Carnivalesque Humour in the 2017 Women's March Protest Posters Against Trumpism: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The 2017 Women's March is a histo-political icon in the US for women's rights, voice, solidarity, collective identity and power to resist Trump's ideologized masculinity, racism and social hegemony. Although the multitude of protest posters in the Women's March has become the core of research from different perspectives, there is still a scarce attention given to how Trump's body compared to Putin's was used to ridicule Trumpism through protestors' multimodal protest posters. To cover such a research gap, this work, in turn, focuses mainly on grotesque imagery in the 2017 Women's March for protesters to delegitimize and scorn Trump's political agenda for 'America First' and 'Make America Great Again'. Based on Bakhtin's (1984a) carnival theory and carnivalesque as an overarching theoretical framework and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual social semiotics as a methodological approach to the selected protest posters corpus, we found that a multimodal grotesque imagery of the Trump-Putin's relationship was manipulated in the 2017 Women's March as a counter discourse to vent protesters' anger and resistance against Trumpism. A work like this will significantly add more to sociolinguistics and political linguistics in terms of considering linguistic and nonlinguistic units in communication. As such, this implies broadening the toolkit of analysis in applied linguistics.

Keywords: Carnival theory; 2017 Women's March; protest posters; humour; multimodal discourse

INTRODUCTION

Linked to a diverse line of research thoughts into humour in the US politics (e.g., Lewis, 2006; Brzozowska, 2007; Krikmann & Laineste, 2009; Andrew, 2012), this paper attempts to illustrate how the 2017 Women's March protesters manipulated multimodal posters to resist Trumpism with respect to hypermasculinity and the homage of a singular homogeneous political identity. From this work perspective, we would argue for the need to consider how women protesters manipulated humour to degrade Trump when he was presented next to Putin in multimodal protest posters. Although earlier research on the Women's March contributed much to the field of study, but there is still less attention paid to the multimodal representation of Trump-Putin's relationship in the protest. Linked to Foucault (1981), women's protest posters are possible means to overcome silence for whatever reason in America. Otherwise, silence gives longer life for the division to remain with a great sense of mutation to the will of a new form of truth. As such, investigating

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humour in protest posters by women in the US context will inevitably contributes to the 'Noisy Majority' and gives a response to the 'SAME SHIT, DIFFERENT CENTURIES' (Bore et al. 2017, p. 534).

In this context, we would argue that multimodal humour protest posters are an inevitable integral element of the symbiosis process for the 2017 women protesters in the carnivalesque square (see, e.g., Barahmeh, 2020; Tunali, 2020). As such, this work aims to investigate the use of grotesque imagery of Trump's body by women in the US context to resist and go beyond Trumpian patriarchy-driven politics. For this end, we use Bakhtin's (1984a) carnival theory and carnivalesque as an overarching theoretical framework to encapsulate grotesque imagery in the 2017 Women's March posters as part of the public's offensive counter-politics discourses in square (cf. Barahmeh, 2020; Bore et al., 2017; Graefer et al., 2018; Tunali, 2020; Wong et al., 2021 among others). We further manipulate Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar as a methodological approach for the analysis of the selected multimodal posters.

What is important to highlight here is that this work does not by any means attempt to unveil how effective the use of multimodal humour protest posters was as related to citizens' actions in this context. This is simply because it is hard to be certain about the intended message via the use of humour discourse. However, this is not to belittle the impact of humour discourse as a social practice against political issues when manipulated to ridicule and turn upside down what might publicly perceived, or intended to be perceived, true (Sørensen, 2016, p.2).

In what follows, we present Bakhtin's (1984b) carnival theory and carnivalesque, humour theories, and how humour can be politicized in the multimodal humour discourses as represented in the 2017 Women's March posters.

BAKHTINIAN CARNIVAL AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As a framework to understand the Rabelais' works, the Renaissance culture in contrast to the Middle Ages culture in Western Europe, Bakhtin's carnival theory is a collective festivity and experience that gathers different people to stand up against power and authority. In the Middle Ages, carnival was used as "a temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibition" (Bakhtin, 1984b, p.10). In a like manner, the carnivalesque life in Bakhtin's carnival theory serves as a medium to challenge all social hierarchies. Carnival is a possible way for the people to 'transcend' the established rules, orders, and conventions that frame their lives with laughter.

With the carnival, Bakhtin (1984b, pp. 129-30) expounds two lives: 'official life' and the 'nonofficial life' of the medieval man as binary themes. The two lives are legitimate, but separated by a strict set of temporal boundaries. While the former refers to the serious life which is more characterized by the strict social hierarchies and orders representing the official power and authority, the latter is the carnival life in square. Square is, metaphorically speaking, the space or context of the pageant (event) in which every individual is active. The carnival square is eccentric with different kinds of behaviour and its people are egalitarian and share 'free and familiar' form(s) of communication. It is mésalliance in virtue of encompassing, collectively interconnect and unify the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the significant, and the wise with the stupid. Linked to Gramsci's (1971) account to popular culture and civil society, this is how people in the carnivalesque square create their popular culture with its fragmentary or 'unorganic' nature, which is difficult to understand in comparison to the 'official culture' (Brandist, 1996, p.

235). So, the culture of the carnivalesque life is not of a particular social class, but universal as a knot of relations between classes to popular culture (Bennett, 1980). Bakhtin's carnivalesque square is then the public space that encompasses 'all culture' for a 'resurgent vibrant civil society' in which power is balanced between the state, society, and private sphere where weak individuals are on an equal footing with the strong social groups (Gramsci, 1971, p. 268). This is how utopian images are created and manipulated by the mass culture to have cultural commodities exchanged and realized. Utopia under control of dominant ideology contributes to the perpetuation of centralization and hegemonic tendencies within society via projection of what is expected to be a higher principle of collective social unity.

Linked to politics, humour discourse is an element of the popular culture of resistance, elimination, and opposition to the homage to the ideology of standardization and to the hegemony of the elite culture as a top-down national culture formation oriented towards legitimizing the regime and its rules (De Grazia, 1981; Mascha, 2011). Political humour in the carnival square works as a critical utopian discourse to counter social hegemony (Moylan, 1986). It can be effectively manipulated to reject and resist 'bad utopia' that works on systemizing social hierarchy against the actual divergent nature of individuals' culture (Adorno, 1974). As in Williams's (1977, p. 110), theory of incorporation, the dominant "is never either total or exclusive. At any time, forms of alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture exist as significant elements in society".

In this context, such a line of thoughts is operationalized through considering the 2017 Women's March protest posters as anti-Trumpian political rules, omnipresence and ideologized masculinity for a homogenized America (cf. Bahrudin & Bakar 2022; Radzi et al., 2021). In this sense, carnivalesque humour discourses represented in the selected posters for analysis in this context are considered as a disparagement tool for the women protesters to voice their collective socio-cultural identity against Trump's patriarchy culture.

As Barahmeh (2020), we would argue that Bakhtin's (1984a) carnival theory and the carnivalesque is universal enough to remain relevant and applicable to study humour discourses in their different socio-political contexts across the world like, Africa (Mbembe, 1992), Europe (Taylor, 1995), the Arab states (Badarneh, 2011), and Latin America (Goldstein, 2013). It is "a hidden polemic against regime's cultural politics", and not only that of Russia in the 1930s under Stalin (Dentith, 2003, p. 71). In light of this, we consider Bakhtin's carnival theory in this context as an overarching theoretical framework to cast light on the public's dissatisfaction and resistance discourses against Trump's masculinity, megalomania, omnipotence, and omnipresence for 'America First' and 'Make America Great Again' as 'bad utopia' in Adorno's (1974) sense. As they are rich and eye-catching objects within the carnival life and square, protest posters in the 2017 Women's March are, we strongly argue, worthy of research in order to penetrate and explore what they intend to tell us about Trump and his political agenda. Humour displayed at the selected multimodal discourse posters in this work reflects protesters' masked hostility, resistance and revolt against Trump.

HUMOUR IN MULTIMODAL PROTEST POSTERS

Research into political culture and communication has acknowledged the significance of considering the constant connection between word and image and any study based on a sharp dichotomy between the two comes at the cost of its quality. Word and image have been rarely distinct in the history of human communication. Such a constant connection in the culture of

politics goes back to the remarkable increase in the volume of political posters with their different sizes and colours in the British politics between 1880 and 1914. It is the case where politics-related communication embraced a variety of modes to address and reach out their growing public with their intricate cultures. In Britain, posters served as a source of both political dispute and political cohesion for which political cartooning was a source of images. Posters were part of the street politics reflecting neither a privatized nor passive culture. They were like weapons in the contest for social space to establish and legitimize identities against political hurly-burly. The visual means that posters help to utilize serve to publicize their political messages with a greater impact (e.g., Thompson, 2013).

With the increasingly changing nature of our today's communication (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999), the adoption of different, but equally important, modes to communicate humour in political carnival comes as no surprise. Scholarship on humour has proved that humour is no longer, if it ever was, confined to the use of word-based discourses, but rather it is more characterized by its multimodality (Attardo, 2017). As in satirical cartoons (e.g., Prendergast, 2017), multimodal protest posters are meant to create humourous image-based discourses, word-based discourses and image-word based discourses, which is in its core a prerequisite for establishing democracy on the carnival square (Baym, 2008). As multimodal counter-politics discourses, posters are possible means to appropriate, subvert and reformulate the 'rules' of the dominant discourse against those who purposefully intend to impose them (Foucault, 1981). In this, one image is worth a thousand words to trivialize politic discourses and decline the assumed political rationality (Mitchell, 2012). With brevity and the use of reduced outlet, the poster is given an extraordinary power to express an intricately condensed set of messages to enhance the widespread of humour and give it an immediate bite in protest. Compression and ambivalence of meaning is what characterizes protest posters to amuse and inform their audiences. This is an infotainment tactic to criticize the prescribed order of things in life with a sense of joy and community spirit (Emre et al., 2014; Tunali, 2020).

With reference to Foucault's (1981, pp. 52, 3) The Order of Discourse, humour in protest is one possible means for people to express their "desire to be freed from the obligation to begin" and have their voices heard without being afraid of what is considered strange and out of "the order of laws". In this sense, humour discourse with its different modes comes to break the shackles of 'exclusion' as a system to have rights back and speak of everything, anything in any circumstances and anywhere. As a social practice, it is linked to power, in Foucault's words, "the power of uttering the hidden truth [and not] a truth in a mask". This translates struggles against system of domination; i.e., it is the power that is surrounded with 'prohibition', 'division' and 'rejection'.

In view of that, humour in multimodal protest posters should not by any means be framed in contrast to 'seriousness' wherein it is seriously intended. It is 'non-humourous'. The desire, or even dreams, for a better future needs no humour and if it does, this is ambiguously done with multiple modes of communication just to dig deep and question simultaneously current and future issues as much as possible (Sørensen, 2016, pp. 8, 24).

The use of multiple unexpected and congruous modes of communication in protest posters strengthens the sense of surprise and shock. In the incongruity theory, humour is more related to the sense of ambiguity, or conflict, through the use of surprising elements in what is intended to be humorous materials. That is, multimodality is a possible means to reflect the 'paradox of humour' and to also address the cognitive processes, emotions and interpersonal relations of the audience in context (Sørensen 2016, pp. 7-8).

From superiority theory perspective, multimodality in protest posters further serves to create humour via framing oneself in a higher and victorious position compared to the 'opponent' as a targeted individual or group (Ferguson & Ford, 2008; Meyer, 2000; Sørensen, 2016). In this sense, multimodal "racist and sexist humour" discourses can be put within the frame of superiority theory to show an "us against them" where a condition is created to invite individuals to laugh at or mock those who are presented and represented as less superior, which is part and parcel of the social solidarity in the carnival square (Lippitt, 1995, p. 55).

Finally, drawing on Freud's (1960, pp. 25, 6) "psychic energy", multimodality in humour protest posters can be used as a tool and means to "subconsciously overcome sociocultural inhibitions" (Meyer, 2000, p. 312). It is an endeavour for individuals to expel, release and discharge their moods of tension against what comes to be realized as unbearable to accept and live with. This is how multimodal protest posters serve as an outlet for individuals' repressed anger, negative feelings and pressure against the standardized form of the 'official life' in Bakhtin's (1984) sense. This emphasizes the "antagonistic social relationships" between the carnivalists and the targeted individuals or groups on the ground (Ferguson & Ford, 2008, p. 284).

Based on the above, carnivalesque humor in this context is approached as a possible tool for the women protesters to reverse or invert Trump's ideologically-driven rules and orders. In this, grotesque imagery technique is manipulated by the protesters to (re-)present Trump's body in an unexpectedly and strangely distorted, disgusting and ugly manner through their multimodal posters (See, e.g., Wrenn, 2018 on the animal imagery in the 2017 women's march protest posters). This is how carnivalesque humour is manipulated to "create an imaginary breathing space in which the normal categories of order and hierarchy are less than completely inevitable" (Scott, 2009, p.168).

CARNIVALESQUE HUMOUR IN THE 2017 WOMEN'S MARCH PROTEST POSTERS

A day after the ex-president Trump's inauguration, on January 21, 2017, hundreds of thousands of women demonstrated to voice their anger and worries about Trump's misogynistic language of the 2016 presidential campaign and the implicit attack of that to the rights of people with their different colours, religions, and interests. This was a point of departure for millions of protesters to join sister movements across America and the world. As a symbol of power and resistance in the protest, 'pussy hats' in their different shades of pink were used as a humourous counter discourse to Trump's vulgar term during his 2016 presidential campaign. So many messages were intended in the march among which are women's rights, the environment and science, abortion rights, health care, immigration, LGBTQ+ rights, kindness, racial and economic justice, motherhood, and citizenship (https://americanhistory.si.edu/creating-icons/women%E2%80%99s-march-2017).

The Women's March has been approached differently by different scholars. In Gökarıksel and Smith (2017), it is defined as the foundation for the political potential of intersectional feminism to enact resistance and to generate new spaces of living together. The authors further defined the 'US flag hijab' and 'pink pussy hats' as ruptures through which protesters find their ways to move forward. Humourous images from the 2017 Women's March on Facebook and Twitter were also used in Bore et al. (2017) to examine the possible ways they potentially serve to positively motivate people to question and challenge practices of inequality and oppression in their own society. For Graefer et al. (2018, pp. 2-3), the Women's March is further considered a "unique insight into how offensive humour" represented with the use protest posters as "effective mobilizing force" to bind people and have their space to vent anger against the discourses of

authority for socio-political transformation. In Graefer et al. (2018), Trump's body was spotted as a source of offensive humour in the protest posters as in mocking his 'comb over' hairstyle, 'small hands', 'orange taint' and the like. Moreover, the Women's March posters are considered as part of the protesters' rejoinders against Trump's fascism via inverting and appropriating his language (Wong et al., 2021). In Wong et al.'s context, protesters lampooned Trump's power structure via their heavy use of the women's body organs and reference to the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in the protest posters along with their pussy hats.

Along the line of such research, we would argue for the need to cast more light on how Trump-Putin relationship was presented and represented in protest posters with their multimodal content (See, e.g., Ashwin & Utrata, 2020, p. 16). This is due to the fact that "[p]osters and slogans featured Trump as little more than a sinister stooge of Russian President Vladimir Putin" is a remarkable aspect of the Women's March (https://www.ponarseurasia.org/ponars-eurasia-discusses-the-depiction-of-russia-at-the-women-s-marches-with-photos/). That is, while protesters attempted to include anything and everything that, they believe, would condemn Trump's power and legitimacy, the relationship between Trump and Putin is still one of the salient subjects in their grotesque imagery. So, this work endeavours to explore and investigate the 2017 women protesters' voice against Trump's tendency to deploy gender to serve his state power. This would significantly contribute to better understanding of how multiple modes of communication served to express women's resistance, power and rebellion against 'Trump's America'. With its focus on the multimodal humour discourse posters, this paper amplifies protesters' voices against Trump's push for mobilizing gender as a tool towards more and more masculinized America like Putin's Russia (e.g., Ashwin & Utrata, 2020).

METHOD

Drawn on earlier studies in the field (e.g., Bore et al., 2017; Graefer et al., 2018; Prendergast, 2017; Wong et al., 2021), this work aims to consider how carnivalesque humour discourses with multiple modes of communication served to express different protest messages in the 2017 Women's March. Based on this, we managed to have access to different websites (as referenced below each of the given posters) to collect multimodal posters as part of the protesters' anti-Trump messages. As a result, we realised that grotesque imagery of the Trump-Putin relationship in the 2017 Women's March multimodal discourse posters needs to be explored and investigated. For this end, the use of Trump-Putin relationship was considered as the main criterion for identifying the sample in this context. Such a criterion is related to the researchers' interest in exploring and investigating multimodality in humour discourse posters as a serious tool to resist manufactured reality in political contexts. The corpus in this context consists of 78 protest posters in which protesters' multimodal representation(s) of Trump body as a source of grotesque imagery is a salient feature. With the use of theme analysis approach (e.g., Joffe & Yardley, 2004), the dataset was categorised into 'word-only grotesque imagery', 'image-only grotesque imagery', and 'word-image grotesque imagery' (**Error! Reference source not found.** below). As a retrieval process, the coding scheme has ended up with filtering the collected data into three main key recurrent themes: '**Trump and Putin: Two in One**', '**Unmanly Trump**', and '**Trump as a Puppet**' (examples below). What is important to highlight here is that the data presented in this context cannot be considered and looked at without taking into account the diversity of anti-Trump posters in the 2017 Women's March. This is to say that posters under study in this context are complementary to other types of posters explored and investigated in different research works (cf. Bore et al., 2017; Graefer, 2018;

Wong et al. ,2021). This, in turn, mirrors the sense of collectivity in the carnivalesque square. If approached in this way, this work proves that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It serves to explain how carnivalesque humour more often than not comes as a result of tensions running high of which laughter is a possible way to relieve and resist Trumpism. Further, it contributes to understanding how humour creates a public space for protesters and audience to bring absurd politics on the table for the audience in a 'pleasant' and 'harmless' manner as part of its incongruity, but without sacrificing its serious meaning (e.g., Mascha, 2011).

TABLE 1. Coding Scheme

Type of Posters	Codes
Image-Only Posters	Toilet-based posters
	Trump as a humiliating object
	Russian interference in the US presidential election 2016
	Defeated Trump-posters
Word-Image Posters	Ridicule of Trump's outward appearance
	Bad peach president
	Wall-policy
	Obama-Trump comparison
	Confidence-inspiring posters
	Women as powerful agents of resistance
	Russian's interference in the US presidential election 2016
	(Re)defining feminine body organs
	(Re)producing Trump's negative words against women to gain positivity
	Women's public revenge on Trump
	Status of liberty supports women solidarity
Content Word-Only Posters	Posters of Trump's threat by women
	Expanding historical context of women's posters
	Ridicule of Trump's slogan
	Disapproval for Mr. Trump

After the initial stage of coding and categorisation referred to above, the researchers managed to create '**Trump and Putin: Two in One**', '**Unmanly Trump**' and '**Trump as a Puppet**' as three main themes to guide the analysis in this context (See, e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87 on thematic analysis).

Based on the above, the following questions are formulated:

RQ1. In what way(s) are the participants (Trump and Putin) represented?
RQ2. What kind of relationship is suggested to exist between the represented
participants and the viewer as well?

To address such research questions, we think that Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar would significantly unveil the potentially politicized meanings of the carnivalesque humour depicted in the protest posters in this context. This will inevitably be through considering multiple elements of representational, interactive and textual meanings that denote: a) the way in which the participants are represented, b) the implied relationships between the viewer and the represented participants, and c) how these relationships contribute to the purpose of the poster (cf. Czachur et al., 2022 and Al-Sharabi et al., 2011).

To explain, the representational dimension in Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) provides a holistic approach to analyse the visualization process of certain units and the kind of attributes assigned to the represented participants, the roles they play, the activity they are involved in and the actions they do (or believed to do) within certain circumstances in a particular point of time. In this respect, words with other non-linguistic units interactively and coherently participate in creating and developing a specific, or a set of, socio-cultural meaningful scenarios (Unsworth, 2009). Linked to the narrative process of the representational dimension, analysing the visual tactics used in protest posters uncovers 'hidden vectors' (actions), or 'eyelines' (reaction) by the represented participants (Trump and Putin in this context). An action process in which the participant creates the 'vector' is called the 'Actor' and the participant receiving that 'vector' is the 'Goal'. Another type of narrative occurs in images when an 'eyeline' forms a 'vector' and produces a reaction rather than an action, hence it is called 'reactional processes'. The participant who looks is referred to as the 'Reacter' and the entity or individual who receives the gaze is the 'Phenomenon'. A reaction in an image may either be 'transactional' where the 'Reaction and Phenomenon' are present or only the 'Reactor in the non-transactional' presentation. Secondary participants in the narrative process of the visual representation of the protest posters is not our prime concern in the analysis. This is simply related to the focus of the work on Trump-Putin visual representation as a point of access to the analysis, which helps to avoid the complexity related to 'circumstances', 'setting', 'means', and 'accompaniment' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.75).

In addition, the interactive dimension in Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) visual grammar helps consider the interactive nature between the content of the protest posters and the viewer/reader. In this sense, a considerable attention will be given to the main participant's (Trump and Putin) gaze direction, their distance from the viewer and the camera's relative angle as visual characteristics of the protest discourse posters under the study. In this respect, 'vectors' as an imaginary connection are created between participants and viewers. Such images have been labelled as 'demands' because "[t]he participant's gaze demands something from the viewer, demands that the viewer enters into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 118). This is a direct address between the represented participant and the intended viewer. However, in some other circumstances, the participant depicted indirectly addresses the viewer. In this case, while the former is the object of inspection of the viewer, the latter would be the subject of the look with a hidden role. Drawing on Edward T. Hall (1960), Kress and van Leeuwen explain how intimate or not the relationship between the participant and the viewer is a question that relies on how far or short the distance is between the two. However, this might be of a different spectrum that extends from only a part of the body to the whole body along with the space around the represented figure and those within the scope of a far-reaching public social distance. This is where the role of the 'Angle' (vertical and horizontal), in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006, 134) sense, comes to be of a key role. The vertical angle is more connected to the sense of superiority/inferiority and inequity in the social structure. With the 'horizontal angle', the viewer and the represented will be imaged whether engaged and attached or not. It is 'a frontal angle' to have the viewer involved within the same image and its representation. In opposite, the 'oblique angle' implies the sense of 'distance' or 'detachment', which indicates "[w]hat you see here is not part of our world; it is their world, something we are not involved with" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 136). How 'realistically' or 'truthfully' images reflect what is represented in is a question that belongs to 'modality' as an individual process. A high modality can be accomplished via the use of certain markers, e.g., colour saturation, colour modulation,

colour differentiation, contextualization, representation, depth, brightness and illumination, to make an image appear 'more than real', or intended to be so (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 159).

With the compositional dimension in Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), we will be able to analyze and explore the 'information value'. This is more concerned with the placement process of the represented elements within the image; i.e., "left and right, top and bottom, center and margin" which at the end serves certain intended communicative purposes or "specific information value". In this sense, what is perceived as 'ideal information' is positioned at the top while 'real information' is placed at the bottom. This can be either of a central information value or a polarized information value with no element in the composition center. The second area is 'salience' which is used to show how the represented elements attract the attention via some features like the "placement in the foreground or background, relative size, contrasts in colour, and differences in sharpness". The last area, 'framing' displays the boundaries in the process of connecting or separating image elements as actual frame lines or dividing lines (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.177). To summarize, TABLE 2 below presents the process of data analysis.

TABLE 2. Data Analysis Process

Defining evaluative categories	This is an iterative process to the (re-)presentation dimension for the analysis of the visual tactics (linguistic and non-linguistic units) communicated through protest posters against Trump. Such an analysis lens is inevitably linked to the compositional dimension and multimodal framing of the posters content under the study.
Identifying and coding the collected data (multimodal posters) related to the evaluative category in this context	
Indexing posters sharing relatively similar modalities under the same code	
Assigning levels/ values to the categorized data. Whenever necessary, the definition of the categories is iteratively modified along with the number of category levels	
Evaluating and (re-)coding the data as a whole	
Analyzing and presenting the findings (theme-based analysis)	
In-depth analysis and presentation of the findings	

Having our theoretical framework and methodological approach spelt out, the analysis of the selected protest posters is presented next.

FINDINGS

Both Trump and Putin have been identified as fair game of pillory in this work. They form the core of the two-bodied grotesque images where the biological body is used as a means through which the 2017 Women's March protest posters transgress the vertical hierarchies of politics and its convexities (cf. Dentith, 2003). Based on Bakhtin's (1984b) carnival theory and the carnivalesque, a grotesque imagery technique like this is important for 'degradation' wherein whatever considered , expected or imagined to be 'high', 'spiritual', 'ideal', and 'abstract' can be lowered and materialized. As such, the three themes, '**Trump and Putin: Two in One**', '**Unmanly Trump**' and '**Trump as a Puppet**' are presented with reference to exemplar protest posters next.

TRUMP AND PUTIN: TWO IN ONE

With its front angle, Figure 1 depicts the two politicians as one compacted person of distorted features under the name "TRUMPsPUTIN". In this poster, Trump and Putin are visually shadowing and defining each other, which symbolically indicates how America with Trump' misogyny is at a serious risk and horror. With its salient and lavish colour, the poster refers to the perceived similarity between Trump and Putin in terms of their gender politics and discourse to re-masculinization to signify their nations. In such a context, the analytical process relates the represented participants within a part-whole structure where the poster as 'carrier' is composed of Trump's and Putin's "possessive attributes". In this sense, we cannot by any means look at such a protest discourse with a 'non-serious humour-directed eye'; i.e., it is a humour discourse that digs deep to point finger into a seriously threatening politics. The front angle of the portrait integrates the audience into it naturally. It vertically shows an eye-level angle as a point of confrontation between the represented and the viewer. A poster like this provides an implicit comparison between Trump and Putin in terms of their hypermasculinity-discourses to further their political agenda and interests. It is the protesters' voice to warn the nation, and the world at large, against their implicit attempt towards mobilizing "gender traditionalism and racism to further their political projects, [and] the restoration of men as patriarchs in the private sphere" (Ashwin & Utrata, 2020, p. 18).

FIGURE 1. https://www.ponarseurasia.org/ponars-eurasia-discusses-the-depiction-of-russia-at-the-women-s-marches-with-photos

UNMANLY TRUMP

Trump's body is further identified as the core in the carnivalesque humour via wielding homophobia and gender-normative masculinity as a symbol of power. This is mainly represented in the humourous sexual protest posters in the 2017 Women's March. It is part of the surprise, shock and incongruity of the carnivalesque humour discourse wherein both Trump and Putin as two male politicians kissing each other intimately (Figure 2). In this context, the mouth plays a key role in the grotesque imagery of the body as it symbolizes Trump's, as a target, unmanly behaviour. Based on the ambiguity, exaggeration, hyperbolism, and excessiveness of the carnival

discourses, such an interpretation might be argued if we think of misogyny tendencies to both Trump and Putin. In either, carnivalesque humour is used to question Trump's credibility as a male politician to "Make America Great Again". "[L]ove is love" in this poster has an echo in other posters like, "TRUMP L♥VES RUSSIAN MEN" in Boston (https://www.ponarseurasia.org/ponars-eurasia-discusses-the-depiction-of-russia-at-the-women-s-marches-with-photos/). As for the communicative value of the colours in the posters, the dominance of the dark colour in the "love is love" poster implicitly indicates the sense of secrecy, mystery, unsureness of Trumpism. Following Bakhtin (1984), colour in this context is central where it symbolizes the darkness of Trump's official life. In terms of the grammar of the designed posters, Putin is placed on the left as 'Given', "something the viewer already knows", and Trump on the right as 'New', an entity "which is not yet known, or perhaps not yet agreed upon by the viewer" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 187). However, pictorial elements in this figure receive an equal share of prominence because both Trump and Putin are in the same size, their black clothes are virtually indistinguishable from the black background. As in Prendergast (2017, pp.18, 9), the black colour here symbolizes 'penance'. The white lines around their outer shape aids to distinguish one from the other. Linked to the narrative process in visual grammar, we see both Trump and Putin detached from their viewers (audience) as serving each other.

To impugn Trump's legitimacy and credibility as a male politician for 'America First', protest posters further depicted Trump as Putin's submissive lover. Clear evidence of this is "My POOTY CALL" where Trump represented as sleepy with Putin in the same bed and the floating red hearts around them. A further point of attack against Trump's masculinity is represented in the "NOT IN… MY HOUSE!" poster. Like the "Tiny Hands" and "Putin's Puppet" below, posters like these are of homophobic messages to ridicule and undermine Trump's intended politics and image. Such a grotesque imagery via framing Trump as a submissive, powerless, insignificant, inferior, sleepy lover for Russian men, and muscular Putin is one of the many different ways for the 'Pussy bites/grabs back' in the 2017 Women's March (e.g., Wrenn, 2019).

Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Trump is depicted as weak in the orthography and images of the posters. To explain, the heroic and muscular body posture to Putin in the "NOT IN" poster with his downward-eye look to Trump in a lower position with the thump up are all evidence of that. A further indication of the weak Trump is represented with the hollow font of "TRUMP L♥VES" compared to the bold font of "RUSSIAN MEN". As in Prendergast (2017), we see that Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) narrative and conceptual processes are working together in these posters. This is to say that 'love', as a word or the heart icon, serves as 'vector' a point of interaction between the two represented figures (Trump and Putin). The posters further adopt a narrative process where Trump and Putin are framed at the centre of the protest discourse as intimate and attached to each other, but detached from the viewers.

FIGURE 2. https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/01/the-best-protest-signs-from-the-womens-march-on-washington.html

In Figure 3, Trump backed by Putin and riding the same horse with their tops naked is a further form of collectivity for the protesters to share the same critical stance towards Trumpism. In the 'horse' poster, we can see the protesters' use of a natural background (high modality) as an indirect indication of the 'reality' of Trumps' 'bad utopia' (Adorno, 1974). The sunbeam falling on Trump's and Putin's bodies, as two represented participants, is a contributing factor where it serves to unveil the mysterious and darkish sides of their gendered (masculinized) politics. As in "MY POOTY CALL", it is an action process wherein Putin is the major actor with his arms, as vectors, around Trump to hold the bridle (the goal). A shirtless visual representation symbolically reflects Putin's masculinity compared to Trump's lean, flabby, weak and dependent body. The two participants here further offer themselves to the viewer as an object of contemplation since they are presented as looking outside the image frame. A long shot and oblique angle reflect their detachment from their own audiences, which by itself symbolically (as 'interactional metafunction') suggests how unreliable and untrusty Trump is for America. Along with other protest messages like, "SEX OFFENDERS CAN'T LIVE IN GOVERNMENT HOUSING", and "THIS PUSSY BITES BACK", the use of bed, horse, love and heart in protest discourse put Trump's superiority at stake and delegitimize the sense of his authority and power. In this sense, multimodal protest posters in this context serve to convey protesters' counter-discourse to subvert and reformulate Trump's dominant masculinized discourse (e.g., Foucault, 1981).
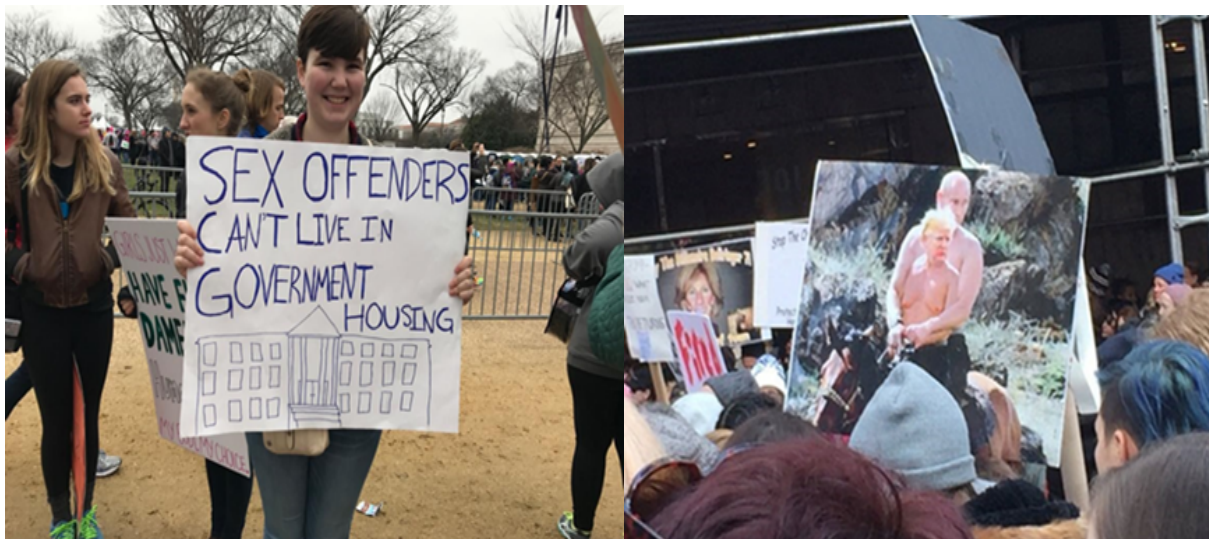
FIGURE 3. https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/01/the-best-protest-signs-from-the-womens-march-on washington.html

TRUMP AS A PUPPET

In Figure 4, Trump is presented and represented as a 'little' and 'funny' baby, a 'big head' attached to a body of a child. Trump's face further appears 'with a zipped smile and a puckered chin', which implicitly refers to the sense of paradox between a leader of 'Great America' and a 'submissive', 'obedient', 'passive', and 'happy' child. It is not that "ideal masculine, impenetrable, normalized and heteronormative white male body" (Gökarıksel & Smith, 2017, p. 12). Linked to action process in Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Putin with his military uniform gives the impression that he is the superordinate actor on the stage of political events and Trump is the goal. The visual representation of a 'Father-like Putin' carries 'the Child-Trump' in the air visualizes how protesters ridicule and degrade Trump's white masculinity and political rationality in comparison to Putin (cf. Graefer et al., 2018). The whole angle of Putin's arms to chair and assist Trump forms a strong vector between the two represented participants. With his 'make America Great Again red hat-like flag', Trump could also be a subordinate actor in holding (action) and a waving flag (goal). This by itself mirrors a vector between the flag holder (Trump) and his carrier (Putin). How strong the bond between the two represented 'leaders' could be further traced through considering the way the 'P' letter of Putin is inserted within Trump's 'T'. With the 'white bouquet' and the gaze of 'a proud-looking' Putin in this poster, this protest discourse resonates with the symbolic sexuality suggested in the posters above.

Humourous micro-representation of Trump's body is also echoed in other word-based posters like, "85% of men have larger hands than Trump" as part of the protesters' intended use of homophobia to symbolically suggest Trump's small genitalia. This particular discourse indirectly suggests the message that Trump is not sufficient, legitimate, and adequate enough for 'America First' and that there is 85% of men can do that. "KEEP YOUR TINY HANDS OFF MY RIGHTS" is a further example that protesters used to announce the need for social equity and women's rights that become under threat with the 'deficient' Trump in the masculinity department. This is evident through the choice of the red colour for 'HANDS' and 'RIGHTS' where it indicates the sense of warning and danger and green for 'KEEP YOUR […] OFF' refer to Trump's ruling junta (e.g., Prendergast, 2017). Based on Foucault (1982), if the body-driven symbolic references represented

in the 'tiny and larger hands', 'the child-like Trump with the man-looking Putin' taken altogether, we understand that protest posters in their multiple components serve to turn the sense of the manufactured power upside down in the carnivalesque square (cf. Wong et al., 2021).

FIGURE 4. https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/01/the-best-protest-signs-from-the-womens-march-on-washington.html

Similar to the 'tiny' representation of Trump's body above, protesters and slogans further portraying Trump as no more than a sinister stooge of Putin is one of the remarkable features in the 2017 Women's March. As in Figure 5, the posters in their different content reflect protesters' dismay against Russian's 'alleged' role in Trump's politics. Again, Putin is the dominant and controlling figure as a puppeteer that speaks through the voice of his puppet-Trump. The intended message to send to Trump, and the rest of the world maybe, is that Trump is not America as a whole and that his exclusive, divisive, insulting, demonizing policy does not in any way 'Make America Great Again'.

FIGURE 5. https://www.ponarseurasia.org/ponars-eurasia-discusses-the-depiction-of-russia-at-the-women-s-marches-with-photos/

In light of the above, this is how the 2017 Women's March expressed their voice to 'Make America Think Again' about the risks of resurrecting Soviet empire to strike back through Putin. The use of different colours in 'MAKE AMERICA THINK AGAIN' poster symbolically indicates the sense of social heterogeneity and unity to resist and say 'NO' to 'Trump's Putin' misogyny. As such, protest discourses like these convey the call of the 'Noisy Majority' with their diverse dreams and colours to 'sing America' (Wong et al., 2021).

DISCUSSION

Protesters' use of the grotesque imagery technique serves to play on homophobia and gender normative masculinity as related to Trumpism (Bakhtin, 1984). The imagery in this sense is reminiscent and insightful where it tapped into protesters' polyphony, whirlpools of dissatisfaction, anger, and revulsion of Trump's politics.

In answering RQ1, carnivalesque humour represented in the foregoing protest posters is manipulated to not only vent protesters' anger towards Trump, but also to communicate their hostile attitudes and 'free-speechness' against Trump's gendered political agenda. As a multimodal representation to 'sexist humour', such protest discourses implicitly reflect the sense of 'us and them'. Individuals are invited to mock and laugh at the inferior Trump in the carnival square (Lippitt, 1995; Martin, 1998). It is part of the grotesque realism in the carnival square that we see the presumed high-level Trump lowered in comparison to Putin via multimodal symbolic references to the lower body functions. Clear evidence of this is the indirect reference to Putin's power and masculinity over Trump. This is visually represented in this context with Putin's military uniform and attractive glamorous military ranks adorning his collar and shoulder while Trump is taking a very unrecognized portion of the same space of the poster with his babyish uniform. It is further easy to recognize how humourously the 'superior' Trump as president of 'America First' has been visualized in protest next to and backed by the big and muscular Putin on the horse. In a like manner, we see Trump framed as a submissive figure in the 'MY POOTY CALL' and 'NOT IN … MY HOUSE' posters. Much like the 'pink pussy hats', Trump-Putin multimodal protest posters serve as vivid symbolic sexual discourses to reclaim "a violent record of masculine assault in which Trump unabashedly participates". Such a representation to Trump adds more to 'We the People Protect Each Other', 'We the People are Greater than Fear', and 'We the People Defend Dignity' (Gökarıksel & Smith 2017, pp. 6,8).

As for RQ2, Trump is pictured as inferior, submissive, inefficient, and inadequate next to Putin. He is not up to 'Make America Great Again' or 'America First'. With their multiple modes of communication, protest posters in this context served to 'make America think again' about Trump's tendency to mobilize gender (masculinity) to serve and maximize his state power. They symbolically suggest that Trump as a follower to Putin's authoritarian tendencies to solidify his political position. Protest discourses in this sense are employed to voice America's resistance to Trump's willingness to manipulate "hypermasculine bravado to appeal to men who are downwardly mobile or anxious about their status and feel nostalgic for a stronger, supposedly "greater" state". This symbolically suggests Americans' concerns about Trump's authoritarian moves and push toward a more gendered United States like Russia under Putin's power (Ashwin & Utrata, 2020, p. 17). Protest posters then served to reflect the power of the 'Pussy' to bite back. This echoes Graefer et al.'s (2018, p. 15) 'Little bitch' offensive Trump placard as a detached figure. It is part of the logicality in the carnivalesque square for the 2017 Women's March protesters to dissent and "resist authority, kowtow to none" (Davis & Foyle, 2017, 8). This is a

possible means to avoid the 'unfinished gender revolution' in Putin's Russia (Ashwin & Utrata, 2020, p. 21).

CONCLUSION

This work demonstrates the relevance and applicability of Bakhtin's (1984) carnival theory as an overarching theoretical framework to shed light on and investigate humour discourse posters in the 2017 Women's March to voice protesters' dissatisfaction and resistance against Trump's autocracy, supremacy and omnipresence. Carnivalesque humour discourse is a disparagement tool at the hand of the women protesters to express their collectivity against patriarchy culture in its different senses and practices and put those in power on the alert. The voice of its actors is no longer on the other side of the divide where politicians have to have their roles and seriously lend an ear to women's speech that comes free at the end.

With its multimodal discourse analysis of humour in the 2017 Women's March protest posters, this work explores how Trump's apparent power and status have been put at risk against Putin's represented firm dominance. While it is limited in terms of the selected data and context, this work, however, has explored how humour discourses in politics are many non-humourous and serious things. The multimodal representation of the carnivalesque humour in the 2017 Women's March protest posters matters more than what it apparently means. It goes beyond the artistic or aesthetic nature of design and content to further decipher certain sociopolitical issues of a very long history. The intended meaning of humour discourses in this sense is not only limited to laughter and should not be solely approached in such a way, but rather it is more like a sociopolitical reform strategy where different layers of meanings could be implicitly expressed. Based on this, further research is still required to address the use of humour discourses with multiple modes of communication against the historical roots of the politics of exclusion, hegemony, prohibition, marginalization, discrimination, and the representation of such disempowering and divisive practices on our humanity and social unity across the world. This, in turn, helps to know more about women's issues as related to their different local cultures and the potential impact this may entail on the world as a whole.

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