T. Jefferson (1801-1809 in office), T. Paine (1737-1809). As a way out of difficult economic situations, the previously named leaders promoted reforms and the transformation of a classical liberalism into its state version. Today, this ideology is known as socio-democratic type of thinking. The direction towards state liberalism was drastically taken during the presidency of F. Roosevelt (1933-1945 in office). Due to his politics, the USA managed to overcome the economic crisis in the 1930s, notably by having carried out a range of reforms. The advocates of this new form of liberalism still viewed the society as a self-regulating mechanism but added the thesis to their theory that its periodical correction or 'repairing' is possible in order to support the system and to avoid revolutionary radicalism (Rovdo, Tchernov & Kazakevich 2007: 44-45). The chosen vector of modern liberalism reached its peak with the integration of a new principle of the welfare state in the 1960s during the government of J. Kennedy's (1961-1963 in office) administration. It means that social questions such as insurance, unemployment benefits and other payments moved from the area of private life and responsibility of an individual to the sphere of the state.

Today, modern liberalists represented by the Democratic Party see the enlargement of functions of a state as a necessity to balance between growing powers of other institutions such as business corporations, labour associations, etc. The concept of pluralism, i.e. the government as one of many centres and sources of power, becomes central in the ideology of modern liberalism. Resort to the state and its greater intervention, the ability of regulation and control, according to this concept, is nothing but a call for protection of an individual's liberty, the establishment of equality for all (Adams 2001: 33). Nowadays, the libertarian mood is reflected in the struggle for voting rights by minorities, the reproductive rights for women, the support for same-sex marriage, and the enlargement of government programs such as education and health care. The Democratic Party includes various factions with different overlapping philosophies, notably progressives, centre-right Democrats, conservative Democrats, libertarian Democrats, Christian left and other – each promoting the interests of particular social groups in the USA.

In contrast, conservatives together with their founders A. Hamilton (1789-1795 in office), J. Adams (1797-1801 in office), J. Madison (1809-1817 in office) among different individual freedoms gave priority to economic freedom (Rovdo, Tchernov & Kazakevich 2007: 248). They were sceptical of different forms of intervention of the state in the regulation of the market economy, social reforms, and they defended free enterprise and an economic life of society in general. Consequently, in the USA, classical liberalism acquired some conservative functions and grew into what is known today as specific American type of 'market conservatism'. Its followers tried to keep to traditional ideas of 'laissez-faire' politics for favourable conditions of capital accumulation and investments, low taxes and limited regulation. Instead of the re-distribution of capital as a solution to economic problems, they put their emphasis on economic growth and the search for new markets. Liberal conservatives viewed social progress in the improvement of material status for all but not necessarily with the same degree and at the same time, thinking thereby of a social hierarchy as a natural and inevitable phenomenon (Kristol 1995). As far as the welfare state is concerned, American conservatives are convinced that a person should be given a choice between a state or private system of social welfare benefits, between state protection and self-protection. According to the conservative ideology, the greater part of revenue should remain in the hands of the people and should not be extracted in the form of taxes. Other competing ideologies are united under the Republican banner such as social conservatives, economic liberals, fiscal conservatives, neoconservatives, populists, moderates, libertarians, the religious right and

others (Goldfein 2015). Each faction introduces a particular vision of government and its interaction with American society and foreign policy issues.

To resume, in general terms, the US ideological system is characterised by a deep division into two wings, historically developed on the basis of different interpretations of what liberalism is. Today, liberal, socio-democratic ideas that advocate the intervention of the state in the regulation of economic liberties, the protection of an individual are defended by the Democratic Party while the Republican Party represents conservative interests related to 'laissez-faire' politics and the individual responsibility of every citizen. The parties are officially registered and their ideological principles are fixed in their programmes. Taking into account all their differences, the liberals and conservatives nevertheless share common views on many fundamental principles of the American state. Other ideologies, e.g. of a feminist or religious nature, although challenging two giant parties from time to time, find common values in one or another party. A constant fight for power results in the cycle of victory of one and defeat of the other ideology.

4.6 Mental schema 'we vs they'

Political ideology is closely related to a question of a dominant type of thinking or a certain mental schema. The latter has "a standard schematic organisation, consisting of a limited number of fixed categories" (Van Dijk 1995b: 139). In previous paragraphs, I have outlined that the central concept of politics is a fight for power of conflicting forces and interests. Accordingly, associated mental schemas present a basic opposition of concepts 'we – they' (Sheigal 2005: 149).

Already Aristotle in his treatise *Politics* pointed to the existence of common views on moral and legal issues which unite people in one group, a state crowning this unification:

...obviously man is a political animal in a sense in which a bee is not, or any other gregarious animal. [...] For the real difference between man and other animals is that humans alone have the perception of good and evil, just and unjust, etc. It is sharing of a common view in *these* matters that makes a household and a state.

Aristotle *Politics* (335-323 BCE) translated by Jowett (1999)

The competitive presence of others who think in different ways, the conflicting interests and clashes of basic values are causes of uncertainty and insecurity among people (Finlayson 2007). In social psychology and social cognition research, this category is known as ‘intergroup’ (Hamilton 1981; Fiske & Taylor 1991; Semin & Fiedler 1992). Van Dijk (1995: 143) adapts this cognitive model to ‘ingroup – outgroup opposition’ and explains that “ingroups and their members, as well as friends, allies, or supporters, tend to be described in positive terms, whereas outgroups, enemies or opponents are described in negative terms”. In this line, Chilton (2004) talks about a relationship between ‘cooperation’ and ‘conflict’ or non-cooperation in politics. He claims that this opposition comes from an originally dual nature of politics, i.e. it is at the same time a struggle for power and resolution of clashes; pluralism of values and convergence of interests. Likewise, Ross and Rivers call the discursive creation and transmission of a positive image of the self ‘legitimation’ whilst the discursive creation and transmission of a negative image of the other ‘delegitimation’ (Ross & Rivers 2017: 3). Similarly, Schmidt (1992: 40) names this opposition a ‘friend – foe’ schema and argues that it is specifically political, just like ‘good – evil’ is specific for moral sphere, ‘beautiful – ugly’ – for aesthetics, ‘useful – useless’ for economics, etc. The opposition ‘we – they’ is salient in political discourse which means that all other characteristics are additional. Furthermore, Schmidt says that the opposition ‘we – they’ is so strong in political discourse that it transforms other oppositions into political ones, dividing people into ‘friends’ and ‘foes’ on the basis of any kind of characteristics, be it ethnic, religious, economic, or else.

This basic schema of political discourse is a source of derivation of other closely connected schemas such as ‘who our friends are and who our foes are’, ‘unification of our friends’, ‘fight against foes’ – all linked to the concept of power and to means of achieving it.

The agonistic factor, as Huizinga (1949: 209) claims, has already been present in the primitive stages of civilisation. However, a ‘friend-foe principle’ characterises a typical competitiveness of modern societies, i.e. “any ‘other’ group is always either your friend or your enemy. Enemy, of course, is not to be understood as *inimicus* i.e. a person you hate, let alone a wicked person, but purely and simply as *hostis* i.e. the stranger or foreigner who is in your group’s way” (Huizinga 1949: 209). These mental schemas influence discourse organisation and the selection of language means. Discourse in its turn becomes an index of ideology. As Van Dijk (2006b: 124) argues, “ideologies are acquired, expressed, enacted and reproduced by discourse, this must happen through a number of discursive structures and

strategies”. Therefore, an ideological polarisation can be studied at all levels of discourse organisation through analysis of, on the one hand, how ingroup members emphasise their own good deeds, reinforce the bad ones of the outgroup; and on the other hand, how they mitigate or deny their own bad properties and the good ones of the outgroup (Van Dijk 2006b: 115).

To sum up, underlying ideologies of political discourse can be resumed in ‘we – they’ opposition where everything connected to ‘we’ conveys ingroup favouring or positive self-presentation, and ‘they’ conveys outgroup derogation or negative portraying. These ideological structures can be revealed through discourse analysis, i.e. various language means are activated to emphasise ‘our’ good things and ‘their’ bad things and to mitigate ‘our’ bad things and ‘their’ good things.

4.6.1 Type of political activity: Orientation – integration – delegitimisation

Political consciousness with corresponding thinking in terms of ‘we – they’ is revealed in a political verbal and non-verbal activity and form a sphere of political communication. Sheigal in her monograph *Semiosphere of political discourse* (2005) established a basic model of political rivalry which I am going to use when examining ideological symbols in political internet memes. The model presents a system divided into three main functional blocks, which are orientation – integration – delegitimisation (Sheigal 2005: 273).

Orientation is an activity aimed at formulation and clarification of a political position. Integration is the search, consolidation of supporters, harmonisation of their relations, maintaining consensus. Delegitimisation is the differentiation activity which includes a fight with the adversary, strengthening conflict relations between political agents.

This triad of political activities is projected on the fundamental political opposition ‘we – they’ (Sheigal 2005). Integration is the consolidation of ‘we’ and differentiation from ‘they’ while delegitimisation suggests aggression against ‘they’ which consequently favours the unification of ‘we’. Orientation occupies a middle position as it is the identification of both ‘our’ and ‘their’. Since there are no strict ideological borders, it can grow into integration or delegitimisation depending on the situation.

All three functional clusters are nevertheless related since in reality text productions combine several concepts as well as the use of one set of principles that inevitably involves the support

or rejection of other principles. Chilton (2004) expresses a similar idea stating that non-cooperation in political communication is only possible because there is a tacit presupposition of cooperativeness.

In what follows, I will apply the semiotic triad of orientation-integration-delegitimation to pre-electoral discourse in the USA. In this chapter I will describe general American conventional orientation signs used in any campaign and observe classic means of integration of citizens around the ideological pole 'we'. The fight against 'them' will then be illustrated in Chapter Five. Several delegitimation means and strategies of fight against the oppositional ideology of 'they' will be shown on the examples of internet memes spread during the 2012 and 2016 presidential campaigns as a response to the opponents' signs of orientation and integration.

4.6.2 US official and non-official ideological orientation signs

Having sketched a model of political rivalry in very general terms, I will now focus on the orientation axis and present a few US official and non-official ideological symbols relevant for my study. As Sheigal (2005: 152) points out, to orient oneself in the field of politics means to know who you are with, who you are against as well as what you fight for and against. For the purposes of identification and differentiation from others, political agents create distinctive signs which provide their names, symbols and suggest supported ideologies. Along with official principles, transcribed in parties' platforms, there are numerous non-official signs of identification of ideology. In what follows, I will show how these non-official signs can be expressed through (a) metaphors of space, (b) nominalisations, (c) animal allegories, and (d) colour metonymies.

a) Metaphors of space

To begin with, nominalisations of political organisations and parties are often related to their interests and values. In many cultures, names of political parties are expressed through a trite metaphor of space: Orientation terms like *left*, *right*, *extreme left*, *extreme right*, *centre*, *left centre*, *right centre* occupy a certain place on a scale where *left* is usually associated with radical social ideology and *right* with conservatism. These terms can signify different values for every country, i.e. depending on the specificity of political culture and the current political situation (Sheigal 2005: 153); moreover, ideological orientations can be changed and shifts

are not excluded. In the USA, the Democrats position themselves to the left of the Republicans on a range of socio-economic issues; accordingly, the former are often referred to as *the Left* and the latter ones as *the Right*.

b) Nominalisations

Today, the US parties are officially known as the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. However, it was only in 1844 that the Democratic Party officially fixed this name. Earlier, this nomination was stigmatised when referred to Thomas Jefferson and his supporters as purveyors of democracy or ‘mob rule’ and opposed to the first American party – The Federalist Party (Appleby 2003). Thus, Jefferson is considered as the founder of the Democratic-Republican Party fighting against the support of bankers and the close ties with Britain (viewed as selling out independent American Republican values to the British monarchy). The Democrats’ historic rival – the Republican Party – was founded in 1854. Their ideological slogan “free labor, free land, free men” shows the interests of anti-slavery activists with Abraham Lincoln being its head (Gienapp 1989). Paying tribute to the Republican values, the party was christened accordingly. Just as the New York newspaper publicist Greely wrote in 1854 “...we think some simple name like ‘Republican’ would more fitly designate those who had united to restore the Union to its true mission of champion and promulgator of Liberty rather than propagandist of slavery” (from *Republican Philadelphia*). The Republican Party is also referred to as Grand Old Party however the term as well as its abbreviation GOP remain unofficial.

c) Animal allegories

Nowadays a whole series of unofficial nominalisations take place for the purposes of orientation among different ideologies. For instance, in the USA, every party is associated with an animal symbol: The donkey is associated with the Democrats and the elephant with the Republicans. The traditional mascot of the Democrats, i.e. the donkey, became popular during Andrew Jackson’s 1828 presidential campaign. His opponents used the derogative label ‘jackass’ for his populist slogan “Let the people rule”. Jackson transformed the negative image of a donkey as a stupid and stubborn beast into a positive symbol of a strong-willed and persistent animal and used it for his campaign posters (Ward 1962). The image was then borrowed by the political cartoonist Thomas Nast who allegorically presented the Democratic Party in the image of the donkey in *Harper’s Weekly* in 1870 (Figure 16). The symbol caught the public attention in 1870 when Nast depicted a donkey kicking a dead lion, symbolising

Lincoln's Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton who had recently died. The stubborn animal represented an anti-war faction with whom the cartoonist disagreed. Since then, this representation has been strongly associated with the Democrats (from *The Democratic Party*).

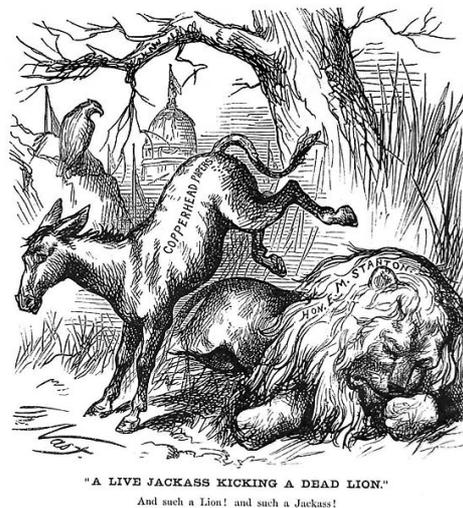


Figure 16. A live jackass kicking a dead lion by Thomas Nast *Harper's Weekly*, January 19, 1870
 (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Democraticjackass.jpg>)

The symbol of the Republican Party, i.e. an elephant, was introduced by Nast in 1874 in his famous cartoon “The Third Term Panic”, which alluded to Aesop’s fable *The Ass in the Lion’s Skin* (Figure 17). A donkey wearing a lion’s skin tagged “Caesarism” shows an alarming scare concerning a possible unprecedented third term of the Republican leader Ulysses S. Grant. The elephant labelled “The Republican Vote” became a mascot of the party which identified itself with such personified qualities as dignity and a strong will (from *CBS News*).



Figure 17. The third term panic by Thomas Nast *Harper's Weekly*, November 7, 1874
 (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:NastRepublicanElephant.jpg>)

Today, the images of the Democratic donkey and Republican elephant are highly schematised and can take different forms depending on the message. The two figures below show the most classical representation of these animal symbols in American patriotic colours:

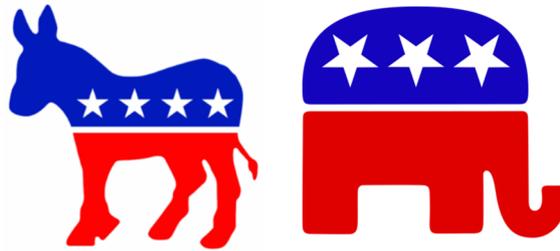


Figure 18. Animal symbols of the Democrats and the Republicans

(Sources: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:DemocraticLogo.png>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Republicanlogo.svg>)

The symbols of other animals are also used in some states, for instance, in some Midwestern states a bald eagle represents the Republicans and a rooster represents the Democrats. However, as we will see later on, donkey and elephant nominalisation signs are the most popular objects of integration and delegitimation activity of representatives of different ideologies.

d) Colour metonymies

In addition, colours can be projected onto political ideologies and their agents through metonymical terms like *green* (nature, Greenpeace), *red* (communists, revolutionary movements), *blue* (conservative movements as a contrast to a red colour), *white* (bourgeoisie movement after revolution 1917 in Soviet Russia). As far as the USA is concerned, this long-standing convention of red and blue is reversed. Although both major political parties use the traditional colours of an American flag (red, white and blue), the colour red started to be associated with the Republicans and the colour blue with the Democrats, starting with the 2000 presidential elections. All of the major broadcasts agreed on the choice of this conventional differentiation to cover the results of the elections and voter preferences by states. Accordingly, on the electoral map, the states where the majority voted for George W. Bush were shown as red while the states supporting Al Gore were coloured blue. Since then, even though the parties have not adopted the colours as their official orientation signs, blue and red have been identified as markers of liberal or conservative ideologies respectively. Colours as identification signs can be viewed in candidates' choices of clothing during their

official appearance in public. However, the choice of red-blue-white and their deliberate variation can also signify a candidate's claim to unite both parties under the American banner.

Consequently, US political orientation signs can be represented through official nominalisations, as well as non-official metaphors of space, animal allegory and colour metonymy. Scholars like Thomas (1995: 314) and Sheigal (2005: 64) argue that political orientation signs play an essential role in a process of forming representations among members of a social group. They compensate the deficit of necessary information, completing possible cognitive lacunae. It happens when a person's emotional reactions to some situations and events become typified. Gradually, orientation signs start to be fixed in the socio-political experience of an individual and in case of a repeated occurrence of similar situations, they are reproduced building up interpretation schemas.

4.6.3 Integration signs: Campaign message encapsulated in slogans, logos and portraits

Having drawn a circle around people with similar political ideas, a group intends to contribute to its harmonisation and to attract more supporters. In order to achieve these goals, political groups work with a whole set of verbal and non-verbal means. It can, for example, be emblems of political parties and movements, slogans, portraits of influential political leaders and their quotes. Sheigal (2005: 157) is convinced that signs of integration are primarily phatic ones, which means that they are directed at consolidating contact between participants of political communication. Sheigal observes different variants of phatic meaning expressed by integration signs in political discourse, which include group identity, solidarity, support, loyalty to the leader and to the system. An agent expressing loyalty shows his/her integration with a regime.

Candidates and their teams resort to integration signs to constantly remind the public of their campaign message, i.e. to spread ideas of the policies and to find those who would agree to follow the group in its actions. Oriented towards a large public, pre-electoral discourse seeks to bring a campaign message to every participant regardless of his/her social status and competence characteristics (Khalatyan 2011: 183). A campaign message is often summarised in several talking points or persuasive statements which presidential runners provide on policy issues during their public speeches. It is reflected in all their verbal and non-verbal actions

whenever they appear in media, and it serves as a golden thread in the interpretation of events throughout the entire pre-electoral period.

(a) Slogans, (b) logos and (c) portraits of candidates are the most frequent integration signs during presidential campaigns. These forms of discourse manifestation can be separate genres, but more often they accompany other pre-electoral genres. During the period of campaigns, these integration signs circulate extensively in the media and are constantly repeated to create a lasting impression with the electorate.

a) Slogan

Slogans are short verbal forms which encapsulate the campaign's message in one or a few words. A slogan can be symbolically called 'a mantra' in Hinduism or Buddhism, a word or a sound repeated *ad nauseam* and believed to possess a mystical power and efficacy.

In their choice of effective slogans, American President candidates often resort to phonetic expressive means which help to produce euphony, a sense of ease and comfort among voters. For example, this effect is successfully employed in a slogan by William Henry Harrison "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" (1840); Benjamin Harrison's "Rejuvenated Republicanism" (1888); William McKinley's "Patriotism, Protection, and Prosperity" (1896); Calvin Coolidge's "Keep Cool With Coolidge" (1924); Ross Perot's "Ross for Boss" (1992); Al Gore's "Prosperity and Progress" (2000); George W. Bush's "Compassionate Conservatism" and "Reformer With Results" (2000); Ted Cruz' "Courageous Conservatives" (2016), one of the slogans of Jeb Bush "Right to Rise" (2016). These slogans either employ a device of alliteration, a repetition of the same or similar sounds, or morphemic repetition, all of which add a rhythmical effect and make a slogan more expressive.

Additional emotive information is created with the repetition of key words in slogans. When repeated, the words come into the focus of attention and stress the meaning they convey. In John C. Fremont's slogan "Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Speech, Free Men, and Fremont" (1856), it is the word "free" which is stressed, its excessive recurrence spreads its meaning to an adjacent "Fremont". Repeated lexical units are also emphasised in the following slogans: Bob Dole's "The Better Man for a Better America" (1996); George W. Bush's "Real Plans for Real People" (2000); John Kerry's "Let America be America Again" (2004); Hillary Clinton's "Ready for change, ready to lead" (2008). Consequently, reiterated words in slogans help to elucidate leading values in a campaign message.

One of the most prominent places in the coinage of strong and witty slogans belongs to a pun with its linguistic mechanism of deliberately using one word form in two meanings. To illustrate this, Woodrow Wilson's 1916 campaign slogan "He Kept Us Out Of War" exploits the word "Us" as a pronoun and at the same time as an abbreviation of the United States. The pun thus melts two notions into one, namely that the United States is us. The play with double meaning is also put into practice in the slogan "In your Heart you Know he's Right" of a presidential runner in 1964, namely Barry Goldwater. Criticised for his extremist views by the opposition, the campaigner resorts to the stylistic device of pun to combat negative publicity ("Right" is used in the meaning "regular opinion, the same as of ordinary Americans") and to position himself as a conservative adherer. Bernie Sanders' common unofficial slogan "Feel The Bern" is a pun achieved through homophones "Bern" (short of Bernie) and "burn". It makes his slogan echo with the expression "feel the burn" and sounds young and daring, which may be taken as explanation for the large number of young people who followed Sanders during his campaign in 2016.

The history of American campaigns also knows interesting cases of slogans crowned with a question mark. These rhetorical questions contain no question but a covert statement of the opposite: "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" inquires Ronald Reagan in his 1980 presidential campaign slogan. The implied answer is "No". Another artificial question is a slogan of Henry Clay's 1844 campaign "Who is James K. Polk?" It does not demand any information as the speaker knows the answer himself but it successfully draws the voters' attention and emphasises the campaign message.

Slogans can be free-standing, self-justifying, they encrypt the ideology of integration without any reference to opponents, or based on the policy of opposition that is oriented towards the delegitimation principle. The use of free-standing slogans is common practice in American presidential campaigns. Less frequent is an occurrence of slogans which are construed in order to withdraw legitimacy of adversary groups. Such slogans are charged with negative emotions and often contain uncovered details about personal lives of presidential runners. To illustrate, James Blaine's 1884 campaign slogan "Ma, Ma, Where's my Pa, Gone to the White House, Ha, Ha, Ha" alludes to Cleveland's out of wedlock relationship and his illegitimate child. In response, Blaine's opponent, Grover Cleveland, ballots for the post of President with a vicious attacking slogan "Blaine, Blaine, James G. Blaine, The Continental Liar from the State of Maine" referring to an adversary's involvement in controversial business in railroad industry (Hamilton 2010: 186). Both teams created their slogans in rhyme which gives more

rhetorical weight to the utterances. Jeb Bush' 2016 slogan "Jeb can fix it" points to problems that the existing reigning order could not resolve and offers his 'service' to put an end to them. Rand Paul's (2016) "Defeat the Washington Machine. Unleash the American Dream" is not a free-standing slogan since it blames the government for having put the American Dream on a leash. Cumbersome at first sight, its rhyme almost turns it into a song that is easy to remember.

Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again!" in his 2016 presidential campaign alludes to Ronald Reagan's "Let's Make America Great Again" in 1980. In Reagan's times, the country was suffering from a worsening economy caused by inflation and a very high unemployment rate. The return to glory days was thus at the core of Reagan's campaign. Trump's deliberate allusion to Reagan's motto (after all, reaganomics reduced inflation and contributed to higher wages and economic growth) implies that the country in 2016 also suffered from decadence, retrogression and economic eclipse. Trump's slogan captures a promise to return to a fantasised glorious past restoring American prosperity, just like Reagan did.

It goes without saying that a simple slogan cannot overcome such problems as economic insecurity, a country's debts, unemployment, etc. Nevertheless, a carefully crafted slogan can influence undecided voters and be a veritable ticket to victory. When creating slogans, campaign managers usually try to keep a broad message pursuing the aim of attracting more voters and fundraisers that can assure a candidate victory at the polls. Too narrow messages with many explanatory details can alienate voters or slow a candidate down.

Throughout his first campaign in 2008, Barack Obama ran on a consistent message of 'change'. It was brought to the American people through two simple official slogans – "Hope" and "Change We Can Believe In" and their derivatives "Hope We Need", "Vote for Change!", "Change We Can Believe In", "Eight [years] is enough!", "A New Beginning", "Yes, We Can!". It referred to hope for a better future, changes in economy, etc. These free-standing slogans build upon shared interests of American people and pull them together. Obama was however criticised as "a man of many slogans" with an argument that "the thing he was aiming to sell" became blurred, lacking one clear campaign theme (Blake 2012).

As incumbent President in 2012, Obama put at the heart of his campaign the healthcare reforms, the bailout of the American auto-industry as well as the fight on terrorism crowned with the death of Osama bin Laden. It made him refine the campaign message from "Hope" and "Change" into "Forward" (Sanchez 2012). A new slogan for 2012 campaign illustrates

what kind of man Obama is and what he would do for the country as a second-term President. The advantage and potential power of one-word slogans is that their only word obtains both the word and the sentence-stress. As Kukharenko (2009: 81-82) claims, the word-sentence with its own sentence-intonation helps to foreground the contents with a stronger emphatic impact. Obama's strong 'workmanlike' word-phrase already found its way into re-election campaigns which was also the case in George W. Bush's 2004 re-election rallies with a slogan "Moving America Forward" or Abraham Lincoln's "Don't Swap Horses in the Middle of the Stream" slogan in his 1864 re-election campaign. Obama's free-standing non-official "Winning The Future", "Greater Together", "We Don't Quit" 2012 slogans were like previous slogans oriented to the ideology of integration with an explicit emphasis on 'we' and 'together'.

The Republican 2012 nominee Mitt Romney compressed his campaign message into a simple slogan "Believe in America". In his policy, Romney put the accent on creating an environment that encourages companies to grow, to revive the middle-class and to create jobs. Opposed to Obama's attribution of economic success to teachers, roads, and bridges rather than to entrepreneurial spirit and hard work the Republican candidate wanted to revive the idea of the American dream. In his speech, Mitt Romney said the following: "I want Americans to welcome and to celebrate success," and "I don't want government to take credit for what the individuals of America accomplish." Romney was criticised for having failed to fit his potentially strong campaign message over the sore subject of unemployment into a catchy slogan (Kessler 2012). This is how American journalist Ronald Kessler in *Newsmax* (2012) puts it:

During the presidential campaign of 1928, a circular distributed by the Republican Party claimed that if Herbert Hoover won, there would be 'a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage.' A slogan that would accurately summarise what Romney stands for and would promise something tangible would be, 'A Job for Every American.' [...] Hoover won a landslide victory over Democrat Al Smith. 'A Job for every American' could help propel Romney to a decisive win.

Kessler (2012)

In her 2016 slogan "Hillary For America", Hillary Clinton encapsulated the message that she stands for America with men/women income equality, paid family leave, universal pre-kindergarten, education affordability, employees' profit-sharing, same-sex marriages and other social policies. Her more recent "Fighting for us" and "I'm With Her" shifted from 'Hillary' to 'we' and therefore sounded less self-centred and more unifying.

Slogans contain a combination of emotive and socio-political aspects. The first aspect serves to evoke the feeling of confidence, optimism, pride and hope. The second one conveys the idea of “We are together. We share the same position” (Sheigal 2005: 158). This phatic ‘join us’ schema with a survey of common interests can have a manipulative impact on the electorate. Such key concepts as ‘I am with you’, ‘I am like you’ give the feeling of semblance, sharing common interests and thus help to identify and homologate political agents with those who they address. Establishing common ground favours the feeling of solidarity between partners and readiness to act according to a manipulator’s desired schema (Megentesov & Mohamad 1997: 62).

Therefore, slogans play an important integration role by transmitting the main idea, the aim of political fight, by calling for unification of advocates of this idea, by creating a feeling of solidarity. Slogans are usually very emotive, reassuring and encouraging. The prevailing phatic function almost turns some slogans into clichés.

b) Logo

The extensive use of logos is typical for the US presidential campaigns. The logo is a flagship symbol of a candidate, and thus his/her signature. Logos are compact forms which serve to double the message that campaigns promote. Out of a party’s numerous ideas, the logo encrypts the most essential ones. Plus, being an economic encapsulation of a campaign message, logos are easily featured on bumper stickers, T-shirts and buttons. If slogans heavily rely upon phonetic expressive means with the purpose ‘to please the voters’ ears’, the creators of logos explore graphic means in order to appeal to people’s eyes. The power of logos is in their colours, lines, types of script which evoke additional meanings. Borchers (2013) notices that simplicity, reduction of meanings in a shorthand form not only allow audience members to conceive the campaign message at once but also keep the door open for numerous interpretations. At the same time, the author claims that “the connection between source and image must be clear, or the image will fail to accomplish its persuasive goal, to be a powerful visual cue which supports candidate’s ideas and proposals” (Borchers 2013: 247).

The Obama logo (Figure 19) was created for the 2008 campaign and was used again in the 2012 elections. Inspired by the first letter of his last name, it consists of a circle suggesting a sun rising over the horizon in chromatic tones of the American flag. A rising sun evokes adjacent notions of a new day to which he wished to lead the country, the feeling of change and hope, a symbol of new beginnings and American optimism.



Figure 19. Barack Obama's 2008/2012 election logo
(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obama_logo)

The candidate Romney and his running mate Ryan were presented by a tri-colour logo (Figure 20) with an extra-large three *R* which reminds us of how Republican they are beside their names.



Figure 20. Mitt Romney's 2012 election logo
(Source: <http://www.pinstopin.com/romney-ryan-logo/>)

Donald Trump's logo (Figure 21) is a banner reading his slogan "Make America Great Again!" framed in patriotic colours. Simple and at the same time solemn, too long to be used for Twitter or FB pages but suitable on caps and T-shirts.



Figure 21. Donald Trump's 2016 election logo
(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Trump_2016.svg)

Hillary Clinton's logo (Figure 22) is distinguished by a twist of *H* and a right-pointing arrow suggesting that Hillary goes forward. The particularity of Mrs Clinton's logo is that its original patriotic blue, red and white colours change according to the constituency that it is speaking to. In other words, its chromatic characteristics are aligned with the candidate's philosophies, the public she addresses and the message she wants to convey. It integrates the colours of a rainbow flag to show her support to same-sex marriages, it is inked up with pink for breast cancer awareness or any other colour to indicate the place that Hillary Clinton visits

(e.g. Hillary is in New York City, etc.) or to celebrate corresponding holidays and milestones (Merelli 2015). Different background topographies are therefore visual embodiments of values on which Hillary Clinton was building her campaign.



Figure 22. Hillary Clinton's 2016 election logos
 (Sources: <http://qz.com/423037/its-official-hillary-clintons-logo-is-actually-perfect/>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillary_Clinton_presidential_campaign,_2016
<http://qz.com/423037/its-official-hillary-clintons-logo-is-actually-perfect/>)

Like Obama's *O*, Hillary's *H*, a one-letter logo is social media friendly; the absence of the year indicates a politician's timeless commitment. However, Clinton's logo appeared to be controversial and drew much criticism upon its introduction to social media. Many found that the red colour of the arrow as well as its rightward direction contradicted the values of the Democrat Party and it was interpreted as a shift to more conservative positions (Kane 2015).

To sum up, logos are compressed pictorial expressions of loyalty and integration with an ideology. Besides having an integrating function, they also play a symbolic role. Like an emblem and a flag are symbols of a nation, a logo symbolically unites a political group.

c) Portrait of a leader

Another ideological symbol of the campaign message is the portrait of the candidate. It shows an iconic representation of the nominee taking a particular posture, face expression, etc. and thereby creating positive associations in the hearts and minds of voters. Barthes observes that the portrait of a politician spread in the pre-electoral period is full of conventions:

La pose de face accentue le réalisme du candidat [...]. Tout y exprime la pénétration, la gravité, la franchise : le futur député fixe l'ennemi, l'obstacle, le « problème ». La pose de trois quarts, plus fréquente, suggère la tyrannie d'un idéal : le regard se perd noblement dans l'avenir, il n'affronte pas, il domine et ensemece un ailleurs pudiquement indéfini. Presque tous les trois quarts sont ascensionnels, le visage est levé vers une lumière surnaturelle qui l'inspire, l'élève dans les régions d'une haute humanité, le candidat atteint à l'olympie des sentiments élevés, où toute contradiction politique est résolue : paix et guerre [...], progrès social et bénéfiques patronaux, enseignement « libre » et subventions betteravières, la droite et la gauche (opposition toujours « dépassée » !),

tout cela coexiste paisiblement dans ce regard pensif, noblement fixé sur les intérêts occulte de l'Ordre.

Barthes (1957: 152)

[A full-face photograph underlines the realistic outlook of the candidate [...]. Everything there expresses penetration, gravity, frankness: the future deputy is looking squarely at the enemy, the obstacle, the “problem”. A three-quarter face photograph, which is more common, suggests the tyranny of an ideal: the gaze is lost nobly in the future, it does not confront, it soars, and fertilizes some other domain, which is chastely left undefined. Almost all three-quarter face photos are ascensional, the face is lifted towards a supernatural light which draws it up and elevates it to the realm of a higher humanity; the candidate reaches the Olympus of elevated feelings, where all political contradictions are solved: peace and war [...], social progress and employers’ profits, so-called “free” religious schools and subsidies from the sugar-beet lobby, the Right and the Left (an opposition always “superseded”!): all these coexist peacefully in this thoughtful gaze, nobly fixed on the hidden interests of Order (Barthes translated by Lavers 1972: 92-93).]

These recognisable conventions can be traced in a photo of Mitt Romney below (Figure 23) which can be found on his personal website.

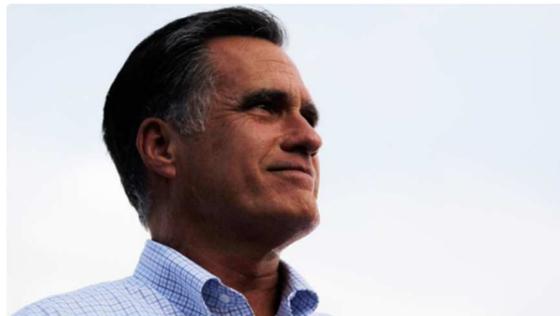


Figure 23. Mitt Romney on his official campaign website
(Source: <http://www.mittromney.com/>)

The Republican nominee appears in the ‘three-quarter pose’ with the head slightly lifted upwards, gazing out into the distance. It suggests that the politician is an inspirational and determined leader with vision. A faint smile stirring his lips implies a positive belief in the future. The light blue sky background against which the candidate is depicted (in total harmony with his garments) strengthens this positive feeling towards a clear and cloudless future, a better tomorrow. The specific location of the camera capturing the leader from the bottom up shows his supremacy, authority and force; yet, the general amiability of his facial expression and representation within the viewer’s reach diminishes an intimidating impression. The benefit of illustrating the leader from the bottom-up perspective is that this

position yields a very iconic image of Romney looking like a two-dimensional effigy, i.e. “a statue – even a two-dimensional statue treatment – suggests to the viewer that the subject is noteworthy enough to have earned such depiction” (Fisher *et al.* 2012: 270). As a result, the relationship between the represented candidate and his viewers is one of reverence and admiration.

A close-up photo of Donald Trump (Figure 24), which was used for his Google Plus account “Donald J. Trump for President”, sought above all to approach the viewer and create an intimate and familiar relationship. The represented candidate looks directly at the viewer’s eyes, explicitly acknowledging the latter. The glance is focused on the viewer with an air of pensiveness. A tight close shot provides proximity to the voters, so dear to presidential runners, and reduces the distance between them. His slightly narrowed eyes and the whole facial expression show a serious politician with a steady and firm look which fixes the viewer, penetrating his/her thoughts. The close depiction as if we can touch the candidate however removes the cold disdain. The viewer feels observed and scrutinised by a wakeful mind. Such visual configuration connects the represented person and the spectator. The Republican candidate addresses the voter with a visual ‘you’ as if demanding something from the viewer.



Figure 24. Donald Trump on his Google Plus profile
(Source: <https://plus.google.com/u/0/+DonaldJTrumpforPresident/posts>)

Similar to previous portraits of leaders, there is little distance between Hillary Clinton and her voters in the photo below (Figure 25). She breaks the barriers in an attempt to approach the voter. Like Donald Trump, she looks directly at the viewer however her gaze suggests a different form of a direct address. Her smile invites the viewer to enter into a relationship of social affinity with her. In this photo, the candidate positions herself not only as a strong, confident and assertive leader (due to an upright three-quarter posture) but also as an approachable and friendly politician who invites the viewer to interaction.



Figure 25. Official portrait of Hillary Clinton

(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hillary_Clinton_official_Secretary_of_State_portrait_crop.jpg)

Obama's campaign identity was marked by a legendary image designed by street artist Shepard Fairey to generate support for an unknown politician in 2008 that became an American icon in the 2012 campaign (Figure 26). While it was not commissioned by the official Obama campaign, the latter did however approve it.



Figure 26. Barack Obama's Hope poster

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Barack_Obama_Hope_poster.jpg)

Just like the portrait of Mitt Romney, the image of Obama fulfils the classic political archetype of a thoughtful, inspirational and strong leader. Besides synthesising the qualities which make Obama a leader, Fairey at the same time seeks 'to capture the essence of Senator Obama' and single him out from other leaders. To render a positive memorable representation among the American public, the artist resorts to a number of additional artistic techniques as,

for example, the interplay with colours, which is a key feature of this image (Fisher *et al.* 2012: 267). Even if the red is slightly orange, the blue is lighter and greyer in tone than primary blue and the white is yellowish cream, the viewer unmistakably recognises the typical palette of an American flag. With Obama's speech in mind "there is not a liberal America and conservative America – there is the United States of America", Fairey converges red states and blue states into opalescent tones on his face (Fisher *et al.* 2012: 270). The effect definitely evokes the feeling of patriotism in a united country but at the same time signals something different which makes Obama stand out of the crowd. A flat-colour illustration with a limited palette of streamlined and high-contrast layers yields an iconic image which almost suggests the statue of a noteworthy person. The light and dark blue contrasts at the bottom of the image delineate the text in bold capital straightforward style, i.e. originally "PROGRESS" which was replaced by "HOPE" and later into "CHANGE". The marriage of text and images helps strengthen the political message of Obama, convincing and inspiring the American people; notably directing the meaning of the image in crucial ways with different words.

Although Fairey's historical inspiration was the well-known portrait of John Kennedy and the image of Lincoln on the five dollar bill (Fisher *et al.* 2012: 270), being a piece of art which has a life of its own, the image of Obama gave rise to other associations among the viewers. As *The Guardian* journalist Laura Barton (2008) notices that "...it has acquired the kind of instant recognition of Jim Fitzpatrick's Che Guevara poster". An Irish artist used Alberto Korda's famous photo of "an ageless quality, divorced from the specifics of time and place" (Kakutani 2009) with *Guerrillero Heroico* "looking off into the distance as if he had his eyes on the future" (Casey 2009). This resemblance in "pensive, determined, defiant, meditative or implacable" gaze as well as colour stylisation portrays Obama like a hero, a symbol of resistance to the capitalist system.

During presidential campaigns, the candidates' images and their versions are widely disseminated in the form of posters, flyers, stickers and key chains, set on T-shirts and coffee mugs and easily downloaded and modified digital images. From 2012 onwards, the images became popular internet memes which were constantly revised and replicated to reinforce the message.

Barthes claims that an electoral photo has a strong power of persuasion:

Ce qui passe dans la photographie du candidat, ce ne sont pas ses projets, ce sont ses mobiles, toutes les circonstances familiales, voire érotiques, tout ce style d'être, dont il est à la fois le

produit, l'exemple et l'appât. Il est manifeste que ce que la plupart de nos candidats donnent à lire dans leur effigie, c'est une assiette sociale, le confort spectaculaire de normes familiales, juridiques, religieuses, la propriété infuse de ces biens bourgeois que sont par exemple la messe du dimanche, la xénophobie, le bifteck-frites et le comique de cocuage, bref ce qu'on appelle une idéologie.

Barthes (1957: 150-151)

[What is transmitted through the photograph of the candidate are not his plans, but his deep motives, all his family, mental, even erotic circumstances, all this style of life of which he is at once the product, the example and the bait. It is obvious that what most of our candidates offer us through their likeness is a type of social setting, the spectacular comfort of family, legal and religious norms, the suggestion of innately owning such items of bourgeois property as Sunday Mass, xenophobia, steak and chips, cuckold jokes, in short, what we call an ideology (Barthes 1957 translated by Lavers 1972: 91).]

No matter what canons are chosen to represent a candidate iconically, to make the viewer engage with some candidates or remain detached from others, all the portraits are designed with the purpose to do something with the viewer. They form “a pseudo-social bond of a particular kind” and in doing so, they define who the viewer is, e.g. an inferior, a friendly interlocutor, an admirer, etc. (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996: 122). A political portrait tries to establish a personal irrational link between a presidential runner and voters. A candidate's photos do not show his/her programme or his/her projects for judgement; rather, they propose his/her physical environment, a total of everyday choice expressed in the form of his/her morphology, clothes and pose. We can conclude that a political leader is portrayed according to a relatively strict set of image techniques and canons. As Fairey, the creator of the Obama poster, puts it, “The point of the poster is to convince and inspire” (Fisher *et al.* 2012: 274). Such iconic representations, even the most artistic ones, therefore primarily convey an ideological message and are emblematic of integration principles.

To summarise, slogans, logos and portraits of politicians condense the campaign message in a catchy way. They have the function of consolidation of adherence to the system of ideas, group solidarity and partisanship. The ritual use of these symbols during pre-electoral campaigns can evoke strong affectionate reactions among the voters. Elder and Cobb (1983: 116) suppose that commonness in affective reactions helps unite people in groups even more than common motives. During election preparations, the official orientation and integration of ideological signs spawn many variations commissioned by the campaigners themselves to give a ‘fresh’ look at the repeated campaign message.

4.7 Discussion

With the aim of describing the global background where internet memes under question are produced, I observed various features of pre-electoral discourse which distinguish it from other subsets of political discourse. An outline of the existing literature helped me to identify the poles of institutionality, information, argumentation, phatic character, manipulation, evaluation, inspiration for action and intermediation.

To situate a text on the global scene also means to define the general sphere of social activity, the institution from where it is produced, its main actors, their ideologies, chronotope, the contents and global aims. I have defined pre-electoral discourse as a variety of political discourse concretised by the specific national context that is the repeated event of the presidential election with its campaign located on the territory of a particular state, where the participants express their ideology and decide who will lead the country during the next term. Pre-electoral discourse was illustrated by examples of the 2012 and the 2016 presidential campaigns located on the territory of the USA where nationwide campaigns begin as soon as presidential candidates announce their intentions to run. The main participants in the global national context are final candidates for the position of the head of state (Barack Obama and Mitt Romney in 2012, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in 2016) and the voters whose close attention is focused on the candidates' policies as well as on how they deal with socio-economic challenges and what plans of improvement they propose. The majority of texts produced during presidential election periods that circled around the personalities of these candidates, political parties they represent and promoted policies make contents of pre-electoral discourse. I have distinguished several functional blocks of pre-electoral activity which are organised around the main function of political discourse, i.e. an instrument for power control. These are orienting the citizens, defining their interests and values; integrating scattered actors into one united group; differentiating one group from others, fighting with dissidence, and, finally, inspiring people to act.

Within the framework of delineating the global context of political meme production, this study also set out to study the US parties' ideological signs of orientation and integration. The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Van Dijk (1995), Sheigal (2005) who claimed that the cognitive schema which dominates the minds of political actors is the polarisation of 'we' and 'they'. Everything connected to 'us' is viewed and described positively while everything related to 'them' is perceived and presented in negative terms. In

the context of American presidential campaigns, the more general political concept of fighting for power is reduced to the fight for the presidential chair in the pre-electoral subset of the language. I have demonstrated that the adherence of Americans to a particular ideology can be revealed through the number of orientation signs, ranging from explicit nominalisations, colour symbols and allegory to metaphors of space. The propagation of integration signs (slogans, logos, leaders' portraits) takes place in order to spread the campaign message and reinforce the camp around the 'we' pole.

CHAPTER FIVE

If the act of incorporating one's culture to make sense of another is a pertinent quality of play and memes, perhaps this is why LOLitics will remain significant to the way we communicate about news and politics.

Tay (2014: 70)

5 The engagement in pre-election discourse through political memes

If common motives and similar emotions unite people in groups, the differences in emotional reactions to the situations and events can fuel social differentiation and alienation. So, what do memes make out of official pre-election discourse to become political memes? Orientation and integration signs become a constant source of inspiration for adversary groups. The vast number of imitations, remakes, parodies and knock-offs are generated to get the candidate off message, i.e. the strategy to create a negative image of adversaries, undermining the authority of their leader. In doing so, internet meme makers create a sort of counter-discourse, a carnivalesque. Similar to carnivals in medieval times, discussions on modern social networking sites turn out to be excellent opportunities to target officials and engender free-thinking and impiety. The authority of official political institutions is inverted, albeit temporarily, during the anarchic, liberating and carnivalesque period of the American elections. In a parallel virtual world, politicians with their serious and solemn look are transformed into clownishly absurd, wildly formed, fantastic characters of irregular proportions, coarse and uncouth beings created through collaborative remixes.

A liberating potential of internet memes can be seen not only as an efficient means of ridiculisation of those in power, but also in the reconception of politics, clearing the ground for new ideas to enter public discourse. Nourished by offline political events, any internet meme shows certain knowledge about political objects, but this knowledge is negotiated, redefined, framed from a different angle in order to solicit critical sensibility of netizens toward burning political issues. The flexibility of its multimodal structure which can be reopened and refilled with a new meaning turns an internet meme into the genre best suited to express one's ideology during the course of the presidential campaign.

Accordingly, this chapter seeks to address the following central research question: *How is the counter-discourse established through political memes?* In my attempt to answer it, I will consider other criteria of genre distinction, i.e. participants on FB and their status, topics of discussion on FB political interest groups, the set of purposes pursued by participants when forging political memes, various delegitimisation signs and the general carnivalesque key tone of memes in relation to politics. In addition, I will scrutinise the question of remix and reproduction as a core mechanism of internet meme creation, and contrast it with a similar genre of digital communication, which is the viral.

5.1 Web 2.0 participatory political culture

At its most basic level, cultural acupuncture taps cultural pressure points to reroute circulation. This model recognizes fan investments in popular narratives as resources for their own fantasies of social change and political empowerment.

Jenkins *et al.* (2018: 238)

The web 2.0 participatory culture is formed by a set of popular web-based platforms characterised by social interactions, creation and exchange of user-generated content (Herring 2013). In this context, “sharing” (John 2013) became a buzzword to describe a variety of activities like posting, uploading a photo or a video, updating a status, writing what one thinks, comments in various social media platforms. At the same time, the practice of sharing became a core feature of the present-day digital sphere. According to Manovich (2015: 144), the participatory culture consists of sharing what was remixed, when people “draw information from all kinds of sources into their own space, remix and make it available to others, and collaborate or at least, play on a common information platform.” Various social media platforms nowadays function as huge ‘regenerative engines’ where information flows, is recycled and regenerated again. Navas (2016) admits that this process stays “relevant as long as people keep uploading and sharing material”. Valtysson (2010: 200) calls the participatory culture “access culture” due to its high level of interaction, the production of massive streams of digital cultural information and its distribution on social networking platforms. Public access to cultural production and consumption became possible through changes in web design, notoriously, with the transition from web 1.0 to web 2.0 which facilitated “creativity, information sharing and collaboration amongst users” (Valtysson 2010: 213). Deuze (2006: 72), when synthesising aspects of digital culture, points to “the emergence of new types of citizenship, participation, activism, dialogue, and interactive communication”. The researcher conceptualises cyberculture as consisting of participation with filtering and repurposing of content as salient features which are possible to understand using the concepts of remediation and bricolage, both from a producer’s and a user’s point of view (Deuze 2006: 72).

The term ‘participatory culture’ itself belongs to Jenkins (2006) who discusses how content is transformed and repurposed by fandom across digital media space. In his co-authored chapter “Participatory Politics” in *Keywords in Remix Studies* (2018), he considers political remixes as a point of contact of participatory and institutional modes of politics (Jenkins *et al.* 2018: 243). Providing several examples from the 2016 US presidential campaign, the researchers

argue (Jenkins *et al.* 2018) that politics enters participatory culture space in terms that are defined by people's recreational activities. It means that netizens express their political opinions through the objects they deal with every day. In addition, when people speak out politically, Jenkins *et al.* (2018: 235) claim, they can do so by "linking real-world concerns to fictional content worlds (often in the form of analogy or allegory), using those shared cultural references as inspiration for creative production, and deploying the resulting products as the basis for discussion within and beyond the interest-based community". The researchers name such cases of political participation as "translation" of politics into pop culture content (Jenkins *et al.* 2018: 239). According to Jenkins, a memetic activity is one of the forms of political participation in which users create templates for the members of the interest-based community, inviting them to insert their own content and reframe political issues and thereby generating new meanings. In effect, his "cultural acupuncture" frame provided as an epigraph to this section reads participatory politics as people's collaborative contributions pulled into discussions of political topics and spread by those who share similar interests (Jenkins *et al.* 2018: 238).

In the digital era, people find themselves saturated in various political situations which are directly brought to them through photos, videos and comments from the scenes of events. Ordinary users with different political agendas shape the social media scape by generating, reconstructing and redefining events. Being an open stage of visual and textual attacks produced from bottom-up mass movements, FB grew for the last decade into a powerful alternative to official broadcasting sources. FB like other social media platforms de-privileges know-all journalism relying on the constant negotiation of cultural meaning. Browsing its pages every day, people witness the way cultural knowledge is produced, decontextualised, transformed, interpreted and re-interpreted. Pursuing similar objectives as reporters, "to inform, to affect and to persuade" (Kozhina *et al.* 2008: 343), social network activists resort to different tools to spar with their opponents. Bowman and Willis (2003: 8) argue that "armed with easy-to-use web publishing tools, always-on connections and increasingly powerful mobile devices, the online audience has the means to become an active participant in the creation and dissemination of news and information". Easiness to diffuse reports is completed by the creative use of information technologies in order to appeal to the target audience. That is, when imitating social patterns and (re)constructing memes, participants freely 'play' with typography, colour, graphics, visual images, and other means.

More and more political objects go through a process of digitalisation where they are repurposed and then released back into the culture with newly generated meanings. The sources can vary from broadcast events such as debates and politicians' public speeches to their photos and bits of their quotes which are then turned into immaterial elements. Recycled and redefined newly minted political objects are then available in digital form to enter the flow of cultural exchange. Successful cultural units grow into virals, reaching a large circulation across the internet (Navas 2016).

Tay (2014) studied the relationships between ordinary citizens, the mainstream media and politics and used the term "LOLitics". Accommodating the inclusion of digital culture argot in the offline vernacular, the researcher refers to "popular culture products that exist within the intersection between pleasure-driven 'play' and (arguably) genuine political discourse" (Tay 2014: 46). The scholar underlines the power of ordinary people and their challenge of politicians and newsmakers through humour and popular culture where "internet memes have become one of the default ways to respond to particular situations online, and this certainly reflects the reaction towards news and political culture" (Tay 2014: 46). Tay argues that when people play with the news, it means that they reinterpret it in a language that ordinary public can make sense of and experiment with its different meanings. Electronic environments where they spread information lower the consequences of risk that comments may entail and therefore become safe spaces to experiment freely when engaged in the active reconstruction of meanings. In doing so, ordinary citizens (in contrast to journalists, for example) "comment behind the safety net of humour" and do not hold "any responsibilities to present factual information" (Tay 2014: 50). Consequently, more and more regular people play a decisive role in politics, competing with the role once reserved for "the church of expression", the professional press (Deuze 2006: 72). Participatory culture gives rise to new types of journalism, more dialogical and interactive, next to the hierarchical, top-down model "telling people what they need to know" (Deuze 2006: 72).

In the mobile period, all political events enter a tremendous technologically mediated information flow. The participatory political web 2.0 culture shows users' ability to rapidly respond to main events and changes in modern politics through easy connection. The realisation of ambiguity and dialectics of political processes pushes people to transform them into a media event. When tagging, posting their status updates or commenting on newsfeeds of others, internet users propose their personal, often satirical interpretation of a political event. Hence, political participation online shows an active rethinking and reframing of

political reality, a refusal of political conformism. In the web 2.0 culture, a passive reader, a consumer of information is transformed into an active interpreter (Filippova 2008: 141). Nielsen (2012) calls them “digital natives”, people connected to contents and to each other in virtual reality and coins the term “Generation C” or “Gen C”. By uniting the roles of “producers” and “users”, Markham (2013) labels cyber activists “produsers” where she puts an accent on both consumption and participation of others in cultural meaning negotiations. The similar term “prosumers” was already in use in 1980 after Toffler’s publication of *The Third Wave* where the American futurist predicted a new post-industrial informational society where the public operate both as producer and consumer. Observing the dynamic of culture from “mass production, mass distribution, mass consumption, mass education, mass media, mass recreation, mass entertainment” (Toffler 1980) toward high-tech computerisation, Falconer (2015: 400) notices that “whereas in the broadcast era there was a time lag between experiencing and critiquing, the digital prosumer simultaneously experiences, likes and shares, rates and reviews, remixes and uploads the vast array of content accessible to her”. It would therefore also be relevant to call digital natives ‘Generation Re’ in view of key attributes which characterise this culture such as remixing, reconstructing, redefining, recycling, regenerating, reproducing, reconfiguring, etc. material for new purposes. The Latin prefix *re-* indicates repetition, return, revert as well as “once more, afresh, anew” (Navas 2018: 247).

Therefore, the creator of a media event on FB is not an impersonal author who brings objective information; s/he is an individual who proposes his/her own interpretation of political reality as the result of independent reasoning and personal experience. This experience is based on a dialogue with others online and it is inseparable from mediatised confluences. Sharing ideas through constantly uploading and updating information fuels the FB regeneration engine and keeps it going. The acts of posting comments, playing with candid photographs of politicians, re-writing their quotes in digital spaces give ordinary citizens the chance to make their voices heard.

5.2 Participants and their status

A speech genre is always produced by a particular initiator and addressed to a particular person or a group of people. Participation structure refers to the number of participants in the online communication and whether it is public, semi-public or private. This criterion also

shows the extent to which interlocutors decide to interact anonymously or using their 'real life' identities (Herring 2007). The status of partners attaches to interlocutors certain norms of behaviour, knowledge, rights and responsibilities. In other words, a genre answers the question "What roles must the participants assume?" To illustrate this, such genre as ticket control in a train presupposes the existence of an inspector (not anyone can check tickets in a public transport) and a passenger. The status can imply a uniform or an appropriate clothing style.

To characterise genre participants, Maingueneau (2014: 124) resorts to a theatrical role metaphor noting that our personality is woven by a multitude of roles: "Un genre de discours mobilise ses participants à travers un rôle déterminé, non dans toutes leurs déterminations possibles" [A speech genre mobilises its participants through a specific role, and not via all their possible determinations (Maingueneau 2014: 124, translation is mine)]. Ducrot underlines the same idea by arguing that "La langue comporte, à titre irréductible, tout un catalogue de rapports interhumains, toute une panoplie de rôles que le locuteur peut se choisir lui-même et imposer au destinataire" (Ducrot 1972: 4) [The language is composed of, on a non-reducible basis, a whole catalogue of interhuman relationships, a range of roles that a speaker can choose for him/herself or impose upon the addressee (Ducrot 1972: 4, translation is mine)]. Similarly, Goffman (1959) resorts to the metaphor of theatre as framework to explain everyday social behaviour with role adoption, the backstage moments and the frontstage performance of identity. Eventually, suffice it to remember Shakespeare's iconic "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players" to understand the notion of genre roles through the metaphor of theatre. However, in contrast to actors, the participants of real communication cannot leave their costumes in their dressing rooms. In other words, people participating in different discourse genres are constantly confronted to "théâtralité" which they cannot quit (Maingueneau 2014: 124).

Since the present study does not aim at providing an extended analysis from a sociolinguistic angle of vision, participant characteristics such as background, skills, experiences, will be omitted. The description will therefore be focused on the presentation of the participants' attitudes, beliefs and ideologies relevant to political communication inasmuch as these characteristics affect what they choose to communicate in a pre-electoral campaign and how.

5.2.1 Participation structure in FB interest groups or “Like Pages”

In the genre scene, all participants are, first of all, internet users. Shifman (2014a: 23) introduces the term “digitally literate” netizen, which is a person who is expected to feel free on all pillars of a web 2.0 participatory culture, which are sharing, commenting, imitating, remixing and using popularity measurements to rate the electronic reproductions of other netizens. A FB netizen is supposed to be capable of freely operating with a participation toolkit as presented above.

FB netizens can act as individuals from their personal accounts or become collective social actors grouped around common political interests. Numerous political, non-profit organisations, as well as amateurs create groups of interests on FB, so-called “Like Pages”, where they provide their subscribers with news feeds, comments and evaluations of political events in forms of memes. By clicking “Like” on the group’s page, they automatically become members of the group and are subscribed to its newsfeed. The number of “Likes” shows how many people follow the group, which reflects the rate of popularity of politicians on social media. In contrast to national political parties, FB ideological groups are loose alliances without any official formalities for admission. A person takes no responsibilities when s/he becomes part of a group. These groups can be described as ephemeral since the dynamics depends on the general election pace and their activity which fades away with the elimination of an opponent against whom the group was fighting. The temporal character is also revealed in the modification and adaptation of images and slogans to the constantly changing political reality.

The participation in FB interest groups has a semi-public, many-to-many structure. It means that they are open to the public, but people must be registered as FB users, having their personal account on this website. Communication many-to-many type shows that the sender of the genre is a group rather than an individual who addresses its discourse to all participants somehow related to the group. Among different participants using FB, we can distinguish meme launchers and those who observe them (actively by commenting or putting “Like” or passively); authors of the ideological page, bearers of political ideologies, united in groups, and the readers can be subscribers to these group news or stand-byers who are exposed to memes through the links of their friends. It must be noted that the participants of a FB interest group are non-identified, they are deprived of individual characteristics and act in their

ideological roles. This is when reacting to the post of a political group, a FB user expresses him/herself in the role of a citizen, a voter, an advocator of a certain ideology.

Since the internet shortens geographic distances and lets go of the restrictions of proximity, people can easily find themselves in considerable numbers “congregate or have a sense of togetherness despite great distances” (Markham & Stavrova 2016: 234). In politics, it certainly helps to implement the function of integration which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

5.2.2 Ideological markers of FB political interest groups

In Chapter Four, we have observed the question of ideologies and the way in which they are presented in the US major political parties, each having its orientation symbols, detailed integration philosophies and delegitimation signs. At the same time, Van Dijk (1995: 140) claims that “ideologies need not be detailed, complex systems, [...]. They may very well be limited to a few basic principles”. In this section, we will attempt to detect the political ideology of some FB “Like Pages” and their markers or indexes.

Each page has a common structure that is defined by technical resolutions of FB, i.e. it contains the name of the group, an avatar, a cover photo; it offers space for descriptions of self-identity, values, goals, activity, etc. Yet, every page can show its originality and playfulness by way of content.

Their onomastics alone can already provide a clue to the unification factor of the people in a given group: *365 Wrongs From The Right; Right Off a Cliff; One Million Strong Against Mitt Romney in 2012; Americans Against The Republican Party; Anti-Republican Crusaders; Formidable Republican Opposition; We love to irritate hateful Republicans; The Bad, the Ugly and the Irrelevant: The 2012 GOP pretenders; GOP: Greed, Oppression, Piety; I love it when I wake up in the morning and Barack Obama is President; You can have your own opinion about Obama but not your own facts; Obama Will Be ReElected In 2012; Nobama 2012; Barack Obama's Dead Fly; Mitt Witt for runner up; Conservative News Today; Conservative Patriots of America; Armchair Patriots; Tea Party Patriots; Christians Against the Tea Party; Teanderthal Party; The Ale Party; Occupy This!; Occupy Democrats; The Other 98%; The Election; Binders Full of Women; Women Against Romney (W.A.R.); Being*

Liberal; The Christian Left; Go Left; Never Hillary; Rude and Rotten Republicans; Just Say NO To Hillary, Occupy What's Right; Anti Hillary 2016 and many others.

This cursorial overview of groups' names helps to notice that some of them are free-standing nominations like *Being Liberal; Conservative Patriots of America; Conservative News Today; Go Left; The Christian Left, Occupy What's Right*, etc. The identification of the group is based on the integrative 'we' principle with a resort to metaphors of space (*Left, Right*), already existing ideological nominations (*Conservative, Liberal, Christian*).

Others are clearly delegitimisation-oriented such as *Nobama 2012; One Million Strong Against Mitt Romney in 2012; Americans Against The Republican Party; Christians Against the Tea Party; Anti-Republican Crusaders; Formidable Republican Opposition, Just Say NO To Hillary, etc.* Such political groups identify themselves through the denial of 'them', i.e. the use of highlighted negations may be taken as proof. The delegitimisation principle also prevails in nominations which use adjectives with negative semantics like in *The Bad, the Ugly and the Irrelevant: The 2012 GOP pretenders*. Otherwise, derogatory names are highly exploited, showing a critical attitude such as *Mitt Witt for runner up, Teanderthal Party*.

Many of them choose to play on the polysemantics of a word. For instance, the nominations *365 Wrongs From The Right* and *Right Off a Cliff* exploit the high polysemantic potential of the word 'right'. Both names preserve the meaning of a spatial metaphor signifying a conservative ideology. Different co-texts however add a new meaning to each name, i.e. 'true or correct as a fact' in ironical opposition with 'wrong' in the first name, and 'directly', 'immediately' and 'completely' in the second one. New and original meanings can be assigned to well-known abbreviations. The name *Women Against Romney (W.A.R.)* suggests that if we abbreviate *Women Against Romney*, it will give *W.A.R.* In the recipients' minds, the word 'war' immediately evokes a fight and aggressive competition between people which corresponds well with the philosophy of the group. GOP, traditionally Grand Old Party, receives the new extension of *Greed, Oppression, Piety* and therefore a new ideology. The FB group with this name fights against these creatively modified principles of the Grand Old Party.

Some nominations not only orient the reader in the world of politics but even manage to encapsulate a brief description of the groups' values, notably *We love to irritate hateful Republicans; I love it when I wake up in the morning and Barack Obama is President; You can have your own opinion about Obama but not your own facts*. Such extended names break

the canon of a short title form that we usually find in a nominative sentence, and instead provide complex syntactic structures. As a result, a humorous effect is achieved.

Less explicit names are not excluded such as *The Other 98%*; *The Election*; *Binders Full of Women*; *The Ale Party*; *Occupy This!* The quite general and rather abstract character of such names requires the activation of some cultural background knowledge. For instance, the interest group *Binders Full of Women* was created as an immediate response to the speech of Mitt Romney during the presidential debates where he referred to binders with resumes of female job applications used to be submitted to him as a Governor. Otherwise, the FB user might need to see additional information provided on the group's page, e.g. avatars, cover photos and sometimes identity description, in order to decode the orientation of the group.

For instance, the name of the group *Occupy This!* can suggest various interests and values (Figure 27). Its page tells more in the pictorial code. An avatar on the left shows the modified logo of the 2016 Democrat candidate Hillary Clinton, notably an arrow pointing downward is a vivid criticism of the candidate's policy vector. The cover photo in the middle depicts the national symbol of the USA, i.e. a fierce-looking bald eagle with a pad-saw pointing to the red stripe of an American flag. The image might imply the fight against left-oriented views (if red is stereotypically identified with social politics). The section "About" provides more details about the values of the group. The way they describe themselves, quoting Milton Friedman, an American Nobel Prize winner in economics and an advisor to the Republican US President Ronald Reagan, reveals a conservative ideology: *The society that puts equality before freedom will get neither. A society which puts freedom before equality will get a high degree of both.*



Figure 27. Snapshot of *Occupy This!* FB page

It must be stressed that any politically oriented FB “Like Page” presents a synthesis of ideological orientation, integration and delegitimisation signs brought together in the multimodal layout of the page. The snapshot of the page below (Figure 28) is a good illustration of this.



Figure 28. Snapshot of *The Bad, the Ugly and the Irrelevant: The 2012 GOP pretenders* FB page

The group’s political position is reflected in their name *The Bad, the Ugly and the Irrelevant: The 2012 GOP pretenders* and clarified in their cover photo. At the background of its image, the seat of the US Congress, the Capitol, dominates. The building implies the beginning of a new Congress where members of the political parties select their political leaders in the Senate and the House of Representatives. On the right of the picture, we can witness two fighters for the office, namely Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. The content look of the first one is contrasted with the miserable and defeated state of the second one. Strong Obama with a self-confident winner look appeals to voters and serves as integration sign. The search for supporters, the harmonisation of their relations and maintaining consensus are also achieved through the following calls found on the page: *I’ll need your vote to help to finish him (Mitt Romney)*, *Invite your friends to like this Page*. The fight against the adversary, the neutralisation of opponents and differentiation from them is achieved through verbal and non-verbal disavowal such as insulting nominations (*the bad, the ugly, the irrelevant, pretenders, the scary bunch*), the grotesque presentation of Mitt Romney as well as the crossing out of Republican runners in the avatar. The number of “Likes” indicates how many people follow the group’s newsfeed and it reveals the level of popularity of the page.

Other examples of verbal integration signs observed on various FB “Like Pages” are *To join click here; Please like our page and tell your friends about it!; Our economy & our democracy are being hijacked by an Elite 2% that is selling out the American dream. Help us change that; Breaking news and political commentary, direct from the frontlines of The American Progressive Movement... Join Us!; Are you for capitalism? Are you against the Occupados? Well, this is the place for you. Let’s show this Occupados that we out number them and defeat Obama, Win the Hill with Hillary, etc.*

As far as negative portrayals of the opponents are concerned, they encompass an unprecedented number of instances, to name just a few verbal delegitimisation markers, e.g. *hateful Republicans; the Party of no leaders, no ideas, no morals, mindless conservatives with the reality they want to deny, hide from, or lie about; Keep calm and give them facts; proudly anti-teapublican; we stand against those bankers, CEOs and lobbyists who have hijacked our democracy to serve themselves at the expense of everyone else; We pay for their taxes breaks, while they block our jobs & health care telling our hungry children ‘God won’t give you more than you can handle’; ...the core of the problem lies with the Republican Party, attributes written around Republican elephant sexist, Christian distortion, angry, discriminating, hypocrisy, hate, lies, bigotry, homophobic and more.*

Consequently, a FB interest group can be called ideological since people who join it are united on the basis of their shared representations, systems of beliefs which justify/deny the claim of a certain group to power. Even though their ideologies are not detailed complex systems, their pictorial symbols, verbal principles and descriptions clearly express political orientation, integration and delegitimisation. Humorous stance is also an important feature of all the pages, which adds an entertaining touch.

5.3 Topic or contents and theme organisation

Herring (2007) distinguishes two levels of themes unfolding in CMC: (1) Topic at the group level which indicates within broad parameters what discussion is appropriate in a given context, according to the group’s definition. (2) Topic at the exchange level is what participants are actually talking about in any given posting which may coincide with the ‘official’ topic of the group or digress from it. Since the latter reveals an individual and unique production, it will be looked at in Chapter Six concerned with the textual level or

scenography. In what follows, I will observe content in a broad sense. When talking about contents, we describe a variety of topics, answering the main question of what cybernauts talk about when posting memes in their ideological FB interest groups?

5.3.1 Contents of a political internet meme

Memes are powerful propagators of meanings, of practices, beliefs and their critique, and as such play a vital role in inventorying and categorizing our cultural memory.

Pordzik (2017: 12)

Traditionally, participation in politics for a voter was restricted to campaigning, communicating with officials, and going to the ballots and vote. The creation of social media platforms facilitated the spread of different forms of digital communication, allowing netizens to spread their authentic creations when voicing their opinions. Politics is one of the themes of discussion and heated debates on the FB timeline. FB provides a platform where American netizens can share their opinions, master their abilities to orient themselves in the political life, evaluate the state of affairs and predict their future development. FB abounds with memes portraying politicians, containing funny jokes about them. These jokes become one of the means of expression of political outlook of an American society. The creators of memes demonstrate their protest through memes (Kanashina 2013: 246). The FB Wall thus became a *sui generis* tribune from where people can voice their standpoints.

Among other forms of digital communication, internet memes are new tools for growing political participation which “spread the most voraciously due to the ease of adaptation and understanding” and “represent a relatively new form of participatory culture that can offer certain demographics an opportunity for political expression, engagement and participation which otherwise might not have been accessible” (Ross & Rivers 2017: 1-2).

In her recent work entitled “Internet Memes” (2018: 4), Miltner points out that political memes “focus on critiquing, lampooning, and dissecting the quotidian goings-on of the people and institutions in positions of power”. Any internet meme shows certain knowledge about original sources of information through which memes ‘nourish’ themselves. Meme creators also expect the readers to possess some knowledge in order to decode successfully a message. Political internet memes take parts of two or more notions/people/events related to politics, combine them and establish a link with other elements (even very incongruous ones!), which

adds something new to previous knowledge. Objects of political life therefore receive a revised meaning through remix, often (but not always) with a critical stance. Thus, political memes are powerful means of generating innovative meanings through sampling, recombining, blending or hybridising and connecting elements of politics with other domains of life. An internet meme as a political remix contributes to the negotiation of meaning, the redefinition of pre-existing material, the soliciting of critical sensibility of netizens toward burning actual issues. The flexibility of its multimodal structure which is constantly reopened and filled with a new meaning turns an internet meme into a genre best suited to express one's ideology during the course of a presidential campaign.

Hence, an internet meme is a pivotal form of political participation in the United States of America. In the twenty-first century, it became an integral part of rhetoric of political activists. Shifman (2014a: 119-123) calls political memes an “amalgamation of cute cats and hard-core politics”, a crossing point of political and personal. A memetic activity depends on offline political events. Meming is a practice of altering the objects through decontextualising them, digitalising and charging them with new subversive meanings. Meme creation grew into mass production due to the user-friendly image-editing software and ubiquitous presence of social media. With basic knowledge of technological tools, people with a view on any issue can easily engage in political participation and have a say.

Ross and Rivers (2017: 1) describe an internet meme as a device for delegitimisation as they often exhibit a tendency to negatively characterise the target during the pre-electoral ‘we versus they’ ideological fight. In the course of analysis of selected memes depicting the candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, Ross and Rivers (2017) revealed different strategies that internet memes employ to criticise, deride, and mock the candidates in relation to some of the controversies in their campaigns. As a result, they describe internet memes “as a creative device which facilitates the potentially viral communication of one's own political beliefs, attitudes and orientations, generally always among groups sharing the same, similar or opposing ideological beliefs” (Ross & Rivers 2017: 1). According to the latter scholars, the popularity of image macro memes is due to their simplicity in the sense that they can be quickly employed and spread in a reaction to an actual political event. Ross and Rivers claim that “memes are an organic means through which citizens can respond in almost real time to contemporary political events with no fear of delay or censorship by mainstream media” (Ross & Rivers 2017: 3). The scientists highlight the anonymity factor involved in meme

coinage and dispersion which, in their opinion, encourages people to participate in the political life.

Studies in political linguistics thus argue that talks about politics in the form of memes online, although indirectly related to the discourse of fight for power nevertheless contribute crucially to building up political awareness, views, ideological positions, and decisions for who to vote. Tard (1998: 249), for example, argues that in regard to politics, it is necessary to reckon with private talks and disputes rather than talks and disputes in parliament. He claims that the power is exercised during informal communication about politics while in Depute Chambers and Government couloirs the power is worn out and often wanes. Sheigal (2005: 34) claims that talks about politics resemble winding brooklets which nourish the river of political fight inasmuch as repeatedly multiplied they contribute to the formation of a political consciousness and public opinion which can eventually have an impact on the course of the political process.

5.3.2 Basic model of an internet meme in a pre-election campaign

If we regard the political meme in its typical repeated situations of communication and imagine a more or less complete isomorphism of a surface and functional levels of organisation, we can imagine the following model:

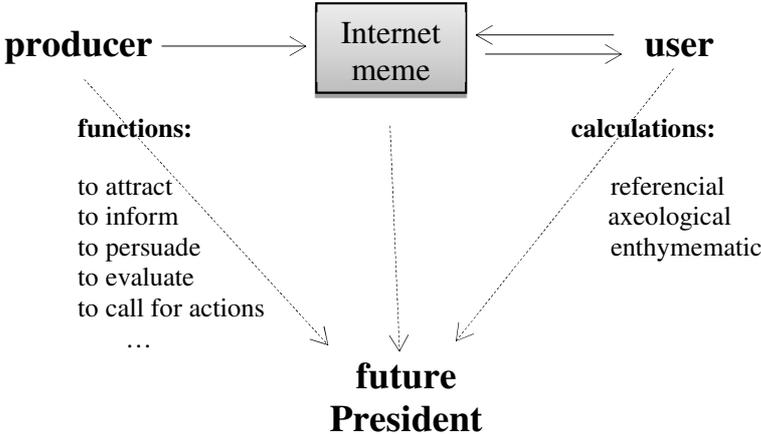


Figure 29. Basic matrix of a political internet meme

A type of text – a political meme – reproduces a model of a communicative situation that is typical during a pre-election campaign on FB: An addressor (a FB user, a member of an ideological FB interest group) informs his/her reader (a FB user, a potential voter) with the aim to catch his/her attention and rouse to action (to vote for a candidate), according to the interests of an addressor (Democrat or Republican ideology) either naming a candidate directly or mentioning him/her implicitly with the help of verbal or non-verbal signals.

The act of making meaning is created by way of interaction of an anonymous creator, the meme and the viewer. Huntington redefines the classical Jakobsonian model of communication applied to memes as follows:

...these elements roughly correspond to those of the basic communication model. However, in addition to these elements of sender, message, and receiver, memes' rhetoric also encompasses the context of events to which the meme responds and source texts from which the meme appropriates and remixes. These associations lend memes their rhetorical power; for the rhetorical critic, a meme is an assemblage of these elements.

Huntington (2016: 80)

Accordingly, the model is broadened by inclusion of a latent component – a large cultural context, a source of nourishment of memes.

As Figure 29 shows, the basic matrix of an internet meme in a pre-election campaign also consists of relations that we construct between the image and the phenomenon it imitates. The reader of the image is always an interpreter. According to Adam and Bonhomme (2009: 195), the image functions as a presupposed system or as a trigger of inferences from which an interpreter comes to a number of conclusions. Such inferences are made on the basis of interpretative processes. Referential calculations are based on the classical questions *who? what? where? when?* These questions reveal the topic or theme of the image, identify the scene, its setting, time, space and the actors of the image. Then the reader activates (or not) his/her encyclopaedic knowledge, archetypal or sociocultural information and makes hypotheses about the meaning that is encoded in the image. There are also axiological calculations in reading the image which comprises valorisation (or not) of the message of the image. Finally, an interpreter makes enthymematic calculations grounded in the interrogation of the aim or purpose of the image and speculations about possible consequences of the presented ideas.

It must be stressed that a schema which is modelled to reflect the basic matrix of a political meme is only one loop in a chain of communication. As we have already seen, an internet meme exists only if it is collaboratively transformed, remixed and reproduced. These processes make us revise the classic formula of communication, viewing it as the stage of a larger dialogue. Lev Manovich (2015) provides a suitable metaphor to describe the circulation of information in the world wide web:

If a traditional twentieth century model of cultural communication described the movement of information in one direction from a source to a receiver, now the reception point is just a temporary station on information's path. If we compare information or media objects with a train, then each receiver can be compared to a train station. Information arrives, gets remixed with other information, and then the new package travels to other destination where the process is repeated.

Manovich (2015: 145)

In this light, a political internet meme is a temporal combination of information which is constantly recombined and reorganised. Every political meme reflects how political physical objects can be negotiated and reinvented via remix, inciting others to continue the transformation and spread. Therefore, in this schema, producers (senders) of information and users (receivers) are the same people, who Markham (2013: 70, 79) calls "producers", reflecting "collapsed roles of producers and users".

5.4 Delegitimation signs: Getting off message

Colouring the opposition policies in dark colours, campaigners produce various political symbols based on delegitimation principles (Sheigal 2005). Equally, during the 2012 and 2016 presidential campaigns, a whole arsenal of linguistic and non-linguistic means was exploited by political activists to create negative images of opponents and to stimulate the American public to vote against them. Destructive 'they' symbols were then spread on different objects of a citizen's everyday life (T-shirts, aprons, cards, badges, bumper stickers, mugs, etc. or diffused in blogs and social media). These symbols are creative weapons that are exploited to foster ideological loops, a battle of opinions "where both sides compete in manipulating each other's signs, tactics, and strategies" (Peverini 2015: 344). The present study seeks to obtain data which will help to cover a research gap concerning deligitimation signs revealed in internet memes. Therefore, this thesis aims to address the following research

sub-question: *How does an internet meme exemplify an ideological stance as a reaction to the US parties' official signs?*

The question of ideological fight between different groups has already received a considerable amount of attention. For example, Van Dijk (1995: 144) distinguishes between various rhetoric strategies, attributing positive actions to ingroups and describing negative actions of outgroups, e.g. emphasis/de-emphasis; assertion/denial; hyperbole/understatement; topicalisation/de-topicalisation; high, prominent position/low, non-prominent position; headlining, summarising/marginalisation; detailed description/vague, overall description; attribution to personality/attribution to context; explicit/implicit; narrative illustration/no storytelling; argumentative support/no argumentative support; impression management/no impression management. A more recent study by Ross and Rivers (2017), in which they examined discursive features of internet memes in relation to the 2016 US presidential election, revealed delegitimisation strategies of authorisation, moral evaluation, rationalisation and mythopoesis.

Similarly to the research of Ross and Rivers (2017), this thesis is concerned with the manner in which internet memes are exploited to mock, deride and criticise American candidates and their parties during the 2012/2016 presidential campaigns. Yet, my analysis of internet memes revealed some other devices that stress the concept of 'otherness' which have not been described before. These means are (a) parodies on slogans, logos and portraits, (b) framing, (c) labelling, (d) onomastics and (e) anthroponyms. In describing these devices, I will show how American citizens expressed their ideological position by reacting to the opponents' official and non-official orientation and integration signs in order to bring about the desired outcome that is the election of one candidate at the expense of another candidate.

5.4.1 Parodies on slogans, logos and portraits

Parody may be described as a composition that is modelled on the imitation of another person, his/her actions and speech by applying inappropriate or unlikely details in an exaggerated way for comic effect. The first appropriation can be traced to Aristotle's *Poetics*. The Greek word *parôdia* can be split into *ôdè* meaning 'a chant' and *para* signifying 'along with', 'next to'; *parôdein* and derivation *parôdia* respectively denoting a false, distorted, deformed chant, sung by another voice or tone (Genette 1982: 20). A memetic reproduction

through parody therefore means a double-voiced repetition and inversion. It consists of the transformation of a text modifying its subject (often vulgarising it), but preserving the style (Piégay-Gros 1996: 57).

An interesting insight concerning parody is given by Greene *et al.*:

...there is often a tension between the potentially conservative effect of repetition and the potentially revolutionary impact of difference. [...] whatever the political contestation, parody proved a useful rhetorical strategy, a counter-discourse. [...] parody is fundamentally ambivalent or paradoxical; it is doubled and divided because of that defining mix of repetition and difference. If it is transgressive, it is only as a form of authorized transgression, like Bakhtin's carnivalesque (1973). It cannot help inscribing and granting authority to what it parodies, even if it aims to challenge it. Parody enacts both continuity and change.

Greene *et al.* (2012: 1002, in *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*)

Therefore, parody is a repetition with variation, aiming at exciting laughter. In politics, the role of these transformative techniques is to denude manipulative strategies of decision makers or to lay bare their policies. It is a means of transgression, distortion and contestation; it is comical, nihilistic and critical towards reality (Ilyin 2001: 188-189, in *Postmodernism. The Dictionary of Terms*). Taking no confidence in what politicians propose, parody shows a disapproval of their programmes, a sort of carnivalesque protest which challenges the authority. In other words, parody is an imitation form which is saturated with a sly spirit of carnival, defiantly mocking a power hierarchy. The question of carnival laughter online will be described in detail in Section 5.5 *Genre key tone*.

Nunes (2018) explores parody within the political mediascape, albeit discussing the application of the dialogism theory by Bakhtin. He views parody as a dialogic form which recontextualises and repositions an original form in order to question the values communicated in the source material. Therefore, according to Nunes (2018), parody creates a zone of contact in which two frames work for or against each other to level lofty political rhetoric of opponents, destabilising their original messages.

As I will further demonstrate, the technique of parody is based on borrowing, transforming and manipulating (Genette 1982: 40). In pre-electoral discourse, it means playing with a linguistic or non-linguistic structure (replacing, adding, suppressing elements, etc.) of already existing free-standing slogans, logos, portraits of candidates and their supporters.

- **Slogan parody**

Appropriation and rearrangement of original slogans into new dialogic relations generally point out to inconsistencies in the opponent's position. To illustrate this, some of the Republican non-official slogans in the 2012 presidential campaign were transformed with allusions to earlier slogans. "Obama Isn't Working" echoes with the slogan "Labour Isn't Working" on the poster of the British Conservative Party in the 1979 general elections with a nominal element being replaced (Stephanopoulos 2012).

Another example is a parody of the Obama slogan written on his famous poster (Figure 30).



Figure 30. Parody on Barack Obama's "Hope" slogan

A new meaning is born through transformation of the slogan "Hope" into *Nope* by replacing the initial letter. This single modification producing a new word – a highly colloquial negation – turns an iconic image of Obama into a rejected politician.

The meme below (Figure 31) illustrates a creative motto which is achieved through transforming the Democrat slogan "Forward" into *For war* by crossing out the letter *D* and by supporting the linguistic message with a drone inserted in Obama's logo.



Figure 31. Parody on Barack Obama's "Forward" slogan

In his joint appearance with former Democrat nominee Bill Clinton, President Obama tried to get Mitt Romney off his message by claiming that his policy would signify for Americans a return to the era of George W. Bush (Hawkins 2012). Promoting Obama’s administration achievements from the previous term, Vice President Joe Biden launched a slogan that brings up an attack against corporations supported by Republicans: “Bin Laden is Dead, General Motors is Alive” (Hawkins 2012). In the example below (Figure 32), the Democrats resorted to an interesting antithesis in the pseudo-Republican slogan *Backward*. The supporters of Obama criticised the politics of Romney predicting his term as a step backward by using an antonym of their own slogan. An elephant’s ancestor, a mammoth, is used so that the reader can unmistakably identify the Republicans.

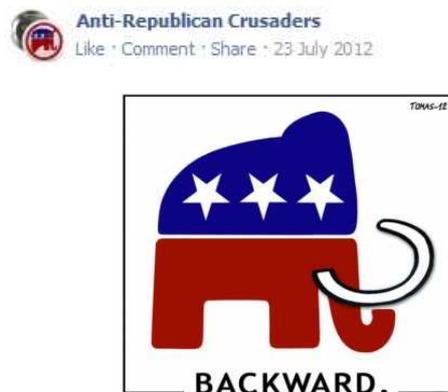


Figure 32. Parody on the Republican slogan

Reverse is a similar pseudo-slogan of the Republicans proposed to American voters via Democrat mediators *The Election* FB page (Figure 33). Initial triple *R* is an essential Republican identification sign. The meme below shows this newly coined catchword in contrast to Obama’s “Forward”, proposing voters the choice between progressive development and stagnation.



Figure 33. Mitt Romney’s pseudo-slogan

Another unofficial slogan with parody elements is *Hope is greater than Fear*, which is taken from the *Kentuckians Against the War on Women* FB page (Figure 34). Changing the ‘other’ slogan (*Fear*) and keeping the original ‘our’ motto (*Hope*) is an additional example of derogation of any deviant ideology and self-glorification.



Figure 34. Remake of Mitt Romney’s slogan

Eventually, adding elements with negative connotations can also transform the meaning of original slogans and serve as an argumentative technique. To illustrate this, the Republican slogan “Romney: Believe in America” was corrected into *Romney: Believe in half of America* by allusion through addition (Figure 35). The precision made by the adversaries on the *Formidable Republican Opposition* FB page presents Mitt Romney as a candidate who does not represent the interests of the whole country. An accentuated *half of* can suggest well-off Americans with a domination of the masculine part.



Figure 35. Parody on Mitt Romney’s slogan

Parody can be successfully achieved through allusion by substitution of elements. The slogan of Donald Trump is a brilliant example of the flexibility of a textual structure which can undergo this permutation and produce a number of funny knock-offs. Examples below (Figure

36) show how cartoonists and digital activists can reopen slogans and inoculate other meanings within the original campaign message which then go viral:



Figure 36. Parodies on Donald Trump’s slogan

Trump’s slogan “Make America Great Again” was largely popularised by his appearance in public wearing a hat that bears the motto. Every time the Republican uttered controversial speeches, the ever-vigilant opposition launched a pictorial attack as an answer. For instance, his promises to build a wall between the USA and Mexico in order to stop illegal immigration as well as the temporary Muslim ban proposal sprang an arrow of remakes of his slogan written on his cap: *Make America Hate Again*, *Make America White Again*, *Make America Grate (it’s Teeth)*. A deliberate mistake *it’s* instead of genitive ‘its’ has been made in the last slogan to suggest the poor level of literacy of the Republican candidate. Similarly, based on one of his speeches where he said “I love the poorly educated” when storming to victory in the Nevada caucus, knock-offs of this genre were produced: *Make America Dumb Again*, *Make America a Laughingstock* as well as others. Since the announcement of Mike Pence to run for Vice President of Trump, their new logo “TP” was parodied by redefinition through the acronym *Toilet Paper* and by rephrasing the slogan *Make America Crap Again*. This last case is an act of profaning or showing impiety and disrespect toward official symbols through stealing a ‘sacred’ character of the Republican runner’s mantra. All the samples show a

consistent pattern of creating parodies, i.e. the replacement of the passive form *Make America ... again* and the conjugation of Trump's America in different ways.

- **Logo parodies**

Just like slogans, logos can be an object of attacks and a bitter parody of advocates of oppositional views. The practice of logo parody is an integral part of the whole process of delegitimisation ideology that stresses the negative image of 'they'. One of the examples of parodied logos is the deck of cards with a transformed joker on top, which is provided below. Images of the Republican candidates with waving hands and the linguistic precision above them: *Liars* with triple *R* standing for Romney, Ryan and Republicans (Figure 37).



Figure 37. Parody on the Republican logo

The next example (Figure 38) converts Mitt Romney's logo into *Hypocrite*.



Figure 38. Parody on Mitt Romney's logo

The politician's face with a doubled mouth pictorially supports the suggested concept of a double nature, incoherent speech behaviour. We can observe that the position of the logo is freely changed. If it occupies the initial position in the original word "Republican", in the earlier discussed case – *Liar* – the logo is left in the end. The example *Hypocrite* appropriates the logo in the middle. With variation of place in the word, the appearance of the sign (capital letters of a particular form coloured in traditional American red, white and blue) remains unchanged to facilitate the recognition and its desired interpretation.

Another interpretation of the Republican triple *R* gives the following pseudo-logo (Figure 39):



Figure 39. Remake of the Republican logo

It respects partially an original version, extending the first *R*s into *Romney* and *Republican*, yet fulfilling the rest with *Recession*, *Repression* and *Regression*. The prefix *re-* gives a negative connotation to these common words and thereby spreads its influence to the associated proper names. An imitation of the signature *airfrance.net* next to the logo implies the similarity of the latter with the French air company which ridicules the candidate's integration sign.

Some Democrat advocates noticed the striking similarity of the Republican logo with the three colours on the popular advertisement of the *Aquafresh* toothpaste (Figure 40). This immediately gave food to some meme creators and they developed a derogatory Republican logo. The first part of the compound word *Aqua* is replaced by *Romney*, which changes the meaning of the logo. It draws parallels between the product which cleans teeth and makes them whiter and the candidate whose policy is sold to be 'racist'. Contemptuous parody destructs the original logo through lowering its ideal status by comparison with dental care goods. The reuse of the original logo in this new context modifies considerably the rhetoric of the 2012 presidential candidate, placing it on the ground of a free play.



Figure 40. Knock-off of Mitt Romney's logo

Many knock-off versions of Obama's logo are based on a pictorial transformation. The two examples below (Figure 41) remove the original rising sun from Obama's *O* horizon and replace it with new symbols.



Figure 41. Parodies on Barack Obama's logo

The first example provides a pseudo-logo with hammer and sickle surrounded by a cheering crowd that holds red flags. The second one, simplistic in form, is rich in chromatic significations, i.e. all coloured in red, the logo shows the rising of the ex-Soviet Union flag; the whole form implies the Soviet emblem. Both logos are aimed at depicting Obama's policy as radically socialist and communist.

The logo below (Figure 42) combines pictorial and linguistic components to damage the image of the Democrats. A flying saucer above the fields of Obama's logo and explanation *...because you want to believe...* implies a non-realistic utopian character of the incumbent President's programme. The opposition group mocks the Democrats by depicting them as blind disciples who believe in political myths.

Barack Obama's Dead Fly added a new photo.



Figure 42. Knock-off of Barack Obama's logo

A strong emphatic impact is achieved by this one-word rhetorical question *Jobs?* with the use of Obama's *O* in the middle (Figure 43). This meme imitating a bumper sticker is a semantically self-sufficient word-sentence since the single word has the word and sentence stress which helps to foreground the content. The interrogative construction of a semantic affirmation represents the failure of Barack Obama to create jobs during his presidency and therefore crushes his integration symbol.

Barack Obama's Dead Fly added a new photo.



Figure 43. Pseudo-logo of Barack Obama

A whole series of logo remixes was produced during Hillary Clinton's campaign in 2016 (Figure 44). An arrow crossing a capital *H* typeface logo appeared to be easy to imitate through manipulation of its direction. Social media users compared it to hospital road signs, the History Channel logo, an English grocery store that went out of business in the 1980s, the FedEx logo, a childish three-year-old finger painting, the logo of the English rock band *The Who*, the New York City twin towers during the 9/11 attacks, and even to the Cuban flag.

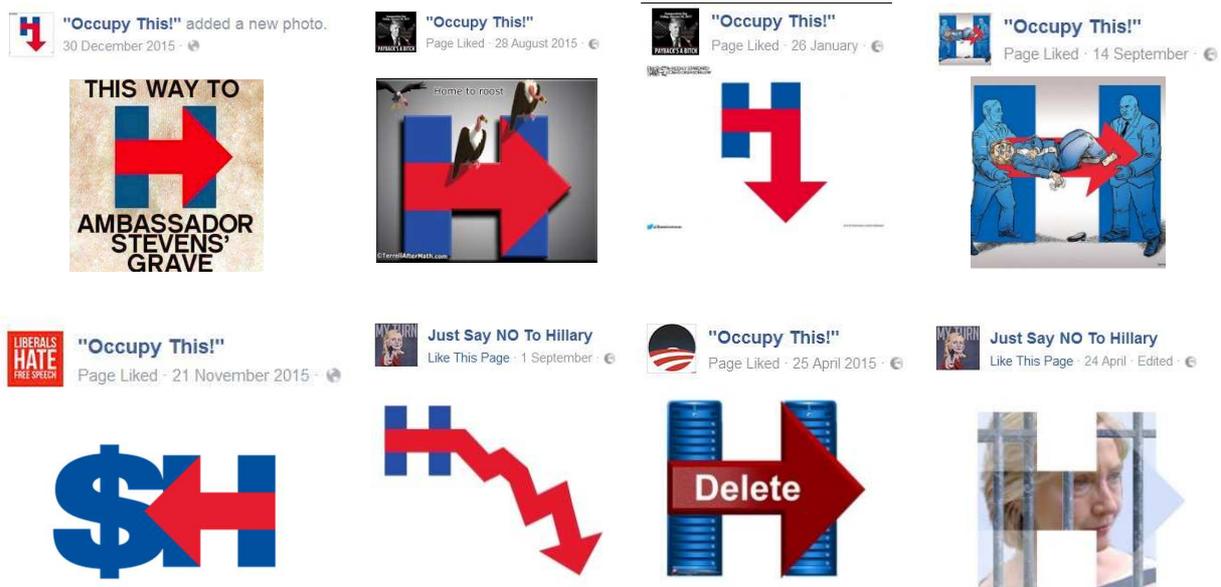


Figure 44. Parodies on Hillary Clinton's logo

Examples from FB (Figure 44) illustrate possible ways of playing with the candidate's logo. Just like Hillary Clinton was constantly changing the topography of her logo to express different philosophies, oppositional groups were equally transforming it every time a new argument against the candidate appeared in the media. For instance, the first parody clearly evokes the Benghazi case where four Americans including the US ambassador in Libya Chris Stevens were killed and Hillary Clinton, the then-Secretary of State, was accused of having failed to provide proper security. Political activists kept the logo unchanged however the surrounding verbal co-text *This way to ambassador Stevens' grave* transforms it into a sign leading to a cemetery. Likewise, the second remake infers the idea of death by adding large scavenging birds nestling on top of Clinton's *H* and a comment on the top *Home to roost*. Unlike the previous parody, the third example conveys no verbal information; by directing the vector of the arrow downwards, it appeals to a trite spatial metaphor with a broad range of negative semantics ranging from 'doing bad' and 'losing credibility' to 'inevitability' and 'leading to hell'. The fourth remix transforms Clinton's *H* into a stretcher where the Secretary of State is carried by her bodyguards. The pseudo-logo alludes to her much-talked-of fainting at the 9/11 memorial and refers to the candidate's poor health condition to be the President. The fifth example reverses the arrow to the opposite direction where it meets a dollar sign, i.e. an attack at Mrs Clinton's Wall Street ties and millions of dollars of her campaign contribution. Economic problems, decreasing market results, might advocate the sixth illustration where an arrow is gradually and steadily descending. The seventh remix indicates

a message of corruption and scandal around Mrs Clinton use of her private email server for official government communication and controversy around deleting thousands of emails. Finally, the last pseudo-logo changes the background topography into Hillary Clinton behind the bars as a suggested scenario for grave mistakes.

- **Portrait parodies**

A great number of parodies of politicians' portraits were produced during the 2012 and 2016 presidential campaigns. A photo of a politician once found in the hands of an opposition group suffers numerous metamorphoses. An image of a strong charismatic leader with a thoughtful gaze lost in the future is transformed into jocular characters. Various techniques are exploited by an active public in order to distort the coherence of pre-existing portraits.

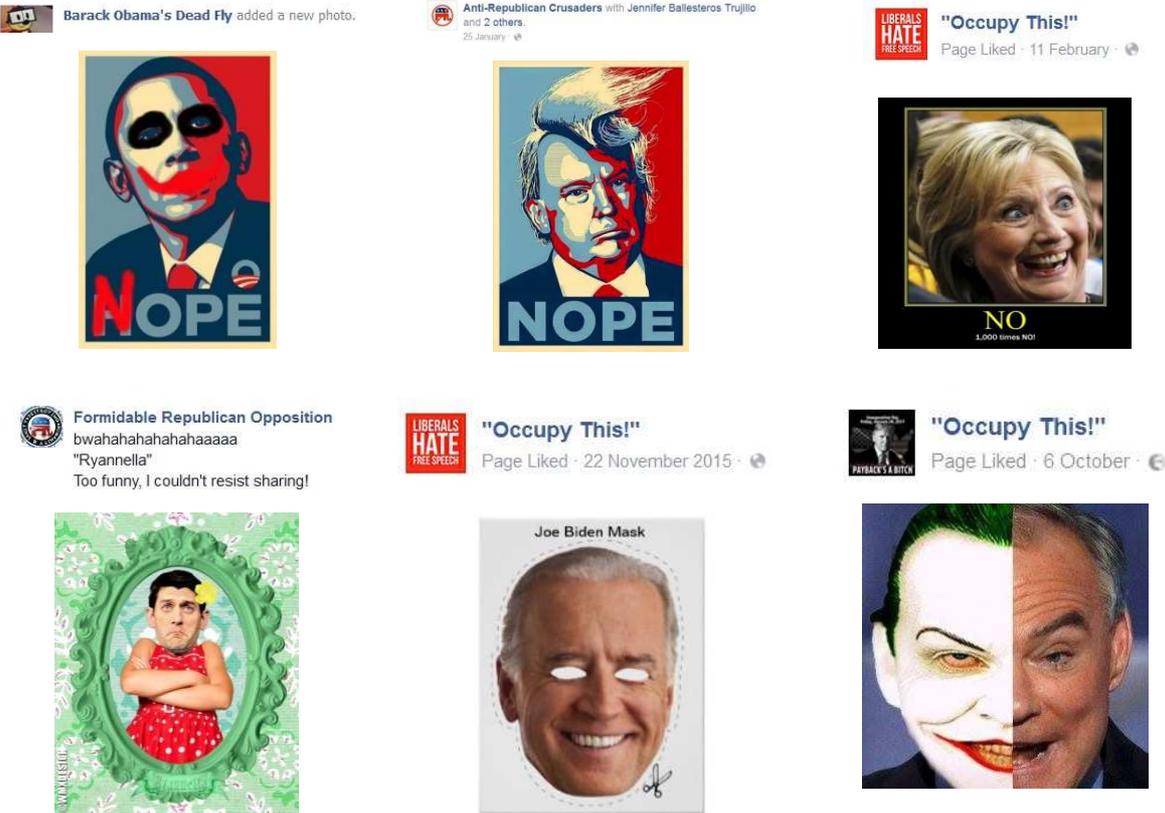


Figure 45. Parodies on portraits of candidates

As illustrated in Figure 45, a few graffiti strokes and a legendary image of Obama is transformed into the criminal mastermind Joker. Trump's serious look and his blown up hair do not match with an image of a leader; the stylisation of Trump's portrait as Obama's poster ends up in a caricature. A frozen motion of Clinton's smile reinforces its striking character

and gives the viewer the feeling of fear rather than affinity. Capturing Ryan’s awkward face expression, cutting it and inserting it into the frame of a little girl transforms the Republican 2012 Vice President runner Paul Ryan into capricious Ryannella. Adding some elements (scissors), omitting others (cutting off Biden’s eyes) turn a portrait of the Democrat runner Joe Biden into a paper mask. Juxtaposition of Tim Kaine’s laugh in frozen motion with a sadistic smile of the supervillain Joker immediately cues the qualities of the latter into the Democrat 2016 Vice President candidate.

A famous parody is Mitt Romney’s transformed portrait with a small face which entered the internet lexicon as *Little Face Mitt* (Figure 46). Created by humourist Reuben Glaser on the basis of the comic-strip villain Dick Tracy, this image had the purpose to inspire people to create similar pictures of the Republican candidate with a miniature face to “involuntarily forever see Mitt Romney with a tiny face” (Glaser 2013).



Figure 46. Parodies on Mitt Romney’s iconic representations
(Source: <http://littlefacemitt.com/>)

The parody in this case is based on the juxtaposition of serious situations and the oddity of the little face. A comic effect is assured either by breaking a strict canon of official portraits or by bringing an unreal feature into an ordinary episode of everyday life like the pictures above show. The first one depicts a patriotic leader against blurred stars of the American flag: A classic three-quarter pose, a slightly lifted head, facial features showing his firm and decisive character. Nevertheless, his face shrunken within an ordinary-scale blank outline of his head violates the rules of a political leader presentation. The result is the rejection of Mitt Romney as a strong chief who can govern the country. In contrast, the second picture represents the Republican nominee in a shop. The chosen setting was originally intended to show Romney as a common citizen. A simple act of buying food for breakfast helps every American to see

in a politician him/herself. However, again a striking miniature face crosses out this desired identification and imposes a funny creature, unable to represent a regular American citizen.

An interesting and creative case is presented by the portrait below (Figure 47), which was designed by the Democratic opposition. Mitt Romney is honoured in a marble statue like a successful Roman emperor. His clothes, lifted head and empty eyes respect all conventions of ancient art. The modern hairstyle and facial features of Mitt Romney are however preserved with the purpose of making him easily recognisable. A text of the inscribed base, which Roman statues usually bear to confirm the identity and remind the people of the emperor's expanding titlature, contributes differently to the perception of the American politician. An incongruous combination of the vulgar lexicon and Latin endings – *Romnius Dickus* – gives him a ridiculous air and totally destroys the politician's positive image.

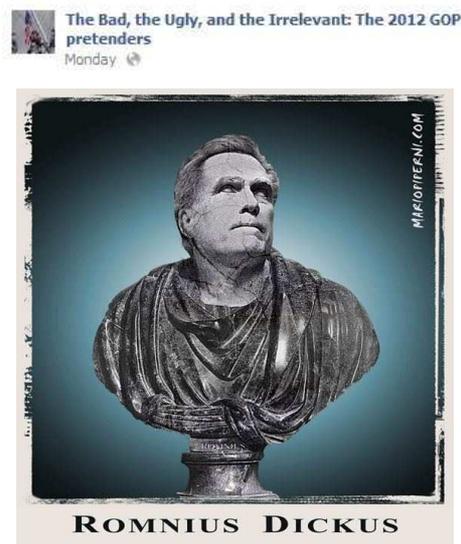


Figure 47. Knock-off of Mitt Romney's iconic representation

Some of the parodies even grow into iconic images which are always at hand of the opposition if the latter seek to attack a candidate or his/her team. Trump's outraged face with the mouth frizzed in letter *F* grew into an icon on social media. Internet users frequently resort to the image, adding various captures reflecting current jokes. The creators of the image below (Figure 48) keep the photo unchanged, but juxtaposition with a screwed up tank triggers parallels between the candidate's edges of eyebrows and general villain face expression. The produced effect is anthropomorphism of an object, on the one hand, and on the other hand, reification of the Donald Trump image which definitely does not sell him as a man who can make America great again.

Teabonics
23 April · 🌐

Uncanny.



Figure 48. Portrait parody based on reification of Donald Trump

When manipulating portraits, oppositional groups can put the images of presidential runners, their teams as well as their predecessors into contrast (Figure 49).



Figure 49. Portrait parodies based on juxtaposition

The first picture above shows the photos of George Bush and Barack Obama. The photo of the first fixes a momentary mimic of perplexity or disappointment; a photograph of the second is a product of a long artistic work showing the strong-willed Democrat leader. Nothing but this contrast in their iconic representations serves as an argument for Obama's supporters to claim that he should be re-elected for the second term to clean up the mess made by Bush. The next parody is an artistic caricature where Donald Trump is compared to Herbert Hoover. If the latter promises people a chicken in every pot, Trump's re-invented slogan, syncretic with his portrait, discredits the 2016 presidential runner on the basis of his own appearance. Eventually, a portrait of Hillary Clinton is juxtaposed to an image of one of the US's greatest presidents, Abraham Lincoln. Regardless of similar black and white chromatic characteristics, proximity with the viewer and the three-quarter posture, it is the look which makes the difference. A piercing interrogating stare of Clinton is juxtaposed to the

calm almost detached gaze of Lincoln. Looking directly into the viewer’s eyes, Lincoln establishes contact with the viewer, whilst Clinton’s slightly lifted head looking away is rather antagonising.

Sometimes oppositional groups make concessions and recognise positive sides of the ideology of ‘they’, which is used as a strong argument and a solid base for a harsh attack. Like previous examples, the post of the *One Million Strong Against Mitt Romney in 2012* FB group uses the stylistic device of contrast (Figure 50). However, the members of the same party are differentiated. Historical figures whose wisdom and authority cannot be denied are portrayed in black and white (mark of the past), in canonical three-quarter poses with a look of iron-willed men. Below them, modern Republican Party members are depicted in a sarcastic way. Coloured photos (mark of the present) show rather ordinary people expressing different emotions from an electric delight to a big surprise. So, on the one hand, we have, legendary portraits of politicians consciously posing in front of the camera, and on the other hand, rapid shots fixing different awkward mimics of people while they talk. As a result, modern right-wing politicians are ridiculed. A similar patchwork of portraits is presented in the meme of the *Formidable Republican Opposition* FB group (Figure 50). Captured in frozen motion, adversary party members are shown in awkward and disadvantageous positions. Such pictorial reinforcement creates a negative impression based purely on their graphic representation and serves as a visual argument to claim that *they’re nuts*.



Figure 50. Portrait parodies based on frozen motion

Figure 51 illustrates another example of the strategy of frozen motion when people are captured in a somewhat ludicrous posture. Netizens can either keep images the way they are or process them through creative editing. The comical posture of Jeb Bush, as if jumping over his brother George Bush Jr, receives the title of the famous American comedy *Dumb and Dumber*. Although the image remains intact, the caption gives a derogatory description to the two politicians.

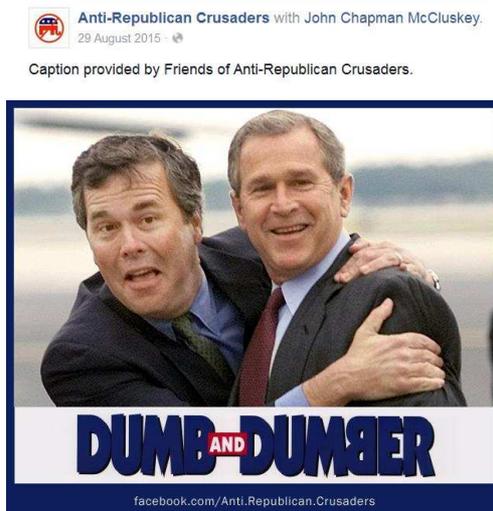


Figure 51. Ridiculous posture in frozen motion

This cursorial overview of parodies suggests that just like original slogans, logos and portraits of leaders are condensations of campaign messages, their remixes are encapsulations of delegitimisation ideas. They seek to destabilise the candidates, distort the coherence of their integration signs, and push them away from their messages.

5.4.2 Framing

Framing is another popular tool for fighting against opponents, as detected during the analysis of memes. In pre-electoral politics, it consists of presenting a candidate's policy using certain terms or providing a particular context and deliberately excluding other elements, thus giving it a new interpretation. A vivid example is the seizure of Obama's 2012 "Forward" slogan and the development of another prognosis "that a second term would lead to ever-growing national debt and deficits" (Sanchez 2012). Here is how Mitt Romney himself took aim at the Obama's "Forward" slogan at a press conference in New Hampshire: "I know he's been

planning on going across the country and celebrating what he calls ‘Forward’. [...] Well, ‘Forward’ doesn’t look a lot like forward to the millions and millions of families that are struggling today in this great country” (Blake 2012).

A fight against adversaries can be achieved through framing a combination of linguistic and pictorial elements like in the example below (Figure 52). Barack Obama, the head lifted in a solemn way, is put in one row with Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong. The historical figures against the red background and different slogans provide the frame of interpretation of Obama’s policy. His slogan “Change” is understood as a social revolution, strengthening the power of the state, and limiting the individual’s freedom.



Figure 52. Framing Barack Obama as a socialist-revolutionist

An interesting case presents the following example (Figure 53), where Democrat supporters eloquently re-orient Americans in their values.



Figure 53. Framing through juxtaposition

Originally, the Republican focus of interest, i.e. the protection of the private economic sector, is added to the Democrat list of values while the Republican philosophy is formulated in negative terms as *protecting the privileged sector*.

Speeches of the candidates give a lot of material for the reformulation of ideas, their different framing in order to create doubt and disagreement in the voters’ hearts. In his famous speech during the 2012 election campaign in Roanoke, Virginia, Obama defends and promotes the American social system, in particular educational institutions, by claiming that everyone’s achievement and prosperous life is the fruit of the whole system, the effort of “great teachers” who created a solid base and gave a ticket to successful life. Republicans extracted Obama’s words from his speech “If you’ve got a business – you didn’t build that” which immediately went viral in social media (Figure 54). Without the original context, the statement however sounds like an underestimation of personal investment of everyone in his/her own success.



Figure 54. Revelation of framing through recontextualisation

An attack through framing the situation in a different way is proposed in the example below (Figure 55). It is based on Hillary Clinton’s ‘get-out-the-vote-rally’ in Ohio a few days before the elections when the candidate was backed by two music icons, notably Beyoncé and Jay-Z. This move of the Democrat runner to encourage people to go to the polls to vote for her was harshly framed by the opposition. The activists of the *Occupy This!* FB “Like Page” presented

it as the story about “the kid who was so homely and unlikable that his mother had to tie a pork chop around his neck to get the dog to play with him” where popular stars are pork chops and Mrs Clinton is a lonely child.



Figure 55. Framing through analogy

Hence, framing is refocusing information which can be either a defence of the ‘we’ group or an attack of the ‘they’ group.

5.4.3 Labelling

Another means of marking the negative ‘other’ in pre-electoral discourse is labelling or stigmatisation. Cherneiko (1996: 42) characterises a label as an axiological name, a sign of non-acceptance of the other. Labelling is an accusation of negative or ‘dangerous’ sides of one ideology from the point of view of another. In other terms, to stick a label onto somebody/something means to create social deviation from an adopted standard and to evaluate it from the position of an ideological difference. Dmitrieva (1994: 92) claims that labels do not reveal objective qualities of an individual, social environment, phenomena, events, and activities, they only accord a negative evaluation, in other words, regard them through the prism of ideological ‘otherness’. Thus, labels usually convey a subjective and prejudiced opinion.

Labels can be based on the opponents’ behaviour, for instance, people can be called separatists, extremists, occupants, racists, a leader can be labelled a dictator, a destructor, a populist, a fascist, etc. Labels which are fairly wide-spread in political discourse are names of political parties and organisations that are famous worldwide for their regimes like, for example, fascists, Nazi, islamists, communists, bolsheviks, reds. A borrowed and

recontextualised term is often an exaggeration of a criticised policy, a label of an extreme variant of the latter.

The meme *Nobama* (Figure 56) is an illustration of this type of labelling.



Figure 56. Labelling Barack Obama as a communist

Although there is no direct labelling in this meme, an obvious modification of Obama’s name suggests a political regime of ‘communism’. On the one hand, the character *O*, is in the shape of the USSR’s symbol ‘hammer and sickle’. On the other hand, the whole post makes an allusion to the flag of the former Soviet Union (red and yellow colours, hammer, sickle and a star), representing communism in a metonymic way. President Obama is therefore labelled here as a socialist-communist. Overall, the post proclaims the rejection of Obama’s socially oriented politics.

A cornerstone of Bernie Sanders 2016 campaign, which is the reversal of income and wealth inequality as well as his populist and social democratic politics, gave a reason to the opposition to label him ‘red’ and ‘communist’. Pictorially, it is represented through parodies of his logo coloured in red with a hammer and sickle depicted above his name (Figure 57).



Figure 57. Labelling Bernie Sanders as a communist

The same label is used for Obama in the ‘fake’ poster below (Figure 58). His red clothes, a star on his ‘budenovka’ – formerly worn by Red Army soldiers, a stretched hand pointed towards the viewer and a reformulated slogan – all suggests a communist ideology.



Figure 58. Labelling Barack Obama as a socialist-communist

Labels are given by adding an easily recognisable ideological attribute to the portrait of a politician (allusion by adjunction as shown in Figure 59). Thus, a Vietnamese triangle panama, a Russian fur hat ‘ushanka’ on the head of Obama implies that the latter is a socialist-communist. A trimmed down toothbrush moustache placed above Trump’s lips makes him look similar to Hitler and consequently labels him a fascist. The name Trump itself can take the form of this vertical 1/3 moustache style and decorate the statue of Liberty labelling Trump’s America as Nazi.



Figure 59. Labelling through allusion by adjunction

Consequently, all these examples show that a word becomes a label that has passed through an ideological filter, an evaluation of an opponent from the position of a group, i.e. who is 'our' and who is the 'other' (Sheigal 2005: 175).

5.4.4 Onomastics

Words also become labels through the deliberate manipulation of a politician's name. Sheigal (2005: 165) claims that the numinous and destructive power of a name (appellations, bynames, nicknames, surnames) historically goes back to a belief in the magic power of language. Sheigal notes the following concerning the roots of the general practice of name-giving:

Право иметь и давать имя было признаком человеческого существа. Древнеримские рабы не имели своего собственного имени и назывались по имени хозяина – это было знаком того, что они лишены человеческого статуса. Отголоски этой древней традиции находим и в современном политическом дискурсе, когда говорящий, выражая крайнюю степень презрения, сознательно избегает называть объект нападок по имени и, таким образом, как бы лишает политика имени, которого он недостоин.

Sheigal (2005: 165)

[The right to have and to give a name was an attribute of treating a person as a human being. Ancient Roman slaves did not have their personal names and were called by names of their masters. It was a sign of the fact that they were deprived of a human status. An echo of this ancient tradition can be found in modern political discourse when a speaker, expressing the highest degree of contempt consciously avoids referring to the object of accusations by name as if depriving a politician of the name he is unworthy of (Sheigal 2005: 165, translation is mine).]

Therefore, labelling through the transformation of a politician's name in political discourse can be a strong means of criticism and rejection of the different 'other'. Opposition groups create new names through different rhetoric devices based on proper names, puns, the use of anthroponyms from precedent historical names, the transformation of precedent names. Playing upon proper names can be expressed through the coinage of unusual verbal units which express an individual sense attributable to a concrete context. These unique words are called nonce words or *occasionalisms* and, as the term suggests, are created for a particular occasion.

The occasionally forged *Nobama* catchphrase is a vivid example of interplay with the politician's name, i.e. a sort of word portmanteau that merges the negation *no* and the personal name *Obama* on the basis of the common letter *O*.

The label of someone talking nonsense is attached to Barack Obama in the nonce name *Oblabla* (Figure 60). The repetition of *a* in the last two syllables creates an assonance between the names and facilitates the establishment of parallels between them. The merged Obama logo definitely creates a negative meaning produced by the label.

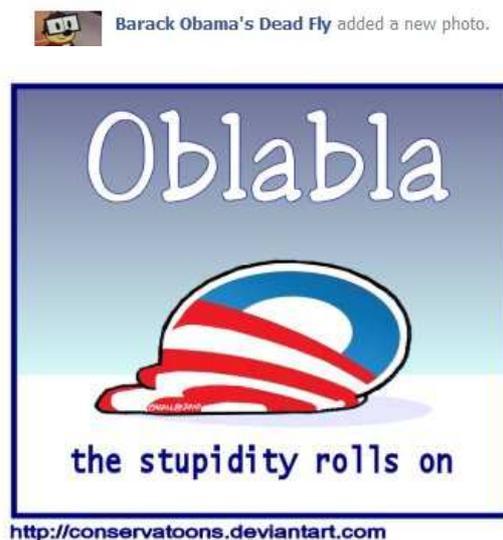


Figure 60. Playing with Barack Obama's name by occasionalism

Another variety of wordplays with personal names is *punning*, i.e. a technique based on such paradigmatic relations as polysemy, homonymy and paronomasia, which is a play upon different meanings of the words, often with humorous outcomes. Name modification grows into a label if a negative quality is attached to a personal name and a parody is produced as a result of it.

Similar sounding words like Romney and Zombie give material for such agnomination as *Mitt Zombie* or *Mitt Zomney* (Figure 61). The word-portmanteau *Zomney*, like in the case of *Nobama*, has two words merged into one on the basis of the common morphemic part *om* in their radicals, i.e. *zombie* and *Romney*. In addition, two words are connected through a phonic association. The produced effect is a comic one, namely that the candidate Mitt Romney is given qualities of a fictive personage zombie who ravens on human beings. A photomontage of Mitt with a named personage as well as a verbal explanation reinforces the idea.

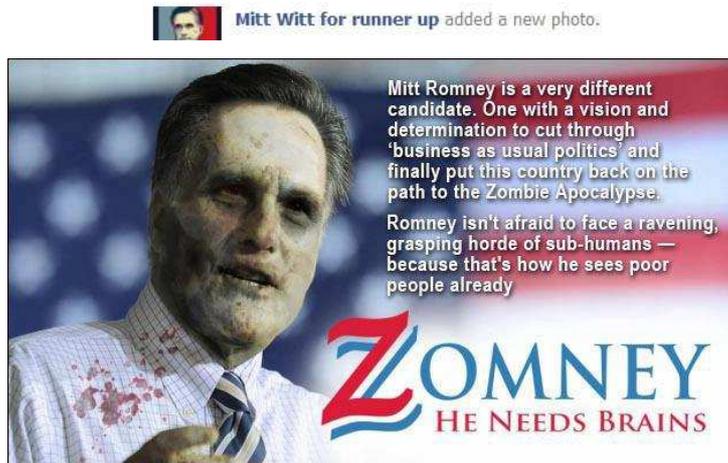


Figure 61. Wordplay with Mitt Romney’s name based on word-portmanteau

A strong criticism with Mitt Romney is also achieved through the coined name *Rmoney*, notably by assonance (Figure 62). By a simple change of place of the second and third letters, the personal name is converted into a name with an additional connotation. The Republican nominee turns into a pocket of money, a rich candidate who defends the interests of the rich. The hyperlink *mittrmoney.com* at the bottom of the meme is a parody of Mitt Romney’s personal blog.



Figure 62. Wordplay with Mitt Romney’s name based on assonance

Dumb Trump is another example of the merging of words which sound alike. Besides a play on words, it creates an effect of assonance and a feeling of symmetry between two words. Slight alterations of names attach an additional sense to a proper name and serve as a tool to stigmatise a politician. It is enough for the opposition to replace one letter, and the first name Hillary is changed into *Killary* or *Hellary*. Such figurative alignments of similar-sounding words ‘to kill’ and ‘hell’ with a partial overlap of morphemes labels Mrs Clinton as an

incompetent politician whose actions or the absence thereof lead to a fatality (evidently evoking the Benghazi case).

The paronomasic permutation of first syllables in the name of Bernie Sanders and the last syllables in Hillary Clinton creates the new tag *Bernary Santon*, which suggests one great Republican enemy.

Hence, the deliberate manipulation of the textual structure of a politician's name is another means to fight the adversary. The creation of occasionalisms or nonce words shows the ability of political activists to manipulate personal names and turn them into common nouns or new bynames with negative connotations.

5.4.5 Anthroponyms

Apart from the creative play with the politicians' own names, political activists allude to names of well-known political leaders via exploiting their surnames or their portraits in order to draw parallels between their actions. Stable associations related to a certain name allow an opposition group to use it in the designation of politicians who have features similar to those of the precedent bearer of a name. Sheigal (2005: 165) calls such labels *anthroponyms*. Given names are used in a representative symbolic function as an incarnation of qualities of a notorious political leader, which receive sharp criticism in society. Social media campaigners actively resort to pre-existing historical names, either using them without changes or transforming them.

A direct transfer of names from one context to another is the case of a literal word-for-word use of a pre-existing name. Such anthroponyms present compressed information fed from previous texts and become strong means of characteristics of contemporary politicians since the image of a concrete historical figure evokes an associative array of features in the recipient's memory (Volodko 2013: 61).

In two memes below (Figure 63), the well-known name Joseph Stalin (the head of the Soviet Union from 1924 to 1953, known for installing a severe totalitarian regime) is used without changes. Both memes deal with the same topic of Tagg Romney's, the son of the Republican candidate, purchase of a voting machine company. The opponents immediately seized the opportunity to alarm the citizens, thereby suggesting that the Romney family tried to create a

skewed vote counting algorithm. This scenario of manipulating the vote counting mechanism evoked the words attributed to Stalin: “Voters don’t count. It’s the people who count the votes, who count” (Scher 2011: 115). Through this analogy, Tagg Romney is automatically granted qualities of a powerful controller of votes, a cheater, an influential person who would certainly do everything for his father to get the presidential chair. Indirectly, Mitt Romney is viewed as a dictator, a leader who would control all spheres of human life.



Figure 63. Anthroponym based on parallels in actions

Instead of providing names of political tyrants, oppositional activists can only juxtapose portraits of politicians, search for parallels in their quotes or merge portraits into one non-realistic scenario.

The two memes below (Figure 64) appeal to Soviet and Iraqi dictators, Joseph Stalin and Saddam Hussein respectively, and are used as the source domain for labelling Donald Trump. Cutting the quotations of the Republican 2016 runner from their original context and pasting them in a summary sheet where two leaders are compared, immediately adds new meanings and purposes to the original statements. Both cases offer understanding of Trump’s verbal sayings through anthroponyms of Stalin and Hussein which infer a negative image of the Republican runner.



Figure 64. Anthroponym based on parallels in sayings

Several user-friendly applications make it possible for political activists to play with graphics of images, blending portraits of leaders into one image and creating new meanings. For instance, the Trump-Pence logo with the initials *T* interwoven with *P* became a source of a new remix, i.e. Trump-Putin. The fact that two politicians repeatedly expressed sympathies towards each other during the American presidential 2016 campaign was heavily criticised by the US media. The meme below (Figure 65), which imitates a retro USSR postcard where a brave soldier (with the glued-on face of Putin) carries a happy child (collage with Trump's head), is a creative protest against the Russian support of the Republican candidate. The merger of the two politicians into one unrealistic comic scenario cues the negative representation of Donald Trump as a naïve child who is easily influenced and dependant on a strong power nation.

Likewise, 'cutting' heads from photos of Hillary Clinton and her team and 'pasting' them into the setting of the North Korean Party assembly creates a new scenario where Mrs Clinton is compared to the personality of Kim Jong-un and her team through the light of his supporters (Figure 65). The use of the anthroponym of the North Korean Supreme Commander

reinforces the negative image of the Democrat candidate, suggesting the corrupted nature of her administration and, what is more, the idolisation of the leader.



Figure 65. Anthroponyms achieved through photomontage

Other recurrent anthroponyms during the US 2016 presidential campaign were largely based on Donald Trump's controversial statements such as the construction of a border wall between US and Mexico to stop illegal immigration, the attack of the federal judge regarding his Mexican heritage, the proposal of a temporary Muslim ban with regard to them entering the country, the US-China trade reforms, the mocking of a reporter with a disability, which elicited considerable controversy in American society. On social media, the Republican candidate received an anthroponym of the Third Reich leader since Donald Trump's success reminds people of the rise of Adolf Hitler in the early 1930s. Trump's big speeches with rhetoric based on public fears, over-the-top showmanship, grandiosity, his nostalgia for an idyllic glorious past, and the exclusion of existing minority groups echoes in some ways with an Aryan ideal. In particular, parallels are made between Hitler's zeroing in on Jews as an enemy, their mass deportations and Trump's calling Mexicans in the USA criminals, drug dealers and rapists, and his promise "to get them out and get them out fast" on Day 1 of his presidency. Similarly, Hitler had synagogues searched and created business and birth records for potential deportees, while Trump supports the creation of a database tracking Muslims in the USA and expanding the surveillance of mosques. Finally, as a history teacher and Holocaust survivor witnesses, Donald Trump's "asking his supporters to raise their hand during his rallies while proclaiming their allegiance to him is eerily reminiscent of Hitler's

Nazi salute, which was meant to inspire loyalty and sympathy towards the regime” (Hod 2016).

The two examples below (Figure 66) draw parallels between the actions of Trump and Hitler, keeping the name of the Nazi leader unchanged:



Figure 66. Anthroponyms based on comparison and metaphor

The first example juxtaposes two leaders and draws parallels between their politics based on marginalisation of minority groups, while the second instance blends two figures into one and chooses the anthroponym of Hitler on the basis of the manner of how to manipulate masses. In the first case, we deal with a comparison, whilst, in the second case we find a metaphor.

Besides appropriating pre-existing historical names without modifications, political activists use transformed names that are still easily recognisable. A transformed pre-existing name has an evaluative function. An object of criticism is not the bearer of the pre-existing name but his contemporary prototype.

A vivid anthroponym with the direct conjugation of a name is used by the opponents under the Republican banner (Figure 67). Obama, who was often criticised for his socially oriented politics, as previously pointed out, is matched with the Chinese socialist Mao Zedong via the merger of their names. The names Mao and Obama are merged via the *o* in both names,

creating the name *Maobama*. The anthroponym labels the American leader as a socialist dictator. The typical Chinese communist clothing supports the same idea and plays a decorative role. Similarly, the creative merger of the last name of Barack Obama and the first name of Che Guevara results in Che Obama (Figure 67). Along with merging the names, blending the portraits of political leaders double-codes the idea of revolution and communism attached to the Democrat President in an attempt to distract Obama's supporters from his real message.



Figure 67. Anthroponyms based on names' occasionalisms

A popular source for coining anthroponyms to attack rich women involved in politics is the historical figure Marie Antoinette. As we will see in the next chapter, the iconic image of the last Queen of France was exploited in a number of cases involving Ann Romney. The caricature below (Figure 68) also establishes parallels with Hillary Clinton when depicting a portrait of the modern American politician in the costume of the French Dauphine and reformulating the famous saying "Let them eat cake". Changing "cake" into *NAFTA* (the North American Free Trade Agreement alluding to Clinton's support of China and the South Korea deals) is a criticism of the Democrat negotiation skills in business affairs, which are viewed by her oppositional camp as a job-killing trade deal. Transforming the radical of Antoinette into *Clintonette* reinforces the message, which the artist wants to bring to the audience, i.e. an illustration of a considerable social distance between elite politics and

popular classes. The irony is felt in the fact that Hillary Clinton positioned herself as a left-wing politician who was supposed to defend the interests of the poor and the middle classes and to provide more jobs.

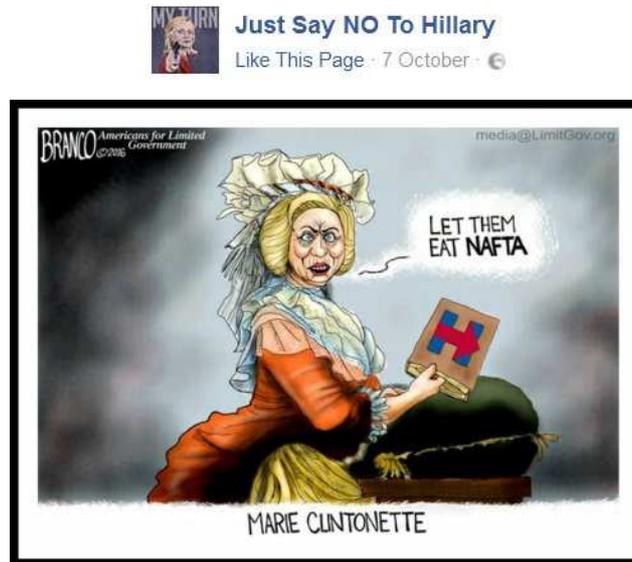


Figure 68. Anthroponym based on name's occasionalism and parallels in actions

Consequently, a play on politicians' names is a means of creating a new sense and associative couplings between combinations of names with other words. According to Herman (2014: 153), an appeal to an authority is a frequent and effective schema in argumentation aimed at legitimisation. Having analysed anthroponyms in internet memes, we can observe the reversed effect. In other words, drawing parallels between the candidates and well-known political leaders who fell into disrepute seeks to delegitimise the opponents. A wordplay with different onomastic units in pre-election campaigns leads to negative portrayals, the destructive evaluation of oppositional candidates as well as an emotional impact on the voter, an attempt to convince the electorate of inaptness of the oppositional candidates to take the seat of the President.

All examples of delegitimation show that internet memes' verbal and visual means have a broad range of structural possibilities to promote self-glorification and criticise others in order to promote interests of a particular group. The analysis of ideological signs brought me to the conclusion that the fight for power is of a double nature, notably the fight to remain on the chair and the fight to get the chair. In both cases, it is necessary to neutralise the opponents leading them off the message. Thus, delegitimation in political discourse means activity

directed at neutralisation of the ‘other’ with the purpose of remaining in power or getting the power. Delegitimisation signs are directed at lowering the status of opponents and defeating them.

5.5 Genre key tone

The manner or spirit in which a genre is performed forms a tonal system. The tone shows a degree of seriousness or a playful humorous character, a formal or casual attitude, contentiousness or cooperation (Herring 2007). An essential characteristic of an internet meme is its comic nature. A joke, fun, delight or something entertaining, diverting and enjoyable – all these synonyms for laughter certainly reflect the character of an internet meme. Nevertheless, behind a seemingly simple and light amusement, a virtual laughter reveals a very deep philosophical meaning. In addition, in the context of politics, it can be a veritable instrument of power defamation. Although there are countless studies dedicated to internet humour and technology-based jokes, as, for instance, works by Konstantineas and Vlachos (2012), Tay (2014), Lewin-Jones (2015), Laineste and Voolaid (2016), Kanashina (2017b), there is still a prevailing representation of comic memes as something frivolous and deprived of seriousness. For example, Konstantineas and Vlachos (2012) claim the following:

...in the field of Internet memes, we encounter the attitude “for teh lulz”, a phrase that suggests an unconditional and unbounded tendency towards bantering about issues considered off limits due to seriousness or compassion. Based on that point of view, there is no image of pain, illness or misfortune that deserves to remain immaculately above a humorous scope.

Konstantineas & Vlachos (2012: 4-5)

Tay (2014: 53) argues that image macro captions are generally benign and that “the humour appears more sophomoric than sardonic [...]. This is evidence of play for play’s sake”. Kanashina (2017b: 70) also underlines the comic nature of internet memes. According to the researcher, humour in internet memes is generally easy to decode since it is addressed to a lambda internet user. In what follows, I will try to present humour of internet political memes under a slightly different angle, drawing parallels with medieval carnival laughter which reveals serious issues behind a mask of triviality. In doing so, I will attempt to address another research sub-question: *What is the key tone of a political internet meme and what specific humorous strategies are used by the meme?*

5.5.1 Carnavalesque tone of a political internet meme

A thing is funny when – in some way that is not actually offensive or frightening – it upsets the established order. Every joke is a tiny revolution. If you had to define humour in a single phrase, you might define it as dignity sitting on a tin-tack. Whatever destroys dignity, and brings down the mighty from their seats, preferably with a bump, is funny. And the bigger they fall, the bigger the joke.

Orwell (1945)

Humour is not just comic relief – it is a form of ideological liberation, a means of deconstructing our social realities, and, at the same time, creating, imagining, and proposing alternative ones.

Kingsmith (2016: 289)

For George Orwell (1945), humour aimed at an established order is not an idle and superfluous pastime but a form of political performance. A funny political internet meme in this sense can be considered a seditious genre, ‘a temporary rebellion’ against social realities proposed by politicians. A joke encrypted in a meme certainly entertains the public, but, at the same time, challenges the structures of power audaciously pointing at discrepancies between official political and ideal representations.

If we understand humour through the theory of incongruity put forward by Kant, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer and others, political humour can be perceived as the violation of what is considered normal in a familiar political context (Kingsmith 2016: 288-289). Political humour on the internet in this sense highlights the anomalies, ambiguity, logical impossibility, irrelevance, and inappropriateness (Smuts 2017 in *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*) that originates in political discourse and action and criticises power, challenging ruling classes while hiding behind a mask of anonymity. If we adopt the lenses of Hobbes’ superiority theory, we can add that political humour is ‘sudden glory’ raised from a feeling of supremacy over political authorities or ideological opponents. In line with Freud and Spencer and, based on their relief theory, we can also view humour as a way of releasing tension generated by inequality and oppression of the ruling classes. Eventually, following play theorists (Eastman, Huizinga), we look at humour as a game, the frivolity of masses who play with relative truths of those who are in power (Taylor 1995; Smuts 2017 in *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*). In order to describe the tone of internet memes, I would like to focus on different aspects of humour and therefore I resort to the carnival theory which, to some extent, unites

these leading theoretical frames and at the same time provides an interesting turn in the study of humorous digital practices, specifically during pre-election periods.

During presidential campaigns, mass production of humorous and satiric internet memes reaches its climax point. Approaching the Election Day, single memetic voices gradually joined together and eventually burst into a roaring laughter resonating in the web 2.0 echo chamber. Such electrifying laughter creates a special carnivalesque mood among the masses. We can observe liveliness and elation related to transforming serious politics into a fiesta, where the borderline between sacred and profane, solemn and comic, good and evil, is blurred (Gavrilov & Kiselev 2004). Thinking of politics through the frame of carnival inevitably takes us centuries backward into a market place of medieval Europe where

a boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture. In spite of their variety, folk festivities of the carnival type, the comic rites and cults, the clowns and fools, giants, dwarfs, and jugglers, the vast and manifold literature of parody – all these forms have one style in common: they belong to one culture of folk carnival humor.

Bakhtin (1990, translated by Iswolsky 1984: 4)

The quote is by Mikhail Bakhtin, a worldly recognised theoretician of the concept of carnivalisation. In his monograph *Rabelais and his World* (written in 1940 and published in 1965), he formulated the main principles, sources and aims of a carnival as well as the essence of laughter in general. The Russian thinker criticised the widespread point of view that “the essential truth about the world and about man cannot be told in the language of laughter” (Bakhtin 1990, translated by Iswolsky 1984: 91). According to Bakhtin, laughter, once being an important part of official ceremonies in antiquity, was steadily forced out of church and state life in the Middle Ages and became viewed as a ‘low’ genre of expression. Nevertheless, in closing the door to every sphere of official life, the medieval ideology granted laughter an exclusive privilege for exceptional freedom, ruthlessness and impunity outside these spheres, notably in the marketplace, during feast days and recreational pastime. Banished from the officialdom, the carnivalesque laughter flourished in forms of ritual fair spectacles and pageants, all sorts of parodies in Latin and vernacular languages, curses, oaths, and popular blazons (Bakhtin 1990).

Within this context, internet drollery in the twenty-first century can be compared to a medieval carnival. Although humour is legalised in many genres of political life in the USA

(especially in editorials and political advertising), its use in official domains is limited, i.e. laughter is viewed as down-grading of politics and all big issues related to it. Laughing in politics is regarded as not taking things seriously. So the rudiments of folk laughter, glee and gaiety, although modified through the course of history, can still be found in internet memes. Nowadays, the carnivalesque function of marketplaces can now be found on social media platforms where various comic forms allow people to express themselves and discuss all that is forbidden at their workplaces, schools, tribunals, press, etc. by virtue of established conventions and taboos.

The essence of carnival is an overturn of habitual values. In the context of present-day American elections, carnival means forming the second parallel world, i.e. an alternative to the officially valid one. Internet carnival laughter during presidential elections proves to be a complex collective world view that is hostile to all pretension of a perfect, finished, solid, secure and unchanging order that politicians present to their voters. Humour rejects all claims for eternal, completed and irreproachable policies. Chaotic in its nature, laughter is directed at the improvement of what is official, serious and static. A comic vision of the world is contrasted with a dull one-sided seriousness provided by official political institutions with their prescribed rules of behaviour. Different from serious official forms of communication, a comic form of discussion provides an alternative outlook with a vivid emphasis on a non-official, casual aspect. The idea of overcoming an existing cultural taboo or ban resulting in laughter was skilfully summarised by Freud's follower Edwin Holt: The essence of comic is in freeing a cat out of a bag. What is a cat? The overwhelmed desires. What is in a bag? The inner censor (Noukhov 2012: 174).

Just like its medieval carnival forms, internet laughter has the same object – authority and power, it aims at changing the political *status quo*, an established order and prevailing truths. It discredits power, makes it vulnerable, through lowering the rating of politicians. While serious sources, when criticising, support their opinions with references to respectful authors, laughter does not need arguments. It convinces through the easiness of its reception. An anecdote, a bitter comment, a ridiculous photo or a photomontage are immediately spread through informal electronic channels and anonymously echo in masses. As most of the information is produced by dialogic groups rather than individuals, the authorship belongs to the whole community of netizens. Since open and direct criticism is always risky and dangerous, anonymisation which is typical for internet communication, favours even the most audacious statements.

In the act of a smile or roars of laughter, American netizens give their *evaluation* of events, their appreciation or disapproval. Zagibalova (2008: 181) claims that a laughing person is armed with knowledge about what the world is and should be. Laughter helps to distance oneself from a political situation, go beyond its frames and observe its actors from the outside. A laughing person notices a certain discrepancy in this situation and sees its absurdity (Filippova 2008: 140). Politics starts to be viewed as entertainment and laughter is a festive way of attaining the truth. It reveals contradictions of reality and endeavours to the ideal. Kanashina (2017b: 70) argues that humour in politically oriented memes often conveys a tragic touch. The researcher views humour in memes as a conflict between an ideal and reality, a mood of dissatisfaction, discontent and disenchantment with politics and the current state of affairs. The relation of laughter with an ideal vision of the world and at the same time awareness of the material life with its restraints is well encrypted in a metaphor which Jean Paul provides. The theoretician of humour compares it with a bird that flies with its tail skywards, keeping in view the earth (Redkozubova 2009).

Virtual laughter changes people's places in the *social hierarchy*. It plays a crucial role in reversing hierarchical ranks. Campanelli (2015: 70) relates it to "the disappearance of broadcast centers radiating communicative rays out from a center (according to the electric circuitry presiding over a society dominated by unidirectional media)" and the emergence of information where decisions are constantly negotiated and integrated in a network of nodes. The process of information production through the activation of nodes in the world-wide 'cosmic superbrain', public access to knowledge bases and technical strategies of playing with information, gives an individual an experience of freedom. Participating in knowledge production, netizens are capable to oppose information entropy and control from the top. Taking pleasure in scornful imitations, parodies, travesties, humiliations and profanations, people publicly demonstrate their own superiority over politicians. They assert their power, and their imperviousness to various threats in the form of laughter. The logic of 'upside down', 'turnabout' is typical for internet laughter. Like at a carnival, there is a continual shift from top to bottom, comic crowning and uncrowning (Bakhtin 1990, translated by Iswolsky 1984: 16-17). The temporary suspension of any hierarchical relations in an online "smooth" space creates free communication which is scarcely possible in everyday face-to-face interactions, in "striated" space (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). In real life, they might be separated by a barrier of class, race, profession, property or age. Social media reduce distance, bring people from different backgrounds into contact, permitting frank and unrestricted

communication as well as carnival familiarity, liberating them from all norms of imposed etiquette. Therefore, swearing, all sorts of crudities, and the use of foul language is a popular practice in social media. Thus, virtual laughter gives a feeling of *freedom*, even though this freedom remains temporal, ephemeral and utopic.

The therapeutic role of laughter, already recognised by Hippocrates, is immense. The Greek physician sees in laughter not only curative properties but agrees with Democritus that it is related to a spiritual assumption of human life, its fears and hopes. In political life, healing consists of walking through a situation, extracting it from backward consciousness, coming through it, laughing out and in this way avoiding various mass fears (Gavrilov & Kiselev 2004). Laughter brings an acute sentiment of victory over fears for injustice, a worse life, poverty, and losses. In the case of presidential elections, humour removes emotional tensions related to the crucial choice of the future. A whit of humour allows people to relax and at the same time sympathise with this or that candidate. Laughter, as a remedy, opens the door to a different world, free from worries and concerns. A silly expression of unilateral silly seriousness, a fear is conquered by laughter and appears in the form of ugly-ludicrous creatures. In the virtual world, ‘scary’ and ‘fearsome’ politicians who disseminate the feeling of anxiety and inquietude are metamorphosed into ‘funny boogeymen’.

Andreas Langlotz (2015: 243) also points to social benefits that humour triggers: “By increasing their status and putting them in a positive light next to one’s audience, humour reflects back on the jokers and creates a positive self-identity for them”. Consequently, jokers who amuse the audience on pages of FB interest groups while propagating political ideas reinforce their positive image and build a space for commonalities (shared knowledge, common understanding) among its members. Furthermore, if humour succeeds, it shows that the promoted idea is shared by group members and leads to strengthening, cementing their solidarity and cohesion. However, laughing together about detected deficiencies of an opposition group or their leader is a jocular act of superiority and power-imposition which distances the group from the object of aggressive humour. In line with this, Langlotz (2015: 274) talking about social functionality of humour, claims that, on the one hand, humour creates a platform for consensus between in-group members (“reinforcing humour”, “social facilitator”), and on the other hand, humour draws a borderline and creates a discord between in-group and outsiders who the laughter of the former challenges (“subversive humour”, “social corrective”).

In political communication, humour, on the one hand, is one of the effective means to demobilise opponents. On the other hand, it helps to find their *alter ego* or allies being a means of integration of a group through mocking and affronting those who do not belong to this group. Humorous memes diffused on FB attract attention, create a positive feeling among the viewers, and show that the creator is a witty up-to-date person who is able to orient him/herself in a political discussion. Laughter in this sense is an ambivalent phenomenon as it negates and affirms at the same time.

Besides, when laughing online, people try to show that this is *not about the conflict situation*, but about a game. The meme below (Figure 69) illustrates this awareness of netizens when they quote the father of poignant humour, Oscar Wilde.

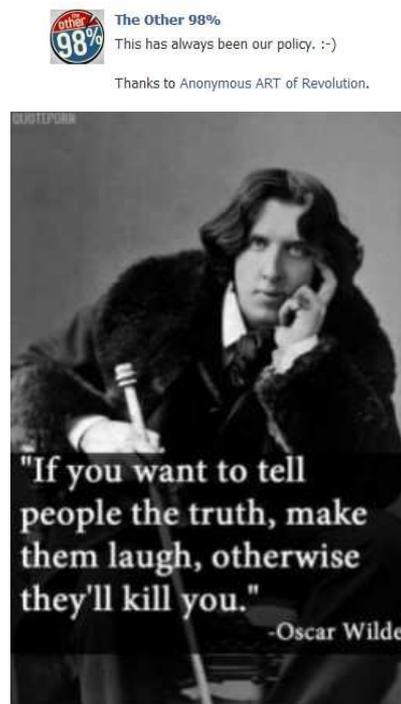


Figure 69. Netizens' awareness of the power of humour

A playful element is thus essential in any form of comic (representing *homo ludens*). This virtual game creates a temporal world outside of people's ordinary lives. All types of relations are possible in this second world since both sides realise its ephemeral, make-believe and 'for fun' character. An easy recognisable caricatured face, even the most humiliating comment, does not provide the cause for legal proceedings. The magical word 'joke' erases hostility as statements are uttered in a gay and joyful tone.

To resume, internet laughter is a form of manifestation of the people's outlook on politicians and ongoing processes. Informal and casual, void of all sorts of censorship, it gives a person the freedom of expression, clears communication up from intolerant seriousness, pre-established frames of behaviour, prescribed norms, rigid forms, their categorical character, numbness and univocal vision of truth. Furthermore, being online, people are temporally liberated from hierarchical privileges and prohibitions erasing barriers between rich and poor, young and old. A virtual carnival offers people "a completely different, nonofficial, [...] and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom" organised on the basis of laughter (Bakhtin 1990, translated by Iswolsky 1984: 5-6). Bakhtin is probably right when he portrays laughter as a doctor, therapist, holistic healer, pointing, on the one hand, at its curative virtues, and on the other hand, drawing our attention to the concerns of laughter with all uncompleted, transitional phenomena, incorporated in earthy carnal images of guts and bottom. He claims that a doctor never deals with a healthy rehabilitated body, but with nascent, forming, struggling, ill, dying, disjoint flesh (Zagibalova 2008: 185). In the political culture online, we can meet this body in the form of cold humour, irony, sarcasm, caricatures, grotesque images, as well as all types of curses, swearing, oaths, etc. which show world imperfections. This humorous carnivalesque tone was detected in the course of a stylistic analysis of internet memes during the 2012/2016 presidential campaigns. In what follows, I will describe different forms of humour and draw conclusions based on the theory of carnival.

5.5.2 Internet comic forms

The web 2.0 carnival culture has different comic forms achieved through complex systems of images. All of them emphasise a reality which reflects a certain dissonance in outward appearance, unexpected emotional détente, the carnivalesque overturning of values, criticism of undue, contraposition of a serious business-like tone through an easy-going and playful character. The comic is a violation or deviation from what is agreed to be the norm in a particular social group and that causes laughter as a consequence. Electronic comic forms during the US presidential campaigns are saturated with pathos of changes and the renewal of power, the realisation of playful relativity of reigning truths. The resort to a comic tone is an attempt to focus on imperfections of politicians and their ideological lines. The reality rejected by netizens is transfigured through fantasy into moronic pairings of text and image.

People's electronic responses to political events dispose a large spectrum of forms of creating a comical effect. They range from amiable patting humour to sharp sardonic criticism. I am going to present the comic forms in the order of amplification of their negative component and growing emotional charge, based on classification of Borisova (1999).

1. Mild humour

An element of digital carnivalisation which I found on FB is mild humour. This less offensive of all comic forms elates the readers' moods and shows the positive side of any political event. The object of humour is a strange eccentric detail or an inessential shortcoming. Humorous memes show an ability of their creators to notice and highlight absurd and jocular elements in reality, funny incidents and odd features of human character. Internet memes which convey humour generally produce a warm feeling when portraying incongruity in a target. There is no aggression and the level of criticism is minimal. Humour manifests 'seriousness behind the mask of laughable', or a double attitude to its object, i.e. under the guise of mockery there is a positive attitude. Its nature is therefore harmless and non-threatening, humour is often intended just to cause laughter. A sender generally sympathises with his/her characters, bantering with them in a subtle way (Borisova 1999: 95).

A humorous effect is created in the following meme (Figure 70) by an apt use of juxtaposition. It shows a portrait of Thomas Jefferson with blue Ray Ban sunglasses and acid pink hair. These two elements of his appearance stick out as alien to someone who lived in the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries and therefore result in humour.



Figure 70. Mild humour

So, humorous memes do focus on whimsical, odd or quaint features of people but when laughing at them they can adopt a kind-hearted attitude. Behind a funny mask, there is often a deep and serious understanding of the object.

2. Witticisms, periphrasis and references

An active and highly productive type of humour is wit. It is a talent not only to reveal the incongruent properties in an object, but to sharpen and define them, to aesthetically evaluate real contradictions of reality with a purpose of rendering their comic nature more visible (Redkozubova 2009).

Netizens readily borrow witty quotes by famous people in order to attract the readers’ attention to imperfections of reality and to make them think.



Figure 71. Wits delivered by ‘truth’ messengers Morpheus and Willy Wonka

Some witty fictional characters from films or books become ‘truth’ messengers and icons in the virtual sphere like the inspirational leader and influential teacher Morpheus or magical Willy Wonka with childlike wonder as illustrated in the memes above (Figure 71).

The form of intelligent humour is often brought to the American public online by comedians like Jon Stuart, Bill Maher or Stephen Colbert. These people with lively imagination possess a faculty to immediately react to political events through smart and amusing comments. The latter are quickly captured and transmitted online via memes:



Figure 72. Wit in comments by the comedians Bill Maher and Jon Stewart

Periphrasis, decomposition of famous quotes as well as recontextualisation of sayings are also examples of a witty retort.



Figure 73. Decomposition and recontextualisation of Decartes' "I think, therefore I am"

The meme above (Figure 73), for instance, borrows a famous statement from the French philosopher Descartes “I think, therefore I am” (*Cogito ergo sum*) and extends it in a humorous way *I think, therefore I am... not Republican*. The meme also incorporates a full quote by Jonathan Swift “When a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this sign; that the dunces are all in confederacy against him” from his satirical essay *Thoughts on Various Subjects* (2014). Even though this utterance remains unchanged, the wrapping context adapts its meaning to the aims of the meme. Placed below a picture of Obama, it refers to the President and puts him on the level of a man with extraordinary abilities, labelling people who do not recognise this fact (it implies Republicans) as dunces.

The aesthetic evaluation of contradictions and discord within the Republican Party is proposed in the meme below (Figure 74). Alliteration through the systematic repetition of the sound *r* together with negative semantics in the introductory comment *Trump is electrifying the base while trampling over the smoldering GOP's corpse* creates a cacophonous effect on the reader. A sense of strain and discomfort is amplified with an image of a dead elephant and Donald Trump on its top. An unexpected comparison in the explanation below, i.e. *Thomas Edison killed an elephant to demonstrate the dangers of electricity. Trump is doing the same thing to the GOP*, sharpens the criticism of the Republican candidate. The creator of the meme plays with the word ‘elephant’, meaning ‘a killed animal’ in the context of Edison’s experiment and ‘the Republican Party destroyed by Trump’ in the 2016 Primaries. The presentation of the meme in a fading yellowish photograph style appeals to the viewer’s aesthetic taste.

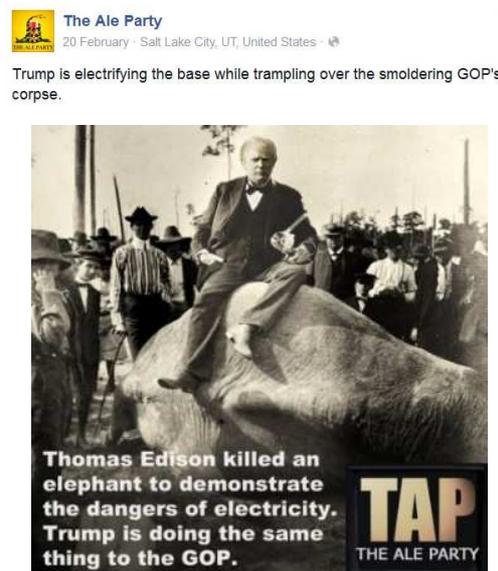


Figure 74. Wit based on alliteration (comment) and wordplay (caption)

In its extreme form, wittiness descends into bitter irony or sarcasm when these masters of rhetoric articulate a collective critical response towards what they perceive as a slick manipulation by a politician and, furthermore, it trains citizens to look out for its signs.

Wittiness is often achieved through different stylistic devices which reflect the category of doubleness, e.g. puns, paradoxes, antitheses, oxymorons.

3. Pun

Language alone gives us a rich material for humour. Brilliance, airiness and jolly gaiety are brought to the audience by pun. The highest form of wittiness, i.e. pun, is “the use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings or different associations, or of two or more words of the same or nearly the same sound with different meanings, so as to produce a humorous effect” (OED). The use of the word *elephant* in the previous meme (Figure 74), for instance, has a double sense as a dead animal referring to Edison’s experiment and as the fractured Republican Party. Puns are based on various paradigmatic relations of lexical units as polysemy, homonymy, paronymy and paronomasia.

A play on words is achieved in the meme below (Figure 75) through the similar pronunciation of *over comb* and ‘overcome’. A change from ‘comb-over’ into *over comb* is made with the purpose of rhyme and easy recognition. Besides the meaning of Trump’s eccentric hairstyle with strands of longer hair at the front, it acquires a sense of ‘overcome’ – to overpower and defeat. The comic effect is achieved through switching from one meaning to another, at the same time combining both.



Figure 75. Pun based on homophones ‘over comb’ and ‘overcome’

Likewise, the following meme (Figure 76) plays on similar sounds and graphics in ‘kampf’ and *koif* when blending the image of Donald Trump with that of Adolf Hitler by allusion through addition. Besides the Führer’s recognisable toothbrush moustache, a direct reference to his autobiographical book *Mein Kampf* is made. Based on two paronyms, a pun is achieved through the balancing of meaning between Nazi anti-Semitic book and the Republican runner’s unique hairdo (modified ‘coif’).

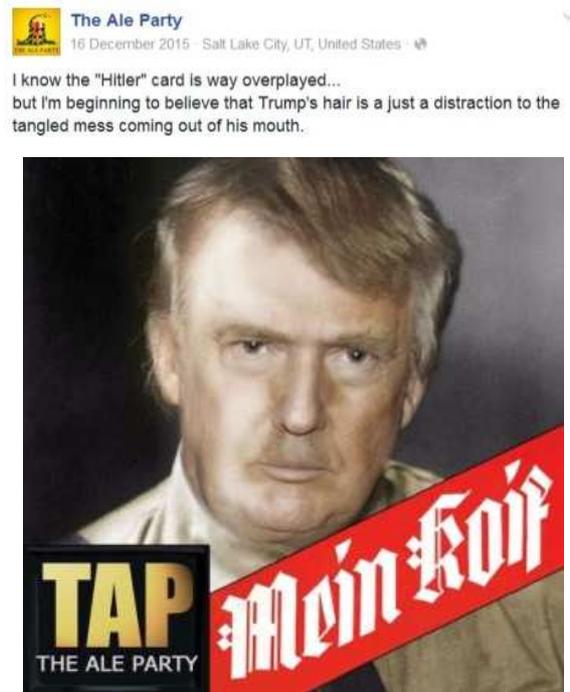


Figure 76. Pun based on paronyms ‘kampf’ and ‘koif’

The use of a play on words only justifies the inventiveness and wit of the author. As for the reader, s/he should know the anatomy of a joke well in order to decode the pun.

4. Repetition

A cleverly woven expression evokes amusement and laughter in the meme below (Figure 77). The caption states *The Clinton Foundation has fed millions of children. Trump’s charities only feed his ego*, where the predicate ‘to feed’ is exploited twice for two distinct meanings. ‘To feed poor children’ is the literal meaning of the word while ‘to feed one’s ego’ is used figuratively, in a sense of bragging, doing charity for the purpose of feeling better about oneself. This positive-negative restatement is employed to infer criticism of Donald Trump’s actions through apt phrasing and repetition.



The Ale Party

Page Liked · 25 August ·

The rating group Charity Watch gives the Clinton Foundation an "A" and it has helped over 400 million people in nearly 200 countries. Trump has promised millions to charity, yet The Washington Post found he's donated less than \$10,000 over 7 years and has used donations to buy sports memorabilia.

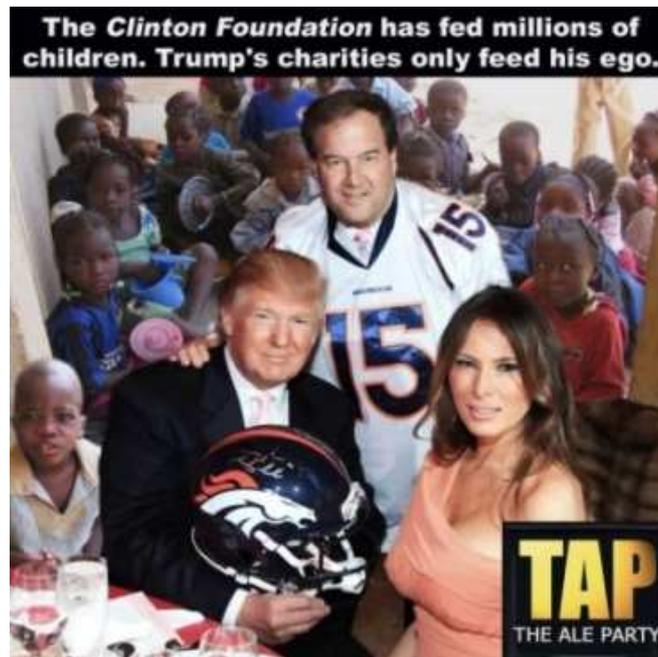


Figure 77. Illustration of repetition

5. Paradox

A well-loved technique of fighters against injustice in society during presidential campaigns is the paradox, i.e. an “absurd”, “self-contradictory” and “intrinsically unreasonable” proposition (OED). Logically unacceptable, strongly counter-intuitive and against its premises, the conclusion of paradoxical statements nevertheless can offer a rather interesting insight into its object, often proved to be well-founded and true. In other words, the paradox combines, at first sight, conflicting notions which after a while reveal strong links and provide an original interpretation. The charm of this figure of speech is in daring to confront living principles and traditions with commonly held opinions and labels. This is why paradox fits well into political discourse online since it breaks the rules, liberates from clichés and stereotypes, and revises a hierarchy of values, generally accepted concepts and representations.

Life contradiction which paradox puts on the surface is always unexpected. In this sense, it differs from antithesis. The latter realises inconsistencies of the world which are not new for the reader – good and evil, light and darkness, love and hate – whereas paradox creates a misalliance between what a recipient is used to and a new angle of vision contrary to what the audience has been led to expect (Fedoseeva & Ershova 2013).



Figure 78. Paradox deduced from fates of famous historical personalities

Illogical connections are presented in the internet meme above (Figure 78). The succession of photos with captions presents Rosa Parks, John F. Kennedy, Martin L. King and Barack Obama as victims. The result of reasoning or apodosis is at odds with general assumptions and expectations. To be arrested for sitting in a bus, to be killed for inspiring people, to be murdered for having a dream – these statements although contradict human logic, present a sad truth. Aimed at defending Obama, this meme juxtaposes him with new heroes of the American public. Locating Obama in this paradoxical frame helps to view him as a victim too in this ironic twist of fate, i.e. a discrepancy between what is intended when one acts and what the result is. It brings paradox close to the next technique, notably irony of the situation which arises from the contrast between how a set of circumstances looks on the surface and what it actually is in reality, disharmony between one’s intentions and consequences, the contrast between what one seeks with his actions and what s/he obtains.

6. Irony

Defined as a double sense, irony is based on contrast between what is expressed explicitly and an implied meaning, the opposite between a statement and its actual sense. In contrast to humour, irony is 'laughable behind the mask of seriousness'. It is aimed at qualities, which, in the opinion of an author who applies irony, do not reflect his/her representation of the phenomenon in question or do not correspond to an established norm. Thus, when using irony, people compare the reality with a certain ideal. Irony ascribes certain qualities to the object which it lacks in reality. In doing so, it glorifies the object with the purpose of showing the reader exactly the opposite, notably the absence of those desired features (Baskakova 2013). Consequently, by using irony, the author criticises people and their actions. Quite often in such type of criticism s/he demonstrates the superiority over the object of mockery. Such sneering criticism is nevertheless hidden. Reticence, the opaque character of an ironic expression is achieved through the contradiction of reality and what is said about it. In other words, under the guise of a positive description, a negative evaluation is concealed.

Irony is used in the example below (Figure 79) to make a bitter remark about apocalyptic prognostics which pre-electoral discourse is paved with.



Figure 79. Irony in verbal reasoning

It evokes an internal apple of discord between two ideological systems of values. The issue of abortions and gay marriages, viewed as planned parenthood and fundamental rights of sexual minorities by the Democrats and as elimination of life and degradation of society by the Republicans. The pessimistic prediction of the latter, that *God will judge America* over these ‘gluttonous’ issues, is easily overturned by the Democrat partisans. The enumeration of dark pages of the US history and impunity of Americans for their previous deeds is finished with the ironical conclusion *But now God will judge America over abortion and gay marriage*. With a literal *OK...got it*, the author pretends to understand the logic of Republicans. The implicit meaning is the direct opposite of what is actually being said and thereby produces a comic effect.

Irony can also be created with the help of visual means. An emphatic effect is created in the two posts below:

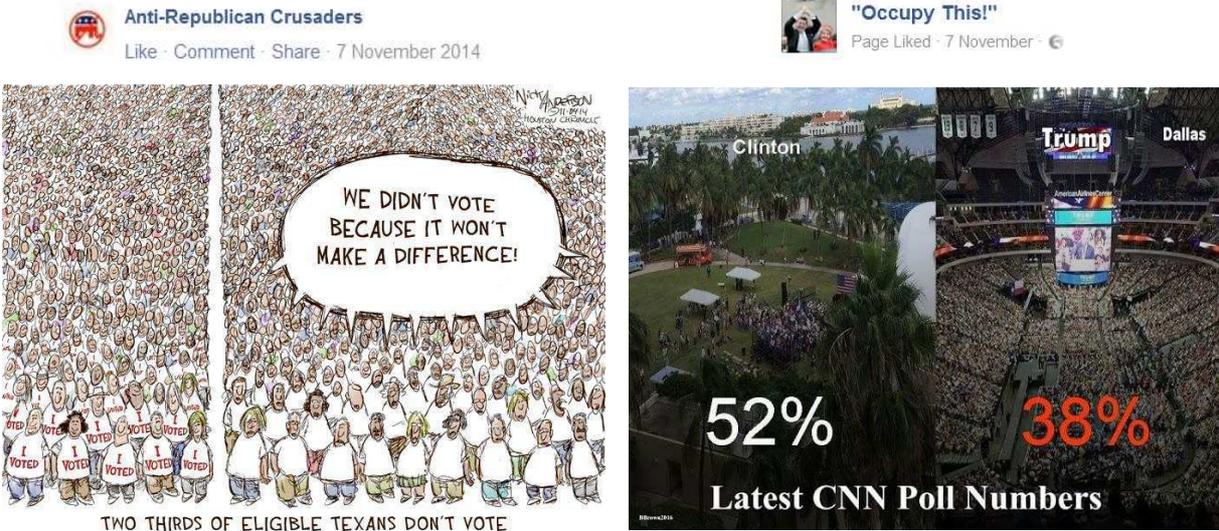


Figure 80. Irony based on contradiction of verbal and visual arguments

It shows a contrast between a verbal statement and a visual argument that suggests the opposite. In the first post, the declaration that one does not vote because his/her voice will not make a difference contradicts the vivid contrast that the image expresses. The second meme reveals the irony of a situation by showing the contrast between what is announced in the media and what the reality is. Similar to humour, irony requires wit and sensibility on the part of the humourist who manifests his/her criticism in a rather subtle way.

7. Sarcasm

Biting irony grows into sarcasm, i.e. “a sharp or cutting expression or remark; a bitter gibe or taunt” (OED). Criticism in the form of sarcasm is generally aimed at general social vice rather than particular features underlining the complete rejection of the phenomenon. It gives a negative depreciative evaluation and expresses it in the form of wicked scorn. In contrast to irony, the sarcastic double sense is more transparent and the implied meaning is more obvious and vivid.



Figure 81. Sarcasm built on allusions to past events

The target of both memes above (Figure 81) is the immigration problem in the United States and hostility of certain groups of the population towards refugees. The first meme illustrates the sarcastic rhetoric question of a Native American to the statement of white male characters *We want our land back!* The second meme names first Europeans in America as dangerous refugees and furthermore sarcastically blames Obama for failing to stop them. Both memes have two planes that are typical for irony, notably the opposite of what is said and what is implied. Through analogies, the authors give a stinging negative evaluation of the ‘non-acceptance of other’ ideology.

8. Bathos

An important element of carnivalisation of politics online is the unexpected change of styles, the ludicrous descent from the elevated to the commonplace, even vulgar style, known as bathos.

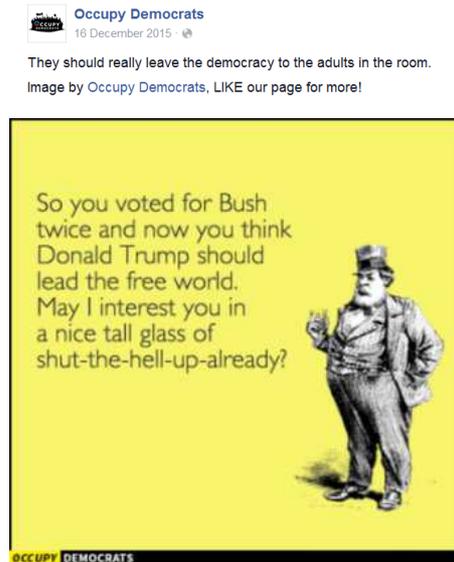


Figure 82. Bathos in an unexpected change of styles

The ludicrous shift from the high style at the beginning of a clause *May I interest you in a nice tall glass of...* to its vulgar end can be observed in the meme above (Figure 82). Such a round-about way of request as *shut-the-hell-up-already* uttered by the seemingly noble gentleman who wears an evening suit produces a comic effect.

A sophisticated flourishing style of writing is adopted in the meme below (Figure 83) where Ann Romney presented as Queen Antoinette (with the playful adaptation of the name by using double *n* – *Anntoinette*).

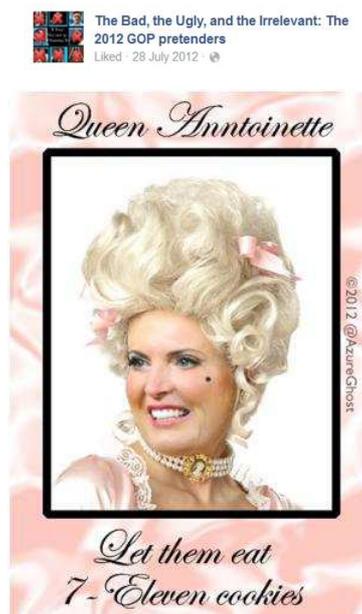


Figure 83. Bathos in marriage of rich royal Rococo style with low price 7-Eleven shop

Calligraphy with fine whorls and ringlets, just like her hair, against a tender pink background creates the image of high royalty and aristocracy. Nevertheless, the combination with the striking and unrealistic proposal *Let them eat 7-Eleven cookies* damages the refined image of Queen Romney and brings her down to earth. Incompatibility between the eighteenth-century Rococo style choice with the modern 7-Eleven chain of convenience stores creates the comic effect. Yet, the outward beauty and tenderness are in sharp contrast with the cruelty of character of the represented Ann Romney. Bathos is therefore revealed in *what* is said with *how* it is being said.

9. Satire

‘Militant’ irony and sarcasm become satire. The term comes from the Latin expression *lanx satura*, i.e. a miscellany, medley dish full of various kinds of fruits brought to the Roman goddess of agriculture and fertility Ceres (Lukov & Fedotov 2013). In the context of presidential elections in the twenty-first century, the idol of satire is an ideal politician who could occupy the presidential chair. Satire adopts a critical stance towards its target with the goal of censuring the folly of inapt candidates. An ideal President is depicted as an anti-ideal where satire does not miss a chance to demonstrate the blatantly ridiculous absence of ideal in its target. Therefore, the satire’s aim is not a separate feature but the whole essence of a candidate. Highly polemical, satire contentiously attacks the imperfect runner with the hope of dissuading potential voters. The distortion of reality is achieved through condemnation and extreme deformation of the candidate’s characteristics. In contrast to milder forms of laughter (humour perceives all in positive gay tones, irony combines positive on the surface and inner negative lines), satire colours both visible and implied grounds in dark colours. Satire is distinctive for its overt engagement: The author of satirising memes does not even try to veil his/her contemptuous attitude and aggression but ruthlessly punishes the victim if the latter deviates from the ideal representation. Due to its crudity and complete denial of the object, it is often called dark, cold humour, or destructive laughter. From all forms of comic forms, satire is different due to its active, resolute character, determination and readiness to fight with the depicted object.

For instance, the following meme (Figure 84) adopts a dark humorous tone when depicting the German *Führer* with his notorious arm raised and attributing the fictional inquiry *Has anyone seen Donald? Donald is about this tall*. In doing so, the iconotext silently attributes

the characteristics of the Nazi to the Republican candidate and in doing that shows strong criticism of the latter.



Figure 84. Dark humour in the reinterpretation of the Nazi salute gesture

The etymology of saturation reflects the structure of this comic form well. In order to support its moral idol, satire borrows from a mix of genre means and rhetorical devices. Such imitation forms as parody, burlesque, travesty, pastiche are all frequently used in satirical depictions. In addition, satire resorts to disadvantageous frozen motions, overt caricature exaggerations, analogy through metaphors and similes, motives of insanity and spooky images of the grotesque.

10. Analogy

Some features can evoke certain associations in people’s minds and result in visual similes and metaphors.



Figure 85. Metaphor and simile

Metaphor represents target and source fused in an integrated whole (Donald *is* a corn) whereas simile depicts both target and source as two juxtaposed objects (Donald *is like* a corn).

Sometimes an analogy can be made through presenting an object which resembles a politician. Verbal information in this case is used for quick identification:



Figure 86. Analogy in iconic representation

11. Antithesis

A humorous effect can be achieved through deliberate contrast of ideas or people through opposition of clauses or images which are strongly contrasted with each other through antithesis.

The following meme (Figure 87) shows a visual contrast between Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Parallelism in their actions – both riding animals in nature – is used in order to emphasise the striking difference in their representations. The Russian leader is presented as a strong, fearless bear rider, the tamer of a wild animal. His courage is emphasised by his bareness and non-protection. These characteristics are sharply accentuated with those of the American equestrian, i.e. slimmer, with a helmet and glasses, Barack Obama is riding an obedient cartoon pony. The contrast is highlighted by differences in setting, notably real nature landscape with Putin against prevailing colourful childish tones with Obama. This visual antithesis makes the audience better understand the difference of policy in

the international arena. It implies the Republicans' criticism of Obama's office for failing to undertake a steady and strong position when representing America in a range of conflicts in the Middle East.

"Occupy This!" added a new photo.
8 January · 🌐

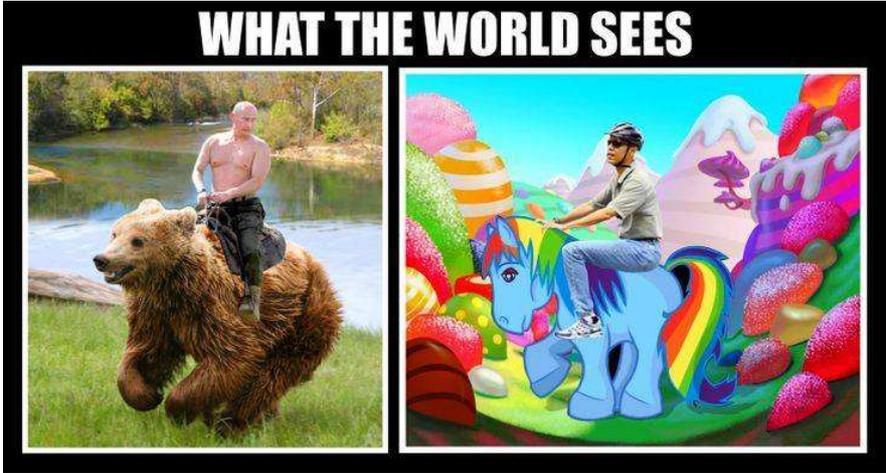


Figure 87. Antithesis in the representation of the Russian and American leaders

Antithesis or contradiction is the technique of building heavy criticism, as in the example below (Figure 88) where two types of contrasts can be observed. On the one hand, there is a contradiction within the same semiotic system, i.e. the clash between two iconic images, notably flabby, obese Donald Trump and the athlete type of constitution of the first President of the United States in the background. On the other hand, a comic effect is created through the conflict of verbal information, i.e. *Donald's doctor claims "Trump will be the healthiest individual ever elected to the presidency"* with an ill-looking representation of Trump.



Figure 88. Antithesis in the corporal representation of Trump and Washington

12. Hyperbole

From Greek ‘exaggeration’, hyperbole creates the comic effect with a strong impression, i.e. through bringing obvious exaggerations of politicians’ qualities to audiences, which are certainly not intended to be understood literally. For example, Bernie Sanders’ actual age at the moment of the 2016 elections is 75 and not 130 as the meme below suggests (Figure 89). Such a deliberate hyperbole is used to disprove the Democrat candidate’s suitability for the presidential chair. Likewise, another meme questions the age of the politician as a cause of his political inaptitude through referring to Caligula’s horse: Since he is so old, he lost to Incitatus, a folly of the Roman Emperor to imagine that his favourite horse can perform a senator’s duties.



Figure 89. Hyperbole based on exaggeration of Bernie Sanders’ age

Similarly, an obvious hyperbole is encrypted in the pseudo-slogan *Hillary 2020 for President* above the picture of an elderly woman representing Mrs Clinton (Figure 90). The exaggeration mocks the everlasting determination of the Democrat to occupy the presidential chair since the 2008 election.



Figure 90. Amplification of Hillary Clinton’s balloting attempts

In line with this, the two memes below (Figure 91) use Hillary Clinton’s abrupt exit from the 9/11 Memorial Day ceremony when she was helped into a van by her agents as a source of extensive exaggeration. Since this case took place on the eve of the first debates, numerous memes depicted the Democrat candidate lying in hospital receiving heavy treatment. Hyperbole shows criticism and doubt of Mrs Clinton’s ability to lead the country for health reasons.



Figure 91. Overstatement of Hillary Clinton’s health condition

13. Litotes

Contrary to hyperbole, litotes employs understatement through negation of someone’s qualities. From Greek “simple”, “plain”, “small”, “meagre”, this device is based on oversimplification and underestimation (OED).

Anti-Republican Crusaders added a new photo.
16 November 2015 ·



Figure 92. Emphatic diminishment of Carly Fiorina’s physical appearance

An insulting caption with repetition of litotes is illustrated in the meme above (Figure 92) that shows Carly Fiorina. The excessive repetition of attributes with ‘small’ semantics, i.e. *then the little fetus, you can see its little heart beating, crawled toward the camera with its little tiny lips* – emphatically diminishes the Republican candidate.

14. Caricature

Combining hyperbole and litotes, caricature is widely used in social media. The ludicrous representations of persons or things by exaggeration of their most characteristic and striking features is *caricature*. From Italian *caricare*, i.e. to charge or load, this technique extends a person’s unusual individual feature and oversimplifies others. The deviations from an existing fashion, habitual language, logical norms, accepted notions, traditions, rules of common courtesy and, finally, striking features of a person’s appearance, can all be reasons for caricature laughter. It must be stressed that comic disharmonic elements in politics are perceived differently to those in our social life. We are tolerant and sympathetic to imperfections of people we know. In contrast, behind laughter about inadequacies of politicians, there will be veritable doubt regarding their abilities to govern the country (Gavrilov & Kiselev 2004). The long nose of Fiorina, the big ears of Obama and the dishevelled hair of Trump give food for grass-root level partisans to mock politicians and relate these natural imperfections with the failure to be a reliable leader.

Hillary Clinton criticised by Bernie Sanders for being supported by Wall Street Investors and Super Pac is depicted with a striking mark that left from her sunglasses (Figure 93).

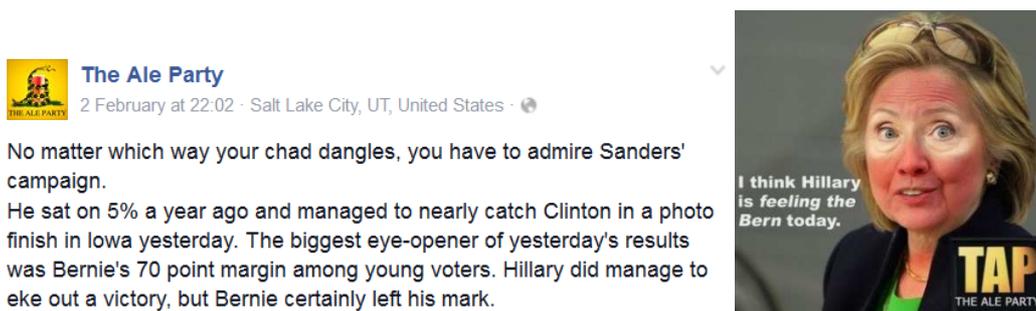


Figure 93. Caricature of Hillary Clinton’s complexion

This exaggeration achieved through the interplay of colours, suggests that she spends her pastime in the sun, either on the beach or in a skiing resort, on the one hand. The caricature of the candidate implies a life of high standard that does not necessarily represent all Democrats. On the other hand, it is the symbolic representation of an eye-opener in facing reality, i.e.

young voters support Senator Sanders. Chromatic play is reinforced with a verbal pun: The paraphrase of ‘feel the burn’ after the sun echoes with Bernie Sanders’ popular slogan “Feel the Bern”, which is what Hillary Clinton is supposed to feel when discovering how popular he is among younger voters.

The loaded portrait of Obama where the viewer’s attention is attracted by Obama’s unnaturally big ears is a vivid example of caricature (Figure 94). The reader stops to perceive the politician in a serious way, as well as his theories concerning terrorism, and adopts a mocking attitude instead.



Figure 94. Caricature of Barack Obama’s ears

Finally, Donald Trump’s hair gives rise to a great number of crude caricatures that circulate in the net. The caricature below (Figure 95) proposes a jocular hypothesis: If a rich politician armed with hairdressers and stylists cannot manage his hair, how can he be trusted to fight against terrorism?

 **The Ale Party**
17 June 2015 · 🌐

“I would hit them so hard” Trump said. “I would find you a proper general, I would find the Patton or MacArthur. I would hit them so hard your head would spin.”
Money may not buy you happiness, but evidently you can purchase delusion.

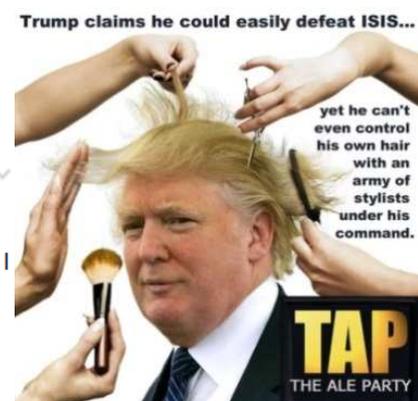


Figure 95. Caricature of Donald Trump’s hairstyle

Caricaturising Trump’s hair has become so popular that it acquired an iconic status and is easily recognised by many netizens even in the most schematised version, like the meme below (Figure 96) shows:



Figure 96. Caricature of Donald Trump’s hair

The rotation of Obama’s logo, the sun rising over rolling hills, and a colour change into golden yellow suggests the wispy golden mane of Donald Trump. The purpose of this caricature is not only to mock his appearance, but also to underline the narcissistic nature of the candidate.

These are examples of portraits in which the characteristic features of the original are exaggerated with ludicrous effects. Caricature can grow into a grotesque when the person’s striking feature starts to have a life of its own, which is metamorphosed into a fantastic creature. To illustrate this, the hair of Donald Trump is animalised into an elephant who is struggling to detach from Trump’s head, i.e. the symbol of Republican candidates who reject Donald Trump because of his sharp criticism and misrepresentation of the party’s fundamental values (Figure 97).

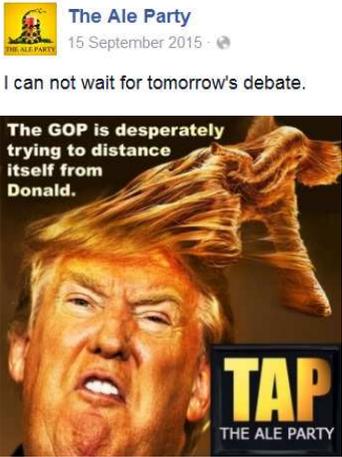


Figure 97. Donald Trump’s hair overloaded with the symbolic Republican elephant

Consequently, comic contents of the caricature show a deviation of qualities from the norm of a specific politician. It is a portrait where an artist deliberately creates the comic effect through the combination of real and unreal, exaggeration, the accentuation of people's specific features, changing their proportions and modifying their relations with the world.

It must be noted that caricature quite often shifts easily into hyperbole or other visual tropes. The meme below (Figure 98) illustrates the fusion of comic techniques based on exaggeration.



Figure 98. Mix of caricature, hyperbole and metaphor

The revelations of Trump's fiscal affairs are presented as the tip of the iceberg represented as his fringe, i.e. a caricature of the candidate's hair. The enormous size of the fringe makes the Titanic look tiny and miserable in comparison to it. This obvious hyperbole is extended with the massive face of Donald Trump hidden under water. The whole composition of the meme presents a metaphor which visualises the expression 'the tip of the iceberg' in a unique way.

5.5.3 Politicians' grotesque replicas in a parallel world

The highest level of distortion, the most unnatural combinations, fantastically extravagant, and bizarre illustrations of politicians are achieved through the use of grotesque. The creation of grotesque images when discussing political events is perhaps the most vivid example of carnivalisation of politics. The grotesque liberates people from fears and intimidation

campaigns and offers ludicrously quaint creatures in the carnival world in return. These are representations of politicians that are in part human and in part animal, mocking transformations into magicians, clowns, buffoons, merry-andrews, vampires and the walking dead.

The grotesque satire is a denial, an exaggeration of undue, of what should not take place. The grotesque, in contrast to caricature, exaggerates to such an extent that it goes far beyond the level of real and becomes fantastic (Schneegans *Geschichte der grotesken Satyre* in Bakhtin 1990). Bakhtin argues that the grotesque image demonstrates the phenomenon in a state of its change, an unfinished metamorphose, this is why they are controversial, ugly, monstrous and malformed. Aristotle in his *Poetics* claims that the base of the comic is ugliness, physical or ethic (Bakhtin 1990). It is a mistake, deformation, miscreation like a funny mask. Ugly, horrible and humorous beginnings are closely tied according to the Greek philosopher.

The true depiction of grotesque images was opened during the primaries in 2016 (Figure 99).



Figure 99. Grotesque animated images replicating the presidential runners during the 2016 primaries

The fragmentation of the Republican Party and a lot of candidates immediately had a response from the FB group *Anti-Republican Crusaders* and its followers. Their memes illustrate a group of politicians that ride a shopping cart at breakneck speed toward the presidential chair, that arrive for caucuses in an enormous five-deck bus, that share a cup of tea in the wonderland of elections, and that rush at a dead run from the debates. In such playful representations, we can feel the exceptional freedom and flexibility of the fantasy of FB users.



Figure 100. Replication of politicians by images of clowns

Internet memes depicting clowns were widespread on social media during the presidential campaigns. The cursorial observation of internet memes (Figure 100) shows us politicians featured with distinctive makeup who wear all sorts of outlandish comedy costumes and colourful wigs. Many clowns are associated with the circus and the entertainment of large audiences. Therefore, a politician presented in the role of a clown-fool is shown to perform ridiculous clumsy actions and causes laughter. The reference to an evil red clown, a Bozo-derived character, is also typical for the American culture where this archetype is associated with transgressive anti-social behaviour and elicits a feeling of fear and eeriness. Yet, it is essential to add that during carnival times, clowns' presence had another function. Buffoons and stupid fellows were constant participants of ceremonies who in a parody-like manner doubled different moments of public life:

This double aspect of the world and of human life existed even at the earliest stages of cultural development. In the folklore of primitive peoples, coupled with the cults which were serious in tone and organization were other, comic cults which laughed and scoffed at the deity (“ritual laughter”); coupled with serious myths were comic and abusive ones; coupled with heroes were their parodies and doublets.

Bakhtin (1990, translated by Iswolsky 1984: 6)

In the carnival of present-day politics, clowns and fools that clone politicians can still be found on social media. Wherever politicians make their appearance in the public, they are doubled online in the form of eccentric clowns. Just like a medieval clown, the contemporary clown-politician transfers a high gesture to the earthy sphere. They degrade, materialise and bring leaders from the top of the hierarchy to its bottom.

Similar grotesquely mocking representations of politics observed on FB are ‘politics is a big party’, ‘politics is a farce’ and others:

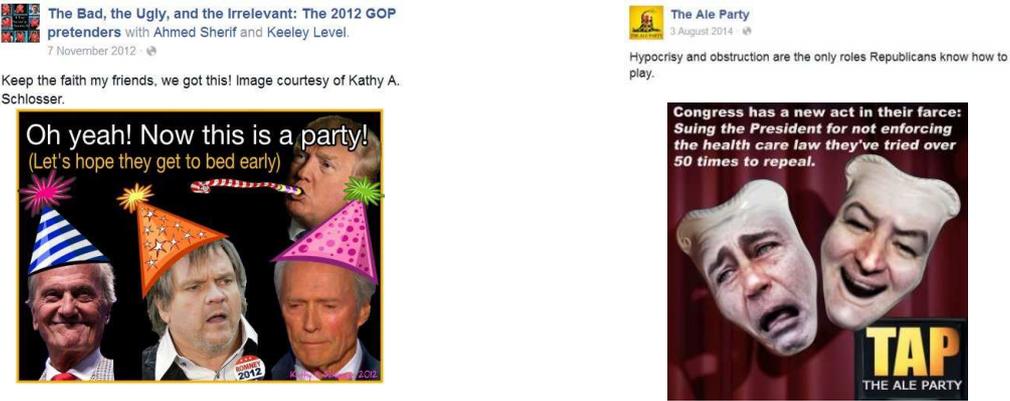


Figure 101. Politics presented as a party and a farce

Besides the entertainment theme, Halloween with its monstrosities is a popular motive in pre-election discourse online. Candidates are compared to monsters like the memes below illustrate (Figure 102). The similarities in captures (the same dimension, focus on a head, similar face expressions or a hair style) bring the viewer to establish analogies between the images. These parallels become a base for the transmission of qualities of fantastic creatures to politicians.



Figure 102. Juxtaposition of politicians with monsters

The portraits of politicians can be blended with imaginary characters through creative editing and by adding necessary attributes to complete the image as illustrated in Figure 103.



Figure 103. Representation of politicians as quaint magical beings

For instance, Bernie Sanders is presented as a magician via integration of a picture of his face into a wizard's costume, adding a fairy wand and colouring his name as if a pixie dust. The created image presents the Democrat candidate's promises as unrealistic and utopian. A

collage made of a painting and an inserted photo of Hillary Clinton frames her as a witch who has been brought to trial because of the death of the American ambassador in Libya. The love affair of Bill Clinton with Monica Lewinski cracks the image of the whole family and gives reason for FB users to metamorphose Hillary into an odd terrifying being with huge horns and magical powers.

Comic fusions with such characters as zombies and vampires were widespread in presidential campaigns online. Hash and eccentric representations of politicians are achieved through fantastic combinations (Figure 104). The portrait of Mitt Romney is loaded with dark grey and greenish colours, decaying teeth and blood stains that refer to a living dead or a zombie. Comic distortions of portraits of Mitt Romney (green eyes, pale complexion, an evil look and a firmly closed mouth which is about to show long fangs) and Ted Cruz (with dripping blood from his mouth and two spots on the neck of his victim) imply the image of a vampire.



Figure 104. Images of zombies and vampires as replicators of candidates

The same theme of the world beyond the grave when talking about politics can be created through grotesque parodies. For instance, the big number of Republicans registered as presidential runners are shown as a horde of sub-humans (Figure 105). In contrast to previous

memes, there is not any fusion or modification of politicians' portraits besides their grouping together. Yet, the verbal element *GOP: The walking dead* is vital in labelling them as such.

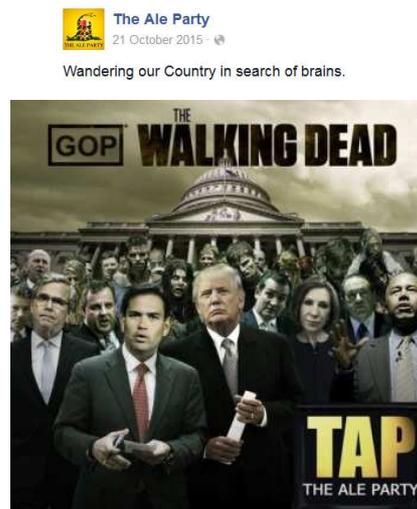


Figure 105. President 2016 runners shown as a horde of sub-humans

In all these examples, politicians are not viewed as strong leaders with robust programs but as politically dead people who stalk their victims. Furthermore, the association of politicians with cadavers, vampires and other creatures with human likeness increases the feeling of revulsion, enmity and distaste for candidates with different ideological platforms.

If one of the popular themes of the carnival online during the 2012 presidential elections was zombie and nether world, a current topic of the 2016 campaign was the jungle with their characters or the zoo. Political opponents created numerous grotesque images of politicians whose faces were merged with wild animals:



Figure 106. Presentation of politicians as half-humans and half-animals

In his essay *Funny, but not vulgar*, George Orwell (1945) wrote the following:

Humour is the debunking of humanity, and nothing is funny except in relation to human beings. Animals, for instance, are only funny because they are caricatures of ourselves. A lump of stone could not of itself be funny; but it can become funny if it hits a human being in the eye, or if it is carved into human likeness.

Orwell (1945)

The association of a politician with a particular animal becomes an allegory with qualities of the chosen species silently cued into the characters of candidates. For instance, Donald Trump represented as orangutan with assigned features which are culturally associated with apes. If in Hinduism a monkey is a sacred animal, in the Christian culture it is viewed as a caricature of a human being, the symbol of peacockery, lust, precipitance, imprudence, light-mindedness, love of fame, avarice and attraction by shiny objects and glittering jewellery. Quaint creatures mixing snakes and faces of Cruz and Pence are also means of redefining their actions. The metamorphosis can symbolise the embodiment of evil inclination in the Western culture.

A free format of carnival unites everything which is normally separated in normal life. Just like Bakhtin's example of a pregnant old woman, the meme below (Figure 107) illustrates a carnivalesque misalliance allowed in a parallel life online. A copied photo shows the Clintons in their youth. An embedded caption ascribed to Bill Clinton, *She doesn't know yet I'm voting for Trump*, would sound absurd in the official political setting, yet it is accepted in a carnival setting.



Figure 107. Carnavalesque misalliance of Bill Clinton's ideological convictions

Grotesque and irrational representations of politicians on FB are also achieved through fantastic fusions of two political figures into one, e.g. Bernie Sanders’ large forehead incorporates Hillary Clinton’s tiny feminine features, Donald Trump’s ‘chevelure’ is attached to Sanders’ face, Barack Obama’s face is buried in Paul Ryan’s hair and beard, and the Clinton couple is merged into one Hillbilly (Figure 108). Such visual stylistics of creating one out of two reflects the abstract notion of coincidence, parallels in views or actions of people. The technique of fusion can however be exploited for different communicative purposes. The first meme calls for the union of supporters – *vote blue no matter who* – since Sanders and Clinton express the same liberal ideology, which is also doubled in the linguistic fusion *Bernary Santon*. In the second, the third and the fourth memes, the politicians of opposite ideologies are however blended with the purpose of showing disappointment and criticism.



Figure 108. Grotesque fusion of two politicians into one

Finally, grotesque visual abnormalities can be created on faces of politicians as a reflection of their inner ‘imperfect’ world. For instance, Mitt Romney’s abrupt reversal of policy known in mass media as ‘flip-flop’ received a series of creative responses on FB in the form of grotesque representations (Figure 109). The double nature of the Republican is depicted literally through doubling his head, his face or his mouth. The degree of explicitness varies from meme to meme, i.e. either two heads or faces produce two radically different speeches presented verbally next to each head and face; or a monstrous head with two open mouths is presented without any verbal support, which gives the reader the freedom of interpretation.



Figure 109. Imaginary doubling of Mitt Romney as response to his changing views

Seredina (2012: 5) presents an interesting point of view when discussing the presence of supernatural elements in the representation of politicians. The researcher claims that if we resort to the etymology of the word ‘supernatural’, i.e. the Latin prefix *super*, meaning above, belongs to the realm that transcends the nature, of course as that of magical or ghostly beings. Yet it also refers to something occult, beyond our understanding, or a longing for high-flown ideals of which political reality is deprived.

Therefore, the grotesque creates, on the one hand, amorphous and horrifying representations, but on the other hand, they are comic and buffoonish. Ludicrous from incongruity and fantastically absurd images of politicians show not only a playful attitude of users towards serious politics but also heavy criticism. Framing politicians as human replicas with various physical distortions and deviations from the norm is aimed at eliciting a repulsive feeling, a sentiment of hideousness and unease in the audience. At the same time, clowns and comic monsters are the heralds of another unofficial truth in the world of politics. The political grotesque in its electronic form is the rhetorical non-laughing laughter with an accent on destructive and pessimistic scenarios and the inability to comprehend what is going on in an official political scene. Though mocking in such an exaggerated way, people put the focus on an imperfect state of affairs, dispraise politicians, and point at mistakes and deficiencies in their programmes.

5.5.4 Profanations

The carnivalisation of American politics online can be seen in the degradation of anything or anybody considered worthy of reverence or respect. Authorities who are held to be respectful become an object of profanity in social media. From Latin *profanare* – “to desecrate, to render unholy” (*Online Etymology Dictionary*), profanations are used to strip officials of their power and bring them down to earth. Memes become those comic forms which laugh and scoff at American politicians.

The unexpected cognitive encounter of two incongruent elements in the following memes (Figure 110) results in the cheapening or vulgarisation of politics.



Figure 110. Profanation of Ben Carson and Bernie Sanders

The successful neurosurgeon, author of numerous books, former hospital director, and candidate for the Republican nomination, Dr Ben Carson, is immediately deprived of his achievements through defilement of his photo on a pack of *Uncle Ben's rice*. The colour of his skin as well as his first name provide the background for comparison and bold profanation such as *Half Baked Ideas & Theories, Always cooked Up in a Cracked Pot*, with an addition of the free statement like *Crazy every time....* Equal desecration, disrespect and mocking are expressed in integrating Bernie Sanders' photo on an ice-cream cover. The reverential senator, Democrat candidate Sanders is drastically diminished once compared with a *Ben and Jerry's* flavour. Famous for his almost magical promising slogans, Sanders' campaign is compared with ice-cream catchy etiquettes. Modified attributes *Chocked full of nuts and pixie dust, Vermont's Biggest Commie* thumbs-down, dethrone the candidate. Repetition of transformed slogans *Free Healthcare, Free College, Free, Free, Free* show a sceptical attitude of the creators. Furthermore, accompanied by triumphing Satyrs on each side, Bernie Sanders is defeated, cheered and met with derision.

Two more examples below (Figure 111) illustrate the case of profanation.



Figure 111. Profanation of Hillary Clinton

The two pictures are the result of digitalisation when political elements undergo the process of recycling. It means that the photos of Hillary Clinton were firstly reused for anti-campaign purposes in real life. Being cut and pasted in a new context, i.e. a condom cover and toilet paper packaging, shows citizens' carnivalesque attempt to regenerate what is 'imperfect', in their opinion, through turning it upside down – what is high becomes low. Secondly, these objects are digitalised and go viral around the web.

The celebration of the earthy and body-based is equally felt in the two memes below (Figure 112). Posted by the *Anti Hillary 2016* and *Formidable Republican Opposition*, they promote political ideology through commercials which are proposed to Americans during the 2016 presidential campaign.



Figure 112. Profanation of candidates through meal ads

The first meme *Hillary Meal Deal* pictorially shows a bowl filled with food. The image is supported by verbal characteristics that enumerate nutrition constituents and provide a strikingly small price, framing the latter in a yellow star, which is typical for commercial communication. The intertextual line of integration of political discourse is revealed through the picture of the Democrat 2016 nominee on the bowl, her name and initials HRC which stand for Hillary Rodham Clinton. Its real aim is not to inform the reader and make him/her buy the product but to criticise the source. The switch from food-commercial discourse to political discourse occurs primarily through lexical units. *Thighs*, *breasts* and *wings* are not perceived as negative in the culinary context. However, harmful connotations that attack both Mrs Clinton's appearance (through attributes *fat thighs* and *small breast*) and her ideology (left wing views) appear through the comprehension of the concepts within human anatomy and political domains.

The second recipe-ad *Trump sandwich* is an example of a recycled digitalised phenomenon which presents a board menu with the description of a special sandwich. Its primary visual characteristics help to establish the scene where a FB user is metamorphosed into a street

passer-by who stops in front of an appealing ad of a sandwich that calls him to buy it. Verbal information supporting the image provides an enumeration of the ingredients. Nothing looks biased and incongruous if one witnesses common food constituents of a sandwich that is made of *white bread, full of baloney with Russian dressing and a small pickle*. One tiny element which breaks the viewer's expectation, redirecting his/her to a completely different domain is the lexical unit *Trump*. In the word combination *Trump sandwich* the politician's personal name is transformed into an attribute. The marriage of these two lexical units triggers the whole mechanism of sense-making which moves between politics and food advertising. In this new combination, the adjective *white* is interpreted as a supporter of the white population; the sense of the word *baloney* shifts from sausage or minced meat sauce to its second meaning, i.e. deceptive talk and nonsense; *Russian dressing* blending vegetables with mayonnaise is re-interpreted as Putin's support of Trump; finally, characteristic of sandwiches, salty acid *pickle* cucumber topping becomes a taboo lexicon. Like the recipe for the *Hillary Meal Deal*, the *Trump sandwich* meme bitterly attacks the Republican candidate's ideology and appearance.

Both memes borrow the form of commercials for the profanation of political leaders, showing their debasement, lowering their status through drawing parallels between politicians' personalities and food.

To sum up, the main principle of carnivalesque profanations is degradation, the desecration of all that is presented to be spiritual and ideal to the material level, relating political realities to food, human anatomy and taboo sphere.

5.5.5 Foul language

A form of grotesque degradation in political internet memes is foul language. Breaking taboo by using abuses in internet memes is a "vague memory of past carnival liberties and carnival truth" (Bakhtin 1990, translated by Iswolsky 1984: 17), which is still slumbering in social media. We can find all types of curses, oaths, swearing which have the function of lowering all that is high, ideal and abstract, bringing it down to earth, materialising it, and turning it into flesh. In the past, foul language was not a meaningless and alien communication as it is today. Certain things could be said with swearing since it had a magical, spelling or regenerating function: People who cursed sent the subject "to the absolute bodily lower

stratum, to the zone of the genital organs, the bodily grave, in order to be destroyed” (Bakhtin 1990, translated by Iswolsky 1984: 17) and revived afterwards. In the web 2.0 culture, this positive regenerating role of foul language is almost completely isolated and lost. It is reduced to bare denial, criticism, and often insult.

The concept of the body in the following meme (Figure 113) is inherited from carnivalesque medieval times in the meme below. The *Share this if you can find the asshole* meme shows images of politicians fixed in disadvantageous positions with ridiculous expressions on their faces. However, it cuts all links with earthy images and foul language which had the purpose of renewal. The meme expresses much criticism and disapproval of people presented in it.



Figure 113. Criticism and disapproval through the use of foul language

The second example (Figure 114) integrates abuses denoting defecation that also once belonged to the popular-festive travesties of carnival. It is interesting to observe that although it is deprived of an ambivalent meaningful regenerating power of carnival curses, the ludicrous interplay between the sense of words (*free shit* in referring Sanders’ ultra-social views and *bullshit* implying financial support of the candidate’s campaign by Wall Street and a super pack) changes it from present-day alien foul language and brings it closer to a carnivalesque use.

"Occupy This!" added a new photo.
3 February at 14:41 · 🌐



Figure 114. Ludic play with the sense of swearwords

FB thus grew into a reservoir where foul language excluded from official communication can freely circulate. Foul language causes laughter when something high, i.e. a serious affair or an important person is descended, derogated and degraded to something low and feeble (Noukhov 2012: 172).

When viewing such systems of satirical images, people first laugh but then have a serious 'after-taste'. Satire makes people think, it unmercifully punishes politicians, mockingly disclaims their imperfect features in the name of their radical transformation according to its ideal.

5.5.6 The motive of the mask

Talking about politics online in a carnival-like frame leads us to the main attribute of the latter, notably the mask. This complex artefact of human culture also finds its place in the digital carnival, social media interactive sites offer unique possibilities of self-expression such as the acceptance of invented names and changing avatars. In the virtual world, a person puts on a mask which facilitates the process of communication, and thereby minimises psychological barriers and liberates the creative 'I'. Like in the past, carnival used to bring the unlikeliest of people together and thereby allowing familiar and free interactions between people from different ranks and backgrounds. Today's social media platforms are those open marketplaces where free speech is encouraged, transcending a social hierarchy of everyday offline life.

On the other hand, a mask disguises, hides, and holds something back. It renders communication anonymous which heightens the possibility of falsifying information, emotional abounding, irresponsibility of one's words as well as the impunity of participants of communication. According to Ross and Rivers (2017: 3), memes are not often beholden to authorship which means that in anonymous participation, creators of memes "are offered protection for the dissemination of controversial, unpopular, and even offensive messages, with no concern for negative consequences or fear of being held accountable, even if the ideas, claims or statements are not supported by any factual evidence". Therefore, a netizen can demonstrate limitless freedom of speech and action since the risk of disclosure, unmasking and negative evaluation of a person by participants is minimal (Vinogradova 2004).

Konstantineas and Vlachos (2012: 5) put it as follows: "The inability to identify the other leads to the expansion of these behaviours. An anonymous cannot be blamed for anything, for he is not a person recognized by 'real' society. Nevertheless, his humour, his attitude and his actions are existent". Accordingly, anonymity covers individuals, which makes it hard to track down a user who spread obscene content.

Besides various avatars, nicknames, and anonymous communication, the motive of the mask is present in other manifestations. The description of Bakhtin of the medieval carnival corresponds well with today's digital phenomenon.

The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames. It contains the playful element of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and image, characteristic of the most ancient rituals and spectacles. Of course it would be impossible to exhaust the intricate multiform symbolism of the mask. Let us point out that such manifestations as parodies, caricatures, grimaces, eccentric postures, and comic gestures are per se derived from the mask.

Bakhtin (1990, translated by Iswolsky 1984: 39-40)

The modern digital mask retains a lot from its popular carnival nature. As we have previously seen, netizens are able to view masks on 'faces' of politicians and show this vision through sarcastic memes. Therefore, as the Russian scholar rightly claims "even in modern life it is enveloped in a peculiar atmosphere and is seen as a particle of some other world" (Bakhtin 1990, translated by Iswolsky 1984: 40), a mask in the US digital presidential

campaign is a sign of an alternative, parallel world of politics. When a serious mask is dropped on the festive Wall of FB, another truth can be heard “in the form of laughter, foolishness, improprieties, curses, parodies, and travesties (Bakhtin 1990, translated by Iswolsky 1984: 94).

To sum up, all comic forms observed on FB during the 2012/2016 presidential campaigns are filled with the carnival spirit. Even though the original medieval functions of humour were transformed into a contemporary social media context, the general tone of laughter has been preserved and different comic forms can still be considered as “sparks of the carnival bonfire which renews the world” (Bakhtin 1990, translated by Iswolsky 1984: 17). The creators of memes perceive serious political issues with joyful relativity and mock everything that does not correspond to their ideal and the way the things must be. An emotional impact on the addressee rises with the gradation of expressive means from inoffensive humour to a categorical unacceptance of the other in the form of the grotesque. Meme makers resort to an unveiled caricature exaggeration when describing politicians’ outward appearance, clothes, actions, speeches, thoughts, feelings, etc. Breaking natural proportions, creating intended disharmony, putting candidates into awkward situations that reveal their ill-favoured features, absurd replies, their primitive aims and odious means of their achievement – all this causes condemning laughter on the part of the reader (Lukov & Fedotov 2013). These various forms of either mild or severe didacticism declared by an American netizen put pressure on politicians that seek the improvement of moral or physical ugliness, bringing political subjects back to an ideal pole. The carnival web 2.0 laughter in this case aspires for a better world. Satire is the most bitter but the most effective remedy of Dr Laughter: It may seem controversial, but after the action of sometimes shocking, the world is renewed and perceived in a more harmonised state. Consequently, electronic memes during presidential campaigns in the USA are not just means of criticism and fight between ‘us’ and ‘them’, but they are also a mirror of contemporary age, sensitive to all changes in society, immediately reacting to them in the form of a memetic response. Memes are an important non-official source of news and jocular digestion of information about political events, exercise of power and its impact on people’s lives. Carnavalesque internet humour during presidential campaigns in the USA reaches its highest emotional peak with its lessening and discharge after the elections. It can be compared to a firework, a hissing squib which explodes, wrapping all in smoke (Breton 1991: 19).

5.6 The internet meme is a remix

We can think of each pre-existing source as notes on a piano, ready to be played at the touch of one's fingers.

Navas (2016)

The last aspect which is to be highlighted when describing the composition of an internet meme is remixing as a process and the result of creating memes. Remix is the hallmark of an internet meme. It is the specific composition that is deliberately created through the combination in innumerable ways of pre-existing segments, depending on what producers want to express. Navas (2016) claims that remix should be considered as any symbolic language which has its own system of signs made out of “building blocks”, comparable to the use of phonemes to create words and combine words in new statements in order to make a different point in a different argument:

...just like words are the building blocks of a written text, musical notes are the basic building blocks of music, digital material such as videos, still images and texts uploaded to websites, blogs, databases and social media platforms online become the building blocks of contemporary global communication.

Navas (2016)

Words and notes are stored in our long-term memory, which we can activate in the short-term memory when we speak or perform a musical extract. Similarly, digital material is archived in virtual databases and can become available when one is logged in. Manovich (2015: 146) compares cultural units which circulate on the web to Lego-like building blocks. Every block drawn from a cultural box can be reorganised, coupled with other blocks, modified to enable a new coupling, and “any finished cultural object can automatically become a building block for new objects in the same medium”.

The whole contemporary remix culture can be characterised as copying, combining, editing and remaking existing materials to produce a new product (Lessig 2008). The practice of fragmentation of reality by selecting some elements, abstracting them and assembling them in a new way due to smart mobile technologies has become an everyday activity for Generation C. Navas (2018: 246) defines remix as “a binder for the constant recycling and repurposing of material and immaterial things” and remix culture as a creative activity of information exchange made possible by digital technologies. Manovich (2015: 142) describes remix as “a composition that consists of previously existing parts assembled, which is edited to create

particular aesthetic, semantic, and/or bodily effect”. The term ‘remix’ itself has for a long time been associated with music, the practice of extracting bits from audio tracks and sampling them in a new combination. The meaning was later extended to other creative productions and has become an umbrella for innumerable digital creative practices and their products such as mashup videos, macro images, short phrases which travel on the web. Therefore, nowadays, remixing means any re-interpretation made to resonate with different audiences.

Extensive discussions of remix can be found in the works by Lessig (2008), Markham (2013, 2017), Navas (2009, 2016), Shifman (2014a), in *The Routledge Companion to Remix Studies* (2015), and in a more recent complementary volume *Keywords in Remix Studies* (2018) edited by Gallagher, Navas and burrough, which contains many interesting articles dedicated to the phenomenon of remix. Summing up the results of their works, I single out some salient characteristics of remix:

- remix is a symbolic language, a system of semiotic signs used for communication;
- remix presents a form of sense-making, a momentary meaning structure, an interpretation, a response when apprehending the “bombardment of stimuli” (Markham 2013), a constant negotiation of meaning, its dialogic exploration through connection of the familiar with the unfamiliar;
- remix is based on the reconfiguration of pre-existing material for new purposes;
- remix is a temporary assemblage which emerges and changes almost immediately after initial production, it can fade or develop into something else;
- life of a remix is continued through the participation/collaboration of others, it exists if it continues to circulate;
- remix is a core element of creativity, being the result of an ongoing process of regeneration;
- remix is a process and an outcome of this process at the same time;
- remix is a rearrangement of parts which while entertaining the public pursues a certain aim;
- remix processes involve five basic activities, notably playing, borrowing, interrogating, moving, and generating;
- remix elements are sampling, hybridisation, and linkage.

Sampling, hybridisation and linkage are pivotal parts of any remix and it is important to refer to these practices in detail in order to understand how remix functions. To provide more insight, I will take a closer look at the work of Annette Markham, i.e. “Remix as a literacy for future anthropology practice” (2017). Later, I will apply the knowledge concerning different stages of remix when examining creative derivations in Section 5.6.2 *Analysis of the Eastwooding viral and the derived memetic group*.

Sampling is the first stage which involves the selection of cultural units, lifting them out of their original, re-contextualising and recombining them in different ways. When sampling, a remixer addresses previously existing meanings. These prior states of meaning serve as inputs, stimuli for new interpretations in new contexts. As a result of remixing, a new meaning is generated which is not found in previous inputs. This stage is called *hybridisation* which is about how novel and creative things emerge from mixing previously understood elements. Although a product that emerges out of hybridisation is wholly dependent on the previously existing elements, its meaning is unique. The fact that the selected segments are placed in a new situation makes the hybrid compelling and entertaining or can generate strong cultural critics of prior elements. Finally, *linkage* like ‘a loop in a chain’ connects elements from different sources together. The power of remix lies in connecting previously unlinked elements. Linkage is a relation by way of interweaving, comparison or juxtaposition of previously unconnected things. Parallels drawn even on the basis of a tiny detail become a key element of sense-making. A new connection being illustrated through establishing a link can develop into a strong argument in favour or against prior sources which a remixer has cut and recombined. In any case, linkage gives a new perspective, a particular angle of vision of the object in question.

Finally, it is necessary to underline the playful element in the process of remixing when crafting internet memes. Assimilation of information and production of new contents resembles a game. Campanelli (2015: 70) explains that this game of assembling existing knowledge happens through various inter-subjective conversations where information is synthesised, modified by the users and poured back into the stream as new information. The playful spirit of a meme lies in its invitation of other users to modify it and transmit it, comparable to a hot potato game where the player receives an object, tosses it and passes it on. The difference is that, “in remix culture a work is never completed, it functions rather as a relay that is passed to others so that they can contribute to the process with production of new works” (Campanelli 2015: 68).

In view of this, an internet meme can be described as an easily reproducible digital genre form, which is able to infinitely synthesise pre-existing sources with the production of new information. An internet meme with remix as its core feature must be distinguished from the similar concept of a viral.

5.6.1 Internet memes vs virals

In their research published in the article “Online memes, affinities, and cultural production” (2007), Knobel and Lankshear distinguish two types of internet memes based on Dawkins’s fidelity feature or as they call it “replicability”. The first type presents high fidelity static memes which are spread entirely intact whereas the second refers to remixed memes which are replicated via transformation of the original meme vehicle:

Many of the online memes in this study were not passed on entirely “intact” in that the meme “vehicle” was changed, modified, mixed with other referential and expressive resources, and regularly given idiosyncratic spins by participants [...]. While the meme or contagious idea itself remained relatively intact, the “look” of the meme wasn’t always held constant. In many ways, these “mutations” often seemed to help the meme’s fecundity in terms of hooking people into contributing their own version of the meme. A concept like “replicability” therefore needs to include remixing as an important practice associated with a [*sic*] many successful online memes, where remixing includes modifying, bricolaging, splicing, reordering, superimposing, etc., original and other images, sounds, films, music, talk, and so on.

Knobel & Lankshear (2007: 208-209)

Researchers have thus revealed that in contrast to high fidelity memes, remixed memes are not only shared online but are constantly adapted and modified, encouraging users to contribute to its evolution.

Hence, when describing internet memes, it is important to underline the words ‘spread’ and ‘remix’. Back in 1976, Dawkins compared the spread of a meme with the spread of a virus. The term ‘viral communication’ entered scientific literature and was gradually compressed into a nominalised adjective ‘viral’ (Shifman 2014a; Miltner 2018). The border between virals or intact memes and remixed memes is very fuzzy, both terms are often used interchangeably. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the difference between them.

When talking about virality, Hemsley and Mason (2013) describe a word-of-mouth-like mode of diffusion of a specific electronic item that was spread at great speed, bridging multiple networks and resulting in a broad reach of the number of people who are exposed to it. Scientists who study virals primarily put the focus on the process of transmission of the message, ‘life and death’ of electronic units which encapsulate the message, the growth of familiarity, the factors that enhance their effectiveness and decline, as well as the power structures underpinning viral diffusion.

In contrast, internet meme-oriented studies tend to focus on the message itself and its transformation as it travels in virtual space. It is not the way and success of diffusion which interests the researchers but the representation of shared values and beliefs, the creation of semiotic signs, the negotiation and construction of new meanings ascribed to units when their form is modified. The longevity of memes, as opposed to virals, depends on their ability to be adapted and remixed by users (Tay 2014: 48).

Shifman (2014a: 55-56) makes an interesting point when defining a viral as a single cultural unit propagated in many copies without change whereas an internet meme is a collection of texts, an array of derivatives that emerged from the original source. The researcher claims that some virals are born and buried to be virals and others evolve to be memetic, notably if they generate user-created derivatives in the form of remakes, parodies and imitations. In other words, one and the same message can be spread virally and then spawn myriads of transformations.

Another stem of distinction between the two concepts lies in the different approaches by users toward an electronic unit. People are motivated to share virals while they engage creatively with memes. Shifman (2014a: 94) argues that “the features that drive people to share content are not necessarily the same as those that draw them to imitate and remake it”. She distinguishes three groups of factors which influence viral or memetic success, some of which are particular either to virals or memes or applicable to both:

Viral success	Common factors	Memetic success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prestige ▪ Positioning ▪ Strong emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simplicity ▪ Humour ▪ Participation tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Memetic potential ▪ Puzzle/problem

Table 1. Viral and memetic success factors (adapted from Shifman 2014a: 95)

In addition, Knobel and Lankshear (2007: 210) have noted that memetic success depends on the presence of the following components: Elements of humour in its various forms, intertextuality revealed through cross-references to popular culture events, and anomalous juxtapositions.

Thus, the core distinction between virals and memes lies in the accurate replication of the first ones and the transformation and appropriation of the second ones. Viral content is not changed but only shared while remixed content evolves by being passed on to others. Both have to be seen as two ends of a dynamic spectrum (Laineste & Voolaid 2016: 27).

Overall, these studies provide in-depth insight into the distinction between virals and memes. However, the existing research has been mostly restricted to the examination of the ‘life’ and ‘death’ of an internet meme (Knobel & Lankshear 2007) or limited comparisons of derived internet memes with a meme-source (Castaño Díaz 2013; Shifman 2014a; Gal *et al.* 2016). The next section of my study is concerned with the analysis of a particular case which I call Eastwooding in order to show the factors that enhance virality and multiple memetic derivations and to answer the following research sub-question: *How does a viral become a meme through remixing?* The novelty of the approach is found in the explanation of viral and memetic success through the remix theory.

5.6.2 Analysis of the Eastwooding viral and the derived memetic group

In order to illustrate factors that enhance a content’s virality, I turn to a video in which the American actor and director Clint Eastwood gives a speech at the Republican National Convention (RNC) in August 30, 2012. Endorsing Republican nominee Mitt Romney, he improvised a conversation with an imaginary non-friend, constantly addressing an empty chair that represents Barack Obama. Throughout the bit, he paused occasionally to berate the chair, and question an absent Obama. In his pseudo-dialogue, the actor criticised the policy of Obama and promoted Romney.

The video and images of Mr Eastwood on stage immediately grew into virals, sending the web into a frenzy. The rocketing popularity of Eastwood viral can be explained by several factors: (1) The main feature which enhanced sharing was, first of all, the humorous content. Eastwood’s sudden turn to a chair and his improvised dialogue to an invisible Obama is a comic situation. The elements of incongruity, absurdity and unexpectedness of an old man

talking to an empty chair during the official meeting jounced the viewers and cheered them up. This humorous content was particularly sharable as it was surprising. Consequently, a person who shares this video with his/her peers may cater to an intention to make people laugh and to create a positive impression of the sender him/herself. (2) Secondly, a key for virality is the prestige of the person who passes the message: “The more famous the author is, the more likely people are to spread the piece” (Shifman 2014a: 69). A hero of American cinema, the Oscar winner Clint Eastwood supported Mitt Romney, which boosted his campaign. (3) Thirdly, the mock interview of Eastwood was highly sharable due to its package. A familiar genre of dialogue turned out to be a simple and easy-to-digest form for delivering the Republican campaign message. The simplicity was also in the actor’s definition of the problem and his proposed solution: Obama failed to deliver on his promises and it is time for Romney and Ryan to take over. People quickly understood it and spread the message to their peers, assuming that others would decode it easily as well. (4) Fourthly, the positioning of an item can be a pivotal factor in the viral process. Launching the video or Eastwood’s image with a chair to a social networking site such as FB was a well-reflected ‘seeding strategy’ by political activists as they targeted ultra-connected people. (5) Participation, considered by Shifman (2014a) as typically viral-based political campaigns, is important in virality when people are encouraged not only to share an item but to undertake steps related to it. A person who disseminates the video under discussion probably not only tries to entertain his/her mates but to influence their choice during the elections. (6) Finally, people eagerly share content that provokes high-arousal emotions, ranging from ‘a feeling of elevation in the face of something greater than oneself’ to the anxiety and rage. It is closely connected with participation features. That is, having watched the video and having been moved by it, some internet users might want to do something with their sentiments. For instance, on the one hand, Eastwood’s off-script speech generated positive valence responses from Republican advocates and was thus forwarded unchanged. On the other hand, it aroused a high level of anger among the Democrats. It deepened netizens’ sense of involvement to an extent of pushing them to undertake necessary actions to change the situation.

Therefore, an electronic item which generates a creative response ceases to be a viral but evolves into a meme. In this case, instead of sharing, users engage in a more active mode of participation, re-creating and appropriating electronic items. Konstantineas and Vlachos (2012) argue that memes like any cultural item is a result of “a circular process that includes conceiving and disclosing an idea by one person, embracing it, conversing it and finally

republishing it by another person”. This idea of dialogism, of reusing and reposting someone else’s content with an addition of something new is essential to distinguish memes from virals:

Images, text and practically every structural template of a meme is subject to constant merging and reshaping, creating new memes known as spin-offs of their predecessors. Thus, a meme’s structure is not something presumed; its constant reshaping implies a renewal for the meaning the meme carries as well.

Konstantineas & Vlachos (2012: 4)

When talking about memetic success, it is important to distinguish between a single meme and a memetic group. For instance, Segev, Nissenbaum, Stolero and Shifman (2015) highlight the differences between individual meme instances, meme families and the entire memetic network. Instead of depicting the meme as a single cultural unit that has propagated well, the researchers define the phenomenon as *groups* of content units, or as families:

We define internet memes as groups of digital textual units created and distributed by many participants, which are bound together by two forces: (a) a shared quiddity which is specific to each family, constituting its singular essence; and (b) more general qualities of form, content, and stance that draw on the conventions of the “meme culture”.

Segev *et al.* (2015: 418)

So, Segev, Nissenbaum, Stolero and Shifman (2015) argue that each internet-based meme family is bound by a specific *quiddity*, that is, a recurring feature that is unique to each family and constitutes its singular essence. The authors claim that these quiddities “serve both as ‘hooks’ for creators in the generation of new meme instances, and as interpretative cues that help consumers recognize specific instances as part of a specific meme family” (Segev *et al.* 2015: 419). It can be an object, action, specific character, generic character and phrase. The chat of Eastwood with a chair, a video episode from the debates night, is taken as a prototype. Other memes are related, adhered or deviated from this initiating meme stance.

The image with Clint Eastwood (Figure 115) presents a brilliant example of a viral which became part of a group, attracting extensive volumes of memetic user-created responses. A copy of Clint Eastwood standing at a podium looking towards a chair swept across social media and the phenomenon of talking to an empty chair became known as Eastwooding. Let us take a closer look at some knock-offs which flooded FB in order to find out how the

Eastwood viral became part of the memetic group, generating user-created derivatives, and how they are connected with the source and other memes in the memetic complex.

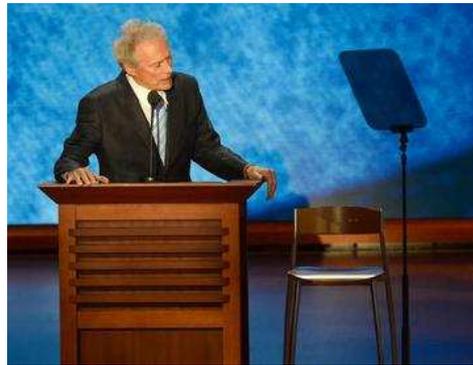


Figure 115. Clint Eastwood at the 2012 Republican National Convention

(Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clint_Eastwood_at_the_2012_Republican_National_Convention#/media/File:Clint_Eastwood_and_Chair.jpg)

As a response to the Eastwood viral image, some of the generated memes conform rather faithfully to the screenshots from the original video with only an inconsiderable number of modifications, while others modify quite freely the authentic source. In any case, all memes of the Eastwooding group found on FB share a common invariant or a quiddity: *A chair*.

Various images give more indices to the reader by presenting a copy of the original photo, i.e. the actor wearing a suit and a tie behind a podium and a chair next to him, and plastering it with cutting captions in the form of comments and quotations. Usually, memes incorporate the words of well-known Americans writers, journalists and media critics whose opinions cannot potentially leave the American public indifferent.



Figure 116. Captions in forms of quotations

To illustrate this, two memes above (Figure 116) show Clint Eastwood as he was in the NRC. Both memes include a text which comments on a picture, one quoting the journalist Jamelle Bouie and another one the comedian Jon Stewart, both appealing to influential American personalities to produce a counter-attack. In these captions, like in most Eastwooding remakes, bitter humour has been used in order to defend Obama and his office. The memes erase the personality of the Oscar-winning director of *Unforgiven* and *Million Dollar Baby*, showing instead an 82-year-old frail-looking man who carries on a kooky dialogue with a chair. This image immediately suggests insanity caused by age.

A similar mood is projected in the meme below (Figure 117) where a witty and entertaining imitation of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* is produced by allusion through the substitution of the noun 'the sea' into *the seat* with an iconic representation of a book.



Figure 117. Caption in a form of a playful allusion to Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea*

The humour is likewise expressed extra-linguistically by showing the face of Jon Stewart on which we can 'read' cues of irony.

The memes described above show original photos of Eastwood and his iconic chair unchanged; but, recontextualised and juxtaposed with a text, they receive new meanings and critical evaluations. The insertion of various elements is especially relevant in the Eastwooding memetic group since the situation of a man talking to an empty chair is absurd in itself. Therefore, it potentially invites internet users to fill in the gaps, to propose what the missing objects might be. Incompleteness thus serves as a hook for further dialogue. The inconsistency of an empty chair bids viewers to propose new characters and create new meanings.

The following group of memes with respect to the same invariant, that is Clint Eastwood behind podium turning to a chair, introduces a new interlocutor who takes the seat. The technique can be called allusion, which works through the addition of elements. The meme below (Figure 118) proposes the seat to George Bush, an ex-Republican President preceding Obama. Eastwood having become an *advocatus diaboli* who defends Obama, evoking the case of Bin Laden finally having been found and killed during Obama's presidency. When George Bush occupies the seat, a speech bubble integrating a newspaper clip with a photo of the Al-Qaida ex-leader creates a more realistic dialogue with a message that is the opposite of the original video: The Democrat President, in contrast to Bush, actually did keep his promise in fighting terrorists and providing a solid security system.



Figure 118. Photomontage with George Bush taking a seat

Another meme (Figure 119) goes even further and places Osama bin Laden himself on the chair, and the actor inquires whether he is better off now than four years ago. Paraphrasing Reagan's campaign slogan, Eastwood although addressing Bin Laden, in reality asks this question to an American citizen. Osama bin Laden with a gunshot wound in his forehead is a laconic pictorial answer to this question.

The Bad, the Ugly, and the Irrelevant: The 2012 GOP pretenders
7 September

Thank you Renee Hudon for sharing this with us!

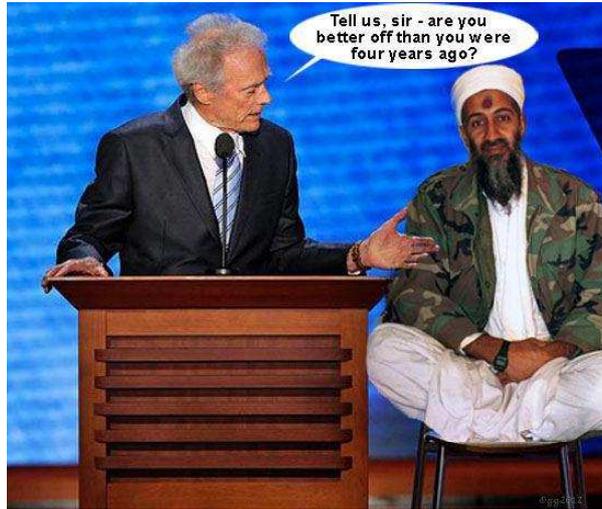


Figure 119. Photomontage with Osama bin Laden taking a seat

Another unrealistic scenario is proposed by the meme which adds the *Sesame Street* Muppet character Kermit the Frog (Figure 120). The meme does not imitate the dialogue like in previous cases but establishes the scene of a musical performance with Clint Eastwood as a listener. The meme might refer to the notorious words of Mitt Romney during the debates night where he mentions his intention to cut funding for *Sesame Street* and the Public Broadcasting Service in general. The deliberate absence of linguistic information in this silent meme however leaves the door open to myriads of other possible interpretations.

Fancy Hollywood Frogs ▶ The Other 98%
Like · Comment · Share · 31 August



Figure 120. Photomontage with the *Sesame Street* character taking a seat

In the meme below (Figure 121), against a familiar blue background, a podium and a chair, new characters have emerged. Eastwood metamorphosed into a diabolic monster questioning an icon of Jesus that is situated on the chair. This surrealistic picture suggests the battle between good and evil where good is associated with Obama and Eastwood personifies the bad force. An even more absurd speech bubble attached to the holy image is now addressing the viewer with the victorious summary of the meme *nailed it!*



Figure 121. Photomontage depicting an icon of Jesus placed on a seat

The group of memes described above provide rather explicit references to the source, i.e. an unchanged setting of the stage, the figure in a dark suit against blue background and the chair. Other memes remaining faithful to the topographic representation can however show more freedom with colours. The example below (Figure 122) presents an imitation of a film poster:

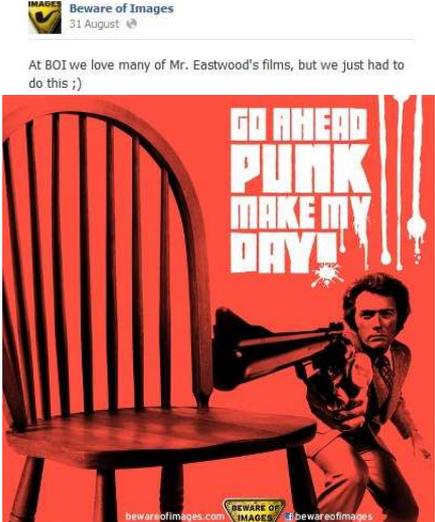


Figure 122. Representation of a fake film poster with a chair

The chromatic palette of this poster meme is reduced to three colours, red, black and white, renouncing the original viral. Likewise, it drastically modifies the scene of action and its elements, i.e. the main invariant, the chair, is put at the foreground and occupies a third of the image; a young Clint Eastwood situated behind it points at someone invisible on the chair. The title on the pseudo-poster refers to the catchphrase “Go ahead, make my day” uttered by the Eastwood character Dirty Harry Callahan from the 1983 film *Sudden Impact*. These are also the words with which Eastwood ends his speech during the NRC. In this frame, Eastwood becomes an antihero and Obama is his victim. By targeting the chair where the American President is supposed to sit, a titan of the tough-guy genre is shown as a ruthless person who crosses all ethical boundaries in pursuit of his own vision of justice.

Even more detached from the original is a situation proposed by the following meme (Figure 123). Clint Eastwood holds a gun and aims it at someone or something outside of the frame. A competent viewer might evoke a scenario of the film *Gran Torino* where Clint Eastwood plays an alienated and angry at the world character. The caption below *Get off my lawn, lawn chair* is a paraphrase of the American idiom ‘You kids, get off my lawn!’, which is believed to be a stereotypical reaction of an elderly wealthy estate owner who reprimands the neighbourhood children who shortcut across his property (respectively a house with lawn). It would be hard to draw a parallel with the original viral, viewing the actor in casual clothes near his car in a garden if the words did not provide more information. The verbal invariant ‘chair’ is the link to the Eastwooding memetic group. On the textual surface, the meme pokes fun at the upper classes, their pride and special attention to their highly valued lawn, whilst on a deeper level, the creators of the iconotext reproach the conservatives for their scornful attitude towards the poor population.

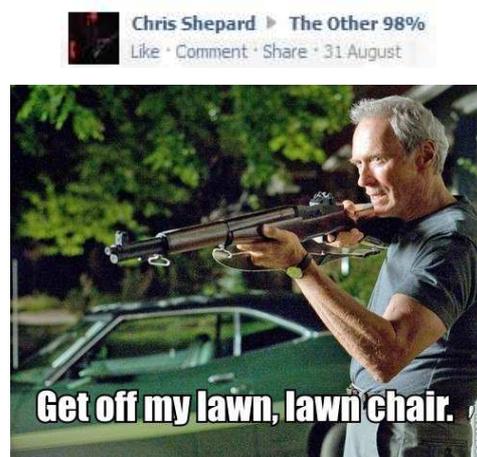


Figure 123. Snapshot from the film *Gran Torino* with Clint Eastwood

Internet users can resort to the practice of re-writing a specific text by other people. The picture of Barack Obama sitting next to an empty chair was, for example, chosen by internet users to repackage the message and propose their own version of the Eastwooding phenomenon (Figure 124). The caption at the bottom of the meme guides the readers in the meaning construction. In this case, the fundraiser and supporter of Mitt Romney, Clint Eastwood, became a victim of mockery with a redistribution of roles.



Figure 124. Barack Obama with an empty chair

Sometimes, people willing to entertain their peers create a puzzle that users may feel inclined to solve or further highlight by creating their own versions of the image.



Figure 125. An empty chair between Barack Obama and Bill Clinton

For example, the meme above (Figure 125) displays an image with Clinton and Obama, with an empty chair between them. In this silent meme, the picture provides even fewer clues than previous memes, which, on the one hand, may challenge the viewer, but on the other hand, gives more liberty for interpretation.

Yet, a representation of politicians and the chair in the centre with a provocative call for captions can inevitably suggest *the* Eastwooding chair to Americans who are familiar with the phenomenon. Thus, the more mysterious the meme is, the more it is advantageous for interpretations as it allows each person to endow it with his/her own preferred meaning (Shifman 2014a: 26).

The same method was used by the Obama campaign which reacted after the Election Day by propagating a photo of the back of the President's chair with Barack Obama's head, along with the caption *This seat's taken* (Figure 126).



Figure 126. Barack Obama on the President chair

Some internet users go further when creating metonymic images of candidates that keep only one invariant from the memetic group. A simple stool represents Obama while the high settle of the King stands for the Republican nominee, as illustrated in Figure 127. Disharmony is created by way of the clear difference between the chairs, notably a modest cheap non-florid stool versus a rich ornate gold armchair. The created dissonance between different ideological values which underlie these metonymic representations can invite people to play with this through creative editing.

Hmm... I wonder which one people will relate more with ;)

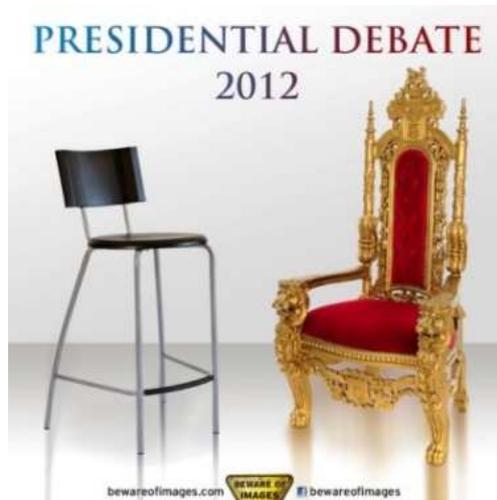


Figure 127. Contrast in metonymic representations of candidates

A similar meme which imitated the longwinded conversation between Eastwood and an imaginary Obama is depicted below (Figure 128). In this case, the blue setting of the NRC is preserved, but the main actors are replaced: The American actress and comedian Betty White takes the place of Eastwood and the original Obama chair is changed into a gorgeous scarlet velvet throne. Even though the caption *Betty interviews Mitt* decisively guides the viewer in the sense-making process, the meme provides enough pictorial clues.

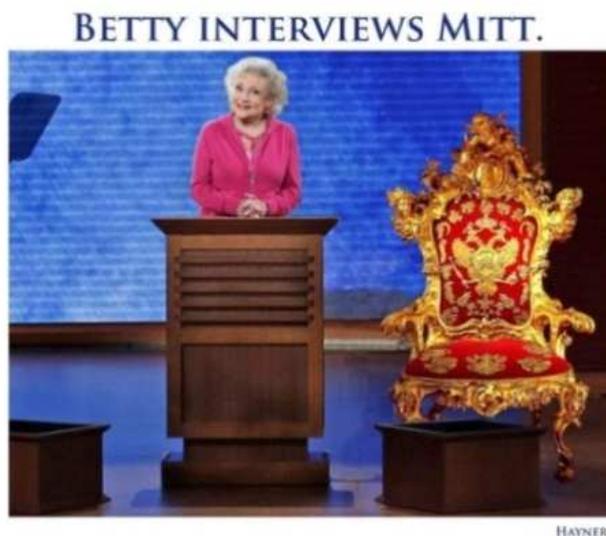


Figure 128. Parody on Eastwood's interview with a chair

FB was eventually ablaze with memes mocking the Oscar-winning director and at the same time coining a new logo for Obama:



Figure 129. Chair representing Barack Obama with new slogans

The two memes above (Figure 129) show an empty chair known in social media as ‘Invisible Obama’. The first one integrates the iconic poster *Hope* and replaces Obama by a chair, while the second one, in the patriotic colours of the American flag, illustrates the famous Eastwood stool which is supported by the solidarity slogan *I’m with* implying ‘with Obama’. Both memes are more abstract than the previous posts depicting the American actor behind the podium therefore they require more background knowledge from the viewer. When borrowing iconotextual aspects from other memes, an electronic unit automatically enters a zone of another memetic group like the Hope chair post illustrates.

Though alluding to the same source, memes can inspire other memes and result in never-ending creative responses. For instance, the meme below (Figure 130) retakes the image of Invisible Obama who viewers were encouraged to believe was sitting on a chair and poses the Republican candidate next to it. Due to the rather explicative caption, the image of the chair suggests an ambivalent meaning: On the one hand, it represents Obama, but on the other hand, it keeps its primary meaning. The Republican candidate is lampooned since a piece of furniture is preferred to be a President rather than him.

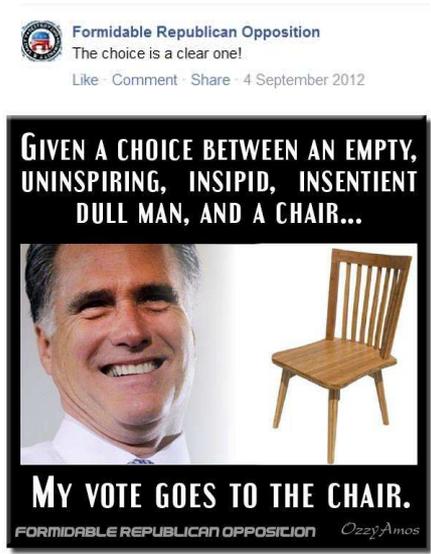


Figure 130. Mitt Romney and Invisible Obama

Finally, the meme can only bring together the semantic units *an old man, talking* and *a chair* when it is immediately linked to the Eastwooding network, even though its graphic layout sends no indexes to evoke the original source. The example below (Figure 131) illustrates this through the imitation of a conversation:



Figure 131. Humorous retake of a ‘chair’ in the imitation of a conversation

This overview of the Eastwooding memetic group illustrated how the same image can be transformed and how numerous new meanings can be generated as a result of these modifications. Schematically, the source with its derivatives can be presented in the following way:

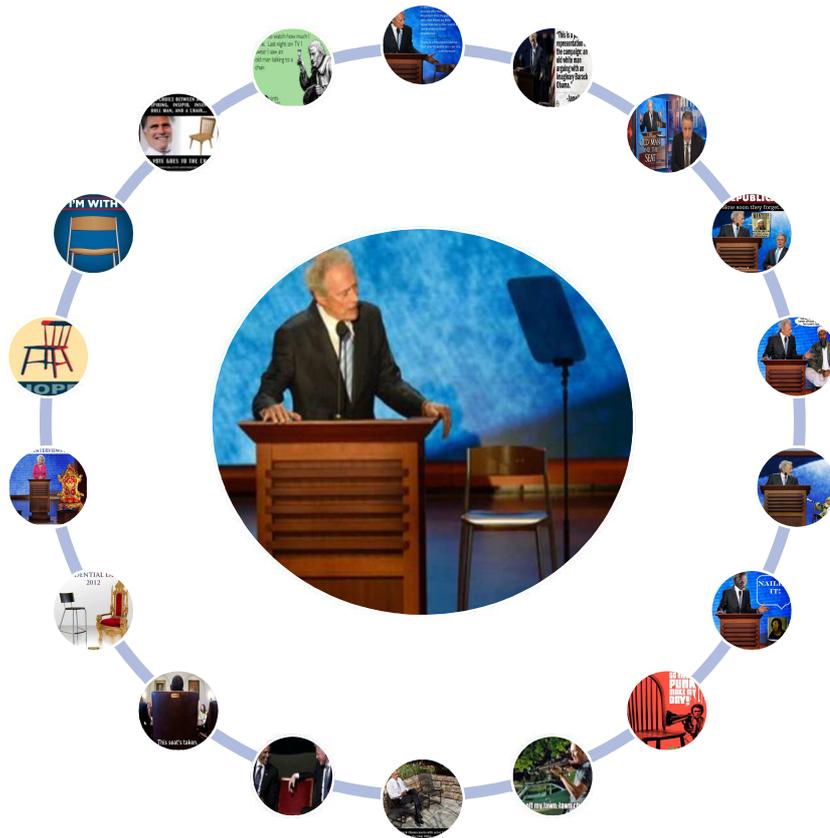


Figure 132. Schema of the Eastwooding memetic group

Though the particular aesthetics of each Eastwooding meme form may differ, a common approach is that every participant makes his/her own contribution by altering some aspects of the meme, while maintaining others, to create a new iteration (Huntington 2016). The source occupies a central position as it is the cradle of inspiration for new memes. Some memes accurately copy the phenomenon they want to share with the public; others employ various means of repackaging, thereby freely manipulating the iconotextual structure. All units in the particular memetic group allude to the same episode, keeping at least one index which links it with other memes with the purpose to be recognised and to pass the encrypted message. The memes are related not only to the original source but to each other too where one meme might encourage the recreation of another.

A meme is just one loop in a dialogic chain of meaning construction. The peers can then respond either by commenting on the meme or by creating another meme inside the same memetic group, thus validating the imitation and giving the go-ahead for further diffusion. Like for a viral, the number of shares and comments indicates the rate of popularity and success of a meme. The act of reproducing the meme creates an invisible bond with the

internet community of Eastwooding ‘re-writers’ as well as the sense of membership in a mysterious brotherhood. In contrast to the viral, the meme is characterised by its evolution, which means “it doesn’t exist unless it morphs through reproduction and dissemination” (Markham 2013: 69). In other words, once the original was distributed, netizens would potentially remix it. The form of the Eastwooding meme has drastically changed over time. The last examples discussed, notably those with the chair, show that the initial meme has morphed into something completely unrecognisable. Only a few elements like an image of a chair and a one-word comment on it, for instance, *Hope*, help to trace the meme back to the starting point. It means that such assemblages with a remote link with the original require a good understanding of the context in order to decrypt the meaning.

The key mechanism which underpins the creation of all Eastwooding memes is a remix. It involves sampling from several sources which means lifting some elements from the original video and combining them with elements from other sources. As a result, the combination presents a hybrid of distinctive ideas that have been created out of an image to which text was added. Linking the dialogue of Clint Eastwood with a chair with a plethora of unconnected objects and characters creates a special relation which might be a comparison or juxtaposition that results in humour. Furthermore, this dialogic process of recontextualisation of elements generates a strong critique of the original source. That is how meme makers are able to make a strong critical point through remix.

To summarise, Eastwooding is an example of how a viral became a meme when it entered a group of texts that allude with different degrees of explicitness to the same source. All observed memes share common qualities which enhance people’s involvement with the content, notably by way of remaking, remixing, or imitating. These active engagement features are the centrality of humour in memetic processes, playfulness, incompleteness, a simple and repetitive story. Firstly, the instances presented above can be assigned to a quirky and biting humour group. As we will see later, humour which addresses political issues is far from being a kind-hearted banter concerning politicians but rather like the sharp edge of a knife pointing at the weak points of the politicians. Secondly, the comic aspect which found its way into the Eastwooding political memes is closely intertwined with playfulness. Humour just like game-playing, claims Shifman (2014a: 79), “is enjoyed for its own sake and involves a multilayered perception of social situations. Comic playfulness may thus lure user creativity by summoning viewers to take part in a game [...] Childish playfulness seems to elicit more playfulness”. Thirdly, textually incomplete, open-ended, flawed, ostensibly unfinished,

unpolished, amateur-looking images with weird, even grotesque creatures, solicit a response from the viewers who are inclined to write in their absence. The lack of the answer and the similarity to a puzzle encourages readers to engage by adding comments, altering captions in order to solve the problem, complete a joke and to spread a meme (Tay 2014: 50). Finally, simplicity and repetitiveness, i.e. two qualities which complement each other, are important attributes for the creation of user-generated versions of the meme. Only an image with a simple message can be edited or remixed, replicated and easily imitated by repetition that enhances memorability. Simple images enable people to emulate them through Photoshop with limited resources and little digital literacy.

5.7 Genre goal or a set of purposes of political internet memes

The statements made by the speaker contain particular information about the world. Every speech genre is aimed at a certain type of modification of the situation in the world and its negotiation with others. The purpose can be viewed on a group level as referring to a computer-mediated group's official *raison d'être* and on a particular genre production level as revealing what individual participants within a group hope to accomplish through any given interaction.

Political internet memes as speech genres fulfil all functions of political discourse, to a different degree, as discussed in the previous chapter. They are centred along three main political axes – to orient, to integrate the supporters, and to fight with the adversary. Nevertheless, political memes are not deprived of functions specific to this particular electronic genre.

1. To attract the viewer's attention in a continuous flux of information

Shifman (2014a: 65) argues that “every day, each one of us is exposed to a mind-blowing amount of information: news and video clips; recipes and funny kittens; quizzes and weather alerts. Sometimes, we read. Mostly, we pass and occasionally, we share: forward, post on our blog, tweet”. An electronic meme often uniting multimodal resources is a relatively short and compact genre form. It turns out to be an effective means of catching a reader's attention in a flow of rapidly changing information popping up on FB. The flashy and original texture of memes increases the chance that the reader notices the meme and reads the message. This

form of visualisation of concepts has a strong likelihood to be noticed in the flow of cyber-information.

2. To inform FB users about major offline political events

For many people, social network platforms are an important source of information. When they log in to check what is going on in the lives of their friends, they are naturally and inevitably exposed to the news of the world. The newsfeeds are from FB users who may have heard of or witnessed actual events and are eager to share those among their relatives and peers. Political memes show that they are up-to-date, topical and critical of politics. They immediately integrate current information from official institutions and play the role of ‘checks and balances’ with regard to the official discourse of power. In contrast to official broadcasting sources, the informal character of communication on social networks helps to get closer to the voters, to be among them.

3. To spread fast and cover the largest possible number of users

It is claimed by some researchers that “today, in an era of information overload and shortened attention spans” people are in need of such forms of communication that can “quickly deliver information and understanding” to target audiences (Smiciklas 2012: 6). The genre of meme proves to be that efficient form of message transmission due to its textual and graphic characteristics. Smiciklas (2012: 7) explains that visual information provided by infographics is effortless, it makes it physically easier for the reader to construct the meaning. Journalist McCandless resumes this idea as follows:

There’s something almost quite magic about visual information. It’s effortless. It literally pours in. If you’re navigating a dense information jungle, coming across a beautiful graphic or lovely data visualization is a relief. It’s like coming across a clearing in the jungle.

McCandless (2010)

Thus, the use of infographics allows the organisation of a large volume of information in a dense form and its quick ‘digestion’. The visualisation of the contents makes it easy to understand. The resort of political activists to the genre of meme in order to bring news to their followers is dictated by its technical advantages. With little expenses, campaigners on FB provide news and interpretations of events in a fast manner. By way of one click, millions of users can be reached at once, thereby covering the largest possible number of users. The

visualisation of the message plays a great and important role for the most rapid and accurate transmission.

4. To express an opinion

When people spread news via social networks online, they often do it by adding their personal attitude, evaluation and comment. This is why the category of information is closely related to modality. The category of modality in internet memes is the result of a user's subjective understanding of offline stories, their interpretation and transformation into a media event. Internet memes are important modes of expression and public discussion. More and more people share their opinions and criticisms with networked peers. A meme which comments on a big event can generate a whole flux of reactions in various forms. Milner (2013, 2016) calls it a polyvocal space where multiple opinions and negotiations of meaning are generated.

5. To criticise in a humorous way

In his/her evaluation of offline or media events, creators of internet memes unite verbal and pictorial images to express the criticism of politicians, their programmes and actions as well as a current state of affairs. The criticism is however shown through various comic forms which soften aggressiveness. Comic, witty and creative memes entertain people and are used as soft power to convince people to vote or not for a particular candidate.

6. To persuade and advocate

Internet memes have proven to be important forms of persuasion and political advocacy. The media scholar Shifman (2014a) demonstrated a persuasive capability of memes along the three main axes. Firstly, the argumentative power of memes is reflected in their extensive use and massive diffusion patterns among family members, friends, colleagues and other individual acquaintances. The personal influence is a crucial aspect of persuasion: Political messages forwarded to people by someone they know are treated more favourably than officially broadcast ads. Secondly, the virality, the number of "Likes" which informs the viewers that many others have found the content interesting, can be very persuasive. Thirdly, as previously observed, the use of images is a powerful tool of influence (Shifman 2014a: 122-123). Out of all of Aristotle's arguments, memes especially make use of pathetic means to appeal to the audience. Images, whether they are designed to bring additional information or double verbal content, are exploited to stir necessary feelings and emotions, to evoke passions among the voters. A pictorial representation can be controlled by the choice of

projected images or the ‘word’ which arms, at first sight, a ‘harmless’ image. This specific genre goal is a part of global aims of pre-electorate discourse that is to convince the public to vote (or not) for this or that candidate.

7. Memes as grassroots action

The compact form, the visualisation of information, the immediate diffusion to the masses as well as the creative potential make an internet meme an attractive genre for political ideology advocacy and the mobilisation of people. The advantage of using any social media in election campaigns is that it allows for uniting people from grassroots level in groups and movements who can put into practice massive multimodal attacks that are aimed at their opponents. Internet memes become a powerful strategy in the hands of Conservative and Democratic FB users. Memes spread on FB can attract more voters and galvanise the latter into action in the most creative and efficient way.

5.8 Discussion

The participants and their ideological values is another generic component which was taken into consideration during the current study. When participants of political communication enter the world wide web, they acquire the status of netizens, digitally literate users that are capable to freely operate with a participation toolkit that webpages provide. The specifics of the FB platform is that it offers the possibility for netizens to act as collective social actors that are grouped around common political interests via creating or subscribing to politically oriented “Like Pages”. In this context, the participation structure is semi-public and many-to-many where individual characteristics of participants are less dominant. When a cyber activist posts a political meme, s/he acts as a citizen, a voter, an advocate of a certain philosophy, i.e. within a niche of an ideological role. Ideological markers of political adherence of a group are revealed in onomastics or the groups’ names, avatars, cover photos and short descriptions of groups’ values which can be free-standing, driven by integration ‘we’ principle or dominated by negative ‘they’ formulation. Any politically oriented FB “Like Page” presents a synthesis of ideological orientation, integration and delegitimation signs that have been brought together in the multimodal layout of the page. The latter is a macro-genre which makes up the immediate context of internet memes.

An important finding concerning internet memes on FB is that politics with its pre-election campaigns is one of the popular topics of discussion and heated debates between participants of several ideological groups. Numerous postings about politics make the FB Wall a *sui generis* tribune from where people can voice their viewpoints. Any member of a FB group can contribute by posting memes to resonate with different audiences. The digitalisation of politics, the creation of collaborative remixes, active rethinking, reframing of political reality as well as the constant exchange of user-generated content – all this forms the web 2.0 participatory culture. Being one of the biggest venues based on propagation of content, FB offers its users a palette of participation toolkits for reacting to newsfeed and sharing it. My choice of FB as the context of analysis of spread internet memes was conditioned by its popularity as a huge ‘regenerative engine’ where information flows, is recycled and regenerated again. The cradle of participatory culture, a veritable scene of war on memes launched by partisan movements during the whole period of pre-election campaigns, FB grew into a powerful alternative to official broadcasting sources. Like other social media platforms, it de-privileges know-all journalism that relies on the constant negotiation of cultural meaning.

The basic matrix of the political meme in a pre-election campaign shows the producer who encrypts a message in the form of an iconotext and destines it to a user with the aim to involve him/her in the negotiation of meaning that is directly or indirectly related to the election of a particular candidate. Having processed the message, a user is expected to respond either by commenting on it or contribute to its further remix. In doing so, the latter becomes a ‘produser’ who unites the qualities of a user and a producer in the collaborative production and interpretation of an internet meme.

By employing a qualitative mode of enquiry, I attempted to illuminate how oppositional groups were actively involved in ideological fights for power through weakening of adversaries by spreading delegitimisation signs (parodies, remakes and knock-offs). Although this study produced results which corroborate the findings of a great deal of previous work in the field of political semiotics and critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk 1995a, 1995b, 2006a,b; Chilton 2004; Sheigal 2005; Ross & Rivers 2017), some new issues have also emerged. For instance, a number of strategies of the ideological fight during the 2012/2016 pre-electoral periods were identified through the semiotic analysis of internet memes which are slogan/logo/portraits parodies, framing, labelling, onomastics and anthroponyms. Parody was based on transformations of already existing free-standing slogans, logos, portraits of

candidates and their parties. Framing is a technique that American activists resorted to in order to highlight some aspects of candidates' policies and deliberately excluding other elements, thus giving a new interpretation to the events. Labelling was exercised by meme creators through identifying social deviation from an adopted standard and evaluating presidential candidates from the position of an ideological difference. A playful manipulation of politicians' names was revealed in onomastics. Finally, anthroponyms were detected as the means of alluding to well-known political leaders via exploiting their surnames or portraits to draw parallels between the actions of these famous historical personalities and presidential candidates. The analysis of signs has shown that through these scripto-visual memetic means American citizens expressed their ideological stance by mocking, criticising and deriding candidates' official and non-official orientation and integration signs.

A humorous stance is another important feature of a political internet meme, as revealed in my study. I have demonstrated how a humorous key tone adds an entertaining touch when bringing serious ideological issues to the FB audience. The study has shown that internet euphoric underground laughter can range from playful light humour to down-to-earth tonality, sometimes attaining a malevolent and violent, provocative and vulgar stance. In any case, political humour is far from being just a trivial and frivolous phenomenon as some scientists believe (Konstantineas & Vlachos 2012; Tay 2014; Lewin-Jones 2015; Laineste & Voolaid 2016); rather, it manifests the entire world view that political activists express online. With the help of Mikhail Bakhtin's (1990) theory of laughter, I have framed political internet memes as a pervasive mass phenomenon, a complex collective world view similar to the medieval carnival. The results of the current study show that in the context of the 2012/2016 presidential elections, the target of internet carnivalesque laughter is authority and power, an overturn of all pretension of perfect, solid and secure policy that politicians promise to American voters. An anecdote, a bitter comment, a ridiculous photo or a photomontage shows netizens' criticisms of reality, which points to its incompleteness, transitional state and to its discrepancy with an ideal representation of those who laugh. Anonymisation of communication within dialogic groups emancipates people in their evaluation of political events, it liberates from imprisonment of cultural canons, reverses places in social hierarchy and gives a feeling of ephemeral freedom. At the same time, when laughing, even through the most audacious internet memes, a 'producer' shows that his/her criticism is not about a conflict situation, but about a game which erases hostility and minimises humiliation of a target. Humour removes emotional tension related to the crucial choice of the future President

and brings a temporary victory over fears throughout presidential campaigns. With the help of humour, 'scary' and 'fearsome' politicians who disseminate the feeling of anxiety in a striated sphere are metamorphosed into 'funny boogeymen' in its alternative smooth virtual space. All internet memes found on FB pages during the US presidential campaigns have proved to be saturated with a carnivalesque tone and a *leitmotif* of power renewal.

During the stylistic analysis of internet memes, I have revealed a whole plethora of various specific devices involved in the creation of comic forms. All of them, whether it is mild humour, lambent wit, gay pun, subtle zeugma, audacious paradox, bitter irony, biting sarcasm, ludicrous bathos, militant satire, jocular frozen motion, unexpected analogy, clashing antithesis, vulgarising profanation, disproving hyperbole, humbling litotes, oversimplifying caricature, show a deviation from what is agreed to be the norm and reveal inadequacy, distort the coherence and 'perfect' nature of pre-existing sources resulting in laughter. Carnivalisation of politics is especially felt in the presence of grotesque quaint clowns, monsters, half animals and half humans that replicate politicians' actions in a parallel virtual world. Other artefacts of carnival liberties can be traced in the foul language which brings everything which is high down to the earth as well as the presence of a mask (an avatar and a nickname) which liberates the user's 'I' from all social norms and barriers. So, even though the carnival web 2.0 laughter has transformed its original medieval functions, it has nevertheless preserved an attitude of joyful relativity toward serious political truths which makes netizens aspire to a better world.

Another objective of the project was to differentiate internet meme genres from virals. The current study showed that in the process of redefining political issues, the practice of creation and diffusion of internet memes occupies a central position. Even though, in reality, these activities present two sides of a coin, a viral is a single cultural unit propagated in many copies without change, whilst an internet meme is part of the collection of texts, an array of derivatives that have emerged from the original source. The definition corroborates the ideas of Segev, Nissenbaum, Stolero and Shifman (2015), who suggested that user-generated derivatives are organised in a memetic group related to an original source through repetition of the same feature, a quiddity, with a different degree of explicitness. Based on the example of the Eastwooding viral, I have observed how a viral evolved to be memetic and generated many user-creative derivatives. When analysing the evolution of the viral into a memetic group, it was interesting to notice that one and the same message can be spread virally and then spawn myriads of transformations, generating new meanings as it travels in virtual space.

When viewing various derivations of the Eastwood meme, we witnessed that an internet meme is composed of small units of cultural information mixed and remixed in different ways. Therefore, another important finding is that a core feature of the internet meme genre is the remix, which echoes with the ideas of Lessig (2008), Navas (2009, 2016, 2018), Borschke (2011), Markham (2013, 2017, 2018), Shifman (2014a), Manovich (2015). The case of the Eastwooding memes illustrated that remix is a specific type of composition deliberately created through selecting some digital segments, abstracting them and assembling them in innumerable ways due to efficient search engines and smart mobile technologies. A new combination is a creative response to political issues in the era of information storms. In the daily bombardment of stimuli, a remixer carefully crafts his/her novel meme via sampling, hybridisation and linkage. The internet meme creation as a remix practice includes a new assemblage of previously existing cultural units, their exploration through the connection of the familiar with the unfamiliar. An internet meme is therefore an innovative interpretation of events which immediately morphs into something else through the further collaborative work of users or fades away. Remix as a means of reproduction is an inventive imitation since a remixer is not engaged in the mere repetition of the original source, but reproduces it with variation, manipulates its structure in a free and flexible way. Consequently, a pivotal characteristic of an internet meme which distinguishes it from a viral is the tension between repetition and difference, the reproduction with deviation from the source, a marriage of continuity and change. Accordingly, an internet meme is always an interpretation, an inventive imitation, the creative response of the remixer who produces it.

I have explained earlier (in Chapter Four) that to fulfill global functions of political discourse, to orient, to integrate the supporters and fight with adversaries, the political internet meme as a particular genre has its own set of goals. As compact multimodal form, it demands little time and efforts from users already overloaded by the constant flux of news. Easy to grasp at once due to the visualisation of information, an internet meme intends to grab the reader's attention and inform the latter about major offline events. An important function of the genre is the quick and accurate delivery of a campaign (off-)message to target audiences and its spread among networked groups. The FB users exploit these genres to express their own understanding of offline stories, to contribute to the negotiation of meaning and to pass it over to other netizens for further remix and regeneration of new senses. An advantage of the genre lies in its open and easily manipulated structure due to technical possibilities that allows users to infinitely reproduce and edit the contents. The extensive use and massive diffusion patterns

among peers and family members raises the persuasive potential of memes. In addition, a political meme does not need to integrate developed sequences of reasoning and chains of arguments since its persuasive power is in visual pathos and ethos based on a relationship to others. All these functional peculiarities make the internet meme an attractive genre for political ideology advocacy and mobilisation of people from a grass-root level. Hence, the popularity of the internet meme as a new genre of political discourse can be explained by a little technical skill needed for a meme's creation, the spread in large quantities, communication of a message within a short period of time and the encouragement of people for further diffusion.

Accordingly, the results of the study show that an internet meme is a comic genre of pre-electoral discourse which has its own specifics determined by a concrete situation of communication, a particular prototypical structure and a dominant key tone. The study determined the largest set of significant features and described an internet meme on the level of genre organisation. In the next chapter, I will show how political internet memes swerve into different discursive directions by borrowing structures from other discourses and genres. In doing so, these flexible types of texts guided by the principle of variation act as replicators of scientific, every-day social, didactic, journalistic, etc. types of knowledge. Therefore, the study will switch from the analysis of the genre and the factors which determine it to the level of concrete text organisation.

CHAPTER SIX

The apparently simple, technical and manipulative process of pruning, remixing and repackaging is made difficult by the fact that, cleverly arranged as memes are, they may always evoke a whole plethora of discursive contexts and codes attached to the copying process.

Pordzik (2017: 6)

6 Remix of discourses and genres

A genre scene although being strongly linked with a certain code of behaviour cannot always explain the functioning of singular and unique texts. Some political memes posted during the US presidential campaigns on FB show a certain partiality for textual forms borrowed from diverse discursive domains. Although preserving their basic ideological matrix, i.e. to identify an ideological position, to reinforce 'us' and to neutralise 'them', these posts are reluctant to textualise the concepts with prototypical image macros, preferring to hide behind other discursive categories. These genres put global discourse and genre frames into the background, reproducing compositional schemas of genres that are conventionally attached to other discourses. In other words, meme producers can violate the norms by introducing their own scene with new roles and prescriptions for participants. The aim of this chapter is to take a close look at interdiscourse, the phenomenon of genre imitation, or typological intertextuality, and to observe a text with a flexible playful carnival structure. I scrutinise the relationship between the profound matrix of political discourse in its pre-electorate variety and manifestations found on the textual surface, and I study how and why borrowed genres which have little in common with political discourse are preferred to an autonomous structure of image macros. Therefore, this chapter is organised around the following research question: *What is the peculiarity of interdiscourse and typological intertextuality as a text-constituting mechanism of political internet memes?*

In my attempt to answer this question, I first sketch the territory of a text within the system of genre and discourse. Then, I demonstrate the fuzziness of its borders, showing its ability to incorporate other texts and discourses into its composition. Provided the fact that every text incorporates several discourses at the same time, I start with the interdiscourse analysis by establishing metaphoric parallels of pre-electoral discourse with other discourses. In doing so, I observe the connection between pre-electoral discourse and other discourses in the existing literature. Then, I attempt to reveal more interdiscursive links through the analysis of internet memes. I try to show that although a political internet meme is a type of pre-electoral communication, in reality it incorporates many features of other discourses. I also pay attention to the fact that crossing different discourses means crossing different ideologies. The study particularly focuses on an intentional borrowing of genre models from different discourses which potentially provide more 'reliable' and thus more convincing ideologies than the one that political discourse can offer. Focusing on the textual mechanism of

integration of various generic patterns, I try to elicit different aspects of this practice from existing research. Ultimately, my objective is to add to studies of typological intertextuality by contributing the current analysis of political memes and their capacity to interweave with other genres through identification of intertextual markers and communicative purposes of such creative borrowings. Finally, I explain how humour is created through clashes between distinct generic frames.

6.1 What is a text?

The sciences of language abound in various definitions of the notion of text, each branch providing its own view and many linguists still trying to agree on a definition of this large and polysemantic word. For the purposes of the present study, it is worth mentioning that, according to Wodak (2008: 6), a text is a specific and unique realisation of discourse. Kress (1985: 27) notes that discourse appears in a text and reveals itself through a text. A text is a linguistic trace of social interactions, a semiotic materialisation of discourse. A text is related to discourse through genre (Kress 1985). Adam (2011a: 33) claims that when there is a text, a verbal or verbal-iconic sequence of utterances, there is always a link of this unit of communication with a genre of discourse. In other words, there are no texts without genres; genre is the link, the converging point of textuality and socio-historic formation. Rastier (1989: 40) expresses the same idea arguing that “un discours s’articule en divers genres, qui correspondent à autant de pratiques sociales différenciées à l’intérieur d’un même champ. Si bien qu’un *genre* est ce qui rattache un *texte* à un discours.” [Discourse is articulated through diverse genres which correspond to many social practices differentiated within the same field. Therefore, it is a *genre* which attaches a text to a discourse (Rastier 1989: 40, translation is mine)]. Bakhtin (1979, translated by McGee 1986) claims that any utterance is a reflection of its relation to a genre, which, in its turn, suits a socio-communicative situation where it is usually produced. He argues that what we hear resonating in a word is an echo of a genre in its totality.

Sanders and Sanders (2006: 598, in *Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics*) observe that originally “the term ‘text’ derives from the Latin verb *texere* ‘to weave’ (hence the resemblance between the words ‘text’ and ‘textile’). But what makes a text a text?” In order to observe different perspectives on language texture, i.e. the nature of the tissue woven into its web, I will briefly observe three main trends in its understanding and interpretation.

For a specialist in semiotics, a text is an encoded and determined sequence of signs with a certain function (Eco 1972; Posner 1991; Lotman 1992; Barthes 1994). Therefore, in semiotics, a text responds to the following minimal criteria: It must be an intentional product of an agent, materially fixed, and functionally oriented. Viewing a text in this large sense, artefacts such as dance, a musical composition, a temple can be regarded as texts. The problem with the approach of viewing any cultural phenomenon as a text is its identification and delimitation (Cherniavskaya 2009: 86).

A narrow definition of a text is proposed in textual linguistics. In this framework, a text is a combination of verbal signs organised by inner principles of cohesion and coherence that is syntactic and semantic connectedness (Sanders & Sanders 2006; Wodak 2008; Adam 2011c). The difficulty with this interpretation of a text is that only a verbal component is considered, with a focus on the inner linguistic laws and organisation. Yet, according to Cherniavskaya (2009: 83), the substance of a text is created of various elements, significantly influencing the perception of the textual whole. This is not only a combination of linguistic signs in the textual tissue, but it also includes graphics, font, visual and colour formatting; in other words, all that is called a textual design. Hence, linguists who deal with genres such as advertising, caricatures, posters along with various multimodal genres of digital discourse cannot ignore non-verbal elements in their analyses and interpretations.

Previously, I have already shown that scientists who work with the above-named genres exploit various labels with an attempt to differentiate a multimodal text from a traditional verbal text. Such terms as ‘hybrid text’, ‘creolised text’, ‘multimodal text’, ‘multimedia text’, ‘scripto-visual text’, ‘iconotext’, ‘kommunikat’ signify the expansion of diverse semiotic systems in linguistic research. In this sense, the text is defined as a complex multi-layered system of signs where verbal, visual and/or audio components are integrated into a communicative whole, a fixed product of discourse. In line with Bardin (1975), Anisimova (1992), Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2001), Cherniavskaya (2009), Kress (2010), Pordzik (2017), I believe that the content of such texts is encoded in different but equally important semiotic signs. Consequently, under *text* I understand a coherent and cohesive multimodal unity, a concrete and unique realisation of discourse through a genre.

6.2 Text as an open system: Intertextuality and interdiscourse

To write a text, according to Derrida (1967, in Wortham *The Derrida Dictionary* 2010: 69), is “to graft”, which involves cutting, marking and inserting alien elements from other texts. Genette calls a text “a palimpsest” written upon other texts which inevitably “bleed” through its semantics (Genette 1982). Riffaterre (1979) names a text an orchestra of superposition of many texts. Barthes (1973) compares a text with a royal beefsteak of Louis XVIII who was known to be a refined gourmand: Just like his favourite dish was prepared by soaking it with juices of other beefsteaks, similarly, a text is filtered through the juice of other texts. The French semiotician also associates a text with an echo chamber which creates a powerful stereophony due to external sounds. This is why Barthes urges researchers to ‘measure’ a text not in a linear system, but in a volume (Ilyin in *Postmodernism, The Dictionary of Terms* 2001). Lotman (1992) presents a text as a “thoughtful device” that generates a plethora of meanings. He underlines that the essence of sense generation does not lie in the unfolding of a text but in its contacts with other texts. All these metaphoric descriptions by semioticians represent a text as an open system of signs.

The question of textual openness is traditionally studied along with the category of intertextuality. The term was introduced by Kristeva in 1967 on the basis of Bakhtin’s conception of “a polyphonic novel” that explained the phenomenon of dialogues of texts and genres in synchronic and diachronic aspects (Samoyault 2010: 9). The Russian thinker claimed that a text, as a cohesive and coherent organisation of signs, is not an autonomous system *hvis clos* as Russian formalists once believed. On the contrary, every text leaves a trail of correspondence with other texts that preceded it or occurred at the same time. Here is Bakhtin’s description:

Всякое конкретное высказывание находит тот предмет, на который оно направлено, всегда уже оговоренным, оцененным. Этот предмет пронизан точками зрения, чужими оценками, мыслями, акцентами. Высказывание входит в эту диалогически напряженную среду чужих слов, вплетается в их сложные взаимоотношения, сливается с одним, отталкивается от других, пересекается с третьими.

Bakhtin (1975: 89-90)

[Every concrete utterance finds the subject, that it is aimed at, already discussed, evaluated. This subject is riddled with points of view, somebody else’s evaluations, thoughts, accents. The utterance enters this dialogically tensed environment of somebody else’s words, intertwines into its

complex relationships, merges with one, pushes off from another, intercrosses with third one (Bakhtin 1975: 89-90, translation is mine).]

It means that every text is closely tied to other texts and exercises a dialogic relation with the statements of other authors. The text, although unique in its nature, is interwoven with somebody else's words. Intertextuality is a particular means of text creation through borrowing elements from earlier texts. To paraphrase this, it is a process of "de-hermetisation" of a textual whole through a particular strategy of reference of one text to other textual systems and their dialogic relation in a plane of contents and form (Cherniavskaya 2009: 177). It is thus a presence, a transposition of one or several texts in a given exemplar and different relations between texts or its fragments.

The theory of correlation between texts is usually associated with two models of intertextuality. A large radical understanding of intertext as a universal feature of a text (any text is intertext) is largely adopted in literary studies and cultural semiotics (Derrida 1967; Kristeva 1967; Barthes 1973; Riffaterre 1979; Genette 1982; Grivel 1982; Smirnov 1985; Lotman 1992; Plekhanova 2011; and others). The principal criticism of the radical conceptualisation of intertextuality is in the absence of a coherent linguistic analysis of concrete texts. Within this paradigm, any even remote relations between texts brought together by similarities of subject matters, narrative lines and ideas are called intertextual. The danger of viewing any text as intertext can result in dissolving the notion of a text itself. The impossibility of analysis of a boundless and limitless text with undifferentiated universal intertextuality can lead to the observation of only abstract relations between texts rather than texts as material realisations of discourse.

The narrow concept of intertext as a specific quality found only in certain clearly stated texts is elaborated on within linguistics (Beaugrande & Dressler 1981; Broich & Pfister 1985; Pfister 1985; Fix 1997, 2000; Adamzik 2004; Cherniavskaya 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009; Holthuis 2004; Petrova 2005; Adam 2006, 2011a; Lugrin 2006; Sachava 2009, 2010; Kazak 2010; Prokofyev 2012, 2013; and others). Adopting a linguistic perspective, in the current study, I reject the idea of absolutisation of intertextuality and present it as a textual category reproduced in a concrete textual exemplar. I will thus regard only a sort of 'privileged' intertextuality, i.e. fixed on a textual surface and immediately accessible to observation. It means that the focus of my analysis are explicit dialogical relations between texts. A text becomes an intertext when we witness obvious and concrete references to its pretexts. Therefore, I talk about intertextuality only in cases when the author *deliberately* thematises

the correlation between texts and makes it transparent for the reader with the help of particular formal means (Cherniavskaya 2007: 17). It means that a text should contain concrete intertextual signals and indicators which motivate a recipient to searching for connectors/links of a given text with other texts.

Consequently, intertextuality is reduced to deliberately and explicitly marked intertextuality, in my understanding. The reduction of the notion helps to avoid an eventual devaluation of the term.

When discussing the question of openness of texts, besides the concept of intertextuality, scientists also talk about interdiscursivity (Sachava 2008; Cherniavskaya 2009: 220-221), which we should differentiate. Both phenomena are closely tied but not interchangeable. A linguist studies intertextuality through the system of its material means and signals. However, texts 'interact' because of the interaction of structures in the human system of knowledge. Researchers like Sachava (2008) and Cherniavskaya (2009) call this level "interdiscursive", which reflects the integration of different code systems and inter-crossings of several spheres of human knowledge and practices. Consequently, intertextuality and interdiscursivity are united in a relationship of concrete – abstract. Typological intertextuality is the concrete textual organisation while interdiscursivity characterises the convergence of various transtextual structures and frames that precede the concrete textual realisation. Being a textual category, typological intertextuality is an explicitly marked dialogue of 'your own' and 'someone else's' texts in the form of references to other genres. Yet, interdiscursivity suggests a switch in the mind of the recipient from one system of knowledge, code and type of thinking to another. It is the relation of meanings, ideas evoked by textual structures.

6.3 Interdiscourse or crossing points with other discourses

Recognising the fact that discourses constantly encounter, overlap and refer to each other in concrete texts, the notion of *interdiscourse* was coined by Pêcheux (1975) and used by scientists (Charaudeau & Maingueneau 2002 in *Dictionnaire d'analyse du discours*; Cherniavskaya 2004, 2009; Adam 2006). The named scholars dealing with interdiscourse were inspired by the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism, which means an interminable chain where any utterance is a response to an antecedent text and at the same time an impulse to forthcoming texts. Recognising a text as an open system, discourse analysts (Kress 1985;

Adam 2006; Wodak 2008; Cherniavskaya 2009; Maingueneau 2014) indicate the importance of studying discourse interactions in one text. For example, Wodak (2008: 17) argues that “discourses and discourse topics *spread* to different fields and discourses. They cross between fields, overlap, refer to each other or are in some other way socio-functionally linked with each other”. Kress (1985: 27) maintains that every text, as a rule, combines several discourses and that we can comprehend the object of study only by an integrity of all discourses, that is recognising interdiscourse in a text. The same idea is proposed by Cherniavskaya (2009: 155-156):

Анализируемый текст предстает как точка пересечения нескольких дискурсов, если понимать под дискурсом отображение некой тематической и когнитивной общности. [...] Нельзя не заметить, что текстовое целое создается, сплетается из взаимопереходов и взаимопересечений различных дискурсов, причем отдельные темы – соответствующие им дискурсы – постоянно актуализируются для читателя внутри других тематических блоков.

Cherniavskaya (2009: 155-156)

[A text under analysis presents a crossing point of several discourses, if under discourse we understand a manifestation of a certain topical and cognitive oneness. [...] It is impossible not to notice that a textual unity is created, intertwined from switching and intercrossing of different discourses, provided that separate topics and corresponding discourses are constantly actualised for the reader within other topical blocks (Cherniavskaya 2009: 155-156, translation is mine).]

In other words, every text is constituted of several discourses; it means that any text reveals a contact of various discursive formations and ideologies. A text is inhabited by multiple forms of someone else’s words, already written or spoken. Hence, the identity of discourse is preserved through interdiscourse.

Pre-electoral discourse is not an exception as it often refers to other discourses and is frequently compared to other domains of human activity. Crossing points with a number of discourses therefore create a favourable base for coining numerous metaphoric parallels found in scholarly papers, broadcasting and social media.

For instance, scientists call pre-electoral discourse with its institutional objective-oriented relations a client-oriented organisation compared to a political trade with candidates in the role of merchants who sell their programmes-goods to the voters-purchasers, the clients of political institutions (Agar 1985; Gaikova 2003: 7). Pre-election discourse is frequently explained through war discourse where candidates and their campaigners are referred to as two camps with their actions described as attacks. The elements of polemics, argumentation,

grounding one's point of view, and handling facts bring pre-election discourse close to the scientific domain. An irrational influence and motivation for actions closely relates pre-electoral discourse to advertising discourse. Political advertising reveals many of its attributes from nomination of an object of advertising to pointing to its benefits (Nikitina 1998), narrowing of the subject matter, simplification in description, the use of key words, expressive images, as well as constant repetition of slogans, tautology (Jefkins 2000). Both discourses seek to create a buzz, an image of a product/presidential candidate. The purpose of a commercial ad is the creation of the need to purchase a product whilst a political ad is aimed at creating an image of political leaders that stimulates a certain attitude towards them and a particular line of behaviour.

One of the most widely used frames of interpretation of political campaigns found in scientific papers is theatrical discourse (Combs 1981; Baranov & Karaulov 1991 in *The Dictionary of Russian Political Metaphors*; Gaikova 2003; Sheigal 2005). For instance, Gaikova (2003: 7) characterises the election of the US President as a long-established ritual with a sequence of actions put up on stage, a political plot with an easily recognised scenario. It is a long process that unfolds according to a particular canon and goes through concrete phases comparable to episodes in a performance (Combs 1981: 53). The US presidential campaign can thus be described as a theatrical act where the main *dramatis personae* are actors-politicians and the voters are spectators. The creation of a politician's image includes working on his/her personal characteristics and speech. In the same interpretative frame, Combs (1981: 53) claims that a presidential candidate and his/her team are expected to act out scenes and express certain ideas indirectly addressing the audience. The presence of a large-scale audience indicates the publicity of pre-electoral discourse. Politicians, when they talk to journalists or to each other, always remember that they are observed by visible or invisible spectators, a 'theatre hall'. Therefore, they deliberately play to the gallery, trying to impress the viewers and to elicit applause.

A contemporary pre-election campaign is also described in terms of TV series. Such film genres like a serial and a situational comedy (a sitcom) are compared with presidential campaigns due to their division into seasons and episodes (the division of an election year into primaries and general election chunks), a fixed set of characters (candidates), various narratives of the same scenario (circulation of a campaign message), the possibility of guiding the viewer by a laugh track (commenting events), and finally the casting procedure for a new season (preparation of parties for next elections). In such a campaign-TV series metaphor,

American citizens are the audience who decide what kind of show they want to watch. In this respect, writer and critic Michael Atkinson in the journal *Rolling Stone* sarcastically describes the American audience during the 2016 presidential elections in the following way:

Ratings aren't great for Hillary, but given their druthers, blue-state/urban/suburban viewers want the same kind of stable network formula they've had for decades – comfortable and safe, like reruns of *Seinfeld*. On the other side of the killing field, the “uneducated” red-state voters are wanting a new kind of show altogether – something dumb and savage, not a nice, practical home-buyers reality show, perhaps, but a meth-cranked *Duck Dynasty With Fighter Jets* mess of a show, which does not make them feel less educated and poorer than they actually already are.

Atkinson (2016)

Atkinson compares Hillary Clinton's campaign with a serial running nationally for 25 years, suddenly interrupted by Trump who 'took over the production' with his reality shows, blurring lines between fact and fiction. Accordingly, entertainment, focus on conflicts and drama, as well as a large off-camera audience make a presidential campaign similar to another popular TV genre, notably a reality show. Suffice it to remember famous shows like *Idols*, *Survivor* or *Big Brother* to notice several parallels, for example, the large number of candidates, and their progressive elimination until only one remains. All events are unfolded under the close eye of experts, observers, and commentators who help the undifferentiated and invisible public to follow the coverage. For instance, American journalist Jay Newton-Small opens her article in *Time* magazine blending pre-electoral discourse with a reality television show:

Lights! Camera! Booming television announcer: 17 candidates. Eight former or current governors. Five current or former senators. Two former or current CEOs, and a neurosurgeon. They're all competing for one job and you, the voter, get to pick. Tune in tonight to see who got voted off the island.

Newton-Small (2016)

So, the presence of an audience, 'a mass observer', is one of the essential qualifiers of pre-electoral discourse since the former are the main target of the politicians' influence. This aspect brings politics and presidential campaigns close to entertainment domains of theatre, series and reality TV shows. However, as we have seen, when analysing a genre scene in a digital context, a lot of Americans cease to be a passive audience that silently observe politicians-actors. Just like in a modern avant-garde performance, the audience is now

actively involved in the creation of pre-electoral discourse, thereby reshaping and redefining politics.

To resume, although some scholars recognise the importance of regarding discourse in relation to other discourses, research on the subject has been mostly restricted to comparisons of political discourse with selected domains of knowledge. Little is known about interdiscourse in internet memes during presidential campaigns so far. In fact, it is not clear what discourses overlap with pre-electoral communication in these digital forms.

So, in the analysis, I adopt the principle of priority of *interdiscourse* over discourse (Pêcheux 1975). It means that even though a dominating discourse in a political meme is notoriously political counter-discourse, its borders open to other discourses, we can make sense or comprehend a meme only inside interdiscourse. Thus, when interpreting a text as a product of discourse, I search for connections with other texts, the products of other discourses.

In the following paragraphs, I describe crossing points of pre-electoral discourse with contest, historical discourse and religion in order to illustrate that in reality, internet memes as concrete texts are crossed over by multiple forms of interdiscourse. This allows me to answer my research sub-question: *How is interdiscourse revealed in internet memes?* Observation of interdiscourse seeks to establish the links of pre-electoral discourse during 2012/2016 campaigns with other domains of knowledge which constitute the novelty of the present study.

6.3.1 Presidential campaign as a contest

Besides the presence of a mass audience, presidential campaigns contain an element of competition that unites pre-electoral discourse with a plethora of other discourses. Just like in reality shows where contestants compete in overcoming multiple challenges to become a winner and gain a reward, presidential candidates constantly seek to discredit opponents in their race for the presidential chair. Apologetic fights and competitiveness likewise link pre-electoral discourse with sport and game playing discourses. Numerous elements from the contest domain can be found in pre-electoral discourse. To name but a few, it is the presence of adversaries, the fight between rivals, the ethics of a combat, rules and regulations, battle strategies and tactics, victory, defeat, the triumph of the winner, and prize awarding of a champion (Sheigal 2005: 44). A presidential campaign can thus be described as ‘a sport

competition' where the candidates for the post of the President are 'sportsmen' who represent their teams (political parties) while the voters are 'supporters' or 'fans' of this or that party team. Similarly, a presidential campaign is often called 'a rally' which has already become a trite metaphor.

To illustrate this, the 'recycled' caricature in social media (Figure 133) depicts a presidential campaign through the metaphor of boxing.

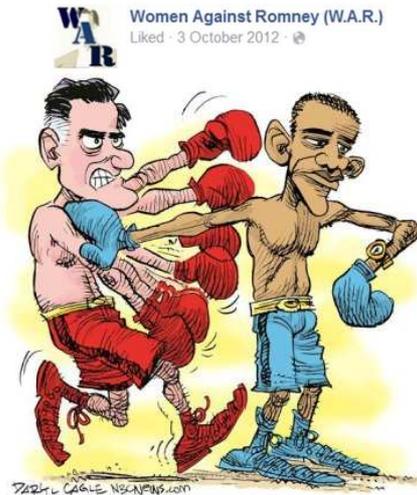


Figure 133. Campaign framed through a boxing contest

The boxing ring is a campaign platform where two boxing candidates show their fighting skills; every boxing glove blow is considered a campaign step, an argument during debates, a vote, etc. Like a boxing contest, a campaign is limited in time, at the end of which the winner is proclaimed, notably the elected President.



Evidently, they call it a basketball "ring" not a hoop on Ted's planet. "The amazing thing is, that basketball ring here in Indiana, it's the same height as it is New York City and every other place in this country. And there is nothing that Hoosiers cannot do." Cruz said.

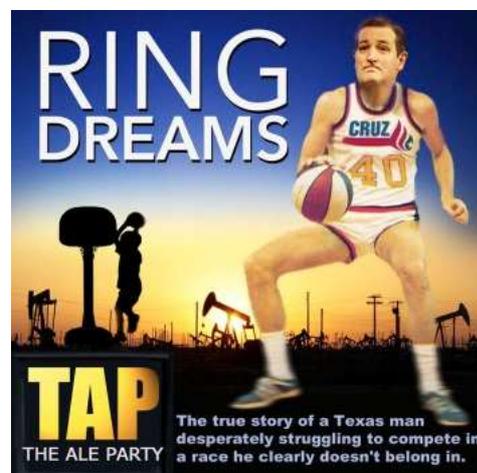


Figure 134. Campaign framed through a basketball game

A simple slip of the tongue can be the cause for doubting a candidate's capability to represent the country. It was sufficient for Tom Cruz to refer to a basketball 'ring' instead of a 'hoop' in order to be depicted as an incompetent player as the meme above suggests (Figure 134). Losing in basketball was compared to his losing position against Donald Trump.

Competition, the fight for power can be taken literally when political activists present candidates as warriors who struggle in their attempts to defeat the other. Debates as a genre where politicians exchange verbal arguments are often framed as a scene of physical battle like the example below illustrates (Figure 135):



Figure 135. Debates presented as a combat duel

This internet meme presents a dramatic science-fiction scene with brave Clinton and defeated Trump cut into pieces, i.e. in reference to Hillary Clinton's victory in the first debates.

Presidential campaigns can also be humorously compared to a show, e.g. a contest for the title of *Miss America* where contestants are presidential candidates who have to prove that they are the best in a number of domains in order to receive the title of *Miss America*, i.e. or rather the President of the country (Figure 136). The presence of competitors, competition between rivals, rules and regulations, audience, judgement of participants by their talent performances, style, strategies and tactics; progressive elimination of contestants until only one remains; victory/defeat; the winner is crowned by the previous year's title holder – all these elements help to cue pre-election discourse into a beauty contest domain.



Figure 136. Campaign framed as a beauty contest

A playful element in politics along with other domains was observed and described in the classic work of Huizinga *Homo ludens* (1949). He claims that politics is “deeply rooted in the primitive soil of culture played in and as contest” (Huizinga 1949: 211). This is especially evident in American politics. General elections with two gigantic teams grow into national sports where “rivalries are always at work, keeping up a continual match between the players whose object is to checkmate one another” (Huizinga 1949: 207). A competition held by presidential agonists is wreathed by a rhetoric duel, notably debates. The candidate whose charisma and eloquent skills are more powerful will bear the palm. The audience feel that politics is a game (a temporal ritual deprived of its seriousness) particularly when witnessing how “the bitterest opponents” have “a friendly chat even after the most virulent debate” (Huizinga 1949: 207). Huizinga explains that

...the elasticity of human relationships underlying the political machinery permits it to “play”, thus easing tensions which would otherwise be unendurable or dangerous-for it is the decay of humour that kills. We need hardly add that this play-factor is present in the whole apparatus of elections.

Huizinga (1949: 207)

Therefore, the feature of a contest is one of the core characteristics of pre-electoral discourse, which relates it to the game and sport domains. This aspect is reflected in the delegitimation of opponents, the demonstration of their professional incompetence and personal failure and as a result, the candidate’s inaptness to occupy the presidential chair. Like a sport or beauty contestant, the presidential candidate seeks to eliminate other participants and to be declared the winner.

6.3.2 Retrospection or history lessons

A great part of pre-electoral discourse is dedicated to the reconstruction of past events. Reflexions about the past and lessons of history help to retrieve examples of a positive or negative experience. Appealing to the issues of the past is used as a solid argumentation either to promote or denounce a candidate for the presidential chair.

To illustrate this, Obama's presidential campaign in 2012 was based on the results and achievements during his previous term. Regarding internal affairs, Obama's promoted strong points were health care and Wall Street reforms, dealing with the economic crisis and unemployment, broadening the rights of sexual minorities and immigrants, the support of the car industry, etc. Concerning the international scene, it is a return to soft power (an approach to international relations involving cultural and economic influence rather than military force) lost during the Bush years, which was especially emphasised, i.e. ending the war in Iraq, withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, the elimination of Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, supporting the Arabic uprising, etc. Bringing forth only positive accomplishments and mitigating failures, Obama's team intended to create a feeling of confidence and security of a chosen political vector among the voters. Similarly, the political platform of Hillary Clinton in 2016 was based on positive lessons of the past with a stress on her contributions as Secretary of State, the promotion of women's rights, achieved accomplishments in childcare and other areas.

The pre-electoral discourse of the Republicans in 2012 as well as in 2016 reveals romanticised recollections of the past, the continuation of the traditions set centuries ago (for example, Donald Trump opposed the ideas of same-sex marriages and abortion claiming that they will destroy the culture of America), the return to the ideal of self-made Americans and the image of the USA as a strong and powerful nation. A nostalgic feeling can be supported by alluding to other political leaders who contributed to the country's development and safety. Donald Trump constructed the whole campaign in retrospection to the past, having chosen Ronald Reagan's approach to politics as an ideal lesson for America to learn. Borrowing and slightly modifying his slogan into "Make America Great Again" Trump, like Reagan in the past, promised to restore the country's economy. The image below (Figure 137) with the Reagans celebrating the victory in 1980 was circulated on the web after Donald Trump was announced the newly elect President of the United States.



Figure 137. Retrospection into Ronald Reagan times

Likewise, the following post (Figure 138) alludes to an ex-President, Democrat Bill Clinton, who preceded the George Bush era. Clinton's pacific politics is contrasted to his Republican's successor who was criticised for involving the USA in the war with Iraq. Posted in 2012, its message is to keep up with the Democrat tradition which Obama can guarantee.



Figure 138. Retrospection into Bill Clinton times

Pre-electoral discourse is not deprived of flashbacks with the purpose of criticism. The meme below (Figure 139) shows the kitchen back in the 1950s. Its central figure – a white woman –

ironically claims that she does not need any rights as she has a kitchen. The reason for such retrospection is an argumentative device to derogate Republican values and set feminine population against their candidate in 2012, Mitt Romney.

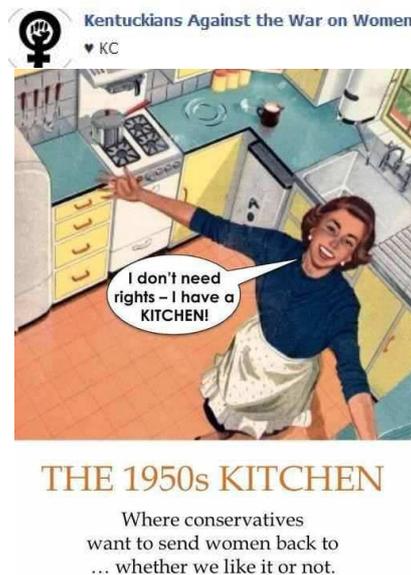


Figure 139. Flashback to the 1950s

Another unrealistic scenario is developed by the following meme (Figure 140). Its creators imagine Mitt Romney running for the post of President in 1932. This historical period is known as 'The Great Depression', i.e. a worldwide economic recession including crashes of stock markets, deflation, high unemployment rates, and mass poverty.



Figure 140. Flashback to the 1930s

The meme is a montage of a black and white photo showing unemployed men queuing outside a depression-era soup kitchen where food was offered for the hungry for free or at a low price. A sharp contrast is achieved through superimposing a 2012 colour image of Mitt and Ann Romney: A grey gloomy atmosphere with famine, poverty and grief, on the one hand, and a bright, radiant glee, rejoicing and prosperity, on the other hand. Speech characteristics present a conservative family as marble-hearted inhuman beings. The deliberate exaggeration made by alluding to the dramatic events in US history and including them in pre-electoral discourse has a strong emotional and persuasive effect.

During the 2016 presidential campaign, the Republican camp accused Barack Obama of controversial politics in regard to military actions, notably withdrawing troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, on the one hand, and launching attacks against Kaddafi in Libya, involvement of the USA in never-ending war against Assad in Syria, on the other hand. The 2016 Republican nominee Donald Trump recurrently criticised ex-State Secretary Hillary Clinton and Obama's administration of creating chaos in the Middle East which resulted in the rise of ISIS. His campaign leitmotif was 'a resurrection' of horror scenes in the US embassy in Libya when several members including the ambassador died in terror attacks, like an internet meme below (Figure 141) sadly illustrates. The constant turn to a shocking past can play a role in evoking strong emotions related to the events with the purpose of influencing the public's decision-making.



Figure 141. Looking back at the Benghazi case

Besides the Benghazi case, the Republicans extracted and revised other events related to Hillary Clinton. To name but a few, these are her private speeches to bankers in Wall Street, the engagement in war issues in Syria, a controversial activity of the Clinton foundation, security issues like writing professional emails from her personal server and other issues. Some facts even remotely connected to the candidate like her husband's love affairs are exploited to cast a shadow on the family's reputation. The internet meme below (Figure 142) presents a caricature of Ben Garrison who personifies Hillary Clinton's past and eloquently presents it as her own enemy in the presidential race.



Figure 142. Revision of Hillary Clinton's past

Similarly, Democrat opposition groups were consistently turning to the past in search for controversial facts against the Republican nominee Donald Trump. These narratives include sexist comments about women, backing of Obama's birther claim, calling for the introduction of the death penalty after the Central Park rape case (when black teenagers were mistakenly accused of a crime), and so on and so forth. His own words or other witnesses' stories were collected, reassembled and reproduced in various genres of a campaign ranging from short videos to long speeches.

In conclusion, a vital characteristic of pre-electoral discourse is its orientation towards past events. Retrospection shows a constant search for new sources of argumentation based on the

reconstruction of ‘our’ positive achievements and unveiling ‘their’ drawbacks. Nevertheless, it is important to stress the fact that flashbacks undergo a considerable recycling process and are presented to the public in a particular ideological light. It means that oppositional ideological camps can extract facts from the past and manipulate the form of the message in various ways.

6.3.3 Prospecion and Messiah syndrome

Alongside flashbacks to the past, prognostics of the future are typical of pre-electoral discourse. This aspect inevitably connects it to religious discourse as long as it deals with a belief in ‘supernatural powers’ of political leaders. In this sense, it is relevant to refer to Cassirer’s work “The Technique of Our Modern Political Myths” (1979) where he claims that in modern society, people assign political leaders the qualities which in primitive societies rested on wizards and shamans. However, if a pre-historical man believed in natural enchantment, a contemporary human being believes in social magic. Cassirer explains that if a certain collective necessity starts to ring with a great force, people easily believe that to realise this necessity, they only need to find the right person, someone who possesses *ultima ratio*. A collective desire is then personified in the political leader (just like in a god earlier). A desire appears in front of people’s eyes in a concrete, live, individualised incarnation guise. If former magicians practised fortune telling and helped to liberate people from social blemish, today’s fortune-tellers, according to the philosopher, are politicians, and prophecy has become a significant tool for governing the country. Politicians promise the most incredible, sometimes impossible things; again and again, they offer prospects of a golden age. Thus, a political chief can be associated with a distant deity or an oracle endowed with supernatural powers and outstanding qualities such as wisdom, far-sightedness and clairvoyance. S/he becomes a preacher of a new modern, completely irrational and mystical religion, being *homo magus* and *homo divinas* at the same time. An idolisation of a political leader is underpinned by corresponding attributes, e.g. emblems, portraits, hymns, cheering.

Besides mythologisation of consciousness, all sorts of soothsaying and ritualisation of communication, political and religious discourses are united on the basis of a belief in the magic power of words. Slogans and summons like religious chanting and collective praying are repeated multiple times in order to influence and control mass consciousness. Interestingly enough, Klucharev notices that

посредством проговаривания специально составленных текстов, таких, где ценностно-значимые понятия встречаются с повышенной частотой, можно достичь различных эмоциональных состояний аудитории – от успокоения до, что бывает гораздо чаще, возбуждения и агрессивности.

Klucharev (1995: 214)

[By virtue of walking through specially created texts, where notions of value are encountered with over frequency, different emotional states of the auditory can be achieved – from peace and tranquilisation to, what happens far more often, excitement and aggression (Klucharev 1995: 214, translation is mine).]

Thus, political formulas absorbed by an uncritical mind and nourished by the faith in the authority of the chief (Lord terrestrial or divine) become postulates of a political religion (Sheigal 2005: 40).

The perception of a leader is one of the aspects which brings modern political elections and religious worship together. Projection to the future also includes predicting the consequences of a choice of this or that candidate. A bright new dawn, a better tomorrow is promised if a voter gives his/her voice for the ‘right’ candidate while doomsday events and the end of the world are amusingly assured for those who make a ‘wrong’ choice.

Interestingly, getting closer to the Election Day in November 2012, the FB platform was transformed into a medium containing all sorts of ‘apocalyptic’ memes. A vivid example is the meme (Figure 143) referring to the Genesis Flood narrative showing Noah, his family and a remnant of all animals who run for their lives from the Flood. Although there is no direct indication of politics, the name of the sender *Barack Obama’s Dead Fly* can easily help an American reader to establish the links between so-called doomsday preppers and voters following the ‘aftermath’ of the Election Day.

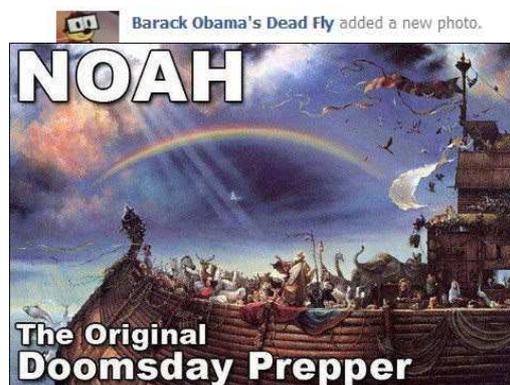


Figure 143. Prospection of Doomsday following the elections

A pessimistic future is especially predicted for opponents. *Anti-Republican Crusaders* group label the most famous and powerful Grand Old Party leaders as *the most dangerous GOP liars club*, and like all dishonest Christians, they are projected to end up in the nether world after the Last Judgement (Figure 144).



Figure 144. Prediction of the Last Judgement after the election of Barack Obama

Coincidentally, the year 2012 was the last period inscribed in the Mesoamerican Long Count Calendar. It became a source of inspiration for eschatological beliefs, innumerable forecasts of cataclysmic events and doomsday transformations. Political activists, in their turn, did not miss the chance to draw humorous parallels between ‘the end of history’ and the worst scenario if the candidate from the opposition wins the presidential election (Figure 145):

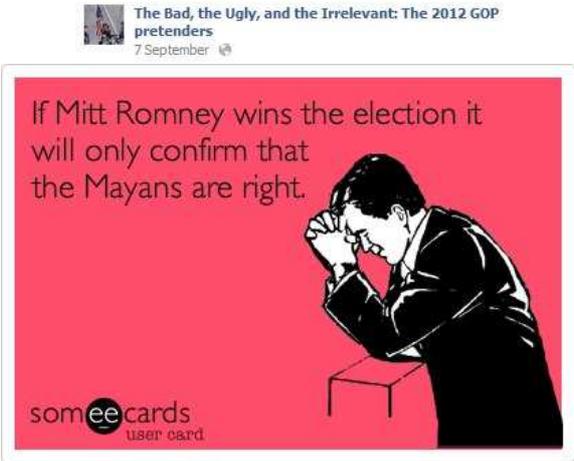


Figure 145. Allusion to the Maya predictions if Mitt Romney were elected

A zombie apocalypse with the resurrection of the dead is another popular metaphorical prediction following the 2012 election. Through his sober judgement, Sherlock Holmes foresees two ends of the political scenario, i.e. either the reign of socialism or the realm of empty heads (Figure 146). Of two coming evils, he chooses the least (after all, who has a better reason than a sure-footed cult detective!).



Figure 146. Foreseeing a zombie apocalypse if Mitt Romney were elected

The end times, the last battle between good and evil forces or Armageddon, is figuratively predicted by Democrat supporters if one were to vote for Donald Trump:



Figure 147. Prognostics of Armageddon if Donald Trump were elected

The meme (Figure 147) depicts a Republican candidate armed with a trident, seated on a blazing throne, suggesting the appearance of Lucifer raised from the abyss. The representation

of the devil himself sends an alarming message to the opponents and indecisive voters as well as dramatic consequences of this choice.

‘Doomsday’ after the elections in 2016 arrived for many Americans as is expressed in the following meme (Figure 148):



Figure 148. Prediction of the end of the world if Donald Trump were elected

The image of the exploding earth reflecting the face of Donald Trump with the caption *It's the end of the world as we know it* resumes a shock of the outcomes of the elections, drawing a pessimistic future. Like the previous meme, it frames a political message into a religious discourse that is based on Christian beliefs. In this metaphor, the end of the world is the victory of the opponent, who incarnates the Son of Satan, the Anti-Christ and therefore the Eve of Destruction. The righteous are cued into those who did not vote for the Republican candidate and thus are ‘clean’ and safe in front of the God-judge. Such framing inevitably suggests that the Democrats are followers of Jesus who are in peril, with the sole consolation left to pray and wait for the Messiah who will ultimately defeat the Satan in future.

So, on the one hand, eschatology and other related matters are promised for non-followers. On the other hand, forthcoming miracles, life fulfilled with happiness and prosperity and other pleasures to come are guaranteed to docile believers. As we have witnessed, this sort of future-oriented pre-electoral discourse has a strong link with religious discourse. Politicians like pastors promise their flock a radiant future where peace and overall florescence reign. They create settings with typical images, stereotypes and beliefs (in an American dream, etc.),

necessary to pass a political message. Just like religious discourse, pre-electoral communication is circled around indoctrination, it imposes particular actions and states. It is thus no wonder that scientists sometimes label a political speech a “secular prayer” (Edelman 1964: 33). Religion unites people in faith, whereas politics unites people around their ideas and interests (Sheigal 2005: 40-41).

To conclude, the language of politics as a language of promise in many respects resembles clerical discourse. In pre-electoral discourse it acquires a conditional value: If a voter gives his/her voice to a candidate, the latter will help him/her to satisfy all his/her needs in the future. Otherwise, doomsday is predicted if voters choose another way. A collective desire, a belief in an American dream, the sun rising in people’s lives are personified and incarnated in a political leader. A politician becomes a Messiah, an oracle who is believed to change existing conditions for the better.

As a result of transparency of discourse borders, there is an overlap of characteristics of different discourses. The absence of clear-cut boundaries between different discourses show that in reality, concrete texts usually reveal a ‘dialogue’ between many discourses at the same time. The analysis of internet memes as concrete manifestations of pre-electoral discourse have shown that this type of political discourse has a number of crossing points with competitive contests, history lessons and religious preaching that is oriented towards the future.

6.4 Typological openness of texts among other intertextual relations

It must be noted that a text as an open system can exercise intertextual relations of various types. Cherniavskaya (2007: 12; 2009: 188-192) claims that one text can be exposed toward another on various levels:

- a semantic and content openness of a text providing a dialogue of opinions and standpoints of different authors inside one textual whole; it is a vertical projection orienting a reader to previous texts (Pfister 1985: 11, in Cherniavskaya 2009: 188), a virtual dialogue between authors separated by distance or time;
- a communicative and pragmatic openness of a text to a reader, to a “text in his/her head”, whose thesaurus is also an open system of presuppositions; it is a horizontal or reception-oriented projection (Pfister 1985: 11, in Cherniavskaya 2009: 189), an

intertextual competence of a reader is a condition of the adequate decoding of a message since an intertextual potential encrypted in a text is realised through the interaction of a text with a reader and his/her background knowledge and cognitive set;

- ideas, themes and logic openness of texts of the same author in a framework of his/her representation of reality; all texts produced by the same author are united in a single system of values and ideals, with every forthcoming work representing a common ideal macro-system, a part of the global structure, tied with other texts by deeply entrenched meaning relations;
- an inner textual openness of a text revealed in the progression of content, on the one hand, from one meaning to another (profound level), on the other hand, from one structure-compositional part to another (exposed level); in this sense, a text is viewed as decomposable in parts with the latter correlated thematically and formally to guarantee the development of its theme and main idea;
- a relatedness of texts in one discursive niche, their adherence to a particular sphere of communication and connection on a global functional level;
- a typological openness of texts of one type to another, where every type reveals a particular system of variable and invariable features; it is a non-closure of a text on the level of its prototypical constitution, typologically motivated relations show an openness of genre compositions and the recognition of a prototypical repetition by a recipient.

In addition, in some multimodal genres (posters, advertising, comic strips as well as internet memes and many others) the resort to preceding visual texts is a widespread practice. Scientists call it “visual intertextuality” or “intericonicity” (Cherniavskaya 2009: 209; Fièvre 2017).

Therefore, the category of intertextuality embraces various strategies of correlation of one text with another, not only on the level of content but also on the level of form. Nevertheless, one of the most researched areas of intertextuality is the connection of texts on a semantic level, referring to other texts in the form of quotations, allusions, reported speech, references, etc. (Piégay-Gros 1996; Fairclough 2003; Cherniavskaya 2005; Petrova 2005; Knobel & Lankshear 2007; Hodson Champeon 2010; Austermühl 2014). Of all these works, the article “Online memes, affinities, and cultural production” of Knobel and Lankshear (2007) must be highlighted since it analyses internet memes. Among other aspects, the researchers detected

the presence of “a rich kind of intertextuality, such as wry cross-references to different everyday and popular culture events, icons or phenomenon” as a factor which contributes to the meme’s fecundity (Knobel & Lankshear 2007: 209). Yet, the researchers do not develop the notion of intertextuality and do not go further than identifying cross-references to popular artifacts which characterise many successful memes. In fact, there are few papers to date that focus on a text as an open system to other texts on a structure-compositional level, on the level of textual prototypes or models, borrowing a particular type or genre of texts. The next section gives a brief overview of these studies.

6.4.1 Imitation of genres: Terminological ‘etiquettes’ and previous research

Textual genre links were already foreshadowed by Bakhtin (1929, 1975) when analysing the literary genre of a novel. According to Bakhtin (1929), a literary text is composed of numerous genres of other types of discourse, which can contain an administrative letter, a scientific article, a military command, medical expertise, or else. All this reveals the multivocal or polyphonic aspect of a text. The Bakhtinian understanding of a text as the absorption of many genres, a fusion of many social discourses was later extrapolated from novels to other genres of speech. Today it becomes an important aspect of analysis in different schools either in literary criticism or in linguistics. The labelling of this phenomenon however varies from one language school to another as well as angles of research and discursive genres as an object of analysis.

Genette (1982), Fateeva (1998), Gignoux (2005), Heidmann (Heidmann & Adam 2010) as well as other scientists have investigated genre relations in literary works. In his work *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* (1982), Genette introduced the concept “architextuality” and defined it as a class of intertextual elements that determines genre relations. Genette (1979) borrowed the term “architext” from Marin (1974) and narrowed down its meaning from any “texte d’origine” to generic relations of texts. The scholar characterised it as the most abstract, implicit, silent and pure taxonomic of all categories of intertextuality. He claims that a text never declares its generic status explicitly; rather, it is up to the reader to guess it. The latter can be prompted either by a paratext (name of a genre mentioned under the title of a work) or by the form of a text. However, Genette did not go

further in researching the dialogue of genres, limiting his analysis to other types of intertextuality.

Developing the ideas of Genette, Gignoux in her work *Initiation à l'intertextualité* (2005) tries to answer the question of how this most abstract and most implicit genre relation is expressed concretely in a text. In her opinion, if a paratext which directly names a genre is absent, the reader can resort to metatextual indexes, which are commentaries, criticisms concerning a text. However, if this information is not available, the recipient can discover the genre from the text itself through a number of syntax structures, semantic characteristics, the whole composition of a text, etc. The reader's identification of a genre will certainly depend on his/her culture, an architextual competence, additional reading; and the activation of this generic knowledge which is often unconscious unless a reader deliberately resorts to a critical reading. The process of genre recognition can therefore be reflected in a spiral movement of anticipations through the gradual reading of a text and constant returning to its beginning (Gignoux 2005: 93).

Both Genette and Gignoux mention that the reception of genres depends on the horizon of expectations of a reader (Genette 1982; Gignoux 2005). If an author of a text explicitly tells the reader its genre, for instance, a sonnet, the reader consequently expects the organisation of a text in the form of a sonnet, a poem of fourteen lines which follows a strict rhyme scheme and specific structure. The deliberate deviation from the rule of genre composition will immediately cause a reaction from the reader. To illustrate this, the modern Russian poet Joseph Brodsky in his *Twenty Sonnets to Mary Stuart* violates this rigid literary genre. For example, in the twentieth sonnet, a contrast can be observed between the classical form of a sonnet in the first part and the organisation of lines proper to scientific or administrative style in the second (Fateeva 1998: 35). Such a shift from a literary genre to an official administrative one in the sonnet of Brodsky undermines the reader's expectations and creates a comic effect.

Some other representatives of discourse analysis and textual linguistics studied this category not only in literary studies, but also in the genre of advertising (Cook 1992; Janich 1997; Lugrin 2006; Adam & Bonhomme 2009; and others). Adam and Heidmann call the phenomenon "genericity" (Heidmann & Adam 2010). Adam explains that the choice of the term with the French suffix *-ité* (in *généricité*) underlines the fact that a concrete text is assigned to a genre class only gradually and that there are always texts which are situated in

large intermediate zones, “sur un gradient de typicalité”, and cannot be adhered to a particular class (Adam 2011a). This term shows the dynamic character of a genre mould and the ‘participation’ of a text in several genres at the same time. The researchers’ choice of the term is motivated by their wish to go beyond the concept of a genre that is too static, thereby taking into consideration complex processes of text coding as well as the reader’s interpretation or decoding. Adam and Heidmann (2010) claim that names of genres like a fairy tale, short story, brief news item, poem, etc. work as etiquettes of belonging, adherence of a text to a group of texts which inevitably set limits, reducing a text to only one category or a family of texts. This is as Adam puts it:

La *généricité* permet de penser la participation d’un texte à plusieurs genres et cela est nécessaire car, à l’exclusion de genres socialement très contraints, de nombreux textes ne se conforment pas à un seul genre. Plutôt que de classer les textes dans une catégorie – leur appartenance –, il faut observer les potentialités génériques qui les traversent – leur participation à un ou plusieurs genres. Analyser une participation au lieu de se limiter à une appartenance classificatoire permet d’entrer dans la complexité des faits de discours.

Adam (2011a: 26-27)

[Genericity allows the idea of a text participating in several genres and it is necessary because except for some socially very rigid genres, numerous texts do not conform to a single genre. Instead of classifying texts into one category – their adherence –, it makes sense to observe generic possibilities which cross over texts – their participation in one or several genres. To analyse participation instead of limiting oneself to the classificatory adherence allows for entering into the complexity of discourse practices (Adam 2011a: 26-27, translation is mine).]

Within the same framework, Lugin (2006) gives a deep insight into different relations between borrowing and borrowed genres based on the example of advertising in the written press. In his book *Généricité et intertextualité dans le discours publicitaire de presse écrite* (2006), Lugin claims that genericity can be implemented due to two types of relations, notably an endogenous relation, i.e. borrowing a matrix from genres of an inner group, for example, an ad imitating another ad; and an exogenous relation, which is copying the matrix from other discursive practices, for instance, an ad imitating genres from media, scientific, spiritual and other discourses. In this respect, we can find an echo in Cook’s *The Discourse of Advertising* (1992: 190), i.e. the division into intra-discoursal and inter-discoursal relations. The first one expresses the voice and knowledge of a genre of the same discourse type while the second speaks with the voice, uses the ‘achievements’ of another discourse type.

Like Lugin and Cook, Adam and Bonhomme (2009) study the genre of advertising and also notice the impartial attitude of some creators of ads to borrow genres from different discursive domains (ad-graffiti, ad-test, ad-interview, ad-recipe, etc.). But contrary to previous authors, their research takes a pragmatic turn. Calling it “an intertextual copy” and “genre parody”, the researchers admit that this hybridisation is used to mask the status of advertising. Taking a mask of another genre helps to melt aggression and intrusion of ads into the consumer’s space, which is often viewed as territorial threat:

...le consommateur virtuel qu’on ennuie, qu’on sollicite ou qu’on agace se convertit, selon les cas, en un lecteur de conte, en un partenaire de jeu ou en un spectateur de théâtre, bref en un interactant bienveillant

Adam & Bonhomme (2009: 144)

[the virtual consumer who we annoy, who we entice and who we irritate is converted, depending on cases, into a fairy tale reader, into a game partner or into a theatre-goer, in one word, into a sincerely welcomed interlocuter (Adam & Bonhomme 2009: 144, translation is mine).]

Consequently, according to the researchers, such discursive practice of hiding the real status of an ad due to other genres, favours the illocution and perlocution success of publicity. The scholars therefore rightly call these genres info-persuasive.

Authier-Revuz (2004) prefers the more general terms “dialoguism” and “heterogeneity” when talking about mixing different textual sequences, speech genres and discourses. The researcher argues that concrete texts can never appear to be homogeneous but always incorporate other voices. The researcher’s particular contribution lies in the distinction between constitutive and shown heterogeneity which will be presented further on.

A closer term – “a dialogue of genres” (*Dialog der Gattungen*) – is used by Holthuis (2004). The linguist thereby understands the dialogue of a text with a genre norm, an interaction of marked conventions and models of texts with their deviations, variations and transformations.

Fairclough (2003) claims that along with analyses of individual genres or a whole network of genres (“genre chains”), researchers can also study “genre mixtures” in a particular text where the latter should not be viewed as situated “in” a single genre but likely to involve a combination of different genres, a text may “mix” or “hybridize genres” (Fairclough 2003: 34, 66). Focusing mainly on the analysis of the individual genres, Fairclough (2003: 34-35, 66)

however points to the problem of genre mixtures in a particular text. The latter, in his opinion, requires a different kit of tools for analysis:

The analysis of interdiscursive hybridity in texts provides a potentially valuable resource for enhancing research [...], offering a level of detailed analysis which is not achievable within other methods.

Fairclough (2003: 35)

Describing the case of an article about the Hungarian town Békéscsaba, taken from a newspaper *Budapest Sun*, Fairclough detects the mixture of a journalistic feature article, a corporate advertisement and a tourist brochure. He also gives the example of “conversationalization” of various genres diffused in the media (broadcast news, radio talks, etc.). Fairclough relates this phenomenon to instances of postmodernity which he calls “new capitalism”, where the mixing of genres is the result of “blurring” of social practices as well as social boundaries (Fairclough 2003: 35). The conclusions of Fairclough about genre hybridity, although giving a deep insight into the problem, are driven by the structural organisation of the text and lack discussions of other aspects brought into the text by every genre as well as the potential impact on the reader.

Pfister and Broich call the relationship between a text and the system of other texts “a systemic reference” (*Systemtextreferenz*), which contrasts with “one text reference” (*Einzeltextreferenz*) or relations between two concrete texts (Broich & Pfister 1985). The German linguists investigated the question of intensity of intertextual links having introduced the detailed differentiation of two types of references through a number of criteria.

The study of intertextual mixing in digital context was carried out by Peverini (2015: 342). The researcher calls it “intertextual stratification” along with other scientific occasionalisms such as “forms of reappropriation”, intertextual and interdiscursive “rewriting” or “reworking” of texts. Based on the example of creative protests in political videos designed for ecological causes, the scientist showed that “texts are complex structures, stratified, rich in allusions and references to other texts and discourses designed to solicit the competence of the receiver” (Peverini 2015: 336). A particular contribution of the research lies in viewing intertextuality as a remix, a stratified hybridisation process and a playful, truly semiotic guerrilla protest tool that is aimed at raising public awareness toward ecological problems.

The phenomenon of imitation of genres also knows a number of metaphoric coinages. For instance, Dufays talks about “genre blurring” (*brouillage générique*) which he defines as “le phénomène qui se produit quand le texte paraît relever de plusieurs genres à la fois et produire ainsi un effet de polygénéricité” [the phenomenon produced when the text seems to reveal several genres at the same time and consequently yields an effect of polygenericity (Dufays 2007: 99, translation is mine)]. The scientist argues that this form of a text is ambiguous in its nature, presenting the case when the reader identifies one or several genres and attributes at least two distinct meanings to the text.

Jost (1985) calls such cases a “vampire activity” since the texts nourish themselves with textual forms of other discourses. He observes that advertising discourse particularly operates with “des détournements, des déformations ou des imitations d’énoncés en tous genres” and that “loins de constituer un genre autonome, l’image publicitaire ne tire son existence que d’une activité essentiellement vampirique” [diversions, deformations or imitations of utterances in all possible genres ... far from constituting an autonomous genre, the advertising image pulls up its existence only via essentially vampire activity (Jost 1985: 1-2, translation is mine)]. In other words, according to the scientist, such imitation of genres is typical for advertising discourse which becomes one of the forms of its existence.

Cook (1992: 29-34) talks about “parasitic discourses” like “literary criticism is parasitic upon literature, sports commentary upon sport” (cf. Bakhtin’s division into primary and secondary genres). When studying the genre of advertising, he describes the ways ads accompany, co-occur and imitate other discourses. He concludes that ads “borrow so many features of other discourses that they are in danger of having no separable identity of their own. Yet [...] this notion of the parasite discourse need not in itself be negative” (Cook 1992: 34). Cook further claims that genres which are based on imitation allow “the voices of other discourses to enter into them with an accompanying potential to subvert the ideology which the original enshrined” (Cook 1992: 29-34). Accordingly, Cook also confirms the idea that genres that imitate other discourses lack their own specific structure, but at the same time, the absence of the identity of their own urges such genres to enrich themselves with ideologies from other discourses.

Maingueneau (2012, 2014) presents the imitation of genres through the metaphor of a theatre and names it “scenography”. Maingueneau’s model will be further developed in detail in Section 6.4.2 *Natural vs simulated dialogism: Text scenography*.

Probably the most influential research on the typological openness of texts was presented in works of German and Russian linguists (Beaugrande & Dressler 1981; Fix 1997, 2000, 2001; Cherniavskaya 2003, 2004, 2007, 2009; Denisova 2003; Adamzik 2004; Sachava 2008; Kazak 2010; and others). The representatives of these schools step beyond a scientific intuition and develop a solid theoretical framework to analyse the phenomenon I continuously refer to in my thesis. The term “typological” or “texto-typological intertextuality” itself was introduced by Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) to fix the phenomenon of genre links which presupposes the reproduction of the same textual model in an open multitude of texts. Cherniavskaya (2003) illustrates this textual mechanism with the example of the pseudo-scientific genre of a horoscope. She also develops a robust theory of linguistic intertextuality and interdiscursivity in scientific communication and media discourse. In her dissertation *Text-constituting potential of imitated interdiscursivity* (2008), Sachava goes through the whole series of examples from different genres to present the phenomenon of genre imitation, arriving at interesting conclusions concerning communicative purposes of such deliberate mixes.

Fix (1997) goes even further in distinguishing different forms of typological intertextuality on the basis of the relation textual exemplar – textual prototype, which I briefly summarise below:

- **Genre linkage** (*Textmustermontage*) – the combination of textual exemplars with different prototypical model but with the same function.
- **Genre mixing** (*Textmustermischung*) – the mix of textual types that are different on semantic, compositional and functional planes.
- **Genre fraction** (*Textmusterbruch*) takes place when a textual exemplar besides features typical for a textual model also reveals other characteristics that do not correlate with other models.

To sum up, a considerable amount of literature has been published on genre links. Researchers have sought to determine different types of relations between genres and how the incorporation of one pattern into the textual structure of another genre influences the reader. Table 2 summarises a list of terms and metaphoric coinages found in different scientific literature based on the analysis of sources above. It shows that although the phenomenon of imitation of genres was an object of studies across various disciplines, there is still no agreement between scholars how to name it.

Terms to label the imitation of genres	Researchers
architextuality	Genette 1979, 1982, 1989; Fateeva 1998; Gignoux 2005
genericity	Lugrin 2006; Adam & Heidmann 2007
intertextual copy, genre parody, masking	Adam & Bonhomme 2009
dialogism, heterogeneity	Authier-Revuz 1982; 1984; 2004
dialogue of genres	Holthuis 2004
genre mixture, interdiscursive hybridity, conversationalisation of genres	Fairclough 2003
systemic reference	Broich & Pfister 1985
intertextual stratification, interdiscursive rewriting of texts	Peverini 2015
genre blurring (<i>brouillage générique</i>), polygenericity	Dufays 2007
vampire activity	Jost 1985
parasitic discourse	Cook 1992
scenography	Maingueneau 1998, 2012, 2014
typological or intergeneric intertextuality	Beaugrande & Dressler 1981; Fix 1997; Cherniavskaya 2009; Austermühl 2014

Table 2. List of terms and metaphoric coinages of the imitation of genres

Hence, the question of openness of texts on a structure-compositional level received considerable attention in literary studies and linguistics. Nevertheless, it still remains an area which needs more research, particularly in the social media context. To my knowledge, the intergeneric cross-references in internet memes have not yet been described.

6.4.2 Natural vs simulated dialogism: Text scenography

Before turning to the analysis of intertextuality in internet memes, it is important to stress the difference between a natural and simulated dialogue of genres. I have already shown when discussing the question of interdiscourse that there are no strict boundaries between ideologies in the large Bakhtinian sense. Texts and genres usually present a crossing of several ideologies as human activities are often interrelated and interdependent, and so are their social

roles (more on discourse-crossing political discourse, see Sheigal 2005: 41-43). It is the rule rather than the exception that human communication consists of several discursive elements. Linguists however call to distinguish between a natural, spontaneous switching into another discourse and a so-called theatricalised or simulated change of discourse (Authier-Revuz 2004; Cherniavskaya 2007).

The first type presents situations where a special discourse, for instance, scientific discourse integrates elements from other discourses, e.g. medical, political, ethical, etc. Such spontaneous relation of discourses demonstrates a natural process of reintegration of human knowledge scattered around different discursive formations (Cherniavskaya 2007: 24). Authier-Revuz (2004) calls it a “constitutive dialogism” or a “constitutive heterogeneity” (*dialogisme constitutif/hétérogénéité constitutive*). Authier-Revuz (2004) argues that a text is never homogeneous but that it mingles different sequences, registers, modalisations, genres of a discourse, etc. A text is not a space where other discourses with their textual traces come from the exterior; it is all constituted of constant debates with ‘otherness’ (in line with Bakhtin’s affirmation that words are always the words of someone else and that discourse is created by discourses of others).

The second type corresponds to the localisable presence of discourse of others in a textual thread. Authier-Revuz (2004) refers to this type as “shown dialogism” or “shown heterogeneity” (*dialogisme montré/hétérogénéité montrée*). Cherniavskaya (2007: 24) claims that such shown dialogue of genres and consequently discourses is a particular strategy of the author of the message who resorts to it deliberately to achieve certain aims. An addressor intentionally borrows a discourse from others through the transposition of linguistic or non-linguistic units into a text so that they are visible and easily identifiable by an addressee. In contrast to the first type, it is a planned dialogism where the creator constructs the message in the form of a play with the interpreter. This is why many researchers call it a “staged” or “theatricalised” dialogism (Goncharova 2003: 13; Cherniavskaya 2004: 35; Sachava 2008).

Linguists have already proven that this theatricalised montage of textotypes is a strong persuasive means which can have a great impact on the reader (Sachava 2008; Cherniavskaya 2009; Prokofyev 2012, 2013). Cherniavskaya (2003, 2004) gives the example of a horoscope. In order to persuade the reader, the addressor knits the facts from scientific discourse in the textual structure, notably from astronomy. Yet, a horoscope neither contains a scientific analysis of reality nor does it provide objective scientific knowledge. Instead, it borrows

ready-made astronomic terms (*Sagittarian new moon on the 22nd; planetary accent; the turning-point solar eclipse on the 9th*, etc.), exact dates (*Preparation for the pivotal Taurus New May on May 6 begins as early as mid-April*), and imitates hypothetical reflexions (*when Mercury, planet of ideas, goes retrograde...*). As a result, it creates a pseudo-scientific message to convince the reader. The goal of such a textual strategy is to change the consciousness of the viewer from everyday habitual discourse to a system of scientific reasoning, and in doing so, to persuade and manipulate the former (Cherniavskaya 2004: 38-39).

Therefore, a dialogue of genres and, as a result, an interaction of larger units or discourses, the interpenetration of various mental structures, can be a natural process of communication or a determined strategy of text constitution. On the one hand, it is a reflection of relatedness of all discursive domains in the human system of knowledge; on the other hand, it is a deliberate and goal-driven imitation of genres and discourses.

As stated earlier, because of its strong element of play, the deliberate genre imitation closely resembles certain artistic forms, namely the performance. Observing such theatrical instances of playing with a textual structure, Maingueneau (2012) accurately notices that the act of stating something does not mean to simply activate preliminary norms of an institution, but to build on this basis a singular performance that has been crafted in a concrete situation of communication, which he labels “scenography”.

Before applying this metaphor to the mechanism of text production, let us observe what scenography is in its proper sense. The term is closely aligned with theatre design. In her book *What is Scenography?*, Howard (2012: 130) states that it “is the seamless synthesis of space, text, research, art, actors, directors and spectators that contributes to an original creation”. The elements of scenography or performance design are footlight, environment, costumes, an artistic perspective concerning the visual, experiential and special composition of performance – all influencing the construction and perception of meaning. Thus, scenography is not a simple décor but a constituent part of a play.

Just like the creation of a spectacle, text creation is a unique adaptation of a given space lot, time, assignment of roles to the participants, ‘materialisation of the imagination’ of a text designer and construction of sense under the circumstances of the situation by a viewer. The speaker adjusts a situation in name of which s/he produces a text.

To illustrate this idea, we will take a look at a meme taken from the FB “Like Page” *Women Against Romney (W.A.R.)* (Figure 149). The meme in the form of a clock depicts a woman wearing an apron, a mother of two children talking on the phone. The cloud shows a friendly conversation where she reminds the person on the other end of the line to set the clock for winter time. In this usual routine at the end of October, when people motherly remind their near and dear ones, a reminder of the Election Day is discreetly embedded.



Figure 149. Scenography of a friendly conversation

Depending on the level of abstraction, this meme can be viewed on the level of discourse as a political message (discourse level), as an internet meme in the pre-election campaign spread on FB (genre level), as a comic, and as a friendly conversation (text level). Thus, the reader of this post is simultaneously addressed in several roles, i.e. as a citizen of the country, as a FB user, as a comic reader, and as an interlocutor, a friend or a relative of a woman on the phone.

The difficulty of applying the discourse – genre – text model is the heterogeneous aspect on the text level as it imitates the genre of another discourse. Therefore, regarding such borrowed cases as theatrical in line with Maingueneau (1998, 2012, 2014), we view the stage – scene – not as a simple decoration where the actors play but as a constructive part of discourse:

La scène de parole ne peut donc pas être conçue comme un simple cadre, un décor, comme si le discours survenait à l’intérieur d’un espace déjà construit et indépendant de ce discours. Elle en est constitutive.

Charaudeau & Maingueneau (in *Dictionnaire d’analyse du discours* 2002: 515)

[The stage of speech thence cannot be understood like a simple frame, a décor, as if the discourse occurred inside already constructed space and independent from it. It (the stage) is a part of it (Charaudeau & Maingueneau 2002: 515, translation is mine).]

The researcher stresses that it is chiefly speech genres which impose drama through assigning interlocutors concrete roles. In other words, in the process of speech production, the speaker installs a scene by choosing a certain role and by imposing a role on his/her addressee.

Therefore, a scene in this model refers to a frame and at the same time to a process of speech production and perception. The frame embraces the concept of context with its participants, and the process, in its turn, is a sequence of verbal or non-verbal actions which constantly develop and negotiate the frame. Thus, in order to describe the context of speech production, Maingueneau (2012) blends the theatrical notion of “scene” with a purely linguistic “situation of enunciation”, notoriously used by Benveniste (1966) and Bally (1965). This concept is close to Hymes’ “situation of communication” (1974) with the difference that the latter is an approach from a more sociological perspective. Charaudeau and Maingueneau claim that a scene of enunciation is the following:

Notion qui, en analyse du discours, est souvent employée concurremment avec celle de “situation de communication”. Mais, en parlant de “scène d’énonciation”, on met l’accent sur le fait que l’énonciation advient dans un espace institué, défini par le genre de discours, mais aussi sur la dimension constructive du discours, qui se “met en scène” instaure son propre espace d’énonciation.

Charaudeau & Maingueneau (in *Dictionnaire d’analyse du discours* 2002: 515-518)

[A notion which in discourse analysis is often employed conjointly with that of “situation of communication”. But, when talking about a “scene of enunciation” one puts an emphasis on the fact that that enunciation happens in an established space, defined by a genre of discourse but also on a constructive dimension of discourse which puts itself on the stage, installs its own enunciation space (Charaudeau & Maingueneau 2002: 515-518, translation is mine).]

Accordingly, the scholar distinguishes between three scenes of enunciation which can occur in a text:

- **Global scene** (*englobante* = including, encompassing), signifies a type of discourse (political, religious, advertising, etc.) and the components of a relevant global situation: Participants, setting, general aims as well as cognitive schemas. On this level, the reader tries to understand from what social institution this text is produced and thinks how s/he should position him/herself vis-à-vis this text, as a citizen in

political discourse, as a believer in religious discourse, as a consumer in advertising, etc.

- **Genre scene** defines a more specific scene which moulds the flow of utterances into a genre pattern, pursuing a certain aim, assigning specific roles for participants, establishing temporal and spatial frames, situating a text in the relevant medium of communication.
- **Scenography** superimposes another genre which functions in the mode “as if” (Adam 2011a: 13-14). Scenography puts both global and genre scenes into the background and creates a new scene with its own time and space relations, as well as new roles of the participants. The scenography is constructed by the text itself. A text transplants another genre into its structure in order to validate the type of discourse.

When borrowing a model from another genre, the creator temporally obscures discursive and generic scenes, s/he makes the viewer forget these ‘real’ life modes for a moment. Relegating them to the background, s/he ‘sells’ the same discourse and genre in different scenographic covers at the same time.

Maingueneau (2012: 61) insists on the fact that the first two scenes – a type of discourse and a speech genre – establish a frame (*cadre scénique*), a stable basis where the utterances acquire their meanings. Taking our posting as an example, its receiver reads and makes sense of the text, only keeping in mind its type of discourse and its speech genre. In other words, the reader is trapped as s/he receives the text as a friendly conversation on the phone at first. Then, by returning to global and genre scenes, s/he apprehends its synthesised meaning.

Fairclough (2003: 51) views these reappropriation cases as a matter of “recontextualization”. The linguist claims that the latter is “a movement from one context to another, entailing particular transformations consequent upon how the material that is moved, recontextualized, figures within that new context”.

Eventually, Charaudeau and Maingueneau argue that speech genres would considerably differ in terms of their openness to other genres (Charaudeau & Maingueneau in *Dictionnaire d'analyse du discours* 2002: 517). Not all genres necessitate a ‘doubling’ of genre scenes. Previously, I have discussed that some genres never incite scenographic scenes (telephone directories, laws, exchanges with pilots and navigators, police reports, etc.). Less rigid genres like journal articles obey some canon structures but at the same time open their frontiers to

implement other genres in their textual structure. On the opposite pole, there are speech genres which are not only 'friendly' to other genres but they need these forms to accomplish their aims. For instance, Adam and Bonhomme (2009: 143-144) conform that advertising as a genre is capable to absorb other existing genres. Choosing forms which are more prestigious (classical tragedy), culturally valid (horoscope), practical (recipe), or just more amusing (riddle), ads, according to scholars, diminish their 'dry' tone and banal matrix from mere describing and selling goods to the public. Charaudeau and Maingueneau conclude that speech genres which resort the most to scenography are those which aim to influence the addressee, to change his/her convictions (Charaudeau & Maingueneau in *Dictionnaire d'analyse du discours* 2002: 517). Furthermore, I also show that similar to the compact multimodal genre of advertising, an internet meme is a haven of departures and arrivals of various genres which makes an ideal meeting point for different discourses. It is an experimental field; the results of such experiments help political discourse to achieve its functions.

To sum up, scenography in textual linguistics is a practice of integrating genres of other discourses into textual structure; adjusting a norm, a canon to the situation of a singular text exemplar; putting global discourse and genre scenes into the background and establishing new roles, spatial and temporal relations.

6.5 Analysis of the imitation of genres

Taking into consideration the previous studies presented above, I am going to proceed with a qualitative analysis of several cases of typological intertextuality, thereby plunging into various discursive contexts that every borrowed genre brings with it. I attempt to examine this particular text-constituting mechanism based on the examples found on pages of FB ideological groups. More precisely, the analysis is firstly aimed at detecting prototypical genre patterns that have been incorporated into internet memes of the US pre-election discourse. In doing so, I attempt to answer the following question: *What are the markers of integration of one genre into the textual structure of another?* Secondly, I formulate functions referring to genres other than traditionally political ones when addressing the question: *What are the communicative purposes of these creative memes?*

Having collected and investigated the data, I grouped the memes into ‘families’ based on similarities in their borrowed structure and imitated discourses. In total, I have organised data into several groups which are imitations of newspaper front pages, a warning poster, advertising, scientific, didactic discourses, administrative discourse or the style of official documents, practical discourse with genres of incentive to act, book covers, film release posters, recreational genres of games, literary discourse split into lyric and narrative fictive genres, and finally, imitation of warning signs and a group of epitaphs. In what follows, I provide an intertextual analysis of memes organised into these families.

6.5.1 Imitation of newspaper front pages

Some memes borrow from genres of the news media, in particular from the printed press such as newspapers. Newspapers that contain foreign and domestic, advertisements, news, announcements, and articles including comments have multifarious functions. They inform a wide audience of current events, sometimes suggest possible interpretations, and give their opinion about the main news (Bourlak *et al.* 2010: 25). Depending on the area in focus, the style of the press can vary, however it often includes neologisms, international words, clichés, abbreviations, acronyms, names of officials and institutions. The attempt by meme creators to make memes look like written press genres encounters some obstacles and presents a challenge. The restriction of space allotted on FB does not allow for the imitation of such complex genres as brief news items, press reports, editorials, essays, feature articles, interviews, and chronicle columns. As a solution, a number of memes take the condensed version of newspaper front pages with their top stories and headlines that are easily recognisable as such by the users.

1. ‘St. Louis Star-Times newspaper front page’

The newspaper style imitation can be illustrated on the basis of a meme created by the FB group *Formidable Republican Opposition* and shared by the group *The Election* (Figure 150). The real genre is a FB meme that encourages the public to create memes against Republicans. However, structurally, it reproduces another type of text, namely a newspaper front page. Literally, the meme informs supporters of Democrats, Liberals and everyone concerned with the proclamation of war against their values and necessary measures that must be taken. The

poignant image of Uncle Sam, a national icon of the United States, calls for resistance and defence (Fischer 2005: 327).

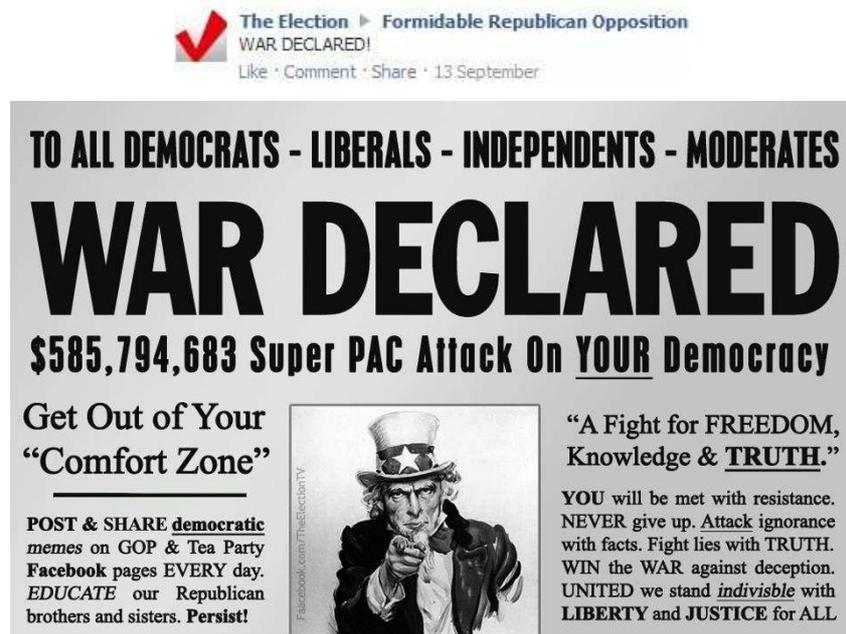


Figure 150. Imitation of a special issue newspaper front page

The famous front page of the newspaper *St. Louis Star-Times* can be considered a prototype of this meme (Figure 151). Issued on Monday evening, December 8, 1941, it deals with casualties on the Hawaiian Island Pearl Harbor as a result of the Japanese air raid and the immediate declaration of war between the United States and Japanese empire. The attack led to the United States' participation in World War II.



Figure 151. *St. Louis Star-Times* front page, December 8, 1941
(Source: www.stltoday.com/news/local/columns/editors)

It is clear that we deal not only with a systemic reference but also a single-text reference in this case (Broich & Pfister 1985: 48-57) since the post under analysis, along with the generic pattern, also shows the concrete and explicitly marked reference to a specific pre-text. Taking into account the referential intertextuality, I focus on typological intertextuality that is revealing as to (a) how prototypical genre patterns are incorporated into the meme of the US presidential campaign and (b) the meme's reference to a concrete preceding text.

So, the creative FB meme imitates the structure of a newspaper front page, firstly, by reproducing its formal characteristics.

The title given to the top story is the headline *War Declared* which is the precise repetition of the title of the prototype paper with its capital letters of a considerable size. It is written in a telegraphic manner, notably an elliptical sentence with an auxiliary verb and the article omitted. It briefly informs the reader about sensational news and what the articles that follow will be about. Its abrupt form contains a clear and intriguing message to arouse interest in the potential reader and to catch his/her eye. Just like the editors of American newspapers, the creators of the posting pay special attention to the title, admitting that few read beyond the headline, or at best the lead. They borrow a ready-made headline to lure the reader into going through the whole of the item or at least a greater part of it.

This short headline is further expanded by subheadings. Their brevity is secured by the use of nominative and elliptical sentences such as *\$ 585,794, 683 Super PAC Attack on your Democracy; A Fight for Freedom, Knowledge & Truth*, and attributive noun groups instead of prepositional of-phrases like *Comfort Zone*. The subheading of the post, although providing its own information, is a mirror reflection of its counterpart in the precedent text (Compare: *\$ 585,794, 683 Super PAC Attack on your Democracy* and *3,000 Casualties in Jap Attack On Hawaii*). There is also assonance between two subtitles (*PAC Attack* and *Jap Attack*). The skillfully turned heading and subheadings summarise the message, move the reader, and invite him/her to read the rest of the article.

Then, just like the original newspaper front page, the layout of the posting is divided into two columns with the picture located in the center. Each column presents a news report with its proper title (*Get Out of Your "Comfort Zone"; A Fight for Freedom, Knowledge and Truth*) – where words are written in capital letters. The titles and the body of both texts contain highlighted quotations (Compare: *"A Fight for Freedom, Knowledge and Truth."* and *"We Will Triumph – So Help Us, God"*). Quotations and reported speech are vital markers of

newspaper language since the latter seeks authenticity, proof and the correctness of the facts reported or the journalist's desire to avoid responsibility (Galperin 1981: 270).

A narrow angle of vision, i.e. smaller than a human can see around him/her, hides the end of the article from the reader's view. Since the posting imitates a breaking news report, its structure reproduces 'an inverted pyramid', i.e. a top-down presentation of information, a descending order of significance. The most important facts have already been announced in the heading and the first paragraphs; there is thus no need to 'waste' the allotted space and bore the reader.

Intertextual links between two genres can also be traced when juxtaposing lexical parameters. The posting under analysis reveals the extensive use of special political terms such as *democrats, liberals, democracy, Republican*; non-term political vocabulary like "*comfort-zone*", *liberty, justice, united, freedom*; newspaper clichés like *get out of your "comfort zone"*, *a fight for freedom* are expressions based on trite images which add pompous and hackneyed characters (Galperin 1981: 270); abbreviations such as *PAC* (a political action committee), *GOP* (Grand Old Party); facts are supported by figures (posting provides a figure \$ 585,794, 683 to show the fund raised by individuals, corporations, unions, and other Republican groups).

Other characteristics of newspaper style can be found in concise syntactic structures of the meme. Here we cannot but agree with Galperin who claims that "as the reporter is obliged to be brief, he naturally tries to cram all his facts into the space allotted. This tendency predetermines the peculiar composition of brief news items and the syntactic structure of the sentences" (Galperin 1981: 272). In addition, the inverse word order, typical for newspaper style, makes phrases more emphatic (*United we stand indivisible with liberty and justice for all*).

The audience's attention is caught by graphic contrasts, which are typical for newspaper style changes in types, for example, printing headlines in larger and heavier fonts, highlighting some information by use of italics. The gradation of black and white colours repeats newspaper chromatic characteristics.

The original photo of Roosevelt and congressmen is however replaced by the picture of Uncle Sam, which was borrowed from J. M. Flagg's poster created in 1917 that aimed at recruiting soldiers for WWI and later for WWII:



Figure 152. J. M. Flagg’s 1917 war poster
(Source: https://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncle_Sam)

The graphic allusion to the American national icon Uncle Sam, symbolising the country, along with the borrowed poster is a case of intericonicity. The image establishes personal contact with the reader, penetrating the latter with Uncle Sam’s steadfast gaze. It gives additional emotions and expressivity, calls for actions, and thus plays a crucial role in double coding to reinforce the ideological message.

Although the meme reproduces the form of the preceding text by using explicit markers of a laconic journalist’s language, in many ways, it breaks the canon and reveals its real nature. A close look at the composition shows that the posting completely ignores the lead, which is what journalists call the ‘five-w-and-h-pattern rule’ (who-what-why-how-where-when). By answering these questions, the lead sums up the whole narrative of the event which “helps to satisfy the curiosity of people who are pressed for time or just lazy about reading further” (Bourlak *et al.* 2010: 26). The event, participants, and their actions are not listed in a traditional lead but they are announced in titles and paragraphs. An important attribute of any journalist’s work is that a byline is not detected neither: There is no indication of the article’s author, the date, the place of issue of the paper, and the original source of news. Instead, right from the first words of the column, the text calls for actions and gives instructions for actions. While the proto-text presents subsequent information in a facts-only manner, the posting abounds in words with a direct recruitment for actions. Verbs in the imperative mood illustrate this, e.g. *get out of your “comfort zone”, post & share, educate, persist, never give up, attack, fight, win*. In addition, the text contains lexical expressions that are typical for internet memes, e.g. *post & share* reveal the real status of the genre. Although the posting

provides some abbreviations which help to direct the reader towards newspaper style, yet they are informal labels like *GOP, Tea Party*. The absence of complex sentences, attributive noun groups and verbal infinitives, participial and gerundial constructions, which are all of paramount importance in news items, is compensated by brief sentences and parallel syntactic constructions. Even if a news report genre supports emotionally coloured graphical units, yet the posting exaggerates with highlighting means. Heavy graphics will be noticed in underlined words (Attack); doubling the importance with the simultaneous use of italics and capitals (*EDUCATE*); italics and underlining (*invisible*); capitals and bold (**LIBERTY, JUSTICE**); capitals, underlining and bold (**YOUR, TRUTH**).

All this violates the norms of newspaper style. The described characteristics point to playful incongruity and reveal the jocular character of the meme as it contradicts the rather strict genre of the press article. The aim of the meme is not to inform the reader about sensational events like the original prototype paper does, but to instigate the American public to be active in an ideological war. The meme mainly alludes to the involvement of Super PACs (independent-expenditure only committees) which were engaged in unlimited political spending, independently of the campaigns. Unlike traditional PACs, they raised funds from corporations without any legal limit on donation size to support the Republican campaign, which caused a number of protests among the Democrats. Taking these steps by the Republicans as an attack, the meme creators have made a sensation out of it due to the chosen genre form and parallels with the past.

Therefore, although the posting looks in many ways like a newspaper front page, it is not interpreted by the reader as such. It is decoded as an internet meme due to invariant characteristics of the genre, i.e. situational genre features (real time, space, medium, status of participants and function). As discussed earlier, Maingueneau (2012: 61) insists on the fact that the first two scenes, notably the type of discourse and the speech genre, establish the main frame which is a stable basis where the utterances acquire their meanings. Taking this meme as an example, its reader, although putting the scenography into the foreground, reads and makes sense of the text, only keeping in mind the type of discourse and speech genre.

2. *'The Washington Post newspaper front page'*

Another suitable example of typological intertextuality, which is based on newspaper top stories coverage, is a meme created by the internet humourist and political activist Mario Piperni (Figure 153). The text structurally reproduces an edition of *The Washington Post*. The

choice of the paper is probably motivated by its high reputation, being one of the oldest extant newspapers and the winner of numerous Pulitzer Prizes, with left-wing bias in reporting.



Figure 153. Imitation of *The Washington Post* front page

The original paper has its own house style and its broadsheet is recognised in the meme by way of the preferred form of expression. Like in the original daily edition, its top heading shows the name of the newspaper which is written in its ancient gothic style, the date and the place of issue. A picture dominates the centre and occupies the greater part of the broadsheet. A large headline accompanies the picture above. Written in a larger heavier bold font, it entices the audience to read further and find out more about current events. Another recognised element of the newspaper style is the use of columns with justified alignment which stretches and shrinks lines inside the columns to make the text fit within allotted dimensions. Placed on the right corner of the paper, the columns allow for the arrangement of a picture that grabs the reader's full attention. Placed immediately after the headline, sub-headlines are another attempt to grab and hold the reader's attention. The two sub-headlines

give the reader a little more information about the story and introduce the latter to the articles. They are written in a font that is still larger than the actual text, but smaller than the main headline, and not written in bold. So, the use of the newspaper's features helps the reader to identify the textual type as a newspaper front page.

Besides its macro-segmentation, the meme respects a number of linguistic characteristics. The newspaper style is recognised through the choice of interrelated lexical, phraseological and grammatical means, reflected in the structure of the headline and sub-headlines. The reader constructs the meaning through the semantics of verbal components as well as images depicted in the photo.

The headline *Gingrich Hot Air Disaster* is written in a telegraphic manner. Its brevity is ensured by the use of the nominative elliptical sentence. It contains an intriguing message about Newt Gringrich, a candidate for the Republican Party presidential nomination in the 2012 elections. Combined in a phrase involving the semantics of an air catastrophe, the topic arouses the interest and affects the reader. The audience's attention is completely arrested by the image. Depicting an explosion and a giant airship in flames, it is a strong appeal to the feelings of the addressee. Furthermore, it gives the reader a sense of being physically present at the reported event as an eyewitness of the catastrophe. The competent viewer will unmistakably recognise the disaster which happened in the sky above Lakehurst, New Jersey in 1937 when the German zeppelin Hindenburg exploded. The event was the subject of the newsreel coverage, including spectacular photos like the one borrowed by the meme creator from a photograph of Gus Pasquerella:

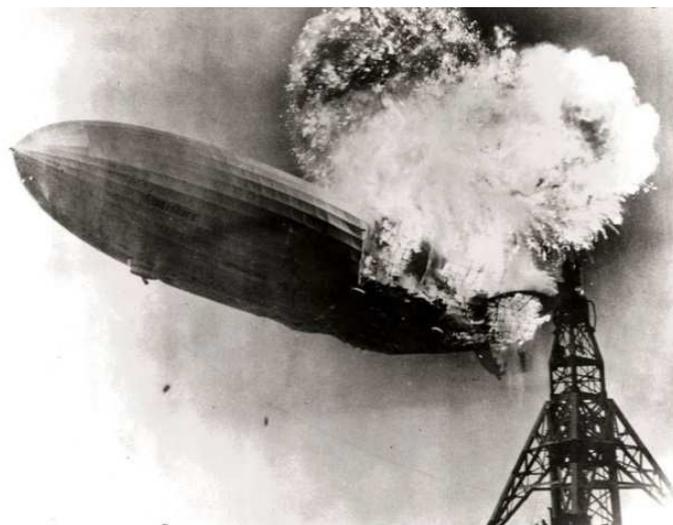


Figure 154. Photograph of Gus Pasquerella
(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hindenburg_burning.jpg)

The cockpit of the burning airship is personalised with the head of the US ex-speaker in the meme. Absurd and incongruous enough, an added human element is however well-integrated into the photo, perfectly matching the chromatic black and white style of the newspaper.

The subheading fixes the sense prompted by the image and extends the rather short and mysterious headline which certainly needs elaboration. Smaller than the main headline but larger than the actual 'text', it answers the reader's questions and satisfies his/her curiosity by stating that the Republican candidate in the 2012 primaries suspends his campaign. Newt Gingrich was heavily criticised by his proposal to have a permanent colony on the Moon by 2020 to reinvigorate the American Space Program, to which the second title "Romney Ponders Gingrich Moon Colony" alludes. Although the sub-headlines give more information, they remain in a rather compact form aligned with the columns. A powerful means of achieving compactness is the omission of articles, pronouns and the use of verbs in the simple present to avoid auxiliaries. Regardless of the perfect form of the newspaper collage, several incongruities nevertheless break the expectations of the reader. The name of the newspaper is *The Washington Toast*, there is the personification of the airship with the head of Newt Gingrich, the absence of first names and titles of officials, the blurring of the columns' lines (the author of the meme realises that the FB user is pressed for time or just lazy about going through the details); all of these features are characteristics of a political meme which shows that the reader deals with pre-election discourse in social media. The message of the meme is to conceptualise the suspension of the Gingrich campaign in terms of the incident with the passenger-carrying rigid airship. Like the air disaster shattered public confidence in the giant and marked the abrupt end of the airship era, the fail of Newt Gingrich to be the Republican nominee makes his Moon ambitions collapse. Just like the German passenger ship, Gingrich's meteoric rise as Republican candidate mesmerised the media and gave it lots of coverage. And like LZ 129 Hindenburg, he crashed before reaching the destination, i.e. the White House.

The very selection and the way of presentation of news like the Liberal-leaning prestigious *The Washington Post* aims at getting the reader's attention. Furthermore, the author of the meme stirs emotions by drawing parallels with the crash of the Hindenburg airship.

Both memes imitating newspaper front pages borrow their core element that is an account of a top story, current news of timely importance, burning and topical for the moment. Taking into consideration the concrete topics of the pre-existing text, i.e. the declaration of war and the

reporting of the disaster, the journalists' goal is to inform the audience about sensational news, for which they seek maximum clarity, precision and appeal to feelings. The resort to these types of texts along with allusions to concrete historical dramas is a search for perfect forms to grab the FB readers' attention. The audience in question wants to know about the events that touch them, interesting or frightening, rather than read about events that are mundane and ordinary. Framing the topic of the Super Pac Republican campaign financing as a war and the Gingrich campaign resignation as air crash disaster cannot leave the FB readers indifferent. The purpose of such special issues is to inform the public about remarkable events; therefore, if the reader sees the newspaper format, s/he expects the information to be relevant and noteworthy.

To sum up, since newspapers serve the purpose of informing the reader and/or providing him/her with an evaluation of the information published, they become very attractive for imitation. The similarity of functions explains the eagerness of meme creators to borrow their visual forms and means to bring the message to the public in the most effective way. With the exception of some specific genres, the language of newspapers is kept with the allegedly neutral and unbiased nature of reporting facts. Like journalists, meme creators also seek to influence public opinion on political matters. In contrast to real newspapers, the aim of memes is especially to satirise, mock, and openly attack opposition groups or promote their own philosophy. Therefore, they differ considerably in the ultimately subjective handling of political facts. The authority of the chosen genre of a front page or a wanted poster helps to give the information a sensational character through the highlighting of the most important news; the reduction of genres into headlines with pathetic photos create an 'eye-catching' effect. A meme in the form of a newspaper announcement gives the impression of authentic information, but at the same time establishing an intimate relationship with the reader through direct address.

6.5.2 Imitation of a wanted poster

The genre of a so-called wanted or reward poster is included in the newsprint group since it is produced with the help of a media source and its main function is to inform the public of the local events. This type of text is usually distributed to alert people of an alleged criminal who

authorities want to apprehend. Besides the function of informing the public, the genre of wanted posters resembles print media genres in layout and telegraphic style.

A meme which appeared on the *Conservative Christians* FB “Like Page” borrows a range of composition sequences from this genre, which allows it to be recognised as such (Figure 155). They include the picture of a missing individual, the description of the wanted person with his guilty act (*is suspect...*), followed by a message of caution (*Be on the look-out!*), a call to stop him (*Capture and return*), and the sum of the reward (*Amount of cash reward*) which is eventually offered for his capture. The most important information is highlighted with capitalisation which inevitably catches the viewer’s attention and increases legibility.



Figure 155. Imitation of a wanted poster

The texture shows that the meme does not imitate modern digital billboard publicity. It rather involves a withered, poor quality newsprint paper in black and white writing. The stylisation of letters is achieved through the choice of the Clarendon typeface, which is characterised by thick, block-like slab serifs, extremely popular in the American Old West in the nineteenth century. The blatant picture of the runaway slave with a string bag over the shoulder immediately brings the FB user back to the dismaying times of slavery. Besides its graphic characteristics, some lexical units point to this historic period and later years, i.e. *plantation, a person of colour, lynch people of colour*; allusions to *Jim Crow* (a pejorative expression meaning ‘Negro’; Jim Crow laws mandated racial discrimination in the Southern United States) and *Bull Connor* (a Southern Democrat who enforced racial segregation denying to attribute civil rights to African Americans). These indexes help people recollect the dark pages of American History when fugitive slaves left their masters and travelled without authorisation in search of freedom. Once captured, they were the subject of severe penalties. All citizens were required to cooperate and provide aid in returning runaways to their owners. The efforts included the distribution of reward posters and flyers, which were the means of mediation between slave catchers, police departments, the government and the public.

Although the meme perfectly imitates the multimodal structure of an old nineteenth-century wanted poster, the text is not interpreted as such. Its contents reveal modern political discourse in the USA which is irrelevant for the reward poster due to a bulk of political vocabulary such as *Democratic Party, Liberal, Republican, Conservative, Tea Party, votes, taxpayer*. Furthermore, the viewer is puzzled by the paradoxal accusations against the suspects. Runaways are presented as criminals and their values – patriotism, defence of the rights of the individual and his/her personal responsibility – are shown as ‘nonsense’ which contradict logic and common sense. Furthermore, these notions are core values of the present-day Republican Party that promote the idea of individualism when it comes to social issues and views the source of social problems as a lack of responsibility.

The text relies on the device of irony in using the language which signifies the opposite of what is literally expressed. The drama of the situation is created through the shift of perspectives from different historical periods and the evolution of views over the subject matter. On the textual surface, the wanted person, the slave appears to be an outlaw, a reckless criminal like it was believed by many in the past when slavery was institutionalised; then again, from a contemporary perspective, slaves are viewed as sufferers of racial discrimination. Likewise, citizens with slave-holding interests were farmers and planters

involved in the cotton industry in the Southern states who legally relied on slave labour, what today is viewed as a shameful practice. Hence, when presenting this analogy, parallels are drawn between slaves and modern Republicans, on the one hand, and slave-catchers and Democrats, on the other hand. People under the Conservative banner are portrayed as poor victims who are trying to escape to a free state, and upon their return to the master are to face harsh punishments whereas the supporters of liberal ideology are framed as partisans of racial segregation. Manipulation resides in apprehending the present-day situation through the lenses of the past. Indeed, the practice of slavery itself is attributed to Democrat followers as in the past, they represented mostly the rural South where people made their living out of plantation and slave labour. On the contrary, GOP was founded by anti-slavery activists, modernists, Northern states with a developed industry. Therefore, the ideology of American conservatism does not contrast with the Democrat liberalism on the basis of modern values which changed several times in the course of history. The difference is rather drawn on the basis of beliefs that have been transported from the Black history. Consequently, contemporary Democrats carry the burden of the past, being labelled hijackers of freedom and basic individual rights, as well as parasites who nourish themselves out of the toiling labour of others.

The real political status of the meme is further revealed in the last paragraph of the poster where the authors admit that the practice of lynching slavery is the subject of the past (*The Party of Jim Crow, The Party of Bull Connor in the not so distant past*). At the same time, the meme creators depict the Democrats' present-day politics as the same on the scale of values. The message of the meme is the following: With the change of time, the values remain the same such as the fight for freedom of the individual, free market capitalism from the conservative perspective and 'stealing' economic liberties through tax paying, and the reinforcement of government control on the part of the Democrats.

The presentation of these ideas through the form of the reward poster has strong potential which is based on its graphics. Ultra-bold types which developed in the early nineteenth century with the expansion of printing and advertising and the need of attention-grabbing typeface remain profitable in modern cyber campaigns. The magnified image of bolder lettering with its retro look appeals to FB readers and easily grabs their attention. The picture of a fleeing slave evokes sad memories of the past which have a strong emotional impact on the spectator.

6.5.3 Imitation of ads

A suitable genre for imitation during presidential campaigns online is the commercial advert. The genre, which is derived from the sub-discourse of newspaper announcements, developed its own distinctive features, each set depending on its oral or written form. Ads, in contrast to political memes, are related to marketing campaigns and targeted at making people buy goods or services. However, like internet memes, they have similar sub-aims of getting the attention of potential consumers, they display the advantages of the product and convince them of the necessity of an advertised object. Ads “offer credible benefits by promising tangible results, like prestige, power, or fame” and generate the desire to possess the product advertised and correspond to the created image (Bourlak *et al.* 2010: 74). This predetermines the way the texts of ads are structured. Usually, they include the slogan, the body, the name of a brand and the company’s logo, although all these components are arbitrary (Lugrin 2006: 102-104).

1. ‘A health clinic ad’

The meme posted by the *Occupy This!* FB group adopts advertising style that imitates the listing of services that a medical institution can provide (Figure 156).



Figure 156. Imitation of a health clinic ad

In doing so, it looks like addressing a certain group of the audience that has health problems. Its body starts with the formulation of a problem, which is immediately followed by the optimal solution proposed to solve it. Hence, its verbal text is structured according to a typical schema: Problem – solution – contact information. It starts with the enumeration of symptoms (*Amnesia – Dizzy Spells – Urinary Incontinence. Metal Parts Falling from Your Pant Legs?*), interrogating the potential patient with the help of a question mark. It then proceeds with *We can help*, highlighted in upper case, and finishes with initiating the reader to contact the Chelsea Mezvinsky Health Clinic. The text has typical imperative structures (*Call or Visit*) as if encouraging the reader to use advertised services. In addition, every new sequence starts at a new line, respecting macro-segmentation of the compact genre.

The name of the clinic as well as the symptoms evoke a series of associations with Hillary Clinton's dizzy spell that she had during the 9/11 commemoration ceremony in New York. In the picture above, the caption-advertisement fixes the meaning of the text and shows the Democrat candidate while leaving the clinic. Although the form of the meme advertises the services of the health centre, its meaning encrypts bitter sarcasm. The meme raises serious questions of Clinton's ability to serve as President of the country, notably by way of adopting the 'mask' of an ad. The reader is not addressed as a citizen, a voter but as a potential patient, a client who is approached by an offer of medical service. The image of Hillary Clinton above the verbal information plays a crucial role in ruining the temporary scenography that was established by the text, orienting the reader to political discourse.

2. 'A remedy ad'

Similarly, the following meme posted by the *Rude and Rotten Republicans* (Figure 157) shows that it can help to find an answer to a health problem. Literally, the text promotes a painkiller naming the trademark as ConwayLax and contains specific pharmaceutical vocabulary which indicates quantity and taste (*100 mg, orange flavored 25 liquid gels*); this is typical for drugs, and the absence of risk factors (*approved for use, tested*). Like in all advertising, the title is designed to grasp the reader's attention with the help of a large type *Softening relief from the discomfort*, showing the usefulness of the object advertised. The compelling, benefit-driven effect is achieved by so-called 'power-words' that are characteristic of advertising style *So much winning!* The body of the text is a further extension of the title, which preserves the same spirit through lexis with the semantics of removing pain and discomfort, i.e. *Daily Comfort; Softener; Gentle, softening relief*. The morphology

supports the chosen genre in the extensive use of attributes that describe the product, while the syntactic structure abounds in repetitions and elliptical sentences. The macro-composition of the text with the division into short neatly organised separate segments reflects the layout of advertising. The choice of dominant chromatic tones of light blue and white adds to the promotion of the soothing cure. Consequently, on structure-compositional, syntactic, lexical and graphic language levels, the text advertises the object in the seeming attempt to convince the reader of the necessity to buy it.



Figure 157. Imitation of a remedy ad

Even though the text looks like an advert, the real emotional response that the meme wants to evoke in the reader is not to make people purchase the promoted product. The meme remixes an existing advertisement with political ingredients – *bigotry*, *Trump*, *a teleprompter*, *poll* with a picture of Kellyanne Conway, Donald Trump’s campaign manager, later appointed as his Counselor. In addition, the red coloured *Trump*, *approved for use as a teleprompter*, *So much winning!*, *poll tested* may point to semiotics associated with the Republicans in the 2016 ö. These multimodal elements disclose the false character of the ad and unveil the real goal of the text. By targeting the campaign strategist of the Republican candidate, the meme indirectly aims at Donald Trump himself and underlines his intolerance to a different ideology. Kellyanne Conway’s immediate appearance in media, after the Republican runner’s controversial speeches in an attempt to save the positive image of the candidate and give

sense to the American public, are framed as a *softening relief from the discomfort of bigotry*. The heavy criticism of Donald Trump is revealed in the use of the word *pussyficated* with negative semantics as well as the noun *teleprompter*, turning Mrs Conway into a device which prompts Donald Trump. The invented name *ConwayLax* resonates with ‘relax’ which reinforces the idea of softening the provocative discourse of the candidate (the idea is double-coded by appeasing pale blue over raging bright red). The linkage of the political phenomenon to the genre of advertising of painkiller shows the extraordinary ability of meme creators to relate the unfamiliar with the familiar and to frame the strategy of the campaign manager in negative terms. Masking its direct intention, the meme demonstrates an original way of attracting FB users’ attention, picturing the new aspect of opposition ideology, and leading voters off the campaign message in an amusing way.

3. ‘An airline company ad’

Another meme found on the FB page *Occupy This!* also imitates the genre of an advert when describing the promotional feature of an airline company (Figure 158).



Figure 158. Imitation of an airline company ad

Its compositional structure reproduces various components of the advertising genre, respecting their usual strategic place in the ad. It means that they are organised in a way to perfectly replicate the typical layout of the chosen genre, evoking right associations in the readers. The text gives the name of the company *Lolita Express*, followed by the slogan, a laconic line to be associated with the name of the company in the form of the hashtag *FlyWithHer* at the top of the iconotext. The body *Proudly serving young and old, from Libya to Haiti* is placed immediately after the image of a flying aircraft at the bottom of the text.

Written in smaller typography, it respects the norms of the chosen genre. On the content level, it literally addresses all generations who can enjoy the service, offering a rich palette of long-distance flights. Like many ads, the text is signed by a logo in the right corner at the bottom, notably to remind the viewers who provides the advertised service. Similarly to the previous meme, the text prioritises elliptical sentences that are typical for ads.

The ‘trademark’ of the company nevertheless shows the link with political discourse since Hillary Clinton’s official campaign logo is transformed into a commercial logotype. Another striking alien element which crosses out the text scenography is the statement *Paid for by Hillary for America*, written against black background which contrasts with light blue sky and pink tones. Due to these elements permeated with political messages, the slogan *FlyWithHer* becomes a pun where the meaning is shifting from the airline company to the political motto of Hillary Clinton.

All this shows that in reality the text does not actually market a travel destination where the airline flies but encrypts more profound meanings. Combining the scandalous private jet Lolita Express with the name of Clinton reconstructs in the readers’ memories a series of narratives. It inevitably connects the couple with Jeffrey Epstein, the company’s owner, reported to be their friend. An explosive element in this relation is that the billionaire was convicted of soliciting sexual relations with a minor and sex slavery on board of his plane. The combination of the reputation of the private jet with the Nabokov-inspired nickname and the husband of the Democrat 2016 nominee as its frequent passenger infers that Bill Clinton was also involved in suspicious activities. In this light, the attributes *old* and *young* acquire new meanings, indirectly accusing Bill Clinton of paedophilia. Consequently, like others of Bill Clinton’s sexual scandals, this narrative is used to tatter the reputation of his wife balloting for presidency, claiming her personal involvement and support of the company. Furthermore, advertising an exclusive travel destination to Libya, notwithstanding the fact that it is a non-flying zone, the meme reminds the readers of the case of Benghazi and the absence of actions on the part of the ex-Secretary of State. When promoting the exotic terminus in Haiti on the visible textual surface, the meme actually targets the Clinton Foundation and its mission on the island. During the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump’s team identified the Clintons with failures of humanitarianism in Haiti after the destructive aftermath of the earthquake in January 2010. Consequently, the text formally represents the commercial value and benefits of the offer of the company while, on its deeper functional level, it is filled with criticism of another ideological group.

4. 'An ad of a pantsuit for sale'

Another imitation of a similar style was posted by the *Occupy This!* FB group (Figure 159). The text looks like an announcement which found its place in the daily dedicated space of a newspaper. The 'ad' presents an object for sale. Structurally, it follows the model of the chosen genre by providing the title *For Sale*, naming the object, offering its short description and giving contact information. The text contains the closing formulas *Serious Requires Only* and *No Phone Calls Please* as if limiting the access, all of which is common for this type of announcement. On a syntactic level, the text is constructed by (a) brief nominative sentences where (b) parts of speech like articles and prepositions are omitted. As we have witnessed in the example of the previous meme, the word limit in newspaper announcements aims at economising space and expenses. In addition, the imperative *Please Direct all Inquiries to*, typical of the genre of announcements, provides a neutral, unbiased and straightforward tone. The gradual switch from upper to lower case shows the order of importance of information units which is typical for announcements. All this, plus the segmentation of the text in clear-cut paragraphs, conform to the norms of the chosen style. The contents of the text contribute to the established scenography: The object for sale is a pantsuit of large size; the announcer puts forward its special features by stating that it is a new designer label with an *extra absorbent crotch protection*.



Figure 159. Imitation of an announcement for sale

Considering these structural constituents, the reader of the posting would take it seriously as a real announcement except for two striking alien elements. The attribute *inaugural* to qualify the suit and the mention of *15 Old House Ln. Chappaqua, NY 10514*, the residence of Hillary

and Bill Clinton in New York, inevitably links the text to political discourse. In addition, the presence of the image of the object of sale as well as colouring the *Inaugural Pantsuit* violet (yet classified newspaper ads do not usually allow these practices) entails inconsistency on a formal level. As soon as the reader notices these anomalies that are incompatible with the detached tone of the newspaper announcement, s/he is returned to the political meme genre.

Accordingly, the main goal of the meme is definitely to celebrate the victory of the Republican candidate Donald Trump; presumably so because the meme was posted after the elections in December 2016. The triumph of Conservative FB users is inseparable from profane lowering of the defeated candidate through mocking her clothes style and exaggerating the size. Exposing the couple's address in Chappaqua, one of the richest zip codes in the US, repeats one Republican line of attack, notably the Democrat's revenue. In this light, the explanation *All Proceeds Will Go To Charity* at the bottom of the text becomes an indirect reference to the Clinton Foundation which has also been under intensifying scrutiny of the Republicans during the 2016 presidential campaign, which was constantly accused of being an opaque corrupted organisation.

The imitation of newspaper classifieds, like no other genre, creates the effect of real communication, addressing the reader as a potential service user or a buyer, thus concealing the real intention of attacking the opposition. The humorous outcome is strong due to the clashes of the serious tone of an announcement and the politically biased information.

In conclusion, the short compact multimodal form of the advertising genre, which is in nature similar to internet memes, is easily imitated and therefore eagerly borrowed by political activists to delegitimise their opponents. Following the prototypical model of marketing publicity, meme creators however deviate on the functional plane. The promotion of the product or service turns out to be a parody, since all imitated forms analysed above are aimed at satirically mocking the leaders of the opposition groups. Ads constituting an integral part of our everyday life seem to be omnipresent, in public transport, billboards, radio, TV, electronic media and so on. Often perceived as an intrusion in our private space, they might produce a negative effect since people are aware of the fact that they pursue the objective of increasing sales, resorting to manipulative strategies and appealing to the customer's mind (Bourlak *et al.* 2010: 74). Retaining this aspect in a political meme can help to reinforce the negative image of an object of criticism.

6.5.4 Imitation of genres of scientific discourse

Internet memes actively resort to genres of scientific discourse and in doing so create pseudoscientific messages with a strong persuasive effect on the reader. The main function of scientific discourse is to work out and ground theoretically objective knowledge about reality, to create new concepts, relations between different phenomena and disclose general laws of existence. Scientific prose is based on already known, systematised and defined facts. This is why scientific genres begin with statements which are taken as self-evident and needing no proof by the general public. The use of terms and neologisms specific for each branch of science contributes to lucidity and exactness; the logical presentation and cohesion of thought manifests itself in the developed feature of scientific syntax, i.e. the use of established postulatory, formulative and argumentative patterns. Precisely formulated statements are accompanied, if considered necessary, by quotations, footnotes, references to sources reflect the dialogue of the author and other scholars (Galperin 1981: 281; Bourlak *et al.* 2010: 61). Internet political memes do not present scientific knowledge as such, they neither convey an analysis, nor do they provide references to prior, scientifically proven sources. Meme creators only borrow the scientific form of expression and fill it with biased points of view. They imitate formal salient features of scientific communication such as objectivity, logical sequence, lucidity, exactness and impersonality and make them visible on concrete levels of text organisation.

1. 'A definition from medical sub-discourse'

An example of a meme which imitates scientific definitions appeared on the *Republican Jesus* FB "Like Page" (Figure 160). The text borrows the matrix of medical sub-discourse, notably providing information about a contagious illness. Literally, the text informs the reader about the disease through logical, consistent theme development that first explains the phenomenon, then provides precautionary measures that must be taken, and finally warns about consequences if one fails to respect the former. Translating this medical algorithm into the language of politics, we can see that the meme tells the reader that the Republican ideology is a dangerous philosophy which presents a menace to the population's interests inasmuch as it is acquired through non-reliable sources and that one should avoid any influence from the part of its supporters. These abstract political ideas are materialised on the textual surface through the activation of intertextual markers that are proper to medical sub-discourse.



Republican Jesus

Page Liked - 3 July 2014 ·

Hmm this sounds scientific, and not good scientific like Ray Comforts bananas either.
~Republican Jesus

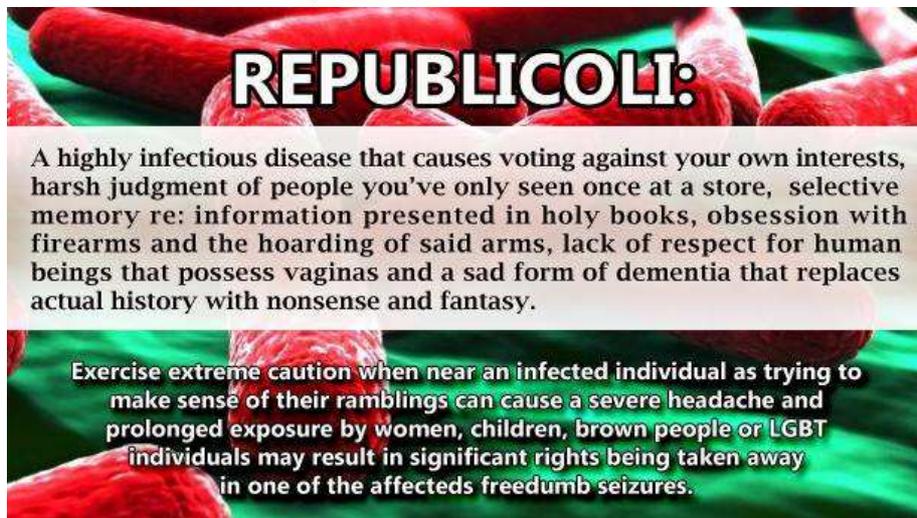


Figure 160. Imitation of a scientific definition

The text starts with a self-evident pronouncement that formulates what the *Republicoli* disease is. The name of the disease is constructed as a pseudo-term derived from Latin, which presents a neologism formation by plural affixation *-li*, notably by analogy with *bacillus – bacilli*. The real Latin medical term *dementia* is preferred to the neutral ‘insanity’. In science, the use of Latin or Greek terms along with neologisms is a notable feature that contributes to the exactness of the explanation; hence, their imitation gives the impression of dealing with an authentic scientific text. Besides that, there is the extensive use of terminology and phraseology from the medical domain such as *infectious disease, an infected individual, vaginas, can cause a severe headache*. Other words like *causes, human beings, prolonged exposure, selective memory, significant*, and *exercise extreme caution* are employed as if to impart general and lucid intellectual information. Secondly, the syntax of the text also reveals features from scientific discourse in the use of lengthy sentences with subordinate clauses; participial (*infected, presented, prolonged, of said*) and gerundial (*trying, being taken away*) constructions as well as impersonal forms (*exercise extreme caution, when near, as trying*). The imitation of scientific style can also be traced in the preference of nominal constructions over verbal ones as if the author of the text avoids time reference for the sake of generalisation. The image of rod-shaped bacteria supports medical information in that it provides an image of the imitated phenomenon.

Obviously, the definition does not present objective knowledge but only borrows a form which gives this impression. This form is a masquerade of the radical left-wing ideology. A negative presentation of the opponents is portrayed as scientifically proven reasoning which has an impact on the reader. An intertextual tension arises when the latter perceives lexical elements from an electoral campaign and an ideological struggle integrated into textual structure of a medical formulation, e.g. *voting, interests, rights* and others. A dialogue of discourses is visible on a semantic level of organisation. Although there is no direct indication that the meme desperately destroys conservative values, some implicit collocations suggest that it refers to the GOP party and their adherents. The term is the main point of departure which guides the reader in the sense-making, with its radical part *republic* declaring the target of criticism. The red colour of *Republicoli* alludes to the unofficial ideological orientation sign of the Republican Party. For instance, it evokes one of the pillars of Republican ideology, i.e. the Bible (*information presented in holy books*); Republicans' defence of rights for arms (*obsession with firearms*); the traditional views upon the place of women (*lack of respect for human beings that possess vaginas*) and other minorities (*brown people, LGBT individuals*). These and other issues that the meme shows in the form of a scientific text are aimed to sow the seeds of enmity between different ideological camps.

The sharp contrast and inconsistency of the two conceptual systems cause clashes in the recipient's mind, breaking his/her expectation of the habitual genre norm of the internet meme. This inevitably leads to laughter. Besides clashes on the content level, there is also a discrepancy on the functional plane. Galperin (1981: 281) claims that the purpose of science as a branch of human activity is "to disclose by research the inner substance of things and phenomena of objective reality and find out the laws regulating them, thus enabling man to predict, control and direct their further development in order to improve the material and social life of mankind". Even though the political meme is textually constructed as if it suggests proven scientific knowledge, its main function is not to inform but to persuade through an overlap of the generally accepted scientific conceptual system and political knowledge, which presents the interests of only certain groups.

2. 'Infographics'

As the term suggests, infographics offer information in graphic form. Providing illustrations and commentaries at the same time, this genre visualises information, models it, systematises it, and helps to avoid a secondary explanation. Being a part of popular scientific prose, the

genre of infographics visualises complex knowledge in order to bring it into close affinity with the language of everyday speech for a better understanding of the described phenomenon by the general public. Such form of communication helps to “deliver complex information in a way that is more quickly and easily understood” (Smiciklas 2012: 4). According to Lugin (2006: 387), the notion of infographics embraces schemes, tables, maps and graphics that are typical for scientific books (astronomy, anatomy, chemistry, etc.). Smiciklas (2012: 5) expands on the idea that infographics cover statistics, dynamics, chronology, schedules, geographical locations, hierarchy, different processes, relationships, etc., which are also found in traditional media such as newspapers and magazines.

The internet meme (Figure 161), which was posted on the FB Page *Formidable Republican Opposition*, imitates the genre of infographics. It looks like a snapshot from an old course book of biology. Opened on a page about parasitism, it visually illustrates different species which benefit at the expense of others.

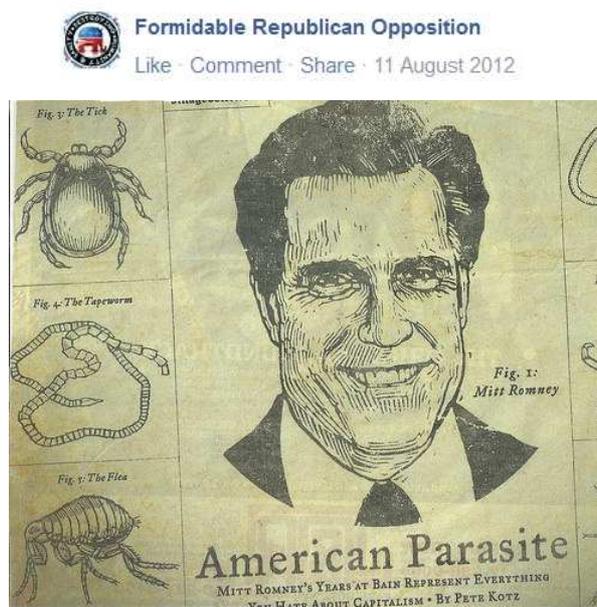


Figure 161. Imitation of an illustration from a course book

The use of terms specific to the given branch of science, i.e. ticks, fleas and tapeworms, is the lexical marker of integration of biological discourse. Among representations of biological parasitic organisms, the illustration of a human figure, a graphic portrait of Mitt Romney, is inserted. The clean, crisp and clear illustration of the Republican candidate responds to the conventions of the scientific norm. The drawing seeks to be read as a piece of objective, factual information that facilitates the process of ‘learning’. It is supported by a legend which

also respects the scientific style, notably italics, abbreviation and numbering (*Fig. 1: Mitt Romney*), which is coherent with other schematic representations of species. The breaking of scientific norms of presentations with the introduction of a human portrait turns an illustration from a biology book into parody. On the level of content, parallels are made on the basis of consumer-resource interactions: Just like biological parasites live in or on their host, Mitt Romney’s global investment firm Bain Capitalism is shown as nourishing itself from a range of industry sectors and geographic regions. The invisible combination of science and politics reinforces the persuasive value of the meme while contrast stylisation and mixed incompatible elements result in humorous effect.

Another example of imitation of scientific infographics is the presentation of Mitt Romney’s views on the issue of abortion through the timeline of human evolution that appeared in *The Other 98%* FB interest group (Figure 162).

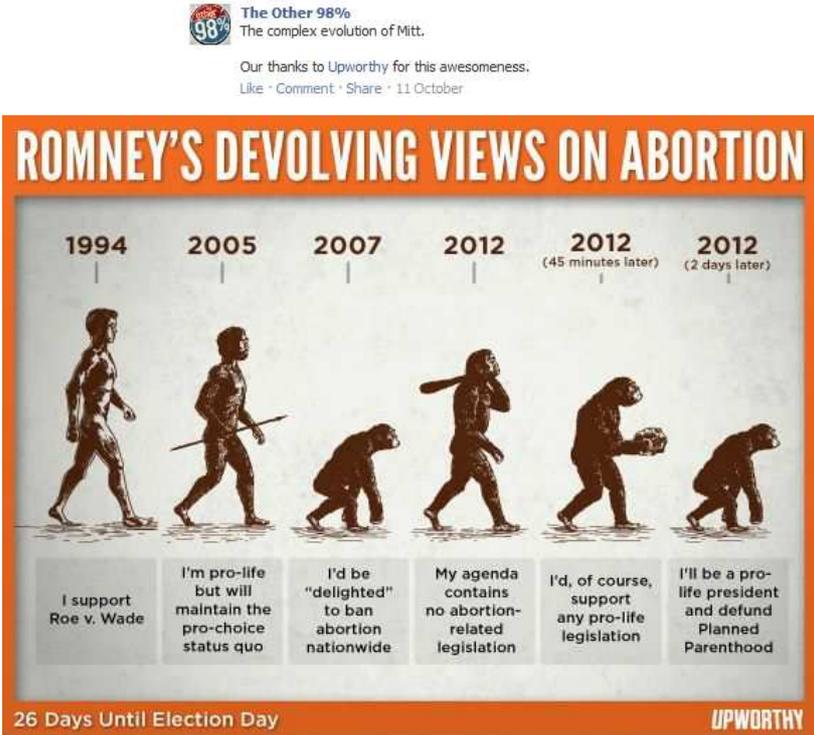


Figure 162. Imitation of evolution infographics

The advantage of this borrowed genre lies in the compression of events with an axis scale of millions of years, dropping all irrelevant elements and retaining only key moments as well as preserving ordering. The meme on Romney’s views on abortion offers an integrated version of development of his outlook, compressed into a single scenario with dates and key speeches,

notably visually respecting the form, i.e. the chronology with years, the corresponding illustration and the short description below. The scientific evolutionary presentation is exploited to construe a linear timeline with changing opinions, where every new position corresponds to a level of the development of Homo sapiens. The rhetorical goal of the meme is to evoke a familiar frame in the recipient's mind and related associations. The asymmetric presentation of species is a graphic manoeuvre to show inconsistency in Romney's views and an eloquent way to evaluate them as steps backward. Such simplistic representation has the aim to denunciate the candidate and his changing positions. In contrast to the scientific chronological scale, the political meme does not present objective information, but evaluates the Republican candidate. The comic effect is based, firstly, on the contrast with the original idea of Darwin's progressive evolution of Homo erectus with time, and the regression of Mitt Romney's views with the years. Secondly, the timeline of human evolution is counted in millions of years, while shifts in Romney's outlook accelerate from years to minutes approaching the Election Day which points to his rapidly changing chameleonic positions.

What do the authors of the meme gain by borrowing the genre of infographics? The advantage of this genre is that a great amount of information can be compressed in the concise format and 'served' at once. Having caught the reader's attention, the linguistic components of infographics, i.e. key-points surrounding the images, do not demand the handling of information in a linear manner. The observer can quickly 'jump' from one point to another. On the other hand, the iconic parts of the meme (images of two men, colours of typography, the balance of colours and comments) facilitate the grasping of the meaning.

To resume, the sender construes the political message through an overlapping montage of internet memes with various scientific genres, and in doing so, s/he resolves the problem of persuasion and manipulative influence on the reader since science is based on the solid foundation of previously acquired knowledge. When imitating scientific genres, the real role of the reader as a FB netizen and an American voter is put into the background. Instead s/he is temporally and unobtrusively put into the role of someone who searches for objective explanations by thumbing pages of an encyclopaedia, consulting dictionaries, reading a biology course book, or interpreting infographics. The symbolic algebra of scientific expression gives the impression of objectivity, logical coherence, impersonality, unemotional character and exactness of scientific style. Furthermore, the persuasive value of the chosen structures lies in presenting self-evident statements that need no proof with terms and figures coined so as to be self-explanatory. Reproducing scientific genre forms, internet political

memes remain loyal to functions of the overarching political discourse. If the purpose of science is to disclose the inner substance of things through research and discover the laws regulating them, enabling to predict and direct their development in order to improve the life of mankind; political discourse is aimed at the struggle for power between conflicting ideological forces.

6.5.5 Imitation of genres of didactic discourse

Various educational genres tightly bound to scientific discourse also found their way into the structures of internet memes. Among others, the general purpose of education as a branch of human activity is to facilitate learning, the development of personal knowledge, the understanding and interpretation of reality, the acquisition of skills, values, beliefs and habits, the assistance in the growth of character, moral and social qualities. The transmission of values, beliefs and ideals cross political aims and hence educational discourse can be a boon for mimetic experiments and a vehicle for promoting ideological messages. In acting this way, meme creators borrow some patterns from the macro-genre of formal education, imitating different phases of a lesson such as teaching, training and evaluating skills to appeal to the American voters. All of them establish the scenography of the formal setting where the FB user instantly finds him/herself in a classroom.

1. ‘An exercise’

The meme below posted by *Teabonics* FB group chooses the educational genre of an exercise in order to mask its political intention (Figure 163). A quick look at its structure evokes pages of a language book where the learner is invited to do a short exercise practicing vocabulary. Every reader who once learned a foreign language or enriched his/her mother tongue definitely remembers this classical pattern of sentences with gaps. The easily recognisable layout of the structural exercise immediately introduces the corresponding learning scene. Although there is no direct task that indicates what to do, the reader knows that s/he is asked to fill in the gaps.

Ambiguity is revealed on the level of chromatic choice where, atypical for workbooks, a black background, white lines on it, and the teacher’s alarming red ink are chosen. Besides this graphic incongruity, the meaning of the phrases point to political discourse. When reading the lines, we are gradually guided to construct a story about the forthcoming Republican

debates and the anticipated outcomes. Although there are no explicit markers, the reader decodes the negative portrayal of Donald Trump through collocations such as *Republican candidate* and *will say something offensive*. The fight with the competitor and the minimisation of his qualities is the aim of the meme.



Figure 163. Imitation of a scholarly exercise

Instead of explicitly telling the FB learner the message, the meme prefers to challenge the reader by playing with him/her a lesson game. The FB user-learner arrives at his/her own conclusions to which s/he is being guided through a labyrinth of structural exercise and hence experiences more fun and pleasure of discovery at the end.

The following meme (Figure 164) which appeared on the page of the *Conservative Christians* calls itself the *Match Game 2016*, which looks like a ludic didactic activity designed to stir up novices' curiosity in a history lesson. The captivating task in the form of the question *Who can match the quote to the individual?* appeals to the reader by providing a challenge. The exercise consists of an activity to match portraits of historical leaders with their sayings, which is familiar to learners. The text is identified as an exercise through the markers of macro-segmentation, i.e. the division into A, B, C, D, E units and the enumeration of corresponding portraits neatly aligned to each quote.

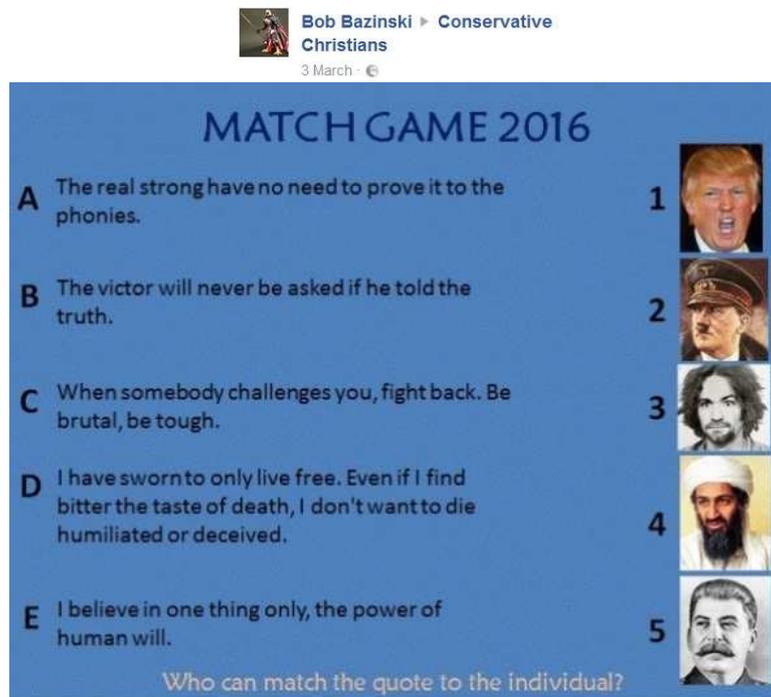


Figure 164. Imitation of a match game exercise

The irrelevance of the quotes destined for children’s history books results in an intertextual tension. The sayings show inspiring ideas from history’s worst leaders, starting from Hitler and finishing with Osama bin Laden. Indeed, the quote B *The victor will never be asked if he told the truth* belongs to the author of the Holocaust, Adolf Hitler (picture 2) who looked upon himself as a supreme being and as representing the truth himself. The quote E *I believe in one thing only, the power of human will* was uttered by an atheist who ordered the death of thousands, Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin (picture 5). The quote A *The real strong have no need to prove it to the phonies* is matched with picture 3, representing the American criminal, murderer and serial brainwasher Charles Manson who believed in apocalyptic race war. Quote D *I have sworn only to live free. Even if I find bitter the taste of death, I don’t want to die humiliated or deceived* is a phrase taken from an audio recording where Osama bin Laden (picture 4), the founder of Al-Qaeda and the author of numerous terrorist attacks, vowed never to be taken alive.

Among these emblems of insanity and macabre violence, who proved their strength through homicide, quote C *When somebody challenges you, fight back. Be brutal, be tough* is supposed to be matched with picture number 1, i.e. that of Donald Trump. The text is a modified version of his tweet which appeared online on July 27th, 2015:

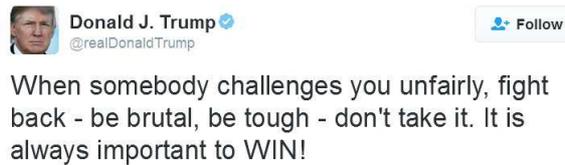


Figure 165. Snapshot of a comment of Donald Trump on Twitter

The original text taken in its integrity does not in itself imply violence. The Republican candidate simply encourages not giving up whatever challenge an individual faces. Nevertheless, omitting such functional smoothers as an adverbial modifier of manner “unfairly”, imperative “don’t take it” changes the utterance, which raises the risk of misinterpretation. Furthermore, placing this radically transformed quotation into the same range as the words of central figures of mass killings amplifies the negative effects on the reader/viewer.

The chosen genre pattern not only stirs up the cyber users’ curiosity, providing intellectual challenges of identification but also serves the strong means of manipulation which consists of fitting Donald Trump’s saying into a schema that is profitable for a manipulator.

An example of a multiple choice exercise presents the meme below (Figure 166), which was found on the page of the *Rude and Rotten Republicans* FB ideological group.



Figure 166. Imitation of a guessing game exercise

The genre is easily recognised through the title *Guess what this is* in large bold letters and the task *Choose the best answer* in smaller lettering. Another important marker of typological intertextuality is the macro-segmentation of the text into four statements that propose the classical choice A, B, C, or D. This guessing game exercise is circled around the picture of an empty desert with one lost human silhouette that makes a key element in sense-making.

The content reveals political discourse in its critical axe. All statements contain bitter sarcasm, which is based on clashes between the image and the verbal information which is aimed against the Republican ideology and its representatives. *The Trump campaign victory party* with only one man present; *The crowd at a Ted Nugent concert*, an American popular singer, who is famous for his right-wing views and his notorious advocacy of gun ownership rights, attacks the ideological position of the musician; *All the republican members of MENSA* in relation with the image implies the poor percentage of Republicans who are in the high IQ society. The last choice *All of the above*, which resumes all answers, is a blow that knocks off the Republican ideology.

Framed as a guessing exercise, it challenges, entertains the reader and at the same time attempts to influence his/her political outlook.

2. 'A spelling alphabet'

Finally, the meme below (Figure 167) posted on the *Rude and Rotten Republicans* FB ideological page imitates a spelling alphabet, i.e. a set of words which stand for the letters often used in modern radiotelephony but also found in school books as a mnemonic device to facilitate the learning of the alphabet. The meme borrows the technique of acrophony when each word replaces the name of the letter beginning with the letter itself. The text is therefore identified as a spelling alphabet due to its explicit title, the listing of letters in the conventional ordering of the English alphabet and supporting examples which start with the corresponding letters. Its general layout is divided into 26 slots, each dedicated to a concrete letter description.

An intertextual dialogue is revealed in interference with political elements in the textual structure of the alphabet. As the title goes *Trump Alphabet in his own words*, it circles around issues related to the Republican billionaire. Every letter provides a quotation taken from his speeches, which is followed by colour-adding comments and subjective evaluations; the words which represent letters stick a label on the politician.



Tell them you found it at Rude and Rotten Republicans

Trump Alphabet

Adulterer

"Beautiful, famous, successful, married - I've had them all, secretly, the world's biggest names, but unlike Geraldo I don't talk about it."

Donald Trump's affair with Marla Maples led to his first divorce

Birther

"(Obama) doesn't have a birth certificate. He may have one, but there's something on that, maybe religion, maybe it says he is a Muslim."

Donald Trump

Climate Change Denier

"The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive."

Donald Trump

Drumpf

"One of my ancestors, a winegrower, changed the family name to Trump at the end of the 1600s—a good move. I think, since Drumpf Tower doesn't sound nearly as catchy."

Donald Trump

*more accurately 1885

Egomaniac

"Sorry losers and haters, but my IQ is one of the highest—and you all know it! Please don't feel so stupid or insecure, it's not your fault."

Donald Trump

Fascist

"Mussolini is Mussolini. But what difference does it make whether it's Mussolini or somebody else?"

Donald Trump has been called a fascist by numerous academics, celebrities and politicians

Gold Digger

"You know, it really doesn't matter what they [media] write as long as you've got a young and beautiful piece of ass."

Donald Trump describing his third trophy wife, Melania, who is 24 years younger than him

Hair-do

"I got a lot of credit for comb-overs, but it's not really a comb-over. It's sort of a little bit forward and back."

Donald Trump speaking about his pompadour which takes over an hour to style each morning

Instigator

"Maybe he should have been roughed up. ... knock the crap out of them." "I'd like to punch him in the face."

Donald Trump talking about violence towards protesters of his rallies

Jingoist

"Who else in public life has called for a pre-emptive strike on North Korea?"

Donald Trump claimed he was the "most militaristic person on [CBS Face the Nation]"

Killers

"But my sons are hunters, Eric is a hunter and I would say he puts it on a par with golf, if not ahead of golf. My other son, Don, is a hunter."

Donald Trump comparing his sons' big-game hunting with golf

Liar

"I watched when the World Trade Center came tumbling down. And I watched in Jersey City... where thousands and thousands of people were cheering as that building was coming down."

Donald Trump

Misogynist

"You could see there was blood coming out of (Megyn Kelly's) eyes, blood coming out of her whatever."

Donald Trump has publicly referred to women as 'fat pigs', 'dogs', 'slobs' and 'disgusting animals'

Narcissist

"All of the women on The Apprentice flirted with me—consciously or unconsciously. That's to be expected."

Donald Trump Narcissism has similarities with histrionic, borderline and antisocial personality disorders.

Orange

Trump has not yet commented on his 'compa loompa' coloring which may be the result of a bad spray-tan or tanning bed.

Websearch to see what he would look like without artificial color.

Politically Incorrect

"I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct. I've been challenged by so many people, and I frankly don't have time for political correctness."

Donald Trump

Quote-Fail

"It is better to live one day as a lion than 100 years as a sheep."

Donald Trump Mussolini quote on Twitter

"I'm still big on quotes: they can be a direct hit on negative or confused thinking."

Racist

"When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending the best. They're sending people that have lots of problems and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists..."

Donald Trump

Short-fingered Showman

"My fingers are long and beautiful, as it has been well documented, are various other parts of my body."

Donald Trump

Torturer

"I would bring back water-boarding, and I'd bring back a hell of a lot worse than water-boarding."

Donald Trump ignoring the Geneva Conventions which bar torture

University Scammer

Trump University was 'a terrific school that did a fantastic job.'

Donald Trump was forced to rename Trump University because it is not a university and currently has three lawsuits against it

Vulgarian

"Ass," "crap," "damn," "f**k," "motherf****r," "p****y," "schlonged," "shit..."

Donald Trump profanity in recent public speeches
"Well, you know, I've always done it just as a way of emphasis and had fun doing it."

Wall

"I will build a great wall—and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me.... I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall."

Donald Trump

Xenophobe

"Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on."

Donald Trump

You're Fired

"I could never have imagined that firing 67 people on national television would actually make me more popular, especially with the younger generation."

Donald Trump

In his own words

Zero Political Experience

"One of the key problems today is that politics is such a disgrace, good people don't go into government."

Donald Trump

This is only a fraction of Trumpisms. Websearch these quotes or topics for more not-so-presidential ideas.

Figure 167. Imitation of a spelling alphabet

Decontextualised and placed into the pattern of the alphabet, Trump's words acquire new, easily manipulated meanings that range from harsh labels (e.g. *Fascist, Jingoist, Misogynist, Xenophobe, Torturer*), to mocking his outward appearance (e.g. *Hair-do, Orange* (for his face colour)) or inner 'beauty' (e.g. *Narcissist, Egomaniac, Short-fingered Showman*). Calling these newly coined terms *Trumpisms*, the authors of the meme fulfil the creative function of the language. Creativity serves however a global political aim, i.e. the fight with an adversary to gain power. This mosaic which is composed of different bits of quotes creates the patchwork garment for Donald Trump, a robe with a repulsive image. The chosen genre, a form of getting off Trump's political message is employed as a metaphor which describes the politician from A to Z. The true alphabet is the first step to master a language, whereas the political alphabet is a tool for learning about the politician from the perspective of his opposition. This biased knowledge about Trump, the negative portrayal of the Republican nominee is learned acrophonically, each letter being represented by one or several words and explained through the quote. Therefore, the imitated form is an effective and original means of compact presentation, where the collection of Trump's speech fragments makes a sort of *cento* which produces a new negative meaning.

In contrast to real educational genres, political memes which imitate their structural patterns do not target the transmission of universal human values through the acquisition of particular school subjects, but lead the American voter to a biased knowledge. Political memes give their lessons through the ideological prism in accordance with the values and interests of the particular social groups. Nevertheless, in turning to educational discourse, political activists attempt to evoke the well-known setting which helps to assimilate the message smoothly. Similar to the imitation of journalistic and scientific discourses, texts imitating didactic discursive genres give the impression of an authoritative sender of information. They create the effect of an authentic solid and unquestionable source of knowledge. In addition, an element of challenge, a puzzle is retained from imitating scholarly exercises which stimulate the reader to go through the message in search for an answer.

6.5.6 Imitation of letters

Quite often internet memes integrate epistolary genres used in administrative communication. The structure of official correspondence is recognised by its strict coded language that is guided by several norms, prescriptions and a high level of standardisation. Equoy Hutin

(2007: 120-121) divides the norms allowing identification of a document as the relevant genre of an official letter into two parts, i.e. the paratextual organisation and the definite compositional structure. The first part includes the A4 format, the heading giving the names of the writer, the addressee and their addresses respectively in the upper left and right parts, the date, the object of the letter, the structure of paragraphs, signature, eventually, post-scriptum. The second part comprises the opening, the exordium (introduction), the body, the peroration (conclusion, summing up), and closing moves where the phase of exordium is designed to prepare the addressee for exchange, introducing the proposal and peroration that recapitulates or projects onto future interactions.

The four memes below (Figures 168-171) are recognised as letters (a letter to Mitt Romney, to the Republican Party both posted by *Formidable Republican Opposition*, to Donald Trump by *Occupy Democrats*, to Barack Obama by *Barack Obama's Dead Fly*) due to a number of markers of epistolary practice.

The most noticeable of all features are compositional patterns of an official letter with combinations of ready-made forms and stereotyped phrases. Its intertextual traces are manifested in the presence of the opening with the usual forms of address (*Hey Mitt Romney; Dear Donald Trump; Dear Mr. President; Dear Republican Party*), the body and typical closing (*Sincerely; Sincerely Yours*). The paratextual organisation of the memes also sends the reader the indexes of an administrative letter. Almost all letters are signed; furthermore, the letters to Obama as well as to the Republican Party are divided into paragraphs reproducing modern 'block style'. This intertextual marker is a sign of structure where every paragraph contains a sequential move that is separated by an empty line. The chosen layout visually shows the reader that s/he deals with professional correspondence.

The discrepancy between the official epistolary form and an internet meme is striking in total absence of the official heading, spatial-temporal information, and the omission of the object. All memes start abruptly, addressing the recipient where conventional phrases of greeting are not always respected (colloquial *Hey Mitt Romney*, absence of political officials' titles). Ritualised preparative forms of exordium and peroration are erased in favour of direct claims that make the letters look like sharp proposals. No developed closing formulas are found; the letter to Obama is not signed at all, which brings the memetic scene back brutally. Graphic characteristics of all texts are also alien elements in administrative correspondence, notably the use of underlining (*proof; lied*) or colours (*tax returns* in red; *why are you so worried*

about the Mexicans wanting to come here? in yellow) for highlighting the key ideas; the choice of a layout other than white (a pink letter to the Republican Party; black background in the letter to Trump) for adding a new meaning. These compositional clashes reveal the scene of a political meme which has the aim of using the epistolary form to integrate its own proposal.

The letter addressed to Mitt Romney (Figure 168) openly demands the addressee to unveil his tax returns. The actual message is to show that Mitt Romney does not represent the interests of the large US population (alluding to famous 47%), that he pays no federal taxes while accusing others. The body of the letter consists of an extended complex syntactic structure where the general syntactic mode of combining several pronouncements into one sentence is compatible with the conventional norm of business letters. However, it ends up with a daring emotionally charged rhetorical question that contradicts the generally accepted strict arrangement of an official communication. The letter reveals the clear implication of scorn and contempt for the Republican leader.



Figure 168. Imitation of a letter to Mitt Romney

Similar to the message to Mitt Romney, the letter to Donald Trump (Figure 169) retains a minimum of epistolary genre features but enough to identify the genre, i.e. an opening form of address, a body of one paragraph, and a closing. The rhetorical question forms the body of the letter. This stylistic choice makes the pronouncement event more categorical, a challenge openly and unequivocally declared. Structurally embodied in a complex sentence filled with bitter irony, the question refers to Mr Trumps' speeches on immigration.

Nailed it.

Thanks to Andy Borowitz.

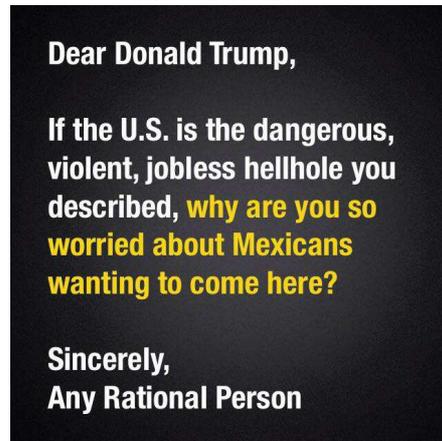


Figure 169. Imitation of a letter to Donald Trump

The letter to Donald Trump pronounces judgement with a shade of contempt for controversial proposals. In order to facilitate the fast comprehension of this complex conditional structure, the colour division comes to the rescue. The incongruent signature *Any Rational Person* clashes with the chosen epistolary form that playfully transforms the whole proposal into thoughts, an inner voice of any sane person.

The letter to Barack Obama is an accusation of the 44th President of the victims in Benghazi (Figure 170).

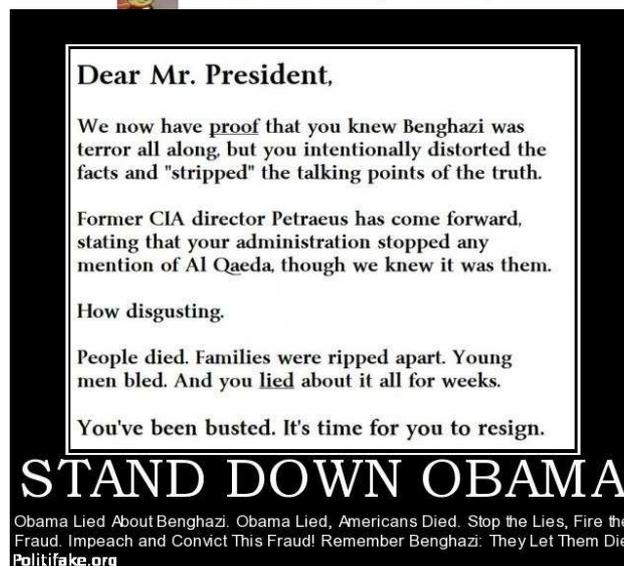


Figure 170. Imitation of a letter to Barack Obama

Its body consisting of five paragraphs presents the proof-witness-evaluation-casualties-consequences schema, which is interwoven with arguments and emotions. The conventional closing is replaced by a call to stand down, highlighted by capital letters and the repetition of casualties, i.e. the last chance for the writer to appeal to emotions using a maximum of pathetic means. Its matter-of-fact tone with an enumeration of non-extended laconic sentences (*People died. Families were ripped apart. Young men bled. [...] Obama lied about Benghazi. Obama Lied. Americans died.*) sounds like a bell tolling for those who were gone. The emotiveness increases with the repetition of rhyming key words *lie* and *die* which reinforce the idea of promoted cause (Obama lied) and effect (Americans died). Having framed Obama as a liar, the letter pronounces its final verdict by encouraging people to impeach the convict.

The macro-segmentation of the letter as well as the choice of typeface offers the meme an attractive crispy clean look which fosters the positive self-presentation of the group who created the text.

The purpose of the following meme (Figure 171) is to portray the ideal of the Republican woman filled with criticism from the point of view of the Democrats and their liberal values. However, instead of directly formulating these ideas, the meme scripters satirically frame them as a letter written to conservatives on the part of Republican women. It shows a pretty woman typing a letter which consists of a greeting, four well-delineated paragraphs and a closing. Regardless the neat form of the administrative letter, it lacks classical moves of opening-exordium-body-peroration-closing scheme. Instead, every paragraph is an exaggerated demand, a claim to take away the basic rights such as planned parenthood, education, equal pay, etc. Every claim is exactly the opposite of the Democratic view of an independent woman. Therefore, the letter is a parody criticising conservative ideology.

The choice of typewriting style against the cream background suggests, at first sight, obsolescence and wornout style. Tom Vanderbilt, a journalist from the online magazine *Slate*, claims that the mono-spaced text font Courier was used largely in typewriters in the past and often represents “a visual symbol of typewritten bureaucratic anonymity, the widespread dissemination of information (and a classification of documents), stark factuality, and streamlined efficiency” (Vanderbilt 2004). When modern Times New Roman 14 font was mutually accepted as the US state department typewriting, Courier 12 was inevitably put “to pasture after several decades of honorable service, like an aging, elegant diplomat whose crisp, cream-colored linen suit and genteel demeanor now seem winningly old-fashioned”

(Vanderbilt 2004). Consequently, this typographic detail implies the depreciation of Republican values. In addition, the choice of the Courier font, this “herald of all stripes of dignified officialdom”, “the voice of clarity and transparency” (Vanderbilt 2004) helps to better illustrate the legal document where the senders claim their rights. Alternatively, the Courier typewriting style has preserved an aesthetic function which singles out the meme in the flow of information. The use of this mono-spaced slab serif in computer communication today offers a respectful reputation with its clean and crispy look as Kettler, a font designer and the creator of Courier digital version, points out: “A letter can be just an ordinary messenger, or it can be the courier, which radiates dignity, prestige, and stability” (Vanderbilt 2004). Therefore, the typographic characteristic of the meme becomes a visual connoter since, on the one hand, it suggests old-fashioned stereotypes of womanhood and, on the other hand, appeals to the viewer by its aesthetics.

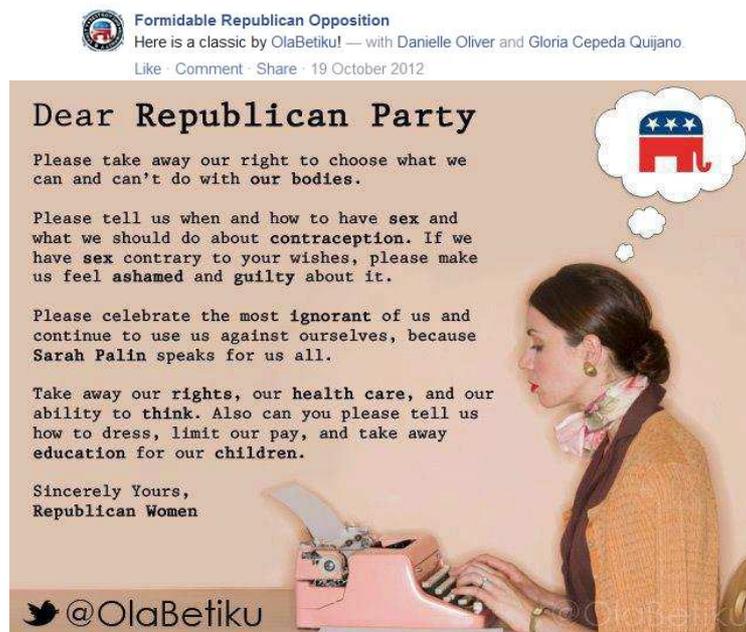


Figure 171. Imitation of a letter addressed to the Republican Party

Memes written as letters borrow the schema of an administrative letter where a person or a group of people seek to achieve an arrangement challenging the conflicting side. The false parodic nature of the letters is evident since the actual addressee is a FB user who is shown these letters with the purpose of changing his/her convictions related to the raised issues. The general aim of administrative letters to state the conditions relating contracting sides considerably deviates from the communicative ends of political memes. The latter do not seek to reach a consensus with the addressees via official epistolary genres, but to divide two

ideological camps blaming each other for existing problems and promote their interests and vision of the world. Every meme adapts the chosen genre of a letter to its proper message. The first three memes (letters to Mitt Romney, to the Republican Party and to Donald Trump) assign FB readers the roles of population members whose interests and values were underestimated. As a consequence, the readers are required to recognise themselves among collective scripters and ‘sign’ the letter which reveals an integrative function of political discourse. The letter to the Republican Party targets feminine voters, promoting a liberal ideal through antithesis.

All these conventional epistolary prescriptions reproduced in memes contribute to fostering such features as precision, lucidity, exactness and conciseness of official communication, avoiding any ambiguity as well as unnecessary information. Therefore, chosen genres add a serious vein to communication. At the same time, ready-made formulas, direct sentences simplify the formulation of the political message. All observed cases manifest a scenography temporally established for the creation of natural and serious communication that brings several parties together.

6.5.7 Imitation of genres of official documents

Besides official correspondence, an appeal to other genres of administrative documents can be found on FB pages. The aim of official administrative communication is to state the conditions that bind two parties when undertaking and/or reaching an agreement between them. The contracting parties can be a state and a citizen, citizen and citizen, between governments, enterprises, a society and its members, an authority and subordinates, a board and an assembly, and others. The style of official documents is known for its strict adherence to the norm out of necessity for absolute precision and transparency of meaning, the avoidance of any ambiguity and wrong interpretation of the document which may cause undesirable consequences (Bourlak *et al.* 2010: 7). Therefore, the administrative style is often revealed in a coded graphical layout, clear-cut subdivision of texts into units of information, order-of-priority organisation of contents, stylistically neutral, generally objective, concrete, unemotional and impersonal tone of presentation. So what makes meme creators resort to these conservative forms of expression? The reasons vary from genre to genre and local communicative purposes 1) ‘ballot’, 2) ‘The Bill of Rights’, 3) ‘conference programme’.

1. 'A ballot'

For instance, the meme below (Figure 172), posted by the *Mitt Witt for runner up* FB ideological group, illustrates an imitation of an administrative form created to mediate the relationship between citizens and their government. The reader can easily recognise it through its prototypical pattern which clearly solicits participation of a citizen in voting by filling in the proposed ballot. This administrative form provides instructions on voting (*President / vote for one*); lists the candidates to be voted on as well as spaces to cross. Nevertheless, the choice between three candidates, *Conservative Romney*, *Moderate Romney* and simply *Barack Obama* is naturally suggested in favour of the latter.



Figure 172. Imitation of a ballot in the Presidential Election

The choice to use this short and eloquent form pursues, first of all, a delegitimisation aim that is to suggest the double nature of the Republican candidate and to implant doubts in the minds of undecided voters. Secondly, bringing the voter to the polls and giving him/her a ballot is the final stage of the campaign. Manipulation consists of visualising and repeating the same message with the hope of influencing the electorate on the Election Day. The reproduction of this administrative genre specific to pre-electoral discourse imitates the natural situation of communication during presidential campaign periods and it is therefore easily understood and assimilated by the viewers.

Likewise, the meme which appeared on the *Conservative Christians* FB page imitates the genre of ballot (Figure 173). It is linked to the Senate decision made against the political platform of Florida Senator Marco Rubio. In doing so, it pursues the aim of diminishing the status of the Republican 2016 Primaries runner. The genre of the voting ballot in the center of the meme is recognised through the division of information into separate chunks, boxes to

cross and the listing of statements. The contents reveal political positions of Marco Rubio enumerating his concrete steps of his electorate programme. Like previous memes, an imitated ballot does not offer the reader the freedom of choice with *missed* on all proposals which signals the fake nature of the genre. Furthermore, the temporal indicators below the statements are inappropriate for ballots. In addition, its comic nature is expressed in the colloquial *Yea/Nay* indication which is irrelevant for an official document.

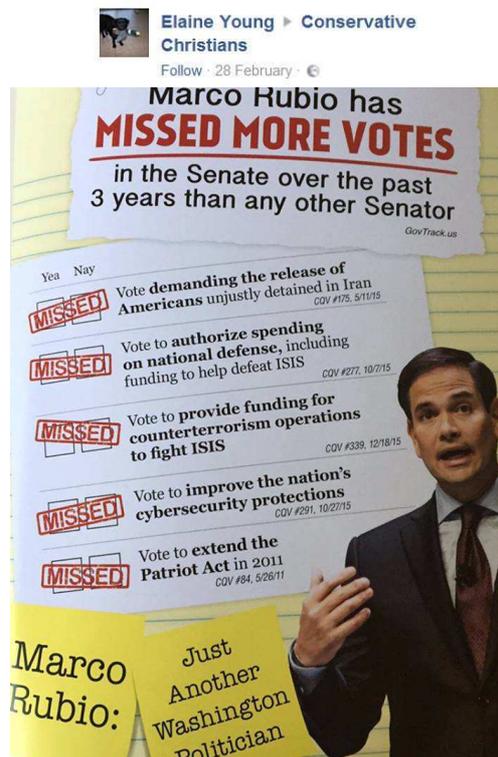


Figure 173. Imitation of a ballot in the Senate

Therefore, the form of the meme contradicts its meaning. If a real ballot is designed for administrative reasons, facilitating mediation between the voters and the candidate, the message of the meme is to present the latter as a mediocre politician. The chosen genre nevertheless helps to conceptualise weak points of the candidate through its clear-cut structuring and gives a summary of Rubio's fiasco in Senate votes through a simple schema. Hence, the manipulation consists of substitution of the analysis of the candidate's platform by simply providing five negative statements. Complex abstract issues of an ideological programme are replaced by concrete, simplified and easily digestible patterns that can be grasped at once. A collage made of pieces of paper, stickers and a photograph of the candidate glued onto a sheet of paper has an aesthetic function and is a creative way of voicing one's point of view.

2. 'The Bill of Rights'

A meme launched by *Political Loudmouth* and *Formidable Republican Opposition* FB groups formulates regulations of women's reproductive rights and protect them against any violations of this contract (Figure 174). Seeking cooperation between citizens with conservative and liberal views, the meme takes the form of a legal document. Its pretext is The Bill of Rights – a referential document, a collection of first amendments to the United States Constitution. In doing so, it imitates the conventional composition of the official agreement document. The meme remixers divide the text into a preamble and a body that is made up of several provisions.

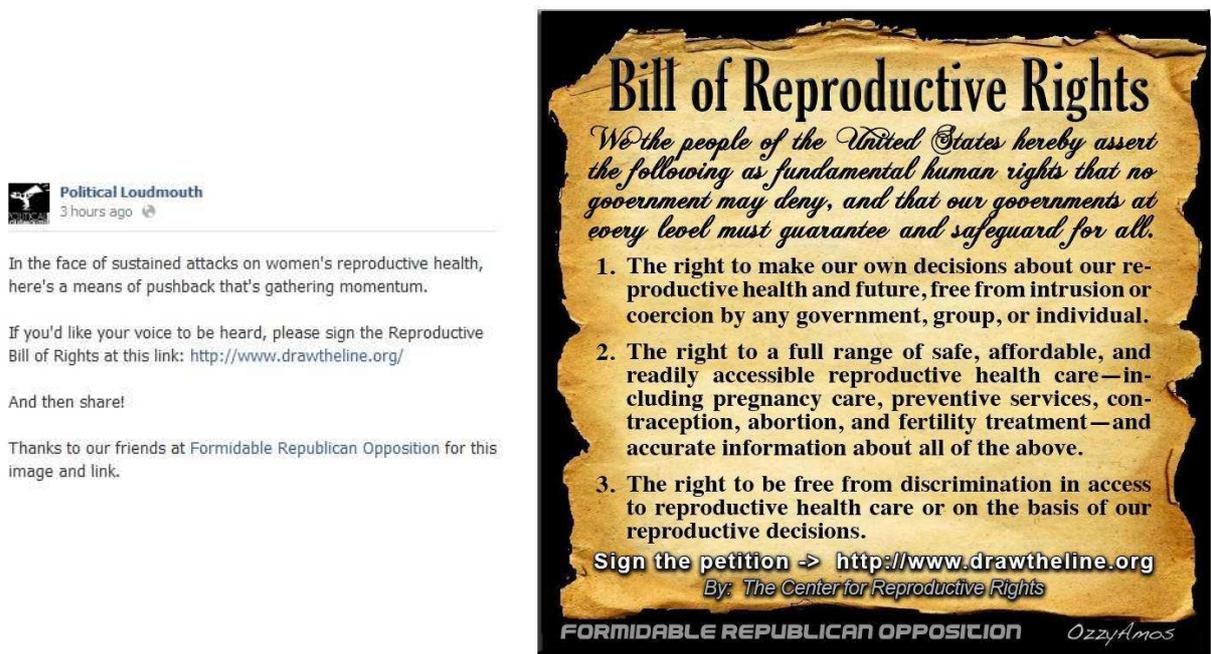


Figure 174. Imitation of The Bill of Rights

A crucial intertextual signal is the direct quotation from the antecedent text in the initial position. This preliminary recital is filled with solemnity *We the people of the United States hereby assert the following as fundamental human rights that no government may deny, and that our governments at every level must guarantee and safeguard for all.* The officialese opening phrase sounds like a real preamble that sets out the name of the parties of interest, the purpose for which the document was concluded, and it states the 'resolve' of the parties to enter into it. Legal language with its adherence to the outdated norm as a variety of official communication can be easily recognised due to other intertextual markers found on different levels of the genre organisation.

Rigid syntax with accurate punctuation, an extensive use of detached constructions with attributes and modifiers play a role in the identifying and explanatory function. Numerous passive constructions imitate the impersonal character of official communication. The text employs substantive clauses, which is typical for this official document that forms the body of The Bill of Rights.

Its lexical features show the prevalence of stylistically neutral and mainly bookish vocabulary and stereotyped words that are used in their primary denotative meaning. There is a special system of clichés and specially pre-established formulas (*hereby assert the following, free from, on the basis of*), legal terminology (*the right to, coercion, accurate information*), archaic words (*hereby*), and conventional expressions (*no government may deny, must guarantee for all*). The abstraction of persons (use generic *we*), the rare use of substitute words like *it, one, that* and the complete absence of tropes and emotive colouring contribute to the general neutral tone of imitated official communication.

The coded graphical layout also contributes to the perception of statements as an official document through the clear-cut subdivision of the text into separate units of information with numbering every new provision, logical arrangement and the order-of-priority organisation of content. Every new paragraph is a solid block of script with long lines extended from margin to margin and little spacing as if to defeat fraudulent deletions and additions. Italics and the ivory yellowish background make it look like an original scribble on old paper.

The text however lacks final closing, which is typical for official documents, and its formal acknowledgement of signatures. Instead, a real political status pops-up at the end with a call to sign the petition and the necessary link. A dialogue of genres becomes evident with the shift in typewriting from clear-cut black boldface that is characteristic of official documents and interposed white letters with a hyperlink. Besides these graphic prompts, the large proportion of words reveals the contemporary American context with its heated debates between right- and left-wing groups over the questions of health care and planned parenthood. The signature below *Formidable Republican Opposition/OzzyAmos* also brings the reader back from scenography to the real genre scene.

Like The Bill of Rights, the meme under analysis is crafted to address the objections raised by some citizen groups. Taking the form of an official document, written on the basis of previously attained concordance between the state and its citizens, the meme intends to validate the contents and make it pass, giving no opportunity to object it. Reliance on the

authority and significant weight of the antecedent document established in the past is a trick device by the creators of the meme. Imitation of this notorious statute which contracts an important historical agreement between individuals implies imposing and conferring women's reproductive rights which must be respected as a law.

3. 'A conference programme'

A similar technique of formal text building can be observed in the example below that was taken from the FB left-wing page *Johnny Steele Comedy* (Figure 175). The text reproduces the formal administrative genre of a conference programme. Its title *CPAC 2013* welcomes the reader to the annual Conservative Political Action Conference attended by Republicans to elect party officials. The peritext stating *We here [...] have just received a leaked copy of today's super secret CPAC itinerary* gives the impression of a serious tone which prepares the reader for the perception of the imitated genre.



Figure 175. Imitation of a conference programme

Intertextual dialogue in the text is visible due to its compositional design. Its coded graphical layout contains 'what' and 'when' details, a schedule with clear-cut sub-divisions into time column and panels/meal segments. Similar to a real programme, the topics are mostly nominal titles with capital letters and extended sub-topics.

The sharp contrast between the form and semantics can be observed in this example which immediately breaks the expectations of the reader. The text owes allegiance to the generic pattern of a conference schedule and at the same time substitutes the contents with other

topics, being the sparkle of a virtual carnival fire. The theme *Gravity: Teach the Controversy* ridicules the event by pointing to its divisive character. *Of Birthers & Girthers: from Trump to Christie* encrypts the heavy criticism of political officials. The notion *birther* circles around Barack's Obama citizenship conspiracy, implying that it is Donald Trump who asserts that Obama was not a natural-born US citizen whilst its assonant *girther* simply labels the Republican Chris Christie as an extremely obese politician. *OBAMA, Kenya Hear Me Calling?* and *White Might Makes Right* show explicitly racist talks whereas *Freedumb Isn't Free* is a sarcastic pun based on homophones *freedumb* and 'freedom'. Besides, the use of colloquial forms is incompatible with official talk (*nuthin'*), informal vocabulary (*dumb* and newly coined *freedumb*). The criticism of broadcasting channel *Fox News* is exemplified in adding their logo as if being the sponsors of this parodic conference. Intertextual tension is also visible in the accent that the meme creators put on Republican meals in the programme. Presented to be as important as speeches, lunch and cocktail parts have the same typographic characteristics as topics of panels; its semantics do not lose a chance to criticise the conference attendants.

The dialogue of the internet meme and the conference programme genre switches the reader from one conceptual system of knowledge into another, from virtual, casual, social into the official domain. The communicative function of such imitation is the sarcastic devaluation of the Republican agenda and its highlights, mocking its representatives, depicting them as poorly educated xenophobic girthers who loaf away their time in organising futile events to propagate their bigoted values. Since the two systems are very distinct in their usage, the comic effect turns out to be stronger due to the clash between the officially neutral itinerary and politically biased propaganda. Another effect that the meme creators search for when borrowing this genre is the catchy offbeat form of the message.

As it is seen from the illustrations above (Figures 172-175), the imitation of the overall code of the official style can take different forms. Each example is characterised by its own conventionality of expression, terminological specifics, its own compositional form, and a variety of syntactic arrangements. But all of them emanate from the general aim of administrative communication, i.e. finding agreement between parties, or communicating an official event. The chosen effect in imitation is neutral, emotionless, with a detached tone in order to avoid a misunderstanding between two parties or add the value of an incontestable law or evidence. The imitation of genres of official administrative discourse helps to create a certain seriousness and professionalism of communication. Remixers of genres seek forms

which would favour an easy acceptance by the public due to an established authority of an administrative style which represents various legal and business institutions.

6.5.8 Imitation of a recipe, instructions, tips

This group is a rather ‘floating’ category of texts which, based on Adam (2011b: 226), I am going to call genres of incentive to act (*genres de l’incitation à l’action*). The attribute ‘floating’ points towards the extremely diverse nature of these textual types. Linguists who have studied these genres include a wide range of texts in this category, depending on the aspects they focus on. According to Adam (2011b: 244-247), behind these seemingly heterogeneous texts, a number of regularities can be found in the compositional structure. The scholar singles out several important characteristics that unite these genres. Enunciation features, commonly known as “voice” in Bakhtin’s (1975) interpretation, imply an expert whose presence is invisible. It means that all explicit traces of the subject of enunciation are erased. Between the expert and the reader a contract of truth is established that concerns the provided information and promise of success. In other words, if the recipient conforms to all recommendations and respects all indicated procedures, this implicit contract guarantees the achievement of the target (success). According to Adam (2011b: 228), the contract of truth justifies the absence of the subject of the enunciation. The withdrawal of the author implies the non-subjective character of provided information. Depending on the specific domain of human activity, every genre will contain corresponding specialised lexical units. One of the most important characteristics of genres of incentive to act is an abundance of predicates representing temporally successive actions in the form of infinitives, imperatives, future or present forms. There is an abundance of temporal ‘organisers’ which allow specifying the succession of elements or relations and the duration of operations. There is a very vivid and strong typographic macro-segmentation of the genres of incentive to act. These genres largely exploit the typographic possibilities of the text. Every operation is often marked by a new paragraph and can contain enumeration markers that visually reflect every stage of the process. Frequent iconic components such as photos, pictures, infographics, diagrams, and maps go beyond a simple illustration, but reveal major information.

Adam (2011b: 229-230) insists on the exclusively factual and practical character of genres of incentive to act and that these informational texts are oriented towards a future of realisation. They help and guide in the realisation of the aim and give necessary instructions how to

proceed. So, besides a great number of differences, genres of incentive to act share some common properties. Procedural, informational and instructive in nature, all of them prescribe a certain plan of action to follow, notably with the aim of achieving a practical result. Remixers of genres are attracted by this practical element of genres of incentive to act and their easy and familiar algorithm of suggested actions imitated in (1) a recipe, (2) instructions and (3) tips.

1. 'A recipe'

The example below is a meme posted on the FB page *Mitt Witt for runner up* (Figure 176). A quick look at the form is enough to notice that the meme represents the genre of recipe.

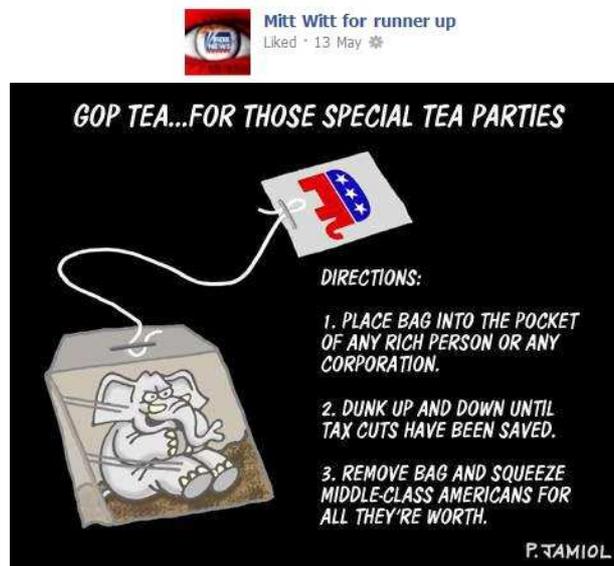


Figure 176. Imitation of a recipe

When applying the usual algorithm of genres of incentive to act to the recipe, we can observe the following: A competent cook (expert) transfers the knowledge to a 'learner' and suggests him/her to follow scrupulously all given indications in the successive order to achieve the result. The genre of recipe places the real genre frame (an internet meme) into the background. Once the reader identifies the recipe, s/he enters the scenography. That is, the writer and the viewer of the meme receive new roles.

Certainly, when recognising the recipe, the reader will experience an immediate clash when viewing this alien element that has been inserted into the political discussion. The structure of the meme answers almost all the requirements of the borrowed form. There is the title *GOP tea...for those special tea parties* and the subtitle *Directions* which invites the reader to follow

the steps in preparation. There is the description of actions which one should undertake in order to achieve the expected result. These temporally successive actions are presented by the verbs in imperative mood such as *place, dunk, remove, squeeze*. The prepositions are conjunctions which specify the direction of the action, i.e. *place bag into*; the manner of acting, i.e. *dunk up and down*; the duration of the action, i.e. *dunk up and down until*; succession of actions, i.e. *remove and squeeze*. There is a vivid typographic segmentation of the text into chunks, every new paragraph corresponds to a new step of the procedure. The picture of the tea bag completes the recipe. Of all different types of recipes the posting resembles more the instruction on a pack of tea in that there is no list of ingredients at the beginning; there are no recommendations or advice at the end however these genre components are facultative.

The structural ‘ingredients’ enumerated above are used together with the elements which are inappropriate for cooking recipes, i.e. the units of political discourse. Its traces can be found mainly on the lexical level, e.g. the name of the tea is *GOP* which is an abbreviation for Grand Old Party, a nickname for the Republican Party of the USA. The name of the party fixes the sense of the iconic representation of the elephant on the tea bag as well as its schematised version on the tea label. The tea under discussion is reserved only for *special tea parties* which refers to the Conservatives. Wordplay can be observed in the polysemic word *party* in *the tea parties*. The first meaning of the word ‘party’ proposed by Collins Dictionary is “a social gathering for pleasure, often held as a celebration”. The second meaning is “a group of people associated with some activity” and more specifically “organized together to further a common political aim”. As the posting activates two semantic fields, i.e. feast and politics, at the same time, the meaning is constantly shifting between them.

Common nouns *money, pocket* used in a figurative sense meaning ‘an account’, saving *tax cuts* circles around an isotope of finance. *Rich person, corporations* and *middle-class Americans* depict a caricaturised social structure of the American society. All these lexical elements point to fiscal clashes in the US economy as well as to a highly divided society.

Elements from the cooking and political domains are also merged on a syntactic level. The first direction presents a simple sentence with an adverbial of place. The main part of the sentence is from the cooking domain (*place bag*) and the secondary part is from the political domain (*into the pocket of any rich person or any corporation*). The second one is a complex sentence with an adverbial clause of time. The cooking elements form the main clause (*dunk*

up and down) and the political units make an adverbial clause (*until tax cuts have been saved*). And finally, the third one is a simple sentence with a direct object. The main part of the sentence is expressed by the cooking area (*remove bag and squeeze*) where the transitive verb demands an object, which is expressed by the political area (*middle-class Americans*).

Such peritextual element as a signature also reveals the ‘real’ status of the posting. Of course there are some recipes which are signed by a cook who suggests them (often on websites), the signature remains an incompatible element in the instruction of making tea. Moreover, the recipe is signed by P. Jamiol, American cartoonist.

We have considered how the combination of elements from both domains facilitate negative inferences vis-à-vis the Republican Party. This message is also inferred by the alignment of pictorial elements of the meme, i.e. a tea bag fused with the image of an elephant that represents the Republican Party. An elephant sitting on the heap of tea can be a metaphorical representation of money. The members of American society will probably activate the well-known character of Scrooge sitting on his sacs of gold. The elephant has a human posture when sitting and holding its front legs together. At closer inspection, the personalisation of the animal is even more obvious when looking at the elephant’s ‘facial’ expression. It shows a wicked sneer (brows knit together and a curl of the ‘lips’).

It may therefore be argued that an internet meme can perfectly repeat the structure of the recipe genre but cannot be named as such. Recipes are “straightforward institutional texts designed to ensure that if a series of activities is carried out according to the prescriptions offered, a successful gastronomic outcome will be achieved” (Swales 1990: 46). The main aim of the meme is not to instruct how to make a cup of tea but to ‘unveil’ the doubtful actions of the opponents and to ridicule them. It only borrows the algorithm of transformation from the recipe: The prescribed chain of operations will change the material from the initial state to the expected final one. The application of the recipe schema to a political situation explains how the members of the Conservative Party bleach money, how they arrive at their capital from the initial amount, from the point of view of an American cartoonist. The reader thinks of fiscal actions in terms of cooking procedures. The simple recipe of making tea helps him/her to comprehend the complex process of budget maintenance. In that, the tea recipe provides the structure in which the Republican fiscal operations are conceptualised. The meme prompts the readers to perceive the complex question of income and taxes and the way upper classes deal with it through the simple pattern of making tea. In other words, the ritual

of making tea, a familiar schema for the reader structures an obscure and complicated domain of fiscal operations. Apparently, the choice of making tea with a tea bag and not with a tea pot with the finest selection of tea leaves might also suggest a lower quality of tea and simplicity in preparation. Fiscal manipulations of Republicans are compressed into three steps, which is as simple as making tea with a tea bag.

Clearly, the memes-recipe is aimed at American FB users and have a strong argumentative purpose to create a negative image of opposition ideology. At the same time, the message is masked behind ‘innocent’ instructions of making tea, the purpose of which is to instruct the reader, to guide him/her in the preparation of a political recipe. The meme under analysis reproduces the structure of the genre of a recipe which establishes a scenography scene. At the same time, due to semantics and immediate FB context, the texts hold the connection with the genre and global political scenes, reminding the reader of the actual purpose of the meme.

2. ‘Instructions’

The following meme (Figure 177) posted on the FB page *The Bad, the Ugly, and the Irrelevant: The 2012 GOP pretenders* gives a 6-step instruction of how to earn money by providing the example of the successful and wealthy candidate Mitt Romney.



Figure 177. Imitation of an instruction

Like in the previous meme (Figure 176), personal traces of the subject are erased and an invisible and competent author instructs the reader how to enrich him/herself. The intertextual markers are, first of all, found in the rich use of imperatives, showing temporally successive actions (*borrow, work, take, put, squeeze, lay off, abolish, close, stash, buy*), time and manner precision connectives (*then, as much... as possible*). Every stage of the process of making money is foregrounded, numbered and starts with a new line. Ironically, the success is guaranteed under all circumstances: *If the company succeeds, you win. If the company goes bankrupt, you already won!* Irony is felt at every stage of the process, through the deliberate use of language which states the opposite. So the authors tell us what one must not do, accusing the 2012 Republican nominee of earning his sizable fortune in an unfair way. A picture of a laughing Mitt Romney saying *Marvellous!* against dollar notes background emphasises the negative attitude towards the 2012 Republican candidate.

Like the Republican tea recipe, these instructions provide a structure in which Mitt Romney's way of arriving at his prosperity is conceptualised. The genre imposes a simple frame for the politician's long achievements in his business success. The clashes of functions of two interposed genres are evident: The meme does not incite the reader to reach a fortune but it uses the pattern to address the criticism of the fortune-maker.

3. 'Tips'

A similar imitation of the genre of incentive to act was launched by the FB group *Women Against Romney (W.A.R.)* (Figure 178). The text is entitled *Romney's Storm Tips* neatly written in a squared notebook. Storm in this meme refers to the destructive hurricane Sandy which went along the Atlantic coast on October 2012 and caused a lot of casualties. The disaster happened a week before the 2012 US elections and had an impact on the presidential campaigns. Governor Romney, in his campaign, released a statement regarding what he would do if he were the President. The meme responds to a list of tips as if given by the Republican candidate.

Intertextual markers of the imitated genre are visible on a syntactic level with an abundance of first conditional constructions starting with *if* and then imperatives (*make sure, don't stop*). Marco-segmentation is also important for recognising the genre, with every new proposition numbered and cut off into a new paragraph. The formal schema suggests a contract of truth made between participants: If one scrupulously follows all the advice given by the competent candidate, s/he will reach the desired result, i.e. the protection and survival from disaster.

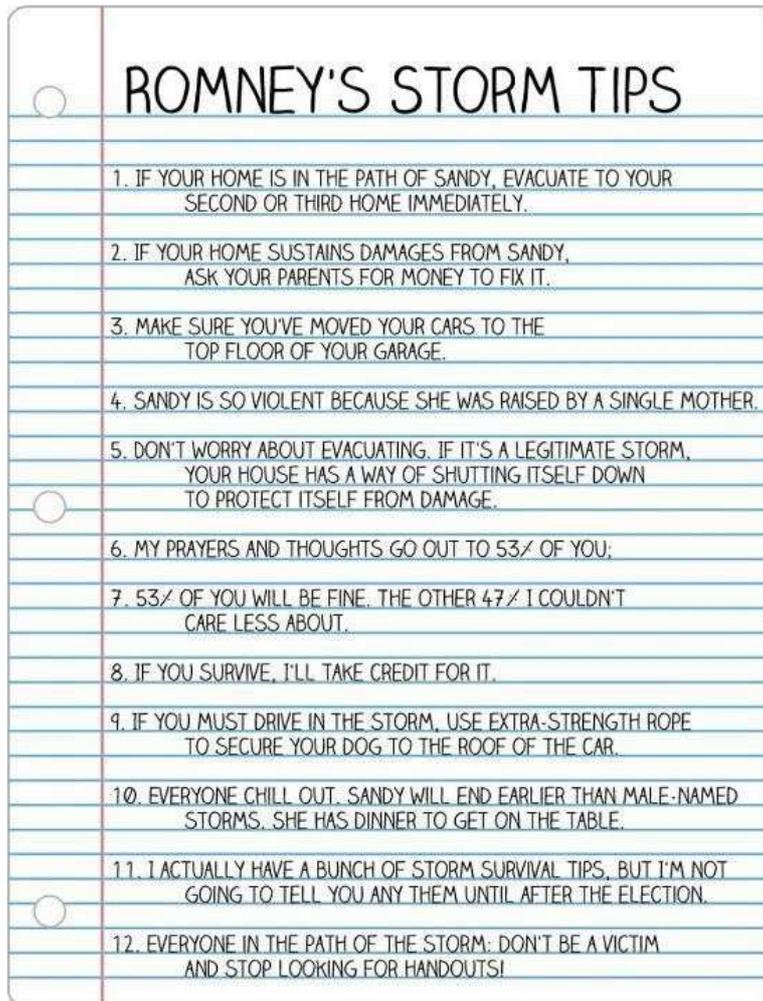


Figure 178. Imitation of tips

However, the contents reveal another aim, which is to criticise the Republican candidate. The sense is created from allusions, all referring to various scandal stories surrounding Governor Romney's name. For instance, Tip 1 proposes that people be immediately evacuated to their second or third home while Tip 3 advises to make sure that one has moved one's car to the top floor of the garage. Both tips allude to Romney's property and wealth. Other tips tackle social issues like single-parent child-raising (*Sandy is so violent because she was raised by a single mother.*), insurance (*If your home sustains damages from Sandy, ask your parents for money to fix it.*), social care (*Everyone in the path of the storm: don't be a victim and stop looking for handouts!*), and women's status (*Everyone chill out, Sandy will end earlier than male-named storms. She has dinner to get on the table.*). Certain tips require previous political knowledge in order to be interpreted like, for example, in Tip 7, percentage 47% refers to Romney's

statement that it is the number of people who would vote for Obama because they are dependent on the government. Tip 6 is constructed on the same background, by induction, that in case of disaster he would pray for the 53% remaining government independent population. All of the tips target Mitt Romney's conservative positions and meet them with heavy criticism. Some tips sound simply absurd in order to create a ridiculous image of the candidate (*If you must drive in the storm, use extra-strengthening rope to secure your dog to the roof of the car.*). The clashes between two genres are also felt in the interplay between the past and the present: Tips are oriented into future actions whilst a talk about Sandy evokes a specific disaster that happened in the past.

The catchy form which is linked with an actually dramatic topic cannot leave the rambling FB reader indifferent. Once having his/her attention, the reader keeps reading the meme since every following tip is filled with comic elements that keep the user's interest alive. Furthermore, the form of direct address employed in the text helps to enlist the reader's sympathies.

Procedural, informational and instructive in nature, all memes imitating genres of incentive to act prescribe a certain plan to follow with the aim of achieving a practical result. The difference is that the original types of texts are designed to help and guide in the realisation of the aim, giving necessary instructions how to proceed. The imitated forms however propose either ridiculous plans which characterise the planner, the adviser or the guide either as an incompetent or as a sarcastic author.

6.5.9 Imitation of personal notes

The genre of personal notes, though very different from previous genres of incentive to act, can still be part of a larger practical discourse since it is composed to 'guide' the author him/herself. The meme posted by the *Conservative Patriots of America* (Figure 179) reconstructs the patterns of this type of text for the sake of black humour with Barack Obama being its target. It illustrates a page from a ruled scribbling pad with debate notes as if written by the Democrat 2012 nominee (the text is signed *B. Obama President of the United States*). The text provides explicit spatial-temporal markers (*10/3/12; Univ. of Denver*) which allude to real presidential debates that took place between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, moderated by Jim Lehrer. The effect that the FB interest group seeks is to create a parody

based on personal records of the President which would reflect his preparation, planning, reflexions, reassuring techniques to minimise stress or raise the spirit during the event of great importance.

 **Conservative Patriots of America**
 This just in!! The Debate Notes!! WARNING!! "F BOMB" INCLUDED!! This posting is NOT for the prudish, or faint at heart!!
 Special thanks to debate notes hunter, Mike Kolanko!! — with Jessica Hensley Farmer and Mark Farmer.
 Like · Comment · Share · 5 October

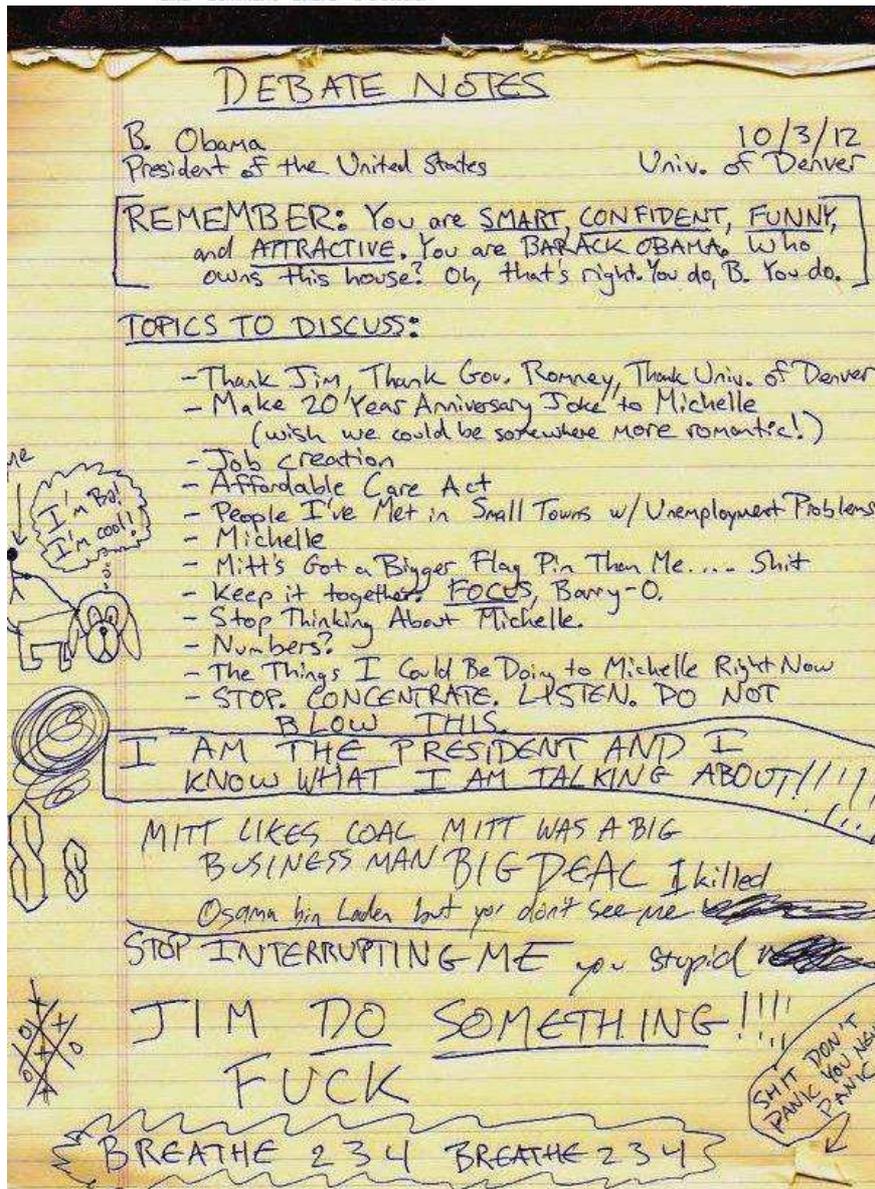


Figure 179. Imitation of debate notes of Barack Obama

The features of the genre regulating the actions and psychological state of the writer can be observed on the lexical level with the abundance of verbs in imperative form (*remember, thank, make, keep, focus, stop, concentrate, listen, do not blow, do not panic, breathe*).

Graphical means are employed to highlight the key concepts and keep them in mind during the speech (underlying, framing, putting information in square brackets, using capital letters). The general macro-segmentation illustrates a list of topical issues as if served to order talking points. Nominal structures reflect important information designed not to forget to put forward (*Job creation, Affordable Care Act, Unemployment Problems, People I've Met in Small Towns, Osama bin Laden*). Abrupt elliptical sentences are written as if following chaotic thoughts (*Numbers?*). Some multimodal markers like scribbles of a ball-point pen create the image of dealing with a real doodle, a draft copy which reflects natural behaviour of the individual when the notes are dedicated only to him alone.

These intertextual markers present a scenography which imposes a certain scenario on the reader. The genre is primarily chosen as a means of characterisation of the politician, creation of his negative portrait. The general layout with cramp hand-writing, full of scrawls, childish drawings, gives a bad impression and suggests that the writer is someone messy, disorderly and untidy. Drawings of manikin, little games like noughts and crosses, known ever since one was at school, imply a bored pupil rather than a strong political leader. Such basic self-persuasion techniques like telling oneself that *You are smart, confident, funny and attractive* ironically suggest that the writer is unsure of himself. Similar self-encouraging phrases also reinforced with graphic means like *I am the President and I know what I am talking about!!!!* written in capital letters and with several exclamation marks. A statement *You are Barack Obama. Who owns this house? Oh, that's right. You do, B. You do.* reproduces an inner dialogue, the conversation of the person with himself to calm his nervous state, to allay excitement. The negative inference is created through the connotation of 'owning the house', as if he possesses the Government.

Among topics relevant for presidential debates, several incongruous statements are added. For instance, an evident act like thanking the mediator and his opponent is framed as a talking point. Likewise, some inappropriate intimate issues like thoughts about his wife also find their way into debate notes (*Michelle, Make 20 Year Anniversary Joke to Michelle, (wish we could be somewhere more romantic!), Stop Thinking About Michelle, The Things I Could Be Doing to Michelle Right Now*). This aspect characterises Obama as a person who cannot control his emotional state that is possessed by haunting ideas and who is unable to concentrate on serious issues. The idea of distraction is also encrypted in such statements as *Mitt's Got a Bigger Flag Pin Than Me... Shit, STOP INTERRUPTING ME you Stupid, JIM DO SOMETHING!!!! FUCK* suggesting the politician's emotionally charged reactions to

immediate situational factors. The use of the upper-case reinforces the effect. The resort to foul language in several cases (*shit, fuck*) is a strong carnivalesque means of profanation, putting the politician from a high status to a low position. This function is also revealed in onomastics when conjugating the name of Barack Obama into *B., Ba, Barry-O*. Altogether, the text demonstrates a gradual accumulation of stress and panic of the scripter and shows it in final self-encouraging statements written in capital letters like *breathe 2 3 4 breathe 2 3 4, shit don't panic you never panic*, strongly pointing at the weak, unbalanced, temperamental character of the President.

A negative evaluation, an emotional expression, an intimate trust-based dialogue with the reader is the effect that the authors of the meme want to create when imitating the genre of personal notes. Bitter humour comes out of the distinct and focused contrast between two discursive systems that were brought together, i.e. that of a casual personal and official political discourse.

A contrary effect is produced in the meme of the opposition group *Anti-Republican Crusaders* who also borrow the genre of personal notes (Figure 180):



Figure 180. Imitation of debate notes of Hillary Clinton

It reconstructs the context of final presidential debates by providing a photo of Hillary Clinton wearing an ivory costume (her appearance during the last debates) against the famous blue background with words from the constitution. Her portrait is juxtaposed with another picture

where a pad with notes and a woman's hand holding a pen are captured. The formal characteristics of the written text show a list of points not to forget. The genre of personal notes is recognised by its graphic layout, i.e. a graph pad with various chaotic scriptures and small drawings. However, the analysis of contents instead of revealing a list of key talking points for presidential debates shows notes for the organisation of a party, i.e. *champagne, party hats, soooo many balloons for Bill* with summarising all this title *Victory Party list*. Prolonged vowels (*soooo*) imitating oral speech, highlighting phrases with several lines as well as pictorial double coding of verbal information (balloons and hats) fill the text with emotions. The incongruence out of juxtaposition of an official political setting such as debates and personal life of a candidate results in the humorous effect. In contrast to the previous imitation, the humour is not bitter as it is not aimed at the represented object. Humour and entertainment by way of imitating the personal notes genre are used to fulfil the function of integration of supporters of Hillary Clinton. The capture on top of the meme *What Hillary was doing every time she looked down at the podium* invites the FB user to return to this moment and re-think it again. Borrowing the genre of personal notes is a playful answer which the creators of the meme propose to a cyber public. The hidden message might contain delegitimisation inference, suggesting bad performance of the Republican opposition leader Donald Trump.

Besides the role of debate-watcher, the FB user is given the privilege to approach the candidate and read her notes. Thus, the chosen genre helps to establish an intimate relationship, i.e. one of trust between the politician and her potential voter.

6.5.10 Imitation of book covers

Some meme creators chose to imitate book covers in order to attract their followers. Front covers of books usually contain the title in large letters, the author's name, a picture, a tagline and the symbol of the publisher. The formulation of a political message via such a peculiar genre as a book cover is likely to be motivated by the strategy of an optimal address of the reader who is interested in developing his/her knowledge and skills in a certain area or who simply wants to plunge oneself into the pleasure of reading. An internet meme imitating a book cover looks like it intends to open a door to a certain knowledge that enlightens the reader. Yet, in reality, it is a means of promoting a political message.

Two memes below (Figures 181-182) take the jacket of popular instructional book series *For Dummies* which intend to present a guide for readers that are new to various topics covered.

The first meme (Figure 181) posted on page the *Mitt Witt for runner up* sports a distinctive yellow and black cover with an informal, blackboard-style title-logo *Conservative Trolling For Dummies* with a triangular-headed cartoon figure known as the Dummies Man. Taglines written in bold letters next to him present several strings of text which serve to clarify points and are designed like a teaser that gives a hint of the contents, notably in an attractive way. A speech balloon tied around an index finger is placed in the margin to indicate a particularly important passage. All these multimodal markers evoke the famous guide in the reader's mind and immediately install a scenography with new roles for FB users, i.e. an expert in the field of trolling explains in a simple way how it functions to a beginner.

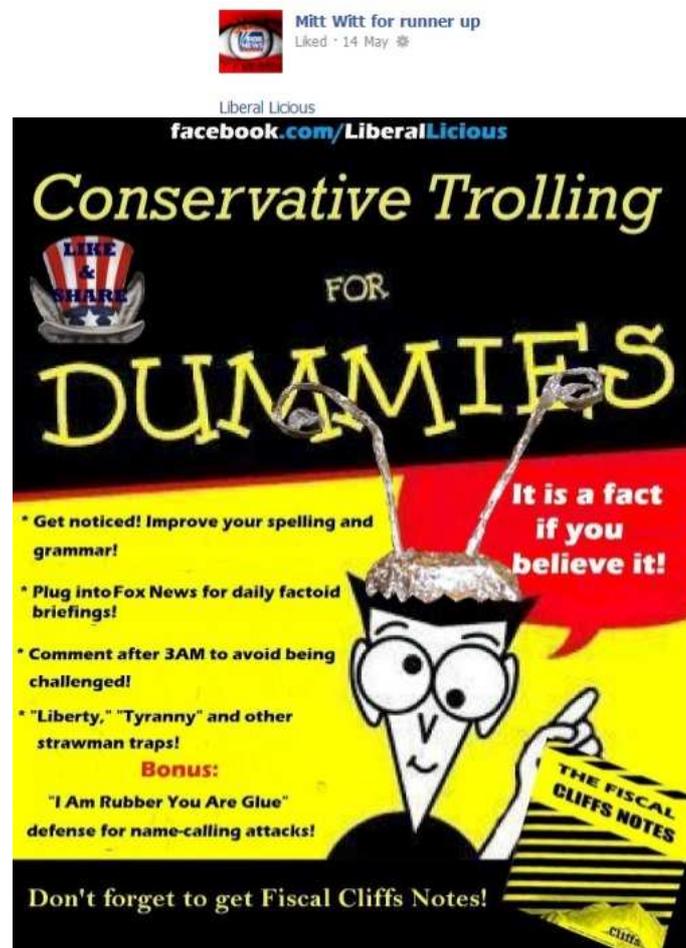


Figure 181. Imitation of book cover *For Dummies*

Originally, the word 'troll' comes from Scandinavian folklore and means an ugly dwarf or any stubborn and disagreeable, antisocial and quarrelsome creature. Trolling on the internet is

a term used to describe an activity of sewing discord and controversy by posting provocative messages. Internet trolls are believed to have the deliberate intent to provoke readers into giving an emotional response and disrupt normal on-topic discussion. The title of the meme-book is *Conservative Trolling for Dummies*, which limits this online practice to conservative users and consequently switches the meme into accusation and labelling rather than an instruction guide book.

This target is especially explicit in the content of taglines. Every line teaches the reader how to become a conservative troll, e.g. getting noticed by improving spelling and grammar, watching conservative TV channels, commenting very late to avoid critics, trapping the reader by arguments from referential books⁷. The irony is felt in every tagline since the authors of the meme claim the opposite of what they think. The book contains fiscal cliff notes which remind the reader of a situation of the cumulative economic effect when taxes were increased and spending decreased. In reality, these statements present delegitimisation signs, expressing critics of different issues such as Fox News broadcasting (*daily factoid briefings*), people who watch this TV channel as a source of information (*It is a fact if you believe it!*) and trolling in newsgroups. Thus, the meme aims at neutralising provocative messages and preventing this practice.

Besides content, some other elements indicate that the meme is not a real book cover but a political scenography. Orientation signs help to identify the political ideology of the authors through the website at the top, Uncle Sam's hat with the Democrat donkey's ears. The integration sign can be found on the hat *Like and Share* in order to attract more voters. Pictorial constituents such as Dummies Man's eyes suggest a slow-witted character. The bonus *I Am Rubber You Are Glue: defense for name calling attacks!* indicates that whatever insulting names trolls use in an attempt to offend the reader, they will bounce off the latter and stick to the name-caller. The bonus inserts a playful element into the text.

Another meme posted on the FB page *Nobama* also borrows a popular scientific prose style book cover (Figure 182). In contrast to the previous meme, its design copies less the famous edition *For Dummies*. It preserves its yellow title against black background written in the same style as the original one. These intertextual markers help the reader to recognise the reference book and enter into a scenographic game.

⁷ The meme refers to Mark R. Levin's book *Liberty and Tyranny: A Conservative Manifesto* (2009) and the quote that Conservatives resort to defend their ideology: "The Conservative does not despise government. He despises tyranny. This is precisely why the Conservative reveres the Constitution and insists on adherence to it."



Figure 182. Imitation of the instructional book series *For Dummies*

The title is *Fiscal Cliff Negotiations for Dummies*, where the multimodal text as if presents a non-intimidating explanation for the reader who is new to this economic situation. The meme alludes to the case when Barack Obama signed a bill into the law to avert the fiscal cliff. The main layout does however violate the original cover design and imposes its own political constituents. Instead of Dummies Man, the reader views the photos of Barack Obama. Taken in a frozen motion, Obama does not look like a strong leader, but rather like a villain with a wicked plan. The page is divided into two columns to show Obama's demand and offer. The exaggeration and the sharp contrast can be felt in the formulation of these statements such as infinite numbers in his demand and vague obscure proposition in his offer. Thus, the meme borrows the title and presents a short explanation of Obama's fiscal cliff negotiations similar to the guide *For Dummies*. An obvious oversimplification of complex issues does however take places since the aim of the political meme is not to instruct the curious reader but to criticise Obama's decisions on taxes.

The intention of the following meme (Figure 183) is to condemn Mitt Romney's doubletalk on a number of issues in his political past and present. In order to achieve this aim, it takes the jacket of the ancient Hindu book of love *Kama Sutra*. To look like its modern commercialised edition, it contains several intertextual indexes such as the title with the recognisable Sutra, a series of pictorial scriptures, a subtitle, a quotation-recommendation as a teaser and a number of best seller signs that are usually used in marketing and advertising.

In contrast to previous imitations, the two memes below (Figures 184 and 185) borrow book covers from fiction literature which do not only help to encapsulate the message in an eye-catching form but also to draw parallels between politicians and characters of concrete novels. In this sense, the memes present the cases of systemic typological and theme intertextual references.

The first meme (Figure 184) posted by the *Anti Tea Party MEMEs* group is a parody of the first book published by Donald Trump entitled *Trump: The Art of the Deal* (1987). It became the target of heavy criticism from left-wing camps since the book was a means of promotion of the Republican candidate in the 2016 campaign, i.e. presented as one of his proudest accomplishments and the story of how his American dream came true. The thematic intertextuality is revealed in the title of the book *TRUMP: “The Art of the Dodger”* which refers to two earlier texts at the same time, notably the title of Donald Trump’s book and the fictive character, Artful Dodger from Charles Dickens’ novel *Oliver Twist*. The formal intertextual links with the front cover of Trump’s book can be seen in the depiction of the portrait of the narrator, the choice of chromatic characteristics with the black background and the red and yellowish tones, yellow frame and yellow and white typography. Trump’s original book teases the reader with the catch phrase *He makes one believe in the American Dream again*, likewise the meme attracts the reader with “A must read..... for those that can”.

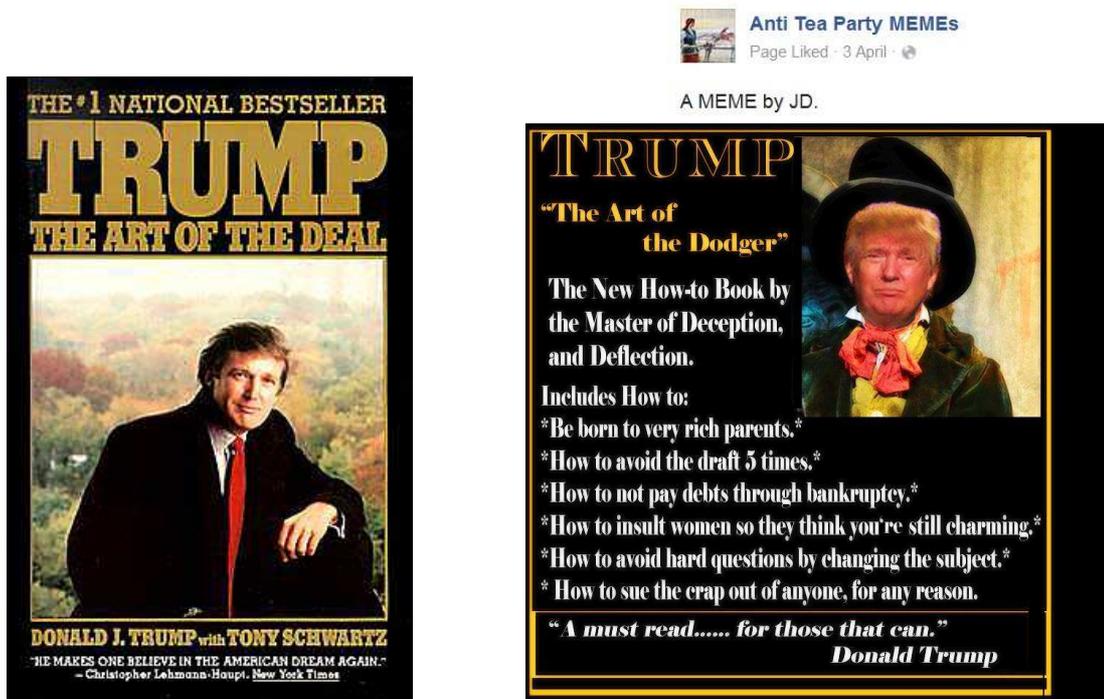


Figure 184. The cover of Donald Trump’s *The Art of the Deal* bestseller and its imitation
 (Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Trump_the_art_of_the_deal.jpg)

In addition, the meme borrows the book’s original 11-step formula for business success and creates a list of statements as if foreshadowing the contents. In reality, this ‘New How-to Book’ aims to portray Donald Trump not as a successful businessman but as an Artful Dodger who avoided military service several times (he is especially criticised for dodging the draft during the Vietnam War), who avoids problematic questions during debates, who avoids paying debts, etc. In this sense, the politician is compared to Dickens’ cunning character Jack Dawkins, known as the Artful Dodger, who is part of the collective cultural memory of English speakers. In addition, the meme attributes the success of Donald Trump to his well-off family (*Be born to very rich parents.*); it refers to scandals involving women (*How to insult women so they think you’re still charming*) and presents the Republican candidate and his followers as poorly educated people (“*A must read..... for those that can*”).

Another example of imitation of a book cover which appeared on the *Mario Piperni Dot Com* FB page also challenges the cultural memory of the reader by referring to heroic English folklore, notably the outlaw Robin Hood (Figure 185). The meme was apparently inspired by the reaction of Barack Obama to Mitt Romney’s tax plan to take from the middle class to afford tax cuts for the rich when the President said: “It’s like Robin Hood in reverse – it’s Romney Hood” (Baker 2012). The political activist Mario Piperni took the idea and framed the comparison as the tale’s front cover.

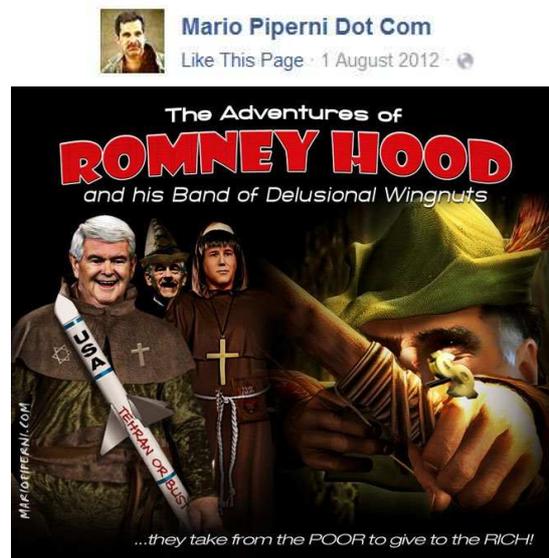


Figure 185. Imitation of the novel *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*

The intertextual markers of a book cover are revealed in the presence of the title in large letters centred at the top of the page *The Adventures of Romney Hood and his Band of*

Delusional Wingnuts. The teaser at the bottom gives a hint of the story ...*they take from the poor to give to the rich*. Like in many fiction books, the major part of the layout is taken up by graphic illustration. Zoomed in, it depicts Mitt Romney as a highly skilled archer at the front and three Republican representatives as his outlaw band of Merry Men in the background. The imitation of the tale cover type of text is an attractive way to lure the voter, referring to Obama’s words.

Finally, the FB group “*Occupy This!*” suggests to the FB user to read the book *Stronger Without the Deplorables* (Figure 186), allegedly written by Hillary Clinton and her running mate Tim Kaine (with an allusion to their original *Stronger Together* campaign book). The genre is recognised by linguistic information as well as graphical co-text. The title dominates the cover, supported by the subtitle at the top of the page (*A Blueprint for America’s Future*), the authors’ names, and the images of smiling candidates. The image depicts a book that casually lies on the wooden table, a pair of glasses and a flower pot. The setting creates a cosy atmosphere, favourable for passing an ideological message.

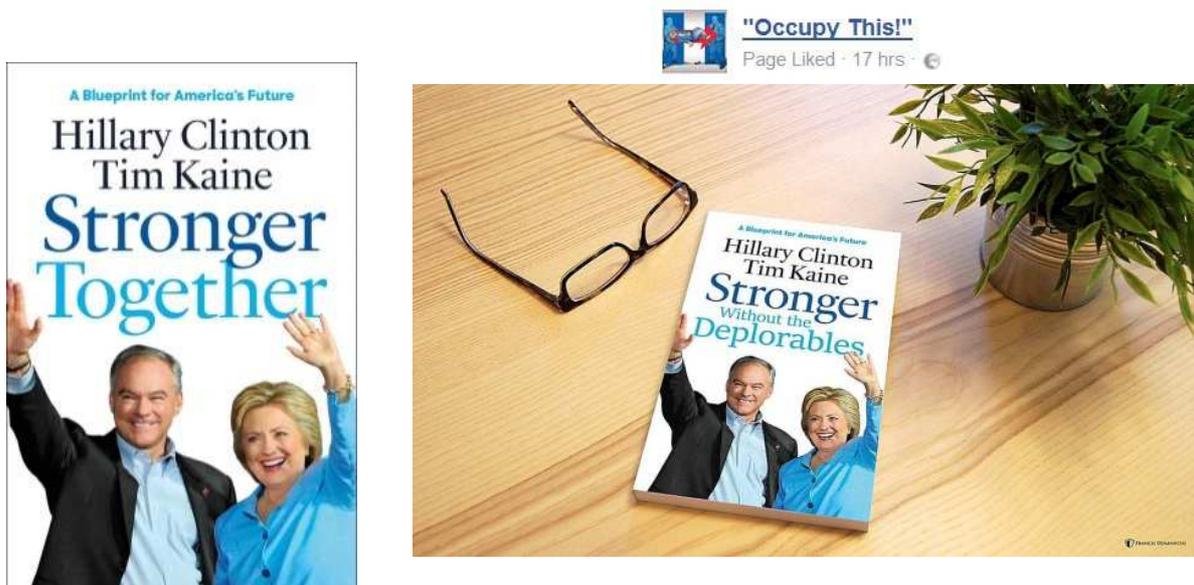


Figure 186. Hillary Clinton and Tim Kaine’s *Stronger Together* campaign book and its imitation
 (Source: https://books.google.ch/books/about/Stronger_Together)

The message consists of reminding the reader of Hillary Clinton’s remark that Trump’s supporters fit into a “basket of deplorables” (Blow 2016). The comment triggered a wave of protests and was the source of numerous digital remakes. The meme-book accentuates the candidate and her running mate’s ideological standpoint, creating a parody on their platform.

To sum up, the imitation of book covers is an example of how political activists push digital design to its limits in the hope of attracting attention. The *For Dummies* layout is chosen for its reputation of being a reference book with worldwide success. By borrowing this book cover, the authors of the meme borrow familiar concepts of simple and direct prose including amusing bits of information. The multimodal *Romney Sutra* is used as a means of metaphoric conceptualisation of the politician's various ideological standpoints. The reference to fictional characters in cover designs is a way of playing with the reader's collective cultural memory when drawing parallels between well-known heroes and politicians. Instead of direct aggressive means of fighting the opposition, the meme creators chose these original ways which besides the main political aim to fight for power also serve to attract the voters and amuse them.

6.5.11 Imitation of film release posters

Some memes are inspired by the canvas of theatrical release posters used as outside placards in cinemas or displayed on DVD packages. Similar to book front pages, these multimodal genres serve as advertisements of artistic products. Since they represent the first contact with the public, their designers have the important mission to make it breath-taking, instilling desire in the viewer to watch the film. In contrast to real genre patterns, memes' film ads do not contain information such as names of actors, directors, producers or a summary of the story. The examples below borrow three essential characteristics from the genre of release posters, namely an impressive picture, a title, and an explanatory subtitle or a tagline. Internet memes covered in film posters establish a scenography with political activists-advertisers that promote a new 'film' scenario for the American public where the main characters are real runners for the presidential chair.

The first meme (Figure 187) which was taken from the *Daily Rushbo* FB group features Barack Obama in the role of the Terminator, referring to James Cameron's prominent science fiction action-thriller film. A photomontage shows Obama's face with blended characteristics of the famous cyborg assassin. The title in large lettering goes *OBAMA* with a tagline *THE ONE TERMINATOR* which gives a hint in a dramatic way. In this context, the meme transforms the historic Election date *Tuesday, November 6, 2012* into the release date of the movie.



Figure 187. Imitation of *The Terminator* film release poster

The idea of comparing Barack Obama with the ever-lasting machine and condensing this message into a memorable sentence comes after his second land-slide victory in the general elections in 2012. However, this idea re-appeared in a speech of Ted Cruz in the Senate in 2015 when he claimed that “He [Obama] is like the Terminator. He never stops, he never gives up, he moves forward and forward and forward” who makes Republicans surrender in questions of funding Planned Parenthood, nuclear deals with Iran, etc. (Kasperowicz 2015).

The layout of the second meme (Figure 188) posted by *The Election* and *The Christian Left* FB groups looks like the cover of a horror film with the captivating title in large capitals *MITT ZOMBIE* wrapped in a shadow. The title plays with the personal name of the politician, transforming assonant *Romney* into *Zombie*.

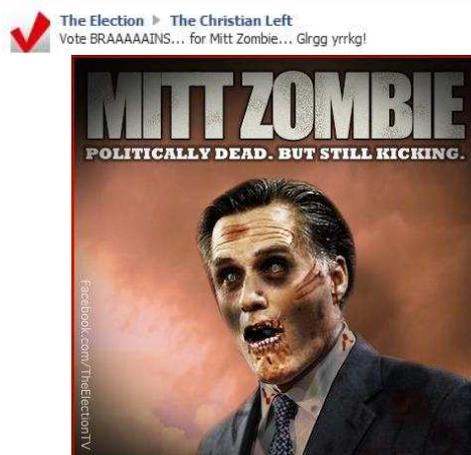


Figure 188. Imitation of *The Zombie* film release poster

The figurative resemblance of Mitt Romney is based on the fantastic character of a ghoulish monster alluding to numerous failures of the candidate during his public appearances in September 2012. The image with the grotesque figure of Mitt Romney serves a double coding of the message. Besides imposing political views, the posting is apparently aimed at entertaining the public. Furthermore, the tagline in smaller lettering *Politically dead. But still kicking* serves not only to clarify the idea of analogy of the Republican candidate with the brain dead reanimated human corpse, but also to create a dramatic effect that appeals to the viewers' subconscious fears. This short eloquent phrase inspired by film industry genres is a reiterated slogan that is associated with the politician in question in the pre-election period and serves as a means of negative advertising of the Republican.

Likewise, the third meme (Figure 189) which I found on *The Ale Party* page imitates a theatrical release poster, inspired by David Gelb's science fiction horror film *The Lazarus Effect*. It borrows its layout with the chromatic gradation of orange, replaces the picture of the main character with Tom Cruz' photo, modifies the title into *The Cruz Effect*, at the same time preserving the police style. The assonance of *Lazarus* and *Cruz* crossing at common *ru* reinforces intertextual links between two texts. Finally, the meme retains a supporting subtitle changing the original *Evil will rise* into *Creating disappointment in the hinterlands*. The reader of the meme is guided by an extended commentary that precedes the posting, which explicitly states that *the Cruz effect* is the fiasco of the Conservative politician in implementing his campaign promises which caused disappointment and loss in the body of voters in remote areas and less developed parts of the country or *the hinterlands*.

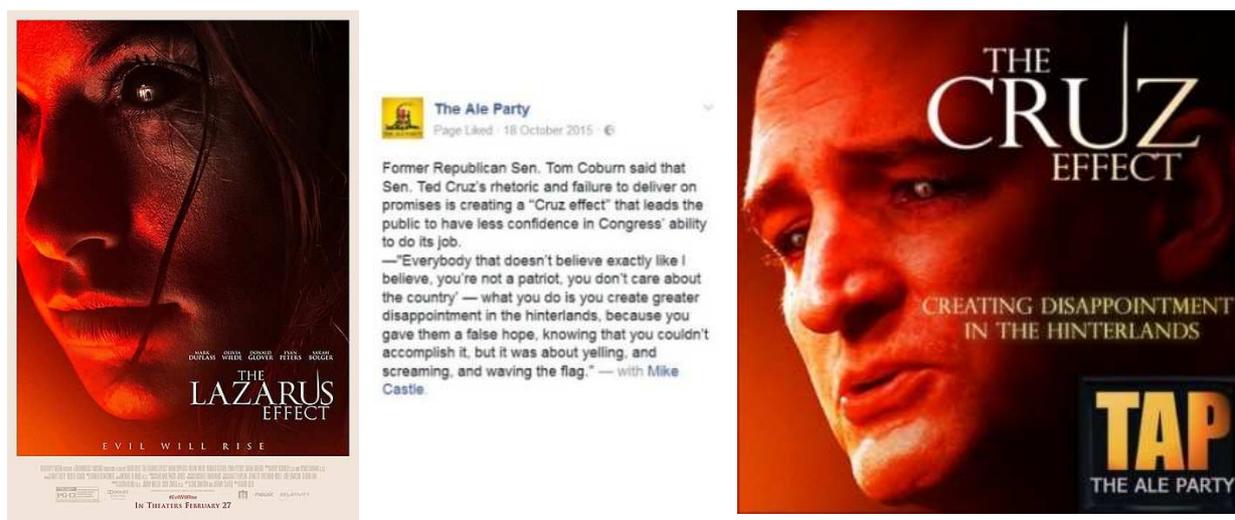


Figure 189. *The Lazarus Effect* - original theatrical release poster and its imitation
 (Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Lazarus_Effect_\(2015_film\)_poster.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Lazarus_Effect_(2015_film)_poster.jpg))

Parallels between political discourse and the fictional world are drawn on the content level. The plot of the film is about medical researchers who developed a serum that can help patients to emerge from a coma, but in reality, their substance produces a different effect, which is to bring the dead back to life. Similarly, the authors of the meme accuse Tom Cruz of giving false hope, failing to deliver on his promises and creating disappointment among the voters. The imitation of the release poster of this smashing hit allures the US voter and becomes a strong means of anti-marketing of the Republican candidate. Just like in *The Lazarus Effect*, the memorable picture and the dramatic phrase sum up the general tone and the premise of the film. The meme resorts to the same techniques in order to strengthen the audience's memory of the promoted political contents.

Another meme (Figure 190), which was posted on the *Rude and Rotten Republicans* FB page, reproduces the genre of film poster by re-making the famous American monster film *King Kong* whose first version was produced in 1933 by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack. The multimodal text provides many markers that allow for its identification as a cinematographic poster. These are the captivating picture in stop-motion, the title in capital lettering, plus listing starring staff, names of the writer, director and producer.



Figure 190. Imitation of the *King Kong* film release poster

The particular thematic reference to the film *King Kong* is due to central elements. On the one hand, there is a colossal figure on top of the Empire State Building in a battle against

notorious aircrafts Curtiss Helldiver. On the other hand, its title *King Wrong*, assonant with the original name, reuses bright yellow chromatics from the original 1933 poster:



Figure 191. Original 1933 poster of the film *King Kong*
(Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kingkong33newposter.jpg>)



Figure 192. Prototype of the image used in the meme *King Wrong*
(Source: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/business/industries/construction-property/article3391905.ece>)

In the political meme-poster, the giant ape is replaced by the figure of Donald Trump through allusion by substitution. In this parody poster, the writer, the director and the actor is Donald Trump, the producers are RNC delegates Donald Trump and Mike Pence, and the entire Trump family is the starring team. The vivid hyperbole achieved through repetition of the same name reveals sharp criticism of narcissism of the Republican candidate. The multimodal text offers the reader multiple layers of meanings and ways of interpreting. The American cultural icon the Empire State Building can symbolically represent the United States and Donald Trump climbing on its top is a metaphor of his ambition to become the President of the country. Aircrafts represent attacks from the opposition in a fierce fight for power. The title *King Wrong* successfully completes two functions, which is (1) to refer to the original

film title through assonance and (2) at the same time, to allude to presidential debates and Trump's constant repetition the word 'wrong' during Clinton's storm of accusations. The gigantic prehistoric gorilla-like monster might map qualities onto the personality of the politician, e.g. giant billionaire in the economic world, ill-mannered with rude and beast-like behaviour.

Like all previous imitations of film posters, the text aims at attracting the users' attention, entertain them and at the same time pass on a political message. The allusion to the famous film reinforces the emotional effect.

The function of the film poster is to advertise a film, while film posters used in presidential pre-election periods promote an anti-campaign message. Nevertheless, like the poster a meme demonstrates artistic interpretations of a scene of a political event and attracts the viewer by striking images of politicians in new roles. The choice of films which topped the box office is not accidental: A recognisable story benefits a quicker understanding and integration of a political message. Furthermore, thematic allusions to famous thrillers and horror films which make the public shiver, stunned and terrified are a means of evoking similar feelings when framing oppositional group leaders. Titles and supplementary expressions create an enticing effect on the viewer and serve as form of advertising anti-slogans since they condense an ideological message in a brief memorable sentence. The imitation of film release covers is therefore a way of entertaining the viewers while covertly promoting political ideas and leading voters off the message of opponents.

6.5.12 Imitation of recreational genres of games

This section is dedicated to the whole cluster of postings which implement the genre of games, and more precisely, their structure ranging from instructions how to play to a game box cover. Observing this kaleidoscope of imitations of play activities, the following questions can be raised: What is common to them all? Are there any similar features behind these diverse memetic forms? Wittgenstein pointed to the complexity of the game genre itself with similarities cropping up and disappearing with every game. Yet, the philosopher detects several elements which unite these cultural productions in a single "network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: Sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail" embracing all in a big "family resemblance" (Wittgenstein 1958: 31-32). The elements

that the scholar examines are amusement, winning and losing in competition between players, demonstration of skills and luck. The family kinship approach vis-à-vis games is also supported by Swales (1990: 49). The linguist claims that it is not “a shared list of defining features” which holds shared membership of games but “inter-relationships of a somewhat looser kind”. Huizinga (1949) in his book *Homo ludens: A study of the play-element in culture* claims that play is a fundamental characteristic of culture. Huizinga argues as follows (1949: 13):

...a free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious”, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means. The function of play in the higher forms which concern us here can largely be derived from the two basic aspects under which we meet it: as a contest for something or a representation of something. These two functions can unite in such a way that the game “represents” a contest, or else becomes a contest for the best representation of something.

In other words, when internet memes imitate games, they imitate a contest and therefore possess a playful element in their textual structure with a strong potential to absorb the reader. The attractiveness of memes-games is that they invite the latter into the imaginary ephemeral world with its proper time and space relations. Being distinct from ordinary life, play presupposes the existence of rules which create this temporary world. In any game, the players stick to the rules, to make the game fair. If the player breaks the rules, s/he must quit the game. A free activity with no profit, a meme-game can thus craft favourable conditions to pass on a political message.

Yet, when analysing imitations of games, we should not simply ask what people are doing, but keep in mind the following question formulated by Fairclough “What are people doing discursively?” (Fairclough 2003: 70). It means that as a linguist I will primarily draw attention to discursive aspect of games. In many game proceedings, language has “an ancillary role”, that is, it accompanies non-verbal actions, with the exception of some verbal games (Fairclough 2003: 70). Language takes a leading role in the formulation of rules and instructions which the player must follow. This is why Adam (2011b: 244-247) includes game instructions in the category of genres of incentive to act. To recall the main criteria, it is the presence of the invisible expert instructing the reader; the participants ‘sign’ the contract of

truth (in the case of games, if you follow the rules, you will win or reach the utmost result); specialised lexis; an abundance of predicates representing temporally successive actions; connectives specifying these actions; the macro-segmentation of the text. Furthermore, we will see that some memes take the form of a game instruction while others simply imitate verbal games or their boxes.

1. ‘Monopoly game’

Those who once played *Monopoly* will unmistakably recognise the familiar layout of the board, which inspired the FB group *The Other 98%* (Figure 193). It shows the square board divided into spaces with symbols and instructions. The spaces depict streets that were split into colour groups, railroads, public utilities, income tax, jail, etc. There are two decks of Chance and Community Chest cards on the board.

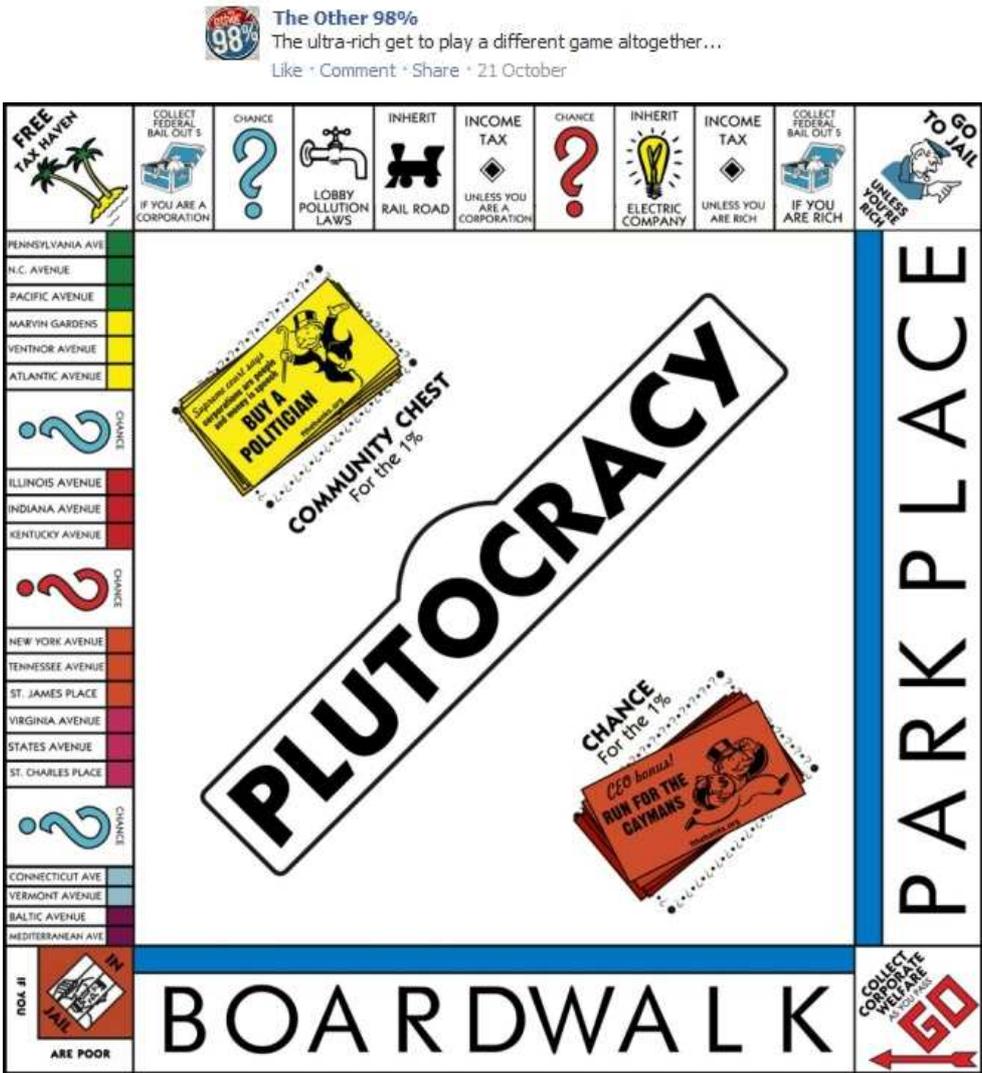


Figure 193. Imitation of the *Monopoly* game board

The posting provides enough cues to activate closely related concepts and frames to complete the representation of the *Monopoly* game. If the reader has once played this game, s/he is able to evoke the scenario: The players sitting around the board, drawing cards, putting them on the corresponding spaces on the track, following the instructions, returning the cards face down to the bottom of the deck, and passing the turn to the next player. The reader can recall that the instructions (or title deeds) specify ownership, purchase and rent prices, mortgages on the property, the cost of building on that property. Through renting and collecting the rent, buying and selling the property, the participant has the goal to drive the opponents into bankruptcy and become the wealthiest player.

Accordingly, the meme exists through the form of the game. To illustrate it, there are several linguistic and non-linguistic indexes:

- the presence of an invisible expert instructing the player, i.e. the prescribed steps are impersonal, expressed through the imperative (*go; collect corporate welfare as you pass; in jail...; go to jail; collect federal bail out...; inherit rail road; inherit electric company*);
- the contract of truth ‘signed’ between the players. In contrast to other genres of incentive to act, the contract of truth is not yet a guarantee that a player will win the game if s/he scrupulously follows the rules. Such factors as luck, strategy gained with experience can play a role in winning the game;
- the presence of specialised lexical units, i.e. the game *Monopoly* models the economic side of life and thus operates with terms from the economic domain (notions *income tax; community chest*, etc.);
- an abundance of predicates representing temporally successive actions such as *go, collect, inherit, buy, run*, all of which guide the player along the track of the board;
- the existence of connectives specifying these actions, e.g. *collect corporate welfare as you pass* (*as* specifies the moment of taking an action); *go to jail, in jail, run for the Caymans* (*to, in, for* in this context indicate directions of actions); *go to jail unless you’re rich, in jail if you are poor, collect federal bail out if you are a corporation, collect federal bail out if you are rich, income tax unless you are a corporation, income tax unless you are rich* (*if* and *unless* show that the action should be carried out under certain conditions).

Linguistic units described earlier are not presented in a block but interwoven with elements from other semiotic systems. It is the multimodal layout of the meme which activates the frame of the *Monopoly* game. Firstly, there is the considerable typographical stylisation of the linguistic elements. Suffice it to observe the name of the game *Plutocracy* in bold capital letters and other linguistic signs with a varying degree of intensity, and we witness the order of their importance. Question marks of a considerable size, together with the linguistic precision *chance* above them, incite the players to draw the chance cards, read the instructions and follow them as the game proposes. Secondly, the geometrical dimension of the posting presents a square surface, with the edge divided into figures of different sizes, the alternation of font as well as the position of words on the surface (the name of the game figuring in the center, decks of cards in opposite angles and the spaces circling around) – all of these features reproduce the symmetric order of the *Monopoly* game. Thirdly, from the topographic point of view, just like the *Monopoly* game, the posting presents a schema or a plan. Fourthly, iconic signs (wagon stands for the rail road, a bulb for the electric company, a tap for water works, a coffer with treasures for community chest, a policeman or a bar for jail) allow for the replication of the famous game. Finally, the main chromatic characteristics or colours also borrowed from the real game group together the street names (each colour has its own price) and facilitate the distinction between chance (orange) and community chest (yellow) cards.

Consequently, the meme under analysis introduces the scenography by reproducing the genre of the board game *Monopoly*. The above-described scripto-visual characteristics are proof of it. Having positioned itself as a game, the meme attributes new roles to the readers as if they were partners of the game. At the same time, the meme is not deprived of characteristics which are atypical for the game. Firstly, there are some speculations around the titles. Having borrowed a great deal of features from the game *Monopoly*, the FB group *The Other 98%* however re-names it into *Plutocracy*. The term ‘plutocracy’ defined as “a state or society governed by the wealthy” (OED), brings the aspect of politics into the text. Together with the accompanying introduction comment *The ultra-rich get to play a different game together...* the game implies only one possible winner, which is the wealthy elite.

Secondly, a closer look at the labels on the signs helps to detect some modifications brought into the original game. Certainly, there are many versions of the *Monopoly* game spread around the world, each country adapting the game to its own geography and economic situation. Nevertheless, there are elements which point not only at the economic context but also at socio-political issues. For example, precisions in guidelines such as *go to jail unless*

you're rich, income tax unless you are rich, income tax unless you are a corporation; changing the original *community chest* into *collect federal bail out \$ if you are rich*; replacing *salary* with *corporate welfare* in *collect corporate welfare as you pass*; substituting classical *water works* with political *lobby pollution laws*; modifying *in jail just visiting* into *in jail if you are poor*; and adding *inherit* into *rail road* and *electric company*.

Thirdly, some new signs are added and many omitted. For instance, the space *free tax haven* with the sign of an isolated island with palms on it is an innovation of the creators of the posting. However, there are no prices found on the spaces, i.e. a feature which is present in the classical *Monopoly* game. Many spaces, to mention but a few, for example, the famous *free parking* placed in the corner of the classical board, *super tax* space and others, were erased. Some spaces were merged into *boardwalk* and *parkplace*, horizontal and vertical lines on the right.

Finally, a lot of alien elements can be found on the cards that players draw. Next to allotted spaces of both decks, there is an indication that Community Chest and Chance cards are *For the 1%*. It supports the idea mentioned in the introduction comment that this game has got privileges only for the *ultra-rich*. The top card of yellow Community Chest reveals in italics *Supreme court says: corporations are people and money is speech* and in bold capital letters *Buy a politician*. The upper card of the orange Chance deck shows *CEO bonus!* in italics and *Run for the Caymans* in bold capital letters. On both cards, we can read the tiny logo *fthebanks.org* which refers to the authorship of the iconotext. At the same time, it sends the reader the link to another text.

All enumerated elements above, although distinct from the *Monopoly* game, are skillfully incorporated into the structure of the board. The layout of the game resembles the familiar game with many unchanged signs and the style of writing. New iconic and textual elements respect the existing order and style. This makes new insertions and modifications imperceptible. Together they suggest the representation of the US right-wing politicians with Mitt Romney as the players of an unfair game.

As we have witnessed, the play is a highly symbolic social phenomenon. One of the play's functions is the representation of some practices. In order to represent the competitive world of economy, *Monopoly* resorts to material signs which substitute social institutions, agents and their actions. *Monopoly* is an imitation of economic life, an abrupt and simplified model of it. In the terms of Huizinga (1949), the play draws a circle around people, imposes its own

order, time, place and roles. Thus, the *Monopoly* players live lives of bankers, buyers, sellers, bankrupt businessmen, etc. Moving around the game board, they pay taxes and rents, collect money from opponents, buy and trade properties, accumulate and lose their houses, hotels and companies. Absorbed by the goal to win, to drive the opponents into bankruptcy, the player experiences uncertainty and strives to solve the problem. Regardless of an element of tension, concentration and ultimate seriousness, the play remains “an intermezzo, an interlude in our daily lives” (Huizinga 1949: 9). After all, it is supposed to be good fun. The player voluntarily chooses to go through this temporary challenge; in ending the tension and achieving high results lies the purpose of this game. Representing an economic model, it also becomes a race for demonstrating the best skills. Therefore, achieving the highest scores and having fun, relaxation and a good pastime are the main functions of *Monopoly*.

Interestingly enough, the political posting simulates the reproduction represented by the game. The creators of the posting borrow this well-known model from the economic world and inhabit it with real actors (corporations, supreme court), places (Caymans) and events (lobby pollution laws, collection of federal bail out). However, the purpose of the meme is to disgrace wealthy American citizens involved in the political game by showing their speculations in capital gaining and influencing the political life. It indirectly points to the Republican candidate Mitt Romney, presenting him as one of the ultra-rich participants. The meme is a mocking attack of the core of the US organisation of power: Politics, economy and justice presented as a bunch of rich gamblers who play an unfair game. Moving around the board, the reader picks the instructions *collect corporate welfare*, *collect federal bail out's*, *inherit rail road*, *inherit electric company*. Framed as privileges of corporations and the rich, these actions give rise to a set of negative evaluations. The instructions *go to jail* and the alternative *in jail* activate a well-known script, i.e. people commit a crime, are judged and, as punishment, go to jail. A normal process in the American culture is however viewed negatively, being restricted to *unless you're rich* in the first sign and *if you are poor* in the second one.

The sign *free tax haven* gives rise to the frame of receiving a salary, declaring or not the income, paying taxes or searching to skirt tax laws by transferring money offshore. The image with an island, golden sand and palms on it resonates the instruction on the top Chance card *CEO bonus! Run for the Caymans!* The chief executive officer alludes to Mitt Romney and the company Bain Capital where he occupies the highest-ranking position of management. The reader might have heard the notorious hearsay story about Romney and his company

maintaining capital funds, investments and assets in the Cayman Islands. In the blend, this story is compressed into an instruction for the players ironically guiding him/her to run to the islands under discussion as s/he soon gets the CEO bonus.

The top Community Chest card instruction is *Supreme Court says: corporation are people and money is speech. Buy a politician!*, which propagates the activation of the general knowledge about the Supreme Court in the USA (which has the highest appellate jurisdiction power over lower courts) and the more specific case *Citizens United, Appellant v. Federal Election Commission*⁸.

The expression *Corporations are people and money is speech* dates back to the US constitutional principles in the mid-1970s which was activated, transformed and reformulated several times by politicians and political activists, notably being adjusted to their aims. In the meme, the quotation is incorporated in the sentence pronounced by the Supreme Court.

The ironic call to buy a politician is connected to the knowledge structures of buying products schema and metaphoric projection of this action to the domain of political life. As a result, politicians, like goods, can be 'bought'; in other words, they are corrupt.

The note that the Community Chest and Chance cards are only *For the 1%* underlines the same idea that all the privileges of the game are the object of a limited number of players. But the note does not mention what kinds of players. Nevertheless, surrounded by other clues like, for example, the title of the post *The ultra-rich get to play a different game together...* attaches the meaning of the number to wealthy Americans. Also, it echoes with the name of the interest group *The Other 98%* in its peritextual relation. A competent reader can recall the slogan of the group written on their FB page: "Our economy & our democracy are being

⁸ The case involves the conservative group Citizens United who planned in 2008 to broadcast a film criticizing the policy of Hilary Clinton which violated the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA). One of the issues of the latter was to cease the use of money outside the limits prescribed by federal campaign finance law (soft money) favouring the use of only federal funds (hard money) for expenditures of election campaigns. In practice, this act prohibited different unions, corporations and non-profit organisations from using their treasury to fund broadcast advertisements mentioning the candidate within 30 days before the primary or 60 days before the general election. Accordingly, the United States District Court for the District of Columbia ruled that the film violated the restrictions of the BCRA. The Supreme Court however reviewed the decision of the local court and proclaimed that it was unconstitutional to ban free speech of associations. The ruling of the Supreme Court caused a series of controversial opinions which split the American public. For conservative advocates it was a tremendous victory. They argued that a corporation is an association of individuals and like individual speakers they must be granted the freedom of speech. They argued that spending money is the way to disseminate speech and an associate group of individuals should not be limited in their actions. Otherwise, it is interpreted as restriction in actions, as governmental control or censorship. As far as the opinion of democrat adherents is concerned, there is a fear of an expanding dominance of the wealthy on the political arena, corruption, foreign investments into American policy, and distortion of audience's perceptions (Ritter 2012).

hijacked by an Elite 2% that is selling out the American dream. Help us change that.” The litotes becomes even more explicit and reduces the rich American people to a tiny percentage in the meme.

All activated additional knowledge structures and frames ‘have a meeting point’ in the title of the game *Plutocracy*. In fact, all of the elements point to the US society, governed by the rich, even if there are no direct indications. Subsequently, the lexical concept ‘plutocracy’ is understood in relation to American society, with the allusion to particular political figures.

The game presented in the meme is designed for only one class of players – the ultra-rich. It does not give equal chances to the participants from the beginning, dooming those to failure who have not got enough capital. Thus, for some readers, there could only be one possible outcome, which is the victory of the richest player out of the ultra-richest. Understanding the reality in terms of the game, *Plutocracy* means that seeing only one possible victory in the elections, i.e. that of the candidate who has got a lot of money. The reader can go further in his/her reflections imagining that the power concentrated in the hands of large agglomerations of wealth can undermine the democratic politics. The politics where you can ‘buy’ a politician is corrupted. The mechanism of capital accumulation and the expanding control over the economic sector might not seem fair.

Why did the initiators of the posting choose the genre of game to transfer the message to the voters? We have already seen that recognition of the genre through its scripto-visual characteristics propagates the activation of the entire package which it comes with, i.e. the place and time, the status of partners, medium and purpose. What follows is that by transplanting this pattern into the meme, the reader thinks of US politics in terms of the game, its process and outcomes. The use of power is understood as the path from the space *GO* to the winning/failure end. The more power the player exercises, the more chances s/he has to win. The matrix of the *Monopoly* game applied to the political posting makes it possible to unite multiple domains of US life. In particular, suggested social inequality, court corruption, fiscal evasion, sources of income and its use for political promotion are all compressed into the compact form that is easy to grasp at once. Furthermore, the familiar game scenario helps to comprehend the complex system of the politico-economic process.

Having observed the interaction between two genres, we can conclude that this creative mix offers the FB reader the temporal world of an American plutocracy game where a certain order of elements reigns. The latter promotes a particular construal of the US right-wing

politicians. Although the genre of the posting is created through the scenography of the game, it is subordinated to the laws of the political discourse which determines the genre theme, its length, and the real status of participants.

2. 'Drinking game'

Another meme, posted by *The Bad, the Ugly, and the Irrelevant: The 2012 GOP Pretenders* group, imitates a drinking game, i.e. a play activity which involves the consumption of alcoholic beverages (Figure 194). Taking the form of a contest, it assigns the FB users the roles of players who should compete to out-drink one another, incorporating the use of verbal exchanges of candidates during debates. Like the previous meme, it gives the reader a list of instructions and looks like a guide of how to play due to a number of intertextual markers:

- the explicit title claiming that the text is a game *The 2012 Presidential Debate Drinking Game*;
- the list of rules, every rule starting from a new line;

Respecting the rules is inevitable to make the game fair as the rules support the temporary world created in a game. As Huizinga (1949: 10-11) puts it:

Play demands order absolute and supreme. The least deviation from it "spoils the game", robs it of its character and makes it worthless. [...] Indeed, as soon as the rules are transgressed the whole play-world collapses. The game is over. The umpire's whistle breaks the spell and sets "real" life going again. [...] The player who trespasses against the rules or ignores them is a "spoil-sport". The spoil-sport is not the same as the false player, the cheat; for the latter pretends to be playing the game and, on the face of it, still acknowledges the magic circle.

Since the meme imitates an endurance game that is based on the candidates' behaviour during the debates, its rules are constructed as anticipations of politicians' actions and consequences for the players once these predictions are realised.

- Elliptical nominative structures showing the prescribed steps (*1 drink, 2 drinks, 3 drinks, 4 drinks, 2 hits of LSD*) along with predicate constructions implying actions (*take a bong rip and hold it in, take a shot, chug a beer, then exhale*). Coloured in distinctive yellow, they serve to highlight and guide the players' engagements;
- connectives expressing the order of actions (*and, then*);
- the absence of any traces of the personality of the instructor (impersonal sentences, imperative mood);

- the layout presenting a board with a chalk handwriting, suggesting a menu board that is usually found in pubs.

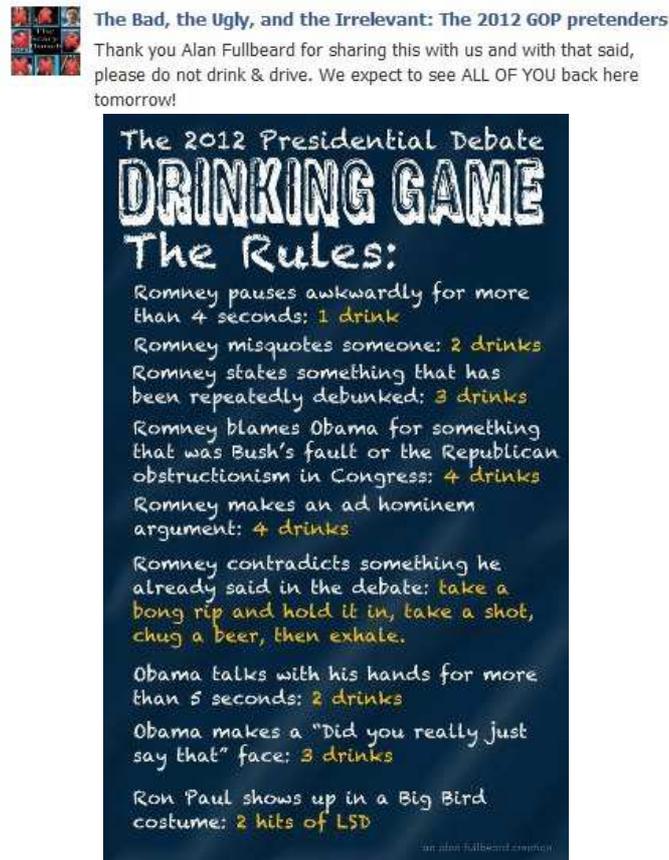


Figure 194. Imitation of the drinking game rules

All these intertextual markers present the meme as a drinking game. The interaction of genres can be observed on the level of lexical units. Statements either start with or mention proper political names (*Romney, Obama, Ron Paul, Bush*), some lexical units reveal the US specific context (*Republican, obstructionism, Congress*). Yet, these elements alone do not signify that the meme is a surrogate genre. The drinking game can integrate any discourse into its structure as long as it contributes to ‘drawing a magic circle’ around the participants and seeing which player can last the longest. But if we take a close look at the semantics of statements, we can observe that the meme is not a game but a mask of passing the political message to American voters. On the one hand, there is a clear imbalance between the predictions of candidates’ behaviours during the debates (six anticipations of Mitt Romney’s speech vs two Barack Obama’s actions). All the statements are biased against the Republican candidate. They portray Mitt Romney as hesitant, lacking self-confident (*pauses awkwardly for more than 4 seconds*), incompetent (*misquotes someone*), weak (*states something that has*

been repeatedly debunked), manipulating (blames Obama for something that was Bush's fault), aggressive (makes an ad hominem argument) and an inconsistent opponent (contradicts something he already said in the debate). Even rules which mention Obama indirectly criticise Mitt Romney (Obama makes a "Did you really just say that" face), depicting him as silly and dull. All these statements predict the Republican's potential losing in the debates with a more far-reaching aim of suggesting loss in the elections. On the other hand, the impossibility and absurdity of the last condition for players turn the game into a joke. It proposes the appearance of the conservative candidate in the Republican primaries Ron Paul in a Big Bird costume as a possible development of the debates scenario. The character from *Sesame Street* alludes to the sensational story about Mitt Romney advocating a funding cut for this entertainment programme. The meme pretends to be a game and trap the reader till this last regulation which brings him/her back to the real meme genre and the global political scene.

3. 'Twister'

The example of a single text reference presents the meme found on *The Ale Party* and *Armchair Patriots* FB groups (Figure 195). It borrows the layout of a *Twister* game box. The game of physical skill where players must move their matching hand or foot to a circle of the correct colour and put themselves in unlikely or precarious positions, eventually causing someone to fall is well-known to the American public.

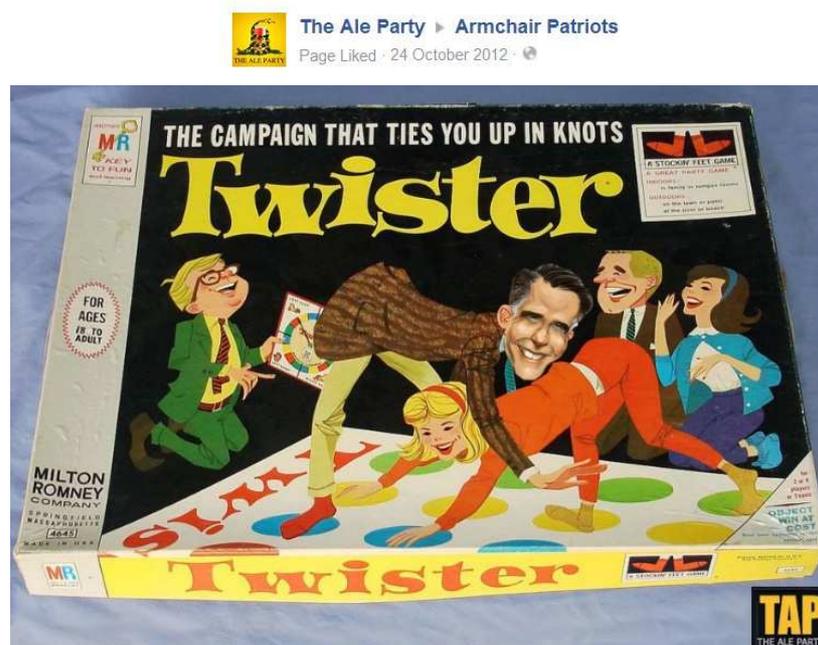


Figure 195. Imitation of a *Twister* game box

The meme presents a snapshot of an old *Twister* box, preserving its early cover design almost unchanged. It depicts a group of people, two playing on a mat, one holding a spinner to determine where the players have to put their hands or feet, others watching and all laughing out of the toy fad.

Compare:

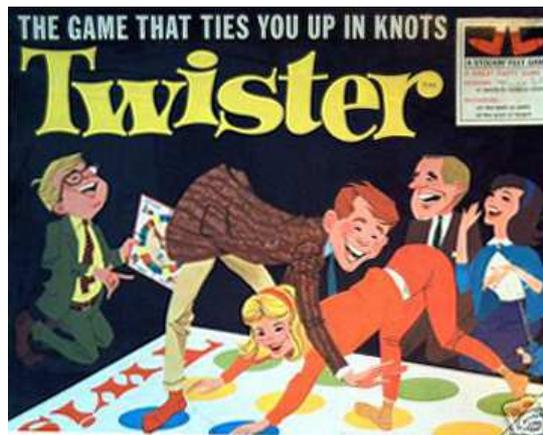


Figure 196. 1966 *Twister* cover art

(Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/0/09/1966_Twister_Cover.jpg)

Besides the bright topographic layout, the meme provides a short description, attractive commentaries, indicates age limits, the company and the place of production to make it look like a real game box. These intertextual markers help to install the scenography of the *Twister* game to prepare the reader to absorb the message. The latter can be gradually constructed through the analysis of details that are seamlessly integrated into the multimodal composition of the *Twister* box. The central figure on the mat has the laughing face of Mitt Romney. Its texture adopts the same artistic style as the whole game layout which assists to its natural assimilation. The teasing commentary *Key for fun* in the upper left corner of the box, the initials of the Republican nominee *MR*, are smoothly integrated. Contrary to the classical *Twister* game, the meme imposes the limits of the age span – *18 to adult* – which rather matches an American voter's stage. The original Milton Bradley Company which produces *Twister* games are modified into *Milton Romney Company* at the bottom of the box. Eventually, the meme unveils its political intention by claiming that this *Twister* is not the game but *the campaign that ties you up in knots*, implying a persistent annoying race for the voter.

A national craze for a short time is not chosen at random by the creators of the meme. The chosen form pursues a number of communicative aims. Being a great party game that brings

different age groups together, it, first of all, favours an easy acceptance of the meme by the reader. The latter is temporally regarded as a player and not as a voter who is intrusively annoyed by repeated campaign messages. Secondly, the immediate recognition of the cover is likely to attract the reader (maybe through good memories of experienced fun) and make him/her aware of the content. Finally, the campaign of the adversary presented as a *Twister* game is a skilful metaphor which helps to encapsulate the delegitimisation message in the original multimodal form, which is grasped at once.

4. 'Scrabble'

The next meme (Figure 197) created by Mario Piperni imitates the word game *Scrabble* where players score points by placing tiles onto the game board. Unlike previous examples, the base for imitation is not a regulation or a box but the game itself. Although it lacks the square box with a 15×15 grid of cells with its original colour scheme, the meme disposes a range of intertextual markers which make the observer think that it is a *Scrabble* game.

Firstly, the meme clearly states at the bottom that the text is *Scrabble* which evokes in the reader's mind the rules of drawing tiles to fill the rack, placing tiles to make a word, scoring, forfeiting the turn and playing again. Secondly, the tiles form words in crossword style that flow left to right in rows or downwards in columns. Thirdly, each tile bears a single letter and is marked with its point value. Fourthly, all tiles grow into a contiguous string of letters, each forming a meaning word. Finally, the meme contains a main word which uses the letters of one or more previously played words and has at least one of its tiles horizontally or vertically adjacent to an already played word.

The political discourse is revealed in the isotopy of the formed words. Taken together, the letter strings *Bermuda*, *Cayman*, *tax*, *haven*, *money*, *fraud*, *lie* share the same theme of tax evasion which gives homogeneity to the *Scrabble* crossword. All of these lexical units are circled around the main word *Romney*. In choosing the repetition of fiscal conspiracy meaning related to Mitt Romney's name, the meme creator accuses the wealthy politician of hiding his assets and considerable income in offshore financial centres Bermuda and Cayman Islands, which are known to be tax havens. Clashes appear between the genre of meme and the real *Scrabble* because, on the one hand, no proper names are allowed in official game conventions, but on the other hand, every letter of the name *Romney* is granted 0 value even though some of them are repeated elsewhere with value 1. This sophisticated stylistic device is used to

To launch this theatrical scene, the authors of the meme employed such intertextual markers as 5x5 cards macro-segmentation, ready-made bingo cards with buzzwords, which the politician is predicted to utter during the event. Besides the general layout, FB users identify the bingo genre patterns through the name *Bingo* itself.

However, the established game scenography disappears as soon as the FB user notices delegitimisation elements that are smoothly incorporated into the game structure. There are a number of tiles which implement ready-made clichés, pursuing the idea of presenting Obama as an incompetent leader who relies on buzzwords in an effort to mask the lack of actual understanding of the situation (*Fiscal responsibility; Previous administration; Unprecedented*). But not all tiles involved in the meme are buzzwords; they rather form a collection of words and expressions that all call for various associations with Obama. Some tiles give a negative evaluation of his policy (*Worst economy since the great depression; The system is broken; Crisis*), others target his personal qualities showing him as a Narcissus (*I, me, my*), or having language ticks (*Let me be clear; I've said time and time again; There are those who say*) and so on. The preference of the informal title *Bullshit Bingo* along with Obama's first name *Barack* creates a sort of cacophony, in addition to the idea of someone talking nonsense or giving untrue facts.

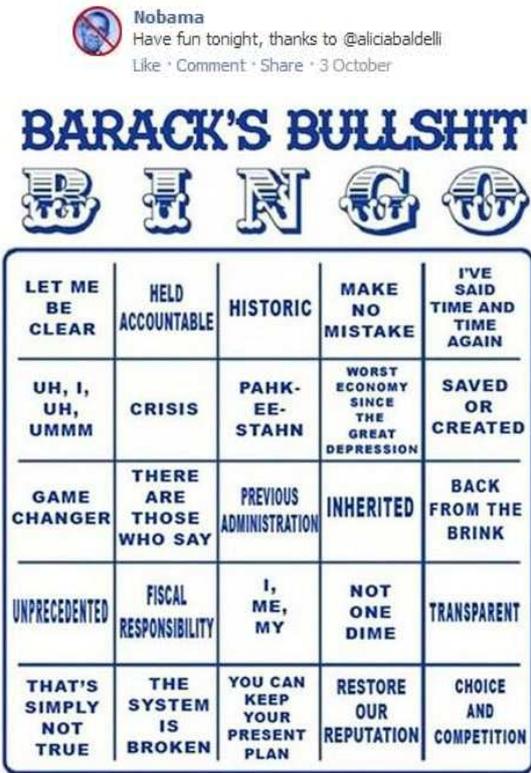


Figure 198. Imitation of the *Bingo* game

Thus, the meme masks its intentions to devaluate Obama via the form of a well-known *Bingo* game. The advantage of the chosen genre is to present the compact patchwork made of cut phrases. Taken from different contexts, they give a large field for interpretation.

6. 'Zingo'

The activists of the left-wing group *Democratic Underground* were inspired by *Bingo's* sister game *Zingo*, which is especially popular among young players. Those who once played it remember the easy algorithm of following two slides at a time, calling out the name of the object and placing the pictures or words on the matching space on the board.

In order to evoke the game from the reader's memory, the creators of the meme (Figure 199) show a 5x5 board with the explicit title *Zingo*. The instruction on top invites the reader to match *the zingers and win*. It looks as if all pictures have already been covered by their corresponding word tiles beside one in the middle, i.e. the portrait of Mitt Romney who is roaring with laughter. The authors keep this card open deliberately, suggesting that the present game is about politics.

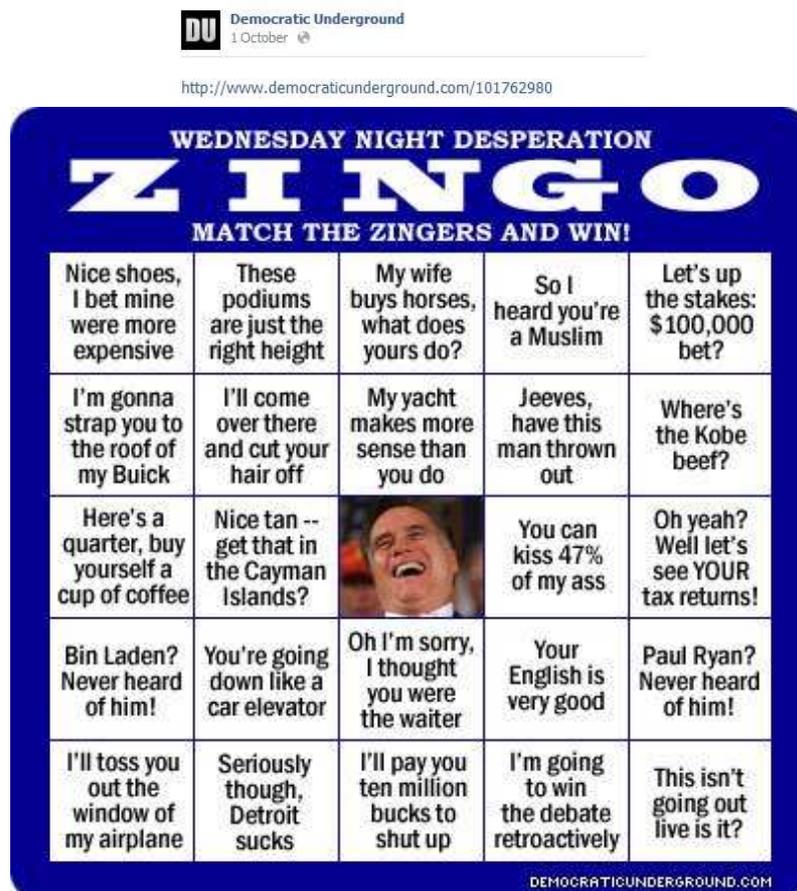


Figure 199. Imitation of the *Zingo* game

Every tile contains an expression which in some way or another refers to the central figure and tells something about the politician in question. A content analysis reveals the themes of Mitt Romney's wealth (*Nice shoes, I bet mine were more expensive; My wife buys horses, what does yours do?; ...my airplane; I can pay you ten million bucks to shut up*), tax hiding (*Nice tan! Get that in the Cayman Islands?*), labelling him a racist (*So I heard, you're a Muslim; Your English is very good*), depicting him as an impulsive and uneducated man who is unable to give appropriate arguments (*I'll toss you out the window of my airplane; You're going down like a car elevator!*), a self-assured (*I'm going to win the debates retroactively*) as well as arrogant and impolite person (*Oh, I'm sorry, I thought you were the waiter*). The peculiarity of this meme-game is that all cards are written in the first person singular as if uttered by the Republican 2012 nominee himself. This eloquent turn is a device of mocking Mitt Romney since there are several unrealistic repetitive statements (*Paul Ryan? Never heard of him! Bin Laden? Never heard of him!*) as well as taboos (*You can kiss 47% of my ass; ...shut up; ... sucks*).

Like the previous meme, it was launched on the eve of the presidential debates (*Wednesday night desperation*) with its main purpose to cast shade on the Republican nominee, to discredit him among hesitant voters and persuade him/her to give the vote to Obama.

7. 'Video game'

Besides the games known to the FB user from childhood, meme creators are also inspired by video games. A meme (Figure 200) from the group *Teabonics* refers to the digital version of the fantasy role-playing game *Magic: The Gathering*, which represents the battle between wizards who resort to spells and different conjuring tricks and magic powers to defeat their opponents.

The borrowed genre is a card with the representation of a character who is engaged in a battle. The genre is unmistakably identified by the person familiar with the game due to characteristics such as the specific layout with conventional signs, the name of a planeswalker followed by the description of his powerful abilities. The choice of vocabulary also assists in the creation of the scenography. Different terms specific to the game such as *creature*, *vigilance*, *summon*, *token*, *mana* describe the level of magic energy used to cast the spell, his force and various means of damaging the opponents.

[w]



Figure 200. Imitation of a character profile from a video game

Nevertheless, instead of quaint wizard creatures, the warrior Donald Trump is depicted. He is presented as a powerful and indestructible struggler who has a magic fuel to fight with other creatures. Although the meme creators mask his appearance in an admiral uniform, the viewer of this digital card would certainly notice clashes of entertainment and political discourses. The contact of the meme and game genres has a crossing point on the syntactic level. Such word combinations as *wall token*, *a protection from non-white creatures*, *use their mana to pay for the wall* remind the reader of Trump's scandalous proposals concerning the fight against illegal immigration from Mexico. In this metaphorical framing, non-white creatures are Mexican people who present an obstacle for wizard-Trump. Trump's token is the construction of the wall as a means of protection. His magic trick is using the energy of his opponents to compensate his power drain. Therefore, vivid criticism is encrypted into the structure.

Since many young people are fond of video games, the meme borrowing the form of this fantastic wizard game can easily draw their attention and in this way passes on the critical message.

To sum up, if real games are not purpose-driven, being primarily a joyful activity when players have fun in a temporally created world inside a magic circle, political memes altogether pursue the aim of fighting for power of conflicting forces and interests. At the same time, when borrowing the outward forms of games, the idea of fun and entertainment, positive memories are transferred. First of all, it attracts the FB user, giving him/her the ephemeral role of a game partner, a role which helps to accept the text more readily.

6.5.13 Imitation of lyric genres

A radically different form of realisation of internet memes is the reproduction of literary genres with their genuine system of images and figurative language with the overwhelming aim to create an aesthetic feeling of pleasure from the form in which the content is presented. This is why, in order to avoid trite forms of expression, some social media activists resort to the language of poetry in order to impress their followers. Jakobson (1960) justly claimed that of all manifestations of language, the lyric is the best example which illustrates the poetic function. Even though memetic verses are modified copies of already existing lyrics, the originality of the chosen form for imitation is incontestable. The original texts are often well-known nursery verses or songs, i.e. genres which are based on prosodic arrangements of utterances with rhythm and rhyme as distinguishable properties. The language of poetry rather than emotive prose or drama is more preferred by meme creators, probably because of its compact form. Rhythmic patterns control the syntactic and semantic aspects of verses and result in “brevity of expression, epigram-like utterances, and fresh unexpected imagery” (Galperin 1981: 252).

The imitations of lyrical forms are based on the integration of sounds and contents, the play upon combination of the sound of a word and its meaning. The phonic aspect is pivotal in memes-lyrics since carefully selected words are conspicuous and their outward appearance means more than their common use. Memes imitating the language of poetry show observable features of compositional patterns of rhythmical arrangements that are revealed in its strict orderly form with alternations of stressed and unstressed syllables; equilinearity, that is, an equal number of syllables in the lines; a natural pause at the end of the line, the line being a more or less complete semantic unit; the identity of stanza patterns; established patterns of rhyming. Both syntax and semantics comply with the restrictions imposed by the rhythmic pattern and are regarded in many ways as dependent on prosody (Galperin 1981: 252-269).

1. 'Rhyming book for children *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*'

To illustrate this, the FB ideological group *I love it when I wake up in the morning and Barack Obama is President* posts a meme on its page that has the form of verse (Figure 201). The creator of the text, Drew Avril, was inspired by Dr Seuss' children's book *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*. Although written for beginning readers, its captivating story about the journey of a boy and a girl through the lives of zany unrealistic creatures has grabbed the attention of people of all ages.

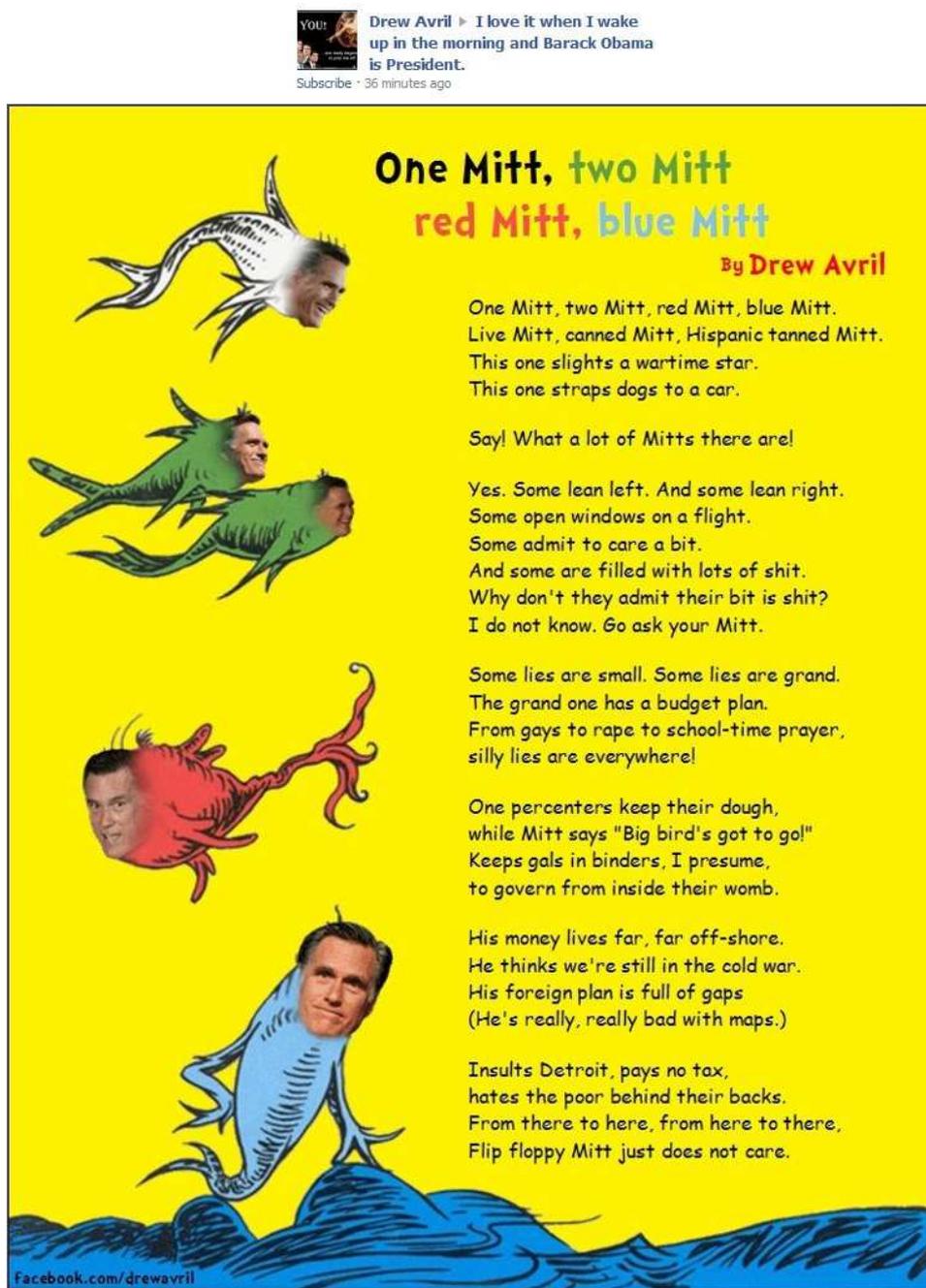


Figure 201. Imitation of Dr Seuss' rhyming book for children

Intertextual markers that link the meme to the original can be observed on different language levels. The easily recognisable form of the verse is, first of all, shown in the specific graphical variant of presentation where the text is arranged into several columns. Secondly, on the phonetic level, the differentiating features are rhythm and rhyme. The rhyme is created through the repetition of the same sounds in the last stressed syllable of two lines (*star/car; right/flight; bit/shit; tax/backs; shore/war; gaps/maps; there/care; presume/womb; dough/go* and other). Rhythmical arrangements are revealed in the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, making the verse principally iambic tetrameter:

Some lies are small. Some lies are grand.
The grand one has a budget plan.

It is based on a sequence of four feet, each consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one. Every line is cut by caesurae, establishing compulsory word boundaries that occur after a particular syllabic position in every line of the verse. There is however a variable equilinearity with an unequal number of syllables in different lines.

The prosodic arrangements of syllables are closely linked to syntactic features. In line with laws of versification, the syntax of many lines shows brief elliptical sentences: *Lived Mitt, canned Mitt, Hispanic tanned Mitt; Yes. Some lean left. And some lean right; Keeps gals in binders, I presume, to govern from inside the womb; Insults Detroit, pays no tax, hates the poor behind their backs*. In some cases, there is a deliberate violation of the fixed subject – predicate – object word order that is required for rhyming. It can be viewed in the following inversions: *What a lot of Mitts there are!* (to rhyme with *a car*); *From gays to rape to school-time prayer, silly lies are everywhere!* (necessary to rhyme *prayer* with *everywhere*). There is a reverse parallel construction (chiasmus) with the crossed order of words (*From there to here, from here to there*) which is typical for poetic style. Lexico-syntactic arrangements of utterances are expressed in the reduplication of words or anadiplosis (*His money lives far, far off-shore*); the constant repetition of *Mitt* throughout the verse (ten times); and enumerations deliberately emphasising personal qualities (*Insults Detroit, pays no tax, hates the poor behind their backs*). The verse also contains such peculiar syntactic connections of utterances as asyndeton (*One Mitt, Two Mitt, Red Mitt, Blue Mitt./Lived Mitt, canned Mitt, Hispanic tanned Mitt*) where the final conjunction ‘and’ is missing, signifying that the enumeration is not complete. In the middle of the verse, a question-in-the-narrative (*Why don’t they admit their bit is shit?/I do not know. Go ask your Mitt.*) is asked and answered by the same person, in this case showing the exclamatory nature, indignation and high emotions. It is also a lyrical

way of establishing contact with the reader. These features bring the meme close to the language of poetry, switching the reader's state into a lyrical mood.

Besides the previously mentioned poetic markers, Drew Avril, like Dr Seuss, resorts to absurd tongue twisters such as *Flipp floppy Mitt* or *Lived Mitt, canned Mitt, Hispanic tanned Mitt*, which establish a direct link with the original work. Eventually, the vocabulary choice with lexical repetitions (*One Mitt, Two Mitt, Red Mitt, Blue Mitt.*) reflects the original title *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*, which is an explicit marker of intertextual dialogue. Bright children's book graphics with a yellow background and colourful fish scattered around point to a concrete text reference too.

Dr Seuss' freewheeling plot interspersed with some rather surreal and unrelated skits makes it easy to adapt the story to the political context. The reader travels through the verse and learns about the character of Romney. The meme consistently makes the reader laugh with its improbable plot, the insane character, and the meaningful theme. Besides the semantics, the political character is expressed in complex sentences (*One percenters keep their dough, while Mitt says "Big Bird's got to go!"*), the choice of specifically political vocabulary (*wartime, to govern, tax, cold war, a budget plan, foreign plan*), allusions to previous events and speeches of Mitt Romney (*open windows on a flight, gays, womb, binders, off-shore, "Big Bird's got to go!"*), returning the text from children's readings to serious campaign issues. If the original Dr Seuss' book teaches children to accept the differences, the purpose of the meme is to satirise the Republican, his constant shifts in ideology. The graphic collage uniting multicolour fish with Romney's faces serves as double coding of the delegitimisation message.

2. 'Nursery rhyme *Pussy Cat Pussy Cat*'

Another meme (Figure 202) posted by the political activist and internet humourist Jay Branscomb derives its structure from the old popular English nursery rhyme *Pussy Cat Pussy Cat*, which was also transformed into a song.

Although many patterns have been modified, the structure of the old song is still easily recognisable due to quotations adapted for the meme *Where have ye been?; I went to London/To visit the Queen*. Like in the original verse, there are a number of anaphoric repetitions in the form of address (*Mitt the Twitt, Mitt the Twitt*). The general form consisting of questions and answers with every stanza containing two lines with alternations of the

metrical patterns is also well preserved. An alternate rhyme is revealed in the second/fourth (*been/Queen*) and analogously the sixth/eighth (*insult/result*) lines. The lack of strictness in its rhythmical design and deviation from the canon is nevertheless observed at the end (*I'm Anglo. I'm Saxon. You people are cruel*).

Besides the reproduced structures, the author of the meme goes further in the creative development of the verse. He extends its form up to six verses by adding stylised archaic forms. The older forms of pronouns such as *ye*; *'Twas*; *Art thou a foole?* serve to create an elevated style. Another means of stylisation are the chosen graphic style of an antique face. Plus, the picture of a buffoon sends the reader to Renaissance England, to the court of Elizabeth I.

Pussycat, pussycat
Where have you been?

I've been up to London
To visit the Queen.

Pussycat, pussycat
What did you there?

I frightened a little mouse
Under her chair.

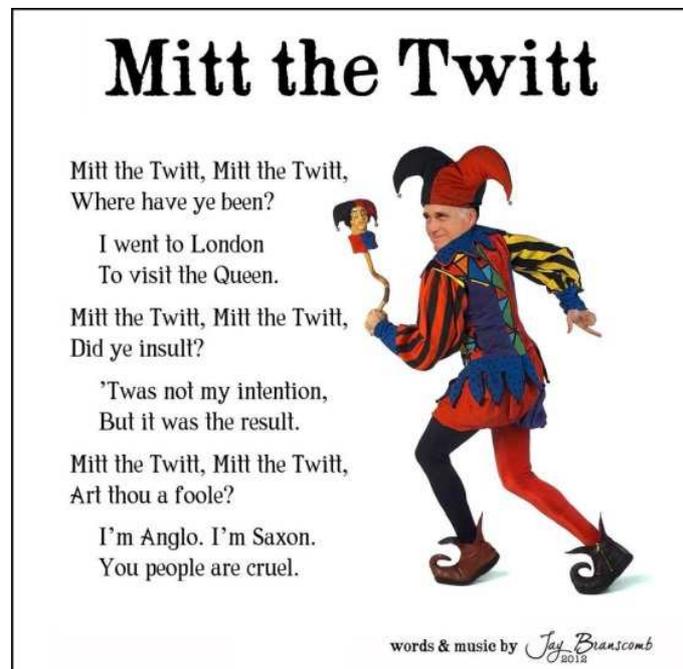


Figure 202. *Pussy Cat Pussy Cat* original rhyme and its imitation
(Source: <http://www.nurseryrhymes.org/pussycat-pussycat.html>)

All these stylistic devices result in a parodic variety, i.e. a travesty when banal stories are narrated through high style. The banality is revealed in reference to the story of Mitt Romney's visit of the British capital and his *faux pas* remembered as an amusing blip (*I went to London*). The politician's diplomatic spat when he cast doubt on London's readiness to host the Olympics as well as addressing Labour Leader Ed Miliband as "Mr. Leader" (*Did ye insult?/'Twas not my intention,/But it was a result*). The vehicled idea is presenting the candidate as a silly motley fool. The emphasis on these mistakes points to his inability to lead diplomatic talks and to represent the country in the international arena.

3. 'Nursery rhyme *I do not like thee, Doctor Fell*'

Two authors muse on possible reasons why they do not sympathise with certain political regimes in the mood of *I do not like thee, Doctor Fell*. This nursery rhyme is believed to be written by the English poet Tom Brown in the seventeenth century in response to the Dean-clergyman Dr John Fell who expelled him from university. The text of *I do not like thee, Doctor Fell* original rhyme goes:

I do not like thee, Doctor Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this I know, and know full well,
I do not like thee, Doctor Fell.

(Source: <http://www.rhymes.org.uk/a32-i-do-not-like-thee-doctor-fell.htm>)

Brown's verse is easily recognisable due to syntactic parallelism of the sentences beginning with *I do not like...* The verses of both memes (Figures 203 and 204) adopt this structure and adapt it to their purposes.

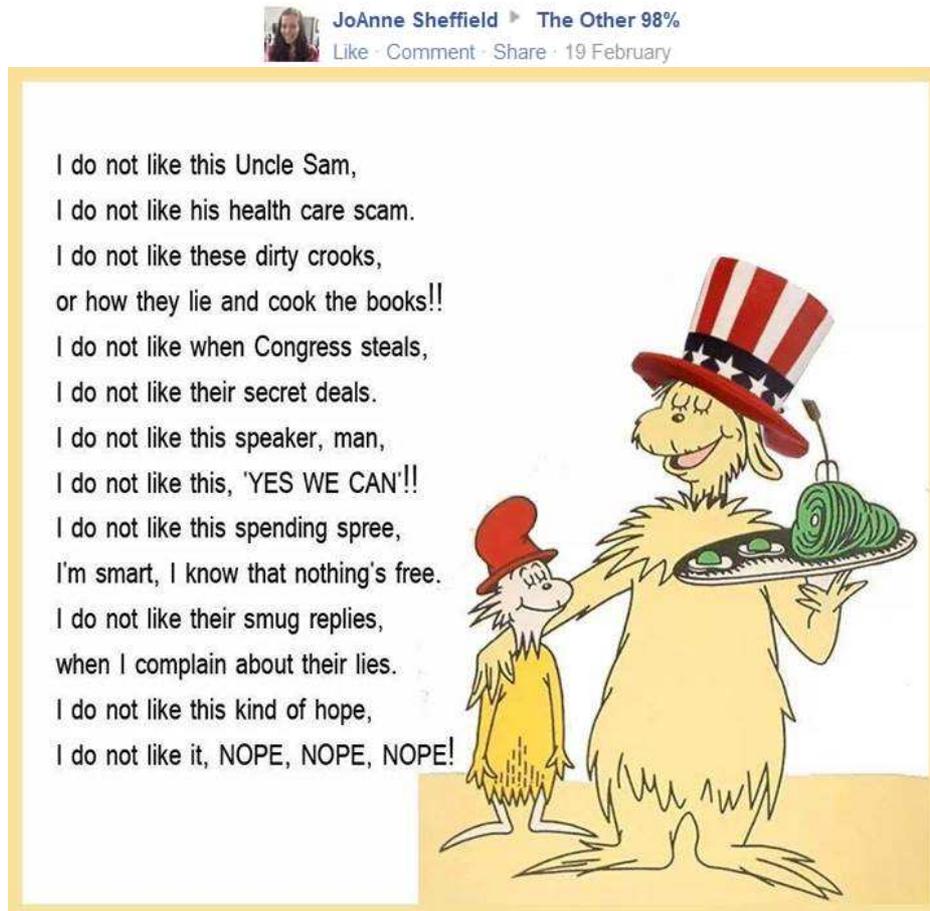


Figure 203. Imitation of *I do not like thee, Doctor Fell* nursery rhyme dedicated to Barack Obama

Prosodic arrangements of the meme of JoAnne Sheffield (Figure 203), posted on the FB page *The Other 98%*, forms a paired rhyme through the matching of the last syllables of succeeding lines (*Sam/scam; crooks/books; steals/deals; man/can; spree/free; replies/lies; hope/nope*). Like the original text, it illustrates the iambic tetrameter.

The meme posted on page *Teabonics* (Figure 204) respects in many ways the rhyming rules of versification at the end of the stanzas (*net/threat; kiss/atheists; changes/exchanges; say/may*). However, in some cases, it departs from the classical metric scheme with such deviations as *percent* and *government* as well as *poor* and *war*; although similar, they do not perfectly match in rhyme. Yet, the overall layout with 6 couplets gives it the form of a nursery song.

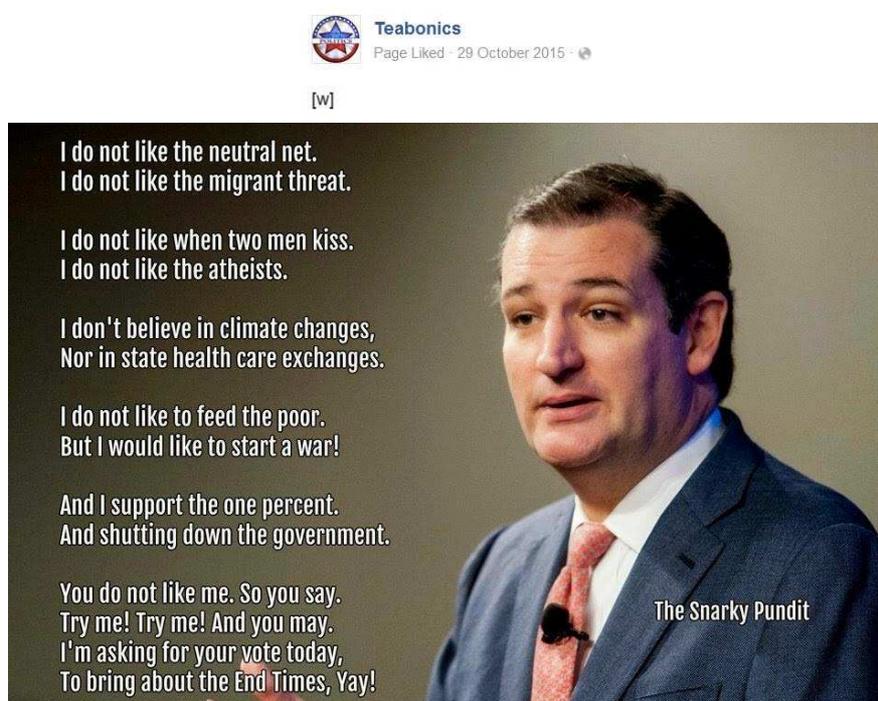


Figure 204. Imitation of *I do not like thee, Doctor Fell* nursery rhyme dedicated to Ted Cruz

Both memes are full of political ideas through the choice of vocabulary and graphic design, each revealing different ideologies. The first one sounds less direct than the second one where the author counts on the readers' competences in order to recognise hidden allusions and references (Figure 203). The Government is presented as Uncle Sam and the Obama administration is recognised through such expressions as *health care*, *Yes we can!* and *nope*. The last ones are emphasised through capital letters to make the reader recognise Obama's slogan and its parody (*Hope vs Nope*). The image of the whimsical creature wearing Uncle Sam's hat embraces the smaller character but keeps a big share of the meat for himself. In

doing so, the picture expresses criticism of Obama's healthcare system, supporting the arguments found in the text (*Congress steals; nothing's free; lies*). Therefore, through the imitation of familiar rhyme, the author expresses his disagreement with Democratic values and shows his dissatisfaction with Obama's promises, calling his administration a bunch of crooks and their health care deal a scam.

The second meme (Figure 204) is more explicit in its criticism which is aimed at the Republican ideology implemented in Ted Cruz. In contrast to the first meme and Brown's original rhyme, the first person narration does not signify that the protest comes directly from the author's mouth. Rather it makes his character – Ted Cruz – speak. His declaration that he does not like immigrants, gays, the poor, and sympathises with only one percent of the population; he does however beg people to vote for him, which clearly suggests that the speech is a parody.

Either the conservative or the liberal meme exploit the nursery rhyme of Tom Brown due to its easy-to-imitate structure with parallel constructions. Similar in many ways through the reference to the same source text, they are at the same time examples of the authors' uniqueness.

To conclude, all analysed rhymes are imitations of old cultural forms, which are rather well-known to the American public since their childhood or school years. The reader is thus taken for a child, looking for a bedtime story or a lullaby. Having been emanated from songs, these children verses are quickly remembered. The integration of political messages in such forms signifies its easy memorisation. The rhyme is of great use for political activists also for its brevity and the new unexpected form with a great volume of imaginary and a great number of emotionally coloured words. In contrast to ordinary neutral communication, the general impression from these words and the emotional impact on the reader last longer. Phonetic features immediately strike the ear and the eye and are therefore easily discernible. The rhyming form shows the meme's individuality due to the strong imprint of personality of its authors. All of the examples reveal to a different degree the aesthetic function of creating an elevated style and then breaking it through various comic incongruities. In any case, the creators who turn to verse in imitation of genres prove to be experts in word-smithing inasmuch as they are capable of expressing their political ideas in a spectacular poetic voice.

6.5.14 Imitation of narrative fictive genres

If lyrics are viewed as the domain of feeling and thought where feeling predominates, emotive prose or fiction is described as the domain of feeling and thought where thought predominates (Shakhovsky 2008: 76). By borrowing fictive genres, the authors of memes create a system of images not only to stir the reader's emotions but also to make him/her think. The stylistician Shakhovsky (2008: 58) claims that "emotional thinking helps to uncover not only the content of the text itself but much extra-information hidden behind words". In this sense, imitations of fictive genres are full of implications and open for interpretations by the readers, giving them food for thought.

Like any literary genre, narrative genres are very personalised in character. They show the author's individuality, his/her personal evaluation of things or phenomena. The author's personal ideas are conveyed in the peculiar individual selection of vocabulary, syntax and graphic means.

Memes which imitate fictive genres often seek to tell a story. Galperin (1981: 270) claims that a function of such emotive genres

...secures the gradual unfolding of the idea to the reader and at the same time calls forth a feeling of pleasure, a pleasure which is derived from the form in which the content is wrought. [...] Nothing gives more pleasure and satisfaction than realizing that one has the ability to penetrate into the hidden tissue of events, phenomena and human activity, and to perceive the relation between various seemingly unconnected facts brought together by the creative mind of the writer.

Out of the pool of narrative genres, the memes below (Figures 206-209) chose the form of (1) the fairy tale and graphic genres such (2) the single-panel comic, (3) the comic strip and (4) the gag panel, each having its own peculiarities and potential in promoting the political message.

1. 'A fairy tale'

The following meme (Figure 205) is formulated as a fairy tale by the sender of the message *The Blue, the Proud, the Liberal Corps*. The genre of fairy tales is evident on the lexical level. The opening structure *Once upon a time...*, ready-made clichés *lived happily ever after* and the explicit marker of the end of the story *The End!* are intertextual markers of the borrowed genre (Heidmann & Adam 2010).



The Blue, the Proud, the Liberal Corps

Thank you Liberal Corps member Dave Datri for sharing this! - Michele ♥

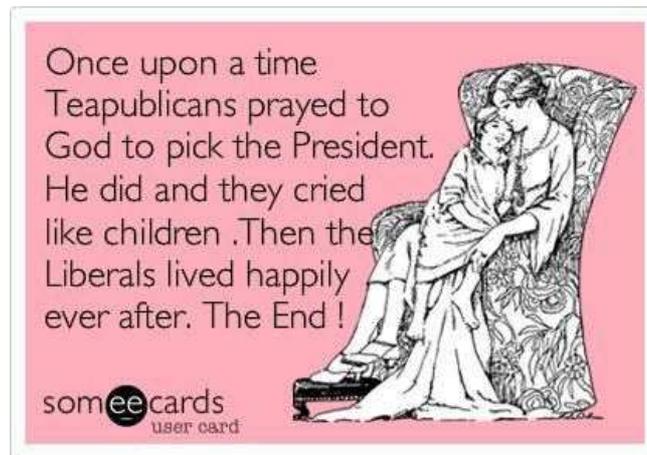


Figure 205. Imitation of a fairy tale

Besides, the genre of fairy tales can hardly fail to be recognised by its structure. The generalised pattern of the named genre was described by Vladímir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928, translated by L. Scott 1968). Following Propp's linear sequential structural analysis, we can observe one of the possible scenarios of the classical fairy tale based on narrative moves: One member of the family either lacks something or desires to have something (*lack, necessity*). Misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched (*mediation*). The seeker agrees to or decides upon counteraction (*beginning counteraction*). The hero leaves home (*departure*). The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc., which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper (*the first function of the donor*). The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor (*the hero's reaction*). The hero makes use of a magical agent (*provision or receipt of a magical agent*). The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of research (*spatial transference between two kingdoms, guidance*). The hero and the villain join in direct combat (*struggle*). The villain is defeated (*victory*). The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated (*liquidation*). The villain is punished (*punishment*). The hero is rewarded (*reward*).

Comparing this pattern with the structure of the meme, we can see the compressed form of a fairy tale where the main heroes desire to obtain something, a magical agent responds to their wish which results in victory and reward on the one side and misfortune and punishment on the other. Respecting the sequence of key events, a political fairy tale nevertheless reverses the roles of *dramatis personae* which results in violations of the readers' expectations.

Translating the structural morphology into political language, we see the main heroes *Teapublicans* who desire to have their President elected and rely on *God's* will to make the right choice. However, God's selection turns out to be the victory of their villain *Liberals* and defeat for the *Teapublicans*. In this way, bitter sarcasm is created as a result of this artistic permutation with the message that the Liberal President (Barack Obama) is chosen by God who alone knows who is good and who is bad.

Just like the picture suggests, the FB user is assigned the role of a child sitting in an armchair, listening to a fairy tale. A real fairy tale is intended to give a moral lesson, to show the reader-child that a good deed always wins and that the evil is inevitably punished in the end. Framing the political message in the morphology of a fairy tale, the authors of the meme transfer the didactic schema but inhabit it with its own political antagonists and relations.

2. 'A single-panel comic'

The meme proposed by the *Conservative Patriots of America* group (Figure 206) manifests itself in a single-panel comic showing characters in frozen motion. The genre of comics is also recognised in the combination of visual images of characters and textual information. It can be called a photo comic or an imitation of *fumetti* storytelling since the meme uses a photographic image rather than a cartoon illustration to build the visual part. The narrative text follows the general conventions of comics, demonstrating a dialogue in speech balloons. The meme encrypted in a single-panel comic lacks continuity, showing one scene of action.



Figure 206. Imitation of a single-panel comic

Imitating graphic literary discourse, the meme exploits its artistic tools to create fictive setting, characters, the general mood when bringing the political message to the reader. The system of images is created through stylistic devices of allusion, antonomasia, and similes. The title and costumes are allusions which establish the setting of an eighteenth-century royal court. The reader is guided to retrieve from his/her memory the story of King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the last French monarch who is famous for the absolute regime and lavish spending of the country's resources to support the Royal family and their court. The couple's ostentatious wealth, the colossal luxury life with armies of servants, departments responsible for the Queen's gloves, bonnets, shoes, etc. ended in debt and a financial crisis, which led to the populace's disillusionment with the monarchy, initiating constant waves of revolts and culminating in the French Revolution. The imagery of a comic based on this historical reference gives additional contextual information that arouses several negative associations. The collage containing the faces of Barack and Michelle Obama as well as antonomasia with name fusions (*King Louie Obama & Michelle Antoinette*) suggests to the reader to construct a similar story that takes into consideration a new political context. The stylistic device of simile is employed to draw parallels between the setting with two sovereigns, one ruling power against another regardless of the fact that they are alien to each other. Excluding all properties between them except one (to be in power), this device gives rise to a new understanding of the Democrat leader and his wife. Employing the simile with the French Royal family, the meme tries to contribute to the ill fame of the American presidential couple.

The language of the meme conforms to the norms of the chosen period in history. Words like *peasantry*, *revolting* assist in creating the setting of absolute monarchy. Furthermore, when people think of the last Bourbon monarchy, the famous quip attributed to Marie Antoinette inevitably springs to their minds. The quote "Qu'ils mangent de la brioche" – Let them eat cake – is believed by many to be uttered by the last French Queen, reflecting her ignorance for the peasants. Similarly, the phrase of the fictive Michelle Antoinette *...if want jobs they can come over and do my nails and hair* aims at showing her misunderstanding the real reasons of unemployment in the country and her indifference towards the poor.

The breaking-up of traditional literary graphic design is revealed in the peculiar unexpected way of combining the imaginary world with real political figures. The appearance and speech characterise the American presidential couple as rich royal characters who worry about their comfort and well-being rather than the country that they rule. Colour-adding comments *vineyard vacation at 7.6 million house, 75 staffers to join, WH still closed, but president finds*

cash for private parties add additional meaning to the image, pointing to the great expenses of the presidential family. The meme puts the idea forward of the Obama state administration as a huge machine which spends a lot of money.

Consequently, the meme offers the FB reader an attractive form with a rich system of images, challenging the reader, counting on his/her intertextual competence, making him/her search for hidden associations and having fun once s/he discovers them. The pleasure is caused by the admiration of selected language and graphic means as well as the fact that the reader is not directly given the message but led to draw his/her own conclusions.

3. 'A comic strip'

The meme of artist and political activist Mario Piperni fabricates the narrative from different fragments of speeches of the Republican 2012 candidate Mitt Romney (Figure 207). The ideological message presented in the form of a comic graphic literary genre is broken up into a story line and identified as such due to a number of intertextual markers that are visible on the textual surface.



Figure 207. Imitation of a comic strip

The relationship between the meme and the comic strip can be, first of all, observed on a graphic level. The image of Mitt Romney and his speech appeared in balloons that are shaped in a multi-panel strip. In contrast to the previous comic imitation, the form of illustration is a still cartooning. Although there are real photos of the Republican candidate, they look like a pencil drawing. This artistic effect is also achieved through the sophisticated play of light on the face of the protagonist and the use of cursive font. The presence of the title also makes the meme look like a real comic strip.

The composition of the meme shows a narrative type of structure. The iconotext presents a juxtaposed sequence of panels divided into three parts, each having temporal markers (*August 2012; Sept. 9, 2012; One day later*). The meme provides information about the main character Mitt Romney and the evolution of his campaign positions over a time span of several months. The contents of his speech reveal the contrast between his campaign promises and the unchanged states of affairs when he was elected President. Presenting Mitt Romney as the President of the United States turns the reality into fiction. The protagonist is characterised through his speech as a man who does not keep his word. Highlighting the key words *Repeal Obamacare – I like – No change* supports this idea. The different sizes of the panels and their arrangement contribute to narrative pacing. The graphic division into a big initial panel and the gradual reduction of forthcoming rectangles reflects the regression of Romney's ideology platform. The healthcare reform is only one issue tackled in the meme-comic. But as the title suggests, there are many more stories to tell. *The Romney Series: Health Care* informs the reader that the text is part of a larger adventure of the main character. On the one hand, it makes a perfect mimicry of the genre, on the other hand, it conveys sharp criticism, suggesting that the story of the main character is not an isolated case, but repeated behaviour or a series of absurd actions. Therefore, an oppositional leader characterised in the form of a multiple-panel sequence of a comic strip is seen in a new and unexpected light.

4. 'A gag panel'

Another form of imitation of the graphic literary genre comic is the gag panel. Images mixed with extended captions instead of speech balloons are elements borrowed from this genre. The posting from *Don't Forget How America Got Screwed Up...* (Figure 208) via the FB group *365 Wrongs From The Right* features an imaginary dialogue between Thomas Jefferson, American President in 1816, and Mitt Romney, Republican candidate to US President in 2012. The portraits show two men who are positioned as if talking. Their replies are not

signalled with quotation marks or dashes like a dialogue. Instead, verbal text is compartmentalised into a typeset caption beneath the portraits that resemble the works of the Swiss artist Rodolphe Töpffer.

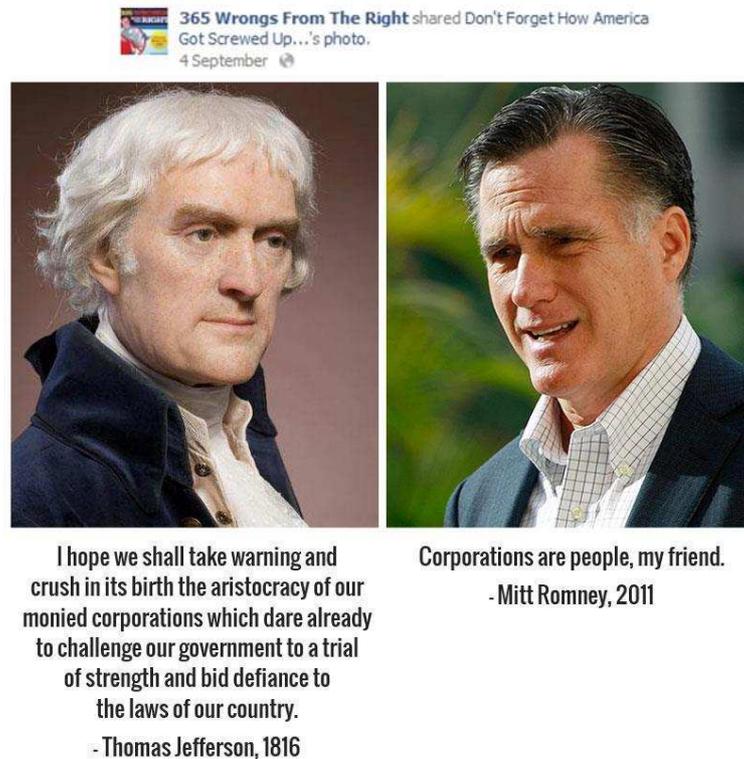


Figure 208. Imitation of a gag panel

Like old comic forms, the meme displays a contrastive two-panel format with the first showing an ideal of human behaviour and the second panel revealing the truth of the situation (compare contemporary expectation/reality gag cartoons). The content analysis shows an eternal apple of discord between two ideological camps, i.e. the question of corporations and their legal right in the USA to act as a person. Unlimited union spending on political issues raised a number of protests against Wall Street. Mitt Romney's quote defending business companies *Corporations are people, my friend* caused a series of mashups on social media. The meme under analysis reaches out to the American Founding Father Jefferson to defend the interests of the government under the Democrat banner. Besides the content, the contrast is also revealed through the form, demonstrating a lengthy formal and florid warning with a deliberate choice of words by Jefferson and a simple casual one-line retort by Romney. The dialogue fabricated from quotes across time is aimed at criticising Mitt Romney and his unwitting reasoning.

The form of the literary genre empowers the meme to break all temporary boundaries and involves the reader in an unrealistic scenario. Nevertheless, real gag cartoons are intended to cause laughter, whilst political contents of the above analysed text suggest sarcasm, aiming at deriding the Republican candidate in the eyes of his voters.

So, why do political activists resort to fiction? To answer this, we need to first answer the question of why we read literature. Shakhovsky (2008: 59) proposes that people need literature “for pleasure, to evoke admiration and to exercise a wide range of emotions alongside with learning something about the world”. When referring to literary genres, meme creators take the role of writers, the students of life who besides the political message offer emotional and intellectual pleasure for the readers. Like writers, political activists try to identify important issues and label them in a creative way. In order to achieve this, they borrow familiar easily digestible literary narratives or dialogic schemas along with stylistic devices of creating a system of images that is rich in associative power. Wrapping the meme in the form of a fairy tale or a comic strip gives political activists the green light to turn the real politicians into fictive characters. This creative metamorphosis sends the reader into an imaginary literary discourse which makes him/her accept any type of behaviour, blurring the frontier between real and invented. The FB reader is plunged into the story with various political events and different characters created through their appearance and speech. The chosen forms help to produce the sensory perception of political abstract notions through an image or a story. Borrowing literary patterns, the authors of memes attempt to reflect the lives of politicians and hidden sides of their characters through original interpretation. The function of communication through literature aims at inciting feelings, emotions and attitudes achieved through the careful selection of language means and stylistic devices. Consequently, presenting memes like a fictive genre gives the reader pleasure of reading and arouses certain emotions and associations between the general and the particular, the abstract and the concrete.

6.5.15 Imitation of warning signs

In order to catch the FB users’ attention and pass on the delegitimisation message, the artist Mario Piperni found it useful to exploit the genre of the warning sign. Easy to grasp, warning signs encapsulate necessary communication, informing quickly and effectively about the hazard ahead either on the road or a dangerous industrial zone. Similar to a car driver, the FB

user has just a few seconds to perceive important information. This explains the use of mostly iconic signs with the minimum of written explanation. The use of pictorial symbols is common in order to be quickly recognised and universally understood.

To illustrate this, the meme below (Figure 209) imitates a sign which warns the viewer of the dangerous place, sending him/her the message of caution to avoid damaging consequences. Topographically, it shows Northern American diamond-shaped icons with a yellow background and black borders with explicit verbal information written in upper case: *Caution danger ahead*. The semantics of this short nominal group shows risk and threat for the viewer. The alarming bright yellow colour reinforces the effect sought. Schematic black icons and homogeneous type font also respond to the chosen style.

In this ideal road setting, a few political signs are smoothly implemented. Icons depict the faces of the Republican 2012 presidential runners while verbal signs integrate *lies* and *more lies*, which is odd for traffic. Instead of the possible adverbial modifier of place *next 4 yards*, an adverbial modifier of time *next 4 years* is integrated. Hence, the meme-sign cautions the FB driver about the danger ahead of him/her where danger stands for the conservative turn in politics.

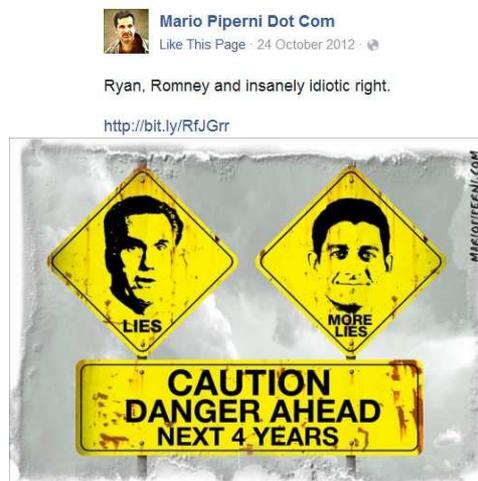


Figure 209. Imitation of the danger caution sign

Likewise, the meme below (Figure 210) derides the Conservative Party by recycling the traffic warning sign *Road works ahead*. The genre is detected through the typical diamond-shaped sign and the icon of a man working in usual black and yellow chromatic gamma. Its angle of vision slightly turned right and up imitates the real situation of driving as if the viewer looks up from his/her low car when passing by.

Reproducing this situation, the political activist encrypts mocking criticism by adding verbally Grand Old Party and its ideological sign of an elephant. Brought together with the icon of a real sign, it creates the new comic meaning of the Republican elephant and the figure of a man (as if he cleans up its excrements) warning the viewer to be careful. The representation wrought in this sign not only pursues the aim of being eye-catching but also of mocking and minimising the opponents.



Figure 210. Imitation of the traffic warning sign

Finally, the sign below (Figure 211) depicts the template which is used for dangerous locations, designed to warn about hazardous materials and objects like chemical poisons.



Figure 211. Imitation of the caution warning sign

The linguistic element *Warning* along the general caution sign comprising an exclamation mark on the standard triangular sign, against the poisonous yellowish orange colour are intertextual indexes of the genre. Like all analysed signs, this template is zoomed in on, eliminating unnecessary elements and concentrating on the essential.

Once the sign of danger catches the attention of the FB user, political elements start their work. The supplemental information that specifies the type of hazard shows that the dangerous zone is Republican where insanity is permitted. The reader is therefore warned in a humorous manner when entering it. The artistic stylisation of the plate – eroded with chemical substances surface – intensifies the effect sought.

To sum up, all analysed memes borrow iconic signs which indicate an obstacle ahead, a potential hazard or a condition requiring special attention. The FB user has certainly seen this type of caution sign in his/her life and remembers the feeling of alert. When viewing the warning sign, the person subconsciously becomes vigilant. Therefore, meme-warning-signs call for attention of the viewers via icons and words with the semantics of danger. This short and expressive form is the perfect ready-made pattern for sharing the political message. Aimed against the opposition, they imply that if choosing an adversary's ideology, people enter a dangerous zone and are likely to have serious consequences for their lives.

6.5.16 Imitation of epitaphs

“...Crust be he that moves my bones” reads Shakespeare's headstone, soliciting the quiet of the playwright's bed of dust. Some memes also present unique art forms, giving intriguing examples of the final word when imitating the genre of epitaph. The latter is a type of text that provides an opportunity to praise, mourn or reflect on the individual and the mystery of life and death (Fanous 2016). The collector and analyst of epitaphs Samuel Fanous claims that the forms and purposes of memorial inscriptions have varied across centuries. They can be flowery eloquent showpieces and their admonitions to the onlooker to pray for the souls of the deceased as well as high-minded moralisations and their warnings to prepare for the terrible hour, from hope of relief of death from the toils of life to religious fervour, promising the rewards that await the faithful in the life to come. Fanous (2016) observes that modern forms of the last word tend toward a record of the bare facts, names and dates, followed by a biblical phrase or an expression of sentiment. Brilliantly creative or merely practical, epitaphs are

words to be remembered by. This aspect is noticed and caught by political activists during the US general elections. When imitating epitaphs, they put the FB user into the role of the visitor of a cemetery or a churchyard, stopping in front of a stone memorial.

To be identified as the genre of the epitaph, the meme (Figure 212) posted by *I love when I wake up in the morning and Barack Obama is President* depicts a pillar set upon the grave with a brief fitting recognition of the deceased – the image and name – the date of birth and death with a summary in a few words, followed by the classical acronym R.I.P.



Figure 212. Imitation of an epitaph dedicated to the Republican Party

The dialogue of genres can be noticed when decoding the meaning of the meme. The deceased is the Republican Party, its year of birth is the year of foundation of the GOP (1854) while the year of death is the year of the Republicans' failure when Barack Obama was elected (2012). Instead of mourning the dead, the expression of love and respect, the irrelevant formulation of the reason of death is engraved. Inapt for an epitaph, the text pursues playing the game with the reader of implementing the moral over the dead. Besides semantics, an intertextual line is visible in the graphics. The texture of the graven image of the Republican Party and flowers look like multimedia drawings childishly glued to the photo of the tomb. In addition, there is the contrast of bright colours of alien elements against the grey cemetery stone. These incongruous elements unveil the political meme and promotion of its ideology. Based on delegitimation signs, the meme-epitaph disproves conservative values

and expresses its exalting feelings related to the landslide victory of the Democrats in the general elections in the form of the final word dedicated to their opponents.

Like the previous meme, the post below (Figure 213) proposed by *The Blue, the Proud, the Liberal Corps* appeared right after the presidential elections in November 2012. Its structure reproduces the epitaph by depicting an upright headstone with a carved name, birth and death dates and a short engraving of the last word. In contrast to the preceding meme, this imitated epitaph creates a dull and melancholy mood with the gradation of grey shades and the deserted background.

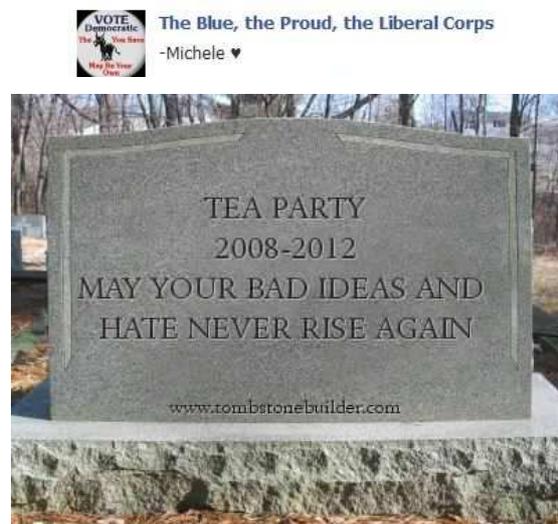


Figure 213. Imitation of an epitaph dedicated to the Tea Party

No sentiments of pity can however be found on this tombstone. Oriented towards the future, the contents of the epitaph denounce the dead – the Tea Party, accusing the latter of previous propagation of evil and hate. The period of 2008 and 2012 points to four years of ideological fight with the Republican opposition which ended with the victory of the Democrats and the symbolic death of the GOP. The meaning, the name of the website written on the bottom, and the general homogeneity in font are signals of the political meme.

Similarly, political activists of the *Teabonics* group resorted to the genre of epitaph in the 2016 presidential campaign. In contrast to previous postings, the meme (Figure 214) develops from the picture taken by a passer-by of a real morbid tombstone anonymously erected in Sheep Meadow in Central Park. Thus, the meme acquires the second-hand status as a result of the viral round on the world wide web. Its message refers to the concrete

representative of the Republican Party, Donald J. Trump, with a flat granite stone stating his name, year of birth and the short text below.

The incongruity of the situation is revealed in several elements of the text constitution. Firstly, the tombstone commemorates a person among the living, the record of death left blank. Secondly, instead of honouring the person, celebrating his virtues, the epitaph rejoices his vice. The carved text goes *Make America hate again* which is a parody of Donald Trump's slogan, achieved through allusion by substituting the qualifier *great* with *hate*. The parody of the tombstone appeared in Central Park, and replicated in many copies online, is not a threat to the politician's life but a challenge, a call for change. The headstone bearing no death sends the message to Mr Trump that he still has time to change who he is.

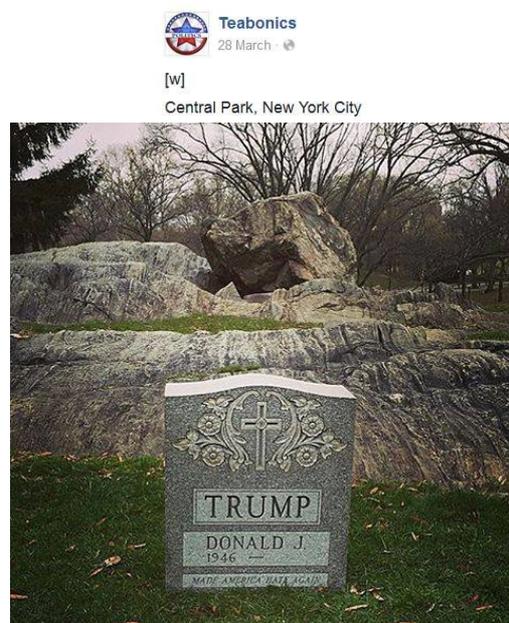


Figure 214. Imitation of an epitaph dedicated to Donald Trump

Metaphors of the afterworld either conceptualise the main outcomes of the elections or express hope for future results. Borrowing patterns of epitaphs, the memes impose their own purposes. Real memorial inscriptions are written for recording or to provide relevant facts of life and death of people, expressing piety, consoling the bereaved, praising the deceased, promoting their work, affirming belief in the afterlife and exhorting the living. Yet, digital political epitaphs seem to embody a new purpose, i.e. the glorification of victory over the defeated opposition, moralisation over the reasons of their fail, a curse to prevent from reappearance, not forgetting entertainment of the cyber visitor. In any case, meme-epitaphs are meant to leave a lasting impression on the reader.

6.6 Diversity of generic imitations and their markers

This desire to balance between the communal and the unique is strongly expressed in the creation of Internet memes, which builds on both recurring topics, norms, and conventions and on a requirement for untypical, unique, and novel contributions.

Segev *et al.* (2015: 420)

Gal, Shifman and Kampf (2016: 1701) view internet memes as a corpus of digital items based on imitation, in which numerous participants create new versions with the awareness of previous ones, preserving and altering various elements in the process. The epigraph above resumes well the tension which meme makers encounter, i.e. praising communality in treated topics they simultaneously seek for uniqueness and self-expression through the form.

The analysis of FB posts revealed a number of cases of integration of different generic forms into the textual structure of internet memes. Table 3 below lists a variety of imitated genres that I have come across during the data collection process.

Discourses	Genres
Journalistic	newspaper front pages, a wanted poster
Advertising	advertisements
Scientific	definition, scientific infographics
Didactic	exercises, a spelling alphabet
Official documents	The Bill of Rights, ballots, a conference programme
Epistolary	open letters
Practical	a recipe, instructions, tips, personal notes
Literary	nursery rhymes, songs, a fairy tale, comics
Other discourses	book covers, film release posters, games, warning signs, epitaphs

Table 3. Diversity of intergeneric imitations: A selection

This palette by no means may be regarded as an exhaustive list of borrowed patterns; yet, it illustrates the diversity of forms which a political internet meme exploits for its text-

constitution. It also shows that the genre of internet meme appears to be a flexible and dynamic genre which can easily integrate numerous structural forms.

The playful remix of various structural compositions opens the door to more abstract categories or discourses. It means that the introduction of a genre fragment into an exogenous text brings with it a functional-stylistic code which this genre stands for. The interaction of different genres on a textual level points to integration, the crossover of various domains of knowledge and communicative practices on an abstract level. The power of remixed patterns is in bringing a certain tradition, convention and way of thinking which every discourse represents. In this vein, political discourse in its digital pre-election variety has proven to be open to such discourses as scientific, didactic, literary, journalistic, etc. All this makes us state that typological intertextuality is a means, a particular strategy of text constitution which possesses a high potential in the realisation of goals of pre-electoral discourse. The markers which make integration of genres visible on a textual level can be linguistic as well as extra-linguistic.

The linguistic markers examined during the analysis are phonetic, lexical, morphological, grammatical, syntactic as well as on the structure-compositional level of genre composition.

To begin with, phonetic means for activating typological intertextuality are especially reflected in imitations of nursery rhymes and found in the presence of rhythm, meter and rhyme. The patterns of variation between strong and weak segments, the regular recurrence of stressed and unstressed syllables (rhythm), their various combinations (metre) as well as their acoustic coincidence at the end of lines (rhyme) determine the presence of poetic genres. Furthermore, alliterations, the effect of assonance or cacophony achieved through the interplay with the phonetic side of a text can be pivotal in the recognition of the named genres.

Then, lexical markers of the imitation of genres are words with semantics that traditionally used and associated with a particular type of text and, largely speaking, type of discourse. Different terms, specific words, conventional archaic forms and clichés, tropes, abbreviations, contractions, traditional symbols, etc. are units which trigger notions from various domains in the recipient's mind. In addition, the words can be taken in their double sense in the same textual frame with two meanings, reminding the reader simultaneously of two different discourses. Otherwise, the use of phraseological expressions can also become a marker of

typological intertextuality when it is associated with one discourse in its figurative meaning and with another discourse in its literal meaning.

In addition, the morphology or the way in which the word is built can also be a marker of integration of various discursive units. Several nonce formations revealed in the course of analysis show the unification of word stems from one discourse and prefixes or endings from another one. Merged together, the verbal unit becomes a crossing point of two discursive genres like in the case of the nonce word *republicoli*, which activates political and scientific discourses at the same time. So terminological word building, derivations, formation by affixation and conversion can point to the presence of a 'foreign' genre in the text of a political meme.

Equally, typological intertextuality can also be marked by grammatical means. The use of verbs in a particular tense, mood, active or passive voice, singular or plural, first, second or third person narration, etc. might point to the genre of a specific discourse. Besides, the omission of some parts of speech or the abundance of other forms can also be a silent feature associated with a particular discursive genre.

In the same way, the syntactic design can imply that a given text functions according to the rules of a particular genre of speech. It is revealed in the variation of different types of sentences, varying from simple elliptical structures to lengthy complex sentences with an extensive use of adverbial, attributive, participial, etc., groups. In addition, the word order, asyndetic or polysyndetic subordination or coordination can contribute to evoking generic prototypes. So, the preferential use of certain syntactic structures has the potential to activate a certain area of human activity that is associated with different genres of speech.

Finally and above all, structure-compositional characteristics of a text are a pivotal criterion in the identification of a genre. The textual macro-segmentation, the specific compositional design, the coded graphical layout, its subdivision into chunks of information, order-of-priority organisation of content, the predominance of certain sequences (descriptive narration, argumentation or dialogic prototypical structures) – all of these are silent features of genre identification.

Extra-linguistic markers of typological intertextuality include various visual means such as numbers, schemes, iconic symbols, pictures, photos and other graphic topographies. The stylisation of the letter, its typography becomes an important feature of recognition of the

genre whether it is an imitation of an official document, a romantic message or an informal writing. What is more, the presentation of textual material support, that is the reproduction of a school notebook, a scrap of paper or time-stained papyrus inevitably contribute to the perception of the text and indicate the genre of communication. Likewise, an important extra-linguistic factor of genre recognition can be the reproduction of its macro-context, the situation where a particular genre of speech appears. A newspaper headline is identified as such if it is surrounded by a newspaper co-text, i.e. an article, its byline, a photo; a book casually lying on the desk with a pair of glasses creates a situation of being at home which facilitates the perception of the genre of a book cover, and so on and so forth.

What is essential to stress is that only in their multimodal unity, the means become markers which trigger a particular type of text in the mind of an addressee. Sachava (2008) who investigated the phenomenon of interdiscursivity claims that isolated markers of various language levels present ‘empty’ units since they alone do not implement the main functions fixed after a particular genre in a given culture. Only taken in their entirety, they are able to guarantee the identification of a particular genre of speech and the discourse with it. The analysis of integration of one genre into the textual structure of another revealed how various intertextual markers that serve as the binding glue of heterogeneous patterns were artfully brought together. All analysed examples appeared to be “crafted to a degree that suppressed their fragmentation and amplified their unity” (Church 2015: 48).

To conclude, the text of the political meme demonstrates a dialogue of typological models and a play of discourses achieved through the combination of language means at different textual levels. The figure above shows that political memes draw from a multitude of discursive genres and the choice of a particular form is guided by a set of aims which will be described in the next section.

6.7 Functions of typological intertextuality

Memos do copy themselves but, as Dawkins points out, they have strikingly low copy-fidelity compared to biological replicators [...]. If stability is a necessary part of memesis, and if low fidelity is a common feature of internet memes, one might ask what it is that makes internet memes memetic? What is being copied?

Brideau & Berret (2014: 311)

Previously, when discussing the prototypical structure of the internet meme, I claimed that it is the absence of particular resources and the privilege of the changeable structure which makes the specificity of an internet meme. In terms of Brideau and Berret (2014) quoted above, a common feature of internet memes is the low copy-fidelity. This rises the question of what the permanent features of a political internet meme in that case are. Through my methodological framework, I tried to identify which discursive norms are obligatory and which allow for some deviation from the original. The analysis showed that two relatively stable ingredients of internet memes, i.e. image and text, appeared to be variable. They go through a series of adaptations and mutations due to different genre patterns, interposed on the scripto-visual structure of the meme. In the midst of the variation that the form of a meme undergoes, the stable feature of the political internet meme is the context of its production and relationship of the text to political discourse and its functions. Different functions are easily decrypted by readers, regardless of the form that the meme might take. So, with the constant change of compositional structure, it is the function of the political meme that remains permanent. The context and the function help the reader to position the given text on the global discursive scene and identify the real status of the text, i.e. as a political meme, and not as a recipe or a nursery rhyme.

Earlier, we have seen that interference of different discourses can appear naturally and spontaneously, as a result of the interconnection of various domains in our conceptual system and the spread of knowledge into several areas at the same time. The imitation of genres by politically charged internet memes is however a ‘theatrical’ phenomenon where scenography is used to fulfil a range of political aims. These goals set by participants are extremely diversified and in constant evolution, persistently adapted to the particular context. Political activists deliberately resort to other genres by using their linguistic patterns, icons, graphics and pictures to tell stories, share information and build knowledge, pursuing the target of bringing a certain political message to the masses. The analysis revealed different functions which cyber-militants intend to achieve. All wide-ranging functions described below do not exclude each other but are interwoven into every case of typological intertextuality, often realised at the same time.

1. To persuade

Having the dominant persuasive function, the political meme is oriented by the influence on the addressee in order to introduce to him/her the ideological lines, attitudes and evaluations,

which is beneficial to the addressor of the message. As a researcher in argumentation, Ruth Amossy (2012: 267) justly claims that the manner of certain texts to index to a genre or to run several generic models has a decisive importance for the argumentative impact of the discourse. If we take the example of the recipe analysed earlier, we will see that the main goal of the meme is to persuade by (mis)informing the public. The text matrix which materialises this aim is argumentative in nature, i.e. the conclusion – Conservatives are not a reliable Party (claim) – is supposed to be inferred from the description of their doubtful fiscal actions (premise). Such a politically saturated message, if served in its ‘raw’ state, would have had a less attractive look and would sound more aggressive. It is doubtful if consumers would accept it so easily. Thus, the initiators of the posting dress it in a more captivating form.

Another researcher in argumentation, Thierry Herman (2018: 2), goes beyond this generally accepted binary claim/premise schema, arguing that any word *argumente* in a text aiming to persuade. It means that every word or the sequence of words which evoke a particular genre orient the reader to a class of possible conclusions. However, the texts which lack a solid justification, a polemic and a dialoguism of positions but preserve final aims of adherence to a particular statement should be considered as rhetorical cases rather than argumentative (Herman 2018: 4).

Church (2015: 43) even finds striking similarities between classical rhetoric and digital remix practices, claiming that both use style and aesthetics as vehicles of persuasion. The researcher argues that the persuasive potential of remix just like that of a classical oratory lies in the process of discovering and generating novel arguments through creative imitation and sampling: “The remixer participates in a practice similar to the ancient orators, creating links between samples by exploiting and leveraging the audience’s understanding of the samples in their original contexts” (Church 2015: 44). The choice of the generic pattern to imitate in itself can be considered a rhetorical act since the enunciator deems one pattern as more appropriate than the other. In other words, the remixer selects from a wide repertoire of genres to reconstruct a new reality. In doing so, s/he chooses which aspects to highlight and which sides to hide from the audience. Therefore, as Church (2015: 49) explains, “the orator’s task of using this dissuasive function of argumentative discourse is to move audience to accept certain ideas while rejecting others as unacceptable”.

Consequently, typological intertextuality is used to modify the position and the point of view of the recipient. The recipient’s mind is switched into another mental space and starts

‘working’ with different codes, meanings and evaluations when interpreting given contents (Cherniavskaya 2007: 23). Persuasive texts are guided by a consciously determined intention and employ programmed strategies to achieve this effect. Accordingly, the political meme actively exploits genres of scientific, didactic, mass media discourses, the style of official documents to create respectively pseudo-scientific knowledge, sensational news or unbiased matter-of-fact information. In doing so, memes exert a strong impact upon the potential voter. They use statistic data, imitate argumentation, logical reasoning, provide background history facts, sound analogies and parallels, graphical means accentuating the main points, abound in the ample use of quotations from authoritative leaders, generalisations, and give vivid examples. Shaping the text in an authoritative genre with its reputation to be objective, the meme manipulates the viewers’ minds through the suggested inference patterns and value judgements.

2. To inform and evaluate

Borrowing memes from discourses other than political ones can provide the viewer with the means of understanding the unknown in terms of the known. Accordingly, typological intertextuality satisfies the basic communicative function of informing the reader about the main events. Typological intertextuality can be used to explain complex, unfamiliar notions with the help of simple familiar patterns. For instance, the better understood schema of the recipe is imported into the structure of the meme to inform the reader about an obscure and complicated domain of fiscal operations. Or the compact form of the instruction notice with its logic accents and simple constructions is useful to save the precious time of the reader and rapidly inform him/her about political events. In her article *Teaching Critical Genre Awareness*, Amy Devitt (2009) talks about how the awareness of genre provides the norm and influences our values and beliefs. The function of informing the reader is inseparable from the evaluation of the political meme. When its creators announce the news, they do it through an evaluative angle. This is why the events pictured in memes are often accompanied by ‘colour-adding’ commentaries. Otherwise, genres like the didactic fairy tale with its moral lesson provide the reader with an evaluation of who is good and who is bad.

3. To catch the reader’s attention, to hook the reader

Various means of informing and convincing the audience are inevitably related to focusing and sustaining the public’s attention. FB being an information-abundant environment overwhelms readers and their abilities to pay attention to all memes posted on its Wall. The

challenge of those political groups who work on public opinion would consist of passing unnoticed in the flow of information on FB. In the competition and ‘war’ of memes to win the public’s attention, there is therefore a constant search for new formats. Subsequently, in order to hook the reader and share the message, the creators choose an unusual organisation for the posting by activating multimodal resources of another genre. The imitation of other genres proposes the audience an original creative form which gives an alternative perspective to the subject matter, it offers new insights and ultimately captures attention. The reader’s attention is fixed to communicatively important units with the help of colour, font and the general offbeat form. For instance, the front page cover with its sensational news attains a higher artistic expressiveness to be singled out among other internet memes. Likewise, borrowing attractive book covers helps to hook the reader and ‘sell’ the ideas. To be appealing enough, the design of information lies in the search of balance between aesthetics and the comprehension of the recipient. The unexpected form of the nursery rhyme or the rich imaginary of narrative genres has the high potential to be noticeable and memorable.

4. To convey and raise emotions

The eye-catching effect of memes is related to the expressive function aimed at moving the reader. However, there is a considerable gap between real life emotions that are experienced at the moment of speech and those in written form, which are sometimes described after the event. Natural face-to-face communication accompanied by body language can be hardly reproduced without the loss of all emotional tones. Memes that are unable to cover the whole variety and richness of live communication with voters with its emotional colouring in commenting on political events “may be compared to the after-light of a long ago dead star, that reached the Earth millions of years after its death” (Shakhovsky 2008: 57). Consequently, in their pursuit of stirring up the audience’s curiosity and raising his/her emotions, memes are combined with genres which have already won the public’s respect and sympathy. For example, the declaration of war or the announcement of an airbus disaster appeal to the feelings of the reader and cannot but move him/her. Emotions are also played on by the abundant use of ornamental and expressive resources of language in the imitation of literary genres. Here belongs the emotionally coloured lexicon, the resort to analogies, metaphors, allusions to pathetic facts of the day and previous events, phonological means as alliteration, rhythm, assonance, cacophony and so on. The use of appealing images, which are sometimes worth thousands of words, is also a tool aimed at creating pathos. Due to their power of

expressing a variety of modal shades of meaning, they are most often used in political memes where the rousing of emotions is the general effect aimed at.

5. Positive self-presentation of the group

To create a positive presentation of a group, the good impression and authority of the speaker is another function of imitation of several discourses notoriously science, literature, mass media, the style of official documents. The imitation of genres of these discourses helps to achieve the effect of authenticity, objectivity, fairness and reliability of the source. Ideology which orients and integrates the public becomes more appealing in the form of a newspaper page or a book cover than in the habitual internet meme format.

6. Negative presentation of opponents

When parodying oppositional groups, writing texts and signing by their leaders, meme creators make use of less prestigious genres than those described above. The rough draft of Obama notes as if written during debates, intrusive adverts, the pink letter by Republican women where they beg to take away their rights are genres which are employed to cast negative light on the opposition.

7. To address the reader in an optimised way

The strategy of an optimised address is realised through the formulation of the message as a type of text that is potentially interesting for the reader as representative of a particular social group. An effective means is addressing the reader as an individual, a concrete person through letting him/her have a look at personal notes (the imitations of debate notes of Obama and Clinton) which flatters the recipient and allows for enlisting his/her sympathies. An effective means to win the sympathies of potential voters is the form of direct address used in these genres. In the genre of everyday talk, like a telephone call of a friend on Election Day, there is direct contact between the participants of communication. The scenographic scene installed with the help of typological intertextuality assigns the FB user temporal roles as game partner, a reader of a newspaper, a poem lover, etc. The former accepts this form of address more readily than being constantly annoyed as a voter.

8. To mask a persuasive intention

The successful use and appellation to various discourse genres can be explained through the aim of hiding the persuasive intention. Political activists combine remix with genre

camouflage tactics in order to conceal, at first sight, the true persuasive goal of their pre-electoral discourse, “renegotiating the fiduciary contact with their audiences” (Peverini 2015: 333). Instead of promoting the political message in a direct way, openly claiming to support one candidate and to oppose another, internet memes prefer to hide behind masks of socially ratified genres like the dictionary, fairy tale, scholarly exercise, road sign, etc. The exploitation of recreational genres such as games as well as theatrical release posters is also an effective strategy of hiding the persuasive intention.

9. To save time

With the fast spread of information and little time to think, as well as high competitiveness, meme creators resort to already pre-existing effective forms. The use of ready-made genre patterns allows political activists to compress the message into a recognisable form that is easy to process. For instance, it is enough for the reader to see the structure *Once upon a time...* and s/he readily expects a fairy tale and to learn a moral lesson. Or when imitating newspaper headlines, meme creators, just like journalists, highlight the most important information for fear of the readers’ passiveness to read the rest.

10. To evoke an aesthetic sensitivity (through the form)

Some imitations are filled with a mysterious, uplifting sense of beauty and intend to evoke an aesthetic sensitivity in the viewers. The rhetoric of imitation of different styles involves presenting the utterance in an appealing form and storing it in the short-term memory. Meme creators focusing on the code itself play with its graphic and phonetic form, thereby raising a palette of feelings inside the spectator. Rather than functional necessity, typography can become a joyful pastiche that involves nostalgic retrospection or provides visual freshness. The artistry that the remixer injects into the memes when imitating different genre patterns is also revealed in the aesthetic choices that s/he makes in order to convey the political message. The creator is able to evoke an aesthetic feeling through aggregating several disparate samples, crafting them into a unified whole, notably larger than the genre fragments contained therein. An appeal to such ethno-literary genres as nursery rhymes or graphic comic strips helps to evoke the necessary aesthetic sentiments while passing on the political message.

11. To entertain

On the one hand, internet memes entertain by means of jokes, comic expressions, etc. that are integrated into its structure. On the other hand, the comic effect is created by way of clashes

of discourses with their different systems of reasoning. The humorous effect is stronger if discourses which are brought together in the text are cardinally different from one another. Wrapping political satire into a recipe form results in the incompatible combination of the abstract world of ideas and the material household domain. As a result, the audience is delighted by the surprise of the strange assemblage of incongruent generic patterns.

6.8 Relation of form and function

Summarising all of the above, we can conclude that in the present study, the relationship of discourse – genre – text is a relationship of the abstract and the concrete, a dialogue between function, communicative intentions and their concrete realisation on the material surface. My observation of postings during the 2012 and 2016 US presidential campaigns on FB has led me to the conclusion that the textual form does not always follow the main function of political discourse, which is to inform, to affect and to persuade the recipient to accept certain ideas and to call the latter to react. Examples which I have analysed prove that some internet memes resist the complete isomorphism of the functional and surface levels. They show that the selected form often violates the expectations of the reader. The political meme reveals itself as a “meta-genre” (Adam & Bonhomme 2009: 143) that is capable to absorb a multitude of existing genres, i.e. a newspaper front page, a game, a recipe, a comic strip, a nursery rhyme, a book cover and many others. These imitations demonstrate that the political internet meme is sometimes structured according to patterns of exogenous genres which do not have a direct link with functions of political discourse. Elements of these genres were observed on different levels of structural organisation, i.e. in the selection of graphic and phonetic means, in the use of specific vocabulary, morpho-syntactic constructions and overall topographic macro-segmentation. Meme creators exploit these intertextual markers deliberately to make exogenous genres visible on the textual surface. As previously pointed out, all imitations manifested a contrastive relationship between the borrowed prototype and the politically charged semantics of internet memes, which turns the latter into parodies. Wrapped in the cover of another type of text, the internet meme rejects a standard image macro form, preferring more attractive, reliable, well-known practical, socially ratified and amusing genres.

The functional relationship in a genre mix was studied in the works of Fix (1997: 97). The researcher proposes an interesting visual model of presentation (Figure 215) which can also

help to interpret the mimetic practice of an internet meme. The schema shows the isomorphism of the form and the function in regular textual usage. That is, the recipe is a text which has a form A to accomplish function A, and the political meme is a text that has a form B to fulfil function B. The political meme in the jacket of the recipe presents the choice of the form A in order to achieve the function of genre B. In other words, instead of using the habitual prototypical format of the internet meme to attract voters and to neutralise the opposition, the political meme chooses the well-known practical form of the recipe where the competent instructor guides the reader to arrive at a successful outcome, the desired dish. The model of Fix graphically illustrates the confrontation of the form and the purpose of genres, textually realised in clashes of structural patterns and general semantics.

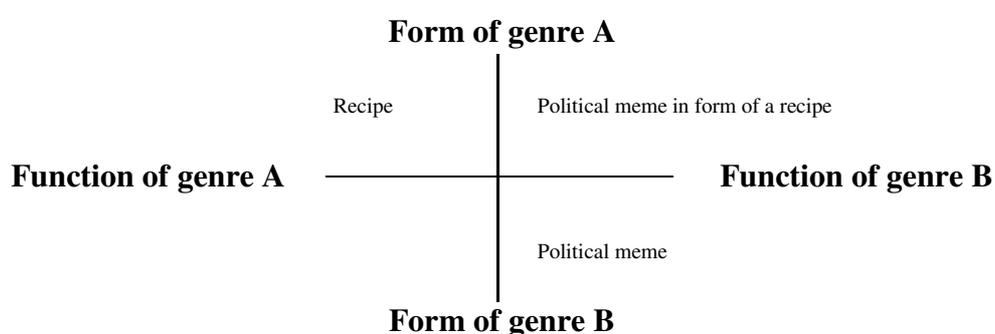


Figure 215. Schema by Fix (1997), adapted version

The practice of using the textual form of genre A by an exogenous genre B illustrates the case that Fix calls “genre mixing” (*Textmuster Mischung*), i.e. the mixing of textual types, demonstrating the dialogue of a unique textual exemplar with its conventional norm revealed in the textual prototype, the dialogue between the function, communicative determination and the possible form of its embodiment (Fix 1997 in Cherniavskaya 2009: 113-114; Adam 2011a: 13-30). In this case, it means that abstract political discourse can be materialised and be visible on the textual surface through generic forms of other discourses. The general context of realisation with its spatial-temporal relations, medium, participants remains a strong factor, reminding the readers that the imitated genre is not real, but a joke, a parody, a game. It is the game between the real genre scene of text B and the scenography established in this text through pattern A. As a result, the reader is temporally converted into a tea-maker, a partner in a game, a cinema-goer, an attendant of a conference, etc. – a more welcoming role than the FB voter who is constantly annoyed by repetitive campaign messages. In this sense, the text manifests the playful carnival structure with strong persuasive power.

6.9 Typological intertextuality as a comic form

When discussing the key tone of an internet meme, I have shown that bringing ostensibly incongruous elements together when imitating genres creates a humorous effect. The unpredicted form violates expectations of the reader and results in surprise and laughter. In this sense, typological intertextuality can be regarded as one of the comic forms that are largely used in the carnivalesque 2.0 presidential campaigns. So, what is the mechanism that creates the humorous effect when imitating genres?

Referring to the incongruity theory, Andreas Langlotz (2015: 252) claims that “we laugh because the joke forces us to dissolve a semantic clash that is achieved by creating an unexpected contrast between two discrepant and concurring interpretations – a conventional and a surprisingly unconventional one. [...] The semantic puzzle of incongruity and the cognitive process of solving it thus amuse the interpreter and motivate laughter”. In other words, laughter as an outcome of humour is based on the presence of incongruity and its resolution. The researcher explains the resolution of incongruity within the framework of conceptual blending theory which includes three steps of recognition, elaboration, and exploration (for further reading see Langlotz 2015: 258-260).

Similarly, Noukhov (2012: 171-178) claims that the range of emotions of a person who solved the comic puzzle, understood the essence of the joke, appreciated the witty pun, goes through a chain of processes, notably confusion – tension – breakthrough – satisfaction (*замешательство – напряжение – озарение – удовлетворение*). In order to understand how typological intertextuality results in humour, I will try to explain this by applying these four stages of Noukhov’s psychological model.

When rambling and scrolling down FB pages, the user suddenly comes across an atypical for social media genres such as The Bill of Rights or a dictionary which makes him/her feel confused, perplexed and embarrassed. Pavlov (1973: 429) describes this state as breaking the dynamic stereotype, a conflict with an automatic well-arranged balanced system that has been formed in monotonously repeated actions or routines. In other words, the frequent user of FB is rather accustomed to habitual forms of postings when his/her friends and interest groups share stories, news and commentaries in the forms of images and colour-adding captures. But if an internet meme appears in the shape of another genre, it manifests new features which are incompatible with the user’s previous mental representation of the named genre. Such a fast and harsh change of the meme’s appearance does not fit an already existing representation of

the generic pattern that is available in the user's mind and it consequently creates a conflict with this prototype. This collision of the existing system of relations, the mental representation of a prototype pattern with an unusual, unwonted form of the meme is characterised by elements of suddenness, unexpectedness, surprise and bewilderment.

Tension is common for the next stage of the reader's reaction to an unusual genre form. The feeling of constraint and struggle is the result of a mental effort of contemplation. The viewer is confronted with an atypical genre form with distant conceptual systems brought together in one text. All mental resources are then mobilised and aimed at tackling the problem of identification of an irrelevant object and solving the puzzle. The mental work is accompanied by the sentiment of discomfort and perplexity. As soon as the latter fails to match the new pattern with the habitual category, a violation of the readers' expectations takes place. Eastman (1936) calls it the "collapse of a pattern", while in Kant's philosophy, the phenomenon is known as the sudden transformation of the frustrated or strained expectation into nothing where "nothing" is a gap which is not filled with an explanation (Kant 2012).

When the FB user correlates semantics with an atypical composition, the stage of strained expectation leads to a phase of breakthrough, i.e. a moment of enlightenment due to the found solution. Observing this incongruity caused by the sprinkling of political elements in genre that is distant to it, the reader has a flash of illumination that this hybrid is an imitation, a parody. The feeling of discharging, lessening of the created intensesness and strain follows. An emotional outburst, energy output takes place.

Finally, what was unknown and unfamiliar at the beginning, putting the reader on his/her guard, goes through adequate interpretation, or "semantisation". This stage is followed by relief, appeasement which results either in a smile of satisfaction or roaring laughter. In other words, laughter is the reaction to the disparity between expectations and what has been perceived (*Elsevier's Dictionary of Psychological Theories*). No wonder, laughter is otherwise called "a reverse gasp" (Noukhov 2012: 173).

Hence, Immanuel Kant (2012) was right in saying that laughter is a state of affect which springs from the sudden transformation of tensed frustrated expectation into nothing. When the reader expects something else than what is going on in reality, the phenomenon inconsistent with expectations evolves into surprise and brings delight through the sudden change of impressions. Kant's Scottish contemporary George Campbell (1968: 150) noticed that speech which excites the feeling of agreeable surprise in the mind arises not necessarily

from its marvellous subject but “solely from the imagery she employs, or the strange assemblage of related ideas presented to the mind”. Church (2015: 46) argues that these, at first sight, odd elements are nevertheless manipulated to align with each other so that as a whole, they reveal an “occluded congruity”. The power of remix is to gradually erase this dissonance and persuade the audience that the clashing patterns belong together.

This carnivalesque mood which typological intertextuality brings along with the dialogic tension and clashes due to contact of two distinct discursive systems makes us return to Huizinga and his *Homo ludens* (1949). At the end of his classic work, Huizinga comes to the pessimistic conclusion regarding the play element in modern culture, stating that “civilization to-day is no longer played, and even where it still seems to play it is false play” (Huizinga 1949: 206). Nevertheless, the analysis of memes has shown a more optimistic picture of modern digital culture. In view of what has been examined before, I can state that the contemporary memetic practice of coining internet memes is filled with a playful jocular mood. The meme taking a mask of another genre is an act of calling the contemporary to join a carnival which temporally transforms politics into a game.

6.10 Discussion

When I investigated the use of internet memes during two presidential campaigns in the USA, I noticed that some of these digital genres revealed features of several discourses. Although the separate features of pre-electoral discourse received much attention from scholars, very little was found in the literature on the question of contact of pre-electoral discourse with other domains of language knowledge and use. In their works, Combs (1981), Baranov and Karaulov (1991), Gaikova (2003), Sheigal (2005) mainly highlighted theatricality of politics. Similarly, Atkinson (2016) and Newton-Small (2016) drew parallels between pre-electoral discourse and cinema and reality shows on the basis of the presence of an invisible mass audience and entertainment element. In the current study, I sought to determine *the links of pre-electoral discourse with other discourses by illustrating internet meme use*. I have found that the component of competition relates pre-electoral discourse with sport and beauty contest discourses. I have demonstrated how meme creators appealed to boxing, basketball, combat duels and Miss America contests to frame presidential candidates as adversaries, the process of political argumentation as the fight between rivals, rhetoric as battle strategies and the winning/losing of the election as victory and defeat. When analysing internet memes, I

also identified the link between pre-electoral discourse and historical discourse. The reconstruction of past events was used by meme creators to either promote or denounce the candidate for the presidential chair. Some memes resorted to positive history lessons to promote candidates' platforms, for example, by alluding to other political leaders who contributed to the country's development (Ronald Reagan or Bill Clinton). Others exploited allusion and retrospection to intimidate the voters so that they would condemn the candidate from the opposition (for instance, women's rights in the 1950s and an economic crisis were linked to the policy of Mitt Romney while the Benghazi case, speeches in Wall Street, the engagement in war issues in Syria, the controversial activities of the Clinton foundation, and security issues were used against Hillary Clinton's policy). The examination of internet memes during the 2012/2016 campaigns showed that alongside flashbacks to the past, prognostics of the future are typical of pre-electoral discourse. This sort of future-oriented pre-electoral discourse has a strong link with religious discourse. A better tomorrow is promised if the voter gives his/her voice to the 'right' candidate while doomsday events and the end of the world are assured for those who make the 'wrong' choice (memes referring to the Genesis Flood narrative, the Last Judgement, the Maya prediction of the end of history, the rise of zombies and other related consequences). Therefore, the elements of contest, historical retrospection and religious prospection in the political use of language have proved the absence of clear-cut boundaries between different discourses. It means that in reality, concrete texts usually reveal a 'dialogue' of many discourses at the same time. These results agree with the findings of other studies on interdiscourse which I mentioned earlier (Kress 1985; Adam 2006; Wodak 2008; Cherniavskaya 2009; Maingueneau 2014), in which a text is crossed over by multiple discourses.

I equally claimed that the concrete and unique realisation of a genre takes place on the textual level of organisation of discourse. So, the aim in this study was to observe political internet memes on the level of text. Earlier, I have shown that the genre of internet meme is assigned to an innovatory group of genres where the leading principle of text composition is variation. It means that its textual structure is open and flexible. In this chapter, I have demonstrated that variation parts and the whole text composition of the internet meme can be modified to such an extent that it makes the text resemble other textual models. Text as an open system of signs is traditionally studied along with the category of intertextuality, a particular means of text creation through borrowing elements from preceding texts (Piégay-Gros 1996; Fairclough 2003; Cherniavskaya 2005; Petrova 2005; Knobel & Lankshear 2007; Hodson Champeon

2010; Austermühl 2014; and others). In contrast to previous research, my research focus was on this least investigated textual category, the typological intertextuality, also called imitation of genres, i.e. a refined strategy which consists of implementing other discursive genres to create an internet meme. The phenomenon was studied by way of examples of different genres such as poems (Fateeva 1998), fairy tales (Adam & Heidmann 2007), advertising (Cook 1992; Janich 1997; Lugrin 2006; Adam & Bonhomme 2009), journalistic feature articles (Fairclough 2003), and horoscopes (Cherniavskaya 2003, 2004). However, I am not aware of any research to date that describes a dialogue of genres in pre-electoral discourse involving internet memes. The findings of this thesis therefore contribute to understand the relationship between memes and other discursive genres, and explain the specifics of intertextuality in the political context. The analysis of memes found on FB revealed that typological intertextuality is a text-constituting mechanism which demonstrates a certain partiality for textual forms borrowed from diverse discursive domains with different functions. The analysis has proven that the political internet meme is an open genre which actively integrates elements from genres of other discourses into its structure. I have demonstrated that the ‘annexation’ of external genres by memes can take diverse forms. The whole series of formal canons ‘invests’ into the structure of the meme, i.e. a letter, a nursery rhyme, a comic strip, a book cover, a fairy tale, an epitaph and so on and so forth. The result of the investigation has shown that typological intertextuality in the political internet meme is an innovative form of remix, a creative strategy planned by FB activists which involves highlighting the layering of political discourse and resorting to camouflage tactics. This emphasises the apparent extraneousness of the text to the pre-electoral campaign frame. The examination of political memes during two US presidential campaigns showed the vivid inconsistency between the functional level of memes and their realisation on the textual surface. I revealed that some political internet memes are reluctant to textualise ideological concepts respecting its basic prototypical matrix. Instead, they prefer borrowing various genres from other discourses, all the same pursuing the main goal of political discourse of fighting for power. In this sense, the text of the internet meme has shown to have a playful carnival structure, capable to absorb different genres when tailoring its own form. The flexibility of the internet meme is revealed in its striking capacity to imitate various stylistic patterns ranging from the extreme linguistic conservatism of legal English to a highly poetic language and its genuine imaginary. What is remarkable is that American netizens have recognised the potential of appropriation of source texts through reopening and manipulating their prototypical models. The power of these rewritten forms lies not only in the deformation

of contents, but in the selection of the generic pattern, hybridising it in a new environment and linking it to various spheres of activity which appeal to the reader.

Since typological intertextuality is a particular mechanism of constitution of the new text through an obviously marked and explicit dialogue of the text and its pre-text, one of the sub-questions of the present study was to find and analyse those *markers of integration of one genre into the textual structure of another*. The result of the analysis has demonstrated that when internet memes imitate genres of other discourses, their style-forming features are revealed at different levels of genre organisation. In the course of the analysis, I have detected markers of typological intertextuality on phono-graphical, morphological, lexical, syntactic, as well as on the level of macro-segmentation of the text, each marker contributing to the overall generic composition. Various visible signals show intertextual links not only with concrete texts, but with the whole typological model of text-constitution in a particular sphere of communication. The interaction of prototypical patterns does not pass jointly and invisibly for the reader but, on the contrary, with explicit markers. This localisable presence of other genres shows that typological intertextuality is used as a deliberate multimodal tactic planned by FB political activists to involve the American public into the negotiation of politics online. This finding suggests that the imitation of genres in the political internet meme is a case of ‘theatricalised’ or simulated change of the discourse, rather than a natural and a spontaneous switch. Therefore, the results of the studies are consistent with those of Maingueneau (2012) who views genres which imitate other discursive genres as cases of scenography. It is relevant to frame the phenomenon of genre imitation in internet memes as scenography because textualisation of an idea does not simply mean direct formulation of political goals on the material surface but building a singular scene, a unique text performance adapted to the concrete situation of communication. The playful element of such theatrical text structures consists of viewing the reader of the posting in several roles simultaneously, notably as a citizen of the country, as a FB user, and depending on the scenography as a newspaper reader, as a game partner, a curious pupil, etc. Scenography constructed by the text puts both global political and genre scenes to the background and establishes a new scene which functions in the mode ‘as if’ (it were a recipe, a nursery rhyme, etc.) with its own time and space relations, as well as new roles for the participants. It is only through the existence of an external genre frame – its medium of communication, setting, participants’ real roles and their goals – that the reader can identify the real political status of the internet meme genre and interpret it in the ‘right’ direction.

Therefore, when playing with genre structures, online activists tackle serious political issues using easily recognisable generic formats. Another sub-question was to reveal *communicative purposes of such creative memes*. The study has found that the goals set by participants who exploit the potential of different genres in the formulation of political memes are extremely diversified, persistently adapted to a particular local context. To experiment, to innovate, to give the text a fresh look, to create its own identity are in harmony with the general aim of the political meme to attract the reader and persuade him/her of the rightness of the promoted ideas. It can be suggested that in our digital age of information superabundance and cyber informational storm, remixers use invention and creativity to dazzle the audience, weaving all sorts of generic tissues in order to produce original patterns. Remixing various genres has the aim to provoke the reaction from FB readers while entertaining. Expected reactions may vary from willingness to read the meme and share it with friends to an inclination to further modify it, from raising certain feelings and emotions with respect to pre-election issues to the readiness to act in a suggested way. Other communicative purposes of imitation of genres are informing and evaluating main political events, and provide an explanation for complex unfamiliar themes through common, easily and quickly recognisable schemas. The creative imitation of genres focuses the readers' attention and attracts adherents, at the same time promoting an ideological fight with the adversary. Typological intertextuality as a determined text-constituting strategy influences the public through deliberately chosen discursive patterns. An annoyingly constantly repeated political message wrapped in an appealing look of socially valid genres sounds less direct and is accepted more readily. The targeted use of typological intertextuality can also be explained by the intention to conceal the true semiotic nature of the campaign, shifting the political conflict between 'we' and 'they' onto fictional, legal, scientific etc. levels. The camouflage of the message into 'friendlier' canonical forms temporally installs new relations between the sender and the receiver. As previously suggested within the framework of scenography, the FB reader is transformed into a game partner, a curious learner, a newspaper reader, etc. – a more acceptable role than the potential voter whose opinion is sought to be influenced. In this sense, the reappropriation of other genres has a strong persuasive effect since political elements are organised through the patterns of forms which in their turn relate politics to other discourses such as recreational, literary, didactic, every-day practical ones. As a rule, this type of rewriting genres is expressed in a playful manner. Adopting the guise of entertainment, the imitation of genres amuses the readers and at the same time provokes their reaction to political events, inviting them to further negotiation of meanings.

The discrepancy between formal and functional levels of internet meme organisation is in line with observations by Fix (1997, 2000) who claimed that genres imitating other genres only borrow their forms, preserving the functions of their original discourses. Likewise, the results conform with ideas found in a number of scientific papers (Lugrin 2006; Cherniavskaya 2007; Adam & Bonhomme 2009; Adam 2011a) where the researchers argued that texts which imitate the genres of other discourses often pursue persuasive aims. An evident, emphasised opposition of two textual systems infers a strong potential and decoding effect which ends up in an attractive form, emotional expression, an evaluation of events, a mask of persuasive intention of bringing an ideological message when drawing a negative portrait of opponents or calling for the unification of supporters. Furthermore, braiding, twisting different types of text, their pattern-breaking produces clashes of different generic logics and often produces a comic effect.

Referring to the incongruity theory, I have presented the mechanism which results in humour when the imitation of genres takes place. When viewing different genres inconsistent with the usual meme format, the person goes through four stages: Confusion out of clashes with the habitual representation of the genre, tension of solving the puzzle, breakthrough or illumination due to the found solution which evolves into satisfaction revealed in laughter.

This playful nature of the text achieved through combinations of various generic patterns, their superimposing creates additional layers and shades of meanings. The introduction of elements from other genres inevitably leads to the transformation of the text-recipient. Disturbed, its balance shaken, the latter, using the words of the Russian semiotician Yuri Lotman (1992), becomes a “generator of meanings”. The sense-making processes are triggered through the juxtaposition of heterogeneous strata of meanings, through the tension of logic of a given text and inserted into it the ‘foreign’ pattern. The essence of the process of generation lies not in its linear unfolding but in the interaction of different structures. It means that the text is not a passive container where content is poured from the outside but a mechanism, a device and a system of several heterogeneous patterns, a continuum where a certain message circulates. Therefore, the text is a game where meanings are constantly negotiated, gliding between multifold structures.

CHAPTER SEVEN

... how can ideas from very different sources be spontaneously thought of together? how can two ideas be merged to produce a new structure, which shows the influence of both ancestor ideas without being a mere “cut-and-paste” combination?

Boden (1996: 273)

7 Remix from a cognitive perspective

The necessity to observe categories larger than material text has become important within textual linguistics, which seeks not only to *describe* the phenomenon but also to *explain* the factors which condition it. In the previous chapter, I have demonstrated that when imitating different discourses and genres, the author encapsulates the message through the system of intertextual means which is visible on the textual surface. Being a textual category, typological intertextuality explicitly shows the integration of patterns and different systems of knowledge, cultural codes related to various spheres of social activity. Yet, intertextual indicators of another genre are identified as such only through the receptive mind. It is the reader who assigns them an intertextual meaning and validity. In other words, texts ‘interact’ because of the interaction of cognitive structures in the human system of knowledge. The interweaving of various genre compositions in the textual whole is preceded by cognitive ‘know-how’ on the transtextual level.

Here it is relevant to quote Pamela Howard (2002) who claimed in her description of theatre design that scenographic material aspects are central not only to compositional and production processes of performance but also to audience experience: “The scenographer visually liberates the text and the story behind it, by creating a world in which the eyes see what the ears do not hear. Resonances of the text are visualised through fragments and memories that reverberate in the spectator’s subconscious, suggesting rather than illustrating the words” (Howard 2002: 33). Like a scenographer, the text creator suggests space which is then transformed in the head of the spectator-reader to any possible scenario.

Linguistic and iconic material markers of other genres serve as triggers for switching the reader’s thinking into another system of knowledge, codes and mental schemas while interpreting the given text. Typological intertextuality is that mechanism which renders these cognitive processes visible on the textual plane due to its explicit or quasi-explicit signs. As a result, on the textual plane, we observe the combination of language units, which initiates in the recipient’s mind the transition from one type of discourse and consequently a passage to another type of thinking. In other words, the borrowed textual type prompts a particular type of thinking, launches a system of general cognitive prototypes and associations with them. Any remix and the dialogue of genres activate interrelation of different mental structures, operations and frames. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the general cognitive mechanism involved in the processes of creation and sense-making of the memes under

analysis. Therefore, in what follows I address my last research question: *What cognitive processes are involved when combining elements from different domains in creating political memes?*

The cognitive perspective can help to model the hidden mechanisms of sense-making and give deeper insight into the phenomenon of the remix of discourses and genres. In Chapter Five, which was dedicated to remix culture, I have already observed different elements which constitute remix practices, e.g. sampling, hybridisation and linkage. These are the processes of selecting, combining segments and creating something new through connecting them with previously unlinked features. It is now time to scrutinise and ground this conceptual mechanism of integration and show what remix is on the cognitive plane. With the help of conceptual blending theory, I observe how an emergent structure appears and generates various inferences when mixing elements from two distinct domains. I focus then on the single-scope network to present how different genres are blended and what effect this blending produces. Furthermore, the chosen framework which promotes novel conceptualisations can help to explain creativity processes that are involved when blending discourses and genres.

7.1 Conceptual blending in the example of ‘Campaigning is Halloween’

From the cognitive perspective new hybrid remixes can be presented as processes known as conceptual blending. Conceptual blending is a theory of online meaning construction and a framework of exploring human information integration (Coulson & Oakley 2000: 175). Developed from two traditions within cognitive linguistics, i.e. conceptual metaphor and mental space theories, blending theory adds significant insight of its own. Particularly, the contribution of conceptual blending is that the meaning construction is not the mere sum of parts of a source and target domains; it involves a more sophisticated practice of integration with the rise of an emergent structure. Hence, the integration network is described as a mechanism for modelling processes of how emergent meaning might come about (Evans & Green 2006: 403). So, conceptual blending, alternatively known as conceptual integration network, is a set of general cognitive processes used to combine different knowledge structures in mental spaces and develop new concepts (Coulson 2006: 115; Coulson & Oakley 2006: 47).

The creators of the blending theory, Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (Fauconnier 1994; Fauconnier & Turner 1996, 1998, 2002), argue that conceptual blending is a general, basic mental operation which “connects input spaces, projects selectively to a blended space, and develops emergent structure through composition, completion, and elaboration in the blend” (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 89). Schematically, Fauconnier and Turner illustrate the functioning of the conceptual integration network the following way:

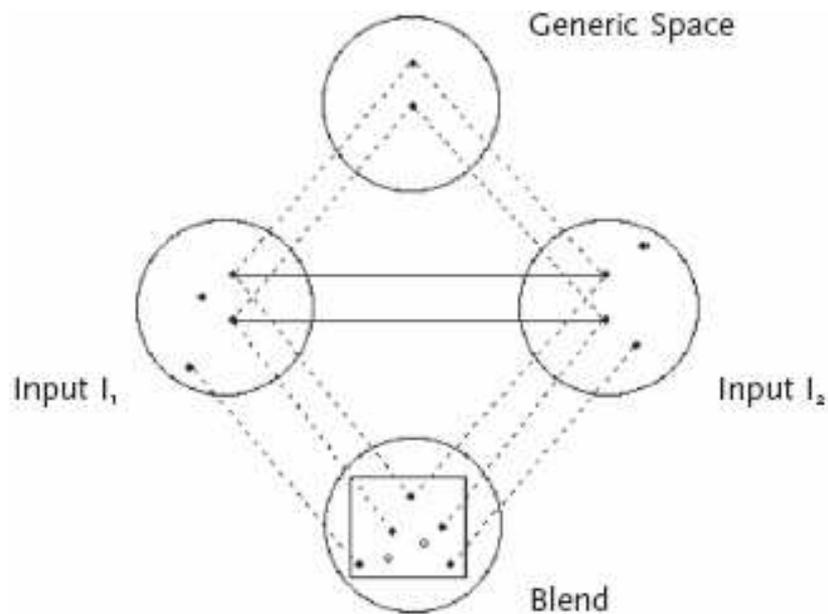


Figure 216. Basic diagram of conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 46)

Blends arise in networks of mental spaces. This basic integration network consists of four mental spaces that are represented by the circles: Two input spaces, the blended space, and the generic space that contains abstract information shared by the inputs. The solid lines indicate the matching and cross-space mapping between the input, while the dotted lines show connections between input and either generic or blended spaces; finally, the solid square in the blended space represents the emergent structure. In other words, the model shows that elements and frames from input domains are combined to yield a hybrid frame which comprises the structure from each of the different domains of input as well as unique knowledge of its own (Coulson 2006: 115). It must be noted, that the unfolding of discourse is a dynamic operation with “a rich array” of mental spaces which appear with different blends, serving as inputs for further blending and re-blending (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 103).

In what follows, I will illustrate different elements of an integration network, based on the example of the meme ‘Campaigning is Halloween’.

1. Input mental spaces

The core elements of any integration network are *input mental spaces* or “small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action” (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 40). These partitions of speakers’ representations consist of elements and relations between them. The elements in their turn can be of any variety of specificity from abstract to extremely specific. In terms of Fauconnier and Turner (examples are mine), *Obama* is more specific than *President*, which is more specific than *man*, *man* is more specific than *human being*, and *human being* is more specific than *physical object*. According to the scholars, an input space can be built around any of these levels of specificity (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 103). In other words, mental spaces can have hyponym-hyperonym relations between them.

Mental spaces are not complete but only partial representations of the elements and relations “as perceived, imagined, remembered, or otherwise understood by a speaker” in his/her life experience (Coulson & Oakley 2006: 47-48). These partial representations can then be completed by activation of the rest of the frame.

In the neural interpretation of cognitive processes, mental spaces are sets of activated neuronal assemblies, and linking between elements corresponds to the neurobiological binding such as co-activation. Grady in his article “Cognitive mechanisms of conceptual integration” (2000) describes the mechanism of neural processing of incomplete information representation. The researcher suggests that the activation of one set of concepts can provoke the spread of activation of other closely related concepts. Consequently, in the conceptual integration network, the activation of one part of the cognitive model results in the activation of other parts of the frame (Coulson & Oakley 2006: 48). This is why by perceiving a part we are able to reconstruct the whole. Mental spaces operate in working short-term memory; however, they are constructed by activating schematic structures or frames available in long-term memory (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 102). Mental spaces are interconnected and can be modified as thoughts and discourse unfold.

Elements and relations can be organised in the frame, i.e. a particular structure connected to our experience and that it is why familiar to us. Thus, mental spaces build up knowledge from one or several conceptual domains. Just like elements, the frame can be more or less specific. *Election* is a frame, but very abstract. *Voting for Obama in 2012 Presidential Election* is also a frame, but with a higher degree of specificity. A frame that specifies the nature of the

relevant activity, events, and participants is called ‘an organising frame’ for a mental space. An abstract frame like *campaign* is not an organising frame, because it does not specify the cognitively representable type of activity and event structure. All campaigns are strategic plans and actions, but can be split into military, advertising, charity, ecological, etc., every campaign having its own organisation. Thus, *presidential campaign* is an organising frame because it specifies the activity, the events and sequences, and the participants. Yet, an input space does not always need to have an organising frame. It is sometimes sufficient for the input space to provide elements and borrow a frame from another input.

Consider the following post taken from *Anti-Republican Crusaders* FB page:

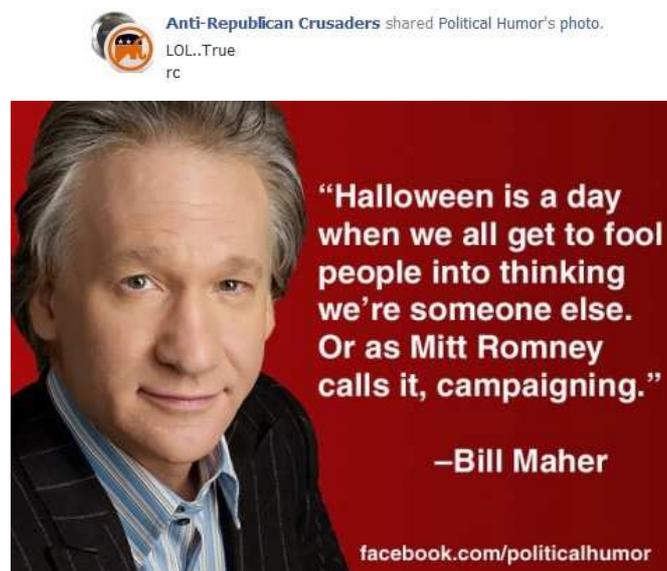


Figure 217. ‘Campaigning is Halloween’ meme

The frame of a presidential campaign, i.e. a series of organised actions seeking to influence public choice for the head of the state, is reasoned through the Halloween organising frame. The meme depicts William Maher (an American comedian, political commentator and satirist) and his quote where he parodies Mitt Romney, the candidate to the President of the USA in 2012. One input space provides information concerning the presidential campaign. The mention of the word *campaigning* in connection with the name of the candidate Mitt Romney specifies an abstract notion of the campaign. The second input includes a conceptual structure related to Halloween, a festival on 31 October with activities of trick-or-treating or guising, attending costume parties, playing pranks, telling scary stories, watching horror films, etc.

Figure 219 shows a graphical representation of input spaces (circles) with the elements (dots):

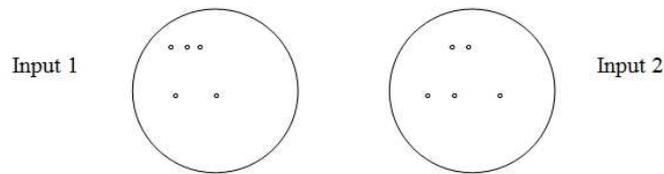


Figure 218. Input spaces with elements

2. Cross-space mapping

Cross-space mapping takes place when matches are created between input mental spaces. Matching produces counterpart connections which can be of different kinds. Coulson (1996: 69) argues that “the choice of counterparts is not arbitrary, but motivated by each element’s role in abstract structural schemas”. Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 47) call all important conceptual relations “vital relations”, for example, role-filling connections, connections of identity and transformation, connections of representation, analogical and metaphoric connections, etc.

Vital relation connections between the input mental spaces are called *outer-space links*. The relations can also be established within the spaces or compressed and projected into relations inside the blend and become *inner-space relations* (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 92-93). There are various possibilities for projecting inner-space and outer-space relations to the blend. The relation is sometimes projected by default, which means without any change. Otherwise, there is a discrepancy between relations in the inputs and their derivations in the blend.

Solid lines in Figure 220 illustrate the cross-space mapping between input spaces:

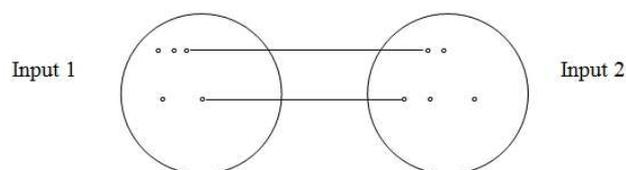


Figure 219. Mappings of elements across inputs (adapted from Evans & Green 2006: 403)

Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 325-327) single out five ways of aligning the relations in the blend and in the inputs: A relation can lack a counterpart in the blend, can highlight certain

elements and omit others (syncopation), can be scaled, can be compressed into another relation, or a relation in one input can be the inverse of that relation in the other (one input has the preferred topology, another input has the preferred compression).

In the example of ‘Campaigning is Halloween’, the matches can be traced between two input spaces. The cross-space mappings establish the following counterparts:

- presidential campaign/Halloween
- candidate to President, Mitt Romney/feast participant
- delivering speeches, visiting factories, universities, etc./attending parties, wearing costumes, playing tricks, etc.
- creation of a positive image with the voters/disguising identity, entertaining

Besides the established matches we can also observe significant incompatibilities between the two input spaces. The quote says that *Halloween is a day*; while the period between campaign and election can be spread over months. Sometimes, the lack of correspondence can provide inferences that are crucial to the author’s argument (Semino 2012: 126).

3. Generic mental space

Generic mental space captures elements common to the inputs. This mental space is structured by abstract relational schemas which are common to both inputs. It provides abstract and schematic information and serves as a “template” for shared structure (Evans & Green 2006: 406). At any moment in the construction of the network, common elements are mapped onto counterparts in each of the input spaces. The existence of elements and schemas which can be abstracted from both inputs enables us to map elements and project them into the blended space. As a result, cross-space counterparts are established. The latter can then be projected to the blend. As soon as interlocutors identify the structure common to both inputs, they “license” integration networks (Evans & Green 2006: 404).

The inputs of *Campaigning* share a common structure which is fixed in the generic space, i.e. public mass event, participants, actions and goals. It is important to identify these abstractions in order to bring input spaces together and ratify the integration network.

The connections between inputs and generic spaces are graphically presented in Figure 220 by means of dotted lines:

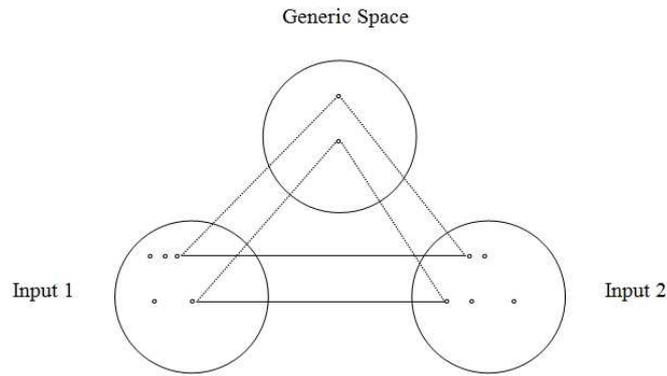


Figure 220. Inputs with a generic space (adapted from Evans & Green 2006: 404)

4. Blended space

A shared relational schema permits setting up another space. The partial entities and the structure projected from two input mental spaces are mixed in a new space. Thus, the fourth mental space is called *the blending space* or the blend. Generic spaces, inputs and blended spaces are interconnected. As the blended space has entities linked to counterparts in the other spaces, it can inherit properties from any of these spaces (Coulson 1996: 71).

It is common that the elements and relations projected to the blended space involve quite disparate, even clashing concepts. Fauconnier (1994) claims that once they are linked in the blend, the access principle can come into force. This is why the elements and relations which are customarily used in one domain can be easily transferred to their counterparts and perceived as natural connections. Coulson (1996: 72) notes that the existence of links between the spaces can enable the importation of elements and structures from one input which has no counterpart in the other input.

Blends reflect generic elements captured in the spaces but also contain structure that is found in neither inputs. This emergent structure provides a new meaning proper to the blended space and not connected to any input. In terms of Fauconnier (1994), blended spaces are mental spaces which are built up online by incorporating entities from both inputs and local contextual information.

The blend of the example under discussion takes elements from two inputs as a platform for further ‘work’ of meaning construction. One of the input spaces provides elements from the sphere of presidential campaign, notably a rather abstract notion of *campaigning* is specified by personal name of the candidate to the post of President, *Mitt Romney*. Another input

provides the organisation of these elements into the celebration of Halloween. The latter serves as an organising frame for the campaign mental space as it specifies the nature of activity, events, and participants. The diffuse elements of Input 1 and the organising frame of Input 2 are projected to the blend and become tied by inner-space relations within the blend.

The major consequence of the blend of elements and structures from two input spaces is that the elements of Input 1 start to function according to the laws of Input 2. As a result, the practice of presidential campaign of Mitt Romney is understood through the deliberately chosen ritual of the Halloween feast, i.e. guising or wearing costumes to hide the real identity. The author of the quote states what is campaigning for Mitt Romney and compares him with a Halloween masquerader in order to mock the candidate.

We can observe that the blend is not a simple act of fulfilling a chosen structure with the elements. The blend suggests that Bill Maher does not share political credo of Mitt Romney and tries to produce an unfavourable framing of the candidate. However, neither of the input spaces taken separately contains a negative assessment.

On the one hand, there is a statement that *Halloween is a day when we all get to fool people into thinking we're someone else*. The yearly festival Halloween in itself does not convey a negative meaning. Originally, Halloween celebrated the end of the summer and the opening of the door to 'a darker world' whereas today's traditions reflect more the formal side of the holiday. If wearing costumes was once believed to be a means of disguising oneself from harmful spirits who managed to escape from the netherworld, in modern times, it is a way of entertaining without any negative connotation.

On the other hand, the author of the quote simply introduces an alternative: *Or as Mitt Romney calls it, campaigning*. Although presidential campaigns often draw on techniques from commercial advertising and propaganda, by default they do not transfer negative emotional valences. In democratic societies, the election 'machines' have a coherent structure of personnel (campaign manager, consultants, activist groups, poll workers, etc.) responsible for a series of activities (fundraising, canvassing, conducting polls, husting etc.) to spread political issues during the election period. Generally speaking, a presidential campaign is a way of establishing a dialogue between politicians and the voters and raising public awareness. Thus, this expression in the post does not infer any negative valence if taken independently of the blend.

Consequently, neither Halloween nor presidential campaign inputs reflect the negative assessment. Nevertheless, in the blend this negative evaluation is evident. According to Coulson and Oakley, the viewer feels something which is not explicitly presented in the blend because s/he “does *not* encode the facts as presented” (Coulson & Oakley 2000: 176). Rather, the recipient is prompted to integrate the information from mental spaces and generate a new structure based on these partially fused inputs. Thus, even though the political campaigning and Halloween guise do not create a negative impression taken separately, we understand the first one in terms of the second one and it leads us to a negative opinion of Mitt Romney. The candidate’s appearance in the public with an objective to pass the message and create a positive impression with the voters is replaced by the Halloween tradition to mask oneself for jocular purposes, a practice totally incompatible with the political setting. As a result, the clashes are created between two concepts which lead to the emergence of the structure with a negative but humorous touch. The negative effect is reinforced by the lexical choice *to fool people*.

Table 4 schematises the conceptual integration network for the analysed post and describes the elements found in every space:

GENERIC SPACE	
Event Agent Actions Goal	
INPUT 1	INPUT 2
Presidential Campaign	Feast Halloween
Candidate to President Mitt Romney	Participant
Delivering speeches, visiting factories, universities, etc.	Attending parties, wearing costumes, playing tricks, etc.
Creation of a positive image with the voters	Disguising identity, entertaining
BLEND	
Mitt Romney deceives the public, hides his real identity in order to be elected as President	

Table 4. Conceptual integration network of the ‘Campaigning is Halloween’ meme

To summarise, a blended mental space is based on the material provided from input spaces. The parts of these different input spaces brought together give rise to a novel structure not found in either of them. According to Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 329), “the essence of a conceptual integration network is to project from many different and sometimes clashing inputs into a single blended space”. It allows for the creation of a new and integrated meaning out of incompatible units.

7.2 Processes of conceptual blending

Having observed mental elements which make up the basis of the conceptual model of remix practices, I am going to proceed with a description of the cognitive processes of the meaning construction. These processes include (1) composition, completion, elaboration, (2) selective projection, (3) compression, and (4) backward projection.

1. Composition, completion, elaboration

Building up an integration network involves a set of mental operations of combining dynamic cognitive models. To construct an integration network means “setting up mental spaces, matching across spaces, projecting selectively to a blend, locating shared structures, projecting backward to inputs, recruiting new structure to the inputs or the blend, and running various operations in the blend itself” (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 44). The cognitive process of the generation of the new structure includes the following operations.

Composition involves the juxtaposition of information from different spaces and attributing relations from one space to elements in the other input space or “role-filling” (Coulson 2006: 122; Coulson & Oakley 2006: 48). The composition of elements from the input spaces establishes relations between them that do not exist in the separate inputs. Generally speaking, at this stage, the concepts from one domain are applied to elements in a different domain (Coulson & Oakley 2000: 180). In the example under analysis, the elements from the domain of presidential campaign have been composed with the structure from the Halloween domain.

Completion or “schema induction” (Evans & Green 2006: 409) adds a familiar structure to the blend. Background frames and scenarios are brought to complete the information projected from the inputs. Since mental spaces are very partial representations of the things that we experienced or heard, read, etc., pattern completion occurs when the structure projected from

the input should match information in the long-term memory. We also saw with Grady (2000) that activation of one concept provokes the spreading activation of closely related concepts. Consequently, in the conceptual integration network, the activation of one part of a cognitive model results in the activation of other parts of the frame (Coulson & Oakley 2006: 48).

In the example under analysis the structure in the blend should match the information available in the long-term memory. When reading the blend we retrieve from our experience or encyclopaedic knowledge that Halloween is a holiday in autumn where people exercise the activities of carving pumpkins, attending costume parties, playing different tricks, watching horror films, etc.

As soon as we come across the words *Mitt Romney* and *campaigning*, we recall presidential campaign in the USA in 2012. Republican candidate Mitt Romney is the opponent of the Democrat Barack Obama. Every candidate has a message to transfer to people and in doing so to evoke a positive impression with the voters. The whole arsenal of means is created to achieve this aim in the most efficient way.

Finally, the multitude of possible scenarios can be elaborated, all prompted by entities from the input spaces but at the same time going far beyond them. This process happens on the stage of *elaboration*. This process involves a mental simulation of the event in the blend, constrained by the logic or illogic of the blended domain itself (Coulson & Oakley 2000: 180). Elaboration is also known under the term “running the blend” (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 48) or “the process of imaginatively developing the blend beyond what is projected from the input spaces” (Semino 2012: 117). The vast pool of possible frames and scenarios that meme makers resort to results in multiple directions of imaginative running the blend. Even the most improbable and “unrealistic scenarios” can be constructed in blends for local purposes (Coulson & Pascual 2006; Semino 2012). It shows the enormous creative potential of conceptual blending in the elaboration of a new structure. Therefore, scientists often call blending “a special device for producing fantastic and impossible scenarios” (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 50). For example, when running the campaign blend we might elaborate a mental image of Mitt Romney guising himself in the costume of a Halloween masquerader.

This raises the question as to how a novel alignment of elements and relations emerge? All processes, i.e. composition, completion, elaboration, are involved in the creation of an emergent structure in the blend. The latter is an organisation of elements that cannot be found in the input mental spaces. Firstly, the new structure is a result of the selective projection from

input spaces to the blended space. We have seen that the blend can incorporate elements from distant, not related and sometimes clashing domains. However, blends have newly created inner relations which make them “internally consistent” (Coulson 1996: 69). The resultant blend has a structure different from both inputs. Secondly, the new coherent structure raised from the blend is the outcome of a completion of information by activating background knowledge. Pre-existed frames activated in the blend help to create further inferences (Kok & Bublitz 2011: 295). Finally, a multitude of possible scenarios can be elaborated which are prompted by the entities from the input spaces, yet at the same time going far beyond them.

Accordingly, an emergent structure arises in the blend that is not copied from any input. It is generated in three ways, notably through composition of projections from the inputs, through completion based on independently recruited frames and scenarios, and through elaboration.

2. Selective projection

Not all entities and structures available in input spaces are projected to the blend (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 47). Depending on different factors (the purpose of integration, relevance of the information, etc.), either two counterparts are projected, or only one; they are fused in the blend, or none of the elements are reflected. Evans and Green claim that the selective projection of structure to the blend is subject to a set of “competing demands” (Evans & Green 2006: 434). In this respect, Fauconnier and Turner (1998; 2002: 327-333) laid out a number of governing principles, alternatively known as “optimality” principles. These governing principles are topology, pattern completion principle, integration, maximisation and intensification of vital relations principles, web principle, unpacking principle, and relevance principle. The researchers suggest that the choice of a guiding principle will depend to a great extent on purposes of blends (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 330).

If we observe our blend of the presidential campaign, we can see that not all elements are reflected in the blend. Neither fundraising, polls, opposition research from the campaign input, nor carving pumpkins into jack-o’-lanterns, trick-or-treating, and divinations from the Halloween input are projected onto the blend. These elements are not relevant for the purpose of the blend. The latter is aimed at mocking the Republican candidate; this is why only elements and relations revealing the similarity between input spaces are selected and intensified. The American satirist Bill Maher brings into comparison Mitt Romney’s campaign and Halloween. Respecting the pattern completing principle, the creator completes elements from the Campaign input with the organising frame of the Halloween input. The

latter turns out to be a useful topology reflected by inner-space relations in the blend. By virtue of the integration principle, necessary adjustments are made to mould diverse parts into an integrated whole. The parts from the festival input are formulated as a statement: *Halloween is a day when we all get to fool people into thinking we're someone else*. While the campaign input is a reformulation of the statement as if it were a reported speech of the candidate: *Or as Mitt Romney calls it, campaigning*. The union of two clashing inputs in the blended space prompts for novel outer-space vital relation. The latter is then reflected in the input which provides the organising frame. Thus, besides the relevance principle, the maximisation of vital relations also has a considerable weight in this case.

Particular importance can be attributed to the unpacking principle when dealing with the blend from the perspective of the reader. The principle shows that the blend all by itself should prompt for the reconstruction of the entire network (Fauconnier & Turner 2002). The familiar sequence of the author's building blends (setting up the inputs, mappings between them and projection of the material to the blend) appears to be reversed when perceiving blends. In this case the departure point is a blend. The process of the 'unpacking' of the blend can meet some difficulties. Firstly, this is because the receiver of the information is not a passive decoder of the message as s/he is depicted in the schema of Jakobson. An enormous amount of interpretive work lies behind the reception of the information. Secondly, one can face disintegrations and incongruities in the blended space. However, the blends give the reader certain clues or in terms of Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 333) "triggers" to reconstruct the entire integration network. These incompatible elements, sometimes growing to absurdities serve as anchors to fix the meaning in activating familiar structures in the long-term memory. The retrieved knowledge then helps us to ratify (or not) the inferences conveyed in the blended space. According to Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 333), "at first we recognize a space with incongruities and that those incongruities prompt us to take the space as a blend and look for its inputs".

Readers will differ depending on their encyclopaedic knowledge as well as notices on "their willingness to expend the necessary cognitive effort" (Semino 2012: 123). Finally, readers can have the flexibility to unpack the blend, or in terms of Semino (2012: 130) "to recognise" the inferences however they can "cast doubts on the validity of the whole conceptual network" and, as a consequence, resist the projection backward to the input spaces. In a word, readers can easily unpack the blend "by inferring from the text the whole conceptual integration network, but this does not necessary mean that they will accept the author's

intended inferences” (Semino 2012: 132). There is therefore a large interpretive variation across different kinds of readers. According to Coulson and Oakley (2006: 59-60), if the reader does not share beliefs, values and presumptions, “objects of agreement”, the arguments conveyed in the blend will not be convincing and persuasion will not happen. In other words, the entities and frames recruited in conceptual blending must be consistent with the value system of the audience that these blends are addressed to.

When studying so-called “blends-we-act-on”, Coulson and Oakley (2006: 64) come to the conclusion that although conceptual integration accounts for the mental operations necessary to incite action, “the roots of action extend beyond the individual’s nervous system”. To a great extent it depends on social practices and cultural values. Relatedly, the effect of drawing correspondences between the conceptual domain of the presidential campaign and Halloween, will depend not only on the cognitive capacity of the reader for conceptual integration but also on the existence of these practices in the culture of the reader or his/her experience outside.

When viewing the campaigning blend we are faced with the absurd correspondence of the festive Halloween and ‘serious’ presidential campaign. This alliance of competing notions serves as a triggering device to reconstruct the input spaces. The compressions can also prompt us to unpack the tightened relations into “full-blown parts of the network” (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 333).

In unpacking the blend, it is vital to take into consideration the web principle. When analysing, as Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 331) suggest, we must not consider topologies in the inputs which are not available in the blend. Similarly, from the direction from blend to input, we must not project back an emergent topology from the blend which is inappropriate for the inputs. For example, it is unnecessary to talk about visiting universities, factories to deliver speeches during the campaign as well as attending costume parties at Halloween if these topologies are not projected to the blend. Correspondingly, the unification of Mitt Romney with the Halloween costume party participant is not to be projected back to the real-life input.

The principles of development of these complex conceptual integrations are almost the same as in simple integrations: There are inputs, cross-space mappings between the counterparts, selective projection and generic spaces. The difference is that there are more than two inputs; there is no need for a single generic space; the projection of inputs can be either in parallel, directly to the blend, or successively into intermediate blends.

3. Compression

Selective projection from input spaces and integration of the structure in the blend provides “an exceptionally strong process of compression” (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 114). Coulson and Oakley (2006: 62) claim that compression is exploited in blends “to construe a complex scenario with a single frame that evokes emotions and other associations consistent with rhetorical goals”. In what follows, I will cursorily observe possible ways of compression in blending.

It can be *scaling* down (compression resulting in a reduced scale) some vital relations such as time, space, change, cause-effect, part-whole, property, similarity, and intentionality. Non-scalable relations such as analogy, disanalogy, identity, representations, can be compressed into scalable ones (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 324). If one of the inputs already contains a tight compression, it can be borrowed to the blend by compressing outer-space relations between inputs. Compression can also be achieved through the process called *syncopation* or dropping all irrelevant elements, retaining only key moments as well as preserving ordering. A closer process is *the highlights compression* when a blend offers integrated versions of life stories, compressed into a single scenario with key events and participants. As a result, the conceptual integration often creates new relations in the blend which sometimes can reach the size of a human scale.

As we can observe in the example of campaigning, there is no neat correspondence between social practices of campaigning and Halloween. The celebration of Halloween with multiple activities is compressed into a single ritual *when we all get to fool people into thinking we're someone else* in the meme. The relation of identity is tightened by generalising all people into Halloween party goers.

In addition, the Halloween ritual of disguising provides an oversimplified view of campaigning. There is a compression of time, i.e. the presidential campaign period in the USA lasts months while Halloween celebration is normally one day. Although Halloween is widely celebrated in the country under discussion, the event itself is less important in comparison with the election of the President of the USA.

In this line, Coulson and Oakley (2000: 187) add that the information in the blend is “interpretable” due to possible metonymic relationships that the elements in the blended space can have with the elements in the input spaces.

To sum up, compression is used in conceptual integration networks to simplify complex relationships between inputs so that they can be easily understood and reach a human scale.

4. Decompression or backward projection

It must be added that conceptual blending is a dynamic process of online meaning construction. Once the blend is established, anything which is fused in it is then projected back to the counterparts in the input spaces. As mental spaces involved in blending remain connected to the rest of the integration network, they can be modified at any moment through this process of *backward projection*, alternatively known as *disintegration*. Backward projection of the blended elements to the input spaces is the consequence of the pass called *decompression*, the opposite process of compression. It means that the blended elements are decomposed and separated. In other words, when the blend is ‘unpacked’, the opposite processes take place (analogy/disanalogy, similarities/dissimilarities, etc.). The mental operations of disintegration and decompression according to Evans and Green (2006: 425), help to achieve the global insight.

The emergence of the new structure (the negative image of Mitt Romney as a result of the parody on his vision of campaigning) projects these inferences back to the campaign input. The inferences are crucial to the author’s argument. They are intended to affect readers’ opinions and eventually the choice of the President of the country. Some readers may think that the person who is cheating on people during the campaign is not compatible with the image of the President and therefore must be rejected. Others can object to the author’s opinion by resisting the inferences generated by the blend and back-projection to the campaigning input. They might think that the blend is an inappropriate representation of the candidate under discussion.

According to Coulson (1996: 77), a blend sometimes contains notions which are incoherent with one of the inputs. The researcher gives an example of “an abused computer virus” – where the structure contributed by the social input (domain) is incoherent with respect to the technical input (target). Such unrealistic combination of elements is possible for local purposes of the blend which “enjoys a short-lived existence”. However, the back-projection of this fantastic structure will vary depending on the inputs. Its access is forbidden to the input-target (Coulson’s example of real computer viruses), while it is open to the input-source. The negative inference emerged in the blend is then transferred back to the input-source for the purpose of triggering a similar inference for its elements. Coulson resumes it the following way:

The blended space, like any other mental space, involves representations in working memory which are exploited in online interpretation of discourse. Thus the fact that shared schemas are exploited temporally in the blended space need not have any ramifications for the organization of general knowledge in long-term memory. The conceptual integration which occurs in blended spaces may be used to form new concepts, or it might just as likely be employed to generate a disposable concept for some local, often rhetorical, purpose.

Coulson (1996: 80)

Therefore, as a result of decompression, elements and newly emergent structures are projected from the blended space back to inputs. The latter can be modified if the reader ratifies suggested inferences. In the case of fantastic scenarios, like ‘Campaigning is Halloween’, the backward projection does not affect input mental spaces, which means that the newly coined blend just enjoys its short experience for local humorous purposes.

To summarise, building up an integration network involves a set of mental operations of combining dynamic cognitive models which include composition, completion, elaboration, compression, selective and backward projections. All these processes are involved in the creation of an emergent structure in the blend, i.e. an organisation of elements that cannot be found in the input mental spaces.

7.3 Genre blending as a single-scope network

Borrowing the structure of one genre and projecting it onto another one can be represented as *a single-scope network*, which is an integration that has two input spaces with different frames, one of which organises the blend.

The defining feature of it is that the organising frame of one input (and not the other) structures the blend. The input that supplies the blend with an organising frame is called *the framing input*, while the other is the focus of understanding, thus *the focus input*. In this respect, single-scope networks are the prototype of conceptual metaphor and its source and target domains (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 127-128).

Figure 221 illustrates the general schema of the single-scope network taken from Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 130), Evans and Green (2006: 429), and adapted for the present study:

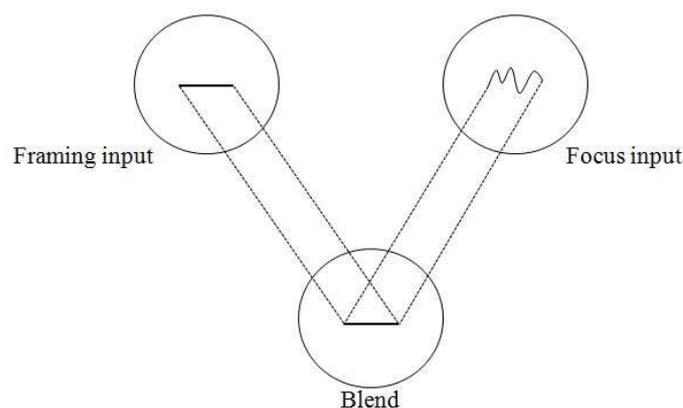


Figure 221. Structuring of focus input by inner-space projection from framing input

If we apply this schema to the phenomenon of imitation of genres, the framing input is formed by borrowed genres, while the focus input is a political internet meme. It means that in blended memes the elements from the focus input (politics) are composed with structures, various genre patterns from other discursive domains. During the analysis of the imitation of genres, I have shown how various patterns are borrowed to organise an internet meme. The lack of space and other communicative purposes are factors that force meme creators to borrow only essential elements from discursive genres, dropping all that is irrelevant for political communication. After all, retaining just a few key elements from generic structures is ample to switch the reader into the mode of a chosen sphere, notably the question-answer turn-taking is enough to recognise a conversation, the conventional opening *Once upon a time...* to think about a fairy tale, the closing formula *Yours sincerely...* to reconstruct a letter, etc. It means that internet memes compress genres to fit their structure in the most efficient way.

Bakhtin (1979) validates generic compressions as follows: “when hearing others’ speech, we guess its genre from the very first words; we predict a certain length (that is, the approximate length of the speech whole) and a certain compositional structure; we foresee the end; that is, from the beginning we have a sense of the speech whole, which is only later differentiated during the speech process” (Bakhtin 1979, translated by McGee 1986: 79). In other words, suffice it to name only a few elements and we are able to reconstruct the whole genre form. From a cognitive perspective, this therefore reflects a pattern completion process where the hearer/viewer induces schemas from the long-term memory to compensate missing information.

We rarely realize the extent of background knowledge and structure that we bring into a blend unconsciously. Blends recruit great ranges of such background meaning. Pattern completion is the most basic kind of recruitment: We see some part of familiar frame of meaning, and much more of the frame is recruited silently but effectively to the blend.

Fauconnier & Turner (2002: 48)

Therefore, when readers view a political meme with the cover of another genre with few discursive elements, they complete the missing information and construct the frames from contextual information and background knowledge. Finally, when running the blend, the readers might elaborate the mental image of politicians in the roles of goodies and baddies in the frame of a fairy tale; imagine presidential runners as characters of comic strips and nursery songs; even view them as a dead person through the framing input of an epitaph.

The process of schema induction from various genres can have several effects on the reader. According to Coulson and Oakley (2006: 63), conceptual integration theory provides an “interpretative model capable of describing the strategic and tactical ways human beings frame situations”. Deliberation as a fundamental area of human cognition recruits blends to animate mappings in such a way that it makes them compelling. Coulson also claims that one-sided networks are “set up for rhetorical purposes in which the aim is to profile a particular construal” (Coulson 2006: 219). This viewpoint can explain why FB activists resort to various genres in order to construct their political memes.

First of all, resorting to some genre frames assists with the creation of the comic effect. When studying political humour, the researchers Delibegović Džanić and Berberović (2010: 197) came to the conclusion that conceptual integration can explain the construction of meaning of political jokes because the blended space reflects two opposing worlds which clash and result in incongruity which in turn produces a humorous effect. In the case of imitation of genres, contrary to other networks (simplex, mirror, double-scope), single-scope networks convey an even bigger conceptual clash as the input spaces have different frames. This is due to the asymmetry between inputs because only the framing input has an organisational power in the single-scope network. Thus, the conceptual clash of carnivalesque internet memes and frames from various ‘serious’ genres causes the humorous effect.

Secondly, a genre pattern overlaid with a meme’s structure brings various associations with it. Andreas Langlotz (2015: 183) views speech genres as complex socio-cognitive context-dependent sense-making practices. These “well-entrenched default-construals”, as he calls

them, are characterised by coded discursive norms and are associated with certain expectations and particular forms of behaviour related to them. Accordingly, when meme creators choose a specific genre from a pool of options, they intend to evoke a series of associations in the mind of the recipients and establish certain roles and social relationships between communicative partners. A meme taking the form of a specific genre violates the reader's expectations and highlights the role that the medium context plays in the interpretation of such innovative creations. Since the reader fails to activate the relevant familiar frame from his/her background knowledge, s/he structures a new frame adapted to the circumstances. Coulson calls such conceptual revision "frame-shifting", which "reflects the operation of a semantic reanalysis process that reorganises existing information into a new frame" (Coulson 2006: 34). The researcher argues that conceptual mechanisms include the importation of a particular structure from the framing input into the blended space; then follows the projection of the structure from the well-developed blended space to the focus input. The back-projection, according to Coulson, may affect the meaning structure in that the objects in the target are placed in correspondence with the objects in the source, i.e. "based on similar roles in their shared relational structure" (Coulson 1996: 68). This is why when referring to various genre patterns, an internet meme frames diffused political elements according to the laws of a borrowed structure. Along with the structure that a 'genre-donor' offers a 'genre-recipient', its positive or negative memories, good or bad reputation, evokes various conditions of its productions, etc.

Thirdly, borrowing a meme from different discourses can save time when decrypting the message. The framing input contributes to the integration network by supplying pre-existing compressions. The main job is then to unite the ready-made compressions with diffuse elements of the focus input and to further project them to the blend. This is why the imitation of genres is a fast and economic means of communication. The users do not lose time explaining the issues by writing new patterns, but borrow patterns which the users are well-accustomed to and which guarantee the identification and fast decoding of the text.

Fourthly, the intention of some FB activists to integrate familiar genres into the internet meme structure can be guided by the idea of communicating complex issues through common frames to make information easily digestible for the readers. Fauconnier and Turner observe that the framing input is exploited "to cast light on the other input", so that we have the feeling that "one thing" is giving insight into "another thing" (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 129). The theorists underline the power of single-scope networks by stating that their blends

“evoke emotions, seemingly anchored in the trustworthy framing input, that feel to us if they are all-clarifying” (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 129). In other words, we understand one phenomenon through the pattern of another, or the ‘input-donor’ provides a reliable frame to the ‘input-recipient’.

Finally, the conceptual integration network of an imitation of genres shows us the persuasive potential of a text since in single-scope networks the blend is entirely dependent on the organising frame. In this case, Semino (2012: 124) suggests that “readers who interpret the scenario via a conceptual integration network are not encouraged to ‘run’ the blend freely and imaginatively, but are guided and constrained by the authors in terms of the correspondences (or ‘counterpart connections’) they establish and the inferences they draw”. The modelling of imitations of genres through single-scope networks illustrates therefore not only the persuasive nature of such blends but sometimes their manipulative power since the organising frame is used to reason about the focus input (Coulson 2006: 212).

Indeed, we cannot but agree with the creators of the theory that blending is not a deterministic cognitive process. It is an unconscious mental operation, and what ‘pops out’ into the consciousness is the final result of the integration network – the blend. Even though human beings are not aware of hidden mental processes behind the integration networks, they can deliberately resort to certain discursive patterns for the purpose of convincing the public. Coulson claims that “in a one-sided network, the blend inherits frame-level structure from one of the input spaces and specific level structure from the other input space. Accordingly, the blend will share much of the logic of the input space that projects frame-level structure” (Coulson 2006: 121). Therefore, the persuasion effect consists of borrowing genres where organising frames are used “to promote the speaker’s desired construal of the events” (Coulson 2006: 215).

Thus, a single-scope network model provides some reasons for recruiting genres by the authors of memes, notoriously, creation of humour, influence upon the meaning creation, economy of time, explanation of complex issues through simple frames and persuasion via socially ratified genres. The single-scope network thus illustrates how meme makers use different genres to provide plausible scenarios when pursuing their political aims.

7.4 Creativity in blending discourses and genres

As a mode of vernacular literacy discursive creativity in the new media is often poetic, usually playful and always pragmatic.

Thurlow (2012: 170)

Mightn't somebody argue that all creative art comes about through something like mutation in the mind?

Dawkins (2013⁹)

In their book *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (2002), Fauconnier and Turner claim that conceptual blending is a set of cognitive operations which are at the heart of imagination and creativity. Furthermore, the researchers argue that the “cognitive fluidity” or the process of bringing together elements from different domains is not reserved only for geniuses and a non-standard way of thinking, as was believed for a long time. Scientists discuss numerous examples from various sides of life (language, art, rituals, advertising, genetics, computer science, etc.) to show that this cognitive operation is fundamental to all activities of the human mind (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 37-38).

Observing discursive practices in new media, Thurlow (2012: 169) also noticed that the mode of expression in banal spaces and everyday exchanges of ordinary language users is not less artful and lyrical than professional “high culture” creativity acts. He puts it this way: “The language play and verbal art of new media communicators is certainly no less creative, no less imaginative, no less reflexive than, say, concrete poetry or other verbal art” (Thurlow 2012: 186). Thurlow has illustrated creativity by providing examples of the usual deployment of non-standard orthography (type play, wordplay or punning, interactional play, identity play, sound play, and topical play), claiming that these are deliberate attempts to break the norms motivated by various pragmatic needs of participants (Thurlow 2012: 179).

The same idea can be found in Langlotz (2013) where he discusses linguistic creativity in computer-mediated communication based on the example of a students’ discussion forum. According to Andreas Langlotz (2013: 159), even though communicators are highly restricted in terms of interactional affordances within the online environment, they still show “the power to creatively shape their immediate world of virtual experience”.

⁹ Taken from Dawkins’ speech transmuted into an auto-tuned song on the internet’s hijacking of the word ‘meme’. More information including video can be found in Solon (2013).

Internet memes which imitate speech genres are no exceptions to such original practices. Some are vivid examples of creative processes. For instance, Shifman regards internet meme genres as prominent examples of vernacular creativity. She argues that if these innovative daily artistic practices were previously “hidden in domestic settings”, in today’s digital era, they are reformulated and have become ubiquitous, highly visible cultural artefacts (Shifman 2014b: 342). As Dawkins himself noticed in his speech in 2013, internet memes in contrast to biological genes are not blind imitations, replicators which produce accurate copies. There is always an element of variation since they are deliberately altered by human creativity. In the hijacked version, as he calls internet memes, mutations are designed not by random change but with the full knowledge of the person doing the mutation, in some cases taking the form of genuine and creative art (Solon 2013). Casilli (2010) explains that the creative practice of reproducing memes in cyberspace comes from an implicit competition between peers. Netizens who seek to demonstrate their originality and generate a collective buzz are guided by the social motive to stand out of the crowd, to be noticed.

Recognising creativity in digital genres is thus not new. Scientists have already studied the creative potential of digital practices and revealed such graphical tactics as the exploitation of chromatic characteristics, experiments with photos and sound, code play with typeface, reduplication, typographic rebuses, emotes, onomatopoeia, prosodic marking, etc. and showed their deeply creative nature (Shortis 2007; Vaisman 2011; Thurlow 2012). What is of interest to look at here is the cognitive operation involved in the innovative practices of mixing genres.

From the cognitive perspective, blending theory helps to formalise creative processes through modelling its mental mechanism. Previously, we have observed the single-scope integration network where the structure from the framing input (source domain) binds elements from the focus input (target domain) and results in a novel emergent structure not found in either input. As I have described earlier, the novel alignment of elements and relations happens during the process of elaboration. Coulson (2006: 122) argues that the activation of novel structure in the blend is evoked in response to the “coalescence of information” from distinct domains.

This idea was also explicitly developed by Forceville in his article *Creativity in pictorial and multimodal metaphors* (2012). The researcher claims that creativity resides not so much in the content of information but in conveying this information in an unexpected pattern-breaking form. For political pre-election memes, this would mean that it is not the banal predictable

campaign message which manifests originality, but its innovative packaging which reflects creativity. An internet meme in the form of a recipe, a fairy tale, a nursery rhyme or a dictionary entry is surprising, original, and also creative. The choice of the specific genre pattern for framing the message demonstrates that meme creators noticed something similar between two sometimes very remote phenomena. Newly established mappings, the unexpected fusion of features presents a political subject under a different angle of vision and makes the blend successful.

In this line, Koestler argues that “the discovery of hidden similarities” between two phenomena or “bisociation” of previously unconnected matrices which results in the production of something new manifests the pattern of the creative act (Koestler 1969: 27, 45). According to Forceville (1996, 2012, 2013), what makes a blend creative is the capacity of finding an appropriate source domain which contains crucial information about the target domain and can update and complement it in a successful way.

It must however be stressed that creativity in political memes is highly contextualised and goal-driven. Referring to Forceville’s schema, we can formulate creativity in genre mixing as follows: Political activists develop a creative representation of political subjects through finding a genre pattern from the source domain which would cue the pertinent structure to be mapped onto the promoted target domain so as to emphasise particular aspects of the subject (positive ‘we’ or negative ‘they’). The main task of this creative blend which succinctly and surprisingly, humorously and beautifully underlines the parallels between the source and the target domains is to make the person vote for a particular candidate.

In conclusion, the process of recruiting various genre patterns in single-scope integration networks shows a creative act. It consists in unveiling hidden similarities between two objects, binding patterns from various domains with political elements and generating new connotations. An innovative act is revealed through conveying information in an unexpected inventive form. Blending several sources into the meme’s structure shows novelty and the creative interpretation of political events. In the context of pre-election campaigns, meme producers hit upon original forms in order to promote their political ideology, which shows that creativity in such meme coining is goal-driven. Pattern-breaking, convincing and appealing, this creative practice serves the aims of political discourse that is the fight for gaining and/or retaining power.

7.5 Discussion

Being a textual category, typological intertextuality explicitly shows the integration of generic patterns on a perceptible material surface. However, linguistic and iconic material markers of other genres serve as triggers for switching the reader's thinking into another system of knowledge, codes and mental schemas. Believing that the cognitive angle of the research could benefit from modelling these hidden mechanisms, giving deeper insight into the phenomenon under analysis, I formulated my last research sub-question, which is to find out *what cognitive processes are involved when combining elements from different domains in creating political memes.*

Drawing upon conceptual blending theory (Grady 2000; Coulson & Oakley 2000, 2006; Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Coulson 2006; Semino 2012), I have observed the general mechanism which lies behind remix that is behind sampling, hybridising and linking elements from various domains of knowledge. Linking two distinct domains in the meme means setting up two different mental input spaces, drawing various cross-space mappings between them, the selective projection of elements from both inputs to the blended space, the generation of an emergent structure, projecting it back to the input spaces and running various scenarios. With the help of the conceptual integration network modelled for the meme 'Campaigning is Halloween', I have illustrated how a new integrated meaning emerges out of two incompatible domains. Although neither of the inputs contains a negative assessment of Mitt Romney, the campaign of the 2012 President runner is reasoned through the Halloween masquerade. The power of the meme lies in establishing a link between distant and previously unconnected elements. Backward projection of this emergent and newly recruited structure can modify our perception of the focus input, which means the understanding of politics in terms of the logic of the chosen frame. The failure to do so might just result in the generation of a plausible concept for the local rhetorical purpose to mock the candidate from the oppositional camp.

In this chapter, I have equally demonstrated that the whole genre pattern from various discourses can become organising frames recruited to structure political elements. The remix of genres from the cognitive perspective presents the single-scope network where a borrowed genre is the framing input whereas the political mental space is the focus input. I have observed how the importation of different genres as organising frames affects political space through backward projection of emergent structures from the blended space. The outcomes of

genre recruitment in the single-scope network result in humour out of conceptual clashes of two distinct domains; the projection of positive or negative experiences related to a particular genre via the activation of schematic structures available from long-term memory; an easy and fast assimilation of new information due to already available pre-existing compressions; the manipulative guidance in interpretation of political events through selective counterpart connections established between two input spaces. The modelling of cognitive processes through the single-scope integration network has shown that within participatory digital culture, American netizens were not only voicing their point of view but also tried to influence other participants by bringing about their own desired outcome of the election.

The chosen cognitive framework, which promotes novel conceptualisations and explains how remix functions, also sheds light upon creativity processes involved when blending genres. Memes which were used in presidential campaigns were constantly striving for innovation and novelty, for effective and striking devices which will overcome the 'fatigue' of American society which is overexposed to repeated campaign messages. Different genre patterns reassembled together in a short but holistically coherent meme are markers of the high level of creativity. The findings are in line with the creativity theory elaborated by Koestler (1969) and Forceville (1996; 2012). This means that even though internet memes incorporate previously existing generic forms and elements, the novelty lies in the unification of unconnected structures. It is in this innovative combination of preceding texts that the political remixer expresses his/her own voice. The originality of such imitative practices is revealed in the user's response in a flexible way, notably s/he is able to creatively manipulate the form and preceding sources to tailor to his/her own ends. Instead of merely copying, remixers productively interpret the samples they exploit in their memes, thereby creatively modifying and appropriating the contents for their use in the new context. The observation of imitation of genres from the cognitive perspective has important implications as the research reaches both descriptive and explanatory adequacy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

...what initially seemed easy and primitive, the explicit characterization of sameness, turned out to be extraordinary complex.

Fauconnier & Turner (2002:12)

8 Conclusion

8.1 General results

The present study aimed at investigating the complexity of the object of studies through combining different methodological perspectives; an attempt to shed new light on the political internet meme as a manifestation of the contemporary digital remix culture during the period of two US presidential campaigns. The search for a suitable theoretical framework and methodology in order to describe the political internet meme in the most possible multifarious ways ended up in combining several approaches and the delineation of a new paradigm adjusted to the chosen object. Instead of resorting to the traditional discipline-specific methodology, I have conceptualised my study through remix, a generative metaphor for thinking about research methods valuing experimentation with data and the playful recombination of theories. In this alternative framework sampling, hybridising and connecting data with previously unlinked ideas to generate revised meanings became the core activity in the course of the study. The formula language-society-cognition-context was adopted as a conductive thread which dictated the implementation of qualitative research methods from various disciplines such as political discourse analysis, American history and cultural studies, textual linguistics, cognitive linguistics, genre analysis, social semiotics, visual rhetoric, remix studies, theory of carnival, and scenography. Every chapter reflected a particular stage of research, either the description of specific relatively stable forms, i.e. genres of internet memes, the observation of an abstract pre-electoral subset of political language as the basis for counter-discourse, or the analysis of unique scenographic textual materialisations. Eventually, a shift from the visible textual surface was undertaken to model cognitive processes which take place in the creation and sense-making of a text. Throughout the entire thesis, I have underlined the pivotal relationship of discourse, genre and text as a relation of the abstract whole and its concrete parts. Whether it is the particular characteristic of a political ideology manifestation, an aspect of an internet genre, or an individual text feature – every statement was illustrated by numerous scripto-visual examples taken from social media contexts. All findings contribute to the description of one and the same phenomenon captured from different angles, continuously zooming in and zooming out. Summarising all the results, I can conclude the following:

First of all, an internet meme was studied within the abstract category of political discourse and the global political macro-context against which an American reader interprets a concrete

genre and a concrete text. This study has found that internet memes as concrete manifestations of pre-electoral discourse constantly encounter, overlap and refer to other discourses. The fact that the election of the President of the United States is a long-established ritual unfolded according to a familiar scenario divided into several acts, under the observance of mass audience which either hoorays or boos politicians-actors, relates pre-electoral discourse with theatre. The interdiscourse analysis of memes also revealed the relationship of pre-electoral discourse with other domains of human activity such as contest, historical discourse and religion. The race for the presidential chair of several participants, their gradual elimination and remaining of one winner who is rewarded, are all illustrations of pre-electoral discourse in the domain of contests. Retrospection in search for positive experiences of the candidate and negative facts of his/her opponents connects pre-electoral discourse with history lessons. Projection to the future, the belief in a better tomorrow and supernatural powers of politicians in realising it inevitably relates pre-electoral communication to religious discourse. These findings suggest that the political internet meme, although reflecting political discourse as a subset of language used in a particular social practice with ideologically and historically determined mentality, presents in reality a crossing point of several discourses.

Studying internet memes in the global political context, I equally observed how the central concept of politics, i.e. the fight for power of conflicting forces and interests is revealed in memes. I have shown that the notion of power and associated mental schemas which present the basic opposition of concepts 'we vs they' are extremely sharpened during presidential campaigns. During this period, the polarisation 'we vs they' determine the perception of reality under an ideological and evaluative prism where all political actors are categorised according to the adherence to the same interests or opposing them. Accordingly, everything which was related to 'we' was viewed and presented in positive terms and all linked to 'they' became the subject of negative portrayal. Political actors who shared common mental representations were grouped around different ideological poles with presidential candidates being their physical embodiment. Through a semiotic analysis, I have demonstrated how participants of pre-electoral discourse exercised various activities of orientation-integration-delegitimation in order to satisfy their needs and interests. The analysis has confirmed that the orientation activity was aimed at formulating the political position, values and philosophy of the group. Besides official programs and nominalisations of parties (the Democrats and the Republicans), citizens identify American ideologies through non-official metaphors of space (left and right), animal allegory (donkey and elephant), and colour metonymy (blue and red).

Integration activities were concerned with searching for supporters, their consolidation, the harmonisation of their relations and the maintenance of consensus. The study has demonstrated that during two pre-electoral periods, these signs included slogans, logos and portraits of leaders. Mostly phatic in nature, these orientation signs encapsulate campaign messages in short catchy forms and are constantly repeated to create a lasting impression with the electorate. If the integration was based on 'we', delegitimisation activities were aimed at strengthening the differentiation from 'they' and included a fight, the neutralisation of opposition, creating conflict-ridden relations between political agents. Among others, these means involved various parodies on official slogans, logos and portraits of politicians; framing political events in a favourable light for ingroup and framing disparagingly of an outgroup; stigmatisation through labelling, underlining ideological otherness through playing with onomastics, creating nonce words out of politicians' names, coining anthroponyms from images of notorious historical leaders.

Secondly, the present study was designed to situate the political internet meme on the genre scene. I claimed that political discourse like any other communication does not unfold in a vacuum but in a particular sphere of human activity since, in reality, speakers do not deal with abstract and vague 'politics' but constantly use concrete textual models in order to regulate different socio-discursive practices. The present study claims that being an institutional type of communication, pre-electoral discourse in the American national and a culturally specific context has a repertoire of typical communicative situations articulated in discursive genres, each treating a restricted subject matter concerning candidates and their policies. The repertoire of genres of pre-electoral discourse has been enriched with the development of CMC which offers participants new means of information exchange. The research has provided evidence that today, informal talks about politics have moved to social media where people develop their orientation skills, evaluate political events, form advocate groups in their fight with the opposition. During the 2012 and 2016 presidential campaigns in the USA, FB appeared to be a prominent hub for bottom-up movements and a large avenue for online canvassing. It became an open stage of scripto-visual attacks between the Democrat and Republican supporters. And the internet meme is getting more and more popular among political partisans as an inexpensive, easily accessible, widely distributed and enjoyable form of expressing one's ideology. This new genre is based on offline political events, which are de-contextualised, transformed into a media event and charged with new subversive meanings. Within the framework of genre analysis, I have examined the internet meme

through the cluster of different external and internal factors and presented it as a relatively stable type of text which reflects specific conditions of human activity during pre-electoral campaigns. Taking into consideration multimodality, I have taken a close look at the internal organisation of internet memes. The study has demonstrated that an internet meme, as a multimodal type of text, integrates linguistic and iconic signs in its structure which in their turn exercise various relations such as complementary relations, double coding, aesthetic relations, emotionalisation, and contradiction.

The present study was also designed to detect the differences between the internet meme and the viral. The result of this investigation shows that when we talk about virals, we want to stress the mode of diffusion of an electronic unit as well as factors enhancing its effectiveness and decline. Yet, when memes are evoked, the focus is on the message itself, the construction of new meanings and transformation as it travels in virtual space. Based on the example of Eastwooding, I have demonstrated various means of reproduction of memes, which are based either on accurate copying of the original sources, pasting them into the new context and mixing them with previously unlinked elements or imitating through transformation of authentic sources with a different degree of deviations. The analysis has shown that scripto-visual genres, internet memes nourish themselves from photography, press, editorials, filmic montage through cutting, editing and changing an original form by preserving some of its aspects and modifying others. All this suggests that the meme genre is part of participatory remix of the web 2.0 culture where copying, combining, transforming and sharing among others have become popular practice in the twenty-first century. Derivatives can be spawned by photomontage or the act of remixing and repackaging a precedent source that can be actualised by adding text, an annotation associated with an image and therefore re-keying its tone.

The analysis of the tone of a political internet meme was another objective of this study. The research has revealed that the prevailing tone of digital memes during two presidential campaigns is humorous and sharply contrasts with the serious key of official politics. I have analysed numerous comic forms ranging from mild humour to bitter satire and I have claimed that together they establish a sort of parallel world inhabited by politicians-actors, politicians-clowns, politicians-monsters. This second comic world can be compared to the medieval carnival where folk laughter aims at showing the imperfect nature of reigning truths, disproving an existing *status quo*, changing and reviving it, reversing the social hierarchy. The joyful tone of internet memes however shows that the situation is not conflict thus it

'ratifies' the critics, renders it acceptable. This shows that the political internet meme as a genre, bridging the political and personal, has a number of functions, notably attraction of attention, information of the major political offline events, fast spread and large coverage, expression of opinion and evaluation of politics through the humorous angle, persuasion and call for action from the grassroots level. Accordingly, the political internet meme can glorify as well as knock down, amuse as well as annoy.

Thirdly, one of the goals of the present study was to observe the text of internet memes in relation to other inseparable units of communicative hierarchy, i.e. genre and discourse. In other words, the text was viewed as a material level of expression of socio-ideological relations, as an incarnation of discourse realised through the genre. There is a whole plethora of varied methods and devices of materialisation of abstract political ideas. Intertextuality is one of them. The focus of the present study was typological intertextuality, a dialogue with the whole class of texts or generic models, a means of creating a new sense through the play of elements from other genres observable on the textual surface. The main finding is that the political internet meme actively exploits and integrates diverse genres of other discourses into its textual structure. The study has detected various explicit markers of integration of different generic patterns into the multimodal structure of the political meme on the phono-graphical, morphological, lexical, syntactic, and on macro-segmentation level of a text. All these intertextual indexes of integration of genres suggest that meme makers borrow different genres deliberately, pursuing particular aims. The result of the investigation of communicative aims shows that political activists exploit genres to attract FB users, to bring the repeated political message into a new and original form, to inform and evaluate the public about complex events through simple familiar structures, to hide an initial attention to persuade behind 'masks' of socially validated generic forms. The aim of entertaining the public while evoking serious political issues shows the playful character of the internet meme. Therefore, the metaphor of theatre is a felicitous tool of grappling the complexity of such heterogeneous texts and relations of the producer and the user. In the course of the analysis, we witnessed how a text which imitates various genres creates a temporal world and assigns different roles to the participants of communication. The readers are constantly given the roles of a game partner, a newspaper reader, a fairy tale listener, and others – in all cases, roles that are friendlier and less intrusive than that of the potential voter. I have demonstrated how an established scenography temporally overshadows the real genre and discourse scenes in order

to pass on the political message effectively. Yet, FB users unmistakably identify the text as a game, keeping in mind the real context of communication.

In addition, the present study has targeted the observation of a set of cognitive processes involved in memetic creation and interpretation. Different elements which constitute remix practices, e.g. selecting, sampling, combining segments and creating something new through hybridisation and linkage, were presented on the cognitive plane. Based on the example of the meme ‘Campaigning is Halloween’, I have shown that the basic conceptual mechanism of integration consists of ‘Campaigning’ and ‘Halloween’ input spaces, their common generic space and the blended space. A new combination projected into the blended space creates a new carnivalesque setting where President candidate Mitt Romney pretends that he is someone else. The generation of the new structure is the result of complex cognitive processes of composition of elements and structures from political and festive domains, the completion of missing information through recruited frames from our background knowledge and the elaboration of various imaginative scenarios. These mental processes of matching and aligning the elements of two different domains, finding the common schema that motivates the analogy between them are recognised as “formidable feats of imaginative work” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 12) when crafting internet memes.

I have argued that the remix of genres from a cognitive linguistic perspective also presents conceptual blending. In order to illustrate this, I have modelled typological intertextuality through the reconstruction of the single-scope network, a set of basic cognitive processes used to combine different knowledge frames in mental spaces with the emergence of a new structure. In doing so, I have shown that the borrowed genre serves as an organising frame which structures the elements of the political internet meme. The resort to cognitive linguistics helped me to illustrate how the importation of different genres as organising frames affects political space through the backward projection of emergent structures from the blended space. This process results in humorous clashes (1) due to the juxtaposition of two distinct domains, (2) in the projection of a certain experience associated with a particular genre, (3) in the easy assimilation of information through recognisable familiar patterns, as well as (4) in the manipulation via selective projections of elements. Likewise, I have demonstrated the mechanism of humour creation and what creative processes are involved in the digital practice of the imitation of genres.

To sum up, in this thesis, an internet meme was presented as a genre and described on different levels of language organisation from abstract discourse to the concrete textual mechanism with its invisible cognitive processes of meaning construction and interpretation. We have witnessed that regardless of a short form of the genre, an internet meme has a complex structure. Its complexity is revealed, on the one hand, on a discourse level of language organisation since its material structure implements several discourses and ideological signs in one text. In addition, multimodality of internet memes signifies heterogeneity of semiotic codes involved in communicating the message, where interactions of the image and the verbal text contribute to the understanding of the message. On the other hand, the complexity of the internet meme is manifested in the involvement of several generic models in its constitution. The remix of genres which at first sight looks like a simple recreational deconstruction of texts, in reality, presents a subtle manipulation practice which relies undeniably on the remixer's ability to address the audience by selecting and managing complex intricacy of interdiscursive references in order to reiterate the political message. When posting internet memes, meme makers were and are engaged in acts of political participation that conveyed/conveys their ideological stance. This has been achieved through various humorous and creative multimodal strategies. Various means of remixing, rewriting, reworking, reopening, reappropriation, resemantisation, reelaboration, reiteration of genres as well as other precedent sources have demonstrated the ability of Generation 'Re' to manipulate the signification process, negotiate meanings, to enhance public awareness of political paradoxes and incite the criticism of one ideology and praise of another during the American presidential campaigns.

8.2 Reflexions, implications and axes for future research

What am I doing when I ask fragments of images to do the work of fragments of sentences, fragments of thoughts, of memory? (Teri, Research diary, February 2, 2012)

I still find myself getting frustrated because I can't figure out how this is all going to come together, but I feel like it will come as I work (Nicole, Research diary, January 20, 2011).

I really hate falling into a completely illusive creative bubble, but there's a lot of "trust" involved in this process (Nicole, Research diary, January 20, 2011).

Holbrook & Pouchier (2014: 756)

During my qualitative investigation, besides understanding and describing the world, I also recurrently questioned how I came to know it. Having adopted the hermeneutical epistemology that prompted my decisions throughout the study, I deliberately avoided single methods and readily applicable models believing that ‘objective’ or ‘god’s eye’ approaches are in many ways reductionist (Markham 2018), and “linear arguments constructed in traditional forms give us a false sense of security about the solidity or unity of our interpretations as well as the ways we arrive at those interpretations” (Markham 2005: 17). Instead, in order to cope with the complexity of the object in question, I chose to follow the data and remixers’ playful manner of dealing with ‘serious’ issues, selecting knowledge segments, patching them together, layering and reusing what has been discovered before to find a new meaning. Conceptualising my research through remix and presenting its outcomes in a mosaic format with different fragments of knowledge, I believe, in line with Markham (2018: 49), that “reclaiming fragmentation, multiplicity, fluidity, and complexity” would “resist linearity, universality, monologic, and reductionism” in the attempt to comprehend the object.

Consequently, to make sense of digital remix practices during the two presidential campaigns in the USA, I have resorted to assembling theories, blending various disciplines and methodological axes in my interpretative work. The remix of methods are believed to be best suited to answer my research questions, studying data in a specific digital context. Changing methodological lenses, from the telescope to the hand loupe was appropriate and necessary to comprehend intricate digital remix practices. The synergy of multiple perspectives from various language schools offered several angles of vision of the phenomenon in question and helped me move through the debris of analysis and numerous interpretive collisions. When collecting information, studying and interpreting this incredible aspect of contemporary remix culture, I was open to any resource or theory which could shed some light on it. In doing so, I tried to emphasise the complexity of the object rather than simplify it through demonstrating the plural viewpoint of the object in the greater context.

When using the remix approach, I focused on the experimental mode of creating knowledge. The words of scientists and practicing artists, Teri Holbrook and Nicole Pourchier (quoted above) repeatedly resonated in my mind:

As collagists, we are able to bind ideas and images that may not normally lie adjacent, which allows us to consider what happens in the folds of pieces that may be seen as binaries: Self – Other, personal – professional, art – science, order – chaos. When we paste together fragments to

create an image or a text, we do not intend for them to be whole; as [...] we are not whole, and the fragmented canvases we create reassure us that disruption is okay.

Holbrook & Pourchier (2014: 759)

In line with these two qualitative researchers, I view my work as fabrication, as an ongoing assemblage, which involves the cacophony of ideas from data, theories and my multiple selves which are in constant relation and mutation.

Since any form of remix is inherently an incomplete and unfinished process, I would also like to point to limitations and a number of questions that have arisen in the course of my work on this thesis which might suggest possible axes for further research.

A major methodological caveat of the current study is that it is based almost solely on memes and mental structures underpinning these visible formations. The thesis particularly focuses on the processes preceding text production and therefore on the creator of the message and his/her intentions. Future ethnographic studies could profit from looking at participants and their reactions from the point of view of readers, ideally incorporating interviews with focus groups. Another related aspect that merits further exploration is the analysis of the whole conversation thread. While I have focused on the meme and its peritext which initiates the communication, I have not examined participants' comments and interactive acts. Studying the entire dialogic chains could be particularly fruitful. In order to have the same context of production and dissemination of data, I analysed internet memes taken from the FB platform. An obvious next step would be to apply similar methods of analysis to other social media contexts to determine if the use of memes and their functions identified during the study is the same in other platforms. Next, although the thesis recognises cognitive processes behind the textual structure and indicates that conceptual blending theory can give an interesting answer from a cognitive perspective, it does not provide an integration network for every concrete example supporting this hypothesis. Bringing the cognitive aspect to textual linguistics in the future would play an important role in a more subtle understanding of the organisation of signs in a text. It would help textual linguistics and discourse studies to move from *what* to *why*, from the level of observation and description to the level of explanation. The evolution of the meme form in rapidly changing media contexts is an ongoing process; an additional mode of inquiry could bring the analysis of the meme genre from a diachronic perspective which would show the dynamics and change of the internet meme over time. While this thesis only examines iconotextual memes, future research of audio-visual meme types could deepen

the theorisation of the concept of the internet meme and add valuable insights. In this thesis, I was mainly concerned with the analysis of intertextuality as a central mechanism of meme building; a detailed exploration of intericonicity may contribute to the deeper understanding of the overall implications of memes. In addition, typological intertextuality was analysed as a text-constituting mechanism of political discourse, but it remains an open question how this textual device is used in other discourses. While this thesis focused on political campaigns in the USA, follow-up studies may look into other discursive spheres and contexts. Future research should look at cross-cultural differences in the construction of the memetic universe. A comparative analysis of the broad spectrum of memes in different countries may enable researchers to identify national and cultural differences in memetic responses. It was beyond the scope of this study to investigate meme contents and their diffusion comparing two presidential campaigns. Research into variations in different pre-electoral periods is needed to observe the dynamics of user-generated content and spread and to identify the factors which condition the differences if any. As meme-based campaigns are becoming more and more prevailing across the globe, further examination of the memetic phenomenon may add an important dimension to our understanding of the relationship between technology, language and power in the twenty-first century.

Notwithstanding these limitations, my study contributes to the fledging body of knowledge on internet memes by broadening the scope of interrogation and methods of analysis. On the methodological level, I combined several approaches breaking down the data into various dimensions to trace different trends in a significant body of memetic responses. The results in the area of verbal/nonverbal behaviour of masses provide the picture of how grassroots level netizens negotiate politics online during presidential campaigns. It gives an insight into issues of ideological expression and enriches the theory of political communication. A close look at the relationship between graphic and verbal constituents of memes contributes to semiotics, multimodal discourse analysis and visual rhetoric. While most studies take a memetic approach to exploring memes, the present study employs a different perspective. In this study, I demonstrated the applicability of the meme concept to the analysis of pre-electoral discourse, notably viewing the political meme as one of its genres. Throughout the analysis of incorporation of one genre into the structure of another, I suggest that political argumentation may be realised not only through content but also through more latent patterns related to form. The analysis led to the identification of recurrent patterns in the, at first sight, ostensibly chaotic universe of memes. Therefore, as a research study, the thesis contributes a micro-

analysis of the imitation of genres in the digital context which has been understudied to date. This study has several implications for textual linguistics which can learn from cognitive studies of mental processes hidden behind textual surface. Cognitive linguistics helps to shed more light on the phenomenon of remix and discursive genre integration, creative processes as well as the general production and sense-making of digital remix practices. All this opens the doors for new discoveries of multifarious sides of digital practices, and more generally, the contemporary remix culture. The selection of memes shown in the thesis represents a minute portion of those generated during 2012/2016 campaigns in response to candidates' speeches and actions. Further research regarding the role of internet memes in politics would be worthwhile. I hope that future studies will continue to expand our knowledge of this fast and ever-growing field.

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