

METAPHORICAL MEANS OF SATIRE FORMATION IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH MEDIA DISCOURSE

Yurchyshyn Vita

Ph.D., Teaching Assistant

Department of English Philology

Vasy Stefanyk Precarpathian National University, Ukraine

Contemporary British media discourse often encodes satire through richly metaphorical language and intertextual allusion [1]. Guided by P. Simpson's discursive framework [2] and V. Yurchyshyn's recent linguo-pragmatic studies [4, 5], this abstract explores how metaphorical means foster satire in news commentary.

Simpson conceptualizes satire as a "culturally situated discursive practice" involving a triadic interaction between satirist, target and audience. In his model, satirical texts are built on layers of irony organized in "three principal ironic phases", achieved by opposing a prime (an echo of prior discourse) with a critical dialectic in the text. Crucially, satire "requires some prior discourse, utterance, or speaker to comment upon" as an echoic mention [2]. V. Yurchyshyn extends this approach by distinguishing two complementary satirical methods – metaphoric and metonymic. The metaphoric satirical method relies on intertextuality and conceptual domain overlap: it employs devices such as transformed quotations, allusions, calques, pastiche, and precedent-related phenomena (references to familiar names or texts) to invoke an implicit comparison across context [4]. These metaphorical triggers invite readers to map one domain of meaning onto another, unveiling a satirical incongruity. Together, Simpson's and Yurchyshyn's frameworks stress that metaphor-laden, intertextual cues are key to constructing the satirist's critical voice in media texts. Using this theoretical lens, the study examines two *Economist* articles (July 2025) as case studies.

The first article exposes a discriminatory airline pricing tactic that charges higher fares to solo travelers. It exemplifies metaphoric satire through both tone and content. The *Economist* writer slyly labels airlines "champions of price discrimination", an ironic framing that at once acknowledges and critiques the industry's brazen profit-seeking. The article amplifies public outrage by quoting travel bloggers' hyperbolic reactions – one complains that carriers are "weaponising their fares" against individuals who "can't clone themselves", and another decries "greed getting out of control". Such language choices function as allusive metaphors: portraying ticket prices as a weapon dramatizes the airlines' aggression, while invoking cloning humorously underscores the unfairness faced by lone passengers. These echoed criticisms serve as the satire's prime, anchoring the article's critical stance in recognizable public sentiment. In turn, the authorial voice provides a dialectic twist: after revealing that some airlines quietly dropped the practice, the piece pointedly concludes that "when it comes to airfares, sunlight can be a surprisingly poor disinfectant". This closing quip subverts the proverb "sunlight is the best disinfectant,"

wryly suggesting that exposing the scheme (sunlight) failed to cure the problem. Here a transformed quotation (the altered proverb) delivers the satirical punch, blending a familiar moral truism with the bitter truth of corporate behavior. Through metaphorical framing and intertextual echo, the article encodes a critique of airline greed in a stylishly ironic register rather than overt moralizing.

The second case study analyzes an *Economist* piece on Generation Z's obsession with reusable water bottles – a cultural fad ostensibly tied to wellness and eco-consciousness. This text employs a metaphoric satirical method even more overtly, saturated with water-related imagery and tongue-in-cheek allusions. It opens by overturning a commonsense assumption (that a water bottle is a “plain, boring receptacle”) and declaring that for Gen Z a bottle is “both a necessity and a fashion statement”, immediately signaling a playful ironical tone. The article's lexicon then swims in water metaphors to exaggerate the trend's scope: an “obsession with ‘self-care’” has led to “a flood of interest” in fancy drinkware, fueling a craze dubbed “hydration inflation”. Such phrasing blends the literal and figurative – a flood connotes both water and an overwhelming surge, while “hydration inflation” cleverly echoes economic jargon to mock how drinking more water became a booming, inflated trend. The writer notes that the hype “is quenching brands' thirst for profit”, a barbed metaphor equating corporate profit-seeking with insatiable thirst, thereby critiquing the commercialization of a youth fad under the guise of health. The piece also makes use of precedent phenomena and pop-culture allusion: it references viral TikTok hashtags and celebrity-endorsed tumbler releases, and even recounts a rumor about Mariah Carey bathing in mineral water – details that anchor the satire in shared cultural knowledge and invite the reader to smile at the absurdity. The culmination is a pithy one-liner capping the trend's excess: limited-edition Stanley cups resell for up to \$800 – “talk about liquid assets.” This pun on the financial term “liquid assets” simultaneously invokes literal liquid (water) and the notion of assets gaining value, encapsulating the article's satirical thesis in five words. By overlaying the finance domain onto the realm of water-bottle collectibles, the text achieves a pointed conceptual overlap: it exposes the profit-driven commodification of a wellness craze through metaphor. Throughout the piece, an air of gentle mockery pervades the polished journalistic prose – a hallmark of *The Economist's* house style – as the author uses stylized discourse to mirror and exaggerate the very phenomenon being critiqued (e.g. describing water as “life-sustaining liquid” in grandiose terms). This conscious over-styling serves a satirical purpose, akin to Simpson's notion of “irony within irony”: the article maintains a straight-faced informative posture while subtly lampooning the subject with embellished language.

In both examples, metaphorical and intertextual techniques are the linchpin of satire formation. The satirists (journalists) embed their critical perspective beneath the surface of factual reporting, relying on readers to perceive the dual meanings. Allusion and precedent citations (from idioms to pop culture) function as echoic hooks that engage the audience's interpretive frame, fulfilling Simpson's requirement that satire be grounded in a shared context of understanding. Meanwhile, the metaphoric framing – whether casting airfare policy as a form of weaponry or recasting a consumer craze

in aquatic terms – creates a conceptual incongruity that highlights the targets’ folly or vice. This aligns with Yurchyshyn’s finding that the metaphoric method “presupposes overlapping of different domains” to establish satirical relations. By invoking one domain (warfare, finance, nature, etc.) to describe another, the media texts provoke readers to recognize the absurdity in the original scenario. Furthermore, these metaphor-driven satirical cues carry out both of satire’s classic functions: the critical function, by exposing a discrepancy between appearance and reality (e.g. eco-conscious Gen Z versus their actual consumerist behavior), and the ludic (playful) function, by packaging the critique in witty, entertaining language that amuses as it informs. The result is a nuanced, multi-layered discourse. Rather than stating the criticism overtly, the journalists allow metaphors and allusions to “do the talking”, encoding judgment in a form that the reader must decode – a process Simpson argues is key to satire’s persuasive power, as the audience experiences a gratifying “uptake” of the hidden meaning.

Thus, the metaphoric satirical method, as delineated by Simpson (2003) and Yurchyshyn (2021, 2023), proves highly effective in contemporary British media texts for delivering critique under the guise of reportage. Through strategic intertextuality, conceptual blending, and stylized phrasing, serious issues are treated with a veneer of humor that engages readers critically. The analysis of the two *Economist* articles demonstrates how metaphorical framing and cultural allusion serve to encode critical satire: the airline-pricing story ridicules corporate greed and market absurdities, while the water-bottle piece gently mocks youthful consumer culture. Both do so by “highlighting discrepancy” and inviting the audience to perceive the ironic gap between what is said and what is meant. This study thereby underscores that even in ostensibly factual media discourse, the linguo-pragmatic machinery of metaphor and irony can generate potent satirical commentary. The findings confirm that the theoretical insights of Simpson and Yurchyshyn on satirical discourse are borne out in practice, illuminating new horizons for analyzing satire’s role in modern mass-media communication.

References

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